Lessons in Leadership and Liturgy in the Winchcombe Psalter

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The later eleventh-century *Vita et miracula Sancti Kenelmi*, probably composed for the Benedictine abbey of Winchcombe in Gloucestershire during the rule of its first Norman abbot, Galandus (1066-1075), includes a remarkable episode attesting to the power of the psalms.[1] The rediscovered body of the holy innocent and royal child-martyr St Kenelm, murdered on the orders of his wicked sister Cwoenthryth, is being taken in triumphal procession to the monastery. Standing "in the upper room of the western church of St Peter [the main abbey church]",[2] Cwoenthryth spies the approach of the celebrating multitudes and is consumed by anger and hatred:

> Snatching up her psalter, by some kind of witchcraft she set about singing not for him, but rather chanting against him the one hundred and eighth psalm so that, in perversely saying

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[1] Love, ed., *Lives*, cx; on the compositional circumstances of post-Conquest hagiography, Ridyard, "Condigna," 205-6; Ridyard, *Royal Saints*, 175, 250-2. For the post-Conquest leadership of Winchcombe, Bassett, "Mausoleum", 96; Williams, *English*, 147.

[2] Love, ed. *Lives*, 70-1.

it back to front- from end to beginning, from the last verse to the first- she might make it harmful to her brother's happy state. But her own curse turned back on her. For, working upwards from the bottom, as this verse rolled off her venomous lips: 'This is the work of them who detract me before the Lord: and who speak evils against my soul', straightaway both her eyes, rooted out from their sockets, dropped upon the very page she was reading. That same psalter, adorned with silver, still shows the proof of this chastisement, stained on the same sentence with the blood of the fallen eye-balls.[3]

Echoing the immediate blinding of the executioner of St Alban, this is a well-worn hagiographic trope: those who wilfully remain spiritually blind will be placed by God in earthly darkness. The sacral and supernatural power of the written word- whether English or Latin- is a recurring theme of Kenelm's *vita*. Cwoenthryth had successfully repressed all discussion of her crime until the miraculous intervention of another heavenly document that reveals the location of Kenelm's body. A dove leaves a parchment written in English on the high altar of Old St Peter's in Rome, but the Pope and his curia cannot understand it. Only after Englishmen have been found to read out the letter can action be taken, and the Pope sends legates to England authorising the translation of Kenelm's body.[4] Yet it is the witchcraft which Cwoenthryth attempts to practice using her psalter that appears to be the final straw in bringing down heavenly vengeance on the murderess.

It is difficult to over-emphasise the 'psalm culture' of any medieval English monastery, but the grisly relic of Cwoenthryth's psalter indicates how the specific cult history and circumstances of an institution might further shape the ways in which the psalms were read and

[3] Love, ed. *Lives*, 71, fn.5: "Ps. 108 (109) is numbered among the so-called 'imprecatory psalms' in which the wrath of God is called to work upon the wicked man. The 'cursing' portion of psalm 108 is from v.5 to v.19. It is perhaps significant that Cwoenthryth was stopped in her backwards recitation at verse 20; thus she did not get a chance to say the specifically imprecatory verses."
[4] Love, ed. *Lives*, 64-7.

interpreted. William of Malmesbury, who may have drawn on the *Vita et miracula* for the accounts of Kenelm's martyrdom and translation incorporated into his *Gesta Pontificum Anglorum* and *Gesta Regum Anglorum*, retells the story with relish and again records that the bloodstains remain on the psalter to this day, "vivid witness to the woman's savagery and to the vengeance of God."[5] He adds that the saint's body "is held in high esteem, and hardly any place in England is honoured by larger crowds of people coming to the saint's festival."[6] Gerald of Wales also recounts a miracle story that indicates the manuscript's use in the liturgy: a Winchcombe monk who had committed fornication on the eve of St Kenelm's day presumed to carry Cwoenthryth's psalter in procession at the festival, and found his hands stuck to it until he confessed his sin.[7]

Such tales of heavenly vengeance and saintly admonition would form powerful prompts to proper spiritual focus on the psalms. Few monks at Winchcombe, as they sang or recited Psalm 108, would have been unaware of its role in the afterlife of St Kenelm. Yet looking at and reading one's psalter strictly with the eyes of faith did not exclude broader contemplation of the moral and spiritual lessons taught by the psalms, and their application in a wider cultic, institutional and political context. The illustrations added to medieval psalters could act as powerful cues for this kind of meditative, polytextual reading.[8] They presented a framework for understanding the psalms that remained open to a variety of interpretations and encouraged multiple layers of meaning.[9]

