

The Kingdoms of Anglo-Saxon England (450–1066)

SIMON KEYNES

The discovery and excavation in 1939 of the ship-burial at Sutton Hoo, in Suffolk, brought to light an object which was immediately recognised as a piece of early seventh-century regalia – a sceptre, or symbol of its owner's power from the kingdom of the East Angles.¹ The power is presumed to be that of a king, buried with his regalia in his ship, amidst other objects symbolic of his exalted status, and indicative of his great wealth and extended connections. The further interpretation of such a magnificently mysterious object leads in many directions and remains a matter of informed speculation. It is enough that the object itself remains symbolic of whatever it had once been known to symbolise, and thereby of all that cannot be known about the earliest stages in the constitutional history of the United Kingdom.

By the standards of later periods, the information available for the understanding of Anglo-Saxon England is limited in quantity and scope; yet by no means does it leave one in the dark.² The two main 'narrative' sources are Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, completed in 731,³ and the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, which originated in the early 890s, and was supplemented in various ways thereafter to the time of the Norman Conquest and beyond.⁴ These texts are supplemented by Asser's *Life of King Alfred*, written

¹ T. D. Kendrick, *et al.*, 'The Sutton Hoo Finds', *British Museum Quarterly* 13 (1939) 111–36, at 128; and R. Bruce-Mitford and A. Care Evans (eds.), *The Sutton Hoo Ship-Burial*, 3 vols (London, 1975–83), II, 311–77.

² For guidance on all aspects of the period, see *The Wiley-Blackwell Encyclopedia of Anglo-Saxon England*, M. Lapidge, *et al.* (eds.), 2nd ed. (London, 2014), cited hereafter as *EncyASE*, including lists of rulers (pp. 521–38) and of archbishops and bishops (pp. 539–66).

³ *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, B. Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors (eds.) (Oxford, 1969); L. Sherley-Price and D. H. Farmer, *Bede: Ecclesiastical History of the English People* (London, 1990).

⁴ For the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, see *English Historical Documents c. 500–1042*, D. Whitelock (ed.), 2nd ed. (London, 1979), hereafter *EHD* I, no. 1, available online, with S. Keynes,

in 893, and dedicated to the King himself,⁵ the anonymous *Encomium Emmae Reginae*, written in 1041/1042, in praise of and for presentation to the widowed Queen Emma, the wife first of King Æthelred the Unready and, later, of King Cnut;⁶ and an anonymous *Life of King Edward the Confessor*, written at about the time of the Norman Conquest. These, in turn, are supplemented by an ‘early’ cluster of saints’ *Lives* (e.g. St Cuthbert of Lindisfarne), and by a later cluster (e.g. St Dunstan of Canterbury). These works take their place beside many other works of literature, in prose or poetry, in Latin, English, Welsh, Irish, or Old Norse. The ‘literary’ record is supplemented by the surviving corpus of law-codes (seventh to eleventh centuries), complemented across the same period by surviving capitularies promulgated by church councils, and a corpus of over 1,500 royal and ‘private’ charters. No less important is the evidence of the coinage, throwing light on aspects of a king’s power, and his relations with other kings.⁷ Standing churches from the period include those at Monkwearmouth and Jarrow (Tyne and Wear), so closely associated with Bede himself, and further south the churches at Brixworth and Earls Barton (Northants.), among many others. Surviving objects from the period, and the many forms of material evidence recovered by archaeological excavation, combine to add further dimensions.⁸ Royal estates have been identified and, in some cases, excavated (for example Yeavinger, in Northumberland, and Cheddar, in Somerset) and, in recent years, discoveries of metal-detectorists, most notably the Staffordshire Hoard (2009), and more recently the Watlington Hoard (2015), have added significantly to the picture overall. Alas, discoveries of ‘new’ books and charters are relatively unusual.

The people famously lampooned by Thomas Carlyle as a ‘gluttonous race of Jutes and Angles, capable of no grand combinations, lumbering about in potbellied equanimity’, should not be underestimated. The challenge is to understand how polities of one kind or another emerged, interacted, came to

⁵ ‘Manuscripts of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*’, in R. Gameson (ed.) *The Book in Britain, I: c. 400–1100* (Cambridge, 2012), pp. 537–52.

⁶ S. Keynes and M. Lapidge, *Alfred the Great: Asser’s ‘Life of King Alfred’ and Other Contemporary Sources* (London, 1983), with C. Breay and J. Story (eds), *Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms: Art, Word, War* (London, 2018) (hereafter *ASKingdoms*), no. 60.

⁷ *Encomium Emmae Reginae*, A. Campbell (ed.) (London, 1949), reprinted with supplementary introduction (Cambridge, 1998).

⁸ R. Naismith, *Medieval European Coinage, with a Catalogue of the Coins in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, 8: Britain and Ireland c. 400–1066* (Cambridge, 2017), cited below as MEC.

⁹ *The Oxford Handbook of Anglo-Saxon Archaeology*, H. Hamerow, et al. (eds.) (Oxford, 2011).

be combined, and were further transformed; by what different means they were governed; and what can be identified as significant ‘constitutional’ moments, across a period of over 600 years.⁹ Some form of observed primacy among the kingdoms passed in the seventh century from Kent via East Anglia to Northumbria, followed by a period of dominance by Mercia, personified by King Æthelbald and King Offa, across the eighth century. The ‘rise’ of Wessex in the ninth century culminated with the reign of King Alfred (871–99) who, as king ‘of the Anglo-Saxons’, did more than any other to leave a distinctive mark on the ‘making’ of the unified kingdom of England. Yet it was far more than a story of royal dynasties, the exercise of royal power, and the origins and early development of what became the operative principles, structures, and institutions. The ‘unified’ kingdom of England, as it stood on the eve of the battle of Hastings, was the product of natural, social and economic forces, involving human agencies at all levels, and affected at every stage by unpredictable combinations of circumstances and events. Although there were significant transformations and changes after the defeat of the English army in 1066, there were many respects in which the kingdom and its people adapted to the new circumstances, and in which matters continued much as before.

The Early Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms (450–670)

They came from three very powerful tribes, the Saxons, the Angles and the Jutes. The people of Kent and the inhabitants of the Isle of Wight are of Jutish origin, and also those opposite the Isle of Wight, that part of the kingdom of the West Saxons which is still today called the nation of the Jutes. From the Saxon country, that is, the district now known as Old Saxony, came the East Saxons, the South Saxons, and the West Saxons. Besides this, from the country of the Angles, that is the land between the Jutes and the Saxons, which is called *Angulus*, came the East Angles, the Middle Angles, the Mercians, and all the Northumbrian race (that is those people who dwell north of the river Humber), as well as other Anglian tribes. *Angulus* is said to have remained deserted from that day to this.

BEDE, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, bk 1, ch.15

⁹ The foundations of modern understanding were laid by J. M. Kemble, *The Saxons in England: A History of the English Commonwealth Till the Period of the Norman Conquest*, 2 vols (London, 1849); followed by the works of Stubbs, Freeman, Maitland, and many others.

Bede's statement about the continental origins of the Angles, Saxons and Jutes, remains the point of departure for the received perception of the circumstances in which significant numbers of people crossed the channel in the late fourth and fifth centuries and settled in southern Britain, after the withdrawal of the Romans. Bede was also well aware of the many others who were already there. He chose to categorise the peoples of Britain as speakers of four languages. He regarded the Angles, Saxons and Jutes collectively as speakers of the 'English' language.¹⁰ The 'Britons' were the Brittonic-speaking peoples of Cornwall, Wales, and parts of Scotland, remaining in areas settled by the 'English'.¹¹ The 'Picts', in the far north-eastern part of Britain, spoke a language related to Brittonic. The 'Scots' were the Gaelic-speaking peoples of Ireland. The Picts and the Scots combined later to form Alba, known to the English as Scotland.¹²

Bede reduced what must have been a highly complex process to the simplest of terms, leading to the emergence and consolidation of seven major kingdoms (Kent, Essex, Sussex, Wessex, East Anglia, Mercia and Northumbria). By fastening unsurprisingly on the kingdoms of his own day, Bede laid the foundations for what had come, by the twelfth century, to be regarded as a 'Heptarchy'. Little is known, in any detail, of the circumstances in which the earliest polities took shape in the sixth and seventh centuries. For the duration of this early period, the emerging kingdoms jostled with each other in ways that might have resulted in the dominance of one over the others, if only for a while.¹³

In 597, Pope Gregory the Great despatched the missionary Augustine to preach the word of God to the English people. Augustine established contact with Æthelberht, king of Kent (560–604), whose sway is said to have extended northwards to the river Humber.¹⁴ The king gave the missionaries a dwelling in Canterbury, described as the chief city (*metropolis*) of his

¹⁰ Bede, *HE* i. 1 and iii. 6 (the four languages, or five including Latin), with M. Ní Mhaonaigh, 'Of Bede's "Five Languages and Four Nations": The Earliest Writing from Ireland, Scotland and Wales', in C. A. Lees (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Early Medieval English* (Cambridge, 2012), pp. 99–119.

¹¹ *HE* i. 22 and v. 22.

¹² A. Woolf, *From Pictland to Alba 789–1070* (Edinburgh, 2007), pp. 1–13.

