The Old English *Bede* and the construction of Anglo-Saxon authority

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The translator of Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica* faced a daunting task. His source text had behind it the authority of a well-known, learned English saint, and a translation of the work would inevitably be a step removed from that saint.[1] How could the translator convince the audience that his translation possessed authority? Alfred's prefaces to his translations and Wærferth's preface to the *Dialogues* gain the confidence of the readers or hearers through their explicit discussion of motives and methods of translation. By contrast, the Old English *Bede* authorizes itself not through any overt claims in an original preface but through strategic translations of the Latin preface and of the text itself.[2] The Alfredian prefaces thus provide valuable points of comparison and contrast for the Old English *Bede*. All the translations assert continuity between source text and translation while replacing the source text in different ways.[3] Alfred and Wærferth reveal their identities as translators and make claims for their own authority while the translator of the Old English *Bede* relies on the authority of Bede himself; Alfred and Wærferth argue for the ability of Old English to render Latin, while the translator of the Old English *Bede* simply provides a text in Old English.

Three prefaces survive from Alfred's own translations. The preface to the *Soliloquies* begins abruptly and never names the king; some opening lines may have been lost.[4] His prefaces to the *Pastoral Care* (*Pastoral Care* 2.1) and the

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[1] I call the translator 'he' for convenience rather than from conviction about the translator's gender or number.

[2] The question of authority in the text was discussed by T. A. Bredehoft, 'Authority and the Moment of Reading: the Additions to the Old English Bede', a paper delivered to the Thirty-Fourth International Congress on Medieval Studies (Kalamazoo, MI, 1999). Bredehoft focused specifically on the reader and especially the reader's response to the Metrical Epilogue, Cædmon's Hymn and the West Saxon Regnal List.

[3] See R. Copeland, *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics, and Translation in the Middle Ages: Academic Traditions and Vernacular Texts* (Cambridge, 1991), which focuses primarily on the later Middle Ages but provides a valuable introduction to medieval translation theory. She argues that Roman models of translation as contestation were replaced by early Christian theories of sameness and continuity of meaning, theories particularly important for translating scripture, even as translations continued to contest and supplant source texts.

[4] See T. A. Carnicelli, *King Alfred's Version of St. Augustine's Soliloquies* (Cambridge, MA, 1969), pp. 1–2, who observes that the 'þonne' in the first sentence appears to indicate a reference to something previous.

Boethius name 'Ælfred kyning' or 'kuning' (*Boethius* Proem 1) in the very first line.[5] The *Dialogues* begins with a preface at least ostensibly from Alfred (1.1–2)[6] and then a preface from the translator, Wærferth, naming both Bishop Wulfstan and Alfred. From the outset these prefaces establish the translations' authority based on the name of a famous ruler or, in the case of the *Dialogues*, two well-known leaders (Wærferth was seeking support from both religious and secular hierarchy).

The prefaces also construct the authority of the translation by commenting upon the work of translation. The Preface to the *Pastoral Care* lists Alfred's helpers and gives a now famous brief description of how he worked: 'hwilum word be worde, hwilum andgit of andgiete' (7.19–20) ('sometimes word for word, sometimes sense for sense'); a similar sentiment is expressed in very similar terms in the Proem to the *Boethius* (Proem 2–3). The *Soliloquies* provides a lengthy and detailed image of the work of a translator as a builder (47.1–48.12). Both prefaces explain the need for the edifying texts to reach a wider audience. Alfred's preface to the *Dialogues* is more general: 'ic forþam sohte 7 wilnode to minum getrywum freondum, þæt hy me of Godes bocum be haligra manna þeawum 7 wundrum awriton þas æfterfyligendan lare' ('I therefore sought and wished of my true friends that they write the following learning for me from God's books concerning the habits of holy men and wonders': *Dialogues* 1.12–17). This last statement does not give an exact *modus operandi*, but it does establish motive and opportunity. All these prefaces comment upon the work of translation itself, reassuring the reader that the translator knows his art and that his motives are sound.

The prefaces also establish the authority of the writer of the Latin source text. Alfred follows the prose preface to the *Pastoral Care* with a verse preface praising 'Gregorius gleawmod' ('clever Gregory': *Pastoral Care* 9.10), and Wærferth's preface also memorializes the learning of 'þæs apostolican papan

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[5] *King Alfred's West-Saxon Version of Gregory's Pastoral Care*, ed. H. Sweet, 2 vols., EETS os 45 and 50 (London, 1871–2; repr. as 1 vol., Oxford, 1996), 2, and *King Alfred's Old English Version of Boethius De Consolatione Philosophiae*, ed. W. J. Sedgefield (Oxford, 1899), p. 1.

