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**‘VENGEANCE IS MINE’: THE VENGEANCE OF
HEAVEN AND EARTH IN ANGLO-SAXON AND
ANGLO-NORMAN SOCIETY, C. 900 – C. 1150**

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Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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December 2018

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‘Vengeance is mine’: The Vengeance of Heaven and Earth in Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Norman Society, c. 900 – c. 1150

Abstract

This thesis examines vengeance as a concept and as a practice in late Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Norman society, specifically in relation to the interplay between theological thought and social attitudes and practices. It brings together a wide variety of sources in which vengefulness and the pursuit of vengeance are prominent themes. These include homilies and theological treatises, narrative histories and chronicles, hagiographies and miracle collections, vernacular poetry, and documentary sources such as law codes.

Much attention has been devoted to the prevalence and mechanisms of feud in medieval society, but in this body of source material, acts of vengeance were just as likely to come from heaven as they were to be inflicted by humans on each other. This thesis examines the theological concept of divine vengeance, the ways that God’s vengeance was observed and experienced in the world in historical events and in the form of vengeance miracles, and the extent to which religious considerations affected the perceived morality of vengeance undertaken by humans. Vengeance emerges as a complex theological, moral and social issue in a society in which levels of religious understanding, engagement and belief varied greatly between different groups and individuals.

This thesis argues that the idea of divine vengeance was consistently used as a rhetorical tool to support certain moral standpoints, and that the interpretation of any event as divine vengeance was never inevitable. God’s right to take vengeance for sin was an integral part of the way that the relationship between heaven and earth was negotiated, the way that events on earth were interpreted and understood, and the way that the morality of human action was thought about. There was significant religious, cultural and institutional continuity in these respects in English society between the tenth and twelfth centuries. Changes were gradual and should largely be credited to wider European developments rather than the direct impact of the Norman Conquest.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Arcoid, <i>MSE</i>	<i>The Saint of London: The Life and Miracles of St Erkenwald</i> , ed. and trans. E. Gordon Whatley (New York, 1989)
Augustine, <i>De civitate dei</i>	<i>St Augustine, Concerning the City of God against the Pagans</i> , trans. Henry Bettenson (London, 2003)
ASC [A]	Janet M. Bately, <i>The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: A Collaborative Edition</i> , vol. 3, MS A (Cambridge, 1986)
ASC [B]	Simon Taylor, <i>The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: A Collaborative Edition</i> , vol. 4, MS B (Cambridge, 1983)
ASC [C]	Katherine O'Brien O'Keefe, <i>The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: A Collaborative Edition</i> , vol. 5, MS C (Cambridge, 2001)
ASC [D]	G.P. Cubbin, <i>The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: A Collaborative Edition</i> , vol. 6, MS D (Cambridge, 1996)
ASC [E]	Susan Irvine, <i>The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: A Collaborative Edition</i> , vol. 7, MS E (Cambridge, 2004)
B, <i>VSD</i>	B, 'Vita S. Dunstani' in <i>The Early Lives of Dunstan</i> , ed. and trans. Michael Winterbottom and Michael Lapidge (Oxford, 2012)
Bosworth-Toller	<i>An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary based on the manuscript collections of the late Joseph Bosworth, D.D. F.R.S.</i> , ed. and enlarged by T. Northcote Toller (Oxford, 1898)
Blickling	<i>The Blickling Homilies: Edition and Translation</i> , ed. and trans. R. Kelly (London, 2003)
CH 1	<i>Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: The First Series</i> , ed. Peter Clemoes, Early English Text Society 17 (Oxford, 1997)
CH 2	<i>Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: The Second Series</i> , ed. Malcolm Godden, Early English Text Society 5 (London, 1979)
<i>CdR</i>	<i>La Chanson de Roland</i> , ed. Ian Short (Paris, 1990) 2 nd edn.
Clark Hall	John R. Clark Hall, <i>A Concise Anglo-Saxon Dictionary for the Use of Students</i> (New York, 1916)
<i>DOEC</i>	<i>Dictionary of Old English Web Corpus</i> , compiled by Antonette diPaolo Healey with John Price Wilkin and Xin Xiang (Toronto: Dictionary of Old English Project, 2009)
<i>DRBO</i>	<i>Douay Rheims Bible Online</i> , http://www.drbo.org/ (2001-2017)
Eadmer, <i>HRE</i>	<i>Eadmer's History of Recent Events in England</i> , trans. Geoffrey Bosanquet (London, 1964)

Eadmer, <i>VA</i>	<i>The Life of St Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury, by Eadmer</i> , ed. and trans. R.W. Southern (London, 1962)
<i>Eadmeri Historia</i>	Martin Rule, <i>Eadmeri Historia Novorum in Anglia, et Opuscula Duo De Vita Sancti Anselmi et Quibusdam Miraculis Ejus</i> (London, 1884)
Gaimar, <i>Estoire</i>	Geffrei Gaimar, <i>Estoire des Engleis / History of the English</i> , ed. and trans. Ian Short (Oxford, 2009)
Herman, <i>MSE</i>	Herman the Archdeacon and Goscelin of St Bertin, <i>Miracles of St Edmund</i> , ed. and trans. Tom Licence, with Lynda Lockyer (Oxford, 2014)
HHHA	Henry, Archdeacon of Huntingdon, <i>Historia Anglorum: The History of the English People</i> , ed. and trans. Diana Greenway (Oxford, 1996)
LoS 1	<i>Ælfric's Lives of Saints, being a set of sermons on saints' days formerly observed by the English Church</i> , ed. Walter W. Skeat, vol. 1 (London, 1881)
LoS 2	<i>Ælfric's Lives of Saints, being a set of sermons on saints' days formerly observed by the English Church</i> ed. Walter W. Skeat, vol. 2 (London, 1900)
ODNB	<i>Oxford Dictionary of National Biography</i>
Osbern, <i>Translatione</i>	'Osberni Historia De Translatione Corporis S. Elfegi Archiepiscopi Cantuariensis, a Lundonia Ad Cantuariam' in <i>Anglia Sacra</i> , ed. H. Wharton, vol. 2 (1691) pp. 143-48
Osbern, <i>Vita S. Alphegi</i>	Osberno, 'Vita S. Alfegi Archiepiscopi Cantuariensis', ed. H. Wharton <i>Anglia Sacra</i> , vol. 2 (1691) pp. 122-48
OVHE	<i>The Ecclesiastical History of Orderic Vitalis</i> , ed. Marjorie Chibnal, 6 vols. (Oxford, 1980)
WMGR	William of Malmesbury, <i>Gesta Regum Anglorum: The History of the English Kings</i> , ed. and trans. R.A.B. Mynors, R.M. Thomson and M. Winterbottom (Oxford, 1998)
WMHN	William of Malmesbury, <i>Historia Novella: The Contemporary History</i> , ed. Edmund King, trans. K.R. Potter (Oxford, 1998)
WMVD	William of Malmesbury, 'Vita Dunstani' in William of Malmesbury, <i>Saints' Lives: Lives of SS. Wulfstan, Dunstan, Patrick, Benignus and Indract</i> , eds. M. Winterbottom and R.M. Thomson (Oxford, 2002)
WMVW	William of Malmesbury, 'Vita Wulfstani' in William of Malmesbury, <i>Saints' Lives: Lives of SS. Wulfstan, Dunstan,</i>

Patrick, Benignus and Indract, eds. M. Winterbottom and R.M. Thomson (Oxford, 2002)

WPGG

The Gesta Guillelmi of William of Poitiers, ed. and trans. R.H.C. Davies and Marjorie Chibnal (Oxford, 1998)

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INTRODUCTION

The place of vengeance in medieval society has fascinated historians for generations. Vengeance and vengefulness permeate medieval fictional literature, historical and hagiographical texts, homiletic tracts and legal documents; evidently, vengeance was an important part of the way that social relationships were negotiated in the middle ages, but its pervasiveness in the surviving sources also suggests that the pursuit of vengeance was a contentious issue, consistently subject to moral analysis. There is a growing recognition of the inter-relationship and mutual influence between theological thought and social practices in medieval society, and the perceived connectedness between heaven and earth.¹ In the source material under consideration in this thesis, acts of vengeance were just as likely to come from heaven as they were to be inflicted by humans on each other. Through an examination of the theological concept of divine vengeance, the ways that God's vengeance was observed and experienced in the world, and the extent to which religious considerations affected the perceived morality of vengeance undertaken by humans, vengeance as a concept as well as a practice will emerge as a complex theological, moral and social issue in a society in which levels of religious understanding, engagement and belief varied greatly between different groups and individuals.

Historians studying medieval vengeance have tended to examine it in its sociological and legal context, namely the practice and regulation of feuding, which has led to the conflation of the study of vengeance with the study of violence.² This has been extended in recent years to include studies of the role of emotional signals in facilitating and legitimising acts of vengeance.³ Studies of medieval vengeance within England have also had a tendency to focus

¹ Helen Foxhall Forbes, *Heaven and Earth in Anglo-Saxon England: Theology and Society in an Age of Faith* (Ashgate, 2013); Carl Watkins, *History and the Supernatural in Medieval England* (Cambridge, 2007).

² William Ian Miller, *Eye for an Eye* (Cambridge, 2006); William Ian Miller, 'Choosing the Avenger: Some Aspects of the Bloodfeud in Medieval Iceland and England', *Law and History Review* 1.2 (1983) pp. 159–204; Guy Halsall, 'Violence and Society in the Early Medieval West: An Introductory Survey', in Guy Halsall (ed.) *Violence and Society in the Early Medieval West* (Woodbridge, 1998) pp. 2–23. Susanna A. Throop, 'Introduction: The Study of Vengeance in the Middle Ages', in Susanna A. Throop and Paul R. Hyams (eds.) *Vengeance in the Middle Ages: Emotion, Religion and Feud* (Ashgate, 2010) pp. 1–4.

³ Thomas Roche, 'The Way Vengeance Comes: Rancorous Words and Deeds in the World of Orderic Vitalis', in Susanna A. Throop and Paul R. Hyams (eds.) *Vengeance in the Middle Ages: Emotion, Religion and Feud* (Ashgate, 2010) pp. 115–36; Susanna A. Throop, 'Zeal, Anger and Vengeance: The Emotional Rhetoric of Crusading', in Susanna A. Throop and Paul R. Hyams (eds.) *Vengeance in the Middle Ages: Emotion, Religion and Feud*, (Ashgate, 2010) pp. 177–99; Kate McGrath, 'The Politics of Chivalry: The Function of Anger and Shame in Eleventh- and Twelfth-Century Anglo-Norman Historical Narratives', in Belle S. Tuten and Tracey L. Billado (eds.) *Feud, Violence and Practice: Essays in Medieval Studies in Honour of Stephen D. White* (Ashgate, 2010) pp. 57–68; Stephen D. White, 'The Feelings in the Feud: The Emotional Turn in the Study of Medieval

on either the Anglo-Saxon period or the Post-Conquest period, while significant studies that have bridged 1066 have remained within the sphere of legal history, tracing developments in state regulation of violence.⁴ Historical study of religious belief and social mentalities has also had a tendency to focus on either the later middle ages or the Anglo-Saxon period, or on the practical mechanisms of pastoral care.⁵ This thesis will fill some of these gaps by using the concept and practice of vengeance in Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Norman society, c. 900 – c. 1150, as a lens to explore various aspects of belief and attitudes towards religion in England in the central middle ages. This long view across the Norman Conquest will also enable an exploration of the extent of continuity and change in attitudes with regards to vengeance taken by God and by humans between the tenth and twelfth centuries, and will reveal the minimal impact that 1066 as opposed to other more general social changes had in the slow evolution of attitudes towards the place of vengeance in the religious and social mentalities of the period.

Two statements of wisdom from *Maxims I* (copied in the Exeter Book, of the late tenth-century) and *Beowulf* (copied c. 1000) illustrate the centrality of vengeance to an Anglo-Saxon worldview as represented through poetic construction:

For a wound there has to be a bandage, for a hard man vengeance; for an arrow there has to be a bow and for both alike there has to be a man as a partner.⁶

It is better for anyone that he should avenge his friend, rather than mourn greatly. Each of us must await the end of life in this world; let him who can, achieve glory before death; afterwards, when lifeless, that will be best for a noble man.⁷

Vengeance', in Kim Esmark, Lars Hermanson, Hans Jacob Orning and Helle Vogt (eds.) *Disputing Strategies in Medieval Scandinavia*, (Leiden, 2013) pp. 282-306; Stephen D. White, 'The Politics of Anger', in Barbara H. Rosenwein (ed.) *Anger's Past: The Social Uses of an Emotion in the Middle Ages* (Cornell, 1998) pp. 137-50.

⁴ Tom Lambert, *Law and Order in Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford, 2017); Paul R. Hyams, 'Feud and the State in Late Anglo-Saxon England', *Journal of British Studies* 1.40 (2001) pp. 1–43; Paul R. Hyams, *Rancor and Reconciliation in Medieval England* (Cornell, 2003). John G.H. Hudson, 'Feud, Vengeance and Violence in England from the Tenth to Twelfth Centuries', in Belle S. Tuten and Tracey Billado (eds.) *Feud, Violence and Practice: Essays in Medieval Studies in Honour of Stephen D. White*, (Ashgate, 2010) pp. 32-49; John Hudson, *The Oxford History of the Laws of England, 871-1216*, vol. 2 (Oxford, 2012) pp. 171-78, 395-99.

⁵ John H Arnold, *Belief and Unbelief in Medieval Europe* (London, 2005); Foxhall Forbes, *Heaven and Earth; Francesca Tinti, Sustaining Belief: The Church of Worcester from c.870 to c.1100* (Ashgate, 2010); Megan McLaughlin, *Consorting with Saints: Prayer for the Dead in Early Medieval France* (Cornell, 1994).

⁶ *Maxims I*, ll. 152-54, in George Philip Krapp and Elliott van Kirk Dobbie (eds.) *The Exeter Book* (London, 1936) pp. 161-62. 'Wræd sceal wunden, wracu heardum men. / Boga sceal stræle, sceal bam gelic / mon to gemæccan.' Translation from S. A. J. Bradley, *Anglo-Saxon Poetry* (London, 1995) p. 349.

⁷ *Beowulf*, lines 1384-89, in Elliott van Kirk Dobbie (ed.) *Beowulf and Judith* (London, 1953) p. 43. 'Selre bið æghwæm / þæt he his freond wrece, þonne he fela munre. / ure æghwylc sceal ende gebidan / worulde lifes; wyrce se þe mote / domes ær deaþe; þæt bið drihtguman / unlifgendum æfter selest.' Translation from *Beowulf*, ed. Michael Swanton (Manchester, 1978) p. 100.

The Old English *Maxims* poems take the form of lists of observations about the state of the world as it is. They present as fact not only observations on how the natural world works, but moral and ethical values that are seemingly timeless and universal in a reflection of reality as perceived by Anglo-Saxon society, and seem to have been designed to bring a sense of comfort and stability through knowledge of the foundations on which the world and society was built.⁸ It has been argued that the *Maxims* reflect ‘popular’ rather than monastic poetry on the basis that they do not contain any mention of a religious institution, nevertheless, they were copied in a monastic environment, possibly before the Benedictine reform of the second half of the tenth century, and were subsequently considered appropriate for binding with other poems on subjects important to the reformers.⁹ Similarly, there has been much debate over the Christian vs. pre-Christian ethos of *Beowulf*.¹⁰ Given the limitations posed by the text’s existence in a sole surviving manuscript from c. 1000, pre-Christian values are unrecoverable in any real sense; nevertheless, the poem does show that Anglo-Saxon audiences were able to imagine and appreciate a world in which heroic and Christian value systems co-existed at the time the manuscript was produced. Together, these statements convey a perceived emotional and social function of vengeance in tenth- and eleventh-century Anglo-Saxon society; it assuaged grief, and, if pursued with bravery, could be a path to the ultimate goal of fame and glory.¹¹ Even though all of the protagonists in *Beowulf* are noble warriors, neither of the above statements of wisdom give the impression that vengeance was status-specific. The ‘*heardum men*’ in *Maxims I* probably refers to a resolute state of mind or stern character rather than any specific class of men.¹² Anglo-Norman texts do not contain the same overt expressions of wisdom, but studies have shown that revenge remained an intrinsic feature of social consciousness; it had a functional role in dispute settlement, was part of the moral framework for waging war and

⁸ See Judith Kaup, ‘Maxims I: In the ‘Mod’ for Life’ in Alice Jorgensen, Frances McCormack and Jonathan Wilcox (eds.) *Anglo-Saxon Emotions: Reading the Heart in Old English Language, Literature and Culture* (Ashgate, 2015) pp. 193-204; Paul Cavill, *Maxims in Old English Poetry* (Cambridge, 1991) pp. 10, 158-83.

⁹ Cavill, *Maxims in Old English Poetry*, p. 179. Patrick W. Conner, *Anglo-Saxon Exeter: A Tenth-Century Cultural History* (Woodbridge, 1993) pp. 148, 152.

¹⁰ Edward B. Irving Jr, ‘The Nature of Christianity in Beowulf’, *Anglo-Saxon England* 13 (1984) pp. 10-21.

¹¹ See Erin Sebo, ‘*Ne Sorga*: Grief and Revenge in Beowulf’ in Alice Jorgensen, Frances McCormack and Jonathan Wilcox (eds.) *Anglo-Saxon Emotions: Reading the Heart in Old English Language, Literature and Culture* (Ashgate, 2005) pp. 177-92.

¹² See the various definitions of *heard* in the Dictionary of Old English, specifically 2-4, which emphasise resoluteness and endurance. *Dictionary of Old English: A to I online*, ed. Angus Cameron, Ashley Crandell Amos, Antonette diPaolo Healey et al. (Toronto: Dictionary of Old English Project, 2018) <https://tapor.library.utoronto.ca/doe/> [accessed 22.05.2018].

politics, and its continued importance as a means of assuaging grief and restoring happiness is born out in texts such as *La Chanson de Roland* and Gaimar's *Estoire des Engleis*.¹³

Historians have traditionally approached the topic of vengeance from this perspective of its functional role in negotiating social relationships and maintaining societal equilibrium. In the study of the medieval world this has largely meant focusing on the context of feud/blood feud and the related issue of state regulation of violence, which in turn has led to the thorny topic of what actually constitutes a feud as opposed to warfare, and the true extent of violence in medieval society.¹⁴ In practice, a feud can be characterised as a series of retaliatory (or vengeful) acts of violence, usually assumed to mean killing, but it is often difficult to identify where and when to distinguish between a feud, outright warfare, or isolated acts of revenge killing.¹⁵ Feuds have usually been characterised as playing out between two or more opposing kin groups; if a member of one group injured or killed a member of another, the members of that group then had a right to exact vengeance on the killer on the victim's behalf. This could then provoke tit-for-tat violence unless a peace settlement, likely through monetary compensation, could be reached.¹⁶ It was a process governed by a set of unspoken rules which laid out how and when vengeance should and could be sought, and which were adhered to through individual and collective senses of duty and responsibility to uphold social ideals.¹⁷

In 'revenge cultures' or 'feud cultures', repayment of wrong through personal systems of violent revenge and compensation has been seen as a stabilising force in lieu of other methods of social regulation or dispute settlement.¹⁸ Paul Hyams and Stefan Jurasinski have both argued that in Cnut and Henry I's legislation, killers were not intended to survive a meeting with their victim's kin.¹⁹ Hyams and John Hudson have also seen systems of personal vendetta as co-existing alongside more official channels of dispute settlement, either of which

¹³ See above, notes 1-4. See also, for example, the Buern Bucecarle episode in *Geoffrei Gaimar, Estoire Des Engleis / History of the English* (hereafter Gaimar, *Estoire*) ll. 2595-2722, ed. Ian Short (Oxford, 2009) pp. 142-49. Buern states that he would never find true happiness again if he did not take revenge on his enemies, and *La Chanson de Roland* (hereafter *CdR*) ll. 1492-1609(1533-1650) and 2870-2986, ed. Ian Short, 2nd edn. (Paris, 1990) pp. 118-24, 194-96, in which grief is presented as a motive for revenge.

¹⁴ Key studies in this area are Miller, *Eye for an Eye*; Hudson, 'Feud, Vengeance and Violence'; Hyams, *Rancor and Reconciliation*; Paul Hyams, 'Was There Really Such a Thing as Feud in the High Middle Ages?' in Susanna A. Throop and Paul R. Hyams (eds.) *Vengeance in the Middle Ages: Emotion, Religion and Feud* (Ashgate, 2010) pp. 151-68; Hyams, 'Feud and the State'; Hudson, *Oxford History of the Laws of England*; Halsall, 'Violence and Society'.

¹⁵ Roche, 'The Way Vengeance Comes', pp. 116-18. Hudson, 'Feud, Vengeance and Violence', pp. 48-49.

¹⁶ Hyams, *Rancor and Reconciliation*, pp. 8-9.

¹⁷ Halsall, 'Violence and Society', pp. 11-12.

¹⁸ Miller, *Eye for an Eye*, pp. 1-16, 24; Hyams, *Rancor and Reconciliation*, pp. 3-4.

¹⁹ Hyams, *Rancor and Reconciliation*, p. 106. Stefan Jurasinski, 'Raddatur Parentibus: The Vengeance of the Family in Cnut's Homicide Legislation', *Law and History Review* 20.1 (2002) p. 171.

could be valid courses of action for individuals seeking redress, although Hudson has argued that personal vendetta gradually began to give way to judicial procedures as English government became increasingly centralised between the tenth and twelfth centuries.²⁰ More recently, Tom Lambert has argued that personal vengeance, within certain legal constraints, had a legitimate place in the maintenance of good order in Anglo-Saxon England, and that it should not be assumed that the aim of regulation of vendetta was to stamp out personal systems of vengeance altogether.²¹ Together, these studies have shown that systems of personal vengeance taking and/or compensation had an important function in Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Norman society as a means of dispute settlement, and were governed by mutually understood codes of conduct.²²

Stepping away from the debates over how and to what extent feud actually operated in medieval society however, (something which is difficult to determine definitively because of the normative and selective nature of the surviving source material such as law codes), it is evident that the language of vengeance was used in a variety of social and religious contexts in both Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Norman society. It cannot be disputed that feud and warfare were prominent arenas in which vengeance was played out, but they operated within a Christian world in which God's vengeance was considered to be a governing force,²³ and were sometimes perceived as being the manifestation of God's vengeance on sinners through human agents.²⁴ The idea of God's vengeance was also amalgamated into judicial procedures on earth involving oaths, ordeals and, after the Norman Conquest, trial by battle; the idea was that God would reveal the guilt or innocence of the accused, who could then receive punishment, or not, legitimately.²⁵ Corporal punishment was undertaken with a view to protecting the soul of the offender in a way analogous to penance, while capital punishment dealt out by humans was more contentious because it carried with it a sentence of excommunication and subsequent exclusion of the soul of the offender from heaven.²⁶ Sudden death in other circumstances might be interpreted as a vengeance miracle, directly attributed to the power of divine vengeance for

²⁰ Hudson, *The Oxford History of the Laws of England*, pp. 171-99, 395-415. Hudson, 'Feud, Vengeance and Violence', p. 40-43, 51-53. Hyams, 'Feud and the State', p. 43. Hyams, *Rancor and Reconciliation*, p. 72.

²¹ Lambert, *Law and Order in Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 1-24, 225-37.

²² Hyams, 'Was There Really Such a Thing as Feud?', pp. 151-52.

²³ See Chapter 1.

²⁴ Hyams, *Rancor and Reconciliation*, pp. 111-27. Paul R. Hyams, 'Neither Unnatural nor Wholly Negative: The Future of Medieval Vengeance', in Susanna A. Throop and Paul R. Hyams (eds.) *Vengeance in the Middle Ages: Emotion, Religion and Feud* (Ashgate, 2010) p. 214. See Chapters 2 and 5.

²⁵ See Chapter 5, pp. 200-205.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

a prior sin.²⁷ Vengeance undertaken by humans will therefore be explored as only part of this broader Christian worldview in which God’s vengeance was perceived to be a powerful intervening force.

This intrusion of the language of vengeance into such varied social and spiritual contexts is likely because medieval understandings of vengeance lacked the modern distinction between vengeance and punishment.²⁸ This distinction has perhaps influenced the way that previous scholarship has approached the study of state regulation of violence, separating personal vendetta undertaken between kin groups from official punishment dealt out by state authorities, with the latter gradually supplanting the former as the preferred method for dealing with offenders.²⁹ It will therefore be useful to attempt a definition of what vengeance meant in medieval terms. In medieval conceptions of vengeance there was instead much more overlap between the two; words that can now be translated as either vengeance or punishment were seemingly used interchangeably in different contexts. The table below lists the Latin, Old English and Anglo-Norman words that relate to vengeance:

Latin ³⁰	ultio	taking vengeance, revenge, retribution, punishment
	ulcisci	to inflict or exact retribution, take revenge, avenge, take vengeance
	ultor/ultrix	one who exacts retribution or vengeance, avenger, punisher
	vindicta	retribution, punitive or vindictive action, vengeance, revenge
	vindicare	to exact vengeance or inflict punishment in retribution, avenge, punish
	talio	repayment, retaliation, revenge, punishment (carries biblical connotations connected

²⁷ See Chapters 3 and 4.

²⁸ Hyams, ‘Was There Really Such a Thing as Feud?’, pp. 166-67. Hyams, ‘Neither Unnatural nor Wholly Negative: The Future of Medieval Vengeance’, pp. 215-16.

²⁹ Cf. Lambert, *Law and Order in Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 1-24.

³⁰ All Latin definitions are from the *Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources*, prepared by R.E. Latham (London, 1975-2013) Fascs. 11 and 13, prepared by D.R. Howlett, pp. 2329, 2579, Fasc. 17, prepared by R.K. Ashdowne pp. 3364, 3540, 3544-45, 3681.

		with God's law of the talion, or retributive justice) ³¹
	poena	penalty, punishment
	punire	to punish
Old English ³²	wracu	revenge, vengeance, persecution, retaliation, punishment, penalty, cruelty, misery, distress, torture, pain, suffering, misery
	wræc	misery, vengeance, persecution, exile, suffering
	wrecend	avenger
	wrecnes	vengeance
	wrecan	to drive, impel, push, persecute, wreak revenge, avenge, punish, advance, fulfil, pronounce
	awrecan ³³	to drive away /drive out, to strike or pierce someone, to avenge a wrong, to sing or recite (in poetry)
Anglo-Norman French ³⁴	vengeablement	in revenge
	vengeable	requiring vengeance
	vengeance	vengeance, retribution, freedom, release
	vengeisun	vengeance
	vement	vengeance, freedom, release
	venger	to avenge, exact satisfaction for, to give vent to, to free oneself, to punish for
	revenger	to avenge, to take revenge

³¹ See Roche, 'The Way Vengeance Comes', p. 119.

³² Old English definitions are amalgamated from John R. Clark Hall, *A Concise Anglo-Saxon Dictionary for the Use of Students* (hereafter Clark Hall) (New York, 1916), p. 363, and *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary based on the manuscript collections of the late Joseph Bosworth, D.D. F.R.S* (hereafter Bosworth-Toller), ed. and enlarged by T. Northcote Toller (Oxford, 1898) pp. 1268-69, 1272-73, unless otherwise stated.

³³ Definition from the *Dictionary of Old English: A to I online*, <http://tapor.library.utoronto.ca/doe/> [accessed 05.09.2018]

³⁴ All Anglo-Norman definitions are from the *Anglo-Norman Dictionary*, eds. William Rothwell, Louise W. Stone and T.B.W. Reid (London, 1992) pp. 653, 853

	avenger	to avenge, an act of revenge
	punir	to punish (subject to divine retribution) ³⁵
	punicion	punishment
	punissable	punishable

In Latin texts, *ultio* and *vindicta* are both used in contexts which refer to either vengeance or punishment, and any modern rendering depends on the choice of the translator.³⁶ It must be noted though that the concept of punishment distinct from vengeance does exist in *poena* and *punire*, but that notions of vengeance expressed by *ultio*, *vindicare* and *talio* are never separated from connotations of punishment. In Old English, words for vengeance had a greater variety of connotations. *Wracu* and *wræc* carry meanings of misery, suffering and exile in addition to vengeance and punishment. Like Latin, Old English does also express the more specific concept of punishment through the word *wite*, although the compound *wræcwite* could be translated literally as vengeance-punishment. Although in Anglo-Norman French *venger* can mean either to punish or to avenge, there does seem to be a greater distinction between the concepts of *vengeance* and *punicion*, which appear to be closer to the modern concepts of vengeance and punishment.

The ways that scholars now refer to miraculous divine vengeance illustrate the ambiguity of medieval notions of vengeance and punishment. Robert Bartlett devotes a section of his book on the Cult of Saints to ‘Punitive Miracles’, in a conscious decision to define such miracles as divine punishment.³⁷ However, on the subject of the prominence of this type of miracle in connection with Irish saints, Máire Johnson characterises the behaviour of Irish saints as ‘vindictive’, and describes their tendency to bring ‘punishments’ down on those who challenge their authority, in ‘punitive episodes’ initiated by these ‘vengeful saints’ in a tradition of ‘saintly vengeance’.³⁸ It would appear that the ability to distinguish definitively between vengeance and punishment in this period is impossible even for modern historians, so that the two can be used interchangeably to refer to much the same concept. The overlapping definitions

³⁵ Additional definition from the Anglo-Norman Dictionary Project, AND: Online edition, 2013-2017. <<http://www.anglo-norman.net/D/punir>> [Accessed 17 Dec 2018]

³⁶ Roche, ‘The Way Vengeance Comes’, pp. 119-20. Paul R. Hyams, ‘Was There Really Such a Thing as Feud?’, pp. 166-67.

³⁷ Robert Bartlett, *Why Can the Dead Do Such Great Things? Saints and Worshippers from the Martyrs to the Reformation* (Princeton, 2013), p. 401.

³⁸ Máire Johnson, ‘“Vengeance Is Mine”: Saintly Retribution in Medieval Ireland’, in Susanna A. Throop and Paul R. Hyams (eds.) *Vengeance in the Middle Ages: Emotion, Religion and Feud* (Ashgate, 2010) pp. 5, 7.

of words relating to vengeance/punishment in Latin, Old English and Anglo-Norman French, in addition to the existence of a vocabulary for punishment separate from vengeance, suggests that it might be helpful to think of medieval notions of vengeance and punishment as being on a spectrum, ranging from official punishment by a recognised authority to personal vengeance conducted through feud. The final result at both ends of the spectrum, i.e. an offender meeting their comeuppance, is essentially the same.

In Old English there are also a number of compound nouns deriving from the root *wræc* that contain connotations of vengeance in its theological context. Some of these compound nouns only appear once or twice in the corpus of Old English, indicating that the poets or composers were using, developing and creating a living and adaptable language that gave them great expressive freedom. The meshing together of these words to create descriptive terminology can reveal something about the way that speakers of Old English (or at least the authors who wrote these words down) thought about the concepts that they thought to describe:

Old English ³⁹	wræcca	wretch, fugitive, exile, outcast
	wræcfæc	time of exile, banishment, misery
	wræcful	wretched, miserable
	wræchwil	period of exile / distress
	wræclast	path of exile
	wræclíc	foreign, strange, wretched, exiled
	wræc-mæg	exile, outcast, miserable man
	wræcmon	fugitive
	wræcscipe	exile
	wræcsetl	place of exile
	wræcsið	journey of exile / peril, pilgrimage, persecution, misery
	wræcstow	place of exile / punishment
	wræcwite	punishment
	wræcworuld	miserable world

³⁹ All definitions are amalgamated from Clark Hall, p. 363, and Bosworth-Toller, pp. 1269-70.

Wræchwil and *wræcworuld* are expressive of the Christian paradigm that explains the difficulties and miseries of life on earth as an exile from heaven that must be borne as God's vengeance for Adam and Eve's sin. *Wræchwil* appears in *The Phoenix*, in a passage which describes how souls and bodies will rise from their graves to come before God at Judgement day, and how the blessed, after their time in exile (from heaven, on earth), will be purified and will rejoice.⁴⁰ *Wræcmon* appears in *Exodus* in reference to Moses at the point where his followers are encamped by the Red Sea in fearful anticipation of attack by Pharaoh's army.⁴¹ *Wræcsetl* appears in *Guthlac A*, when Guthlac is describing the wilderness he has chosen to inhabit as a refuge for fugitives and wretched spirits.⁴² *Wræcwite* appears twice in one sentence of *Blickling Homily 1*, on the topic of the annunciation of Mary.⁴³ The homilist says that 'The first mother of humankind brought misery (*wræcwite*) when she broke God's commands; she was subsequently cast into this suffering (*wræcwite*).'⁴⁴ R. Morris in his earlier translation of this homily renders *wræcwite* as 'affliction' or 'vengeance' rather than the 'suffering' and 'misery' used in R. Kelly's recent translation quoted above.⁴⁵ This highlights the effect that the different decisions of translators can have on our own understanding of a text or word. By looking at the contexts in which words with the root '*wræc*' appear, we can see that it was used in both theological and secular contexts, which suggests at least some level of connection between the two as constituents of the same worldview as expressed in Old English.

It is significant that the Anglo-Norman French *punir* also directly relates to divine punishment, where Latin and Old English would still use *ultio/vindicta* and *wræc/wrecan* respectively. It indicates a connection in Anglo-Norman expression too between what judicial punishment dealt out by humans on earth and God's punishment of sinners was supposed to achieve. This overlap between the concepts of vengeance and punishment can be illustrated by

⁴⁰ *Dictionary of Old English Web Corpus* (hereafter *DOEC*), compiled by Antonette diPaolo Healey with John Price Wilkin and Xin Xiang (Toronto: Dictionary of Old English Project, 2009). <http://tapor.library.utoronto.ca/doecorpus/cgi-bin/oecidx?type=bigger&byte=590635&q1=wrAchwil&q2=&q3=> [accessed 21.02.2017]

⁴¹ *DOEC*, <http://tapor.library.utoronto.ca/doecorpus/cgi-bin/oecidx?type=bigger&byte=151842&q1=wrAcmon&q2=&q3=> [accessed 21.02.2017]. *Exodus*, l. 136, ed. and trans. Daniel Anlezark, *Old Testament Narratives* (Harvard, 2011), p. 214.

⁴² *DOEC*, <http://tapor.library.utoronto.ca/doecorpus/cgi-bin/oecidx?type=bigger&byte=508119&q1=wrAcsetl&q2=&q3=> [accessed 21.02.17]. *Guthlac*, l. 296, ed. Krapp and Dobbie, *The Exeter Book*, p. 58.

⁴³ *DOEC*, <http://tapor.library.utoronto.ca/doecorpus/cgi-bin/oecidx?type=bigger&byte=8412352&q1=wrAcwite&q2=&q3=> [accessed 21.02.17].

⁴⁴ Blickling Homily 1, ll. 33-35, ed. Richard J. Kelly, *The Blickling Homilies: Edition and Translation* (London, 2003) pp. 2-3. 'Seo æreste modor þyses menniscan cynnes wræcwite middangearde brohte þa heo Godes bebodu abræc, ond on þis wræcwite aworpen wæs.'

⁴⁵ Blickling Homily 1, l. 41, ed. R Morris, *The Blickling Homilies of the Tenth Century. From the Marquis of Lothian's Unique MS. A.D. 971* (London, 1880), p. 4.

Ælfric of Eynsham's mid-Lent homily *The Prayer of Moses*. Ælfric writes: 'God from the beginning avenged contempt of himself by punishments (*God gewræc fram frymðe mid witum*), first upon the angels who rashly exalted themselves, and afterward on Adam, when he had sinned.'⁴⁶ In this representation, sin through not obeying God's injunctions is effectively an insult to God himself, to which God has the right to exact recompense, and a hierarchy between God and men is established in which vengeance could come from above in the same way as punishment. Ælfric's words also highlight the type of punishment that could be considered to equate to vengeance, and the type of offence that deserved it. In this case, it is the personal insult that God perceives in Adam and Eve and Satan's crime that places what we now might identify as punishment in the form of exile into the category of vengeance. We might therefore define medieval vengeance less in relation to what the vengeful act is, and more in relation to what it is a response to. After all, acts of vengeance could come in as many forms as there were people to enact them, but the unifying constituent could be the nature of the insult or injury that preceded such acts.

Even in the context of law, which, from a modern perspective we might expect to be the epitome of impartial punishment for crimes committed, medieval penalties could be placed in an area of fusion on the spectrum between vengeance and punishment. Legal prohibitions were based on biblical law, and there was significant overlap with the style and content of homilies and penitential handbooks which dealt with confession and penalties for sin, so that there was a further conflation between what constituted a crime against society and a sin against God.⁴⁷ Since medieval law codes were usually compiled in the name of specific kings, and because kings were considered to be imbued with divine authority, committing a crime became a personal insult to the king, and by extension to God, and was therefore deserving of vengeance/punishment.⁴⁸ All of this can probably be traced back to the personal nature of medieval social structure, in which bonds of kinship, patronage and loyalty formed the basis

⁴⁶ *Ælfric's Lives of Saints, Being A Set of Sermons on Saints' Days Formerly Observed by the English Church* (hereafter *LoS* 1), ed. Walter W. Skeat, vol. 1 (London, 1881) 1.13, p. 297.

⁴⁷ Patrick Wormald, *The Making of English Law: King Alfred to the Twelfth Century, vol. I: Legislation and its limits* (Blackwell, 2001) pp. 426-29; M.K. Lawson, 'Archbishop Wulfstan and the Homiletic Element in the Laws of Æthelred II and Cnut', in Alexander R. Rumble (ed.) *The Reign of Cnut: King of England, Denmark and Norway* (London, 1994) pp. 141-64.

⁴⁸ Patrick Wormald, 'Giving God and King Their Due: Conflict and Its Regulation in the Early English State' in *Legal Culture in the Early Medieval West: Law as Text, Image and Experience* (London, 1999) pp. 333-57; The connections between earthly and heavenly power have been discussed in an art historical context by Robert Deshman, 'Christus Rex et Magi Reges: Kingship and Christology in Ottonian and Anglo-Saxon Art.', *Frühmittelalterliche Studien: Jahrbuch Des Instituts Für Frühmittelalterforschung Der Universität Münster* 10 (1976) pp. 367-405. Robert Deshman, *The Iconography of the Full Page Miniatures of the Benedictional of Aethelwold* (Princeton, 1970) p. 204.

of social relationships, carrying the duty to support and, if necessary, avenge members of those kin groups.

This same structure can be identified in the way that human relationships with God were thought about. Hyams has described one aspect of the relationship between God and humanity as ‘divine feud’, in the sense that insulting God through disobedience to his commands incurred the possibility of becoming the victim of God’s vengeance in much the same way as human feuds operated.⁴⁹ Evidence of this sort of conceptualisation can be seen particularly in the Old English poems *Genesis*, *Exodus*, *Daniel* and *Azarias*, which all place biblical narratives in an Anglo-Saxon aristocratic cultural setting, with God’s relationship with Satan and humanity akin to that between a lord and his retainers, where their disobedience was a form of betrayal.⁵⁰ In this sort of set up, maintaining personal honour as well as the stability of the accepted social hierarchy was paramount, and one way to achieve that was by being seen to take vengeance against insult and anything that might disrupt such stability.⁵¹ If heaven, hell and earth were all conceptualised as being parts of the same created universe, then it makes sense that the relationship between heaven and earth, as well as that of humans with each other, was imagined in terms of the same or very similar cultural structures, with vengeance taking a similar moral as well as functional role in negotiating both.

An additional problem in defining the medieval concept of vengeance arises from the way that authors, both in Latin and Old English, did not always use the specific terminology related to vengeance identified above, even where it is clear that a scenario should be understood under that paradigm. For example, Archbishop Wulfstan of York’s *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos* (c.1014) does not once use any term which directly translates as vengeance, or indeed any other Old English word containing the root *wræc*. What Wulfstan does use, multiple times, is the phrase *þurh Godes yrre* (through God’s anger), to emphatically bring home the message that the miseries currently befalling the nation in the form of Viking attacks and social anarchy were the result of God’s anger at men’s sin.⁵² It is a clear causative sequence from sin which provokes God to anger, to God’s wrathful action as a result of that anger. Thomas Roche has identified something similar in Orderic Vitalis’s *Historia Ecclesiastica* (1123-1137), where in discussing how a feud begins, Orderic stresses the flow of emotions and passions that spurred

⁴⁹ Hyams, *Rancor and Reconciliation*, p. 123.

⁵⁰ On the origins of the idea of Satan as an opponent of God, see Peter Denelle, *Satan Unbound: The Devil in Old English Narrative Literature* (Toronto, 2001) pp. 9-10.

⁵¹ Hyams, *Rancor and Reconciliation*, p. 39.

⁵² Wulfstan’s *Sermo Lupi Ad Anglos*, ll. 70, 71, 80, 85, 93, ed. Elaine Treharne, *Old and Middle English C. 890-c.1400: An Anthology*, 2nd edn. (Blackwell, 2004) pp. 262, 264.

people to action rather than explaining the details of deeds and motives.⁵³ Roche identifies the signal words as *iratus* and *furor*, along with *per iram* (the equivalent of the Old English *þurh yrre*), and ascribes this way of telling things to Orderic's world view, in which emotions formed both a narrative device and a social code of symbolic communication.⁵⁴ As with Wulfstan's rhetoric, anger against perceived insult provides the catalyst for vengeful behaviour.

Another layer might therefore be added to the description of medieval vengeance, in that for an act to count as vengeful it had to be at least partly motivated by a negative emotional response, usually anger or grief, to another act which was perceived as wrong. In being reactive in this way, vengeance must also have served a purpose, namely to counteract the initial wrong. In Hyams' definition in *Rancor and Reconciliation in Medieval England*,

Vengeance is neither mechanical in a knee-jerk fashion nor wholly negative in aim or motivation; rather, it proceeds from a clear and/or passionate sense of wrong and seeks to restore not merely the status quo ante but the way things *ought* to have been. In other words, inherent in vengeance is its own view of justice, which sometimes coincides with that of official law, or at other times presents an alternative that challenges the 'official' view.⁵⁵

In other words, vengeance is a deliberate course of action taken according to the subjective view of the avenger of what constitutes justice for perceived wrong, aiming to restore an ideal social set up. Of course, Hyams is dealing with the specific context of feud and dispute settlement, but there are elements of this definition of vengeance that can be applied to some of the other contexts under discussion here, especially the notion that vengeance is intended to restore 'the way things *ought* to have been'. In relation to divine vengeance, when God was seen to take vengeance on a sinful humanity, it was because humanity should not have been sinful in the first place and God's vengeful punishment was intended to bring them away from such sin and restore the proper order of creation.⁵⁶ A sense of gaining justice is also key to the idea of divine vengeance (whether direct, channelled through the saints, or reserved for judgement day) no less than in warfare, pursuing personal revenge through feud, or punishing criminals. It might therefore be possible to broaden Hyams' description of vengeance to encompass the full range of social and religious contexts in which it appears.

⁵³ Roche, 'The Way Vengeance Comes', p. 124.

⁵⁴ Ibid., pp. 124-25. Cf. Daniel Lord Smail, 'Emotions and Somatic Gestures in Medieval Narratives: The Case of Raoul de Cambrai', *Zeitschrift Fur Literaturwissenschaft Und Linguistik* 35. 2 (2005) pp. 34-48.

⁵⁵ Hyams, *Rancor and Reconciliation*, p. 39.

⁵⁶ See Chapter 1.

To attempt such a description, medieval vengeance might be conceived of as a (usually) violent act taken against another person or group of people in response to a perceived insult, in a causative sequence of events involving an emotional context and a sense of moral judgement underpinned by ideas of justice, with the aim of restoring balances and order in the social set up. Vengeance was governed by a set of social rules which dictated when a vengeful act was considered to be acceptable, and may be enacted in accordance with those rules or against them, either between social equals, or by a higher authority, human or divine, in an overlap with the idea of deserved punishment. This is admittedly hugely broad, but that breadth gives scope for exploring the many different practical contexts and manifestations of vengeance that fit within its remit. It also allows for exploring to what extent there was an evolution or change in how divine vengeance was perceived and experienced, and how vengeance taken by humans was thought about and practised in the period under consideration here, as well as the level of variation in how vengeance was represented between different genres of sources written for different audiences and purposes.

While this description of medieval vengeance is a useful starting point, it must be remembered that medieval society was not static, or indeed homogenous in the way it thought. In the period between c.900 and c.1150, England became a unified nation, saw two major reform movements in the church (the tenth century Benedictine monastic reform movement, and the Gregorian reform movement in the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries) and developments in law and religious practices and structures. It suffered multiple military invasions and underwent significant cultural change first from Scandinavian occupation in the first half of the eleventh century, and then from Norman Conquest and settlement after 1066. The influence of all of these changes must be taken into account when considering the ways that vengeance was thought about in this period. While it is tempting to look for linear developments, such as the gradual decline in feud in favour of state regulated dispute settlement, we are more likely to encounter different elements being emphasised at different times.⁵⁷

In a religious context, the ideals of the tenth-century reformers, focused on monastic behaviour and general lay piety, along with increasingly severe Viking invasions and general apocalyptic expectations associated with the year 1000, created a preoccupation with divine

⁵⁷ This sort of linear approach is taken by Hudson, 'Feud, Vengeance and Violence'.

vengeance against the English nation as a whole, and how to stave it off.⁵⁸ This was a different atmosphere from that of the Gregorian reform movement, a key aspect of which was the investiture controversy revolving around clashes of personalities between ecclesiastical and secular powers over who had the right to ordain priests, which created a different emphasis on divine vengeance against individuals who opposed reforming ideals.⁵⁹ Ideologically however, the aims of the tenth and eleventh century reformers were not dissimilar. Both the Benedictine and Gregorian reformers sought to improve standards of behaviour among the clergy and thought of their activities in terms of correction, emendation and renewal; they were simply working in different political contexts and their impacts differed in scope.⁶⁰ Scholars now question the extent to which the tenth-century Benedictine reform movement was a co-ordinated effort, and have begun to emphasise instead the limitations of its influence outside of a few monastic centres such as Winchester in comparison to the later Gregorian reform effort which was a Europe-wide phenomenon.⁶¹

Culturally, 1066 has traditionally been seen as a dividing point in English history, marking the end of the Anglo-Saxon period and the beginning of a new regime and society. As will be discussed in chapter two, this view takes its lead from eleventh- and twelfth-century historians who saw the Norman Conquest as a momentous, decisive and disruptive event in English history.⁶² There is in fact much more nuance to the impact of the Conquest on English society and culture, and historical debate now recognises the significant levels of continuity that existed before and after 1066. The already high degree of cross-channel economic and cultural contact in the late-tenth and first half of the eleventh century has been highlighted,

⁵⁸ See Malcolm Godden, 'Apocalypse and Invasion in Late Anglo-Saxon England', in Malcolm Godden, Douglas Gray, and Terry Hoad (eds.) *From Anglo-Saxon to Early Middle English: Studies Presented to E.G. Stanley* (Oxford, 1994) pp. 130-62; Simon Keynes, 'Re-Reading King Æthelred the Unready', in David Bates and Julia Crick (eds.) *Writing Medieval Biography, 750-1250: Essays in Honour of Professor Frank Barlow* (Woodbridge, 2006) pp. 77-96.

⁵⁹ See, for example, the conflicts between Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury, and Kings William Rufus and Henry I, in *Eadmeri Historia Novorum in Anglia, et Opuscula Duo De Vita Sancti Anselmi et Quibusdam Miraculis Ejus* (hereafter *Eadmeri Historia*) ed. Martin Rule (London, 1884) pp. 53-62, 81-83, 115-16, 134-35, 170-72. Translated in *Eadmer's History of Recent Events in England: Historia Novorum in Anglia* (hereafter *Eadmer, HRE*) trans. Geoffrey Bosanquet (London, 1964) pp. 62-63, 85-86, 120-21, 141-42, 182-83. *The Life of Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury by Eadmer* (hereafter *Eadmer, VA*), 45-50, ed. R.W. Southern (London, 1962) pp. 122-27.

⁶⁰ Julia Barrow, 'Ideas and Applications of Reform', in *The Cambridge History of Christianity*, ed. Thomas F.X. Noble and Julia M.H. Smith, vol. 3: Early Medieval Christianities, c. 600 - c. 1100 (Cambridge, 2008), pp. 345-62.

⁶¹ Nicola Robertson, 'Dunstan and Monastic Reform: Tenth-Century Fact or Twelfth-Century Fiction?', *Anglo-Norman Studies* 28 (2006) pp. 153-67; For an overview of scholarship on the tenth-century reform, see Nicola Robertson, 'The Benedictine Reform: Current and Future Scholarship', *Literature Compass* 3, no. 3 (2006) pp. 282-99.

⁶² See Chapter 2.

particularly with regard to the extent of connections between the ruling families of England and Normandy, from Æthelred's marriage to Emma of Normandy in 1002, to Edward the Confessor's close relationship with the Norman court, having resided there for over two decades after being forced to flee Swein's army in 1013.⁶³ After the Conquest, historians have pointed to continuities in the persistence of Old English writing and active engagement with older English manuscripts into the twelfth century, and Norman adoption of Anglo-Saxon legal structures, appropriation of Anglo-Saxon saints' cults and keen interest in the history of their conquered nation.⁶⁴ Nevertheless, the Normans summarily displaced the Anglo-Saxon aristocracy and religious authorities, changed English social structures and landscape through their program of castle and cathedral building, and introduced French language and literature to upper levels of society with its ideals of chivalry, none of which can have been without effect on how people thought about the place of vengeance in society despite the simultaneous persistence of Old English culture.⁶⁵

A holistic picture of the place of vengeance in Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Norman Christian society can only be gained by an examination of its representation across a variety of source types. This thesis will therefore draw together a range of source material including homilies and theological treatises, hagiographies and miracle collections, historical narratives and chronicles, documentary sources, and vernacular literature. One issue with taking a view across the Norman Conquest is that there is significantly more source material available from the post-conquest period. The upsurge in historical and hagiographical writing by Anglo-Norman authors in the later eleventh and first half of the twelfth century inevitably means that more detail can be gained from this type of source for this later period than for the tenth and earlier eleventh century.⁶⁶ Conversely, there is more surviving homiletic material composed in the late tenth and early eleventh century than for the post-conquest period, although much

⁶³ David Bates, *William the Conqueror* (London, 1989) pp. 9-10. See also the studies in Wilhelm Levison, D.W. Rollason, Conrad Leyser and Hannah Williams (eds.) *England and the Continent in the Tenth Century: Studies in Honour of Wilhelm Levison (1876-1947)*, Studies in the Early Middle Ages, v. 37 (Turnhout, 2010)

⁶⁴ Bates, *William the Conqueror*, pp. 115-31; Hugh M. Thomas, *The English and the Normans: Ethnic Hostility, Assimilation, and Identity, 1066-c.1220* (Oxford, 2003); Susan J. Ridyard, 'Condigna Veneratio: Post-Conquest Attitudes to the Saints of the Anglo-Saxons', in *Anglo-Norman Studies: Proceedings of the Battle Conference 9*, ed. R. Allen Brown (Woodbridge, 1986) pp. 182-206; Mary Swan and Elaine M. Treharne (eds.) *Rewriting Old English in the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge, 2000). Mark Faulkner, 'Archaism, Belatedness and Modernisation: "Old" English in the Twelfth Century', *Review of English Studies* 63. 259 (2012) pp. 183-97.

⁶⁵ See relevant chapters in Robert Bartlett, *England under the Norman and Angevin Kings, 1075-1225* (Oxford, 2000). Bates, *William the Conqueror*, pp. 132-43; Marjorie Chibnall, *Anglo-Norman England 1066-1166* (Oxford, 1986); H.R. Loyn, *Anglo-Saxon England and the Norman Conquest* (London, 1991).

⁶⁶ Antonia Gransden, *Historical Writing in England* (London, 1974).

continued to be copied.⁶⁷ This means that it is not always possible to directly compare the rhetorical techniques of authors writing in the same genre before and after the conquest and, where it is possible, there is simply more to go on for the later period.

The morality of vengeance in a Christian context cannot be thought about without reference to God's power to reward and punish as a governing force in the world. Chapter one will introduce the theological basis for the idea of divine vengeance. It will explore the way that the idea of God's dual nature of mercy and wrath affected the way that humanity's relationship with God was conceptualised, and why divine vengeance for human sin was thought to be a necessary component. It is important to understand these theological principles and the way that they developed because they underpin the way that divine vengeance was observed, experienced and represented in other contexts, and this affected the way that the morality of vengeance undertaken by humans was thought about from a Christian perspective. Significant sources under consideration here will be, for the Anglo-Saxon period, the homilies of Ælfric, Abbot of Eynsham (d. 1009x10) and Wulfstan, Bishop of Worcester and Archbishop of York (d. 1023), and for the Anglo-Norman period, the theological treatises of Anselm, Abbot of Bec and Archbishop of Canterbury (d. 1109).⁶⁸ Vernacular homilies and sermons were designed to articulate the basic principles of Christian teaching to as wide an audience as possible and to exhort that audience to adhere to morally correct Christian behaviour, whereas theological treatises written in Latin were designed to facilitate intellectual debate among scholarly communities, but despite these different purposes, both kinds of texts are useful sources for exploring the ways that Christian theologians thought about divine vengeance as a principle.

Ælfric was the most prolific homilist of the late Anglo-Saxon period, producing four series of homilies designed to make monastic teaching accessible in the vernacular to secular clergy and their lay congregations as well as to monastic audiences.⁶⁹ Ælfric's work is distinct

⁶⁷ Mary Swan, 'Ælfric's Catholic Homilies in the Twelfth Century', in Mary Swan and Elaine M. Treharne (eds.) *Rewriting Old English in the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge, 2000) pp. 62-81; Jonathan Wilcox, 'Wulfstan and the Twelfth Century', in Mary Swan and Elaine M. Treharne (eds.) *Rewriting Old English in the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge, 2000) pp. 83-93; Susan Irvine, 'The Compilation and Use of Manuscripts Containing Old English in the Twelfth Century', in Mary Swan and Elaine M. Treharne (eds.) *Rewriting Old English in the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge, 2000) pp. 41-61.

⁶⁸ For the lives and careers of Ælfric, Wulfstan and Anselm, see Joyce Hill, 'Ælfric: His Life and Works', in *A Companion to Ælfric*, ed. Hugh Magennis and Mary Swan (Leiden, 2009); Matthew Townend, 'Introduction', in *Wulfstan, Archbishop of York: The Proceedings of the Second Alcuin Conference*, ed. Matthew Townend (Turnhout, 2004); R.W. Southern, *Saint Anselm: A Portrait in a Landscape* (Cambridge, 1990).

⁶⁹ Joyce Hill, 'Ælfric: His Life and Works', in Hugh Magennis and Mary Swan (eds.) *A Companion to Ælfric* (Leiden, 2009) pp. 35-64.

in catering to a combination of monastic, clerical and lay audiences; it is evident that he did not expect all of his audience to be especially pious, but he did expect at least intermittent attendance at Sunday services by a broad range of people.⁷⁰ His two series of *Catholic Homilies* (composed 989-995) are topically arranged to follow the structure of the liturgical year and were designed for preaching, while his *Lives of Saints* series (composed 992-1002) consist of the passions of the early martyrs and some contemporary saints and were commissioned by Ealdorman Æthelweard and his son Æthelmær and were more suited to private reading.⁷¹ Ælfric's homilies continued to be copied and emended up to the thirteenth century, albeit in fragmented form against his express pleas for maintaining their consolidation and accuracy.⁷² Alterations in a 'late hand' of the twelfth century to one of Ælfric's manuscripts of his *Catholic Homilies* written c. 990 add details and clarity which may suggest that twelfth-century preachers making use of Ælfric's writings were engaging with a broader audience with less religious knowledge than Ælfric had envisaged.⁷³

Wulfstan's output was less extensive, though his voice was perhaps more publically prominent. He wrote homilies in both Old English and Latin, and their popularity also lasted into the twelfth century, although largely anonymously.⁷⁴ His role as Archbishop of York made him more of a statesman involved in law making and administration, first for King Æthelred and then for Cnut, and his writings were more tied to the political circumstances of the time

⁷⁰ Jonathan Wilcox, 'Ælfric in Dorset and the Landscape of Pastoral Care', in *Pastoral Care in Late Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. Francesca Tinti (Woodbridge, 2012), 52-62.

⁷¹ Catherine Cubitt, 'Ælfric's Lay Patrons', in *A Companion to Ælfric*, ed. Hugh Magennis and Mary Swan (Leiden, 2009) pp. 165-92. Joyce Hill, 'The Benedictine Reform and Beyond', in Phillip Pulsiano and Elaine Treharne (eds.) *A Companion to Anglo-Saxon Literature* (Oxford, 2008) pp. 158-59; Joyce Hill, 'The Dissemination of Ælfric's Lives of Saints: A Preliminary Survey', in Paul E. Szarmach (ed.) *Holy Men and Holy Women: Old English Prose Saints' Lives and Their Contexts* (New York, 1996) p. 236; Joyce Hill, 'Ælfric's Sources Reconsidered: Some Case Studies from the Catholic Homilies', in J.J. Toswell and E.M. Tyler (eds.) *Studies in English Language and Literature: 'Doubt Wisely': Papers in Honour of E.G. Stanley* (London, 1996) pp. 362-80.

⁷² Elaine Treharne, 'Making Their Presence Felt: Readers of Ælfric, c.1050-1350', in Hugh Magennis and Mary Swan (eds.) *A Companion to Ælfric* (Leiden, 2009) pp. 399-400. Hill, 'The Preservation and Transmission of Ælfric's Saints' Lives: Reader-Reception and Reader-Response in the Early Middle Ages', in Paul E. Szarmach and Joel T. Rosenthal (eds.) *The Preservation and Transmission of Anglo-Saxon Culture: Selected Papers from the 1991 Meeting of the International Society of Anglo-Saxonists* (Michigan, 1997) p. 422. Hill, 'The Dissemination of Ælfric's Lives of Saints', p. 235; Jonathan Wilcox, 'Transmission of Literature and Learning: Anglo-Saxon Scribal Culture', in Phillip Pulsiano and Elaine Treharne (eds.) *A Companion to Anglo-Saxon Literature* (Oxford, 2008) pp. 63-64. Mary Swan, 'Ælfric's Catholic Homilies in the Twelfth Century', in Mary Swan and Elaine M. Treharne (eds.) *Rewriting Old English in the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge, 2000) pp. 62-66, 81.

⁷³ Faulkner, 'Archaism, Belatedness and Modernisation: "Old" English in the Twelfth Century', pp. 200-202.

⁷⁴ Jonathan Wilcox, 'The Dissemination of Wulfstan's Homilies: The Wulfstan Tradition in Eleventh-Century Preaching', in Carola Hicks (ed.) *England in the Eleventh Century: Proceedings of the 1990 Harlaxton Symposium* (Stamford, 1992) pp. 203-17; Thomas N. Hall, 'Wulfstan's Latin Sermons', in Matthew Townend (ed.) *Wulfstan, Archbishop of York: The Proceedings of the Second Alcuin Conference* (Turnhout, 2004) pp. 93-140.

than Ælfric's, which focused on general pastoral teaching.⁷⁵ Ælfric and Wulfstan were both prominent figures in the second wave of the tenth-century Benedictine reform movement, and both saw public exhortation as their moral duty.⁷⁶ They are known to have directly corresponded, with Ælfric taking on the role of spiritual advisor (unusual given his lower ranking status), and a number of Wulfstan's homilies are largely rewritings of works by Ælfric.⁷⁷ These homilies cannot be considered representative of what everybody everywhere believed, only what those who decided what official doctrine was thought that Christian congregations should believe and should be taught.⁷⁸ This does not devalue them as evidence of the way that divine vengeance was thought about, but their main value lies in the arguments and techniques that the homilists used to try to persuade their audiences of the rightness of their teachings.⁷⁹

Anselm was perhaps the most prominent theologian of the early Anglo-Norman world. Between c. 1075-6 and 1108, he produced a series of treatises intended to prove the truth of Christian doctrine through logical reasoning.⁸⁰ Those that will be primarily considered in this thesis are his *Monologion* (1075-76), the three philosophical dialogues *De veritate* (On Truth), *De libertate arbitrii* (On Free Will) and *De casu diaboli* (On the fall of the devil) (1080-86), *Cur Deus Homo* (Why God became man) (1093x1100) and *De Concordia praescientiae et praedestinationis et gratiae dei cum libero arbitrio* (On the concordance of God's foreknowledge, predestination, and grace with human freedom) (1107-08). Anselm's new 'rational' method of theological enquiry was somewhat revolutionary and provoked controversy among his more conservative contemporaries.⁸¹ He did, however, have a profound

⁷⁵ Dorothy Whitelock, 'Archbishop Wulfstan, Homilist and Statesman', in Dorothy Whitelock (ed.) *History, Law and Literature in 10th-11th Century England* (London, 1981) pp. 42-60; Jonathan Wilcox, 'Wulfstan and the Twelfth Century', in Mary Swan and Elaine M. Treharne (eds.) *Rewriting Old English in the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge, 2000) pp. 83-93.

⁷⁶ Matthew Townend, 'Introduction', in Matthew Townend (ed.) *Wulfstan, Archbishop of York: The Proceedings of the Second Alcuin Conference* (Turnhout, 2004) pp. 1-7; Hill, 'Ælfric: His Life and Works', pp. 35-64.

⁷⁷ Malcolm Godden, 'The Relations of Wulfstan and Ælfric', in Matthew Townend (ed.) *Wulfstan, Archbishop of York: The Proceedings of the Second Alcuin Conference* (Turnhout, 2004) pp. 354-73. Ælfric, CH 2.19, ll. 1-3, ed. Godden, p. 180

⁷⁸ Helen Foxhall Forbes, *Heaven and Earth in Anglo-Saxon England: Theology and Society in an Age of Faith* (Ashgate, 2013) p. 31.

⁷⁹ Eugene Green, *Anglo-Saxon Audiences* (New York, 2001) pp. 77-81.

⁸⁰ For the dating of Anselm's writings, see the introduction to *Anselm: Basic Writings*, ed. and trans. Thomas Williams (Indianapolis, 2007) pp. vii-xi.

⁸¹ R.W. Southern, *Saint Anselm: A Portrait in a Landscape* (Cambridge, 1990) pp. 135-81; Giles Gasper, 'Envy, Jealousy and the Boundaries of Orthodoxy: Anselm of Canterbury and the Genesis of Proslogion', *Viator* 41.2 (2010) pp. 59-68. Toivo J. Holopainen, 'Logic and Theology in the Eleventh Century: Anselm and Lanfranc's Heritage', in G.E.M. Gasper and H. Kohlenberger (eds.) *Anselm and Abelard: Investigations and Juxtapositions* (Toronto, 2006) pp. 13-16; Giles E.M. Gasper, *Anselm of Canterbury and His Theological Inheritance* (Ashgate, 2004) p. 2, 12; Southern, *Saint Anselm: A Portrait*, pp. 70-73.

personal influence on his immediate acquaintances, including his predecessor as Abbot and Archbishop Lanfranc (d. 1089) and hagiographer Eadmer, as well as other monks at Bec and Canterbury.⁸² The necessity of God's punishment in upholding the proper relationship between the divine and humanity, and the consequent morality of acts of vengeance/violence by humans, were both topics that interested Anselm.⁸³ His treatises were not designed to teach wide audiences in the same way as Ælfric's or Wulfstan's, but Anselm was not an isolated figure and they do demonstrate the way that he, as a theologian, attempted to reconcile Christian doctrine about God's punishing power with the morality of human behaviour.

It is important to understand the theology of divine vengeance because it influenced the way that Christian authors viewed the world and represented the morality of human actions. Divine vengeance was a significant aspect of the way that unfortunate events on earth were interpreted and rationalised. In addition to this explanatory purpose, the idea of divine vengeance also became a rhetorical tool which authors utilised in order to communicate moral lessons about what they considered appropriate human conduct. Chapter two will explore how the idea of divine vengeance influenced perceptions of history and historical writing, with particular reference to developing interpretations of the causes of and responses to the viking threat during the reign of Æthelred the Unready (978-1016), developing representations of the causes of the Norman Conquest of 1066, and reactions to the death of King William Rufus in 1100. All of these were major events that subsequently became interpreted as instances of God's vengeance working in the world, but in different ways by different historians.

This chapter will mostly draw on the historical narratives of the Anglo-Norman historians of the late eleventh and first half of the twelfth century, simply because there was a vast increase in output of historical writing in England at this time. The first case study will redress this by using the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (ASC) among a variety of other sources to assess the development of the idea of the vikings as being the agents of divine vengeance against the English over the course of Æthelred's reign (978-1016), before moving on to later representations and interpretations. The ASC in its various versions was a major source that the twelfth-century historians drew on, though the Peterborough [E] Chronicle was continued

⁸² Southern, *Saint Anselm: A Portrait*, pp. 369-96. See also Anselm's wide and varied personal correspondences in *The Letters of Saint Anselm of Canterbury*, ed. Walter Fröhlich, Cistercian Studies Series 96-97 (Kalamazoo, 1990) 3 vols.

⁸³ See Chapter 1.

simultaneously up to the mid-twelfth century, which means that it can be used as a comparison to the Anglo-Norman authors' texts.⁸⁴

All three case studies will explore the rhetorical strategies that different historians used to convince their audience that divine vengeance was at play in a given situation, usually in the form of human agents. Key historical narratives under consideration will be: William of Poitiers' *Gesta Guillelmi* (1071x1077), written to commemorate Duke William's career before 1066,⁸⁵ William of Malmesbury's *Gesta Regum Anglorum* (first completed c. 1126 and revised 1135), written for the Empress Matilda,⁸⁶ and *Historia Novella* (1140x1143), commissioned by Earl Robert of Gloucester;⁸⁷ Henry of Huntingdon's *Historia Anglorum* (1123x1154),⁸⁸ commissioned by Bishop Alexander of Lincoln; Eadmer's *Historia Novorum* (1109-1124) and accompanying *Vita S. Anselmi* (1109-1125),⁸⁹ and Gaimar's *Estoire Des Engleis* (1136x1137), written under the patronage of a noble family in Lincolnshire.⁹⁰ Orderic Vitalis's *Historia Ecclesiastica* (written 1123x1137), originally intended as a history of his own monastery of St Evroul in Normandy, will be included as a point of comparison, inasmuch as his work was part of the same outpouring of historical material in the Anglo-Norman world, but since he was writing in Normandy for a primarily Norman audience rather than in England, his work will not be a main point of focus.⁹¹ All of these authors came from monastic or clerical backgrounds, but, with the exception of Eadmer and possibly William of Poitiers, whose dedicatory preface is missing, all were writing for secular aristocratic patrons.⁹² Their narratives were often similar, but no two historians had exactly the same view of past events, and the ways that they rhetorically structured their narratives to reveal moral truths about the world gives their work an edificatory purpose similar to that of homilies.

⁸⁴ Susan Irvine, 'The Production of the Peterborough Chronicle', in Alice Jorgensen (ed.) *Reading the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: Language, Literature, History* (Turnhout, 2010) pp. 49-50; Malasree Home, 'Double-Edged Deja Vu: The Complexity of the Peterborough Chronicle', in Alice Jorgensen (ed.) *Reading the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: Language, Literature, History* (Turnhout, 2010) p. 88.

⁸⁵ *The Gesta Guillelmi of William of Poitiers* (hereafter WPGG), eds. R.H.C. Davies and Marjorie Chibnall (Oxford, 1998) p. xx.

⁸⁶ William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Regum Anglorum: The History of the English Kings* (hereafter WMGR), eds. R.A.B. Mynors, R.M. Thomson and Michael Winterbottom, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1998) pp. xxii-xxiii.

⁸⁷ *William of Malmesbury, Historia Novella: The Contemporary History* (Hereafter WMHN), ed. Edmund King, trans. K.R. Potter (Oxford, 1998) pp. xxix-xxxiii.

⁸⁸ *Henry, Archdeacon of Huntingdon, Historia Anglorum: The History of the English People* (hereafter HHA), ed. Diana Greenway (Oxford, 1996) pp. lvii-lxvi.

⁸⁹ *Eadmeri Historia*, pp. xv-l; Eadmer, VA, pp. ix-xii, xxii-xxiii.

⁹⁰ *Gaimar, Estoire*, pp. xxv-xxvii. Ian Short, 'Gaimar's Epilogue and Geoffrey of Monmouth's Liber Vetustissimus', *Speculum* 69, no. 2 (1994) pp. 336-38.

⁹¹ *The Ecclesiastical History of Orderic Vitalis* (hereafter OVHE), ed. Marjorie Chibnall (Oxford, 1969) vol. 1, p. 32, 45-47.

⁹² WPGG, p. xv.

Chapters three and four will use similar techniques to analyse the ways that divine vengeance was observed and experienced on a smaller scale in the form of vengeance miracles. These will be based on a survey of vengeance miracles recorded between c. 900 and c. 1150 in hagiographies, miracle collections and the historical narratives explored in chapter two. Just as there was an upsurge in historical writing in the late eleventh and first half of the twelfth century, there was also a dramatic increase in the number of hagiographical texts being written after the Norman Conquest, many of them about Anglo-Saxon saints whose cults lacked earlier documentation.⁹³ This once again means that there is more source material available from the post-Conquest period, but because the genres of hagiography and miracle collecting remained substantially consistent in nature and style throughout the middle ages it is still possible in this case to make direct comparisons between the types of miracles being recorded in the Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Norman periods.

Chapter three will begin with a statistical analysis of vengeance miracles recorded between c. 900 and c. 1150 in order to produce a typology of situations in which divine vengeance was likely to be observed in the world. It will then explore the channels of communication that led to certain misfortunes becoming interpreted as the result of divine vengeance and subsequently recorded in the form of a miracle story, channels which wove through monastic and lay society and which must have given many stories a life apart from their surviving written version.⁹⁴ Chapter four will examine some of the themes that arise from this survey of vengeance miracles to determine what these can reveal about the ways that vengeance miracle stories were used to combat religious scepticism and resistance to religious teaching. This will provide a window into the extent to which the threat or possibility of divine vengeance striking was taken seriously by people in different sections of society, and the extent to which a fear or consciousness of the possibility of divine vengeance might have affected their behaviour. Key areas of exploration will be: resistance to preaching and Christian observances such as saints' feast days by lay people; political clashes between royal and Church authority; and monastic and clerical negligence. This will illustrate the way that changing religious ideals influenced the way that divine vengeance was perceived and experienced in the world in different situations at different times, and show how concepts of sin differed between the authors of these texts and the people that they wrote about.

⁹³ See Ridyard, 'Condigna Veneratio', pp. 205-206.

⁹⁴ See Chapter 3.

An important point that chapters two, three and four throw up is that divine vengeance was often perceived as being accomplished through human agents. Chapter five will turn back to representations of vengeance by humans in order to explore how ideas about divine vengeance influenced the way that the morality of vengeance by humans was thought about in different contexts. It will look at the ways that authors of fictional literature drew on the idea of divine vengeance in order to get their audiences to think about the morality of the vengeful actions of the characters depicted, and the consequences for their soul. Key texts will be *Beowulf* (surviving in a manuscript written c. 1000),⁹⁵ *The Battle of Maldon* (survived in a manuscript now lost but likely written at the end of the tenth or early eleventh century),⁹⁶ *La Chanson de Roland* (in Oxford, Bodleian, Digby 23, copied 1140x1170 in the Anglo-Norman dialect, though likely composed towards the end of the eleventh century)⁹⁷ and *Raoul de Cambrai* (first section likely written in the early twelfth century).⁹⁸ The rhetorical techniques of the different poets will then be set in comparison with the ways that some of the historical narratives sought to persuade their audiences that certain acts of vengeance that had personal and social motives were spiritually justified and enacted on behalf of God. The chapter will then go on to explore the way that divine vengeance was incorporated into judicial practice, and the implications for the types of punishments dealt out by humans that were deemed to be acceptable. By incorporating analysis of vengeance miracle stories that feature judicial punishment presented as the manifestation of divine vengeance on an offender with the way that the morality of corporal and capital punishment is presented in law codes themselves, it will explore the consistent complexity of attempting to determine when a human judge was to be considered as acting on behalf of God, and what limits should be set on the extremity of punishment dealt out by humans. Because law codes themselves are more ideological documents than representations of actual practice, setting them alongside these miracle stories will help to illustrate the way that legal prescriptions were used and reacted to in practice. Finally, the chapter will consider circumstances in which human vengeance was not considered permissible, or where it was considered more admirable to withhold rather than to deal out vengeance. It will explore legal constraints on the pursuit of personal vengeance, representations of the behaviour of noblemen, and compare representations of the behaviour of

⁹⁵ Proposed dates for the composition of *Beowulf* have ranged from the seventh to the eleventh century. For some of the debates, see Colin Chase (ed.) *The Dating of Beowulf* (Toronto, c1981).

⁹⁶ Donald Scragg, 'The Battle of Maldon', in Donald Scragg (ed.) *The Battle of Maldon AD 991* (Oxford, 1991) pp. 24-35.

⁹⁷ *CdR*, pp. 9-10

⁹⁸ See *Raoul de Cambrai*, ed. and trans. Sarah Kay (Oxford, 1992), pp. xxxv-lxvii. *Raoul de Cambrai, Chanson de geste de XIIIe siècle*, introduction, notes and trans. William Kibler, ed. Sarah Kay (Paris, 1996) pp. 16-17

saints to that of non-saintly people as represented in hagiographies. This will show how great was the moral complexity surrounding vengeance undertaken by humans from a Christian perspective, and that identifying when an act of vengeance was undertaken in accordance with God's will, or not, was a consistent problem.

This thesis will demonstrate that there is more to the study of vengeance in the central middle ages than has previously been recognised. Not only was vengeance an important part of the way that social relationships were negotiated on earth, the necessity of punishing human sin was also intrinsic to the way that the relationship between heaven and earth was conceptualised. The idea of divine vengeance pervaded human understandings of the course of history and the way that people experienced the world. It also affected the way that the morality of acts of vengeance by humans was thought about; how were people to know when their own intended acts of vengeance were or were not divinely approved? Was the threat of divine vengeance for incorrect action actually important to people when they were seeking vengeance? Rather than adding to the existing scholarship on the prevalence of feud in this period, and the social mechanisms through which vengeance was sought, I will instead focus on the ways that divine vengeance was conceptualised as a theological principle, the ways that divine vengeance was observed, experienced and reported in the world, the ways that authors in different contexts employed the idea of divine vengeance as a rhetorical framework for presenting moralising depictions of human actions, including vengeance, and finally the ways that the idea of divine vengeance influenced the way that vengeance undertaken by humans was thought about from a Christian moral perspective.

CHAPTER 1:

THE THEOLOGY OF DIVINE VENGEANCE

The concept of God's right to take vengeance on sinful humans was central to the way that the morality of vengeance was thought about in medieval society in a variety of contexts. Sin defined as a person's refusal to return to God the honour that is owed to Him through their own free choice forms the basic conceptual framework within which all manifestations of God's just punishment should be understood. The idea that God could and did inflict vengeful punishment on humans for sinning was integral to the way that earthly misfortune was often explained and rationalised, as well as being foundational to understandings of heaven, hell and Judgement Day in the afterlife. This was not simply from a perspective of God requiring justice for offences against himself; God's judgement was explicitly talked about in terms of vengeance.

This chapter will explore in detail the theological basis for the concept of divine vengeance, as it was developed and discussed in the years c. 900 – c. 1150, in order to introduce the moral and conceptual framework for the following chapters' discussions of the specific ways that God's vengeance was observed and reacted to on earth in the form of momentous historical events, punitive miracles, and through human agents. As will be considered further in chapters two to four, stories recounting God's vengeance were almost invariably composed and written down for moralising purposes, and were always retrospective interpretations of sequences of events identifying the cause of a negative effect. However, to have had their intended impact, these stories relied on their audience sharing an understanding of the way that God's punishing power worked in the world. The extent to which individuals engaged with and understood the theological minutiae of the reasons for God's vengeance must have varied a great deal depending on their social position and level of access to education, and even to an extent on personal belief and inclination for such learning. As chapters four and five will show, the threat of God's vengeance may not have mattered to some people at all. Nevertheless, the principle that God had a right to avenge offences against himself, and frequently exercised that right on earth as well as on souls after death, was an important part of the way that many people, across the social spectrum, thought about their own and others' conduct and the spiritual consequences of their actions.

Theological interpretations of the necessity of God's vengeance revolved around three main issues, which will be explored in this chapter in turn: the existence of free will and the nature of humanity's relationship with God, the nature of sin, and the dual nature of God's punishment as either purgative or vindictive in order to make recompense for human sin. The issue of free will is important because it explains *why* humans frequently deserved punishment from God, while ideas about the nature of sin determined *when*. The final section addresses the issue of why simple forgiveness for sin was not enough, and the way that God's merciful nature was balanced with the necessity of punishment for sin through the idea of purgation, which sat alongside His vindictive retribution. All of these issues were regularly up for debate in the period under consideration here, so this chapter will also address the extent to which there was consistency or change in the way that divine vengeance was thought about from theological and pastoral perspectives. I suggest that there were varying degrees of change, and in different contexts; the way that sin was thought about changed more than the way that free will was dealt with for instance, while pastoral teaching remained more constant and underwent a more gradual change than intellectual discussion about sin and recompense.

One issue with assessing such levels of change and consistency, however, is the nature of the available source material. Anselm's theological treatises written in the late eleventh and early twelfth century were designed for a scholarly audience made up of monks and possibly intellectual secular clerics, whereas Ælfric of Eynsham's homiletic works of the late tenth and early eleventh century were designed to communicate what were considered correct Christian principles to a wide audience in a pastoral context.⁹⁹ Any Old English homiletic tradition before Ælfric seems to have been somewhat limited, though this may be an issue of survival. The only evidence for composition of vernacular homilies prior to the second half of the tenth century is an erased fragment of Old English in Oxford, Bodleian Library, Digby 63, written in Northumbria possibly as early as the mid ninth century on parchment that was subsequently reused for a Latin text.¹⁰⁰ Subsequently, the earliest extant manuscript containing a homily collection in Old English is the Blickling manuscript, dated to c. 971 though of unknown origin, and the only other significant extant collection is found in the Vercelli Book, a manuscript also palaeographically dated to the 970s, and possibly produced at a Kentish centre.¹⁰¹ Similarly,

⁹⁹ On the contribution of secular clerics to intellectual life in England during the long twelfth century, see Hugh M. Thomas, *The Secular Clergy in England, 1066-1216* (Oxford, 2014) pp. 228-44, 254-65.

¹⁰⁰ Scragg, 'The Battle of Maldon'.

¹⁰¹ See D. G. Scragg, 'The Corpus of Vernacular Homilies and Prose Saints' Lives before Aelfric', *Anglo-Saxon England* 8 (1979) pp. 223-77. See *The Blickling Homilies*, ed. Kelly, p. xxix. Samantha Zacher, *Preaching the Converted: The Style and Rhetoric of the Vercelli Book Homilies* (Toronto, 2009) pp. 5-19.

there is a rich body of devotional poetry written in Old English surviving in manuscripts from the later tenth and eleventh century; many of these poems are argued to have originated earlier, but no earlier written copies survive.¹⁰²

Ælfric and Anselm frequently addressed similar theological topics, though the different genres and purposes of their writings mean that they must be read in different ways if their ideas are to be directly compared. Anselm's theological expositions provide detailed and direct discussions of theological principles, whereas with Ælfric's homiletic tracts designed to teach the principles of Christian faith to non-scholarly audiences it is necessary to read between the lines to extrapolate the principles that he wished to communicate. The same applies to Wulfstan's homilies. This means that it is possible that any change in thinking detected may be at least partly down to the genre and purpose of the surviving sources. Equally, consistencies across genres of sources designed for different audiences may indicate attitudes well established through various sections of society. Ælfric appears to have been innovative in the style and content of his homily collections. He reacted against the content of earlier homilies of the type of the Blickling and Vercelli books because of their use of apocryphal material, and in his own homilies drew more on the Alfredian tradition of scholarship with its reliance on Augustine, Gregory and Bede.¹⁰³ He also dealt with theological problems such as original sin, free will and reasons for the existence of suffering in the world that earlier homilists seem to have avoided; in doing so, he seeks to provide a deeper level of theological explanation for the duties that Christians must adhere to on earth in order to protect their soul after death.¹⁰⁴ These are all topics that Anselm later addressed in greater detail in a scholarly context.

Theological ideas cannot be divorced from the social context in which they were written, since social practice and theological principles each influenced the other.¹⁰⁵ Although there were distinctions between monastic, clerical and lay areas of life, there were always elements of overlap. Although Anselm wrote his treatises for an intellectual audience, he too engaged in pastoral activity during his time as Archbishop of Canterbury and came into contact with people from varied sections of society. In his *Vita Anselmi*, Eadmer speaks of how Anselm travelled through England dispensing spiritual instruction to a wide spectrum of people,

¹⁰² The major manuscripts containing Old English poetry and their *ASPR* editions are: *The Exeter Book*, eds. George Phillip Krapp and Elliott van Kirk Dobbie (London, 1936); *The Junius Manuscript*, ed. George Phillip Krapp, (New York, 1931); *The Vercelli Book*, ed. George Phillip Krapp, (New York, 1932).

¹⁰³ Malcolm Godden, 'Ælfric and the Vernacular Prose Tradition', in ed. Paul E. Szarmach and Bernard Felix Huppe (eds.) *The Old English Homily and Its Backgrounds* (Albany, 1978) pp. 106-07.

¹⁰⁴ Godden, 'Ælfric and the Vernacular Prose Tradition', p. 107.

