Chapter 3

ALFREDIAN IDEOLOGY

KEY ELEMENTS OF Alfredian ideology can be identified in the Alfredian texts. Of course, not all ideology is communicated overtly. Sometimes it takes the form of assumptions which lie, *sub silentio*, behind or beneath express statements. There is also an overlap between ideology and ideological power. Ideological power can derive from control of the content of an ideology (such as a religion or political movement). Controlling the dissemination of an ideology can augment this ideological power.[1] Those in control have the opportunity to harness collective action and direct it in ways that benefit them. This chapter focuses on identifying the relevant concepts, the *content*, of Alfredian ideology in the texts. The term "ideology" is used in the sense of "what the message was."

Ideology was important because it explained what Alfred wanted people to do and why they should do it. Ideology provided the ultimate objective of the proposed reforms, cogent reasons why the elites should participate in reforms, and tools to help them implement these reforms. Alfredian ideology was articulated across a variety of written media—translations of respected texts, the *ASC*, and the *domboc*. It is reasonable to assume that Alfredian ideology was also articulated verbally, in formal contexts such as assemblies and judicial hearings, and during informal face-to-face discussions, even though we lack extensive records of these interactions.

Ideology was a crucial component in the assemblage of Alfredian text-bodies, which were agential in bringing about Alfredian reform. Ideology pervaded Alfredian social practices of lifelong learning, education, and the administration of justice, which were equally agential in Alfred's reform program. I explain how text-bodies and social practices were agential in Alfredian reform in chapters 5 and 6.

The ultimate objective of Alfredian ideology was the (re)acquisition and practice of God-devoted wisdom across all levels of the community. (I say (re)acquisition because the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms converted to Christianity over the course of the seventh century.) There were several key components to the Alfredian model of acquiring and practising God-devoted

1 Snyder, "Networks and Ideologies," 308–09, 316.

wisdom. At the heart of the model was the relationship between king and subjects, framed by reciprocal obligations. The king's paramount obligation was to exercise royal power in service to God, echoing the Carolingian model of kingship.[2] Power exercised this way was constrained by the obligation to guide and protect the people entrusted to a king's care, and was subject to divine oversight. Humility ensured the righteous use of royal power. Honour and wealth were appropriate tools of royal power exercised in service to God.

The community had a concomitant obligation to obey their king, who had been appointed by God to lead them. Good lordship and loyal friendship facilitated appropriate behaviour within the political hierarchy in a God-centred community. *Cræft* (mental or spiritual calibre) and the *modes eagan* (the "eyes of the mind") were essential tools for both king and subjects in their goal of God-devoted wisdom. The concept of the Anglo-Saxons as the *Angelcynn*, a people with a common identity and a shared destiny, operated to cohere the community and reinforce the importance of reorienting the community back to God.[3] Alfredian ideology therefore encompassed a variety of concepts and methodologies. Alfredian ideology was both political and religious, intertwining "spiritual health and social integration."[4]

This array of concepts and tools provided flexibility to articulate Alfredian ideology across individual texts. The use of a variety of media to articulate and disseminate Alfredian ideology was a shrewd strategy. It increased the reach of that ideology—different texts were apt for different kinds of textual communities.[5] Importantly, there is a social dimension to a textual community—a process of absorption of the content of texts, acting in accordance with them, and identification through those actions and beliefs.[6] The concepts of textual communities and social practices overlap.

Different genres of texts permitted different aspects of ideology to be emphasized, tailored to suit the audience and the circumstances of reception. Alfred paid attention to the circumstances of reception, adjusting social practices or creating new ones in order to maximize the prospects of Alfredian ideology being absorbed and acted upon. While I focus on the ideology embedded in texts in this chapter, it is important to remember that material culture can instantiate and transmit ideology.

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2 Pratt, *Political Thought*, 58–60.

3 Foot, "Making of *Angelcynn*."

4 Brown, *Transformation of Britain*, 103.

5 Stock, *Implications of Literacy*; Stock, *Listening for the Text*.

6 Stock, *Listening for the Text*, 112–13, 150–53.

In this chapter, I analyze the texts traditionally regarded as the Alfredian canon—the *Pastoral Care*, *OE Boethius*, *Soliloquies*, and *Prose Psalms*.[7] I refer to these four texts as "the Alfredian translations." I start my analysis with a close consideration of the *Pastoral Care*—its prefaces and the modifications in translation. In respect of the *OE Boethius* and the *Soliloquies*, I examine elements of ideology in turn, referring to the texts in which the elements are articulated, rather than working through each text separately. I then turn to the *ASC*, the *domboc*, and finally, the *Prose Psalms*. Before examining the individual texts, it is useful to consider why translations were used at all.

The Alfredian Translations

Translation was an act which could accrue authority for the translator from the status of the original work.[8] There were precedents for translations.[9] Both Asser and the Prose Preface to the *Pastoral Care* suggest that Alfred's Mercian advisors had expertise in translation, which is consistent with the early ninth-century Mercian evidence for vernacular literacy.[10] Harnessing the authority of patristic texts was common sense for a leader aiming for a Christian community. It was a form of authority readily available, uncontroversial, and likely to garner the support of the bishops, with their influence and resources.

The Alfredian translations modified the source texts, thereby shaping the power appropriated from those texts.[11] The Carolingians had shown how to manipulate written repositories of Christian authority to articulate a sense of shared history and destiny, and to mandate specific standards of collective behaviour.[12] In one respect, the Alfredian texts were very different from the Carolingian model. Alfredian texts used the vernacular, not Latin. I discuss this later in this chapter, in the context of the notion of the *Angelcynn*, and more fully in the chapter on Alfredian social practices.

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7 Bately, "Alfred as Author," 140–42.

8 Lerer, *Literacy and Power*, 62; Harbus, "Metaphors of Authority," 718–19, 722.

9 Bede is an obvious example: Crépin, "Bede and the Vernacular."

10 Rauer, "Early Mercian Text," 5–6; Brown, "19 Mercian Manuscripts," 289; Rauer, "Old English Literature."

11 Stanton, *Culture of Translation*; Davis, "National Writing"; Discenza, "Alfred's Verse Preface."

12 Costambeys and Innes, "Introduction," 2, 4; McKitterick, *Carolingians and the Written Word*.

The careful appropriation of authority is most evident in the text which announced the reform program—the *Pastoral Care*. Pope Gregory the Great's *Regula pastoralis* was a well-known text in clerical circles long before Alfredian reform.[13] Aldhelm quoted it, and both Bede and Alcuin used it and recommended it to fellow ecclesiastics.[14] It is highly likely that the text was known by all of the learned men Alfred relied upon to help him learn. It is probable that they brought the text to the king's attention to help him formulate his ideas of the responsibilities of kingship, during his quest for personal wisdom. The text was widely held to be instructive for secular rulers.[15] Alcuin and Hincmar of Reims both used the text to develop ideas of good secular governance in the Carolingian court.[16] The Prose Preface to the *Pastoral Care* was an invitation to consider the text anew.

The *Pastoral Care*: The Flagship Text

The Prose Preface encapsulates Alfredian ideology—explicitly in relation to the reorientation of the community back to God, implicitly in relation to the enhanced authority of the king. Its style is carefully chosen. The effect is to imbue the Preface with "a powerful sense of Alfred's presence."[17] The Preface describes a previous Golden Age of wisdom, peace, and prosperity in England. The implication is that learning, peace, and material prosperity are causally linked.[18] There is a striking contrast between the images of former glory and present decay.[19] Both the cause and the remedy are encapsulated in the notion of Christian wisdom. "Alfred" identifies the Viking raids, the loss of peace, and material prosperity as divine punishment for the loss of wisdom inherent in the loss of learning. Only by relearning what they have lost, and by recommitting to the values they previously held dear, can the community reverse their present misfortunes.

"Alfred" bemoans the dire state of learning in the kingdom. "He" says: "ðone naman ænne we lufodon ðætte we Cristne wæren, ond swiðe feawe ða ðeawas" (we loved the name alone of being Christians, and very few loved

13 Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Library*, 127.

14 Schreiber, "*Searoðonca hord*," 172–73; Anlezark, "Gregory the Great," 25.

15 Anlezark, "Gregory the Great," 14, 31; Schreiber, *Alfred's OE Translation*, 8, 10.

16 Schreiber, *Alfred's OE Translation*, 8, 10; Whobrey, "Alfred's Metrical Epilogue," 175–76.

17 Faulkner, "Royal Authority," 127.

18 Shippey, "Wealth and Wisdom."

19 Discenza, "Persuasive Power," 132–33.

the practices).[20] The comment paraphrases Augustine's pithy inquiry: "Quomodo te gloriaris esse Christianum? Nomen habes et facta non habes" (How are you proud of being a Christian? You have the name and not the deeds).[21] The phrase was employed by other writers in the early medieval period.[22] Its use by "Alfred" evidences a degree of scholarly sophistication.[23] While Keynes and Lapidge use the word "virtues" in their 1983 translation of the Prose Preface, the Latin word facta aligns semantically with the concept of deeds rather than virtues. James Cross notes that the Bosworth-Toller Anglo-Saxon Dictionary translates ðeawas as "practices."[24] Using the word "practices" highlights the active and the behavioural component of Christian wisdom, how the community would reorient themselves back to God.[25]

The Alfredian concept of wisdom embraces more than knowledge; following Augustine, *sapientia* is the goal, not *scientia* or *eruditio*.[26] *Sapientia*, "a Solomonic perceptiveness to the will of God," is a gift from God, a moral and religious sagacity; the concept pervades the Alfredian canon.[27] *Sapientia* permits the regulation of the self; good regulation of the community follows.[28] *Sapientia* is not innate; it must be earned, and honed by use.[29] Literacy is the mechanism by which wisdom is accessed and God's favour gained.[30] In this, "Alfred" channels Solomon, a comparison made explicit by Asser and reiterated in the *domboc*.[31] Proposed reforms are linked to a historically approved method of redemption, making a powerful emotional appeal to avoid further divine reprisals.[32] In articulating a conception of wisdom in terms which echoed biblical precedent and authoritative exegesis, "Alfred"

20 *Pastoral Care*, 6–7.

21 St. Augustine, "Tractatus V," col. 2018.

22 Cross, "The Name."

23 Anlezark, "Which Books," 9.

24 Bosworth and Toller, *Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, 1042; Cross, "The Name," 66.

25 There is an echo of this emphasis on behaviour in the OE *Exodus*, on the imperative to keep the covenant actively: Zacher, *Rewriting the Old Testament*, 79.

26 Bately, "Literary Prose," 9; Szarmach, "Meaning of Alfred's Preface," 64, 70. Shippey, however, has misgivings: Shippey, "Wealth and Wisdom," 353.

27 Hudson, *Laws of England*, 24.

28 Wormald, "Uses of Literacy," 107.

29 Discenza, "Persuasive Power," 127.

30 Bately, "Literary Prose," 9; Wormald, "Uses of Literacy," 107.

31 Asser, chaps. 76, 99.

32 Stanton, *Culture of Translation*, 71.

provided impeccable authority for the argument, and cast it in terms which would have been persuasive to the ecclesiastical elites in particular.

I do not suggest a dichotomy between Alfred's secular and clerical elites. The secular and the ecclesiastical were not separate spheres of action.[33] Alfredian ideology astutely appealed to both secular and religious values, notwithstanding potential tensions between the two worldviews. In Alfredian ideology, Christian wisdom led to success in warfare, territorial expansion, and material wealth. Material wealth—treasure—was culturally important in early medieval Western Europe, a fundamental measure of an individual's stature and character both as recipient and giver, and equally a measure of a community's worth and honour.[34] I develop this point further, in relation to royal largesse, when I return to the Jewel in chapter 7.

