

## Invasion and Kingship

### [1] *Beowulf*, ll. 175 – 88, the Danes worship at pagan shrines

Hwilum hie geheton æt hærg-trafum  
wig-weorþunga, wordum bædon  
þæt him gast-bona geoce gefremede  
wið þeod-þraum. Swylc wæs þeaw hyra,  
hæþenra hyht; helle gemundon  
in mod-sefan, metod hie ne cuþon,  
dæda demend, ne wiston hie drihten god,  
ne hie huru heofena helm herian ne cuþon,  
wuldres waldend. Wa bið þær ðe sceal  
þurh sliðne nið sawle bescufan  
in fyres fæþm, frofre ne wenan,  
wihte gewandan; wel bið þær þe mot  
æfter deað-dæge drihten secean  
ond to fæder fæþmum freoðo wilnian.

[Sometimes they offered honour to idols at pagan shrines, requested with prayers that the soul-slayer would bring about a remedy for them, in the people's affliction. Such was their custom, the hope of the heathen, they remembered hell in their minds, they did not know the Measurer; the Judge of Deeds, nor did they know the Lord God, nor indeed did they know how to pray to the Protector of the Heavens, Wielder of Glory. Woe unto him who must thrust his soul into the fire's embrace through wicked force, he expects no comfort, nor expects any change in fortune! It will be good for he who, after death-day, might seek the Lord and find security in the embrace of the Father.]

### [2] Caedmon's Hymn

Nu sculon **herigean** **heofonrices weard,**  
**meotodes meahte** and his **modgeþanc,**  
**weorc wuldorfæder,** swa he **wundra gehwæs,**  
ece drihten, **or onstealde.**  
  
He **ærest sceop** **eorðan bearnum**  
**heofon to hrofe,** **halig scyppend;**  
**þa middangeard** **moncynnes weard,**  
ece drihten, **æfter teode**  
**firum foldan,** **frea ælmihtig.**

[Now we must praise the guardian of the Kingdom of Heaven, the might of the Measurer and his mind-thoughts, work of the wonder-father, as he—eternal Lord—authored the beginning

of each wonder. He first fashioned heaven as a roof for the children of the earth, holy Creator; then the Guardian of mankind, eternal Lord, ordained middle-earth, the lands for men, almighty Master.]

### [3] The arrival of the ‘Northmen’

787. Her nam Breohtric cining Offan dohter Eadburge. 7 on his dagum comon ærest .iii. scipu Norðmanna of Hereðalande, 7 þa se gerefa þært rad, 7 he wolde drifan to ðes cininges tune þy he nyste hwæt hi wæron, 7 hine man ofsloh þa; ðæt wæron þa erestan scipu Deniscra manna þe Angelcynnes land gesohton.

[787. Beorhtric took King Offa's daughter Eadburg for his wife, and in his days came the first three ships of the Northmen from Horthaland. The reeve rode there, and tried to force them to go to the king's dwelling, because he did not know what they were; and then he was killed. Those were the first ships of Danish men to seek out of the land of the English.]

### [4] Lindisfarne is destroyed

793. Her wæran *reðe forebycna* cumene on Norðhymbra land, ond ðæt folc earmlice drehtan. Ða wæran *ormete ligræscas*, ond wæran *gesawenæ fyrne dracan on ðam lifte fleogende*, ond sona fylgde mycel hunger. Ond æfter ðam ðes ylcan geares earmlice hæðenra hergung adyligodan Godes cyrigan in Lindisfarennu ee, ðurh reaflac ond manslyht.

793. Here *terrible portents* came about in the land of Northumbria, and miserably afflicted the people: these were *immense flashes of lightning, and fiery dragons were seen flying in the air*, and there immediately followed a great famine, and after that in the same year the raiding of the heathen miserably devastated God's church in Lindisfarne island by looting and slaughter. (*Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* MSS A/F)]

### [5] Alcuin comforts the Bishop of Lindisfarne (793)

Do not be dismayed by this disaster. God chastises every son whom he accepts, so perhaps he has chastised you more because he loves you more. Jerusalem, a city loved by God was destroyed, with the Temple of God, in Babylonian flames. Rome, surrounded by its company of holy apostles and countless martyrs, was devastated by the heathen, but quickly recovered through the goodness of God. Almost the whole of Europe has been denuded with fire and

sword by Goths and Huns, but now by God's mercy is as bright with churches as the sky with stars and in them the offices of the Christian religion grow and flourish. Encourage each other, saying, "Let us return to the Lord our God, for he is very forgiving and never deserts those who hope in him."

