ANGLO-SAXON WILLS AND THE INHERITANCE OF TRADITION IN THE ENGLISH BENEDICTINE REFORM[1]

In his will, which dates from between 931 and 939, near the end of the reign of King Æthelstan, a certain Wulfgar writes that he wishes to divide some of the lands he holds, with one part going "þam godes þeowum for mine sawle ⁊ for mines fæder ⁊ for mines ieldran fæder" (Kemble 1838-49: 175-76).[2] Expressions of such concern are rare in the corpus of wills from before Wulfgar's time; they are also rare in the eleventh century.[3] But between 925 and 992, ten of the twenty-four extant wills (42 %) mention ancestors and their souls.[4] Æthelstan's coronation was held in 925; Oswald

[1] My thanks to Allen J. Frantzen, Joyce Hill, Mercedes Salvador and especially Greg Rose for generous assistance and encouragement.

[2] S 1533. "…for the servants of God for my soul and that of my father and those of my elder fathers [ancestors]" (Kemble 1839-49: 175-76). In order to avoid the confusion that plagues many other studies of the wills, in the text I will use the name of the primary testator while in footnotes I will cite the edition from which I draw the Old English text, and I will also give the appropriate number (preceded by a capital S) from Sawyer 1968. Unless otherwise noted, translations are my own. I give a complete list of the Anglo-Saxon wills arranged in order of their probable dates of composition in Appendix I. For the date of Wulfgar's will see Sawyer (1968: 429).

[3] Among the wills dating from the ninth and early tenth centuries, only those of Dunn (S 1514), which dates from 855, and King Alfred (S 1507; 873-888) mention ancestors' souls (though see below for a discussion of these wills). While the number of extant wills from 992-1066 is comparable to the number of wills from 925-992, only four of these twenty-seven wills (14.81%) mention ancestors' souls: Wulfric, 1000-1002; Athelstan Ætheling, 1014 (S 1503); Leofgifu, 1035-1044 (S 1521); and Ketel, 1052-1066 (S 1519) (though see below for a discussion of Wulfric's will).

[4] Wills mentioning ancestors' souls from between 925 and 922 are: Wulfgar, 931-939 (S 1533); Theodred, 942-951 (S 1526); Ælfgar, 946-951 (S 1483); Æthelric, (S 1501); Æthelflæd, 962-991 (S 1494); Ælfgifu, 966-975 (S 1484); Ælfheah, 968-971 (S 1485); Brihtric and Ælfswith, 973-987 (S 1511); Æthelgifu, 980-990 (S 1497); Wulfwaru, 984-1016 (S 1538).

of Worcester died in 992. These two dates mark the beginning and the end of the Anglo-Saxon Benedictine Reform of the tenth century.[1] As Figure 1 illustrates, the dates of wills that express concern for ancestors' souls correspond closely with these dates, and this co-incidence is not a mere artifact of interval selection.[2] It is no surprise that Æthelwold, Dunstan and Oswald were concerned about the relationship of their political, cultural and

[1] The basic history of the Benedictine reform is outlined in Stenton (1950: 428-54); see also Knowles (1950: 16-82). It is traditional to date the Reform as beginning between 939 and 946, when Dunstan became abbot of Glastonbury, and ending with the death of Oswald in 992 (Knowles 1950: 31, 70). But more recent scholarship has placed the beginning of the intellectual and cultural renaissance in the court of Æthelstan (Keynes 1985; Gretsch 1991: 1-5, 426-27 and *passim*). See also Yorke 1988; Brooks & Cubbitt 1996; Ramsay et al. 1992; Parsons 1975. The introduction and notes to Lapidge & Winterbottom 1991 are also exceptionally useful. Although the reform continued to influence subsequent culture through the efforts of the second generation of reformers (most famously Ælfric of Eynsham and Archbishop Wulfstan), the expansion of the reform and the great influx of new converts to the monastic life can be said to have effectively ended with the death of Oswald.

[2] Because we do not have single-year dates for a majority of the Anglo-Saxon wills it is impossible to construct a true stack histogram to represent them. Figure 1 represents the number of wills plotted against time, giving each will as a range of potential dates. It is important when reading the graph to remember that each box, no matter how large, only represents one will, and that each will was in fact written during only one year in the range of dates represented by the box. The will of Æthelgifu (S 1497), which is discussed below, is only listed once although it exists in multiple manuscripts with somewhat different contents. Figures 2 and 3 are stack histograms, but they are constructed at the expense of the full range of possible dates for each will, since each will is plotted as a member of a decade-long set. Figure 2a illustrates the distribution of wills in time if the earliest possible date for each will is chosen. Figure 3a shows the distribution if the midpoint of each possible range of dates is selected. Neither method can be entirely accurate, since the true date of one will might be close to the midpoint while another might be close to the lower bound (I have omitted including an upper-bound histogram, since the data are skewed by the presence of the "right wall" of the Conquest, which tends to cause a clustering near 1066 that is probably not reflective of the data). Both figures illustrate, as does figure 1, the tight clustering of wills mentioning ancestors' souls in the 925-992 interval; this cluster is even more evident if the wills are plotted on a logarithmic scale, a method which eliminates some potential "noise" from the data. It is interesting that the absence in the 950's of wills mentioning ancestors' souls coincides with the reigns of Eadred and Eadwig, one king who, while he supported the reform, was weak and often ill (see below) and the other actively hostile to Dunstan and, presumably, the reform. Unfortunately there is not enough data to do more than merely note the interesting coincidence.

religious project to the past, but the influence of reform ideals upon the wider, secular culture has not been previously documented.[1]

In the following pages I will argue that this striking cluster of wills mentioning ancestors' souls and the co-incidence of the cluster, in both time and geographic distribution, with the tenth-century Benedictine Reform provides evidence that the reform influenced the beliefs and practices of secular Anglo-Saxons. The specific language of the wills in question (even when that language is standard diplomatic), in addition, perhaps, to the propensity of female testators to refer more frequently to their ancestors, shows that ideologies important to reformed monasteries had been adopted by secular individuals as part of a grassroots pietistic movement which deeply valued the practice of donating property to obtain monastic devotions aimed at the remediation of ancestors' souls. As a result of this penetration of reform ideologies into secular culture, individual Anglo-Saxons saw themselves being in direct contact with their predecessors through their intercession via masses, psalms and prayers purchased through their gifts to the monasteries. The evidence of the wills thus helps to explain the power of the idea (and ideal) of the past in Anglo-Saxon England, for that past was not only remembered, but actually re-animated through the active purchase of grace for departed ancestors, a purchase facilitated by the wills which document it.

ANGLO-SAXON WILLS AS EVIDENCE

Depending upon which scholar is counting, there are between fifty-five and sixty-two wills extant from Anglo-Saxon England.[2] This corpus of

[1] The current scholarly consensus seems to be that the Benedictine reformers saw themselves as restoring monasticism to its proper practice and rightful place of influence in a united English kingdom. They believed their monastic practice (influenced as it was by continental reform) was a restoration of unique and ancient English traditions arising originally from Augustine's mission and linked to the work of the great English scholars Bede and Aldhelm (Gretsch 1999: 1-5, 426-27 and *passim*).

[2] Sheehan (1963: 21, n.11) and Sawyer (1968: 414-31) both enumerate fifty-nine documents in their lists of wills. Other recent scholars to examine the wills, Brenda Danet and Bryna Bogoch (1992), claim a corpus of sixty-two. Because Danet & Bogoch do not list Sawyer numbers or make citations of all the specific documents

vernacular wills has no parallel on the continent in the early medieval period and shows that the Anglo-Saxon fondness for using the vernacular was not limited to literature. The oldest will we possess, that of Æthelnoth, the reeve at Eastry, Kent, and his wife Gænberg dates from the beginning of the ninth century (Robertson 1956: 4-7).[1] The latest vernacular will, that of Ulf and Madselin, dates from between 1066 and 1068 (Whitelock 1930: 94-97).[2] Nearly all the wills are found as later (thirteenth- and fourteenth-century) copies by monastic scribes of earlier (and now lost) documents: only fifteen wills are preserved in contemporary form, and these are also nearly all of monastic provenance (Whitelock 1930: xli).[3] The absence from cartularies of wills dating from before the ninth century provides at least some evidence that the custom of writing wills was not adopted by the Anglo-Saxons until around 800.[4]

they consider, I have been unable to reconstruct with certainty their corpus. Kathryn Lowe's unpublished 1990 Cambridge Ph.D. dissertation enumerates a corpus of sixty-two wills. Lowe's corpus is substantially the same as the one I use, which is drawn from the *Electronic Sawyer*, ed. S. E. Kelly, available on the world wide web at:

http://www.trin.cam.ac.uk/users/sdk13/chartwww/eSawyer.99/eSawyer2.html.