In the Verse Preface, Christian wisdom is described as a form of treasure—searoðonca hord—echoing Old English epic poetry like *Beowulf* and *The Wanderer* in tone and terminology.[35] It also had an impeccable Solomonic pedigree (3 Kings 3:11–14 and 2 Chronicles 1:7–12).[36] The Prose Preface specified, twice, that wealth follows the acquisition of wisdom:

> swelce hie cwæden: Ure ieldran, ða ðe ðas stowa ær hioldon, hie lufodon wisdom, ond ðurh ðone hie begeaton welan ond us læfdon. Her mon mæg giet gesion hiora swæð, ac we him ne cunnon æfter spyrigean. Ond forðæm we habbað nu ægðer forlæten ge ðone welan ge ðone wisdom, forðæm ðe we noldon to ðæm spore mid ure mode onlutan.
>
> (as if they were to say: Our elders, who once inhabited these parts, loved learning, and through it they amassed wealth and left it to us. Here their track can still be seen, yet we cannot follow it. And we have now forfeited both the riches and the learning, because we would not incline our understanding to the track.)[37]

Treasure occurs elsewhere as a measure of worth: in the *OE Boethius*, the historical Boethius is described within a single stanza as being just, a great treasure-giver, wise, and eager for honours—these are admirable character traits.[38] Treasure and treasure-giving appealed to values and emotions deeply embedded in the aristocratic ethos.[39] The promise of wealth would

33 Jurasinski, "English Law," 10.

34 Cherniss, *Ingeld and Christ*; Faulkner, *Wealth*.

35 Frantzen, "Form and Function," 130.

36 Zacher, "Chosen People," 461.

37 *Pastoral Care*, 6–7.

38 *Boethius*, Metre 1, lines 49–52.

39 Cherniss, *Ingeld and Christ*, 82.

have been highly motivating for an early medieval aristocratic audience. Nelson argues that wealth was held out as reward because the Alfredian program, unlike Charlemagne's, required the active participation of the lay elites.[40] The lure of wealth may have been a deliberate strategy to coax participation from the unwilling or the sceptical.

Further, the Verse Preface to the *Pastoral Care* stamps the king's authority by inserting Alfred into what Nicole Guenther Discenza describes as "a chain of authority," using metaphors, sentiments, and language familiar to the audience from secular heroic texts.[41] Alfred already has royal authority; by placing him between Gregory, Augustine, and the audience for Gregory's text, a claim is laid to religious and textual authority in terms likely to be palatable to the intended audience.[42] In expressly directing the bishops to copy and circulate the translation in the king's voice, the Verse Preface inserts the king into the chain between bishop, lower clergy, and laity.[43] "Alfred" may well have considered Carolingian precedents in crafting the Prose and Verse prefaces.[44]

In both prefaces, the focus is thus on the acquisition of God-devoted wisdom. This focus dovetailed with Gregory's characterization in the *Cura pastoralis* of the obligation to teach as a sacred duty. This set the tone for those who would be responsible for steering the Alfredian community back to God. Teaching was an evangelical obligation, owed to God and to others whom one should serve. This was a common theme in Gregory's writings.[45] It is echoed in later texts, such as the Vercelli Book.[46] Highlighting this theme at the commencement of the reform program would presumably have prodded the bishops to action—they too served. The king's responsibility for his people expressed in the Prose Preface not only channelled Gregory's concept of power in service to others, it provided an impeccable justification for the invitation to the bishops to act with the king—making the invitation difficult to refuse.

In the *Pastoral Care*, the obligation to teach is emphasized and expanded to include secular contexts. The text addresses *lareowas* (teachers) 110

40 Nelson, "Wealth and Wisdom," 36, 45.

41 Discenza, "Alfred's Verse Preface," 629.

42 Stanton, *Culture of Translation*, 79; Discenza, "Alfred's Verse Preface," 625–26; Harbus, "Metaphors of Authority," 723–24.

43 Discenza, "Alfred's Verse Preface," 627–30.

44 Godden, "Prologues and Epilogues."

45 Markus, *Gregory the Great*, 20.

46 Leneghan, "Teaching the Teachers."

times.[47] It also has a more secular flavour in its use of other terminology, substituting *ealdorman* and *ealdordom* for the Latin *rector* or *praelatus*, and translating *praepositus* as *scirman*.[48] The effect is to adjust the focus of the text, widening it to include those who exercise secular authority over others.[49] The notion of rulers as teachers was consistently characterized in the Alfredian texts as a hallowed Christian Latin tradition.[50] Alterations in translation made the text apt for the exercise of secular power, but did not alter Gregory's focus on how power must be wielded: cautiously, with humility, and in service to God and others.[51] As Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe has shown, the Alfredian translation diverges from the source text in its treatment of power exercised this way. The translation tempers Gregory's unease about the essentially fraught nature of power by distinguishing between the worthy and self-serving wielder of power.[52] "Alfred" also softens Gregory's warning that bishops who involve themselves in worldly affairs and take their focus away from God will displease Him (2 Tim. 2:4). "Alfred" qualifies the warning with the words "to ungemetlice" (too immoderately).[53]

The validation of the appropriate use of secular power is a major theme of Alfredian ideology. Other aspects of Alfredian ideology are embedded in this translation. These are the proper use of worldly riches, and the importance of good lordship and friendship. Section 143.1–4 of the *Pastoral Care* emphasizes the importance of the relationship between lord and follower; another section (201.2–3) explicitly states that lordship is divinely ordained and may not therefore be resisted.

These themes are reiterated in other Alfredian translations, and they feature strongly in the *domboc*. The other texts and the *domboc* were aimed at the secular elites as well as the clerical. Although the *Pastoral Care* was directed principally at the bishops, the Verse Preface and the emphasis on treasure suggest that "Alfred" anticipated that secular elites might well access the text, or portions of it. The framing pieces, as stand-alone texts, were also apt for the classroom and the task of learning to read. It is clear that Alfred was alert to that additional opportunity for persuasion. A new

47 Discenza, "Wealth and Wisdom," 459.

48 Schreiber, "*Searoðonca hord*," 187.

49 Anlezark argues, contra, that there is no evidence that the *Pastoral Care* was modified for readers other than bishops: Anlezark, "OE *Pastoral Care*," 231.

50 Discenza, "Wealth and Wisdom," 458.

51 Leneghan, "Royal Wisdom," 83–85.

52 O'Brien O'Keeffe, "Inside, Outside."

53 Faulkner, "Royal Authority," 132–33.

social practice of lifelong learning was introduced, and the existing social practice of education was modified, to facilitate the discussion and absorption of ideology contained in the Alfredian translations.

In order to reverse their fortunes, Alfred's people had to apply Christian wisdom. Applying Christian wisdom required more than private piety. It was crucial that Christian wisdom guided the community's actions and values in order to earn divine approval and fend off the Vikings. Alfred needed those who were involved in the management of the kingdom, the principal men, secular and clerical, on side. They would help to inculcate the requisite values and behaviour through their leadership in diverse social practices.

The *OE Boethius*, the *Soliloquies*, and the *Prose Psalms* were intended to assist with that process of inculcating and applying Christian wisdom. They therefore had to be tailored so that they would be suitable for secular elites as well as higher clergy. These texts contain greater digressions from their source texts than the translation of *Cura pastoralis*, and I argue that these digressions were deliberate. In common with scholars like Discenza and David Pratt, I contend that the OE translations evidence key concepts in Alfredian ideology—the importance of the *modes eagan* in the task of learning, Solomonic God-centred wisdom as the goal of learning, and the roles of kingship, lordship, friendship, honour, and earthly goods in a God-focused community.[54] In both the *OE Boethius* and the *Soliloquies*, the translation either expands upon or departs from the source text's commentary on each concept. These were not errors of transmission. I adopt Discenza's argument that Alfred deployed strategies of persuasion in the process of translating which were designed to make the texts easier to access and absorb. Ease of access increased the prospects of spreading the message, particularly to the adult men, the ealdormen, whom Alfred needed to target. These strategies increased the prospects of Alfredian ideology being discussed and accepted.

The *Soliloquies* and the *OE Boethius* are generally regarded as having been translated by the same person, even by those who doubt Alfredian authorship.[55] They use similar strategies of persuasion, and they both deal with important facets of Alfredian ideology. I introduce each text briefly. In analyzing these texts, it is easier to consider strategies of persuasion first, before considering ideology. Using subsections, I consider strategies of persuasion, *modes eagan*, lordship, friendship, and worldly goods, turning from the *OE Boethius* to the *Soliloquies* in each subsection.

54 Discenza, "Influence of Gregory"; Discenza, *King's English*, Introduction; Pratt, *Political Thought*, Part 2; Pratt, "Persuasion and Invention."

55 Godden and Irvine, *OE Boethius*, 1:8; Szarmach, "Augustine's *Soliloquia* in OE," 232.

The *OE Boethius* and the *Soliloquies*: Background

The central theme in the *OE Boethius* is finding the path to God. That is an integral part of its contextualization as a Christian text; the theme is absent from the source text. This theme echoes Alfred's own personal journey to wisdom (as recounted by Asser). This suggests that where there are modifications of the concepts from Latin source text to the OE text, those alterations signal issues of particular significance to Alfred. Many of those alterations revolve around the nature and responsibilities of kingship. These had particular relevance for Alfred's personal quest for wisdom, but they were also fundamental to Alfredian ideology and the task of reorienting the community back to God.

Some scholars have found it difficult to conceive why Augustine's *Soliloquia* was chosen as one of the books "most necessary for men to know."[56] Anlezark has cast doubt on Alfredian authorship of the OE translation, while acknowledging that the linguistic evidence points to an author who used the West Saxon dialect around 900.[57] Anlezark's reservations rest upon the esoteric nature of some of the content of the *Soliloquia*—difficult theological issues such as the pre-existence of the soul. There is no evidence that Alfred was interested in venturing into such intellectually difficult and theologically hazardous territory. If, however, Alfred was not concerned with the totality of the content of a text, but only what was useful to him, then the extraneous material may not have mattered a great deal to him. It was not as though he had a large selection of texts to choose from, or the option of writing his own polemic. There was no concept of a manifesto, a call to arms, in the early medieval period. I argue that "Alfred" took what was available—established texts, already known in educated circles—and manipulated them so that they articulated Alfredian ideology and could be used as vehicles to disseminate that ideology. I argue (in the next chapter) that the king intended his adult elites to seek wisdom the same way he had sought wisdom—using texts to spark discussion and elucidate debate. He probably did not intend his adult elites to read a text in its entirety or to study it as closely as a monastic community might do. It therefore probably did not matter very much that the texts contained material extraneous to Alfredian ideology or purpose, as long as they did not conflict with it.

56 Szarmach, "Alfred's Soliloquies," 160.

57 Anlezark, "Soul," 59–60.

Strategies of Persuasion in the *OE Boethius* and the *Soliloquies*

Discenza has identified a number of strategies of translation in the *OE Boethius* which made it a more accessible and engaging text.[58] I summarize some of her arguments. Woven into the translation are familiar features of Old English poetry. These include the use of doublets and the use of Old English poetic formulations such as "we have heard" and "we have learned." Loan words from the Latin are few in number and appear elsewhere in Old English, so that the text is phrased in language familiar to the audience. Likewise, style and syntax follow Old English patterns, rather than Latin.

