Samuel Masters
University of Nottingham, Student ID 20130512.
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Power, Provision and Punishment: Alfred's Presentation of a King's Responsibilities in the *Old English Pastoral Care* and the *Old English Boethius*

Samuel Masters

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Introduction

Alfredian literature is at the forefront of early-medieval English (Anglo-Saxon) literary studies today. Scholars have largely been preoccupied with debating how much of the corpus is authentically Alfred's and how much was composed by others under the king's name. I shall address a more pertinent question: what do these texts reveal about Anglo-Saxon expectations of kingship? Pratt argues Alfred's translations present a rare depiction of an early-medieval king's beliefs on 'the source, distribution and uses of legitimate power'.[1] Expanding on this, I will examine where Alfred believes 'legitimate power' comes from and how it should be used. I will argue that Alfred diverges from traditional early-medieval perspectives, under which a king should be a strong, independent-minded war-leader. Instead, his literature promotes a new, humbler form of leadership, whereby a king's primary duties are to uphold God's laws and provide for his people's needs.

To demonstrate this, I have focused my analysis on two Alfredian translations of sixth-century Latin texts. The *Old English Pastoral Care* (hereafter *OEPC*) translates Pope Gregory the Great's advice to bishops, *Regula Pastoralis* 'Pastoral Rule' (*RP*).[2] Meanwhile the *Old English Boethius* (*OEB*) reworks Boethius' philosophical treatise, *De*

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[1] David Pratt, *The Political Thought of King Alfred the Great* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p.3.

[2] *The Old English Pastoral Care*, ed. R.D. Fulk (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2021); Gregory, *Regula Pastoralis*, ed. H.R. Bramley (London: James Parker and Co, 1874). Hereafter, all references to these texts shall be to these editions and given in parentheses as, respectively, *OEPC* and *RP.*

Consolatione Philosophiae 'The Consolation of Philosophy' (*DCP*).[3]

Both texts are adapted from their sources to align with Alfred's own views of leadership and were circulated to relay this to his people and under-lords – thereby promoting Alfred's public image as king. Yet there are some key differences. Notably, *OEB* argues that a good king should keep giving to all his people and providing for them, while a bad king uses his power to command and becomes corrupted by pride. In contrast, *OEPC* does not see giving and commanding as mutually exclusive, contending that a good king is one who both cares and provides for his people and disciplines and commands them when they go wrong. But generally speaking, both promote the same new kingship image – an image which had a profound impact on subsequent Anglo-Saxon kings.

For the sake of clarity, I will first outline in this Introduction the contextual background to the Alfredian corpus. Afterwards, Chapter 1 will examine how both texts emphasise a ruler's need for humility beneath God, and how kings are often corrupted and misled by pride. Chapter 2 will discuss the extent to which each text promotes a ruler's duty to give before commanding or disciplining. I will conclude by noting Alfred's lasting impact on Anglo-Saxon kingship, and the implications of this for further studies into this discipline.

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[3] *The Old English Boethius*, ed. Malcolm Godden and Susan Irvine (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), Vol.1, 'C-Text', pp.383-541; Boethius, *Philosophiae Consolationis*, ed. H.F. Stewart, E.K. Rand, S.J. Tester (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973). Hereafter, all references to these texts shall be to these editions and given in parentheses as, respectively, *OEB* and *DCP.*

Historical Context

As Keynes explains, Alfred's literary programme was highly influenced by contemporary political circumstances, especially 'the Viking invasions'.[4] Accordingly, before analysing Alfred's literature one must understand the context in which these texts were written.

Born as the youngest son of King Æthelwulf of Wessex, Alfred succeeded to the throne upon the death of the last of his four older brothers, Æthelred, in 871.[5] He reigned until his death in 899.[6] By around 880, Alfred had assumed authority over Wessex, Mercia and large sections of Wales.[7] The West Saxons were internally divided: their bipartite kingdom had only recently been reunited, and now Alfred's nephews contested his claim.[8] This, plus the mix of three peoples, meant that Alfred was always concerned with promoting unity across his kingdom.

Unity was especially important for withstanding the Viking attacks. When Alfred came to power, the Vikings had just begun a rapid push through West Saxon territory, and Alfred likely feared some of his subjects would defect to these new rulers.[9] Indeed, according to Asser (Alfred's friend and biographer) the king was opposed by some of his

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[4] Simon Keynes, 'Alfred the Great and the Kingdom of the Anglo-Saxons', in *A Companion to Alfred the Great*, ed. Nicole G. Discenza and Paul E. Szarmach (Leiden: Brill, 2015), pp.13-46 (p.13).
[5] Simon Keynes and Michael Lapidge (eds), 'Introduction', in *Alfred the Great: Asser's Life of King Alfred and Other Contemporary Sources* (London: Penguin, 1983), pp.9-58 (pp.13, 16-18).
[6] *Ibid.*, p.44.
[7] Keynes, 'Kingdom of the Anglo-Saxons', pp.13-4.
[8] *Ibid.*, pp.17-9.
[9] *Ibid.*, p.19; Keynes and Lapidge, 'Introduction', p.18.

own people 'who had submitted to the Vikings' authority'.[10] Things

began to turn after Alfred defeated the Vikings at the Battle of Edington

in 878.[11] Following this, somewhere between 880 and 886 the Alfred-

Guthrum Treaty was signed; the Viking leader Guthrum was effectively

forced to accept baptism and nominally converted to Christianity, and

he and his forces withdrew to territory outside of Alfred's kingdom.[12]

Alfred could then reign in relative peace until 892, when the Viking

Great Army arrived from the continent.[13] In 896, Alfred defeated this

opposition too.[14]

The Texts

Authorship

As mentioned before, recent scholarship has debated whether Alfred

personally authored nothing (Godden) or virtually all the texts

traditionally ascribed to him (Bately).[15] But as Faulkner argues,

'whether or not Alfred was actually responsible for translating [*RP*] […]

his voice and presence resonate throughout the translation' and the

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[10] Asser, *Life of King Alfred*, trans. Simon Keynes and Michael Lapidge, in *Alfred the Great*, ed. Keynes and Lapidge, pp.65-110 (p.83).
[11] Keynes, 'Kingdom of the Anglo-Saxons', p.13.
[12] *Ibid.*, p.23.
[13] *Ibid.*, p.14.
[14] *Ibid.*
[15] Malcolm Godden, 'Did King Alfred Write Anything?', *Medium Ævum*, 76:1 (2007), 1-23; Janet M. Bately, 'Did King Alfred Actually Translate Anything? The Integrity of the Alfredian Canon Revisited', *Medium Ævum*, 78:2 (2009), 189-215. For a more in-depth tracing of the different scholarly interpretations of this matter, see Discenza and Szarmach, 'Appendix: Annotated Bibliography on the Authorship Issue', in *Companion to Alfred*, pp.397-415.

alterations made to the source 'contribute to the construction of the same royal ideology that can be found in the other Alfredian translations and in Asser's contemporary portrait of the king'.[16] Even if Alfred did not author his other translations himself, they all evidence a royal influence or commissioning, channelling the king's voice and his untraditional expectations of kingship. Hence the authorship question does not impact the conclusions I draw. For the sake of ease, I shall hereafter refer to Alfred as the author.

<div align="center">Manuscripts and Structure</div>

DCP is split into five books, each broken down further into chapters and meters. *OEB* exists in two redactions, which Godden and Irvine term the 'B-' and 'C-Text'. While both preserve the rough ordering of *DCP*'s arguments, their structures differ. The B-Text, preserved in one late-eleventh- or early-twelfth-century manuscript, is written entirely in prose.[17] It is divided into forty-two chapters by coloured initials.[18] The C-Text is preserved as a tenth-century copy within a later composite manuscript and, like *DCP*, includes meters too (albeit very different from the Latin).[19] The divisions between sections (prose and meters)

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[16] Amy Faulkner, 'Royal Authority in the Biblical Quotations of the Old English Pastoral Care', *Neophilologus* 102:1 (2018), 125-40 (pp.125-6).
[17] Godden and Irvine, 'The Manuscripts of the OE Boethius', in *OEB*, Vol.1 pp.9-43 (p.9).
[18] *Ibid.*, pp.14-5.
[19] *Ibid.*, pp.18-24. Much of this manuscript is now damaged, meaning the C-Text must be deciphered from the seventeenth-century Junius Manuscript which merges both versions – see *ibid.*, pp.24-34.

are marked inconsistently – sometimes with enlarged initials,

sometimes with line spaces.[20] My analysis shall focus on the C-Text.

Meanwhile *OEPC* is preserved in six manuscripts, the earliest of

which dates to the late-ninth century (contemporary with Alfred's

reign).[21] All redactions roughly follow *RP*'s structure: four books split

into chapters, plus a preface and epilogue. Additionally, Alfred adds his

own prefatory material to both works: an original Prose and Verse

Preface plus an extra introductory meter to *OEB*, and a Verse Prologue,

Epistolary Preface and Verse Epilogue to *OEPC*.

Time of Composition

OEPC is widely believed to be Alfred's earliest translation.[22] Partly this

is because it is this text's Epistolary Preface that explains Alfred's

motivations for his education programme (discussed below). Based on

manuscript evidence, Schreiber believes *OEPC* was first circulated in

the early 890s.[23] Bately gives an even earlier composition date of 888.[24]

I agree with Bately, since 888 would be before the Great Army's 892

invasion summarised above. Alfred's Epistolary Preface alludes to

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[20] Godden and Irvine, 'The Manuscripts of the OE Boethius', p.23.

[21] Carolin Schreiber, 'The Manuscripts of the Old English Pastoral Care', in *King Alfred's Old English Translation of Pope Gregory the Great's Regula Pastoralis and its Cultural Context* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2003), pp.51-82.

[22] Carolin Schreiber, '*Searoðonca Hord*: Alfred's Translation of Gregory the Great's *Regula Pastoralis*', in *Companion to Alfred*, ed. Discenza and Szarmach, pp.171-99 (p.179); Janet Bately, 'Old English Prose Before and During the Reign of King Alfred', *Anglo-Saxon England*, 17 (1988), 93-138 (p.125); Fulk, 'Introduction', in *OEPC*, pp.vii-xxiv (p.ix).

[23] Schreiber, '*Searoðonca Hord*', p.178.

[24] Janet M. Bately, 'Alfred as Author and Translator', in *Companion to Alfred*, ed. Discenza and Szarmach, pp.113-42 (p.141).

Viking activity in the past tense, as those who *forhergod* 'laid waste to' British land and churches (p.6); apparently this plundering from earlier in Alfred's reign was not occurrent at the time of composition.[25] In contrast, *OEB* uses the same verb in the infinitive form, *forheregian*, in reference to those who *get doð* 'yet do' this plundering (Prose 8, ll.11-3). Chapter 2 will demonstrate that this most likely alludes to the Vikings, which strongly suggests that *OEB* was composed after 892.

Relatedly, I am unconvinced by Keynes' argument that, based on their mention of a *stilnesse* 'stillness, time of peace' (*OEPC* Epistolary Preface, p.8), *OEPC*'s prologues and epilogues were added after 896 (when the Great Army had been defeated in England).[26] Alfred is evidently concerned that the peace will not last, suggesting rather that he is writing sometime in the late-880s (when he had presided over a decade of peace) and acknowledging the possibility that the Vikings will re-emerge in the near future (as they did in 892).

<u>Purpose and Audience</u>

Throughout Alfred's translation programme, he promotes his reformed ideas on kingship to all *Angelcynn* 'English folk', as stated repeatedly in *OEPC*'s Epistolary Preface (pp.4-11). This reflects Alfred's aim to unite his kingdom's various and divided peoples outlined above. As Discenza explains, Alfred translates Latin texts into the more accessible

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[25] Unless stated otherwise, all translations are mine.
[26] Keynes, 'Kingdom of the Anglo-Saxons', pp30-1.

vernacular to 'unite[] the Anglo-Saxons' as one people with one shared language.[27] As part of this unifying agenda, his literature consistently presents the ongoing struggles with the Vikings as a holy war between 'Christians' and 'pagans'. Keynes notes that these are the terms Asser uses throughout his biography.[28] Similarly, I will demonstrate that throughout *OEB* and *OEPC*, Viking activity is implicitly linked to infamous pagan, heretical or pre-Christian rulers. Through this literary portrayal (regardless of how historically accurate it was), Alfred seeks to unite the English and Welsh Christians under himself against their common pagan enemy.

Besides a generic address to all *Angelcynn*, each text more specifically addresses a different socio-political group. This is mainly evidenced in Alfred's added prefaces. Irvine contends that *OEPC*'s prefaces were likely composed separately from the main text.[29] Yet she admits that these sections were still circulated with the main text from a very early date, being contained in ninth-century manuscripts of *OEPC*.[30] Therefore, they at least quickly became part of the text, and were used by Alfed to indicate his audience. The Verse Prologue declares that Alfred wrote this text *ðæt he his biscepum / sendan meahte* 'that he could send it to his bishops' (ll.14-5), just as Gregory wrote *RP* to advise church leaders. Schreiber notes that such phrases,

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[27] Nicole Guenther Discenza, *The King's English: Strategies of Translation in the Old English Boethius* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2005), pp.3-4.
[28] Keynes, 'Kingdom of the Anglo-Saxons', p.37.
[29] Susan Irvine, 'The Alfredian Prefaces and Epilogues', in *Companion to Alfred*, ed. Discenza and Szarmach, pp.143-70 (p.153).
[30] *Ibid.*

plus the manuscript evidence for *OEPC* being circulated to bishops,

evidence this text's episcopal audience.[31] However, she adds that

OEPC also addresses 'secular office-holders': Alfred's opening refers to

wiotan […] ægðer ge godcundra hada ge weoruldcundra 'wise men in

both clergy and laity' (Epistolary Preface, p.4).[32] This secular audience

is further suggested through the leadership terms Alfred most

commonly uses. Rather than translating Gregory's Latin *episcopus*

'bishop' with the equivalent Old English term *bisceop*, Alfred frequently

uses *reccend*, which Fulk explains is 'most usually and conventionally

to be translated as 'ruler'' – i.e., himself.[33] He also addresses the

ealdormon 'one in authority' (particularly referring to someone 'of

secular office') and the *lareow* 'teacher, master, preacher' (usually

suggesting ecclesiastical office).[34] Alfred apparently uses these terms

synonymously, blending together secular and ecclesiastical offices. This

encourages all the king's sub-leaders (bishops and landlords) to follow

his own example as their *reccend*: to both govern and spiritually

educate.

　　While *OEPC* is mainly intended for leaders, Discenza explains

how the preface indicates that Afred's overall translation programme

targeted 'a broader audience', as he sought to educate *eall sio gioguð*

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[31] Schreiber, '*Searoðonca Hord*', p.190.
[32] *Ibid.* (translation Schreiber's).
[33] Fulk, 'Introduction', p.xii.
[34] Angus Cameron, Ashley Crandell Amos, Antonette diPaolo Healey et al. (eds), *The Dictionary of Old English: A to I* (Toronto: Dictionary of Old English Project, 2018), <https://tapor.library.utoronto.ca/doe/> [accessed 23rd June 2023], 'ealdor-mann', Senses I, II.A.1 (hereafter, this dictionary shall be referenced as *D.O.E*); Joseph Bosworth, *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary Online*, ed. Thomas Northcote Toller, Christ Sean, Ondřej Tichy (Prague: Faculty of Arts, Charles University, 2014), <https://bosworthtoller.com> [accessed 13th July 2023], 'láreów'.

ðe nu is on Angelcynne friora monna 'all the youth of free men who are now in England' (Epistolary Preface, p.8).[35] Correspondingly, *OEB*'s stated audience is not leaders but the *leod* 'people' (Verse Preface, l.4), or commoners. Irvine argues that this text's prefaces were also composed independently.[36] Yet they too soon circulated (at least by the time of the tenth-century C-Text manuscript) as part of the work. Moreover, *leod* intentionally demarcates a different audience from *OEPC*. As Szarmach concludes (partly from Æthelweard's tenth-century account), *OEB* 'was read aloud to a non-scholarly audience'.[37] Owing to this, as well as differences between the source texts, *OEB* offers less practical advice than *OEPC*. Instead, it focuses on enhancing the audience's spiritual understanding. To this end, Alfred encourages the people to look to their king to guide them towards God.

<u>Translation Accuracy</u>

In Discenza's analysis of *OEB* as a translation, she uses two key terms from Translation Studies: 'adequacy' (how accurately the translation reflects its source) and 'acceptability' (how well the translated text conforms to the language or ideology of the culture for which it was

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[35] Discenza, *King's English*, p.2.
[36] Irvine, 'Prefaces and Epilogues', pp.160-2.
[37] Paul E. Szarmach, 'Boethius's Influence in Anglo-Saxon England: The Vernacular and *De Consolatione Philosophiae*', in *A Companion to Boethius in the Middle Ages*, ed. Noel Harold Kaylor Jr. and Phillip Edward Phillips (Leiden: Brill, 2012), pp.221-54 (p.223). Admittedly, part of *OEB*'s audience must have been from a more scholarly, socially higher group or the clergy, as the mostly illiterate commoners would require such people to read it to them.

translated).[38] *OEPC* is Alfred's most 'adequate' translation. Scholars

generally agree this is because Alfred had less confidence in himself as

a translator during his first project.[39] Nonetheless, as Fulk explains,

Alfred does also make some important 'acceptable' changes.[40]

OEB is far less adequate, appropriated freely. Notably, the

dramatis personae changes. *DCP* is framed as a discussion between

Philosophia 'Philosophy' and Boethius' avatar whom she instructs. In

place of these, Alfred substitutes *Wisdom* 'Wisdom' (alias

Gesceadwisnes 'Reason') who teaches Boethius' anthropomorphised

Mod 'spirit, mind'.[41] Solomonik-Pankrashova convincingly argues that

Wisdom most likely represents God 'the Divine *Logos*', named 'Lady

Wisdom' in the Old Testament Proverbs.[42] Meanwhile *Mod*, as Chapter

2 shall evidence, is often used to represent the king, as God's

(*Wisdom*'s) pupil and voice to the people. Having altered the cast,

Alfred then significantly alters the dialogue, refocusing it on kingship

and God's sovereignty.

