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Light and Divine Wisdom: An Alternative Interpretation of the Iconography of the Fuller Brooch

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Abstract: The Fuller Brooch is considered the earliest English representation of the five senses. The central character, representing sight, is thought to also hold one or more figurative meanings, linked to ideas and concepts that were current in King Alfred's cultural context. These figurative meanings were presumably meant to be emphasised and clarified by the two objects this figure is holding. So far, however, these have not been satisfactorily interpreted, with most scholars tentatively identifying them as plants or cornucopias. This study makes a case for these objects to be torches, embodying the concept of light, so central in the theme of the *oculi mentis* 'eyes of the mind' and in Alfred's ideas of wisdom and learning. The relevance of divine light in the Alfredian cultural framework emerges clearly from the translations into English of the *Soliloquia*, of the *Consolatio Philosophiae* and of the *Regula pastoralis*. Evidence also emerges from the iconography of the *inluminatio* 'illumination' of the *oculi mentis* for the acquisition of divine wisdom featuring in the Utrecht Psalter (and its later copies), and from the iconographical connection between torches, light and God that can be seen in the historiated initial of one of the hymns of the Durham Hymnal.

Key terms: Old English prose, King Alfred, *oculi mentis*, five senses, sight, torch, Utrecht Psalter, Harley Psalter

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1 Introduction

The late-ninth-century¹ Fuller Brooch (see Figure 1), now in the British Museum, in London,² is considered by recent scholarship as one of the objects that very likely originated within Alfred's circle (Kempshall 2001; Pratt 2003; Webster 2003a). The similarity between the central character on the Fuller Brooch and the character on the so-called Alfred Jewel³ was noticed by Bakka already in 1966 (277–282); Pratt, Kempshall and Webster, however, have shown that the connection between the Fuller Brooch and the beliefs and works that can be tightly linked with King Alfred is much stronger than has ever been thought, based not only on style but also on intellectual content (Webster 2003a: 87), featuring “symbolic iconographies of a kind close to Alfred's own ideas about spiritual education and Christian kingship” (Webster 2003a: 81).⁴

The main decorative motif of the Fuller Brooch has been interpreted as a personification of the five senses,⁵ within the broader context of God's Creation, and with the sense of sight – characterised by huge, emphasised eyes – given preeminence and appearing in the centre of the brooch.⁶ There are no doubts that this central, anthropomorphic figure represents sight.⁷ Given its prominence in the

1 The proposed dating for the brooch spans from the second quarter of the ninth century to the early tenth century, with recent scholarship more prone towards a late rather than early date. For a short survey of the different opinions, see Wright (2007: 170, footnote 6).

2 <https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/H_1952-0404-1> [all websites were last accessed on 19 August 2022].

3 The Alfred Jewel (<<https://www.ashmolean.org/alfred-jewel>>) is one of the most cherished and famous objects in the holdings of the Ashmolean Museum of Art and Archaeology, Oxford. It has generally been connected with the reformatory cultural policy of King Alfred, as its name suggests, and to the *æstel* mentioned in the *Preface* to the Old English translation of Gregory's *Regula pastoralis*. This *æstel* has mainly been interpreted as a pointer, an instrument to guide the reader's sight on the page. A series of comparable objects have emerged from Anglo-Saxon England. See Hinton (1974: no. 23 and 2008).

4 See also Pratt (2003) and Kempshall (2001).

5 The iconography was interpreted by E. T. Leeds and mentioned in a 1949 letter to R.L.S. Bruce-Mitford, which the latter published in his “Late Saxon Disc-Brooches” (1956: 183–184).

6 For a detailed analysis of the brooch, see Bruce-Mitford (1974: 306–325).

7 See, for example, Bakka (1966: 282): “The fifth, central figure, would then represent sight, and his eyes are, in fact, depicted in a way different from those of the six other full-face heads on the brooch. The eyes are large circles with a central pupil, surmounted by upturned eyebrows; the other full-face heads merely have dots for eyes; the eyebrows turn downwards. The emphasis on the eyes on the central figure strengthens the probability that he represents sight, as implied by his association with the other four senses”. See also Webster and Backhouse (1991: 280) and Blurton (1997: 202). On the five senses in Medieval England, see Treharne (1991), Hoek (1997), Gannon (2005), Woolgar (2006), Fera (2012) and O'Brien O'Keeffe (2016). On the five senses in general, see Laplantine

arrangement of the five senses, however, scholars have tended to attribute further figurative values to this central character. These additional values must be sought within a Christian framework, as the small cross clearly marked on the front of the character's robe, interpreted by some scholars as a pallium, attests.⁸ The very shape of the field in which the character has been placed, with four protruding ends, forming the arms of a square cross, also suggests a Christian interpretation. As to what these additional values might be, opinions vary, although most scholars seem to favour an interpretation of this iconographical element as wisdom⁹ or Christ, or as a combination of both figurative meanings.¹⁰

One element that might help clarify the imagery intended by the maker or the commissioner of the brooch is the mysterious pair of objects that the central figure appears to be holding in a so-called Osiric pose. They consist of two long, tubular structures ending in flowing protuberances. This detail seems to have baffled scholars for a long time, and there is presently no agreement on what kind of objects they may be, although some sorts of plants or flowers,¹¹ possibly protruding from cornucopias,¹² seem to be the most accepted candidates. Wright (2007: 174) points out that “their prominence suggests they are symbolic attributes of the figures who hold them”;¹³ it is difficult, however, to explain why cornucopias or plants should be so relevant to a representation of sight, and the identification of these two mysterious objects and their meaning remains, as Pratt (2003: 220) concedes, “a very open question”.¹⁴

(2005), Fasolini (2005) and Caseau (2014). See also the website <<http://www.centreforsensorystudies.org>>.

8 On the interpretation of this cross, see Pratt (2003: 212) and Wright (2007: 186).

9 This association would be mediated by a representation of the *oculi mentis*, a patristic commonplace mentioned frequently by Gregory the Great in his *Regula pastoralis* and consistently translated as OE *modes eagan* in the texts associated with Alfred's educational circle (see below, section 2).

10 See, in particular, Kempshall (2001: 124–125), Pratt (2003: 212–16) and Wright (2007), but also Howlett (1974) and Webster (2003a: 87 and 2003b: 20).

11 For a complete list of all the possible plant-related interpretations, see Wright (2007: 175, footnote 19).

12 See i.a. Keynes and Lapidge (1983: 204): “the [central] figure [on the Fuller Brooch] holds two cornucopias, horns of plenty, overflowing with flowers and representing the fruits of the earth” and Bruce-Mitford (1974: 324).