¹³ For recent treatments, see B. Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms of Early Anglo-Saxon England* (London, 1990); A. Williams, *Kingship and Government in Pre-Conquest England c. 500–1066* (London, 1999); D. P. Kirby, *The Earliest English Kings*, rev. ed. (London, 2000); B. Yorke, *The Conversion of Britain 600–800* (Harlow, 2006); and D. N. Dumville, 'Origins of the Kingdom of the English', in R. Naismith and D. A. Woodman (eds.), *Writing, Kingship and Power in Anglo-Saxon England* (Cambridge, 2018), pp. 71–121.

¹⁴ Bede, *HE* i. 25.

dominions. Bede pays particular attention to King Æthelberht's law-code drawn up in writing around 600 'after the Roman manner', and explains that the laws were written in English 'and are still kept and observed by the people'.¹⁵ The text of the law-code is of singular interest for the light it casts on Kentish society at the beginning of what would be a longer process of Christianisation, with heavy protection accorded to the church, and particular concern for the provision of a comprehensive guide to the rates of compensation due for bodily injuries of all kinds.¹⁶ On the basis of archaeological evidence,¹⁷ one is struck by the diversity of material culture and practices across the country, and by the wide social scale represented, inhibiting generalisation and reminding one of all that lies hidden beneath the surface of recorded events.¹⁸ The challenge remains to understand how the information drawn largely from Bede can contribute to its interpretation.

It is Bede who provides what is now a famous list of seven kings, c. 490–670, who (as he saw it) had held primacy or leadership (*imperium*, *ducatus*) over the 'southern' kingdoms.¹⁹ The first two – Ælle of Sussex (c. 490) and Ceawlin of Wessex (c. 590) – are little more than names in early annals and royal genealogies. The third was Æthelberht of Kent (d. 616), renowned for his conversion and for his law-code. The fourth was Rædwald of East Anglia (c. 620), though he did not enjoy such a position until after Æthelberht's death.²⁰ The list ends with the three Northumbrian kings who feature so prominently in Bede's work: Edwin (616–33), Oswald (634–42) and Oswiu (651–70).²¹ The significance of Bede's grouping of these seven kings

¹⁵ Bede, *HE* ii. 5, with *EHD* I, no. 29, and *ASKingdoms*, no. 10 (illustration).

¹⁶ For text, translation and analysis of the early (seventh-century) Kentish law-codes, as transmitted in the twelfth-century *Textus Roffensis*, see L. Oliver, *The Beginnings of English Law* (Toronto, 2002); see also *EHD* I, nos. 29–31. The later Kentish codes, one in the names of Hlothhere (r. 673–85) and Eadric (r. 685–6), and the other in the name of Wihtrud (r. 690–725), afford some sense of the change thereafter, or lack of it.

¹⁷ J. Blair, *Building Anglo-Saxon England* (Princeton, 2018), pp. 103–76, for 'transformation' across the seventh century, drawing on evidence from a wide variety of sites.

¹⁸ For the significance of material evidence in general, see *The Oxford Handbook of Anglo-Saxon Archaeology*, H. Hamerow, et al. (eds.) (Oxford, 2011); with R. Fleming, *Britain after Rome: The Fall and Rise 400 to 1070* (London, 2010), and S. Oosthuizen, *The Emergence of the English* (2019), esp. pp. 59–92. See also C. Fern et al., *The Staffordshire Hoard: An Anglo-Saxon Treasure* (London, 2019) and *ASKingdoms*, no. 15.

¹⁹ Bede, *HE* ii. 5.

²⁰ For discussion, see J. M. Wallace-Hadrill, *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People: A Historical Commentary* (Oxford, 1988), pp. 58–9 and 220–2.

²¹ Bede, *HE* ii. 15, with *ASKingdoms*, nos. 13–14.

continues to be debated.²² It could be a record of succession to a form of supremacy recognised by all in this early period and indicative, therefore, of mutual respect within an enduring polity of 'Britain'. Or it could be regarded, more simply, as the product of an attempt on Bede's part to provide some sense of the changing balance of power, or dynamics, leading up to a glorious age for the Northumbrians, as the story drew closer to his own time.

Archbishop Theodore and the Church of Canterbury (670–725)

Soon after he [Theodore] arrived [at Canterbury] he visited every part of the island where the English peoples lived, and was gladly welcomed and listened to by all. He was accompanied everywhere and assisted by Hadrian, as he gave instruction on the ordering of a holy life and the canonical custom of celebrating Easter. He was first of the archbishops whom the whole church of the English consented to obey. . . . Never had there been such happy times since the English first came to Britain.

BEDE, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, bk IV, ch. 2

With these words and, indeed, throughout book IV of the *Ecclesiastical History*, Bede recognised Theodore, archbishop of Canterbury (669–90), as the key figure in establishing the authority of his office throughout the 'whole church of the English'.²³ What Bede had called the 'great and active controversy about the keeping of Easter' had been settled by King Oswiu's decisive intervention at the synod of Whitby in 664;²⁴ but there is no mistaking Bede's view that it was Archbishop Theodore who took over the key role thereafter. Indeed, Bede's striking portrayal of Theodore would have played its own part in buttressing the authority which the incumbent archbishop of Canterbury came to exercise among the English as a whole, contributing in this way to the role played by successive archbishops, in matters of church and state, from the mid eighth century onwards.

After his initial survey, with Hadrian, of 'every part of the island where the English peoples lived', Theodore summoned a council which met at Hertford on 24 September 672, stressing the need to observe 'all those things

²² B. Yorke, 'The Bretwaldas and the Origins of Overlordship in Anglo-Saxon England', *Early Medieval Studies in Memory of Patrick Wormald*, ed. S. Baxter, et al. (Farnham, 2009), pp. 81–96.

²³ M. Lapidge, 'Theodore', in *EncyASE*, pp. 461–3.

²⁴ Bede, *HE* iii. 25, with W. M. Stevens, 'Easter Controversy', in *EncyASE*, pp. 160–1.

which were conducive to the unity and peace of the church'.²⁵ The report prepared as a record of its proceedings recorded a unanimous decision to 'meet once a year on 1 August, at the place known as *Clofæshoh*'. Although *Clofesho* was indeed the site of many important meetings thereafter, there is no evidence that councils were convened there (to the exclusion of other places) on any regular basis.²⁶ The excerpts provided by Bede from the report which emanated from another council, convened by Archbishop Theodore at Hatfield in 679, are also instructive.²⁷ The report is dated with reference to the regnal years of four kings (Northumbria, Mercia, East Anglia and Kent), in a way which suggests that some kind of equilibrium existed at the time between these kingdoms and that, for an equally good reason, its draftsman could not so easily provide the equivalent information for the three other kingdoms (Wessex, Sussex and Essex).²⁸ We are left in no doubt, however, that Archbishop Theodore had played a significant political role in very difficult circumstances. The lesson conveyed by Bede was that the role of the archbishop of Canterbury transcended that of the secular powers.

The ecclesiastical councils which Theodore initiated in the 670s became, in certain respects, the forerunners of the royal assemblies convened in the separate kingdoms thereafter.²⁹ At Hertford, in 672, Theodore had dictated a record of the decisions taken, and the bishops present had then attached their own signatures. It may be that the gatherings at *Clofesho* and elsewhere help to explain the origin and early development of the form of document known to modern scholarship as the Anglo-Saxon 'royal diploma' by which kings,

²⁵ For the Hertford Capitulary of 672, see Bede, *HE* iv. 5, with C. Cubitt, *Anglo-Saxon Church Councils c.650–c.850* (London, 1995), pp. 249–50, and S. Keynes, 'Church Councils, Royal Assemblies, and Anglo-Saxon Royal Diplomas', in G. R. Owen-Crocker and B. W. Schneider (eds.), *Kingship, Legislation and Power in Anglo-Saxon England* (Woodbridge, 2013), pp. 17–182, at 18–20.

²⁶ For a list covering the province of Canterbury from 672 to 845, see Cubitt, *Church Councils*, pp. 247–88. The location of *Clofesho* itself (a name denoting spurs of land with a cleft between them), so well known in its day, remains unidentified, though documentation from the meeting there on 12 Oct. 803 (*CantCC* 32–3) suggests an association with the diocese of Leicester.

²⁷ For the Hatfield Capitulary of 679, see Bede, *HE* iv. 17, with Cubitt, *Church Councils*, pp. 252–6, and Keynes, 'Councils, Assemblies and Royal Diplomas', pp. 19–20.

²⁸ For the complications, see *HE* iii. 30 (Essex), iv. 12 (Wessex; Mercia and Kent), and iv. 15 (Wessex and Sussex). The council of Hatfield [in Ecgrith's 10th year] took place after the battle of the Trent, between Ecgrith of Northumbria [in his 9th year] and Æthelred of Mercia (*HE* iv. 1).

