Drihtne gecoren, snotor and soðfæst:

The Ideal Anglo-Saxon Counsellor in the Old English *Daniel*

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INTRODUCTION

Whereas, nowadays, most people will not think the good weather is the result of a good, just and pious monarch on the throne, Anglo-Saxons, such as the monk Alcuin, did see it this way.[1] In Anglo-Saxon society and in many other medieval societies, people thought the king was essential to the well-being of the country and its people. After all, the king was charged with such responsibilities as defending the country, caring for the poor, advancing prosperity, and protecting the Church.[2] Furthermore, he also had a moral responsibility in guiding his subjects, because he was the image of God on earth. As a consequence, his responsibilities were both towards God and the people; his rule was supported by the Church and he himself chosen by God.[3] In various works, Anglo-Saxons writers stressed that a good king – the so-called *rex pacificus* – brought prosperity to the entire nation, not only in the shape of good weather, but also, as Rob Meens notes, in the shape of good harvest, health, the gift of children and victory to the army.[4] In contrast to the prosperity brought by the reign of a good king, people believed that the reign of a bad king – or a *rex iniquus* – would have devastating effects on the wealth or even existence of the nation. According to Anglo-Saxon writers (and other early medieval commentators), the bad king would not govern the country well, bring the kingdom into a state of disorder, and bring the wrath of God upon the entire nation.[5] Given the importance of a good and pious king, medieval writers, mainly clerics, wrote advice literature that contained instructions for kings on how to behave and on how to govern their kingdoms. This genre of advice literature was called mirror for princes or mirror of princes.[6] The genre found its way into Anglo-Saxon England and into poetry in the Anglo-Saxon vernacular, with *Beowulf* and *Daniel* as prime examples.[7]

Writers of mirrors for princes stress that one aspect of good kingship is the king's ability to listen to the good advice of his counsellors, the so-called *witan*.[8] After the king, the people

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[1] Rob Meens, "Politics, Mirrors of Princes and the Bible: Sins, Kings and the Well-being of the Realm," *Early Medieval Europe* 7, no. 3 (1998), 354.
[2] Hilary E. Fox, "Denial of God, Mental Disorder, and Exile: The Rex Iniquus in *Daniel* and *Juliana*," *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 111, no. 4 (2012), 426-428.
[3] Fox, "Denial of God," 427; Richard Ables, *Alfred the Great: War, Kingship and Culture in Anglo-Saxon England* (London: Longman, 1998), 250.
[4] Meens, "Politics, Mirrors of Princes," 354.
[5] *Ibid*., 351; Fox, "Denial of God," 427.
[6] Fox, "Denial of God," 427.
[7] Paul G. Remley, *Old English Biblical Verse: Studies in Genesis, Exodus and Daniel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 246-247; Gillian R. Overing, "Nebuchadnezzar's Conversion in the Old English *Daniel*: A Psychological Portrait," *Papers on Language and Literature* 20, no. 1 (1984), 4; Patrick Murray-John, "The Poetics of 'Knowing' in Anglo-Saxon Visions" (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2003), 68-69.
[8] Rachel S. Anderson, "Ælfric's Kings: Political Hagiography in Anglo-Saxon England" (PhD diss., Indiana University, 2004), 23.

having a seat in the *witan* were the most important individuals of the country: they were the highest ranking bishops and most important noblemen. These people had large responsibilities as the governors of their own subjects, as people on which the king depended for support, and as counsellors at the king's court.[9] Therefore, just like a bad king, bad or badly functioning counsellors were a great danger to the country. One period of Anglo-Saxon history specifically illustrates the consequences of ill-functioning advisors: the unsuccessful reign of Æthelred Unræd, which resulted in the conquest of England by the Vikings due to military and political failures. As Æthelred's epithet *unræd* 'bad counsel' suggests, the Anglo-Saxon military and political failures were mainly blamed on the bad advice of Æthelred's counsellors, as Courtney Konshuh's study on the Æthelredian annals of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* has demonstrated. She claims that the composer of this set of annals mainly blames the Danish conquest of England on the ill-functioning of the king's advisors.[10] The demise of Anglo-Saxon England during Æthelred's reign confirms that the impact of bad counsellors could have devastating consequences to a kingdom and a people.

Because counsellors had such an important place in Anglo-Saxon society, some texts likely functioned as advice literature for advisors just like the mirror for princes genre did for kings. One example is Alfred the Great's translation of Pope Gregory's *Regula Pastoralis*, also known as *Pastoral Care*. As Alfred notes in his *Preface*, he saw the *Pastoral Care* as a book of general guidance for leaders, both noblemen and bishops.[11] Accordingly, Alfred sent his translation to his own bishops, who also had a place in the *witan*.[12] Other major Anglo-Saxon writers, active during the reign of Æthelred Unræd, also stress the importance of good advice.[13] One of these writers is Archbishop Wulfstan of York, who very directly addresses the ill-functioning advisors in his writings. For instance, in his homily *Bethurum XI*, Wulfstan warns both the king and the *witan* about the state of the country and warns them for injustice and improper behaviour.[14] In the same period, Ælfric of Eynsham, an influential Anglo-Saxon abbot, also shows an interest in bad counsellorship and its consequences. For example, he

[9] Levi Roach, *Kingship and Consent in Anglo-Saxon England, 871-978: Assemblies and the State in the Early Middle Ages*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought: Fourth Series (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 159-160, doi: 10.1017/CBO9781139567756.
[10] Courtney Konshuh, "Anraed in Their Unraed: The Æthelredian Annals (983–1016) and Their Presentation of King and Advisors," *English Studies* 97, no. 2 (2016), 158-159.
[11] Abels, *Alfred the Great*, 250.
[12] Gregorius the Great, Henry Sweet and Alfred the Great, *King Alfred's West-Saxon Version of Gregory's Pastoral Care* (London: Oxford University Press, 1934), 7-8.
[13] Konshuh, "Anraed in Their Unraed," 140.
[14] Nicholas P. Schwartz, "Rulers and the Wolf: Archbishop Wulfstan, Anglo-Saxon Kings, and the Problems of His Present" (PhD diss., University of New Mexico, 2015), 179-180.

depicts several biblical women as bad counsellors in his homilies, including Queen Jezebel, the wife of King Ahab.[15] As such, these texts, which may have functioned as advice literature for counsellors, demonstrate a concern over the functioning of royal advisors in Anglo-Saxon England.

In the central literary work of the present thesis, the Old English *Daniel*, counsellors are influential to the narrative as well. For example, the recurring inability of King Nebuchadnezzar – the main character of the poem – to listen to his counsellors distinguishes him as a bad king, and is also a significant cause for his exile, a major event in the poem.[16] In studying *Daniel*, critics have not yet paid enough attention to the counsellors of the poem. Instead, they have focused on identifying the Hebrew men and the Babylonian king and his counsellors as moral opposites. Nebuchadnezzar is juxtaposed to Daniel, who, as the faithful servant of the Lord, able to perceive divine wisdom and interpret the dreams sent by God. Nebuchadnezzar, in contrast, lacks this wisdom because of his sins, and, therefore, does not understand his dreams.[17] The Three Youths are direct opposites to Nebuchadnezzar, as John Bugge has argued, because of their sexual purity, by which they are protected from the fire of the heated oven and are able to prophesise God's words. Nebuchadnezzar's son Belshazzar – who is a variation on the unbelieving Nebuchadnezzar – on the other hand, is linked with sexual impurity and drunkenness, which causes his inability to read God's words written on the wall at his final feast.[18] This work of scholars studying the Babylonians and the Hebrews as opposite role models from a moral perspective has given valuable insights. However, little attention has yet been paid to Daniel, the Three Youths and the other (unnamed) counsellors of the poem in their roles as counsellors of the king in itself, or, put differently, independently from their function as opposite role models to king Nebuchadnezzar and other sinful and unrighteous characters in the poem.

My thesis will attempt to fill this niche by answering the question of whether the Old English *Daniel* may have functioned as advice literature not only for kings, but for counsellors as well. In order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of counsellors in Anglo-Saxon society, I will first devote a chapter to studying a number of sources from the Anglo-Saxon period that reflect or address counsellors and counsellorship in Anglo-Saxon society, as well as some recent scholarly work on the functioning of the *witan*. This first chapter will include the

[15] Anderson, "Ælfric's Kings," 24.
[16] Remley, *Old English Biblical Verse*, 246-247.
[17] Overing, "Nebuchadnezzar's Conversion," 4-6; Murray-John, "The Poetics," 88.
[18] John Bugge, "Virginity and Prophecy in the Old English *Daniel*," *English Studies* 87, no. 2 (2006), 134-136.

writings of some of the most prominent Anglo-Saxon writers, such as Wulfstan and King Alfred. In essence, in my first chapter I will identify essential elements of ideal counsellorship as presented by these Anglo-Saxon authors. In the second chapter, I will forge a connection between the content of the first chapter and the representation of counsellors of the Old English *Daniel*. The chapter will be focused on studying the counsellors of the Old English *Daniel* and the similarities and differences with the Anglo-Saxon ideal of counsellorship as described in the first chapter. In doing so, this second chapter will attempt to show that the Old English *Daniel* presents Daniel and the Three Youths as good counsellors according to Anglo-Saxon standards, thus elaborating on how these men are good counsellors, but also how the Babylonians are bad counsellors.

This thesis will contribute to the field of Anglo-Saxon studies in several ways. Firstly, the study will provide an understanding of how the Anglo-Saxon poet of *Daniel* incorporated a very concrete political reality, namely that of counsellorship, into poetry. In the case of the Old English *Daniel*, the thesis explains how the poem attempts to illustrate how counsellors should function. Secondly, the study will showcase how the Anglo-Saxon poet transformed the biblical story of Daniel and made it suited for an Anglo-Saxon audience, especially as an indirect instructional document for Anglo-Saxon member of the *witan*. In addition, the present thesis will attempt to comprehensively describe the ideal counsellorship according to Anglo-Saxon writers, which could be used to study counsellors of other Old English poems as well. Finally, the thesis concerns a poem in the corpus of Old English literature less frequently studied then the more famous poems such as *Beowulf*. Since scholars have not yet addressed counsellorship in *Daniel* extensively, this thesis will explain the depiction of the counsellors of a less studied Old English poem from a unique perspective.

CHAPTER I – DETERMINING AN IDEAL FOR ANGLO-SAXON COUNSELLORS

Activities of the 'witan'

Before going into detail about the actual ideal for counsellors in Anglo-Saxon England, some functions of the *witan* will be discussed, as well as how the *witan* functioned. The discussion will give some context for understanding the ideal for counsellors as described further onwards in this chapter.

Judgement and legislation

The Anglo-Saxon *witan* had several tasks, of which a number that are relevant to the current study shall be listed. One major task of the *witan* was legislation. Law-codes made by Anglo-Saxon kings often mention the involvement of the *witan*. For instance, John Maddicott quotes the law-code *II Æthelstan*, which mentions that "all this [the laws] was established at the great assembly at Grately, at which Archbishop Wulfhelm was present, with all the nobles and councillors whom King Æthelstan had assembled."[19] Throughout the Anglo-Saxon period almost all law-codes contain similar statements.[20] The fact that nearly all law-codes mention the involvement of the *witan* suggests, according to Maddicott, that the *witan* and the king showed they shared responsibility over these codes and that it was essential that the *witan* publicly supported these law-codes.[21] However, as Levi Roach notes, the *witan's* actual role in drafting the law-code remains implicit in these statements since they do not describe how the *witan* was involved in law-making.[22] Nevertheless, Roach argues that there are other indications of the *witan*'s active involvement in drafting codes and discussing about the individual clauses. For instance members of the *witan* could initiate to change clauses after the law had been established. To illustrate *IV Æthelstan* mentions a clause about the minimum age of death penalty that was altered after consultation with the *witan* at a later meeting, with explicit mention of a discussion and consultation between the people involved.[23] Roach notes that this example does not demonstrate in detail "how the advice of the king's counsellors might have altered planned legislative activity at the original assembly," but does "demonstrate that law

[19] John R. Maddicott, *The Origins of the English Parliament, 924-1327* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 28.
[20] Roach, *Kingship and Consent*, 107-108.
[21] Maddicott, *Origins*, 28.
[22] Roach, *Kingship and Consent*, 107.
[23] *Ibid*., 109.

was a matter for debate and consultation."[24] Therefore, members of the *witan* had a substantial impact on the countries' legislation.

A related task of the *witan* was judgement. The most important cases of judgement are assumed to have been brought to the *witan*, such as difficult property suits, cases concerning the king, and treachery by important noblemen.[25] The king and the *witan* would judge together in these important cases. For instance, Maddicott names the case of Ealdormann Ælfric. The account of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* and the charter of Æthelred suggest that this was a high-profile case: the crime seems to have been so serious that the actual transgression itself is not even mentioned. In order to judge this case, the charter narrates, the king and his most important counsellors assembled to discuss the case and judge the ealdorman together.[26] Although most minor cases are assumed to be executed by local judges, it is clear the *witan* had a major task in judgement and legislation.

