

'Ealra þæra goda þe þa hæðenan on ðam dagum for godas hæfdon':
A Comparative Analysis of Wulfstan's De Falsis Deis and Ælfric's De Falsis Diis

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Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Chapter 1 – Context	5
Chapter 2 – A Comparative Analysis of Wulfstan’s <i>De Falsis Deis</i> and Ælfric’s <i>De Falsis Diis</i>	10
Chapter 3 – Discussion	19
Conclusion	22
References.....	23
Abstract.....	25
APPENDIX A. Translation of Wulfstan’s <i>De Falsis Deis</i> (Bethurm XII)	26

Introduction

The Anglo-Saxons arrived to the British Isles as invaders during the 6th century, and by the end of the 8th century, they had established several kingdoms and converted to Christianity. During the 9th century, however, a new wave of pagan invaders from Scandinavia began raiding England, and by the end of the first millennium they controlled a large part of the island, while continuing to raid the areas still under English rule. The religious authorities must have found it difficult to explain how the pagan invaders could overtake the more organised Christian kingdoms so easily. Ælfric, Abbot of Eynsham, and Wulfstan, Bishop of Worcester and Archbishop of York addressed the issue in some of their homilies; both saw the pagan barbarians' invasion as punishment for the sins of the English people, and linked the invasion to the events of the apocalypse (Godden, 1994, p. 130-131). Most famous example is probably Wulfstan's *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos*, but also Ælfric's *De Falsis Diis* discusses the topic of Scandinavian deities, and Wulfstan revised part of this homily for his own use.

Even though Ælfric and Wulfstan often had similar concerns and wrote in the same genre of homilies, their style is very different, and has often been the subject of comparison. Wulfstan used material from Ælfric in many of his homilies, either directly, only rephrasing the text to create a style very different from Ælfric's and easily recognisable as his own, or combining parts of Ælfric's text with other sources (Bethurum, 1957, p. 30-35). Early research on Wulfstan's style, and comparison with Ælfric, was often focused on identifying elements of Wulfstan's style in order to use these in establishing the canon of his works (Bethurum, 1957; Jost, 1950; McIntosh, 1949). Some more recent studies also address the question of the linguistic features that Wulfstan uses to achieve his style, and often consider the influence of genre and text type on his linguistic usage and style (Green, 1995; Orchard, 1992). Their audiences were also different: Wulfstan, as a bishop, preached his homilies to a

lay audience, while Ælfric's audience consisted of learned ecclesiastics. The style they used for their writing must have been chosen with this in mind, rather than being just personal preference, or a stamp of their authorship.

As Wulfstan often used Ælfric's works as his sources, comparison of such texts could show not only what kind of strategies were used to adapt a text to a certain audience, but also reveal much of the context and purpose of the adapted text. One example is Wulfstan's reworking of Ælfric's *De Falsis Diis*: even though Wulfstan does not make any major changes to the content, his reworking of the text changes the emphasis and style significantly. Ælfric's longer homily deals with the worship of heathen gods in a much wider context, but Wulfstan focuses on the part discussing the Scandinavian deities. While some of Wulfstan's changes to Ælfric's *De Falsis Diis* are clearly related to adapting the text to a different audience, the change of focus and emphasis indicates that his homily is much more closely related to current events than has previously been acknowledged. Chapter 1 of the present study provides the relevant background concerning the authors and the text, Chapter 2 presents a comparative analysis of Ælfric's *De Falsis Diis* and Wulfstan's *De Falsis Diis*, and Chapter 3 discusses the implications of Wulfstan's changes. A new translation of Wulfstan's *De Falsis Deis* is provided as Appendix A.

Chapter 1 – Context

Wulfstan and Ælfric are the two most significant writers of the late Old English period, but both their style and their role in service of the Church were very different. Ælfric is often admired for his fine style and for the learnedness revealed in his works. Wulfstan uses much fewer sources and rarely names them, but his style was certainly effective and must have made a lasting impression on his listeners. He had many other duties in addition to writing homilies, however. While Ælfric lived the monastic life of a scholar and could dedicate his time to writing and learning, Wulfstan served not only the Church but also the state as an advisor and lawmaker to King Æthelred and the first Danish king Cnut (Bethurum, 1957, p. 62). Their different roles in the society are also reflected in their choice of topics. Ælfric seems to have purposefully set out to provide a collection of texts to cover more or less all the important topics on the Christian faith, and his works reveal he used a wide array of sources, which he often refers to in his writing (Gatch, 1977, p. 12-13). Wulfstan's homilies, on the other hand, focus on fewer themes, which often seem to be connected to matters he considered important in his public role. It seems he only wrote on topics he considered important to address. This chapter summarises the relevant background concerning Ælfric and Wulfstan, as well as discuss their sphere of influence and relationship.