"Alfred" used familiar concepts as well as familiar style. Boethius's interrogator is not Philosophy, but Wisdom. Wisdom appears in OE poetry, as well as in other genres.[59] In the *OE Boethius*, Wisdom is described as a foster-mother, a more congenial characterization than remote Wisdom.[60] The source text maintains the fiction of a conversation between the two characters; in contrast, Discenza lists a dozen places in the *OE Boethius* where the book refers to itself. The speaking book is an Old English cultural norm, which "Alfred" employed to great persuasive effect in his prefaces, as well as in text-bodies and the Jewel.[61] Discenza argues that the book speaks particularly where the argument is heavy-going, and that this strategy was employed to build a camaraderie between "Alfred" and his audience—a sense of shared labour.[62] The rapport is bolstered by a switch from the third person or impersonal voice in the Latin, to the first and second person voice in the OE. From chapter 22 of the *OE Boethius*, the protagonist simply uses *ic*.

The OE translation starts by situating the main character, Boethius, in a known historical period, albeit with some details that do not appear in the Latin text.[63] The historical figure soon fades into the background, as the main character is increasingly frequently referred to as *Mod* (mind) and *Gesceadwisnes* (wisdom). This change effects a switch in viewpoint for the audience. The central character is no longer a long-dead historical person with whom the audience can have limited connection. *Mod* is a proxy for each of us. *Mod*'s path to wisdom is open to the audience, because it is not historically contingent. Britton Brooks argues that the *OE Boethius* creates a relational-focused

58 Discenza, "The Old English Boethius"; Discenza, *King's English*.

59 Discenza, *King's English*, 88–89.

60 Discenza, *King's English*, 72; Crawford, *Childhood*, 123–38.

61 Earl, "King Alfred's Talking Poems."

62 Discenza, *King's English*, 61–63.

63 Godden, "King and Counselor," 203.

pathway to God, diverging from the argument-focused dialectic of the source text.[64] Erica Weaver suggests that the focus in the *OE Boethius* on "mental discipline that is entangled with the disciplining of the soul" made this text apt for the Alfredian educational program.[65] In fundamentally reshaping the way that the central character learns, "Alfred" made the *OE Boethius* far more relevant and accessible to his audience than the source text.

The OE text is made less arduous by the use of more tangible imagery and everyday narrative than the original.[66] The protagonist shows emotions and is therefore more empathetic. He smiles, and wonders (Prose 21 and 29; Prose 27 and 30). In the source text, a display of emotion is cause for reprimand by Philosophy.[67] Discenza argues that this human touch assists the audience not only to digest difficult argument but also to envisage undertaking a similar journey towards wisdom.

"Alfred" made his translation of Boethius more relevant to his ideology by framing it in an explicitly Christian context. The use of Wisdom as interlocutor connects the text to the Wisdom Books of the Old Testament, and links Alfred as putative author with Solomon, reputed author of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes.[68] In Proverbs 8:15–16, Wisdom proclaims that she is behind every throne. Solomonic kingship is a concept "Alfred" uses frequently. The Solomonic concept of "God-devoted wisdom" is revealed as the ultimate goal in the *OE Boethius*.

In the *Soliloquies*, "Alfred" used the same strategies of translation as in the *OE Boethius*: the use of familiar Old English language, explication of difficult passages from the source text, more concrete imagery, and a reliance on authority rather than logic.[69] The tone in the Alfredian translation is markedly different from Augustine's source text. Ruth Waterhouse argues that Alfred's carefully calibrated tone constructed an "immediate and friendly intimacy" between the king and his audience, based partly upon the audience's greater sensory and emotive response to the text.[70] Similarly, "Alfred" employed an intimate tone to great effect in the Prose Preface to the Pastoral Care—he makes a show of deferring to his audience "Forðy me ðyncð betre,

64 Brooks, "Intimacy, Interdependence."

65 Weaver, "Bending Minds," 358.

66 Gatch, "King Alfred's Version," 28; Godden and Irvine, *OE Boethius*, 54.

67 Watts, *Boethius*, bk. 1, chap. 5, 18.

68 Treschow, "Wisdom's Land," 263; Discenza, *King's English*, 34.

69 Discenza, *King's English*, 126.

70 Waterhouse, "Tone in Alfred's Version"; Gatch, "King Alfred's Version," 25.

gif iow swa ðyncð."[71] The intimate tone levelled the relationship between king and audience, invited the audience in close, and fostered a sense of a shared undertaking.

The *Soliloquies* is a more practical text than the original—many of the arguments reflect lived experience and common sense. As Allen Frantzen puts it: "Alfred weaves the truth of his own experience into the Augustinian argument."[72] That assessment of the OE text is consistent with there being a period in which the source text was used to anchor discussion and debate between Alfred and his coterie, before the text was translated for use by others.

Having considered strategies of persuasion—elements of the text which made it easier for the audience to understand and assimilate Alfredian ideology—I turn to the content of that ideology. "Alfred" identified two tools which could be used by individuals to reorient themselves to God—the *modes eagan* and *cræft*. "He" also identified social relationships which, when functioning properly, would consolidate the application of Christian wisdom. These were good kingship and loyal friendship. Good kingship required particular explication, to assuage fears of increased royal power. "Alfred" used *cræft* and the Gregorian ideal of humility to signal an awareness that power is only righteously exercised in service to God.

Alfredian Ideology: *modes eagan*

The *modes eagan* is a critical tool in the journey to wisdom. Vision as a metaphor for the mind's perception was a familiar legacy from classical antiquity.[73] In Old English literature, sight was the pre-eminent sense, because of the acknowledged link between sight and the acquisition of knowledge.[74] Sight and hearing are referenced on two unusual quatrefoil brooches in the Galloway hoard.[75] The Alfredian concept of the eyes of the mind is both an essential tool for following the path inward to achieve God-focused wisdom, and a consequence of finding that wisdom, an enhanced perception, and understanding turned outward. It is both instrument and reward. The incentive to learn to use the mind's eye is thus powerful. *Modes eagan* is a concept

71 *Pastoral Care*, 8.

72 Frantzen, *King Alfred*, 87.

73 Wilcox, "Alfred's Epistemological Metaphors," 180–83; Hindley, "Sight and Understanding," 23; Karkov, "Sight and Vision."

74 Fera, "Metaphors," 730.

75 There is no definitive publication on the hoard yet. See "The Galloway Hoard."

which is developed in the *OE Boethius*, and it is reiterated in the *Soliloquies* and the *Prose Psalms*. It is referenced on high-status objects associated with Alfred, notably the Fuller brooch and the Alfred Jewel.

In the *OE Boethius*, when Wisdom first visits the prisoner (Prose 2—before Boethius segues into *Mod*), Wisdom has to dry Boethius's mind's eye before Boethius can even recognize him. Without a properly functioning mind's eye, understanding is obscured, and things appear hopeless. Later, Wisdom says: "Þu me ahsast micles and earfoðes to ongitanne. Gif þu hit witan wilt, ðu scealt habban ær þines modes eagan clæne and hlutor" (You ask me a great thing and one difficult to understand. If you wish to understand it, you must first have your mind's eyes clean and pure).[76] Reorienting yourself to God enables you to see clearly both your predicament and the best solution for it.

In the *Soliloquies*, there are extensive analogies between sight and understanding which echo the discussion in the *OE Boethius*, and also expand on it with some concrete imagery. For example, Reason uses the analogy of a person climbing a ladder in small steps—an extended vista becomes available to him as he gradually climbs (1.79). Comprehension grows as the mind's eye is employed. "Alfred" also uses the analogy of travel by ship and land to explain how to learn to use the mind's eye. One may travel by ship towards land, but on reaching land, the ship must be left behind. If the mind's eye is used in the right way, then sight acts as an anchor, fixing the mind to God (1.38). The mind's eye provides the connection to God.

The protagonist asks directly what the mind's eye is. In the *Soliloquia*, one needs reason, faith, hope, and charity to make one's mind's eye function properly.[77] These are New Testament concepts (1 Cor. 3:9). In the *Soliloquies*, Reason answers somewhat differently. The mind's eye is "gescæadwisnesse, toæacan oðrum creftum" (the faculty of reason, together with other virtues). Reason then elaborates on those other virtues:

> Wysdom and eadmeto and wærscype and gemetgung, rihtwisnes and mildheornes, gesceadwisnes, gestadþines and welwilnes, clennes and forheafdnes.
>
> (Wisdom and humility and prudence and moderation, righteousness and mercy, reason, constancy and benevolence, purity and abstinence.)[78]

Many of these other virtues are relational and behavioural, virtues appropriate for dealings between people, rather than between an individual and God.

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76 *Boethius*, Prose 33, 396–97.

77 Watson, *Augustine*, bk. 1, chap. 12, 41.

78 *Soliloquies*, bk. 1, chap. 38, 218–19.

In the *Soliloquies*, Reason says that God works with us, using these powerful tools. The effect of "Alfred's" modification of this passage is to give a far more socially constructed flavour to the mind's eye than in the source text. The passage evokes *Mod*'s argument in Prose 9 that in order to rule well, to exercise his *cræft* (see below), a king needs "gebedmen and ferdmen and weorcmen" (prayer men and army men and workmen).[79] The path to God does not entail repudiating relationships with others but infusing those relationships with Christian virtues and practices. This applies to kingship. *Modes eagan* is linked to good kingship, because good kingship is centred upon God.

Alfredian Ideology: Good Kingship

Leading insular clergy (Aldhelm, Bede, Boniface, and Alcuin) admonished and advised their kings, endeavouring to "shape, moderate and Christianise royal behaviour"—as did their Carolingian counterparts.[80] Kings themselves did not ruminate about the nature and pitfalls of power.[81] The evils of unjust power, and the argument that power corrupts so that it is always eventually exercised unjustly and oppressively, is a central theme of the *Consolation of Philosophy*. This is one of the principal reasons why Malcolm Godden has repeatedly cast doubts upon the attribution of this text to Alfred.[82] He makes the same argument in relation to the *Soliloquies*.[83]

However, the *OE Boethius* departs significantly from the source text's argument that the exercise of power is necessarily evil, instead providing "a meditation on royal power."[84] It sets out the affirmative case for the exercise of power. The *OE Boethius* is not the only Alfredian translation to situate its discussion of moral reflection within contemporary political concerns and to modify the translation accordingly.[85] The recalibration of the treatment of power in the *Pastoral Care* may well have provided confidence that the *Consolation of Philosophy* could be similarly adjusted. I argue that the profound divergence between source text and translation on the nature of power sup-

79 *Boethius*, 98–99.

80 Cardwell, "What Sort of Love."

81 Which is partly why Hrothgar's advice to Beowulf on good and bad kingship is so powerful—it is unexpected. Swanton, *Beowulf*, lines 1698–1757.

82 Godden, "King and Counselor," 206–07; Godden, "Alfredian Prose," 135; Irvine and Godden, *OE Boethius*, xi.

83 Godden, "King and Counselor," 206.

84 Szarmach, "Alfred's Nero," 147, 151.

85 O'Brien O'Keeffe, "Inside, Outside," 335.

ports the attribution of the text to "Alfred," because it served a useful pragmatic purpose—to reassure the West Saxon elites.

In the *OE Boethius*, "Alfred" provides additional material to the source text, fleshing out the nature of bad kingship, and making careful distinctions between it and good kingship. In the introduction narrative, Boethius the historical person defends ancient Roman laws and justice against the oppressions of the tyrant Theodoric—bad kingship is juxtaposed with power wielded to protect and to serve.[86] The Alfredian distinction between good and bad kingship constitutes a conscious acknowledgement of the danger of power. The interpolation of the concept of authority exercised in service to God which Gregory articulated in the *Cura pastoralis* negates this danger. Gregorian authority is conditioned by the duty imposed by God to care for the spiritual wellbeing of others—to act in the world. The Latin text contains no such obligation to participate in worldly affairs in service to others.[87] "Alfred" articulates two other concepts to reassure his elite audience that, in Alfred's case, the use of power would be constrained. Both concepts stem from God-devoted wisdom. The first is *cræft*; the second is humility.

