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Thomas Wilson and the Tudor Commonwealth: An Essay in Civic Humanism

By ALBERT J. SCHMIDT

WOLSEY'S fall marked more than the passing of a man: it symbolized the end of an era in the evolution of statecraft. The cardinal's successor as chancellor was the layman Thomas More; henceforth, during that Reformation century the Tudor sovereigns were generally to prefer lay humanists to learned or ambitious clerics for administering the body politic of the realm. The humanists of Tudor England were seldom impractical academicians given to cloudy idealism; they were men versed in the ways of the world. If in their conservatism they envisioned and fought for an improved society cloaked in Platonic and Ciceronian finery, they meant to achieve it slowly by retaining much of that organic and hierarchical society in which they lived but which was fast dissolving. Hard-headed and ruthless when occasion demanded, they often displayed no less facility in racking a traitor than in discoursing on the classics. They served their masters and mistresses well, for in the throne they saw the only substantial bulwark against the new assault on custom. Their significance is best understood by reviewing the achievements of the civilians, diplomats, and secretaries—versatile men all—whose breadth of wisdom saw their commonwealth through so many storms.

Thomas Wilson, a member of that second generation of English humanists which flourished at Cambridge during the 1540's, was one such scholar who left the hallowed atmosphere of the university for the more lucrative career promised by the civil law and royal preferment.[1] Remembered for his humanist treatises on logic, rhetoric, and Demosthenes, he established for himself as well a reputation as an economist and commonwealth man by his lengthy essay condemning usury.[2] In public affairs Wilson served his queen

[1]For biographical sketches of Wilson see A. F. Pollard's article in *DNB*, XXI, 603-607, and my article, "Thomas Wilson, Tudor Scholar-Statesman," *Huntington Library Quarterly*, XX (1957), 205-218.

[2]The present author makes no attempt to evaluate Wilson's contribution to logic and rhetoric or his translation of Demosthenes. The best commentary on Wilson's

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(Elizabeth) in parliament, on embassies, in the privy council, and in the secretaryship.[3] Doubtless his claim as Renaissance statesman was equal to that as Renaissance savant.

Although Wilson's significance both as a scholar and statesman has been duly noted, no genuine appraisal of the relationship between the two exists. The present essay, in no sense a detailed account of either, does seek to clarify his role as a humanist statesman by enumerating some of his political, religious, and social ideas. Wilson, like Demosthenes and Cicero, was no political bystander; he immersed himself in the strife of public life in order to serve the commonwealth. He terrorized his queen's enemies until his name became a byword with them. His essays in the manner of the New Learning, though revealing a high sense of scholarship, contained a pragmatic quality related to his public service. Like all Renaissance writers Wilson approached scholarship for didactic purposes, and the goal that he established for himself was less to teach Englishmen logic and rhetoric than to teach citizenship. Wilson's writings provide a keen insight into the whole theme of civic humanism during the English Renaissance.

His two best-known scholarly works were the *Rule of Reason* and the *Arte of Rhetorique*, written in 1551 and 1553 respectively. These erudite discourses on logic and rhetoric contained for the common reader folksy digressions on contemporary politics, society, and religion as well as classical wisdom. They show also the impact

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contribution to logic is Wilbur S. Howell, *Logic and Rhetoric in England, 1500-1700* (Princeton, 1956), which devotes a full chapter to the *Rule of Reason, Conteinyng the Arte of Logique, Set Forth in Englishe*. Howell's conclusions on Wilson's *Rhetorique* follow those reached by the late Russell H. Wagner, whose many writings have evaluated Wilson's place in rhetorical theory. The *Rule of Reason* exists in no modern edition, but the *Rhetorique* (to which my citations refer) was edited by George H. Mair (Oxford, 1909). Mair's conclusions on Wilson's work should be considered only in the light of the more recent research by Wagner. The best commentary on Wilson as translator of Demosthenes is probably Carey H. Conley, *The First English Translators of the Classics* (New Haven, 1927). The most recent edition of Wilson's *Discourse upon Usury* is one edited with a brilliant introduction by R. H. Tawney (London, 1925). Hereafter this edition is cited as *Usury*. The several essays on scholastic economics and *Gresham on Foreign Exchange* by Raymond de Roover (Cambridge, Mass., 1949) have also noted Wilson as commonwealth man and economist.

