

Article

Liturgy and Learning: The Encyclopaedic Function of the *Old English Martyrology*

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Abstract: This article examines the broad, encyclopaedic ambit of the scholarly information contained in the ninth-century *Old English Martyrology*. Martyrologies generally serve as para-liturgical resources outlining the contours of the liturgical year and the biographies of the saints commemorated throughout its course. However, the *Old English Martyrology*, the earliest European example of a vernacular, prose martyrology, adapts the genre into a more multivalent, scholarly handbook that instructs and informs its users—generally, practitioners of the liturgy—in a variety of topics. Subjects covered in the text include geography, language, hagiography, temporal reckoning, computus, astronomy, cosmology, meteorology, science, liturgy, and learning of a general Christian nature pertaining to the saints and the liturgical year. The present volume considers the impact of liturgy upon various facets of medieval intellectual, cultural, religious, political, and social life. The article at hand considers how the liturgical year is used as the framework around which instruction, edification, and general ecclesiastical learning might be imparted. While liturgical texts generally constitute formulae to be enacted by practitioners, para-liturgical resources provide background information that is germane to the liturgy, the liturgical year, and ecclesiastical life. This article begins with an examination of the development of the kalendar of the saints and the genre and form of the martyrology. It moves on to examine the different types of scholarly learning contained in the *Old English Martyrology*, the purpose of such details for the professional religious user, and what this information tells us about the text's application. Overall, this article considers the *Old English Martyrology* as an interdisciplinary manual dealing with liturgy, the liturgical cycle of the saints, and the subjects it impinges upon.

Keywords: liturgy; martyrology; calendars; encyclopaedic writing



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1. Introduction

The celebration of the liturgy is a profound meditative and devotional activity in which the divine is encountered in the material world. Through the liturgy, heaven and earth meet in a space emulative of the New Jerusalem, an encounter that is grounded by firm, scholarly principles pertaining to time, the calendar, and the computus. As Jones has remarked:

“As an ideal, sacralizing this world and anticipating the *uita angelica* of the next, the liturgy above all must have demanded instruments for “stabilizing” its signs, placing them “out of the realm of potential arbitrariness.”” (Jones 1998, p. 659)

The practice of Christian worship is supported through a plethora of scholarly, para-liturgical textual aides, adjunct resources intended to inform the clergy and to govern the liturgy. Various types of para-liturgical texts were assembled in service of the liturgical year, including *computistica*, kalendars, and martyrologies. Like kalendars, martyrologies provided an inventory of the *sanctorale*, the non-moveable cycle of saints and their feastdays arranged according to the structure of the calendric year. These were composite works that educated and instructed users on the contours of the liturgical year and the saints or events that might be commemorated on a day-to-day basis. Martyrologies differed from saints'

kalendars, however, in that they offered a wealth of additional information of a largely hagiographical character (on how martyrologies were used, see [de Gaiffier 1961](#), pp. 40–59). In this way, a martyrology constituted a para-liturgical reference work, an index outlining which saints warranted memorialisation and why their stories matter.

The martyrological genre was adapted in a highly interesting fashion in a ninth-century Anglo-Saxon text known as the *Old English Martyrology*. It is remarkable because of its comprehensive and encyclopaedic character that goes beyond the confines of traditional martyrological texts that focus mainly on hagiography. In addition to its overview of the saints, their feasts, and their hagiographies, the *Old English Martyrology* contains a wealth of learned information pertaining to time, the calendar, and cosmology, as well as knowledge of a technical, scientific, and encyclopaedic nature. Although conventionally referred to as a “martyrology”, the work is a more complex and polyvalent resource. This article analyses how the format of the martyrology was adapted in this text, the types of encyclopaedic knowledge that it relates, and how this information fits within a genre primarily concerned with the proper of the saints. Liturgy was at the centre of religious and intellectual life in the early medieval period. As such, para-liturgical resources aimed at outlining aspects of the liturgy or its structural systems frequently engage with other subjects of relevance to its practitioners and students. The *Old English Martyrology* uses the framework of the *sanctorale* of the liturgical year to impart various kinds of learning that were essential to the profile of the professional religious at this time. Overall, this article suggests insights on how liturgy and learning interacted in a textual genre that falls outside the confines of traditional liturgical texts.

2. Origins of Martyrologies

Christianity adopted the practice of fixed and moveable liturgical celebrations from Judaism. However, the notion of commemorating the saints has its origins in the persecution of Christians in the early Church and late antique period. The formative Church began to honour its believers who had lost their lives for their faith. The example of these individuals warranted reverence and commemoration. Groups of Christians maintained registers of martyrs from their communities and these lists—known as diptychs—were read aloud during the liturgy (on the origins of saints and feasts, refer to [Bartlett 2013](#); [Bradshaw and Johnson 2011](#); [Caridi 2016](#); [Rouwhorst 2020](#), pp. 27–51). Churches were built on the site of a martyr’s resting place, and liturgical commemorations were observed there on their day of martyrdom or *dies natalis*, the day of one’s spiritual birth into the next life. These figures came to be commemorated beyond the confines of their church or locality, eventually being seen as intercessors and figures of veneration. As the concept of sainthood developed, more figures came to be revered for their example and commemorated liturgically, including biblical figures, confessors, and bishops. While former bishops, the deceased, and the living were also the subject of prayer in the liturgy, the martyrs were honoured in a special way ([Caridi 2016](#), pp. 20–23). Over time, a repeating annual cycle of saints’ commemorations was established in addition to the central feasts of Easter (and those that follow it) and events in the lives of Christ and the Virgin. As Christianity developed, the system of feasts and commemorations became more elaborate.

The fossilisation of martyrs’ names in the diptychs and their use in the liturgy gave rise to the earliest kalendars of saints’ feasts. Two lists of martyred believers and martyred bishops, the *despositio martyrum* and *despositio episcoporum*, are found together in a compilation known as the *Chronographie* of 354. The compilation of such lists is clearly intended to have a liturgical function ([Caridi 2016](#), p. 23). These lists are not universally comprehensive in their coverage, since the idea of creating an exhaustive list was still in development at this stage; there remains today a great deal of provincial variation in the commemoration of saints. One of the earliest attempts to assemble a catalogue of the martyrs and saints is the pseudonymous *Martyrologium Hieronymianum*, a fifth-century work from Italy, which was later expanded in Gaul. The text is a martyrological kalendar or an enumerative martyrology, in essence a list of martyrs, saints, and their feastdays arranged in order of

the calendric year. This work brings together holy figures from across Christian history in Europe and the Near East from multiple sources. This was one of the earliest attempts to create a database of universal saints' feastdays and to stipulate their liturgical observance. This work is arranged according to the ancient Roman division of the month into kalends (1st of the month), nones (5th or 7th), and ides (13th or 15th), whereby dates are reckoned in reverse from these points. From the fifth century on, kalendars and martyrologies were compiled in various locations with little to no uniformity in the saints that they included. These early kalendars and martyrologies were essentially liturgical (Ó Riain 2006, p. xvii). Evidence for the precise nature of liturgical commemoration in the early and late antique Church is scant. Nevertheless, we know that, by the early medieval period, during the Mass, the deacon read the feastdays for the following week, and from the ninth century onwards, that the martyrology was read at the start of the monastic chapter following the office of Prime (Ó Riain 2006, p. xvii). The Calendar of Willibrord—the Anglo-Saxon apostle of Frisia—is an important early medieval text containing an interesting combination of Anglo-Saxon, Irish, Italian, and Eastern saints (for the text, see Wilson 1918; Hen 1997, pp. 41–62). While wide-ranging in its universalising approach, this work is thought to represent a kalendar for personal reference and observance rather than one aimed at more general use.

The historical martyrology was an important development in the genre whereby the more telescopic format was expanded to include historical and hagiographical details about the saints (on development of the martyrology, see Lifshitz 2001, pp. 169–70; Dubois 1978). Throughout the sixth century and onwards, the *Martyrologium Hieronymianum* continued to evolve and expand, while enumerative kalendars and martyrologies continued to be composed regionally, combining idiosyncratic mixes of local and universal saints. Innovation was led by Bede who, through his *Martyrologium* (725x731), enhanced the catalogue format to create the historical, narrative, or anecdotal martyrology (for a translation of the text, see Lifshitz 2001, pp. 179–97). Bede supplemented the names of saints, their feastdays, and place of death with historical and narrative hagiographical detail. The more expansive format spearheaded by Bede contained digested hagiographical notices of greater and lesser lengths with dates counted consecutively from the first of each month, rather than using the older Roman system. Bede's *Martyrologium* was innovative because it combined the structure of the martyrological kalendar with synopsis versions of saints' lives, many of which were at his disposal in the well-provided library of Wearmouth-Jarrow. Indeed, Bede's purpose in this text seems to have been to provide background information on the saints and to synthesise Latin *passiones* for his readers in a useful manner. Through Bede, the martyrological form served the more diverse purpose of educating its users about the background and significance of saints commemorated throughout the liturgical year. Other influential early medieval examples of the martyrology include the work of Florus of Lyon (d. c.860), Rabanus Maurus (c.780–856), Ado of Vienne (c.800–875), Usuard (d. c.875), Notker the Stammerer (c.840–912), and Óengus of Tallaght (8th–9th century). All Western martyrologies from the early medieval period are descended in some way from the *Martyrologium Hieronymianum*, including Bede's *Martyrologium*, which, alongside that of Ado of Vienne and Usuard, had a significant impact on the Continental tradition (Lifshitz 2001, p. 170; McCulloh 1978–1979, pp. 417–61).

