

Abraham Wheelock's Edition of Bede's *History* in Old English

by

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In 1639 or 1640 Sir Henry Spelman established and endowed a lectureship at Cambridge for the study of Anglo-Saxon. The newly-created post was given to Abraham Wheloc or Wheelock, at that time Professor of Arabic in the University. Wheelock was also university librarian and amanuensis, and it was in this capacity that he had, some time before, copied some Old English MSS to be used by Spelman in an edition of the Councils of the English Church which he was preparing. The lectureship in Anglo-Saxon was endowed with a church living, and Wheelock also retained his post as librarian.¹

While he held the lectureship Wheelock produced the one work for which he is known, the *editio princeps* of the Old English version of Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*, a version often attributed to King Alfred.² This volume also contained a version of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle with Wheelock's Latin translation. A second edition in the following year included also a reprint of Lambarde's *Archaionomia*, a sixteenth-century collection of Old English laws. Though he had hoped to print the Catholic Sermons of Aelfric and an Old English dictionary, Wheelock produced nothing other than the *Bede* in the field of OE (apart from a peculiar effort to write OE poetry himself).³ But the *Bede* with its annotation and additional matter makes a respectable total in itself. The complete accuracy of the text of the *History* and the translation of the Chronicle

¹ For reference to the negotiations see Henry Ellis, *Original Letters of Eminent Literary Men* (London, 2843), pp. 156 and 161; also Preface to Wheelock's edition, sign. Ba, and references cited in *DNB*, s. v. "Wheelock". The name Wheloc, which I derived from earlier writers and originally used, is clearly a back-formation from the Latin form of his name "Whelocus".

² *Historiae Ecclesiasticae Gentis Anglorum Libri V* (Cambridge, 1643). See Dorothy Whitelock, "The Old English Bede" in *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 1962: "My investigations have failed to find evidence that the translation of Bede was undertaken as part of Alfred's scheme. On the other hand, they have not proved that it was not so undertaken" (p. 74). "That the work was undertaken at Alfred's instigation remains a probability" (p. 77).

³ See F. L. Uttley, "Two Seventeenth-Century Anglo-Saxon Poems", *MLQ* III(1942), 243—262.

came in for criticism later, inevitably, as pioneering works of this kind are rarely faultless; but his remained the only edition of the OE version until Smith's in 1722, and there was no other again until Miller's edition for the Early English Text Society between **1890** and 1898.¹

What I wish to investigate here, however, is not the textual quality of Wheelock's edition, but some of the reasons that motivated him in the production of this large book and some effects of this motivation on his work; both should, I think, be of interest to those concerned with the early history of OE studies or with the religious history of seventeenth-century England—and his work crosses the boundaries of both. For Wheelock makes it abundantly clear both in the prefaces and notes to his book, that he was animated in his new studies largely by the exigencies of religious polemic, and less by a purely disinterested historical enquiry. Spelman had specified that the occupant of the chair should devote himself largely to the study of Old English Church history,² in which he himself was deeply interested, and Wheelock observed this instruction conscientiously and assiduously. Spelman, though an ardent churchman, was also a scholar genuinely interested in constitutional law and in antiquities in general, and in his chief work, the *Concilia* (1639), dealing with the Councils of the early English Church, he rarely shows the very tendentious approach to which such a work at this period could easily lend itself. His book savors much less of a polemical contribution than that of his protege whose interest in apologetic was not new, for even when he was Professor of Arabic he had contemplated a refutation of the Koran in that language.³

Wheelock was not, however, the first to use Bede's *History* for polemical purposes. Almost eighty years before (1565) Thomas Stapleton, one of the better-known Elizabethan Catholic controversialists, had produced a translation of Bede's Latin text (without any reference to the OE version) for such a purpose. His translation was a faithful rendering of the Latin text, as the most recent editor of the Stapleton version testifies; if there was any suspicion that Stapleton had strained the sense of the Latin in a polemical interest "it was utterly groundless, for ... his translation is very close to the original. Indeed, in several passages he has

¹ For a historian's judgement on the two early editions of Bede in England see David Douglas, *English Scholars*, 2nd ed. (London, **1951**), pp. 62—64 and, on the Chronicle and Laws, pp. 68—70.