[3]For one aspect of Wilson's diplomatic career and secretaryship see my article "A Treatise on England's Perils, 1578," *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte*, XLVI (1955), 243-249.

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that Wilson's Cambridge period had on his thought and actions.

Wilson's scholarship most assuredly was influenced by those great teachers at Henrician and Edwardian Cambridge, John Cheke, Thomas Smith, Roger Ascham, and Walter Haddon—all of whom he called his friends. At one time or another they each must have taught the young Wilson more than the classics, for they all shared an enthusiasm for religious reformation and an affinity to the Tudor monarchy. Nor did Wilson during this formative period escape the web of religious controversy so prevalent during Edward's reign. Several years before he composed his *Reason*, he accepted the patronage of that great Protestant lady and former Lincolnshire neighbor Katherine (Willoughby) Brandon, duchess of Suffolk.[4] She who was the benefactress of the refugee-divine Martin Bucer would never have condoned Wilson's tutoring her two small sons had he not been "safe" on matters religious. Her devotion to Bucer brought Wilson into unusually close touch with that conciliatory continental divine. Many of the political ideas incorporated in the *Reason* and *Rhetorique* were also the consequence of his university experience. Even when he lamented the death of his two students, the dukes of Suffolk, he showed a politic eye as he dedicated their eulogy to the new duke of Suffolk, Henry Grey.[5] The latter was a thoroughgoing partisan of John Dudley, duke of Northumberland; and it was with the Dudleys that Wilson rode—at Cambridge during the early fifties, and with Northumberland's sons, Leicester and Warwick, during Elizabeth's reign. The Cambridge years were instructive for Wilson; his early humanist essays remain meaningless unless these influences are noted.

In 1551 Wilson wrote the *Rule of Reason*, nominally a work on logic for popular consumption. He made no pretext at originality but stated in his dedication to Edward VI that he proposed to make familiar to the "vulgar people" those parts of the "sciences liberal"

[4]Wilson's acquaintance with the former Katherine Willoughby must have dated to his Lincolnshire youth. The Wilsons and Willoughbys were neighbors, and likely Wilson's father identified himself as a partisan of Charles Brandon after the latter crushed the Lincolnshire rising of 1536. See my article "Some Notes on Dr. Thomas Wilson and His Lincolnshire Connections," in the Lincolnshire *Historian* (Spring, 1957). Wilson had kind words for Brandon in his *Rhetorique* (pp. 14-15).

[5]*Epistola de vita et obitu duorum fratrum suffolciensium Henrici et Caroli Brandon* (London, 1551).

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which theretofore had been available only in Greek. "I thought that logic among all other being an art, as apt for the English wit and as profitable for their knowledge as any the other sciences are, might with as much grace be set forth in the English as the other arts heretofore have been."[6] The performance of such services, a common habit of sixteenth-century humanists, illustrated their interfusion of ethics and citizenship with scholarship. Wilson obviously supplemented his stated purpose with others, religious and political. The *Reason*, packed with the kind of syllogisms commonly used in theological disputations and polemics of the day, could serve as a handy manual for the less-learned preachers and their flocks. The charge that the *Reason* was "one long Protestant tract in which the doctrines of Geneva are enforced by the apparatus of mediaeval logic"[7] is valid—especially if one considers selections like those that follow:

The Christian righteousness is the pureness of the mind.
To wear a tippet, a cowl, a shave crown is not the pureness of the mind.
Therefore the outward attire is not the Christian righteousness.[8]

All hypocrites count well [good] works high holiness.
Some hypocrites have been bishops.
Therefore some bishops have counted well works high holiness.[9]

Wilson also voiced his patriotic zeal:

Every common weal is God's ordinance.
Every common weal hath need of laws and armor.
Therefore some laws and armor are gods ordinance.[10]

All Christians refuse to get goods ungodly.
Some merchants refuse not to get goods ungodly.
Therefore some merchants are no Christians.[11]

Loyalty to the magistrate was the fullest expression of Christian virtue, for the sovereign "is the minister of God for a good end to

[6]Cf. Howell, *Logic and Rhetoric:* "The *Rule of Reason* is not a translation of Aristotle's *Organon.* But it is an attempt to render into English the main concepts and terms of the *Organon,* as those concepts and terms had come to be understood in the Renaissance; and it too is of good quality as a work of learning" (pp. 12-13). My citations from the *Reason* are from the edition published in London in 1563 by John Kingston. Spelling in quotations has been modernized.