Kalendars and martyrologies in all their forms are highly idiosyncratic compositions reflecting the interests of individuals, communities, and regions. Building on the work of Whatley, Rushforth has collated all saints mentioned in Anglo-Saxon kalendars, none of which are identical (Rushforth 2008; see also Lapidge 1991). Pfaff has cautioned that the inclusion of a saint in a kalendar or martyrology does not prove liturgical observance, but rather makes liturgical observance feasible (Pfaff 1993, pp. 225–26). These texts, then, seem to operate as reference works, outlining in detail, with different degrees of selectivity, the feastdays of the saints throughout the liturgical year. A wealth of related non-hagiographical information is also frequently incorporated, as in the calendar in Oxford, Bodleian Library, Digby 63, which contains notices of a seasonal and cosmological

nature. In this way, the intertwined genres of kalendar and martyrology supply information that goes beyond the limits of the *sanctorale*. Whether their purpose is more historical and hagiographical, as with Bede's *Martyrologium*, or more scholarly and encyclopaedic, as we shall see with the *Old English Martyrology*, texts outlining the saints of the liturgical year provide information on para-liturgical subjects that are germane to the liturgical year and the general learning of those who observe it.

3. The Old English Martyrology

The *Old English Martyrology* is the longest and most elaborate martyrological text to survive from Anglo-Saxon England and the only vernacular version of this genre. Overall, the text hybridises the genres of the martyrology, saints' kalendar, and encyclopaedia. Its generic characteristics and the scholarly purposes it serves are the primary concern of the following analysis. All references to the text refer to Rauer's edition and division of the text, which follows Kotzor's numbering of the text's subsections (Rauer 2013a). The most complete surviving manuscript of the *Old English Martyrology* dates from the end of the ninth century, but the text as such might have been composed at the end of the eighth century or the first half of the ninth century (Rauer 2013a, pp. 1–4); Rauer concludes that the text was composed c.800xc.900 (Rauer 2013a, p. 3). The text represents one of the most prominent records of prose literary culture from the Anglo-Saxon kingdom of Mercia and was used and copied until the end of the Anglo-Saxon period and beyond (on transmission, see Rauer 2007, pp. 145–46). Several features of the martyrology are of note for the present discussion. It is a prose text written in the vernacular aimed at educating its readers—clerical scholars in a monastic setting or educated secular priests without access to the resources of a monastic library—about local and foreign saints, and a range of related subjects (Rauer 2013a, pp. 15–18). It is the earliest surviving example of a vernacular prose martyrology in Europe. It is a narrative and discursive prose text, but its organising framework combines the solar Julian calendar and the *sanctorale*, the fixed liturgical cycle of saints. In sum, the text maps a wealth of saints' names and their feastdays together into a calendric arrangement, providing hagiographical narratives for most days of the liturgical year. The *Old English Martyrology* contains 238 entries of varying lengths for occasions throughout the calendric year. However, the text's utility and application exceed that of liturgical kalendars used in the context of liturgy since it appears also to operate as a fairly comprehensive, though idiosyncratic, overview of the *sanctorale*, and, furthermore, as a repository for learned information pertaining to Christianity and the Christian year. The genre of the *Old English Martyrology*, its encyclopaedic character, and the functions it might have held for its users are questions governing the following discussion.

4. Comprehensiveness and Coverage

The policy that the Martyrologist adopted in collecting, organising, and compiling the text is one of broadness, variety, and inclusivity (Rauer 2013a, pp. 1, 17). The primary preoccupation of the *Old English Martyrology* is with saints, their biographies, and the devotional or spiritual value of these narratives. For the most part, the *Old English Martyrology* is focused on fixed dates for the feasts and obits (*dies natales*) of saints from biblical times to its contemporary age. Interestingly, a number of non-fixed, moveable feasts are also included, such as Easter (the Resurrection), the Ascension, Pentecost, and the Minor Rogations. Individuals commemorated in its kalendar include biblical saints such as Mary Magdalene (§133), early Church martyrs, desert fathers, and regional, national, and local saints from the insular world, Europe, and the Near East. The saint who appears most frequently in the text's kalendar is John the Baptist, given that a number of feasts commemorate different aspects of his life, martyrdom, and post-mortem veneration. Other dates of note in the year are also included, such as the solstice and the beginning of the seasons. Interestingly, like a number of Anglo-Saxon saints' kalendars, the Martyrologist includes Old Testament figures in his overview of the saints. The Machabees of the Old Testament/Hebrew Bible are commemorated on 1 August by the Martyrologist (§140). The

inclusion of Old Covenant saints from before Pentecost might seem striking, but many figures such as Job are included in a number of Anglo-Saxon calendars (see [Rushforth 2008](#)). The narratives and figures of the Old Testament loomed large in catechesis, exegesis, and the lections of the divine office. The cultivation of Old Testament feasts was undoubtedly driven by monastic personnel who would have read about Old Testament figures such as Job, on whom Gregory the Great wrote a commentary. It is worth noting that figures such as John the Baptist or Joachim and Anna (not included in the *Old English Martyrology*) are Old Covenant saints, although not Old Testament. The mix of feasts and events commemorated in the Martyrologist's calendar is, therefore, diverse, intellectual, and eclectic.

An interesting feature of the *Old English Martyrology* is that, despite its length and narrative detail, it is largely ahistorical and does not provide the year of death for the saints it commemorates, a feature that is characteristic of Bede's *Martyrologium* (725x731). Exceptions in the *Old English Martyrology* include the entries for Luke (18 October, §207), which dates the Evangelist's death to the reign of Constantius, and Andrew (30 November, §233), whose death is also dated by reference to this figure. However, such specificity is not the norm in this text. The ahistorical aspect suggests that the Martyrologist was motivated by a universalising principle, collecting and representing saints from different historical periods and regions in the Christian Near East and Europe for his audience. In the absence of a comprehensive ecclesiastically mandated calendar, this Anglo-Saxon author was prompted to collect, arrange, and present an expansive overview of feasts of the saints alongside a host of related information, providing, in essence, a 'go-to' reference text on calendric matters of a fixed nature. Its focus on hagiographical detail demonstrates that the Martyrologist found spiritual value in these narratives and wished to communicate digested synopses of saintly *exempla* to his readers. The breadth of material assembled in this text is remarkable and indicates the work of a careful and encyclopaedic mind that was able to control an impressive range of materials ([Cross 1985](#), pp. 227–49; [Rauer 2003](#), pp. 89–109; [2007](#), p. 144; [2013a](#), pp. 2–4, 15–18; [2017a](#), p. 552).¹ The Martyrologist is interested in universal saints and saints of national, regional, and local importance. Apostolic, early Church, and late antique saints are the best represented category of saints in the text, a fact that is unsurprising given the breadth of the historical timeframe and geographical range. One of the purposes of the text seems to have been to supplement Anglo-Saxon knowledge of the *sanctorale* and to fill in gaps in the liturgical year with saints from earlier Christian periods, figures of devotion that might not necessarily have been widely known in the contemporary context.

As noted, the text is made up of 238 entries according to the subdivisions used by both [Kotzor \(1981\)](#) and [Rauer \(2013a\)](#). This figure includes a number of entries that consist of more than one notice. These additional notices include the beginning and end of most months (for example, beginning of January: §8a; end of February: §36a), the beginning of summer (9 May: §83a) and winter (7 November: §221a), and the summer solstice (24 June: §111a). Further to this, for 25 March, two notices are telescoped together into a single, reasonably lengthy entry (Annunciation Day, The Crucifixion: §56, §56a). This entry treats these two important feasts together because of the typological link between the date of the Lord's conception and that of His Passion. Similarly, some notices are telescoped together into a single entry, but these are counted by the editors as separate commemorations in the text's calendar (1 June, Priscus and Nicomedes: §95, §96; and 3 September, Aristion, Paternianus, and Felicianus: §174, §175). In total, there are 25 additional notices of a calendric, seasonal, and combined nature throughout the text. As such, the *Old English Martyrology* is made up of 263 notices in total. The additional notices concerning the months do not explicitly specify dates, but indicate the transitions from one month to the next. Therefore, there is an argument to be made for viewing these notices as subsidiary to the primary hagiographical entries pertaining to the days of the calendric year. However, these notices relating to the calendric and natural divisions of the year are integral to the overall function and structure of the work. When tallying the number of entries in the text, it

is important to remember that the work is lacunose, and entries are missing for part of January, most of February, and many days in December.

The *Old English Martyrology* is not entirely comprehensive in terms of its treatment of the calendric year, and many dates in its calendric cycle remain vacant. A considerable number (almost 18%) of the calendric entries in the *Old English Martyrology* are reduplicated, that is, the Martyrologist provides more than one occasion of commemoration for a single date in the calendric year. This is a feature of the list structure of early martyrologies and calendars, and is remarkable here because of the length and detail of the entries provided. In total, 44 entries of this kind appear in the text. These entries put forward multiple saints or feasts for the same calendric date or, alternatively, offer information relating to the overall structure of the calendric year, its months and seasons, dates of astronomical importance, and other data. There can be multiple entries given for a single day (for example, 31 December, Pope Silvester I: §7; 31 December, Columba: §8) or multiple commemorations telescoped together into a single entry, such as those discussed above (§56, §56a; §95, §96; and §174, §175). On the dates for which multiple feasts or occasions are indicated, two or three entries at a maximum are offered. As noted, a number of entries do not refer to dates, but to the cycle of the year and its seasons. For example, the feast of Petronilla on the 31 May (§94) is followed by entries indicating the end of May (§94a) and the beginning of June (94b), while dates are given for the beginning of winter (§221a) and the summer solstice (§111a). Calendric signposts indicating the beginning and end of the months are provided for each month except for the end of December, the end of January, and the beginning of February. The absence of some markers is, perhaps, the result of manuscript lacunae, in that much of December and February are missing in all witnesses.

