

“HWILUM WORD BE WORDE, HWILUM ANDGIT OF ANDGIETE”? BEDE’S *ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY* AND ITS OLD ENGLISH TRANSLATOR

Raymond C. St-Jacques

In her 1962 paper on the Old English *Bede* Dorothy Whitelock examined some of the major differences between the Old English translation of Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* and its Latin original in an attempt to determine the connection, if any, between the translation and Alfred's educational reforms.¹ Her paper provides a useful list of omissions in the Old English and discusses some of the principles guiding the translator in omitting passages. Whitelock, however, does not consider the function in the Latin work of passages deleted in the Old English, nor does she address the larger question of the differing perceptions of history at work in the original and the translation.

An examination along these lines, I believe, demonstrates that Bede organizes much of his material in such a way that his reader perceives the past as a series of patterns; his Old English translator, on the other hand, seems to see in the Latin a loose assembling of noteworthy and dramatic events more in the tradition of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* but with a strong moralistic bent. Coupled with these two perceptions of how the materials of English Church history should be viewed are major differences in attitude towards the role of the historian and his handling of his sources. These essential differences are particularly apparent in three places: in Bede's lengthy narration of certain major events omitted in the Old English version; in the Latin Preface, substantially modified in translation; and

in Bede's inclusion of texts of letters relating to the English Church and of many bits of information concerning the physical world, all generally omitted in the Old English. The translation is a remarkable work meriting attention on other than purely linguistic grounds and greatly deserving of praise as a literary work in its own right. At least two praiseworthy features should be singled out -- the translator's sure grasp of prose styles and his fine narrative craftsmanship.

One of the dominant patterns² Bede perceives in some major events of the history of the Church in the British Isles, considerably if not totally obscured by the translator through a series of deletions, may be summarized as follows. The doctrines of the Universal Church are challenged by the forces of falsehood in one guise or another, leading to a conflict in which the truth of orthodox tradition defeats falsehood. There follows a period in which faith is strengthened only to be challenged again by falsehood as the pattern repeats itself.

This pattern is first sketched in Book I, chapter 8, on the Arian heresy, a chapter only partly rendered into Old English. The section translated depicts the Universal Church in conflict with Arianism, which is finally crushed by the forces of orthodoxy and tradition represented by the Council of Nicaea:

Paescyninges tidum se Arrianisca gedwola waes upcumen; & þaet
 deadbaerende attor his getreowleasnyse, nalaes þaet on eallum
 middangeardes cyricum þaet he stregde, ac hit eac swylce on þis
 ealond becom. Se gedweola waes on þam Nyceaniscan sinope
 geniðerad & afylled on Constantinus dagum.

(In this king's time the Arian heresy arose; and the deadly
 poison of [its] unbelief [it] spread not only to all the churches
 in the world, but it also came into this island. This heresy
 was condemned and crushed in the days of Constantine at the
 Council of Nicaea.)³

Missing, however, is the vehemence of the Latin denunciation of Arianism and Bede's perception of the profundity of the evil of this error:

Mansitque haec in ecclesiis Christi quae erant in Brittania pax
 usque ad tempora Arrianae vaesaniae, quae corrupto orbe toto
 hanc etiam insulam extra orbem tam longe remotam veneno sui

infecit erroris; et hac quasi via pestilentiae trans Oceanum patefacta, non mora, omnis se lues hereseos cuiusque insulae novi semper aliquid audire gaudenti et nihil certi firmiter obtinenti infudit.

(The churches of Britain remained at peace until the time of the Arian madness which corrupted the whole world and even infected this island, sundered so far from the rest of mankind, with the poison of its error. This quickly opened the way for every foul heresy from across the Ocean to pour into an island which always delights in hearing something new and holds firmly to no sure belief.) [pp. 34-37]

In Book I, chapter 10, Bede's first reference to the Pelagian heresy, which does not appear in the Old English, contains the same pattern in a slightly more developed form. Pelagianism is a universal evil, a "treacherous poison," a "madness" (p. 39). The confrontation between it and orthodoxy is described in terms of an epic battle, given a timeless quality as the whole of Church tradition is marshalled against it in the form of "thousands of Catholic authorities" quoted by "Augustine and the rest of the orthodox fathers." As will be the case in later chapters on Pelagianism, however, falsehood is not totally defeated and the truth is not perceived or accepted by all.