Note however that Old English transcripts of two wills which were in 1990 known only as Latin translations (S1517 and 1532) have been identified by Keynes 1993a. The only significant difference between my corpus and Kelly's is my reduction of some multiple-copy wills to one data point for statistical purposes. See Appendix 1. The majority of the wills were first printed by Kemble (1839-48). Benjamin Thorpe (1865) published some additions to Kemble although, according to Whitelock (1930: xlii), he included "several documents which are technically not wills." E. Edwards (1866) published an additional four wills, and W. de Gray Birch (1885-93) printed several wills in his collection of charters. A.S. Napier and W.H. Stevenson (1895) edited two more, and F.E. Harmer (1914) edited and translated twelve of the earliest wills. In 1930, Dorothy Whitelock published the texts and translations of thirty-nine wills. After Whitelock's edition a few additional wills were edited by A.J. Robertson (1956) and Whitelock herself edited a second (and longer) manuscript of the *Will of Æthelgifu* for the Roxburghe Club in 1968.

[1] 805-832 (S 1500). Tacitus is generally unreliable for matters Anglo-Saxon, and in any event Tacitus wrote eight hundred years before the bulk of the evidence I discuss came into existence. Nevertheless, and for what it may be worth, he does note in chapter 20 of *Germania* that, among the Germans, "heredes tamen successoresque sui cuique liberi, et nullum testamentum" ("nevertheless each person's own children are his heirs and successors, and there is no testament").

[2] S 1532.

[3] Lowe (1990: 12-24) identifies twenty-three wills as pre-conquest.

[4] Contrast the sudden appearance of wills in the documentary record with the "almost continuous" series of royal charters "joining the seventh-century kingdom of Kent

Written wills could only be produced by literate individuals with access to writing materials and almost certainly operating in some institutional context. Such a context could be found in two institutions in the Anglo-Saxon period—monastic scriptoria or the royal writing office.[1] It does not seem possible, however, at this stage of our knowledge, to prove that the wills were produced by the royal writing office.[2] George Brown suggests

to the England of William the Conquerer" (Stenton 1959: 2). It seems reasonable to assume that if wills had been in use pre-800 they would appear as copies in cartularies. The *Codex Wintoniensis* (London, British Library, Add. 15350), the cartulary for the Old Minster, Winchester, contains documents dating to 680 (S 1428a), but includes no wills from before the ninth century. In addition, while there are many forgeries in the *Codex Wintoniensis*, there are not even any forged wills dating from before 800, strongly suggesting that Anglo-Saxon forgers did not believe that wills dating from before the ninth century would be accepted as genuine and thus supporting the idea that the custom of will writing arises after 800. The extant pre-900 single-sheet wills are all from Kent and all from the archive of Christ Church, Canterbury (S 1482, S 1500, S 1508, and S1510). Of the three remaining pre-900 wills extant only in copies, two are from Kent (S 1508, from Christ Church, Canterbury and S 1514 from Rochester). The will of King Alfred is an exception, coming from Wessex and found in the archive of the New Minster, but this royal will cannot be taken as typical, and clearly the distribution of documents supports the idea that the wills are a Kentish custom that only spread to the rest of England (and only that south of the Humber) as a result of the Benedictine Reform.

[1] Although the existence of the royal writing office was once controversial—M. T. Clanchy (1979: 17), for example, saw the production of texts as purely monastic—it is now firmly established. W. H. Stevenson first proposed the existence of a royal writing office, but his 1898 *Sandars Lectures in Bibliography* were never published (they are available on the world wide web, courtesy of Simon Keynes, at http://www.trin.ac.uk/users/sdk13/chartwww/STEVEN%7E1/ STEVINT.HTM). Richard Drögereit (1935) was the first scholar to publish an argument for the existence of a secretariat attached to the royal court during the years 931-963, and he identified the work of royal scribes from the reigns of Æthelstan, Edmund, Eadred and Edgar. T.A.M. Bishop (1971) noted an additional royal scribe active in 956-57, during the reign of Eadwig. Simon Keynes (1980: 17-55) demonstrated that the royal secretariat endured throughout the reign of Æthelred. Eric John (1982: 167) acknowledged that while the evidence is complicated and unclear, he was willing to accept a chancery as possible. More recently, David Dumville (1993: 1-7) argues for the presence of a chancery and views such an office as intimately connected with the monasteries.

[2] Most wills are found as later copies in monastic cartularies. For example, the *Codex Wintoniensis* dates from 1130-1150 and the Sacrist's Register of Bury St. Edmunds (Cambridge, University Library, Ff. 2. 33) dates from the late thirteenth to early fourteenth century (Davis 1958: 16, 120). Because so many wills are later copies, we cannot identify the scribes of the original documents. There are a number of single-sheet wills for which scribes have been identified. For example, the scribe of the main text of S 1482 also wrote S 153, S 188, S 1268, and S 1436; the scribe of

that "spurred on by the ecclesiastical reform, other non-monastic centers, such as cathedrals with secular canons, produced texts both in Latin and Old English" (1995: 121). But these scribes were the exception rather than the rule and there is no specific evidence that they were associated with the wills. As far as our limited evidence can demonstrate, therefore, the wills should be seen as being in the main the products of monastic scriptoria, which were, Seth Lerer argues, the only institutions "that could foster a culture of textuality" in Anglo-Saxon England (1991: 8).

Upon the fortunes of the monastery, therefore, depended the fortunes of the wills, a link borne out by the distribution of Anglo-Saxon testaments, which is "most uneven as to time and place" (Sheehan 1963: 23). Nearly all the wills come from between the middle of the tenth century and the Conquest, and nearly all owe their preservation to their containing bequests to the abbeys of Abingdon, Bury St. Edmunds, Christ Church, Canterbury and Winchester.[1] Whitelock argues that written wills were more common than the existing manuscript distribution would indicate: "that great numbers of wills from Anglo-Saxon times have perished is shown not only by fairly frequent references in Anglo-Saxon documents from the ninth century onwards to wills no longer extant, but also by the distribution of those wills which have survived" (Whitelock 1930: xli). The sample of extant wills, then, may be skewed by a bias towards the preservation of wills that record gifts to monastic foundations: it is at least theoretically possible that some or many Anglo-Saxons made wills did not name monastic foundations at all, and for this reason these wills were not preserved. But this caveat aside, it seems not unreasonable to use the existing corpus to attempt to determine patterns of inheritance in both time and space.

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the main text of S 1486 also wrote S 1494; the scribe of S 1500 also wrote S 41; the scribe of S 1533 also wrote the guild regulations in Bern, Burgerbibliothek 671, 76v; the scribe of S 1536 also wrote S 906.

So while it is possible that some wills were written by royal writing office scribes, confirmation or refutation of this position is not yet possible. Dumville (1992: 79-81) argues that Wulfgar's will (S 1533) was likely written at the *witenagemot* "when scribal facilities and sufficient witnesses would have been available," and that the will, written by Æthelstan's chancery scribes, was likely written on the royal estate at Bedwyn.

[1] The geographic distribution of the bequests listed in the wills is discussed further below and illustrated in figures 4-6.

The precise legal status of the Anglo-Saxon will has been the matter of some debate, and resolution is beyond the scope of this essay.[1] The most substantial argument turns on the dispositive status of the will.[2] A writ "is purely evidentiary… its publication does not appear to represent the act of conveyance itself. A dispositive counterpart is required" which is supplied by a diploma (Keynes 1980: 141-42). The will, in contrast, has both elements of dispositive and evidentiary power. While it was not a substitute for the diploma or landbook, a written will could be used in litigation as evidence for an actual change of ownership (Sheehan 1963: 4-16). Diplomas and writs were issued by the court, but each will was created by an individual or married couple. Thus, while their implementation often required the permission of the king, wills do record in some measure the desires of individual Anglo-Saxons.

The degree to which we can use wills to identify individual desires depends upon how much freedom individuals had when creating a will. All of the wills exhibit four general characteristics: they attempt to influence the behavior of living people after the death of the testator; they attempt to provide for contingencies foreseen by the testator, including such events as the birth of a child or the death of an executor; they arrange, through the institution of alms of one sort of another, to provide for the soul of the testator; and finally, wills attempt to prevent the alteration of the document in which they are recorded.

Within this framework, the wills also tend to follow some formulaic conventions. A. Campbell asserted that the wills are structured by "an Old English legal jargon, which in view of the universal use of Latin for other documents, must have evolved for the purpose of making wills" (1938: 133-

[1] See Hazeltine (1930: i-xxi). Hazeltine's remarks as to the evidentiary status of wills are quoted or paraphrased without dissent in a number of influential general studies (Greenfield & Calder 1986: 114; Stock 1983: 48-49).

[2] Sheehan's project is to show through the history of the will the influence of Christianity in the development of English civilization. He thus complicates the strictly legal history given by Hazeltine, showing the connections between wills, alms and notions of the afterlife (Sheehan 1963: 17). Sheehan also explains the relationship between wills and other sorts of gifts (28-30), making important distinctions between *post-obit* gifts (any transaction in which the transfer did not take place until the testator's death even though the gift may have been arranged long before), and gifts made *verba novissima*, that is, on the death-bed (31).