Alfredian Ideology: *cræft*

In the *OE Boethius*, the concept of *cræft* is not as narrowly confined as the source text's concept of *virtus* (moral integrity or rectitude).[88] *Cræft* "forges a connection between power, talent and virtue, and between man and God."[89] As Discenza notes, *cræft* is a synthesis of spiritual, moral, and material elements. Peter Clemoes argues that this synthesis was already present in OE poetry.[90] That would have made the concept easier for an aristocratic audience to understand and assimilate. Discenza suggests that mental or spiritual calibre is the essence of *cræft*, underlining the pivotal God-focus of Alfredian wisdom. *Cræft* is a tool available to all on their journey to God, not just kings. Everyone must use the resources he has, to find the right path.[91]

The notion that individuals must strive, must use their skills, resonates with the Preface to the *Soliloquies*. That Preface makes it clear that the acquisition of Christian wisdom requires dedication and effort. Although the

86 *Boethius*, Metre 1, 8–9.

87 Gatch, *Loyalties and Traditions*, 111; Discenza, *King's English*, 39–40.

88 Yorke, "Alfred and Weland," 53.

89 Discenza, *King's English*, 121. See also Faulkner, *Wealth*, 70.

90 Clemoes, "King Alfred's Debt."

91 Clemoes, "King Alfred's Debt," 237.

Preface to the *Soliloquies* emphasizes the personal effort required to acquire wisdom and the imperative to use that wisdom, "Alfred" did not cast the path to wisdom as a solitary endeavour. Individual effort was required, within a communal endeavour. The clues that the Preface to the *Soliloquies* provides to the king's intentions are discussed in the next chapter.

The *OE Boethius* also makes it clear, contra the *Consolation of Philosophy*, that the exercise of *cræft* in striving for eternal reward brings rewards in this world which should not be disdained—honour and reputation.[92] "Alfred" thereby links concepts familiar to, and valued by, his community with God-devoted wisdom. This strategy stands in stark contrast to the innovative use of the concept of humility. Humility in the exercise of power was a Gregorian concept, and therefore already familiar to Alfred's bishops.[93] However, it was not a secular virtue lauded in Old English epic literature.[94] It had the potential to discompose secular elites.[95]

"Alfred" used the concept of humility as a way of signalling the proper limits of power. One limitation is the purpose of power—power must be exercised in the service of God who has granted the power. Kingship is a duty, not a privilege. Royal power exercised appropriately is focused outward, on God and on the people entrusted to the king's care, not inward, on self-gratification. A second limitation is the proper relationship between king and followers. "Boethius" bemoans the ingratitude of his tyrant emperor and the deleterious sycophancy of his favourites. *Mod* contrasts this with a view of kingship where good servants and measured advice are necessary to the king's ability to govern well and should be suitably rewarded (Prose 9). This sense of humility as moderating the relationship between lord and follower is echoed in the *Soliloquies*.

The concept of humility was used to pre-emptively assuage aristocratic concern about the dangers of a too-powerful king. Alfredian ideology greatly enhanced royal power. The West Saxon elites doubtless recognized this. The exercise of *cræft* and humility place the ruler firmly in the Solomonic model of kingship, conditioning the exercise of royal authority.

The source text occasionally depicts God as master and individual as servant—"Alfred" multiplies those analogies, particularly in Books 2 and 3, so that the master–servant paradigm becomes the predominant character-

92 Irvine, "Wrestling with Hercules," 178–79; Yorke, "Alfred and Weland," 62–63.

93 Discenza, "Influence of Gregory," 68; Anlezark, "Gregory the Great."

94 Alfredian humility had a very different flavour from Hrothgar's cautionary advice to Beowulf to avoid hubris, for example. Swanton, *Beowulf*, lines 1758–68.

95 Discenza, "Influence of Gregory," 72.

ization of the relationship between God and man.[96] Significantly, "Alfred" frequently places himself with the subordinate, viewing the relationship from the subservient position.[97] The effect is a silent acknowledgement that a temporal lord, such as a king, also serves a master. "Alfred" thus brings himself closer to his audience, as one who also serves.[98] "He" also reinforces the idea that power is exercised in service to God. This acknowledgement fits with discussion of lordship and power in the *OE Boethius*. The master–servant paradigm permeates other discussions. In both versions, Reason asks what measure the protagonist will use in order to understand his friend, Alippius. In the source text, Augustine seeks to truly know his friend through his intellect.[99] In the *Soliloquies*, loyalty is the paramount consideration: "Đonne wiste ic hwilce treowða he hæfde wið me" (Then I would know what sort of loyalty he might have toward me).[100]

Loyalty is also integral to the passage where Reason sketches a scenario in which the protagonist receives a command from his lord, in a sealed letter. All that he knows is that the command involves leaving behind the wealth already received from his lord. Reason asks whether he would follow the command, trusting to his lord, or would he elect to stay, and enjoy the wealth already bestowed? The answer, after some prevarication and a wistfully expressed desire to keep the existing wealth and retain his lord's goodwill, is that the protagonist would obey the fresh instructions.[101] Waterhouse argues that Alfred acknowledges his own role in the lord–follower relationship—with its elements of command, obedience, and reward—and also the space for love in that relationship.[102] Love is implicit in the Alfredian characterization of loyal friendship.

Alfredian Ideology: Loyal Friendship

In the *OE Boethius*, the Alfredian concept of friendship differs from the source text. Alfredian friendship reinforces the mutual obligations of lord and follower, which is adumbrated in the discussion of lordship. "Alfred" uses language redolent of hierarchy, of responsibility and

96 Hitch, "Alfred's *Cræft*," 132.

97 Waterhouse, "Tone in Alfred's Version," 50, 75.

98 Waterhouse, "Tone in Alfred's Version," 72.

99 Watson, *Augustine*, bk. 1, chap. 8, 35.

100 *Soliloquies*, bk. 1, chap. 32, 212–13.

101 *Soliloquies*, bk. 1, chap. 40, 221.

102 Waterhouse, "Tone in Alfred's Version," 72–73.

status.[103] The Alfredian character of the relationship between king and retinue owes more to Germanic values than to Latin traditions.[104] The emphasis is on friendship within hierarchical bounds, love intrinsically tied to loyalty. These concepts would have been familiar to the audience from poems such as *Beowulf* and *The Wanderer*. However, "Alfred" recasts that friendship in a Christian context.

Metre 11 of the OE text characterizes friendship as a strong cohesive force which produces the "sibbe samrade" (harmonious peace) that God has ordained. Prose 12 describes loyal friends as "ðæt deorwyrðeste ðing ealra þissa weoruldgesælða" (the most precious thing of all these worldly felicities), divine in nature because created by God.[105] Friendship between superior and subordinate which is based upon mutual esteem and a shared value system cements the divine order. In Metre 15 and Prose 15, Wisdom details the perils faced by subjects serving a king with false values. However, "Alfred" recasts that friendship in a Christian context. This remodelling is a subtle reminder to the audience that a good king should be cherished by his people, reciprocating the king's obligation to cherish his people.[106]

In the *Soliloquies*, "Alfred" addresses the role of friendship in the context of learning. Friendship in this text is far less hierarchical than in the *OE Boethius*, far more about camaraderie, and it appears to have been deeply important. The *Soliloquia* starts with Reason "appearing" before Augustine, who is having an existential crisis. Reason tells him to write down what he learns about God. Reason further advises him not to count on encouragement from a large audience for his writings, although what he writes may be worth something to a few people.[107] It is a curious comment, and gratuitous. Augustine has explained, before Reason appears, that he is trying to understand himself and how he should be. Of what relevance is an audience? The implication in the Latin source is that the nature of the quest to understand God is innately solitary. The Alfredian text takes a different view.

In the OE text, Reason makes no comment about an audience. Instead, Reason advises the protagonist to write, and says that he will need a suitable place to write, free from distractions but enhanced by the support of learned and interested companions: "and fæawa cuðe men and creftige mid þe, ðe nanwiht ne amyrdan ac fultmoden to þinum crefte" (and a few familiar and

103 Thomas, "Binding Force of Friendship," 16.

104 Discenza, *King's English*, 78–80.

105 *Boethius*, 124–25, 138–39.

106 Discenza, "Power, Skill," 106.

107 Watson, *Augustine*, bk 1, chap. 1, 23.

capable people with you, who would not disturb you, but would rather be supportive of your undertaking).[108] In the *Soliloquies*, learning is best undertaken collaboratively, if the right people can be found. The principal character then bemoans his lack of assistants as well as his inadequacies for the task of knowing God, and Reason tells him to pray for help. The implication is that good assistants are a God-given benefaction. Alfred, of course, had assistants from the start of his own journey towards wisdom, and he freely acknowledged the benefits they provided. The departure from the source text's assessment of the value of assistants reflects Alfred's personal experience and suggests that he wanted others to learn collaboratively, as he had learned.[109]

In the *Soliloquia*, Augustine later declares that he will abandon his friends if they hold him back from his quest to know God (1.20). In the *Soliloquies*, the character asserts that he will not abandon his friends even if they hamper his quest for wisdom—they would still be helpful to him in other ways, and he could help them (1.67–68). Loyalty imbues the obligation to assist others. Loyalty as a characteristic of friendship in the *Soliloquies* aligns with the model of friendship in the *OE Boethius* (where loyalty is the crux of friendship), and it resonates with the duty owed to others in the *Pastoral Care*. Loyalty was, of course, of paramount importance to an early medieval king, because of the personal nature of kingship and the personal bonds upon which it relied. The emphasis on loyalty is consistent with the sense of the importance of communal endeavour. While the *Soliloquia* has a strong flavour of the solitary about it, the OE text emphasizes the socially constructed self.[110] The contextualization of self within community allows "Alfred" to defend the use of material wealth as a tool of good kingship, since merit and honour are social constructs.

Alfredian Ideology: Worldly Goods

When the eyes of the mind see clearly, when the ruler focuses on God-devoted wisdom, and his relationship with his followers is in harmony, then worldly concerns can be put in their proper perspective. Amy Faulkner has shown how wealth is consistently depicted across the Alfredian translations as a productive resource in a properly-functioning community.[111]

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108 *Soliloquies*, bk. 1, chap. 4, 188–89.

109 O'Brien O'Keeffe, "Listening to the Scenes," 23.

110 Ganze, "Individual in the Afterlife"; Green, "Speech Acts."

111 Faulkner, *Wealth*. I am grateful to Dr. Faulkner for allowing me to read her doctoral thesis before publication.

The *OE Boethius* departs radically from the *Consolation of Philosophy* in its treatment of worldly goods.[112] The change is tailored to suit the intended audience and to advance Alfredian ideology, a major component of which is the powerful king. Again, Discenza's commentaries on the *OE Boethius* are central to my argument. While the source text discounts material wealth as a false lure and an empty prize, the *OE Boethius* acknowledges that they have value. Worldly goods can be a means of acquiring other things with greater value, such as honour. For example, in Prose 7, Wisdom concedes that gold has value, although much depends on how it is acquired and distributed—and her emphasis is on distributing it. In Prose 4, Wisdom makes her values clear:

> Ne onscunige ic no þæs neoþeran and þæs unclænan stowe gif ic þe geradne gemete, ne me no ne lyst mid glase geworhtra waga ne heahsetla mid golde and mid gimmum gerenodra, ne boca mid golde awritenra me swa swiðe ne lyst swa me lyst on þe rihtes willan.
>
> (I do not shun this low and unclean place if I find you well-disposed, nor do I want walls made with glass or thrones decorated with gold and jewels, nor do I want books written in gold as much as I want a well-directed will in you.)[113]

Alfred's clerical elites would doubtless have affirmed the emptiness of riches within the Christian worldview, at least in theory. Alcuin's strictures on a number of his clerical contemporaries suggest that sometimes practice did not match theory.[114] However, his secular elites were highly unlikely to entertain the notion that riches were worthless and to be repudiated. Alfred, as an early medieval king, needed wealth and treasure in order to govern.

