

Der Albani-Psalter

Stand und Perspektiven der Forschung

The St Albans Psalter

Current Research and Perspectives

Herausgegeben von / Edited by
Jochen Bepler und Christian Heitzmann



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The St Albans Psalter: Abbot Geoffrey's Book?

Rodney M. Thomson

It is contended that most of the evidence which has been interpreted as connecting the great Psalter with Christina of Markyate equally connects it with Abbot Geoffrey. Indeed, this seems a more plausible interpretation. We argue, therefore, that the book was commissioned by Geoffrey for himself and his successors, and probably remained at St Albans Abbey, passing from abbot to abbot. It was neither made for, nor possessed by Christina or her community; rather, those features in it which definitely refer to her do so because of the relationship between her and Geoffrey, viewed from the abbot's position. This interpretation enables us to offer a new date for the Psalter's manufacture.

Ein Großteil der Argumente, die für eine Verbindung zwischen dem großartigen Psalter und Christina von Markyate sprechen, lassen sich in gleicher Weise auch auf Abt Geoffrey beziehen. Dies scheint in der Tat die schlüssigere Deutung zu sein. Daher wird hier die These vertreten, dass die Handschrift von Geoffrey für sich und seine Nachfolger in Auftrag gegeben wurde und wahrscheinlich in der Abtei St Albans blieb, wo sie von Abt zu Abt weitergegeben wurde. Sie wurde weder für Christina geschaffen noch war sie in ihrem Besitz oder in dem ihrer Gemeinschaft. Vielmehr haben die eindeutigen Bezüge auf Christina, die in der Handschrift zu finden sind, ihren Begründung in der Beziehung zwischen Christina und Geoffrey und zeigen die Sicht des Abtes. Diese Deutung erlaubt es, eine neue Datierung für die Entstehung des Psalters vorzuschlagen.

For fifty years it has been largely-accepted wisdom that the St Albans Psalter was either made or adapted at St Albans Abbey for the holy woman Christina of Markyate and that it was in her hands from early on, at the nunnery of Markyate where it presumably remained until the Dissolution. In a recent article, the historian Donald Matthew has offered a fundamental challenge to all of these notions. His timely intervention has stimulated my own reinterpretation of the evidence, leading however to a conclusion which differs both from the generally received one, and from that reached by Matthew himself, that the book

was made for Christina's mentor, Roger the Hermit.¹ I begin with three general points.

A priori one would expect a book as splendid and expensive as the Albani Psalter² to have been commissioned by a great prelate for his own use. This is a point made a number of times previously, for instance by Talbot, Powell and by Matthew himself, even though it has always been set to one side in favour of different lines of argument³. As Matthew puts it: "Frankly, the idea that a work of this kind and on this scale was handed over, let alone designed, for use in a mere hermitage is difficult to credit. What we know of Roger, as of Christina, does not make them seem likely recipients of such a luxurious gift, from even the most generous benefactor."⁴

This time, rather than setting this a priori assumption aside, I propose to take it as the starting-point for my own argument.

Secondly, whoever the book's destinee, it is a 'personal', not communal book, made for a member of a religious community certainly, but not a liturgical book in the full sense, that is, not a choir-book for the Divine Office. In this respect comparison can be made with other books from St Albans that were: the slightly later Breviary, Brit. Lib., Roy. 2 A. X, and Psalter, formerly the property of Brian Cron, now Brit. Lib., Add. 81084.⁵ This is one way of interpreting features of the St Albans Psalter such as the oddly empty Calendar, perhaps intended to be filled later (as it was), at the behest of its owner; the eccentric contents of the Alexis quire; and the captions added to aid meditation on the Psalms.

Finally, recently-available evidence suggests that the book is more of a physical unity than had previously been thought⁶. For example, for long it was accepted as obvious that the Labours of the Months in the Calendar were by a different artist

¹ Donald Matthew: The incongruities of the St Albans Psalter. In: *Journal of Medieval History* 34 (2008), p. 396-416.

² Michael T. Clanchy: *From Memory to Written Record*, 2nd ed. Oxford 1993, p. 194: "one of the most expensive artefacts made in twelfth-century England".