This paper focuses on the unusual illustrations added to a combined New Testament and Psalter made at Winchcombe c.1130-1140, now Dublin, Trinity College MS 53 and known

[5] Thomson and Winterbottom, ed. *Gesta Pontificvm*, I, 450-1; Thomson and Winterbottom, ed. *Gesta Regum*, I, 392-3.
[6] Thomson and Winterbottom, ed. *Gesta Regum*, I, 392-3.
[7] Love, ed. *Lives*, 72-3, fn.3.
[8] Huot, " Polytextual", 203-10.
[9] Cleaver, "Illuminating", 23-8.

as the Winchcombe Psalter.[10] I first argue that its unusual depictions of kings, especially King David, were explicitly designed to encourage pictorial meditation on the subject of good Christian rulership in a monastic context. I then consider how a rare image of David dancing that illustrates Psalm 1 could be understood in the context of Winchcombe's cult of St Kenelm, laying emphasis on the role of liturgical performance in returning one to the innocence and spiritual purity of youth. I will finally speculate on the possible patron of this extremely large, high-status and impressive, but ultimately unfinished work. I suggest that the Winchcombe Psalter may have been made to mark the 1138 arrival of Abbot Robert, a kinsman of King Stephen, but abandoned unfinished during the conflict between King Stephen and the Empress Matilda. These wars directly affected the monastery between 1140 and 1144.

The Winchcombe Psalter: Illustrations and Iconography

The Winchcombe Psalter has been recently catalogued by Laura Cleaver and Helen Conrad O'Briain, from which the following summary is drawn. A large, 430x290mm manuscript, the psalter contains both the Gallican and Hebraicum translations of the psalter, set out in two vertical columns with the Gallican on the left, and the Hebraicum on the right. The numbering of the psalms follows the Gallican version. Prefaced by a gathering of introductory material on the psalms, the manuscript may have been designed for close scholarly study.[11] It includes the so-called 'Psalm 151' and contains some embarrassing scribal errors: when copying the opening of Psalm 1, the scribe repeats the Gallican reading *pestelentiae*, rather than the

[10] Another manuscript referred to as the Winchcombe Psalter is Cambridge, University Library MS Ff.1.23, an eleventh-century Psalter in Latin, accompanied by an Old English translation: Binski and Panayatova, ed. *Cambridge Illuminations*, 70-2, no.17. A detailed discussion is Lapidge, " Abbot Germanus". Other manuscripts from Winchcombe are detailed in Heimann, "Twelfth-Century", 107 and fn.74 and Hayward, ed. *Winchcombe Chronicles*, I, 104-5.

[11] Cleaver and Conrad O'Briain, *Latin Psalter*, 54-6.

Hebraicum *derisorum*, while the end of verse five in the Hebraicum version of Psalm 1 has been inserted above verse four.[12]

The manuscript is not lavishly illustrated and several of its illuminations have only been sketched in. It opens with four folios of illustrated canon tables, and contains conventional outline drawings of SS Mark, Luke and John.[13] The three major divisions of the psalter at Psalms 1 (f.151r), 51 (f.164r) and 101 (f.178v) are marked by large foliate initials, and an additional, slightly smaller pair of initials denotes Psalm 109, the first psalm sung at Vespers on Sundays.[14] On f.178v (Psalm 101), the initial on the right-hand side of the page has been left in sketch form, while a green and pale red colour wash has been added to elements of the initial on the left side. The opening page of the New Testament, f.7v (Figure 1), depicts St Matthew writing at his desk, shown within an architectural frame and accompanied by a full-page, unfinished historiated initial. The letter 'L' is formed by a series of interlocking roundels knit together by crooked foliate stems, bursting with acanthus leaves and flowers. In the main body of the 'L', each roundel is divided by a slender central column supporting two rounded arches. Underneath the arches, bust-length male figures stand or sit, twisted towards each other or gesturing in dialogue. Adelheid Heimann has demonstrated how the twenty-eight figures depict Christ's ancestors as traced through the royal house of David in Matthew 1.1-17.[15] The iconography of MS 53 is rooted in the Anglo-Saxon tradition: a late-tenth-century gospel book of St Bertin (Boulogne, Bibliothèque Municipale MS II) places the ancestors of Christ within rows of arched niches on f.11v.[16]