The first detailed presentation of the pattern occurs in chapters 17 to 22 of Book I, a six-chapter section omitted in its entirety in the Old English.⁴ The British Church, battling Pelagianism unsuccessfully, seeks help from the Church of Gaul, which sends a group of missionaries headed by Germanus and Lupus. After several encounters with devils bent on preventing them from carrying out their mission, they meet in open debate with the heretics, defeat them and force them into retreat, thereby reaffirming the faith of the Britons. While the story occurs in a particular place, at a particular time, Bede takes great pains to demonstrate its universal and timeless characteristics and its recurrence in Church history. From the beginning the characters in the drama loom larger than life. Germanus himself is Christ-like in his actions, calming the tempests, curing the blind and the lame. His companions are likened to the apostles by their good conscience, their scriptural learning and their virtue, which enable them to work miracles: "Erat illis apostolorum instar et gloria et

auctoritas per conscientiam doctrina per litteras, virtutes ex meritis" ("like the apostles, they acquired honour and authority for themselves through a good conscience, their learning through the scriptures, and the power of working miracles through their merits," pp. 56-57). The power of the forces behind the heresy and the depth of its evil, which the missionaries must counter, are made explicit by Bede in his description of the two camps before the great debate. The conflict pits divine faith, piety, and Christ on the one hand against human presumption, pride, and Pelagius on the other: "hinc divina fides, inde humana praesumptio; hinc pietas, inde superbia; inde Pelagius auctor, hinc Christus" (pp. 56-58). The battle has now been raised to a cosmic and timeless level. In the end falsehood is overcome and deceit unmasked through arguments drawn from apostolic tradition: "deinde antistites venerandi torrentes eloquii sui cum apostolicis et evangelicis imbris profuderunt" ("Then the venerable bishops showered upon them the words of the apostles and evangelists in torrents of eloquence," pp. 58-59). Later, the struggle between the British Church and Pelagianism is again linked to the Universal Church's other historical conflicts when Germanus places within the tomb of British martyrs who have died resisting Pelagianism the relics of all the apostles and various martyrs ("omnium apostolorum diversorumque martyrum," p. 58) since they have all entered heaven equal in merits. The rest of chapter 18 and chapters 19 to 22 repeat this pattern as Pelagianism reemerges and is again crushed. This time Germanus cures a blind girl through the might of Church tradition in the form of relics of saints, which he presses to her eyes. The miracle is described as the retreat of darkness before the light of truth ("evacuatos tenebris lumen veritatis implevit," p. 58). Once again, the faith of the Britons is reaffirmed.

Interesting variations appear in chapters 21 and 22. First, the British are attacked by heathen Pictish forces, win the day through the power of their faith, and are blessed with a long period of peace. As chapter 22 ends, however, justice and truth are everywhere on the wane as the British relapse into sin and faithlessness. Bede here refers specifically to one sinful act, the failure of the British Church to preach the truth to the Saxon invaders. The invaders will, of course, be converted to the truth in time but largely by Roman missionaries, leading eventually to another great conflict, this time between the Roman and Celtic Churches over the observance of Easter.

Bede's treatment of the Easter controversy shows it to be one of his major concerns, and he describes it as a repetition of this same pattern of struggle between truth and falsehood in the Universal Church. His frequent brief references to the dispute appear in the Old English, and even the powerful personal feelings generated by this error ("hoc multum detestans," III, 17, p. 264) are faithfully translated ("Ic hit swiðe onscunede," p. 206).⁵ The Old English version, however, has chosen to omit Book III, chapters 25-26, Bede's dramatic presentation of the debate between the parties at Whitby and the resulting defeat and departure of the Celtic party, the story of Adamnan of Iona and his attempt to lead his monastery into the Roman fold in Book V, chapters 15-17, as well as the very long letter of Ceolfrith to Nechtan in Book V, chapter 21. It is unfortunate that the last is not reproduced in the Old English as it explains Bede's view of the seriousness of the Celtic Church's error, which he sees as analogous to the Pelagian heresy:

Qui ergo plenitudinem lunae paschalis ante aequinoctium provenire posse contenderit, talis in mysteriorum celebratione maximorum a sanctorum quidem scripturarum doctrina discordat; concordat autem eis, qui sine praeveniente gratia Christi se salvari posse confidunt, qui et si vera lux tenebras mundi moriendo ac resurgendo numquam vicisset, perfectam se habere posse iustitiam dogmatizare praesumunt.

(Whoever argues, therefore, that the full Paschal moon can fall before the equinox disagrees with the teaching of the holy Scriptures in the celebration of the greatest mysteries, and agrees with those who trust that they can be saved without the [prevenient] grace of Christ . . . and who presume to teach that they could have attained to perfect righteousness even though the true Light had never conquered the darkness of the world by dying and rising again.) [pp. 544-45]

For Bede, then, this dispute is not a mere squabble but another example of a major attack upon the Catholic Church and the apostolic tradition of which it is the custodian; it is, in fact, part of the pattern of Church history. Many interesting and plausible reasons can be suggested for the deletion in the Old English of Bede's chapters on Pelagianism and the Easter controversy, but the fact remains that these cuts significantly

alter the reader's understanding of Bede's vision of Church history and, I suggest, point to a very different approach to things historical.