¹⁰⁵ Helen Foxhall Forbes, *Heaven and Earth*, pp. 1-2, 10.

adapting his words to his listeners, whether monastic, clerical or lay, and how Anselm performed the pastoral duties of Archbishop, delivering confirmations and sermons to crowds of people.¹⁰⁶ In Anselm's conversations as reported by Eadmer, the subjection of the will to God and the necessity of maintaining willing adherence to God's precepts seem to have been important topics of discourse.¹⁰⁷ The ideas that Anselm expresses in his writings should therefore not be seen as isolated from wider society. The ways that people engaged with the concept of divine vengeance can also be seen through documents such as charters, wills, law codes and penitential handbooks. Despite being normative and formulaic texts, these sources are a useful supplement to homiletic and theological tracts because they demonstrate the ways that people were ideally supposed to put the theological ideas surrounding the concept of divine vengeance to practical use in the care of their own souls.

Changing intellectual trends over the tenth to twelfth centuries, the scholarly resources available to authors in different places at different times, and the impact that this had on thinking about divine vengeance, must also be taken into account. Reverence for and reliance on patristic authors, especially St Augustine (c.354-430) and St Gregory the Great (c.540-604), remained consistent across the period, but access to their works did not. Anglo-Saxon scholars were certainly aware of patristic writings, and had direct access to some works at least at major scholarly centres such as Winchester, Peterborough, Bath, Exeter, Worcester and Canterbury, but this seems to have been piecemeal and inconsistent.¹⁰⁸ Gregory the Great's *Moralia in Iob* and *Dialogues* were among the most popular patristic texts in Anglo-Saxon England; the *Dialogues* circulated both in Latin and in an Old English translation by Bishop Wærferth of Worcester, made at the request of King Alfred.¹⁰⁹ Ælfric's *Catholic Homilies* drew heavily on Gregory's *Dialogues* (in Latin, though he also knew the Old English version) and Augustine; Gregory more directly and Augustine through intermediary Carolingian homilies.¹¹⁰ From the

¹⁰⁶ Eadmer, *VA*, i.31, ii.21, ii. 25-26, ii. 43, pp. 54-57, 93-97, 101-02, 121

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, ii.11, ii. 21, pp. 77, 93-97

¹⁰⁸ Michael Lapidge, *The Anglo-Saxon Library* (Oxford, 2006) pp. 65-69, 134-47, 250-91; Conner, *Anglo-Saxon Exeter: A Tenth-Century Cultural History*, pp. 2-47.

¹⁰⁹ Lapidge, *The Anglo-Saxon Library*, pp. 25-69, 134-47, 304-07; Richard Gameson, 'St Wulfstan, the Library of Worcester and the Spirituality of the Medieval Book', in Julia S. Barrow and N.P. Brooks (eds.) *St Wulfstan and His World* (Ashgate, 2005) pp. 59-104; Malcolm Godden, 'Wærferth and King Alfred: The Fate of the Old English Dialogues', in Janet L. Nelson and Malcolm Godden (eds.) *Alfred the Wise: Studies in Honour of Janet Bately on the Occasion of Her Sixty-Fifth Birthday* (Weybridge, 1997) pp. 35-44. Christine Thijs, 'Wærferth's Treatment of Miracles in His Old English Translation of Gregory's Dialogues', *Notes and Queries* 53 (2006) pp. 272-86.

¹¹⁰ On Ælfric's sources, see Lapidge, *The Anglo-Saxon Library*, pp. 250-66. Godden, 'Wærferth and King Alfred', p. 44. Malcolm Godden, 'Ælfric and the Vernacular Prose Tradition', p. 104. Joyce Hill, 'The Dissemination of Ælfric's Lives of Saints', p. 236; Joyce Hill, 'The Benedictine Reform and Beyond', p. 158; Thomas Hall, 'Biblical

later eleventh century and into the twelfth, efforts were made to supplement Anglo-Saxon library collections with patristic texts, above all those of Augustine, although still there was variation between what became available at different centres; this was not necessarily down to Norman incomers viewing Anglo-Saxon libraries as deficient, rather it was in line with wider European enthusiasm for acquiring and copying patristic texts at this time, and was simultaneous with such developments in Normandy.¹¹¹ Carolingian works simultaneously declined in representation.¹¹²

Increased direct access to Augustine's writings therefore occurred at the same time as developments in scholarship and scholarly methods such as logic in the new European universities and cathedral schools of the late eleventh and twelfth century, both of which must have been factors in enabling Anselm to write the type of theological exposition that he did.¹¹³ Reverence for orthodoxy and changes in scholarly method thus continued alongside each other. I would suggest that the continued popularity of Old English homilies (particularly those by Ælfric) simultaneously with the composition of new types of intellectual tracts indicates that the messages that religious writers thought important to communicate through pastoral teaching remained broadly consistent even while theological principles were held up to increasing intellectual scrutiny.¹¹⁴ Hugh M. Thomas and Julia Barrow have shown that intellectual secular clerics played a key role in the dissemination of earlier medieval theological texts and works of the twelfth-century renaissance, and in the transmission of theological knowledge to the laity.¹¹⁵ Since the secular clergy were the main providers of pastoral care for the laity, this is important when considering the range of contexts discussed in the following chapters in which God's vengeance was observed and represented.

and Patristic Learning', in Phillip Pulsiano and Elaine Treharne (eds.) *A Companion to Anglo-Saxon Literature* (Oxford, 2008) pp. 336-39; Hill, 'Ælfric's Sources Reconsidered', pp. 362-80.

¹¹¹ Richard Gameson, *The Manuscripts of Early Norman England (c.1066-1130)* (Oxford, 1999) pp. 6-8; Webber, *Scribes and Scholars at Salisbury Cathedral c.1075-c.1125*, pp. 1-81; Gameson, 'St Wulfstan, the Library of Worcester and the Spirituality of the Medieval Book', pp. 61-91.

¹¹² Gameson, *The Manuscripts of Early Norman England*, p. 31.

¹¹³ R. N. Swanson, *The Twelfth-Century Renaissance* (Manchester, 1999).

¹¹⁴ On the transmission of Ælfric's *Catholic Homilies* and *Lives of Saints*, see Elaine Treharne, 'Making Their Presence Felt: Readers of Ælfric, c.1050-1350', in Hugh Magennis and Mary Swan (eds.) *A Companion to Ælfric* (Leiden, 2009) pp. 399-400; Hill, 'The Preservation and Transmission of Ælfric's Saints' Lives: Reader-Reception and Reader-Response in the Early Middle Ages', p. 422; Joyce Hill, 'The Dissemination of Ælfric's Lives of Saints', p. 235; Jonathan Wilcox, 'Transmission of Literature and Learning', pp. 63-64; Roy M. Liuzza, 'Religious Prose', in Phillip Pulsiano and Elaine Treharne (eds.) *A Companion to Anglo-Saxon Literature* (Oxford, 2008) p. 246; Susan Irvine, 'The compilation and use of manuscripts containing Old English in the twelfth century', pp. 62-66, 81.

¹¹⁵ Thomas, *The Secular Clergy in England, 1066-1216*, pp. 254-65. Julia Barrow, 'The education of the cleric, I and II' in *The Clergy in the Medieval World: Secular Clerics, Their Families and Careers in North-Western Europe, C. 800 - C. 1200* (Cambridge, 2013) pp. 170-235.

FREE WILL AND OBLIGATION TO GOD

The theology of divine vengeance was based on the idea that humans had an obligation to love and follow God, their creator, which it was necessary to uphold through their own free will. When humans failed to willingly uphold that obligation, God had a right to exact vengeance. The existence of free will and the consequence that humans frequently chose not to uphold their obligation to God was the reason that God's vengeance on sinful humans was necessary. (As the following chapters will show, however, exactly how humans were expected to adhere to God and the reasons they were considered to be deserving of divine vengeance varied a great deal.) By the tenth century in the west, Augustinian ideas about free will and sin were pre-eminent, and remained so into the twelfth century. Both Ælfric and Anselm drew heavily on Augustine in their own writings, and there is evidence of the same Augustinian ideas filtering through to other genres such as religious and epic poetry. It is important to understand the theology of free will in this period because it applied to the whole spectrum of human activity and underpinned the idea that God's vengeful punishment was always deserved and meaningful; sinning was a choice which would meet its comeuppance, perhaps in this life and certainly in the next.

Ideas about free will and sin in the central middle ages were founded on Augustine's *De Civitate Dei*, written towards the end of his life between 413 and 427. This was the culmination of a lifetime of developing theological understanding.¹¹⁶ Having explained the story of the fall of angels (apocryphal) and men (biblical), which provides the historical explanation for the flawed state of the human condition, since humanity is still bearing the consequences of Adam and Eve's inability to resist temptation by the devil and obey God's commands, Augustine goes on to discuss the importance of obedience to God through free will.¹¹⁷ Augustine argues that God's instructions to humanity demanded obedience, and because of that demand, the rational creature was made in such a way that it is to their advantage to be in subjection to God, and calamitous to be disobedient, making willing obedience to God the highest virtue.¹¹⁸ Augustine maintains that since a rational creature, i.e.

¹¹⁶ On the development of Augustine's thinking on free will, see Jesse Couenhoven, 'Augustine's Rejection of the Free-Will Defence: An Overview of the Late Augustine's Theodicy', *Religious Studies* 43, no. 3 (2007): 279–98; For Augustine's life and career, see Garry Wills, *St Augustine* (London, 1999).

¹¹⁷ *St Augustine, Concerning the City of God against the Pagans*, trans. Henry Bettenson (London, 2003). (Hereafter Augustine, *De civitate dei*) On the fall, see xiii.13-15, pp. 522-23. For an explanation of original sin, see xvi.27, pp. 688-89. On God allowing demons to act in the world, see vii.35, p. 297.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.* xiv.12, p. 571

a human, can only obtain happiness through adherence to the highest good which is God, failure to adhere to God must be the result of a corruption of the rational nature.¹¹⁹ Such perversion comes from a will or desire that was created good but has been overtaken by pride, which, Augustine says, was the first fault of the rational creature and the beginning of all sin.¹²⁰ In Augustine's thinking then, a perversion of the will through pride was the sin that constituted a created being's failure to live up to its obligation to God, and was the reason that it became deserving of God's punishment.

The extent to which pride was considered to be the root of sin in the central middle ages can be seen in vernacular literature. The Old English *Genesis B* in the Junius 11 manuscript is a narration of the fall of angels and Adam and Eve. It is an interpolation into the longer *Genesis A* from an Old Saxon original. This interpolation may have taken place in the early tenth century, though the manuscript itself is of the late tenth century.¹²¹ In *Genesis B* it is Satan's 'ofermod' (over-pride) that makes him deserving of punishment from God and causes his downfall.¹²² Similarly, Beowulf is warned against succumbing to over-pride, and successfully does so.¹²³ In the *Battle of Maldon* and *La Chanson de Roland*, both Byrhtnoth and Roland are guilty of over-pride which causes them to engage in a hopeless battle, and both lose their lives in the ensuing fight. The *Maldon* poet describes Byrhtnoth as acting with *overmode* when he allowed the enemy invaders to cross the causeway that separated the two armies and join battle.¹²⁴ In this context, Byrhtnoth's *overmode* can be interpreted in the way of disastrous but admirable courage, but it is significant that *ofermod* more usually appears in Old English texts to refer to the devil's over-pride in his rebellion against God, and it is one of the sins that Wulfstan warns against in his homilies.¹²⁵ The plot of *La Chanson de Roland* is also driven by Roland's excessive pride, which causes his defeat and death. Roland's enemy, Ganelon, at one

¹¹⁹ Ibid. xii.1, pp. 471-72

¹²⁰ On how everything was created good, see ibid. xii.5, pp. 476-77. On pride, see ibid. xii.6, p. 477

¹²¹ See A.N. Doane, *The Saxon Genesis: An Edition of the West Saxon Genesis B and the Old Saxon Vatican Genesis* (Madison, 1991) pp. 43-54; Barbara Raw, 'The Probable Derivation of Most of the Illustrations in Junius 11 from an Illustrated Old Saxon Genesis', *Anglo-Saxon England* 5 (1976) pp. 133-48.

¹²² *Genesis*, ll. 262, 272, 338, ed. Krapp, *The Junius Manuscript*. pp. 10-13.

¹²³ *Beowulf*, ll. 1758-1761, ed. Dobbie, *Beowulf and Judith*, p. 54. Translation by Swanton, *Beowulf*, pp. 118-19.

¹²⁴ *The Battle of Maldon*, l. 89, ed. Elliott van Kirk Dobbie, *The Anglo-Saxon Minor Poems* (London, 1942) p. 9. See also H Gneuss, 'The Battle of Maldon 89: Byrhtnoð's Ofermod Once Again', *Studies in Philology* 73, no. 2 (1976) pp. 117-37; K.O. O'Keefe, 'Heroic Values and Christian Ethics', in *The Cambridge Companion to Old English Literature*, ed. M Godden and M Lapidge (Cambridge, 1991) pp. 107-25.

¹²⁵ A search for *ofermod* in the *DOEC* returns 360 hits. See

[https://tapor.library.utoronto.ca/cgi-bin/doecorpus/oec-](https://tapor.library.utoronto.ca/cgi-bin/doecorpus/oec-idx?sid=ed66a2aceb4611b352a59fe9e802ea56&index=Fragmentary&type=simple&q1=ofermod&restrict=Cameron+number&resval=&class=All&size=First+100)

[idx?sid=ed66a2aceb4611b352a59fe9e802ea56&index=Fragmentary&type=simple&q1=ofermod&restrict=Cameron+number&resval=&class=All&size=First+100](https://tapor.library.utoronto.ca/cgi-bin/doecorpus/oec-idx?sid=ed66a2aceb4611b352a59fe9e802ea56&index=Fragmentary&type=simple&q1=ofermod&restrict=Cameron+number&resval=&class=All&size=First+100) [accessed 20.05.2017] See, for example, Wulfstan, Homilies VI, VIIIc, Xa, Xc, ed. Dorothy Bethurum, *The Homilies of Wulfstan* (Oxford, 1957), pp. 145, 184, 192, 203, 207.

point reproaches Roland for his pride and expresses surprise that God had borne it so long, a speech that foreshadows Roland's subsequent defeat.¹²⁶ It is an uncomfortable moment because even though Ganelon is the villain of the piece his words have a ring of truth about them. The result is a level of ambiguity over how the audience is supposed to perceive Roland. It shows that even Christian heroes are fallible sinners and that God will not tolerate excessive pride in any context.¹²⁷ This shows that the idea that over-pride was a sinful fault pervaded texts designed for entertainment as well as texts intended for theological discourse and instruction, which thereby emphatically draw attention to pride as the cause of many other woes.

Possession of a will that was free to succumb to pride was what made God's vengeful punishment for sin meaningful. Again, Augustine's arguments in *De Civitate Dei* about the importance of free will in the meaningful functioning of humanity's relationship with God remained foundational to the way that God's rewarding and punishing power was understood fairly consistently throughout the tenth to twelfth centuries. In addressing the question of why, if created beings were made for loving God, God did not create them incapable of doing otherwise, Augustine explains that God bestowed on angels and humans the power of free choice, which enabled them to desert God and abandon their felicity if they so chose, and that He gave everlasting good to those who freely chose to adhere to Him, but justly inflicted misery on those who chose to abandon Him.¹²⁸ Innate in this argument is the envisioning of divine reward or punishment as being always deserved and justified.¹²⁹ Free will was what made the act of adhering to God's precepts, or not, meritorious or censured. It was essential that created beings freely and willingly chose to love God, their creator, because without that free choice, if they were compelled either to adhere to God or to sin, neither reward nor punishment would be justified because they would have been unable to act any differently.

Ælfric makes Augustine's arguments on these topics accessible in the vernacular in his *Catholic Homilies* (989-995) and his *Lives of Saints* series (992-1002), in which he neatly sums up the existence of free will and why it was important in making God's punishments and rewards meaningful. Ælfric follows Augustine to explain that God created all beings good and let them have their own discretion whether they would love or forsake their creator.¹³⁰ He gave

¹²⁶ *CdR*, ll. 1773-1774, ed. Short, pp. 134-35.

¹²⁷ Andreas Kablitz, 'Religion and Violence in the Song of Roland', *MLN126 Supplement* (2011) p. 143.

¹²⁸ Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*, xxii.1, pp. 1022-23

¹²⁹ *Ibid.* v.10, p. 195

¹³⁰ *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: The First Series* (hereafter Ælfric, CH 1), ed. Peter Clemoes, Early English Text Society 17 (Oxford, 1997) 1.1, ll. 27-29, 155-59, pp. 179, 184. There is no source for these lines on the *Fontes*

angels free will so that they might either remain in everlasting bliss through obedience, or lose that bliss through disobedience, because it would not be commensurate with his righteousness if he subjected them to his service by compulsion, or pushed them into evil. Some angels perverted their own free will, and wrought themselves into devils through their own pride.¹³¹ Likewise, humans could not be compelled to break God's commandment, and were free to choose whether to be disobedient. Adam and Eve became guilty through their own free will, and passed their guilt on to their offspring.¹³² By stressing that the fallen angels and Adam and Eve all possessed their own free will, which they misused, Ælfric emphasises their personal choice and fault. In Ælfric's representation, the choice should be obvious, and the effect is to stress that every individual should recognise their own responsibility to make themselves deserving of reward and avoid God's punishment.

Ælfric's purpose in writing his homilies was entirely pastoral; they are a product of a strong conviction among the tenth-century Benedictine reformers, by whom Ælfric was educated, that teaching the fundamentals of the Christian faith to the wider population was an important duty of bishops and priests. They are designed as materials for preachers to teach correct, orthodox Christian principles to their congregations, as well as to encourage monastic-style devotion throughout society.¹³³ The conviction that priests had a duty to teach and instruct their congregations was not new; it was also expressed in the anonymous Blickling homilies, the earliest extant collection of English vernacular preaching material addressed to a lay and clerical audience and homilies similar to those Ælfric may have drawn on.¹³⁴ However, the range of topics that the clergy had a duty to teach seems to have dramatically increased in Ælfric's estimation, with free will among those given a new importance. Free will is a topic

Database. See 'The Sources of CH 1.1 (C.B.1.1.2)', *Fontes Anglo-Saxonici*, http://fontes.english.ox.ac.uk/data/content/astexts/title_sources.asp?refer=C%2EB%2E1%2E1%2E2 [accessed 26.07.2018] Cf. Green, *Anglo-Saxon Audiences*, p. 77.

¹³¹ CH 1.7, ll. 137-52, ed. Clemons, p. 236. There is no source for these lines on the *Fontes Database*. See 'The Sources of C.H 1.7 (C.B.1.1.8)', *Fontes Anglo-Saxonici*, http://fontes.english.ox.ac.uk/data/content/astexts/title_sources.asp?refer=C%2EB%2E1%2E1%2E8 [accessed 26.07.2018]

¹³² CH 1.7, ll. 153-65, ed. Clemons, pp. 236-37. Ælfric partially follows Augustine's *De correptione et gratia* for these lines. See 'The Sources of C.H 1.7 (C.B.1.1.8)', *Fontes Anglo-Saxonici*, http://fontes.english.ox.ac.uk/data/content/astexts/title_sources.asp?refer=C%2EB%2E1%2E1%2E8 [accessed 26.07.2018] See also LoS 1.17, ll. 226-71, ed. Skeat, pp. 380-83. Ælfric's source for this passage was Alfred's Old English Boethius. See 'The Sources of Lives 17 (C.B.1.3.18)', *Fontes Anglo-Saxonici*, http://fontes.english.ox.ac.uk/data/content/astexts/title_sources.asp?refer=C.B.1.3.18&flag=1&pagesize=All [accessed 18.07.2018]

¹³³ See Hill, 'Ælfric: His Life and Works', pp. 35-37, 47. Hill, 'The Benedictine Reform and Beyond', pp. 152-54, 163-64. Milton McC. Gatch, *Preaching and Theology in Anglo-Saxon England: Ælfric and Wulfstan* (Toronto, 1977) pp. 11-17, 47-59. Lynne Grundy, *Books and Grace: Ælfric's Theology* (London, 1991) pp. 1-2.

¹³⁴ *The Blickling Homilies*, ed. Kelly, p. xxix. Godden, 'Ælfric and the Vernacular Prose Tradition' p. 102. Gatch, *Preaching and Theology*, pp. 12-17.

that does not appear in the Blickling or Vercelli collections, and rarely in Wulfstan, but which is expounded by Ælfric on a number of occasions, suggesting that he wished to communicate not only the ways in which Christians could become deserving of reward or punishment by God, but also the theological reasons why.¹³⁵ The *Catholic Homilies* had the greatest dissemination of any Old English work and may have reached large numbers of local churches in the form of pamphlets for preachers, while the *Lives of Saints* show an appetite for such works among pious, literate, aristocratic circles for private reading, having been commissioned by ealdorman Æthelweard and his son Æthelmær out of a wish to emulate elements of monastic learning and practice in their own lives.¹³⁶ Even in a rural society most people lived within a few miles of a church, and attendance on Sundays and feast days was expected from an early date after the conversion period.¹³⁷ Although it remains difficult to say in what numbers ordinary lay people came to church to hear preaching, or how much they listened to or understood when they did, the importance of free will and the consequent inherent justice of God's punishment for sin or reward for piety was evidently among the kinds of messages that Ælfric innovatively thought that monastic and lay congregations should hear.¹³⁸

This importance of articulating in the vernacular the idea that free will was what made God's punishment or reward just and meaningful was not confined to homiletic texts. The first part of the Old English poem *Christ and Satan*, probably an early- to mid-eleventh-century addition to the late-tenth-century Junius 11 manuscript consisting of *Genesis A and B*, *Exodus and Daniel*, is a lament on the fall of the angels which repeatedly emphasises that angels and people have an obligation to adhere to God and that upholding that obligation must be a conscious choice, otherwise punishment follows.¹³⁹ The poet exhorts the audience to 'keep in

¹³⁵ See 'Free Will' and associated entries in Robert DiNapoli, *An Index of Theme and Image to the Homilies of the Anglo-Saxon Church, Comprising the Homilies of Ælfric, Wulfstan, and the Blickling and Vercelli Codices* (Anglo-Saxon Books, 1995) p. 44. Godden, 'Ælfric and the Vernacular Prose Tradition', p. 107.

¹³⁶ Catherine Cubitt, 'Ælfric's Lay Patrons', in Hugh Magennis and Mary Swan (eds.) *A Companion to Ælfric* (Leiden, 2009) pp. 165-67, 183-84; Gatch, *Preaching and Theology*, pp. 48-49; Nicholas Howe, 'The Cultural Construction of Reading in Anglo-Saxon England', in Jonathan Boyarin (ed.) *The Ethnography of Reading* (California, 1993) pp. 58-73; Wilcox, 'Transmission of Literature and Learning', p. 64; Foxhall Forbes, *Heaven and Earth*, pp. 51-52, 121, 137.

¹³⁷ Foxhall Forbes, *Heaven and Earth*, p. 37.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.* p. 47.

¹³⁹ The cohesion and provenance of Junius 11, particularly concerning the thematic and visual distinction of *Christ and Satan* from the other three poems, has been debated. See Joyce Hill, 'Confronting Germania Latina: Changing Responses to Old English Biblical Verse', in R.M. Liuzza (ed.) *The Poems of MS Junius 11: Basic Readings* (New York, 2002) pp. 1-19; J. R. Hall, 'The Old English Epic of Redemption: The Theological Unity of MS Junius 11', in R.M. Liuzza (ed.) *The Poems of MS Junius 11: Basic Readings* (New York, 2002), pp. 20-52; J.R. Hall, "'The Old English Epic of Redemption": Twenty-Five-Year Retrospective', in R.M. Liuzza (ed.) *The Poems of MS Junius 11: Basic Readings* (New York, 2002) pp. 53-68; Janet Schrunck Ericksen, 'The Wisdom Poem at the End of MS Junius 11', in R.M. Liuzza (ed.) *The Poems of MS Junius 11: Basic Readings* (New York, 2002) pp. 302-26; Barbara Raw, 'The Construction of Oxford, Bodleian Library, Junius 11', *Anglo-Saxon England* 13 (1984)

mind the holy Lord’ and ‘choose for ourselves an abode with the king of all kings’, while the fallen angels tell each other to ‘Think: we were allowed to dwell in heaven’s brightness while we were willing to obey holy God’.¹⁴⁰ In describing the torments of hell the poet comments that God ‘will take vengeance upon them in suffering since they often forgot the Lord God, the one eternal ruler, him whom they ought to have had as their hope’, which is followed by an encouragement to everyone throughout the world to ‘decide to start obeying the saviour’.¹⁴¹ This thematically corresponds with the *Genesis B* poet’s description of how the angels fell from heaven because ‘they did not desire to respect [God’s] word and deed, therefore he, almighty God, set them in a worse light underneath the earth, defeated in dark hell.’¹⁴² The fate of the angels who consciously chose not to uphold their obligation to God is dwelt on as a reminder that God has exercised his right to exact vengeance on sinful beings from the beginning of creation, and in doing so forces an emotive reflection on the consequences that a failure to subject the will to God’s could and would have in this life or the next.

Scholars have disagreed over whether Junius 11 was produced for devotional reading within a monastic community or for a powerful lay patron for the same purposes (such as Ealdorman Æthelweard who commissioned Ælfric’s *Lives of Saints* series).¹⁴³ The arguments for both are compelling in different respects; the fact that it has been possible to identify the unifying theme of the manuscript variously as an allegorical retelling of salvation history, and as a model of political inspiration, highlights the difficulty of separating ‘monastic’ and ‘lay’ interests and values.¹⁴⁴ Just as Ælfric’s homilies were likely to have been heard by both secular and monastic audiences, and as has been noted with the difficulty of distinguishing between treatment of secular and monastic audiences in the Vercelli homilies, Junius 11 may also

pp. 187–207. Leslie Lockett, ‘An Integrated Re-Examination of the Dating of Oxford, Bodleian Library, Junius 11’, *Anglo-Saxon England* 31 (2002) pp. 141–73; Rohini Jayatilaka, ‘Old English Manuscripts and Readers’, in Corinne Saunders (ed.) *A Companion to Medieval Poetry* (Oxford, 2010) p. 61.

¹⁴⁰ *Christ and Satan*, ll. 201-04, 231-32, ed. Krapp, *The Junius Manuscript*, pp. 142-43. ‘Gemunan we þone halgan drihten [...] ceosan us eard in wuldre mid ealra cyninga cyninge’. ‘Hwæt, we in wuldres wlite wunian moston / þær we halgan gode heran woldon’. Translation from Bradley, *Anglo-Saxon Poetry*, pp. 92, 93.

¹⁴¹ *Christ and Satan*, ll. 638-43, ed. Krapp, *The Junius Manuscript*. ‘stæleð feondas / fæhðe and firne, þær ðe hie freodrihten, / ecne anwaldan, oft forgeaton, / þone þe hie him to hihte habban sceoldon. / Uton, la, geþencan geond þas worulde, / þæt we hælende heran onginnen!’ Translation from Bradley, *Anglo-Saxon Poetry*, p. 102.

¹⁴² *Genesis*, ll. 309-12, ed. Anlezark, *Old Testament Narratives*, pp. 24-25. ‘Forþon heo his dæd and word / noldon weorðian, forþon he heo on wyrse leoht / under eorðan neoðan, ællmihtig God, / sette sigeleas on þa sweartan helle.’

¹⁴³ For the monastic argument, see Peter J. Lucas, ‘MS Junius 11 and Malmesbury’, *Scriptorium* (1980) pp. 197–210. For the argument for a lay patron, see Daniel Anlezark, ‘Lay Reading, Patronage, and Power in Bodleian Library, Junius 11’, in Giles E.M. Gasper and John McKinnell (eds.) *Ambition and Anxiety: Courts and Courtly Discourse, C. 700-1600* (Toronto, 2014) pp. 76–97.

¹⁴⁴ For the argument for salvation history, see Hall, ‘The Old English Epic of Redemption’; For the argument for political interest, see Anlezark, ‘Lay Reading, Patronage, and Power in Bodleian Library, Junius 11’, pp. 76-97.

provide evidence of the same sorts of ideas about free will and the consequences of not willingly adhering to God's commands being articulated in the vernacular and circulated in both secular and monastic circles in the later tenth and early eleventh century.¹⁴⁵

Although in the later eleventh century Anselm of Bec (later Archbishop of Canterbury) gave greater scrutiny to the concept of free will as being intrinsic to making God's vengeance or reward just, the effect was to confirm the arguments of Augustine, which Ælfric and his contemporaries followed, rather than to fundamentally alter them. In his *Monologion* (1075x1076), Anselm echoes Augustine's reasoning that the rational creature was made for loving God, and develops this further through the application of logic. He reasons that if to be rational is to be capable of discernment, meaning the ability to judge something worthy of love or repudiation, the outcome of that discernment should be to love the supreme essence (God) above all else. He concludes that it is 'clear that the rational creature ought to devote all its power and will to remembering and understanding and loving the supreme good, for which purpose it owes its very existence'.¹⁴⁶ Anselm cannot seem to imagine that any rational creature could use their discernment to come to any other reasonable conclusion; in his thinking, anyone who uses their discernment and nevertheless decides to repudiate God is simply wrong, not fulfilling their duty to their creator through sinful pride, and is therefore all the more deserving of punishment. He then goes on to explain why a will that chooses to repudiate God must be punished, arguing that it is necessary for God to distinguish treatment of the soul before it existed, which 'is capable of no good and wills no evil' ('id quod nullum bonum potest et nullum malum vult'), and the soul that has free will, which 'is capable of the greatest good and wills the greatest evil' ('id quod maximum bonum potest et maximum malum vult') and thereby disdains what it was made for.¹⁴⁷ When such a soul dies, Anselm asserts, it cannot return to its previous state of experiencing nothing, because just as the soul that loves God must be rewarded, so the soul that disdains God must be punished.¹⁴⁸

In his *De libertate arbitrii* (1080x86), Anselm elaborates on the same Augustinian ideas that Ælfric had discussed, about free will and personal choice being what made the first angels

¹⁴⁵ On Ælfric's audiences, see Gatch, *Preaching and Theology*, pp. 53-54. On the Vercelli homilies' intended audience, see Zacher, *Preaching the Converted: The Style and Rhetoric of the Vercelli Book Homilies*, pp. 33-42, esp. pp. 41-42.

¹⁴⁶ Anselm, *Monologion*, lxviii, ed. Franciscus Salesius Schmitt, *S. Anselmi Cantuariensis Archiepiscopi Opera Omnia*, vol. 1 (Stuttgart, 1984) pp. 78-79; 'Clarum ergo est rationalem creaturam totum suum posse et velle ad memorandum et intelligendum et amandum summum bonum impendere debere, ad quod ipsum esse suum se cognoscit habere.' Translation from Thomas Williams, *Anselm: Basic Writings* (Indianapolis, 2007) p. 66.

¹⁴⁷ Anselm, *Monologion*, lxxi, ed. Schmitt, vol. 1, p. 81. Translation from Williams, *Basic Writings*, p. 68

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

and men deserving of God's punishment. Here, Anselm envisages the will as battling between two forces: the will to sin and the will to not sin. He insists that no one can be led into sin without their consent, because to be so led, the will to sin must be stronger than the will to not sin, whereas if the will to not sin remained stronger, no thought of sin could persuade it.¹⁴⁹ This argument explains why assessments of Adam and Eve's guilt could combine their personal fault with the malign influence of devilish temptation; they were simultaneously led by external influence, and to blame for their own conduct, in that no external force could have tempted them to sin if the will to follow it was not present. The main difference between Ælfric and Anselm's writings about free will therefore seems to be that whereas Ælfric presented the theological principles as unquestionable doctrine, Anselm sought to make them irrefutable by the addition of logical proof. This could simply be down to differences in genre and purpose, but could also be ascribed to the emergence of a new rigorous scholasticism in Anselm's day in the beginnings of what has been termed the 'twelfth-century renaissance' in Europe, marked by a revival of ancient learning and the development of new educational structures.¹⁵⁰ This new scholasticism led to a deeper questioning and investigation of what had been accepted as received authority, though as Anselm's treatment of free will shows, this did not have to mean that received authority was rejected; it could instead be reinforced. Anselm himself insisted on his adherence to orthodoxy, and, at least in this area, despite his novel scholarly methods his fundamental views seem to have remained conservative.¹⁵¹

Anselm did not confine his ideas to scholarly treatises. As already noted, as Archbishop of Canterbury he was a visible figure who travelled through England performing the pastoral duties of a bishop, delivering sermons and spiritual advice to lay, clerical and monastic audiences.¹⁵² Though his writings did not have the same pastoral impetus as Ælfric to educate the Christian population more broadly, he did consider it his duty to give spiritual guidance to his fellow monks, and his extensive letter collections show that he was considered an authoritative figure in this respect. In a letter of 1071 for example, written even before *Monologion* was published, he can be seen explaining to Henry, a monk of Christ Church, Canterbury, the principle that he would later articulate more fully in *Monologion*, that God demands the submission of his creation, and that humans achieve that submission through

¹⁴⁹ Anselm, *De libertate arbitrii*, v, vii, ed. Schmitt, vol. 1, pp. 214-17, 218-20.

¹⁵⁰ See Swanson, *The Twelfth-Century Renaissance*, pp. 103-51.

¹⁵¹ Anselm, *Monologion*, Prologus, ed. Schmitt, vol. 1, p. 8.

¹⁵² See above, note 104.

selfless and willing obedience to God's will rather than their own.¹⁵³ The aim of such advice seems to have been to give encouragement and comfort to young monks and stress the value of the monastic life.

More obliquely, Anselm's influence can be detected in the work of his contemporary and pupil, Osbern of Canterbury.¹⁵⁴ Monastic discipline seems not to have come naturally to Osbern (which, nevertheless, did not stop him becoming a sharp critic of negligent monks himself), and in 1076 he had been sent to Bec, where Anselm was then prior, by Archbishop Lanfranc of Canterbury. He spent the next four years there under Anselm's tutelage, during which time Anselm composed his controversial *Proslogion*, before they returned to Canterbury together in 1080. Osbern seems to have had a relatively close relationship with Anselm; Anselm wrote to Lanfranc praising Osbern's intellect and progress at Bec, and Osbern may in turn have inspired Anselm with his love for the Canterbury saints.¹⁵⁵ Sometime after 1080, and therefore probably around the same time that Anselm was composing his philosophical dialogues *De veritate*, *De libertate arbitrii* and *De casu diaboli* while he was Abbot of Bec, Osbern wrote a *Life* of St Ælfheah, the archbishop of Canterbury who had been martyred by the Danes in 1012.¹⁵⁶ Within his account of Ælfheah's life and martyrdom, the *Life* contains passages of spiritual commentary addressed to Osbern's fellow Christians.

One such passage concerns humanity's obligation to follow God and God's punishing and rewarding power, and aligns with Anselm's comments on the same topic in his *De libertate arbitrii* and *Cur Deus Homo* (composed shortly after Anselm became Archbishop of Canterbury in 1093). Anselm says that God's ultimate goodness means that he neither benefits from human worship nor is harmed by human sin, but by punishing and rewarding voluntary acts of obedience and disobedience, God demonstrates that all of creation is subject to him.¹⁵⁷ Free will was given in order for the rational nature to be able to choose to maintain an upright

¹⁵³ *The Letters of Saint Anselm of Canterbury*, ed. Walter Fröhlich, Cistercian Studies Series 96-97, vol. 1 (Kalamazoo, 1990) 5, pp. 84-85.

¹⁵⁴ On the links between the monasteries of Bec and Canterbury see Giles Gasper, "A Doctor in the House?" The Context for Anselm of Canterbury's Interest in Medicine with Reference to a Probably Case of Malaria', *Journal of Medieval History* 30 (2004) pp. 245-61; Gasper, 'Envy, Jealousy and the Boundaries of Orthodoxy', pp. 59-60.

¹⁵⁵ On Osbern's career, see Jay Rubenstein, 'The Life and Writings of Osbern of Canterbury', in Richard Eales and Richard Sharpe (eds.) *Canterbury and the Norman Conquest: Churches, Saints and Scholars 1066-1109* (London, 1995) pp. 27-40. On Osbern's relationship with Anselm, see Gasper, 'A Doctor in the House?' pp. 252-61. For a summary of the dates of Anselm's writings, see Williams, *Anselm: Basic Writings*, pp. vii-xi.

¹⁵⁶ For the dating of Osbern's *Life of Ælfheah*, see Rubenstein, 'The Life and Writings of Osbern of Canterbury', pp. 34-35.

¹⁵⁷ Anselm, *Cur Deus Homo*, 1.14-15, ed. Schmitt, vol. 2, pp. 72-74; Brian Davies and Brian Leftow, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Anselm*, Cambridge Companions to Philosophy (Cambridge, 2004) pp. 293-94.

will only for its own sake.¹⁵⁸ Osbern takes this principle and uses it to explain why the Christian God is superior to heathen gods:

[The gods of the heathen] not only grant freedom to sin to their followers, but even induce these men to sin by their very rites and rituals, fearing that men would deny the honours owed to them if they do not seek to please them by the deadly permissiveness of shameful pleasures [Osbern gives comedies and drama festivals as examples of these and says that these are gods] who clearly have no regard for their worshippers if they have not granted them freedom from sin. But all powerful God, our Lord, does not show himself in need of any of our goods, and thus proves that he is a true God. The worship that he demands means he has no fear of giving men precepts for living; he gives precepts for living so that he may extend rewards to those that obey him but punishment for those that despise him.¹⁵⁹

In this assessment, because the heathen gods' honour can be diminished if they do not secure worship from their followers by allowing them to indulge in activities that, from a Christian perspective, are sinful, those gods cannot give their followers rewards or punishments in the same meaningful way as the Christian God. This is why Osbern can assert that heathen gods 'have no regard for their worshippers'. 'Freedom from sin', as Osbern means it, does not mean the inability to commit sin, nor freedom from the consequences of sin, rather the freedom to choose to not sin and therefore become deserving of eternal reward (and vice versa, the freedom to choose to sin and be deserving of punishment).

This precisely aligns with Anselm's own arguments, which suggests that the topic of God's just punishment and reward was something that was under discussion in the monastic circles of Bec and Canterbury in the later eleventh century. It is surprising that Osbern presents this commentary as his own rather than attributing it to St Ælfheah in his attempts to convert the heathen invaders of Canterbury in 1011/12. By addressing his readers in his own voice Osbern gives these points more immediacy, which suggests that these were issues that were still considered important and relevant. The idea that God has no need of our gifts and desires only the goodness of our minds and souls is also consistent with Ælfric and Augustine's

¹⁵⁸ Anselm, *De libertate arbitrii*, 1-3, ed. Schmitt, vol. 1, pp 207-13. Translation from Williams, *Anselm, Basic Writings*, pp. 149-52

¹⁵⁹ Osberno, *Vita S. Alphegi Archiepiscopi Cantuariensis* (hereafter Osbern, *Vita S. Alphegi*), ed. H. Wharton, *Anglia Sacra*, vol. 2 (1691) p. 133. 'qui non modo peccandi impunitatem suis tribuunt cultoribus, verum etiam variis eosdem observationibus atque oblectationibus ad peccandum inducunt; dum metuunt indebitos sibi honores ab hominibus denegari, si non eisdem per mortiferas voluptatum execrandarum licentias stuerint placent [...] qui nullam sibi culturæ possunt exhibere reverentiam, si non hominibus peccandi triuerint licentiam. At Deus omnipotens & Dominus noster, ut in nullo bonorum nostrorum se indigere, ac per hoc verum se Deum esse manifestet; sic culturam exigit, ut vivendi præcepta dare non metuebat; sic vivendi præcepta dat, ut ea servantibus præmia, contemnentibus vero supplicia proponat.' Translation from Frances Shaw, *Osbern's Life of Alfege* (London, 1999) 19, p. 56

teaching, and there seems to be the same pattern of this Christian principle remaining fundamentally the same but receiving more extensive discursive treatment in the later eleventh century.¹⁶⁰ The idea that God's bestowal of free will on his human creation was what made His reward or punishment necessary and just, as articulated by Augustine, therefore seems to have remained foundational to the way that theologians thought about God's punishing and rewarding power throughout the tenth to twelfth centuries. The conviction that God's punishment, if and when it came, was always deserved and just because the victim had freely chosen to sin, was what underpinned the accounts of divine vengeance that will be discussed in the following chapters. This leads into the question of what exactly it meant to diverge from God's precepts and become deserving of His vengeful punishment.

THE NATURE OF SIN

If sin committed through free will explained *why* God's vengeance was an essential part of upholding His relationship with humanity, theologians then also had to consider what exactly sin constituted. Augustine said that pride was the root of all sin, and this remained influential in the way that sin was thought about, but also key to debates over the nature of sin in the period under discussion here was the issue of whether sin lay more in action or intent, and consequently whether bad action or bad will made a person more deserving of God's punishment.¹⁶¹ Debate surrounding the relative importance of action and intent in determining whether something was sinful intensified in the twelfth century with the growth of new schools and scholastic methods, but a fundamental understanding that sin was constituted by unfulfilled obligation to God, as a consequence of pride, remained.

To a great extent, the Lord's Prayer formed the basis for thinking about the nature of sin, and Ælfric, Wulfstan and Anselm all drew on the part of the prayer about forgiveness of sins to comment on the meaning of sin, which is expressed in terms of unfulfilled debt to God.

¹⁶⁰ Ælfric, CH 1.2, ll. 100-03, CH 1.9, ll. 95-102, ed. Clemoes, pp. 193, 252. For these lines in CH 1.2, Ælfric drew on Bede and the Psalms. See 'The Sources of CH 1.2 (C.B.1.1.3)', *Fontes Anglo-Saxonici*, http://fontes.english.ox.ac.uk/data/content/astexts/title_sources.asp?refer=C.B.1.1.3&flag=1&pagesize=All [accessed 26.07.2018]. The Fontes database does not record any sources for these lines in CH 1.9. See 'The Sources of CH 1.9 (C.B.1.1.10)', *Fontes Anglo-Saxonici*, http://fontes.english.ox.ac.uk/data/content/astexts/title_sources.asp?refer=C%2EB%2E1%2E1%2E10 [accessed 26.07.2018] See also *Ælfric's Catholic Homilies: The Second Series* (hereafter CH 2), ed. Malcolm Godden, Early English Text Society 5 (London, 1979) 2.28, ll. 55-58, p. 251

¹⁶¹ Augustine, *De civitate dei*, xii.6, p. 477

Wulfstan addresses the topic in his Latin Sermon *On conversion and repentance and communion*, one of a group of short tracts preserved in MS Copenhagen 1595, which was at least partly written while Wulfstan was bishop of Worcester between 1002 and 1016, possibly as preparatory compositions to fuller Old English sermons.¹⁶² He states that:

For the Lord said: ‘If you have forgiven others for their sins (*peccata*), then your Father in heaven will forgive you for your sins (*peccata*), but if you will not forgive, neither will your Father forgive you your sins (*peccata*).’ And we say in our prayer: ‘Forgive us our debts (*debita*) as we forgive our debtors (*debitoribus nostris*).’ ‘Debt’ here means the sin one commits against another.¹⁶³

Peccata (plural of *peccatum*) can be translated as fault, error, mistake, transgression, or sin.¹⁶⁴ By setting this alongside *debita* (plural of *debitum*), usually translated as meaning something that is due: a debt, duty or obligation, Wulfstan is equating fault or sin with unfulfilled obligation.¹⁶⁵

Ælfric gives an almost identical rendering of this in his Old English homily *On the Lord’s Prayer*:

The fifth prayer is, ‘Et dimitte nobis debita nostra, sicut et nos dimittimus debitoribus nostris:’ that is, ‘Forgive us our trespasses (*gyltas*) as we forgive those men who trespass against us (*þam mannum þe wið us agyltað*).¹⁶⁶

Ælfric renders *debitum* as *gylt*, a word which carries a range of meanings including guilt, crime, sin, offence, fault, debt, and a failure of duty.¹⁶⁷ It may be this final meaning of unfulfilled duty that is significant in Ælfric’s choice of *gylt* to interpret *debitum* here. There are other words in Old English that also carry the meaning of debt: *gafol* was often used to refer to tribute owed to the Danes, but could also have a figurative meaning in the sense of spiritual tribute of faith

¹⁶² Thomas N. Hall, ‘Wulfstan’s Latin Sermons’, in Matthew Townend (ed.) *Wulfstan, Archbishop of York: The Proceedings of the Second Alcuin Conference* (Turnhout, 2004) pp. 96-100.

¹⁶³ Hall, ‘Wulfstan’s Latin Sermons’, pp. 129-31. ‘Sic enim dixit dominus: ‘Si dimiseritis hominibus peccata eorum dimittet uobis Pater caelestis peccata uestra; si autem non dimiseritis nec Pater uester dimittet uobis peccata uestra’ (Matthew 6.15). Et nos in oratio dicimus: ‘Dimitte nobis debita sicut et nos dimittimus debitoribus nostris’ (Matthew 6.12). Debitum in hoc loco peccatum sonat quod alter peccat in altero.’ (Emphasis and Biblical identifications Hall’s)

¹⁶⁴ Lewis and Short, *DLD*, <http://clt.brepolis.net.ezphost.dur.ac.uk/dld/pages/QuickSearch.aspx> [accessed 20.05.2017]

¹⁶⁵ Ibid: <http://clt.brepolis.net.ezphost.dur.ac.uk/dld/pages/QuickSearch.aspx> [accessed 20.05.2017]

¹⁶⁶ Ælfric, CH 1.19, ll. 127-29, ed. Clemoes. ‘þæt fife gebed is, ‘Et dimitte nobis debita nostra, sicut et nos dimittimus debitoribus nostris.’ þæt is, ‘Forgif us ure gyltas, swa swa we forgifað þam mannum þe wið us agyltað.’ Ælfric drew directly on the Gospel of Matthew. See ‘The Sources of Catholic Homilies 1.19 (C.B.1.1.21) *Fontes Anglo-Saxonici*, http://fontes.english.ox.ac.uk/data/content/astexts/title_sources.asp?refer=C%2EB%2E1%2E1%2E21 [accessed 20.07.2018].

¹⁶⁷ See Bosworth-Toller, p. 494, and the *Dictionary of Old English: A to I online*: <http://tapor.library.utoronto.ca/doe/> [accessed 20.05.2017] Cf. Green, *Anglo-Saxon Audiences*, pp. 31-33.

owed to God.¹⁶⁸ *Scyld* has a closer meaning to *peccata* in carrying connotations of guilt, sin, crime or fault.¹⁶⁹ The concepts of debt combined with a failure of duty seem to be what distinguishes *gylt* here. Specifically in this context of the Lord's Prayer, such a failure is constituted by human failure to forgive each other; if adherence to God was supposed to be selfless, then a failure to forgive was the very opposite of such selflessness because it meant that the mind would be focused on personal resentment rather than giving its whole self to God. From the perspective of fairness, one who does not forgive cannot reasonably be expected to be forgiven. This importance of forgiveness will be discussed further in chapter five.

As with the idea of free will, Anselm placed under logical scrutiny this concept of sin in terms of unfulfilled debt to God. In his *Cur Deus Homo*, Anselm reasons that if angels and humans were always to return to God what they owed (*debet*) to him, they would never sin.¹⁷⁰ This debt he defines as the submission to the will of God that every rational creature ought to maintain. He comes to the conclusion that someone who does not discharge this debt by paying back to God the honour that is owed to Him takes from God what is rightly His and so dishonours Him, therefore sinning is a dishonouring of God. Anselm's exposition is still based on the meaning of sin as expressed in the Lord's Prayer, but instead of simply quoting from and commenting on the prayer, he confirms and strengthens the idea of sin in terms of unfulfilled obligation to God through logical reasoning.¹⁷¹

It was more difficult to determine exactly when a person failed to live up to their obligation to God because of the moral distinction between action and intent, and the questions of whether a sinful action was deserving of punishment if it was not accompanied by sinful intent. An awareness of the problem of action vs. intent in determining whether a person's soul was deserving of God's punishment or not goes back a long way. Ælfric relates a story which first appears in the seventh-century *Vita Furseyi*, about a vision experienced by the Irish missionary monk St Fursey (d.649), in which Fursey's soul was led up to the space between heaven and hell, where angels and devils proceeded to argue over which destination he deserved to be sent.¹⁷² The devils contended that because Fursey had consented to evil his soul

¹⁶⁸ See *Bosworth-Toller*, p. 358, and the *Dictionary of Old English*: <http://tapor.library.utoronto.ca/doe/> [accessed 20.05.2017].

¹⁶⁹ See *Bosworth-Toller*, p. 846.

¹⁷⁰ Anselm, *Cur Deus Homo*, 1.11, ed. Schmitt, 2, p. 68.

¹⁷¹ David Brown, 'Anselm on Atonement', in Brian Davies and Brian Leftow (eds.) *The Cambridge Companion to Anselm* (Cambridge, 2004) p. 292.

¹⁷² Ælfric, CH 2.20, ll. 19-268, ed. Godden, pp. 190-98. See 'The Sources of CH 2.20 (C.B.1.2.25)', *Fontes Anglo-Saxonici*, http://fontes.english.ox.ac.uk/data/content/astexts/title_sources.asp?refer=C%2EB%2E1%2E2%2E25 [accessed

was not immaculate and therefore deserved punishment, while the angels defended his inner goodness and purity of heart. It is the angels whose argument prevails, yet Fursey does not escape unscathed; before returning to his body Fursey is burned by an unrighteous soul which the devils cast upon him, and bore the mark on his shoulder and face for the rest of his life.

The story illustrates the complexities of determining whether it was action or intent that made an act sinful. Fursey's pure heart meant that he did not deserve the ultimate punishment of consignment to hell, nevertheless he was not perfect in his actions, and the burn he sustained symbolised his cleansing from his transgression. (This purgative purpose of God's punishment will be discussed further in the next section.) Conversely, in the same homily 'On conversion and repentance and communion', Wulfstan emphasises that a person can remain sinful in mind even when sinful action ceases, and is therefore no less deserving of punishment:

If you deplore your actions but continue to perform them, then you don't know how to repent. What good does it do for someone to profess sorrow for the sin of extravagant living and still burn with the flames of avarice or anger or be ignited by the fire of envy or harbour the crime (*dolum*) of malice against one's neighbour in one's heart?¹⁷³

This sentiment is echoed in his law codes for King Æthelred, which contain injunctions that the law of God should be 'zealously cherished both in word and deed' (*Ac lufige man Godes riht heonan forð georne wordes 7 dæda*).¹⁷⁴

In the later eleventh and twelfth century, scholarly debate shifted to place more emphasis on intent than on action. In thinking about the relative merits of action and intent, Anselm made the point that correct action did not necessarily deserve reward, because it is possible for a person only grudgingly to perform what he ought to do; justice deserving reward occurs only when an action proceeds from a correct will, and exists even if it is impossible for that will to come about.¹⁷⁵ This is similar to the controversial contention of his near contemporary, Peter Abelard (1079-1142), that sin lay purely in intent, and that just as the performance of a good intent cannot add to its worthiness, an action cannot become sinful unless it stems from an impure will, because actions are subject to external factors in ways that

27.07.2018] and Paul Fouracre, 'Fursa [St Fursa, Fursey], d. 649', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-10252?rskey=ZL1HAI&result=1> [accessed 27.07.2018]

¹⁷³ Hall, 'Wulfstan's Latin Sermons', pp. 132-31. 'Nam qui sic alia deplorat ut tamen alia committat penitentiam agree nescit. Quid enim prodest si peccata quis luxoriae defleat et adhuc auaritia estibus inardescit aut ire aut inuidiae igne accenditur aut dolum malitiae in corde contra proximum tenet?'

¹⁷⁴ V Æthelred 26, ed. A.J. Robertson, *The Laws of the Kings of England from Edmund to Henry I* (Cambridge, 1925) pp. 86-87.

¹⁷⁵ Anselm, *De veritate*, 12, ed. Schmitt, 1, p. 194.

the will is not.¹⁷⁶ Notably however, the late twelfth century Old English text *The Ormmulum*, written for a pastoral purpose, contains almost exactly the same phrasing that Wulfstan used in stressing that English folk, for love of Christ, should learn and follow his teaching ‘*wiþþ þohht, wiþþ word, wiþþ dede*’.¹⁷⁷ It may be that the text of the Ormmulum was deliberately echoing traditional phrasing, but it is nevertheless significant that this emphasis on good action combined with good intent was included. It shows that, despite the issue of action and intent having been subjected to such scholarly debate in the later eleventh and twelfth century, there was a continued sense that the importance of correct action combined with correct intent was necessary to avoid sin, and was something that still needed to be articulated in a pastoral context in order to help Christians gain God’s favour and avoid His punishment.

RECOMPENSE, FORGIVENESS AND PURGATIVE VS. VINDICTIVE PUNISHMENT

The purpose of God’s vengeance could be viewed in two ways; as vindictive, or as purgative. As my discussion of vengeance miracles in chapter three will show, where God’s vengeance was observed in the world it was almost always vindictive. Rarely did any victim of His miraculous punishment get the opportunity to redeem themselves before meeting a grisly end. This may be a consequence of the types of situations in which God’s vengeance was likely to be perceived – illness, injury and sudden death were the most common misfortunes to be attributed to divine vengeance as a consequence of sin.¹⁷⁸ However, this evidence of such circumstantial instances of divine vengeance might also demonstrate a gap between the way that God’s punishment was likely to be perceived and reported in a given situation, and the way that it was thought about theologically. If vengeance miracle stories predominantly depicted God’s punishment as vindictive and final, theologians, in trying to balance the necessity of God’s punishment for sin with His merciful nature, sought to stress its purgative purpose. As demonstrated in the case of St Fursey’s vision discussed above, punishment could, in some circumstances, cleanse the soul of sin before judgement day and prepare it for heaven.

¹⁷⁶ Peter Abelard, *Ethics*, ed. D. E. Luscombe (Oxford, 1971) pp. 15, 45-49. Hiroko Yamazaki, ‘Anselm and Abelard on Original Sin’, in G.E.M. Gasper and H. Kohlenberger (eds.) *Anselm and Abelard: Investigations and Juxtapositions* (Toronto, 2006) p 176. William E. Mann, ‘Ethics’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Abelard*, ed. Jeffrey E. Brower and Kevin Guilfooy (Cambridge, 2004) pp. 296-97.

¹⁷⁷ Elaine Treharne, *Old and Middle English c. 890-c.1400: An Anthology*, 2nd edn. (Blackwell, 2004) pp. 327.

¹⁷⁸ See Chapter 3.

Penance inflicted on the body on earth had the same function. The reason that God could not grant forgiveness for sin without also demanding such recompense, and the necessity of punishment when recompense was not forthcoming, will be the subject of this section.

Again, the theological principle behind the necessity of making recompense for sin in order to avoid God's punishment is most clearly articulated by Anselm in *Cur Deus Homo*, in which he explains why humankind could only gain redemption through Christ's sacrifice. Having established that sinning is a dishonouring of God, Anselm explains that it is not enough simply to pay back honour if compensation for harm done by the affront is not also offered.¹⁷⁹ In this respect, it might be useful to recall Hyams's description of vengeance which included the idea that vengeance is intended to restore not only what was but the way things ought to have been.¹⁸⁰ Recompense works in the same way to restore balances; humans ought never to have stolen honour from God, and therefore they owe recompense in addition to the simple obedience to the creator that they are obligated to submit to. Anselm argues that since all humans owe their obedience and their life to God and cannot give anything more than they already owe, only Jesus's life, which he was not obliged to give, could be sufficient recompense for original sin.¹⁸¹ This is a rejection of the traditional ransom theory of atonement which dominated the earlier middle ages and which Ælfric subscribed to, negating any rights of the devil over humanity and insisting on humanity's entire obligation to God.¹⁸² It is a vision of the universe as existing in a state of perfect equilibrium, with forgiveness balanced by corresponding sacrifice, and every debt requiring payment.¹⁸³ Anselm argues that to forgive sin without demanding recompense is the same as not punishing it, which would be to leave God's kingdom unordered. Further, it does not befit God to give the same treatment to sinners as to those who remain obedient.¹⁸⁴ If God did not punish the one who took away the honour owed to him, he would not keep that honour unimpaired. Necessarily therefore, when God's honour is taken away, either it is paid back or else punishment follows.¹⁸⁵ It was this sort of reasoning that lay behind the practice of confession and penance; penitential punishments were

¹⁷⁹ Anselm, *Cur Deus Homo*, i.11, ed. Schmitt, 2, p. 68.

¹⁸⁰ Hyams, *Rancor and Reconciliation*, p. 39.

¹⁸¹ Anselm, *Cur Deus Homo*, ii.18, ed. Schmitt, 2, pp. 126-29.

¹⁸² For a fuller discussion of Anselm's novel thinking on this issue, see Giles E.M. Gasper, *Anselm of Canterbury and His Theological Inheritance*, pp. 164-67. David Brown, 'Anselm on Atonement', in *The Cambridge Companion to Anselm*, ed. Brian Davies and Brian Leftow (Cambridge, 2004) pp. 84-94.

¹⁸³ Southern, *Saint Anselm: A Portrait*, pp. 75-76, 212.

¹⁸⁴ Anselm, *Cur Deus Homo*, i.12, ed. Schmitt, 2, pp. 69-71.

¹⁸⁵ Anselm, *Cur Deus Homo* i.13, ed. Schmitt, 2, p. 71. See also Brown, 'Anselm on Atonement', pp. 293-94.

an attempt to cleanse the soul of the guilt of sin in order that God would grant forgiveness after death (at Judgement Day) rather than deal out punishment.¹⁸⁶

As well as teaching Christian principles, one aim of pastoral care was to help people to protect their souls, ideally by avoiding sin, but where sin was committed by providing mechanisms for confession, repentance and penance aimed at mitigating the effects of God's vengeful punishment. In the same way that sin was considered as being constituted through action and intent, penance also had to be undergone sincerely; in order for penitential acts to have their intended effect of absolving a person from sin, they should be only the demonstration of true inner repentance.¹⁸⁷ It is clear from the survival of penitential handbooks for confessors and homilies in the vernacular that appropriate penance was a significant concern of those involved in ensuring provision for pastoral care in late Anglo-Saxon England, and that penance was envisaged as an important part of the performance of piety.¹⁸⁸ Penance is a significant theme in the Blickling and Vercelli homily collections as well as those of Ælfric and Wulfstan; the Blickling homilist explicitly refers to the use of penitential handbooks by confessors dealing with penitents, and they are also among the books that Ælfric thought it necessary for a priest to possess.¹⁸⁹ Penitential handbooks produced in the tenth and eleventh centuries detail penances to be prescribed for a wide variety of sins, but should be read as guides or models for confessors in their pronouncements on penitents rather than as a reflection of actual practice.¹⁹⁰ Nevertheless, they are practical guides for dealing with sin and their existence alongside penance as a theme in homilies suggests that pastoral teaching sought to instil a consciousness of sin and supply a functional means by which Christians could absolve themselves before God and earn forgiveness rather than punishment. Similarly, divine vengeance on transgressors was frequently invoked in Anglo-Saxon land grant charters which contain sanction clauses threatening eternal anathema on anyone who violated their agreements, but these are almost as

¹⁸⁶ This idea comes from 1 Corinthians 11.31-32 and is discussed by Gregory the Great in *Moralia in Iob* 4.26-40. See *Douay Rheims Bible Online* (hereafter *DRBO*) <http://www.drbo.org/chapter/53011.htm> [accessed 26.07.2018]; *S Gregorii Magni, Moralia in Iob Libri I-X*, ed. Marci Adriaen, Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina 143 (Turnhout, 1979), pp. 181-88.

¹⁸⁷ Concern over lack of sincerity in penance is highlighted by Rob Meens, *Penance in Medieval Europe, 600-1200* (Cambridge, 2014) p. 186. See also Catherine Cubitt, 'Bishops, Priests and Penance in Late Saxon England', *Early Medieval Europe* 14.1 (2006) p. 49.

¹⁸⁸ Catherine Cubitt, 'Bishops, Priests and Penance in Late Saxon England', pp. 41-63.

¹⁸⁹ Blickling Homily 4, ll. 53-55, ed. Kelly, *The Blickling Homilies*, pp. 28-29. 'Ælfric's Pastoral Letter to Bishop Wulfstige', 52, ed. Dorothy Whitelock, M Brett, and C.N.L. Brooke, *Councils and Synods, with Other Documents Relating to the English Church*, vol. 1, A.D. 871-1204 (Oxford, 1981) pp. 206-07. Zacher, *Preaching the Converted: The Style and Rhetoric of the Vercelli Book Homilies*, p. 31. Rob Meens, *Penance in Medieval Europe*, p. 163; Cubitt, 'Bishops, Priests and Penance in Late Saxon England' pp. 48, 50.

¹⁹⁰ Helen Foxhall Forbes, 'Affective Piety and the Practice of Penance in Late-Eleventh Century Worcester: The Address to the Penitent in Oxford, Bodleian Library, Junius 121', *Anglo-Saxon England* 44 (2015) pp. 340-41.

frequently followed by a mitigation of ‘unless he makes amends’, thereby acknowledging that the opportunity to regain God’s favour always existed and was there for the taking by those who chose.¹⁹¹

Biblical and early Christian history supplied plentiful examples of misused free will and missed opportunities for repentance followed by divine punishment which demonstrated God’s ultimate fairness and justice. The destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, for instance, was considered to be God’s punishment against the Jews for Jesus’s crucifixion forty years previously, and was expounded in a Blickling homily and by Ælfric in his *Catholic Homilies* to give the lesson that God always gives the opportunity for repentance and amendment, even for so heinous a crime, and that if that opportunity is not taken, His vengeance will follow.¹⁹² Likewise, at every stage of the Old English *Genesis*, there is a distinct sense of foreshadowing and foreboding with the knowledge that some humans would fail to uphold their obligation to God and would fall into sin and be doomed. The most emphatic commentary in this respect is on the Sodomite race, who are described as ‘shameless in their sins, perverse in their deeds; they brought about their own eternal detriment.’¹⁹³ Although the *Genesis* poet reassures his audience that no mortal who deserved to gain God’s favour and duly works for it need fear loss of his protection, blame for the fate of Sodom is placed squarely on sinful humans who will not amend or repent.

In a similar way to thinking about the nature of sin, the intellectual developments of the twelfth century do not seem to have had a significant impact on the way that penance was thought about and practised in a pastoral context. Rob Meens has shown that the essential character and purpose of penance remained consistent throughout the tenth to twelfth centuries: even though the development of law as a discipline of study in the cathedral schools and universities of the twelfth century meant that penance increasingly became a topic of theological discourse separate from pastoral care, subject to intellectual debate in the same way as the nature of sin, and even though traditional penitential handbooks were no longer copied,

¹⁹¹ *Anglo-Saxon Charters*, ed. A.J. Robertson (Cambridge, 1956) charters 19, 25, 30, 38, 42, 45, 46, 49, 50, 55, 56, 58, 59, 64, 82, 105, 112, 117.

¹⁹² Blickling 6, ll. 182-202, ed. R. Kelly, pp. 52-55; Ælfric, *CH* 1.28, ll. 17-70, ed. Clemoes, pp. 410-12. Ælfric’s sources for this passage were Gregory the Great, Haymo and Rufinus. See ‘The Sources of CH 1.28 (C.B.1.1.30)’, *Fontes Anglo-Saxonici*, http://fontes.english.ox.ac.uk/data/content/astexts/title_sources.asp?refer=C%2EB%2E1%2E1%2E30 [accessed 07.08.2018]

¹⁹³ *Genesis*, ll. 1935-1936, ed. Krapp, *The Junius Manuscript*, pp. 58-59. ‘Wæron Sodomisc cynn synnum þriste, / dædum gedwolene; drugon heora selfra / ecne unræd.’ Translation from Anlezark, *Old Testament Narratives*, p. 137.

there remained continuity of pastoral practice through the use of penitential tariffs (though as with earlier penitential handbooks, these were possibly intended as guidelines only).¹⁹⁴ From the later eleventh century though, the idea of penance seems to have expanded to encompass a broader range of activities, largely because of the influence of the crusading movement. In the Old English penitential handbooks, penances usually took the form of bodily abstinence, such as fasts of varying lengths and severity, with the intent being that the physical suffering incurred would constitute recompense for the sin and reduce the consequences for the soul in the next life.¹⁹⁵ There was also a distinction between private and public penances; public/communal rituals of penance were necessary for serious sins, whereas private/personal penance sufficed for secret sins.¹⁹⁶ Development can be seen in the late eleventh and twelfth century when crusading and battle against the heathen came to be considered in a penitential light, as demonstrated in the epic poem *La Chanson de Roland*, when Archbishop Turpin orders Roland's army to strike their heathen Saracen opponents as penance (*par penitence*).¹⁹⁷ By doing so, Roland and his army are choosing the mode of their suffering through which to express their love of God.¹⁹⁸ This may be indicative of a move towards a more active and publically visible type of penance rather than the more introspective and personal penances based on bodily abstinence laid out in the Old English handbooks.¹⁹⁹

The purpose of this discussion of penitential practices has been to show that making recompense for sin was an essential part of the way that Christians were supposed to live out their relationship with God, and that purgative punishment for sin in one form or another was considered the necessary means of making that recompense. Chapters two to four will discuss accounts of what happened when those who were considered to be sinners were unrepentant and failed to restore their dutiful relationship with God. In these cases, when people who were perceived to have failed to uphold their obligation to God subsequently met with misfortune, that misfortune was interpreted as divine vengeance on the sinner. Repentance and making amends could in some cases turn aside God's vengeance, but the vast majority of these accounts

¹⁹⁴ Meens, *Penance in Medieval Europe*, pp. 191-213.

¹⁹⁵ See Allen J Frantzen, *Anglo-Saxon Penitentials: A Cultural Database*, 2003. The *Canons of Theodore*, Brussels, Bibliotheque Royale, MS Bx 8558 (B) 149b, B70.01.01: http://www.anglo-saxon.net/penance/index.php?p=TCTH8558_149b [accessed 21.05.2017] and *Scriftboc*, Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Junius 121 (X) 87b, X01.01.00-X01.04.01: http://www.anglo-saxon.net/penance/index.php?p=TSBOC121_87b [accessed 21.05.2017]

¹⁹⁶ Foxhall Forbes, 'Affective Piety and the Practice of Penance', pp. 332-33. Sarah Hamilton, 'The Unique Favour of Penance: The Church and the People, C. 800 - C. 1100', in *The Medieval World*, ed. Peter Lineham and Janet L. Nelson (London, 2001), 229-43.

¹⁹⁷ *CdR*, i. 1138, ed. Short, pp. 96-97.

¹⁹⁸ Kablitz, 'Religion and Violence in the Song of Roland', p. 148.

¹⁹⁹ Grundy, *Books and Grace*, p. 197. Cubitt, 'Bishops, Priests and Penance in Late Saxon England', p. 49.

of the comeuppance of sinners were designed as warnings of the consequences of failing to uphold proper Christian standards of behaviour and dutiful respect for God.

Penance was intended to help any Christian make recompense for their sins before God and earn his mercy and forgiveness instead of his vengeance, but in special cases God was perceived to intervene directly by sending cleansing punishment on his chosen. Illustrative of this is the illness that King Alfred suffered throughout his life, which Asser in his *Life of Alfred* (893) presents as God's answer to Alfred's prayer for an illness that would still allow him to perform his duties as king, but severe enough to atone for his youthful sin of sexual profligacy.²⁰⁰ This idea that Alfred's illness was obtained from God by prayer was repeated by William of Malmesbury in the twelfth century.²⁰¹ Similarly, legend has it that St Dunstan was inspired to become a monk when his kinsman Bishop Ælfheah the Bald (bishop of Winchester 934-51) asked God to send signs of his disapproval of Dunstan's engagement to a young girl, a plea which was answered with an illness that brought Dunstan close to death. Dunstan's hagiographer, known only as B, explains that in this way 'the kind and merciful Lord took pity on His servant Dunstan [...] As the result of this punishment from God and the salutary teaching of the blessed bishop Ælfheah, he became sounder in understanding...'²⁰² This is a theme prevalent to varying extremes in hagiographical and monastic contexts: St Æthelwold was said to have frequent inner illnesses, while Anselm's letters to his fellow monks give the consoling message that illness is God's chastisement of his chosen and that the tribulation it brings should be rejoiced in because it means that God will be more lenient in the next world.²⁰³ Osbern even applies this principle to his defence of St Ælfheah's martyrdom by stressing that God punishes most heavily those who he loves most dearly.²⁰⁴ The difference between this sort of purgative punishment and the tales of divine vengeance that will form the subject of the following chapters is that the recipients of God's cleansing punishment in these instances are depicted as understanding that the purpose of their travails was to make recompense for sin and hasten the path of their souls to heaven, whereas the victims of divine vengeance in the majority

²⁰⁰ *Alfred the Great: Asser's Life of King Alfred and Other Contemporary Sources*, ed. and trans. Simon Keynes and Michael Lapidge (London, 2004) pp. 88-90.

²⁰¹ WMGR, ii.21, p. 189.

²⁰² B, *Vita S. Dunstani* (hereafter B, *VSD*), 7-8, ed. and trans. Michael Winterbottom and Michael Lapidge, *The Early Lives of Dunstan* (Oxford, 2012) pp. 26-29, and see notes 77-79 for identification of Ælfheah and biblical models for Dunstan's illness. 'Pius igitur et misericors Dominus serum suum Dunstanum [...] miseratus retraxit [...] Et dum ex hac predicta Dei correctione et beati antestitis Ælfheahi documento salutari sanioris effectus esset intellegentiae ...'

²⁰³ *The Letters of Saint Anselm of Canterbury*, 1. 9, 39, 63, ed. Fröhlich, pp. 91-92, 139-41, 162-63.

²⁰⁴ Osbern, *Vita S. Alphegi*, p. 133.

of accounts are depicted as the deserving recipients of severe penalties because of their choice to sin without any intention of amendment.

Where sin was committed and was not followed by repentance and penance, God's vindictive punishment necessarily followed. Whereas illness for the saintly could be interpreted as God's compassionate punishment leading to a place in heaven, in cases of grave sin committed by an unrepentant offender, illness followed by death was unequivocal evidence of God's vengeance which would not be followed by forgiveness, but by damnation for the soul. As chapters two and three will discuss further, any interpretation of an event as divine vengeance could only be made after the fact, and narratives were created by searching back through past events to determine what sin might have made an individual deserving of their unfortunate fate. An extreme case of this is Ælfric's description of the death of King Herod when he presents Herod's horrible illness and suicide as his just comeuppance for his massacre of the holy infants.²⁰⁵ Ælfric leaves no room to doubt that Herod's bodily disease was only a precursor to worse suffering in the afterlife, saying that

Truly the impious Herod did not possess his kingdom in long prosperity, for without delay the divine vengeance fell upon him which destroyed him with manifold misery, and also made evident what torment he must eternally suffer after death.²⁰⁶

The story of Herod's suicide developed from a version of Herod's death first put forward by Eusebius in the early fourth century. It conflates the death of the Herod guilty of massacring the infants, which is not recorded in the bible, with the death of his descendant Herod who was said to have been struck down and eaten by worms because he did not give honour to God.²⁰⁷ Eusebius hinted at Herod's suicide, but it was made explicit by Rufinus in his translation of Eusebius's work.²⁰⁸ Ælfric follows Rufinus's version ending in Herod's suicide to connect his painful and undignified death, leading to eternal torment, with his worst crime.²⁰⁹ Since Ælfric

²⁰⁵ Ælfric took this story from Rufinus's *Historia Ecclesiastica*. See 'The sources of Catholic Homily 1.5 (C.B.1.1.6)', *Fontes Anglo-Saxonici*,

http://fontes.english.ox.ac.uk/data/content/astexts/title_sources.asp?refer=C%2EB%2E1%2E1%2E6 [accessed 24.07.2018] Cf. Alexander Murray, *Suicide in the Middle Ages*, vol. 2: The Curse on Self-Murder (Oxford, 2000) pp. 86-121.

²⁰⁶ Ælfric, CH 1.5, ll. 123-27, ed. Clemoes, p. 221. 'Eornostlice ne breac se arleasa Herodes his cynerices mid langsumere gesunfulnyse, ac buton ylidinge him becom seo godcunlice wracu, þe hine mid menigfealdre yrmðe fordyde, and eac geswutelode on hwilcum suslum he moste æfter forðsiðe ecelice cwylmian.' (my translation)

²⁰⁷ *DRBO*, Matthew 2:19: <http://www.drbo.org/cgi-bin/d?b=drb&bk=47&ch=2&l=19#x>, Acts 12:23: <http://www.drbo.org/cgi-bin/d?b=drb&bk=51&ch=12&l=21#x> [both accessed 22.05.2017] Cf. Murray, *Suicide in the Middle Ages*, 2, pp. 343-56.

²⁰⁸ Mary Clayton, 'Suicide in the Works of Ælfric', *The Review of Old English Studies*, New Series 245.60 (2009) pp. 355.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.* p. 356.

considered suicide to be a sin with no mitigating circumstances, there could be no more appropriate fate for Herod.²¹⁰

Such a fate is illustrative of the way that God's vengeful punishment of those considered to be His enemies, as opposed to his chosen, on earth and in the afterlife, was thought about. The passions of the early martyrs were popular texts throughout the middle ages and make up a significant proportion of Ælfric's *Lives of Saints* homily series. They invariably ended with the heathens who killed the saints being swiftly dispatched through God's power, while the vengeance miracles that will be discussed in chapter three frequently portray sudden illnesses, injuries and/or death as God's just vengeance on those (Christians as well as heathens) who violated church property, blasphemed, broke oaths, disrespected saints or were considered in a variety of other ways to have sinned. The idea that God's vengeance resulting in death was a precursor to further punishment for the soul in the afterlife was emphasised to varying degrees at different times and in different contexts. A comparison of the stories of Cain and Abel as depicted in the Old English *Genesis A* and the mid-twelfth-century Anglo-Norman play *Le Jeu D'Adam* shows a change in spiritual emphasis in Cain's punishment for murdering Abel, from a stress on the consequences of bodily misery to drawing greater attention to the fate of Cain's soul.²¹¹ *Genesis A* focuses on Cain's punishment of exile on earth, whereas *Le Jeu D'Adam* ends abruptly with God informing Cain that his life shall drag on miserably for his deed, then immediately demons coming to lead him into hell.²¹² Similarly, the *Roland* poet unsympathetically describes the death of a pagan whose soul is taken by Satan ('L'anme de lui en portet Sathanas') and another whose soul is taken by demons, in direct contrast to Roland's army whose souls are with God.²¹³

The concepts of God's purging or vindictive punishment cannot be fully discussed without reference to the fate of the soul after death and Judgement Day, when Christ will come again to judge the living and the dead, to lead the righteous into eternal glory and send the wicked into eternal perdition with Satan.²¹⁴ This was the moment towards which all Christian

²¹⁰ Ibid. pp. 339, 350.

²¹¹ On the monastic character of the poems in the Exeter Book, see Conner, *Anglo-Saxon Exeter: A Tenth-Century Cultural History*, pp. 148-64. On its provenance, see Richard Gameson, 'The Origin of the Exeter Book of Old English Poetry', *Anglo-Saxon England* 25 (1996) pp. 135-85. On the provenance of *Le Jeu D'Adam* see *Le Jeu d'Adam*, ed. Wolfgang von Emden, British Rencsvals Publications 1 (Edinburgh, 1996) pp. v-vii.

²¹² *Genesis*, ed. Anlezark, *Old Testament Narratives*, pp. 73-77; *Le Jeu d'Adam*, ed. Emden, p. 53.

²¹³ *CdR*, ll. 1268, 1510(1553), 2397, ed. Short, pp. 104-05, 118-19, 168-69.

²¹⁴ *DRBO*, Mark 13: <http://www.drbo.org/chapter/48013.htm> , Matthew 25.26-46:

<http://www.drbo.org/chapter/47025.htm> , Revelation 20:11-13: <http://drbo.org/chapter/73020.htm> and the second letter of Paul to the Corinthians 5:10: <http://drbo.org/cgi-bin/d?b=drb&bk=54&ch=5&l=10#x>

thought and action should be orientated so as to be deserving of a place in paradise and avoid eternal punishment. Around the year 1000 there was a heightened atmosphere of apocalyptic expectation associated with the coming of the antichrist and the imminence of Judgement Day, but anticipation of Judgement Day had been a feature of Christian experience throughout the early middle ages, and of more immediate concern for most people was the fate of the soul in the interim, between the moment of death and the day of judgement.²¹⁵ The notion of purgatory as a named place became more developed in the twelfth century, but it was not a new concept.²¹⁶ St Fursey's burning by a damned soul, discussed above, is illustrative of this concept of a penal place, as is the vision of Drihthelm, in which occurs a burning valley described as a penal place to cleanse the souls of men who would not correct their sins in life, yet were penitent at their last day; Ælfric took Fursey's vision from the seventh-century anonymous *Vita Fursei*, and Drihthelm's from Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica* (c.731).²¹⁷ The main determiner of a soul's fate immediately after death and at Judgement Day was its obedience or disobedience to God whilst residing in the body on earth, although prayer for the souls of the dead by the living could shorten their time in purgatorial punishment; studies of donations to monasteries and church foundations by lay people in exchange for masses for the dead have shown that this idea of being able to influence the fate of the soul in the interim gained increasing currency over the tenth and especially eleventh centuries.²¹⁸ Evidently there were those who took on board homiletic warnings about the necessity of preparing the soul to be held to account before God, first at the moment of death and subsequently at the last judgement whenever that might come.

Accounts of miraculous divine vengeance, which overwhelmingly resulted in the untimely death of the victim and the implication that their sinful soul had met with punishment

²¹⁵ Helen Foxhall Forbes, 'Apocalypse, Eschatology and the Interim in England and Byzantium in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries', in *Apocalypse and Reform from Late Antiquity to the Middle Ages*, ed. Matthew Gabriele and James T. Palmer (London, 2019) pp. 140-42.

²¹⁶ For the argument for the development of purgatory as a notion in the twelfth century, see Jacques Le Goff, *The Birth of Purgatory* (London, 1984).

²¹⁷ The story of Fursey is in Ælfric, CH 2.20, ll. 19-268, ed. Godden, pp. 190-98. For Ælfric's source, see 'The Sources of CH 2.20 (C.B.1.2.25)', *Fontes Anglo-Saxonici*, http://fontes.english.ox.ac.uk/data/content/astexts/title_sources.asp?refer=C%2EB%2E1%2E2%2E25 The vision of Drihthelm is in CH 2.21, ll. 22-100, pp. 199-200. For Ælfric's source, see 'The sources of CH 2.21 (C.B.1.2.26/27)', *Fontes Anglo-Saxonici*, http://fontes.english.ox.ac.uk/data/content/astexts/title_sources.asp?refer=C%2EB%2E1%2E2%2E26%2F27 [both accessed 25.07.2018]

²¹⁸ Barbera H. Rosenwein, *To Be the Neighbor of Saint Peter: The Social Meaning of Cluny's Property, 909-1049* (Cornell, 1989) pp. 38-48 and 204-06. Megan McLaughlin, *Consorting With Saints: Prayer for the Dead in Early Medieval France* (Cornell, 1994).

after death, were tangible warnings of God's vengeful power.²¹⁹ The extent to which fear of punishment in the afterlife was, or should be, a motivator to adhere to proper Christian standards of behaviour and morality was another point of divergence between theologians. Again, Anselm stands out in taking a severe, idealistic stance against the value of fear of punishment as an incentive to maintain an upright will. In *De Veritate* (1080x1086), he reasons that for a will to be truly just, it must will what it ought (to love and follow God), because it ought (i.e. willingly and freely), not through any compulsion (in this case fear) but for the sake of rectitude itself.²²⁰ This means thinking and acting as God wishes through a genuine desire to obey God, as opposed to through fear of punishment or because of any other external pressure.²²¹ Such an idealised absence of influencing factors is something that Anselm struggles with in *De casu diaboli*. Anselm's problem is that although the evil angel could not have foreknown his punishment, because of his example the good angel cannot now help having knowledge of it, and the same applies to humanity with knowledge of the manifold examples of God's vengeance on sinful people that had occurred throughout history. Anselm's solution is to conclude that knowledge of punishment can have no effect as an incentive to maintain rectitude where the will is upright enough, i.e. a truly upright will need have no fear of punishment despite knowing that the possibility exists, because no temptation to sin will ever overcome it and therefore it need have no fear of ever experiencing punishment.²²²

Anselm's position on the uselessness of fear as a motivator to avoid punishment was not widely shared, either earlier or by some of his contemporaries, for whom Gregory the Great's ideas on fear and compunction seem to have been more appealing and influential. Gregory's *Dialogues* gained currency in Anglo-Saxon England, both in Latin and through their translation into Old English by Bishop Wærferth of Worcester, though do not appear to have been among his most popular texts in Norman libraries, while his *Moralia in Iob* remained one of the most widely circulated patristic texts both before and after the Norman Conquest.²²³ Towards the end of his *Dialogues*, Gregory distils his ideas about compunction that he gave more extensive expression to in the *Moralia*. He acknowledges that fear of punishment can

²¹⁹ See Chapter 3.

²²⁰ Anselm, *De Veritate*, 7, ed. Schmitt, 1, pp. 191-96.

²²¹ See Jeffrey E. Brower, 'Anselm on Ethics', in Brian Davies and Brian Leftow, (eds.) *The Cambridge Companion to Anselm* (Cambridge, 2004) pp. 222-23.

²²² Anselm, *De Casu Diaboli*, 23-24, ed. Schmitt, 1, pp. 269-72.

