

THE KING AND THE MONKS IN THE TENTH-CENTURY REFORMATION¹

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IT is generally agreed by scholars that monasticism was virtually, if not entirely, extinct in England by the mid-tenth century, and that the Vikings did it. The first proposition has the entire support of the contemporary narrative sources—which are scanty but authoritative—but the second has not. The best evidence is provided by one of the great men of the Benedictine revival in King Edgar's reign, St. Æthelwold. He almost certainly wrote the supplement to, and interpretation of, the Rule of St. Benedict, which was imposed on the English monks in a synod at Winchester about the year 970, and is generally known as the *Regularis Concordia*.² In it he states flatly that monasticism had in the past been utterly ruined by *saecularium prioratus*, secular domination.³ We can get some idea of what he meant partly from the *Concordia* itself, partly from an anonymous vernacular account of the restoration of the monasteries, which there is no reason to doubt is by Æthelwold himself.⁴ In this vernacular account he complains bitterly about the gift of church estates to kinsfolk by abbesses—the vernacular account was written for some nuns—and of grants of land made to sweeten the great men of the neighbourhood. Obviously this is part of what he meant by *saecularium*

¹ I have to thank Mr. R. H. C. Davis and Mr. P. H. Sawyer for their suggestions and criticisms. I have also to thank the abbot and community of Downside for allowing me to use their magnificent collection of books on monastic history.

² Ed. Dom Thomas Symons, London, 1953.

³ *Ibid.* p. 7.

⁴ O. Cockayne, *Leechdoms, Wortcunning and Starcraft*, iii (Rolls Series), 432-44. A translation is given by Dr. Whitelock, *English Historical Documents*, i (London, 1955), 846, from which I have quoted throughout. The importance of this document has been obscured by the belief that it was neither authentic nor by Æthelwold. Dr. Whitelock has shown that this belief is unfounded, *loc. cit.*

prioratus, and a more particular study of the *Concordia* will add other important details. For the moment, however, it is enough to notice that it is the malpractices of the local magnates and their families which he thought threatened the newly revived monasteries. In the vernacular account Æthelwold is mainly thinking of the future, but it is possible to infer that this menace was not new, and that it had ruined the monasticism of an earlier day. He says explicitly that on Edgar's succession Glastonbury was the only true monastery in England, and the only place where monks could be found; and towards the end of the account he again deprecates the "robbery of evil men", which together with the connivance of negligent kings had, in his opinion, "impaired the observance of this holy rule in former times". Thus St. Æthelwold insists that monasticism had altogether fallen before the revival of Glastonbury by St. Dunstan in Edmund's reign, and that the reasons were mainly local and English. The Vikings are nowhere mentioned. When it is remembered that Æthelwold was born in the time of Edward the Elder, and had had considerable experience in reviving monasteries in eastern England, where some monastic buildings had certainly been burnt down,¹ this silence is significant. It looks to me as if Æthelwold did not think of the ruin of monasticism in terms of the physical damage to persons and buildings; what he thought was the prime factor, was the behaviour of the English magnates who had used their power to get control over ecclesiastical endowments. In the *Concordia*, Æthelwold prescribes the remedy for *saecularium prioratus*; recourse to royal *dominium* only "with great expectations for the defence of the holy places and increase of ecclesiastical possessions".² It seems that at first monks were forbidden even to accept estates from men

¹ Æthelwold's first foundation Abingdon had been destroyed by the Vikings. *De Abbatibus Abbendonie, Chronicon Monasterii de Abingdon*, ed. J. Stevenson, ii (Rolls Series, London 1858), 277-8: "Ethelwoldus monachus Glestoniae . . . suscipiens abbatiam Abbendoniae invenit ibidem monasterium . . . dirutum a paganis omnino et destructum invenit."

² *Op. cit.* p. 7: "Saecularium vero prioratum, ne ad magni ruinam detrimenti uti olim acciderat miserabilitier deveniret, magna animadversione atque anathemate suscipi coenobiis sacris sapienter prohibentes, regis tantummodo ac reginae dominium ad sacri loci munimen et ad ecclesiasticae possessionis augmentum voto semper efflagitare optabili prudentissime iusserunt."

other than the king. It will be interesting then to follow up these suggestions of Æthelwold, and look at the early history of the revival from the point of view of the alliance of king and monks to defeat *saecularium prioratus*.¹

It is most convenient to begin by showing that Æthelwold was not exaggerating the importance of royal *dominium* in the defence of monasticism, and this can be done most easily by drawing attention to the quite vital part played by King Edgar himself in the monastic revival. This part is illuminated by a mere recounting of the history of the revival before Edgar's accession in 959 and the decisive synod of 964.

The first evidence of the coming of the new monasticism to England is the appearance of Ælfheah, "priest and monk", as witness to a charter of 929.² The same Ælfheah was made bishop of Winchester in 934, by King Æthelstan; he was a relative of Dunstan.³ In 935, or very soon afterwards, he tonsured Dunstan and Æthelwold, although only with royal permission, as Ælfric's life of Æthelwold explicitly points out.⁴ Thus King Æthelstan had given the chief West Saxon see to a monk in 934, but no attempt was made, or permitted to be made, to reform the chief West Saxon monastery, Glastonbury, until the time of Æthelstan's successor, Edmund. Even then the king did not agree easily to the reform. About the year 940, Dunstan had fallen into disgrace, and whilst on his way to exile, was recalled, restored to favour, and given Glastonbury to rule

¹ The modern study of the revival has concentrated mainly on the liturgical and cultural remains. It is admirably summed up in E. S. Duckett, *St. Dunstan of Canterbury* (London, 1955). For an account of the Benedictine reformation which stresses the interpenetration of the political and spiritual factors, it is still necessary to turn to Stubbs's introduction to his volume in the Rolls Series, *Memorials of St. Dunstan*.

² W. de Gray Birch, *C[artularium] S[axonicum]* (London, 1885-93), no. 641.

³ It is not known where Ælfheah got his monastic ideals from. It is likely enough from continental sources through the court of Æthelstan. In 928 an ambassador from Henry the Fowler came to King Æthelstan, and it was to this embassy that Levison traced the transmission of some of the details of the legend of St. Ursula, and her uncertain number of virgin companions, from England to Cologne, *Bönnener-Jahrbücher*, cxxxii (1927), 71. Why should not knowledge of the Lotharingian and Cluny reforms have been similarly transmitted to the Anglo-Saxon court?

⁴ *Vita Æthelwoldi, Chron. Monast. Abingdon*, ii. 256.

and reform. According to the first *Life* of Dunstan, Edmund had a miraculous escape from death whilst hunting, which he attributed to a promise to recall Dunstan.¹ Whether we call this conversion miraculous, providential, merely psychological, or all three, something very odd must have happened. Nothing else in Edmund's conduct gives the slightest indication of his sympathy for monasticism. In 944, after the appointment of Dunstan to Glastonbury, he gave the lands of the abbey of Bath to a group of clerks from the monastery of St. Bertin, who were refugees from the reforms of Gerard of Brogne.² Even at Glastonbury, Dunstan had to go about the work of reform slowly, since his companion there, Æthelwold, wished to go overseas to find "a more perfect monastic discipline".³ He was only dissuaded by the grant, of a portion only, of the lands of an obscure *monasteriolum* at Abingdon, to build an abbey and fashion a community after his own mind.⁴ By this time Edmund had been succeeded by his brother Eadred, who, unlike Edmund, had the greatest confidence in Dunstan, made him one of his principal advisers,⁵ and kept part of his treasure at Glastonbury. Even so the monastic discipline there was not perfect, and Æthelwold was only sparingly endowed for his new enterprise.

