

## Some sources of the Old English Boethius

John H. Brinegar  
Virginia Commonwealth University

Alfred's Boethius greatly alters the Latin original. Alfred omits much of Boethius's content and adds a great deal of material, and this has been the focus of much scholarship devoted to his translation. Early studies assumed that Alfred had only imperfectly understood *De consolazione philosophiae* and that his alterations were attempts to render Boethius's text as accurately as he could, perhaps with the aid of a marginal commentary. Until relatively recently, studies of Alfred's sources focused on trying to identify the commentary that he was supposed to have used. Two families of commentaries have been suggested as likely candidates: one attributed to Remi of Auxerre, and the other to an anonymous monk of St. Gallen. Joseph S. Wittig's article 'King Alfred's Boethius and its Latin Sources: a Reconsideration' effectively put an end to this trend, however, by arguing that Alfred had not used a commentary; instead, his additions might reflect knowledge of a small number of separate works. To support this claim, he compared Alfred's translation of *De consolazione* Book III metre xii (the Orpheus meter) with Boethius's Latin and with the glosses in forty-five manuscripts of *De consolazione*, including 'all the Remigian manuscripts, [and] nearly all extant copies of St Gallen, as well as seven other early manuscripts preserving less extensive glosses.'<sup>1</sup> He also proposed plausible sources for 'those additions in the passage which the commentaries do not explain.'<sup>2</sup> After this, he examined five notable additions for which scholars had claimed that Alfred was indebted to the commentary. As a result of his

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<sup>1</sup> J. Wittig, 'King Alfred's Boethius and its Latin Sources: a Reconsideration,' *Anglo-Saxon England* 11 (1983), 157-198, at 163.

investigation, Wittig concluded that no manuscript examined in the study even came close to providing an adequate source for Alfred's additions.

Wittig's investigation is well-founded and convincingly demonstrates that many apparent parallels between glosses and Alfred's additions could actually be extrapolations from *De consolatio* itself or simple reflections of commonplace ideas. As a result, the idea that Alfred's additions primarily rely on a Remigian commentary is now very difficult to uphold. In fact, Wittig's argument strongly suggests that Alfred's additions do not primarily rely on any commentary. As he says, 'one may choose to continue in the expectation that a manuscript containing just the right glosses may yet be found; it will, however, have to be singularly unlike any of those so far known.'<sup>3</sup> In the twenty years since Wittig wrote these words, no such manuscript has been found; it appears, then, that Alfred drew his additional material from a small group of texts, one of which may have been a commentary on *De consolatio*. He may have gotten this material either through direct consultation of texts or through memorial familiarity with them. My investigations of Alfred's additions suggest that their major sources are Bede's *De natura rerum*; Virgil's *Aeneid* and Servius's commentary on it; a mythographical work like that of the Vatican mythographers; Eutropius's *Breviarium*; Gregory the Great's *Homilia XXXIV in Evangelium*; Ambrose's *Hexameron*; and the Biblical books of Wisdom, Sirach, and Proverbs.

Many of Alfred's additions provide information about the natural world; the most likely sources of such information are treatises *de natura rerum*, or 'on the nature of things.' Such treatises typically include information on the natures and courses of the

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<sup>2</sup> Wittig, 'King Alfred's Boethius,' 163.

<sup>3</sup> Wittig, 'King Alfred's Boethius,' 185.

sun, moon, and stars, the composition and partition of the earth, and various kinds of weather. Valerie Flint has noted the immense popularity of these treatises during the Carolingian period;<sup>4</sup> this popularity increases the likelihood that Alfred could have had access to them. The three most influential treatises *de natura rerum* written before 850 are Isidore's *De Natura Rerum*, Bede's work of the same name, and Hrabanus Maurus's *De Universo*, and so it is likely that much of Alfred's information came from one of these. Alfred's additions prove to have almost nothing in common with Hrabanus's book, but show several parallels with both Bede's and Isidore's texts. After comparing Alfred's additions with their closest parallels in Bede and Isidore, Bede appears to be the more likely source; in the few instances in which Isidore seems to provide the better parallel, Alfred could reasonably have been using Ambrose's *Hexameron* rather than either Bede or Isidore. One representative example follows. In I met. v.10-13, Boethius describes the morning and evening star in this way: 'Et qui primae tempore noctis/ Agit algentes Hesperos ortus,/ Solitas iterum mutet habenas/ Phoebi pallens Lucifer ortu'<sup>5</sup> [And that which, at the beginning of night, sets its rise in motion as cold Hesperos, changes its accustomed reins again as Lucifer, paling at the rise of Phoebus].<sup>6</sup> Alfred translates this as 'þone beorhtan steorran þe we hatað morgensteorra, þone ilcan we hatað oðre naman æfensteorra' (10.8-9)<sup>7</sup> [the bright star we call morning star, the same one we call by another name evening star]. This phrasing clearly states that the two stars are one, a

