

# A FUNCTIONAL APPROACH TO REGISTER IN THE *PREFACE TO THE PASTORAL CARE*

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## ABSTRACT

The functional approach to register proposed in this paper aims to provide a critical analysis that reveals the role played by King Alfred's *Preface to the Pastoral Care* in realizing social action from a new perspective based on the combination of Martin's and Halliday's paradigms of field, tenor and mode. The data obtained represent an endeavour to discern how this study confers a new viewpoint to traditional perceptions relating to the text's persuasive nature and to the presence of issues of authority and social inequality.

KEY WORDS: Old English, *Preface to the Pastoral Care*, critical analysis, functional grammar.

## RESUMEN

La aproximación funcional al registro propuesta en este trabajo pretende proporcionar un análisis crítico que revele el papel que jugó el *Preface to the Pastoral Care* del rey Alfredo en el desempeño de su función social desde una nueva perspectiva basada en la combinación de los paradigmas de *field, tenor y mode* de Martin y Halliday. Los datos obtenidos representan un intento por discernir cómo este estudio confiere un nuevo punto de vista a las apreciaciones tradicionales relacionadas con la naturaleza persuasiva del texto y con la presencia de cuestiones de autoridad y desigualdad social.

PALABRAS CLAVE: inglés antiguo, *Preface to the Pastoral Care*, análisis crítico, gramática funcional.

## INTRODUCTION

King Alfred's prose preface to his translation into Old English of the *Pastoral Care* is without a doubt the most discussed of Alfred's writings. The *Preface*, presented as a circular letter to the bishops of the English church, was composed sometime between A.D. 890 and 896. The letter describes the state of learning in England at the time of his accession and sets forth Alfred's educative aims within the difficult circumstances of his reign, from A.D. 871 to 899, which was mainly spent fighting the Viking invaders. The assessment of the *Preface* as a portrayal of Alfred's reflections and as a source of Anglo-Saxon social and cultural information

is a factor that has been highlighted from different sides (Frantzen 26; Geenfield and Calder 44; Hagedorn 87; Smyth 528; Wrenn 206). Together with the many references to the commitment of the author with the precepts of the Christian culture, researchers have also focused on the overwhelming dimension of this religious project to pervade a secular sphere (Discenza, *Wealth, Persuasive*; Frantzen; Huppé; Nelson; Pratt; Szarmach). Some other frequently discussed lines of debate attached to Alfred's educational and religious enterprise focus on the persuasive nature of the text (Huppé 119; Orton 144; Shippey 354-355), its socially selective intention (Discenza, *Wealth* 454; Frantzen 28; Smyth 559-560; Wormald 18) and the apparent paradox conveyed by the association of wealth and wisdom (Discenza, *Wealth*; Nelson; Orton).

The systemic approach to register proposed in this paper aims to consider the study of these features from a new perspective based on the combination of Halliday's and Martin's paradigms of field, tenor and mode, being this analysis sustained by the flexibility of functional grammar in the study of Old English as attested by previous research (Cummings, *Systemic, Systemic Functional*; Davies; Möhlig and Klages). Martin's (501-502) reinterpretation of register offers a much richer account of Halliday's parameters, as he extends Halliday's notion of register referring to language as context's expression plane to cover in addition part of context's content plane. Martin's supplementary considerations within each variable allow for a critical rendering that proves to be more feasible to explain those issues of social inequality and authority in the text pointed out by previous research. Discourse analysis with critical purposes takes a particular interest in issues of ideological power and inequality and defends the study of discourse not only as a tool for the social construction of reality, but also as an instrument of power and control (Fairclough, *Critical*). Such an approach fits the contextual characteristics of the Anglo-Saxon period marked by the multi-faceted influence of Christianity and that leads to a view of religion as ideology in terms of the lack of exclusion between a religious domain and a purely secular one.<sup>1</sup> Thus, as Bergner (*Pragmatics, Openness*) contends, a proper understanding of the Anglo-Saxon text can only be obtained by assuming an order of phenomena centred on the idea of God.

