Book Reviews/Comptes rendus

Milton McC. Gatch. *Preaching and Theology in Anglo-Saxon England: Aelfric and Wulfstan*. Toronto and Buffalo : University of Toronto Press, 1977. Pp. xiv, 266 \$15.

In the character of homilist and theologian, the tenth-century Anglo-Saxon monk and abbot Aelfric was a figure of significance in the English Renaissance. The first Anglo-Saxon work printed was his homily *De Sacrificio in Die paschae*, which appeared in 1567 with a preface signed by two archbishops, including Matthew Parker, and thirteen bishops polemically pointing out that the English reformers' doctrine of the Eucharist had been held by Aelfric and the Anglo-Saxon church. Despite Parker's misunderstanding of Aelfric's teaching and his misuse of the homily for controversy, he must be remembered with gratitude as a pioneer in the rediscovery of Anglo-Saxon religious writings.

The theology that Archbishop Parker and his group of reformers sought in Aelfric's homilies has been shown, since their time, to be traditionally Catholic, and the continuity they hoped to find between the Anglo-Saxon and the Anglican churches exhibits itself in, rather, the opposite direction. As Professor Gatch demonstrates in his study of the eschatological doctrines of Aelfric and Archbishop Wulfstan of York, the preachers treated of inherited doctrines and were faithful to teachings of the Latin Fathers and the Carolingian sources from which their materials were largely drawn. Professor Gatch delicately suggests, however, that the reformers might have found, at least tentatively, further material for religious controversies in the teaching of Aelfric and Wulfstan on the end of man: their expositions of the Last Judgement seem made at the expense of the notion of purgation of the soul after death and, hence, lessen emphasis on intercessory prayers for the dead and on expiation of sin after death. In this instance also, nonetheless, the two preachers are writing out of a tradition of belief that had not yet developed into dogma; Aelfric and Wulfstan remain, in their work, both conservative in their dealing with doctrine and progressive in their presenting a further stage in the systematization of theological ideas throughout the Middle Ages.

In studying the eschatology of Aelfric and Wulfstan, Professor Gatch describes the teaching of Aelfric on the Harrowing, individual judgement and the doctrine of intercession, the end of the world, and the Last Judgement. On all these topics, Aelfric is found to be more consistent in his writings than the homilists of the slightly

earlier Blickling and Vercelli collections. Three major works by Aelfric are analyzed to show him as teacher and pastor, using exempla from natural science and hagiography; as exegete in the tradition of Bede, using rhetorical devices and allegorical interpretation in his handling of Scripture; as theologian comprehensively treating the subject of eschatology, using among other sources the tract *Prognosticon Futuri Saeculi* of Julian of Toledo that he himself had epitomized (the excerpts are edited by Professor Gatch in an appendix). Wulfstan's contribution to Anglo-Saxon preaching on the Last Things is limited by Professor Gatch to, essentially, a discussion of his views on Antichrist, one of Wulfstan's primary motifs.

Preceding this study of the eschatology of Aelfric and Wulfstan, which occupies almost half of the text of the volume, is an investigation of preaching in the early medieval period. Professor Gatch sees the Carolingian homilies as related to monastic worship and perhaps to private devotion, with their contents exegetical in form. Catechetical vernacular preaching, he believes, can be associated with the Prone, the part of the Mass following the Gospel. Aelfric's preaching materials are examined in the light of these views, and from the external evidence of hagiography and Aelfric's and Wulfstan's comments on preaching, and the internal evidence of the manuscripts of Aelfric's writings, Professor Gatch surmises that Aelfric, although familiar with exegetical, monastic homilies (even to the extent of using that of Paul the Deacon for source material), intended to produce catechetical works for the laity. Wulfstan, too, is seen as catechetical and hortatory in preaching.