This impression that we are dealing with two differing views of history is borne out, I think, in the Latin Preface and its Old English translation, where further essential differences concerning the function of history and the task of the historian are expressed. Both men begin by distancing themselves from the work at hand through the rhetorical device of *prosopopoeia*.⁶ For the Old English writer the book he is translating will speak to the reader. Its function will be to praise good and denounce evil, and the reader will practise one and avoid the other.⁷ This statement of didactic intent is reinforced by a comment on the worthiness of such an undertaking and by a rhetorical question asking how a reader who refuses to act accordingly can hope to benefit from the instruction the book provides:

Forðon þis gewrit oððe hit god sagað be godum mannum, & se ðe hit gehyreþ, he onhyreþ þam, oððe hit yfel sagap be yfelum mannum, & se ðe hit gehyreð, he flyhð þæt & onscunap. Forþon hit is god godne to herianne & yfelne to leanne, þæt se geðeo se þe hit gehyre. Gif se oðer nolde, hu wurð he elles gelaered? (For this book either speaks good of the good, and the hearer imitates that, or it speaks evil of the evil, and the hearer flees and shuns the evil. For it is good to praise the good and blame the bad, that the hearer may profit. If your hearer be reluctant, how else will he gain instruction?) [pp. 2-3]

While this didactic function is presented in the Old English preface as the most important and indeed the only function of the *Ecclesiastical History*, Bede's original is less categorical. Where the translator speaks of "this book," Bede refers to *historia* itself not as a book but as a genre, a discipline with its own law ("vera lex historiae," p. 6) as he tells us at the end of the Preface in a passage which does not appear in the Old English. One of the functions of *historia* is certainly to distinguish between virtuous and wicked men and deeds, but only the reader who is thoughtful, devout, and earnest will profit from this and be spurred on to imitate good and eschew evil:

Sive enim historia de bonis bona referat, ad imitandum bonum auditor sollicitus instigatur; seu mala commemoret de pravis,

nihilominus religiosus ac pius auditor siue lector devitando quod noxium est ac perversum, ipse sollertius ad exsequenda ea quae bona ac Deo digna esse cognoverit, accenditur.

(Should history tell of good men and their good estate, the thoughtful listener is spurred on to imitate the good; should it record the evil ends of wicked men, no less effectually the devout and earnest listener or reader is kindled to eschew what is harmful and perverse, and himself with greater care pursue those things which he has learned to be good and pleasing in the sight of God.) [pp. 2-3]

Bede sees at least one other function and alludes to it in the conclusion to his Preface in several sentences omitted in the Old English. After apologizing for the errors which might have crept into his data and for which he is not responsible -- the Old English preface ends at this point -- Bede goes on to ask for his reader's prayers and explains why he deserves them; he has sought to put on record those events which he believes to be worthy of remembrance and likely to be welcome to the inhabitants of those kingdoms and places with which he has dealt: "ut qui de singulis provinciis sive locis sublimioribus, quae memoratu digna atque incolis grata credideram, diligenter adnotare curavi . . ." ("Since I have diligently sought to put on record concerning each of the kingdoms and more important places, those events which I believe to be worthy of remembrance and likely to be welcome to the inhabitants . . .," pp. 6-7). History, therefore, may offer moral instruction through the exempla it presents, but it also serves as a record of events so that posterity may know its past.⁸

The Latin Preface also provides us with knowledge of Bede's view of his sources and data in three passages, only one of which appears in the Old English, and then in altered form. In discussing his sources for the story of St. Cuthbert Bede divides his material into two categories. There are first the writings about the abbot by the brethren at Lindisfarne, which Bede says, in a clause omitted by the translator, he has read in simple faith ("simpliciter fidem historiae quam legebam," p. 6). To these stories he has made it his business to add with care what he himself has learned ("per me ipse cognoscere potui sollerter adicere curavi"). In the Old English, the last clause of the Latin is rendered only as "Ic foyste" ("I have added," p. 4). The Old English, then, through its omissions does not reproduce the fine distinction Bede is making between

materials of a hagiographical bent and documented facts, nor does it mention the care with which Bede has combined both in his work. Furthermore, the Old English does not translate one of the concluding sentences of the Preface in which Bede again deals with the truth or falseness of his sources. Here Bede states that in accordance with the true law of history, he has collected data from common report and assembled them simply into a book ("qui, quod vera lex historiae est, simpliciter ea quae fama vulgante collegimus ad instructionem posteritatis litteris mandare studuimus," p. 6). The inference, of course, is that should these common reports later prove false, Bede as a compiler should not be blamed. Finally, Bede's attitude towards sources leads him again in his Preface to refer to the research carried out for him in the Roman archives, which has produced many of the letters he will later quote. Since the Old English eliminates the texts of the letters, it is understandable that this part of the Preface should not appear in the translation. It may well be that the deletion of the letters was simply meant to shorten the Old English version. However, in the light of the translator's handling of Bede's comments on sources in the Preface, I suggest that the elimination of the letters stems primarily from a very different view from that of Bede of how such materials, which provide the solid underpinning of a historical work, should be handled.