²⁹ Cubitt, *Church Councils*, pp. 86–7; Keynes, 'Councils, Assemblies, and Royal Diplomas', pp. 18–20; and B. Snook, 'Who Introduced Charters into England: The Case for Theodore and Hadrian', in B. O'Brien and B. Bombi (eds.), *Textus Roffensis: Law, Language, and Libraries in Early Medieval England* (Turnhout, 2015), pp. 257–89, at 279–83.

acting at their own assemblies, granted land to favoured parties on privileged terms. The earliest example of such a diploma, surviving in its original form, is one issued in the name of Hlothhere, king of Kent, dated 679, with the consent of Archbishop Theodore.³⁰

An apparent reflection of formal relations between two of the major Southumbrian kingdoms at about this time is provided by West Saxon and Kentish law-codes of the 690s. The vast wooded area between the two kingdoms of Wessex and Kent, described in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (200 years later) as the ‘great wood’ (then, as now, known as the Weald), seems to have created difficulties when those up to no good tried to pass unnoticed from one kingdom to another. In the law-code of Ine, king of the West Saxons (688–726), ch. 20, we read: ‘If a man from a distance or a foreigner goes through the wood off the track, and does not shout nor blow a horn, he is to be assumed to be a thief, to be either killed or redeemed.’ An identical provision occurs at the end of the law-code of Wihtred, king of Kent (695). The people of Kent are said in the *Chronicle* to have made terms with Ine in 694, and the Kentish and West Saxon law-codes are preserved independently of each other; so, the occurrence of the same clause in two law-codes of much the same date, yet from different kingdoms, may indicate that a formal agreement between the kingdoms was reached, in the late seventh century, in an attempt to resolve the issue.³¹

The Mercian Supremacy (725–825)

All these kingdoms (*prouvinciae*) and other southern districts right up to the Humber, together with their various kings, are subject to Æthelbald, king of the Mercians.

BEDE, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, bk V, ch. 23

In naming the bishops currently in office and the kingdoms to which each belonged, Bede provides impeccable contemporary evidence that at the time of his writing, in 731, the kingdoms of Kent, Essex, East Anglia, Wessex, Mercia, the people west of the Severn [the *Magonsæte*], the *Hwicce* [in

³⁰ S 8 (*CantCC* 2), in *EHD* I, no. 56 (translation), with *ASKingdoms*, no. 19 (original). Anglo-Saxon charters are cited by their number in the ‘Electronic Sawyer’ (online), which provides further details.

³¹ *EHD* I, nos. 30–1 (translation). For discussion, see P. Wormald, *The Making of English Law: King Alfred to the Twelfth Century*, I: *Legislation and Its Limits* (Oxford, 1999), p. 103; Oliver, *Beginnings of English Law*, pp. 162–3 and 179–80; and S. Jurasinski, ‘Royal Law in Wessex and Kent at the Close of the Seventh Century’, in S. Jurasinski and A. Rabin (eds.), *Languages of the Law in Early Medieval England* (Leuven, 2019), pp. 25–44.

Worcestershire], Lindsey, and Sussex, partook together in what has long been recognised as a period of sustained Mercian ‘supremacy’ south of the river Humber.³² Five years later, in 736, the draftsman of a charter of Æthelbald, king of the Mercians (716–57), still extant in its original form, styled him ‘king not only of the Mercians, but also of all the kingdoms (*provinciae*) called by the general name “south English” and, in the witness-list, ‘king of Britain’.³³ The rulers of the Mercians could trace the origins of their dynastic power back to Penda, in the mid seventh century; but the means by which they established, extended and exercised their dominance over the various Anglian peoples and religious houses of the midlands can only be imagined. No doubt, much arose from personal bonds formed with the leaders of many smaller groups, coming together for collective security and strength; and more would have depended on the dynamics which linked royal power to particular religious houses across the midlands, from Crowland (Lincs.) to Repton (Derbys.), and elsewhere.³⁴ No less important was the effective exploitation of available resources, including lucrative tolls on trade in London,³⁵ and the subjugation of peoples and kingdoms further afield. The process by which the Mercians, under King Offa (757–96), sought to transform the basis of their power becomes more clearly visible in the 780s, but fell apart thereafter.

From the outset, the maintenance of relations between the secular and religious orders was as important as the extent of power and the means of its exercise. Two letters, written independently and within about ten years of each other, show how such matters became increasingly strained, both north

³² The foundations of modern understanding were laid in 1918 by Sir Frank Stenton, consolidated in his *Anglo-Saxon England*, 3rd ed. (Oxford, 1971), pp. 202–38. For more recent studies, moving in different directions, see *Mercia: An Anglo-Saxon Kingdom in Europe*, M. P. Brown and C. A. Farr (eds.) (London, 2001); *Æthelbald and Offa: Two Eighth-Century Kings of Mercia*, D. Hill and M. Worthington (eds.) (Oxford, 2005); A. Burghart, *The Mercian Polity, 716–918* (Routledge, 2018); and Blair, *Building Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 179–231.

³³ S 89 (*Worc.*), in *EHD* I, no. 67 (translation), with *ASKingdoms*, no. 38 (original). For the *Hwicce* and the *Magonsæte*, see P. Sims-Williams, *Religion and Literature in Western England 600–800* (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 16–53.

³⁴ For perceptions of Æthelbald from Crowland, see *Guthlac: Crowland’s Saint*, ed. J. Roberts and A. Thacker (Donington, 2020), with *ASKingdoms*, no. 39 (*Guthlac Roll*); and M. Biddle and B. Kjølb-Biddle, ‘The Repton Stone’, *ASE* 14 (1985), 233–92, for his burial and commemoration.

³⁵ For the toll charters, as a group, see S 88 (*Roch* 2), with *EHD* I, no. 66 (translation). For further discussion, see S. E. Kelly, ‘Trading Privileges from Eighth-Century England’, *Early Medieval Europe* 1 (1992), 3–28, with *Charters of St Paul’s, London*, S. E. Kelly (ed.), (Oxford, 2004), pp. 15–16 and 148–52; and R. Naismith, *Citadel of the Saxons: The Rise of Early London* (London, 2019), pp. 95–8, with *MEC*, pp. 156–57.

and south of the Humber, in the early eighth century and, from this stage, how those in power responded. In a letter to Egbert, bishop of York, written in 734, Bede himself expressed his view that ever since the death of Aldfrith, king of the Northumbrians, in 705, relations had been going from bad to worse.³⁶ A decade later, in the mid-740s, the English missionary Boniface, fully engaged with his work among the Germanic peoples on the continent, wrote to Æthelbald, king of the Mercians, berating him for his loose living, for the widespread violation of church privileges, and the appropriation of church revenues.³⁷ In urging the king to set a better example, Boniface adds that the abuses had begun in the time of Ceolred, king of the Mercians (709–16), and Osred I, king of the Northumbrians (706–16). Boniface also sent a strongly worded letter to Archbishop Cuthberht, complaining that monks were forced to work on royal buildings, ‘a thing unheard of anywhere in the Christian world except only among the English people’.³⁸

The archbishop’s response, in 747, was to convene a council of the church at *Clofesho* at which he set down, in thirty chapters, a comprehensive programme of regeneration and reform.³⁹ He sought to ensure (for example) that proper training be provided for those charged with pastoral care; and he closed with a report of an extended debate on how the religious orders must learn to pray for and respect the secular orders, for their own protection and so that all might live together in harmony. In a royal assembly convened at Gumley (Leics.) in 749, King Æthelbald took matters further by granting privileges to the church in the form of a royal charter. Soon afterwards a dossier of the key texts was produced, probably at Canterbury, perhaps intended for wider circulation.⁴⁰ It comprised the texts of Boniface’s letters to the king and to the archbishop; the archbishop’s canons from the council of *Clofesho*; King Æthelbald’s charter; and an abridged version of Pope

³⁶ EHD I, no. 170 (translation); Sherley-Price and Farmer, *Bede: Ecclesiastical History*, pp. 337–51.

³⁷ EHD I, no. 177 (translation).

³⁸ *Councils and Ecclesiastical Documents relating to Great Britain and Ireland*, A. R. Haddan and W. Stubbs (eds.), 3 vols (Oxford, 1869–78) III, pp. 376–83, with Emerson, *Letters of Boniface*, pp. 136–41.

³⁹ For the *Clofesho* Capitulary of 747, see *Councils*, ed. Haddan and Stubbs, III, 360–76, and J. Johnson, *A Collection of the Laws and Canons of the Church of England*, 2 vols (Oxford, 1850) I, pp. 240–62, with Cubitt, *Church Councils*, pp. 99–124 (pastoral care) and 125–52 (liturgical provisions).

⁴⁰ S 92, from an unidentified archive, with S. Keynes, ‘The Reconstruction of a Burnt Cottonian Manuscript: The Case of Cotton MS. Otho A. I’, *British Library Journal* 22 (1996), 113–60, at 116–19; *William of Malmesbury, Gesta Regum Anglorum*, R. Thomson (ed.), 2 vols (Oxford, 1998–9), i. 113–19, and ii. 62–3; and D. Pratt, *The Political Thought of King Alfred the Great* (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 140–1.

Gregory's *Pastoral Care*, for more general instruction. When circulated in this form, the dossier would have conveyed much the same message as Bede had intended for readers of his *Ecclesiastical History* about the need to avoid conflicts of interest between the secular powers and the religious orders, but here packaged for its intended (contemporary) audience in a way which gave it greater authority and impact.