52). But the situation is actually somewhat more complicated. Campbell's often-quoted assertion that the scribes of the wills "provided a framework" ends up begging the question of whether or not scribes put into standardized phrasing the desires of testators or worked to structure and limit what and how a testator could bequeath.[1]

Other cultural conventions may also have influenced the language of the wills. Sheehan suggests that a will needed to be able to "be capable of defending the gift" against the opposition of family members, should they dispute the will (1963: 24). The ability of a document to "defend," albeit in the hands of specific interested parties, suggests first of all that wills are not only evidentiary, and second, that the style of wills may have invested the documents with what Danet and Bogoch call "performative power." That is, the specific phrases used in the wills, as well as the inclusion of "speech acts" such as curses may be linked to collocations that were powerful in the spoken culture of Anglo-Saxon England. The extra-textual power of these phrases may have increased the chances of a given testator's wishes being followed (Danet & Bogoch 1992: 110-12).

In any event, there are both near-universal elements and significant regional and temporal patterns in will diplomatic. For example, the prefatory clause of wills shows a range of variation with a distinctively regional character. There are four main forms of the prefatory clause:[2]

Type 1: ic/N kithe … an/unnen.

Type 2: This/Her is …cwide.

Type 3: Her/ic swutelath on thisse ge/write … an … aihte.

Type 4: ic an … aefter minne daege (this type amounts to no prefatory clause, since it is the first dispositive clause of the will).

[1] The question of how much the use of a linguistic formula limits the freedom of a person using it is fraught with literary-theoretical difficulties. Nevertheless it seems reasonable to suppose that there is some significant difference between a cultural practice in which a testator tells a scribe what he or she wants to bequeath, the scribe then converting these wishes into formulaic prose, versus a situation in which the scribe, as representative of the monastery, tells the testator what is appropriate for him or her to donate and to whom the donation should be made.

[2] For a discussion of one form of prefatory clause, see Withers (1999: 119-22) and Lowe 1991.

If we compare the distribution of these clauses by archive, we see:

Bury St. Edmunds:
Type 1: 6 (33.33%)
Type 2: 4 (22.22%)
Type 3: 7 (38.89%)
Type 4: 0
Other: 1 (5.56%)

Christ Church, Canterbury:
Type 1: 5 (71.43%)
Type 2: 2 (28.57%)
Type 3: 0
Type 4: 0
Other: 0

Old Minster, Winchester:
Type 1: 1 (12.50%)
Type 2: 0
Type 3: 5 (62.50%)
Type 4: 1 (12.50%)
Other: 1 (12.50%)

New Minster, Winchester:
Type 1: 1 (14.385%)
Type 2: 3 (42.66%)
Type 3: 0
Type 4: 2 (28.57%)
Other: 1 (14.385%)

St. Albans:
Type 1: 2 (50.00%)
Type 2: 0
Type 3: 1 (25.00%)
Type 4: 1 (25.00%)
Other: 0

All others:
Type 1: 2 (12.50%)
Type 2: 3 (18.75%)

Type 3: 6 (37.50%)
Type 4: 2 (12.50%
Other: 3 (18.75%)

These differences are not merely an artifact of a particular chartulary style, since they exist in both original single sheets and chartulary copies and across archives. There are similar patterns in the term used for soul ("gast" is used interchangeably with "sawel" in 9th-century wills, but never in the later wills), dispositive verbs, presence or absence of symbolic or verbal invocation, presence or absence of anathema, sanction or blessing, and ratio of third person to first person in diplomatic. It is thus to some degree possible to distinguish by analysis of diplomatic between what elements of the will are required legal framework and what represent the choices of individual bequestors.

Mention of remediation of ancestors' souls appears to be a variable that is individual to each bequestor. Wills mentioning ancestors' souls occur in the majority of archives but do not predominate in any of them, either in single-sheet wills or in cartularies.[1] This distribution, coupled with the distribution in time discussed above, strongly supports the idea that the use of remediation diplomatic was an individual choice, perhaps influenced by the urging of a monastic scribe, but nevertheless a choice that an individual was free to make or not make. It is therefore reasonable to conclude that, despite all the difficulties created by an impoverished documentary record, wills can be used evidence for the desires of Anglo-Saxon testators, though they are also likely to represent to some degree the desires and cultural imperatives of the institutions by whose hands they were created and preserved: Anglo-Saxon monasteries from the ninth century to the Conquest.

THE DESIRES OF TESTATORS AND CORRELATION WITH THE REFORM YEARS

[1] Wills mentioning ancestors' souls are found in the archives of Christ Church, Canterbury (2); Bury St. Edmunds (7); Winchester, Old Minster (3); Winchester, New Minster (1); Rochester (2); Ramsey (1); Bath (1); St. Albans (1).

The reasons why Anglo-Saxons would choose to *write* wills (as opposed to simply bequeathing in the kind of oral ceremonies that Danet and Bogoch, Hazeltine, Whitelock and Sheehan propose) are straightforward.[1] Written wills are more difficult to modify than remembered oral promises, and documents can last longer than memories. In fact the wills indicate that testators intended their wills to last for all eternity. Many include curses that assume the permanence of the document.[2] For example, Wulfgyth writes in her will:

> and se þe mine quyde beryaui þe ic nu biqueþen habbe a godes ywithnesse beriaued he worþe þises erthliche meryþes and ashireyi hine se almiyti driyten þe alle shepþe shop and ywroyte uram alre haleyene ymennesse on domesday. and sy he bytayt Satane þane deule and alle his awaryede yueren into helle Grunde and þer aquelmi and godes withsaken bute ysweke and mine irfinume neuer ne aswenche (Whitelock 1930: 86).[3]

This curse operates until the end of time, indicating that the testator desires to gain a form of eternal power—the ability to influence the fates of others and to constrain their behavior from beyond the grave. It is hard to imagine such trans-temporal power being exercised without the help of the technology of writing.[4]

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[1] Seth Lerer argues that Anglo-Saxons were aware of "textual power: the control that writings exercise over their readers and their world" (1991: 62). Harnessing textual power for wills and other purposes would be a logical consequence of its recognition.

[2] Danet & Bogoch (1992: 109-15) cite twenty-five curses in their corpus of sixty-two wills.

[3] S 1535. "And he who takes away from my will which I have now declared in the witness of God, may he be riven of all happiness on earth, and may the Almighty Lord who created and wrought all creatures exclude him on judgment day from the fellowship of all the saints, and may he be given to the Satan the devil and all his accursed heirs and there suffer with those God has forsaken without end, and never trouble my inheritors."

[4] It is important to remember, however, that not only does a document need to be preserved for long periods of time in order to project trans-temporal power, but someone must be able to *read* the document and must decide to *obey* it. Both of these requirements are more difficult to ensure than much previous scholarship has assumed, and while Anglo-Saxon testators could not foresee the Conquest and the changes in their language, they must have been aware, as we are today, that quite often the wishes of the deceased are not followed.

If an individual's identity is in part constituted by his or her ability to influence other individuals, then the post-mortem influence enabled by written wills is a means of perpetuating individual identity after death. Such perpetuation of identity through wills can be seen today in purely secular contexts, and suggests that perpetuation of identity may be a basic human desire. In the Anglo-Saxon period the perpetuation of identity after death was inextricably bound up with Christian conceptions of the afterlife. Thus, as Sheehan argues, the use of wills was inextricably linked with the church.[1]

The church enabled the post-mortem perpetuation of identity by preserving the memory of individuals, by helping to enforce the execution of their desires, and by saying masses to aid their souls.[2] The preservation of the memory of benefactors, particularly in continental monasteries, has been exhaustively documented.[3] We know that such preservation was important to Anglo-Saxons as well as to individuals on the continent because the practice of recording benefactors' names in a *Liber Vitae* was widespread

[1] Sheehan's argument that "in many ways the history of the will in England is a supreme example of the part played by Christianity in the growth of western civilization" is perhaps overstated, but his emphasis of the ecclesiastical context of Anglo-Saxon wills is a helpful counterbalance to an otherwise strictly legalistic approach to wills as an example of the evolution of a legal procedure (1963: 3 and *passim*). For an example of analysis focused almost exclusively on legal matters see Hazeltine (1930: vii-xv).

[2] The church could aid in the execution of a will if, for example, both a monastic foundation and an individual were named as beneficiaries. To preserve its own interest in any given will, a monastic foundation might very well insist that the entire will be carried out, thus thwarting family members or other interested parties opposed to the testator's desires for his or her land or goods.

[3] Patrick Geary notes that "in the ninth through eleventh centuries [monastic] cartularies protected not simply property rights both vis-a-vis tenant and royal authorities, but they also protected the memory of benefactors … " (1994: 86). Barbara H. Rosenwein (1982: 32-50) has shown that bequests to reformed monasteries were a way for individuals in unstable times to associate themselves with stable and reliable communities. She also argues (1989: 141-43) that transfers of property between monasteries and secular communities were ways for individuals and communities to become "neighbors" of St. Peter. Megan McLaughlin argues that such bequests were not merely for the purpose of "acquiring more and more prayer" for the testators but were instead ways for individuals and families to form close ties with the monastic community: "the point of all these lists [of the names of benefactors], then, was not simply to preserve the names of certain individuals; it was, rather, to record them *among* other names" (1994: 101).

throughout Anglo-Saxon England.[1] Preservation of a name in a *Liber Vitae* clearly did work, as Rosenwein, McLaughlin and Geary have all shown, to create a community that included both monks and lay donors bound together by strong social and religious ties. But at least as important as the social ties that bound monks and laypersons together was the ability of the church to provide for the souls of the dead.