If the texts of these letters provide firm support for the authority of Bede as an historian, his frequent insertion of pieces of verifiable information about the physical world also lends a certain solidity to his work. Bede frequently pauses, for example, to comment on a geographical location such as that of the Isle of Wight, which is about thirty miles in length from east to west and twelve from north to south and lies six miles off the southern coast of Britain at its eastern end and three miles at its western end: "quae habet ab oriente in occasum XXX circiter milia passuum, ab austro in boream XII, in orientalibus suis partibus mari sex milium, in occidentalibus trium, a meridiano Brittaniae litore distans" (I, 3, p. 24). At other times he describes some natural phenomenon such as the cutting off from the mainland of the island of Lindisfarne at high tide: "qui videlicet locus accedente ac recedente reumate bis cotidie instar insulae maris circumluitur undis, bit renudato litore contiguus terrae redditur" (III, 3, pp. 218-20). I do not wish to belabour this point, but whether or not Bede meant this information to function in this way, such frequent inclusions do help to anchor the work to the world of everyday

realities.⁹ By deleting most of these details the Old English translator has to some extent deprived his work of this solidity.

Has the translator, then, betrayed his original as all translators are often said to do? In a sense, yes. Nevertheless, his fidelity, respect, and love for his Latin source are everywhere evident in what he has retained, which is in fact many, many times greater than what he has left out. He demonstrates this respectful and loving attitude towards his material in an often scrupulous adherence to the letter of the Latin text, but frequently, as if caught up in the momentum of a story he is translating, he alters the shape of the Latin prose or adds a significant detail and thereby makes some positive contribution to the original narrative and to the readers' appreciation of the text.

The translator's craftsmanship is perhaps best studied first in his handling of English prose, which reveals his ability to work well in a wide range of styles, some of which are typified in the following examples. The first, from Book IV, chapter 3, is a statement that Egbert's account of Chad's death can be confirmed by similar statements made by the monk Trumberht:

Convenit autem revelationi et relationi prae-fati fratris
Gepwærað eac swylce pære onwrigenesse & pære gesegene

de obitu huius antistitis
pæs foresprecenan broðor bi forðfore þisses biscopes

etiam sermo reverentissimi patris Ecgbercti,
& eac pæf word pæs arwyrðan faeder Ecgberhtes,

-- de quo supra diximus --

-- bi pæm we beforan saegdon --

qui dudum cum eodem Ceadda adolescente et ipse adulescens in Hibernia
se geo aer mid þone ilcan Ceaddan in Hibernia (Scotta ealonde)
begen in geoguðe

monachicam in orationibus et continentia et meditatione
in munuclife in gebedum & in forhaefdnese & in leornunge

divinarum scripturarum vitam sedulus agebat (p. 344).

haligra gewrita Gode lifdon (p. 270).

In both texts the main verb appears first, followed by the subject ("sermo"). The subject's genitive complement "Ecgbercti" is then in an ideal position to govern its two adjective clauses. Bede's Latin provides an elegant solution to the problem of positioning two clauses related to the subject without losing the connection between the subject, verb, and dative complement of the main clause while, at the same time, placing the same dative complement close enough to the beginning of the sentence so that the reader can identify the "aforesaid brother" as the Trumberht mentioned in previous sentences. The Old English reproduces this contrived pattern with two minor changes, the addition of an appositive ("Scotta ealonde") and the inversion of two phrases ("In Hibernia" and "begen in geoguðe"). Time after time, the translator faithfully reproduces such "Latinated" patterns.

The second example is in a more mixed style, copying the Latin in the general ordering of elements but freer in the rendering of certain of these elements. The sentences occur in Book IV, chapter 10, and tell the story of the miraculous cure of the wife of a "gesith" in the cemetery of the monastery at Barking:

Perducta namque a puellis suis ad monasterium,
 Ða waes heo gelaeded from hire þeowum & þignenum to þaem mynstre,

quia in proximo erat,
 þe þær neah waes

ubi fidem suae sanationis integram se habere professa est,
 þær heo was ondeftende, þæt heo hæfde onwalgne geleafan
 hire haelo.

introducata est ad cymiterium
 Ða waes heo gelaeded to liictune (þara Godes þeowa);

et, cum ibidem diutius flexis genibus oraret,
 & mid þy heo þær longe gebedum cneom hire gebaed,

nihilo tardius meruit exaudiri.
 sona geearnode þæt hire bene geherde waeron.

Nam exurgens ab oratione,
 Ond sona þæs þe heo fram þam bede aras,

pruisquam exiret de loco
 aer þon þe heo of þære stowe eode,

petitae lucis gratiam recepit
 þaet heo onfeng gife þaes bedenan leohtes

et quae famularum manibus adducta fuerat,
 ond seo aer hire þeowa hondum þyder gelaeded waes,

ipsa libero pedum incessu domum laeta reversa est;
 heo þa freo on hire fofa gongum bliðe ham hweorfende waes,

quasi ad hoc solummodo lucem amitteret temporalem,
 efne þon gelicost, swa swa heo to ðon þaet wilwendlice
 leoht an forlete,

þaet heo in hire haelo aeteawde

ut quanta sanctos Christi lux in caelis
 hu micel leoht Cristes þa halgan in heofenum ahten, &

quae gratia virtutis possideret,
 hwylic gifu heora maegenes waere (pp. 292-94).

sua sanatione demonstraret (p. 364).

