

Sanctity in Tenth-Century Anglo-Latin Hagiography:  
Wulfstan of Winchester's *Vita Sancti Æthelwoldi* and  
Byrhtferth of Ramsey's *Vita Sancti Oswaldi*

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The candidate confirms that the work submitted is her own work and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis examines central examples of sanctity in the hagiography of late tenth- and early eleventh-century England in order to determine whether or not there are any common themes to be found. It considers specific moments and examples from the broad context of 'the Benedictine Reform' in order to investigate the ways in which texts and ideas were manipulated or negotiated to promote particular political and ecclesiastical interests. These include the influence of certain types of narrative, for example, hagiography and other documentary sources such as charters, setting them in the context of, and also interrogating them for what they can show us about, the contemporary ideology.

The specific focal points of the study are encapsulated by the two main thesis chapters, Winchester and Ramsey. The primary focus is on Æthelwold and Oswald, and the contemporary hagiography associated with their cults: Wulfstan of Winchester's *Vita S. Æthelwoldi* and Byrhtferth of Ramsey's *Vita S. Oswaldi*. In addition, Dunstan and Edward the Martyr are examined, and Edmund of East Anglia whose cult was promoted and received its first hagiography during this period. The texts in question are closely examined in order to determine what other figures and themes the saint in question is associated with and the ways that these associations contributed to the characterisation of the saint and thereby to the construction of their sanctity. It is evident that whilst the two primary texts under consideration – the *Vita S. Æthelwoldi* by Wulfstan of Winchester and the *Vita S. Oswaldi* by Byrhtferth of Ramsey – do have certain ideas in common, there are also significant contrasts between the two, leading to the conclusion that Winchester and Ramsey valued different qualities in the depiction of, and perhaps even qualifications for, sainthood, and constructed the sanctity of their monastic patrons accordingly. The fundamental basis for both Æthelwold's and Oswald's claim to sanctity is the same: it was their roles as Benedictine monks and promoters of Benedictine monasticism which placed them in the ranks of confessors, thereby qualifying them for sanctity.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

<i>Ælfric, Vita</i>	<i>Ælfric, Vita S. Æthelwoldi</i> in <i>The Life of St Æthelwold Wulfstan of Winchester</i> , ed. by Michael Lapidge and Michael Winterbottom (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991)
<i>ASC</i>	<i>Anglo-Saxon Chronicle</i>
<i>ASC MS A</i>	<i>The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: A Collaborative Edition</i> , 3, MS A, ed. by Janet Bately (Cambridge: Brewer, 1986)
<i>ASC MS D</i>	<i>The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: A Collaborative Edition</i> , 6, MS D, ed. by G. P. Cubbin (Cambridge, Brewer, 1996)
<i>ASE</i>	Anglo-Saxon England
B	Birch, Walter de Gray, ed., <i>Cartularium saxonicum: a Collection of Charters Relating to Anglo-Saxon History</i> , 3 vols (London: Whiting, 1885-93)
c	chapter
cc	chapters
CSASE	Cambridge Studies in Anglo-Saxon England
ECTV	<i>Early Charters of the Thames Valley</i> , ed. by Margaret Gelling (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1979)
EETS	Early English Texts Society
<i>EH</i>	Bede, <i>Ecclesiastical History of the English people</i> , ed. and trans. by Bertram Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969)
EHD	<i>English Historical Documents I: c. 500-1042</i> , 2 <sup>nd</sup> edition, ed. and trans. by Dorothy Whitelock
HBS	Henry Bradshaw Society
K	Kemble, John M., <i>Codex Diplomaticus Aevi Saxonici</i> , 6 vols (London: Sumptibus Socieitatis, 1839-1848), III
KEE	King Edgar's Establishment of Monasteries
<i>LME</i>	<i>Ælfric's Letter to the Monks of Eynsham</i> , ed. and trans by Christopher A. Jones, CSASE, 24 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998)

- NMFC New Minster Foundation Charter, ed. and trans by Alexander R. Rumble in *Property and Piety in Early Medieval Winchester*, Winchester Studies, 4.3 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), pp. 65-97
- ns new series
- os original series
- Passio* Abbo of Fleury, *Passio Sancti Eadmundi* ed. by Michael Winterbottom in *Three Lives of English Saints* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1972), pp. 17-29
- RS Rolls Series
- S Sawyer, Peter H., *Anglo-Saxon charters: an Annotated List and Bibliography* (London: Royal Historical Society, 1968)
- ss supplementary series
- VSD* *Vita Sancti Dunstani auctore B.*, ed. by William Stubbs, in *Memorials of Saint Dunstan*, ed. by William Stubbs, RS, 63 (London: Longman, 1874), pp. 3-52
- VSO* *Vita Oswaldi Archiepiscopi Eboracensis*, ed. by James Raine, in *The Historians of the Church of York and its Archbishops*, ed. by James Raine, RS 71, 3 vols, (London: Longman, 1879), I, pp. 399-475
- Wulfstan, *Vita* Wulfstan of Winchester, *Vita Sancti Æthelwoldi*, ed. and trans by Michael Lapidge and Michael Winterbottom in *The Life of St Æthelwold / Wulfstan of Winchester* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991)



## 1. GENERAL INTRODUCTION

This thesis considers specific moments and examples from the broad context of ‘the Benedictine Reform’ in order to investigate the ways in which texts and ideas were manipulated or negotiated to promote particular political and ecclesiastical interests. These include the influence of certain types of narrative, for example, hagiography and other documentary sources such as charters, setting them in the context of, and also interrogating them for what they can show us about, the contemporary ideology. The specific focal points of the current study are encapsulated by the two main thesis chapters, Winchester and Ramsey. The primary focus is on Æthelwold and Oswald, and the contemporary hagiography associated with their cults. In addition, Dunstan and Edward the Martyr will be examined, as well as those cults which received promotion and their first hagiography during this period – Swithun and Edmund of East Anglia.<sup>1</sup> The aim is to form the foundations of a survey of sanctity in late tenth- and early eleventh-century England and to determine whether or not there are any common themes to be found.

The earliest hagiography associated with Edward ‘the Martyr’, the son of King Edgar murdered *c.* 978, is found as a ‘mini-vita’ incorporated into the *Vita S. Oswaldi*. The text, composed within approximately two decades of the crime, provides evidence that the cult of the murdered king developed relatively quickly after his death. Thus the cult is a near contemporary of those of Æthelwold and

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<sup>1</sup> For a full discussion of Swithun’s cult see Michael Lapidge, *The Cult of St Swithun*, Winchester Studies, 4.2 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003). Unfortunately this work was published too late for it to be consulted for this thesis for any purposes other than providing translations, but it will certainly form a valuable contribution to scholarship on this topic.

Oswald, and is included in this study. Abbo of Fleury's text, the *Passio S. Eadmundi* is considered as it was composed at Ramsey during the period 985 x 987, when Abbo was master of the Ramsey school. Abbo most likely taught Byrhtferth and therefore the two texts can be read together to determine whether or not there are any similarities or differences to be found, particularly in the depiction of royal martyr saints, especially Edmund and Edward. In this way an attempt can be made to ascertain whether Abbo's work influenced Byrhtferth's, what common features there may be between the two texts and whether sanctity was constructed and depicted in ways that were particular to Ramsey.

The study has been divided into two main chapters: Winchester and Ramsey to reflect the two saints and the place of composition of the hagiography associated with them. The texts associated with Winchester, and also Æthelwold, are Wulfstan of Winchester's *Vita S. Æthelwoldi*, composed at Winchester at some point during the period c. 996 to c. 1000, and Ælfric's *Vita S. Æthelwoldi*. Ælfric's *vita* was composed later than Wulfstan, c. 1006, and it is clear that the work is based on that of Wulfstan's; indeed it reads as an abbreviated version of the original. As Ælfric was a student at Winchester under Æthelwold's tutelage, and his work is dedicated to the Bishop and monks of Winchester, it is interesting to examine his *vita* to see how he reworked some of the themes contained in Wulfstan's original – Æthelwold's close association with King Edgar, for example – in order to make it acceptable to an early eleventh-century (as opposed to a late tenth-century) Winchester audience. In this way the development of ideas on the constructions of sanctity can be traced from one generation to the next. The reason for choosing these texts, as opposed to others – the *Vita S.*

*Dunstani*, for example – is that they are the hagiographical texts associated with these monastic saints which can be best located geographically and whose authors can be identified with a considerable degree of certainty. The author of the *Vita S. Dunstani*, is simply known as ‘B’ and nothing more is known of the author or the place of composition than that it was probably composed on the Continent – perhaps at Ghent – by someone, possibly a cleric, who may have been with Dunstan at Glastonbury and who, as indicated by his dedication of the work to Archbishop Ælfric, may have written the work in an attempt to gain patronage.<sup>2</sup>

The relevant scholarship on each text is discussed at the appropriate places in the subsequent sections, and therefore a few notes on scholarship on the late tenth century in general will be given here to set this work in context. When considering modern scholarship on late tenth-century England, it is interesting to note that there appear to be two strands of work: one which gives a general overview of the period and personalities and one which deals with specific regions and individuals. The general works seem to follow a pattern, for the most part promoting Dunstan as the instigator and motivating force behind what has come to be called the ‘Benedictine Reform movement’ (a term which will be discussed in more detail below). This view was first put forward by Armitage Robinson in his *The Times of Saint Dunstan*, where Dunstan and Glastonbury are regarded as the most important elements of ‘the reform’.<sup>3</sup> This view was subsequently taken up by Knowles in *The Monastic Order in England*,<sup>4</sup> and both works regard

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<sup>2</sup> For a detailed examination of the *Vita S. Dunstani*, see Michael Lapidge, ‘B. and the *Vita S. Dunstani*’, in *St Dunstan: His Life Times and Cult*, ed. by Nigel Ramsay, Margaret Sparks and Tim Tatton-Brown (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1992), pp. 247-59.

<sup>3</sup> J. Armitage Robinson, *The Times of Saint Dunstan* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1923).

<sup>4</sup> David Knowles, *The Monastic Order in England 940-1216*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963).

Dunstan's abbacy of Glastonbury as the single most important event of the tenth century; Robinson says: 'It was a turning point in the history of religion in England', and likewise Knowles states: 'it was a decisive moment in the history of religion in England'<sup>5</sup>. Robinson and Knowles credit Æthelwold and Oswald with accomplishing the task of driving 'the reform movement' forward, but both are seen as disciples of Dunstan, a description which perhaps does not accurately reflect the reality reflected in the sources associated with this period. Although Eric John based many of his arguments and conclusions on evidence of charters which have since been found to be spurious, he nonetheless raises a number of interesting and well observed questions. He was, for example, the first scholar to question the central role assigned to Dunstan in 'the reform'.<sup>6</sup> The work of these earlier scholars is carried forward into the most recent 'generalist' work to cover this period: Loyn's chapter 'The English Church: Monastic Reform in the Tenth Century' in his *The English Church 940-1154*, although only recently published, reflects an earlier generation of scholarship that owes much to Knowles, John et al.<sup>7</sup> At this point it may be worth noting that many of the assumptions made by these 'generalist' authors reflect the views expressed by the twelfth-century authors William of Malmesbury and John of Worcester in their accounts of the period.<sup>8</sup> Both these authors credit Dunstan and Edgar as the stimulus for and controlling force of a unified 'reform' movement.

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<sup>5</sup> Robinson, *Times of Saint Dunstan*, p. 85 and Knowles, *Monastic Order*, p. 38.

<sup>6</sup> Eric John, 'The Sources of the English Monastic Reformation: A Comment', *Revue Bénédictine*, 70 (1960), 197-203 (p. 200, n. 1); 'the over-emphasis of the part of Dunstan in the revival seems to go back to the immediate post-Conquest historians of English monastic history', (p. 200, n. 1).

<sup>7</sup> H. R. Loyn, *The English Church 940-1154* (Harlow: Longman, 2000), pp. 1-23.

<sup>8</sup> William of Malmesbury, *De Gestis Pontificorum Anglorum*, ed. by N.E.S.A. Hamilton, RS 52 (London: Longman, 1870), trans by David Preest, *William of Malmesbury The Deeds of the Bishops of England (Gesta Pontificorum Anglorum)* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2002). John of Worcester, *The Chronicle of John of Worcester*, ed. by R. R. Darlington and P. McGurk, trans by Jennifer Bray and P. McGurk, 3 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), II.

These general accounts have been supplemented by the recent work done on individual personalities of the late tenth century: the collections of essays celebrating the centenaries of Dunstan, Æthelwold and Oswald, for example.<sup>9</sup> Other works have focused on the principal ecclesiastical centres, particularly Canterbury, Winchester, Worcester and Glastonbury, and have examined the role of individual places in late tenth-century ecclesiastical history.<sup>10</sup> Similarly there has been much work done on the literature of the period and on individual texts such as the *Regularis Concordia*, Æthelwold's Old English version of the Benedictine Rule and the text known as 'King Edgar's Establishment of Monasteries'.<sup>11</sup>

What is lacking is a revised general overview of the period; one which reconsiders the ecclesiastical history of the period and re-examines the evidence to

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<sup>9</sup> Dunstan: *St Dunstan: His Life, Times and Cult*; Æthelwold: *Bishop Æthelwold His Career and Influence*, ed. by Barbara Yorke (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1988) and Oswald: *St Oswald of Worcester*, ed. by Nicholas Brooks and Catherine Cubitt (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1996).

<sup>10</sup> Canterbury: Nicholas Brooks, *The Early History of the Church of Canterbury* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1984); Worcester: Julia Barrow, 'The Community of Worcester, 961-c. 1100', in *St Oswald of Worcester*, pp. 84-99, and Joe Hillaby, 'St Oswald, the Revival of Monasticism and the Veneration of the Saints in the Late Anglo-Saxon and Norman Diocese of Worcester', in *Transactions of the Worcester Archaeological Society*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, 16 (1998), 79-132; Winchester: *Tenth-Century Studies: Essays in Commemoration of the Millennium of the Council of Winchester and 'Regularis Concordia'*, ed. by David Parsons (London: Phillimore, 1975), *Winchester in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. by Martin Biddle, Winchester Studies, 1 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976) and Alexander Rumble, *Property and Piety in Early Medieval Winchester*, Winchester Studies 4.3 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); Glastonbury: Lesley Abrams, *Anglo-Saxon Glastonbury Church and Endowment* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1996), and *The Archaeology and History of Glastonbury Abbey*, ed. by Lesley Abrams and James P. Carley (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1991).

<sup>11</sup> *The Monastic agreement of the monks and nuns of the English nation*, ed. and trans by Thomas Symons (London: Nelson, 1953), (henceforward referred to as Symons, *Regularis Concordia*); *Die Regularis Concordia und ihre altenglische Interlinearversion*, ed. by Lucia Kornexl, (Munich: Fink, 1993); *eadem*, 'The *Regularis Concordia* and its Old English gloss', *ASE*, 24 (1995), 95-130; Mechthild Gretsch, 'Æthelwold's translation of the *Regula Sancti Benedicti* and its Latin exempla', *ASE*, 3 (1974), 125-151; *eadem*, 'The Benedictine Rule in Old English: a Document of Bishop Æthelwold's Reform Politics', in *Words, Texts and Manuscripts: Studies in Anglo-Saxon Culture Presented to Helmut Gneuss on the Occasion of his Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, ed. by Michael Korhammer (Cambridge: Brewer, 1992), pp. 131-58; 'An Account of King Edgar's Establishment of Monasteries', in *Councils and Synods, with other documents relating to the English Church*, ed. by D. Whitelock, M. Brett and C. N. L. Brooke, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), 1 (henceforward referred to as KEE), pp. 142-54.

determine whether or not a unified ‘reform’ movement can be seen to have existed. It is also noticeable that whilst the issue of sanctity has been discussed in the context of particular saints and associated hagiography, there has been no attempt to examine sanctity on a wider basis, or with reference to the politics of the late tenth century and its ecclesiastical history. It is hoped that this thesis can form the foundations for such a work both by examining the evidence for a ‘reform movement’, and by studying sanctity – its constructions and depictions – in the hagiography associated with two of the leading ecclesiastics of the period, and the ones who have been regarded as ‘reformers’ by subsequent generations of scholars.

In order to do this, the following methodology was established and used. The texts in question were closely examined in order to determine what other figures and themes the saint in question was associated with and the ways that these associations contributed to the characterisation of the saint and thereby to the construction of their sanctity. These associations could be with other saints; contemporary figures – for example Dunstan, who features prominently in the hagiography of both Æthelwold and Oswald; specific places, such as Fleury; secular figures, both individual kings and the more general ideas of ‘the crown’ or ‘the throne’; Biblical themes and characters; contemporary ideologies, for example the clear association of Edmund with the ruler ideology known as christological kingship; and the more abstract notion of ‘the divine’, that is associations with ‘the Lord’, Christ, the Holy Spirit or non-specific Biblical themes. All such associations were then noted under the headings Biblical, the divine, secular and ecclesiastical, and in this way it could be seen which group

predominated in any particular text. Each association was then studied to determine the role and function it had within the text; the way the association was used – what its purpose was; any precedents there may be for making such an association; and any similarities that the association may have to other texts, both hagiographical and non-hagiographical.

In the thesis itself, my analysis of these associations is presented in the two central chapters on Winchester and Ramsey. Each of these chapters is divided into sections dedicated to an individual text. These sections are in turn divided into subsections detailing each category of association. Detailed conclusions are made at the end of each section, where the texts involved can be compared and contrasted, so in order to avoid too much repetition, only a brief summation of the themes and associations is given at the end of the examination of each text.<sup>12</sup>

In order to read the hagiography in context other contemporary sources were also considered. These other sources include the extant charters from the reigns of Athelstan to Æthelred. The reasons for looking at the charter evidence and the methodology involved will be given in greater detail in the following chapter; all that need be noted here is that the charter survey was conducted in order to determine whether some, or all, of the claims made by hagiographers could be substantiated – whether the charter evidence corroborated Wulfstan's claim that

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<sup>12</sup> Biblical quotations given in Latin in the main body of the text are taken from the Vulgate and the English translations of these quotations are taken from the Douai-Rheims translation of the Vulgate. Translations of the *Vita Sancti Oswaldi* and the *Passio Sancti Eadmundi* are my own. Elsewhere translations are taken from the edition cited, or the EHD. On occasions these other translations have been modified for the sake of clarity and to make them more literal, where these translations have been altered, no quotation marks will be used and the citation will say that the translation has been altered. In addition, any editorial marks represented in quotations are those used by the editors of each text.

Æthelwold spent a period of time at Athelstan's court at the start of his career, for example. In addition coronation *ordines* were consulted in connection with the study of the royal saints Edmund and Edward the Martyr, as some of the themes and associations of christological kingship displayed in the hagiography can also be found in the *ordines*.

As noted above, one aim of this thesis is to examine the evidence in the hagiography, and the associated sources, for a unified 'reform movement'. It is important to consider what 'the reform' actually means. In most scholarship from the twelfth century onwards it is clear that 'the reform', or 'the Benedictine Reform' is generally understood to be a united movement started by Dunstan who, along with his 'disciples' Æthelwold and Oswald, set about restoring Benedictine monasticism to England in the late tenth century. The implication is that all three figures are initiating similar improvements in their respective centres: Glastonbury (and later Canterbury), Winchester and Worcester; each following the same principles and, after *c.* 970 x 973, all using the same monastic customary – the *Regularis Concordia*. There are, however, a number of problems with this view, and primarily with the assertion that these so-called 'reformers' are aiming to restore English monasticism to its former glory during the 'golden age' described by Bede in his *Historia Ecclesiastica*.

The notion that the use of the Benedictine Rule was widespread in the late seventh and early eighth centuries has been questioned increasingly in recent years, and although the Anglo-Saxons are recognised as showing an early interest



in the Rule it is now clear that it was rarely, if ever, used in its pure form.<sup>13</sup>

Furthermore, it is evident that in the later Anglo-Saxon period individual monasteries, although often following the Rule, adapted it to suit the needs of that specific house. The assumption that monastic life in England had disappeared during the first wave of Viking invasions is also something which needs to be challenged, as although communities such as those on Lindisfarne suffered during this period, there is evidence that the destruction of monasticism was not so widespread as had been supposed.<sup>14</sup> Indeed, it is usually the later, 'Benedictine' monastic sources which claim that there were no monasteries in England until Dunstan refounded Glastonbury and Æthelwold was given the allegedly derelict monastery at Abingdon in the late tenth century.<sup>15</sup>

At several points this thesis draws attention to the fact that the earliest surviving evidence for particular constructions of 'the reform' dates to the twelfth century. This lends support to the current scholarly understanding of the ways in which the twelfth century was engaged in a reconstruction of the events of the later Anglo-Saxon period. The main lines of scholarly argument have not always been alert to whether the twelfth-century evidence that they draw on is supported by pre-Conquest sources. A more detailed deconstruction of the idea of 'the reform' will be included in the conclusion to the thesis, where the evidence to support this idea can be set out in full. All that need be noted here is that from the

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<sup>13</sup> See Patrick Wormald, 'Bede and Benedict Biscop', in *Famulus Christi : Essays in Commemoration of the Thirteenth Centenary of the Birth of the Venerable Bede*, ed. by Gerald Bonner (London: S.P.C.K., 1976), pp. 141-69.

<sup>14</sup> See Dawn Hadley, 'Viking and Native: Rethinking Identity in the Danelaw', *Early Medieval Europe*, 11 (2002), 45-70, *eadem*, 'Cockle Amongst the Wheat: the Scandinavian Settlement of England', in *Social Identity in Early Medieval Britain*, ed. by William O. Frazer and Andrew Tyrrell (London: Leicester University Press, 2000), pp. 111-35 and *eadem*, 'And they proceeded to plough and support themselves: the Scandinavian Settlement of England', *Anglo-Norman Studies*, 19 (1996), 69-96.

<sup>15</sup> See, for example, Wulfstan, *Vita*, c. 18, pp. 32-33.

analysis of the evidence of late tenth- and early eleventh-century hagiography and the other sources considered in this study, it is apparent that to speak of a unified ‘reform movement’ or ‘the reform’ fails to take into consideration the clear indications in these texts that there was no such movement, that each figure – Dunstan, Æthelwold and Oswald – promoted Benedictine monasticism in his own way in his respective centre. Therefore in order to find other ways of describing the developments in monasticism which occurred at this time no such assumptions about ‘the reform’, ‘reform texts’ and ‘reform saints’ will be made.

There are other terms used consistently throughout the thesis which require some definition here: ‘anti-monastic reaction’ and ‘christological kingship’. ‘Anti-monastic reaction’ is the term commonly applied to the turmoil after the death of Edgar in 975 when many Benedictine houses had lands confiscated by secular landowners. As Fisher has noted, the term ‘anti-monastic’ is misleading, as many of those attacking some monasteries were patrons of others.<sup>16</sup> It looks, therefore, as if this was a reaction against specific monasteries and not others, in particular those houses which gained lands at the expense of lay owners. The problems arose as a result of the many tenurial changes which occurred when the Benedictine houses were formed; many landowners were forced to give the monasteries land which they had held for generations, but which the monks claimed had belonged to the monastery in the ‘golden age’ before the Viking invasions. Although these lands were often purchased by the monasteries (or on their behalf) from the landowners, it was usually on terms which favoured the monks as opposed to the landowners, and as the monks had the support of the

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<sup>16</sup> D. J. V. Fisher, ‘The Anti-Monastic Reaction in the Reign of Edward the Martyr’, *Cambridge Historical Journal*, 10 (1950-52), 254-70.

king, there was little that the nobles could do but relinquish their lands.<sup>17</sup> For the sake of ease of terminology, ‘anti-monastic reaction’ is used in places in this thesis to refer to this period and to the struggles between certain monasteries and landowners which ensued after the death of Edgar.

‘Christological kingship’ is a term which is used particularly in connection with the royal saints Edmund and Edward the Martyr. It refers to the development in ruler theology which took place in the late tenth century in Anglo-Saxon England and Ottonian Germany, whereby the kings were imbued with monastic ideals and imagery and, in particular, imagery associated with Christ. The development of christological kingship in Anglo-Saxon England has been discussed in detail by Robert Deshman.<sup>18</sup> One striking example of which is close to the central focus of this thesis is the proem to the *Regularis Concordia*, where Edgar is described as ‘pastor pastorum’,<sup>19</sup> which is clearly a reference to I Peter 5. 4 where Christ is described as ‘princeps pastorum’ (‘prince of pastors’). In addition, the charter marking Æthelwold’s refoundation of the New Minster,

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<sup>17</sup> See Alan Thacker, ‘Æthelwold and Abingdon’, in *Bishop Æthelwold*, pp. 43-64 for a discussion of the endowment of Abingdon. See also A. Williams, ‘*Princeps Merciorum gentis*: the Family, Career and Connections of Ælfhere, Ealdorman of Mercia, 956-83’, *ASE*, 10 (1982), 143-72 for a discussion of the way that lands were given to the Mercian monasteries of Oswald, and how that land was reclaimed after the death of Edgar.

<sup>18</sup> See Robert Deshman, *The Benedictional of Æthelwold*, *Studies in Manuscript Illumination*, 9 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), *idem*, ‘*Benedictus monarcha et monachus*: Early Medieval Ruler Theology and the Anglo-Saxon Reform’, *Frühmittelalterliche Studien*, 22 (1988), 204-240 and *idem*, ‘The Imagery of the Living Ecclesia and the English Monastic Reform’, in *Sources of Anglo-Saxon Culture*, ed. by Paul E. Szarmach, *Studies in Medieval Culture*, 20 (Kalamazoo MI: Western Michigan University Press, 1986), pp. 261-82.

<sup>19</sup> Symons, *Regularis Concordia*, p. 2; ‘Regali utique functus officio ueluti Pastorum Pastor sollicitus a rabidis perfidorum rictibus, uti hiantibus luporum faucibus, oues quas Domini largiente gratia studiosus collegerat muniendo eripuit’; ‘Thus, in the fulfilment of his royal office, even as the Good Shepherd, he carefully rescued and defended from the savage open mouths of the wicked – as it were the gaping jaws of wolves – those sheep which by God’s grace he had diligently gathered together’. C.f. I Peter 5. 4: ‘et cum apparuerit princeps pastorum percipietis inmarcescibilem gloriae coronam’; ‘and when the prince of pastors shall appear, you shall receive a never fading crown of glory’.

Winchester, refers to Edgar as ‘Christi uicarius’ (‘vicar of Christ’)<sup>20</sup>. Perhaps the best example to be found is the depiction of Edmund in Abbo’s *Passio S.*

*Eadmundi*, discussed below, where Edmund is clearly characterised as a monastic king and a Christ-figure.

The concepts covered by these two terms, ‘anti-monastic reaction’ and ‘christological kingship’ are important to the arguments set out in this thesis. The ‘anti-monastic reaction’ supports recent scholarly arguments that wish to complicate the somewhat simplistic picture of ‘the Benedictine Reform’. Christological kingship is a phenomenon which is manifested in texts of the period which are examined in this thesis. In order to provide a critical foundation for the textual analysis of the main chapters, the following chapter will re-examine the political context for events narrated in the hagiography.

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<sup>20</sup> New Minster Foundation Charter, ed. and trans by Alexander R. Rumble in, *Property and Piety in Early Medieval Winchester*, Winchester Studies, 4.3 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), pp. 65-97 (Henceforward referred to as NMFC), VII, p. 81.

## 2. POLITICS

### Introduction

The late tenth century in England is most often associated with a period of the revival of Benedictine monasticism known as ‘the Benedictine Reform’. This ‘reform’ was notable for the support which kings, particularly Edgar, gave to the promotion of monastic ideals. The monastic revival was also noted for the close involvement of bishops and archbishops who were themselves monks; Dunstan, Æthelwold and Oswald being the three best known figures of the ‘reform movement’.<sup>1</sup>

Dunstan is often credited as the founder of ‘the reform’, but, as we will see, this is open to question. He was appointed abbot of Glastonbury 940x946 by King Edmund. As abbot he is said to have transformed the community following the principles set out in the Rule of St Benedict. He was joined at Glastonbury by Æthelwold some time in 940s. Æthelwold spent many years studying under Dunstan and taking the monastic habit at Glastonbury. The ‘reform’ continued when Æthelwold was given the neglected monastery of Abingdon to refound c. 954. Æthelwold was joined at Abingdon by monks from Glastonbury and he rebuilt the monastery and established a monastic community, again based around the Rule of St Benedict. The ‘reform’ is said to have suffered during the reign of Eadwig. Personal differences between the young king and Dunstan resulted in Dunstan’s exile from England between 956 and 958.

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<sup>1</sup> The most recent general account of ‘the reform’ can be found in Loyn, ‘The English Church: Monastic Reform in the Tenth Century’. There are, however, problems with this account, as noted in the General Introduction. Discussions of the life and works of Dunstan, Æthelwold and Oswald can be found in *St Dunstan: His Life Times and Cult*, ed. by Nigel Ramsay, Margaret Sparks and Tim Tatton-Brown; *Bishop Æthelwold His Career and Influence*, ed. by Barbara Yorke and *St Oswald of Worcester*, ed. by Nicholas Brooks and Catherine Cubitt.

In 958 Eadwig's younger brother, Edgar, was appointed king of England north of the Thames and Edgar recalled Dunstan from exile and made him bishop of Worcester in 958 and bishop of London, also in 958. In 959 Eadwig died and Edgar succeeded to the throne of the whole country and it is this period which is generally regarded as the climax of 'the reform'. It is likely that Edgar was tutored by Æthelwold at Abingdon, where he was imbued with a respect for Benedictine monasticism which was to become a prominent feature of his reign. Edgar is frequently represented as acting as a father figure to monks and supporter of 'the reform'. According to contemporary texts, Edgar ordered monasteries to be built and helped monastic founders, for example Æthelwold, by granting them and their foundations privileges of lands and ensuring that the monastic houses were given, or were able to buy, lands on terms which favoured the monks, and not the secular landowners.

Dunstan and Æthelwold were joined in 'the reform' by Oswald who had trained as a monk at one of the foremost Continental Benedictine houses, Fleury. Oswald was appointed bishop of Worcester in 961 after Dunstan was promoted to the archbishopric of Canterbury in 959, and in 963 Æthelwold was appointed bishop of Worcester. In 964, and with the assistance of one of Edgar's leading thegns, Æthelwold forcibly expelled the secular clerics from the Old Minster, Winchester; an event which is often regarded as a defining moment of 'the reform'. From this period onwards 'the reform' continued to gain momentum; numerous monasteries were founded, including Westbury-on-Trym and Thorney, and others were refounded, Ely and Pershore, for example. In 971 Oswald was appointed to the archbishopric of York, which he held in plurality with

Worcester until his death. Scholars point to the Council of Winchester as another important event of ‘the reform’. This council, held in *c.* 973, was an assembly of all the leading bishops and abbots, convened by the king, to discuss the state of English monasticism. Again there are difficulties in the current reconstruction. It is generally accepted that from this meeting came a document known as the *Regularis Concordia*, a monastic customary compiled by Æthelwold which was intended to unify monastic practises throughout England. Edgar died in 975 and there followed a period which is often referred to as ‘the anti-monastic reaction’, when many monasteries, especially those in Mercia, suffered through loss of lands which were reclaimed by secular landowners who had themselves suffered when the lands were claimed by the monasteries in Edgar’s reign.

In order to reconsider the roles of Dunstan, Æthelwold and Oswald in the political life of the late tenth century, what follows is an integrated overview of the primary and secondary material. Much work has been done on the literature of the period and individual texts and authors of both the late tenth and early eleventh centuries.<sup>2</sup> Here the role politics played in the development of monastic life, particularly that which centred on the Rule of Saint Benedict, will be considered.

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<sup>2</sup> *Die Regularis*, ed. by Lucia Kornexl; Mechtild Gretsch, ‘Æthelwold’s translation of the *Regula Sancti Benedicti* and its Latin exempla’ and ‘The Benedictine Rule in Old English’. For authors of the second generation of ‘reform’ see Christopher A. Jones, ed. and trans, *Ælfric’s Letter to the Monks of Eynsham*, CSASE, 24 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Jonathan Wilcox, ed., *Ælfric’s Prefaces* (Durham: Durham Medieval Texts, 1994) and Joyce Hill, ‘The Preservation and Transmission of Ælfric’s Saints’ Lives: Reader-Reception and Reader-Response in the Early Middle Ages’, in *The Preservation and Transmission of Anglo-Saxon Culture*, ed. by Paul E. Szarmach and Joel T. Rosenthal (Kalamazoo MI: Medieval Institute Publications, Western Michigan University, 1997), pp. 405-430 and *eadem* ‘Monastic Reform and the Secular Church: Ælfric’s Pastoral Letters in Context’, in *England in the Eleventh Century: Proceedings of the 1990 Harlaxton Symposium*, ed. by Carola Hicks (Stamford: Paul Watkins, 1992), pp. 103-117.

The general assertions made by the hagiographers about each figure – Dunstan, Æthelwold and Oswald – have been examined in the texts under consideration: Byrhtferth of Ramsey's *Vita S. Oswaldi*, Wulfstan's *Vita S. Æthelwoldi* and Ælfric's *Vita S. Æthelwoldi*. In an attempt to try to establish which parts of the hagiographical texts present a reasonably accurate account of the political life of the time and the role that the three subjects played in it, the witness lists of contemporary charters have been examined. A lot of work has been done on Anglo-Saxon charters, but much of it has yet to be published, and, as with the work on the individual characters and places, the work done so far has been very focused; there has been no general overview, with no attempt being made to read the charters alongside the hagiographical texts.<sup>3</sup>

Furthermore, the published work on these charters contains no statement of a standardised methodology for approaching the study of the documents, and therefore what follows is an account of how they were used for this analysis.

## **Methodology**

The survey studied the royal charters from the reigns of Athelstan to Æthelred and in particular those listed by Sawyer and published by Birch and

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<sup>3</sup> See, for example, Simon Keynes, *The Diplomas of King Aethelred 'the Unready', 978-1016: A Study in Their Use as Historical Evidence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980); *idem*, 'The 'Dunstan B' charters', *ASE*, 23 (1994), 165-93; *idem*, 'A lost cartulary of St Alban's Abbey', *ASE*, 22 (1993), 253-279; Peter Sawyer, 'Charters of the Reform movement: the Worcester archive', in *Tenth-Century Studies*, pp. 84-93; and the British Academy and Royal Historical Society series of editions of Anglo-Saxon charters both published and in preparation, the most recent of which are the two volumes on the Abingdon cartulary edited by S. E. Kelly: *Charters of Abingdon Abbey*, Anglo-Saxon Charters, 7 and 8, 2 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000-2001) and the volume dedicated to the New Minster, Winchester, edited by Sean Miller: *Charters of the New Minster, Winchester*, Anglo-Saxon Charters, 9 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).



Kemble.<sup>4</sup> Some charters not found in either Birch or Kemble, but published on the website <http://www.anglo-saxons.net/hwaet?do=show&page=Charters><sup>5</sup> which gives witness lists, have also been included in the survey, in order to make it as comprehensive and accurate as possible. The witness lists were carefully examined and all occurrences of the names Dunstan, Æthelwold and Oswald, in any form (for example there were numerous spellings of Æthelwold: Athelwoldus, Æþelpold, Æðelwold and Æthelpold) were recorded and tables were created noting the following: the charter number, both Sawyer and either Birch or Kemble, the date, a brief description of the charter, and the attestation (for example: *Dunstan abbas* or *Æthelwoldus episcopus*). Once this survey was complete the process was repeated, with particular attention being paid to the charters of the reigns of Eadwig, Edgar and Æthelred, to note the relative positions in the witness list of the attestations of the three leading reformers; again these results were recorded in tabular form. Once these results had been noted, the same process was repeated a third time, looking at the attestations and relative positions of the bishops and abbots during this period, with particular attention being paid to the archbishops of Canterbury and York and the bishops of Winchester, Worcester and London. Finally the manuscript date and provenance of each relevant charter were recorded, using the information provided in Sawyer's *Anglo-Saxon Charters*.

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<sup>4</sup> Sawyer, *Anglo-Saxon Charters*. Birch: W. de Gray Birch, *Cartularium Saxonicum*, 3 vols (1885-1899); Kemble: John M. Kemble, *Codex diplomaticus aevi saxonici*, 6 vols (London: Sumptibus Societatis, 1839-1848), III.

<sup>5</sup> Charter database listed on [www.anglo-saxons.net](http://www.anglo-saxons.net) < <http://www.anglo-saxons.net/hwaet?do=show&page=Charters> > [site maintained by Sean Miller, last accessed 25 September 2003].

When the tables had been completed, taking each figure in turn, the number of attestations of each rank – Dunstan as *abbas*, *episcopus* and *archiepiscopus*, Æthelwold as *minister*, *abbas* and *episcopus* and Oswald as *episcopus* and *archiepiscopus* – during the individual reigns from Athelstan to Æthelred were counted and these figures were noted on a spreadsheet. These figures were then converted to a percentage of the total number of royal charters for each reign and once again, the results were noted on a spreadsheet and both sets of results were represented in graphic form. In addition the total number of attestations from each reign – regardless of rank – was set against the total number of charters.<sup>6</sup> The tables and accompanying graphs can be found at the end of the thesis in the Appendices.

The information relating to the bishops of Winchester, Worcester and London was treated in a similar manner: the total number of attestations from each bishop in each reign (from Athelstan to Edgar) was noted on a separate spreadsheet and then rendered in graphic form, with the addition of the attestations of the archbishops of Canterbury and York; those by Dunstan and Oswald being rendered separately. Graphs were produced for each individual reign and a final graph was produced combining all the data to illustrate the relative attestations and importance of these sees. In order to determine the relative significance of the attestations of Dunstan and Oswald as archbishops of Canterbury and York respectively, the number of attestations of the archbishops of Canterbury and York from each reign (Athelstan to Edgar) were recorded, both as numbers and as a percentage of the total number of charters from each

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<sup>6</sup> See Appendix A, Tables 1, 2 and 3.

reign. Once again this information was recorded on a spreadsheet and represented graphically.<sup>7</sup>

## Analysis

Dunstan, according to his earliest biographer, B, spent his childhood in Glastonbury where he received clerical tonsure before entering the household of Bishop Ælfheah ‘the Bald’ of Winchester. It was through the influence of Ælfheah that Dunstan rejected marriage and became a monk, before returning to Glastonbury to the household of the matron Æthelflæd (a niece of king Athelstan). After this Dunstan was made abbot of Glastonbury by king Eadmund.<sup>8</sup> Adelard, the next biographer of Dunstan, adds a period in the household of his paternal uncle Athelm, archbishop of Canterbury, who commended Dunstan to Athelstan and brought him to the royal court; according to Adelard, only after he is given Glastonbury by Eadmund does Dunstan become a monk.<sup>9</sup> Through this and other alterations and additions made to B’s *vita*, Adelard appears to be creating, or at least strengthening, connections between the Dunstan tradition and Winchester and Canterbury; Adelard was writing for a Canterbury audience and an archbishop who had previously been bishop of Winchester.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> See Appendix B, Graphs 5 and 6.

<sup>8</sup> B, *Vita Sancti Dunstani*, in *Memorials of Saint Dunstan*, ed. by William Stubbs, RS, 63 (London: Longman, 1874), pp. 3-52), (henceforward referred to as *VSD*), c. 14, pp. 24-25.

<sup>9</sup> Adelard, *Epistola Adelardi ad Elfegum Archiepiscopum de Vita Sancti Dunstani*, in *Memorials of Saint Dunstan*, ed. by William Stubbs, pp. 53-68, *lectio* 3, p. 56.

<sup>10</sup> The career of Dunstan and its relationship to the various biographies is discussed in detail by Nicholas Brooks in ‘The Career of St Dunstan’, in *St Dunstan: His Life, Times and Cult*, pp. 1-23; for a description of the alterations made by Adelard and the later hagiographers see pp. 2-3.

Wulfstan, the earliest biographer of Æthelwold, says that during his *adolescentia* the saint had gained such a reputation for holy life that he was made known to King Athelstan, who sent for him, and Wulfstan reports that Æthelwold subsequently spent a period in the king's household.<sup>11</sup> At the king's command Æthelwold first received clerical tonsure and was then consecrated as a priest by Ælfheah, bishop of Winchester; according to Wulfstan this occurred on the same day that Dunstan was tonsured to clerical orders. There followed a period spent in the household of Ælfheah, again at the king's command (*praecipiente rege*), when, according to Wulfstan, Æthelwold's inclination was to go to Glastonbury. He did go to Glastonbury, presumably after the death of Athelstan, and under the tutelage of Dunstan became a monk and attained the rank of deacon.

Oswald's earliest biographer, Byrhtferth of Ramsey, states that Oswald was a nephew of Oda, archbishop of Canterbury from 941 to 958. Oda is credited with Oswald's early education, the implication being that he spent his time with his uncle in Canterbury. At some unspecified point in his youth Oswald purchased a monastery in Winchester with a gift of money given to him by Oda. Precisely which monastery is uncertain, but it is highly unlikely to have been the New Minster. Rather than trying to fit Oswald into a community at either the Old or New Minster, this should highlight how many unidentified monastic communities there probably were in and around Winchester at this time. After a period spent in Winchester, Oswald found the monastic life there too luxurious and, desiring a stricter way of life, asked Oda to allow him to travel overseas. Oda duly sent him to Fleury, where he remained for several years during the

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<sup>11</sup> Wulfstan, *Vita Æthelwoldi* c. 7.

950s, finally attaining the rank of deacon before Oda sent for Oswald to come and join him. Oswald returned to England to be greeted with the news that his uncle was dead and so he travelled to York to another relative, Archbishop Oskytel. According to Byrhtferth, Oskytel introduced the young Oswald to Dunstan, who, it is implied, was bishop of Worcester at this time. On his elevation to the archbishopric of Canterbury, Dunstan recommended to King Edgar that Oswald be given the, now vacant, bishopric of Worcester, in 961.

Dunstan does not appear in the witness lists of any charters from Athelstan's reign, which may indicate that he was either not at court at this time, or that if he was, then he was not considered important enough to witness charters. This would seem to corroborate the narration of B, who makes no mention of a period spent at Athelstan's court; it also adds credence to the belief that Adelard's addition of such an episode was an invention designed to strengthen the Winchester–Canterbury connections. An Æthelwold, however, appears as *minister* in the witness lists of charters from the period 931 to 939 of Athelstan's reign. All or at least some of these references may be to the future bishop of Winchester. The chronology of Æthelwold's life as described by Wulfstan and drawn up by Lapidge and Winterbottom shows that the period of Æthelwold's stay in Athelstan's household (from the beginning of his *adolescencia*) was sometime during the period 924 x 937/8; thus it is possible that the earlier attestations by *Æthelwold minister* could be Æthelwold of Winchester.<sup>12</sup> It is less likely that the later attestations could be the 'correct' Æthelwold, as it would appear that this would be the time (934/5 x October 939) spent with Ælfheah,

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<sup>12</sup> For the chronology of Æthelwold's life see Lapidge and Winterbottom, *Wulfstan of Winchester*, pp. xl-xlii.

presumably in Winchester, and an examination of the itinerary of King Athelstan shows that there was only one *witan* held at Winchester during this period; in May 934.<sup>13</sup> It is perhaps worth noting here that, during this time, both Æthelwold and Dunstan were, according to their respective biographers, at Winchester in the household of bishop Ælfheah, yet B makes no mention of Æthelwold's presence, whilst Wulfstan tells how Ælfheah consecrated both Æthelwold and Dunstan as priests on the same day.<sup>14</sup>

The precise date of Dunstan's appointment as abbot of Glastonbury is at some point during the reign of king Eadmund (939-46). His first appearance in the witness lists is in a charter from this reign (S509 / B816) dated to 946; he appears as the last of four *abbates* in the list.<sup>15</sup> The next attestation comes from a charter of the same year, issued by Eadred (S520 / B815), where he appears as *abbud*, the second-to-last attestation in the second of two columns of witnesses. The next appearance of Dunstan in the witness lists comes in a charter of 948, with the attestation *Dunstanus abbas Glastoniae*,<sup>16</sup> and from 949 onwards he appears regularly in the lists.<sup>17</sup> The charter S466 (B752), dated 940, a diploma of Eadmund, grants an estate at Christian Malford in Wiltshire to Abbot Dunstan. This charter is, however, somewhat problematic; although it is preserved in the

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<sup>13</sup> For a map of the itineraries of the Anglo-Saxon kings see David Hill, *An Atlas of Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1981), pp. 85-91 (p. 87). It is interesting to note that May 934 is, in fact, the only time that the *witan* was held in Winchester during Athelstan's reign.

<sup>14</sup> Wulfstan, *Vita*, c. 8, pp. 12-13. This story is repeated by William of Malmesbury in his *Gesta Pontificorum* II: 75, p. 164-65 (trans Preest, pp. 108-109).

<sup>15</sup> The descriptions of attestations and their positions within witness lists are taken from those charters published by Birch.

<sup>16</sup> S 538 (B 872) this charter survives in five manuscripts, the earliest of which dates from the late fourteenth century (P.R.O., Pat. R. 17 Ric. II pt 1, m. 31), manuscripts listed as they are in Sawyer.

<sup>17</sup> Attestations by Dunstan as abbot appear in 2% of the charters from Edmund's reign, 15% of those from Eadred's and 7% from Eadwig's. These figures increase significantly once Dunstan starts witnessing charters in Edgar's reign where attestations by Dunstan as *episcopus* and *archiepiscopus* appear in 86% of charters in total.

Glastonbury cartularies, it was not included in the *Liber Terrarum*, a late eleventh- to early twelfth-century cartulary of the abbey which is now lost, but whose contents are listed in another manuscript: Cambridge, Trinity College, MS R.5.33.<sup>18</sup> S 466, despite missing its witness list, contains formulae (including the dating clause), which are believed to derive from the original, but it has been argued that here it is possible that a later forger substituted Dunstan's name in the original version of this charter, which had a lay beneficiary.<sup>19</sup> The witness list of another charter, although admittedly not a royal diploma, dating to 940, contains an attestation by a Dunstan. Of the four manuscripts in which this charter is found, two date from the twelfth century.<sup>20</sup>

The evidence of the *Vitae Æthelwoldi* however is often overlooked by those trying to determine the date of Dunstan's appointment to Glastonbury. According to Wulfstan, who is followed in this by Ælfric, Æthelwold stayed with Ælfheah in Winchester at Athelstan's insistence, when his inclination was to leave and become a monk at Glastonbury. This would seem to imply that Dunstan was already at Glastonbury during Athelstan's reign, which – given the wealth of evidence to the contrary – would seem unlikely. The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* gives the date 942 for the appointment of Dunstan to Glastonbury.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> See Brooks, 'The Career of St Dunstan', p. 4, n. 15.

<sup>19</sup> See Brooks, 'The Career of St Dunstan', p. 4.

<sup>20</sup> Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, 189, f. 200 and Canterbury, DC., Reg. P, f. 21<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>21</sup> *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: A Collaborative Edition*, 3, MS A, ed. by Janet Bately (Cambridge: Brewer, 1986) (henceforward referred to as *ASC MS A*), for the year 942 states: 'Eadmund cing Sancte Dunstane Glæs]tingeberig betæhte ðær he syððan ærest abbud wearð', p. 73. As Bately says in the notes to this edition, this text is 'additional material in hand 7, with the first part erased. Reading supplied from F', p. 73, n. 4. 'Here King Edmund entrusted Glastonbury to St Dunstan, where he afterwards first became abbot' (trans in *English Historical Documents I: c. 500-1042*, ed. by Dorothy Whitelock, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (London: Eyre Methuen, 1979) (henceforward referred to as EHD), p. 221).

This date is repeated by the twelfth-century chronicler John of Worcester.<sup>22</sup> The evidence of the charters would seem to disprove the convention (started by B) that Dunstan was a confidant of the king. There are relatively few attestations by *Dunstan abbas*; ten out of the sixty-eight extant charters dating to Eadmund's reign.<sup>23</sup> This might indicate that Dunstan was not yet appointed to Glastonbury until later in the reign. Alternatively, Dunstan may have been appointed earlier, but was unpopular, or not considered important enough to be included in the witness lists to the charters.<sup>24</sup> Given the way that the twelfth-century authors such as William of Malmesbury and John of Worcester seem to have (re)written the history of the late tenth-century development of Benedictine monasticism with Dunstan as its focus, it is possible that those early charters dedicated to and witnessed by *Dunstan abbas* could have been altered in the twelfth century to make the charter evidence fit with the traditions of Dunstan's centrality and close relations with the king being reported by the chroniclers. Whilst it is appreciated that to a certain extent this is an argument from silence, which is problematic in this early period, the point is nevertheless worth making.

There are similar uncertainties surrounding the date for Æthelwold's appointment to the abbacy of Abingdon. The traditional date given is *c.* 954, based on the account in the fourteenth-century *Cronicon* of John of Glastonbury,

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<sup>22</sup> John of Worcester writes: 'Hic Dei seruo *Dunstano* sumus et *eius consiliis gloriosus a quo diuersis honoribus sullimatus Glastonie, in qua educatus est, abbatis iure preficitur*', 'He (Edmund) became most high and glorious through the counsels of God's servant Dunstan, whom, after advancing him to various honours, he put in charge of Glastonbury (where Dunstan was brought up), as abbot'; John of Worcester, *Chronicle*, pp. 396-397.

<sup>23</sup> This equates to 15% of the charters. See Tables 1-3 in Appendix A.

<sup>24</sup> *VSD*, c. 13, pp. 21-23. See also Brooks, 'The Career of St Dunstan', pp. 11-14. For a discussion of the composition of the witness lists of charters see Keynes, *Diplomas*, pp. 154-62 (pp. 155-56).



and repeated in Knowles.<sup>25</sup> From the hagiography it is clear that Æthelwold went to Glastonbury either late in Athelstan's reign or early in Edmund's. Æthelwold spent an unspecified time there, rising through the ranks to become *decanus*.<sup>26</sup> The implication is that Æthelwold spent the entire period of Edmund's reign at Glastonbury.<sup>27</sup> This implication appears to be supported by the charter evidence as there are only three attestations by an *Æthelwold minister* in the witness lists of the charters from Edmund's reign, all in low positions and it is unlikely that these refer to Æthelwold of Winchester. According to Wulfstan, Æthelwold eventually became dissatisfied with the life at Glastonbury and requested to be allowed to travel overseas, but was prevented from doing so by King Eadred, acting on the instructions of his mother, Eadgifu. Subsequently Eadred, again through the influence of Eadgifu, gave the derelict monastery of Abingdon to Æthelwold to refound.<sup>28</sup> This would indicate that Æthelwold was given Abingdon at some point during the period 946 x 955.

Æthelwold appears in five of Eadred's charters dating to the period 946 to 955.<sup>29</sup> In only two of these – S 538 (dating to 948) and 567 (dating to 955) – is Æthelwold listed as 'abbas', which would appear to suggest that 948 is the

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<sup>25</sup> John of Glastonbury, *Cronicon sive Antiquitates Glastoniensis Ecclesiae*, ed. by James P. Carley and trans. by David Townsend (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1985), pp. 124-25. See also, *The Heads of Religious Houses: England and Wales, I: 940-1216*, ed. by David Knowles, C. N. L. Brooke and Vera C. M. London, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 23.

<sup>26</sup> The implication from Wulfstan's *Vita* (which is repeated by Ælfric), is that Æthelwold went to Glastonbury on the death of Athelstan: both texts state that Æthelwold remained in Winchester at the king's command ('praecipiente rege') and the later ('postmodum') went to Glastonbury, although there is no indication in either text of how long was meant by 'postmodum'. See Wulfstan, *Vita*, c. 9, pp. 14-15 and Ælfric, *Vita*, c. 6, p. 72 (EHD, p. 905).

<sup>27</sup> S 461, 463 and 464.

<sup>28</sup> See Wulfstan, *Vita*, c. 11, pp. 18-23 and Ælfric, *Vita*, cc, 7-8, p. 73 (EHD, pp. 905-06). See also Thacker, 'Æthelwold and Abingdon', for a discussion of the condition of Abingdon when Æthelwold was appointed abbot.

<sup>29</sup> These are S 520, 538, 544, 549 and 567. Only S 538 and 567 were used for the statistical analysis as in the other three charters the subscriptions read: 'Aepelwald pontifex'; 'Æpelwald presul pontificale cum augusto eulogium iubilando dogmatizau'; and 'Ældred et Æpelwald scripserunt pontificali auctoritate concordantes' respectively.

earliest possible date for Æthelwold's appointment to Abingdon. There are, however, problems with both charters. Opinion is divided on the authenticity of S 538, a confirmation of privileges and grant of land by Eadred to Crowland Abbey;<sup>30</sup> whereas S 567 – a grant by Eadred to Æthelwold of land at Abingdon and elsewhere – is generally held to be spurious.<sup>31</sup> The argument for a date of 954 is strengthened by the inclusion of a passage in Wulfstan's *Vita* (and repeated by Ælfric) describing how Eadred and his retinue were entertained at Abingdon by Æthelwold and how the supply of mead proved inexhaustible. Although this passage is intended as a miracle story, it contains the detail that present in the king's entourage were Northumbrian thegns, who became intoxicated.<sup>32</sup> A feature of Eadred's reign had been troubled relations with the Northumbrian kingdom. In 947 it had accepted Eadred's rule, but rebelled against him in the following year, before the Northumbrians finally pledged themselves to Eadred in 954.<sup>33</sup> It is most likely that there would have been Northumbrian hostages in Eadred's retinue at this time, which would explain their presence at Abingdon, and therefore the hagiographic episode might be rooted in some contemporary political reality. Æthelwold's absence from genuine charters from the later period of Eadred's reign may indicate that Æthelwold was either not at court, busy with his restoration of Abingdon, or that

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<sup>30</sup> See Sawyer, *Anglo-Saxon Charters*, p. 204 for details. It is worth noting that this charter survives in manuscripts dating to the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries: London, BL Arundel 178, 41r-42r (s. xvi); PRO Conf. R. 1 Hen. VIII, pt 2, no. 7; PRO Pat. R. 17 Ric. II, pt 1, m. 31; PRO Pat. R. 1 Hen. IV, pt 2, m. 8 and Oxford, All Souls College, 32, 4<sup>v</sup>-6<sup>v</sup> (s. xv).

<sup>31</sup> See Michael Lapidge, 'Æthelwold as Scholar and Teacher', in *Bishop Æthelwold*, pp. 89-117 (p. 94), Keynes, *Diplomas* p. 116 n. 6 and p. 27 n. 40.

<sup>32</sup> Wulfstan, *Vita*, c. 12, pp. 22-25; Ælfric, *Vita*, c. 8, p. 73.

<sup>33</sup> See *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: A Collaborative Edition*, ed. by G. P. Cubbin, 6, MS D (Cambridge: Brewer, 1996) (henceforward referred to as ASC MS D) for the years 947, p. 44 (EHD, p. 222) and 954, p. 45 (EHD, p. 224).

his position as abbot of a newly refounded monastery was not considered important enough to be included in the witness lists.<sup>34</sup>

Both Dunstan and Æthelwold appear in the charters of Eadwig's reign, although neither features in many charters or in a particularly prominent position: both appear in five charters, although not the same five.<sup>35</sup> Their absence from the charters could be read as evidence of the 'anti-monastic' sentiment which was said to have characterised Eadwig's reign, which culminated in the expulsion of Dunstan from the kingdom in *c.* 956. As noted above, recent work has re-examined the period and revealed that what was regarded as 'anti-monastic' has more to do with shifting political allegiances under a new regime than with a genuine reaction against monasticism. These shifting allegiances can be seen in the way the young king can be seen to promote his own kin and their allies at the expense of those nobles favoured by his father and uncle.<sup>36</sup>

This change in administration could account for the relatively low occurrence of Dunstan and Æthelwold in the witness lists of the reign. Dunstan's unpopularity at court is indicated by his dismissal from the country, although his biographer, understandably, attributes Dunstan's exile to his piety and humility. A more political motive for the banishment is represented in the hagiography by the incident at Eadwig's coronation when Dunstan forcefully removed the king from the 'disgraceful caresses' of two women – Æthelgifu and her daughter,

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<sup>34</sup> It is perhaps worth noting that the itinerary of Eadred's reign indicates that Eadred was at Abingdon at some point in 955, before his death at Frome in November that year. See D. Hill, *Atlas*, p. 89.

<sup>35</sup> Dunstan appears in the witness lists of S 582, 597, 605, 633 and 663; and Æthelwold in S 586, 607, 658, 660 and 663.