The idea of almsgiving providing remediation for the souls of the departed has a firm biblical basis in Acts 20:35 and II Corinthians 9:5-14. That Anglo-Saxons believed that the saying of prayers, the chanting of psalms and the commemoration of individuals in masses would aid the souls of the departed in the afterlife is obvious from simple inspection of the corpus of wills, the majority of which state that donations to a church or monastic foundation are given "for mine soule" (Whitelock 1930: 34-37).[2] Wills throughout the period also request intercession for a handful of individuals either close to the testator or politically powerful: a spouse, king or lord. Such donations are a structured and institutionally assisted form of almsgiving; the giving itself is beneficial for the soul, and a gift to a church foundation makes the alms even more valuable.[3]

That Anglo-Saxons would also want to provide for the souls of their loved ones seems a reasonable and common desire, and the ability of

[1] For Anglo-Saxon *libri vitae* see Gerchow 1988. The Durham *Liber Vitae* (most of which dates from the ninth century and was written in Lindisfarne) was printed in facsimile by the Surtees Society (Surtees 1923). More recently, Simon Keynes has edited *The Liber Vitae of the New Minster and Hyde Abbey Winchester* (Keynes 1996).

[2] "For my soul." The specific quotation is from the will of Æthelflæd (S 1494), but the phrase or some variant with the same meaning is ubiquitous.

[3] There were many gifts that were in a sense given to no one, and these gifts should be viewed as pure alms. For example, as David Pelteret (1995: 110-25) notes, many testaments manumit slaves after the death of the testator. While contemporary readers may see post-mortem manumission as a rather cynical act (the testator enjoyed the value of the slaves' labor during his life; when he was dead and no longer needed the labor, his soul benefited from the manumission), it does indicate the value Anglo-Saxons placed on almsgiving without a *quid pro quo* from any specific institution; there is no hint that the freed slaves are supposed to pray for the souls of their owner; the freeing itself is enough. The freeing of slaves as a means of remediation for a departed soul has a biblical basis in Jeremiah 34:8-22, and a foundation in Æthelstan's laws, Ordinances I and I.1 (Liebermann 1898-1916: I.148).

monasteries to provide for the souls of the dead even as they provided for at least some of the spiritual needs of the living creates a continuum of monastic and lay memory, and a "corporate memory of a religious community" (Keynes 1996: 50). New entries in a *Liber Vitae* are part of an ongoing book, a tradition of names and remembrances. Yet until the middle of the tenth century (with only one clear and one ambiguous exception) Anglo-Saxon testators, while relying upon future generations to perpetuate their own memories, only looked forward; they did not *in their wills* look back to their predecessors.

Before the Benedictine reform only two wills, those of Dunn and that of King Alfred, mention ancestors.[1] Dunn's will, which dates from 855 and comes from Kent, approximates the standard diplomatic of the mention of ancestors. Dunn grants a title deed to his wife for her lifetime. Upon her death she is to "geselle hit on ∂æs halgan apostoles naman sce Andreas ∂am hirode 'in' mid unnan Godes ⁊ his hal'l'gena for unc buta ⁊ eall uncre eldran" (Whitelock 1930: 14-16).[2] Notice that while Dunn does not specifically mention the souls of his ancestors, the care of their souls and memory is implicit in the grant to the foundation.

No other ninth-century will mentions ancestors in general and only one, that of King Alfred, mentions specific ancestral individuals. But we cannot take this will as typical. When Alfred first mentions his ancestors he does not take into account their souls, but is rather concerned to justify his ownership of his inheritance. He writes: "Ic Ælfred cingc … smeade ymbe minre sawle þearfe ⁊ ymbe min yrfe þæt me God ⁊ *mine yldran forgeafon* ⁊ ymbe þæt yrfe þæt A∂ulf cingc min fæder us þrim gebroþrum becwæ∂" (Harmer 1914: 15-19, 49-53, my emphasis).[3] Alfred may have had very good reasons well beyond those of simple piety for mentioning the ancestors from whom his power and wealth came from. Youngest of five brothers, Alfred was not—despite the chronicler's suggestion, repeated by Asser, that

[1] S 1514 and S 1507.

[2] "Give it to the brotherhood in the name of the holy apostle St. Andrew with the permission of God and his saints for both of us and all our ancestors."

[3] "I, King Alfred, have thought about the needs of my soul and about my inheritance which God *and my ancestors gave* to me, and about that inheritance that my father King Æthelwulf bequeathed to us three brothers." See also Keynes & Lapidge (1983: 171-78 and 313-26).

he was anointed by the Pope as such—expected to become king, and he faced political opposition at home in addition to his struggles with Vikings (Keynes and Lapidge 1983: 69, 72-75). Alfred may have wanted to remind readers (and hearers at any oral ceremony) of his legitimate claim to the throne. Alfred also does not mention his ancestors' souls, the standard formula for the post-reform wills that do place themselves within a tradition of inheritances, though he does specifically mention one ancestor, his father. Alfred wishes two hundred pounds for both his soul and his father's to be distributed among priests, poor servants of God, the distressed poor, and the church in which Alfred's body will be buried.

Alfred's will foreshadows the more elaborated interest in ancestors' souls found in the wills of the 930's through the end of the tenth century, and expansion of Alfred's practice is consistent with the Benedictine reformers' predilection for building upon and developing Alfredian institutions and customs.[1] The next will to mention ancestors' souls is that of Wulfgar, noted above, who in his will (composed 931-939) bequeaths his land for his, his father's and his ancestors' souls (Kemble 1838-49: 175-76).[2] Wulfgar's interest in the souls of his ancestors marks the beginning of the cluster of wills with a similar focus. That this first will to mention ancestors' souls dates from the reign of Æthelstan is also consistent with recent scholarship that puts the foundations of the Benedictine reform in Æthelstan's court.[3]

The next mention of ancestors and their souls appears in the will of Theodred, Bishop of London, who between 942 and 951 bequeaths property "for mine soule ȝ for min louerde þat ic vnder bigeat and for min Eldrene" (Whitelock 1930: 2-5).[4] Both Wulfgar's and Theodred's wills, however, are

[1] See below, and also, for example, Gretsch (1999: 341-47 and 426-27). Dumville also argues that the Alfredian program of cultural and religious revival was planned to "mature in the time of later generations" (1992: 2).

[2] S 1533. "For my soul and for [that] of my father and for [those of] my older fathers," my translation. That Wulfgar's will is genuine is not in dispute. See Dumville: "the will, on a small and separate sheet, was folded with the diploma; it has since been joined to it" (1992: 78 n106). See also Keynes (1980: 14-19).

[3] The case for Æthelstan's court as an incubator of the later reform movement is made by Gretsch (1999: 332-83). See also Lapidge (1993a: 18-24); Keynes 1985 and Dumville (1992: 204-05).

[4] "For my soul and for my lord under whom I acquired it [the property] and for my ancestors."

written before the real rise in power and influence of the Benedictine Reform, and it is after their wills that the corpus begins to be filled with mentions of ancestors.

Ælfgar's is the first will from this tight cluster of wills mentioning ancestors' souls. Some time between 946 and 951 (i.e., after Dunstan became abbot of Glastonbury), Ælfgar bequeathed estates in Suffolk and Essex to the monastic community which eventually became Bury St. Edmunds; to the community at Stoke (probably Stoke-by-Nayland, Suffolk); to St. Mary's, Barking; to Christ Church, Canterbury; and to St. Paul's, London. Ælfgar instructs his daughter Æthelflæd that he wishes her to grant an estate to a "halegan stowe" of her choice "for yre aldre soule" (Whitelock 1930: 6-9).[1] If Æthelflæd has no children then she is to grant an additional estate to Stoke "for yre aldre soule," and she is in addition to do "so wel heo best may into Stoke for mine soule and for ure aldre" (Whitelock 1930: 6-9).[2] Ælfgar also grants an estate to his son (?) Ælfwold, provided that he pay a food-rent every year to the community at St. Paul's "for vre aldre soule" (Whitelock 1930: 6-9).[3] The wills of Ælfgar's two daughters, Æthelflæd and Ælfflæd, indicate, as Lowe has argued, that "Ælfgar's wishes seem to have been upheld" although each daughter had some latitude in the timing of her donations (1990: 188-96).[4]

There is no reason to explicate each and every will that mentions ancestors' souls; the pattern is clear in both Figure 1 and in the list of wills given in Appendix 1. The wills from the height of the tenth-century reform period which mention ancestors' souls are, in chronological order: Wulfgar, Theodred, Ælfgar, Æthelric, Æthelflæd, Ælfgifu, Ælfheah, Brihtric and Ælfswith, Æthelgifu, Wulfwaru and Æðelstan Mannesson.[5] This corpus is constructed by including all the wills which mention ancestors' souls (either using familiar diplomatic terms like "eafora" for ancestors or by mentioning

[1] S 1483. "A holy place" "for our ancestors' souls."
[2] "For our ancestors' souls;" "do good the best she may unto Stoke for my soul and our ancestors'."
[3] "For our ancestors' souls,"
[4] S 1494 and S 1486.
[5] S 1533, 1526, 1483, 1501, 1484, 1485, 1511, 1497, 1538, 1503a.

specific individuals) extant from the reform period bounded by the coronation of Æthelstan and the death of Oswald (925-992).[1]

Only four wills after 992 mention ancestors' souls, those of Wulfric, Æthelstan Ætheling, Leofgifu and Ketel. But I believe that at least one of these (Wulfric, which dates from between 1002 and 1004) should in fact be considered part of the reform-era group. The main body of the will of Wulfric mentions ancestors' souls, and the will also includes a coda in which the voice of the document switches from the first person to the third person and states:[2]

> Þis is seo freolsboc to þam mynstre æt Byrtune þe Æþelred cyning [æf]re ecelice gefreode. gode to lofe. ȝ eallon his halgan to weorþunge. Swa swa Wulfric his geedstaðelode. for hine sylfne. [ȝ fo]r his yldrena sawla. ȝ hit mid munecon gesette. fi þær æfre inne þæs hades menn under heora abbude. gode þeowian. æfter [san]ctus Benedictus tæcincge. Sic fiat (Whitelock 1930: 48-51).[3]

This contextualization given by the coda clearly links the gift to the re-establishment of Burton, which was a result of the monastic expansion brought about by the reform.