The linguistic data used to formulate each register variable comes from the double-sided identification of each individual or participant involved in the text as both a centre of structure and action.<sup>2</sup> Concerning the first part, we will use the information coming from Halliday's nominal phrases, Martin's identification sys-

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<sup>1</sup> The Christian church displayed an absolute influence as an institution of social and economic power (Angenendt), bringing also literacy on a very ambitious scale in order to set up education as a complementary service to God (Lees; Lendinara). In this sense, King Alfred's educational reform represented a very ambitious project unparalleled in Europe at that time.

<sup>2</sup> Although Martin uses the term "participant identification" to denote "the strategies languages use to get people, places and things into a text and refer to them once there" (95), the phrase is here confined to those structures referring to people, but not to places or things.

tems and van Leeuwen's socio-semantic categories.<sup>3</sup> As regards their role as a focus of action, the depiction of each participant is completed with the information provided by Halliday's transitivity structures.<sup>4</sup> Four main identification systems have been distinguished in the text, namely those referring to the sender and receiver of the epistle, to a first person plural and to a wide referential system that includes the complex of individuals used by Alfred to support his arguments. The socio-semantic categories generated in the latter lead to several sub-groups that include religious members, kings, other high-status individuals as well as some other generic references. Accordingly, this paper aims to explore the relevance of some linguistic structures illustrating this double function of participants concerning the establishment of the parameters of register in the *Preface*. Traditional perceptions relating to the text's persuasive nature and to the presence of issues of social inequality and authority will also be attached in order to complement this analysis. At the same time, the data obtained attempts to discern how this study confers, in turn, a new perspective to this background of previous research.

## FIELD

Halliday's (Halliday and Hasan 12) concept of field as topic or subject takes shape in the *Preface* around the central issue of the educational reform proposed by Alfred which he articulates through some retrospective sections that contrast the spiritual and cultural splendour of the past with the intellectual decadence of the present. At the same time, the text bolsters the necessity of a doctrinal approach to Christianity and learning under the menace of worldly punishment. This interpretation of field in terms of the contrast between different periods of time offers a more detailed understanding in Shippey's four-fold division in which issues of wealth and wisdom interact.<sup>5</sup> As an alternative to Shippey's historical analysis,

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<sup>3</sup> Martin's system of identification examines the way in which language is structured to refer to the participants in discourse as well as the relevance attached to them in terms of the referential chains they generate: "The more central the participant ... the more likely it is to provide a referent for a phoric item..." (107). Halliday's (180-196) nominal structure is also used as a base to specify the critical and sociological relevance of the participants in terms of the socio-semantic inventory proposed by van Leeuwen whose categories for the representation of what he calls 'social agents' plays an important role within a critical perspective by the systematic association of certain categories to some individuals.

<sup>4</sup> Transitivity structures sustain the function of the clause as representation in order to give a picture of reality as a complex of processes associated to some participants and circumstances (Halliday 106-175).

<sup>5</sup> Shippey divides the *Preface* into four sections, each concerned with a specific period of English history: period I (end of the seventh century), a time of material and spiritual prosperity; period II (A.D. 855-865), a time of wealth without wisdom; period III (A.D. 871 and after), in which neither wealth nor wisdom was to be found; period IV (the time of the writing of the preface, around A.D. 890), in which at least some wisdom flourishes.



Szarmach argues that the text is about wisdom as *sapientia* and stresses the influence of church fathers on Alfred's thought as well. Indeed, these two long-established interpretations of the content of the *Preface* provide a more thorough insight to a general Hallidayan approach, which additionally can be supplemented by Martin's notion of field. See table 1.

TABLE 1. *PREFACE'S* PATTERN OF FIELD

FIELD	
What is happening?	Project of educational reform and exposition of the intellectual decay
Institutional purpose	Institutional purpose linked to Christianity through its different fields of influence: social, cultural and ideological Common sense. Elementary taxonomies