Decision-making

Another main set of the *witan*'s activities can be labelled as political decision-making. These activities included all sort of matters of foreign policy, like decisions about waging war, peace treaties, political marriages and the reception of foreign delegations.[27] As an illustration, the Alfred-Guthrum treaty between the Anglo-Saxons and the Vikings in the year 900 had been made in consultation with the Anglo-Saxon *witan*. Furthermore, Roach notes that the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* recorded that the *witan* ordered ships to assemble in London in 992 during the reign of Æthelred II and that the king and the *witan* jointly decided to fight the Vikings in 999.[28] Divisions of the kingdom were also discussed with the *witan*. Roach mentions that the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* makes mention of the consultation of the *witan* when the kingdom was divided between Harold Harefoot and Harthacnut in the year 1035.[29] Because the *witan* decided over all sorts of major internal and external affairs, the *witan* fulfilled, as Roach extensively argues, an essential role in Anglo-Saxon politics.[30] In short, as Roach states, "the *witan* was a microcosm of the polity, and any issues of importance to the kingdom at large might be raised,

[24] Roach, *Kingship and Consent*, 109.
[25] Maddicott, *Origins*, 30.
[26] *Ibid*., 30-31.
[27] Roach, *Kingship and Consent*, 156-158.
[28] *Ibid*., 158.
[29] *Ibid*., 156.
[30] *Ibid*., 159.

from the most practical concerns of law and order, to more moral concerns about purity and pollution."[31]

Election

One final business of the Anglo-Saxon assembly illustrates how much power the individual members of the *witan* could have on the state of affairs in the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms. This activity was election. Through election, members of the *witan* and the king gained support in the government by electing allies to important positions. Therefore, councils interfered with the election of, for instance, bishops to their sees, although the election of bishops officially was a matter of the clergy.[32] As an illustration, Byrthferth notes that Oda of Canterbury was elected before the *witan* and in consultation with the members of the assembly and the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* describes how bishop Dunstan was transferred to Canterbury at the *witan*'s advice.[33] Moreover, in Anglo-Saxon England the king was also officially elected by the people, although, according to Roach, it must be understood that the election by the people meant an election by the *witan*, who were the representatives of the people. Edward II was, for example, elected by Dunstan and the *witan* as the *Passio Eadwardi* tells.[34] That the sources describe a king was elected by the *witan* is significant, since this shows that Anglo-Saxon writers felt the need to report the king was supported by his councillors. As such, the business of election indicates that the king and individual members of the Anglo-Saxon assembly were constantly seeking support.

Consensus and support

Given the fact that the assembly as a whole and its individual members had much influence on the state of affairs in the kingdom, both Roach and Maddicott argue that Anglo-Saxon politics was consensual in nature. That is to say, when the king needed counsel or was mentioned to have made a decision with the advice of his counsellors, this meant that he had not only asked their advice but also sought their support for the decision. Simply put, the king could not rule effectively without the support of his advisors. Maddicott, for instance, emphasises that all the above-mentioned tasks of the *witan* were consensual tasks in nature and that the frequent mentions in Anglo-Saxon law-codes of the *witan*'s support indicates that explicit support of the

[31] Roach, *Kingship and Consent*, 159.
[32] *Ibid*., 152-153
[33] *Ibid*., 153.
[34] *Ibid*., 150-151.

witan was essential for an Anglo-Saxon king.[35] Similarly, the mention of the *witan* when a king was elected was a public display from the high-ranking men of the country supported the king's rule.[36] Altogether, the fact that the king sought support from people in different ways highlights the power of the *witan*. Furthermore, it suggests the *witan* and the king needed to cooperate in order to successfully govern the kingdom and most likely did so.[37] In this light, Roach notes, giving counsel was very essential to the welfare of the realm, and the most powerful kings were probably the ones who could gain the most support from their counsellors.[38]

Personal relationships

Because kings, nobles, and important clergymen had to cooperate in order to successfully govern the country, personal bonds were essential in the Anglo-Saxon political landscape. The king would attempt to gain the support of his magnates through personal bonds which were initiated and maintained, for example, at the informal events of the assembly, like feasts. As an illustration, Maddicott highlights an account by Byrthferth, who describes that King Edgar royally received his advisors at his Easter assembly, and gave them a warm welcome. Activities like feasts were, as Maddicott states, "a forum for the resolution of social tensions."[39] Counsellors could gain much influence due to their good relationship with the king. In fact, there are several instances of counsellors that became influential because of their close personal bond with the king. For instance, we know that King Eadred loved Abbot Dunstan so much that he made him his chief advisor and that King Æthelred of Mercia enjoyed discussions with his counsellor Ecgwine.[40] Because of their personal bonds with their kings, these people could have a great impact on king's opinion and as such the decisions made in the assemblies of the *witan*. In contrast, people who did not have royal favour were not allowed to approach the king and sometimes had to do penance in order to gain access to the king.[41] In addition, as Roach notes, friends helped each other out for instance at legal activities, when one was accused of a crime. As Roach states, it "seems that much wheeling and dealing took place at meetings of the *witan*, as humble figures would ask lords, relatives or associates to intervene on their behalf with the king or with other figures further up the chain of influence."[42] In conclusion, informal bonds

[35] Maddicott, *Origins*, 26-30.
[36] Roach, *Kingship and Consent*, 152.
[37] *Ibid*., 158-159.
[38] *Ibid*., 236-238.
[39] Maddicott, *Origins*, 23-25.
[40] Roach, *Kingship and Consent*, 183.
[41] *Ibid*., 184.
[42] *Ibid*., 183-189.

and personal relationships were very important for both king and counsellors because it determined the amount of political influence an individual had.[43]

In sum, the members of the *witan* were powerful individuals, who had a major impact on the state of affairs in the kingdom. The *witan* discussed and decided on important topics, like the law and the election of bishops. Given the power of the individual members of the *witan*, cooperation was needed to govern the country well, and personal relationships were important in Anglo-Saxon politics.

The ideal of counsellorship in Anglo-Saxon England

This section discusses the ideal of counsellorship as presented in a number of key works from the Anglo-Saxon period, most of which were written by clerical writers. The first work is King Alfred's Old English translation of Gregory's *Pastoral Care*. Alfred translated the *Pastoral Care* and wrote his *Preface* to the work in order to educate his bishops. The work can also be read as a work of guidance for all men of authority in general.[44] Another document that will be discussed is Ælfric of Eynsham's *Lives of Saints*, a collection of homilies which are mostly about the lives and deeds of saints.[45] *Lives of Saints*, as Rachel S. Anderson explains, also contains depictions of both good and bad counsellors. These counsellors are mostly featured in conjunction with the depictions of good and bad rulers listening to either good or bad counsel and are included to show the motif of good rulers who succeed because they listen to good counsel.[46] Ælfric's depictions of negative rulers and their inability to listen to good counsel show his overall anxiety towards kingship in general, and are probably a response to the ineffectiveness of Æthelred Unræd's reign.[47] The depictions of both good and bad counsellors makes *Lives of Saints* a well-suited document for the study of the ideal for counsellors.

Two other documents that are included in the discussion are Wulfstan's *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos* and *Institutes of Polity*. These documents are, like Ælfric's *Lives of Saints*, in part, a reflection on the unsuccessful reign of Æthelred Unræd and the abysmal state of the kingdom at that time. Wulfstan's concerns over the state of the kingdom are well attested in *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos*, his most famous sermon. In this text, Wulfstan explains why he thinks Anglo-Saxon society suffers defeats from the Vikings and blames almost every class in society for this. He

[43] Roach, *Kingship and Consent*, 236.
[44] Abels, *Alfred the Great*, 250.
[45] Ælfric, Abbot of Eynsham, *Ælfric's Lives of Saints*, edited by Walter W. Skeat (London, 1881), https://archive.org/details/aelfricslivesof01aelf.
[46] Anderson, "Ælfric's Kings," 127-129.
[47] *Ibid*., 141-142.

claims, among others, that noblemen show passivity in battle and are afraid to do penance for their sins, that the Anglo-Saxons do not treat the Church and its leaders well, and that they do not care about God's laws and secular laws.[48] To summarise, Wulfstan complains that the Anglo-Saxons do not live as good Christians and that God has sent his wrath upon the nation as a consequence.[49] As he saw the abysmal state of the Anglo-Saxon kingdom, Wulfstan felt the need to reform Anglo-Saxon society, which he wanted to do according to God's law.[50] He presents his view on how to reform society in several texts, one of which is *Institutes of Polity*. In this document, Wulfstan presents a textual model for an ideal kingdom with instructions to important members of the council, mainly noblemen and bishops, and to the *witan* as a whole.[51] Both these documents are relevant for the present discussion of the ideal for counsellors. *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos* mainly presents Wulfstan's view of the failures of counsellors, and *Institutes of Polity* presents how Wulfstan thinks the *witan* and its members should function.

Righteousness

The most fundamental trait for Anglo-Saxon counsellors is righteousness, both according to divine law and the earthly laws of the Anglo-Saxon kingdom. Therefore, Wulfstan's wish to reform Anglo-Saxon society according to God's law is significant. The single most important instruction for Anglo-Saxon counsellors that Wulfstan gives is keeping God's and worldly laws.[52] Wulfstan highlights the significance of keeping these laws by thoroughly emphasising them in his instruction to the *witan* in *Institutes of Polity*, which reads as follows:

> Cyningan and bisceopan, earlon and heretogan, gerefan and deman, larwitan and lahwitan gedafeneð mid rihte for Gode and for worulde þæt hi anræde weorðan and Godes right lufian.
>
> [It rightly befits kings and bishops, earls and generals, reeves and judges, scholars and lawyers, that they be in agreement in the sight of God and the world and cherish God's law.][53]

[48] Andreas Lemke, "Fear-Mongering, Political Shrewdness or Setting the Stage for a 'Holy Society'?—Wulfstan's *Sermo Lupi Ad Anglos*," *English Studies* 95, no. 7 (2014), 765-767.
[49] *Ibid.*, 764.
[50] *Ibid.*, 765.
[51] Schwartz, "Rulers and the Wolf," 111-112.
[52] Schwartz, "Rulers and the Wolf," 228-229.
[53] Karl Jost, *Institutes of Polity, Civil & Ecclesiastical* (Bern: Francke, 1959), 62. Unless otherwise stated all quotations of *Institutes of Polity* are taken from *Institutes of Polity, Civil & Ecclesiastical*, edited by Karl Jost; Michael James Swanton, *Anglo-Saxon Prose* (London: J.M. Dent, 1975), 127-128. Unless otherwise stated all translations of *Institutes of Polity* are taken from *Anglo-Saxon Prose*, translated by Michael Swanton.

Remarkably, Wulfstan's emphasis on keeping the law in this line is threefold. Firstly, even though in other sections of the work there are instructions for members of the counsel specifically, Wulfstan's only real instruction to the entirety of the *witan* is keeping these laws. Furthermore, Wulfstan stresses the weight of keeping the laws by stating that all members of the *witan* are subject to keeping both God's and worldly law – which he highlights by listing all people that participate in the assemblies of the *witan*. He includes both earls and bishops, but also lower placed lawyers and the highest ranking person in the country, the king. This way, Wulfstan emphasises that the duty to keep the law transcends the ranks of these people. Lastly, Wulfstan expresses that keeping these laws is of essence in a somewhat strange way. A closer look at the instruction quoted above reveals that God's law is actually mentioned twice; Wulfstan states that members of the witan have to be in agreement before God and the world, in order to cherish God's law. Thus, Wulfstan instructs counsellors to keep God's law and worldly law, but also states that the goal of keeping these laws has to do with God's law. Therefore, reading Wulfstan's instruction quoted above, one must conclude that Wulfstan gives great significance to keeping secular laws and, in particular, to keeping God's law in his instruction to counsellors. It seems, Wulfstan values righteousness or justness as one of the most vital traits for counsellors.

There are quite a number of reasons why Anglo-Saxon writers stress justness to be a counsellor's most vital trait, of which several will be listed in the following section. Firstly, keeping the laws of God and the world helps counsellors to achieve unity within the council. This way, being righteous is directly connected to the practice of consensus politics as explained above. Both Ælfric and Wulfstan hint at the practice of consensus politics in their works. Ælfric, as Kevin R. Kritsch notes, states that the king should listen to his counsellors and act "mid þæs folces fultume" [with the support of the people], according to Kritsch a cooperative element of governance.[54] Wulfstan connects the cooperative element of governance to the justness of counsellors. In the instruction to the *witan* he orders them to be united in keeping the law "þæt hi anræde weorðan" [so they become united].[55] Unity was, as has been mentioned above, essential for the king and his counsellors in order to effectively govern the country and the most successful kings were probably the ones most capable of creating unity between the different counsellors. By stressing that righteousness will help achieve unity, Wulfstan implies that righteousness is key for successfully governing the kingdom. Furthermore, he implicates that

[54] Kevin R. Kritsch, "Fragments and Reflexes of Kingship Theory in Ælfric's Comments on Royal Authority," *English Studies* 97, no. 2 (2016), 164-165.
[55] Jost, *Institutes of Polity*, 62. Jost translates these words as "daß sie einig werden", so they become united.

counsellors who are righteous will be capable of cooperation with other righteous counsellors and a righteous king, and will for that reason function well in Anglo-Saxon politics.

Righteousness is also a required for counsellors to accomplish one of their key tasks: ensuring justice in the country. In *Institutes of Polity*, Wulfstan implies that he thinks keeping the law and the task of ensuring justice are connected. To begin with, the archbishop assigns the task of maintaining earthly laws in the country to earls, the highest ranking secular counsellors. He instructs them in particular: "þeofas and þeadscaðan hi sculon hatigan and riperas and reaferas hi sculon hynan utan hi geswican" [they must hate thieves and despoilers of the people and they must condemn robbers and plunderers, unless they desist].[56] People such as thieves and robbers are people who commit injustice both to others and to God. In particular, Wulfstan, thus, instructs earls to fight these earthly forms of injustice. In addition, Wulfstan instructs earls to be morally just themselves by stating more generally, that "symle hi sculon a unriht swiðe ascunian" [they must always severely shun injustice].[57] Thus, Wulfstan links the earls' duty to ensure justice with a moral responsibility to be righteous and just themselves. In doing so, he implies the importance of justness in order to properly accomplish the task of ensuring justice in the country.