<sup>36</sup> For details see Yorke, 'Æthelwold and the Politics of the Tenth Century', pp. 74-78.

Ælfgifu, when the king was supposed to be at the coronation feast.<sup>37</sup> According to the hagiography it was this incident which caused Dunstan to be exiled, although interestingly it is implied in the text that there was a short period of time between the coronation incident and Dunstan's exile. B describes Æthelgifu's anger and threats towards Dunstan, how his property is seized, his friends are punished and his own pupils conspire against him, before stating that Dunstan sailed for Gaul.<sup>38</sup> It would appear that the hagiography is reflecting reality at this point as the charter evidence indicates that Dunstan was not expelled immediately after the coronation: he attests four charters from 956, at least one of which (S 663) belongs to what Keynes has classed as 'group two', dated to February 956.<sup>39</sup> This is the last charter which Dunstan witnesses, indicating that he was exiled at some point after this.<sup>40</sup>

Although Æthelwold appears in only five of Eadwig's charters, there is evidence that Æthelwold himself was not as unpopular at court as Dunstan was. Both Wulfstan and Ælfric pass over Eadwig's reign in their texts. The significance of their silence will be discussed in a subsequent chapter.<sup>41</sup> As Barbara Yorke has illustrated, there is evidence to suggest that Æthelwold's fortunes during Eadwig's reign differed greatly from those of Dunstan.<sup>42</sup> Æthelwold appears to have benefited from the support of not only Ælfgifu and

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<sup>37</sup> *VSD*, c. 21, pp. 32-33.

<sup>38</sup> *VSD*, cc. 22-23, pp. 33-35.

<sup>39</sup> For a discussion of the charters of Eadwig's reign, and in particular those issued in 956 see Keynes, *Diplomas*, pp. 48-70 (pp. 54-56).

<sup>40</sup> See *ASC*, MS A, for the year 955 which reads: '7 aflæmde Sancte Dunstan ut of lande', p. 75. 'and put St Dunstan to flight out of the country' (EHD, p. 224). This is an addition made by hand 7. *ASC* MS D for the year 957 states: '7 on þam ylcan geare wæs Dunstan abbod adræfed ofer sæ', p. 45. 'and in the same year Abbot Dunstan was driven across the sea', (EHD, p.224).

<sup>41</sup> See the sections on 'Secular Associations' in both the Wulfstan and Ælfric sections of chapter 3.

<sup>42</sup> See Yorke, 'Æthelwold and the Politics of the Tenth Century', pp. 79-80.

her kin, but also other royal family members who were promoted during Eadwig's reign; in particular Ælfhere and Ælfheah.<sup>43</sup> The charter evidence also indicates that Eadwig himself may have been a supporter of Abingdon. A grant of privileges and confirmation of lands was given by Eadwig to the abbey in 959 (S 658). Opinion is divided on the authenticity of this charter,<sup>44</sup> but there are other charters granting lands and privileges to Abingdon which appear to be genuine.<sup>45</sup> One of these charters (S 607) includes the grant of a wood at Hawkridge in Berkshire for the building of the church at Abingdon, indicating that the church described by Wulfstan as being designed by Eadred but completed in Edgar's reign was nonetheless being built in Eadwig's and with the assistance of the king.<sup>46</sup> Thus the absence of Æthelwold from all but five of Eadwig's charters may not indicate his unpopularity at court, but rather the fact that he was kept busy with the rebuilding of Abingdon, and, as John has suggested, being tutor to the young Edgar.<sup>47</sup> Oswald does not appear in any charters from either Eadred or Eadwig's reign. At this time, according to Byrhtferth, Oswald was a monk at Fleury and so his absence from witness lists is to be expected.

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<sup>43</sup> See Yorke, 'Æthelwold and the Politics of the Tenth Century', p. 81, n. 137, for details of the support given by Ælfhere and Ælfheah to Æthelwold's monastic foundations.

<sup>44</sup> See Kelly, *Charters of Abingdon Abbey*, item 83, pp. 337-41, which argues that the charter is most likely to be genuine. Margaret Gelling in *The Early Charters of the Thames Valley* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1979), (henceforward *ECTV*), item 93, p. 51 similarly declares that the charter is probably genuine, or at least based on a genuine charter. Keynes, in his *Diplomas*, p. 11 nn. 16, 17, p. 27 n. 40, pp. 98-100 states that the charter is spurious.

<sup>45</sup> These are S 605, 607 and 663. See Kelly, *Charters of Abingdon*, item 52, pp. 216-21 (p. 219); item 57, pp. 242-46 (p. 244) and item 59, pp. 250-55 (p. 252). Other grants made by Eadwig include S 584, a grant of land at Tadmarton in Oxfordshire to Abingdon. Keynes, *Diplomas*, p. 68 n. 130 and p. 75 n. 151 and Kelly, *Charters of Abingdon*, item 68, pp. 286-90 (p. 288) both take this charter to be spurious. S 583 is also a grant of land by Eadwig to Abingdon and opinion on this charter is again divided. Kelly, *Charters of Abingdon*, item 58, pp. 246-50 (p. 248), takes it to be probably spurious; whereas Gelling, *ECTV*, item 79, p. 47 takes it to be genuine.

<sup>46</sup> See Wulfstan, *Vita*, cc. 12-13, pp. 22-25. (See also Ælfric, *Vita*, cc. 8-9, pp. 73).

<sup>47</sup> Eric John, 'The King and the Monks in the Tenth-Century Reformation', in his *Orbis Britanniae and Other Studies* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1966), pp. 154-80 (pp. 158-60).

It is the reign of Edgar which is most associated with the promotion of Benedictine monasticism and as such it is as an adviser to, and close companion of, Edgar that Wulfstan and, to a certain degree, Ælfric describe Æthelwold. Both Wulfstan and Ælfric use the phrase ‘Ætheluuoldus a secretis Eadgari incliti regis’<sup>48</sup>. It is therefore reasonable to expect that this close relationship would be reflected in the charter evidence. Æthelwold, first as abbot of Abingdon, then as bishop of Winchester, appears in one hundred and thirteen of the one hundred and sixty-four extant charters from Edgar’s reign.<sup>49</sup> This is a relatively high proportion of the charters, and an examination of Æthelwold’s subscriptions reveals that, once bishop of Winchester, he consistently witnessed the charters in a high position, after Dunstan and the Archbishop of York. This would appear to confirm the depiction by Wulfstan and Ælfric of a close association between Edgar and Æthelwold; the nature of this relationship and further evidence to support its existence is set out in detail in a subsequent chapter.<sup>50</sup> Given that the relationship between Edgar and Æthelwold was so close, it would perhaps be expected that Æthelwold would figure in a higher percentage of Edgar’s charters. It is unlikely that Æthelwold’s absence from the witness lists is an indication that he was not considered important enough, or that there was not enough room for his name.<sup>51</sup> An examination of the itinerary for Edgar’s reign reveals that although Winchester features prominently, the *witan* was frequently held elsewhere – Gloucester, Kingston and Chester for example.<sup>52</sup> Wulfstan and

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<sup>48</sup> Wulfstan, *Vita*, c. 25, pp. 42-43. C.f. Ælfric, *Vita*, c. 18, p. 76; ‘Erat autem Ætheluuoldus a secretis regis Eadgari’.

<sup>49</sup> Æthelwold appears in 29 charters as *abbas* and 84 as *episcopus*; thus Æthelwold witnesses 69% of Edgar’s charters: 18% as abbot of Abingdon and 51% as bishop of Winchester. See Tables 1 to 3, Appendix A and Graphs 1 and 2, Appendix B.

<sup>50</sup> See ‘Secular Associations’, in both the Wulfstan and Ælfric sections in chapter 3.

<sup>51</sup> See Keynes, *Diplomas*, pp. 154-62 (p. 155).

<sup>52</sup> See Hill, *Atlas*, p. 90 for Edgar’s itinerary. For a discussion of the *witan* as the most likely place for the issue of royal diplomas see Keynes, *Diplomas*, pp. 126-34.

Ælfric describe how Æthelwold toured his monastic foundations to ensure that his standards of monastic customs were observed.<sup>53</sup> From Edgar's itinerary it can be seen that he was rarely in the vicinity of any of Æthelwold's monastic foundations (except Winchester); thus a speculative explanation for why Æthelwold does not appear in more of Edgar's charter witness lists may be that the two figures were often not in the same place at the same time.

As has already been noted, subsequent generations have held Dunstan to be the pivotal character of the late tenth-century; the close adviser to Edgar who was responsible for the king's involvement in the promotion of Benedictine monasticism. The evidence from the charters does little to challenge this view; as Bishop first of Worcester, then London, and then Archbishop of Canterbury, Dunstan witnesses one hundred and forty-one of Edgar's charters (equivalent to eighty-six percent).<sup>54</sup> This would seem to support the picture depicted by the later chroniclers of a close association between Dunstan and Edgar. If, however, the attestations of Dunstan's predecessors as archbishop of Canterbury are taken into consideration, then it can be seen that Dunstan's appearance in eighty-six percent of Edgar's charters is not unique. For example, attestations of the archbishop of Canterbury (regardless of the incumbent) appear in ninety-nine percent of Athelstan's charters, in seventy-eight percent of Edmund's charters, and eighty-five percent of the charters from Eadwig's reign.

Dunstan appears in thirty-six of the charters issued by Æthelred between 979 and c. 993, (equivalent to eighty-two percent), and had he lived longer, given the

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<sup>53</sup> Wulfstan, *Vita*, c. 27, pp. 43-45. C.f. Ælfric, c. 19, p. 77.

<sup>54</sup> Dunstan witnesses six charters (4%) as *episcopus* and one hundred and thirty-five (82%) as *archiepiscopus*. See Table 1, Appendix A.

possibility of strained relations with the king toward the end of his life, this percentage, in terms of overall number of charters witnessed from Æthelred's reign, would be lower.<sup>55</sup> Whilst it cannot be denied that Dunstan was an influential figure in late tenth-century politics, the argument could be made that it was the position which made Dunstan influential, and not the personality. There is some justification for regarding him as the 'prime minister' of the late tenth century; however, this epithet must also be applied to other Archbishops of Canterbury, both before and after Dunstan, given their apparent importance in the witness lists. It would seem, therefore, that Dunstan's influential position as Archbishop of Canterbury was reconstructed by the chroniclers of the twelfth century who characterised Dunstan as the 'a secretis Eadgari incliti regis', thus moving him to the forefront of what they consciously, or unconsciously, similarly reinterpreted as a 'reform movement'.<sup>56</sup>

Oswald does not appear in any witness lists until after his appointment as bishop of Worcester; as noted above, this is consistent with the hagiography

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<sup>55</sup> For these figures and their graphic representation, see Tables 1 to 3, Appendix A and Graphs 2, Appendix B. See Graphs 5 and 6, Appendix B for the relative attestations of the archbishops of Canterbury compared to those of Dunstan.

<sup>56</sup> See, for example, William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Pontificorum*, pp. 26-27, which reads: 'Afflaverat profecto cor regis divinitatis spiritus, ut ejus consilium suspiceret in omnibus, incunctanter fatiens quaecunque pontifex jubenda putaret. Ille quoque quicquid famae et saluti regis concinnum esse intelligeret, non omitere, differentem acrius urgere, ipsius prius mores subditorum speculum effigians, cum excessisset, absque personae respectu ferotius ulciscens. Exemplum dicti in Gestia regis apposui, quod eum septenni multasset penitentia pro illicita in eam quae vel umbratice sanctimonialis fuisset concupiscentia. Ita proceres ad specimen et normam regis compositi, parum vel nichil contra jus et aequum auderent, qui dominum suus tam obnoxium Dunstano intelligerent'. 'The divine spirit had assuredly breathed on the heart of the king, for he looked to Dunstan's advice in all matters and unhesitatingly did whatever the archbishop was minded to command. For his part Dunstan never left out what he knew was consonant with the king's reputation and safety. When the king hesitated, he would put sharper pressure on him. Whenever he transgressed, Dunstan pointed to his own previous way of life as a model for his subjects, and he would mete out savage punishments without any respect of persons. I gave an example of one of these in *The Deeds of the Kings*. Dunstan sentenced the king to seven years penance for his unlawful affair with a woman who had become a nun as a cover. In this way the nobles were brought into line with the example and standard of the king, and dared to do little or nothing contrary to law and justice when they saw their master so obedient to Dunstan', trans by Preest p. 19.



which states that Oswald was overseas in Fleury from some time in the early 950s to *c.* 958. He does not appear in any witness lists as an abbot during the period when Byrhtferth states that he was at an unidentified monastery in Winchester.<sup>57</sup> Given that the text implies that this monastery was purchased by Oswald, it would be expected that he would have been appointed as its abbot. This lack of any attestations by Oswald during this period may be an indication that the foundation, and by association, Oswald was not considered important enough to be included in the witness lists, not that he was necessarily absent from court. If this is the case, then it adds weight to the argument that the Winchester monastery of Oswald was not the New Minster, which was a royal foundation, and whose abbot may have been accorded some importance, but rather that Oswald's monastery was a minor monastic house in the Winchester environs. Oswald features in the witness lists of seventy-five of Edgar's charters which equates to forty-six percent of the total number of charters, as both Bishop of Worcester and Archbishop of York.<sup>58</sup> This figure is notably lower than those for either Dunstan or Æthelwold. He was only appointed to the bishopric in 961, and, as Keynes notes, it was customary for new bishops to be placed lower in the ranks of the bishops and to work their way up the list.<sup>59</sup> As this was the case, it is worth noting that, although Oswald appears to witness fewer charters, he does so at a somewhat higher position than might be expected.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Byrhtferth, *Vita Oswaldi Archiepiscopi Eboracensis*, in *The Historians of the Church of York and its Archbishops*, ed. by James Raine, RS 71, 3 vols, (London: Longman, 1879), I, pp. 399-475 (henceforward referred to as *VSO*), pp. 410-11.

<sup>58</sup> As Bishop of Worcester Oswald attests forty-eight (29%) of Edgar's charters and twenty-seven as Archbishop of York; this equates to 17% of the total number of charters issued during Edgar's reign, but 60% of those charters issued between *c.* 971 and 975 – the period when Oswald was archbishop. See Table 1, Appendix A and Graphs 1 and 2, Appendix B.

<sup>59</sup> Keynes, *Diplomas*, p. 156.

<sup>60</sup> In those charters dated before 963 Oswald witnesses in a higher position than Æthelwold, although this is to be expected, as at this point Oswald is a bishop, who naturally outranks Æthelwold who is still abbot of Abingdon at this time.

After the promotion of Æthelwold to the bishopric of Winchester, the three bishoprics which regularly appear at, or near, the top of the lists of bishops are those of Winchester, Worcester and London. In Edgar's reign Winchester consistently appears in a high position in the witness lists, reflecting the close relationship between Edgar and Æthelwold. Another explanation for the fewer subscriptions by Oswald may be that he was not a court on a regular basis. This is a hypothesis which would appear to be supported by the large number of charters issued by Oswald himself, as bishop of Worcester. There are some eighty charters dating to the period of Oswald's episcopacy and the reorganisation of several hundreds into what became known as the Oswaldslow.<sup>61</sup> The administrative processes involved in this reorganisation may well have kept Oswald in Worcester for much of his bishopric, and the itineraries of Edgar's reign show that the closest the court came to Worcester was Gloucester, in December 964.<sup>62</sup> A similar situation may have occurred once Oswald was promoted to the archbishopric of York: as archbishop Oswald may have been at York rather than at court. The only evidence for Oswald's presence in York is a short passage in the *Vita S. Oswaldi*;<sup>63</sup> this does not necessarily mean that Oswald was not there at any other time, but it would appear that for the greater part of his archiepiscopacy Oswald was resident in Worcester.<sup>64</sup> There appears to be a general pattern of archbishops of York witnessing fewer charters

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<sup>61</sup> See Patrick Wormald, 'Oswaldslow: an immunity', in *St Oswald of Worcester*, ed. by Brooks and Cubitt, pp. 117-28; *idem*, 'Lordship and Justice in the Early English Kingdom: Oswaldslow revisited', *Property and Power in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. by Wendy Davies and Paul Fouracre (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 114-36 and Sawyer, 'Charters of the Reform Movement'.

<sup>62</sup> See Hill, *Atlas*, p. 90, for a map of Edgar's itinerary.

<sup>63</sup> *VSO*, pp. 454-55.

<sup>64</sup> The lack of documentary evidence for York in the late tenth century makes it difficult to determine exactly how much time Oswald spent in the archdiocese, there are, however, numerous charters from the Worcester archive issued by Oswald throughout the period he was also Archbishop of York, which would seem to indicate that he was present for much of the time at Worcester.

than their Canterbury counterparts.<sup>65</sup> It is also worth considering that no claims are made by the *Vita S. Oswaldi* for a close association between Oswald and Edgar of the sort which appear in the *Vitae S. Æthelwoldi* associating Æthelwold and Edgar.<sup>66</sup>

## Conclusions

The analysis of the charter statistics detailed above indicates that, for the most part, the claims of the hagiographers can be substantiated. There are attestations by an Æthelwold from charters dating to Athelstan's reign indicating that the statement made by Wulfstan that Æthelwold first spent a period at court before entering the ecclesiastical life could be true. There are few references to Dunstan during the reigns of Eadmund and Eadred, which substantiates the claims by B that Dunstan was unpopular at court during the reign of Eadmund. The charters do less to corroborate the claims that Dunstan was a confidant of Eadred but, as noted above, absence from a witness list does not necessarily mean that an individual was not present at court and counted as a close ally by the king, but might instead indicate merely that their position in the established hierarchy was not significant enough for them to be given a place in the witness list. The relatively high position of Æthelwold's attestations once he became Bishop of Winchester may substantiate the claims that there was a close association between king and bishop, and there are other sources which also corroborate these claims. Dunstan's predominance in the witness lists once he is Archbishop of Canterbury would also appear to indicate that there was an association between king and archbishop, although, as noted above, this may

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<sup>65</sup> See Graphs 5 and 6, Appendix B.

<sup>66</sup> See the discussion in the 'Secular Associations' section of the *Vita S. Oswaldi* chapter below.

relate more to Dunstan's rank as archbishop than to any personal affiliation. Further study of the relative positions of other bishops would undoubtedly give a clearer indication of the relative importance of Æthelwold and Oswald in the politics of the late tenth century, but from this analysis it is clear that certain claims made by the hagiography can be substantiated by reading these texts against the charters.

### 3. WINCHESTER

#### INTRODUCTION

Æthelwold is best known as abbot of Abingdon (c. 954-63) and bishop of Winchester (963-84) and as one of the three figures at the centre of the revival of Benedictine monasticism which occurred in late tenth-century England.<sup>1</sup> Few precise details are known of his origins or his family background. He is thought to have been born somewhere in Wessex at some point during the period 904x909. During his youth Æthelwold was present at the royal court of King Athelstan and became a member of the royal household. Æthelwold spent a short period of time in the household of Ælfheah, bishop Ælfheah of Winchester (934-51), who tonsured him into clerical orders and consecrated him as a priest. Sometime after the death of Athelstan Æthelwold left Winchester and travelled to Glastonbury to further his studies and also took the monastic habit, both under the tutelage of Dunstan.

After a long period of time spent at Glastonbury, perhaps a decade or more, Æthelwold was appointed by King Eadred to the abbacy of the rundown monastery of Abingdon. As abbot, Æthelwold rebuilt the monastic buildings and the church, which was also rededicated. In addition the endowment of the abbey was considerably increased. After approximately nine years spent at Abingdon, King Edgar appointed Æthelwold to the bishopric of Winchester, where he remained until his death in 984. As Bishop of Winchester, Æthelwold expelled the secular clerks from both the Old and New Minsters, replacing them with

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<sup>1</sup> See Yorke, *Bishop Æthelwold*.

monks, and so helping to establish the peculiarly English phenomenon of monastic cathedral communities.

The main events of the life of Æthelwold are relatively well documented in both contemporary and near contemporary documents. The principal sources of information concerning his career are the two *vitae* written by Wulfstan and Ælfric. There has been much debate over which was the exemplar but here I follow the argument set out by Michael Lapidge and accept that the Wulfstan *vita* was the model and that Ælfric's work was a later abridgement of it.<sup>2</sup>

However, as noted above, these are not the only sources associated with the life of Æthelwold; indeed the *vitae* are, by their very nature, primarily concerned with Æthelwold's activities within the church and his monastic reforms. In order to examine the secular aspects of Æthelwold's life the evidence of the *vitae* needs to be supplemented with information from other sources.

These sources include the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, Lantfred's *Translatio et miracula S. Swithuni* and Wulfstan's metrical version of this work, the *Narratio Metrica de Sancto Swithuno*, which between them document Æthelwold's reformation and refoundation of monasteries and the building programme which he undertook at the Old Minster, Winchester, when he was bishop of that city.<sup>3</sup> In addition there are those texts which are recognised as being composed by Æthelwold himself: the New Minster Foundation charter, the text known as

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<sup>2</sup> For details of Lapidge and Winterbottom's argument and the evidence to support it see Lapidge and Winterbottom, *Wulfstan of Winchester*, pp. cxlvi-clv. See D. J. V. Fisher, 'The Early Biographers of St Æthelwold', *English Historical Review*, 67 (1952), 381-91 and M. Winterbottom, 'Three Lives of St Ethelwold', *Medium Ævum*, 41 (1972), 191-201.

<sup>3</sup> For a full discussion of Lantfred's *Translatio et miracula* and Wulfstan's *Narratio* see Lapidge, *The Cult of St Swithun*.

‘King Edgar’s Establishment of Monasteries’ and the Old English translation of the Benedictine Rule.<sup>4</sup> Further evidence, although not contemporary, of the monastic revival is supplied in documents associated with the monastic houses themselves: the twelfth-century *Liber Eliensis*, the *Chronicon Monasterii de Abingdon* and the eleventh-century *Liber vitae* of Hyde Abbey.<sup>5</sup>

Wulfstan’s *vita* is structured as a chronological account of the life of Æthelwold, but precise dates are given on only three occasions: Æthelwold’s elevation to the bishopric of Winchester on 29 November 963 (c. 16), the consecration of the new westwork of the Old Minster, 20 October 980 (c. 40) and the death of Æthelwold on 1 August 984 (c. 41). However, as Lapidge and Winterbottom have demonstrated, the dates of other events described in the *vita* can be determined by referring to other contemporary sources.<sup>6</sup> The translation of Saint Swithun, for example, is described by Wulfstan as taking place in ‘IDVS IVLII’; there is no mention of the year, but by reference to Wulfstan’s *Narratio* the date can be fixed to 15 July 971.<sup>7</sup> The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* can similarly be used to determine the dates of events described by Wulfstan; for example the

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<sup>4</sup> NMFC, ed. and trans by Rumble; KEE, ed. by Whitelock, Brett and Brooke, and for Æthelwold’s Old English translation of the Benedictine Rule see Gretsch, ‘Æthelwold’s translation of the *Regula Sancti Benedicti* and its Latin exempla’ and *eadem*, ‘The Benedictine Rule in Old English: a Document of Bishop Æthelwold’s Reform Politics’.

<sup>5</sup> *Liber Eliensis*, ed. by E. O. Blake, Camden 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, 92 (London: Royal Historical Society, 1962); *Chronicon Monasterii de Abingdon*, ed. by J Stevenson, RS, 2, 2 vols (London: Longman, 1858); *The Liber vitae of the New Minster and Hyde Abbey, Winchester*, ed. by Simon Keynes, Early English Manuscripts in Facsimile, 26 (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1996).

<sup>6</sup> See the chronology of Æthelwold’s life set out in Lapidge and Winterbottom, *Wulfstan of Winchester*, pp. xxxix-xlii.

<sup>7</sup> Wulfstan, c. 26, pp. 42-43. See Wulfstan, *Narratio*, in Lapidge’s *Cult of St Swithun*, pp. 372-551 (pp. 448-449).

deaths of Kings Athelstan, Eadmund and Eadred, are dated 939, 946 and 955 respectively in the *Chronicle*, but they have no date in Wulfstan's *vita*.<sup>8</sup>

Of Wulfstan himself, little is known beyond the facts that he was a pupil of Æthelwold and was a monk and priest at the Old Minster, Winchester in the late tenth century. From the name 'Wulfstan Cantor', which is often associated with him, it is known that he rose to become *precentor*. Evidence for his presence at the Old Minster is found in three documents associated with late tenth- and early eleventh-century Winchester: a list of monks of the Old Minster compiled during the period 984 to 1005 under bishop Ælfheah which is now preserved in the *Liber vitae* of Hyde Abbey; another list of Old Minster monks found in an eleventh-century Old English translation of Chrodegang's *Regula canonicorum*; and an eleventh-century Old English text from the New Minster, known as 'The Vision of Eadwine', which mentions Wulfstan as one of a number of monks who accompanied Æthelwold on a visit to the New Minster.<sup>9</sup> The information that he was an oblate at the Old Minster during the time of the translation of Saint Swithun in 971 is found in Wulfstan's own work, the *Narratio Metrica de Sancto Swithuno*,<sup>10</sup> but beyond this all that is known of Wulfstan is his works.

When considering texts associated with Wulfstan there are a number of problems relating to authorship to be considered. There are several works which can be possibly or probably ascribed to Wulfstan but for which there are no

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<sup>8</sup> Wulfstan, cc. 10 and 13 (pp. 16-17, 24-25). See, for example, the entries under 946 and 955 in *ASC MS A*, p. 74 (EHD, pp. 222 and 224) and *ASC MS D*, pp. 44 and 45 (EHD, pp. 222 and 224).

<sup>9</sup> For further details of Wulfstan's life and career see Lapidge and Winterbottom, *Wulfstan of Winchester*, pp. xiii-xv.

<sup>10</sup> Wulfstan, *Narratio*, 1. 899; see Lapidge, *The Cult of St Swithun*, pp. 372-551, (pp. 448-449).



direct indications of his authorship. William of Malmesbury attributed two works to Wulfstan: the *Vita S. Æthelwoldi* and the *De Tonorum harmonia*.<sup>11</sup> This latter work has yet to be identified and is presumed lost, but was apparently a treatise on music theory, which would be appropriate for Wulfstan's role as *cantor* at the Old Minster.<sup>12</sup> Other works ascribed to Wulfstan are the *Breuilquium de omnibus sanctis*, the *Narratio Metrica de Sancto Swithuno* and assorted liturgical materials associated with the cult of Æthelwold; all works appropriate to associate with a *cantor*.<sup>13</sup>

Wulfstan's *Vita S. Æthelwoldi* survives in five manuscripts, none of which contains any rubric which ascribes it directly to Wulfstan, but his authorship can be determined on a number of grounds. As noted above, William of Malmesbury knew of two *vitae* of Æthelwold, one of which he ascribed to Wulfstan and the other to Ælfric.<sup>14</sup> There survive only two *vitae* of Æthelwold which date from before the twelfth century, and they are very likely to be those to which William is referring. One of the surviving *vitae* contains a dedication of the text to Bishop Cenwulf of Winchester by Ælfric and the other is anonymous; the anonymous text has recently been attributed to Wulfstan.<sup>15</sup> Wulfstan played a significant role in the translation of Æthelwold's remains and the subsequent

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<sup>11</sup> For a more detailed examination of this text and the evidence for Wulfstan's authorship of it see Lapidge and Winterbottom, *Wulfstan of Winchester*, pp. xvi-xvii.

<sup>12</sup> There is evidence to suggest that this text survived at least into the fifteenth century. Two fifteenth-century manuscripts – Oxford, Bodleian Library, Bodley 77 and All Souls 90 – exist of an anonymous and unprinted commentary on Boethius, *De Musica*, and they contain a large number of quotations on authorities on musical theory. Among these quotations are four referring to a 'Breuilquium super musicam' by a 'Wulstan'. This is taken by Lapidge and Winterbottom to be synonymous with the *De Tonorum harmonia* referred to by William of Malmesbury, whose title was 'presumably a descriptive one'. See Lapidge and Winterbottom, *Wulfstan of Winchester*, pp. xvi-xvii.

<sup>13</sup> For detailed descriptions of these works see Lapidge and Winterbottom, *Wulfstan of Winchester*, pp. xvii-xxii. See also David Howlett, 'Numerical Play in Wulfstan's Verse and Prose', *Mittellateinisches Jahrbuch*, 31 (1996), 61-67.

<sup>14</sup> William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Pontificorum*, p. 406.

<sup>15</sup> See Lapidge and Winterbottom, *Wulfstan of Winchester*, pp. xv-xvi and pp. cxlvi-clv.

promotion of the cult.<sup>16</sup> Two chapters of the *Vita S. Æthelwoldi*, forty-two and forty-four, are used by Wulfstan in the *Narratio* and certain phrases found in both works indicate that the two were composed by the same person. The date of composition of Wulfstan's *Vita Æthelwoldi* cannot be precisely fixed, but a period of *c.* 996 to *c.* 1000 can be determined as the *vita* gives the information of Æthelwold's translation in 996 and the *Narratio*, with two chapters of the *vita* incorporated into it, is preserved in a manuscript dating from *c.* 1000. It is possible, therefore, that the *vita* was composed to coincide with the translation, implying a date of 996.<sup>17</sup>

There are five extant manuscripts of Wulfstan's *vita*, dating from the late eleventh to the fourteenth century, here listed as they appear in the edition of the text, and with the sigila assigned to them by Lapidge and Winterbottom.<sup>18</sup>

Manuscript A is London, British Library, Arundel 169 folios 88<sup>r</sup> to 95<sup>r</sup>, which is dated on palaeographical grounds to the first half of the twelfth century.

Manuscript G, Gotha, Forschungsbibliothek 1.81, folios 94<sup>r</sup> to 101<sup>r</sup>, dates to the second half of the fourteenth century, from an unknown English centre and with a similarly unknown later provenance. The other three manuscripts are all complex. London, British Library, Cotton Caligula, A. viii, folios 125<sup>r</sup> to 128<sup>v</sup>. contains fragments of Wulfstan's *Vita S. Æthelwoldi* and parts of a *Vita S. Birini*. The manuscript originated at the Old Minster Winchester (with a later

<sup>16</sup> See Lapidge and Winterbottom, *Wulfstan of Winchester*, pp. c-ci.

<sup>17</sup> This suggestion is made by Lapidge and Winterbottom, *Wulfstan of Winchester*, p. xvi and p. c.

<sup>18</sup> The edition used is that by Lapidge and Winterbottom in *Wulfstan of Winchester*. For full descriptions of the manuscripts and their relationships see pp. clxviii-clxxxv.

provenance from Ely), and dates to the late eleventh or early twelfth century.<sup>19</sup> The fourth copy of the *vita* is found in London, British Library, Cotton Nero E. i, part 2, folios 209<sup>v</sup> to 216<sup>v</sup>. At the end of part 2 of the manuscript are a number of miscellaneous texts, added at some point in the twelfth century. These are followed by the remains of a Latin passional composed in the first quarter of the thirteenth century, which had originally been an entirely separate document. It is in this early thirteenth-century passional that the copy of the *Vita S. Æthelwoldi* is found.<sup>20</sup> As the earlier portions of the manuscript originated at Worcester it has been suggested that the manuscript may still have been at Worcester when the later additions were made.<sup>21</sup> This is, however, conjecture, and the origin and provenance of the thirteenth-century passional are, more safely considered unknown.

The final manuscript listed by Lapidge and Winterbottom is London, British Library, Tiberius D. iv, part 2, folios 121<sup>v</sup> to 130<sup>v</sup>. Folios 1 to 105 are dated to the late eleventh or early twelfth century, originating either in Northern France or England, with a probable provenance of the Old Minster, Winchester.<sup>22</sup> Folios 158 to 166 are, along with Winchester Cathedral Library 1, dated to the late tenth or early eleventh century with a Winchester provenance. The middle folios, 105<sup>v</sup> to 157<sup>v</sup>, consist of the *vitae* of four English saints: the anonymous *Vita S. Birini*, the anonymous *Vita* and *Miracula S. Swithuni*, Wulfstan's *Vita S. Æthelwoldi*

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<sup>19</sup> See Helmut Gneuss, *Handlist of Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts: a List of Manuscripts and Manuscript Fragments Written or Owned in England up to 1100* (Tempe, Arizona: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2001), item 308, p. 61.

<sup>20</sup> For the earlier parts of the manuscript see Gneuss, *Handlist*, items 344, 344.5 and 345, p. 65. See also the description of the contents of the Cotton-Corpus Legendary found in Peter Jackson and Michael Lapidge, 'The Contents of the Cotton-Corpus Legendary', in *Holy Men and Holy Women: Old English Prose Saints' Lives and Their Contexts* ed. by Paul E. Szarmach (Albany: State University of New York, 1996), pp. 131-46.

<sup>21</sup> See Lapidge and Winterbottom, *Wulfstan of Winchester*, p. clxxvii.

<sup>22</sup> See Gneuss, *Handlist*, item 378.5, p. 70.

and Osbern of Canterbury's *Vita S. Dunstani*. As Lapidge and Winterbottom note: 'it would seem, to judge from the appearance of scripts throughout the manuscript, that it was begun in the late eleventh century and continued perhaps into the early twelfth, when the *uitae* of the English saints were added'.<sup>23</sup>

Although only five manuscripts of the *vita* survive it is evident that it enjoyed a wide circulation, wider perhaps than one might assume from the small number of extant manuscripts and the relatively restricted diffusion of the cult of Æthelwold himself. The use of the text by a number of later authors is evidence for this. It has already been observed that Wulfstan himself used two chapters of the *vita* in his *Narratio*; and Byrhtferth of Ramsey, in his *Vita S. Oswaldi*, attributes the pious nature and enthusiasm for monastic observance of King Edgar to Æthelwold's influence, but states that he leaves the discussion of Æthelwold to his own biographers.<sup>24</sup> A sequence honouring Æthelwold, known as *dies sacra*, *dies illa*, found in the two 'Winchester Tropers' includes references to miracles performed by Æthelwold during his lifetime.<sup>25</sup> One of these allusions is to Æthelwold's breaking up of church ornaments to feed the poor, which is found in chapter twenty-nine of Wulfstan's *vita*, but which is absent from Ælfric's text. The *Vita S. Wulfhilde* by Goscelin of Saint-Bertin contains a passage which tells a story of how, when Æthelwold visited Barking, drink was poured and yet the supply was never exhausted. This story is modelled on chapter twelve of the

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<sup>23</sup> Lapidge and Winterbottom, *Wulfstan of Winchester*, pp. clxxvii-clxxix (p. clxxviii).

<sup>24</sup> *VSO*, pp. 426-27.

<sup>25</sup> The 'Winchester Tropers' are found in the manuscripts Oxford, Bodleian Library, Bodley 775 (Winchester, Old Minster, s. xi<sup>med</sup>) and Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 473 (Winchester, Old Minster, s. x/xi or xi<sup>24</sup>), but the sequence is an addition in a later eleventh-century hand. See Gneuss, *Handlist*, item 597, p. 96 and item 116, p. 38. See Lapidge and Winterbottom, *Wulfstan of Winchester*, pp. clv-clvi for further details of this use of Wulfstan's *Vita S. Æthelwoldi*.

*Vita S. Æthelwoldi*, although it is unclear whether Goscelin was using the Wulfstan text or the Ælfric, as the story appears in both.

Other later uses of the *vita* can be found in works by Orderic Vitalis, William of Malmesbury and the authors of the *Libellus Æthelwoldi* and the *Chronicon monasterii de Abingdon*. The Abingdon manuscript of John of Worcester's *Chronicon ex chronicis* contains several extracts from Wulfstan's *vita*, which provides further evidence for the existence of a copy of Wulfstan's text at Abingdon during the late twelfth century.<sup>26</sup> The Peterborough Chronicle of Hugh Candidus, the Ely Breviary, the *Cronica* of John of Glastonbury, the Breviary of Hyde Abbey, the *Liber monasterii de Hyda* and the 'South English Legendary', among others also contain references to or excerpts from Wulfstan's *Vita S. Æthelwoldi*, testifying to the extensive circulation of the text.<sup>27</sup>

Ælfric's career and canon have been the subject of a great deal of scholarship over the years, and he is regarded as one of the most prolific and influential writers of the late tenth and early eleventh centuries. His works, mainly in the vernacular, include two series of *Catholic Homilies*, a collection of vernacular saints' lives known as the *Lives of Saints*, pastoral letters, and a customary (written in Latin) for the monks of Eynsham known as the *Letter to the Monks of Eynsham*.<sup>28</sup> He is often regarded as an abbreviator and it is clear that his *Vita S.*

<sup>26</sup> London, Lambeth Palace 42 (Abingdon, s. xii<sup>ex</sup>). This manuscript contains additions to John of Worcester's *Chronicon* which concern Abingdon in the tenth century. See Lapidge and Winterbottom, *Wulfstan of Winchester*, pp. clx-clxi.

<sup>27</sup> For a complete list of later uses of Wulfstan's *vita* see Lapidge and Winterbottom, *Wulfstan of Winchester*, pp. cxliii-clxvii

<sup>28</sup> *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: the First Series*, ed. by Peter Clemoes, EETS, ss, 17 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: the Second Series*, ed. by Malcolm Godden, EETS, ss, 5 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979); *Ælfric's Lives of Saints: Being a Set of Sermons on Saints' Days Formerly Observed by the English Church*, ed. by Walter W.

*Æthelwoldi* can be included in this category; Lapidge and Winterbottom have shown that the work is an abbreviated version of Wulfstan's *vita* and that Ælfric used what they term a 'red pencil' technique to remove what he considered superfluous and also anything which may have appeared unorthodox to him.<sup>29</sup>

The composition of Ælfric's text has been dated to 1006 on the basis of the dedication in the Preface of the *vita* which reads: 'Ælfricus abbas, Wintoniensis alumnus, honorabili episcopo Cenulfo et fratribus Wintoniensibus, salutem in Christo'<sup>30</sup>. Cenwulf was only bishop of Winchester for a short period of time in 1006 and Ælfric's description of himself as 'abbas' presumably refers to his status as abbot of Eynsham, a position he gained *c.* 1005; which would support a date of 1006 for the composition of the *vita*.<sup>31</sup> There is only one extant manuscript of Ælfric's *vita*: Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, lat. 5362, folios 74<sup>r</sup> to 81<sup>r</sup>, dating from *c.* 1100.<sup>32</sup> The manuscript, written either in England or Normandy, is known to have been at Fécamp, and it also contains a copy of a

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Skeat, EETS, os, 76, 82, 94 and 114 (London: Trübner, 1881-1900); Ælfric's *Pastoral Letters*, in *Councils and Synods, with other documents relating to the English Church*, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), I, pp. 191-226 and pp. 242-302; and Jones, *Ælfric's Letter to the Monks of Eynsham*.

<sup>29</sup> See Lapidge and Winterbottom, *Wulfstan of Winchester*, p. clii. For more detailed examinations of Ælfric's composition technique and concerns over orthodoxy see Joyce Hill, 'Translating the Tradition: Manuscripts, Models and Methodologies in the Composition of Ælfric's *Catholic Homilies*', *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, 79 (1997), 43-65; *eadem* 'Reform and Resistance: Preaching Styles in Late Anglo-Saxon England', in *De L'Homélie au Sermon: Histoire de la Prédication Médiévale*, ed. by Jacqueline Hamesse and Xavier Hermand (Louvain-la-Neuve: Université Catholique de Louvain, 1993), pp. 15-46; E. Gordon Whatley, 'Lost in translation: omission of episodes in some Old English prose saints' legends', *ASE*, 26 (1997), 187-208 and Mary Clayton, *The Cult of the Virgin Mary in Anglo-Saxon England*, CSASE, 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 260-65.

<sup>30</sup> Ælfric, *Vita*, c. 1, p. 71; 'Abbot Ælfric, a pupil of Winchester, to the Bishop Cenwulf and the brothers of Winchester, sends greetings in Christ' (EHD, p. 832).

<sup>31</sup> For an outline of the chronology of Ælfric's career see the Introduction to *Ælfric's Prefaces*, ed. by Jonathan Wilcox (Durham: Durham Medieval Texts, 1994), pp. 2-15. For a brief discussion of the foundation of Eynsham see Jones, *Ælfric's Letter to the Monks of Eynsham*, pp. 5-17.

<sup>32</sup> See Gneuss, *Handlist*, item 885.3, p. 136.

commonplace book compiled by Ælfric.<sup>33</sup> The contents of the commonplace book comprise a number of excerpts of Latin texts, including passages from Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica* concerning the lives of Cuthbert, Oswald, Birinus and Æthelthryth; Abbo of Fleury's *Passio S. Eadmundi* and an abbreviated version of Lantfred's *Translatio et miracula S. Swithuni* – all of which were reworked and used in Ælfric's vernacular hagiography.

A second manuscript – Boulogne-sur-Mer, Bibliothèque Municipale, 63, folios 1 to 34 – contains a similar collection of Latin passages used by Ælfric in his works.<sup>34</sup> It has been suggested that the presence of Ælfric's *Vita S. Æthelwoldi* in the Paris manuscript may indicate that Ælfric produced an abbreviated version of Wulfstan's text as the first stage in the production of a vernacular text. The dedication to Bishop Cenwulf and the Winchester monks in the Preface would seem to indicate that the work was intended to circulate in Latin, so it may be that, as Lapidge and Winterbottom suggest, the *vita* had a dual purpose: as a Latin composition in its own right intended for a monastic audience and as the base for a vernacular text, which was perhaps intended for a secular audience.<sup>35</sup> As there is only one extant manuscript of Ælfric's *vita*, there is no indication of how widely it circulated, or indeed of the intended audience. The evidence of the preface would imply a monastic audience, but in addition Ælfric's association with his patrons Æthelweard and Æthelmær has been well

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<sup>33</sup> See Lapidge, *Cult of St Swithun*, pp. 555-61.

<sup>34</sup> See Gneuss, *Handlist*, item 800, pp. 119-120, for the date and provenance and a list of contents for this manuscript. For the association of the manuscript with Ælfric see E. M. Raynes, 'MS Boulogne-sur-Mer 63 and Ælfric', in *Medium Ævum*, 26 (1957), 65-73.

<sup>35</sup> See Lapidge and Winterbottom, *Wulfstan of Winchester*, pp. cxlix. See also Wilcox, *Ælfric's Prefaces*, p. 53. For a discussion of Ælfric's Latin works and in particular his Latin style see Christopher Jones, 'Meatim Sed et Rustica: Ælfric of Eynsham as a Medieval Latin Author', in *Journal of Medieval Latin*, 8 (1998), 1-57.

documented, both by modern scholarship and Ælfric himself.<sup>36</sup> It is possible, therefore, that Ælfric imagined a well-educated secular – but non-royal – audience for his *vita*, in addition to a monastic one. Wulfstan's audience would have been largely, if not entirely, monastic. This may be one reason why the text circulated widely in an apparently monastic context. In contrast, the anticipation of a potential lay audience of Ælfric's text may explain his obvious concern with both orthodoxy and lessening the emphasis on royal monastic associations in favour of secular patronage of monasteries.

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<sup>36</sup> See for example the prefaces to the *Lives of Saints* collection, where it is clear that Ælfric was responding to a request from his patrons to produce such a work. See, for example, both the Latin and Old English Prefaces to the *Lives of Saints*'. The question of Ælfric's audience has been addressed by modern scholarship mainly in association with his vernacular works; see, for example, E. Gordon Whatley 'Pearls before Swine: Ælfric, Vernacular Hagiography and the Lay Reader', in *Via Crucis: Essays on Early Medieval Sources and Ideas in Memory of J. E. Cross*, ed. by Thomas N. Hall (Morgantown: West Virginia University Press, 2002), pp. 158-184.



## WULFSTAN OF WINCHESTER'S *VITA SANCTI ÆTHELWOLDI*

One of the most noticeable features of Wulfstan's *Vita S. Æthelwoldi* is the association that the author makes between his subject and a number of different parties. There are clear affiliations made with the throne, Dunstan, Bishop Ælfheah, other saints and Æthelwold's pupils. An analysis of these affiliations gives an insight into the basis of Æthelwold's sanctity as portrayed by Wulfstan, in addition to illustrating his character as portrayed in the Wulfstania *vita*. It is perhaps no surprise that the secular aspects of Æthelwold's life and career are, for the most part, not dwelt upon in the *vita*; it was the spiritual nature of his life and his accomplishments in the field of ecclesiastical reform that resulted in the miracles which it relates in order to promote the saint's claim. It is interesting, therefore, to note that prominence is given to certain secular associations within the text, and in particular those made between Æthelwold and the throne. On initial inspection the affiliations established in the text, reinforce the view that it was the spiritual aspects of Æthelwold's career which led to his veneration as a saint, but a more detailed analysis – when used in conjunction with evidence for Æthelwold's secular career which can be found from other sources – illustrates that there may have been another, more secular or even political basis on which the sanctity was based.

### **Secular Associations**

The most obvious association to be found within the *vita* is that with the throne; in charting the period from the time of his birth during the reign of Edward the Elder (899-924) through to the dedication of the rebuilt Old Minster

in 980 in the reign of Æthelred II (978-1016), the text indicates a clear and consistent association between Æthelwold and the throne. It is implied in the *vita* that kings may come and go but that royal commitment to Æthelwold, first as abbot and then as bishop, never falters.

The first direct contact that Æthelwold has with royalty is during his *adolescencia* when he attends the court of King Athelstan (924-939). According to Wulfstan it was the nature of Æthelwold's holy life that caused the young man to come to the attention of the king; the text says:

praeconium sanctae conuersationis eius Æthelstano regi, [...] fama uulgante nuntiatum est, iuuenemque festinanter accersiri praecepit. Qui cum adductus staret in praesentia regis, inuenit gratiam in conspectu eius et in oculis optimatum eius, ibique indiuiduo comitatu multum temporis agens in palatio plura a sapientibus regis utilia ac proficua sibi didicit.<sup>37</sup>

The charter evidence for Æthelwold's presence at Athelstan's court has been discussed in an earlier chapter, so all that need be noted here is that an Æthelwold *minister* appears in charters from the corresponding period, and that this appears to substantiate Wulfstan's account.<sup>38</sup> Another interesting point in this passage is the reference to Æthelwold as 'indiuiduo comitatu' ('inseparable

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<sup>37</sup> Wulfstan, *Vita*, c. 7, pp. 10-11; rumour brought public recognition of his holy life to King Athelstan, [...] who ordered the young man to be sent for without delay. When he was brought and stood in the king's presence, he found favour in his sight and in the eyes of his thegns. He spent a long period there in the royal palace [*burh*] as the king's inseparable companion, learning much from the king's *witan* that was useful and profitable to him (Lapidge and Winterbottom, p. 11, altered). In this and in following quotations from Lapidge and Winterbottom's edition of Wulfstan's *vita*, some alterations have been made to make the translations more literal, where they have been altered the citation will say so.

<sup>38</sup> For a more detailed discussion of Athelstan's charters and Æthelwold's appearances in the witness lists see the Politics chapter above.

companion') of the king, which echoes Wulfstan's description of the relationship between Æthelwold and Edgar given later in the text; Æthelwold is referred to as 'a secretis Eadgari incliti regis'<sup>39</sup>. There is an interesting ambiguity about the passage quoted above, as there is an implication that Æthelwold attended the royal court as a layman. This hypothesis is reinforced by the following sentences of the chapter, in which Wulfstan states that it was at Athelstan's command that Æthelwold was first tonsured to clerical orders and then later consecrated as a priest by Bishop Ælfheah of Winchester. Wulfstan says: 'Et demum, iubente rege, ab Ælfego Wintoniensi episcopo secundum morem ecclesiasticum prius ad clericatus officium tonsoratus ac deinde, paucis labentibus annorum curriculis, in gradum sacerdotalem consecratus est'<sup>40</sup>. The phrase 'et demum' implies that Æthelwold had spent a significant period of time at court before he was consecrated, adding weight to the argument that in his earlier years at court Æthelwold showed no signs of entering the church.

The phrase 'iubente rege' is used to describe the reasons for Æthelwold's consecration, and it is interesting to speculate that without Athelstan's intervention, Æthelwold may never have entered upon an ecclesiastical career. This would make Athelstan indirectly responsible for Æthelwold's achievements, and it raises the question of what motivation Wulfstan might have had for presenting Athelstan in this way. In both the *Vita S. Oswaldi* and the *Vita S. Dunstani*, divine inspiration plays a role in the early careers of the two saints,

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<sup>39</sup> Wulfstan, *Vita*, c. 25, p. 42. A more detailed discussion of the relationship between Æthelwold and Edgar is given later in this section.

<sup>40</sup> Wulfstan, *Vita*, c. 7, pp. 10-11; In the end, at the king's command, he was tonsured by Ælfheah, bishop of Winchester, according to the custom of the church, first to clerical status, then, after a few years had gone by, consecrated to the rank of priest (Lapidge and Winterbottom, p. 11, altered).

whereas the origins of Æthelwold's ecclesiastical career are clearly linked with royal authority. This may be a reflection of a well-established tradition based upon knowledge of the close relationship between Æthelwold and Edgar which has been projected backwards to reflect a similar relationship between Æthelwold and all royalty (with the exception of Eadwig). It is interesting that Wulfstan has not attempted to redefine the origins of Æthelwold's career as having direct associations with the divine. In contrast, in the *Vita S. Oswaldi*, Byrhtferth attributes Oswald's ecclesiastical career to the influence of the divine.<sup>41</sup> It would appear that whilst Wulfstan is emphasising, or reflecting, Æthelwold's preference for royal patronage of monasteries, this system of affiliations is not deemed useful by Byrhtferth. By the time the *Vita S. Oswaldi* was written in a period when the political situation had changed, there was a different king and as a result secular, non-royal nobles were favoured as monastic patrons.

The impression that Æthelwold's early career is influenced, if not guided, by the king is repeated later in the *vita* when Wulfstan says that Æthelwold remained in Winchester at the king's command when his inclination was to go to Glastonbury. What Wulfstan says is: 'Aput quem praecipiente rege quo melius imbueretur aliquandiu commoratus est'<sup>42</sup>. Again the question to be asked is why Athelstan wanted Æthelwold to remain in Winchester. One suggestion, supported by the use of 'melius imbueretur', is that the king wanted Æthelwold

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<sup>41</sup> See the 'Associations with the Divine' sub-section in the *Vita Sancti Oswaldi* section below.

<sup>42</sup> Wulfstan, *Vita*, c. 9, pp. 14-15; With him (Ælfheah) he (Æthelwold) stayed for some time at the king's wish to be better instructed (Lapidge and Winterbottom, p. 15, altered). Although Æthelwold's early career is not linked by Wulfstan with divine assistance, it is worth remembering that Wulfstan begins his *vita* with descriptions of premonitive dreams of Æthelwold's mother, in which Æthelwold's career is foretold. See Wulfstan, *Vita*, cc. 2-3, pp. 4-7.

to remain in Winchester in order that he could be groomed to be Ælfheah's successor and so continue the close relationship between the city and the throne.<sup>43</sup> Whatever the reasons were, and they may never be known, the passage serves to highlight the influence Athelstan had on Æthelwold's career; although at this point the implication is that the throne was hindering Æthelwold's progress as it was later, ('tandem') presumably after the death of Athelstan, that he went to Glastonbury and was professed as a monk.

Royal intervention, or perhaps interference, in Æthelwold's career does not end with the death of Athelstan but is continued by his successors. It is interesting that a close association with royalty, and in particular with the crown, is a recurring theme in Wulfstan's *vita*. It reoccurs when Wulfstan describes how Æthelwold wanted to travel overseas to study Continental monastic practices, but was prevented from doing so by King Eadred, who was acting on the instructions of his mother, Eadgifu. The text says:

uir Domini Ætheluuoldus, adhuc cupiens ampliori scripturarum scientia doceri monastica religione perfectius informari, decreuit ultramarinas adire partes. Sed uenerabilis regina Eadgifu, mater regis memorati, praeuenit eius conamina, dans consilium regi ne talem uirum sineret egredi de regno suo, insuper asserens tantam in eo fuisse Dei sapientiam quae et sibi et aliis sufficere posset, quamuis ad alienae patriae fines ob hanc causam minime tenderet.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> For a discussion of Winchester's role in the succession dispute which ensued after the death of Edward the Elder see Yorke, 'Æthelwold and the Politics of the Tenth Century', pp. 69-73.

<sup>44</sup> Wulfstan, *Vita*, c. 10, pp. 18-19; Æthelwold, the man of the Lord, in his continuing eagerness to be taught the scriptures more thoroughly and to be formed more perfectly in a monk's religious life, determined to go overseas. But the venerable queen Eadgifu, the king's mother, forestalled his plans, advising the king not to allow such a man to leave his kingdom, and asserting moreover that he was so filled with the wisdom given by God that he had enough for others as well as for himself, even if he did not go to foreign parts for this purpose (Lapidge and Winterbottom, p. 19, altered).

It is clear from the passage that it was Eadgifu who was ultimately responsible for keeping Æthelwold in England; again royalty is seen controlling the course of Æthelwold's career. The reason given by Wulfstan for this is that Eadgifu recognised Æthelwold's potential; he had enough divine wisdom for himself and others, presumably meaning that he could teach others using his wisdom. That the king should not let 'such a man' ('talem uirum') leave the country implies that there were not many men of his kind in England at the time, an idea which is echoed later in the *vita* when Wulfstan describes how, before the monastic revival prospered under Edgar, there were only two monastic houses in the country: Glastonbury and Abingdon.<sup>45</sup> One way of reading the passage is as Wulfstan's apology for Æthelwold's lack of Continental experience; both Dunstan and Oswald, the two other leading figures of the monastic revival, spent time in Continental houses: Dunstan in Saint Peter's Ghent and Oswald in Fleury. It may have been that Continental monastic experience was considered important enough by Wulfstan and his audience for him to feel the need to state that Æthelwold wanted to go overseas but was prevented by the crown. It is worth speculating briefly as to where Æthelwold would have gone if he had been successful in his attempt to travel overseas. As noted above, Dunstan spent time in the monastery of Saint Peter in Ghent when he was exiled by Eadwig and Oswald spent several years at Fleury.<sup>46</sup> It is possible that Æthelwold intended to go to Fleury, as this was where he sent the monk Osgar, once he had re-established the monastery of Abingdon.<sup>47</sup> There is evidence of the influence of both Fleury and Ghent in the proem to the *Regularis Concordia*, attributed to

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<sup>45</sup> Wulfstan, *Vita*, c. 18, pp. 32-33.

<sup>46</sup> For details of Dunstan's exile and stay at St Peter's, Ghent see the *VSD*, c. 23, p. 34 and Brooks, 'The Career of St Dunstan'. Byrhtferth describes Oswald's stay at Fleury in the *VSO*, pp. 413-19. For a discussion of this see the *Vita S. Oswaldi* section in chapter 4.

<sup>47</sup> Wulfstan, *Vita*, c. 14, pp. 26-27.

Æthelwold, which reads: ‘accitis Florensis beati Benedicti necnon praecipui coenobii quod celebri Gent nuncupatur uocabulo monachis’.<sup>48</sup>

There is also an implicit criticism of Dunstan and the monastic observances of Glastonbury in the phrase ‘et monastica religione perfectius informari’; a criticism which is indirectly repeated when Wulfstan describes the reasons for Æthelwold sending Osgar to Fleury: ‘ut regularis obseruantiae mores illic disceret ac domi fratribus docendo ostenderet, quatinus ipse normam monasticae religionis secutus’<sup>49</sup>. The suggestion is that the monastic observances experienced by Æthelwold at Glastonbury were not a strict observance of the Benedictine Rule. This is interesting when placed next to the account of Glastonbury’s monastic observance given by Dunstan’s first biographer, B, who says: ‘et hoc praedicto modo saluberrimam sancti Benedicti sequens institutionem, primus abbas Anglicae nationis enituit’<sup>50</sup>. B makes it clear that Dunstan, and his monks at Glastonbury, followed the Rule of Saint Benedict, although there is no indication that the Rule was followed exactly and the phrase ‘praedicto modo’ is as intriguing as it is unclear.

This unspoken disapproval of Glastonbury reinforces the argument that the monastic revival lacked uniformity; it progressed differently in different places depending on the personal monastic preferences and observances of the three

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<sup>48</sup> Symons, *Regularis Concordia*, p. 3. ‘they summoned monks from St Benedict’s monastery at Fleury and from that eminent monastery which is known by the renowned name of Ghent’.

<sup>49</sup> Wulfstan, *Vita*, c. 14, pp. 26-27; ‘to learn there the way of life according to the Rule and show it to his brothers when he taught them back at home. Thus Æthelwold could himself follow the regulations of monastic observance’.

