

Rule and Reform

[1] Alfred is set apart by his love of learning

One day [...] when his mother was showing him and his brothers a book of English poetry which she held in her hand, she said, ‘I will give this book to whichever one of you can learn it the fastest.’ Spurred by these words, or rather by divine inspiration, and attracted by the initial letter of the book, Alfred [...] immediately took the book from her hand, went to his teacher and learnt it. When it was learnt, he took it back to his mother and recited it.

Asser's Life of Alfred, chapters 22–23, trans. Keynes & Lapidge.

[2] Alfred lays out his objectives in translating Gregory the Great's *Pastoral Care* into English, in the preface to that work

ÐEOS BOC SCEAL TO WIOGORA CEASTRE

Ælfred kyning hateð gretan Wærfeð biscep his wordum luflice and freondlice; and ðe cyðan hate ðæt me com swiðe oft on gemynd, hwelce wiotan iu wæron giond Angelcynn, ægðer ge godcundra hada ge woruldcundra; and hu gesæglīca tida ða wæron giond Angelcynn; and hu ða kyningas ðe ðone onwald hæfdon ðæs folces on ðam dagum Gode and his ærendwrecum hiersumedon; and hie ægðer ge hiora sibbe ge hiora siodo ge hiora onweald innanbordes gehioldon, and eac ut hiora eðel gerymdon; and hu him ða speow ægðer ge mid wige ge mid wisdome.

Pastoral Care, ed. Henry Sweet, I, p. 3.

[‘THIS BOOK MUST GO TO WORCESTER

King Alfred commands that his Bishop Werferth be greeted with loving and friendly words. And I would have it known that it comes very often into my mind what wise ones there were formerly among the Angelcynn, both in religious orders and in secular orders; and how happy times were then throughout the Angelcynn; and how the kings, who had authority over this people in those days, obeyed God and his messengers; and how they not only maintained their peace, morality and authority at home but also extended their territory outside; and how they succeeded both in warfare and wisdom.’]

[3] Preface to the *Pastoral Care* continued: the decline of learning among the English:

Swa clæne hio wæ oðfeallenu *on Angelcynne* ðæt swiðe fewawa wærон behionan Humber ðe hiora ðeninga cuðen understandan *on Englisc*, oððe furðum an ærendgewrit of Lædene on Englisc areccean; and ic wene ðætte noht monige begindan Humber næren.

[‘So completely was it [i.e. learning] decayed *among the Angelcynn* that there were very few south of the Humber who could understand their divine services *in English*, or translate a single letter of Latin into English; and I expect that there weren’t many north of the Humber either.’]

[4] Preface to the *Pastoral Care* continued: The neglect of wisdom and its consequences

Geðenc hwelc witu us ða becomon for ðisсе worulde, ða ða we hit nohwæðer ne selfe ne lufodon ne eac oðrum monnum ne lefdon: ðone naman anne we lufodon ðætte we Cristne wæren, and swiðe feawe ða ðeawas[...] Ða ic ða ðis eall gemunde ða gemunde ic eac hu ic geseah, ærðæmðe hit eall forhergod wære and forbærned, hu ða ciricean *giond eall Angelcynn* stodon maðma and boca gefyldæ[...] forðæm we habbað nu ægðer forlæten geðone welan ge ðone wisdom, forðæmðe we noldon to ðæm spore mid ure mode onlutan.

Pastoral Care, ed. Sweet, p. 5.

[‘Remember what punishments befell us in this world when we ourselves did not cherish learning nor transmit it to other men. We were Christians in name alone, and very few of us possessed Christian virtues [...]. When I reflected on all this, I remembered how – before everything was ransacked and burned – the churches *throughout all the Angelcynn* stood filled with treasures and books [...]. [But] we have now lost the wealth as well as the wisdom, because we did not wish to set out minds to the track.’]

[5] Preface to the *Pastoral Care* continued: A project of translation

Ða gemunde ic hu sio æ wæs ærest on Ebreisc geðiode funden, and eft, ða hie Creacas geliornodon, ða wendon hie hie on hiora agen geðiode ealle, and eac ealle oðre bec, and eft Lædenware swa same, siððan hie hie geliornodon, hie hie wendon ealla ðurh wise wealhstodas on hiora agen geðiode wendon. On eac ealla oðræ Cristnæ ðioda summe dæl

hiora on hiora agen geðiode wendon. *Forðy me ðyncyð betre, gif iow swæ ðyncyð, ðæt we eac sumæ bec ða ðe niedbeðearfosta sien eallum monnum to wiottonne, ðæt we ða on ðæt geðiode wenden ða we ealle gecnawan mægen.*

Pastoral Care, ed. Sweet, pp. 5–7.

