“In the Language to which They Were Born”: A Study of Audience for the Vernacular Catholic Homilies of Aelfric

Presentation #1 Abstract
In the final decades before the year 1000, an Anglo-Saxon abbot named Aelfric wrote and distributed three series of homilies in the Old English language, all, or nearly all, of which have survived. David Knowles, in his monumental volume, The Monastic Order in England, describes Aelfric’s place in English church history as “second only to Bede and in direct spiritual descent from him.” Aelfric appears to clearly state his purpose for the composition of his homilies in two prefaces attached to the first series of forty homilies, with the first preface written in Latin and the second in Old English. These homilies, he states, have been compiled and translated from the works of church fathers such as Augustine, Jerome, and Bede, and are to be read by priests in English churches to the unlearned, who cannot understand the Latin of the Scriptures and liturgy, but only their own native tongue. However, there is considerable debate among scholars as to the suitability of the homilies as written, with their frequent insertions drawn from erudite theologians, for a completely uneducated lay audience. This project will closely examine the prefaces and a selection of the homilies themselves, attempting to determine how they may in fact have been used in the dissemination of the faith within the Anglo-Saxon church.

At-A-Glance Bios- Presenter #1
Dr. Angela B. Fulk is an adjunct professor of English and Classics at SUNY Buffalo State and Canisius College in Buffalo, NY. She is the area chair for Profession Development and Pedagogy for the Northeast Modern Language Association.

Start Date
10-21-2017 10:15 AM

End Date
10-21-2017 12:15 PM

Recommended Citation
https://mds.marshall.edu/sermon_conference/2017/All/8