Alfred believed that learning was perhaps the strongest conduit to God, and lamented its
general decline throughout England. He thought that the Viking raids were a punishment
for the moral failings of the English people.

Book production and manuscript-making skills had declined in the mid-to-late ninth century.

Alfred wanted to return to the time of learning that was characteristic of the seventh and
eighth centuries, which had produced the works of Bede and Biscop, Alcuin and Lindisfarne.

Without any secular institutions in place to support Alfred’s revival of learning, monasticism
was to be the vehicle for educational reform. Part of this was the translation of many works,
or as he put it: ‘turn into the language that we can all understand certain books which are
the most necessary for all men to know’.

However, due to the lack of West Saxons’ learning, he was forced to turn to Mercian
scholars, Charlemagne’s court and Gallic monasteries to complete the translations.

Translated works included:

Pope Gregory I’s *Pastoral Care and Dialogues*;
Bede’s *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*;
Boethius’ *De Consolatione Philosophiae*;
St Augustine’s *Soliloquies*. 