In Matthew 1.17, Christ's royal lineage is divided into three series of fourteen generations each: running from Abraham to David, David to the Babylonian exile, and from

[12] Conrad O'Briain, "Psalms", 17; Cleaver and Conrad O'Briain, *Latin Psalter*, 54.
[13] Heimann, "Twelfth-Century", 106-7 (Appendix).The canon tables are ff.2r-4v, and the illustrations of the Evangelists are found at f.7v (Matthew), f.24v (Mark), f.36r (Luke), f.54v (John).
[14] Cleaver and Conrad O'Briain, *Latin Psalter*, 54; Cleaver, "Illuminating", 32.
[15] Heimann, "Twelfth-Century", 87-94.
[16] Backhouse et al, ed. *Golden Age*, 60-5, no.42; Heimann. "Twelfth-Century", 89-92.

the Babylonian exile to the coming of Christ. As twenty-two of the figures on f.7v have been given attributes, another motif with an Anglo-Saxon precedent, they can be identified as the first two generations of the ancestors of Christ, concluding here with King Jeconiah.[17] The serried ranks of Christ's royal ancestors, linked together by flowering branches, stress the earthly continuity of the Saviour's royal lineage, flourishing despite royal sin, disaster or exile. At the right of the horizontal arm of the 'L ', Jeconiah places his crown at the feet of the transfigured Christ.[18] Jeconiah's gesture of submission underlines the status of Christ as the king of kings, reigning eternally in heaven in contrast to ephemeral worldly glory on earth. Even before the reader arrives at the psalter text, kings and kingship are a prominent theme.

While there is an iconographic continuity with earlier Anglo-Saxon manuscripts, and a continuation of the insular tradition of tinted and colour-washed outline drawing, f.7v of the Winchcombe Psalter shows a marked formal and stylistic contrast with the fluttering drapery folds, ghostly outlines and sketchy brushwork characteristic of much Anglo-Saxon art.[19] The limbs of the solid, fully over-painted figure of Matthew are outlined by clinging, damp-fold drapery. Strong white cobwebs of highlights over his robes provide his figure with further weight and monumentality. There is an appreciable Byzantine influence in his mask-like face with its heavy brows, large, staring eyes with upraised pupils, solemn features and tight curls of hair.

Similarly 'up to date' are the profusion of vegetal and foliate tendrils with scrollwork, acanthus leaves, beasts and monstrous figures which form the two opening 'Beatus' initials on f.151r that introduce Psalm 1, one of the largest and most impressive surviving illustrations to the Winchcombe Psalter (Figure 2).[20] Unfurling leaves and flowers with frilled edges, outlined in green and further embellished by red, and more occasionally purple, spotted and circular

[17] Heimann, "Twelfth-Century", 87-91.
[18] Heimann, "Twelfth-Century", 93.
[19] Karkov, *Anglo-Saxon*, 41, 198, 235; see also Wormald, *English Drawings*; Dodwell, *Pictorial Arts*, 99-120.
[20] First discussed Heimann, "Twelfth-Century", 94-106.

patterns twine their way between the gaps of the lettering, fuller and more ornate in the capital 'B' of the Gallican. A sky-blue background to the Gallican 'B' sets it off against the smaller, unfinished and only half-coloured, lowercase 'b' of the Hebraicum initial. Yet in both initials, exaggerated looping stems sprout with or terminate in three-leaf clover and leafy crocket forms, yawning outwards in slow curls out of the flowers spiralling at the centre of each letter. Monstrous lion masks, beasts and hybrids bite and suckle at both initials, echoing how monks were taught to ruminate "on the divine flowers of the Divine Word [and] retain nothing else in their hearts and mouths", chewing on the succulent flavours and sweet flowers of the sacred text in their *meditatio*.[21] The twists of the creatures' fur and hair, edged in green, are easily confused with the flourishing vegetation of the initials. If not wholly 'absorbed' and 'incorporated' in the text, their open jaws and sated smiles affirm the physical and spiritual nourishment offered by the living, flowering Word.