³ *The Life of Christina of Markyate*. Ed. Charles H. Talbot. Oxford 1959, rev. ed. Oxford 2002, in the Introduction, p. 23; Morgan Powell: *Making the Psalter of Christina of Markyate (The St. Albans Psalter)*. In: *Viator* 36 (2005), p. 293-335, at 297.

⁴ Donald Matthew (cf. fn. 1), p. 414.

⁵ Otto Pächt, Charles R. Dodwell, Francis Wormald: *The St Albans Psalter*. London 1960, pp. 24, 30, 32-45, 276-277 (*Studies of the Warburg Institute* 5); Rodney M. Thomson: *Manuscripts from St Albans Abbey*. Rev. ed. Woodbridge 1985, vol. 1, p. 28-30.

⁶ E.g. Francis Wormald: *The Palaeography of the St. Albans Psalter*. In: Otto Pächt, Charles R. Dodwell, Francis Wormald (cf. fn. 5), p. 275-277.

from the unhistoriated initials in the Psalter.⁷ Now Peter Kidd has established that the artist of the Labours was also responsible for the underdrawings to all of the Psalm-initials.⁸ Again, the recent disbinding has revealed, for the first time, that the book was originally sewn in a single operation; none of its parts – Calendar, miniature-cycle, Alexis quire or Psalter proper, had a separate, independent existence, at least in a tacketed or sewn state, or for any length of time.⁹ Nonetheless the Alexis quire seems to have been an afterthought, disturbing the logic of the (presumably) original disposition, in which David the Musician at the end of the miniature cycle would have faced a great **B** opening the Psalms.

However, despite my first presupposition we need to take account of some features that seem, with varying degrees of probability, to connect the Psalter with Christina, and with her relationship with Abbot Geoffrey: the most persuasive of these, it seems to me, are the added obits in the Calendar and the replacement initial to Ps. 105. However, even if one were to accept that *every one* of the features held by scholars to refer to Christina does so, it does not follow automatically that the Psalter was therefore made or modified for her, let alone that she had it in her hands in Markyate. Scholarship has far too easily accepted the second as the corollary of the first. On the contrary, from the same evidence it is possible to draw an entirely different conclusion, namely that the Psalter was Abbot Geoffrey's, and that his evolving relationship with Christina led him to incorporate features which reflected it, some in the course of its original manufacture, some as very early modifications, others as later additions. To put it differently: those features of the Psalter that refer, or have been thought to refer, to the relationship between Geoffrey and Christina, could be seen as representing his side of the relationship rather than Christina's. And that would be consonant with the impression one gets from Christina's *Vita*, in which she is shown as influencing the abbot (by

⁷ E.g. Francis Wormald: Description of the manuscript and commentary on the calendar and litany. In: Otto Pächt, Charles R. Dodwell, Francis Wormald (cf. fn. 5), p. 10.

⁸ Peter Kidd: Contents and Codicology. In: Jochen Bepler, Peter Kidd, Jane Geddes: The St Albans Psalter (Albani Psalter). Commentary. Simbach am Inn 2008, p. 131-132.

⁹ Almuth Corbach, Heinrich Grau: Kodikologische Befunde und Überlegungen zur Neubindung des Psalter, in this volume. Cf. Peter Kidd (cf. fn. 8), p. 91, maintaining that the Alexis quire had "sewing-stations that do not occur in the other parts of the book". This observation was made, however, before the book was taken down prior to rebinding and must be mistaken. The parts could, of course, have existed in a completely unbound state, and indeed this must have been the case simply because the manufacture of the whole book would have taken a long time, perhaps a year or more.

advice, encouragement, comfort and reproof), and not the reverse.¹⁰ This interpretation could be used to explain original features of the Psalter such as the female saints in the Litany, the early alteration of the Trinity initial, and later additions such as the initial to Ps. 105, the feasts of female saints in the Calendar, and the relevant obits. It can also be applied to some if not all of the material in the Alexis quire. If any of this material is relevant to Christina, then it is a case of Geoffrey addressing her, or reflecting on interactions with her, not vice versa.