Unlike the expansive *Martyrologium Hieronymianum*, Bede's *Martyrologium* is selective in terms of the saints it includes and does not attempt to cover the year comprehensively (Lifshitz 2001, pp. 172–73). The Metrical Calendar of York, an early and highly influential Anglo-Latin metrical calendar from the second half of the eighth century, is not extensive and comprises 82 hexameters that catalogue a total of 65 feasts (Lapidge 1984, pp. 326–69; Karasawa 2015, p. 18; Wilmart 1934, pp. 41–69). Later martyrological and calendric texts such as the Old Irish *Félire Óengusso* (“Martyrology of Óengus”) and the Anglo-Latin Metrical Calendar of Hampson, itself a greatly expanded version of the Metrical Calendar of York, provide entries for 365 days of the Julian solar year. In the Old English Metrical Calendar or *Menologium* from the tenth century, coverage of the calendric year is limited to 29 liturgical feasts and 20 compustistical or calendric notices (Karasawa 2015, pp. 33–44). The Metrical Calendar of Hampson dates from the tenth century while the *Félire Óengusso* dates from the ninth century (McGurk 1986, pp. 79–125; Gallagher 2017, pp. 151–69; 2020, pp. 464–66). The Anglo-Latin Metrical Calendar of Ramsey is a further adaptation of the York and Hampson calendars from around the year 1000 that is more restrained in its coverage of the year (Lapidge 1984, pp. 326–69). The Pseudo-Hieronymian martyrology, an organic text with a complex history of development, combines various eastern and western sources to create a comprehensive catalogue of the feasts of the saints throughout the year. In his version, Bede spearheaded a more restricted and selective form of the martyrology. That the *Old English Martyrology* does not cover every calendric date could relate to its ninth-century composition before the genre once again tended towards comprehensiveness. However, these examples demonstrate the variety that obtained with regard to coverage of the year in calendars and martyrologies of this period. Scope varied greatly depending on the interests and needs of compilers and users. Multiple entries for a single calendric date, and a number of other entries pertaining to related subjects, mean that out of 238 or 263 entries, approximately 178 days of the liturgical year are covered. Although its calendric coverage is not exhaustive, the *Old English Martyrology* remains comprehensive in other ways.

5. Structure and Genre: Kalendars and Martyrologies

The *Old English Martyrology* differs from enumerative and historical martyrologies, which tend to be less expansive (see Lifshitz 2001; Quentin 1908; Rauer 2003, pp. 89–109). In general, martyrologies and saints' kalendars, many of which accompany manuscript resources for the performance of the liturgy, constitute liturgical 'to do' lists. By contrast, the *Old English Martyrology* provides 'everything you need to know' about the *sanctorale*, as well as detailed synopses of a broad range of saints and attendant calendric, computistical, and encyclopaedic information. In comparison to the *Old English Martyrology*, Bede's *Martyrologium* and the *Martyrologium Hieronymianum* are more restricted in their focus and form (Biggs 2016, pp. 241–78). The following represents a prototypical example of an entry in the *Martyrologium Hieronymianum*: "XIII KL. IUL. IN AFRICA. Marcie. Emili. Felicis. ROMAE CIUITA. Balbine. UIA ADRIATINA. Marci. Marcelliani. Thomi. Pauli. Cyriaci. RAUENNA. Scoru. Marthari. Felicis. Emili. Crispini. IN ALEXANDRIA. Natale. Sci marini." (De Rossi and Duchesne 1894, p. 79). Bede describes the makeup of his martyrology in his autobiographical postscript to the *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*: "A martyrology of festivals of the holy martyrs, in which I have diligently tried to note down all that I could find about them, not only on what day, but also by what sort of combat and under what judge they overcame the world" (Colgrave and Mynors 1969, pp. 570–71; on the Old English Martyrology and Latin martyrologies, see Kotzor 1986, pp. 301–33).² A typical example of Bede's self-declared method can be seen in the entry for 17 February: "In Babylon, the commemorative festival of Polychronius, bishop of that same city: who, in the presence of the persecutor Decius, his face having been crushed with stones, with his hands outstretched, lifting his eyes to heaven, sent forth his spirit. It is written in the passion of St. Lawrence" (Lifshitz 2001, p. 182). However, entries such as the account of Saint Valentine given for 14 February offer more detailed narrative and historical detail (Lifshitz 2001, p. 181). The entries in Bede's *Martyrologium* largely follow the pattern outlined in Bede's autobiographical statement, balancing the brevity of earlier kalendars and martyrological lists with detailed historical and hagiographical data culled from various resources. As Lifshitz has observed, "the standard martyrological form would ever after adhere to the template created by Bede" (Lifshitz 2001, p. 174). As previously noted, Bede's *Martyrologium* represents an important advance in the tradition of martyrological texts, developing the genre to be more detailed than earlier lists of martyrs and saints that included, at most, lists of names and locations of martyrdom or death arranged in the order of the calendric year. Bede's text moves from an enumerative structure to a more detailed narrative arrangement and—with the genre of *legendier-martyrologe* focused on hagiographical narratives—was undoubtedly one of the main formal influences on the Martyrologist (Rauer 2003, pp. 89–109; 2007, p. 133; 2013a, pp. 1–4). The *Old English Martyrology* represents yet another leap in the history of this genre and provides distilled 'micro-passiones' or 'micro-vitae' alongside a wealth of related Christian knowledge and lore. In this way, the text could also be regarded as an accessible form of the legendary (Rauer 2007, p. 133).

The *Old English Martyrology* contains a number of basic, skeletal entries that follow the terser format of the kalendar. For example, "On the twenty-ninth day of the month is the feast of the holy martyrs Saints Sisinnius, Martyrius, and Alexander, who suffered glorious martyrdom for Christ" (29 May, §93). Similarly brief entries are given for 17 June (Blastus: §105) and 3 September (Aristion, Paternianus, Felicianus: §174, 175). Some entries include only a saint's name and obit such as the entry for Calepodius (10 May: §85). Rauer has indicated how such entries might represent unfinished sections that were not or could not be supplemented and expanded with additional sources (Rauer 2013a, p. 15). Concise but complete entries such as that given for Pancras (12 May: §86) provide the saint's name, calendric date of martyrdom, location, oppressor, method of persecution, and final resting place. Entries such as this resemble the digested yet detailed historical format pioneered by Bede in his *Martyrologium*. The Martyrologist's entry for Pancras is paralleled by the bare-bones calendric entries in the Calendar of Willibrord and Bede's *Martyrologium*, and contains details that are possibly drawn from the *Passio S. Pancratii*

and the *Liber pontificalis* (Rauer 2013a, p. 260). In this way, the entry for Saint Pancras betrays the gradual and cumulative composition of the *Old English Martyrology*, which supplements the basic kalendar entries with martyrologies, *passiones*, and related literature. The argument that the text represents a straightforward translation of a Latin exemplar does not convince given the various (complete and incomplete) levels of composition that are evident throughout the text (Lapidge 2005, pp. 29–78; Rauer 2003, pp. 89–109; 2013a, pp. 3–4). An incomplete Latin exemplar is, of course, possible. However, the various entry formats, and the highly idiosyncratic nature of its saints and encyclopaedic information, suggest that the *Old English Martyrology* is a composite work assembled by a vernacular author who synthesised a variety of sources.

6. The *Old English Martyrology* as Encyclopaedic Writing

As Rauer has observed, the *Old English Martyrology* “represents one of the most impressive examples of encyclopaedic writing from the European Middle Ages” (Rauer 2013a, p. 1). While the text represents the genres of saints’ kalendar and martyrology, the range of learning it presents to its readers indicates a broader purpose. Rauer has commented on the hybrid nature of the text, observing that it is part “martyrology, kalendar, legendary, homiliary, and encyclopaedia” (Rauer 2007, p. 144) and shares traits with “*menologia* . . . and collections of encyclopaedic material” (Rauer 2013b, p. 17). By comparison, Bede’s text provides more historical and narrative detail than previous realisations of the genre. The Martyrologist adopted a similar thoroughness, but on a greatly expanded scale, which also incorporated an array of encyclopaedic learning. In terms of coverage of the saints, the Martyrologist exhibits more breadth than we see in kalendars used to regulate, assist, or inform the enactment of worship in monastic or secular settings. At this point in history, there was no officially mandated ecclesiastical kalendar promulgated by Rome, and the observance of saints in the liturgy remained largely a matter of local interest and taste. Martyrologies helped to supply information about the cycle of saints’ feastdays and commemoration. If typical martyrologies help to supply Christian learning of this nature, then the *Old English Martyrology* takes the form a step further, utilising the calendric structure as a repository for an eclectic range of knowledge. Although kalendars like Digby 63 also contain eclectic information, the format does not permit the more thorough relation of information that we get with the *Old English Martyrology*. It is important to note that the *Old English Martyrology* does not represent the liturgical kalendar observed in one particular Anglo-Saxon church context or another, but rather offers a ‘go-to’ encyclopaedic scholarly reference text on calendric and attendant matters. Several questions now arise: What kind of learning is contained in the *Old English Martyrology*? Why is a text with a para-liturgical function—offering as it does an overview of the *sanctorale*—utilised as a repository for encyclopaedic knowledge? How much of this encyclopaedic detail derives from the Martyrologist’s source texts, and why was this information put forward? What does this tell us about the intended purpose and use of the *Old English Martyrology*?