The first sentence is built around two principal clauses, the first preceded by one participial phrase modifying the subject of the main clause and governing two subordinate clauses, the second preceded by one subordinate clause only. The Old English follows the pattern of the Latin but transforms the initial participial phrase into a clause, which gives a better sense of the movement of the action than does the Latin "perducere" in its participial form. It also expands the infinitive clause "se habere fidem" and the infinitive "exaudiri" into two noun clauses ("þaet heo haefde . . . geleafan" and "þaet hire bene geherde waeron"), producing greater flow than the more static Latin. The second sentence is in the same mixed style, with the Old English once again changing the participial phrase ("exurgens . . .") into a clause ("heo aras") and again improving the sense of chronological development. The Old English closely imitates the next three clauses of the Latin, but then moves logically from the third clause ("efne þon

gelicos†, swa swa . . .") into the "þæt" clause -- the whole passage then reading: "exactly as if she had only lost that temporal light so that she might by her cure demonstrate . . .," followed by two subordinate clauses, each referring to a truth which the miracle demonstrates. The Latin, in a much more sophisticated manoeuvre, introduces between the conjunction "ut" and the rest of the clause it governs a long subordinate clause describing the two truths demonstrated by the cure. The Latin then goes on with the rest of the "ut" clause, the story and the chapter ending with the word "sanatione"; this echoes "miraculum sanitatis," the words with which the story began. The Old English, then, imitates the Latin most of the way, but gives up on the closing rhetorical flourish.

The final example might be described as written in the plain style of simple chronology. It is found at the beginning of Book IV, chapter 1, and deals with Hadrian's proposing of the monk Andrew as Archbishop of Canterbury to replace the deceased Deusdedit:

Qui indignum se tanto gradui repondens,
 Ða ondswarede he him & cwæð, þæt he waere swa micles hades
 unwyrðe;

ostendere posse se dixit alium,
 & cwæð þæt he meahhte oðerne getæcnan,

cuius magis ad suscipiendum episcopatum et eruditio
 þe biscophada wyrðra waere ge on gelaerednesse ge on his
lifes gegearnunge

conveniret et aetas (p. 328).

ge on gedefre eldo (p. 254).

Bede carefully arranges the elements for the reader, subordinating Hadrian's feelings and the act of responding in a participial phrase, foregrounding Hadrian's nominee ("alium") in the main clause and giving Hadrian's reasons in the succeeding subordinate clause. From the outset the Old English prefers to follow the natural order of events in a series of brief clauses joined by "and" and arranged chronologically. The sentence ends with a subordinate clause less rhetorical but more logical than the Latin, listing in order the three areas in which Andrew is worthier than Hadrian and refusing to imitate the Latin's elegant "et eruditio conveniret et aetas."

This last sentence might well be praised as a better imitation of true-life action and discourse, but the Old English translator shows no great preference for this style; he is a consummate craftsman of prose, at home in all three styles described above.¹⁰

This last sentence also furnishes an example of another important type of alteration, the addition of some detail or other to the Latin description of a character, more often than not making the character a little more saintly, more evil, or simply more human than the original description. When Abbot Hadrian proposes Andrew, it is not only because of the elderly monk's learning and age but also because of his meritorious life ("ge lifes gegearnunge"). When Cadwall overruns the Isle of Wight, two young princes, brothers of the defeated king Arwald, conceal themselves from the face of the victorious king in the Latin ("a facie regis victoris," IV, 16, p. 382) but from the sight of the cruel king in the Old English ("from onsyne paes unholdan cyninges," IV, 18, p. 308). Captured and condemned to death, the princes are converted to the true faith and baptized. Thus assured of salvation, they face their executioner not only gladly ("bliðe") as in the Latin but fearlessly ("unforhte") as well. When Owine, the head of Queen Aethelthryth's household, decides to enter a monastery, he brings his tools because, less capable than others of study of the Scriptures, he wishes to apply himself more earnestly to manual labour ("eo amplius operi manuum studium inpendebat," IV, 3, p. 338). Underscoring the value of Owine's contribution, the Old English adds that he produced those things that were needful ("worhte þa þing, þe nyðþearfleco waeron," IV, 3, p. 264. To the Latin description of the death of Archbishop Paulinus, who ascends to the kingdom of heaven bearing with him the fruits of his glorious labours ("ad caelestia regna cum gloriosi fructu laboris ascendit," II, 20, p. 204) the Old English adds touchingly that his body rests in peace ("& his lichama on sibbe resteð," II, 16, p. 150). The Latin says of the fragrance which arose from the opened tomb of the holy nun Eorcengota that it was as sweet as if stores of balsam had been unsealed ("quasi opobalsami cellaria esse viderentur aperta," III, 8, p. 240); the Old English considerably strengthens this and by implication increases Eorcengota's claims to holiness by associating with the scent of the balsam that of the most valuable and sweetest spices in the world ("hordaern . . . ðe balsami & para deorwyrðestena wyrta & para swetes-tena þara þe in middangearde waeron," III, 6, p. 174).