The final chapter of the book places Aelfric and Wulfstan in historical perspective and regards them not only as skillful prose stylists but also as notable for "their conceptions of the role of the preacher and for their creative combinations of traditional materials which achieve coherency and even originality because of the selective intelligence[s] which formed them" (p. 128). The rest of the volume contains the appendix of Aelfric's excerpts from Julian of Toledo previously mentioned, a lengthy and useful bibliography, notes that include translations from the Old English text quoted, and three indexes. The value of the apparatus is unquestionable; its size, almost as long as the text it supports, is, however, daunting. The complex history of preaching materials that Professor Gatch recounts in the first section of his text and the analysis of the teachings of Aelfric and Wulfstan that occupies the second section are not so fully developed as they might be, as the proportion of text to the generously-provided blank pages and the apparatus in this volume indicates. The author, furthermore, evades the full treatment that his extremely interesting topics deserve: to refer the reader to other articles he has written for discussion that would substantiate claims he makes (n. 54. p. 73) and to use the admittedly medieval rhetorical device of the "refusal to describe" (pp. 37, 54, 57) is to neglect both his materials and his readers. And while it is true that, in actual amount, Aelfric's homilies provide more material for investigation than do those of Wulfstan, the Archbishop does seem to receive somewhat cursory treatment for a figure who is suggested, at least by the titles of sections and of the book, as equal in importance: the list of citations from Aelfric, for example, extends over four and a half double-columned pages; that for Wulfstan is complete in one such page. One must also regretfully note the carelessness in proofreading that mars the work throughout: at the least, irritating; here, unexpected and disappointing in a scholarly work from a respected press.

This volume is, nevertheless, a welcome addition to the critical writings on Aelfric and Wulfstan: although Professor Gatch touches upon the literary traits of the sermons, his chief concern is to study the doctrine these sermons contain. In doing so, he reveals clearly that the works of these men merit the attention of historians of theology as well as of literature. Dom David Knowles' assessment of Aelfric, that he was "one of the most distinguished figures in the history of Western theological learning in the centuries immediately before the renaissance of the eleventh century," is given good illustration in Professor Gatch's book. That he is less successful with Wulfstan is due in part to the smaller corpus of writings with which he can deal and to the ecclesiastical situation, different from that of Aelfric, in which Wulfstan was writing, but also to the narrow limits Professor Gatch has set for his investigation. His hypotheses regarding kinds of preaching, the liturgical setting for preaching and the place of the vernacular are interesting and suggestively, if cautiously, stated; scholars concerned with the history of preaching — substance, art and circumstances — will find much that is challenging here.

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Gene Brucker. *The Civic World of Early Renaissance Florence*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1977. Pp. xii, 526. \$25.00.

No topic so dominates the terrain of Renaissance history as that of the uniqueness of the Florentine experience. A generation of American scholars has studied the problem of exactly what forces made Florence such a precocious entity in the Tre and early Quattrocento. The primary emphases have been on the nature of "civic humanism" and the corresponding changes in the social and political make-up of Florence. If on occasion more heat than light has resulted, we have as a result of this research probably a deeper knowledge of what took place in Florence than we have of any other late medieval commune. All the theories produced have helped to delineate both the problems and the solutions.

Professor Brucker in his new book continues his analysis of the Florentine state begun in his *Florentine Politics and Society 1323-1378* (Princeton University Press, 1962) with a detailed study of the *reggimento* which came to power in 1382 after the upheavals resulting from the Ciompi revolt. Brucker characterizes this new regime as elitist in contrast to its predecessor which was a corporatist, guild government. It did not effect changes in the "constitution" of the city since Florentines were too conservative to allow any radical innovations. Rather, their appeal was to the needs of the Republic and not to the vested interests of the individual guild. External politics as well as internal economic and social considerations necessitated rational and sophisticated analysis, often resulting in a critical review of traditional Florentine allegiances which had revolved around the old corporatist structure. The elite had the political expertise and self-confidence to accomplish this reevaluation. While not a democratic regime, the elite did take into consideration the *popolo* and their claims. Although the tenure of the regime did not begin auspiciously it