7. Geographical Knowledge

In respect of hagiographical, historical, and geospatial coverage, the text is unparalleled in Anglo-Saxon literature. The Martyrologist compresses an impressive range of Latin *passiones* and related literature into digested narratives that emphasise the deeds and miracles of the saints (Rauer 2013a, pp. 17–18). In addition to presenting saints from across Christian history, the *Old English Martyrology* also introduces its readers to the geographical world of these saints (see Roberts 1997, pp. 155–78). The text contains a wealth of geographical information about the unfamiliar locations from which many of these saints and their hagiographies originated. The Martyrologist guides his readers around the parameters of the known world. The text informs us that Bartholomew (25 August: §162) ministered in India, which is the farthestmost corner of the known world—from the Martyrologist’s perspective—while James the Greater introduced Christianity to Spain, the westernmost fringe of the world where the sun sets (25 July: §135). Rather usefully, the Martyrologist

outlines the extent of Christendom and the known world for Anglo-Saxon readers. In the entry for Bartholomew, India is located between “the dark land” and the world ocean “Oceanus” or, in Old English, “Garsecg” (Rauer 2013a, pp. 166–67). Such specificity helps the reader to locate distant countries and regions in geospatial and comprehensible terms. The reader is also oriented in terms of British geography, and we are told twice that the abbey of Lastingham is in the north, which is presumably unfamiliar to the readers that the Martyrologist has in mind (2 March, Chad: §37; 26 October, Cedd: §214).

The Martyrologist is always careful to clarify in which country a city or place is located. For example, the reader learns that Valencia is in Spain (22 January, Vincent: §31), Hierapolis is in the region of Phrygia (1 May, Phillip: §74), Tarsus is in the country of Cilicia (15 July, Cyricus and Julitta: §127), Nicea is in Bithynia (2 August: Theodota and her Three Sons: §144), and that Caesarea is in the country of Cappadocia (17 August, Mamas: §157). In an attempt at greater comprehensibility, the vernacular translated place name “æt Triticum” is given for the Latin “Trecassium” (29 July, Lupus: §138). Ethnic or group designations are also sometimes given, such as in the entry for Fursa (16 January: §21), where Ireland is clarified as the “country of the Gaels”, a detail that can be traced to either source material or to the Martyrologist himself. In the absence of widespread cartography, textual geography of this kind furnished a gazetteer of the surface, political divisions, and cities of the world for early medieval scholars (see Anlezark 2013, pp. 66–81).

In her analysis of the geography of the *Old English Martyrology*, Roberts has demonstrated the centrality of Rome to the Martyrologist’s conception of the world (Roberts 1997, pp. 156–61). Highly specific information is provided about the streets of the city of Rome; throughout, we read about the Via Appia, Via Aurelia, Via Latina, Via Pancras, Via Salaria, Via Tiburtina, and the Ager Veranus. While we might expect *passiones* that take place in Rome to be specific about this location, the inclusion of street-names here provides Anglo-Saxon users with specific knowledge about this important, but otherwise distant and unfamiliar, religious centre of gravity. The Martyrologist imagined that his readers might be interested in the street-names of Rome, indicating how the compilation was intended as a means of expanding worldviews and imparting geographical information. As such, the *Old English Martyrology* functions as a textual geography of the Mediterranean region. Through a calendric catalogue of foreign saints, the text exposes its Anglo-Saxon readers to a host of locations that might otherwise be unknown or seem distant and intangible. Through its register of hagiographical narratives, the text seeks to broaden knowledge of the *sanctorale*, as well as the geographical knowledge of users, in order to render the saints and their places of origin more familiar. If the Martyrology sought to impart knowledge of saintly veneration from other ecclesiastical provinces, understanding these locations was an important facet of this programme.

An appreciation of the background of a saint is important to their veneration. As mentioned, geographical information helps to indicate the origin of saints catalogued by the Martyrologist. The text also offers specific information about the churches dedicated to particular saints and the miracles that occurred there. We learn that all who build a church in honour of Cyricus, a child martyr, or who commemorate his memory liturgically will receive many blessings (15 July, Cyricus and Julitta: §127). The church built upon the remains of the Gallic saint Symphorian is renowned for the miracles that occur there at the saint’s intercession (22 August: §160). Similarly, many healing miracles are associated with the church dedicated to the martyred bishop Dionysius and deacons, Rusticus and Eleutherius (8 October: §203). On occasion, the saints are also known to arbitrate on matters of morality and justice at the locations dedicated to their name. One particularly gruesome entry recounts how a dispute over stolen money was brought to the monastery and church built upon the relics of Audomarus in Saint-Omer; the case was settled through the direct intervention of Audomarus, who caused the thief’s eye to pop out upon reaching the church (8 September: §181). The occurrence of miracles at sites associated with saints—whether intercessory (*fama signorum*) or punitive like that of Audomarus—is a defining trope of hagiography. However, accounts of these wonders help readers at a far remove from a

saint's place of origin to understand the figure's relevance and efficacy as an object of veneration and votive prayer.

Ecclesiastical buildings in the Holy Land and Mediterranean are also a category of interest for the Martyrologist. On three occasions, accounts of churches in the Holy Land, as supposedly described by Arculf in Adomnán's *De locis sanctis*, are included (5 May, the Ascension of Christ: §79; 24 June, Summer Solstice: §111a; and 30 September, Jerome: §200), which are discussed in detail below (q.v. Named Source References). That the dedication and consecration of some churches is worthy of inclusion is also interesting. In the case of St Peter's, Rome, this is the first and most important church consecrated in Rome (18 January: §25), and it remained the central focus of Western Christianity. The discovery of Saint Michael's church, Mount Gregano, Italy (8 May: §82), and the dedication of Saint Michael's church, Thracia (29 September: §199), are presumably included due to their association with this important biblical figure. Other important churches for the Martyrologist include the Santa Balbina, which is the resting place of Pope Mark (8 October: §203). Cumulatively, these details provide a greater understanding of the saints that the Martyrologist includes, but also offer an itinerary of important ecclesiastical buildings and locations associated with the saints. This information can arguably be viewed as an extension of textual geography, a sort of 'pilgrim's guide' at a time when pilgrimage to such distant locations and sites was not feasible. The Martyrologist's decision to include these data further demonstrates the encyclopaedic function of the text, helping users think concretely about place.

8. Liturgical Information

The text offers its readers insight into the regulation and enactment of the liturgy. The liturgical information in the work derives, naturally, from its para-liturgical function as a martyrology and kalendar, and from its encyclopaedic character as a scholarly reference work. However, in some ways, the text itself is liturgical since it might have functioned as a resource for preaching on the saints and frequently relates the value of intercessory prayer to particular saints (Rauer 2012, pp. 563–71). The text opens with 25 December, the Nativity of the Lord (§1) and the start of the liturgical year in the early medieval world.³ Christmas is placed above the other feasts that occur on this date, essentially grading these feasts in terms of their liturgical importance. The Circumcision and purification of Christ (1 January: §9) is introduced by the Martyrologist as "the Octave of Christ and Saint Mary" (Rauer 2013a, pp. 42–43). The "octave of the Lord" is the title found in most older sacramentaries, but the Circumcision was, nevertheless, a known liturgical feast at this time and is attested in the Gelasian Sacramentary (Wilson 1894). The Martyrologist's entry for this date focuses on the Circumcision and naming of Christ. The octave of Christmas (an octave being a secondary festival that is held one week after a major festival) outranks the relatively new dominical feast of the Circumcision, although the latter is an important event in the life of Christ; the feast of the Circumcision was widely celebrated by the late tenth century, when Ælfric of Eynsham composed a homily for the occasion. The importance of Christmas as one of the primary feasts of the year is reflected in the Martyrologist's treatment of the 1 January, which is introduced first and foremost as an octave, despite apparent knowledge of the Circumcision. The title "the Octave of Christ and Saint Mary" might seem odd to the modern eye. However, 1 January was celebrated as "Natale Sanctae Mariae" from the seventh century in Rome, one of the earliest Marian feasts to be mandated. Although later displaced by other Marian feasts, the Martyrologist harkens to this joint feast celebrating both the birth of Christ and honouring the Virgin, a dual appreciation of some antiquity like the Annunciation, which is both Marian and dominical. The Martyrologist's reference to purification seems to relate to the fact that both the Circumcision of Christ and Purification of the Virgin constituted a joint feast before the latter came to be celebrated on 2 February (Candlemas) as a result of Byzantine influence (Clayton 1984, pp. 209–33, in particular 209–10). In terms of liturgical classification, the birth of the Virgin (8 September: §180) is ranked in order and importance above the feastday of Audomarus on the same date (§181). Although the *Old English Martyrology* was compiled from many different sources, multiple

entries for a single calendric date are graded—or even elided—according to their liturgical importance.

The Major Rogation Day or the *Litania Maior*—a day of fasting, prayer, litanies, and processions (from Latin *rogare* “to ask”)—is explained as a Roman festival that is observed throughout all churches (25 April: §69). The Major Rogation has its origins in the pagan festival Robigalia and is aimed at petitioning God for “mild weather and plentiful crops and physical health” (Rauer 2013a, pp. 86–87). As the Martyrologist indicates, the observation began in Rome (it is first attested in the Gregorian Sacramentary), before becoming observed universally. The entry for the Major Rogation, which synthesises a number of sources, introduces the feast and its history, in the manner of a liturgical crib or glossary (Rauer 2013a, p. 257). A second entry is provided for Rogationtide or the Minor Rogations (§78), the Rogation days held on the Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday preceding Ascension Thursday (Bazire and Cross 1982; Hill 2000, pp. 211–46; Lapidge 1991; Sellers 1996). Interestingly, the Martyrologist places the Minor Rogations between the 3 and 5 May, despite the moveable nature of these days of fasting and procession, a fact that is acknowledged in the entry for these days; the Ascension occurred on the fortieth day after the Resurrection and ten days before Pentecost (Acts 1:3, 2:1), therefore making the Minor Rogations moveable. Easter can occur from 22 March to 25 April, making May a fairly appropriate place to include these moveable days of observance in an otherwise fixed liturgical framework. The Minor Rogations are included to complement the fixed observance of the Major Rogation on 25 April, further underscoring the *Old English Martyrology* as a scholarly adjunct to liturgical observance.