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<sup>4</sup> V. I. J. Flint, 'Thoughts About the Context of Some Early Medieval Treatises *De Natura Rerum*', in her *Ideas in the Medieval West: Texts and Their Contexts* (London, 1988).

<sup>5</sup> All quotations from *De Consolatione Philosophiae* are taken from L. Bieler, ed., *Anicii Manlii Severini Boethii Philosophiae Consolatio*, Corpus Christianorum Series Latina 94 (Turnholt, 1957) [references are to book, prose or metre, and section number].

<sup>6</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all translations from Latin or Old English are my own.

<sup>7</sup> All quotations from the Old English Boethius are taken from *King Alfred's Old English Version of Boethius 'De Consolatione Philosophiae'*, ed. W. J. Sedgefield (Oxford, 1899) [references are to page and line number; abbreviations have been expanded and editorial italics and brackets removed].

point not made so clearly in the Latin text. Alfred similarly translates another, potentially more misleading reference to Vesper and Lucifer in his chapter XXXIX. Here he is translating IV met. vi, which contains the lines ‘Vesper seras nuntiat umbras/ Revehitque diem Lucifer alnum’ (14-15) [Vesper announces the late shadows (of night) and Lucifer brings back the bountiful day]. These lines imply two different stars, but Alfred clearly knows that Lucifer and Vesper are the same star. He expands these lines considerably as follows:

Ac se steorra þe we hatað æfensteorra, þonne he bið west gesewen, þonne tacnað he æfen. Færð þonne æfter þære sunnan on ðære eorðan sceade oð he ofirnð þa sunnan hindan; cymð wiðforan þa sunnan up. Þonne hate we hine morgensteorra, forþam he cymð eastan up; bodað þære sunnan cyme (135.32-136.5)

But the star which we call the evening star, when it is seen in the west it betokens evening. Then it travels after the sun into the earth’s shadow until it overtakes the sun from behind; it rises in front of the sun. Then we call it the morning star, because it rises in the east; it announces the sun’s coming.

This account of the star’s travels between morning and evening shows that Alfred definitely knows that morning and evening star are one, despite the Latin text’s implied separation. Neither Bede nor Isidore mention this star overtaking the sun in its travels; this could be Alfred’s own explanation of how one star can appear both after the sun sets and before it rises. Bede does, however, state that the two stars are the same. In his chapter XIII, he mentions ‘Venus, quae et Lucifer et Vesper’ (204.5-205.1)<sup>8</sup> [Venus, which is both Lucifer and Vesper]. Although Isidore does discuss both Lucifer and Vesper, he never connects them. In fact, in his chapter XXVI, ‘De Nominibus Astrorum’

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<sup>8</sup> All quotations from Bede’s *De Natura Rerum* are taken from *Beda’s Venerabilis Opera Pars I: Opera Didascalica*, ed. C. W. Jones, Corpus Christianorum Series Latina 73a (Turnholt, 1975) [references are to page and line number].

(51)<sup>9</sup> [On the Names of Stars], he gives them separate entries. Thus this passage shows Alfred using material that could have come from Bede but could not have come from Isidore.

Although most of Alfred's additions on the elements have plausible sources in Bede or Isidore, there are some instances in which neither author seems to be a source. The three most notable of these— water preventing the earth from drying up, water having three proper places in the cosmos, and God restraining fire from destroying all other things— all have strong parallels in Ambrose's *Hexameron*. In discussing how water moistens the earth, Alfred says, 'forþam gif þæt wæter hi ne geðwænde, þonne drugode hio and wurde todrifen mid þam winde swa dust oððe axe' (80.17-19) [therefore if water didn't moisten it (i.e. the earth), it would dry up and be driven by the wind like dust or ashes]. On the same topic, Ambrose says:

propterea quia exundat ignis et feruet, etiam aqua exundat in terris, ne eas surgentis solis et stellarum micantium ardor exureret et tenera rerum exordia insolitus vapor laederet (II.3.12)<sup>10</sup>

for the same reason that fire spreads and burns, water spreads on land, so that the burning of the rising sun and sparkling stars may not dry it up, and so that the tender beginnings of things may not be harmed by unaccustomed warmth.