That said, not all the features of the Psalter that have been held to point to Christina necessarily do so. I agree with Matthew that this is particularly true of the *Chanson de S. Alexis*, because the differences between the *Chanson's* account of the saint's biography and the *Vita's* account of Christina's are much greater than the similarities.¹¹ Where facts are so scarce, we should proceed from the known to the known, not from the known to the unknown. We know nothing about Christina's thoughts on Alexis, if indeed she had any, whereas we do know that well before the time of the Psalter's manufacture Alexis was acknowledged at St Albans: a chapel was dedicated to him before 1119, and two MSS from the abbey, one earlier than, one contemporary with the Psalter, contain versions of his Life in Latin.¹² His feast appears in three other slightly later St Albans books and in the Psalter's Litany – but not in the Calendar, which shows how odd the Calendar is.¹³ So the interest in Alexis reflected in the inclusion of the *Chanson* in the Psalter springs from St Albans tradition – of that we can be confident; the notion that Christina or anyone else at the time drew a connection between the Alexis story and her own is pure conjecture.

Again, the presence of her obit and that of her relatives in the Calendar is certainly significant – no-one else's family members are included – but its significance should not be exaggerated. These entries, written in the style of the St Albans scriptorium, are to be seen in the context of the abbey's relationships with a number of local hermits and nunneries connected with it in various ways: some of the hermits, for example, had been monks of the house, and two of the

¹⁰ The Life (cf. fn 3), cc. 55-60, etc.

¹¹ The "similarities" were stressed by Otto Pächt: The full-page miniatures. In: Otto Pächt, Charles R. Dodwell, Francis Wormald (cf. fn. 5), p. 136-139. It "mirrors exactly the experiences of Christina", according to Talbot in: The Life (cf. fn. 3), p. 26.

¹² New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, Ms. 926; Cambridge, Pembroke College, Ms. 82 (probably made at St Albans, at its cell of Tynemouth by c. 1150), printed from the latter in: Otto Pächt (cf. fn. 11), p. 144-146.

¹³ It is in the calendars of Brit. Lib., Add. 81084, Royal 2 A. X and Egerton 3721. Cf. Francis Wormald (cf. fn. 7), p. 39.

nunneries, Sopwell and Markyate, were founded from the house and indeed by Abbot Geoffrey.¹⁴ St Albans appears to have been a double house at the Conquest; a remnant of this was the community of female religious living until 1140 in the abbey almonry, and there survive four twelfth-century liturgical books or parts of books apparently made at the abbey for nunneries not necessarily even nearby (Littlemore in Oxfordshire and Wherwell in Hampshire).¹⁵ We should beware of making all roads lead to Christina. For example, the feast of St. Margaret, one of the additions to the Calendar, has been conjectured to refer to Christina's sister of that name.¹⁶ But the feast was popular at the time. The *Vita* itself tells of a woman from Canterbury who visited Markyate after a vision from St. Margaret.¹⁷ The *Gesta Abbatum* tells how Geoffrey's successor, Abbot Robert, caught in a storm at sea on his way to Rome in 1154, invoked St. Margaret and vowed to insert her name in the St Albans Litany¹⁸ (The fact that it was *already* in the Psalter's Litany shows once again that the Psalter is a personal, not a communal book). The *real* question is why Robert invoked Margaret in the first place; doubtless because she was already regarded as significant at St Albans and more widely.

So far I have simply argued that those features of the Psalter that have previously been used to support the notion that it was in some sense Christina's *could* just as well support the proposition that it was Geoffrey's. I now want to argue that the second alternative is in fact more likely. First of all, it would explain why the Litany suffrages are masculine, and why no attempt was ever made to alter them. The language of the so-called 'Spiritual Warfare' tract in the Alexis quire is also relentlessly masculine and best understood as addressed to a male religious com-

¹⁴ *Gesta Abbatum S. Albani*. In: *Matthaei Parisiensis Opera*. Ed. William Wats. Paris 1644, p. 37; David Knowles, Noel Hadcock: *Medieval Religious Houses: England and Wales*. 2nd ed. London 1971, p. 75n. The obits in the Psalter's Calendar include those for the prioress of Sopwell, and an unidentified hermit and canon. *Matildis monialis de Marzellis*, whose obit was added on 12 July, was identified by Francis Wormald (cf. fn. 7), p. 29 with a nun of Markyate; but *Marzellis* must surely refer to the aristocratic French nunnery of Maillezais (Vendée); it cannot be derived from 'Markyate'.