² See Ellis, p. **155**.

³ *DNB* s.v. "Wheelock".

been curiously reserved, and seems almost to have missed opportunities of emphasising the Catholic teachings implied in them.”¹ But, in fact, Stapleton did not miss much opportunity for using Bede in the controversial battle. He kept the polemics, however, for another book which was meant to be read in conjunction with Bede.² This was *A Fortresse of the Faith* (Antwerp, 1565) in which all the evidences in Bede for the differences in doctrine between the “primitive faith” in England and that of the Reformers (fols. 103b—104) are marshalled in the polemical interest. Clearly, apart altogether from the ethics of translation, Stapleton felt he had quite enough ammunition in a perfectly faithful rendering of the Latin *History* accompanied by an extensive volume of commentary.

Wheelock apparently felt the same thing could be done with the same text for the Protestant point of view, though he reproduced the Latin and OE texts without any modern English version, and the commentary, also in Latin, was in the same volume. The use of OE was, moreover, rather more than the mere curiosity it has been called.³ For many, no doubt, it would have been merely that, but it did have a reason too. Its presence implied a pride in the fact that a work of the stature of Bede’s *History* had appeared in the ancient language of England, and had been translated into this language by one of England’s great kings at that. That such pride in England’s linguistic heritage was a very real thing in the seventeenth century has been thoroughly demonstrated in Richard Foster Jones’s study, *The Triumph of the English Language*.⁴ This nationalistic pride in the language was closely related to a religious pride in the fact that eminent writings of the ancient *Ecclesia Anglicana* had appeared in the mother tongue.

More concretely the printing of the Latin and OE side by side enabled the editor to make polemical capital of a number of things, principally the omissions (and they were many) made by the royal translator, of which I shall have more to say presently. The parallel printing showed precisely what the king omitted, and the editor could claim that the omissions were dictated by the independent if not downright “protestant” spirit of the English translator. Wheelock’s notes, moreover, were heavily

1. Philip Hereford, ed., *The History of the Church of England, Translated by Thomas Stapleton* (Oxford, 1930), p. 454.

2. M.M O’Connell, *Thomas Stapleton and the Counter-Reformation* (New Haven, 1964), pp. 55-56; also Stapleton’s “Dedication to Queen Elizabeth”, Sign. *3.

3. J. J. Campbell, “The Dialect Vocabulary of the Old English Bede”, *JEGP*, L, (1951), 350, n. 8.

4. Stanford University Press, 1953, especially chaps. 7—8,

larded with extracts from Old English homilies, and it showed an attempt at editorial objectivity if the original OE were printed side by side with the editor's translations for those who could judge their faithfulness. But Wheloc's single volume was not, any more than Stapleton's two, a purely disinterested work. His method of editing shows, indeed, that the Elizabethan spirit of controversy was still alive, and that the impetus given by Matthew Parker to the controversial use of OE studies had still much vigor.

Archbishop Parker (1504—1575) is well known as one of the very earliest of the scholars who had revived a knowledge of OE in the sixteenth century, and he was the veritable founder of a "school" which looked upon the study mainly as a propaganda weapon with which to assail the Roman Catholic position.¹ The point of departure for such scholars was the insistence that the doctrinal position of the Reformers was nothing new in England: that the *Ecclesia Anglicana* of Anglo-Saxon times and the contemporary reformed Church of England were essentially one and the same. Only with the Conquest, with the advent of foreigners like Lanfranc and Anselm, had corruption of doctrine and practice invaded the English Church. It was to prove this contention that Parker and his secretary, John Joscelyn, had produced the first book ever printed in Old English: *A Testimonie of Antiquitie* (1566).² This consisted of a sermon and extracts from pastoral letters written in OE for two bishops by the homilist Aelfric (c. 955—1012) on the central doctrine of the Eucharist. Parker felt that Aelfric's position represented that of the Anglo-Saxon Church and that it agreed with contemporary Reform doctrine, not with contemporary Roman doctrine. A faithful translation of the OE text was provided in *A Testimonie*, and a long commentary supplemented by marginal notes drove home the polemical point.