[6] *Bischof Wærferths von Worcester Übersetzung der Dialoge Gregors des Grossen*, ed. H. Hecht, 2 vols., Bibliothek der angelsächsischen Prosa 5 (Leipzig, 1900–7; repr. as 1 vol. Darmstadt, 1965). See also M. Godden, 'Wærferth and King Alfred: the Fate of the Old English *Dialogues*', *Alfred the Wise: Studies in Honour of Janet Bately on the Occasion of her Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, ed. J. Roberts and J. L. Nelson with M. Godden (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 35–51, at 36, who notes that 'linguistically and stylistically it shows all the hallmarks of Wærferth's writing rather than Alfred's own'. Godden suggests that Alfred asked Wærferth to write the preface in his name. On the stylistic difference between this preface and Alfred's own texts and charters, see also D. Whitelock, 'Some Charters in the Name of King Alfred', *Saints, Scholars and Heroes. Studies in Medieval Culture in Honour of Charles W. Jones*, I: *The Anglo-Saxon Heritage*, ed. M. H. King and W. M. Stevens (Collegeville, MN, 1979), pp. 77–98.

sanctus Gregorius' ('the apostolic pope St Gregory': *Dialogues* 2.19–20). The preface to the *Soliloquies* explains that 'Agustinus, Cartaina bisceop, worhte twa bec be his agnum ingeþance' ('Augustine, bishop of Carthage, made these two books according to his own inner thought': *Soliloquies* 48.13). Only the *Boethius* fails to mention its author specifically in its Proem, but a brief biography of the Latin writer, original to the Old English text, appears between the Proem and the body proper of that translation (7.1–8.5).

These openings establish authority in three ways: they connect the translations to highly respected Anglo-Saxon names; they comment briefly on the act of translation; and they conclude with approving reference to the author of the Latin source text, the authority behind the text. The translation has value and authority because its writers and translators possess legitimacy as figures of proven power and wisdom. The prefaces also highlight continuities between the source text and translation. This pattern seems to have worked for Wærferth and especially for Alfred, who used it more than once. The Old English *Bede* was translated in the late ninth or early tenth century, roughly the same time as the Alfredian texts, and there is reason to believe that the Old English *Bede* was part of Alfred's programme of translation.[7] Even if the translation were not part of Alfred's programme, it seems likely that unless the Old English *Bede* had been translated before Alfred's programme began, the kind of person who would translate Bede's work into Old English at this time would have known the programme and its texts.[8]

Yet the Old English *Bede* does not follow the Alfredian model; it has no preface of its own. Instead, the translator launches straight into Bede's own

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[7] See D. Whitelock, 'The Old English Bede', *PBA* 48 (1962), 57–90, who retracts her earlier view that the Old English *Bede* was certainly part of Alfred's programme. Her later article concludes that such a claim can neither be proven nor disproven. See also Whitelock, 'The Prose of Alfred's Reign', *Continuations and Beginnings: Studies in Old English Literature*, ed. E. G. Stanley (London, 1966), pp. 67–103, at 77–9; here she gives a brief discussion of the dating and characteristics of the Old English translation. The Old English *Bede*'s place in Alfred's programme is discussed in some detail by S. Foot, 'The Making of *Angelcynn*: English Identity before the Norman Conquest', *TRHS* 6th ser. 6 (1996), 25–49, esp. 38–41.

[8] Texts from the Alfredian programme seem to have enjoyed relatively good circulation. The *Pastoral Care* is still extant in six copies: see N. R. Ker, *Catalogue of Manuscripts containing Anglo-Saxon* (Oxford, 1957), nos. 19, 30, 87, 175, 195 and 324. A marginal note in London, British Library, Cotton Tiberius B. xi + Kassel, Landesbibliothek, Anhang 19 (Ker, *Catalogue*, no. 195), records that the book has already been given to Plegmund, Swithulf and Wærferth; the first two copies mentioned in the note do not survive. The *Dialogues* survive in two copies and two fragments (Ker, *Catalogue*, nos. 60, 96, 182 art. 1 and 328A). The *Boethius* exists in two copies (Ker, *Catalogue*, nos. 167 and 305); A. S. Napier discovered a fragment from another manuscript in 1886 and a transcript was printed in 1887, but the fragment had been lost by the time Sedgefield made his edition in 1899 (see Sedgefield's edition, pp. xv–xvi). The *Soliloquies* (Ker, *Catalogue*, no. 215, art. 1) and the Paris Psalter (Ker, *Catalogue*, no. 367) are each preserved in single manuscripts.