¹⁵ Rodney M. Thomson (cf. fn. 5), vol. 1, p. 37-38, 56-60.

¹⁶ E.g. Peter Kidd (cf. fn. 8), p. 66. Margaret, sister of Christina figures in *The Life* (cf. fn. 3), cc. 59-61, 67, 80.

¹⁷ *The Life* (cf. fn. 3), p. 118-121.

¹⁸ *Gesta* (cf. fn. 14), p. 46. Wats's edition was based upon Matthew Paris's autograph, Brit. Lib., Cotton Nero D. I. Despite the strictures of Richard W. Vaughan: *Matthew Paris*. Cambridge 1958, p. 182, I have collated the edition with a microfilm of the manuscript and found it to be substantially accurate. The edition of Henry T. Riley: *Gesta Abatum Monasterii Sancti Albani*. London 1867 reproduces the revised version of Thomas Walsingham from Brit. Lib., Cotton Claudius E. IV.

munity.¹⁹ Additions to the Psalter, above all in the Calendar, made over a period of time, are in ‘St Albans’ hands, that is, in the style of the abbey’s scriptorium.²⁰ The text of the Psalms in Oxford, New College MS 358, a late thirteenth-century St Albans Psalter, has been shown to be very close to that in the Albani Psalter.²¹ This can best be accounted for by supposing that the Albani Psalter was still at the abbey when the New College Psalter was made. Moreover, the sumptuous New College book was clearly for the special use of the abbot.²² One of the so-far insoluble puzzles about the Albani Psalter is the occurrence of St. Martin dividing his cloak near the end of the otherwise christological miniature cycle. In fact, it appears that the parish church at Gorrion (Maine), Abbot Geoffrey’s birthplace, was already dedicated to Martin in 1082.²³

Now the *Gesta Abbatum* describes, as the centrepiece of Geoffrey’s abbacy, his construction and decoration of a new shrine for the saint, and the translation of the relics into it on 1-2 Aug. 1129, with the usual publicity.²⁴ Is this momentous event reflected in the Calendar of the Psalter? If not, then we can surely date the Calendar earlier than the Translation, if so, then later. In fact, on 2 Aug. we find, in

¹⁹ The Litany suffrages are discussed by Francis Wormald (cf. fn. 7), p. 31 and n. 1; cf. Peter Kidd (cf. fn. 8), p. 99-100, especially his comments on p. 100: “while masculine forms do not necessarily prevent a prayer such as the second collect of the Albani Psalter being used by a female reader, the use of masculine forms in places where feminine forms could have been employed, shows that in at least one respect it was not deliberately tailored for one. In this regard it may also be significant that the illustrations to the collects in the Albani Psalter show numerous laymen and monks, but no women or nuns.” The “Spiritual Warfare” tract on p. 71-72 is reproduced e.g. in Otto Pächt, Charles R. Dodwell, Francis Wormald (cf. fn. 5), pls. 40-1, English translation by Patrick Edwards in: Jochen Bepler, Peter Kidd, Jane Geddes (cf. fn. 8), p. 218-19.

²⁰ Francis Wormald (cf. fn. 7), p. 6, 25, 27. This is true even of the added record of the dedication of the priory church at Markyate on 27 May (1145).

²¹ James Golob: The glossed Psalter of Robert de Lindesey and related manuscripts. 2 vols., unpubl. PhD diss. Cambridge University 1981, vol. I, summarized by Peter Kidd (cf. fn. 8), p. 92. The New College book is described by Nigel J. Morgan: *Early Gothic Manuscripts 1250-1285*. London 1988, no. 174 (A Survey of Manuscripts illuminated in the British Isles 4.2).

²² Its Calendar includes obits, by the main scribe, for all of the abbots between the Conquest and 1235 (death of William of Trumpington). Although Morgan (who does not mention the obits) dates it c. 1270-80 on stylistic grounds, it was presumably made before 1263, when John of Hertford, the next abbot after William, died; it was doubtless his book.