13 The reference is to the central figures in both Fuller Brooch and Alfred Jewel.

14 As far as the Alfred Jewel is concerned, Wright (2007: 177–183) makes a convincing case for a plausible connection between the variable colours of the eyes and the variable colours of flowers, based on a version of the apocryphal legend of the *homo octipartitus* ‘octipartite man’ which derived Adam's eyes from flowers (*pondus floris* or *pondus florum* or *flores* ‘a pound of flowers’) rather than from the sun (*pondus solis* ‘a pound of the sun’). The motif found its way into Hiberno-Latin

The present study makes a case for these mysterious objects to represent torches, in connection with the concept of light, which was a pivotal part of the theme of the *oculi mentis* ‘eyes of the mind’, so dear to King Alfred and his scholarly helpers. After all, light is of primary importance to all human beings, and this importance is also revealed by its metaphoric¹⁵ use in language. As Scott (2018: 77) states at the beginning of his chapter on light, in his exploration of the Universe:

Light is an essence of human existence, the primary way most people experience their world.¹⁶ Its importance makes light a natural metaphor for creation, for understanding, for life itself. The heavens are ‘a shining firmament.’ God created light before all else. When a human is born, she ‘sees the light of day.’ We believe what we see ‘with our own eyes.’ We understand when we ‘see the light.’ We persevere if we see ‘light at the end of the tunnel.’ Tales of near death focus on a bright light calling the nearly departed to an afterlife. Light is a primal energy that represents life. It is clarity, truth, and safety. Darkness is danger; darkness is the underworld; darkness is death.

Divine light was a key concept in the context of Alfredian’s philosophy, in a time of moral darkness and danger, and torches may be considered an apt metaphor to represent this concept figuratively. This study explores the way in which this iconographic element is exploited here and in other contexts to represent, figuratively, the ability to see truth – in obscure times – through the light of divine wisdom.

2 The Fuller Brooch within the Theme of the *oculi mentis*

More than one scholar (Kempshall 2001; Pratt 2003; Webster 2003a; Wilcox 2006) have underlined how some of the works and translations traditionally held to

texts and can also be found in the Durham Collectar (*pund blostmes* ‘a pound of flower’) and in the *Prose Solomon and Saturn* (*blosmena pund* ‘a pound of blossoms’). The objects portrayed on the Fuller Brooch, however, do not resemble flowers and cannot be explained in the same way. Moreover, this connection establishes a link to a non-essential peculiarity of the physical eye rather than to a significant attribute of sight itself.

15 For the concept of ‘metaphor’, I follow Lausberg (1998: 250–256): “The *metaphora* [...] is explained as the *brevitas* form of the comparison.”

16 Wright (2007: 179) mentions the “self-explanatory rationale linking the organs of sight and sunlight”.

stem from the Alfredian cultural agenda¹⁷ insist on the patristic metaphorical theme of the ‘eyes of the mind’ (Latin *oculi mentis*; OE *modes eagan*).¹⁸ The eyes of the mind are illuminated by wisdom, thereby allowing the intellect to perceive divine truth. This concept emerges very clearly from the Old English translation of Augustine’s *Soliloquia*, where this process is explained in detail in parts of the work that are independent from the source text. A key passage reads:

Ac swa swa þeos gesewe sunne ures lichaman æagan onleoht, swa onliht se wisdom ures modes æagan, þæt ys, ure angyt; and swa swa þæs lichaman æagan halren beoð, swa hy mare gefoð þæs leohtes þære sunnan; swa hyt byð æac be þæs modes æagan, þæt is, andgit. Swa swa þæt halre byð, swa hyt mare geseon mæg þære æccan sunnan, þæt is, wysdom (Carnicelli 1969: Book 1, p. 78, l. 3–8).

‘But just as the visible sun gives sight to the eyes of our body, so *wisdom gives sight to the eyes of our mind, that is, our understanding/intellect*. And just as the eyes of our body are healthier when they receive more of the sun’s light, so it is also with the eyes of the mind, that is, understanding/intellect. The healthier that is, the more it may see of *the eternal sun, which is wisdom*’.¹⁹

This passage establishes a parallelism between the vision of the eyes of the body and that of the eyes of the mind. The eyes of the body provide physical sight by means of physical light, that is the visible sun, allowing men to perceive corporeal reality. The eyes of the mind, conversely, provide intellect/understanding by means of the light of wisdom, that is the eternal sun (=God), allowing men to perceive divine truth. This parallelism can be summarised in the table below:

Instrument	Eyes of the Body Physical vision	Eyes of the Mind Intellect / understanding
Empowering Element	Light given by the visible sun	Light given by the eternal sun / God / wisdom
Target	Corporeal reality	Divine truth = God

God, in this view, is both the target and the empowering element, because it is only through God’s light that man can perceive truth and God himself, who is the eternal light.

¹⁷ On the question of the Alfredian authorship of some of the works which have been ascribed to him, see Godden (2007 and 2009); Bately (2009); Discenza and Szarmach (2014: 397–415).

¹⁸ For a historical survey of the theme, see Wilcox (2006: 180–184).

¹⁹ Translations are mine unless otherwise indicated. Emphasis in all quotations is mine. For a translation of the Old English verb *onliht*, see Bosworth and Toller (1898–1921), s. v. *on-lihtan* (<<https://bosworthtoller.com/024664>>).

Light is therefore a key element in the whole process, since the light of wisdom and the light of God must illuminate the intellect (= the *modes eagan* ‘eyes of the mind’) so that it can perform its function. It is like necessary fuel. This relevance is also stressed in the *Preface* to the translation of the *Soliloquia*, where the author expresses confidence that God will illuminate the eyes of his mind (*mines modes eagan ongelihthe* ‘illuminate the eyes of my mind’) to let him understand the right path and lead him to eternal glory:

Swa ic gelyfe eac þæt he gedo for heora ealra earnunge, ægðer ge þisne weig gelimpfulran gedo þonne he ær þissum wes, ge hure *mines modes eagan* to þam *ongelihte* þæt ic mage rihtne weig aredian to þam ecan hame, and to þam ecan are, and to þære ecan reste þe us gehaten is þurh þa halgan fæderas (Carnicelli 1969: Preface, from p. 47, l. 16 to p. 48, l. 3).

‘[A]s I believe He will, through the merits of all these [saints], both make this present road easier than it was before, and in particular will *illuminate the eyes of my mind* so that I can discover the most direct way to the eternal home and to eternal glory and to the eternal rest which is promised to us through those holy fathers.’ (Keynes and Lapidge 1983: 138–139)

The theme of the *modes eagan* and the relevance of light within the theme are well attested also in the translation of Boethius’s *Consolatio Philosophiae* and in the translation of Gregory’s *Regula pastoralis*.²⁰ In the translation of the *Consolatio Philosophiae*, for example, God is asked explicitly to illuminate the eyes of the mind with his light, and let the just ultimately see God:

Forgif us þonne hale *eagan ures modes* þæt we hi þonne moton afæstnian on þe, and todrif ðone mist þe nu hangað beforan ures modes eagum, & *onliht þa eagan mid ðinum leohte*; forþam ðu eart sio birhtu ðæs soðan leohtes, and þu eart sio sefte ræst soðfæstra, and ðu gedest þæt hi ðe gesioð (Godden and Irvine 2009: vol. 1, p. 318, ch. 33, l. 244–248).