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[38] Discenza, *King's English*, p.6.
[39] Schreiber, '*Searoðonca Hord*', p.179; Fulk, 'Introduction', p.ix.
[40] *Ibid.*, pp.ix-x.
[41] *Mod* may be translated variously ('mind', 'soul', 'mood', *etcetera*) but always in reference to the 'inner man' or spiritual part of an individual. See Bosworth, *Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, 'mód', Senses I-III.
[42] Tatyana Solomonik-Pankrashova, 'The "Ventriloquism" of Logoi in the Old English Prose Psalms and "Boethius"', *Medieval Mystical Theology*, 30:2 (2021), 113-128; see Proverbs 1.20-33 (Douay-Rheims), <https://drbo.org/> [accessed 8th September 2023]. Hereafter, all scriptural references will be to this translation.

Early-Medieval Expectations of Kingship and Recent Scholarship

To understand what Alfred is adding to expectations of kingship, we
must first see what he is responding to. Wormald notes the traditional
'centrality of active and predatory war-leadership for Germanic kings'.[43]
He also argues it was the king's responsibility to enforce laws and
justice within his dominion.[44] Similarly, Charlemagne held that a king
must both set his people a 'good example' and compel them through
laws into obedience.[45] Orton argues this Carolingian model was the
inspiration behind Alfred's law codes for 'moral discipline'.[46] Yet to
Wormald, traditional Anglo-Saxon kings imposed laws based on their
individual sense of judgement, advertising their own 'rights and
privileges' and 'what [they] can be seen to have got away with'.[47] In
short, respected kings were warriors capable of audaciously enforcing
their own laws and ideologies upon their people.

However, Wormald also acknowledges that across the Anglo-
Saxon era, kingship underwent 'change rather than continuity', as
gradually kings became expected to focus less on war-leading and
more on 'setting their subjects an example of the Christian life' and
'humility'.[48] Likewise, Leneghan holds that, inspired by the biblical King

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[43] Patrick Wormald, 'Celtic and Anglo-Saxon Kingship: Some Further Thoughts', in
Sources of Anglo-Saxon Culture, ed. Paul E. Szarmach and Virginia Darrow Oggins
(Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1986), pp.151-83 (p.153).
[44] *Ibid.*, pp.168-9.
[45] Charlemagne, 'General Admonition', trans. P.D. King, in *Charlemagne: Translated
Sources* (Kendal: University of Lancaster, 1987), pp.209-20 (p.209).
[46] Daniel Orton, 'Royal Piety and Davidic Imitation: Cultivating Political Capital in the
Alfredian Psalms', *Neophilologus*, 99 (2015), 477-92 (p.480).
[47] Wormald, 'Celtic and Anglo-Saxon Kingship', p.152.
[48] *Ibid.*, p.153.

David, 'medieval kings eventually came to see themselves not simply as war leaders but as moral shepherds of their peoples'.[49] Orton emphasises how Alfred elsewhere (in his *Psalms* translations) identifies with David, who was conventionally interpreted as a forerunner of Christ's humble kingship.[50] Additionally, under the popular philosophy of Gregory the Great, the king came to be seen as the bodily representation of the nation; God would reward or punish the king as befits his people's virtues or sins, and vice versa.[51] The popularity of this philosophy across ninth-century Europe is evidenced, as Orton observes, through various other texts – including Alfred's depiction of David in the Old English *Psalms.*[52]

None of the above scholars has yet explained how kingship moved from war-leader to spiritual exemplum. As this dissertation will explain, I believe this to be a direct result of Alfred's literature. Despite his successes as a war-leader outlined above, Alfred chooses not to advertise this much in his writings. Rather, reacting against the traditional model outlined by Wormald, he presents himself as following a new form of rulership. Under this, he selflessly enforces not his own will but God's laws for the people's spiritual benefit. This reformed kingship template – the leader who humbles himself beneath God and

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[49] Francis Leneghan, *The Dynastic Drama of Beowulf* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2020), p.197.

[50] Orton, 'Royal Piety', pp.478, 490.

[51] Gregory, *Morals on the Book of Job* (Oxford: John Henry Parker, 1845), Vol.2 Book XIII, pp.87-117 (pp.89-92).

[52] Orton, 'Royal Piety', pp.481-2; Patrick O'Connor (ed.), *King Alfred's Old English Prose Translation of the First Fifty Psalms* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Medieval Academy of America, 2001).

does not exalt himself over the people – is then channelled through Alfred's literature, setting a new model for future kings to follow.

Within this template, Alfred also (I argue) reforms ideas on where legitimate power comes from. In his analysis of Ælfric's homilies, Kritsch concludes the late Anglo-Saxons believed in three 'complementary notions' behind legitimate kingship: 'elective kingship', whereby the king had the support of his people; 'theocratic authority', as the king was appointed by God for his virtuousness; and 'hereditary birthright', with the king coming from a royal lineage.[53] As Szarmach explains, Ælfric was heavily influenced by Alfred and his literature.[54] Ælfric's portrayal of kingship was largely a continuation of Alfred's reformed views. Consequently, Kritsch's conclusions on Ælfric's homilies indicate how kingship was interpreted in light of Alfred's texts. I do not believe Alfred greatly reshaped understandings of 'hereditary birthright': although he was of the Wessex royal family, his literature does not much discuss lineage as a legitimising factor. But through *OEB* and *OEPC*, this thesis will demonstrate that Alfred frequently emphasises 'theocratic' and 'elective' approval as crucial for any ruler. Through his literature, he consistently seeks to present himself as a virtuous king chosen by both God and the people, and argues a king should in turn use his power for God and the people.

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[53] Kevin R. Kritsch, 'Fragments and Reflexes of Kingship Theory in Ælfric's Comments on Royal Authority', *English Studies*, 97:2 (2016), 163-85 (p.164).
[54] Szarmach, 'Boethius's Influence', p.237.

Samuel Masters
University of Nottingham, Student ID 20130512.
ENGL4310

Chapter 1:

Pride and Humility: The Corruption and Misuse of Divinely-Given Authority

Through various historical and scriptural examples, both *OEB* and *OEPC* demonstrate that pride is the main barrier to theocratic authority, as it causes kings to rule for themselves rather than for God. This is a marked change from earlier Anglo-Saxon understandings of kingship. Prior to Alfred, kingship expectations are mainly attested through heroic poems. These typically envisage leaders as confidently boasting in the mead-hall of their heritage, abilities and achievements before their retainers.[55] This evidences Wormald's afore-cited belief that the traditional king should be the strong war-leader and independent legislator. Whether or not this literary representation was an historical reality is unimportant to this study: the literature shows how kingship was popularly portrayed, and what cultural expectations were built into it. Alfred's literature reshapes these expectations. His texts instead indicate that an ideal king ought not to display arrogance nor enforce his own legislative agenda, but should rule humbly, promoting God's laws before his own.

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[55] For examples of such boasts, see *Beowulf*, ed. Frederick Klaeber, R.D Fulk, Robert E. Bjork and John D. Niles (4th edn) (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), ll.407-26, 530-89, 2426-34, 2490-2537; *The Fight at Finnsburh*, in *The Cambridge Old English Reader* (2nd edn), ed. Richard Marsden (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp.334-9 (ll.24-7); *Waldere, Fragments I-II*, in *A Choice of Anglo-Saxon Verse* (2nd edn), ed. Richard Hamer (London: Faber & Faber, 2015), pp.30-7.

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OEB

Ruling for the 'One King'

OEB puts forth two polarised models of kingship: God represents the perfectly righteous leader, while historical figures such as Nero and Theoderic exemplify selfish abuse of power. *DCP* repeatedly emphasises that *summum deum summi perfectique boni esse plenissimum* 'God is the most high and perfect good' (3.10, p.276), which Alfred renders as *he is þæt fulle god and þæt fullfremede* '[God] is the complete and perfect good' (*OEB* Prose 20, ll.17-8). But Boethius says little about God's rulership role, aside from that He is the *regum […] dominus* 'Lord of kings' (*DCP* 4.1m, l.19). Alfred expands on this title: God is the *an cyning* 'one king' who *waldeð giond wer-ðioda / ealra oðra eorðan cyninga* 'rules over all other earthly kings across the nations of men' (*OEB* Meter 24 ll.31, 35-6). Whereas the Latin text uses separate terms to represent human kings (*reges*) and God's overarching sovereignty (*dominus*), the Old English refers to both as *cyning*. This explicit comparison makes God's rulership pattern more relevant to human kings: God is not only the 'One King' with authority 'over all other earthly kings', but the supreme model for them to imitate. The shared diction also implies that the authority of 'earthly kings' like Alfred originates in the divine 'One King'; He rules over them, and has appointed them to rule for Him over their own 'nations'. Leneghan

argues the Anglo-Saxons came to view 'earthly kingship' as representative of 'Christ, the King of Kings'.[56] In line with this, in *OEB* Alfred implicitly reminds his people that he is their 'earthly king' who represents the 'One King' to them, and therefore that God's unconditional sovereignty should transfer into their unquestioning obedience to himself.

In *DCP*, Boethius' chief rulership model is *Amor* 'Love'. 2.8m describes *Amor* as the *foedus perpetuum* 'eternal law' (I.4), which *rerum seriem ligat* 'binds all things together' (I.13) to establish a united *felix hominum genus* 'happy race of men' (I.28). Yet in Alfred's replacement passage, *Amor*'s ordering power is instead ascribed to God:

An Sceppend is   butan ælcum tweon.

Se is eac wealdend   woruld-gesceafta

heofones and eorðan   and heah-sæ

and ealra þara   þe ðær in wuniað,

ungesæwenlicra   and eac swa same

ðara ðe we eagum   on lociað,

ealra gesceafta.   Se is ælmihtig,

þæm oleccað   ealle gesceafte

þe þæs ambehtes   awuht cunnon

ge eac swa same   þa ðæs auht nyton

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[56] Leneghan, *Dynastic Drama*, p.198.

> *þæt hi þæs ðeodnes   þeowas sindon.*
>
> *Se us gesette   sido and þeawas,*
>
> *eallum gesceaftum   unawendende*
>
> *singallice   sibbe gecynde,*
>
> *þa þa he wolde,   þæt þæt he wolde,*
>
> *swa lange swa he wolde   þæt hit wesan sceolde.*
>
> *Swa hit eac to worulde   sceal wunian forð,*
>
> *forþæm æfre ne magon   þa unstillan*
>
> *woruld-gesceafta   weorðan gestilde...*

'There is one Creator without any doubt. He is also the ruler of all this worldly Creation, of Heaven and Earth and the deep sea, and of all those that dwell in these places, the unseen and in the same way also those which we look on with our eyes – of all Creation. He is almighty, whom all Creation seeks to please, those who are at all aware of that service and also those who do not know at all that they are that Lord's servants. He set us morals and customs, unchanging for all creatures, a natural, lasting peace, whenever He wanted, whatever He wanted, for as long as He wanted it to last. So must it remain in the world forthwith, because never can the moving worldly creatures be stilled…'

(*OEB* Meter 11, ll.1-19)

Like *Amor*, God unifies all Creation in 'lasting peace'. But *Amor* is an

impersonal abstract force, whereas God personally rules over the land

and people to bring about peace. Moreover, whereas to Boethius

nature's 'eternal law' will *tenere* 'hold' everything in balance (*DCP* 2.8m

l.4), Alfred believes 'worldly creatures can never be stilled' naturally.

Instead, to secure peace they require someone to intervene outside of

the law of nature. Hence God 'set us morals and customs' by which His

people could agree on what was right and wrong and thus look after

one another peacefully*.*

In this, Alfred sets the template for his own leadership. In

Scripture, God created humanity 'in His own image' and commanded it

to 'have *dominion* […] over the whole earth […] *subdue* it, and *rule* over

[it]' (emphasis mine).[57] While this addresses all humans, its rulership

vocabulary suggests a particular relevance for kings. Pratt argues that

in Alfred's day, societal order, economy and political manoeuvring all

'centred on the ruler'.[58] But the ruler was anointed, Leneghan explains,

to symbolise his 'duty to uphold the laws of God'.[59] Thus while

Creation's order is sustained through God, God entasks kings with

sustaining this order within their own dominions on His behalf, ruling 'in

His own image'. This justifies Alfred's lengthy law codes, likely

composed in the late 880s or early 890s (roughly the same time as his

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[57] Genesis 1.26-8.
[58] Pratt, *Political Thought*, p.10.
[59] Leneghan, *Dynastic Drama*, p.211.

translation projects).[60] In *OEB*, Alfred reminds his people that these

laws exist to enforce God's 'morals and customs', thereby securing

God's 'lasting peace' across the realm.

Also at this time, Alfred had presided over more than a decade of

peace, having defeated Guthrum's army in 878. Moreover, from the

Anglo-Saxon Chronicles, we see Alfred established for himself such a

reputation of 'ma[king] peace' in Britain between Christians and pagan

Vikings.[61] His treaty with Guthrum was published as 'the *peace* which

King Alfred and King Guthrum […] have all agreed on […] for

themselves *and for their subjects*' (emphasis mine).[62] Rather than

seeking a public image as a proud war leader like Wormald's traditional

kings, Alfred instead consistently presents himself as a humble peace-

maker and law-setter like God, placing the people's needs before his

own. Although even kings 'who do not know at all that they are that

Lord's servants' are yet made to serve Him, unwilling servants are

much less effective at maintaining God's peace, instead prioritising their

own power and glory (to be shown forthwith). These two categories of

service to the 'One King' may also be seen in Alfred and Guthrum, who

under their treaty were both technically king over part of England.

Whereas Alfred's literature depicts himself as highly 'aware of [his]

service' to God, Guthrum was a pagan (albeit one coerced into

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[60] For the dating of Alfred's law codes, see Simon Keynes and Michael Lapidge, 'Extracts from the Laws of King Alfred', in *Alfred the Great*, ed. Keynes and Lapidge, p.163.

[61] Michael Swanton (ed.), *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicles* (London: Phoenix Press, 2000), pp.72, 73, 75.

[62] *The Treaty Between Alfred and Guthrum*, trans. Simon Keynes and Michael Lapidge, in *Alfred the Great*, ed. Keynes and Lapidge, pp.171-2 (p.171).

baptism) and therefore presumably unaware of this service. Consequently, while Alfred upholds God's peace for the *Angelcynn*, the pagan Vikings disrupt it – as was happening at the likely time of composition with the invasion of the Great Army. Thus through this distinction in *OEB*, Alfred indicates that he is the only king with genuine theocratic authority in England. He encourages his people to follow his rulership and laws, otherwise they 'never can […] be stilled' from war.

Submitting to the 'One King'

Considering the above, one might agree with Wormald's assertions that a good Anglo-Saxon king must implement his own legislative agenda. However, Alfred is careful to show that it is not his own laws and judgements he is enforcing, but God's. In addition to being the 'One King', God is also described in *OEB* as the *an dema* 'One Judge' (Meter 24 l.42) – the only 'one' capable of ruling unequivocally and faultlessly upholding justice. As we saw in Meter 11, God alone can command 'whenever He wanted, whatever He wanted, for as long as He wanted it to last'. Consequently, while 'earthly kings' should aspire to follow God's pattern of caring for their people by maintaining peace and leading them in Godly 'morals and customs', they cannot rule with the same authority or disciplinary rights. This should serve as a warning to those who would become too power-hungry, and rule by enforcing their own desires and sense of justice over others.

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Alfred's reputation was the opposite: in Asser's *Life of King Alfred*, the king is depicted as a humble ruler who reigned 'almost unwillingly'.[63] Although we cannot be sure that this biography was commissioned by Alfred, it certainly conforms with the humble expectations of kingship painted throughout the Alfredian corpus; as Keynes and Lapidge argue, 'it comes as no surprise […] when Asser tells us that [Alfred] initially had misgivings about his ability to cope, for it is plain from Alfred's own writings that he was not one to take responsibility lightly'.[64] More specifically, Alfred was not one to take responsibility to God lightly: Asser tells us that when Alfred became king, although he doubted his own ability to rule and withstand the Vikings, he trusted in 'divine help' to guide him.[65] His law codes further clarify that he does not rule for himself, as he prefaces them with the declaration,

> *Ic ne dorste geðristlæcan þara minra awuht*
>
> *fela on gewrit settan, forðam me was uncuð,*
>
> *hwæt þæs ðam lician wolde, ðe æfter ūs*
>
> *wæren.*

'I dared not to presume to set down in writing many of my own [laws], because it was unknown to me which

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[63] Asser, *Life*, p.81.
[64] Keynes and Lapidge, 'Introduction', p.18.
[65] Asser, *Life*, p.81.

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of them would please those who come after us'.[66]

In fact Alfred did add several of his own laws to the codes – further supporting Wormald's arguments for the legislative ruler. Yet I believe that in this extract Alfred expresses his intentions not to codify his own beliefs. Rather, he codifies God's 'morals and customs', and his own laws are formalisations of these. Keynes and Lapidge believe Alfred's codes 'show how the king sought to maintain social order'.[67] But this order is not based around Alfred's own morals, but God's morals revealed through Scripture. This is evident in how Alfred begins his codes with 'a series of quotations translated from the book of Exodus, representing the law […] received from God', plus other translations from the New Testament.[68] Returning to Kritsch's categories for legitimate kingship, this strengthens Alfred's perceived theocratic authority, and he believes it will also please the people of his own day and 'those who come after us' (enhancing his elective kingship). Thereby, Alfred sets a new standard of rulership, under which kings should not (despite Wormald's assumptions) proudly enforce their own agenda but encode God's laws and lead the people in humbly submitting to them.