In Prose 9, *Mod* makes a spirited and extended defence of earthly goods as necessary materials for the exercise of power, which was entrusted to him. Twice, *Mod* expressly refers to the needs of a king. The historical Boethius was never a king; he was a senior official in an imperial administration. The overwhelming inference is that this is an alteration made in Alfred's interests. One can almost hear the king, on being read the Latin text's condemnation of riches as a worthless trap, exclaim "No, no, no, I'm not having that!"[115]

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112 Although Godden and Irvine argue that both Boethius and the OE author exhibit a fundamental ambivalence to wealth: Godden and Irvine, *OE Boethius*, 64–65.

113 *Boethius*, 22–23.

114 See for example the letter from Alcuin to Calvinus and Cuculus, 801, in Allott, *Alcuin of York*, letter 21, p. 30.

115 This entertaining image comes from Barbara Yorke's conference paper "Becoming Royal."

As Discenza points out, the response of Wisdom (here called *Gesceadwisnes*, "Reason") is more temperate, more flexible, than Philosophy's response in the source text.[116] Reason does not reject *Mod*'s defence of riches outright. Instead, Reason responds by warning that even those who acquire riches in order to do good things are in danger of great evil, by doing good things for the wrong reasons: "þæt is þone wilnung leases gilpes and unryhtes anwealdes and ungemetlices hlisan godra weorce ofer eall folc" (that is the desire for vain glory and unjust power and immoderate fame for good deeds above all people).[117]

In the *OE Boethius*, in contrast to the *Consolation of Philosophy*, riches are not an encumbrance to the higher goal of God-centred wisdom, as long as they are used appropriately. The Alfredian perspective on wealth as a useful tool if used advisedly—as a means to a worthy end but not an end in itself—echoes Gregory's acknowledgement of the role of wealth in good deeds in chapter 21 of the *Cura pastoralis*.[118] The justification of wealth used wisely has parallels with the Alfredian defence of power in the *OE Boethius*. Like wealth, power is not necessarily a corrupting force. In Alfredian ideology, honour and wealth rewarded individual effort, signalled the use of *craeft*. It confirmed the link that "Alfred" made in the Prose Preface to the *Pastoral Care* between the acquisition of Christian wisdom and the wealth and prosperity that would follow.

The *OE Boethius* and the *Soliloquies* as Vehicles for Alfredian Ideology

The *OE Boethius*, manipulated in translation from its source text, was thus an apt vehicle for Alfred's ideology. It told an interesting story, anchored in Roman history, which was adjusted to make the content more accessible to a West Saxon audience. Important Alfredian themes are explicated in the text, in ways which make it possible to pick the text up and read passages from it (once the general gist of the narrative is known). I develop this argument in the next chapter.

The *Soliloquia* was not as apt for Alfred's purpose as the *Consolation of Philosophy*, not as ready-to-hand. Nevertheless, it contained material which could be adjusted to suit Alfredian themes of the mind's eye, learning, lordship, and friendship. Anlezark describes the *Soliloquies* as a version, rather

116 Discenza, *King's English*, 40.

117 *Boethius*, Prose 9, 100–1.

118 Davis, *Pastoral Care*, 158–62.

than a translation, of the source text; Frantzen calls it an adaptation.[119] In terms of Alfredian ideology, there are many similarities and overlaps between the *OE Boethius* and the *Soliloquies*.

Co-opting the authority of translation, "Alfred" adapted Latin source texts so that they were suitable vehicles for components of his ideology, without making them unrecognizable. There were other elements of Alfredian ideology for which translated Latin texts were not an apt vehicle. Other genres were used to articulate and disseminate those elements, particularly the characterization of the common identity and destiny of the Anglo-Saxon people, the *Angelcynn*. This characterization blurred the distinction between the separate *gentes* recorded by Bede. I do not argue for a neat division of ideology between genres—creative ways were used to weave Alfredian ideology *across* different texts, so that they reinforced each other. Thus, the Alfredian notion of the *Angelcynn* finds its first (muted) expression in the Prose Preface to the *Pastoral Care*. The *domboc* emphasizes Anglo-Saxon common history and destiny, but also holds out Solomonic, God-devoted wisdom as the lodestar for the administration of justice, echoing the Alfredian translations. I start by considering the concept of the *Angelcynn*.

The Creation of the *Angelcynn*: A Common Identity and Destiny

I want to reiterate that I do not use the term "Anglo-Saxon" in the sense of race, biological descent or fixed ethnicity. Alfred needed the diverse communities he ruled to meld into a homogeneous group. He could not arbitrarily dismantle old regional identities, but he could offer a fresh identity, the *Angelcynn*. In order to encourage his disparate peoples to reconceptualize their communal identity, the boundaries between those narrowly-conceived and competitive identities and the *Angelcynn* had to be porous. Choosing to identify as a member of the *Angelcynn* had to be open not just to those living in Wessex, but also to those in the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms subjugated by the Vikings. Critically, that identity also had to be available to those of Scandinavian or Celtic descent living under Alfred's rule who wished to opt-in.

The Alfredian texts invoked a myth of descent, of common origin—in the *ASC*, the *domboc*, and, inferentially, in the Prose Preface to the *Pastoral Care*. Myths of origin were common in this period. Nicholas Howe defines an origin myth as "an account of the ancestral past, which, despite any evi-

119 Anlezark, "Soul," 39; Frantzen, *King Alfred*, 71.

dence to the contrary, gives a group its irreducible common identity."[120] An origin myth, by definition, goes beyond the evidence, or ignores it, and may include a creative appropriation of significant material from other genres; as a "remembered history" it involves choice.[121] Myths of descent can be used to find common ground between people, or to justify exclusion. Medieval myths of descent occur in secular heroic poetry as well as in clerical writings.[122]

A theological component is invaluable to any myth of origin which seeks to tie the present and the future to a past event or series of events, to predicate a potential future upon breaking with the past.[123] In the early medieval period, the Bible was "the most significant historical work that ever had been, or ever could be, written."[124] The biblical past not only explained present events but also anticipated future events.[125] The use of the Bible as the key to interpreting and predicting meant that early medieval Christians tended to look for similarities across times and contexts, rather than differences.[126] This was fertile ground in which to lay claim to a communal identity with a special relationship with God. In the rumination on the cause of current woes in the Prose Preface to the *Pastoral Care*, "Alfred" alleges just such a special relationship. The Prose Preface taps into deeply held foundation myths about the Anglo-Saxon peoples articulated by influential insular Christian writers—Gildas, Bede, and Alcuin.[127]

Gildas wrote *De excidio Britanniae* in about 540 CE. He was Romano-British, and he regarded the Germanic migrations of the fifth century as pagan invasions, a righteous punishment of the indigenous British inhabitants, who had abandoned Christian teaching and lived in moral torpor.[128] The British, Gildas wrote, had enjoyed a Golden Age as a result of God's grace, but had lost divine favour as a result of their sinful behaviour. He described and interpreted the migrations within a Christian worldview, rather than as secular British history.[129] Gildas drew on Old Testament authority for

120 Howe, *Migration and Mythmaking*, 5.

121 Lewis, *History: Remembered*, 11–12.

122 Reynolds, "Medieval *Origines Gentium*," 375, 380.

123 Howe, *Migration and Mythmaking*, 64–65.

124 Keen, "Mediaeval Ideas," 286.

125 McKitterick, *Perceptions of the Past*, 19; Bernau, "'Britain': Originary Myths."

126 Keen, "Mediaeval Ideas," 309; Zacher, *Rewriting the Old Testament*, 5.

127 *Gildas*, chaps. 22.1, 24.1, 26.1; *HE*, bk. 1, chap. 15; *EHD*, no. 194, 844–46.

128 *Gildas*, chaps. 22.1, 24.1, 26.1.

129 Sims-William, "Gildas and the Anglo-Saxons," 2.

his casting of the Germanic migrants, whose homelands were in the North, as a divine scourge, citing Jeremiah (46:24) and Ezekiel (26:7). This Christian framework enabled later writers like Bede and Alcuin to recast and shape Gildas's history as an origin myth for their own people, who were of course the descendants of Gildas's brutal aggressors.[130] In the hands of Bede and Alcuin, the descendants of those aggressors became a Chosen People, beloved of God.

The Northumbrian scholar and cleric Bede wrote the *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum* in or about 731. Bede distinguished between various Germanic tribes who migrated to Britain. Language was, for him, a clear delineator of both the various migrant groups and the indigenous *gentes*.[131] Bede made no claim for a common English identity, based upon political rulership; kings could rule multiple kingdoms, but the individual *gentes* were not merged by the fact of common rulership.[132] Bede did, however, believe in a Christian or ecclesiastical community which transcended ethnic and political boundaries. This was the sense in which he wrote of a *gens Anglorum*, a people defined not by origin or ethnicity but by their (Roman) Christianity.[133] A lack of evidence makes it difficult to ascertain whether this was a particularly clerical perspective, or one shared by the laity as well in this period.[134]

Bede attributed the success of the immigrants of the fifth and sixth centuries to the refusal of the Britons who already inhabited the archipelago to convert the newly arrived immigrant groups to Christianity, choosing to stay aloof from them.[135] He used Gildas's notion of the British archipelago as a special landscape marked by God's bounty, a land which could only be securely claimed and occupied by the just, but in a different way from Gildas. He recast Gildas's account of the fate of the British Christians who strayed, not as a prediction of impending catastrophe, but as a cautionary tale for his contemporaries, using the analogy of the Israelites.[136] The aim of the analogy was to remind his contemporaries of the value of what they currently had,

130 Howe, *Migration and Mythmaking*, 38.

131 Yorke, "Political and Ethnic Identity," 71.

132 Yorke, "Political and Ethnic Identity," 73–76.

133 *HE*, bk. 1, chap. 1 and bk. 5, chap. 22; Foot, "Making of Angelcynn," 38–39; Zacher, *Rewriting the Old Testament*, 27–28.

134 Harris, "An Overview," 749.

135 *HE*, bk. 1, chap. 22.

136 Howe, *Migration and Mythmaking*, 52.

not what they had lost, by providing a framework for understanding their recent history: an origin myth.

Alcuin also referenced the Israelites in his poem *Versus de patribus regibus et sanctis Euboricensis ecclesiae*.[137] Alcuin's perspective in this poem, written before the Viking raids intensified in scale and frequency, resembles Bede, rather than Gildas: he does not prophesy impending doom, but rather focuses on blessings bestowed upon the island's inhabitants. However, in 793, after the Viking raid on Lindisfarne, Alcuin's letter to Æthelred, king of Northumbria, raised the prospect of the end of another Golden Age.[138] Alcuin wrote in terms which explicitly linked the raids to a failure by his native community to adhere to Christian behaviours and values, and warned of worse to come if errors were not corrected.[139] This was not, in 793, an immutable future, but rather a prospect of disaster which could be avoided by scrupulous action, a rigorous attendance by the clergy and laity alike to their spiritual obligations. Alcuin's prescription, the call for greater religious observance, is consistent with contemporary Carolingian response to imminent threat—the call for "collective gestures of atonement."[140] Alfred's response was quite different and highly original. Alfred called not for rituals but for widespread behavioural change based upon a deeper understanding of Christian wisdom.