<sup>50</sup> *VSD*, c. 15, p. 25; ‘and following the most wholesome institution of St Benedict in the aforementioned way, he shone as the first abbot of the English nation’. (EHD, p. 899).

leading figures.<sup>51</sup> One final point is whether this implied criticism of Dunstan and Glastonbury might originate from Æthelwold or Wulfstan himself. Rather than a faithful representation of Æthelwold's own opinions, it may be Wulfstan who is criticising the Glastonbury customs, coming as he did from Winchester where it is clear that the monastic customs were considerably different from those monastic houses outside Æthelwold's sphere of influence. If this is the case, then it is subverting the tradition, which Wulfstan himself propagates in the *vita*, of seeing Dunstan and Glastonbury as the source of the monastic revival in England. It is not clear why Wulfstan might have wished to subvert this tradition in this way. One reason could be that Winchester was a royal foundation and it would therefore make sense for Wulfstan to emphasise it at the expense of Glastonbury.

In this instance, the consequence of royal intervention was Æthelwold's appointment to the abbacy of Abingdon, but here again the crown – or more precisely the queen mother – can be seen to be shaping Æthelwold's career. In a passage which immediately follows that quoted above, Wulfstan says: 'Quibus auditis delectatus rex magnam circa Dei famulum coepit habere dilectionem, placuitque ei, suadente matre sua, dare sancto uiro quondam locum, uocabulo Abbandoniam'<sup>52</sup>. Here again Eadgifu is seen as the more influential figure, 'swaying' the king, Eadred.<sup>53</sup> A direct association between Eadred and

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<sup>51</sup> For a more detailed discussion of this, see the General Introduction above.

<sup>52</sup> Wulfstan, *Vita*, c. 11, pp. 18-19; The king having heard these things began to feel great affection for the servant of God. Swayed by his mother, he decided to give the holy man a place called Abingdon (Lapidge and Winterbottom, p. 19, altered).

<sup>53</sup> See Pauline Stafford, *Queens, Concubines and Dowagers: The King's Wife in the Early Middle Ages* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1983, repr. 1998), pp.125-26 for details of an association between Dunstan and Eadgifu. See *eadem*, 'Queens, Nunneries and Reforming Churchmen: Gender, Religious Status and Reform in Tenth- and Eleventh-Century England', *Past and Present*, 163 (1999), 3-35; M. A. Meyer, 'Patronage of the West Saxon Royal



Æthelwold (without the mediation of his mother) is made when Wulfstan describes the king's endowment of Abingdon.<sup>54</sup> The original monastery had been relatively small and had fallen into disrepair.<sup>55</sup> At the time it was given to Æthelwold to refound, Wulfstan states that its estate consisted of forty hides of land ('quadraginta tantum mansas possidens'), and that the rest of the estate had passed into royal control. Eadred returned these estates, amounting to one hundred hides, to the abbey, as Wulfstan says: 'Dedit etiam rex possessionem regalem quam in Abbandonia possederat, hoc est centum cassatos, cum optimis aedificiis, [...] et de regio thesauro suo multum eos in pecuniis iuuit'<sup>56</sup>. Here again the queen mother is shown to have a related role: these gifts were, according to Wulfstan, surpassed by those given to the abbey by Eadgifu who endowed the abbey on a 'lavish scale': 'sed mater eius largius solatia munerum eis direxit'.<sup>57</sup>

That the association between Æthelwold, Abingdon and Eadred continued after the king's initial endowment of the abbey can be seen from Wulfstan's description of how the king literally played a 'hands-on' role in the construction of the new buildings; Wulfstan says: 'Venit ergo rex quadam die ad monasterium, ut aedificiorum structuram per se ipsum ordinaret; mensusque est

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Nunneries in Late Anglo-Saxon England', *Revue Bénédictine*, 91 (1981), 332-58; *idem*, 'Women and the Tenth-Century English Monastic Reform', *Revue Bénédictine*, 87 (1977), 34-61 and C. R. Hart, 'Two Queens of England', *Ampleforth Journal*, 82 (1977), 10-15 and 54 for the role of women and queens, particularly Eadgifu, in the monastic revival and for their association with Dunstan and Æthelwold.

<sup>54</sup> Wulfstan, *Vita*, c. 11, pp. 18-23.

<sup>55</sup> See Alan Thacker, 'Æthelwold and Abingdon', in *Bishop Æthelwold*, pp. 43-64 (pp. 44-45) for details of the state of Abingdon when Æthelwold was made abbot.

<sup>56</sup> Wulfstan, *Vita*, c. 11, pp. 20-21; The king also gave his royal estates in Abingdon, that is a hundred hides, with excellent buildings, [...] and he helped them with much money from his royal treasury (Lapidge and Winterbottom, p. 21, altered). Wulfstan, *Vita*, c. 11, pp. 20-21. The charter in which the Abingdon endowment is preserved – S 567 (B 906) – is generally regarded as spurious; see S.E. Kelly, *Charters of Abingdon Abbey*, item 51, pp. 209-16. See also Keynes, *Diplomas*, p. 11 n 16 and p. 27 n 40.

<sup>57</sup> Wulfstan, *Vita*, pp. 20-21; 'but his mother sent them presents on an even more lavish scale'.

omnia fundamenta monasterii propria manu, quemadmodum muros erigere decreuerat'<sup>58</sup>.

These two passages establish Abingdon as a royal monastic (re)foundation and much of the responsibility for the establishment of the monastery is taken away from Æthelwold and given to Eadred.<sup>59</sup> The portrayal of the king giving the land to the monastery, as opposed to Æthelwold's purchase of it, firmly establishes Eadred as the principal patron of Abingdon. Although Wulfstan does not make this clear, it is apparent that Æthelwold had complete control over every aspect of the monastery, which is implied by the inclusion of the information that, after he was appointed to the bishopric of Winchester, Æthelwold appointed Osgar as abbot of Abingdon in his place which, incidentally, is contrary to the regulations for the appointment of an abbot set out in the Rule of St Benedict.<sup>60</sup> The question of why Wulfstan chose to represent the refoundation of Abingdon in this way is worthy of consideration as the implications of the king's donation of such a considerable amount of land would surely not have been lost on the audience of the *vita*. The most obvious reason is that Wulfstan was reproducing a well-established and well-known reality. A more subtle reading of the text would suggest that Wulfstan was also reflecting an ideal working relationship between the crown and monastic founders (and their foundations) in the relationship of Eadred and Æthelwold; the crown was a generous benefactor and protector of the monks but did not interfere in any way

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<sup>58</sup> Wulfstan, *Vita*, c. 12, pp. 22-23; One day the king visited the monastery to oversee the building works in person. With his own hand he measured all the foundations of the monastery according to the way he had decided to build the walls (Lapidge and Winterbottom, p. 23, altered).

<sup>59</sup> Examples of kings and bishops, including Æthelwold, engaging in craftwork are cited by C. R. Dodwell, *Anglo-Saxon Art: A New Perspective* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982), pp. 49-50.

<sup>60</sup> Wulfstan, *Vita*, c. 21, pp. 36-37.

in the running of the monastery itself. This view may be reinforced by the inclusion of the figure of Eadred in the miracle story which immediately follows the description of Eadred's measuring out the land for the new buildings. Afterwards Æthelwold invites the king and his companions to dine in the 'hospicio'.<sup>61</sup> The king accepts and orders 'lavish draughts of mead' ('et iussit abunde propinare hospitibus ydromellum') to be served to the guests and Wulfstan says: 'Quid multa? Hauserunt ministri liquorem tota die ad omnem sufficientiam conuiuantibus; sed nequiuit ipse liquor exharurur de uase, nisi ad mensuram palmi'<sup>62</sup>. Wulfstan does not attribute this miracle to any specific individual, and although it is implicit that it was a testament to Æthelwold's developing ecclesiastical reputation, Eadred participates directly in the miracle: it was he who ordered the mead to be served.

The association between Æthelwold and Eadred depicted in Wulfstan's *vita* was not unique. B illustrates a similar, if not closer, association, between Dunstan and Eadred in his *Vita Sancti Dunstani*. Here Dunstan is associated with both Eadred and his predecessor Eadmund, although of the two the stronger affiliation appears to be that with Eadred. When describing how Dunstan came to Edmund's court, B uses a *topos* similar to that used by Wulfstan in the *Vita S. Æthelwoldi*; he says: 'regis succedentis, Eadmundi scilicet, sublimitas beatum Dunstanum, qui vitae probabilis et linguae extiterat eruditae, conspectibus ejus

<sup>61</sup> Wulfstan, *Vita*, c. 12, pp. 22-23. See Symons, *Regularis Concordia*, p. 62 for the stipulations Æthelwold later made concerning hospitality. The text reads: 'Omnia igitur humanitatis officia in hospitio pater ipse, si quomodo potuerit, uel fratrum quilibet deuotissime praebeat'. 'Wherefore whenever he can, the father himself, no less than each of the brethren, shall be most zealous in providing every kind of service in the guesthouse'. A similar statement can also be found in the New Minster Foundation Charter; see NMFC, IV, p. 86: 'Laicis in hospitio condecens exhinbeatur humanitas', 'Let seemly kindness be shown to laymen in the guest-house'.

<sup>62</sup> Wulfstan, *Vita*, c. 12, pp. 22-25; 'Well, the servants drew off drink all day to the hearts' content of the diners, but the level in the container could not be reduced below a palm's measure'.

adesse praecepit, ut etiam ipse inter regios proceres et palatinos principes annumeraretur electus'<sup>63</sup>. Although not expressed in such explicit terms as those of the *Vita S. Æthelwoldi*, it is evident that it was Dunstan's life and 'conversation' which brought him to the king's attention; Wulfstan says that it was the holiness of Æthelwold's life which brought him to Athelstan's attention. B continues his narrative by describing Dunstan's behaviour at court and his virtuous life there. The chapter continues with an account of how Dunstan's enemies contrive to bring about his disgrace. These plots result in Dunstan's expulsion from the royal court whilst it is at Cheddar. This is followed by a story of how Eadmund was hunting a stag near Cheddar; the stag fell down a precipice (presumably Cheddar Gorge) and the King's horse carries him at full speed after the fallen stag. In preparation for his own death the King makes a confession of the wrong done to Dunstan and the horse miraculously stops on the edge of the precipice. As a result Eadmund makes Dunstan Abbot of Glastonbury.<sup>64</sup> As with the *Vita S. Æthelwoldi*, the king is involved in a miracle story, although in this instance the king is involved in a negative way, whereas in the Æthelwold narrative, the king's involvement in the miracle is a positive factor.

The association between Dunstan and Eadred is formed immediately following Eadmund's death and it is implied that the two may have known each other prior to Eadred's accession as B says: 'Hic itaque in sublimitate roboratus beatum patrem Dunstanum tanto caritatis ardore dilexit, ut nullum poene ex

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<sup>63</sup> *VSD*, c. 13, p. 21; 'of the succeeding king, namely Edmund, ordered the blessed Dunstan to appear before him, that he might be chosen and numbered among the royal courtiers and chief men of the palace' (EHD, p. 898). There appears to be a lacuna in the Latin as the subject of 'regis succedentis' is missing.

<sup>64</sup> *VSD*, cc. 13-14, pp. 21-25.

primatu sibi praetulisset'<sup>65</sup>, and follows this with a statement of how Dunstan returned the respect and love which the king showed to him. There is no mention of any third party introducing Dunstan to Eadred, as there is in the *Vita Æthelwoldi* where Eadgifu is the influential figure. One consequence of this association between Dunstan and Eadred was that the king entrusted his treasures to Dunstan at Glastonbury, according to B: 'Ex hac quippe caritatis fiducia, commisit illi rex optima quaeque suorum suppellectilium, quamplures scilicet rurales cartulas, etiam veteres praecedentium regum thesauros, necnon et diversas propriae adeptionis suae gazas, sub munime monasterii sui fideliter custodiendum'<sup>66</sup>. The king's mother, Eadgifu, who features prominently in the association of Æthelwold and Eadred, is mentioned only briefly by B. Eadred intends to make Dunstan bishop of Crediton but Dunstan refuses, so Eadred asks his mother to intervene, which she does, but to no avail.<sup>67</sup> The implication here is that if any individual could have persuaded Dunstan to accept the position then it was Eadgifu, hinting at a closer association between the two than is expressed in the text.<sup>68</sup> Here again Eadgifu is at the centre of the affiliation.

The description of Dunstan's relationship with Eadred in B's text mirrors that of Æthelwold and Edgar portrayed in Wulfstan's *vita* and implied in other sources; for example in the document known as 'King Edgar's Establishment of

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<sup>65</sup> *VSD*, c. 19, p. 29; 'And when thus confirmed on the throne, he loved the blessed Father Dunstan with such great warmth of love that he preferred hardly anyone of his chief men to him'. (EHD, p. 900).

<sup>66</sup> *VSD*, c. 19, p. 29; 'Indeed out of this loving trust, the king committed to him all the best of his goods, namely many title-deeds and also the ancient treasures of preceding kings, as well as various precious things he had acquired himself, to be faithfully kept in the security of his monastery'. (EHD, p. 900).

<sup>67</sup> *VSD*, c. 19, pp. 29-30.

<sup>68</sup> See Stafford, *Queens Concubines and Dowagers*, pp. 125-26 for the relationship between Dunstan and Eadgifu. See also *eadem*, 'Queens, Nunneries and Reforming Churchmen' and Hart, 'Two Queens of England'.

Monasteries' (henceforth 'King Edgar's Establishment') and the New Minster Foundation Charter, both of which are attributed to Æthelwold himself. An association with Edgar is one of the significant aspects of Æthelwold's career, and consequently this would be expected to be reflected in Wulfstan's *vita*, but in fact there are relatively few instances in the text where the figures of Æthelwold and Edgar are directly associated; it is as if the assumption was made by Wulfstan that the audience already knew the nature of the relationship between the king and the bishop and therefore there was no need to go into specific details in the text.

Of these few instances of direct association, the first is where Wulfstan describes Æthelwold's promotion to the bishopric of Winchester. This occurred, according to the text, before the monastery church at Abingdon had been consecrated,<sup>69</sup> and the phrase 'iubente rege' is used to describe Æthelwold's consecration by Dunstan: 'Et iubente rege consecrauit illum Dunstanus archiepiscopus Dorobernensis ecclesiae'<sup>70</sup>. This echoes the description of Æthelwold's initial tonsuring into clerical orders and subsequent consecration to the priesthood by Ælfheah. Both these things are done at the king's command ('iubente rege'); in the case of the tonsuring of Æthelwold it is Athelstan who gives the command, whereas it is Edgar who orders Dunstan to consecrate Æthelwold as bishop of Winchester. Both instances reinforce the impression that Æthelwold's career was being guided, or manipulated, by the crown.

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<sup>69</sup> Interestingly the narrative in the *vita* passes straight from the death of Eadred to the accession of Edgar. Wulfstan merely states that Æthelwold did not complete the building works which Eadred had marked out for him, but that in Edgar's reign an imposing church dedicated to the Virgin Mary was built and completed. See Wulfstan, *Vita*, c. 13, pp. 24-25. For a more detailed discussion of the omission of Eadwig's reign in the text see below.

<sup>70</sup> Wulfstan, *Vita*, c. 16, pp. 30-31; 'On the king's orders, he was consecrated by Dunstan, archbishop of Canterbury'.

Immediately following his description of Æthelwold's consecration, Wulfstan recounts the expulsion of the clerics from the Old Minster, Winchester; after listing all the faults of the canons, Wulfstan says: 'Quod minime ferens sanctus uir Ætheluuoldus, data licentia a rege Eadgaro, expulit citissime detestandos blasphematores Dei de monasterio'<sup>71</sup>. The description of the expulsion of the canons is repeated in a subsequent chapter where Wulfstan adds the detail that the king sent Wulfstan of Dalham, one of his thegns, to assist in the eviction, saying: 'Misit quoque rex illuc cum episcopo quendam ministrorum suorum famosissimum, cui nomen erat Wulfstan æt Delham, qui regia auctoritate mandauit canonicis ut unum de duobus eligerent, aut sine mora dare locum monachis aut suscipere habitum monachici ordinis'<sup>72</sup>. In both instances it is clear from the text that Æthelwold had royal support for his actions and that the expulsion of the canons from the New Minster is similarly achieved with the king's permission, 'annuente rege Eadgaro'<sup>73</sup>.

The expulsion of the canons from the Old and New Minsters is recorded in a number of contemporary sources including the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, 'King Edgar's Establishment' and the charter recording the refoundation of the New Minster Foundation Charter. In all of these accounts the responsibility for the expulsion of the canons is placed with Edgar himself. The *Chronicle* states:

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<sup>71</sup> Wulfstan, *Vita*, c. 16, pp. 30-31; The holy man Æthelwold would not tolerate it. With the permission of King Edgar, he most quickly expelled from the monastery such detestable blasphemers against God (Lapidge and Winterbottom, p. 31, altered).

<sup>72</sup> Wulfstan, *Vita*, c. 18, pp. 32-33; 'The king also sent there with the bishop one of his agents, the well-known Wulfstan of Dalham, who used the royal authority to order the canons to choose one of two courses: either to give place to the monks without delay or to take the habit of the monastic order'.

<sup>73</sup> Wulfstan, *Vita*, c. 20, pp. 36-37.

Her dræfde Eadgar cyng þa preostas on Ceastre of Ealdanmynstre 7 of Niwanmynstre 7 of Ceortesige 7 of Middletune 7 sette hy mid munecan; 7 he sette Æþelgar abbod to Niwanmynstre to abbode 7 Ordbirht to Ceortesige 7 Cyneweard to Middletune.<sup>74</sup>

After a description of how Edgar had first reformed himself, the New Minster Foundation Charter states: ‘uitiosorum cuneos canonicorum e diuersis nostri regiminis coenobiis Christi uicarius eliminaui’<sup>75</sup>. One of the reasons given for this expulsion was that the canons did not offer prayers which were considered advantageous to the king and subsequently the clerks were of no benefit to him.<sup>76</sup>

In the place of the canons, the charter states: ‘gratos Domino monachorum cuneos qui pro nobis incunctanter intercederent nostri iuris monasteries deuotus hilariter collocaui’<sup>77</sup>. Similar views are reflected in the text of ‘King Edgar’s Establishment’, which reads:

began georne mynstera wide geond his cynerice to rihtlæcynne, [...] Halige stowa he geclænsode fram ealra manna fulnessum, no þæt an on Wesseaxna rice, ac eacswylce on Myrcena lande. Witodlice he adref [cano]nicas þe on þæm foresædum gyltum ofer[fle]de

<sup>74</sup> ASC MS A, 964, pp. 75-76; ‘In this year King Edgar drove out the priests in the city from the Old Minster and from the New Minster; and from Chertsey and from Milton (Abbas); and replaced them with monks. And he appointed Abbot Æthelgar as abbot of the New Minster, and Ordbirht for Chertsey, and Cyneweard for Milton’ (EHD, p. 226). The appointment of abbots by anyone other than the whole community concerned, but particularly by the king, goes against the principles of the Rule of St Benedict.

<sup>75</sup> NMFC, VII, p. 81; ‘I, the vicar of Christ, have expelled the crowds of depraved canons from the various monasteries of our kingdom’. The use of the phrase ‘Christi uicarius’ to describe Edgar, has been noted in the General Introduction as an indication of christological kingship since later in the text it is used to describe the abbot of the New Minster (NMFC, XIII, p. 88).

<sup>76</sup> NMFC, VII, p. 81; ‘Quod nullis mihi intercessionibus prodesse poterant’: ‘Because they could not have [had] been of [no] benefit to me with their intercessory prayers’ (trans, Rumble but again with slight alterations. The words altered from Rumble’s original translation are included in square brackets).

<sup>77</sup> NMFC, VII, P. 81; ‘(I) have joyously installed in the monasteries within our jurisdiction, throngs of monks pleasing to the Lord, who might intercede unhesitatingly for us’.



genihtsumedon, 7 on þam fyrrestum stowum [e]alles his andwealdes  
munecas gestapolode to weorþfulre þenunge Hælendes Cristes.<sup>78</sup>

The authorship of both the New Minster Foundation Charter and ‘King Edgar’s Establishment’ has been attributed to Æthelwold himself. It is interesting to see the difference between Wulfstan’s *vita* where Æthelwold is portrayed as one of the instigators of the monastic revival, starting with Abingdon and Winchester, and the texts written by Æthelwold, where the impetus for Benedictine monasticism is seen as coming from Edgar and where the figure of Æthelwold is hardly depicted at all. This inconsistency is probably little more than differing styles of writing and different authorship; monastic modesty would have prevented Æthelwold from claiming all, or even any, responsibility for the monastic revival and furthermore these texts were composed in the voice of the king and so would prioritise the royal role. What is worth noting is Æthelwold’s use of themes taken from the developing ruler ideology of christological kingship to depict the figure of Edgar in both these texts.<sup>79</sup> There is, therefore, a clear difference in the roles of Æthelwold and Edgar in the revival of monasticism as depicted by Wulfstan in the *vita* and those texts composed by Æthelwold himself. Wulfstan’s text, although hagiographical in nature, and thus prone to exaggeration of the subject’s achievements, is likely to be reflecting the reality of events at the Old and New Minsters.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> KEE, pp. 149-150; ‘he began zealously to set monasteries in order widely throughout his kingdom, [...] He cleansed holy places from all men’s foulnesses, not only in the kingdom of the West Saxons, but in the land of the Mercians also. Assuredly he drove out canons who abounded beyond measure in the aforesaid sins, and he established monks in the foremost places of all his dominion for the glorious service of the Saviour Christ’.

<sup>79</sup> The characteristics and development of christological kingship have been discussed in the General Introduction above. Here Æthelwold’s use of its motifs to characterise Edgar is striking.

<sup>80</sup> For a slightly different reading of Edgar’s involvement in Æthelwold’s expulsion of the clerics see Eric John’s article, ‘The Beginning of the Benedictine Reform in England’ in his *Orbis Britanniae*, pp. 249-64, where John argues that Æthelwold expelled the clerics without the king’s

Edgar is indirectly associated with Æthelwold in the descriptions of the latter's refoundation of the monasteries of Ely, Peterborough and Thorney. As noted above, Æthelwold was associated with the king, in this case Eadred, in the description of the foundation of Abingdon. Whereas at Abingdon land was given as a gift by Eadred (establishing him as the principal benefactor of the abbey), it is interesting to see that when Æthelwold refounds the Fenland monasteries of Ely, Peterborough and Thorney Wulfstan clearly states that he purchased the lands with which they were endowed, this makes Æthelwold himself the principal benefactor of these abbeys. In the case of Ely Wulfstan says: 'datoque precio non modicae pecuniae emit eum a rege Eadgaro'<sup>81</sup>, and for Peterborough the text reads: 'Alterum quoque locum in regione Giruorum precio optinuit a rege et nobilibus terrae, positum in ripa fluminis'<sup>82</sup>. In both cases the land was not donated by the king, but was bought from him: a subtle difference which denies Edgar a role as a benefactor of the abbeys and gives sole responsibility for their refoundation to Æthelwold. At Thorney all that is said by Wulfstan is that Æthelwold purchased a third place on the banks of the Rive Nene, but Wulfstan does not specify from whom this land was bought.<sup>83</sup> The depiction of the endowments of these Fenland abbeys as legitimate purchases made by Æthelwold, undoubtedly with Edgar's support and approval, may have been an attempt by Wulfstan to justify the tenorial changes that Æthelwold's restoration

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permission and when the canons appealed to Edgar (according to John at a council held at Easter 964) only then were Æthelwold's actions sanctioned by the king. For a discussion of the council where this appeal apparently took place see the 'Secular Associations' sub-section of the *Vita S. Oswaldi* section in chapter 4.

<sup>81</sup> Wulfstan, *Vita*, c. 23, pp. 38-39; and having paid the price, not a small amount of money, he bought it from King Edgar (Lapidge and Winterbottom, p. 39, altered).

<sup>82</sup> Wulfstan, *Vita*, c. 24, pp. 40-41; He purchased another place too in the region of the Gyrwe from the king and noblemen of the land, situated on the banks of the rive Nene (Lapidge and Winterbottom, p. 41, altered).

<sup>83</sup> Wulfstan, *Vita*, c. 24, pp. 40-41.

of these abbeys imposed on the local landholders.<sup>84</sup> From the reaction of the local nobility after Edgar's death it is clear that many of these purchases, if indeed they were purchases, were made on terms which favoured Æthelwold and not the nobility. Wulfstan was writing Æthelwold's *vita* after Edgar's death and after a period when many of the original landholders had taken back the lands annexed by Æthelwold. Wulfstan's representation of Æthelwold purchasing land and the subsequent reduction in the *vita* of the role Edgar played in these refoundations undermines the close association between the bishop and the king which is portrayed both in the *vita* and in other contemporary sources. It might have been expected of Edgar to give land to Æthelwold. This is one among many indications that the establishment of monasteries was not as simple as Edgar ordering monasteries to be founded.

This notwithstanding, Wulfstan's general tendency is to highlight Æthelwold's association with the king and the king's role in shaping late tenth-century monasticism. A theme which is illustrated by the way Wulfstan devotes a chapter of the *vita* to Æthelwold's relationship with Edgar. This reads:

Erat autem uir Dei Ætheluuoldus a secretis Eadgari incliti regis, sermone et opere magnifice pollens, in plerisque locis ecclesias dedicans et ubique euangelium Christi praedicans, iuxta ammonitionem Ysaiæ prophetae dicentis: 'Clama, ne cesses, quasi tuba exalta uocem tuam, et adnuntia populo meo scelera eorum, et domui Iacob peccata eorum.'<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> See Barbara Yorke's introduction to *Bishop Æthelwold*, pp. 1-12 (p. 6).

<sup>85</sup> Wulfstan, *Vita*, c. 25, pp. 42-43; 'The man of God Æthelwold was an intimate of the distinguished king Edgar. He was splendidly strong in word and deed, dedicating churches in many places and everywhere preaching the gospel of Christ in accordance with the instruction of the prophet Isaiah: "Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins"'. 'a secretis' is an indeclinable masculine

Whilst this passage reinforces the idea of a close relationship between Æthelwold and Edgar, the origin and precise nature of this relationship remains unclear in the *vita*. Some clarification can be gained by looking outside the text at other sources. In ‘King Edgar’s Establishment’, for example, that Edgar had spent time as a young man at Abingdon is implied in the sentence: ‘Witodlice sona swa he to his cynedome gecoren wearþ, wæs swiþe gemudige his behates þe he on his æpelincghade cildgeong Gode behet 7 sancta Marian, þe se abbod in hine gelapode to þæm munuclife’<sup>86</sup>. Byrhtferth, in his *Vita S. Oswaldi* also suggests that Æthelwold may have instructed the young Edgar when he says:

instructus idem rex ad cognitionem veri Regis ab Æthelwoldo sanctissimo episcopo Wintoniensis civitatis. Iste enim vero ipsum regem ad hoc maxime provocavit, ut clericos a monasteriis expulit, et ut nostris ordinibus contulit, quia erat eximius consiliarius. Relinquam ergo sua beata gesta suis, quae satis lucide descripta sunt.<sup>87</sup>

Here it is implied that Byrhtferth knew, and possibly possessed a copy of, Wulfstan’s *vita*. The reader is left in no doubt that Æthelwold was responsible for stimulating Edgar’s interest in the revival of monasticism. In the *Vita S. Oswaldi* Byrhtferth, in common with the authors of texts such as the New Minster Foundation Charter and ‘King Edgar’s Establishment’, credits Edgar, if

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substantive meaning ‘an intimate counsellor’, see J. F. Niermeyer, *Mediae Latinitatis Lexicon Minus* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), p. 63.

<sup>86</sup> KEE, pp. 147-48; ‘Certainly, as soon as he was elected to his kingdom, he was very mindful of the promise which he had made as an atheling in his childhood, to God and to St Mary, when the abbot had invited him to the monastery’.

<sup>87</sup> *VSO*, pp. 426-27; ‘the same king (Edgar) was instructed in recognition of the true King by the most holy bishop Æthelwold of the city of Winchester. For in truth he called the king himself especially to this, as he expelled the clerics from monasteries, and as he united our orders, because he (Æthelwold) was an excellent adviser of him (Edgar). Therefore I shall omit his blessed deeds, which have been clearly described enough’. See also Eric John, ‘The King and the Monks in the Tenth-Century Reformation’, pp. 159-60 for a discussion of the possibility that Edgar was tutored at Abingdon by Æthelwold.

not with instigating the ‘reform’, then certainly with being a motivating force behind it. This is striking partly because Wulfstan’s chapter, quoted above, contains an interesting ambiguity; whilst grammatically the ‘sermone et opere magnifice pollens’ and ‘in plerisque locis ecclesias dedicans’ must belong with ‘Ætheluuoldus’, making Æthelwold the one ‘strong in word and deed’ and ‘dedicating churches in many places’, the insertion of ‘a secretis Eadgari incliti regis’ adds confusion to the question of exactly who or where the impetus for the foundation of churches comes from. This ambiguity is seemingly deliberate and one suggestion is that Wulfstan, like Byrhtferth, was using contemporary ruler theology to imbue Edgar with ecclesiastical and monastic characteristics and in this way portray him as a christological king.

Wulfstan’s *vita* creates a clear relationship between the throne and Æthelwold, but Wulfstan was selective in his representation of this association. The chronology moves from the death of Eadred on to the reign of Edgar with the simple statement that Æthelwold did not finish building the church at Abingdon in Eadred’s reign, but completed it in Edgar’s.<sup>88</sup> The narrative jumps the four years which comprise the reign of Eadwig. Other royal associations are omitted from the text: Æthelwold’s affiliation with Edgar’s third wife, Æflthryth, and her son Æthelred, and it is perhaps these omissions which reveal most about Æthelwold’s relationship with the crown and the way it was portrayed by Wulfstan. At first sight it would seem natural for Wulfstan to gloss over the reign of Eadwig; it was Eadwig who exiled Dunstan and the reign was associated

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<sup>88</sup> Wulfstan, *vita*, c. 13, pp. 24-25.

with a period of 'anti-monastic' feeling.<sup>89</sup> This interpretation fails, however, to take into account the nature of the sources which represent the reign in such a way; this view is largely based on accounts written in the later tenth century by leading monastics and their supporters. It has been shown that, far from being 'anti-monastic', the changes that occurred after the death of Eadred were due to the changes in the balance of power at court.<sup>90</sup> The charter evidence indicates that monastic life at Abingdon, though perhaps not flourishing, did not cease during the reign as Stenton suggested.<sup>91</sup> Æthelwold, unlike other leading ecclesiastics including Archbishop Oda and Dunstan, recognised Eadwig's marriage to Ælfgifu;<sup>92</sup> and as noted above, there is evidence to suggest that the young Edgar was educated at Abingdon under the instruction of Æthelwold and, as Yorke notes, 'Eadwig is hardly likely to have entrusted his brother's education to Æthelwold if the latter had shown him the sort of hostility which he had received from Dunstan'<sup>93</sup>. It can also be seen that Æthelwold continues attesting Eadwig's charters after rule of the kingdom was divided between Eadwig and Edgar.<sup>94</sup> This indicates that Æthelwold does not sever ties with Eadwig despite tutoring Edgar at Abingdon.

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<sup>89</sup> See *ASC*, MS D, 957, p. 45, which states: ' 7 on þam ylcan geare wæs Dunstan abbod adræfed ofer sæ'. 'And in the same year Abbot Dunstan was driven across the sea' (EHD, p. 224).

<sup>90</sup> For a full discussion of the changes in political allegiances in Eadwig's reign see Yorke, 'Politics of the Tenth Century', pp. 74-77.

<sup>91</sup> F. M. Stenton, *The Early History of the Abbey of Abingdon* (Reading: University College, 1913; repr. Stamford: Paul Watkins, 1989), p. 49. The charter evidence refuting this view is set out by Eric John in *Orbis Britanniae*, pp. 158-60, and see also pp. 189-91. See also Yorke, 'Politics of the Tenth Century', pp. 79-80.

<sup>92</sup> See Yorke, 'Politics of the Tenth Century' and also Pauline Stafford, *Queens, Concubines and Dowagers*, p. 126.

<sup>93</sup> Yorke, 'Politics of the Tenth Century', p. 80.

<sup>94</sup> For a discussion of the appearances of Dunstan and Æthelwold in Eadwig's charters see above pp. 13-36.

Another contentious association omitted from Wulfstan's *vita* was that with Edgar's third wife Ælfthryth.<sup>95</sup> It was Æthelwold who was largely responsible for the composition of the *Regularis Concordia*, which made the queen, Ælfthryth, responsible for the protection of nunneries,<sup>96</sup> a theme which is repeated in 'King Edgar's Establishment'.<sup>97</sup> The iconography of the Virgin Mary as Queen of Heaven, an ideology which gave significant benefit to Ælfthryth, was similarly developed at Winchester;<sup>98</sup> and, as Pauline Stafford has noted, '[i]t was probably at Winchester under Æthelwold that the idea of Ælfthryth's queenly anointing was conceived'.<sup>99</sup> It was, however, Æthelwold's support of Ælfthryth's son, Æthelred, during the disputed succession after Edgar's death in 975, which may have proved most controversial. Dunstan and many other ecclesiastics favoured Edward, Edgar's son by his first wife, who was later murdered by supporters of Æthelred.<sup>100</sup> Thus it can be seen that the prominent secular association in Wulfstan's *vita* is with the crown. Indeed, the crown, in a number of guises, acts as the guiding influence on Æthelwold's career. It will be seen that the dominant theme of Wulfstan's *vita* is the close association between the throne and the monasteries, as exemplified by the relationship between Edgar and Æthelwold.

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<sup>95</sup> For a detailed account of Æthelwold's association with Ælfthryth see Yorke, 'Politics of the Tenth Century', pp. 81-86.

<sup>96</sup> Symons, *Regularis Concordia*, p. 3 states: 'coniugique suae Ælfthithae sanctimonialium mandras ut impaudi more custodies defenderet cautissime praecepit'. 'And he saw to it wisely that his Queen, Aelfthryth, should be the protectress and fearless guardian of the communities of nuns'.

<sup>97</sup> KEE, p. 150.

<sup>98</sup> See Robert Deshman, *The Benedictional of Æthelwold*, Studies in Manuscript Illumination, 9 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), pp. 204-07 and 213-14.

<sup>99</sup> Stafford, *Queens, Concubines and Dowagers*, p. 127.

<sup>100</sup> For a more detailed discussion of Edward 'the Martyr' see the *Passio S. Eadmundi* section in the Ramsey chapter below.

## Ecclesiastical Associations

The most significant ecclesiastical association found in Wulfstan's *vita* is that with Dunstan. Æthelwold and Dunstan are first associated in Wulfstan's *vita* when Æthelwold is consecrated to the priesthood, where Wulfstan simply says: 'et contigit eum ordinasse in ipso tempore simul Dunstanum et Ætheluuoldum et quendam, Æthelstanum uocabulo, qui postmodum monachilem habitum deserens'<sup>101</sup>. The affiliation between Æthelwold and Dunstan is strengthened when the former travels to Glastonbury and becomes a disciple of Dunstan. It was at Glastonbury that Æthelwold took the monastic habit and Wulfstan reinforces the association by saying: 'Cuius magisterio multum proficiens, tandem monastici ordinis habitum ab ipso suscepit, humili deuotione eius regimini deditus'<sup>102</sup>. Later in the same chapter Wulfstan states that Æthelwold rose to become 'decanus' of the monastery, although the precise meaning and status of 'decanus' is unclear. It may be that the *decanus* was next in authority to the abbot, or there may have been a *praepositus* (prior) who exercised this authority. The tenth-century sources are unclear on this point, although both offices can be found in the *Regularis Concordia*.<sup>103</sup>

As noted earlier Wulfstan reports that Æthelwold, after a period spent in Glastonbury, wanted to travel overseas to experience Continental monasticism. As this passage has been discussed in detail already it will not be re-examined

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<sup>101</sup> Wulfstan, *Vita*, c. 8, pp. 12-13; and so it happened that he ordained on one and the same day Dunstan, Æthelwold and one called Athelstan, who afterwards forsaking a monk's habit (Lapidge and Winterbottom, p. 13, altered).

<sup>102</sup> Wulfstan, *Vita*, c. 9, pp. 14-15; 'He profited greatly by Dunstan's teaching, and eventually received the habit of the monastic order from him, devoting himself humbly to his rule'.

<sup>103</sup> See Symons, *Regularis Concordia*, pp. 39 and 56. The word 'decanus' usually refers to a dean in a cathedral. Later medieval cathedral communities contained four deans and the offices were similar to monastic offices. The deans were usually of a higher status than a precentor or cantor.



here. Æthelwold's desire to seek out what Wulfstan describes as a more perfect monastic life reads as an implicit criticism of Glastonbury monastic practice, and, by association, Dunstan. It is striking, therefore, that Wulfstan says that when Æthelwold went to Abingdon, he did so with Dunstan's consent. Wulfstan writes: 'Factumque est, consentiente Dunstano abbate, secundum Regis uoluntatem, ut uir Dei Ætheluuoldus praenotati loci suscipere curam'<sup>104</sup>. There is no reason to suppose, therefore, that Dunstan would not have given his consent to Æthelwold's proposed journey overseas. Here again there is a conjunction of the crown and Dunstan. One of the main precepts of the monastic revival was to ensure that monks stayed in their monastery; the abbot's permission was required for a monk to move from one monastery to another.<sup>105</sup> Rather than highlighting the links between Dunstan and the crown, this passage emphasises the canonical propriety of Æthelwold's move to Abingdon, as it was done with his abbot's, Dunstan's, permission.

Both Dunstan and Æthelwold are credited by Wulfstan with the revival of monasticism in England: 'Sicque factum est, consentiente rege, ut partim Dunstani consilio et actione, partim Ætheluuoldi sedula cooperatione, monasteria ubique in gente Anglorum, quaedam monachis, quaedam sanctimonialibus, constituerentur sub abbatibus et abbatissis regulariter uiuentibus'<sup>106</sup>. The use of

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<sup>104</sup> Wulfstan, *Vita*, c. 11, pp. 20-21; At the king's wish and with the consent of abbot Dunstan it came about that the man of God Æthelwold took charge of the aforementioned place (Lapidge and Winterbottom, p. 21, altered).

<sup>105</sup> The Rule of St Benedict stipulates that a vow of stability was one of the three promises which a novice should make on his admittance to the order. Chapter 58 of the Rule states: 'in oratorio coram omnibus promittat de stabilitate sua et conversatione morum suorum et obedientiam', 'In the oratory, in the presence of all, he shall promise stability, conversion of his life, and obedience', *The Rule of St Benedict*, ed. and trans by Justin McCann (London: Burns Oates, 1952), pp. 130-131.

<sup>106</sup> Wulfstan, *Vita*, c. 27, pp. 42-43; And so it came about, with the king's agreement, that thanks to Dunstan's counsel and activity and to Æthelwold's unremitting aid, monasteries were

‘regulariter’, which simply means ‘regularly’, contains no indication that the rule followed was necessarily that of St Benedict and adds weight to the argument that a unified ‘Reform movement’ bears little resemblance to the reality of late tenth-century monasticism. It is clear from sources associated with Winchester, Worcester and perhaps Glastonbury that monastic revival took a different form in each place and that the most zealous ‘reformer’ was Æthelwold. Therefore an association with Dunstan might have made Æthelwold more acceptable to a later monastic audience, or perhaps such an association was used to strengthen the relationship between Winchester and Canterbury. The responsibility for the promotion of Dunstan’s cult appears to be appropriated by Winchester. In this way Winchester is drawn into Canterbury’s circle of influence and it thereby gains some of Canterbury’s authority as a primary site for the promotion of Christianity.

Wulfstan emphasises the connection between Æthelwold and Dunstan by dedicating an entire chapter of his *vita* to a prophetic dream which Dunstan had whilst both Dunstan and Æthelwold were at Glastonbury. In the dream Dunstan saw a tree of great height whose branches appeared to stretch over all points of the compass and the branches of the tree were loaded with cowls. As Wulfstan says:

uidit [...] quasi quandam mirae celsitudinis arborem, quae ramos suos expandere uisa est ad orientem et occidentem, septentrionem et meridiem, super uniuersam Britanniae regionem uasta longitudine et latitudine extensam. Cuius arboris rami innumeris erant maioribus

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established everywhere in England, some for monks, some for nuns, governed by abbots and abbesses who lived regularly (i.e. according to a Rule) (Lapidge and Winterbottom, p. 43, altered).

atque minoribus cucullis onusti, ipsa uero arbor in summo cacumine  
gestabat unam pergrandem cucullam, quae manicarum uelamento  
supereminens protegebat ceteras et ingenti proceritate supergrediens  
uniuersas ipsum contingebat caelum.<sup>107</sup>

The dream continues with an explanation of the vision of the tree, given to Dunstan by an angel in the guise of a priest: the tree represents the island of Britain and the large cowl at the top is Æthelwold. The other cowls are the many monks who would be instructed by Æthelwold and who would be drawn from all quarters to serve God. The image of Æthelwold protecting the other monks with the jutting sleeves is an odd description in itself as surely cowls do not have sleeves.<sup>108</sup>

The dream vision is a standard narrative tool of hagiography and can also be seen in the late tenth-century religious vernacular poem ‘The Dream of the Rood’.<sup>109</sup> Wulfstan is using a narrative strategy that would have been familiar to his audience to place Æthelwold unequivocally at the forefront of ecclesiastical life in the late tenth century. The passage is as much political propaganda as it is hagiographical convention; propaganda which acts on behalf of Winchester and

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<sup>107</sup> Wulfstan, *Vita*, c. 38, pp. 56-57; ‘he saw [Dunstan saw] [...] what looked like a tree of wonderful height, which appeared to stretch its branches to east, west, north and south, extending far and wide over all Britain. The branches of the tree were loaded with countless cowls, some bigger, some smaller. But the tree itself carried on its topmost point one very large cowl, which protected the others with the covering of its jutting sleeves, and was so much higher than the rest that it reached heaven itself’.

<sup>108</sup> Wulfstan, *Vita*, c. 38, pp. 56-57.

<sup>109</sup> For the use of dreams in Continental hagiography see Isabel Moreira, *Dreams, Visions and Spiritual Authority in Merovingian Gaul* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000) and Paul E. Dutton, *The Politics of Dreaming in the Carolingian Empire* (London: University of Nebraska Press, 1994). For discussions of Insular visions see, for example, Patrick Sims-Williams, *Religion and Literature in Western England 600-800*, CSASE, 3 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990) and Milton McC. Gatch, ‘Piety and Liturgy in the Old English *Vision of Leofric*’, in *Words, Texts and Manuscripts: Studies in Anglo-Saxon Culture Presented to Helmut Gneuss on the Occasion of his Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, ed. by Michael Korhammer (Cambridge: Brewer, 1992), pp. 159-79.

Wulfstan himself as well as Æthelwold. Æthelwold is at the top of the tree protecting all the other monks – who came from all over the country, and who differed from each other – and is leading them to heaven. One way to interpret this is that Wulfstan was aware that there were differences in monastic practice across the country, despite the alleged unifying influence of the *Regularis Concordia*. This passage clearly sets out Æthelwold's claim to be the foremost monastic 'reformer', and that as a result his style of monastic observance was the most ideal and the way through which entry into heaven could be gained.

The description of Æthelwold as overshadowing cowls from all points of the compass implies that his influence is universal, whereas in reality it was limited to those monastic houses directly associated with him and his disciples. The description of the unifying influence of Æthelwold in the dream could be an allusion to the *Regularis Concordia*, the monastic customary composed by Æthelwold and intended to unite all the monastic houses of the country. Given the importance that is attached by modern scholarship to this document and the Council held at Winchester where it was drawn up, it is striking that neither the customary nor the council is explicitly included in Wulfstan's *vita*.<sup>110</sup> This may be because the importance of these events, like the presence of a unified 'reform movement', has been overstated by later scholarship and consequently Wulfstan's omission is not as significant as the subsequent scholarship would suggest. The use of Dunstan to promote Æthelwold's claim as leading ecclesiastic is worth considering, as Dunstan himself is often considered to be the

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<sup>110</sup> For a discussion of the evidence for the Council of Winchester see the 'Secular Associations' subsection of the *Vita S. Oswaldi* section of chapter 4.

foremost ecclesiastical figure of the times.<sup>111</sup> Perhaps one reason for this was to enhance Æthelwold's credibility as a 'reformer', contributing to the promotion of Winchester and Æthelwoldian monasticism as the ideal.

The political aspects of the dream are also noteworthy: it may be that the dream narrative was intended to act as a piece of political propaganda for Winchester and Wulfstan himself. As was observed in the introduction, Wulfstan was *cantor* of the Old Minster, a role which inevitably carries political implications. Similarly the Old Minster had strong connections with the crown, not least of which was the physical proximity of the cathedral to the royal palace, Winchester being the capital of the kingdom at this time.<sup>112</sup> As noted above, Æthelwold had strong connections with both Ælfthryth and her son Æthelred, in whose reign the *vita* was composed. Dunstan's influence suffered a decline in this period, and this may be reflected in the dream where, by placing Æthelwold at the top of the tree, the importance of Dunstan is diminished and he is reduced to the role of prophet. It could be read as a political statement by Wulfstan, not only reflecting Æthelwold's own political affiliations, but those of Winchester and Wulfstan himself. The dream and Æthelwold's position in it place Winchester at the centre, or top, of religious life in England, and also represent it as having jurisdiction over all monastic life in the country. That in itself is surely a bold political statement.

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<sup>111</sup> Whilst it is clear that Dunstan was considered an important and influential figure by contemporary sources, this idea of Dunstan as a close adviser to Edgar may be a later reconstruction, of late tenth-century political life; for more detail of this argument see the discussion in the previous chapter.

<sup>112</sup> See Biddle, *Winchester in the Early Middle Ages*, for the archaeological evidence of the proximity of the royal palace and the Old Minster, and the implications that this has for the relationship between Edgar and Æthelwold.

In addition to Dunstan, Wulfstan also associates the figure of Æthelwold with Ælfheah, bishop of Winchester, in whose household Æthelwold spent a period of time before he went to Glastonbury. It was Ælfheah who tonsured Æthelwold to clerical orders and consecrated him to the priesthood on the same day he consecrated Dunstan. In the description of Æthelwold's consecration Wulfstan includes an account of prophecies made by Ælfheah. After celebrating Mass, Ælfheah said that he had consecrated three men that day,<sup>113</sup> and then states: 'quorum duo ad episcopalem peringent apicem, unus quidem primum in ciuitate Wigornensi deinde in Cantia, [...] alter uero mihi quandoque successurus est in pontificii dignitatem'<sup>114</sup>. This association with Ælfheah, who is seen as a tutor and early mentor to the young Æthelwold, can be read on two different levels. On one level it is a standard hagiographical *topos* of prophecy, with Ælfheah seen merely as the instrument through which the prophecy is announced. However, an association with Ælfheah may also be an association with the city of Winchester itself. After his death in 951, the bishop was venerated to a small extent and there are references to his deposition, on the twelfth of March, in two eleventh-century calendars from Winchester.<sup>115</sup> Ælfheah also appears amongst the lists of confessors in two late eleventh-century litanies, one originating from the New Minster, Winchester and the other probably coming from Christ Church

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<sup>113</sup> The third, a man named Athelstan by Wulfstan, afterwards deserted the church and according to Wulfstan ended his life 'in the stink of luxury' ('in fetore luxurie uitam finuit'), also prophesied by Ælfheah.

<sup>114</sup> Wulfstan, *Vita*, c. 8, pp. 12-13; Two will reach the peak as bishops, one of them first at Worcester, then in Canterbury [...] while the second will one day be the successor to me in the worthy office of pontiff (Lapidge and Winterbottom, p. 13, altered).

<sup>115</sup> Cambridge, Trinity College R. 15. 32, pages 15-26 (Winchester, New Minster, s. xi<sup>1</sup> (1036/6)) and London, British Library, Cotton Vitellius E. xviii, fols 2-7b (Winchester, New Minster, s. xi med. or xi<sup>3/4</sup>). See *English Kalendars before A. D. 1100*, ed. by Francis Wormald, HBS, 72 (London: Henry Bradshaw Society, 1934), nos 10 and 12 respectively.

Canterbury.<sup>116</sup> The lack of liturgical material associated with it would indicate that the cult was restricted (possibly to Winchester alone) and that the feast was not fully commemorated. Thus the prophetic tool was another Winchester saint, whose cult Æthelwold, and perhaps Wulfstan in his role as cantor, may have played a part in promoting.

As would be expected from a hagiographical text, the figure of Æthelwold is associated with a number of saints: Swithun, Laurence, Benedict, Mary of Bethany and the Virgin Mary. The association with Swithun is not surprising; he was a ninth-century bishop of Winchester whose cult Æthelwold did a great deal to promote. Wulfstan dedicates a chapter of the *Vita S. Æthelwoldi* to a description of Æthelwold's translation of Swithun's relics to a new shrine within the Old Minster church on 15 July 971.<sup>117</sup> No details of the translation itself are given, but it is clear that Wulfstan viewed this as an opportunity for the former bishop of Winchester to endorse the present bishop's reforms. The text reads:

Cuius praedicationem maxime iuuit sanctus antistes Suuithunus  
 eodem tempore caelestibus signis declaratus et infra templi regiam  
 gloriosissime translatus ac decentissime collocatus. Ideoque gemina  
 simul in domo Dei fulsere luminaria, candelabris aureis superposita:  
 quia quod Ætheluuoldus salubri uerborum exhortatione praedicauit,  
 hoc Suuithunus miraculorum exhibitione mirifice decorauit.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> London, British Library, Arundel 60 (Winchester, New Minster, s. xi<sup>2</sup> prob. 1073) and London, British Library, Cotton Claudius A. iii fols 9-18 and 87-105 (The 'Claudius Pontifical') (s. xi<sup>2/4</sup> or xi med, probably Canterbury CC). See *Anglo-Saxon Litanies of the Saints*, ed. by Michael Lapidge, HBS, 106 (London: Henry Bradshaw Society, 1991), nos XII AND XVII and XVIII.

<sup>117</sup> For a full discussion of the cult of Swithun see Lapidge, *Cult of Swithun*

<sup>118</sup> Wulfstan, *Vita*, c. 26, pp. 42-43; The holy bishop Swithun greatly helped his preaching at this time having been proclaimed by signs from heaven, and gloriously translated to receive proper burial within the church. So it was that at one and the same time two lamps blazed in the house of God, placed on golden candlesticks; for what Æthelwold preached by the saving

The surviving liturgical calendars also indicate an affiliation between Æthelwold and Swithun. All the calendars which mark the feasts of Æthelwold also mark the deposition and translation of Swithun. However, although there are no feasts marked in the calendars dating to the period before *c.* 970, at least one of the feasts of Swithun is marked in all but one of the calendars dating from the period 988 onwards, indicating that the cult had a wider appeal than that of Æthelwold. The wider appeal of the cult of Swithun is also indicated by lack of geographical focus of the calendars; his feasts are marked in calendars associated with both St Augustine's and Christ Church Canterbury and the two calendars associated with Worcester.<sup>119</sup>

Swithun was a ninth-century bishop of Winchester and as such it is highly unlikely that he was a monastic bishop; he more likely belonged to the class of secular clerics that Æthelwold disliked so much. It would seem strange, therefore, that Æthelwold would promote his cult. The reasons for the promotion of the cult and for why an affiliation with Swithun may have made the cult of Æthelwold more widely acceptable may be found in the miniature of Swithun which accompanies the feast of the deposition of the saint in the *Benedictional of Æthelwold*. A full description of the imagery and iconography of the saint can be found in Robert Deshman's facsimile edition of the manuscript,<sup>120</sup> and for the purposes of the current discussion it is enough to note that the figure is depicted with a tonsure, implying a monastic background. As D. J. Sheerin has argued, Æthelwold and the Winchester monks must have known that Swithun had not

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encouragement of his words, Swithun wonderfully ornamented by display of miracles (Lapidge and Winterbottom, p. 43, altered).

<sup>119</sup> Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 9 and 391.

<sup>120</sup> Deshman, *Benedictional of Æthelwold*, pp. 138-39 and plate 32.



been a monk but that, for them, the cult of Swithun ‘may have represented some continuity with the past, some effort to make room for earlier religious traditions in the new monastic dispensation’<sup>121</sup>. Thus if the promotion of the cult of Swithun was, in part, an attempt to reconcile the monks and ‘Old Winchester’ from whose families the expelled clerics probably came, then the continued association between Æthelwold as a saint and Swithun could also have been an attempt to maintain this reconciliation.

Though the evidence is less conclusive, the surviving Anglo-Saxon litanies of the saints also highlight the affiliations made between Æthelwold and both Swithun and Dunstan. Of the forty-six litanies, only ten contain invocations to Æthelwold.<sup>122</sup> Of these ten, all contain an invocation to Swithun and eight contain an invocation to Dunstan. Given the role that Æthelwold played in the promotion of the cult of St Æthelthryth, discussed below, of the ten litanies which have an invocation to Æthelwold, nine also contain an invocation to Æthelthryth, in addition to one where, due to the damaged state of the manuscript, all that is visible is an invocation to ‘sancta Æ’, which may or may not be Æthelthryth, included in the invocations to the chorus of virgins. Four of the ten manuscripts are associated with the Winchester houses,<sup>123</sup> and another four are associated with houses in East Anglia: Ramsey, Crowland and Bury St Edmunds, of which Crowland and Bury St Edmunds may have had some

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<sup>121</sup> Daniel Sheerin ‘The Dedication of the Old Minster, Winchester, in 980’, *Revue Bénédictine* 88 (1978), 261-273 (pp. 269-70).

<sup>122</sup> These manuscripts are Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 391 and 422, London, BL, Additional 28188, BL, Arundel, 60, BL, Cotton Galba A. xiv, BL, Cotton Vitellius A. vii, BL Harley 863, Oxford, Bodleian Library, Douce 296, Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Reg. Lat. 12 and Worcester, Cathedral Library, F. 173. See Lapidge, *Litanies*, nos VI, VIII, IX, XII, XVI, XXII, XXIII, XXXII, XLV & XLVI.

<sup>123</sup> MSS Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 391, London BL, Arundel 60, Worcester, Cathedral Library, F. 173. London, BL, Cotton Galba A. xiv may be of Winchester origin, though the precise location is not easy to establish, see Lapidge, *Litanies* pp. 69-70 for details.

connection with Æthelwold or his disciples.<sup>124</sup> Only one of the manuscripts originates from Worcester (Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 391); neither of the liturgical calendars which originate from Worcester mark either of the feasts of Æthelwold.<sup>125</sup> This again illustrates the close association between the cult of Æthelwold and Winchester.

The association between Æthelwold and Æthelthryth can also be found in Wulfstan's *vita*, where in the description of the refoundation of Ely he states: 'In qua regione locus omni ueneratione dignus habetur, magnificatus nimium reliquiis et miraculis sanctae Æthelthrythae reginae et perpetuae uirginis ac sororum eius [...] Hunc ergo locum famulus Christi pro dilectione tantarum uirginum magnopere uenerari coepit'<sup>126</sup>. In other sources Æthelwold is associated with the translation of Æthelthryth's relics to the renovated church and the saint features prominently in the *Benedictional of Æthelwold*, where she appears in the choir of virgins; her feast is also marked in the *Benedictional*, with an accompanying full-page illustration. The composition and iconography of this picture have been discussed in detail by Dëshman,<sup>127</sup> who notes the association that is made between Æthelthryth and the Virgin Mary. On the opposite folio to the illustration of Æthelthryth is what Dëshman describes as

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<sup>124</sup> These are MSS London, BL, MS Additional 28188, and BL MS Cotton Vitellius A. vii, Oxford, Bodleian Library, Douce 264 and Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Reg. Lat. 12.

<sup>125</sup> These calendars are found in MSS Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 391 and Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 9. See Wormald, *English Kalendars* numbers 17 and 18, pp. 212-37.

<sup>126</sup> Wulfstan, *vita*, c. 23, pp. 38-39. In the region a place is held worthy of all reverence, for it is made glorious by the relics and miracles of St Æthelthryth, queen and perpetual virgin, and her sisters. [...] The servant of Christ began to reverence this place greatly, out of his love for such distinguished virgins (Lapidge and Winterbottom, p. 39, altered)

<sup>127</sup> Dëshman, *Benedictional of Æthelwold*, pp. 121-24, plate 28.

