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IV

The
Saxon Bishops of Wells

A Historical Study in
the Tenth Century

By

J. Armitage Robinson, D.D.

Fellow of the Academy

Dean of Wells

London

Published for the British Academy

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THE SAXON BISHOPS OF WELLS

A HISTORICAL STUDY IN THE TENTH CENTURY

I

THE FIRST BISHOP OF WELLS

THE bishopric of Wells was founded a thousand years ago, in the reign of Edward the Elder; but a reasonable tradition takes back the church of St. Andrew another two hundred years. King Ina had carried the Saxon Conquest beyond the limits of Somerset, driving the British before him as far as Exeter. The kingdom of Wessex had become too large a diocese to be ruled by a single bishop with his seat at Winchester; so the western portion was now cut off and placed under the supervision of a second bishop sitting at Sherborne. This was in 705, and the new bishop was the learned Abbot of Malmesbury, St. Aldhelm, who died in 709 in the little wooden church of Doultling, in the course of one of his episcopal tours among the villages of Somerset. Brief as was the period of his rule, Aldhelm wrought great good for his people. Before he became bishop his learning and his gentleness had done much to persuade the British folk to join with their Saxon fellow Christians in keeping Easter on the same day, and to abandon certain customs, trivial in themselves, but mischievous when clung to as symbols of separation. At the same time King Ina's generous legislation was treating the conquered as almost on the level of their conquerors, and the two races soon began to coalesce. Ina built a new church of stone for the British monastery at Glastonbury, east of the wattled church of immemorial antiquity; and we may readily accept the tradition that it was the same king who, under St. Aldhelm's guidance, built the first church by the Wells of St. Andrew.

The creation of a separate bishopric for the county of Somerset was not an isolated act. It was part of a policy which, if not formulated by King Alfred, was the natural outcome of the work which he

did for England. When Alfred came to the throne in 871, the Danish terror was at its height, and for the first seven years of his reign practically the whole of England was at the mercy (if we may so say) of these merciless invaders. A last stand was made at Athelney, and on the hill that rises above Burrow Bridge.¹ It is the proudest moment of the history of Somerset. Here was the rallying-point of the heroic band which was to restore the fortunes of Wessex and prepare the way for the new England of the tenth century. Hence went the Somersets forth, to be joined by the Dorsets and the Wilts, and to inflict such a defeat on the foe as should shatter for the first time the legend of their invincibility.

These heathen Norsemen, who had long harried the land with a cruel and widespread desolation, had shown no regard for sacred places or persons, but had sacked and burned churches and monasteries, and had slain priest, monk and nun, such only escaping as could pick up the bones of their patron saints and flee into desert places. Religion and learning alike were threatened with extinction. Alfred tells us that, when he came to the throne of Wessex, not a scholar could he find south of the Thames; few men south of the Humber, and not many north of it, knew the English meaning of their Latin service-books, or could translate a Latin letter. Such was the plight of the Church which had sent out the learned Boniface to convert the Germans, and had given Alcuin of York to the service of the Emperor Charlemagne.

Alfred not only thrashed the Danes, but he also made Christians of them, thus leading the way to a lasting peace with some at least among them. Moreover he compelled them to withdraw from the whole of Wessex and from the city of London, and confine their settlements to the north of the Thames; and he made a compact with them, and propounded laws by which Englishmen and Danes should live side by side in reasonable security. Thus he laid the foundations of the new England, which his son Edward and his grandsons Athelstan, Edmund, and Edred were to build up stage by stage in the first half of the splendid tenth century. What more he did for justice, learning, education and religion is of common knowledge. But one great reform he did not live to see, although he paved the way for its arrival.

The whole of Wessex in his day had but two bishops; one sat at Winchester, the other at Sherborne; and the Bishop of Sherborne was responsible for all that lay west of him. It might seem as

¹ Burrow Bridge, or Boroughbridge, so called from the *burh* rising above it on the east bank of the Parret, a mile from Athelney itself.

though some relief was contemplated when the king gave Exeter to Bishop Asser, a learned man whom he had brought from St. Davids, and whose knowledge of their language would help him to deal with the folk of Devon and Cornwall—the West Welsh, as they were then called. But Asser himself presently became Bishop of Sherborne, so that matters remained as before. When, however, King Edward the Elder had been seated on the throne for nine or ten years, there had been time for a new generation to grow up, trained in the schools which Alfred had founded. Archbishop Plegmund, one of Alfred's men of learning, now determined, with King Edward's aid, to face the problem boldly and as a whole. The diocese of Winchester was divided, so as to give a bishop for Wilts., with his seat at Ramsbury; and the diocese of Sherborne was divided, giving new sees to Somerset and Devon. These counties were already recognized territorial divisions, and their aldermen had led the county hosts in the fights against the Danes. The ecclesiastical was rightly made to coincide with the civil division; and thus Wells and Crediton got bishops of their own.¹

If we are asked why remote little Wells was chosen for the seat of the Somerset bishop, and not the famous city of Bath, with its abbey some two centuries old, our answer is ready. First, Wells is central to the county, whereas Bath is not; secondly, the court was much at Cheddar in those days, and Wells lay between royal Cheddar and the 'royal island' of Glastonbury,² that ancient home of religion, the glories of which were soon to shine more brightly than ever; thirdly, Bath had for two hundred years looked north and not south, casting in its lot with Gloucestershire, and living under the rule of the Mercian kings. The Mercian lands indeed were being gradually united to the kingdom of the West Saxons, as they were regained little by little from Danish rule. Alfred's daughter Ethelflaed was married to Ethelred, the alderman of the Mercians, and after the disappearance of the last Mercian king this warrior princess ruled with her husband, and even after her husband's death, as the Lady of the Mercians; but when she died, in 918, Mercia came directly under Edward's control, and a fresh step was taken towards the unity of England. Somewhere about this time Bath returned to its own county of Somerset; but it must still have seemed a stranger-town, and nearly two centuries were to run before the bishop's stool was set up in its abbey church.

¹ See the Note (A) on the Early Endowment of the See of Wells.

² 'Regalis insula,' *Memorials of St. Dunstan* (Rolls Ser.), p. 6.

The first Bishop of Wells was Æthelhelm, or Athelm, as he is more commonly called.¹ He must have been among the earliest fruits of Alfred's educational endeavours. He seems to have been related to the royal house, as his nephew Dunstan undoubtedly was. His brother Heorstan, Dunstan's father, had an estate bordering on Glastonbury to the south-east; and Athelm may have been born in that neighbourhood. He appears to have been educated at Glastonbury, if indeed he was not a monk of the abbey.² His consecration may be placed in 909 or 910. Of his work in the new diocese of Somerset we know nothing at all; but we may be sure that it was strong and good; for when the aged Plegmund died, in 923, Athelm was chosen to succeed him in the archbishopric of Canterbury.³ This was a remarkable choice; for it had hardly ever happened that an archbishop was appointed from the number of existing bishops; there were precedents indeed, but only three or four in the three centuries since St. Augustine's death. When he was settled at Canterbury, Athelm sent for his nephew Dunstan, a lad of about fourteen, who had been brought up at Glastonbury. King Edward died at the end of 924, and on September 4 in the following year Athelm anointed and crowned King Athelstan. On January 8, 926, he died; but not before he had commended Dunstan to the new king and secured him a place in the court. He could not know how great was the service he thus rendered to the England of the coming days. He was buried at Canterbury, where his obit was kept,⁴ and his name was invoked among saintly confessors.⁵

Here we must needs break off our narrative in order to consider the various historical problems which beset some of the statements which have just been made.

¹ See the Note (B) on the Name Æthelhelm or Æthelm.

² *Memorials of St. Dunstan*, pp. 7, 10, 54 f. William of Malmesbury makes Athelm a monk of Glastonbury: *ibid.*, p. 258; *Gesta Regum*, i. 224; *Antiq. of Glaston*, in Hearne's *Adam of Domesday*, i. 92. The Canon of Wells, improving on this, makes him abbot: *Historia Maior*, Wharton, *A. S.* i. 555. On the other hand Brompton, in his *Chronicon*, says: 'qui quidem Athelmus non fuit monachus, sed omnes alii archiepiscopi Dorobornenses ante eum,' Twysden, *Scriptt. Decem*, p. 838. The Glastonbury Obituary possibly included him as having been Bishop of Wells, perhaps also as Dunstan's uncle; and thus he may in time have been thought of as a monk of the abbey. It is most reasonable to suppose that he had his education there.

³ See the Note (C) on the Date of Athelm's Translation to Canterbury.

⁴ Cotton MS., Nero C. 9.

⁵ See the Note (D) on the Tombs of Athelm, Wulfhelm and Lyfing.

II

THE SUBDIVISION OF THE WESSEX DIOCESES

The earliest historical record which tells us of the rearrangement by which a new diocese was formed out of Winchester for Wiltshire, and two new dioceses out of Sherborne for Wells and Crediton, is the famous manuscript presented by King Athelstan to the guardians of St. Cuthbert's shrine. This manuscript contains Bede's Life of St. Cuthbert and a metrical narrative of the saint's miracles. Between these two pieces come lists of bishops and genealogies of kings. These and similar episcopal lists deserve a critical treatment which they have not yet received. They occur, in conjunction with genealogical lists of the Anglo-Saxon royal houses, in a number of manuscripts which present them at various stages of completeness. The most important codices are :

Cotton MS., *Vespasian B. 6* (c. 805-11).

Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, 183 (c. 935).

Cotton MS., *Tiberius B. 5* (c. 990).

Our chief concern will be with the second of these manuscripts, King Athelstan's codex mentioned above. But, in order to interpret its evidence aright, we must make a preliminary study of the list of the West Saxon bishops given in *Vespasian B. 6*.

This is a composite volume containing

i. *Beda de temporibus* (ff. 1-102).

ii. Astronomical and other tables, and various items (ff. 103-7), followed by lists of popes, &c., and of English bishops, and genealogies of Mercian and Northumbrian kings (ff. 107 b-111).

iii. In a much later hand, William of Newburgh's *History* (ff. 112 onwards).

It is not certain that i and ii originally formed part of the same MS.: probably they did not. A note on f. 102 b seems to have been written c. 840, and the copy of the tract of Bede was perhaps written a little earlier. But ii may fairly be assigned to a yet earlier date. The popes end with Leo III (795-816) probably, though the re-inking of the MS. makes it hard to say with certainty that the next two names, Stephen V (816-17) and Paschal I (817-24), were not written by the original scribe. The point must really be decided by the evidence of the English lists.

We begin by observing that the scribe would seem to have written before July 27, 816, the date of the Council of Celcyth, at which

Winchester, Leicester and Lichfield were represented by Wigthegn, Rethhun and Herewine:¹ for these names are added to his lists by a second hand, which brings most of the dioceses down to *c.* 825.

Again, the last signatures of Werenberht of Leicester and Aldwulf of Lichfield are in 814 (Harley Charter 83 A. 1; Birch, *C. S.* 343). But in this charter Wigthegn already appears as Bishop of Winchester; so that the Wessex lists must have been written before this. Indeed, if with Bishop Stubbs we accept the date and signatures of the spurious foundation charter of Winchelcombe (Birch, *C. S.* 338) as derived from a genuine charter,² then Wigthegn (or Wignoth, as he is there corruptly written) was already Bishop of Winchester in 811. He may have succeeded earlier still, for the last appearance of Alhmund, his predecessor, is on July 26, 805 (Birch, *C. S.* 322).

If now we date the episcopal lists between 805 and 811 (or 814) we shall satisfy all demands, with two exceptions which if they stood by themselves might suggest a yet earlier date. For Tidferth of Hexham succeeded in 806, and Egbert of Lindisfarne in 803; and both of these were added by the second hand. But for these remote dioceses the original scribe may easily have been behindhand in his information. As for the royal genealogies, the latest king to be mentioned is Coenwulf of Mercia (796–821). No Wessex kings are included in these lists.

Provisionally, therefore, we place the writing of these episcopal lists between 805 and 811. Such a date is not excluded by palaeographical considerations.³

If we are right in thinking that we have here got back to the original compilation of these episcopal lists—and there seems to be no evidence of an earlier stage—they were drawn up at a critical period in the history of the Church and of the State. King Offa's scheme of a separate Mercian province with an archbishop at Lichfield had been short-lived; it was finally disposed of by Archbishop Ethelweard in 803. Although Wulfred, the next Archbishop of Canterbury (805–832), had a prolonged struggle with Coenwulf, the last great Mercian king, the unity of his province was no longer in question, and Kent was soon to be released from the Mercian tyranny. The power of Wessex was growing under Egbert (802–39), and was soon to alter the face of England after the battle of Ellandune in 825.

It is not without significance that at this moment of impending

¹ Haddan and Stubbs, *Councils, &c.*, iii. 579.

² *Ibid.* iii. 574 n.

³ I am permitted to say this on the authority of Mr. J. P. Gilson, of the British Museum, who has kindly allowed me to consult him.

change, when a new unity was about to be given to the State, a scholar should be moved to trace the episcopal successions of the whole of England, and thus to display the antecedent unity of the English Church. Alcuin had died in 804, and the land was soon to be plunged in the darkness of that ignorance which two generations later Alfred would have to deplore. We may regard the compilation of these lists as one of the last efforts of Alcuin's school.

The following is the Wessex list of episcopal successions in Vespasian B. 6. The names marked with an asterisk have been added by the second hand, c. 825.

Nomina episcoporum occidentalium saxonum.

Primus occidentalium saxonum birinus fuit episcopus qui cum consilio honorii papae venerat brittanium. ii agilberht iii uune iiii leutherius v haedde Deinde in duas parochias diuisus est altera uuentanaecium ecclesiae altera scira-bur(nensis) ecclesiae.

In uenta(na) ciuita(te)

- i danihel
- ii hunfrið
- iii cynheard
- iiii aeðelheard
- v egbald
- vi dudd
- vii cyneberht
- viii alchmund
- wigðegn*
- herefrið*

In scira(burnensi) eccle(sia)

- i aldhelm
- ii forðhere
- iii herenuald
- iv aeðelmod
- v denefrið
- vi uuigberht
- allistan*

The main source of the compiler's information for the earliest period would naturally be the *Historia Ecclesiastica* of Bede. He has, in fact, actually adopted Bede's words, taking them from two widely separated passages of his work.

(1) *Hist. Eccl.* iii. 7 Eo tempore gens *Occidentalium Saxonum*, qui antiquitus *Gewissae* vocabantur, regnante Cynigilso fidem Christi suscepit, praedicante illis verbum *Birino episcopo*, qui cum consilio papae *Honorii* venerat *Brittanium*.

The second passage explains the riddle of what appears to be the ungrammatical *diuisus est*.

(2) *Hist. Eccl.* v. 18 Quo (sc. Haedde) defuncto, *episcopatus* provinciae illius in duas parochias *diuisus est*: una data Daniheli, quam usque hodie regit; altera Aldhelmo, cui annis iiii strenuissime praefuit, etc.

We are now ready to consider the evidence offered to us by the Wessex lists in C. C. C. C. 183. It will be convenient to postpone for the moment certain interesting questions as to the date of this MS., and of the lists which it contains.

- Nomina episcoporum
occidentalium saxonum*
- i. birinus fuit epis qui cum consilio honorii pape venerat brittanniam
 - ii. Agilberht
 - iii. pine
 - iiii. leutherius
 - v. hædde
deinde in duas parrochi
as diuisus est. altera uenta
cenorum ecclesie altera scire
burnensis ecclesie
uentane ciuitatis episcopi
 - vi. Danihel
 - vii. Hunfrið
 - viii. Cynheard
 - viiii. Æþelheard
x. Ecgwald
 - xi. dudd
 - xii. Cynebryht
 - xiii. Alhmund
 - xiiii. pigþegn
 - xv. Hereferð
 - xvi. Eadhun
 - xvii. Helmstan
(f. 62 b, col. 1)
 - xviii. Spiðhun
 - xviiii.
 - xx. Denepulf
 - xxi. Friþestan
 - xxii. Ælfheah
 - xxiii.
 - xxiiii. Deinde uintoni
 - xxv. en̄ ecclā in duas
 - xxvi. parrochias
 - xxvii. diuisa est temp̄
 - xxviii. Friþestan . unam tenu
 - xxviiii. it Friðestan . et alteram
 - xxx. Æþelstan . postea Oda.
- Scireburnensis ecclesie episcopi*
- i. Adhelm
 - ii. Forðshere
 - iii. Hereuuald
 - iiii. Æðelmod
 - v. Denefrið
 - vi. pigbriht
 - vii. [E]alhstan
 - viii. heahmund
 - iiiiii. æþelheah
 - x. pulfsige
 - xi. asser
 - xii. æðelpearð
(col. 2)
deinde in tres parrochias
diuisa est . pillensis ec-
clesie et cridiensi(s)
ecclesie
- Scireburnensis ecclesie*
- xiii. þærstan
 - xiiii. æþelwald
 - xv. Sigelm
 - xvi. ælfred
- Unillensis ecclesie*
- i. æpelmus
 - ii. uulfhelmus
 - iii. ælfheah
- Cridiensis ecclesie*
- i. Eadulf
(ii.) æþelgar

It is at once evident that we have here a continuation of the lists of which we have found the earliest stage in Vesp. B. 6. The continuator is plainly no trained scholar, and he has indicated the fresh subdivision of the Winchester diocese in a very awkward manner. He has omitted even to tell us that the new diocese then formed was the diocese of Wiltshire, which had its seat at Ramsbury. He continues the Winchester list to his own day without any suggestion that the area of the diocese has undergone a second limitation. He has left a gap after the name of St. Swithun; we find it filled some fifty years later in Tiberius B. 5 by the name of Ealferth. His last three bishops are Denewulf (879-908), Frithestan (909-31) and Ælfheah 'the Bald' (934 onwards). Strangely enough, he has left

out the saintly Beornstan, who came in on Frithestan's retirement and sat for two years and a half, if not longer. This omission, again, is supplied in Tiberius B. 5.

Having brought his Winchester list down to his own time, he finds it necessary to explain that part of the Winchester diocese has for some time been separated off and ruled by a bishop of its own. He looks back to the note, which he has already copied, recording the first subdivision of the see of Winchester, and he appends a somewhat belated note of a similar character: 'Then (*deinde*) the church of Winchester was divided into two dioceses, in the time of Frithestan: one Frithestan held, the other Æthelstan, and afterwards Oda.' We know that Oda came in at some time between 925 and 927, and went to Canterbury in 942. Athelstan, who preceded him at Ramsbury, came in, it would seem, when the new see was founded, 'in the time of Frithestan': but this is a somewhat vague indication of date.

Let us now see how he deals with the subdivision of Sherborne. He carries down his Sherborne list past Asser, who died in 909, to Æthelweard. Then he inserts a note, the meaning of which is fairly clear, though its construction is faulty: 'Then (*deinde*) it was divided into three dioceses—of the church of Wells, and of the church of Crediton.' After this we have three separate lists—for the reduced diocese of Sherborne, for Wells, and for Crediton.

When did this subdivision actually take place? Was it on Asser's death, or in the time of Æthelweard, or immediately after his time? Was it contemporaneous with the subdivision of Winchester, and part of a complete scheme for the reconstitution of the Wessex dioceses? All that we can say here is that the evidence of this MS. does not afford us clear answers to these questions. The writer has got himself into a curious tangle, from which he must have been thankful to emerge and to go forward with the straight lines of his separate lists. We shall be unwise if we press his language with a rigidly logical interpretation.

He left an awkward problem for his successors when they came to carry on the Winchester list. The note as to the subdivision 'in the time of Frithestan' was already out of its proper place: what should they do with it? The scribe of Tiberius B. 5 continues the Winchester list without a break, adding the names of Ælfsige, Æthelwold and Ælfheah the second (the future archbishop and martyr). He then adds a note in which he attempts to combine the two notes of his predecessor:

Uentania ecclesia in duas parrochias divisa est . tempore friðestan . unam tenuit friðestan . et alteram æðelstan . postea . oda . Deinde in .iii. ^{es} parrochias divisa est . wiltunensis . et willensis . et cridiensis . aecclesiae .

After this he gives the Sherborne list from the time of Aldhelm down to his own day. We observe that he has given us 'Wiltunensis' as the name of the diocese which had before been left without a name: but he gives it in the wrong place, and makes confusion worse confounded.

We have now to consider the date and provenance of the two manuscripts of which we have last spoken.

(1) C.C.C.C. 183. Simeon of Durham (*Hist. Dunelm.* ii. 18: I, p. 75, Rolls Ser.) says that in 925 Tilred, Bishop of Chester-le-Street, died, and was succeeded by Wigred, in whose tenth year Athelstan, on his way into Scotland, made great offerings at St. Cuthbert's shrine. This brings us to 934. 'In the fourth year after this, i. e. 937,' he says, was the battle at 'Weondune, otherwise called Etbrunnanwerc or Brunnanbyrig'. Thus it is quite plain that Simeon of Durham dates the gifts of Athelstan to St. Cuthbert in 934, the year of his first expedition to Scotland.