²²³ Gameson, 'St Wulfstan, the Library of Worcester and the Spirituality of the Medieval Book', p. 63. Gameson, *The Manuscripts of Early Norman England*, pp. 42-43. Godden, 'Wærferth and King Alfred: The Fate of the Old English Dialogues', pp. 33-44. Godden, 'Ælfric and the Vernacular Prose Tradition', p. 104. Lapidge, *The Anglo-Saxon Library*, pp. 134-307.

exist as a motivation to act correctly, and does not dismiss it as entirely blameworthy, but rather sees it as a guiding force towards a more hopeful feeling of compunction.²²⁴ Gregory says that the sinful penitent at first weeps for fear of eternal punishment, but when fear subsides, what remains is a sense of security from assurance of forgiveness having performed penance wholeheartedly. This brings the sinner's soul to a love of heavenly joys, and the thought of being deprived of those joys makes us weep more than fear of hell and eternal misery. Thus, the compunction of fear, when perfect, leads to the compunction of love.²²⁵ Both Ælfric and Anselm's pupil Osbern relate fearful visions of the punishment of sinners in the afterlife because of their edificatory value. Ælfric describes a vision of coming torment that a proud nobleman experienced and related to his son just before his death, and says that this vision was shown for the bettering of others.²²⁶ In his *Life of St. Ælfheah*, Osbern includes a story about a vision experienced by Ælfheah that revealed the torment of a negligent monk who had died, and explains that God made this known so that the others, seeing this example of God's wrath, would cease their sinful behaviour.²²⁷ He also presents a plague which attacked the Danes who were occupying Canterbury before Ælfheah's death as a terrifying catalyst for their conversion.²²⁸ Unlike Anselm, Ælfric and Osbern seem to think that knowledge of punishment, and further, deliberately cultivating fear of punishment, had a role in creating the motivation to adhere to God, more than presentation of positive examples and conviction of what was right alone.

This cultivation of a fear of divine vengeance for the moral and spiritual benefit of humanity extended from homiletic material to historical narratives, hagiographies and miracle collections, fictional literature, and to concerns over the proper applications of human legal authority, as authors across this variety of genres sought to provide edificatory material for their audiences outside of pastoral contexts.²²⁹ The torments of hell and Judgement Day were significant themes in Old English devotional poetry, as seen in the meditations of *Christ and Satan* (in Junius 11, discussed above), *Soul and Body I* (in the Vercelli Book)²³⁰, *Christ III*, *Soul and Body II* and *Judgement Day I* (in the Exeter Book, produced in the second half of the

²²⁴ Gregory, *Dialogues*, 3.34, ed. Odo John Zimmermann, *The Fathers of the Church*, v. 39 (Washington, 2002) pp. 173-74.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*

²²⁶ Appendix, 20.

²²⁷ Osbern, *Vita S. Alphegi*, pp. 124-25.

²²⁸ *Ibid.* p. 137.

²²⁹ See Chapters 2-5.

²³⁰ *Soul and Body I*, ed. Krapp, *The Vercelli Book*. See also *The Old English Soul and Body*, ed. Douglas Moffat (Woodbridge, 1990) pp. 50-64.

tenth century and donated to Exeter Cathedral by Bishop Leofric by 1072)²³¹ and *Judgement Day II* (based on a Latin poem by Bede and found in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, 201, a collection of poetry and prose of the early eleventh century)²³² for example. All of these poems dwell on descriptions of Satan's punishment in hell and/or the torments that wicked souls will suffer after death. Judgement Day is also a significant theme in the Blickling and Vercelli homily collections as well as in those of Ælfric and Wulfstan.²³³ Although it is important not to overstate the importance of fear of God's punishment in these works – Ælfric at least usually places warnings of God's punishment and assurances of His mercy side by side, and there are other poems, notably *Christ I and II*, *The Phoenix*, and *Descent into Hell* (Exeter Book)²³⁴, and *The Dream of the Rood* (Vercelli Book)²³⁵ that focus on the hope of redemption offered by Christ's birth, death and resurrection – it is evident that the fearful prospect of punishment for the soul in hell and at Judgement Day was something that homilists and composers/copiers of devotional poetry thought was important for their audiences to be conscious of. The accounts of divine vengeance in historical narratives, hagiographies and miracle collections which will be discussed in chapters two to four, and the ways that people thought about the morality of their own vengeful behaviour which will be the focus of chapter five, must be considered in the context of a world in which an awareness of God's power to exact vengeance for sin in this life or the next was acute, at least in spiritually sensitive circles and probably much more widely depending on individual inclination for piety.

The degree of change in preoccupations about the consequences for sin in the afterlife between the tenth and twelfth centuries should not be overstated. Although the treatment of Cain's punishment in the Old English *Genesis A* and the mid-twelfth-century play *Le Jeu D'Adam* differs, this may be down to differing genres and audiences more than because of a significant shift in ways of thinking about the afterlife. Study of the subject matter of English vernacular homilies produced between 960 and the early thirteenth century has shown that emphasis on the imminence of Judgement Day, the temporal consequences of sin, and

²³¹ *Christ*, ll. 867-1664, *Soul and Body II* and *The Judgement Day I*, ed. Krapp and Dobbie, *The Exeter Book*, pp. 27-49, 174-77, 212-15. On the provenance of the Exeter Book, see Gameson, 'The Origin of the Exeter Book of Old English Poetry', pp. 136-79.

²³² *Judgement Day II*, ed. Dobbie, *The Anglo-Saxon Minor Poems*, pp. 58-67. See Elaine Treharne, 'Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, 201', *The Production and Use of English Manuscripts 1060-1220*, <https://www.le.ac.uk/english/em1060to1220/mss/EM.CCCC.201.htm> [accessed 27.07.2018]

²³³ See 'The Day of Judgement' in DiNapoli, *An Index of Theme and Image to the Homilies of the Anglo-Saxon Church*, pp. 31-32.

²³⁴ *Christ*, ll. 1-866, *The Phoenix* and *The Descent into Hell*, ed. Krapp and Dobbie, *The Exeter Book*, pp. 3-27, 94-112, 219-22.

²³⁵ *The Dream of the Rood*, ed. Krapp, *The Vercelli Book*, pp. 61-65.

performance of religious duties such as paying tithes and maintaining social order characteristic of tenth and eleventh century homilies faded, while attention to the death of the individual, confession, penance and church attendance dramatically increased after 1100.²³⁶ This distinction is not sharp, since contrition, confession and penance are all topics addressed by earlier homilists, but rather represents a gradual evolution in topics considered most important to impart to Christian congregations and readers.²³⁷

Such a shift can probably be attributed to a subsiding of apocalyptic expectations associated with the year 1000, which by some calculations was thought to herald the end of the sixth age of the world and the coming of the antichrist before the day of judgement.²³⁸ It has been argued that the intellectual developments of the twelfth-century 'renaissance' also heralded the 'discovery of the individual' as increasing emphasis was placed on personal, inner intent as opposed to each person's place within a spiritual collective.²³⁹ While the changing emphases of homiletic texts might provide some support for this argument, as already mentioned, Ælfric emphasises individual responsibility and intent in his homilies, and scholars are increasingly recognising the Anglo-Saxons' preoccupation with the inner life of the mind.²⁴⁰ There may have been an evolution in the ways that individual intent was discussed, or in attention to individual souls becoming more visible through rituals such as confession, but this was more subtle than the argument that the idea of the individual only appeared in the twelfth century would suggest. There was always a sense that a person was responsible for upholding their own obligation to God and was therefore responsible for the fate of their own soul; whether or not the hope of heaven or the threat of God's vengeance inspired individual people to behave piously must have varied a great deal.

²³⁶ Kathleen Greenfield, 'Changing Emphases in English Vernacular Homiletic Literature, 960-1225', *Journal of Medieval History* 7.3 (1981) pp. 283-97.

²³⁷ Greenfield, 'Changing emphases in English vernacular homiletic literature', p. 286, 295, 297.

²³⁸ James T. Palmer, *The Apocalypse in the Early Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 2014). Godden, 'Apocalypse and Invasion'; R.H. Bremmer, 'The Final Countdown: Apocalyptic Expectations in Anglo-Saxon Charters', in *Time and Eternity: The Medieval Discourse*, by G Jartitz and G Moreno-Benz (Turnhout, 2000) pp. 503-14.

²³⁹ Swanson, *The Twelfth-Century Renaissance*; Colin Morris, *The Discovery of the Individual, 1050-1200* (Toronto, 1987).

²⁴⁰ See, for example, M.R. Godden, 'Anglo-Saxons on the Mind', in *Learning and Literature in Anglo-Saxon England: Studies Presented to Peter Clemoes on the Occasion of His Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, ed. Michael Lapidge and Helmut Gneuss (Cambridge, 1985); Antonia Harbus, *The Life of the Mind in Old English Poetry* (Amsterdam, 2002). Poems such as *The Seafarer* and *The Wanderer* are also meditations of the inner life of an individual. See *The Exeter Book*, ed. Krapp and Dobbie, pp. 134-37, 143-47.

CONCLUSION

God's punishment was consistently portrayed in terms of vengeance in the central middle ages. It is important to understand the theology behind the concept of divine vengeance because it underpins the ways that God's punishing power was observed and experienced on earth, and the ways that the morality of vengeful actions undertaken by humans were understood. The important point to come out of this chapter is that God's vengeful punishment for human sin, whether on earth or in the afterlife, was necessary in order to restore proper equilibrium in the relationship between God and humanity, as a corollary to His reward for those who upheld their obligation to their creator. Free will was the essential quality given to the angels and humanity that made their upholding, or not, of their obligation to God, and His consequent reward or punishment, meaningful and just. The difficulty of determining what upholding this obligation to God meant in practice can be seen through gradually intensifying debate over the relative merits of action vs. intent in assessment of particular acts as sinful or not. Where a heart and mind was pure, God's punishment was considered to be purgative, compassionate and merciful because it provided the recompense for sin that could then lead to forgiveness, whereas for unrepentant sinners, God's punishment was necessarily vindictive in order to make good the dishonour shown to Him.

The ultimate vindictive punishment of consignment to hell at Judgement Day was to be feared and avoided through willing repentance and penance on earth, while, increasingly, prayers for the souls of the dead in monastic liturgies were thought to aid souls in the interim and shorten their time in purgatory. God's purgative chastisement, on the other hand, was to be welcomed and willingly borne with. In the surviving evidence, free will as a theological principle seems to have emerged as a topic for pastoral provision in the late tenth century with the second wave of the monastic reform movement. After this, pastoral teaching about the importance of free will, penance and inner contrition as atonement for sin remained more consistent than intellectual debate about the nature of sin and recompense, which intensified in the later eleventh and twelfth century. Judgement Day and the immediate judgement of the soul after death were consistent concerns as moments of reckoning; even in the heightened apocalyptic atmosphere associated with the year 1000, the necessity of preparing the soul to be

held to account at the final judgement and immediately after death, either of which could come at any time, were not mutually exclusive.²⁴¹

These theological principles about the necessity of God's punishment for sin provide the conceptual underpinning for the following chapters' discussions of the tangible contexts in which God's vengeance was observed and experienced on earth. Ideas about humanity's obligation to God, free will and the nature of sin are the reasons why particular negative events, both at the grand scale of national conquest and within the course of everyday experience, could be interpreted as God's vengeance on a nation or on an individual. The fundamental theological point that humans owe a debt to God which, if not paid back freely and willingly with good acts and a pure heart or through penance and true contrition, will lead to God's punishment, leaves a lot of room for interpretation. The idea of God's vengeance could therefore become a rhetorical and moral tool, particularly in historical and hagiographical writing, within which certain events could be framed in order to present a particular interpretation of historical events and incidents considered to be miraculous. Any presentation of such events in this light necessarily relied on audiences having at least rudimentary knowledge of the place of God's punishment in the functioning of his relationship with humanity in order to have its intended impact.

²⁴¹ Foxhall Forbes, 'Apocalypse, Eschatology and the Interim', pp. 139-60.

CHAPTER 2:

SEEING DIVINE VENGEANCE IN HISTORY

For medieval authors, the concept of divine vengeance was an important interpretative framework for historical misfortune. These moments, where God's punishing power was considered to have been tangibly demonstrated on earth, were considered to hold moral value and were therefore important to record. William of Malmesbury, in the preface to his *Historia Novella* (1140-43), written for Earl Robert of Gloucester, defined the value of his work as encouraging virtue and justice in his readers through 'learning of the divine gentleness to the good *and vengeance on traitors*' (my emphasis).²⁴² Henry of Huntingdon too, in the opening of his *Historia Anglorum* (dated 1135),²⁴³ written at the request of Bishop Alexander of Lincoln, expresses his wish that his work will provide moral enlightenment for his readers by showing them examples of 'what to imitate *and what to reject*' (my emphasis).²⁴⁴ Henry sees history as a compendium of examples of valour, wisdom, prudence, righteousness and temperance, and, in contrast, of intemperance, feebleness and injustice, harking back to classical and biblical figures, and considers knowledge of the past gained through human intellectual capacity to be a distinguishing ability of the rational creature, with the implication that God gave humans this ability in order to acquire the wisdom to regulate their own actions.²⁴⁵ This sort of justification for the historical endeavour was a common introductory trope in Anglo-Norman historical writing of the first half of the twelfth century. It was a providential view of history inherited from a tradition stemming back through Bede to Gregory the Great and Augustine, that defined the value of preserving historical knowledge as being not merely for its own sake, but because of the utility of its moral and spiritual lessons to the present.²⁴⁶ Historical narratives written with this moralising purpose in mind were never

²⁴² WMHN, Prologue, p. 3. 'Quid enim plus ad honestatis spectat commodum, quid conducibilis equitati, quam divinam agnoscere circa bonos indulgentiam, et erga periueros vindictam?'

²⁴³ Henry gives this date of completion at the beginning of his prologue. See HSHA, Prologue, pp. 3-4. For discussion, see Greenway's introduction, pp. lxx-lxxii, cxlvii

²⁴⁴ Henry began writing sometime after 1123, and repeatedly revised his text. Six different versions can be identified, with endings at 1129 (1 and 2), 1138 (3), 1146 (4), 1149 (5) and 1154 (6) See HSHA, pp. ixvi-ixvii and Prologue, pp. 2-3, 6-7. 'In quo scilicet opera sequenda et fugienda lector diligens dum inuenerit, ex eorum imitatione et euitatione Deo cooperante melioratus, michi fructum afferent exoptabilem.'

²⁴⁵ Ibid, Prologue, pp. 3-5.

²⁴⁶ On Augustine and Gregory's views on the utility of history, and their influence on William of Malmesbury, see Sigbjørn Olsen Sønnesyn, *William of Malmesbury and the Ethics of History* (Woodbridge, 2012) pp. 78-81. See also Carl Watkins, *History and the Supernatural in Medieval England* (Cambridge, 2007) p. 24. William of Malmesbury expresses admiration for the work of Bede in his *GRA*, i.prologue, p. 15. On twelfth-century

impartial, but were carefully rhetorically constructed; divine vengeance was a rhetorical framework which authors could use for interpreting history and historical events.

The interpretation of divine vengeance in history from a Christian moral perspective cannot be separated from the theological ideas discussed in chapter one that hinged upon humanity's obligation to love and follow God their creator, an obligation which must be upheld freely and willingly and which, if broken, must be punished. For historians seeking to provide moral lessons for their readers to help them avoid the pitfalls of sin, history provided a compendium of examples of virtuous figures who were considered to have properly upheld their obligation to God, and of others who were considered to have scorned their debt to God and met with divine punishment.²⁴⁷ Momentous events could become emblematic of the impact of God's vengeance on a sinful people, while certain figures became notorious for having brought down God's vengeance on themselves. Biblical history, which demonstrated that God was capable of enacting disastrous vengeance against sinful humanity, provided models for interpreting more recent events. It has been shown that Carolingian elite culture was deeply rooted in a sense of connection to biblical ancestors, but that scriptural models were usually only explicitly brought to the fore in times of insecurity such as rebellion and succession crisis, at which point they were held up as reference points for the duties of kings, ecclesiastical officials and secular magnates.²⁴⁸ The biblical poems of the Junius 11 manuscript, if produced for a lay patron as has been argued, might be an example of biblical narratives being given contemporary resonance in this way.²⁴⁹ Biblical precedent allowed later historians to identify the wrath of God affecting the course of the history of the English, and by juxtaposing biblical example with contemporary events they provided social and ideological commentary backed up by scriptural authority that forced their audience into reflection on human sinfulness.²⁵⁰

Even with such emphasis on these positive and negative examples for providing moral inspiration to readers, however, the frequency with which unfortunate events were ascribed to

appreciation of Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica*, see Antonia Gransden, 'Bede's Reputation as an Historian in Medieval England', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 32.4 (1981) pp. 397-425.

²⁴⁷ Carl Watkins, 'Memories of the Marvelous in the Anglo-Norman Realm', in Elizabeth van Houts (ed.) *Medieval Memories: Men, Women and the Past, 700-1300* (Harlow, 2001) pp. 92-95. John O. Ward, 'Orderic Vitalis as Historian in the Europe of the Twelfth-Century Renaissance', *Parergon* 31.1 (2014) pp. 2-3. Watkins, *History and the Supernatural*, p. 25.

²⁴⁸ Mayke de Jong, 'Carolingian Political Discourse and the Biblical Past: Hraban, Dhuoda, Radbert', in Clemens Gantner, Rosamond McKitterick and Sven Meeder (eds.) *The Resources of the Past in Early Medieval Europe* (Cambridge, 2015) pp. 87-102.

²⁴⁹ Anlezark, 'Lay Reading, Patronage, and Power in Bodleian Library, Junius 11', pp. 76-97.

²⁵⁰ Watkins, *History and the Supernatural*, pp. 14, 16-17; Suzanne Fleischman, 'On the Representation of History and Fiction in the Middle Ages', *History and Theory* 22.3 (1983) pp. 283-86.

divine vengeance should not be overemphasised. The framing of any event in terms of divine vengeance was relatively rare, which means that such an interpretation was not applied to an event unthinkingly, and that when an event *was* identified as the manifestation of God's wrath, it was an occasion that was considered to have great historical and moral significance. It is also important to note that, as with all historical representations, any interpretation of an event as divine vengeance could only happen retrospectively. This meant that there was a difference between the ways that historians dealt with recent history and the distant past. Instances of divine vengeance from the distant past that were still considered important enough to report had gained the status of received wisdom, whereas the interpretation of more recent events was more contentious and variable. Through exploring how historians were able, with hindsight, to construct coherent causative narratives of sin followed by divine vengeance out of the confusion of relatively recent historical events, this chapter will show how such interpretations of history were never inevitable, but were the result of deliberate manipulation of sequences of events in order to represent a historical moment as constituting evidence of God's punishment for some earlier sin.²⁵¹

This chapter will explore how the paradigm of divine vengeance became a rhetorical framing device for presenting moralising historical narratives through three main case studies: interpretations of the Viking invasions and eventual Danish conquest of the English during the reign of Æthelred the Unready (978-1016); justification of the Norman Conquest of England in 1066; and interpretations of the sudden death of King William Rufus in 1100. These were three exceptional and momentous points in history that, as far as it is possible to tell, by the time the Anglo-Norman historians were writing in the first half of the twelfth century, had become almost universally accepted as examples of divine vengeance. All related to kings who were considered to have inadequately upheld their obligation to God, and whose fates were used to pass moral commentary on appropriate Christian behaviour. They stand out in contemporary sources because they were remarkable instances of God's vengeful intervention in history on a significant scale with far reaching ramifications, something which happened periodically but not frequently, so that to live through such an event was a momentous experience and a cause for reflection.²⁵²

²⁵¹ On the narrativisation of history, see Fleischman, 'History and Fiction', pp. 280-86. Monika Otter, 'Functions of Fiction in Historical Writing', in Nancy Partner (ed.) *Writing Medieval History* (London, 2005) pp. 113-14.

²⁵² Watkins, *History and the Supernatural*, p. 40.

Importantly, however, none of the interpretations of these events as divine vengeance was inevitable, and no two narratives were exactly the same. Interpretations of the conquests of 1016 and 1066 as divine vengeance developed slowly, as growing historical distance allowed greater retrospection on increasingly long term causes and effects. The death of King William Rufus, in contrast, is an example of an instance where divine vengeance may have been anticipated, and where this interpretation of his sudden end was retrospectively reinforced. In each case, an interpretation through the framework of divine vengeance became the dominant historical narrative, but it is important to recognise that there were also simultaneous counter-narratives that either rejected divine vengeance as an interpretation, or did not consider it to be necessary. In relation to ‘fictional’ depictions of historical events in epic poetry, Susan Fleischman has proposed a definition of historical truth as ‘what was willingly believed’.²⁵³ The authors who wrote about the conquests of 1016 and 1066 and the death of King William Rufus as divine vengeance evidently believed that God’s punishing power was at work in those moments, but even where there was a broad consensus of belief that a historical moment was the result of God’s vengeance on earth, the sequences of causation that lay behind it could be represented in various ways by different historians.

The fact that there was a wide and long lasting recognition of these three events as evidence of divine vengeance is significant. Interpretations of an event as divine vengeance did not always gain such traction. An example of an event that was afforded such significance by at least one commentator that was reiterated locally, but which did not enter the collective consciousness so profoundly, is offered by the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (ASC) entries for 975. The entries for this year describe what has been referred to as the ‘anti-monastic reaction’ after King Edgar died and his son Edward succeeded to the kingdom.²⁵⁴ It is the earliest year for which any of the versions give this sort of moralising commentary. The differing rhetorical structure of the accounts in the [A], [D] and [E] recensions of the *Chronicle* illustrate how subjective and localised the attribution of a particular historical event to the workings of divine vengeance could be. The earliest text is the final of four poetic entries known as the ‘Edgar Panegyrics’ in the Winchester [A] *Chronicle*, the earliest surviving version of the ASC begun in the last years of the ninth century and kept up sporadically by multiple scribes over the tenth

²⁵³ Fleischman, ‘History and Fiction’, p. 305.

²⁵⁴ D.J.V. Fisher, ‘The Anti-Monastic Reaction in the Reign of Edward the Martyr’, *Cambridge Historical Journal* 10.3 (1952) pp. 254–70.

century.²⁵⁵ The poem also appears in the Abingdon manuscripts [B] and [C]: [B] contains annals up to 977 and has been paleographically dated to 977xc.1000, though a date of 977x979 has been suggested on the grounds that its royal genealogy is continued up to Edward the Martyr, but without his regnal years being filled in, which suggests that the poem may have been composed very shortly after Edgar's death.²⁵⁶ It represents the appearance of a comet and subsequent famine as divine vengeance for the destruction of monasteries in Mercia after the death of Edgar:

975 [A]: '... Then, as I have heard, praise of the ruler was felled to the ground, widely and everywhere in Mercia; many of the wise servants of God were scattered. That was great grief to those in whose breasts bore in heart a burning love of the Creator. Then was the Author of glories, Ruler of victories, Counsellor of heavens, too much scorned, when His law was broken [...] And then up in the heavens appeared a star in the firmament which heroes, firm in spirit, prudent in mind, men learned in science, wise soothsayers, widely call by the name of comet. The Ruler's vengeance was widely known, famine over the earth throughout the nation of men.'²⁵⁷

Next is the entry from the Worcester [D] version, written by multiple scribes in hands typical of the second half of the eleventh and early twelfth century, but probably copied from earlier sources.²⁵⁸ Its entries up to 981 are a conflation of MSS [B], [C] and [E] with northern annals.²⁵⁹ It substitutes the poetic entry for 975 for prose bearing the rhetorical influence of Archbishop Wulfstan, suggesting that the entry was composed in the early eleventh century from a northern viewpoint.²⁶⁰ It reverses the sequence in which it introduces the comet, famine and destruction of monasteries and the observation of divine vengeance is only implicit:

975 [D]: '... and then immediately in harvest-time in that same year, the star *comet* appeared. And then in the following year came a very great famine and very manifold disturbances throughout the English race. In his days, because of his youth, God's

²⁵⁵ Mercedes Salvador-Bello, 'The Edgar Panegyrics in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle', in Donald Scragg (ed.) *Edgar, King of the English 959-975, New Interpretations* (Woodbridge, 2008) p. 252. ASC [A], ed. Bately, pp. xxi-xliii. *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicles*, ed. Michael Swanton, (London, 2000) p. xxi.

²⁵⁶ Simon Taylor, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: A Collaborative Edition*, vol. 4, MS B (hereafter ASC [B]) (Cambridge, 1983) pp. xi-xxiii. *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicles*, ed. Swanton, p. xxiii.

²⁵⁷ ASC [A], pp. 77-78. 'Ða wæs on Myrceon, mine gefræge, wide 7 welhwær Waldended lof afylled on foldan. Fela wearð todræfed gleawra Godes ðeowa; þæt wæs gnornung micel þam þe on breostum wæg byrnende lufan Metodes on mode. Þa wæs mærdā Fruma to swiðe forsewen, sigora Waldend, rodera Rædend, þa man his riht tobræc [...] 7 þa wearð ætywed uppe on roderum steorra on stadole, þone stiðferhpe, hæleð higeleawe, hatað wide cometa be naman, cræftgleawe men, wise soðboran. Wæs geond werðeode, Waldended wracu wide gefrege, hungor ofer hrusan; þæt eft heofona Weard gebette, Brego engla, geaf eft blisse gehwæm egbuendra hurh eorðan westm.' Translation from Swanton, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicles*, p. 120.

²⁵⁸ ASC [D], pp. xi-xxxviii.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.* p. xxxix.

²⁶⁰ *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicles*, ed. Swanton, p. xxv

adversaries, Ealdorman Ælfhere and many others, broke God's law, and impeded the monastic rule [...] and after that it always got much worse.²⁶¹

Finally, the following extract is from the Peterborough [E] manuscript, the latest recension of the *ASC* initially copied c. 1122 from an exemplar from Canterbury or Rochester, and subsequently the longest maintained.²⁶² It maintains the same narrative sequence as that in the [D] recension quoted above:

975 [E]: '... and then immediately in harvest-time in that same year, the star comet appeared, and then in the following year came a very great famine and very manifold disturbances throughout the English race. And Ealdorman Ælfhere ordered very many monastic institutions to be overthrown which King Edgar earlier ordered the holy bishop Æthelwold to establish.'²⁶³

The [A] version, written closest in time to the events it describes, is the most rhetorically charged in its assertion that divine vengeance came as a result of destruction of monasteries in Mercia. The Winchester chronicler seems to be expressing a deep personal grievance and spiritual angst over the affront to monastic life in Mercia after Edgar's death, and rhetorically manipulates the narrative sequence of events to place the overthrow of monasteries before the appearance of the comet and arrival of famine, thereby presenting the famine as divine vengeance for such contempt for monasticism, presaged by the comet.²⁶⁴ In the other versions, the comet still presages famine, but also seems to be an omen foreshadowing the destruction of the monasteries, which becomes a symbol of religious degeneration in itself.

This difference can probably be explained by the geographical and chronological variances between the production of the different versions of the *ASC*, and the personal choices made by each compiler/copier. Schematic analysis of the relationship between the various manuscripts shows that all stem from a common stock of material, but diverge to varying degrees after 890.²⁶⁵ The [A] recension represents an early southern version, written relatively contemporaneously with the events described; 975 is the last point at which it corresponds with

²⁶¹ *ASC* [D], pp. 46-47. '7 sona on þam ilcan geare on hærfest æteowde cometa se steorra, 7 com þa on ðam æfran geare swyðe mycel hungor 7 swyðe mænigfealde styrunga geond Angolcynn. On his dagum, for his iugoðe, Godes wipærsacan Godes lage bræcon Ælfhere ealdorman, 7 oþre manega, 7 munucregol myrdon, 7 mynstra tostæncton [...] 7 aa æfter þam hit yfelode swiðe'. Translation from Swanton, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicles*, p. 121.

²⁶² *ASC* [E], pp. xii-xix. Susan Irvine, 'The Production of the Peterborough Chronicle', pp. 49-52.

²⁶³ *ASC* [E], p. 59. '7 þa sona on þam ilcan geare on herfeste æte\o/wde cometa se steorra, 7 com þa on þam eafran geare swiðe mycel hungor 7 swyðe mænigfealde styrunga geond Angelcyn. 7 Ælfhere ealdorman het towurpon swyðe manig munuclif þe Eadgar cyng het ær þone halgan biscop Aðelwold gestaðalian.' Translation from Swanton, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicles*, pp. 121-22.

²⁶⁴ Salvador-Bello, 'The Edgar Panegyrics', pp. 252-53.

²⁶⁵ For a tabular summary of the various manuscripts and their dates, see Alice Jorgensen, 'Introduction: Reading the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle', in Alice Jorgensen (ed.) *Reading the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: Language, Literature, History* (Turnhout, 2010) pp. 4, 6-7.

the other versions.²⁶⁶ [B] and [C] are closely related to each other, with [B] being the exemplar for [C]; an Abingdon origin has been postulated for both, though Canterbury has also been suggested for [C].²⁶⁷ [D] and [E] stem from a now lost northern recension that through the tenth century apparently received the same information as the West Saxon version, but recorded it in an independent style.²⁶⁸ What therefore seems to be happening is the events of a particular year being ascribed different significance both geographically and over time, from the initial horror of the [A] chronicler, echoed by [B] and [C], to the rhetorically charged but less flamboyant [D] version, to the significantly toned down [E] recension. There seems to have been a deliberate choice somewhere along the lines of transmission of [D] and [E] to substitute prose for poetry, and to play down the rhetoric of divine vengeance, whereas [A], [B] and [C] chose the poetic entry emphasising divine vengeance for ideological effect.²⁶⁹ The differences between these entries show how, when an author had no particular moralising agenda to pursue or personal grievance to express, the divine vengeance paradigm could be bypassed, or was not considered to be a necessary or relevant frame of analysis, which meant that in the long term any initial interpretation of an event as such could become lost or suppressed. This is why those events that did gain a widespread and long-term reputation as evidence of divine vengeance are of particular interest. The following case studies will show how interpretations of a historical moment as divine vengeance could develop over time and be put to use in different ways to describe the same event; by exploring the importance of divine vengeance as a rhetorical tool, our understanding of the ways that medieval historical narratives were constructed will be enhanced.

KING ÆTHELRED AND THE VIKINGS

By the twelfth century, an image of Æthelred (r. 978-1016) as a king who, ‘harassed by the wrath of God, had a wretched reign’, had become entrenched.²⁷⁰ Anglo-Norman historians looked back on the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicles* account of a reign dominated by ever worsening viking attacks culminating in conquest by Cnut in 1016, and saw a damning picture of a weak,

²⁶⁶ ASC [A], p. xciii

²⁶⁷ ASC [B], pp. xi-xii, Katherine O’Brien O’Keefe, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: A Collaborative Edition*, vol. 5, MS C (hereafter ASC [C]) (Cambridge, 2001) pp. xxvi-lxxiv, xc-xci.

²⁶⁸ ASC [D], p. lx. ASC [E], pp. lvii-lviii. *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicles*, ed. Swanton, pp. xxii, xxv, xxvi, xxix.

²⁶⁹ On the ASC’s partiality, see Jorgensen, ‘Introduction: Reading the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle’, p. 27.

²⁷⁰ HH HA, v.32, p. 334-35. ‘Adelred [...] ira Dei perturbatus erumpnose regnavit.’

sinful and unsuccessful king whose failure to defend England was a clear sign of God's displeasure at his conduct and character as king.²⁷¹ In looking for causes of God's wrath, twelfth-century historians pointed to Æthelred's supposed involvement in the murder of his half-brother King Edward in 978, a dishonourable beginning to his reign that cast a shadow over it ever afterwards. This was a different attitude from that held by contemporaries (including Æthelred himself) who were more inclined to attribute God's displeasure to the degenerating state of religion in England after the reign of King Edgar (959-75).²⁷² The first explanation places responsibility for the fate of the nation directly with the king, and has roots in medieval political theory which included the idea that the wellbeing of the nation was directly correlated to the power and integrity of the ruler.²⁷³ The second is a more collectivist view that spread the blame over the inhabitants of the nation, who were considered to be all at fault for not respecting or upholding Christian values and behaviour, akin to the biblical stories of destruction mentioned above.²⁷⁴ This section will explore when, how and in what contexts these different interpretations arose, and attempt to understand why the first supplanted the second as the dominant narrative about Æthelred's reign.

The first issue in this case study is that of when viking invaders began to be seen as agents of divine vengeance at all. By the end of Æthelred's reign, they were unequivocally interpreted as such, at least in high-level ecclesiastical circles; attempts to rehabilitate King Æthelred from his disastrous reputation by various scholars have shown that he and his government made a concerted military effort to resist viking attacks, and supplemented this with a programme of spiritual reform and penitence in the hope that God's wrath would be turned aside, right up until the moment of conquest.²⁷⁵ Wulfstan's *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos* (c.1014) decried the proliferation of national sin and the many misfortunes afflicting the nation 'because of God's anger' (purh Godes yrre), in an echo and amplification of a sermon delivered

²⁷¹ Simon Keynes, 'The Declining Reputation of Aethelred the Unready', in David E. Pelteret (ed.) *Anglo-Saxon History: Basic Readings* (New York, 2000) pp. 158-72. See also Simon Keynes, 'The Vikings in England, c.793-1016', in Peter Sawyer (ed.) *The Oxford Illustrated History of the Vikings* (Oxford, 1997) pp. 48-82.

²⁷² Simon Keynes, 'Re-reading King Æthelred the Unready', pp. 90-93

²⁷³ See the ninth abuse, 'The Unjust King', in *Two Ælfric Texts: The Twelve Abuses and the Vices and Virtues: an Edition and Translation of Ælfric's Old English Versions of de Duodecim Abusivis and de Octo Vitiis et de Duodecim Abusivis*, Anglo-Saxon Texts 2 (Cambridge, 2013), p. 131. Wulfstan, *Institutes of Polity*, 2-4, ed. Andrew Rabin, *The Political Writings of Archbishop Wulfstan of York* (Manchester, 2015) pp. 103-07. Mary Clayton, 'The Old English "Promissio Regis"', *Anglo-Saxon England* 37 (2008) pp. 91-150.

²⁷⁴ For a detailed analysis of changing perceptions of causation with regard to the Danish Conquest of 1016, see Emily A. Winkler, *Royal Responsibility in Anglo-Norman Historical Writing* (Oxford, 2017) pp. 1-120.

²⁷⁵ Keynes, 'Re-Reading King Æthelred', pp. 77-96; Simon Keynes, 'An Abbot, an Archbishop, and the Viking Raids of 1006-7 and 1009-12', *Anglo-Saxon England* 36 (2007) pp. 151-215; Catherine Cubitt, 'The Politics of Remorse: Penance and Royal Piety in the Reign of Æthelred the Unready', *Historical Research* 85.228 (2012) pp. 179-92.

by Ælfric in 1009/10, which itself gave more explicit treatment to the idea that had begun to find expression in his *Prayer of Moses* (995x998), that English cowardice in resistance and consequent shame in defeat was part of God's vengeance, in part for injustices done to monastic life, but also for constant low level impiety by regular attendees of mass.²⁷⁶ Around the same time, 995x1005, Byrhtferth of Ramsey in his *Life of St Oswald* connected the battle fought at Maldon in 991 to the biblical prophecy of Jeremiah which predicted that the kindreds of the north would bring destruction because the Israelites had not heeded God's words.²⁷⁷ That the attitude extended to royal and governmental circles, at least from 1008, is shown by Wulfstan's involvement in the composition of law codes for King Æthelred, which took on an increasingly homiletic character as the attacks worsened, with emphasis on spiritual measures intended to turn aside God's wrath.²⁷⁸

Æthelred's governmental policies from the early 990s have been seen as reactive to the idea that the invasions represented God's vengeance against the English. Simon Keynes has identified 993 as marking the beginning of Æthelred's remedial measures, a point corresponding with a change in his court circle to include a significant presence from members of the Benedictine monastic reform movement.²⁷⁹ From 993 onwards, royal charters show a contrite Æthelred granting, restoring and confirming lands and privileges to monasteries which

²⁷⁶ For a discussion of the dating of the *Sermo Lupi*, see Keynes, 'An Abbot, an Archbishop', pp. 203-15. Wulfstan, *Sermo Lupi*, ed. Treharne, *Old and Middle English*, pp. 260-67. Alice Cowen, 'Byrstas and Bysmeras: The Wounds of Sin', in Wulfstan, *Archbishop of York: The Proceedings of the Second Alcuin Conference*, ed. Matthew Townend (Turnhout, 2004) pp. 408-11. Ælfric, Supplementary Homily 14, ll. 98-107, 136-46, ed. John C. Pope, *Homilies of Aelfric: A Supplementary Collection, Being Twenty-One Full Homilies of His Middle and Later Career for the Most Part Not Previously Edited, with Some Shorter Pieces, Mainly Passages Added to the Second and Third Series*, vol. 2 (Oxford, 1968) pp. 519-22. For the date of this homily, see John C. Pope, ed., *Homilies of Aelfric: A Supplementary Collection, Being Twenty-One Full Homilies of His Middle and Later Career for the Most Part Not Previously Edited, with Some Shorter Pieces, Mainly Passages Added to the Second and Third Series*, vol. 1 (Oxford, 1967) p. 149. See also Malcolm Godden, 'The Relations of Wulfstan and Ælfric', in Matthew Townend (ed.) *Wulfstan, Archbishop of York: The Proceedings of the Second Alcuin Conference* (Turnhout, 2004) pp. 363-73. For the dating of the *Prayer of Moses*, see Malcolm Godden, 'Apocalypse and Invasion', p. 133. Cubitt, 'The Politics of Remorse', pp. 187-89. Keynes, 'Re-Reading King Æthelred', pp. 94-95. Ælfric, LoS 1.13, ed. Skeat, pp. 289-95, 295.

²⁷⁷ Byrhtferth of Ramsey, *Vita S. Oswaldi*, v.5, ed. Michael Lapidge, *Byrhtferth of Ramsey, The Lives of St Oswald and St Ecgwine* (Oxford, 2009) pp. 156-59. Michael Lapidge, 'The Life of St Oswald', in Donald Scragg (ed.) *The Battle of Maldon AD 991*, (Oxford, 1991) pp. 51-56.

²⁷⁸ See Lawson, 'Archbishop Wulfstan and the Homiletic Element', p. 154; Patrick Wormald, 'Archbishop Wulfstan and the Holiness of Society', in *Legal Culture in the Early Medieval West: Law as Text, Image and Experience* (London, 1999) pp. 243-46; Wormald, *Making of English Law*, pp. 328-45. Cf. Simon Coupland, 'The Rod of God's Wrath or the People of God's Wrath? The Carolingian Theology of the Viking Invasions', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 42.4 (1991) pp. 535-54.

²⁷⁸ Keynes, 'An Abbot, an Archbishop', p. 172. See, for example, VII Æthelred 3, 6.2, ed. Robertson, *The Laws of the Kings of England*, pp. 115-16.

²⁷⁹ Keynes, 'An Abbot, an Archbishop', pp. 170-71. Keynes, 'Re-Reading King Æthelred', pp. 90-95. Keynes, *The Diplomas of King Æthelred 'The Unready' 978-1016: A Study in Their Use as Historical Evidence* (Cambridge, 1980) pp. 98-99, 182, 186, 189-92.

he had allowed to suffer losses in the 980s, a violation which he blames on the errors of his youth and the influence of evil counsellors.²⁸⁰ However, these restorations need not have sprung initially from any sense of needing to pacify an angry God, but could instead have been symptomatic of the influence of reforming ideals for their own sake.²⁸¹ Likewise, the simultaneous increase in production of a wide variety of religious texts, substantial church building, and promotion of the cults of saints around the turn of the millennium need not have initially been a direct response to an awareness of a need to allay an angry God.²⁸² That is not to say that these activities did not gain that dimension as time went on, but because the nature of the raids did not so suddenly change at the same time, and rather built more gradually in ferocity, it is unlikely that such a consciousness appeared so suddenly and so comprehensively along with the change in formulation of Æthelred's court circle.

It is evident that in the last decade of Æthelred's reign, he and his government were consciously cultivating a spiritual response to the viking threat, which complemented, if not overrode, efforts at military resistance.²⁸³ The law code known as VII Æthelred, written by Archbishop Wulfstan and promulgated in response to the arrival of Thorkell's immense army in 1008/09, decreed a programme of public fasting and prayer before key festivals, and masses against the heathen to be sung in monasteries, with the intent that general moral reform and penitence would be effective in turning aside God's wrath.²⁸⁴ This was accompanied by the appearance of the unusual 'Agnus Dei' coin type, which has been interpreted as symbolic of the need to invoke divine assistance in driving away sin and the enemy.²⁸⁵ These spiritual measures were not new however. There are parallels with Carolingian reactions to viking and Saracen invasions in the ninth and early tenth centuries, which clerical authors saw as divine vengeance for the sins of the Frankish people, calling on the whole realm to defend the church through a combination of military and spiritual measures.²⁸⁶ Stipulations for fasts, prayers and masses against the heathen in monasteries are also referenced by Ælfric in his pastoral letter to

²⁸⁰ Simon Keynes, *The Diplomas of King Æthelred*, pp. 96-99. Roach, 'Penitential Discourse', pp. 260-66.

²⁸¹ Simon Keynes, 'The Historical Context of the Battle of Maldon', in Donald Scragg (ed.) *The Battle of Maldon AD 991* (Oxford, 1991) pp. 98-99.

²⁸² Liuzza, 'Religious Prose', p. 270.

²⁸³ Kathryn Powell, 'Viking Invasions and Marginal Annotations in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 162', *Anglo-Saxon England* 37 (2008) p. 159.

²⁸⁴ See, for example, VII Æthelred 3, 6.2, ed. A.J. Robertson, *The Laws of the Kings of England from Edmund to Henry I* (Cambridge, 1925), pp. 115-16. Keynes, 'An Abbot, an Archbishop', p. 172. Roach, 'Apocalypse and Atonement', pp. 745-46.

²⁸⁵ Simon Keynes, 'The Vikings in England, c.793-1016', pp. 80-81.

²⁸⁶ Coupland, 'The Rod of God's Wrath or the People of God's Wrath?', pp. 535-40, 552-54.

bishop Wulfsgie of Sherborne, written 933xc.995.²⁸⁷ Wulfstan was therefore likely drawing on and encouraging the wider adoption of recognised ecclesiastical practices.

A gradual, or circumstantial development of the perception of the invaders as the agents of divine vengeance is also supported by analysis of the various versions of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. The *Æthelredian Chronicle*, comprising annals 983-1016 of manuscripts [CDE], has been identified as having been composed as a whole shortly after the end of Æthelred's reign, possibly in London.²⁸⁸ These annals take a retrospective view of Æthelred's entire reign, marking the resumption of raiding in 980 as the beginning of a trajectory towards conquest in 1016, and emphasising the weakness of the English defence arising from treachery among their commanders.²⁸⁹ The character of the *Æthelredian Chronicle* is different from the earliest recension, the Winchester [A] manuscript. The entries of the [A] version from 973 to 1006 were written in the first decade of the eleventh century, possibly in or shortly after 1006, and are unique from every other version.²⁹⁰ Whereas the *Æthelredian Chronicle* emphasises the resumption of raiding in the early years of Æthelred's reign, MS [A] does not record any viking activity until the Battle of Maldon in 991 (which it numbers 993).²⁹¹ Similarly, MS [A] is alone in making no mention of either the £10,000 paid to the invaders in 991, nor the £16,000 that was included in the peace agreement with Olaf. Instead, the phrasing is in line with that used by Asser in his *Life of Alfred* (893) when he speaks of Alfred repeatedly making peace with viking leaders and standing sponsor at the baptism of Guthrum.²⁹²

This suggests that even c. 1006 when the chronicler of the [A] version was writing, it was not a foregone conclusion that the raids of the 980s would be ascribed such significance.

²⁸⁷ 'Ælfric's pastoral letter to bishop Wulfsgie', ch. 157, in *Councils and Synods, with Other Documents Relating to the English Church*, vol. 1, A.D. 871–1204, eds. Dorothy Whitelock, M Brett, and C.N.L. Brooke, (Oxford, 1981) pp. 193, 226. On the context and influence of Ælfric's pastoral letters, see Joyce Hill, 'Monastic Reform and the Secular Church: Ælfric's Pastoral Letters in Context.', in Carola Hicks (ed.) *England in the Eleventh Century: Proceedings of the 1990 Harlaxton Symposium* (Stamford, 1992) pp. 103–17; Joyce Hill, 'Authorial Adaptation: Ælfric, Wulfstan and the Pastoral Letters', in Akio Oizumi (ed.) *Text and Language in Medieval English Prose: Studies in English Medieval Language and Literature*, 12 (Frankfurt, 2005) pp. 63–75; Joyce Hill, 'Wulfsgie of Sherborne's Reforming Text', in Alexander R. Rumble (ed.) *Leaders of the Anglo-Saxon Church: From Bede to Stigand* (Woodbridge, 2012) pp. 147–63.

²⁸⁸ See Keynes, 'The Declining Reputation of Æthelred', pp. 159-60.

²⁸⁹ Alice Jorgensen, 'Rewriting the Æthelredian Chronicle: Narrative Style and Identity in Anglo-Saxon Chronicle MS F', in Alice Jorgensen (ed.) *Reading the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: Language, Literature, History* (Turnhout, 2010) pp. 113, 116-18.

²⁹⁰ ASC [A], pp. xiii-xiv, xxxvii-xxxix, xciii. Janet M. Bately, 'The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle', in Scragg (ed.) *The Battle of Maldon*, pp. 42, 46.

²⁹¹ MS [C] records raiding at seven locations in the 980s, while MSSS [DE] record two instances. See ASC [C]), pp. 84-85, ASC [D], p. 48, ASC [E], pp. 60-61. Ryan Lavelle, *Æthelred II, King of the English 978-1016* (Stroud, 2002) p. 52.

²⁹² *Alfred the Great: Asser's Life of King Alfred and Other Contemporary Sources*, ed. and trans. Simon Keynes and Michael Lapidge (London, 2004) p. 53, and e.g. ch. 43, 45, p. 81.

Viking activity was nothing new in the late tenth century; Scandinavians had been settled in the Danelaw for some time, in addition to an ongoing influx of raiding groups.²⁹³ The small-scale raiding of the 980s was probably not considered to be out of the ordinary until, from the perspective of Cnut's successful conquest, they could be retrospectively interpreted as the beginning of the playing out of God's punishment of the English. This involved a conscious re-evaluation of the past four decades of history in order to determine the causes and playing out of God's punishment of the English, which would lay the groundwork for later historians to make a direct connection between the circumstances in which Æthelred gained the throne in 978 and the resumption of raiding in 980, and ascribe the arrival of the invaders to divine vengeance. The differences between MS [A] and the Æthelredian *Chronicle* do not necessarily mean that the chronicler of the [A] version was unaware of or did not subscribe to the belief that the vikings were the agents of divine vengeance against the English at the time that he was writing c. 1006. Instead, this chronicler did not think the divine vengeance paradigm necessary or appropriate to portray the early raids or the Battle of Maldon. The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicles* were as much ideological constructions as any narrative history, and it may be significant that Æthelred was still alive at the time the [A] recension was written, with still a decade of his reign ahead of him: this chronicler may have wished to portray his resistance efforts more positively at this point than did the compilers of MSS [CDE] after 1016.²⁹⁴

The accounts of the Battle of Maldon in the Old English poem *The Battle of Maldon* and Byrhtferth of Ramsey's *Vita S. Oswaldi* (995x1005) also support the supposition that any characterisation of the invaders as the agents of divine vengeance depended on authorial perspective and intent. The loss of the original manuscript containing *The Battle of Maldon* means that it is difficult to determine how long after the battle the poem was composed.²⁹⁵ It is primarily a celebration of the tragic heroism of a number of noblemen who fought with Earl Byrhtnoth. It sits within the Christianised heroic genre characteristic of Germanic and Old English verse; prowess and the spectacle of battle are glorified and the warriors are honoured for their bravery, loyalty and disregard for life.²⁹⁶ Even though the beginning and end of the poem are missing, there is no suggestion in what remains that the poet was trying to present Byrhtnoth's defeated army as the victims of divine vengeance. Byrhtferth's *Vita S. Oswaldi*

²⁹³ Keynes, 'The Vikings in England', pp. 48-74.

²⁹⁴ On the ASC's partiality, see Jorgensen, 'Introduction: Reading the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle', p. 27.

²⁹⁵ Scragg, 'The Battle of Maldon', p. 32.

²⁹⁶ Ibid. pp. 32-34. Roberta Frank, 'The Battle of Maldon and Heroic Literature', in Scragg (ed.) *The Battle of Maldon*, pp. 198-207.

presents a more conflicted picture; even though Byrhtferth felt able to connect the defeat at Maldon with Jeremiah's prophecy concerning God's warning to the Israelites, he also stressed that Byrhtnoth's bravery and prowess were granted through God's mercy, and that his defeat was honourable.²⁹⁷ Uncertainty over the exact dating of these two works means that they cannot concretely be used to show that the differences in their portrayals of the defeat at Maldon were due to differing proximity to the battle itself. If *The Battle of Maldon* was composed immediately after the battle, then it may indicate that at this early date the conclusion that the invaders were the agents of divine vengeance had not yet been reached. If it was composed later, then it indicates that the differences between the poem and Byrhtferth's account were down to authorial perspective, and that the *Maldon* poet did not consider the divine vengeance framework useful or appropriate for his purpose of memorialising Byrhtnoth and his army. Either way, it shows that use of the divine vengeance paradigm was not inevitable.

Although there were moments when Æthelred and his government can be seen to be responding to the idea of the invaders being the manifestation of divine vengeance, no single moment can be identified as the point at which perceptions of the invaders changed from their being accepted as simple disruption to their becoming conceptualised within a providential framework of divine vengeance. Instead, this belief is likely to have built up gradually among different groups of people at different times, perhaps initially among the proponents of the monastic reform movement who in the mid-990s began to articulate a link between abuses done to monastic life and God's displeasure, and later extended to a sense of national sin and moral degradation as the attacks continued to worsen. At the same time, depictions of the invaders within the framework of divine vengeance seem to have only been employed where such rhetoric was considered to have a specific moral utility by a particular author. Even in the last years of Æthelred's reign when the view was most widespread, it does not always seem to have been considered necessary. Kathryn Powell has suggested that an early eleventh-century annotator of Ælfric's Ash-Wednesday homily, who inserted a reference to the '*heregangum*' (invading force) in an otherwise not overtly political work, felt the same sense of oppression from the invasions as Wulfstan, but expressed a different spiritual response.²⁹⁸ The annotation was made next to a passage in which Ælfric comments on the inevitability of misfortune in the world, which suggests that the invaders in this case were being seen in relation to the idea of worldly misfortune which must be borne with forbearance as expressed in the Book of Job.²⁹⁹

²⁹⁷ Byrhtferth, *Vita S. Oswaldi*, v.5, pp. 156-59. Lapidge, 'The Life of St Oswald', pp. 51-56.

²⁹⁸ Powell, 'Viking Invasions and Marginal Annotations', pp. 151, 156-58.

²⁹⁹ *Ibid.* p. 160.

If, as Powell argues on palaeographical and codicological grounds, this annotator was writing notes for the public delivery of this homily within the monastic community at Canterbury when the city was being ravaged by Thorkell's army between 1009 and 1012 (the period which also saw the martyrdom of Ælfheah, Archbishop of Canterbury), this may hint at the existence of an alternative view of the invaders to that which Wulfstan expressed in public discourse, in a context where his public reform agenda was not required.³⁰⁰

Between the end of Æthelred's reign and the twelfth century, there was then another re-interpretation of his calamitous reign that altered the way that the cause of God's wrath in the form of the invasions was perceived, so that Æthelred was held personally responsible for the arrival of the invaders in 980 because of the abhorrent way that he had obtained the throne in 978. Twelfth-century historians presented the resumption of viking attacks in 980 within a paradigm of divine vengeance, as a direct consequence of the deplorable way that Æthelred attained the throne after the murder of his half-brother Edward in 978, a crime which they considered to be exacerbated by the bad character of the king himself. The most vitriolic twelfth-century historian to lay the blame for causing God's wrath directly on King Æthelred was William of Malmesbury. In his *Vita Dunstani* (c.1129-30) and his *Gesta Regum Anglorum* (c.1135), William describes the whole course of Æthelred's life as cruel, pitiable and disgraceful, stained by his and his mother Ælfthryth's complicity in the murder of Edward.³⁰¹ His worthlessness was foretold at his baptism by St Dunstan, when the baby prince opened his bowels during the ceremony, his cowardice was established when as a child he developed a pathetic fear of candles,³⁰² and his disgrace was cemented at his coronation ceremony when Dunstan prophesied that

Inasmuch ... as you aimed at the throne through the death of your own brother ... the sin of your shameful mother and the sin of the men who shared in her wicked plot shall not be blotted out except by the shedding of much blood by your miserable subjects.³⁰³

³⁰⁰ Ibid. pp. 160, 162-69.

³⁰¹ William of Malmesbury, *Vita Dunstani* (hereafter WMVD), ii.21, ed. M. Winterbottom and R.M. Thomson, *William of Malmesbury, Saints' Lives: Lives of SS. Wulfstan, Dunstan, Patrick, Benignus and Indract* (Oxford, 2002) pp. 273-75. WMGR ii.162-164, pp. 264-69.

³⁰² WMGR ii.164, p. 268.

³⁰³ WMGR ii.164, p. 268: 'Quia ... per mortem fratris tui aspirati ad regnum ... non delebitur peccatum ignominiosae matris tuae et peccatum virorum qui interfuerunt consilio illius nequam, nisi multo sanguine miserorum provincialium'. The fear of candles comes from the *Passio Sancti Eadwardi*, ll. 13-19, ed. Christine Fell, *Edward, King and Martyr* (Leeds, 1971), p. 7. See also Lavelle, *Aethelred II*, p. 83. Dunstan's prophecy appears in Osbern's *Vita Sancti Dunstani*, 37, ed. William Stubbs, *Memorials of Saint Dunstan, Archbishop of Canterbury* (London, 1874) pp. 114-115.

William then continues to stress Æthelred's bad character and disregard for Dunstan's prophetic warnings, and the proof of God's judgement came when, soon after Dunstan's death in 988, the Danes 'overran everything'.³⁰⁴ Just as hagiographers sought to imbue their saints with divine favour from birth, William presented Æthelred as completely lacking in that regard, and deservedly so.

When exactly the traditions related by William of Malmesbury began to develop is uncertain. Legends relating to Æthelred's guilt were certainly in circulation by the late eleventh century, documented for the first time by Osbern of Canterbury and Goscelin of St Bertin in connection with the cults of Dunstan and Edward; Dunstan's prophetic foresight was used to reinforce Æthelred's bad character, and the perpetrators of Edward's martyrdom required punishment.³⁰⁵ In contrast, there is little to suggest that contemporaries laid such blame on Æthelred during his reign.³⁰⁶ MS [E] of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (1016x1023) expresses horror at the act in a poetic entry numbered 979, but does not name any perpetrators, and implies that the ensuing misfortunes were punishment against the English as a collective for their complicity in the king's death.³⁰⁷ Similarly, the earliest detailed account of Edward's death by Byrhtferth of Ramsey in his *Vita Oswaldi* (995x1005), written while Æthelred was still alive, places Æthelred and Ælfhryth close to the scene but accuses the group of English magnates who had supported Æthelred's succession over Edward's rather than them.³⁰⁸ In the same text, Byrhtferth even praises Æthelred as a *clito egregius* (excellent prince), whose consecration was celebrated and who later suffered misfortune.³⁰⁹ Simon Keynes has put this change of emphasis over the eleventh century down to a retrospective attempt to determine the root cause of Cnut's ultimate defeat of the English, which was accepted as evidence of divine vengeance, with the explanation being found in the suspicious circumstances surrounding Edward's murder and Æthelred's accession to the throne, and the important task being to show exactly why the king deserved such a blighted rule as punishment from God.³¹⁰ More recently, Emily Winkler had argued that the change is a reflection of a shift in ideology concerning royal responsibility which is reflected in a different view of historical causation between the

³⁰⁴ WMGR, ii.165, p. 271.

³⁰⁵ Susan J. Ridyard, *The Royal Saints of Anglo-Saxon England: A Study of the West Saxon and East Anglian Cults* (Cambridge, 1988) pp. 48-50. See also David Rollason, *The Mildrith Legend: A Study in Early Medieval Hagiography in England* (Leicester, 1982) p. 56

³⁰⁶ Keynes, 'The Declining Reputation of Æthelred', pp. 168-69

³⁰⁷ ASC [E], 979, pp. 59-60; Keynes, 'An Abbot, an Archbishop', p. 179. Fell, *Edward, King and Martyr*, p. xxi.

³⁰⁸ Byrhtferth, *Vita S. Oswaldi*, iv.18, pp. xxxvi, 137-41. Keynes, *The Diplomas of King Æthelred*, p. 167.

³⁰⁹ Byrhtferth, *Vita S. Oswaldi*, v.4, pp. 154-55

³¹⁰ Keynes, 'Diplomas', p. 169; Keynes, 'The Declining Reputation of Æthelred', p. 171.

compilers of the *Æthelredian Chronicle* and the historians of the twelfth century.³¹¹ In either case, it depends on a rejection of the contemporary explanation for and reaction to the situation outlined above, and a long-term reinterpretation of historical causation and effect with regard to identifying the reasons for God's wrath.

At the same time, there was also a current of legend connected with the cult of St *Ælfheah* which persisted at least until the late eleventh century that suggests that the Viking invaders were not homogeneously assigned the status of divine avengers. In his *Life of Ælfheah* (written in the 1080s), Osbern presents the invaders who murderously ransacked Canterbury as themselves the deserving victims of divine vengeance for their actions in the form of a terrible plague, and describes various gruesome vengeance miracles that struck the perpetrators of *Ælfheah's* martyrdom individually.³¹² Osbern is even proud that *Ælfheah* managed to convert some of the Danes to Christianity, an element of human connection that is less detached than the more usual categorisation of the invaders as merely the enemy.³¹³ Even William of Malmesbury expresses some contradiction over the image of the Vikings as divine avengers when he relates a rumour that their leader Swein died in 1014 as a result of a blow on the head delivered by St Edmund in a vision after he had ravaged the lands of that abbey, presenting a slightly different version of a story which also appears in Herman the Archdeacon's *Miracles of St Edmund*.³¹⁴ These examples suggest the existence of a multiplicity of views of the invaders that were not necessarily incompatible with that put forward by homilists and historians, but that do complicate the picture by showing that categorisation of a people as the agents or victims of divine vengeance could be fluid depending on circumstance, and could be adopted or not for a particular purpose as convenient. Agents of divine vengeance could become subject to divine vengeance themselves, in this case when the honour of a saint was at stake.

Of the twelfth-century Anglo-Norman historians, only Henry of Huntingdon produced a narrative that closely corresponded with the contemporary perception of the viking raids. In Henry's long view of history, the Danes were merely the fourth divinely sent plague to have

³¹¹ Winkler, *Royal Responsibility*, pp. 10-27.

³¹² Osbern, *Vita S. Alphegi*, pp. 137, 142. *Osberni Historia De Translatione Corporis S. Elfegi Archiepiscopi Cantuariensis, a Lundonia Ad Cantuariam* (hereafter Osbern, *Translatione*) ed. H. Wharton, *Anglia Sacra*, vol. 2 (1691) p. 144. For the dating of Osbern's *Life of Ælfheah*, see Rubenstein, 'The Life and Writings of Osbern of Canterbury', pp. 34-35. Paul Anthony Hayward, 'Translation Narratives in Post-Conquest Hagiography and English Resistance to the Norman Conquest', *Anglo-Norman Studies* 21 (1991) p. 72.

³¹³ Osbern, *Vita S. Alphegi*, p. 141.

³¹⁴ Appendix, 81, 193.

struck the island of Britain over the past millennium.³¹⁵ He attributes the reason for God's fury to the withering of religious life and pervasiveness of treachery among men of every rank, and connects viking advances and victories with the deaths of the leading reformers Æthelwold, Dunstan and Oswald, and with Æthelred's destruction of the bishopric of Rochester in 986.³¹⁶ The message is clear: without the guidance of the leaders of the reform movement, the perceived rights of the church were left open to abuse and the king was liable to stray. Given that Henry also accuses Æthelred's mother Ælfthryth of having killed Edward herself, he does not appear to perceive any contradiction in assigning blame to both the nation collectively and to Æthelred individually, showing that although the earlier interpretation of the causes of divine vengeance may have been superseded by a probably more gripping story of royal scandal, it did not die out completely.³¹⁷ The difference between Henry's representation of collective responsibility and contemporary perceptions of experiencing divine vengeance was that Henry knew what the end of Æthelred's reign had been, whereas at the time, defeat was never seen as inevitable. As long as the English perceived the errors for which God was punishing them to be those of religious decline and behavioural degeneracy, those were things which could be remedied with proper instruction. The king's supposed murder of his brother on the other hand, was a finite act that could not be undone and could be identified in retrospect as having been suitably punished. In this respect there is a certain similarity to the way that historians looked back on Harold Godwinson's defeat at Hastings in 1066 as having been caused by his father Earl Harold's involvement in the murder of Æthelred's son Alfred thirty years previously.

NARRATIVES OF 1066

The Norman Conquest of England in 1066 is another example of an event interpreted by various historians as the consequence of divine vengeance against the conquered English, although they differed in their specific prejudices. Much of our information for the events of 1066 comes from the Anglo-Norman historians of the subsequent century, and so the prevailing narrative is a classic example of history written (much later, in some cases) by the victors. There is enough agreement between the historians to be able to reconstruct the immediate

³¹⁵ HCHA i.4, pp. 14-15.

³¹⁶ HCHA, v.preface 28, pp. 275, 327. For a summary of the impact of Æthelwold, Dunstan and Oswald as reformers, see Hill, 'The Benedictine Reform and Beyond' pp. 152-55.

³¹⁷ HCHA, v.27, p. 324, note 126. On the blame laid on Ælfthryth, see Kirsten A. Fenton, *Gender, Nation and Conquest in the Works of William of Malmesbury* (Woodbridge, 2008) pp. 106-14

causes and sequence of the conquest as depicted on the Bayeux Tapestry: Harold Godwinson was said to have made an oath to Duke William of Normandy promising him the English crown after the death of Edward the Confessor, however Harold broke that oath and was himself crowned king, a slight to Duke William which led to his successful invasion to claim what he perceived as his hereditary right.³¹⁸ The Anglo-Norman historians have been accused by modern scholars of being essentially propagandists for William the Conqueror, through their moralising narratives seeking to justify his victory over the English and legitimise Norman inheritance of the kingdom, a tendency which, if anything, only became stronger after the first generation of testimonies.³¹⁹ Because of this, the subtly varying ways in which they present the broader long- and short-term causes of the Norman Conquest within different constructions of divine vengeance is intriguing.

It is possible to identify three broad strands of thought in the historical interpretation of the Norman Conquest: one was the conviction that the conquest was only the latest development in a long cycle of history that went according to a divine plan which could be revealed through prophecy; another links the conquest very specifically to the horrible murder of the English *ætheling* Alfred by Earl Godwine thirty years previously, and his son Harold's perjury; a third blames the weakness and immoral character of the English kings since Æthelred for the disastrous fate of their nation. Not every historian explicitly uses the terminology of divine vengeance, nevertheless, in a similar way to Wulfstan's emphasis on God's anger in his *Sermo Lupi*, it is often clear through narrative structures which emphasise the consequences of the sins of the English and/or their kings that their view of the Norman Conquest is through the framework of divine vengeance. This case study will seek to address the question of when and why each of these strands of thought came to prominence, and from that show the ways that the interpretation of history could develop over time to suit different purposes. Elizabeth van Houts has attributed English silence in the decades following the conquest to a profound sense of shock following such a traumatic time.³²⁰ It will therefore also be instructive to address to

³¹⁸ The Tapestry is preserved in the Musée de la Tapisserie de Bayeux, in Bayeux, Normandy. For discussions of its dating and provenance, see, for example, D. Bernstein, *The Mystery of the Bayeux Tapestry* (Chicago, 1986) and N.P. Brooks and H.E. Walker, 'The Authority and Interpretation of the Bayeux Tapestry' in *Anglo-Norman Studies 1: Proceedings of the Battle Conference* (1978), pp. 7-28

³¹⁹ Elizabeth van Houts, 'Historical Writing', in Christopher Harper Bill and Elizabeth van Houts (eds.) *A Companion to the Anglo-Norman World* (Woodbridge, 2003) p. 107. Elizabeth van Houts, 'The Memory of 1066 in Written and Oral Traditions', *Anglo-Norman Studies* 19 (1996) p. 176.

³²⁰ van Houts, 'The Memory of 1066 in Written and Oral Traditions', pp. 172, 179.

what extent the English voices that do show through agree with the dominant Norman narrative, and the significance of the divine vengeance paradigm being adopted, or omitted on occasion.

The earliest accounts of the battle of Hastings and the Norman Conquest come from the epic poem, the *Carmen de Hastingsae Proelio* by Guy, Bishop of Amiens (1067x1070), William of Poitiers' *Gesta Guillelmi* (1071x1077) and William of Jumièges' *Gesta Normanorum Ducum* (c. 1070).³²¹ The first two of these fit unequivocally into the model of justificatory literature that sought to glorify and legitimise a hero, in this case Duke William of Normandy, and to demonise his opponents. Along with the circulation of oral stories, they also set the interpretative framework from which subsequent accounts were derived and adapted.³²² All of these early accounts take a relatively short-term and personal view of the causes of the Norman Conquest, with a providential perspective only really beginning to be given narrative prominence by William of Poitiers. It is notable that the earliest poetic account of the battle of Hastings, despite depicting William in the conventional model of a classical hero whose piety earns him divine favour, does not immediately situate William's victory within the framework of a long-term divine plan of vengeance against the English.³²³ Instead, all reference to divine punishment is directly targeted at Harold Godwinson individually for his actions in the immediate run-up to Hastings. First, a confusing section seems to suggest that Harold's victory over his brother Tostig at Stamford Bridge was ordained by God so that William's subsequent victory over Harold at Hastings would be doubly justified, in that he both avenged Harold's crime of fratricide and gained the kingdom that was rightfully his.³²⁴ This is then reinforced through reference to Harold's perjury, which found him 'guilty by the judgement of God.'³²⁵ There is no suggestion that the author of the *Carmen de Hastingsae Proelio* took any longer view of the causes of Harold's defeat, or sought to give any deeper theological or philosophical meaning to William's victory.

It was William of Poitiers and William of Jumièges who first put forward a longer view of historical causation for the conquest by extending the blame laid on Harold to his father Earl Godwine, although William of Poitiers gives this idea much more extended treatment.

³²¹ The attribution of the *Carmen de Hastingsae Proelio* to Guy, Bishop of Amiens is made by Orderic Vitalis. See *OVHE*, 3, ed. Chibnall, 2, ii.158, pp. 185-87.

³²² van Houts, 'The Memory of 1066 in Written and Oral Traditions', p. 174.

³²³ Neil Cartlidge, 'The Norman Conquest and English Literary Culture After 1066', in Robert DeMaria, Heesok Chang, and Samantha Zacher (eds.) *A Companion to British Literature*, vol. 1: Medieval Literature 700–1450 (Wiley, 2014) pp. 102-03.

³²⁴ *The Carmen De Hastingsae Proelio of Guy, Bishop of Amiens*, ll. 131-40, ed. Frank Barlow (Oxford, 1999) pp. 10-11, and note 2. '

³²⁵ *Carmen De Hastingsae Proelio*, ll. 239-42, at l. 242, p. 17. 'Divino tamen est iam rea iudicio.'

According to William, the catalyst for English defeat at Hastings was the murder of the English *ætheling* Alfred, son of Æthelred the Unready, along with his group of retainers, at the hands of Earl Godwine in 1036 due to his status as a potential rival for the crown after the death of Cnut.³²⁶ The narrative of the *Gesta Guillelmi* is based on the premise that Earl Godwine's shocking crime presaged the future destruction of his family line through the death of his offspring Harold, whose fate was doubly secured through his own offence of perjury. Losing both the kingdom and his life was Harold's punishment for his own presumption and his father's atrocity. William of Poitiers heavily implies that Harold's fate should be understood in terms of divine vengeance. He foreshadows Harold's death in a passage directly addressed to Earl Godwine, saying that because of Alfred's murder, 'William, the most glorious duke [...] will smite with his avenging sword the throat of Harold, your offspring and your equal in cruelty and perfidy.'³²⁷ He subsequently emphasises Harold's impious behaviour in contrast to a quasi-hagiographical portrait of Duke William describing the divine favour he enjoyed, and uses a religious analogy to explain why the Battle of Hastings eventually turned against the English, who, he says, 'grew weaker, and endured punishment (uindictam) as though confessing their guilt by their defeat.'³²⁸ (This is the first indication that the English were regarded as being complicit in Harold's crimes and were therefore deserving of punishment.) Mirroring his earlier address to Earl Godwine, William of Poitiers reflects on Harold's death by directly admonishing him. He blames Harold for bringing disaster on his own head, suggests that his death proves that God did not support his inheritance of the English throne, and says that his doom was foretold by a comet soon after he received the crown, an omen which serves to confirm the prophetic warning to Earl Godwine that his offspring would reap the consequences of his crime.³²⁹

It is easy to attribute a personal agenda to William of Poitiers' version of events, given his status as Duke William's chaplain for many years.³³⁰ His narrative construct may also have been influenced by the personal connections between the English *æthelings* and the Norman

³²⁶ WPGG, i.3, 4, ii.1, pp. 5-7, 101. Cf. William of Jumieges, *Gesta Normanorum Ducum*, ed. Stephen Morillo, *The Battle of Hastings: Sources and Interpretations* (Woodbridge, 1996) pp. 17-19. For the succession controversy and the spurious circumstances of Alfred's return and murder, see ASC [C], 1035, p. 105. The *Encomium Emmae Reginae*, iii.2-5, ed. Alistair Campbell (London, 1949) pp. 40-45. Pauline Stafford, *Queen Emma and Queen Edith: Queenship and Women's Power in Eleventh Century England* (Oxford, 1997) p. 241; Eric John, *Reassessing Anglo-Saxon England* (Manchester, 1996) p. 166

³²⁷ WPGG, i.6, pp. 5-6. 'Guillelmus uero, gloriosissimus dux [...] uindice gladio feriet iugulum Heraldi, tuae sobolis crudelitate perfidiaque consimillimae.'

³²⁸ WPGG, i.46, ii.1, ii.13, ii.21, pp. pp. 76-79, 100-03, 122-23, 132-33. 'Languent Angli, et quasi reatum ipso defectu confitentes, uindictam patiuntur.'

³²⁹ WPGG, ii.24, pp 140-43

³³⁰ WPGG, pp. xvi, xx.

court; by the time of Alfred's disastrous return to England in 1036, he and his brother Edward (later Edward the Confessor) had been living in exile in Normandy among Duke William's family for two decades.³³¹ This would explain why from a Norman perspective William of Poitiers would express such outrage over Alfred and his Norman retainers' murder, and could present William's victory at Hastings as justified retaliation.³³² To fulfil his purpose of glorifying Duke William and demonising his opponents, William of Poitiers sought to emphasise divine support on the one hand, and offences worthy of divine punishment on the other. In presenting a convincing narrative it was simply a matter of retrospectively identifying what those offences were. Since it was Harold Godwinson who lost the Battle of Hastings, this limited the pool of historically identifiable offences to those connected with him, which conveniently included his father's atrocity.

Given the distance and perspective of another few decades, the historians of the first half of the twelfth century further widened the lens of historical causation of the Norman Conquest and began to depict Harold and Earl Godwine's crimes of perjury and murder as symptomatic of a wider state of national sin and degeneracy that made the English as a whole deserving of divine vengeance. While the *Gesta Guillelmi* remained influential – Orderic Vitalis for example explicitly admires the work and directs his own readers towards it – it began to sit among a variety of other interpretations that ranged from Orderic's own relatively balanced account in his *Historia Ecclesiastica* (1123-1137) that acknowledges Norman as well as English fault as displayed in the heavy price of their victory, to Henry of Huntingdon's grand sense of the inevitability of English destruction through God's longstanding plan of vengeful destruction, to William of Malmesbury's fixation with the faults of King Æthelred.³³³

Developments in interpretations of the causes of the Norman Conquest within the framework of divine vengeance may be due to a new twelfth-century conception of royal responsibility which contributed to the moral failings of the people at large. Emily Winkler has recently shown that the Anglo-Norman historians of the first half of the twelfth century

³³¹ WPGG, p. xv; Frank Barlow, 'Edward [St Edward, known as Edward the Confessor] (1003x5-1066)', *ODNB*, www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/8516 [accessed 15.09.2017]; M.K. Lawson, 'Alfred Ætheling (d.1036/37)', *ODNB*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/184> [accessed 15.09.2017]; On Edward's life prior to becoming king, see Frank Barlow, *Edward the Confessor* (Yale, 1997) pp. 3-53. Jay Rubenstein, 'William of Poitiers talks about war' in Jason Glenn (ed.) *The Middle Ages in Texts and Texture: Reflections on Medieval Sources* (Toronto, 2011) p. 131

³³² The way that humans could be portrayed as the agents of divine vengeance whilst still pursuing personal grievances will be discussed further in chapter 5.

³³³ *OVHE*, 3, ed. Chibnall, 2, ii.157, 148-50, pp. 185, 175-79. For detail on Henry and William's narratives see this section below.

subscribed to a view of kingship that emphasised the ruler's ability to influence the fate of his nation through his conduct and character, specifically different from Carolingian and Anglo-Saxon views which placed the king's role in ensuring the wellbeing of his nation within a wider sense of collective responsibility (although it must be noted that the tenth-century *Promissio Regis* also contains reference to the king's responsibility for the spiritual wellbeing of the nation).³³⁴ This view of the king's responsibility and abilities was brought to bear on twelfth-century interpretations of both the conquests of 1016 and 1066; just as blame was newly laid on King Æthelred for being primarily responsible for bringing God's vengeance on the English in 1016, so was Harold Godwinson criticised for bringing about the same in 1066.³³⁵ As discussed above, William of Malmesbury directs particular venom at Æthelred, but Æthelred was only perhaps the worst example in William's *Gesta Regum* of a king whose moral failings were reflected in the state of their people and brought God's vengeance upon them; William of Malmesbury also castigates the early British king Vortigern, and later William Rufus, for their slothfulness, profligacy and failure to subject their will to God's, and Harold Godwinson, who gained the crown through perfidy.³³⁶ Both Henry of Huntingdon and William of Malmesbury mark Æthelred's marriage to Emma of Normandy in 1002 as the beginning of the inevitable slide towards conquest in 1066 since it created the kin connection between the royal houses of England and Normandy that would later allow Duke William to make his claim to the English throne.³³⁷ Henry says that 'It is clear that this [Æthelred's marriage] happened at God's command, so that evil would befall the ungodly.'³³⁸ For Henry, every subsequent development, including Alfred's murder (which he dates incorrectly), was just a step towards the fulfilment of God's plan of destruction, whereas for William, the murder was only another instance of Æthelred's bad judgement.³³⁹ Henry of Huntingdon and Orderic Vitalis also both sought to discredit the character of Harold Godwinson, prior to and during his brief reign in 1066, thereby emphasising his role in bringing about divine vengeance on the English in 1066.³⁴⁰

³³⁴ Winkler, *Royal Responsibility*, pp. 10-95. Cf. Clayton, 'The Old English "Promissio Regis"', pp. 91-150.

³³⁵ *Ibid.* pp. 11, 101-22.

³³⁶ For analysis of William's treatment of these three kings, see Sønnesyn, *William of Malmesbury and the Ethics of History*, pp. 174-75, 216-55, 196-97.

³³⁷ *HHHA*, vi.1-2, pp. 337-41. *WMVD*, ii.34, p. 297.

³³⁸ *HHHA*, vi.prologue, pp. 338-39. 'Hoc autem Dei nutu factum esse constat, ut ueniret contra improbos malum.'

³³⁹ In a passage added in the third version of the HA, c.1140, Henry places the murder after the death of Harthacnut in 1042, relating it to Earl Godwin's ambition to have Edward become king and marry his daughter. See *HHHA*, vi.20-21, pp. 370-73, note 108.

³⁴⁰ *OVHE*, 3, ed. Chibnall, 2, ii. 145-47, pp. 171-75. *HHHA*, vi.25, p. 383

These ideas about the responsibility of the king for failing to prevent conquest and causing national disaster sat within a providential view of history in which God's punishment of one people through conquest led to opportunity for improvement with a change of dynasty.³⁴¹ These ideas of the Norman Conquest as both divine vengeance and renewal were not mutually exclusive. As will be demonstrated in chapter three, the victims of divine vengeance were sometimes able to redeem themselves through amendment and repentance.³⁴² Henry of Huntingdon and William of Malmesbury both represent the Norman Conquest as an example of a time when the moral failings of the people at large had led to divine punishment indiscriminately striking the deserving as well as the undeserving. In the prologue to his *Historia Anglorum*, Henry of Huntingdon sets out his view of British history as cycling through periods of moral improvement and decline followed by divine vengeance, of which the Norman Conquest is the latest example:

From the very beginning down to the present time, the divine vengeance (diuina ultio) has sent five plagues into Britain, punishing the faithful as well as unbelievers. The first was through the Romans, who overcame Britain but later withdrew. The second was through the Picts and Scots, who grievously beleaguered the land with battles but did not conquer it. The third was through the English, who overcame and occupy it. The fourth was through the Danes, who conquered it by warfare, but afterwards they perished. The fifth was through the Normans, who conquered it and have dominion over the English people at the present time.³⁴³

Here, Henry aligns the Normans with the invading Romans and Saxons as the agents of divine vengeance who all brought lasting legacies with their conquests, and during his description of the coming of the Normans in book six he continually reminds his readers that the Normans should be understood as the agents of divine vengeance against the English.³⁴⁴ Similarly, William of Malmesbury ends his account of the Norman Conquest by explaining that 'as in tranquil times God's serene kindness often fosters bad and good men equally, so in the hour of captivity His stern judgement sometimes grips the good as well as bad.'³⁴⁵ William regards the Norman Conquest as both a punishment and a blessing. It is clear that he believes that the

³⁴¹ Winkler, *Royal Responsibility*, pp. 136-37.

³⁴² See below, p. 115, and Fig. 3, p. 121.

³⁴³ *HHHA* i.4, pp. 14-15. 'Quinque autem plagas ab exordio usque ad presens immisit diuina ultio Britanniae, que non solum uisitat fideles, sed etiam diiudicat infidels. Primam per Romanos, qui Britanniam expugnerauerunt sed postea recesserunt. Smiddl16 ecundam per Pictos et Scotos, qui grauissime eam bellis uexauerunt, nec tamen optinuerunt. Terciam per Anglicos, qui eam debellauerunt et optinent. Quartum per Dacos, qui eam bellis optinuerunt, sed postea deperierunt. Quintam per Normannos, qui eam deuicerunt et Anglis inpresentiarum dominantur.'

³⁴⁴ Winkler, *Royal Responsibility*, pp. 130-37. *HHHA*, vi.preface, 27, 29, 38, pp. 339, 385, 393, 403.

³⁴⁵ *WMGR*, iii.245, pp. 458-61. 'uerum sicut in tranquillitate malos cum bonis fouet plerumque Dei serenitas, ita in captiuitate bonos cum malis nonnumquam eiusdem constringit seueritas.'

degenerating morality of some sections of English society was a cause of their defeat, yet this defeat by the Normans was also intended to fulfil a providential progression towards moral improvement and salvation.³⁴⁶ The Norman Conquest was regarded by Henry and William as God's vengeful intervention in history in response to the moral failings of the English that had accrued over the preceding decades in a reflection of the bad character of certain kings, which also initiated an opportunity for renewal and the fulfilment of God's providential plan.³⁴⁷

One mode of historical proof that the Norman Conquest was the result of divine vengeance as part of God's providential plan for the English was prophecy, since the fulfilment of prophetic predictions gave confirmation to God's guiding hand in the structure of history.³⁴⁸ William of Malmesbury gives authority to his narrative by relating a prophecy that King Edward the Confessor, who by this point was acknowledged as a saint, was supposed to have uttered on his deathbed, giving a message from God that said 'Since the leading men in England, earls, bishops, and abbots, are servants not of God but of the Devil, God has given this country after your death for a year and a day into the hand of the enemy, and demons will roam over the whole of this land.'³⁴⁹ This prophecy apparently had a mixed reception at the time, for William of Malmesbury says that men trembled when they heard it, but that Archbishop Stigand (of whom William is very critical) had laughed it off as the ravings of an old man.³⁵⁰ Such disregard of this grave warning by the archbishop would only seem to confirm the negligent character of the leading men of England that the prophecy described, and William sees its fulfilment in the Norman Conquest.

As with any historical narrative, the veracity of prophetic revelation could only be determined in hindsight (or indeed if the prophecy was invented afterwards), which also meant that any recorded revelation was open to manipulation to suit a particular purpose. A supposed prophecy of Archbishop Dunstan, first noted in the late eleventh century, is a case in point. According to Osborn in his *Vita S. Dunstani* (1070s), shortly before his death in 988, Dunstan warned that 'There is about to spread among the race of the English a dreadful and long-lasting

³⁴⁶ Sønnesyn, *William of Malmesbury and the Ethics of History*, pp. 186-208.

³⁴⁷ Ibid. p. 197; Winkler, *Royal Responsibility*, p. 129. Cf. Michael Winterbottom, 'William of Malmesbury and the Normans', *The Journal of Medieval Latin: A Publication of the Medieval Latin Association of North America* 20 (2010) pp. 70-73.

³⁴⁸ R.W. Southern, 'Aspects of the European Tradition of Historical Writing: 3, History as Prophecy', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 22 (1972) pp. 159-60, 169

³⁴⁹ WMGR, ii.226, pp. 414-15. 'Quoniam primores Angliae, duces episcopi et abates, non sunt ministri Dei sed diaboli, traddit Deus regnum post obitum tuum anno uno et die uno in manu inimici, peruagabunturque demones totam hanc terram.'