‘the historiated initial O of Christ, which begins the text of her feast’<sup>128</sup>; no other feast contains a full-page frontispiece miniature and a historiated initial, and this indicates the importance of her feast, at least at Winchester.<sup>129</sup>

The name Æthelthryth appears on two more occasions in Wulfstan’s *vita*; the first is when the prophetic dreams of Æthelwold’s mother are interpreted; ‘ad quandam Christi famulam, nomine Æthelthrytham, moribus et aetate maturam, quae in praefata urbe nutrix erat Deo deuotarum uirginum’<sup>130</sup>. Wulfstan is rather vague about this Æthelthryth; it could be that she was abbess of the Nunnaminster, which was founded some time during the reign of Edward the Elder.<sup>131</sup> The second Æthelthryth mentioned by Wulfstan is definitely the abbess of the reformed Nunnaminster; ‘mandras sanctimonialium ordinavit, quibus matrem de qua superius paululum tetigimus Æthelthrytham praefecit’<sup>132</sup>. It is possible that this is the same person as the Æthelthryth who interprets the dreams, although she would be of a considerable age by the time the Nunnaminster was reformed in the 960s, as Wulfstan describes her as ‘aetate matura’ when Æthelwold’s mother consults her. It could also be that Wulfstan has mistaken two women with the same name as one and the same person.<sup>133</sup>

The association between St Æthelthryth and Mary expressed in the *Benedictional of Æthelwold* and Æthelthryth’s subsequent promotion as a patron of nuns

<sup>128</sup> Deshman, *Benedictional of Æthelwold*, p. 121 and plate 29.

<sup>129</sup> The significance of this has been discussed by Deshman in his *Benedictional of Æthelwold*, pp. 121-24.

<sup>130</sup> Wulfstan, *Vita*, c. 2, pp. 4-5; she went along to a servant of Christ called Æthelthryth, a woman ripe in years and experience, and the nurse of the virgins dedicated to God in the aforementioned city (Winchester) (Lapidge and Winterbottom, p. 5, altered).

<sup>131</sup> See Sarah Foot, *Veiled Women: The Disappearance of Nuns from Anglo-Saxon England*, 2 vols (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), II, pp. 243-52 (pp. 243-44).

<sup>132</sup> Wulfstan, *Vita*, c. 22, pp. 36-39; ‘Here he established flocks of nuns, placing over them Æthelthryth, whom I briefly mentioned above’.

<sup>133</sup> See Foot, *Veiled Women*, p. 246.

would, as Deshman has argued, have ‘strengthened the authority of her namesake’ at the Nunnaminster.<sup>134</sup>

A further ecclesiastical association made by Wulfstan is made with Laurence. The *vita* includes a chapter dedicated to the description of how Æthelwold saved a number of the poor from starvation during a famine. Æthelwold, he says, spent all the money he had on the poor and when the money ran out he ordered all the church ornaments and silver vessels to be broken up and turned into money, which he used to buy food for the poor. The text then reads: ‘In cuius pietatis opere sectatus est imitabile exemplum beati Laurentii leuitae et martyris, qui, instante persecutionis tempore, thesauros et facultates ecclesiae dispersit deditque pauperibus’<sup>135</sup>.

The final affiliations made with Æthelwold to be discussed here, are those with Mary of Bethany and the Virgin Mary. Wulfstan, when describing the virtuous childhood of Æthelwold and how he studied religious literature, states: ‘ut qui aliis uiam salutis erat ostensurus ipse cum Maria secus pedes Domini humiliter sederet et uerbum ex ore illius salubriter audiret’<sup>136</sup>. This is clearly an allusion to Mary of Bethany, who was favoured by monastic writers as she

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<sup>134</sup> Deshman, *Benedictional of Æthelwold*, p. 173.

<sup>135</sup> Wulfstan, *Vita*, c. 29, pp. 46-47; ‘In this work of love Æthelwold followed the splendid example of St Laurence, deacon and martyr, who, in a crisis during the persecution, dispersed the treasures and riches of the church and gave to the poor’. As Lapidge and Winterbottom have pointed out, the passage is similar to one found in Bede, *EH* iii. 6, where Oswald ordered a silver dish to be broken up and the pieces divided amongst the poor. See Lapidge and Winterbottom, *Wulfstan of Winchester*, p. 44, n. 4.

<sup>136</sup> Wulfstan, *Vita*, c. 6, pp. 8-11; thus one who was destined to show others the ‘way of salvation’ was himself with Mary would sit humbly at the feet of the Lord, and would listen to the words of salvation from his lips (Lapidge and Winterbottom, pp. 9 and 11, altered). C.f. Luke 10. 39.

characterised the contemplative life whilst her sister, Martha, symbolised the active life.<sup>137</sup>

As has been seen, the Virgin Mary was associated with other saints whose cults Æthelwold promoted during his episcopacy; he was also influential in promoting the cult of the Virgin during this period and this association is reflected in the *vitae*. The rise of the cult of the Virgin Mary in the tenth century has been discussed in detail by Mary Clayton,<sup>138</sup> and, as she has illustrated, most of the reformed monasteries were dedicated to the Virgin Mary, or to Mary and another saint. Æthelwold's association with Mary is strengthened by the *Regularis Concordia*, provided that we accept the arguments that Æthelwold played a major role in its composition. There are several occasions when prayers for Mary are specified; after lauds and vespers when the psalms for the king and queen have been sung, prayers for the patron saint of the foundation and on Saturdays a Mass for Mary was to be said.<sup>139</sup> The calendars and liturgical texts mark the four main feasts of the Virgin and in texts associated with Winchester the additional feasts of her presentation in the temple and her conception are also marked. The *Benedictional of Æthelwold* is significant in its artistic representations of the Virgin in that it emphasises Mary's royalty and position as queen of heaven.<sup>140</sup> As Deshman has pointed out, this portrayal of Mary as the queen of heaven is associated with the promotion of the queen's prestige in

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<sup>137</sup> See Giles Constable, *Three Studies in Medieval Religious and Social Thought: The Interpretation of Mary and Martha, The Ideal of the Imitation of Christ, The Orders of Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995). For Byrhtferth's use of Mary of Bethany see the 'Ecclesiastical Associations' subsection of the *Vita S. Oswaldi* section of chapter 4.

<sup>138</sup> Mary Clayton, *The Cult of the Virgin Mary in Anglo-Saxon England*; eadem, 'Centralism and Uniformity Versus Localism and Diversity: The Virgin Mary and Native Saints in the Monastic Reform', *Peritia*, 8 (1994), 95-106.

<sup>139</sup> *Regularis Concordia*, ed. Symons, p. 14, p. 20, p. 31 and p. 35. See also Clayton, *The Cult of the Virgin Mary*, pp. 62-65.

<sup>140</sup> See Deshman, *Benedictional of Æthelwold*, especially pp. 124-38.

England, and especially in Wessex, at this time. Once again we are brought back to an affiliation with the throne and the dependence of the ‘reformers’ on royal support. The relationship between Æthelwold and Queen Ælfthryth has been discussed above, and perhaps the affiliations made between Æthelwold and saints Mary and Æthelthryth reflect once again this association with the throne.

### **Associations with the Divine**

Significantly, the first association that Wulfstan creates for Æthelwold is with the divine, through the illustration of a series of dreams with the theme of predestination experienced by Æthelwold’s mother whilst she was pregnant with the future saint. Wulfstan takes full advantage of the use of premonitive dreams; he includes the dreams of Æthelwold’s mother, and the dream of Dunstan, discussed above, which is immediately followed in the text by Æthelwold’s own dream, which will be discussed below.

Æthelwold’s mother has two dreams in Wulfstan’s *vita*; in the first, as she is sitting at the door of her house she sees a banner whose top seems to touch to heaven. The banner is lowered to the ground and envelops the pregnant woman; once it has done so, it regains its old strength and firmness and returns to the sky.<sup>141</sup> The second dream described features Æthelwold’s mother seeing a golden eagle leaping from her mouth and flying away, shading as it did so the whole of the city of Winchester with its golden wings.<sup>142</sup> Wulfstan then gives his own interpretation of the dreams, saying: ‘Nos quoque eorundem somniorum

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<sup>141</sup> Wulfstan, *Vita*, c. 2, pp. 4-5.

<sup>142</sup> Wulfstan, *Vita*, c. 2, pp. 4-5.

coniectores esse possumus'<sup>143</sup>. The banner, Wulfstan says, indicates that the unborn Æthelwold 'quandoque futurum militiae Dei signiferum'<sup>144</sup>. The interpretation of the golden eagle is more detailed, with Wulfstan using Isidoran etymology to explain the derivation of the word eagle (*aquila*). He uses a quotation from Proverbs 21. 20 to account for the golden colour of the eagle before stating: 'Qui perspicaci et inreuerberata cordis acie diuina meditando, semper ad caelestia per contemplationem uolauit, et super ecclesiam, magni regis ciuitate, quam contrariae potestates inpugnare nitebantur'<sup>145</sup>. The imagery of these dreams and their explanation would undoubtedly have been familiar to the *vita*'s audience, creating a link between Æthelwold and the divine which could be traced back to before his birth. Wulfstan is defining the type of sanctity with which he intends Æthelwold to be associated by using a set of references understood by a particular group of people. This raises the question of audience for the *vita*; it would be useful to be able to determine what the intended audience of this text was, and whether a secular audience was envisaged.

Wulfstan also includes two dream visions later in the text: one experienced by Dunstan which has been discussed above, and one experienced by Æthelwold himself. It is surely not coincidental that Dunstan's dream is immediately followed by Æthelwold's own dream in the text. Æthelwold's authority, and that of his dream, is enhanced by Dunstan's perceived spiritual authority, in a similar way that the authority of Winchester is enhanced by an association with

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<sup>143</sup> Wulfstan, *Vita*, c. 3, pp. 6-7; 'We too may act as interpreters of these dreams'.

<sup>144</sup> Wulfstan, *Vita*, c. 3, pp. 6-7; 'was one day to be standard-bearer in the army of God'.

<sup>145</sup> Wulfstan, *Vita*, c. 3, pp. 6-7; For Æthelwold, who thought on divine things with an acute mind whose sight could not be averted, always flew in contemplation to the heavenly things. He spread far and wide the shades of his fatherly protection over the church, the 'city of the great king', which was under attack from hostile powers (Lapidge and Winterbottom, p. 7, altered).

Canterbury. In Æthelwold's dream he is standing at the seashore and he sees a ship near to him that is full of fish (especially eels). Whilst wondering what this means he hears a voice calling his name which said 'Ætheluuolde, Ætheluuolde, hoc tibi mandatum colitis a Deo missus est: "Excita hos pisces, quibus haec nauis quam cernis impleta est, et orationibus tuis effice ut sint homines, sicut antea fuerunt"'<sup>146</sup>. After much praying the eels turn back into men and come ashore, with Æthelwold recognising many of them personally. They thank the Almighty God that through his clemency and 'the arrival of my insignificant self' ('per meae paruitatis aduentum'), they had been restored to life and reason.<sup>147</sup>

The main way in which Æthelwold is associated with the divine is through the numerous miracle stories included in the text. The first of these occurs when Æthelwold was still a child, indicating that this association was longstanding and simultaneously highlighting the idea of predestination which features prominently in Æthelwold's birth and early childhood.<sup>148</sup> B's *Vita S. Dunstani* similarly features a miracle associated with the young Dunstan: after describing his progress in learning, B states that Dunstan falls sick with a fever and becomes delirious. He rises from his bed and climbs onto the roof of the church at Glastonbury and then returns, unharmed, to lie down between two keepers inside the church.<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> Wulfstan, *Vita*, c. 39, pp. 58-59; 'Æthelwold, Æthelwold, God sends you this command from heaven: "Rouse these fish which fill the ship you see, and cause them by your prayers to be men as they were before"'.  
<sup>147</sup> Wulfstan, *Vita*, c. 39, pp. 58-61.  
<sup>148</sup> Wulfstan, *Vita*, c. 5, pp. 8-9.  
<sup>149</sup> *VSD*, c. 4, pp. 8-9.



The majority of the miracle stories occur after Æthelwold was made abbot of Abingdon and subsequently bishop of Winchester, and in this way they give divine sanction to Æthelwold's actions and 'reforms'. The miracle of the inexhaustible supply of mead, described above, is the first of these, and illustrates the association with the divine with references to the story of the marriage at Canaan. A similar miracle is found in the *Vita S. Dunstani*, where B describes how King Athelstan promised to visit the noble matron Æthelflæd at Glastonbury; the king sent servants to see whether she had enough provisions to entertain his retinue and they found a shortage of mead. Æthelflæd prayed to the Virgin Mary and the mead was provided.<sup>150</sup>

The association between the divine and Æthelwold as abbot of Abingdon is continued in chapter fourteen of Wulfstan's *vita*. During the rebuilding work at Abingdon, Æthelwold places one of the brothers, Ælfstan, in charge of catering for the builders. Ælfstan willingly undertakes this task without any help from either other brothers or lay assistants, yet the abbot thinks that he has an assistant. Whilst making a customary tour of the abbey grounds Æthelwold sees the brother standing by a boiling cauldron preparing food for the craftsmen. Noting the clean floor and sparkling pans, Æthelwold accuses Ælfstan of stealing the service from him in doing all the work by himself and without the abbot's knowledge. Æthelwold orders the monk to prove himself as a 'miles Christi' by plunging his hand into the boiling cauldron and picking up a piece of food from the bottom. This Ælfstan does without hesitation and without harm coming to

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<sup>150</sup> *VSD*, c. 10, pp. 17-18.

his hand.<sup>151</sup> This resonates strongly with references to the Rule of Saint Benedict and the instructions concerning the obedience which a monk must give to the abbot. In this way divine authority is used to reinforce and sanction Æthelwold's 'reforms', particularly his strict adherence to the Benedictine Rule. This too could be read as the promotion of Winchester Benedictine monasticism, as undoubtedly the audience of the *vita* would have understood the significance of such miracles.

The majority of the last fourteen chapters of Wulfstan's *vita* is filled with miracle stories which illustrate the authority that Æthelwold received from the divine; how an empty flask dropped on a road was found full of oil, how a monk fell from the roof of the church but was unharmed and how a candle lay burning on the page of a book that the bishop was reading, yet the book was undamaged, to give but three examples. One purpose of hagiography is to connect the subject directly to Christ, often by connecting him or her to existing saints and so tracing the saintly authority back to Christ himself. This can be seen in the preface of Wulfstan's *vita* which reads: 'Ex quorum collegio beatus pater et electus Dei pontifex Ætheluuoldus, uelut lucifer inter astra coruscans, suis temporibus apparuit, multorumque coenobiorum fundator et ecclesiasticorum dogmatum institutor inter omnes Anglorum pontifices solus singulariter effulsit'<sup>152</sup>. This imagery of Æthelwold as a 'shining star' is repeated in some liturgical material

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<sup>151</sup> Wulfstan, *Vita*, c. 14, pp. 26-29.

<sup>152</sup> Wulfstan, *Vita*, Preface, pp. 2-3; 'Of the company of these teachers (the apostles) was the blessed father and elect of God, Bishop Æthelwold. He burst on his time brilliant as the morning star among other stars; the founder of many monasteries and teacher of the Church's doctrines, he shone alone among all the English bishops'.

associated with his cult; that found in MS Alençon 14, for example.<sup>153</sup> The Collect refers to Æthelwold, as ‘Deus qui preclari sideris sancti pontificis Adeluoldi illustratione nouam populis Anglorum tribuisti lucem hodierna die clarescere’<sup>154</sup>. Similar imagery is used in the liturgical material associated with the feast of the translation; in the hymn Æthelwold is described as a star resplendent in heaven.

The immediate conclusions to be drawn from Wulfstan’s *vita* are the clear and consistent association made between Æthelwold and the throne, particularly Edgar. Another striking feature is the use made of Dunstan, at first portrayed as tutor and mentor to Æthelwold and then as a prophetic figure who has a dream about how influential Æthelwold will be. It is significant that there are relatively few associations made between Æthelwold and biblical figures and the more abstract notion of the divine; this is in direct contrast to Byrhtferth’s *Vita S. Oswaldi* where the predominant association is with precisely these groups, at the expense of secular associations.

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<sup>153</sup> This manuscript, MS Alençon, Bibliothèque Municipale 14, fols 34<sup>v</sup> to 36<sup>r</sup>, containing liturgical material associated with the cult of Æthelwold and a copy of Wulfstan’s *Vita S. Æthelwoldi*, was copied in the early twelfth century by Orderic Vitalis from a lost exemplar which seemingly originated from the Old Minster, Winchester. The liturgical pieces are found immediately after the copy of the *vita* and Lapidge and Winterbottom have argued that there is good reason to associate them with Wulfstan himself. The manuscript contains all the liturgical material necessary, with the exception of lections (required for matins and for the mass), for the commemoration of the saint on the feast of his deposition (1 August) and his translation (10 September): collects and hymns for First Vespers for each of the two feasts tropes and mass-sets for each of the two feasts.

<sup>154</sup> *Wulfstan of Winchester*, p. cxv; ‘Oh God, you brilliantly gave the new light of the bright star, holy bishop Æthelwold, to the English people to dawn on this day’.

## ÆLFRIC'S VITA S. ÆTHELWOLDI

As noted in the introduction to this chapter, it has been generally accepted that Ælfric's *Vita S. Æthelwoldi* is an abbreviated version of Wulfstan's text. It is therefore to be expected that many of the associations that Wulfstan made between Æthelwold and various figures – Dunstan, Edgar and Swithun, for example – would be repeated by Ælfric. As with the Wulfstan text an analysis of these associations in Ælfric's version gives an insight into the way that Æthelwold's sanctity was perceived and constructed. Although many of the affiliations expressed in the Ælfric text are the same as those in Wulfstan's work, Ælfric can be seen to do a number of different things with them: he copies text verbatim from Wulfstan, creating the same association; he repeats the same text but changes the wording which changes the emphasis and so the nature of the association; and he omits certain episodes all together, thus removing – or not creating – an affiliation.

### Secular Associations

Although perhaps less obvious than in Wulfstan's, an association between Æthelwold and the crown is a consistent theme in Ælfric's *vita*. The first example occurs in the text when the young Æthelwold comes to the attention of King Athelstan, who has him brought to court; Ælfric says: 'Creuit autem puer, et in ipsa pueritia sacris litterarum studiis traditus est. Qui adolescens factus Æthelstano regi, filio Eaduerdi, fama uulgante notus factus est; et eius comitatu diu adhaerens, cum esset acer ingenio, plura a sapientibus regis utilia sibi

didicit'<sup>155</sup>. One difference is that in his rendering of the text, Ælfric does not include the suggestion found in Wulfstan's *vita* that Athelstan sent for Æthelwold, who then found favour with the king and his thegns.<sup>156</sup> More striking is the lack of any parallel in Ælfric's *vita* to the declaration that Æthelwold was a close companion of the king, which can be found in Wulfstan's description of Æthelwold as Athelstan's 'indiuideo comitatu'. Ælfric does not, however, alter the implication, contained in Wulfstan's text, that there was a secular aspect to Æthelwold's presence at court.<sup>157</sup> This fits in with the general pattern of Ælfric reducing the importance of royal patronage, in favour of secular patrons.<sup>158</sup>

The association with Athelstan is continued by Ælfric in his description of Æthelwold's consecration, which was done at the king's command: 'et demum, iubente rege, ab Ælfego Wintoniensi episcopo tonsoratus et in gradum sacerdotalem consecratus est'<sup>159</sup>. The sense that Æthelwold was at court for a significant period of time before he was tonsured is given by the phrase 'et demum', and Ælfric states that Æthelwold was consecrated through the king's orders, 'iubente rege', both these ideas are found in Wulfstan's text, and indeed

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<sup>155</sup> Ælfric, *Vita*, c. 5, p. 72; The boy grew and was given over in his very boyhood to the study of the sacred writings. When he was a young man and his fame spread, he was made known to King Athelstan, son of Edward, and he belonged to his following for a long time. He learnt from the king's counsellors many things useful to him, for he was of keen intelligence' (EHD, pp. 904-905, altered). In this and in following quotations from the EHD translation of Ælfric's *vita*, some alterations to the translation have been made.

<sup>156</sup> C.f. Wulfstan, *Vita*, c. 7, p. 10; 'iuuenemque festinanter accersiri praecepit. Qui cum adductus staret in praesentia regis, inuenit gratiam in conspectu eius et in oculis optimatum eius'.

<sup>157</sup> C.f. Wulfstan, *Vita*, c. 7, p. 10; 'ibique indiuideo comitatu multum temporis agens in palatio plura a sapientibus regis utilia ac proficua sibi dedit'.

<sup>158</sup> See Jones, *Ælfric's Letter to the Monks of Eynsham*, pp. 43-49.

<sup>159</sup> Ælfric, *Vita*, c. 5, p. 72; 'and at length by the king's orders he was tonsured and consecrated into the priestly orders by Ælfheah, bishop of Winchester' (EHD, p. 905).

the phrase is identical in both.<sup>160</sup> Ælfric omits the detail that Æthelwold was tonsured to clerical orders before being consecrated as a priest, which is found in Wulfstan's text, and which reads in that version: 'secundum morem ecclesiasticum prius ad clericatus officium'. The exclusion of this phrase may simply have been part of Ælfric's abbreviation process; translating 'sense for sense' rather than word for word. It is likely that he felt there was no need to include this information; his intended audience was monastic, or in the case of some of his potential elite lay audience very familiar with monastic culture, and would have understood that Æthelwold would have naturally been tonsured to clerical orders as it was part of the progression of an ecclesiastical career. It is nonetheless noteworthy as an example of Ælfric's abbreviation technique and, rather than questioning Ælfric's omission of the phrase, it may be worth considering why Wulfstan included it. A suggestion is that the intended audience of Wulfstan's *vita* may have included secular readers who were not familiar with the ecclesiastical career progression; a hypothesis which is supported by the phrase 'secundum morem ecclesiasticum' (by the custom of the church).

The influence of the king on Æthelwold's career can again be seen in Ælfric's text in the description of the period Æthelwold spent in Winchester under the tutelage of Bishop Ælfheah: 'Ætheluuoldus uero, multum melioratus doctrinis et exemplis Ælfegi, ordinatoris sui, cui iubente rege studiose ad tempus

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<sup>160</sup> C.f. Wulfstan, *Vita*, c. 7, p. 10; 'Et demum, iubente rege, ab Ælfego Wintoniensi episcopo secundum morem ecclesiasticum prius ad clericatus officium tonsoratus ac deinde, paucis labentibus annorum curriculis, in gradum sacerdotalem consecratus est'.

adhaesit, postmodum Glæstoniam perueniens magnifici uiri Dunstani'<sup>161</sup>. Here again Ælfric uses the phrase 'iubente rege' to describe the progression of Æthelwold's career and, although the ideas expressed are similar to those in Wulfstan's *vita*, Ælfric repeats the phrase 'iubente rege' from the earlier chapter, whereas Wulfstan uses 'praecipiente rege'<sup>162</sup>. Ælfric implies that Æthelwold spent a considerable period of time with Ælfheah and that 'afterwards' ('postmodum') he went to Dunstan at Glastonbury.

The phrases 'iubente rege [...] postmodum' and 'praecipiente rege [...] tandem' used by Ælfric and Wulfstan respectively have generally been read as an indication that Æthelwold reluctantly remained at Winchester when his own inclination was to go to Glastonbury.<sup>163</sup> There is, however, little further evidence from the text to suggest this; both Wulfstan and Ælfric depict Ælfheah as a mentor figure for the young Æthelwold, stating that he learned many things from him. As Æthelwold is described as staying in the household it is assumed that he was at the Old Minster in Winchester, and it is unclear what the standard of monastic practice was there. Perhaps significantly neither *vita* describes Ælfheah as a monk and both texts state categorically that secular canons were expelled by Æthelwold from the Old Minster when he became bishop. Thus it must be inferred that at the time when Æthelwold was at the Old Minster the majority of his contemporaries were secular canons, as indeed he may have been. This argument is backed up by the statements in both *vitae* that Æthelwold took the

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<sup>161</sup> Ælfric, *Vita*, c. 6, p. 72; 'Æthelwold greatly benefited by the teaching and example of Ælfheah, who ordained him, and whom he zealously served for some time by the king's orders, and afterwards, going to Glastonbury, he placed himself under the instruction of the glorious man Dunstan' (EHD, p. 905).

<sup>162</sup> C.f. Wulfstan, *Vita*, c. 9, p. 14, where the whole clause reads: 'Aput quem praecipiente rege quo melius imbueretur aliquandiu commoratus est'.

<sup>163</sup> See Lapidge and Winterbottom, *Wulfstan of Winchester*, p. 11 n. 10 and p. 14 n. 3.

monastic habit at Glastonbury, and that there were no monastic houses in England before Dunstan had reformed Glastonbury and Æthelwold Abingdon.<sup>164</sup>

The presence of secular canons and lack of any strict monastic observance at the Old Minster could therefore provide an explanation for why Æthelwold was reluctant to stay in Winchester. The contemporary monastic audiences of both *vitae* would inevitably have been aware of the Æthelwoldian interpretation of pre-Æthelwoldian Winchester monasticism (or lack of it) and subsequently the implications of the passages describing how Æthelwold was kept at Winchester at the king's command would not have been lost on them. There is a danger, however, of reading too much into isolated phrases such as 'iubente rege [...] postmodum' and 'praecipiente rege [...] tandem'. These sentences do not prove what Æthelwold actually wanted. In any case, they are contained in 'pro-reform' propagandist texts and so they are more likely to be constructing a particular, politicised version of events.

Æthelwold continues to be associated with the crown after the death of Athelstan; the king, Eadred, and his mother, Eadgifu, are both affiliated with Æthelwold by Ælfric. Ælfric describes how, after spending time at Glastonbury, Æthelwold wished to travel overseas to continue his monastic studies but was prevented by Eadred and Eadgifu. The text reads:

Elapso denique multo tempore postquam monachilem susceperat  
gradum, disposuit ultramarinas partes adire, causa imbuendi se sacris  
libris seu monasticis disciplinis perfectius; sed praeuenit uenerabilis

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<sup>164</sup> See Wulfstan, *Vita*, c. 9, pp. 14-15 and c. 18, pp. 32-33 and Ælfric, *Vita*, c. 6, p. 72 (EHD p. 905) and c. 14, p. 75 (EHD, p. 907).



regina Eadgiuu, mater Regis Eadredi, eius conamina, dans consilium regi ne talem uirum sineret egredi de regno suo.<sup>165</sup>

In his reinterpretation of the text, Ælfric follows Wulfstan's example and places the responsibility for keeping Æthelwold in England with Eadgifu.<sup>166</sup> The reasons given for Eadgifu's intervention are the same here as they are in the Wulfstan text: that the king should not let 'talem uirum' leave the kingdom; the same phrase is used in both texts, although Ælfric does not include Wulfstan's elaboration that Æthelwold had enough divine wisdom to instruct the kingdom without needing to go overseas.

Ælfric's text, like its exemplar, contains a subtle criticism of Glastonbury and Dunstan in the phrase 'causa imbuendi se sacris libris seu monasticis disciplinis perfectius', although the criticism is perhaps more pronounced in Ælfric's work as there is no indication that it was Æthelwold's eagerness for learning that stimulated his desire to leave Glastonbury, as there is in Wulfstan's text. The sense of apology for Æthelwold's lack of continental experience found in Wulfstan's text seems to be lessened by Ælfric and replaced with a harsher

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<sup>165</sup> Ælfric, *Vita*, c. 7, p. 73; At length, when a long time had passed after he had received monastic orders, he determined to go to lands across the sea, to train himself more perfectly in sacred books and monastic discipline; but the venerable Queen Eadgifu, King Eadred's mother, prevented his plans, advising the king not to let such a man depart from his kingdom (EHD p. 905, altered).

<sup>166</sup> C.f. Wulfstan, *Vita*, c. 10, pp. 18-19; 'uir Domini Æthelwoldus, adhuc cupiens ampliori scripturarum scientia doceri monastica religione perfectius informari, decreuit ultramarinas adire partes. Sed uenerabilis regina Eadgifu, mater regis memorati, praeuenit eius conamina, dans consilium regi ne talem uirum sineret egredi de regno suo, insuper asserens tantam in eo fuisse Dei sapientiam quae et sibi et aliis sufficere posset, quamuis ad alienae patriae fines ob hanc causam minime tenderet'. Æthelwold, the man of the Lord, in his continuing eagerness to be taught the scriptures more thoroughly and to be formed more perfectly in a monk's religious life, determined to go overseas. But the venerable queen Eadgifu, the king's mother, forestalled his plans, advising the king not to allow such a man to leave his kingdom, and asserting moreover that he was so filled with the wisdom given by God that he had enough for others as well as for himself, even if he did not go to foreign parts for this purpose (Lapidge and Winterbottom, p. 19, altered).

judgement of Glastonbury monastic practices. The question of where Æthelwold intended to go if he had been allowed to leave the kingdom has been discussed in the previous section. Ælfric gives no further indication of the intended destination, but simply reproduces the description from Wulfstan.

The association with Eadred and Eadgifu is repeated by Ælfric in his description of the refoundation of Abingdon. Again following Wulfstan, Ælfric confirms that it was through Eadgifu's influence that the king gave the deserted monastery at Abingdon to Æthelwold: 'Placuit tunc regi Eadredo, suadente matre sua, dare uenerabili Ætheluuoldo quondam locum, uocabulo Abbandun, in quo monateriolum habebatur antiquitus'<sup>167</sup>. Ælfric similarly includes the details that the abbey's estates consisted of forty hides, with another hundred which had passed into royal control.<sup>168</sup> In the following chapter the association between Æthelwold, Abingdon and the crown is continued with an account of Eadred's endowment of the abbey. Ælfric says:

Dedit etaim rex possessionem regalem quam in Abundonia  
 possederat, hoc est centum cassatos, cum optimis aedificiis, [...] et in  
 pecuniis multum eos iuuuit; sed mater eius largius. Venit ergo rex  
 quadam die ad monasterium, ut aedificiorum structuram per se ipsum  
 ordinaret; menusque est omnia fundamenta monasterii propria manu,  
 quemadmodum muros erigere decreuerat.<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>167</sup> Ælfric, *Vita*, c. 7, p. 73; 'It then pleased King Eadred by his mother's persuasion to give to the venerable Æthelwold a certain place, Abingdon by name, in which a little monastery was situated in ancient days' (EHD p. 905).

<sup>168</sup> See Thacker, 'Æthelwold and Abingdon'.

<sup>169</sup> Ælfric, *Vita*, c. 8, p. 73; The king also gave the royal property which he had owned in Abingdon, that is one hundred hides, with excellent buildings [...] and he assisted them greatly with money, but his mother did so even more generously. Then the king came one day to the monastery to plan himself the structure of the buildings, and he measured out all the foundations of the monastery with his own hand, and determined in what way to erect the walls' (EHD p. 905-06). C.f. Wulfstan, *Vita*, cc. 11-12, pp. 20-23.

Ælfric follows Wulfstan in his depiction of Abingdon as a royal foundation, as illustrated by the donations of land and money given by Eadred and Eadgifu, and includes Wulfstan's detail that the king measured out the foundations of the new buildings 'propria manu'.<sup>170</sup> Ælfric's faithful repetition of the details of Abingdon's foundation lends credence to the speculation that Wulfstan's description was a reasonably accurate representation, if not of the truth, then of a well-established tradition concerning the foundation of Abingdon, which was likely to be acceptable to the intended audience of both texts.

Eadred is also featured in Ælfric's portrayal of a miracle which occurred at Abingdon: the inexhaustible supply of mead. Although this account is an abbreviated version of Wulfstan's, it contains the same basic elements: after the description of the king measuring out the foundations the abbot, Æthelwold, invites the king and his retinue to dine with him and he agrees.<sup>171</sup> Eadred orders mead to be served, the doors are closed so that no one could leave the drinking and mead is liberally served all day, yet the level in the vessel remains the same. Ælfric also repeats the details that there were Northumbrians present in the king's retinue and that they got rather intoxicated, although he refrains from repeating Wulfstan's statement that this was a normal occurrence for Northumbrians.<sup>172</sup> Ælfric also retains the involvement of Eadred in the miracle. Once again it can be seen that Ælfric kept the sense of the original in his abbreviation whilst changing some of the wording; one example is Ælfric's use of 'medonem' for 'mead', in place of the more flamboyant 'ydromellum' used by

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<sup>170</sup> See Dodwell, *Anglo-Saxon Art*, pp. 49-50.

<sup>171</sup> Ælfric, *Vita*, c. 8, p. 73 (EHD, p. 905-06).

<sup>172</sup> See the Wulfstan section above.

Wulfstan.<sup>173</sup> This may be an example of Ælfric tending to opt for a clear style, rather than a more complicated one, to express his ideas.

Ælfric continues Æthelwold's association with the figure of the crown into the reign of Edgar. The first reference to Edgar in the text makes no direct connection between the King and Æthelwold, but is used to describe how the building of the new church at Abingdon measured out by Eadred was not begun in that reign, but was built and completed in Edgar's: 'Non coepit tamen abbas designatum sibi opus aedificare in diebus Eadredi Regis, quia cito obiit, sed regnante Eadgaro honorabile templum [...] construxit loco et consummauit'<sup>174</sup>. The first direct association between Æthelwold and Edgar is made in the description of the elevation of the former to the bishopric of Winchester, where Ælfric says: 'et elegit eum Eadgarus felicissimus rex Anglorum ad episcopatum Wintoniensis ecclesiae, [...] et eo iubente ordinavit illum Dunstanus, archiepiscopus Dorouernensis ecclesiae'<sup>175</sup>. Here again the impression given is that Æthelwold's career is being steered by the crown as Ælfric uses the phrase 'iubente rege'; the same phrase is used in his description of Æthelwold's initial tonsure into clerical orders and his seemingly enforced residence in Winchester, both of which were achieved at Athelstan's command. Wulfstan's text describes Æthelwold's consecration in similar terms, saying: 'Et iubente rege consecrauit illum Dunstanus archiepiscopus Dorobernensis ecclesiae'<sup>176</sup>. Although this may

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<sup>173</sup> See Lapidge and Winterbottom, *Wulfstan of Winchester*, p. 73, n. 4.

<sup>174</sup> Ælfric, *Vita*, c. 9, p. 73; Nevertheless, the abbot did not begin to construct the work assigned to him in the days of King Eadred, for he soon died, but in the reign of Edgar he built and completed in that place a noble temple (EHD, p. 906, altered). C.f. Wulfstan, *Vita*, c. 13, p. 24.

<sup>175</sup> Ælfric, *Vita*, c. 11, p. 74-75; 'and Edgar, the most blessed king of the English, chose him for the bishopric of the church of Winchester, [...] and Dunstan, archbishop of Canterbury, consecrated him by the king's orders' (EHD, p. 907).

<sup>176</sup> Wulfstan, *Vita*, c. 16, pp. 30-31; 'On the king's orders, he was consecrated by Dunstan archbishop of Canterbury'.

only be a coincidental feature of style, it is perhaps worth observing that Ælfric consistently uses the phrase ‘iubente rege’ to describe direct royal intervention in Æthelwold’s career, whereas Wulfstan uses a variety of phrases, including ‘iubente rege’ and ‘praecipiente rege’.<sup>177</sup> Again this may be an indication of Ælfric being as clear as possible, using repetitive phrasing, rather than more poetic language.

Æthelwold is next associated with Edgar in the description of the expulsions of the secular canons from the Old and New Minsters in Winchester. As in Wulfstan’s text, the expulsion of canons from the Old Minster is Æthelwold’s first act as bishop to be recorded by Ælfric. After a description of the ‘male morigerati’ canons, similar to Wulfstan’s, Ælfric states: ‘Quod minime ferens uir sanctus Ætheluuoldus, data licentia a rege Eadgaro, expulit citissime nefandos blasphematores Dei de monasterio, et adducens monachos de Abundonia locauit illic’<sup>178</sup>. This passage, with the exception of a couple of words, is taken directly from Wulfstan’s *vita*.<sup>179</sup> Ælfric has used ‘nefandos’ in place of Wulfstan’s ‘detestandos’ to describe the clerics, the spelling of Abingdon is slightly different in the two texts, and Ælfric has ‘uir sanctus Ætheluuoldus’ as opposed to Wulfstan’s ‘sanctus uir Ætheluuoldus’; apart from these changes the two passages are identical. It is, however, interesting to note the implications of Ælfric’s use of ‘nefandos’. The word ‘detestandos’ has undertones of bearing

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<sup>177</sup> C.f. Wulfstan, *Vita*, c. 7, p. 10 and c. 9, p. 14.

<sup>178</sup> Ælfric, *Vita*, c. 12, p. 75; ‘The holy man Æthelwold by no means put up with this, but when King Edgar’s permission had been given, he very quickly expelled the impious blasphemers of God from the monastery, and bringing monks from Abingdon, placed them there’ (EHD, p. 907, altered).

<sup>179</sup> C.f. Wulfstan, *Vita*, c. 16, p. 30; ‘Quod minime ferens sanctus uir Ætheluuoldus, data licentia a rege Eadgaro, expulit citissime detestandos blasphematores Dei de monasterio, et adducens monachos de Abbandonia locauit illic’.

false witness, which stem from the language used in the biblical account Peter's denial of Christ.<sup>180</sup> Wulfstan appears to be using more 'reformist' language to address issues of orthodoxy, whereas Ælfric's use of 'nefandos' refers to accursedness rather than orthodoxy. This is a little unusual given Ælfric's assertions, in all his writings, of the importance of orthodoxy. One other minor change that Ælfric makes in his account is that he does not explicitly associate Wulfstan with Dalham. Rather his text reads 'Misit quoque rex quondam ministrorum suorum famosissimum, Wulfstanum uocabulo'<sup>181</sup>. The description of Wulfstan as 'famosissimum' is the same as it is in Wulfstan's *vita*, but the omission of the 'æt Delham' again either indicates that by the time Ælfric was writing the details of the expulsion were well established and the audience would have known which 'Wulfstan' was meant without any additional description, or it implies a different, and better informed, intended audience for Ælfric's text, who did not need to be informed of the place.

In his depiction of the association of Æthelwold and Edgar in the expulsion of the Old Minster clerics, Ælfric reflects the recognised tradition of royal involvement in the development of Benedictine monasticism and a close alignment of Church and State; at least in Winchester, even if the association was not so strong elsewhere in the kingdom. This is emphasised by the inclusion of the detail that the expulsion of clerics from the New Minster was achieved with

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<sup>180</sup> See Matthew 26. 59-60 for the language of false testimony. 'Detestandos' and its associated words can be found in texts by Patristic authors, such as Augustine of Hippo, where 'detestandos' can be applied to heretics.

<sup>181</sup> Ælfric, *Vita*, c. 14, p. 75; 'The king also sent a very celebrated thegn of his, Wulfstan by name' (EHD, p. 907). C.f. Wulfstan, *Vita*, c. 18, pp. 32-33.

Edgar's consent.<sup>182</sup> Again, this description is almost identical to that in Wulfstan's *vita*; one interesting change, however, is found in the description of Æthelwold himself. Although Ælfric repeats Wulfstan's metaphor of Æthelwold spreading his wings, 'Exinde expandit Ætheluuoldus alas suas',<sup>183</sup> they are not golden coloured as Wulfstan describes them, and neither does Ælfric refer to Æthelwold as 'Christi aquila'<sup>184</sup>.

A connection with Edgar can be found in Ælfric's description of Æthelwold's activities at Ely, Peterborough and Thorney. Once more this is clearly based on that found in Wulfstan's text and what is striking is not what is preserved from the source text, but what is changed. Ælfric states that Ely was purchased from the king: 'Quem emebat Ætheluuoldus a rege'<sup>185</sup>, but he omits Wulfstan's detail that it was bought with a large sum of money: 'datoque precio non modicae pecuniae emit eum a rege Eadgaro'<sup>186</sup>. Similarly while Ælfric uses the same words as Wulfstan to describe the purchase of Thorney, he uses 'adquisiuit' to describe Æthelwold's acquisition of Peterborough, whereas Wulfstan states that

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<sup>182</sup> Ælfric, *Vita*, c. 16, p. 76; 'et, annuente rege Eadgaro, expulit clericos de Nouo Monasterio'; 'and expelled the clerics from the New Minster, with King Edgar's consent' (EHD, p. 908). See Eric John, 'The Beginning of the Benedictine Reform in England', in his *Orbis Britanniae*, pp. 249-64 (p. 252), for a discussion of the possibility that Æthelwold expelled the clerics from the Old Minster first and then sought Edgar's permission.

<sup>183</sup> Ælfric, *Vita*, c. 16, p. 76.

<sup>184</sup> C.f. Wulfstan, *Vita*, c. 20, pp. 36-37; 'Exinde Christi aquila antistes Ætheluuoldus expandit aureas alas suas'. 'Thereupon Bishop Æthelwold, the eagle of Christ, spread his golden wings'. At this point in his text Wulfstan is repeating his description of Æthelwold found in one of the premonitive dreams which Æthelwold's mother experienced before the future bishop was born. In this dream the mother saw a golden eagle spring from her mouth and fly away, as it flew over the city it shaded all of Winchester with its wings. The repetition of this imagery in relation to Æthelwold's activities in Winchester carries an implication that Æthelwold was fulfilling the prophecy. It is striking, therefore, that, although Ælfric includes a description of the same dream in his *vita*, there is no explicit suggestion that Æthelwold's transformation of Winchester monasticism was the fulfilment of a prophecy. Here again this may be an indication that Ælfric expected his audience to be familiar enough with the subject matter to recognise the imagery without the need for precise repetition.

<sup>185</sup> Ælfric, *Vita*, c. 17, p. 76; 'Æthelwold bought this from the king' (EHD, p. 908).

<sup>186</sup> Wulfstan, *Vita*, c. 23, pp. 38-39. and having paid a large sum of money he bought it from King Edgar (Lapidge and Winterbottom, p. 39, altered).

it too was bought, 'precio optinuit', from the king and nobles. These changes may just be stylistic; Wulfstan's phrase clearly indicates that the land was acquired with money. There is an ambiguity in Ælfric's use of 'adquisiuit', which simply means 'acquired'. Ælfric does, therefore, diminish the importance of money in his account of the acquisition of Æthelwold's three Fenland monasteries. As noted in the previous section, by stating that Æthelwold purchased the land for these three foundations, Wulfstan made Æthelwold himself the sole benefactor of the abbeys. By playing down the role of money in the acquisition of these monasteries, Ælfric is also diminishing the importance of Æthelwold as sole benefactor of the abbeys; indeed the implication in the case of Peterborough would be that there was another, unnamed, benefactor. In this way the role of secular patrons is emphasised and that of royal patronage is diminished.

Ælfric's association of Æthelwold with Edgar continues with the inclusion of a chapter detailing the nature of the relationship between the bishop and king. Again there is a great deal of similarity between Ælfric's text and his exemplar; notably the use of the phrase 'a secretis regis Eadgari'<sup>187</sup> which is copied almost verbatim from Wulfstan.<sup>188</sup> Ælfric goes on to describe how Æthelwold was: 'magnifice pollens sermone et opere, ubique praedicans euangelium Christi iuxta ammonitionem Isaiae prophetae dicentis'<sup>189</sup> and concludes with a quotation from Isaiah 58. 1. Ælfric uses the same biblical quotation as Wulfstan, but he has

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<sup>187</sup> Ælfric, *Vita*, c. 18, p. 76; *Erat autem Ætheluuoldus a secretis regis Eadgari*. 'Æthelwold was an intimate counsellor of King Edgar (EHD, p. 908, altered).

<sup>188</sup> Wulfstan, *Vita*, c. 25, pp. 42-43 reads: '*Erat autem uir Deo Ætheluuoldus a secretis Eadgari incliti regis*'. 'The man of God Æthelwold was an intimate of the distinguished king Edgar'.

<sup>189</sup> Ælfric, *Vita*, c. 18, p. 76; 'prevailing nobly in word and deed, preaching everywhere the gospel of Christ according to the admonition of the prophet Isaiah, who says:' (EHD, p. 908).



omitted Wulfstan's description of Æthelwold's church-dedicating activities, with the result that the focus of Ælfric's narrative is Æthelwold's role as a preacher.<sup>190</sup> It is interesting that, as in Wulfstan's *vita*, there is no mention of Æthelwold's role as adviser to the young king. As noted in the previous section, Byrhtferth, in his *Vita Sancti Oswaldi*, implies just this and also that Æthelwold was responsible for the king taking such an active role in the promotion of Benedictine monasticism. Æthelwold himself, in his proem to the *Regularis Concordia*, implies that he had such a role: 'abbate quodam assiduo monente et regiam catholicae fidei uiam demonstrante'<sup>191</sup>. Here again this lessens the emphasis on royal patronage of monasteries and to a certain degree Ælfric distances Æthelwold from Edgar, thus reworking the text in a way which was more suited to his own audience, than perhaps Wulfstan's text may have been.

The final association Ælfric makes between Æthelwold and Edgar is in his statement that the monasteries were founded throughout the kingdom by Dunstan and Æthelwold and that this was achieved with the king's consent: 'Sicque fatum est consentiente rege, ut partim Dunstani consilio et actione, partim Ætheluuoldi, monasteria ubique in gente Anglorum, quaedam monachis, quaedam monialibus,

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<sup>190</sup> Wulfstan, *Vita*, c. 25, pp. 42-43 reads: 'sermone et opere magnifice pollens, in plerisque locis ecclesias dedicans et ubique euangelium Christi praedicans, iuxta ammonitionem Ysaiae prophetae dicentis' (He was splendidly strong in word and deed, dedicating churches in many places and everywhere preaching the gospel of Christ, in accordance with the instruction of the prophet Isaiah).

<sup>191</sup> Symons, *Regularis Concordia*, p. 1; 'being diligently admonished by a certain abbot who explained to him the royal way of the Catholic faith'.

constituerenur sub abbatibus et abbatissis regulariter uiuentibus'<sup>192</sup>. In this statement Ælfric is again following Wulfstan.<sup>193</sup>

As in Wulfstan's text, there is a clear association made between Æthelwold and the throne, particularly with Edgar, in Ælfric's *vita*. In common with Wulfstan Ælfric omits, or more precisely fails to record, certain of Æthelwold's associations which may have appeared contentious – with Eadwig, Æthelred and his mother Ælfhryth. The details of these associations have been discussed in the previous section. These associations are not found in his source text and there would have been no compelling reason for Ælfric to add them in his work, as it is likely that Ælfric was aware of the controversial nature of Æthelwold's ventures into secular politics. Eadwig's marriage to Ælfgifu was, by some calculations, certainly within the prohibited bounds of consanguinity and Æthelwold's support of it not only set him in direct opposition to Oda and Dunstan but also may have been uncanonical. Similarly Æthelwold's support of Ælfhryth and her son, Æthelred, during the succession dispute after Edgar's death – when the elder son Edward clearly had the stronger claim to the throne – once again set him in opposition to Dunstan.<sup>194</sup> Ælfric, like Wulfstan before him, glossed over Æthelwold's political career and concentrated on his achievements as a bishop and promoter of Benedictine monasticism. It may be that both authors felt that Æthelwold's involvement in secular affairs – especially those which set him at odds with Dunstan – would detract from his reputation as a

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<sup>192</sup> Ælfric, *Vita*, c. 18, pp. 76-77; And thus it was brought to pass with the king's consent that monasteries were founded everywhere among the English people, partly by the counsel and action of Dunstan and partly by that of Æthelwold, some with monks and some with nuns, living regularly under abbots and abbesses (EHD, p. 909, altered).

<sup>193</sup> C.f. Wulfstan, *Vita*, c. 27, pp. 42-43.

<sup>194</sup> For further details see Yorke, 'Æthelwold and the Politics of the Tenth Century', pp. 82-85.

monastic 'reformer', and as part of a united group of the key ecclesiastical personnel of the late tenth century.

It is therefore interesting to note Ælfric's omission of Wulfstan's description of the rededication ceremony of the Old Minster, Winchester, in 980, which associates Æthelwold with Æthelred and the leading nobles. Wulfstan, by contrast, stresses this association:

Exinde superna pietas sancto pontifici tantam contulit gratiam ut sublimes illi saecularium potestatum principes, duces, tyranni atque iudices et omnes qui hactenus contrarii et in uia Dei resistere uidebatur subito uelut oues ex lupis efficerentur et eum miro affectu uenerarentur, eiusque genibus colla summittentes ac dexteram illius humiliter exosculantes orationibus se uiri Dei in omnibus commendarent.<sup>195</sup>

It has been suggested that this ceremony served the dual purpose of reconciling the various factions involved in the civil unrest which followed the disputed succession after Edgar's death (and which culminated in the murder of Edward, 'the Martyr') and of offering the monks of Winchester a chance to demonstrate their wealth and success.<sup>196</sup> As Daniel Sheerin comments: 'They [the Winchester monks] were able to indicate to any hostile elements, at whatever level of

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<sup>195</sup> Wulfstan, *Vita*, c. 40, pp. 60-63; Furthermore, heavenly compassion gave so much grace to the holy bishop that those high lay dignitaries, ealdormen, potentates, and judges, and all who had previously seemed his enemies, standing in God's path, were suddenly made, as it were, sheep instead of wolves: they revered him with extraordinary affection, and, lowering their necks to his knees and humbly kissing his hand, commended themselves in all things to the prayers of the man of God (Lapidge and Winterbottom, pp. 61 and 63, altered).

<sup>196</sup> See Daniel Sheerin 'The Dedication of the Old Minster, Winchester, in 980'.

society, how firmly entrenched they were and the degree of royal favor they once again enjoyed'<sup>197</sup>.

Given that this passage implies Æthelwold's close association with, even dominance over, the king and leading nobles, it is surely significant that Ælfric omits it from his *vita*, especially when it is implied that Æthelwold was a tutor to Æthelred.<sup>198</sup> Once again this is an indication of Ælfric's diminution of reliance on royal patronage, and perhaps a criticism of Æthelred himself. It is clear, however, that there was a noticeable change in Æthelred's policies after Æthelwold's death: the young king can be seen asserting his independence; his mother, Ælfthryth – a close associate of Æthelwold – was dismissed from court, and although there is no reversal of Edgar's policies of monastic patronage, several distinguished houses, including Abingdon, Glastonbury and the Old Minster, Winchester, suffered a reduction in their privileges and had property alienated from them.<sup>199</sup> Interestingly Æthelred later cites Æthelwold's death as a pivotal point in his reign.<sup>200</sup> As noted above, Ælfric wrote his *vita* of Æthelwold during the later period of his life, probably after he was appointed abbot of Eynsham, making it contemporary with his *Letter to the Monks of Eynsham* (henceforward referred to as the *LME*). In these later works, especially the *LME*,

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<sup>197</sup> See Daniel Sheerin 'The Dedication of the Old Minster', p. 273.

<sup>198</sup> See *VSO*, pp. 426-27 and the discussion in John, 'The King and the Monks in the Tenth-Century Reformation', pp. 158-60.

<sup>199</sup> See Keynes, *Diplomas*, pp. 176-82 and Pauline Stafford, 'The Reign of Æthelred II, A Study in Royal Policy and Action', *Ethelred the Unready: Papers from the Millenary Conference*, British Archaeological Reports, 59 (Oxford: British Archaeological Reports, 1978), pp. 15-46 (p. 27).

<sup>200</sup> See charter S 876 which reads: 'dilectissimi Adeduuoldi episcopi cuius industria ac pastoralis cura non solum [meae] uerum etiam uniuersorum huius patrie tam pr[incipum] quam subditorum'; '[the death of Æthelwold deprived the country of one] whose industry and pastoral care administered not only to my interest but also to that of all the inhabitants of this country, the common people and the leading men' (trans by Keynes, *Diplomas*, p. 176). See also Yorke, 'Æthelwold and the Politics of the Tenth Century', pp. 85-86.

there is a distinct move away from an emphasis on royal-monastic ties.<sup>201</sup> It is evident that Ælfric admired the working relationship of Edgar and Æthelwold but appreciated that such a close royal-monastic association was neither possible nor practical in his time; as Christopher Jones says, in his discussion of Ælfric's use of the proem to the *Regularis Concordia*; 'he [Ælfric] may also have taken a quietly sceptical view of its royalist and polemical zeal, which must have seemed less convincing, if not, at times, outright embarrassing, to some early eleventh-century heirs of reform'<sup>202</sup>. It is interesting to note that in his *Life of Swithun*, Ælfric praises Edgar's support of monasticism and blames Æthelred's unenthusiastic approach to monasticism for the renewed Danish attacks.<sup>203</sup> Furthermore, as Jones has noted, although it is arguably based on the *Regularis Concordia*, Ælfric's *LME* uses hardly any of the *Concordia*'s proem, which is where most of Æthelwold's royal-monastic philosophy is found.<sup>204</sup>

Thus in his depiction of Æthelwold's secular associations, Ælfric reflects Wulfstan's tradition of associating Æthelwold with the throne, but tones this down a little to suit an audience faced with a different situation and a monarch who fell short of the ideal monastic patron epitomised by Edgar. Ælfric was very closely connected to his aristocratic, secular – and non-royal – patrons,

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<sup>201</sup> For a detailed examination of the composition and context of the *LME* see Jones, *Ælfric's Letter to the Monks of Eynsham*, pp. 44-49.

<sup>202</sup> Jones, *Ælfric's Letter to the monks of Eynsham*, p. 45.

<sup>203</sup> See Lapidge, *Cult of St Swithun*, pp. 606-07; 'and we secgað to soðan þæt se tima wæs gesælig and wynsum on Angelcynne, þa ða Eadgar cyning þone Cristendom gefyrðrode and fela munuclifa arærde; and his cynerice wæs wunigende on sibbe, swa þæt man ne gehyrde gif ænig sciphære wære buton agenre leode þe ðis land heoldon'. 'And I say in truth that the time was blessed and delightful in England when King Edgar advanced Christianity, and established many monasteries; and his kingdom was flourishing in peace, so that one never heard of any Viking army except for those of the people themselves who live permanently in this land'. See Jones, *Ælfric's Letter to the Monks of Eynsham*, pp. 47-48 for other examples of Ælfric's criticism of Æthelred.

<sup>204</sup> See Jones, *Ælfric's Letter to the Monks of Eynsham*, p. 44.

Æthelweard and Æthelmær, and he may well have envisaged a non-royal, but secular audience, in addition to a monastic one, for his *vita*.

### **Ecclesiastical Associations**

As is to be expected, many of the ecclesiastical associations found in Ælfric's text are the same as those in his source text. The most obvious association is that with Dunstan and, with one notable exception, the examples of Æthelwold's association with Dunstan given by Ælfric are the same as those given by Wulfstan. Thus Æthelwold and Dunstan are first associated when they are both ordained by bishop Ælfheah of Winchester on the same day, and Ælfric includes the detail that a third man was also ordained that day.<sup>205</sup> Ælfric repeats Wulfstan's description of Ælfheah's prophecy revealing how one of those ordained would become bishop of Winchester and one a bishop in another diocese: 'Hodie consecraui tres sacerdotes, quorum duo ad episcopalem apicem pertingent, alter in mea sede, alter alia diocesi'<sup>206</sup>. There is a slight alteration to Wulfstan's original text which clearly states that whilst one would become bishop in Winchester, the other would become bishop first of Worcester and then in the metropolitan see of Canterbury.<sup>207</sup> In his omission of these details Ælfric is clearly associating the prophecy primarily with Æthelwold, at the expense of

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<sup>205</sup> Ælfric, *Vita*, c. 5, p. 72; 'et contigit eum ordinasse simul Dunstanum et Ætheluuoldum et quondam, Æthelstanum uocabulo, qui postmodum monachilem habitum deserens apostata fine tenus perdurauit'. 'and it happened that he [Ælfheah] ordained at the same time Dunstan and Æthelwold and a certain Athelstan, who afterwards abandoned the monastic habit and remained an apostate to the end' (EHD, p. 905). C.f. Wulfstan, *Vita*, c. 8, pp. 12-13.

<sup>206</sup> Ælfric, c. 5, p. 72; 'I have consecrated three priests today, two of whom will attain to the episcopal dignity, one in my see, the other in another diocese' (EHD, p. 905).