²³ Gabriel Boullard: *La paroisse de Gorrion des origines à 1789*. In: *Bulletin de la commission historique et archéologique de la Mayenne*, ser. 2 vol. 23 (1917), p. 34-51, at 35. I have first to thank Jane Geddes for telling me that the present church at Gorrion, a nineteenth-century structure, is dedicated to (St Mary and) Martin, a dedication likely to be medieval. Then Peter Kidd kindly informed me of the article cited above, which makes this certain.

²⁴ *Gesta* (cf. fn. 14), p. 38-39.

red and in the original hand, the saint's *Inventio*. The feasts are clearly one and the same, so we ought to be able to date the manufacture of the Psalter after 2 Aug. 1129. But it is not as simple as that. The original *Inventio* was that allegedly accomplished by King Offa in 793. But on which day? There is no information about this earlier than the Psalter. The local monk Roger Wendover (d. 1236), in his *Flores historiarum*, said that it was 1 August, and the fact that the octave of the feast continued to be celebrated on 8 August supports this.²⁵ It has been supposed that Roger's source was a tract on the abbey's foundation already known to William of Malmesbury and Henry of Huntingdon, in other words in existence by 1125.²⁶ It is hard to know why Geoffrey effectively abolished this feast by conflating it with the Translation on 2 Aug., but that appears to be what he did. Now this is the very entry in which the scribe got the saint's name wrong: 'Albinus' for 'Albanus', 'a mistake', said Talbot, 'which no one familiar with the place where his relics were preserved could have made.'²⁷ But the same scribe spells it correctly at the main feast on 22 June, and to me it does not seem strange that a scribe who was presumably not a monk but a paid professional, almost certainly Norman or French, perhaps newly-arrived in England, should have Albinus of Angers more in mind than Albanus of England. It is strange that it went uncorrected.

This redating, if it is accepted, has some important implications. On the one hand it would put the manufacture of the whole book squarely into the period in which Geoffrey and Christina were in contact; on the other it makes a connection with Roger the Hermit impossible, since he died not later than 10 Jan. 1123.²⁸ Much of Matthew's argument for the Psalter being made for Roger the Hermit

²⁵ Roger of Wendover: *Flores historiarum*. Ed. Henry O. Coxe. 5 vols. London 1841-1844, vol. 1, p. 251-259; Wilhelm Levison: St. Alban and St. Albans. In: *Antiquity* 15 (1941), p. 337-359, at 351-352. Matthew Paris also gives 1 Aug. in his *Vitae duorum Offarum* and *Gesta* (cf. fn. 14), but he has lifted this from Roger: ed. Wats, p. 18. Later in the same work, and in *Gesta* (cf. fn. 14), he says that Willegod, first abbot of St Albans, moved the celebration of the *inventio* to 2 Aug., so that it did not clash with the feast of St Peter in Chains (*ibid.*, p. 20, 23). This is the same reason he gave for Geoffrey's celebration of the *translatio* on that day. See Richard W. Vaughan (cf. fn. 18), p. 42-45, 191. The Calendar in Oxford, New College 358, has the *inventio* on 2 Aug., the octave on 8 Aug.

²⁶ Richard W. Vaughan (cf. fn. 18), p. 191; William of Malmesbury: *Gesta regum Anglorum*. Ed. Roger A. B. Mynors, Rodney M. Thomson, Michael Winterbottom. 2 vols. Oxford 1998-1999, vol. 1, p. 123; *id.*, *Gesta pontificum Anglorum*. Ed. Michael Winterbottom, Rodney M. Thomson. 2 vols. Oxford 2007, vol. 1, p. 480-1; Henry of Huntingdon: *Historia Anglorum*. Ed. Diana Greenway. Oxford 1996, p. 246-247.

²⁷ *The Life* (cf. fn. 3), p. 23.

²⁸ Charles R. Dodwell: Note on the date of the St. Albans Psalter. In: Otto Pächt, Charles R. Dodwell, Francis Wormald (cf. fn. 5), p. 279-80.

rests on the importance, as he sees it, of Roger's obit in the Calendar, entered in the hand of the Alexis quire and Psalm-*tituli*: "The obit of Roger, hermit and monk of St Albans; may he be remembered especially on this day by whoever has this Psalter"²⁹. It is fundamental to Matthew's case that this entry should have been made soon after Roger's death. Clearly it was not. His other point is that its elaborate wording suggests that it was regarded as more important than any of the other obits, including Christina's. But this comparison is inadmissible because it is the only obit in this particular hand. Its wording shows that the obit was important for the particular individual who entered it, and that is all one is entitled to say about it. Nonetheless, the request in it for Roger to be remembered by each subsequent person into whose hands the Psalter comes is significant. This would be a very odd request indeed if it concerned a communal book, kept and used within the convent's church. For me it is yet another piece of evidence that this was a personal book, presumably to be passed from abbot to abbot.