Wulfstan repeats this connection between the responsibility of maintaining justice and the encouragement to be righteous individually in his instruction to bishops. Yet, differing from the instruction to earls, Wulfstan tasks the bishops with ensuring justice on a spiritual level. In doing so, Wulfstan parallels the duties of bishops and earls stressing the essentiality of justness for counsellors for ensuring justice in the country. Wulfstan instructs bishops first to fight injustice in general: "ac bodian hi symle Godes right georne and unriht forbeodan gime, se þe wille" [but let him who will, always take care diligently to preach God's law and forbid unrighteousness].[58] Moreover, just as he did with instructing earls, Wulfstan gives bishops the duty to specifically fight thievery and robbery, only bishops are tasked fighting these crimes on a spiritual scope. That is to say, bishops are responsible for fighting transgressions of God's law. Wulfstan creates the parallel between bishops and earls by depicting the devil as a spoiler: "nis nan swa yfel scaða, swa is deofel silf. He bið aa ymbe þæt an, hu he on manna sawlum mæst gescaðian mæge" [there is no spoiler so evil as is the Devil himself. He is forever concerned with one thing – how he can most ravage men's souls].[59] By portraying the devil as

[56] Jost, *Institutes of Polity*, 79; Swanton, *Anglo-Saxon Prose*, 130.
[57] Jost, *Institutes of Polity*, 79; Swanton, *Anglo-Saxon Prose*, 130.
[58] Jost, *Institutes of Polity*, 69; Swanton, *Anglo-Saxon Prose*, 129.
[59] Jost, *Institutes of Polity*, 69; Swanton, *Anglo-Saxon Prose*, 129.

a thief, Wulfstan suggests that the tasks of bishops and earls are very comparable and that these people are to be united for one specific purpose: to fight the injustice and unrighteousness. Like he had ordered the earls, Wulfstan instructed the bishops to be just themselves:

> And hig sculon bodian and bisnian georne godcunde þearfe cristenre þeod. And ne sculon hi ænig unriht willes geþafian, ac to ælcan rihte geornlice filstan.
>
> [And they must preach and carefully give an example of the spiritual duty of a Christian nation. And they must not willingly consent to any injustice, but diligently support every righteousness.][60]

In conclusion, Wulfstan parallels the duties of bishops and earls in ensuring justice and both links their task to their personal effort to keep gods and worldly laws. Simply put, Wulfstan suggests high-ranking counsellors must, in order to fulfil their task properly, be righteous.

Keeping the law is also essential because the righteousness or unrighteousness of the leading men impacts Anglo-Saxon society and the well-being of its people as a whole. As Anglo-Saxons generally believed, keeping the laws is vital because of God's resentment towards countries and people who commit injustice. Wulfstan's *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos* is testament to what happens if the people fail to keep divine and worldly laws and the role of negligent counsellors in the process. To begin with, Wulfstan summarises that God sent the Vikings to pillage the land because of the injustice of the entirety of the Anglo-Saxon people:

> Ac soð is þæt Ic secge þearf is þære bote, forþam Godes gerihta wanedan to lange innan þyssa þeode on æghwylcan ænde. And folclega wyrsedan ealles to swyþe […]. And hreodest is to cweþenne, Godes laga laðe and lare forsawene. And þæs we habbað alle þurh Godes yrre bysmor gelome, gecnawe se þe cunne.
>
> [But it is the truth when I say that there is need for a solution, because God's laws have dwindled for too long among this nation in each provinde. And public laws have declined all too greatly […]. And it can all be said most briefly that God's laws are hated and his teachings despised. And through God's angers we are all frequently shamed, understand this whoever is able to.][61]

Thus, clearly, because the Anglo-Saxons have broken both worldly and divine laws, God feels resentful and sends his punishments. Further onwards in his sermon, Wulfstan makes clear that the widespread injustice among the nation is partly caused by the negligence of people

[60] Jost, *Institutes of Polity,* 68; Swanton, *Anglo-Saxon Prose*, 128-129.
[61] Elaine Treharne, ed., *Old and Middle English c. 890-1450: An Anthology* (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 260-261. Unless otherwise stated all translations of *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos* are taken from *Old and Middle English c. 890-1450: An Anthology*, edited by Elaine Treharne.

responsible for justice in the country. He refers back to the historian Gildas, who saw the same sins occur among the Britons, who were destroyed by God for their sins:

> And þæt wæs geworden, þæs þe he sæde, þurh ricra reaflac, and þurh gitsinge wohgestreona, þurh leoda unlaga and þurh wohdomas, þurh biscopas asolcennesse and þurh lyðre yrhðe Godes bydela, þe soþes geswugedan ealles to gelome and clumedan mid ceaflum þær hy scoldan clypian.
>
> [And that happened, so he said, because of robbery by the powerful, and through the coveting of ill-gotten acquisitions, through the unlawfulness of the people, and through unjust judgements, through the idleness of bishops, and through the wicked cowardice of God's preachers, who kept silent about the truth all too often and mumbled with their jaws where they should have called out.][62]

Even though Wulfstan acknowledges that every person who broke the laws of God and the world is individually responsible, he also specifically reproaches the people in power for failing to accomplish their tasks. Wulfstan specifically reproaches the strong – by which he points at the nobility – because they are unjust towards their weaker subjects and judge them unfairly – and the clergy, because they break the law and fail their task of pointing the people at their injustice. Thus, unjust counsellors are, according to Wulfstan, accountable for the demise of the nation, which indicates he believes unrighteous counsellors are an affliction to the country. On the opposite, Wulfstan thinks ideal counsellors are a blessing to the nation because of the welfare God gives to nations who keep divine and worldly laws.

Anglo-Saxon clerics like Wulfstan not only believed justness of counsellors impacted the nation as a whole, but also that just counsellors would be favoured themselves. Most notably, God would reward righteous counsellors by giving them higher positions in the government. For instance, in Ælfric's homily *Of Saint Maurus*, Ælfric describes the story of Florus, a Frankish thane, whom God gives an influential position because of his righteousness. Florus is described by Ælfric as a prominent counsellor: "Se florus wæs ða fyrmest þæra francena þegna and ðam cyninge leofest þe on þæra leode rixode" [This Florus was then the first of the Frankish nobles, and dearest to the king who reigned over that people, and all the king's counsel went by his advice].[63] Thus, Florus is very influential in his position as closest individual to the king. This prominent position is, according to Ælfric, given to him as a gift from God, "forðan þe he wæs æwfest æfre fram his geogoðe" [because he had ever been pious

[62] Elaine Treharne, ed., *Old and Middle English*, 266-267.
[63] *Ælfric's Lives*, ed. Walter W. Skeat, 156-157. Unless otherwise stated all translations of *Lives of Saints* are taken from *Ælfric's Lives of Saints*, edited and translated by Walter W. Skeat.

from his youth].[64] Ælfric presents the same relationship between a prominent position at the court and a counsellor's righteousness in his homily *Of Saint Sebastian*. Sebastian is a Christian at a heathen court but keeps his identity as Christian hidden. He is a man who respects God's law: "He wæs swiðe snotor wer and soðfæst on spræce rihtwis on dome and on ræde foregleaw" [He was a very prudent man, truthful in word, righteous in judgement, in counsel forseeing].[65] Sebastian's righteousness pleases God, and, subsequently, the homily specifically tells God gives Sebastian a prominent position at the court as the most appreciated servant of the heathen king:

> He ge-sette hine to ealdre ofer an werod and het hine symble beon ætforan his gesihðe and ealle þa hyred-menn hine hæfdon for fæder and mid lufe wurðodon forðon þe god hine lufode.
>
> [He (the king) set him as a perfect over a cohort, and bade that he should always be in his presence; and all the household held him as a father, and honoured him with love, because God loved him.][66]

God thus favours Sebastian for his justness and piety in his position as counsellor. With these examples, Ælfric suggests clearly that God rewards counsellors for keeping His law and favours them with in their position in the government.

In contrast, Ælfric also clarifies that counsellors who advise unjustly and are unrighteous will be punished by God in their personal lives. Ælfric's most striking example of such an unrighteous counsellor is Jezebel in his homily *Of the Book of Kings*. In this homily, Ælfric depicts Jezebel as a counsellor of King Ahab. In the homily, Jezebel receives more prominence than in the original account in order to depict her as a bad counsellor.[67] She is completely ignorant of God's law and persuades Ahab to commit sins through bad advice: "Seo tihte hyre wer to ælcere wælhreownysse and hi tyrgdon god mid gralicum weorcum" [she incited him with every cruelty and they provoked God with hostile works].[68] As a result of Jezebel's bad advice, God turns hostile towards Ahab, Jezebel, and Israel, and then punishes them. In Jezebel's case, Ælfric notes God penalises her explicitly personal life by dispossessing her of all worldly honour at her death. As the homily narrates, she gets killed and eaten by the dogs as a punishment for her injustice.[69] Thus, in Ælfric's homily, Jezebel is highlighted as a

[64] *Ælfric's Lives*, ed. Walter W. Skeat, 156-157.
[65] *Ibid*., 116-117.
[66] *Ibid*., 132-133.
[67] Anderson, "Ælfric's Kings," 188-189.
[68] *Ælfric's Lives*, ed. Walter W. Skeat, 386-387.
[69] *Ibid*., 404-405.

counsellor-like figure bereaved of all worldly honour for her sins, which include her bad counsel. Ælfric's example shows how Anglo-Saxons believed God punishes counsellors for their unrighteousness personally.

To summarise, a first trait of good counsellors is righteousness. Through righteousness, counsellors will be able to achieve unity, will be able to govern the country well, and will bring God's blessing upon the nation and upon themselves

Wisdom

Another trait Anglo-Saxon authors believed counsellors should possess is wisdom. Many writers from early medieval Western Europe describe wisdom as an essential trait of good counsellors and encourage kings to listen to the advice of old, sober and wise counsellors.[70] Ælfric and Wulfstan do so as well. In his *Lives of Saints,* Ælfric describes king David's counsellor Ahitophel as "wis on raede" [wise in speech]."[71] Wulfstan encourages the bishops to be wise: "A gerist bisceopu, wisdom and wærscype" [wisdom and prudence always befits bishops].[72] The word *wisdom* is thus used by several Anglo-Saxon authors as a quality of counsellors.

Wisdom is essential to counsellors since through wisdom a counsellor is capable of giving good counsel. To begin with, a wise counsellor possesses the practical qualities to properly give counsel, namely intelligence and speech. As Corey Zwikstra explains, in Old English, the word *wisdom*, "inhabits a mental context and receives its full definition only through speech."[73] In other words, thinking and speaking are intrinsically connected within the word *wisdom* itself. Therefore, as Zwikstra notes, "through speech the wise character moves from a solitary thinker to a social being with responsibilities to his community as a preacher, counsellor, or teacher."[74] For a counsellor, being wise according to this definition, is essential since he has to publicly present his view on how to govern the kingdom at assemblies. For counsellors, being capable of thinking without the quality of speech or the other way around is either idle or unsuccessful. Yet, Zwikstra explains, speech from a wise person "releases wisdom externally, activating its full potential."[75] Put differently, a wise counsellor is intelligent and

[70] Meens, "Politics, Mirrors of Princes," 351.
[71] *Ælfric's Lives*, ed. Walter W. Skeat, 117, 427.
[72] Jost, *Institutes of Polity,* 77; Swanton, *Anglo-Saxon Prose*, 130.
[73] Corey J. Zwikstra, "The Psychology of Wisdom in Old English Poetry" (PhD diss., University of Notre Dame, 2008), 199.
[74] *Ibid*., 199.
[75] *Ibid*., 199.

eloquent. It stands to reason that such a counsellor will be able to both think of good counsel and will be able present counsel well.

Wisdom, however, is not only a combination of eloquence and intelligence. Wisdom has an additional meaning in Anglo-Saxon thought: seriously living according to God's law in combination with having knowledge of God's law. Ælfric clearly explains this element of wisdom in his homily *The Prayer of Moses* in his *Lives of Saints*. He does this by claiming he presents true wisdom, namely "Godes wisdom:"

> Eadig bið se man seðe gemet wisdom forðan þe se wisdom is selra þone scinende gold and he ana is deorwurðra þonne ða dyran maðmas þæt is se wisdom þæt man wislice libbe and his dæda gefadige to his drihtnes willan.
>
> [Blessed is the man that findeth widom, because wisdom is better than shining gold, and it alone is more precious than costly treasures. This is wisdom, that a man may live wisely and order his deeds according to the Lord's will.][76]

Thus, a wise person simply obeys God's law, because in His law God has presented His will. If a man wants to live according to God's will, then, according to Ælfric, he needs to know God's law:

> Min bearn ne forgit ðu mine beboda and æ ac healde ðin heorta (sic) hi geornlice hi gelengað þin lif and þu leofast on sibbe and mildheortnyss and soðfæstnys þe soðlice ne forlætað.
>
> [My son, forget not thou my commands and law, but keep them [in] thine heart diligently; they shall prolong thy life and thou shalt live in peace, and merry and truth shall verily not forsake thee.][77]

That Ælfric encourages people to keep the law in their hearts is significant because the word keeping in the heart suggests that people should both know God's laws well and practice them seriously. Thus, Ælfric thinks wisdom is a combination of very seriously living according to and knowing God's law. It's easy to see why counsellors who keep God's law in their hearts give good counsel. They will give just and righteous advice and make decisions that will help ensure God's law is respected in the country. Given the importance of keeping God's law for the welfare of the country, wise counsellors are vital to the nation.