[7]*Rhetorique,* Introd., xv.

[8]*Reason,* fol. 29.

[9]Ibid., fol. 30.

[10]Ibid.

[11]Ibid., fol. 29.

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the punishing of naughty persons, and to the comforting of godly men."[12] For Wilson the Roman Catholic was not the only one prone to place other loyalties before those due his king:

No contemner of the Magistrate is a Christian.
All Anabaptists are contemners of the Magistrate.
Therefore no Anabaptist is a Christian.[13]

The *Rule of Reason* passed through eight editions; and though it was not so popular as the *Rhetorique*, it undoubtedly reached those who had neither the opportunity nor the inclination to hear a Cheke or Smith. Its broad circulation served the cause of Reformation and the Edwardian commonwealth no less than that of scholarship.

For reasons similar to those that he had for editing his work on logic, Wilson prepared one on rhetoric in 1553.[14] The stated purpose of the *Arte of Rhetorique* was picturesquely explained by Haddon's

[12]Ibid., fol. 54.

[13]Ibid., fol. 28.

[14]Wilson's *Rhetorique* has been variously appraised. Warton, writing some two centuries after it was written, hailed it as "the first system of criticism in our language" (quoted from Wagner, "Thomas Wilson's *Arte of Rhetorique*," unpubl. diss. [Cornell, 1928], p. 16). Much later Mair called it a "landmark in the history of the English Renaissance" and "important . . . indeed indispensable to the history of English literature" *(Rhetorique*, Introd., vi). J. W. H. Atkins, following Mair, has commented that "its [the *Rhetorique*'s] claim to be reckoned among the more significant of Elizabethan critical works cannot well be challenged. In the revival of rhetorical studies in 16th-Century England it occupies the central position" *(English Literary Criticism: The Renascence* [London, 1947], p. 84). The best authority on Wilson's *Rhetorique*, Wagner, stated that Wilson's work was important not so much for its pioneering in literary criticism as for its being the "first adequate treatise designed to make available to Englishmen the suggestions on public speaking of classical rhetoric" ("Thomas Wilson's *Arte of Rhetorique*," *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, XV [1929], 140). Wagner further explained that "in re-uniting, selecting and adapting the classical principles of public address, Wilson restored the body and, to some extent, reformed the concepts of rhetorical theory. In recalling rhetoric from the museum to the market-place, he not only re-established the ancient conception of rhetoric as the art of the speaker, but, because of his own self-imposed purpose of adapting old doctrines to new times and new needs, he effected far reaching changes which have greatly influenced the theories of public address we hold today" (quoted from "Thomas Wilson's Contributions to Rhetoric," in *Papers in Rhetoric*, ed. Donald C. Bryant [St. Louis, 1940], p. 7). There has been an inclination on the part of scholars to attribute to Wilson influence on Shakespeare. Hardin Craig in "Shakespeare and Wilson's *Arte of Rhetorique*, an Inquiry into the Criteria for Determining Sources," *Studies in Philology*, XXVIII (1931), 618-630, has shown that no conclusive evidence of influence exists. For other comments on Wilson's *Rhetorique* cf. Wagner, "Wilson and His Sources," *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, XV (1929), 525-537. Wagner dealt with the differences in the various editions of the *Rhetorique* in "The Text and Editions of Wilson's *Arte of Rhetorique*," *Modern Language Notes*, XLIV (1929), 421-428.

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poems in the preface. Wilson, having taught Logic how to speak English, gave Rhetoric great cause for sorrow because she did not know the language; but fortunately Wilson heard her and promised proper instruction. Divided into three books, the *Rhetorique* first deals with definitions and the needs—inventions, disposition, elocution, memory, and utterance—of the proficient orator. The second book contains a detailed comment on disposition or the development of the oration or address. The last is an elaboration of the remaining three topics introduced in the first section.