Martin's definition of field "in terms of sets of activity sequences oriented to some global institutional purpose" (536) turns the transitivity structures involving the actions of participants into a valuable means to assess their role as actual or potential members of the Christian institution. Based on this institutional orientation, several paths of interconnection between religion, state power and education come to light. Firstly, the opening transitivity scheme "actor (*Ælfred kyning*) + process (*gretan*) + goal (*Wærferð biscep*) + circumstance (*luflice & freondlice*)" in *Ælfred kyning hateð gretan Wærferð biscep his wordum luflice & freondlice* [3.1-2] embodies the institutional line of communication set up between the crown and the church in the text.<sup>6</sup> This relationship is further itemized in terms of the institutional submission of the first to the latter in the construction "actor (*ða kyningas*) + process (*hersumedon*) + goal (*Gode & his arendwrecum*)" in *hu ða kyningas ðe ðone ónwald hæfdon ðæs folces [on ðam dagum] Gode & his arendwrecum hersumedon* [3.5-6]. Activity sequences also manifest the social, ideological and educational areas of influence of Christianity brought about by the connection between educational or cultural fields and religious ones. In order to articulate the link between religion and education Alfred draws on the use of the first person plural in the following two structures: "senser (*we*) + process (*lufodon/lefdon*) + phenomenon (*hit [wisdom]*)" in *ða ða we hit nohwæder ne selfe ne lufodon ne eac oðrum monnum ne lefdon* [5.5-6] and "senser (*we*) + process (*lufodon*) + phenomenon (*ðone naman anne ðæt[te] we Cristne wæren*)" in *ðone naman anne we lufodon ðæt[te] we Cristne wæren* [5.6-7]. This last configuration materializes "the divergence between the appearance of be-

<sup>6</sup> My citations are in the form [page number.line number] from Hatton MS in Henry Sweet's edition. Transitivity structures only refer to the relevant elements of the fragments selected.

lief and the reality of behavior” that is traditional in Christian literature (Szarmach 61). In view of that, as stated by Frantzen, Szarmach’s analysis “directs our attention away from the preface as a historical record to its use of traditional Christian literary themes” (27). This fact supports the performative nature of these structures, since the author urges the reader to move from a view of Christianity as an outer shell of conviction to an inner ideological reality. Regarding the use of the first person plural, the inclusion of the receiver in what Fairclough terms “inclusive we” (*Language* 106) indicates a desired concurrence between the writer and his audience that additionally imposes an institutional load on them. Yet, Orton moves beyond a mere individual or institutional reference as he contends that the use of *we* in these two clauses reaches a higher projection displayed on a national level (144). Thus, Alfred urges the reader to approach both wisdom and Christianity in an effective manner that embraces the educational domain of Christianity extended on a national dimension. This commitment with Christianity is also made evident in the description of religious members in the structure “carrier (*ða godcundan hadas*) + process (*wæron*) + attribute (*giorne*) + circumstance (*ge ymb lare ge ymb liornunga, ge ymb ealle ða ðiewotdomas ðe hie Gode [don] scoldon*)” in *ða godcundan hadas hu giorne hie wæron ægðer ge ymb liornunga, ge ymb ealle ða ðiewotdomas ðe hie Gode [don] scoldon* [3.9-11], with the link religion–education illustrated through the two-fold role of *ða godcundan hadas* as depicted by the circumstance element. Supporting again a performative character that goes beyond the scope of this structure itself, Frantzen highlights the connotations of this clause in conjunction with the experiential constructions attributed to the kings because of the implicit exemplifying purpose that sustains them and that turns them into a model not only to the reader, but to foreign scholars: “He notes that simultaneously the religious orders were eager to teach and to learn, and to perform holy services as well. So excellent was this civilization that it was a model to foreign scholars who arrived in England to study” (28).

This network of religion, education and crown encompasses a further explicit link with wealth by placing the activity sequences of participants into the much discussed paradox of the association between wealth and wisdom. The structures “actor (*Ure ieldran*) + process (*begeaton*) + goal (*welan*)” in *Ure ieldran, ða ðe ðas stowa ær hioldon, hie lufodon wisdom & ðurh ðone hie begeaton welan* [5.13-15] and “actor (*we*) + process (*habbað forlaten*) + goal (*welan*)” in *fórðem we habbað nú ægðer forlaten ge ðone welan ge ðone wisdom* [5.16-17] establish the contrast between the presence and absence of wealth, something which also conditions Shippey’s historical division, and thus presents power in the text as goal obtained and goal lost. Considering that Alfred completes the historical scheme of the *Preface* by looking ahead to a time in which wealth will be reinstated (Frantzen 27), wealth becomes not only an essential ingredient within the whole institutional purpose of the text, but the goal itself that demarcates the ensuing activity sequences of participants beyond the text. Also, wealth appears as a mark of social distinction in some members: “carrier (*ða kyningas*) + process (*hæfdon*) + attribute (*ónwald*)” in *ða kyningas ðe ðone ónwald hæfdon ðæs folces* [3.5] and “carrier (*eall sio gioguð ðe nu is ón Angelcynne friora monna*) + process (*hæbben*) + attribute (*speda*)” in *eall sio gioguð ðe nu is ón*