<sup>207</sup> Wulfstan, *Vita*, c. 8, pp. 12-13; 'hodie coram Deo tribus uiris manus imposui, eosque in sacerdotii ordinem consecraui: quorum duo ad episcopalem pertingent apicem, unus quidem primum in ciuitate Wigornensi, deinde in Cantia, [...] alter uero in mihi quandoque successurus est in pontificii dignitatem'. 'Today, in the presence of God, I have laid hands on three men, consecrating them to the priesthood. Two will reach the peak as bishops, one of them first at Worcester, then in Canterbury [...] while the second will one day be the successor to me in the worthy office of pontiff (Lapidge and Winterbottom, p. 13, altered).

Dunstan, whereas Wulfstan's description of the prophecy, while it includes Æthelwold, appears to focus on the future career of Dunstan. Wulfstan, then, uses the prophecy to reinforce the association of Æthelwold with Dunstan whereas Ælfric uses it to associate Æthelwold with a divine indication of future greatness. Ælfric makes no mention of Ælfheah's prophecy when he relates how Dunstan was elevated to the bishopric of Worcester; and one result is that the focus of the narrative is shifted away from Dunstan and on to Æthelwold. In all other respects the passage is a condensed, but nonetheless accurate, repetition of Wulfstan's text.<sup>208</sup>

Reproducing Wulfstan's text verbatim, Ælfric continues the association of Æthelwold with Dunstan with a description of how Æthelwold goes to Glastonbury to study under Dunstan and whilst there receives the monastic habit. Although including a brief list of everything which Æthelwold learned whilst at Glastonbury, Ælfric omits the detail that Æthelwold became *decanus* of the monastery. This omission is most likely a feature of Ælfric's general trend to abbreviate texts; a detail which he felt was unnecessary and was therefore left out of his narrative. The reason for this may be that the facts of Æthelwold's career were well known to Ælfric's audience; this episode also does not add anything to the narrative of Æthelwold's later career. Indeed this chapter gives an ideal example of what Lapidge and Winterbottom referred to as the 'red pencil' abbreviation technique, where Ælfric appears to have copied what he wanted from Wulfstan's text and discarded all that he regarded as unnecessary.<sup>209</sup> It is also worth noting that Ælfric repeats Wulfstan's association of Dunstan with the

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<sup>208</sup> Ælfric, *Vita*, c. 9, pp. 73-74 (EHD, p. 906). C.f. Wulfstan, *Vita*, c. 14, pp. 24-27.

<sup>209</sup> See Lapidge and Winterbottom, *Wulfstan of Winchester*, p. cliii.

crown, particularly Eadred, which is most noticeable in the description of Æthelwold's promotion to the abbacy of Abingdon. Both authors state that this was done with Dunstan's permission and according to the wishes of the king. The relationship of Eadred and Dunstan has been discussed in more detail in the previous chapter,<sup>210</sup> and Ælfric's reflection of it in his *vita* may indicate that this relationship was a well-established tradition, but that Ælfric considered it significant enough to include in his text is surely noteworthy. One obvious association between Æthelwold and Dunstan which is omitted by Ælfric is the description of Dunstan's dream. This omission may be an indication of Ælfric's abbreviation style, which often involves the omission of dreams and visions. More interestingly, it may also indicate that Ælfric was aware of differences in monastic practice at this time, and that representing Æthelwold as the head of a unified Benedictine movement would have been unacceptable to his own audience. This is surprising in the light of Ælfric's known Winchester connections.

As in Wulfstan's *vita*, another significant ecclesiastical association in Ælfric's text is between Æthelwold and Swithun. This can be found in the same place in Ælfric's work as it can in Wulfstan's: after the description of Æthelwold's close relationship with Edgar and before the statement that Æthelwold and Dunstan, with the support of Edgar, founded numerous monasteries. Whereas Wulfstan dedicates a whole, albeit small, chapter to Swithun, Ælfric condenses this into a few lines, saying: 'Cuius praedicationem

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<sup>210</sup> See the 'Secular Associations' sub-section in the Wulfstan section to this chapter.



maxime iuuit sanctus Suuithunus eodem tempore reuelatus; quia quod Ætheluuoldus uerbis edocuit, hoc Suuithunus miraculis mirifice decorauit'<sup>211</sup>.

Neither text gives any details of Æthelwold's translation of Swithun, although Wulfstan does allude to it in his heading to the chapter, which reads: 'DE REVELATIONE SANCTI ANTISTITIS SWITHVNI, QVEM SANCTVS ÆTHELWOLDVS IN ECCLESIAM TRANSTVILT <SVB DIE> IDVS IVLII'<sup>212</sup>. These omissions are understandable, as both authors had already completed separate treatments of the *Life* of Swithun. It is generally accepted that Wulfstan was the author of the metrical version of Lantfred's *Translatio et miracula S. Swithuni*, known as the *Narratio metrica de S. Swithuno*. Lapidge dates this composition to the period 992 x 994, saying that it was: 'put in its final form shortly after the translation of St Æthelwold in 996, when two chapters of Wulfstan's prose *Vita S. Æthelwoldi* (cc. 42, 44) were turned into verse and incorporated into the poem'<sup>213</sup>. Ælfric had also composed his own work on Swithun, also based on Lantfred's *Translatio et miracula*, and incorporated into the collection known as the *Lives of Saints*, which was completed before the death of Ealdorman Æthelweard in c. 998.<sup>214</sup> In this vernacular text a clear connection is made between Æthelwold and Swithun, as is understandable, but the role assigned to Edgar in the translation of Swithun is noteworthy:

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<sup>211</sup> Ælfric, *Vita*, c. 18, p. 76; St Swithun who was translated at this time greatly assisted his [Æthelwold's] preaching; because what Æthelwold taught by words, Swithun wonderfully adorned by miracles (EHD, p. 909, altered). C.f. Wulfstan, *Vita*, c. 26, pp. 42-43.

<sup>212</sup> Wulfstan, *Vita*, c. 26, pp. 42-43. 'ON THE REVELATION OF THE HOLY BISHOP SWITHUN, WHOM THE HOLY ÆTHELWOLD TRANSLATED INTO THE CHURCH ON 15 JULY'.

<sup>213</sup> Lapidge and Winterbottom, *Wulfstan of Winchester*, p. xxii.

<sup>214</sup> See Wilcox, *Ælfric's Prefaces*, p. 45.

Eadgar cyning þa – æfter ðysum tacnum – wolde þæt se halga wer wurde up gedon, and spræc hit to Aðelwolde þam arwurðan bisceope, þæt he hine up adyde mid arwurðnyse. Þa se bisceop Aðelwold, mid abbodum and munecum, dyde up þone sanct mid sange wurðlice, and bæron into cyrcan Sancte Petres huse, þær he stent mid wurðmynte and wundra geframað.<sup>215</sup>

Here Ælfric unmistakably ascribes the initiative to translate Swithun to Edgar, which reflects the indirect association of Æthelwold, Edgar and Swithun in both Ælfric's and Wulfstan's *vitae* of Æthelwold.

The third significant association Ælfric makes for Æthelwold is that with Æthelthryth. Once again Ælfric follows Wulfstan closely in his depiction of this association; it is found in Ælfric's description of the refoundation of Ely, which simply says: 'Est igitur locus in regione quae uocatur Elig, nobilitatus nimium reliquiis et miraculis sanctae Ætheldrithae uirginis ac sororum eius'<sup>216</sup>. As with Swithun, a vernacular *Life of Æthelthryth* was incorporated into the *Lives of Saints* collection and it may be that Ælfric therefore felt it unnecessary to add any further details of this saint or her association with Æthelwold.<sup>217</sup> Unlike in Wulfstan's text, the name Æthelthryth appears only once more in Ælfric's *vita*; he includes the detail that Æthelthryth was the name of the abbess of

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<sup>215</sup> Lapidge, *Cult of St Swithun*, pp. 594-95; 'The King Edgar – after these miracles – wanted the saint to be exhumed, and said this to Æthelwold the venerable bishop, that he should translate him with dignity. Then Bishop Æthelwold, with other abbots and monks, exhumed the saint honourably with singing of hymns, and carried his remains into the cathedral (namely St Peter's minster) where he remains in glory to perform miracles'.

<sup>216</sup> Ælfric, *Vita*, c. 17, p. 76; 'There is moreover a place in the region called Ely, greatly ennobled by the relics and miracles of St. Æthelthryth, the virgin and her sisters' (EHD, p. 908).

<sup>217</sup> For a more detailed discussion of the association between Æthelwold and Æthelthryth see the 'Ecclesiastical Associations' subsection of the Wulfstan section of this chapter.

Æthelwold's newly refounded Nunnaminster in Winchester.<sup>218</sup> He does not, however, include Wulfstan's detail that it was an Æthelthryth who acted as interpreter of the dreams which Æthelwold's mother had before Æthelwold was born. Whereas Wulfstan specifically states that the mother went to Æthelthryth who, it is implied, was abbess of the Nunnaminster, to have her dreams interpreted, Ælfric's text simply states: 'Horum autem somniorum, sicut rei probavit euentus, coniectores facile esse possumus, in sublimi uexillo intelligentes filium eius quem gestabat in utero signiferum fore militiae Dei, sicut erat'<sup>219</sup>. It could be that Ælfric is trying to make the dream episode less supernatural, and in addition attempting to take control of it by giving its interpretation explicitly in his own voice.

There are two ecclesiastical associations found in Wulfstan's text which are not repeated by Ælfric; with Laurence and Mary of Bethany, and although the Virgin Mary is mentioned by Ælfric in connection with Æthelwold's new church at Abingdon, there is no firm association made between the Virgin and Æthelwold. Mary of Bethany features in Wulfstan's narrative when he describes Æthelwold's scholarly childhood; the text reads: 'ut qui aliis uiam salutis erat ostensurus ipse cum Maria secus pedes Domini humiliter sederet et uerbum ex ore illius salubriter audiret'<sup>220</sup>. Ælfric makes no mention of Mary of Bethany,

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<sup>218</sup> Ælfric, *Vita*, c. 17, p. 76 (EHD, p. 908). For more detail of the identity of Æthelthryth see the 'Ecclesiastical Associations' section in the preceding chapter. See also Sarah Foot, *Veiled Women*, II, pp. 243-44.

<sup>219</sup> Ælfric, *Vita*, c. 2, p. 71; But we can easily interpret these dreams, as the event has proved the matter and recognise in the lofty standard that the son whom she was carrying in her womb was to be a standard-bearer of the soldiers of God, as he truly became (EHD, p. 904, altered). See Sarah Foot, *Veiled Women*, II, pp. 243-52 (p. 246) for a discussion of the possibility that the two Æthelthryths of Wulfstan's text may be the same person.

<sup>220</sup> Wulfstan, *Vita*, c. 6, pp. 8-11; thus one who was destined to show others the 'way of salvation' was himself with Mary to sit humbly at the feet of the Lord, listening to the words of salvation from his lips (Lapidge and Winterbottom, pp. 9 and 11]. C.f. Luke 10. 39.

merely stating: ‘Creuit autem puer, et in ipsa pueritia sacris litterarum studiis traditus est’, before continuing straight on with a description of how Æthelwold attended the court of King Athelstan.<sup>221</sup> It may be that this omission is rather an indication of Ælfric’s tendency to abbreviate texts, rather than a significant statement on Ælfric’s part. Mary of Bethany was considered a good example of the contemplative life, as opposed to her sister Martha who represented the active, and as such was an ideal example for the monastic life.<sup>222</sup> Ælfric includes a homily on Mary of Bethany in his Catholic Homilies collections<sup>223</sup> which would indicate that he did not ‘disapprove’ of her as such; and this would lend credence to the theory that her omission from the *Vita S. Æthelwoldi* was as a result of Ælfric’s abbreviation method. One possible reason for the exclusion of the association with Mary of Bethany is that such an association might not have been considered suitable for a non-monastic audience.

Given the role that Æthelwold played in promoting the cult of the Virgin Mary, discussed in greater detail in the previous section, it would seem surprising for Ælfric not to make a greater association between her and Æthelwold in his *vita*. There were, however, aspects of the cult of the Virgin which Ælfric considered inappropriate for his audiences, particularly the liturgy associated with the Assumption, which may have influenced Ælfric’s view in establishing

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<sup>221</sup> Ælfric, *Vita*, c. 5, p. 72; ‘The boy grew and was set in his very boyhood to the study of sacred writings’ (EHD, p. 904-05).

<sup>222</sup> For a full discussion of the roles of Mary and Martha in Medieval theology see Constable, *Three Studies in Medieval Religious and Social Thought*.

<sup>223</sup> The Homily of Mary of Bethany is included in the *Catholic Homilies*, is actually listed as the ‘Homily for the Assumption of the Holy Virgin Mary’. See Benjamin Thorpe, *The Homilies of the Anglo-Saxon Church*, 2 vols (New York and London: Johnson Reprint Co., 1971), II, pp. 438-45.

an association between her and Æthelwold.<sup>224</sup> Despite this possible factor, by establishing such a connection here, Ælfric would not necessarily risk connecting Æthelwold with any of the aspects of the Marian tradition of which Ælfric disapproved. Ælfric also excludes an association made with Laurence which can be found in Wulfstan's *vita*. Ælfric does not include any of this story, which would perhaps indicate that the association with Laurence was excluded again as part of Ælfric's abbreviation technique rather than a deliberate attempt to dissociate Laurence from Æthelwold. Here again this may be an indication that a non-monastic audience, in addition to the Winchester community, may have been envisaged for Ælfric's text and that Laurence, like Mary of Bethany, was considered unsuitable for this type of audience.

As in Wulfstan's text, the predominant association created for Æthelwold is with the crown, particularly Edgar. It is also noticeable, however, that the more general associations with other kings, Athelstan and Eadred, are tempered somewhat from the way they were portrayed in Wulfstan's original. It might have been expected that Ælfric would highlight the ecclesiastical associations made in the *vita* to counterbalance his reduction of the secular ones, but this does not appear to be the case; indeed Ælfric omits some of the ecclesiastical associations which Wulfstan includes: those with Mary of Bethany and Laurence the deacon. As both of these highlight Æthelwold's role as monk and pastor, it is unlikely that Ælfric's motives were anything other than the need for brevity in his abbreviation. It may be that Ælfric, writing specifically for a Winchester

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<sup>224</sup> For a detailed examination of Ælfric's approach to the cult of the Virgin see Mary Clayton, *The Cult of the Virgin Mary in Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 258-66 and 272-74 and *eadem*, 'Hermits and the Contemplative Life in Anglo-Saxon England', in *Holy Men and Holy Women: Saints' Lives and their Contexts*, ed. by Paul E. Szarmach (Albany: State University of New York, 1996), pp. 147-75.

monastic audience, made the assumption that his audience was familiar with the basic elements of Æthelwold's story, perhaps even with Wulfstan's original, and therefore felt there was no need to include such details. The more detailed implications of Ælfric's inclusions and omissions are discussed in the 'Conclusions' section to this chapter.

## CONCLUSIONS

As noted in the introduction to this chapter, it is apparent that Ælfric's *Vita S. Æthelwoldi* is an abbreviation of Wulfstan's *Vita* of Æthelwold, and although the two texts contain the same essential elements, Ælfric's text is no mere carbon copy of the original. What makes Ælfric's text interesting and worth studying is what is omitted rather what is included. Certain themes found in Wulfstan's text that have clearly been adapted to suit Ælfric's audience; the depiction of Æthelwold's close relationship with the crown being the best example.

Association with the crown in various forms is a clear and consistent theme running throughout Wulfstan's *vita* and at times it reads as if the crown is controlling Æthelwold's career. Athelstan appears to be responsible for starting Æthelwold in his ecclesiastical career by ordering that he be tonsured into clerical orders and then consecrated as a priest: 'Et demum, iubente rege, ab Ælfego Wintoniensi episcopo secundum morem ecclesiasticum prius ad clericatus officium tonsoratus ac deinde, paucis labentibus annorum curriculis, in gradum sacerdotalem consecratus est'<sup>225</sup>. Athelstan is also responsible for keeping Æthelwold at Winchester when his own inclination was to go to Glastonbury to become a monk. Eadred and Eadgifu are similarly responsible for keeping Æthelwold in England when he wanted to travel overseas, and as compensation they promoted him to the abbacy of Abingdon. Finally there is the association with Edgar, through whose influence Æthelwold is promoted to the

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<sup>225</sup> Wulfstan, *Vita*, c. 7, pp. 10-11; In the end, at the king's command, he was tonsured by Ælfheah, bishop of Winchester, according to the custom of the church, first to clerical status, then, after a few years had gone by, consecrated to the rank of priest (Lapidge and Winterbottom, p. 11, altered).

bishopric of Winchester, and who is credited alongside Æthelwold with the promotion of Benedictine monasticism. It is interesting to see that Wulfstan creates a parallel between Æthelwold's relationships with Athelstan and Edgar: the young Æthelwold is described as an inseparable companion ('*indiudivo comitatu*') of the king when he is at court before the start of his ecclesiastical career.<sup>226</sup> Later in the *vita*, he is similarly described as 'an intimate of the distinguished king Edgar' ('*a secretis Eadgari incliti regis*'<sup>227</sup>). Here the emphasis is on royal patronage, following the tradition set by Æthelwold, and unlike Ælfric, who favours secular patronage.

The strength of these royal associations is tempered considerably by Ælfric, although he includes the same episodes where the royal affiliations are made. In his description of Æthelwold at Athelstan's court, for example, all suggestion that the king sent for Æthelwold and that he was the '*indiudivo comitatu*' of Athelstan is removed, although the tonsuring and consecration on Athelstan's orders are maintained. It is evident that Ælfric admired Æthelwold; he was educated at Winchester under Æthelwold's tutelage, and he describes himself as '*alumus adelwoldi*' in his Latin preface to the first series of *Catholic Homilies*.<sup>228</sup> Yet it is also evident, and therefore striking, that Ælfric's admiration of Æthelwold did not prevent him from disagreeing with his former master on certain monastic customs. The monastic customary written by Ælfric for his community at Eynsham, known as the *Letter to the Monks of Eynsham*, is clearly based on Æthelwold's own customary, the *Regularis Concordia*, but there are

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<sup>226</sup> Wulfstan, *Vita*, c. 7, pp. 10-11.

<sup>227</sup> Wulfstan, *Vita*, c. 25, pp. 42-43.

<sup>228</sup> Peter Clemoes, ed., *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: the First Series*, EETS, ss, 17, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 173, l. 3.



striking differences between the two texts, particularly in those aspects relating to the relationship between the throne and the monastic community.<sup>229</sup> It is not that Ælfric disapproved of these provisions in the *Regularis Concordia*, but rather that they were no longer practical. Edgar's strong kingship and support of Benedictine monasticism had been replaced by comparatively weak kingship. This resulted in a backlash against those monastic foundations which had gained land from secular landowners who had been forced to accept less than favourable terms by Edgar. Ælfric was also writing during a period when the country was suffering at the hands of the Danes, who had resumed their invasions and had inflicted defeat on the English forces at the battle of Maldon in *c.* 991. All these factors meant that a close relationship between monasticism and the throne was no longer desirable or practical and monastic leaders were looking for support to secular leaders, such as Ælfric's patrons Æthelweard and Æthelmær, rather than to the throne.<sup>230</sup> As will be seen in the next chapter, a similar move away from close association of a monastic leader with the throne towards affiliation with leading secular figures can be seen in Byrhtferth's *Vita S. Oswaldi*, most likely written within a few years of Ælfric's *vita*.

The ecclesiastical associations described by Wulfstan are, for the most part, maintained by Ælfric. In both texts Dunstan plays an important role, first as tutor and mentor to the young Æthelwold and subsequently as a colleague similarly responsible for the promotion of Benedictine monasticism. Ælfric repeats Wulfstan's statement that there were no monasteries in England until Dunstan

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<sup>229</sup> See Jones, *Ælfric's Letter to the Monks of Eynsham*, pp. 44-49.

<sup>230</sup> See Jones, *Ælfric's Letter to the Monks of Eynsham*, pp. 48-49.

transformed Glastonbury and Æthelwold did likewise at Abingdon.<sup>231</sup> It would appear that an association with Dunstan was one of the key elements in the hagiography of the monastic leaders of the late tenth century, as Dunstan also features in the *Vita S. Oswaldi*, although not as prominently as he does in the *vitae* of Æthelwold. It is perhaps worth noting that Oswald does not feature in either of the Æthelwold texts, although Æthelwold does feature in the *Vita S. Oswaldi*. This, together with Byrhtferth's treatment of Æthelwold in his *Vita Sancti Oswaldi*, discussed in the chapter which follows, may indicate that the two figures were not connected as closely as subsequent scholarship has suggested; another indication that there may not have been a unified 'reform movement', but rather individuals promoting Benedictine monasticism in their own way in different parts of the country. The association made between Æthelwold and Swithun in Wulfstan's text is repeated in Ælfric's *vita*, but it is shortened considerably, which is undoubtedly a feature of Ælfric's abbreviation style. Associations with Mary of Bethany and Laurence found in Wulfstan's *vita* are omitted from Ælfric's text, but again this could be attributed to Ælfric's desire for brevity in his texts rather than a deliberate attempt to dissociate Æthelwold from either figure. Mary of Bethany was considered a good role model for the contemplative life and as such it is unsurprising to find her in both Wulfstan's *Vita S. Æthelwoldi* and Byrhtferth's *Vita S. Oswaldi*. If, however, there was a section of Ælfric's intended audience which was non-monastic then both Mary of Bethany and Laurence may have been considered unsuitable figures to have been associated with Æthelwold.

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<sup>231</sup> Wulfstan, *Vita*, c. 18, pp. 32-33. C.f. Ælfric, *Vita*, c. 14. p. 75 (EHD, p. 907).

The feature of both the *vitae* of Æthelwold which is striking when they are placed in comparison with the *Vita S. Oswaldi*, is the marked lack of associations with what has been classed as ‘the divine’, and biblical figures, both of which feature predominantly in Byrhtferth’s text; indeed this appears to be one way in which Oswald is distinguished from Æthelwold. This will become apparent when comparison is made with the *Vita S. Oswaldi*. Predestination does feature in both *vitae* of Æthelwold, portrayed through the dreams experienced by Æthelwold’s mother before the birth of her son.<sup>232</sup> Ælfric reworks the text so that rather than follow Wulfstan in ascribing the interpretation of these dreams to Æthelthryth, the interpretation is presented in Ælfric’s own voice. As noted in the analysis above, it is significant that Ælfric omits the two dreams described in Wulfstan’s *vita*, both of which clearly promote Æthelwold and Winchester as the ideal of Benedictine monasticism. The dream attributed to Dunstan, where Æthelwold is represented as a large cowl sitting at the top of a tree whose branches are loaded with cowls, has clear implications for the promotion of Winchester and Æthelwoldian monasticism. Ælfric’s omission of the dream may relate to issues of his particular notions of orthodoxy and of the validity of dreams or visions. It may also relate back to Ælfric’s use of Æthelwold’s monastic customary, the *Regularis Concordia* as discussed above, that although Ælfric admired and respected Æthelwold as an individual, there were certain aspects of his approach to monasticism which were not suited to the early eleventh century. It could be possible that such blatant promotion of Winchester as the only form of monasticism would not have been appreciated by Ælfric’s audience.

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<sup>232</sup> See Wulfstan, *Vita*, cc. 2-3, pp. 4-7 and Ælfric, *Vita*, c. 2, p. 71 (EHD, p. 904).

#### 4. RAMSEY

##### INTRODUCTION

Oswald, bishop of Worcester (961-92) and archbishop of York (971-92), is one of the central figures of the ecclesiastical history of the late tenth century.<sup>1</sup>

Along with Dunstan and Æthelwold, he is regarded as one of the three 'reformers' who transformed English monasticism at this time. The place and date of Oswald's birth are unknown, although it is evident that he was born to a wealthy family of Anglo-Danish descent. Whilst little is known of Oswald's parentage, it is known that his paternal uncle was Oda, archbishop of Canterbury from 941-58 and that he was also related to Oskytel, archbishop of York (956-71), from whom he took over the archbishopric in 971.

Oswald spent at least part of his youth in the household of Oda, where he was educated by the continental scholar Frithegod.<sup>2</sup> During the late 940s or early 950s he purchased an unspecified monastery in Winchester with money given to him by Oda. He found the standard of monastic life in Winchester unsatisfactory and so at some point during the early 950s he travelled to Fleury, where he trained as a Benedictine monk. Oswald returned to England in 958, a short time before the death of Oda. After his appointment to the bishopric of Worcester in 961, Oswald established a number of monasteries at Westbury-on-Trym (965x964), Pershore (c. 970) and Ramsey, with Ealdorman Æthelwine, (c. 966), in addition to establishing a monastic community dedicated to the Virgin Mary in

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<sup>1</sup> See Brooks and Cubitt, *St Oswald of Worcester*.

<sup>2</sup> For a discussion of Frithegod, see Michael Lapidge, 'A Frankish Scholar in Tenth-Century England: Frithegod of Canterbury/Fredegaud of Brioude', *ASE*, 17 (1988), 45-65.

Worcester. In addition to founding new monasteries, Oswald also refounded a number of others, including Winchcombe.

As noted in the general introduction, Ramsey is one of the tenth-century monastic centres which produced hagiographical texts that can be clearly located both geographically and chronologically and where the authors of these texts have also been identified. These texts are Byrhtferth's *Vita Sancti Oswaldi* and Abbo of Fleury's *Passio Sancti Eadmundi*, both composed at Ramsey in the last quarter of the tenth century, or in the case of the *Vita S. Oswaldi*, possibly in the first few years of the eleventh.

It is interesting to note that, whereas the main events of Æthelwold's life are documented in sources – both contemporary and near contemporary – other than the *vitae* discussed in the previous chapter, there are relatively few contemporary sources which record the events of Oswald's life and career. The main source for information on Oswald is Byrhtferth's *Vita S. Oswaldi*. Oswald's activities in connection with Ramsey are documented in the twelfth-century history of the abbey known as the *Liber Benefactorum*.<sup>3</sup> There is, however, little information concerning his activities as bishop of Worcester and archbishop of York. Aside from the *vita*, there are the charters associated with Oswald's reorganisation of the hundreds which came to be known as the *Oswaldslow*<sup>4</sup> and brief mentions of Oswald in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. The sources for late tenth-century York are still fewer than those for Oswald and Worcester; indeed the brief description

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<sup>3</sup> *Chronicon Abbatiae Ramesiensis*, ed. by W. Dunn Macray, RS, 83 (London: Longman, 1886). See also *Ramsey Abbey's Book of Benefactors*, ed. and trans. by Susan B. Eddington and others, 2 vols (Great Britain: Hakades, 1998 and 2001).

<sup>4</sup> See Patrick Wormald, 'Oswaldslow: an immunity' and *idem*, 'Lordship and Justice in the Early English Kingdom: Oswaldslow revisited'.

contained in Byrhtferth's vita is one of the few written sources for York history from the period.<sup>5</sup> Following on from this information can be gained from the twelfth-century chroniclers such as John of Worcester and William of Malmesbury but, as noted in the General Introduction, there are problems with relying too heavily on these works which appear to be reinterpreting the developments in late tenth-century monasticism, creating a unified movement with Dunstan at its centre, and with Oswald and Æthelwold as satellites.<sup>6</sup>

In recent years, some substantial work has been done on Worcester in the post-Conquest period, establishing it as a centre for the continued production of Old English texts up until the early thirteenth century,<sup>7</sup> examining the composition and activities of the cathedral community in this period; and exploring the ways in which the community viewed its past and constructed its identity.<sup>8</sup> The scholarship regarding Worcester in the late tenth and early eleventh centuries has been, however, somewhat intermittent and much of it dates back to the early part of the previous century and the works of J. Armitage Robinson and Ivor Atkins; these were built on by Eric John and Peter Sawyer in

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<sup>5</sup> For sources dealing with tenth-century York see David Rollason, *Sources for York History to AD 1100* (York: York Archaeological Trust, 1998), pp. 20-22. See also Simon Keynes' chapter 'The Additions in Old English' in the facsimile edition of the York Gospels in *The York Gospels: a facsimile with introductory essays*, ed. by Nicholas Baker (London: Roxburghe Club, 1986), pp. 81-99. There is not much discussion of Oswald and York, but it does briefly discuss the endowment of York Minster in the late tenth century.

<sup>6</sup> See the General Introduction and 'Politics' chapter above.

<sup>7</sup> See Christine Franzen, *The Tremulous Hand of Worcester: A Study of Old English in the Thirteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991); Emma Mason, *St Wulfstan of Worcester c. 1008-1095* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990) and Elizabeth A. McIntyre, 'Early Twelfth-Century Worcester Cathedral Priory, with Special Reference to the Manuscripts There' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Oxford, 1978)

<sup>8</sup> See Julia Barrow, 'The Community of Worcester, 961-c.1100', in *St Oswald of Worcester: Life and Influence*, ed. by Nicholas Brooks and Catherine Cubitt (London: Leicester University Press, 1996), pp. 84-99; *eadem*, 'English Cathedral Communities and Reform in the Late Tenth and the Eleventh Centuries', in *Anglo-Norman Durham: 1093-1193*, ed. by David Rollason, Margaret Harvey and Michael Prestwich (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1994), pp. 25-39 and *eadem*, 'How the twelfth-century monks of Worcester Perceived Their Past', in *The Perception of the Past in Twelfth-Century Europe*, ed. by Paul Magdalino (London: Hambledon, 1992), pp. 53-74.

the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>9</sup> Due to the fragmentary nature of the evidence, there has been little work done on Oswald's activities in York and the relationship of Worcester and York during Oswald's archiepiscopacy.

Thus the main source for details of Oswald's life is Byrhtferth's *Vita S. Oswaldi*, composed at some point during the period 997x1002.<sup>10</sup> The *vita* is divided into six books which give an approximately chronological account of the life of Oswald, but which digress at several points to discuss other features of late tenth-century politics: the coronation of Edgar, for example. Byrhtferth also includes details of the life of Oswald's uncle and early mentor, Oda, in a part of the text which reads as a 'mini *vita*' in its own right. In addition there are passages giving a brief outline of the career of Dunstan, the translation of St Benedict's relics to Fleury, the careers of Oswald's disciple Germanus and Foldbriht abbot of Pershore, another 'mini *vita*' detailing the murder of Edward 'the Martyr', and two acrostics composed by Abbo of Fleury and dedicated to Dunstan. At no point does Byrhtferth give any precise dates for any of the events which he discusses and at times some of the more detailed organising of events appears confused.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> J. Armitage Robinson, *St Oswald and the Church of Worcester*, British Academy Supplemental Papers, 5 (London: Published for the British Academy by Humphrey Milford, Oxford University Press, 1919), and *idem*, *The Times of Saint Dunstan* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1923), pp. 123-42. Ivor Atkins, 'The Church of Worcester from the Eighth to the Twelfth Century', in *Antiquaries Journal*, part 1, 17 (1937), 371-91 and part 2, 20 (1940), 1-38 and 203-28. Eric John, 'St Oswald and the Tenth Century Reformation', in *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 9 (1958), 159-72 and *idem*, 'St Oswald and the Church of Worcester' in his *Orbis Britanniae and Other Studies* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1966), pp. 234-248 and Peter Sawyer, 'Charters of the Reform Movement: the Worcester Archive'.

<sup>10</sup> For details of the dating limits see Michael Lapidge, 'Byrhtferth and Oswald', in *St Oswald of Worcester*, pp. 64-83 (p. 65).

<sup>11</sup> The structure and chronology of the *Vita S. Oswaldi* has been discussed in great detail by Michael Lapidge, 'Byrhtferth and Oswald', who gives particular attention to Byrhtferth's account of Edgar's coronation and the battle of Maldon (pp. 70-78). For a more detailed discussion of Byrhtferth's treatment of the battle of Maldon see also Michael Lapidge, 'The *Life of St Oswald*',

The *Vita S. Oswaldi* survives in only one manuscript: London, British Library, MS Cotton Nero E. i, part 1, folios 3<sup>r</sup> to 23<sup>v</sup>. The *vita*, along with Byrhtferth's *Vita S. Ecgwini*, Lantfred's *Translatio et miracula S. Swithuni* and Wulfstan of Winchester's hymn *Aurea lux patrie*, forms an addition to what is commonly known as the 'Cotton-Corpus Legendary'.<sup>12</sup> Both the additions, including the *Vita S. Oswaldi*, and the main body of the legendary date to the third quarter of the eleventh century and have a Worcester provenance. Whilst work has been done on the legendary itself,<sup>13</sup> relatively little work has been done on the manuscript history and transmission of the additions in general, and the *Vita S. Oswaldi* in particular. As a result there is no indication as to how widely the *Vita S. Oswaldi* circulated as an independent text, other than at Worcester and presumably Ramsey.<sup>14</sup>

Apart from the various works ascribed to him, little is known of Byrhtferth himself. From details contained in those texts attributed to him, it is likely that Byrhtferth entered Ramsey as an oblate and was a student there when Abbo came

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in *The Battle of Maldon AD 991*, ed. by Donald Scragg (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991), pp. 51-58.

<sup>12</sup> The Cotton-Corpus Legendary is a Latin collection of saints' lives, believed to have been written in Northern France or Flanders and transmitted to England where it was almost certainly used by Ælfric as a source for his compositions on saints' lives. The collection does not survive in its original form, but is reflected in three surviving later manuscripts: Cotton Nero E. i, part 1 folios 55 to 208 and part ii, folios 1 to 155 and Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 9.

<sup>13</sup> See, for example, Jackson and Lapidge, 'The Contents of the Cotton-Corpus Legendary', Patrick H. Zettel, 'Saints' Lives in Old English: Latin Manuscripts and Vernacular Accounts: Ælfric', *Peritia*, 1 (1982), 17-37, discusses the use that Ælfric may have made of the legendary in the production of his vernacular saints' lives.

<sup>14</sup> S. J. Crawford was the first to identify Byrhtferth as the author of the *vita* in his article; 'Byrhtferth of Ramsey and the Anonymous Life of St Oswald', in *Speculum Religionis: Being Essays and Studies in Religion and Literature from Plato to Von Hügel*, ed. by F. C. Burkitt (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1929), pp. 99-111. This identification has been generally accepted, but little scholarship has been devoted to the study of the text and transmission of the *vita*. Michael Lapidge and Peter Baker give a brief outline of the text in their discussion of Byrhtferth's works in the introduction to their edition of Byrhtferth's *Enchiridion*. EETS, ss. 15 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. xxv-xxxiv (p. xxix). A detailed study of the text and its transmission will no doubt be included in Michael Lapidge's forthcoming edition of the text: *Byrhtferth of Ramsey: the Lives of Oswald and Ecgwine* (Oxford Medieval Texts).



from Fleury to teach at the school (985-87). He possibly began his own scholarly compositions after Abbo's departure and may have taught at the Ramsey school until his death in *c.* 1020. There is speculation that Byrhtferth may have travelled to Evesham at some point during Wythmann's abbacy of Ramsey (1016-1020), when there appears to have been some turmoil within the Ramsey community. If this was the case, then Byrhtferth most likely died at Evesham.<sup>15</sup> More detail is known of Byrhtferth's works, although many of them have been transmitted anonymously and Byrhtferth has been identified as the author on stylistic and linguistic grounds. Byrhtferth is, perhaps, most famously known for his *Computus* and the *Enchiridion*, best described as a commentary on the *Computus*. Both works were composed at Ramsey during the period 988-1006. As well as the *Vita S. Oswaldi*, Byrhtferth is credited with writing the *Vita S. Ecgwini*, a hagiographical account of the life of Ecgwine, bishop of Worcester ?693-717, based, according to Baker and Lapidge, on spurious charters and oral tradition.<sup>16</sup> Some of the early sections of the *Historia regum*, normally attributed to Symeon of Durham, have, on stylistic grounds, also been ascribed to Byrhtferth. In addition to these works, it is possible that Byrhtferth composed some Latin verse, although at present there is nothing definitely ascribed to him. Furthermore, it is possible that he may have composed a Latin chronicle dealing with tenth-century English history, which could have formed the basis of parts of his *Vita S. Oswaldi* as well as being a source for John of Worcester's *Chronicon ex chronicis*.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> This suggestion is made by Baker and Lapidge in *Enchiridion*, p. xxxiv. See also pp. xxxiii-xxxiv for more details on Byrhtferth's life and career.

<sup>16</sup> See Baker and Lapidge, *Enchiridion*, p. xxix.

<sup>17</sup> For details of all these works see Baker and Lapidge, *Enchiridion*, pp. xxv- xxxiii.

As noted above, one of the few things known of Byrhtferth is that he was a student of Abbo, who taught at Ramsey during 985 to 987. The links between the two abbeys of Ramsey and Abbo's *alma mater*, Fleury, are reflected in the way that Byrhtferth speaks in glowing terms of his former master, and the inclusion of the two acrostics dedicated by Abbo to Dunstan in the *Vita S. Oswaldi*.<sup>18</sup> There are at least two known manuscripts, composed at Ramsey, which demonstrate links between the two abbeys. The first is Orleans, Bibliothèque Municipale, MS 127 (105), 'the Winchcombe Sacramentary'; a sacramentary written for the Winchcombe community, most likely during the period when that community was at Ramsey (975-992), but with a later provenance from Fleury.<sup>19</sup> The other manuscript is London, British Library, MS Harley 2904, known as the 'Harley Psalter'; a Gallican Psalter written either at Winchester for Ramsey, or at Ramsey itself, but which contains illustrations almost identical to those found in manuscripts produced at Fleury.<sup>20</sup> These links are in addition to the more obvious, personal ones: that Oswald was himself a monk at Fleury, and that Germanus, one of his own disciples who later became abbot of Winchcombe (c. 972-975) and possibly abbot of Ramsey (992-993), also studied at Fleury with Oswald, and returned to Fleury in 975 when the monastic community was driven from Winchcombe.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> *VSO*, pp. 460-62. For a discussion of these acrostics see Scott, J. Gwara, 'Three Acrostic Poems by Abbo of Fleury', *Journal of Medieval Latin*, 2 (1992), 203-35.

<sup>19</sup> See Gneuss, *Handlist*, item 687, p. 133. See also *The Winchcombe Sacramentary*, ed. by A. Davril, HBS, 109 (London: Henry Bradshaw Society, 1995).

<sup>20</sup> See Gneuss, *Handlist*, item 430, p. 76. Baker and Lapidge suggest that this Psalter may have been produced for Oswald's personal use, due to the nature of the veneration of St Benedict which is found in the manuscript, *Enchiridion*, p. xx.

<sup>21</sup> See Knowles, *Heads of Religious Houses*, pp. 61 and 78.

There is little argument that Abbo of Fleury wanted to do more than create a piece of high quality hagiography when he composed the *Passio Sancti Eadmundi*, his Life of the ninth-century martyr, St Edmund. It is accepted by both Marco Mostert and Antonia Gransden that Abbo, writing before he had been elected to the abbacy of Fleury, intended the *Passio* to be used as a ‘mirror’ for the new Capetian kings Hugh Capet and Robert II. In this respect Abbo follows the contemporary tradition for using hagiography to influence the behaviour of princes and kings. That this necessarily means that the piece was composed at Fleury after Abbo’s return from Ramsey and before the death of Dunstan (between the autumn of 987 and 19 May 988), as Mostert argues, is more contentious.<sup>22</sup> Gransden, by contrast, argues that there is no reason why the work could not have been composed in England, at Ramsey, during Abbo’s two years as teacher there.<sup>23</sup> The place of composition is in many ways irrelevant and indeed where the *Passio* was written is the wrong question to be asking at this point as current scholarship is in no position to answer it conclusively.

Little is known about the historical Edmund other than the brief descriptions found in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* and Asser’s *Life of King Alfred*, which mainly relate that Edmund was killed in battle against invading forces c. 869 AD. The *Chronicle* reference, under the year 870, states:

N. .dcccclxx. Her rad se here ofer Myrce innon Eastængla 7  
wintersetl namon æt ðeodforda, 7 þy wintra Eadmund cyning him

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<sup>22</sup> Marco Mostert, *The Political Theology of Abbo of Fleury* (Hilversum: Verloren Publishers, 1987), p. 45.

<sup>23</sup> Antonia Gransden, ‘Abbo of Fleury’s *Passio Sancti Eadmundi*’, *Revue Bénédictine*, 105 (1985), 20-78 (pp. 40-56).

wiþ feaht, 7 þa Dæniccan sige naman 7 þone cyning ofslogon 7 þæt land eall geeodon.<sup>24</sup>

Asser's description of the historical Edmund is hardly any more detailed:

Anno Dominicae Incarnationis DCCCLXX nativitatis autem Ælfredi regis vigesimo secundo, supra memoratus paganorum exercitus per Merciam in Orientales Anglos transivit, et ibi in loco, qui dicitur Theodford, hiemavit. Eodem anno Edmund, Orientalium Anglorum rex, contra ipsum exercitum atrociter pugnavit. Sed proh dolor! Paganis nimium gloriantibus, ipso sum magna suorum parte ibidem occiso, inimici loco funeris dominati sunt, et totam illam regionem suo dominio subdiderunt.<sup>25</sup>

Other than these scant details, very little is known of the historical Edmund. The main source of information available to Abbo was apparently the oral tradition of the martyrdom which had grown up surrounding the creation of the cult and which had been passed down, in a similar manner to the way described by Abbo in the letter to Dunstan which accompanied the *Passio*. In this prefatory letter Abbo writes: 'Audierant enim quod / eam pluribus ignotam, a nemine scriptam, tua sanctitas ex antiquitatis memoria collectam historilaiter me praesente retulisset domno Rofensis aecclisiae episcopo et abbati monasterii quod dicitur

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<sup>24</sup> ASC MS D, p. 24 'In this year the raiding army rode across Mercia into East Anglia, and took up winter quarters at Thetford. And that winter King Edmund fought against them, and the Danes had the victory, and killed the king and conquered all the land' (EHD, p. 192).

<sup>25</sup> Asser's *Life of King Alfred*, ed. by W. H. Stevenson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), pp. 25-26. 'In the year of our Lord's Incarnation 870 (the twenty second of King Alfred's life) the pagan [Keynes and Lapidge have Viking] army mentioned above passed through Mercia to East Anglia, and spent the winter there at a place called Thetford. In the same year, Edmund, king of the East Angles, fought fiercely against that army. But alas, he was killed there with a large number of his men, and the pagans [Keynes and Lapidge, Vikings] rejoiced triumphantly; the enemy were masters of the battlefield, and they subjected that entire province to their authority'; trans. by Simon Keynes and Michael Lapidge in *Alfred the Great: Asser's Life of King Alfred and Other Contemporary Sources* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1983), pp. 77-78.

Mealmesbyri ac aliis circum assistentibus'<sup>26</sup>. Abbo then goes on to establish the legitimacy of this account by stating that it was the same story which Dunstan himself had heard as a young man when it had been told to King Athelstan by the armour bearer of Edmund himself: 'quod eam iunior didicisses a quodam sene decrepito, qui eam simpliciter et plena fide referebat gloriosissimo regi Anglorum Aethelstano, iureiurando asserens quod eadem die fuisset armiger beatis uiri qua pro Christo martyr occubuit'<sup>27</sup>. The description of the story being passed directly from person to person – from the old man to Athelstan to Dunstan to Abbo – acts as a legitimisation of the oral tradition. The fact that that the story was told to Abbo by Dunstan is an additional strategy which enhances the credibility of the narrative.

The earliest known text of the *Passio* is Lambeth Palace Library MS 362, folios 1 to 12, dating to the second quarter of the eleventh century. The manuscript contains the *Passio S. Eadmundi*, assorted hymns and a Mass for St Edmund; although it has a possible later provenance of St Augustine's Canterbury, it may have been composed at Bury St Edmunds.<sup>28</sup> This is a quarto-sized *libellus*, intended, it would seem, for individual use. As Gransden has pointed out, this manuscript contains two scribal features that do not appear in other known copies, suggesting that it is the closest to Abbo's original

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<sup>26</sup>*Passio*, Prologue: 12-16. 'For they had heard that your holiness had given in my presence an account of the passion [of Edmund], which was unknown to many people, which had not been written about by anybody, and which was gathered by inquiry from the memory of the past, to the lord bishop of the church of Rochester and to the abbot of the monastery which is called Malmesbury, and to the others who were present'.

<sup>27</sup>*Passio*, Prologue: 19-22. 'you related to them that, as a young man, you had heard of the suffering from an ailing old man who had related it in simple terms and with complete fidelity, to the most glorious king of the English, Athelstan, declaring on oath that he had been the armour bearer of that blessed man on the very day on which he had died as a martyr for Christ'.

<sup>28</sup> See Gneuss, *Handlist*, item 518, p. 87.

autograph.<sup>29</sup> The next known copy is Copenhagen, Kongelige Bibliotek, MS G. K. S.1588, folios 4<sup>v</sup> to 28. This is also a quarto-sized *libellus*, but dated to the late eleventh century, again probably composed at Bury but possibly subsequently to be found at Saint Denis.<sup>30</sup> The only other known early copy is in the *de luxe* manuscript British Library, MS Cotton Tiberius B. ii, folios 2 to 85, which contains Abbo's *Passio* at folios 2 to 19<sup>v</sup>, in addition to an incomplete copy of the long version of the *Miracula S. Eadmundi* attributed to Hermannus Archidiaconus.<sup>31</sup> Once again this is likely to be a Bury manuscript, dating to the late eleventh or early twelfth century, and it is in the main concerned with the eleventh-century cult and miracles of the saint.

The manuscript tradition of these early copies can be seen to be English, which could possibly argue in favour of the original composition having been made in England. Later copies of the *Passio* survive from both England and the Continent, most dating to the twelfth century, and that it is found in Legendaries or Passionals belonging to the Cistercian Abbey of Clairvaux, the Cluniac Priory of Saint-Martin-des-Champs in Paris and the Benedictine Abbeys of Fécamp and Jumièges, to name but a few.<sup>32</sup> The copies which survive in England and the Continent are of different recensions; in England all but one of the copies of English provenance belong to the revised Tiberius recension which apparently superseded the Lambeth / Copenhagen recension, whereas many of the copies of Continental provenance derive from the earlier recensions of the Lambeth /

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<sup>29</sup> See Gransden, 'Abbo of Fleury's *Passio*', pp. 63-75. (p. 64).

<sup>30</sup> See Gneuss, *Handlist*, item 813. p. 123.

<sup>31</sup> See Gneuss, *Handlist*, item 371. p. 68.

<sup>32</sup> See Gransden, 'Abbo of Fleury's *Passio*', pp. 63-75 for a discussion of the manuscript transmission of the *Passio*.

Copenhagen manuscripts.<sup>33</sup> This may indicate the early dissemination of both the cult and the narrative on the Continent, whether or not Abbo wrote the *Passio* there.

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<sup>33</sup> See Gransden, 'Abbo of Fleury's *Passio*', p. 71.

**BYRHTEFERTH'S *VITA SANCTI OSWALDI***

There are times in the *Vita Sancti Oswaldi* when Oswald appears almost as an incidental character. Byrhtferth is writing a history of Ramsey and its surroundings as much as he is writing *vita* of Oswald and thus he narrates events including descriptions of people whom he considers essential in order to situate Oswald in the history of late tenth-century England. Oswald is nonetheless the primary subject of the text, and it is the construction and depiction of his claim to sanctity that concerns us here.

The associations and affiliations depicted by Byrhtferth in his *Vita S. Oswaldi* give an indication of the way in which Oswald's sanctity was constructed. Throughout the text the figure of Oswald is associated with a number of different ideas and individuals, varying from particular individuals, such as Oda, Dunstan and Edgar, to less specific themes and ideas, for example biblical figures and ideas and 'the divine'. A common hagiographical *topos* was the association of the subject of the text with previous generations of saints, thus establishing the new saint's qualifications and enabling the present and future audience to trace the origin of the saint's power back through the ranks of confessors, martyrs or virgins to Christ himself. It is interesting, therefore, to note that whilst Oswald is associated with other saints, these saints are almost all of either his generation of 'reformers' (Dunstan and Æthelwold), or the generation immediately preceding his (Oda); the only named saint with which Oswald is associated whose cult does not originate in the late tenth century is that of Benedict (and a general comparison to the Desert Fathers), and these are



perhaps, as Lapidge has suggested, indications of the author's preoccupation with monasticism.<sup>34</sup>

### **Associations with the Divine**

The most consistent affiliations made in the text are those between Oswald and biblical characters and events, and with Christ and God; as in the previous chapter, those with God, Christ and unspecified biblical characters or themes will be referred to as 'the divine'. These associations should, perhaps, come as no surprise as they are the standard foundations on which sanctity is constructed, but it is worth looking at the way in which both associations were used. The connection between Oswald and the divine is established at the beginning of the *vita*; indeed the first sentence of the first chapter (after a lengthy and somewhat rambling prologue) states: 'Religiosus vir Domini Oswaldus gratia Summi Opificis erat in pueritia praeventus, per quam Sacro lavacro extitit ablutus, et septemplici dono Sancto Flaminis ornatus, sicut ordo demonstrat ecclesiasticus'<sup>35</sup>. From here the author moves on to establish the connection between Oswald and his paternal uncle, archbishop Oda, where the focus of the narrative turns from Oswald to Oda and a brief description of Oda's career and claim to sanctity is given. When the focus returns to Oswald, at the beginning of the second chapter, the theme of Divine support and encouragement throughout Oswald's youth emerges once again.

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<sup>34</sup> Michael Lapidge, 'Byrhtferth and Oswald', p. 66.

<sup>35</sup> *VSO*, p. 401; 'The religious man of the Lord, Oswald, was supported in his childhood through the grace of the Highest Maker, through this grace, he was washed with Holy baptism, and adorned with the holy seven-fold gift of flame, as the ecclesiastical order of service demonstrates'.

During his youth, that is when he was *adolescens*, Oswald was educated by Oda. However, as well as an association with the Archbishop, there is an underlying theme of Divine support and pre-destination. Oswald's willingness to serve God is described as the result of a gift from God, a statement which is reinforced by a direct quote from the Vulgate: 'Eo largiente Qui linguas infantium facit disertas'<sup>36</sup>. Oswald's rapid progression in learning is similarly supported by the Holy Spirit.<sup>37</sup> It is interesting to note that in this sentence Oswald is described as *Deicola Christi*.<sup>38</sup> The author follows this description of divine support for Oswald's education with a sentence in which Oswald's later career is pre-ordained by the divine: 'Sitiebant ipsius penetralia cordis largiter haurire semper doctrinam sacrae eruditionis quam Conditor clementius contulit in pectore beati tyronis quem praescivit et praedestinavit ante suae nativitatis tempora praeesse ecclesiae filiis'<sup>39</sup>.

The theme of predestination returns later when, after spending time living a luxurious but spiritually unfulfilling life with clerics in an unspecified Winchester monastery, Oswald asks Oda if he could go abroad to study continental, and by implication stricter and more 'correct', monastic customs.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> *VSO*, p. 410; 'through the lavish giving of Him who made the tongues of infants eloquent.' Although there are two differences in spelling (*facit* for *fecit* and *disertas* for *dissertas*) this a direct quotation from the Book of Wisdom 10. 21.

<sup>37</sup> *VSO*, p. 410; 'quia erat praeventus egregio Spiritus Sancti dono'. 'because he was supported by the extraordinary gift of the Holy Spirit'.

<sup>38</sup> This term is a little odd as it literally means 'the follower of God-Christ'. A more standard term would have been *Christicola* – 'the follower of Christ'.

<sup>39</sup> *VSO*, p. 410; 'The inner reaches of that youth's heart used always to be thirsty to drink in abundance holy learning's doctrine/teaching which the Creator gently bestowed in the breast of that blessed recruit whom he foreknew and predestined before the time of his birth to preside over the sons of the church'. Here the language is reminiscent of the language found in the Pentecost liturgy of Winchester Troper; see *The Winchester Troper: from mss. of the Xth and XIth Centuries; with Other Documents Illustrating the History of Tropes in England and France*. ed. by Walter H. Frere, HBS, 8 (London: Harrison, 1894), pp. 24-25.

<sup>40</sup> *VSO*, p. 412; 'Ultra marinas vellem visitare partes, si tuae potentiae ratum esset, et in loco quo tuus affectus decreverit, Deo servire et Sanctis Ejus, quatenus recipi merear in dextera parte

It is interesting that the exact location where this study is to take place is left to Oda's discretion, although later in the text Byrhtferth informs the reader that Oda studied at Fleury.<sup>41</sup> Oda's response to this request is expressed in terms of delight; he understands it to be the gift of the Holy Spirit ('intelligens in ejus corde esse Santi Spiritus donum'),<sup>42</sup> and he is not surprised as changes do not take place without the knowledge and influence of the divine: 'Non magnopere tamen de ipsius mirabatur voluntate, quia omnis subita mutatio rerum non fit sine persuasione Creatoris piissimi omnium creaturum'<sup>43</sup>. Perhaps predestination is too strong a term for the ideas expressed here, but there is a definite sense that Oswald's career is, at the very least, being steered by the divine, in some instances acting through Oda, in others acting directly on Oswald's own conscience.

The divine can be seen acting as a protective force working in Oswald's favour: the devil (Behemoth) tries to torment Oswald, wanting him to 'become frightened like a woman' ('quem voluit muliebriter expavescere'), because he believes Oswald to be defenceless when, in reality 'he was very strongly defended by Apostolic weapons' ('putans eum esse inermem qui erat Apostolicis munitus praevalide armis').<sup>44</sup> The role of the divine as protector of Oswald can

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coronandus, post generale iudicium iusti Arbitris'. 'I would like to visit parts across the seas, if your power determines so, and in the place which your desire decrees, to serve God and his Saints, so that I may be worthy to be welcomed on the right side, to be crowned after the general judgement of the just by the Judge'.

<sup>41</sup> *VSO*, p. 413.

<sup>42</sup> *VSO*, p. 412; 'understanding in his heart that it was the gift of the Holy Spirit'.

<sup>43</sup> *VSO*, p. 412; 'Nevertheless he did not marvel greatly about his will, since each sudden change of affairs would not be made without the most pious persuasion of the Creator of all creatures'.

<sup>44</sup> *VSO*, p. 417. The symbolism of this passage is rooted in Biblical exegesis where the roaring lion represents Satan (as opposed to a silent lion which represents Christ) and the pigs represent possession by the devil (taken from the story Gaderene of the swine). The symbolism of the sheep is unclear, but may represent a going astray motif. Disturbance by noise is a common monastic and eremitical theme.

also be seen when he is travelling back to England after his stay in Fleury; an angel comes out of the heavens and protects Oswald and his companions: ‘quibus e superis caelis Angelus venit, qui eos mira protegit munitione, sicut legitur in Divinis codicibus, Angeli enim sunt ministratores eorum *qui hereditatem capiunt aeternae salutis*’<sup>45</sup>. The biblical precedent quoted here comes from Hebrews 1. 14, and is one of the few New Testament associations made for Oswald.

An association with angels, or one angel in particular, is found later in the text. After being made Archbishop of York Oswald travels to Rome to receive his pallium, and on his return to England Oswald praises God, who sent the archangel Raphael to Oswald: ‘Reversus almus pater ad solum proprium, odas reddidit summo Ihesu, Qui sibi destinavit suae sedis ministrum, Raphaelem archangelum’<sup>46</sup>. There is no mention of why, or for what purpose, Raphael was sent to Oswald. Most of the references to Raphael come from the Apocryphal book of Tobit, also known as Tobias. The first few chapters of the book are dedicated to a description of Tobit’s piety and dedication to God. He and his kin, including his wife and son – also called Tobias – are taken into captivity in the city of Nineveh. As a result of his piety, God ensures that Tobit finds favour with the king, Salamanasar. When the king dies he is succeeded by his son, Sennacherib, who hates the Israelites, and during this time of implied persecution, Tobit does what he can to help his kin, distributing alms from his own possessions and burying the dead, though specifically ordered not to. The Lord then decides to test Tobit’s patience in a similar manner to the way he

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<sup>45</sup> *VSO*, p. 419; ‘for which (quibus) an Angel came out of the highest heavens, who protected them with wonderful defences. as it is written in the Divine codices. for Angels are the protectors of those who receive the inheritance of eternal salvation’.

<sup>46</sup> *VSO*, p. 436; The kind father, having returned to his own land, he frequently offered hymns to the highest Jesus. Who sent to him the minister of his own seat, the archangel Raphael’.

tested Job's. Whilst he was sleeping, dung falls from a bird's nest onto Tobit's face and blinds him. But Tobit's faith does not falter despite his misfortune and for his steadfast adherence to the word of God he is mocked by the Israelites.