Ambrose is wordier than Alfred, but the basic content of both passages is the same: water keeps the earth from drying up. 'Drugode' and 'exureret' form a close verbal parallel, and there is a further similarity of content. Just prior to explaining why the earth does not dry up, Alfred talks about growing plants, saying 'for þam sype heo bið geleht þæt hio grewð and blewð and westmas bringð' (80.16-17) [by that soaking the earth is moistened

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<sup>9</sup> All quotations from Isidore's *De Natura Rerum* are taken from *De Natura Rerum Liber*, ed. G. Becker, (Amsterdam, 1967) [references are to page number].

<sup>10</sup> All quotations from Ambrose's *Hexameron* are taken from *Hexameron*, ed. K. Schenkl, *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum* 32.1 (Vienna, 1896) [references are to book, section, and line

so that it grows and blooms and brings forth crops]. Similarly, Ambrose's 'tenera rerum exordia' seems to refer to young plants. Thus both passages mention new growth in close connection with water's moistening of the land. Later in Ambrose's discussion of water's presence and function on the earth, another sentence contains a strong parallel with Alfred's diction. Ambrose says, 'terra meridianae plagae torretur ardoribus atque aestu soluta fatiscit in puluerem' (I.3.12) [the earth of the southern zone is parched by burning heat and, broken up by the heat, is reduced to dust]. Alfred's 'dust' exactly translates 'puluerem,' providing further evidence that the *Hexameron* lies behind this passage from his text. Between the two sentences cited above, Ambrose discusses the balance between water and fire, and gives a fairly long list of rivers; this material takes up thirty-one lines in the CSEL edition of the *Hexameron*. This degree of separation greatly reduces the likelihood that both sentences would have been combined in one gloss to a passage in Bede or Isidore, and thus suggests that Alfred had access to a full text of the *Hexameron*.

Alfred adds mythological material to the Boethius in five places. Two of these, the stories of Orpheus and of Odysseus and Circe, are extensive expansions of two of Boethius's meters (III met. xii and IV met. iii respectively). A third, inspired by a single sentence in III pr. xii, is a fairly lengthy account of the giants' rebellion against Jove, which is then explained as a false version of the story of the Tower of Babel. The other two, which again expand on single sentences in the Latin, concern Hercules's slaying of Busiris and his fight with the Hydra; these are much briefer passages than the first three. Alfred's versions of all of these stories seem to be influenced by Servius's commentary

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number]; English translations are from *Hexameron, Paradise, and Cain and Abel*, trans. J. J. Savage, The Fathers of the Church 42 (New York, 1961).

on the *Aeneid*; the second Vatican mythographer also provides close parallels. Again, I'll give one example: Alfred's version of the Hydra story.

Alfred's story is an expansion of Boethius's very brief allusion to the Hydra in *De consolazione*, Book IV. Philosophy says that, in discussing why the evil flourish and the good suffer, doubts multiply 'velut hydrae capita (IV pr. vi. 3) [like the Hydra's heads].' Alfred preserves this simile, but adds to it a brief account of Hercules's fight with the Hydra. He does not use the name 'Hydra,' though, describing it as a serpent with nine heads, which grows seven new heads if one is struck off.<sup>11</sup> Hercules, Jove's son, fought this serpent but could not think how to overcome it until he covered it with wood and burned it up.<sup>12</sup>

Alfred's statement that the Hydra had nine heads places his account in a tradition whose earliest Latin witness is Servius. In his commentary on Book VI of the *Aeneid*, he describes the Hydra, saying 'alii tria volunt habuisse capita, alii novem' (VI.575)<sup>13</sup> [some maintain that it had three heads, others nine]; elsewhere, he calls it 'serpentem inmanis magnitudinis' [a serpent of immense size] and notes that in Latin it is called excetra, 'quod uno caeso tria capita excrescebant' (VI.287) [because, when one head was cut off, three grew up from it]. Servius's material contains the essential information which Alfred includes in his description of the Hydra: it is a serpent with nine heads, which grows more heads if one is cut off. Servius also mentions the Hydra's death, saying that it was 'ab Hercule incendio consumpta' (VI.287) [consumed with fire by Hercules]; thus almost every important detail of Alfred's account could have come from Servius. Isidore's

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<sup>11</sup> Sedgefield, *King Alfred's Boethius*, 127.7-14.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 127.7-10.