[76] *Ælfric's Lives*, ed. Walter W. Skeat, 306-307.
[77] *Ibid*., 306-307.

Promoting learning

Related to the importance of the knowledge of wisdom for counsellors, Anglo-Saxon authors point out that counsellors should either promote or be engaged in book-learning and study. Study and learning are essential in Anglo-Saxon England, because through the study of good books and God's law, counsellors receive wisdom. To illustrate, King Alfred links book-learning, wisdom, and the welfare of the country to each other in his *Preface* to *Pastoral Care*:

> Gode ælmihtegum sie ðone ðæt[te] we nu ænigne on stal habbað lareowa. And forðon ic ðe bebiode ðæt ðu do swæ ic geliefe ðæt ðu wille, ðæt ðu ðeðissa woruldðinga to ðæm geæmetige swæ ðu oftost mæge, ðæt ðu ðone wisdom ðe ðe God sealde ðær ðær ðu hiene befæstan mæge, befæste. Geðene hwelc witu us ða becomon for ðisse worulde, ða ða we hit nohwæðer ne selfe ne lufodon ne eac oðrum monnum ne lefdon.
>
> [Thanks be to God almighty that we have any teachers among us now. And therefore I command thee to do as I believe thou art willing, to disengage thyself from worldly matters as often as thou canst, that thou mayest apply the wisdom which God has given thee wherever thou canst. Consider what punishments would come upon us, if we neither loved it (wisdom) ourselves nor suffered other men to obtain it.][78]

In this quote, Alfred encourages bishops in particular to become wise through studying God's law and for that reason encourages them to study when they can, otherwise the country will be punished by God.[79] Moreover, Alfred repeatedly mentions that one of the reasons England is in decay is because people are not capable of reading books in their own language, and for that reason not able to study these good books. Therefore, he says, he translated a number of good books into English, following the example of the Greeks, Romans and other Christian nations that translated God's law into their own languages. In his *Preface*, he encourages young men to learn to read English writing in order to understand the content of good books.[80] Thus, Alfred advocates the importance of study, because it will provide the wisdom through which counsellors will be able to govern the country correctly.

When applied to counsellors, however, not all types of counsellors were encouraged to engage in study of the law and good Christian books. In the composition of the Anglo-Saxon *witan*, Wulfstan assigns the task of learning mostly to the clergy. Bishops are, in Wulfstan's

[78] *King Alfred's West Saxon Version*, ed. Henry Sweet, 3-5. Unless otherwise stated all translations of the *Pastoral Care* are taken from *King Alfred's West Saxon Version of Gregory's Pastoral Care*, edited and translated by Henry Sweet.
[79] Thomas A. Shippey, "Wealth and Wisdom in King Alfred's *Preface* to the Old English *Pastoral Care*," *The English Historical Review* 94, no. 371 (1979), 353.
[80] *The West Saxon Version*, ed. Henry Sweet, 4-7.

view, teachers of secular members of the *witan*.[81] Wulfstan mentions that they have this particular task in his instruction to the *witan* specifically:

> And bisceopas syndon bydelas and godes lage lareowas, and hi sculan bodian and unriht forbodean: and se þe oferhogige, þæt he heom hlyste, hæbbe him gemæne þæt wið God sylfne.
>
> [And bishops are heralds and teachers of God's law, and they must preach justice and forbid injustice; and he who scorns to listen to them, let him settle that with God himself.][82]

In the context of the *witan*, bishops, according to Wulfstan's instruction, have to teach justice and righteousness to the other members of the *witan*, so the *witan* as a whole will remain righteous and function properly. To become knowledgeable and wise, Wulfstan encourages, as Alfred did, bishops to study: "bisceopas sculan bocum […] filigan" and "hi sceolan leornian and rihtlice læran and ymbe folces dæda georнlice smeagan" [bishops must attend books (and) they must learn and teach correctly, and diligently require about the deeds of the people].[83] So, Wulfstan believes bishops must study both God and the deeds of the people, and are responsible for teaching the knowledge they gain from their study. Through this study, bishops will thus become wise, give wise counsel and for that reason govern the country correctly, which is according to God's law.

Apart from listening to the advice of learned bishops, high-ranking secular counsellors need to protect and regularly support the Church materially. Especially Wulfstan points out that noblemen are given these practical tasks that serve the promotion of learning. For example, Wulfstan instructs earls as follows: "Ac a hi sculon circan ofer ealle oðre þinc weorðian and werian" [but above all other things, they must honour and defend the Church].[84] In addition, Ælfric praises a number of secular counsellors in his homilies for protecting the Church. For instance, in his homily *On Kings*, Ælfric explicitly narrates the example of Obadia, a thane of the sinful king Ahab who has secretly protected 100 prophets in the country.[85] Obadiah hardly has any impact on the narrative itself, but only seems to be included to be praised as a "arwurðfulla Godes ðegn" [worthy servant of God][86] for his protection of God's prophets. Another role model for earls Ælfric mentions is Florus, whom he sets as an example of a secular

[81] Schwartz, "Rulers and the Wolf," 35-37, 218.
[82] Jost, *Institutes of Polity*, 62; Swanton, *Anglo-Saxon Prose*, 128.
[83] Jost, *Institutes of Polity*, 67; Swanton, *Anglo-Saxon Prose*, 128.
[84] Jost, *Institutes of Polity*, 79; Swanton, *Anglo-Saxon Prose*, 130.
[85] Anderson, "Ælfric's Kings," 190-191.
[86] *Ælfric's Lives*, ed. Walter W. Skeat, 388-389.

counsellors who uses his secular power to benefit the Church.[87] As has been mentioned before, Florus is depicted by Ælfric as a good secular counsellor of his Frankish king. One important deed he is praised for his construction of a monastery.[88] Ælfric thus portrays Obadiah and Florus as exemplary good secular counsellor through their acts which serve learning in the country. Good secular counsellors, Anglo-Saxon writers suggest, may not be learned in books and God's law, but should still promote learning by providing protection and support to the Church and its members.

The sin of selfishness

Finally, there is one form of unjust behaviour that is of particular interest in the depiction of the ideal of counsellorship by the Anglo-Saxon writers covered in this chapter. This behaviour is the sin of selfishness. Anglo-Saxon authors warn high-ranking people for this sin in particular and encourage counsellors to be selfless instead. Self-interest is a very damaging sin for counsellors because powerful and wealthy people are prone to succumb to the temptations of luxury and power. The *Pastoral Care* warns explicitly for these temptations in a section called 'Of the burden of rule and how he is to despise all toils, and how afraid he must be of every luxury.'[89] This part of the work explains that "forðæm for ðære orsorgnesse monn oft aðint on ofermettum" [for through luxury men are often inflated with pride] and "oft þæt he te gode gedyde he forlist" [they often lose what good they did].[90] Thus, a high rank comes with a certain burden, the temptation of power. Giving in to this temptation may cause a man to commit sins. As a matter of fact, the consequences of caving in to these temptations seem so major that Gregory actually warns his readers by giving an example of the Lord Christ himself choosing not to become a secular ruler:

> Ne fleah he ðy rice ðy his ænig monn bét wyrðe wære, ac he wolde us ða bisene astellan, ðæt we his to suiðe ne gitseden; & eac wolde for ús ðrowian. He nolde beon cyning, & his agnum willan he com to rode gealgan.
>
> [He did not shun supremacy because any man was worthier of it, but wished to set us an example of not coveting it too much. He wished not to be king; yet of his own free will came to the cross.][91]

[87] Anderson, "Ælfric's Kings," 129-132.
[88] *Ælfric's Lives*, ed. Walter W. Skeat, 154-155.
[89] *King Alfred's West-Saxon Version*, ed. Henry Sweet, 32-36.
[90] *Ibid*., 34.
[91] *Ibid*., 33.

Thus, even the Lord himself, according to Gregory, did not become a secular ruler in order to show his followers the temptations of supremacy and wealth. Following Christ's example, people with a wealthy and powerful positions must not love their possessions and uphold honour too much because of the dangers these worldly possessions present.

Counsellors can act wrongly out of self-interest in two main ways. The first way is acting out of material gain, a violation of God's and worldly laws because of the injustice done to towards weaker and poorer people. Wulfstan especially warns earls not to act out of material gain,[92] stating they should "nahwar þurh undom for feo ne for friendscipe forgiman heora wisom swa þæt hi wændan unriht to rihte oððe undom deman earmon to hynðe" [nowhere neglect their wisdom through bad judgement, for money or for friendship, so that they turn injustice to justice or decree bad judgement to the injury of the poor].[93] Ælfric presents a similar attitude towards secular counsellors who are only interested in their own material gain, for instance in the homily *Ahitophel and Absalom* in *Lives of Saints*:[94]

> Eall swa þa unriht-wisan deman þe heora domas awendað æfre be þam sceattum na be soðfæstnysse and habbað æfre to cépe heora soðfæstnysse and swa hi sylfe syllað wið sceattum. […] Ne sceall nan godes þegn for sceattum riht deman ac healdan þone dom gif he drihtnes man sy buton lyðrum sceattum symle to rihte þæt he on þam ecan life his edlean underfo.
>
> [So likewise those unrighteous judges who pervert their judgements, always for gain, and not for justice, and always offer their justice for sale, and thus sell themselves for the sake of money. That they shall have the end for their unrighteousness, eternal torments with the treacherous devil. […] None of God's thanes may decide a cause for gain, but maintain the judgement, if he be the Lord's man without miserable bribes, ever for the right, that he may receive his reward in the eternal life.] [95]

Although Ælfric mainly addresses secular counsellors in these comments, the instructions are most likely meant for high-ranking clergy as well. Both ecclesial and secular counsellors should not act out of interest in material gain.

The other way in which counsellors may be selfish is through fear for their positions as counsellors or even their lives, while they demonstrate the incorrect behaviour of other people, for example. This warning is especially relevant to bishops, as they are tasked with the moral guidance of the nation and the *witan*. Bishops and clergymen who neglect their duties damage the country because of the sins the people will commit as a result of the clergy's negligence.

[92] Schwartz, "Rulers and the Wolf," 229.
[93] Jost, *Institutes of Polity*, 78; Swanton, *Anglo-Saxon Prose*, 130.
[94] *Ahitophel and Absalom* is part of the larger homily *Of Saint Alban*.
[95] *Ælfric's Lives*, ed. Walter W. Skeat, 430-431.

Both Ælfric and Wulfstan warn clergymen and bishops for negligence and fear. As Robert Upchurch argues, Ælfric's adaptation of Gregory's homily of the Second Sunday after Easter recalls God's condemnation of negligent clergymen. In this homily, the clergy are false shepherds who are self-interested and do not govern their flock well.[96] Wulfstan gives bishops a similar waring in *Institutes of Polity*: "gif bisceopas forgymað, þæt hi synna ne styrað ne unirht forbeodaþ ne Godes right ne cyþað, ac clumiað mid ceaflum, þær hi sceoldan clypian, wa heom þære swigean!" [if bishops neglect to punish sins or forbid unjustice, nor make known God's law, but muble with their jaws where they ought to cry out, woe to them for that silence!].[97] Wulfstan likewise acknowledges the danger of fear: "Hy sculon Godes ege habban on gemynde and ne eargian for worldege ealles to swiðe" [they must bear in mind the fear of God and not be all too slothful for fear of the world].[98] Wulfstan and Ælfric both emphasise the dangers of negligence and fear that are caused by too much self-interest. The ideal counsellor, in their eyes, acts completely selflessly thereby always pointing out the injustice of people, no matter if this may be a dangerous act.

Finally, counsellors who are self-interested will not give good counsel. Ælfric gives a great example of a counsellor motivated by his own advantage in *Ahitophel and Absalom*. As noted above, Ahitophel is a counsellor who is "wis on ræde" [wise in speech][99] when he is a counsellor in David's court and serves him well. However, in the story, Ahitophel betrays David for Absalom, David's revolutionary son. In doing so, Ahitophel chooses his own good. Unfortunately for him, when switching sides his advice also becomes unwise. He advises Absalom to immediately chase David after his revolution to kill him, which actually is the best advice from a practical point of view. However, even though Ahithophel's advice will help Absalom succeed in his revolution, he is not a wise thane on this particular occasion. Rather, this honour goes to another one of David's thanes. This unnamed thane opposes Ahithophel and counsels Absalom wrongly: he tells David's son to wait with an attack on David, which will enable David to build up his strength. However, even though the advice is wrong for Absalom, the thane is still described as giving wise advice: "ac sum oðer þægn wið-cwæð his geðeahte wislice" [but another thane wisely opposed his design].[100] The reason this thane's advice is wise is because it is in line with God's plan and God's will, namely to deliver David:

[96] Robert K. Upchurch, "A Big Dog Barks: Ælfric of Eynsham's Indictment of the English Pastorate and *Witan*," *Speculum* 85, no. 3 (2010), 510.
[97] Jost, *Institutes of Polity*, 63; Swanton, *Anglo-Saxon Prose*, 128.
[98] Jost, *Institutes of Polity*, 68; Swanton, *Anglo-Saxon Prose*, 129.
[99] *Ælfric's Lives*, ed. Walter W. Skeat, 426-427.
[100] *Ibid*., 430-431.

