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THE REGIUS PSALTER, FOLIO 198V: A REEXAMINATION

Almost exactly twenty years ago, Patrick O'Neill published an article in this journal in which he discussed two short additions to the final leaf of the so-called Regius Psalter which were almost certainly written at Christ Church, Canterbury.¹ Although his discussion is a valuable one, his conclusions regarding these additions can be modified in the light of further evidence of which he was apparently unaware. I therefore wish to examine the additions again and to suggest an alternative interpretation of the two texts.

Neil Ker printed the first addition as do[.] ælf[. . .] seo hlæfdige,² to which I would perhaps add the Tironian nota 7 at the start. Although the passage is too short to offer a firm date, the script seems to be from the first half of the eleventh century. Patrick O'Neill has reminded us that seo hlæfdige as an appositive title was reserved for the wife of a king, and he has deduced from this that ælf- refers most probably to Ælfgifu (Emma) of Normandy, wife of King Æthelred and then of King Cnut.³ Many Anglo-Saxon women's names began with ælf-, including at least three prominent women called Ælfgifu during the reigns of Æthelstan and Cnut, but the prominence of Ælfgifu of Normandy makes her the most likely candidate, particularly given her benefactions to the community at Christ Church.⁴ O'Neill has also

¹ P.P. O'Neill, 'A Lost Old-English Charter Rubric: the Evidence from the Regius Psalter', *N&Q*, ccxxxi, (1986), 292–4.

² N.R. Ker, *Catalogue of Manuscripts Containing Anglo-Saxon* (Oxford, 1953), 319–20 (no. 249).

³ O'Neill, 293, citing J. Bosworth and T.N. Toller, *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary* (Oxford, 1898), s.v. hlæfdige. For a more detailed discussion see A. Campbell, *Encomium Emmae Reginae* (London, 1949; reprinted with supplementary introduction by S. Keynes, Cambridge, 1998), 58. In addition to the charters listed by Campbell, I have also found the formula Ælfgifu seo hlæfdige in S.1511 and S.1523. I have found only two other names with this title in the charters, namely Eadgifu (S.1032, S.1138, S.1154, S.1426), and Ælfthryth (S.1449). References of the form 'S.' followed by a number are to P.H. Sawyer, *Anglo-Saxon Charters: An Annotated List and Bibliography* (London, 1968).

⁴ Of the charters referred to in note 5, above, S.1511 refers to Ælfgifu, Æthelstan's first wife, but the rest refer to Ælfgifu (Emma) of Normandy. For the benefactions see O'Neill, p. 293, and R. Fleming, 'Christchurch's Sisters and Brothers: An Edition and Discussion of Canterbury Obituary Lists', in *The Culture of Christendom: Essays in Medieval History in Commemoration of Denis L.T. Bethell*, ed. by M.A. Meyer (London, 1993), 126 and 135.

reconstructed the first word of the scribble as donauit and has argued that this text may be the remnant of a royal grant.⁵ Unfortunately, there are problems with this reconstruction. There is insufficient space in the manuscript to allow the full word donauit, and this word is not normally abbreviated do[.]; indeed, the word is not normally abbreviated at all.⁶ Furthermore, to change languages like this, from the (probably) Old English 7 to Latin donauit and back to Old English seo hlæfdige, seems very unlikely. I have inspected the manuscript under ultra-violet light and enhanced a digital photograph of the page; doð seems a likely option, but it is impossible at this stage to be certain, and I have found no text in the extant corpus of Old English which matches such a reading.

The second note in question was printed by Ker as [. . .]eluf (?) cing [. . .]code ceoln[o]ðe on ece yrfe.⁷ Examination under ultra-violet light and with digital image-enhancement has yielded hit immediately after cing, n. in the previous line above eluf, and a[.]e in the line above n., with a descender visible on the letter between a and e. The script of this note is very similar to that of the first but is perhaps slightly later in style if not date. As was noticed some time ago, this scribble has the form of a charter.⁸ O'Neill has reconstructed it as Æþeluulf cing gebocode Ceolnoðe on ece yrfe which seems valid both historically and palaeographically once the word hit is included. O'Neill has also suggested that the text was copied in the eleventh century from the Old English rubric of an original ninth-century charter. Although no such rubric survives, he has suggested that the charter in question was S.286 which is preserved in a thirteenth-century cartulary and records a grant from King Æthelwulf of Kent to Archbishop Ceolnoth of Canterbury in the year 838.⁹ Unfortunately this identification is a little strained. S.286 is indeed the only extant charter which records a grant from Æthelwulf to Ceolnoth, but it

⁵ Instead of recording a gift, another possibility is that it commemorates a visit by the queen or as a form of liber uitae, a suggestion for which I thank Tim Bolton.

⁶ No abbreviation of the form do[.], and no abbreviation for dono or its inflected forms was given by W.M. Lindsay, Notae latinae: An Account of Abbreviation in Latin MSS. of the Early Minuscule Period (c.700–850) (Cambridge, 1915), including the supplement of Latin manuscripts from 850–1050. A. Cappelli, Dizionario di abbreviature... (Milan, 1987), 107, listed three abbreviations of the form don, of which the closest in date to the scribbles is donatio (saec. xii in.). O'Neill has suggested donum but has rightly dismissed it as unlikely and grammatically unsound; see O'Neill, 294.

⁷ Ker, 320 (no. 249).