Latin preface, but now in English. The text features a translator who remains anonymous, virtually invisible, and who does not identify a patron or a motive but lets Bede's patron and motive stand. He does not even introduce his Latin author but lets that author introduce himself.

Alfred's comments on the act of translation could reassure readers that he had carefully considered the perils of translation – or they could make readers wonder whether he had avoided all the pitfalls. Bede's translator avoids the dilemma by avoiding the issue. He never poses questions of translation or language, offering instead the illusion of transparency and continuity. Only a few scattered lines of scriptural quotation and prayer remain in Latin, and brief Latin incipits mark some book divisions.[9] At the outset (and for virtually the entire text) the audience is given no real reason to think of the text as a translation at all. Whether or not readers knew that the work was originally written in Latin, they could read it *as if* it were written in Old English with just a few odd snippets of Latin.[10]

The often Latinate style might be the one rupture in the illusion of the *Bede* as an Old English text.[11] Readers who recognized the traces of the source language might feel a tension with the multiple ways in which the translator established a specifically Anglo-Saxon authority, obscuring traces of the Latin text. Yet the

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[9] *The Old English Version of Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, ed. T. Miller, 4 vols., EETS os 95, 96, 110 and 111 (London, 1890–8). MS Ca begins each book with 'Liber Primus', 'Secundus', etc. and continues the heading throughout the book. MSS Ca and C mark the opening of bk III with 'TERTIUS INCIPIT ECCLESIASTICAE HYSTORIAE GENTIS ANGLORUM LIBER' (152, no line numbers) and Ca notes the ending of that book with 'Explicit liber tertius' (252.3). Ca opens IV with 'INCIPIT LIBER QUARTUS ISTORIAE GENTIS ANGLORUM' (252, no line numbers); O has a variant (see footnotes 252–3). C, O, and Ca all note the start of V (384, no line numbers) with 'INCIPIT ECCLESIASTICAE HIS-TORIAE GENTIS ANGLORUM LIBER QUINTUS'. In the two manuscripts where the prefatory material is still extant, there are Old English chapter-headings grouped together at the start of the text. T and O no longer have prefatory matter, and Nowell did not transcribe the prefatory material in C, so they may well have contained chapter headings which are now lost. See D. Whitelock, 'The List of Chapter-Headings in the Old English *Bede*', *Old English Studies in Honour of John C. Pope*, ed. R. B. Burlin and E. B. Irving, Jr (Toronto, 1974), pp. 263–84, at 265–6.

[10] For similar illusions created by the close rendering of Latin prefaces in late Old English translations of saints' lives, see E. G. Whatley, 'Late Old English Hagiography, ca. 950–1150', *Hagiographies: histoire internationale de la littérature latine et vernaculaire en Occident des origines à 1550*, ed. G. Philippart (Turnhout, 1996–) II, 429–99, at 450.

[11] For the style of the Old English *Bede*, see especially S. Potter, *On the Relation of the Old English Bede to Werferth's Gregory and to Alfred's Translations* (Prague, 1931). Whitelock, 'The Old English *Bede*', discusses style briefly (esp. pp. 75–7). On narrative style, see also R. C. St-Jacques, '"Hwilum Word Be Worde, Hwlum Andgit of Andgiete"? Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* and its Old English Translator', *Florilegium* 5 (1983), 85–104, esp. 93–101; and M. Kilpiö, *Passive Constructions in Old English Translations from Latin: With Special Reference to the Old English Bede and the Pastoral Care*, Mémoires de la société néophilologique de Helsinki 49 (Helsinki, 1989).

Latinate syntax also quietly asserts continuity with the source text, implying a translation faithful even at the level of the word and again banishing questions of translational method and accuracy should they occur to a reader or hearer. Alternatively, the Latinate style might simply have served to elevate the text; Janet M. Bately finds similar 'mannerisms' in ninth- and tenth-century charters, indicating that Latinate style was a mark of learning or formality.[12] While such syntax might or might not assist other strategies which focus attention on Anglo-Saxon authority, the translator's silence on the issue of translation for the most part diverts attention from the Latin source text and especially from any possibility of difference between the Latin forebear and the Old English text.

