Alfred the Great
- c. 849-899; ruled 871-899
- Son of Æthelwulf; kingdom was divided among his sons Æthelbald and Æthelberht before his death
  - Æthelbald was the king of Wessex on his death, succeeded by his brother Æthelred, Alfred was the secundarius (roughly ‘heir presumptive’) and became king on the death of his brothers
- fought Vikings for several years, but finally defeated them at Battle of Edington
- Got Guthrum to accept baptism with the Treaty of Wedmore, 878
- established treaty line with the Vikings in 886

Alfred’s translation project
- Decided to order the translation of “those works that are most necessary for all men to know” from Latin into OE
- Major works: Bede’s *HE*, Boethius’s *Consolation of Philosophy*, Orosius’s *History against the Pagans*, Gregory’s *On Pastoral Care* and *Dialogues*, Prose Psalter, St. Augustine’s *Soliloquies*
  - Probably had a direct role in translation of Boethius, Gregory, Psalms, and Augustine, but was not sole translator
  - Usually had a nationalist purpose behind them
  - He and his translators did not just literally translate, but added or deleted material that he felt necessary for a modern audience
  - Justification for his project in the preface to *On Pastoral Care* (oldest surviving MS: Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Hatton 20)
- Bald’s *Leechbook* and *Old English Martyrology* may be connected

Asser
- Welsh monk from St. David’s monastery; possibly the bishop of that diocese
- C. 885 asked by Alfred to join the scholars at his court
  - after a year’s illness, joined Alfred and agreed to split time with the court and with St. David’s
  - May have assisted Alfred with *Regula Pastoralis* and *Consolation of Philosophy*
- Made abbot of Exeter monastery c. 890
- Consecrated bishop of Sherborne sometime in the 890’s

Vita Álfredi Regis Angul Saxonum
- “Life of Alfred, King of the Anglo-Saxons,” written c. 893
- Shows influence of Bede, two lives of Louis the Pious, Einhard’s *Life of Charlemagne, Historia Brittonum*, *Vita Alcuini*, Anglo-Saxon Chronicle
- Also quotes Virgil, Sedulius, Aldhelm
Prose style suggests Frankish education or influence of Franks at Alfred’s court
Perhaps written for a Welsh audience, as the Welsh were in disarray and turned to Alfred
Also one of the few medieval sources to refer to the people of England as “Anglo-Saxons”
(all in Latin)

Manuscript and Editions
- **London, BL, Cotton Otho A.xii** – c. 1000, but destroyed in Ashburnham House fire (1731)
- Possible influence on Bryhtferth in the *Historia Regum*, the *Encomium Emmae*, Florence of Worcester’s *Chronicle*, *Annals of St. Neots*, Gerald of Wales’ *Life of St. Æthelberht*
- After dissolution of the monasteries by Henry VIII, owned by John Leland, Archbishop Parker, Lord Lumley, Robert Cotton, then the British Museum
- Transcriptions had been made by Parker and others (CCCC 100; Cambridge, UL Add. 3825; Cambridge, Trinity Coll. O.7.25)
- Editions: Parker (1574); Francis Wise (1722); Petrie (1848); Stevenson (1904)