¹ *Memorials of St. Dunstan*, pp. 23-5.

² *Cartulaire de l'abbaye de St. Bertin*, ed. M. Guérard (1840), p. 145.

³ *Vita Æthelwoldi*, p. 257.

⁴ F. M. Stenton, *Early History of Abingdon* (Reading, 1913), pp. 50-1.

⁵ Dr. Whitelock, *EHD.*, p. 46, thinks that the *Vita Dunstani's* claim that Dunstan occupied a specially important place in Eadred's counsels exaggerated. But the *Vita*, in my opinion, gives details of what its claim was based on which seem entirely credible. There can be little doubt that Dunstan refused a bishopric, *Memorials*, p. 29. Eadred also entrusted some of his royal treasures to Dunstan's safe-keeping. These treasures were the royal landbooks, *loc. cit.*, and when Eadred wished to make his will, he sent for them, since the title-deeds had, of course, to go with the estates in question, *ibid.* p. 31. The *Vita* says: "misit (Eadred) circumquaque ad congregandas facultates suas". Dr. Whitelock, *EHD.* p. 829, translates this passage: "he sent on all sides to collect his goods."

I do not think that *facultas* is ever used to mean goods in so wide a sense, v. Niermayer, *Lexicon* s.v. : in English texts it means landbooks, charters. Bede uses the word in this sense, *H.E.* iv, c. 13, and it occurs as a key word in latin charters from the earliest times, v. CS 35. Obviously then an important section of the royal archives was entrusted to Dunstan. There is nothing incredible in this, and since it suggests that Dunstan was high in Eadred's confidence, I see no reason for rejecting the *Vita's* claims for Dunstan's influence.

In 955, when Eadred died leaving two nephews, Eadwig and Edgar, to succeed in turn, the monastic revival had achieved only the partial reform of Glastonbury and the first stages of the revival of Abingdon. Under the new king, Eadwig, Dunstan again fell into disfavour, and soon after Eadwig's coronation, he went into exile in a reformed Lotharingian monastery, St. Peter's, Ghent.¹

It would be convenient if we could reduce the issue between Dunstan and Eadwig to a difference of opinion about monastic reform, but I do not think we can. The *Cartularium Saxonicum* contains some sixty charters dated 956. No other single year in Anglo-Saxon history can show such a profusion of landbooks, such a waste of the royal demesne we might say. The whole of Edgar's reign produced less than sixty surviving charters with lay-grantees. For some reason Eadwig found it necessary, in 956, to buy support by these lavish grants of lands and privileges, but in spite of his generosity, England north of the Thames—the sources call it Mercia—repudiated its allegiance to him in 957, and chose his brother, Edgar, as king. So far as the sources allow us to see, Eadwig was powerless to resist, and he had to remain content with the allegiance of the West Saxons. Thus it is obvious that early in his reign Eadwig had lost the confidence of his magnates, and this may have had something to do with Dunstan's disgrace. Equally obviously this crisis could not have been caused by the quarrel with Dunstan alone, nor is it likely that monasticism played much part in it.

The monastic party, so far as we can identify them, counted only Abbot Dunstan and Archbishop Oda amongst the great men.² Æthelwold was only abbot of a small, incomplete monastery. The third saintly monk of the revival, Oswald, was still a monk at Fleury; neither Æthelwold nor Oswald

¹ *Memorials*, pp. 34 and 59.

² Oda became archbishop of Canterbury in 942. We know that at some point in his life he visited Fleury and received the tonsure, although he can never have been actually cloistered. *Vita Oswaldi, H[istorians of the] C[hurch of] Y[ork]*, ed. J. Raine (Rolls Series, i, London, 1879), 413 and v. R. R. Darlington, *English Historical Review* (1936), p. 387. It is most probable that Oda visited Fleury as bishop of Ramsbury, since he travelled to those parts in 936, after his consecration as bishop, but before his translation to Canterbury.

can have mattered much in 957. It is possible that some of the great magnates were beginning to be interested, and Ealdorman Æthelwine and Byrhtnoth, who were later great benefactors of the monks, were amongst Edgar's supporters in 957. But so too was Ealdorman Ælfhere of Mercia, who was later the bitterest of the monks' opponents. Nor, on the other hand, is it quite certain that Eadwig was altogether opposed to reform. It is usually supposed that his opposition to the monks was absolute, and that immediately after sending Dunstan into exile, he seized the estates of Abingdon as well as Glastonbury.¹ The evidence, however, is rather against this. Charters, not obviously forged, were granted to Abingdon by Eadwig in 956. I cannot claim to have investigated the charters in question minutely—it is necessary to take all the "reform charters" and study them as a group if secure judgements are to be made—but it seems *a priori* unplausible that Abingdon forgers would attribute their fabrications to Eadwig in view of his reputation in later monastic tradition. Æthelwold, as the witness-lists of the charters prove, remained faithful to Eadwig until his death in 959. We shall probably never know, then, the reasons for Eadwig's unpopularity with his magnates, but it is improbable that monkery had much to do with it.

If the events of Eadwig's reign throw little light on the relations of crown and monks, there can be no doubt that the monastic party, such as it was, was very much on Edgar's side. Dunstan was immediately summoned back to Mercia in 957 and made bishop of Worcester and London. Archbishop Oda remained with Eadwig, but he did not scruple to consecrate Dunstan at Edgar's request; Eadwig, apparently, could do nothing to stop him. Oda summoned his nephew, Oswald, back from Fleury, but when Oswald returned he found his uncle dead. He wasted no time in going to Eadwig's court, but went north instead, where Dunstan took him up and secured his accession to Worcester in 960 or 961.² In 959 Eadwig conveniently died and Edgar succeeded to the whole kingdom: with his accession the monks came to power.

¹ M. D. Knowles, *Monastic Order in England* (Cambridge, 1940), p. 39.

² HCY. i. 420.