The translator also often adds details that help to make a situation more dramatic. In Book II, chapter 12, we are told the story of Edwin, who

while in exile in the court of Raedwald learns that his host is planning to surrender him to his enemies. Both the Latin and the Old English describe in similar terms his anguished thoughts, but while the Latin has him sitting outside the palace ("residensque mestus ante palatium," p. 178), the Old English paints an even more desolate picture by having him sit on a stone ("swiðe unrot on stane," p. 128). This detail appears in the Latin several sentences later, but the reader learns of it second hand as it were from a ghostly figure who appears to Edwin and asks him why he is sitting on a stone in such a dejected manner. Here the translator is to be commended for his sense of timing and visual effect.

More dramatic also because of additional details is the story of the conversion of Edwin's high priest Coifi in Book II, chapter 13. Wishing to give the king clear-cut proof of his rejection of the old religion, Coifi asks the king for a stallion "quem ascendens ad idola destruenda veniret" ("which he might mount and set out to destroy the idols," p. 184), rendered fairly faithfully by the Old English "þæt he meahte on cuman & deofolgyld toweorpan" ("that he might ride out and overthrow the idols," p. 138). Both the Latin and the Old English then mention the law prohibiting priests from riding stallions and carrying arms. The Latin describes the ensuing action in the following manner: "Accinctus ergo gladio accepit lanceam in manu, et ascendens emissarium regis pergebat ad idola" ("So, girded with a sword, he took a spear in his hand and mounting the king's stallion he set off to where the idols were"). The Old English dramatizes the scene more effectively. Coifi's request is granted and we are shown the king giving the priest the sword with which he girds himself; he then takes a spear in hand, leaps on the king's stallion and rides to the idols: "þa sealde se cyning him sweord, þæt he hine mid gyrde; & nom his spere on hond & hleop on paes cyninges stedan & to þaem deofulgedum ferde." At this point, to the Latin comment that the common people thought the priest mad ("Quod aspiciens vulgus aestimabat eum insanire"), the Old English adds "swa gescyrpedne" ("so equipped"), making the people's reaction refer clearly back to the religious law that the high priest was breaking. The Latin goes on to describe Coifi throwing his spear into the temple to profane it ("profanare illud, iniecta in eo lancea quam tenebat"). The Old English omits the exact motive for Coifi's action, insisting instead on the violence of the throw: "þa sceat he mid þy spere, þæt hit sticcode faeste on þaem herige" ("then he cast his spear, so that it stuck fast in the sanctuary").¹¹

Passages dealing with storms at sea seems to be another favourite area of expansion for the translator. One such passage in Book III, chapter 15, tells the story of the priest Utta, who was caught in a terrible storm. The Old English begins the narrative with several realistic details not in the Latin. The passengers embark and the ship sets out ("heo in scip eodon & ut leton," p. 200). Soon, however, contrary winds arise ("þaette astigon wiðorwearde windas"). Both texts then depict the fury of the waves, the sailors' attempts to moor the ship with her anchors, and the despair of the passengers as water fills the ship. The Latin tells us the passengers see death and their end as imminent ("mortem sibi omnes imminere et iamiamque adesse viderent," p. 260). The Old English is considerably more graphic; the passengers see the figure of death itself opposing them ("heo ealle deað seolfne him onweardne geseagon"). In Book V, chapter 1, Guthfrid's account of the calming of a storm by the hermit Ethelwald, the Latin "mortem" is once again translated as "deaðes seolfes," and the near panic of the sailors is described in more dramatic terms. The Latin has the seafarers discovering that the storm completely surrounds them: "invenimus nos undiqueversum pari tempestate praeclusos" ("we found we were shut in by the storm on every hand," pp. 454-55). The Old English allows us to visualize the desperate manoeuvrings the seafarers engage in as they unsuccessfully attempt to flee the storm: "Caerde we usic ðider we caerde, gemaetton we usic aeghwonon geliice storme foresette & foretynde . . ." ("Turn wherever we might turn, we found ourselves closed in and cut off by the same storm," pp. 386-87).