"dauid wurde frā heora wodnysse ahræd" [David should be delivered from their madness.].[101] Ahithophel's advice, in contrast, is not labelled as wise even though it is the best advice from a practical point of view. However, what Ahitophel did was advise his real lord, David, wrongly and unwisely: "seðe wolde berædan his rihtwisan hlaford" [who sought to advise wrongly his true lord].[102] Therefore Ahitophel is not a good counsellor. He offers advice that appears to be good but is motivated by self-interest. His selfishness makes him unwise and, therefore, incapable of giving good counsel. Counsellors who act out of self-interest for whatever reason will, this homily suggests, not give counsel according God's will and are unwise. Counsellors who are selfless, are, of course, the opposite.

Conclusion

The works of the Anglo-Saxon writers that were discussed in the current chapter present a number of traits they believe are essential for well-functioning Anglo-Saxon counsellors, namely righteousness, wisdom and selflessness. Most importantly, counsellors have to keep both the earthly and divine laws, because of the many benefits God gives to a righteous nation in general and to counsellors personally. Wisdom is needed for counsellors, because through wisdom they will give good counsel. Selflessness is vital as well, because of the dangers that self-interest and selfishness present especially to high-ranking and wealthy members of the *witan*. Selfish counsellors will not keep God's law, whereas selfless, wise counsellors will. Finally, these authors encourage counsellors to promote learning throughout the country or to study themselves in order to gain wisdom.

[101] *Ælfric's Lives*, ed. Walter W. Skeat, 430-431.
[102] *Ibid*., 430-431.

CHAPTER II – THE IDEAL OF COUNSELORSHIP IN THE OLD ENGLISH *DANIEL*

The Old English poem *Daniel* is an Anglo-Saxon retelling of the events of the first five chapters of the biblical book of *Daniel*. Even though the Anglo-Saxon poem is named after the main character of the biblical book, the narrative focuses on Nebuchadnezzar as its most important character. The poem starts by summarising the story of the Babylonian conquest of Israel, the exile of the Hebrews to Babylon and the recruitment of serviceable young men to Nebuchadnezzar, including the Three Youths. Following this prologue, the poem describes the conversion of the sinful king Nebuchadnezzar through the events of the two dream episodes and the fiery furnace episode, in which the Three Youths survive a heated oven with God's help. Through the events of these episodes, God reveals himself to the Babylonian king as the eternal, all-powerful Lord. Following these events, Nebuchadnezzar does acknowledge God's superiority but does not truly convert himself and remains sinful. Because of his sins, Nebuchadnezzar is punished by God: he is exiled and becomes a beast for a period of time. Yet, even though God exiled Nebuchadnezzar to punish him, the exile also functions as the final step in the ruler's conversion. After his exile, the king is truly converted, becomes a righteous person, and a good king. Following these events, the poem narrates the fall of the Babylonian empire, focusing on Nebuchadnezzar's son Belshazzar. Like his father, Belshazzar does not acknowledge God's superiority and is sent a sign by God, the handwriting on the wall of his palace. Yet, unlike Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar does not convert himself. Instead, he and the Babylonian empire fall as a punishment for and a consequence of his sins and the sins of his people.

Scholars of the Old English *Daniel* have argued that some of the elements of ideal counsellorship as identified in the previous chapter are featured in the Old English poem as well, although not yet in relation to ideal counsellorship. Most notably, critics have argued that the themes of self-interest and keeping God's law are important structural and thematic elements of the poem. The theme of self-interest is very clearly present in Nebuchadnezzar's conversion story.[103] Nebuchadnezzar refuses God's power first and foremost, as Bosse and Wyatt state, because of his pride and personal satisfaction.[104] Even after the miracles of the fiery furnace and the dreams that have come to Nebuchadnezzar, the king is still too proud,

[103] Remley, *Old English Biblical Verse*, 244.
[104] Roberta Bosse and Jennifer Wyatt, "Hrothgar and Nebuchadnezzar: Conversion in Old English Verse," *Papers on Language and Literature* 23, no. 3 (1987), 262.

which eventually is the cause for the his exile.[105] Nebuchadnezzar's pride is one of the characteristics that mark him as an example of the bad king or the *rex iniquus*.[106] Moreover, the destruction of Babylon and the destruction of Jerusalem are caused by the pride of Belshazzar and the Israelites, respectively.[107] Similarly, the theme of keeping God's law is an essential element of the poem.[108] As Robert E. Bjork shows, the poem sets up a contrast between righteous and sinful people. Daniel and the Three Youths are repeatedly associated with keeping the law, while the Babylonians are associated with committing sins and choosing the devil's craft. Similarly, the Israelites at the beginning of the poem are blessed and favoured by God for keeping the covenant, but are punished with exile in Babylon after they have abandoned God's law and started to commit sins.[109]

As of yet, these elements of good counsellorship as present in the poem and as identified in the previous chapter have not yet been linked to the counsellors of the poem. Linking these elements will be the focus of the current chapter. It will be argued that the Old English *Daniel* presents an ideal of good counsellorship in its depiction of Daniel and the Three Youths. The Hebrews are depicted as good counsellors, whereas most of the Babylonian advisors and magicians are portrayed as bad counsellors. The ideal of counsellorship which the poem presents through Daniel and the Three Youths is mostly similar to the ideal of counsellorship of the Anglo-Saxon authors as identified in Chapter I. The counsellors of the poem are righteous as well as wise, and act selflessly. With these qualities they are a blessing to the Babylonian and Hebrews nations, to their king and to themselves.

Is the Old English 'Daniel' about counsellorship?

The following section will discuss whether or not the Old English *Daniel* is about counsellorship, before going into detail about the ideal for counsellors in the poem. Critics generally argue that the poet of *Daniel* has consciously transformed the original narrative into a story that is both relevant and recognizable for Anglo-Saxons.[110] The poem's depiction of

[105] Bosse and Wyatt, "Hrothgar and Nebuchadnezzar," 262-263; Manish Sharma, "Nebuchadnezzar and the Defiance of Measure in the Old English *Daniel*," *English Studies* 86, no. 2 (2005), 104.
[106] Fox, "Denial of God," 450.
[107] Remley, *Old English Biblical Verse*, 245.
[108] Peter J. Lucas, "A Daniel come to Judgement? Belshazzar's Feast in Old and Middle English," in *Loyal Letters: Studies on Mediaeval Alliterative Poetry & Prose*, ed. L.A.J.R. Houwen and A.A. Macdonald (Groningen: Forsten, 1994), 74-75.
[109] Robert E Bjork, "Oppressed Hebrews and the Song of Azarias in the Old English *Daniel*," *Studies in Philology* 77, no. 3 (1980), 215.
[110] Overing, "Nebuchadnezzar's Conversion," 3-4.

councils and counsellors is part of this transformation. There are multiple indications the Anglo-Saxon poet may have intended *Daniel* to be a poem about counsellorship.

To begin with, the poem chose to adapt the councils from the original narrative in detail. This is unlike many other parts of the original narrative that have been left out completely or were changed significantly. Like the biblical account, the poet narrates how Nebuchadnezzar assembles his council when he is unable to remember the first dream:

> þa tosomme sinra leode
> þa wiccungdon hwæt hine gemætte,
> frægn þa ða mænigea hwæt hine gemætte,
> þendon reord-beren reste wunode.
>
> [commanded together those of his people who paraded witchcraft most widely, the gathering was to be asked what he had dreamt.][111]

Furthermore, after the second dream, he summons a gathering as well: "het þa tosomne sine leode / folc-togan feran" [then he commanded his people together, the national leaders to come].[112] The poem's accounts of these scenes is remarkably similar to the biblical verses that describes these events, especially the account of the first dream: "praecepit ergo rex ut convocarentur arioli et magi et malefici et Chaldei et indicarent regi somnia sua qui cum venissent steterunt coram rege" [Then the king commanded to call together the diviners and the wise men, and the magicians, and the Chaldeans: to declare to the king his dreams: so they came and stood before the king].[113] The presence of the accounts of these assemblies and their similarities to the biblical verses may indicate that these councils are of essence to the poem.

Yet, because two specific assemblies also occur in the biblical account, they may not be seen as conscious depictions of Anglo-Saxon councils by the Anglo-Saxon poet. However, the poem also depicts moments where the king assembles his council that do not occur as explicitly in the biblical account. This happens after the fiery furnace episode, at the point in the narrative where the Youths are ordered to present themselves to Nebuchadnezzar having survived the heated oven. In the biblical account, the king summons his counsellors to look at the miracle and, when the Youths return from the fire, the king praises God amidst his counsellors.[114] The Old English poet, in contrast, depicts these two events as two different gatherings of

[111] *Daniel*, ll. 120-123. Unless otherwise stated all quotations from *Daniel* are taken from Daniel Anlezark, *Old Testament Narratives* (Cambridge, Ma: Harvard University Press, 2011), 248-299.
[112] *Daniel*, ll. 526-527a.
[113] Dan. 2:2 (Vulgate).
[114] Dan. 3:91-100 (Vulgate).

counsellors. First, as in the biblical account, the king gathers his closest advisors specifically to consider the miracle of the furnace: Ða þæt ehtode ealdor þeode / Nabochodnossor, wið þam nehstom / folc-gesiðum" [Then Nebuchadnezzar, the nation's leader, considered it with his closest advisors].[115] Following the events, in contrast, he then summons together a second council to publicly praise God:

> Ða se ðeoden ongan geðinges wyrcan;
> het þa tosomme sine leode,
> and þa on þam meðle ofer meningo bebead
> wyrd gewordene and wundor Godes.
>
> [Then the prince began to summon an assembly he ordered his people together, and then in the gathering he announced across the multitude the accomplished feat and God's miracle.][116]

The Old English poet, thus, depicts more assemblies than the biblical account. Given the fact that these assemblies were essential to Anglo-Saxon politics as well, one may conclude that the poet intended these assemblies to be of importance in the narrative.

A second indication of the poet's intention to address counsellorship is the presence of elements recognisable for Anglo-Saxons in the descriptions of the councils in the poem. As an illustration, whereas the biblical narrator does not determine where Nebuchadnezzar's assemblies take place, the Old English poem indicates that the people who must explain the first dream are "on þam meðel-stede" [in the assembly hall],[117] a typical Old English word to describe the palace of an Anglo-Saxon king. Another recognisable element is the fact that the king considers the miracle of the fiery furnace "wið þam nehstom / folc-gesiðum" [with his closest advisors].[118] As was argued in the previous chapter, closeness to the king was of value to Anglo-Saxon counsellors. Therefore, Nebuchadnezzar's act to consider the miracle with his closest advisors fits in with the practice of consensus politics in the Anglo-Saxon period, as explained in the first section of the previous chapter. Anglo-Saxon readers must have recognised the king's move to consider these matters with his closest advisors. Finally, the entire episode of the handwriting on the wall takes place specifically in Belshazzar's "healle" (hall).[119] The use of these elements of Anglo-Saxon politics indicates the poet adapts the biblical story by incorporating certain elements recognisable and relevant for his audience. Given the

[115] *Daniel*, ll. 409-411a.
[116] *Daniel*, ll. 467-470.
[117] *Daniel*, l. 145b.
[118] *Daniel*, ll. 410b.-411a.
[119] *Daniel*, l. 718b.

attention the poet paid to depicting these councils, one may assume the poet could have intended these councils and counsellors to be of relevance in the narrative.

Additionally, the poem gives significance to good counsel by highlighting the consequences of listening to bad counsel. Most importantly, critics have argued that the exile of both Nebuchadnezzar and the Jews are partly caused by their reluctance to listen to the good and wise advice of good counsellors. The Hebrews are blessed at the beginning of the poem because they keep God's covenant, but seize to do so at a certain point in time. After the Hebrews have abandoned the law, God sends advisors, called "halige gastas" [holy souls], to the Israelites "þa þam werude wisdom budon" [who offered wisdom for the troop].[120] However, the poem expresses the Hebrews fail to listen to the advice appropriately:

> Hie þæra snytro soð gelyfdon
> lyte hwile oðþæt hie langung beswac,
> eorðan dreamas, eces rædes,
> þæt hie æt siðestan sylfe forleton
> Drihtnes domas, curon deofles cræft.
>
> [For a little while they believed in the truth of that wisdom, until passion, the joys of the earth, deprived them of eternal counsel, so that they eventually abandoned the Lord's decrees, chose the craft of the devil.][121]

This failure to listen to the advice given by God's messengers is one of the causes of their exile to Babylon.[122] God grows "reðe-mod" [belligerent] and "unhold" [unfriendly] towards them and sends the Babylonians.[123] Similarly, God eventually exiles King Nebuchadnezzar because of his failure to listen to good advice. Even though God sends Nebuchadnezzar dreams and the king rationally comes to understand that God is the eternal Lord, he still refuses to listen to Daniel's advice.[124] After Daniel has explained the second dream to the king – the final dream before his exile – the poem explicitly mentions Daniel gives good counsel: "Gehyge þu, frea min, fæstlicne ræd" [Consider, my lord, reliable advice].[125] Nevertheless, Nebuchadnezzar, does not listen to Daniel's wise words, as the poem narrates:

> No þæs fela Daniel to his drihtne gespræc
> soðra worda þurh snytro cræft

[120] *Daniel*, ll. 26b.-27.
[121] *Daniel*, ll. 28-32.
[122] Bugge, "Virginity and Prophecy," 134.
[123] *Daniel*, ll. 33a., 34a.
[124] Murray-John, "The Poetics," 83-84.
[125] *Daniel*, l. 585.