*Angelcynne friora monna, ðara ðe ða speda hæbben* [7.10-11]. Alfred's programme of translation and education would strengthen certain individuals who were already powerful in society. Besides the objective of accompanying the *Pastoral Care*, the second main aim of Alfred's prefatory letter was to outline "his hopes for the education of the free-born youth of Wessex" (Smyth 559). This fact depicts power as a relevant qualifying feature of participants and hence reinforces the teleological role of power in Alfred's educational plan and also in the text's paradigm of field. Discenza (*Wealth*), Orton and Nelson have tackled the paradox embodied in Alfred's excessive concern with power by rejecting a metaphorical interpretation in terms of spiritual or intellectual wealth, which is also discarded here. As stated by Discenza (*Wealth* 466), Alfred outlines a programme to institutionalize the connections between wealth and wisdom by encouraging a market in which cultural capital has economic and social value.

This same network of connections that religion embraces has a counterpart in the analysis of religious members as a focus of structure. The linguistic resources that account for their social function uncover a parallel three-dimensional link with culture, God and state power. The presentation of ecclesiastics is registered through the socio-semantic category of classification in *se biscep* [9.6] and *gelerede biscepas* [9.4]. In the latter, the inclusion of the epithet *gelerede* specifying the learned character of the participants shapes the link between religious and educational domains. The nominal groups *Plegmunde minum ærcebisepe* [7.21], *Assere minum biscepe* [7.21], *Grimbolde minum mæsseprioste* [7.22] and *Iohanne minum mæssepreoste* [7.22] merge the socio-semantic categories of nominalization and classification in order to offer an individualized reference and specify their institutional rank respectively. Both categories reinforce their relevance both as individuals and as social members, whereas a third one of relational identification conferred by *minum* establishes in addition the connection between the state power represented by Alfred and the ecclesiastics. In the complex paratactic nominal structure *Gode & his ærendwrecum* [3.6], the noun *ærendwrecum* denotes the function of religious participants through the socio-semantic class of functionalization, whereas the possessive *his* attaches the value of relational identification setting up a further explicit link with God. Huppé explains how this noun phrase specifies the religious origin of the state power: "it springs from their obedience to God and His messengers (*ærendwrecum*), the latter term seeming to define the role of the church as the expositor of God's word, and thus by implication reserving temporal rule to the king" (125). In the nominal group *Godes ðiowa* [5.11] the category of relational identification conveyed by the possessive *Godes* reiterates the bond with God. An added aspect in the mixture of religious and secular environments is contemplated through the references to the communities of secular clergy that according to Orton (142-145), the noun phrase *Godes ðiowa* realizes. Despite living communally and observing canonical hours, they would not follow monastic rules.

Within the variable of field, Martin sets up a second dimension centred on a scale of common/uncommon sense in terms of the degree of taxonomic complexity accompanying discourse (542- 546). Concerning this aspect, the institutional purpose of the *Preface* is materialized through common sense assumptions attached



to a superficial level of explicit taxonomic simplicity and strategic transitivity patterns. As will be explained next, this model disguises a second level of implicit content ascribed to mode that attempts to determine and control the behaviour of the reader. Accordingly, Martin's concept of field accounts for the combination of language and action that underpins the persuasive nature of the text as regards an institutional focus that encompasses the social, educational and political flanks of Anglo-Saxon life.

## TENOR

Halliday's idea of tenor as "who are taking part" (Halliday and Hasan 12) is interpreted in terms of the contact established between King Alfred and Bishop Wærferth within a wider social framework that includes religious members (e.g. *gelærede biscepas* [9.4], *Godes ðiowa* [5.11]), power elites (e.g. *ða kyningas* [3.5]) and some other generic references (e.g. *oðrum monnum* [5.6], *menn* [5.22], *eallum monnum* [7.7.]). As illustrated in table 2, Martin's view of tenor along the three dimensions of status, contact and affect (523-536) helps to systematize these social relationships within some critical parameters of power and social inequality: status refers to the relative positions of participants in a culture's social hierarchy, contact refers to their degree of institutional involvement and affect covers the degree of emotional charge between them.