Æthelbald was succeeded by Offa, king of the Mercians (757–96), who proved able, in the 760s and 770s, to build up a considerable, even unprecedented, degree of power: protected by his dyke in the west against incursions from Wales;⁴¹ able to consolidate his rule across the midlands; and eager to raise the kingship of the Mercians to new heights, especially for the benefit of his son Ecgrifith. A short text known to modern scholarship as the 'Tribal Hidage' names over twenty-five Anglian peoples, perhaps long under Mercian rule, conveying an impression of Mercia itself as a political entity which, not least in the complexity of its composition, might have differed from other southern kingdoms. Little is known of the process by which Offa was able to extend and maintain his authority over them, and then over the more distant polities, including the kingdoms of East Anglia, Essex, Kent and Sussex.⁴² Yet a remarkable sequence of events, in 785–7, shows how Offa, at the height of his power, was prompted to conceive and able to achieve a larger and especially significant purpose. By the mid-780s, nearly thirty years into his reign, a major concern for Offa was that the archbishop for the whole of the 'southern' province remained in Canterbury, though Mercia was patently the dominant secular power in its midland strongholds, with Offa's rule extending to the south and east over Kent and East Anglia. Offa wished to modify the structure of the English church, in its accommodation to the secular order, by reducing the extent of the archbishopric of Canterbury, and thereby creating what would then become a second archbishopric for Southumbria, in the heart of his own kingdom, at Lichfield.

One can but imagine how the plan was taken forward. In 785, King Offa, accompanied by his queen Cynethryth, their son Ecgrifith, and four Mercian ealdormen, attended a church council convened at Chelsea, taking advantage

⁴¹ Asser, *Life of King Alfred*, ch. 14, describing Offa as a king 'who terrified all the neighbouring kings and provinces around him, and who had a great dyke built between Wales and Mercia from sea to sea'; see also K. Ray and I. Bapty, *Offa's Dyke: Landscape and Hegemony in Eighth-Century Britain* (Oxford, 2016).

⁴² S. Keynes, 'England, 700–900', in R. McKitterick (ed.), *The New Cambridge Medieval History*, II: c. 700–c. 900 (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 18–42, at 21–5; with Dumville, 'Kingdom of the English', pp. 97–8.

of the occasion to issue a charter in which he demonstrated his power in Kent.⁴³ In 786 Pope Hadrian I (772–95) commissioned George, bishop of Ostia, and Theophylact, bishop of Todi, to act as his legates, charged to examine how matters stood among the English. They were initially received by Archbishop Jænberht and then by King Offa; and after that, they attended a meeting with Offa and Cynewulf, king of the West Saxons (r. 757–86). At this point the legates parted company: Theophylact went deeper into Mercia, and George went north to meet with Ælfwald I, king of the Northumbrians (778–88), Eanbald, archbishop of York (779–96), and others. In his report to the Pope, George explains how he brought before them a capitulary of twenty chapters and provides a list of witnesses representing the secular and ecclesiastical orders of the north. He explains further how, on returning south, they joined King Offa, Archbishop Jænberht and many others at another council of the Mercians, and how ‘the separate chapters were read in a clear voice and lucidly expounded both in Latin and in the vernacular, in order that all might understand’, followed by another impressive list of the witnesses.⁴⁴ The report, with the embedded capitulary, provides a detailed view of the dynamics of church and state at this early period, as the legates moved between and interacted with various interested parties. Bishops, ‘in their councils’, are forbidden from judging secular matters (*secularia*), while kings and princes are urged to exercise their own powers with all due care. There should be concord and unanimity everywhere, between kings and bishops, ecclesiastics and laymen, and all Christian people (c. 14).

It is only from awareness of the outcome that one begins to realise how much the legates had left unsaid. The immediate outcome of the legatine visit was a synod at which the see of Lichfield was elevated to archiepiscopal status, significantly reducing Canterbury’s own authority, followed by Hygeberht’s installation as Lichfield’s first archbishop. It would appear, moreover, that Hygeberht’s first task, perhaps indeed the object of the exercise, was to officiate at the coronation of Offa’s son, Ecgrith, as king. It was the first recorded coronation of an Anglo-Saxon king, and it took place in his father’s lifetime. Since Offa would have been well aware of Frankish

⁴³ S 123 (*CantCC* 22), with *ASKingdoms*, no. 43 (original).

⁴⁴ For the Legatine Capitulary of 786, embedded in the report, see *Councils*, Haddan and Stubbs (eds.), III, 447–62, with Johnson, *Canons* I, 266–85, and *EHD* I, no. 191 (translation). For further discussion, see Cubitt, *Church Councils*, pp. 153–90; and J. Story, *Carolingian Connections: Anglo-Saxon England and Carolingian Francia c. 750–870* (Aldershot, 2003), pp. 55–92.

(Carolingian) precedent,⁴⁵ it seems that he sought to overcome resistance in Canterbury in order to achieve what he wished for his son and, in the longer run, for the kingdom of the Mercians.

Among those who played a significant role in the legatine mission of 786 was Alcuin of York, already renowned as a scholar and teacher. Alcuin is named in the legatine report as a representative (*legatus*) of Ælfwald, king of the Northumbrians, and played a significant part in framing the capitulary itself.⁴⁶ It seems, moreover, that he chose to accompany the legates on their return to Frankia in 786, and soon found a place at Charlemagne's court.⁴⁷ There he developed the habit of writing letters of friendship, guidance, censure and consolation to a wide circle of recipients, including many in Britain, from the friends of his upbringing in York to kings, archbishops, bishops, and many others. Collectively Alcuin's letters provide an invaluable commentary, from his refreshingly 'Northumbrian' perspective, on the course of events in the late eighth century, as seen by one with his feet now in Frankia but with his head and his heart in what always remained his homeland. From him we gain understanding of the hopes which many had placed in Offa's consecrated son; of what the Viking attacks of the early 790s signified as manifestations of God's anger on the English people for their sins; and why the 'death of kings' in 796 (Offa of Mercia, his son Ecgrith, and Æthelred I of Northumbria) was so disheartening. Alcuin's letters helped posterity to appreciate how much was felt to depend on holders of office, in the religious and secular orders, discharging their appointed duties.⁴⁸

The 'Mercian Supremacy' began to fall apart in the aftermath of Offa's death and the church of Canterbury resumed its full authority. In October 803, Archbishop Æthelheard, formerly abbot of Louth (Lincs.), who had succeeded Jænberht as archbishop of Canterbury, presided at a council at *Clofesho*. One of the two surviving decrees issued from the council abolished the archiepiscopal status of the see of Lichfield and restored the primacy to

⁴⁵ For the Carolingian background, see J. Nelson, *King and Emperor: A New Life of Charlemagne* (London, 2019), pp. 69–72.

⁴⁶ Cubitt, *Anglo-Saxon Church Councils*, pp. 165–90; Bullough, *Alcuin*, pp. 346–56; and B. Carella, 'Alcuin and the Legatine Capitulary of 786: The Evidence of Scriptural Citations', *Journal of Medieval Latin* 22 (2012), 221–56, strengthening the case for Alcuin.

⁴⁷ Bullough, *Alcuin*, pp. 336–46; Nelson, *King and Emperor*, esp. pp. 224–5 (papal legates 786) and 315–18.

⁴⁸ Bullough, *Alcuin*, pp. 81–102; *ASKingdoms*, nos. 48, 77 and 140; and S. Keynes, "The 'Canterbury Letter-Book': Alcuin and After", *Manuscripts in the Anglo-Saxon Kingdom: Cultures and Connections*, ed. C. Breay and J. Story (Dublin, 2021), pp. 119–40.

Canterbury.⁴⁹ The other asserted the freedom of monasteries from secular lordship,⁵⁰ leading soon afterwards to an extended dispute between Wulfred, archbishop of Canterbury (805–32), and the Mercian king.⁵¹ On 27 July 816, Archbishop Wulfred presided over a major council of the church at Chelsea. The capitulary affords further evidence of Archbishop Wulfred's determination to assert the freedom of the religious orders from interference by secular powers.⁵²

It is hard to comprehend the apparent implosion of the Mercian regime in the 820s. The Mercian polity had dominated the Southumbrian kingdoms for about 100 years, yet its collapse in the 820s seems to have begun from within, leading first to the defeat of King Beornwulf by Ecgberht of Wessex at the battle of *Ellendun* (Wroughton, Wilts.) in 825, and the loss of Mercian authority in the south-east, and then to Ecgberht's conquest of Mercia itself in 829, 'and everything south of the Humber'. The West Saxon chronicler, in the early 890s, was moved in this connection to appropriate Bede's list of the seven overlords of Southumbria, and to add Ecgberht's name as the eighth, hailing him as *Bretwalda* ('ruler of Britain'). Both Æthelbald and Offa had been accorded similarly inflated styles in their own lifetimes; and it may be that the chronicler sought in this way to suggest that by his conquest of Mercia, Ecgberht had achieved the same level of distinction.

The Mercian 'legacy' to posterity might not have been what King Offa had intended, but it was distinctive and enduring.⁵³ The gold and silver coinages of King Offa, including a series carrying portraits of the king, a gold mancus which imitates a contemporary Arabic dinar, and (uniquely for the whole period) coinage struck in the name of his wife, Queen Cynethryth, have long been renowned for their artistic quality and monetary interest.⁵⁴ The mounted warrior depicted on the 'Repton Stone', excavated in 1979 in the church where Æthelbald was buried, is presumed to represent the King himself. Most tantalising, however, is the 'sword which belonged to King Offa', bequeathed by Æthelstan Atheling (d. 1014) to his brother Edmund Ironside (d. 1016), and thus a Mercian heirloom in 'West Saxon' hands,

⁴⁹ S 1431a (*CantCC* 32), with *EHD* I, no. 210, and *AS Kingdoms*, no. 44 (original).

⁵⁰ S 1431b (*CantCC* 33), with Brooks, *Early History*, p. 179.