If the Psalter *was* Geoffrey's, then we should find evidence in the Calendar for his liturgical innovations, listed in the *Gesta Abbatum*: "He also ordained that Ascension Day should be made a principal feast and that the feasts of St. Matthew the Apostle and Evangelist, St. John before the Latin Gate, St. Giles, the Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and St. Catherine, should be celebrated in a festal manner in copes, for the reverence of God and His saints."³⁰ All these feasts are present, and Ascension (opposite 5 May), St. Giles, and the Conception are in colours. As Francis Wormald said, it is unlikely that Geoffrey upgraded all these feasts at one and the same time, so, following his line of argument, we may perhaps assume that the Calendar was copied before the upgrading of SS. Matthew, Catherine and John before the Latin Gate.³¹ But one must beware of arguing from omissions and failures to upgrade in liturgical books.³² In fact Giles had still not been upgraded in the later St Albans Calendars of Brit. Lib., Egerton 3721 and Royal 2 A. X, and the Conception does not appear at all in Egerton. In other words, the presence of some of Geoffrey's upgrades in the Calendar of the Albani Psalter is more significant than the absence of others.

Assuming this scenario, what might the function of the Alexis quire have been? First of all, it may have had a brief existence, in its own right, prior to its incorpo-

²⁹ Francis Wormald (cf. fn. 7), p. 29.

³⁰ *Gesta* (cf. fn. 14), p. 40.

³¹ Francis Wormald (cf. fn. 7), p. 24.

³² A point made to the writer by the late Christopher Hohler, in a private communication.

ration in the Psalter. The main evidence for this is the accreted nature of its contents, none of which could have been entered after the quire was bound. But I suspect that it was always intended for the Psalter, and that work on it went on, spasmodically, while the rest of the book was in course of manufacture. This is the most personal part of the book, and it would be satisfactory if one could identify its hand, also responsible for the Roger obit and the Psalter captions, as Abbot Geoffrey's. But the philologists have proved, beyond doubt, that the copyist of the Chanson was an Englishman.³³ Perhaps, then, its scribe was the abbot's secretary. It has to be said, though, that his writing is not particularly English, let alone in St Albans scriptorial style. In addition, he did not write well because he was trying to squeeze his text into a severely delimited space. He wanted, or was required, to fill just this quire and no more. It seems to me that the main reason for its creation *was* the Chanson, which must have been copied first. Next came the Beatus initial, though the doodle of jousting knights may have been already present, as the initial is set abnormally low on the page, as though to make way for it. By the same token it may be that the initial also took account of the commentary yet to come, as it is set leaving a wide left-hand margin. The Tract on Spiritual Warfare, which refers both to the jousting knights and Beatus initial, was obviously entered after their completion. It, the bilingual extract from Gregory, and the Emmaus miniatures, cannot be dated in relation to each other. The two last were clearly there to fill blank leaves. The Alexis quire's contents, and their presentation, are a strange mixture of formality and informality: high-quality illustration and multi-coloured script on the one hand, unformatted jottings on the other. Its presence is an intrusion, though an attempt has been made, through the Beatus initial, to incorporate it into the pre-existing scheme. Morgan Powell describes it attractively as Abbot Geoffrey's 'drawing-board'³⁴ – I should myself prefer 'work-sheet'. Perhaps its average high quality simply reflects a situation more or

³³ Ulrich Mölk: Der lateinische Albanipsalter und sein französisches Alexiuslied, in this volume. Ian Short, pers. comm. of 16. 11. 2009: "I personally have never been in any doubt that the Prologue, the Chanson and the Images text are all written, i.e. copied, in Anglo-Norman, and not in any other recognisable Continental French dialect that I know of. ... In the absence of a standardised spelling system (such as that of Latin), vernacular copyists tend to copy into their own dialect, and I find it hard to picture that Geoffrey could have written in French like that of Albani. Whether or not he'd been an adoptive Anglo-Norman for 20 years, he will have learned to write in France, and while he might possibly have adapted his oral French to his Insular environment, I can't imagine him changing his spelling habits."