The will of Ælfflæd, the daughter of Ælfgar, which, like the will of Wulfric, dates from between 1002 and 1004 is a more complicated case. The

[1] I have used the expanded version of the will of Æthelgifu (S 1497) found in the twenthieth century in Gloucestershire (Whitelock 1968). This expanded version includes language about the remediation of souls. For a discussion of the textual problems of the various versions of the will of Æthelgifu, see Pelteret (1995: 112-19, 330-34). See also Keynes (1993a: 268) and (1993b: 305). Although the will of Siflæd exists in two versions (S 1525a and S 1525), I have only used it for one data point, since S 1525 appears to be a clarification of 1525a, and thus seems to represent the desires of only one testator, Siflæd (remediation language is absent from both versions).

[2] S 1536. The switch from first- to third-person cannot be in itself taken to indicate a switch from the desires of a testator to the framework provided by a scribe (or by tradition). The wills are approximately evenly divided between first- and third-person testaments, and this division does not seem to track very closely the temporal or geographic affiliation of the will.

[3] "This is the charter-book for the monastery at Burton which King Æthelred freed for ever, for the praise of God and the honor of all his saints. Just as Wulfric re-established it for himself and for the souls of his ancestors, and settled monks in it so that there ever after men of that order under their abbot would serve god in that place after the teachings of St. Benedict. So may this be."

will almost certainly relies upon the textual precedent of Ælfgar's will and in any event is written by the same scribe as Ælfflæd's sister Æthelflæd's will (which dates from between 962 and 991).[1] But while Ælfflæd mentions ancestors in her will a total of eight times, she never explicitly mentions their souls. Instead she repeats several times that the estates in question have come from her ancestors. She also donates land to Stoke, where, she notes, the bodies of her ancestors lie buried, and we could take this to mean that she is concerned for their souls. But given the scribal and textual connections between Ælfflæd's will and both Ælfgar's and Æthelflæd's as well as the ambiguity of her invocation of ancestors, it seems safest to include Ælfflæd's will among the eleventh-century wills that do not mention ancestor's souls.

Even if Wulfric's and Ælfflæd's wills are not included in the reform-era group, there is still a robust statistically significant difference between the probability that a will from the reform era will mention ancestors' souls and the probability that a later will will do so (see Table 1a): 41.67% percent of the wills dating from the reform period mention ancestors' souls, while a mere 14.81% percent of the wills in the eleventh century do so.[2] If Wulfric's will is shifted to the reform period the percentages change to 44.00% for the reform-era corpus and 11.54% for the post-reform corpus with a probability of 99% that the data are significant (see Table 1b).[3] The sample size of wills from the period before the reform, a mere eight wills, is too small to use the χ^2 test for statistical significance, but Fisher's Exact Test indicates that there is only a 76% probability that the differences between the two eras are artifacts of imperfect data.[4] In summary, then, statistical analysis supports the observation that wills in the reform period are far more likely to mention ancestors' souls than are wills in other periods.

[1] Ælfflæd's will is S 1486, Ælfgar's is S 1483, and Æthelflæd's S 1494.

[2] Statistical analysis using the χ^2 test shows that there is only a 5% chance that these results arise from random fluctuations in the data; in other words, the results are 95% likely to be reflections of actual differences ($\chi^2 = 4.600$ with 2 degrees of freedom).

[3] If Wulfric's will is shifted, $\chi^2 = 6.744$ with 2 degrees of freedom.

[4] And see above for an examination of how the two wills in this period which do mention ancestors' souls (Dunn and King Alfred, S 1514 and 1507) are different from the wills of the reform period.

The temporal distribution of wills that mention ancestors' souls is thus not inconsistent with the hypothesis that the tenth-century Benedictine Reform influenced testators' desires. The geographic distribution of wills provides even more evidence for seeing the hands of Æthelwold and Dunstan at work (at least indirectly) in these wills. Figures 4-6 illustrate the geographic distribution of the ecclesiastical beneficiaries of English wills.[1] Several trends are immediately obvious: None of the extant vernacular wills lists any donations to monasteries or cathedrals north of the Humber. The pre-reform wills donate exclusively to foundations in the south east.[2] After the coronation of Æthelstan, gifts spread to houses in Wessex and East Anglia, and once the reform gets underway, the geographic range of gifts to ecclesiastical foundations spreads both north and west. The beneficiaries of wills that mention ancestors' souls are reform-founding or reformed houses, including Glastonbury, Romsey, Malmesbury, Bath and Ely, and the spread of these gifts tracks the spread of the reform relatively closely.[3] The distribution of the few post-992 wills that mention ancestors' souls also suggests that the memory of the reform remained strongest in Winchester,

[1] These maps come with several caveats. First, as is evident from simple inspection, the biases of the cartularies in which the wills are preserved are particularly evident in the geographic distribution of testaments. Bury St. Edmunds, Canterbury and Winchester are almost certainly over-represented (or rather, other houses are probably under-represented). Also, because so many wills are not dateable to a single year there is significant flexibility in the chronological arrangement of bequests. I have therefore provided maps based on the mid-point of the date range for any given will (i.e., a will which we know dates from between 1002 and 1004 is plotted at 1003). This distribution of wills is perhaps easier to understand when viewed in color, so I have created graphics that can be viewed over the internet at http://acunix.wheatonma.edu/mdrout/wills.html.

[2] The pattern of donations can be used to provide evidence as to the reputations of various ecclesiastical foundations, since donors often gave estates spread throughout England to monasteries that were likewise widely scattered. Wulfric (S 1536), for instance, bequeaths "more than seventy estates spread over eleven counties" (Sheehan 1963: 99); Ælfgar's will (S 1483) gives gifts to St. Edmunds, Bedericesworth; the community at Stoke (probably Stoke-by Nyland, Suffolk); St. Marys, Barking; Christ Church, Canterbury; and St. Paul's, London (Sawyer 1968: 414-15).

[3] Again, the lack of single-year dates for many wills makes this correspondence somewhat difficult to prove. But clearly as the reform progresses wills mentioning ancestors' souls begin to give gifts to houses further afield from Winchester, Canterbury and London.

Canterbury and London as well as at foundations created by the reformers such as Ely and Bury St. Edmunds.

The combined evidence of both the geographic and the temporal distributions of wills that mention ancestors' souls supports the hypothesis that these wills were influenced by the cultural work of the reform. The use of the wills to locate testators as part of a continuum or tradition, by mentioning ancestors' souls along with the souls of testators, also fits well with the intellectual concerns of the Benedictine reformers.

WILLS AND THE CONCERNS OF THE BENEDICTINE REFORM

The wills mentioning ancestors' souls are linked in time and in geographic distribution with the Benedictine Reform. They are also linked with the reform movement in their mode of operation and the concerns they evince. Most importantly, wills written during the reform period not only draw on the power of writing to make permanent the desires of testators, but they also assume that the permanence of the document will be guaranteed by monastic permanence.

After the disasters of the ninth century, but before the height of the reform, it is difficult to identify any one institution that individual Anglo-Saxons would have agreed was permanent. Political collapse and Viking raids had led to the demise of monasticism. Secular institutions relied upon the familiar father-to-son transmission of name, power and property, but the persistence of any one lineage was no sure thing.[1] Reformed monks were representatives of a different sort of continuity, one that could be counted on to persist in a way that earlier monasteries had not.

[1] Father to son genealogy is a commonplace in Anglo-Saxon culture and most famously evident in *Beowulf*, where "bearn Ecgþeowes" (the son of Ecgtheow) is Beowulf's most common epithet. Such genealogy can also be found in the West Saxon regnal lists and genealogies and the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (the Cynewulf and Cyneheard entry for 757, with its concluding list giving the genealogy of Offa in terms of a series of "son of" formulations is simply the most famous example). For succession being far from simple and familial power being far from permanent, see Dumville 1979 and 1977; see also Sisam 1953 and Davis 1992.