This humble leadership style is further exemplified in Meter 1 through the example of Theoderic in his early ruling days. The

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[66] Felix Lieberman (ed.), *Das Gesetzbuch der Könige Ælfred und Ine*, in *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), Vol.1 pp.15-123 (p.46 (49.9)).
[67] Keynes and Lapidge, 'Laws of King Alfred', p.163.
[68] *Ibid.*, p.163; see Lieberman, *Das Gesetzbuch*, pp.17-8.

Theoderic passages are non-existent in *DCP*. Nokes and Swaim hold that Alfred's audience 'would equate one king with another, and conflate the roles of Alfred and Theoderic'.[69] Hence Alfred takes care to initially present Theoderic as a positive exemplum, so that the text opens by highlighting the benefits of godly kingship for the people. Theoderic displayed theocratic authority as a king *Criste gecnoden* 'dedicated to Christ' (Meter 1 l.32), and elective kingship as *fægnodon ealle / Rom-wara bearn* 'all the children of Romans rejoiced' upon his coming to power (ll.33-4) and thus displayed their popular support for his rule. Consequently, they *him recene to / friðes wilnedon* 'quickly desired to make peace with him' (ll.34-5); Theoderic is able to consolidate peace just as God does in Meter 11. Comparably, Asser portrays Alfred as a king appointed through 'divine will' and 'the unanimous wish' of his people, who thereby brought peace to his realm for several years (as discussed above).[70] As per Kritsch's conclusions, to secure peace both kings require the backing of both God and the people. The inverse of this godly kingship image is presented through Theoderic's predecessors, the *Gota gylpes full, guðe gelysted, / folc-gewinnes* 'Goths full of pride, desiring battle, a conflict of peoples' (*OEB* Meter 1 ll.9-10). This is another addition to the source, illustrating the boastful war-leader archetype traditional to Old English heroic poetry. While this image aligns with the traditional kingship expectations outlined by Wormald, it is not praised in Alfred's texts. The Goths' 'pride' misled

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[69] Richard Scott Nokes and Paige K. Swaim, 'Kingship in Alfred's Meters of Boethius', *Carmina Philosophiae*, 13 (2004), 61-74 (p.70).
[70] Asser, *Life*, p.80.

them into harming their people through 'conflict', rather than protecting

them by maintaining peace. Theoderic amends his predecessors' pride

by humbly accepting the finiteness of his power, recognising that his

decrees will last only *ðenden God wuolde þæt he Gotena geweald /*

agan moste 'while God desired that he might have power over the

Goths' (ll.38-9). As Kritsch argues, theocratic authority means 'the

ruler's position […] is dependent on God's grace'.[71] Accordingly,

Theoderic here acknowledges that his continued reign depends on

God's will, as God alone can (as Meter 11 later clarifies) command

'whatever He wanted, for as long as He wanted it to last'. Thus Alfred

demonstrates that to uphold his people's joy and peace, a king must

humbly submit to God's overarching sovereignty. By opening his text

with this example, Alfred makes clear what kind of kingship he aspires

towards.

Becoming the 'One King'

Despite Theoderic's opening humility, Nokes and Swaim also

emphasise the political danger for Alfred in associating himself with the

emperor against whom Boethius rebelled.[72] Since Boethius is described

as *rihtwis* 'righteous' (l.49), and according to Discenza Anglo-Saxons

commonly respected him as a 'Christian martyr', Alfred risked his

audience supporting Boethius and following his example in resisting the

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[71] Kritsch, 'Fragments and Reflexes', p.172.
[72] Nokes and Swaim, 'Kingship in Alfred's Meters', p.70.

king's authority.[73] Godden sees this 'sympathetic account of an

attempted revolt against a legitimate king' as evidence against a royal

authorship of *OEB*.[74] However, Theoderic's authority does not remain

'legitimate'. Kaylor describes the 'shift in Theoderic's domestic policy'

from benevolent to cruel.[75] In line with this, Troncarelli finds that

throughout late-antique and early-medieval Europe Theoderic was

typically viewed negatively after he turned against Boethius (who in turn

was popularly understood as a justified 'dissident').[76] Alfred

incorporates Theoderic's 'shift' into his own narrative, after Theoderic

þæt eall aleag 'lay all that [virtuous conduct] aside' (Meter 1 l.39).

Whereas once Theoderic had been 'dedicated to Christ', now *wæs*

þæm æþelinge Arrianes / gedwola leofre þonne drihtnes æ 'Arianus'

heresy was dearer to that nobleman than God's law' (ll.40-1).

Comparable to Bede's criticisms of Pelagian kings who 'denied our

need of heavenly grace', so Alfred criticises Theoderic's heresy that

blinded him to his need of 'God's law' and his duty as king to uphold it.[77]

As Nokes and Swaim argue, Alfred 'posit[s] Theodoric as an evil heretic

attacking Christianity', thereby 'defus[ing] the problem of [Alfred] being

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[73] Nicole Guentha Discenza, 'The Old English *Boethius*', in *Companion to Alfred*, ed. Discenza and Szarmach, pp.200-26 (p.207).
[74] Malcolm Godden, 'King and Counsellor in the Alfredian Boethius', in *Intertexts: Studies in Anglo-Saxon Culture Presented to Paul E. Szarmach*, ed. Virginia Blanton and Helene Scheck (Tempe, Arizona: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2008), pp.191–207 (p.206).
[75] Noel Harold Kaylor Jr., 'Introduction: The Times, Life and Work of Boethius', in *Companion to Boethius*, ed. Kaylor and Phillips, pp.1-46 (p.43).
[76] Fabio Troncarelli, 'Afterword: Boethius in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages', in *Companion to Boethius*, ed. Kaylor and Phillips, pp.519-49 (pp.533-4, 519-20).
[77] Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, trans. Bertram Colgrave and R.A.B. Mynors (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), p.39.

identified with a wicked or incompetent king'.[78] In contrast to Alfred's

presentation of his own rulership in his law codes and Meter 11,

Theoderic now seeks to rule without 'God's law' and sets his own

judgments as he punishes all who disagree with his own agenda: *Het*

Iohannes, godne papan, / heafde beheawon 'he commanded the good

pope John to be beheaded' (ll.42-3), and *hine inne heht / on carcernes*

cluster belucan 'commanded [Boethius] to be locked in a prison cell'

(ll.72-3). Theoderic becomes characterised by repeated commands

(*het*) for unjust punishments, as he seeks to have 'whenever he

wanted, whatever he wanted'. In effect, he makes himself his own god,

deciding for himself what is right and wrong and forgetting that only the

'One Judge' can provide laws and discipline others in perfect justice.[79]

Contrary to Wormald's belief that a good Anglo-Saxon king 'got away

with' enforcing his own desires (as opposed to God's or the people's), in

Theoderic Alfred exemplifies the dangers of such an autocratic

approach to rulership.

Orton concludes from the Old English *Psalms* that Alfred

believed 'royal adherence to God's laws ensure governmental

stability'.[80] Accordingly, after Theoderic replaces Gd's law with his own

agenda, governmental chaos ensues in the form of rebellion. Hence

Alfred's narrator, following Theoderic's execution of John, criticises the

emperor in the scathing litotes, *næs ðæt hærlic dæd* 'that was not a

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[78] Nokes and Swaim, 'Kingship in Alfred's Meters', p.70.
[79] *OEB* and *OEPC*'s different takes on the disciplinary roles of God and earthly kings shall be discussed further in Chapter 2.
[80] Orton, 'Royal Piety', p.489.

noble deed' (l.43). The exact same phrase is later applied to Nero

(Meter 9 l.18), whose infamously un-Christian behaviour and

consequent governmental instability shall be discussed in Chapter 2.

Through this, Alfred underscores how Theoderic has turned away from

his past humble service to God and instead assumes sovereign control

himself. Resultantly, he foregoes any theocratic authority. Additionally,

Theoderic committed *unrim oðres manes […] godra gehwilcum*

'innumerable other crimes against everyone's good' (ll.44-5). Whereas

previously his subjects 'rejoiced' under his rule, now 'everyone' is

harmed by him. This failure to respect the people's needs costs him his

elective authority. Without either of these Kritschian factors, Theoderic's

rulership becomes illegitimate. This strengthens Alfred's own image by

contrast, as a legitimate, humble king ruling beneath God and for the

people.

     In Prose 8, Theoderic's and Nero's self-idolatrous rulership is

explicit:

> *For ðæm anwealde ge eow woldon ahebban*
>
> *up oð ðone heofen gif ge meahten. Þæt is*
>
> *forðæm þe ge ne gemunon ne eac ne*
>
> *ongitað þone heofoncundan anweald and*
>
> *þone weorðscipe; se is eower agen and*
>
> *þonan ge comon*.

   'For that power you would raise yourselves up to Heaven

   if you could. That is because you do not remember nor

understand the heavenly power and the honour which is

your own, and from which you come.'

(*OEB* Prose 8 ll.3-6).

Godden and Irvine note that this 'considerable expansion' from the

Latin (*dignitatibus potentiaque […] quae vos verae […] caelo exaequatis*

'honour and power, which you men […] regard as equal to the heavens'

(*DCP* 2.6, p.208)) more firmly emphasises Platonic ideas that the soul's

origin is in heaven and aims to return there.[81] Indeed, the 'power' which

all people crave for themselves originates in God's 'heavenly power', by

which they were created. This addition parallels Colossians:

> For in him were all things created in heaven and
>
> on earth, visible and invisible […] all things were
>
> created by him and in him. And he is before all,
>
> and by him all things consist.[82]

This Bible passage is also alluded to in the afore-cited Meter 11: God is

'Lord of Heaven and Earth, the unseen and […] those which we look on

with our eyes'. This further suggests that Alfred had these verses in

mind while working on *OEB*. By echoing them here, Alfred emphasises

that all authority originates in God, and human leaders should use their

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[81] Godden and Irvine, 'Commentary', in *OEB*, Vol.2 pp.241-519 (pp.307-8).
[82] Colossians 1.16-7.

power to point back to Him rather than arrogantly seeking to 'raise

[themselves] up' in His place.

OEB offers several examples of rulers who attempt this self-

deification as a result of their *ofermod*. Elsewhere Tolkien translates

ofermod as 'overmastering pride' and argues it is a term 'of severe

criticism'.[83] This interpretation is well-founded: a very large portion of

this term's attestations come from Alfredian texts, in which it is always

clearly used pejoratively.[84] In an addition to Scripture, Alfred's Psalm 28

describes how God destroys *ofermodra manna anweald* 'the power of

overly-proud men'.[85] Similarly, *OEB* frequently associates *ofermod* with

sinfully prideful leaders. Prose 8 repeatedly criticises Tarquin's *ofermod*

(ll.17-20), translating the Latin *superbia* 'arrogance' (*DCP* 2.6, p.208).

Further, Meter 25 describes

> *…ðæm ofermodum*
>
> *unrihtwisum eorðan cyningum,*
>
> *ða her nu manegum   and mislicum*
>
> *wædum wlite-beorhtum   wundrum scinað…*

'…the overly-proud, unrighteous earthly kings, those who

here now shine wonderfully in many and various

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[83] J.R.R. Tolkien, 'The Homecoming of Beorhtnoth Beorhthelm's Son', 1953, in J.R.R. Tolkien, *Tree and Leaf*, ed. Christopher Tolkien (London: Harper Collins, 2001), pp.119-150 (pp.143, 147).
[84] Antonette diPaolo Healey, John Price Wilkin, Xin Xiang (eds), *Dictionary of Old English Web Corpus* (Toronto: Dictionary of Old English Project, 2009), <https://tapor-library-utoronto-ca.nottingham.idm.oclc.org/doecorpus/> [accessed 9th August 2023], Simple Search, 'ofermod'.
[85] Alfred, 'Psalm 28.5-6', in O'Connor (ed.), *Psalms*, p.131.

beautifully bright garments…'

(ll.1-4)

Each of these will have someone

>   *…him awindan of*

>   *þæs cyne-gerelan   claða gehwilcne*

>   *and him ðonne oftion   ðara ðegnunga*

>   *and þæs anwaldes   ðe he her hæfde,*

>   *ðonne meaht ðu gesion   þæt he bið swiðe gelic*

>   *sumum ðara gumena   þe him geornost nu*

>   *mid ðegnungum   ðringað ymbeutan…*

'strip from him each of those kingly clothes and take from

him the service and power which he had here. Then you

could see that he is very like some of those men who now

eagerly throng round him in service…'

(ll.22-5)

In a common scriptural image of judgement, God will 'strip […] naked'

his disobedient people, and those once proudly 'clothed with fine linen'

will see these 'great riches come to nought'.[86] Mirroring this, Alfred uses

the clothes of these kings who displayed *ofermod* to represent their

perceived honour; although once elevated in wondrous attire, God will

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[86] Hosea 2.3, Revelation 18.16-7.

'strip' all this away from them, humiliating them. Discenza argues *OEB* assumes a more flexible hierarchy of beings than *DCP*, by which wiser, more virtuous humans 'may approach the divine'.[87] Nevertheless, she concedes that all humans remain fundamentally on the 'lower' (mortal) level of Creation, unable to reach 'higher' (divine) 'pure intelligence'.[88] Hence these kings who presume themselves to be far greater than others must eventually be revealed as 'very like' their subjects. Thereby, Alfred presents pride as the main enemy of virtuous kingship; when leaders exalt themselves over God, He will punish them.

OEPC

Corrupting Pride: Saul and David

The presumptuousness of elevating oneself and enforcing one's own authoritative way is criticised in *OEPC* too, as Alfred advises his bishops and under-lords on how to rule responsibly. Frequently, Alfred adapts what Leneghan has identified as the three main 'archetypes of medieval kingship' in Anglo-Saxon England: Saul, David and Solomon, the first three kings of Israel.[89] Unlike his predecessors, Solomon does not feature in any narrative account within *OEPC* and so is not used as a positive or negative exemplum of proud or humble kingship; I shall

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[87] Discenza, 'Old English Boethius', p.223.
[88] *Ibid.*, pp.222-3.
[89] Leneghan, *Dynastic Drama*, p.197.

therefore not focus my analysis on him. Notwithstanding, *Salomonn se snottra* 'Solomon the wise' (*OEPC* 1.4, p.40) is, as Faulkner notes, repeatedly cited by Alfred even when Gregory does not name him, so that Alfred can appropriate this respected voice to evidence his own wisdom.[90] This image of the wise king conforms to the archetypal medieval literary uses of Solomon described by Leneghan – making it highly likely that Alfred was aware of how Old Testament models were popularly understood in his own time.[91] Therefore, it is significant when Alfred chooses to present Saul and David differently from their archetypes. Leneghan argues David frequently symbolised 'mildness and clemency' and 'martial strength' to Anglo-Saxons.[92] Meanwhile Saul, though also a 'warrior king', primarily exemplified the charismatic but morally flawed leader.[93] Yet as Schreiber observes, in *OEPC* 1.3 (pp.38-40) Alfred vastly expands upon *RP* 1.3 (p.14) to emphasise both Saul's and David's pride and other consequential sins.[94] Indeed, by examining each in turn we shall see that throughout *OEPC* both kings are primarily used to exemplify the dangers of pride in a leader.

As with the corrupted leaders of *OEB*, in *OEPC* 1.3 and 2.17 Saul's *ofermod* (again translating the Latin *superbia* (*RP* 1.3 and 2.6)) is repeatedly emphasised:

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[90] Faulkner, 'Royal Authority', p.129.
[91] Leneghan, *Dynastic Drama*, p.197.
[92] *Ibid.*, pp.197, 212.
[93] *Ibid.*, pp.197, 211.
[94] Schreiber, '*Searoðonca Hord*', p.188.

Sua sua Sawl Israhela kyning ðurh

eaðmodnesse he geearnode ðæt rice, ond for

ðæs rices heanesse him weoxon ofermetto.

For eaðmodnesse he wæs ahæfen ofer oðre

menn, ond for ofermettum he wæs aworpen.

Dryhten ðæt gecyðde ða ða he cuæð: 'Ða ðu ðe

selfum ðuhtest unwenlic, ða ic ðe gesette eallum

Israhelum to heafde.' […] Forðy he ongeat ðæt

he ma meahte ðonne ænig oðer, ða wende he

ðæt he eac mara wære. […] Sua oft ðonne ðæt

mod aðint on ofermettum for ðære menige ðæs

folces ðe him underðied bið, hit bið

gewemmed mid ðæs anwaldes heanesse…

'Just so, Saul the king of Israel earnt that kingdom

through humility, and because of that kingdom's

exaltation, arrogance grew in him. For humility he was

raised over other men, and for arrogance he was cast out.

The Lord made that known when He said: 'When you

thought yourself unpromising, then I set you at the head of

all Israel.' […] Since he understood that he could do more

than any other, he then supposed that he was greater too.

[…] So often, when the mind has swollen in arrogance

because of the many people beneath it, it becomes

stained through the exaltation of that power…'

(2.17, p.122)

Contrary to the usual Old English presentation of Saul, there is no mention of his mediating charisma or military strength; he is purely an example of morally-lacking rulership. This is partially due to the translation's accuracy to the source text. But even so, it is striking that Alfred presents Saul in such an unequivocally negative light. Earlier we examined Nokes and Swaim's argument that when Alfred discusses Theoderic, the audience is likely to 'equate one king with another'. This is even truer when Alfred discusses Saul, in whom Alfred reflects his own kingship (examined below). Unlike Theoderic, Saul is not first praised as a positive exemplum. While he is said to have once ruled 'through humility', this serves mainly to highlight his later antonymous *oferm[od]* for which 'he was cast out'. Although he initially reigned through both theocratic authority (God 'set him' in power) and elective kingship (he received the people's 'exaltation'), no details of his former great, humble conduct are given. Consequently, he cannot be used as a positive leadership example.

Soon Saul becomes 'swollen [*aðint*] in arrogance'. *Aðindan* is only attested in *OEPC*, always in connection with pride.[95] It represents how this vice grows, gradually obscuring one's good conduct. Because of this misuse of authority, Samuel exposes Saul's vices *beforan ðam folce* 'before the people' (1.3, p.38), costing Saul their legitimising elective support. Additionally, God withdraws Saul's theocratic authority.