The remainder of the book is dedicated to an account of a journey undertaken by Tobit's son, Tobias. When Tobit believes that he is going to die, he asks Tobias to reclaim some money which he had lent an old friend many years previously. Tobias says that he does not know the way to this friend's house and needs a guide. He sees a beautiful young man, Raphael, and asks him to be his guide, unaware that he is an angel. During the journey, Tobias is attacked by a fish which Raphael helps him to subdue. The angel also advises Tobias to keep the fish's heart, liver and gall to be used in medicine. The pair come to the house of Sara, a woman who has had seven husbands, all of whom have been killed by a devil on the couples' wedding night. Tobias asks to marry Sara, but must first defeat the devil. He burns part of the fish's liver which Raphael uses to blind – and therefore, it is assumed, kill – the devil. Raphael then continues on to collect the money, while Tobias marries Sara. After his marriage, Tobias returns to the house of his father, and anoints Tobit's eyes with the fish's gall, thus restoring the blind man's sight. At this point Raphael reveals to the father and son who he really is. Tobit praises God and encourages all the Israelites to do the same, prophesying the restoration of Jerusalem. He dies at the age of one hundred and two, after he has also predicted the destruction of Nineveh. Tobias and his family leave the city and he enjoys a long and happy life.

It could be that there is a dual alignment at work in this passage, with Byrhtferth associating Oswald with both Tobit and Tobias. Tobit is deeply pious and observant and lives among the Israelites who were not. This may be an allusion to Oswald's position as a promoter of Benedictine monasticism, but one which again separates him from his contemporaries Æthelwold and Dunstan. Tobias is a more active figure than his father, defeating the devil and healing his father's blindness. One way of reading the allusion could be to see Oswald as Tobias, healing the blindness of the English church. Whatever the association with Raphael is intended to signify, it is unusual and as such distinguishes Oswald, and thereby Ramsey, from Æthelwold and Winchester.

The sense that Oswald was assisted and supported by the divine continues in his later career, almost as though he has Divine patronage instead of, or as well as, secular – certainly the presence of Edgar and the crown is felt much less here than in the *Vita Æthelwoldi*, a point which will be discussed in more detail below. According to Byrhtferth, whilst at Fleury (and as a result of his frequent Psalm-singing) Oswald earned the 'grace and favour of eternal blessings of the highest Jesus' ('veniam et gratiam aeternae benedictionis Jhesu altissimi promeruit quam nec in praesenti vitae, neque in futuro saeculo amittere potuit')<sup>47</sup>.

At this point Byrhtferth makes an allusion to Oswald's musical abilities. After defeating the devil, Oswald is described as attaining the rank of deacon: 'Adeptus culmen honoris Levitici, quod coram Domino et omni populo inclyte

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<sup>47</sup> *VSO*, p. 419; 'he earned the grace and favour of the eternal blessings of the highest Jesus which he would not lose either in this life, nor in the future generation'.

officium explevit, quia pulchritudo vocis et suavitas pulchritudinis atque altitudo suavitatis in eo simul erant. Tria in uno, dono Dei, habebat dona, ut autumo, vocis pulchritudinem, et pulchritudinis suavitatem, et altitudinem cum vocis modulatione'<sup>48</sup>. The use of the phrase 'tria in uno, dona Dei', 'three gifts by means of God's one gift', is interesting: although there is no direct reference to the Trinity, the language echoes the theology of the Trinity familiar to a monastic audience, in this way reinforcing Oswald's association with the divine.

The depiction of the divine as patron of Oswald should, perhaps, not be all that surprising. The association filters down to Ramsey itself and can only strengthen the position (both ecclesiastical and secular) of both the abbey and its monks: the divine acts as patron to Oswald, who in turn founds and is patron to Ramsey. The connections between Ramsey, Oswald and the divine are highlighted in a passage relating to the consecration of the abbey: 'Eo tempore constructum est decenter monasterium quod ipse et reverendus Oswaldus archiepiscopus inceperunt, quod ipse pater consecravit, adjutus Divino auxilio et confortatus amminiculo Ælfnothi episcopi, qui super illum locum erat constitutus'<sup>49</sup>. When the text is concerned with Ramsey, Oswald is frequently depicted as a father figure, which is not unusual for a monastic founder. This

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<sup>48</sup> *VSO*, p. 417; 'Having obtained the height of diaconal honour, which celebrated office he fulfilled before God and all the people, since the beauty of the voice, the sweetness of beauty, and the loftiness of sweetness were in him at the same time. He was holding three gifts, by means of God's one gift, so I say: the beauty of <his> voice, the sweetness of beauty, and the loftiness with the voice's melody (or movement)'. It is worth noting that 'autumo' is in the first person. In addition much of the language here is technical language relating to music; the deacon in a monastery had a prominent musical role, singing the *Exultet*, for example. Thus, by highlighting his musical abilities here, Byrhtferth is showing Oswald to be a good deacon and thus an exemplary monastic figure. The passage may also serve to illustrate Oswald's skill as a preacher, another significant function of a deacon and one which similarly required a good voice.

<sup>49</sup> *VSO*, p. 446; 'In that time the monastery which he [Æthelwine] and the revered archbishop Oswald began was appropriately constructed, which the same father [Oswald] consecrated, helped by Divine assistance and reinforced by the support of bishop Ælfnoth, who had been placed over that place'.

representation of Oswald as a paternal figure closely connected to the divine and the subsequent reflection of this on to Ramsey enhances the abbey's spiritual authority. This enhancement might be more than just a standard hagiographic elevation of the subject: it also serves to distinguish Ramsey from the Fenland abbeys connected with Winchester and Æthelwold and, at the same time, raising Ramsey's standing above that of Winchester.

### **Biblical Associations**

Biblical associations can be classified separately from the divine as they are used differently and are often different in nature. Byrhtferth uses many direct quotes from the Vulgate (although at times there are a few minor differences in spelling, and he sometimes combines quotes from either different chapters of the same book or from different books altogether); most of these are Old Testament and are (for the most part) seamlessly interwoven into the text of the narrative to give weight to his story.<sup>50</sup> As well as direct quotations, Byrhtferth uses analogy, often directly comparing Oswald with a variety of Old Testament figures, including Lot, Isaac, Joshua, Solomon and Jacob.

Before travelling to Fleury to receive 'proper' monastic training, Oswald spends time at a monastery in Winchester (which he purchased using money given to him as a gift from Oda). The use of money to purchase land for monasteries is found later on in the *vita*, in Byrhtferth's description of the

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<sup>50</sup> This makes it very likely that Byrhtferth is using texts from memory.



foundation of Ramsey, although in that instance the money is refused.<sup>51</sup> The acquisition of land with money is also a feature of Wulfstan's description of Æthelwold's refoundation of the Fenland monasteries of Ely, Thorney and Peterborough.<sup>52</sup> It is striking therefore, that in Byrhtferth's text Æthelwine refuses the money offered by Oswald, whereas in the *Vita S. Æthelwoldi* it is implied that the money Æthelwold offered the king and nobles was accepted. This is perhaps another attempt by Byrhtferth to establish an identity for Ramsey which was separate from the Fenland monasteries associated with Æthelwold. Ramsey was co-founded by Oswald and Æthelwine, Ely, Peterborough and Thorney were, however, all founded solely by Æthelwold. In addition, there is no suggestion of royal involvement in Ramsey's foundation, but Wulfstan states that Ely and Peterborough were endowed with land purchased from the king.<sup>53</sup> Ælfric, in his abbreviation of Wulfstan's *vita*, moderates the importance of money in these foundations, and as a result Æthelwold's importance as sole benefactor of them.<sup>54</sup> In this respect, Ælfric's *Vita S. Æthelwoldi* has more in common with Byrhtferth's *Vita S. Oswaldi*, which may indicate that there was a shift in emphasis towards secular patrons of monasteries instead of royal patronage.<sup>55</sup>

Whilst at Winchester Oswald lives a life which is luxurious, but spiritually unfulfilling, and he is described as living like Lot in Sodom: 'Cum his mansitabat

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<sup>51</sup> *VSO*, pp. 428-29.

<sup>52</sup> Wulfstan, *Vita*, c. 24, pp. 40-43.

<sup>53</sup> Wulfstan, *Vita*, c. 24, pp. 40-41.

<sup>54</sup> See the 'Secular Associations' subsection of the Ælfric section in Chapter 3 for a full discussion of Ælfric's changes and of their implications.

<sup>55</sup> See Jones, *Ælfric's Letter to the Monks of Eynsham*, pp. 44-49.

pius adolescens, velut Loth in Sodomis'<sup>56</sup>. Almost immediately the relationship between Oda and Oswald is compared to that between Moses and Joshua: after commenting on the clerics' 'excessive songs' (*superfluas nenias*'<sup>57</sup>), and a discussion of the delights of the flesh, Byrhtferth says: 'Sic resplenduit sub pio parente, velut Josue sub eximio Aquatico, quia secundus enituit in Jordanis culmine'<sup>58</sup>. The reference here is to the crossing of the Jordan in Joshua chapter three, which parallels the crossing of the Red Sea, but it must be remembered that whereas Moses only sees the promised land, Joshua actually enters it. Oda is often regarded as a forerunner of the revival of Benedictine monasticism which took place at the end of the tenth century, and he is described by Byrhtferth as a monk who trained at Fleury. Byrhtferth's criticism would therefore seem to be that either Oda was not a good enough Benedictine, or that his fault was that he did not promote Benedictine monasticism in the way that Oswald and his contemporaries did.

Analogies with biblical Egypt frequently occur in the text. Oswald standing before Abbot Wulflad on his arrival at Fleury is described as: 'velut inclytus dux Niliaci regni ante Pharaonem'<sup>59</sup>. The language of the preceding phrase is noteworthy: 'Deinde astans perspicax tyro coram cunctis sancti castris fratribus, et velut inclytus dux Niliaci regni ante Pharaonem'<sup>60</sup>. The use of the word 'tyro' has military implications, matched by the 'sancti castris'. At certain places in the

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<sup>56</sup> *VSO*, p. 411; 'With these [clerics] the pious young man was staying just like Lot in Sodom'.

<sup>57</sup> *Nenias* is an odd choice of word; it can mean laments, ditties, nursery rhymes, popular songs or perhaps heroic lays, which is perhaps a comment on and condemnation of the nature of the clerics.

<sup>58</sup> *VSO*, p. 411; 'In this way he was resplendent under the pious father [Oda], just as Joshua under the distinguished Moses [literally 'one living in water'], because the second was distinguished in the depths of the Jordan'.

<sup>59</sup> *VSO*, p. 413; 'just as the celebrated leader of the kingdom of the Nile before Pharaoh'.

<sup>60</sup> *VSO*, p. 413; 'Then, the sharp-sighted abbot (*tyro*) standing in the presence of all the brothers of the holy camp, just as the celebrated leader of the kingdom of the Nile before Pharaoh'.

text the language seems to have military overtones, perhaps more so than the standard language of the *miles Christi*, although this precise phrase is not used to describe Oswald. At the start of the paragraph where the phrase ‘velut inclytus dux Niliaci regni ante Pharaonem’ is found, Oswald is described as ‘egregius Israhelita’ (‘eminent Israelite’). Here again Byrhtferth is using imagery associated with biblical Egypt to line up Oswald with Moses, thus establishing Oswald as a patriarchal figure, even before his ecclesiastical career has begun.

A further association with biblical Egypt is found later in the text. Oswald’s arrival at the newly founded Ramsey is described thus:

Jacob venerandus patriarcha in animabus septuaginta descendit in Ægyptum, noster vero patriarcha, majoribus suffultus honoribus, descendit in insulam omni pulchritudine repletam. Ille cum filiis ad regem venit Niliaci regni; iste cum spiritualibus venit ad regnum Domini de quo concinit Daviticus Psalmus, inquit, Dominus regnavit, exultet terra, laetentur insulae multae. Illius eximium genus persecutus est rex Ægypti, istius persecutus est diabolus, qui est rex omnium iniquorum. Illius generis terra repromissionis promissa erat; istius caelestis regni gloria, si in monasterio Sancti Benedicti servaverunt decreta.<sup>61</sup>

This passage is clearly a reference to Genesis 46. 27, and the description of the persecution of Oswald’s men could be a reference to events in Oswald’s diocese

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<sup>61</sup> *VSO*, p. 431; ‘The revered patriarch Jacob, with his seventy souls (i.e. heirs) went down to Egypt, in truth our patriarch, supported by great honours, went down to the island which was filled with all beauty. The former [Jacob] came with <his> sons to the king of the kingdom of the Nile; the latter [Oswald] came with spirituals (monks) to the kingdom of the Lord about which the Davidic Psalm sings, saying, The Lord hath reigned, let the earth rejoice: let many islands be glad. The king of the Egyptians persecuted the distinguished race of the former [Jacob], the devil, who is king of all evil men, persecuted the latter’s [Oswald’s] men. The Promised Land had been promised for the former; the glory of the heavenly kingdom <has been promised> for the latter, if in the monastery of Saint Benedict they preserved the rules’.

of Worcester after the death of Edgar. Landholders forcibly reclaimed lands they had lost to monasteries during the creation of the *Oswaldslow*. This culminated in the eviction of the Winchcombe community which took refuge at Ramsey for a period of time.

Another Old Testament association is made between Oswald and Isaac. Referring to Oswald's early career at Fleury, the text says: 'Associatus Dominicis castris praefatus Salvatoris servus, et bene, sicuti norma monasticae legis et decreta promulgant, probates in pulsatorio, velut Isaac ab imolatione proprii necis liberatus est, Patri se Spiritum quotidie cogitans offerre, quod est pingue libamen Deo nostro'<sup>62</sup>; a reference to Genesis 22. 2-19. Notable here are the use of the word *castris* and also the phrase 'pingue libamen', an oily or fatty libation. The language comes from Leviticus and Numbers, concerning various kinds of sacrifices and burnt-offerings, literally like Isaac in Genesis 22. This is likely to be an allusion to Oswald's role as a priest and pastor, as only priests could make the sacrifices of burnt-offerings in the Old Testament.

Also during his time at Fleury Oswald is associated with Solomon. Byrhtferth first gives a description of Oswald's character and conduct (all ideally monastic). This is followed by an association of Oswald with the early church fathers. Finally, Oswald is said to be 'Salomis nectareo et ambrosio est odore perfusus, dicens cum Psalmista, In me sunt, Deus, vota tua, quae reddam,

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<sup>62</sup> *VSO*, p. 414; 'United with the Lord's camp, and, just as the norms and decrees of monastic law propose, well tested in the novices' quarters, the aforesaid servant of the Saviour was freed, just like Isaac, from the sacrifice of his own death, daily thinking that he was offering his spirit to the Father, which is a burnt-offering to our God'.

laudationes tibi. Et illud, holocausta medullata offeram tibi'<sup>63</sup>. That this is a biblical allusion is without doubt, but it is a little odd, since neither of the words 'nectareus' and 'ambrosius' is used in the Bible and the Psalm quotations are not obvious indicators to an explanation. It is possible that the reference to Solomon is not a direct reference to the books thought to be by Solomon, but to the commentary on them in the biblical book of Ecclesiasticus (now called Sirach) 35. 8, 39. 19 and especially 45. 20 ('He chose him out of all men living, to offer sacrifice to God, incense, and a good savour, for a memorial to make reconciliation for his people'), all of which connect scent, sacrifice, praise, works and election.<sup>64</sup>

If there is no biblical reference for the specific details of Oswald's temptation by the devil itself, then the description of Oswald's triumph definitely has biblical overtones, although no direct reference is made to a biblical figure or event. The description reads:

Venit ad eum in balatione ovium, in latratione canum, in grunnitione porcorum, in ruditione asinorum, in fremitu leonum, in strepitu populorum, quae in omnia signo salutiferi crucis extinxit; quique super dorsum gigantis potenter ascendit, cujus gladius arripuit et caput forti manu percussit, habens postmodum bellum cum Philistaeis.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> *VSO*, p. 416; 'he was imbued with Solomon's nectared and ambrosial scent. Saying with the Psalm, In me, O God, are thy vows, which I will return to thee as praises And that, I will offer up to thee holocausts full of marrow'. See Psalms 55. 12 and 65. 15.

<sup>64</sup> See Janet L. Nelson, 'The Second English *Ordo*' and 'National Synods, Kingship as Office, and Royal Anointing: an Early Medieval Syndrome', in *eadem*, *Politics and Ritual in Early Medieval Europe* (London: Hambledon, 1986), pp. 361-74 and 239-57, for discussions of the imagery used in English coronation *ordines*, which is similar to that contained in the *Vita S. Oswaldi*.

<sup>65</sup> *VSO*, p. 417; 'He (i.e. the devil) came to him in the bleating of sheep, in the barking of dogs, in the grunting of pigs, in the braying of asses, in the roaring of lions, in the shouting of people, all

The phrase which seems to contain the most obvious allusion is ‘*quique super dorsum gigantis potenter ascendit, cuius gladius arripuit et caput forti manu percussit, habens postmodum bellum cum Philistaeis*’. The allusion is to the David and Goliath story, where David, after knocking down the giant Goliath,<sup>66</sup> and having no sword of his own, takes Goliath’s own sword and decapitates him: ‘*cumque gladium non haberet in manu David cucurrit et stetit super Philistheum et tulit gladium ejus et eduxit de vagina sua et interfecit eum praeciditque caput ejus vidente*’<sup>67</sup>. Although the language is different, the ideas are the same.

There is one other association made between Oswald and the Old Testament; that with the ‘Mountains of Israel’. After a description of the translation of St Benedict from Monte Cassino to Fleury, Byrhtferth starts a new paragraph with the following passage:

*Floruit cum caeteris floribus enormiter Oswaldus impiger monachus, qui magnopere satagebat hoc quod summus vates proclamat, dicens, Montes Israel, ramos vestros expandite et florete, et fructus facite. Tunc mons Israel, ut meae exiguae sollertiae videtur, ramos extendit, cum devotus monachus bonis actibus intentus fuerit, desidiam otiositatis velut mortiferi veneni poculum fugiendo. Tunc mons Israel floret et fructus facit, cum parsimoniam sanctae abstinentiae*

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of which he (Oswald) destroyed with the sign of the healing cross; and he strongly climbed upon the back of the giant, whose sword he snatched away, and severed its head with powerful hand, afterwards having war with Philistines’.

<sup>66</sup> Although Goliath is not actually described as a ‘giant’, his height is mentioned in 1 Kings 17. 4 as ‘sex cubitorum et palmo’; ‘six cubits and a span’, (which was probably between 6 and 9 feet tall), whatever his actual height, Goliath was understood and viewed as ‘a giant’.

<sup>67</sup> 1 Kings 17. 50-51: ‘And as David had no sword in his hand. He ran, and stood over the Philistine, and took his sword, and drew it out of the sheath, and slew him, and cut off his head’.

servat, caterorumque exhibitione bonorum operum se exornet, sicut is gessit quem pro modulo probamus.<sup>68</sup>

It seems clear that an association is being made between Oswald and the *mons Israel*, but its purpose is unclear. The biblical context does not help either, unless the *mons Israel* was meant to be read as an allegory for the revival of Benedictine monasticism in general with Oswald (along with Dunstan and Æthelwold) as the instruments of the divine prophecy making the land spiritually fertile again

The language here is interesting as it echoes that used in the previous passage to describe Fleury: ‘Rite Floriacus dictus est ille sacer locus, quia in eo, ut libet loqui, florent roseo colore et niveo splendore, sed etiam patriae caelestis gloriae’<sup>69</sup>. The use of flowers as a descriptive term is significant, not only is it a pun on the name Fleury, it is the symbolism of flowers and flourishing and is repeated in the passage that immediately follows it, which relates to Oswald; ‘Floruit cum caeteris floribus enormiter Oswaldus impiger monachus’, thus connecting Oswald, not only with the Old Testament idea of the *mons Israel*, but also reinforcing his association with St Benedict and Fleury.

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<sup>68</sup> *VSO*, p. 422; ‘Oswald the energetic monk flourished greatly with other flowers, and he was busying himself greatly with that which the greatest prophet proclaims, saying, Mountains of Israel, spread out your branches and flourish, and make fruit. Now the mountain of Israel, as is seen through my small skill, extended <its> branches when the devoted monk, through good deeds, was eager <to avoid> the indolence of leisure, just as a cup of deadly poison was to be avoided. Then mount Israel will flourish and make fruit, when it preserves the frugality of holy abstinence, and through the maintenance of other good works he embellished himself, just as we approve that which he carried out on behalf of the small measure (meaning the poor?)’. See Ezekiel 36. 8.

<sup>69</sup> *VSO*, p. 422; ‘Duly Fleury has been called that sacred place, because there, as it is pleasing to say, the flowers of Paradise flourish with the rose colour and the snowy splendour of gems; and not only flowers of this beautiful place, but also glories of the heavenly land’.

When compared to the number of direct associations with Old Testament figures or situations, the number of comparable associations with the New Testament is surprisingly few. One example is found in the second chapter, after a description of Oswald's monastic life and austerities at Fleury and following an account of how Oswald was 'robust in body, with vigorous powers' ('robustus corpore, fortibus viribus')<sup>70</sup> and how he had spurned the secular world from an early age ('a juventute promptus in Dei servitute, vitia carnalis petulantiae velut quisquiliarum peripsema aporians')<sup>71</sup>, Oswald is shown to be 'sedens ad pedes sanctae disciplinae Dei, cum Maria desiderans optimam partem eligere'<sup>72</sup>. This whole passage is dependent on the Mary / Martha story found in Luke 10. 42, and it promotes the idealised contemplative figure of Mary favoured by the monks, as opposed to the more active figure of Martha.<sup>73</sup>

Another New Testament association is made, this time with the Apostles. Byrhtferth describes how, after Oswald was made bishop, he toured the villages of his diocese: 'Circuibat more summi Salvatoris Apostolorumque Ipsius'<sup>74</sup>. After this a reference is made to Paul: 'Erat enim, ut egregius ait agonista Paulus, irreprehensibilis, et Deo et omni populo amabilis'<sup>75</sup>. The reference here would appear to be to I Timothy 3. 1-5 where the character of the bishop is described:

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<sup>70</sup> *VSO*, p. 416.

<sup>71</sup> *VSO*, p. 416; 'inclined from youth toward God's service, shedding the faults of carnal wantonness like the waste of rubbish,'

<sup>72</sup> *VSO*, p. 416; 'sitting at the feet of the holy teachings of God, with Mary desiring to choose the best part'.

<sup>73</sup> See Constable, *Three Studies in Medieval Religious and Social Thought* and also Clayton, 'Hermits and the Contemplative Life in Anglo-Saxon England'.

<sup>74</sup> *VSO*, p. 421; 'he used to go around in the manner of the highest Saviour Himself and of the Apostles'.

<sup>75</sup> *VSO*, p. 421; 'For he was as the distinguished champion Paul says, irreproachable, and worthy to be loved by God and by all people'.



fidelis sermo si quis episcopatum desiderat bonum opus desiderat oportet ergo episcopum inreprehensibilem esse unius uxoris virum sobrium prudentem ornatum hospitem doctorem non vinolentum non percussorem sed modestum non litigiosum non cupidum suae domui bene praepositum filios habentem subditos cum omni castitate si quis autem domui suae praeesse nescit quomodo ecclesiae Dei diligentiam habebit.<sup>76</sup>

The association with Paul is used to characterise Oswald as the ideal bishop and priest, as do the majority of the biblical associations, from both Old and New Testament. The associations with Tobit and Tobias are, perhaps, the exceptions. As noted earlier, the association with Tobit emphasises Oswald's perception and piety, whilst that with Tobias could indicate Oswald's role as a 'reformer', as Tobias is an active figure, defeating devils and healing his father's blindness.

### **Secular Associations**

Secular associations established within the *Vita Sancti Oswaldi* are comparatively few. Only two figures are connected with Oswald in any significant way: King Edgar and Ealdorman Æthelwine. At first glance the inclusion of these two figures in the *vita* would seem obvious, indeed necessary; Edgar was the great patron and promoter of the 'reform movement' and Æthelwine was the co-founder and patron of Ramsey. However, on closer examination, these associations, and particularly that with Edgar, appear less straightforward. At this point it is worth noting that there is one other significant

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<sup>76</sup> I Timothy 3. 1-5; 'A faithful saying: if a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. It behoveth therefore a bishop to be blameless, the husband of one wife, sober, prudent, of good behaviour, chaste, given to hospitality, a teacher, Not given to wine, no striker, but modest, not quarrelsome, not covetous, but One that ruleth well his own house. having his children in subjection with all chastity. But if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?'

royal figure described in the *vita*: Edgar's son Edward, known as 'the Martyr', whose treatment in the text will be discussed in detail in the following section.

Though the figure of Edgar appears several times in the *vita*, there are only a few occasions when he appears in direct association with Oswald: when Oswald asks Edgar for some land on which to build a monastery, when Edgar elevates Oswald to the archbishopric of York, and during Edgar's coronation, although here all that is mentioned is Oswald's presence alongside Dunstan. Whereas in the *Vita S. Æthelwoldi* the crown, and in particular Edgar, play an important part in the construction of Æthelwold's identity, in the *Vita S. Oswaldi* the role of the crown has far less impact on the construction of Oswald's identity. One question to keep in mind is whether this could have been a reflection in the hagiography of the relative political importance of Winchester and Worcester.

The figure of Edgar first occurs in the *vita* when Oswald is made bishop of Worcester; here, however, there is no direct association made between the future bishop and the king; Oswald's appointment is made through the agency of Dunstan: 'Impetravit a praepotentissimo Eadgaro rege sibi sedem Apostolici culminis dari quod erat in Wigornensi civitate vacua, quod leni a rege petitione acquisivit'<sup>77</sup>. This sentence comes at the end of a passage describing Dunstan's influence on Oswald, so when put into context it can be seen that a stronger association is being made with Dunstan, and a weaker one with Edgar.

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<sup>77</sup> *VSO*, p. 420; 'He (Dunstan) requested from the most powerful king Edgar that the seat of Apostolic height (bishopric), which was empty in the city of Worcester be given to him (Oswald), which he acquired through the petition from the kind king.'

Oswald's first direct contact with Edgar in the text comes when he asks the king for some land on which to found a monastery. After a description of Oswald's activities and achievements as bishop, one of which was to found a small monastic community at Westbury,<sup>78</sup> the author relates how Oswald became increasingly concerned about what would happen to the community, and presumably monasticism in general, after his death.<sup>79</sup> Oswald consults his friends who advise him to take his concerns to the king, which he does. What follows is the description of a large meeting, at which all the bishops and important magnates are present; Edgar's character and military achievements are described, alongside his piety and his support for Benedictine monasticism, and as a result of this meeting Edgar declares that forty monasteries should be founded: 'Delectatus vero rex in eorum sacris officiis, plusquam quadraginta jussit monasteria constitui cum monachis, diligens per omnia Christum Dominum, Ejusque dignissimum militem, Sanctum Benedictum, cujus famam per pii Oswaldi episcopi narrationem agnovit',<sup>80</sup>.

The passage starts with a list of those who attended the meeting:

Venit ipse, veneruntque omnes primates egregii, et duces eximii, praepotentes milites ex omnibus castellis, et oppidis, atque civitatibus et territoriis, populusque infinitus ad regem. Venit et princeps episcoporum Dunstanus cum suis, necnon Æthelwoldus sanctus praesul, omnisque dignitas totius Albion; quos omnes suscepit

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<sup>78</sup> *VSO*, p. 422-24.

<sup>79</sup> *VSO*, p. 424-25.

<sup>80</sup> *VSO*, p. 426; 'The king truly delighted in their holy offices, ordered more than forty monasteries to be set up with monks, loving Lord Christ through all things, and His most worthy soldier, Saint Benedict, whose fame he knew through the story of the pious bishop Oswald'.

regaliter, quibus gaudium concessit laetitiae, et laetitiam miscuit  
gaudio in illo Paschali.<sup>81</sup>

This meeting, at which Oswald expressed his fears for his monastic community, may have been intended to be understood by the text's audience as the Council of Winchester, where the monastic customary known as the *Regularis Concordia* was drawn up by Æthelwold.<sup>82</sup> The Council is generally held to have taken place in c. 973, but both the date and indeed the existence of the Council are problematic. The Council of Winchester, the great synod convened by King Edgar and attended by all the bishops, abbots and abbesses, is regarded as the high point of 'the Reform'. It was where the drive to monastic unity was started, and was the impetus for the creation of the *Regularis Concordia*. This is the view that has been held by scholars from the twelfth century onwards, particularly by Symons in all his studies of the text,<sup>83</sup> and which is still propagated by modern scholarship. The main evidence for the existence of such a council, aside from the oblique reference to an Easter council in the *Vita S. Oswaldi* noted above, comes from the proem to the *Regularis Concordia* itself. There, the text says that Edgar was concerned that though the Rule of Benedict had been established in many monasteries, there was a variety in monastic usage and in order to establish uniformity: 'Tali igitur ac tanto studio praefatus rex

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<sup>81</sup> *VSO*, p. 425; 'He came himself, and all the distinguished bishops, and the excellent leaders, the powerful soldiers from all the fortresses and from the walled towns, and from the cities (bishoprics?) and from the territories and unlimited people came to the king. And Dunstan, foremost of bishops, came with his people, and also the holy bishop Æthelwold, and every person of rank of all Albion; he (Edgar) received them all royally, to whom he conceded the joy of happiness, and he mixed happiness with joy on that Easter'.

<sup>82</sup> C. R. Hart, following Eric John, dates this meeting to 964 in his article 'The Foundation of Ramsey Abbey', *Revue Bénédictine* 104 (1994), 295-327 (p. 300). See also Eric John, 'The Beginning of the Benedictine Reform in England', *Orbis Britanniae*, pp. 249-64.

<sup>83</sup> Thomas Symons, 'The *Regularis Concordia* and the Council of Winchester', *The Downside Review*, 80 (1962), 140-56 and *idem*, 'Regularis Concordia: History and Derivation', in *Tenth-Century Studies*, pp. 37-59 and 214-17 and see also Symons' introduction to his edition the text, pp. ix-lix.

magnopere delectatus, arcana quaeque diligenti cura examinans, synodale concilium Wintoniae fieri decreuit'<sup>84</sup>. In his introduction *LME*, and adaptation of the *Regularis Concordia*, Ælfric states: 'Ideoque haec pauca de libro consuetudinem quem sanctus Aðelwoldus Wintoniensis episcopus cum coepiscopis et abbatibus tempore Eadgari felicissimi regis Anglorum undique collegit ac monachis instituit obseruandum'<sup>85</sup>

These allusions have been taken as tangible confirmation of the existence of the Council of Winchester. There is, however, no record, of such an event in any of the manuscripts of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, including those associated directly with Winchester. Similarly, neither Wulfstan nor Ælfric make any reference to either the Council or the *Concordia* in their *vitae* of Æthelwold. This lack of evidence from outside the document apparently produced at the Council itself has not been seen as an obstacle to the existence of such an event. Indeed, one of the most recent commentators on the *Regularis Concordia*, Lucia Kornexl, notes: 'contemporary Anglo-Saxon historiography exhibits a degree of randomness that need not make us overly suspicious about the silence of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle(s)* especially of manuscript A (the 'Parker Chronicle'), with its pronounced Winchester connections'<sup>86</sup>. This is an argument from silence, and whilst to a certain degree such arguments are a necessity in the study of this period, this one appears particularly challenging. The *Concordia* is a

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<sup>84</sup> Symons, *Regularis Concordia*, p. 2. 'Exceedingly delighted with such great zeal, the aforesaid king, after deep and careful study of the matter, commanded a Synodal Council to be held at Winchester'.

<sup>85</sup> Jones, *Ælfric's Letter to the Monks of Eynsham*, p. 110; 'I am therefore setting forth in writing these few things from the customary that St Æthelwold, bishop of Winchester, together with his fellow bishops and abbots in the time of the most blessed Edgar, king of the English, compiled from various sources and established for monks to observe' (trans., Jones, p. 111).

<sup>86</sup> Kornexl, 'The *Regularis Concordia* and Its Old English Gloss', p. 97.

document which is closely associated with Æthelwold and Winchester and clearly reflects Æthelwold's views, particularly with regard to the nature of the relationship between the king and the monasteries, and as such is a highly politicised document. If Byrhtferth is attempting to represent this Council in his *Vita S. Oswaldi*, then his taking responsibility for its convention away from Edgar and passing it to Oswald is yet another example of Byrhtferth diminishing monastic reliance on royal patronage and in so doing reinforcing the classification of Ramsey as something different and distinct from Winchester.

The issues surrounding the Council of Winchester and the composition of the *Regularis Concordia* are worthy of note, but of no direct concern here. What is significant for the present discussion is that, as has been stated above, this meeting is the first direct contact that is mentioned between Oswald and Edgar; indeed it is only one of two (or possibly three) instances within the *vita* when Oswald is directly associated with the king. If the meeting was intended to represent the Council of Winchester, then this may have been an attempt by Byrhtferth to associate Oswald with a meeting that had important implications for the progress of the 'reform' and English Benedictine monasticism in general. Much is made by scholars from the twelfth century onwards of the presence and participation of both Dunstan and Æthelwold at the council, but little would appear to be known of Oswald's involvement.

It is also interesting that this council, which helped determine the development of reformed monasticism in England, seems to be presented as the result of Oswald's concern for his own monastic community. Given the close

links which had been well established between Winchester, Æthelwold and Edgar, as well as those between Dunstan and Edgar, this passage, with its seeming implication that this royal council addressing the state of monasticism in the country stemmed from Oswald's own concerns, could have been an attempt to redress the balance in Oswald's favour. Was it, then, an attempt to draw Oswald, and by association Worcester, and perhaps Ramsey, into the perceived ecclesiastical sphere of influence by connecting them with Winchester. At the very least, whether the chronology is at fault or not, it establishes Oswald's connection to the revival of Benedictine monasticism which occurred at this time.

One result of the meeting is that Oswald asks Edgar for some land on which to found another monastic community. Edgar offers Oswald three sites: St Albans, Ely and Benfleet, all of which Oswald inspects and then rejects, a detail which is in itself interesting. This again dissociates Oswald, and thereby Ramsey, from royal influence. As noted above, Ely is refounded by Æthelwold who purchased it and the land from Edgar. According to the *Vita S. Oswaldi*, Oswald is then approached by Ealdorman Æthelwine, who offers him land at Ramsey, which Oswald accepts, and he founds the monastic community there. The problem with chronology reappears here as the foundation of Ramsey is generally dated to *c.* 966,<sup>87</sup> eight years before the (approximate) date of the council of Winchester. The question is further complicated when the refoundation of Ely is taken into consideration, as this was accomplished by

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<sup>87</sup> The date for the foundation of Ramsey has been much disputed. J. Armitage Robinson uses the date 968 in his *St Oswald and the Church of Worcester* (p. 36). C. R. Hart, however, argues for an earlier date in his article 'The Foundation of Ramsey Abbey' at p. 313, where he says: '964 is the likely date; possibly however it was a year or two later'.

Æthelwold some time during the period 964x971, in all probability before the council, so Ely could not have been offered to Oswald after it.<sup>88</sup>

The next time that Oswald is directly associated with Edgar is when he was elevated to the archbishopric of York. This event took place in *c.* 971, although no date is given in the *vita*. Byrhtferth says: ‘Ipse autem dilexit miro affectu patrem Oswaldum, cujus in capite duas coronas imposuit, hoc est contulit ipsi prius episcopatum Merciorum gentis, et postmodum Northanymbrorum; cui praecepit ut ad limina sanctorum properaret Apostolorum, cujus imperiis liberis patravit’<sup>89</sup>. There then follows a description of Oswald’s visit to Rome to receive his *pallium* and of the reception he received from the king on his return to England: ‘Susceptus est digniter a rege, sicut semper, cui benedictionem Apostolicae sedis et suam advexit, quem secum sedere praecepit, quem pro spiritali patre habebat, sciens ipsum secundum Dominum praelatum esse magis quam subditum’<sup>90</sup>.

There are several points of interest here, the first of which is the use of the phrase ‘mro affectu’ used to illustrate the reasons for Oswald’s elevation to the archiepiscopacy. From these three occasions on which the figures of Oswald and Edgar appear together, and the general impression given is that any association

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<sup>88</sup> For a description of the refoundation of Ely see Wulfstan of Winchester, *Vita S. Æthelwoldi* c. 23. For a detailed chronology of Æthelwold’s life and career see Lapidge and Winterbottom, *Wulfstan of Winchester*, pp. xl-xlii.

<sup>89</sup> *VSO*, p. 435; ‘Moreover with wonderful affection he loved the father Oswald, on whose head he placed two crowns, that is, first he conferred upon him the bishopric of the Mercian race and afterwards of the Northumbrians; and he ordered him to go to the threshold of the holy Apostles, whose unrestrained commands he accomplished’.

<sup>90</sup> *VSO*, p. 436; ‘He was worthily received by the king, as always, to whom he (Oswald) conveyed the blessings of <both> the Apostolic seat and his own, whom he (Edgar) ordered to sit with himself, whom he was considering as a spiritual father, knowing that (according to the Lord) he was elevated rather than inferior’.



between the two was not as close as between Edgar and Æthelwold or Dunstan. On these three occasions the relationship between the (arch)bishop and king is expressed in a context that renders the term 'affection' somewhat confusing, as there is no encounter between the two that would naturally lead the reader to understand the origin of this 'affection'. Furthermore, there is the reality of the appointment to take into consideration: it has been argued that Oswald's elevation to the archbishopric of York was, in all probability, a political appointment, or at the very least politically motivated. Oswald was of Danish descent, a relative of the previous archbishop, Oskytel, who was also of Danish origin, and West Saxon control over the Northumbrian kingdom had only recently been consolidated.<sup>91</sup> Even if the appointment was not a political one, it is unlikely that it would have been made without the knowledge and approval of Dunstan; indeed it is more likely that Dunstan recommended Oswald to Edgar. As has been seen above, it was through Dunstan's influence that Oswald received the bishopric of Worcester. It is not, therefore, unreasonable to suppose that the elevation to York came about through his intervention, as Dunstan was, it would appear, on more intimate terms with Edgar than was Oswald.

If this is the case, then what reason could Byrhtferth have had for representing the appointment in such a way? He was surely aware of the reality, political or otherwise, behind the elevation. Its presentation in the *vita* could be read as a hagiographical *topos*; the *vitae* of the other leading ecclesiastical figures

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<sup>91</sup> See *ASC MS D* for the years 947, p. 44 (EHD, p. 222) and 954, p. 45 (EHD, p. 224) for a description of Eadred's suppression of a Northumbrian rebellion. See also Keynes, 'The Additions in Old English', p. 84 which states that in 934 Athelstan granted an estate at Amounderness to Wulfstan, Archbishop of York. The intention was that the archbishop would act as the king's representative in the region and help to control an area of recent Scandinavian settlement.

of the period, Dunstan and Æthelwold, express the relationship between their subjects and Edgar in terms of respect and affection. However, as has already been noted, the relationship between Edgar and Oswald is rarely represented in such terms. Indeed, it appears at times that Byrhtferth is at pains if not to disassociate Oswald completely from the king, then at least not to define Oswald's character through an emphasis on a close relationship with Edgar. This is in contrast with the strategy adopted in the *Vita Æthelwoldi*.

One question which this point raises is whether this representation of the relationship between Oswald and Edgar should be read as an attempt to redefine royal and Episcopal relations. Byrhtferth refers on at least one occasion to a *vita* of Æthelwold,<sup>92</sup> and would appear to be aware of the way that Dunstan and Æthelwold are defined through their relationship with Edgar. He might, therefore, deliberately be doing something different with Oswald. It would appear that Edgar is benefiting from an association with Oswald rather than vice versa, a possibility strengthened by the phrase at the end of the passage where, after welcoming Oswald home from Rome 'worthily as always' ('susceptus est digniter a rege, sicut semper'),<sup>93</sup> Edgar instructs Oswald to sit next to him: 'quem pro spiritali patre habebat, sciens ipsum secundum Dominum praelatum esse magis quam subditum'<sup>94</sup>. The knowledge that Oswald was a 'spiritalis pater' could perhaps account for Edgar's 'mirus affectus', but again perhaps the hagiography is reflecting the political reality. Byrhtferth has already acknowledged the close relationship between Edgar and Æthelwold, and that

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<sup>92</sup> *VSO*, p. 427. This is presumed to be the *Vita S. Æthelwoldi* by Wulfstan of Winchester.

<sup>93</sup> *VSO*, p. 436.

<sup>94</sup> *VSO*, p. 436; 'who he was considering as a spiritual father, knowing him to be the second Lord bishop subordinate to the wise men'.

between the king and Dunstan, and so by making the distinction between Oswald and Dunstan here the implication is that Byrhtferth is raising Oswald above Æthelwold, and even Dunstan. This links back to the passage noted earlier where, and again this is implied, Byrhtferth is raising Ramsey above the other Fenland monasteries. This is a similar textual and political strategy which does not precisely affect the relative position of Oswald, but rather the relative position of Ramsey. To a politically acute ecclesiastical audience, these implications might have been clear.

The other main secular figure associated with Oswald in the *vita* is Æthelwine, Ealdorman of East Anglia and co-founder (with Oswald) of Ramsey abbey. At first glance, this would appear to be a straightforward, and perhaps obvious, association to make: Æthelwine provided the land for Ramsey's foundation and subsequently was a generous patron of the abbey, and he was a loyal defender of monks during the so-called 'anti-monastic reaction' after the death of Edgar in 975.<sup>95</sup> On closer inspection, however, the association appears once again more complex; indeed it could be argued that there are two associations being made: between Æthelwine and Oswald and between Æthelwine and Ramsey, with the latter being the stronger association.

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<sup>95</sup> See Hart, 'The Foundation of Ramsey Abbey', pp. 306-11 for a discussion of the foundation endowment of the abbey. See also Janet M. Pope, 'Monks and Nobles in the Anglo-Saxon Monastic Reform', *Anglo-Norman Studies*, 17 (1995), 165-80. That Ramsey was generously endowed can be seen from a passage in the text where the gifts of Oswald are listed: 'Libros Sancti Evangelii concessit, vestes ad ministrandum Deo obtulit, cuncta necessaria ecclesiae dedit, [...] calices, sciffos (scyphos), manutergia, sexonica, cornua ad vinum fundendum, stragulas, tapetia, lectisternia, cortinas, cucullas fratrum, pellicia sicque ut cum honore Domino parere.' (He gave books of the Holy Gospels, he offered to God vestments to serve, all the necessary <things> he gave to the church, [...] chalices, bowls, towels, cloths (*sexonica*), horns for the pouring of wine, coverings, tapestries, quilts, curtains, the cowls of the brothers, furs; so in this way to serve the Lord with honour).

As with Edgar, there are few occasions where Oswald is directly associated with Æthelwine. The first, and most obvious, is when the two initially meet and the foundation of Ramsey is discussed. This meeting takes place in the text immediately after Edgar's offer of the three sites (St Albans, Ely and Benfleet) had been made, and seemingly refused. After a brief description of the funeral of a celebrated soldier, Byrhtferth says: 'Deinde venit ad eum miles egregius, nomine Æthelwinus, petens, ut mos Christiani est, ejus benedictionis gratiam'<sup>96</sup>. That Æthelwine is portrayed as seeking out Oswald is surely significant. Yet again it distinguishes Oswald and Ramsey from the Fenland monasteries connected with Winchester. Æthelwine seeks Oswald out and offers him land to found a monastery, whereas Æthelwold buys land from unspecified nobles and the king. It may be that it was intended to act as an indication of Oswald's standing. After a brief diversion of the narrative, Oswald explains to Æthelwine that he has a community of monks in his own diocese ('parochia') for whom he is fearful, that subsequently he is looking for a place where he can establish them safely, and that he is willing to reward the person who provides him with such a place with gold or silver: 'Si excellentia tuae venerationis aliquem haberet locum quo tales possem constituere, vellem pro hoc tibi aurum vel argentum pro mercede libenti animo dare'<sup>97</sup>. In this instance, Æthelwine refuses the money, and offers Oswald the land at Ramsey on which there is, apparently, an existing community of three men wishing to follow a monastic life, but in need of someone to show them the right path ('viam veritatis')<sup>98</sup>. Æthelwine's refusal of

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<sup>96</sup> *VSO*, p. 428; 'Then a distinguished thegn, with the name Æthelwine, came to him, entreating, as is the custom of the Christian, the grace of his blessing'.

<sup>97</sup> *VSO*, p. 429; 'If the excellence of your veneration should have a place in which I might be able to locate them (*tales*). I would with willing soul on account of this to give to you gold or silver freely for a reward'.

<sup>98</sup> *VSO*, p. 429-430. See also Hart, 'The Foundation of Ramsey Abbey', p. 301-02.

the money would appear more significant than Oswald's offer of it: if Oswald had paid for the land, Ramsey would have been entirely his foundation.

Æthelwine's gift of the land, 'with willing soul', to Oswald makes him the chief benefactor of the abbey and establishes him as co-founder with Oswald.

After this initial encounter the figures of Oswald and Æthelwine do appear together in the text, but always in the context of Ramsey: as in their labours at the abbey, the completion of the abbey and the consecration of the church, annual visits to the abbey, and at a banquet and conference held at Ramsey.<sup>99</sup> In all these examples, the impression given is that of a stronger association between Æthelwine and Ramsey than Æthelwine and Oswald. This is reinforced by the final chapter of the *vita* where the figure of Æthelwine appears if not to take precedence over that of Oswald, then to become equally important. After the lengthy description of a conference and banquet where the two figures appear together, the narrative focuses on Æthelwine and Ramsey. At this point there is no (direct) mention of Oswald.<sup>100</sup>

An association is created in the text between Oswald and Æthelwine after the death of the former, although again Ramsey features prominently in the relationship. Æthelwine is at the abbey when the news of Oswald's death is heard and, after describing the general sorrow of the monks, the text moves to a more specific account of Æthelwine's sorrow, saying that after this he never smiled: 'Nemo postmodum illum conspexit laetum; nemo ridentem labiis, nec

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<sup>99</sup> *VSO*, pp. 438-39, 446 and 465-66.

<sup>100</sup> *VSO*, pp. 465-68.

verbis jocantem, aut nutibus exultantem'<sup>101</sup>, all of which reads like a list of monastic virtues. From here Byrhtferth moves to a description of Æthelwine's preparations for his own death, the event of his death (including the detail that Bishop Ælfheah and Germanus were with him) and his funeral. It is interesting, and somewhat indicative of the nature of the relationship between the two figures of Oswald and Æthelwine within the *vita*, that their respective burials are described in the same sentence: 'Sepultum vero est corpus ejus in Ramesige; beatissimi autem Oswaldi in Wigornensi civitate'<sup>102</sup>. It is evident, therefore, that at this point the text is more concerned with Ramsey than with Oswald. The characterisation of Æthelwine in these final sections of the *vita* appears to be based on monastic principles in a similar way that Winchester and Æthelwold (and indeed also Byrhtferth in the *vita*) use monastic and christological imagery to characterise Edgar. The effect of this is once again to promote Ramsey, or at least place it on a level with Winchester. It also reinforces the preference of secular patronage of monasteries rather than royal, which for Byrhtferth, and Ramsey, is seemingly a significant distinction.

If, as has been suggested above, secular associations play a minor role in the construction of Oswald's identity, whether as monk, bishop, archbishop or saint, then it is necessary to consider the question of why Byrhtferth dedicates a relatively significant proportion of the text to the figures of Edgar and Æthelwine, for substantial parts of the text are dedicated to the characters and deeds of these two figures. It could be argued that their inclusion in the *vita* was

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<sup>101</sup> *VSO*, p. 474; 'Afterwards no one saw him happy; no one <saw him> laughing with <his> lips, nor joking with words, or exulting with nods'.

<sup>102</sup> *VSO*, p. 475: 'Now his body (Æthelwine's) was buried in Ramsey; while <the body> of the most blessed Oswald <was buried> in the city of Worcester'.

a necessity; they are the two secular figures who played the most significant roles in the monastic revival in general and the foundation of Byrhtferth's own abbey in particular. Æthelwine's generosity as co-founder and benefactor is described in the text as being directed towards Saint Benedict in particular, not necessarily Oswald: 'Sic et praepotens dux in sua parte quicquid egregium habuit aut acquisivit, libens dedit Sancto Benedicto, quem post Dominum privilegio dilexit amore'<sup>103</sup>. In the text of the *vita* Æthelwine is characterised as a loyal supporter of the monastic revival, and in this respect he is represented in similar terms to the figure of Edgar; with Æthelwine, however, this characterisation is taken a stage further and a military element is added. During his description of the 'anti-monastic reaction' after Edgar's death, Byrhtferth depicts the struggles between the supporters of the monks and their opponents in terms of a battle and Æthelwine is represented as the leader of the 'pro-monastic' force: 'Sed sancta mens justi viri Æthelwyni nequaquam hoc ferre studuit, sed congregato digno exercitu factus est ipse dux agminum, quem protexit et confortavit princeps Angelorum'.<sup>104</sup> It appears that Æthelwine takes over Edgar's role as defender of monasticism after his death, as in the same passage Byrhtferth describes how all the nobles and their sons came to him, understanding him to be the best judge of the situation.<sup>105</sup> Indeed, the character of Æthelwine, and the reason for his

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<sup>103</sup> *VSO*, pp. 446-47; 'And thus the very powerful leader in his own region acquired whatever he regarded exceptional he freely gave to Saint Benedict, whom after the Lord he valued with particular love'.

<sup>104</sup> *VSO*, p. 445; 'But the holy mind of the righteous man Æthelwine was by no means eager to tolerate this, but assembling a noble army he whom the prince of Angels protected and strengthened, himself became the leader of the forces'.

<sup>105</sup> *VSO*, p. 445; 'omnes milites nobiliores et inclyti filii principum ad eum mente devota venerunt, pro certo scientes quia in eo essent sapientia ad faciendum iudicium' (all the more noble thegns and the illustrious sons of the leading men came to him with devoted heart, knowing for certain that in him was wisdom to do judgement'. It is striking that Byrhtferth uses an Old Testament quote, taken from III Kings 3. 28, to describe Æthelwine's wisdom, almost as if he is wanting to hint at an association with Old Testament kings such as David or Solomon. If his is the case, then it is an interesting point and one which merits further investigation.

prominence within the *vita*, are summed up in a single sentence at the end of the ‘anti-monastic reaction’ portion of the text. Here Byrhtferth says: ‘Defendit pius princeps Orientalium Anglorum omnia loca monasteria cum maximo honore, pro qua re amicus Dei dictus est’<sup>106</sup>. It is Æthelwine’s position as ‘amicus Dei’, and particularly ‘amicus’ of Ramsey, which guarantees him distinction in the *vita* and lines him up with Oswald.

Edgar’s role in the *vita* is perhaps more complex than Æthelwine’s, as it appears to be operating on several levels. There are a number of passages within the text devoted solely to Edgar and aspects of his reign and character: the depiction of his character and his involvement with the monastic revival, a passage detailing his relations with the Emperor Otto II, and a detailed description of his coronation, which includes a short passage dedicated to his queen, Æthelgifu.<sup>107</sup> As has been argued above, the crown and Edgar do not play an important role in the construction of Oswald’s identity and qualifications for sanctity. This is striking when compared to the associations made with both the crown and particularly Edgar in the *vitae* of the other two ‘Reform’ saints, Dunstan and Æthelwold. In these two texts an association with Edgar appears to be an essential component of the creation of the saintly identity of the subject; Dunstan, in particular, is associated with both Eadmund and Edgar, and even the *Vita Oswaldi* acknowledges the relationship between Æthelwold and Edgar.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> *VSO*, p. 446; ‘The pious leader of the East Anglians defended all the places <of >monasteries with the greatest honour. for which reason he has been called the friend of God (*amicus Dei*)’.

<sup>107</sup> *VSO*, pp. 425-28; 435 and 436-38. For an analysis of the coronation passage see Lapidge. ‘Byrhtferth and Oswald’, pp. 70-73.

<sup>108</sup> *VSO*, pp. 426-27.



Given that Byrhtferth seems deliberately to try to distance Oswald from Edgar and royal authority, it is significant that the figure of Edgar features prominently in two chapters of the text. Edgar was, however, considered important to the revival of monasticism in general, if not to Oswald personally. It is also clear that Edgar's reign was seen as a 'golden age' by subsequent generations and Byrhtferth was writing in a period of political uncertainty and renewed Danish attacks. The inclusion of passages depicting Edgar as a good king, who kept peace in the kingdom and who was a friend to monks may have been intended to act as a reminder to Byrhtferth's audience, which no doubt included educated nobles and perhaps even King Æthelred himself, of what a good king should be. It is evident from the text itself that Byrhtferth at the very least knew of the *vitae* of Dunstan and Æthelwold, and it is possible that he had a copy of B's *Vita Dunstani* in front of him when he composed the passages concerning Dunstan to the *Vita Oswaldi*.<sup>109</sup> It could be that Byrhtferth was following tradition; understanding that his audience would already know how important Edgar was for the monastic revival. In his characterisation of Edgar, Byrhtferth is acknowledging the development of ruler ideology and the development of christological kingship, perhaps more so than either the authors of both the *Vita Æthelwoldi* or the *Vita Dunstani*. At the same time, however, he is distancing his hero, Oswald, from the crown and in so doing is echoing the norm in France, where secular figures, including the crown, usually had relatively little influence on ecclesiastical institutions. Thus it could be argued that whilst the Wulfstan *vitae* and B are following a particularly English tradition, Byrhtferth's text owes more to Abbo, Fleury and Continental traditions.

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<sup>109</sup> *VSO*, pp. 457-61.

If this was the case, then it is necessary to wonder what an English audience would have made of Byrhtferth's text. If, as has been suggested, the text was commissioned by Bishop Wulfstan and therefore was primarily intended for a Worcester audience, what they might have made of it is open to speculation. The key point here, and one which is not fully understood by scholars at this time, is the relationship between Worcester and Ramsey, which is obviously meaningful and complicated.

### **Ecclesiastical Associations**

The final significant group of associations to be found within the *Vita Oswaldi* is those with ecclesiastical figures and institutions. Oswald is associated with a variety of ecclesiastical figures and institutions; both contemporaries such as Dunstan, Æthelwold, Oda and Oskytel, and a small group of older saints: Benedict, the Virgin Mary, Mary of Bethany, and interestingly Wilfrid and Cuthbert. As with the other associations, however, those which would appear obvious and straightforward are on closer examination more complex, and it is again not immediately clear how, or indeed why, Byrhtferth is using them.

The ecclesiastical association most apparent within the text is that between Oswald and Dunstan. The two are first connected when Oswald is introduced to Dunstan by Oskytel, archbishop of York. It is implied that Dunstan was not yet archbishop himself as he is described as 'Dunstano venerando episcopo'; that he had already acquired a reputation for holiness is made clear as the sentence continues: 'qui illis diebus ob sanctitatis praeconio mirabiliter resplenduit piis meritis, in conspectu Justi Arbitris, Qui eum mire mirificavit in arvis, quem

praescrivit Secum regnaturum in astris'<sup>110</sup>. The implication in the narrative which follows is that Oswald was guided, and perhaps instructed, by Dunstan at this early stage of his career. The text says:

Recurrentibus non plurimis ex diebus solaris anni mensibus,  
 reverendus Christi famulus Dunstanus suos conspicuos iniecit  
 obtutus in Oswaldi vultibus, non ut illa petulans domina in Josph,   
 quo fortior pugnatore urbium dicitur, sed, ut libet humilibus dicere  
 verbis, sicut Christus negantem discipulum benigno respectu intuitus  
 est, sic supremus episcopus humilem Oswaldum.<sup>111</sup>

This is immediately followed by the information that Dunstan asked Edgar to promote Oswald to the bishopric of Worcester (which must mean that by this time Dunstan is archbishop of Canterbury). Byrhtferth says: 'Impetravit a praepotentissimo Eadgaro rege sibi sedem Apostolici culminis dari quod erat in Wigornensi civitate vacua, quod leni a rege petitione acquisivit'<sup>112</sup>.

To what extent it could be argued that Dunstan instructed, or even influenced Oswald is an interesting question, and one to which the *vita* provides no answer. Indeed, after this early encounter Oswald's relationship with Dunstan becomes, like his association with Edgar, no longer the subject of direct description. The two figures appear together in places throughout the text, but they are not directly

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<sup>110</sup> *VSO*, p. 420; 'to the revered bishop Dunstan, who in those days through the proclamation of his holiness radiated marvellously with pious merits, in the sight of the Just Arbiter who exalted him wonderfully in the regions, who he knew beforehand would rule with him in the heavens'.