‘Grant us then healthy *eyes of our mind* that we may fasten them on you, and drive away the mist that now hangs before the eyes of our mind, and *illuminate the eyes* [of our mind] *with your light*; because you are the *brightness of the true light*, and you are the soft rest of the just, and you grant that they see you.’

Wilcox’s analysis of the *modes eagan* commonplace in the Old English translations of Gregory’s *Regula pastoralis*, Augustine’s *Soliloquia* and Boethius’s

²⁰ See Hindley (2016) and Wilcox (2006) for a detailed study of the *modes eagan* theme in the translations of Augustine’s *Soliloquia*, Boethius’s *Consolatio Philosophiae* and Gregory’s *Regula pastoralis*. Hindley shows how the theme, which is discussed implicitly in the *Consolatio Philosophiae*, becomes more explicit in the *Soliloquia*. Wilcox notices a progressive elaboration of a conceptual system, which starts with the *Regula pastoralis*, followed by the *Consolatio Philosophiae* and reaches its conclusion in the *Soliloquia*.

Consolatio Philosophiae demonstrates that this theme was actually reinforced in the vernacular Old English works and used even more cogently and profusely than in the original Latin texts (Wilcox 2006: 187). She shows how this notion revolves around the concepts of light and illumination, and around a light vs. dark opposition, both in the vernacular texts and in their sources. She also discusses how relevant and functional this concept was for Alfred's idea of wisdom and for his conception of the duties of a pious ruler.

The relevance of the concept of light in the Alfredian cultural framework is also apparent in the studies of other scholars. While analysing Alfred's use of Gregory's *Regula pastoralis*, Kempshall (2001: 124) remarks: "the sense of sight is the understanding with which he [i.e. the ruler] sees wisdom, the light of truth. [...] Those in the highest authority are like eyes, using the light of knowledge to see ahead."²¹

Pratt's own words, discussing Alfred's agenda, assign a key role to the concept of light in Alfred's vision, in which, he states, Alfred could perceive himself simultaneously as the wise King Solomon, and as wisdom itself, that is "the divine lord, who illuminates all with his light, like the sun":

Alfred's own learning made it credible for him to represent simultaneously both wisdom himself – that is, the divine lord who illuminates all with his light, like the sun – and also the wise King Solomon, to whom all the earth had come, like the Queen of Sheba, in order to hear his wisdom. (Pratt 2003: 193)

Pratt (2003: 212–216) and Webster (2003a: 87) agree that this pursuit of temporal and spiritual wisdom, which is the central core of the *oculi mentis/modes eagan* theme, is suggested also by the iconography of the Fuller Brooch. In Webster's words:

It is not difficult to see how such an unusual item, carrying a very structured message about the pursuit of wisdom, might have made a suitable emblem not just of temporal status but also an exemplar of the search for spiritual wisdom upon which earthly power depends. (Webster 2003a: 87)

It would seem hardly surprising, therefore – given the relevance of the concept of light in the *oculi mentis/modes eagan* theme, and particularly within the Alfredian cultural framework – to find a depiction of this 'divine light' on the Fuller Brooch, in connection with the concepts of sight, the *modes eagan*, and the pursuit of wisdom. In fact, it is exactly this divine light that distinguishes the physical sight

²¹ Kempshall (2001: 124) refers to *Regula pastoralis* I.11; I.1; II.7; III.32.

of the *lichaman eagan* ‘eyes of the body’ from the spiritual sight of the *modes eagan* ‘eyes of the mind’.²²

In my reading, this divine light is depicted, on the Fuller Brooch, in the shape of torches, which are intuitively connected to light and sight, since, through the brightness produced by their fiery tongues, torches allow human beings to see in the dark, when the sun no longer shines. They are a replacement for the light of the sun, allowing men to see in times of darkness. Here darkness is to be intended in a spiritual sense, on the basis of the light/darkness opposition which is part of the patristic *oculi mentis* commonplace, as explained above, and torches are meant to represent wisdom, that is the ‘divine light’ that allows the *modes eagan* to perceive truth and dispel darkness/blindness.

This iconography is by no means exclusive to the Fuller Brooch: it is also found in Carolingian Psalters portraying God bestowing his light on the psalmist’s eyes, as will be shown in the next sections (3–4), discussing the iconography of torches in Carolingian and early English manuscripts and other objects.

3 The Iconography of Torches in Early English Manuscripts

Although no representation of torches²³ in Early English manuscripts resembles the Fuller Brooch’s mysterious objects identically, the same is true for cornucopias²⁴ or sceptres or even flowers or plants. Torches, however, are also depicted, in other manuscripts/sources, as being made up of similar long, thick, tubular structures ending in an inverted-cone shape, from which a multitude of tongue-

22 Both types of light (and sight) are necessary. Human beings need physical light – whether natural (i.e. the sun, the OE *heofoncandel* ‘candle of heaven’ and *godes condel* ‘God’s candle’) or artificial (a candle or a torch) – to read the sacred texts, and they need divine light (i.e. wisdom) to understand and perceive the divine truth they contain.

23 For a full list of representations of torches in Early English manuscripts see Ohlgren (1986: 350, 395). The catalogue records sixteen entries under the heading “torch” and eleven ones under the heading “firebrand”. The latter are mostly found in illustrations of Prudentius’s *Psychomachia*.

24 The only representation of a cornucopia mentioned in Ohlgren’s catalogue (1986: 342) is found in London, British Library, Harley 603, fol. 50r (s. x/xi or xi¹, Canterbury CC), and bears little resemblance with the Fuller Brooch items, both in the general aspect and most importantly in the way it is held by the bearer’s hand. The relevant folio can be viewed at: <http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=harley_ms_603_f050r>. For more information on the manuscript, see Gneuss and Lapidge (2014: no. 422). See also <<https://psalter.library.uu.nl/page/123>> for the corresponding image in the Utrecht Psalter (Utrecht, Universiteitsbibliotheek 32, fol. 58r).

like elements protrude. Examples can be found in illustrations featuring in a number of manuscripts from Early Medieval England. For instance, a torch is held by the Virgo zodiac sign within a calendar in London, British Library, Arundel 60, fol. 5v.²⁵ Ælfric's translation of *Genesis* in London, British Library, Cotton Claudius B.IV, features, on fols. 3r,²⁶ 27r²⁷ and 38r,²⁸ respectively: anthropomorphic representations of the sun and the moon, each carrying a torch; Abraham dreaming of a smoky furnace surrounded by nine torches; Abraham carrying a torch while leading Isaac to the place of sacrifice. An anthropomorphic representation of the moon holds two torches, one in each hand, within the *Aratea*, in London, British Library, Cotton Tiberius B.V (fols. 2–73 and 77–85), fol. 47r.²⁹ A scene of the Crucifixion, filling a whole page in London, British Library, Cotton Titus D.XXVII, on fol. 65v, shows anthropomorphic representations of sun and moon, holding a torch each, above the cross.³⁰ Various torches appear within the illustrations of the Psalter in London, British Library, Harley 603, on fols. 7r,³¹ 15r,³² 33r,³³ 59r³⁴ and 71v³⁵. Finally, an anthropomorphic figure holds two torches, one in each hand, in a historiated initial in the hymn “Invocatio ad sanctam trinitatem”, in Durham, Cathedral Library, B.III.32, on fol. 2r.³⁶ All these torches are drawn differently, but they share the same basic elements listed above. So there is a certain amount of similarity, at least between the structure of torches and the objects portrayed on the Fuller Brooch. Bruce-Mitford showed in 1974 that a close representation of these protruding elements found on the Fuller Brooch, with rounded tips with two horizontal strokes, could be observed in some plant-like decorations in the Abingdon sword (1974: 315). The same pattern, however, is

25 <http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=arundel_ms_60_f005v>. Gneuss and Lapidge (2014: no. 304): s. xi², prob. 1073, Winchester, New Minster.