He does not describe the gifts in detail, but refers us to a *cartula*, which he has already (p. 72) spoken of as 'ecclesiae cartula quae antiquam regum et quorumque religiosorum munificentiam erga ipsum sanctum continet'. This is the *Historia de S. Cuthberto*, printed in the same volume of the Rolls Series. Here we read (§ 26, p. 211) that when Athelstan was making a great expedition into Scotland he visited the shrine of St. Cuthbert and made royal gifts, 'et inde subscriptum testamentum composuit et ad caput sancti Cuthberti posuit: In nomine domini nostri Iesu Christ. Ego Ethelstan rex do sancto Cuthberto hunc textum Evangeliorum, . . .' (many gifts follow) ' . . . et unam sancti Cuthberti vitam, metrice et prosaice scriptum . . .' Evidently this deed of gift was written on a leaf of the Gospels thus presented (*hunc textum*).¹

The *cartula* proceeds to tell us that Athelstan charged his brother Edmund to bring his body to St. Cuthbert if he should fall in the

¹ It is believed that this Book of the Gospels was the Cotton MS., Otho B. 9, of which only charred fragments of thirteen leaves now remain. It was described by Wanley (Hickes's *Thesaurus*, ii. 238), who gives Athelstan's English dedication of the book to St. Cuthbert. This was followed by 'Nota Sax. de donis quae contulit idem rex Æthelstanus'. The Latin 'testamentum', given in the *Historia de S. Cuthberto*, seems to be a combination of these entries. Mr. Hodgson Hinde (*Sym. Dun.*, i. 149, Surtees Soc.) says: 'There is a copy of this charter-will in MS. Cotton, Claudius D. iv. 21-2, a MS. of the fifteenth century. It occurs also at p. 93*b* of the same MS., and is said to be taken "Ex libro Prioris; et concordat cum libro magni altaris". The passage relating to Edmund is said to be "Ex libro magni altaris". Neither it, nor the will of Athelstan, is in the Liber Vitae, and some other book is no doubt meant.' The Claudius MS. was referred to by Wanley, but is not mentioned by Birch, *C. S.* 685.

expedition. There is nothing here to give a definite date : but, as Edmund was only twelve or thirteen years old in 934, we seem rather to be pointed to 937, when we know that Edmund took part in the expedition. The allocation of the gifts to 934 may be regarded as a mere conjecture.¹

It is generally agreed that the MS. C.C.C.C. 183, which contains the Life and Miracles of St. Cuthbert in prose and in verse, and has at the beginning the picture of a king offering a book to a saint, is the actual volume presented by King Athelstan to St. Cuthbert. Now, when we examine the episcopal lists contained in this MS., we find that the latest name is that of Ælfheah the Bald, who succeeded Beornstan at Winchester in 934 (or possibly 935); and we note that no successor is given to Ælfheah of Wells, who died in 937 or 938. We may be confident, therefore, that the MS. was written before 938, but we cannot be sure that it was completed before 935.

Thus again we are pointed to 937 rather than 934 as the date of the donation. It is possible that the book was promised on the former occasion, and was written and brought up from the south at the later date. This is in itself a natural supposition: for the codex was evidently written specially for the occasion, as we may judge both from its subject and from the picture at the beginning; and it would take some time to make so beautiful a book.

It is not easy to conjecture where this MS. was written. We naturally think first of Winchester; but against this is the fact that the Winchester list of bishops, as we have noted above, has two gaps—a space is left after St. Swithhun, and the name of St. Beornstan, who had died quite recently, is omitted without even a break in the numbering.

¹ The allocation of Athelstan's gifts to 934 occurs also in the first section of the *Historia Regum* (*Sym. Dun.*, R. S., II. 93); here again it is clear that Athelstan's deed of gift is the ultimate source of information. This first section is a highly composite document: from 734 to 802 it embodies the very important Northumbrian Annals (cf. Stubbs, Preface to *Hoveden*, R. S., I. xxviii ff.); but after this the compiler is at a loss till Asser's Life of Alfred supplies him with abundant materials; after that source has failed him, he uses a form of the Saxon Chronicle intimately related to the ancestor of E (the Peterborough Chronicle): but, though he supplies us with some unique notices of northern affairs at a few points between 888 and 978, we must be careful not to estimate their value by the fact that they occur in the same compilation as the Northumbrian Annals of the earlier period. Symeon's own hand is probably to be traced in certain parts of this first section, and the mention of Athelstan's gifts under 934 may be due to him: in any case this notice (repeated in a shorter form in the second section, *ibid.* II. 124) and that which occurs in the *Hist. Dunelm.* are not likely to be independent of each other.

Yet we may be fairly confident that the book comes from Wessex: for, apart from the list of the archbishops of Canterbury, only the Wessex bishops are brought down to the writer's own day. All the other episcopal lists come to an end before *c.* 840.¹ If the writer had been at Canterbury he might have done more for these other dioceses. We must look for him in Wessex; and after Winchester the most likely place would seem to be Glastonbury. This was a royal monastery, and the court was frequently in Somerset; Dunstan was trained at Glastonbury, and became abbot there a few years after this. St. Cuthbert was said to have appeared to King Alfred when he was hard pressed in the Somerset marshes, and the parish church of Wells proves by its unusual dedication that the saint was in high honour in the neighbourhood in very early days. A copy of his Life and of his Miracles may have been already at Glastonbury, or may have been brought from the north for the writing of this book. This is no more than a guess; but it fits in with the fact that the next evidence for these episcopal lists is found in a MS. which undoubtedly has a Glastonbury connexion.

(2) Of this MS. (Tiberius B. 5) something must now be said. It appears to be of the second half of the eleventh century, but its episcopal lists end *c.* 990. The royal genealogies are the same as in Vesp. B. 6, save that that codex had entirely omitted the West Saxon kings. This defect is remedied in two ways: before the genealogies of Vesp., Tiberius inserts a list of kings from Cerdic to Æthelred; and after the genealogies of Vesp., it adds (*a*) a genealogy of Ine (which is found as the last of the genealogies in C.C.C.C. 183), and (*b*) a genealogy of the Æthelings, Eadward, Eadmund and Æthelred, sons of Edgar, tracing them up to Ingeld the brother of Ine. Then it says:

Ingeld was i nes broðor westseaxna cyninges . 7 he heold rice .vii. 7 xxx wintra . 7 he getimbrade þæt beorhte mynster æt glastinga byrig . 7 æfter þam ferde to s̅ce petres . 7 þær his feorh asealde . 7 onsibbe gerest . 7 hi begen broðra wæron cenredes suna.²

This genealogy is continued through Cerdic and Woden to Scēf,

¹ The list of popes comes down to Adrian III (884-5): the entries from *c.* 840 to this date may have been inserted by an earlier owner in the MS. from which our scribe was copying.

² Notes which appear to be derived from this Glastonbury form of the genealogy are added to A of the Saxon Chronicle by a very early hand: see Plummer, i. 40 (under 688) and 42 (under 728). The genealogy is that of A.-S. Chron. *s.a.* 855, where, however, the Glastonbury reference is not found. The reference does appear in the copy of the genealogy found in the *Textus Roffensis*.

Noah's son, who was born in the ark; and so on up to 'Adam, primus homo. Et pater omnium qui est Christus' (f. 23 a).

There are other indications which point to Glastonbury as the source of the archetype of this MS. For on f. 23 b we have a list of names without any heading at all, beginning with Hemgils and ending with Ælfward. These are, in fact, the abbots of Glastonbury; and Ælfward was the successor of Abbot Sigegar, who became Bishop of Wells in 975.

On the same page comes a list of tenth-century popes; and then follows an account of Archbishop Sigeric's visit to Rome (printed by Stubbs, *Memorials of Dunstan*, 391 ff.). The date of this visit was 990. Sigeric had been Abbot of Glastonbury from 980 to 985.

We are justified, therefore, in connecting much of the matter contained in Tiberius B. 5 with Glastonbury. But it is probable that the MS., which is to be dated about a century later, was written for or at Winchester: for the name of St. Swithhun, and no other, is entirely in capital letters.

We have already quoted from Tiberius B. 5 the composite note which describes the subdivision of the Wessex dioceses, and have mentioned its additions to the Winchester list. To the Sherborne list are added (after Ælfred) Wulfsige, Alfwold and Athelsige. We may now give in full the lists for Wiltshire, Wells and Crediton.

Nomina episcoporum wiltunensis

- i. Æðelstan
- ii. Oda iii. Ælrici
- iii. Osolf
- iiii. Ælfstan
- v. Wulfgar
- vi. Sigericus . dei
- vii. amicus

Nomina wiltunensis ecclesie

- i. Aðelm
- ii. Wulfhelm
- iii. Ælfheah ii
- iiii. Wulfhelm
- v. Brihthelm
- vi. Kynewerd
- vii. Sigegar

Nomina episcoporum eridiensis ecclesie

- i. Eadulf
- ii. Æðelgar
- iii. Ælfwold
- iiii. Sideman
- v. Ælfric
- vi. Ælfwold

What conclusions can we draw from the study of these episcopal lists as to the date of the subdivision of the Wessex dioceses under Edward the Elder? The creation of a new diocese out of Winchester took place 'in the time of Frithestan'. This vague manner of speaking may be due to the misplacement of the note, which perhaps ought to have followed the name of Denewulf. In any case our first inquiry must be as to the year of Denewulf's death and the year of Frithestan's accession.

The Parker MS. (A) of the Chronicle, which was written at Winchester, has the following entries :

908. Her gefor Denulf, se was on Winteceastre biscop.

909. Her feng Frithestan to biscopdome on Winteceastre, 7 Asser biscop gefor æfter ðæm, se was at Scireburnau biscop.

The same entries are found in MSS. B, C, and D, but under the years 909, 910. It is to be noted that the original numbers in A have been increased by *one* for all the years from 892 to 928: so that A now appears as giving our two annals as 909 and 910.¹ But the original numbering of A has the support of the Annals of St. Neots, where we read :

Anno dcccxc. A(s)ser episcopus Sciraburnensis obiit, et Frithestanus suscepit episcopatum Uintoniae.

A yet earlier date (908) is assigned for Asser's death in the *Annales Cambriae*, and Mr. W. H. Stevenson declares (*Asser*, p. lxxv) that 'it is difficult to say which is the correct year'.

If we accept the year 909 for the accession of Frithestan and for the subsequent death of Asser, we may not unreasonably suppose that the whole scheme for the Wessex dioceses came into operation at the end of that year.²

Note on the Winchester Charters of 909.

There is a group of charters, concerned with Winchester properties and dated in 909, which speak of the division of Winchester into two dioceses by King Edward the Elder, and the request of Bishop Frithestan that certain ancient grants may

¹ I cannot follow Dr. Plummer in regarding the original numeration of A from 892 to 928 as mistaken. It is a serious misfortune that, following Thorpe's example, he has given the *altered figures only* in his text: for the evidence of A is in consequence perpetually misquoted.

² If it be objected that Asser's successor is given in the lists as Æthelweard, and that the note which describes the subdivision of Sherborne follows after his name, it may be replied (1) that the year of Asser's death remains uncertain, and (2) that Æthelweard may have died soon after his consecration. We know nothing of him apart from these lists: the charters in which his name occurs cannot be relied on.

be confirmed to him. These 'mellifluous donations'—if we may be allowed to use the phrase of Archbishop Plegmund's attesting clause—all come from the Winchester Register (Brit. Mus. Addit. MS. 15,350), a most untrustworthy source. One of them, however, has also a separate existence as Harley Charter 43. C. 1: it is beautifully written, but the hand is undoubtedly of later date than 909. As the evidence of these charters has been so often quoted, it is necessary that this charter at any rate should be subjected to examination.¹

(a) 'Ego Eadueardus divina largiente clementia Angulsaxonum rex, tempore quo diuicesim Uentanae ecclesiae in duas divisi parrochias, obuixae rogatus fui a Fridestano quem tunc praedictae ecclesiae episcopum constitueram, ut novarum astipulatione litterarum sanctae ecclesiae testamenta, uti olim ab antecessoribus meis Cynegislo atque Cynepalho multisque eorum successoribus devote tradita atque restaurata fuerant, confirmans renovarem . . .'

The phrase 'tempore quo diuicesim Uentanae ecclesiae in duas divisi parrochias' recalls the episcopal lists in C.C.C.C. 183, where we read: 'Deinde Wintoniensis ecclesiae in duas parrochias divisa est tempore Fripestani.' But the use of *diocesis* in this connexion may possibly raise our suspicion.²

(b) 'terram quae undique adiacet civitati quae in exordio Christianae religionis, Birino venerabili episcopo praedicante, beato Petro eiusque coapostolo Paulo concessa fuerat.'

The writer here and elsewhere in the charter has doubtless drawn his information from Bede: but this particular statement is unfortunate; for Birinus sat at Dorchester, where a church was provided for him; and not until Cenwalh's reign did a bishop sit at Winchester.

(c) 'nulli secularium militum' looks like a later phrase.

(d) 'beati Petri apostolorum principis auctoritate praecipimus' does not seem language that the king would have used, even though he joins Plegmund and his 'suffraganei' with him. The phrase is repeated and enlarged lower down.

(e) The reference to Archbishop Theodore and his forbidding the alienation of church property by bishops (Council of Hertford, Bede, *H. E.* iv. 5) seems as little likely to be genuine as the reference to Bishop Denewulf, Frithestan's predecessor, who was only just dead, as having specially offended in this matter 'ad animae suae periculum'.

(f) 'Ego Plegmund archiepiscopus mellifluam donationem praefati regis subscripsi cum signaculo sanctae crucis.'

Elaborate attestations of this kind do not seem to come in genuine charters till about half a century later.

I had noted these points as casting more or less of suspicion upon this charter before I came across Mr. W. H. Stevenson's condemnatory judgement (*Asser*, 322 n.), which I here reproduce: 'These texts, with the exception of the first [i. e. Birch, *Cart. Sax.* ii. 283, no. 620], are derived from the Winchester chartulary, and they are all of a very suspicious nature. Bishop Stubbs, who accepts their evidence as fixing the division of the bishoprics in this year, states that the charter at p. 283 exists in an "original tenth-century charter" (preface to Malmesbury, *Gesta Regum*, ii, p. lvi, note 3). It is reproduced in the Brit.

¹ It is printed in Birch, *Cartul. Saxon.*, no. 620. The others are to be read *ibid.*, nos. 623, 625, 627, 628, 629.

² It is, however, so used in the decrees of the Council of Celchyth (816).

Mus. *Facs.* iv, pl. 10, and is written in what must be a very late tenth-century hand, but is more probably an early eleventh-century one. It is one of the long series of forgeries intended to establish the reduction of the hidage of Chilcomb from a hundred hides to one. We have no indications that such reductions of hidation were known before the introduction of Danegeld, and no evidence beyond the Winchester charters that such reductions were made by royal charters.'

Whether Mr. Stevenson may not have unduly depressed the date of the handwriting is a question for the experts in palaeography. But we may accept without any hesitation his judgement that the whole series of these charters is an elaborate Winchester forgery; and we must content ourselves with noting that at Winchester, when these documents were composed, the division of the diocese into two parts was held to have taken place not later than 909. Such a conclusion might easily have been drawn from the episcopal lists in conjunction with the Winchester copy of the Chronicle, which, as we have seen, originally gave 909 as the date of Frithestan's accession.

III

THE PLEGMUND NARRATIVE

The story of the fivefold division of the Wessex dioceses at the instigation of Pope Formosus, and of the consecration by Archbishop Plegmund of seven bishops on one day, has long been discredited. But, fictitious though the narrative is, it rests on a basis of fact, and it is closely connected with 'one of the most vexed incidents of Anglo-Saxon History'.¹ The story in brief is this. In 905 Formosus, Pope of Rome, wrote to Edward, King of the English, and complained that the West Saxons had been left for seven years without a bishop: if this were not amended, he would lay a curse on the English instead of the blessing which the holy Pope Gregory had sent them. So the king held a council, and decided, with consent of the archbishop, to make five sees where before there were but two. Then the archbishop went to Rome, and the pope was pleased to remit his anger and to accept the new scheme. When Plegmund returned he consecrated in one day seven bishops, namely, for Winchester and Sherborne, for the new sees of Ramsbury, Wells and Crediton, and for two other sees which happened to be vacant. To the Bishop of Crediton three properties in Cornwall were assigned—Polltun, Cælling and Landuithan—to the intent that he should visit the Cornish folk each year, to convert them from their errors; for before this, so far

¹ Stubbs, pref. to *W. of Malmesbury*, *Gesta Regum*, I. 140 n.; see also II. liv ff., where the matter is discussed at length.

as they could, they resisted the truth, and were not obedient to the apostolical decrees. Now all this the pope decreed in the Synods of the Church of St. Peter, that he who should change this sound counsel might for ever be damned.

It is unfortunate for the story that Formosus died in 896, nine years before the date of his letter; his acts were twice cancelled by his successors, and bishops consecrated by him were required to be consecrated afresh. Moreover, the episcopal lists which we have already considered refute the notion that the West Saxons were left for seven years without a bishop. But, grotesque as the story is, it is yet worth while to inquire, When does the document first appear, and with what motive is it likely to have been composed?

The earliest copy has hitherto been held to be that which is found in the Leofric Missal.¹ It is one of two entries at the beginning which Mr. Warren, the editor, would ascribe to 'quite the latter part of the eleventh century'. Bishop Stubbs accordingly opined that the story 'acquired its present form soon after the middle of the eleventh century'.

In 1895, however, the publication of the Crawford Charters proved that at all events the substance of it, as the cautious editors remarked, must go back to an earlier period.² For a letter which is regarded as having been addressed by Archbishop Dunstan to King Æthelred (c. 985) contains all its main points, including the worst of its chronological errors. This letter, which is one of a group of documents connected with Crediton, declares that King Ecgbriht, having subdued the West Welsh, gave to Sherborne three Cornish estates—Polltun, Cællwic and Landwithan. In after times, when the admonition of Pope Formosus led to the creation of new dioceses (and here the story is given in outline), these estates were assigned to Eadulf, the new Bishop of Crediton, 'to be under the authority of the people of Devon, because they (the people of Cornwall) had formerly been disobedient, without awe of the West Saxons'.³ Eadulf's successor, Æthelgar, retained them, notwithstanding that King Athelstan had given the bishopric of Cornwall to Conan. But when Daniel succeeded Conan, King Edred gave the Cornish estates

¹ Oxford, Bodl. MS. 579, ed. Warren (1883), p. 1 f. The Leofric Missal was written somewhere on the borderland of Lorraine and France, the Arras-Cambray district, about 925: it came to England in the second half, and was at Glastonbury at the close, of the tenth century.

² Crawford Charters, ed. Napier and Stevenson (*Anecdota Oxoniensia*, 1895), ch. vii.

³ The reason given in the Plegmund narrative—the ecclesiastical irregularities of the British Christians—had perhaps by this time ceased to be understood.

to him. And in like manner King Edgar gave them to Wulfsige. Wherefore the archbishop declares that they ought to be held by the Bishop of Cornwall now.

With the help of this interesting letter we can place the original story in its historical setting. For its composition is most easily explained as the assertion of the right of a Bishop of Crediton to hold estates which might not unreasonably be claimed for the newly-erected bishopric of Cornwall. Now the death of Æthelgar, Bishop of Crediton, took place *c.* 953, and the consecration of Daniel to the see of Cornwall was certainly not later than 955. Just at this time—probably when new bishops were entering upon both sees—the transfer of the Cornish estates was effected. The document which sets out the claim of Crediton, and gives it papal sanction, may reasonably be referred to the episcopate of Æthelgar (934–53), or at latest to the period immediately after his death, when the transfer was about to take place.

This conclusion is borne out by the existence of a copy of the document which seems to have escaped the notice of historians. When I began to investigate the early successions of the Bishops of Wells, my friend the late Mr. Edmund Bishop kindly referred me to Addit. MS. 7138 in the British Museum, which, as he had noted many years ago, was said to contain the Plegmund story. He could not remember to have looked at it himself, but as it was attributed to the eleventh century he thought it might possibly be the earliest copy that we possess. His anticipation has been more than justified. The manuscript in question contains a strip of parchment, 16 inches by 6 inches, offering a text of the Plegmund story which closely agrees with that in the Leofric Missal. This document was presented to the British Museum in 1828 by Sir John Trevelyan, of Nettlecombe, co. Somerset, among whose family records it had been preserved. I am permitted to say that the authorities of the Museum now attribute it with certainty to the tenth century. I am not authorized to be more precise, but I have reason to think that if we place it about the middle of that century—that is to say, within the episcopate of Æthelgar of Crediton—our decision will not be seriously challenged. If, therefore, this is not the original document itself, it is probably one of a set of copies circulated at the time of its composition.