The translator removes much of the written documentation which supports Bede's narrative, leaving the account to stand simply as Bede's own words. Thus the translator establishes Bede as *the* authority in the text. Even before that, however, the translator retains Bede's preface largely intact. Bede's explanation of who he is and what he does in his *Historia ecclesiastica* functions like the translators' prefaces to Alfredian translations. As Wærferth's preface contains the names Wulfstan and Alfred, Bede's preface contains the names Bede and Ceolwulf; Bede puts these names in the first sentence, in a letter of greeting which sounds like the reverse of Alfred's letter to his bishops: 'Gloriosissimo regi Ceoluulfo Beda famulus Cristi et presbyter' ('To the most glorious King Ceolwulf, Bede, servant of Christ and priest': *Historia ecclesiastica* Praef.).[13] The translation, 'Ic Beda Cristes þeow and mæssepreost sende gretan ðone leofastan cyning Ceolwulf' ('I, Bede, servant of Christ and priest, send greetings to the most beloved King Ceolwulf': Old English *Bede* 2.1–2) sounds more like Alfred's 'Alfred kyning hateð gretan Wærferð biscep his wordum luflice ond freondlice . . .' ('Alfred the King orders Bishop Wærferth to be greeted lovingly and in a friendly way . . .': *Pastoral Care* 3.1–2) than does Bede's sentence. Perhaps the translator rendered Bede's sentence as he did because he knew Alfred's letter. In other words, this preface adapts one of the methods of asserting authority used by the Alfredian prefaces: it establishes authority based on well-known Anglo-Saxon names, that of a cleric and that of a king.

The translation continues by detailing Bede's goals and methods, starting with Bede's reasons for writing: 'Forþon hit is god godne to herianne 7 yfelne to leanne, þæt se geðeo se þe hit gehyre . . . For þinre ðearfe 7 for þinre ðeode ic þis awrat . . .' ('Because it is good to praise good and to blame evil, so that he who

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[12] On the style of the Old English *Bede*, see J. M. Bately, 'Old English Prose before and during the Reign of Alfred', *ASE* 17 (1988), 93–138, esp. 123–5. She compares other documents, including Mercian charters, on pp. 133–6.

[13] *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, praef., ed. B. Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors (Oxford, 1969), p. 2 [hereafter cited in references as *HE*].

hears it may thrive . . . For your need and for your people I wrote this . . .': Old English *Bede* 2.10–12). The preface then details how Bede worked. Abbot Albinus first taught him and later encouraged him to begin this work. Bede also used documents. In the Latin, Nothhelm searched the 'scrinio' ('archives') to bring back documents (p. 4) – not his, but official documents written by the actors in important events. Both men's roles seem more prominent in the Old English phrasing. The translator says that Albinus 'oððe [Nothhelm] to me sende, oððe on stafum awrat 7 me sende . . . þæt we her writað . . . þurh Albinus myngunge þæs abbudes 7 ðurh Noðhelmes ærendo 7 gesægene' ('either sent him to me, or wrote out and sent to me [whatever he learned] . . . so that we write here . . . through the reporting of Albinus the abbot and through Nothhelm's messages and statements': Old English *Bede* 4.1–2, 4 and 6–7). The Latin writers have disappeared, to be replaced by Bede, the Anglo-Saxon saint, assisted by Nothhelm, the 'æfestan mæssepreost on Lundenbyrig' ('pious masspriest of London', 2.24–4.1). Other Anglo-Saxon authorities appear by name as well: the Old English preface tells us that Bede learned from Cedd and Chad (4.14–16), a statement which is factually wrong – the Latin notes them as founders of a monastery inhabited by some of Bede's informants.[14] Readers of the Old English text would find no indication that any of Bede's sources used Latin and little that anyone outside England ever wrote anything of interest.

The most notable alteration in the preface comes at the very end, in the apologia. Bede writes:

Lectoremque suppliciter obsecro ut, siqua in his quae scripsimus aliter quam se ueritas habet posita reppererit, non hoc nobis inputet, qui, quod uera lex historiae est, simpliciter ea quae fama uulgante collegimus ad instructionem posteritatis litteris mandare studuimus.[15]

The Old English contains instead this apology: '7 þone leornere ic nu eadmodlice bidde 7 halsige, gif he hwæt ymbe ðis on oðre wisan gemete oððe gehyre, þæt he me þæt ne otwite' ('and I now humbly pray and ask, if the reader meet or hear anything from this work in a different way, that he not blame me': Old English *Bede* 4.32–6.3). The sense is no longer that the reader may find something contrary to truth in the text, but that the reader may find something different from other versions; whether the reader is not to blame Bede for any mistakes he made, or not to blame Bede because differing reports do not indicate that *Bede* made a mistake, remains open. References to

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[14] *HE* praef. (ed. Colgrave and Mynors, p. 4). See Whitelock, 'The Old English *Bede*', p. 75.