The Prose Preface to the *Pastoral Care* expressly identifies the cause of current misfortunes as the loss of Christian wisdom. That loss entailed the forfeiture of the privileged status which his people had hitherto enjoyed. In describing the collective loss of wisdom, "Alfred" evokes a sense of lost inheritance. Fulk translates the phrase "Ure ieldran, ða ðe ðas stowa ær hioldon, hie lufodon wisdom ond ðurh ðone hie begeaton welan ond us læfdon" as "Our elders, who once inhabited these parts, loved learning, and through it they amassed wealth and *left it to us*" (emphasis added).[141] Sweet translates *læfdon* as "bequeathed," which also connotes an inheritance, a strong sense of entitlement.[142] The Dictionary of Old English Web Corpus contains

137 Godman, *Alcuin*, 10–11.

138 Letter from Alcuin to Æthelred, king of Northumbria, 793, *EHD*, no. 193, 842–44.

139 See also letter from Alcuin to Higbald, Bishop of Lindisfarne, *EHD*, no. 194, 844–46.

140 de Jong, *Penitential State*, 154–58; McCormick, "Liturgy of War"; Lamb, "Evidence from Absence," 55–57.

141 *Pastoral Care*, 6–7.

142 Sweet, *Alfred's West-Saxon Version*, 5.

a number of entries for *læfdon*, which tend to have the flavour of a purposive transfer.[143]

"Alfred" makes no mention of the internecine conflict between the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms before the Viking incursions.[144] That conflict is amply attested in both the *ASC* and in Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*. Biblical precedent confirmed that such conflicts indicated God's ire. Internecine conflict and strife between kingdoms were inflicted upon the Israelites by God as punishment (1 Kings). "Alfred" did not draw this connection. Given the predilection in the Alfredian texts for biblical precedent, the inference is that this was a deliberate choice. Foot suggests that for Alfred, as for Bede, disparate pasts were not as important as a common future.[145] Instead, recollection was altered and things forgotten in the service of forging a new communal identity, the *Angelcynn*.[146] I suggest that "Alfred" trod very carefully in creating his concept of the *Angelcynn*. Highlighting old rivalries, even as corroborating evidence of divine displeasure, would not help the audience to consider themselves one community.

"Alfred" needed to portray a people at peace in order to claim a Golden Age which had been lost. Alfred also needed contemporary cohesion. The concept of the *Angelcynn* was a new, more prestigious and important pan-regional identity, superimposed upon existing parochial identities.[147] This pan-regional identity stood in opposition to the pagan Vikings. Importantly, it was an identity which could be adopted by individuals from other, defeated, Anglo-Saxon kingdoms who wished to opt in. The emergence of new and fluid communal identities was not a novel proposition in early medieval Europe, as Patrick Geary has long argued.[148] Early medieval *gentes* were "peoples in progress."[149] The use of biblical precedent in a discourse of ethnicity in this period was an easily understood example of a "repertoire of ethnicity," providing both *exempla* (things to be imitated) and *typoi* (the past prefiguring the future).[150]

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143 "Dictionary of Old English Web Corpus."

144 Lavelle, *Alfred's Wars*, 45; Wormald, "*Engla Lond*," 5.

145 Foot, "Making of *Angelcynn*," 36.

146 Lewis, *History: Remembered*; Davis, "National Writing"; Foot, "Remembering, Forgetting."

147 Konshuh, "Constructing Early Anglo-Saxon Identity," 157.

148 Geary, "Ethnic Identity"; see also Yorke, "Anglo-Saxon Origin Legends," 15–16.

149 Wolfram, "How Many Peoples," 101.

150 Pohl, "Introduction—Identification," 32–33.

As Ross Poole argues, the construction of a community is not an epiphenomenon of economic or political relationships. A sense of community is itself an actant, a powerful force which regulates the relationships between individuals who identify as part of that community.[151] The concept of the *Angelcynn* provided a mechanism for the voluntary adjustment of values and behaviours through self-identification as part of that community and actions (including social practices) which advertised that self-identification to others.

It is important to bear in mind that the king could not impose a new sense of identity. "Alfred" could articulate it, make it persuasive and appealing. Ultimately it was up to Alfred's people to choose to adopt that identity, to self-identify, and to perform that identity in their relations with others.[152] The Alfredian texts enticed them to make that choice by linking an overarching identity of Englishness to the idea of a Chosen People and a promise of communal redemption.

The trope of a Chosen People who defy God and are either punished by conquest or repent and rehabilitate, and are therefore returned to favour, was well-known. To re-earn God's favour, and thereby avoid annihilation, Alfredian ideology prescribed actions which were culturally familiar and consistent with existing Christian worldviews. The actions, the state of mind, and the emotions necessary to achieve the objective were already part of the Anglo-Saxon cultural and historiographical landscape. The community of the *Angelcynn* was thus framed by the Alfredian depiction of the past and representation of the future. These shared a common thread, the consequences of the orientation of the community toward, or away from, God.

Critically, accepting the mantle of the New Israelites meant accepting corporate responsibility for actions and failings. The community would be judged by God collectively, rather than individually. Divine punishment, as conceived by early medieval clerics, fell on a people, a collective. A community flourished or was scourged as a group.[153] A sense of cohesion, of a close-knit community, was therefore important. This sense of collectivity may well have helped to collapse the old regional boundaries within Alfred's extended kingdom, making it easier for the king to exercise control over all his peoples.

The Alfredian texts reinforced the narrative of the *Angelcynn* consistently. An *ASC* entry (s.a. 886) records the submission of "all Angelcyn"

151 Poole, *Nation and Identity*, 10–13.

152 Harris, *Race and Ethnicity*, 32–33; Stodnick, "Emergent Englishness."

153 Harris, "Overview," 747–48; Pohl, "Introduction—Identification," 36.

to Alfred on the occupation of London. London had previously been held by the Vikings, taken when they overran part of Mercia. The *ASC* entry describes the ceremonial reclaiming of London (it had probably been wrested from the Vikings a few years previously) together with the delegation of local power by Alfred to the Mercian ealdorman Æthelred.[154] This account highlighted the concept of *Angelcynn* as a common identity which submerged previous rivalries and distinctions between former Anglo-Saxon kingdoms in the pre-eminence of its construction against the pagan Viking "Other." Foot describes this as "innovative language of legitimation"—validating political novelty.[155] It is from this date that King Alfred is styled *rex Angulsaxonum* or *rex Anglorum et Saxonum* rather than *rex Saxonum* in his charters, and from this date that Asser so describes his king.[156] These titles reinforce the concept of a new entity—Asser's use of *rex Angulsaxonum* suggests that King Alfred's contemporaries understood the difference.[157] In the Alfred–Guthrum treaty, the king is said to represent "ealles Angelcynnes witan."[158]

The characterization of the *Angelcynn* as the New Israelites has its critics, notably George Molyneaux. Molyneaux challenges the contention that the pre-Conquest English considered themselves to be God's specially chosen people.[159] His concept of the Elect is grounded in the theological distinction between the Israelites, with whom God made an explicit and unique covenant, and the New Testament expansion of the Israelites' special status to all Christians. The New Testament designated all Christians as the people of God (1 Peter 2:9–10).[160] Molyneaux argues that an early medieval community such as the pre-Conquest English must have asserted a special status above all other *Christian* peoples to be designated as a community claiming the status of the Elect. As no such claim is made by authors such as Gildas, Bede, Alcuin, or indeed Wulfstan, Molyneaux concludes that the pre-Conquest English did not regard themselves as the "peculiar successors" to Old Testament Israel.[161]

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154 Keynes, "Alfred and the Mercians," 23.

155 Foot, "Historiography," 129.

156 Whitelock, "Some Charters"; Nelson, "Political Ideas," 155.

157 Roach, *Kingship and Consent*, 7–8.

158 K & L, 171.

159 Molyneaux, "Did the English."

160 Zacher, *Rewriting the Old Testament*, 95.

161 Molyneaux, "Did the English," 737.

Molyneaux is perhaps right in arguing that these authors did not lay claim to a particularist form of divine election, but that is, with respect, a narrow argument. It ignores the undoubted use of a looser and less literal concept of a Chosen People in political ideology. Walbert Bühlmann usefully distinguishes between the notion of special election as an ideology and as a theology.[162] Mary Garrison describes the concept of election as a culturally shaped appropriation, a socially and politically contingent sense of exceptionalism.[163] Samantha Zacher discerns just such an appropriation in Old English poetry which adapted Old Testament narratives.[164]

Early medieval political leaders like Charlemagne and Alfred were employing a metaphor for political purposes: a metaphor which would likely have been familiar and attractive to their audiences. Bede's conception of the English was as "a" people chosen by God, a people whose special place in God's plan is emphasised by his use of the verb "foreknown," echoing Scripture (Rom 8.29).[165] Such a characterization suited pragmatic political purposes. First, it distinguished the Alfredian and Carolingian communities from other communities with whom they were in conflict. Second, both Alfred and the Carolingian kings characterized themselves as divinely appointed. That designation would be more persuasive, harder for their elites to resist, in the context of a community characterized as having a special relationship with God. As an ideology, the concept of a Chosen People tends to emerge in contexts where a new identity is politically and socially useful; in these circumstances, the concept is deployed as a bonding discourse.[166] In this context, the power of a diluted form of particularism is not extinguished by being embedded in a wider Christian community.[167] The *ASC* followed the Frankish precedent of using annals as a bonding discourse—a vehicle to disseminate and reinforce a sense of history and identity, and a specific political ideology.[168]

162 Bühlmann, *God's Chosen Peoples*, 124.

163 Garrison, "Divine Election," 281.

164 Zacher, *Rewriting the Old Testament*; Anlezark, "Sceaf, Japheth," 16.

165 *HE*, bk. 1, chap. 22; Cardwell, "People Whom He Foreknew," 50–53; I am grateful to Sarah Foot for this observation.

166 Garrison, "Divine Election," 299.

167 Kaye, "Anglicanism."

168 McKitterick, "Constructing the Past"; McKitterick, "Political Ideology."

The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*

Traditionally, annals were kept to chart the passage of time and to calculate important religious festivals.[169] The *ASC* may have its roots in the "Chronological Epitome" attached to Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*, but it became a means of creating and reflecting communal identity through its portrayal of history and its inculcation of communal memory.[170] The degree to which Alfred supervised the production of the *ASC* is unclear, but the inclusion of the West Saxon genealogical preface is cogent evidence of royal involvement at some level.[171] At the very least, as Susan Irvine puts it, the *ASC* is "a project he would have favoured."[172] The *ASC* is a compilation by various anonymous annalists, probably secular clerics, possibly writing in different parts of the country, who drew on a number of sources.[173] The "common stock" of the chronicle, ending in ca. 892, was most probably produced at Alfred's court and disseminated for use and further copying.[174] Nicholas Brooks argues that the annals for 893–896 (after the common stock) may also have emanated from Alfred's court.[175] This suggests that the scribes responsible for the *ASC* were familiar with the Alfredian concept of the *Angelcynn*, possibly from the period of formation of Alfredian ideology through Alfred's own collaborative learning period.