One copy doubtless found a home at Winchester, and was transcribed in course of time into the twelfth-century Register (Addit. MS. 15,350), from which Birch has printed his text (*Cart. Sax.* 614). This copy, or another at Canterbury, might have been in Dunstan's

hands when he wrote his letter to King Æthelred. The Nettlecombe MS. itself may well be that which was transcribed into the Leofric Missal at the end of the eleventh century: it is certainly an interesting fact that it has come to light in modern times almost on the border of Devon.¹

It was perhaps the Winchester copy which played a curious part in the great struggle for precedence between Canterbury and York. When Lanfranc came to Canterbury, in 1070, he found his metropolitan church in ruins; and the most valuable records of his see were said to have perished in the flames. When the controversy with York was at its height, two years later, some of his monks (if not the archbishop himself) thought it necessary to reconstruct their ancient *privilegia*, as weapons for a contest which doubtless was really decided on grounds of policy even more than of tradition. Among the ten papal privileges which were ultimately produced in evidence was a letter of Pope Formosus. It is exceedingly improbable that this pope's name would ever have been invoked but for the existence of the Plegmund narrative, which offered an irresistible temptation to the ingenious constructor of papal documents. As it is, the ninth of the privileges takes the form of a letter in which Pope Formosus begins by retracting his former threats—‘mucronem devotationis retrahentes . . . benedictionem vobis mittimus’—and proceeds, after various injunctions as to regularity in the appointment of bishops, to confirm the supremacy of Canterbury over the whole of the English Church. The Plegmund narrative tells us that the pope, when he wrote his letter, was ‘motus cum magna iracundia et

¹ Since writing the above I have found that the document was printed in 1857 among the Trevelyan Papers edited for the Camden Society by J. Payne Collier. The first piece there given is a charter of Æthelstan (though dated 670, Ind. 11), granting a manse at Muncatun to God and St. Mary and also St. Peter, ‘ad monasterium quod ab incolis nominatur Exanceaster’ [given more fully, with names of witnesses, by Birch, *Curt. Sax.* 726, from B.M. Addit. Charter 19,516]. On this the editor notes: ‘It seems likely that the document was obtained from Exeter Cathedral, together with the missing leaf of the Domesday Book of Exeter, and, possibly, with the fragment relating to the Seven Bishops. An Edward Willoughby was Dean of Exeter from 1496 to 1508; and about a century and a half subsequently a Trevelyan married the heiress of Willoughby (of Leahill, in the parish of Payhembury, Devonshire), and thereby became possessed of the documents in question. They were found at Nettlecombe by Sir W. C. Trevelyan, who presented the leaf of the Exeter Domesday Book to the Dean and Chapter of Exeter, to be inserted in its proper place.’ The same writer states that the Plegmund document was presented to the British Museum by Sir John Trevelyan in the spring of 1828. It had been in Mr. Petrie's hands at the end of the previous year.

devotione',¹ and threatened to send *maledictionem* instead of *benedictionem*; so we may be sure that our document was in the forger's hands. Indeed its preservation in the Canterbury Registers is solely due to the fact that the monks thought that it would lend verisimilitude to what followed, if they included this ancient document in the record of their *privilegia*, though it had no bearing at all on the question in dispute. Accordingly it stands just before the ninth privilege under the title *Memorable factum*.² It occupies the same place, and bears the same title, in Eadmer's second edition of his *Historia Novorum* (Rolls Series, pp. 261-76). William of Malmesbury gives the *privilegia* in his *Gesta Pontificum* (p. 59), including the letter of Formosus, but not the Plegmund narrative. This he reserves for his *Gesta Regum* (I, p. 140), where he introduces it with the words 'iocundum puto memoratu'. Thus the memorable fiction found its way into the orthodox history of the English Church.

The following is the text of the document from Addit. MS. 7138 :

+ Anno illo quo transacti sunt a natiuitate dñi nri ihu xpi . dcccc . Misit formosus pontifex apostolicus romanę ecclesie in terram Anglorum ad regem eadueardum . motus cum magna iracundia ac deuotione . Et mandauit ei cum suis omnibus maledictionem contra benedictionem . quam beatus papa gregorius per scm uirum agustinum genti anglorum antea misit . Nisi cum episcopis instituisset destitutas parrochias episcoporum . Secundum antiquam traditionem . que tradita est genti anglorum a sede sci petri . Nam . per .vii. annos plene destituta est regio ieuuissorum ab omni episcopo . Quo facto congregauit eadueard rex synodum senatorum gentis anglorum . In quo presidebat plegmundus archieps . regi recitans et disputans districta uerba aplice legationis . quam misit beatus papa formosus . Tunc sibi rex cum suis et plegmundus archieps . salubre consilium inuenerunt . assumentes sibi dominicam sententiam . messis quidem multa est . operarii uero pauci . Singulis tribus ieuuissoru singulos constituerunt episcopos . et singulis episcopia constituerunt . Et quod dudum duo habuerunt in quinque diuiserunt . Acto illo consilio . cum honorificis muneribus plegmundus archieps romam rediit . aplicum formosum cum magna humilitate placauit . regis decreta et seniorum regionis enuntiauit . quod et aplico maxime placuit . Rediens ad patriam in urbe dorobernia .vii. episcopos .vii. ecclesiis in uno die ordinauit . Frythestanum ad ecclam uventaniensem . Ethilstanum ad ecclam Coruinensem . Vuærstanum ad ecclesiam sciraburnensem . Ethilhelmum ad ecclam fontaniensem . Eaduulfum ad ecclam Cridienensem . Insup addiderunt illi tres uillas in Cornubia quorum nomina polltun . cællineg . landuithan . ut inde singulis annis uisitaret gentem cornubiensē ad exprimendos eorum errores . Nam antea in

¹ Birch, printing from Addit. MS. 15,350, gives *deuotione*, instead of *devotatione*, against all the other authorities.

² So in two Canterbury MSS. of the beginning of the twelfth century: Faustina B. 6 + Claudius A. 3 (parts of the same codex), and Cleopatra E. 1. See the full discussion in H. Boehmer, *Die Fälschungen Erzbischof Lanfranks von Canterbury*, 1902.

quantum potuerunt ueritati resistebant . et non decretis apostolicis oboediebant . Sed et aliis prouinciis constituit duos . australibus saxonibus . uirum idoneum beorneh ordinauit . et mercionibus coenuulfum ad ciuitatem quæ dicitur dorchester . Hoc autem totum . sic papa apostolicus in synodis æcclesiæ s̄ci petri conclusit . ut dampnaretur in perpetuum . qui hoc salubre mutaret consilium ;

In dorso. S̄c̄ptā continēs diuisiones Ep̄atum p̄ pp̄m formosum.

If our view of the matter is correct, the Plegmund narrative was a fighting document. It was not composed with the intention of placing on record the division of the Wessex dioceses, but as a statement of the claim of the Bishop of Crediton to three estates in Cornwall. The imprecatory clause with which the pope is made to give a perpetual sanction to the whole scheme bears out this idea of a claim to property: it would hardly be natural as the sanction or safeguard of a rearrangement of dioceses.

The writer's knowledge of the history of the papacy in the period when the division took place was curiously deficient; but he was probably right in his statement as to the appropriation of the Cornish estates to the new see of Crediton at the time of its foundation. The three properties returned to Crediton when Cornwall was again merged in the Devon see under Bishop Lyfing (1027-46), whose successor Leofric moved to Exeter in the days of Edward the Confessor. In the Domesday Book one of the three, if the identification with *Caluuitona* be correct, was in the hands of the king; but the other two, *Pautona* and *Languitona*, were held by the Bishop of Exeter. The last of these, now Lawhitton, is still held on behalf of the Church by the Ecclesiastical Commissioners.¹

What other facts can be gathered from his narrative? It is plain from our examination of the episcopal lists that the year 905 cannot be accepted as the date of the division of the dioceses; and that the papal complaint that Wessex had been seven years without a bishop is pure fiction. On the other hand, the assertion that the creation of five Wessex sees in place of two was a single act of policy is highly probable, and we have found nothing hitherto that cannot be brought into harmony with it. Either of the years 909 or 910 will sufficiently meet the general requirements of the case. That the new dioceses corresponded with tribal divisions is a point of interest which the writer has quite properly noticed. Moreover, the names of the bishops whom Plegmund is said to have consecrated offer no difficulty, if we allow but a very brief episcopate to Æthelweard of Sherborne. Nor is there any inherent improbability in the statement that, such being the circumstances, seven bishops were consecrated at Canter-

¹ See *Crawford Charters*, p. 107.

bury on one day. This is the kind of event that would make an impression at the time, and would be remembered in the next generation. If, therefore, we eliminate from the document all reference to the intervention of Pope Formosus, and judge it simply by its statements as to what took place in England, we shall find little reason to quarrel with its historical statements.

Note on the Introduction of the Name of Formosus.

The most surprising feature of the document which we have been discussing is the name of the pope who was called in to give perpetual sanction to the arrangement. We have seen the reason for calling in a pope: but why should it have been the unfortunate Pope Formosus?¹ It might be suggested that the writer had access to a manuscript containing lists of popes and bishops. One such had been written some ten years before, possibly at Glastonbury, for King Athelstan to present to St. Cuthbert's shrine. The papal list would give names only and no dates, and a wrong name might easily be selected. It is, however, a curious circumstance in this connexion that the list in the MS. just referred to (C.C.C.C. 133) has no pope later than Hadrian III (834-5); and it is still more curious that the list in Tiberius B. 5, compiled *c.* 990 and also connected with Glastonbury, stops with the same pope, although its numeration is continued to allow of the addition of eleven more names: that is, about the number which, judging from the previous century, would be required to bring the list down to the writer's own time. This shows an extraordinary lack of interest in the papal successions, and the difficulty which might attend an inquiry concerning them in the west of England. We seem compelled, therefore, to suppose that some tradition connected the name of Formosus with the primacy of Plegmund.

Let us turn, then, to the story of Pope Formosus, and seek for a possible point of contact between him and our archbishop.² Born, probably at Rome, about the year 816, he was made Bishop of Porto in 864 by the great Pope Nicholas I. Strange as it would have appeared to the men of two generations later, this very preferment disqualified him in the eyes of his contemporaries for the papal chair, since a bishop, unless expelled by violence, was not permitted to pass from one see to another. In 863 Formosus with another bishop went as papal envoy to the court of Bogoris (renamed Michael), the newly converted king of the Bulgarians: for, though his people had been evangelized by Greek missionaries, he was now seeking further instruction from Rome. The king wished to retain Formosus, whose labours had been most successful, and to make him his archbishop; but Pope Nicholas refused this, on the ground already mentioned,

¹ It is curious to find the name of Pope Formosus again in the Anonymous Chronicle of the archbishops of York, writing after the death of Thurstan (1140). He informs us that St. Oswald received the pall in 972 from Pope Stephen—though Symeon of Durham, whose words he is actually copying at this point, had said 'from Pope Benedict'. Then he adds that by a concession of Pope Formosus, Stephen's successor, he retained the see of Worcester along with the archbishopric (Raine, *Hist. of York*, ii. 341). Stephen VI was succeeded by Formosus in 891.

² For what here follows see Dümmler, *Auxilius und Vulgarius* (1866).

that a bishop must not leave one see for another. Formosus was a valued agent of the next pope, Hadrian II, who in 869 made him his envoy to Lothaire II. The death of that king prevented this mission from taking effect, but three years later he went on an embassy to Louis the German.

After this his fortune suddenly turned. At Christmas 875 John VIII crowned Charles the Bald as emperor. Soon afterwards, at a synod held on April 19, he threatened Formosus and certain persons of the first rank in Rome with excommunication, giving them till May 9 to make submission. Formosus himself was accused of conspiring against the emperor and plotting to dethrone the pope and take his place. Yet his character stood high, and such a man as Hincmar of Rheims was at this time seeking the friendship of 'the Apostle of the Bulgarians'. He fled to France and found refuge with Hugh, the powerful Abbot of Tours. It seems probable that the pope was moved by personal animosity: the strange charge of complicity with the Saracens, who were then threatening Rome, may have arisen out of the story that the fleeing party had left the city gate open behind them. In July the deposition of Formosus was confirmed, and a protégé of the pope became Bishop of Porto. In 878 the pope visited France, and renewed his ban at a council held at Troyes. Formosus appeared and submitted; but he was only received into lay communion, and that after taking an oath never to enter Rome again or to seek restoration to his office. When Pope John died, in 882, he was still in exile and resident at Sens.

The next pope was Marinus, who had succeeded in explaining away the objection that at one time he had been bishop of an obscure Italian see. He restored Formosus to his bishopric of Porto, absolving him from the oath which he had taken under compulsion. As Bishop of Porto, Formosus consecrated Pope Stephen VI in 885. He had then recovered lost ground; but political strife complicated ecclesiastical affairs in Rome, and he had bitter enemies who were forced as yet to bide their time. In September 891 he became pope; but his freedom of action was hampered, and just as his predecessor had been obliged to crown Guido of Spoleto, so Formosus had to admit Lambert his son as joint emperor. In February 896, however, the rival Arnulf was crowned at last; but on April 4 Formosus died. In his short pontificate he had a high repute for moral vigour, and he restored St. Peter's. The two counts against him—his former bishopric and his oath of renunciation—were forgotten for the time: he was never challenged while he occupied the papal throne, but received universal recognition.

His successor lived but fifteen days, and was followed by Stephen VII, a fierce opponent of Formosus, by whom, however, he had been consecrated Bishop of Anagni five years before. Arnulf was now known to be dying, and in the new year (897) Lambert re-entered Rome in triumph. In February a synod was called, at which the disinterred Formosus was vested in papal robes, tried, condemned, unfrocked, his benediction fingers cut off, his body buried with contumely and presently unearthed again and flung into the Tiber. His papal acts were cancelled, and his ordinations were declared to be invalid.

Then came a reaction, and Stephen was thrown into prison. Of the next pope, Romanus, there is nothing to tell. But Theodore II, who followed him at the close of this eventful year, though he reigned but twenty days, began the reinstatement of the outraged Formosus, whose body, miraculously as it seemed, had been thrown up by the river. In 898 John IX became pope, after Sergius,

an old enemy of Formosus, had for a few months established himself by violence in the papal chair. John, who had been ordained by Formosus, completed the work which Theodore had begun. First at a synod in Rome, and then at a great council in Ravenna, he condemned the gross wickedness of the mock trial. All the acts of Formosus were now reinstated with the sole exception of the crowning of Arnulf, Lambert himself being present at the council. Sergius and his party were condemned afresh, and it was enacted that the emperor's representatives must always be present at the consecration of a pope.

In June 900 Benedict IV succeeded; and it is to be noted that on August 31 he confirmed to Bishop Angrin of Langres the use of the pall which had been granted him by Formosus. In 903 Leo V, after thirty days of rule, was imprisoned by Christopher, who in turn was imprisoned by Sergius, victorious at last by the aid of the shameless Marozia, whose paramour he was reputed to be. Sergius III ruled from January 904 until his death in 911. With threats of violence he forced the clergy of Rome to a synod which renewed the condemnation which Stephen VII had passed upon Formosus. John IX, who had reinstated him, was held to be a mere usurper whose acts had no validity. The clergy ordained by Formosus were not only degraded, as by Stephen, but actually forced to reordination.

We have now to ask whether, and if so to what extent, the English Church was affected by this strange series of events. Was there anything at all to connect Plegmund with Pope Formosus and the vicissitudes of his fate?

The date of Plegmund's accession is not certain. The A.-S. Chron. places the death of Archbishop Æthelred in 888, and makes no mention of his successor. But a later hand has inserted under 890 the election of Plegmund to the archbishopric. A like entry appears in E, the Peterborough edition of the Chronicle; but it is written in Latin. There can be no doubt that in both instances a Canterbury addition is in question; and, as we shall hereafter have reason to think, this evidence is of little value. Florence of Worcester puts the death of Æthelred and the accession of Plegmund in one and the same year, namely, in 889. As the obit of Æthelred was celebrated at Canterbury on June 30, it is probable that his successor was appointed before the end of the year, whether the year be 888 or 889.

Now a Canterbury tradition says that Plegmund received his pall from Formosus; but this may merely have been a conjecture based on the belief (for which we have only late Canterbury evidence) that Plegmund was consecrated in 890. As Formosus only became pope Sept. 19, 891, we cannot assert with any confidence that it was he who bestowed the pall on Plegmund.¹

Nevertheless it is right to consider a suggestion put forward by Bishop Stubbs as a possible explanation of the problem. We learn from the historian Ethelweard that in 908 Plegmund went to Rome, carrying alms for the people and for Edward their king. If his pall had been given him by Formosus, this visit to Sergius III might have been prompted by the desire to secure his position before he proceeded to consecrate bishops or to rearrange dioceses. The advantage of this suggestion is that it offers a possible reason for the connexion of the name of

¹ By the time of Gervase (c. 1205) the story had grown into his consecration by Pope Formosus: 'Hic Romam profectus a Formoso papa sacratu est, palli-
umque suscepit et metropolitani plenitudinem potestatis' (Gerv., R. S., ii. 350).

Formosus with the action of Plegmund. A visit to Rome, due to anxiety as to the value of a pall given seventeen years before by Formosus, might be transformed through sheer ignorance into a visit to Formosus himself. It must at any rate be allowed that no other solution of the problem is forthcoming. For the statement commonly made that Formosus had already shown an interest in the affairs of the English Church rests wholly on the evidence of the forged letter which forms one of the spurious *privilegia* of Lanfranc's time.

Note on the Letter of Archbishop Dunstan to King Æthelred.

The editors accept this document as a genuine letter of Dunstan—not indeed as the original, but as a copy written at the end of the tenth or the beginning of the eleventh century. I shall not be so rash as to question their verdict, although a case might be made out for the view that the letter was composed by a Cornish ecclesiastic to counter the claim of a papal sanction for the assignment of the properties to the see of Crediton. It might be urged that the earlier history of the lands in Egbert's time would be a conjecture founded on the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle *anno* 813, when that king is said to have overrun Cornwall from east to west; that the tithing of the land would come from Æthelwulf's Donation, and the decay of learning in England from Alfred's well-known Prefaces. After this all comes, plainly enough, from the Plegmund narrative. Then the history from Daniel onwards would probably be well within the writer's own knowledge, and might in general be trusted.

But though I do not propose to dispute its genuineness, I think it can be made clear that the document has been tampered with; and, if this be so, it would seem to follow that it was still considered useful, even at the end of the tenth or the beginning of the eleventh century: in other words, that the controversy was reopened again and again, probably because Crediton could always claim a papal sanction in its favour. To make my points clear I must take the liberty of printing in full the translation of the letter, italicizing the words which the editors inform us are written by another, though as they believe a contemporary, hand (*Crawford Charters*, p. 106).

'This writing the archbishop sends to his lord, Æthelred, the king. It happened that the West Welsh (the inhabitants of Cornwall) rose against King Egabriht. The king then went thither and subdued them, and gave a tenth part of the land [to God], and disposed of it as it seemed fit to him. He gave to Sherborne three estates, Polltun, Cællwic, Landwīpan. And that remained so for many years until heathen hordes overran this country and occupied it. Then there came another time after that, when the teachers fell away and departed from England on account of the unbelief that had then assailed it; and all the kingdom of the West Saxons stood for seven years without a bishop. Then Formosus, the pope, sent from Rome, and admonished King Edward and Archbishop Plegmund to amend this. And they did so; with the consent of the pope and all the witan of the English nation they appointed five bishops where there were formerly two: one at Winchester, that was Frypstan, a second at Ramsbury, that was Æpelstan, a third at Sherborne, that was Wærstan, a fourth at Wells, that was Æpelm, a fifth at Crediton, that was Eadulf: and to him (Eadulf) were assigned the three estates in Wales (Cornwall), to be under the authority of the people of Devon, because they (the people of Cornwall) had formerly been

disobedient, without awe of the West Saxons. And Bishop Eadulf enjoyed these lands during his life, Bishop Æpelgar after him in like manner. *Then it happened that King Æpelstan gave to Cunvin the bishopric as far as the Tamar flowed.* Then it happened that King Eadred commended Daniel to be consecrated, and gave the estates, as the witan advised him, to the bishop-stool at St. Germans. Afterwards, when King Edgar bade me consecrate Wulfsgige, he and all our bishops said that they did not know who could possess the estates with greater right than the bishop of the diocese, seeing that he was loyal and preached the belief of God aright and loved his lord (the king). If then this bishop does so now, I know not why he should not be worthy of the estates, if God and our lord (the king) grant them to him. *For it does not seem to us that any man can possess them more rightfully than he, and if any (other) man take them to himself, may he have them without God's blessing or ours.*

It will be convenient to take these three additions in reverse order. In the last of them the editors have noted the change from the first person singular of the letter to the first person plural, and suggest that Dunstan here speaks on behalf of his suffragans as well as himself. They think that the hand is contemporary with the original writer. Whether that be so or not, it is to be observed that he writes 'for þan', while the former writes 'forþam' (p. 19, l. 16); 'rihtlicor' for 'rihtlucur'; 'griþ' for 'gyf' (ll. 25, 26); and 'hi' (three times) unaccented, as against 'hi' (five times) with the accent.

The second insertion is by the same hand. Room has been made for the first portion of it ('Then it happened that King Æthelstan') by erasing what stood there before: the remainder is inserted above the line. We note, as the editors have noted, that the king's name is here spelt 'æpēstan', whereas in l. 13, just above, the Bishop of Ramsbury's name had been given as 'æpelstan'. We also find the spelling 'cing' as against 'cyng' (six times). As the next sentence begins 'Then it happened that', the editors have suggested that the scribe's eye passed on, and so the words in question were left out. But this would hardly account for the erasure of 'Then it happened that' and its being written in again. Moreover, whereas the original writer says 'þa gelamp þæt', the correcting hand writes 'þa gelamp hit þ'. What is specially interesting is that the italicized words, however valuable historically, are not necessary to the argument: for Conan is not supposed to have held these lands at all. What may have been erased to make room for the new piece of information we cannot tell.

Lastly, the words 'that was Æpelm' are added over the line by the same corrector. We may note that he writes 'wæs' for 'was', which is always unaccented in the original document. The omission was doubtless merely a scribal error on the part of the composer or a copyist.