³⁴ Morgan Powell (cf. fn. 3), p. 306. I cannot, however, agree that the material in the quire bears a close relationship to the planning of the rest of the Psalter.

less unique to St Albans. With such a professional scriptorium at hand, the abbot, instead of doodling himself, could call on the services of a secretary and a professional artist. Whether this ‘work-sheet’ was an aide-memoire to himself, or whether he actually read from it on his visits to Christine, is of course impossible to say. It is best characterized as monastic teaching-material.

The presence of material in the vernacular of the upper class should not surprise, and need not imply a reader or readership – in this instance Christina – whose Latin was shaky or non-existent.³⁵ The Winchester Psalter, for instance, is virtually bilingual, Latin and Old French in alternate lines; the Eadwine Psalter is glossed in English and French.³⁶ This relates to the broader issue of vernacularity in the cloister: for instance, homilies in Old English were still being copied at Christ Church Cathedral Priory, Canterbury, in the second half of the twelfth century.³⁷ Monks also enjoyed appropriate vernacular ‘entertainment’ literature.³⁸

What features does this interpretation *not* explain, and are there any features that positively fly in its face? Let us recognize at the outset that we can expect a degree of incoherence and anomaly in any luxury liturgical book from the manuscript era. Some will have been purely mechanical, due to the time taken to make them and the enormous cost: production could be intermitted due to lack of funds, and only resumed when the funding was again available together with another team of scribes and decorators. The Winchester Bible, never in fact finished, is a famous case in point.³⁹ As to resulting anomalies, in the great Bury Bible the *IN* of *IN*

³⁵ A view often put forward in the past; see the literature listed by Ian Short: *Les psautiers d’Oxford et de Saint Albans: liens de parenté*. In: *Romania* 128 (2010), p. 29-45, at p. 40 nn. 24-26.

³⁶ For the Winchester Psalter, Brit. Lib., Cotton Nero C. IV see Francis Wormald: *The Winchester Psalter*. London 1973; for the Eadwine Psalter, Cambridge, Trinity College, Ms. R. 17. 1 see *The Eadwine Psalter. Text, Image and Monastic Culture in Twelfth-Century Canterbury*. Ed. Margaret T. Gibson, T. Alexander Heslop and Richard W. Pfaff. London 1992.

³⁷ Brit. Lib., Royal 1 A. XIV (c. 1180), exemplar for Oxford, Bodl. Libr., Hatton 38 (c. 1200); Rodney M. Thomson: *Books and Learning in Twelfth-Century England. The Ending of ‘Alter Orbis’*. Walkern 2006, p. 11.

³⁸ E.g. Dominica Legge: *Anglo-Norman in the Cloisters*. Edinburgh 1950, esp. chs. 1-4; Ian Short: *Patrons and polyglots. French literature in 12th-century England*. In: *Anglo-Norman Studies* 14 (1992), p. 229-249; Ian Short: *Verbatim et literatim. Oral and written French in twelfth-century Britain*. In: *Vox Romanica* 68 (2009), p. 156-168.

³⁹ Winchester Cathedral, Ms. 17. For a select bibliography see Walter Oakeshott: *The Artists of the Winchester Bible*. London 1945; Walter Oakeshott: *The Two Winchester Bibles*, Oxford 1981; C. Michael Kauffmann: *Romanesque Manuscripts, 1066-1190*. London 1975, no. 83 (*A Survey of Illuminated Manuscripts in the British Isles* 3); Claire Donovan: *The Winchester Bible*. London 1993.