Human figures have also been placed within the foliage and as on f.7v, Biblical history comes to the fore. The transfigured Christ shown on f.7v was both *filius Dei* and *filius David*, and in the centre of the Gallican 'B' is the seated figure of King David, enthroned, crowned and cross-legged. The supposed royal author of the psalms sits in glory, tuning rather than playing the prominent harp held in both hands. Five further roundels stud the Gallican letter: David's accompanying musicians, consisting of two trumpeters, a viol-player, a bell-player and an additional dancer, singer or conductor.[22] These can be identified as some of the Levites chosen in 1 Chronicles 15.16-22 "to be singers with musical instruments [...] on psalteries, and harps, and cymbals, that the joyful noise might resound on high". The standing figure may even be a depiction of Chonenias, chief of the Levites who "presided over the prophecy, to give out the tunes: for he was very skilful."[23] The more unusual illustration on the right side of the page

[21] Peter of Celle, c.1145, quoted in Camille, *Image on the Edge*, 63-4; Karkov, *Art of Anglo-Saxon*, 219.
[22] Heimann, "Twelfth-Century', 95.
[23] 1 Chronicles 15.22 (Vulgate).

was first identified by Adelheid Heimann as David dancing before the Ark of the Covenant (1 Chronicles 15 and 2 Samuel 6). Completing a chronological depiction of the return of the Ark of Covenant to Jerusalem, David's bent form echoes the depiction of medieval acrobats, his outstretched arms almost reaching down to his ankles.[24] The Ark is shown in the guise of a medieval reliquary, three fleur-de-lis 'flowering' from its lid. Inside the single roundel of the Hebraicum 'b', Michal, the daughter of Saul is shown looking upwards, as if "looking out at a window, [where she] saw king David dancing and playing, and she despised him in her heart."[25] Punished by God with childlessness, the barren Michal frozen in her plain roundel can be contrasted with the verdant, fertile flourishing of the letters around her.

Dancing with such abandon, "with all his might [...] leaping and dancing"[26], the image exemplifies David's humility, placing his royal self in the lowly position of an entertainer and so deeply humbling himself before the Lord.[27] Across the two depictions on f.151r, David exemplifies the basic Christian antithesis of *humilitas* and *sublimitas*.[28] The ultimate Biblical model for good Christian kingship is shown in all his power and glory, crowned and enthroned, but also in all his piety and humility, "uncovering himself before the handmaids of his servants" amongst the multitude "with joyful shouting, and with sound of trumpet."[29] With originality and great spatial economy, this episode of Biblical history demonstrates the importance of a ruler's personal virtues, while also stressing the importance of acts of religious composition and devotion. The two major illustrations of the Winchcombe Psalter summarise the qualities and conduct required for good Christian rulership: royal lineage on f.7v, combined with recognition that whatever one's earthly stock, all earthly royal power is as nothing to that of

[24] Heimann, "Twelfth-Century",96-7.
[25] 1 Chronicles 15.29 (Vulgate); Heimann, "Twelfth-Century", 96-7.
[26] 2 Samuel 6.14-16 (Vulgate).
[27] 2 Samuel 6.22 (Vulgate): 'I will both play and make myself meaner than I have done: and I will be little in my own eyes: and with the handmaids of whom thou speakest, I shall appear more glorious."
[28] Heimann, "Twelfth-Century", 104-6 stresses the interpretation of David's dance as an example of *humilitas*, and 105: "The two Bs side by side depict the two contrasting aspects of David's nature: his *sublimitas* as ruler and psalmist and his *humilitas* as a dancer before the ark."
[29] 2 Samuel 6.20, 15 (Vulgate).

Christ, before whom all kings are subordinate. On f.151r, the importance of a ruler's obligations to the Church and to the worship of God is underlined.

I stress 'rulership', because these images of David would have great relevance in a monastic context. The Beatus initials on f.151r foreground David's role as psalmist and organizer of the liturgy, and highlight his commitment to whole-hearted participation in religious ceremonial, forgetting his worldly status when giving praise to God. In the Winchcombe Psalter, David is represented as a living exemplar for monastic devotion, as the man whose "will is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he shall meditate day and night".[30] The monks of Winchcombe should aim to do the same, reciting David's psalms and imitating the king's abandon when performing the monastic office.