Let us note that Dunstan first became important under Eadred, who had known him since childhood. Eadred was much influenced by his mother, who favoured Dunstan and Æthelwold highly. But Eadred was lukewarm in the cause of reform compared with his nephew, Edgar; Edgar had not merely grown up with the monks, he had been brought up by them. The preamble to the *Concordia* speaks of Edgar "being diligently admonished in the royal way of the catholic faith by a certain abbot".¹ In spite of the great weight which must be attached to the opinion of the late Edmund Bishop, his suggestion that this abbot was Dunstan cannot be accepted.² Æthelwold must be meant, since the first Life of St. Oswald says "that the same king [Edgar] was instructed in the knowledge of the true king by Æthelwold".³ When was this instruction given? Presumably before Edgar's accession to Mercia in 957, and the *Concordia* seems to imply that it was after 954 and the foundation of Abingdon, since it says that the instruction was given by "a certain abbot". I think Æthelwold means he was an abbot when he had Edgar in his charge, since, when he wrote the *Concordia*, he had been bishop of Winchester for some years. Why should he hark back to his earlier office unless he means us to understand that he taught Edgar during his time as abbot of Abingdon? Further Æthelwold, in the vernacular account of the founding of the monasteries, remarks that when Edgar was still an *ætheling*, he stayed at Abingdon and promised to help Æthelwold complete the monastic buildings. It looks very much as though Edgar came into Æthelwold's care after the latter's departure from Glastonbury, but before his own accession. Since Æthelwold became abbot of Abingdon only a few months before Eadred's death, it looks as though Edgar was in his care in the crucial early months of Eadwig's reign, which is interesting. This early schooling must in part explain Edgar's enthusiasm for monastic reform. It must also explain why Æthelwold, rather than Dunstan, took the lead in the revival from now on. The *Vita Oswaldi* tells us that Æthelwold was the king's principal counsellor,⁴ and we might guess this from the way we meet Æthelwold at every point in the revival. The first expulsion of

¹ *Op. cit.* p. 1. ² *Ibid.* p. 1, n. 3. ³ *HCY.* i. 426. ⁴ *Ibid.* p. 427.

clerks to make way for monks was at Æthelwold's cathedral of Winchester, and many of the greatest of the earliest monasteries were founded under his ægis. Dr. Knowles has conveniently divided the early monastic plantations into spheres of influence associated with each of the three monastic saints. The feeble group associated with Dunstan is as striking as the great names in Æthelwold's connection. Abingdon, Peterborough, Ely, Thorney, Crowland, the two Winchester monasteries, and probably St. Albans, are the most famous. This can, no doubt, be partly explained by Æthelwold's famous energy, but energy alone cannot contrive great endowments, something must be allowed for privileged access and royal favour.

Æthelwold was no mere court prelate, of course. He stands at the heart of the intellectual revival brought about by the new monasticism, and expressed most fully partly in the latin, but mainly in the vernacular writings produced in the reigns of Æthelred II and Cnut. The *Concordia* was almost certainly his work. Two short sections are said to have been added by Dunstan;¹ the inference seems to be that he had little to do with the rest. Æthelwold also probably wrote the vernacular account of the founding of the monasteries. This is associated with a vernacular version of the Rule of St. Benedict, which is now generally regarded as his work. A careful investigation of the diplomatic of late Old English documents, other than writs, would certainly disclose developments of some interest, which seem to arise at Abingdon and Winchester in Æthelwold's day. It is even possible that the revival of Anglo-Saxon Chronicle may have some connection with Æthelwold. These last two points are as yet mere conjectures, but the most famous name in the literary revival is that of Abbot Ælfric, and he was beyond question a pupil of Æthelwold.² This means we may bring the homilist Wulfstan into the circle too.³

¹ Op. cit. p. 4.

² *Ælfrics Grammatik und Glossar*, ed. J. Zupitza (Berlin, 1880), I: "sicut didicimus in scola Æþelwoldi", and cf. Thorpe, *Homilies*, i. 1: "ego Ælfricus, alumnus Adelwoldi".

³ D. Bethurum, *Homilies of Wulfstan* (Oxford, 1957), p. 345; D. Whitelock, *Sermo Lupi* (London, 1952), pp. 25 ff.; J. Ure, *The Benedictine Office* (Edinburgh, 1957), 34-46.

It is, moreover, worth pointing out that of the three saints connected with the revival, Dunstan can have had least experience of life in a reformed community. Oswald spent some years as a monk at Fleury, and Æthelwold built up and ruled over a monastery at Abingdon for nearly ten years, before he became bishop of Winchester. Dunstan began, and ended, his monastic life as abbot of the imperfectly reformed abbey of Glastonbury. He belongs rather with the great clerical statesmen such as Alfheah and Oda, the men who by their influence at court and their reputation for sanctity, prepared the way for the experienced monks, Oswald and Æthelwold, who actually, I believe, effected the revival. It is not, then, surprising that various recensions of the *Chronicle* merely note the death of Dunstan "archbishop" in 988, but two of them, *D* and *E*, under 984, record the death of Æthelwold "the father of the monks". The trend of recent studies has confirmed the judgement made by Sir Frank Stenton many years ago: "It was from Abingdon rather than Glastonbury that the new monasticism of the tenth century derived its distinctive features."¹

Some apology is required for recounting so much familiar information at such length, but my purpose must be my excuse. At every point it has been apparent that the course of the revival hung on the king's nod, and its progress was entirely dependent on influence at court. Even when the scanty evidence of the history of the personalities involved in the early history of the revival is examined, it is again a story of favourably or unfavourably disposed kings, royal friendship and enmity. This is even more apparent when we turn to Edgar's reign proper.

Very little was done for the revival of monasticism in the early years of the reign beyond the promotion of Dunstan to Canterbury, Oswald to Worcester and Æthelwold to Winchester, and the completion of Abingdon with the King's help.² Probably the monks were not yet ready. Abingdon had only been founded in 954; Glastonbury was still not perfect in the same year, and the only other monastery which could offer a supply of trained and experienced monks was a tiny community at Westbury-on-Trim founded by Oswald, little, if at all, earlier

¹ *EHA*. p. 7.

² *EHD*. p. 847.

than 962. It is not surprising, then, that little was done to widen the scope of the reform until 964.

In 964 the minds of both Æthelwold and Oswald were troubled. Æthelwold's formidable conscience was disturbed by the "lascivious clerks" established in his cathedral church. Oswald was likewise troubled for the future of his monastery at Westbury-on-Trim. This community was settled on part of his cathedral endowment,¹ which could be resumed by a successor less favourably disposed to monasticism. Oswald then went to his colleagues Æthelwold and Dunstan for advice.² Then, since Æthelwold was the king's chief adviser, he was deputed to approach the king. The result was a great synod held at Easter, 964, probably at Winchester,³ which decided on a general policy of resuming ecclesiastical endowments held by "clerks" and granting them out to monks. Æthelwold had already begun the eviction of the clerks from his cathedral at Winchester, and Oswald plainly wanted to do the same at Worcester. Both Oswald and Æthelwold got their way, and by the end of 964, Winchester and Worcester cathedrals had been forcibly converted to monasticism. Winchester New Minster, Chertsey, Milton Abbas⁴ followed soon after, and the principal endowments in southern and midland England were at the disposal of the monks whenever they should be ready to use them. Thus by 964 the reform was launched; the monks had come to power. One can very nearly give the Benedictine revival a precise date and place of origin: Easter, 964, and a royal synod, probably held at Winchester.

The debt the new monks owed to the royal *dominium* of church matters and church lands could hardly be more obvious. But what exactly was the *saecularium prioratus* it had to overcome, and why was Æthelwold, and not he alone, so afraid of it? The narrative sources are of little help here, and we must turn to a few charters, some of them dubious concoctions—which, however, we may control in various ways—if we are to find out.