⁵¹ For this clash between 'church' and 'state', see *Charters of Christ Church*, ed. Brooks and Kelly, pp. 198–200, and *EncyASE*, pp. 511–12.

⁵² The Chelsea Capitulary of 816, in *Councils*, ed. Haddan and Stubbs, III, 579–85, with Johnson, *Canons*, I, 300–9, and Cubitt, *Church Councils*, pp. 191–203.

⁵³ Blair, *Building Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 179–231, citing unpublished work by M. Capper.

⁵⁴ Naismith, *MEC*, pp. 132–8; with *ASKingdoms*, nos. 45 and 46.

treasured by the half-brothers of King Edward the Confessor.⁵⁵ Above all, the age of the Mercian supremacy would not be forgotten by those north of the Thames and south of the Humber, which was more than enough to ensure that the legacy would remain an important factor in the politics of the tenth and eleventh centuries.

Upheaval and Realignment in Southumbria (c. 830–80)

And we order that two written copies of this reconciliation, identical throughout, be written; and the archbishop is to have one copy, with the charters of Christ Church, and the kings Ecgberht and Æthelwulf the other, with their own charters of inheritance.

Council of Kingston, 838

The transition from the Mercian ‘supremacy’ via an ‘ascendancy’ of Wessex to what would later become a unified kingdom of the English is the essence of the continuing story of constitutional change before the Norman Conquest. The process had begun with King Ecgberht’s ‘conquest’ of the Mercians in the 820s. Thereafter, he was able to extend his power eastwards into Kent and to make secure his rule south of the Thames; and it was on this basis, in the longer run, that he and his son Æthelwulf (839–58) were able to meet the increasingly severe threat posed by invading Viking armies. Ecgberht and Æthelwulf might well have seen the way forward as the creation of an accord or understanding between successive kings of the extended kingdom of the West Saxons (including the south-east), and the archbishops of Canterbury; while the incumbent archbishop would certainly have been eager to protect the interests of endangered religious houses. It remained, however, a story in which Mercia, as well as Wessex, would have a crucial part to play.⁵⁶

Once the authority of the church of Canterbury had been re-affirmed, at the council of *Clofesho* in 803, the position of the archbishop would have been significantly strengthened.⁵⁷ In 838, a formal agreement was drawn up between Ecgberht and Æthelwulf, on the one hand, and Archbishop Ceolnoth (833–870), on the other. It had been agreed (as part of a

⁵⁵ S 1503 (*CantCC* 142), with *EHD* I, no. 129.

⁵⁶ S. Keynes, ‘The Control of Kent in the Ninth Century’, *Early Medieval Europe* 2 (1993), 111–31, and further below, on developments in the 870s.

⁵⁷ *Canterbury Professions*, M. Richter (ed.) (Torquay, 1973), with *EncyASE*, pp. 178–9.

'reconciliation' between the two parties) that the kings and their heirs should ever after have 'firm and unbroken friendship' from the archbishop and his successors; and that the archbishops and community of Christ Church, Canterbury, could always be sure of receiving 'patronage and protection' from the king. The 'Kingston Accord' of 838 marked the establishment, in effect, of a 'special relationship' between the archbishops of Canterbury and the kings of the West Saxons. The endorsement, given above at the head of this section, is most unusual, and indicative of the particular significance attached to the record. It is hard, indeed, to resist the conclusion that a new 'West Saxon' dispensation had emerged and been recognised.⁵⁸ If the new dispensation was intended to ensure greater 'friendship' between the secular and ecclesiastical orders, it might help to explain why the series of church councils, so significant in the seventh to ninth centuries, appears to end with the confirmatory meeting convened *æt Astran* in 839.

The kingdom of Wessex emerged, in the second half of the ninth century, to take what would become a lead in resistance to the common external threat. In 853, King Æthelwulf sent his youngest son, Alfred, to Rome, where he is said to have been 'consecrated' king, though it is likely that the nature of the ceremony was purposefully misrepresented, or simply misunderstood.⁵⁹ In 855 Æthelwulf is said to have 'conveyed by charter the tenth part of his land throughout all his kingdom to the praise of God and his own eternal salvation'. This would have been regarded as a generous act and, by virtue of it, the King and his counsellors would have hoped to gain divine support in their struggle against the Vikings, as well as the support of those on whom they depended.⁶⁰ No less remarkable was the king's decision, in the same year, to make the long journey south to Rome, accompanied by an entourage which included his youngest son, Alfred. The King was away for a year, returning in 856 with Judith, daughter of Charles the Bald, king of the Franks, as his new queen.⁶¹ The extended and close contact between the West Saxon and Frankish royal families was a remarkable outcome for Æthelwulf, much

⁵⁸ Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 234; Brooks, *Early History*, pp. 146–7 and 197–203; S. Keynes, 'The West Saxon Charters of King Æthelwulf and His Sons', *EHR* 109 (1994), 1109–49, at 1112–14; Cubitt, *Church Councils*, pp. 80 and 237–8; Nelson, *ODNB Æthelwulf* (online); Pratt, *Political Thought*, pp. 18–19 and 45–8.

⁵⁹ *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* 853, in *EHD* I, no. 1; Asser, ch. 8; with a papal letter, in *EHD* I, no. 219. Alfred's journey to Rome left its mark in the *Liber Vitae* of Brescia, a religious house in northern Italy.

⁶⁰ *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* 855, in *EHD* I, no. 1; Asser, ch. 11; *Charters of Malmesbury Abbey*, ed. S. E. Kelly (Oxford, 2005), pp. 65–91.

⁶¹ Asser, *Life of King Alfred*, ch. 11.

to the advantage of the West Saxon line. At the same time, it led to shared appreciation of the threat posed by the Viking raids, and a deeper understanding of Vikings as instruments of divine wrath inflicted on the English for their manifest and manifold sins, to be countered by proper observance of the Christian life, including penance, fasting, prayer, alms-giving, and pleading for the intercession of the saints.⁶²

There were also developments which illustrate the emergence in Wessex of a strong sense of dynastic identity and control. Asser tells how, during King Æthelwulf's absence, his son Æthelbald had rebelled against him and how, as a result, the kingdom was divided, with Æthelwulf assigned the eastern part and Æthelbald the 'more important' western part.⁶³ On his return, Æthelwulf allowed the division to stand.⁶⁴ Clearly following Carolingian example, and assuming powers which were perhaps unprecedented among the English, Æthelwulf had a document drawn up for the guidance of his sons, so that they 'should not quarrel unnecessarily among themselves after the death of their father'.⁶⁵ The kingdom itself was to be divided between Æthelwulf's two eldest sons, Æthelbald (in the west) and Æthelberht (in the east, including Kent); and his own inheritance was to be divided between his children. Æthelwulf died in 858, and Æthelbald at once disgraced himself by marrying his father's widow, living lawlessly thereafter until his death in 860. It was then agreed among the surviving brothers and counsellors that Æthelberht should succeed to whole kingdom; and on his death, in 865, Æthelred similarly succeeded to the whole. In this way, division was averted. In constitutional terms, the kingdom of the West Saxons, now extending across southern Britain from Cornwall to Kent, had come of age.

The main factor determining the course of events in the central decades of the ninth century was the increasing incidence and impact of the Viking raids. There had been early raids on the south coast in the 780s, and on Lindisfarne and elsewhere in the 790s; but the threat intensified thereafter and was perhaps most strongly felt from the 830s onwards. The 'heathen army' which had arrived in 865 was supplemented by another in 871, identified by the chronicler as 'a great summer army', and the movements

⁶² The principle is articulated in a text said to represent a vision of an English priest, sent by a 'king of the English' (Ecgberht or Æthelwulf) to Charles the Bald, incorporated in a set of ninth-century Frankish annals; see J. L. Nelson, *The Annals of St-Bertin* (Manchester, 1991), pp. 42–3.

⁶³ Asser, *Life of King Alfred*, ch. 12. ⁶⁴ Asser, *Life of King Alfred*, ch. 13.

⁶⁵ Asser, *Life of King Alfred*, ch. 16; with Alfred's will, in *Alfred the Great*, pp. 174–5 and 314.

of an evidently large and presumably combined force are represented thereafter by the continuing record of the winter camps.⁶⁶ The impact throughout the country was little short of devastating. In the chronicler's terminology, the East Angles were 'conquered' in 870, though the land was not 'settled and shared out' until 880. In Mercia, the Vikings drove King Burgred and Queen Æthelswith across the sea in 874, and 'conquered' the land, installing a certain Ceolwulf as king;⁶⁷ and in 877 they shared out some of the land among themselves, and gave some to Ceolwulf. The kingdom of the Northumbrians was 'conquered' in 875, and the land was 'shared out' in the following year.

The achievement of King Alfred and the West Saxons, in the same decade, was to survive rather than to succumb. King Æthelred I had died in 871, and Alfred became king of the extended kingdom.⁶⁸ He came to be renowned, of course, for the courage and leadership which he displayed in 878 when, seemingly, all but reduced to his stronghold at Athelney, in the Somerset marshes. No less significant, however, was the emergence, in the later 870s, of some form of political and monetary alliance between Alfred of Wessex and Ceolwulf of Mercia arising not least from their shared commercial interests in London.⁶⁹ Both rulers are seen from the evidence of charters, and shared coin-types, to have respected each other, though it was clearly Alfred who had the upper hand.