The compilers of the *ASC* deliberately selected and highlighted material within a cohesive narrative—the story of the making of the *Angelcynn*.[176] Irvine characterizes this as more than propaganda. It is evidence for the emergence of an English identity, a social reality based upon a shared history and a sense of place.[177] The *ASC* indicates that the concept of the *Angelcynn* was already circulating when the *ASC* was produced. A close connection between scribes and Alfred's inner circle would explain why the *ASC* presents a consistent narrative framework, a teleological account which privileges the West Saxon dynasty and characterizes Alfred's reign

169 Swanton, *Anglo-Saxon Chronicles*, xi.

170 Bredehoft, "History and Memory," 110.

171 Dumville, "West Saxon Genealogical," 66.

172 Irvine, "Anglo-Saxon Chronicle," 344.

173 Brooks, "England in the Ninth Century," 3–4; Scharer, "Writing of History," 183.

174 Brooks, "Anglo-Saxon Chronicle," 48; Stafford, "Making of Chronicles," 66.

175 Brooks, "Anglo-Saxon Chronicle," 49.

176 Foot, "Finding the Meaning," 99; Yorke, "Representation of Early West Saxon History," 155–59.

177 Irvine, "Anglo-Saxon Chronicle," 346–47; Stodnick, "Interests of Compounding."

as inevitable and ordained.[178] While the *ASC* does not expressly refer to a Chosen People, the notion is implicit in the entry for 855, which traces Æthelwulf's genealogy back to Noah and Christ. Ryan Lavelle argues that the *ASC* created an affinity between the West Saxon royal house and the concept of the *Angelcynn*.[179] Olga Timofeeva has drawn attention to the strong association between Alfred's *domboc* and the earliest version of the *ASC* (A), demonstrated by their preservation in the same manuscript.[180] This association suggests a contemporary perception of an integrated reform program.

A close connection between Alfred's inner circle and those who produced the *ASC* also explains why the *ASC* used the vernacular, in contrast to Continental annals—and indeed in contrast to the local annals and other sources on which the ASC was doubtless based.[181] Language is itself an integral component of communal identity.[182] The use of the vernacular in Alfredian texts is thus implicated in the formation of the identity of the *Angelcynn*—it is a substantive component as well as an effective means of widely disseminating that identity. Jacqueline Stodnick traces the linguistic practices which anchored the concept of *Angelcynn* to a new temporal understanding of the realm of the *Angelcynn*.[183]

Nelson has voiced doubts about the efficacy of the *ASC* as a vehicle for dissemination of Alfredian ideology, notwithstanding its use of the vernacular. She queries whether the West Saxons "went in for public readings of a text which is so very unlike the stirring rhythms and themes of *Beowulf*."[184] If, however, the *ASC* was compiled in bursts, rather than in yearly increments, then portions of the text would more closely resemble a coherent body of work, more amenable to being read or read aloud.[185] The fact that the *ASC* used the vernacular would render it suitable as a tool to teach individuals to read, whether in the *schola* or in a nobleman's home. The vernacular would also make the *ASC* more accessible to an ealdorman who wished

178 Irvine, "Anglo-Saxon Chronicle," 352–53; Trilling, "Writing of History," 237.

179 Lavelle, "Representing Authority"; see also Sheppard, *Families of the King*, 99–102.

180 Timofeeva, "Sociolinguistic Concepts," 139.

181 Leneghan, "Royal Wisdom," 72.

182 Poole, *Nation and Identity*, 14.

183 Stodnick, "Interests of Compounding"; Stodnick, "Sentence to Story."

184 Nelson, "Frankish Identity," 74.

185 Scharer, "Anglo-Saxon Chronicle," 163.

to consult it, either for his own edification, or as part of a discussion in a localized textual community.

The *ASC* presented a different discourse about communal identity, about the *Angelcynn*. This narrative was part of a pattern of emerging discourses about identity across Western Europe, legitimating new polities.[186] The principal purposes of Carolingian and Alfredian constructs of identity were firmly grounded in the present and the immediate future—political integration and the pursuit of a common identity and purpose.[187] The argument that these annals were used to manipulate a sense of communal identity is supported by modern analysis of the social and political role of archives. The modern characterization of archives as social constructs acknowledges the power of systems to store and retrieve history as "dynamic technologies of rule which actually create the histories and social realities they ostensibly only describe."[188] This characterization applies equally to early medieval archives.[189] The *ASC* was just such an archive. It was used to impose a particular constructed history and to inculcate an overarching identity.[190]

Alfredian concepts of history, destiny and identity were reiterated in other media. The Alfredian depiction of the *Angelcynn* as the New Israelites is a major theme of the *domboc*. The *domboc* would have been accessed in different textual communities from the *ASC* and perhaps reached a broader audience, involving those lower down in the hierarchy. The fact that the code proper commences with rules about oath-taking suggests that the *domboc* was discussed and applied in contexts which included those of lesser social status, those who owed obligations, and who took oaths to serve truly.[191]

The *domboc*

The Prologue to the *domboc* starts with excerpts from Exodus, linking the Mosaic past to the Alfredian present in a teleological account.[192] In citing the Old Testament, "Alfred" demonstrated that Christian law evolved from,

186 Pohl, "Introduction- Distinction," 2–9.

187 Reimitz, "*Omnes Franci*," 54, 57.

188 Schwartz and Cook, "Archives, Records," 7.

189 McKitterick, *Carolingians and the Written Word*; Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance*.

190 Konshuh, "Constructing Early Anglo-Saxon Identity."

191 Foot, "Making of *Angelcynn*," 37.

192 Adair, "Troublesome Source," 215; Adair, "Narratives of Authority," 16–20.

and drew its authority from, the divine law revealed to Moses.[193] A claim of authority through citation of the Old Testament was not novel. The Old Testament was a familiar source of inspiration for legislation in early medieval Europe.[194] However, in its Anglo-Saxon context, the Prologue to the *domboc* was a uniquely extensive exposition of political and ideological aspiration. No other Anglo-Saxon king, before or after Alfred, engaged in such an extensive exposition of political and ideological aspiration.[195] And that discourse is in Alfred's first-person voice. While the use of first-person voice was common in the brief prefatory remarks of other royal legislation, it provided added gravitas and persuasive force to the theory of justice and the community's destiny articulated by analogy in the *domboc*'s prologue.

The Prologue to the *domboc* was a clear statement of Alfredian ideology, coupling justice to the community's identity and destiny, and its relationship with God. The representation of Alfred's community as the New Israelites was reinforced by the citation of the Mosaic law in the Prologue. Wormald argues that the sophisticated handling of Mosaic law constituted an unmistakeable invitation—indeed, an offer which could not be refused—to take up the mantle of the New Israelites, and to live in accordance with divine law.[196] That divine law and that concept of Christian wisdom permeated the *domboc*.[197]

Existing legislative traditions were used alongside biblical tradition to construct the Alfredian community in the *domboc*. Communal identity was asserted through the representation of shared legislative traditions. The way that this was achieved is almost counter-intuitive. The Prologue highlights the different *gentes* by reference to their individual legal codes, then amalgamates their legislative traditions. In doing so, regional identity and old divisions are downplayed, in favour of a foregrounded pan–Anglo-Saxon identity. "Alfred" refers to the laws of his West Saxon forebear, Ine, and the laws of Offa of Mercia and Æthelberht of Kent. Only the laws of Ine were appended, apparently unedited, to the *domboc*.[198] Ingrid Ivarsen has recently suggested that Ine's laws were originally recorded in Latin and translated into Old English as part of Alfred's translation program.[199] The laws of Offa

193 Wormald, *Making of English Law*, 423.

194 Wormald, *Making of English Law*, 124, 416.

195 Pratt, *Political Thought*, 215; Richards, "Laws of Alfred," 294.

196 Wormald, *Making of English Law*, 426–27.

197 Keynes, "Royal Government," 231–32.

198 Richards, "Laws of Alfred," 292.

199 Ivarsen, "King Ine."

of Mercia, which have not survived, and of Æthelberht of Kent are acknowledged as precedents for the *domboc*, but they are not cited as a source for any specific provision in that code. Although Ine's code was appended, there was no attempt to synchronize the new code with Ine's; to do so would have detracted from "Alfred"'s purpose.

This contrasting use of legislative tradition reflected twin objectives. "Alfred" provided a reassuring patina of familiarity and stability to the heartland of Wessex by appending Ine's law. In citing admired kings from other jurisdictions as valued sources of this legislation, the *gentes* of those kingdoms, peoples who had come under Alfred's authority, were given a separate assurance of familiarity. A differently articulated signal of connection and belonging was provided to them. By issuing the code without specific acknowledgement of the provenance of each substantive provision, the Prologue to the *domboc* knitted the legislative traditions of all three kingdoms into one, *and implied that they had never really been different anyway*. This was a powerful device for cohesion. Wormald noted the impact on the collective consciousness of the code, in its restatement of familiar secular judicial themes correlated to familiar biblical judicial themes.[200] Courtnay Konshuh has demonstrated a similar process in the *ASC*—the deliberate smoothing of regional differences and the construction of common identity to "influence contemporary perception."[201]

This nuanced handling of legislative tradition may explain the puzzle of Alfred's chosen title in the Prologue, *Westseaxna cyning*, "king of the West Saxons." Here surely was an opportunity to emphasize the new pan-regional identity being so carefully constructed by describing the king as *rex Anglorum*, "king of the English." The answer may lie in historical Kentish sensitivity to their subjection to overlordship by Mercia and then Wessex. The narrower title may well have been chosen to avoid any perception of a West Saxon cultural take-over, particularly given the effort made to acknowledge the contribution of Mercia and Kent to the code.

The last text that I want to examine is the *Prose Psalms*. Alfredian texts were integrated into new and modified social practices—this is how Alfredian ideology was conveyed and disseminated. The role of the *Prose Psalms* within Alfredian social practices is more conjectural than other texts because it is incomplete. According to William of Malmesbury, Alfred was working on a translation of the Psalter when he died.[202] Patrick O'Neill argues that the

200 Wormald, *Making of English Law*, 427.

201 Konshuh, "Constructing Early Anglo-Saxon Identity," 156–61.

202 Giles, *William of Malmesbury's Chronicle*, bk. 2, chap. 4, 120. Both O'Neill and

text was not intended as a primer or a service book, but as a reading book.[203] This is consistent with it being intended for the reform program, although the precise way in which it was intended to be used is unknown. For that reason, I treat the text as a special case, separate from the others.

The *Prose Psalms*

Holy texts raised special considerations for any translator. The Psalms were a cornerstone of early medieval devotional practice.[204] They were also ubiquitous in the classroom, as a Latin primer.[205] Anglo-Saxon communities especially valued the Psalter as a type of wisdom book. Familiarity and status combined to give any translator minimal room to manoeuvre in translation of the substantive text, although some scope was provided by the complicated transmission history of the psalms. The Latin version used in early medieval Europe had been through a series of translations from other languages, some infelicitous. The result was a text both cryptic and stylistically awkward.[206] There is a general scholarly consensus that the *Prose Psalms* owe much to the historical and literal tradition of interpretation of the psalms advocated by Theodore of Mopsuestia.[207] "Alfred" took a pragmatic approach to translation, an approach consistent with the "word for word and sense for sense" approach adopted in other Alfredian translations.[208]

Sometimes, this pragmatic approach simply explicated obscure references in the Psalms. For example, in Ps(P) 16:14, where the psalmist expresses a wish that his enemies starve to the point of consuming swine's flesh, "Alfred" points out that swine's flesh was forbidden to the Jews. In Ps(P) 17:7, "Alfred" clarifies that the mountain is a reference to the psalmist's enemies, and in Ps(P) 41:8 "he" explains that the earth's cataracts represent the Lord's anger. These are not explanations that an educated monastic audience would require. Nor would Alfred himself have needed them, if the translation was for his personal use. Their presence in the translation suggests that a wide and diverse audience was anticipated—and perhaps

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Frantzen suggest that there are good grounds for believing that William was correct: O'Neill, *Prose Translation*, 73; Frantzen, *King Alfred*, 90.