TABLE 2. PREFACE'S PATTERN OF TENOR

TENOR	
Who are taking part?	Social scheme formed by religious members, power elites and rest of the population referred to in a generic way
Status	Equality between religious members and power elites and inferiority position of the rest of participants
Contact	Regular contact between superior members and occasional with inferior ones
Affect	Occasional affective conduct related to strategy of suspension of authority

Concerning the first dimension, Martin distinguishes a basic opposition between equal and unequal status based on linguistic choice by assuming a symbolic relationship between the social rank of individuals and the linguistic systems that sustain their presence in the text (527-528). This fact can be appreciated in the similarity of socio-semantic categories employed to materialize the presentation of both ecclesiastical members and power elites as a centre of structure and in opposition to the rest of individuals belonging to the fourth reference system detected in the text. Proving that, both sender and receiver are assigned the categories of nomination and classification in *Ælfred kyning* [3.1] and *Wærferð biscep* [3.1] in order to



stress their pre-eminence both individually and as regards a social function that provides them with an institutional support of authority. The analogous socio-semantic and phrase structures of both individuals as the embodiment of state and church respectively symbolize a similarity of status and social value. The social repertoire of the *Preface* also includes the categories of genericization and classification in *ða kyningas* [3.5] and *gioguð* in *eall sio gioguð ðe nu is ón Angelcynne friora monna, ðara ðe ða speda hæbben* [7.10-11], the latter justifying the criticisms against Alfred's socially selective learning project. "The youth (*gioguð*) in question were inevitably male, free-born (sons of *friora monna*), with enough *sped* —wealth or ability or both..." (Smyth 560-61). As previously mentioned, religious members count on the categories of nomination in *Plegmunde minum ærcebiscepe* [7.21], *Assere minum biscepe* [7.21], *Grimbolde minum mæseprioste* [7.22] and *Iohanne minum mæsepreoste* [7.22], underpinning a particularized and pertinent identification that may be linked to their role not only as bishops under Alfred's reign but also as leading assistants in his translation programme (Orton 144). As observed in field, references to the clergy also draw on the socio-semantic types of categorization (classification and functionalization), association and relational identification, all of them contributing to highlight their social role within a system of connections with God, power and education. A further subgroup of social members within the fourth reference system (*oðrum monnum* [5.6], *menn* [5.22], *eallum monnum* [7.7]) represented through the socio-semantic categories of genericization and aggregation expands the scope of participants affected by Alfred's statements. By representing them as an indefinite mass or group Alfred supports the pretensions to universality of his message, sometimes exerting a direct persuasive function (*Geden hwelc witu ús ða becomon for ðisse worulde, ða ða we hit nohwæder ne selfe ne lufodon ne eac oðrum monnum ne lefdon* [5.5-6]) sometimes just describing the state of intellectual decline (*Hie ne wendon ðatt[e] æfre menn sceolden swæ re[c]elease weorðan & sio lar swæ oðfeallan* [5.22-23]). In view of that, this systematic scheme of categories illustrates how the status dimension of tenor supports the existing social hierarchy.

Alfred materializes his authority in the text through an extensive identification system enacted by the first person singular combined strategically with the first person plural. The use of the latter conveys a high degree of authority to the text in terms of which Alfred acts in representation of all the participants by inflicting an institutional load on them. This combination of referential chains supports Szarmach's claim that the *Preface* must be contemplated as a complex personal statement combined with a public intention that proclaims the magnitude of Christian wisdom (63). Alfred's presence in the text embodies some other paths of linguistic control emerging from his role as a focus of action by means of three transitivity patterns. Firstly, in *ic ðe bebiode ðæt ðu... befestan mæge, befašte.* [5.1-4] and *Ond ic bebiode ón Godes naman ðæt nan món... from ðæm mynstre* [9.2-3], the verbal process *bebiode* exemplifies the function of command Alfred exerts not only over the receiver but over a collective participant. In giving specific instructions about his book, Alfred moves from a particular audience to a universal one: "The *bebiode* of the conclusion differs from the others in that it is not addressed to Wærferð, but to all men, present or future, who will make use of the book" (Huppé 131). Secondly,