Other books from the Parker circle used OE texts or extracts to buttress the Reform argument in related areas. Some copies of *A Defence of Priestes Manages* (1566/67, STC 17519) incorporated OE in the book's historical argument against compulsory celibacy.

The laudable tradition

1. See, among more recent works, Eleanor Adams, *Old English Scholarship* (New Haven, 1917); David Douglas, *English Scholars*, 2nd ed. (London, 1951); C.E. Wright, "The Dispersal of the Monastic Libraries and the Beginnings of Anglo-Saxon Studies", *Transactions of the Cambridge Bibliog. Society*, I, iii (1951), 208—237; W. W. Greg, "Books and Bookmen in the Correspondence of Archbishop Parker", *The Library*, 4th series, XVI (1935—36), 243—277.

2 See John Bromwich, "The First Book Printed in Anglo-Saxon Types", *Trans. Cambridge Bibliog. Society*, III, iv (1962), 265—292.

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of reading the Scripture in the vernacular was demonstrated in the most concrete fashion by an edition of the OE Gospels (1571) for which Foxe, the martyrologist, wrote a short preface, though the editing seems to have been by Parker and his aides.¹ This tradition had been carried on by William L'Isle, a relative of Spelman's, with his *Saxon Treatise* (1623), and by John Spelman, Sir Henry's son, with an edition of an OE Psalter (1640) in which he acknowledged the impetus given to his work by the example of Parker. Wheelock was, therefore, following a well-established route, and that his motive was in fact almost identical with the motives of those who had traveled it before him is clear enough from his own statements. A long letter of his to Sir Simonds D'Ewes, one of the many learned gentry of the seventeenth century, and himself an antiquarian, states Wheelock's attitude to the purposes of studying OE. It was chiefly a pragmatic one. He expresses a wish "that our learned gentry (if peace continue) would imploy some scholars to be under them ... to compile a body of our Divinity, I say of our doctrine out of the Saxon and British writers: and to praesent the papists with these as a rule to leade them by if they would be constant to the best Antiquities".² This was in **1639** before he had taken up his Saxon lectureship, apparently, but he was already busy about his Saxon studies, and no doubt applying himself "to the antientest authors of our Church and Church History" as Spelman had recommended him. The hint that Wheelock dropped to D'Ewes did not bear fruit in the way he suggested, but it was certainly well directed. D'Ewes, best known for his Parliamentary Journal, was a religious man of a Puritanical bent, and with little time for Papists. Moreover, he was avidly interested in English antiquity, and had the financial means to devote a good deal of time to his researches, even employing a clerk to do much of the necessary copying—a luxury that few scholars could afford; a good deal of the energies of D'Ewes and his clerk seems, however, to have been spent gratifying D'Ewes's obsession with his family pedigree.³ At any rate he did not take up Wheelock's suggestion. Peace did not continue either, as Wheelock had apparently feared, and most men became concerned with more pressing matters in the dispute between King and Parliament. Wheelock was, however, able to

1. *The Gospels of the fower Evangelistes* (London, 1571).

2. Ellis, p. 157. The letter is dated Jan. 26th, 1639.

3. *Autobiography and Correspondence of Sir Simonds D'Ewes*, ed. J. O. Halliwell (London, 1845), passim.

continue with his work in OE along the lines Spelman had suggested, and he brought out his first edition of Bede's *History* together with a version of the Chronicle "in the heat of the war".¹ This edition of the *History* contained the five books of Bede's work in the original Latin with the OE version arranged in a parallel column. Where there is no OE to correspond to the Latin (and such lacunae are frequent and often large) Wheelock indicates the omission with "Deest Sax"[the Saxon is missing]. The volume is swelled by Wheelock's heavy annotation in which, as I have said, he often uses large extracts from OE homilies with his own Latin translation. The extracts are used as illumination or commentary upon Bede's text, or to buttress Wheeloc's own commentary on or interpretation of the text.