The apparent collapse, in the 870s, of the ancient kingdoms of East Anglia, Mercia and Northumbria stands in stark contrast to the survival of the kingdom of the West Saxons, as extended eastwards in the ninth century to include Sussex, Essex and Kent. The explanation has perhaps more to do with the structure and resources of Alfred's extended kingdom, from Cornwall to Kent, than with an imagined resilience of the West Saxons, or with freshly flourishing notions of Bede's *gens Anglorum*, in both cases as personified by King Alfred himself. In Mercia, by contrast, some part of the kingdom which had been assigned by the Danes to Ceolwulf on its conquest

⁶⁶ For the material evidence from Torksey, see D. M. Hadley and J. D. Richards, 'The Winter Camp of the Viking Great Army, AD 872–3, Torksey, Lincolnshire', *Antiquaries Journal* 96 (2016), 23–67, and *The Viking Great Army and the Making of England* (London, 2021), pp. 86–116. The map of navigable rivers, in *Handbook*, Hamerow, et al. (eds.), p. 558, is instructive.

⁶⁷ Asser, *Life of King Alfred*, ch. 46. An entry in the *Liber Vitae* of Brescia (Lombardy) captures Burgred and Æthelswith's passage by the abbey on their way to Rome, accompanied by others; see *ASKingdoms*, pp. 49–50, with illustration.

⁶⁸ Asser, *Life of King Alfred*, ch. 18, with pp. 236–7.

⁶⁹ J. Naylor and E. Standley, *The Watlington Hoard: Coinage, Kings and the Viking Great Army in Oxfordshire, AD 875–880* (Oxford, 2022). For London in the 870s and 880s, see also Naismith, *Citadel of the Saxons*, pp. 114–24.

in 874 was then ‘shared out’ by the Danes in 877, leaving Ceolwulf in western Mercia and the Danes in control of the east midlands. In the aftermath of Alfred’s victory over the Danes at Edington, Wiltshire, in May 878, Alfred and Guthrum came to terms.⁷⁰ Guthrum took his defeated army back to East Anglia, where they ‘shared out’ the land they had conquered in 870. On Ceolwulf’s presumed death in 879, Alfred found himself in a strong position, and was seemingly quick to take advantage. The part of Mercia which had remained under Ceolwulf’s control was taken over by Alfred, leaving the Danes controlling the east midlands (later ‘the land of the Five Boroughs’). Hence the situation represented, around 880, by the short legal text known to posterity as the ‘Treaty between Alfred and Guthrum’, which defines the boundary between them (leaving Alfred clearly in control of London), in effect marking the foundation of a new kingdom.⁷¹

The Kingdom ‘of the Anglo-Saxons’ (c. 880–927)

Then I, King Alfred, gathered [the laws] together and ordered to be written many of the ones that our forefathers observed – those that pleased me; and many of the ones that did not please me I rejected with the advice of my counsellors, and commanded them to be observed in a different way. For I dared not to presume to set down in writing at all many of my own, since it was unknown to me what would please those who should come after us. But those which I found either in the days of Ine, my kinsman, or of Offa, king of the Mercians, or of Æthelberht (who first among the English people received baptism), and which seemed to me most just, I collected herein, and omitted the others.

King Alfred’s prologue to his law-code (c. 890)

The kingdom ‘of the Anglo-Saxons’, so distinctively ‘Alfredian’ at the moment of its creation (c. 880), emerged not only from the wreckage of the ‘Heptarchy’ but also from Alfred’s victory over the Danes at Edington, leading to an understanding with Guthrum and, soon afterwards, their recognition of a boundary which respected London as in Alfred’s domain, and Watling Street, now the A5(M), as the boundary between them across

⁷⁰ For the so-called Treaty of Wedmore, see the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* for 878, and Asser, *Life of Alfred*, ch. 56.

⁷¹ For the treaty between Alfred and Guthrum, see *EHD* I, no. 34 (dated 886–90), and *Alfred the Great*, pp. 171–2 (with the same date), with Keynes, ‘King Alfred and the Mercians’, pp. 31–4 (re-dated c. 880, in the light of the numismatic evidence from London), and *ASKingdoms*, no. 61 (illustration).

the midlands. In certain contexts, the King would retain his identity as 'king of the West Saxons'; but clearly, contemporary usages went significantly further. The polity is reflected in the prologue to Alfred's law-code (above), advertising the fact that his responsibilities extended beyond those of his predecessors.⁷² The fact remained, of course, that many of the English still lived under the control of the Danes who had 'conquered' and 'shared out' land in the 870s; but the formation of Alfred's kingdom represented the establishment of a political entity extending (as before) across the south, but now also across the Thames to take in the western and south-eastern parts of Mercia, providing a good foundation for the recovery of conquered lands to east and north, and securing the English against further threat from the Vikings. The kingdom of the Anglo-Saxons would prove, indeed, to be Alfred's legacy, maintained and taken forward, after his death, by his son Edward the Elder (899–924) and his grandson, Æthelstan (924–39), until itself superseded, in 927, by Æthelstan's unified kingdom 'of the English'.⁷³

Alfred's was emphatically not a kingdom dominated by West Saxon courtiers or mentalities. Asser's *Life of King Alfred*, written in 893, is invaluable for the information it provides about activities at King Alfred's court, and on what was seen to characterise the King himself. Asser addresses Alfred as 'ruler of all the Christians of the island of Britain', and describes his arrival at Alfred's court in terms borrowed from the account, in a ninth-century *Life of Alcuin*, of Alcuin's reception by Charlemagne, suggesting (in effect) that Asser imagined himself as one put in Alcuin's place to advise Alfred, as Britain's equivalent to the Frankish emperor.⁷⁴ The 'Mercian' presence at Alfred's court was evidently of special importance, mixing with 'Saxons' (east, west and south) and those from Kent (east and west). Alfred's wife, Ealhswith, was herself from Mercia,⁷⁵ and was sooner or later joined at court by several others. Æthelred, styled 'ealdorman of the Mercians', is known to have acknowledged Alfred's rule by 883; and sooner or later Ealdorman Æthelred married Alfred's eldest daughter Æthelflæd, strengthening the

⁷² For an example, in a charter of 892, see *Alfred the Great*, pp. 179–81 and 326–30; with further discussion, *ibid.*, pp. 227–8, n. 1.

⁷³ Keynes, 'King Alfred and the Mercians', pp. 34–9, with 'Alfred the Great and the Kingdom of the Anglo-Saxons', in N. G. Discenza and P. E. Szarmach (eds.) *A Companion to Alfred the Great* (Leiden, 2014), pp. 13–46; and Pratt, *Political Thought*, pp. 105–11.

⁷⁴ Asser, ch. 79, with *EncyASE*, pp. 51–2 (Asser). For recent discussion, see R. Thomas and D. Callander, 'Reading Asser in Early Medieval Wales: The Evidence of *Armes Prydein Vawr*', *ASE* 46 (2019), 115–45, at 132–4, and R. Thomas, 'The *Vita Alcuini*, Asser and Scholarly Service at the Court of Alfred the Great', *EHR* 134 (2019), 1–24.

⁷⁵ Asser, chs. 29 (marriage in 868), 73 (marriage in Mercia) and 75 (children).

association in the strongest possible terms.⁷⁶ The Mercian element at court also included two priests.⁷⁷ The more junior, Plegmund, was among those named by Alfred as his teachers when first learning how to read Latin and translate into English. He rose rapidly to become archbishop of Canterbury (890–923), in which office he would have assumed further responsibilities, perhaps taking the lead in the development of a new order of service for the coronation of a king, used probably for the first time in 900 at the coronation of Edward the Elder.⁷⁸

It is only appropriate that Alfred's establishment of his kingdom 'of the Anglo-Saxons' should have been accompanied by a programme of regeneration and reform. He set out his plan in the form of a letter which serves as his preface to the translation from Latin into English of Pope Gregory the Great's *Pastoral Care*.⁷⁹ The King reflects on the decline of standards, and stresses the need for learning, literacy, and the provision, in English translation, of certain 'books that are most necessary for all men to know'.⁸⁰ Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy* was also among the books translated.⁸¹ It seems likely that, alongside provision of significant works in translation, more basic instruction was provided which, in itself, would help to prepare the ground for the wider use of documentation, in Latin and in the vernacular, so well attested across the tenth century, and for the flowering of literature and learning in both languages across the same period.⁸²

A rather different work produced probably in the early 890s, perhaps in response to the arrival of 'the great Danish army' in 892, was the original 'common stock' of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. At Alfred's court, the *Chronicle* was at once used by Asser to provide a chronological framework for his *Life of King Alfred*, written in 893. At appropriate places, Asser inserted more personal information about the king, of a kind and quality not available for

⁷⁶ Asser, chs. 75 and 80, with *EncyASE*, p. 16 (Æthelred and Æthelflæd).

⁷⁷ Asser, ch. 77, with *EncyASE*, pp. 378–9 (Plegmund), and 489 (Werferth).

⁷⁸ For discussion of the origins, transmission, and dating of this text, as a development of an *ordo* which originated in Frankia in the 890s, see D. Pratt, 'The Making of the Second English Coronation *Ordo*', *ASE* 46 (2019), 147–258, with his *English Coronation Ordinances in the Ninth and Early Tenth Centuries*, Henry Bradshaw Society (2023).

⁷⁹ *EHD* I, no. 226, and *Alfred the Great*, pp. 124–7, with *ASKingdoms*, no. 62 (illustration).