the *Preface's* five major sections “begin with some reference to the writer’s powers of memory, usually a *ic ða (ðis eall) gemunde*, “When I then remembered (all this)” (Shippey 346). The combination “first person singular + mental process” in e.g. *ic... geðencean* [3.17-18], *wundrade ic* [5.19] and in the repetitive use of *ic... gemunde* [5.8] allows the author to deploy his function as a centre of reflection over the experiential content in such a way that he seems to legitimate his subjectivity position as a source of authenticity in the message. Thirdly, Alfred’s discursive legitimacy is also strengthened through his function both as *sayer* and *receiver* in the same transitivity construction “*sayer (ic) + process + (andwyrde) + receiver (me selfum)*” in *ic ða sona eft me selfum andwyrde* [5.21-22]. This double position condenses in the same structure his role as *sender* of the message, as a *trusted source* of deliberation and as a *central interlocutor* in the text.

The second dimension of contact evaluates the degree of institutional involvement between participants in terms of the distinction between the two ends of involved and uninvolved (Martin 528-32). As previously indicated by the institutional connotations implied in field, the involved side is systematized by the initial transitivity structure “*actor (Ælfred kyning) + process (gretan) + goal (Wærferð biscep) + circumstance (luflice & freondlice)*” [3.1-2] that makes the message be supported on the contact between the crown and the church, a contact that is later identified in terms the submission of the first to the latter: “*actor (ða kyningas) + process (hersumedon) + goal (Gode & his ærendwrecum)*” in *hu ða kyningas ðe ðone ónwald hæfdon ðæs folces [on ðam dagum] Gode & his ærendwrecum hersumedon* [3.5-6]. This contact has a matching part in the enactment of religious members as a centre of structure. The category of relational identification in the nominal groups *Plegmunde minum ærcebisepe* [7.21], *Assere minum biscepe* [7.21], *Grimbolde minum mæsseprioste* [7.22] and *Iohanne minum mæssepreoste* [7.22] conferred by *minum* generates a further connection between the state power represented by Alfred and the ecclesiastics, whereas the same category in *Gode & his ærendwrecum* [3.6] and *Godes ðiowa* [5.11] sets up an explicit link with God by means of the possessives *his* and *Godes* respectively.

Despite the minor influence exerted by the third dimension of affect in the *Preface*, the basic realization principle of amplification associated with it allows for a critical interpretation that justifies the affective dose interspersed in the *Preface* in order to guarantee the effectiveness of power considerations, specifically “at the discretion of participants in a dominance position” (Martin 533). As Martin asserts, affect is something that can be balanced, turned on and off, adjusted to normal levels or turned on really loud when the occasion desires. Concerning this aspect, the use of the first person plural epitomizes the employment of the same linguistic device with a paradoxical mixture of authority and affective doses. The inclusive “we” complies with an oscillating attitude that alternates Alfred’s manifestations of control with some other affective positions of closeness and suspension of power. This inclusive “we” encodes a common identity to all the participants through the fusion of all the identification chains and at the same time, imposes an institutional unification through the socio-semantic category of assimilation supporting it. Thus, despite not implying a distinction of individuals in terms of a social or ideological scale, this first person plural represents one of the most tangible proofs



of the strategy sustaining the contact between all the social members with the aim of holding the pretensions to universality of the text under the façade of an affective posture.

Some other linguistic devices included in this third dimension of tenor are the concluding adverbial phrase *luflice & freondlice* [3.1-2] in the opening transitivity structure of the text which “may just possibly serve, in its warmth, to give a sense of the personal and humanizing to the formal phrases of salutation” (Huppé 124). The affective tone conveyed by interpersonal elements in the evaluative epithet *godena* in *ðara godena wiotona* [5.19] unveils the author’s flattering presentation of the religious members that in a general way also underpins the use of the interpersonal resources in the text. The information provided by the nominal phrases and socio-semantic categories strengthening the social function of ecclesiastics in field and in the previous dimensions of tenor has an additional meaning within affect. The interpersonal resources attached to their role as a centre of structure show different fronts of valuable and complimentary description: link with political power through the category of relational identification (e.g. *Plegmunde minum ærcebiscepe* [7.21]), link with God through relational identification (e.g. *Gode & his arendwrecum* [3.6] and *Godes ðiowa* [5.11]), connection religion-education through the evaluative epithet (*gelærede biscepas* [9.4]), social relevance through the category of functionalization (e.g. *arendwrecum* [3.6]), institutional rank through classification (*ærcebiscepe* and *biscepe* [7.21]) and positive assessment through the evaluative epithet (*ðara godena wiotona* [5.19]).