King Eadred's will, written between 951 and 955, provides for numerous contingencies; among others, if beneficiaries should die with or without children or if Abbot Dunstan should die before receiving his two hundred pounds.[1] In addition, Eadred arranges a secular, legal penalty: those failing to carry out his wishes will lose their estates, which will "þonne gane þæt land in þær min lic rest" (Harmer 1914: 34-35).[2] By naming the monastery as beneficiary, Eadred is linking the post-mortem enforcement of his will not to his successor, or his family, but to the institution of the monastery.

Eadred seems to put some faith in the capability of the monasteries to endure, and his will is thus evidence for the mindset of a secular individual at the beginning of the reform. Recall that Eadred became king upon the death of his brother Edmund in 946, when the rebuilding of English monasticism can hardly have progressed so far that the decay of monastic power in the ninth century would have been completely forgotten (Stenton 1950: 355-59). But Eadred almost certainly grew up in the court of Æthelstan, the source of many of the reformers' beliefs and ideas. Moreover, Dunstan was Eadred's treasurer, the holder of the king's royal *haligdom*. Eadred actively assisted the reformers and was certainly well aware of the current and immediate past circumstances of English monasticism.[3] The king must have known that there existed on the continent monastic houses that had endured for several centuries. His ill health (attested by the *Vita S Dunstani*, William of Malmesbury and John of Worcester, as well as by the fact that Eadred often did not attend the *witan*) is likely to have encouraged the king to think of his posterity and the care of his soul (Stubbs 1874 [1965]: 31). Thus Eadred, who did not have sons to whom he could bequeath his kingdom, entrusted the monasteries with the perpetuation of his memory and social influence.[4]

[1] S 1515.

[2] "Then go to that land [i.e., the monastic foundation] in which my body will rest."

[3] Eadred was quite sympathetic to the early reform movement and gave Dunstan and Æthelwold the estates of a deserted monastery at Abingdon (John 1966: 181).

[4] I have not counted Eadred's will among those that mention ancestors' souls because the mention of an ancestor, Eadred's mother, is written in such a way that seems to indicate that she is alive and that Eadred thinks he will pre-decease her; Eadred directly gives her various estates and booklands.

But while Eadred was a supporter of the reform, the reform itself had not yet succeeded to the point where he would entrust only the monastery to preserve his memory. Thus he hedges his bets, hoping that either the monastery or the secular social structure will preserve his memory and care for his soul. Eadred also provides for elaborate contingencies, giving back-up plans in the event that any of his various beneficiaries dies. In other words, he is not content to assume that monastic succession will ensure the continuity and memory of the institution of the monastery. Instead he relies upon a succession of individuals, whom he names.

Wills and their links to monasteries provide continuity for the preservation of memory different from the father-to-son transmission of property that seems to have been the folk custom in Anglo-Saxon England. The practice of keeping a necrology (to which is linked the eternal prayers called for by the wills) extends the respect for the seniority of monks back into time and preserves an order or ranking past the deaths of individual monks.[1] This sort of preserved cultural memory—aided as it is by the technology of writing—is significantly different from that promoted through father-to-son transmission. It is therefore of more than passing interest that while sixteen wills in the corpus mention ancestors' souls, only two testators identify themselves as "the son of": Leofwine, who notes that he is "wulfstanes sunu," and Thurstan, "Wine sune" (Napier & Stevenson 1894: 22).[2] Thus testators rarely label themselves as "son of" or "daughter of" even as they acknowledge their participation in a continuum of ancestors.[1]

[1] For Anglo-Saxon necrologies, see Gerchow 1988. *Ælfwine's Prayerbook*, which dates from between 1023-1031, contains both a necrologic list and calendar (Günzel 1993). For the date of *Ælfwine's Prayerbook* see Keynes (1996: 111). The *Regularis Concordia* commands that a letter in a certain form shall be sent to neighboring monasteries informing them of the death of a monk. The other monasteries are to sing various psalms and prayers for the deceased "et nomen eius notetur in anniuersariis" ("and his name is to be set among the anniversaries"), suggesting that records of the deaths of brothers were preserved (Symons 1953: 67).

[2] S1522 and S 1531. Leofwine's 998 will comes just after the brief era that Keynes calls Æthelred's "period of youthful indiscretions," 984-993, in which the king greatly reduced the power and freedom of the monasteries (Keynes 1980: 176-86). Perhaps this "anti-monastic reaction," which D.J.V. Fisher (1950-52) finds also in the brief reign of Æthelred's predecessor, Edward the Martyr, suggested to Leofwine that genealogical methods for the perpetuation of inheritance provided a useful hedge against the vicissitudes of monastic fortune. Thurstan son of Wine,

Providing additional support for the idea that the wills worked to replace father-to-son continuities with a different continuum is the evidence of the wills written by women. Of the fifteen wills that mention ancestors' souls, four—Æthelflæd, Ælfheah, Æthelgifu and Leofgifu—are by women.[2] Wills by women thus account for 25 percent of the testaments that mention ancestors' souls even though women only account for 18.64 percent of the wills in the corpus (see Table 2a).[3] Women also continue to mention ancestors into the post-reform period in disproportionate numbers; two of the four wills by women which mention ancestors' souls, those of Ælfflæd and

whose will dates from 1043-45, had significant contacts in the Danelaw: he notes a "felageschipe" with one "Vlfketel," and his will is witnessed by several other individuals with Danish names (Whitelock 1930: 80-82). Thus Thurstan may have been influenced by an Anglo-Danish practice of recognizing continuity not in ancestors who, while unnamed, were accessed through monastic prayers, but by the simple continuity of fathers to sons. I recognize that there are elements of special pleading in this portion of the argument. However, it does seem unusual that in the entire corpus of wills only these two individuals identify themselves as "son of." Such appellations were commonplace in other Anglo-Saxon contexts, most famously in *Beowulf*. Stephen O. Glosecki (2000) argues that the presence of nephews as heirs in various wills indicates "traces" of an avuncular line of inheritance that he believes to have been the folkright in early Germanic Europe. I would point out that there are interesting links between wills naming nephews as benefactors and the Danelaw.

[1] The disinclination to use "son of" formulae may be another example of links between reformed monastic ideology and the wills. Under the Benedictine *Rule*, a monk's father and mother are not supposed to be particularly important to him once he had entered the monastery. Chapter 54 of the *Rule*, for example, forbids a monk to receive any gifts or letters whatsoever, whether from his parents or anyone else. The monk is supposed to give his obedience and allegiance to the abbot and the senior monks who have come before him into the order, rather than to his biological family. The *Rule* twice mentions the duty of monks to reverence their seniors and love their juniors, first in the list of the instruments of good works that makes up chapter four (canons 68 and 69), and again in chapter sixty-three (16, 69) (Hanslik 1977).

[2] S 1494, 1484, 1485, 1497, 1521.

[3] Christine Fell (1984: 95) claims that one quarter of the surviving wills are by women. But one can only reach this figure if wills from couples are counted as wills by women. There are a total of eleven wills by women: S 1513, 1539, 1525 and 1525a (taken as one will, see above n. 42 for explanation), 1484, 1497, 1538, 1486, 1495, 1520, 1521, 1535. There are an additional five wills by couples: S 1500, 1511, 1493, 1532, 1529. If wills by couples are taken as equivalent to wills by women, the percentages given above are somewhat different; the proportion of wills by women and couples which mention ancestors' souls is 45.45%. See table 2b in the appendix for a presentation of the data. Fisher's Exact Test shows that there is only a 21% chance that these results are artifacts of random fluctuations in the data.

Leofgifu, are written after 992.[1] The propensity of women to mention their ancestors' souls offers the intriguing possibility that women could, via written wills, find ways to participate in traditions of continuity from which the older, secular traditional practice of recognizing and naming father-to-son relationships (like those in the royal genealogies) had excluded them.[2]

Furthermore, the ways that women construct their wills and refer to their ancestors suggests that female testators were attempting to mobilize cultural power in somewhat different ways than their male counterparts. Ælfflæd (already discussed above) describes her donations thus: "þonn*e* synd þis þa land þæ minæ yldran þærto bæcwædon ofær minre swystor dæg. ȝ ofær minne" (Whitelock 1930: 38).[3] In fact, Ælfflæd mentions her ancestors ("yldran") eight times in her will, and she distinguishes them from her father, whom she names specifically as granting lands in Totham (Whitelock 1930: 38). Ælfflæd also attempts to mobilize the living to enforce the desires of the dead, calling upon ealdorman Æthelmær to be her friend and protector and "efter minum dege gefelste fi min cwide ȝ mira yldran standan mote" (Whitelock 1930: 38-41).[4] It seems that Ælfflæd is working to justify her decisions based upon her participation in a continuum of ancestors, hoping thus to ensure the support of her will.

Women are also more likely to invoke powerful patrons by name. For example, in the middle of her will Æthelflæd mentions kings Edmund and Edgar as well as Ealdorman Brihtnoth (Whitelock 1930: 35-37). Ælfgifu asks Bishop Æthelwold to always intercede for her and for her mother (Whitelock 1930: 20-23).[5] These two phenomena, mentioning ancestors and invoking living men as supporters, suggest that women were (as we would expect) less able to participate in the father-to-son continuity and thus relied

[1] S 1486 and 1521.

[2] Obviously "ancestors" can include mothers and grandmothers as well as male relatives. For traditions of female "matrilineal genealogy" and "maternal genealogy" in early English monasticism see Dockray-Miller (2000: 1-76).