One final example must suffice, in this case a particularly fitting one since Bede himself comments on the potential effect of the story on the audience, a point no doubt well taken by the Old English translator, with his love of moralizing tales. "Factum est hoc nuper in provincia Berniciorum," writes Bede, "ac longe lateque diffamatum multos ad agendam et non differendam scelerum suorum paenitentiam provocavit. Quod utinam exhinc etiam nostrarum lectione litterarum fiat!" ("This happened lately in the kingdom of Bernicia. The story spread far and wide and roused many people to do penance for their sins without delay. And may the reading of this account of ours have the same effect!" pp. 504-5). It occurs in Book V, chapter 14 and deals with a monk who having refused to live a good life saw at the moment of his death the place reserved for him in hell. Though the Latin describes him only as "fabrili arte singularis" ("an exceptionally skilled

craftsman," p. 502), the Old English further particularizes, saying "syndrygllice in smiðcraefte wael gelaered" ("specially well trained in the craft of a smith," p. 442). Expanding upon the Latin's description of the reactions of the other monks, by whom "ad castigatiorem vitam converti ammoneretur" ("he was warned to turn to a more chastened way of life"), the Old English dwells on his sinfulness: "& hie hiene monedon & laerdon paet he his life gecerde to claensnunge his synna" (they admonished and warned him to change his life and purge his sins). The Latin speaks of his absences from religious offices since he preferred "magisque in officina sua die noctuque residere" ("to remain in his workshop day and night"). What could he have been doing all the while? "Sittan and licgan" ("sitting and lying down"), answers the translator. The illness that suddenly strikes him and brings him to his death ("percussus enim languore atque ad extrema perductus") is presented at greater length and more clinically in the translation: "Ða waes se mon geslegen & gestonden hefigre adle; & seo weox & hefigade, oððæt he waes to þam ytemestan daege gelaeded" ("Then was the man stricken and afflicted with severe illness; and it increased and grew worse, till he was brought to the last day"). At the moment of death the monk sees Satan, whom the Old English calls: "þone ealdan feond monocynnes" ("the old enemy of mankind"), plunged into the depths of hell, or Tartarus in Bede's classical Latin: "demersum in profundis Tartari . . . vidit aperta Tartara." The Old English writer chooses to stress the suffering of hell, translating "besencedne on þam grundum helle tintreges" ("sunk in the depths of hell's torments") and "geseah helle tintrego opene" ("he saw hell's torment open"). Although the monks beg him "paenitentiam faceret" ("to do penance"), which phrase the Old English significantly expands into "his synna hreowe & andefnesse dyde" ("to repent and confess his sins"), the dying monk cannot. The folk proverb that the tale is meant to illustrate appears in the Latin but tucked away in a subordinate noun clause: "Unde accidit illi, quod solent dicere quidam, quia qui non vult ecclesiae ianuam sponte humiliatus ingredi, necesse habet in ianuam inferni non sponte damnatus introduci" ("It happened to him as people say that he who is not willing to enter the church gate humbly of his own accord, is bound to be carried against his will to the gates of hell, a damned soul"). In the Old English, however, the proverb is stated clearly as a proverb in a grammatically independent unit and in a much more quotable form: "Se ðe ne wile cirican duru wilsumlice geeadmodod ingongan, se sceal nede in helle duru unwillsumlice geniþerad gelaeded

beon" ("He that will not voluntarily and humbly enter the church door, shall of necessity against his will be led as one of the damned in at hell's door").

These examples, selected at random, provide a very incomplete view of the wealth of additional details in the Old English. Numerous others exist, many of which contribute to a true heightening of the reader's emotional response to the people and situations Bede depicts. If the translator has not been completely faithful in transmitting Bede's vision of history to his readers, he has redeemed himself as a master of prose narrative.

University of Ottawa

NOTES

¹ "The Old English Bede," *PBA* 48 (1962) 57-90. On the question of authorship, see also Sherman Kuhn, "The Authorship of the Old English Bede Revisited," in *Studies Presented to Tauno F. Mustanoja on the Occasion of His Sixtieth Birthday*, *NM* 73 (1972) 172-80.

² In his "Imitation and the Venerable Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica*," in *Saints, Scholars and Heroes: Studies in Medieval Culture in Honour of Charles W. Jones*, ed. Margot H. King and Wesley M. Stevens, I (Collegeville, Minn. 1979) 161-90, Calvin B. Kendall discusses Bede's use of other types of patterns, especially biblical ones. It is interesting to note, however, that if the Old English translator saw these patterns, he was not particularly scrupulous about preserving them. Though he reproduces what Kendall finds to be an imitation of Acts in Book I of the Latin, he only partially preserves what Kendall takes to be an imitation of the Pauline Epistles (I, 23, 24, 27-32), omitting chapters 24 and 28 and abridging chapter 23. Kendall's second level of imitation, that of the whole body of sacred scriptures, is also seriously marred by the translator, who deletes chapters 17-22 from Book I, where along with chapters 1-16 Kendall finds an imitation of the Old Testament period. The story of Germanus of Auxerre (I, 19), a parallel to Job according to Kendall, is buried in chapter 14 of the Old English, which

also contains chapters 15 to 20 of the Latin. The account of holy places (V, 16-17), which Kendall describes as extending "the axes of history spatially and temporally to embrace all human experience" (p. 176), is omitted entirely in the Old English.