David also carried typological significance as a prefiguration of Christ. Jane Hawkes has examined how early medieval images of David as psalmist could illustrate the notion that "the words of the psalms were those of Christ and his Church living under the New Covenant", stressing the direct divine inspiration of the psalms and their importance as prophecies of the crucifixion.[31] The image of David dancing in the Winchcombe Psalter emphasises the fulfilment of Biblical prophecy. The celebrations shown in the Gallican 'B' remind that God's covenant with Abraham was fulfilled in David and the foundation of his kingdom.[32] Depicting the return of the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem presents an historic example of divine promises fulfilled, and prophecy become reality. Yet the image also points textually and liturgically into the future, towards the New Covenant. As the prefatory image to the psalter text, the illustration encourages the viewer to meditate on the forthcoming words of God- and Christ- composed by David the psalmist. With the Ark of the Covenant given a contemporary dress on f.151r, the Davidic image of past rituals could also be conflated directly with present-

[30] Psalm 1.2 (Vulgate).
[31] Hawkes, "Figuring salvation", 267; Hawkes, "Old Testament", 155-6.
[32] Hawkes, "Figuring salvation", 272.

day rites commemorating Christ's Passion, once again uniting Old Testament promise with New Testament fulfilment. When performed by a monastic viewer of the Winchcombe Psalter, image and action unite. Participation in the liturgy could be understood as fulfilling the obligations of every Christian's covenant with Christ and his Church.[33] The practice and significance of these ceremonial duties could be traced back to the actions of David as depicted on f.151r, allowing the image of David dancing to be comprehended on a moral, historical and typological level.

St Kenelm and Spiritual Youth

I would now like to locate these prompts to devotion more firmly in the context of Winchcombe's institutional history and cult, and suggest the further significance that an image of David dancing might have in such a setting. Monastic contemplation at Winchcombe of the historical actions of virtuous kings, followed by consideration of the royal virtues that could and should be imitated within the present-day monastery, would not have been unusual. What is today a small market town near the Cotswolds was an ancient Anglo-Saxon royal centre, first as part of the kingdom of the Hwicce and then as part of Mercia. Surviving historical records for Winchcombe are somewhat sparse. For the purposes of this paper, the most significant extant work is preserved in London, British Library Cotton MS Tiberius E.IV, as part of 'school-book' collection of computistical materials.[34] A series of brief annals extend from the Incarnation to 1181 and may have been intended as a further aid to the teaching of computus.[35] Largely derived from a single historical source connected to Gloucester Abbey, they make little reference to the internal history of Winchcombe.[36]

[33] Hawkes, "Figuring salvation",272.
[34] Hayward, *Winchcombe* I, 3-8, 28-61.
[35] Hayward, *Winchcombe* I, 41-61.
[36] Hayward, *Winchcombe* I, 124-45.

The monastery is said to have been founded in 798 by King Coenwulf of Mercia (796-821) as a burial church for himself and his family. An alleged foundation charter and copies of papal privileges are recorded in the annals to this effect.[37] Designed to house three hundred monks, Coenwulf's monastery was dedicated in 811.[38] In his own, more forthcoming accounts of the house's history, William of Malmesbury presents Coenwulf as an exemplar of virtuous Christian kingship: victorious in battle, a staunch supporter of the church and characterised by his piety, humility, clemency and generosity. When the king and patron has Winchcombe dedicated by thirteen bishops, "he freed at the altar the king of Kent, whom he had lately made captive by right of war [...] as well as [giving] presents beyond number and price [...] "[39] Coenwulf's building of Winchcombe was "a piece of munificence on a scale inconceivable in our own times."[40] The monastery may have served as a royal archive and administrative hub for Coenwulf's local sub-kingdom, in addition to acting as a dynastic burial place.[41]

Steven Bassett argues that Coenwulf may have built a freestanding mausoleum close to the east end of the abbey church of St Peter's.[42] Dedicated to St Pancras, another boy martyr, this royal mausoleum may have been the first burial place of Coenwulf's son, Kenelm.[43] The cult of Kenelm, whose martyrdom is recorded in the Winchcombe Annals under 819, appears to have emerged only during the later tenth century. Winchcombe was refounded c.969 by