[15] 'And I humbly beg the reader that, if he find anything in these things which we have written to have something other than truth set down, he not blame us, for, because it is a true law of history, I have simply endeavoured to commit to writing for the instruction of posterity those stories spread by common report.' *HE* praef. (ed. Colgrave and Mynors), p. 6.

weakness are omitted; Bede is a secure authority, not one likely to make an error.[16]

Just as the translator omits clear reference to documents written by non-Anglo-Saxons from the preface, emphasizing Anglo-Saxon documentation, he systematically removes documents which Bede inserted into his Latin text, with a few significant exceptions. He does this so carefully that a reader unfamiliar with the Latin cannot tell that anything is missing. Most of the documents that Bede copied into his own text are papal letters. Gregory's letter of encouragement to Augustine and his companions finds a place in Bede's text, preceded by 'Quibus ille exhortatorias mittens litteras, in opus eos Verbi diuino confisos auxilio proficisci suadet. Quarum uidelicet litterarum ista est forma . . .' ('Sending encouraging letters to them, he persuaded them to continue the work, trusting in the divine help of the Word. Of which letters this is the form . . .'),[17] and there he inserts the letter. The Old English translator neatly snips off the transition to the letter and instead launches into a paraphrase: 'þa sende Sanctus Gregorius ærendgewrit him to, 7 heo trymede 7 lærde in þam gewrite þæt . . .' ('Then St Gregory sent a letter to him, and it exhorted and taught them in that letter that . . .': Old English *Bede* 56.10–11). The entire paraphrase employs the third person where the Latin uses first and second person. Moreover, the rephrasing is positive; Gregory's criticism of Augustine for abandoning his task is removed: 'Quia melius fuerat bona non incipere quam ab his, quae coepta sunt, cogitatione retrorsum redire . . .' ('Because it would have been better not to start good works than to withdraw knowingly from those things which have been begun . . .')[18] lacks any Old English equivalent. The translator also omits any reference to the letter's formal dating-clause, a characteristic feature of papal correspondence.

The new summary of the letter's contents is unusual for this translator; he only provides such a summary at one other place (248.16–27). More often, the translator simply retains the short description with which Bede introduces each letter, omits any transition and the letter itself, and resumes after the letter ends.

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[16] A comparison of the openings of the printed texts of the *Historia ecclesiastica* and the Old English *Bede* would exaggerate the differences in tone because they derive from different traditions. There are two main families of *Historia ecclesiastica* manuscripts. Among the characteristics of the *m*-class, the basis of Colgrave and Mynors' edition, is the placement of a humble prayer immediately after Bede's preface (see *HE*, ed. Colgrave and Mynors, pp. xxxix–xli). The *c*-text situates the prayer at the end of the *Historia ecclesiastica*. Miller argues that the translator's Latin text was Cotton Tiberius C. ii, the manuscript which stands at the head of the *c*-family, and which had the appeal at the end (p. xxiii). If the translator had encountered this prayer at the beginning of the text, it would have been interesting to see how he treated it, but it seems most likely that he did not find it there. Instead, the prayer appears at the end of the Old English *Bede*, where its humility cannot diminish the authority of the text.

[17] *HE* I.23 (ed. Colgrave and Mynors, p. 68).   [18] *Ibid.* (ed. Colgrave and Mynors, p. 70).