IV

THE CORONATION OF KING ÆTHELSTAN BY ARCHBISHOP ÆTHELM, AND THE DATE OF DUNSTAN'S BIRTH

The limits of the episcopate of Athelm at Wells cannot be determined with absolute certainty. We have fixed his accession with probability in 909. In 923, as it would seem, he was translated to

Canterbury.¹ No charter is extant which bears his attestation as Bishop of Wells ; but this is due to the exceptional lack of genuine charters of the reign of King Edward the Elder.

It is of more importance to decide the year of Athelm's death and of Wulfhelm's accession to Canterbury. For here we are concerned with the coronation of King Athelstan and, incidentally, with the date of St. Dunstan's birth. Bishop Stubbs discussed these problems and reached conclusions which have been accepted by subsequent historians : namely, (1) that King Athelstan was crowned in 925, not by Athelm, but by Wulfhelm ; and (2) that in this same year Dunstan was born. The judgement of so great a master can seldom be set aside, unless indeed new evidence has come to light which was not before him when he wrote. The charter which we shall presently examine is not contained in Kemble's *Codex Diplomaticus*, upon which Bishop Stubbs depended when his Preface to the Lives of St. Dunstan was written, in 1874. It was printed by Birch in the *Cartularium Saxonicum* (ii. 317, no. 641) in 1887. It gives us, I believe, the true date of King Athelstan's coronation, September 4, 925, and its first witness is Archbishop Athelm. If Bishop Stubbs had known of this charter and had felt able to accept it as genuine, it is probable that his doubt as to the trustworthiness of the testimony of Adelard, the second biographer of St. Dunstan, would have been removed, and that in consequence he would have reconsidered the question of the birth-year of the saint.

Before we examine the charter we must look at the statement of Adelard to which reference has just been made. We have two historical authorities for the early period of St. Dunstan's life, and two only. One is the anonymous Saxon priest, who is known to us merely by his initial B. His work was dedicated to Ælfric, who became Archbishop of Canterbury in 996 ; and a copy of it was sent abroad by Wulfric, the Abbot of St. Augustine's, to Abbo of Fleury in the hope that he might turn it into verse. Abbo died in 1004 ; and accordingly Bishop Stubbs thinks that the year 1000 may fairly be assigned as the date of this work. Its writer was personally acquainted with St. Dunstan, who had died in 988, that is, twelve years before. The other authority is but a few years later in date. Adelard, a monk of Blandinium, that is, of St. Peter's in Ghent, where St. Dunstan had received hospitality during his brief banishment, addresses his book to Alphege, who was Archbishop of Canterbury from 1006 until 1012, when he was murdered by the Danes. Adelard had the earlier life in his hands, but it was not his only

¹ See the Note (C) on the Date of Athelm's Translation to Canterbury.

source of information. His purpose was not strictly biographical, but rather to compose chapters of narrative to be read as the lessons at Matins on St. Dunstan's feast.

Adelard makes no statement at all as to the date of Dunstan's birth, but he tells us that he received his first education at Glastonbury. Then he proceeds: 'When now the flower of his youth was growing in years, he departed from Glastonbury, and joined himself to Athelm, the Archbishop of Canterbury, his uncle on the father's side; and he began to reside with him. The archbishop, admiring the grace of God that was in him, and perceiving the tokens of future greatness, introduced him into the royal palace, and affectionately commended him to King Athelstan, whom he had anointed with the sacred unction; and there from day to day he increased in all virtue, and became great in the sight of the king and his princes.'¹

This is a straightforward statement, and if it be true it doubtless came from the old archbishop himself, when he talked, as we know that he did, with the younger folk about his early days. A coronation would make an ineffaceable impression on a boy's mind, especially if his uncle had crowned the king. If it is not true, what could be the motive of its insertion? We know that Dunstan was closely connected with the royal house: it was not necessary to invent such a story to explain how Dunstan came to court; and it was quite superfluous to take him to Canterbury, when the court was so often at Cheddar. But the story was without corroboration, and it seemed to conflict with the chronological evidence. What that evidence was, we must consider presently: meanwhile we turn to the charter of which we have spoken above.

This is contained in the great Register of St. Augustine's, Canterbury, now in the British Museum (Claudius D. 10), written about the end of the fourteenth century. The document is entitled 'King Athelstan's donation of a certain land in Thanet'.² It is not strictly speaking a charter, but a very full memorandum based on a charter, which may have been too indistinct from age to be entirely legible; at any rate the monk who wrote the Register found great difficulty in reading the Saxon names which occurred in it. Here we find the statement that 'in the year of our Lord 925 (Indiction 13), in the first year of the reign of King Athelstan, on the day of his coronation, being the day before the nones of September', certain alienated property was restored by the king to the monastery, with the consent of certain persons named.

¹ *Memorials of St. Dunstan*, p. 55.

² Claud. D. 10, f. 185: Birch, *Curt. Saxon.*, no. 641.

The document occurs in the Register under the heading *De Menstre*; f. 185 begins with a donation by King Cnut of the manor of Menstre 'cum corpore beate uirginis Midrede'. Next is a confirmation by King Edward the Confessor. Then comes the donation of King Athelstan, as follows:

Item donacio Regis Athelstani de quadam terra in Taneto (rubr.)

Anno ab incarnatione domini ·DCCC· XXV· indictione ·XIII· primo anno regni regis Adalstani, die consecracionis eius, pridie nonas Septembris, rex Saxonum et Anglorum Adalstan terram quatuordecim aratrorum dedit sc̄o Augustino, que terra in insula Thanet habetur, nomine Werburginland, pro remedio aīe sue, que eciam rapta fuerat iniuste a sc̄o Augustino per multos annos, sed deo annuente rex Adalstanus restauravit iterum illam terram sc̄o Augustino, cum consensu ep̄orum octo et principum duorum quorum nomina hec sunt. Adlem archieps̄ . Alla eps̄ . Siglem eps̄ . Wlfem eps̄ . Wlbred eps̄ . Berneth eps̄ . Eatolp eps̄ . Winsig eps̄ . Ordgar princeps . Aelwald princeps . et Odda minister regis . et Cened abbas . et Alfeth sacerdos . et alius Alfeth sacerdos et monachus.

We note the following points in favour of the trustworthiness of this document:

- (1) The Indiction is correctly given.
- (2) In 925 September 4 was a Sunday, an appropriate day in those times for a coronation.
- (3) The date falls within the first year of the king's reign. A considerable number of charters of King Athelstan are forthcoming, which give the day, month, and year of our era, and the regnal year of the king. They cannot all be trusted, but an examination of them leads with fair certainty to the result that Athelstan's accession took place after December 24, 924, and before January 1, 925. He would, therefore, be said to have come to the throne in 924 or in 925, according as the year was reckoned from January 1 or from Christmas Day. In either case September 4, 925, would be, as our document says, in the first year of his reign. If it be thought strange that his coronation should be so long delayed, we have but to point to the precedent of King Edward, his father, who was not crowned until Whit-Sunday, though King Alfred had died on October 26 in the preceding year.

(4) The witnesses whose names are recorded present no chronological difficulty, if only we allow that Archbishop Athelm was still living at the time in question. Their names are curiously misspelt, but the fault must be attributed to the scribe of the Register: possibly he wrote them down from dictation. The Anglo-Saxon ð (for *th*) has been written as *d*; and *elm* appears constantly as *lem*: so

that Athelm has become Adlem. Again, Alfeth is twice written for Alfheah (Alphege): perhaps the scribe meant it to be read as Alfech, as *c* and *t* are hardly distinguishable in his writing: so too Berneth (or Bernech) is written for Beornege. We may now, with the help of Bishop Stubbs's *Registrum*, identify the episcopal witnesses:

Alla Ella (or Elfwin), Lichfield: 909 × 926–35 (?).

Siglem Sigelm, Sherborne: 918 × 926–33.

Wlfem Wulfhelm, Wells: 914 [923?]—transln. to Canterbury.

Wlbred Wilferth, Worcester: 922–28.

Berneth Beornege, Selsey: 909–31.

Eatolp Eadulf, Crediton: 909–34.

Winsig Winsige, Dorchester: 909 × 926–34 (?).

It is plain that no difficulty is presented by the attestation of all these bishops at the time of the king's coronation in 925. As to the other witnesses: 'Ordgar dux' and 'Ælfwald dux' attest a charter of 926 (Birch, *C. S.* 659);¹ and Odda attests as 'minister' or 'thegn' between 925 and 941 (*C. S.* 649, &c.). 'Cened abbas' is the same as 'Cynaht abbas', who attests in 925 (*C. S.* 642), and appears again as 'Kenod abbas' among the English names inscribed for prayer in the monastery of St. Gall on the occasion of Bishop Kynewold's visit in 929.²

The two Ælfheahs present points of peculiar interest. A little later in King Athelstan's reign we shall find two Ælfheahs attesting the same charters as bishops. One will be Archbishop Wulfhelm's successor at Wells; the other, Ælfheah the Bald, the Bishop of Winchester, who persuaded Dunstan, his kinsman, to adopt the monastic life, and ordained him to the priesthood.

Our document speaks of 'Alfeth sacerdos et alius Alfeth sacerdos et monachus'. In a copy of the Gospels in the British Museum (Reg. I. B. 7, f. 15 *b*) there is a Saxon manumission of Eadelm and his children, granted by King Athelstan 'immediately after he became king'.³ Ælfheah, mass-priest and Byrnstan, mass-priest, were witnesses to the act.

It would seem, as is likely enough in itself, that these three priests,

¹ This is Ordgar's last appearance.

² Piper, *Confraternitates (Mon. Hist. Germ., 1884)*, pp. 100, 136: see the Note (F) on Three Swiss Confraternity Books.

³ This is unfortunately mistranslated by Birch (*C. S.* 639) as 'before he became king'. The document is printed and translated in Harmer's *English Historical Documents* (no. xix). It begins thus: Æðelstan cyng gefreode Eadelm forraðe þæs ðe he aræst cyng was; ðæs was on gewitnesse Ælfheah mæssepreost 7 se hired 7 Ælfric se gerefa 7 Wufnoð Hwita 7 Eanstan prafost 7 Byrnstan mæssepreost.'

who were in the king's employ at the very beginning of his reign, all became bishops.

1. The Ælfheah who stands first in both documents goes to Wells, c. 926. The earliest attestation of 'Ælfheah bishop' is in 929.

2. Byrnstan goes to Winchester in 931.

3. The Ælfheah who is both priest and monk succeeds Byrnstan at Winchester, c. 934. Rudborne (*Anglia Sacra*, i. 213) says that after Byrnstan's death 'Elphegus ex monacho Glastoniae eligitur Wentanae ecclesiae'. This Ælfheah would seem to have been the younger of the two; and that may be the reason why he was given a surname ('the Bald') to distinguish him from his senior, the Bishop of Wells. In our document the distinction is drawn by noting that he was a monk as well as a priest.

Before leaving our document we may note with interest the Somerset connexion of the witnesses whose names we have chiefly been considering. Here is Archbishop Athelm, lately at Wells, the uncle of Dunstan, who, if we may trust Adelard, had recently come to him from Glastonbury. And here is the younger Ælfheah, the future Bishop of Winchester, another kinsman of Dunstan, and himself a Glastonbury monk. Again, it is a curious coincidence that we find together here the first, second, and third bishops of the newly-created see of Wells, in the persons of Athelm, Wulfhelm, and the elder of the two Ælfheahs. Perhaps it is not mere coincidence that Somerset and its bishops are so prominent in connexion with the Wessex court. For Dunstan was certainly related to the royal house, whether more or less closely than his kinsmen Athelm and Ælfheah the Bald we cannot tell. And Glastonbury is described by the biographer B as *regalis insula*. The Lady Æthelfleda, a niece of King Athelstan, and a kinswoman of Dunstan, had built herself a house west of the church, and used to entertain the royal family there. There, too, a little later, King Edmund was buried, and after him King Edgar, who indeed was born close by. Nor had the connexion of the court with Somerset begun with King Athelstan's reign.

I cannot feel the least hesitation in accepting the statement of our document, and the corresponding statement of Adelard to which it brings such striking confirmation. But it is necessary to examine the evidence which has been adduced on the other side, and to endeavour to test its validity.

First, we must consider the record of a purchase of properties by Archbishop Wulfhelm which bears the date 923. It comes from the Register of Evidences of Christ Church, Canterbury. Birch has

printed it (*C. S.* 637) from two MSS., Lambeth 1212 and Bodl. Tanner 223, as follows :

EALDENSTRETE . WADLAND . WLFREDIGLAND.

[✠] Anno dominice Incarnationis . DCCCCXXIII . WLFELMUS archiepiscopus comparavit undecim agros . mille . denariis puri argenti iuxta stratam quae dicitur EALDANSTRATE in occidente . Hæuuningland in aquilone cingesdic.

Item comparavit quosdam agros . qui ab incolis nominantur WADLAND 7 WLFRETHINGLAND iuxta locum qui nominatur ryther ceap . Hiis terminis circumdatur praenominata terra in oriente publica strata . in australi parte terra Brithulfi . In occidente civitas Doroberniae . in aquilone . Burhuuare boc aceras.

This in its present shape is not a charter, but a bare memorandum. No Indiction is given, and no names of witnesses by which we might test the date. The first trustworthy attestations of Archbishop Wulfhelm appear to occur in 926 (*Birch, C. S.* 658, 659); and this, as we have seen, is the probable year of his translation from Wells to Canterbury.

It is on the ground of this memorandum that the particular year 923 has been chosen as the date of Wulfhelm's accession, and consequently of Athelm's death. But this cannot be regarded as evidence of the same value as that of the document which we have been studying. It is impossible to verify the date, and we must explain it as the result of a copyist's carelessness.

Indeed the same MS. (*Lamb.* 1212) contains on the next page a charter by which the eleven fields are made over to Archbishop Wulfhelm in 939 (*B. C. S.* 733):

[✠] Anno dominice incarnationis . DCCCCXXXIX . indictione . XIII . anno Æðelstani regis . Ego Wuhelmus concedo Wlfelmo archiepiscopo aliquam partem terre iuris mei . id est undecim agros a meridie Doroberniae circumdata his terminis . ab oriente Adredesland . a meridie publica strata . ab occidente Brihtelmesland . ab aquilone Cingesland.

Hanc donacionem ego Athelstanus rex cum sigillo crucis confirmavi.

- ✠ Ego Wlfelmus confirmavi.
- ✠ Ego Teodredus Lundoniensis episcopus subscripsi.
- ✠ Ego Alfegus Wintoniensis subscripsi.
- ✠ Ego Odo Scirburnensis subscripsi.
- ✠ Ego Cenuualdus episcopus subscripsi.

The bishops are contemporary, though the signatures have perhaps been modified in form by the copyist.

We have now to face a far more serious task—the examination of the evidence of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, which places the accession of Wulfhelm in 925, and assigns to the same year the birth of Dunstan.¹ If this evidence is to be accepted, it is obvious that the

¹ In what follows I am indebted to a paper on 'The Accepted Year of St. Dunstan's Birth' by Mr. Toke, which embodies the results of Mr. Edmund

statement of Adelard that Archbishop Athelm introduced Dunstan to the court of King Athelstan is an absurd mistake; nor will Athelm's coronation of the king remain at all probable, since that archbishop's death was commemorated at Canterbury on January 8. We shall begin our examination by presenting the evidence in brief.

(1) A (the Parker Chronicle), as it at present stands, says that in 923 Archbishop Plegmund died; and that in 925 King Edward died and Athelstan succeeded, St. Dunstan was born, and Wulfhelm became archbishop.

(2) F has under 925 the same events as A in the same order, except that St. Dunstan's birth stands last.

(3) E at first recorded the death of King Edward and the accession of Athelstan under 924: then this was cancelled, and under 925 was entered, 'Then Bishop Wulfelm was hallowed, and the same year K. Eadward died'.

(4) B, C, and D place King Edward's death and Athelstan's election as King of the Mercians and his coronation at Kingston under the year 924.

1. The most important authority is the Parker Chronicle, which was written at Winchester. Its first hand writes as far as 891: then it is continued by a succession of hands until 1001. At some date after this it left Winchester, and for a long time no further entries were made in it.

In course of time the book came to Canterbury, probably not before 1070. Between the years 1002 and 1070 there are but ten entries, and then follow the Latin Acts of Lanfranc. Mr. Plummer, whose account of the MS. I have followed,¹ has distinguished fourteen hands in the writing of the Chronicle. Of these the following belong to this later Canterbury period:²

No. 11. From 1002 to 1066 (except the sentence about the comet, and the charter at 1031). Mr. Warner, of the British Museum, dates this hand as late as 1075.

No. 12. The last sentence of 1066 and the first portion of 1070.

No. 13. The remainder of 1070 and the charter at 1031.

No. 14. The Latin Acts of Lanfranc and some of the episcopal lists. This is the hand of the writer of F, and belongs to the end of cent. xi or the beginning of cent. xii. It is possible that Nos. 13 and 14 may be identical.

Bishop's investigations, and is printed in *The Bosworth Psalter* (Gasquet and Bishop, 1908), pp. 133 ff.: but I have approached the whole question from a different standpoint.

¹ *Two Saxon Chronicles*, II. xciv.

² *Ibid.* II. xxv.

Now these same Canterbury hands can be traced as making interpolations into the original annals of the tenth century. The motive plainly was to supply the defect of the Chronicle in respect of the see of Canterbury; for it contained no notices of bishops other than those of Winchester until 994, when the death of Archbishop Sigeric was recorded. It is worth while to set out these Canterbury interpolations in full, prefixing to each the number of the hand to which it is ascribed.

- (11) 923.¹ Her forþferde Plegmund arcebisceop.
 (12) 925.¹ ȝ Sċe Dunstan wearð akæmmed.
 (14) ȝ Wulfelm feng to þan arcebisceop rice on Cantnare byri.
 (14) 941. Þa was Wulfelm arcebisceop on Cañt.
 (11) 942. arcebisceop.
 (12) 943. <Her Eadmund eing S. Dunstane Glæs> tingeberig betæhte
 ðær he syððan ærest abbud wearð.
 (12) 956. ȝ aflæmde Sċe Dunstan ut of lande.
 (12) 959. Her he sæn'te efter Sċe Dunstane . ȝ gæf him þrice on
 Wigracæstre . ȝ ðær æfter þ þrice on Lundene.
 (12) 961. Her gewat Odo arceb . ȝ Sċe Dunstan feng to arcebrice.

We may note first the entries of No. 11. Mr. Plummer supposes that Plegmund's death was entered in 923 by 'a purely mechanical mistake', the interpolator having put it under DCCCCXXIII instead of under DCCCCXIII. Yet it is strange that he has omitted Athelm altogether. Birchington (*Anglia Sacra*, i. 4) also misses out Athelm, and makes Plegmund sit thirty-four years; and the Register of Prior Henry of Eastry (*ibid.* 83), after assigning thirty-four years to Plegmund, gives ten to Athelm, and only thirteen to Wulfhelm. Gervase had candidly admitted that he did not know how long these archbishops sat.²

The mutilated entry under 942 Plummer would complete with the words '<Her forðferde Wulfelm>' on the ground that this was the year of Wulfhelm's death; but he notes that 942, which was originally written, is now made into 941, and likewise the preceding 941 into 940.

No. 14 may be taken next. Wulfhelm's accession is entered at 925. Stubbs has assigned it to 923. But if it be true that Athelm crowned Athelstan on September 4, 925, and died on January 8, we

¹ The figures 923 and 925 (originally 922 and 924) were before these Canterbury glossators; for the change had been made at least as early as the date (c. 1025) of the burnt Cotton MS. edited by Wheloc (W).

² See further in the Note (C) on the Date of Athelm's Translation to Canterbury.

cannot put it earlier than 926, when, as we have said, his name first appears in charters.

The entry under 941 seems meaningless as it stands; but perhaps the scribe intended to have written *gewat*, 'departed', instead of *was*; compare the entry under 961. It may be that he was merely transferring the entry of Wulfhelm's death from 942 to the previous year.

To No. 12 (the scribe of F) the Dunstan entries are due. It is certainly strange that the Chronicle, which until 1001 remained at Winchester, should have had no mention at all of the name of Dunstan; and that it should have been left to a Canterbury scribe after the Conquest to make up the deficiency as well as he could by brief marginal annotations.¹

2. F (Domit. 8) is a bilingual MS., its entries being made first in Saxon and then in Latin. It is a Canterbury book, written not earlier than the end of the eleventh century. Its evidence at this point is of value only as expressing the Canterbury view at that date.² But it is interesting to note in passing that under 927 its Latin entry runs: 'Wulfelmus archiepiscopus porrexit Rome pro pallio:' its Saxon entry (like that in E) has no words corresponding to 'pro pallio'.

3. E (Laud. Misc. 636), the Peterborough Chronicle, written c. 1121, is founded on a Chronicle which till c. 1067 belonged to St. Augustine's, Canterbury. From that Augustinian Chronicle F was largely drawn.³ This finds an illustration in the statement which is now before us. For E has under 925: 'Her Wulfelm biscop wes gehalgod;' and F in its margin has: '7 Wulfelm wearþ gehadod to arþ to Caſit.'

4. B (Tib. A. 6), C (Tib. B. 1), D (Tib. B. 4). This represents the last entry from the 'Mercian Register'.

¹ The Latin entry of his death under 988 ('hoc anno obiit Sçs Dunstanus aſeþs') is said by Plummer (i. 125 n.) to be 'written in an ancient and very small hand'. We may assume that it is by one of the Canterbury hands, even if it cannot be assigned with certainty.