Wheelock's intent in putting out the edition is perhaps best illustrated by his own declaration at the outset in his dedication to the Chancellor, Vice-Chancellor and Professors of the University. In the course of this dedication he defends his mode of annotating the work with extracts from other writings of the pre-Conquest Church. These, he says, "will put before you the proof of the antiquity [of current Anglican doctrine] which will remove the accusation of novelty, and they will demonstrate the truth ... if the accusers wish to be consistent, and they will demonstrate abundantly the unanimity that our communion has with the ancient mother Church". The reader of such old documents must, of course, carefully distinguish between true Catholic doctrine and the "personal vain imaginations" and "perverse dogmas" of a handful of people which will meet his eye (Pref., Sign. A₃).

Another dedication to Thomas Adams, founder of the chair of Arabic at the University, which Wheelock had occupied, points out that he had spent a considerable part of seven years in studying the records of their Saxon forefathers and in mastering their ancient tongue "the instructress of Catholic truth and peace" (Pref., Sign. A4r-A4v). The general reader is informed that the editor has added commentaries on points of doctrine that occur in the text when such doctrines are currently in disf ute; these commentaries are not always the editor's, but are taken as often as possible from the Anglo-Saxon sermons preached to the people, when the editor feels that such sermons will throw light on the text of Bede. He had become convinced, he says, even before Sir Henry Spelman had

¹. *Life, Diary and Correspondence of Sir William Dugdale*, ed. W. Hamper (London, 1827), p. 222.

urged the work upon him, of the great utility of OE for providing incontrovertible demonstrations of the Catholic faith as practiced in Anglo-Saxon England. The prudent reader will, of course, be able to distinguish apostolic doctrine from extravagant tales, dubious stories and uncertain doctrines which testify to the pious fraud of the teachers and the credulity of the learners. Finally, attention is directed to the index at the end of the book, to such significant words as “Invocation”, “Sacraments”, “Petrus”, “Scripture”, “Prayer”, “Mass”, “Purgatory”, “Transubstantiation” on which the text and notes will provide rich commentary (Sign. B1-B4v).

The promise to comment heavily on the text is fully carried out in the notes and marginalia. The bent followed is, perhaps naturally, that already familiar from the works of Parker and Joscelyn, Foxe, and L’Isle:

an insistence on the presence of a more or less flourishing Christianity in England before Augustine, and a consequent depreciation in reverence for the Roman missionary previously honored as “the apostle of the English”; a determined attack on the whole notion of papal authority in England; an attempt to show that the Anglo-Saxon doctrine on the Eucharist did not imply transubstantiation, and that reverence for images and invocation of the saints were not practiced by the Anglo-Saxon Church; and firm assertion of the collective opposite: that the practice and belief of the Anglo-Saxon Church agreed with the current position of the Church of England and not with that of Rome. There is emphasis also on the Anglo-Saxon use of Scripture in the vernacular and of the important place of preaching in the pre-Conquest Church.

A representative selection of Wheelock’s notes and marginal comments will, I hope, illustrate adequately the color of his approach and his methods of procedure. At the end of the chapter in which Bede deals with the martyrdom of St. Alban (I, 7) Wheelock attaches an excerpt from an Anglo-Saxon homily in honor of the saint—for two reasons, he says. First, so that the British proto-martyr should have his history proclaimed; and, more important, to show how strongly the Anglo-Saxon Church kept *British* saints in memory. He even takes pains to point out more than once that the “England” and “English” of the homilist are, of course, “Britannia” and the “Britons”, since the event took place before the advent of the Angles, let alone before Augustine. At the end of this homily the preacher says that “cristendom wearþ geunwurþod siþan oþ þaet Agustinus hine eft astealde be Gregories lare—After this time

Christianity remained unhonored until Augustine, at Gregory's bidding, established it once more". Against his own translation of "geunwurpod" as *inhonorata* Wheelock carefully puts the marginal comment "non extincta" (p. 40).