For instance, where Bede writes: 'Misit etiam litteras, in quibus significat se ei pallium direxisse, simul et insinuat, qualiter episcopos in Brittania constituere debuisset. Quarum litterarum iste est textus . . .' ('He also sent letters, in which he wrote that he was sending him the pallium, and at the same time he suggested how he ought to establish bishops in Britain. Of which letter this is the text . . .').[19] The Old English reads: 'Sende eac swylce Agustine þæm biscope pallium 7 gewrit, in þam he getacnode, hu he sceolde oðre biscopas halgian on hwylcum stowum settan in Breotone' ('He also sent the pallium to Augustine the bishop and a letter, in which he indicated how he should consecrate other bishops and where he should establish them in Britain': Old English *Bede* 90.4–6). Other popes fare similarly. Honorius writes to King Edwin: 'Misit et regi Eduino litteras exhortatorias, paterna illum caritate accendens, ut in fide ueritatis quam acceperant persistere semper ac proficere curarent. Quarum uidelicet litterarum iste est ordo . . .' ('He wrote encouraging letters also to King Edwin, enflaming him with paternal charity, that they always persist in the true faith which they had accepted and take care to complete the work. The order of these letters is this . . .').[20] The translator gives: '7 eac swylce Eadwine þæm cyninge sende trymmendlic gewrit, 7 mid fæderlice lufan hine wæs onbærnende, þæt heo in þæm geleafan soðfæstnisse, þone þe heo onfengon, symle fæstlice astoden 7 aa wunedon' ('and also he sent an encouraging letter to King Edwin, and with fatherly love he was enflaming him, that they always remain fast and ever dwell in the true belief which they had taken up', 146.8–11).

Occasionally the Old English fails even to mention the presence of a letter. Where Bede begins, 'Misit etiam tunc isdem uenerandus pontifex ad Etherium Arelatensem archiepiscopum, ut Augustinum Brittaniam pergentem benigne susciperet, litteras, quarum iste est textus . . .' ('Then this venerable pope also sent to Etherius, archbishop of Arles, so that he kindly receive Augustine as he travelled to Britain, letters whose text is this . . .'),[21] the translation makes no mention either of a letter or of Etherius. The entire chapter is omitted and the translator passes silently over the archbishop of Arles to a figure of much greater interest, Æthelberht, king of Kent. Three other letters are similarly omitted without a trace;[22] a total of thirteen letters that appear in the Latin do not appear in the Old English.[23] Other kinds of inserted texts and documents are omitted as well. The translator omits a hymn from IV.20 and three epitaphs from bk V (V.7, V.8 and V.19). He removes V.15–17, where Bede describes

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[19] *HE* I.29 (ed. Colgrave and Mynors, p. 104).   [20] *HE* II.17 (ed. Colgrave and Mynors, p. 194).
[21] *HE* I.24 (ed. Colgrave and Mynors, p. 70).
[22] These are *HE* II.11, which should appear at Old English *Bede* 124.25; II.19, which should appear at 146.26; and V.21, where the chapter appears but the letter is missing from 470.2.
[23] Letters omitted from the Old English text appear in: *HE* I.24, 28, 29, 30, 31 and 32; II.7, 10, 11, 17, 18 and 19; and V.21.

Adomnán's book on the Holy Land, *De locis sanctis*, and then quotes long passages from it. Almost every omission involves documents written outside England. The translator either omits them entirely or, more often, presents Bede's preview of what is in the document without quoting the document itself.

The one omission of an insertion by an Anglo-Saxon is the lengthy hymn on Æthelthryth (*HE* IV.20), which was composed by Bede himself. Perhaps the translator did not wish to do violence to the work of the venerable Bede by forcing a quantitative, abecedarian poem into Old English. The hymn is very allusive and repetitive and draws heavily on images from Latin sources, both classical and Christian. While the translator's merits are the subject of some dispute, it is difficult to envisage this translator rendering it into either good Old English verse or prose.[24] Even if he could translate it acceptably, he would risk competing with *Cædmon's Hymn*, which stands out in the Old English text for its familiar Old English poetic form and thus celebrates native literary production.

The effect of the omissions is to leave Bede as the sole authority for each of the events and sentiments marked by the letters. The documentation which Bede worked so hard to amass is nearly gone now. Of the Latin sources which Bede quotes directly, only two epitaphs and four other documents remain. Bede's voice dominates the translation more than it does his own text; he stands as the main, almost sole, authority and author. Moreover, all the papal correspondence advising or admonishing kings is gone – obliterating the history of papal attempts to exert direct authority over English kings. The translation appears to be simply a window onto the source text when in fact it dramatically recentres the text. The interest here is truly in *English* history and authority. While the Old English *Bede*, like the Latin *Historia ecclesiastica*, still tells the story of the English church coming fully into the Roman fold on the dating of Easter, Romans play virtually no direct role in English history except in conversion, an event safely in the distant past.

The few sources that remain are ones particularly significant for English history. The first letter in the Old English *Bede* is a letter of the Britons to the consul Aetius asking the Romans to defend them against barbarians (48.5–9). The refusal of this request precipitated the invitation to Hengist and Horsa and thus the settlement of the Germanic tribes who would become the English. The document holds great significance for the English, although it was written by their predecessors on the island.