² The disposition of the original passage and the marginal additions is well indicated by a diagram in *Bosworth Psalter*, p. 139. But I do not feel able to distinguish the hands as Mr. Toke there does. The Saxon entries about Wulfhelm and Dunstan in the right-hand margin are now nearly illegible: possibly they may be by a different hand: the writing is very small. But the Latin entry as to Wulfhelm, which is preceded by an erased date, can hardly be said to be in the lower margin. This, again, possibly may be by a different hand: at any rate, the writing is a little larger. The Dunstan entry below this is in the lower margin, and the hand is the same, so far as I can see, as that of the Latin entry as to Wulfhelm. But the whole is huddled up and is an ugly bit of writing.

³ See Plummer, *ut supra*, II. xxxviii ff.

Thus the evidence of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, which was at first sight so imposing, is reduced on examination to a Canterbury tradition of post-Conquest days. Some of the mistakes of this tradition may perhaps be accounted for by the loss of documents in the great fire. But the curious error as to Dunstan's birth deserves to be followed up more closely.

First, we must consider an entry in the Paschal Tables found in Calig. A. 15. The tables begin with the year 988. They run across the pages (132*b*, 133*a*), and the right-hand half of the second page is left blank for the entry of brief annals. Now 988 is the first year of an Indiction, and also the first year of the Lunar Cycle of nineteen years. But it is also the year of St. Dunstan's death. That event accordingly is entered as the first of the brief annals.

Then it seems to have occurred to the scribe who made this entry that it was desirable to record St. Dunstan's birth as well, though it did not fall within the period of the tables. Accordingly, in the top margin of the two pages he entered the year 925, missing out the Indiction, but giving the Epact and some other of the usual particulars (part of which have been shorn away in binding). When he reached the part of the margin over the space reserved for annals, he began an entry which, owing to its length, he had to carry down the right-hand margin as well.¹ It is to the following effect: 'In this year was St. Dunstan born, and he lived sixty-three years, and in the sixty-fourth year he died, 13 Kal. Jun.'

Liebermann, who edited these annals in his *Ungedruckte Anglo-Normannische Geschichtsquellen* (1879), ascribes the MS. to the end of the eleventh century. It is a Christ Church, Canterbury, codex, and the annals as far as 1076 are in one handwriting. They are in part copied word for word from the Parker Chronicle. So that all we have found is the same Canterbury tradition, which placed Dunstan's birth in the year 925.

The assignment of St. Dunstan's birth to 925 has introduced serious confusion into the chronology of his times, and has led recent scholars to reject historical statements which would otherwise have been accepted without hesitation. The error can now be seen to have originated in the *scriptorium* of Christ Church at Canterbury. The neglect of Dunstan challenged more than one of the monks of Lanfranc's restored house. Osbern, the sub-prior and precentor, was moved to write a new Life of the saint, and to add to it a book of

¹ Here again Mr. Toke's diagram is helpful: but I cannot agree with him that the handwriting of the margin is different from that of the first annal in the text: see *Bosworth Psalter*, p. 141.

his miracles; but his younger contemporary Eadmer found so much historical inaccuracy in Osbern's work that he wrote yet another Life, in what he conceived to be a style more suited to the simple reader. Now, whether Osbern was himself responsible for the erroneous entry in the Chronicle or not, his language enables us to see plainly how the mistake arose. He had before him the two authoritative narratives of St. Dunstan's life, the work of the anonymous author B, and the subsequent Life composed by Adelard, who himself had made use of B. Osbern begins by saying: 'Regnante magnifico Anglorum rege Æthelstano, anno quidem imperii eius primo . . . *natus est puer dei* Dunstanus Wessaxonice Angliæ partibus.'¹ The words italicized are derived from Adelard: '*Natus ergo puer dei* sacro est lavacro intinctus.'² Adelard is silent as to the date of birth, but he has before him the sentence of B, which is the ultimate source of confusion.

For B, who rejoices in a flamboyant style, introduces Dunstan thus: 'Huius [*sc.* Æthelstani] imperii temporibus *oritur puer strenuus* in West-Saxonum finibus, cuius pater Heorstanus, mater vero Cynethrydis vocitatur.'³ Now, since 'the times of the *imperium*' of Athelstan extend from 924 to 939, and since the writer is about to tell us that King Edmund, his successor (939-46), called Dunstan to him as one of his principal counsellors, and presently made him Abbot of Glastonbury, it may fairly be questioned whether he is even attempting to fix the date of Dunstan's birth in his somewhat vague phrase '*huius imperii temporibus oritur puer strenuus in West-Saxonum finibus*'. For he could hardly have made Dunstan a royal counsellor and an abbot before he was twenty-one, or indeed when he was but eighteen, if we accept the year 943 for his promotion as abbot.

Adelard may indeed have been representing '*oritur puer strenuus*' by his '*natus ergo puer dei*'; but, if so, he showed his discretion by omitting the limitation to the reign of Athelstan. For he presently goes on to tell us that Dunstan was residing with his uncle Athelm at Canterbury about the time when Athelstan came to the throne, and that Athelm commended him to the new king's notice. Osbern, however, accepting Adelard's '*natus ergo puer dei*' as the equivalent of '*oritur puer strenuus*', makes the best he can of '*huius imperii temporibus*'. He fixes on Athelstan's first year as the date of Dunstan's birth; and when he comes to the appointment to Glastonbury he mitigates the scandal by making it appear that, though entrusted with the abbey of King Edmund, he only became abbot after he had rebuilt the church and offices, and had gathered a band

¹ *Memorials of St. Dunstan*, p. 71.

² *Ibid.*, p. 54.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

of worthy monks around him. He has to deal drastically with his authority B in order to get this result; for he is forced to cancel the story of Dunstan's installation by the king in the abbot's seat, and to reduce the king's action to a grant of the possession of the abbey. It is worth while to point out that Osbern's solution is exactly that which No. 12 (the scribe of F) has introduced into the margins of the Parker Chronicle: for, having entered Dunstan's birth under 925, he says when he comes to 943: 'Here K. Edmund entrusted St. Dunstan with Glastonbury, where he *afterwards* became the first abbot.'

Whether Osbern originated or only adopted this solution can be but a matter of conjecture; but the misplaced ingenuity of the Canterbury scholar had a long run of mischievous success. Eadmer escaped the trap by a judicious silence; perhaps he knew something of the exploits of No. 12. But William of Malmesbury, though he too wrote as a critic of Osbern, was caught by it; and so it became history. Florence of Worcester, however, shows more caution; his date for Dunstan's promotion as abbot is 942, but under 924 he prudently inserts the ambiguous sentence '*cuius temporibus oritur puer strenuus Dunstanus in West-Saxoniae finibus*'. He must have recognized the absurdity of making him abbot at eighteen, and have consulted the original authority on which the calculation was based. It is indeed quite possible that the biographer B meant to say no more than that in King Athelstan's day 'there arose a mighty youth in Wessex'. It is more likely, however, that his knowledge of chronology did not suffice to fix the date of Athelstan's accession within ten or fifteen years. Whichever it be, he wrote vaguely, and has had the misfortune to be interpreted precisely.

V

THE SUCCESSORS OF BISHOP ATHELM, 923-74

When Athelm was translated to Canterbury, in 923, his successor at Wells was Wulfhelm; and on Athelm's death (January 8, 926) Wulfhelm was his successor again at Canterbury. If we may trust the eleventh-century Canterbury tradition, Wulfhelm undertook in 927 the dangerous journey to Rome, and received his pall from John X, who perished the next year.¹ It is possible, therefore, that the see of Wells remained vacant until he could consecrate a new

¹ See above, p. 37: see also the Note (E) on the Perils of the Road to Rome.

bishop with full authority on his return. In 929 we find Archbishop Wulfhelm's name entered in the Confraternity Book of the monastery of St. Gall. King Athelstan was a splendid prince who cultivated foreign friendships, and five of his sisters were married on the Continent. Two of these ladies were sent to the Saxon king, Henry the Fowler, that he might choose one of them for his son, who was afterwards to become famous as Otto the Great. It may have been in some connexion with this marriage that in 929 Kyneward, the Bishop of Worcester, went a tour among the German monasteries, bearing rich gifts from the English king.¹ In October he came to St. Gall, and found the monks keeping the festival of their patron saint. To the royal generosity they responded by an alliance of prayer, which included the names of King Athelstan, Archbishop Wulfhelm, and seven English bishops, besides abbots and nobles. Last on the list is the name of a lady, Keondrud, who would seem to be rightly identified by Bishop Stubbs with Kynedritha, the mother of St. Dunstan. Thus Somerset found a place in the prayer of the Swiss monks nearly a thousand years ago. King Athelstan and Wulfhelm also occur in the Confraternity Book of Reichenau, which may perhaps have been visited on the same journey.²

The activities of Archbishop Wulfhelm in connexion with royal councils and legislation are attested by several references to him in the Laws of King Athelstan.³ Of his work at Wells no record is preserved; but to the Abbey of Glastonbury he is said to have given twenty hides at Deverel, co. Wilts.⁴ The fortunes of Glastonbury were beginning to revive towards the end of Athelstan's reign. The abbey was apparently in the king's hands, and was ruled by thegn

¹ The marriage seems to have taken place in the autumn of 929: see Dümmler, *Otto der Grosse*, p. 10, n. 1. We may therefore reasonably suppose that Bishop Kyneward's primary mission was to conduct the two princesses to the German court.

² See the Note (F) on Three Swiss Confraternity Books.

³ See the Note (G) on Archbishop Wulfhelm and the Laws of King Athelstan.

⁴ A thirteenth-century list of the charters which were contained in the very ancient 'Liber Terrarum' of Glastonbury is printed (from the Trinity College, Cambridge, MS., no. 724) by Hearne in his *John of Glastonbury*, ii. 370 ff. Here we have the two titles: 'Ethelstanus de Deverel dat. Wlfhemo, quam et ipse G. [sc. dedit Glastoniae]. I dem de Vuerdeverel dat. Osfritho, quam ipse G.' These charters were before W. of Malmesbury when he wrote (*Antiq. Glastou.* ap. Hearne, *Ad. de Domerham*, i. 70): 'Wlhelm archiepiscopus dedit Deverel xx hidas, assensu eiusdem regis [sc. Ethelstani]. Osfricus dedit Werdeverel, hoc est, Munecatone x hidas' (cf. *ibid.* 99). Osferth, or Osfrith, is first of the *duces* in 930 (Crawford Ch. iv, cf. B. C. S. 669): he appears to have been of the royal house (B. C. S. 553, 611). There is a cluster of Deverills on the

who were abbots only in name.¹ But Dunstan was there, setting an example of true monastic life; and to this may be due the considerable number of benefactions to which the charters of the period bear witness. William of Malmesbury, who claims Athelm as a monk of Glastonbury, makes no such claim in the case of Wulfhelm; but it is not improbable that Wulfhelm too received his education there. He died on February 12, 942,² and was buried, like his predecessor, at Canterbury.³

Ælfheah became Bishop of Wells after Wulfhelm's translation to Canterbury in 926. He had been one of King Athelstan's mass-priests, serving, it would seem, in what would later have been called his chancery.⁴ He appears to have died in 938.⁵

His successor was a second Wulfhelm, whose name occurs in charters from 938 to 955. There is a curious reference to him in the will of King Edred, who died at Frome, co. Somerset, November 23, 955. The king leaves his lands to Queen Edgiva (Eadgifu), his mother, with the exception of some estates which he gives to the monasteries at Winchester. But his most noteworthy bequest for his soul's release is a gift of sixteen hundred pounds, that his people 'may be able to purchase for themselves relief from want and from the heathen army, if they need [so to do]'. The money was to be deposited on trust as follows: the archbishop was to receive four hundred pounds for the men of Kent, Surrey, Sussex, and Berkshire; and, 'if aught betide him', then the money is to go to the Christ Church monastery under the supervision of the chief men of the shires. Bishop Ælfsige was to receive four hundred at the

stream which bears that name south of Warminster in Wilts: Longbridge Deverill, Hill D., Brixton D., Monkton D., and Kingston D. The last of these names again points to the royal house. Can it be that Wulfhelm, like his predecessor Athelm, was connected with the royal family?

¹ The list of abbots in Tiberius B. 5 places Cuthred and Ecgwulf immediately before Dunstan. Neither of these persons occurs with the title of abbot in charters; but the name 'Cudret' comes directly after two abbots in the St. Gall Confraternity Book on the occasion of Bishop Kynewald's visit in 929: see the Note (F) on Three Swiss Confraternity Books. Both are found attesting charters as thegns.

² Wulfhelm's first attestation is in 926 (B. C. S. 658), his last in 941; and Oda, his successor, attests in 942. For the confused interpolation in the Chronicle see above, p. 37. The day is from the Canterbury Obituary (Nero C. 9).

³ See the Note (D) on the Tombs of Athelm, Wulfhelm and Lyfing.

⁴ See above, p. 32.

⁵ Ælfheah's first secure attestation as bishop is in 928 (B. C. S. 663, 664); for B. C. S. 660 (A. D. 927) is questionable. His last appearance is in 937, and his successor attests in the next year; but the charters are of doubtful value.

bishop-stool of Winchester—two hundred for Hampshire, one for Wilts, and one for Dorset—with the like provision in case of his death. ‘Item, Abbot Dunstan is to receive two hundred pounds, and to keep it at Glastonbury, for the people of Somerset and Devon; and, if anything happen to him, arrangements similar to those above shall be made.’ Also Bishop Ælfsige is to have two hundred pounds at Winchester to give to whichever shire shall need it. Lastly, Bishop Oseytel (then at Dorchester, afterwards at York) is to have the remaining four hundred for the Mercians. Then follows the enigmatic sentence: ‘Now Bishop Wulfhelm has that sum of four hundred pounds.’¹

We know from the biographer B that King Edred relied chiefly on Dunstan in his administration of the kingdom, and that he committed his charters and treasures to his keeping in the monastery of Glastonbury. In his last illness the king desired to dispose of his property, and sent Dunstan to bring the treasure from Glastonbury, but he died while the abbot was on his return journey.² We can understand, therefore, that to Dunstan, and not to either of the two bishops, was the legacy entrusted for the counties of Somerset and Devon. But how Bishop Wulfhelm of Wells came to be in possession of four hundred pounds of the king’s money remains unexplained.³

Wulfhelm II was succeeded in 956 by Brihthelm. In order to understand the story which has been connected with his name, it is necessary to recapitulate briefly the political events of the period.

King Edmund had come to the throne in 939, at the age of eighteen years.⁴ Dunstan, the monk of Glastonbury, being then about thirty, became one of his principal counsellors. The court was at Cheddar, and Dunstan’s rivals contrived to bring him into disgrace with the king, who summarily dismissed him from his service. But immediately after this King Edmund nearly lost his life while hunting a stag that dashed over the Cheddar cliffs. Being saved as by a miracle, he at once sought reconciliation with Dunstan, and made him Abbot of Glastonbury. After this Dunstan had great influence

¹ The document is printed by Birch, *C. S.* 912. I give the translation from Harmer’s *English Historical Documents*, no. xxi. The Old English and Latin versions printed by Birch grossly misrepresent the whole transaction. Before the name Wulfhelm stands þ in the manuscript: no reasonable explanation of this is offered; the sentence is: ‘þænne hæfþ þ pulfhelm biscop ƿæt feoper hund punda.’

² *Memorials of St. Dunstan*, pp. 29, 31.

³ It may be that both he and Archbishop Wulfhelm were of the royal house.

⁴ For this I accept Mr. Beaven’s argument, *E. H. R.* xxxii. 517 ff. (1917).

both with King Edmund and with his brother Edred, who reigned from 946 to 955.

King Edred's early death was the signal of disaster. The boy Edwy, Edmund's elder son, came to the throne at the age of fifteen. He was under the influence of a court party which resented the power wielded during the last two reigns by Abbot Dunstan and Edgiva the queen-mother. The estates of the latter were confiscated, and Dunstan was driven into exile; he took refuge in Flanders, and was for a time the guest of the reformed abbey of St. Peter, at Ghent. Meanwhile the country was misgoverned, and presently the Mercians revolted, choosing Edgar, the king's younger brother, as their king. Thus the work of three generations seemed destined to be overthrown, and the unity of England broken up once more. Edgar at once recalled Dunstan, and by the advice of his Witan made him a bishop. He was consecrated by Archbishop Oda, who seems now to have withdrawn from King Edwy's court. He was given the see of Worcester, and to this was soon added the oversight of London.

Meantime the see of Wells had fallen vacant by the death of Wulfhelm II in 956, shortly after Edwy had come to the throne. The new bishop was Brihthelm, who is thought to have been a kinsman of the king: in any case he must have been the nominee of the party then in power. Two years later the archbishopric of Canterbury fell vacant. An unworthy successor to Oda the Good was found in Ælfsige, the Bishop of Winchester. But Ælfsige perished of cold in the Alps, on the way to Rome to fetch his pall. Then, it would seem, Brihthelm of Wells was chosen for Canterbury;¹ but he had hardly got there when King Edwy died, October 1, 959. Edgar was at once accepted as king of the reunited realm: Brihthelm was sent back to Wells, and Dunstan became Archbishop of Canterbury. A new and a peaceful era had begun. Edgar, indeed, was only sixteen; but Dunstan was again the chief minister of the kingdom, and his rule in Church and State crowned the work of Alfred and his great successors, with the result that English unity was finally and for ever achieved.

Brihthelm's episcopate covers practically the whole of King Edgar's reign. He died in 974, and was buried at Wells.² His obit was kept at Glastonbury on May 15, as we learn from William of Malmesbury, who indeed claims him as a monk of the abbey.³

¹ See the Note (H) on Bishop Brihthelm and his Namesakes.

² Cf. the entry inserted in *Flor. Wigorn.*, *sub anno 973*: 'Sumertunensi episcopus Brihthelmus obiit, et in Wyllum humatus est; cui successit Middeltunensis abbas Cinewardus'; but for the year see below, p. 47, n. 2.

³ *Antiq. Glaston.* ap. Hearne, *Ad. de Domerham*, i. 94 'Idus Maii obiit Brihthelmus episcopus Wellensis, monachus Glastoniae'.

VI.

THE LATER SAXON BISHOPS, 974-1033

As we review the names of the first five bishops of Wells—Athelm, 909-23; Wulfhelm, 923-6; Ælfheah, 926-38; Wulfhelm II, 938-56; Brihthelm, 956-74—we may observe that several of them, indeed quite possibly all of them, were Somerset men, and more or less closely connected with the royal family. Two of them went from Wells to Canterbury; and a third seems to have travelled the same way, though political complications turned him back. Two of them, Athelm and Brihthelm, are said to have been Glastonbury monks; one of them, Archbishop Wulfhelm, gave an estate to the abbey; and it is quite likely that all of them received their education in that royal house. These considerations are worthy of the attention of the historian of the tenth century, who may recall the further facts that Edgar was born at Edgarley, a hamlet of Glastonbury, and that both he and his father Edmund were buried in the abbey. ‘The little kingdom of Wessex’—to use Liebermann’s words¹—‘formed the starting-point for a dominion over England, over the British Isles, and over half the earth to-day.’ And it should not be forgotten that from Alfred to Edgar, in the first great period of the Making of England, the power of Wessex radiated from Somerset. It is in harmony with this fact that the great movement of monastic reform under Edmund, Edred, and Edgar had likewise a Somerset origin. Of this reform it is necessary now to give a brief account, as it affected the Wells episcopate for the next two generations.

The ravages of the Danes had almost obliterated the monastic life of England. The properties of many of the abbeys had reverted to the king’s hands for lack of owners, and their churches were served by a few clerks whose reputation was painfully low. We must, indeed, allow for some exaggeration on the part of those who presently took their places, but we cannot doubt that there was great need of reform. When we look for the first inspiration of the new movement, we find it in the saintly personality of Ælfheah the Bald, who became Bishop of Winchester about the year 934. He first appears in history as a mass-priest of King Athelstan, designated as ‘priest and monk’ to distinguish him from his contemporary Ælfheah the priest, who became the third Bishop of Wells.² Ælfheah the Bald was a kinsman

¹ *Ungedruckte Anglo-Normannische Geschichtsquellen* (1879), introd. to § ix.

² See above, p. 32.

of Dunstan, and like him was related to the royal house ; it is probable, therefore, that he was a Somerset man and a monk of Glastonbury. It was he who persuaded Dunstan to take the monastic vow, and he ordained to the priesthood on the same day Dunstan and his friend Ethelwold, who presently followed Dunstan to Glastonbury. There for ten or, it may be, fifteen years Dunstan worked quietly on, rebuilding the abbey and training young monks in the faithful observance of St. Benedict's Rule. Up to this point the movement was wholly English in character, and was not affected in any way, so far as we can tell, by influences from abroad.