> þæt þæs a se rica reccan wolde,
> middan-geardes weard, ac his mod astah.
> Heah from heortan; he þæs hearde ongeald.
>
> [Daniel could not speak enough true words through wise skill about this to his lord that he would make potentate, middle-earth's guardian, take account of it, but his mind climbed up, high from the heart; he paid for that.][126]

This passage clearly states Nebuchadnezzar is exiled partly because he does not listen to the advice given by Daniel. The biblical account does also emphasise Nebuchadnezzar's unwillingness to listen to good counsel to an extent, but does not recount the parallel between him and the Jews, since the short prologue that tells the history of the Israelite exile is added by the Anglo-Saxon poet.[127] Listening to counsel, then, is a notable thematic element in the poem, another indication the poet intended the poem to be about counsellorship.

Perhaps most convincingly, the poem depicts the characters of Daniel and the Three Youths specifically as members of Nebuchadnezzar's council by substantially altering their storylines from the original narrative. To begin with, the biblical narrative depicts Daniel as a young man, who just like the Three Youths, was recruited from Israel to be educated in Babylon. Just like the Three Youths, he rejects the food Nebuchadnezzar offers him, receives God's grace and grows up to become a skilled servant of the king with the ability to explain dreams.[128] The Old English poem, on the contrary, completely omits Daniel's youthful age, his recruitment as a young man, and his rejection of the Babylonian food. In fact, he does not even occur alongside the Three Youths in the prologue, whereas he had a very prominent role in the beginning of the biblical narrative. Instead, the poem introduces him later, at the council that Nebuchadnezzar assembles after the first dream, where Daniel is described as follows: "Se wæs ord-fruma earmre lafe / þære þe þam hæðenan hyran sceoldo" [He was the leader of the wretched remnant of those who had to serve the pagans].[129] Thus, the poem introduces Daniel as the established leader of Israel and simply describes him as being responsible for a portion of Nebuchadnezzar's subjects – an element completely made up by the poet. By changing Daniel's character so much, the poet suggests that Daniel is an established member of the Babylonian court and perhaps even the king's *witan*. He is thus, already, a counsellor when the poet introduces him.

[126] *Daniel*, ll. 593-597.
[127] Dan. 4:24 (Vulgate).
[128] Dan. 1:6-9 (Vulgate).
[129] *Daniel*, ll. 152-154.

More evidence that supports the assumption that Daniel is an established counsellor is the omission of the reason of Daniel's presence at the assembly. Instead, the poem suggests that Daniel attends the gathering of Nebuchadnezzar and his *witan* simply because of his established position as counsellor. In the biblical telling, Daniel attends the council because he and all the other wise men in Babylon may be killed if the dream is not explained. The biblical account then narrates that Daniel prays to God and approaches a servant to ask the king if he might be allowed to explain the dream.[130] The poem, on the contrary, fully omits this episode and with that the reason Daniel attends Nebuchadnezzar's council. Instead, by not narrating the why of Daniel's attendance, the poem suggests Daniel may have simply been present at the council because of his position as leader of the remnant of the Hebrew people. These people, who are now a part of Nebuchadnezzar's empire, are represented by Daniel at the council, it seems and Daniel attends the council to serve his "man-drihten" [earthly lord], a term used a number of times by the poet describe the relationship between Daniel and the king.[131] In sum, the poet has almost completely altered the character of Daniel from the original story and instead depicts Daniel as an established counsellor at Nebuchadnezzar's court.

The poet has altered the storyline of the Three Youths somewhat more subtly. Instead of completely omitting their history as he did for Daniel, the poet has centred their storyline around their coming-of-age as young counsellors. In the biblical account, the element of coming-of-age in the narrative of the Three Youths is definitely present, but the Old English poem retells the story with a different emphasis, namely an emphasis on their coming-of-age as good counsellors. In the biblical account, the moment when they become members of Nebuchadnezzar's court is narrated in the first chapter. Daniel and the Three Youths are recruited as potential servants of the king, receive education, and reject the pagan food they are offered.[132] Because they do so, God gives them wisdom.[133] After their education, Nebuchadnezzar discovers their wisdom and gives them a position at the court.[134] Later, he gives them a higher position as governors of the province of Babylon after Daniel has explained the first dream to King Nebuchadnezzar.[135] The Old English poem, by contrast, transforms the story of their recruitment. As in the Bible, Nebuchadnezzar first recruits young people from Israel by letting his officials seek out "hwilc þære geogoðe gleawist wære / boca bebodes þe

[130] Dan. 2:13-16 (Vulgate).
[131] *Daniel*, l. 157.
[132] Dan. 1:8-20 (Vulgate).
[133] Dan. 1:17 (Vulgate).
[134] Dan. 1:19-20 (Vulgate).
[135] Dan. 2:48-49, 97 (Vulgate).

þær brungen wæs" [for those of youth that had been brought there who were wisest in the books of the law].[136] Immediately after that, the poem recounts that the Babylonians find the Three Youths. Yet, unlike the biblical account, where the young men first receive education, the poem narrates that the Three Youths must come before the king immediately: "Þa þry common to þeodne foran" [these three came before the prince].[137] At that moment, the poem recounts that they are tested by the king, even before they receive education: "hie þam wlancan wisdom sceoldon / weres Ebrea, wordum cyðan, / hige-cræft heane, þurh halig mod' [the men of the Hebrews had to make known wisdom in words to the proud one, high intelligence through a holy mind].[138] They pass their test successfully and are given food and clothing, but there is not mention that they are given a position, like in the biblical account. Therefore, they are, at this point, only recruited as potential counsellors instead of given a position as counsellor. This way, the coming-of-age of the Youths is still unfinished at this point and they are not yet fully grown as counsellors.

Furthermore, the poem incorporates the entire fiery furnace episode in the coming-of-age narrative of the Youths, unlike in the biblical account. As mentioned above, the Old Testament narrative recounts that the Youths reject Babylonian food, for which God grants them wisdom and Nebuchadnezzar gives them a position in the Babylonian government. The poet uses the episode of the rejection of Babylonian teaching completely differently by placing the moment the Youths reject Babylonian teaching much later in the poem. In the poem, they reject pagan values just before the fiery furnace episode. When Nebuchadnezzar commands them to bow for the idol the poet states: "Noldon þeah þa hyssas hyran larum / in hige hæðnum [however, those youths would not listen to pagan teaching].[139] Thus, the poem very specifically portrays the Youth's refusal to bow for the golden idol as a rejection of pagan teaching. This rejection is equivalent to the biblical rejection of the Babylonian food, which the poem does not retell. As argued in the previous paragraph, the Three Youths are still educated in Babylonian values at this point in the narrative. As such, the poet consciously changes the storyline of the Three Youths and alters their coming-of-age story building up to their rejection of the golden idol.

This particular rejection is also the way the Youths become good counsellors. The poem uses the victory of the Youths in the heated oven as the last stage in their coming-of-age as

[136] *Daniel*, ll. 81-82.
[137] *Daniel*, l. 93.
[138] *Daniel*, ll. 97-98.
[139] *Daniel*, ll. 217-218a.

good counsellors. After the Youths have survived the heated oven, the king is so impressed that he grants them their position as members of the Babylonian court – and perhaps its *witan*. They are specifically given the position of governors of Israel: "Agæf him þa his leoda lafe þe þær gelædde wæron / on æht eald-feondum, þæt hie are hæfdon" [Then he returned the heirlooms of the people to them, which had been brought there in the possession of those ancient enemies, so that they had honour].[140] Thus, the Youths are given a position, but not as governors of Babylon as in the Bible, but as governors of Israel. Thus, because the three men rejected pagan teaching of bowing for Nebuchadnezzar's statue they are installed as counsellors. In addition, not only are they installed as counsellors, they are also good counsellors because they give good counsel: "wæron hyra rædas rice, siððan hie rodera waldend, / halig heofen-rices weard, wið þone hearm gescylde [their counsels were potent, after the ruler of skies, the holy guardian of the heavenly kingdom, shielded them against harm].[141] Given the outcome of their entire narrative, it is safe to say the poet has deliberately changed the entire storyline of the Three Youths into a coming-of-age story of good young counsellors. Significantly different from the biblical account, the entire narrative of the Youths culminates in them becoming good counsellors.

In conclusion, there are many indications that the poem present a well thought-out ideal for counsellors. The poem depicts the counsels specifically, gives more attention to the theme of listening to counsel than the Bible, and also significantly alters the characters and narratives of some of its main characters focusing on Daniel and the Three Youths as counsellors.

The ideal of counsellorship in the Old English Daniel

As described in the first chapter, righteousness, selflessness and wisdom are, according to the Anglo-Saxon authors that were studied in the chapter, all ideal qualities for counsellors. The following section will discuss these qualities in relation to the counsellors of the Old English *Daniel*. It will be argued that the Old English *Daniel* presents these qualities in its depiction of the ideal counsellors as well.

Righteousness

As identified in the previous chapter, Anglo-Saxon authors believed the ideal counsellor should be righteous and just. The Old English poem also connects righteousness to good counsellorship and attributes righteousness as a quality for counsellors for two reasons. Firstly, the poem

[140] *Daniel*, ll. 452-453.
[141] *Daniel*, ll. 456-457.

emphasises God blesses a nation because of its just leaders. Secondly, God blesses righteous counsellors personally with protection, prosperity, and wisdom.

The poet demonstrates that God favours righteous and just counsellors personally most clearly in the fiery furnace episode. In the episode, God protects the Three Youths because of their righteousness and gives them prosperity afterwards. The episode narrates the story in which the Three Youths are thrown in a heated oven because of their disobedience towards Nebuchadnezzar's command to bow for the golden idol. Throughout the poem's account of the episode, the poet suggests that their righteousness is key for their survival of the furnace, by repeatedly referring to their righteousness, unlike the biblical account.[142] They are, for instance, called "Godes spel-bodan" [God's messengers], "halgum" [holy-ones] and "æfæste" [who kept the law].[143] Furthermore, they disobey Nebuchadnezzar out of righteousness, especially. When Nebuchadnezzar personally commands the Youths to bow, the poet emphasises that "hogedon georne / þæt æ Godes ealle gelæste" [they eagerly intended that they would completely fulfil God's law].[144] God does reward them because he sees their righteousness. This reward is twofold. First of all, the Youths receive protection from God, because immediately after they have been thrown in the fire, God sends an angel to rescue them: "Halige him þær help geteode, sende him of hean rodorde / God, gumena weard, gast þone halgan" [He established holy help for them there, God, the guardian of the people, sent them that holy spirit from heaven].[145] As in the Biblie, the Youths do not even have to ask for protection.[146] However, the poem explicitly links their victory to their righteousness, by which the poem suggests God protects His servants who keep His law in particular. Secondly, they receive prosperity, because they are gifted the position of governor of Israel, as mentioned in the previous section. As such, the poem's depiction of the fiery furnace episode is testament to how God protects and rewards righteous counsellors.

In the fiery furnace episode, the poem also emphasizes that counsellors who keep God's law are an advantage to the entire nation. Because of the righteousness of the Three Youths, God blesses the entire Hebrew nation by redeeming them from their previous sins and giving them back a part of their independence. The poem sets up the redemption of Israel with Azarias' prayer, which is, as Robert Bjork has argued, a communal prayer for the redemption of the

[142] Dan. 3:12-18 (Vulgate).
[143] *Daniel*, ll. 229b., 251a., 247a.
[144] *Daniel*, ll. 218b.-219.
[145] *Daniel*, ll. 235-236.
[146] Dan. 3: 23-24.

entire Hebrew nation.[147] As mentioned in the previous paragraph, the Three Youths themselves are not in need of any rescue, because God sends an angel at the moment the three men are thrown in the fire. Therefore, the Youths' prayers in the oven are not for their own survival, but for their exiled people, an element the poet borrowed from the Vulgate narrative.[148] These people are in need of rescue because they are captives in Babylon and redemption because they "æ-cræftas ane forleton" [abandoned the power of the law] and "unriht don" [did unrighteousness] specifically.[149] Subsequently, the poem states Azarias confesses that "eac ðon wom dyde / user yldran" [our elders committed crimes], so that "we nu hæðenra / þeow-ned þoliað" [we now suffer servitude to the pagans].[150] Having confessed the sins of his people, he prays for their deliverance:

> 'Ne forlet þu usic ana, eca Drihten,
> for ðam miltsum ðe ðec men hligað,
> and for ðam treowum þe þu, tirum fæst,
> niða nergend, genumen hæfdest
> to Abrahame and to Isaace
> and to Iacobe, gasta scyppend.'
>
> ['Do not abandon us, eternal Lord, because of the mercies that people attribute to you, and for the covenants which you, firm in glory, saviour of men, have taken up with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, creator of souls.'][151]

Praying like this, Azarias acts as a good counsellor and leader of Israel. He takes responsibility for the unrighteousness of the people and asks God to renew the law with the Hebrews. God hears their prayer and confirms their redemption by sending a second angel in the fiery furnace. Yet unlike in the biblical account, God grants Israel a form of independence immediately, as Nebuchadnezzar installs the Three Youths as governors of Israel specifically, as quoted above.[152] Not only do the Israelites gain redemption because of their righteous representatives in the poem, they are also given good governors and a form of independence. To sum up thus far, the poem clearly displays how God blesses a nation because of their righteous leaders.