Although Wulfstan and Ælfric had very different style of writing, their theological views were not so different, and they were both involved in the Benedictine reformation (Gatch, p. 21). While the founders of the movement, Dunstan, Oswald, and Æthelwold, had focused on establishing the new monastic order, it was left to their followers to write the important texts to teach the clergy (Bethurum, 1957, p. 80). Even if Wulfstan and Ælfric took up the task, they did not receive the same reverence as their canonised predecessors in the

reformation, and no contemporary lives were written of them. As a result, only few facts are known of their life.

The first reliable date concerning Wulfstan is his consecration as Bishop of London in 996, and there are only a few details known of his life before that (Bethurum, 1957, p. 56). He may have been from the Fenlands area: he is buried in Ely, some names of his family members appear in charters from the area, and the only medieval account of his life is found in the 12th-century Book of Ely (Bethurum, 1957, p. 55-56). His early training before becoming a bishop is unknown; some sources mention he was a monk, while one claims he was not, although Bethurum (1957) points out this may be a misinterpretation of the source (p. 57). Wulfstan's time as bishop is not well documented; the ecclesiastical histories only mention his appointment to York, his re-founding of St. Peter's at Gloucester, and his consecration of Ashington (Whitelock, 1942, p. 25-26). He seems not to have made a significant impact in the affairs of his see, except for giving some support to the growth of Benedictine monasticism (Barrow, 2004, p. 159). Not much is known of his time as bishop in London, except that he left his signature in several charters. He signed those as *Wulfstan(us)*, but interestingly, he uses the name *Lupus* when signing his penitential letters, in addition to his homilies (Whitelock, 1942, p. 40). When Wulfstan became Bishop of Worcester in 1002, he was also granted the title of Archbishop of York, following his two predecessors in holding both titles. York was practically under Danish rule at the time, and so impoverished that it was likely not possible to maintain archiepiscopal functions without the support of Worcester (Bethurum, 1966, p. 212). Bethurum (1966) also suggests that since Wulfstan I, archbishop of York in the mid-tenth century, had joined forces with the invaders, the authorities were cautious to appoint another archbishop to a region beyond their control (p. 212). It is not known how Wulfstan divided his time between York and Worcester, as there are few sources available from York. Whitelock (1965) argues that some of the manuscripts, which can be

connected with Wulfstan, may have been produced at York, suggesting Wulfstan was “not a constant absentee from his archiepiscopal see” (p. 224).

In addition to his duties in the service of the Church, Wulfstan was involved in politics, much like the powerful bishops in continental Europe at the time (Bethurum, 1957, p. 69). The Book of Ely remembers him as a “trusted friend and adviser to both Ethelred and Cnut” (Bethurum, 1966, p. 213). Wulfstan resigned Worcester in 1016 but remained Archbishop of York, and when Cnut became king a year later, he seems to have focused on his duties in York, working to bring the pagan Danes under the control of the Christian Church (Bethurum, 1966, p. 214). Many of his sermons deal with baptism, which must have been an important duty for an Archbishop in the north, but in addition, Wulfstan also had a role in secular legislation. He had already written Ethelred’s code; the Latin version names him as the author, and the Old English version is in his style (Whitelock, 1942, p. 36). His law texts indicate some knowledge of the conditions and different rules of the Danelaw, and he often uses Scandinavian words to denote certain social classes (Whitelock, 1965, p. 224-226). He seems to have attempted to create laws that both the Danes and the English could accept. Secular laws were necessary to control the pagan Danes, as they did not yet respect the authority of the Church (Bethurum, 1957, p. 72-73). The laws Wulfstan wrote for Cnut preserved some English traditions through the Danish conquest and even through the Norman conquest of 1066, creating a base for the later English laws (Wormald, 2004, p. 20-22). Wormald also suggests that writing law codes influenced Wulfstan as a writer, observing that “his earlier laws are heavily homiletic, and his later homilies are very like laws” (p. 17). Wulfstan, then, had to divide his time between his duties to the Church and the state, and his writings also reflect this. Even though they deal with matters important to the Church, they show influence of his role as the king’s legislator, and often have political content as well, as is in his famous *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos*. Some sources note his reputation as an eloquent

speaker; the Book of Ely has the most favourable account, saying, “when he spoke it was as if his listeners were hearing the very wisdom of God himself” (Bethurum, 1957, p. 85-86).

If Wulfstan attempted to serve both the Church and the monarch, Ælfric focused on his scholarly work. Few details are known of his life, other than what he reveals in his writings. He mentions he received his early training from a priest who had limited command of Latin; later, he was trained in Winchester by St Æthelwold, one of the leaders in the Benedictine reformation (Clemoes, 1966, p. 179). He served as a mass-priest and probably as schoolmaster in a newly founded monastery at Cerne Abbas from around 987 (Clemoes, p. 179). He began writing his works there, and continued to write when he became Abbot of Eynsham, another new monastery in 1005; last of his works is likely written around 1010, but the date of his death is not recorded (Clemoes, p. 179). If Wulfstan wrote on selected religious topics, Ælfric’s texts cover a wide range of themes. His *Catholic Homilies* consists of two collections, both covering the important days of the ecclesiastical year, and he later wrote two additional sets of homilies, which draw partly from the earlier ones (Clemoes, p. 181). *De Falsis Diis* is included in the later set of his homilies. He also wrote Saints’ lives, as well as summaries of Old Testament books, and works to be used in teaching Latin (Clemoes, p. 181-182). Ælfric seems to have purposefully attempted to create a set of texts for the clergy to use, as he seems to have considered the existing collections of vernacular homilies inadequate; he comments on this in the introduction for the first series of *Catholic Homilies* (Gatch, 1977, p. 7-8). His works were circulated widely, so through them, he must have held much more authority than he could have had because of his position as a monk or even as an abbot.