The Martyrologist provides a wealth of information pertaining to local and universal feasts and their histories and importance. In a similar fashion to how Old English months are incorporated into the makeup of the *Old English Martyrology*, the Anglo-Saxon observation of Lammas (*hlafmæsse*), a harvest event, is noted in the entry commemorating Eusebius of Vercelli (1 August: §142). This underscores, furthermore, the general and encyclopaedic nature of the text, which seeks to educate its readers about important points in both the local and universal liturgical and seasonal years. Liturgical history is offered in respect of the feast of All Saints (1 November: §218), which was instituted by Pope Boniface, who also decreed that it should be afforded the same primacy as Christmas. The importance, grade, or class of a feast is a key category of information that the Martyrologist sought to relate. We get a glimpse of the importance of a particular feast in terms of historical practice in the entry for Bertinus (5 September: §178). During his life, the saint blessed wine (which possibly refers to the celebration of the Eucharist) and cured the sick, demonstrating holiness and miraculous powers of healing during his life. Following the saint’s death, a man who had been stricken with deafness and immobility for failing to observe the sabbath was cured at the ninth lesson “of Christ’s gospel” in the church of Bertinus (Rauer 2013a, pp. 176–77). Nine lessons are a distinguishing feature of one of the highest classifications of feasts and, while it might not refer to the feast of Bertinus himself, provide an insight into how different feasts were classified and celebrated.

Aside from providing information on feasts and their observation, the *Old English Martyrology* on occasion points to how liturgical enactments were realised. In the entry for Pope Stephen I (2 August: §143), the Martyrologist informs us that this pontiff was the first to decree that “priests and deacons should use dedicated liturgical vestments on no worldly occasion, but without exception in church only” (Rauer 2013a, pp. 152–53). While relatively little is known about Anglo-Saxon vesture and how it developed in this early period, here we get an indication from the Martyrologist of its significance and, more importantly, that such sacred vestments ought not to be worn outside of the enactment of the liturgies for which they are prescribed. Prescriptiveness can also be seen in the entry for Gordianus (10 May: §84), where it is noted that “his commemoration is to be celebrated with masses in all churches” (Rauer 2013a, pp. 102–3). There are a handful of feasts for which it is mandated that masses or sacraments should be celebrated. Its importance is recognised in the story of Cassius (29 June: §115), who was called home to the Lord on

the feast of Peter and Paul (also 29 June) for his diligent celebration of daily mass. The Martyrologist stresses the celebration of the Mass on certain feasts. A similar emphasis on commemorating saints and the effectiveness of their intercession appears in a number of other entries (23 April, George: §67; 28 April, Christopher: §73; 7 July, Marina: §122; 15 July, Cyricus and Julitta: §127).

At a time when custom varied vastly from region to region, the text betrays some anxieties about when the liturgy is observed in other locations, particularly Rome. The Martyrologist points out that the martyrdom of Zoe is kept in Rome (?4 July: §118; Rauer 2013a, p. 270). Given general Anglo-Saxon *romanitas* and the observance of Roman custom such as the use of the *Psalterium Romanum*, the Martyrologist's suggestion that Roman observances should also be followed in Anglo-Saxon England is not surprising. Similar prescriptions are given for Nicander (17 June: §104), whose commemoration appears "in the older massbooks" (Rauer 2013a, pp. 118–19). Such a designation is likely intended as an appeal to antiquity and authority. The *Old English Martyrology* thus provides a sort of bulletin mapping trends in liturgical practice.

The Octave of Peter and Paul on 6 July (§114) is the only other octave contained in the kalendar of the *Old English Martyrology* aside from the Octave of Christ and Saint Mary, discussed above. As well as indicating the importance of the two primary apostles, their octave further indicates that the *Old English Martyrology* is not intended as a liturgical manual as such, given its omission of other relevant and widely celebrated octaves; the focus on this particular saintly octave is likely due to the Rome-centric sources deployed by the Martyrologist. The Martyrologist relates that the octave of the joint feast should "be celebrated with masses and divine sacraments" (Rauer 2013a, pp. 130–31). As Rauer observes, this information probably derives from a liturgical text and is included here to indicate to users of the text that Peter and Paul, and their octave, are among the primary apostolic feasts in the kalendar (Rauer 2013a, p. 271). The text's manner of liturgical commentary, and the orientation it provides around the kalendar, further suggest that the text might have functioned as an ancillary reference work for a scholar or practitioner of the liturgy.

On numerous occasions, the Martyrologist identifies feasts that are from older massbooks or newer massbooks or sacramentaries, some of which might have included materials brought to Anglo-Saxon England by Archbishop Theodore (Hohler 1995, pp. 222–35). Commemorations in the older massbooks or sacramentaries include Priscus (1 June: §95), Nicander (17 June: §104), Magnus (19 August: §159), Rufus (27 August: §165), Priscus (1 September: §172), Quintus (5 September: §177), Sinotus (7 September: §179), and Lupulus (15 October: §206).⁴ Saints observed in more recent sacramentaries or massbooks include Nicomedes (1 June: §96), Agapitus (18 August: §158), and Sabina (29 August: §169). For 1 June, two saints are included for commemoration, Priscus and Nicomedes—the first from the old sacramentary or massbook, and the second from the more recent books (Rauer 2013a, pp. 110–11). In these entries, the new work referred to is probably the Gregorian Sacramentary, while the older sacramentary could refer to the Gelasian Sacramentary (Billet 2014, p. 147n; Kotzor 1981, pp. 258–59; Rauer 2013a, p. 263). Whatever the sources of these observances, the Martyrologist is keen to flag up the value and antiquity of older feasts, while also promoting more modern observances; both serve to consolidate Anglo-Saxon liturgical identity with the practices of the wider Church and Rome, and to instruct users of the text in historical and contemporary liturgical practice. For the Martyrologist, the inclusion of a saint in an historical or more recent liturgical compilation provided the *imprimatur* for their broader study and observance throughout the Church. In an entry commemorating Maurice and the Theban Legion, a group of 6000 Diocletian martyrs, the text informs us that while their names are unknown, they are recorded "in heaven in the books of life" (Rauer 2013a, pp. 186–97). For the Martyrologist, commemoration in earthly liturgical books or the heavenly books of life is the honour awarded to martyrdom. On the whole, the *Old English Martyrology* functions as a toolkit or reference work, providing information to its Anglo-Saxon readers of how the liturgy is used elsewhere.

9. Computus, Astronomy, Meteorology, Cosmology

A distinctive feature of the *Old English Martyrology* is its pronounced engagement with cosmology, the divisions of the year, time measurement, astronomical events, natural science, zoology, and topics of a calendric, technical, and non-hagiographical nature (Kotzor 1981, pp. 233–43; Rauer 2007, pp. 125–46; 2013a, pp. 1, 16). While martyrologies are usually narrow in their focus on hagiography, the *Old English Martyrology* communicates an impressive range of knowledge about the liturgical, calendric, and natural or solar year. These data can be regarded as calendric and Christian lore, that is, digested technical learning intended for the general instruction of the reader. The types of knowledge conveyed are fundamental to the educational profile of a clerical or monastic individual at this time. While closely aligned with the genres of martyrology and saints' kalendar, the *Old English Martyrology* goes beyond what is normally included in these texts (Rauer 2013a, p. 16). The technical information that the Martyrologist assembles is not out of step with the text overall, given its general character as an encyclopaedic reference work or toolkit. Knowledge pertaining to the calendar and the overall makeup of time is germane to a programme outlining the diurnal saints and feasts of the liturgical year. Computistical, chronological, and calendrical texts are commonly transmitted together in liturgical, computistical, and technical compendia (Rushforth 2008, pp. 18–54; numerous compendia of this nature are listed in Gneuss and Lapidus 2014). The *Old English Martyrology* combines aspects of these subjects within a single reference work, making it a versatile and functional composition that services some of the primary educational needs of its day.

While the sequence of saints and feasts occupies the centre of the text, it is framed by notices indicating the general structure of the calendric year. As Stodnick has observed, the text begins and ends each month with "a calendric observation, which typically makes note of the number of days in each month, its name in both Latin and English, as well as explanations of the name's meaning" (Stodnick 2013, p. 34). These notices also detail the hours of daylight and darkness in a given month. Such astronomical observations instruct users regarding the sun and the seasons, emphasising the essential relationship between the liturgical cycles, the calendar, and the natural, solar year. Presumably such observations held a practical purpose and furnished reminders about the varying lengths of the days in a given time of the year and their learned (Latin) and colloquial (Old English) names. According to Rauer and Kotzor, notes on the hours of daylight have parallels in a number of liturgical calendars (Rauer 2013a, pp. 16, 242; Kotzor 1981, pp. 302–11). The entry for January is particularly interesting as it recasts the start of the month, 1 January, liturgically as the eighth day of Christmas (§8a). The note also explains that January is the first month of the year "for the Romans and for us" (Rauer 2013a, pp. 42–43), although 25 December is the start of the liturgical year. In this way, the Anglo-Saxon year had two starting points: the liturgical year (25 December, Christmas) and the Julian or Roman civil year (1 January). Such notices must have served to illustrate the differences between the ecclesiastical and Roman calendars for users in this context. Notices on the beginning and end of a month help to divide each month into discrete units. These signals also constitute a form of calendric anadiplosis, connecting one month to the next, and conceptually uniting the *sanctorale* with the set structure of the calendric year and the rhythms of the natural year.

Etymologies are provided for "Haligmonað" (Holy Month), the Old English name for September (§171b), which was given "because our ancestors when they were pagans . . . practiced their devil-worship in that month" (Rauer 2013a, pp. 172–73), and for "Blotmonað" (Sacrifice Month), the vernacular name for November when pagan sacrifices were made (§217b). The treatment of these names of the month is slightly longer than others because their etymology is consonant with so many of the text's hagiographical narratives about pagan worship and conversion. Not only are these details thematically relevant, they further help to tie the story of Anglo-Saxon conversion and Christianity to the history of early Christianity given in the various synopsis accounts of martyrdom.