[3] "Then these are the lands which my ancestors bequeathed to it [the community at Stoke] after my sister's days and after mine."

[4] S 1486. "And after the end of my days will help to ensure that my will and the wills of my ancestors may stand."

[5] S 1484.

upon other means—offered by the tradition of reform-era wills—to improve the chances of their wills being followed.

Regardless of gender, the majority of testators who refer to their ancestors seemed to believe in the efficacy of the monastery to save the souls of these individuals even when they were not explicitly named. In their attempts to make connections to "yldran," testators linked themselves with traditions or continuities of identity that were to some degree an invention of the monastic reformers. Every individual is of course descended from innumerable ancestors, but no one (except perhaps those kings, including King Alfred, whose genealogies, are constructed as reaching back to Germanic gods and biblical figures) can pretend to know who all of them are.[1] By suggesting to testators that monks could pray for generic ancestors rather than specific individuals, the monastery invents a continuity of tradition that does not need to be substantiated by fallible human memory but is rather imminent in the mention of generic ancestors in a written document.[2]

Of course, as part of the church, monasteries were party to the mechanisms by which individuals could achieve eternal life regardless of whether or not they were remembered by their descendants. But in the wake of the Benedictine reform, monasteries position themselves as a significant link between the present and the past and thus, in the minds of testators, between the present testator and his or her future descendants. Reformed monasteries could offer to testators the ability to aid their ancestors years after the testators had left the earth. By extension they offered the capability of providing for the souls of the living long after their deaths. In both cases the continuities and traditions so important to individual identity in the Anglo-Saxon period were accessed through the textual culture of the

[1] For Alfred's genealogy see Stevenson (1959: 2-4). Note that Alfred's list of ancestors, and other similar lists in other contexts, preserve the names of only the direct male (putative) ancestors.

[2] An interest in ancestors' souls can be substantiated in a pre-Christian, Germanic context. The early eighth century king Radbod of Frisia was about to convert to Christianity when he paused on his way to the baptismal font and asked St. Wulframn if he (Radbod) would see his pagan ancestors in heaven. Wulframn replied: certum est dampnationis suscepisse sententiam" ("it is certain that they have received the sentence of damnation"). Radbod, needless to say, withdrew from the font and did not convert to Christianity (Krusch & Levison 1810: 668).

monastery, and the document of the will provides a physical record of the intended provision by the living of the spiritual welfare of the dead.[1]

CONCLUSIONS: TRADITION AND THE REFORM

A complete rehearsal of the evidence for the place of tradition in the cultural work of the Benedictine reform is beyond the scope of this article, but it is useful to connect an analysis of the wills with the larger picture of the development of tenth-century culture. Gretsch's *The Intellectual Foundations of the English Benedictine Reform* synthesizes the scholarship that has gone into establishing the "pivotal role" of the vernacular in the Benedictine reformers' programme as well as their "fervent enthusiasm" for the hermeneutic style in Latin (Gretsch 1999: 4-5 and *passim*).[2] Gretsch shows that Æthelwold and Dunstan were especially concerned to link their cultural work to not only the current 'state-of-the-art' practices of continental Benedictine monasticism but also to the tradition of unique English practices of hermeneutic Latin (deriving from Aldhelm) and vernacular translation (deriving from Alfred).

Concern with maintaining traditional English customs and linking them with present practice is evident throughout the document mostly clearly identified with Æthelwold and the reform, the monastic consuetudinary *Regularis Concordia* (Symons 1953: 2-8).[3] In the prologue to the *Concordia* Æthelwold writes that the synod composed the document after being moved by the advice of King Edgar to develop one set of monastic customs for England: "Sanctique patroni nostri Gregorii documenta, quibus beatum Augustinum monere studuit ut non solum Romanae uerum etiam Galliarum honestos ecclesiarum usus <in> rudi Anglorum ecclesia decorando

[1] Of course the textual culture of the monastery was not the *only* way that continuities and traditions were accessed. But the monopoly the monastery held on the production and, more importantly, the preservation of textualized memory must have made the institution very important to Anglo-Saxons who wanted to preserve their memories for long periods of time.

[2] For the "hermeneutic style" see Lapidge 1993b.

[3] For the reasons to prefer this edition to the 1984 edition by Symons and T. Spath see Kornexl (1993: clxvi). See also Symons 1975.

constituerit recolentes" (Symons 1953: 2-3).[1] Monastic customs are to be gathered "colligentes, uti apes fauum nectaris diuersis pratorum floribus in uno alueario" from the continent (Ghent and Fleury, in particular), but the resulting creation is considered to be a part of the English tradition established by Augustine's mission from Gregory the Great (Symons 1953: 2-3).[2] The *Concordia* also takes great care to cite particular liturgical customs as English and traditional ("usu patrem").[3]

Just one example of this concern for tradition and English practice spreading from monastic law and custom into literary culture can be found in the hexameters of the verse prologue to the "Breviloquium de omnibus sanctis" (Lapidge & Winterbottom 1991: xviii-xix).[4] These hexameters in hermeneutic Latin are part of an acrostic poem for the name "VVLFSTANVS" (Wulfstan). Lines 17-18 read: "Versibus ecce cano, scriptis que tradita legi / Et Dominum in sanctis, uersibus ecce cano" (Lapidge & Winterbottom 1991: xviii-xix).[5] The poet sees fit to mention that the things he is writing about are "things handed down in writing." His poem not only celebrates such things, but he, by repeating them in the hermeneutic style makes himself a participant in a tradition.[6] Gretsch (1999: 425-27 and

[1] "And recalling the letters of our patron St. Gregory by which he strove to instruct the blessed Augustine so that he might establish, by adorning, the noble customs not only of the Roman, but also of the Gallic churches, in the rude church of the English."

[2] "Just as bees collect the honeycomb of nectar from diverse flowers of the meadow into one hive."

[3] Paragraph 32, sentences 6-9 says that ringing bells at Nocturns and Vespers is "sicut in usum huisu patriae;" prayers for the Royal House (8, 1) and the use of chasubles in Lent and on Quarter Tense days (34, 29) are said to come from "usu patrem" (Symons 1953: 29-30 and 31-33).

[4] "Short poem about all Saints."

[5] "I sing in verses thing which I have read handed down in writing, and these verses I sing the Lord present in his saints," trans. Lapidge and Winterbottom 1991.

[6] Note that this is in some ways, to use the Eric Hobsbawm's terms, an "invented tradition" since there had not been a continuous practice of writing in the hermeneutic style from the school of Theodore and Hadrian to the Benedictine reform; the reformers were re-animating a moribund practice; see Hobsbawm and Ranger (1981: 1-14). For the school of Theodore and Hadrian and the discontinuities between their hermeneutic practice and later development of the hermeneutic style during the reform see Lapidge 1996. See also Gretsch (1999: 332-83). My use of Hobsbawm's terminology is not meant to suggest that I subscribe to his vaguely conspiratorial views of invented tradition as a means of oppression. I would suggest that the essays collected by Hobsbawm and Ranger

passim) has established that the reformers were concerned to create and develop a tradition in both Latin and in Old English glossing contexts (including the Royal Psalter and the glosses to Aldhelm's *de Virginitate*). But this self-conscious creation of a literate tradition linking the glorious Anglo-Saxon past with the tenth century has not yet been proven to have spread to vernacular materials, with the possible exception of the document traditionally referred to as *Edgar's Establishment of the Monasteries*.

This text, composed in Old English by Æthelwold as a preface to his translation of the *Benedictine Rule*, illustrates the ties between the reform project and the Anglo-Saxon past.[1] *EEM* connects Bede with the reform project through a deliberate echo of his *Ecclesiastical History*'s discussion of Gregory the Great's mission to England and emphasizes the importance of the *Rule* of St. Benedict and the value of translation into the vernacular (Lapidge 1988: 102-103). More importantly for the purposes of this study, *EEM* makes a clear connection between participation in traditions of the past (Gregory's Mission, Bede's *Historia*) and a continuing practice into the future: "Forþi, þonne, ic mid ealre estfulnesse mine æftergengan bidde ⁊ þurh Drihtnes naman halsige, þæt hy þyses halgan regules bigenc a þurh Cristes gife geycen ⁊ godiende to fulfremedum edne gebrencgen" (Whitelock et al. 1981: 152).[2]

By creating a will that looked back to a testator's ancestors and simultaneously placed an obligation upon a monastic house to commemorate the testator eternally in the future, a testator could interpolate him- or herself into a continuum, a tradition of names and memories perpetuated across

illustrate how very difficult it is to separate an "invented" tradition from some other (presumably 'not-invented') kind.

[1] The document is printed and translated in Whitelock et al. (1981: 142-54). For Æthelwold's authorship see Whitelock (1970: 125-36). Gretsch argues that *EEM* was originally used as the preface to Æthelwold's translation of the *Benedictine Rule* and notes that *EEM* is "a piece of original Old English prose, not a translation" (1999: 122-24 and 230-33). Note that the appearance of links to traditions of English monasticism in this document tells us little about the penetration of these ideas into the secular culture, since Æthelwold was both the prime mover of the reform and the author of *EEM*.