<sup>13</sup> All quotations and citations from Servius's commentary are taken from *In Vergilii Carmina Commentarii*, ed. G. Thilo and H. Hagen (Hildesheim, 1961) [references are to book and line number of the *Aeneid*].

*Etymologiae* give a similar description of the Hydra, which is slightly more like Alfred's;<sup>14</sup> Isidore does not connect the Hydra with Hercules, however, lessening the likelihood that he is Alfred's source.

The chief oddity of Alfred's account is the number of heads that the Hydra regenerates after losing one. No description of the Hydra that Alfred could have known says that it grew seven heads in place of one,<sup>15</sup> and only the Vatican *Mythographus* texts mention it having seven heads to begin with. Much like *Mythographus II*, *Mythographus I* describes the Hydra as 'serpens, quinquaginta habens capita, vel, ut quidam dicunt, septem' (28)<sup>16</sup> [a serpent having fifty heads, or, as some say, seven]. Shortly after this, the author mentions regeneration, saying 'uno capite caeso, tria capita crescebant' [when one head was cut off, three grew up]. It is at least conceivable that, through scribal error, 'tria' was replaced by 'septem' in some copy of this material; for example, if the gloss were written with Roman numerals it would be possible to misread 'iii' as 'vii.' Alfred's information could possibly have reached him through such an erroneous text. Faulty memorial transmission of this material might also explain Alfred's description. Even error, however, has to have a source. Since no other written description of the Hydra gives it seven heads, Alfred's account almost certainly draws on the mythographical tradition represented by *Mythographus I* and *II*, or at least shares a common source with them.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Isidore, *Etymologiarum sive Originum Libri XX*, ed. W. M. Lindsay, (Oxford, 1911), book XI, ch.3, sec.34.

<sup>15</sup> Boccaccio, in his *Genealogiae Deorum*, says that the Hydra regenerated seven heads, but gives no source for this information.

<sup>16</sup> All quotations from the Vatican *Mythographus* texts are from *Mythographi Vaticani I et II*, ed. P. Kulcsár, Corpus Christianorum Series Latina 91c (Turnholt, 1987) [references are to page number].

<sup>17</sup> The ultimate source of the seven-headed Hydra is perhaps pictorial. Classical art depicting the Hydra sometimes shows it with seven heads, particularly in small spaces such as seals or incised gems.



As well as adding material about the natural world and mythological figures to his translation, Alfred also incorporates information about several historical Roman personages. Usually Alfred includes this material in order to amplify Boethius's passing reference to some figure. Most of Alfred's information about these figures derives ultimately from Eutropius's *Breviarium ab urbe condita*, a fourth-century summary of Roman history. The *Breviarium* was popular until the early ninth century, when Paulus Diaconus's *Historia Romana* began to replace it. Paulus's work is based directly on the *Breviarium*, and incorporates much of its text wholesale; he adds details to Eutropius's account and continues it through 552 A.D. Because both texts present a great deal of identical information, it is difficult to determine which Alfred might have known. While the *Historia Romana* was more popular by the end of the ninth century, copies of the *Breviarium* were still in circulation, and Alfred and his assistants might have used either of the works. The first addition that draws on Eutropian material concerns Tarquinius Superbus. Alfred says that 'Romana witan on Torcwines dagum þæs ofermodan cyninges for his ofermettum þone cynelican naman of Romebyrig æresð adydon' (34.31-35.2) [in the days of the arrogant king Tarquin the Roman senators, because of his pride, first banished the title of king from Rome]. Boethius mentions this event in II pr. vi. 2, but does not refer to Tarquinius. Following Boethius, Alfred goes on to say that the Romans then wished to drive out the consuls who had driven out the king,<sup>18</sup> adding the following: 'forðæmþe se æftera anweald þara heretogena þæm romaniscum wítum getwyr licode þonne se ærra þara cyninga' (35.4-6) [because the subsequent rule of the consuls pleased the Romans yet worse than the former rule of the kings]. Alfred's additions identify Tarquinius as the last Roman king and emphasize that the Romans

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<sup>18</sup> Sedgefield, *King Alfred's Boethius*, 35.2-4.

resented the consuls more than they had the kings; both of these elements are present in Book I of the *Breviarium*.