[‘Then I recalled how the Law was first composed in the Hebrew language, and then, when the Greeks had learned it, they translated it into their own tongue, and all other books as well. And so too the Romans, after they had mastered them, translated them all through learned interpreters into their own language. Likewise all the other Christian peoples turned some part of them into their own language. *Therefore it seems better to me – if it seems to you – that we too should turn into the language that we can all understand certain books which are the most necessary for all men to know.*’]

[6] Preface to the *Pastoral Care* continued: Alfred as translator?

ða ongan ic ongemang oðrum mislicum and manigfealdum bisgum ðisses kynerices ða boc wendan on Englisc ðe is genemned on Læden Pastoralis, and on Englisc Hierdeboc, hwilum word be worde, hwilum angit of andgiete, swæ swæ ic hie geliornode æt Plegmunde minum ærcebiscepe and æt Assere minum biscepe and æt Grimbolde minum mæsse prioste and æt Iohanne minum mæssepreoste. (*Pastoral Care*, ed. Sweet, p. 7).

[‘I then began, amidst the various and manifold cares of this kingdom, to translate into English the book which in Latin is called *Pastoralis*, in English ‘Shepherd-Book’, sometimes word for word, sometimes sense for sense, as I learnt it from Plegmund my archbishop, and from Asser my bishop, and from Grimbald my mass-priest and from John my mass-priest.’]

[16] Preface to the *Pastoral Care* continued: the *æstel*

ond to ælcum biscepstole on minum rice wille ane onsendan; and on ælcre bið an æstel, se bið on fiftegum mancessa.

Pastoral Care, ed. Sweet, p. 7.

[‘I intend to send a copy to each bishopric in my kingdom; and in each copy there will be an *æstel*, worth fifty mancuses.’]

[7] Metrical Epilogue to the Old English *Pastoral Care*

Dis is nu se wæterscipe ðe us wereda god
 to frofre gehet foldbuendum.
 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 welspryne is
 on hefonrice, ðæt is halig gæst.
 Ðonan hine hlodan halge and gecorene;
 siððan hine gierdon ða ðe gode herdon
 ðurh halga bec hider on eorðan
 geond manna mod missenlice.
 Sume hine weriað on gewitlocan,
 wisdomes stream, welerum gehæftað,
 ðæt he on unnyt ut ne tofloweð,
 ac se wæl wunað on weres breostum
 ðurh dryhtnes giefe diop and stille.
 Sume hine lætað ofer landscare
 riðum torinnan. Nis ðæt rædlic ðing,
 gif swa hlutor wæter, hlud and undiop
 tofloweð æfter feldum oð hit to fenne wearð.
 Ac hladað iow nu drincan, nu iow dryhten geaf
 ðæt iow Gregorius gegiered hafað
 to durum iowrum dryhtnes welle.
 Fylle nu his fætels se ðe fæstne hider
 kylle brohte, cume eft hræðe.
 Gif her ðegna hwelc ðyrelne hylle
 brohte to ðys burnan, bete hine georne,
 ðy læs he forsceade scirost wætra,
 oððe him lifes drync forloren weorðe.

OE text: Susan Irvine and Malcolm Godden, *The Old English Boethius* (2012), 410–3

[This is now the body of water which the God of hosts named as a comfort for us as earth-dwellers. He said that he desired that ever living waters would flow forth in the world from the innermost being of those under the sky of fully believe in him. It is in little doubt that the well-spring of the body of water is on the kingdom of heaven, that is the Holy Ghost. Thence the saints and the chosen drew it; after, those who did God's bidding directed it through holy books here on earth in diverse manners through the minds of men. Some restrain wisdom's stream within the mind's enclosure, bind it with their lips, so that it does not flow out useless, but the water dwells in man's breast through God's grace, deep and still. Some allow it to disperse in streams across the country. That is not an advisable thing, of such clear water loud and shallow runs across fields until it turns to fenland. But draw for yourselves now to drink, now that the Lord grants to you that Gregory has directed the Lord's spring to your doors. He who brought here a steadfast vessel my fill it now, return again quickly. If here any man has brought o this stream a punctured vessel, mey he remedy it eagerly, less that he scatter the purest of waters or lest the drink of life become lost.]