³⁵⁰ WMGR, ii.227, pp. 414-15

evil from a foreign people'.³⁵¹ While Osbern, and afterwards Eadmer in his *Historia Novorum*, relate this prophecy to the coming of the Danes, and William of Malmesbury omits it entirely due to it not being corroborated by any earlier source, Henry of Huntingdon subtly changes the wording so that it appears to predict the Norman Conquest.³⁵² Henry references the words of 'a certain man of God' who warned that 'because of the enormity of their crimes [...] an unforeseen lordship would come on them [the English] from France.'³⁵³ By either deliberately altering or differently interpreting Dunstan's words, Henry thereby extends the historical foreshadowing of 1066 still further. The fact that there is no contemporary record of Dunstan making such a prophecy could be because his earliest biographer, B, despite presenting Dunstan as a visionary in other respects, apparently knew very little of his life as archbishop after 960 and legends concerning that period circulated as oral report instead.³⁵⁴ In addition, such a warning was perhaps not considered urgently noteworthy until after it could be considered to have been fulfilled.

In a similar vein, in the section recording a 'translation' of the supposedly fifth-century prophecies of Merlin in his *Historia Regum Britanniae* (completed c.1136), Geoffrey of Monmouth includes a series of cryptic predictions that the White Dragon would invite over a daughter of Germany, then the German Worm would be crowned and sit enthroned until the North Wind would rise against him, and the German Dragon would find it hard to escape, for vengeance (*ultio*) for its treason would overtake it, and the decimation of Normandy would be a sorry blow, for a people dressed in wood and iron corselets would take vengeance (*vindictam*) on it for its wickedness.³⁵⁵ Merlin's prophecies gained widespread circulation and popularity in their own right during the twelfth century; these predictions concerning the Saxon, Danish and Norman takeovers of Britain were among those that could be considered to have been fulfilled, which then lent credibility to others that had not yet come to fruition but were suitably

³⁵¹ HHHA, vi.preface, p. 340, note 3. Osbern's *Vita Dunstani*, 43, ed. Stubbs, *Memorials of Saint Dunstan*, pp. 124-25. 'Anglorum gentem dira ac diuturna mala ab exteris gentibus esse passuram' (my translation)

³⁵² See Osbern's *Vita Dunstani*, 46, ed. Stubbs, *Memorials of Saint Dunstan*, p. 127. *Eadmeri Historia*, p. 3. Translation from Eadmer, *HRE*, p. 3. WMVD, ii.34, p. 297.

³⁵³ HHHA, vi.preface, pp. 338-39. 'Predixit etiam eis quidam vir Dei, quod ex scelerum suorum inmanitate [...] eis insperatum a Francia aduenturum dominum.'

³⁵⁴ Catherine Cubitt, 'Archbishop Dunstan: A Prophet in Politics?' in Julia Barrow and Andrew Wareham (eds.) *Myth, Rulership, Church and Charters: Essays in Honour of Nicholas Brooks* (Ashgate, 2008) pp. 146-47.

³⁵⁵ *The Historia Regum Britanniae of Geoffrey of Monmouth*, ed. Acton Griscom, trans. Robert Ellis Jones (London, 1929) p. 386. 'Vix obtinebit cauernas suas germanicus draco. quia ultio proditiōnis eius superueniet. Uigebit tandem paulisper. set decimatione neustrie nocebit. Populus namque in ligno & tunicis ferries superueniet. qui vindicta, de nequicia ipsius sumet.' Cf. Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The History of the Kings of Britain*, vii.1-2, trans. Lewis Thorpe (London, 1966) pp. 170-73. Julia Crick, 'Geoffrey of Monmouth, Prophecy and History', *Journal of Medieval History* 18 (1992) p. 359.

vague.³⁵⁶ The effect of this particular prophecy is to trace the legitimacy and inevitability of the Norman takeover of England as vengeance for the treacherous crimes of the Anglo-Saxons (the German Dragon) back to the earliest history of the island of Britain. While the prophecies related by William of Malmesbury and Henry of Huntingdon fit into the broader Norman tendency in the century after the conquest to adopt Anglo-Saxon culture and present themselves as the legitimate and divinely ordained inheritors of the kingdom, the prophecy of Merlin related by Geoffrey, in contrast, seems to depict the Norman Conquest as the Saxons' just comeuppance for having wrested the island from those who they were invited over to protect centuries earlier, linking the distant British past with Geoffrey's own time.³⁵⁷

What has emerged from this brief overview of how the Anglo-Norman historians brought divine vengeance into play in their historical narratives in different ways is that there was apparently a gradual progression from attributing God's vengeance to the immediate causes contained within the political situation and manoeuvrings of 1066, to an increasingly long view of historical causation as part of a divine plan for the destruction of the English. Even though Henry of Huntingdon is the only historian who explicitly refers to the Norman Conquest as 'diuina ultio', it is clear through the inclusion of prophecy and references to God's judgement and the impiety and guilt of the English and/or their kings prior to defeat that William of Poitiers, William of Malmesbury and others also intended their readers to understand the causes and consequences of the Norman Conquest within the conceptual framework of divine vengeance.³⁵⁸ Each historian brought their own perspective to explain this broadly shared providential interpretation of history.

Whether there was an ethnic element to these depictions of the Norman Conquest within the framework of divine vengeance will be the next question to address. William of Malmesbury and Henry of Huntingdon, like Orderic Vitalis, were of mixed English and Norman descent and were sympathetic to the English past, and this may be significant in their presentations of the Conquest as both deserved punishment for the sinful English, and as an

³⁵⁶ Crick, 'Geoffrey of Monmouth, Prophecy and History', pp. 359-71.

³⁵⁷ On Norman adoption of Anglo-Saxon culture, see Ridyard, 'Condigna Veneratio', pp. 182-206. Hugh M. Thomas, *The English and the Normans*. On Geoffrey as an advocate for Welsh history, see John Gillingham, 'The Context and Purposes of Geoffrey of Monmouth's History of the Kings of Britain', in *The English in the Twelfth Century: Imperialism, National Identity and Political Values* (Woodbridge, 2000) pp. 20-37. For the argument for an intended Norman audience for Geoffrey's work, cf. Jennifer Farrell, 'History, Prophecy and the Arthur of the Normans: The Question of Audience and Motivation Behind Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae*', *Anglo-Norman Studies* 37, ed. Elizabeth van Houts (2015) pp. 99-114.

³⁵⁸ See above, note 343.

opportunity for moral improvement.³⁵⁹ William of Malmesbury especially is careful to acknowledge the existence of different and conflicting traditions and opinions surrounding the key points that were generally identified as having brought down divine vengeance on the English, including the circumstances of Alfred's murder, the veracity of Harold's oath to William, and the character of Harold himself, and admits his inability to determine the truth of any version, instead presenting all information for the reader's examination.³⁶⁰ This reinforces the point that William and Henry's narratives were deliberately formulated rhetorical constructions that set 1066 within the framework of divine vengeance with particular moral purposes in mind, and suggests that there existed other ways of assessing this point in history that existed alongside this dominant historical narrative.

There is evidence to suggest that there was at least a current of agreement among the conquered English that took a line of thought on the Norman Conquest which was similar to that earlier promulgated by Wulfstan and Ælfric with regard to the viking invasions.³⁶¹ The [D] recension of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, apparently written out in the second half of the eleventh century at Worcester, subscribes to the view that 'the French had possession of the place of slaughter, just as God had granted them because of the people's sins.'³⁶² This chronicler identifies himself with the conquered, and expresses the most emotive involvement in events out of all the versions, although it is difficult to tell whether the entry was written immediately after the conquest or added at a later point because the manuscript contains a number of later interpolations.³⁶³ Elizabeth van Houts has suggested that the monks who recorded this view were presenting 'a theological rationalisation of national shame' that 'contrived to anaesthetise to some extent the trauma from which they were suffering.'³⁶⁴ Such a view can to an extent be expected to emanate from a monastic atmosphere, but what is potentially more significant is when the divine vengeance paradigm is conspicuously absent from surviving English records. The [A] and [E] versions of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle are much briefer and more annalistic in their treatment of 1066, which may be down to genre, but

³⁵⁹ Elizabeth van Houts, 'The Memory of 1066 in Written and Oral Traditions', p. 176. Winkler, *Royal Responsibility*, p. 146.

³⁶⁰ WMGR, ii.188, p. 337, ii.228, pp. 417-21

³⁶¹ See Jacqueline Stodnick, 'Sentence to Story: Reading the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle as Formulary', in Alice Jorgensen (ed.) *Reading the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: Language, Literature, History* (Turnhout, 2010) pp. 107-11.

³⁶² ASC [D], 1066, pp. xi-xxxviii, 80. 'þa Frencyscan ahton wælstowe gewæld, callswa heom God uðe for folces synnon'. Translation from Swanton *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicles*, pp. 199-200.

³⁶³ Elizabeth van Houts, 'The Memory of 1066 in Written and Oral Traditions', p. 172. Pauline Stafford, 'The Anglo-Saxon Chronicles, Identity and the Making of England', *The Haskins Society Journal, Studies in Medieval History* 19, eds. Stephen Morillo and William North (2007) p. 36.

³⁶⁴ van Houts, 'The Memory of 1066 in Written and Oral Traditions', p. 171.

when compared with the [D] recension suggests a deliberate choice to omit further commentary, and may exemplify a reluctance to engage with the events further, perhaps out of trauma and shock, or perhaps because of unwillingness to perpetuate the narrative of the conquest as divine vengeance against the English.³⁶⁵

Eadmer's *Historia Novorum* (begun before 1100 but completed 1109x1124) is also an exception in that Eadmer, a monk of Canterbury of English parentage, displays a reluctance to place the Norman Conquest within the divine vengeance paradigm, and is careful neither to praise William overtly nor to condemn Harold outright.³⁶⁶ The only element of foreshadowing comes when Harold informs King Edward that he wishes to go to Normandy to secure the release of some of his relatives, and Edward warns Harold against the trip because he had 'a presentiment that you will succeed only in bringing misfortune on the whole kingdom and discredit upon yourself,' an important warning but in no way equivalent to Edward's deathbed prophecy as told by William of Malmesbury, especially as Eadmer goes on to defend Harold's reasons for breaking what he casts as an invalid oath to William.³⁶⁷ The only nod that Eadmer gives to the existence of an interpretation of the battle of Hastings within the framework of divine vengeance is in the form of a report:

Of that battle the French who took part in it do to this day declare that, although fortune swayed now on this side and now on that, yet of the Normans so many were slain or put to flight that the victory which they had gained is truly and without any doubt to be attributed to nothing else than the miraculous intervention of God, who by so punishing (puniendo) Harold's wicked perjury shewed that He is not a God that hath any pleasure in wickedness.³⁶⁸

It is interesting that Eadmer alludes to the divine vengeance paradigm adopted by the French but does not develop the interpretation himself. His account is similar to the way that Orderic Vitalis, another historian of mixed English and Norman parentage, presented the Norman victory, emphasising the heavy casualties on both sides, but by putting the interpretation of the

³⁶⁵ ASC [A], 1066, p. 84. ASC [E], 1066, pp. 86-87.

³⁶⁶ For the dating of the *Historia Novorum* and *Life of Anselm*, see *Eadmeri Historia*, pp. xv-1, Anselm, VA, pp. ix-xii, xxii-xxiii. Gasper, 'Envy, Jealousy and the Boundaries of Orthodoxy', p. 50. On Eadmer's life, see J.C. Rubenstein, 'Eadmer (Edmer) of Canterbury (b.c.1060, d. in or after 1126)', *ODNB*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-8383?rskey=bSv6aY&result=1> [accessed 03.08.2018].

³⁶⁷ *Eadmeri Historia*, p. 6. 'Præsentio tamen te in nihil aliud tendere, nisi in detrimentum totius Anglici regni, et opprobrium tui. Translation from Eadmer, *HRE*, pp. 6-8.

³⁶⁸ *Eadmeri Historia*, p. 9. 'De quo prælio testantur adhuc Franci qui interfuerunt, quoniam, licet varius casus hinc inde extiterit, tamen tanta strages ac fuga Normannorum fuit, ut Victoria qua sunt vere et absque dubio soli miraculo Dei ascribenda sit, qui puniendo per hanc iniquum perjurii scelus Haroldi, ostendit se non Deum esse volentem iniquitatem.' Translation from Eadmer, *HRE*, p. 9.

English defeat as divine punishment for Harold's perjury into the mouths of the surviving French soldiers, Eadmer is separating himself from the conquerors and being careful to conceal his own opinion, which may exemplify a reluctance on the part of the English to see their defeat in those terms. The passage might therefore represent a glimpse of a concurrent resistance to the idea of English defeat as divine vengeance against the nation at the same time as that very idea was developing.³⁶⁹ Given also that Eadmer did not shy away from attributing other events to divine vengeance – as will become clear in the next case study, since he was one of the most vehement propagators of that narrative with regard to the death of King William Rufus in 1100 – it is significant that he saw fit to bypass the paradigm in relation to 1066.

A specifically English view of the Norman Conquest that did not subscribe to a narrative of divine vengeance is also supported by the accounts of the monks Symeon of Durham and John of Worcester, and the secular cleric Gaimar. Symeon, writing 1104-7x1115, gives only cursory treatment to the battles of Stamford Bridge and Hastings and instead devotes his attention to St Cuthbert's protection of the north in the years following 1066.³⁷⁰ John's *Chronicon ex Chronicis* was commissioned by Bishop Wulfstan of Worcester (d.1095), though was not completed until 1140-43, and was based in a large part on the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*; although he holds the English kings as responsible for the fate of their nation, he does not place this within a providential perspective.³⁷¹ Neither does Gaimar, the author of the poetic *Estoire des Engleis*, which also drew on the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* and was written probably in the 1130s or 1140s at the request of Constance, a member of a prominent noble family in Lincolnshire.³⁷² It has been argued that Gaimar actually presents a relatively anti-Norman perspective, at least to the extent that he casts both the Norse and Norman invaders as aggressors, admires Harold's victory at Stamford Bridge, and sets up his subsequent defeat at Hastings as tragic heroism in the model of the *chansons de gestes*.³⁷³ This is based on the ambiguity of the word 'ultrages', which Gaimar uses to describe the behaviour of Harold and the English, and which could imply either outrageous criminality or excessive courage in the

³⁶⁹ Cf. Elizabeth van Houts, 'The Norman Conquest Through European Eyes', *English Historical Review* 110.438 (1995) pp. 832-53.

³⁷⁰ Symeon of Durham, *Libellus de Exordio Atque Procursu Istius, Hoc Est Dunelmensis, Ecclesiae: Tract on the Origins and Progress of This the Church of Durham* (hereafter Symeon, *LDE*), iii.15, ed. David Rollason (Oxford, 2000) pp. 182-83.

³⁷¹ Winkler, *Royal Responsibility*, pp. 18-22.

³⁷² Ibid. pp. 22-25. For alternative datings of Gaimar's *Estoire*, ranging from 1135-1150, see Paul Dalton, 'The Date of Geoffrey Gaimar's "Estoire Des Engleis", the Connections of His Patrons, and the Politics of Stephen's Reign', *The Chaucer Review* 42.1 (2007) pp. 23-47.

³⁷³ Penny Eley and Philip E. Bennet, 'The Battle of Hastings according to Gaimar, Wace and Benoît: rhetoric and politics', *Nottingham Medieval Studies* 43, ed. Michael Jones (1999), pp. 49-54.

manner of Byrhtnoth and Roland.³⁷⁴ John and Gaimar were writing at around the same time that William of Malmesbury and Henry of Huntingdon were composing their own texts that presented 1066 very definitely within a providential framework of divine vengeance. John and William were both monks, whereas Gaimar and Henry were secular clerics, which means that there is no easily definable separation between monastic historians writing about divine vengeance on the one hand, and secular clerics dismissing it on the other, or even an identifiable point in time when a framework of divine vengeance for legitimising the Norman Conquest was no longer seen as necessary.³⁷⁵ It is significant though that every twelfth-century narrative that rejects the framework of divine vengeance for the Norman Conquest outright had strong English links.

As with historical representations of King Æthelred and the conquest of 1016, the variety of ways in which historians used the framework of divine vengeance with regard to 1066, and the simultaneous existence of narratives that bypassed that paradigm, indicates that no single interpretation of the Norman Conquest as divine vengeance was inevitable. The earliest account of the Battle of Hastings did not refer to any long-term or moral causes of English defeat other than Harold's perjury, and the narrative sequence of causation for divine vengeance against the English only began to be lengthened by William of Poitiers a decade later. It was then only elaborately set within a broader providential vision of history in the first half of the twelfth century. The paradigm of divine vengeance was a powerful rhetorical tool through which the course of history could be explained, but it was not the only way that historical events could be interpreted and rationalised. With regard to 1066 it was carefully utilised by Anglo-Norman historians in different ways to produce historical narratives with a moral purpose, and was bypassed by others who either rejected the interpretation outright or simply did not see it as necessary.

THE DEATH OF WILLIAM RUFUS

Historians of the first half of the twelfth century generally agreed that the untimely death of King William Rufus in a hunting accident in 1100, killed by a stray arrow whilst on

³⁷⁴ Ibid. p. 53. *Gaimar, Estoire*, l. 5342, p. 290.

³⁷⁵ Cf. van Houts, 'The Memory of 1066 in Written and Oral Traditions', pp. 174-79.

an expedition in the New Forest, was the result of his appallingly impious behaviour as king.³⁷⁶ Despite this unfortunate fate, William Rufus cannot be said to have been a ‘bad king’ in the same way as Æthelred; even the most vehement of his critics, Eadmer of Canterbury, acknowledges that he had great successes in terms of military and political power and dominance.³⁷⁷ Instead, the objections to his kingship, as might be expected from ecclesiastical authors, come from his irreligious temperament and his stubborn resistance to church authority in the ongoing investiture contest between clerical and secular power.³⁷⁸ It might seem an obvious point that ecclesiastical authors with a vested interest in promoting the rights of the church over clerical appointments would seek to discredit a king who opposed this, but looking at the precise ways in which different texts attempt to get this point across is enlightening. The question that arises from this case study is what level of feeling existed against William Rufus before his death, and for how long, and to what extent this contributed to the assessment of his death as evidence of divine vengeance, or whether this was predominantly a retrospective reaction to an unexpected and disruptive event.³⁷⁹

The sharply critical monastic attitude towards William Rufus is exemplified in the entry for 1100 in the [E] version of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, which initially complains of his violence, adherence to evil counsel, avarice and excessive taxation, but devotes the most attention to lamenting how the king ‘humiliated God’s church’ by making high level ecclesiastical appointments his own prerogative and not scrupling to grant bishoprics and abbacies in return for money and even keeping Canterbury under his own control.³⁸⁰ Because of this, the chronicler observes that the king was ‘abhorrent to God’, and that this was proved by his end, ‘because he departed in the midst of his injustice without repentance and any reparation,’ which meant grave consequences for his soul.³⁸¹ Such a mercenary attitude towards church property was not unique to William; Henry of Huntingdon and Symeon of Durham both later report divine vengeance against noblemen who turned churches into castles,

³⁷⁶ For an overview of the twelfth-century historical accounts of the death of William Rufus and how they compare, see Frank Barlow, *William Rufus* (London, 1983) pp. 410-37.

³⁷⁷ *Eadmeri Historia*, pp. 116-17. Translation from Eadmer, *HRE*, p. 121

³⁷⁸ *Eadmeri Historia*, pp. 61-62, 80-82, 115-16. Translation from Eadmer, *HRE*, pp. 62-63, 84-85, 120. *ASC* [E], 1100, pp. 109-11. For a summary of the investiture dispute, see Colin Morris, *The Papal Monarchy* (Oxford, 1989) pp. 155-71.

³⁷⁹ Barlow, *William Rufus*, p. 437

³⁸⁰ *ASC* [E], 1100, p. 110. ‘Godes cyrcean he nyðerade’. Translation from Swanton, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicles*, p. 235

³⁸¹ *ASC* [E], 1100, p. 110. ‘Gode andsæte, swa swa his ænde ætywde, forþan þe he on middewardan his unrihte buten behreowsunge 7 ælcere dædbote gewat.’ Translation from Swanton, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicles*, pp. 235-36.

but William Rufus's divine punishment was the most high profile.³⁸² The chronicler's attitude apparently represents the general consensus among the Anglo-Norman historians, who regarded his oppression of his people through taxation and wars, unjust governance and disregard for Church authority as evidence that he had brought God's wrath down on himself.³⁸³ Based on these narratives and their lack of any human conspiracy theory surrounding the accident, Frank Barlow has argued that it was the very suddenness of the king's death in such arbitrary and ignominious circumstances that led to it being interpreted by the clergy as clear evidence of divine vengeance, and that 'when such an evident sinner perished, there was no need to look beyond the avenging hand of God.'³⁸⁴ While perhaps obvious to theologically trained ecclesiastics however, it could not be taken for granted that that narrative would be automatically accepted by everybody, especially those who were less religiously inclined, and so the burden of proof remained, which is where their elaborately constructed narratives come into play.

As mentioned above, a significant criticism of William Rufus was his impious temperament and opposition to the ecclesiastical establishment, specifically manifested in his conflict with Anselm, who had been made Archbishop of Canterbury in 1093, over the question of investiture.³⁸⁵ It was this clash of personalities that formed the backbone of Eadmer's criticism of the king, and this was also emphasised by both Henry of Huntingdon and William of Malmesbury.³⁸⁶ Eadmer had a close relationship with Anselm founded on the devotion and admiration of a young monk to his superior, and in his *Vita S. Anselmi* and *Historia Novorum* (both begun during the 1090s but not completed until after Anselm's death in 1109) he uses every rhetorical construction at his disposal to establish unequivocally that 'the Divine vengeance was soon going to fall on him [William Rufus] for his persecution of Anselm.'³⁸⁷ The *Historia Novorum* seeks to present a generally damning picture of the king's character, with emphasis on his arrogance in the face of church authority. Eadmer explains that October 1099 saw the king boasting that no pope should have any jurisdiction in his realm except by his permission, and August the following year saw him struck by an arrow in the heart whilst

³⁸² Appendix, 119, 176.

³⁸³ Cf. HHA, vii.22, p. 447-449; OVHE, 10.15, ed. Chibnall, 5, pp. 285-89. *Eadmeri Historia*, p. 116-17. Translation from Eadmer, HRE, pp. 120-21.

³⁸⁴ Barlow, *William Rufus*, p. 425, 437

³⁸⁵ On Anselm's involvement in the investiture dispute, see Christopher Harper-Bill, 'The Anglo-Norman Church', in Christopher Harper-Bill and Elizabeth van Houts (eds.) *A Companion to the Anglo-Norman World* (Woodbridge, 2003) pp. 167-80.

³⁸⁶ HHA, vii.19, p. 445. WMGR, iv.315, p. 561.

³⁸⁷ Eadmer, VA, ii.xlv, p. 122. 'quia ultio Divina in proximo eum pro persecutione Anselmi oppressura esset ferebatur.'

out hunting, impenitent and unconfessed, forsaken by everyone. Some said that the arrow was in flight, others that the king fell on it: 'Sufficient to know that by the just judgment of God he was stricken down and slain.'³⁸⁸ The space of a year between William's offence and God's vengeance firstly indicates that the king had a chance to repent and did not take it, and secondly illustrates how otherwise unconnected events could be retrospectively set within a providential structure of cause and effect in order to shore up the interpretation of an event as divine vengeance.

Eadmer's problem in this assessment is the incongruity of the king's worldly successes with his divinely ordained fate as a result of his obstinate opposition to church and by extension God's authority. He explains this away by describing William's relationship with God as being characterised by various methods of fruitless cajoling to persuade the king to reform his behaviour and uphold his proper duty to God. In Eadmer's narrative, William became violently ill and almost died in 1093 following several years of exploiting the vacancy of the see of Canterbury after the death of Lanfranc and resisting pressure to appoint Anselm as his successor.³⁸⁹ William was advised to save his soul and open the prisons, remit arrears of fines, and restore liberty to the churches by appointing pastors, most of all Canterbury.³⁹⁰ He then forcefully appointed Anselm as archbishop, recovered from his illness, and promptly undid all his good deeds.³⁹¹ Bishop Gundulf of Rochester, who was now living with Anselm, urged the king to be more careful in living according to the will of God, and the king's reply was, 'By the holy face at Lucca you may be sure, Bishop, that God will never find me become good in return for the evil he has done to me.'³⁹² It is unlikely that that the king actually uttered these words. They directly foreshadow Eadmer's later comment that

since he (Willam) refused either to be disciplined by ill-fortune or to be led to right-doing by good fortune, to prevent his raging with fury long continued to the detriment of all good men, the just Judge by a death sharp and swift cut short his life in this world.³⁹³

³⁸⁸ *Eadmeri Historia*, p. 116. 'cum scire sufficiat eum justo iudicio Dei prostratum atque necatum.' Translation from Eadmer, *HRE*, pp. 120-21.

³⁸⁹ *Eadmeri Historia*, p. 30. Translation from Eadmer, *HRE*, p. 31.

³⁹⁰ *Eadmeri Historia*, pp. 30-31. Translation from Eadmer, *HRE*, pp. 31-32. On William Rufus's exploitation of the church, see Christopher Harper-Bill, 'The Anglo-Norman Church', p. 177. E. Mason, 'William Rufus and the Benedictine Order', *Anglo-Norman Studies* 11 (1999) pp. 113-42

³⁹¹ *Eadmeri Historia*, pp. 32-38. Translation from Eadmer, *HRE*, pp. 33-39

³⁹² *Eadmeri Historia*, pp. 38-39. Translation from Eadmer, *HRE*, pp. 39-40

³⁹³ *Eadmeri Historia*, p. 117. 'Quapropter dum nec malo corrigi voluit nec bono ad bene agendum attrahi potuit, ne in perniciem bonorum diutino furore saeviret, compendiosa illum æquus Arbiter et momentanea æde huic vitæ subtraxit.' Translation from Eadmer, *HRE*, p. 121.

Eadmer seems convinced that the fact of William's sudden death spoke for itself as damning evidence of God's judgement on the king's poor character, and in the *Vita Anselmi*, he also records that Anselm wept because 'the king had died in his present [i.e. sinful] state.'³⁹⁴ Eadmer implies that the king's prolonged impious conduct had led God to deny him the opportunity to cleanse his soul by preparing for a 'good death', so it follows that his punishment was understood to be eternal. C. Warren Hollister has called the incident 'a spectacular illustration of fallen pride', and therefore a moral example that could be put to use by ecclesiastics and theologians to paint a negative example of the consequences of impiety.³⁹⁵ As will be discussed further below however, such a view was subjective.

In support of this negative assessment of William's character, and given the lack of witnesses at the scene, the other source of proof that his death was the result of divine justice came in the form of reports of portents and prophecies, which were given retrospective importance out of the belief that God's vengeance never struck without reason or warning.³⁹⁶ In the *Vita Anselmi*, Eadmer reports that there had been many prophecies concerning the king's death, strange and unusual signs throughout England, and revelations to religious men, culminating in a vision reported to Anselm and others by Hugh, abbot of Cluny, in which he saw the king accused and condemned before the throne of God.³⁹⁷ This vision, which took place four days before the king's death, is the crucial point of proof for Eadmer, probably given the lack of trusted witnesses at the scene of the accident.³⁹⁸ In Anglo-Norman historical writing in general, there is a decided hierarchy in preferred witnesses, with high status clergymen being considered the most trustworthy authorities; William of Malmesbury considers Eadmer himself to hold enough authority to repeat his story almost word for word.³⁹⁹ Indeed, Eadmer stresses how everybody trusted the abbot and did not ask how he knew.⁴⁰⁰

Similarly, Orderic Vitalis shores up his condemnation of William Rufus by relating a vision experienced by a monk of Gloucester in which Christ promised that vengeance on the king for his oppression was imminent, which was taken seriously enough that Abbot Serlo

³⁹⁴ Eadmer, *VA*, 49, p. 126. '...quam illum sicut erat mortuum esse.'

³⁹⁵ C. Warren Hollister, 'The Strange Death of William Rufus' in C. Warren Hollister, *Monarchy, Magnates and Institutions in the Anglo-Norman World* (London, 1986) p. 59

³⁹⁶ Warren Hollister, 'The Strange Death of William Rufus', p. 59

³⁹⁷ Eadmer, *VA*, ii.45-49, pp. 122-26.

³⁹⁸ *Ibid.* ii.46, p. 123, note 2.

³⁹⁹ Watkins, 'Memories of the Marvelous', pp. 96-106. Elizabeth van Houts, 'Introduction: Medieval Memories', in Elizabeth van Houts (ed.) *Medieval Memories: Men, Women and the Past, 700-1300* (Harlow, 2001) pp. 5-6. *WMGR*, iv.332, p. 573.

⁴⁰⁰ Eadmer, *VA*, ii.46, p. 123.

wrote a letter of warning to the king, and a sermon was preached by Abbot Fulchred of Shrewsbury in which he deplored the state of the country and warned of approaching divine vengeance (which, if it happened, would bear comparison with Archbishop Wulfstan's *Sermo Lupi* a century before).⁴⁰¹ In addition to these prophecies, there were also various reports of freak weather and portentous occurrences, including a report of blood welling from the earth in the year of William's death.⁴⁰² The chains of communication through which such reports and prophecies circulated will be a theme of the next chapter, but it is worth noting here that the existence of reports of such prophecies across a wide geographical area stretching from at least Gloucester to Cluny, and of reports of portents not necessarily confined to a monastic context, suggests that there was a general atmosphere of expectation in relation to the king's fate, at least during the final months of his reign. Although the possibility must remain open that these prophecies were collected or manufactured after William's death, if they did genuinely circulate beforehand, this leaves us to wonder whether the death of the king in any other way would have also been interpreted as divine vengeance.

Running counter to this apparent atmosphere of superstition, and another theme which will be addressed in chapter 4, is the question of scepticism towards such providential attitudes. The monastic historians clearly placed William Rufus's death within their divinely structured vision of history, and used stories of portents juxtaposed with the king's own laughing disregard of them to place blame for the king's fate squarely on himself.⁴⁰³ Nevertheless, William Rufus does not seem to have been universally despised despite the complaints of the chroniclers. Even William of Malmesbury, though critical of the king's vanity and impiety, and subscribing to the view that the king met his death 'by God's strict judgement' (*seuero Dei iudicio*), insists that he is 'ashamed to speak evil of so great a king' and manages to gloss over his faults of character by casting them as misguided generosity which regretfully translated into degeneracy in the kingdom at large.⁴⁰⁴ He deliberately allows readers to form their own opinion of the king's character and fate, unlike his treatment of Æthelred, perhaps because in this case he was dealing with a king who had reigned within living memory.⁴⁰⁵ William's careful attitude is exemplified in his account of how the tower of Winchester Cathedral, where William Rufus

⁴⁰¹ *OVHE*, 10.15, ed. Chibnall, 5, pp. 285-89.

⁴⁰² *WMGR*, iv.321-333, pp. 567-73; *HHHA*, vii.22, pp. 447-49. *ASC* [E], 1100, pp. 109-11.

⁴⁰³ *OVHE*, 10.15, ed. Chibnall, pp. 285-89. *WMGR*, iv.331, p. 571. Barlow, *William Rufus*, p. 426.

⁴⁰⁴ *WMGR*, iii.275, iv.prologue-305, 312-15, 316, pp. 505, 543, 555-61. 'quia de tanto rege mala dicere erubescio'. See also Sønnesyn, *William of Malmesbury and the Ethics of History*, pp. 216-25.

⁴⁰⁵ *WMGR*, iv.321, p. 567

was buried, fell in 1107.⁴⁰⁶ In his early versions of the *Gesta Regum*, William of Malmesbury confidently asserts that there were many who said that the tower's fall was due to the king's sins, because it had been wrong to inter such a wanton and lecherous man in such a sacred spot, especially as he had not even received the last rites.⁴⁰⁷ In his later revisions, however, he merely states that the tower's fall gave rise to much comment which he refrains from repeating, and makes a point of giving the pragmatic explanation that the tower may have fallen from unsound construction anyway, even had the king not been buried there.⁴⁰⁸ William of Malmesbury, it seems, had become aware of there being a significant section of his audience who would no longer be responsive to a purely providential explanation of events.

The only fully non-condemnatory account of William Rufus's death is found in Geoffrey Gaimar's *Estoire des Engleis* (c.1138), an epic poem written in French vernacular and written for a predominantly secular, lay audience.⁴⁰⁹ Although Gaimar is still unable to account for the king's sudden death in any other way than attributing it to God's mysterious plan, he seeks to mitigate the problem of William's dying without having received the last rites by describing how one of the huntsmen gave him a handful of grass and flowers to eat in lieu of the host, and is hopeful that the consecrated bread he had taken the previous Sunday will stand him in good stead.⁴¹⁰ There is not the automatic assumption that William's soul was destined for hell seen in the other texts, and this demonstrates just how personally driven and rhetorically charged accounts of divine vengeance by other writers could be. Since Gaimar was not personally invested in the investiture controversy, he seems not to have regarded William Rufus's conduct in that regard with the critical eye of other commentators who were more closely connected to the conflict between church and state in the 1090s.

The interpretation of the death of King William Rufus as divine vengeance for his impious behaviour stands in contrast to the other case studies because it was an interpretation that was made quickly and may have been anticipated. In addition to the prophecies and portents that were reported in the year preceding the king's death, Eadmer records a group of letters sent by Pope Paschal II and Anselm to King William and his advisor Count Robert of Meulan which attempt to persuade the king to change his attitude towards lay investiture and

⁴⁰⁶ *William of Malmesbury, Gesta Regum Anglorum: The History of the English Kings*, ed. R.M. Thomson and M. Winterbottom, vol. II: General Introduction and Commentary (Oxford, 1999) p. 287, note 6.

⁴⁰⁷ WMGR, iv.333, MS T1A, p. 575.

⁴⁰⁸ WMGR, iv.333 MSS CB, p. 575.

⁴⁰⁹ Gaimar, *Estoire*, pp. ix, xiv.

⁴¹⁰ *Ibid.* ll. 6249-6346, pp. 338- 343.

threaten divine punishment if he refused.⁴¹¹ These will be discussed in further detail in chapter 4, but such threats may have contributed to the swift interpretation of William's death as divine vengeance for his resistance to Church reform; they certainly provided added fuel for Eadmer's denouncing of the king's character and portrayal of him as deserving divine punishment. It also goes to show just how rhetorically charged and context specific Eadmer's depiction was, attributing William's punishment primarily to his treatment of Anselm and reluctance to relinquish control of clerical investiture. By depicting the king's fate so harshly in opposition to Anselm's character and divine support, Eadmer also reinforced his case for Anselm's sanctity, which was not universally accepted.⁴¹² This assessment of William's death as divine punishment was widely shared among ecclesiastical historians, but it is notable that William of Malmesbury at least shows a reluctance to denounce the king completely, and that Gaimar presents an alternative and much more generous account of his death. Such discrepancy shows the level of subjectivity with which interpretations of divine vengeance were made and the variability in the ways that events were interpreted.

CONCLUSION

Medieval historical writing was theologically informed and didactic in purpose; within it, narratives of divine vengeance were carefully and deliberately constructed by individual authors in different ways to suit their own moral agendas. The case studies in this chapter have shown that even where there was a broad consensus that a historical moment did constitute evidence of God's vengeance on earth, that consensus often did not develop immediately, and even once such an interpretation had been established there were significant differences in how cause and effect were attributed and interpreted by different authors. Developments in historical interpretation can be traced over time. Short term views of an event tended to be reactive, as with the reaction to the viking invasions during Æthelred's reign based on identifiable deficiencies in religious observance, emphasis on Harold's perjury as a cause of the Norman Conquest, and William Rufus's sudden death drawing attention to his clash with Archbishop Anselm and obstinacy over the investiture controversy. In the longer term, historians were able to trace much longer but no less impartial sequences of causation, seen in

⁴¹¹ See Chapter 4.

⁴¹² Eadmer, *VA*, p. xi. Gasper, 'Envy, Jealousy and the Boundaries of Orthodoxy', p. 50.

the shift in emphasis to the dishonourable circumstances in which Æthelred gained the throne as a cause of Cnut's conquest almost four decades later, and the gradual lengthening of the causes of 1066 back to the murder of Alfred by Earl Godwin in 1036 and then further back into Æthelred's reign with the prophecies of Dunstan.

At the same time as these narratives were being developed however, there were also counter-narratives that either placed less emphasis on, or completely bypassed or contradicted, the divine vengeance paradigm; William of Malmesbury frequently alludes to this atmosphere of dissent and discussion in his reluctance to make definitive pronouncements when faced with conflicting rumours. Of the three case studies discussed in this chapter, the interpretation of the viking invasions during the reign of Æthelred as divine vengeance was the most broadly accepted. Even though perceptions of the causes of divine vengeance changed, probably due to the influence of the developing cults of St Edward and St Dunstan, and a developing view of the ability of the king to influence the fate of the nation, the basic assumption that the invaders were the agents of divine vengeance against the English remained. Where we can catch glimpses of interpretations of the invaders other than as agents of divine vengeance, they are in contexts specific to individual monasteries. With regard to 1066, there appears to have been an ethnic difference in historians' willingness to ascribe the Norman Conquest to divine vengeance against the English; those of mixed English and Norman descent portrayed the conquest as both God's punishment and a blessing, whereas those with stronger English connections seem to have been less inclined to place the conquest within a framework of divine vengeance. With regards to William Rufus, Eadmer's personal connection with Anselm seems to have been the major factor in his depiction of the king's death as divine vengeance, whereas Gaimar, as the furthest removed from the immediate circumstances of the investiture controversy, did not feel the need to frame William's death in those terms.

Analysis of the way that the framework of divine vengeance was used as a rhetorical tool in medieval historical texts is important for understanding the way that the past was approached and historical writing was constructed. The case studies in this chapter have shown that interpretations of divine vengeance, even when applied to momentous historical moments, were never automatic or unthinking, but were carefully considered and needed strong supporting evidence in order to gain widespread acceptance. Even within an atmosphere of credulity with regard to identifying historical events as evidence of divine vengeance, such an interpretation was not applied indiscriminately or uniformly. The elaborate narratives constructed by the Anglo-Norman historians which traced the long-term causes of God's wrath

required substantial historical study in order to make causal connections between individual events that were sometimes decades apart, which is perhaps the reason that it took time for those long-term narratives to emerge, as opposed to more easily identifiable short-term causes.

An emphasis on the way that the framework of divine vengeance was used as rhetoric should not downplay the importance of belief in these narratives. In order to identify the causes of God's wrath, historians drew on moral explanations of the nature of sin and humanity's obligation to love God through their own free will; equally, this identification of historical events as examples of God's punishment for sin helped to illuminate those theological principles and provided moral lessons for their audiences. Even where a strong personal agenda is evident, as with Eadmer's treatment of William Rufus, authors should be seen as seeking to persuade their audiences of their own belief that divine vengeance was at work in a given circumstance. The next chapter will expand upon this use of divine vengeance as a rhetorical paradigm to explore the ways that God's vengeance was observed and experienced in human life on a smaller scale in the form of vengeance miracles.

CHAPTER 3:

VENGEANCE MIRACLES, THEIR OBSERVATION AND COMMUNICATION

Just as the paradigm of divine vengeance was applied to certain historical events as an explanatory framework for the way that things happened, as an integral part of the way that human history was interpreted and rationalised, so was God's punishment observed within the course of everyday life as a way of explaining individual misfortune. Such small-scale episodes of divine vengeance are predominantly recorded in hagiographical texts and miracle collections, in the form of punitive miracle stories, but also appear in historical texts and homilies such as those discussed in the last section, which were frequently written by the same monastic and clerical authors. Miracles were enthusiastically recorded throughout the Middle Ages; the period from the late-eleventh to the early-thirteenth century has been described as witnessing a 'mania' for miracle collecting in England, and that of the tenth to the twelfth century as the 'heyday' of punitive miracles.⁴¹³ This period coincides with the introduction of a formal canonisation process, which required evidence of a holy person's sanctity, in the form of witnesses to their holy life and miracles, to be presented to papal commissioners for assessment, as popes increasingly claimed control over the cult of saints.⁴¹⁴ Even though analysis of miracle collections has shown that, overall, punitive miracles make up only a small proportion of recorded miracles, the majority of which were benevolent acts of healing and protection, they were still an important part of the way that divine power was seen to be demonstrated in the world.⁴¹⁵

This observation of divine vengeance in the world was not confined to the monastic and clerical writers who compiled miracle collections and included stories of miraculous occurrences in hagiographies and histories. Rather, there were underlying chains of communication that led to the miracle account in its final form, which included lay

⁴¹³ Rachel Koopmans, *Wonderful to Relate: Miracle Stories and Miracle Collecting in High Medieval England* (Pennsylvania, 2011) pp. 2-4. Bartlett, *Why can the dead do such great things?* p. 405.

⁴¹⁴ Bartlett, *Why can the dead do such great things?* pp. 57-64.

⁴¹⁵ See studies by Pierre Andre Sigal, *L'homme et le miracle dans la France médiévale: XIe. – XIIe siècles* (Paris, 1985), Ronald Finucane, *Miracles and Pilgrims: Popular Beliefs in Medieval England* (London, 1977), and André Vauchez, *Sainthood in the Late Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1997). Robert Bartlett summarises Sigal's figures in *Why can the dead do such great things?* pp. 342-44.

participation, and even initiation.⁴¹⁶ Written narratives form the tip of a much wider circulation of stories of supernatural occurrences and experiences, informed by the theological beliefs outlined in chapter one. The interest of these narratives lies in what they can reveal about the way that people looked for, saw, experienced and responded to divine vengeance in smaller scale contexts, and the ways in which stories of divine vengeance circulated within and between different sections of society, perhaps creating a self-influencing cycle that informed what divine vengeance was expected to look like.

In categorising an event as divine vengeance, I have followed the approach taken by Máire Johnson, which is that ‘any miraculous punitive reprisal might be considered a vengeance episode’.⁴¹⁷ In medieval thinking, there was an overlap between the definitions of vengeance and punishment, such that they could be used interchangeably to refer to punitive or retributive consequences following a perceived offence.⁴¹⁸ In the context of divine vengeance, this meant any misfortune that struck an individual person, or a group of people, that was subsequently interpreted as God’s punishment for an earlier sin. The following two chapters are based on a survey of two hundred and twenty-three such vengeance episodes recorded across thirty-five texts encompassing hagiographies, histories and miracle collections, which were written, or circulated, in the period c. 900 – c.1150 in England (and in the case of Orderic Vitalis, Normandy).⁴¹⁹ The divine vengeance episodes in question are those which are explicitly related in the formula of a miracle or incorporated into a text for other purposes.⁴²⁰ Although the majority of the texts are part of the late-eleventh and twelfth-century upsurge in historical and hagiographical writing and miracle collecting that resulted from Norman adoption of previously sparsely documented Anglo-Saxon saints’ cults and a new fervour for recording orally circulating memories for posterity, they record miraculous episodes of divine vengeance which happened at various points throughout the period in question, as well as episodes from biblical history and early Christian, British and English history.⁴²¹ The majority of miracle stories are unique, although the more high-profile stories tend to be repeated across sources, and some miracles contain more than one type of punishment. This survey is by no

⁴¹⁶ John Arnold, *Belief and Unbelief in Medieval Europe* (Oxford, 2003) p. 19.

⁴¹⁷ Máire Johnson, “Vengeance is Mine”: Saintly Retribution in Medieval Ireland’, p. 9.

⁴¹⁸ See above, Introduction.

⁴¹⁹ These are listed in the Appendix.

⁴²⁰ On the convergence between the genres of hagiography and history, see Pierre-Andre Sigal, ‘Histoire et hagiographie; les miracula aux XIe et XIIe siecles’ in *Annales de Bretagne et des pays de l’Ouest* 87.2 (1980) pp. 239-57.

⁴²¹ On Norman adoption of Anglo-Saxon Saints’ cults, see Ridyard, ‘Condigna Veneratio’, pp. 182-206, Simon Yarrow, *Saints and their Communities: Miracle Stories in Twelfth Century England* (Oxford, 2006) pp. 3-6. On this newfound impetus for writing things down, see Koopmans, *Wonderful to Relate*, pp. 89-98.

means exhaustive, and in order to present this type of analysis it is necessary to place all types of offence, punishment and victim of divine vengeance into generalised categories. Nevertheless, it is valuable in enabling an overview of the types of situations in which divine vengeance was likely to be observed and recorded.

By focusing on a select few of the miracles in this sample, this chapter will explore the processes of communication through which certain occurrences came to be considered as miraculous divine vengeance, and how those stories developed to reach their surviving written form. For some miracle accounts, it is possible to postulate a chain of events and patterns of oral communication that led to the form and rhetorical structure of the written text. In others, the possibility that an author sat down and invented a punitive miracle story to suit a particular purpose cannot be discounted. Both fed into each other in contributing to the types of events that were perceived and reported as divine vengeance. Key sources for this section will be the miracles of Saints Cuthbert, Modwenna and Erkenwald. This chapter will also touch on the ways that divine vengeance could be retrospectively written into the historical record of certain events where divine power was not perceived to have been at play earlier, and the subjective nature of the way that divine vengeance was often observed and reported. The tentativeness with which authors occasionally reported an event as miraculous divine vengeance shows a recognition of discernment on the part of their audience, and an unwillingness to simply believe anything. This issue of religious scepticism will be taken up in the next chapter, with some further analysis of some of the miracles given here, as well as some other key case studies from my survey, in particular episodes relating to Saints Wulfstan of Worcester, Swithun, Kenelm, Erkenwald, Dunstan, Ælfheah and Æthelwold, as well as the role of divine vengeance in Eadmer's presentation of St Anselm's conflict with Kings William Rufus and Henry I.

TOWARDS A TYPOLOGY OF DIVINE VENGEANCE

The most common types of infringement that resulted in divine vengeance were blasphemy or impiety (for example, not properly observing Ash Wednesday or Lent)⁴²², threats to monastic property (through pillaging or appropriation of lands)⁴²³ and disrespect shown to a saint (often through refusal to acknowledge a feast day or expressing doubt over incorrupt

⁴²² See, for example, Appendix, 31-33.

⁴²³ See, for example, Appendix, 50-52, 58, 122-33.

relics),⁴²⁴ all of which relate to monastic and pastoral interests (fig. 1). Other infringements are mostly miscellaneous offences related to more secular concerns such as political fallout;⁴²⁵ these form a smaller but still significant proportion of recorded miracles. Punishments for persecution of a saint mostly come from the *Lives* of the early martyrs, but also include punishments for a few later martyrdoms such as those of St Kenelm and St Ælfheah.⁴²⁶

The vast majority of recorded victims of divine vengeance were adult men (fig. 2). Within that category, men of high status make up the largest proportion, followed by monks and clergymen. Lower status men, including craftsmen, labourers and peasants, and those of unspecified status, between them make up about the same proportion as monks and clergy. Those men of unspecified status are likely to fit into the lower status category, since they are usually defined by their poor character as opposed to by their name or rank, as would be expected for a person of high status.⁴²⁷ Where low status is defined, it is either with a specific occupation, or by emphasising the victim's wretched situation.⁴²⁸ Elaine Treharne has argued that Ælfric addressed many of his homilies to a male audience, and deliberately wrote women out of much of his work because he could envisage no place for them in his male Benedictine monastic world.⁴²⁹ This may skew the figures for the pre-conquest period since Ælfric dominates so much of the available source material, but it remains the case that overall, women make up a tiny proportion of the victims of divine vengeance, and again, of the women who were affected, those of high status make up the largest proportion.⁴³⁰ Groups of victims include towns, armies, nations, crowds and small social groups.⁴³¹ Child victims are very rare.⁴³² There is also no apparent correlation between the social status of victims of divine vengeance and the type of offence they were likely to have committed (fig. 3). There is a surprisingly even spread of offences among high-status men in particular. With regard to the types of offences which different groups were likely to have committed, monks were hardly ever punished for threatening monastic property, women were never punished for doing so, and in the two instances of a child being struck by divine punishment, both were for blasphemy. This suggests

⁴²⁴ See, for example, Appendix, 17, 62-63, 83.

⁴²⁵ See, for example, Appendix, 110-13, 147-48, 167.

⁴²⁶ See, for example, Appendix, 27-30, 59, 73-78, 137-40.

⁴²⁷ See, for example, Appendix, 40, 61, 90, 108, 151.

⁴²⁸ See, for example, Appendix, 58, 210, 213-15.

⁴²⁹ Elaine Treharne, 'The Invisible Woman: Ælfric and His Subject Female' in *Leeds Studies in English* 37 (2006) pp. 191-208.

⁴³⁰ See, for example, Appendix, 1, 7, 99-100, 150.

⁴³¹ See, for example, Appendix, 12, 19, 34, 98, 146, 154, 191.

⁴³² See Appendix, 10, 122.

that there was no clear divide by social status in the types of situations in which divine vengeance was likely to be perceived and recorded.

By far the most frequent type of divinely ordained punishment was death, often violent and untimely, offering no opportunity for mercy (fig. 4). I have included the threat of death in this category because occasionally the victim was given the chance to redeem themselves and the threatened punishment was avoided or mitigated, even though the threat was perceived to be sincere.⁴³³ Sudden or untimely death was considered to be a serious punishment theologically because it meant that the soul had not been cleansed of sin.⁴³⁴ Ælfric explicitly explains that God sometimes sends dreadful evil on impious men, so that their punishment begins in this world and continues in the next, but that sinful men who are afflicted by God's vengeance may redeem themselves through spiritual amendment, assuming they are not struck down first.⁴³⁵ Sickness or injury, and madness, were the next most common categories, though it must be noted that these often went together with death as the cause of the victim's demise, which contributes to the overall dominance of that category.⁴³⁶ Other types of punishment included, for example, paralysis, humiliation, exile, and destruction of property.⁴³⁷ With the exception of paralysis, all of these are of most importance for high-status individuals. There is little to no correlation between types of offence and the punishment that they incur (fig. 5); death and sickness/injury especially are relatively evenly spread as a proportion of the consequences of each type of offence. It is notable, however, that the largest proportion of offences after which the victim was able to redeem themselves are those of blasphemy/impiety, and that not a single persecutor of a saint was offered the opportunity for redemption. There is also no significant pattern in the kinds of punishment that affected each type of victim, except that visionary rebukes were predominantly experienced by monks and clergymen, though with high status men not far behind (fig. 6).

This lack of any clear pattern between types of offences, punishments and victims of divine vengeance reflects the individual and what might often be considered coincidental circumstances of most miraculous occurrences. For example, Ælfric's homily for Ash Wednesday contains a series of other examples of what could have been construed as accidental death. Firstly, a man who had refused to enact the proper Ash Wednesday observances or

⁴³³ See, for example, Appendix, 85, 115, 200.

⁴³⁴ On notions of good and bad death, see Foxhall Forbes, *Heaven and Earth*, pp. 297-99. Nancy Caciola, 'Wraiths, Revenants and Ritual in Medieval Culture', *Past and Present* 152 (1996) pp. 7, 27. See also Chapter 5.

⁴³⁵ CH 1.31, ll. 255-57, ed. Clemoes, p. 448.

⁴³⁶ See, for example, Appendix, 106, 124, 190.

⁴³⁷ See, for example, Appendix, 55, 84, 94, 103, 121.

refrain from sleeping with his wife at the prohibited times is killed whilst riding in the woods.⁴³⁸ Being attacked by dogs and attempting to defend himself with his spear, his horse carries him forwards so that his spear skewered him. Secondly, a man who ate during Lent falls in a swoon and is only with difficulty revived; finally, a man who drank whenever he pleased during Lent without his cup being blessed is killed by a boar, which by chance was being bated outside.⁴³⁹ It would be easy to construe all of these happenings as mere coincidence; such scenarios were not unknown outside of any theological context, since hunting and boar baiting were notoriously dangerous pursuits, and anything could have brought on a fainting fit. Instead, it is the sequence and timing of events, as well as the fairly humiliating ways to die in contrast to the arrogance the victims displayed in their previous insult which shows that their fate was decreed through God's judgement.

Overall, these figures support the arguments that have been made by various scholars which place emphasis on the practical utility that stories of vengeance miracles could have for monastic houses who had few means of protecting their lands and interests other than expounding dire warnings of the consequences dealt out to those who attempted to infringe their property rights or disrespected the patron saint of the foundation.⁴⁴⁰ An often-cited example of a text written for this purpose is the tenth-/eleventh-century *Historia de Sancto Cuthberto*, which reads as part cartulary, part narrative, and seeks to establish St Cuthbert as a vengeful protector of his community's lands.⁴⁴¹ It has been noted that punitive miracles tended to proliferate in the written record at a particular stage in a saint's cult, when it had become big enough to attract generous donors, and consequently greedy malefactors.⁴⁴² Certain saints do seem to have been particularly vengeful defenders of their property, for example St Cuthbert and St Modwenna, which would suggest that the recording of punitive miracles in association with a particular cult was designed to serve the needs of the saint's community at that particular

⁴³⁸ Appendix, 31.

⁴³⁹ Appendix, 32-33.

⁴⁴⁰ Hyams, *Rancor and Reconciliation*, pp. 120-23; Benedicta Ward, *Miracles and the Medieval Mind: Theory, Record, and Event, 1000-1215* (Philadelphia, 1987) pp. 37-42; Bartlett, *Why can the dead do such great things?* pp. 401-07; Pierre Andre Sigal, 'Un aspect du culte des saints: le chatiment divin aux XIe et XIIe siecles d'apres la litterature hagiographique du midi de la France' in M.H. Vicaire (ed.) *La religion populaire en Languedoc du XIIIe siecle a la moitie du XIVe siecle* (Toulouse, 1976) pp. 41-52.

⁴⁴¹ The date of the *Historia* has been variously placed from the mid-tenth to the later eleventh century. See *Historia de Sancto Cuthberto: A History of Saint Cuthbert and a Record of His Patrimony*, ed. Ted Johnson South (Cambridge, 2002) pp. 26-36; Ted Johnson South, 'Changing Images of Sainthood: St Cuthbert in the *Historia de Sancto Cuthberto*' in Sandro Sticca (ed.) *Saints: Studies in Hagiography* (New York, 1996) pp. 89-90.

⁴⁴² Ward, *Miracles and the Medieval Mind*, p. 62. W.M. Aird, 'The making of a Medieval miracle collection: The Liber de Translationibus et Miraculis Sancti Cuthberti', *Northern History* 28.1 (1992) p. 8.

time.⁴⁴³ The persistence of the vengeful character of St Cuthbert into the twelfth century has been put down to the need of the Benedictine monastic community which replaced the Anglo-Saxon community of married clerks in 1083 to justify their position as the new guardians of Cuthbert's relics, and may also be due to northern resistance to the Norman Conquest in the years following 1066.⁴⁴⁴

However, the even higher number of divine vengeance episodes arising from instances of blasphemy or impiety also shows that pastoral interests could be as high as, if not higher than, monastic interests on the agenda of the authors who recorded these miracles; many vengeance miracles seem to have been composed as warnings to the general populace of the importance of maintaining proper Christian behaviour, as well as of respecting particular saints and monastic foundations. The fact that in some descriptions of divine vengeance the victim took the opportunity to amend and redeem themselves reflects the importance of the dual nature of God's punishment as either vindictive or purgative, however, the relatively small overall proportion of vengeance miracles in which this was the case suggests that when a misfortune was identified as being the result of divine vengeance, it was usually vindictive. One explanation for this may be that cases where a victim of divine punishment recovered were less shocking and therefore less likely to be recorded. Alternatively, instances of sickness, madness and/or sudden death were often considered to be serious enough that reasons were sought other than natural causes or bad luck, so that if a preceding sin could be identified, it may be causally linked to the subsequent misfortune and a story of divine vengeance could arise.

In terms of developments in the recording of divine vengeance over the course of this period, there is a substantial increase in the amount of source material available from the post-conquest period. Ælfric's *Catholic Homilies* and *Lives of Saints* form a disproportionate amount of the pre-Conquest source material and, given the nature of these works, which were designed as texts for instruction in the fundamentals of Christian faith, they contain an equally disproportionately high number of divine vengeance episodes from biblical history and the lives of the early martyrs, as well as a high number of pastorally-focused contemporary miracles.⁴⁴⁵ Interest in recording such ancient episodes of divine vengeance did not wane; Orderic Vitalis opens his *Historia Ecclesiastica* with a retelling of many of the biblical and

⁴⁴³ See Appendix, 50-54, 97-133.

⁴⁴⁴ A.J. Piper, 'The First Generations of Durham Monks and the Cult of St Cuthbert', in Gerald Bonner, David Rollason, and Clare Stancliffe (eds.) *St Cuthbert: His Cult and Community to AD 1200* (Woodbridge, 1989) p. 438. William E. Kapelle, *The Norman Conquest of the North: The Region and Its Transformation 1000-1135* (North Carolina, 1979) p. 128.

⁴⁴⁵ Appendix, 18-47.

early Christian passions that Ælfric relates.⁴⁴⁶ Ælfric's lives of more recent saints such as Swithun and Edmund, as well as the other pre-Conquest sources such as the *Vita S. Ecgwini* and the *Historia de Sancto Cuthberto* record the same types of punishment for disrespecting saints and violating monastic property as many post-conquest saints' *Lives*. Even with Ælfric's dominance in the Anglo-Saxon material therefore, in this respect there is essentially no discernible change in the character of vengeance miracles recorded across the period.

There are other areas in which changes in the kinds of situation in which divine vengeance was perceived and reported can be detected, however. Alongside the consistent appearance of miracles against those who threatened or violated monastic property, there is a perceptible shift in other types of infringements punished by divine vengeance in post-Conquest sources. These will be discussed further in the next chapter, but, in summary, there is increasing emphasis on proper religious observance among the laity, especially with regard to celebration of saints' feast days, and an increasing concern with clerical celibacy.

Even with the diversity of individual circumstances in which divine vengeance was perceived, the fact that it is possible to generalise at all about the forms that divine vengeance could take suggests that there were certain circumstances in which God's punishment was more likely to be perceived than in others.⁴⁴⁷ Sickness and injury were common in medieval life, as was mortality, and since only a select few people who fell ill, or were injured and died suddenly, were considered to have been the victims of divine punishment, these must have occurred in a special set of circumstances which helped to categorise them as divine vengeance, or things must have happened afterwards which then led people to interpret a certain misfortune in that way.⁴⁴⁸ A statistical analysis of attributed causes of disease in the early middle ages has shown that in only slightly less than a fifth of accounts was sin considered to be the cause of disease as opposed to natural causes, and that where an author made a connection between disease and sin, it was to address a grievance against the sick person.⁴⁴⁹ Death in battle is another case in point. Of all the noblemen, kings and emperors who had met their deaths in battle over the

⁴⁴⁶ Appendix, 134-40.

⁴⁴⁷ Sigal, 'Un aspect du cult des saints', pp. 47-48. Arnold, *Belief and Unbelief*, p. 94.

⁴⁴⁸ Benedicta Ward sees miracles as a 'catalogue of dangers of a violent society in which calamity was usual and recourse was had to local saints.' See *Miracles and the Medieval Mind*, p. 49. Archaeological evidence from cemeteries such as Raunds Furnells (tenth-century Anglo-Saxon burial ground) show that a high proportion of the population had skeletal trauma and evidence of long term health conditions. See Faye Powell, 'The Human Remains' in Andy Boddington (ed.) *Raunds Furnells: The Anglo-Saxon Church and Churchyard* (English Heritage, 1996) Archaeological Report 7, pp. 113-24.

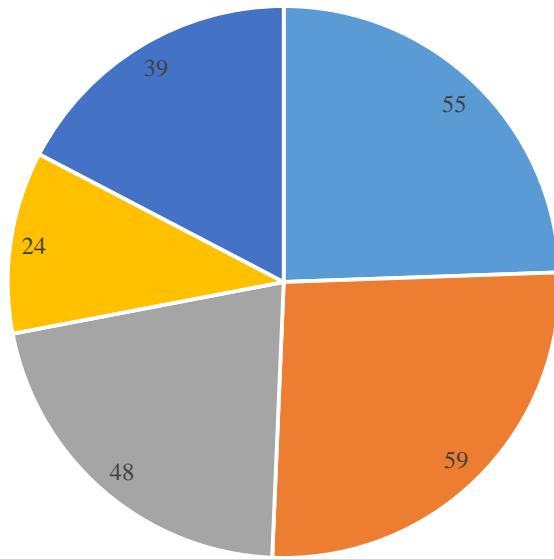
⁴⁴⁹ Jerome Kroll and Bernard Bachrach, 'Sin and the Etiology of Disease in Pre-Crusade Europe', *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 41.4 (1986) pp. 395-414.

course of history, only for a very small proportion was this attributed to divine vengeance, usually when the individual ruler had been considered particularly impious or had consistently abused their power.⁴⁵⁰ With regard to healing miracles, Rachel Koopmans has pointed out that only certain types of ailments tended to get miraculous cures, for example, blindness and paralysis.⁴⁵¹ Seemingly, saintly help lent itself to some afflictions more than others. If stories of particular illnesses being cured through saintly help circulated, it would then become a self-perpetuating cycle in which people sought saintly help predominantly for the afflictions they knew it to have cured before. Similarly, if a person became ill and then recovered without seeking saintly help, then no miraculous intervention would have been seen.⁴⁵² In the same way that not every recovery from illness was interpreted as miraculous, not every misfortune was seen as the result of divine vengeance. But, where an accident came after an offence that people knew to have brought on divine vengeance in the past, they might be more likely to interpret coincidences in this framework. The remainder of this chapter will further explore the processes of communication through which certain occurrences came to be considered as miraculous divine vengeance, and how those stories developed to reach their surviving written form.

⁴⁵⁰ See, for example *HHHA*, i.40, p. 63. In the opening list of Roman emperors the only reference to divine vengeance is in relation to Julian the Apostate.

⁴⁵¹ Koopmans, *Wonderful to Relate*, pp. 36-40.

⁴⁵² *Ibid.* pp. 36-40.



■ Threatening monastic property ■ Blasphemy/Impiety ■ Disrespecting a saint ■ Persecuting a saint ■ Other

FIGURE 1: TYPES OF OFFENCE INCURRING DIVINE VENGEANCE

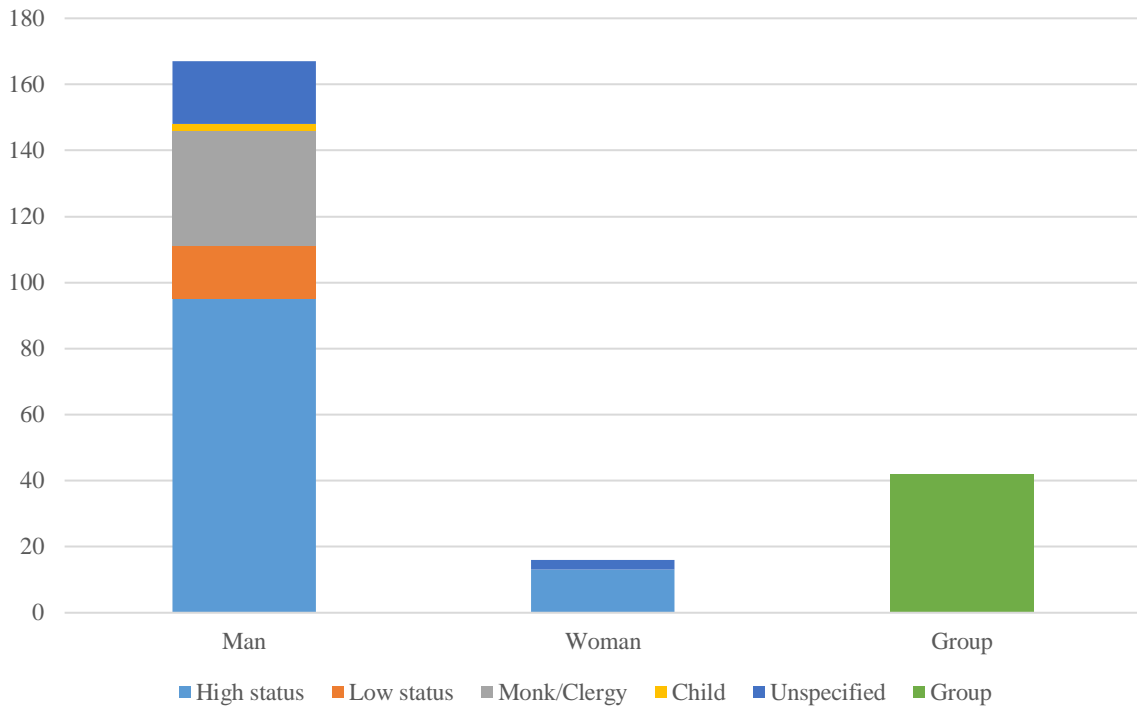


FIGURE 2: VICTIMS OF DIVINE VENGEANCE BY SOCIAL CATEGORY

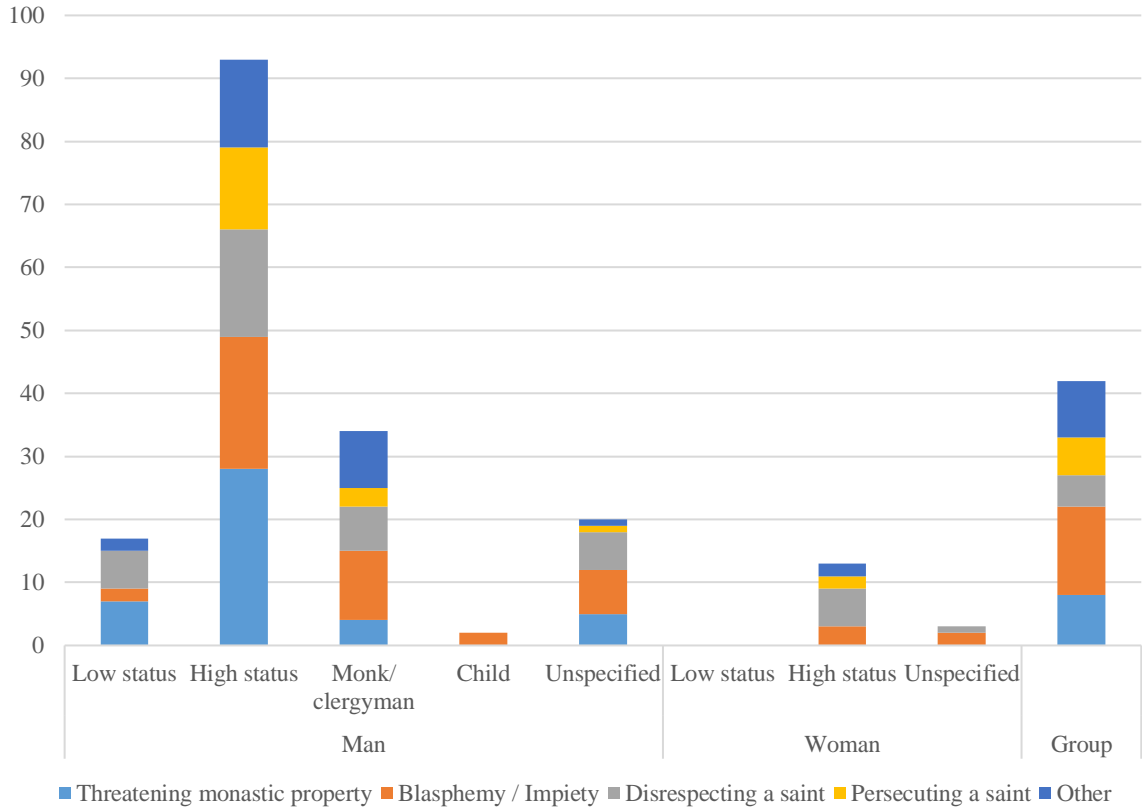


FIGURE 3: RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN VICTIMS OF DIVINE VENGEANCE AND TYPES OF OFFENCE

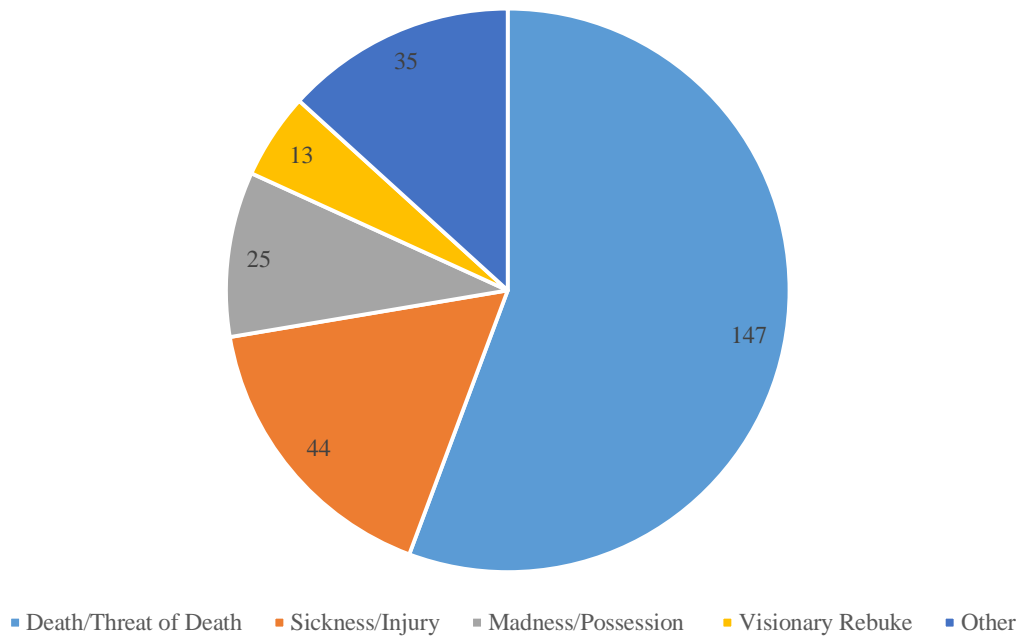


FIGURE 4: TYPES OF DIVINE PUNISHMENT

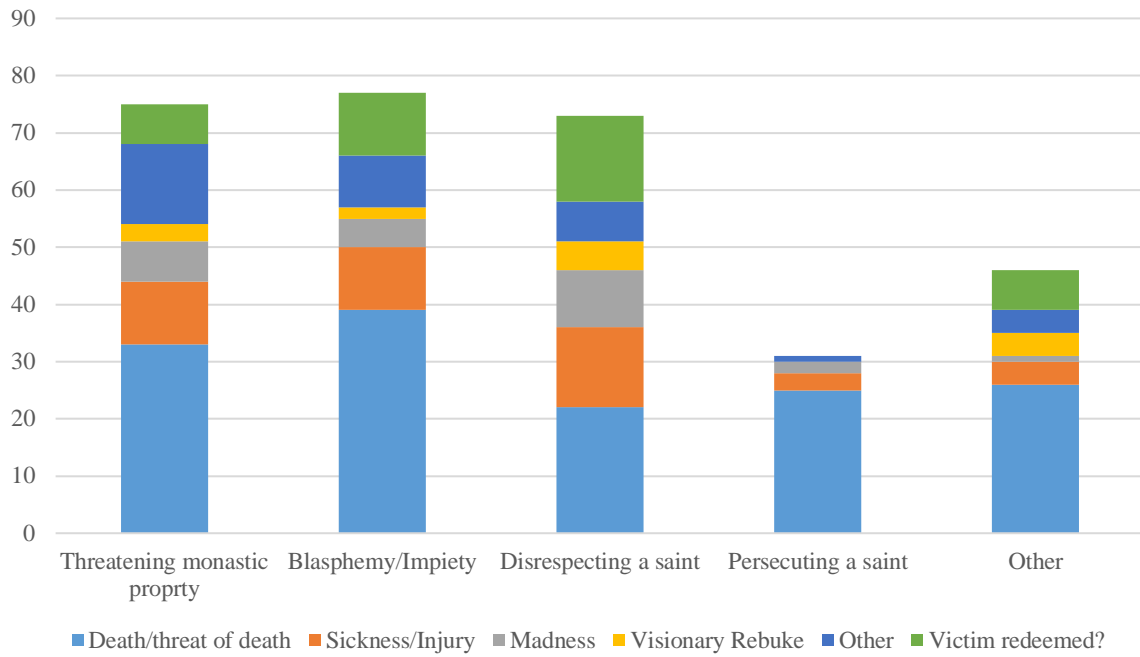


FIGURE 5: RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TYPES OF OFFENCE AND DIVINE PUNISHMENT

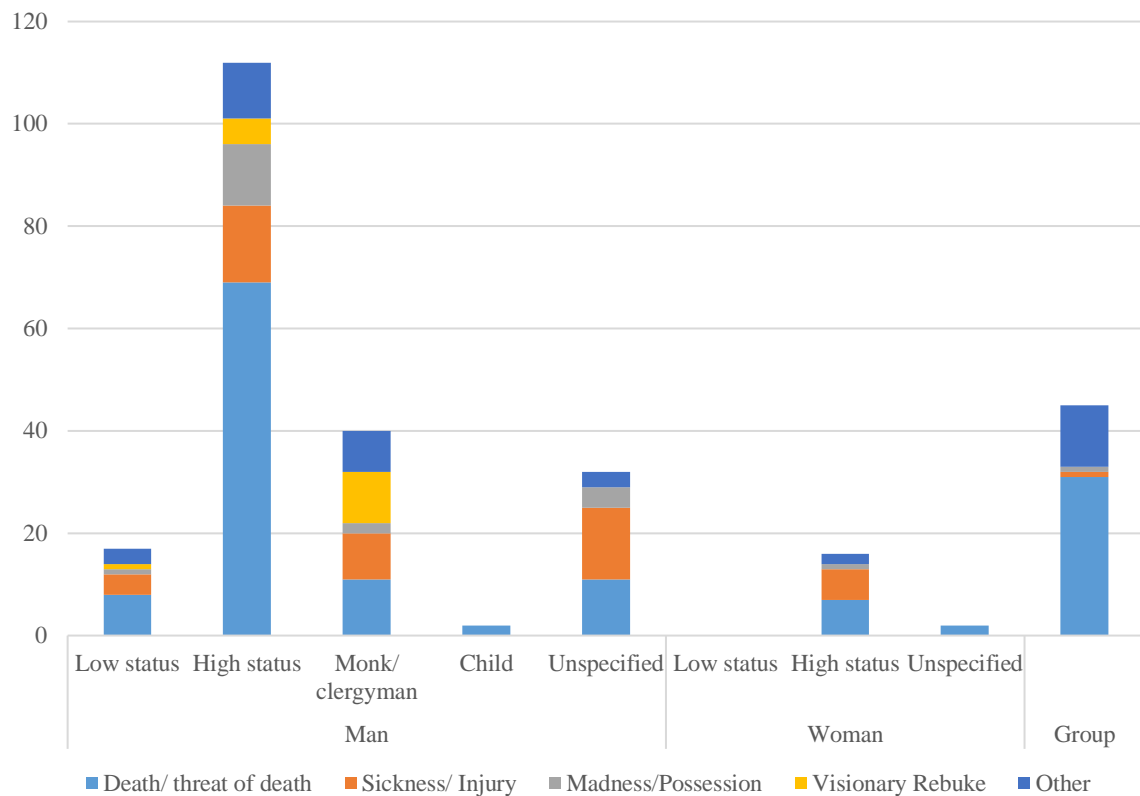


FIGURE 6: RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN VICTIM AND TYPE OF PUNISHMENT

OBSERVING, EXPERIENCING AND REPORTING DIVINE VENGEANCE

Chapter two showed that interpretations of momentous historical events within the framework of divine vengeance were subjective and deliberately constructed for moral purposes. The written stories of divine vengeance that will be discussed in this chapter were constructed within the same rhetorical framework, but brought divine power into the occurrences of everyday life. Traditionally, vengeance miracle stories have been seen as deterrents to those who sought to appropriate monastic property or undermine the authority of an institution's patron saint, but my analysis of the types of situations in which divine vengeance was likely to be recorded has shown that stories of vengeance miracles had an equally important pastoral purpose in seeking to encourage proper Christian behaviour in their audiences.⁴⁵³ This is important to keep in mind when considering the processes of communication that led to the creation of a vengeance miracle story in the form that it was written down. While authorial rhetoric shaped the written stories that have survived, and some interpretations of an incident as divine vengeance were evidently made by the author themselves, the compilers of hagiographical and historical works also relied on a variety of oral and written sources, and made efforts to record the presence and testimony of witnesses to miracles that were often said to have happened a long time before they were recorded.

THE VOICE OF THE AUTHOR

For the compilers of hagiographical miracle collections, every punitive miracle that they chose to include was a deliberately constructed narrative designed to provide an edifying story to their audience. Anything that did not contribute to this purpose was irrelevant, and it is impossible to know what or how many miracle stories were rejected as unfounded or dubious. As with the interpretations of historical events within the framework of divine vengeance discussed in the previous chapter, there needed to be compelling evidence to support the interpretation of any misfortune as divine vengeance. Sometimes, authors took a risk by recording an incident as a miracle when there was known disagreement over whether God's

⁴⁵³ See Julia M.H. Smith, 'Oral and Written: Saints, Miracles, and Relics in Brittany, C. 850-1250', *Speculum* 65.2 (1990) pp. 338-42. And see above, note 407.

vengeance was actually at play. In these cases, they simply stated their own belief that divine vengeance was involved, but this is unusual. I discussed in chapter two William of Malmesbury's caution in attributing the collapse of a tower following William Rufus's death to divine vengeance in the revised draft of his *Historia Regum*. Herman of Bury, too, in his *Miracles of Edmund* (completed c. 1098) records a miracle which was said to have occurred during the Danish invasions at the end of Æthelred's reign.⁴⁵⁴ To protect Edmund's body from the Danes, a monk called Ælwine was carting the saint around the country, and one night was refused hospitality by a priest. Ælwine slept outside, and towards morning Edmund's cart began to move, which he took as a sign from God that they should leave. Ælwine had not taken Edmund far when they looked back to see the house in flames. Herman acknowledges that it was commonly said that this might have happened anyway, but expresses his belief that the fire was punishment for the priest's inhospitality, and uses the biblical story of Lot's escape from Gomorrah as an allegory to demonstrate the truth of God's vengeance for Edmund.⁴⁵⁵ This example shows the importance of an author's rhetorical construction of a miracle story for convincing their audience that divine vengeance was truly at work. Herman's inclusion of the existence of opposing opinions shows that God's vengeance was not an automatic assumption when misfortune struck, and that the audiences of vengeance miracle stories were capable of discernment as to when an interpretation of divine vengeance should be applied.

It is unusual to see evidence of an author's own thought process in the interpretation of an incident as divine vengeance. Another example of where this does happen is in William of Malmesbury's *Vita Wulfstani* (c.1125x1142) about bishop Wulfstan of Worcester (d.1095). William describes how one day when a crowd was waiting for confirmation by Wulfstan in the church cemetery at Gloucester, a reckless youth took it upon himself to sign the children with mud and obscene incantations, then began to rave and batter his head against a wall. The mob drove him away and he fell head first into a well or sewage pit and although his relatives rescued him, he died a few days later.⁴⁵⁶ Such circumstances lent themselves to an interpretation of the youth's death as divine punishment for disrespecting Wulfstan and the ritual of confirmation, but in this case the situation is complicated because William says that Wulfstan grieved as much for the boy's punishment as his sin, so he sent a blessing and the

⁴⁵⁴ Appendix, 82.

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁶ William of Malmesbury, *Vita Wulfstani* (hereafter WMVW), ii.14, ed. Michael Winterbottom and R.M. Thomson, *William of Malmesbury, Saints' Lives: Lives of SS. Wulfstan, Dunstan, Patrick, Benignus and Indract* (Oxford, 2002) pp. 87-89. 'sed credo pro his quae furens egeret uel tolerauerat aliquantis post diebus fati munus expleuit.'

boy regained his wits, ‘but a few days later, I suppose (*credo*) because of what he had done or undergone, he completed his allotted span.’⁴⁵⁷ Winterbottom and Thomson’s translation of *credo* as ‘I suppose’ makes it appear that William finds it difficult to reconcile the death of the youth with his initial indication of recovery following Wulfstan’s blessing, but also cannot help but acknowledge what he sees as the familiar pattern of divine vengeance. If this is substituted for the more usual translation of *credo* as ‘I believe’, William’s assessment of the youth’s death becomes less reluctant, and firmly within what he knows to be the workings of God’s vengeance. This inclusion of his personal opinion may be an acknowledgement that in this case it was a view not shared by everyone, and it is an indication of how carefully such incidents were thought about before being recorded as a vengeance miracle story.

For historical authors working with a wider remit, deciding when and when not to present an event as divine vengeance was also a conscious choice. It is again rare for an author’s thought process in deciding when and when not to put forward an interpretation of an event as divine vengeance to show through, but occasionally a glimpse of this process of interpretation can be detected. One example of this is Gaimar’s personal interpretation of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* entry for 837 in his *Estoire Des Engleis* (c.1138). The [A] and [E] versions of the *ASC* briefly state that ‘Here Ealdorman Wulfheard fought at Southampton against 33 ship-loads, and made great slaughter there and took the victory’.⁴⁵⁸ Gaimar picks up on this annal, noting that a strongly armed fleet of Danes landed at Southampton, and then comments that ‘God, however, must, I think, have conceived a great hatred for them, for through Wulfheard, a virtuous ealdorman who attacked the Danes, killed many of them and defeated them, he visited great destruction on them’.⁴⁵⁹ It is unusual for an author’s opinion to show itself so plainly in a text, and it is also strange that Gaimar should have picked up on this particular point to express his, given how insignificant the *ASC* entry for 837 appears among the many other (much longer and more detailed) accounts of Danish attacks it contains, and given Gaimar’s general lack of recourse to a providential explanation for historical events in his *Estoire*.⁴⁶⁰

⁴⁵⁷ *Ibid.* p. 89

⁴⁵⁸ *ASC* [A], p. 43. ‘Her Wulfheard aldormon gefeaht æt Hamtune wiþ .xxxiii. sciphlæsta 7 þær micel wel gesloh 7 sige nom’. *ASC* [E], p. 46. ‘Her Wulfheard ealdorman gefeaht æt Hamtune wið .xxxiii. sciphlesta 7 þær mycel wæl gesloh 7 sige nam’. Translation from Swanton, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicles*, pp. 62-63.