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[95] Healey et al., *Dictionary of Old English Web Corpus*, Simple Search, 'aðin'.

Like the rulers displaying *ofermod* in *OEB* Meter 25 (discussed above),

Saul believed 'he was greater' than other humans and above

Discenza's 'lower' mortal level, effectively deifying himself. Hence God

deposes him, as we have seen God do to other overly proud rulers in

Alfred's *Psalms* and *OEB*. Again, Orton's afore-cited conclusion that

'royal adherence to God's laws ensure governmental stability' is proven

to be applicable to kingship throughout Alfred's literature. As

Theoderic's disobedience led to rebellion, so Saul's disobedience leads

to his downfall which leaves the nation's kingship in question. Thus,

Alfred highlights to his bishops and under-lords the danger that praise

and pride pose for a leader: they can cause him to rule for himself

rather than for God and the people, thereby endangering the whole

kingdom.

Saul's successor is presented as little better. As previously

mentioned, Orton argues that in the Old English *Psalms* Alfred identifies

himself in David and his humility. In *OEPC*, one would expect Alfred to

likewise present himself through David as an ideal Christian king. Yet

diverging from conventionality, *OEPC* highlights David's faults more

than his virtues:

> *Sua ac Dauit […] wæs mid ofermettum*
>
> *gewundad, ond ðæt suiðe wælhreowlice*
>
> *gecyðde on Urias slæge his agenes holdes*
>
> *ðegnes, for ðære scamleaselecan gewilnunge*
>
> *his wifes.*

'So too David was wounded by pride, and that very cruelly

made itself known through the slaying of Uriah, his own

loyal retainer, out of shameless lust for his wife.'

(1.3, p.38)

Leneghan explains how the Anglo-Saxons followed 'biblical tradition' in

interpreting 'earthly kingdoms' as imperfect representations of 'the

heavenly kingdom', with even David and Solomon being only 'imperfect

types of Christ'.[96] 'Imperfect' is an immense understatement of David's

kingship in *OEPC*: far from being Christ-like, David's pride, and

consequent other sins, are (as Schreiber commented) much more

detailed than in *RP* (1.3, p.16). Introduced in direct comparison to Saul,

'so too David […] was wounded by pride'. Gregory vaguely reports that

David *in tumorem vulneris eruptit* 'broke out in a swelling wound' (*RP*

1.3, p.16), but does not interpret this growing physical impairment as a

symbol of David's spiritual impairment (pride). This pride then breeds

further vices, as it 'made itself known' through murder and adultery.

Neither Gregory nor Scripture blame pride as the root cause of these

other sins.[97] Moreover, Gregory's juxtaposition between David's

crudeliter rigidus 'cruelly hard' pursuit of murder and *enerviter fluxus*

'weakly soft' resistance to lust (*RP* 1.3, p.16) establishes a mocking

tone, but one less severely critical than Alfred's talk of 'very cruel'

murder and 'shameless lust'. Through this Alfred voices a much more

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[96] Leneghan, *Dynastic Drama*, p.199.
[97] For the Scriptural account of David's sin, see 2 Samuel 11-12.

serious stance against pride, warning his bishops and under-lords that this transgression easily develops into many others.

Despite this focus on David's pride, Alfed also includes more detail on his former virtuous deeds than he does for Saul – probably owing to the common understandings of David as an exemplary leader mentioned above by Leneghan and Orton. Notwithstanding, the contrast renders David's story much more tragic than Saul's, as the audience is shown just how far he falls spiritually. Where Gregory briefly comments that David *prius quippe ferire deprehensum persecutorem noluit* 'previously indeed would not strike his persecutor [Saul] at unawares' (*RP* 1.3, p.16), Alfred elaborates on how David,

> *forbær ðæt he ðone kyning ne yfelode, ðe*
>
> *hine on sua heardum wræce gebrohte, ond*
>
> *of his earde adræfde, ða he his wel geweald*
>
> *ahte on ðæm scræfe…*

'refrained from doing harm to the king, who had brought him into such hard exile and driven him from his land, when he had him well within his power in that cave…' (*OEPC* 1.3, p.40)

One of Alfred's purposes here is to argue that any divinely-ordained king deserves his subjects' support, as shall be discussed presently. But he is also offering a clear example of how David *monegum yfelum wið hine selfne forwohtum ær gearode* 'previously forgave many evils

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committed against him' (pp.38-40). While this aligns with the typical meek and merciful Davidic archetype identified by Leneghan, as shown *OEPC*'s David does not retain this image. His former mercy is contrasted with his becoming *grædig ðæs godan deaþes* 'greedy for the good man's [Uriah's] death' (p.40). He thereby turns against his subjects, forsaking any Kritschian elective legitimacy. Alfred also adds that *sio scyld hine suiðe feorr of ealra haligra rime atuge* 'that sin would have drawn him very far away from the company of all the saints'. David's threatened exile from the Saints' Communion demonstrates God's disapproval, thus reducing his theocratic authority. With Theoderic, Alfred first identifies with his good kingship traits then distances himself from his faults. Saul's former virtues are only mentioned vaguely to highlight his wrongdoings. David is handled differently from either of these: his good traits are expanded upon, but only after his vices are, by which point it is too risky for Alfred to identify with him. Besides, like Boethius David was famous for resisting a king's authority. Hence Alfred uses David not as a model template like Leneghan or Orton would expect, but as a grievous example of undelivered leadership potential. Through pride, David's virtues were transformed into selfish cruelty and abuse of retainers.

That said, David also serves as an example of how those leaders who have strayed from their God-given duties can return to them. Where Gregory claims David was forgiven by God after his *flagella* 'scourging' (*RP* 1.3, p.16), Alfred ascribes this redemption to David's *gesuinc ond ða earfeðu* 'labours and hardships' (*OEPC* 1.3,

p.40). While both writers agree that a leader who has mis-stepped through pride must be punished by God in some way, Alfred additionally argues that that leader must intentionally 'labour' to do better. Through this, Alfred encourages his bishops or under-lords to repent of any sins and actively seek to please God and the people, so that God will forgive them and return their theocratic authority. Moreover, following Leneghan's argument that David was commonly used to represent 'imperfect' messianic rulership, by detailing both his vices and his virtues Alfred acknowledges that even the best of kings will make mistakes but can always improve. This implies a self-awareness of the times when Alfred too has been misled by pride, and a renewed pledge to do better through his future 'labours' for his people.

Divinely-Anointed Kingship: Alfred and Saul

I make the above argument on Alfred's presentation of his own humble, toiling leadership style based on how the arguments of *OEPC* reflect his thoughts and beliefs regarding leadership, not on any assumption that Alfred autobiographically identifies with David. Orton contends that Alfred does commonly represent himself in David, given the similarities between the biblical narrative of David and Asser's biography of Alfred: both kings came to power after their elder siblings were passed over, and both could have usurped the previous king's position (Alfred from his brother Æthelred and David from Saul) but instead 'waited for God's

permission'.[98] However, in Alfred's day anyone of royal descent could become king without necessarily having the most direct primogenitive right.[99] Hence his succession was not unusual and not necessarily inspired by David. Rather, in *OEPC* Alfred's language more transparently compares himself to Saul. We saw earlier how Asser highlights Alfred's fears when he was made king. Saul similarly began his reign unconfidently, as he *tealde hine selfne his suiðe unwierðne* 'counted himself very unworthy of it [the throne]' (*OEPC* 1.3, p.38). Moreover, although *OEPC* rarely uses the term *kyning/cyning*, it always does so when referring to *Ælfred kyning* 'King Alfred' (Verse Prologue, 1.11, and Epistolary Preface, p.4; see also *OEB* Prose 1, l.1 and Verse Preface, ll.1-2) or *Saul se cyning* 'Saul the king' (1.3, p.38; also p.40 and 2.17, p.122), but not in reference to David. Even Christ is not described as the supreme *an cyning* as in *OEB*; rather, *Ða weorðmynde cynhades he fleah* '[Christ] fled from the worship of kingship' (1.3, p.36). Surprisingly, Alfred's diction invites his audience to associate Saul – the proud king who abused his people's trust – with himself. But by so doing, Alfred also highlights to his bishops and under-lords that he is, like Saul, a king chosen by God to be 'set […] at the head' of his people. We saw earlier that, as per Nokes and Swaim's arguments, *OEB*'s handling of Theoderic 'strengthens [Alfred's] claim as a legitimate king' by avoiding 'being identified with a wicked or incompetent king'. In *OEPC*, Alfred 'strengthens his claim' simply by

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[98] Orton, 'Royal Piety', p.483.
[99] Kritsch, 'Fragments and Reflexes', p.175.

identifying with God's anointed ruler. We see this in another change

from *RP*:

> …*nam cum praepositis delinquimus, eius*
>
> *ordini qui eos nobis praetulit obuiamus*…

'…for when we offend those set over us, we oppose

the ordinance of Him who set them above us…'

(*RP* 3.4, p.150)

> …*forðæm ðonne we agyltað wið ða hlafordas,*
>
> *ðonne agylte we wið þone God ðe*
>
> *hlafordscipe gescop*…

'…for when we sin against our lords, we sin against the

God who created authority…'

(*OEPC* 3.28, p.212)

As Schreiber argues, this change more clearly asserts that '*hlafordscipe*

(lit. 'lordship') should not be opposed, because it was created by

God'.[100] Alfred further suggests this when he emphasises how David

'refrained from doing harm to the king [Saul]' despite his misdeeds, as

cited above. Whereas in *OEB* we saw Alfred suggest Boethius was right

to rebel against Theoderic after he became corrupted by pride, in

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[100] Schreiber, '*Searoðonca Hord*', p.188.

OEPC he stresses that all kings are appointed by God and ought therefore to be obeyed. It is up to God to 'cast out' arrogant or unfaithful rulers like Saul – something I shall address in Chapter 2.

Although we can only speculate as to why these texts differ on this matter, I believe the historical context offers a clue. As my Introduction explained, early in Alfred's reign he likely feared that some of his subjects would give their support to the Viking rulers in Britain. While this was less of a danger by the time *OEPC* was composed in the late 880s (when the Vikings had been temporarily expelled from Alfred's kingdom), as noted Alfred still expresses concern in the Epistolary Preface that the 'stillness' would end and the Vikings would return – likely awakening these old fears of his subjects' betrayal. To discourage such treachery, Alfred compares himself with a biblical king (even one as faulted as Saul) to remind the *Angelcynn*'s ecclesiastical and secular leaders that he is God's chosen representative and therefore worthy of their support.

Meanwhile, *OEB* was likely composed after the Great Army's invasion in 892. Rather than exacerbating Alfred's anxieties, Keynes explains that the reality of renewed conflict appears to have united the English and Welsh against their common pagan enemy.[101] Consequently, Alfred uses the example of 'righteous' Boethius against heretic Theoderic to encourage his people living within Viking-held

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[101] Keynes, 'Kingdom of the Anglo-Saxons', p.39.

territory to rebel against these proud rulers and instead support God's

elected ruler: himself.[102]

Nevertheless, while Alfred utilizes Saul's status as a divinely-

ordained king, as with his handling of Theoderic he is careful to

distance himself from Saul's wrongdoings. Whereas Saul failed to

prioritise the people's will over his own, Alfred had the continued

support of his *witan.*[103] As Kritsch explains, this council purportedly

represented the elective support of the people.[104] This would have been

well-known to Alfred's bishops and under-lords, who therefore could not

see Saul's pride or self-deification in their own king. Hence Alfred was

able to identify with Saul's initial theocratic authority without risk to his

elective kingship. Yet as for correct kingly conduct, we shall now see

that Alfred finds humbler scriptural models in which to reflect himself.

Humble Leadership

As Schreiber argues, Alfred's purpose in expanding *RP*'s account of

Saul and David was to demonstrate that 'an important qualification for

the right exertion of power is humility'.[105] Indeed, we have seen Alfred

criticise both kings' pride. He then supplements this lesson further

through several biblical examples of the inverse, humble approach to

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[102] For further evidence as to how Alfred represents the Vikings and un-Christian rulership in Theoderic, see Chapter 2.
[103] Richard Abels, *Alfred the Great: War, Kingship and Culture in Anglo-Saxon England* (New York: Longman, 1998), p.135.
[104] Kritsch, 'Fragments and Reflexes', pp.175-6.
[105] Schreiber, '*Searoðonca Hord*', p.188.

leadership. As previously cited, immediately before 1.3's description of Saul and David's self-important approaches to kingship, Christ 'fled from the worship of kingship'. This may reflect the scriptural description of how Christ,

> Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men […] He humbled himself…[106]

He knew He was worthy of being exalted as God and King, but instead chose to live humbly as one of His people ('in the likeness of men'). In contrast to Christ and Peter, Saul presumptuously assumes himself 'to be equal with God' or at least 'greater' than the common people (as discussed). Returning to Discenza's study of hierarchy in *OEB*, while Alfred did believe humans could 'approach the divine', this ascension comes through virtue not pride. Concordantly, whereas *OEPC* presents Christ as a 'higher' (divine) being who makes himself 'lower' (human), Saul is lower but pretends to be higher. While *OEB* uses God as a model of perfect sovereign rulership, *OEPC* uses the God Incarnate as a model of perfect selfless humility in a leader. This is followed by other New Testament leaders: soon after Saul's purported claim to be

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[106] Philippians 2.6-8.

'greater', Cornelius bows to Peter and the apostle protests, *ne iom ic monn sua ilce sua ðu?* 'Am I not a man just as you are?' (2.17, p.124). Unlike Saul, Peter recognises that even leaders are mere lower beings. Thereby, *OEPC* establishes two general opposing forms of leadership, which I shall term pre-messianic and post-messianic (based on Alfred's Christian perspective that Christ is the Messiah). The pre-messianic type describes Old Testament leaders who came before Christ, or pagan leaders such as the Vikings who do not yet know Christ's leadership model and therefore cannot follow it. All these leaders are shown to follow pride and serve themselves. The post-messianic type describes New Testament or later Christian leaders; these follow Christ's model of humility. While generally-speaking the Anglo-Saxons may have respected David for his humility (as we saw Orton argue) and both Saul and David as military leaders (as reflected in Leneghan's archetypes), *OEPC* does not show any of this. Instead the text categorises both as pre-messianic kings, and focuses on what was wrong with leadership without Christ's example. Hence 2.17 transitions from such Old Testament leaders like Noah, Lucifer and Saul (pp.118-122) to New Testament Christ, Paul and Peter (pp.124-134), highlighting how Christ's servant-king example changes a leader's responsibilities.

As another post-messianic leader, Alfred indicates that he too follows Christ's humble example. Notably, while Alfred refers to himself as *kyning* (with no demonstrative), in *OEPC* Saul is always *se kyning*. Perhaps this difference exists because Alfred's realm was split between

two kings: himself and Guthrum. Yet elsewhere Alfred does not credit

Guthrum as a legitimate king (see pp.23-4). A more plausible

explanation is that although Alfred identifies with Saul as God's chosen

leader of his people, unlike Saul Alfred lives in the post-messianic age

of Christ – *OEB*'s 'One King' – and is not the definitive ruler. Writing on

2.17, Faulkner argues that by frequently voicing Christ's words 'in the

first person' (and also the apostles', discussed below), Alfred 'bolsters

the king's authority, under the guise of an expression of humility'.[107]

Indeed, by channelling Christ's voice Alfred presents himself as the king

entasked by the 'One King' (in *OEB*'s terms) to carry His authoritative

word to the people. But as with *OEB* and Alfred's law codes, and

contrary to Wormald's afore-cited interpretations of traditional Anglo-

Saxon kingship, this does not justify the king arrogantly enforcing his

own laws or agenda; David's crimes against Uriah and his wife have

already criticised such an independent rulership approach. Rather,

Alfred's main purpose in appropriating the voices of Christ and His

apostles is to align himself with their humble approach to leadership,

ruling beneath God but not overly exalting himself above the

commoners. This contrasts with the arrogant, self-willed kingship of

David and Saul, whom *OEPC*'s persona never voices. By this, Alfred

argues that he and his office-holders beneath him should move away

from traditional heroic models of proud overlordship, and instead seek

to lead and care for their people with Christ-like humility.

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[107] Faulkner, 'Royal Authority', p.131.

This post-messianic leadership approach is further illustrated through *OEPC* 2.17's presentation of the apostles:

> *Ne sint we nane waldendas eowres*
>
> *geleafan, ac sint fultemend eowres gefean.*
>
> 'We are not rulers of your faith, but are helpers of your joy.'
>
> (Paul, p.124)

> *Ne sint we nane waldendas ðisses folces,*
>
> *ac we sint to bisene gesette urre heorde.*
>
> 'We are not rulers of this people, but we are set as an
>
> example to our flock.'
>
> (Peter, p.128)

Peter's words as reported here are remarkably similar to 1.3's claim that Christ refused earthly kingship in order to *us ða bisene astellan, ðæt we his to suiðe ne gitseden* 'set us an example that we do not covet [rulership] too greatly' (p.36). *RP* does argue that Christ fled kingship to *per conversationem docerat, exemplum se sequentibus præbens* 'teach us by His conduct, offering Himself as an exemplum for those who come after Him' (1.3, p.14). But it is Alfred who specifies that this example was set to other leaders, and that they should not 'covet' their position for the honour it brings themselves. Thereby, Alfred adapts his source to emphasise how Christ set an example of humility

to His chosen leaders (ecclesiastical and secular), who in turn must set an example of righteous living to their 'flock', the people.