In his notes to the *History* (II, 2) he is perhaps a trifle less sour about Augustine and Gregory than he had been earlier when he wrote in his clumsily-phrased letter to D'Ewes that it would be clear from a study of the old historians "how far Augustine and his successors did well, and where, without scripture, by human devises they did fondlie praevaricate, and Greg[ory] himself was not free ... Plaine it is that Augustine baffled K[ing] Ethelbert, when telling him of opening to him and his the King-dome of Heaven, he did not point to him the way of convertinge Kent, &c. first by the meanes of his Queens's Berda her Chaplaine &c. ... and by the converted Brittaines of Bangor especially, and soe might the faire-spoken Christian Romans, even then, have followed the steps of the Heathen Romanes who when they had doone their errand returned to their owne places back againe: and was not Gregorie subtle inough ... when he reserved a pallium and dotum for ever to be sent from Rome?"¹

For our purpose here it is not necessary to unravel completely the syntactical snarls in this remarkably tangled piece of prose. What is clear is the deliberate denigration of Augustine who "prevaricated" by "human devises" and "baffled" King Ethelbert. There is, also, more than an insinuation that Augustine had an unworthy motive in remaining in England when he could have left the conversion of Kent to the chaplain of the Christian Queen Bertha and to the Christian Britons of Bangor, and quit the country like the heathen Romans before him. (The deliberate paralleling of the Christian Romans and the pagan Romans is not meant to be flattering). Wheelock, moreover, disregards the well-known unwillingness of the Britons to preach the faith to the AngloSaxons, and the absence of any evidence that Queen Bertha's chaplain had made much headway in the conversion of England. The attack on Gregory is not quite so forthright but perhaps equally damaging: he is obviously an accessory to Augustine's "prevarication" and is "subtle enough" to retain a hold on power in the English Church.

In the same letter, however, he absolves Augustine of actual complicity in the slaughter of the Bangor monks at the Battle of Chester, a suggestion that could be read into Geoffrey of Monmouth's account of that affair,

1. Ellis, p. 157.

and was so taken by some writers before Wheelock. Wheelock concedes, however, that Augustine, according to three Latin MSS, was dead at the time of the battle, but also that “he fore-tould and threatened their death ... and I would it had not been every way soe bad”. Still, conjectures that Augustine was actually the author of the massacre “were better left, and sufficient it is to say he prophesied, that is, threatned the destruction of the fountaines and seminaries of the auncient Britaine Church; for that was of them intended, that Rome may the better domineire’¹

It will be worthwhile to recall here briefly the circumstances of this affair as Bede relates it in Book II. Augustine was twice rebuffed by the British Christians when he tried to get them to conform to Roman usage and to cooperate with him in the christianization of England; the Britons insisted on retaining their own traditions of Christian practice (especially in the keeping of Easter), and they refused to help in the conversion of the pagan Anglo-Saxons, their old enemies. On the occasion of his second rejection Augustine had predicted that, as a punishment for their intransigence, the Britons would be destroyed by the very people they had refused to convert. Later the Britons did suffer a crushing defeat by King Ethelfrid of Northumbria at Chester, and twelve hundred Bangor monks were also said to have died in the slaughter.

Now the Latin text of the *History* (II, 2) specifically states that the fulfillment of Augustine’s prediction took place long after he had gone to his heavenly reward (*quamvis ipso jam multo ante tempore ad coelestia regna sublato*). Great play had, however, been made with the fact that this clause is not in the OE version; the Latin sentence was held to be a later monkish interpolation inserted in an attempt to whitewash Augustine’s depravity; his prediction was regarded as a threat and a curse rather than as a prophecy, and the massacre as his attempt to avenge his injured pride.² Wheelock’s studies enabled him to realize that the Latin text was in fact older, but his reluctance to abandon some of the earlier dislike of Augustine is apparent in his letter written at a time when he apparently already knew the facts. In the notes, moreover, he cites various Roman Catholic

¹ Ellis, pp. 158—159.