⁴⁵⁹ Gaimar, *Estoire*, ll. 2396-2400, ed. Short p. 133. ‘jo qui ke Deus mult les hëait, / car par Wolfhard, un bon baron, / en fu feit grant destruction: / celui a els se combati, / mult en oscist e sis venqui.’

⁴⁶⁰ See Chapter 2.

Sometimes, where more than one account of an event exists it is possible to work out an author's personal interpretation even where this is not explicitly stated, or the reworking of a story over time. Henry of Huntingdon for example ascribes the death of King Sigeberht at the hands of a swineherd, recorded in the lengthy [A] and [E] versions of the *ASC* entry for 755, to divine punishment, adding the framework of divine vengeance and a layer of theological commentary against wicked kings that does not appear in the *ASC*, but Henry does not feel the same need to highlight that this is his own opinion.⁴⁶¹ Using the rhetoric of divine vengeance, Henry of Huntingdon and William of Malmesbury also retrospectively condemned other Anglo-Saxon kings for their inappropriate and grasping treatment of the church.⁴⁶² Miracle stories could also become exaggerated over time. The *Lives of St Dunstan* (909-988), by the anonymous author B (995x1004) and William of Malmesbury (c.1129-30) both record a story that when King Edmund was out hunting one day, he very nearly lost his life by chasing a stag over a precipice. As the king's horse was hurtling towards the edge, he realised that his impending doom must be because he had insulted Dunstan by ejecting him from court, and he promised God that he would make amends if he were allowed to live. His horse then miraculously stopped just in time.⁴⁶³ William of Malmesbury's version is essentially the same, except that the horse halted with its front feet already over the edge of the drop.⁴⁶⁴ It is a minor detail, but it adds drama to the story and makes it altogether more miraculous. Perhaps William was catering to an audience more inured to hearing such stories and less impressed by anything short of wondrous.⁴⁶⁵

The difficulty with tracing this sort of development of a story in the majority of recorded punishment miracles however, is that they frequently only survive in one written version, and describe incidents that were said to have happened a long time before it was considered expedient to write them down. Authors also frequently relied on earlier models of miracle stories in order to lend credibility to their account, so that individual stories can appear as mere trope or convention. This does not mean that all vengeance miracle stories were simply made up to fit a certain model of what divine vengeance should look like – most are too circumstantial for this to be the case – but it does mean that authors may have been more likely to record those stories concerning situations that had known precedents. This means that there is more

⁴⁶¹ *HHHA*, iv.20, pp. 244-47, p. 246, note 115.

⁴⁶² Appendix, 155, 158, 161, 186-88.

⁴⁶³ B, *VSD*, 13, pp. 47-51.

⁴⁶⁴ *WMVD*, i.15, pp. 201-5.

⁴⁶⁵ See Koopmans, *Wonderful to Relate*, pp. 2-4.

complexity to determining the extent to which a written story was the result of an interpretation of an incident and narrative rhetorical construction made by an individual author, or arose from a longer chain of communication. The remainder of this chapter will analyse the construction of a selection of vengeance miracle stories in depth in order to understand the processes of communication between different sections of society that contributed to the form of the surviving miracle account.

THE IMPORTANCE OF LAY PIETY AND RECEPTIVENESS

Written stories of divine vengeance were often the culmination of a lengthy process of communication that stretched from those who initially experienced or observed a vengeance miracle to the monastic or clerical author who wrote the story down. The process of communication did not end there, however. Hagiographical texts were designed to be read aloud, for monastic and lay audiences through liturgical and public reading, which could then give a story a new lease of life in a world in which oral communication was the norm.⁴⁶⁶ The written accounts that have survived are, then, merely snapshots from a particular point in the communal development of a story that may have taken shape over several generations.⁴⁶⁷ Although the written accounts reflect monastic interests and perspectives, the efficacy of any story depended on the degree to which it could engage with the thought-structures of the intended audience.⁴⁶⁸ Commenting on Geoffrey of Burton's *Life and Miracles of Modwenna* (1118x1150), Robert Bartlett has stated that 'All vindictive miracles are, of course, ecclesiastical fantasies of revenge, but in some the repentance of lay offenders is more important, in others their destruction.'⁴⁶⁹ While it is true that the stories in this text did perform a function (most of Modwenna's miracles are the standard form of punishment for those who threatened the property of Burton Abbey where her relics lay), I would question the use of the word 'fantasies' to describe the way that these stories were created. Fantasy implies wishful thinking and a recognition that the story is divorced from reality, and I would instead suggest that these stories of miraculous divine vengeance should be considered as part of a world view

⁴⁶⁶ Aron Gurevich, *Medieval Popular Culture: Problems of Belief and Perception*, trans. János M. Bak and Paul A. Hollingsworth (Cambridge, 1988) p. 5.

⁴⁶⁷ On miracle stories as the product of communal participation, see Simon Yarrow, *Saints and their Communities*, pp. 13-21.

⁴⁶⁸ Gurevich, *Medieval popular culture*, pp. 5, 11, 15-17.

⁴⁶⁹ *Geoffrey of Burton, Life and Miracles of St Modwenna*, ed. Robert Bartlett (Oxford, 2002), p. xxvii.

in which supernatural forces played a pervasive and intimate role in directing the course of events.

Positive lay engagement with religion and religious conviction can be observed in a variety of ways, and should not be discounted when considering how stories of divine vengeance originated and developed.⁴⁷⁰ It has been shown that many lay people, especially those higher up the social scale, met more than the basic requirements of religious practice, and helped to shape the religious atmosphere of the central middle ages just as much as members of the clergy.⁴⁷¹ There is evidence to suggest that preachers had willing audiences, there was demand for the sacraments of baptism and confirmation, there was widespread enthusiasm for the cult of saints, donations to saints' shrines were lucrative for the churches that housed them, and over the tenth to the twelfth century there was a significant growth in the number of local churches and lay foundations, driven by demand from congregations as much as official imposition, from a wish for direct access to supernatural power.⁴⁷² The dichotomy between 'popular' and 'official/elite' religious belief and experience has been questioned in recent years, with the recognition that high-status clergy subscribed to devotion to saints' cults and stories of the miraculous just as much as the people they served.⁴⁷³ In her study of the role of oral and written communication in maintaining local saints' cults in Brittany between the ninth and thirteenth centuries, Julia Smith has shown that there was an intimate interplay between popular, oral, and written, clerical accounts in maintaining a flourishing cult, as stories of the miraculous, including saintly vengeance, circulated freely in association with holy sites in the landscape, and without clerical mediation.⁴⁷⁴ John Blair has also demonstrated that, despite institutional differences, Anglo-Saxon saints' cults often exhibited the same deeply embedded folkloric character.⁴⁷⁵ Applied to the stories of divine vengeance under consideration here, this conclusion would also account for the type and formation of vengeance miracles that predominate in the written record, which cater to monastic interests, and would suggest that

⁴⁷⁰ Arnold, *Belief and Unbelief*, p. 7. Sarah Hamilton, *Church and People in the Medieval West* (Harlow, 2013) pp. 163-213.

⁴⁷¹ Hamilton, *Church and People in the Medieval West*, pp. 163-244. Arnold, *Belief and Unbelief*, p. 19, 59.

⁴⁷² Hugh M. Thomas, 'Lay Piety in England from 1066-1215', *Anglo-Norman Studies* 29 (2006) pp. 179-92. Watkins, *History and the Supernatural*, pp. 69-70. Foxhall Forbes, *Heaven and Earth*, p. 14. Arnold, *Belief and Unbelief*, p. 41-42; Francesca Tinti, *Sustaining Belief: The Church of Worcester from c.870 to c.1100* (Ashgate, 2010), p. 244. Frank Barlow, *The English Church, 1000-1066: A History of the Later Anglo-Saxon Church* (London, 1979) and Frank Barlow, *The English Church, 1066-1154: A History of the Anglo-Norman Church* (London, 1979). WMVW, ii.14, pp. 87-89.

⁴⁷³ Karen Louise Jolly, *Popular Religion in Late Saxon England: Elf Charms in Context* (North Carolina, 1996).

⁴⁷⁴ Smith, 'Oral and Written: Saints, Miracles and Relics in Brittany', pp. 311-338.

⁴⁷⁵ John Blair, 'A Saint for Every Minster? Local Cults in Anglo-Saxon England' in Alan Thacker and Richard Sharpe (eds.) *Local Saints and Local Churches in the Early Middle Ages* (Oxford, 2002) pp. 477-86.

these were likely to have existed among other, orally circulating stories which have not survived in written form.

Fear of divine wrath was one factor that influenced the way that people participated in religion, and one role of written vengeance miracles was to cultivate this fear by preserving the memory of times when God had shown his wrath. Barbara Abou-El-Haj has pointed out the way that some of the illustrations in an early twelfth-century copy of Bede's *Life of St Cuthbert* and appended miracle collection (Oxford, Bodleian Library, University College MS 165) emphasise the immediate punishment of transgressors of Cuthbert's property.⁴⁷⁶ One of the illustrations shows Cuthbert's punishment of death for a man called Barcwith, who had violated the saint's sanctuary (a fate which goes far beyond any punishment for that crime that was legally permissible at the time) and despite Barcwith's master subsequently donating a cross and precious gospel book to the church, it is emphatically Cuthbert's retribution rather than the donation that is pictured (see fig. 7).⁴⁷⁷



FIGURE 7: THE PUNISHMENT OF BARCWITH. OXFORD, BODLEIAN LIBRARY, UNIVERSITY COLLEGE MS 165, FOLIO 157

⁴⁷⁶ The illustrations of the punishments of the Danish leader Onlafald, a man called Barcwith, and a Norman thief, are printed in Barbara Abou-El-Haj, 'Saint Cuthbert: The Post-Conquest Appropriation of an Anglo-Saxon Cult' in Paul E. Szarmach (ed.) *Holy Men and Holy Women: Old English Prose Saint's Lives and the Contexts* (New York, 1996) pp. 176-178, 196-98.

⁴⁷⁷ *Ibid.* p. 178.

This episode fits with the territorial character of Cuthbert's vengeance miracles in the *Historia de Sancto Cuthberto*, which the Normans continued to promote to consolidate their own claims on the church of Durham.⁴⁷⁸ Cuthbert's posthumous miracles between the tenth and twelfth centuries were unusually vengeful, and these illustrations show how promoting the vengeful nature of a saint was a conscious choice. The Barcwith illustration also suggests that such miracle stories were promoted for other purposes than attracting donations to Durham, which presumably could be inspired by other reasons. Patronage to religious houses was especially common at moments of personal crisis, when a donor's awareness of their own sinfulness became heightened with a consciousness of the closeness of death, and wished to create for themselves a tangible social bond with the recipient monastic community who would then pray for the donor's soul.⁴⁷⁹ Orderic Vitalis at one point praises the zeal of a noble knight who, through fear of God, resolved to restore all the dilapidated churches in his region and thereby placate God towards himself, a motivation which Orderic evidently thought was appropriate to ascribe to the knight on this occasion.⁴⁸⁰ Masses for the dead were thought to provide assistance for souls in the interim between death and the last judgement, while bequests in wills and charters of donation usually stressed that a donation was being made for the sake of a donor's soul, and sometimes the soul of a family member or ancestor, and the texts usually conclude with a sanction clause cursing the soul of anyone who infringes the charter's decrees.⁴⁸¹ Even with the caveat that this was a formulaic construction, a genuine religious sentiment and motive of salvation should not be discounted. Stories of vengeance miracles therefore circulated in, and were perhaps often the product of, a religiously sensitive population in which frequent interaction between monasteries and lay people created the space and environment for exchange of stories.

⁴⁷⁸ Ibid. p. 199.

⁴⁷⁹ Rosenwein, *To Be the Neighbor of Saint Peter*, pp. 4-5, 38, 48, 206.

⁴⁸⁰ *OVHE*, 6, ed. Chibnall, 3, iii.110-11 p. 331. 'qui timore Dei plenus in corde suo pie proposuit, ut omnes in vicinio suo æcclesias quæ uetustate et incuria in multis desolationibus quas supra notavi dirutæ errant restauraret'.

⁴⁸¹ McLaughlin, *Consorting With Saints*, pp. 142-43. Helen Foxhall Forbes, 'The Power of Binding and Loosing: The Chains of Sin in Anglo-Saxon Literature and Liturgy', *Quaestio Insularis: Selected Proceedings of the Cambridge Colloquium in Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic* 8 (2008) pp. 51-65. See, for example, *Anglo-Saxon Wills*, ed. and trans. Dorothy Whitelock (Cambridge, 1930), *Anglo-Saxon Charters*, ed. and trans. A.J. Robertson (Cambridge, 1956).

PROCESSES OF OBSERVATION AND COMMUNICATION

There were two ways in which divinely sent punishment could be recognised: either by being observed by onlookers who noticed the fate of the victim and saw the hand of God at work, or personal experience, when a victim realised that they were suffering the effects of God's vengeance and might try to take steps to remedy the situation.⁴⁸² Herman the Archdeacon records these processes of communal and individual interpretation in his *Miracles of St Edmund* (1098x1100). He describes how Herfast, a bishop in East Anglia, made a prolonged attempt to bring St Edmund's Abbey into his own authority through simony, and was blinded by a branch one day when he was out riding. Herman says that Herfast came to Abbot Baldwin, who advised him to consider what he had done that might have offended God and Edmund, and after this Herfast made a public confession and was healed after medical attention.⁴⁸³ This process of communication and evaluation of possible past misdemeanours probably contributed to the emergence of many vengeance miracle stories, but is not usually so explicitly stated.

In order for an incident to become construed as divine vengeance, there needed to be a trigger that alerted onlookers to the involvement of supernatural intervention. A good example is a miracle recorded by Geoffrey of Burton in his *Life and Miracles of Modwenna* (1118x1150). Modwenna of Burton was at some point identified with a royal Irish abbess called Monnine, founder of the monastery of Killeavy, who died c.517, whose life apparently later became conflated with two other saints. Geoffrey's text is based on an eleventh-century *Life* by an Irish author called Conchubranus, which expanded Modwenna's career to bring her from Ireland to southern Scotland and then to Burton-on-Trent in the West Midlands, where her relics were enshrined.⁴⁸⁴ Geoffrey records a miracle which was said to have happened before the Norman Conquest, during the time of Abbot Leofric, concerning a goldsmith named Godmor who was said to have met his death as a result of stealing money from Modwenna's shrine.⁴⁸⁵ The story goes that Godmor gained permission from abbot Leofric to despoil the shrine, ostensibly for the needs of the poor. When Leofric and Godmor went to buy corn with

⁴⁸² Sigal, 'Un aspect du culte des saints', p. 47.

⁴⁸³ Appendix, 87.

⁴⁸⁴ *Life and Miracles of St Modwenna*, ed. Bartlett, pp. xxiv-xv. Robert Bartlett, 'Monnine (St Monnine, Darerca), d. 517', *ODNB*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-18869> [accessed 17.03.2018]

⁴⁸⁵ ASC [E], p. 87, records that Leofric died in 1066. See *Life and Miracles of St Modwenna*, ed. Bartlett, p. 183, note 132.

some of the money, they dismounted in a meadow and Godmor stuck his spear in the ground while he went to relieve himself. Remarkably, ‘through the judgement of God’ (*Dei iudicio*), the spear tilted towards him, and although his companions cried out he fell on it and met an untimely death. Some money from the shrine was found among his clothes, ‘and it was clearly understood for what crime he had deserved such punishment.’⁴⁸⁶ Although Geoffrey stresses from the beginning that Godmor had wicked intentions, if we consider how it was discovered that he was a thief it becomes clear that no one could have known that this was the case if it weren’t for the accident with the spear. Up until the moment of discovery, the abbot and monks seem to have had no reason to suspect Godmor, and his death seems to have been presumed to have been nothing more than an accident. Once they had found the coins on his person, it was a simple step in hindsight to re-evaluate the sequence of events that led up to his death and identify the link between the theft and divine punishment.

There is always the possibility that Geoffrey was constructing this story according to hagiographical trope. The manner of Godmor’s death bears similarity to that of a peasant in Byrhtferth’s *Vita S. Ecgwini* (c.1016), who cut his own head off with his scythe after swearing a false oath attempting to claim a section of Ramsey’s land.⁴⁸⁷ This story is among others that may have originated in oral tradition in Byrhtferth’s own time.⁴⁸⁸ Nevertheless, assuming there is a kernel of truth behind the story of Godmor, the process by which his death was attributed to divine vengeance can reveal something of the way that supernatural power was observed in the world. There are similarities in the way that divine vengeance was recognised in the case of Godmor with the way that demonic intervention was experienced in the world, in that both were seemingly explanations of last resort when no other logical explanation could be found.⁴⁸⁹ An episode in the ninth-century *Life* of Leoba, written at Fulda about an English missionary abbess who died on the continent in 782, relates how a nun at Wimborne (Dorset) had lost a set of keys and went to beg forgiveness from the abbess, who suspected that they had been stolen by the devil and was proved right when the keys were eventually discovered in the mouth of a dead fox after the nuns had prayed.⁴⁹⁰ It is significant that the nun herself did not immediately assume any supernatural involvement in the disappearance of the keys, and the conclusion of demonic activity was only reached after consultation with the abbess. Given that

⁴⁸⁶ *Life and Miracles of Modwenna*, 43, ed. Bartlett, c. 43. ‘sicque datum est clare intelligi pro quali culpa penam talem meruisset accipere’.

⁴⁸⁷ Appendix, 58, 123.

⁴⁸⁸ Michael Lapidge, ‘Byrhtferth and the Vita S. Ecgwini’, *Mediaeval Studies* 41 (1979) p. 345.

⁴⁸⁹ Foxhall Forbes, *Heaven and Earth*, p. 28.

⁴⁹⁰ *Ibid*, pp. 28-29.

several decades had passed between the time that Godmor was said to have suffered divine punishment and Geoffrey's version of the story, it is not unreasonable to suppose that, as in the *Life* of Leoba, some discussion and consultation may have taken place before the conclusion of divine vengeance was reached.

Both of these accounts come from monastic contexts, where demonic activity and divine vengeance were both witnessed and recorded by monks and nuns. If supernatural intervention in events was not an automatic assumption in these spiritually sensitive circles, it was perhaps even less likely to have been perceived as a matter of course in lay environments, which means that the moments where divine vengeance *was* perceived were of particular importance.⁴⁹¹ It has been suggested that oral communication among the laity themselves must have been as effective, if not more effective, than messages promulgated by the clergy, since people may have more readily paid attention to their immediate peers than a relatively detached member of the clergy.⁴⁹² This may explain why some hagiographers took pains to stress how interpretation of an event as divine vengeance was arrived at through public observation and discourse, as they sought to persuade their audience of the authenticity of the miracle through the attestation of witnesses.

Two episodes in the *Miracula S. Erkenwaldi* (1141), attributed to Arcoid, a canon of St Paul's in London, illustrate this process at work. Erkenwald was a seventh-century bishop of London who died c.693. Little is known about his life, and Arcoid was writing at a time when the monastic community of St Paul's was attempting to reinvigorate and promote Erkenwald's cult in London, shortly after the translation of Erkenwald's relics into a new shrine in 1140. Most of the miracles he records took place in the years immediately before and after the translation.⁴⁹³ One relates how a wretchedly poor man refused to acknowledge Erkenwald's feast day by ceasing his work, was admonished by a passing clergyman and, storming off in a contemptuous rage, tripped over a half-buried skull, fell on his head and died.⁴⁹⁴ Following this, Arcoid writes that news of the accident spread, a crowd arrived and began to enquire into the sequence of events, and after some discussion it soon realised that the poor man's fate was the sentence of the highest judge for his disobedience and impudence.⁴⁹⁵ In the second miracle, Arcoid relates how a craftsman called Vitalis continued his work of cleaning hides on

⁴⁹¹ Watkins, *History and the Supernatural*, p. 40.

⁴⁹² Koopmans, *Wonderful to Relate*, pp. 9-27.

⁴⁹³ *The Saint of London: The Life and Miracles of St Erkenwald, Text and Translation* (hereafter Arcoid, *MSE*), ed. and trans. E. Gordon Whatley (New York, 1989), pp. vii, viii, 25, 36.

⁴⁹⁴ Arcoid, *MSE*, 2, pp. 109-15.

⁴⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

Erkenwald's feast day, when some passing citizens noticed him and warned him of the consequences for his soul for his disobedience to Erkenwald. Vitalis scorned these warnings, and in the midst of his derision he pierced his own eye with the blade of his tool. Once again, Arcoid records varied public opinion of the accident; some people reviled Vitalis for his blasphemy, others offered sympathy for his misery.⁴⁹⁶ There is likely a heavy clerical gloss in the way that Arcoid tells this story; his text was designed to promote the cult of Erkenwald in London and it was in his interests to present that section of the crowd who concluded that divine vengeance was at work as having the dominant voice. Vitalis injuring himself with his own tool recalls both Geoffrey of Burton's account of Godmor being killed with his own spear and Byrhtferth of Ramsey's account of the peasant decapitating himself with his own scythe. Arcoid therefore seems to be adding the familiarity of hagiographical topos whilst establishing the credibility of the miracle by emphasising the collective opinion of a large group of witnesses. This does not mean that the story should be dismissed, however; it is also easy to see how an incident of that type would draw a curious crowd and there is no reason to suspect that at least the process of communication described is not broadly accurate.⁴⁹⁷

When a vengeance miracle took place away from the direct observation of crowds of people, other processes of communication came into play. Another story in the *Life of Modwenna* relates how, when William (the Conqueror) had begun to reign in England, a company of robbers ravaged the lands and properties of the church of Burton, and violated the monastery itself by pillaging and burning. Afterwards, while they were on the road and boasting about their achievements, they all became insane and after a while 'died a bodily death, a spiritual death, a perpetual death, suffering eternal damnation by God's righteous judgement.'⁴⁹⁸ News spread and for a long time no robbers dared plunder there for fear of God's vengeance, and acknowledged the merits of the venerable Modwenna.⁴⁹⁹

Assuming that the abbey of Burton was actually pillaged at some point during the years after the Conquest, there are various ways that the version of the story as told by Geoffrey could have developed. Given that God's vengeance was said to have struck the robbers on the road at a distance from the monastery, it may be that a story that a band of robbers, who were boasting of their exploits at Burton and had gone insane, spread as a sensation in itself and

⁴⁹⁶ Arcoid, *MSE*, 12, p. 149.

⁴⁹⁷ On the importance of witnesses to hagiographers and historians, see Pierre-André Sigal, 'Histoire et hagiographie', pp. 243-44. Carl Watkins, 'Memories of the Marvellous', pp. 94-106.

⁴⁹⁸ *Life and Miracles of St Modwenna*, 44, ed. Bartlett, pp. 184-85. 'morte corporis, morte anime, morte perpetua recto uidelicet Dei iudicio in eternal dampnatione omnes partier perierunt.'

⁴⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

found its way back to Burton without any supernatural significance being placed on it, at which point the monks made the connection with the robbers who had pillaged the abbey, and between the offence and divine punishment. Alternatively, the interpretation of their insanity as divine vengeance could have been made before the story reached the monks, who then found it expedient to record the incident. This type of story of divine vengeance in connection to violations of monastic property had been current for long enough that most people were probably able to identify what they were seeing, and if the miracles discussed above are anything to go by, interpretations could be and were made quickly. It is also possible that there was a robbery and it was the monks who decided to spread a warning tale as a deterrent to others. In every scenario, the intended effect of the story was the same, and Geoffrey felt able to pronounce its efficacy, which means that either such an atmosphere of fear was created that the idea of divine punishment was truly a deterrent, or the level of damage was severe enough that it left little worth pillaging until such time as the monastery had been restored. Perhaps it was some combination of both.

A more complex account of two revenants that appeared in the village of Drakelow sometime in the later eleventh century might demonstrate what scholars now consider to be a dialogue between official doctrine and folkloric consciousness.⁵⁰⁰ According to Geoffrey of Burton, two peasants had run away from the village of Stapenhill in the jurisdiction of the abbot of Burton, to the neighbouring village of Drakelow, wishing to live under the jurisdiction of the lord of that place, count Roger the Poitevin. After stirring up a quarrel between count Roger and the abbot of Burton that resulted in Roger seizing and burning a large part of the abbey's crop store, and an armed fight over the remainder, the runaway peasants were suddenly struck down dead the next day. This is where, usually, the miracle story would be expected to end, perhaps with an admonishment to the audience to respect monastic property; however, the story continues. The two peasants were buried the following morning in the churchyard at Stapenhill, and on the evening of that same day they appeared at Drakelow, carrying their coffins on their shoulders. The whole following night they were seen walking through the fields, sometimes in the shape of men carrying coffins, sometimes in the likeness of animals, and spoke to the other peasants, banging on the walls of their houses and instructing them to move quickly. After

⁵⁰⁰ Aron Gurevich, *Medieval Popular Culture*, p. 5-6. John Blair, 'A Saint for Every Minster?', pp. 477-49. John Blair, 'The dangerous dead in Early Medieval England' in Stephen Baxter, Catherine Karkov, Janet L. Nelson and David Pelteret (eds.) *Early Medieval Studies in Memory of Patrick Wormald* (Ashgate, 2009) pp. 548-49. The involvement of count Roger the Poitevin, of the house of Montgomery, dates this story to before 1102, when he was exiled. See the *Life and Miracles of Modwenna*, ed. Bartlett, p. 193, note 141.

many nights of this happening, a deadly plague struck the village which quickly killed all except three of the peasants. Seeing this, count Roger repented and begged pardon from the abbot and monks, entreated them to placate God with prayers, and ordered double restitution for all the damages he had inflicted. Despite the count's penitence, the peasants who still remained in the village fell sick and lived in terror of the phantom men who walked at night. So, with permission from the bishop, they dug up the bodies, cut off their heads and tore out their hearts, then reinterred them with their heads between their legs. Then they burned the hearts and an evil spirit was seen flying away, soon after which both the disease and the phantoms ceased.⁵⁰¹ Even so, the remaining peasants abandoned the village 'and for long thereafter no one dared to live there, fearing the vengeance of the Lord that had struck there and wondering at the prodigies that God omnipotent had worked through the holy virgin'.⁵⁰²

It is clear how Geoffrey wants us to interpret this story, since the chapter heading places the blame on 'the runaways who suffered a wonderful example of vengeance which befell them on their own account'.⁵⁰³ Within this, there appear to be multiple levels of divine vengeance at work. For Geoffrey, rising as revenants and the subsequent treatment of their bodies was punishment in itself for the runaway peasants who caused the conflict between count Roger and the abbot, and was perhaps related to concerns over the body's ejection from proper Christian burial.⁵⁰⁴ A possible parallel to Geoffrey of Burton's account is found in the *Miracles of St Edmund* by Hermann of Bury (fl. 1070-1100), which recounts an incident which took place c.1000, in which the body of a sheriff was moved by demons so that it got up and walked after his death, a circumstance connected with the fact that, in life, he had invaded the sanctuary of St Edmund.⁵⁰⁵ The appearance of revenants in association with outbreaks of plague seems to have been a feature of belief throughout the middle ages; there is archaeological evidence for deliberate disablement of corpses as early as the sixth and seventh centuries, although most

⁵⁰¹ There is archaeological evidence for this sort of treatment of dead bodies, which has been interpreted as corroborating documentary accounts of this type. See S. Mays, R. Fryer, A.W.G. Pike, M.J. Cooper and P. Marshall, 'A multidisciplinary study of a burnt and mutilated assemblage of human remains from a deserted Medieval village in England', *Journal of Archaeological Science: Reports*, 16 (2017) pp. 441-55. Blair, 'The dangerous dead', pp. 539-55. Stephen Gordon, 'Disease, sin and the walking dead in Medieval England, c. 1100-1350: a note on the documentary and archaeological evidence' in E. Gemi-Iordanu, S. Gordon, R. Matthew, E. McInness, R. Pettitt (eds.) *Medicine, Healing and Performance* (Oxford, 2014) pp. 55-70. Jacqueline Simpson, 'Repentant soul or walking corpse? Debatable apparitions in Medieval England', *Folklore* 114 (2003) p. 390.

⁵⁰² *Life and Miracles of Modwenna*, 47, ed. Bartlett, pp. 191-99, p. 198: 'et longo post tempore nulli sunt ausi habitare in ea, metuentes uindictam Domini que tam mire ibi contigerat et prodigia reuerendo mirantes que omnipotens per sanctam virginem operabatur'.

⁵⁰³ Ibid. 47, pp. 190-91. 'de profugis quale ipsis et propter ipsos mirande contigit ultionis exemplum.'

⁵⁰⁴ Blair, 'The dangerous dead', pp. 550-55.

⁵⁰⁵ See Foxhall Forbes, *Heaven and Earth*, pp. 317-18. Appendix, 80.

documentary accounts of their existence come from the later middle ages.⁵⁰⁶ Revenants were usually depicted as having lived an evil life and coming to a sudden, bad end, a concept that has significant overlap with the way that divine vengeance was often seen to manifest itself, sometimes with the consequence that the body of the victim of divine vengeance would not stay in its grave, representing the idea that the fate of the soul after death was tied to the fate of the body.⁵⁰⁷ However, in the remainder of Geoffrey's account, the phantom wanderers seem to have in turn become the bearers of punishment against the villagers of Drakelow, which Count Roger also seems to have interpreted as divine punishment for his own actions, possibly due to the loss of a significant proportion of his labour force in that place.⁵⁰⁸

In this case, there seems to have been an unusually complex and convoluted chain of events involving the deaths of two runaway peasants and the outbreak of a plague nearby, with the perceived appearance of two revenants in association with the plague also becoming connected with those two dead peasants. It is unclear when exactly the interpretation of divine vengeance would have been applied here, or whether it was Geoffrey who applied the framework of divine vengeance to the entire narrative. It does seem, however, as though the village was seen as in some way cursed, and if this was considered to be divine vengeance at the time, it is interesting that it was attached predominantly to a place rather than a person, and the surviving villagers thought that they could physically run away from it. This may be adding a level of theoretical interpretation to quite a sensible departure from a place struck by plague, though it is easy to see how the abandoned place could then gain a fearful reputation which then lent itself to becoming construed within a divine vengeance framework. The association of divine vengeance with a particular place might be comparable to the way that certain landscape features, such as springs, wells and trees, became associated with local saints' cults as sites of healing and devotion.⁵⁰⁹ The place name 'Drakelow' means 'dragon barrow', derived

⁵⁰⁶ Blair, 'The dangerous dead', p. 542. The most-often cited accounts come from William of Newburgh, writing at the end of the twelfth-century, who describes two very similar occurrences to that described by Geoffrey of Burton, where wandering corpses were associated with an outbreak of plague, which was only ended when the body of the revenant was dug up, the heart cut out, and the corpse burnt. See Jacqueline Simpson, 'Repentant soul or walking corpse', p. 391-94.

⁵⁰⁷ Blair, 'The dangerous dead', pp. 554-55. Caciola, 'Wraiths, Revenants and Ritual in Medieval Culture', p. 27. Foxhall Forbes, *Heaven and Earth*, pp. 315-18.

⁵⁰⁸ On economic structures and organisation, see Chris Dyer, *The Archaeology of the Eleventh Century: Continuities and Transformations* (London, 2017) esp. ch. 4 and 5.

⁵⁰⁹ Smith, 'Oral and Written: Saints, Miracles, and Relics in Brittany', p. 335. Blair, 'A Saint for Every Minster?', 455-94.

from the Old English ‘*draca*’ and ‘*hlæw*’, which suggests that other fearful folkloric associations may have come into play in the creation of this vengeance miracle story.⁵¹⁰

Although the surviving accounts of divine vengeance are the result of authorial construction, where a punishment was not fatal it is sometimes possible to detect how a victim might recognise their own punishment as divine vengeance for an offence that they had committed and subsequently attempt to make amends.⁵¹¹ In his *Life of St Swithun* (990s), Ælfric describes how once, during a funerary vigil, a foolish man who was present blasphemously mocked St Swithun by imitating the saint and demanding candles.⁵¹² In the midst of his jesting, he collapsed, was carried home and lay despairing of his life for a long time until his kinsmen carried him back to Swithun’s shrine, he confessed his foolishness and begged forgiveness from the saint, at which point he was healed. Swithun’s cult began in 971 with the translation of his relics into the main church of the Old Minster, Winchester, so this miracle can be dated to the two decades between then and Ælfric’s writing.⁵¹³ It is significant that Ælfric notes the delay between the foolish man being taken home and being carried back to Swithun to repent and be healed. Ælfric uses the story as the basis for criticising such jolly behaviour at funerals, but this was a later rhetorical construction. It is significant though that even within this construction, the foolish man and his kinsmen do not seem to have immediately interpreted his sickness as divine vengeance; only when he had lain ill for some time did they apparently make the connection between his mockery of St Swithun and present condition, at which point they seem to have known how to remedy the situation, both recognising divine punishment and hopeful of divine mercy. It seems as though, in this case, the realisation that divine vengeance might be at play was a last resort when recovery did not seem promising.

Illness and visionary experiences sometimes together contributed to the interpretation of misfortune as divine vengeance, and it is in this sort of miracle account that the initial interpretation of divine vengeance by lay people is often most obvious. One miracle of St Erkenwald concerns a man who would not allow his wife to make a donation to Erkenwald’s shrine and became afflicted with an intense pain in his stomach. Erkenwald appeared to his

⁵¹⁰ See *The Dictionary of Old English: A to I online*, *draca*, <https://tapor.library.utoronto.ca/doe/hlæw>, <https://tapor.library.utoronto.ca/doe/> [accessed 08.08.2018]. Sarah Semple, ‘A Fear of the Past: The Place of the Prehistoric Burial Mound in the Ideology of Middle and Later Anglo-Saxon England’ in *World Archaeology* 30.1, *The Past in the Past: The Reuse of Ancient Monuments* (1998) pp. 109-13.

⁵¹¹ Sigal, ‘Un aspect du culte des saints’, p. 47.

⁵¹² Ælfric, LoS 1.21, ed. Skeat, pp. 459-61.

⁵¹³ *The Anglo-Saxon Minsters of Winchester: The Cult of St Swithun*, ed. Michael Lapidge, *Winchester Studies* 4.ii (Oxford, 2003) p. 8.

wife in a dream and instructed her to urge her husband to have himself carried to the sepulchre. Eventually she was successful, and there he was healed, and Arcoid holds him up as an example of what happens to those who stand in the way of the works of holiness.⁵¹⁴ It is impossible to be certain about how much of this miracle account is Arcoid's construction and how much of it relates to reality. However, if the basic outline of the miracle was first brought to the attention of the canons of St Paul's by the couple themselves during their experience at the shrine, it is significant that there was apparently no clerical input into their experience prior to their arrival, which means that the woman must have made the connection between her husband's offence and illness herself and worked out the means of correcting it. This in turn suggests that she had absorbed a belief in the honour due to Erkenwald, and a recognition of divine vengeance and what it meant, even if her husband had not.

This guidance of a wife can also be seen in the *Life of St Swithun*. This time, a bedridden old thegn from the Isle of Wight had a vision of a mysterious figure who exhorted him to pray for his enemies as well as his friends and to neither wish, do nor consent to evil against any man. The figure explained that when he corrected this fault, he would be healed. On waking, the thegn related the vision to his wife, who informed him that it was Swithun that he had seen, and said that he should be carried to the church and pray to be healed through the saint's merits.⁵¹⁵ Again, there is the same pattern of no clerical input prior to the supplicant's arrival at the shrine, and it seems as though the thegn had instinctively internalised the church's teachings on loving his enemy and forgiveness, even if, once awake, it did not make sense to him. His wife was then responsible for encouraging him in the practical steps needed to cure himself. Even though Ælfric's sermonising account of the vision is based on Romans 12.20, and his assertion that the thegn related his vision to bishop Æthelwold, the instigator of Swithun's cult, may be an effort to lend historical weight and legitimacy to the account, the pattern of the thegn experiencing a vision which was then interpreted by his wife and resulted in the decision to travel to Swithun's shrine at Winchester needed to be plausible.⁵¹⁶ The same goes for Arcoid's story. It is likely that he constructed his account with inspiration from this type of model, but since his aim was to promote the cult of Erkenwald among the citizens of London, it still needed to be relatable. Stories such as these were designed to encourage voluntary devotion to and respect for the saint in question, and are also related to the desire of

⁵¹⁴ Arcoid, *MSE*, pp. 133-35

⁵¹⁵ Ælfric, LoS 1.21, ed. Skeat, pp. 463-65.

⁵¹⁶ Elaine Treharne, 'Ælfric's Account of St Swithun: Literature of Reform and Reward' in Elizabeth M. Tyler and Ross Balzaretto (eds.) *Narrative and History in the Early Medieval West* (Turnhout, 2006) p. 184.

clerical and monastic authors to promote the value of voluntary repentance and confession.⁵¹⁷ While not necessarily accurate reflections of specific occurrences, they do demonstrate the kinds of behaviour amongst members of the laity that were subject to condemnation and praise. These accounts give the impression that members of the laity could and did discuss religious teaching among themselves and seek to correct each other when they went astray, and also that tangible experiences, including those relating to divine vengeance, were important in forming the basis for people's opinions and attitudes.

On a more ostentatious scale, Symeon of Durham in his *Liber de Exordio*, written probably 1104-7x1115, describes how a tax collector called Ranulf was punished by St Cuthbert for oppressing his people.⁵¹⁸ This episode can probably be dated to 1073/74, following William the Conqueror's entry into Durham in 1072 on his return from an expedition into Scotland.⁵¹⁹ This would mean that Symeon, who probably arrived in Durham with Bishop William of St Calais in 1091, only knew about it from hearsay. In Symeon's telling, the people of St Cuthbert objected to this new tax, and prayed to Cuthbert for aid. Just before the first tax was due to be collected, Cuthbert appeared to Ranulf in a dream, struck him with the pastoral staff and warned that he would suffer still worse if he did not go away quickly. On waking, Ranulf was stricken with severe infirmity, and made his vision publically known.⁵²⁰ He asked for prayers of intercession, donated a precious cloth to Cuthbert's tomb (which Symeon comments is still there as a memorial to the event), and promised amendment. This was not enough however. Even though Ranulf had himself carried around the bishopric on a litter to demonstrate his guilt and punishment, his illness only got worse and only abated when he left the territory of the bishopric.⁵²¹ There is some hint here as to how incidents of divine vengeance could be officially memorialised through the presence of associated material objects, which could become focal points for a particular story, once again creating an association and memorialisation of an instance of divine vengeance with a specific place. For Symeon, the presence of the cloth donated by Ranulf, in addition to the public declaration of his guilt, is testament to the truth of the story.

There is a notable similarity here to an earlier miracle of St Cuthbert related by Symeon, which happened to bishop Sexhelm of Durham, c. 948.⁵²² Sexhelm was said to have been

⁵¹⁷ Hamilton, 'The Unique Favour of Penance: The Church and the People, c. 800 - c. 1100', p. 230.

⁵¹⁸ Symeon, *LDE*, iii.20, p. 197.

⁵¹⁹ *Ibid.* iii.19, p. 197, note 71, iii.20, p. 199, note 73. Kapelle, *The Norman Conquest of the North*, pp. 134-35.

⁵²⁰ Symeon, *LDE*, iii.20, p. 199.

⁵²¹ *Ibid.*

⁵²² *Ibid.* ii.19, p. 141, note 110.

consumed with avarice and brought ruin to the people of St Cuthbert. As with Ranulf, Cuthbert rebuked Sexhelm in a dream three nights in a row, threatening increasingly severe punishments, and finally imminent death if he did not depart from the bishopric. Sexhelm ignored these warnings until after the third night he began to grow ill, at which point he hastened to depart, and recovered his health on arrival in York. Given this similarity, it is tempting to suppose that Symeon was merely employing an established form of vengeance miracle narrative, and it is plain that the promotion of the power of St Cuthbert in this respect was in the interests of the monks of Durham, particularly at the time Symeon was writing when there was considerable resentment against Bishop Ranulf Flambard, who exploited the wealth of the church of Durham for personal gain.⁵²³ However, it would be facetious to suggest that Symeon simply invented these stories. The Sexhelm miracle is similar thematically to those recorded in the *Historia de Sancto Cuthberto* in that it shows Cuthbert as a protector of his community, and was said to have occurred around the time that that text was beginning to be composed, or at least not long before.⁵²⁴ The other vengeance miracles in the *Historia* are all responses to appropriation and devastation of Cuthbert's property by outsiders, so the fact that the Sexhelm miracle is not directly related to acquisitions and losses of land may explain why it does not appear in that text, but it is not unreasonable to suppose that such a story began to develop at around the same time. Symeon certainly found it expedient to try to demonstrate the consistency of St Cuthbert's powers of protection through the two examples. The two men's publically visible responses suggest that they indeed felt that they had been reprimanded by St Cuthbert in some way and were fearful of further punishment. Ranulf having himself carried round the city, especially, was a voluntary and public display of contrition that can be compared to public performances of penance, which also depended on an individual recognising their own fault and attempting to atone for it.⁵²⁵

⁵²³ William M. Aird, 'The Boundaries of Medieval Misogyny: Gendered Urban Space in Medieval Durham', in Lud 'a Klusáková and Laure Teulière (eds.) *Frontiers and Identities: Cities in Regions and Nations* (Pisa, 2008) p. 59. William M. Aird, *St Cuthbert and the Normans: The Church of Durham, 1071-1153* (Woodbridge, 1998) pp. 171-76; David Rollason, 'Symeon's Contribution to Historical Writing in Northern England' in David Rollason (ed.) *Symeon of Durham, Historian of Durham and the North* (Stanford, 1998) p. 4. W.M. Aird, 'The Political Context of the Libellus de Exordio' in David Rollason (ed.) *Symeon of Durham, Historian of Durham and the North* (Stanford, 1998), p. 44.

⁵²⁴ See above, note 483

⁵²⁵ On public and private penance, see Sarah Hamilton, 'The Unique Favour of Penance: The Church and the People, C. 800 - C. 1100', in Peter Lineham and Janet L. Nelson (eds.) *The Medieval World* (London, 2001) pp. 229-43. Foxhall Forbes, 'Affective piety and the practice of penance', pp. 332-40 and Mayke de Jong, 'Transformations of Penance' in Frans Theuws and Janet L. Nelson (eds.) *Rituals of Power from Late Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages* (Leiden, 2000) p. 220.

Accounts of visions such as this raise the question of whether divine vengeance was ever anticipated. If a person was known to be behaving in a way that had incurred divine vengeance in the past, if an accident were then to befall them, it may have been more likely to become interpreted within a divine vengeance framework. One story which appears in the *Liber Eliensis* (1169x1177), a record of the history of the monastery of Ely and its patronage by St Æthelthryth, describes how a man called Gervase who was an assistant of the reviled sheriff of the county of Cambridge, Picot, was extremely hostile to the people of St Æthelthryth and met his death after being stabbed in the heart by the saint in a dream.⁵²⁶ Prior to this dream, the compiler of the *Liber Eliensis* says that Gervase was repeatedly, but ineffectually, warned of Æthelthryth's power, until the abbot was prompted to seek mercy from the saint. This may have created an atmosphere of anticipation, but this only became notable because of the way that Gervase died. When Æthelthryth appeared to Gervase in his dream, she rebuked him for harassing her people and implanted her staff in the region of his heart. This caused Gervase to wake, screaming, which roused the whole household. He exclaimed to them what had happened in his dream, asserted that he was going to die because of it, and breathed his last.⁵²⁷ After this, the compiler of the *Liber Eliensis* says that reports of the matter spread widely, and St Æthelthryth became feared among the nearby population so that for a long time no nobles, judges, administrators or other powerful men dared to plunder the possessions of Ely.⁵²⁸ Even taking into account the probability that the efficacy of this story in instilling fear of Æthelthryth in the populace is exaggerated here, the basic elements of the dream and the spread of the tale through gossip can probably be taken at face value. The consistency of the features of these visionary vengeance miracle accounts affecting officials who imposed unwelcome and burdensome authority over a saint's community suggests that their grave illness or sudden death was one circumstance in which divine vengeance was likely to be perceived.

More problematic are the set of miracles recorded by Symeon of Durham against women who dared to approach St Cuthbert's shrine, with punishments even more disproportionately harsh than that which Barcwith met with for abusing Cuthbert's sanctuary, discussed above. Symeon was the first author to record a prohibition of women from the vicinity of Cuthbert's church, a rule which was apparently unique to Cuthbert's cult in the

⁵²⁶ On the dating of the *Liber Eliensis*, see *Liber Eliensis: A History of the Isle of Ely from the Seventh Century to the Twelfth*, Compiled by a Monk of Ely in the Twelfth Century, ii.132, (hereafter *Liber Eliensis*), ed. and trans. Janet Fairweather (Woodbridge, 2005) pp. xxii-xxiii, 251-53.

⁵²⁷ *Liber Eliensis*, ii.132, pp. 252-53.

⁵²⁸ *Ibid.* ii.132, p. 253.

twelfth century and has led to the cult at this time being called ‘misogynistic’ by modern historians.⁵²⁹ Symeon records the fates of three women who died as a result of entering the restricted area around Cuthbert’s church, although he asserts that there were several others who suffered similar punishment, which suggests that he selected for recording those that he considered to be the most edifying or authoritative accounts.⁵³⁰ The earliest was said to have occurred c. 1060 when Judith, the wife of Earl Tostig, wished to honour St Cuthbert but was afraid to approach his shrine, so she sent her servant girl ahead as a trial.⁵³¹ The servant girl was repelled by a violent force, was struck ill, struggled home and was racked with terrible torment until eventually she died.⁵³² The other two probably belong to the period after 1083 when the old community of St Cuthbert, which was made up of married clergy, was replaced by Benedictine monks.⁵³³ One concerns a woman called Sungeova who took a shortcut through St Cuthbert’s cemetery after a feast one night with her husband, thinking that they would expiate the sin by almsgiving afterwards. On the way through, she became terrified and cried out that she was losing her senses, and as soon as she stepped outside the fence she collapsed, was carried home and died that night.⁵³⁴ The other involved the wife of a certain rich man, who also took the path through the cemetery in order to get a glimpse of Cuthbert’s shrine. After this she went out of her mind and bit out her own tongue, and the madness did not leave her until one day she was found dead under a tree, having apparently slit her own throat with the knife discovered in her hand.⁵³⁵ Importantly, Symeon presents all three women as having been aware of their being prohibited from entering the vicinity of Cuthbert’s tomb, and yet they did so anyway; they made a conscious choice to break Cuthbert’s rules and met their punishment.

The difficulty with tracing the origin of these stories is that there was no precedent for this type of miracle in any contemporary cult, and neither is there any evidence that a prohibition on women entering Cuthbert’s church was enforced before the late eleventh century, which means that this may be one case where the stories were more the result of Symeon’s rhetorical construction than of lay initiation.⁵³⁶ The function of these stories in

⁵²⁹ See V. Tudor, ‘The Misogyny of St Cuthbert’ in *Archaeologia Aeliana, or Miscellaneous tracts relating to Antiquity* 12 (1984) pp. 157-68. Aird, ‘The Boundaries of Medieval Misogyny: Gendered Urban Space in Medieval Durham’ pp. 50-62.

⁵³⁰ Symeon *LDE*, ii.8, p. 109.

⁵³¹ Tudor, ‘The Misogyny of St Cuthbert’, p. 159.

⁵³² Symeon, *LDE*, iii.11, pp. 175-77.

⁵³³ Tudor, ‘The Misogyny of St Cuthbert’ p. 160.

⁵³⁴ Symeon, *LDE*, ii.8, p. 109.

⁵³⁵ *Ibid.* ii.9, p. 109.

⁵³⁶ Tudor, ‘The Misogyny of St Cuthbert’, p. 159. William M. Aird, ‘The Boundaries of Medieval Misogyny: Gendered Urban Space in Medieval Durham’, p. 56.

Symeon's narrative sits within his broader purpose of depicting the purity and continuity of Cuthbert's community between its original members and the Benedictine monks that replaced the Anglo-Saxon community of married clerks in 1083.⁵³⁷ His emphasis on the importance of clerical chastity is in line with the concerns of the eleventh- and twelfth-century Gregorian reform movement, and these miracle stories may have been a practical attempt to ensure the separation of the new monastic community at Durham from women, and to disassociate themselves from their new bishop, Ranulf Flambard, who was not in monastic orders.⁵³⁸ It has also been suggested that they were born out of the new monks' need to take control of property from the old hereditary community, and remove women from proprietorial structures.⁵³⁹

There is one parallel for this type of miracle in the *Dialogues* (c.593) of Gregory the Great, when a woman tried to go to see a hermit called Martin despite knowing that he had hidden himself from the sight of women, and met her death when climbing back down the mountain where he was residing.⁵⁴⁰ It is therefore possible that Symeon was drawing on the authority of Gregory and seeking to align Cuthbert with one of the earliest confessor saints. However, given that there is evidence that Symeon made use of information which had been passed down to him elsewhere in his text, and needed it to be credible to his audience, it is unlikely that Symeon simply invented these stories.⁵⁴¹ It might be helpful instead to think of them as the result of a gradual development and elaboration of reports from events that did actually happen. The ban on women entering Cuthbert's church does seem to have originated with the arrival of the new monks in 1083 with their ideals of Gregorian reform and need to establish their own legitimacy and authority, and Symeon certainly manipulated his source material to create the impression that the ban had been in place since the earliest days of Cuthbert's cult. Symeon traces the ban back to a fire which had destroyed the monastery of Coldingham in the seventh century as divine vengeance for the scandalous behaviour of the monks and nuns residing there, after which Symeon says women had their rights of entry into

⁵³⁷ The degree of disruption caused by the arrival of Benedictine monks at Durham and expulsion of the Anglo-Saxon community in 1083 has been debated. Symeon may have exaggerated the extent of change and under-represented continuity of personal. See David Rollason, 'Symeon's Contribution to Historical Writing in Northern England', pp. 5-12, W.M. Aird, 'The Political Context of the *Libellus de Exordio*', pp. 34-40, Aird, *St Cuthbert and the Normans*, pp. 139-40.

⁵³⁸ Colin Morris, *The Papal Monarchy*, pp. 79-126, Tudor, 'The Misogyny of St Cuthbert' p. 158-59, Aird, 'The Boundaries of Medieval Misogyny: Gendered Urban Space in Medieval Durham', pp. 58-59. Piper, 'The First Generations of Durham Monks and the Cult of St Cuthbert', p. 443, Fiona J. Griffiths, 'Women and Reform in the Central Middle Ages' in Judith M. Bennett and Ruth Mazo Karras (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of Women and Gender in Medieval Europe* (Oxford, 2013) p. 450.

⁵³⁹ Aird, *St Cuthbert and the Normans*, pp. 125-26.

⁵⁴⁰ Gregory, *Dialogues*, 3.16, ed. Zimmerman, pp. 141-45. Appendix, 7.

⁵⁴¹ Aird, *St Cuthbert and the Normans*, p. 120, W.M. Aird, 'The making of a Medieval miracle collection', p. 12.

Cuthbert's church and cemetery completely removed.⁵⁴² The story of the fire at Coldingham as divine vengeance for the immorality of the inhabitants was first related by Bede in his *Historia Ecclesiastica* (731) and was picked up on by other twelfth-century historians, but Symeon was the first and only author to associate it with the banishment of women from Cuthbert's churches.⁵⁴³ It is still possible, though, that these miracles against women were grounded in real events which were remembered and later interpreted within the framework of divine vengeance. These women may have been known to have suffered a tragic end to their lives, and the connection was made that at some time or another they had all disobeyed Cuthbert by entering his cemeteries, and it was this version of events interpreted as divine vengeance that Symeon felt it was important to record.

CONCLUSION

This survey of vengeance miracles recorded in hagiographical and historical sources has shown that established models had a strong influence on the types of situations that were likely to become interpreted and recorded as divine vengeance. As with the interpretation of history, divine vengeance was perceived to be at work in a particular situation where people wanted or expected to see it, and where circumstances lent themselves to such an interpretation. Vengeance miracles were recorded when an author perceived that they held utility as a moral message, but it is likely that those stories that have survived in written copies were only part of a much wider circulation of oral communication which is now impossible to recover.⁵⁴⁴ The fact that I have identified such a small sample of instances of divine vengeance across so many different hagiographical and historical sources, all of which are lengthy literary texts written with religious purposes in mind, also shows that divine vengeance was not perceived everywhere, and was not an automatic assumption when misfortune occurred. The accounts that have survived are therefore records of things that were unusual, particularly shocking, and were considered worthy of singling out for comment.⁵⁴⁵ Vengeance miracles associated with saints tended to be written down when a cult had become prominent and wealthy enough that it needed to protect itself; some saints were more vengeful than others, but that does not mean

⁵⁴² Appendix, 98

⁵⁴³ *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, ed. and trans. Bertram Colgrave and R.A.B. Mynors (Oxford, 1972) iv.25; Appendix, 173

⁵⁴⁴ Cf. Smith, 'Oral and Written: Saints, Miracles, and Relics in Brittany', p. 338.

⁵⁴⁵ Foxhall Forbes, *Heaven and Earth*, p. 28, 313, Watkins, *History and the Supernatural*, p. 40.

that vengeance miracles were only observed at those times.⁵⁴⁶ Sometimes episodes of divine vengeance were not associated with a saint at all.⁵⁴⁷ Sometimes miracles were grounded in a specific historical context, and sometimes they lack any historical context. This can make it difficult to distinguish between incidents that were retrospectively narrated within the framework of divine vengeance by an author themselves, and those which were interpreted in that way by others. Nevertheless, I would postulate that stories of divine vengeance could be in oral circulation for a long time before any impetus arose to write them down, particularly those from before the Conquest which were later written down for posterity by Norman authors.

Despite the dominance of monastic interests in the written record of vengeance miracles, and the clear intended function of the promotion of these stories for the monastic houses in question, it has also become clear that these were only part of a variety of circumstances in which divine vengeance could be perceived.⁵⁴⁸ Many stories did originate within a monastic context, but there were also times when the initial perception of divine vengeance happened outside of a monastic environment, and a story was then picked up on by monastic authors and adapted to suit the purposes of their text. Lay people who were engaged with religion in other areas of their lives could be just as likely to perceive divine vengeance at work in their own experiences as monastic authors, and could be just as discerning. They were aware of the kinds of religious obligations that they were expected to follow, for example showing adequate honour to their local saint, and were able to recognise their own divine chastisement when they fell short.⁵⁴⁹ Oral communication was key, and although the majority of miracle accounts are unique, existing stories seem to have influenced the types of events and associated circumstances that would be likely to become interpreted as evidence of divine vengeance.

The scarcity of recorded female victims of divine vengeance reflects the general absence of women in much medieval source material, but where divine vengeance against women does appear, it is often for strikingly different reasons than those for which men were punished. Orderic Vitalis records the murder of Mabel, wife of Roger of Montgomery, as her just comeuppance and divine vengeance for her hostility to the monks of St Evroul and the way that she had disinherited many lords, which is in line with the types of offences for which men frequently met with divine punishment and therefore shows that there did not necessarily have

⁵⁴⁶ Ward, *Miracles and the Medieval Mind*, p. 62, Aird, 'The making of a Medieval miracle collection', p. 8.

⁵⁴⁷ Appendix, 13, 147-48, 166, 170.

⁵⁴⁸ Sigal, 'Un aspect du culte des saints', pp. 48-52.

⁵⁴⁹ On expectations of practical religious observance, see Foxhall Forbes, *Heaven and Earth*, pp. 48-54.

to be a gendered difference in the way that divine vengeance worked.⁵⁵⁰ However, the miracles against women recorded by Symeon of Durham do demonstrate the existence of a locally gender-specific aspect to the kinds of offences that incurred divine vengeance. Within those miracles that affected men, there is also no clear status difference in the types of offences that were divinely punished; proportionally, high and low status men were just as likely to meet with punishment for violating monastic property, blaspheming, or disrespecting a saint, though they might have violated monastic property in different ways. This lends further support to the conclusion that there were certain types of behaviour that, if followed by misfortune, in the right circumstances lent themselves to becoming interpreted as divine vengeance.

Further questions which arise from these observations are related to the extent to which most people truly were concerned about divine vengeance in the world around them, and the possibility that they were going to be struck by it. It is unlikely, for example, that every woman who ventured into Cuthbert's cemetery in the late eleventh and twelfth century subsequently met with divine punishment for daring to infringe the boundary. Symeon presents the three women whose deaths he relates as being aware of the prohibition but hopeful that they would come away unscathed.⁵⁵¹ Symeon's stories are therefore designed as a deterrent, a reminder that any woman thinking of flouting the infringement might be the one to suffer divine vengeance for the affront. It has been noted that the majority of the early visitors to the shrine of St Godric of Finchale, which arose near Durham in the 1170s, were women, which suggests that by that time at least there had developed a wider awareness of the prohibition described by Symeon, which some women responded to by taking their devotion elsewhere when the opportunity arose.⁵⁵²

Folklore and hagiographical construction are often difficult to separate, with written accounts arising from storytelling circulating locally among and between lay and religious people, and then being reworked for the purposes of a particular author.⁵⁵³ The other side to the argument that there were certain circumstances in which divine vengeance was more likely to be perceived than in others is that those very similarities between the circumstances of many vengeance miracle stories suggests that many people were not, in fact, particularly concerned about the possibility of divine vengeance affecting them in their own lives, and habitually acted

⁵⁵⁰ *OVHE*, 5, ed. Chibanll, 3, ii. 410-11, pp. 135-37.

⁵⁵¹ Appendix, 99, 100, 106.

⁵⁵² Tudor, 'The Misogyny of St Cuthbert', pp. 161-62.

⁵⁵³ Catherine Cubitt, 'Folklore and Historiography: Oral Stories and the Writing of Anglo-Saxon History' in Elizabeth M. Tyler and Ross Balzaretti (eds.) *Narrative and History in the Early Medieval West* (Turnhout, 2006) pp. 200, 210-11.

in ways that monastic and clerical authors considered to be impious.⁵⁵⁴ The sheer number of divine punishments recorded against those who threatened or violated monastic property, for example, suggests that this was a persistent problem and the perpetrators thought that they could get away with it without suffering divine chastisement. Likewise, the repeated appearance of miracles against those who doubted or showed inadequate respect to a saint, usually by doubting the incorruption of their relics or not properly observing a feast day, suggests that general religious indifference was considered to be a problem by monastic authors. This issue of religious scepticism and the role that accounts of divine vengeance had in combatting it will be the subject of the next chapter.

⁵⁵⁴ On general disbelief and religious scepticism in the later middle ages, see Arnold, *Belief and Unbelief*, pp. 217-30.

CHAPTER 4:

DIVINE VENGEANCE AND RELIGIOUS SCEPTICISM

For every person who lived in fear of divine vengeance and saw it at work in the world around them, influencing events from the unusual to the mundane, there was probably another who never gave it a second thought. Just as vengeance miracle accounts are revealing about the processes of communication by which the faithful observed and reported instances of God's punishing power in certain circumstances, they are also valuable sources of information for understanding levels of resistance to church authority and scepticism towards the value of religious ideas and practices in everyday life, across the social spectrum. In the words of Robert Bartlett, hagiographical literature reveals 'a bubbling broth of mockery, disrespect, doubt, disbelief, disdain, and derision.'⁵⁵⁵ Susan Reynolds has drawn attention to the dangers of assuming a homogeneity of religious belief and engagement in the middle ages, as individuals at all social levels from the nobility to the peasantry and the clergy were capable of making thoughtful choices about the religious ideas that they were taught.⁵⁵⁶ Religious attitudes ranged from fervent piety to outright unbelief, with a core of what Reynolds termed 'conventional piety', referring to the majority of people who probably accepted the church's teachings without agonising over them.⁵⁵⁷ In relation to the later middle ages, John Arnold has also pointed out that even though medieval Christian teaching was centred on the idea that all human action should be taken with consideration for the resultant fate of the soul after death, most people did not live with their death beds constantly in mind, and that there was a general lack of engagement with and enthusiasm for religion that was not manifested in outright unbelief in the modern sense of atheism, but was characterised by inattention and indifference.⁵⁵⁸ Stephen Justice has gone further to suggest that miracle stories and saints' lives, which show vehement reactions to such indifference by monastic and clerical authors, suggest the existence of a 'deep and diffuse scepticism' that is hard to pin down.⁵⁵⁹ Indeed, even if specific miracle accounts cannot be considered to be accurate representations of the thoughts of individual dissenters, they certainly show that authors were able to imagine the types of arguments that could be

⁵⁵⁵ Bartlett, *Why can the dead do such great things?* p. 596.

⁵⁵⁶ Susan Reynolds, 'Social Mentalities and the Cases of Medieval Scepticism' in *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 1 (1991) pp. 21-44.

⁵⁵⁷ Reynolds, 'Social Mentalities', pp. 38-39.

⁵⁵⁸ Arnold, *Belief and Unbelief*, pp. 49, 218-19.

⁵⁵⁹ Stephen Justice, 'Did the Middle Ages Believe in Their Miracles?', *Representations* 103.1 (2008) p. 21.

made against participating in the rituals of the cult of saints, for example, and felt it necessary to attempt to refute them.⁵⁶⁰ Audiences of hagiography ranged from monastic to local lay populations, who may have heard episodes read out on feast days and holidays. As well as providing proof of the sanctity of a particular saint, an important purpose of miracle accounts was the edification of the faithful; vengeance miracles provided tangible evidence of God's wrath in a form that could be seen and understood, beyond biblical history, so that the punishments of religious dissenters gave spiritual support to the pastoral message that an individual author was seeking to promote.

Accounts of vengeance miracles are a useful source for accessing the types of religious cynicism, scepticism and unbelief that existed in the middle ages, since relating the punishments of those who infringed church teaching and authority was one of the channels through which ecclesiastical authors could express their concern about dissenters. This chapter will primarily use accounts of vengeance miracles which occurred as responses to instances of blasphemy, impiety and disrespect shown to saints to explore what these accounts can reveal about the extent to which people in different sections of society were concerned about the possibility of divine vengeance and the extent to which that fear affected their behaviour. Consistencies and changes in the character of these vengeance miracles will also show the extent to which the types of vengeance miracle that were written down mirrored changes in religious preoccupations. Four broad areas of discussion will be: miracles which depict the punishment of those who refused to listen to preachers, miracles of punishment for people who refused to honour saints' feast days and other religious observances, miracles against monks and clerics for negligent behaviour, and the way that the rhetoric of divine vengeance was used in political conflicts. This will build on the observations of the previous chapter to develop a picture of the way that divine vengeance was experienced and observed in the world, and the ways that the rhetoric of divine vengeance was used within high medieval society.

RESISTANCE TO PREACHING

Public preaching was one of the most important ways that Christian teaching was disseminated in the middle ages. The texts of homilies and sermons survive in abundance, and

⁵⁶⁰ Cf. Peter Lang, 'Miracles and Disbelief in the Late Middle Ages', *Mediaevistik* 1. Frankfurt am Main (1988) pp. 23–38.

reveal the kinds of messages that clerical authors thought that it was important to communicate to Christian congregations. In chapter one I showed that the same kinds of messages about human obligation to God, free will and the necessity of God's punishment were fairly consistently communicated to audiences of both monks and laity. There is evidence that in the twelfth century preachers could have large and enthusiastic audiences, and that in earlier centuries too there were some particularly pious lay men who lapped up church teachings, such as Ealdorman Æthelweard and his son Æthelmær who commissioned Ælfric of Eynsham to write his *Lives of Saints* homily series in the late tenth and early eleventh century.⁵⁶¹ However, religiosity among the laity was not homogenous, and there is also consistent evidence that preachers were not always greeted enthusiastically, enough so that clerical authors expressed worry about the general population's inattention, indifference and even hostility to preachers. Reluctance to listen to preachers was not always an issue that was addressed through stories of divine vengeance though; in my survey of recorded episodes of divine vengeance, there are no punishments for refusal to accept preachers in any text until the twelfth century, and even then these are almost exclusively recorded by William of Malmesbury in relation to St Wulfstan of Worcester. This section will address the place that the rhetoric of divine vengeance had in persuading people to listen to the messages of preachers.

Teaching the fundamentals of Christianity to the wider population was an important duty of the clergy in the middle ages; it was a duty that Ælfric of Eynsham was particularly concerned about, and which he sought to facilitate through the production of his *Catholic Homilies*, while he catered to the wishes of his lay patrons with his *Lives of Saints* series. In those same homilies however, Ælfric complained of the inattention and irreverence of church congregations, who were prone to drink and talk whilst there.⁵⁶² Byrhtferth of Ramsey's *Vita S. Ecgwini*, written c.1016 for the monks of Evesham Abbey and preserved in a unique manuscript copy from the second half of the eleventh century, is about Ecgwine, bishop of Worcester in the late seventh/early eighth century and founder of Evesham Abbey.⁵⁶³ Byrhtferth praises Ecgwine's diligence in preaching to large crowds, but complains that when

⁵⁶¹ Catherine Cubitt, 'Ælfric's Lay Patrons' in Hugh Magennis and Mary Swan (eds.), *A Companion to Ælfric*, (Leiden, 2009) pp. 165-92. Cf. James Campbell, 'The Church in Anglo-Saxon Towns', in *Essays in Anglo-Saxon History* (London, 1986) p. 147.

⁵⁶² Ælfric, *Abbot of Eynsham, Lives of Saints: being a set of sermons on saints' days formerly observed by the English church*, vol. 2 (hereafter LoS 2) ed. Walter W. Skeat, (London, 1900) 2.13, pp. 293-95. 'Ælfric's Pastoral Letter for Wulfsgie III, Bishop of Sherborne, 993xc.995', 105, ed. Dorothy Whitelock, M. Brett and C.N.L. Brooke, *Councils and Synods, with Other Documents Relating to the English Church*, vol. 1, A.D. 871-1204, (Oxford, 1981) pp. 217-18.

⁵⁶³ Byrhtferth, *Vita S. Ecgwini*, ed. Lapidge, *The Lives of St Oswald and St Ecgwine*, p. lxxxiii. Michael Lapidge, 'Byrhtferth and the Vita S. Ecgwini', *Mediaeval Studies* 41 (1979) pp. 333, 341-42.

Ecgwine preached of the judgement and mercy of God, there were those who were sceptical of his words and when they congregated at all, it was for business and idle gossip rather than salvation.⁵⁶⁴ Byrthferth continues to describe Ecgwine's public threats of hellfire and eternal punishment for the sinful, inserting a passage from Bede's poem *De die Iudicii* for Ecgwine's sermon,⁵⁶⁵ which apparently fell on rebellious ears and made some members of his audience angry enough that they sought the support of more powerful men against the saint, and falsely accused him of deceit and evil deeds in the presence of the *witan*, with the result that the king (Æthelred of Mercia) ordered Ecgwine to seek protection from the pope.⁵⁶⁶

Almost nothing is known of Ecgwine's life, and Byrthferth constructs his depiction of the saint's early career with the topos of Ecgwine inheriting Christ's evangelical powers.⁵⁶⁷ This description of Ecgwine's preaching has the air of Byrthferth's contemporary, Archbishop Wulfstan of York's expounding style, and though it cannot be considered any reflection of Ecgwine's own activity in the seventh century, it does indicate what Byrthferth admired in a preacher in the early eleventh century, and the issues that he considered most in need of attention at the time that he was writing. In this case the important theme was penance, which reflects the general apocalyptic and millenarian concerns of the late tenth and early eleventh century as well as the sense that a spiritual response to the viking invasions was necessary.⁵⁶⁸ It is difficult to establish just how much of Ælfric and Byrthferth's complaints are rhetorical trope, but it is significant that they seem to share the concern that considerable numbers of the laity were simply not interested in listening to spiritual instruction, and in Byrthferth's case that they could even be actively hostile to preachers in the face of threats of divine judgement. Neither Ælfric nor Byrthferth describes any direct divine punishment in the form of vengeance miracles against those who did not pay attention to preachers, however, which suggests that either there were no models for vengeance miracles in that context and therefore it was not a context where divine vengeance was expected, or it was not a problem that it was thought could be addressed through warning miracle stories.

In contrast, in the twelfth century, William of Malmesbury reports the divine punishment of a group of people in Saxony who interrupted mass by singing and dancing in the churchyard, and in his *Vita Wulfstani* (c.1125x1142) reports four punishments against those

⁵⁶⁴ Byrthferth, *Vita S. Ecgwini*, 11, pp. 225-29.

⁵⁶⁵ Lapidge, 'Byrthferth and the Vita S. Ecgwini', p. 349.

⁵⁶⁶ Byrthferth, *Vita S. Ecgwini*, 12, pp. 229-31.

⁵⁶⁷ Lapidge, *The Lives of St Oswald and St Ecgwine*, pp. lxxxiii-lxxxv. Lapidge, 'Byrthferth and the Vita S. Ecgwini', *Mediaeval Studies* 41 (1979) p. 331.

⁵⁶⁸ Keynes, 'An Abbot, an Archbishop'; Cubitt, 'The Politics of Remorse'; Godden, 'Apocalypse and Invasion'.

who refused to acknowledge St Wulfstan's preaching, three of which are on the specific theme of men refusing to listen to messages about peace and reconciliation.⁵⁶⁹ The miracles show how a combination of the status and charisma of the preacher, and the topic of the day, could affect the level of attention people were willing to pay at any one time. Wulfstan lived c. 1008-1095, and was bishop of Worcester from 1062.⁵⁷⁰ William's *Vita Wulfstani* was written three or perhaps four decades after Wulfstan's death and is based on a now lost Old English life written c. 1100 by Coleman, a monk of Worcester who had served for fifteen years as Wulfstan's chaplain and died in 1113, supplemented by extra material that William had acquired from Prior Nicholas (c.1113-24) who had also personally known Wulfstan.⁵⁷¹ Andy Orchard has argued that the influence of Coleman's personal preoccupations can still be detected in William's work, including in the construction of a miracle against a plasterer in Worcester, called Earmær, who towards the end of Wulfstan's life refused to listen to Coleman when he was preaching on behalf of Wulfstan.⁵⁷² According to William's account, Earmær, who nurtured a deadly hatred against someone in the town, would not stay to hear Coleman talk of peace, reasoning that a monk, as opposed to a bishop, could be safely ignored. He subsequently suffered permanent injury to both his legs when some scaffolding he was standing on collapsed under him, spent a year in bed and never lost the pain in his feet.⁵⁷³ Orchard argues that the construction of this miracle story reflects Coleman's bitterness over the snub and gratification over seeing it punished, and if this is the case then it is an example of someone's misfortune being interpreted as divine vengeance for personal, vindictive reasons.⁵⁷⁴ This miracle also feeds into the theme of Wulfstan being an advocate for peace throughout William of Malmesbury's text. William uses the four vengeance miracles to validate Wulfstan's efforts to encourage peace and discredit those who refused to listen to his entreaties, as well as to confront the issue of who was considered responsible for carrying out preaching duties, or who was considered to have the authority to preach in public. The incongruity of Wulfstan's advocacy for peace and his association with these vengeance miracles does not seem to have been a problem for William.

⁵⁶⁹ Appendix, 178, 180, 181, 183.

⁵⁷⁰ Nicholas Brooks, 'Introduction: How Do We Know about St Wulfstan?' in Julia S. Barrow and Nicholas Brooks (eds.) *St Wulfstan and His World* (Ashgate, 2005) pp. 1-2.

⁵⁷¹ Brooks, 'Introduction: How do we know about St Wulfstan?' pp. 4-5. Emma Mason, *St Wulfstan of Worcester, C. 1008-1095* (Oxford, 1990) pp. 269-71, 286-94.

⁵⁷² Andy Orchard, 'Parallel Lives: Wulfstan, William, Coleman and Christ', in Julia S. Barrow and N.P. Brooks (eds.) *St Wulfstan and His World* (Ashgate, 2005) p. 54.

⁵⁷³ WMVW, ii.16, pp. 93-95

⁵⁷⁴ Orchard, 'Parallel Lives: Wulfstan, William, Coleman and Christ', p. 54.

William's emphasis on the importance of peace in the eyes of God is in line with wider eleventh and twelfth century efforts to regulate local feud, which could be difficult among men whose sense of honour rested on pursuing violent personal conflict themselves.⁵⁷⁵ The *Leges Henrici Primi* (1108x1118) contain clauses encouraging reconciliation, which suggests that this was a theme of broader social concern.⁵⁷⁶ In one instance, the *Vita Wulfstani* depicts divine vengeance directly intervening in a public dispute. William of Malmesbury describes how on one occasion when the ageing Wulfstan was preaching in Gloucester, he was called in as a mediator between a man called William the Bald and the five brothers of a man who William had accidentally killed. The brothers would not accept reconciliation on any terms, and although Wulfstan begged them to forgive the offence, they insisted that they would rather be excommunicated than fail to avenge their brother's killing, having lost all human sentiment in their sorrow. At that point, Wulfstan turned from entreaty to chastisement, and accused them of being sons of the devil who stood out against peace. The crowd shouted that this was true, and William says that upon the curses of the people followed vengeance from God. The fiercest of the brothers suddenly went mad; he rolled on the ground, bit and dug at the soil, foamed poisonously, and his limbs smoked so that a foul smell polluted their air around. The other brothers became terrified that an offence in which they were all implicated would be avenged on themselves as well as on him, their pride collapsed and Wulfstan restored peace to all, and no one hence presumed to answer back to Wulfstan when he was talking peace.⁵⁷⁷

The significance of this story is that, in William's depiction, ultimately it was nothing that Wulfstan said or did that persuaded the brothers to accept his message. His depiction of the brothers' voluntary preference for excommunication over failing to avenge their dead brother suggests that they either understood what it meant and actively shunned it as a threat, or did not understand the concept and so paid it no regard. Instead, only the tangible evidence of the wrath of God external to Wulfstan's entreaties could shock and convince them into acquiescing. For William of Malmesbury, this evidence of divine support was proof of Wulfstan's sanctity and, with the benefit of hindsight, he is able to frame the whole story around the build up to the miracle. First, he presents the raging brothers as in the minority, and in the wrong, in their desire for violent vengeance against William the Bald. The pointed reference to the accidental nature of the killing in this case corresponds with clauses in the *Leges Henrici*

⁵⁷⁵ See esp. Hudson, 'Feud, Vengeance and Violence', pp. 32-49.

⁵⁷⁶ *Leges Henrici Primi* (hereafter *LHP*) 36.1c-36.2a, ed. and trans. L.J. Downer (Oxford, 1972) p. 143. On the dating of the *LHP*, see Downer's introduction, pp. 1-42, esp. 34-37.

⁵⁷⁷ *WMVW*, ii.15, pp. 89-93

Primi which distinguish between accidental and intentional homicide, and so contributes to the picture of the raging brothers as the unreasonable party.⁵⁷⁸ It is particularly in line with a clause which reads

88.6a: For it is a rule of law that a person who unwittingly commits a wrong shall consciously make amends.

88.6b: He ought however to be the more accorded mercy and compassion at the hands of the dead man's relatives the more we understand that the human race grows sick with the harshness of a cruel fortune and with the melancholy and wretched lamentation of all.⁵⁷⁹

The backbone of this miracle story is likely to have come from Coleman, though the specific wording must be regarded as originating with William, who, Orchard has also shown on several occasions toned down what he considered to be Coleman's overblown rhetoric.⁵⁸⁰ The issue of vengeance as a social and moral problem will be discussed further in chapter five, but this miracle highlights the difficulty of making the ideal of forgiveness work in practice. The intervention of God in the midst of Wulfstan's ineffectual entreaties for peace demonstrated that his appeal to the brothers for reconciliation had divine support. The failure of all verbal methods of persuasion goes to show how ineffective even Wulfstan's reputation and status could be in the face of anyone who had closed themselves off to any suggestion that did not accord with their immediate desires. The miracle demonstrates a conflict between a sense of social honour that demanded violent vengeance against a brother's killer, and the pious ideal of peace and forgiveness that Wulfstan promoted, in a clash of two inflexible moral systems. In the same way as Arcoid emphasises the collective opinion of the crowd in the *Miracula S. Erkenwaldi*, William is at pains to show that the divine punishment of the raging man was immediately apparent to all present, not least his other four brothers who were quick to see that they were all at fault and react accordingly, and that the report subsequently had a wide reaching effect in ensuring that no one dared contradict Wulfstan on the topic of peace again, at least not openly.

The final miracle in the *Vita Wulfstani* that depicts divine punishment for breach of the peace involves a direct entreaty to Wulfstan to mediate in a dispute whilst he was delivering a sermon about peace when dedicating a church at Ratcliffe. A poor man begged Wulfstan to

⁵⁷⁸ *LHP*, 68.7-9, p. 217, 72.1c, p. 229

⁵⁷⁹ *LHP*, 88.6a-6b, ed. Downer, p. 271. 88.6a: *Legis enim est, qui inscieniter peccat, scieniter emendet. 88.6b: Misericordie tamen et amoris tanto propior erga parentes esse debet, quanto genus humanum fortune seuque asperitatibus, lugubri miseroque omnium fletu, nouimus egrotare.*

⁵⁸⁰ Orchard, 'Parallel Lives: Wulfstan, William, Coleman and Christ', p. 43.

restore peace between himself and a certain rich man who had been a priest. The rich man would not agree to settle the dispute, and Wulfstan prophesied his downfall, a prophecy which was later considered to have been fulfilled when the rich man was later defeated and killed by his enemies.⁵⁸¹ William's inclusion of these three episodes suggests that he was worried about a general reluctance to listen to preaching on a topic that conflicted with other social interests and expectations, especially by anyone under the rank of bishop. The miracle involving the madness of one of the five brothers who were bent on revenge suggests that in the right circumstances, in this case when the timely misfortune of an obstinate listener became interpreted as divine vengeance, a preacher could become perceived to be worth listening to through evidence of divine support. With Earnmær's accident and the rich man's defeat and death, the interpretation of divine vengeance must have been made later, with their misfortune being subsequently linked to their refusal to listen to Wulfstan. The thematic similarity between these punitive miracles in the *Vita Wulfstani* suggests that for Coleman and for William, Wulfstan's promotion of peace was an important endeavour and evidence of his sanctity. The fact that the various misfortunes of all three men became causally linked to their refusal to listen to Wulfstan's entreaties for peace, and became considered important to record for that reason, indicates that a reluctance to listen to spiritual instruction on the importance of peace and reconciliation may have been common. As with the presentation of most vengeance miracles involving religious detractors, the victims of divine punishment are depicted as aberrant, among a faithful crowd. The very existence of these warnings, however, speaks to a persistent problem of inattention and indifference, at least in a vocal minority, that monastic preachers and the authors who wrote about them sought to address.

The other issue that the vengeance miracles in the *Vita Wulfstani* address is that of whether monks as well as bishops had the right, or duty, to preach. Canons prohibiting public ministrations by monks appear in the decrees of the Primatial Council of Winchester of 1076 and of the first Lateran Council of 1123.⁵⁸² Wulfstan became bishop well before these decrees were introduced, and William of Malmesbury, probably following Coleman, seeks to present him as justified in preaching as a monk early in his career. The story of Earnmær's punishment for scorning Coleman on the grounds of his status as a monk is constructed to counter an argument that preaching should be the sole preserve of bishops, as is another miracle that struck a monk from overseas called Winrich in Wulfstan's youth, who also objected when Wulfstan

⁵⁸¹ Appendix, 183.

⁵⁸² Whitelock, Brett, and Brooke, *Councils and Synods*, pp. 619, 729.

took it upon himself to preach in Worcester when he perceived that the people were lacking sermons.⁵⁸³ Francesca Tinti has argued that it is unlikely that this objection actually represents the true practicalities of preaching in the first half of the eleventh century, on the grounds that contact between monks and the local population was probably frequent in cathedral towns such as Worcester, that monasticism had played a fundamental role in pastoral care since the earliest English Christianity, and that many priests who took up monastic vows would not have given up their pastoral functions, because otherwise there would have been a void in spiritual provision for the local population.⁵⁸⁴ Significantly, the most prolific Anglo-Saxon homilist, Ælfric, was a monk rather than a bishop. Tinti also suggests that it is significant that it was a foreign monk who objected to Wulfstan's preaching, which may indicate different attitudes towards preaching provision between England and the continent.⁵⁸⁵ The canons of the Primate's Council at Winchester show that such a view had made its way to England by 1076, and the Lateran Canons show that the issue of monks undertaking public ministrations was still live at the time that William of Malmesbury was writing. The role of divine vengeance in these two miracle stories might therefore be seen as an attempt to vindicate Wulfstan and Coleman's preaching activity and provide spiritual justification for it in the face of official prohibition.

In the *Vita Wulfstani*, divine vengeance plays a key role in William's depiction of the way that people were persuaded to accept and pay attention to Wulfstan's preaching. In William's presentation, the monk Winrich was only convinced of his error and became repentant for his criticism of Wulfstan's pastoral endeavours when he had a vision in which he was given a severe cudgelling by God's attendants; the brothers of the man accidentally killed by William the Bald were only persuaded to acquiesce to Wulfstan's entreaties for peace on seeing the madness of the most furious among them; while Earnmær suffered serious injuries whilst going about his work one day, after which, William says, virtually nobody dared to refuse reconciliation when begged in the name of Wulfstan.⁵⁸⁶ Selective hearing such as Earnmær's when it came to deciding when and when not to listen to preachers may not always have had such consequences, but Earnmær happened to have an accident that was subsequently linked to his refusal to listen to Coleman and was interpreted as divine vengeance. It is unclear

⁵⁸³ WMVW, i.8, pp. 35-39.

⁵⁸⁴ Tinti, *Sustaining Belief*, pp. 245-48. On the importance of monks in fulfilling pastoral duties following Æthelwold's reforms, see Christopher Riedel, 'Praising God Together: Monastic Reformers and Laypeople in Tenth-Century Winchester' in *The Catholic Historical Review* 102 (2016) pp. 284-317.