The corresponding movement on the Continent had begun a generation earlier. Cluny had been founded in 909, just about the time of Dunstan's birth and the accession of his uncle Athelm to the new see of Wells. Fleury was reformed in 930 by an abbot of Cluny, but it retained its independence and did not, like so many other abbeys, become subject to Cluniac rule. About the same time Gerard of Brogne was busy with similar reforms, and the abbey of St. Peter at Ghent, where Dunstan was afterwards received during his exile, was revived by him. The connexion of England and the Continent was so close during the reigns of Athelstan and Edmund that the English churchmen must have been well aware of the reforms in France and Flanders.¹ Indeed, the fame of Fleury is said to have led Oda the Good to seek the monastic habit from that abbey when he was promoted to the see of Canterbury. Oda was of Danish descent, as was Oskytel his kinsman, the Archbishop of York ; and we may note, in passing, the extraordinary fact that seventy years after Alfred's Peace of Wedmore both the archbishops of England were of Danish origin. What immediately concerns us here is that Oda's brilliant young nephew Oswald, disgusted with the laxity of the clerks over whom he had been set to preside in a monastery at Winchester, desired to go abroad and become a monk. Had he been a Somerset man, he would have joined Dunstan and Ethelwold at Glastonbury, the one English house where he could then have found the strict observance that he sought. As it was, he went, by his uncle's advice, to Fleury. He was at length recalled by the aged Oda, but before he could reach Canterbury his uncle was dead, and he went on to Oskytel at York. Then Dunstan found him out, and commended him to King Edgar to fill the see of Worcester, which he had just vacated. Whilst Oswald was still at Fleury, Ethelwold conceived the wish to go there

¹ Some of the monks of St. Bertin, who had refused to accept the reform of Gerard of Brogne in 944, set sail for England, and were placed by the king in the abbey of Bath (Folcuin, *Gesta abbatum S. Bertini*, Pertz, *M.G.SS.* xiii. 629).

also; but the queen-mother warned Edred of the danger of losing him, and he was sent off with companions from Glastonbury to restore the ancient monastery of Abingdon. Thus it came about that Dunstan himself was the first link between the revived English monasticism and the great continental reforms; and it was to a Lotharingian house, reformed not from Cluny but by Gerard of Brogne, that the providence of his exile brought him.

In 963 Ethelwold was made Bishop of Winchester, and thereafter, with Oswald at Worcester and Dunstan at Canterbury, the monastic movement went forward apace. It is unnecessary to follow it farther here. What has been said so far is, however, directly to our purpose. For now all the more eager spirits among the young English churchmen sought their training in the monasteries, which once again had become living homes of devotion and learning. The result is plainly seen at Wells, where for the next sixty years the bishops, six of them in succession, were all chosen from among the abbots of the reconstituted monasteries.

The first of these was Cyneward, Abbot of Middleton, or Milton Abbas, in Dorset. This house had been founded by King Athelstan, who placed there relics of St. Samson of Dol and St. Bradwalader, given him by the Breton refugees who crossed the Channel when the Danes were ravaging their country.¹ It was one of the first four minsters reformed under King Edgar, and the first reforming abbot was Cyneward, who had been trained by Dunstan at Glastonbury. We read in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle under the year 964: 'K. Edgar drave out the priests at Winchester from the Old Minster and from the New Minster, and from Chertsey and from Middelton, and settled them with monks: and he placed Abbot Æthelgar at the New Minster as abbot, and Ordbriht at Chertsey and Cyneward at Middelton.'²

Cyneward became Bishop of Wells in 974,² and ruled but one

¹ Liebermann, *Die Heiligen Englands*, p. 19: '(S) Þonne resteð sanctus Branwalatrus se biseop on þam mynstreæt Middeltune'. '(C) Þonne is on Middeltune sancte Brangwalatæris héafod biscopes, and sancte Samsones earm, biscopes, and his crice.' Among the relics described in *Monast.* ii. 350 we find: 'Brachium et plura ossa sancti Sampsonis archipraesulis,' and 'brachium sancti Branwaladri episcopi'. On the introduction of Breton cults see *Bosworth Psalter*, pp. 53 ff., and McClure, *British Place-names*, pp. 160 ff.

² Cyneward attests as bishop in 974 (B. C. S. 1303). Birch prints a charter (B. C. S. 1302) from Addit. MS. 15,350, in which Brihthelm attests as bishop and Cyneward as abbot: it is misdated 984, probably for 974. A Wilton charter of 974 (B. C. S. 1304) also has both names. Kemble passes the former, but rejects the latter. As the only authority for the year 973 is the inserted entry in Florence of Worcester, we shall be more prudent if we accept 974 as the date.

short year; he died on June 28, 975, ten days before King Edgar.¹ So it was that Cyneward was buried at Wells just before the king was buried hard by at Glastonbury, and their names are linked together in the poem on King Edgar's death which is preserved in the Chronicle:

A glorious man
Ten nights before
From Britain went,
The bishop good
By native force,
Whose name was Cyneward.

The next bishop came from Glastonbury. Sigegar, or Sigar, stands next but one in the list of abbots to St. Dunstan himself.² He ruled at Wells from 975 to 997.³ Glastonbury showed his tomb, near to that of St. Benignus;⁴ but Wells claims to have his bones beneath his effigy, and with them is a leaden tablet inscribed SIGARVS EP̄C WELLENSIS.

Though we know but little about him, it is certain that Bishop Sigar made a great impression in Wells. No bishop had sat for so long a time—twenty-two years. In after days he was regarded as the earliest bishop of the see whose name was certainly known. He heads the list of bishops in a Wells document of *c.* 1175, and in another Wells document two hundred years later. He heads a much earlier list in a Bath manuscript of the Anglo-Saxon Gospels, written *c.* 1090; and, what is more surprising still, he holds the same place in a Winchester book of *c.* 1030—that is to say, a generation after his death. In some of these lists he is placed before the two bishops who certainly preceded him, Brihthelm and Cyneward. All this goes to show that he was a man who left a mark on his times. He

¹ The entry inserted into Flor. Wigorn. is ten years too late: '985. . . . Kynewardo Wellensi episcopo defuncto successit Sigarus abbas.' Cf. W. of Malmesb. *Antiq. Glaston.* ap. Hearne, *Ad. de Domerham*, i. 94 'Quarto Kalend. Iulii obiit Keneualdus episcopus, monachus Glaston.' As this day (June 28) is indicated by the notice in the A.-S. Chronicle, we conclude that Cyneward is meant, and not Cynewald Bishop of Worcester.

² Tiberius B. 5: Dunstan, Ælfrie, Sigegar, Ælfward. This list was drawn up in Bishop Sigar's lifetime: see above, p. 14. W. of Malmesb., *ut supra*, p. 85, quotes from a charter: 'Anno DCCCCLXV. Ego Edgarus Sigaro abbati', &c. The date may be correct, but Sigar's earliest attestation as abbot seems to occur in 974 (B. C. S. 1303).

³ These are probably the correct dates. His first attestation as bishop is in 979 (Kemble, *Cod. Dipl.* 621), his last in 995 (K. C. D. 691).

⁴ W. of Malmesb., *ut supra*, p. 93 'Quarto Kal. Iulii obiit Sigegarus Wellensis episcopus, abbas Glastoniae. Hic iacere fertur sub sancto Benigno.' There is a happy uncertainty about *fertur*.

entered into confraternity with the Old Minster (i.e. the cathedral church) at Winchester, and he was also prayed for in the New Minster, afterwards the abbey of Hyde. There can be no doubt that, when the figures of the Saxon bishops were carved for their monuments in the church at Wells at the beginning of the thirteenth century, Bishop Sigar was regarded as the oldest of all who were buried there.¹

The next Bishop of Wells was also an abbot—but this time from Westminster. St. Dunstan was regarded as a second founder at Westminster, where he is said to have settled twelve monks brought from his own abbey of Glastonbury. Westminster, like Glastonbury, soon began to send out its abbots as bishops. The most famous was St. Wulsin, who went to Sherborne in 992; and he would appear to have been succeeded as abbot by Alfwy (or Ælfwin), who in his turn went to Wells in 997.² It is probable that it was a Somerset man who thus came back from Westminster to Wells.

There is a strange statement about Bishop Ælfwin in a Wells document written about 1175, to the effect that he supplanted Sigar in the bishopric, and that after Sigar's death he lived as bishop thirteen days and then expired.³ It has been suggested that Bishop Sigar in his old age may have had Ælfwin as his coadjutor; and we can well understand that he might wish to have one of his former monks to take his place. It is, however, possible that there has been some confusion with the story of a later Bishop Ælwin, to whom we shall come presently.

The obit of Bishop Ælfwin would seem to have been kept on August 29. In the calendar of the Leofric Missal there is an entry by a later hand on this day: 'Obitus Ælfwini episcopi.' But it is possible that some other bishop is referred to.

In charters of 997 and 998 we find the signature of Bishop Ælfwin and also of an abbot named Lyfing.⁴ This Lyfing was the Abbot of Chertsey, co. Surrey, which had been founded in the days of King Ina (c. 690), together with the abbey of Barking, co. Essex, by St. Erconwald, Bishop of London. This we have on the authority of Bede

¹ For the details of this paragraph I may be allowed to refer to a paper entitled *Effigies of Saxon Bishops at Wells*, in *Archaeologia*, vol. lxxv, pp. 95-112 (1913-14).

² Flete, *Hist. of Westminster*, p. 78 'Alfvyus abbas, postea episcopus Funtanensis.' See the Note (I) on the First Abbots of Westminster.

³ *Historiola*, &c., in 'Ecclesiastical Documents' edited by Hunter for the Camden Society (1840), p. 14 'Alwynus, qui subplantavit Sigarum ab episcopatu (MS. æpō); post cuius obitum cum xij^o diebus vixisset episcopus exspiravit.'

⁴ K. C. D. 698, 700.

(*H. E.* iv. 6). The A.-S. Chronicle tells us that Chertsey was reformed in 964, at the same time as the minsters at Winchester and at Middleton. Ordbriht was then appointed abbot; Lyfing may have been his immediate successor. Lyfing attests as Bishop of Wells in 999.¹ William of Malmesbury tells us that he was also named Ethelstan or Elstan.²

In 1013 he was translated to Canterbury.³ St. Elphege had been murdered by the Danes on April 19 in the previous year, and the primacy had since stood vacant. Archbishop Lyfing probably took a prominent part in the making of King Ethelred's Laws in 1014. It was his strange fortune to crown Edmund Ironside in 1016, and Cnut in the following year. He died in 1020, according to two manuscripts (E, F) of the Chronicle. The only manuscript (D) which places his death in 1019 describes him thus: 'Then departed Ælfstan the archbishop. He was named Lifing; and he was a man exceeding prudent (*ræd-fæst*) alike before God and before the world.' He was ready in counsel, as Ethelred his master was Unready (*ræd-leas*).⁴

On Lyfing's promotion to Canterbury in 1013 the see of Wells was filled by Æthelwine, the Abbot of Evesham. His attestation as abbot occurs in a charter of July 1012 (K. C. D. 1307), and the Evesham records place him between Brihtmaer and Ælfward, the latter of whom is said to have been appointed in 1014.⁵ Æthelwine attests as bishop from 1018 to 1022, always in company with Brihtwine bishop and (except in 1018) with Brihtwig abbot. This Brihtwine is probably the Bishop of Sherborne: he is mentioned in the A.-S. Chronicle (E) as present when King Cnut translated St. Elphege to Canterbury in 1023. Brihtwig is the Abbot of Glastonbury, who was to succeed Æthelwine at Wells in 1024.

William of Malmesbury is responsible for the statement that Æthelwine was ejected from his see by Brihtwine, that Brihtwine was then ejected, and that Æthelwine returned, only to be ejected by Brihtwine for the second time. It is possible that the story has arisen from an attempt to interpret the confusions of the ancient episcopal lists of Wells and of Sherborne for this period.⁶

¹ K. C. D. 703.

² *Gest. Pont.*, pp. 33, 194; so A.-S. Chron. (E), quoted below.

³ A.-S. Chron. (E).

⁴ For his tomb at Canterbury see the Note (D) on the Tombs of Athelm, Wulfhelm and Lyfing.

⁵ *Monasticon*, ii. 26, from the MS. of Sir Simonds D'Ewes (now Harl. MS. 229); cf. *Hist. of Evesh.* (Rolls Ser.), p. 81.

See the Note (J) on the Various Bishops Brihtwine.

Brihtwig (Beorhtwig, or Brihtwy) was consecrated in 1024, or possibly at the end of 1023.¹ He was also called Merewit.² He was much honoured at Glastonbury, where he had become abbot, according to William of Malmesbury, in 1017, and where he had caused a cross to be made, and also an altar-front decorated with gold and silver and ivory.³ He was buried in the northern apse, at the altar of St. John Baptist. In the fourteenth century a wax candle was kept burning before his tomb, and his anniversary was observed with much solemnity.⁴ He died April 12, 1033. This we learn from a valuable document written by Bishop Giso, his next successor but one:⁵ the year is confirmed by the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle.⁶ Brihtwig was at once the last bishop of the English race and the last of the long series of abbots who had come out of the reformed monasteries. We may bring the period to a close by recapitulating their names:

Cyneward from Middleton, 974-5 ;
 Sigar from Glastonbury, 975-97 ;
 Ælfwin from Westminster, 997-9 ;
 Lyfing from Chertsey, 999-1013 ;

¹ Æthelwine's last signature is in 1022 (K. C. D. 734). Brihtwig still attests as abbot in 1023, and only in 1024 as bishop (K. C. D. 737, 739, 741). The date 1027, given by Stubbs, is based on W. of Malmesbury (cited below).

² *Gest. Pont.*, p. 194, Bath Gospels (C. C. C. C. 140); Merehwit, A.-S. Chron. (E) 1033; Cott. ch. xii. (K. C. D. 742); Merechyyt, *Historiola*, p. 15.

³ *Antiq. Glaston.* (Hearne), p. 87: 'Anno MXVI Brithwius abbas constitutus fecit tabulam ante altare, auro et argento et ebore polimitam, et crucem. Hic post decem annos suscepti regiminis in episcopum Wellensem est electus; ' p. 94: 'Anno incarnationis MXXXIV obiit Brihwius episcopus Wellensis, abbas Glastoniae. . . Hic iacet in aquilonari porticu ad sanctum Iohannem Baptistam.'

⁴ Hearne, *John of Glaston.* ii. 363 (from Trin. Coll., Cant., no. 724) 'Haec sunt anniversaria in quibus accendi debent .ii^o. processionales et .iiii. cerei maioris formae remocius. Inae regis, Brithwoldi et Brithwi episcoporum, Roberti abbatis senioris, Willelmi abbatis. . . ¶ Sciendum etiam quod multi de praenominatis qui in ecclesia Glastoniensi requiescunt singulos cereos habent ante locum suae sepulturae, videlicet Edgarus, Brithwold et Brithwi, Robertus in meridie, Willelmus in aquilone, abbates in capitulo. Edmundus senior in aquilone, et Edmundus iunior [Edmund Irouside] in meridie, ante maius altare.'

⁵ *Historiola*, p. 15 'Anno dominicae incarnationis m^o.xxx^o. Cnuth rege Danorum et Norweyensium optinente etiam principatum totius Britanniae, Brytheri episcopus Welliae ecclesiae, Merechyyt cognominatus, ii. idus Aprilis obiit, et in Glasstingensi coenobio, in quo ante episcopatum abbas fuit, est sepultus.' Internal evidence shows that the year was originally written m^o.xxxiii^o. W. of Malmesb., *ut supra*, p. 94, gives the year as mxxxiv. The Abingdon Martyrology (C. C. C. C. 57) has the entry (by a later hand) 'brihtpig ep.' on 3 Id. Apr. (James's *Catalogue*, I, p. 116).

⁶ A.-S. Chron. (E) 1033: 'Her on þisum geare forðferde Merehwit þ on Sumersæton. ȝ he is bebyrged on Glastingabyrig.

Æthelwine from Evesham, 1013-24 ;
 Brihtwig from Glastonbury, 1024-33.¹

The abbots had had their day. Once again, as under Edward the Elder and Athelstan, the king's mass-priests—the chaplains who formed his chancery—became under Cnut and Edward the Confessor the usual source from which bishoprics were filled. And these last-mentioned kings—the one a Dane, the other English by his father, but Norman by his mother, and Norman also by his education and in his sympathies—chose foreign priests for the work of their chancery, and then rewarded them by appointment to English sees.

Wells was typical in this respect. Dudoc, the Old Saxon, was followed by Giso the Lotharingian. Both may have been good men: the second certainly stands high in the roll of meritorious achievement. But the change from abbots to royal chaplains, though perhaps necessitated by the decline of the monastic revival, marks a period of general retrogression, in which ambitious and worldly clerks attained to the highest places in the Church, and sometimes held sees in plurality as the reward of continued political services.

Better days were coming, but the interval was very dark. Wells was perhaps more happy than many other dioceses, partly from the fact that Bishop Dudoc had a longer episcopate than any of his predecessors, and so the see was saved from the chances of unworthy and even simoniacal appointments; partly because, when a change came at last, it obtained a good bishop in Giso of Lorraine, who, being neither English nor Norman, could mediate the better between conquerors and conquered, and who ruled yet longer than any before him—from the last years of the Confessor through the whole of William's reign into the days of his son Rufus. Then, indeed, calamity befell the Church of Wells, from which it did not recover for more than a generation. Only when, after the lapse of a full century, a monk again sat in the bishop's seat, came the dawn of a brighter day.

VII

ADDITIONAL NOTES

A. *The Early Endowment of the See of Wells*

It is a matter of some interest to inquire what provision was made for the new Bishop of Wells, when the diocese was constituted *c.* 909.

¹ The bishops who followed were: Dudoc, an Old Saxon (1033-60); Giso, a Lotharingian (1061-88); John of Tours (1088-1122); Godfrey, a German (1123-35); Robert, monk of Lewes (1136-66).

We have no direct evidence, but a partial answer is suggested by the analogy of the neighbouring diocese of Crediton, which was constituted at the same time. Three properties in Cornwall which had belonged to the see of Sherborne were transferred to the Bishop of Crediton; and then, after a period of protracted controversy, they were finally settled upon the Cornish bishopric, which resulted from a fresh subdivision. We might suppose, therefore, that lands in Somerset which had belonged to the Bishop of Sherborne would form the nucleus of the endowment of the see of Wells. Such a process of transfer seems reasonable and just, though it must be noted that the wealthy heritage which the Bishop of Winchester held in Taunton and its neighbourhood had never accrued to the Bishop of Sherborne.

Now Asser tells us in his *Life of Alfred* (c. 81) that the king gave him as a Christmas gift the two minsters of Congresbury and Banwell, and at a later time Exeter with its whole diocese in Saxon land and in Cornwall. This second gift is interpreted to mean that Asser was made the bishop of the westernmost portion of the diocese of Sherborne, and that this temporary diocese was again merged in Sherborne when Asser became bishop of that see.

Two points of interest to the see of Wells arise out of this information. In the first place we observe that Congresbury and Banwell, after strange vicissitudes,¹ ultimately became secure possessions of the Church of Wells. Secondly, the Church of Wells could show a charter which recorded an exchange of properties between King Edward the Elder and Asser, Bishop of Sherborne. Asser gave to the king the minster of Plymentun, that is Plympton in Devon. This we may suppose had come to him as a part of King Alfred's gifts, and had remained with him when he became bishop of the larger diocese of Sherborne.² The lands which the king gave to Asser in exchange

¹ Both Congresbury and Banwell were given by King Cnut to Dudoc his mass-priest, before he became Bishop of Wells, in 1033. Dudoc bequeathed them to the see of Wells (+1060). But Earl Harold seized them, and Bishop Giso was unable to recover them from him. Banwell he succeeded in obtaining from King William; but Congresbury remained with the Crown until it came at last to the Church in the reign of King John. See *Historiola*, pp. 15 ff., and Wells Register, i. 110. For the history of Banwell see also the article by the Rev. C. S. Taylor in *Som. Archaeol. Soc. Proceedings*, vol. li. (1905).

² Plympton in the reign of King Henry I was a church of Regular Canons, introduced (c. 1121) by William Warelwast, Bishop of Exeter, who transferred the secular priests to the collegiate church of Bosham in Sussex. That the church of Plympton had a history in Saxon times is shown by its claim to a gift from King Edgar of the church of Landoho in Cornwall. See *Monasticon*, vi. 51, 54.

were in the county of Somerset, which was until after Asser's death a portion of the Sherborne diocese. They are thus described in the charter: ¹ 'tres villas, id est peolingtun terram de sex manentium, et Bocland terram quinque manentium, atque Lidgeard terram .xii. manentium.' Domesday Book shows that the Bishop of Wells held, and had held T. R. E., both Wellington and Bishop's Lydeard; and we learn from another source that Buckland formed a portion of Wellington.²

We are therefore on fairly secure ground if we suppose that these three estates—Wellington, Buckland, and Bishop's Lydeard, situated just within the border of Somerset, and separated from Devon by the Blackdown Hills, were a part of the original endowment of the bishopric of Wells when it was created out of Sherborne in the beginning of the tenth century.

To these distant properties we must add the large estate of Wells itself, the immemorial heritage of the church of St. Andrew, where the bishop's stool was now set. A charter of King William, which claims to have been drafted by Bishop Giso himself (Wells Reg. iii. 241), though probably spurious, is of interest as showing the range of the Wells estate: 'in the territory of Wells and the villages thereto belonging are 50 *mansus*—Paulesham, Woky, Hentun, Gyrdleg (Yardley), Bledenhyth (Bladney), Eastun, Westbyrig, Woky Hole, Æbbeuyrth, Burcotan, Middeltun and Other Middeltun, Æt tham Pæenne, Hornningdune and Other Hornningdune, Hwite circe, Denrenn (Dinder), Dulticotan, Welsleg, Wuormestorr, Celicotan (Chilcot), Begenhangra (Binegar), Wandestreow, and Hlittun (Litton).'