26 <http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=cotton_ms_claudius_b_iv_f003r>. Gneuss and Lapidge (2014: no. 315): s. xi^{2/4}, Canterbury StA?, prov. *ibid*.

27 <http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=cotton_ms_claudius_b_iv_f027r>.

28 <http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=cotton_ms_claudius_b_iv_f038r>.

29 <http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=cotton_ms_tiberius_b_v!1_f047r>. Gneuss and Lapidge (2014: no. 373): s. xi^{2/4}, Canterbury CC? Winchester?, prov. Battle.

30 <http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=cotton_ms_titus_d_xxvii_f065v>. Gneuss and Lapidge (2014: no. 380): 1023x1031, Winchester NM.

31 <http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=harley_ms_603_f007r>.

32 <http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=harley_ms_603_f015r>.

33 <http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=harley_ms_603_f033r>.

34 <http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=harley_ms_603_f059r>.

35 <http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=harley_ms_603_f071v>. On the Harley illustrations, see below, section 4.

36 <<http://www.digipal.eu/digipal/page/1009/>>. Gneuss and Lapidge (2014: no. 244): s. xi¹–xi med., Canterbury. On this illustration, see below, section 5.

found in the feathers of the peacocks in the ring of Æthelwulf (see Pratt 2003: 208), and it is therefore not exclusive to plants. Moreover, the tongue-like elements from the Abingdon sword emerge from the stem at different heights, like the leaves of a plant from a stem, while on the Fuller Brooch these protruding elements all start from the same level. This peculiar feature of the objects depicted on the Fuller Brooch has parallels in the depictions of the flames of the torches featuring in the illustrations listed above.

In many of these illustrations, torches are used figuratively to represent natural light. Heavenly bodies emitting light, like the sun and the moon, are frequently personified, that is depicted as anthropomorphic characters holding torches, as in the *Genesis* creation scene in London, British Library, Cotton Claudius B.IV, fol. 3r; in the *Aratea* in London, British Library, Cotton Tiberius B.V (fols. 2–73 and 77–88), fol. 47r (the moon here holding two torches), and in the Crucifixion scene in London, British Library, Cotton Titus D.XXVII, fol. 65v. In a Carolingian witness of Martianus Capella's *De nuptiis*, from Tours, dated to the middle of the ninth-century (Bamberg, Staatsbibliothek, Msc.Class.5, fol. 9v), Astrologia is also depicted as holding two torches (here both in one hand), representing the sun and the moon.

In some cases, torches are portrayed in the hands of the creator of both light and light-emitting heavenly bodies, that is God himself. In a Psalter illustration from London, British Library, Harley 603, fol. 33r, for example, God is portrayed holding both the sun and a torch, presumably representing the light of the sun or the moon.³⁷

There are some illustrations, however, that clearly depict torches as representations of wisdom as 'divine light', allowing human beings to see truth and escape fear and dangers. This use is particularly evident in the illustrations of the ninth-century Carolingian Utrecht Psalter,³⁸ as well as in its later English 'copies'³⁹ –

37 Ohlgren (1986: no. 169/61): "Above, God holds symbols of the sun (v. 7)". It is an illustration for Psalm 60 (61). See also images of God appearing in a flaming mandorla, as in London, British Library, Harley 603, fols. 32v and 66r. Flames are also one of the symbols for the Holy Spirit, as in the biblical scene of the Pentecost. But see Noel (1995: 164) for a different interpretation of the image on Harley 603, fol. 33r.

38 Utrecht, Universiteitsbibliotheek 32.

39 Noel (1995: 156–168) explains very well that these texts cannot be considered mere copies, as they feature a lot of careful innovations, adaptations, reinterpretations and contaminations. The Harley Psalter, in particular, was probably heavily influenced also by a lost ancestor of the Odbert and Bury Psalters.

that is the Harley Psalter,⁴⁰ Eadwine Psalter,⁴¹ and Paris Psalter,⁴² – which will be discussed in the following section.

4 The Use of Torches to Represent ‘Divine Light’ in the Utrecht Psalter and in its English Copies

A torch used as a representation of ‘divine light’ appears in two illustrations of the Utrecht Psalter, where it is held by God, who pours the light coming from its flames onto the psalmist’s eyes. In the illustration to Psalm 12 (13), on fol. 7r (see Figure 2), the psalmist is portrayed facing and indicating some enemies equipped with bows, arrows, spears and shields.⁴³ A ray issuing from God’s torch illuminates the eyes of the psalmist. The text of the Psalm (v. 1–5) clarifies the figurative meaning of the torch:

40 London, British Library, Harley 603.

41 Cambridge, Trinity College Library, R.17.1 (Canterbury, CC; c. 1155–1160). The Eadwine Psalter contains five versions of the Psalter: the *Gallicanum*, the *Romanum*, the *Hebraicum*, an Old English interlinear translation above the *Romanum* and an Anglo-Norman French interlinear translation above the *Hebraicum*. The name of the manuscript derives from the name of the main scribe who is portrayed at the end of the codex. At least a dozen scribes and artists were involved in the making of the manuscript, which was conceived as a very comprehensive volume. It is also rich in glosses and commentaries. The dating is based on the depiction of a comet. See Noel (1996: 124) and Wüstefeld (1996: 236–237).

42 Paris, Bibliothèque National de France, lat. 8846 (c. 1180–1200). The Paris Psalter is an incomplete copy of the Eadwine Psalter, although it also contains material from the illustrations of the Utrecht Psalter which are not found in the Eadwine Psalter. It is the work of one scribe and two artists. The style of the illustrations is very different from that of the Harley and Eadwine Psalters. Here miniatures are fully painted and set against burnished-gold backgrounds. The second of the two artists was Catalan, and completed the illustrations in the middle of the fourteenth century. See Noel (1996: 124) and Wüstefeld (1996: 240–241).

43 Cf. Ohlgren (1986: no. 169/14), describing the similar illustration in the Harley Psalter: “The Psalmist, sitting under a tree receives the rays of a lighted torch held by God.” As Ohlgren remarks, in the scene, one can also see “the enemy with bows and arrows, shields, and spears”. On the illustrations of the Utrecht Psalter, see Panofsky (1943) and van der Horst (1996).