[147] Bjork, "Oppressed Hebrews," 233.
[148] Dan. 3:26-45.
[149] *Daniel*, l. 19, l. 23b.
[150] *Daniel*, ll. 296b-297a., ll. 306b.-307a.
[151] *Daniel*, ll. 309-314.
[152] Bjork, "Oppressed Hebrews," 225-226.

Wisdom

The previous chapter argued that the Anglo-Saxon authors believed wisdom was one of the ideal qualities for counsellors. *Daniel* is no different, although the poem does define the source of wisdom slightly differently. Like the Anglo-Saxon authors in the previous chapter, the Old English poem defines wisdom as a quality of speaking and intelligence and also links it to taking God's law to the heart. Yet, unlike the authors from the previous chapter, the poet of *Daniel* depicts wisdom as a graceful gift from God rather than the result of study. Lastly, *Daniel* displays how wise counsellors give good counsel through their wisdom in detail.

Like the Anglo-Saxon authors discussed in the previous chapter, the poem presents wisdom as a quality of elaborate speech in combination with intelligence. The poem portrays Daniel in particular as a character who is both an intelligent individual and an eloquent speaker.[153] When Nebuchadnezzar orders Daniel to explain the second dream, the poet states that Nebuchadnezzar asks Daniel specifically because he knows Daniel possesses "sefan sidne" [wide intelligence], "snytro cræft" [wise skill] and "wise word-cwide" [sagacious speech].[154] Daniel thus has the ability to present his intelligence and skill properly. Daniel's wisdom encompasses both speaking and thinking, essential for counsellors in the Anglo-Saxon government as argued in the previous chapter.

Furthermore, like the Anglo-Saxon authors discussed in the previous chapter, the poet links God's law and wisdom in a similar manner. As Gilian Overing argues, the main difference between the Babylonian wise men and the Hebrew wise men (Daniel and the Youths) is their belief in God's law: those who accept God's law receive his divine wisdom and those who deny God's law remain unwise.[155] The poem introduces belief in the law as wisdom in the recruitment episode of the Youths in the opening section of the poem. In this episode, the poet makes clear that the Three Youths are recruited primarily for their knowledge of God's law. As an illustration, Nebuchadnezzar – who is, at that point in the narrative, unaware of God's existence – orders his thegns to seek out "hwilc þære geogoðe gleawist wære / boca bebodes þe þær brungen wæs" [those of youth that had been brought there who were wisest in the books of the law].[156] In other words, Nebuchadnezzar acknowledges wisdom comes from God's law, even though he does not believe in God and probably does not know God at all. Likewise, the Youths are carefully selected on the basis of their knowledge of the law and the extent to which

[153] Murray-John, "The Poetics," 91-92.
[154] *Daniel*, ll. 282-283.
[155] Overing, "Nebuchadnezzar's Conversion," 5.
[156] *Daniel*, ll. 81-82.

they live according to God's commandments. When the Babylonian thanes select them, they distinguish themselves as "æðele cnihtas and æfæste / ginge and gode in god-sæde" (ll. 90-91) [nobly-wise, princely and fixed on the law, young and good among the divine stock].[157] Most importantly, they are focused on the law, which implicates they both know and practice God's commandments. Thus, the poem defines wisdom very similar manner to Ælfric in the previous chapter.

Although the poem reveals that knowledge of God's law is an element of wisdom, the poem does not present learning and study as the tools to gain wisdom as much as the Anglo-Saxon authors treated in the previous chapter do. Instead, the poem indicates that wisdom mainly is a graceful gift from God to His righteous subjects. The poem clarifies that wisdom is a gift by depicting both Daniel and the Youths as people who are selected by God through his grace. The poem calls the Three Youths, for example, not only righteous, but also "metodes gecorene" [chosen by the creator].[158] More clearly, the source of Daniel's wisdom is mainly derived from the grace received from God because of his righteousness.[159] When introducing Daniel, the poem indicates that Daniel is chosen by God as well, and immediately connects his wisdom and righteousness to his selection by God: "Drihtne gecoren, / snotor and soðfæst" [chosen by the Lord, wise and righteous].[160] Furthermore, the poem indicates before Daniel's interpretation of the dream that his wisdom and his knowledge of the dream is given to him through grace:[161]

> Him God sealde gife of heofnum
> þurh hleoðor-cwyde haliges gastes,
> þæt him engel Godes eall asægde
> swa his man-drihten gemæted wearð.
>
> [God gave him grace from the heavens through the utterances of a holy spirit, so that an angel of God explained everything to him, as his earthly lord had dreamt it.][162]

Whereas the biblical narrative tells Daniel and the Three Youths pray for the interpretation of the dream, the Old English poem omits these prayers so that Daniel receives the knowledge of the dream without even asking for it. This way, Daniel's intelligence and knowledge of the law

[157] *Daniel*, ll. 90-91.
[158] *Daniel*, l. 92b.
[159] Overing, "Nebuchadnezzar's Conversion," 6.
[160] *Daniel*, ll. 150b.-151a.
[161] Murray-John, "The Poetics," 71.
[162] *Daniel*, ll. 154-157.

is simply God's graceful gift which he always gives to his righteous subjects. Thus, *Daniel* presents wisdom as God's gift to the righteous.

How a counsellor gives good counsel

The poem also illustrates how an ideal counsellor gives good counsel through wisdom. In essence, the poet displays that wise counsellors do so by being capable of interpreting signs and events correctly, which is from God's point of view.

Good counsellors are capable of correct interpretations through their wisdom, which the poem emphasises by distinguishing the good counsellors from the bad counsellors by their ability to interpret the dreams.[163] In the poem, the interpretation of the dreams is essential, which the poem emphasises by giving much more attention to the interpretation of the dreams than to the actual dreams themselves.[164] The biblical narrative retells the entire first dream in detail.[165] The Old English poet, in contrast, chooses to completely omit the dream and highlight the interpretation: "Ða eode Daniel, þa dag lyhte / swefen reccan sinum frean, / sægde him wislice wereda gesceafte" [then Daniel went as the day lighted to explain the dream to his lord, he told him wisely about the destiny of nations].[166] After he has explained everything, Daniel is honoured in Babylon. By stating that Daniel interprets the dream specifically and giving him honour for that, the poem reveals that Daniel is not wise because he knows the dream, but because he is capable of interpreting the dream correctly. That Daniel's capability of interpretation is a consequence of his wisdom is made clear in a later part of the narrative, namely at the feast in Belshazzar's palace, where God sends a sign in the shape of the handwriting on the wall. As with the first dream, the poem focuses on the interpretation of the words by completely omitting the exact words written on the wall that were told in the biblical narrative. Instead, the poem recounts Daniel's elaborate interpretation of the writing:

> 'Þu for anmedlan in æht bere
> husl-fatu haleg, on hand werum.
> On þam ge deoflu drincan ongonnun,
> ða ær Israela in æ hæfdon
> æt Godes earce, oðþæt hie gylp beswac,
> win-druncen gewit, swa þe wurðan sceal.
> No þæt þin aldor æfre wolde
> Godes gold-fatu in gylp beran
> […]

[163] Murray-John, "The Poetics," 70-72.
[164] *Ibid*., 90-92.
[165] Dan. 2:31-36 (Vulgate).
[166] *Daniel*, ll. 158-160.

ac þæt oftor gecwæð aldor ðeoda
soðum wordum ofer sin mægen,
siððan him wuldres weard wundor gecyðe,
þæt he wæra ana ealre gesceafta
Drihten and waldand; se him dom forgeaf,
unscyndne blæd eorðan rices –
and þu lignest nu þæt sie lifgende,
se ofer deoflum dugeþum wealdeð.'

['For pride you would parade in captivity the sacred liturgical vessels in the hands of men. You have taken to drinking to devils with them, which the Israelites formerly used lawfully at the ark of God, until boasting seduced them, their intelligence intoxicated, as shall happen to you. Not at all would your father ever vauntingly parade God's golden vessels, nor the more quickly boast, […] but the leader of nations more often announced to his forces in true words, after the guardian of glory had made known to him, that he alone is Lord and ruler of all created things; he gave him honour, the unsullied glory of earth's empire – and now you deny that he is living, who rules in majesty over the devils.'][167]

Through his combined knowledge of God's law and his intelligence, Daniel perceives the sins of the Babylonians and is capable of connecting their sinfulness to the histories of the Hebrews and Nebuchadnezzar.[168] Therefore, in this passage, what the sign exactly means is not important to the poet, but rather this lengthy interpretation and, thus, Daniel's wisdom.

In *Daniel*, this capability of interpretation enables counsellors to give good counsel. The poem illustrates that giving good counsel is directly linked to interpretation mainly in the episode of the second dream. In this passage, Daniel explains the dream to Nebuchadnezzar in a similar fashion to how he explains the sign of the writing on the wall. In addition, the poem explicitly states he gives good advice following his correct interpretation of the dream. First he explains Nebuchadnezzar the dream: he will be cast out of his empire until he believes that God is the eternal ruler of the earth.[169] After his explanation, Daniel gives the following advice:

'Gehyge þu, frea min, fæstlice ræd.
Syle ælmyssan, wes earmra hleo,
þinga for ðeodne ær ðam seo þrah cyme
þæt he þec aworpe of woruld-rice.
oft metod alæt monige ðeode
wyrcan bote, þonne hie woldon sylfe,
fyrene fæstan, ær him fær Godes
þurh egesan gryre alder gesceode.'

[167] *Daniel*, ll. 747-764.
[168] Murray-John, "The Poetics," 92-96.
[169] *Daniel*, ll. 556-580.

['Consider, my lord, reliable advice. Give alms, be the protector of the weak, place a petition before the prince, before that time should come when he cast you out of your empire. Often the creator allows many a nation fixed on sin to make remedy, when they themselves wish to, before God's sudden attack deprives them of life with frightening terror.']170

In this passage, the poem explicitly connects good advice to being capable of interpretation. Daniel is able to understand and interpret the dream and what God means to communicate to the king. Yet, he also knows how Nebuchadnezzar could prevent his own through his knowledge of God, his wisdom. Therefore, the poem illustrates how Daniel's wisdom allows him to correctly interpret the dream, and give good counsel afterwards.

The poem provides more evidence for a link between wisdom, interpretation and good counsel in the final stages of the fiery furnace episode. In this particular part of the narrative, an unnamed counsellor is, through interpretation, capable of properly counselling the king. This particular counsellor helps Nebuchadnezzar to comprehend the different miracles that happen in the oven, namely the appearance of angels and the survival of the Youths. Nebuchadnezzar the king is incapable of interpreting; he only perceives the outcome of the event.[171] The counsellor, in contrast, comprehends why the boys have been freed from the fire:

'Geðenc, ðeoden min, þine gerysna.
Ongyt georne hwa þa gyfe sealde
gingum gædelingum. Hie God herigað
anna ecne, and ealles him
be naman gehwam on neod sprecað
þanciað þrymmes þristum wordum.'

['Understand clearly who has granted that grace to these young companions. They are praising God, the one everlasting, and call on him by each and every name in necessity, they thank him for the victory with bold words.']172

In this passage, the poem shows this counsellor understands that God rescued the three men, because they are his righteous and faithful servants, rightfully praising him for the victory. By acknowledging God this way, the unnamed counsellor shows he possesses wisdom. Subsequently, the poet shows that the counsellor gives good advice according to his interpretation: he advises the king to "aban þu þa ofna brego Caldea, / ut of ofne. Nis hit owihtes god / þæt hie sien on þam laðe leng þonne þu þurfe" [summon the men, prince of the Chaldeans,

170 *Daniel*, ll. 585-592.
171 Murray-John, "The Poetics," 80.
172 *Daniel*, ll. 420-424.

out of the furnace. It is not at all good that they should be in pain much longer than you need].[173] The unnamed advisor understands the event correctly, explains everything to the king and advises him well. Even though he may not be explicitly mentioned as a righteous or wise person in the poem, he still gives good counsel because he comprehends the event correctly. At least he is wise to some extent as it is clear he believes in God's existence and acknowledges that God is the one everlasting.

Promoting study

Unlike the Anglo-Saxon authors in the previous chapter, the poem does not emphasise the ideal counsellor's task to promote learning or be engaged in study. Possibly, the poem does touch upon this theme as much because the poem does not distinguish as clearly between the different tasks of bishops and noblemen and presents a more general ideal for advisors. Another possibility could be that the poem presents righteousness mainly as a gift from God to people who respect his law.

Selflessness

The previous chapter demonstrated that another main characteristic of the Anglo-Saxon ideal counsellor was their selflessness. The following section discusses that the Old English *Daniel* stresses a similar selfless counsellorship. First of all, the poem explains why selfishness is such a big sin, namely because it causes people to commit other sins. Opposing selfishness, the poem presents humility as a good character trait over pride. Furthermore, like the Anglo-Saxon works of the previous chapter, the poem discourages counsellors to give in to material gain and not to fear when giving counsel. Finally, *Daniel* clearly distinguishes that selfish counsellors are not able to give good counsel.