⁵⁸⁵ Tinti, *Sustaining Belief*, p. 246. See also Marjorie Chibnall, 'Monks and Pastoral Work: A Problem in Anglo-Norman History', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 18.2 (1967) p. 165.

⁵⁸⁶ WMVW, i.8, ii.16, pp. 35-39, ii.16, 93-95

whether he made this connection himself, or whether the interpretation was made and spread by the monks of Worcester, or by Coleman himself. In either case, given the unspecified length of time between his offence and punishment, there was likely to have been an examination of the cause of his accident which searched back through his past to identify any offence he may have committed that would make him deserving of divine punishment, and the cause settled on was his refusal to listen to Coleman's preaching.

These miracle stories should perhaps be read as encouragement to the monks of Worcester to emulate their eleventh-century bishop and persevere in their pastoral duties. There is little evidence that veneration for Wulfstan extended more than locally in the early eleventh century, since Coleman's *Life* appears to have been produced for the English-speaking monks at Worcester, and William of Malmesbury's Latin version similarly seems to have been designed to make the text accessible to the Anglo-Norman members of the monastic community at Worcester Cathedral, and survives in only one late-twelfth-century manuscript copy.⁵⁸⁷ Insofar as Wulfstan's vengeance miracles can be considered as any reflection of real life, they should probably be treated in a similar way to Byrhtferth's depiction of the hostility of audiences towards Ecgwine: that is, as hagiographical topoi designed to prove Wulfstan's sanctity by showing him to be enjoying divine support in the face of adversity, but constructed in reaction to something that was considered to be a problem. These were instances of the comeuppance of those who refuted Wulfstan's right to preach and/or ignored his messages about peace that were chosen as an important demonstration of his holiness and were noteworthy enough to be written down. If such objections to the rights of monks to preach in general, and to Wulfstan's messages about peace in particular, can be considered representative of the preaching atmosphere in Worcester in the eleventh and early twelfth century, then this set of vengeance miracles in the *Vita Wulfstani* can probably be interpreted in a similar way to Cuthbert's miracles against women recorded by Symeon of Durham, as supporting a particular need of the local monastic community at a specific time. Both present sets of vengeance miracles that are thematically coherent and apparently unique to contemporary Worcester and Durham respectively; and although they conform to the generalised vengeance miracle category of disrespect shown to a saint followed by punishment, it demonstrates the localised way that this sort of vengeance miracle story could be manifested.

⁵⁸⁷ John Crook, 'The Physical Setting of the Cult of St Wulfstan', in Julia S. Barrow and N.P. Brooks (eds.) *St Wulfstan and His World* (Ashgate, 2005) p. 207. Brooks, 'Introduction: How Do We Know about St Wulfstan?' pp 4-9. Mason, *St Wulfstan of Worcester, c. 1008-1095*, pp. 271-72, 290-91.

FEAST DAYS AND RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES

Refusal to respect a saint's feast day was a common trope of punitive miracles.⁵⁸⁸ Feast days varied according to locality, and were supposed to be celebratory holidays for the local population, but they were sometimes difficult to enforce.⁵⁸⁹ The most common complaint of the authors of miracle narratives with regard to these days was of people, mainly craftsmen and labourers, refusing to set aside their work and join in the feast day celebrations out of respect for the saint in question. This is one area where change can be detected either side of the Norman Conquest. No Anglo-Saxon author in my sample complained of a feast day not being observed, nor recorded any punishment against anyone who refused to cease their work. Ælfric relates the punishments of men who did not properly observe the fasts of Lent and Ash Wednesday, and who mocked St Swithun's demand for candles, but these are connected with general religious practice rather than a specific feast day.⁵⁹⁰ This may be connected to the greater regularisation of the cult of saints from the later eleventh century through documentation, and the way that new Norman communities sought to establish their legitimacy and authority by demonstrating that they enjoyed the support of their local Anglo-Saxon saint, which may have given a greater importance to the observation of feast days by the general populace.⁵⁹¹ Alternatively, it may simply show that the Anglo-Saxons had different priorities with regard to the recording of saints' lives and miracles to their continental neighbours. A book of miracles of St Benedict of c.870, written to promote the cult of Benedict at Fleury, predominantly consists of miracles of punishment and power, including punishments for working on feast days, which may indicate that the absence of records of miracles of this type in England before 1066 corresponded to a peculiarly Anglo-Saxon reticence in hagiographical writing.⁵⁹² *Unrihtweorc* (secular work on Sundays and feast days) appears as an area of episcopal jurisdiction in the reigns of William I (1066-1087) and Henry I (1100-1135), and seems to have been actively policed by some bishops, which does suggest a more rigorous attitude developing towards the correct observation of religious holidays.⁵⁹³

The earliest text in my survey that contains any miracles against people who refused to observe a feast day is the anonymous *Vita et Miracula S. Kenelmi* (1066x1075), about the royal

⁵⁸⁸ Bartlett, *Why Can the Dead Do Such Great Things?* pp. 133-36.

⁵⁸⁹ *Ibid.* p. 406

⁵⁹⁰ Appendix, 31-33, 40.

⁵⁹¹ Ridyard, 'Condigna Veneratio', pp. 205-06.

⁵⁹² Ward, *Miracles and the Medieval Mind*, pp. 43-50.

⁵⁹³ See M. Brett, *The English Church Under Henry I* (Oxford, 1975) pp. 149-50.

child martyr Kenelm entombed at Winchcombe, who was killed by his sister Cwoenthryth in c. 821 in order that she could gain the Mercian kingdom for herself.⁵⁹⁴ The text contains a miracle against Cwoenthryth as punishment for her crime, in which her eyes fell out of their sockets as she read a psalm backwards as a curse; two against men who appropriated Kenelm's land and oppressed his people; and two against people who refused to acknowledge Kenelm's feast day.⁵⁹⁵ All the punishments except Cwoenthryth's appear to be ascribed to the reign of Cnut (1016x1035).⁵⁹⁶ In one, a lady who presided over the village of Pailton refused to allow the village to celebrate Kenelm's feast day with a holiday and lose a day's profit; she suffered the same punishment as Cwoenthryth of both her eyes shooting out of her face, as well as the loss of her oxen which had been yoked to carts but escaped and scattered.⁵⁹⁷ In the second, a blacksmith in Hereford was working on Kenelm's feast day when his hammer and tongs became stuck to his hands, and his assistant's hands became embedded in the wood that he was gripping. The tools became unstuck after prayers were offered, and their fists became unclenched when the monks present had offered lamps to Kenelm.⁵⁹⁸

These stories may have originated before 1066. In the preface to the text, the author offers the name of Wulfwine, who had been a monk of Worcester and pupil of Oswald (d.992) as a source of information, who left a 'memorandum' which may have passed directly to the author or via an intermediary called Ælfwine who was still alive at the time of writing.⁵⁹⁹ There is evidence to suggest that Oswald had revived the cult of Kenelm c.969, though evidence for the maintenance of a cult disappears between 975, when the Winchcombe community was dispersed during the anti-monastic reaction that followed the death of King Edgar, and the abbacy of Godwine, which began in 1043.⁶⁰⁰ Nevertheless, liturgical calendars, service books and litanies show that Kenelm was widely venerated by the early eleventh century.⁶⁰¹ Together, the attestation of witnesses, evidence for earlier commemoration of Kenelm and localisation of many of the stories through specific landscape features and place names suggests that the *Vita et Miracula* may not have been entirely hagiographical fabrication, but could have been based

⁵⁹⁴ *Vita et Miracula S. Kenelmi*, ed. Rosalind C. Love, *Three Eleventh Century Anglo-Latin Saints' Lives: Vita S. Birini, Vita et Miracula S. Kenelmi, Vita S. Rumwoldi* (Oxford, 1996) pp. lxxxix-xci.

⁵⁹⁵ Appendix, 59, 60-61, 62-63.

⁵⁹⁶ See Kenelm, 18-21, pp. 59-63.

⁵⁹⁷ Appendix, 63. This is possibly Pailton in Warwickshire. See *Vita et Miracula S. Kenelmi*, ed. Love, p. 76, note 5.

⁵⁹⁸ Appendix, 62.

⁵⁹⁹ *Vita et Miracula S. Kenelmi*, ed. Love, pp. xciv-xcvi.

⁶⁰⁰ *Ibid.* pp. cxi-cxii

⁶⁰¹ *Ibid.* pp. cxiii-cxvii

on already circulating local legend.⁶⁰² If the origin of the two miracle narratives concerning punishments for working on feast days described here can be dated to the reign of Cnut, then it indicates that this type of miracle may not have been an entirely new feature of the way that divine vengeance was seen to be manifested after 1066 in England, but that vengeance miracles of this type only became considered important to record after the Norman Conquest with the greater formalisation of many cults. Goscelin's *Life of St Wulfsgie of Sherborne*, probably written 1078x1080, contains a miracle very similar to that which struck the blacksmith in the *Vita et Miracula S. Kenelmi*, in which a woman became stuck to her distaff and spindle when she refused to cease spinning on Wulfsgie's feast day;⁶⁰³ a late-eleventh-century collection of the miracles of St Swithun records a miracle of this type for the first time, with the punishment of a man who was pulling up brambles and thorns in a field on the Lord's day;⁶⁰⁴ three of the six punitive miracles in the *Miracula S. Erkenwaldi* (c.1141) are against men who would not lay down their tools on Erkenwald's feast day;⁶⁰⁵ and the *Liber Eliensis* (1169x1177) records the punishments of two officials who prohibited celebration of the feasts of St Æthelthryth and her sister saints.⁶⁰⁶

It is tempting to interpret this type of vengeance miracle as being intended to promote the cult of a saint at a time when it might have been struggling locally. As the examples mentioned above show, they tend to cluster in relation to specific cults. However, they may also have sought to address bigger questions about the spiritual value of participating in the rituals of the cult of saints. Arcoïd's descriptions of Erkenwald's vengeance miracles especially seem designed not only to encourage the participation of Londoners in Erkenwald's cult in the mid twelfth-century, but to defend the rituals of the cult of saints in general against sceptics. One miracle in the *Miracula S. Erkenwaldi*, mentioned in the last chapter, goes into detail about exactly why some members of the laity might choose to ignore Erkenwald's feast day and continue their work, and attests to the existence of both a public and personal level of discourse and disagreement between the clergy and laity with regard to the perceived merits of religious observances such as saints' feast days. The miracle concerning the wretched man who scorned

⁶⁰² Catherine Cubitt, 'Folklore and Historiography: Oral Stories and the Writing of Anglo-Saxon History' in Elizabeth M. Tyler and Ross Balzaretti (eds.) *Narrative and History in the Early Medieval West* (Turnhout, 2006) pp. 190-196.

⁶⁰³ Appendix, 65. For the date and authorship of this text, see Rosalind Love, 'The Life of St Wulfsgie of Sherborne by Goscelin of Saint-Bertin: a new translation with introduction, appendix and notes' in Katherine Barker, David A. Hinton and Alan Hunt (eds.) *St Wulfsgie of Sherborne: Essays to Celebrate the Millenium of the Benedictine Abbey 998-1998* (Oxford, 2005) pp. 98-102.

⁶⁰⁴ Appendix, 95.

⁶⁰⁵ Appendix, 210, 214, 215.

⁶⁰⁶ Appendix, 220, 222.

Erkenwald's feast day by working in the vicinity of Erkenwald's shrine, fell on his head and died, is one of the longest accounts in Arcoid's text.⁶⁰⁷ He relates at length the conversation between the poor man and a minister who happened to be passing in the street. The minister took it upon himself to admonish the man, who could see no benefit to himself in ceasing his lowly work to honour Erkenwald, and obstinately refused to do so. The minister argued that the man was in need of the aid of Erkenwald more than most due to his poverty, emphasised the insult to God of scorning a saint's festival, and warned that if he did not repent he would soon feel the divine justice he deserved. Unmoved, the man retorted that Erkenwald was utterly irrelevant to the daily struggle of earning his livelihood, asserting that he would be a laughing stock if he gave up his work and expected to be fed by Erkenwald, and launched into an angry diatribe against the privileges of the clergy, whose comfortable mode of life he saw as completely disconnected from his own. The poor man is singled out as a lone dissident among crowds of devotees to Erkenwald on this day, and is presented as deranged in his contempt for the saint.

It is impossible to determine whether this miracle story is based on an incident that really happened, but Arcoid evidently thought that the arguments that he attributes to the poor man against showing veneration to Erkenwald were realistic, and felt the need to use the figure of the passing cleric to refute them. E. Gordon Whatley has argued that this miracle is the most demonstrably fictional, or legendary, in Arcoid's text, on the grounds that it lacks any historical context, combines two well-attested hagiographical topoi of divine punishment for illegal work on a feast day and for profaning the saint's shrine itself, and the existence of analogues in two early-twelfth-century miracles of St Benedict, in which a feast breaker insists that he must work in order to eat, and in Gregory of Tours' *Gloria Martyrum*, which has the same structure of a priest admonishing a despoiler of St Nazaire's shrine, who cracks his head and dies as he rides away.⁶⁰⁸ From a theological perspective, he points out that refusing to observe a feast day was more than simply disrespect for a particular saint; physical labour was the biblical punishment for humanity's fall from grace, therefore resting on religious festivals was an anticipation of salvation and a way of affirming devotion to the whole sacramental system.⁶⁰⁹ Gordon Whatley suggests that the poor man's fate, tripping over the skull, is symbolic of his incomprehension

⁶⁰⁷ Appendix, 210.

⁶⁰⁸ Gordon Whatley, 'Opus Dei, Opus Mundi: Patterns of Conflict in a Twelfth-Century Miracle Collection' in Michael G. Sargent (ed.) *De Cella in Seculum: Religious and Secular Life and Devotion in Late Medieval England* (Cambridge, 1989) pp. 85-89.

⁶⁰⁹ *Ibid.* p. 90.

of the divine and the spiritual reasons for observing Erkenwald's holiday, and that Arcoid was addressing not only impious laymen, but also demonstrating to his fellow clerics the validity of the cult of saints in general in the face of increasing intellectual scrutiny of the value of the material aspects of saints' cults, and the growth of heretical movements that rejected them outright.⁶¹⁰

These are compelling arguments. Nevertheless, if Arcoid's intent was to address wider current concerns about the validity of saints' cults and the relevance of the lives of the clergy, he must have had a reason for doing so via the genre of a miracle collection with a heavy emphasis on punishment for the non-participation of Londoners in Erkenwald's cult, rather than a theological treatise of the type of Guibert of Nogent's *On Saints and Their Relics* (c.1125), a tract with a very different tone which on the contrary worries about too enthusiastic veneration of undocumented saints and false relics among the uneducated laity.⁶¹¹ Even with the likelihood that Arcoid drew inspiration from other miracle collections, it suggests that he was seeking to address attitudes that he perceived to be a problem for the cult of Erkenwald at the time that he was writing, especially among this class of labourers. His text attests to the existence of an undercurrent of resentment and resistance towards religious obligations and the clergy who tried to impose their observation, of which the clergy were aware, and suggests that the practical considerations of everyday living could take precedence over participation in religious rituals associated with the cult of saints. As with William of Malmesbury's depiction of Wulfstan berating the grieving, raging brothers who were bent on revenge, it suggests that sometimes laymen on the receiving end of clerical admonishment were not appreciative. Perhaps these dissenters were in the minority, but they were a vocal enough minority to merit attention, and the vengeance miracle accounts that deal with them seem to be designed to demonstrate their error through evidence of the judgement of God.

Other than outright derision for the value of devotion to saints and celebration of their feast days, the other kind of disrespect shown to saints which was often divinely punished was mockery of saints and rituals of veneration, usually by low status laymen. One example of this is the miracle in Ælfric's *Life of St Swithun* mentioned in the last chapter, in which Swithun punished a foolish man who pretended to be Swithun and loudly demanded candles in a parody of the expectation that the faithful would honour a saint's shrine with this type of gift.⁶¹² A

⁶¹⁰ Ibid. p. 91-95.

⁶¹¹ Guibert of Nogent, *On Saints and Their Relics*, ed. T. Head, *Medieval Hagiography: An Anthology* (New York and London, 2000) p. 415.

⁶¹² Appendix, 40.

similar miracle occurs in the *Miracula S. Erkenwaldi*, when a silversmith called Eustace mocked Erkenwald by lying in the coffin that was being made to go into the saint's new reliquary which was then under construction, and bawling out demands for gifts, then became struck with great pain and died within a few days.⁶¹³ Such similarity suggests that what we are seeing is a motif of the type common in folk-tales, of a stock character and/or situation, preserved in social memory, finding repeated expression in different stories.⁶¹⁴ The miracle against the youth in the *Vita Wulfstani* who performed an obscene replication of the process of signing children with mud and incantations is another example of the punishment of irreverent mockery.⁶¹⁵ This does not devalue the meaning of these stories, or mean that each story was not based on something that actually happened; rather, it suggests that Ælfric, Arcoid and William of Malmesbury all considered the motif of the mocking impersonator of a saint to be a realistic scenario and to have a meaningful place in their texts. The actions of the victims of these punishment miracles fundamentally question the value of the material and ritual aspects of religion, which would explain why ecclesiastical authors keen to promote participation in religious observances and encourage continued donations to a shrine would seek to shore up the credibility of a saint by narrating their punishments. The fact that this type of story was considered worth recording by different authors across the period from the late tenth to the mid-twelfth century suggests that this type of irreverence was considered to be a persistent problem, though each author puts a different rhetorical spin on their tale, which can reveal something of the type of attitudes that they were seeking to combat.

Ælfric uses the foolish man's punishment as the basis for criticising what he considered to be inappropriate jollity at funerals and a general lack of respect for what should be a solemn occasion. Arcoid gives an extended commentary to explain that the reason Eustace was punished in this way was because he had 'stubbornly scorned the miracles and sanctity of Erkenwald, and he had thereby provoked the agent of secret justice to strike him deep inside.'⁶¹⁶ William of Malmesbury is the most sympathetic to the victim in displaying his own conclusion that the youth's death was the result of divine vengeance, perhaps because he died in spite of a blessing from Wulfstan.⁶¹⁷ All the victims are portrayed as foolish, reckless and thoughtless rather than malicious in their actions, and it may also be significant that all the mockers

⁶¹³ Arcoid, *MSE*, 10, pp. 143-45.

⁶¹⁴ See James Fentress and Chris Wickham, *Social Memory* (Oxford, 1992) pp. 59-71, 150.

⁶¹⁵ *WMVD*, ii.14, pp. 87-89.

⁶¹⁶ Arcoid, *MSE*, 10, pp. 142-45. 'Nimirum erkenwaldi miracula eiusdemque sanctitatem pertinaciter spreuerat, unde secreti iudicii rimatorem ad percutiendum penitus animarat.'

⁶¹⁷ Appendix, 179.

received, if not encouragement from those around them, at least the laughter of a willing audience. Their irreverence does not seem to have been immediately regarded as a problem by the majority of onlookers, who were able to recognise and appreciate the ridiculous in the religious rituals that they took part in, much like modern satire. This does not necessarily have to indicate a deliberate stance of opposition or malice towards those rituals, but could simply be a release of feelings.⁶¹⁸ Taken together, they give the impression that many people took a more light-hearted approach to religion than sermonising ideologues would have liked.

This irreverence seems to have extended to other religious observances. Ælfric is the only author to complain of men not observing Lent properly, but this may be down to difference in genre rather than later authors not sharing his concerns. Ælfric's homilies continued to be copied and circulated through to the thirteenth century, which indicates the continued relevance of his ideas to subsequent generations, and their continuing to fulfil a function of addressing general pastoral issues, while hagiographers concentrated on the problem of inadequate devotion to particular saints.⁶¹⁹ Ælfric's homily for Ash Wednesday perhaps best illustrates his rhetorical purpose of exhorting his audience to correct behaviour. He reserves commentary on what he sees as social problems for the most contemporary miracle stories, perhaps because demonstrating the intrusion of divine vengeance into familiar scenarios may have more forcefully grabbed his audience's attention. The first man who would not acknowledge Ash Wednesday and was killed whilst riding in the woods died 'because he had refused those few ashes', which emphasises how easy it would have been for him to make the proper observances and avoid such harsh consequences.⁶²⁰ The characterisation of the other men who did not observe the Lenten fast properly as a 'buffoon' (*truð*) and a 'fool' (*dysiga*) again emphasises how easily their punishment could have been avoided had they been less impulsive.⁶²¹ Presumably such irreverence was common enough that Ælfric felt it needed to be combatted through warnings of this type.

The proliferation of vengeance miracles against those who scorned a saint's feast day, who disrespected a saint through mockery, or who refused to participate in other religious observances, suggests that irreverence and religious indifference were commonplace. It also suggests that the people who are recorded as having met with divine punishment for their impious actions did not anticipate God's wrath; they seem to have thought that they would get

⁶¹⁸ R.W. Southern, *The Making of the Middle Ages* (Yale, 1953) p. 149.

⁶¹⁹ Treharne, 'Readers of Ælfric'.

⁶²⁰ Appendix, 31. 'þæs ðe he forsoc þa feawa axan.'

⁶²¹ Appendix, 32-33.

away with it in the same way as plunderers of monasteries. This suggests that the possibility of divine vengeance was something that was not often close to the majority of people's consciousness, and lends further support to the conclusion that an individual misfortune could only become interpreted as divine vengeance if the circumstances lent themselves to it. The Norman Conquest marks a clear divide between the level of importance that Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Norman authors placed on the observation of saints' feast days, at least in terms of the importance of miracles against those who scorned feast days being written down. Even then, this type of miracle tended to cluster in association with certain saints. Less of a division can be seen, however, in vengeance miracles involving mockery of a saint or other religious observances not being taken seriously, where the same types of scenario were recorded in both the tenth and twelfth centuries, and where Old English homiletic texts continued to be read and copied this suggests that the same types of issues continued to be considered important. Perhaps the lone dissenters who are usually depicted as the target of this type of vengeance miracle were not so lone after all.

MONASTIC AND CLERICAL NEGLIGENCE

About a third of the vengeance miracles against monks and members of the clergy in my survey were for negligence in adherence to their vows, or for inappropriate behaviour.⁶²² Gregory the Great's *Dialogues* (593) seem to have been influential as a model for constructions of this type of miracle story. Originally written in Latin at the end of the sixth century, they were translated into Old English in the late ninth century by Bishop Wærferth of Worcester as part of King Alfred's literacy programme, and continued to circulate in both languages.⁶²³ There are eleven vengeance miracles that appear in both the Latin and Old English versions, seven of which involve the transgressions of monks and members of the clergy, for offences including jealousy, murderous intent, discontent and heresy, which appear to have provided models for later authors writing their own vengeance miracle stories. This affects the way that we should read these later stories. Where a story can be identified as being similar to an earlier model, the existence of that model does not devalue the later story as evidence for the way that divine vengeance was observed in the world, but it should be taken into account as perhaps

⁶²² See fig. 3, Chapter 3.

⁶²³ See Chapter 1.

being a reason for the later story being chosen for recording; patristic authority for a similar occurrence would have lent credibility to the later record. Of course, not all stories of vengeance miracles that struck monks and members of the clergy can be traced to a patristic model, but it is significant that several do, and that different aspects of Gregory's *Dialogues* were picked up on at different times to support different moral agendas. A significant change in the character of vengeance miracles against monks and clergy corresponds with evolving religious ideals, specifically associated with the (Benedictine) reform movement of the tenth century and the Gregorian reform movement of the later eleventh century.

In the tenth and early eleventh century, an interest in the miracles of St Benedict, as recorded by Gregory, seems to have influenced the character of vengeance miracles that were recorded, especially in association with the leaders of the Benedictine reform movement. The Latin version of Gregory's *Dialogues* record how St Sabinus's archdeacon was impatient to take Sabinus's place as bishop of Canosa, plotted to poison the saint, and died.⁶²⁴ Ælfric follows Gregory in his *Catholic Homilies* in describing how an envious priest tried to kill St Benedict with a poisoned loaf and was killed by a collapsing balcony.⁶²⁵ Wulfstan of Winchester, writing in the early eleventh century, narrates how some envious monks tried to poison St Æthelwold and were sent into exile.⁶²⁶ Interestingly, Ælfric does not record these monks' punishment of exile in his own, shorter, *Life of Æthelwold*, merely that Æthelwold drank the poison but was not harmed.⁶²⁷ Ælfric included the *Life* of St Benedict in his *Catholic Homilies* presumably in order to make the story accessible to a wide audience, and Wulfstan may have been attempting to align Æthelwold with the popular founder of Benedictine monasticism, the rule of which was the foundation for the reform movement that Æthelwold set in motion at Winchester from 963.⁶²⁸ It is therefore strange that Wulfstan chose to emphasise the divine punishment of the monks who attempted to poison Æthelwold where Ælfric did not.

From the later eleventh century, the focus of vengeance miracle stories that affected monks and clergy shifted to tackle the problem of clerical celibacy and purity, which

⁶²⁴ Gregory, *Dialogues*, 3.5, ed. Zimmerman, pp. 118-19.

⁶²⁵ Appendix, 2, 22. See 'The Sources of Catholic Homily 2.11 (C.B.1.2.12)', *Fontes Anglo-Saxonici*, http://fontes.english.ox.ac.uk/data/content/astexts/title_sources.asp?refer=C.B.1.2.12&flag=1&pagesize=All [accessed 14.08.2018]

⁶²⁶ Appendix, 55.

⁶²⁷ See Ælfric's *Life of Æthelwold*, 15, ed. Michael Winterbottom, *Three Lives of English Saints* (Toronto, 1972) pp. 23-24.

⁶²⁸ H.R. Loyn, *The English Church, 940-1154* (Harlow, 2000) pp. 12-14.

corresponds with the preoccupations of the late eleventh-century Gregorian reform movement, associated with Pope Gregory VII (1073-85).⁶²⁹ Interestingly, there are only two miracles in my survey that record punishments for simony, the other major concern of the reform movement. One is the miracle of St Edmund against Bishop Herfast for attempting to impose his authority over Edmund's abbey mentioned in chapter three.⁶³⁰ The other is recorded by Symeon of Durham, who says that one Eadred, a clerk of Durham, had purchased the bishopric from King Harthacnut (r. 1035-1042) using money from the church's treasure, and subsequently died in his tenth month as bishop, seized by a sudden infirmity one day as he was about to enter the church.⁶³¹ This is clearly Symeon's retrospective interpretation of Eadred's death. The lapse of ten months between his purchasing the bishopric and his divinely decreed death recalls Eadmer's construction of the death of King William Rufus, in which one year the king was heard boasting that he would not bow to the authority of any archbishop, and the next met his death in a hunting accident.⁶³² The spatial element of Eadred's death, with his infirmity occurring at the door of the church, also recalls Symeon's treatment of Cuthbert's miracles against women who attempted to approach the saint's shrine, which all involve punishment striking the women at the boundary of Cuthbert's cemetery, and a miracle in the *Historia de Sancto Cuthberto*, in which a heathen called Onlafbald was transfixed at the door of the church and died.⁶³³ Perhaps Symeon was attempting to establish a historical precedent for divine vengeance for simony in the same way as he tried to demonstrate continuity of Cuthbert's prohibition of women from his shrine by using a story first recorded by Bede, about how a fire destroyed the monastery of Coldingham as punishment for the improper behaviour of the monks and nuns there, as a basis for explaining the twelfth-century prohibition of women from Cuthbert's tomb, the only precedent for which is found in a miracle relating to the hermit Martin in Gregory's *Dialogues*.⁶³⁴

In addition to this, from the later eleventh century my survey also contains miracles against a priest, a cardinal and a nun all guilty of not observing proper chastity.⁶³⁵ These punishments for the sexual indiscretions of members of the clergy are new in the later eleventh

⁶²⁹ See Jennifer Thibodeaux, *The Manly Priest: Clerical Celibacy, Masculinity, and Reform in England and Normandy, 1066-1300* (Philadelphia, 2015) pp. 1-13, 152-53.

⁶³⁰ Appendix, 87.

⁶³¹ Appendix, 104.

⁶³² See Chapter 2.

⁶³³ Appendix, 53, 99, 100, 106. See also William M. Aird, 'The Boundaries of Medieval Misogyny: Gendered Urban Space in Medieval Durham', pp. 50-62.

⁶³⁴ Appendix, 98

⁶³⁵ Appendix, 105, 172, 192.

and twelfth centuries. It is interesting that vengeance miracles only appear in this context at this time because clerical chastity was a concern of the tenth-century reformers as well as the eleventh.⁶³⁶ There is earlier evidence for concern over the sexual behaviour of lay people, with one miracle in the Old English *Dialogues* of Gregory the Great and one recorded by Ælfric against lay people who engaged in sexual activity at what were considered to be the improper times, which may reflect Ælfric's own high moral standards and his advocacy for monastic values to be extended into the wider Christian community, but there are no later miracles punishing lay people for this type of behaviour.⁶³⁷ Even though the numbers of miracles of this type are small, they do therefore correspond with growing concerns over clerical purity associated with the Gregorian reform movement, in connection with its aims of creating a separation between the lives of the clergy and the rest of society through a ban on clerical marriage and simony, in a struggle between the values of monastic reformers and members of the secular clergy.⁶³⁸ There was strong resistance to the idea that clerics should remain celibate and enforcement proved a challenge.⁶³⁹ This type of vengeance miracle story therefore seems to have been designed to prove that God was on the reformers' side.

More generally, vengeance miracles are periodically reported against negligent monks, or monks who struggled to maintain the rigour of the monastic life, and seem designed both to provide warnings to monks who did not properly uphold their vows through evidence of God's punishment of transgressors, and reminders of the spiritual value of the monastic life. Sometimes this was with regard to the monks' duty of properly honouring the patron saint of their foundation. Punishment in this case could take the form of mild admonishment, such as in Goscelin's account of a clerk who fell asleep in front of St Mildrith's tomb being dealt a great slap by the saint.⁶⁴⁰ On other occasions, the admonishment was intended to have a collective, spiritual impact. Lantfred's *Translatio et Miracula S. Swithuni* (972x974) records that so many miracles occurred at Swithun's tomb at Winchester that the monks had grown lazy in praising each and every one of them, as they were reluctant to rise multiple times in the night. In a convoluted chain of communication, Lantfred says that Swithun appeared to a lady

⁶³⁶ Barrow, 'Ideas and Applications of Reform', pp. 345-62.

⁶³⁷ Appendix, 1, 31. Joyce Hill, 'Ælfric: His Life and Works', in *A Companion to Ælfric*, ed. Hugh Magennis and Mary Swan (Leiden, 2009) p. 64.

⁶³⁸ See the decrees against clerical marriage made at the Primatial Council at Winchester of 1076 (canon 1), the Council at Westminster of 1102 (canon 5) and the Primatial Council at London of 1108 (canon 1) in Whitelock, Brett, and Brooke, *Councils and Synods, with Other Documents Relating to the English Church*, pp. 619, 675, 700. Colin Morris, *The Papal Monarchy* (Oxford, 1989) pp. 98-108. Thibodeaux, *The Manly Priest*, pp. 7-11.

⁶³⁹ Thomas, *The Secular Clergy in England, 1066-1216*, pp. 156-86.

⁶⁴⁰ Appendix, 79.

and instructed her to tell bishop Æthelwold to command the monks not to stop praising God on every occasion a sick person was healed, or else miracles should cease and they should experience the wrath of God for their ungrateful behaviour.⁶⁴¹ It is unclear which prospect was the more frightening. Ælfric records the same miracle in his *Life of St Swithun*, only in his telling, Swithun appears to a certain good man, rather than a lady.⁶⁴² The switch was probably a deliberate choice by Ælfric since it fits with his omission of all but one of the nine miracles performed for women in Lantfred's text, and the broader focus on specifically male contexts of the Benedictine reform movement, and possibly represents a reluctance to associate bishop Æthelwold with a woman.⁶⁴³ In Ælfric's construction of the miracle, the chain of communication through Swithun to Æthelwold lends divine support to the aims of the Benedictine reform movement in promoting Christian devotion and obedience.⁶⁴⁴ Ælfric presents Swithun's miracles as a divinely sent reward for the Benedictine reform movement at Winchester, set in motion by Æthelwold, therefore a cessation of miracles would become a sign that any loss of momentum in reform was not acceptable to God.⁶⁴⁵ The point of the threatening story remains the same, however, that great importance was placed on the monks frequently and publically praising Swithun's miracles in the church, in the presence of the laity gathered.⁶⁴⁶

Other serious misdemeanours seem to have been neglect in upholding monastic vows and appropriate monastic behaviour. Where Lantfred and Ælfric show a hint of sympathy for the sleep-deprived monks of Winchester, Osbern of Canterbury in his *Vita et Translatio S. Elphegi* (after 1080), is venomous in describing the scandalous behaviour of some of the monks at Canterbury, accusing them of being forgetful of their faith and profession and plotting how they might embark again on the ways of the world, through purloining food, engaging in drunkenness and lechery, and devoting themselves to everything dishonourable.⁶⁴⁷ God's punishment is also much harsher and more fearful in this case. One of the guilty men died, and the night following his burial, Ælfheah had a vivid and distressing vision of the monk's soul in

⁶⁴¹ Lantfred, *Translatio et Miracula S. Swithuni*, ed. Michael Lapidge, *Winchester Studies 4.ii: The Anglo-Saxon Minsters of Winchester: The Cult of St Swithun* (Oxford, 2003) pp. 293-97.

⁶⁴² Appendix, 15, 39.

⁶⁴³ See Elaine Treharne, 'Ælfric's Account of St Swithun: Literature of Reform and Reward' in Elizabeth M. Tyler and Ross Balzaretto (eds.) *Narrative and History in the Early Medieval West* (Turnhout, 2006) p. 178.

⁶⁴⁴ Treharne, 'Ælfric's Account of St Swithun', p. 185.

⁶⁴⁵ Treharne, 'Ælfric's Account of St Swithun', pp. 187-88, Elaine Treharne, 'The Invisible Woman: Ælfric and His Subject Female' in *Leeds Studies in English* 37 (2006) p. 199.

⁶⁴⁶ Christopher Riedel, 'Praising God Together: Monastic Reformers and Laypeople in Tenth-Century Winchester' in *The Catholic Historical Review* 102 (2016) pp. 305-15.

⁶⁴⁷ Appendix, 68. On the dating of the *Vita S. Elphegi*, see Rubenstein, 'The Life and Writings of Osbern of Canterbury' p. 35.

torment. When he related it to the others in the morning, Osbern says that the dead monk's companions became so terrified that they confessed their error and begged to be punished so that they should not remain under the shadow of divine punishment to come.⁶⁴⁸ This narrative is likely predominantly imaginative rhetoric by Osbern, since there is no earlier record relating to Ælfheah's cult in any detail, and the offences he accuses the monks of are generic and formulaic.⁶⁴⁹ Nevertheless, it would appear that in many cases maintaining the monastic life for its own sake took more willpower than was possessed by all but the saintly, and belief in the value of that life needed to be shored up by reminders of God's power.

It is also significant that monks and clergy were more likely than any other group to experience divine vengeance in the form of a visionary rebuke.⁶⁵⁰ This may reflect the spiritual sensitivity of monastic and clerical circles, because unless these stories were simply invented, divine vengeance involving visions had to be experienced and reported personally rather than being an interpretation made by observers. It must be noted though that a high proportion of these visionary rebukes appear in William of Malmesbury's saints' lives which were written for monastic audiences, and indeed that there is a dramatic increase in reports of this kind from the later eleventh century, which may correspond with an increasing concern about individual sin and personal penance.⁶⁵¹ Lantfred's and Ælfric's reports of the vision of St Swithun that threatened a cessation of miracles if the monks of Winchester did not start praising Swithun more enthusiastically is in response to the collective guilt of the community, as is St Ælfheah's vision of the torment after death of one of the monks of Canterbury who had been behaving scandalously. After this, all reported visions are experienced by a monk or clergyman in response to a sin that they themselves had committed, which suggests that this type of visionary experience was increasingly accepted as a form that divine vengeance could take, or at least that it was increasingly taken seriously by monastic authors and audiences.

There are a variety of other vengeance miracles against monks and members of the clergy in my survey that do not fit into these themes, such as the abbot who disrespected Archbishop Anselm, fell off his horse and found himself dragged along by the stirrups;⁶⁵² Archbishop William of Canterbury whose death was predicted within a year from his blessing Stephen as king;⁶⁵³ or the monk called Nicholas who ignored St Wulfstan's orders against

⁶⁴⁸ Osbern, *Vita S. Alphegi*, pp. 124-25

⁶⁴⁹ On Osbern's creative licence, see Rubenstein, 'The Life and Writings of Osbern of Canterbury', p. 36.

⁶⁵⁰ See Chapter 3, fig. 6.

⁶⁵¹ See Chapter 1. Appendix, 178, 185, 202, 205-06.

⁶⁵² Appendix, 94.

⁶⁵³ Appendix, 174.

drinking when an attack was anticipated and was assailed with fearful dreams.⁶⁵⁴ All of these are circumstantial and reflect the personal prejudices of Eadmer, who sought to prove Anselm's sanctity in the face of opposition, Henry of Huntingdon, who was critical of Stephen's succession, and perhaps Coleman, who it has been suggested was jealous of Nicholas's closeness to Wulfstan.⁶⁵⁵ Amongst these more idiosyncratic stories however, there are trends that can be detected in the types of vengeance miracle against monks and clergy that were recorded, which were frequently based on earlier models, but also reflected changing concerns about ideal standards of behaviour, particularly in line with the Gregorian reform movement's emphasis on clerical chastity, and, to a lesser extent, criticism of simony. Discontent among monks and neglect in upholding their duties seem to have been more consistent problems that stories of divine vengeance sought to tackle, while reports of visionary rebukes for specific individual sins seemingly increased in importance. The proliferation of miracles against monks and members of the clergy demonstrates the gap between ideal behaviour and actual behaviour on the part of those in religious orders; just as with lay people, levels of piety and devotion varied between individuals, and stories of divine punishment for less than ideal behaviour must have been intended to support the spiritual value of the ideals that those who wrote them sought to promote.

DIVINE VENGEANCE AND POLITICS

Occasionally, statements about divine vengeance were used as rhetorical tools in descriptions of disputes between secular and ecclesiastical authorities, especially where a saint was involved. Two stand-out examples in my survey are B's treatment of St Dunstan's fallings out with Kings Æthelstan, Edmund and Eadwig in the tenth century due to his being maligned by backbiters at court, and Eadmer's depiction of Anselm's dispute with Kings William Rufus and Henry I over the issues of the primacy of the archiepiscopate of Canterbury and lay investiture. B's *Vita S. Dunstani* (997x1002) and Eadmer's *Historia Novorum in Anglia* (1109x1125) both depict saints who were closely involved with royal political circles and show how the divine punishment of those who opposed a saint in a political context could be worked into a hagiographical narrative for rhetorical effect. Eadmer's inclusion of letters sent during

⁶⁵⁴ Appendix, 184.

⁶⁵⁵ Mason, *St Wulfstan of Worcester, c. 1008-1095*, p. 219; Orchard, 'Parallel Lives: Wulfstan, William, Coleman and Christ', p. 45.

Anselm's clash with Henry I over lay investiture also shows how warnings about divine vengeance could be actively used in support of an argument, even when the threat of divine vengeance was not fulfilled. Both narratives involve the exile of the saint in question, followed by the divine punishment of the opposing king, or a threat of divine punishment; Dunstan was ejected from the Anglo-Saxon court three times, the second time followed by the near death of King Edmund and the third by the death of King Eadwig, while Anselm retreated from England twice, with William Rufus dying during his first stint abroad, and Henry warned of divine vengeance during his second. The main difference between Dunstan and Anselm is therefore the nature and context of their disputes with the kings in question. B attributes Dunstan's expulsions to the jealousy of other members of the court and is vague on the exact reasons, whereas Anselm's cause is much more clearly defined as part of a wider concern over the correct relationship between church and state. It is not implausible that Eadmer was seeking to align Anselm with his saintly predecessor as archbishop; Eadmer had also written a number of *Lives* of the Canterbury saints, including St Dunstan, and this may have had an influence on his presentation of Anselm.⁶⁵⁶

The only pre-conquest text in my survey that brings divine vengeance into descriptions of political disputes is B's *Vita S. Dunstani*. Dunstan was of high birth and wielded increasing political influence during the reigns of Æthelstan (924-939), Edmund (939-946), Eadred (946-955), Eadwig (955-957), Edgar (959-975), Edward (975-978), and the first decade of Æthelred's reign (978-1016) until he died in 988.⁶⁵⁷ His earliest hagiographer, an author known only as B, has little to say about Dunstan's career after 960, when he was appointed Archbishop of Canterbury, but his portrait of Dunstan's career until that time is of a man whose high-minded piety earned him a significant number of enemies among his compatriots. On three occasions, Dunstan found himself summarily ejected from court, the last two of which resulted in the kings who ordered his expulsion being subjected to divine vengeance. The first time Dunstan was ejected, during the reign of Æthelstan (924-939), B says that backbiters at court, including his own kinsmen, had become riled by his piety and favoured position and spread malice; they brought false charges against him to the king and won his banishment. The humiliated Dunstan was thrown into a stinking marsh, but B reports no punishment for the perpetrators in this instance, and Dunstan talked his way back into favour.⁶⁵⁸ Perhaps in this

⁶⁵⁶ On Eadmer's career, see J.C. Rubenstein, 'Eadmer [Edmer] of Canterbury (b.c. 1060, d. in or after 1126)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2004) <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/8383> [accessed 11.09.2018]

⁶⁵⁷ On Dunstan's career, see *The Early Lives of Dunstan*, ed. Winterbottom and Lapidge, pp. xiii-lxiii.

⁶⁵⁸ B, *VSD*, 5-6, pp. 16-25.

instance B knew of no subsequent misfortune that happened to any of the perpetrators that could then be interpreted as divine vengeance. The second time Dunstan was expelled resulted in the miracle mentioned in the previous chapter, which describes King Edmund's brush with death as he chased a stag towards a precipice whilst out hunting one day at Cheddar.⁶⁵⁹ Once again, B attributes Dunstan's expulsion to the malicious influence of backbiters at court, who were jealous of the prominent position Edmund had given Dunstan among his royal magnates on his accession in 939 and spread such malice that the king, in a towering rage, ordered Dunstan to be stripped of his rank and expelled from court. Edmund's near death resulted in him recalling Dunstan and instating him as abbot of Glastonbury.⁶⁶⁰

The third time that Dunstan was banished from court was during the reign of Eadwig (955-57). In B's narrative, when Eadwig left his own coronation celebrations to lie with his consort Ælfgifu and her mother Æthelgifu, Dunstan forcefully separated the king from the two women and brought him back to the gathering.⁶⁶¹ This aroused the fury of Ælfgifu and from then on she persecuted Dunstan, influencing the king and even some of Dunstan's young pupils, confiscated his rank and properties and forced his withdrawal into exile in Flanders.⁶⁶² Divine vengeance took longer to act in this instance; Dunstan remained in exile until, in 957, B says that Eadwig was abandoned by the people north of the Thames for his imprudent rule, and the kingdom was divided between him and his brother Edgar.⁶⁶³ Soon, however, Eadwig 'breathed his last, dying a wretched death because he had gone astray and forsaken the just judgments of God', after which Edgar took over both kingdoms, gave back to Dunstan the abbacy of Glastonbury and made amends to other people whom Eadwig had pillaged.⁶⁶⁴ Michael Winterbottom and Michael Lapidge have argued that there was much more complexity to the political rivalries that led to Dunstan's exile in this last instance than B let on, to do with his particular closeness to King Eadred (953-55), who had preceded Eadwig, and Eadwig's subsequent redistribution of royal property.⁶⁶⁵ B's demonization of Ælfgifu as responsible for forcing Dunstan's last exile fits better thematically with his overall narrative structure, however. By employing the same trope on three occasions, of Dunstan uniquely enjoying God's favour amidst a tide of adversity, B is creating an image of sanctity separate from the

⁶⁵⁹ Appendix, 48.

⁶⁶⁰ B, *VSD*, 13-14, pp. 43-51.

⁶⁶¹ B, *VSD*, 21, pp. 66-69.

⁶⁶² B, *VSD*, 22, pp. 68-71.

⁶⁶³ B, *VSD*, 23-24, pp. 70-77. 24.3, p. 76: 'Interea germanus eiusdem Eadgar, quia iusta Dei sui iudicia deuiando dereliquit, nouissimum flatum misera morte expirauit.'

⁶⁶⁴ B, *VSD*, 24, pp. 75-77.

⁶⁶⁵ *The Early Lives of Dunstan*, ed. Winterbottom and Lapidge, p. xxx-xxxiii.

intricacies of political disagreements. This makes the first time Dunstan was thrown out of court, which does not employ the divine vengeance trope, particularly interesting.

In both cases where B describes divine punishment at work, it is the king who bears the brunt of it, even though it is others at court who initially stir up hatred against Dunstan. This may be a symptom of the special duty of the king in promoting the spiritual health of the nation, a duty which, by expelling the spiritual leader Dunstan, Edmund and Eadwig were not fulfilling. At the time B was writing, 997x1002, the sense that the English were being divinely punished for their sins in the form of relentless viking invasions was developing, and the role of the king in both causing such misfortune and bringing the nation back into God's favour was being articulated in texts such as Ælfric's *De Duodecim Abusivis*, in which one of the longest sections is dedicated to the unjust king.⁶⁶⁶ This background may be a factor behind B's description of Eadwig's death, which he presents as divinely ordained not only for his treatment of Dunstan, but also for his own generally poor conduct as king. The progression from no divine punishment to the death of a king being attributed to divine vengeance might also reflect Dunstan's progression in status, from a member of a high-ranking family, to being numbered among Edmund's chosen royal magnates, to being appointed as abbot of Glastonbury.⁶⁶⁷ God allowed Edmund to escape punishment for his treatment of Dunstan as his magnate, but did not allow Eadwig to get away with his treatment of Dunstan as abbot. It is also interesting that in none of Dunstan's three expulsions does B describe any specific arguments or disagreements between Dunstan and the kings that led to his ejection. Instead, B presents a generalised picture of Dunstan's holiness that aroused the jealousy of those around him. This is in contrast to the way that Eadmer later presents the disputes between Archbishop Anselm and King's William Rufus and Henry I, set against Anselm's vision of securing the primacy of the archbishopric of Canterbury over all of Britain, and the investiture controversy associated with the Gregorian reform movement.⁶⁶⁸

I have already discussed the way that King William Rufus's sudden death in 1100 was widely (and swiftly) considered to be divine vengeance for his impious rule.⁶⁶⁹ Eadmer's

⁶⁶⁶ On the dating of the *VSD*, see *ibid.* p. lxiv. On the interpretation of the viking invasions as divine vengeance, and the role of the king. See above, Chapter 2.

⁶⁶⁷ B, *VSD*, 1-5, 13, 14, pp. 2-21, 42-51.

⁶⁶⁸ On Anselm's vision for the archbishopric and progress towards securing his aims, see Sally N. Vaughn, 'St Anselm of Canterbury: the philosopher-saint as politician', *Journal of Medieval History* 1.3 (1975) pp. 279-305, and Sally N. Vaughn, 'St Anselm and the English investiture controversy reconsidered', *Journal of Medieval History* 6.1 (1980) pp. 61-86. On the Papal reform movement and the question of investiture, see Colin Morris, *The Papal Monarchy*, pp. 154-73.

⁶⁶⁹ See Chapter 2.

depiction of William's death within the framework of divine vengeance is inseparable from the context of the ongoing investiture controversy between church and state, and the specific rights of Canterbury. Anselm's exile in 1097 was precipitated by his quarrel with William over Canterbury's military obligations, and it was during this period of exile that he attended the councils of Bari in 1098 and Rome in 1099, where he personally heard Pope Paschal's prohibition of lay investiture and homage.⁶⁷⁰ The timing of William's death, which occurred whilst Anselm was still in exile with their conflict over the rights of Canterbury unresolved, undoubtedly contributed to Eadmer's depiction of it within the framework of divine vengeance. When William's brother, Henry I (1100-1135), acceded to the throne, the specific issues of lay investiture and homage were brought to the fore; when Henry invited Anselm back to England, Anselm adhered to the strictures of the papal councils and refused to consecrate bishops who had received royal investiture, and refused to do homage to Henry himself.⁶⁷¹ This created a whole new conflict between Anselm and Henry over the relative rights of church and state over investiture, which once again sent Anselm into exile in 1103. Eadmer does not report any divine vengeance against Henry, probably because Anselm managed to secure a compromise between Henry and the Pope that was ratified in 1107. However, Eadmer records the communications between the three men in unusual detail, and his description of the progress of their dispute is important because of the way that it shows threats of divine vengeance, supported by the evidence of William Rufus's divine punishment for having exploited Church property and opposed Anselm, being employed as an active rhetorical tool to attempt to persuade Henry to capitulate to papal decrees and relinquish his powers of investiture.⁶⁷²

Eadmer records a group of letters dispatched over the course of the dispute, mainly between Henry, Anselm and Pope Paschal II, of which three are of interest because of the way that they invoke threats of divine vengeance against those who opposed Anselm: from Pope Paschal II (1099-1118) to King Henry, from Paschal to Anselm, and from Anselm to Henry's advisor Count Robert of Meulan.⁶⁷³ Though Eadmer only includes letters whose content contributed to his own presentation of the rightness of Anselm's cause, their rhetorical structure can reveal something of the kinds of arguments that those who supported the total ban on lay

⁶⁷⁰ Morris, *The Papal Monarchy*, p. 157; Christopher Harper-Bill, 'The Anglo-Norman Church', p 175.

⁶⁷¹ *Eadmeri Historia*, pp. 119-20. Translation from Eadmer, *HRE*, pp. 124-25. Sally N. Vaughn, 'St Anselm and the English Investiture Controversy Reconsidered', pp. 63-69; Morris, *The Papal Monarchy*, pp. 157-58.

⁶⁷² Richard Southern has called William Rufus 'the most secular ruler' of all medieval English kings because of his attitude towards the church. See R.W. Southern, *Saint Anselm and His Biographer: A Study of Monastic Life and Thought* (Cambridge, 1963) p. 142-145.

⁶⁷³ *Eadmeri Historia*, pp. 134-35, 149-51, 170-71. Translation from Eadmer, *HRE*, pp. 141-42, 158-60, 182-83.

investiture thought or hoped would be effective in persuading their opponents. The letter from Paschal to King Henry was written in 1101/1102 after both Henry and Anselm had sent representatives to Rome to explain their position.⁶⁷⁴ It places most emphasis on the futility of any kind of secular strength in the face of God's wrath, if it is deserved, and contains an explicit threat of divine vengeance against Henry, showing an anticipation of God's wrath that is different from the way that contemporary historians read it back into events after the fact. Paschal reminds Henry that he reigns through God, praises him for having 'departed from the impiety of the King, your Brother (William Rufus), which as you see, has been terribly punished by the judgement of God', warns him to avoid the counsel of 'men of perverse mind who are trying through investitures of bishops and abbots to make the heart of the King deserving of the wrath of God', and goes on to insist that 'if [...] you (Henry) offend Him, no devices of your nobles, no support of your soldiers, no arms, no riches, will be able to help you, when He takes in hand to destroy.'⁶⁷⁵ The intent of this argument is to deflect attention from the conflict for power between men, and direct it towards the relationship between man and God. Only at the very end of the letter does Paschal inform the king that in setting free the churches he would also gain the Pope's friendship, in a nod to acknowledging his own authority and ambition.⁶⁷⁶ Ultimately, from such a distance the success of the Pope's arguments relied on Henry also believing in the hierarchy between Church and secular power, respecting that his position was subordinate to Paschal's with regard to investiture, and having knowledge and understanding of historical precedents of divine vengeance.

In appealing to the higher power of God, Paschal turned the investiture dispute into a moral and ideological issue.⁶⁷⁷ At the same time, Paschal wrote to Anselm, also beginning by commenting on his conflict with William Rufus and his time in exile, when 'the Almighty Lord did terribly execute His judgement upon that wicked King', and going on to encourage Anselm by praising his steadfastness in his position.⁶⁷⁸ This is a different tone from two other letters from Paschal to Henry, one written in 1101 when Henry first appealed to him over the issue of investiture, and one in 1103 when Anselm was in exile, both of which take a more gentle,

⁶⁷⁴ *Eadmeri Historia*, pp. 132-35. Translation from Eadmer, *HRE*, pp. 139-42.

⁶⁷⁵ *Eadmeri Historia*, p. 134. 'Deseruisti enim fratris tui regis impietatem, quam Divino conspicis iudicio terribiliter vindicatam [...] nisi sunt aliqui perversæ mentis homines qui cor regum per episcoporum et abbatum investituras Divinæ indignationi aptare conantur [...] Quem si, quod absit, offenderis, non procerum consilia, non militum subsidia, non arma, non divitæ, ubi subvertere cœperit, poterunt subvenire.' Translation from Eadmer, *HRE*, pp. 141-42.

⁶⁷⁶ *Eadmeri Historia*, p. 135. Translation from Eadmer, *HRE*, p. 142

⁶⁷⁷ Colin Morris, *The Papal Monarchy*, p. 171.

⁶⁷⁸ *Eadmeri Historia*, p. 135. 'de perverso rege sua omnipotens Dominus iudicia terribiliter perpetravit.' Translation from Eadmer, *HRE*, pp. 142-43.

conciliatory effort at persuading the king to give up the practice of investiture and thereby increase his standing in the eyes of God.⁶⁷⁹ It would appear that explicit threats of divine wrath were only one among a variety of rhetorical persuasive methods employed by the pope in this dispute. Since the controversy went on for so long, neither threats of God's wrath nor encouragement to gain God's favour seem to have been particularly effective, perhaps due to the ideological clash between royal and ecclesiastical power, perhaps because other issues seemed more pressing to the king, perhaps because of an unwillingness on the part of the king to break with the English tradition of a sacerdotal king responsible for the spiritual oversight of his kingdom, and embrace the new philosophy of a united Christendom under the ultimate authority of the pope in Rome.⁶⁸⁰

Interestingly, the letter from Paschal to Anselm, written in 1103 and opened by Anselm when he went into exile once more that year, does not differ hugely from the above in its tone or message.⁶⁸¹ The Pope details examples of biblical punishments for unlawful investitures, including Uzziah, who unlawfully claimed for himself the office of priesthood, and was smitten with leprosy.⁶⁸² Presumably this was to help arm Anselm with arguments to use against the king, but it may also have been intended as encouragement to Anselm to maintain his steadfastness against the king. What is emphasised in this letter but not in the others is the blame laid on priests who have accepted a church from lay hands, who are to be 'smitten with the spiritual sword' and 'estranged from the fellowship of the brethren.'⁶⁸³ The diversity of opinion and belief among the laity has been recognised, but this letter is also a reminder that the clergy was not a cohesive body either, because it highlights another problem that the church faced in the investiture dispute;⁶⁸⁴ for all those who argued against lay investiture, there were probably just as many who were unconcerned about accepting it, and as long as there were laymen willing to bestow churches and men willing to accept them, the issue could not be easily stamped out. It has even been suggested that Anselm himself had no strong feelings about lay investiture, but felt conscience- and duty-bound to oppose the practice out of obedience to the Pope.⁶⁸⁵ If this was the case, it may therefore be significant that Paschal is

⁶⁷⁹ *Eadmeri Historia*, pp. 130, 155-57. Translation from Eadmer, *HRE*, pp. 137, 164-66.

⁶⁸⁰ Christopher Harper-Bill, 'The Anglo-Norman Church', pp. 167-69.

⁶⁸¹ *Eadmeri Historia*, pp. 148-51. Translation from Eadmer, *HRE*, pp. 156-60.

⁶⁸² *Eadmeri Historia*, pp. 150-51. Translation from Eadmer, *HRE*, p. 159.

⁶⁸³ *Eadmeri Historia*, p. 151. 'susceperunt spirituali gladio feriuntur [...] a consortio fratrum et ordinationes et ordinationes alienas habemus.' Translation from Eadmer, *HRE*, p. 159.

⁶⁸⁴ See. Arnold, *Belief and Unbelief*, p. 10.

⁶⁸⁵ Southern, *Anselm and His Biographer*, p. 153. C. Warren Hollister, 'St Anselm on Lay Investiture', *Anglo-Norman Studies: Proceedings of the Battle Conference* 10, ed. R. Allen Brown (1987) pp. 145-58.

employing the same warnings of divine vengeance against the opposing party in his communication with both Anselm and Henry, as a method of persuasion in support of a particular moral and ideological code.

Anselm wrote to Count Robert of Meulan whilst he was in exile in 1105, after Robert had been excommunicated in 1104 for supporting the king on the issue of investiture, and shortly before Anselm and Henry once again sent representatives to the pope in an effort to resolve the issue.⁶⁸⁶ The letter discusses Anselm's negotiations with the king over his return to England, and Henry's continued delay in seeking the mediation of the Pope, and describes how the English Church had been left desolate by Anselm's absence for nearly three years. It ends on what is intended as a powerful rhetorical message, when Anselm says:

For this reason I must tell you that I very much fear that the King is provoking God's anger against himself and against those on whose advice he is acting when he puts off taking steps to promote a result so much needed and so clearly right, steps which it is in his power to take and which he could take without losing a scrap of those prerogatives which with God's approval belong to the King's sovereignty. As friend and as Archbishop, such as I am, I advise the King and those about him not to be more anxious to do their own will than the will of God, for some day God will do his own will against the will of those who so act. Take heed then for him and for yourselves before God openly shows His anger, which as yet he holds in abeyance waiting for you to bow to His will.⁶⁸⁷

As well as taking their cue from Paschal, Anselm's arguments resemble those in his theological treatises which discuss humanity's duty towards God and how they should freely bow to his will.⁶⁸⁸ In accordance with arguments for Anselm's own lack of concern over the issue of lay investiture, and Sally Vaughn's contention that Anselm's main goal was instead to secure the primacy of the Archbishop of Canterbury as a co-ruler alongside the king of England, his warnings of God's wrath in this letter are over the detriment to the English Church caused by his continued absence, rather than the specific issue of investiture, with his main concern being for some sort of settlement to be reached.⁶⁸⁹ It may also be significant that this level of rhetoric is only being used towards the end of the dispute, after a stalemate of several years. It is a

⁶⁸⁶ *Eadmeri Historia*, p. 163, 170-72. Translation from Eadmer, *HRE*, pp. 174, 182-83.

⁶⁸⁷ *Eadmeri Historia*, p. 171. 'Quapropter dico vobis quia valde timeo ne ipse super se provocet iram Dei, et super eos quorum consilio differ tam necessariæ rei, tam rationabili, succurrere; cum ad illum hoc pertineat et facere possit, ut nihil perdat de iis quæ secundum Deum ad regiam pertinent potestatem. Sicut amicus et sicut archiepiscopus, qualiscunque sim, consulo illi et iis qui circa illum sunt, ut non plus studeant satisfacere voluntati suæ contra voluntatem illorum qui hoc faciunt. Consulite ergo illi et vobis priusquam Deus ostendat iram suam, quam adhuc suspendit, expectans ut humiliemini ad voluntatem suam.' Translation from Eadmer, *HRE*, pp. 182-83.

⁶⁸⁸ See Chapter 1.

⁶⁸⁹ See above, note 641; Vaughn, 'St Anselm and the English Investiture Controversy Reconsidered', pp. 68-77.

different tone from the letter which Anselm wrote to Henry himself at the same time, which is devoid of such threats and focuses instead on the practicalities of resolving their differences through the mediation of the pope.⁶⁹⁰ It seems that Anselm was deliberately refraining from making threats of divine vengeance directly to the king, and instead seeking to influence him through his peers. As with Paschal's earlier letter to Henry, his argument here relies on Count Robert believing in and understanding the way that God's power worked in the world, even though no one could know in advance exactly how or when divine vengeance would strike.

Letters were often accompanied by oral communication, and they anticipate further conversations about their content. Although they specifically raise the issue of the possibility of impending divine vengeance, it is impossible to know whether the threat of divine vengeance did actually figure in Henry's discussions with his advisors. Anselm and Paschal used the threat of God's wrath as a weapon in their cause of furthering the power of the church separate from that of the state, as they sought to cultivate a fear of divine vengeance in their opponents. Out of the numerous letters that Eadmer includes in his text, the fact that only three of them put threats of divine vengeance to any significant rhetorical effect suggests that their use was considered and calculated. If there is any weight to Sally Vaughn's argument that Anselm was a shrewd political maneuverer who took advantage of the king's distraction by other political crises to pursue his own cause, this would suggest that it was pragmatism on the part of the king rather than any fear of impending divine wrath that eventually persuaded Henry to compromise, even with the recent fate of his brother held over him.⁶⁹¹

It is significant that, despite recording these threats, Eadmer has no divine vengeance to report against Henry. This may be because the dispute was eventually resolved in Anselm's favour in 1106, when Henry agreed to compromise with Anselm by relinquishing his right to invest bishops with ring and staff, but retaining his right to receive homage for temporalities before consecration, which rendered divine punishment unnecessary.⁶⁹² It may also be because Henry lived and ruled successfully until 1135. Had he died suddenly on one of his Norman campaigns while his clash with Anselm was ongoing, as William Rufus had died with his dispute with Anselm unresolved, we might now be looking at a very different narrative from Eadmer, in which those threats of divine vengeance were fulfilled. The letters suggest that the idea of divine vengeance was not only a retrospective interpretative framework, but could be

⁶⁹⁰ *Eadmeri Historia*, pp. 169-71. Translation from Eadmer, *HRE*, pp. 180-82.

⁶⁹¹ Sally N. Vaughn, 'St Anselm of Canterbury: the philosopher-saint as politician', pp. 279-305, and Sally N. Vaughn, 'St Anselm and the English investiture controversy reconsidered', pp. 61-86.

⁶⁹² Christopher Harper-Bill, 'The Anglo-Norman Church', p. 175.

invoked in the course of political disagreements even if the warning was not then fulfilled.⁶⁹³ B's *Vita S. Dunstani* shows divine punishment working in support of Dunstan in a similar way to Eadmer's depiction of God's punishment of William Rufus working in support of Anselm; the interpretation of Edmund's brush with death and of the death of Eadwig through the framework of divine vengeance was made retrospectively and incorporated into B's narrative to demonstrate Dunstan's special favour with God. Eadmer's extensive inclusion of letters from Pope Paschal and Anselm to Henry I and his advisors is unusual, and they provide a snapshot of the way that the rhetoric of divine vengeance could be utilised in political disputes in support of one cause or another. The investiture controversy, characterised by a clash between church and state (though neither of these represented a homogenous pool of agreement) probably lent itself to such rhetoric. The length of Anselm's dispute over a decade or more, first with William Rufus and then with Henry, also indicates how little attention these secular rulers paid to such threats of divine vengeance.

The fact that the outcomes of political disputes between church and state officials were so rarely framed in terms of divine vengeance suggests that it took extraordinary circumstances for any interpretation of this sort to be made. That both of my examples here involve disputes between a reforming Archbishop of Canterbury and various kings is also significant. Eadmer may have drawn on his knowledge of the way that divine vengeance was said to have worked in support of Dunstan's cause in the tenth century to inform the way that he depicted God's support of Anselm; the divine punishment of their opponents contributed to and reinforced their saintly portrait. The speed with which William Rufus's death became widely considered to have been the result of divine vengeance for his appalling conduct as king (and, in Eadmer's case, for his opposition to Anselm) also contributed to the way that Anselm's continuing dispute with Henry I was conducted; William's death was used as recent and chilling proof that God's support lay in favour of those who opposed the practice of lay investiture and clerical homage to laymen. Such recent precedent allowed a heightened rhetoric of anticipation of divine vengeance striking again should Henry I not capitulate to the reformers. The impact that this rhetoric actually had on his advisors is difficult to assess because the investiture dispute eventually ended in compromise, and there were likely many other factors that contributed to this settlement, but it does seem that pragmatism rather than any great fear of impending divine vengeance had more of an influence on the settlement.

⁶⁹³ This is similar to the way that prophecy operated. See Southern, 'Aspects of the European Tradition of Historical Writing: 3, History as Prophecy', pp. 159-69.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, vengeance miracle stories present strong evidence for the existence of a whole range of impiety and religious scepticism across the social spectrum, from indifference to religious teachings, to outright derision for the value of religious observances such as feast days, to a light-hearted approach to religious rituals, to non-adherence to proper standards of behaviour, to political clashes between secular and church authorities. At either end of the scale there were the people who expressed outright condemnation and defiance, and those who took religious observance to the extreme, and it is those extremes which are most often reacted to in the sources because they stand out for particular criticism or praise. This indicates that Arnold's assessment of impiety in the later Middle Ages as being characterised by indifference and inattention can be applied just as much to this earlier period, with the addition that mockery also denotes a level of self-reflection and may indicate how well cemented into culture the practices being mocked actually were. The communication of ideas across different sections of society was not always easy. Our vision may be skewed because of the ecclesiastical nature of the sources, which seek to present any dissenters as misguided, however, the minor but significant presence of those dissenters shows the diversity of opinion and liveliness of discourse that existed within and among different sections of society, no matter how much the church might have wished to homogenise it. If the examples discussed in this chapter can be taken as evidence of wider impiety that the authors of the texts perceived as a problem, it seems that, until confronted with the very real possibility of death, very often neither monks nor laymen seem to have given much thought to the fate of their souls, but once the idea of God's wrath presented itself, it could provide a motivation to reform.

Despite the formulaic construction and character of many of the vengeance miracle stories in my survey, there are areas in which consistencies and changes in the kinds of situation in which divine vengeance was perceived and reported can be detected. Miracles against those who threatened or violated monastic property or who doubted the incorruption of relics are fairly consistent across the period, as is the repetition of stories from early Christian history. From the late eleventh and twelfth century however, an increasing number of vengeance miracles were reported for specific, prescriptive and often localised offences. Whereas Ælfric and Byrhtferth made generalised complaints about inattention to preaching without reference to any specific consequential vengeance miracles, William of Malmesbury, drawing on Coleman, used the miraculous punishments of those who refuted monks' as opposed to

bishops' rights to preach, or obstinately resisted Wulfstan's messages about peace, as an important thematic aspect of his portrait of Wulfstan's sanctity. While this shows the rhetoric of divine vengeance being used specifically in the context of Wulfstan's pastoral activities to demonstrate that he enjoyed God's favour, these miracles may also be indicative of a wider atmosphere of indifference to preaching, where tangible evidence of God's wrath could be more powerful than a sermon. Miracles against those who refused to cease work to acknowledge a feast day only appear in the written record in England after 1066, though some of these stories may be older. This is the only instance where the Norman Conquest marks a sharp turning point in the types of vengeance miracles that were recorded. Punishments for mockery of or indifference to other religious rituals seems to have been more consistent.

Miracles against monks and clerics reflect changes in religious ideals associated with the late tenth-century Benedictine reform movement and the later eleventh-century Gregorian reform movement. They are also the most likely to take the form of a visionary rebuke, with the number of visions reported increasing dramatically in the twelfth century, especially by William of Malmesbury. The English investiture controversy as narrated by Eadmer is an unusual instance of the rhetoric of divine vengeance being actively used as a persuasive tool in a political conflict, and there are consistencies between the way that interpretations of incidents as divine vengeance were used to support the case for Dunstan's sanctity in the tenth century and Anselm's in the twelfth. The observation of divine vengeance in central medieval society was therefore not static, but familiar topoi ensured that stories fitted into the familiar pattern of divine direction of the world, and whether or not some version of the incidents recorded actually happened, they had to be credible (in some sense) to audiences.⁶⁹⁴ Some may have been invented by monastic and clerical authors; equally some may have developed through oral circulation, but the choices that authors made in the stories that they selected to write down, and the way that they constructed their narratives, nevertheless reveal the types of concerns about improper religious observance, among monks, clergy and laity, that were current at certain times and in certain localities.

...

These two chapters have shown that the power of divine vengeance was something that people across different sections of society were conscious of, and were capable of discerning in the world around them when a person who was considered to have sinned in some way met

⁶⁹⁴ Foxhall Forbes, *Heaven and Earth*, p. 27.

an unfortunate fate. Equally, the existence of miracle stories recounting divine vengeance for irreligious behaviour suggests that a fear of God's vengeance striking does not seem to have dictated the behaviour of many people at a day-to-day level. That is not to say that most people did not believe in the idea of divine vengeance, only that the chances of actually becoming a victim of God's wrath were not considered to be high.⁶⁹⁵ The next chapter will explore the extent to which a consciousness of divine vengeance fed into the way that the morality of vengeance by humans was thought about, and the ways that vengeance was practiced and negotiated within society.

⁶⁹⁵ Cf. Dorothea Weltecke, 'Doubts and the Absence of Faith', in John H. Arnold (ed.) *The Oxford Handbook of Medieval Christianity* (Oxford, 2014) p. 365.

CHAPTER 5:

THE MORALITY OF VENGEANCE FROM THEOLOGICAL AND SOCIAL PERSPECTIVES

The previous chapters have shown that the pursuit of vengeance/punishment was an integral component of the way that the relationship between God and humanity was perceived to be regulated, and that the observation of divine vengeance on earth was inseparable from social and moral concerns. Numerous studies on the role of vengeance in human societies have also shown that vengeance had a key functional role in maintaining social equilibrium through the mechanisms of feud and blood feud, that it was intrinsically connected to notions of honour, shame and the upholding and restoring of social status, and that particular acts of vengeance could be considered licit or illicit depending on emotional motivations and circumstances.⁶⁹⁶ These same studies also present a general consensus that vengeance was ubiquitously accepted across social classes in the centuries before and after 1066, and was primarily manifested in the form of violence. Divine and human vengeance have largely been treated as separate issues, within theological and legalistic contexts respectively. Paul Hyams has gone some way towards removing this distinction by pointing out that, from a Christian moral perspective, every act of vengeance was spiritually charged; vengeful feuding posed a theological problem because of the biblical injunction that vengeance was God's prerogative, but at the same time God frequently enacted his judgement through human agents, which meant that a vengeful human might be seen as aiding God against his enemies, or in more ambiguous situations could hope that God approved their vengeance-taking.⁶⁹⁷ Richard Kaeuper has also discussed the way that the spiritual ideal of forgiveness was reconciled with a vengeance culture within the chivalric value system; just as God takes vengeance on earth for sin, good warriors avenged their honour when it was insulted, while showing mercy by refraining from killing.⁶⁹⁸

⁶⁹⁶ Hudson, 'Feud, vengeance and violence'; Hyams, 'Feud and the State'; Hyams, *Rancor and Reconciliation*; Miller, *Eye for an Eye*; Hyams, 'Was there really such a thing as feud?' Halsall, 'Violence and Society'; Hudson, *Oxford History of the Laws of England*; Lambert, 'Protection, Feud and Royal Power'; Roche, 'The Way Vengeance Comes', Erin Sebo, Grief and Revenge in Beowulf'; White, 'The Feelings in the Feud'; McGrath, 'The Politics of Chivalry'; White, 'The Politics of Anger'; Throop, 'Zeal, Anger and Vengeance'.

⁶⁹⁷ Hyams, *Rancor and Reconciliation*, pp. 111-27.

⁶⁹⁸ Kaeuper, 'Vengeance and Mercy in Chivalric Mentalité' in T.B. Lambert and David Rollason (eds.) *Peace and Protection in the Middle Ages* (Toronto, 2009) p. 175.

This chapter will build on Hyams and Kaeuper's observations to further explore the way that certain acts of vengeance in different contexts were justified through appeal to both human social motivations and the idea of divine sanction. It will discuss the extent to which spiritual considerations were important for people pursuing vengeance, or whether theological justifications for particular acts were more of a rhetorical tool used by ecclesiastical authors. The first section will explore the way that vengeance was presented in imaginary situations in literature; the ways that authors depicted the motivations of characters pursuing vengeance, and how audiences were supposed to react, can reveal elements of the way that the social morality of vengeance was thought about. The second section will discuss some perhaps equally imaginative depictions of the motivations of men pursuing vengeance through battle in historical writing, and the way that the rhetoric of divine vengeance could be used in support of one cause or another and could gloss over the often less spiritual motivations of the actors. This section will focus on Anglo-Norman historical narratives rather than the *ASC* because the Anglo-Norman historians were more likely than the various chroniclers to try to represent acts of vengeance by humans as spiritually justified, or the actors as the agents of divine vengeance. The *ASC* presents a relatively matter-of-fact record of vengeance as a motivation for events, and surprisingly few references to vengeance at all compared to other sources. This may be due to the nature of a chronicle as opposed to a narrative history, since the characteristic is maintained even in the later entries which in general take on the more prosaic character of Anglo-Norman historical writing.⁶⁹⁹ Section three will discuss the role of humans as the agents of divine vengeance in judicial procedure, and section four will go on to explore situations where vengeance was not considered to be appropriate, where mercy and restraint were considered to be the more honourable course of action. Sources under consideration will be literary, historical and hagiographical, along with theological and legislative material, all of which were composed with moral purposes in mind.

Although vengeance was an intrinsic feature of the way that social relations were negotiated throughout the period under consideration here, it was not unproblematic from a Christian moral perspective, and the pursuit of personal vengeance was always subject to attempts at regulation by both secular and ecclesiastical authorities, if for different reasons. Law codes sought increasingly to place limits on rights of personal vendetta and instead bring

⁶⁹⁹ Janet M. Bately, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: A Collaborative Edition*, vol. 3, MS A (hereafter *ASC* [A]) (Cambridge, 1986) 917, pp. 66-68. G.P. Cubbin, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: A Collaborative Edition*, vol. 6, MS D (hereafter *ASC* [D]) (Cambridge, 1996) 952, pp. 44-45. Susan Irvine, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: A Collaborative Edition*, vol. 7, MS E (hereafter *ASC* [E]) (Cambridge, 2004) 1048, 1090, pp. 80-82, 101.

dispute resolution under state control, while pastoral teaching sometimes argued against the pursuit of vengeance altogether and promoted the ideal of forgiveness instead in order to protect a person's soul; Blickling Homily III for the first Sunday in Lent advocates against vindicating wrongs and for following the example of Christ with eagerness instead, while Ælfric was adamant that vengeance should not be undertaken by humans because the effect of human insult pales in comparison to the necessity of preserving a person's own relationship with God.⁷⁰⁰ He also expresses concern, however, that misguided people could seek out and find spiritual justification for their own vengeance, and does his best to not facilitate this further. One story which Ælfric seems to have regarded as particularly problematic is the Passion of St Thomas the Apostle, a part of which he feared could be interpreted as promoting a favourable view of the pursuit of vengeance, for which reason he omits it from his Catholic Homilies series:

The passion of St Thomas we leave unwritten, because it has long-since been turned from Latin into English song-wise; but the wise Augustine, however, has said in some treatise of his, that one thing incredible was set in that narrative, that is of the cupbearer who struck the apostle on the ear, and of the dog which brought his hand in again. Of this Augustine said, "This those read with great diligence who love vengeance; but it is allowed us to doubt in this, that the apostle would so cruelly avenge his injury." For this doubt, we would not touch his passion. It is, nevertheless, all quite credible, except that which Augustine gainsays.⁷⁰¹

The story that Ælfric will not recount in full but felt the need to allude to anyway in order to express concern over its popularity is an episode from the passion of St Thomas in which a steward of the emperor Dionysius struck and rebuked the apostle, and was afterwards attacked and killed by a lion and devoured by dogs, who then brought back his hand that had struck Thomas.⁷⁰² His objection, drawing on the authority of Augustine, seems to come from the fact that Thomas predicted the steward's gruesome fate, with a malevolence that he apparently could not countenance in the behaviour of the saint. Ælfric's concern about what he considered the negative impact and influence of this story suggests that Ælfric assumed a level of

⁷⁰⁰ Blickling Homily 3, ll. 101-07, ed. Kelly, pp. 22-23. See also, for example, Ælfric, CH 1.3, ll. 130-85, 1.11, ll. 132-37, ed. Clemoes, pp. 202-04, 271. Hudson, 'Feud, vengeance and violence', Hudson, *Oxford History of the laws of England*, Hyams, 'Feud and the State'.

⁷⁰¹ Ælfric, CH 2.34, ed. Godden, p. 298. Translation from CH 2.39, ed. Thorpe, p. 521 'Thomes ðrowunge we forlætað unawritene, forðan ðe heo wæs gefyrn awend of Ledene on Englisc on leoð-wison; ac swa-ðeah se wisa Augustinus sæde on sumere his trahtnunge, þæt an þing wære ungeleaflic on ðære race geset, þæt is be ðam byrle þe ðone apostol ear-plætte, and be ðam hunde ðe his hand eft inn-abær. Be ðam cwæð Augustinus, "þis rædað mid micelre gecneordnysse ða ðe wrace lufiað; ac us is alyfed be ðisum to twynienne, þæt se apostol wolde gewreca swa wælhreawlice his teonan." For ðyssere twynunge nolde we hreppan his ðrowunge. Heo is swa-ðeah eall full geleaflic, buton ðam anum þe Augustinus wiðsæcð.'

⁷⁰² Appendix, 136.

knowledge of its contents among his audience, was aware of the potential spiritual pitfalls of what he considered its misinterpretation, and could not condone its continued promulgation.

In contrast, Anselm in took a less stringent view of the permissibility of vengeance. In *De Concordia*, he advocates for care when pursuing a feud because each individual act of vengeance is done through free will and therefore might be enacted against God's will, but he does not condemn vengeful conflict outright.⁷⁰³ In *Cur Deus Homo*, he elaborates on the problem of knowing when vengeance enacted by humans is sinful or not. In Anselm's thinking, vengeance does not belong to humans because they belong to God and not to themselves.⁷⁰⁴ God commands humans to forgive because the right to vengeance is his alone, so that when earthly powers rightly enact vengeance, it is really God acting because he ordained them for that purpose.⁷⁰⁵ Anselm also explains that there is a difference between things that God causes to happen and things that God permits to happen; he permits some people to perform evil deeds through their own free choice.⁷⁰⁶ In the case of punishment or vengeance, the rightness of any punishment or act of vengeance depends both on the authority of the person doing the punishing or avenging and whether the person on the receiving end is deserving of it.⁷⁰⁷ The implication of Anselm's argument is that every correctly enacted act of vengeance is through God, with the qualification that not all human acts of vengeance are correct. This means that every incorrect act of vengeance must be a sin which God permits through free will; this in turn creates a moral conundrum in identifying which are correct and which are incorrect. Rather than offering clarification however, this argument instead creates more difficulties in assessing whether an act of vengeance was licit or not; since every would-be avenger must think that their vengeance is justified in order for it not to be classed as mindless violence, and since those on both sides of a conflict could be considered to be avengers, it was difficult to identify what God's will actually was. Authors writing in hindsight could rhetorically construct their narrative to present certain avengers as justified or not based on their assessment of the motivations of each party and the outcome of their actions, but that does not necessarily mean

⁷⁰³ Anselm, *De concordia*, 2.3, ed. Schmitt, 2, p. 262. Translation from *Anselm, Basic Writings*, ed. Williams, p. 374.

⁷⁰⁴ Anselm, *Cur deus homo*, 1.20, ed. Schmitt, 2, p. 87. Translation from *Anselm, Basic Writings*, ed. Williams, p. 280.

⁷⁰⁵ Anselm, *Cur deus homo*, 1.12, ed. Schmitt, 2, p. 70. Translation from *Anselm, Basic Writings*, ed. Williams, p. 263.

⁷⁰⁶ Anselm, *De veritate*, 8, ed. Schmitt, 1, p. 186. Translation from *Anselm, Basic Writings*, ed. Williams, p. 129. Anselm, *Cur Deus Homo*, 1.7, ed. Schmitt, 2, pp. 57-57. Translation from *Anselm, Basic Writings*, ed. Williams, pp. 251-52.

⁷⁰⁷ Anselm, *De veritate*, 8, ed. Schmitt, 1, pp. 186-87. Translation from *Anselm, Basic Writings*, ed. Williams, pp. 130-31, *Cur Deus Homo*, 1.7, ed. Schmitt, 2, pp. 57-57. Translation from *Anselm, Basic Writings*, ed. Williams, pp. 251-52.

that those pursuing vengeance thought about the moral or spiritual implications at the time of acting.

Anselm, like Ælfric, seemed to fear that theological arguments could be misapplied by people seeking to justify their acts of vengeance. In his *De Concordia*, he warns that whenever

someone wrongs another and then is killed by him in retaliation, those who complain, ‘This was foreknown and predestined by God and so it was done by necessity and could not have turned out otherwise’ are without justification. Indeed, neither the one who angered the other by wronging him, nor the one who took revenge, acted by necessity. Each acted by his own will alone.⁷⁰⁸

In this passage Anselm is not talking about the doctrine of predestination (the idea that all humans have inherited the guilt of original sin, but a certain number of souls are predestined to be redeemed through God’s grace, irrespective of their earthly life)⁷⁰⁹ but the idea that nothing on earth could happen if God had not willed it. *De concordia* is Anselm’s attempt to reconcile the existence of human free will with the supremacy of God’s will. The apparent incompatibility between humans having the capacity to act through their own volition and God foreknowing everything that they would do was evidently something that he considered a challenge to intellectual understanding, and he seeks to show that every human act is done through free choice, not because God’s wills it, even though God knows everything that is going to happen. Anselm’s intellectual arguments were situated on a level of theological complexity beyond most people’s religious experience, and they had limited scholarly influence.⁷¹⁰ However, Anselm was not a recluse, and his worldview was a product of the monastic and aristocratic atmosphere of the later eleventh and early twelfth century.⁷¹¹ His choice to illustrate his point about free will using a revenge situation, directly refuting those who would assert that nothing that was done could have been done any differently, suggests that he was aware that people could, and possibly did, try to justify their vengeance through a misunderstanding of the theological principles of free will and God’s foreknowledge. Anselm

⁷⁰⁸ Anselm, *De concordia*, 2.3, ed. Schmitt, 2, p. 262. ‘velut cum homo homini facit iniuriam, unde ab illo occiditur –, quidam clamant dicentes: ‚Sic praescitum et praedestinatum erat a deo, et ideo necessitate factum est, nec aliter fieri potuit‘. Quippe nec qui alium iniuria irritavit nec qui se vindicavit, hoc fecit necessitate, sed sola voluntate; quia si non sponte voluisset, neuter quod fecit fecisset.’ Translation from *Anselm, Basic Writings*, ed. Williams, p. 374.