The calendar by which the Martyrologist arranges the register of saints and feastdays is structured according to the solar or natural year and its defining turning points: the solstices, equinoxes, and seasons. No entry survives for the winter solstice, perhaps due to manuscript lacunae, or for the equinoxes, but the text as it is extant does include an entry for the summer solstice (24 June: §111a). These astronomical events help to divide and structure the liturgical year, rooting the cycle of saints and other feasts in the recurring turning points and rhythms of the natural solar year. As Karasawa has pointed out, the solstices and equinoxes provide an elementary or popular means of dividing the liturgical year (Karasawa 2015, p. 34). The Martyrologist relates how the sun is at its highest elevation (“in the middle of the sky”) at midday on the solstice; he uses an account of a column in Jerusalem, “umbilicus terrae” (the naval of the earth), that did not cast a shadow at this point of the day to demonstrate practically how the sun reached its highest elevation. Latin and vernacular terminology is also offered for the solstice (Latin: *solstitium*; Old English: *sungihite*). The Martyrologist relates an arguably scientific explanation of the summer solstice derived from, supposedly, Arculf’s account as recorded by Adomnán in *De locis sanctis* (Rauer 2013a, p. 268). The calendar by which the *sanctorale* is arranged depends upon the solar year, which is a fixed and scientifically understood phenomenon; as such, in a text dealing comprehensively with the *sanctorale* and other subjects, largely of an encyclopaedic nature, it is natural for this type of information to be included here. The practice of computus is so commonly associated with the complex lunar calculation of Easter that it is easy to forget how scholars at this time appreciated the straightforward—and, indeed, basic—associations between the solar calendar and the fixed liturgical cycle. For the Martyrologist, such associations were, nevertheless, worth drawing attention to as governing principles of the systems at hand.

In the note on the beginning of summer (9 May: §83a), a further technical and scientific explanation relates that “at that time the Seven Stars [i.e., Pleiades] rise at dawn and set in the evening” (Rauer 2013a, pp. 102–3). As the Martyrologist learned from Bede (Rauer 2013a, p. 259; Bede *De temporum ratione*, 30, 35; Wallis 2004, pp. 87, 101), the Seven Sisters, also known as Vergiliae, rise at dawn and set at dusk from November to April, succinctly and correctly explaining seasonal changes in the night sky. Such details provide practical astronomical knowledge for users of the text, enabling them to determine the seasons and their changes (see Anderson 1997, pp. 231–63). However, the Martyrologist adopted the dates for the seasons from Bede’s *De temporum ratione*, which puts forward the Roman dates in addition to the Spanish dates deriving from Isidore. As such, the seasonal dates included by the Martyrologist would not have correlated precisely with the seasons in Anglo-Saxon England. Nonetheless, the point and effect remain the same: the passing of the seasons and the movement of the stars is part of the divinely ordained rhythm of the year; the Church does not only use this system to regulate its liturgical practices, but it is an intrinsic and essential part of the cycle.

Seasons are astronomical and, as a result of the earth’s astronomical movement in relation to the sun, they are climatologically and meteorologically different. In addition to the various notices on daylight hours in each month of the year, we occasionally get information on weather at particular points in the year. The Old English name for June, “Ærra Liða” (Earlier Mild (Month)), is explained as referring to the mild air and sea conditions at this time “when people normally travel across the water of the sea” (Rauer 2013a, pp. 110–11). Favourable weather and richer grazing underlie the Old English name for May, “Primilice” (1 May: §73b). Notices on pagan practices (including “Haligmonað” and “Blotmonað”) seem out of place in a work on the Christian year (Rauer 2007, p. 127), but demonstrate the author’s enthusiasm for encyclopaedic factoids about the calendar and the year. As noted earlier, references to pagan worship in the Old English names of the months help to tie the story of the Anglo-Saxon conversion to Christianity to early Christianity. Meteorology and the natural cycle of the year are also at the fore of the Martyrologist’s mind when compiling these additional calendric and seasonal entries. Both two-season and four-season systems were used to divide the natural year in Anglo-Saxon

England. The Martyrologist includes the beginning of summer (9 May: §83a) and the beginning of winter (7 November: §221a). The text relates that winter is 90 days long and summer is 92 days long. Since these do not collectively cover the number of days in a year, either the Martyrologist did not complete all notices for the four seasons or wanted to follow a two-season system, but did not emend his materials to reflect the total number of days in the year (Rauer 2013a, pp. 259–60). It is, perhaps, because the Martyrologist's programme of seasonal or calendric notices is incomplete that entries are also not provided for the vernal or autumnal equinoxes.

The notices on the seasons are similar to the entry for the summer solstice and Pleiades, and serve to root the liturgical cycle in the natural year. As Karasawa has summarised:

“The solstices were conceived to be the midpoints of winter and summer, whereas the equinoxes were also conceived to be located in the middle of spring and autumn. According to this way of understanding the year, a year consists of eight parts of roughly equal length, and the liturgical year, beginning with Christmas, which coincides with the (unofficial) winter solstice, can be neatly divided into four at the solstices and the equinoxes, while it can be divided further into eight at the beginnings of the seasons.” (Karasawa 2015, p. 37)

As such, it is not some general and abstracted notion of ‘the year’—from 25 December, 1 January, or even 25 March until the year's end—which would have governed the Martyrologist's understanding of the calendar; rather, he would have understood the year and the calendar as reflections of the solar year, a natural and familiar cycle with important temporal markers and meteorological turning points throughout that, in turn, punctuate the liturgical cycle, its feasts, and seasons. In this way, the *sanctorale* and fixed cycle of feasts would have been the most familiar and ordinary, while the *temporale*, the moveable feasts, would have seemed different because the lunar year is more complex and less naturally or obviously discernible than the solar year.

These short, helpful notices on the general structure of the calendar, the hours of daylight, and Latin and more popular vernacular names of the month speak to the encyclopaedic and pedagogical function of the *Old English Martyrology* as a calendric handbook, toolkit, or manual. As Stodnick has commented:

“These entries significantly diversify the account—linguistically, intellectually, and culturally—interleaving various notions of temporality alongside the progression of the *sanctorale* and reminding readers that the reckoning of time is a cultural practice interconnected with language history, and agriculture. By integrating English and Latin chronological nomenclature, these accounts reproduce the effect of the [*Old English Martyrology*]'s saintly catalogue, in which native figures, continental saints, and biblical characters are juxtaposed.” (Stodnick 2013, p. 34)

In many respects, the combination of information about weather, the seasons, and astronomical events is of a similar timbre to collections of prognostics, a type of miscellaneous early medieval compendia dealing with medicine, meteorology, computus, and science (Cesario 2012, pp. 391–426; Chardonnets 2006; Liuzza 2010). Indeed, scientific detail such as the Latin medical term and Old English name for gout is given in one account (Latin: *podagra*; Old English: *fofadl*; 6 July, Tranquillinus: §120). The coalescence of calendric, medical, and astronomical detail in this compilation—too often, the *Old English Martyrology* is thought of as a singular or uniform work—may have been partially influenced by prognostic collections, which served a similarly versatile and learned function. The Martyrologist's sections on the names of the months seemingly draw on Bede, *De temporum ratione*, among other possible sources (Karasawa 2015, pp. 182–97, at 184–85; Rauer 2013a, pp. 232, 242). Expertise in the intricacies of computus and time reckoning are not necessary for observance or study of the fixed cycle of the *sanctorale*; however, familiarity with the basic structures of the year is, and the *Old English Martyrology* helpfully excerpts relevant information and arranges it for the reader around the annual sequence of saints.

Perhaps the most remarkable notices in the *Old English Martyrology* are the seven entries dealing with the Hexameron, the biblical days of Creation (18–24 March). To the modern eye, it might seem out of step with the genre of the martyrology and saints' kalendar to include biblical events such as the days of Creation or the birth of Adam within its programme of "feasts". However, Adam is, after all, the first prophet and saint, and the Creation was understood as an historical, biblical event. Regarding Creation, "primus dies saeculi" is named in a substantial number of Anglo-Saxon kalendars, while the birth of Adam, the sixth day of Creation, is mentioned in a number of other texts (Wilmart 1934; Rushforth 2008). The birth of Adam, the days of the Hexameron, and other seasonal, cosmological, and calendric notices appear alongside hagiographical feasts in the kalendar in Digby 63, which dates from the ninth century (867x892) (Rauer 2013a, p. 16). The hexameral schema in *Old English Martyrology* and the Anglo-Saxon kalendars surveyed by Wormald and Rushforth follow Bede, who placed the equinox on 21 March and "primus dies saeculi" three days prior on 18 March. Pre-Bedan computistical traditions located the first day of Creation on the equinox, which was historically observed on 25 March and later on 21 March (Warntjes 2021, pp. 172–74). It made sense to Bede, who observed the equinox on 21 March, that the luminaries should have been created on this astronomically perfect date (Bede *De temporum ratione*, 6: Wallis 2004, pp. 24–28). These dates became enshrined in the calendric tradition and their significance is fully fleshed out here by the Martyrologist. The hexameral notices correspond closely to the technical and broadly scientific information discussed hitherto and speak in interesting ways to the overall conception and purpose of the *Old English Martyrology*. Rather than constituting feasts for liturgical observance *per se*, these notices are in line with the profile of encyclopaedic learning that characterises the work.

Cross identified the Irish cosmological work, *De ordine creaturarum* by Pseudo-Isidore (c.655–75) as the primary sources for these notes; Bede, *De temporum ratione* is probably the source underlying the particular calendric dates presented here, as Rauer has suggested (Cross 1972, pp. 132–40; Rauer 2013a, pp. 245–49; Smyth 2003–2004, pp. 1–39; 2011, pp. 137–222). Arguments regarding how the *Old English Martyrology* uses or departs from its source material will not be covered here. The present discussion seeks to understand the function of these notices in the text's overall structure.