This humility requirement is particularly notable in the leadership terms used by the apostles. In both Peter and Paul's purported words, Alfred replaces Gregory's verb *dominare* 'to be in control of' (*RP* 2.6, pp.80, 84) with the titular noun *waldendas* 'rulers'. Through the apostles' appropriated voices, Alfred argues leaders should not adopt this title. Alfred avoids doing so himself: as noted above in comparison to Saul, his literature always refers to himself as *kyning* 'king'. While *kyning* bespeaks authority, it does not boast of it nor exploit this power over the people. Meanwhile *waldend* has a literal, transparent meaning of 'wielder [of power]', or 'one who exercises power over persons or things, a controller, master'.[108] This indicates a firmer control over the people and their freedom. *Waldend* is most frequently used 'in reference to God', making human rulers who style themselves as such sound self-idolatrous.[109] In accordance with Schreiber's argument, this nuance in terminology ironically implies that the one most qualified to wield power is the one who in humility is least desiring to use it. As *kyning* Alfred does not advertise the power he wields, but like the apostles rules only to be 'an example to [his] flock' and 'helper of their joy'. In this, he argues that post-messianic leaders should not seek to raise their own power and honour like Saul and David did, but should

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[108] *Oxford English Dictionary*, 'waldend, n.' (Oxford University Press, July 2023) <https://www.oed.com/dictionary/waldend_n?tab=meaning_and_use> [accessed 10th August 2023]; Bosworth, *Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, 'wealdend', Sense I.
[109] *Oxford English Dictionary*, 'waldend, n.'.

humbly prioritise their people's happiness and spiritual progression (as *Sawl se cyning* was originally entasked to do for his own people). This is further suggested through another important alteration to Gregory's text, this time purporting to be Christ's words:

> …*principes gentium dominantur eorum, et*
>
> *qui majores sunt, potestatem exercent in eos.*
>
> *Non ita erit inter vos.*
>
> '…the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are greater exercise authority upon them. It shall not be so among you'.
> (*RP* 2.6, p.84)

> …*ðioda kyningas bioð ðæs folces waldendas,*
>
> *ond ða ðe ðone anwald begað, hi beoð*
>
> *hlafordas gehatene; ne sint hit ðonne na sua*
>
> *betweoxon eow,*
>
> '…the kings [*kyningas*] of the nations are those people's power-wielders [*waldendas*], and those who turn that power are called lords [*hlafordas*]; it shall not be so among you'.
> (*OEPC* 2.17, p.128)

Gregory is critical of the use of power over others – of those who *dominatur* 'exercise dominion over' their subjects. Alfred similarly

criticises the *kyningas* who proudly make themselves *waldendas*, yet

again turning Gregory's verb phrase into a title. Faulkner believes this

nominalisation and vocabulary changes are there to avoid 'the

implication of immoral subjugation that is present in the Latin', while the

hlafordas clause serves 'as a reminder that *only* kings and lords are

entitled to such authority' (Faulkner's emphasis); together this justifies

Alfred's royal status.[110] However, as I clarified above, Alfred justifies

royal authority only so long as it is used for the people and according to

Christ's humble model. Regarding this passage, I do not agree that

Alfred is representing himself in the *waldendas* or *hlafordas*: his tone is

critical of these, as he warns his bishops and under-lords not to follow

their example. He does not criticise the authority of the *kyningas*; as

noted, Alfred identifies with this title himself, and argues such authority

is necessary for the people's spiritual benefit. But he takes issue with

how many kings use this power to grant themselves new honour and

status, symbolised in the two new titles they arrogantly adopt.

Throughout the Anglo-Saxon period, the primary political understanding

of *hlaford* appears to have been 'ruler/sovereign/governor' over

others.[111] While it may occasionally refer to divinely-appointed rulership

(as Schreiber notes on *OEPC* 3.28, cited above) and general

governance of the people, Pratt explains that the term usually signifies

heroic war-lordship exercised over one's retainers.[112] Apparently *hlaford*

came to denote honour based on the use of power over others, for

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[110] Faulkner, 'Royal Authority', p.131.
[111] *D.O.E.*, 'hlāford', Sense 3a.
[112] Pratt, *Political Thought*, p.29.

better or worse. Nelson argues *hlafordscipe* and *ealdordom* are Alfred's 'preferred terms' for royal authority, used 'to construct an authority distinct from, and higher than, *anweald* – earthly power'.[113] But as mentioned, the only title Alfred uses self-referentially is *kyning*. Here, *hlafordas* and *waldendas* are both nominalised titles added to the source in place of *RP*'s verb phrases, representing how prideful leaders bestow new honours upon themselves as they boast of their power. Rather than seeking praise as a war-lord or independent thinker like the traditional early-medieval kings we saw Wormald describe, Alfred consistently rejects such heroic titles and instead seeks recognition as the people's spiritual leader and protector of their joy. He uses comparably humble terms for his addressees, mentioned in my Introduction: *ealdormon* (a descriptive term for one with authority, but not boasting of nor outwardly referring to this authority) and *lareow* 'teacher' (signifying power used for the people's educational benefit). While I agree with Nelson that *ealdordom/ealdormon* is a favourite term of Alfred's, it generally refers to the sub-leaders he addresses. In any case, contrary to Nelson's claims, Alfred clearly rejects any 'higher' unearthly power; through both our texts, we have seen him criticise such self-deification. Rather, his carefully-selected diction indicates that post-messianic leaders should not honour themselves with additional titles boasting of their power, but humbly care for their people.

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[113] Janet Nelson, 'Power and Authority at the Court of Alfred', in *Essays on Anglo-Saxon and Related Themes in Memory of Lynne Grundy*, ed. Jane Roberts and Janet Nelson (London: Centre for Late Antique and Medieval Studies, 2000), pp.311-37 (p.332).

Chapter 1 Conclusions

Throughout *OEB* and *OEPC*, Alfred demonstrates a consistent concern for a leader's pride. Whereas traditional Anglo-Saxon kings presented themselves as independently-authoritative, strong-minded war-leaders, Alfred associates such traits with un-Christian or Old Testament kings. Instead, Alfred promotes a new, post-messianic form of kingship. In *OEB*, he emphasises the king's role to humbly uphold God's laws for the people rather than enforcing his own; by this he appeals to his subjects to recognise his God-given authority over them. *OEPC* further grounds this leadership style in New Testament examples to show Alfred's ecclesiastical and secular office-holders how to guide their people in selfless humility.

Chapter 2:

Giving, Commanding and Disciplining

One important mark of Alfred's reformed, post-messianic depiction of leadership is that, as noted, it always seeks the people's benefit. This means not simply commanding others like Wormald's traditional strong-willed kings; from what we have seen so far, it is clear that both *OEB* and *OEPC* are suspicious of such dominating rulers. Rather, Alfred emphasises the king's duty to provide for and protect the people, and not to lord over them. Various older literary representations also suggest a lord (or *goldwine* 'gold-friend, generous lord') should give to his retainers.[114] Yet in the context of these texts, this giving was usually either in reward for a retainer's good service or to the lord's select group of heroic warriors or court servants (or in the case of *Judith*, used ironically). In Wormald's words, for traditional Germanic kingship 'royal power was based on the ability to attract heavily armed warriors, and thus on the capacity to reward them with treasure and land'.[115] Again, how historically accurate these literary representations are is less significant to this discussion, in which I focus on how kingship was

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[114] E.g. see *Beowulf*, ll.1170, 1476, 1602, 2419, 2583; *Judith*, in *Cambridge Old English Reader*, ed. Marsden, pp.183-99 (l.22); *The Wanderer*, in *ibid.*, pp.375-82 (ll.22, 35). Although the dating of *Beowulf* remains debatable, Leneghan believes it to have 'originated in […] the late-seventh or early-eighth century' (*Dynastic Drama*, p.6). Leneghan's reasoning is sound, so I shall henceforth assume a pre-Alfredian date for *Beowulf*'s composition.

Also see *Maxims II*, in *Cambridge Old English Reader*, ed. Marsden, pp.344-49 (ll.14-5, 28-9).
[115] Wormald, 'Celtic and Anglo-Saxon Kingship', p.153.

popularly presented. Alfred's post-messianic model differs from his literary predecessors: the king should give to the whole nation out of unmerited love for them and devotion to God, not just to warriors in payment of service. However, whereas *OEB* views giving and commanding as mutually exclusive, *OEPC* highlights situations when it is right for a king to command or discipline his subjects.

<div align="center">The Provider King: <i>Mod</i></div>

A template of generous kingship is sketched by *Mod* in *OEB* Prose 9. Continuing the post-messianic model of *OEPC*'s apostolic leaders discussed in Chapter 1, *Mod* rules humbly by God and for the people. Brooks describes Prose 9 as 'a substantial expansion […] from the Latin'.[116] Indeed, while the equivalent passage in *DCP* (2.6-7) mentions the *dignitatibus potentiaque* 'honour and power' (2.6 p.208) of men like Boethius, it does not specify kings (save briefly, as the *reges* whom the Romans deposed (p.208)) nor mention these powerful men's responsibilities to their people. In contrast, *Mod* details how a *cyning* 'king' should conduct himself:

> *…nan mon ne mæg nænne cræft cyðan ne*
>
> *nænne anwald reccan ne stioran butan*
>
> *tolum and andweorce […] Þæt bið þonne*

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[116] Britton Brooks, 'Intimacy, Interdependence, and Interiority in the Old English Prose Boethius', *Neophilologus* 102:4 (2018), 525-542 (p.531).

cyninges andweorc and his tol mid to

ricsianne þæt he hæbbe his lond fullmonnad.

He sceal habban gebedmen and ferdmen

and weorcmen. […] [B]utan þissan tolan

nan cyning his cræft ne mæg cyðan. […]

[H]e habban sceal to ðæm tolum þæm þrim

geferscipum biwiste […] land to bugianne

and gifa and wæpnu and mete and ealu and

claþas, and gehwæt þæs ðe þa þre

geferscipas behofigen. Ne mæg he […]

buton þisum tolum nan þara þinga wyrcan

þe him beboden is to wyrcenne.

'No one can make known any skill nor rule or steer any power without tools and material […] That is the king's material and his tool to rule with: that he has his land fully manned. He must have clergymen, fighting men and workers […] Without these tools no king can make known his skill […] He must have sustenance for those tools, those three estates […] land to inhabit and gifts and weapons and food and ale and clothes, and whatever those three estates need. Nor can he […] without these tools do any of the things which he is commanded to do.'

(Prose 9, ll.8-19)

This focus on a king's duties is why, as stated in my Introduction, I believe *Mod* to be representative of Alfred; as Godden argues, this alteration from *DCP* evidences Alfred's royal voice, 'as if the king is suddenly allowed to speak for his side'.[117] Crucially, this voice is noticeable only when it speaks up for his subjects: *Mod* describes the king's principal responsibility as to provide 'sustenance for […] the three estates'. Mohl explains that the popular Three Estates Model of later medieval literature, to which Alfredian images form a precursor, represents all society within three essential, co-dependent roles.[118] Hence when *Mod* outlines the king's dependence upon the 'clergymen, fighting men and workers', he is symbolically acknowledging his duty towards all society: a king must provide all his people with 'whatever [they] need'. This is not entirely separate from the traditional Anglo-Saxon kingship archetype: as *Mod* argues a king must provide 'land' and 'gifts' in order to keep his realm 'fully manned', so we saw Wormald argue that a king's power depends upon his warriors whom he rewards with 'treasure and land'. But to Alfred, a king should not only reward his 'fighting men' but provide for the basic needs – the 'weapons' (symbolising protection), 'food' and 'clothes' – of all three estates, regardless of whether they have earnt any reward.

  Mod's description also reflects a king's theocratic authority. He argues a king needs royal power to achieve 'the things which he is

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[117] Malcolm Godden, 'The player king: Identification and self-representation in King Alfred's writings', in *Alfred the Great: Papers from the Eleventh-Centenary Conferences*, ed. Timothy Reuter (Farnham: Ashgate 2003), pp.137–150 (p.144).
[118] Ruth Mohl, *The Three Estates in Medieval and Renaissance Literature*, 1933 (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing, 1962), pp.5-9.

commanded to do'. In common early-medieval thought (largely

influenced by Pseudo-Dionysius), all commands ultimately originate in

God.[119] As my Introduction explains, God is likely represented in *OEB*'s

Wisdom, to whom *Mod* is here responding. We also observed in

Chapter 1 the scriptural parallels in the preceding Prose 8, which

indicate that all power comes from God. Hence it must be God who

þone anwald [...] me befæst 'entrusted that power to [*Mod*]' (l.7). This

underscores the God-given authority of kingship. Moreover, *Mod*

believes that using this power to provide for his people is how he shall

'rule and steer' the nation – imitating how God *eallum stiorde and*

racode 'steered and ruled everything' (Prose 21, l.133). To *Mod*,

following God's example in providing for his people's needs is God's

orders for all kings.

For Alfred, amending his source to emphasise the king's

responsibilities as a giver was politically advantageous: other

contemporary sources build his reputation as one who meets this God-

given mandate. *Mod* alludes to his pre-existing reputation as a

generous provider of land, weapons (symbolising protection) and food.

Keynes and Lapidge cite three near-contemporary written sources

(Asser's *Life*, the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicles* and the *Burghal Hidage*) for

Alfred's mass building project of halls, cities and *burhs* across

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[119] John Marenbon and D.E. Luscombe, 'Two Medieval Ideas: Eternity and Hierarchy', in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Philosophy*, ed. A.S. McGrade (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp.51-72 (pp.60-5); Pseudo-Dionysius, 'The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy', trans. Colm Luibheid, in *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, ed. Luibheid (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), pp.193-259 (pp.195-6).

England.[120] By commissioning this, Alfred protected the people of Wessex and their lands. He further protected the people of London in 886 by refortifying their city before the Vikings arrived.[121] Asser reports how he fed his people through the 'distribution of alms […] showing immense and incomparable generosity to all men'.[122] Admittedly, as Abels explains, Asser presented an ideal hagiographical image of the 'perfect Christian king', which was likely exaggerated from the 'real' Alfred.[123] However, Abels also notes that Alfred 'wished to be seen' according to this ideal – both a 'victorious war-leader' like Wormald describes and a wise Christian king.[124] This is shown in Alfred's translations too, which influenced Asser's account.[125] As explained in my Introduction, these translations were written to educate all *Angelcynn*, and *OEB* particularly targeted the commoners to whom it was read aloud. Thus regardless of the authenticity of Alfred's ascribed actions, his contemporary literature shapes his public image as a generous leader who provides for all his people. In this Alfred begins the transition of kingship expectations from the traditional war-leader to the post-messianic humble giver and protector. This dual image was published to the people so that they would be reminded, through *Mod*'s depiction of generous kingship, of all that Alfred has (purportedly) done for them in war and provision that makes him worthy of their support.

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[120] Keynes and Lapidge, 'Introduction', p.24.
[121] Keynes, 'Kingdom of the Anglo-Saxons', pp.22-3.
[122] Asser, *Life*, pp.86-8.
[123] Abels, *War, Kingship and Culture*, p.326.
[124] *Ibid.*
[125] *Ibid.*, p.324.

Samuel Masters
University of Nottingham, Student ID 20130512.
ENGL4310

The Destructive King: Nero and the Vikings

To strengthen this positive self-depiction, the surrounding passages of
OEB include contrasting negative examples of kingship: kings who take
rather than give. *Mod* differentiates between his selfless leadership
style and rulers who crave *eorðlican anwealdes* 'earthly power' or
eorðlican rices 'earthly rulership' for themselves (Prose 9, ll.3-5). Since
we have established that *Mod* (representing Alfred) believes all kings
are 'entrusted with' power by God for the sake of providing for the
people, we may deduce that inverting this duty and hoarding power for
oneself is an abuse of this divinely-commissioned authority. Above we
saw *Mod* argue a king cannot 'rule or steer any power without tools and
material', referring to the 'three estates' which work and defend his
land. Not only does a king's authority depend upon the people's elective
approval (as we saw Kritsch argue); he must also provide for these
'tools' in order to rule efficiently. Hence the king who fails to provide for
his subjects' needs reduces his own power, being unable to 'rule or
steer' the nation. This contrasts with God's steering template cited
above, thereby indicating a divine punishment: God blesses generous
kings like *Mod* with the ability to rule as He rules, but takes this power
away from kings who fail to care for their people.

Earlier, *Wisdom* uses the same diction to describe such rulers
who forget God's sovereign command as *stiorlease men and recelease*
'directionless and reckless men' (Prose 4, l.78). This phrase is altered

from the Latin *nequam homines atque nefarios* 'wicked and evil men'

(*DCP* 1.6, p.170) to complement the ship-steering metaphor and

explicitly contrast with good rulers like *Mod*. Such 'reckless' rulers are

said to trust in *sliðne wyrd* 'cruel Fate' over *Godes geþeahte* 'God's

design' for their power (Prose 4, ll.81-2). But as shown, it is God who

ultimately steers everything, whereas Fate is random and unreliable:

wyrd […] beswicð […] hit gecyð self mid hire hwurfulnesse þæt hio bið

swiðe wancol 'Fate deceives. It shows itself though fickleness to be

very unstable' (Prose 10, ll.14-6). Kings who rule through 'unstable',

unreliable Fate rather than God rule without theocratic authority. This

makes their power illegitimate in Anglo-Saxon thought, meaning it must

eventually fail.

  OEB offers numerous examples of such leaders who fall as a

result of their failure to care for their people as God commands them. I

showed in Chapter 1 how all of Meter 25's arrogant leaders are

deposed, having used their power for their own gain rather than to give.

Similarly, while Theoderic began as a good king who granted the

Roman people their *eald-rihta* 'ancient rights' to land (Meter 1 l.36) –

their 'land to inhabit' as *Mod* later describes – he is less generous after

his arrogance leads him into cruelty. Consequently, his subjects

(Boethius) resist him; although he remains king, his power to command

the people is diminished. Additionally, *OEB* describes several leaders

whose un-Christian beliefs render them illegitimate, destructive, and

ungenerous. Chapter 1 examined Theoderic and Nero's self-deification.