203 O'Neill, *OE Psalms*, 19–20.

204 Toswell, *Anglo-Saxon Psalter,* 3; O'Neill, *OE Psalms*, vii.

205 Leneghan, "Introduction," 7; O'Neill, *OE Psalms*, vii.

206 O'Neill, "Strategies of Translation," 138, 142–43.

207 Butler, "Children of Israel," 12; O'Neill, *OE Psalms*, xii.

208 O'Neill, *OE Psalms*, 74.

that the translation was aimed primarily at those without the resources or inclination to consult extraneous sources such as commentaries or scholarly interpretive glosses.

"Alfred" also took the opportunity to choose words which were not the direct equivalent of the Latin words in the source text, but which reiterated themes in other Alfredian translations. Faulkner has traced Alfred's use of *mod*—inserting it where there is no reference to the mind in the source text, frequently choosing it instead of *heorte* (heart) or *sawl* (soul), or indeed other body parts, such as the mouth.[209] *Eagan modes*, a phrase and concept familiar from the *OE Boethius* and the *Soliloquies*, appears three times, in Ps(P)s 13:8, 16:10, and 18:8. Likewise, *cræft* also appears, in Ps(P) 37:9, and is used in the Alfredian sense of a composite of mind, talent, and virtue.

"Alfred" sought to draw parallels between the psalmist's enemies and the Vikings menacing Wessex. In Ps(P) 18, respite from political strife results in the psalmist being "unwenne" (spotless) and "geclænsod" (cleansed), because he can focus on God, rather than on political upheaval. Daniel Orton interprets this as a straightforward association—adherence to God's laws means political stability.[210] I suggest that it has particular reference to Alfredian ideology and the aim of his program of reform—the reorientation of the community back to God and deliverance from the Viking threat. Michael Treschow discerns the translator tweaking the text in Ps(P) 28 to make the psalm a call for gratitude for deliverance from the Vikings.[211]

"Alfred" adopted an innovative way of subtly adjusting the psalms to fit with Alfredian ideology. Each psalm was supplied with an introduction which provided historical background and interpretive assistance.[212] These were introductions in the medieval sense—they state the guiding idea or theme as well as the purpose or application of the psalm.[213] It was a remarkably clever, if audacious, strategy. "Alfred" exhibited similar audacity in other texts. In the translation of biblical quotations within the text of Gregory's *Cura pastoralis*, the king's voice was conflated with the voices of Gregory, Solomon, and, occasionally, Christ. In the preface to the *domboc*, the king's voice elided with those of God, Moses, Christ, and the Apostles. The Alfre-

209 Faulkner, "Mind."

210 Orton, "Royal Piety," 489.

211 Treschow, "*Godes Word*." Treschow believes the Psalms to be part of the Alfredian project, but not authored by Alfred: Treschow, Gill, and Swartz, "King Alfred's Scholarly Writings."

212 O'Neill, *OE Psalms*.

213 Frantzen, *King Alfred*, 95.

dian introductions to the *Prose Psalms* draw a close connection between the psalmist and Christ by representing that just as David lamented or rejoiced, so too did Christ in comparable circumstances. This representation is achieved by the almost ubiquitous use of the simple phrase *swa dyde Crist* (Christ did likewise).[214]

The Alfredian introductions explicated the text, as the patristic commentaries did, but they were contained in the same document as the text, like a gloss. The effect was to provide an immediately available resource for teaching others and for personal devotion.[215] This correlated with the aim of Alfredian reform, centring the community back to God, and the dual social practices of formal education and lifelong learning. Importantly, it greatly increased the likelihood of the audience relying upon this interpretation of the individual psalms, particularly a secular audience. The individual introductions gave scope to embed Alfredian ideology—the source text could not substantially be departed from in translation, but an appropriate slant on each psalm could be provided in the introductions.

Each introduction stresses the role of David or another king, and characterizes that kingship as an amalgam of political and spiritual authority.[216] The introduction situates each psalm in its historical context, in David and his community's path from sin to God, and from political chaos to peace and stability. David and Solomon were the pre-eminent models of excellent kingship in the early medieval period.[217] The Alfredian texts frequently emulate or cite Solomon, but David was also a motif, particularly in Asser's *Life*.[218] The focus of the introductions is thus on moral exempla and the path to wisdom, and the king's pastoral duties to his people.[219] The *Prose Psalms* project an image of kingship and community available to Alfred's people to adopt.[220] Ps(P)s 4:4, 17:38, and 41 also reinforce the inevitability of eventual victory of the Christian community over its enemies—and that such a community is formed when its king serves God and its people serve their king.

For example, the introduction to Psalm 13 subtly encourages the audience to connect the psalm with Alfredian ideology:

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214 O'Neill, *OE Psalms*.

215 O'Neill, "Strategies of Translation," 277, 281; Orton, "Royal Piety," 488.

216 Butler, "Thus Did Hezekiah," 627–28.

217 de Jong, "Carolingian Political Discourse," 87.

218 Toswell, *Anglo-Saxon Psalter*, 67–68; Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, 465.

219 Butler, "Children of Israel," 16–17.

220 Orton, "Royal Piety," 485–87.

> Ða Dauid þisne þreotteoðan sealm sang, þa seofode he to Drihtne on þam sealme þæt æfre on his dagum sceolde gewurðan swa lytle treowa, and swa lytel wisdom wære on worulde; and swa deð ælc rihtwis man þe hine nu singð, he seofað þæt ylce be his tidum; and swa dyde Crist be Iudeum; and Ezechias be Rapsace, Assyria cyninge.
>
> (When David sang this thirteenth psalm he lamented to the Lord that always in his time so few covenants should be made, and that so little wisdom existed in the world, and so does every just person who now sings it, lamenting the same thing about his times; and so did Christ about the Jews; and Hezekiah about Rabshakeh, king of the Assyrians.)[221]

The word "wisdom" appears in the introduction, but it does not appear in the psalm itself. However, the psalm contains a number of elements of Alfredian wisdom: *modes eagan*; the emphasis on behaviour, on the socially constructed self; and a Chosen People. The psalm predicts deliverance for a Chosen People who are threatened by an enemy who would *fretan* (devour) them. Deliverance is achieved by the acquisition and application of God-devoted wisdom. The parallel with Alfred's community is clear—and the introduction casts the psalm as a precedent for the West Saxons. This psalm is an example of how "Alfred" could mould perceptions of Scripture through these introductions and use them as a vehicle for Alfredian ideology.

A similar shaping of perception is discernible in the introduction to Psalm 11. Again, wisdom is mentioned in the introduction, but not the psalm itself: "Þa Dafid þisne endleftan sealm sang, þa seofode he on þam sealme þaet on his dagum sceolde rihtwisnes and wisdom beon swa swiðe alegen" (When David sang this eleventh psalm he lamented that in his time justice and wisdom should be brought so very low).[222] Cued by other texts containing Alfredian ideology, it is possible to read this psalm as an example of the evil that results when individuals do not fear and follow their lord, in contrast to the strength and purity of Christian wisdom.

It is doubtful whether Alfred had a sufficiently comprehensive knowledge of both Scripture and the exegetical traditions to have authored such a "harmonizing translation" and apt introductions—it is more likely that the scholarship which made this achievement possible was provided by the king's advisors.[223] That scholarship is evident, for example, in the way that three different versions of the psalms are synthesized—the Roman, Gallican, and Hebrew psalters—to produce a coherent Old English version which

221 O'Neill, *OE Psalms*, 38–39.

222 O'Neill, *OE Psalms*, 32–33.

223 Frantzen, *King Alfred*, 96.

privileged exposition over literal translation.[224] This supports the argument about the way that Alfred learned, through interaction with his coterie, through discussion and debate.

Translation of the psalms presented particular challenges which were absent from other Alfredian translations, but also unique opportunities to add the king's voice and embed Alfredian ideology in a text which circulated widely and in different contexts throughout his community, thus extending the reach of the message. The Psalms had a normative dimension—they inculcated particular viewpoints and ways of behaving. The Psalter, Alice Jorgensen reminds us, was an emotion script for that society: "[the Psalms] were not simply for reading and comprehending but for praying and performing."[225] Emily Butler suggests that the frequent reference to psalms being sung in the OE introductions was a way of connecting readers' emotions with the psalmists— "encouraging readers to imagine joining their voices in the same kinds of laments, entreaties and rejoicings as the Psalms captured."[226]

This chapter has focused on the texts which most scholars accept as part of the Alfredian canon. I do not, however, exclude other texts less securely associated with Alfred—the *Dialogues*, the *OE Bede*, and the *OE Orosius*—from a role in promoting Alfredian ideology. I discuss this possibility in later chapters. Ideology was crucial to persuading the elites to adopt Alfredian reforms, to do as their king asked. In this chapter, I have focused on the *content* of that ideology, on what Alfred wanted his people to do (reorient themselves to God), why they should do it (because they were a people with a particular history and destiny, which gave them a pathway to assuage divine wrath), and how they should do it (by using the tools of *modes eagan* and *cræft* to acquire Christian wisdom and apply it, in the process regulating their relations with one another and their divinely chosen king).

The concept of the divinely chosen king sat uneasily with Anglo-Saxon norms of kingship—that all *æthelings* with a blood-tie to the present king were (in theory) throne-worthy. An ideology of kingship which tied the validity of kingship itself, and its exercise, to God-devoted wisdom would have been more palatable to Alfred's elites than a claim for authority and power which was not so constrained. "Alfred" articulated a model of power exercised in service to God and constrained by humility. Friendship and loy-

224 O'Neill, *OE Psalms*, xi.

225 Jorgensen, "Learning about Emotion," 128, 134.

226 Butler, "Examining Dualities," 415. See also Leneghan, "Making the Psalter Sing," 196.

alty fall within the same model, and facilitate good relations throughout the political hierarchy, as well as good kingship. All individuals are implicated in this endeavour. Everyone must use their mind's eye to discern Christian wisdom and exercise their own *cræft* to understand and apply that wisdom. Material goods are rightly used in furtherance of good kingship—treasure, honour, and reputation are justifiable rewards which do not prevent the attainment of eternal rewards. If the community acquired Christian wisdom—and practised it—then they could fulfil their destiny as a people beloved of God and avoid Viking conquest. The concept of the *Angelcynn* provided Alfred's people with a way of interpreting their present misery and having confidence in a better future, if they followed their king.

The Alfredian translations contained this ideology. It did not matter that these texts contained other content as well. Early medieval kings had no established status as writers, so "Alfred" used the material to hand, and adjusted it so that it was apt for purpose. In the next chapter, I argue that Alfred intended to replicate his personal method of learning for his elites, providing texts which would spark or elucidate discussion of key parts of Alfredian ideology. Of course, those texts were only part of the methodology. Alfred needed to provide the environment and the inducement for others to choose to learn, as he had. The Prose Preface to the *Pastoral Care* was the first, crucial, step in Alfredian persuasion, getting the bishops onside and actively participating in his program of renewal. The Verse Preface to the *Pastoral Care* and the Preface to the *Soliloquies* were similarly persuasive, although appropriate for his secular elites as well.

Alfred went further, to provide the right environment and powerful inducement for others to accept his ideology and act upon it. His persuasive strategies went well beyond the meaning of the words on the pages of his texts. He harnessed the agency of the texts as objects, as text-bodies. And he instituted new patterns of behaviour, new social practices, and modified existing ones, so that discussion and debate could flourish. In the next chapter, I analyze how Alfred intended his elites to use the Alfredian translations.