We may now turn to the Domesday Survey and note those properties which belonged to the bishop in the time of King Edward the Confessor. From these we must rule out such as we know to have been added by Bishop Giso, namely, (a) *Cumbe* (Combe St. Nicholas), which the bishop purchased³ from Azor, son of Torold, who held it T. R. E.; (b) *Banwelle*, spoken of above; (c) *Jatune* (Yatton), held T. R. E. by John the Dane; (d) *Wedmore*, given by King Edward the Confessor;⁴ (e) *Litune* (Litton), bought by the bishop from Ælfred;⁵ (f) *Milvertune*, given by Queen Edith.⁶

¹ Birch, *C. S.* 610, from Wells Reg. iii. 290.

² Wells Reg. (iii. 241); Kemble, *C. D.* 816.

³ Wells Reg. iii. 255 b.

⁴ *Ibid.*, R. i. 176.

⁵ R. i. 14. This is the same Litton as is reckoned as part of the Wells territory in the general charter of King William.

⁶ R. i. 18.

The remainder of the properties recorded in Domesday Book would appear to have belonged to the bishopric of Wells in the earlier days; but we cannot determine how many of them formed a part of its original endowment. They are the following:

Chingesberie, *Cerdre*, and *Litelande* ('Littelaneaia,' Exon. book): i. e. Kingsbury Episcopi, Chard, and a small estate probably to be reckoned with Huish Episcopi. These make up 30 hides.

Wivelescombe: 15 hides.

Evrecriz (Evercreech): 20 hides.¹

Winesham: 10 hides. This, though held T. R. E. by Elsi, was an ancient property of the see, and was recovered by Bishop Giso.²

Chieve: 30 hides. This is Chew Magna, and includes Dundry.

B. *The name Æthelhelm or Æthelm.*

The name is not uncommon in the ninth and tenth centuries: the same person appears under both forms. In the A.-S. Chron. we find: (1) 837 Æthelhelm (Æthelm B) ealdorman of Dorset, slain in a fight with the Danes at Portland; (2) 887 Æthelhelm, ealdorman of Wilts., takes Alfred's alms to Rome; 894 (Æthelm A) he defeats the Danes at Buttington, together with Æthered and Æthelnoth, ealdormen of Devon and Somerset; 898 (Æthelm A) he dies. (3) In King Alfred's Will (Birch, C. S. 553) lands are granted to 'Æthelm, my brother's son'. (4) In the Life of St. Oswald (Raine, *Historians of York*, i. 405) a knight, Æthelhelm, is patron of the young Oda, afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury, and takes him to Rome; (5) Æthelhelm, ealdorman, was father of Ælflaed, the second wife of King Edward the Elder (Will. of Malm. *Gesta Regum*, i. 137); (6) 'Æthelm abbas' attests a charter granted by King Edward and Æthelred of Mercia in 903 (B. C. S. 603 from Stowe xxi).³ (7) The Winchester MS. of Bede (late tenth century) has a colophon recording the name of a scribe Ædelelmus: it is followed by a note in very corrupt Irish. It is possible that both colophon and note were copied from an earlier MS. The mistake in the colophon, 'pro anima Ædelelmo (sic)', seems to bear this out. It is thought that the MS. may have a Glastonbury origin; but it would be hazardous to assign its original to our Æthelm; see Plummer's *Bede*, I. cx f.

On the Continent also we meet with the name: as, for example, in Flodoard's Annals (ed. Lauer, 1906): 921 Adelelmus (Alleaume,

¹ *Westberie*, which comes next in order, is included in the territory of Wells in King William's charter cited above: so also *Wandestreu*, which comes after Wedmore.

² *Historiola*, p. 17.

³ Possibly the future Bishop of Wells.

Bishop of Laon, 921–30); 932 Adelelmes comes (Alleaume, Count of Arras); 936 Adelelmus Silvanectensium praesul obiit (Alleaume, Bishop of Senlis); 948 quidam clericus Laudunensis, nomine Adelelmus.

C. *The Date of Athelm's Translation to Canterbury.*

The Canterbury writers at the end of the eleventh century placed Plegmund's death in 923, and assigned to him a primacy of thirty-four years. As his obit was kept on August 2, the reckoning would not be inconsistent with the Canterbury date of his accession, viz. 890.

But recent historians are agreed in giving 914 as the year of the death of Plegmund and the accession of Athelm. The sole authority for this date is the statement found under that year in Florence of Worcester: 'Athelmo Wyllensi episcopo, in archiepiscopatum Dorubernensem levato, successit Wlfhelmus.' This is given by Petrie in the *Mon. Hist. Brit.* in a foot-note, as being one of the numerous additions made in A (Corp. Chr. Oxon. 157): it is not found in the Lambeth codex. *Unfortunately Thorpe printed it without comment as a part of the text*, though he rejected silently the parallel addition of A under 924, which records Athelm's death and Wulfhelm's accession to Canterbury, followed by Ælfheah's accession to Wells.¹

It is important, therefore, to discover the historical value of these additions in A. Some of them are designated by Petrie as '*A. add.*'; such are the two just referred to: others as '*A. alia manu*'. But they are of the same character, and often refer to the same sees. Again and again they prove to be obviously wrong, sometimes by as much as a hundred years.² This is what Petrie himself says about them in a note to the year 543:

Abhinc in cod. A occurrunt additamenta plurima tam in textu quam in margine, diversis licet antiquis manibus exarata. Ad episcoporum Anglorum series ferme spectant, plerumque ex 'Gestis Pontificum' Willielmi Malmesburiensis hausta. Quoad chronologiam, fere ad libitum posita videntur; sed cum ex hoc vel simili codice in textum Florilegi sive Mathaei Westmonasteriensis irreperint, et inde, ut verisimile est, in aliorum Chronicis obtinere locum, haec etiam inter MSS. codicum varietates representanda duximus.

Until I had examined the Lambeth MS. (L) with some care, I had hoped that a distinction might be drawn between the entries of episcopal successions which are found in A only and those which are

¹ See the foot-note in *M. H. B.* under 924.

² So Ealdbeorht and Esne under 872 and 885, a century too late.

also found in L. But I now see that, at any rate for the period with which we are here concerned, they are all equally untrustworthy. They do not come from Florence himself, but are in many instances quite certainly derived from W. of Malmesbury's *Gesta Pontificum*. But on what principles the years to which they are assigned are chosen is for the most part quite obscure.¹

Cod. A is undoubtedly the most important authority for the text of Florence of Worcester. But it is loaded with interpolations of various dates. Some of them are in the margins, but for others room has been made by erasure of portions of the text. Many of these interpolations are not to be found in the Lambeth manuscript, which is derived directly or indirectly from A, and was written about a quarter of a century later for the monastery of Abingdon. The entry with which we are here concerned is a good example of the value of this manuscript (L) for controlling the text of A.

Under the year A. D. 914 we read in L (f. 118) after the word *construxit* the short sentence, 'Hiemps nimis magna et dura', with which the annal closes. Now in A *construxit* ends a line; a portion of the next line was, we may assume, filled with the brief description of the hard winter, which the interpolator thought might well be spared. The erasure was most carefully made, and thus the whole line was available for the entry as to Archbishop Athelm's accession which has been quoted above.

This interpolator, who may have been at work in the last quarter of the twelfth century, has added other entries as to the episcopal successions at Wells. Thus at the end of the annal of 924 he adds the following, the first two words finding place at the end of a line, the rest running over into the margin:

Defuncto Athelmo archiepiscopo successit Wlhelmus, cui ad Wyllyensem ecclesiam successit Ælfegus, illique Wlfhelmus, illique Brythelmus.

If Thorpe, who omitted these words altogether, had been equally silent as to the former interpolation, it is unlikely that any historian would ever have suggested the year 914 for Plegmund's death and the translation of Athelm to Canterbury.

Accordingly we are thrown back on the Canterbury date of 923 for the death of Plegmund and, by inference, for the accession of Athelm. Its earliest authority is a note inserted into the Parker codex (A) of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle by a Canterbury writer c. 1075. There appears to be no reason for questioning its correctness: there certainly

¹ See a further account and criticism of these entries by Mr. W. H. Stevenson in his *Asser*, p. 108.

is no charter evidence that can be pleaded either for or against it.¹ Now that we have placed Athelm's death in January 926, we can still give him two full years and rather more at Canterbury.

If we ask how the interpolator of Florence could have been led to choose 914 as the year of Athelm's accession, we may find a possible answer on this wise. The MS. of the *Gesta Pontificum*, which is believed to have been written by William of Malmesbury himself (Magd. Oxford 173), and to represent his own alterations for the second edition of his work, has in bk. i, cc. 13, 14 (p. 20, Rolls Series), the number of years which each archbishop ruled inserted over his name. Thus Plegmund sat thirty-four years, Athelm twelve, Wulfhelm thirteen, Oda twenty. If we add these years together we reach a total of seventy-nine. But Plegmund became archbishop in 889 or 890, and Oda died in 958 or 959. Between these two events the interval is sixty-nine years, not seventy-nine. Here was a fruitful source of confusion. If you worked forwards you might put Plegmund's death in 923, in accordance with the Canterbury tradition. If you worked backwards from 959, Athelm's accession would fall in 914. It is fair to mention that this will not explain the subsequent entry which speaks of Athelm's death under 924; but this may have been suggested by the immediately preceding notice of Athelm's coronation of King Athelstan, which has also been antedated.

D. *The Tombs of Athelm, Wulfhelm and Lyfing at Canterbury.*

The bodies of Athelm and Wulfhelm rested at first in the church or baptistery of St. John Baptist, which Archbishop Cuthbert had built to the east of the great Saxon church. In Lanfranc's new church they, with the other archbishops, were placed in the tribune or gallery of the north transept, on the eastern side of which was an apsidal chapel with an altar at which mass was celebrated daily.² After the attempt of a foreign monk in 1121 to carry off the body of St. Bregwin, that saint and Archbishop Plegmund were placed behind the altar of St. Gregory in the south choir-transept.³ It may be that Athelm and Wulfhelm were moved at the same

¹ Birch, *C. S.* 638, is from Stowe charter xxiii (not xxii). This is a grant by Archbishop Plegmund which is dated DCCCCXX. But XX is written over an erasure. The first five letters are original, and the date must be DCCCCV, which corresponds with the Indiction (viii).

² 'In aquilonali parte super voltum singuli sub singulis ligneis locellis, ubi quotidie mysterium sacrificii salutaris celebratur, positi sunt,' Eadmer, *Vita Bregwini* (*Anglia Sacra*, ii. 188).

³ *Ibid.*; see also Gerv. i. 15.

time from the gallery, and placed in the apsidal chapel beneath, where Gervase tells us they were in his time—Athelm behind the altar of St. Benedict to the right, and Wulfhelm before it to the left. The gallery itself was pulled down, Gervase further informs us, shortly after the murder of St. Thomas, in order to give a better view of the newly erected altar in the Martyrdom.¹ In later days the apse in which St. Benedict's altar stood was destroyed when Prior Goldston (1449–68) extended this chapel to make his new Lady Chapel, but this rebuilding would not necessarily have interfered with the resting-places of our two archbishops.

Archbishop Lyfing, who went from Wells to Canterbury in 1013, was removed in Lanfranc's time, like his predecessors, to the gallery of the north transept, and then somewhat later to the left of the altar of St. Martin in the northern of the two apses which projected from the north choir-transept. In 1180, when the new choir was finished, he was placed in a corresponding position; and Gervase adds that Queen Ediva, who before the fire of 1173 had reposed under a gilded *feretrum* somewhere in the middle of the south transept, was now deposited at the altar of St. Martin, under the *feretrum* of Lyfing.²

In a manuscript of the middle of the fifteenth century there is an 'Oratio ad omnes sanctos quorum corpora in Cantuariensi continentur ecclesia'. Here we find mention of both Athelm and Wulfhelm in the following prayer:

Oratio. Omnipotens sempiterne deus cuius ineffabili providentia gloriosi martires [Thomas *erased*], Alphegus, Blasius, Salvius, confessoresque tui lucidi Dunstanus, Odo, Wilfridus, Anselmus, Audoenus, Cuthbertus, Athelardus, Bregwynus, Plegmundus, Alfricus, Athelgarus, Ciricus, Wulfredus, Aethelredus, Wulfelmus, Celnothus, Fleogildus, Athelmus, Wulganius, celeberrimaque virgo Syburgis, necnon et ceteri quorum reliquie in Cantuariensi continentur ecclesia, preclare vite meritis sanctorum tuorum collegio sunt ascripti: presta quesumus, &c.³

E. *The Perils of the Road to Rome.*

The following illustrations are from Flodoard's Annals:

921. Anglorum Romam proficiscentium plurimi inter angustias Alpium lapidibus a Sarracenis sunt obruti.

¹ Gerv. i. 11.

² Gerv. i. 24. Queen Edgiva, widow of King Edward the Elder and mother of King Edmund: see above, p. 44. She had given to Christ Church Mepham, Peckham, and other estates, Gerv. ii. 49.

³ Sloane MS., 1939: see *Bosworth Psalter*, p. 124f., where it is said that other lists include 'S. Lanfrancus' and 'Ediva regina'.

923. Multitudo Anglorum limina sancti Petri orationis gratia petentium inter Alpes a Sarracenis trucidatur.

929. Viae Alpium a Sarracenis obsessae, a quibus multi Romam proficisci volentes impediti revertuntur.

931. Graeci Sarracenos per mare insequentes usque in Fraxinidum saltum, ubi erat refugium ipsorum et unde egredientes Italiam sedulis praedabantur incursum, Alpibus etiam occupatis, celeri, deo propitio, interneccione proterunt, quietam reddentes Alpibus Italiam . . . Rotbertus episcopus Turonensis ecclesiae Roma remeans sub Alpibus noctu infra tentoria cum comitantibus secum interimitur a latronibus.

933. Sarraceni meatus Alpium occupant, et vicina quaeque loca depraedantur.

936. Sarraceni in Alemanniam praedatum pergunt, et revertentes multos Romam petentes interimunt.

939. Collecta diversorum hominum, quae Romam petebat, a Sarracenis pervasa et interempta est.

941. Collecta Transmarinorum, sed et Gallorum, quae Romam petebat revertitur, occisis eorum nonnullis a Sarracenis; nec potuit Alpes transire propter Sarracenos, qui vicum monasterii sancti Mauricii occupaverant.

942. Idem vero rex [Italiae] Hugo Sarracenos de Fraxinido eorum munitione disperdere conatur.

951. Sarraceni meatum Alpium obsidentes a viatoribus Romam petentibus tributum accipiunt, et sic eos transire permittunt.

See further Dümmler, *Otto der Grosse*, pp. 113 f.

F. *Three Swiss Confraternity Books.*

In 1884 Paul Piper published in the *Monumenta Germaniae Historica* the Confraternity Books of St. Gall, Reichenau, and Pfäfers (near Ragatz), under the title *Libri Confraternitatum Sancti Galli Augiensis Fabariensis*. An interesting description of these books is given by Bishop G. F. Browne in his 'Boniface of Crediton' (1910), pp. 343 ff.; but he is concerned only with the eighth-century entries. The passages which here follow from the St. Gall Book were reprinted by Bishop Stubbs in *Memorials of St. Dunstan*, pp. lxxv ff., from Goldast's inferior text. I give, therefore, Piper's text in full, adding passages of a like character from the other two books.

I. 1. *Cod. Sangall. 915, p. 5 (Piper, p. 136).*

Anno ab incarnatione domini DCCCCXXVIII indictione II Keonwald venerabilis episcopus profectus ab Anglis, omnibus monasteriis per totam Germaniam, cum oblatione de argento non modica et in id ipsum a rege Ang[e]lorum eadem

sibi tradita, visitatis, in idibus Octob. venit ad monasterium sancti Galli; quique gratissime a fratribus susceptus (est *erased*) et eiusdem patroni nostri festivitatem cum illis celebrando quatuor ibidem dies demoratus est. secundo autem postquam monasterium ingressus est, hoc est in ipso depositionis sancti Galli die, basilicam intravit et pecuniam copiosam secum attulit, de qua partem altario imposuit, partem etiam utilitati fratrum donavit. post haec, eo in conventum nostrum introducto, omnis congregatio concessit ei annonam unius fratris, et eandem orationem quam pro quolibet de nostris, sive vivente sive vita decedente, facere solemus pro illo facturam perpetualiter promisit. haec sunt autem nomina quae conscribi rogavit: rex Ang[e]lorum Adalstean, Keonowald episcopus, Wighart, Kenvun, Konrat, Keonolaf, Wundrud, Keondrud.

2. *Cod. Sangall. Class. II Cist. 24. a. 1 Arca DD. 2 (Piper, p. 100, col. 332).*¹

Adalsten rex . Wolfhelm archieps . Elwinus eps . Eotkarus eps . Wunisge eps . Sigihelm eps . Oda eps . Fridosten eps . Cunifrid eps . Kenod abb . Albrich abb . Cudret . Erdulf . Fridolef . Wulfun . Ortgar . Osfred . Elfsie . Adalvierd . Elwin . Adalwin . Berectwin . Wlfilt . Wighart . Conrat . Kenuun . Wndrud . Keonwad eps . Kenolaf . Keondrud . cum ceteris.

II. *Augiensis (Piper, p. 238).*²

Aethelstaenum
 regem cum uulfelm̃
 archiep̃s et nostris
 fidelissimis vivis
 ac in pace quies
 centibus vestro ser
 vitio in christi nomine
 commendamus
 Wighart³

III. *Cod. Confrat. Fabariens. (now at St. Gall: Piper, p. 363).*

(1). A group of four, crowded in among 'brethren of the city of Constance'.

Athalsten rex
 Otmundus rex Odgiva⁴
 Odo archiepiscopus

(2) In next column, a further series in the same hand.

Ricardus Odboldus Rege
 noldus Alfere Heltrut
 Rodleef Ealfere Othelo
 Id Wlfric Warin Fol

¹ These are supplementary leaves of the same codex. The names are all in one column, one below the other, ending with 'cum ceteris' as a separate line.

² The names are written thus in what has come to be (by crowding) the seventh column on the page. The original entries were brethren of Jumièges, c. 800.

³ 'Wighart forsitan scriptor fuit' (Piper).

⁴ The entry was probably made in King Edmund's lifetime. Edgiva is doubtless the widow of King Edward the Elder, mother of King Edmund.

rad Bersten Odmar Ath
 alger Kielelm Athalsi
 Athalbold Liman Odmund
 Athalsuit Wlric Wlfid
 Bolo Gundwin Uro Wecin
 Duva¹

G. *Archbishop Wulfhelm and the Laws of King Athelstan.*

Liebermann, *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen*, i. 146: 'mid geþehte Wulfhelmes [mines] arcebisceopes.' So *ibid.* 148. This last synod was at Greatley, cf. *ibid.* 166: 'Ealle ðis wæs gesetted on ðam miclan synoþ æt Greatanleage, on þam wæs se ærcebisceop Wulfhelme mid eallum þæm æþelum mannum 7 wiotan, ðe Æþelstan cyning gegadrian.'

Ibid. 170 [c. 928-38]. Letter of bishops and other wise men of Kent, thanking the king for his legislation at Greatley, and now also 'in concilio apud Fefresham'.

Ibid. 173 ff. [c. 930-40]. 'Decretum episcoporum et aliorum sapientum London. . . in adiectione iudiciorum que apud Greateleiam et Exoniam instituta sunt, et item apud þunresfeldam. . . 10. Quod sapientes omnes dederunt vadium suum insimul archiepiscopo apud þunresfeldam, quando Ælfeach Stybb et Brihtnodus Odonis filius venerunt ad concilium ex verbo regis . . .' (first at Greatley, again at Exeter, then at Feversham, and fourthly at Thundersfeld) 'coram archiepiscopo et episcopis et sapientibus quos rex ipse nominavit. . . ' 12. quod rex dixit nunc iterum apud pitlanbyrig (Whittlebury?) sapientibus suis, et precepit ostendi archiepiscopo et ceteris episcopis [þam arcibiscope be þeodrede biscop].'

H. *Bishop Brihthelm and his Namesakes.*

Our last evidence for Wulfhelm II of Wells is in 955. In 956 we find King Edwy making a grant of Kennington, co. Berks, 'meo fideli Byrhtelmo presbytero': Oda and Edgar attest (B. C. S. 971; from Abingdon chartulary). This is followed (B. C. S. 972) by a Saxon document recording the exchange of Kennington for Creedy Bridge, co. Devon, with Abbot Ethelwold. Ælgifu the king's wife and Æthelgifu her mother attest: so do Bishop Coenwald and others; but not Oda and Edgar. Brihthelm is now a bishop. This is before Coenwald's death in 957, but after King Edwy's marriage and the retirement of Oda and Edgar from the court.

From this it would seem that Brihthelm the priest, who is in

¹ Some of these seem to be English names misspelt.

favour with the royal family, becomes a bishop, about the end of 956. He no doubt is the new Bishop of Wells. If another Abingdon charter is to be trusted, he was a relative of King Edwy. This charter (C. C. C. Camb. 111, f. 159) comes among the sixteenth-century transcripts of Abingdon charters now bound up with the Bath chartulary, but having no real connexion with it. It grants to the newly appointed bishop land at Stowe. Edgar attests, and Coenwald, but not Oda; it is dated in 956.¹

In this same year, and until 959, we find two Brihthelms attesting charters together. One of them is the Bishop of London, who has been attesting since 953: his limit is given by the appointment of Dunstan to London in 959.