⁸ G.F. Warner and J.P. Gilson, British Museum Catalogue of Western Manuscripts in the Old Royal and King's Collections (London, 1921), 41.

⁹ O'Neill, 292–3.

is difficult to accept that only one land-transaction between these powerful individuals ever took place. O'Neill has cited Nicholas Brooks to argue that 'royal grants of land to the Archbishop of Canterbury were virtually non-existent during the ninth century',¹⁰ but it would be a striking coincidence if our scribble happened to be from this very one surviving document. Furthermore, we do know of at least one other land-transaction between this king and archbishop. S.1471 is a vernacular chirograph which records an agreement between Archbishop Eadsige and one Æthelric concerning land in Kent; the original document survives from the Christ Church archive and has been dated to the mid or late 1040s.¹¹ The significance here is that the land in question had been bought in the ninth century by Archbishop Ceolnoth, and the eleventh-century record states explicitly that Apelulf cing hit gebocode Ceolnoþe arcebiscope on ece yrfe. The scribble in the psalter matches this text precisely except that Ceolnoth's title is omitted. Furthermore, S.1471 is one of the nine documents in the Old English corpus which includes the phrase Ælfgifu seo hlæfdige, a phrase which, as we have seen, is also found on the same page in the psalter.

Unfortunately the identification of the scribble with S.1471 cannot be proved conclusively, even if the evidence is much stronger than that for S.286. However, the two scribbles and a third Old English note on 198v of the Regius Psalter all point directly at Christ Church, the first half of the eleventh century, or both.¹² Furthermore, the two scribbles seem to be from charters, and the most obvious conclusion is that they relate directly to material in the Christ Church archive. But why and when were they written into the psalter? The surviving portion of S.1471 is the middle section of a chirograph, but folio 198 cannot have been another portion of that or any other single-sheet document from the mid-eleventh century. The last quire in the psalter is in eight but lacks the final leaf; folio 198 is therefore conjugate with folio 193. But folios 190v–6v contain two vernacular prayers written by a single scribe in the late-tenth or

¹⁰ O'Neill, 292 n. 6, citing N. Brooks, The Early History of the Church of Canterbury: Christ Church from 597 to 1066 (Leicester, 1984), 145–6.

¹¹ S.1471, edited by A.J. Robertson, Anglo-Saxon Charters, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, 1956), no. 101; dated after 26 Dec. 1045 by F.E. Harmer, Anglo-Saxon Writs, 2nd ed., (Stamford, 1989), 51, and probably 1045 by T.J. Oleson, The Witenagemot in the Reign of Edward the Confessor: A Study in the Constitutional History of Eleventh-Century England (London, 1955), 154. The surviving original is now London, British Library (hereafter BL), Cotton Augustus ii.70.

¹² For the third note, apparently part of a letter from a monk at Christ Church, see Ker, 319 (no. 420).

early-eleventh century, and so the bifolium 193/198 must have been bound into the psalter at least a generation before the 1040s. Furthermore, the two documentary scribbles do not form a single contiguous piece of writing. Their position on the page suggests that they were always distinct entities, and the first scribble was written in a smaller and perhaps earlier hand than the second one. It seems that only part of the text was ever copied into the Regius Psalter, and that the scribbles are therefore either pen-trials or notes made when drafting one or more larger texts.

It may be significant that the land which was granted in S.1471 received a lot of attention in the eleventh century and thereafter. The document itself survives in no less than four copies: the original single sheet, two thirteenth-century copies in Middle English, and a seventeenth-century transcript of the Middle English version.¹³ The ninth-century grant of the same land is also partially recorded in a twelfth-century cartulary, although this charter is of rather doubtful authenticity.¹⁴ Furthermore, the grantor in S.1471, one Æthelric Bigge, is recorded in a late endorsement on the single sheet and also in a list of benefactors to Canterbury Cathedral which was compiled by Gervase of Canterbury, thereby confirming that the transaction was remembered over a century after the fact.¹⁵ It is hard to say whether our scribbles reflect the initial drafting of S.1471 or whether they are the result of later copying, perhaps work towards an early list of benefactors. But they can certainly be accounted for by the surviving evidence and do not require a putative lost rubric to S.286.¹⁶

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¹³ The Middle English copies are Canterbury, Dean & Chapter, Reg. A, 143rv, and Canterbury, Dean & Chapter, Reg. E, 44r; the Middle English transcript is BL Stowe 853, 30v–31v. The on-line *Regesta* omits the two copies now in Canterbury; see S. Miller and S.E. Kelly, *Regesta*, although the forthcoming *Revised Electronic Sawyer* will list all four. Both Sawyer, p. 412, and the *Regesta* erroneously describe the seventeenth-century transcript as Old English.

¹⁴ S.1625, not listed in the on-line *Regesta* but printed by W. de G. Birch, *Cartularium Saxonicum: A Collection of Charters Relating to Anglo-Saxon History* (London, 1885–93), I, 600 (no. 427).

¹⁵ W. Dugdale, *Monasticon Anglicanum...* (London, 1817–30), I, 97: *A.D. MXLIV. Egelricus Bigge dedit huic ecclesiae Chert, Stouting, et Miletune*. For further discussion of this transaction see Brooks, 148 and 302–3.

¹⁶ I wish to thank staff at the British Library for allowing me to view their MS Royal 2.B.v under ultra-violet light. I also thank David Dumville, Simon Keynes, and Tim Bolton for their comments on earlier versions of this paper. The opinions and errors which remain are, of course, entirely my own.