In consequence, Alfred adds to his source that they proceeded to

forslean and forheregian 'destroy and lay waste' to their own and others' lands (Prose 8, ll.12-3). Their heresy or paganism has led them to stop giving and start destroying. Alongside these rulers, *Wisdom* warns that there are some who 'yet do' this plundering. In my Introduction (p.10), I argued this refers to Viking activity in Britain. Godden and Irvine disagree, holding that it is unclear 'whether the author is alluding to kings known to Boethius or those known to his own readers; the reference seems to be to destructive rulers rather than raiding Vikings'.[126] Against this, Nokes and Swaim compare Theoderic's Arianism with 'the evil pagan Danes'.[127] In light of the evidence in both *OEB* and *OEPC*, this seems to be Alfred's more likely intended reference. Firstly, as mentioned Alfred specifies that this destruction is 'yet' happening in his own day, not Boethius'. Secondly, as my Introduction noted, *OEPC* uses the same verb, *forhergod*, in a clear reference to the Vikings. As to Godden and Irvine's differentiation between rulers and raiders, Vikings had begun claiming land in Alfred's realm long before these texts were likely composed, with some of Alfred's subjects submitting to their rule (Introduction, pp.6-7). This makes the Vikings both 'destructive rulers' and raiders, and the most obvious referent of *OEB*'s contemporary plunderers.

Nokes and Swaim are also right to note the Vikings' paganism. As explained in my Introduction, Alfred and Asser consistently present the Vikings as the pagan enemy of Alfred's Christian people.

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[126] Godden and Irvine, 'Commentary', p.308.
[127] Nokes and Swaim, 'Kingship in Alfred's Meters', p.70.

Accordingly, here in *OEB* Prose 8 the Vikings are associated with Theoderic and Nero (to be discussed below), who are infamous for their respective heresy and paganism. Against this depiction of destructive un-Christian rulers who abuse their God-given power, Alfred depicts a *god cyning* 'good king', who was granted power *for his cræftum and for his medemnesse* 'for his skills and for his kindness' (*OEB* Prose 8 ll.26, 30). These 'skills' are, as shown above, subsequently expanded upon by *Mod*: they refer to the successful direction of God-given power over the people, achieved by providing for all of society. As discussed, Alfred has shown himself to be such a generous and kind leader to his people. We also observed in Chapter 1 how *OEB* Meter 11 may reflect Alfred and Guthrum in its distinction between kings who are and are not 'aware of [their] service' to God – further supplementing Alfred's perceived theocratic authority. Thereby, Alfred presents himself as the spiritual leader sent to resist non-Christian aggressors. His public image as a Christian leader – visually enhanced by his procurement of Guthrum's baptism – is the cause of the change Wormald notes (but cannot explain) in Anglo-Saxon kingship expectations. Writing around the time of invasion and disunity, Alfred realised that the most effective way to defeat the Vikings would not be to encourage heroic battle feats and personal exaltation as heroic poetry does, but to unite all *Angelcynn* under his Christian leadership against their common, perceivedly pagan enemy. Hence in *OEB* Alfred represents himself in the Christian *Mod* whilst indicating that the Vikings are the pagan heirs of Nero and Theoderic, who recklessly trust in Fate or ungodly powers.

Wisdom (representing God, as explained) describes these un-Christian and ungenerous rulers as *unweorðost* 'most unworthy' of ruling (Prose 8, l.9), indicating that any theocratic authority they once had has now been lost. Some would argue that as non-Christians, they never had any divine right to rule. However, in Scripture God is frequently said to 'raise up' pagan rulers to punish His rebellious people.[128] As we shall see below, Alfred elsewhere demonstrates an understanding of this theology. Here, we note that while un-Christian rulers are shown to destroy the land, Alfred (*Mod*) provides for the people. Through this portrayal, Alfred appeals to the loyalty of his people who have sided with the Vikings, reassuring them that unlike the Vikings he will maintain his divinely-ordained right to rule by caring for them as God commanded.

Expanding on this negative kingship exemplum, in Meter 9 *Wisdom* recounts the reign of Nero, *Rom-wara cyning* 'king of the Romans' (l.3). As with the proceeding Prose 9, this Meter is heavily expanded from the equivalent source passage (*DCP* 2.6m) and adds the specific mention of kingship. Alfred alters both passages so that his audience will notice the antonymous rulership styles of *Mod* and Nero. Alfred demarcates Nero as the predecessor of his contemporary pagan enemy discussed above – the Vikings – by characterising him through various un-Christian terms: *ærlest* 'cruelty' (l.1), *man and morðor* 'crime and mortal sin' (l.7), *unrihtwis* 'unrighteous' (l.8). Although *OEB* does

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[128] E.g. Isaiah 3.1-26, 8.1-10.

not name Nero as an enemy of Christians specifically, this is assumed

given his established reputation as a persecutor of the Church (which

quickly developed across Christian Europe from the third or fourth

century), and further implied here through his attributed vices.[129]

More importantly for this discussion, even if Alfred does not focus

on how Nero abused the church, he does show how this pagan ruler

abused his subjects in general. Whereas *Mod* provides land and Alfred

built cities, Nero *het him to gamene [...] forbærnan / Romana burig*

'commanded the city of Rome to be burned down, for his entertainment'

(ll.9-11). This is another addition to the Latin. Through it, Alfred stresses

how Nero, instead of giving to his people, destroys their land like the

Vikings and selfishly commands for personal amusement. The phrase

him to gamene is used again describe Nero's sadistic joy when *he*

eorð-cyninges yrmde and cwelmde 'he harmed and killed earthly kings'

(ll.46-7). The repetition underscores how everything Nero does is for

himself, rather than the people's benefit. Through this, Alfred warns

those in authority of the consequences of not caring for their people. As

we have seen above through *Mod*'s teaching, Alfred subsequently

theorises that when a leader fails to provide for his 'tools', he

compromises his own power. In line with this, Nero finds that by taking

away his people's lives and living spaces he burns down his own *eðel-*

stol 'government seat' (l.11) – a symbol of his authority. Remembering

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[129] For this reputation as a persecutor of Christians, and a list of medieval literary examples of this, see William B. Gwyn, 'Cruel Nero: The Concept of the Tyrant and the Image of Nero in Western Political Thought', *History of Political Thought*, 12:3 (1991), 421-55 (p.451).

Kritsch's findings that an Anglo-Saxon king's power is made legitimate through the people's support (elective kingship), by harming and coercing the people Nero loses that legitimacy. Thus by myopically neglecting his people, Nero makes his rule more vulnerable.

In addition to this self-induced limitation, we also noted in *Mod*'s monologue that kings who misuse the power God entrusts them with will face divine punishment. Hence *Wisdom*, through a rhetorical question, effectively tells us that Nero lost his theocratic authority:

> *Wenst ðu þæt se anwald   eaðe ne meahte*
>
> *Godes ælmihtiges   þone gelpscaðan*
>
> *rice berædan   and bereafian*
>
> *his anwaldes […]?*
>
> *Eala, gif he wolde,   ðæt he wel meahte,*
>
> *þæt unriht him   eaðe forbiodan!*
>
> *Eawla, þæt se hlaford   hefig gioc slepte*
>
> *sware on þa swyran   sinra þegena…*

'Do you think that the power of God Almighty could not easily dispossess the boastful enemy of his kingdom and take away his power […]? Indeed, if He had so desired, He could easily have forbidden him that injustice! Behold, the Lord grievously slipped a heavy yoke on the necks of his retainers…'

(Meter 9, ll.48-56).

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As the learned in Alfred's audience would know, Nero did not reign for

long before he did lose his power, via a gruesome death.[130] But the

implication that it is God who deposed him is a further addition to the

Latin, which merely asks,

Celsa num tandem valuit potestas

vertere pravi rabiem Neronis?

'Could not [Nero's] arrogant power at last turn around

Nero's perverted madness?'

(*DCP* 2.6m, ll.14-5)

Leneghan explains that the early-medieval church, heavily influenced

by Gregory's writings, frequently used Old Testament examples to

illustrate how God blesses kings who obey Him 'while those who

disobey stand to lose their authority and incur divine retribution on

themselves and their people'.[131] Although *OEB* uses few biblical

kingship examples, it teaches this same lesson through historical

examples such as Nero. As discussed in Chapter 1, God is the 'One

King' beneath whom all other kings rule; He has set clear laws which

He entasks mortal kings with promoting. Yet instead of bowing to God's

sovereignty and upholding His peace, Nero regards himself as the king

above other kings (who he views as objects of his sport) and makes

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[130] Various medieval retellings of Nero's death exist – see Gwyn, 'Cruel Nero', p.451.
[131] Leneghan, *Dynastic Drama*, p.200.

himself the one whom *eall […] heran sceolde* 'all must obey' (ll.44-5)*.*

By commanding rather than giving and protecting, Nero has misused

his God-given authority, and for all this disobedience he will (mirroring

Leneghan's conclusions) 'incur divine retribution'. Having lost his

people's support, his sins also provoke God to take away his theocratic

authority and eventually 'take away his power'. Without either elective

or theocratic backing, to Alfred's contemporaries Nero represents

illegitimate pagan rulership like the Vikings', which God will soon

overturn.

Divine Punishment and the King-Nation Relationship

In Leneghan's argument cited above, he specifies that for a king's

disobedience, God would punish not only that leader, but his people

too. This follows the influential Gregorian philosophy outlined in my

Introduction: the king's sins represented the people's sins, and thus

brought God's retribution upon them too. Notwithstanding, Gwyn

explains that throughout the Middle Ages, 'if a ruler abused his subjects

it was explained as the result of his own sins […] and usually also as

the result of God's decision to punish his subjects for their sins'.[132] This

follows logically from the same Gregorian argument: if the king is the

nation's body, then a sinful nation will be punished with a sinful and

abusive king. That king must then, in turn, be punished for his nation's

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[132] Gwyn, 'Cruel Nero', p.426.

sins. Together, Leneghan and Gwyn's comments express a contradiction in early-medieval theological understandings of kingship. When the people sin, God punishes them by appointing a cruel king. But that king's ungodly practices would also merit punishment, which meant further punishment upon the people too. Thus an endless retributive circle is formed. This contradiction cannot be fully resolved, but one reason why the Alfredian corpus is so important to early-medieval kingship studies is that Alfred at least offers a partial solution.

Gregory's belief that a leader's sins causes his people to suffer is retained in *OEPC*:

> *Ðonne ðam lareowum aðistriað ðæs modes*
> *eagan, ðe beforan gan scoldon mid godum*
> *bisenum, ðonne gebigð ðæt folc hira hrycg*
> *to hefegum byrðenum manegum.*
> 'When in teachers the spirit's eyes, which should lead with good examples, grow dim, the people bend their backs to many heavy burdens'.
> (1.1, p.32; see also *RP* 1.1, p.10).

As clarified in my Introduction, Alfred's leadership diction throughout *OEPC* indicates that he is applying Gregory's guidance to secular office-holders as well as bishops – including kings. To Alfred, all leaders should be spiritual 'teachers' to the people, setting them 'good examples'. When a leader fails to do this, his people suffer under

'heavy burdens'. He fails to teach them how to live righteously, meaning they will sin and be punished too (as per Leneghan's findings). Yet inversely, Gwyn's conclusions also hold in *OEPC*, as *unwise lareowas cumað for ðæs folces synnum* 'unwise teachers come about due to the people's sins' (1.1 p.30). Alfred has already illustrated this through the example of the Vikings, sent as *witu* 'punishments' when the people *swæ recelease weorðan ond sio lar swæ oðfeallan* 'became so careless and learning so decayed' (Epistolary Preface, p.6). Bately remarks that Alfred's literature reveals his 'primary interest lay in the pursuit of wisdom, and of an understanding of God and of God's purpose, the restoration of which to the land was a prerequisite for peace and stability'.[133] These comments in the Epistolary Preface (non-existent in *RP*) support this conclusion: Alfred adapts his source to explicitly blame the people's ignorance and neglect of spiritual learning for their subjection to 'unwise' pagan Viking rulers. Yet these are the leaders with 'dim' spiritual eyes, thus causing the people to further stumble under 'heavy burdens' of ignorance. Because they lack good rulers or teachers, they cannot grow spiritually – hence the retributive circle continues.

Returning to Nero, as cited above *Wisdom* clarified he will be deposed for his sins – but only once God 'desired' it. Even in times of national suffering, it is God who has ultimate control. As Chapter 1 noted from Meter 11, God appoints even 'those who do not know that

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[133] Bately, 'Author and Translator', p.142.

they are the Lord's servants'. Thereby, though Nero does not willingly serve God, God uses his tyrannical rule as the 'heavy yoke' by which He punishes Nero's subjects (just as the poor teachers of *OEPC* are 'heavy burdens' on their people). *DCP* does not mention any punishment falling upon the populace. What sin the Roman people committed to deserve this retribution is not specified; perhaps it was their paganism, but we can merely speculate. Conforming to popular Gregorian theory, Alfred alters both texts to highlight the king-nation mutual relationship: the people must live righteously to be blessed with a good king, and the king must live righteously so that the people will be blessed.

Yet if God punishes a sinful nation by appointing an ungodly king as its body, and punishes a sinful king by afflicting his people, how can this chain end? Would such reasoning not cause all attempts to justify kingship to crumble, as any leader – including Alfred – would inevitably be another punishment for the sins of the people and previous rulers? While Alfred does try to incorporate both sides of this retributive circle, he appears aware of the contradictions and hints towards a solution: while God appoints tyrannical or unwise rulers as punishment, he does not intend them to remain in power for long. In time, He will replace them with more exemplary rulers. Chapter 1 cited *OEB*'s declaration that only God can command 'for as long as He wanted it to last'. Logically, this means that all other rulers, although appointed by God, will not be permitted to remain in power beyond the time God sets them. Moreover, *OEPC* 1.1 makes clear that when the *ungelæredan*

'unlearned' (p.28) presume to take power, they *ricsiað of hira agnum dome, næs of ðæs hiehstan deman* 'rule by their own judgement, not that of the highest Judge' (p.30). *RP* asserts the same (1.1, pp.6, 8) but only in reference to bishops (whereas Alfred, as I demonstrated in my Introduction, uses terms referring to both political and spiritual leaders) and as mentioned does not blame the people for their ungodly leaders. As Gwyn explains, by Alfred's day it was commonplace to hold the people's sins responsible for such divine punishments. Alfred therefore incorporates this theory alongside other popular Gregorian ideas that a king suffers for the nation's sins, and demonstrates how both philosophies can coexist and be held in balance. In *OEPC*, we have seen that God does punish the people for their ignorance by subjecting them to unwise rulers (the Vikings). But given Gregory's words channelled through *OEPC* and cited above, Alfred's audience sees that although these rulers are appointed by God, they do not rule by His judgements and are therefore not ascribed any legitimising theocratic authority. Hence, once they have served their purpose to punish the English peoples, God shall depose them again – thus breaking the circle.

Thereby, Alfred encourages his people that God is intervening to remedy their national ignorance by removing these unwise rulers. In their place, Alfred indicates God has appointed a more educated king: himself. Alfred has proven his intellectual talents through his translation programme, and further claims to have studied with various bishops (*OEPC* Epistolary Preface, p.8). Asser exacerbates this educated

image for him: although Alfred grew up with little education, he loved to learn and God taught him Latin 'through divine inspiration'.[134] Through this, Alfred depicts himself as one chosen and equipped by God, able to restore his people's wisdom and lead them out of their spiritual blindness – thereby meeting Bately's 'prerequisite for peace and stability' and removing the 'burden' of Viking rule. Elsewhere, *OEPC* cautions leaders,

> …*he no ana ne forwierð, ðonne he oðrum yfele bisene steleð […] Ða ofer oðre gesettan sint to manianne ðæt hie for hira monna gedwolan ne weorðen gedemde, ðonne hie wenað ðæt hie hira selfra gewyrhtum sien clæne.*
>
> 'He is not alone who will decay, when he sets others a wicked example […] Those set over others are to govern that they do not become judged for their people's transgressions when they consider their own deeds to be pure.'
>
> (3.28, p.204)

Largely following Gregory's text (*RP* 3.4, p.142), Alfred makes clear that a leader should always be an exemplary figure to his people, and God punishes all leaders who instead mislead their people through 'wicked

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[134] Asser, *Life*, p.99.

example[s]' – hence Nero and the Vikings defeated earlier in Alfred's reign all 'decay[ed]'. Inversely, this passage clarifies that God also raises up righteous leaders over sinful peoples, but so long as these leaders remain 'pure' in their own conduct (an exception not present in *RP*) they need not be punished for the people's 'transgressions'. This, Alfred implies, is why God appointed him: his passion for God and learning makes him too 'pure' to be punished for the nation's ignorance, and also means he will set the people a better spiritual example than the Vikings. Thereby, God will cease punishing them and forgive them.

Returning to *OEB*, for a similar purpose Nero's tyranny is contrasted with *Mod*'s generosity. As discussed, *Wisdom* clearly alludes to the day when God shall remove Nero from power, once the Romans have born their 'yoke' of punishment for God's designated time span. In the following Prose 9, this negative example and retributive leader is replaced with *Mod*'s more beneficent model. This reminds Alfred's audience that they are no longer being punished with pagan rulers who further God's wrath, but have been gifted with Alfred who has the skills needed to lead them back to God. These skills include both his martial skill to resist the Vikings (Wormald's traditional kingship model) and his intellectual passion and ability to lead spiritually discussed above (Alfred's reformed kingship model). Thus both texts supplement Alfred's perceived image as a divinely-ordained king sent to rescue his people. He thereby warns his people to support him rather than his pagan rivals, and to follow him in seeking spiritual and intellectual reform for the good of the whole nation.

Samuel Masters
University of Nottingham, Student ID 20130512.
ENGL4310

Punishment in *OEB*: God's Justice verses Human Disciplining

In both texts, we have seen Alfred clarify that the ungodly leaders whom God appoints have no lasting authority over their people. *OEB* goes further: while all rulers are chosen by God, none of them – however good or bad – has a right to implement his own punishments upon his subjects. They may enforce God's laws and discipline, but not their own.