[8] *The Wanderer*: Kingly behaviour and Boethian teaching

(i) Lines 1–6

Oft him anhaga are gebideð,
metudes miltse, þeah þe he modcearig
geond lagulade longe sceolde
hreran mid hondum hrimcealde sæ,
wadan wræclastas. Wyrd bið ful ared!

[Always the lone-one awaits mercy for himself, the grace of the Measurer, although he—with mind-cares—must long over the waterways stir with [his] hands the ice-cold sea, travel the paths of exile. Fate is fully determined!]

(ii) Lines 34–44

Gemon he selesecgas ond sincþege,

hu hine on geoguðe his goldwine
wenede to wiste. Wyn eal gedreas!
Forþon wat se þe sceal his winedryhtnes
leofes larcwidum longe forþolian,
ðonne sorg ond slæp somod ætgædre
earmne anhogan oft gebindað.
þinceð him on mode þæt he his mondryhten
clyppe ond cysse, ond on cneo lecge
honda ond heafod, swa he hwilum ær
in geardagum giefstolas breac.

[He remembers the hall-men and treasure-giving, how his gold-friend (lord) accustomed him to feast in his youth. Joy is all decayed! Therefore he know, he who must long go without his friend-lord's beloved teachings; then sorrow and sleep at once together often bind the wretched solitary-one. He thinks in his mind that he clasps and kisses his lord, and kn his knee lays hands and head, as he at times before in bygone days enjoyed the gift-seat.]

[9] The Old English translation of Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy*

(i) Metre 2, lines 1–4a

Hwæt, ic lioða fela lustlice geo
sanc on sælum; nu sceal siofigende,
wope gewæged, wreccea giomor,
singan sar-cwidas.

[Formerly I sang many songs joyfully in happy times; now sighing, exhausted by weeping, I, a sad outcast, must sing laments]

(ii) Prose 29, 5

ælc mon witan þæt hit sint ægþer ge twegen naman ge twa þincg, foreþonc and wyrd. Se foreþonc is sio godcunde gesceadwisnes; sio is fæst on þæm hean sceppende þe eall forewat hu hit geweorðan sceall ær ær hit geweorðe. Ac þæt þæt we wyrd hatað,

þæt bið Godes weorc þæt ælce dæg wyrcoð, ægþer ge þæs ðe we gesioð ge þæs þe us ungesewenlic bið.

[everyone can perceive that both two names and two things comprise it, providence and ate. Providence is the divine intelligence; it is fixed in the high creator who foreknows all, how it must turn out before it happens. But that which we call fate, that is God's work, which he effects every day, both that which we see and that which is invisible to us.]

[10] The *Angelicynn* unite under Alfred

886: Her for se here eft west þe aer east gelende, 7 þa up on Sigene, 7 þær winter setl namon. By ylcan geare gesette Ælfred cyning Lunden burg, 7 him all Angelcyn to cirde. Þæt buton Deniscra monna hæfniede was, 7 hie þa befæste þa burg Æþerede aldormen to haldonne.

[‘886: Here the raiding army went west, that had earlier arrived in the east, and then up the Seine and took winter-quarters there. That same year King Alfred occupied the fort of London, and *all the Angelcynn (English) turned to him*, except those that were in captivity to Danish men, and he gave the fort to Aldorman Athelred to hold.’]

Anglo-Saxon Chronicle

[11] Alfred’s obituary

901: Her gefor Ælfred Aþulfiŋ, syx nihtum aer ealra haligra mæssan; *Se wæs cyning ofer eall Ongelcyn* butan ðæm dæle þe under Dena on walde wæs, 7 he heold þæt rice oþrum healfum læs þe ·xxx· wintra, 7 þa feng Eadweard his sunu to rice.

[‘901: Here died Alfred son of Athelwulf, six nights before the Feast of All Hallows. *He was king over all the Angelcynn* except for that portion which was under the control of the Danes, and he held that kingdom twenty-eight and a half years. And then Edward his son succeeded to the kingdom.’]