⁷⁰⁹ James Wetzel, ‘Snares of Truth: Augustine on Free Will and Predestination’, in Robert Dodaro and George Lawless (eds.) *Augustine and His Critics: Essays in Honour of Gerald Bonner* (London, 2000) pp. 124-29.

⁷¹⁰ See Southern, *St Anselm: A Portrait*, pp. 369-70.

⁷¹¹ *Ibid.* pp. 222-27.

seeks to demonstrate that revenge, like every other human act, is a choice that carries moral and spiritual implications.

Through discussion of the ways that vengeance was presented in the different contexts of imaginative literary representation, historical narratives, judicial procedure, and hagiography, this chapter will explore the extent to which spiritual concerns over the fate of the soul influenced the way that the morality of vengeance by humans was thought about in the central middle ages. This will complement the conclusions of previous studies which have emphasised the essentially functional role of vengeance in medieval society, linked to notions of honour and shame and restoring social equilibrium. Even though the rhetorical construction of the surviving source material often makes it impossible for individual perspectives in specific circumstances to be recovered, the extent to which Christian morality permeates all contexts in which vengeance was written about shows that vengeance was thought about as a spiritual problem and was something that could receive spiritual justification or condemnation. This is probably also a product of the contexts in which the surviving texts were written, nevertheless this shows that authors frequently wanted their audiences to consider the moral and spiritual implications of vengeful acts. Vengeance in certain situations could be admired and glorified, but its role in negotiating human relationships was not thought about uncritically.

HEROIC AND CHRISTIAN VALUES IN VERNACULAR LITERATURE

Fictional poetry written in the vernacular was one way of articulating the moral concerns of society, and revenge seems to have come under consistent scrutiny. From the biblical contexts of the Old English *Genesis* and *Exodus*, to the Christianised heroic world of *Beowulf*, to the revenge plots of *La Chanson de Roland* and *Raoul de Cambrai*, revenge was a significant narrative force. These legendary tales were grounded in familiar social settings, governed by well-known social rules that allowed authors to explore the morality of vengeful behaviour without commenting on the conduct of living individuals. Medieval fictional narratives have been classed, along with histories and poetry, as a subsection of the art of rhetoric in that all were constructed by consciously selecting and ordering narrative data for a

utilitarian or social purpose.⁷¹² The narratives under consideration here may have been constructed to look like history, and many even purport to be about real historical events, but that does not mean that audiences were not fully aware that the characters that they were reading or hearing about were the imaginative creations of an author; this was true just as much for Old English and French epic as for the burgeoning genre of romance in the twelfth century.⁷¹³ These vernacular texts, although often commissioned by and/or written for aristocratic lay audiences, were written by Latinate authors who had been through a monastic education.⁷¹⁴ The dominance of Latin provided a basis for cultural continuity either side of the Norman Conquest.⁷¹⁵ This means that they are valuable texts for exploring the ways in which ecclesiastical and secular values with regard to vengeance coincided. The ways that religious rhetoric was incorporated into these texts, or not, will help to shed light on the extent to which religious ideals were important for secular audiences compared to other social values when thinking about the morality of vengeance.

In order to assess developments and continuities in the representation of vengeance in vernacular literature, this section will take a roughly chronological survey of some Old English texts written in the late tenth and early eleventh century, and Anglo-Norman French texts written between the late eleventh and mid twelfth century. Although Old English texts were still being copied and composed throughout the eleventh and twelfth centuries, these largely ceased to include sustained narratives and poetry after the early eleventh century, and instead the surviving manuscripts contain homilies, laws, gospels, psalters, theological tracts and dialogues, medicinal texts, and the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*.⁷¹⁶ The exception is the Old English

⁷¹² Monika Otter, 'Functions of Fiction in Historical Writing', in Nancy Partner (ed.) *Writing Medieval History* (London, 2005) pp. 109-22. Suzanne Fleischman, 'On the Representation of History and Fiction', pp. 280-86. Laura Ashe, *Fiction and History in England, 1066-1200* (Cambridge, 2007) pp. 18-19.

⁷¹³ Donald Scragg, 'The Battle of Maldon: Fact or Fiction', in Janet Cooper (ed.) *The Battle of Maldon: Fiction and Fact* (London, 1993) pp. 22-31. D.D.R. Owen, 'The Epic and History: "Chanson de Roland" and "Carmen de Hastingae Proelio"', *Medium Aevum* 51.1 (1982) pp. 18-34. Cf. Laura Ashe, '1155 and the Beginnings of Fiction', *History Today* 65. 1 (2015), <https://www.historytoday.com/laura-ashe/invention-fiction> [accessed 20.08.2018]. D. H. Green, *The Beginnings of Medieval Romance: Fact and Fiction, 1150-1220*, *Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature* 47 (Cambridge, 2002). Otter, 'Functions of Fiction in Historical Writing', pp. 120-21.

⁷¹⁴ Andy Orchard, 'Old English and Latin Poetic Traditions', in Corinne Saunders (ed.) *A Companion to Medieval Poetry* (Oxford, 2010) pp. 65-68. Cf. Leonard Neidorf, 'VII Aethelred and the Genesis of the Beowulf Manuscript', *Philological Quarterly* 89.2/3 (2010) pp. 127-29, which argues for a communal production of the *Beowulf* manuscript within a monastic community.

⁷¹⁵ Cartlidge, 'The Norman Conquest and English Literary Culture after 1066', p. 100.

⁷¹⁶ Irvine, 'The compilation and use of manuscripts containing Old English in the twelfth century', pp. 41-42, Seth Lerer, 'Old English and its Afterlife' in David Wallace (ed.) *The Cambridge History of Medieval English Literature* (Cambridge, 1999) pp. 8-9, and Rosalind Field, 'Romance in England, 1066-1400' in David Wallace (ed.) *The Cambridge History of Medieval English Literature* (Cambridge, 1999) pp. 152-54.

Apollonius of Tyre which appears in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 201, from c. 1040.⁷¹⁷ Ian Short has related this lack of new Old English literary texts, in the twelfth century at least, to a lack of English aristocratic patrons after the Norman Conquest, since they were replaced by members of the Norman nobility who preferred to commission works in French.⁷¹⁸ Nevertheless, twelfth-century England had a trilingual culture, and the acceptance of Old English as a literary language may have influenced the emergence of vernacular French writing, which appeared in England earlier than on the continent: Old English heroic poetry and French epic and Romance share thematic similarities, not least the significance of revenge as a central plot driver.⁷¹⁹

The Old English texts which feature vengeance as a major theme and which will be under consideration here are *Beowulf* (preserved in London, British Library, Cotton Vitellius A xv, written around the year 1000), *The Battle of Maldon* (existed in London, British Library, Cotton Otho A xii, now burned), *Genesis B* and *Exodus* (in Oxford, Bodleian Library, Junius 11, of the late tenth-century).⁷²⁰ The story of Apollonius of Tyre does also contain elements of a revenge plot, but the Old English version (based on the Latin *Historia Apollonii regis Tyri*), which has been called the ‘earliest surviving Romance in English’, is missing a substantial section of Apollonius’s adventures.⁷²¹ Since it has been established that the Old English translator adapted the Latin text to bring it in line with English cultural expectations, and because most of the references to revenge in the Latin version are in the section that is missing in the English manuscript, I will not include the Old English *Apollonius* in the following analysis.⁷²² French vernacular texts which will be discussed are *La Chanson de Roland* (late

⁷¹⁷ Printed and translated in Treharne, *Old and Middle English*, pp. 275-300.

⁷¹⁸ Ian Short, ‘Patrons and Polyglots: French Literature in Twelfth-Century England’, *Anglo-Norman Studies: Proceedings of the Battle Conference 14* (1991) p. 247.

⁷¹⁹ See Ian Short, ‘Patrons and Polyglots’, pp. 229-32, Judith Weiss, ‘Insular Beginnings: Anglo-Norman Romance’ in Corinne Saunders (ed.) *A Companion to Romance* (Oxford, 2004) pp. 26-44. Hyams, *Rancor and Reconciliation*, p. 61, 119. Mark Faulkner, ‘Archaism, Belatedness and Modernisation: “Old” English in the Twelfth Century’, pp. 182-83.

⁷²⁰ Paul Hyams adds to this list *The Wanderer*, *The Seafarer*, the *Sword Riddle*, *The Wife’s Lament* and *The Husband’s Message*, on the grounds that they all attest to the centrality of feud in Old English culture. However, none of these poems directly engage with the process of vengeance-taking nor moral justifications for revenge, therefore I will not be including them in this discussion. See Hyams, *Rancor and Reconciliation*, p. 74, note 16. None of the other Old English poems which might be classed as ‘heroic’, including the fragmentary *Battle of Finnsburh* (existed on a single folio in London, Lambeth Palace Library 487, now lost), *Waldere* (in Copenhagen, Royal Library, Ny kongelige Samling 167b, dated to the late tenth or early eleventh century), and *The Battle of Brunanburh* (in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 173, and appears as the annal for 937 in four of the seven manuscripts of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*), feature a revenge plot.

⁷²¹ Treharne, *Old and Middle English*, p. 275.

⁷²² Ibid. p. 275. Compare the translations by Elaine Treharne, in *Old and Middle English*, pp. 275-99, and Benjamin Thorpe, *The Anglo-Saxon Version of the Story of Apollonius of Tyre* (London, 1834), which supplies the gap in the Old English version with a translation from the Latin. See also the collated Latin text by Peter Godden (ed.) *The Old English Apollonius of Tyre* (Oxford, 1958).

eleventh century), Gaimar's *Estoire Des Engleis* (proposed dates of composition range from 1135 to 1150)⁷²³ and *Raoul de Cambrai*. This last survives in a manuscript of c. 1200, but the poem itself is thought to have been composed by three successive authors, with the first section at least, which tells of Raoul's conflict with the Vermandois family, originating in the early twelfth century, and the following two sections added in the later twelfth century.⁷²⁴ I will therefore discuss only the first Raoul section here.

All of these narratives are set within a Christian moral framework. Human impulses, emotional needs, social values, and desire for revenge are set in combination with theological considerations as authors seek to provide moral commentary on their characters' vengeful pursuits. There has been plenty of scholarship on the role of emotional expressions in signalling that an offence has been taken and that an act of revenge has been prompted, whether licit or illicit.⁷²⁵ Characters' emotions are expressed more physically in the French texts than in the Old English, but the narrative function is the same.⁷²⁶ Rather than concentrating on the mechanics of vengeance-taking, therefore, this section will consider the ways that these texts force their audience to think about the moral and spiritual implications of vengeance and its consequences for society. There are multiple voices to consider in the texts when assessing them in this way. First, there are the characters themselves, whose immediate motivations for vengeance are imagined by the author, who presents them as acting spontaneously in response to the events of the narrative. There are also sometimes the voices of other characters, reacting to the actions of the hero and giving spiritual admonishment. The voice that will primarily be discussed here, though, is the author's own voice, which sometimes gives moral commentary on the characters' actions and foreshadows the consequences. This commentary might include the rhetorical presentation of characters as the agents of divine vengeance carrying out their revenge with God's approval (e.g. Charlemagne in *La Chanson de Roland*) or as the victims of

⁷²³ Dalton argues that the most likely dates of composition are c.1141x1150. See 'The Date of Geoffrey Gaimar's "Estoire"', pp. 23-24. Short argues for March 1136xApril 1137. See 'Gaimar's Epilogue', pp. 336-38.

⁷²⁴ See *Raoul de Cambrai*, ed. and trans. Sarah Kay (Oxford, 1992) pp. xxxv-lxvii, and *Raoul de Cambrai, Chanson de geste de XIIIe siècle*, introduction, notes and trans. William Kibler, ed. Sarah Kay (Paris, 1996) pp. 16-17. Sarah Kay, 'La Composition de "Raoul de Cambrai"', *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire*, 62.4 (1984) pp. 474-92.

⁷²⁵ White, 'The Politics of Anger'; White, 'The Feelings in the Feud: The Emotional Turn in the Study of Medieval Vengeance'; Roche, 'The Way Vengeance Comes'. Throop, 'Zeal, Anger and Vengeance'.

⁷²⁶ See, for example, the physical expressions of sorrow of Charlemagne's army in *CdR*, ll. 2397-2422, ed. Short, pp. 168-70. On Anglo-Saxon preoccupation with the inner mind, see Rolf H. Bremmer, 'Looking Back at Anger: Wrath in Anglo-Saxon England', *Review of English Studies* 66, no. 275 (2015) p. 435; Alice Jorgensen's introduction to Alice Jorgensen, Frances McCormack, and Jonathan Wilcox (eds.) *Anglo-Saxon Emotions: Reading the Heart in Old English Language, Literature and Culture* (Ashgate, 2015); Antonia Harbus, *The Life of the Mind in Old English Poetry* (Amsterdam, 2002); Britt Mize, *Traditional Subjectivities: The Old English Poetics of Mentality* (Toronto, 2013).

a tragic death as a consequence of their ill-advised actions (e.g. Byrhtnoth and his army in *The Battle of Maldon*, Roland and Raoul in *La Chanson de Roland* and *Raoul de Cambrai* respectively). It is important to separate these voices because the emotions and motivations that authors ascribe to characters at the point of action do not always correspond with an author's rhetorical commentary and framing of the work as a whole, which is designed to influence how an audience perceives each character and their actions.

Authors do not always present explicit value judgements on whether certain acts of vengeance are to be considered correct or incorrect, even when performed by characters who can be categorised as the villain of the piece. The character of Satan in *Genesis B*, for example, is well developed and not entirely unsympathetic. Satan's actions in causing the fall of man are unequivocally portrayed as detestable, but his wish to take revenge on God for casting him out of heaven is not seen as unnatural. Satan's furious sorrow at his punishment for his own over-ride is what prompts his revenge on God by targeting Adam and Eve, and the narrative takes on a sense of inevitable tragedy. By dramatizing the narrative as a feud between God and Satan, bringing the conflict into the familiar world of the Anglo-Saxon warrior value system, the poet forces the audience to reflect on the tragic consequences that a desire for revenge could have.⁷²⁷ A similar sympathy can be seen in *Beowulf* for Grendel's mother, whose desire to take revenge for her dead son is not portrayed as unnatural. She too is furious and sorrowful, and even though she and Grendel are explicitly cast as progeny of Cain, her revenge is assessed according to the same value system as the humans she attacks and her right to take vengeance for the death of her son is not questioned.⁷²⁸ Nevertheless, there is a sense of tragedy throughout *Beowulf* for the consequences that revenge carries for society. This is perhaps most notable in the Finn digression, which is dominated by expressions of grief for dead warriors and the seemingly endless stream of casualties that the pursuit of revenge causes.⁷²⁹ In *Exodus* too, this sense of tragedy at the consequences of revenge is extended to the victims of God's vengeance, when the poet laments the grief of the widows left behind after Pharaoh's army is killed by the collapse of the Red Sea.⁷³⁰ Rather than simply presenting characters and their vengeance as

⁷²⁷ Daniel Anlezark, 'Old English Biblical and Devotional Poetry' in Corinne Saunders (ed.) *A Companion to Medieval Poetry* (Oxford, 2010) p. 105-06. Cf. Ruth Wehlau, 'The Power of Knowledge and the Location of the Reader in Christ and Satan', in Roy M. Liuzza (eds.) *The Poems of MS Junius 11: Basic Readings* (New York, 2002) pp. 287-88.

⁷²⁸ *Beowulf*, lines 1321-1344, ed. Dobbie, pp. 41-42. Translation from *Beowulf*, ed. Swanton, pp. 96-98. See also John M. Hill, *The Anglo-Saxon Warrior Ethic: Reconstructing Lordship in Early English Literature* (Florida, 2000) pp. 72-73. For descriptions of Grendel as God's enemy, see *Beowulf*, lines 101-02, 105, 711, 786, 811, 1255, ed. Dobbie, p. 6, 23, 26, 39. Translation from *Beowulf*, ed. Swanton, pp. 39, 69, 71, 73, 95.

⁷²⁹ *Beowulf*, lines. 1136-1159, ed. Dobbie, p. 36. Translation from *Beowulf*, ed. Swanton, p. 89.

⁷³⁰ *Exodus*, lines 500-15, ed. Krapp, p. 105. Translation from Anlezark, *Old Testament Narratives*, p. 241.

right or wrong, these texts ask their audience to reflect on the reasons why a character might have a wish for revenge, on the effect that their pursuit of vengeance has on those around them, and, by extension, on wider society.

The mournful tone of these poems indicates a paradox between an awareness of the suffering and destruction that vengeful acts could cause, at the same time as being convinced of their necessity. After Grendel's mother's attack on Heorot, the *Beowulf* poet comments, 'That was not a good bargain, where those on both sides had to pay with the lives of friends.'⁷³¹ There is no judgement here about which side was in the right or wrong, and the poet's use of 'had to' (*sceoldon*) turns what was technically a choice to take retaliatory action into a regrettable, but inevitable, result. It seems that empathy for the motivations and consequences of violent vengeance, and a sense of justice that must of necessity be carried out, were not mutually exclusive. John Hill has argued that we need not see tragedy in the revenge plots of *Beowulf*, but should instead view the world of the poem as dramatized, archaic, emotionally mixed and full of particularised events, creating a heroic epic that is not comforting but neither is it censuring.⁷³² Lack of censure does not negate a sense of tragedy, however. The moral world of *Beowulf* is complex precisely because of the tension between expressing sorrow at the state of a world where vengeance is so frequently necessary, at the same time as painting a picture of a society in which pursuing vengeance with honour is the path to glory, and the poet never gives the impression that inaction is preferable. Of course, the *Beowulf*-poet is depicting a time long past, which means that the social values and structures depicted cannot be considered necessarily representative of late tenth-century Anglo-Saxon society, but the fact that the poet is using the historical setting to get his audience to think about the social consequences of revenge is significant.⁷³³

In contrast, the *Battle of Maldon* and *La Chanson de Roland* present scenarios in which the pursuit of vengeance is admired and even glorified. Both are heroic poems that imaginatively recount a historical event, respectively the battle fought by Earl Byrhtnoth's army against viking invaders at Maldon in 991, and Charlemagne's battle at Roncevaux in 778,

⁷³¹ *Beowulf*, lines 1304-1306, ed. Dobbie, p. 41. 'Ne wæs þæt gewrixle til, / þæt hie on ba healfa bicgan scoldon / freonda feorum.' Translation from *Beowulf*, ed. Swanton, p. 97.

⁷³² Hill, *The Anglo-Saxon Warrior Ethic*, pp. 72-73.

⁷³³ See Roberta Frank, 'The Beowulf Poet's Sense of History', in Larry D. Benson and Siegfried Wenzel (eds.) *The Wisdom of Poetry: Essays in Early English Literature in Honour of Morton W. Bloomfield* (Kalamazoo, 1982) pp. 53-66.

historically fought against the Basques but against the Saracens of Spain in the poem.⁷³⁴ Both depict battles between Christian and heathen armies in which the heathens come out victorious, and the poems are eulogies for Byrhtnoth, Roland and their armies. In the midst of battle, the desire to avenge their fallen lord and companions is presented as the main motivation for the warriors to continue fighting even with the knowledge that they will lose their lives in the process, rendering them honourable in defeat.⁷³⁵ For Roland, it is the knowledge, or trust, that Charlemagne will avenge his death that keeps him going, and when he eventually sounds the horn to summon Charlemagne's army, it becomes a cry for vengeance more than a cry for help, which Charlemagne is then honour-bound to pursue.⁷³⁶ Roberta Frank has shown that the theme of men dying with their lord is a literary motif that appears in eleventh-century *chansons de gestes* as well as Scandinavian skaldic poetry and sagas, and she argues that *The Battle of Maldon* should be seen as looking forward to this eleventh-century European poetic tradition rather than harking back to older values or representing a uniquely Scandinavian ideal of suicidal loyalty.⁷³⁷ The similarities between the portrayals of Byrhtnoth, Roland and their armies indicates a general heroic outlook over the late tenth and up to the early twelfth century that valorised the pursuit of vengeance for fallen companions in battle irrespective of risk to life, at least in imaginative literature.

Stories of such loyalty were certainly compelling into the mid-twelfth century, though they were beginning to be problematised. Gaimar's elaboration of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* entry for 755 (which itself is unusually long and detailed) relates a disastrous fight between the retainers of King Cynewulf of Wessex and an *ætheling* called Cyneheard, who was the kinsman of Cynewulf's predecessor Sigeberht, who had been driven out of the kingdom and killed.⁷³⁸ Gaimar's rendering is on the surface a confused and inaccurate rendering of the original, involving a fight between the retainers of Cynewulf and Sigeberht himself, but it still contains

⁷³⁴ Scragg, 'The Battle of Maldon: Fact or Fiction', pp. 22-31. *CdR*, ed/ Short, p. 8. Fleischman, 'History and Fiction', p. 295. Gérard Brault, 'Structure et Sens de La Chanson de Roland', *The French Review: Special Issue* 45. 3 (1971) p. 1.

⁷³⁵ Scragg, 'The Battle of Maldon', pp. 33-35. *The Battle of Maldon*, lines 202-325, ed. Dobbie, *The Anglo-Saxon Minor Poems*, pp. 12-16. Translation from Bradley, *Anglo-Saxon Poetry*, pp. 524-28. Cavill, *Maxims in Old English Poetry*, pp. 124-31.

⁷³⁶ *CdR*, ll. 1737-52, ed. Short, pp. 132-34.

⁷³⁷ Roberta Frank, 'The Ideal of Men Dying with Their Lord in the Battle of Maldon: Anachronism or Nouvelle Vague', in Ian Wood and Niels Lund (eds.) *People and Places in Northern Europe, 500-1600: Essays in Honor of Peter Hayes Sawyer* (Woodbridge, 1991) pp. 95-106. Cf. John Hill, *The Anglo-Saxon Warrior Ethic*, pp. 112-114

⁷³⁸ *ASC* [A], pp. 36-38. *ASC* [E], 37-38.

the same emphasis on the retainers fighting to the death to avenge the deaths of their lords.⁷³⁹ Gaimar's subsequent commentary on the fight is interesting though because in addition to stressing the bravery of both sides, he comes to the conclusion that the retainers' deaths were ultimately futile because nothing much was gained by the kin of either side.⁷⁴⁰ This comment is different from the glorified loyalty of Byrhtnoth's and Roland's retainers, and is reminiscent of the *Beowulf*-poet's observation that the outcome of a feud was bittersweet when friends' lives were lost on both sides. Both Gaimar and the *Beowulf*-poet seem to be using events of the distant past to force their audience to reflect on the impact that the pursuit of violent revenge could have on social groups.⁷⁴¹ The difference between this and the treatment of revenge in the *Battle of Maldon* and *La Chanson de Roland* may be due to the contexts in which each of these was written. The *Battle of Maldon* was likely written within a decade or two of the battle itself, which means that it was commemorating and memorialising a defeat that happened within living memory, and mitigates any sense of its futility. Although *La Chanson de Roland* was commemorating a more distant battle, its composition may have been associated with the first crusade of 1098-1100, and may have been intended to inspire crusading spirit in its audience.⁷⁴² Revenge could therefore be glorified where appropriate, but its negative effects seem also to have consistently been a cause for reflection. Since no one at the beginning of the twelfth century would have remembered the individuals who took part in the battle at Roncevaux in the eighth century, their fates could provide a platform for relatively detached commentary on the pitfalls of the pursuit of vengeance.

In addition to forcing a consideration of the social impact of vengeance, the authors of these fictional narratives also drew attention to the spiritual implications of characters' vengeful actions. As noted already, vengeance undertaken by humans was morally charged from a theological perspective because of the idea that vengeance should be left to God. Where an author wished to portray a character's vengeance as divinely approved and justified, they placed their narratives within a theological framework in order to be able to reconcile a character's immediate motivations for vengeance within the action of the story with a portrayal of them as divinely supported. It could be argued that Beowulf is such a character. The Christian quality of *Beowulf* has been much debated, but scholars now generally accept that

⁷³⁹ Gaimar, *Estoire*, ll. 1819-1904, ed. Short, pp. 100-05. Cf. Barbara Yorke, 'The Representation of West Saxon History', in Alice Jorgensen (ed.) *Reading the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: Language, Literature, History* (Turnhout, 2010) pp. 145-49.

⁷⁴⁰ Gaimar, *Estoire*, ll. 1889-1904, ed. Short, pp. 104-05.

⁷⁴¹ Frank, 'The Beowulf Poet's Sense of History'.

⁷⁴² *CdR*, ed. Short, p. 19.

the poem as it survives was composed by a Christian poet who thought about a long-lost heathen world in Christian terms.⁷⁴³ Beowulf consistently acknowledges the support of a higher power, and the poet says that Grendel met his death (at the hands of Beowulf) as a ‘consequence of his sins’.⁷⁴⁴ This, combined with the poet’s description of Grendel as an enemy of God, gives the impression that Beowulf is taking vengeance on Grendel and his mother on behalf of God as well as on behalf of King Hrothgar and the inhabitants of Heorot who have been terrorised by Grendel for twelve years.⁷⁴⁵ His personal goals of achieving fame through courageous exploits therefore align with the idea that he is divinely supported. Similarly, in *La Chanson de Roland*, Charlemagne’s immediate motivation for joining battle with the Saracens is to uphold his bond of loyalty to Roland and avenge his death, but in the poet’s narrative construction he becomes the agent of divine vengeance on the Saracens.⁷⁴⁶ Before he enters battle, the angel Gabriel appears to him in a vision and tells him that he can avenge himself on the criminal Saracens, God causes the sun to stop in its tracks to give the Franks time to catch up with the Saracens, and divine support is reinforced in the ensuing battle when the Franks shout that ‘God has allowed us to administer his judgement.’⁷⁴⁷

Charlemagne’s vision, the Franks’ battle cry, and bishop Turpin’s call for them to fight as penance (mentioned in chapter one) are the only points in the poem where the characters themselves are made to acknowledge that there is a spiritual dimension to their actions. Indeed, characters are rarely portrayed as thinking about the spiritual implications of their vengeful intent before acting, even though authorial commentary on those actions frequently brings spiritual considerations to the attention of their audience. It may be significant that these are all points in *La Chanson de Roland* where the consequences for the army’s souls are positive. In *Raoul de Cambrai*, Raoul’s actions are consistently portrayed as sinful and he is ruled by his immoderate temper.⁷⁴⁸ In addition to authorial foreshadowing of the consequences for his soul, warnings are given to Raoul in the voices of other characters, which he ignores.⁷⁴⁹ Efforts to locate the historical Raoul have placed the action of the poem in the Christianised world of the

⁷⁴³ For a summary of some of the debates, see Paul Cavill, ‘Christianity and Theology in Beowulf’ in Paul Cavill (ed.) *The Christian Tradition in Anglo-Saxon England: Approaches to Current Scholarship and Teaching* (Cambridge, 2004) pp. 15-40. Cf. the essays in Colin Chase (ed.) *The Dating of Beowulf* (Toronto, c1981).

⁷⁴⁴ *Beowulf*, ll. 1253-1255, ed. Dobbie, p. 39. ‘Grendel warode, / unriht æfnde oppæt ende becwom, / swylt æfter synnum.’ Translation from *Beowulf*, ed. Swanton, p. 95.

⁷⁴⁵ *Beowulf*, l. 147, ed. Dobbie, p. 7. Translation from *Beowulf*, ed. Swanton, p. 41.

⁷⁴⁶ See Stephen D. White, ‘Protection, Warranty and Vengeance in *La Chanson de Roland*’ in T.B. Lambert and David Rollason (eds.) *Peace and Protection in the Middle Ages* (Toronto, 2009) pp. 155–67.

⁷⁴⁷ *CdR*, ll. 2443-2475, 3368, ed. Short, pp. 172-73, 240. Brault, ‘Structure et Sens de La Chanson de Roland’, p. 8.

⁷⁴⁸ *Raoul de Cambrai*, ll. 320-23, 1211-1352, ed. Kay, pp. 29, 89-97

⁷⁴⁹ *Raoul de Cambrai*, ll. 363-86, 1053-1129, ed. Kay, pp. 33, 79-83

tenth century, but the poet was addressing twelfth-century social concerns.⁷⁵⁰ Even though Raoul's enemies only ever invoke their right to take revenge on Raoul because he had killed members of their families and had injured their own honour, the audience is clearly supposed to understand Raoul's death as being a consequence of his sinful, vengeful actions, while Raoul's enemies' vengeance on him is divinely supported.

These fictional literary texts cannot be read as an accurate reflection of the way that vengeance actually operated in central medieval society, partly because of their consciously historical settings, partly because they are imagined, idealised narratives with moral messages. It has been suggested that the *chansons de gestes* especially were more ideological representations of the courage and loyalty of knights than any reflection of the way that war was actually fought between aristocrats in tenth-century France, in which vengeance was conducted with much more pragmatic discrimination than in the songs, with more violence targeted at peasants than at fellow lords.⁷⁵¹ Nevertheless, all of the poems discussed here suggest sophistication of both authors and audiences. They are full of complex, flawed characters whose motivations and desires for revenge are expected to be understood sympathetically by the poems' audiences. This complexity sometimes makes it difficult to separate specific acts of revenge into licit/illicit and just/unjust. Nevertheless, the authors used the same rhetorical techniques as historical writers to place their narratives within the framework of divine vengeance. It is clear where the audience is supposed to understand divine support lies and where it does not, even when the emotions and motivations of evil characters are treated somewhat sympathetically. To achieve this, there is usually a clear separation between the motivations that an author ascribes to a character, and an author's own commentary on the action, which forces the audience to think about the social and spiritual consequences of that action. The only situation in which a desire for revenge is not lamented at all is in the heat of battle, when the wish to avenge fallen companions is portrayed as honourable and inspirational. In these respects there are probably more continuities than changes in the character of fictional narratives with revenge plots at their centre between the tenth and twelfth centuries.

⁷⁵⁰ See *Raoul de Cambrai*, ed. Kay, trans. Kibler, pp. 7, 17-22. Kay, 'La Composition de "Raoul de Cambrai"', pp. 476-77. Robert A. Eisner, 'Raoul de Cambrai, ou la tragédie du désordre', *The French Review: Special Issue* 45.3 (1971) p. 41.

⁷⁵¹ Dominique Barthélemy, 'Feudal War in Tenth-Century France' in Susanna A. Throop and Paul R. Hyams (eds.) *Vengeance in the Middle Ages: Emotion, Religion and Feud* (Ashgate, 2010) pp. 105-13.

ENACTING GOD'S WILL WITH HONOUR AND GLORY

The battle cry that the *Roland* poet gives to Charlemagne's army, that 'God has allowed us to administer his judgement' on the Saracens whilst avenging Roland and his army's deaths, is reminiscent of battle orations retrospectively composed for army leaders by Anglo-Norman historians. In *La Chanson de Roland*, this cry is a dramatic embellishment of Charlemagne's battle which adds both poignancy and credibility to the poet's presentation of his divinely approved victory.⁷⁵² Battle orations containing statements of this nature were used in the same way by Anglo-Norman historical authors. The idea of fighting to avenge God, or with God's aid, was a common trope of battle orations attributed to army leaders in the central middle ages, although John Bliese has shown that this was still less frequent than appeals to the virtues of bravery and prowess and consequent glory and honour.⁷⁵³ Bliese identified seventeen categories of encouragement that regularly appear in recorded battle orations from the central middle ages. Most frequent was an appeal to men's sense of honour achieved through prowess; the assurance that God would lend help in the coming battle (a category which includes the idea of fighting to avenge God) was third; vengeance appears only eleventh.⁷⁵⁴ The commonalities between recorded battle orations undoubtedly means that they are largely rhetorical trope, but they were designed to have an impact, and this suggests that ecclesiastical writers were in touch with the kinds of motivations that were likely to inspire men to fight, or were likely to provoke admiration for the army leader giving the speech by their readers.⁷⁵⁵ This hierarchy of inspirational statements suggests that a motive of vengeance was not a necessary justification for starting a battle, and that, in rhetorical characterisations, religious sensibilities were considered complementary to notions of prowess and honour as modes of encouragement to fight. Whether those religious considerations mattered at the moment of acting is more difficult to assess.

A prominent example of the way that social and religious sensibilities were set in combination in battle orations in this way is the speech attributed to Duke William before the Battle of Hastings by Henry of Huntingdon.⁷⁵⁶ I have already discussed how Henry constructed

⁷⁵² Owen, 'The Epic and History', p. 18.

⁷⁵³ John R.E. Bliese, 'Rhetoric and Morale: A Study of Battle Orations from the Central Middle Ages', *Journal of Medieval History* 15.3 (1989) p. 206.

⁷⁵⁴ Bliese, 'Rhetoric and Morale: A Study of Battle Orations', pp. 204-17.

⁷⁵⁵ *Ibid.* pp. 201-04.

⁷⁵⁶ On the likelihood of William having given some sort of speech before Hastings, see John R.E. Bliese, 'Rhetoric and Morale in the Norman Conquest of England', *Military Affairs* 52 (1988) pp. 23-28.

his narrative of the Norman Conquest within the framework of divine vengeance. The prologue of book six of his *Historia Anglorum* reiterates that the coming of the Normans was one of the afflictions that God had planned for the English people on account of their compelling crimes, which means that, when the audience arrives at William's battle speech, they are primed once more with the image of the Normans as the agents of God's wrath against the English.⁷⁵⁷ Nevertheless, the speech that Henry gives to Duke William appeals to human social obligations and grievances, and to his army's sense of honour, rather than to any sense of the Normans being the agents of divine justice:

Are you not ashamed that King Harold, who has broken the oath he made to me in your presence, should have presumed to show you his face? It is amazing to me that you have seen with your own eyes those who by execrable treachery beheaded your kin, together with my kinsman Alfred, and that their impious heads should still stand on their shoulders. Raise your standards, men, and let there be no measure or moderation to your righteous anger. Let the lightning of your glory be seen from the east to the west, let the thunder of your charge be heard, and may you be the avengers of most noble blood.⁷⁵⁸

The construction of this speech within Henry's overall representation of the Normans as the agents of divine vengeance illustrates Hyams's point that vengeful humans could be portrayed as acting on God's behalf, but human initiative was still needed.⁷⁵⁹ It also fits Guy Halsall's model of a feuding society, in which grievances did not have to be followed by immediate revenge, but could be let to lie, and could then later resurface as a justification for violence to solve another, more immediate problem.⁷⁶⁰ Henry presents William as co-opting the support of his army by bringing them into a shared sense of injured honour, with personal grievances channelled into an obligation for vengeance. Given Henry's overall portrayal of the Normans as the agents of divine vengeance, it is significant that he does not feel the need to include this sense of acting on behalf of God in his composition of William's battle speech. It highlights the gap between what men's motivations for vengeance might have been at the point of acting and later rhetorical representations that sought to emphasise larger moral lessons.

In contrast, Henry of Huntingdon and William of Malmesbury's depictions of the Battle of Lincoln of 1140/41, when Robert Earl of Gloucester was called to break a siege laid by King Stephen around Lincoln Castle, a battle which ended with the capture of Stephen and his

⁷⁵⁷ HCHA, vi.preface, pp. 339-40.

⁷⁵⁸ HCHA, vi.29, pp. 389-93.

⁷⁵⁹ Hyams, *Rancor and Reconciliation*, p. 126.

⁷⁶⁰ Halsall, 'Violence and Society', pp. 20-21.

supporter Count Baldwin, do attribute to both Robert and Baldwin a sense of themselves as acting on behalf of God. As with Charlemagne's army's cry in *La Chanson de Roland*, in this case the battle orations serve to reinforce a sense of the outcome as 'God's judgement on the king'.⁷⁶¹ Henry's account was probably written by 1146 and is interesting because he gives a rousing speech to both Earl Robert and Count Baldwin before the battle with almost identical words of encouragement, although only Robert's speech invokes a motivation of vengeance:⁷⁶²

Robert: lift up your spirits, relying on your own courage, or rather on God's justice, take up God's offer of vengeance on those vicious men and fix your eyes on unfading glory for yourselves and your descendants. And now, if you share this determination to carry out this judgement of God, vow to advance and swear not to take flight, together raising your right hands to heaven. 'He had scarcely finished, when they all renounced flight with a blood-curdling cry, their hands raised to heaven, and buckling themselves into their armour, made their splendid advance towards the enemy.'⁷⁶³

Baldwin: what have they done, by God's will, other than offer themselves and their baggage to you? You see their horses, their arms, and their very bodies subjected to your power. So, warriors, stretch out your courage and your invincible right hands, and leaping high, seize what God himself has offered you'. But even before he brought the course of his speech to an end, the enemy's din was upon them....⁷⁶⁴

In Robert's speech, the sense of acting on behalf of God complements and helps to justify his army's pursuit of glory through engaging in the battle. Baldwin's speech being cut short demonstrates that his use of the same arguments was not justified or condoned by God. This rhetorical technique by Henry can be compared to an instance in Orderic Vitalis's *Historia Ecclesiastica*, when he attributes to the rebels Earl Robert of Hereford and Ralph of Norwich in the reign of William the Conqueror, men who he considers to be traitors and tyrants, a speech pertaining to the idea that God had brought about an opportune moment for them to seize the realm, since heaven had made it plain that William was not worthy to govern the kingdom.⁷⁶⁵ These are indications that it was not considered unrealistic for men to sometimes attempt to cultivate the idea that their planned vengeful actions were to be undertaken on behalf of God

⁷⁶¹ HHHA, x.19, p. 739. 'Dei igitur iudicio circa regem'.

⁷⁶² For the date of Henry's composition, see Donald Matthew, *King Stephen* (London, 2002) p. 64.

⁷⁶³ HHHA, x.15-16, pp. 727-33, at pp. 730-32: 'erigite animos et de uirtutibus uestris – immo, de Dei iusticia – confis, uindictam uobis a Deo oblatam de facinorosis presumite, et gloriam inmarcessibilem uobis et posteris uestris prefigite. Et iam si uobis idem animus est ad hoc Dei iudicium perpetrandum, progressionem uouete, fugam abiurate, erectis in celum unanimiter dextris. 16. Vix finierat, et omnes extensis in celum minibus terribili clamore fugam abiurauerunt, et se in celum colligentes in hostem splendide progrediuntur.'

⁷⁶⁴ HHHA, x.18, pp. 736-37. 'quid aliud egerunt nisi quod uobis Dei nutu et se et impedimenta sua optulerunt? Equos itaque eorum et arma et ipsorum corpora ditioni uestre subiecta conspiciatis. Extendite igitur animos uestris et dextras inexpugnabiles, viri bellicose, ad diripiendum cum summo tripudio quod ipse uobis optulit Deus.' Sed iam antequam orationis seriem terminaret, clamor adest hostium...'

⁷⁶⁵ OVHE, 4, ed. Chibnall, 2, ii. 258-59, pp. 311-13.

in order to inspire followers, but the use of these arguments did not always correspond with success. It was then up to historians to retrospectively determine where God's support lay.

William of Malmesbury, describing the Battle of Lincoln in his *Historia Novella* (1140x1143), does not directly attribute these religious considerations to Robert, but instead speculates on Robert's thoughts before joining battle, inserting spiritual justification alongside Robert's personal motives for coming to the aid of Lincoln:

the king had wronged his son-in-law who was in no way at fault, was besieging his daughter and had turned into a castle the church of the Blessed Mother of God at Lincoln. How greatly these things must have influenced the prince's mind! Would it not be better to die and fall with glory, rather than bear so signal an affront? So, for the sake of avenging God and his sister, and to free his relatives, he took the risk. The adherents of his party, most of them disinherited men inflamed to grief for what they had lost and conscious of valour, followed him eagerly...⁷⁶⁶

Divine punishments for churches being turned into castles are among the vengeance miracles for impiety in my survey;⁷⁶⁷ by adding this affront to God to Robert's list of personal grievances, William is providing an added level of justification for Robert's actions and attempting to portray them in a positive light by indicating that his sense of religious duty is complementing if not overriding his sense of duty to his family, whilst still appealing to heroic notions of shame, honour and glory. The *Historia Novella* was commissioned by Robert of Gloucester himself and was consciously constructed in his praise. There were times when William of Malmesbury struggled to consistently justify Robert's actions, largely because of his change of allegiance from his half-sister the Empress Matilda to King Stephen in 1135, then back to Matilda in 1138.⁷⁶⁸ In spite of this, William seeks to present Robert's unswerving commitment to Matilda's cause by insisting that his decision to support her in 1138 was due to the king's infidelity and because, having consulted many ecclesiastics, if he neglected his original oath to his sister he would live this life in disgrace and not earn blessedness in the next.⁷⁶⁹ The fact that it took Robert so long to decide that it was in his interests to keep faith with Matilda and take to action avenge her wrongs suggests that the idea of acting for the

⁷⁶⁶ WMHN, iii.42, pp. 82-85: 'rex generum suum nullis eius culpis iniuriauerat, filiam obsidebat, aecclesiam beatae Dei genitricis de Lindocolino incastellauerat. Haec quanti apud mentem principis esse debebant! Nonne prestaret mori et gloriose occumbere, quam tam insignem contumeliam pati? Vliscendi ergo Deum et sororem, simulque necessitudines suas liberandi, dedit se discrimini.'

⁷⁶⁷ Appendix, 119, 176.

⁷⁶⁸ Matthew, *King Stephen*, pp. 70-71

⁷⁶⁹ WMHN, i.21, pp. 41-43. On the dating of books one and two, see pp. xxx-xxxiii. Bjorn Weiler, 'Royal Justice and Royal Virtue in William of Malmesbury's *Historia Novella* and Walter Map's *De Nugis Curialium*', in István P. Bejczy and Richard G. Newhauser (eds.) *Virtue and Ethics in the Twelfth Century* (Leiden, 2005) pp. 321-28.

preservation of his soul was a convenient excuse that allowed William of Malmesbury to gloss over his selfish ambition.⁷⁷⁰

It is almost impossible to uncover individual perspectives prior to a vengeful act underneath the rhetoric of historical characterisations, but the way that historians represented certain people and their motivations can reveal the kinds of attitudes that were to be admired or despised. In the same way as literary texts, authorial voices guided their readers to an understanding of certain people as enacting vengeance on God's behalf, or as acting sinfully. This did not always correspond with the stated immediate motivations of the historical figures themselves, for example in Henry of Huntingdon's account of the Battle of Hastings. While the representation of certain individuals as the agents of God's vengeance was retrospectively applied by ecclesiastical historians in order to place those people and their actions in the best possible moral light, their constructions of battle orations do indicate that this was one situation where God's will was likely to be invoked at the time of acting in support of other social motivations for fighting, whether followed by success or not. Henry of Huntingdon and Orderic Vitalis certainly thought that this type of speech was appropriate by the victorious Earl Robert, defeated Baldwin, and the unsuccessful rebels against William the Conqueror. William of Malmesbury had more difficulty making Earl Robert's behaviour admirable, but does so by finding and inserting spiritual justifications for his actions. While it would be disingenuous to discount all ascribed religious considerations in the pursuit of vengeance through battle, authors of historical narratives seem to have used spiritual frameworks primarily as rhetorical tools for retrospectively presenting particular acts of vengeance as morally justified and enacted in accordance with God's will.

⁷⁷⁰ On Robert's lacklustre efforts to promote Matilda's cause and his self-interest, see Matthew, *King Stephen*, pp. 123-24, Robert B. Patterson, 'William of Malmesbury's Robert of Gloucester: A Re-Evaluation of the *Historia Novella*' in *The American Historical Review* 70.4 (1965) pp. 983-97.

‘JUSTIFIABLE IN THE SIGHT OF GOD AND ACCEPTABLE IN THE EYES OF MEN’ ⁷⁷¹

Much attention has been given to the way that personal systems of feud operated over the tenth to twelfth centuries within an increasingly centralised state subject to royal authority, based on discussions of the extent to which taking personal, violent revenge was acceptable and justifiable, and how often recourse to violence was taken, within a system which also incorporated court procedures and official punishments.⁷⁷² This increasing centralisation of judicial procedure might be seen as a way of resolving the moral conflict between the social need for vengeance and a spiritual need for forgiveness, since the conflation of what constituted crime and sin in this period meant that judicial punishment could be theologically justified as being dealt out on behalf of God. In both Augustine and Jerome’s thinking, when a criminal was executed he was killed by the law on behalf of God rather than by an individual executioner, meaning that legal punishment became the embodiment of both divine and societal vengeance.⁷⁷³ This merging of divine and secular law is traceable back to the earliest English codes, and was given new weight in the laws of Alfred, which explicitly aligned English law with the edicts of Moses, setting a precedent for the increasingly divine character of royal law over the tenth century, which became particularly forcefully articulated by Archbishop Wulfstan in the early eleventh century and continued to be represented as the edicts of the king designed to uphold the will of God in society up to the promulgation of the *Leges Henrici Primi* in the early twelfth century.⁷⁷⁴

This did not mean that legal procedures were not held up to scrutiny and their theological implications discussed. Then as now, for judicial punishment to be justifiable, judges had to be sure that they were not punishing innocent men. The problem of proof when prosecuting offenders was, in the most difficult cases, resolved through recourse to the direct

⁷⁷¹ Quotation from III Edgar 1.2 in context of remission of compensations: ‘swilce hit for Gode gebeorhlic sy 7 for worlde aberendlic’, and in VI Æthelred 10.1: ‘swa for Gode sy gebeorhlic 7 for worolde aberendlic’ in context of merciful punishments proportional to the offence, II Cnut 2: ‘swa hit for Gode sy gebeorhlic 7 for worulde aberendlic’ referring to whenever anyone sins and commits grievous crime, ed. Robertson, *The Laws of the Kings of England*, pp. 25, 95, 175.

⁷⁷² Hudson, *Oxford History of the Laws of England*; Hyams, ‘Was There Really Such a Thing as Feud?’; Hyams, ‘Feud and the State’; Halsall, ‘Violence and Society’; Hudson, ‘Feud, Vengeance and Violence’; Hyams, *Rancor and Reconciliation*, pp. 71-72. Patrick Wormald, ‘Giving God and King Their Due: Conflict and Its Regulation in the Early English State’, in Patrick Wormald, *Legal Culture in the Early Medieval West: Law as Text, Image and Experience* (London, 1999) pp. 336-42. Cf. Lambert, *Law and Order in Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 1-24, 163-201.

⁷⁷³ Foxhall Forbes, *Heaven and Earth*, pp. 139-40

⁷⁷⁴ David Pratt, *The Political Thought of Alfred the Great* (Cambridge, 2007) pp. 215-29. Wormald, *The Making of English Law*, pp. 426-29.

judgement of God through oaths, ordeals, and, after 1066, trial by battle, after which if an offender was found guilty judicial punishment might follow, though even the verdicts that such procedures revealed were not unproblematic or always accepted, and a system which depended for its efficacy on all concerned understanding and believing that perjury would have consequences for the soul at the last judgement was open to abuse.⁷⁷⁵ The efficacy of oath-taking therefore occasionally needed to be shored up through tangible examples of God's power. Two miracles in the *Life of St Kenelm*, one in Byrhtferth's *Life of St Ecgbine* and one in Herman's *Miracles of St Edmund* involve men being prevented from swearing a false oath by divine punishment, and seem to serve as affirmations of the validity of oath-taking as a judicial practice as well as functioning as demonstrations of the power of the saint in question to protect their monastery's lands.⁷⁷⁶ These miracle stories seem to work on a similar premise to that which has been suggested for the Anglo-Saxon ordeal by consecrated bread that was reserved for the clergy, that God would not allow a person to swear a false oath at the altar without demonstrating his displeasure.⁷⁷⁷ Given that so few vengeance miracle stories feature divine punishments for false oaths however, it would appear that tangible signs of God's involvement during such judicial processes were the exception rather than the rule, which meant that knowing in what circumstances human judges truly were enacting God's will could therefore be problematic. Capital punishment in particular, though used throughout the period under consideration, was up for debate, with even ecclesiastics such as Ælfric and Wulfstan in the early eleventh century not seemingly able to agree on exactly when judicial execution was and was not appropriate.⁷⁷⁸

The codes known as VIII Æthelred and II Cnut, written by Archbishop Wulfstan of York, explicitly state the specific duty of the king, as Christ's deputy, to avenge offences against God. In VIII Æthelred this clause is in the context of punishments for homicides committed in a church in violation of sanctuary, while in II Cnut it is in relation to protecting men in orders and strangers, both of which have spiritual implications.⁷⁷⁹ In VIII Æthelred,

⁷⁷⁵ Foxhall Forbes, *Heaven and Earth*, pp. 150-72. Robert Bartlett, *Trial by Fire and Water: The Medieval Judicial Ordeal* (Oxford, 1986) pp. 24-100. Sarah Larratt Keefer, 'Donne se cirlicsa man ordeales weddigeð: The Anglo-Saxon Lay Ordeal' in Stephen Baxter, Catherine Karkov, Janet L. Nelson and David Pelteret (eds.) *Early Medieval Studies in Memory of Patrick Wormald* (Ashgate, 2009) pp. 353-67. The first mention of trial by battle in English law codes is in *William I: Exculpations Regarding Exculpation* 1-2, ed. Robertson, *The Laws of the Kings of England*, p. 233.

⁷⁷⁶ Appendix, 58, 60-61, 88.

⁷⁷⁷ John D. Niles, 'Trial by ordeal in Anglo-Saxon England: What's the problem with barley?' in Stephen Baxter, Catherine Karkov, Janet L. Nelson and David Pelteret (eds.) *Early Medieval Studies in Memory of Patrick Wormald* (Ashgate, 2009) pp. 370-72.

⁷⁷⁸ Foxhall Forbes, *Heaven and Earth*, pp. 179-83.

⁷⁷⁹ VIII Æthelred 2.1, II Cnut 40, ed. Robertson, *The Laws of the Kings of England*, pp. 119, 197.

Wulfstan also extends this duty to being incumbent on every Christian man, this time without being directly connected to a spiritual context.⁷⁸⁰ This latter clause appears to remove the special status of the king as divinely appointed avenger of offences against God by ascribing the same duty to any Christian man, and since the exact ways that vengeance should be taken are not specified, in so doing perhaps legitimises vengeance taken within the process of feud as being part of the same judicial structure as official punishments decreed under royal law. In giving approval to vengeful human action carried out on behalf of God, it would appear that Wulfstan considered passivity in the face of wrong, especially in the context of abuses against the church and members of the clergy, just as unacceptable to God as illegitimate vengeance. Born out of the desperate situation of viking invasions of unprecedented scale and ferocity at the end of Æthelred's reign, Wulfstan's law codes gained an increasingly homiletic tone, and VIII Æthelred represents this merging of legal prescription and pastoral injunction designed to draw attention to cultivating the proper relationship of society with God at its height.⁷⁸¹ Wulfstan's codes therefore represent an idealised vision of the role of both law and independent initiative in prosecuting offenders on God's behalf.

One problem with equating judicial punishment with God's justice was that human agents, even judges, were flawed, which meant that limits had to be set to ensure that the boundaries of what was considered adequate punishment were not crossed so that it became excessive.⁷⁸² Once again, this balance is articulated most clearly by Archbishop Wulfstan in his code known as VI Æthelred, in the context of the necessity of determining upon 'merciful punishment' for trivial offences':

10.1. But every deed shall be carefully distinguished and judgement meted out in proportion to the offence, as shall be justifiable in the sight of God and acceptable in the eyes of men.

10.2. And he who judges another shall earnestly consider what he himself desires when he says: "Forgive us our trespasses" etc.⁷⁸³

⁷⁸⁰ VIII Æthelred 35, ed. Robertson, *The Laws of the Kings of England*, p. 127.

⁷⁸¹ Lawson, 'Archbishop Wulfstan and the Homiletic Element', p. 154. Patrick Wormald, *Legal Culture in the Early Medieval West: Law as Text, Image and Experience* (London, 1999) pp. 243-46; Patrick Wormald, *The Making of English Law*, pp. 449-65.

⁷⁸² Foxhall Forbes, *Heaven and Earth*, p. 130.

⁷⁸³ VI Æthelred 10.1-2, ed. Robertson, *The Laws of the Kings of England*, p. 95. '10.1. Ac æghwice dæde toscade man wærlice 7 dom æfter dæde medemige be mæpe, swa for Gode sy gebeorhlic 7 for worulde aberendlic. 10.2. 7 geþence swyþe georne se þe oþrum deme, hwæs he sylf gyrne, þonne he þus cweðe: "Et dimitte nobis debita nostra" et reliqua.'

Here, Wulfstan directly acknowledges the tension between what is admissible to God and desired by men in vengeful and punitive action, in a rare nod to human emotional needs in the law codes.⁷⁸⁴ Merciful punishment, for Wulfstan, appears to have meant punishment short of the death penalty, of which he was a vocal opponent.⁷⁸⁵ II Cnut (likely issued in 1027 or 1029-34), which Wulfstan is also thought to have had a hand in compiling, explains that severe mutilations are prescribed for repeated offences instead of death so that ‘punishment shall be inflicted, while, at the same time, the soul is preserved from injury’ (*swa man sceal steoran 7 eac ðære saule beorgan*).⁷⁸⁶ This gave the offender the opportunity to repent and maintain the final judgment of the soul as God’s prerogative. Wulfstan’s preference for such ‘merciful’ punishments may also have arisen from consideration for the souls of the judges who prescribed them; imposing the burden of severe physical suffering on offenders meant that their chances at salvation were improved, and that the judge would not commit a sin himself by imposing an unduly harsh capital sentence.⁷⁸⁷ Interestingly, the only total prohibition of capital punishment is found in laws attributed to William I, which stipulate that the offender should suffer blinding, mutilation and/or castration rather than death.⁷⁸⁸ The *Leges Henrici Primi* once more stipulate that ‘capital punishment should be carried out with respect to all persons of manifest guilt’ and explicitly appeal to Augustine and Jerome to support the argument that judicial killing is not sinful.⁷⁸⁹ Even though capital punishment was permissible, it was consistently regarded as extreme, and legislation therefore set limits to the extent to which humans could legitimately act as the agents of God, which meant that judicial punishment should ideally aim to be corrective or purgative rather than vindictive.⁷⁹⁰

This connection between legal punishment and God’s justice is rarely articulated outside of the ideological statements of law codes. Only five of the two-hundred episodes of divine vengeance surveyed in the last two chapters involve legal punishment, and all of them

⁷⁸⁴ Hyams, ‘Neither Unnatural nor Wholly Negative: The Future of Medieval Vengeance’, p. 205.

⁷⁸⁵ Foxhall Forbes, *Heaven and Earth*, p. 176.

⁷⁸⁶ II Cnut 30.5, ed. Robertson, *The Laws of the Kings of England*, p. 191. On the dating of I and II Cnut, see pp. 137-39.

⁷⁸⁷ See Nicole Marafioti, ‘Earthly Justice and Spiritual Consequences: Judging and Punishing in the Old English Consolation of Philosophy’ in Jay Paul Gates and Nicole Marafioti (eds.) *Capital and Corporal Punishment in Anglo-Saxon England* (Woodbridge, 2014) pp. 115-24.

⁷⁸⁸ *The Ten Articles of William I*, 10, *Willelmi Articuli Retractati*, 17, ed. Robertson, *The Laws of the Kings of England*, pp. 242-43, 250-51.

⁷⁸⁹ *LHP*, 49.7: ‘debet autem de conuictis iustitia fieri.’ 72.1c-d, Translation from *Leges Henrici Primi*, ed. L.J. Downer (Oxford, 1972) pp. 165, 229.

⁷⁹⁰ Hyams, ‘Neither Unnatural nor Wholly Negative: The Future of Medieval Vengeance’, p. 214, Nicole Marafioti and Jay Paul Gates, ‘Introduction: Capital and Corporal Punishment in Anglo-Saxon England’ in Jay Paul Gates and Nicole Marafioti (eds.) *Capital and Corporal Punishment in Anglo-Saxon England* (Woodbridge, 2014) pp. 1-16.

involve criminal social acts rather than religious abuses. Asser's *Life of Alfred* contains a story about a priest and a deacon who attempted to kill their abbot but were caught, imprisoned, tortured and killed, with the outcome framed as being through God's judgement.⁷⁹¹ Goscelin's *Life of St Wulfsgie* records how, following the theft of one of the church's golden shrines, a voice coming from Wulfsgie's tomb was heard to say, 'Revenge is mine, I will repay saith the Lord', and this prophecy was fulfilled that same day when the thieves were arrested and punished.⁷⁹² In Goscelin's telling, the disembodied voice gives divine sanction to the arrest of the thieves. It is an unusually explicit example of the way that earthly punishment could be considered to be the enactment of God's revenge. Similarly, Herman's *Miracles of St Edmund* relate how a thief at Edmund's shrine was eventually caught by the sacrist's servants and when he confessed was flogged, branded and banished as a criminal.⁷⁹³ Another is a miracle of Modwenna, in which a forester called Osmund continually harmed the monastery of Burton by confiscating, killing and impounding livestock that crossed the boundary with his land.⁷⁹⁴ Modwenna appeared to Osmund one night in a vision, accused him of causing strife with the monastery, and threatened to have his eyes torn out and her wood returned to its rightful owners whether he wished it or not. Osmund was initially moved to repent, but soon disregarded the dream, and that very week was caught in another, unspecified crime and lost both his eyes in the penalty that was his due. The rhetorical construction of this miracle is apparent because his treatment of the monastery's lands and his blinding for another crime were only connected through Geoffrey's narrative.

It may be significant that the punishment suffered by Osmund was corporal rather than capital. The other miracle featuring legal punishment is recorded by Abbo of Fleury in his *Life of St Edmund* and involves the capital punishment of a group of thieves who tried to steal from St Edmund's church.⁷⁹⁵ Despite general proscriptions of capital punishment for theft in Old English law codes, in this story the death sentence is not regarded positively. The miracle itself is that the thieves became bound to the spot in the act of breaking into the church and were thus discovered. Bishop Theodred subsequently gave the order for them to be hanged, and Abbo says that he was penitent for this decree for the rest of his life and sought reconciliation with

⁷⁹¹ Appendix, 13.

⁷⁹² Appendix, 67. Trans. Rosalind Love, 'The Life of St Wulfsgie of Sherborne', pp. 114-15.

⁷⁹³ Appendix, 90.

⁷⁹⁴ Appendix, 127.

⁷⁹⁵ Appendix, 16. This episode does not appear in Herman's miracle collection since he designed it as a continuation of Abbo's. See *Herman the Archdeacon and Goscelin of St Bertin, Miracles of St Edmund*, ed. Tom Licence and Lynda Lockyer (Oxford, 2014) p. lxi.

God with a three-day fast and by washing and clothing Edmund's incorrupt body. Whilst this story must be read as a hagiographical construction, Theodred's conflicted attitude towards the death penalty may be borne out by his involvement in changing the minimum age for judicial execution from twelve to fifteen during the reign of Æthelstan, perhaps influenced by Irish and continental canon law, variant versions of which were circulating in England which stipulated either twelve or fifteen as the age at which the death penalty could be used.⁷⁹⁶

Such uncertainty over the spiritual morality of judicial capital punishment decreed by human judges may be one explanation for why it hardly ever features in vengeance miracle narratives composed by ecclesiastics, even though the majority of vengeance miracles involve the divinely decreed death of the offender by other means. Even though there was overlap between the definitions of sin against God and crime against the king, it is therefore significant that narratives of divine vengeance rarely encompass offences that might more naturally sit in the category of criminal acts liable for legal punishment, such as theft (except from monasteries) and homicide (except for the killing of a saint).⁷⁹⁷ This indicates either that God's judgement was apparent in cases of legal punishments and therefore did not need rhetorically articulating, or that the types of situations where God's intervention was most often perceived in the world were those where legal punishment could not reach, or were considered to be morally and spiritually wrong rather than criminal. Theodred's penitence for condemning the thieves to death also addresses the issue of whether clerics should be involved in passing secular judgements, something which Ælfric also explicitly instructs against in his correspondence with Archbishop Wulfstan, first in a private letter and then in his public *Pastoral Letter* written shortly after 1002.⁷⁹⁸ Abbo and Ælfric seem to have been specifically concerned about the appropriateness of clerics dealing out capital punishment, which would place their own souls in danger, rather than the rightness of the death penalty itself, and this leads into the next section on exactly when, and by whom, it was considered more appropriate and honour-worthy to withhold than to pursue vengeance.⁷⁹⁹

⁷⁹⁶ Foxhall Forbes, *Heaven and Earth*, pp. 147-50.

⁷⁹⁷ On the conflation of crime and sin, see *ibid.* pp. 130-37. Wormald, *The Making of English Law*, pp. 426-29.

⁷⁹⁸ Foxhall Forbes, *Heaven and Earth*, pp. 177-79.

⁷⁹⁹ *Ibid.* pp. 179-83.

WITHHOLDING VENGEANCE

In a legal system in which ‘self-help’ remained an integral part of dispute settlement, and in which one person’s view of wrong or insult requiring retaliation could be quite different from another’s, recognising when acts of vengeance were correct or incorrect in the sight of God could be a difficult task.⁸⁰⁰ Paul Hyams has convincingly argued that there is no suggestion in tenth- and eleventh-century Anglo-Saxon law codes that vengeance and salvation were incompatible.⁸⁰¹ Although this chapter has shown that vengeance could sometimes be justified spiritually, there were also circumstances in which withholding vengeance was considered to be the more admirable option. A wish to regulate and limit vendetta was a primary concern of law codes and was justified through Christian principles. The laws of Edmund (939-946), for example, through their regulations on vendetta, present a vision of a Christian society in which vengeful violence was not entirely prohibited, but was strictly regulated within a set of permissible circumstances.⁸⁰² Even though Edmund’s laws were perhaps created under the influence of Archbishop Oda of Canterbury, who had close connections with the continental reform movement, and should therefore be read in the context of the promotion of monastic values throughout society, their influence can be detected right up to the promulgation of the *Leges Henrici Primi* in the early twelfth-century.⁸⁰³

There were various circumstances in which violent vengeance was not permitted by law. The *Leges Henrici Primi* (hereafter *LHP*) are the latest, and longest, collection of laws compiled during the period under consideration, and contain the most detailed differentiations between circumstances of offences and the punishments that they deserve.⁸⁰⁴ Studies have shown that the payment of compensation for injury or death was consistently an option in feuding societies, meaning that peaceful settlement of disputes was not impossible, although appropriate compensation payments became less clearly and formally defined after the Norman Conquest.⁸⁰⁵ The *LHP* explicitly discuss oaths of reconciliation, though they also acknowledge that the likelihood of a friendly settlement depended on the degree of blame attaching to the

⁸⁰⁰ Hyams, *Rancor and Reconciliation*, p. 6.

⁸⁰¹ Hyams, ‘Feud and the State’, p. 25.

⁸⁰² II Edmund I, Preamble, ed. Robertson, *The Laws of the Kings of England*, p. 9.

⁸⁰³ Ann Williams, ‘Edmund I (920/21-946)’, *ODNB*, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/8501> [accessed 22.09.2018]. Wormald, *The Making of English Law*, pp. 398-415.

⁸⁰⁴ See the detailed legislation on homicide in *LHP* 68-80, ed. Downer, pp. 214-53.

⁸⁰⁵ Miller, *Eye for an Eye*, pp. 104-05. Hudson, *Oxford History of the Laws of England*, p. 411. Lambert, *Law and Order in Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 226, 350, 358-59.

slain person, and to the attendant circumstances.⁸⁰⁶ They also state that ‘No one may exact retribution in the case of his own man outside the proper operation of the law’,⁸⁰⁷ and at various points they elaborate provisions for lords and other men to disassociate themselves from an offender if they were not party to the offence, and seek to limit the target of vengeance in cases of homicide to the offender him- or herself, with explicit reference to the authority of the laws of Edmund.⁸⁰⁸ Other circumstances in which an enemy could be killed with impunity, i.e. without incurring any retaliatory vengeance, were the discovery of adultery (laws of Alfred, the so-called laws of William I and *LHP*),⁸⁰⁹ fighting on behalf of one’s lord if he is being attacked (laws of Alfred and *LHP*),⁸¹⁰ pursuing anyone who has violated sanctuary by committing homicide within a church (II Edmund, VIII Æthelred, I Cnut and *LHP*),⁸¹¹ and pursuing a thief (II Æthelstan and III Edmund).⁸¹² In more specific circumstances following the truce between King Æthelred and the viking fleet led by Olaf, II Æthelred insists that all injuries from before the truce should be forgotten, and no-one should attempt to avenge themselves or demand compensation.⁸¹³ V Æthelred also demands every dispute to be laid aside on holy days.⁸¹⁴

Law codes are normative texts and it is therefore difficult to determine with any accuracy the extent to which their precepts were known, used and followed, but they do represent idealised systems of social morality. These snippets of continuity between the tenth- and twelfth-century codes, though relatively sporadic, suggests that there were consistencies in the way that the immorality of vengeance in certain circumstances was ideologically thought about. No adulterer, violator of sanctuary, or thief could be legitimately avenged if they were subsequently slain because they had broken a code of honour. On the flip side, anyone who committed homicide whilst fighting on behalf of his lord should not become the target of any vengeance because he was upholding a code of honour. Interestingly though, Anglo-Saxon

⁸⁰⁶ *LHP*, 36-362b, 70.12c, ed. Downer, p. 141-45, 223.

⁸⁰⁷ *LHP*, 86-86.3, ed. Downer, p. 263. ‘Ne quis se vindicet de suo domine sine lege.’

⁸⁰⁸ *LHP*, 78.12, 88.9b, 88.11-11c, 88.12-21d pp. 223, 273, 275. II Edmund 1-1.3, ed. Robertson, *The Laws of the Kings of England*, p. 9.

⁸⁰⁹ *The Laws of Alfred (871-899)* 42.7, in *English Historical Documents c.500-1042* (hereafter *EHD*) ed. Dorothy Whitelock, vol. 1 (London, 1979) p. 380. *The (so-called) Laws of William I*, 35, ed. Robertson, *The Laws of the Kings of England*, p. 269. *LHP* 82.8, ed. Downer, p. 259.

⁸¹⁰ *The Laws of Alfred*, 42.5, ed. Whitelock, *EHD*, p. 380. *LHP* 88.10, ed. Downer, p. 273.

⁸¹¹ II Edmund 2, VIII Æthelred 1.1, I Cnut 2.2, ed. Robertson, *The Laws of the Kings of England*, pp. 9, 117, 155. *LHP*, 79.5, ed. Downer, p. 247.

⁸¹² II Æthelstan (924-939) 20.7, ed. Whitelock, *EHD*, p. 385. III Edmund, ed. Robertson, *The Laws of the Kings of England*, p. 13. Cf. Lambert, *Law and Order in Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 231-34.

⁸¹³ II Æthelred preamble, 1, 6.1, ed. Robertson, *The Laws of the Kings of England*, pp. 57-59.

⁸¹⁴ V Æthelred 19, ed. Robertson, *The Laws of the Kings of England*, p. 85.

penitential handbooks class revenge killing, even when demanded by honour for a kinsman, as murder, and prescribe penance accordingly.⁸¹⁵ The *LHP* also contain a section on appropriate penances for homicides by both laymen and clerics.⁸¹⁶ This is perhaps a further reflection of a clash of social values that simultaneously demanded the upholding of bonds of loyalty and honour with the spiritual ideal of forgiveness, and implies a paradox where vengeance could be technically justified from a social perspective and yet not morally justified from a religious perspective. In a similar way to the heavy penances imposed on the victorious side after the Battle of Hastings, penance following a revenge killing could therefore have been one way of reconciling that paradox.⁸¹⁷

Nevertheless, pastoral teaching discouraged vengeance. Ælfric's homilies promote the ideal of forgiveness, and peace is a strong theme in the preaching of bishop Wulfstan of Worcester as depicted in his *Life* by William of Malmesbury.⁸¹⁸ These pastoral messages were what might be considered the 'official' line of theological thought, and represent the ideas of members of the clergy who considered their interpretation of what constituted ideal Christian behaviour to be the only correct view.⁸¹⁹ Such official views tend to obscure all others, but sometimes clerical complaints about interpretations of scripture that they considered to be wrong reveal conflicting views of the morality of vengeance. Ælfric's aversion to retelling the Passion of St Thomas does not appear to have been shared by many, for example. In his later *Lives of Saints* series, Ælfric was forced to include the Passion after repeated requests from his patron ealdorman Æthelweard, though he compromises by introducing it with his doubts over translating it into English, repeating Augustine's reservations about the story related above because 'it is not in the catholic canon' (non enim est in catholico canone), and ostentatiously omitting it from his subsequent text.⁸²⁰ Æthelweard was unlikely to have been unaware of the part of the Passion of St Thomas that Ælfric omits; he was literate in Latin, and Ælfric implies

⁸¹⁵ See, for example, the *Old English Introduction*, Cambridge Corpus Christi College, MS 190, S76.02.06 and S76.02.07, *Scriftboc*, Oxford, Bodleian, MS Junius 121, X17.04.01, the *Old English Penitential*, Oxford, Bodleian, MS Laud 482, Y42.01.01, *Old English Handbook*, Cambridge Corpus Christi College, MS 201, D54.05.01, Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 265, C54.05.01, ed. Alan J. Frantzen, *Anglo-Saxon Penitentials: A Cultural Database* (2003-2007)

⁸¹⁶ *LHP*, 72.2b-73.6a, ed. Downer, pp. 229-31.

⁸¹⁷ 'Penitential articles issued after the Battle of Hastings, 1067x1070', ed. Whitelock, Brett, and Brooke, *Councils and Synods*, pp. 581-84. Cf. Lambert, *Law and Order in Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 183, 220-24.

⁸¹⁸ See above, Chapter 5: Introduction, and Chapter 4.

⁸¹⁹ Foxhall Forbes, *Heaven and Earth*, p. 31.

⁸²⁰ Ælfric, LoS 2.36, ed. Skeat, pp. 398-401, quotation at line 6. Ælfric's source was Augustine's *De sermone Domini in monte*. See 'Source Summary for Lives 36 (Passion of St Thomas the Apostle) (C.B.1.3.34)', 1997, *Fontes Anglo-Saxonici*, http://fontes.english.ox.ac.uk/data/content/astexts/src_summary.asp?refer=C%2EB%2E1%2E3%2E34 [accessed 14.06.2018]

that the vernacular ‘song’ version (leoð-wisan) which he refers to was widely known.⁸²¹ This means that he was making a deliberate point, both to his patrons and other readers, that this apocryphal story should not be taken notice of because of what he considered its dubious provenance and moral message with regard to its being perceived as a justification for vengeance. Ælfric in fact seems to have been using Augustine’s views selectively in this instance to support his own disapproval of what he saw as the misused message of the story; Augustine did not actually condemn it outright, arguing that even though it was not in the canon, there was still moral value to be gained from it because it was a demonstration of the way that vengeance could be justifiably taken on the body in order to save the soul.⁸²² Not all ecclesiastics shared Ælfric’s disapproval of the story. Orderic Vitalis includes it in full among the passions of many other martyrs in his *Historia Ecclesiastica*, which suggests that it raised issues of scriptural authority and appropriate behaviour that Ælfric was particularly sensitive to.⁸²³

The wider issue raised by Ælfric’s refusal to relate this part of the Passion of St Thomas is that of whether saintliness could ever be compatible with malevolent or vengeful thoughts. In Anglo-Norman hagiographical writing, any hint of conscious, vengeful behaviour by a saint during their lifetime (in contrast to the vengeful posthumous character of many saints) seems to have been universally disapproved of and swept under the carpet. Given the proliferation of vengeance miracles channelled through the saints discussed in the last chapters, this disapproval appears somewhat contradictory until it is considered that saintly vengeance miracles are almost exclusively posthumous and represent God’s punishment channelled through a dead saint rather than the vengeance of the living saint him/herself. Saints, whilst alive, were instead expected to exemplify the ideal of mercy and forgiveness, manifested in benevolent miracles. St Cuthbert is one saint whose changing character in this respect has been noted; his powerful persona as a vengeful protector of his community’s lands and interests only became established from the tenth century with the production of the *Historia de Sancto Cuthberto*, whereas his *Life* written by Bede in the early eighth century emphasised his calling as a hermit and his communion with the natural world.⁸²⁴ Elsewhere, Osbern is unusually explicit in having St Ælfheah explain how he strives to imitate Christ and emphatically refuses

⁸²¹ On Æthelweard’s literacy, see Mechthild Grestch, ‘Ælfric, Language and Winchester’ in Hugh Magennis and Mary Swan (eds.) *A Companion to Ælfric* (Leiden, 2009) pp. 130-36.

⁸²² M.R. Godden, ‘Ælfric’s Saints’ Lives and the Problem of Miracles’, in *Old English Prose: Basic Readings*, ed. Paul E. Szarmach and Deborah A. Oosterhouse (New York, 2000) pp. 294-95.

⁸²³ Appendix, 136.

⁸²⁴ Johnson-South, ‘Changing Images of Sainthood: St Cuthbert in the *Historia de Sancto Cuthberto*’, pp. 83-93.

to take vengeance on his enemies; Wulfstan of Worcester praises St Æthelwold for refraining from punishing a thieving monk; both St Anselm and St Modwenna are praised for praying for their enemies; and in the letter appended to the *Life of Ailred of Rievaulx*, Walter Daniel relates how Ailred refused to take any revenge on a monk who tried to kill him.⁸²⁵ This meant that when a living saint was perceived as having been implicated in a punitive miracle, such as the supposed prophecy of St Thomas, it created a conundrum for hagiographers.

Even in an atmosphere of some credulity with regard to the observation of the supernatural, categorisation and recording of an event as divine vengeance was not taken lightly. This was especially true of any occasion when divine punishment seemed to have been channelled through a saint during their lifetime. One story related by William of Malmesbury in his *Vita Dunstani* tells of a rich man called Ælfwold who fell ill and wished to become a monk at Glastonbury in order to heal himself. When he recovered some time later, he abandoned his monastic vows and did damage to the house, prompting the monks to complain to Archbishop Dunstan about him. Dunstan reportedly said to them, ‘Look for vengeance to the Mother of the Lord. As for him, let foxes eat him.’⁸²⁶ William asserts that this was not intended as a curse, but nevertheless came true, since the runaway monk fell ill and died in agony, and when his body was being taken to Glastonbury it was assaulted and eaten by foxes. This story does not appear in the earlier *Life of Dunstan* by the anonymous author B, which includes no information about Dunstan’s career as archbishop, and William of Malmesbury seems to include it in order to rebuff any idea that Dunstan himself was capable of any sort of malevolent behaviour.⁸²⁷

Similarly, in a defensive letter to a certain Maurice accompanying Walter Daniel’s (fl. 1150-1167) *Life of Ailred of Riveaulx* (b. 1110, d. 1167), in which Walter grudgingly responds to a request to provide witnesses for some of the miracles he ascribes to Ailred, of which two prelates had doubted the veracity, he supplies the names of witnesses for Ailred’s more benevolent miracles, but retracts his story of how Ailred cursed an obnoxious abbot who subsequently died and refuses to supply witness for it.⁸²⁸ Even though he lists the episode

⁸²⁵ Wulfstan of Winchester, *The Life of St Aethelwold*, 33, eds. Michael Lapidge and Michael Winterbottom (Oxford, 1991) pp. 49-53. Osbern, *Vita S. Alphegi*, pp. 133-34. Eadmer, *VA*, 45, ed. Southern, p. 122. *Life and Miracles of St Modwenna*, 19, ed. Bartlett, pp. 77-83. Walter Daniel, *The Life of Ailred of Rievaulx: With the Letter to Maurice*, ed. F.M. Powicke (London, 1950) pp. 79-80.

⁸²⁶ WMVD, ii.25.3, p. 281-83. ‘A domini matre ultionem exigite; illum comedant uulpes.’

⁸²⁷ Cf. Cubitt, ‘Archbishop Dunstan: A Prophet in Politics?’, pp. 153-55.

⁸²⁸ This may have been Maurice, prior of Kirkham, near Rievaulx at the time of Ailred’s death. See Walter Daniel, *The Life of Ailred of Rievaulx*, ed. Powicke, pp. xxx-xxxi, 68. Powicke, pp. xxx-xxxi. Stephen Justice, ‘Did the Middle Ages Believe in their Miracles?’ p. 6.

among Ailred's miracles in the *Life*, in the letter he acknowledges that the abbot's death may have been a coincidence that had the semblance of a miracle, rather than emphasising any miraculous cause.⁸²⁹ This letter is important for considering how people determined whether an event was miraculous. Although Walter may have initially had no qualms about attributing the abbot's death to Ailred's curse, he was aware that others did, and when pressed on this issue showed the same reluctance as William of Malmesbury when attributing the instigation of divine vengeance to a saint whilst they were alive. Ailred's own attitude to vengeful violence has been discussed with regard to his reaction to an incident within the Gilbertine order at Watton, when the nuns took brutal revenge on a young nun who had become pregnant and her lover by beating and imprisoning her and forcing her to castrate the young man.⁸³⁰ Scholars have disagreed over whether a letter which Ailred wrote in the 1160s describing the incident expresses more ambivalence or shock over such brutal violence on the grounds that he praised the nuns' zeal in avenging the injury done to Christ, though not necessarily the deed.⁸³¹ It is rare to find a glimpse of a saint's character from their own writing in addition to their hagiographical portrait. Ailred was a controversial saint, to the extent that Walter Daniel felt the need to write an *apologia* to accompany his *Life*, and it is a reminder of the way that hagiographical authors could gloss over the more unsavoury aspects of a saint's personality to make them conform to an idealised saintly standard. In Ailred's case, this miracle may have been problematic as much because of the lack of witnesses as much as because of its nature as a vengeance miracle, nevertheless the prevarications of Ælfric, William of Malmesbury and Walter Daniel suggest that the pursuit of revenge in any fashion was unacceptable and even inconceivable by the saints during their lifetimes.

This admiration of the ability to exercise restraint sometimes translated into portraits of kings and nobles in historical writing. Temperance in rulership did not equate to refraining from violence altogether, but in certain circumstances restraining vengeful impulses could be a mark of power. Henry of Huntingdon holds up the Roman Emperor Augustus as a model, describing him as mild, gracious, courteous, handsome, literate and eloquent, moderate in appetite, not vengeful over abusive talk about himself, and merciful to those accused of treason. However, he also wielded huge military strength and conquered many nations, which indicates

⁸²⁹ Walter Daniel, *The Life of Ailred*, ed. Powicke, p. 44, 68. Stephen Justice, 'Did the Middle Ages Believe in the Miracles?' p. 6.

⁸³⁰ Giles Constable, 'Aelred of Rievaulx and the Nun of Watton: An Episode in the Early History of the Gilbertine Order', in Derek Baker (ed.) *Medieval Women: Dedicated and Presented to Professor Rosalind M.T. Hill on the Occasion of Her Seventieth Birthday* (Oxford, 1978) pp. 208-10.

⁸³¹ *Ibid.* p. 208. Cf. Walter Daniel, *The Life of Ailred of Rievaulx*, ed. Powicke, pp. lxxxi-lxxxii.

that Henry only really considered restraint of violence a virtue in certain circumstances, namely relating to personal revenge.⁸³² This is elaborated by William of Poitiers in his *Gesta Guillelmi*. After a section describing how William crushed a rebellion in Normandy as ‘leader of the avenging party’ he admires how the ‘The Duke, moved by kinship, the humble submission, and the wretchedness of the defeated, did not seek a harsh vengeance.’⁸³³ There seems to have been no honour in crushing his opponents further than necessary. Then comes another long passage about William’s exploits in subduing enemy territories in France, but again he shows restraint at the crucial moment:

See now, the way is open for the Norman duke to devastate the wealth of the enemy and to plunge his name into eternal ignominy. But he knows that it is characteristic of wise men to temper victory and that the man who cannot restrain himself when he has the power to take vengeance is not really powerful. He decides therefore to turn aside from the road that had been auspicious for him.⁸³⁴

This passage contains echoes of religious discourses about the virtues of moral strength and emotional temperance required for ruling with love, fear, mercy and justice, seen, for example, in Ælfric’s translation of the *Twelve Abuses* and the *Vices and Virtues*.⁸³⁵ The *Gesta Guillelmi* continues to alternate in this way between Duke William’s calculated vengeful fury against his enemies and his demonstrations of clemency, and it is this knowledge of when to exercise or withhold vengeance that makes William such an imposing figurehead in this text.

Even though many of his actions are identical to those of his enemy lords in their conflicts over territory, wreaking devastation on the countryside through violence, Duke William is presented as a glorious avenger and sometimes magnanimous giver of mercy, whereas his enemies are arrogant, emotionally unstable, and are brought to ruin as a consequence.⁸³⁶ John Gillingham has put Duke William’s clemency in his treatment of his enemies down to the development of chivalrous ideology in Normandy in the first half of the eleventh century, arguing that the defining characteristic of chivalry among the Norman

⁸³² HHA, i.19, pp. 37-38.

⁸³³ Ibid. i.8, 9, pp. 11-13.

⁸³⁴ Ibid. i.19, pp. 26-27. ‘En duci Normannico liber progressus patet ad deuastandam hostis opulentiam, ad delendum aemuli nomen ignominia sempiterna. Sed nouit esse prudentium uictoriae temperare, atque non satis potentem esse qui semet in potestate ulciscendi continere non possit. Placet ergo fortunatum iter conuertere.’

⁸³⁵ *Two Ælfric texts : the twelve abuses and the vices and virtues ; an edition and translation of Ælfric's Old English versions of de duodecim abusivis and de octo vitiis et de duodecim abusivis*, ed. and trans. Mary Clayton (Cambridge, c.2013) see esp. the sixth and seventh abuses on weak lords and contentious men, pp. 123-25.