This non-compulsive rulership model is depicted in Prose 27, where *Mod* initially laments how he does not have the same disciplinary authority as God:

> *…gif ic hæfde swilcne anwald swilcne se*
>
> *ælmihtiga God hæfð, þonne ne lete ic no ða*
>
> *yfelan derigan þæm goodum swa hi nu doð.*

'…if I had such power as the Almighty God has, then I would not let the evil harm the good as greatly as they now do'.

(ll.3-5)

DCP's Boethius avatar similarly wishes that the wicked could not harm the good (4.4, p.338). But unlike *Mod*, he does not question God's judgement behind this nor seek God's authority to change this issue. *Mod*'s remark borders on self-idolism like Theoderic and Saul's as

discussed in Chapter 1. For this *Wisdom* implicitly rebukes *Mod* in

reminding him that,

> *God hæfð getiohhod to sellanne witu and ermða*
>
> *þam yflum monnum.*

'God has determined to give punishments and miseries to

evil persons'.

(ll.18-9)

Whereas *DCP* ascribes the outcome of the wicked's actions to

infortunium 'misfortune' or impersonal Fate (4.4, p.338), Alfred has

altered this to depict an intentional, active disciplinary procedure which

all must answer to. But he is clear that it is God, and not his appointed

kings, who is able to justly direct this procedure. Here *Wisdom* warns

Mod that only God has the right and ability to punish justly. *Wisdom*

then clarifies this further by differentiating between worldly and eternal

punishments:

> *…þa yflan bioð miclan gesæligran þe on ðisse*
>
> *weorulde habbað micelne wean and manigfeald*
>
> *witu for hiora yfelum, ðonne þa sien ðe nane*
>
> *wræce nabbað ne nan wite on ðisse worulde*
>
> *for hiora yfle […] [Ð]a yflan habbað symle*
>
> *hwæthwugu godes ongemong hiora yfle. Þæt*
>
> *is hiora wite, þæt mon mæg swiðe eaðe*

> *gereccan mid rihte him to goode. Ac þa þe*
>
> *him bið unwitnode eall hiora yfel on þisse*
>
> *worulde habbað sum yfel hefigre and*
>
> *frecenlicre þonne ænig wite sie on þisse*
>
> *worulde.*

'…the evil who have great affliction and manifold

punishments in this world for their sins are much more

fortunate than those who have no vengeance nor

punishment in this world for their sins […] The evil always

have some good among their evil. That is their punishment,

which one can very easily reckon with justice to be good for

them. But those who remain unpunished for all their evil in

this world have a heavier and more perilous punishment

than any in this world.'

(ll.47-50, 67-71)

As mentioned in Chapter 1, *OEB* presents God as the 'One Judge' –

the only one capable of ruling in perfect justice. Prose 27 similarly

refers to Him as the *rihtwis dema* 'just judge' (l.82). Hence when non-

divine kings seek to punish others 'in this world' based on their own

judgements, they obstruct God's justice. They ought rather to leave the

disobedient in their sin. If this is done, God will always deal those

sinners a punishment that is 'good for them' and just: either their inner

'good among their evil' is grieved by their sinful selves and repents, or

they receive the 'heavier and more perilous' punishment after death.

Chapter 1 noted Discenza's conclusions that in *OEB*, humans may 'approach the divine' but not equal it. Hence *Mod* is wrong to desire 'the power [of] Almighty God': as a lower, non-divine being, he is incapable of wielding it justly. Instead, *Wisdom* points to the ways mortal leaders can 'approach' God through His example:

> *Þæt is his weorðscipe þæt he swa giful is, and*
>
> *swa rumedlice gifð. Ðæt is micel gifo þæt he*
>
> *gebit oðþæt þa yflan ongitað hiora yfel and*
>
> *gecierrað to goode.*

'That is His honour that He is so generous and gives so bountifully. That is a great gift, that He waits until the wicked understand their sins and turn to good.'

(Prose 27, ll.84-7)

Wisdom's implication is that human kings should likewise rule with grace and mercy, 'giv[ing] so bountifully' to all their people regardless of their sins – as we have seen Alfred consistently highlight in his literature how he provides for the *Angelcynn* despite their spiritual and intellectual ignorance. Kings should also wait until their subjects 'understand their sins and turn to good' – giving their afore-mentioned inner good the time to correct their unrighteous ways. Through this teaching, and the counter-examples of cruel leaders such as Nero who inflict punishments themselves, Alfred argues that kings should leave vindication to God, who alone can judge in perfect justice.

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Those authoritarian rulers who implement their own sense of justice upon their people are mocked by *Wisdom* as:

> …*hwelce mus þæt wære hlaford ofer oðre mys*
> *and sette him domas and nedde hie æfter*
> *gafole*…
>
> '…some mouse that was lord over other mice and set them laws and compelled them to pay tribute…'
>
> (Prose 8, ll.44-6).

This passage remains relatively accurate to the source, where in *DCP* 2.6 the mice example is used to teach how unnatural it is for anyone to see himself as above his fellow creatures (p.210). However, as previously cited, Discenza argues that while *OEB* portrays all humans as fundamentally lower beings, the hierarchy is more flexible than in *DCP*: wiser, more virtuous humans are higher than others. Hence Alfred cannot be using this mouse image for the same purpose as Boethius, since godly leaders like Alfred and *Mod* are closer to divinity than their less virtuous subjects (whom God places under their authority). Nonetheless, as mentioned even such leaders are on the same broad lower category of mortal beings, and therefore ought not to forcibly 'compel' their subjects. It is this compulsion that Alfred criticises in the mouse analogy. As mentioned, Orton believes Alfred follows Charlemagne in arguing it was the king's duty to both exemplify and compel his subjects into good spiritual obedience. Alfred certainly

believed in a leader's role as a moral exemplum – something we have already seen across both our texts. Yet in *OEB*, Alfred is definitively against compulsive rulership. Kings who command and discipline their people according to their own judgements are ridiculed as self-important mice 'that lord over' others. They ought to promote the laws God set for 'moral discipline' (as Alfred did through his laws, observed in Chapter 1), rather than establishing their own unjust *domas*. More directly, this term means 'judgement, sentence'.[135] Whether or not this also here refers to codified law, it strongly indicates that such rulers believe they can implement their own punishments in place of the 'One Judge'. In this they effectively make themselves God, as we have seen Theoderic and Nero attempt. They also do not give to their subjects but take tribute from them – a direct contrast to *Mod*.

Of course, Alfred himself instigated numerous law codes. But as Chapter 1 explained, his laws were heavily based on biblical precedents. Hence it is not his own judgement he believed he was inflicting upon his subjects, but God's judgement channelled through Alfred via Scripture. Additionally, Alfred summarises his law code's purpose:

> *Of ðissum anum dome mon mæg geðencean,*
>
> *þæt he æghwelcne on ryht gedemeð; ne*
>
> *ðearf he nanra domboca oþerra. Geðence he,*

---

[135] *D.O.E*, 'dōm', Sense 1.

> *þæt he nanum men ne deme þæt he nolde*
>
> *ðæt he him demde, gif he ðone dom ofer hine*
>
> *sohte.*[136]

'One may think about this one law, so that he will judge each case justly; he will need no other law book. He will think that he will not judge any other person as he would not want to be judged, if he sought this law over him.'

This too has a scriptural basis.[137] It clarifies that the purpose of Alfred's laws is to uphold the 'one law' (God's law) and thereby prevent others from judging or compelling selfishly or unfairly. Instead, anyone in authority must 'judge […] as he would […] want to be judged', thus maintaining social justice and avoiding unfair treatment towards fellow 'lesser' created beings. In this Alfred portrays his laws as for the people's good, rather than being there to take tribute from them like the mice-lords. As we have seen through the contrast between *Mod* and *Nero*, in *OEB* Alfred depicts two categories of rulership: the giver and the penal oppressor. Since only God can punish in perfect justice, Alfred presents himself purely as a benevolent giver. Thus in *OEB* Alfred does not, despite Orton's claims, justify compelling one's subjects. To him a good king should enforce God's laws alone and give to the people, and never take from or command them.

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[136] Alfred, *Gesetzbuch*, p.44 (49.6).
[137] E.g., compare Luke 6.31: 'as you would that men should do to you, do you also to them in like manner'.

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The Rod and Staff – *OEPC*

Contrary to *OEB*'s dichotomous model, *OEPC* does not portray giving and commanding as mutually exclusive. Alfred gives this work another Old English title, *Hierde-boc* 'Shepherd's Book' (Epistolary Preface, p.8). *Hierd* translates and nominalises *RP*'s adjectival *pastoralis* 'pastoral', emphasising all post-messianic leaders' duty to be 'moral shepherds of their peoples' (returning to Leneghan's argument cited in my Introduction). A shepherd was entasked not only with caring for his sheep but directing their movement – using both the 'rod and the staff' as God the Shepherd does in Psalm 22.[138] These complementary implements feature as recurring images throughout *OEPC*, proving that Alfred had both purposes in mind. In particular, the text emphasises that for all *godan recceres* 'good rulers',

> *…sceal ðær bion gierd - ðæt is ðæt he ðreage*
>
> *his hiremenn. Ond eac sceal bion […] suetnes –*
>
> *ðæt is ðæt he him sie lieðe […] Mid gierde mon*
>
> *bið beswungen, ond mid stæfe he bið awreðed.*

'…there must be a rod – that is, that he punishes his subjects. And also there must be sweetness – that is that he is kind to them. With a rod one is beaten, and with a staff he is sustained.'

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[138] Psalm 22.4.

(2.17, p.134).

The text attributes this model to David, and as per Leneghan's meek

Davidic archetype, this description depicts a ruler who is kind to his

followers. Yet against this expectation, this king also beats his subjects.

This is the kind of disciplinary action which we have seen Alfred criticise

in *OEB*, where he argues only God can justly punish. But in *OEPC*

Alfred views the disciplinary 'rod' as a necessary complement to the

exhorting 'staff', and he argues a 'good ruler' should use both. This

difference is partly down to *OEPC* sticking closer to its late-antique

source (*RP* 2.6, p.88). But it also shows Alfred conforming more in

OEPC than in *OEB* to Charlemagne's afore-mentioned belief that a

leader should both exhort and compel his people.

We can only speculate at the reasons for this change of

perspective on commanding and disciplining. Part of it was likely down

to the different audiences. *OEPC* reminds other office-holders of the

king's authority over them and asks them to act with similar authority

over the people – by extension strengthening Alfred's control over the

whole nation. Meanwhile *OEB* was composed for the people, so Alfred

flatters himself by reminding them how he provides for them rather than

commanding them. Additionally, political circumstances likely impacted

these texts. As explained in my Introduction, I believe *OEPC* to have

been composed c.888, and *OEB* sometime after the Great Army

invaded in 892. I noted how *OEPC*'s Epistolary Preface hints towards

an expected Viking resurgence. Therefore, Alfred may have seen a

need to enforce both Christian morals and his own authority prior to this, so as to unite all *Angelcynn* under one Christian leader and make them strong in the face of pagan antagonism. After the Great Army arrived, *Angelcynn* in occupied or threatened territory would not likely have seen much benefit in one commanding ruler (Alfred) over another (Guthrum). Hence in *OEB* Alfred instead tells the people they are best guided through generous provision over commands, appealing to their loyalty through his benevolence.

<div align="center">The Guide-King</div>

Both texts agree that the king's primary duty should be to guide his people politically and spiritually. This is made clear through the ship-and-rudder metaphor. Bately lists this as one of the Alfredian texts' 'shared themes' that evidence a common authorship.[139] We have already seen how Alfred manipulates this metaphor in *OEB* to visualise God's sovereign control, and to portray successful leadership as that which imitates God by giving to the people rather than taking. *OEPC* uses similar language:

> *Swiðe eaðe mæg on smyltre sæ ungelæred*
>
> *scipstiera genoh ryhte stieran, ac se*
>
> *gelæreda him ne getruwað on ðære hreon*

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[139] Bately, 'Author and Translator', p.130.

> *sæ ond ðæm miclan stormum…*
>
> 'Very easily can an unlearned helmsman steer rightly
>
> enough, but the learned helmsman does not have
>
> confidence in himself on the rough sea and the great
>
> storms…'
>
> (1.9, p.64)

As with *Mod*'s description, Alfred here portrays the king as the nation's 'helmsman' who 'steers' or guides them. This passage remains relatively accurate to its source (*RP* 1.9, p.35), whereas *OEB*'s sea-pilot images are (as Bately notes) added by Alfred.[140] It appears he liked Gregory's use of this symbolism, so added it to Boethius' text too. Aside from evidencing a shared authorship, this common image also suggests Alfred made a continued effort across both texts to emphasise the king's responsibility to guide his people through troubles.

The retained metaphor in *OEPC* bears particular significance to Alfred's day: he did rule in a time of 'great storms', seeking to protect his people from the Vikings and amend their spiritual ignorance. As I explained earlier, in both texts Alfred portrays himself as the king who will lead his people out of these troubles and the retributive circle. But this passage makes clear that he does not do this alone: just as *Mod* cannot rule without his 'tools and material', so *OEPC*'s experienced helmsman 'does not have confidence in himself'. To lead well, he

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[140] Bately, 'Author and Translator', p.132.

requires the cooperation of his bishops and under-lords whom he addresses, so that together they may humbly guide the people through the challenging spiritual and socio-political circumstances.

In Alfred's translation of Gregory's Epilogue (*OEPC* p.532), the ship imagery is reapplied to depict the earth as the *scipgebroce ðisses anweardan lifes* 'shipwreck of this present life'. This is altered from *RP*'s *vitae naufragio* 'shipwreck of life', implicitly 'my life' as Gregory reflects upon his sinful state (4.4, p.404). Returning to Discenza's Translation Studies terms cited in my Introduction (pp.13-4), Alfred here produces an acceptable (not adequate) translation, made relevant to his contemporary audience. Rather than focusing on Gregory's remote life, he locates the 'shipwreck' in their 'present' ninth-century England. And instead of referring to his personal troubles like Gregory, he addresses the broader challenges of the time. Presumably this refers to the Viking attacks and spiritual decline alluded to in the Epistolary Preface. Asser imitates this imagery when he describes how Alfred,

'…sustained by divine assistance, struggled like an excellent pilot to guide his ship […] to the […] safe haven […] through the many whirlpools of this present life.'[141]

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[141] Asser, *Life*, p.101.

In context, Asser's 'whirlpools of this present life' refer to the 'relentless attacks of foreign peoples' (Vikings).[142] It is sensible to assume the same application for this sea-pilot metaphor in his *OEPC* source. Pratt examines the 'unprecedented stability' West Saxons experienced throughout the ninth century.[143] Under Alfred, who successfully minimised the Viking threat and united Wessex and Mercia, this stability increased. Thus *OEPC* portrays Alfred as successfully steering his nation with God's help and for the people's benefit. His past successes as a traditional war-leader (aligning with Wormald's model) meant his public image benefitted from reminding his people of their 'present' circumstances, and how he has already begun to lead the nation out of this 'whirlpool' or 'shipwreck'.

Yet this shipwreck also symbolised the nation's spiritual state. The metaphor has its origins in New Testament Scripture, where Paul declares false teachers have 'made shipwreck concerning the faith'.[144] Comparably, this Chapter has witnessed how in both *OEB* and *OEPC*, pagan leaders fail to teach the people spiritually, thereby bringing divine punishment upon the nation. Hence the king who can successfully steer the nation through this 'rough sea' must not only be an accomplished war-leader like Wormald argues, but also a 'moral shepherd' like we saw Leneghan describe, capable of guiding and teaching his people spiritually. By using this metaphor, Alfred implicitly promises to instruct his people more faithfully than the Vikings have done, thus leading

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[142] Asser, *Life*, p.101.
[143] Pratt, *Political Thought*, p.33.
[144] 1 Timothy 1.19.

them out of their spiritual shipwreck. This is further evidenced in Asser's

account: Alfred must guide his people through the 'whirlpool' described

above by 'instructing, cajoling, urging, commanding, and […] sharply

chastising those who were disobedient […] to the general advantage of

the whole realm'.[145] Having proven himself as a war-leader, Alfred also

(and Asser, who reuses Alfred's imagery) highlights the post-messianic

king's duty to lead his people away from sin, so that God will not punish

but reward 'the whole realm'.

Away from this shipwreck, Gregory claims to have *manege men*

gelæd to ðæm stæðe fullfremednesse on ðæm scipe mines modes 'led

many people to the shore of perfection in the ship of my mind' (*OEPC*

p.532). Alfred chooses to translate this sentence accurately (in

Discenza's terms, 'adequately'), retaining this image. Yet he never

ascribes this or any other part of the text to Gregory. From this,

Faulkner identifies 'a striking merging of the two voices, pope and king,

with the king's presence emerging dominant […] an authorial voice that

is firmly located in the royal court of ninth-century Wessex'.[146] Alfred

presents Gregory's theocratic authority as his own to indicate that he is

the spiritual leader who will guide them to 'the shore of perfection' –

heaven or spiritual sanctification, in contrast to 'this present life' of

struggles. In Chapter 1 we observed *OEB*'s use of the same word,

fullfremednesse 'perfection, fulfilment, completeness', in adjectival form

to describe the perfect goodness found in God, to whom mortal leaders

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[145] Asser, *Life*, pp.101-2.
[146] Faulkner, 'Royal Authority', pp.128-9.

should direct their people.[147] Thus both texts portray the same ultimate

aim of a king: to lead his people to God, so that they may find complete,

perfect happiness in Him.

Commanding under God – *OEPC*

Unlike in *OEB*, *OEPC* uses this steering metaphor to argue that a king

cannot govern effectively without using both the rod of discipline and

the staff of guidance and provision. This does not mean dominating

selfishly and according to his own human judgement like Nero and

Theoderic in *OEB*. Rather, *OEPC*'s model leader commands as *hwelc*

hierde […] sceal 'a shepherd ought to' (Gregory's Epilogue, p.532): to

protect and guide his flock. Earlier, I explained how *OEB* argues that a

king is dependent upon his 'tools', the people, and to compel them

would make him an arrogant mouse-lord who abuses his God-given

power. But in *OEPC*, Alfred argues the inverse: the commoners depend

more on the leader than the leader depends on them, as he is (as cited

above) the 'ship' which will carry them to that 'shore of perfection'.