The variable of tenor exhibits a symbolic relationship between linguistic resources and the social position of participants. The first dimension of rank exemplifies the superiority condition assigned to ecclesiastics and power elites as well as the imposing attitude displayed by Alfred within the institutional parameters exposed in field. In the second dimension, the frequency scale that distinguishes between regular or occasional contact acts as a barometer to catalogue individuals in terms of a relationship regulated by the criteria of power and ideological alignment as designed through the previous dimension of rank. The third component of affect performs an implicit purpose in conjunction with the previous dimensions of status and contact in order to adapt the effectiveness of the discourse through the fluctuating movement of authority, as evinced in the latter ones, and the affective dose the former incorporates. All things considered, Martin’s three-dimensional view corroborates the dynamic character of tenor in the *Preface*, the manifold roles transferred strategically to the participants and even the mixture of the connotations of status, contact and affect in the same linguistic device, namely the use of the first person plural.

## MODE

The persuasive nature of the text is also assisted by the impact of all the previous information on mode due to the textual orientation of this third register variable. As summarized in table 3, Martin’s view enriches the perception of the

*Preface* as an epistle supplied by Halliday’s (Halliday and Hasan 12) concept of mode along two metafunctionally oriented dimensions, interpersonal and experiential. According to the interpersonal side, linguistic choice unveils the capacity to generate on the reader some common patterns of reaction or feedback. That strategic imposition to act corroborates how the *Preface* can be assessed as the picture of a man’s mind at work, presenting solutions to problems with a concept of effective presentation (Huppé 119-120). Thus, some linguistic devices in the text draw on a calculated mechanism that firstly, aims to activate the action of the individuals by means of some alert sources and secondly, establishes a subsequent pattern of action to follow promoting the adhesion to Christianity and to Alfred’s educational reform. This design of behaviour is assisted by the doctrinal propaganda transmitted by the description of religious participants as institutional members.

TABLE 3. PREFACE’S PATTERN OF MODE

MODE	
What part is the language playing?	Preface presented as epistle form
Interpersonal	Complex and subtle mechanism of composing to produce the reaction of participants
Experiential	Strategic construction of a new social order and reconstruction of past events

The transitivity pattern generated around the first person plural in “actor (*hwelc witu*) + process (*becomon*) + goal (*us*)” in *hwelc witu ús ða becomon for ðisse worulde* [5.5] situates all the participants within the first half of a two-sided manipulative system.<sup>7</sup> This first part encompasses some alert sources that by placing them in a situation of despair prepare the path for a second subsequent pattern of action to follow built on the network of wisdom, Christianity and power as depicted in field. Additionally, the structure “senser (*we*) + process (*lufodon*) + phenomenon (*ðone naman anne ... ðæt[te] we Cristne wæren, & swiðe feawe ða ðeawas*)” in *ðone naman anne we lufodon ðæt[te] we Cristne wæren, & swiðe feawe ða ðeawas* [5.6-8] exerts a function within this first side bearing in mind its aim to make the reader aware of the divergence between the appearance of belief and the reality of behaviour (Szarmach 61). But Szarmach also comments on the unique impact of Alfred’s version of his Christian complaint on the grounds of a connection with the

<sup>7</sup> As pointed out by Orton, “the *witu* suffered by the English for their slackness are almost certainly the Viking attacks; and the placing of this observation next to the appeal to present bishops may imply some criticism of them” (145). Alfred only alludes to the Vikings in passing, as he recognizes that the problems he was up against were rooted in the English church (Orton 148).