⁸⁰ In addition to the *Pastoral Care*, and the *Consolation of Philosophy*, the books included the first fifty psalms of the Psalter, St Augustine's *Soliloquies*, the *Dialogues* of Pope Gregory, and Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*.

⁸¹ *EHD* I, no. 237 (b); *Alfred the Great*, pp. 132–3.

⁸² For a view of the 'project' which urges a more realistic appraisal of its outcomes, see 'The Alfredian Project and Its Aftermath: Rethinking the Literary History of the Ninth and Tenth Centuries', *PBA* 162 (2009), 93–122.

any other king of this period. Most significantly, the existence of the new polity was taken for granted: in Asser's usage, Alfred's predecessors are always styled kings 'of the West Saxons'; but Alfred himself – in the opening dedication and throughout the text – is always king 'of the Anglo-Saxons', respecting the new formulation.

Asser writes that King Alfred 'did not refrain from directing the governing of his kingdom'. He tells us, at some length, of the king's particular concern that judges were seen to be doing their duty, and especially 'in all cases concerning the care of the poor'. Alfred's surviving law code is presented as if complementary to the much earlier law-code of Ine, king of the West Saxons (688–726)⁸³ Asser also tells how Alfred 'used also to sit at judicial hearings for the benefit both of his nobles and of the common people . . .', further explaining how Alfred would 'look into nearly all the judgements which were passed in his absence anywhere in his realm, to see whether they were just or unjust'. The same concern for order shines through King Alfred's will, a remarkable document which reveals much about the complications within the royal family, and the arrangements made between its members, followed by very detailed provision for his various beneficiaries.⁸⁴

King Alfred the Great died on 26 October 899. On Whitsunday (8 June) 900 Edward the Elder was crowned king 'of the Anglo-Saxons', in succession to his father.⁸⁵ In the order of service presumably for Edward's coronation, which drew on earlier Frankish material and was devised apparently during Alfred's reign,⁸⁶ the ceremonial begins with two bishops leading the king by hand into the church, where the king is 'elected' by the bishops and by the people. The king makes a threefold promise: that the church and people should, at all times, enjoy true peace; that all wrongdoing is forbidden; and that he will observe justice and mercy in all judgements. The king is anointed by the archbishop, who recites the anointing prayer in which reference is made to the two peoples – Angles and Saxons – over whom the king was set. The king is then invested with the regalia: ring, sword, crown, sceptre, and

⁸³ For a translation of a substantial part of Alfred's law code, see *EHD* I, no. 32; see also *Alfred the Great*, pp. 163–70. For appraisal of the code as a whole, see M. Richards, 'The Laws of Alfred and Ine', in Discenza and Szarmach (eds.), *Companion to Alfred*, pp. 282–309, with T. Preston, *King Alfred's Book of Laws* (Jefferson, NC, 2014), pp. 105–48 (Alfred and Ine).

⁸⁴ S 1507 (*WinchNM* 1), with *EHD* I, no. 96, and *Alfred the Great*, pp. 173–8 (with map).

⁸⁵ For the various aspects of Edward's reign, see *Edward the Elder 899–924*, N. J. Higham and D. H. Hill (eds.) (London, 2001).

⁸⁶ On the coronation *ordo* probably developed in Alfredian court circles in the 890s, see D. Pratt, *Two English Coronation Ordines*, Henry Bradshaw Society (London, 2022), with his 'Second English Coronation *Ordo*' (2019), for further discussion.

rod. The service draws to its close with a prayer enjoining the king to stand and hold fast to the position which he has held hitherto by 'paternal succession' but would hold henceforth by the authority of Almighty God. This order of service has, with some modifications, remained at the heart of the coronation ceremonial for more than a thousand years.

It was as king 'of the Anglo-Saxons' that Edward the Elder embarked, with his sister Æthelflæd, and her husband Æthelred, ealdorman of the Mercians, on the sustained and seemingly well-coordinated campaign which led to the recovery from 'Danish' control of the lands in Mercia and East Anglia that had been 'conquered' in the 870s, and which were thus (and for the first time) brought into the control of the rulers of the kingdom of the Anglo-Saxons. The details of the campaign are known from two very different sets of annals: one focusing on 'West Saxon' dimensions⁸⁷ and the other providing a 'Mercian' view of events.⁸⁸ The degree of co-ordination achieved by the two main forces is impressive. It is clear, however, that King Edward was determined to protect what he would have regarded as his particular interests as king of the Anglo-Saxons. When Æthelred died, in 911, Edward asserted his control of London and Oxford. Some form of dominion (*anweald*) over the Mercians passed to Æthelflæd; but when she died, in 918, Edward himself seems to have taken action by seizing their daughter Ælfwynn, depriving her of her authority in Mercia, and asserting his own. In the early tenth century, Edward, south of the Thames, and Æthelred and Æthelflæd, north of the Thames, were able to preside over assemblies at which they might issue charters creating estates. It is apparent, however, that Æthelred and Æthelflæd, for their part, were *not* empowered to issue coins in their own names.⁸⁹

Edward the Elder died on 17 July 924. As in 900, the succession was disputed, exposing this time the competing claims of half-brothers, born of successive king's wives. Æthelstan was the son of Edward by his first wife, Ecgwynn, and had support at the Mercian court; whereas Ælfweard was a son of Edward by his second wife, perhaps the better placed in Wessex although, in the event, a lost cause because he died within two weeks of his father. On 4 September 925, Æthelstan was crowned king by Æthelhelm, archbishop of Canterbury. Again, we can appreciate how the ceremonial established a bond between the archbishop and the king, likely to serve the longer-term interests of both parties. As King Ceolwulf had given land to

⁸⁷ *ASKingdoms*, no. 59.

⁸⁸ *ASKingdoms*, no. 67.

⁸⁹ Naismith, *MEC* II, pp. 167–72.

Archbishop Wulfred on his consecration in 822, King Æthelstan restored land in Kent to St Augustine's, Canterbury on the day of his coronation.⁹⁰

Æthelstan's brief period of rule as king 'of the Anglo-Saxons' is all too easily lost behind his several years of greater glory, as king 'of the English' and 'of the whole of Britain'. The sequence of events in 925–7, so important for our understanding of the transition from one political entity to another, must be stitched together from annals of various origins and uncertain authority. In January 926 Æthelstan was at Tamworth, in the heart of the old kingdom of Mercia, where he made an alliance with Sihtric II Sihtricsson, king of Dublin and York. Æthelstan is said to have given his sister in marriage to Sihtric, presumably to help secure Sihtric's position in York, and perhaps in return for an undertaking of some kind. When Sihtric died, in 927, his son Guthfrith II Sihtricsson is said to have seized power in York; whereupon Æthelstan took a force up to the north and drove him out, thereby gaining control for himself of the former Anglo-Scandinavian kingdom. Soon afterwards, Æthelstan was recognised as king not only over the Northumbrians of York but also over those who lived further north under Aldred, son of Eadwulf of Bamburgh. To mark the outcome, 'all the kings who were in this island' – including the major rulers in Wales, and Constantine, king of the Scots – met King Æthelstan on 12 July 927, where 'they established peace with pledge and oaths in the place which is called Eamont, on 12 July, and renounced all idolatry and afterwards departed in peace'.⁹¹ It is hard to verify the details; but it was in such a way, or in such stages, that Æthelstan, last of the three kings 'of the Anglo-Saxons', would appear to have become the first of many kings 'of the English'.

The Kingdom 'of the English' (927–1066)

In England also kings were often victorious through God, as we have heard say; just as King Alfred was, who often fought against the Danes, until he won the victory and protected his people. Similarly Æthelstan, who fought against Olaf and slew his army and put him himself to flight, and afterwards lived in peace with his people. Edgar, the noble and resolute king, exalted the praise of God everywhere among his people, the strongest of all kings over the English people; and God subdued for him all his adversaries, kings

⁹⁰ S 394 (*CantStAug* 26): *Charters of St Augustine's Abbey Canterbury*, S. E. Kelly (ed.) (Oxford, 1995), pp. 99–103.

⁹¹ *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, MS D, 927, in *EHD* I, no. 1, p. 218. Foot, Æthelstan, pp. 17–20; and C. Downham, *Viking Kings of Britain and Ireland: The Dynasty of Ivarr to 1014* (Dunedin, 2007), pp. 97–9 (Sihtric Sihtricsson, 921–7) and 99–105 (Æthelstan, and Guthfrith).

and earls, so that they came to him without any fighting, desiring peace, subjected to him for whatever he wished, and he was honoured widely throughout the land.

Ælfric of Cerne Abbas and Eynsham, c. 1000

The words of Ælfric, monk of Cerne Abbas and later abbot of Eynsham, offer a rare comment on the recent past from a known and authoritative observer. Alfred (871–99) and Æthelstan (924–39) were remembered for their victories, gained in the early stages, but Edgar was remembered in a significantly different way. Ælfric was writing during the reign of King Æthelred the Unready (978–1016), and, looking back to Edgar, would have been acutely conscious of living in more difficult times.