¹ HCY. i. 424.

² Loc. cit.

³ HCY. i. 426-7. I have discussed the siting of this synod, and the relation of the account of its origin given in the *Vita Oswaldi* to that given by the *Vita Æthelwoldi*, J.E.H. ix (1958), 167, n. 4.

⁴ *Chronicle, Æ*, s.a. 964.

The preamble of the Oswaldslow Charter, CS 1135,¹ says that Oswald, in 964, gave the clerks he found sitting in his cathedral a choice between renouncing their womenfolk or their prebends²; the Ramsey Chronicle says much the same.³ There can be little doubt that these passages accurately record an episode in the history of Worcester Cathedral. The narrative sources refer frequently to the lascivious and unchaste clerks whom the monks replaced. CS 1135 calls the sitting clerks of Worcester "degraded and lascivious", but it also reveals that they were not profligates, but married men. At any rate they were given a choice between their prebends and their wives. The point is important, and the evidence CS 1135 contributes to the problem of the "lascivious clerks" of the highest value. The sitting clerks were respectable enough after the fashion of their day. Indeed we could hardly explain the continued pious donations of land and property given to the unreformed communities right up to the eve of the revival if they were not. Everything suggests that CS 1135 is right; the monks invaded communities composed at least partly of married clerks. If this was so we should expect that the reform meant some changes in the tenorial practices of the revived monasteries. Obviously communities composed of married men would require rather different economic arrangements from a community of celibates with no wives and children to provide for. The evidence of these new tenorial arrangements, although scanty, is significant.

A late Worcester source, an inquest of 1093, which was based on earlier documents, claimed that, before the conversion of Worcester, the clerks had held the endowment in individual prebends, *quasi propria*, and that the conversion of Worcester meant that each clerk gave up what he had formerly regarded as his

¹ I have defended the authenticity of this passage, *J.E.H.*, ix (1958), 159-69 and discussed the charter in general, *BULLETIN JOHN RYLANDS LIBRARY*, xli (1958-9), 54-80.

² "Ego (Eadgarus) confirmo . . . ut jam amplius non sit fas neque jus clericis reclamandi quicquam inde quippe qui magis elegerunt cum sui ordinis periculo et ecclesiastici beneficii dispendio suis uxoribus adherere quam deo caste et canonice servire."

³ *Chronicon Abbatie Ramesiensis*, ed. W. D. Macray (Rolls Series, London, 1886), pp. 41 and 19.

own to a common fund. In other words conversion at Worcester entailed the clubbing together of a number of individual prebends, the communalization of the endowment. The Ramsey Chronicle says much the same thing.¹ Both these are late sources depending on earlier material of uncertain character and provenance but both to my mind speak the truth. A charter of Bishop Coenwald of Worcester, dated 957, granted an estate belonging to the church of Worcester to Behstan "priest of the same monastery".² Behstan was even allowed to nominate an heir for the estate—it was to stay in his family for the lifetime of four members before it reverted to Worcester cathedral. This looks very like a grant *quasi propria* to a member of the cathedral community. Even after the conversion of Worcester, tradition was still strong enough to persuade, or force, Oswald to grant an estate for three lives to Wynsige the first prior.³ There is thus no reason to doubt that the conversion of Worcester involved a revolution in the manner of holding the cathedral property. Whilst it happens that here, as in so many dark places in Anglo-Saxon history, Worcester offers more evidence than anywhere else, it is not likely that it was unique in the character of its conversion.

There is some evidence that property-holding by men called monks *quasi propria* was taken for granted in pre-Viking England. In 805, Archbishop Æthelheard of Canterbury gave an estate to his cathedral community, and recorded the gift in a charter of which an authentic copy survives, CS 319. He states specifically: "ut omne bonum quod in illa terra lucrificetur fratres sibi singulariter ad mensam suam habeant et ad alteram necessitatem faciant qua illis bona et spontanea voluntate maxime utile videatur." Thus at Christ Church Canterbury, in 805, the members of the community had their own tables to which the profits of at least some part of the endowment were assigned.

¹ *Chronicon Abbatie Ramesiensis*, ed. W. D. Macray (Rolls Series, London, 1886), p. 20. Although this chronicle was put together after the Conquest, it must have had earlier and reliable sources, since it gets a surprising number of things right. It is the only narrative source which accurately describes the enlarging of Worcester cathedral by St. Oswald for instance.

² CS 993.

³ J. M. K[emble], *C[odex] D[iplomaticus]* (London, 1839-48), no. 616.

In 813 Archbishop Wulfred undertook a reform of the Canterbury cathedral community, and left a memorial of his work in an important charter, CS 342. The members of the community are allowed to hold houses individually, and even to bequeath them to whom they liked, provided they left them to men who were at least potential members of the community. The charter reads: "Ego Wlfredus . . . dabo et concedo familia Christi habere et perfruere domos . . . jure perpetuo hereditatis . . . cuicumque relinquere vel donare voluerint unusquisque liberam habeant facultatem in eodem monasterio donandi sed nec alicui foras extra congregationi. . . ." Archbishop Wulfred, however, abolished the individual tables, since he required the members of the community to eat in a common refectory. He also required them to sleep in a common dormitory and altogether "observe the life of monastic discipline according to the *Rule (juxta regulam)*". In an earlier discussion of this charter¹ I suggested, following Levison, that *regula* without qualification at this time meant the rule of St. Benedict. This is not so. Mr. Bullough has pointed out² that "until the Synod of Aachen in 817 this would imply obedience to a rule other than or not exclusively that of St. Benedict". The arrangements prescribed by Archbishop Wulfred are hardly compatible with St. Benedict's rule in any case, but there is no doubt that Archbishop Wulfred, and not only he, thought that the members of the Canterbury community living "regularly" were monks. Not only does he call this life the regular life of monastic discipline, but twenty years later a member of this community left just such a will as the archbishop prescribed, CS 402. The man's name was Werhard. He left the community numerous estates: he was obviously a man of family and property, and this, no doubt, is why his will has been preserved. He also gave back "all the lands inside and outside Kent which I have hitherto held by the gift of the archbishop and with the cognizance of the aforesaid family of Christ". The disposition of these lands is left to the discretion of the archbishop. Thus what a later age would have called prebends were attached to the Canterbury houses. What is particularly interesting is that Werhard refers

¹ *J.E.H.* ix. 171.

² *Ibid.* p. 236.

to his bretheren as his "brother monks" and the community as "monachi ecclesie Christi". Of course by later Benedictine standards, Werhard was hardly worthy of the name of monk at all—one suspects that men of St. Dunstan's generation would have called him ugly names. What matters here, however, is what constituted monasticism in the early ninth century. We have examined evidence from one recently reformed community only, but a contemporary, Alcuin, seems to mean by monk, in his correspondence, much what Wulfred or Werhard meant.¹ In any case it is becoming apparent that we have assumed a too early and too easy diffusion of the Rule of St. Benedict in the past. Dom Hallinger has argued that even Gregory the Great was ignorant of the Rule,² and Dom Ferrari has pointed out that "there is no evidence of a monastery in Rome which employed *exclusively* the rule of St. Benedict much before the tenth century".³ Obviously then it is wrong to equate pre-Viking English monasticism with the maintenance of strict Benedictine standards, and we must be prepared to find that early monks were by no means so strict on the matter of holding property as later monks thought proper.