³ *The Old English Version of Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, ed. Thomas Miller, EETS, O.S.95 and 96 (London 1890-91), I, 42-43. All subsequent references to the Old English are from this edition. All references to the Latin text are taken from *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, ed. Bertram Colgrave and R.A.B. Mynors (Oxford 1969). Any changes I have made to the translations provided in these editions appear in square brackets.

⁴ In his masterful chapter on Bede in *The Vision of History in Early Britain from Gildas to Geoffrey of Monmouth* (New York 1966), Robert W. Hanning speaks of Book I, chapters 17-22 as essential to Bede's historical vision of the Saxons "not simply as virtuous heathens . . . but . . . as the New Israel, chosen by God to replace the sin-stained Britons in the promised land of Britain" (p. 70). By omitting these chapters entirely, the Old English has all but obliterated this vision.

⁵ For Bede's "detestation of heresy and schism" as a sign of his "sense of writing within the patristic tradition," something which seems to be lost on the Old English translator as is apparent from his omissions and abridgements of materials dealing with heresies and schisms, see Gerald Bonner, "Bede and Medieval Civilization," *ASE* 2 (1973) 73-4. The faith of the Fathers and apostolic tradition loom large in the patterns of history described above, for these are the very forces which are employed to defeat falsehood and evil. On the refutation of heresies as one of the reasons for writing history, see B. Lacroix, o.p., *L'Historien au moyen âge* (Montréal 1971) 189.

⁶ For an excellent discussion of this and other rhetorical strategies in Bede, see Calvin B. Kendall, "Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica*: The Rhetoric of Faith," in *Medieval Eloquence: Studies in the Theory and Practice of Medieval Rhetoric*, ed. James J. Murphy (Berkeley 1978) 145-72. Kendall sees the *Historia* as "a finally unified vision of the totality of man's experience from the mundane to the miraculous, in and beyond time. The instrument which enabled Bede to hold in suspension the most diverse materials relating to the internal and external dramas of life without losing control, and thus to project the shape of faith in the sixth age, was the Latin rhetoric of the early Middle Ages" (p. 147).

⁷ This is, of course, one of the principal reasons for writing history as Livy had pointed out in the Preface to his *Ab Urbe Condita* (1, 10), a model for so many later historians: "Hoc illud est praecipue in cognitione rerum salubre ac frugiferum, omnis te exempli documenta in inlustri posita monumento intueri; inde tibi tuaeque rei publicae quod imitere capias, inde foedum inceptu, foedum exitu, quod vitas" ("What chiefly makes the study of history wholesome and profitable is this, that you behold the lessons of every kind of experience set forth as on a conspicuous monument: from these you may choose for yourself and for your own state what to imitate, from these mark for avoidance what is shameful in the conception and shameful in the result"): B.O. Foster, ed., Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, Mass. 1948-67) I, 6-7.

⁸ Benoit Lacroix, o.p., in *Orose et ses idées* (Montréal 1965) writes of this aim of history: "*Narratio rei gestae ad instructionem posteritatis*, c'est la définition que requrent tour à tour et sans discuter l'antiquité, le moyen âge et la Renaissance" (p. 51). See also his *L'Historien au moyen âge* (at n. 5) 168, especially n. 102 for sources for this and similar statements in Cicero, Quintilian, and Bede himself.

⁹ In *De Oratore*, 2, 15, Cicero notes the importance of geographical representation in historical writing, placing it next to chronological arrangement in importance: "Rerum ratio ordinem temporum desiderat, regionum descriptionem; . . ." ("The nature of the subject needs chronological arrangement and geographical representation"): E.W. Sutton and H. Rackham, eds., Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, Mass. 1942) I, 244-45.

¹⁰ I wish to thank my student Deborah Knott for several valuable suggestions concerning the translator's prose style.

¹¹ In connection with this episode one should also note the Old English additions of "Hwaet ic wat" ("Well I know") to Coifi's speech to the king or the rendering of the Latin "Unde restat ut" ("So it follows") as "Forþon me þynceð wislic" ("Therefore it seems wise to me"), which give Coifi's words a more personal ring than is heard in the more formal Latin. The Latin text of the earlier part of the story is discussed at length by Donald K. Fry in "The Art of Bede: Edwin's Council" in *Saints, Scholars and Heroes* (at n. 2) 191-207. Fry links the "sparrow in the hall" image to Psalm 83 and its exegesis. As Fry and others have pointed out, Bede quotes from the Psalm several times in the *Historia*, and Fry's argument is convincing. The translator does not seem to have understood what Bede

was doing here, however. He does retain the Latin's quotations from Psalm 83 (III, 19 and IV, 13) and even includes the Latin verse in the first instance. He does not, however, reproduce anything like the "Tabernacula/cenaculo" pun, using instead "heall," not normally employed to gloss "tabernacula," and "brid" for "passer" instead of the correct "spearwa." See, for example, A.P. Campbell, ed., *The Tiberius Psalter* (Ottawa 1974), 217-18.