Chapters 8 through 13 of Book I of the *Breviarium* tell the story of the expulsion of Tarquinius and the institution of the consuls, clearly indicating that Tarquinius was the last king of Rome. Chapter 13 may lie behind Alfred's emphatic statement that the consuls' rule was less popular than Tarquinius's had been. It begins as follows: 'Sexto decimo anno post reges exactos seditionem populus Romae fecit, tamquam a senatu atque consulibus premeretur' (I. xiii. 28)<sup>19</sup> [In the sixteenth year after the kings had been driven out, the Roman people rebelled because they were being oppressed by the Senate and the consuls]. This emphasizes the strong desire of the people to rid themselves of the consuls, and is also the only event in the story presented as a popular uprising. In chapter 8, concerning Tarquinius's expulsion, Eutropius says, 'Brutus, parens et ipse Tarquinii, populum concitavit et Tarquinio ademit imperium' (I. viii. 26) [Brutus, who was himself related to Tarquinius, stirred up the people and deprived Tarquinius of rule]. Here, Brutus is the driving force behind the expulsion of the kings. Comparing this personal action with the clearly popular rebellion against the consuls might well lead to the conclusion that the Roman people resented the consuls more than they had the kings; Book I of the *Breviarium* is a plausible source for Alfred's additions on this subject. The *Breviarium* could also account for Alfred's knowledge of Fabricius<sup>20</sup> and some of his knowledge of Nero.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> All quotations from Eutropius are taken from *Breviarium ab Urbe Condita*, ed. F. L. Müller, Palingenesia 56, (Stuttgart, 1995) [general references are to book and chapter, followed by page number when necessary].

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 2. xiv.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 7. xiv.

The numerous additions in which Alfred introduces Christian material into his version of *De consolazione* are surprisingly frustrating to analyze. Most of the additions are very brief, and hence do not suggest any particular source; in addition, a number of the longer and more detailed Christianizing additions seem particularly likely to have outside sources, but concerted effort has yet to discover them. The search for sources has not been completely fruitless, however. Unsurprisingly, the Bible is the source of many of the additions; Alfred draws especially on the book of Wisdom. Other identifiable sources include Gregory the Great's *Homilia XXXIV in Evangelium*, from which Alfred draws material about angels. Alfred's echoes of the book of Wisdom are numerous; I'll give one here. In III pr. iv, Philosophy says that virtue confers worth on a person. Alfred amplifies this by saying that each virtue has its particular gift, and then he adds the following:

Swa swa wisdom is se hehsta cræft, and se hæfð on him feower oðre cræftas; ðara is an wærscipe, oðer gemetgung, ðridde is ellen, feorðe rihtwisnes. Se Wisdom gedeð his lufiendas wise and weorðe and gemetfæste and geþyldige and rihtwise, and ælces godes þeawes he gefyllð þone þe hine lufað (62.24-29)

Just so wisdom is the highest virtue, and it has in it four other virtues: the first of them is prudence, the second temperance, the third is fortitude, the fourth justice. Wisdom makes its lovers wise, worthy, sober, patient, and just, and fills the one who loves it with every good attribute.

The first part of this comes from Wisdom 8:7:

et si iustitiam quis diligit  
labores huius magnas habent virtutes  
sobrietatem enim et sapientiam docet et iustitiam et virtutem  
quibus utilius nihil est in vita hominibus

and if a man love justice, her labours have great virtues: for she teacheth temperance and prudence and justice and fortitude, which are such things as men can have nothing more profitable in life.<sup>22</sup>

The relation is clear. It is somewhat odd that Alfred's list of the cardinal virtues does not follow the same order as the biblical one, but this may be due to quotation from memory rather than directly from the text. The second part of this addition does not seem to come from Wisdom; it may perhaps come from some commentary on the book, but such a commentary has not yet been identified. Paul Szarmach, in his article 'Alfred's *Boethius* and the Four Cardinal Virtues',<sup>23</sup> examines both Alcuin's *Liber de Virtutibus et Vitiis* and glosses to *De consolatione* in relation to this passage, but does not mention the verse from Wisdom. He concludes that 'neither the commentary tradition nor the major text presenting the theme of the Four Cardinal Virtues gives direct evidence' of being a source for the passage, suggesting that its second portion may be original to Alfred.<sup>24</sup>