We may also cite in this connection some later literary evidence, and some evidence from parallel developments in Francia. The *Regularis Concordia* forbade abbots and abbesses from making wills, and monks and nuns are instructed to ignore their terms if wills were made.⁴ This looks very like an attempt to protect a corporate endowment against attempts by the most powerful single member of the community to treat any part of the monastery's property *quasi propria*. A generation later Abbot Ælfric in his pastoral letter, speaks of the duty of monks: "þe libbað æfter regole unden heora abbode 7 ealle heora ðingc him ðoð gemæne swa him diht se abbod" (who live according to the *Rule* under their abbot, and have all their

¹ *Epistolae*, M.G.H. Epistolarum, iv, no. 284, for instance, where it is obvious that contemporary monks had their own houses. Cf. *Ep.* no. 21.

² "Papst Gregor der Grosse and der hl. Benedikt", *Studia Anselmiana*, xlii (1957), 269-77.

³ *Early Roman Monasteries*, *Studi di Antichità Cristiana*, xxiii (Vatican, 1957), quoted from Mr. Bullough's review, *J.E.H.* ix. 236.

⁴ *Op cit.* p. 69.

goods in common as the abbot directs them).¹ There is also an important passage in Ælfric's homily on the deposition of St. Martin: "He filled that monastery [of Tours] with good-living men, that is to say with eighty monks who steadfastly obeyed him, and they had all their property in common—nor had they anything separately."² It is significant that Ælfric, in describing the good-living monk, should single out community of property as a distinguishing mark; later in the same homily he thinks it worth while pointing out that these same model monks sat together for meals.

I shall now cite what seems to me decisive evidence from the Continent. The force of this evidence will, however, depend on whether the student is inclined to think that England in the tenth century was *sui generis*, or whether, as some of us now incline to think, there was much in common between England and Francia in the tenth century, especially in fundamental institutions and tenorial notions. Certainly the importance for the English Benedictine reform of the contemporary Continental reform movement cannot be denied. We have already seen that Archbishop Oda had been tonsured at reformed Fleury, where he later sent his nephew and protégé. Æthelwold was about to withdraw to a Continental monastery, when he was made abbot of Abingdon; we may guess this was Fleury since he later sent his disciple, Osgar, to Fleury for training,³ and Abingdon seems to have got its first copy of the *Rule* of St. Benedict from Fleury.⁴ Now Fleury was reformed by St. Odo of Cluny about 930. The success of the reform, aided perhaps by the pretensions of Fleury to hold some dubious bones of St. Benedict, made the name of Cluny. The nature of this reform is described in some detail by Odo's biographer, John of Salerno. It is plain that conditions at Fleury on the eve of its conversion were

¹ B. Thorpe, *Ancient Laws and Institutes of England*, ii. 372. The use of the key-words in the sense I have taken them is found elsewhere in Ælfric's works, *Homilies*, ed. B. Thorpe (London, 1843), i. 316: "ne heora nan næfde synderlice æhta, ac him eallum wæs gemæna heora ðing."

² *Homilies*, ii. 506.

³ *Vita Æthelwoldi*, p. 259.

⁴ *De Abbatibus Abendonae*, p. 278: "Fecit etiam venire regulam Sancti Benedicti a Floriaco monasterio."

rather like those at Worcester in 964. John of Salerno says explicitly : “ *res monasterii nequaquam in commune possederant, sed pro posse et libitu suo eas inter se diviserant.*”¹ Odo tried to persuade the inmates of Fleury to three fundamental reforms : “ *ut ab esu carnum recederent, parceque viverent, nihilque proprium possiderent.*”² The devices they resorted to in order to defeat Odo are well known. They gave estates to their relatives, and, having impoverished the endowment, virtuously gave up eating meat and demanded a supply of fish, which in central France was particularly costly. Nor was Fleury unusual in its tenurial habits. Sackur long ago pointed out, in his classical work on the Cluny reform,³ that a study of the early sources for houses of the “ Cluny connection ”⁴ showed that communalization of the endowment was commonly the first stage in the reform of the monastery concerned.

It is true that we have here only two indubitable and relevant facts ; that holding *quasi propria* was common in Frankish monasteries and detested by the Cluny connection, and that the English reformers knew, revered, and borrowed from the practices of such reformed houses as Fleury.⁵ This does not prove of itself that unreformed English monasteries were necessarily in like case to unreformed Fleury, but taken together with the scanty but significant literary and charter evidence I have already cited, it does seem that the *onus probandi* is on those who wish to

¹ Migne, *PL.* cxxxiii. 81.

² *Loc. cit.*

³ *Die Cluniacenser* (Halle, 1892), i. 52.

⁴ Confusion is sometimes caused when the influence of Cluny is discussed, because later in the tenth century it became usual for a house reformed from Cluny to remain in permanent subjection to Cluny as part of the Cluniac order. The Cluniac order has tended to divert attention from what is probably much more important, the Cluny connection, that is houses, most of them great ones, reformed by the abbots of Cluny, or after Cluny's ideals. Fleury is the obvious example—the *arcisterium sancti Benedicti* Oswald's biographer called it, because it held the alleged bones of St. Benedict. The distinction was pointed out by Dom J. Othon in a classical article in the *Revue Mabillon* (1932), p. 151. Dom Othon correctly assigned the English houses of the reform movement to the Cluny connection.

⁵ Not only Fleury provided a model. Dunstan went in exile to St. Peter's, Ghent, and monks from Ghent as well as Fleury assisted at the compilation of the *Regularis Concordia*, p. 3. Æthelwold modelled the Abingdon chant on the customs of Corbeil, *Hist. Mon. Abingdon*, i. 129.

argue the contrary. It seems to me that the situation at Worcester in 964 was not unique, nor by contemporary standards incompatible with monasticism, although it certainly could not be reconciled with the *Rule* of St. Benedict. Indeed in many ways the English reform was the local branch of the Cluny connection, and decisive stage in the introduction of true Benedictine monasticism into England.

This tenurial revolution could not stop with the communalization of the endowment. At first sight it might appear that the enforcement of celibacy and the communalization of the endowment meant simply a storm in clerical teacups, but this is not so. The sources insist that the "clerks" whom the new monks replaced, or forcibly converted, were well-born. The tenth-century *Life* of St. Oswald, for instance, speaks of clerks of "very high birth" who squandered the treasures of the Church on their wives.¹ We know that the first prior of Worcester, Wynsige, had been a beneficed clerk there until he had been converted willy nilly by Oswald. The Ramsey Chronicle remarks that he was the best-born of the community of his day.² Well-born clerks tend to have equally well-born lay relatives endowed with power and influence, which, one may reasonably guess, lay in the districts in which their clerkly friends or relatives held their benefices. Consequently the communalization of the endowments and the expulsion of married clerks must have had wider repercussions. This may seem a dangerously unsubstantiated inference, but, in fact, it is a reasonable inference, as an examination of a little of the evidence for the nature of early ecclesiastical endowment and an analysis of some complaints about lay-reactions to the revival, will show.