[37] Hayward, *Winchombe* I, 3-4; Lapidge, "Abbot Germanus", 118.
[38] Hayward, *Winchcombe* I, 4; Hayward, *Winchcombe* II, 450-61; Bassett, "Mausoleum", 84-5.
[39] Thomson and Winterbottom, ed. *Gesta Pontificvm*, 448-9. The account in Thomson and Winterbottom, ed. *Gesta Regum*, 138-9 is even fuller: " Cenwulf was a man of outstanding distinction, whose merits were greater even than his reputation, and [he] never exposed himself to carping by any lapse; pious at home and victorious in the field [...] This praise he earned not only by the splendour of his reign, but also by his personal humility, never seen more clearly than in his restoration of the shaken dignity of Canterbury [...] king as he was, he made light of his own worldly eminence in his kingdom [...when he released Eadberht Pran at the high altar]-it was a wonderful exhibition of his natural clemency. Cuthred, whom he had set up as king of Kent, was there to applaud this act of regal generosity. The church resounded with applause, and great was the to-and-fro in the streets; for there, in the presence of thirteen bishops and ten thegns, no man met with a denial of Cenwulf's generosity, but all went home with full purses [...] Having enriched that monastery [of Winchcombe] with great revenues, on a scale that now seems incredible, in the twenty-fourth year of his reign he paid it the final honour of being buried there."
[40] Thomson and Winterbottom, ed. *Gesta Pontificvm*, 448-9.
[41] Hayward, "Innocent", 85-6.
[42] Bassett, "Mausoleum", 90-1.
[43] Bassett, "Mausoleum", 90.

Bishop Oswald of Worcester and veneration of Kenelm may have been established by the first abbot, Germanus, before he and his monks were exiled in 975.[44] Absent from the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, the historical Kenelm seems to have died c.811, having already witnessed charters as an adult *dux* or *princeps*.[45] One of several Anglo-Saxon martyred royal innocents, such as Edward the Martyr or Wigstan, the literary Kenelm conforms exactly to the hagiographic type: a youth of radiant beauty, purity and innocence, he is murdered through no fault of his own by the evil machinations of his sister Cwoenthryth and meets his end without resistance.

Paul Antony Hayward has convincingly located such cults in the context of late tenth and early eleventh-century reformed monasticism.[46] Rewriting martyrdom as a sign of virginal purity, and stressing the incorruptible, eternal youth and innocence of saints such as Kenelm, their cults fulfilled "internal disciplinary and pedagogical functions".[47] The monastic life was explicitly understood as a way of preserving or returning to a child's angelic, virginal purity: monks shaved, for example, in imitation of the humility and innocence of boys, and to be equal with the angels that "forever flourish in a youthful age".[48] Hayward argues that in the context of monastic institutions with high numbers of oblates and novices, St Kenelm provided a particularly useful model for imitation: younger monks could be taught the spiritual value of preserving their "primal simplicity" by a child-hero with immediate relevance as a devotional model.[49] Older monks were also encouraged to imitate Kenelm's innocence. And in the details of his martyrdom by a jealous and envious older sister, they were strictly reminded of their

[44]Hayward, *Winchcombe* II, 472-3; Lapidge, "Abbot Germanus", 119; Rollason, "Cults", 9-10; Love, ed. *Lives*, lxxxix-xc: Kenelm's wicked older sister Cwoenthryth did exist, as she is attested as the abbess of Minster-in-Thanet, in contrast to the inglorious reign and ignominious end narrated in the *Vita et Miracula S. Kenelmi*; Bassett, "Mausoleum", 85-7.
[45] Love, ed. *Lives*,lxxxix-xc; Rollason, "Cults", 9-10.
[46] Hayward, "Innocent". His forthcoming study is *Kingship, Childhood and Martyrdom in Anglo-Saxon England*.
[47] Hayward, "Innocent", 91.
[48] Hayward, "Innocent", 88.
[49] Hayward, "Innocent", 89 (quotation), 89-90.

obligations to protect, nurture and preserve the physical and mental purity of those in their care.[50]

On f.151r, David is a notably sprightly dancer, leaping upwards in a somersault before the viewer.[51] Although he is shown fully clothed, in breeches and a long-sleeved tunic, perhaps echoing the notice in 1 Chronicles 15.27 that he "had on him an ephod of linen", his torso is bared upwards, and in both the Gallican 'B' and the Hebraicum 'b', David has a very minimal beard. Shown as a narrow, dark outline of green curls at the Gallican 'B', the beard is even more difficult to make out in the image of David dancing: two curls peer from either side of his cap-like crown, and a single wobbling outline to the right side of his chin marks the faintest of beards. A beardless face is one of the most unmistakable visual signs of youth in medieval manuscript illustration.[52] It is possible that David has been deliberately closely 'shaved' by the artist on f.151r, as a way of rendering the nakedness emphasised by Michal in 2 Samuel 6.20. David is not only dancing with 'youthful' abandon before the Ark of the Covenant, but by casting off all marks of royal dignity, adult wisdom and maturity, "uncovering himself [...] naked", he has been spiritually reborn.[53] The king himself states in 2 Samuel 6.22: "I will be little in my own eyes", although the reference is again to the diminution of his royal status.