My suggestions about Alfred's sources make it possible to speculate further about the books and ideas current in ninth-century Wessex. Perhaps not too surprisingly, all or part of several patristic texts seem to have been available. Alfred's heavy reliance on Bede's *De natura rerum* for information on the physical world, along with several close verbal parallels between his text and Bede's, strongly suggests that he had access to the full text of that book. Alfred's use of material from widely separated sections of Ambrose's *Hexameron* implies that he also had access to all of that work. Other material from patristic authors, however, could have come from memorial transmission; the

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<sup>22</sup> The Latin text is taken from *Biblia Sacra Iuxta Vulgata Versionem*, ed. R. Weber, OSB, 3rd ed. (Stuttgart, 1983); the translation is taken from *The Holy Bible: Douay Version, translated from the Latin Vulgate (Douay, A.D. 1609; Rheims, A.D. 1582)*, (London, 1956).

<sup>23</sup> P. Szarmach, 'Alfred's *Boethius* and the Four Cardinal Virtues', *Alfred the Wise*, ed. J. Roberts and J. L. Nelson with M. Godden (Cambridge, 1997), 223-235.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 233.

additions that appear to draw on Gregory's *Homiliae*, for example, differ enough from their sources' wording that Alfred need not have seen an actual text. In only two cases would he have had to have the books themselves, and both of those books might reasonably have been in an Anglo-Saxon monastic library. Alfred's preface to his *Pastoral Care* does suggest that many books have been destroyed by the Danish invaders; Alfred's main concern therein is not a lack of books, however, but a lack of people able to read them. More books may have survived the Danes than is commonly supposed, and certainly they could not have destroyed every book in England. Sir Frank Stenton observes that Alfred's preface probably exaggerates the dearth of learning in ninth-century England; western Mercia is not known to have been ravaged by the Danes, and Alfred's Mercian helpers may have been heirs to an unbroken tradition of learning.<sup>25</sup> It is also conceivable that Grimbald or John brought books with them from the Continent. Alfred's use of patristic sources provides more information about specific works current in ninth-century Wessex but does not suggest anything new about the kinds of books that might have been available.

Alfred's historical and mythological sources, on the other hand, do suggest that classical texts were rather better known in his Wessex than has been assumed. The least surprising of these sources is of course Orosius, since his work was obviously available to Alfred's circle. Alfred's use of Eutropius's *Breviarium* is also no shock; in fact, it would be mildly unusual if Alfred were using some other source for Roman history. Alfred's use of a mythological text like the first Vatican mythographer's, while interesting, is not unusual; such texts seem to have been current in the ninth century and would be logical places to look for basic mythological information. The information that

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<sup>25</sup> F.M. Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 3rd ed. (Oxford, 1971), 270-271.

Alfred seems to have drawn from Virgil and Servius is more surprising, though, since it shows a fair familiarity with their writings. Wittig observes that access to classical authors in ninth-century England might be greater than has been supposed,<sup>26</sup> and Janet Bately's edition of the Old English *Orosius* suggests that its translator had some degree of access to a range of classical texts.<sup>27</sup> One can conclude from the degree of Alfred's use of classical texts that some reassessment of their place in Anglo-Saxon intellectual life is in order.

As seen thus far, Alfred draws on a variety of sources for his translation. The text that seems to influence Alfred's alteration of *De consolacione* the most, however, is the Bible. Material from the book of Wisdom permeates the *Boethius* in a way that no other auxiliary source does, and Alfred's revision of *De consolacione* shows the influence of the biblical wisdom literature attributed to Solomon. It is noteworthy that all of Alfred's outside sources, a wider group than at first seems likely, are included ultimately to support a Scripturally based re-envisioning of Boethius's text. However broad the content of Alfred's intellectual milieu was, biblical modes and models seem to have been central to it. Thus, while this study suggests some rethinking of assumptions about the books available in ninth-century England, it ends by reinforcing a very traditional picture of Anglo-Saxon intellectual endeavor.

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<sup>26</sup> Wittig, 'King Alfred's Boethius,' 185.

<sup>27</sup> *The Old English Orosius*, ed. J. Bately, Early English Text Society, ss 6. (London, 1980).