It seems probable that in the first generations after the conversion of England, men who founded monasteries expected the estates concerned, and the monastery on them, to stay in the family. The foundation narrative of Gloucester, CS 60, taken with Bede's bitter complaints to Bishop Ecgberht,³ show that

¹ HCY. i. 411.

² Op. cit. p. 41.

³ I have discussed the machinery of early ecclesiastical endowment, and examined these two sources in some detail in *Land Tenure in Early England* (Leicester, 1959).

monasteries, and especially the rule of them, were expected to become hereditary. Smaller gifts of land to monasteries might also be expected to form what were in effect hereditary prebends within a complex of other, probably similarly placed endowments. If I am correct in my reading of it, CS 77 records the founding of just such a hereditary prebend.¹ An authentic late eighth-century charter, CS 283, which grants a Gloucester estate to Worcester on condition that it be always held by a male member of the grantor's family who has taken orders, and is presumably to be a member of the cathedral community, seems to do likewise. It is not surprising, then, to find Oswald beginning his monastic career by ruling a Winchester monastery which his uncle, Archbishop Oda, bought for him at a stiff price, "donando digno pretio".²

The most important way in which the Benedictine reformation affected, and overturned, established family rights, however, was in connection with the abbatial office itself. There is, I think, no doubt that in early English monasticism hereditary abbacies were common and probably the rule.³ This seems implicit in Bede's letter to Ecgbert and the early monastic foundation charters. It is equally strongly supported by the remarkable history of Iona, a community which, although not English, did exert a remarkable influence on English religious life. Eight of the first nine abbots of Iona were certainly relatives

¹ I have defended this interpretation of CS 77 in *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, xxxi (1958), pp. 125-7.

² *HCY*. i. 411. Odo of Cluny began his monastic career in a similar fashion. He was given a place in the community of St. Martin of Tours by Count Fulk of Anjou. "Comes Fulco, qui eum nutrierat : cui mox cellam juxta beati Martini tribuit ecclesiam et quotidianum victum ex eadem canonica acquisivit, eique concessit," *PL.*, cxxxiii. 48. The state of things at Tours sounds even less monastic than was Canterbury in the eighth century, yet Odo found the *Rule* of St. Benedict in the library at Tours, and assumed it was binding on him, *ibid.* c. 50. When Odo left Tours for Baume and St. Berno, he took one hundred volumes from the library with him, *ibid.* c. 54. Since it is difficult to believe that Odo stole the books or that the community of Tours was indifferent to its library, it is tempting to think that Odo took them in lieu of the portion he surrendered.

³ Whitelock, *EHD*. p. 77: "Anglo-Saxon landowners tended to regard the house they had founded as a family possession, to be handed down in their kindred."

of St. Columba; the ninth may have been.¹ At any rate the Benedictine reformers were mortally afraid of the grip of the hereditary principle on abbatial appointments. The *Concordia* strictly forbade *secularium prioratus*²; it seems likely enough that at least partly this *prioratus* meant the direct rule of monasteries by lay-men. The previous section had strictly enjoined that all elections should be carried out with the consent and advice of the king. This provision is plainly aimed against local great men seeking to enforce hereditary rights to control abbatial elections, since it is reinforced by a privilege found in charters granted to a number of reformed monasteries in the late tenth and early eleventh centuries. Almost all of these also contain dubious or spurious material, but since one charter of excellent repute,³ KCD 684, contains the privilege in question, it must represent a genuine provision of the reform period. It reads in the Abingdon version :

. . . that after the death of this same abbot Wulfgar, in whose day this restoration of liberty, according to the mind of Christ, was conceded, the whole community of the aforesaid monastery should elect an abbot with suitable counsel, according to the provision of the Rule of St. Benedict, choosing justly from amongst the same throng of bretheren. This liberty and privilege is to be observed by all catholics henceforth and for ever, nor are any outsiders whomsoever, relying on tyrannical contumacy and seizing authority in the aforesaid monastery, to exercise their power, but the aforesaid community shall be exalted by the privilege of perpetual liberty.

Thus the scanty evidence does point rather decisively to a deep-rooted principle of hereditary, local, control over abbatial elections, which the tenth-century reformers intended to abolish with royal help.

Again we may turn to Francia and the Cluny connection for illuminating analogies and parallels. The first crisis in the history of Cluny itself was the struggle to secure the election of Odo as abbot, and the exclusion of Wido, the nephew of the

¹ *Adamnani Vita S. Columbae* ed. J. T. Fowler (Oxford, 1894), genealogical table.

² *Op. cit.* p. 7. *Prioratus* is used of secular and spiritual authority in the *Concordia*. An interesting passage, p. 4, suggests that *prioratus* included the holding by lay-men of the abbatial office itself: "et hi qui spiritualis imperii prioratum ad disciplinae utilitatem non ad saecularis tyrannidem potentatus super eas exercent."

³ F. M. Stenton, *EHA*. p. 32.

founder, St. Berno.¹ Likewise the abbey of Fleury, which exercised such an important influence on the English reformers, was strengthened with a papal privilege which put the abbey under a regimen similar to that prescribed in the *Concordia*. At Fleury all local control was excluded,² and the responsibility for seeing that elections to the abbacy were held in accordance with the *Rule* assigned to the king of the Franks.³

It could not be expected that such an assault on vested interests as the Benedictine reformation represented, could pass without opposition. Nor did it. St. Æthelwold, for instance, complained :

If any of them (abbesses), led astray by the temptation of the devil, be convicted of crime against the Church or the State, let neither king nor secular lord be glad at it, as if the way were cleared and a reason given for him to rob God, who owns these possessions, and who never committed any crime. . . . If any of the king's reeves is convicted of crime against God or man, what man is so foolish or so senseless as to deprive the king of his property because his reeve is convicted? Therefore in the same way let whatever among the possessions of the churches is given to the eternal Christ stand for ever.⁴

Æthelwold, then, was worried about the forfeiture of estates belonging to the monasteries under the guise of penal fines. Oswald, too, was afraid of such penalties since several of his charters contain a precautionary provision. A charter of 963 for instance, reads : " The whole amount of the land, therefore, is 3 hides which Bishop Oswald grants by charter to his thegn

¹ Sackur, *op. cit.* i. 66.

² The main enemy of the Fleury monks was the bishop of Orleans, the local ordinary. Houses of the Cluny connection in Francia normally set great store by episcopal exemption. Other monastic reformers, in England and Lotharingia for instance, did not seek such exemption. It would be unwise to see a difference in principle here. In central France, and in the environs of Cluny itself, there was no strong reform-minded lay-power capable of schooling a secular-minded episcopate. In England, on the contrary, the king was powerful enough to choose his bishops and the English monks captured the episcopate before they captured the monasteries. It is likely that circumstances only, at first, determined the attitude of the Cluny connection to episcopal exemption. How dangerous it is to distinguish too sharply between Cluny and, say, Lotharingian attitudes to reform, is shown by the career of Leo IX as bishop of Toul. He was educated at St. Évre, a house of the Cluny reform, Michel, *Studi Gregoriani*, iii, 299 ; he retained an affection for Cluny, but he did not seek episcopal exemption for the reformed houses of his diocese, Michel, *art. cit.*

³ *PL.* cxxxii. 1076.