By rhetoric Wilson meant first and foremost the spoken art that aimed "to teach, to delight, and to persuade." Like Quintilian, Wilson conceived the influential role of the orator in the commonwealth and therefore directed his reader to subject matter as well as method. His witty, moralistic digressions and suggestive examples drawn from contemporary politics, society, and theology both pleased the public and informed them of how they might better serve the cause of church and state.

Wilson doubtless hoped to improve the quality of preaching, for it was his opinion that "the Preachers of God mind so much edifying of souls, that they often forget we have any bodies. And therefore, some do not so much good with telling the truth, as they do harm with dulling the hearers, being so far gone in their matters, that often-times they cannot tell when to make an end." Then, too, he provided these same clergymen with something to preach about when he described Roman Catholicism as the worship of God "in Copes, in Candlesticks, in Bells, in Tapers, and in Censers, in Crosses, in Banners, in shaven Crowns, and long Gowns, and many good morrows else."[15]

No less consideration was given in the *Rhetorique* to love of country and the relationship of patriotism to morality. Rebels he roundly condemned:

> in battle to kill an enemy, is thought right worthy, or to adventure upon a rebel . . . is generally commended, yea, to put one to the worse, or to make him fly the ground, is called manly. . . . Can any be counted more honest than such as seek to save their Country, by hazarding their carcasses, and shedding of their blood? Can love show itself greater, than by yielding of life, for the health of an army? (p. 19)

[15]*Rhetorique*, pp. 136, 33.

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Wilson urged marriage for the good of the state and at the same time attacked priests who theoretically practiced celibacy but in reality (so he maintained) kept concubines.[16] He denounced laziness, which ruined self and country: "Labor getteth learning, learning getteth fame, fame getteth honor, honor getteth bliss forever. . . . Of sloth cometh pleasure, of pleasure cometh spending, of spending cometh whoring, of whoring cometh lack, of lack cometh theft, of theft cometh hanging, and there an end for this world." Lamenting the "Dicing, Carding, picking, stealing, fighting, Ruffians, Queens and Harlots"[17] in addition to enclosures, he concluded that England had paid in part for its wickedness and idleness when God had visited death upon the two young dukes of Suffolk. The variety of the digressions in the *Rhetorique* gives no cause to wonder at a recent critic's estimate that it "is the first rhetoric since Quintilian's to give a full and unified treatment of the best of classical doctrines and to make them really useful in the world of practical affairs."[18] That the work did indeed make some impression upon contemporaries was evidenced by Gabriel Harvey, who commented on its "delighting the Hearers, and stirring them to Laughter" and observed that it and the Logic "[are] the daily bread of our common pleaders, & discoursers. With his dialogue of usury, fine, & pleasant."[19]

Wilson's *Rhetorique* has been called a milestone in literary criticism because of the particular passage in which he condemned "inkhorn terms" and Italianated English. Like Cheke, Ascham, and a host of English humanists, Wilson regretted the affected and foreign speech that was permeating the language in that increasingly cosmopolitan age. Their purpose was to render the classics into an unadorned English in order to facilitate the transmission of ideas on morality, citizenship, and religion. Wilson's attack on elegant language impressed his contemporaries, for as Barnabe Barnes put it: Wilson by his "discretion . . . did redress our English barbarism."[20]

[16]Ibid., pp. 39-63 passim.

[17]Ibid., p. 204.

[18]Wagner, "Wilson's Contributions to Rhetoric," *Papers in Rhetoric*, p. 2.

[19]G. C. Moore Smith, *Gabriel Harvey's Marginalia* (Stratford-upon-Avon, 1913), pp. 114, 122.

[20]Quoted from Tucker Brooke, "The Renaissance," in *A Literary History of England*, ed. Albert C. Baugh (New York, 1948), p. 435. Wilson left evidence that

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Though in the end he seems to have failed quite as completely in preserving a pure and unpretentious language as other aspects of the old order, he did earn for himself a lingering reputation as a literary critic.