The first day of Creation is incomplete due to manuscript lacunae, but the second day concerns the presence of supercelestial waters (Genesis 1:6–7) and their role in controlling the earth's temperature (18–19 March: §45, §46). The Martyrologist's explanation provides a scientific purpose for the rather curious detail of waters above the firmament, which goes against the Aristotelian theory of elemental weight (Gallagher 2021a, pp. 167–90). This note helps to synthesise biblical cosmology with early medieval scientific understandings of the operation of the natural world. The notion of the cosmological egg, much like the work's textual geography, offers a written physical and cosmological description of the shape of the Earth and the natural world more generally (on which, see McMullen 2020, pp. 23–34).

The notice for the third day of Creation is, perhaps, the most scientifically detailed of all seven. It offers a robust explanation of the hydrological cycle and the 'ledones' (lesser) and "malinae" (greater) tides of the lunar year (20 March: §48). This information seems to be derived from Bede, *De natura rerum*, 39 (for an edition, see Kendall and Wallis 2010, p. 95), although there are 26 ledones and malinae in the lunar year, rather than 24, as Cross has observed (Cross 1972, p. 135; Hughes 2003, pp. 1–24). This notice incorporates the rhythms of the lunar cycle into an otherwise solar structure and explains the operation of water in the natural world in purely scientific terms. Details provided regarding the solar months, the tides, and astronomy collectively constitute the introductory building blocks of computus, the calendric science that governs the liturgical year.

The fourth day of Creation concerns the creation of the luminaries, which were seven times brighter before the Fall (21 March: §50). The original brightness of the sun and moon will, following the end times, be reinstated just as humanity will be remade. The Martyrologist links the operation of the natural world theologically to the condition of

human existence, rooting astronomy in Christian cosmology, theology, and eschatology. An interesting aside is included regarding the waxing and waning of the moon and how these phases are the result of the speed of the moon's course. The Martyrologist emphasises the immutability of these rhythms and their thoroughly scientific nature, grounding the foundation of the fixed and moveable cycles in simple scientific and computistical terms. The brief explanation put forward by the Martyrologist indicates that within the sacred narratives, there are observable scientific processes at play. Interestingly, the reinstatement of the former brightness of the luminaries points users of the text to the complete, inevitable future realisation of the temporal cycle at the Eschaton.

The notice for the fifth day of Creation is similarly scientific in its taxonomy of 153 species of fish and innumerable birds that it presents (22 March: §52). The Martyrologist relates how different species of birds—birds of the land, sea, or fresh water—relate to the environments from which they originated or were created (Cross 1972, pp. 136–37). Here we see how the Genesis Creation narrative could be utilised as a means for commenting on the makeup of the natural world and its creatures. The sixth day of Creation is of less interest from a technical or scientific point of view since it mostly discusses the imperviousness of prelapsarian man to the elements, physical harm, or age (23 March: §53). The notice for the seventh day is brief and echoes the biblical account that God rested from His labours (Genesis 2:2).

The series of cosmological notes is remarkable: firstly, because one might not expect the Hexameron to be treated as a datable historical event within a kalendar or martyrology outlining the feasts of the Christian year; and secondly, since these notices are of a scientific and technical nature. This was an environment in which knowledge about the operation of the natural world was gained and imparted through learned Christian works, and often in works concerning Genesis. In one of the most detailed vernacular calendric works from this context, it is not surprising, then, that accessible scientific and cosmological learning should be housed here or that events from Genesis, a book commonly used as a means of commenting on the natural world, should be incorporated. These notices are indisputably the product of a learned exegetical milieu and serve to impart a basic, scientifically grounded appreciation of cosmology and the natural world. It is easy to suggest where early medieval interpretations of the natural world do not fit with modern scientific understandings, but this does not appreciate the achievement and the relative accuracy of these notices in an intellectual universe to which the biblical worldview was singular.

While the precise calendric dates provided for these events might seem incredulous, they are far from that. The creation of the luminaries on the vernal equinox is significant and roots the entire natural cycle of the sun in terms of scientific understandings of the solar year cycle. Computus is the most expressly scientific genre of this period. However, it does not exclusively deal with contemporary lunar cycles, but frequently engages in cosmological and scientific exegesis; the phase of the moon at Creation and the precise date on which the sun and the moon were created has important implications for later determinations of the calendar. For the Martyrologist and scholars like him, the world operated according to a natural cycle established at Creation. To determine the precise beginning of that natural cycle is to ground the cosmological narratives of Genesis firmly within scientific and computistical principles.

The text offers the historical calendric dates for first occurrences of a number of feasts from the *temporale*, the moveable cycle of feasts contingent upon and including Easter. The entries for the 25 March (the Annunciation and Crucifixion: §56, 56a), the Descent into Hell (26 March: §57), the Resurrection (27 March: §58), the Ascension (5 May: §79), and Pentecost (15 May: §88) are actually related to this batch of cosmological notes, in that they similarly attempt to pinpoint the calendric dates of biblical events in order to show the relatedness of the computus, the natural cycles of the solar and lunar years, and biblical history. Outlining the first occasions of these feasts illustrates for early medieval practitioners of the liturgy that the fluctuations of the *temporale* are in total accord with historical biblical events. The

scientific timbre of the hexameral notices clearly demonstrates that the Martyrologist's primary interest for these sections was to offer scientific explanations, not only of the natural world, but of the calendar and the natural but divinely ordained cycles of time. Pinpointing historical dates for biblical events in one way emphasises the cyclical nature of the *temporale*. However, tracing events from the first day of Creation (18 March) to the Incarnation of Christ 5199 years later (25 December: §1) evokes the temporal schema of the six ages of the world, the idea that the material world will endure for 6000 years in line with the six days of Creation. While cycles repeat and fluctuate annually, the inclusion of these dates emphasises to users of the text that history will inevitably end. That the Resurrection follows the six days of Creation on 25 March is typologically significant, suggesting the eternal eighth age of the world to come. Similarly, the Annunciation and Crucifixion appear together in a combined entry, emphasising a typologically perfect theology of time. Viewed in this way, the days of Creation, the Annunciation, and the Resurrection speak in subtle and nuanced ways to temporal theories of eschatology.

How are we to understand this broad constellation of non-hagiographical information in generic terms? Some modern analogues could be helpful in this regard. Rauer has written about the *Old English Martyrology* as an early form of the almanac, a text that imparts a range of encyclopaedic information through a calendric structure (on the *Old English Martyrology* as almanac, see [Rauer forthcoming](#)). The encyclopaedic character of the *Old English Martyrology* is similar to the contents in the modern, largely Victorian, genres of the commonplace book, the miscellany, and the book of days.⁵ Commonplace books were compiled by an individual—and sometimes passed on and adapted, much like medieval manuscripts—and contained a variety of handpicked and excised miscellaneous materials of interest to the compiler or compilers. Miscellanies were, largely, serialised publications and contained a breadth of knowledge that does not have an equivalent in twentieth and twenty-first century literature, given our modern taste for compartmentalising information. The book of days is, perhaps, the most appropriate modern comparison that can be made with the *Old English Martyrology*. Chambers's *Book of Days*, a two-volume work, provides content for each day of the calendric year, including the saints and famous individuals connected with a day, trivia, and history with more detailed articles on selected individuals, in essence "a compendium of information relating to the days, months, and seasons of the year". Early medieval analogues containing brief synopses of calendric or scientific learning in a digested format include collections of prognostics, the *Etymologiae* of Isidore of Seville, and the range of 'miscellaneous' encyclopaedic notes that frequently appear in Anglo-Saxon manuscripts ([Dekker 2007](#), pp. 279–315; [2012](#), pp. 65–95; [2013](#), pp. 95–130; [2019](#), pp. 203–24; [Estes 2012](#), pp. 623–51; [Gallagher 2021b](#), pp. 437–55). In the Anglo-Saxon ninth century and beyond, when wide swathes of information were not so readily accessible in textual forms in all places, composite reference works with broad intellectual and conceptual ambits such as the *Old English Martyrology* were not only useful tools, but natural products of the information culture of the day.

10. Named Source References

A further scholarly or encyclopaedic feature of the *Old English Martyrology* is its numerous source references and allusions to scholarly works. Through his numerous publications, Cross has significantly advanced our understanding of the sources deployed by the Martyrologist in the composition of the text (for example, [Cross 1985](#), pp. 107–28; see also [Rauer 2003](#), pp. 89–109). According to Rauer's apparatus criticus, 22 entries draw on passages of the *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum* by Bede. This is one of the commonly cited sources in the work and is drawn upon by the Martyrologist for 15 entries relating to insular saints and related figures such as Germanus of Auxerre. The *Historia ecclesiastica* provided a valuable resource for native and non-native saints, as well Christian practice more broadly. The *Old English Martyrology* assembles a historical chronicle of hagiography that stretches from the biblical era to its contemporary time. Given that it is drawn upon as a source, Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica* might well have provided a model for the Martyrologist,

perhaps even in the form of its Old English translation, with which it shares close Mercian affinities. It is clear that the Martyrologist found the *Historia ecclesiastica* to be a vital resource for his project since he refers to it *nominatim* on eight occasions, all in relation to local or geographically adjacent saints (2 March, 7 May, 26 May, 4 August, 3 October, 11 October, 26 October, and 14 December). The terminology employed is “Angelcynnnes bocum” (the books of the English or books about the English) or some orthographic variation thereof. Early medieval authors utilised descriptive titles, rather than fixed ones, and the title used by the Martyrologist engenders a conception of collective identity and belonging for the “Angelcynn”. Signposting sources is a common practice in biblical commentary and historical writing, but it is less commonly seen in martyrologies and kalendars. The *Historia ecclesiastica*, while also hagiographical, is an historical and scholarly work, and direct source references of this nature help to root the *Old English Martyrology* in this tradition as well the related tradition of exegesis.