² See, for example, Parker’s *De Antiquitate* 2nd ed. (Hanover, 1605), p. 35; John Jewel, *The Defence of the Apology*, Parker Soc., Vol. 26 (Cambridge, 1845), p. 300, and Vol.25 (1850), 778—779. For the context of the dispute at this period about the discrepancies in the two versions of Bede see D. Whitelock, *The Peterborough Chronicle*, Early English MSS in Facsimile (Copenhagen, 1954), pp. 22—23.

authors who, he says, regarded Augustine as “caedis suasorem et proinde autorem” (iii), [an advocate or even author of the carnage] though he ends by quoting the opinion of John Foxe that this was suspicion rather than fact (*History*, 115—116).

The related question of the existence of Christianity in Britain before Augustine, and the mission's evident origination from Rome, had obvious implications for the matter of papal authority in England. The notion that papal authority was established in England by Augustine's mission at Pope Gregory's bidding is something that Wheelock makes frequent and spirited efforts to quash. In the *History* (II, 8), for example, Bede quotes the letter from Pope Boniface to Archbishop Justus granting him authority to consecrate bishops. In his notes to this (p. 128) Wheelock insists that it was only with great difficulty that Boniface had been able to get the Emperor Phocas of Constantinople to declare the primacy of the see of Rome, and that it was really from Phocas that Boniface got authority to minister in Britain; and Augustine and Gregory obtained licence to preach to King Ethelbert's subjects only by entreating the king's permission. Pope Boniface, says Wheelock, kept quiet in his letter about the fact that his authority was derived from the Emperor.

Wheelock strikes hard again at the idea of papal authority over the English Church in his notes to a later chapter in the same Book (II, 17). His starting point is Pope Honorius's letter to Edwin, reproduced by Bede in this chapter. In the letter the Pope states his intention of having two archbishops in England, the one to have his authority to consecrate a new one when either of the original archbishops dies. Wheelock's note combines sarcasm and indignation: “Quin Honorius Papa, honoris sui diminuti et istius servitutis damnum, AUTHORITATE, quam adsciscit sibi, sua (qua creando utrosque archiepiscopos, animas totius regni decreverat regere) solertissime resarcit. Ex hac nostra (inquit) non servili sed plusquam Regia autoritate” (p. 151).

Moreover, he attributes to Alfred annoyance at the Pope's arrogation of authority to himself, and he assumes that it was for this reason that the king omitted to translate the letter which Bede gives fully in the Latin. In fact, he says, the king eliminated from the Old English version all the letters of the Roman Popes because they seemed to smack in a covert way of the ancient Roman haughtiness.¹ He emphasises that King Edwin

1. For a rather different explanation see D. Whitelock, “The Old English Bede” in *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 1962, pp. 57—90: “One principle of selection was to omit most of the letters, documents, epitaphs and poems quoted by Bede ... A second principle of selection is of greater interest. The translator's main concern is with the ecclesiastical history of the *English* nation” (P. 62). Bede omits much about the Celtic Churches, and much about the Easter controversy (p. 63). Miss Whitelock is of the opinion that the translator's omission of much of Bede's documentation is a simple failure to understand his use of such material (pp. 74—5) which occupies about one seventh of the whole work. Plummer, in his *Life and Times of Alfred the Great* (Oxford, 1902), pp. 172—173, gave much the same set of reasons as Miss Whitelock.

had *invited* the Pope to send the pallium, and had thus retained in the hands of the kings of England the power of initiating the appointment of archbishops in the Church of England: “sic et suae et totius ecclesiae libertati ut videtur consulturus” (p. 153). Wheelock is also at pains to show in what sense *under Christ only* could Gregory have been regarded by the English in earlier times as (in Pope Honorius’s words) the king’s “master and patron” and as the apostle of their nation.

Other tenets of the Anglo-Saxon Church as well as its services and practices come in for discussion, sometimes in quite minute detail. Bede’s belief in miracles and in the efficacy of relics is undeniable, and Wheelock has not much to say about this except, as we have seen, to express his opinion that it represents “piam doctis fraudem” and to ask “Quid haec ad Fidem Catholicam?” (Pref., Sign. B2 - B2v. See p. 52 above).