The period 927–1066 can be treated as a whole because, for all the external forces which continued to affect the course of events in the notionally ‘unified’ kingdom, and for all the underlying regional, social and political tensions combining to complicate issues as they arose, the political framework proved itself fundamentally stable. The unified kingdom of the English, established by King Æthelstan in 927, was regarded by c. 1000 as a kingdom of ‘England’, and retained its basic form (as the political order within which events unfolded) until the Norman conquest. The sustained interest in the kingdom of York shown by the Hiberno-Norse rulers of Dublin found expression again in 937, when Olaf Guthfrithsson (from Dublin) and Constantine II, king of Alba (Scotland), joined forces to challenge what had been created just ten years before. Their defeat by the English was hailed grandly as the finest since the ‘Angles and Saxons’ had invaded Britain ‘and won a country’.⁹² There were many further complications thereafter; but the reluctance of those holding power among the Northumbrians to accept rule from the south had given way, by the mid-950s, to the realisation that their prosperity and security lay in acceptance of the kings of the English. During these years there were further divisions (along the line of the river Thames) of the ‘unified’ kingdom, notably between King Eadwig and his brother Edgar in 957–9, between Edmund and Cnut in 1016, and between Harthacnut and Harold Harefoot in 1035–7, but they arose from unfolding political circumstances, and the default position remained the unified kingdom.⁹³

⁹² For the poem, see *EHD* I, no. 1, annal for 937 (translation). The location of *Brunanburh* remains a matter for debate. The evidence is reviewed by C. Downham, ‘A Wirral Location for the Battle of Brunanburh’, *Translation of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire* 170 (2021), 15–32.

⁹³ For details of divided rule in the tenth and eleventh centuries, see *EncyASE*, ‘Appendix II’, pp. 521–38, at 536–8 (‘Kings of the English (927–1066)’).

This kingdom, first established in 927 and conquered by the Normans in 1066, was governed by a monarchy in which the powers and responsibilities of the king himself were set down in an order of service which had originated in the late ninth century (for the kingdom of the Anglo-Saxons) and, each time it was used, continued and, indeed, renewed the role of the archbishop of Canterbury in guiding the king in discharging the duties of his office.⁹⁴ The king's power and the expectations of his people derived from the coronation service. The monarch maintained contact with his appointed ealdormen and other holders of high office by means of regular assemblies convened perhaps four or five times a year, at different places in his extended kingdom, moving around to take advantage of his widely scattered estates, to display his royal power, to engage with the people, and to conduct the necessary business of the realm. The nature of these assemblies is best represented by a remarkable series of royal diplomas, which extend from 928 to 935. They convey the *grandeur* of the new dispensation cast in the language to match.⁹⁵ It appears from the diplomas that new practices were introduced and standards set, in the late 920s, for the planning of royal assemblies, which might have extended to attendance, conduct of business, documentation, and opening and closing ceremonial. In addition to discussion of the pressing affairs of church and state, the routine business at such meetings would have included law-making, reports and decisions about the coinage, and appointments and investiture to offices. It would also have included the production of royal diplomas granting land on privileged terms to religious houses, or to members of the secular order. Needless to say, the serious business would have been interspersed with feasting, entertainment, gossip, and intrigue. Æthelstan's assemblies have taken their place, and deservedly so, as the best and most compelling part of the evidence for the pre-Conquest 'origins' of the English parliament,⁹⁶ though in certain respects the origins go back much further.

Royal assemblies are likely to have remained the main forum for discussion and direction of the kingdom's affairs until the end of the period. The high

⁹⁴ Above, pp. 22–23, with *ASKingdoms*, nos. 118 and 119.

⁹⁵ *ASKingdoms*, no. 69 (original, dated 12 Nov. 931, at Lifton, Devon); S. Keynes, *An Atlas of Attestations in Anglo-Saxon Charters, c. 670–1066* (Cambridge, 2002), Table XXVII (defining the corpus), with D. A. Woodman, "'Æthelstan A" and the Rhetoric of Rule', *ASE* 42 (2013), 217–48, and S. Keynes, 'Welsh Kings at Anglo-Saxon Royal Assemblies (928–55)', *Haskins Society Journal* 26 (2014), 69–122, at 85–92.

⁹⁶ J. R. Maddicott, *The Origins of the English Parliament 924–1327* (Oxford, 2010), pp. 1–56; Foot, *Æthelstan*, pp. 127–57; L. Roach, *Kingship and Consent in Anglo-Saxon England, 871–978: Assemblies and the State in the Early Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 2013), pp. 32–43.

quality evidence available for understanding of the course of events during the reign of King Æthelred ‘the Unready’ (978–1016) throws light on the roles played by successive archbishops of Canterbury, including Lyfing (1013–20), described by a chronicler as ‘a very prudent man, both in matters of church and state’ who might well have presided over the transition from English to Danish rule in the aftermath of the deaths of Æthelred and Edmund Ironside in 1016, and might also have ‘managed’ the transition to the Anglo-Danish regime personified by Cnut, represented by the law-codes and other writings of Wulfstan, archbishop of York (1002–23).⁹⁷ In the event, the undoing of the kingdom of the English proved to be not so much the weakness of its political structures, or the failure of its leaders, but a combination of circumstances which, in the absence of a son by marriage in 1044 to Edith, daughter of Earl Godwine, had determined Edward’s options in his search for a successor: leading from William, duke of Normandy, to Edward the Exile (d. 1057) and then the young Edgar the atheling, but on his deathbed to Earl Harold who, in 1066, found himself having to deal first, and successfully, with an invasion from Norway, but immediately thereafter, and unsuccessfully, with an invasion from Normandy.

Epilogue

The significance of the Norman Conquest for the continuing course of English and British history has long been debated.⁹⁸ William’s victory over King Harold on 14 October 1066 created a political entity quite different in its conception from the kingdom which it replaced: one that was William’s by right of conquest rather than one that had passed down a line of kings reaching back to the sixth century. The useful fiction, symbolised by Domesday Book, that William reigned as Edward’s successor, served well at least until the new royal line could claim a connection back to the old, which happened before too long, and is well symbolised by Westminster Abbey. Evidence of an ‘Anglo-Saxon’ legacy to Anglo-Norman England, and indirectly, therefore, to early modern Britain, is as considerable in extent as it is varied in nature.

⁹⁷ A. Rabin, *The Political Writings of Archbishop Wulfstan of York* (Manchester, 2015), pp. 101–24 (*Institutions of Polity*), and *Old English Legal Writings: Wulfstan* (Cambridge, MA, 2020), pp. 60–99, 102–07, 114–23, 210–99.

⁹⁸ G. Garnett, *Conquered England: Kingship, Succession, and Tenure 1066–1166* (Oxford, 2007), pp. 9–24, with *The Norman Conquest: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford, 2009), pp. 5–18 and 123–30, and *The Norman Conquest in English History, I: A Broken Chain?* (Oxford, 2020); see also Garnett’s chapter in this volume.

The two most important sources of information on the period before the conquest (then as now) – Bede’s *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, and the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* – were accessible in the libraries of various religious houses, and soon became the basis for the construction of a modified past, which now culminated with a great Norman victory over the English and all that followed. Clerics, monks and others who had begun to turn to the construction of their own or the nation’s history in the twelfth century and thereafter, turned often to the period before the Norman Conquest, eager to preserve traditions, to recover ancient rights and privileges, and to build upon them. The singular distinction bestowed on King Alfred as ‘the Great’ – for the role, by then, credited to him in the unification of England – is first attested in the thirteenth century in the writings of Matthew Paris, monk of St Albans. The concept of (Roman) ‘Britain’, which had remained influential throughout the Anglo-Saxon period, became an integral part of the legacy; the concepts of the ‘English people’, and of a unified kingdom of ‘England’, were of their own making, and continued to apply. The imagined construct of an ‘Ancient Constitution’ was a different matter. It originated in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, beginning with the Elizabethan ‘Society of Antiquaries’; and it was taken further in the hearts, minds and writings of Sir Edward Coke (1552–1634), Sir Henry Spelman (1562–1641) and John Selden (1584–1654), among others, drawing directly on their studies of documentation from the dispersed archives of religious houses. Thereafter, it came to be personified by King Alfred the Great, who (unlike others) had succeeded in protecting his kingdom and his people against foreign invasion; who introduced subordinate forms of government; who sought, at the same time, to promote literacy, education and learning; and who strove to ensure that justice was done. Alfred’s story had been accessible to the learned since the first publication of Asser’s *Life of King Alfred*, by Archbishop Parker in 1574, and had significant impact as it came to be popularised in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.⁹⁹ King George III, as a boy, had been encouraged by his father to study English history, and can be seen to have taken particular interest in Alfred the Great – not least how Alfred ‘apply’d himself to regulating the various parts of the government of the country’.¹⁰⁰ By this time King Alfred was, indeed, on a roll; and when George became king in 1760, he was seen as one who might be encouraged to follow

⁹⁹ Keynes, ‘Cult of King Alfred’, esp. pp. 239–46 (Parker, *et al.*) and 246–60 (Coke, *et al.*).

¹⁰⁰ Windsor, Royal Archives, GEO/ADD/32/2–46.

Alfred's example.¹⁰¹ It only remained for King George IV to choose the essential Alfredian themes (the making of laws and the expulsion of the Vikings) for the friezes incorporated on either side of the central bow on the Garden Front of Buckingham Palace.

¹⁰¹ E.g. *The Christian's Magazine*, Nov./Dec. 1760, pp. 296–304 and 342–54, with an engraving of King George contemplating an image of King Alfred; and W. L. Pressly, *James Barry's Murals at the Royal Society of Arts: Envisioning a New Public Art* (Cork, 2014), pp. 155, 175, and 313–18.