- 1 [...] *Usquequo Domine oblivisceris me in finem? Usquequo avertis faciem tuam a me?*
 - 2 *Quamdiu ponam consilia in anima mea, dolorem in corde meo per diem?*
 - 3 *Usquequo exaltabitur inimicus meus super me?*
 - 4 *Respice, exaudi [MS et exaudi] me Domine Deus meus. Inlumina oculos meos ne umquam obdormiam in mortem [MS morte].*
 - 5 *Nequando dicat inimicus meus: Praevalui adversus eum. Qui tribulant me, exultabunt si motus fuero. (Weber and Fisher 1969: 780–782)⁴⁴*
-
- 1 'How long, O Lord, wilt thou forget me unto the end? How long dost thou turn away thy face from me?
 - 2 How long shall I take counsels in my soul, sorrow in my heart all the day?
 - 3 How long shall my enemy be exalted over me?
 - 4 Consider, and hear me, O Lord my God. *Enlighten my eyes that I never sleep in death.*
 - 5 Lest at any time my enemy say: I have prevailed against him. They that trouble me will rejoice when I am moved.' ⁴⁵

The psalmist seeks protection in God against his enemies, who in the image are portrayed as physical warriors with military weapons. These enemies are the psalmists's internal struggles, that is, his thoughts and sorrows. This protection, we are told, must come in the shape of divine light illuminating his eyes (*Inlumina oculos meos* 'Enlighten my eyes'), and allowing him to flee from death. The only way in which a light illuminating the eyes of the psalmist can save him from death is by allowing him to 'see' (and comprehend) divine truth; to 'see' the essence of God/Christ; to 'see' the right path and escape damnation. The expressions *inimicus meus* 'my enemy' and *mortem* 'death' must therefore be intended primarily, here, in a moral sense. And the light is clearly, once again, divine wisdom, allowing the intellect (that is, the eyes of the mind) to perceive truth. A similar image of God pouring the light of a flaming torch onto the psalmist's eyes, again as an illustration to Psalm 12 (13), appears in the Harley Psalter, fol. 7r; the Eadwine Psalter, fol. 21r; the Paris Psalter, fol. 21r; and – in a much simplified version and context – in the Odbert Psalter, fol. 19v,⁴⁶ and in the Bury St Edmund Psalter, fol. 28r.⁴⁷ In the Odbert Psalter, the artist added a tiny inscription as a caption

44 The text of the Utrecht Psalter is Gallican. I have modernised punctuation and capitalization. Cf. Ezra 1:9.8.

45 All biblical translations are from the Douay-Rheims version.

46 <https://bvmm.irht.cnrs.fr/includes/img/France/Boulogne-sur-Mer/B621606201/3_plein_ecran/IRHT_174737_2_P.jpg>. Boulogne-sur-Mer, Bibliothèque Municipale des Annonciades, 20 (999, Saint-Bertin). The marginal illustrations in this manuscript seem to have been drawn from an ancestor of Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Reg. lat. 12 (Wüstefeld 1996: 242–243).

47 <https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Reg.lat.12/0065>. Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Reg. lat. 12 (s. xi^{2/4}, prob. Canterbury CC, prov. Bury St Edmunds) (Gneuss and Lapidge 2014: no. 912). Ohlgren (1986: no. 189/8): "God, cross-nimbed, beardless, holding a cross-shaft and

beside the illustration, above the psalmist's head, reading *inlumina oculos* 'enlighten my eyes' (Noel 1996: 131; see Figure 6). Bolens (2022: 14) has noted that the shape of the flames in this illustration, in the Utrecht Psalter and its copies, is rather unusual, as they project sideways and downwards towards the psalmist, a feature which is also visible on the Fuller Brooch.⁴⁸

The same 'protective' function of this divine light is reiterated on fol. 15r of the Utrecht Psalter, where Psalm 26 (27) begins with the words *Dominus inluminatio mea, et salus mea, quem timebo?* 'The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear?' (Weber and Fisher 1969: 798). The illustration of this Psalm (see Figure 3) depicts God holding both a torch and the hand of the psalmist. The hand of God, appearing from the sky, emits some rays which touch the torch and then descend on the psalmist's head. The enemies of the psalmist fall from their horses (as a consequence).⁴⁹ The illustration makes clear that it is the light coming from the torch held by God that protects the psalmist, because it has been endowed with 'divine light', that is divine wisdom, illuminating and thus saving the psalmist. The same illustration is found in the Harley Psalter, fol. 15r; the Eadwine Psalter, fol. 44v; and the Paris Psalter, fol. 44v.

The Utrecht Psalter was very likely produced in the Benedictine monastery of Hautvillers, near Rheims (Goldschmidt 1892 and Durrieu 1895). Although it is dated to the first half of the ninth century (c. 816–833),⁵⁰ and can therefore be thought to derive from a historical context revolving around the characters of Emperor Louis the Pious, his eldest son Lothair, and his counsellor Ebbo (Archbishop of Rheims), the manuscript can also be connected with Charles the Bald's circle. As van der Horst states, there is evidence that the manuscript was well known to the artists that were active in Charles the Bald's Court School around

a flaming torch, stands upon the shoulders of the Psalmist or David who sits holding a scroll inscribed with Ps. 12: 4–5". Harley 603 and Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Reg. lat. 12, were produced in the same context and around the same time.

48 "[T]he challenge of line 4 (*Enlighten my eyes*) was answered by imagining an object capable of projecting light downwards [...]. A comparison between the drawings in the four psalters shows a progression from horizontal flames projecting rays of light downward (*Utrecht*), to flames turned downward and extended by rays (*Harley*), flames slanted upward and rays running downward (*Eadwine*), and finally a flame-less torch with very distinct and straight rays of light streaming downward [*Paris*]" (Bolens 2022: 14). On the representations of torch flames turned downwards, see also Musto (2001: 7–8).

49 Cf. Ohlgren (1986: no. 169/28), who describes the same illustration in the Harley Psalter in the following terms: "God, standing in the door of his house (v. 4) and holding a torch, leans out and grasps the Psalmist's hand (v. 1). [...] Along the foreground, the enemies who, rushing against the Psalmist, stumble and fall (vv. 2–3)".

50 For an alternative, later dating, see Chazelle (1997).

the middle of the ninth century (1996: 23–34 and 82). The representation of the bestowing of ‘divine light’ featuring in the Utrecht Psalter as an illustration to Psalm 26 (27) analysed above is also portrayed on one of the ivory plaques that may have once covered the Prayerbook of Charles the Bald,⁵¹ and that certainly stem from his Court School. Here the torch is clearly visible but the rays emanating from the Hand of God have been omitted (see Figure 4), probably as it was difficult for the artist to carve them.⁵² The ivory plaque shows that this protective ‘divine light’ was a key concept within Carolingian culture in general and at Charles the Bald’s Court School in particular.

The illustrations in the Utrecht Psalter therefore very likely represented some conceptual interpretations of the Psalms that were still current at Charles’s Court School, and presumably influenced those intellectual figures that had cultural relationships with that court or with its wide affiliations. Among these figures, we can count also King Alfred and his scholarly helpers.