<sup>111</sup> *VSO*, p. 420; 'Not many days of the solar year having passed, Dunstan the revered servant of Christ turned his remarkable glances on the expression of Oswald, not as that impudent lady on Joseph, <who is> stronger than an attacker of cities, it is said, but, as it is pleasing to speak of with humble words, just as Christ gazed with benign respect on the denying disciple, so the highest bishop looked on Oswald'.

<sup>112</sup> *VSO*, p. 420; 'He (Dunstan) requested from the most powerful king Edgar <that> the seat of Apostolic height (i.e. bishopric) which was empty in the city of Worcester to be given to him (Oswald), which he acquired through the petition from the kind king'.

associated again; Dunstan is said to have attended the Easter council where the future of monasticism is discussed, but, as has been argued above, the impetus for this meeting appears to be coming from Oswald; all the *vita* says of Dunstan's involvement is: 'Venit et princeps episcoporum Dunstanus cum suis',<sup>113</sup>. Another instance where Dunstan and Oswald are linked in the text is at Edgar's coronation; both are mentioned (separately) in the narrative describing the coronation ceremony, but at the banquet afterwards: 'Episcopi praestantissimi Dunstanus venerandus atque Oswaldus reverendus, in solio sublimato cum rege elevati sunt',<sup>114</sup>.

Apart from these two occasions, the only other direct connection Byrhtferth makes between Oswald and Dunstan is when he describes the actions of all three monastic 'reformers'. After commenting on Edgar's participation in the monastic revival, Byrhtferth states:

Praecepit facundissimo pastori ecclesiae Christi quae est in Cantia civitate, ut ipse Athelwoldus Wintoniae civitatis decus, sed et Oswaldus Wigornensis episcopus scirent ut omnia monasterii loca essent cum monachis constituta, pariterque cum monialibus, quod mox mira et constanti velocitate patravere, quia ardentibus erant in operibus suis et sancti in actibus suis.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> *VSO*, p. 425; 'And Dunstan, foremost of bishops, came with his own people'.

<sup>114</sup> *VSO*, p. 438; 'The most excellent bishops, the venerable Dunstan and the revered Oswald, had been lifted up on the elevated throne, with the king'.

<sup>115</sup> *VSO*, p. 434; 'He said to the most eloquent shepherd of the church of Christ which is in the city of Canterbury, that Æthelwold himself glory of the city of Winchester, and also Oswald bishop of Worcester knew that all the places of the monastery had been planted with monks, and equally nuns, which they had soon accomplished with wonderful and constant speed, because they had been blazing in their works and holy in their acts'.

Here Oswald is associated with both Dunstan and Æthelwold, and to a degree Edgar, and as such with the general spirit of the monastic revival. It is unclear here whether Byrhtferth is implying that there was an organised pattern of ‘reform’; if he is, this raises interesting questions as to why he does so, in the light of the differing evidence for ‘reform’ noted earlier.<sup>116</sup> It may be that Byrhtferth, and indeed his audience, were aware of such disparity and that this was an attempt to create an illusion of unity. The reason for this being desirable might be the context in which the text was written; during a time of renewed invasions and political instability, and after a period of so-called ‘anti-monastic reaction’, the consequences of which Byrhtferth may have witnessed first-hand when Germanus and his community were forced to retreat to Ramsey after being expelled from Winchcombe. It could be that Byrhtferth is aware of differences in contemporary monastic practice and is, in viewing the previous generation of ‘reform’ and ‘reformers’ with a sense of nostalgia for a ‘golden age’, trying to inspire in his audience monastic unity and conformity and identification with that previous apparently unified strand of ‘reform’.

Although Æthelwold features in the *Vita Oswaldi*, there appears to be no direct association made between him and Oswald. As is the case with Dunstan, he is described as being present at the Easter council, but of him all that is said is: ‘necnon Æthelwoldus sanctus praesul’<sup>117</sup>. The description of Æthelwold is in itself interesting, as he is often referred to by Byrhtferth as ‘sanctus’, a term frequently used to describe Oswald, but rarely Dunstan. Æthelwold appears together with Dunstan and Oswald in the passage detailing their collective

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<sup>116</sup> See the comments in the General Introduction to the thesis, pp. 1-12.

<sup>117</sup> *VSO*, p. 425; ‘and also the holy bishop Æthelwold’.

achievements described above, but aside from these two instances there are no other occasions when Oswald and Æthelwold appear together in the text.

Æthelwold does, however, appear on his own in two passages of the *vita*. The first passage comes during Byrhtferth's discussion of Edgar and states that as a child the king was educated by Æthelwold.<sup>118</sup>

instructus idem rex ad cognitionem veri Regis ab Æthelwoldo  
sanctissimo episcopo Wintoniensis civitatis. Iste enim vero ipsum  
regem ad hoc maxime provocavit, ut clericos a monasteriis expulit, et  
ut nostris ordinibus contulit, quia erat eximius consiliarius.

Relinquam ergo sua beata gesta suis, quae satis lucide descripta  
sunt<sup>119</sup>.

This passage is interesting for several reasons: firstly it illustrates a close association between Edgar and Æthelwold. This association is understandably represented in more detail in Wulfstan's *Vita Æthelwoldi*, where it forms an intrinsic part of Æthelwold's identity, although it is striking that Wulfstan gives no indication that Æthelwold was Edgar's tutor. That this association should be repeated in the *Vita Oswaldi*, where no close connection is made between Oswald and Æthelwold, is surely not coincidental and therefore may be an expression of a well-established tradition relating to the close relationship between Edgar and Æthelwold. The passage also implies that Æthelwold was one of Edgar's advisers, if not the chief adviser, and responsible for inspiring Edgar's enthusiasm for monastic revival, which brings into question Dunstan's

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<sup>118</sup> For a discussion of Æthelwold's influence on the young Edgar see John, 'The King and the Monks in the Tenth-Century Reformation', pp. 158-60.

<sup>119</sup> *VSO*, pp. 426-427; 'the same king was instructed in knowledge of the true King by the most holy bishop Æthelwold of the city of Winchester. For in truth he especially called the king himself to this, as he expelled the clerics from monasteries, and as he united our order, because he (Æthelwold) was the excellent adviser of him (Edgar). Therefore I shall leave behind the blessed deeds of him, which have been clearly described enough'.

role in the revival. That Dunstan was an important figure in the late tenth century is undeniable; he features prominently in several texts of the period, in which he is praised and spoken of with great affection. There is, however, little evidence that he was as active in monastic 'reform' as subsequent generations have argued. Even in his own *vita* there is little mention made of his reforming activities; all that is mentioned is that he assists Edgar in the promotion of monasticism.

In the light of this, perhaps Wulfstan and Byrhtferth are reflecting reality. To find such a close association between bishop and king in the bishop's own *vita* is perhaps not surprising (although unusual); but to have it repeated in a *vita* where the author appears to dissociate his subject from royal authority is noteworthy. Furthermore, the passage implies that Byrhtferth knew of a *Vita Æthelwoldi*, probably that by Wulfstan, although this does not necessarily mean that he was in possession of a copy. If, however, Byrhtferth was in possession of, or knew well, a copy of the *Vita Æthelwoldi*, then his repetition of Æthelwold's association with Edgar could simply be just that, a repetition. This does, however, raise the question of audience once again: in all probability the audience of the *Vita Oswaldi* would have been familiar with the characters and events of the first generation of the monastic revival, and therefore if Byrhtferth repeated something which was fictitious, surely his audience would have realised this. Byrhtferth also makes the point that Æthelwold 'nostris ordinibus contulit'<sup>120</sup>. This appears to be another reference to the Council of Winchester

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<sup>120</sup> *VSO*, p. 427; 'he united our orders', there is an interesting ambiguity in this phrase: it could simply mean that Æthelwold united the order of service, which could be an oblique reference to the *Regularis Concordia*, or it could mean that Æthelwold united the Benedictine order. Given

and the *Regularis Concordia*; which again raises the question of use of the *Concordia*; how widely its customs were adopted and whether monastic unity was a reality at the end of the tenth century.

Another significant ecclesiastical association in the *Vita Oswaldi* is made between Oswald and Saint Benedict. As has been noted above, the saints that Oswald is associated with are those whose cults were considered important by the monastic 'Reformers'; and of these the most significant was, of course, Benedict. It is worth noting that on most occasions the association of Oswald with Benedict is mediated through Ramsey. It is generally understood that the monastery was dedicated to the saint; the evidence for this in the text, however, is not specific, as is typical for Byrhtferth's style.<sup>121</sup> Ramsey is described as, first, the 'monastery of Saint Benedict' ('monasterio Sancti Benedicti')<sup>122</sup>, and second, or under the protection or patronage of Benedict; 'et in patrocinio sanctissimi Benedicti abbatis'<sup>123</sup>. This could be taken to mean the specific dedication of the abbey and its church to the saint or perhaps merely that the monastic customs followed there were those of the Rule of Saint Benedict.

It is, however, clear from the text that there was also a dedication to the Virgin Mary at Ramsey. When describing a procession of the monks to the church, it is clearly stated that a church was dedicated to the Virgin Mary: 'Est antiquitus mos constitutus ut ad Beatae Mariae genitricis Christi perpetuaeque

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the way that Byrhtferth seems to be trying to distance Oswald from Æthelwold in the *vita*, this would seem unlikely.

<sup>121</sup> For the dedication of Ramsey to Benedict see Knowles, *Heads of Religious Houses*, p. 61.

<sup>122</sup> *ISO*, p. 431.

<sup>123</sup> *ISO*, p. 434.



virginis [ecclesiam] tota congregationis deambulare nudis plantis debeat'<sup>124</sup>. It is evident that at some point the church tower collapsed and was rebuilt, leading to a rededication of the church, and so it could be that the church was originally dedicated to Benedict and later re-dedicated to Mary.<sup>125</sup> It is, however, not unlikely that there was a dual dedication at the abbey, which would not have been unusual for the time,<sup>126</sup> and although the combination of Benedict and Mary may seem unusual, both were ideal 'Reform saints'. There is no archaeological evidence from Ramsey and so there is no way of telling whether or not the abbey had more than one church, and thus whether the two dedications might have been for two churches in the abbey precinct. The combination of these two figures is an interesting one, and the association with Benedict in particular seems to reflect Ramsey's, and subsequently Oswald's, connection with Fleury. This connection is strengthened by a passage of the *vita* which details the translation of Benedict's relics to Fleury.<sup>127</sup>

As has been noted above the association of Oswald and Benedict is usually mediated through Ramsey; there is only one instance in the text where Oswald is directly associated with Benedict. When describing Edgar's piety and love of monasticism, Byrhtferth says: 'Delectatus vero rex in eorum sacris officiis, plusquam quadraginta jussit monasteria constitui cum monachis, diligens per omnia Christum Dominum, Ejusque dignissimum militem, Sanctum Benedictum,

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<sup>124</sup> *VSO*, p. 447; 'Formerly the custom was established that the whole height of the congregation should process with bare soles (i.e. feet) to the [church] of the perpetual virgin the Blessed Mary mother of Christ'.

<sup>125</sup> For the collapse of the tower, see *Chronicon Abbatiae Ramesiensis*, pp. 75-9.

<sup>126</sup> Other examples of dual dedications are Cerne, founded c. 987 dedicated to St Peter and St Æthelwold and Malmesbury, founded c. 965, dedicated to St Mary and St Aldhelm. See Knowles, *Heads*, pp. 37 and 54.

<sup>127</sup> *VSO*, p. 421-22.

cujus famam per pii Oswaldi episcopi narrationem agnovit'<sup>128</sup>. The implication here is that Edgar had heard the narration of the *Vita Benedicti* (from Gregory the Great's *Dialogues*) from Oswald. It is also possible that Oswald told Edgar the story of the translation of Benedict's relics to Fleury. This is a somewhat intriguing statement for Byrhtferth to make. Given that it is Byrhtferth who implies that it was Æthelwold who inspired in the young Edgar a love of monasticism, particularly Benedictine, it would be surprising if Edgar had not heard the *Vita Benedicti* when he was at Abingdon with Æthelwold. By implying that it was Oswald who introduced Edgar to the narration on Benedict is another instance where Byrhtferth is amplifying the authority of Oswald, and therefore Ramsey, at the expense of Æthelwold and Winchester.

This association with Benedict is complemented in the *vita* by an affiliation with Fleury, which is perhaps why Byrhtferth is critical of the monastic customs of his English contemporaries. Associations with Fleury are a theme running throughout the text: it was where Oswald received his monastic training and Byrhtferth includes a description of the translation of Benedict's relics. Byrhtferth, Ramsey and Fleury are also connected through Abbo. The influence of Abbo on Byrhtferth has been described above,<sup>129</sup> and the figure of Abbo is distinguished in the text. Byrhtferth includes in the *vita* a verse description of Ramsey written by Abbo, who he refers to as 'illo Theophilo' and 'Philosophus superius',<sup>130</sup> and he also inserts two acrostics and four lines of verse by Abbo,<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> *VSO*, p. 426; 'The king, truly delighted in their holy offices, ordered more than forty monasteries to be set up with monks, loving through all things Lord Christ, and His most worthy soldier, Saint Benedict, whose fame he knew through the story told by the pious bishop Oswald'.

<sup>129</sup> See the Introduction to this chapter.

<sup>130</sup> *VSO*, pp. 431-32 and p. 433.

<sup>131</sup> *VSO*, pp. 460-62.

all dedicated to Dunstan. It is also possible to see Abbo's influence in Byrhtferth's treatment of Edward 'the Martyr', which will be discussed in the following chapter. The appearance of Abbo in the *vita* is perhaps less of an attempt to associate him with Oswald, than it is a more personal association of him with Byrhtferth, who was in all probability a pupil of Abbo's while the latter was master of the school at Ramsey.

It is evident that the main associations created for Oswald are with the divine and biblical figures. Less frequent but still prominent are ecclesiastical associations and still less so are secular associations, particularly those with the king, which are given relatively little prominence. Of these secular associations, however, it is that with Ealdorman Æthelwine which Byrhtferth considers more important. This is not surprising as Æthelwine was co-founder of Ramsey. Furthermore, as illustrated above, many of the associations made with Oswald were reflected back onto Ramsey itself, in order to enhance the status of the abbey. This is particularly true of those associations with the divine, and it would appear that this is a deliberate attempt by Byrhtferth to distinguish Oswald and therefore Ramsey from Æthelwold and Ramsey's Fenland neighbours, Ely, Peterborough and Thorney, all of which were Æthelwoldian foundations.

## ABBO OF FLEURY'S *PASSIO SANCTI EADMUNDI*

Another aspect of Byrhtferth's text needs examining – the 'mini-vita' of Edward 'the Martyr'. In order to do so, however, it is useful first to consider another Ramsey text – Abbo of Fleury's *Passio Sancti Eadmundi*.

The circumstances surrounding the composition of the *Passio S. Eadmundi* – whether or not it was composed at Ramsey or at Fleury – have been discussed in great detail elsewhere, as have Abbo's motives for composing such a piece and the way in which he used the *Passio* to construct and depict his views on ideal kingship.<sup>132</sup> Although these naturally influence the way that Edmund's sanctity is depicted, they are not of primary concern here, and the main focus of the analysis which follows will be the associations which Abbo makes for Edmund and his enemies and the way in which he uses the contemporary ruler theology of christological kingship to depict Edmund's sanctity.

The most significant association to be found in the *Passio Sancti Eadmundi* is that between Edmund and Christ. The character of Edmund is clearly constructed as a Christ-figure, placing Edmund firmly in the tradition of christological kingship. When the *Passio* is compared to the other Ramsey text discussed in this section (the *Vita S. Oswaldi*) it is interesting to note how few associations are made between Edmund and other figures. These individuals are a mixture of Old Testament characters – Job and Daniel – and Christian saints – Sebastian, Lawrence and Cuthbert.

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<sup>132</sup> See Mostert, *The Political Theology of Abbo of Fleury* and Gransden, 'Abbo of Fleury's *Passio Sancti Eadmundi*'.

The central theme of the *Passio* is kingship, with Abbo using the text as a forum for developing his ideas on the nature of ideal Christian kingship. It is in this context that the association of Edmund with Christ should be viewed: Christ is king in heaven, and Edmund is king on earth. This association can be seen throughout the *Passio* influencing the description of Edmund's character, his treatment of his enemies and his death. It can also be seen in the depiction of the Danes responsible for Edmund's death, and particularly in the characterisation of their leader, Hinguar. The figures of Christ and Edmund are most closely associated in the chapters of the text concerned with Edmund's death: chapters nine to eleven; it is in these chapters where Edmund is depicted as a Christ-like figure, rather than as merely a close follower of Christ. This characterisation of Edmund comes after the invasion of the kingdom and the slaughter of the people; Edmund is confronted in his palace by a messenger sent by the Danish leader, Hinguar, who has given him an ultimatum: surrender or die. After being advised to either flee or surrender by his adviser – who is, interestingly, a bishop – Edmund confronts the messenger and gives him his reply to take back to Hinguar.

The role of the bishop is interestingly presented in the *Passio*. As noted above, it is the bishop who advises Edmund to either flee or submit to the Danes, not the advice which would be expected of a bishop. There are several ways to interpret the role of the bishop. The first could relate to the idea that martyrdom should be avoided until it is inevitable. It could be that Abbo viewed Edmund as perhaps a little too eager for martyrdom and that the debate with the bishop

delayed Edmund's martyrdom until the point of inevitability had been reached. The advice to surrender or flee is still somewhat unusual. It does, however, prompt Edmund to make the speeches through which many of Abbo's ideas on kingship are expressed, and indeed dialogue between king and bishop is one of the key elements of Abbo's ideology.<sup>133</sup> The episode with the bishop may also serve to highlight the steadfastness required of an ideal king and his ability to defend the Christian faith from all parties, including those within his own circle. It is clear from Abbo's writings that he had great respect for Oswald and also, particularly, for Dunstan, with whom he corresponded after his return to Fleury in 987.<sup>134</sup> It would therefore appear unlikely that Abbo's unfavourable representation of the English bishop was intended as an indictment of contemporary English bishops, and more probable that it was a reprimand to those bishops who collaborated with the Danish invaders.<sup>135</sup> It may also be a reflection of Abbo's own experience of strained relations between monks and bishops in the diocese of Orleans; the clashes between Abbo as abbot of Fleury and Arnulf, bishop of Orleans, have been well documented.<sup>136</sup> It is therefore possible that there were similar tensions between the monastery and the

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<sup>133</sup> For a discussion of the possible influence that Abbo's experiences in England may have had on the development of his philosophy and in particular his views on the relationship between the king and the bishops, see E. Dachowski, 'The English Roots of Abbo of Fleury's Political Thought', *Revue Bénédictine*, 110 (2000), 95-105 (pp. 98-100). Although the article reflects an earlier generation of scholarship in its approach to 'the reform' and the 'anti-monastic reaction', it raises some interesting points.

<sup>134</sup> A letter from Abbo to Dunstan is included in the material associated with Dunstan edited by William Stubbs, see *Memorials of St Dunstan*, pp. 378-80. In addition to the correspondence edited by Stubbs, two acrostic poems written by Abbo and dedicated to Dunstan are included by Byrhtferth in his *Vita Sancti Oswaldi*. See *VSO*, pp. 460-61.

<sup>135</sup> See for example Wulfstan, Archbishop of York, who, the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* implies, collaborated with the Northumbrians in rebelling against King Eadmund and was seemingly imprisoned at some point in 952. See *AS C*, MS D, for the years 947, 952 and 954, pp. 44-45 (EHD, pp. 222-24).

<sup>136</sup> For a discussion of the relations between Fleury and the Archbishop of Orleans see Thomas Head, *Hagiography and the Cult of Saints: The Diocese of Orleans, 800-1200* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), particularly pp. 235-281.

episcopacy in the period before Abbo travelled to England which influenced his views on bishops.

It is during the confrontation with Hinguar's messenger that a more direct association of Edmund with Christ begins. In his response to the messenger Edmund says: "Madefactus" inquit "cruore meorum mortis supplicio dignus extiteras; sed, plane Christi mei exemplum secutus, nolo puras commaculare manus, qui pro eius nomine, si ita contigerit, libenter paratus sum uestris telis occumbere"<sup>137</sup>. This passage appears to function on a number of levels: firstly a direct comparison between Edmund and Christ is made in the phrase 'plane Christi mei exemplum secutus', indicating that Edmund is imitating Christ's example. This does not, however, necessarily mean that Edmund is being depicted as a Christ-like figure. It is the remainder of the passage, with its imagery of Edmund refusing to fight his enemies and being willing to die on behalf of his people, which echoes the sacrifice of Christ for the sake of mankind and in this way begins to consolidate the characterisation of Edmund as a Christ-figure.

In the following chapter, which depicts the act of Edmund's martyrdom, Edmund is linked with Christ once again, and to a greater degree than previously in the text. From the beginning of the chapter, the imagery creates echoes of the arrest, trial and crucifixion of Christ. Edmund, alone in his palace, is surrounded by Hinguar's troops:

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<sup>137</sup> *Passio*. 9. 3-6; 'Soaked with the blood of my dead [people] you have shown yourself worthy of the punishment of death, but I, having openly followed the example of Christ my Lord, refuse to stain [my] pure hands. I, who for his name if it now be necessary am willingly prepared to die by your weapons'.

Tunc sanctus rex Eadmundus in palatio ut membrum Christi proiectis armis capitur, et uinculis artioribus artatus constringitur, atque innocens sistitur ante impium ducem, quasi Christus ante Pilatum praesidem, cupiens eius sequi uestigia qui pro nobis immolatus est hostia.<sup>138</sup>

There are a number of elements within this passage which strengthen both the association of Edmund with Christ and Edmund's depiction as a Christ-figure. The statement that Edmund was arrested 'proiectis armis capitur' creates an allegorical allusion with Christ; Edmund chose not to fight as Christ chose not to fight. There is also an indirect echo of the arrest of Christ in Gethsemane where Edmund is aligned with Peter, as it was Peter who was armed and was reprimanded by Christ for cutting off the ear of a servant of the High Priest.<sup>139</sup> Edmund's impending death is again depicted as a sacrifice and equated with Christ's sacrifice, although it is interesting that Abbo describes Edmund as desiring this death – a good saintly principle for Edmund to follow.

In addition to these general allusions, Abbo makes more explicit statements to reinforce his characterisation of Edmund as a Christ-figure. The description of Edmund as 'ut membrum Christi' implies that he was more than a disciple of Christ and that he was 'as a member of Christ', a part of Christ himself. The most unambiguous association of Edmund and Christ is found in the phrase 'atque innocens sistitur ante impium ducem, quasi Christus ante Pilatum

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<sup>138</sup> *Passio*, 10. 6-11; 'Then the holy king Edmund, with weapons thrown aside, was seized in the palace as a member of Christ, and was bound with tight chains, and was made to stand innocently before the impious leader, just as Christ before the governor Pilate, desiring to follow in the footsteps of him, the victim, who was sacrificed for us'. For the biblical use of 'membrum' see I Corinthians 12. 14, 12. 19 and 12. 26.

<sup>139</sup> See Matthew 26. 51-52.



praesidem'. Here the figure of Edmund is directly related to Christ, and interestingly the figure of Hinguar is aligned with that of Pilate. The characterisation of both the Danes in general and Hinguar in particular makes an important contribution to the construction of Edmund's identity as a Christ-like figure within the *Passio*, and will be discussed in more detail below. After this passage Abbo describes how Edmund was mocked and beaten: 'Uinctus itaque multis modis illuditur, ac tandem fustigatus acri instantia perducitur ad quondam arborem uicinam'<sup>140</sup>. Here again the treatment of Edmund before his execution echoes the treatment of Christ before the crucifixion. It is worth noting that during the descriptions of the physical acts of torture and the final execution, Edmund is portrayed as a Christ-figure. Whilst suffering a scourging with whips Abbo says that Edmund was 'semper Christum inuocando flebilibus uocibus'<sup>141</sup>; and it was the realisation that Edmund could not be brought to forsake Christ that led Hinguar to order Edmund's decapitation. Here, in addition to being a Christ-figure, Edmund is also a follower of Christ.<sup>142</sup> The description of Edmund's martyrdom and his refusal to forsake Christ are both standard hagiographic motifs for martyrs, placing the *Passio* and Edmund in the tradition of established martyr hagiography and martyr saints.<sup>143</sup>

The analogy between Edmund and Christ is continued after the saint's death; indeed, in the chapter following the description of Edmund's martyrdom, direct

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<sup>140</sup> *Passio*, 10. 11-13; 'And so in chains he was mocked in many ways and finally after being savagely beaten, he was led to a certain tree nearby'.

<sup>141</sup> *Passio*, 10. 14-15; 'always calling upon Christ with a tearful voice'.

<sup>142</sup> *Passio*, 10. 22-24; 'Cumque nec sic Hinguar furcifer eum lanistis assensum prebere conspiceret, Christum inclamantem iugiter, lictori mandat protinus ut amputet caput eius'. 'But when the villain Hinguar saw that he would not give assent through violence [and that] he continually called upon Christ, he ordered [his] attendant to cut off <Edmund's> head immediately'. Here Hinguar is acting as a standard persecutor in a *passio*, see for example the *Passions* of St Laurence or St Sebastian.

<sup>143</sup> Examples include the martyrdoms of St Lucia, St Sebastian and St Laurence.

comparisons are made between the two figures. The chapter begins with the phrase ‘*Talique exitu crucis mortificationem quam iugiter in suo corpore rex pertulit, Christi Domini sui secutus uestigia, consummauit*’<sup>144</sup>. Here Abbo states that Edmund was ‘following in the footsteps of Christ’ and although this does not directly associate Edmund with Christ, the implication is that Edmund’s sacrifice, his death, is comparable to that of Christ’s. The direct comparisons continue with an analogy being made between the tree to which Edmund was tied and the cross on which Christ was crucified:

Ille quidem purus sceleris in columna ad quam uinctus fuit  
sanguinem non pro se sed pro nobis flagellorum suorum signa  
reliquit; iste pro adipiscenda gloria immarcescibili cruentato stipite  
similes poenas dedit. Ille integer ob detergendam rubiginem  
nostrorum facinorum sustinuit benignissimus immanium clauorum  
acerbitatem in palmis et pedibus; iste propter amorem nominis  
Domini toto corpore grauibus sagittis horridus et medullitus  
asperitate tormentorum dilaniatus in confessione patienter perstitit,  
quam ad ultimum accepta capitali sententia finiuit.<sup>145</sup>

This passage clearly sets out the comparisons between Edmund and Christ: Edmund’s tree equates with the cross and the arrows shot into Edmund are compared to the nails which pinned Christ’s hands and feet to the cross.

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<sup>144</sup> *Passio*, 11. 1-3; ‘Thus in his departure from life, the king, followed the footsteps of his Lord Christ, consummated the sacrifice of the cross which he had endured continually in the flesh’.

<sup>145</sup> *Passio*, 11. 3-12; ‘Just as he (Christ), free from sin, left on the column to which he was bound, not for himself, but for us, the blood which was the mark of his scourging, so <Edmund> paid a like penalty bound to the blood-stained tree, for the sake of obtaining glory which does not fade away. He, most benevolent, innocently suffered the bitter pain of merciless nails in his hands and feet in order to cleanse the filth of our sins; he (Edmund). for the love of the name of the Lord, with his whole body bristling with grievous arrows, and lacerated to the marrow by the acutest tortures, steadfastly persisted in profession of his faith which having received a death-sentence, he finished to the last’.

The way that Abbo uses the imagery of blood is also worth noting; not only are the tree and the arrows of Edmund's martyrdom compared with the cross and the nails of the crucifixion, but the spilling of Edmund's blood is compared with that of Christ's. This imagery is surely not coincidental and it reinforces, along with the whole passage, the concept of Edmund as imitating Christ on earth; indeed, as noted above, there are times when the imagery almost goes so far as to suggest that Edmund is part of Christ himself. Here that the imagery of the blood-soaked tree and the parallels with the blood-soaked cross are very reminiscent of the descriptions of the tree in the Old English poem *The Dream of the Rood*. The poem exists in a manuscript which dates to the late tenth or early eleventh century, and probably originated in Southeast England, so there may have been a local tradition which Abbo drew on when describing the tree which Edmund was tied to.<sup>146</sup>

An association is made with Sebastian, unsurprisingly, during the description of the martyrdom in the *Passio*; when Edmund is shot with arrows he is said to be 'uelut asper herecius aut spinis hirtus carduus, in passione similes Sebastiano egregio martyri'<sup>147</sup>. It is the description of the act of martyrdom which places Edmund in the tradition of recognised martyrs, and an association with Sebastian emphasises Edmund's suitability to be part of this tradition. Abbo associates Edmund with Laurence when describing a miracle performed by the former. After the translation of Edmund's body to a shrine at *Bedricesgueord*, Leofstan, an arrogant 'man of great power' ('quodam magnae potentiae uiro'), demands that the saint's coffin be opened so that he may see for himself if the body is

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<sup>146</sup> See *The Dream of the Rood*, ed. by Michael Swanton (Exeter: University of Exeter, 1987).

<sup>147</sup> *Passio*, 10. 20-22; 'like a prickly hedgehog or thistle with hairy spines, similar in suffering to the illustrious martyr Sebastian'.

indeed incorrupt; despite being advised against it by many people, he insists and the request is carried out. As soon as Leofstan looks upon Edmund's body he is driven mad, is disowned by his pious father for such a crime, and is subsequently reduced to poverty and meets a wretched end.<sup>148</sup> After this description Abbo goes on to say:

Sicque sanctus rex et martyr <Eadmundus> omnibus innotuit / non se esse inferiorem meritis Laurentii beati leuitae et martyris, cuius corpus, ut refert beatus pater Gregorius, cum quidam seu digni seu indigni leuare uolentes conspiceret, contigit ut septem ex eis ibidem subita morte perirent.<sup>149</sup>

Here again the association with Laurence is used to place Edmund in the established tradition of martyr saints and to authenticate the power of Edmund's miracles. Only two miracles are attributed to Edmund after his cult is established:<sup>150</sup> the paralysis of the thieves who tried to break into his tomb and the vengeance wrought upon the arrogant Leofstan. These were probably the miracles which were most closely associated with the cult and therefore most well known by the potential audience of the *Passio*, and although they reflect traditional miracles, the precise details are unusual. It could be, therefore, that by associating Edmund with Laurence, and by both including the details of

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<sup>148</sup> *Passio*, 16.

<sup>149</sup> *Passio*, 16. 15-20; 'In this way the holy king and martyr <Edmund> demonstrated to all / that he was not inferior in merits to Laurence the blessed deacon and martyr, whose body, as has been related by the blessed father Gregory, when certain people, worthy or unworthy inspected [it] with the intention of exhuming it, that seven from them perished right there by sudden death'.

<sup>150</sup> The discovery of Edmund's talking head in the brambles is undoubtedly miraculous, as is the revelation that his body was incorrupt several years after its burial. The miracles referred to here are those where the saint can be seen to be actively exerting his power over the surrounding people, rather than being miraculous in a more passive way.

Laurence's miracle and using Gregory to establish its authenticity, Abbo was making the miracles acceptable to a late tenth-century monastic audience.<sup>151</sup>

There is only one other saint in the *Passio* with whom Edmund is associated: Cuthbert. The association is made in the letter dedicated to Dunstan which acts as prologue to the *Passio* and is used to endorse the validity of the claim that Edmund's body was incorrupt. Abbo reminds Dunstan of how, when he was telling the story of Edmund and mentioned the incorrupt nature of Edmund's body, he was asked by one of the audience how such a thing could be possible. In his response to this question, Dunstan cited Cuthbert as an example of a saint whose body had not decayed. Abbo states that Dunstan described Cuthbert as: 'sanctus Domini Cuthberhtus, incomparabilis confessor et episcopus, non solum adhuc expectat diem prime resurrectionis incorrupto corpore sed etiam perfusus quodam blando',<sup>152</sup>.

Edmund is also associated with two Old Testament figures: Job and Daniel. The association with Daniel is implied, although the figure of Daniel himself is not named in the text. When describing how Edmund's followers had found his severed head being guarded by a hungry wolf, all that is said is: 'beatissimum regem et martyrem <Eadmundum> illo uiro desideriorum iudicauerunt meritis

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<sup>151</sup> For a discussion of the character and symbolism of Edmund's miracles see Catherine Cubitt 'Sites and sanctity: revisiting the cult of murdered and martyred Anglo-Saxon royal saints', in *Early Medieval Europe*, 9 (2000), 53-83 (pp. 63-66).

<sup>152</sup> *Passio*, Prologue 40-43; 'the Lord's Saint Cuthbert, unequalled confessor and bishop, is still awaiting the day of his first resurrection not only with an incorrupt body. but also suffused with a certain soothing warmth'. The description of Cuthbert's uncorrupt body can also be found in Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, ed. and trans. by Bertram Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), c. 30, pp. 442-443. The language used by Abbo is similar to that used to describe Oswald in the *VSO*, p. 410, and that they both reflect language found in the Pentecost liturgy of the Winchester Troper. See the 'Associations with the Divine' subsection in the *Vita S. Oswaldi* section of this chapter.

similem qui inter esurientium rictus leonum illesus spreuit minas insidiantum',<sup>153</sup>.

This is clearly a reference to the story of Daniel and the lions,<sup>154</sup> but as with Byrhtferth's allusion to the story of David and Goliath, described in the previous section, it is striking that the Old Testament figures are not named.<sup>155</sup> This could mean that there was an assumption made by Abbo, and similarly Byrhtferth, that the audience of both texts were familiar enough with the stories to recognise them without the need for the names to be specified. An association with Daniel may present Edmund as overcoming powerful opposition, in a similar manner to the David and Goliath association described in the previous chapter.

The association between Edmund and Job is perhaps more complex than that between Edmund and Daniel. It is made when Abbo describes the onset of the Danish attacks on Edmund's kingdom; because Edmund is such a devout Christian and firm supporter of the church, the devil decides to test his endurance, just as he did Job's: 'Cumque tam conspicuis in Christo et aecclesia emineret bonorum actuum ornamentis, eius patientiam, sicut et sancti Iob, aggressus est experiri inimicus humani generis'<sup>156</sup>. This is followed by a description of how the devil then sent one of his own servants to torment Edmund with the hope that he would turn on God and curse him to his face: 'qui omnibus quae habuerat undeunde sublatis ad impatientiam (si posset) erumpere

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<sup>153</sup> *Passio*, 12. 46-48; 'they judged the most blessed king and martyr [Edmund] with similar merits to that man of desires who was sits unharmed among the jaws of hungry lions and spurned the threats of those lying in ambush'.

<sup>154</sup> See Daniel 9. 23, 10. 11 and 14. 30 ff.

<sup>155</sup> See the 'Biblical Associations', in the *Vita S. Oswaldi* section of this chapter.

<sup>156</sup> *Passio*, 4. 15-17; 'And since so eminently conspicuous was he in the face of Christ and of the church, through the adornment of good deeds, that, just like the holy Job, the enemy of the human race attacked to test his patience'.

cogeret, ut desperans Deo in faciem bene diceret'<sup>157</sup>. Although these passages create an association between Edmund and Job, there is a stronger connection made between the Danes and the devil. Thus the association with Job may be being used in order to position the Danes as devilish.

Indeed, the construction of Edmund as a Christ figure can be seen to begin with the characterisation of the Danes, particularly their leader Hinguar, as contrasting figures to Edmund. The tradition of constructing oppositional ethnic identities was well known in the late tenth century, and it can be seen in the works of both Ælfric and Wulfstan.<sup>158</sup> Abbo appears, however, to be taking this tradition and adapting it for his own purposes, as the ethnicity of the Danes and Hinguar appears to be secondary to their role as servants of the devil. If ethnicity was a primary concern in the construction of the Danish identity, then it is interesting to note that the Danes as a race are rarely seen in the *Passio* and it could be argued that they have no meaningful specific identity, ethnic or otherwise. The characterisation of Hinguar as a diabolical oppositional figure to Edmund links directly into the construction of Edmund as a Christ-figure. There may, however, have been good reason for not giving the Danes a specific identity: the abbey of Ramsey is, after all, situated in the middle of the Danelaw. In addition, Oswald himself may well have had Danish ancestry, so an outright categorisation of the Danes as devils may have been insulting to Oswald, Abbo's

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<sup>157</sup> *Passio*, 5. 2-4; 'who, stripped of all his possessions, might be goaded to break out to impatience, and despairing bless God to His face'. This echoes Job 1. 11, where the imagery used is also blessing God to his face.

<sup>158</sup> See for example Ælfric's *Life of St Edmund*, ed. by G. I. Needham, in *Lives of Three English Saints* (London: Methuen, 1966), pp. 43-60 and Wulfstan's *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos*, ed. by Dorothy Whitelock, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn (Exeter: University of Exeter, 1976).

patron at the time, and also would probably have had negative political implications for the abbey itself.

This construction of Hinguar as an oppositional figure for Edmund begins with the passage described above where Edmund is likened to Job; the text says that the devil sets ‘one of his own members’ against Edmund (‘unum ex suis membris’). Hinguar himself is specifically named in the following sentence: ‘Fuit autem idem aduersarius Hinguar uocabulo dictus’<sup>159</sup>. This distinguishes Hinguar from the Danes in general and associates him directly with the devil; interestingly the language echoes that used later in the text to describe Edmund: ‘ut membrum Christi’<sup>160</sup>. Abbo reinforces this specific connection between Hinguar and the devil by associating the Danes with evil in general: they come from lands in the north and according to the prophets all evil comes from the north.<sup>161</sup> The text goes on to give a generic description of the people of the north who are cruel as the result of ‘natural ferocity’, reinforcing the link between them and the devil:

quas certum est adeo crudeles esse naturali ferocitate ut nesciant malis hominum mitescere, quandoquidem quidam ex eis populi uescuntur humanis carnibus, qui ex facto Greca appellatione Antropofagi uocantur. Talesque nationes abundant plurimae infra Scithiam prope Hyperboreos montes, quae antechristum, ut legimus,

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<sup>159</sup> *Passio*, 5. 4-5; ‘This adversary was called by the name Hinguar’.

<sup>160</sup> *Passio*, 10. 7.

<sup>161</sup> *Passio*, 5. 8-13; ‘cum uenerit indurati frigore suae malitiae ab illo terrae uertice quo sedem suam posuit qui per elationem Altissimo similis esse concupiuit. Denique constat iuxta prophetarum uaticinium quod ab aquilone ueni omne malum, sicut plus aequo didicere, perperam passi aduersos iactus cadentis tesserarum, qui aquilonalium gentium experti sunt seruitiam’. ‘since, hardened by the coldness of his evil he came from that high land in which he set his throne who through pride desired to be similar to the Highest one. And then it is well known according to the predictions of the prophets that every evil comes from the north, just as those who have experienced the savagery of the northern peoples have learned too well, having endured to their cost the unlucky throwing of the dice’.



secuturæ sunt ante omnes gentes, ut absque ulla miseratione  
 pascantur hominum cruciatibus qui characterem bestiae noluerint  
 circumferre in frontibus<sup>162</sup>.

Abbo uses a combination of classical and biblical motifs to interpret Scandinavia and its people. This device is also adopted by Ælfric and later Wulfstan in the sermon *De Falsis diis*.<sup>163</sup> All three authors draw on their audience's knowledge of classical deities to construct a particular set of characteristics in order to understand the Scandinavian gods. The use of classical images to describe Hinguar continues in the following chapter where Abbo attributes the destruction wrought on the kingdom to 'Archimeneian rage' ('Archemeniam rabiem'), which could be a reference to the Persian emperor Xerxes.<sup>164</sup>

This interpretation of the Danes may place Abbo in the tradition of anti-Danish polemical writing of the late tenth and early eleventh centuries. In texts such as Wulfstan's *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos*, however, it is clear that the focus of the author's criticism is the English themselves. Wulfstan accuses the English of many sins, not least of which is being bad Christians, and asserts that a result of this fall in standards is the renewed Danish invasions of the late tenth and eleventh centuries, which are seen as divine retribution.<sup>165</sup> In this, Wulfstan is

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<sup>162</sup> *Passio*, 5. 13-22; 'It is certain indeed that they are cruel as a result of natural ferocity as they do not know how to mellow the evils of men since indeed certain of them feed on human flesh, who by that fact are called by the Greek name Anthropophagi. And such peoples are very numerous (south of) Scithia near the Hyperborean mountain, foremost followers of the antichrist, so that they may feed without compassion on the tortures of men, who refuse to carry around on their brows that mark of the beast'.

<sup>163</sup> See Ælfric, *De Falsis diis*, ed. by John C. Pope in *Homilies of Ælfric: A Supplementary Collection*, EETS, os 259 and 260, 2 vols (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), II, pp. 667-724.

<sup>164</sup> *Passio*, 6. 1-2. Echoes of classical texts are to be found in the description of the attacks themselves; for example, Hinguar's men are called 'impious miles', echoing Virgil's *Eclogues* 1. 70.

<sup>165</sup> Wulfstan, *Sermo Lupi*, pp. 65-67.

working in the tradition of Alcuin, Bede and Gildas, all of whom read attacks on England as divine punishment for bad English Christians. The remedy recommended by both Alcuin and Wulfstan is to avert the raids through prayers and proper Christian living so that God's grace will return to the English. In the *Passio* the exact opposite is true: Hinguar's attack on Edmund's kingdom is not portrayed as divine retribution for bad Christian practices and leadership, but rather it is because Edmund is such a good and ideal Christian king that the devil sends Hinguar to torment him.

The clearest definitions of an oppositional anti-Christ figure are found, unsurprisingly, in those chapters containing the clearest characterisations of Edmund as a Christ-figure. It is through the speeches of the messenger sent by Hinguar that the characterisation of Hinguar as diabolical is developed. Hinguar is described as 'Terra marique metuendus dominus noster Hinguar, rex inuictissimus, diuersas terras subieiendo sibi armis'<sup>166</sup>. The messenger confronts Edmund, challenging him; 'Esto itaque cum tuis omnibus sub hoc imperatore maximo, cui famulantur elementa pro sibi innata clementia'<sup>167</sup>. The theme of mastery over the elements is present throughout this passage, giving Hinguar dominion over the supernatural and thereby strengthening his characterisation as the antithesis of Edmund. This representation of Hinguar is complemented by Edmund's response to the speech:

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<sup>166</sup> *Passio*, 7. 8-9; 'Our master Hinguar, the most invincible king, a terror by land and sea, having subjected several diverse lands to his rule by forces of arms'.

<sup>167</sup> *Passio*, 7. 19-20; 'Submit therefore, with all your people, to the greatest chief whom the elements serve by their inherent clemency towards him'.

Ideo pernici gradu rediens festinus, domino tuo haec responsa perfer  
 quantotius: Bene / filius diaboli patrem tuum imitaris [...] Cuius  
 sectator praecipuus me nec minis terrere praeuales nec blandae  
 perditionis lenociniis illectum decipies, quem Christi institutis  
 inermem repperies.<sup>168</sup>

The alignment of Hinguar with the devil is clear from the phrases ‘filius diabolo’ and ‘cuius sectator praecipuus’. The construction of Edmund as a Christ-figure is completed in the passage described above where Abbo says that Edmund was brought before Hinguar ‘quasi Christum ante Pilatum praesidem’. There are two traditions concerning the role of Pilate in the crucifixion; the gospels of Mark and Luke make Pilate culpable, whereas Matthew and John do not. The association of Hinguar with Pilate is obviously intended, not only to enhance the depiction of Edmund as a Christ-figure, but also to reinforce Hinguar’s standing as an oppositional figure.

Throughout the *Passio* kingship – both ideal and flawed – is a consistent theme. Abbo uses the characters of his two protagonists, Edmund and Hinguar, to define his ideals of kingship, using them to distinguish the identities of the good king and the bad king. Christ as Edmund is the ideal king and Hinguar as an anti-Christ is the antithesis of the ideal king. The speeches of Hinguar’s messenger and Edmund’s responses discussed above can, therefore, be read as dialogue between good kingship and bad kingship.

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<sup>168</sup> *Passio*, 9. 6-13; ‘Therefore, return in haste with swift step to your master and as quickly as possible take this reply to him: ‘Son of the devil, you imitate your father well [...] [You] his particular follower are not strong enough to terrify me with threats, nor will you deceive me with the seductive enticements and allures of ruin for you will find me unarmed by the instructions of Christ’.

## Edward the Martyr

This construction of a royal saint as a Christ-figure can be seen in the other Ramsey text discussed in this section: the *Vita Sancti Oswaldi*, which includes a mini-*vita* of the murdered king Edward, the elder son of King Edgar. The influence of Abbo's ideas on kingship, and christological models in general can be seen in the Edward narrative. There are, however, significant differences in the way that these ideas are used. It is clear that the main association made by Byrhtferth is between Edward and Christ, and a closer reading of the text reveals other associations which have more to do with expiating the murder of a king, than with placing the text in the tradition of martyr hagiography.

After a description of the disputed succession and civil unrest which followed Edgar's death, the story as it is told by Byrhtferth reads as follows: approximately eighteen months after his accession Edward travels to an estate in Corfe in Dorset to see his half brother, Æthelred, and his step-mother, Ælfthryth. On approaching the house Edward is surrounded and stabbed by men associated with Ælfthryth; he falls from his horse and dies instantly. His body is buried unceremoniously on what is implied to be unconsecrated ground, where it remains for a year until Ealdorman Ælfhere of Mercia comes and uncovers the body, which is found to be pure and uncorrupt. The body is then washed, clothed in new vestments and placed in a coffin and carried to an unnamed place where it is buried with all due honour and ceremony.<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>169</sup> *VSO*, pp. 448-52.

The use of christological motifs is most evident in Byrhtferth's description of Edward's death, although it is interesting that the murder itself is not depicted as martyrdom. Byrhtferth's description of the thegns surrounding Edward as he approached the house reads: 'Circumstabant eum unique armati viri, cum quibus et pincera humili officio astabat ministrando'<sup>170</sup>, which is clearly reminiscent of the biblical account of the arrest of Christ. The association of the surrounding of Edward with the arrest of Christ is repeated in the more unambiguous statement:

Namque cum insidatores ejus ipsum vallarent, et, velut Judaei  
 summum Christum olim circumdarent, ipse intrepidus equo resedit.  
 Dementia quippe una erat in eis, parque insania. Tunc nequitia  
 pessima et dementia truculenta Beelsebutini hostis flagrabat in  
 mentibus venenosorum militum; tum sagittae toxicatae facinoris  
 Pilati exsurrexerunt satis crudeliter adversum Dominum, et adversus  
 Christum Ejus.<sup>171</sup>

The alignment of Edward with Christ is clearly made in the phrase 'velut Judaei summum Christum olim circumdarent'. The phrase 'adversum Dominum et adversus Christum Ejus' is a direct quotation from Acts 4. 26 and serves to strengthen the connection between Edward and Christ. The entire verse reads: 'adstiterunt reges terrae et principes convenerunt in unum adversus Dominum et adversus Christum ejus'<sup>172</sup>. The kings and princes rising up against Christ create

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<sup>170</sup> *VSO*, p. 449; 'Armed men surrounded him on all sides and with them also stood the cupbearer to perform his humble service'.

<sup>171</sup> *VSO*, p. 449-50; 'And so when his betrayers surrounded him, just as the Jews once surrounded the Highest anointed Christ, he remained undaunted on his horse. Obviously there was madness and equal insanity in them. Then the most depraved wickedness and savage madness of the enemy Beelzebub was flaming in the minds of the poisonous soldiers; accordingly the poisonous arrows of the crimes of Pilate rose up [with] sufficient cruelty against the Lord and against His Christ (*lit.* 'anointed one')'.

<sup>172</sup> Acts 4. 26; 'The kings of the earth stood up, and the princes assembled together against the Lord and his Christ'.

a clear parallel with those thegns and nobles who rebelled against Edward, and it is evident from his use of the biblical phrase that the ‘Christum Ejus’ of Byrhtferth’s text was intended to be read as Edward. The use of christological imagery continues in Byrhtferth’s description of the murder of Edward where the text reads: ‘Milites ergo tenentes eum, unus ad dexteram ipsum trahebat ad se quasi osculum illi dare vellet, alter vero sinistram ejus duriter accepit, qui et vulneravit’<sup>173</sup>; the imagery of the kiss is clearly reminiscent of the betrayal of Christ by Judas.

In the *Passio Sancti Eadmundi*, where Edmund is depicted as a Christ-like figure, Abbo creates a parallel construction of the Danes in general, and Hinguar in particular, as clear oppositional figures – instruments of the devil sent to torment Edmund to try and make him forsake Christ. The construction of Edward’s attackers follows this pattern to a certain degree: they are described as ‘insidiantes et maligni’<sup>174</sup> and we are told that ‘acceperunt inter se iniquum consilium, qui ita damnatam habebant mentem et nebulosam diabolicam caliginem’<sup>175</sup>. The motive for the murder is similarly ascribed to diabolical influence: ‘Dementia quippe una erat in eis, parque insania. Tunc nequitia pessima et dementia truculenta Beelsebutini hostis flagrabat in mentibus venenosorum militum; tum sagittae toxicatae facinoris Pilati exsurrexerunt satis crudeliter adversum Dominum, et adversus Christum Ejus’<sup>176</sup>. The use of Pilate

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<sup>173</sup> *VSO*, p. 450; ‘Accordingly the soldiers seized him, one drew him to the right towards himself as though wishing to give him a kiss, but another harshly seized his left hand and also wounded him’.

<sup>174</sup> *VSO*, p. 449; ‘Tracherous and evil’.

<sup>175</sup> *VSO*, p. 449; ‘They formed among them a wicked plan, for they possessed minds so accursed and such diabolical blindness’.

<sup>176</sup> *VSO*, p. 450; ‘Obviously there was madness and equal insanity in them. Then the most depraved wickedness and savage madness of the enemy Beelzebub was flaming in the minds of

here reinforces the construction of Edward as a Christ figure. In addition, Byrhtferth is following the tradition which makes Pilate culpable for Christ's crucifixion. Through Pilate's culpability, it is the political authorities who are made responsible for the death of Christ, rather than the religious authorities. Thus Byrhtferth's use of Pilate here has implications for the Edward narrative: it reinforces the point that there were political motivations behind Edward's murder. A similar use of Pilate as an oppositional figure is found in the other Ramsey text under discussion here: Abbo's *Passio Sancti Eadmundi*, and it is interesting that these two texts use Pilate in the same way. This may be an example of Abbo's influence on Byrhtferth, or it may indicate that Ramsey followed the biblical tradition in which Pilate was made culpable for Christ's crucifixion, which would appear to be the more common practice.

The depiction of the murder of Edward as an act committed by men acting under the influence of the devil aids the construction of Edward as a Christ-figure. Yet nowhere are Edward's enemies specifically characterised as instruments of the devil sent with the particular task of tormenting and destroying Edward, or making him abandon his faith and denounce Christ. There is no one figure set in opposition to Edward's Christ-figure, but rather a number of anonymous 'zealous thegns' ('zelantes ministri') of his half-brother and step-mother.<sup>177</sup> It is interesting to see that later versions of the story, beginning with the late eleventh-century *Passio Sancti Eadwardi*, clearly

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the poisonous soldiers; accordingly the poisonous arrows of the crime of Pilate rose up [with] sufficient cruelty against the Lord and His Christ'.

<sup>177</sup> *ISO*, p. 449; 'contra quem sui fratris zelantes consurrexerunt ministri' ('the zealous thegns of his brother rose up against him').

construct Ælfhryth as the oppositional figure to Edward.<sup>178</sup> These texts were, however, written well after the deaths of Ælfhryth, Ælfhere and Æthelred, all of whom could be considered prime suspects in Edward's murder. By contrast Byrhtferth, writing within a few years of Ælfhere's death (in 983) and possibly whilst Ælfhryth was still alive (she died in 1000 / 01), was in no position to directly implicate any of the leading nobles, particularly the king's mother.<sup>179</sup> Byrhtferth's characterisation of Edward's attackers as acting under diabolical influence, whilst not representing them as instruments of the devil, reads more as a criticism of the crime than the criminals themselves – it was the act of killing a king which was diabolical.

The representation of Edward's death as martyrdom contains few, if any, of the standard hagiographic elements for a martyr. There is no sense that Edward is dying for any noble cause; he did not die in battle defending his people against heathen invaders as Edmund did, but rather he died at the hands of his political rivals. Byrhtferth calls Edward 'martyr Dei',<sup>180</sup> yet Edward's faith is hardly mentioned; indeed all that the text says in this regard is: 'Erat doctus Divina lege, docente episcopo Sidemanno'<sup>181</sup>. Edward's faith is not tested in any way, unlike in the *Passio Sancti Eadmundi* where Abbo states that one objective of Edmund's torture was to make him forsake Christ.<sup>182</sup> Unlike that of Edmund, and indeed most other martyrs, Edward's death is quick and relatively painless

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<sup>178</sup> For the text and a discussion of the *Passio Sancti Eadwardi* see Christine Fell, *Edward King and Martyr*, Leeds Studies in English, ns, 3 (Leeds: University of Leeds. School of English 1971).

<sup>179</sup> For a discussion of the political background to Edward's murder see Barbara Yorke, 'Edward, King and Martyr: A Saxon Murder Mystery', in *Studies in the Early History of Shaftesbury Abbey*, ed. by Laurence Keen (Dorchester, Dorset County Council: 1999), pp. 99-116.

<sup>180</sup> *VSO*, p. 450.

<sup>181</sup> *VSO*, p. 449; 'He had been instructed in Divine law by the teaching of bishop Sideman'.

<sup>182</sup> *Passio*, 10. 22-35.



and there is no element of torture in Byrhtferth's description of the murder. Similarly, although Edward's assailants are described as insane and possessed of diabolical wickedness, there is no sense that they are sent by the devil to persecute Edward, whereas Abbo states that Hinguar and the Danes were specifically sent by the devil to test Edmund.<sup>183</sup> In these ways Edward is clearly not placed in the tradition of martyrs and indeed there are no other martyr saints in Byrhtferth's narrative with whom Edward is associated.

The depiction of Edward's character similarly serves to highlight the unusual nature of his claim to sanctity. Whereas Abbo stressed the strength of Edmund's faith and portrayed his character in christological terms, making Edmund the embodiment of ideal Christian kingship, Byrhtferth rarely mentions Edward's character and when he does it is not characterised in christological terms. Although there is a general impression in the narrative of Edward's faith, no emphasis is made of its strength. Aside from the information, noted above, that Edward was taught by Bishop Sideman, the only other direct comment Byrhtferth makes on the subject comes when Edward has been surrounded by his assailants; he says 'Habebat enim satis paucos milites secum rex venerandus, quia non timuit quenquam, confidens in Domino et in potentia virtutis Ejus'<sup>184</sup>. Byrhtferth is again using a direct quotation from the Vulgate to describe Edward; here the quotation is taken from Ephesians 6. 10. All the direct quotations that are used to describe Edward are taken from the New Testament, adding emphasis to his association with Christ. There is only one description of Edward's character in the text, and this is far from flattering. When discussing

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<sup>183</sup> *Passio*, 4. 15-20.

<sup>184</sup> *VSO*, p. 449; 'The venerable king indeed had with him very few soldiers, because he did not fear anything, trusting in the Lord and in the might of His power'.

the succession crisis after the death of Edgar, Byrhtferth acknowledges that some nobles wished to choose Æthelred because he had the gentler nature, whereas with regard to Edward he says: ‘Senior vero non solum timorem sed etiam terrorem incussit cunctis, qui non verbis tantum, verum etiam diris verberibus, et maxime suos secum mansitantes’<sup>185</sup>. As Yorke notes, ‘[i]t is surely significant that Byrhtferth, who was not eager to make excuses for the guilty side, admits that Edward was a difficult person and not best equipped to deal with the problems with which he was faced’<sup>186</sup>.

Byrhtferth’s description of Edward’s character contrasts with Abbo’s description of Edmund’s, where Abbo describes Edmund as mixing severity with kindness: ‘Nactus uero culmen regiminis, quantae fuerit in subiectos benignitatis, quante in peruersos distractionis’<sup>187</sup>. Admittedly Abbo uses the *Passio* to illustrate his ideas on kingship, making Edmund an ideal king, and thus his characterisation in the text reflects these ideals; however, given that Byrhtferth appears to be trying to portray Edward as a martyr and Christ-like figure, it is significant to see his text reflect what was probably a well-known reality. It is also worth noting that Byrhtferth only uses christological motifs in the depiction of Edward’s death, rather than in his descriptions of Edward himself, which suggests that it was the act of killing a king which Byrhtferth considered more important than the character and person of Edward himself.