Returned to a state of spiritual youth, innocence and purity by bearing a 'naked', boyish, almost clean-shaven and dancing form before the Ark of Covenant, the image of David on f.151r once again stresses the importance of the liturgy, but in a way particularly resonant with the cult of St Kenelm. Performance of the Divine Office, and its recitation of the relevant psalms throughout the week, is cast here as another means of returning to the innocence and

[50] Hayward, "Innocent", 88-91.
[51] Heimann, "Twelfth-Century", 101: "David's dance is generally presented in a very decorous, stately manner, never even remotely approaching his acrobatic behaviour in the Dublin manuscript."
[52] Smith, *Three Women*, 67-72.
[53] 2 Samuel 6.20 (Vulgate). Hayward, "Innocent", 87-8 highlights how the sanctity of these martyrs was partly defined by their rejection of the royal state. In the Winchcombe Psalter image, David is (temporarily) doing the same.

spiritual purity of youth. Interestingly, the only similar English combination of such imagery (noted by Laura Cleaver and Helen Conrad O'Briain) can be found on f.15v of the c.1130-1140 Shaftesbury Psalter (London, British Library Lansdowne MS 383). [54] Gaze fixed upwards, a more decorous standing, unmistakeably but still quite narrowly bearded David holds a book before a dressed altar, watched by a row of male spectators crowded into the outer edges of the 'B'. Below, two musicians are joined by a devil, playing his own instrument. Possibly connected to the widow of Henry I, Adeliza of Louvain, the manuscript may have been made for use at the nunnery of Shaftesbury, or from a Shaftesbury model. Shaftesbury was another institution centred on the cult of a murdered royal innocent, St Edward the Martyr, who features prominently in the calendar and litany of the Shaftesbury Psalter.[55] The particular emphasis on youthful abandon and spiritual purity found in the image of David dancing in the Winchcombe Psalter may have been designed to consciously relate Winchcombe's local royal history and martyr to the royal lineage of that ultimate martyr, Christ. To recite the words of David in the psalms each day was also to praise and imitate St Kenelm, with the two sacred kings and their royal, priestly and prophetic exemplar, Christ, placed in a visual, liturgical and typological correspondence of heartfelt devotion.

Contemporary Royal Connections and the Possible Owner of the Winchcombe Psalter

While Winchcombe undoubtedly prided itself in its glorious royal history and institutional 'lineage', John of Worcester, apparently a frequent visitor to the convent, provides suggestive evidence for more contemporary connections to the court, and the monastery's place within networks of royal power.[56] He records meeting Grimbald, the physician of Henry I at Winchcombe, who told Abbot Godfrey of Winchcombe about Henry's 1134 four-part dream

[54] Noted in Cleaver and Conrad, *Latin Psalter*, 54.
[55] McKendrick et al, ed. *Royal Manuscripts* 117, no.11. For the cult of St Edward see Ridyard, *Royal Saints*, 154-167; Rollason, "Cults", 2.
[56] Hayward, *Winchcombe*, I, 123.

sequence "there in my presence and hearing." [57] The story was probably told after the king's death in 1135, and before the 6th March 1137 death of Abbot Godfrey.[58] One wonders what Grimbald's precise connections to Winchcombe may have been: as Edward the Confessor and then William I's royal physician, Baldwin, became Abbot of Bury St Edmunds, a monastic origin or training for Grimbald is not impossible.[59]

The Winchcombe Psalter images would also remind a viewer of the more practical, public and political value of David/the Winchcombe monks' devotional work, when performed with proper humility and in the innocent, joyful abandon of spiritual youth. As God would respond favourably to correctly performed services and heartfelt prayers, the institution and its external patrons would end up "prospering like the tree planted near running waters", while the wicked "are driven like dust from the face of the earth".[60] Offering a visual model of political virtue and good Christian conduct applicable to both secular and religious leaders, the significances of these unusual images, combined with the manuscript's impressive size, may suggest that the Winchcombe Psalter was designed for the instructional and scholarly use of, and public display by, either a high-status entrant to the house, or another senior figure exercising power and authority over the monastery, one who might frequently welcome secular visitors and wish to stress the monastery's value as a beneficiary of royal patronage.