⁴ *EHD.* p. 849.

Æthelstan, on condition that whatever he does, the estate shall return unforfeited to the holy foundation.”¹ In order to understand the connection between these penal forfeitures and the reactions of aggrieved lay magnates dispossessed of hereditary rights in their family monasteries, it is necessary to say something briefly about the way justice was administered in England at this time.

The supreme responsibility for the making, changing and administering of the law was the king's. The king, however, did not, indeed could not, do everything himself, and some, probably considerable, powers of the execution and administration of justice were delegated to the chief royal *ministri*, the local ealdormen and king's thegns. We hear occasionally of men with delegated powers simply called reeves. *Reeve* is a word with a wide connotation in Anglo-Saxon, and some of these reeves were probably king's thegns and their immediate subordinates. In practice, since the ealdorman presided, with the bishop, in the local shire-moot, these great magnates and their local companions exercised great influence on the administration of justice in a given locality.² Thus local justice and local power tended to go hand in hand. It was just this class of man, part royal

¹ A. J. Robertson, *Anglo-Saxon Charters* (Cambridge, 1939), no. xxxvi. I have cited Dr. Robertson's translation.

² A good example of how limited was the King's power to enforce unpopular decisions, especially those to do with land litigation, is provided by the narrative of the history of an estate subsequently granted by Queen Eadgifu to Christ Church Canterbury, F. E. Harmer, *Select English Historical Documents* (Cambridge, 1914), no. xxiii. Eadgifu was the wife of Edward the Elder and the mother of Edmund and Eadred. She disputed an estate with one Goda, who held the land in question. After six years complaining the *witenagemot* heard the queen's case and found for her: "Even then she could not get possession of the estate until her friends induced King Edward to declare that Goda must restore the estate, if he wished to hold any land at all; and so he relinquished it." As soon as her son Eadred died, she was again despoiled of her property; it was not until the accession of Edgar that it was restored with the support of the young king and his *witan*. Even a great lady like Eadgifu, then, could get her rights only with difficulty. Even a strong king like Edward was only reluctantly prepared to enforce a decision of his own *witan* in favour of his own wife. Under a weak king all semblance of justice vanished overnight, even for so great a person as the dowager queen. It will be obvious then that the power of the local establishment—mainly composed, of course, of the ealdormen and king's thegns—was very strong indeed in the tenth century.

minister, part great landed proprietor in his own right, that Bede says went in for founding hereditary, family, and fraudulent monasteries on a great scale.¹ It is the ealdormen and king's thegns who lie behind the early monastic foundation charters and narratives.² It is they, or rather their descendants in the tenth century, who were at once the losers by the new order of things, and the men with judicial powers over the new monks, their estates, and tenants. It is hardly to be wondered at that they may sometimes have been tempted to take back what they thought was their own under the guise of judicial process. I do not see that we can interpret Æthelwold's complaints or explain the provision in Oswald's charters in any other way. We are not, however, limited to these scraps of evidence; some charters have survived which show something of the character of the remedies devised by Edgar and his monk-bishops to meet these quasi-judicial forfeitures.

In effect King Edgar met the danger by transferring certain of the delegated powers, of what we should call government, from the local ealdorman and his subordinate *ministri* to the local abbot or bishop. The charters which record these transactions are amongst the most enigmatic in Anglo-Saxon history; we are certainly only at the beginning of understanding them. The best of them relate to the churches of Winchester and Worcester and their 'liberties' as these stood in the first generation of the reform.³ It would seem from these that Edgar met

¹ *Ad Ecgbertum, Opera Historica*, ed. C. Plummer (Oxford, 1896), i. 416: "ut nullus pene exinde praefectorum extiterit qui non huiusmodi sibi monasterium in diebus suae praefecturae comparaverit. . . . ac praevalet pessima consuetudine ministri quoque regis ac famuli idem facere sategerint; atque ita ordine perverso innumeri sint inventi, qui se abbates pariter et praefectos sive ministros aut famulos regis appellent. . . ."

² CS 60 was the foundation narrative of Gloucester. The endowment was granted to a royal *minister*, Osric in *iure perpetuo*. CS 154 is a grant by King Æthelbald to Ealdorman Cyniberht "ad construendam coenubium". Cyniberht's son was probably an abbot, CS 220. CS 77 is a grant to a *minister* of the Mercian king, Oslaf, and Worcester cathedral. Most of the early landbooks take the form of grants to ecclesiastical institutions, usually represented by their patron saints, or to men with an ecclesiastical title. Many of these, unless we disbelieve Bede, must have been in fact fraudulent grants.

³ The labours of Dr. Robertson and Dr. Harmer have immensely clarified the Winchester evidence; I have myself attempted a minute examination of the

the threat to the young episcopal monasteries in question by excluding the royal *ministri*, that is the ealdorman and the local king's thegns, from some of the church's estates, burdening the bishop with certain judicial, and even military, obligations formerly discharged by lay *ministri*. This seems to have been done by making the bishops in question the heads of hundreds—in the tenth century the principal Anglo-Saxon unit of local government. In later language the king granted away hundreds to the churches of Worcester and Winchester. Thus the judicial powers exercised by and through the hundred were now firmly under the supervision of its new head, the local bishop. In this way the danger to ecclesiastical endowments in the guise of judicial forfeitures was avoided. The Winchester evidence, and to a lesser extent the Worcester documents, show that these grants of hundredal authority had further and serious consequences for the principal men of the district in question. Thegns who had previously held land by book, with the right to dispose of it freely by testament or sale, lost this right. In future they were to hold precariously at the bishop's will.¹ Æthelwold, at Winchester, gave these men life-tenancies only, Oswald, at Worcester, more generous or less powerful, gave them tenancies for three lives with reversion to the church in the end.

To go further into the details and implications of these "liberties" would involve a long and controversial discussion which I have attempted elsewhere.² However, that the suppression of bookright in the interests of the new monks was important outside the liberties of the churches of Winchester and Worcester, is suggested by a clause in the series of charters for reformed houses already quoted above. The Pershore version, CS 1282 reads :

Tempore siquidem quo rura quae domino devoto concessi animo injuste a sancta Dei aecclesia ablata fuerant perfidi quique novas sibi hereditarias kartas usurpantes ediderunt sed in patris et filii et spiritus sancti nomine precipimus ut catholicorum nemo easdem recipiat sed a cunctis repudiatiae fidelibus in anathemate deputentur veteri jugiter vigente privilegio.

relevant Worcester charters. The documents, the liberties, and the problems they present are discussed in my *Land Tenure in Early England*.

¹ This is suggested by the lawsuit recorded in F. E. Harmer, *Anglo-Saxon Writs* (Manchester, 1952), no. 108.

² I have discussed these at some length in *Land Tenure in Early England*.