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<sup>185</sup> *VSO*, p. 449; ‘Certainly the elder [Edward] inspired not only fear but even terror in all, for [he scourged them] not only with words but also with dire blows and especially his own men dwelling with him’.

<sup>186</sup> Yorke, ‘Edward, King and Martyr’, p. 107.

<sup>187</sup> *Passio*, 4. 1-2: ‘of what kindness he was, once he had obtained the summit of power, towards his subjects [and] of what great severity [he was] towards wrongdoers’.

Although Edward is not constructed as an ideal Christian king in the same way as Edmund is, the proximity of Byrhtferth's composition to the events depicted probably forbade the author from taking too much licence; kingship does appear to be a prominent theme in the Edward narrative. Byrhtferth begins his discussion of Edward with an account of the succession crisis and civil unrest which followed the death of Edgar in 975, which leads into the unflattering description of Edward's character quoted above. In this context Byrhtferth's use of the word 'electus' to characterise Edward can hardly be a coincidence. At the start of the narrative the text reads: 'Nonus vel quintus interea effluxerat mensis et decimum lumen mortalibus radiabat, postquam ipse electus erat'<sup>188</sup>; a little later Byrhtferth describes Edward as: 'conspicuus atque electus rex'<sup>189</sup>. Selection, or perhaps election, formed one of the key principles of Abbo's ideal kingship and he uses the word 'eligitur' to describe Edmund's accession to the throne: 'Qui atavis regibus aeditus, cum bonis polleret moribus, omnium comprouincialium unanimi fauore non tantum eligitur ex generis successione quantum rapitur ut eis praeesset sceptrigera potestate'<sup>190</sup>. Here again it must be borne in mind that Abbo was constructing an ideal and that he makes it clear that it was Edmund's good character which led him to be 'non tantum [...] quantum rapitur' and that family succession remained an important factor in the choice of king.<sup>191</sup> It is likely that Byrhtferth and Ramsey were in favour of the choice of Edward as king during the succession dispute: Æthelwine, co-founder and chief

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<sup>188</sup> *VSO*, p. 449; 'Meanwhile nine and five months had passed by the tenth moon was beaming with light for men, after he [Edward] was chosen'.

<sup>189</sup> *VSO*, p. 449. 'illustrious chosen king'.

<sup>190</sup> *Passio*, 3. 5-9; 'He descended from generations of ancestral kings, since strong in good character, he was not so much chosen on the basis of family succession as seized by the unanimous support of all those who lived in the same district, so that he was at their head with the power of wielding the sceptre'.

<sup>191</sup> For a discussion of Abbo's views on the king-making process see Mostert, *Political Theology*, pp. 135-56 (and especially pp. 143-50 for the use of election).

benefactor of the abbey, and most of his family supported Edward, and furthermore it is unlikely that Ramsey's other co-founder, Oswald, was a supporter of the Ælfhere-Ælfthryth-Æthelred party as many of his monasteries in Western Mercia had suffered at the hands of Ælfhere during the period of unrest. This may account for Byrhtferth's description of Edward as the 'chosen' king, emphasising his legitimacy to be on the throne.<sup>192</sup> One reason for Byrhtferth's inclusion of the Edward narrative in his *Vita S. Oswaldi* could be that it was intended to act as a reminder of the crime and a reprimand to those responsible. It could also have been intended, as Yorke has suggested, to act as a stimulus for the promotion of Edward's cult.<sup>193</sup>

Byrhtferth similarly uses predestination as a tool to affirm Edward's stature as legitimate king; when introducing the section of the text devoted to the discovery of Edward's body, the text refers to Edward as 'Rex Regum non Suum militem, et vice Sui regiminis in terris constitutum et praelectum',<sup>194</sup>. Interestingly Byrhtferth also uses predestination to reinforce Edward's stature as a martyr. This description of the plan to kill the king reads: 'insidantes et maligni quaerebant animam innocentis, cui Christus praedestinavit et praescivit consortem fieri martyrii dignitatis',<sup>195</sup>. These passages create a parallel between Edward's legitimacy as king and legitimacy as a martyr, reinforcing the idea that kingship and the act of murdering a lawful king were the main focus of this point of the narrative.

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<sup>192</sup> For a discussion of the legitimacy of the claims of Edward and Æthelred to the throne see Yorke, 'Edward, King and Martyr', pp.104-06.

<sup>193</sup> Yorke, 'King Edward, King and Martyr', p. 111

<sup>194</sup> *VSO*, p. 450; 'The King of Kings did not wish His own soldier, appointed and predestined to rule on earth in His place'.

<sup>195</sup> *VSO*, p. 449; 'Tracherous and evil, they sought the soul of the innocent whom Christ predestine and pre-ordained to be a worth in worthy martyrdom'.

This argument is strengthened by Byrhtferth's use of 'Christus', which refers to both Edward and Christ in the text. In the first instance, 'Christus' is used in the quotation cited above, referring to Edward's destiny to be a martyr and here it is clear that it refers to Christ. The next time the word occurs is in the sentence 'Acceperunt inter se iniquum consilium, qui ita damnatum habebant mentem et debulosam diabolicam caliginem, ut non timerent maus immittere in Christum Domini'<sup>196</sup>. Here the 'Christus' represents Edward, and it is clear that his characterisation as 'the Lord's Anointed' is a clear reference to his status as the legitimate king. It is also worth noting that this quotation is an indirect reference to I Kings 26. 7-11 where David and Abisai enter Saul's camp and steal his spear, but when Abisai suggests killing Saul, David prevents him saying: 'ne interficias eum quis enim extendit manum suam in christum Domini et innocens erit'<sup>197</sup>. Thus here again Byrhtferth seems to be emphasising the question of whether or not it is legal to kill an anointed king.<sup>198</sup> Byrhtferth again uses 'Christum' to refer to Christ himself when describing how Edward's attackers surrounded him: 'velut Judaei summum Christum olim circumdarent'<sup>199</sup>.

The association between Edward and Christ is strengthened by the description of Christ as the 'highest Anointed One' and again the dominant theme is kingship: Edward as the anointed king on earth and Christ as the

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<sup>196</sup> *VSO*, p. 449; 'They formed among them a wicked plan, for they possessed minds so accursed and such diabolical blindness that they did not fear to raise their hands against the Lord's Anointed One'.

<sup>197</sup> I Kings 26. 9; 'Kill him not: for who shall put forth his hand against the Lord's anointed, and shall be guiltless?'

<sup>198</sup> For the significance of anointing in English coronation *ordines* see Nelson, 'The Second English *Ordo*' and 'National Synods, Kingship as Office, and Royal Anointing'.

<sup>199</sup> *VSO*, p. 449; 'just as the Jews once surrounded the highest Anointed One [Christ]'.

anointed king of heaven. These parallels are reiterated by Byrhtferth's use of the direct quotation from Acts 4. 26 noted above: 'adversum Dominum, et adversus Christus Ejus', where the 'Christus Ejus', although referring to Christ in the biblical context, is to be read as Edward in the context of the *Vita Sancti Oswaldi*. By characterising Edward as a Christ-figure and emphasising the anointed nature of both the earthly and heavenly king, Byrhtferth is able to compensate for the lack of any traditional martyr elements in the Edward narrative: it is Edward's death as a legitimate, anointed king, at the hands of murderers, which is to be understood as the act of martyrdom.

There are other features of the Edward narrative in the *Vita S. Oswaldi* which merit attention. The first of these is the absence of Dunstan from the account. It is clear that during the succession dispute Dunstan was one of Edward's most powerful supporters and it was Dunstan who consecrated Edward as king. Given Byrhtferth's apparent emphasis of the legitimacy of Edward's kingship, an association with Dunstan would seem ideal, as it would only serve to strengthen the view that Edward was the lawful consecrated king.<sup>200</sup> Dunstan's omission, therefore, may be an acknowledgement of the political role which the archbishop played in securing the accession of Edward; a role which Byrhtferth may have felt was not appropriate for Dunstan. There is, however, surely a gain in saying that Edward was anointed by the Lord rather than saying that he was simply anointed by the Archbishop of Canterbury.

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<sup>200</sup> It is striking that the only ecclesiastical association that Byrhtferth does make for Edward is with Sideman, bishop of Crediton between 973 and c. 975 / 977.

Another striking feature of the text is a reference to the story of Cain and Abel; when discussing the punishment of those responsible for Edward's murder the text reads: 'Qui enim protoplasti nati sanguinem de manu fratris sui requisivit, Ipse regis Sui sanguinem de manibus istorum interrogavit'<sup>201</sup>. The reference to the biblical story of brother murdering brother is surely not coincidental and is more likely to be a subtle criticism of Æthelred, if not a direct implication of the king in his brother's murder. Yorke has suggested that Æthelred's official recognition of Edward's cult may, in part, have been a response to Byrhtferth's criticism of the fact that no one had been punished for Edward's murder and no penance had been done.<sup>202</sup> This subtle reference to the crime of Cain may have been one of the tools Byrhtferth used to try to prompt Æthelred to make reparation for his brother's murder.

It is evident that a common theme in both the *Passio S. Eadmundi* and the Edward narrative in the *Vita S. Oswaldi* is an association of the subject of the narrative with the ideals and imagery of christological kingship. For both Edmund and Edward the most significant association is with Christ; indeed for Edward, Christ would appear to be the only affiliation of note. Whereas Edmund is affiliated with biblical figures such as Job and Daniel, and other martyr saints – Sebastian and Lawrence – there are no such associations made for Edward. The significance of these associations, or lack of associations, will be discussed in greater detail in the conclusion to this chapter, but the apparent influence of Abbo on Byrhtferth can be noted here. The construction of Edward as a Christ-

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<sup>201</sup> *VSO*, p. 451; 'He who required the blood of the son of the first man from the hand of his brother, the same demanded the blood of the king from the hands of those men'. See Genesis 4. 8-12.

<sup>202</sup> Yorke, 'King Edward, King and Martyr', p. 111.

figure would appear to have been taken from Abbo's *Passio*, a copy of which must have been at Ramsey during the time Byrhtferth was writing his *vita*. The models and motifs of christological kingship can also, however, be seen in manuscripts associated with Winchester, particularly the *Regularis Concordia* and the New Minster Foundation Charter, so Byrhtferth may also have been influenced to a certain degree by Winchester ideas on kingship. The similarity in use of Pilate as an oppositional figure for the two saints could indicate that Abbo's construction of Hinguar influenced Byrhtferth's narrative. It is more likely, however, that Byrhtferth was following a tradition which was well-established in Anglo-Saxon England in general and probably at Ramsey in particular.



## CONCLUSIONS

At first sight, the only obvious similarities between the *Vita S. Oswaldi* and the *Passio S. Eadmundi* would be their composition at Ramsey and the use of christological imagery to portray royal saints. There are, however, other themes common to the two texts; predestination and legitimate kingship, for example. This notwithstanding, a number of elements make the *Vita S. Oswaldi* somewhat unique: the inclusion of passages where Byrhtferth digresses to discuss other characters and events – Oda, the battle of Maldon, Edward the Martyr, for example; a consistent association of Oswald with biblical, particularly Old Testament figures and themes; and the absence of a close association between Oswald and the crown, but yet the depiction of a close relationship with a secular figure, Æthelwine.

As noted above, the predominant associations to be found within the *Vita S. Oswaldi* are between Oswald and the more abstract notion of ‘the divine’ and particular biblical characters. The divine is seen to be responsible for the inception of Oswald’s career and at periods throughout the *vita* can be seen influencing it; when Oswald decides to go overseas, for example, Oda is not surprised at the request, and understands Oswald’s desire to be the gift of the Holy Spirit. The passage also contains an allusion to predestination – another important theme which runs through the *vita* – as there is a statement to the effect that such changes do not take place without the persuasion of the Creator of all things. This association with the divine is clearly used to distinguish Oswald from his ecclesiastical contemporary Æthelwold, whose career is noticeably

influenced by the crown: Æthelwold is tonsured and consecrated at the command of Athelstan; he is prevented from going to Glastonbury to become a monk also by Athelstan; he is prevented from going overseas to study Continental monasticism by Eadred and his mother Eadgifu; and he is promoted to the bishopric of Winchester by Edgar.

This association of Oswald with the divine also has implications for the abbey of Ramsey itself; indeed at one point there is a definite connection made between Oswald, the divine and Ramsey. The description of the dedication of the abbey reads: ‘Eo tempore constructum est decenter monasterium quod ipse et reverendus Oswaldus archiepiscopus inceperunt, quod ipse pater consecravit, adjutus Divino auxilio et confortatus amminiculo Ælfnothi episcopi, qui super illum locum erat constitutus’<sup>203</sup>. These strong connections made between Ramsey and the divine, via Oswald, are undoubtedly deliberate and may be an attempt to give Ramsey a distinct identity. As noted in the chapter above, Ramsey was at this point the only important Fenland abbey not founded, or refounded, by Æthelwold. Ely, Peterborough and Thorney, all of which were geographically close to Ramsey, were associated with Æthelwold and his style of Benedictine monasticism; it is possible that by clearly stating that Oswald, and by association Ramsey, were guided and influenced by the divine, as opposed to the crown, Byrhtferth was making an unambiguous statement about the independence of Ramsey as a Fenland abbey.

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<sup>203</sup> *VSO*, p. 446: ‘In that time the monastery [Ramsey] which he [Æthelwine] and the revered archbishop Oswald began was appropriately constructed, which the same father [Oswald] consecrated, helped by Divine assistance and reinforced by the support of bishop Ælfnoth, who had been placed over that place’.

Biblical associations also feature prominently in the characterisation of Oswald: he is variously associated with Isaac, Joshua, Jacob, David, Solomon and the archangel Raphael. The association with Joshua is used to highlight the differences between Oda and Oswald: Oda is aligned with Moses and Oswald with Joshua. Moses leads the Israelites out of Egypt, yet does not enter the kingdom of heaven, whereas Joshua does. The obvious explanation for this would be that Oda was not a Benedictine monk, but Oswald was. This is notable, as Byrhtferth clearly states that not only had Oda been a monk, but also that he had received the monastic habit at Fleury, where Oswald had studied monasticism.<sup>204</sup> Byrhtferth also dedicates a significant portion of the first chapter of his *vita* to Oda, where he creates a ‘mini-*vita*’ similar to that of Edward the Martyr; he describes Oda’s character and career, in particular his disagreements with the king, Eadwig, and includes three miracles performed by Oda. It is obvious, therefore, that Byrhtferth held Oda in high regard and indeed he credits much of Oswald’s early education to Oda (who is linked with the divine in the process). This makes Byrhtferth’s characterisation of Oda as Moses somewhat puzzling, unless it was meant to symbolise that Oswald was Oda’s protégé, continuing the work – the establishment of Benedictine monasticism – which Oda had begun by taking the monastic habit himself, but not by establishing Benedictine houses as Oswald did.

Of the other Old Testament associations made for Oswald, perhaps the most perplexing is that with Raphael. The association is made after Oswald returns to England after his trip to Rome to receive his *pallium*: ‘Reversus almus pater ad

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<sup>204</sup> *VSO*, p. 413.

solum proprium, odas reddidit summo Ihesu, Qui sibi destinavit suae sedis ministrum, Raphaelem archangelum'<sup>205</sup>. As noted in the relevant chapter, the uses of Raphael in England at this time are uncertain and he does not seem to appear in any of the litanies dating to the period. The use of Raphael may have been intended to associate Oswald with Tobit and his son Tobias. An association with Tobit would emphasise Oswald's piety and orthodoxy; Tobit was the Israelite who adhered most closely to the word of God. Tobit is also presented as perceptive, whereas those around him, including the other Israelites, were not. This may have been another attempt by Byrhtferth to set Oswald above his contemporaries, particularly Æthelwold and Dunstan. The association with Tobias depicts Oswald as a healer, with the implication that Oswald was healing English monasticism; again this distinguishes him, and thereby Ramsey, from the other contemporary monastic founders, particularly Æthelwold. If this was the case, then Byrhtferth was overlooking the fact that the evidence from Worcester indicates that cathedral community remained a mixture of clerics and monks for a long period of time, perhaps even until after Oswald's death.<sup>206</sup> If, as is suspected, Raphael was an unusual association for Byrhtferth to make, it raises the question of audience and whether or not the audience of the *vita* would have understood such an association. Alternatively, or in addition, perhaps there was a particular veneration for Raphael at either Ramsey or Worcester for which evidence has been lost. The association with Raphael may, of course, be less complicated than this, and may merely symbolise divine approval and support for Oswald's appointment to the archbishopric with God sending one of his

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<sup>205</sup> *ISSO*, p. 436; 'The kind father, having returned to his own land, he frequently offered hymns to the highest Jesus, Who sent to him the minister of his own seat, the archangel Raphael'.

<sup>206</sup> See Barrow, 'The Community of Worcester, 961-c. 1100' and 'English Cathedral Communities and Reform in the Late Tenth and the Eleventh Centuries'.

archangel's to help Oswald in his establishment of monasticism. Although perhaps Michael and Gabriel would surely have been more familiar to an audience.

It has been noted that Oswald is associated with David. Byrhtferth does not, however, make the connection explicitly, but rather it is implied. When describing how Oswald overcame the temptations of the devil, Byrhtferth states that Oswald 'quique super dorsum gigantis potenter ascendit, cujus gladius arripuit et caput forti manu percussit, habens postmodum bellum cum Philistaeis'<sup>207</sup>. As noted in the section above, this is a clear reference to the story of David and Goliath and although David is not specifically named, the allusion must have been clear to a monastic audience, and perhaps also to an educated lay audience. A similar allusion to a specific biblical character is made by Abbo in the *Passio S. Eadmundi*, where the wolf guarding the head of Edmund is likened to the hungry lions in the story of Daniel, but again no specific statement linking Edmund and Daniel is made; it is expected that either a monastic, or an educated lay audience would hear or read the passage and understand the reference, making the association between Edmund and Daniel themselves.<sup>208</sup>

As noted above and in the *Vita S. Oswaldi* section, few New Testament associations are made for Oswald, and of those that are made, perhaps the most significant is that with Paul, where Byrhtferth makes a clear reference to I

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<sup>207</sup> *VSO*, p. 417; 'and he strongly climbed upon the back of the giant, whose sword he snatched away, and severed its head with powerful hand, soon having war with Philistines'.

<sup>208</sup> *Passio*, 12. 46-48; 'beatissimum regem et martyrem <Eadmundum> illo uiro desideriorum iudicauerunt meritis similem qui inter esurientium rictus leonum illesus spreuit minas insidiantum'; 'they judged the most blessed king and martyr [Edmund] with similar merits to that man of desires who was sits unharmed among the jaws of hungry lions and spurned the threats of those lying in ambush'.

Timothy 3. 1-5, in which verses the character of the ideal bishop is described. The implication is clear: Oswald fulfils all the requirements to be an ideal bishop. No such association with Paul is made in either of the *vitae* of Æthelwold, and perhaps this is again a deliberate statement on Byrhtferth's part, designed to make a clear distinction between Æthelwold and Oswald. If this is the case then an implicit criticism of Æthelwold is contained in the association. The presence of Æthelwold in Byrhtferth's text does not seem to add anything to the construction of Oswald's sanctity, and it appears that Byrhtferth is acknowledging Æthelwold's existence and not attempting to create a close association between the two figures.

The association, or lack thereof, between Oswald and Edgar has been discussed in detail in the section above, and it is clear that although Edgar features prominently in the *vita*, he is rarely directly linked with Oswald; indeed it appears as if Byrhtferth is almost attempting to dissociate the two figures, once again in marked contrast to Æthelwold. It is therefore significant that some of the biblical figures associated with Oswald are also connected to Edgar in the same text: David, Joshua and Paul are all used by Byrhtferth to characterise Edgar.<sup>209</sup> This reveals an interesting tension at work within the *vita*: even if Oswald is not dissociated with Edgar, no attempt is made to associate firmly the bishop and the king; yet the same biblical models used to characterise Oswald are used to depict Edgar. It may be that the deliberate distancing of Oswald and Edgar was another way for Byrhtferth to distinguish Oswald from Æthelwold, as there was an apparent tradition of a close association between Æthelwold,

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<sup>209</sup> See *VSO*, p. 425; 'Erat bellicosus ut egregius [P]saltes filius Jesse, sapiens ut Justus. ... ut Paulus, misericors [ut] Moyses, audax ut Josue'. 'He was warlike as the distinguished son Jesse (i.e. David), knowing the ... as Paul, merciful [as] Moses, bold as Joshua'.

Winchester and Edgar. This noticeable lack of association of Edgar and Oswald can also be read as another attempt by Byrhtferth to create an identity for Ramsey which is separate from other monastic foundations closely affiliated with the throne; particularly Winchester.

The use of David and Joshua to characterise Edgar should, perhaps, not be surprising, since both figures feature in the coronation *ordines* from Carolingian France and Anglo-Saxon England. The English *ordines* contain a prayer asking that, the king have the humility of David, among other virtues also taken from the Old Testament.<sup>210</sup> It is interesting to note that in his account of Edgar's coronation, Byrhtferth includes as description of how Dunstan wept for joy because the king was so humble.<sup>211</sup> The use of Paul, however, may indicate that Byrhtferth was depicting Edgar as a monastic king; the analogy with Paul precedes a description of Edgar's character where the king is portrayed as respecting monks as brothers and loving them as sons.<sup>212</sup> Byrhtferth goes on to depict Edgar as a pastoral figure, admonishing himself the shepherds he set over his flocks of monks and nuns.<sup>213</sup> Byrhtferth's description of Edgar is firmly located within the late tenth-century tradition of monastic, or christological kingship, which was epitomised by Edmund in Abbo's *Passio S. Eadmundi*. It is difficult to ascertain whether Byrhtferth's characterisation of Edgar was directly influenced by Abbo, in view of the fact that Abbo himself may have been

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<sup>210</sup> *English Coronation Records*, ed. by L. G. W. Legg (Westminster, 1901), p. 16, 'Hunc dextera tuae potentiae semper ubique circumda quatinus predicti abrahe fidelitate firmatus moysi mansuetudine fretus iosue fortitudine munitus david humilitate exaltus salomonis sapientia decoratus tibi in omnibus complaceat' 'And ever cover him with thy powerful hand, that he, being strengthened with the faith of Abraham, endued with the mildness of Moses, armed with the fortitude of Joshua, exalted with the humility of David, beautified with the wisdom of Solomon, may please thee in all things', Legg, p. 24.

<sup>211</sup> *VSO*, p. 437.

<sup>212</sup> *VSO*, p. 425.

<sup>213</sup> *VSO*, p. 426.

influenced by a Winchester tradition of constructing kingship in this way. As Deshman has demonstrated, some of the best examples of christological kingship can be found in manuscripts associated with Winchester; the New Minster Foundation Charter and the illustration on the frontispiece of the *Regularis Concordia*, for example.<sup>214</sup>

Even though Byrhtferth characterises Edgar as a monastic king, he nonetheless deliberately dissociates Oswald from the crown. This may be a response to the contemporary political situation, as a similar theme can be seen in Ælfric's *Vita S. Æthelwoldi*. Although there is a well-documented tradition of a close relationship between Æthelwold and Edgar, Ælfric – seemingly deliberately – tempers his depiction of this relationship to make his text more acceptable to an early eleventh-century audience. As has been noted in the Ælfric section, it is clear that Ælfric appreciated and admired the relationship between Edgar and Æthelwold, but accepted that a close affiliation between the church and the throne was neither possible nor practical for his generation of ecclesiastics.<sup>215</sup> Ælfric's *Vita S. Æthelwoldi* and Byrhtferth's *Vita S. Oswaldi* were most likely composed within five years of each other and it is surely significant that both texts reflect a shift away from a close association between the church and the throne, in favour of secular patrons in the form of Æthelwine in the *Vita S. Oswaldi* and Æthelweard and Æthelmær in the case of Ælfric.

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<sup>214</sup> For further details of these manuscripts and their depiction of christological kingship see the discussion in the Introduction to the thesis.

<sup>215</sup> See the 'Secular Associations' subsection of the Ælfric section in Chapter 3, and also Jones, *Ælfric's Letter to the Monks of Eynsham*, p. 45.



When considering the *Passio S. Eadmundi* and the *mini vita* of Edward the Martyr found in the *Vita S. Oswaldi* there are several similarities to be seen, not least of which is the consistent use of Christ and christological imagery to characterise their subjects. Byrhtferth's use of the christological themes and motifs to characterise Edward is, in all likelihood, evidence that he was influenced by his former master Abbo. Christological kingship was the dominant contemporary ruler theology and therefore Byrhtferth may have been exposed to its ideals and images from other sources than Abbo. It is also interesting to see that both authors not only use Christ to characterise their saints, but also use oppositional imagery to depict the enemies of both saints. Abbo portrays the Danes as minions of the devil, and their leader, Hinguar, almost as an anti-Christ figure, and Byrhtferth states that it is diabolical madness and insanity which clouds the minds of Edward's murderers. The political constraints on Byrhtferth were, perhaps, more immediate than those on Abbo; the person who gained most from Edward's death was Æthelred, so to portray those who profited from the murder as devilish would have been foolish in the extreme, particularly if one of the purposes of the Edward section of the *vita* was to encourage Æthelred to promote Edward's cult. It is clear that Abbo had greater freedom to construct a direct oppositional figure for Edmund as he was working with a tradition and individuals which were historical, whereas the characters involved in Byrhtferth's narrative had existed within living memory. If they themselves were not alive, then their immediate kin certainly would be, and would no doubt disapprove of their relatives being characterised as minions of the devil.

In both texts the emphasis is clearly on legitimate kingship. For Byrhtferth it was the illegality of murdering an anointed king which was the primary concern. Abbo, however, used the *Passio* to develop ideas on what, and who, a king should be, using Edmund as the model for an ideal king. It is interesting that two texts concerned with kingship should be composed at Ramsey within a few decades of each other. This may be a reflection of the political circumstances of the abbey during the time that they were written; a period of relatively weak kingship, when the country in general and the fenlands in particular were suffering from renewed Danish attacks and invasions. This raises the question of audience, and it is clear that both texts were primarily intended for monastic audiences, but the prominence given to kingship must surely indicate that a royal audience was also intended. As noted in the introduction to this section, it has been argued that Abbo intended the *Passio* as a 'mirror' for the new Capetian kings Hugh Capet and Robert II. Surely it could also have been intended for Æthelred; giving him an ideal to which he should aspire, incidentally an ideal not unlike the way his father, Edgar, was portrayed in contemporary literature and imagery.

It is noticeable that Abbo associates Edmund with Sebastian and Laurence, both well-established martyrs, thus placing Edmund's cult firmly in the tradition of martyrs. Byrhtferth, however, does not associate Edward with any other martyr saints, or any other saints at all. This may relate to the fact that Edward's cult was in its infancy at this stage, indeed the passages in the *Vita S. Oswaldi* may be what prompted the promotion of the cult by the king, who ordered the celebration of Edward's feast to be a national event. Surely Byrhtferth would

have wanted to establish Edward's qualifications to sanctity, and the accepted means of doing this was by associating the new saint with existing saints of the same type – in this case martyrs – which makes the absence of any such associations in the Edward narrative striking. For both saints, however, the basic principle on which their sanctity was based was their deaths at the hands of enemies: an invading heathen army in the case of Edmund, and, more unusually, political enemies for Edward. For both, the proof that their claims to be saints were valid ones was the discovery of their uncorrupt bodies.

## 5. GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

The aims of this thesis, as set out in the General Introduction, were to form the foundations of a survey of sanctity in late tenth- and early eleventh-century England and to determine whether or not there are any common themes to be found. From the analyses above, it is evident that whilst the two primary texts under consideration – the *Vita S. Æthelwoldi* by Wulfstan of Winchester and the *Vita S. Oswaldi* by Byrhtferth of Ramsey – do have certain ideas in common, there are also significant contrasts between the two, leading to the conclusion that Winchester and Ramsey valued different qualities in the depiction of, and perhaps even qualifications for, sainthood, and constructed the sanctity of their monastic patrons accordingly. The fundamental basis for both Æthelwold's and Oswald's claim to sanctity is the same: it was their roles as Benedictine monks and promoters of Benedictine monasticism which placed them in the ranks of confessors, thereby qualifying them for sanctity.

In Winchester the focus is consistently placed on Æthelwold's association with the crown, from Athelstan to Edgar, which would seem to indicate a more political approach to the depiction of sanctity than is seen at Ramsey. Æthelwold's own use of the cult of St Swithun is surely an example of this: Æthelwold vigorously promoted the cult to elevate the status of the Old Minster, and perhaps to help fund the rebuilding work there. The efficacy of his campaign can be seen in the contemporary calendars and litanies, where the two saints, Swithun and Æthelwold, are frequently associated. In Ramsey, however, the focus is clearly on associations with Biblical themes and characters, and the

divine. Where Æthelwold is consistently associated with the crown, Oswald is frequently associated with either the abstract notion of the divine, or figures such as David, Joshua, Isaac and Paul, all of whom are used to emphasise Oswald's role as a pastor and monk. Both read as being politically motivated, but the politics of each text is different: Æthelwold favours royal-ecclesiastical power, whereas Oswald favours secular-ecclesiastical power.

This differing approach to the construction of sanctity reinforces the argument made in the General Introduction, that to talk about a unified 'reform movement' is somewhat inaccurate. This is particularly true when the repeated attempts that Byrhtferth makes to dissociate Oswald and Ramsey from Æthelwold and Winchester are taken into consideration. In addition to the evidence, or rather lack thereof, of the hagiography, other sources must be taken into consideration. The evidence from places such as Worcester cathedral priory suggests that certain communities remained mixed – made up of both clerics and Benedictine monks – for long periods of time after the so-called 'reform'. As Sawyer has convincingly argued, the evidence from the Worcester charters indicates that, rather than there being a wholesale expulsion of clerics from the priory, the change to a monastic community was achieved through 'natural wastage': clerics died and were replaced by monks.<sup>1</sup> The *Vita S. Oswaldi* also contains indications that Oswald was not possessed of a hatred for clerics, as it would appear that Æthelwold was. Although referring to Oswald's stay at an unspecified, and obviously un-Benedictine, house in Winchester as being like Lot staying in Sodom, Byrhtferth does describe the clerics in a more favourable

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<sup>1</sup> Sawyer, 'Charters of the Reform movement'.

light than Wulfstan did; they are referred to as ‘*religiosi et dignissimi clerici*’ (‘religious and worthy clerics’)<sup>2</sup>. Admittedly there are references to the faults of the clerics; in greedily acquiring treasures which they gave to their wives and not the church, the impression given is that if they had donated the treasure to the church then their greed could almost have been forgiven. Although the clerics are labelled as ‘hateful’, it is worth noting that it is Edgar who considers the clerics in this way; it is Edgar, Byrhtferth says, who expelled the clerics from the monasteries;<sup>3</sup> there is no connection of such ideas with Oswald.

Thus Byrhtferth is corroborating the evidence of the *vitae* of Æthelwold – that Edgar played a significant role in the expulsion of clerics, at least from Winchester, and was therefore a supporter of Benedictine monasticism – but this in no way means that there was a unified ‘reform movement’ sponsored by the king. It is likely that Edgar supported the foundation of monasteries as it was a way of extending royal control over areas where there was little to begin with; this is another reason why certain landowners forcefully reclaimed their lands after Edgar’s death. To refer to something as ‘a movement’ implies that there was more than one person doing the same thing at the same time, when this is clearly not the case in late tenth-century England. Æthelwold expels the clerics by force, whereas the evidence of the charters suggests that the change in the Worcester cathedral community was achieved slowly, through a process of what Sawyer termed ‘natural wastage’.

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<sup>2</sup> VSO, p. 411.

<sup>3</sup> VSO, p. 425.

The promotion of Benedictine monasticism in late tenth-century England is only considered 'reform' because its proponents disliked, or at least disapproved of, secular clerics and considered the replacement of clerics with monks to be a restoration of the communities in order to improve their spiritual status. Our only evidence for this, of course, comes from the same Benedictine communities that were the proponents of 'the Reform' and so our understanding of 'the Reform' is strongly influenced by the stance of those communities. The number of Benedictine houses was also relatively small at this time and so the ideas of 'reform' are, in effect, the ideals of a minority. What is lacking is any documentary evidence from communities of secular clerics, detailing their observances to redress the balance. All the texts which claim that clerics were lax in their standards of religion, greedy and impious were composed by Benedictine monks, the so-called 'reformers'. It would be interesting to be able give a voice to the secular clerics at this time, and to understand what their standards were like. This would enable scholars to speculate more accurately as to whether there was a need for 'reform', or whether this was just the opinion of a minority, whose views were not shared by members of other religious communities.

Thus, rather than referring to the late tenth century as a period of 'Benedictine reform', or the 'reform era', it would be more accurate to refer instead to the period of promotion of Benedictine monasticism. As noted in the Politics chapter, and throughout the thesis, it is possible that the characterisation of the promotion of Benedictine monasticism as a 'reform movement' may have originated in the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries, when chroniclers such

as William of Malmesbury and John of Worcester appear to have rewritten the ecclesiastical history of the late tenth century and also the hagiography of those figures associated with this period, focusing on Dunstan, Glastonbury and Edgar. What the motives for doing this were is still unclear and indeed the whole subject is outside the bounds of this thesis, but a closer examination of these texts, especially close comparison of them with the tenth-century texts will, no doubt do much to further the understanding of both periods, and to determine precisely when the idea of a 'unified reform movement' was conceived.

Future investigation, could usefully focus on other hagiographical texts, such as those associated with the cult of Swithun, with Dunstan himself, and with saints promoted by Oswald, in order to give a comprehensive survey of sanctity in this period, and through this to gain a greater understanding of the varieties of Benedictine monasticism which were in existence in late tenth-century England, and the place of saints and sanctity within the ecclesiastical life of the period. The aim of this thesis has been to provide a foundation for a survey of sanctity in the late tenth century, and the role played by Benedictine monasticism in the construction and depiction of sanctity in the hagiography of this period – it is clear that the sanctity of both Æthelwold and Oswald was created within a context of Benedictine monasticism. That sanctity could be depicted in differing ways within this same context indicates that there was room for individual expression, and not imposed uniformity, as the traditional definition of 'the reform' would suggest.



APPENDIX A

**Table 1: Number of Attestations in charters listed for each reign and each rank**

	Athelstan	Edmund	Eadred	Eadwig	Edgar	Edward	Æthelred*
<b>Total</b>	74	59	68	87	164	5	44
<b>Dunstan – <i>abbas</i></b>	-	1	10	5	-	-	-
<b>Dunstan – <i>episcopus</i></b>	-	-	-	-	6	-	-
<b>Dunstan – <i>archiepiscopus</i></b>	-	-	-	-	135	5	36
<b>Æthelwold – <i>minister</i></b>	20	3	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Æthelwold – <i>abbas</i></b>	-	-	2	5	29	-	-
<b>Æthelwold – <i>episcopus</i></b>	-	-	-	-	84	5	21
<b>Oswald – <i>episcopus</i></b>	-	-	-	-	48	-	-
<b>Oswald – <i>archiepiscopus</i></b>	-	-	-	-	27	3	38

\* Only the charters issued between 979 and 993 have been included here – 44 in total. It must also be remembered that Æthelwold died in 984, Dunstan in 988 and Oswald in 992, which accounts for Æthelwold witnessing significantly fewer charters than either Dunstan or Oswald, and for Oswald witnessing more charters than Dunstan.

**Table 2: Number of attestations for each reign, regardless of rank as a figure**

	Athelstan	Edmund	Eadred	Eadwig	Edgar	Edward	Æthelred*
<b>Total</b>	74	59	68	87	164	5	44
<b>Dunstan</b>	-	1	10	5	141	5	36
<b>Æthelwold</b>	20	3	2	5	113	5	21
<b>Oswald</b>	-	-	-	-	75	3	38

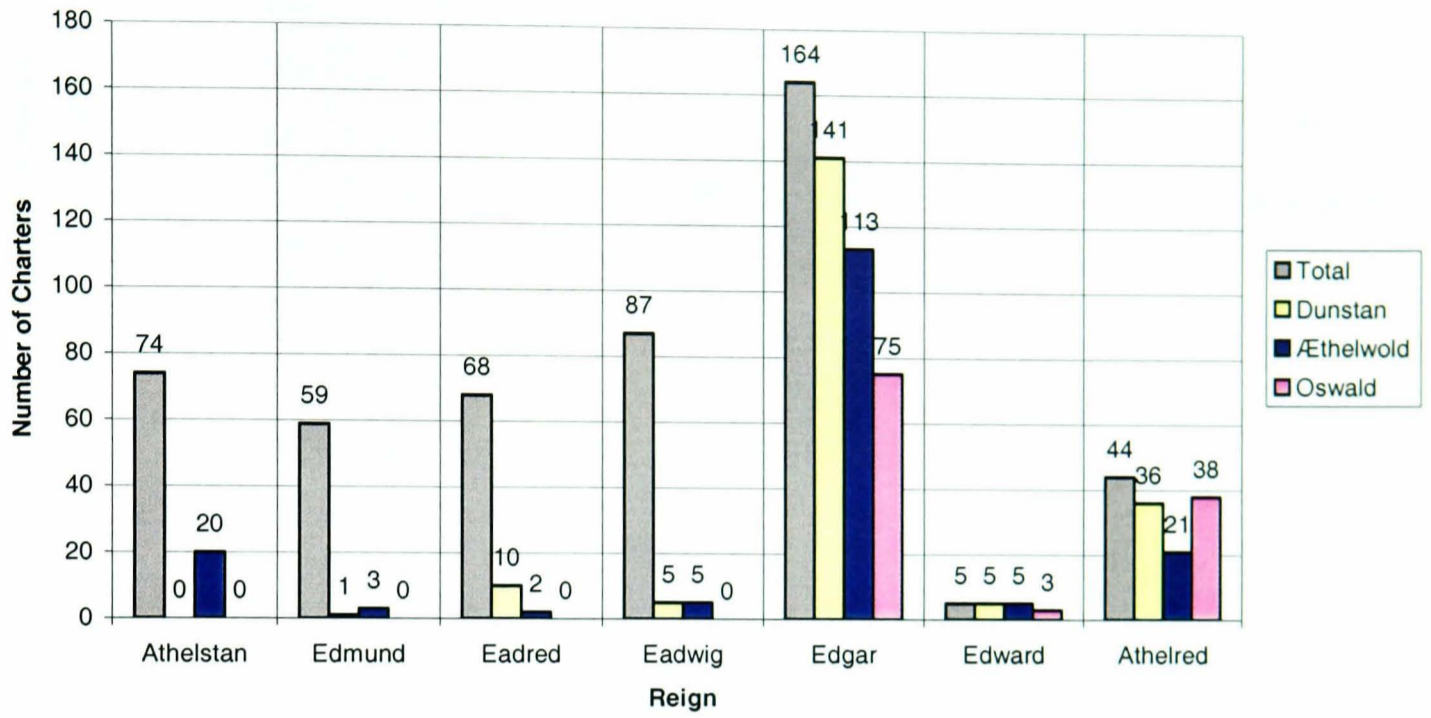
**Table 3: Number of attestations for each reign, regardless of rank as a percentage**

	Athelstan	Edmund	Eadred	Eadwig	Edgar	Edward	Æthelred*
<b>Total</b>	74	59	68	87	164	5	44
<b>Dunstan</b>	-	2	15	6	86	100	82
<b>Æthelwold</b>	27	5	3	6	69	100	48
<b>Oswald</b>	-	-	-	-	46	60	87

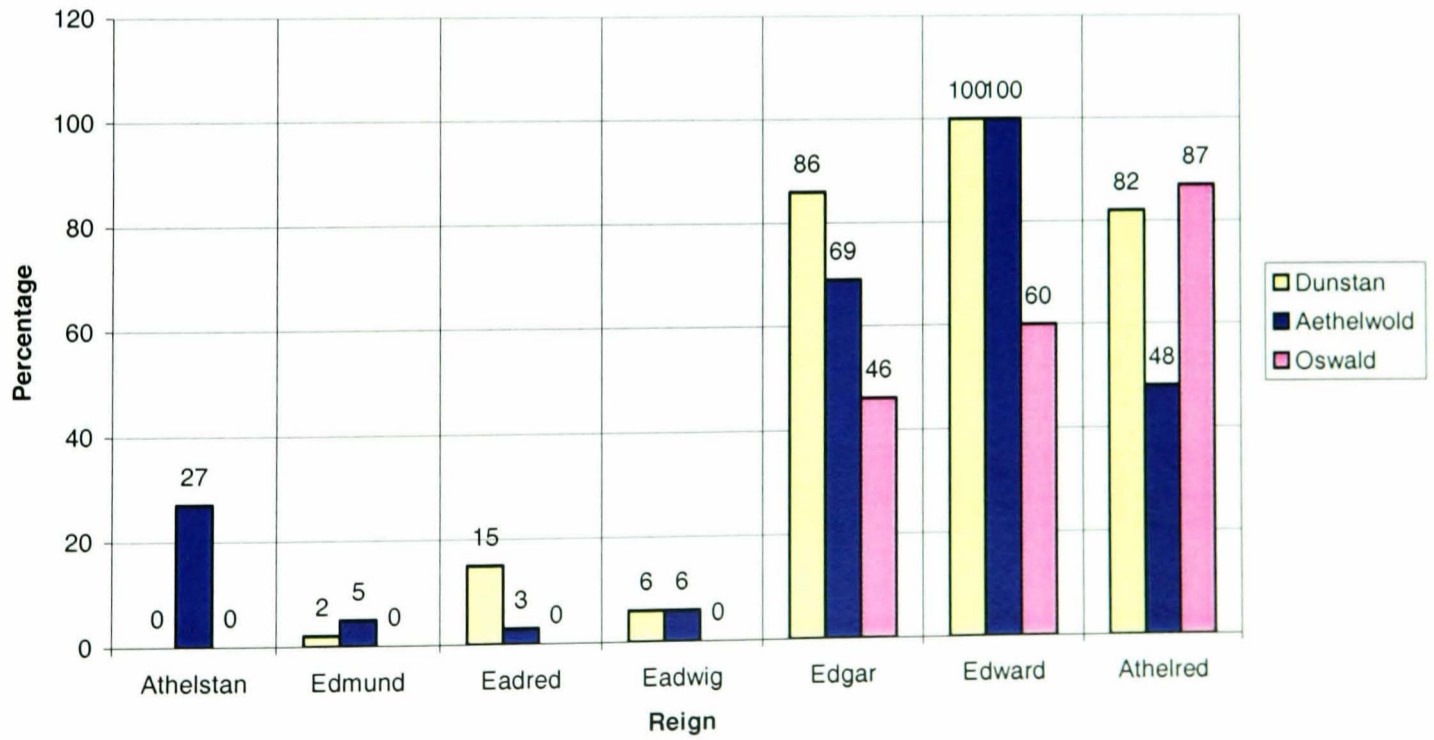
\* Only the charters issued between 979 and 993 have been included here – 44 in total. It must also be remembered that Æthelwold died in 984, Dunstan in 988 and Oswald in 992, which accounts for Æthelwold witnessing significantly fewer charters than either Dunstan or Oswald, and for Oswald witnessing more charters than Dunstan.

APPENDIX B

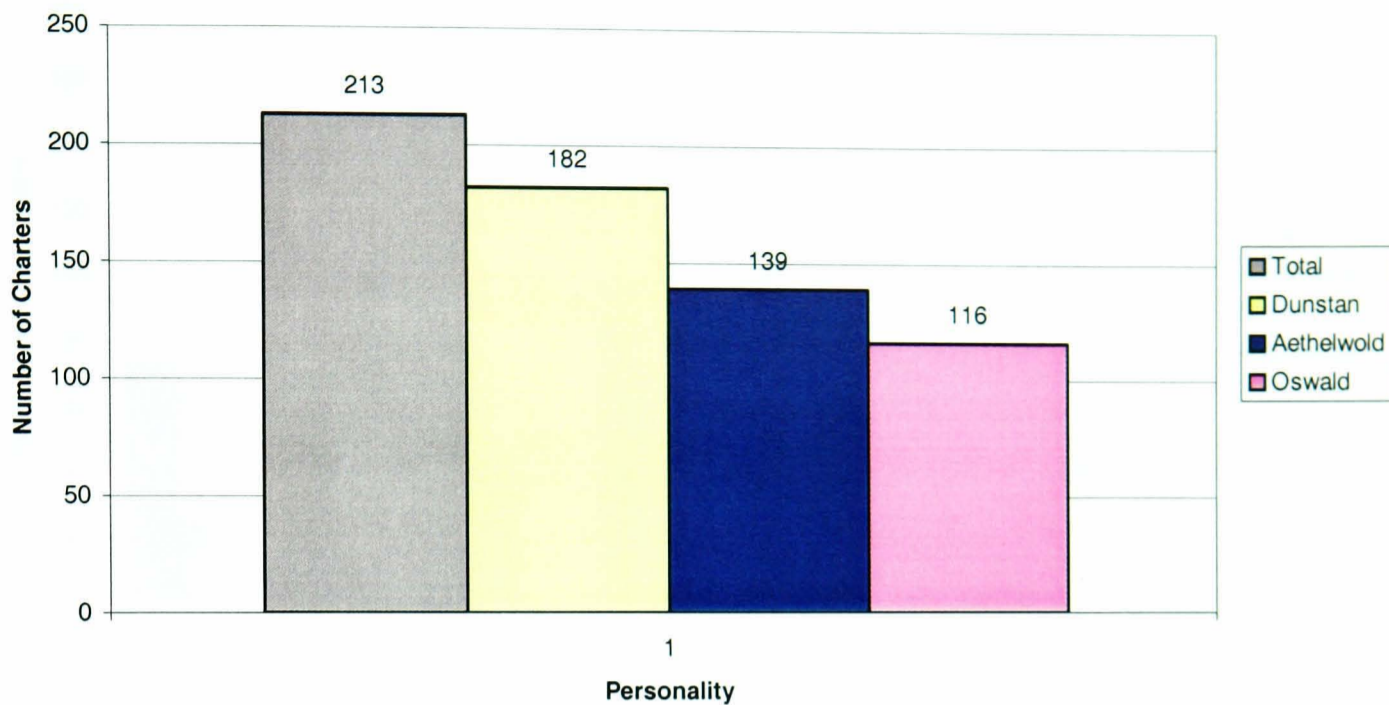
Graph 1: Total Number of Charters Witnessed as a Figure



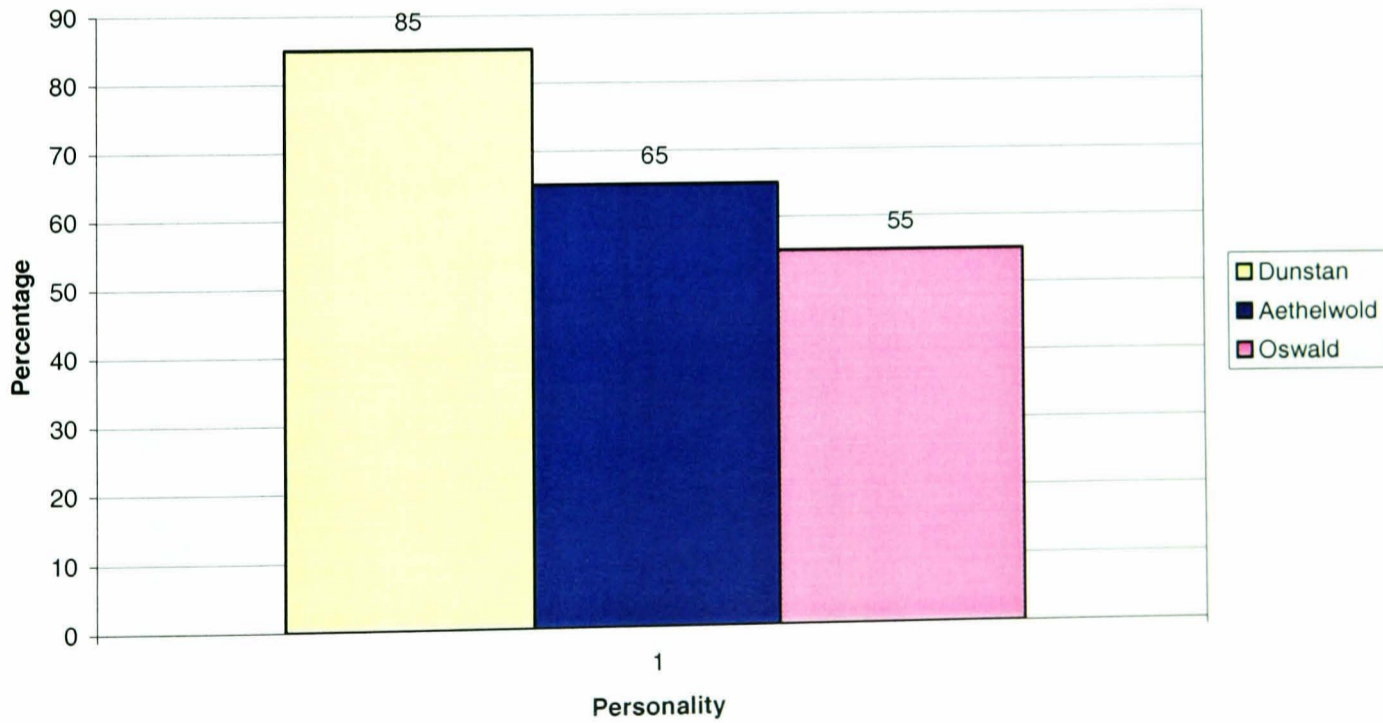
Graph 2: Total Number of Charters Witnessed as a Percentage



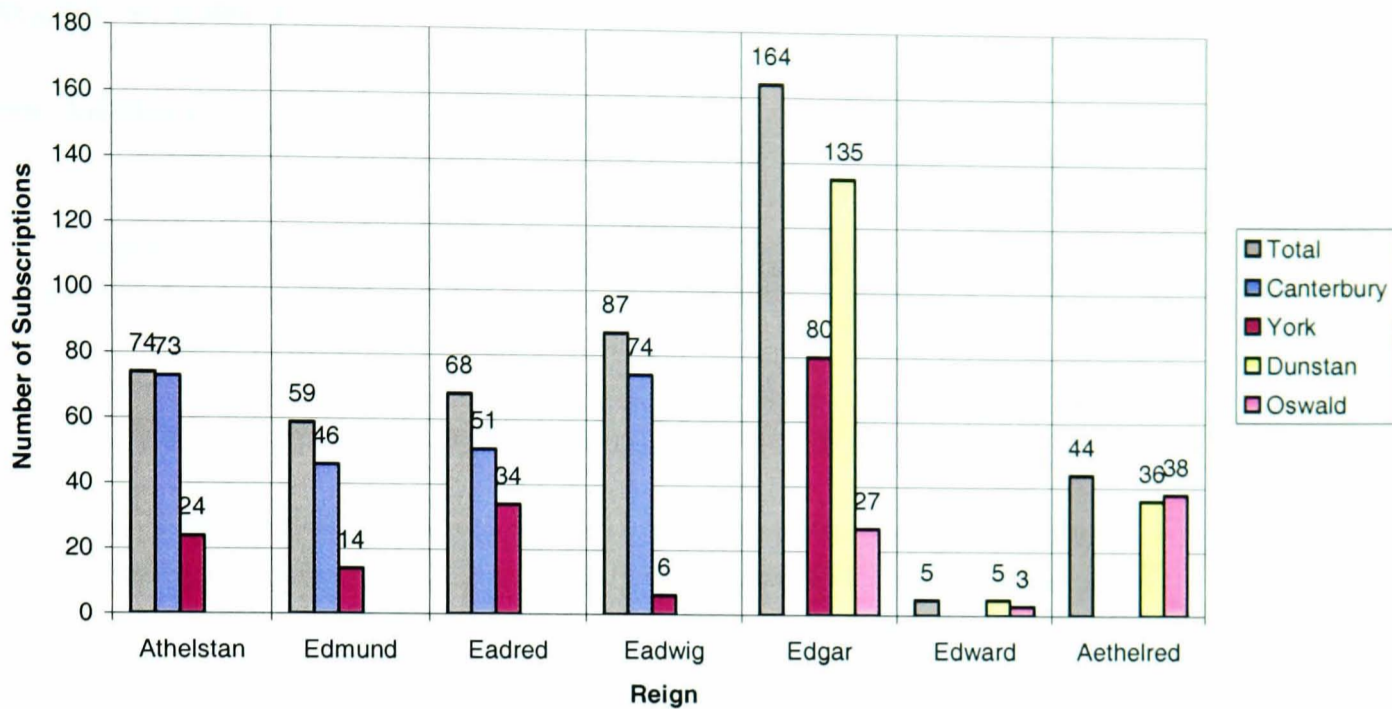
Graph 3: Total Number of Charters Witnessed from the reigns of Edgar to Athelred as a Figure



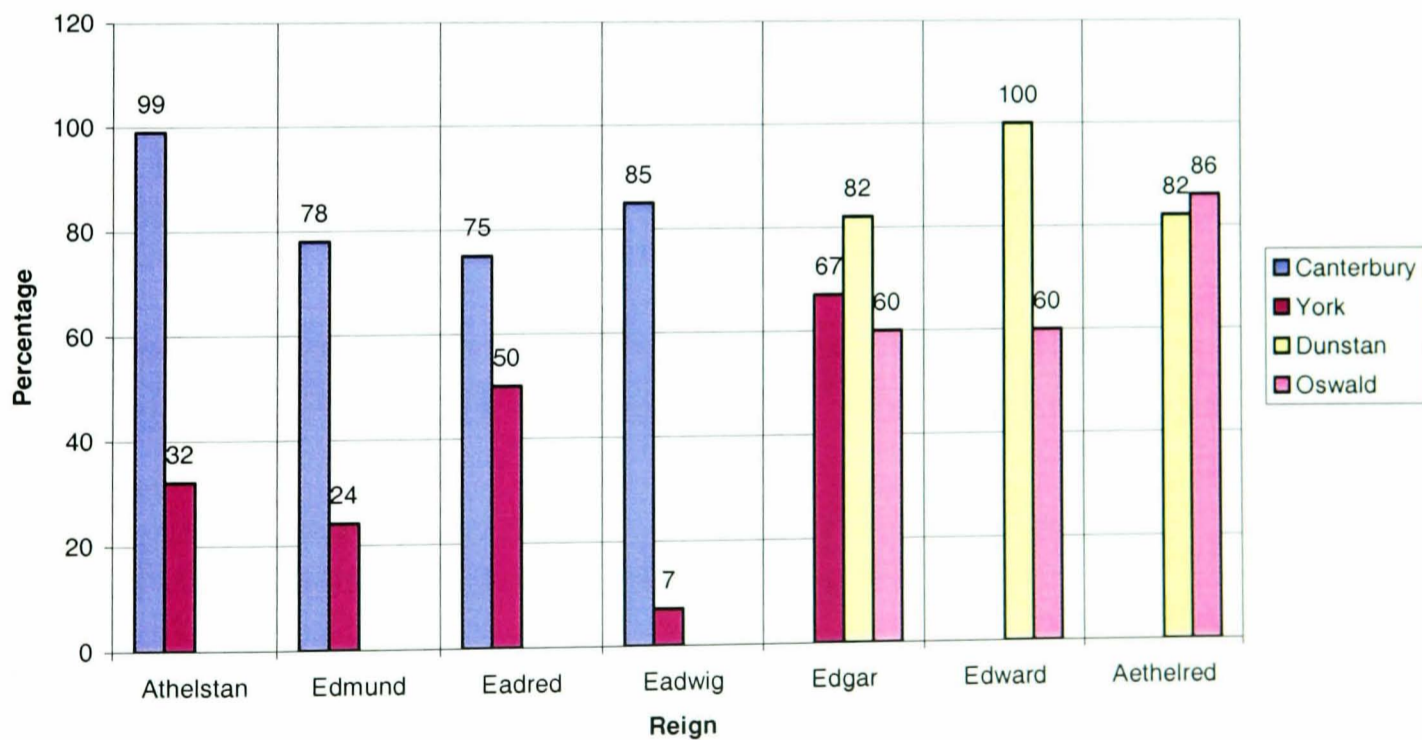
Graph 4: Total Number of Charters Witnessed from the reigns of Edgar to Athelred as a Percentage



Graph 5: Subscriptions of Archbishops of Canterbury and York as Figures



Graph 6: Subscriptions of Archbishops of Canterbury and York as a Percentage



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