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[24] Bately, 'Old English Prose', remarks positively on the translator's learning and Latinity, but notes that his vernacular prose is sometimes unidiomatic (p. 118). St-Jacques, '"Hwilum Word Be Worde"', is generally favourable. Whitelock is more critical of both the translator's grasp of Latin and his Old English style (see 'The Old English *Bede*', esp. pp. 75–6), while Potter describes the style as imitating the Latin 'slavishly' to the point where 'the translation sometimes becomes little more than a gloss' (*On the Relation*, p. 2).

Next come the *Interrogationes* and *Responsiones*, Augustine's questions to Pope Gregory and the latter's answers. The translator seems to have changed his mind about including the *Interrogationes*; they are not found where they belong, in I.27, but placed after bk III. Dorothy Whiteock suggested that citation of the *Interrogationes* in recent disputes about marriage may have led the translator to include them.[25] On this occasion the translator follows Bede's transition into the letter: 'Nec mora, congrua quaesitui responsa recepit, quae etiam huic historiae nostrae commodum duximus indere . . . ' ('Without delay, he received responses appropriate to his questions, which also we join appropriately to our history . . .')[26] becomes 'Ond he sona þara gerisne andsware onsende . . .' ('And at once he sent appropriate answers to those [questions] . . .', 64.4–5). The ending of the letter in Old English translation also follows the Latin: 'Hucusque responsiones beati papae Gregorii ad consulta reuerentissimi antistitis Augustini' ('And these were the responses of the blessed Pope Gregory to the consultation of the most reverent Bishop Augustine');[27] 'þis seondon ondsware þæs eadigan papan Sanctus Gregorius to geþeahtunge 7 to frignesse þæs arwyrðan biscopes Agustinus' ('These are the answers of blessed Pope Gregory to the consultation and to the question of the most worthy Bishop Augustinus', 88.26–7).

While contemporary disputes may have helped to determine the inclusion of the exchange in the Old English text, it is also worthy of note that this was a specifically English document: Augustine initiated the exchange from England. His letter was answered by the saint responsible for converting the English, a man who wished himself to come as a missionary to England. The Latin version contains a reference in *Interrogationes* 7 to another letter Gregory is sending; this comes in the following chapter.[28] The Old English *Bede* does not reproduce the letter, and the translator exercises his usual care in removing any reference to it.

The translator also renders into English an epitaph memorializing Gregory, an epitaph for Augustine himself and two documents from the synod of Hertford. Nearly all of these are documents from England. Gregory's epitaph and responses come from outside, but both relate to the conversion of England. The conversion of the English figures as Gregory's only accomplishment deserving specific mention in the epitaph:

To Criste he Ongle gehwyrfde mid arfæstnesse lareowdomes . . . þis gewin 7 þissum gelic, þeos gemen þe wæs, 7 þis þu hyrde dydest, þæt þu Drihtne brohtest micel gestreon haligra saula: þyssum sigorum þu Godes bysceop blissian miht, forþon þu þinra weorca ece mede butan ende nimest. (Old English *Bede* 94.23–4, 94.25–96.2)

He converted the Angles to Christ with pious teachings . . . This struggle and others like it, this care was yours, and you did this as pastor, so that you brought the Lord a great

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25 Whitelock, 'The Old English *Bede*', p. 70.
26 *HE* I.27 (ed. Colgrave and Mynors, p. 78).
27 *Ibid.* (ed. Colgrave and Mynors, p. 102).
28 *Ibid.* (ed. Colgrave and Mynors, pp. 86–8).

treasure of holy souls; in these victories you, bishop of God, may enjoy bliss, because you are receiving for your works the eternal reward without end.

The translator has very smoothly reduced Bede's chapter on Gregory from seven pages to two and a half, but he has retained Gregory's request to be sent to the English (98.3–5).[29] A second epitaph, this one on Augustine (II.3/ 106.6–10), has the advantage not only of being brief and in prose, but being *English*, as it appears on a tomb near an English church. The documents from Hereford are Archbishop Theodore's record of the discussions and a communal statement of orthodox beliefs held by the bishops (310.12–312.32). Both these documents are specifically English, produced by gatherings of English clergy, and both concern continuing church practices and beliefs which may well have seemed relevant to a clerical or even a pious lay translator in the late ninth or early tenth century.