Wilson's participation in the world of affairs did not prevent his continuing his humanist writing. His civic humanism with respect to both the foreign and domestic scenes was evidenced by his translation of Demosthenes' *Orations* and his own *A Discourse upon Usury*, both published at the beginning of the decade of the 1570's. Well experienced in matters of statecraft, at home as a master of requests and abroad as an ambassador, Wilson identified himself with the radical Protestant faction of the queen's privy council. Like his cohorts Walsingham and Leicester, he constantly urged vigilance against enemies within and without and close co-operation with the continental Protestant princes. Recognizing the threat from Hapsburg, Guise, and Pope abroad, he produced as early as 1570 a piece of propaganda literature drawn from the wisdom of Hellas. This work, his translation from the Greek of Demosthenes' *Orations*, was designed to warn his countrymen of the threat of an aggressive Philip—this one from Spain instead of Macedon. Wilson purposely turned these literary masterpieces into instruments of state. The theme was well stated in the preface by Wilson: "He that loves his country and desires to procure the welfare of it, let him read Demosthenes and he shall not want matter to do himself good."

Although affairs of state prompted Wilson to prepare this edition, it should not be regarded as a hastily written political tract. He noted in his dedication to Sir William Cecil some of the previous Latin translators and his own intent to provide an English rendering. The ideas had been planted in his mind years before by "that rare learned man and singular ornament of this land" John Cheke, Cecil's brother-in-law. So scholarly was it and so well did it serve propa-

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he was himself an orator of substance. He delivered a Latin funeral oration honoring Edward Courtenay, earl of Devon, at Padua in 1556 (printed in John Strype, *Ecclesiastical Memorials* [London, 1721], III, 191). In 1567 on embassy to the Portuguese king, Wilson gave a long Latin oration on the commercial grievances suffered by the English (B. M. Cotton MSS, Nero, B.i., fol. 131). He spoke in commons at length against usury and vagabonds (cf. nn. 27 and 28) and in the parliament of 1572 gave a ringing speech in which he urged the extreme penalty for the Scottish queen (Diary of Thomas Cromwell, 1572, J. E. Neale Transcripts, London).

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ganda needs that one authority on Demosthenes has credited Wilson with giving during the sixteenth century "a distinct impulse to the study of Demosthenes in England as bearing on the service of the State."[21]

Just as Wilson expressed his fear of his queen's enemies abroad so did he voice concern for his country's internal well-being. Usury, enclosures, the sturdy beggar, and whatever else brought stress and tension to the commonwealth he denounced categorically in *A Discourse upon Usury*. Published in 1572 and dedicated to his close friend and patron the earl of Leicester, this work was only one of the numerous sixteenth-century polemics against usury. But it was considerably more erudite than most.[22] England, long an economic backwater, found that economic growth during the first half of the sixteenth century had left in its wake both practical and moral problems. Custom faced the deadly onslaught from capitalism, yet the former had its defenders in those who, loath to divorce ethics from economics, bemoaned the realm's safety in the shadow of the rapacious usurer and encloser. As author of *A Discourse upon Usury*, Thomas Wilson emerged as one of the most outspoken of these protesting commonwealth men.

In his *Usury* Wilson made heroes of the preacher and civilian; at the same time he cast the usurious merchant and his comrade the common lawyer as villains. The dialogue rested upon two basic ideas: the danger of usury to the commonwealth and the immorality of such economic activity in which expediency took precedence over those rules of fixed moral conduct as set forth in the canon law of the church. Woven into the dialogue is a very profound analysis of the intricacies of the exchange at Antwerp, for Wilson was especially disturbed about the exorbitant interest rates his queen paid on her loans there.[23] Even worse than foreign usurers were

[21]Charles D. Adams, *Demosthenes and His Influence* (New York, 1927), p. 145.

[22]De Roover suggests that Wilson was abler than Gresham in analyzing theoretical economic problems (*Gresham on Foreign Exchange*, p. 97). Ludovico Guicciardini, the great contemporary authority on the Antwerp money market, had respect for Wilson's diplomatic skill and even recommended him for an embassy to Germany (*Cal. S. P., Foreign, 1577-1578*, No. 744).