Alcuin of York, *Letter to Higbald*, trans. by S. Allott, Alcuin of York (York, 1974)

### [6] King Edmund is killed by the Vikings (869)

Sum swyðe gelæred munuc com suþan ofer sæ fram sancte Benedictes stowe on Æþelredes cyninges dæge to Dunstane ærcebiskeope, þrim gearumær he forðferde; and se munuc hatte Abbo. Þa wurdon hi æt spræce oþþæt Dunstan rehte be sancte Eadmunde, swa swa Eadmundes swurdbora hit rehte Æþelstane cyninge þa þa Dunstan iung man wæs, and se swurdbora wæs forealdod man. Þa gesette<sup>o</sup> se munuc ealle þa gereccednysse on anre bec, and eft ða þa seo boc com to us binnan feawum gearum þa awende we hit on Englisc, swa swa hit heræfter stent.

[...]

Hit gelamp ða æt nextan þæt þa Deniscan leode ferdon mid sciphære hergiende and sleande wide geond land swa swa heora gewuna is. On þam flotan wæron þa fyrimestan heafodmen Hinguar and Hubba, geanlæhte þurh deofol, and hi on Norðhymbralande gelendon mid æscum, and aweston þæt land, and þa leoda ofslogon.

Þa cwæð Eadmund cyning swa swa he ful cene wæs, "þæs ic gewilnige and gewisce mid mode, þæt ic ana ne belife æfter minum leofum þegnum þe on heora bedde wurdon, mid bearnum and wifum, færlice ofslægene fram þysum flotmannum. Næs me næfre gewunelic þæt ic worhte fleames, ac ic wolde swiðor sweltan gif ic þorfte for minum agenum earde, and se ælmihtiga God wat þæt ic nelle abugan fram his biggengum æfre, ne fram his soþan lufe, swelte ic, lybbe ic."

[A certain very learned monk came south over the sea from Saint-Benoît-sur-Loire in the days of King Æthelred to Archbishop Dunstan, three years before he went forth [died]; and the monk is called Abbo. Then they came into conversation until Dunstan explained about Saint Edmund, just as Edmund's sword-bearer had explained it to King Æthelstan when Dunstan was a young man, and the sword-bearer was an elderly man. Then the monk

composed all the narrative into one book, and when the book came to us again within a few years then we translated it into English, just as it remains hereafter.

*[On the virtues of King Edmund]*

Then it eventually happened that the Danish people set out with a ravaging fleet and slaying widely throughout the land just as is their custom. On the ship there were foremost the captains Hinguar and Hubba, united through the devil, and they arrived in Northumberland with spears, and laid waste to that land, and slew the people.

*[Hinguar sails to East Anglia, and blackmails King Edmund, who is advised by a bishop to give in to the raiders' demands]*

Then said King Edmund, as he was very brave, “This I wish and desire with [my] heart, that I will not survive alone after my beloved thanes who were suddenly slain in their beds with their wives and children by these sea-men. It was never customary for me that I should take flight, but I would rather die if I need for my own land, and the almighty God knows that I will never turn from his observances ever, nor from his true love, whether I live or die”.]

From Ælfric's *Life of St Edmund*, Old English text from Peter Baker

### **[7] The *Angelcynn* unite under Alfred:**

886: Her for se here eft west þe ær east gelende, 7 þa up on Sigene, 7 þær winter setl namon. Þy ylcan geare gesette Ælfred cyning Lunden burg, 7 him all Angelcyn to cirde. Þæt buton Deniscra monna hæftniede was, 7 hie þa befæste þa burg Æþerode 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.]

### **[8] Alfred becomes known as king of the Angles**

901: Her gefor Ælfred Aþulfling, syx nihtum ær 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.

[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.]

### [9] Alfred's illness

[H]e was struck without warning in the presence of the entire gathering by a sudden severe pain that was quite unknown to all physicians. Certainly it was not known to any of those who were present on that occasion, nor to those up to the present day who have inquired how such an illness could arise and - worse of all, alas! - could continue so many years without remission, from his twentieth year up to his fortieth and beyond. Many alleged that it happened through the spells and witchcraft of the people around him; others, through the ill-will of the devil, who is always envious of good men; others thought that it was the result of some unfamiliar type of fever; still others thought that it was due to the piles, because he had suffered this particular kind of agonizing irritation even from his youth

Simon Keynes and Michael Lapidge, *Alfred the Great: Asser's life of King Alfred and other contemporary sources* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1987), p. 74.

### [10] 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.

### [11] 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 gesæglica tida ða wæron giond Angelcynn; and hu ða kyninges 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 know that it comes very often into my mind what wise ones there were formerly among the Angelcynnn, 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.’]

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

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

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

Geðenc hwelc witu us ða becomon for ðisse 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 wäre and forbærned, hu ða ciricean *giond eall Angelcynn* stodon maðma and boca gefyldæ [...] forðæm we habbað nu ægðer forlæten ge ðone 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.’]

[14] 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 niedbeðarfosta 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.*’

[15] 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 ærcebiskepe and æt Assere minum biscepe and æt Grimboldi 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 Grimbold 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.’]

[17] 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    welsprynge 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.]

### [18] *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.]

### [19] 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 s 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.]

**Reading** (see also references at the end of the accompanying Powerpoint)

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