Another source indicated by name includes “*De Uirginitate*” by Alcuin (3 April, Agape, Chionia and Irene: §59). In the entry for Gregory the Great (12 March: §42), the Martyrologist tells us that the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove “breathed into his mouth religious wisdom which he recorded in books”. There is the sense that the Martyrologist is flagging up works that he deems important for general Christian education. There are a number of other references to books within the hagiographical narratives that the Martyrologist digests and presents, including references to the Gospels (‘Godes bocum’, 30 August, Felix of Thibiuca: §170) and the various references to “mæssebocum” (massbooks) discussed in relation to liturgy above (see [Gneuss 1985](#), pp. 91–141). The second most commonly named author in the text is Arculf, a Frankish bishop who is thought to have travelled to the Holy Land before being shipwrecked off the coast of Iona; after his foundering, Arculf dictated an itinerary and gazetteer of the Holy Land to the Donegal saint, Adomnán, which survives as *De locis sanctis*, one of the most important early medieval sources for knowledge of the Near East. The Martyrologist refers to Arculf directly as a source on four occasions (23 April, George: §67; 5 May, the Ascension of Christ: §79; 24 June, Summer Solstice: §111a; and 30 September, Jerome: §200). Aside from the discussion of Saint George in the entry for 23 April (§67), all of these entries refer to Arculf’s supposed description of ecclesiastical buildings in the Holy Land. While these descriptions are perhaps best discussed in relation to textual geography, the requirement for this information to be endorsed through source references, compared to other categories of information, is remarkable. In these entries, we see the Martyrologist at work, collecting and arranging geographical detail from various sources. The specificity of the information related, which includes descriptions of churches and their interiors, necessitates a manner of scrupulous citation that we do not see elsewhere in the text. The use of source references lends the work an historical or scholarly character that we do not see in other texts of this nature. Rauer has compared the *Old English Martyrology* to a “crash course in hagiography” ([Rauer 2003](#), p. 98; [2013b](#), p. 28). I would add to this and suggest that it is a crash course in a range of subjects, an accessible reference tool like SparkNotes, A Very Short Introduction, or Wikipedia, introducing its reader to topics as diverse as geography, history, hagiography, language, liturgy, temporal reckoning, and science. In a similar manner to a reading list, this is a scholarly reference work that is careful to point interested users to further reading. In the entry for Simon Stylites (27 July: §136), the text refers to sacred scriptures as “the treasure of human souls” ([Rauer 2013a](#), pp. 144–45). The purpose of the *Old English Martyrology* is to gather and present some of the treasure of the human soul from works of Christian learning for general consumption.⁶

11. Language, Latin, Etymology

Commenting on the versatile generic character of the *Old Martyrology*, Rauer has likened the text to a glossary, among other types of writing ([Rauer 2013a](#), p. 17). Despite its lengthy prose format, the text functions in this fashion on a number of levels (on language, see [Porck 2021](#), pp. 359–83; [Rauer 2017b](#), pp. 139–58). In translating and summarising

hagiographical narratives, it offers a vernacular crib to an impressive range of Latin saints' lives and *passiones* (on Latinity, see Cross 1986, pp. 275–99). Further still, through its technical Old English vocabulary and frequent incorporation of Latin terminology, the *Old English Martyrology* educates its users and readers in arcane language or Latin, which some possible users might not have had access to. The following section presents some instances in which the Martyrologist utilises terminology in Latin or other languages and analyses the possible motivations for his doing so.

A number of cases in which the Old English text defers to Latin concern place names. For 1 May (Phillip: §74), Bethsaida, the home of the apostle Phillip and a Hebrew place-name, is glossed as "*domus uenatorum*", which is then translated into Old English as "huntena hus" (the house of hunters) (Rauer 2013a, pp. 92–93). Similar vernacular translations are offered for the place names "*Silua Negra*" and "*Silua Candida*" (2 June, Marcellinus and Peter: §98). Both instances serve to make these names understandable to Old English readers; the etymology of "Bethsaida" is fairly well known amongst exegetes familiar with the work of Jerome or Bede, while the place names "*Silua Negra*" and "*Silua Candida*" would not pose particular difficulty to a reader with basic Latin. The purpose of the Martyrologist's onomastic translation, therefore, seems to be driven by a desire to achieve comprehensibility, and may be related to the text's purpose of providing access to Latinate subjects for users who do not possess the necessary linguistic skills. However, it is also worth noting that etymology was a mainstay of early medieval exegesis, for purely scholarly or encyclopaedic purposes. Rusche has outlined how Latin in the text relates to glossaries from Canterbury, as Rauer has noted (Rusche 2005, pp. 437–55; Rauer 2007, pp. 138–39; 2016, pp. 73–92). In this way, the text seems more interested in promoting technical and learned vocabulary, rather than in making things simple for its readers. In the entry for Pope John I (18 May: §89), it is this desire for encyclopaedic and linguistic factoids that seems to underlie the garbled transliteration of "Peodoricus" to "Deodric" (Rauer 2013a, p. 261). Technical terminology like "ztmologesis" (Exomologesis), the Greek term for "Rogation", and "undern" (terce) and "non" (nones) is similarly intended to impart scholarly and temporal vocabulary (Rogation, 25 April: §68; Rogation Days: §78). Glossing the Old English "Wætlingacæster" (St Albans, 22 June: §109) with the Roman-British name "Uerolamium" indicates how the text was intended to impart scholarly and somewhat abstruse information, which is entirely in the character of early medieval exegesis. The meaning of Christ's name ("His name in Hebrew was Jesus, in Greek *Soter*, and in Latin *Saluator*, and in our language 'Healing One' [Hæland])" discloses a scholarly interest in linguistic and exegetical factoids. It is likely that the Martyrologist was a biblical exegete and, like Bede, might not have been primarily taken up with hagiography and calendric studies in his day-to-day scholarly work. The interest in linguistic factoids and etymologisation betrays a mind that was shaped by this exegetical style of learning, if not actively engaged in its practice.

12. Conclusions

Liturgy provided the fundamental structure on which religious and intellectual life in the early medieval Latin West was centred. Given this prominence, the resources delineating its systems reveal the interests and concerns of its practitioners. As noted, the aim of historical martyrologies is to provide a greater level of information about the saints commemorated in the liturgical year compared to traditional kalendars and enumerative martyrologies. The *Old English Martyrology*, while an historical martyrology at its core, goes even further in its inclusion of encyclopaedic, technical, and scientific information. As well as outlining the *sanctorale*, the greatest part of the fixed liturgical year, the text delves into a range of attendant subjects, including computus, cosmology, and calendric science. Additionally, it offers its readers a host of geographic, linguistic, and historical detail. The majority of this information (excluding the more suspect inclusion of pagan details) is in some way germane to the *sanctorale*, inspiring in its users an appreciation of the background of the saints, of the language(s) of ecclesiastical learning, and scholarly factoids pertaining

to the liturgical year and the veneration of the saints. Rauer has convincingly argued that the *Old English Martyrology* might have been composed for use as an aide by individuals who were unable to cope with longer materials or who may not have had access to such resources, a fact that seems more convincing given the “vernacular brevity” of the text (Rauer 2007, p. 142). Indeed, the text’s encyclopaedic distillation of a wealth of learned subjects and sources seems consonant with its function as an easy reference text, a ‘go-to’ resource for professional religious individuals in need of information on the fundamental structure of the liturgical year and its attendant subjects. In this way, the *Old English Martyrology* operates as an encyclopaedic and interdisciplinary manual for clerical and monastic personnel interested in the liturgical year, the saints, the calendric year, computus, and cosmology. Other non-liturgical calendric texts such as the *Metrical Calendar of Hampson* use the liturgical-calendric year as a means of educating and instructing its readers, in this case in the art of Latin hexameters as well as the contours of the calendric and liturgical year (McGurk 1986, pp. 79–125; Gallagher 2017, pp. 151–69; 2020, pp. 464–66). Martyrologies are not strictly liturgical, however, and the *Old English Martyrology* is a highly atypical example of the genre, operating as it does on many additional levels. Nevertheless, like liturgical kalendars, enumerative and historical martyrologies, and other didactic or pedagogical calendric texts, it deals with the regulation and observance of the liturgical year. There could be no better conduit for instructing clerical and monastic personnel than a text based on the liturgical year, the programme around which religious and intellectual life operated at this time.

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Notes

- ¹ On the sources and compilation of the text, see Rauer’s annotated bibliography (<https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/~cr30/martyrology/>, accessed on 18 February 2022), s.v. ‘Studies: Sources, Composition’.
- ² *Martyrologium de nataliciis sanctorum martyrum diebus, in quo omnes, quos inuenire potui, non solum qua die uerum etiam quo genere certaminis uel sub quo iudice mundum uicerint, diligenter adnotare studui.*
- ³ 25 March was also taken as the start of the year in Anglo-Saxon England. Ælfric, *Catholic Homilies*, I.6 mentions that service books and kalendars sometimes begin with Advent, but not because it is the start of the year.
- ⁴ It is unclear to what degree the two entries for Priscus (§95; §172) represent different individuals or the same person commemorated on different days in different liturgical sources.
- ⁵ For example, R. Chambers, *The Book of Days: A Miscellany of Popular Antiquities in connection with the Calendar including Anecdote, Biography, and History Curiosities of Literature and Oddities of Human Life and Character* (Chambers 1864); G. W. M. Reynolds, *Reynold’s Miscellany of Romance, General Literature, Science, and Art* (Reynolds 1846–1869); Richard Bentley, *Bentley’s Miscellany* (Bentley 1836–1868).
- ⁶ The text displays an interest in numerological symbolism, frequently stemming from exegetical and typological interpretations of scriptural numbers, which adds further to its scholarly, encyclopaedic flavour (on numerology, see Rauch 2016, pp. 265–73).

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