Wulfstan was one of those who respected Ælfric’s learned opinion. Some of their correspondence survives, revealing that Wulfstan asked Ælfric’s opinion on various issues of Church practice (Godden, 2004, p. 34). The studies of Jost, Whitelock, and Bethurum have also identified several works of Ælfric that Wulfstan used as sources. Of the homilies printed

in Bethurum's edition, IV, V, VI, VII, VIIb, VIIc, Xb, Xc, XII, XVIII and IX use some material from Ælfric, mostly from his homilies but also from his pastoral letters; Wulfstan also used Ælfric's works as a source for *Institutes of Polity* and *Canons of Edgar* (Godden, 2004, p. 363-4). In addition to *De Falsis Deis* (Bethurum XII), XVIII and IX are also Ælfric's works rewritten, while the rest use parts of Ælfric's text to varying degree and combine it with other sources. Out of the 21 texts printed in Bethurum, then, just over half are based on Ælfric's works, and as Godden (2004) points out, since the remaining texts are often short, mostly drawing their content from the Bible, Ælfric is clearly the most important source Wulfstan uses for his homilies (p. 364). This close relationship has suggested to some that Ælfric prepared collections of texts, either his own or of other authors, for Wulfstan's use. Bethurum (1942) discusses MS Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, 190 as a possible example of this, based on Fehr's study on the MS, which links it to both authors (p. 927-928). Whitelock (1942), however, considers it more likely that the MS was produced in Worcester, where the original sources were likely to be present (p. 33-34). While it has become common to consider that Ælfric prepared texts specifically for Wulfstan's use, others disagree; the issue will be discussed further in the following chapter in connection to Wulfstan's use of Ælfric's homily *De Falsis Diis*.

Chapter 2 – A Comparative Analysis of Wulfstan’s *De Falsis Deis* and Ælfric’s *De Falsis Diis*

Wulfstan’s homily *De Falsis Deis*¹, or ‘The False Gods’ (Bethurum XII), is one of the many texts where Wulfstan uses Ælfric’s work as his source. Wulfstan’s changes adapt the text to his typical style and make it better suited for lay audience and spoken delivery. His reworking also focuses on the topic of Scandinavian deities, while Ælfric’s homily deals with the topic of worshipping false gods in a wider context. This chapter discusses the manuscript context of the texts and analyses the changes made by Wulfstan. The comparison is based on the editions of Bethurum (1957) for Wulfstan, and Pope (1968) for Ælfric; the line numbers refer to these editions.

In addition to featuring his typical style, *De Falsis Deis* can be attributed to Wulfstan rather securely, as it is found in a manuscript with several of his homilies, most likely prepared for the use of St. Wulfstan of Worcester (Bethurum, 1957, p. 4). This manuscript, Bodleian Hatton 113 (Hatton 113) is the only one to contain Wulfstan’s version; Ælfric’s text is known from seven other manuscripts, and was first edited in its entirety by John C. Pope as *De Falsis Diis* (Pope, 1968). Pope’s edition is based on Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, 178 (Corpus 178), although he considers some of the other manuscripts more authoritative and more closely connected to Ælfric, but they do not have the complete text due to lost pages (Pope, p. 667). The relationship of the manuscripts to Wulfstan’s text may also reveal which version was available to Wulfstan. One passage, which Pope considers to be a later addition by Ælfric, only appears in two of the manuscripts, Corpus 178 and Bodleian Hatton 116 (Hatton 116), and partially also in Wulfstan’s revision. The other texts in these manuscripts also appear to be later versions of Ælfric’s works (p. 673). Wulfstan’s revision also shares

¹ In Bethurum’s 1957 edition, the name of the homily is spelled *De Falsis Dies* in the title, which seems a printing error, as she refers to it elsewhere as *De Falsis Deis*.

three variant readings with Corpus 178, which do not appear in any of the other manuscripts (Pope, p. 674). Pope finds this difficult to explain, as he believes “Wulfstan’s copy of Ælfric’s homily came straight from the author, whereas R [Corpus 178] and S [Hatton 116] shared an ancestor that had deliberately introduced unauthorized additions” (p. 675). Godden (2004), however, suggests that instead of receiving the text directly from Ælfric, Wulfstan may have used a selection similar to Corpus 178, prepared by an unknown compiler (p. 368).