But use and veneration of images, and prayers to the saints are points that crop up again and again in Bede, and Wheelock addresses himself to these references in his notes throughout. His contention is that the Anglo-Saxon Church *did not* venerate images nor pray to the saints, nor say prayers for the repose of departed souls. In the short life of Bede appended to the beginning of the *History* is Cuthbert’s letter where the writer expresses his gratitude that prayers and masses are being offered for the deceased Bede, their beloved father and teacher. Bede himself had also begged the brethren to offer masses and prayers for him (Sign. B₄v). At both these points in the text Wheelock draws attention to his own notes on the mass at the end of Bede’s preface, and he scores a point at these words in the “Life”: “at sic regna migravit ad coelestia” by adding the marginal question “Ergo quid opus missa nisi ut pro salute V. Bedae gratias agerent?” (Sign. B₄v).

That the mass, anyhow, was essentially different from what the Papists now hold is plain, he insists, from the Anglo-Saxon rejection of transubstantiation. The proofs for this last are the familiar pieces, all from Aelfric: the pastoral letters written by him for Wulfstan and Wulfsige, and the Paschal Homily. These had been printed more than

three quarters of a century before by Parker and Joscelyn (see p. 49 above) and had been reprinted more than once already.' Wheelock's comments also are naturally in the Parkerian tradition: belief in transubstantiation is a comparative innovation, and does not represent the older, more orthodox doctrine; and the true Catholics of the reigns of King Henry VIII and Queen Mary stood by the old position and suffered for their integrity. (It should, perhaps, be noted that Wheelock never uses the word "Catholic" to mean "Roman Catholic").

Throughout his annotations he is particularly insistent on the absence from the old English Church of veneration for images; and at many points in Bede's narrative where such veneration seems to be indicated Wheelock annotates the text assiduously, insisting on the contrary. A good example is the story of Oswald's erecting of a cross before the battle of Heavenfield (III, 2), well-known also from Aelfric's account of the King's life. In this case, however, Wheelock finds fault with Aelfric, from whom he quotes lavishly with approval elsewhere in the book. Aelfric in "De Passione S. Oswaldi Regis" gives this account of the incident which Wheelock quotes: "Oswald þa araerde þone rode sona gode to wurþmynte aer þan þe he to þam gewinne come, and clypode to his geferum. Uton feallan to þaere rode and þone Aelmihtigan biddan" (III, 2, notes). "Then Oswald raised a cross quickly to the honour of God before he came to the battle and cried to his companions 'Let us fall down before the cross and pray the Almighty...'"² But Bede and his translator Alfred, Wheelock correctly insists with rather fine distinction, do *not* say that Oswald or his men bowed or knelt *to the cross*, but merely that Oswald erected the cross and he and his men knelt in prayer; Aelfric's version is an invention of later writers who wrongly cite Bede to justify their idolatry. It would seem that Wheelock is thus seriously undermining the position of Aelfric as a reliable guide and authority on the doctrine of the early Church in England. Aelfric has been treated by Wheelock and others before him, as representative of the pure doctrine of that Church, especially on the matter of transubstantiation. Now, however, he is found

¹ In Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*, 2nd ed. (1570), pp. 1302 ff., and in L'Isle's Saxon *Treatise* (1623). See also the heavy annotation to Chapter XXII in which Bede has a story illustrating the benefits of saying mass for the living and the dead (pp. 318—319); the notes on p. 462 also deal with this matter at some length with specific reference to the work of Parker, Foxe and L'Isle.

² I use the translation in Skeat's *Aelfric's Lives of the Saints*, Vol. II, E.E.T.S., no. 94 (London, 1900), 127. Skeat's OE text has "ane rode" (126, l. 17) for Wheelock's "þone".

guilty of seriously perverting Bede's text and of approvingly representing a Christian king in an idolatrous attitude.

