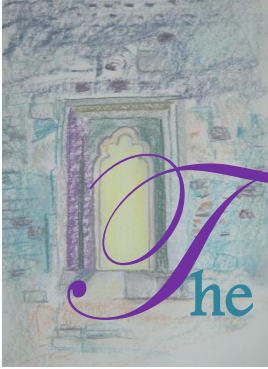


Part I

Introduction



The Beauty of

Holiness

The reds, yellows, greens, of the stained glass are fading as the light of the setting sun, now splendored upon the hills and vales of England's fair land, makes its final entry into the quiet interior of the ancient Abbey. The now lit chandeliers illuminate with colorful brilliance yellow sandstone, faded red stone, ancient red paint, ornate walls, colored pillars, grey arches, dark brownish grey marble, white marble sculptures, yellow and white letters on the floor. The bright red of the light-stands for reading the prayer books and the colors of clothing contrast the many earth tones. The final light of day brightens the purple and blue glass of the ornately crafted windows.

I commence writing this book depicting the life of Alfred the Great while sitting before the tomb of Geoffrey Chaucer, beloved among the greats of English literature. The life of Alfred the Great has been a tremendous inspiration to me. His literacy program of 889 AD played a very pivotal role in the history of England and the English speaking world. Alfred derived his strength and wisdom from God and the Bible he loved. From these he found the happiness he desired for himself and the people of England. The purpose of this book includes presenting fun and exciting drawings depicting the life of Alfred, to be historically accurate and informative, and highlighting principles from Alfred's life which helped him to ascend to the pinnacle of human greatness.

Surrounded by stones of the past, the stones of Westminster Abbey, sitting in front of the tomb of Geoffrey Chaucer, I pause to reflect upon the beauty of Christianity. Westminster Abbey certainly is exemplary of the most beautiful of all buildings ever built. Ornateness and color and history and beautified space testifies to all generations the glory of God. Shortly prior to sitting down to pen these words, I saw the tomb of Edward the Confessor, this Abbey's founder, Alfred's descendant and recipient of Alfred's love for God and people and learning. Westminster Abbey is where influential monarchs are crowned. But these stones attest to a much greater King, the King who Alfred drew his strength and power from, the Lord of lords and the King of kings, Christ Jesus. The building attests to another time, a time more directly associated with the simpler and fundamental sources of strength, the stone and wood of the earth, and a king who drew his strength from God Almighty. Alfred saw himself as a direct spiritual heir of Moses, Christ, and the twelve disciples, a ruler who governed under the direct authority of God.

Alfred the Great was the king who led the English people to defeat the invading Vikings. After the Vikings had rampaged and murdered in England for decades, and after having killed his own brothers, Alfred gave the Vikings an opportunity to be forgiven. Alfred, having won a decisive victory over the Vikings, baptized the invading king, adopting him as his son. Alfred is considered the founder of England, the first king of all the English. He founded the English navy and is credited with beginning the juried legal system. He built defenses to protect England from invaders and established a military with three units to insure the constant defense of England's people. He wrote a law code for his people. He designed and implemented a mother tongue literacy program, his first purpose being "the happiness of the English people." One of Alfred's titles is *The Father of English Prose*. He himself translated *Psalms* 1-50 from Latin into English for the people to read. Alfred's educational program catapulted English to become the language learned by more people than any other in all history. He is a hero for all of mankind.

"The fool has said in his heart, 'there is no God.'" God has a very real and historic place in the history of mankind. Libraries of books have been written about servants of God who daily witnessed God's almighty presence in their lives. The history of the English language is very uniquely linked to God and the Bible. English received its alphabet when Christian missionaries wrote an English translation between the lines of their Latin Bibles. The first literature written in the English language was the Lord's Prayer and the Gospel of John, translated, as far as we know, by the Venerable Bede. Among the first great English poets in history was Caedmon, known for his Christian songs and poetry. King Alfred the Great's Bible based literacy program gave the people of England literacy in their mother tongue, propelling English to become an

international language of great importance. Without any doubt, Alfred's personal faith in Jesus Christ and his love for the Bible, affected everything he did. He was one of the most influential people of all of history.

I hope that this Illustrated Life of the great Christian king can once again give this man his rightful place in the history of civilization. A great deal of what we know about Alfred the Great comes to us from the biography written by one of Alfred's spiritual advisors, Asser, who came to Alfred from Winchester. This *Illustrated Life* is based upon Asser's *Life of Alfred*.

The Church in Wantage
Stones resting in place for 700
years whisper peacefully, inviting
us all to eternal life in Christ Jesus.