If Wulfstan’s copy of Ælfric’s homily was similar to that found in Corpus 178, it is notable that he selects only a small part of it. Ælfric’s *De Falsis Diis*, as printed in Pope (1968), has 676 lines, of which Wulfstan uses the lines 72-161. This part deals with the worship of pagan gods, and explains connections with the Greek deities and their Danish counterparts. Ælfric’s text, however, continues with stories mostly from the Old Testament, so that his version becomes “much more a reassuring celebration of God’s triumph over a series of foolish pretenders than a frontal assault on contemporary evils” (Pope, p. 669). If Wulfstan had the complete text available to him, his choice to exclude much of the content suggests that he was motivated by a desire to address the contemporary paganism that the Danes still practised. Bethurum (1957), however, considers the homily rather “cool and unimpassioned compared with Wulfstan’s frequent denunciation of Germanic pagan practises,” and “more a piece of learning than a tract addressed to a current evil” (p. 334). Still, compared to Ælfric’s text, Wulfstan’s version focuses on content that has a direct connection with the contemporary situation, so Bethurum’s description seems better suited to Ælfric’s homily than Wulfstan’s.

Ælfric begins his homily with the story of Adam and Eve, but Wulfstan omits this part. His first sentence is not based on Ælfric’s text, and describes the topic of his homily:

- (1) Eala, gefyrn is þæt ðurh deofol fela þinga misfor, and þæt mancynn to swyðe Gode

mishyrde, and þæt hæðenscype ealles to wide swyðe gederede and gyt dereð wide.

(Wulfstan, l. 3-5)

‘Alas, long ago many things went wrong because of the devil, and mankind disobeyed God too greatly, and heathenism altogether too widely did great harm and still does great harm widely.’²

The added sentence clearly points out that it is heathenism that Wulfstan wishes to address, contemporary as well as past. The ending is also changed, as Ælfric’s text continues further, describing how the names of the weekdays relate to the names of pagan gods. The rest of his homily mostly deals with instances of idolatry in the Old Testament. Wulfstan ends his homily by encouraging his audience to live a Christian life and praise their creator, and with a reference to the Trinity. The ending is Wulfstan’s only reference to God as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost in this homily, even though Ælfric refers to the Trinity both in the opening and the end of his homily, in the parts that Wulfstan left out. Bethurum (1957) points out that the last lines of Wulfstan’s version “are identical with sentences from Homily VII. 30-33, and it is particularly characteristic of Wulfstan that he should take the subject of the trinity as given but should revert to what was almost certainly an earlier treatment of it in his own language” (p. 33).

Wulfstan’s only other notable addition to the content of the text is mentioning *Nembroð and ða entas* ‘Nimrod and the giants’ (Wulfstan, l. 8) as the builders of the Tower of Babel; Ælfric only speaks of *ða entas* ‘giants’ (Ælfric, l. 74). As Bethurum (1957) points out, even though Ælfric does not mention the name, both are “following a widespread medieval interpretation of Gen. x. 8-11, and xi 1-9, which regarded Nimrod as the founder of Babylon and an arch rebel,” and according to which Nimrod is a giant as well (p. 334).

² The translations for both Ælfric and Wulfstan are made for the present study. Full translation of Wulfstan’s *De Falsis Diis* appears as Appendix A.

Adding the name suggests Wulfstan knew the story from another source as well, but as he does not make any further reference to this source, it is difficult to say why he mentions the name. As rhythm was an important element of his style, perhaps he needed an additional stressed word for the line.

Throughout the homily, Wulfstan makes additions that introduce his characteristic style and add emphasis to points he must have considered important. Bethurum (1957) includes a short analysis of the changes Wulfstan made to Ælfric's homily, and points out they are similar to those made to Homily IX and to the D version of Ælfric's Second Pastoral Letter (p. 32). The changes include adding intensifying words, such as *swyðe* 'very' (Wulfstan, l. 11), *ealle* 'entirely' (Wulfstan, l. 28), and *georne* 'eagerly' (Wulfstan, l. 47), and replacing a single word with two. These have a similar meaning and often similar endings as well, as in *wolice and gedwollice* 'wrongly and erringly' (Wulfstan, l. 13-14), which replaces *wolice* 'wrongly' (Ælfric, l. 80), and in *luftad and wurðiaþ* 'loved and honoured' (Wulfstan, l. 32) instead of *wurðiaþ* 'honoured' (Ælfric, l. 96) in Ælfric's texts, or similar prefixes, as in *gescop and geworhte* 'created and made' (Wulfstan, l. 34) which replaces *gesceop* 'created' (Ælfric, l. 98), and *gefeoht and gewinn* 'fighting and battle' (Wulfstan, l. 65) in place of *gefeoht* 'fighting' (Ælfric, l. 132). Bethurum (1957) also notes additions made for the sake of rhythm, or "for the emphasis and clarity necessary in spoken delivery" (p. 32). All these types of additions are certainly common, as shown in examples (2) and (3):