Anglo-Saxon Chronicle

[12] A celebratory poem on the re-capture of the Danelaw (942)

Her Eadmund cyning, Engla þeoden,
maga mundbora, Myrce geeode,
dyre dæd-fruma, swa Dor scadeþ,
Hwitanwylles geat and Humbra ea,
5 brada brimstream. Burga fife -
Ligoraceaster, and Lindcylene

and Snotingaham, swylce Stamford,
eac [and] Deoraby - Dæne wieran ær
under Norðmannum nyde gebegde
10 on hæþenra hæfte-clommum
lange þrage, oþ hie alysde eft
for his weorþscipe wiggendra hleo,
afera Eadweardes, Eadmund cyning

Here King Edmund, leader of the English,
protector of kin (and men, and maidens), a dear deed-doer,
overran Mercia, bounded as far as Dore,
and Whitwell's Gap, and the Humber River -
5 that broad, brimming stream. The five boroughs –
Leicester, and Lincoln,
and Nottingham, likewise Stamford,
also Derby - the Danes (there) were before
bowed/broken with need under the Northmen,
were in the heathens' bondage of captivity
for a long time, until they after were freed
by His Worship, the protector of warriors,
Edward's son, King Edmund.

Capture of the Five Boroughs, trans. Martin Foys; Old English text from *Old English Poetry in Facsimile* <<https://oepoetryfacsimile.org>>

[13] Judith urges her people to battle

Þa seo *gleawe* het, golde gefrætewod,
hyre ðinenne *þancolmode*
þæs herewæðan heafod onwriðan
ond hyt to behðe blodig ætywan
175 þam burhleodium, hu hyre æt beaduve gespeow.
Spræc ða seo æðele to eallum þam folce:

“Her ge magon sweotole, sigerofe hæleð,
leoda ræswan, on ðæs laðestan
hæðenes heaðorinces heafod starian,

180 **Holofernus unlyfigendes**,
þe us monna **mæst morðra** gefremede,
sarra sorga, ond þæt swyðor gyt
ycan wolde, ac him ne uðe god
lengran lifes, þæt he mid læððum us

185 eglan moste; ic him ealdor oðþrong
þurh godes fultum. Nu ic **gumena** gehwæne
þyssa burgleoda biddan wylle,
randwiggendra, þæt ge recene eow
fysan to gefeohte. Syððan **frymða god**,

190 **arfæst cyning**, eastan sende
leohtne leoman, berað *linde* forð,
bord for breostum ond *byrnhomas*,
scire *helmas* in sceadrena gemong,
fyllan folctogan *fagum sweordum*,

195 *fæge frumgaras*. Fynd syndon eowere
gedemed to deaðe, ond ge **dom** agon,
tir æt tohtan, swa eow getacnod hafað
mihtig dryhten þurh mine hand.”

[The wise woman, fretted in gold, ordered her servant
prudent-minded to unwrap the head of that warrior
and to display it, all bloody as a sign to the city-folk,
to testify how she had found victory in battle.

The noble one then spoke unto all those people:

“Here you can clearly gaze, victorious heroes,
upon the leader of his nation, upon the head
of the most hateful heathen warrior, Holofernes unliving,
who, among men, did us the **worst crimes**,

grievous afflictions, and wished to increase them
yet even more, but God would not grant him
a longer life so that might torment us
with wrongs—I deprived him of life
by the help of God. Now I wish to ask
each of **these men, these city-folk,**
these shield-warriors, to hurry yourselves
swiftly to battle after **the God of Creation,**
the Mercy-fast King, has sent from the east
the radiant beam of light. Bear your *shields* forth,
shields before your breasts and *mailed-shirts*,
gleaming helmets, into the troop of your enemies
and fell their commanders with *splattered swords*,
the *fated first-spears*. Your enemies have been
adjudged to death, and you shall own the **glory**,
honor in the battle, just as the Mighty Lord
has betokened to you all, through my hand.”]

Judith, ll.171 – 98, trans. Hofstetter; Old English text from *Old English Poetry in Facsimile*
<<https://oepoetryfacsimile.org>>

[14] A poem in celebration of West Saxon victory at the Battle of Brunanburh (937)

Her Æpelstan cyning, eorla dryhten,
beorna beahgifa, and his bropor eac,
Eadmund æþeling, ealdorlangne tir
geslogen æt sæcce sweorda ecgum
5 ymbe Brunanburh. Bordweal clufan,
heowan heapolinde hamora lafan,
afaran Eadweardes, swa him geæþele wæs
from cneomægum, þæt hi æt campe oft
wiþ laþra gehwæne land ealgodon,
10 hord and hamas. Hettend crungun,

Sceotta leoda and scipflotan
fæge feollan, feld dennade
secca swate, siðþan sunne up
on morgentid, mære tungol,
15 glad ofer grundas, godes condel beorht,
ecea drihtnes, oð sio æpele gesceaft
sah to *setle*.