The Winchester charters show how little safeguard for long-established interests was this insistence that the Church should have traditional rights to the lands in question. We do not yet understand the full implications of the monks' tenurial revolution, but it is becoming clearer that the tenth-century reformation entailed a swingeing attack on entrenched and traditional local interests as part of the effort to enforce the strict observance of the *Rule* of St. Benedict. It is no wonder the monks had to wait on the zeal of the reigning king: King Edgar's part in the reformation of the monasteries was as great as Henry VIII's in their dissolution.

I should like in conclusion to point to some implications and consequences of this necessary alliance of monks and the monarchy. It is not unfair to say that the revival had a characteristic shape by the time it produced real monks and real monasteries. It was a court movement; at first no more than a current of opinion amongst clerical courtiers about what was going on in Lotharingia, Fleury or wherever. At the centre of things stood the king, on whose nod the revival waxed and waned. Of course in the end the revival depended on monks in monasteries, but the monasteries depended on the king. Once the establishment of monasteries had been determined by Edgar, monasticism became high politics, and its maintenance in the circumstances of the tenth century made it more than ever dependent on royal favour. The monks were not only aware of this, they gladly acknowledged it. We find gratitude to the royal family at the heart of their spiritual life, the liturgy, with its endless round of prayers for king and queen. Nor did monkish "royalism" stop at prayers, even doctrine was affected. The reformers promoted a "political theology" of an extreme kind. For them the king was a true *mediator inter clericos et laicos*, and his quasi-priestly character is well-shown by the *ordo* devised by one of them, probably Dunstan, for Edgar's coronation, which significantly did not take place until he had passed the age of canonical ordination, thirty.¹ St. Æthelwold went so far as to compare Edgar with

¹ P. E. Schramm, *History of the English Coronation* (Oxford, 1937), p. 119. The constitutional importance of this *ordo*, especially the implications of the substitution of the *promisso regis* for the *primum mandatum*, argued for by Professor Schramm, have been convincingly questioned by C. A. Boumann, *Sacring and Crowning* (Groningen, 1957), 142-5.

the Good Shepherd in the *Regularis Concordia*.¹ A generation later, a monk of the Æthelwold connection, says "a christian king is Christ's representative amongst a christian people".²

The dependence, then, of the monks on royal power, and their very real gratitude is clear enough, but the monarchy's charity was something more than its own reward. Something must also be said of the political consequences of King Edgar's benefactions. It is certain, I think, that Edgar's conduct must have been prompted by a genuine devotion to Benedictine monasticism, as interpreted for him by his tutor, Æthelwold. To suppose otherwise we should have to credit him with a prescience and cynical concealment of motives never found in real life, but only in the pages of history books. What is more, the risks involved must have been at least as evident as the advantages to be gained. We need not doubt, however, that Edgar was to some extent aware of what the monarchy stood to gain from the attempt to eliminate or reduce *saecularium prioratus*.

The *Concordia* replaced *saecularium prioratus* by royal *dominium*. In doing this it secured for the king a prominent part in every regular abbatial election. In other words every reformed monastery in England was turned into a royal *eigenkloster*. The value of this for the monarchy hardly needs stressing. It was particularly important in midland England. In Mercia the West Saxon dynasty had only recently acquired authority, and King Edgar can have inherited few estates and little *prioratus* over ecclesiastical property. The reform inevitably changed this. If we take the single example of Worcester, we can see how the monarchy benefited from the new order of things. The church of Worcester had originally been the church and see connected with the ruling family of the Hwicce in the days of the Mercian hegemony.³ After the Viking wars and the dismemberment of Mercia, the former territory of the Hwicce seems to have become the heart of "English" Mercia, and Worcester perhaps the principal church subject to the Mercian

¹ Op. cit. p. 2: "Regali utique functus officio veluti Pastorum Pastor . . . a rabidis perfidorum rictibus . . . oves . . . eripuit."

² VIII Æthelred 2. 1, F. Liebermann, *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen* (Halle, 1903), i. 263.

³ CS 183.

ealdorman. At any rate Bishop Werfrith of Worcester, about the year 904, refers in a charter to Ealdorman Æthelred of Mercia and his wife as the community's lords.¹ St. Oswald's great "liberty", which covered the heart of modern Worcestershire and surrounded the important fortified *burh* of Worcester, was henceforth subject to a monk-bishop nominated by the king. The ealdorman of Mercia was virtually excluded; what is more, the bishop, being celibate, could never have heirs, and the succession was determined only with royal advice and royal consent. We know from the *Vita Oswaldi*, that Oswald established seven monasteries in Mercia.² Even if none of them had the privileges that Worcester enjoyed, they are likely to have had some privileges, and these could only have been added to the powers of the abbot by subtraction from the authority of the ealdorman of Mercia and his friends. It is not surprising to find Ealdorman Ælfhere of Mercia in the van of opposition to the monks when the death of Edgar made opposition possible. There is evidence that ealdormen in other parts of the country resented the new monks too.³

The monarchy profited also from the less tangible aspects of the revival. Every monastery in the country which obeyed the command of the *Concordia*, with its constant round of prayers for the king, was a *foyer* of royalist propaganda. The high doctrine of kingly dignity promoted by the monks can have done the standing of the monarchy no harm, and may have done it some good. We cannot estimate the effects of this intangible ideological support, but we should not therefore ignore it. Abbots were henceforth counted amongst the king's *witan*; they appear regularly and in quantity at *witenagemotan*: we may guess they were equally prominent in the local shire courts.

¹ *Charters*, no. xix.

² *HCY*. i. 439.

³ *Charters*, lix, speaks of: "Ealdorman Edwin [of Sussex] and the folk who were enemies of God." They seized estates from Rochester cathedral after Edgar's death. The flagrant nepotism practised by St. Oswald cannot have made the conversion of Worcester palatable to the dispossessed Mercian clerks and thegns. Oswald gave his brother Osulf three written grants, CS 1139, 1204 and 1233; another brother, Æthelstan, got one charter, KCD 623; a kinswoman was granted CS 1180; two kinsmen were the grantees of KCD 637, 645 and 670; Eadric *compater* was given CS 1182.

Some of the new monks preached, and with force; mostly they preached to monks, but sometimes they spoke to lay-men as well. The sermon "of the Wolf to the English" is an obvious, and, thanks to Dr. Whitelock, famous example. We have, therefore, another possible channel for ideological influence in the royalist interest. The new monks, like the old clerks, tended to be well-born, and any heightening of their respect for the West Saxon royal house is likely to have communicated itself to their relatives at home. In other words the monasteries offered an atmosphere permeated with devotion to the royal family: on the great occasions and in the shire meetings, within their monastic connections of whatever kind and degree, the English upper classes were forced to breathe that atmosphere. We shall never know how much this ideology mattered, but it must have contributed to the transformation of the royal family of Wessex into the royal family of England.

It is plain that the tenth-century reformation was more than an episode in the domestic history of religious establishments; it has its place in what it is unfashionable, but reasonable, to call constitutional history. There was a good deal more to the reign of Edgar than historians have hitherto allowed.