- (2) Þa syððan toferdon hy wide landes, and mancyn þa sona swyðe weox; and ða æt nyhstan wurdon hi bepæhte þurh ðone ealdan deofal þe Adam iu ær beswac swa þæt hi worhton wolice and gedwollice him hæpene godas (W 10-14)
- 'Then afterwards they dispersed wide across the land, and mankind then soon much increased; and then at last they became deceived by the old devil that betrayed Adam

long ago before, so that they made wrongly and erringly heathen gods for themselves’

- (3) Ða þa hi toferdon to fyrleum landum, and mancynn þa weox, ða wurdon hi bepæhte þurh þone ealdan deofol þe Adam ær beswac, swa þæt hi worhton wolice him godas (Æ 77-80)

‘When they dispersed to distant lands, and mankind then increased, then they became deceived by the old devil that betrayed Adam before, so that they made wrongly gods for themselves’

The content remains the same, but the added intensifiers in *sona swyðe weox* ‘soon much increased’ and adding *and gedwollice* ‘erringly’ after *wolice* ‘wrongly’ both add emphasis and alter the rhythm. Interestingly, Wulfstan’s doubled words mostly appear in connection to the pagan gods, if they are negative, as in the previous example. The positive pairs, such as *lufiad and wurðiaþ* ‘loved and honoured’ (Wulfstan, l. 32), are connected to the Christian God. Wulfstan’s additions also make the order of events, and the fact that some time must have passed in between, much clearer, with *þa syððan ... and ða æt nyhstan* ‘Then afterwards ... and then at last’ replacing *Ða þa ... ða* ‘When ... then’ in Ælfric’s text. Similar addition of *æt nyhstan* ‘at last’ occurs later as well (Wulfstan, l. 19, 35-36).

Many of Wulfstan’s additions can be considered stylistic, in that they make the text more suitable for spoken delivery, but some of the additions emphasize certain points much more strongly in his text than in Ælfric’s homily. When speaking of the pagan deities, Wulfstan often adds words to make explicit that they are not real gods, as in examples (4) and (5), where he changes *god* ‘god’ to *gedwolgod* ‘false god’ when referring to Odin:

- (4) Ðes gedwolgod wæs arwurðe eac betwux eallum hæðenum on þam dagum, and he is Oðon gehaten oðrum naman on Denisce wisan. (Wulfstan, l. 70-72)

‘This false god was also honoured among all heathens in those days, and he is called Odin by other name in Danish manner.’

- (5) Ðes god wæs [a]rwyrðe betwux eallum hæþenum, and he is Oðon gehaten oðrum naman on Denisc. (Ælfric, l. 139-140)

‘This god was honoured among all heathens, and he is called Odin by other name in Danish.’

Wulfstan also adds *on þam dagum* ‘in those days’, which suggests that this is something that occurred long ago; he adds the same words on l. 56. Perhaps he wanted to give the impression that the pagan gods belong to the past, even if this was not necessarily the case if he preached the homily in York. He also replaces *god* ‘god’ with *gedwolgod* ‘false god’ (Wulfstan, l. 63), and *godas* ‘gods’ with *hæþene godas* ‘heathen gods’ (Wulfstan, l. 81). Ælfric seems to assume that his audience knows the difference between pagan deities and the true God even if he does not make it explicit, but Wulfstan’s additions leave no room for misinterpretation.

Wulfstan also often remind his listeners of the error in worshiping pagan deities, as in (6) and (7):

- (6) And he hatte Þor oðrum naman betwux sumum þeodum; ðone Denisca leoda lufiað swyðost and on heora gedwylde weorðiaþ geornost. (Wulfstan, l. 56-58)

‘And he was called Thor among some nations; him the Danish people love the most and in their error worshipped most eagerly.’

- (7) And he hatte Þor betwux sumum þeodum, þone þa Deniscan leoda lufiað swiðost. (Ælfric, l. 124-125)

‘and he was called Thor among some nations, him the Danish people love the most.’

Similar additions point out that the worship of these gods only occurred among heathens: *ðe h þurh hæðenscipe getealde* (Wulfstan, l. 81-85), and *swyðe healic gyden æfter hæðenscipe geteald* (Wulfstan, l. 49) replacing *swyðe healic gyden* (Ælfric, l. 114). Wulfstan's additions emphasize what he must have considered important: worshipping these gods only occurred among heathens, long ago, and is wrong.

Wulfstan also emphasises the devil's role in encouraging the worship of false gods. Ælfric mentions the devil only twice (l. 79, 159), but Wulfstan adds further references to Satan, as shown in (10) and (11):

- (8) Hi namon eac him ða þæt to wisdom e þurh deofles lare þæt hy wurðedon him for godas þa sunnan and ðone monan for heora scinendan beorhtnesse (Wulfstan, l. 17-19)
 'They also took it as wisdom through devil's teaching that they worshipped the sun and the moon as gods for their shining brightness'
- (9) Hi namon ða to wisdom e þæt hi wurðodon him for godas þa sunnan and ðone monan, for heora scinendan beorhtnysse (Ælfric, l. 82-83)
 'They took then as wisdom that they worshipped the sun and the moon as gods, for their shining brightness'

The phrase *þurh deofles lare* 'through the devil's teaching' is also added twice later, even if Ælfric does not refer to the devil in these parts (Wulfstan, l. 19-20, 69), and *þurh deofol* 'because of the devil' in the lines Wulfstan added to the beginning (Wulfstan, l. 3). All the additions link the devil with the pagan gods.