[2] "Therefore, then, I pray that my successors with all devotion and pray in the Lord's name, that they ever increase the observance of this holy rule through the grace of Christ and may, improving it, bring it to its full perfection" (Whitelock et al. 1981: 152).

generational boundaries. The testator who mentions his ancestors may therefore be seen as doing explicitly what Æthelwold and other tenth-century practitioners of the hermeneutic style in Latin are doing implicitly by imitating Aldhelm or continuing the educational and cultural programs of Alfred and Æthelstan's court. The co-incidence of concern for ancestors' souls with the reform years, the geographic links between donations and the progress of the reform, and with the reformers' clear efforts to emphasize the traditionality of their practice, all combine, it seems to me, to support the hypothesis that we see in the wills of the tenth century an expression of the revolution brought about by the Benedictine Reform. The wills show that the cultural concerns of highly literate, superbly educated monks had spread into the wider secular culture.[1]

By the mentioning their ancestors' souls in their wills, individual Anglo-Saxons were actively intervening with God on behalf of those individuals, named or unnamed. They were thus not only remembering the past, but actively participating in it, building a trans-temporal community of believers that was linked by memory, written record and cultural practice the same way that Æthelwold, Dunstan and the other intellectual leaders of the reform had linked themselves, through study and imitation, with Aldhelm and Bede. This interpretation of the wills suggests that in the tenth century, monastic concerns and ideologies had so penetrated Anglo-Saxon culture that even secular Anglo-Saxons were, to a great degree, seeing themselves through monastic eyes and creating a culture that reflected that vision.

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[1] Benjamin Withers discusses "the legally binding formulas of the Anglo-Saxon wills" and their connection to architecture—an inscription in the Anglo-Saxon church at Breamore in Hampshire—and the rubrics of the Old English prose *Genesis*. He sees the rubrics' use of will language as stressing "the text's accurate and valid presentation of past events" and suggest that in eleventh-century England "the interests of ecclesiastical and secular society were closely intertwined." While Withers' analysis focuses on later texts, he is noting a very similar process to the one I discuss above: elite monastic, ecclesiastical concerns are spilling over into the wider culture (Withers 1999: 136, 135, and 139).

Figure 1

Figure 2a

Figure 2b

Figure 3a

Figure 3b

MAPS:

The maps illustrate the geographic spread of bequests to monasteries and cathedrals (bequests to abbots are credited to their monasteries). Squares ■ indicate bequests that do not mention ancestors' souls; triangles ▲ indicate bequests that mention ancestors' souls. Numbers refer to the list of wills in Appendix 1.

Bequests were assigned to an interval based on the earliest possible date for each will. The difference between this method of plotting and a mid-point based method (i.e., plotting the will based on the midpoint of the range of possible dates) was trivial. If a midpoint plotting system were used, there would be no change in Figure 4, and three wills, numbers 27, 28 and 30 would be shifted from Figure 5 to Figure 6.

Figure 4 (map 1)

Figure 5 (map 2)

Figure 6 (map 3)

TABLE 1A: COMPARISON BY PERIOD: NUMBERS OF WILLS MENTIONING ANCESTORS' SOULS

Years	Mention Ancestors' Souls	Do Not Mention Ancestors' Souls	Totals	% Mentioning Ancestors' Souls
805-924	2	6	8	25.00
925-992	10	14	24	41.67
993-1066	4	23	27	14.81
Totals	16	43	59	27.12

Fisher's Exact Test for 805-924 versus 925-992: p = .24
Probability that data are significant: 76%
χ^2 for 925-992 versus 993-1066: 4.600 with 2 degrees of freedom
Probability that data are significant: 95%

TABLE 1B: COMPARISON BY PERIOD: NUMBERS OF WILLS MENTIONING ANCESTORS' SOULS (IF WULFRIC'S WILL (S 1536) IS COUNTED AS BEING IN THE 925-992 INTERVAL)

Years	Mention Ancestors' Souls	Do Not Mention Ancestors' Souls	Totals	% Mentioning Ancestors' Souls
805-924	2	6	8	25.00
925-992	11	14	25	44.00
993-1066	3	23	27	11.54
Totals	16	43	59	27.12

Fisher's Exact Test for 805-924 versus 925-992: p = .22
Probability that data are significant: 78%
χ^2 for 925-992 versus 993-1066: 6.744 with 2 degrees of freedom
Probability that data are significant: 99%

TABLE 2A: COMPARISON BY GENDER OF TESTATOR, WOMEN VERSUS MEN & COUPLES: NUMBERS OF WILLS MENTIONING ANCESTORS' SOULS

Gender of Testators	Mention Ancestors' Souls	Do Not Mention Ancestors' Souls	Totals	% Mentioning Ancestors' Souls
Women	4	7	11	36.60
Men & Couples	12	36	48	25.00
Totals	16	43	59	27.12

Fisher's Exact Test for Women versus Men & Couples: p = .21

Probability that data are significant: 79%

TABLE 2B: COMPARISON BY GENDER OF TESTATOR, WOMEN & COUPLES VERSUS MEN: NUMBERS OF WILLS MENTIONING ANCESTORS' SOULS

Gender of Testators	Mention Ancestors' Souls	Do Not Mention Ancestors' Souls	Totals	% Mentioning Ancestors' Souls
Women & Couples	5	11	16	31.25
Men	11	32	43	25.58
Totals	16	43	59	27.12

Fisher's Exact Test for Women & Couples versus Men: p = .23

Probability that data are significant: 77%

APPENDIX 1: LIST OF THE WILLS USED IN THIS STUDY

Legend:

number used in figures / date of will / name of testator / Sawyer number

underlined wills mention ancestors' souls; *italicized* wills may be ambiguous and are discussed in detail in the text.

1 / 805 to 832 / Æthelnoth / S 1500

2 / 833 to 839 / Abba, reeve / S 1482

3 / 845 to 853 / Badanoth Beotting / S 1510

4 / 855 / Dunn / S 1514

5 / 871 to 889 / Alfred ealdorman / S 1508

6 / 873 to 888 / King Alfred / S 1507

7 / 900 / Ceolwynn / S 1513

8 / 900 ? / Ordnoth / S 1524

9 / 931 to 939 / Wulfgar / S 1533

10 / 932 to 939 / Alfred thegn / S 1509

11 / 942 to 951 / Theodred / S 1526

12 / 946-947 / Earl Æthelwold / S 1504

13 / 946 to 951 / Ælfgar / S 1483

14 / 950 / Wynflæd / S 1539

15 / 950 to 1025 / Wills of Siflæd / S 1525

16 */ 951 to 955 / Eadred / S 1515*

17 / 955 to 958 / Ælfsige / S 1491

18 / 957 to 958 / Æthelgeard / S 1496

19 / 958 / Æthelwyrd / S 1506

20 / 961-995 / Æthelric / S 1501

21 / 962 to 991 / Æthelflæd / S 1494

22 / 964 to 980 / Brihtric Grim / S 1512

23 */ 966 to 975 / Ælfgifu / S 1484*

24 / 968 to 971 / Ælfheah / S 1485

25 / 971 to 983 / Æthelmær / S 1498

26 / 973 to 987 / Brihtric and Ælfswith / S 1511

27 / 975 to 1016 / Ælfhelm / S 1487

28/ 978-1016 / Ærnketel and Wulfrun / S 1493

29 / 980-990/ Æthelgifu / S 1497

30 / 984 to 1016 / Wulfwaru / S 1538

31 / c. 986 / Æðelstan Mannesson / S 1503a

32 / 987 / Æthelwold / S 1505

33 / 998 / Leofwine / S 1522

34 / 1000 / Wulfgeat / S 1534

35 */ 1000 to 1002 / Ælfflæd / S 1486*

36 */ 1002 to 1004 / Wulfric / S 1536*

37 / 1003 to 1004 / Ælfric archbishop / S 1488

38 / 1004 to 1014 / Æthelflæd to St. Paul's / S 1495

39 / 1007 / Godric / S 1518

40 / 1008 to 1012 / Ælfwold / S 1492

41 / 1015 / Athelstan Ætheling / S 1503

42 / 1017 to 1035 / Leofflad / S 1520

43 / 1017 to 1035 Manat the Anchorite / S 1523

44 / 1020 and after / Thurketel Heyng / S 1528

45 / 1022 to 1043 / Wulfsige / S 1537

46 / 1035 to 1040 / Ælfric bishop / S 1489

47 / 1035 to 1044 / Leofgifu / S 1521

48 / 1038 or before / Thurketel / S 1527

49 / 1042 to 1043 / Ælfric Modercope / S 1490

50 / 1042 to 1043 / Thurstan / S 1530

51 / 1042 to 1053 / Wulfgyth / S 1535

52 / 1042-1066 / Ulf / S 1532

53 / 1043 to 1045 / Thurstan son of Wine / S 1531

54 / 1047 to 1070 / Æthelmær bishop / S 1499

55 / c. 1050 / Eadwine / S 1516

56 / 1050 / Æthelric Bigga / S 1502

57 / c. 1050 / Thurkil and Æthelgyth / S 1529

58 / 1052 to 1066 / Ketel / S 1519

59 / 1053 / Eadwine of Caddington / S 1517

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