Van der Horst considers the possibility that the Utrecht Psalter might have reached England much earlier than the year 1000, perhaps even during Alfred’s life, via Charles’s daughter Judith:

It is not known how and why the manuscript came to be in Canterbury in the first place. It is generally believed to have arrived around the year 1000 [...]. But it cannot be excluded that the Utrecht Psalter was in England even earlier than that, because England frequently had close contacts with Europe in the ninth and tenth centuries. For example, in 856 Aethelwulf, King of Wessex and father of King Alfred, married Judith, the daughter of Charlemagne’s grandson Charles the Bald. [...] perhaps it [i.e. the Utrecht Psalter] had even been in the possession of Charles’s daughter Judith, given in marriage to the English king. (van der Horst 1996: 34)

Even without taking into account the possibility of an early arrival of the Utrecht Psalter itself in England, for which we have no evidence, the influence of its iconography might have reached England already in the ninth century. The young Alfred spent some time at the court of Charles the Bald with his father, around 856, and he could have seen the Utrecht Psalter on that occasion. We know for certain, however, that even later King Alfred had contacts with Charles’s entourage and with Rheims, since he had a correspondence with Fulco, a palace cleric

⁵¹ Zürich, Schweizerisches Nationalmuseum, AG 1311. <<https://dlf.uzh.ch/sites/kunstsnm/die-elfenbeintafeln-aus-der-hofschule-karls-des-kahlen-3/>>.

⁵² “As in the Utrecht Psalter, the Lord holds a torch in one hand and stretches his other to the psalmist to illustrate verse 1: *Dominus illuminatio meae et salus mea* [The Lord is my light and my salvation]. However, in Utrecht the ‘light’ is reinforced by emanations from the Hand of God above, which the ivory carver could not emulate.” (Wüstefeld 1996: 204–205). Here again, the torch flames go – as on the Fuller Brooch – sideways and down, rather than up.

of Charles, later abbot of Saint-Bertin and archbishop of Rheims (883).⁵³ Fulco then sent Grimbald from Saint-Bertin to Wessex, where Alfred appointed him as one of his scholar-helpers.

Pratt (2003) and Webster (2003a: 102) also dwell on the connection that can be made between the beliefs, the literary works and the objects that can be ascribed to Alfred's cultural milieu, and those pertaining to Charles's Court School. Even the admiration for the wise King Solomon, they argue, was partly mediated through Carolingian models. And it is possible that these models also included the iconography of torches to represent 'divine light', as featured in the Utrecht Psalter and in Charles the Bald's Court School's ivory cover mentioned above.

Both Kempshall (2001: 118) and Webster (2003a: 102), moreover, underline Alfred's love of the Psalms, which can also be inferred from the *Vita Ælfredi*. It is a fact, after all, that a prose translation of the first fifty Psalms was produced within King Alfred's cultural agenda, and possibly by the king himself.⁵⁴ Alfred was therefore undoubtedly very familiar with the concepts of 'enlightenment' and 'divine light' which emerge from the Psalms.

The Utrecht Psalter's torches certainly influenced artist F (Noel 1995: 212–213) working on the Harley Psalter, where some further representations of divine torches, along the same conceptual lines, appear in illustrations on fol. 59r for Psalm 115 (116),⁵⁵ and on fol. 71v for Psalm 139 (140).⁵⁶ In the latter case, in particular, God holds two torches, one in each hand, as on the Fuller Brooch (see Figure 5).⁵⁷ And again he pours the flames on the psalmist, to enlighten his eyes, thus protecting him from his enemies. In Ohlgren's words:

In the center, the Psalmist, being attacked by enemies with ropes (v. 6) who also have serpents issuing from their mouths (v. 4), cries out to God, who, leaning out of his mandorla, pours the contents of a flaming torch on the Psalmist (v. 8). (Ohlgren 1986: no. 169/112).

Artist F was very innovative. His work technique is analysed extensively by Noel (1995: 77–88), who concludes that "he looked very hard at Utrecht's images, and

⁵³ On the correspondence between Alfred and Fulco, see Nelson (1997: 135–144).

⁵⁴ Alfred's authorship of the translation of the Psalms is still an open question. See O'Neill (2001) on the matter.

⁵⁵ Ohlgren (1986: no. 169/83).

⁵⁶ Ohlgren (1986: no. 169/112). The Utrecht Psalter also features a torch on fol. 88v (Canticum 9, from Luke 1. 68–79), illustrating the sentence: *Inluminare his qui in tenebris et in umbra mortis sedent* 'To enlighten them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death' (Weber and Fisher 1969: 1608).

⁵⁷ The illustrator might have been inspired by the image of a man holding two torches, one pointing downwards, appearing in the Utrecht Psalter on fol. 48v (Psalm 82).

adapted motifs from other Psalms to his requirements”. In this case, in particular, he creates a new divine-torches scene by conflating the slim torches from Utrecht Psalms 12 (13) and 26 (27) (Figures 2 and 3), and the divine-torch scene from the Odbert/Bury tradition, with its conspicuous torch held upside down.⁵⁸ The psalmist invokes God’s protection,⁵⁹ and this protection once again is granted in the shape of a (huge) flame coming from God, holding two torches, one in each hand. The parallel with the Fuller Brooch is striking, and although the Harley Psalter is much later, this illustration proves that the concept of the ‘divine light’ could be equally expressed with two torches. It also shows that artist F deemed it necessary to deviate from his source in order to put greater emphasis on this concept.⁶⁰

Summing up, Alfred’s circle’s intellectual focus on the *oculi mentis* and the role of ‘enlightenment’ and ‘divine light’ in this process, as highlighted above, make torches plausible candidates for the objects held by sight on the Fuller Brooch. This interpretation seems reinforced by the iconography of this ‘divine light’ as emerging from the Utrecht Psalter (and its adapted ‘copies’), also on the basis of the close cultural connections that can be observed between Alfred’s cultural milieu and Charles the Bald’s Court School.

The iconography of this morally enlightening function of the flaming torch, however, is not limited to the Utrecht Psalter and its derivatives: it can also be seen in Cotton Tiberius C.VI, fol. 18v,⁶¹ in a full-page miniature preceding the prefaces to the Psalter, where Christ is portrayed holding a cross, a book and a flaming, horn-shaped torch, and in the historiated initial of the hymn “*Invocatio ad sanctam trinitatem*” in the Durham Hymnal, which will be analysed in the next section (5), where God/Light holds a torch in each hand, as in the Harley Psalter, fol. 71v, and on the Fuller Brooch.⁶²

58 One of the artists of the Odbert/Bury tradition might have been influenced – for this image – by the illustrations of torches in Prudentius’s *Psycmachia*, where they have, however, an opposite value, as weapons used by vices against virtues.

59 *Eripe me Domine ab homine malo; a uiro iniquo libera me* ‘Deliver me, O Lord, from the evil man; rescue me from the unjust man’ (Weber 1953: 338). The Harley Psalter is partly Roman and partly Gallican. This Psalm follows the Roman version.