⁸³⁶ See, for example, the presentation of Count William of Arques in WPGG, 1.23-28, pp. 25-43. David Bates, ‘Anger, Emotion and a Biography of William the Conqueror’ in Janet L. Nelson, Susan Reynolds and Susan M. Johns (eds.) *Gender and Historiography: Studies in the Earlier Middle Ages in Honour of Pauline Stafford* (London, 2012) pp. 23-25.

aristocracy was merciful treatment of their defeated enemies (when they were fellow aristocrats) and a reluctance to kill and mutilate them when they were prisoners, in contrast to their contemporaries in Anglo-Saxon England, where politics was conducted with much less regard for life and limb, and that the Normans brought this more compassionate style of politics to England with them after 1066.⁸³⁷ However, this does not take into account William of Poitiers' idealised and quasi-hagiographical portrait of Duke William in the *Gesta Guillelmi*, and ignores what might have been more pragmatic considerations in his decisions not to dispatch his aristocratic enemies. Dominique Barthélemy has argued that in wars where the goal was reclaiming land, vengeance was often taken indirectly by pillaging the peasants of other lords rather than through bloody vendetta between great men.⁸³⁸ This is indeed borne out by William of Poitiers' hint that laying waste enemies' lands could be more expedient than killing them.⁸³⁹ That is not to say that chivalric mentality did not feature at all in Duke William's dealings with his Norman enemies, but that it is important to be aware that William of Poitiers wrote the *Gesta Guillelmi* specifically in praise of William's career up to the Norman Conquest of England, and therefore in a similar way to hagiographical texts, his emphasis on William's restraint in taking vengeance on his enemies has a heavy rhetorical gloss which represents an ideal rather than reality.

A similar case can be made for William of Malmesbury's portrait of Robert of Gloucester in his *Historia Novella*. I have already discussed how William glossed over Robert's belated and self-interested support for his sister Matilda, and this picture of the earl's unstinting loyalty is reinforced by a description of how in 1142 he refrained from avenging his wrongs on the citizens of the royal borough of Southampton at the request of a family who were his loyal dependents who feared becoming entangled in any ensuing conflict.⁸⁴⁰ Conveniently, Robert realised at the same time that it would be equally glorious for him to recover the castle at Wareham, which Stephen had attacked and plundered, in the hope that it would bring the king away from besieging his sister at Oxford.⁸⁴¹ It seems that in this instance, one grievance could be put aside without loss of face if pursuing it would have a negative impact on other bonds of responsibility and loyalty. Equally, though, complete inaction is not

⁸³⁷ John Gillingham, '1066 and the Introduction of Chivalry into England', in *The English in the Twelfth-Century: Imperialism, National Identity and Political Values* (Woodbridge, 2000) pp. 209-29. Cf. Hyams, *Rancor and Reconciliation*, p. 115.

⁸³⁸ Barthélemy, 'Feudal War in Tenth-Century France', pp. 105-12.

⁸³⁹ See, for example, WPGG, 1.38, p. 61.

⁸⁴⁰ WMHN, iii.75-77, pp. 127-29.

⁸⁴¹ WMHN, iii.77, pp. 129-31.

an option either, and the honour here is in withholding a particular act of vengeance where the detriment would have outweighed the gain. The ability to make such considered judgements is a mark of moral superiority for William.

On other occasions, vengeance was frowned upon because it conflicted with familial bonds and obligations. In the lead up to Beowulf's final battle with the dragon, he remembers his youth and speaks of how Hæthcyn, son of King Hrethel, accidentally shot his brother Herebald through missing his mark with a horn blow: 'That was a conflict without compensation, a wicked crime wearying to ponder in the heart; but nevertheless, the prince had to relinquish life unavenged.'⁸⁴² The problem for Hrethel lay in the conflicting obligations and loyalties that arose from one of his sons killing the other; because the killer, victim, and person who should take revenge were all part of the same family, the normal rules about honour and vengeance could not apply because they assume that the injured and injuring parties are from different groups. Hrethel is paralysed, not because, in Erin Sebo's argument, 'revenge in this case would be meaningless because there is no guilty party', but because his bond of kinship with his surviving son overruled his obligation to take vengeance for his dead son.⁸⁴³ A similar situation to that experienced by King Hrethel, in a story from British history in which a mother of two princes was faced with the murder of one of her sons by the other, is related by Geoffrey of Monmouth in his *Historia Regum Britanniae* and Wace in his *Roman de Brut*, though unlike King Hrethel, the mother brutally killed her remaining living son out of vengeful anguish for the death of the other.⁸⁴⁴ Geoffrey has no moral verdict, but Wace is outraged at what he regards as the mother's sin. Wace does not describe any divine vengeance against the mother herself, but he does bemoan the social consequences of her vengeance: the death of both princes created a succession vacuum and civil war ensued.⁸⁴⁵ The mother's sin, for Wace, lay not only in her breaking her bond of kinship to take vengeance on her son, but also in the disaster she brought upon the people as a result. Aside from Wace using this story as a demonstration of the moral degeneracy of the Britons to explain why the island was overrun by the Romans and Saxons, it also suggests that where bonds of loyalty between kin conflicted with an obligation to take vengeance, loyalty should take precedence.

⁸⁴² *Beowulf*, ll. 2441-2443, ed. Dobbie, p. 76. 'þæt wæs feohlæs gefeoht, fyrenum gesyngad, / hreðre hygemeðe; sceolde hwæðre swa þeah / æðeling unwrecen ealdres linnan.' Translation from *Beowulf*, ed. Swanton, p. 151.

⁸⁴³ Erin Sebo, 'Ne Sorga', p. 184.

⁸⁴⁴ See Geoffrey of Monmouth, *History of the Kings of Britain*, ii.16, ed. Thorpe, p. 88. *Wace's Roman de Brut, a History of the British: Text and Translation*, ll. 2151-2180, ed. Judith Weiss, Exeter Medieval English Texts and Studies (Exeter, 1999) pp. 54-57.

⁸⁴⁵ *Wace's Roman de Brut*, ll. 2181-2206, pp. 56-57

CONCLUSION

Vengeance permeated high medieval society in a variety of contexts. It was subject to rules and regulation (which could, however, be broken) and feuds, when properly conducted, were a functional means of maintaining social order.⁸⁴⁶ This chapter has also shown that vengeance posed a moral and spiritual problem, which was addressed in different ways. Heroic literature both valorised and problematized the destructive pursuit of vengeance in relation to its spiritual consequences. By sympathetically depicting the motivations of even villainous characters they forced audiences to think about the destructive personal and social consequences that cycles of vengeance and retaliation could have. Where historical authors perceived the workings of divine vengeance in a past event or series of events, or sought to present the actions of certain individuals as morally justified, they depicted individual human acts as corresponding to the divine will. Judicial procedure was laid down and carried out with thought for the consequences for the souls of both offenders and judges, though judicial punishments were rarely explicitly depicted as the direct result of divine vengeance. There were certain circumstances in which vengeance was not permitted or approved of, while any vengeful thought or intent on the part of the saints during their lifetimes was inconceivable.

The difference between the rhetorical frameworks in which literary and historical authors set their narratives, providing either spiritual warnings about characters' actions or depicting divine support for those actions, and the stated immediate motivations for vengeance of those characters, which most often were related to notions of personal honour, suggests that vengeance was often not undertaken with consideration for the consequences for the soul, and that ecclesiastical authors were aware of this. In judicial practice, however, thought for the appropriateness of punishments dealt out by humans, and for the souls of judges dealing out those punishments, seems to have been taken more often. Judicial procedure was one circumstance where judges were supposed to be punishing offenders on behalf of God, and had to be careful not to overstep the mark. Saints were admired for their restraint during their lifetimes, and were portrayed as unfailingly prioritising the ideal of forgiveness above all else. This indicates that such restraint was unusual and therefore admirable. Although individual perspectives are often obscured, the presentation of characters with distinct personalities in literary fiction, historical narratives and hagiographies suggests that we should perhaps think

⁸⁴⁶ Lambert, *Law and Order in Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 224-31, 350-51.

about a spectrum of piety from saintly people who refused to take vengeance in any situation, to those who gave no regard to Christian morality and the fate of their souls at all, with a conflicted space in the middle where the spiritual ideal of forgiveness and obligations of honour sometimes clashed and sometimes could be reconciled.

CONCLUSION

This thesis has provided a contribution to the fields of history of belief and mentalities as well as of the history of vengeance. My focus on the late Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Norman period has bridged some of the gaps in existing studies of the extent of religious belief in medieval society and the relationship between theological thought and social practice, and in doing so it has also contributed to debates over the extent of continuity and change in English society before and after the Norman Conquest, and to studies of Norman reception of the Anglo-Saxon past.⁸⁴⁷ Significantly, it has widened the lens of comparison of Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Norman society to show that there were many areas of religious, social and institutional continuity between the pre- and post-Conquest periods that stretched back further than the decades immediately preceding the Conquest, into the tenth century. This was especially true of the Benedictine and Gregorian reform movements, which differed in their scope more than in their aims, and of legal ideology, since twelfth-century law looked back to the codes of the early tenth century for its authority. Cultural change did happen, but outside of the political upheaval caused by the Conquest it was gradual, often patchy, and cannot be pinned down to any single moment of change.

The idea of divine vengeance consistently pervaded and influenced many parts of society and social practices; theology and notions of social morality were not divorced from each other, even though individual people engaged with divine vengeance as an influencing force in their lives to widely varying extents. Although it is almost impossible to uncover specific individual perspectives beyond the monastic and clerical authors of the sources under consideration, those sources do reveal the kinds of behaviours and attitudes that those authors sought to praise or condemn. Reports of the existence of rumours and of widespread talk about instances of God's vengeance in the world, while acknowledging that these are often textual tropes designed to bolster the authority of a certain story, should not always be dismissed as mere invention. At the same time, the observation of divine vengeance in the world was not the norm, and the authors of historical narratives, miracle stories and fictional literature all used similar rhetorical techniques to persuade their audiences that God's vengeance was at work in a particular event.

⁸⁴⁷ Thomas, *The English and the Normans*; Ridyard, 'Condigna Veneratio'; Loyn, *Anglo-Saxon England and the Norman Conquest*.

Divine vengeance as a concept was a way of understanding and rationalising worldly misfortunes and was intrinsically tied to notions of social morality and providence. The observation and experience of divine vengeance in the world was both a cause and effect of moral understandings of sin and its comeuppance. Theologians sought to understand the place of God's vengeance in the functioning of the relationship between heaven and earth through elucidating the existence of free will, the nature of sin, and the purposes of God's purgative or vindictive punishment. Many of the rituals of pastoral care, such as confession and penance, were focused on purgation from sin, to protect the soul from further punishment after death. Participation in these rituals was encouraged through both assurances of God's ultimate mercy and warnings about God's vindictive punishment, reinforced with examples of those who had suffered God's wrath on earth and people who had experienced visions of tortured souls in the afterlife. Ælfric was the first vernacular homilist in the surviving sources to grapple with free will as a concept and attempt to articulate to his audiences the theological principles that lay behind the Christian duties that they were expected to adhere to, while theological exposition and pastoral teaching became more divided from the later eleventh century, as the rise of new scholarly methods of logical reasoning led intellectual theologians such as Anselm to set the existence of free will and the nature of sin under increasing scrutiny, with greater emphasis placed on the importance of sinful intent over sinful action. Consistently, however, there remained the principle that God had a right to exact vengeance for offences against Himself, and that he could, and did, exercise that right both on earth and in the afterlife.

In practice, the interpretation of any event on earth as divine vengeance, or of certain people as the agents of divine vengeance, was always subjective, but it was not arbitrary. Theological reasoning about free will, the nature of sin and the necessity of repentance remained abstract principles, which meant that the exact sorts of behaviour that constituted sin were open to interpretation. Circumstances in which divine vengeance was likely to be perceived in the world and subsequently recorded included situations where there was known precedence for God's punishment striking, occasions of momentous historical change, and instances that related to the promotion of new religious ideals. The existence of models from biblical history and earlier medieval history served to reinforce the truth of many stories of divine vengeance. Explicit comparisons with such models are not often made, however, and therefore the impact of many stories relied on audiences having a common awareness of the types of situations in which divine vengeance was likely to occur, and a familiarity with well-known examples. Reliance on precedent and rhetorical trope does not necessarily mean that a

story of divine vengeance was (entirely) fabricated by an individual author (even though that possibility must often remain open), but more that an awareness of the types of occasions on which divine vengeance had struck in the past may have influenced the types of situations in which God's punishment was likely to be perceived and recorded by later authors. The exception to this is the unprecedented rise in vengeance miracles associated with the Gregorian reformers' promotion of clerical celibacy from the later eleventh century.

This thesis has also contributed to the history of memory. In the hands of historians, hagiographers and authors of miracle collections, the concept of divine vengeance became a rhetorical framework for interpreting the course of history and the fates of individuals on a smaller scale. This rhetorical framework might usefully be thought about as a way of remembering. Interpretations of any event as divine vengeance could only be made retrospectively, and in recorded narratives there is often a significant delay between perceived offence and divine punishment. In miracle stories and historical narratives, the speed with which divine vengeance could strike an offender ranged from instantaneously, to days, weeks, a year, or even decades after a sin had been committed. Theologically, this delay could be explained by the idea that God offered opportunities for repentance, and if repentance was not forthcoming, divine punishment would follow. Within the functioning of historical memory, in the cases of recorded historical narratives and miracle stories, it is likely that when misfortune occurred, an enquiry would be made back through the past to determine whether any sin had been committed that would have led to a divine punishment. If a prior sin was remembered, then a connection could be made with the subsequent misfortune and an interpretation of divine vengeance applied. Because any such interpretation was subjective, universal agreement could not be assumed, and it was an author's task to try to persuade his audience of his own conviction that divine vengeance truly was evident in any given situation. Stories of divine vengeance that were chosen for writing down were those that their authors considered to be the most convincing, or had most moral value. It is impossible to know how many other stories circulated orally and never achieved written form.

Importantly, no interpretation of an event as divine vengeance was inevitable. Specific circumstances were needed, and even interpretations of divine vengeance that appear universal in the source material were in fact highly curated; disagreement existed but was not often acknowledged. Chapter two showed that interpretations of significant historical events as divine vengeance developed slowly, and were represented in a variety of ways by different historians. It also showed that there were other writers who did not think that these supernatural

explanations were necessary to explain the course of history. Any assessment of an event as evidence of divine vengeance was tied to a certain moral agenda. This was true of historical narratives, miracle stories and fictional literature. Sometimes authors acknowledged differing opinions as to whether an accident was the result of God's vengeance or natural causes, but more often they presented their interpretations of divine vengeance as irrefutable. Sometimes these interpretations stuck and gained widespread acceptance; sometimes they faded away as the urgency of their moral message dissipated, or remained localised.

I have emphasised the concept of divine vengeance as a retrospective interpretative framework for explaining the course of events, but there may also have been times, such as with the death of William Rufus, when God's punishment was anticipated. In these cases, if a misfortune occurred it would have been likely to become interpreted as divine vengeance quickly by those who had been looking for it. Sometimes, though, divine vengeance was hoped for or expected, yet did not materialise. Robert Bartlett has pointed to a story in the *Liber Eliensis* in which Picot, sheriff of Cambridgeshire, plundered the Abbey of Ely in the years after 1066 and expressed contempt for St Æthelthryth. The author of the *Liber Eliensis* calls on God to punish him, but has no vengeance miracle to report other than the death of his assistant, Gervase, whose fatal vision of St Æthelthryth was discussed in chapter three.⁸⁴⁸ Similarly, Herman the Archdeacon records a miracle in which a thief stole from St Edmund's tomb three times before he was caught and punished, despite the monks' prayers to Edmund for vengeance after the first theft.⁸⁴⁹ Herman implies, retrospectively, that God caused the thief to be unable to rid himself of the ornaments that he had stolen or to leave the confines of Edmund's town with them, but it was eventually through the initiative of the monks themselves that the thief was caught and punished. This lack of punishment against Picot himself, and Edmund's failure to respond to the prayers of his monks after the first theft from his tomb, is a reminder that experiencing divine vengeance for any act of impiety was not the norm, despite what the compilers of miracle collections, hagiographies and histories would have their audiences believe, and despite what they may sometimes have hoped or prayed for.

Authors recorded stories of divine vengeance because they had a moralising purpose; they provided examples of behaviours not to emulate, supported by proof that God would not tolerate them. The choice to communicate moral messages in this way was deliberate, however. In some situations, stories of benevolent miracles could serve the same purpose. For example,

⁸⁴⁸ Bartlett, *Why Can the Dead Do Such Great Things?* pp. 405-06.

⁸⁴⁹ Appendix, 90.

Walter Daniel's *Vita Ailredi* describes how a discontented brother twice tried to leave the monastery of Rievaulx, but was prevented by the prayers of Ailred, which first caused him miraculously to wander on ways that continually brought him back inside the walls of the monastery, and second created a force at the gate as though the air was a wall of iron which prevented him leaving.⁸⁵⁰ Walter Daniel does not record any divine vengeance against this monk, his emphasis instead being on Ailred's benevolence in ensuring he stayed within the monastery. This is different from two miracles in Gregory's *Dialogues* which record the punishments of runaway monks. In one, a homesick young monk left his monastery without permission to go to see his parents, died on his arrival, and his body would not stay in its grave until St Benedict had given his forgiveness.⁸⁵¹ In the other, Benedict angrily bade a discontented monk leave the monastery, but when he did so he experienced a vision of a dragon that terrified him so much he returned and vowed to never leave again.⁸⁵² These are two different ways of addressing the same moral problem, and highlight the important role of authorial selection and construction in the stories that have survived.

Stories of divine vengeance were reactive to things that happened in the world. It was therefore unpredictable if or when God's punishment would strike. Threats of divine vengeance can thus be considered in a similar way to prophecy. The inclusion of prophecy was an important part of history writing because it confirmed that history was unfolding according to God's plan (even though predictions were often only recorded after the fact). Not all prophecies that were made came to fruition however, because their fulfilment depended on things going on as they were, which meant that if things changed, the predicted course of history would change too.⁸⁵³ In the case of Anselm's conflict with Henry I, because a compromise over investiture and homage was reached in 1107, Henry I could no longer be considered to be deserving of divine vengeance for his obstinacy towards the papal reformers. Papal threats of divine vengeance seem to have had little effect on Henry, but when threats of worse punishment became tangible they may have been taken more seriously. My survey of recorded instances of divine vengeance in chapter three showed that there were a small number of victims of God's punishment who were able to redeem themselves and avert the ultimate penalty of untimely death. This relied on those individuals or their family or friends realising and understanding

⁸⁵⁰ Walter Daniel, *The Life of Ailred of Rievaulx*, 15, 22, ed. Powicke, pp. 24-25, 30-32.

⁸⁵¹ Appendix, 3.

⁸⁵² Appendix, 4.

⁸⁵³ Southern, 'Aspects of the European Tradition of Historical Writing: 3. History as Prophecy', p. 161. Jennifer Farrell, 'History, Prophecy and the Arthur of the Normans', p. 113.

what was happening to them and what they needed to do to amend. Such stories should be read as reflecting the desire of clerical and monastic authors to promote voluntary repentance and penance rather than as a true reflection of specific individual circumstances, but that does not mean that people, whether lay, clerical or monastic, did not ever recognise the effects of divine vengeance and seek to amend their behaviour.⁸⁵⁴

The extent to which individuals worried about divine vengeance in their everyday lives, and the extent to which it affected their behaviour, must have varied considerably. The idea that vengeance belonged to God alone posed a moral problem for those who sought to justify humans seeking to avenge their own grievances, and provided fuel for those who sought to discourage vengeance by humans altogether. Authors of fictional literature used the framework of divine vengeance in the same way as authors of historical narratives and miracle stories in order to convince their readers that the fates of certain characters were the result of divine vengeance for their sinful behaviour, or that certain characters were acting as avengers on behalf of God. Their narrative constructions forced their audiences to think about the spiritual consequences of their characters' actions, but those authors rarely present the characters themselves as acting with any thought for spiritual considerations. Authors of historical narratives also may have attributed spiritual motivations retrospectively to figures that they approved of in order to present them in the best possible light. They seem to have been aware that social and personal honour and bonds of loyalty were a motivating factor for people deciding whether to take vengeance on their enemies or not more often than any consideration of whether their intended vengeance was spiritually justified.

The moral appropriateness of penalties and vengeance dealt out by humans was set under consistent scrutiny. Judicial practice and punishments posed moral problems because of the difficulty of identifying when human punishers could legitimately be considered as acting on behalf of God. This problem was exacerbated by the idea that God sometimes permitted people to act sinfully, and because the outcomes of spiritual procedures such as oaths and ordeals were not always trusted. At the same time, personal vengeance and judicial procedures were both considered components for the maintenance of good order in society, and humans could not refrain from punitive and vengeful action entirely. Indeed, the only times when withholding vengeful thoughts and actions entirely were considered admirable in response to insult was by saints during their lifetimes, whom it was necessary to depict as upholding the

⁸⁵⁴ Hamilton, 'The Unique Favour of Penance: The Church and the People, c. 800 - c. 1100', p. 230.

pious ideal of forgiveness. Law codes laid out when vengeance was not considered to be permissible, and these were all when an offender had committed an action that was considered sinful and therefore did not deserve to be avenged. Even with peaceful settlements through compensation encouraged, inaction was hardly ever considered preferable from the perspective of personal honour.

Overall, there is another dimension to vengeance in medieval society than the prevalence and mechanism of feud that merits further study. This thesis has highlighted the extent to which vengeance as a moral and spiritual concern was embedded in Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Norman society. Divine vengeance was a great leveller; kings and peasants alike could be struck by God's punishment in remarkably similar ways, albeit for different reasons. God's right to exact vengeance for sin was an integral part of the way that the relationship between heaven and earth was negotiated, and of the way that the morality of human action and need to take vengeance for themselves was thought about. The morality of vengeance taken by humans was not black and white; it could be acknowledged to be a destructive force in society and problematic from a Christian theological perspective at the same time as being considered honourable, justified and necessary. Most significantly, the idea of divine vengeance has emerged as a rhetorical tool to support certain moral standpoints, which had strong continuities in some respects but also changed in conjunction with religious ideals between the tenth and twelfth centuries.

APPENDIX: LIST OF EPISODES OF DIVINE VENGEANCE

The following sources have been selected to give as broad an overview as possible, within the scope of this project, of the types of situations in which divine vengeance/punishment was recorded in texts that were written in England, or were circulating in England, during the period c.900 – c. 1150. In order to achieve this breadth of study, I have focused on sources which are readily available in printed editions. The hagiographical texts that are included are only those that I have found which contain vengeance miracles. Not all hagiographical texts contain this type of miracle, and attribute only benevolent miracles to the saint in question. Further study would be merited to explore the extent to which the expectations of genre or the preferences or style of individual authors contributed to the likelihood that a hagiographical text contains vengeance miracles. Inevitably, there will be some texts and/or miracles that I have missed, especially from the vast quantity of hagiographical literature that was written in the late eleventh and twelfth century, and I hope that this list will act as a basis for wider future study.

<i>Bischofs Wærferth von Worcester Übersetzung der Dialoge Gregors des Grossen</i> , ed. Hans Hecht, Bibliothek der angelsächsischen Prosa 5 (Leipzig, 1900)		
1	1.29, pp. 69-74	A woman in Tuscany slept with her husband the night before joining the procession to dedicate the church of St Sebastian. As soon as the relics appeared she was seized by an evil spirit. She recovered after days and nights of prayer on her behalf.
2	2.8, pp. 116-22	A priest called Florentius was jealous of St Benedict, and attempted to kill and corrupt the saint, first with a poisoned loaf, and then by tempting him with the dancing of depraved women. He was killed by a collapsing balcony.
3	2.24, pp. 154-55	A young monk left his monastery to go to see his parents without permission. He died on his arrival, and his body would not stay in its grave. Benedict's forgiveness caused his body to stay in the ground.
4	2.25, pp. 155-57	A certain foolish monk wished to leave Benedict's monastery, and one day in anger Benedict bade him depart. No sooner was he out of the gate than he met a dragon with its mouth open. Fearful it would devour him, he cried out to the other monks, but they could not see the creature. They brought him back trembling and he promised to never again forsake the monastery.
5	3.15, pp. 205-10	A thief stole some sheep from a field near a church. He became rooted to the ground with the sheep stuck on his shoulders. The thief was released through the prayers of the clergy.
6.	3.14, pp. 199-200	A sacrist at Spoleto struck a holy man who he thought was praying in the church for too long, and became possessed by a demon. The demon was exorcised by the holy man he had struck.
7	3.16, p. 212	A lady attempted to go to see a hermit called Martin even though the saint avoided the sight of women. She died as she climbed back down Mount Massico in Campania where he was residing.

8	3.26, pp. 229-32	Four monks were envious of St Florentius, and killed the saint's tame bear. Florentius pronounced a curse on them in his grief. They contracted leprosy and met a horrible death. Florentius wept to the end of his life at the fulfilment of his curse.
9	3.29, pp. 234-35	A heretical bishop of the Lombards, called Arrianus, asked the bishop of Spoleto for a church to celebrate an unrighteous festival. The bishop of Spoleto refused, and Arrianus boasted that the next day he would enter the church by force. At dawn Arrianus approached the locked church with a crowd of supporters, the doors swung open by themselves with a great crack, the lamps were all kindled, and Arrianus was struck by sudden blindness and was led away by strangers.
10	4.19, pp. 288-90	A little boy, whose father was remiss in correcting his blasphemy, died from the pestilence with blasphemy on his lips.
11	4.25, pp. 294-95	A holy man stopped for a meal whilst on a journey, contrary to God's instructions, and was killed by a lion. God did not allow the lion to eat his body.
Asser's <i>Life of Alfred</i> in <i>Alfred the Great: Asser's Life of King Alfred and Other Contemporary Sources</i> , ed. and trans. Simon Keynes and Michael Lapidge (Penguin, 1983) 893		
12	p. 76	The Northumbrians were in dispute after expelling the rightful king Osberht, and installed Ælle in his place. Ælle and Osberht resisted the vikings at York but they were killed and their forces annihilated.
13	pp. 104-05	A priest and deacon of Gallic origin plotted to kill their abbot and lay the blame on a nearby whore. They were caught, captured, imprisoned and killed through various tortures.
Lantfred, <i>Translatio et Miracula S. Swithuni</i> , in <i>The Anglo-Saxon Minsters of Winchester: The Cult of St Swithun</i> , ed. Michael Lapidge, <i>Winchester Studies</i> 4.ii (Oxford, 2003) 972x974/5		
14	pp. 261-63	A blacksmith failed to report a vision of Swithun to the bishop, which contained instructions to exhume and translate Swithun's body. He was threatened with death if he did not pay heed to the requests of the saint. The blacksmith eventually followed the visionary instructions and set Swithun's translation in motion.
15	pp. 293-97	The monks of Winchester had become ungrateful and lazy in praising Swithun's miracles, because they had become so numerous and they were reluctant to rise for the purpose several times in the night. Swithun appeared to a lady, threatening that miracles would cease and that they would feel the wrath of God if they continued to neglect his praise, and that she should inform the bishop. The lady informed the bishop of her vision, and from then on praise of Swithun's miracles was not neglected.
Abbo of Fleury, <i>The Life of St Edmund</i> , in <i>Three Lives of English Saints</i> , ed. Michael Winterbottom (Toronto, 1972)		
16	15, pp. 83-85	Some thieves tried to break into the church of St Edmund, and became bound to the spot in the act with their implements. Bishop Theodred ordered them to be hanged, and was penitent for the sentence for the rest of

		his life. He ordered a three day fast in order to avert God's indignation and anger, and gain grace to wash and clothe the incorrupt body of Edmund.
17	16, pp. 85-86	A man of great power named Leofstan demanded to see for himself Edmund's incorrupt body. The moment the coffin was opened and he looked in, he was smote with madness. When his father, a man of great piety, named Ælfgar, heard what had happened, he cast Leofstan out, so that he was reduced to poverty and by God's judgement was devoured by worms.
<i>Ælfric's Catholic Homilies, The First Series</i> , ed. Peter Clemoes (Oxford, 1997) 989-995		
18	1.5, pp. 221-22	After ordering the slaying of the holy Innocents, Herod became seized by an unspeakable disease so that his body rotted and stank. Eventually he committed suicide by stabbing himself.
19	1.28, p. 410-15	Forty years after Christ's passion, the inhabitants of Jerusalem had not repented, and had only increased their impiety. They martyred Stephen and James and persecuted the other apostles. God sent Titus to destroy Jerusalem.
20	1.28, pp. 416-17	A nobleman in the province of Valeria, called Chrysaurius, was filled with sins, inflated with pride, a slave to fleshly lusts, and inflamed with excessive covetousness. Before his death, he had a vision of a great company of evil spirits ready to snatch his soul, and no repentance could prevent them.
<i>Ælfric's Catholic Homilies, The Second Series</i> , ed. Malcolm Godden (Oxford, 1979) 989-995		
21	2.4, p. 30	In the fifth age of the world the people of Israel were guilty towards God, and the king Zedekiah turned to heathenism. God sent an immense army led by Nebuchadnezzar to destroy Jerusalem.
22	2.11, p. 96	A certain mass priest was envious of St Benedict and attempted to kill the saint with poison, and when that failed he attempted to corrupt his soul through tempting him with naked women. The priest was killed by falling through a collapsing floor.
23	2.18, p. 178	The emperor who persecuted the prophets bit his tongue so that it flowed with blood, and then departed from this world to meet cruel torments.
24	2.32, p. 278	King Hyrcatus attempted to seduce the maiden Effigenia, but was rebuffed. He gave orders for her house to be set on fire, but God raised a great wind and returned the fire to the king's dwelling, so that he escaped with difficulty. Afterwards, his only son went mad, and he himself became afflicted with elephantiasis. Despairing of being healed, he fell upon his sword.
25	2.33, p. 287	The apostles Simon and Jude were martyred at the temple of the sun, and even though the air was serene, God sent lightning which burst the temple apart and burnt up the two wizards who had perpetrated their deaths.
<i>Ælfric's Lives of Saints, Being A Set of Sermons on Saints' Days Formerly Observed by the English Church</i> , 2 vols. ed. Rev. Walter Skeat (London, 1881 and 1900). 992-1002		

26	1.2, p. 41	Eugenia disguised herself as a man in order to enter a monastery and was elected abbot. A wealthy widow called Melantia came to Eugenia for healing, but then attempted to seduce her, was rebuffed, became angry, and falsely accused Eugenia of her own sin. Eugenia would not avenge herself on Melantia, but Christ sent a rushing fire that burnt Melantia's house.
27	1.4, p. 113	The emperor Martian was persecuting saints Julian and his wife Basilissa. The saints were brought to the temple in bonds, and Julian prayed for God to show his might. The earth opened up and the temple sank down with all its priests and many of the heathen.
28	1.4, p. 115	Martian martyred the saints, and the heathen were struck by lightning, an earthquake and thunder so that a great many perished. Martian was consumed with a disease of worms and died.
29	1.8, pp. 205-07	Saint Agatha was being tortured. Then there was an earthquake, which crushed the counsellor and his advisors under falling walls.
30	1.8, p. 209	After Agatha's death, Quintianus went over the river in a ship in order to apprehend all her kindred, but as he lay in the ship a horse seized him with his teeth, and another horse flung him overboard. His body was never found.
31	1.12, p. 265	A certain foolish man would not observe Ash-Wednesday and slept with his wife at the forbidden times. That week, when he was riding on some errand, he was attacked by some hounds and defended himself with his spear, but his horse carried him forward so that the spear went right through him and he fell dying.
32	1.12, p. 265	That same week, a certain buffoon in the bishop's household did not heed the Lenten fast, but went to the kitchen while the bishop was saying mass and began to eat. He fell in a swoon at the first morsel, spat blood, and his life was saved with difficulty.
33	1.12, p. 267	A man with bishop Ælfheah would drink during lent whenever it pleased him. One day the bishop refused to bless his cup, and the fool drank anyway. When he went outside, a boar was being bated there by chance. The boar ran against him, skewered him, and killed him.
34	1.13, p. 299	The cities of Sodom were destroyed by fire and brimstone for the sins of the inhabitants, and foul water cursed the land.
35	1.13, p. 299	Dathan and Abiran spoke foolishly and did great dishonour to Moses. God was angry with them and they were swallowed by the earth along with their wives and children.
36	1.13, p. 303	King David sinned against God, and God sent an angel who slew seventy-thousand men in David's dominion.
37	1.18, pp. 401-07	Queen Jezebel lived wickedly and promiscuously. Her son died from being shot in the back, and she died from being thrown from and balcony and trampled by horses, and her body devoured by dogs.
38	1.20, p. 437	Queen Æthelthryth interpreted a tumour on her neck as punishment for wearing fine necklaces in her youth.

39	1.21, p. 457	The monks of Winchester had become lazy in praising Swithun's miracles, which angered God. Swithun appeared to a certain good man, threatening that miracles would stop.
40	1.21, pp. 459-61	Once, during a funerary vigil, a certain foolish man jestingly pretended to be Swithun and demanded candles and worship. After blaspheming for a long time he collapsed, was carried home, and lay for a long time, despairing of his life, until his kinsmen carried him back to Swithun, he confessed, begged pardon, and became well again.
41	1.21, pp. 463-65	A bedridden old thegn from the Isle of Wight has a vision in which a figure instructed him to neither do, speak, nor think any evil towards any man, and then he should be healed. This confused the thegn because he only wished evil to those who had done evil to him, and he was instructed to forgive his enemies. The thegn's wife informed him that it was Swithun that he had seen, and took him to the church to pray and be healed.
42	1.22, p. 481	Saint Apolinaris was accused to the emperor, and was led to torture. A certain heathen man, who had the most fiercely opposed him, went mad and died.
43	2.25, p. 103	God was angry with Antiochus because of his treatment of God's people. Antiochus knew it but was unrepentant. He became afflicted with worms, his body stank, and he died miserably in a foreign land.
44	2.25, pp. 117-19	Heliodorus was sent to take treasure intended for almsgiving from a temple. As the priests prayed for aid, his comrades lost their strength and fell, and were overcome with fright. Heliodorus was beaten by two angels to within an inch of his life. The priest Onias was persuaded to pray for Heliodorus, and the angels told him that he ought to thank Onias for his life, and to tell the miracle at home.
45	2.32, pp. 329-31	Some thieves tried to enter the church where Edmund's body lay, and became bound to the spot with their implements. The bishop ordered them to be hanged.
46	2.32, p. 331	A certain rich man called Leofstan arrogantly demanded to see Edmund's incorrupt body. As soon as he saw it, he raved and roared, and died miserably.
47	2.32, p. 333	Seven men who wished to see the body of St Lawrence died together as they were looking.
B, <i>Life of Dunstan</i> , in <i>The Early Lives of Dunstan</i> , ed. and trans. Michael Winterbottom and Michael Lapidge (Oxford, 2012) Late 997x1002		
48	13-14, pp. 43-51	King Edmund was turned against Dunstan by backbiters at court, stripped him of his rank and sent him into exile. Edmund came close to death whilst out hunting one day, when his horse almost chased a stag over the precipice. Edmund realised that he had hurt Dunstan and promised to make recompense if he was allowed to live, and his horse stopped at the edge of the drop. He then instated Dunstan as abbot of Glastonbury.

49	24, pp. 74-77	King Eadwig went astray and forsook the just judgements of God. He was abandoned by his people and died.
<i>Historia de Sancto Cuthberto: A History of Saint Cuthbert and a Record of His Patrimony</i> , ed. Ted Johnson South (Cambridge, 2002) 10 th / 11 th century		
50	10, p. 51	King Osberht stole the lands of Warkworth and Tillmouth from Cuthbert, and lost his kingdom and his life after a year.
51	10, p. 51	King Ælle stole the lands of Billingham, Cliffe, Wycliffe and Crayke from Cuthbert in spite of his good pronouncements. He died in battle against the heathen at York.
52	12, pp. 51-52	Halfdan entered the Tyne, wrought devastation and sinned against Cuthbert. He began to rave and reek so that his army chased him across the sea and he was never seen again.
53	23, pp. 61-63	A certain Onlafbald questioned the power of Cuthbert. He raged and swore by Thor and Odin to be the bitterest enemy to Cuthbert's community. On entering the church he was transfixed with one foot either side of the threshold, fell in pain and the devil thrust his soul into hell.
54	33, pp. 68-71	The Scots crossed the Tweed, devastated the lands of Cuthbert and despoiled the monastery of Lindisfarne. Before battle could be joined against them, the Scots were swallowed by the earth, as Cuthbert had predicted to the leader of the resisting force, Guthred, in a vision in the night.
<i>Wulfstan of Winchester, The Life of St Æthelwold</i> , ed. Michael Lapidge and Michael Winterbottom (Oxford, 1991) Possibly as early as 996, likely early 11 th century		
55	19, p. 35	Some monks poisoned Æthelwold out of envy. Æthelwold recovered, forgave them, but they were sent into exile to wander throughout the English provinces.
56	35, pp. 53-55	A monk was vying with Æthelwold in reading. He watched Æthelwold reading a text, then took his place when he left. The monk was rebuked in a dream when a figure jabbed his fingers in his eyes, and he was in pain for several days. Penance removed his guilt.
<i>Ælfric of Eynsham, Life of Æthelwold</i> , in <i>Three Lives of English Saints</i> , ed. Michael Winterbottom (Toronto, 1972)		
57	24, p. 27	A monk named Theodric followed Æthelwold in reading a text. The following night, he was rebuked in a dream when a figure jabbed his fingers into his eyes, and he was afflicted for several days, until he sought satisfaction with the saint.
<i>Byrhtferth of Ramsey, Vita S. Ecgwini</i> , in <i>Byrhtferth of Ramsey, The Lives of St Oswald and St Ecgwine</i> , ed. and trans. Michael Lapidge (Oxford, 2009) c.1016		
58	iv.10, pp. 290-97	A peasant falsely claimed some land belonging to the monastery was his, by putting some earth from his own dwelling into his shoe so that he could swear that he was standing on his own land when the abbot decided that

		either he or the peasant should claim the land by means of an oath. He met his death by cutting off his own head with his scythe.
<i>The Life and Miracles of St Kenelm, in Three Eleventh-Century Anglo-Latin Saints' Lives: Vita S. Birini, Vita et Miracula S. Kenelmi and Vita S. Rumwoldi</i> , ed. and trans. Rosalind C. Love (Oxford, 1996) 1066x1075		
59	16, pp. 70-73	Kenelm's sister, Cwoenthryth, committed fratricide in order to gain the kingdom. When her brother's body was found, she chanted a psalm backwards as a curse against him, and straightaway both of her eyes fell out of their sockets onto the page that she was reading, and died soon afterwards. Her body would not stay buried in either the church or the fore-court nor the cemetery, and was thrown into a remote gully. The psalter still bore the stain of this chastisement.
60	18, pp. 73-75	In the reign of Cnut (1016x1035), a rich Dane called Osgot Digera attempted to annex a piece of land adjacent to St Kenelm's, and intended to swear a false oath that the land was his. As he rushed forward to swear his oath, he was repulsed by a great force, went out of his mind and soon died.
61	19, p. 75	A notorious man named Godric swore a false oath by Kenelm that he had never defrauded anyone of rent. He was struck dumb and was attacked by the angry mob.
62	20, p. 77	A lady who presided over the village of Pailton refused to let the village celebrate Kenelm's feast with a holiday and lose profit. Both of her eyes shot out onto the table, as had happened to Kenelm's unworthy sister. Her oxen which were yoked to carts scattered and were lost.
63	21, pp. 77-79	A blacksmith was shamelessly working on Kenelm's feast day. His hammer and tongs became stuck to his hand, and his assistant's hand became embedded in the wood that he was gripping. Prayers were offered which unstuck the tools, then the brothers present offered lamps to Kenelm, which unclenched their fists.
<i>The Gesta Guillelmi of William of Poitiers</i> , ed. and trans. R.H.C. Davis and Marjorie Chibnall (Oxford, 1998) 1071x1077		
64	i.3, 4, 46, ii.1 pp. 5-7, 77, 101	Harold Godwinson was defeated at Hastings as punishment for his father, Earl Godwine's role in the murder of the ætheling Alfred thirty years previously, and his own perjury in breaking the oath he swore to Duke William promising him the English crown.
<i>The Life of Saint Wulfsin of Sherborne by Goscelin</i> , ed. C.H. Talbot, <i>Revue Bénédictine</i> 69 (1959) pp. 68-85. 1078 x 1080		
65	15, pp. 81-82	A woman of some reputation in the parish of Sherborne scorned Wulfsig's feast day by continuing her work of spinning against the advice of her neighbours and relatives. She became stuck to her spindle and distaff until she was carried to Wulfsig's relics in the church during mass and begged his forgiveness. The spindle and distaff were hung by the shrine in commemoration of the miracle.

66	16, p. 82	One of Wulfsgige's successors, Ælfmær, a monk of Canterbury, usurped his position and tried to appropriate one of the brothers' endowments. He became blind, but it was later reported that when back at his own monastery he did eventually regain his sight so that he might know that he had been punished by Wulfsgige for his tyranny.
67	19, p. 83	Under Herman, one of Wulfsgige's successors, one of the church's golden shrines was stolen. One night, the sacristan and all the brothers in the choir heard a voice from Wulfsgige's tomb which said 'Revenge is mine, I will repay saith the Lord'. They prayed, and the same day the shrine was restored and the thieves were arrested and punished.
Osberno, "Vita S. Alphegi Archiepiscopi Cantuariensis", in <i>Anglia Sacra</i> , ed. H Wharton, vol. 2, 1691, 122–48		
68	pp. 124-25	Some monks were behaving scandalously: at night they secretly ate purloined food, engaged in drunkenness and lechery and devoted themselves to everything dishonourable. One of the guilty monks died. Afterwards, Ælfheah had a vision in which he saw, at the spot in the refectory where the sinful merrymaking took place, the dead man's torment, him being beaten with whips and fiery snakes by men of grim appearance. Ælfheah related his vision to his disciples, the other culprits were terrified and repented.
69	p. 129	Ælfheah was travelling to Rome and stopped in the town of Ansonia. Not knowing who he was, the townsfolk ransacked his house and forced him to leave. Ælfheah had not gone far when a great fire broke out in the town and the people fled. The people realised that they must have insulted Ælfheah, caught up with him, and his prayers moved the fire. He then exhorted them to welcome strangers in the future.
70	p. 132	A man called Edric, of low birth, had been made prefect of the kingdom. His brother slandered the nobility of Canterbury in the presence of the king, then seized the goods that he and Edric had inherited from their father. The nobles who the bother had slandered had him killed and set fire to his house. Edric demanded revenge, but the king declared his brother had been killed with justice, so Edric enlisted the help of the Danes to fulfil his vengeance.
71	p. 137	The Danes were ransacking Canterbury when they were struck by a deadly plague. They initially thought that this disaster was the result of bad luck rather than divine will. Eventually, all ran to Ælfheah and begged him to make supplication to God, and he cured everyone with blessed bread.
72	p. 141	The Danes in Canterbury were refusing to convert to Christianity. They were afflicted with various scourges of demonic vexation, ulcerous tumours, some were swallowed by the sea, and some were killed by their own hand. Any who took any shreds of Ælfheah's clothing would reluctantly give them back after being terrified by an apparition, and then would die.
H Wharton, 'Osberni Historia De Translatione Corporis S. Elfegi Archiepiscopi Cantuariensis , a Lundonia Ad Cantuariam', in <i>Anglia Sacra</i> , vol. 2, 1691, 143–48		
73	p. 144	Lord Haco fell on his own sword.

74	p. 144	A prophet intent on the science of astrology stuck a pen in his own throat.
75	p. 144	A presbyter tried to steal the martyr's crucifix and died.
76	p. 144	Another presbyter stole the martyr's sandals, was assailed by a demon and was dreadfully afflicted wherever the sandals dragged his feet.
77	p. 144	The Danish chiefs, being terrified by the abovementioned miracles, took to the sea, thinking that they could escape the martyr's wrath in the ocean, and either met their deaths in shipwreck, or became trapped on unknown shores.
78	p. 144	Thyrkill was plundering in England, until Cnut drove him first from England, then from Denmark, and eventually he was killed by a rabble and his body thrown out to the wild beasts and birds. His soul was condemned to eternal damnation.
<p>'Goscelin of Canterbury's Account of the Translation and Miracles of St Mildrith (BHL S961/4): An Edition with notes', <i>Medieval Studies</i> 48 (1986) pp. 139-210 1087-1091</p>		
79	20, pp. 180-81	A clerk fell asleep in front of Mildrith's tomb. He had a vision of Mildrith rising from her tomb and giving him a great slap. On waking, he saw Mildrith descending back into her tomb.
<p>'Miracles of St Edmund, by Herman' in <i>Herman the Archdeacon and Goscelin of St Bertin, Miracles of St Edmund</i>, ed. and trans. Tom Licence, with Lynda Lockyer (Oxford, 2014) Completed by c. 1098</p>		
80	3, pp. 10-15	A woman involved in a criminal case sought Edmund's sanctuary. The judge and his servants dragged her out of the basilica while the monks prayed for vengeance on them. The judge went mad and when he died his corpse remained possessed by a demon. Unable to stay in its grave, his body was sewn into a calf's skin and thrown into a lake.
81	4-10, pp. 14-27	In 1013 when Swein was ravaging England, he imposed a tax on St Edmund's community which they refused to pay and prayed for help from Edmund. Edmund sent Swein a warning through a monk called Ælwine, threatening God's displeasure. Ælwine was forewarned by Edmund in a dream of Swein's impending death, and a report soon came that Swein had been transfixed by a lance. His body was taken back overseas.
82	13, pp. 30-33	Ælwine was carrying Edmund's body around on a cart to protect it from the Danes. A priest refused him hospitality one night, and his house was burned down after Ælwine and Edmund left.
83	17, pp. 36-37	A Dane tried to see Edmund's body on its litter and was blinded on the spot. He repented, his sight was restored and he presented gifts to Edmund.
84	22, pp. 52-55	Abbot Leofstan planned to inspect Edmund's relics and prepared with a three-day fast. He decided to test whether Edmund's head, which had been decapitated, had truly been restored to his body by pulling it. Afterwards, his hands were gripped in perpetual paralysis. The next chapter reveals that he developed rheumatism.

85	23, pp. 59-59	Once when King Edward visited Bury, a royal official called Osgod entered Edmund's basilica drunk out of his wits. He went mad, was carried to Edmund's tomb, supplication was made on his behalf, he was restored to health and promised amendment.
86	26, pp. 64-67	A Norman courtier seized possession of one of Edmund's manners and ignored Abbot Baldwin's reprimands. A few days later, he was struck with an excruciating headache, and a mark remained on his eye to his dying day. He sent his servants with a candle for Edmund, hoping for a cure, but to no avail.
87	27, pp. 66-73	Herfast, bishop in two shires of East Anglia, attempted to assert his authority over St Edmund's through simony. After testing Edmund's patience, he was struck in the eye by a branch one day as he was riding through the woods, both eyes oozed blood and putrid tissue and seemed beyond repair. He came to Abbot Baldwin who advised to consider whether he had offended the saint, made a public confession, received medical treatment and soon his injury was repaired, though the pupil of one eye remained murky.
88	27	After Herfast had got his health back, he renewed his campaign for St Edmund's and in 1081 his suit had a hearing in the presence of all the magnates of England. Edmund silenced Herfast so that he could not make his false testimony, and he was forced to make large payments until the day he died.
89	36, pp. 100-03	In 1087, a nobleman called Robert de Curcun sought permission from his lord, Roger Bigod, to usurp the manor of Southwold, which belonged to Edmund. The land was given to him illegitimately, and on the appointed day as he was riding there with his men, a storm arose with a mighty whirlwind and lethal hail that prevented them from completing the journey. Robert went into a stupor which was afterwards stamped on his face for everyone to see. Two of his men made it to the manor and grabbed what they could: Turolf, his steward and a soldier called Gyrenner de Mouneyn. One went mad and a few days later the other also succumbed to frenzy. They returned home with their minds befuddled and dared not try again.
90	50, pp. 346-49	A thief stole ornaments from Edmund's bier and the monks prayed for vengeance but none was forthcoming. The thief stole again from the shrine and was captured in the back alleys, unable to rid himself of the stolen ornaments or leave the town with them. The treasurer kept watch by the shrine and the third time the thief came back, he kissed the altar and removed a penny with his mouth. The sacrist's servants seized him, beat him, recovered the coin and the ornament, and when he confessed they flogged and branded him and then banished him.
Martin Rule, <i>Eadmeri Historia Novorum in Anglia, et Opuscula Duo De Vita Sancti Anselmi et Quibusdam Miraculis Ejus</i> (London, 1884).		
91	pp. 30-36	King William Rufus was resisting arguments that Anselm should be made Archbishop of Canterbury, and asserted that no-one should be archbishop except himself. He was immediately smitten with a violent sickness that brought him close to death. Anselm recommended confession and amendment. He was soon forced to accept the archbishopric, and declared

		that the king would live to put right what he did in giving him the position without his consent.
92	pp. 116-17	King William Rufus rejected the authority of the Pope and behaved unrighteously. God attempted to discipline the king by ill fortune, and lead him to right-doing by good fortune, but William heeded neither. He was struck dead by an arrow whilst out hunting, impenitent and unconfessed.
<i>The Life of St Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury, by Eadmer</i> , ed. and trans. R.W. Southern (London, 1962) 1093x1125		
93	2.45-46, 49, pp. 122-27	Anselm was in exile at Cluny because of his quarrel with King William Rufus. Many things were prophesied about the king's death because of his persecution of Anselm, including a vision that appeared to Hugh, abbot of Cluny, in which William was accused before the throne of God and sentenced to damnation. He was suddenly killed by a stray arrow whilst out hunting.
94	2.58, pp. 136-37	Anselm had been ill, and bishops and abbots had gathered for his burial. On his recovery, they went home again. Ralph, abbot of Séez, scoffed at Anselm's piety and pride and refusal of proper treatment. As Ralph tried to pull a branch from an oak tree to use as a fly swat, he was thrown from his horse and dragged for a distance with his foot caught in the stirrup.
<i>Miracula S. Swithuni in The Anglo-Saxon Minsters of Winchester: The Cult of St Swithun</i> , ed. Michael Lapidge, <i>Winchester Studies</i> 4.ii (Oxford, 2003) late 11 th century		
95	46, pp. 681-83	A certain man was labouring in a field on the Lord's day, inspired by avarice, attempting to pull up brambles and thorns. He pricked himself with a thorn, and his whole hand and arm swelled until he was on the point of death. He was taken to a statue of Swithun and there was cured.
<i>The Old English Life of St Nicholas with the Old English Life of St Giles</i> , ed. E.M. Treharne (Leeds, 1997) early 12 th century		
96	p. 115	Emperor Constantine and his alderman Ablavius imprisoned and condemned to death three innocent men. Both experienced a vision in which Nicholas threatened ignominious death; Constantine would be beset by great strife and would be killed, with his body given to the animals and birds, Ablavius's body would be meat for the worms, and all the men who belonged with him would die a sorrowful death. They each told the other their dream, and Constantine commanded the prisoners to be released.
<i>Symeon of Durham, Libellus de Exordio atque procursu istius, hoc est Dunelmensis, ecclesiae: Tract on the Origins and Progress of this the Church of Durham</i> , ed. and trans. David Rollason (Oxford, 2000) 1104-7x1115		
97	ii.5, p. 89-90	In 794, following the sack of Lindisfarne in 793, when the Danes led by Don looted, dug up altars, pillaged treasures, captured and tormented the monks, they met their deaths in a shipwreck whilst ravaging the port of Jarrow. Their ships were destroyed in a storm so that some drowned, and some washed up on land to be killed by the inhabitants.

98	ii.7, pp. 105-09	The monks and nuns of Coldingham were living in improper familiarity, engaging in feasting, drinking and story-telling rather than prayer. The nuns wove fine clothes and adorned themselves to win the friendship of outside men. The monastery was consumed by fire, the monks were severed from all female company, and women were banned from entering the church.
99	ii.8, p. 109	A woman called Sungeova, wife of Bevo's son Gamel, walked through Cuthbert's graveyard one night with her husband on the way home from a feast because it was the cleanest way. She lost her senses as she exited the graveyard, fell down, was carried home and died that night.
100	ii.9, p. 109	The wife of a rich man walked through Cuthbert's cemetery because she wanted to see the fabled beauty of the ornaments of the church, and took courage from her husband's powerful position. She went out of her mind, bit out her own tongue and was found dead under a tree one day, having apparently slit her own throat with the knife in her hand.
101	ii.13, pp. 121-23	Halfdan inflicted cruelty on Cuthbert's church and other places of the saints. He went insane and suffered bodily torment, exile and death: he emitted an intolerable stench so that the army held him in contempt and drove him out. He fled from the Tyne with his ships and soon perished with his men.
102	ii.14, pp. 127-29	The Scots violated Cuthbert's peace, and their army was swallowed by the earth.
103	ii.16, pp. 131-33	Onlafbald, a follower of Rægnald, molested the community and people of St Cuthbert, expropriated lands from the bishopric, and refused to convert. He was transfixated at the door of the church, one foot trapped either side of the threshold. After remaining trapped for a long time he acknowledged the sanctity of Cuthbert, and the others no longer presumed to appropriate lands.
104	iii.8, p. 169	Eadred, who had been second in rank to bishop Edmund, purchased a bishopric from King Harthacnut using money taken from the church's treasure. He died in his tenth month as bishop, seized by sudden infirmity as he was about to enter the church.
105	iii.10, pp. 173-75	A priest called Feoche was persuaded to celebrate mass even though he had slept with a woman the night before. The host turned hideous, black and bitter. Feoche confessed to the bishop, did penance, and thereafter lived chastely and piously.
106	iii.11, pp. 175-77	Judith, wife of Tostig, had donated various ornaments to Cuthbert's church, wished to worship the saint at his tomb and promised many more treasures if she were permitted to do so. Out of fear, she sent her servant girl ahead of her, who was repelled by a terrible force as soon as she stepped inside the cemetery, and became racked with terrible torment until she died. Judith and Tostig made amends with many gifts of adornment for the church.
107	iii.11, p. 177	A man called Barcwith wished to infringe Cuthbert's peace, and died suddenly.

108	iii.12, pp. 177-79	A man called Oswulf, of evil character, was plagued by a snake coiled round his neck. It could not be removed, even when cut up, and grew larger and larger. It left him when he entered Cuthbert's church, and returned immediately on exiting. Oswulf spent three days fasting and praying in the church, and then went on perpetual pilgrimage.
109	iii.13, pp. 179-81	A man attending Cuthbert's feast with his master stole some coins left as oblation at Cuthbert's tomb by pretending to kiss the tomb and taking up some of the coins in his mouth. The coins became burning hot and his mouth sealed shut. He begged forgiveness at the tomb, placed his offering, kissed the tomb, and the coins fell out of his mouth.
110	iii.15, pp. 183-85	Earl Robert Cumin, whom King William had set over Northumbria, attempted to impose his authority over a Northumbrian rebellion. Robert and all but one of his men died when the Northumbrians threw fire at his house in Durham, which through prayers to Cuthbert did not spread further.
111	iii.15, p. 185	King William attempted to avenge Earl Robert's death by sending another army, which was prevented from moving from Allerton by a dense fog. Someone warned the army of Cuthbert's power, and that no-one was able to threaten Durham with impunity, and they soon returned home.
112	iii.15a, pp. 189-93	A certain man called Gillo Michael obstructed and robbed the fugitives, after which the monks decided to move Cuthbert's body to Lindisfarne to escape King William's anger. One of the monks who had been sent back to Durham to see how things were, had a vision of Gillo Michael in a valley full of the souls of men in torment. Members of his household confirmed that he had died at the time of the vision.
113	iii.15a, p. 193	Earl Cospatrick advised the community of Cuthbert to flee, then emptied the church of its possessions. He was expelled from the earldom, and became constantly beset by misfortunes and afflictions.
114	iii.19, p. 197	King William sought to investigate whether Cuthbert truly lay at Durham. He was struck with terrible heat and weariness, and fled.
115	iii.20, pp. 197-99	A certain man called Ranulf was sent to exact tribute from the people of Cuthbert on behalf of the king. The night before the first tribute was to be imposed, Cuthbert appeared to Ranulf in a dream and beat him with the pastoral staff. On waking, Ranulf was too infirm to rise. Ranulf had himself carried around the bishopric on a litter to demonstrate Cuthbert's vengeance, then left the bishopric and recovered.
116	iii.23, pp. 211-13	Bishop Walcher did not restrain the bad behaviour of his men. Though personally honest and noble, he did not prevent the archdeacon from appropriating church ornaments, or his knights from robbing and killing. One day he and all his men were murdered unexpectedly.
117	iii.23, pp. 211-17	Earl Waltheof was guilty of the death of Bishop Walcher. A man called Eadwulf fell ill, died and had a vision of Waltheof chained in an infernal oven, then came back to life and reported his experience. Waltheof was killed by his wife's brother.

118	iv.2, p. 227	The barbarians who sacked Lindisfarne met their deaths and eternal torment.
119	continuation, pp. 307-09, 317-19	William Cumin was fortifying the chapel of St John as a Castle. He suffered sickness, madness and death. Symeon says that the reader must judge whether this was an accident or the just judgement of God. In another continuation he relates the same story but without appealing to the reader's judgement.
120	continuation, p. 309	A mason involved in fortifying the chapel went mad whilst engaged in the work. His companions began to lead him to Durham but on the way he bit out his tongue and died.
<i>Geoffrey of Burton, The Life and Miracles of St Modwenna</i> , ed. and trans. Robert Bartlett (Oxford, 2002) 1118x1150		
121	19, pp. 77-83	Chancuninus, an advisor of King Conall, advised the king to plunder the treasure of Modwenna's monastery rather than deplete his own treasury, in order to give Alfred, who had been visiting, a parting gift. Modwenna predicted that misfortune would strike Chancuninus, and he suffered feuds, invasions, devastation of his lands, lack of peace, and poverty and want until the end of his life.
122	36, pp. 151-53	A little boy persistently blasphemed, disrespected and mocked his Lord. His Christian parents took him to Modwenna but nothing could change his behaviour. The boy died an unexpected death, destroyed by the devil whose follower he was. The boy's parents took him to Modwenna again, who restored him to life suitably chastised.
123	43, pp. 181-83	A goldsmith in the abbey's service, named Godmor, falsely coveted gold and silver from Modwenna's shrine. He encouraged the abbot to despoil the shrine for the needs of the poor, but on a break on a journey to buy corn with the abbot, Godmor fell on his spear and died. It was discovered that he had fraudulently kept some of the gold from the shrine for himself when it was discovered among his clothes after his death.
124	44, p. 185	A noble Englishman called Swein Child, with a large retinue, ravaged the lands and properties of Modwenna, and violated the monastery itself with pillaging and destruction. While they were on the road, boasting in evil joy, all went insane and after a while died. News spread and for a long time no robbers dared plunder there.
125	47, p. 191	Ælfwine Hopwas, a royal official, did much harm to the monastery of Burton. One day, whilst boasting of his exploits to his wife and family, he put out his own eye with his thumb.
126	47, pp. 191-99	Two peasants ran away from the village of Stapenhill in the jurisdiction of the abbey of Burton, wishing to live under the jurisdiction of Roger the Poitevin in the village of Drakelow instead, and instigated a violent scuffle between the abbot and Roger over stored crops. The peasants suddenly died the next day while sitting down to eat, but at night were then seen wandering round Drakelow. Meanwhile, a plague killed most of the inhabitants. Count Roger made reparations to the abbey, but the plague continued until the remaining peasants dug up the bodies, tore out the hearts

		and burnt them, and reburied the bodies with their heads between their legs. The village was afterward abandoned.
127	49, pp. 205-09	Osmund, a forrester, harmed the monastery by confiscating, killing and impounding livestock that crossed land boundaries, stirring up hatred between the abbot and his lord. Modwenna appeared to Osmund in a dream and threatened that she would have his eyes if he did not change his ways. That very week Osmund was caught in a crime and had his eyes put out as the penalty.
128	49, p. 209	A bad neighbour made similar blockage of pasture, became ill and died. Before his death he performed penance and confessed, granted his property to the monastery, was buried there and was forgiven.
129	50, p. 209	A certain rich man used his power to harm the church and died.
130	50, p. 209	A rich man threatened the peasants on the abbey's property in passing and died.
131	50, p. 209	Another man harmed the church and died in a river flood.
132	50, p. 210	Another man raised a plea concerning the monastery's lands, and died through being thrown from his horse, which broke his neck and shattered his insides.
133	50, p. 210	Some men committed perjury to take land from the monastery and variously suffered madness, poverty and death.
<i>The Ecclesiastical History of England and Normandy by Ordericus Vitalis</i> , trans. Thomas Forester (London, 1880) vol. 1, 1123x1137		
134	2.1, pp. 179-80	Herod had treated Peter cruelly and disrespected God. He was smote by the angel of the Lord and eaten with worms because he did not give glory to God.
135	2.3, pp. 210-12	Simon the Magician accused Peter of being a corrupt magician, and the emperor Nero built a tower in the Field of Mars, which Simon climbed and began to fly. Paul prayed that the angels of Satan would no longer hold up Simon, and he crashed to the ground, his body broken into quarters.
136	2.8, pp. 254-55	A steward of Dionysius struck and rebuked Thomas the Apostle. Thomas predicted what would happen to him, and when he went to the water fountain a lion attacked him and sucked his blood, then dogs came and devoured his limbs, and brought back the hand which had struck Thomas.
137	2.10, pp. 274-75	King Hyrcatus attempted to seduce and marry the consecrated virgin Iphigenia, and ordered the martyrdom of Matthew. He was attacked by elephantiasis and eventually fell on his own sword.
138	2.11, pp. 282-83	Simon and Jude were killed by the priests Zaroos and Arphaxad, for destroying images of the sun and chariot and moon. The priests were struck by lightning and burnt to ashes, and the temple was rent apart.

139	2.15, p. 294	A crowd of heathen were present at the martyrdom of Mark. Many perished in a destructive thunderstorm.
140	2.17, p. 300	Heathen priests brought about the martyrdom of Martial and were killed by a thunderbolt.
<i>The Ecclesiastical History of Orderic Vitalis</i> , ed. Marjorie Chibnall (Oxford, 1980) vols. 2-3 1123x1137		
141	vol. 2, p. 55	Mabel, the daughter of William Talvas, abused the hospitality of the monks of St Evroul. Abbot Thierry warned her to restrain her vanity, but she flew into a rage and threatened to bring an even bigger retinue. The next day she fell sick in agony and fled. She recovered and avoided the place forever afterwards.
142	vol. 2, p. 155	Robert the Bald seized booty from the territory of St Ouen, and met his death by falling from his horse and breaking his neck.
143	vol. 2, p. 157	An eagle carried off some hens from the monastery of St Judoc, and died after returning the cock.
144	vol. 2, p. 159	A man called Drochtic expressed doubt over St Judoc's incorrupt body, and was struck deaf and dumb and remained enfeebled for the rest of his life. His wife gave two villas to Judoc for the salvation of his soul.
145	vol. 2, pp. 175-77	The English army was defeated at Hastings as punishment for the murder of the ætheling Alfred.
146	vol. 2, pp. 175-77	The Norman army experienced significant slaughter at Hastings as punishment for coveting the goods of other men.
147	vol. 2, pp. 319-21	Robert Fitz Osbern, Earl of Hereford, oppressed the English and caused the deaths of many thousands of people. He met his death by the sword, and later all his progeny were obliterated as well.
148	vol. 2, p. 351	King William the Conqueror was censured by many for ordering the execution of Earl Waltheof, and was later faced with rebellions and adversity, and fewer victories in battle.
149	vol. 2, p. 361	Rotrou, Count of Mortagne, plundered the lands of the cathedral church of Chartres, was excommunicated and became permanently deaf.
150	vol. 3, pp. 135-37	Mabel, wife of Roger of Montgomery, was guilty of various killings and disinheriting and exiling other lords. In particular, she deprived Hugh of his paternal inheritance, who subsequently beheaded her while she was bathing in her chamber.
151	vol. 3, p. 287	Some oaf stole and split in half a piece of marble from the Church of St Mary on the hill near Charentonne, and died within a year.
152	vol. 3, pp. 319-21	Some men in the Frankish army mocked the relics of saints Evroul, Evremond and Ansbert because they were unfamiliar, and the next night lightning struck the jester and other idle wretches who had mocked.

153	vol. 3, pp. 325-26	The Franks stole the relics of St Evroul, which Ascelin, then abbot, considered to be divine chastisement.
<i>Henry, Archdeacon of Huntingdon, Historia Anglorum: The History of the English People</i> , ed. and trans. Diana Greenway (Oxford, 1996) 1123x1154		
154	i.4, p. 15	The inhabitants of Britain were guilty towards God and suffered five plagues in the form of the arrival of the Romans, the Picts and Scots, the English, the Danes, and the Normans.
155	ii.2, p. 83	Vortigern refused to hear the preaching of Germanus, and met his death when fire from heaven hit the fortress where he was staying and caused falling masonry.
156	ii.6, pp. 87-89	The Picts and Scots made war on the British. They became afraid and fled from battle, and some of them met their deaths in the river.
157	iii.15, 16, p. 163	The British refused to accept peace and failed to preach to the English. They were defeated in battle against Æthelfrith at Chester.
158	iii.20, pp. 167-69	Sæberht's sons committed idolatry and expelled bishop Mellitus. They died in battle.
159	iii.21, pp. 169-71	Bishop Lawrence intended to follow Mellitus and Justus and depart from the kingdom. While he was sleeping in the church of Peter and Paul, the apostles appeared to him in a dream and whipped him severely. Lawrence revealed everything to the king, who put aside his unlawful wife, was baptised, and recalled the other bishops.
160	iv.4, pp. 215-17	King Ecgfrith attacked Ireland and laid waste a people that had always been friendly to the English. He was defeated in battle against the Picts, and his kingdom remained narrower.
161	iv.20, 245-47	King Sigeberht was guilty of pride and wickedness, was banished and met his death at the hands of a swineherd, as vengeance for his lord who had been murdered.
162	v.preface, p. 275	The English church had withered, and treachery was rife, particularly in Northumbria. Heathens violated the land for 230 years.
163	v.27, p. 325	After King Edward was murdered, many of the chief men of England were injured or killed when a ceiling collapsed and they fell from a loft.
164	v.28, p. 327	Æthelred was in conflict with the bishopric of Rochester. The Danes brought destruction to England.
165	vi.preface, p. 339	The English were guilty of compelling crimes, including slaughter, treachery, drunkenness and impiety. They reaped persecution by the Danes, and conquest by the Normans.
166	vi.23, p. 379	Earl Godwine committed treachery and was implicated in the murder of the ætheling Alfred. He choked to death when he attempted to proclaim his innocence.

167	vi.38, pp. 403-05	King William plundered the kingdom of Philip in France, burned churches and killed many people. On his return to England he became sick and died.
168	vii.17-18, p. 443	The duke of the Normans refused the governorship of Jerusalem, and met misfortune thereafter.
169	vii.22, pp. 447-49	William Rufus ruled the English with injustice, and met his death suddenly during hunting.
170	vii.32, p. 467	Two sons of King Henry, his daughter, niece, and many of his nobles and household, were all, or nearly all, said to be tainted with the sin of sodomy. All died in a shipwreck: despite calms seas and no wind, God brought dense cloud and hidden rocks.
171	vii.34, pp. 469-71	Ranulph, chancellor of the king, was guilty of oppression, robbery and pride. He was ill for all the twenty years he was at court. One day, whilst conducting the king to his castle, he fell from his horse, a monks rode over him, and he died a few days later.
172	vii.36, pp. 473-75	John of Crema, a Roman Cardinal, was guilty of unchastity and hypocrisy, being caught with a whore despite leading a council that dealt harshly with priests' wives. He retreated to Italy, was confounded and discredited.
173	ix.38, p. 673	The nuns of Coldingham were guilty of disgraceful behaviour and impiety. Prayer was replaced by drinking, gossip and other delights, and the nuns adorned themselves with finery to attract the friendship of men from outside. The monastery was destroyed by fire.
174	x.1, pp. 699-701	William, Archbishop of Canterbury, blessed Stephen as king, despite Stephen having previously sworn fealty to Matilda. His death was predicted within a year.
175	x.1, pp. 699-701	Roger, bishop of Salisbury, was the second to swear an oath to Stephen, and was later arrested and tormented by the king.
176	x.22, pp. 745-47	Robert Marmion and a certain Geoffrey turned churches into castles. Blood bubbled from the walls of the church as a premonition, and both died fighting, Robert as an excommunicate devoured by eternal death, Geoffrey struck by an arrow from a foot soldier.
177	x.22, pp. 745-47	A commander of foot soldiers broke into some churches, and met his death through being becalmed at sea. The lot fell to him and his wife to be cast adrift in a small boat, and they were swallowed by a sudden whirlpool.
William of Malmesbury, <i>Vita Wulfstani</i> , in <i>William of Malmesbury, Saints' Lives: The Lives of SS. Wulfstan, Dunstan, Patrick, Benignus and Indract</i> , ed. Michael Winterbottom and R.M. Thomson (Oxford, 2002) c.1126		
178	i.8, pp. 35-39	A monk from overseas, called Winrich, objected to Wulfstan's preaching on the grounds that preaching was the prerogative of the bishop, not a monk. He experienced a terrible vision in which the judge rebuked him and a succession of attendants gave him a severe cudgelling. Winrich swore to make no more objections to Wulfstan's preaching, related the vision, confessed and begged forgiveness.

179	ii.14, pp. 87-89	A certain youth mocked the process of signing children at Gloucester. While a crowd of people were waiting for Wulfstan, the youth took it upon himself to sign the children with mud and utter obscene incantations. He began to rave, the crowd drove him away and he fell head first into a well. He was retrieved by his relations but died a few days later. William seems reluctant to assign this to divine vengeance.
180	ii.15, pp. 89-93	The brothers of a man who had accidentally been killed in Gloucester refused to accept appeasement from the killer, and ignored Wulfstan's entreaties to do so. They insisted that they would rather be excommunicated than fail to avenge their brother's killing, treating Wulfstan with contempt and injuring God. The fiercest brother went mad, rolling on the ground, biting the soil, frothing, foaming, his limbs smoking and stinking. The other brothers were terrified and offered peace, and Wulfstan restored health to the mad one.
181	ii.16, pp. 93-96	A plasterer called Earnmær nurtured hatred against someone in Worcester, and refused to listen to Wulfstan's deputy, Coleman, preach peace, reasoning that a monk as opposed to a bishop could be safely ignored. Whilst he was carrying out his work, a contraption that he was standing on broke and he injured both legs, and remained in pain to the end of his life.
182	ii.18, pp. 97-99	The first Sunday after Easter, Wulfstan was in a vill called Blockley and was about to say mass when he found that the ornaments on the altar were in an unfit state. He signed to the minor clerk to tell the chamberlain to put things right, but the clerk flew into a rage and gave the boy a great smack. Wulfstan was enraged by this action, and the same moment he grew angry, the clerk fell ill and unconscious. After the reason for his sudden collapse was determined, the clerk begged pardon and the illness left.
183	ii.22, pp. 105-07	Wulfstan made a sermon about peace whilst dedicating a church at Ratcliffe, and a poor man begged him to restore peace between himself and a certain rich man who had been a priest. The rich man remained arrogant, and Wulfstan prophesied his downfall. His enemies came upon him and his companions left him to be killed.
184	iii.16, pp. 131-33	Wulfstan maintained a sizeable armed force as a precaution against Danish attack. One day when it was rumoured the Danes were on their way, Wulfstan forbade drinking in the house. One Nicholas flouted this order and was assailed by fearful dreams for his disobedience.
185	iii.23, 145-47	A monk nurtured a dreadful crime in his mind, though had not yet put it into effect. The recently deceased Wulfstan appeared to him in a vision, threatening death that year if he did not desist from his sin. The monk was terrified and pledged to observe the rule.
<i>William of Malmesbury, Gesta Regum Anglorum: The History of the English Kings</i> ed. and trans. R.A.B. Mynors, R.M. Thomson and Michael Winterbottom (Oxford, 1998) c.1126, revised c. 1135		
186	1.80, p. 117	King Ceolred was guilty of violating nuns and trampling the privileges of the church. He died suddenly whilst feasting.
187	1.80, p. 117	King Osred was guilty of the same offences. He lost his kingdom and his life while still young.

188	1.80, p. 117	Charles, prince of the Franks, was guilty of overthrowing monasteries and appropriating the revenues of churches. He was consumed by torments and met a shameful death.
189	ii.137, pp. 223-24	A rebel called Alfred was plotting to blind Æthelstan at Winchester. He died in Rome after being sent there to defend himself against the pope.
190	ii.160, pp. 261-62	Abbot Æthelweard opened king Edgar's tomb and cut the body so that blood spurted out. He went mad and met his death from breaking his neck as he left the church.
191	ii.173-74, pp. 295-97	Some companions at a church in Saxony interrupted the mass by singing and dancing in the churchyard, and disregarded the priest's admonishments. They were cursed to perpetual singing and dancing for a year. Some dies afterwards, and some survived, though with continually shaking limbs. The bishop of Cologne absolved the companions after a year.
192	ii.175, pp. 299-300	A man in Agrippa took an irreligious nun as his mistress and refused to return her to her convent. A year later, he was struck by lightning and died.
193	ii.179, p. 309	Swein was ravaging England and the lands of St Edmund. He was struck by St Edmund in a vision and died.
194	ii.197, p. 355	Earl Godwine was implicated in the ætheling Alfred's death, and died by choking.
195	ii.200, p. 363	Godwine's wife, the sister of Cnut, bought slaves in England and shipped them to Denmark, especially young girls. Her infant son died, and she also died from being struck by lightning.
196	ii.204, pp. 377-81	A woman skilled in the art of witchcraft and soothsaying was greedy and lascivious. Her son and his family were killed by a collapsing house, and she herself became sick and died. Her spirit was carried off by demons, which no amount of chains on her coffin could prevent.
197	ii.210, p. 391	Offa put many leading men to death, including King Æthelberht. His son lived a very short life.
198	ii.211, pp. 391-93	Kenelm's sister, Cwenthryth, killed her brother in order to gain the kingdom for herself. Her eyeballs were wrenched from their sockets.
199	ii.213, pp. 395-97	Leofstan demanded to see St Edmund's incorrupt body, went mad and died.
200	iii.237, pp. 441-45	Two clerks at Nantes obtained priests' orders at too young an age as a favour from the local bishop. One of them died and was consigned to eternal punishment. The dead clerk appeared to the other and warned him to become a monk before it was too late for his soul, which he did.
William of Malmesbury, <i>Vita Dunstani</i> , in <i>William of Malmesbury, Saints' Lives: The Lives of SS. Wulfstan, Dunstan, Patrick, Benignus and Indract</i> , ed. Michael Winterbottom and R.M. Thomson (Oxford, 2002) c. 1129x1130		

201	i.14, 15, pp. 199-205	King Edmund ejected Dunstan from court, believing the abuse and slander of the nobility. Out hunting one day at Cheddar where Dunstan had found refuge, he came close to death when his horse almost chased a stag over a precipice. Edmund realised that he had injured Dunstan, promised to make amends, and the horse stopped with its feet already over the edge.
202	i.24, pp. 219-23	Dunstan refused to accept the bishopric of Winchester. In a dream, St Peter struck his hand with a caressing cane as a warning not to refuse the title in the future.
203	ii.21, pp. 273-75	Æthelred was quarrelling with the bishop of Rochester and accepted bribery to cease attacking the city, which provoked Andrew, patron saint of the city. Dunstan prophesied the descent of evils on England.
204	ii.25, pp. 281-83	A rich man called Ælfwold fell ill and wished to become a monk. However, on regaining his health he hankered after the world again, scorned his monastic vows and persuaded the king to restore all his property, which he then abused. Having fallen ill again, he died on the way to Glastonbury and his body was eaten by foxes, as Dunstan had idly predicted.
William of Malmesbury, <i>Life of Benignus</i> , in <i>William of Malmesbury, Saints' Lives: The Lives of SS. Wulfstan, Dunstan, Patrick, Benignus and Indract</i> , ed. Michael Winterbottom and R.M. Thomson (Oxford, 2002) 1126x1135		
205	pp. 361-63	A brother who had long been ill slighted the power of Benignus, asserting that the saint could do him no harm nor good. Benignus appeared to the brother in a dream, rebuked him and gave him a great slap to the face. The brother was plagued by fevers for a year.
206	pp. 361-63	Other brothers mocked Benignus and stole his tooth. In the same vision as above, Benignus threatened sore torment unless the culprits came to their senses.
William of Malmesbury, <i>Life of Indract</i> , in <i>William of Malmesbury, Saints' Lives: The Lives of SS. Wulfstan, Dunstan, Patrick, Benignus and Indract</i> , ed. Michael Winterbottom and R.M. Thomson (Oxford, 2002) 1126x1135		
207	pp. 371-79	When Indract was travelling between Ireland and Rome, some robbers killed him and his companions in the belief that their sacks were filled with gold. Being brought to justice, before the king could impose a proper penalty they became troubled with unclean spirits and tore each other apart like dogs.
<i>Geoffrey Gaimar, Estoire des Engleis / History of the English</i> , ed. and trans. Ian Short (Oxford, 2009) 1136x1137		
208	p. 133	The Danes invaded Southampton and, by God's judgement, were defeated by Ealdorman Wulfheard.
<i>Geoffrey of Monmouth, The History of the Kings of Britain</i> , trans. Lewis Thorpe (London, 1966) c. 1136		
209	pp. 54, 281	The British were guilty of arrogance, and submitted to the Picts and Saxons.

Arcoïd, *Miracula Sancti Erkenwaldi*, in *The Saint of London: The Life and Miracles of St Erkenwald, text and translation*, ed. and trans. E. Gordon Whatley (New York, 1989) 1140/1141

210	2, pp. 109-15	A wretched man ground by poverty refused to cease his work on Erkenwald's feast day, and loudly expressed contempt for Erkenwald when challenged by a minister. He ranted about the privileges of the clergy and how Erkenwald had no relevance to his own life. In his rage he stormed off, tripped over the half-buried skull of a dead man, fell on his head and died.
211	4, pp. 121-29	A great fire in London seemed to unleash God's fury on those who had offended him. Amid the burning of the city and the church the pall on Erkenwald's tomb survived unharmed.
212	6, pp. 133-35	The husband of a certain devout woman prevented her from donating for Erkenwald's new silver shrine. He became sick with an intense pain in his stomach that lasted several days. Erkenwald appeared to the woman in a dream and instructed her to urge her husband to be carried to the sepulchre. He eventually complied and was healed.
213	10, pp. 143-45	A silversmith called Eustace mocked Erkenwald by lying in the saint's new coffin that was being made in the workshop, pretending to be the saint and demanding gifts. He became sick and died within a few days.
214	12, pp. 149-51	A craftsman called Vitalis profaned Erkenwald's feast day by continuing to clean hides and making derisive comments to passers-by who tried to persuade him to stop. He suffered serious injury by slipping the blade out of his tool and piercing his own eye.
215	17, pp. 159-61	One of the painters who was working in the crypt where Erkenwald was being kept violated the saint's festival by preventing worshippers from entering the crypt with their offerings so that he could continue painting. He suffered a beating from Erkenwald in a vision for being so disrespectful.

William of Malmesbury, Historia Novella: The Contemporary History, ed. Edmund King, trans. K.R. Potter (Oxford, 1998) 1140x1143

216	ii.39, pp. 74-77	Robert Fitz Hubert had seized Devizes Castle and boasted that it would enable him to take possession of the whole district from Winchester to London. He was previously implicated in the death of eighty monks and destruction of their church and was threatening more of the same, and had a reputation for horrific treatment of prisoners. Robert was hanged by John Fitz Herbert, Castellan of Marlborough, who objected to handing over Devizes to the Empress Matilda.
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Liber Eliensis: A History of the Isle of Ely from the seventh century to the twelfth, compiled by a monk of Ely in the twelfth century, trans. Janet Fairweather (Woodbridge, 2005) 1169x1177

217	i.41, pp. 74-75	A pagan struck a hole in Æthelthryth's coffin in search of treasure. His eyes were torn from his head and he died.
218	i.49, pp. 80-82	An archpriest and his accomplices doubted the truth of the preserved relics. The archpriest used the hole to poke around in the coffin, got hold of the shroud and cut a piece off. The archpriest's family died first through plague, then the archpriest and two of his accomplices. Another went mad, and

		another became paralysed. The last accomplice was healed through supplication to Æthelthryth.
219	ii.132, pp. 251-53	Gervase, an administrator of taxation, was oppressing Æthelthryth's people, and summoned the abbot to court. The night before the abbot's trial, Æthelthryth appeared to Gervase in a dream, rebuked him and planted the point of her staff in his heart. On waking, he told his vision and died.
220	iii.51, 52, pp. 360-66	Master Ranulf, who was entrusted with the monks' properties, ejected and replaced rightful office holders, abolished sources of support, decreased victuals, withheld revenues, prohibited travelling, prohibited celebration of feast days, denied burial without payment, and became involved in a treasonous plot. The plot became out of hand and was brought to light. Ranulf took flight and dwelt as a wanderer like a second Cain, doomed to die a death without dying.
221	iii.119, pp. 455-56	Leofsige was guilty of stealing land from the monastery. While the disagreement went on all the arable land went to waste. He soon died.
222	iii.120, pp. 457-58	Gervase refused to celebrate the feasts of the lady saints, was gluttonous, and attempted to take mass without chastity. At the moment of mass he vomited and excreted loudly and had to be carried away and stripped of his vestments. Gervase recognised his guilt and made public confession.
223	iii.138, pp. 176-78	Various men wronged Æthelthryth and suffered various illnesses of cysts, deafness and dumbness, some of which were fatal.

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