Although this text does admit, as discussed, that the 'helmsman' cannot

steer the nation alone through difficult times, in this Alfred is mainly

petitioning his sub-leaders (*OEPC*'s primary audience) to assist him in

directing the nation. Contrary to contemporary late Anglo-Saxon ideas

of elective kingship, Alfred does not indicate his power is dependent

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[147] *D.O.E*, 'full-fremednes, full-fremodnes'.

upon his people.[148] Rather, it is through the king that the people will find

fulfilment. Alfred expands on this through further water imagery in his

additional Verse Epilogue:

> *He cwæð ðæt he wolde   ðæt on worulde forð*
>
> *of ðæm innoðum   a libbendu*
>
> *wætru fleowen,   ðe wel on hine*
>
> *gelifden under lyfte.   Is hit lytel tweo*
>
> *ðæt ðæs wæterscipes   wel-sprynge is*
>
> *on hefon-rice,   ðæt is Halig Gæst.*
>
> *Ðonnan hine hlodan   halge and gecorene,*
>
> *siððan hine gierdon   ða ðe Gode herdon*
>
> *ðurh halgan bec…*

'[God] declared that He intended ever-living waters to flow

forth in the world inside those who trusted in Him well under

Heaven. It is little doubt that the source of those waters is in

Heaven, that is, the Holy Spirit. From there the holy and elect

drew it, after those who obeyed God prepared it through holy

books…'

(p.534, ll.3-11)

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[148] By appropriating Gregory's voice, Alfred does appear to depend upon subordinates when he asks John to *me […] sum bred geræce ðinra gebeda* 'extend to me a plank of your prayers'. But as prayer, this depicts more a dependency on God than on his people.

Irvine interprets the continued water imagery between the two epilogues as symbolic 'not only to the process of acquiring God's wisdom via Gregory and (implicitly) Alfred, but also to the need to continue to produce books […] to ensure the reliable transmission of that wisdom'.[149] To this it should be added that Alfred portrays that 'reliable transmission' as coming to the people only through himself. Although the 'ever-living waters' originate in the Spirit, they can only be accessed because 'those who obeyed God prepared it through holy books'. This is blatantly self-reflective, alluding to Alfred's pledge in the Epistolary Preface to translate,

> *…suma bec – ða ðe niedbeðearfosta sien*
>
> *eallum monnum to wiotonne […] mid Godes*
>
> *fultume*.
>
> '…certain books – those which are most necessary for all
>
> people to know, by God's help'.
>
> (p.8)

Thereby, Alfred strongly indicates that the people need himself – God's obedient appointed ruler – to access the fountain of wisdom that will carry them to the shores of completion. Karkov notes that every subsequent manuscript illustration of Anglo-Saxon kings features a book.[150] This evidences the lasting impact of Alfred's writings upon

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[149] Irvine, 'Prefaces and Epilogues', p.160.
[150] Catherine E. Karkov, *The Ruler Portraits of Anglo-Saxon England* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2004), p.4.

understandings of kingship: kings must be wise, book-learned spiritual guides for their people. Earlier we examined Bately's hypothesis that Alfred viewed learning as a 'prerequisite for peace and stability'. By opening and closing *OEPC* with references to books, Alfred advertises himself as the educated king who can provide this wisdom and consequent peace amidst the storms of 'this present life'.

Thus, through *OEPC* Alfred claims to be called by God to command or instruct his subjects (in contrast to *OEB*, which as seen criticises commanding leaders). Continuing with the water metaphor, in *OEPC*'s Verse Epilogue (original to Alfred) he commands each of his subjects to *fylle nu his fætels* 'fill now his vessel' (l.25) with the 'waters' of his instructions. Whereas *OEB* highlights the need to provide physical supplies (land, food, *etc.*), *OEPC* only mentions giving the 'water' or 'ship' of instructions that lead to heaven. *OEPC*'s instructive focus may be partially explained by remembering that its source was written for an epistolary audience. Yet in addition to teaching, Gregory expects bishops to give charitably: *RP* 2.16 makes clear that they should also address *infirmantium negotiis* 'the needs of the weak' (p.70). Moreover, Alfred's additional Verse Epilogue, though addressed to *ðegna[s]* 'servants' (l.27) as opposed to bishops, still mentions no gifts other than instruction. Even that gift is effectively a command: Alfred orders every subject to 'fill' on spiritual learning and *cume eft hræðe* 'come again soon' (l.26). Likewise, we have seen how Asser (who as noted imitates *OEPC*'s images and arguments) praises Alfred for 'cajoling, urging, commanding, and […] chastising' the people in

order to guide them. This again resembles Charlemagne's authoritative

kingship template. Hence whereas in *OEB* the ship-pilot steers his

nation wholly by the staff of giving, in *OEPC* and Asser's *Life* he also

uses the rod of instruction and command. Alfred's changes and

additions to the source make his translation more acceptable or

relatable to ninth-century leaders, as he emphasises their duty to

command and the people's need to obey.

Alfred does caution that any who *ðyrelne kylle / brohte to ðys*

burnan 'have brought a leaking container to this brook' – who have not

wholly obeyed his commands nor learnt from his instructions – will *lifes*

drync forloren 'lose the drink of life' (Verse Epilogue, ll.27-8, 30). This is

not because Alfred will take judgement into his own hands, but because

he believes that his commands are the 'ever-living waters' which

originate in the Holy Spirit and are channelled through him for the

people's spiritual benefit. Relatedly, we saw him suggest in his law

codes that they are there to uphold God's laws. Consequently, in

OEPC's Verse Epilogue it is disobedient subjects, and not unrighteous

rulers as in *OEB*, who will bring God's wrath upon themselves. This

conclusion reveals a different tone between the two works. *OEB*

encourages the people, assuring them that Alfred is a good king who

uses his power for their sake and is therefore worthy of their support.

OEPC warns the people of the divine punishment which will befall them

if they do not follow his laws and commands. Ultimately both texts

share the same aim: to raise popular support for Alfred. As Nelson

argues, there would be no point in Alfred translating into the vernacular

if not to appeal to the widespread, unified support of the whole people, and he uses this to boost his own authority and right to rule.[151] But *OEPC*, with its pre-892 leadership audience, seeks to achieve this through a more coercive approach. Throughout this text, Alfred frequently stresses the ruler's right to command and discipline his people according to God's laws. Commanding is shown not only to be permissible for a leader, but mandatory:

> …*monige siendum mid miclum giefum*
>
> *monegra cræfta […] forðon ðe hie hie*
>
> *scoldon monegum tæcan, ond for oðerra*
>
> *monna ðearfe onfoð ðyllica giefa: […] hie*
>
> *gehealdað hira lichoman firenlusta clænne […]*
>
> *hi beoð […] mid lara suetmettum gefylde […]*
>
> *geðyldige, ond eaðmode […] hie habbað ða*
>
> *arodnesse ond ða bieldo ðæt hie magon*
>
> *anweald habban […] hi beoð reðe ond stræce*
>
> *for ryhtwisnesse. Ða ðe ðonne ðyllice beoð,*
>
> *ond him mon suelcne folgað beodeð, ond hie*
>
> *him wiðsacað, […] hie weorðað bereafod ðara*
>
> *giefa ðe him God for monigra monna ðingum*
>
> *geaf, næs for hiera anra.*

'There are many with great gifts of many skills, so that they

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[151] Nelson, 'Power and Authority', pp.331-3.

should teach many others, and they receive these gifts for

other people's need: they keep their bodies clean from lust;

they are filled with the sweet food of learning; patient and

humble; they have the resolution and the confidence that

they may hold onto power; they are fierce and strict for the

sake of righteousness. When those who are like this are

given such authority, and refuse it, they become deprived of

those gifts which God gave them for many people's sake,

not for their own.'

(1.5, pp.44-6)

Leaders receive 'great gifts', and Alfred adds to his source (*RP* 1.5) that

these are granted 'for other people's need'. As we saw Alfred explain

through *Mod* in *OEB* Prose 9, so here God grants authority so that

rulers can care for their people. Many of the listed gifts relate to being a

good exemplum, resisting sins (e.g. lust) and displaying Christian

virtues ('patient and humble'). But Alfred then stipulates that rulers

should 'have the resolution and the confidence that they may hold onto

power' and be 'fierce and strict for the sake of righteousness'. Whereas

RP merely stipulates that leaders should be *auctoritatis fortitudine erecti*

'upright in the courage of authority' (1.5, p.20), Alfred goes further to

argue a ruler should actively 'hold onto power' and wield it with

intentional *arodnesse* 'boldness, resolution'.[152] Bately and Faulkner

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[152] Bosworth, *Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, 'arodness'. *D.O.E* similarly notes that *arod* indicates 'active', intentional activity (*D.O.E*, 'arod', Sense b).

each notes how Alfred elsewhere appropriates *RP* to allow for more flexibility of conduct.[153] Yet in 1.5, Alfred makes a leader's conduct more inflexible: he ought not to compromise on his authority, but must be strong, confident in his power and able to enforce it rigidly over his people. He knows God has granted him authority, so will use it to discipline others for the sake of their own 'righteousness'. Faulkner deduces from Alfred's frequent addition of the modifier *ungemetlic(e)* 'immoderate(ly)' that he is 'more understanding of the necessity of engaging with worldly things' than Gregory, and that some such things may be justly pursued 'as long as one does it prudently'.[154] His different portrayal of power in 1.5 suggests this is not only something which can be sought justly, but which must be claimed and used by those whom God has gifted it to.

Moreover, just as in *OEB* we saw that God removes power from those who abuse the people they should protect, in *OEPC* those who 'refuse' their authority – who do not guide or actively command their people as they should – will likewise 'be deprived of the gifts God gave them'. Subsequently, such leaders are said to have failed Christ's command to *fed […] min sceap* 'feed my sheep' (1.5, p.46), continuing *Hierdeboc*'s shepherd-flock metaphor. Like *OEB*, *OEPC* emphasises the king's duty to provide for his subjects. But in this text, Alfred argues that this provision involves using his divinely-ordained theocratic authority to command his people in the path of righteousness. Not

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[153] Bately, 'Alfred as Author', p.134; Faulkner, 'Royal Authority', pp.132-3.
[154] *Ibid.*, pp.133-4.

instructing them spiritually would be as worthy of punishment as not

providing for them like Nero: both failures deny the people their 'need'

(spiritual or physical), requiring God to withdraw His gifts and depose

that leader.

Punishment in *OEPC*: God's Justice through Human Disciplining

OEPC's coercive leadership approach is later extended into a

disciplinary role. A *lareow* '(religious) teacher' (see Introduction, p.12)

must not only command his people, but *cyðan ond wrecan* 'make

known and punish' their sins (3.64, p.522). The first of these two terms

is closer in meaning to the relative *RP* term, *denuntiare* 'announce,

declare' (3.40, p.396).[155] Yet in context, *cyðan* implies more than a

declaration of fact, but a public revelation of the sinner's misdeed in

order to shame him. Such a harsh deterrent is nowhere encouraged in

OEB, where we have witnessed Alfred's aversion towards humanity's

flawed attempts to judge fairly. *Wrecan* is an addition to the source.[156] It

can mean 'punish' (Bosworth, Sense III), but also frequently 'avenge'

(Sense IV) or more commonly 'to drive, force' (Sense I).[157] However it is

translated, the text clearly supports a leader's right to forcefully compel

sinners to end their unrighteous practices and do penance; this is a

necessary task of any leader, given his duty as a *lareow* to enhance his

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[155] See *D.O.E.*, 'cȳþan', Senses 1, 2, 2a, 5.
[156] *RP* does mention leaders identifying what is to be *punire* 'punished' in their subjects (3.40, p.396), but not in this clause nor with such strong diction as *wrecan*.
[157] Bosworth, *Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, 'wrecan'.

people's spiritual growth. In *OEB*, we witnessed Alfred's belief that humans could (in Discenza's terms) 'approach the divine'. *OEPC* focuses on how this happens. Luscombe explains that in common medieval philosophy, 'higher orders' such as kings were entasked with directing 'lower orders' to God, so that they gradually become 'more deiform'.[158] Hence Alfred, as *lareow*, must be strict with his subjects in punishing their sin and teaching them virtues, thereby supporting them in their spiritual growth.

Thus, despite Faulkner and Bately's afore-mentioned arguments that Alfred adapts *RP* to be less rigid against sin, overall *OEPC* is stricter than its source. By this Alfred highlights the need for a firm leader like himself to keep the people's spiritual progression in check. That said, two factors should be remembered. Firstly, as mentioned the term *lareow* frequently carried ecclesiastical connotations. It was therefore on God's authority that punishment was enforced through the human king's verdict, and not according to that king's own imperfect judgement (as *OEB* claims Nero ruled). Secondly, Alfred is not advocating the punishment of sinners directly, but of their *yfelu* 'sins' (p.522). While such spiritual punishment will still be reflected physically against that sinner (shaming him, alongside other punishments for specific crimes detailed in Alfred's law codes), the purpose of this is not vengeance as *wrecan* might suggest. Rather, it is 'to drive [or] force' out the transgression, purging that sinner and the nation of the sin within

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[158] Marenbon and Luscombe, 'Eternity and Hierarchy', p.62.

through a change of heart attitude. This purging even includes the *lareow*, as *ærest he sceal wrecan on him selfum his agnu yfelu* 'first he must punish in himself his own sins'. Since following Gregorian thought the king was the representative body of the people, when the king humbly confesses 'his own sins' and punishes or drives these out of himself, he is symbolically purging the whole nation of its sins. Through example, the king teaches his people penitence and humility. Thereby, Alfred makes clear his firm stance against unrighteousness whilst being careful not to appear vindicative. To care for the nation, he must not only teach and exemplify a good spiritual life, but command it and punish those who err.

Chapter 2 Conclusions

In both *OEB* and *OEPC*, Alfred argues that kings must protect and provide for their people – not just in warfare, but for other socio-political and spiritual needs. This reformed kingship model also addresses the paradoxical king-nation relationship, whereby the condition of each was seen as the punishment for the other's sins. Alfred indicates that God does not appoint cruel kings permanently but will depose them and replace them with more exemplary rulers such as himself, reinforcing his theocratic authority. The texts disagree on the extent to which a king should command and discipline his people, perhaps due to differences in audience and political concerns. Despite this, a commanding king need not be a proud king, meaning neither text contradicts the humble

post-messianic model discussed in Chapter 1. Departing from

Wormald's template of traditional Anglo-Saxon kingship, Alfred

consistently argues that a king should first and foremost be a generous

teacher and spiritual exemplum to his people.

__Conclusion__

This dissertation began with Pratt's assertion that Alfred's translations bespeak much 'on the source, distribution and uses of legitimate power', and asking what exactly they say on this. We have now seen that throughout *OEB* and *OEPC*, Alfred argues the source of any leader's legitimate power is always primarily God, supplemented by the approval of his subjects. Similarly, the distribution of power must begin with God gifting authority to His chosen rulers, who must also receive their people's support. From there, this power is channelled to the king's bishops and under-lords whom Alfred addresses in *OEPC*. Thereby, both texts testify that Alfred encouraged the beliefs in theocratic authority and elective kingship which Kritsch identifies in Ælfric's later homilies. Thus, through both texts Alfred indicates that he is the only divinely-ordained king in England with a lasting right to rule, and that his pagan rivals are temporary punishments sent by God for the *Angelcynn*'s spiritual and intellectual ignorance. Soon, Alfred implies, these proud and selfish leaders shall be deposed, as God has chosen himself to lead his people out of their spiritual and political struggles.

As to the correct use of power, this is more debatable between the two texts. *OEPC* stresses the importance of commanding and disciplining in order to secure a united Christian nation under the king's authority, in preparation against the perceived heathen enemy's re-

emergence. Meanwhile *OEB* focuses on using power to provide for the people's physical needs in contrast to the Vikings' destructiveness, which as in *OEPC* is blamed upon their heathenism. Nevertheless, both texts' central concern for rulership is that the king uses his power under God and for the people's spiritual benefit. He should not exalt himself and seek to increase his own power and honour, but in humility should make himself a post-messianic spiritual exemplum and teacher to his people.

Thereby, through his literature Alfred carves a new form of kingship. Moving away from the traditional proud war-leader model, Alfred bases his rulership style on Christ's humble example. This is not to say that one model completely dispelled the other; after Alfred's time, heroic poems continued to celebrate glory-seeking war-leaders. However, unlike earlier poems such as *Beowulf*, these later works never uncritically recall a leader's arrogant boasting. In *The Battle of Brunanburh* King Æthelstan never boasts himself, while *The Battle of Maldon* criticises Byrhtnoth's *ofermod* that led him to endanger his people rather than protecting them.[159] Thus the lasting impact of Alfred's corpus upon popular literary portrayals of kingship was to remove the expectation of arrogance and add the more important expectation of being a learned spiritual teacher and exemplar for the

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[159] *The Battle of Brunanburh*, in *Cambridge Old English Reader*, ed. Marsden, pp.122-7; *The Battle of Maldon*, in *ibid.*, pp.287-305 (ll.89-90); Tolkien, 'Homecoming of Beorhtnoth'; Paul Cavill, 'Interpretation of *The Battle of Maldon*, Lines 84-90: A Review and Reassessment', *Studia Neophilologica* 67:2 (1995), 149-164 (p.152); Donald Scragg, 'The Battle of Maldon: Fact or Fiction?', in *The Battle of Maldon: Fiction and Fact*, ed. Janet Cooper (London:Hambledon Press, 1993), pp.19-31 (pp.24-5).

nation. He marks the beginning of the transition from Wormald's war-leader to Leneghan's 'moral shepherd'. Both these scholars observed this shift, and I have now given an explanation for its time and cause. Therefore, future studies into Anglo-Saxon kingship must begin with Alfred, as the pivotal point when this role transformed.

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