For more than a thousand years Alfred the Great, king of Wessex (d. 899), has been considered one of the founders of the English vernacular literary tradition. Alfred has also been held up as a model monarch, and featured in eighteenth-century debates about the limits of monarchy and the rule of law. One of the most important foundations of this tradition is Alfred's declaration in a letter to his bishops that he wishes to translate from Latin into English 'those books most necessary for all people to know'. For many centuries a number of translations and works have been attributed to the king, but now some question whether he translated anything at all. This lecture bring new evidence to the debate over Alfred's role at the beginning of English prose, and ask which books are 'most necessary'.

**Dan Anlezark** specialises in Old and Middle English language and literature, and is particularly interested in the literary reception of the Bible and the literature of Classical antiquity by the Anglo-Saxons. He has published on and edited a range of Old English texts. His first book (*Water and Fire: The Myth of the Flood in Anglo-Saxon England*, 2006) examined the literary reception of the biblical Flood in a range of Anglo-Saxon texts, from Bede's commentaries to the Old English epic poem *Beowulf*. His edition of *The Dialogues of Solomon and Saturn* (2009) discusses a group of highly idiosyncratic Old English dialogues found in MSS Corpus Christi College 41 and 422, involving King Solomon and the pagan God Saturn. Anlezark has edited and translated a group of Old English narrative poems from *MS Junius 11* and the *Exeter Book, Old Testament Narratives* (2011), in the Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library series. He was elected a Fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities in 2014.

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*This lecture is free and all are welcome*

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