Now about 959, Ælfsige having gone to Canterbury, a Brihthelm succeeds him (apparently) at Winchester. And on the death of Ælfsige, on his way to Rome, a Brihthelm is appointed to Canterbury, but is soon sent back to make way for Dunstan. What Brihthelms are these? Two attest together under Dunstan as archbishop until 963, when Æthelwold becomes Bishop of Winchester.

The Winchester Brihthelm is called a kinsman of King Edgar (B. C. S. 1074, 1076). We are therefore tempted to identify him with the Wells Brihthelm, the kinsman of his brother Edwy. But the appearance of the two as attesting together would seem to rule this out.

The Brihthelm who goes to Canterbury and returns is called Bishop of Dorset by Dunstan's biographer B., the only real authority for the story.

On the other hand, the early episcopal lists in Tiberius B. 5 know of no Brihthelm either at Winchester or at Sherborne. Yet there must have been a gap of three or four years between Ælfsige and Æthelwold at Winchester. These lists recognize only Brihthelm of London and Brihthelm of Wells.

From what has been said above it seems plain that there were two Bishops Brihthelm, one at Wells and the other at Winchester, both of whom were related to the royal family, and probably involved in the political controversy of their time. One or other of them is referred to in the great charter of Eynsham Abbey granted by King Ethelred (Kemble, *C. D.* iii. 341, no. 714) as the kinsman of Æthelweard the historian, who himself was of royal descent.²

¹ B. C. S. 986 'cuidam meorum charorum propinquorum, qui per dei providentiam ad episcopalem gradum electus necnon praedestinatus conscendit'.

² 'Dedit quoque Byrthelmus quondam episcopus Æthelweardo propinquo suo,

It is just possible that the Winchester Brihthelm may be the same man as the Bishop of London (953-9), who may have had to leave London for political reasons, and whose see was held for a time by Dunstan, together with the see of Worcester.¹ It is also just possible that, having thus followed Ælfsige at Winchester, he was chosen to follow him also at Canterbury, only to be displaced by Dunstan for the second time.

On the other hand, it is commonly believed that the 'Dorset' Brihthelm who went to Canterbury was in fact Bishop Brihthelm of Wells. Two explanations of the appellation 'Dorset' are offered: (1) that it is a mistake for Somerset; (2) that Sherborne was vacant, and that the Dorset diocese was being temporarily ruled by the Bishop of Wells.

It will be useful to collect here some of the passages which bear upon the problem.

1. The Saxon priest B (*Mem. of St. Dunstan*, p. 38):

'Post cuius [*sc.* Ælfsini] consummationem elegere Byrhtelmum Dorsaetensium praevisorem ad summum sanctae Dorobernensis ecclesiae sacerdotem: et erat vir iste mitis et modestus et humilis et benignus, in tantum ut tumidos quosque vel rebelles sub correctionis verberare non, ut debuisset, cohiberet. . . . Comperiens ergo rex quod praedictus pontifex haec iura praescripta in commissa sibi plebe mansuescendo minime adimpleret, iussit eum vias per quas veniebat redire, et relictam dignitatem rursus recipere possidendam.'

Neither Osbern, Eadmer, nor William of Malmesbury, in rewriting the Life, makes any change in the name of the see.

2. Florence of Worcester (*Mon. Hist. Brit.* compared with Thorpe's edition):

958. Alfsius² Dorsetensium episcopus obiit; cui Brihthelmus,³ vir pius⁴ et modestus, humilis et benignus, successit. . . . Huic [*sc.* Odoni] successit Wentanus episcopus Alfsinus, et pro ipso ad episcopatum Wintoniensis ecclesiae ordinatus est Brihthelmus.⁵

959. . . . Brihthelmus Dorsetensium⁶ episcopus Cantuariae ad

patri videlicet Æthelmari, viginti mansiones ubi ab incolis et Æscæron dicitur, quas Æthelwerdus filio suo Æthelmaro longe ante mortem suam († c. 998) donavit, et ille supradictas mansiunculas ad monasterium dedit': *Cartulary of Eynsham*, i. 22; Mr. W. H. Stevenson identifies the place as Esher, co. Surrey.

¹ This supposition avoids the difficulty which would attend the consecration of a new bishop for Winchester before Ælfsige had received the pall.

² Ulsi B; Ælsius Thorpe.

³ Byrthelmus Th.

⁴ mitis AB Th.

⁵ + Wellensis episcopus V^{us} A Th.

⁶ Sumersetsensium A.

patriarchatum sedis eligitur; sed, quoniam¹ ad tantam rem minus erat idoneus, iussus a rege Cantuaria discedit, atque² ad relictam nuper ecclesiam suam rediit³ . . .

963. Sanctus Æthelwoldus venerabilis abbas⁴ a B. Dunstano educatus, mortuo Brihthelmo, episcopatum Wintoniensis ecclesiae suscepit. . . .

973. . . . Sumertunensis episcopus Brihthelmus obiit, et in Willum⁵ humatus est; cui successit Middeltunensis abbas Kynewardus.⁶

The MSS. here referred to are the Corpus Christi, Oxford, codex (A), and the Lambeth codex (B, *alias* L). For the entries under 958 and 959 the Lambeth codex is plainly the more trustworthy: for Ulsi⁷ corresponds to Wulfsize of the Sherborne list in Tiberius B. 5; and the text of B, under 959, is much closer to Osbern's Life of Dunstan (p. 107 f.), from which the entry is drawn.

An examination of Codex A shows that under 958 the words 'Wellensis episcopus V^{us}' are a later addition. Moreover, under 959, 'Byrthelmus' is by the first hand, but 'Sumorsetensium . . . iudicio omnium' is written over an erasure and overflows into the margin: it seems certain that originally the words were 'Dorsetensium . . . discedit, atque', as they are in B. Accordingly the identification of the 'Dorset' Brihthelm with Bishop Brihthelm of Wells begins with an interpolator of A, probably some time near the end of the twelfth century.

3. There is a charter printed by Birch, *C. S.* 1045, from the Book of Hyde, which professes to be a grant of King Edwy to Newminster, dated 959, Ind. 2. This has the curious attestation: 'Ego Byrthelm Dorobernensis ecclesiae episcopus': the next to attest being 'Byrthelm Wintoniensis ecclesiae episcopus'.

If this stood by itself, the evidence coming from so tainted a source would be of little value; and *episcopus* might be supposed to be a scribe's error for *archiepiscopus*. But the Athelney Chartulary, published by the Somerset Record Society (vol. 14, p. 146), gives an

¹ quia B.

² iussus . . . atque] iudicio omnium A.

³ *Thorpe* has: 'Byrthelmus Sumorsetensium episcopus ad archipraesulatum Cantwariae sedis deligitur; sed quia ad tantam rem minus erat idoneus iudicio omnium, ad relictam' &c.

⁴ + Abbendonensis ecclesiae B.

⁵ Wyllum *Th.*

⁶ Cinewardus *Th.*

⁷ This in the Lambeth MS. is the result of an uncompleted correction. The 'V' of 'Vlsi' has been partially washed out, and there is an erasure after the final 'i'.

unexpected confirmation. The original chartulary is lost, and we are only presented with an English translation : the names have been oddly corrupted.

King Edwy grants land at Ham on the west bank of the Parret to his old servant Ceolward. 'This gift was made A.D. 958, indict. 2.' The Indiction enables us to restore the year 959, as in the Hyde Charter. Then follows :

'I, Edwi, king of the English, have confirmed the said gift with the sign of the Holy Cross ✠.

I, Birliterin, "Dorobernensis ecclesiae episcopus," have signed.

I, Birliterin, bishop of Winchester, have signed.

I, Osulf bishop, have impressed (my mark).

I, Alfwold bishop, have confirmed it.

I, Daniel bishop, have agreed.

I, Elfgar, the king's friend, have assented.

I, Oswald, have signed.

I, Osulf his brother, have agreed.

I, Edmund "dux", have confirmed it.

I, Alfer minister, was present.

I, Alred minister, have assented.'

A note is added : 'This land of Hamme King Athelred afterwards gave to the abbey of Athelney.' The next charter is King Ethelred's gift.

I see no reason for doubting that the original from which this copy has descended was a genuine charter of King Edwy, which was transferred to the monks of Athelney when the property was given to them by King Ethelred. The bishops are the same as in B. C. S. 1045—Byrthelm 'Bishop' of Canterbury, Byrthelm of Winchester, Osulf (Ramsbury), Alfwold (Sherborne or Crediton), Daniel (Cornwall).

Ælfgar, 'the king's friend', is 'Ælfgar regis propinquus', who attests in 958 (B. C. S. 1035). He is the kinsman of King Edgar, Edwy's brother, who is said in A.-S. Chron. (A) to have died in Devon in 963, and to have been buried at Wilton.

Osweward minister and Oswulf minister follow one another in the companion charter, B. C. S. 1045 : see also B. C. S. 1029, 1030. An Osweward is called *propinquus* of King Edgar in B. C. S. 1314.

Eadmund dux signs from 937 to 963 (Crawford Charters, p. 84).

Ælfhere minister and Ælfred minister attest B. C. S. 1045 : and in B. C. S. 1030 Eelfere minister is followed by Ælfred minister. 'Ælfhere . ex parentela regis . minister' attests in 955 (B. C. S. 917). In 956 King Edwy made a grant of lands in Dorset 'cuidam meorum

optimatum vocamine Ælfredo', for his humble and faithful obedience (B. C. S. 958).

It is interesting to observe how many of the lay witnesses were actually related to the king.

The extraordinary attestation of Brihthelm as *episcopus*, not *archiepiscopus*, may point to the recognition of the uncertainty of his position. If we accept the evidence of these two charters, as I think we must, it is plain that it was not the Brihthelm of Winchester who went to Canterbury, but in all probability the Brihthelm of Wells.

I. *The First Abbots of Westminster.*

The earliest history of Westminster may be said to begin with Offa, king of the Mercians, towards the end of the eighth century. The Westminster historian Sulcard, writing about 1080, says that Offa had intended to place monks there, but his purpose was not carried out. A charter of King Offa granting Aldenham to Ordbricht the abbot is among the Abbey muniments: it was accepted by Widmore; but it can hardly be genuine in its present form, though the gift which it describes may quite well have been given by that king, who is further said to have bestowed relics on the church. A small minster served by a few priests no doubt existed when Dunstan was administering the two bishoprics of Worcester and London. We may accept the statement of William of Malmesbury that Dunstan founded a small monastery for twelve monks and made Wulsin their abbot.¹ It is likely enough, as a later writer adds, that he brought the monks from his old abbey of Glastonbury.

Later tradition spoke of abbots before St. Dunstan's time. Flete, in his History of Westminster (p. 78), says that he had found evidence of at least seven among the ancient muniments, and that three of them had become bishops. These three are Ordbricht, in King Offa's time, who became Bishop of Selsey, Alfwy, and Alfric, who were Bishops of Wells and Crediton. Then he gives, as the first abbot after Dunstan, Wulsin, who was made Bishop of Sherborne.

Now, if we accept the generally admitted dates, we find the following names which correspond to his list:

- Elfric, Bishop of Crediton, 977;
- Ordbricht, Bishop of Selsey, 989;
- Wulsin, Bishop of Sherborne, 992;
- Aelfwin, Bishop of Wells, 997.

¹ *G. P.*, p. 178 'instructo ad xii monachos coenobiolo.'

It is possible that Flete got the names of the bishops and their sees from the Westminster *Martilogium*. He has been misled as to the dates by the mention of Ordbrigt in the supposed charter of King Offa.

We may note here an Abingdon charter (Kemble, *C. D.* 684*) of 993, which, though it cannot be regarded as genuine, has a list of attestations of an exceptionally interesting character. Eighteen abbots attest, each with the name of his abbey.

Among them is 'Wulfsige, Westm̄ abbas'. Then after the dukes and ministers comes 'Ego Ælfwig Westm̄ abbas', followed by 'Ego' twenty-three times without any names. Now among the bishops 'Wulfsige Scirburnensis ecclesiae episcopus' has already occurred: so that Ælfwig's name may have come in as a correction in an early copy. At any rate we have here an independent witness to the existence of such an abbot of Westminster in King Ethelred's days.

J. *The Various Bishops Brihtwine.*

If we rely on the evidence of charters only, it seems plain enough that Lyfing was followed at Wells by Æthelwine in 1013; and Æthelwine by Brihtwig, the Abbot of Glastonbury, in 1024. Moreover, we have a Bishop Brihtwine who attests from 1018 to 1045.

But William of Malmesbury gives the following successions for Wells and Sherborne at this period:

WELLS. *G. P.*, p. 194. (After Lyfing) Ethelwinus abbas de Evesham, postea eiectus: Brihtwinus, Elwinus iterum reversus et Brihtuinus eiectus, itemque Ethelwino eiecto Brihtuinus reversus; Merewit qui et Brihtuui. . . .

SHERBORNE. *G. P.*, p. 179. (After St. Wulsin) successerunt Alfwoldus, Ethelricus, Ethelsius [† c. 1017], Brihtwinus, Elmerus, Birhtuinus, Alfwoldus frater eius. . . .

These statements seem to be related in some way to the lists prefixed to the MSS. of Florence of Worcester, which run thus (Thorpe, i. 237):

WELLS.	SHERBORNE.
x. Æthelwinus.	xx. Æthelsius.
Hic prius Eoveshammensis extitit abbas.	xxi. Brihtwinus.
xi. Byrhtwinus.	xxii. Ælmarus.
xii. Byrhtwius.	xxiii. Byrhtwinus.

Further, in the Wells *Historiola* we have: Brithuinus, Elwynus,

Brithwynus [= Merechyyt]. And in the Bath Anglo-Saxon Gospels the text runs :

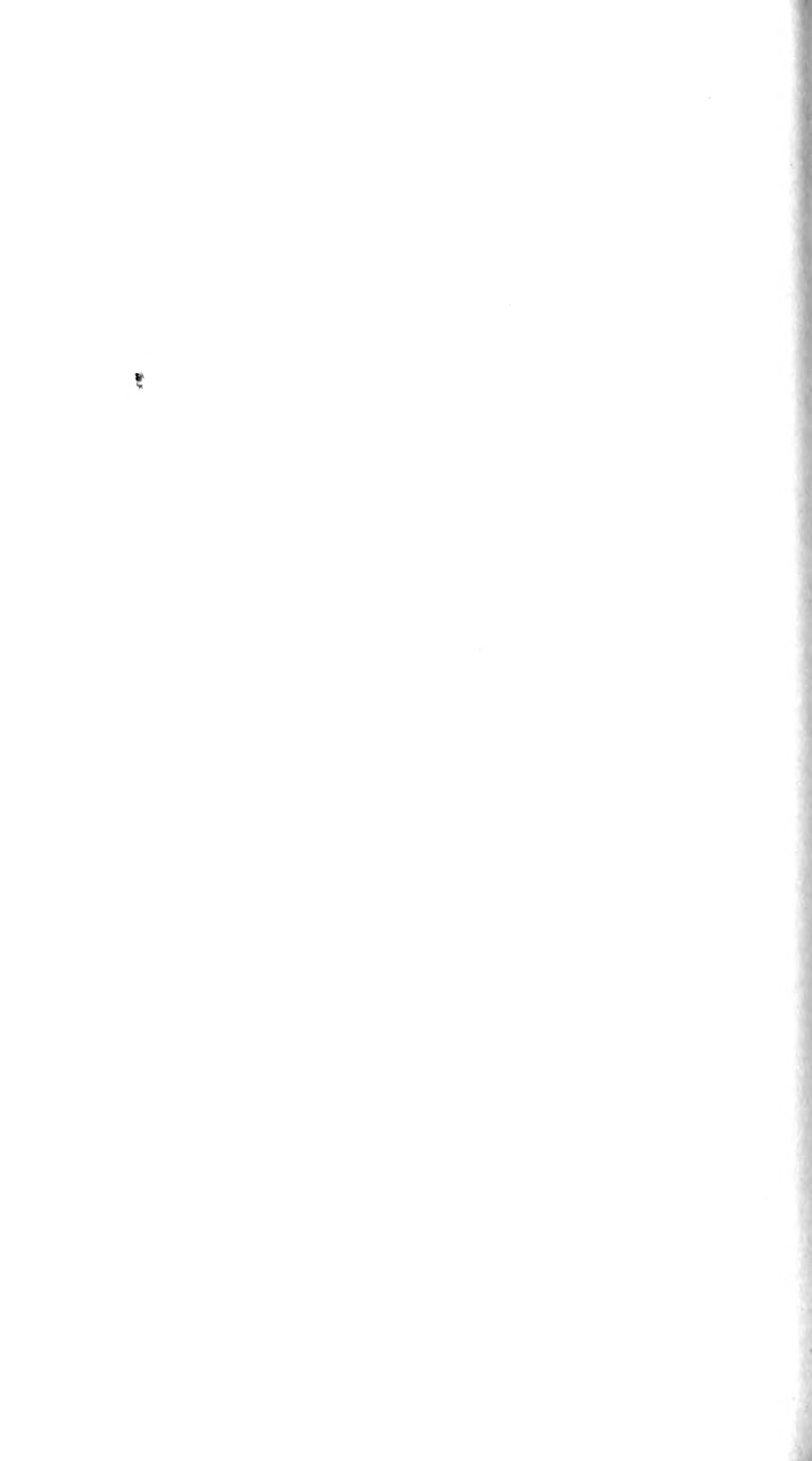
Brihtuinus.

Ægeluinus.

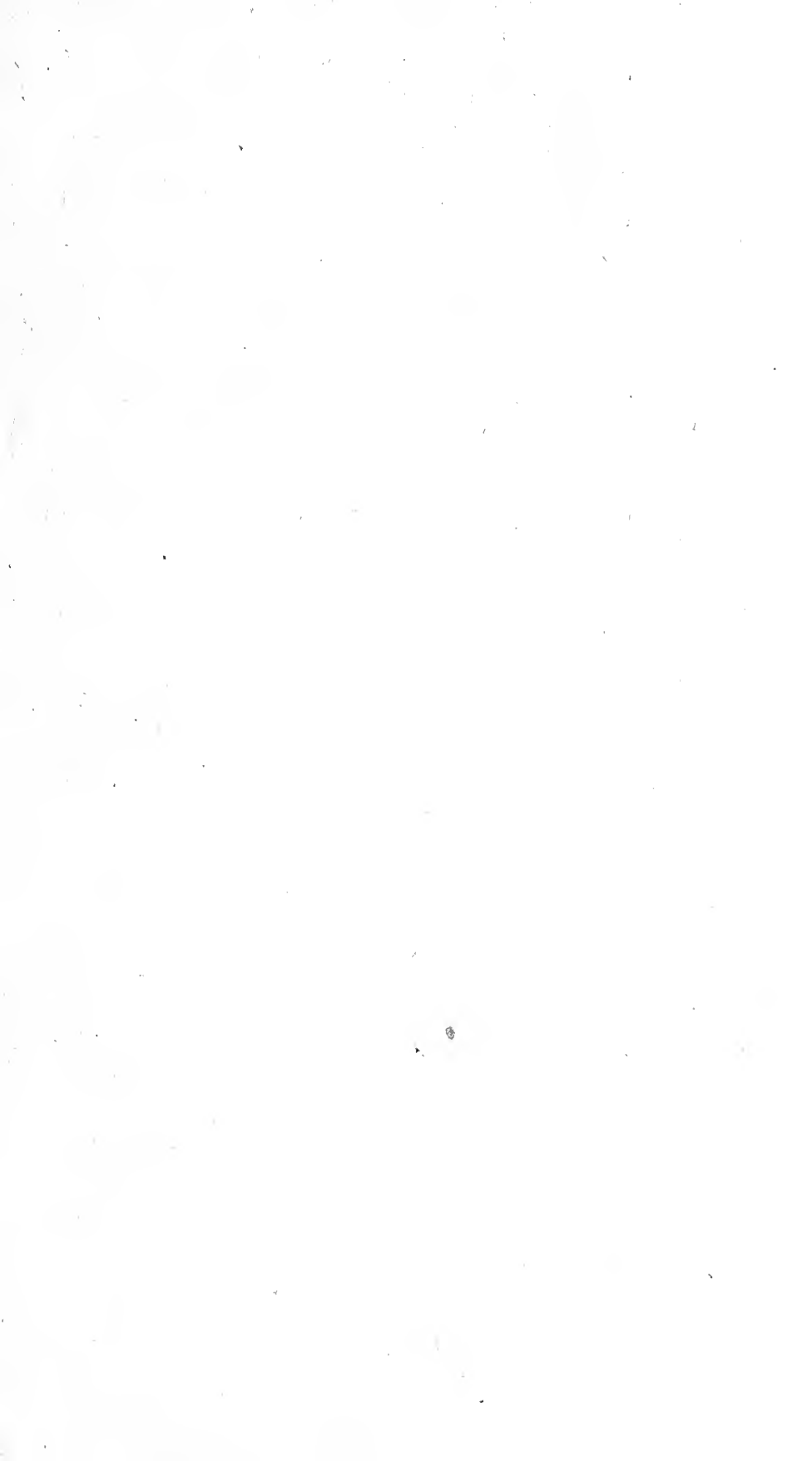
merewit (*sic*).

Brihtuuius.

In spite of all this testimony it seems unlikely that there was more than one Bishop Brihtwine at Sherborne (Ælmar is probably the Bishop of Selsey of that period); nor can we feel any confidence as to the existence of any Bishop Brihtwine (as distinct from Brihtwig) at Wells.







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