To begin with, the poem presents selfishness and pride as deadly sins by displaying that they initiate that people break other parts of God's law.[174] *Daniel* illustrates this particular connection between pride and breaking the law in the story of the Hebrew exile. Recalling the history of the Hebrews, the poem narrates that Jews are prosperous when they keep God's law, but are punished when they commit sins. The origin of their sins, is their pride; the poem stresses that they lived prosperously "oðþæt hie wlenco anwod æt win-þege, / deofol-dædum,druncne

[173] *Daniel*, ll. 427-429.
[174] Remley, *Old English Biblical Verse*, 245.

geðohtas" [until pride invaded them with devilish deeds at the feast, drunken thoughts].[175] After they have become too proud, the poem mentions that they "unriht don" [did unrighteous], for which God banishes them.[176] Like the Jews, Nebuchadnezzar commits injustice because of his pride and self-interest.[177] Nebuchadnezzar's main sin after he has learned that God exists, is his pride – he is too proud to acknowledge God as the eternal ruler of the earth.[178] Quite literally, because of his pride, he commits his final sin, a boast, which infuriates God so much he sends him into exile:

> 'Đu eart seo micle and min seo mære burh
> Þe ic geworhte to wurðmundum,
> rume rice. Ic reste on þe,
> eard and eðel agan wille.'
> Đa for ðam gylpe gumena drihten
> Forfangen wearð and on fleam gewat,
> Anna on ofer-hyd ofer ealle men.
>
> ['You are mine, the great and famous city that I built to my honour, a broad empire. I repose in you, city and homeland I will possess.' Then for that boast the lord of men became seized with madness and departed in flight, alone in his pride over all people.][179]

To summarise, the poem suggests pride and self-interest are major sins, because they the cause people to break commit injustice.

Given the function of pride and selfishness as root of other sins, *Daniel* prompts counsellors to humbly acknowledge God's superiority and act accordingly. The Three Youths are the best examples of counsellors who are humble in the right way. Their humility is expressed in the song in which they thank God for the deliverance of the Hebrews people:

> 'We þec herigað, halig Drihten,
> and gebedum bremað Þu gebletsad eart,
> gewurðad wide-ferhð ofer worulde hrof,
> heah-cyning heofones, halgum mihtum,
> lifes leaht-fruma, ofer lande gehwilc.'
>
> ['We praise you holy Lord, and extol you in our prayers. You are blessed, worshipped forever above the roof of the world, high-king of heaven, in your holy majesty, radiant source of life, across every land.'][180]

[175] *Daniel*, ll. 17-18.
[176] *Daniel*, l. 23b.
[177] Sharma, "Nebuchadnezzar and the Defiance," 103-104.
[178] Overing, "Nebuchadnezzar's Conversion," 9-11.
[179] *Daniel*, ll. 609-614.
[180] *Daniel*, ll. 404-408.

In this song, they show their humility by praising God as the ruler of the world. They conform to the image of the selfless counsellor, not honouring themselves but God, who is, according to them, responsible for their survival of the heated oven. Simply put, the poem promotes humility as one important aspect of selflessness.

Like the Anglo-Saxon authors in the previous chapter, the poet of *Daniel* encourages counsellors to not be selfless by an interest in worldly honour or other material gain. Throughout the poem, Nebuchadnezzar has a tendency to reward the actions of Daniel and the Three Youths with material rewards, because he thinks a material reward is fit for their deeds.[181] Most notably, he rewards the Youths several times, with either food, clothing or a position at his court. The poem makes clear, however, that good counsellors give counsel neither for coin nor for honour. In the final episode of the poem, the people bargain Daniel to translate the illegible handwriting on the wall of Belshazzar's hall.[182] In response to the rewards offered to him Daniel says: "No ic wið feoh-sceattum ofer folc bere / Drihtnes domas" [I do not present the Lord's judgements to the nation for coins].[183] In refusing the people's bargains, Daniel acts like good, selfless counsellor. Clearly, the poem emphasises counsellors should not be selfish by being interested in material profit or worldly honour.

Just like the Anglo-Saxon writers of the previous chapter, the poem encourages advisors not to be selfless by fearing when pointing people at their unrighteousness and giving their advice. When Daniel is ordered to explain the second dream to Nebuchadnezzar, the poem shows Daniel hesitates when he has to deliver bad news that the king will be exile:

> He ða swigode, hwæðere soð ongeat
> Daniel æt þam dome, þæt his drihten wæs,
> gumena aldor, wið God scyldig
> Wandode se wisa; hwæðre he worde cwæð
> æ-cræftig ar, to þam æðelinge.
>
> [He then went silent. However, Daniel at that judgement understood the truth, that his lord, the leader of men, was guilty before God. The wise one hesitated; however, the messenger skilled in the law spoke in a word to the prince.].[184]

Even though Daniel hesitates to speak the truth and deliver the bad news, Daniel chooses not to act out of self-interest and shares all he must explain to Nebuchadnezzar. More strikingly, the poem depicts the Three Youths as the primary example of being fearless and selfless. When

[181] Overing, "Nebuchadnezzar's Conversion," 5.
[182] *Daniel*, ll. 737-742.
[183] *Daniel*, ll.743-744a.
[184] *Daniel*, ll. 546-550.

they reject the golden statue, already a bold move in itself, the poet narrates that the Three Youths proclaim their negative attitude towards Nebuchadnezzar's statue in public: "Oft hie to bote balde gecwædon / þæt hie þæs wiges wihte ne rohton" [in addition, they often boldly said that they did not care at all for that idol].[185] In a sense, the Youths give counsel to other people by proclaiming their opinion of the golden idol, the symbol of Nebuchadnezzar's pride. The poem thus shows, that the Three Youths and Daniel, act selflessly in these instances, by not fearing for their lives, but first and foremost proclaiming God's words to the nation and the king.

Finally, the poem describes how counsellors who are selfish are incapable of giving good counsel, like Ahitophel in Ælfric's *Lives of Saints*. Overing and Murray-John agree that the unsuccessful interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dreams by the Babylonian counsellors is the result of their selfish and material worldview.[186] The poem does not state that these counsellors are egotistic directly, but implicates this by describing that they display their knowledge publicly. As an illustration, the poet calls them "þa wiccungdom widost bæron" [those who paraded their witchcraft most widely].[187] More strikingly, these counsellors exalt themselves over other people, which Nebuchadnezzar complains about when his counsellors prove incapable of interpreting his first dream:

> 'Næron ge swa eacne ofer ealle men
> mod-geþances swa ge me sægdon,
> and þæt gecwædon þæt ge cuðon
> mine aldorlege, swa me æfter wearð
> oððe ic furðor findon sceolde.'
>
> ['you are not as potent in intellect above all people as you have told me, when you said that you understood my allotted life, what would happen to me afterward, or what I should encounter henceforth.'][188]

In essence, the Babylonian counsellors are proud of their wisdom and knowledge and act selfishly by exalting themselves.[189] However, they are completely incapable of interpreting both the first and the second dream. Remarkably, the poem narrates that Nebuchadnezzar does ask his magicians to interpret the second dream but not because he is convinced they know the interpretation of the dream:

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[185] *Daniel*, ll. 200-201.
[186] Overing, "Nebuchadnezzar's Conversion," 6; Murray-John, "The Poetics," 70-71.
[187] *Daniel*, ll. 120b.-121.
[188] *Daniel*, ll. 136-140.
[189] Overing, "Nebuchadnezzar's Conversion," 6.

Het þa tosomne sine leado,
folc-togan feran, frægan ofer ealle
swið-mod cyning hwæt þæt swefen bude,
nalles þy he wende þæt hie hit wiston,
ac he cunnode he hie cweðan woldon.

[Then he commanded his people together, the national leaders to come, the arrogant king asked them all what he had dreamt, not at all because he thought they knew it, but he tested how they would speak.][190]

After the events of the first dream, thus, Nebuchadnezzar does not even consider taking his counsellor seriously. Even Nebuchadnezzar, who at this point in the narrative is still an unrighteous and sinful king, understands that these people are completely incapable of giving good counsel and presenting wisdom. Since their incapability is caused by their selfishness, the poem links selfishness to giving bad counsel. These people are not even given the chance to give counsel, because they cannot understand God's messages in the first place.

Conclusion

To conclude, the Anglo-Saxon poem clearly presents Daniel and the Three Youths as good counsellors and in doing so presents an ideal for good counsellorship. The poem's ideal of good counsellorship shows many similarities with the ideal of counsellors presented in the previous chapter. The ideal counsellor is wise, righteous and selfless. People who possess these qualities and act accordingly, are blessed by God, are good counsellors because they give counsel, and will be a blessing to the nation and to themselves, because God favours them.

[190] *Daniel*, ll. 526-530.

CONCLUSION

The present thesis has described an ideal for counsellors in Anglo-Saxon political thought and has argued that the poet of the Old English *Daniel* presents a mostly similar ideal for counsellors in his adaptation of the biblical story of Daniel. As described in the first chapter of this thesis, prominent Anglo-Saxon writers, including Wulfstan and Ælfric, describe the ideal counsellor as righteous and just. Righteousness and justness are essential, because God will favour the country for its righteous leaders and bless individual counsellors who respect and keep his law, while just counsellors will govern the country correctly and according to God's law. Wisdom is essential for one key duty of counsellors, namely to give counsel. Wise counsellors will give good advice, because they possess the practical quality to do so, intelligence and eloquence, and acknowledge God and divine law, counselling according to God's will. Counsellors may receive wisdom through the study of good Christian books and knowledge of the law. Therefore, high-ranking advisors should study themselves or otherwise promote study by providing protection and gifts to the Church. Not being selfish is essential, because through selfishness people act unjustly and will bring God's wrath upon the nation. Wealthy and powerful members of the *witan* are especially susceptible to selfishness, and are therefore encouraged to be selfless.

The second chapter argued that the Old English *Daniel* presents an ideal of counsellors that is strikingly similar to the ideal identified in the first chapter. The poet of *Daniel* has greatly altered the characters of Daniel and the Three Youths from the original biblical narrative and depicted them as ideal Anglo-Saxon counsellors. The poet has altered the role of these characters by giving them specific positions as counsellors at the court of Nebuchadnezzar. They are ideal Anglo-Saxon counsellors because they distinguish themselves by their righteousness and willingness to keep God's law, their wisdom they receive from God, their selfless acts and their overall humility towards God. Furthermore, the poem describes how God blesses the nation's these ideal counsellors govern. Especially the Hebrew nation is favoured, because they are redeemed because of the Three Youths and are given a form of self-government with the Youths as their leaders. Furthermore, Daniel and the Three Youths all provide good counsel to the king and to the nation through the wisdom God gives them. Strikingly, the Old English *Daniel* illustrates in detail how wisdom helps counsellors to give wise counsel. In essence, wise counsellors are capable of interpreting the world correctly. They are capable of doing so through their intelligence, their devotion to God and their knowledge of Him and His law. With their correct interpretation, wise counsellors will give good counsel.

The present thesis is a contribution to the study of the Old English *Daniel*, most importantly, by arguing that the poem presents an ideal for counsellors through Daniel and the Three Youths. This thesis has shown that the characters of Daniel and the Three Youths can and should be considered, not only, as moral opposites to King Nebuchadnezzar, but also as ideal counsellors individually. This way, the current thesis has shown that the Old English *Daniel* is not only a poem about moral values such as pride and keeping God's law, but that the poem also applies these moral values to more tangible elements of Anglo-Saxon society, in this case counsellorship. Therefore, the thesis has demonstrated how the story of Daniel has been made relevant to an Anglo-Saxon audience not only from a moral perspective, but also from a more practical point of view and that the poem, for this reason, may be considered an instructional document for Anglo-Saxon members of the *witan*.

On a different level, the thesis also provides some interesting contributions to the field of Old English poetry, and perhaps Old English biblical poetry in particular. First of all, what has been provided in this thesis is a quite striking parallel between the works of Anglo-Saxon clerical, political thinkers and an Old English poem. Given the fact that this has been a fruitful approach for this thesis, future research could potentially explore further parallels between the works of important clerics such as Wulfstan and Ælfric, and Old English poetry. In fact, the first chapter of this thesis could be put to use as a framework for further study of the ideal for counsellors in Old English poetry. Furthermore, future research could explore parallels between the counsellors of the Old English *Daniel* and the counsellors of other Old English poems, like *Beowulf*.

The Anglo-Saxon ideal for counsellors as identified in the first chapter should, however, should only be considered a step towards future research into the ideal for counsellors in Anglo-Saxon society. It proved difficult to study the topic of the ideal counsellor in Anglo-Saxon society because of the few sources available in the field of historical research on the ideal for Anglo-Saxon counsellors. The present thesis may have paved the way for future research to some extent by describing some important aspects of good counsellorship, but should in no way be considered a definitive answer to the question of how Anglo-Saxons believed counsellors should ideally function. Furthermore, since the first chapter draws its inspiration mainly from two late Anglo-Saxon sources, it is too bold to claim that the ideal for counsellors as described in this thesis exactly represents the entire period of Anglo-Saxon rule in England. As a consequence of all this, more historical research is needed to identify the ideal for counsellors in Anglo-Saxon England.

Yet, the Anglo-Saxon ideal for counsellors as identified in the first chapter of this thesis also proved to be of great use for the study of the Old English *Daniel*. As such, the current study contributed to a better understanding of a less studied poem in the corpus of Old English literature. Ultimately, the two chapters combined show that the Old English poem *Daniel* clearly presents an ideal for counsellorship. Therefore, one must conclude that the poem can – and perhaps should – be read as a mirror for counsellors.

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