60 It might be interesting to note that Gameson (1992) has highlighted a connection between the Harley Psalter and Winchester.

61 <http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=cotton_ms_tiberius_c_vi_f018v>. Gneuss and Lapidge (2014: no. 378; s. xi^{3/4}), prob. mid 1060s, Winchester OM?.

62 Other instances of a character holding two torches simultaneously can be found in a portrayal of the moon in London, British Library, Cotton Tiberius B.V, fol. 47r; and in an illustration of the Gemini zodiacal sign, in London, British Library, Arundel 60, fol. 4r. Most representations of the sun and the moon, however, show an anthropomorphic figure holding one torch only.

5 The Hymn *Invocatio ad sanctam trinitatem* in the Durham Hymnal

Another important contribution to my argument comes from an eleventh-century Canterbury hymnal now in Durham (Cathedral Library, B.III.32), where the first hymn (“*Invocatio ad sanctam trinitatem*”, beginning with the words *O lux beata Trinitas*, fol. 2r) is introduced by a historiated initial ‘O’ containing a depiction of a character holding two burning torches, and which closely resembles the iconography found on the Fuller Brooch (see Figure 7).⁶³ The Latin word *LUX* ‘light’ appears right beneath the image, as if it were a modern caption. The first stanza of this vesper hymn – meant to be sung on Saturday evening (Milfull 1996: 475) – discusses the way in which, once the sun has gone down and darkness has stepped in, human beings have to turn to God for enlightenment and reassurance. The Trinity of Light (*Lux, beata Trinitas*) becomes the sun in times of darkness, brightening the life of men and reassuring their hearts through its powerful light (Lat. *lumen*, translated as *leoht* in the accompanying Old English continuous interlinear gloss):

O LUX, BEATA TRINITAS
ET PRINCIPALIS UNITAS,
iam sol recedit igneus;
infunde lumen cordibus.

eala þu [...] þu eadige þrynnes
7 ealdorlic annys
eallunga sunne aweggewit seo fyrenne
onageot † asænd leoht heortum

‘O Light, blessed Trinity
and sovereign Unity,
already the fiery sun is setting;
[therefore] fill our hearts with light.’ (Milfull 1996: 109)⁶⁴

⁶³ <<http://www.digipal.eu/digipal/page/1009/>>. For an edition and translation of the hymn, see Milfull (1996: 109–111). There are actually various versions of this hymn in the manuscript, written by different hands that Milfull identifies as D₁, D₂ and D₄. Her edition is based on D₁, whilst the text here discussed was copied by D₂, on fol. 2r. The heading is omitted by D₂, and some words have not been glossed.

⁶⁴ As already explained, the edited text is based on D₁.

Temple (1976) and Ohlgren (1986) have interpreted the character found in the initial ‘O’ as a “personification of light”, in the shape of a female figure;⁶⁵ Keefer (2007: 99), however, has challenged this view and claims that “it could as readily represent not a female but one of the Persons of the Trinity as well”. She observes that “it is God who holds all images of the lighted torch in London, British Library, Harley 603” and also in Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Reg. lat. 12, fol. 28r. The topic, argument and invocation of the hymn would seem to confirm that this person might figuratively represent both light and God/Christ/Holy Spirit at the same time, since there is obviously a complete overlap between the Trinity and light, as they are combined in one entity (*Lux, beata Trinitas* ‘Light, blessed Trinity’).

Thus the Trinity is here understood as light chasing away darkness and allowing human beings to see at night, when the sun is gone. Night makes human beings vulnerable, and represents, also figuratively, a time of fear and turmoil. The light of the Trinity comforts men and allows them to overcome both their fear and the dangers of dark times, saving their bodies and souls.⁶⁶

Although much later than the Fuller Brooch, this historiated initial shows that the iconography of a character holding two torches in order to represent the ability to see and overcome dangers with the help of divine light was not limited to the Psalter, but could also feature in other types of texts. It also shows that the imagery of a lighted torch, with the ability to chase away darkness, would make a very suitable metaphor to represent Alfred’s aspirations and preoccupations as a king. In a ninth-century historical and cultural context, characterised by the urge to fight against a widespread cultural decay, with Viking attacks heavily threatening the political, religious and social stability of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms, the image of a divine light allowing the king and his people to see the right path, through wisdom and the protection of God, and be led to safety and salvation, would have been very powerful. This protective element is well aligned with the protective function of the divine torches that can be found in the Utrecht Psalter and its later copies.

⁶⁵ Temple (1976: no. 101): “a personification of light represented by a half-length female figure holding two torches”; Ohlgren (1986: no. 206/1): “Initial O: historiated with a personification of light, represented by a half-length female, nimbed and veiled, holding two burning torches.”

⁶⁶ Another hymn in the Durham Hymnal based on this correspondence between Christ and light is the “Ymnus ad Completorium” beginning with the words *Christe qui lux es*, sung daily at Compline in winter (Milfull 1996: 135–137).

6 Conclusions

The sense of sight is central to the iconography of the Fuller Brooch, where it should be considered as a representation not only of physical vision, but also and primarily of the human intellect (the *oculi mentis* ‘eyes of the mind’), aiming to see God through wisdom.⁶⁷ The patristic commonplace of the *oculi mentis* was very central to the theological and philosophical beliefs pertaining to King Alfred’s cultural circle, and was very tightly connected with the concept of the *illuminatio* ‘illumination’, that is, the bestowing of divine light on the (spiritual) eyes of human beings, to make their intellect able to see spiritual truths and God himself. The brooch seems to embody Alfred’s main ideas of education and moral and political behaviour very closely. As Webster very aptly sums up:

The brooch, superb in its craftsmanship and subtle in its intellectual content, is a powerful embodiment of Alfred’s ideas about the importance of wisdom and its acquisition – by himself, by his nobility, by his clergy and by the next generation who would govern after him. Its seriousness of import is so close to Alfred’s thinking that it is hardly possible to see it as other than commissioned by the king himself – if not for his own personal use, then for one of those among his family, entourage, or churchmen who were also dedicated to the pursuit of wisdom. (Webster 2014: 66).

Divine light was a pivotal element within the process of illumination of the *oculi mentis*, and therefore a concept very firmly associated with spiritual sight, as the Old English translations of the *Soliloquia*, the *Consolatio Philosophiae* and the *Regula pastoralis* clearly show. The two still mysterious objects that the central character on the Fuller Brooch holds must be linked to the concept of spiritual sight and to the elements of the *oculi mentis* commonplace. Given the relevance of the concept of divine light in the *illuminatio* process, and given the shape of these objects on the brooch, resembling torches found in other early medieval English manuscripts, a case can be made for these unidentified objects to represent the torches of divine light, turning physical sight into spiritual perception.