*witu* mentioned in the previous structure: “because he connects it with punishments Anglo-Saxon society has received, presumably at the hands of the Danes” (61). The use of the first person plural gives effectiveness to these warning sources by unifying participants in a plight and hence increasing the dimensions of disaster, but it also reveals the author’s concern with power, whose loss alerts participants: “actor (*we*) + process (*habbað forlæten*) + goal (*welan*)” in *we habbað nú ægðer forlæten ge ðone welan ge ðone wisdom* [5.16-17]. A further side of these alarm devices rests on some existential constructions that assess the lack of learned people in the past as a factor of educational debacle: *swiðe feawa wæron behionan Humbre ðe hiora deninga cuðen understondan on Englisc* [3.13-15], *noht monige begiondan Humbre naren* [3.16] and *Swæ feawa hiora wæron* [3.17]. The socio-semantic category of aggregation formed by the combination “adverb + quantifier” (*swiðe feawa, noht monige, swæ feawa hiora*) supports the existential element in these transitivity structures with the purpose of displaying a statistic value. The attachment of *swiðe, noht* and *swæ* reinforcing quantifiers prompts us to treat participants as poor statistics, whereas the progression they exhibit emphasizes the scale of learning disaster. As posed by Huppé, that “incremental variation serves vividly to picture the dearth of scholars Alfred encountered when he became king and gives particular effectiveness to period 3 with its simple statement of thanksgiving for the present time when there is *ænigne onstal... lareowa*” (127). Within this interpersonal metafunction, Martin includes another feature related to the scale of complexity in the composing of discourse, “the way in which text is shaped as an object of meaning” (513). The strategic mechanism that sustains the construction of the text connects this dimension of mode with the taxonomic simplicity mentioned in field. As previously explained, the persuasive presentation of the message requires a second level of implicit content that is now validated through the interpersonal angle of mode.

Relating to its experiential dimension, which mediates the semiotic space between action and reflection, the *Preface* presents itself as a text constitutive of social processes, in opposition to the ones that simply accompany those processes. As regards the additional distinction between construction and reconstruction suggested by Martin (520-522), although the *Preface* presents a constructing mode in terms of the project of educational reform Alfred portrays, those fragments that illustrate the contrast between the intellectual decadence of the present and the past splendour give form to the reconstruction side of mode. This tactic movement in time acquires great connotations in Shippey’s historical analysis with a potential period V wherein both wisdom and wealth will be restored to his kingdom. Thus, the *Preface* combines a reconstructing process of social reality with a constructing enterprise that aim jointly to generate the ideological allegiance of participants within a new moral, social and cultural order in accordance with the institutional parameters of Christianity specified in field. Alfred conceives a social order in the text dominated by status and ideological criteria that is not casual. Frantzen highlights the carefully arranged subdivisions of Alfred’s society in the *Preface* as well as the role assigned to learning in each part, especially as regards religious and royal members (28). But Alfred also includes a further reference system enacted by the combination of first person singular and first person plural that exercises a tactic



control through the fusion of all the identification systems it entails and hence allows him to impose his authority over the whole social panorama. Likewise, Discenza's (*Persuasive*) statements on Alfred's persuasive power become completely meaningful in mode. As Discenza (*Persuasive* 131) exposes, Alfred's argumentation is subtle and potent, he conveys arguments with beauty as well as authority to win over a variety of readers to his views, his "use of history to authorize the programme gives him a solid foundation on which to build his other appeals."

## CONCLUSION

Halliday's concept of field, tenor and mode together with Martin's views within each register variable fit a critical analysis that reveals the role played by the *Preface* in realizing social action. In the Anglo-Saxon context, discourse is materialized in institutional forms and practices with a strategic purpose according to which the formation of subjects derives from the effect of power of the Christian institution. The rendering of context employed in this examination rejects a strict distinction between a secular and a religious domain in favour of an evaluation of this relationship in terms of the areas of discursive influence of Christian ideology, which provides a solid framework of tripartite interconnection between the institution of Christianity, education and power. As attested in this paper, the *Preface* may be contemplated as an instrument of control, not only of communication, by means of which the Anglo-Saxon reader can be manipulated as he assumes he is just being addressed. But mostly, this functional approach to register allows us to detect a domain of convergence between this new perspective and those issues of persuasion, power and inequality referred to by traditional research. These traditional statements have a counterpart in the analysis of linguistic structures attributed to the participants in the text. Our interpretation of the linguistic devices involved in the description of the individuals both as a centre of structure and action supports a critical view according to which far from giving orders, Alfred crafts a preface to entice the readers to his social, ideological and didactic project.

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