If the devil's role as the deceiver of mankind is emphasised, so is God's role as their saviour. Compared to Ælfric, Wulfstan tends to use longer epithets when referring to the Christian God. In (10), he refers to God as *ðone soðan God and heora agene scyppend* 'true

God and their own creator’, whereas Ælfric refers to him as *ðone Scyppend* ‘the Creator’ in (11). The line also has one of Wulfstan’s typical word pairs, as he adds *geworhte* ‘made’ after *gescop* ‘created’.

(10) and ðone soðan God and heora agene scyppend forsawon, þe hy to mannum gescop and geworhte. (Wulfstan, l. 14-16)

‘and rejected the true God and their own creator, who created and made them as men.’

(11) and ðone Scyppend forsawon þe hy gesceop to mannum. (Ælfric, l. 81)

‘and rejected the Creator who created them as men.’

Similar additions occur further in the homily as well: *and forleton heora Drihten þe hy gescop and geworhte* ‘and abandoned the Lord who created and made them’ (Wulfstan, l. 19-21) replaces *and forletan heora Scyppend* ‘and abandoned their Creator’ (Ælfric, l. 84), and *þe he mancynne geuðe* ‘that he created mankind’ (Wulfstan, l. 25-27) is added after *for his micclan godnysse* ‘because of his great goodness’ (Ælfric, l. 92). Wulfstan’s additions emphasise the point that the only true god is the Christian God.

Even if Wulfstan condemns the worship of pagan gods more strongly than Ælfric, it is curious to notice that he spares his listeners from hearing about some of the deities’ worst deeds. When speaking of Saturn, Ælfric mentions that he ate his children, but Wulfstan only says that he killed them. Ælfric also tells of Jove sleeping with his daughters Minerva and Venus, but Wulfstan omits this, as (12) and (13) show:

(12) Heora twa dohtra wæron Minerua and Uenus. Þas manfullan men þe we ymbe specað wæron getealde for ða mærostan godas þa on ðam dagum, and þa hæðenan wurðodon hy swyðe þurh deofles lare (Wulfstan, l. 50-53)

‘Their two daughters were Minerva and Venus. Those wicked people whom we speak about were counted as the greatest gods on those days, and the heathens worshipped them greatly through devil’s teaching’

(13) Heora (ge)dohtra wæron Minerua and Uenus. Ða forlæg se fæder fullice buta, and manega his magan mannlice gewemde. Ðas manfullan menn wæron ða mæroston godas þe þa hæþenan wurðodan, and worhton him to godum; (Ælfric, l. 115-119)

‘Their daughters were Minerva and Venus. Then the father foully slept with both, and his wickedness could defile many. Those wicked people were the greatest gods that the heathens worshipped, and made them into gods’

Here, Wulfstan follows Ælfric rather closely, but leaves out the sentence describing the incestuous relationship between the father (Jove) and his daughters Minerva and Venus; this is unlikely to be a coincidence, as Wulfstan also omits another reference to this later, although he mentions Venus sleeping with her brother Mars (Wulfstan, l. 78-79). The genealogy of the classical deities makes them all related to each other, so marriages and unions with close relatives were unavoidable. Wulfstan appears to tolerate the mention of unions between siblings, but removes both the references to those between father and daughter. As there are no other omissions of content within the lines that Wulfstan uses from Ælfric’s homily, this must be a deliberate choice.

As the comparison shows, Wulfstan’s additions often emphasize the falsehood of heathen gods, the role of the devil in encouraging their worship, and God’s role as the true savior much more strongly than in Ælfric’s homily. Wulfstan’s choice to focus on the part which deals with the Scandinavian deities gives them a much more central position in his version, whereas in Ælfric’s homily they appear only as one of many examples of pagan gods.

Chapter 3 – Discussion

Although Wulfstan's changes may seem mostly stylistic, they have a clear purpose in altering the emphasis of the homily and making it more suitable for his audience. This chapter discusses the effects of Wulfstan's changes in more detail in order to suggest his reasons for the changes.

As Bethurum (1957) points out, Wulfstan's changes to Ælfric's *De Falsis Diis* are all typical of him: adding intensifiers, replacing a single word with two, added explanations and emphasis, and repetition (p. 32-33). These features have been generally considered Wulfstan's trademarks, and a sign of his authorship, which they undoubtedly are, but they can be also seen as a strategy he uses to adapt a text for his audience. If Ælfric preached his own homilies, it would have been to a learned audience of his monastery, while Wulfstan preached to a lay audience. This difference necessitates Wulfstan's added explanations and the many changes that add emphasis and clarity. Perhaps it also explains why Wulfstan left out some of the worst stories of the pagan deities: if his audience had not heard of them, he would not wish to shock them with unnecessary detail. As his omissions concern the classical deities, perhaps this also shows that they were not the main concern of his homily.