This divine light, within the process of illumination and divine protection, can also be observed, iconographically, in the same form of torches, in the Utrecht Psalter and in other objects stemming from Charles the Bald’s Court School, such as an ivory plaque replicating the Utrecht illustration to Psalm 26 (27). This similarity reinforces this interpretation. Moreover, given the political

⁶⁷ A thorough survey of the iconography of the other four senses depicted on the brooch is beyond the scope of this investigation. However, such a study would be desirable and might yield interesting results.

and cultural connections between the courts and cultural circles of Charles the Bald and King Alfred, it appears reasonable to surmise that the Utrecht Psalter might have acted as a source of inspiration,⁶⁸ albeit indirectly, mediated through close contacts with the Court School of Charles the Bald.⁶⁹

In my view, the central focus of the object is wisdom, good leadership and salvation: all concepts that were very relevant to King Alfred and his circle. Divine light is the empowering element; torches are its physical representations. The central character is probably hard to define because he may represent simultaneously – in a multilayer mode so typical of early English art – physical sight, spiritual sight, light, wisdom, God, and also perhaps King Alfred or Archbishop Plegmund⁷⁰ themselves. The protective function of the divine light, as the historiated initial ‘O’ of the hymn “*Invocatio ad sanctam trinitatem*”, in the Durham Hymnal, suggests, was probably also intended as much needed to guide and defend, in times of spiritual darkness, the king, his people, and late ninth-century Anglo-Saxon kingdoms from Viking attacks.⁷¹

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68 According to Pratt (2003: 209–210), the origins of the iconography for the representation of the five senses used on the Fuller Brooch should be sought in the philosophical and theological texts that were available at the time.

69 If van der Horst’s hypothesis of a possible presence of the Utrecht Psalter in England in the ninth century were proven to be right, then the Fuller Brooch might be considered among the evidence of such presence.

70 Wright (2007: 186) has made a case for the central character of the Fuller Brooch to represent Archbishop Plegmund, a possible candidate also as owner of the brooch: “And since the figure of Sight on the Fuller Brooch appears to wear a pallium inscribed with a cross, it may not be too fanciful to suggest that the brooch was made for Plegmund, Alfred’s Archbishop of Canterbury from 890 to 923, who was granted the pallium by Pope Formosus and who assisted Alfred in the preparation of his translation of the *Pastoral Care*.” Even the representation of the king as an illuminated or Christ-like character would fit very well with the Alfredian cultural context. See Pratt (2003: 189–221) and Gallagher (2019: 288–290).

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Figure 1: The Fuller Brooch © The Trustees of the British Museum



Figure 2: Illustration of Psalm 12 in Utrecht, Universiteitsbibliotheek, Psalterium Latinum (Hs. 32), fol. 7r (detail) © Utrecht, Universiteitsbibliotheek



Figure 3: Illustration of Psalm 26 in Utrecht, Universiteitsbibliotheek, Psalterium Latinum (Hs. 32), fol. 15r (detail) © Utrecht, Universiteitsbibliotheek



Figure 4: The ivory bookcover (Schweizerisches Nationalmuseum Zürich, AG 1311) derived from the Utrecht Psalter's illustration to Psalm 26 © Schweizerisches Nationalmuseum



Figure 5: Illustration of Psalm 139 in London, British Library, Harley 603, fol. 71v (detail) © British Library Board



Figure 6 : Illustration of Psalm 12 in Boulogne-sur-Mer, Bibliothèque Municipale des Annonciades, 20, fol. 19v (detail) © Bibliothèque Municipale de Boulogne-sur-Mer

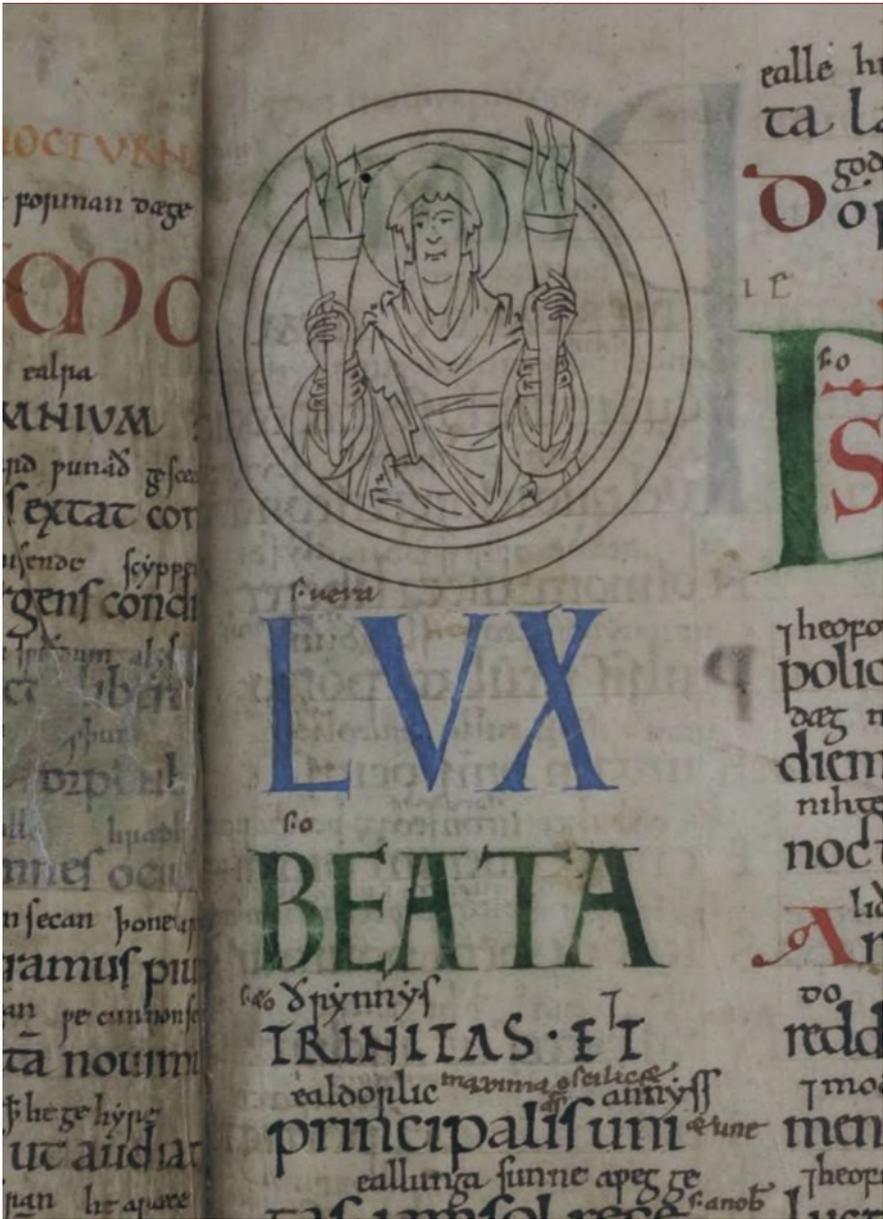


Figure 7: Historiated initial in Durham, Cathedral Library, B.III.32, fol. 2r (detail). Reproduced by kind permission of the Chapter of Durham Cathedral © Dean and Chapter of Durham Cathedral