PRINCIPIO is missing now and seems never to have been present.⁴⁰ Other apparent incoherences will relate to the personal interests and circumstances of the commissioner, usually no longer knowable by us now. Not everything therefore can be expected to be explicable, let alone explicable in terms of a single overarching interpretation. In the Psalter itself we find uncorrected mistakes such as the *Beatus* initial on p. 72, the superfluous words on p. 73, and passages of Psalm-text obliterated by overpainting.⁴¹ We also find changes in the liturgy going unregistered: not only Abbot Geoffrey's upgradings mentioned earlier, but later feasts such as *Amphibalus* (important at St Albans from the late twelfth century) and *Thomas Becket* (important universally). Over and above this class of anomaly, my interpretation does not help explain the botched change of plan about the start of the Psalter proper.⁴² But neither are any of these things explained by the 'Christina' interpretation. My interpretation may or may not provide an alternative explanation for the 'Emmaus' pictures in the Alexis quire, insofar as they reflect liturgical drama, a known interest of Abbot Geoffrey's.⁴³ It does not explain the 'Ramsey' features of the Calendar, which have in the past been linked, not unreasonably, to the birthplaces of Roger the Hermit and Christina.⁴⁴ Matthew offers an alternative explanation, namely the friendship between Abbot Richard, Geoffrey's predecessor, and Herbert Losinga, bishop of Norwich, who had been abbot of Ramsey.⁴⁵ But the fact is that we know practically nothing about the St Albans liturgy prior to the Psalter. In judging its Calendar and Litany to not quite reflect the regular usage at the abbey, comparisons have had to be made with local liturgical books dating from later than 1154.⁴⁶ Why was the 'Christina' initial added to Psalm 105 in particular? The hexametric rubric calls upon Christ to protect the monks of St Albans, while the Psalm itself asks for a

⁴⁰ Rodney M. Thomson: *The Bury Bible*, Cambridge 2001, p. 4.

⁴¹ As noted by Peter Kidd (cf. fn. 8), p. 93, 134.

⁴² For which see e.g. Otto Pächt (cf. fn. 11), p. 151-152; Peter Kidd (cf. fn. 8), p. 89-90.

⁴³ Otto Pächt (cf. fn. 11), p. 73-79, 143-144; Gesta (cf. fn. 14), p. 35.

⁴⁴ Francis Wormald (cf. fn. 7), p. 24-5.

⁴⁵ Donald Matthew (cf. fn. 1), p. 399, 406.

⁴⁶ Namely, Brit. Lib., Add. 81084, Egerton 3721 and Royal 2 A. X; see Francis Wormald (cf. fn. 7), p. 23-24, 30-45. The books have been presumed to be later than 1154 because all include *Margaret* in their litanies (see above). The scribe of the second and third was still active after 1158: Michael Gullick has identified him as the scribe of Durham Cathedral, *Dean & Chapter Archives 3. 2. Spec. 1* (1158/1173, illustrated in: *A History of Northumberland*. Ed. Northumberland County History Committee. 15 vols. Newcastle-upon-Tyne 1893-1940, see vol. VIII, pl. opposite p. 48), and *Hertford, Archives and Local Studies Centre, Gorhambury VIII B. 60* (1155/1158); Terence Alan M. Bishop: *Scriptores Regis*. Oxford 1961, no. 233.

return to the Lord. Perhaps the context was the monks' murmuring about and dissatisfaction with Abbot Geoffrey's relationship with Christina and his expenditure of the convent's resources on the foundation of Markyate, done, says the *Gesta Abbatum*, without consultation.⁴⁷ But the biggest puzzle is the so-called 'Tract on Spiritual Warfare', which makes so little sense that one can only assume that it is a very rough draft or mnemonic. Most of it reads as a homily to monks, except for the last section, in which the author addresses a single person (*Audisti*). It has been thought that this person was Christina, because of the subsequent comment "lest any of those talkers, who investigate, should rebuke us". What the comment means, however, is completely obscure, and I wonder whether *Audisti* could be a scribal slip for *Audistis*, which would at least provide logical continuity with what has gone before.

I conclude by reiterating the two most important points for which I have argued in this article: (a) that no attempt at an overall interpretation of the Albani Psalter's manufacture and purpose will explain all of its 'incongruities', and (b) that the most reasonable interpretation is that it was created for a grand prelate, Abbot Geoffrey of St Albans, and reflects in some measure his relationship with his monks and with Christina of Markyate. It is simply not credible that it was created either for a hermit or for the abbess of a small community.*

⁴⁷ *Gesta* (cf. fn. 14), p. 40-41.

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