The emphasis Wulfstan adds to the role of the devil in encouraging the worship of false gods is also typical of Wulfstan; while Ælfric considered human sinfulness more as a result of free will and personal responsibility, Wulfstan generally saw sin as the result of the devil's work (Godden, 2004, p. 373-374). Rather than a difference in theological views, this may also be a strategy used to make difficult and abstract concepts more easily understandable for his audience. Presenting the devil as a personified evil, luring people to sin or into keeping false gods, can create a powerful image that helps to make a point more obvious. Similarly, emphasising God's role as the saviour of mankind presents God as the

personification of good, and the only way to counter the devil and sin. This clear distinction of good and evil also helps to underline one of the main concerns of the homily: by associating the worship of pagan deities with the devil Wulfstan shows that it is explicitly wrong and sinful.

Although Wulfstan's additions often emphasize that heathenism is a grave error, he does not give direct instructions concerning this to his audience. Such speech acts are common in many of Wulfstan's homilies, as Green (1995) shows. Green highlights Wulfstan's use of performative verbs, or *utan* 'let us', to encourage his audience towards certain actions (p. 115-116). In *De Falsis Deis*, Wulfstan does not make use of these to dissuade his audience from worshipping heathen gods; instead, he seems to assume they share his Christian faith. The careful additions he makes to always refer to false or heathen gods set the heathen world apart from that of his audience. His message seems to be that it was the heathens who worshipped these false gods, but us good Christians certainly know better. Wulfstan's version of *De Falsis Deis* is focused on getting this message across in the most efficient manner.

It is noticeable that Wulfstan does not add any more details to Ælfric's text when describing the worship of pagan deities. He follows Ælfric's text when describing the Scandinavian gods, although he emphasizes the fact that they were false or pagan gods. If he had some first-hand knowledge of their cult, he does not show it in *De Falsis Deis*. In several of his other homilies, he condemns heathen practises, but often in a very general manner (Meaney, 2004, p. 473). For example, in his homily *Be Cristendome* (Bethurum Xc), he states that 'each heathen practice should always be avoided in word and deed' (transl. Meaney, p. 473). Similar concerns are often expressed in his law tracts (Meaney, p. 473-475). In his *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos* (Bethurum XX), however, he describes pagan customs in much more detail. He mentions, for example, that 'among pagan people no one dares to withhold

anything small or large of what is ordained for the honouring of false gods [...]. And among pagan peoples no one dares to ill-use the servants of false gods in any way' (transl. Meaney, p. 467). *Sermo Lupi* is dated to 1014, and while *De Falsis Deis* cannot be dated as accurately, it was most likely written earlier, between 1006-1014 (Wormald, 2004, p. 26). During this time, Wulfstan was both the Archbishop of York and Bishop of Worcester. Perhaps he had mostly been at Worcester when he wrote *De Falsis Deis*, and did not yet have the knowledge he shows in *Sermo Lupi*, but it is also possible that he did not consider it necessary to add any detail to make his point.

It is not known where Wulfstan preached the homily. If it were in Worcester, his audience would have been English, and even though some folk superstition may have still lived on in the countryside, they had been Christians for many generations. If it were in York, however, a large part of his audience would have been Danes, and even if they had converted to Christianity, it was not so long ago. Old traditions are slow to die, and many pagan customs must have still been practiced by the same people who went to church to hear the bishop preaching. Yet Wulfstan does not address these practises in his homily. The opposition he creates is clear: it is not between Christians and those who are perhaps not yet very good Christians, but between Christians and pagans, those who still worship the old gods and raid the English shores. This message must have been important for both the English and Danes at York.

Conclusion

Both Ælfric and Wulfstan lived in a time when England suffered from the raids of Scandinavian invaders, and both responded to the threat in their writing. Ælfric's *De Falsis Diis* deals with the worship of heathen gods in a wide context, and the Scandinavian deities only serve as one example in his text. Wulfstan's choice to leave out much of Ælfric's discussion gives them a much more central position in his reworking titled *De Falsis Deis* and suggests that his homily is connected to the contemporary events. The differences of their audience required them to assume a different style in their homilies, but as the comparison shows, Wulfstan's additions and changes also emerge as a conscious strategy to emphasize the aspects of the topic he found most important. Wulfstan condemns the pagan way of life often in his writings, but also worked to write laws that both the English and the Danes could respect so they could live together without conflicts. His homily shows similar tolerance towards the Danish population of York: *De Falsis Deis* only condemns the error of those who still worship pagan deities, not those who have converted to Christianity.