[Here [in this year], King Æbelstan, lord of noblemen, ring-giver of soldiers, and his brother also, Prince Edmund, won everlasting glory with sword-edges around Brunanburh. They broke the shield-wall, cut down battle-shields, the remnants of hammers, The sons of Edward, it was only befitting their noble descent from their ancestors that they should often defend their land in battle against each hostile people, hord and home. The enemy perished, Scots men and seamen, fated they fell. The field flowed with blood of warriors, from sun up in the morning, when the glorious star glided over the earth, God's bright candle, eternal lord, till that noble creation sank to its seat.]

The Battle of Brunanburh, ll. 1 – 17a, Old English text from *Old English Poetry in Facsimile* <<https://oepoetryfacsimile.org>>

[15] Rules for monks and nuns, regarding reading

CHAPTER 48

Idleness is the enemy of the soul.
Therefore the sisters should be occupied
at certain times in manual labor,
and again at fixed hours in sacred reading.
To that end
we think that the times for each may be prescribed as follows.

From Easter until the Calends of October,
when they come out from Prime in the morning
let them labor at whatever is necessary
until about the fourth hour,
and from the fourth hour until about the sixth
let them apply themselves to reading.

After the sixth hour,
having left the table,
let them rest on their beds in perfect silence;
or if anyone may perhaps want to read,
let her read to herself
in such a way as not to disturb anyone else.

CHAPTER 49

On the days of Lent,
from morning until the end of the third hour
let them apply themselves to their reading,
and from then until the end of the tenth hour
let them do the work assigned them.
And in these days of Lent
they shall each receive a book from the library,
which they shall read straight through from the beginning.
These books are to be given out at the beginning of Lent.

But certainly one or two of the seniors should be deputed
to go about the monastery
at the hours when the sisters are occupied in reading
and see that there be no lazy sister
who spends her time in idleness or gossip
and does not apply herself to the reading,
so that she is not only unprofitable to herself
but also distracts others.

From *Saint Benedict's Rule for Monasteries*, trans. Leonard J. Doyle and adapted by the
Order of St Benedict

[16] Saint Eugenia dresses as a man to become a Christian, and lives in a monastery

Then prayed she her father that she might go away from his house in the city of Alexandria; she thus desired to seek after the Christians' doctrine, because she had no one in that city, no believing man who could instruct her, seeing that Philip drove away the Christians from Alexandria beforehand, all of them.

So then Eugenia quickly journeyed until she arrived where the Christians were singing with great joy, thus glorifying God: Omnes dii gentium demonia; dominus autem celos fecit: 'All the gods of the heathen are devils, and verily the Lord created the heavens.'

Eugenia then was greatly stirred, and with weeping addressed her two servants, whose names were Protus and Jacinctus, who had been instructed in Latin and in Greek, together with Eugenia, in worldly doctrine, **and were eunuchi, that is to say, castrated**, and were to their mistress true and faithful.

Then Eugenia took them apart in conversation, called them brethren, **and besought that they would shear her hair after the fashion of men, and disguise her with garments as if she were a boy.**

She desired to approach the Christians in the garb of a man, that she might not be betrayed.

Then went these three, and left their companions, until they arrived at the Christians' abode, where they praised their Lord by night and by day.

[Bishop Helenus is made aware of Eugenia's presence]

the bishop bade her be called, greatly thanking Almighty God, that He had been pleased to reveal to him the maiden's will.

Then he took her asunder, **and said to her assuredly how she was no man, and of what kindred she was, and how she, by the virginity which she had chosen, greatly pleased the heavenly King;** and said, that she should extremely suffer persecutions because of her virginity, and should yet be preserved by help of the true Lord, who shields his chosen ones.

To her two servants he said, that they ought to preserve true nobility in their minds, though they served men, and said that Christ addressed them in these gospel-words, 'I call you not servants, but ye are my friends'.

Then the bishop bade the converted maiden still to continue in the man's apparel, until they had all been baptized in the font, and to join secretly in the service in the minster.

Eugenia then dwelt in the minster with a man's mind, though she were a maid, with her two servants, unknown to every one, and observed in her conduct the holy service with gentleness of mind and great humility, and by her holy virtues pleased the Saviour.

She increased in the doctrine of the true faith, and in divine writ, with a good will, and was changed (as it were) from a wolf to a sheep.

From the life of St Eugenia, in *Aelfric's Lives of Saints*, ed. and trans. Walter Skeat

Reading and references

See also references on the corresponding PowerPoint presentation.

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