Again on the question of image-worship, there is a letter from Pope Boniface to King Edwin (II, 10) urging him to accept the faith, abolish idols and replace them with the sign of the cross. Wheelock stresses heavily that though the Pope proposes to Edwin to accept the image of the cross he condemns the worship of idols, and Wheelock urges that the cross was not proposed for worship but as a compendious *picture* of the story of Christ's passion, "historiae Domini nostri crucifixi depictum prae oculis, et intellectu compendium" (p. 134).

He emphasises references to preaching and to reading the Scriptures (e.g. pp. 172—3), and again on the negative side, he insists that praying to saints was not a practice of the Anglo-Saxon Church in spite of any appearances to the contrary. As a counterweight to such appearances he emphasises the places where the old writers refer to the worship of *God*, and to God as giver of all grace and alone to be worshipped (p. 134).¹

The second edition of Wheelock's volume (1644), incorporating Lambarde's *Archaionomia* has little added interest except for an item in the *Archaionomia* itself which fits in well enough with Wheelock's attitude on a subject I have just been discussing: the worship of images. Lambarde's book reproduced, among its series of laws, the Laws of Alfred. In the version of the decalogue prefixed to these old laws the specific prohibition of image-making and image-worship is omitted from the second commandment. With a long note inserted at this place Lambarde had sharply pointed up the omission, and attributed it to the influence of the Roman Church at the Second Council of Nicaea,² and the point thus made by Lambarde had a long polemical life. It lasted at least into the nineteenth

¹ The index entry for "Invocatio", for example, is extraordinarily lengthy:

"Invocatio: invocant, adorant, et colunt solum Deum per totum opus Christiani Reges, Episcopi ... Sancti alii celebriores." A very large number of references to the text follow. The notes to Bede's Prayer at the end of his Epitome are lengthy and fairly representative (p. 495).

² *Archaionomia* (1568), Sign. G iiiv: "You should be warned, dear reader, that it is not due to my negligence nor that of the copyists that the second commandment of the decalogue about not making images has been omitted. It was deliberately omitted by those who first ordered these laws to be put in writing. For after that famous Second Council of Nicaea in 794 (which approved the worship of images), they decided something should be subtracted from the writings of God (such was the mental darkness of the times) in order that greater weight might be attributed to the commandments of men. And it is not to be found, as far as I know, in any copy written in Saxon." Incidentally, the date usually given for the Council of Nicaea is 787 A.D.

century, although Sir Henry Spelman, as early as 1639, had pointed out that in fact the prohibition *was* there, though in abbreviated form and in tenth place, “in loco decimo mancum tamen”.¹

Although I have given merely a few examples, it should be clear that Wheelockamply fulfilled the promise given in the Preface to add comments on matters of doctrine that occurred in the *History* when they were currently in dispute; so much so, indeed, that the value of his work as a piece of historical or linguistic research seems sometimes to have taken a secondary place to its value in his eyes as a valuable controversial document. But, however mixed his motives, he had nevertheless rescued from near oblivion the Old English text of Bede, and by publishing it “he made available for scholars in its complete form the cardinal authority for the history of England in the early Anglo-Saxon period”.² The same can be said with perhaps even greater justice of his publication of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle which, unlike Bede’s *History*, had never seen print in any form. He had, moreover, brought greater attention to the writings of Aelfric, though he was not the first to discover this writer any more than he had been the first to see the Old English Bede or the Chronicle. But he obviously recognized Aelfric’s importance and, as I have noted, he planned an edition of the homilies. This edition never appeared, and Aelfric had to wait another three hundred years for a full edition of his Catholic Homilies. Though the age of literary appreciation of Old English literature had hardly arrived as yet, Wheelock’s lavish use of the homilies in his notes had already begun to make clear the importance of Aelfric as a major writer of Old English prose, and helped to establish him more firmly than before as a figure of significance for the history of the later Anglo-Saxon Church.

1. *Concilia*, I, 363—364. The commandment “ne wyrc þe gyldene godas oþþe seolfrene—You shall not make for yourself gods of gold or silver” appears in the list after the commandment not to covet one’s neighbor’s goods. See also F. Liebermann, *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen* (Halle, 1903), pp. 28—29.

2. D. Douglas, *English Scholars* (London, 1951), p. 62.