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Abstract

Wulfstan's *De Falsis Deis* is a reworking of Ælfric's much longer homily *De Falsis Diis*. Even though both texts address the issue of pagan gods and their worship, their style and focus are very different. Ælfric's longer homily deals with the worship of heathen gods in a much wider context, but Wulfstan focuses on the part dealing with the Scandinavian deities. While some of Wulfstan's changes to Ælfric's *De Falsis Diis* are clearly related to adapting the text to a different audience, the change of focus and emphasis indicate that his homily is much more closely related to current events than has previously been acknowledged. The present study provides a comparison of Wulfstan's *De Falsis Deis* and Ælfric's *De Falsis Diis*, and discusses how Wulfstan's changes are related to the contemporary situation.

APPENDIX A. Translation of Wulfstan's *De Falsis Deis* (Bethurm XII)

Alas, long ago many things went wrong because of the devil, and mankind disobeyed God too greatly, and heathenism altogether too widely did great harm and still does great harm widely. Yet we do not read anywhere in books that man established any idolatry in the world in all the time that was before Noah's flood. But afterwards it happened that Nimrod and the giants built that wonderful tower after Noah's flood, and as many languages occurred to them, thus that book said, as there were workers. Then afterwards they dispersed wide across the land, and mankind then soon much increased; and then at last they became deceived by the old devil that betrayed Adam long ago before, so that they made wrongly and erringly heathen gods for themselves, and rejected the true God and their own creator, who made and created them as men. They also took it as wisdom through devil's teaching that they worshipped the sun and the moon as gods for their shining brightness and then at last offered them sacrifice through devil's teaching, and abandoned the Lord who created and made them.

Some men also said about the shining stars that they were gods, and begun to worship them eagerly, and some believed also in fire for its sudden burning, some also in water, and some believed in the earth because it feeds all things. But they could thoroughly understand, if they knew the difference, that it is true God that created all these things for us men to use and to make use of, because of his great goodness that he granted mankind. All created things also all do just as their own creator orders them, and may not do anything without our Lord's consent, because there is no other creator except the one true God that we believe in, and over all other things we love and honour him alone with sure faith, calling with mouth and with the earnestness of heart that he alone is true God who created and made all things.

Yet, the heathens did not wish to be keeping so few gods as they had before, but began to worship at last various giants and stern men of the world that were mighty in worldly

power and were awe-inspiring while they lived, and followed their own desires completely. There was one man in the olden days on the island that was called Crete, that was called Saturnus, and he was so cruel that he destroyed his own children, all except one, and in an unfatherly manner made their life into loss early in youth. He nevertheless left unwillingly one to live, although he killed the other brothers; and he was called Jove, and he became a malignant fiend. He drove out his own father afterwards from the same aforementioned island that was called Crete, and wanted eagerly to destroy him if he could; and that Jove was so very lustful that he married his own sister, she was named Juno, and she became a very high goddess according to pagan telling. Their two daughters were Minerva and Venus. Those wicked people whom we speak about were counted as the greatest gods on those days, and the heathens worshipped them greatly through devil's teaching; but the son was nevertheless worshipped more greatly in paganism than the father, and he is also counted as the most honoured of all the gods that the heathens had as gods on those days in their error. And he was called Thor among some nations; him the Danish people love the most and in their error worshipped most eagerly.

His son was called Mars, who always made battle and false accusations, and often caused strife and disputes. This wretch the heathens also worshipped after his death as a high god, and as often as they were at war or wanted to fight, then they offered him their sacrifice before to honour this false god; and they believed that he could support them much in battle, because he loved fighting and battle in life. A certain man also was called Mercurius in life, who was very deceitful and nevertheless full of thoughtful cunning in deeds and deceptions. This the heathens also made to be their great god for themselves, and offered him sacrifice at crossroads often and frequently through the devil's teaching, and brought various praise-gifts (offerings) for him to high mountains. This false god was also honoured among all heathens in those days, and he is called Odin by other name in Danish manner. Now some Danish men

say in their error that it was Jove, who was called Thor, Mercury's son, that they called Odin, but they do not have that correct, because we read in books, both heathen and Christian, that he who was called Jove in truth is Saturn's son. And a certain woman was called Venus who was Jove's daughter, and she was so foul and so wicked in wantonness that her own brother slept with her, thus the men said, through devil's teaching, and those evils the heathens also worshipped as exalted woman.

Also many other heathen gods were variously found and also such heathen goddesses were held in very great honour throughout middle-earth to ruin mankind, but these were the foremost ones that for paganism counted (mattered), although they foully lived in the world. And the contriving devil that always deceives concerning mankind brought the heathen men to the great error that they chose for themselves so foul gods that they set their foul lust as law for themselves and lived all their life in uncleanness while they existed. And blessed were those who scorned all such and who loved and worshipped the true God that all things created and made. One is almighty God in three persons, that is Father, Son, and the Holy Ghost. All the three names encompass one divine might and he alone is the eternal God, ruler and maker of all creation. He shall be always praised and honoured in all the world without end, Amen.