In the end, English is *the* language; most traces of Latin, or of the act of translation, have been hidden, aside from the sometimes Latinate syntax. Bede is *the* historian; after the initial mention in his preface of some of his sources, the main voice we hear throughout the text seems to be Bede's own. Only in five places in the Old English text is a third-person reference made to Bede, in each case replacing a first-person reference from the Latin (144.9–11, 186.33–4, 216.22–3, 378.12–3, 448.10–11);[30] in one case a first-person construction is changed to an impersonal one (326.2–3). Yet more than fifty times a first person pronoun or verb appears in the text with Bede as referent: to all appearances, Bede speaks to the reader directly in Old English, with no translator mediating between the monk and his audience.[31] Bede becomes the authority, the guarantor of truth for

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[29] The chapter in the Latin edition covers the even-numbered pages 122–34; in the Old English, it runs just over two, the even-numbered pages 94–8. The omissions include some family history (*HE* II.1, ed. Colgrave and Mynors, p. 122); Gregory's spiritual life and works of charity (pp. 122–4 and 128–30); and Gregory's writings (pp. 126–8). As Potter writes, 'the most striking of all these omissions is that of the life and literary work of Gregory' (*On the Relation*, p. 11).

[30] As noted by Miller in his edition, and by J. J. Campbell, 'The OE Bede: Book III, Chapters 16 to 20', *MLN* 67 (1952), 381–6, the portion at 216.22–3 is only in two manuscripts. Both Miller and Campbell argue that this portion is by the original translator.

[31] 'Bede' may even make an extra appeal to the reader in CCCC 41, where a metrical epilogue appeals to readers for prayers for the unnamed first-person speaker. A reader could take the appeal as Bede's, the translator's, or the scribe's. See F. C. Robinson, 'Old English Literature in Its Most Immediate Context', *Old English Literature in Context*, ed. J. D. Niles (Woodbridge, 1980), pp. 1–29 and 157–61; repr. Robinson, *The Editing of Old English* (Oxford, 1994), pp. 3–24. This epilogue is not printed in Miller's edition of the Old English *Bede* but can be found in ASPR VI, 113. Bredehoft, 'Authority and the Moment of Reading', argues that the manuscript presentation of the poem in alternating lines of red and black would set off the poem from the text which precedes it. The distinctiveness of the poem might, Bredehoft further argues, cause readers to see the epilogue 'as belonging to the tradition of the Alfredian "colophonic" poem', which would have 'a powerful secondary effect: it would identify the translation of the *Historia* as a product of Alfred's literary circle' (p. 10 of Bredehoft's unpublished paper).

statements which had in his Latin *Historia* been guaranteed by the documents which he incorporated. The translator has no need of continental authorities or Latin documentation when England has its own history now available in its own legitimate language.

The Old English *Bede* transmits most of the material contained in the *Historia ecclesiastica*. Yet it does not simply pass this material on, however much it may appear to do so; the translation does in fact supplant the Latin text and provides a means of access to their own history – now framed a little differently – to Anglo-Saxons who did not know Latin. The text also alters the meaning of 'English history'. While Bede's *Historia* celebrates the English segment of a universal church united by a pope and the Latin language, the Old English *Bede* celebrates the English church, with nods to a pope who makes rare cameo appearances. England itself is a land with a language, culture and history of its own. The translator removes himself from any questions of authority, quietly constructing Bede as a reliable authority whose word needs no further proof.

The work of this translation thus differs from that of other Alfredian translations, which emphasize the translator's authority and actions and champion non-English authors. Yet like other Alfredian translations, it also promotes the authority of the source text. The Old English *Bede* takes Alfred's attempts to establish English language and culture one step further, supplanting the Latin source text where Alfred's translations simultaneously praise and supplant their Latin sources. The differences between known Alfredian texts and the Old English *Bede* on the matter of authority may indicate that the *Bede* was a late work. Perhaps Alfred had less of a hand in this text; it may have been commissioned by Alfred but not completed in his lifetime, or it may have been executed without his direct oversight. Or perhaps Alfred too saw translations which quietly supplanted their source texts as the next logical step in his programme. Regardless of the exact circumstances of its production, the Old English *Bede* both draws on and supports the same sense of English history, and English pride, to which the other translations appealed.[32] Even more than the identifiably Alfredian translations, the Old English *Bede* established that English was a language suitable for prose writing. The Venerable Bede could speak with the authority of a Gregory, Boethius or Orosius – but when he spoke, he did so as an Anglo-Saxon speaking to his fellow Englishmen and Englishwomen in a way the other Latin authors never could.

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[32] Again, see Foot, 'The Making of *Angelcynn*'.