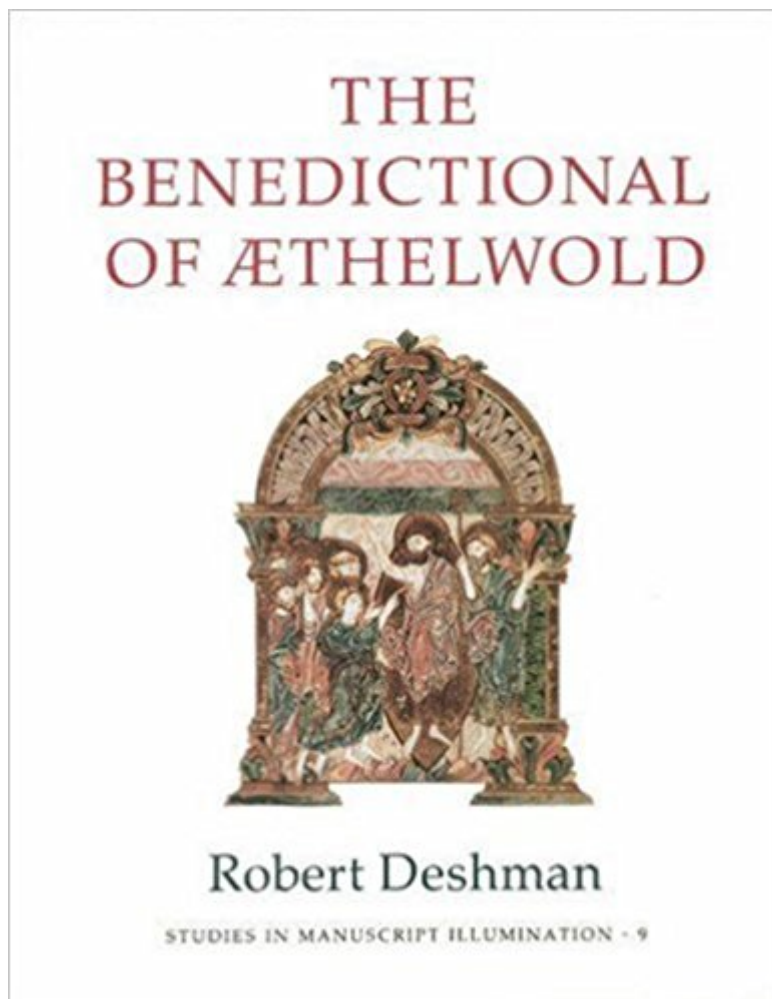




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The Benedictional Of Aethelwold (Studies In Manuscript Illumination 9)



Synopsis

In this major contribution to the study of illuminated manuscripts, Robert Deshman explores in detail one of the great works of medieval art, the sumptuously illustrated Benedictional commissioned by the powerful Anglo-Saxon bishop, Æthelwold of Winchester (963-84). A seminal work in the formation of the "Winchester style," the manuscript embodies a highly intricate and often novel presentation of images. Deshman considers the iconography, style, ornament, and text against the backdrop of their pictorial, literary, and liturgical sources. This enables him then to anchor the work within the patron's historical and cultural context: his monastic reforms, his culting of saints, his political ideals, the ideological connotations of earlier artistic styles--and, most importantly, his unusual hermeneutic modes of thought and visualization, wherein extremely abstruse theological concepts are reified in clouds, architecture, drapery, and even ornament. Employing traditional art historical tools, Deshman nonetheless develops an innovative methodological thesis, that specific visual and conceptual motifs run through the large and varied cycle of images, tying them together in a complex, multilayered program. This programmatic pictorial technique, "cycle symbolism," occurs in an exceptionally systematic fashion in Æthelwold's manuscript, but was used widely in medieval art. Deshman's analysis offers a new way of looking at and understanding picture cycles, one that has fundamental methodological implications for the entire field of manuscript illumination.

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Winner of the 1997 Charles Homer Haskins Medal, Medieval Academy of America One of Choice's Outstanding Academic Titles for 1995 "Deshman's book is 'thick history,' an in-depth study of a series of miniatures in a long-famous manuscript [dating back to the late 10th century] . . . The strengths of Deshman's book are his mastery of the textual sources for monastic and royal ritual and ideology and his familiarity with early-medieval art as a whole from which he can draw conclusions as to sources and parallels."--Speculum - A Journal of Medieval Studies

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