The scanty sources for the twelfth-century history of Winchcombe offer one possible candidate for speculation here. John of Worcester records that at a Great Council held at Northampton in 1138, Robert, a Cluniac monk and reportedly (*ut ferunt*) a kinsman of King Stephen, was appointed to the abbacy of Winchcombe.[61] The production of a combined New

[57] Hayward, *Winchcombe*, I, 123-4; McGurk, ed. *Chronicle of John of Worcester*, 200-1: "Erat itaque iste medicine artis peritus, Grimbaldus nomine, qui apud Wincelcumb, me presente et audiente, narrauit hec omnia domno Godefrido eiusdem ecclesie abbati."
[58] Hayward, *Winchcombe*, I, 123.
[59] Ridyard, "*Condigna*", 187.
[60] Psalm 1.3-4 (Vulgate).
[61] McGurk, ed. *Chronicle of John of Worcester*, 240: "Due etiam date sunt abbatie, una Wincelcumbe cuidam Cluniacensi monacho, ut ferunt regis propinquo, nomine Rotbertus [...]" This is also recorded, under erroneous

Testament and psalter in honour of Robert's arrival, perhaps even intended for his personal use, may have been planned by the abbey and work begun on it in the monastic scriptorium. However the conflict between Stephen of Blois and the Empress Matilda for the English throne may well have obstructed the manuscript's completion. In 1140, the town of Winchcombe was attacked by Milo of Gloucester on behalf of Matilda. Milo took possession of the castle, close to the abbey gates, and harried the countryside around it for the next four years. John of Worcester records that at his attack, the greater part of the town was burnt down and there was much looting and destruction. [62] If Robert was indeed related to King Stephen, there was no reason for Milo to spare the abbey and we can assume significant damage to monastic properties and income during this period. The 1142 entry in the Winchcombe Annals records that: "This whole year along with the preceding one was taken up with the pillaging and oppression of churches, of the rich and the poor."[63] Finally in 1149, the monastery's sufferings were crowned by a devastating fire, and Abbot Robert died in the same year.[64]

It would not be surprising if such upheavals led to the abandonment of work on the Winchcombe Psalter, or if the resources and personnel required to complete the manuscript simply became unobtainable during the conflict. Possibly intended to be of special didactic value to Abbot Robert, but also useful for any monk who read or viewed it, the Winchcombe Psalter's images of successive Biblical kings, and its visual encomium to King David, defined for the community living under the spiritual protection of St Kenelm exactly the type of rulership that they expected, or would accept, from any figure of authority. The pages display a royal lineage and a royal figure that reward continual historical and spiritual meditation,

dates and simply stating "Robert succeeded to the abbacy of Winchcombe" in the Winchcombe Annals: see Hayward, *Winchcombe I*, 138-9 and *Winchcombe*, II, 524-7.

[62] McGurk, ed. *Chronicle of John of Worcester*, 282: "Milo exconstabularius grandi adunato exercitu [...] Wincelcumbiam invadit, maxima ex parte uillam combussit, predam egit, spoliatos rebus, ob exigendam ab eis, licet iniuste, mammonam iniquitatis, secum abduxit."

[63] Hayward, *Winchcombe*, II, 524-5.

[64] Hayward, *Winchcombe*, I, 145; Hayward, *Winchcombe*, II, 526-527; Love, ed. *Lives*, 123-5, Appendix C.

easily connected to St Kenelm and at the same time, to more contemporary kings and monastic concerns. The lessons offered by the Winchcombe Psalter in good Christian rulership, and its visual definition of proper liturgical performance, aptly demonstrate the convergence of faith, politics and pictures in the Anglo-Norman world.

Figure Captions

Figure 1: c.1130-1140 Dublin, Trinity College MS 53 (Winchcombe Psalter), f.7v. Image used by kind permission of The Board of Trinity College Dublin.

Figure 2: c.1130-1140 Dublin, Trinity College MS 53 (Winchcombe Psalter), f.151r. Image used by kind permission of The Board of Trinity College Dublin.