[23]Undoubtedly usury did in this case cause a real drain on her purse, for she generally paid as much as twelve per cent interest on loans while the *ditte di borsa* were usually charged no more than seven.

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the English merchants who took interest from their queen. He made his preacher Ockerfore say to the merchant Gromelgainer:

cursed be that lending that maketh the borrower go abegging, that undoeth the state, that destroyeth nobility and gentlemen, that driveth the prince to seek aid of her subjects by parliament to pay her debts. For it is you usurers, and none other, that bring the prince behind hand, with taking twelve and fourteen in the hundred. A strange people, that take usury of their prince, being their assured defense, their loving nurse, and their chief safeguard.[24]

In another instance Wilson has his civilian describe the usurer and the decay he brought the realm:

The usurer is an idle man. He doth not travail, nor labor by sweat of his brow to advance himself and his country but useth the pains and troubles of others to his great gain. . . . And, therefore if all should do as the usurer doth, the ground should lie untilled, no trade of merchandise should be used, nor yet occupying maintained for the use of mankind. . . . Therefore you see that the usurer is the occasion of all dearth and want that happeneth to a commonweal. And this is one of the chiefest occasions of all your bankrupts now a days and decayed gentlemen that have borrowed money and taken wares so dearly that the very usury in time hath wholly eaten them up and undone them forever.[25]

The author protested not only against the charging of interest; he spoke out as well against that "devouring caterpillar," the encloser. He lamented the "decay of good houses and wracking of the people" that the villain had instigated. He observed that "the commonwealth is weakened and whole towns destroyed through the covetous usurer"; and in place of a flourishing countryside one finds only

desert places . . . and wild solitarines for beasts to range in and to feed upon, cattle and sheep occupying the places of many a good honest meaning man. So that by these two idle occupations, great usury and many flocks of sheep and herds of beasts, this noble country is made in manner a forest, and brought to great ruin and decay, through dispeopling of men, overthrowing of towns, and oppressing of the poor with intolerable usury.[26]

[24]*Usury*, pp. 268-269.

[25]Ibid., pp. 283-284.

[26]Ibid., p. 286.

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Wilson did more than write about the social problems of his day. As a master in the court of requests he had a firsthand encounter with some, for it was his duty to hear "poor men's causes." In the parliament of 1571 Wilson spoke of both vagabonds and the problems of usury. Two usury bills introduced in that parliament to repeal the anti-usury statute of 1552 provoked his comment. His speech against usury on April 19 in commons is one of the best on that subject from any parliamentary debate. Noting that he had studied the problem in detail, he emphasized that usury was forbidden both by the canon law and ancient custom. There could be no compromise by condoning moderate usury, for "usury [as the] taking of any reward or price or sum over and above the due debt . . . is robbery." He proceeded to show the irreparable harm that usury would have on queen and country:

> Men not using their own money but finding great gain in usury do employ the same that way so that her customs must decrease; to the commonwealth: for that who so shall give hire for money is to raise the same in the sale of commodity. All trades shall be taken away; all occupations lost for most men seeking most ease and greatest gain without hazard or venture will forthwith employ their money to such use.

The learned doctor then showed how usury was condemned in the common law and by various church councils and noted that divines call usury "Spider, Canker, Aspis, Serpent, and Devil." He discussed the practice of the exchange in the Low Countries and in Germany, where the doings of the Fuggers had brought "beggaring of great and mighty princes." In conclusion he invoked the authority of John Cheke and English legal commentators in maintaining that usury should be judged felony.[27]

In his speech against vagabonds Wilson expressed sympathy for the poor but observed that nowhere in Christendom did "such looseness and lewdness" exist as in England. These sturdy beggars gave no peace to the realm, and "it was no charity to give to such a one as we know not, being a stranger unto us." The Greeks judged such beggars thieves, and he himself would subject them to imprisonment.[28]

[27]B. M. Cotton MSS, Titus, F. i., fol. 163.

[28]Ibid., fol. 152 b.

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This analysis of Thomas Wilson's written works relates only half of the story of his civic humanism.[29] His stout devotion to his religious creed and service to the crown tell the rest. For twenty years he sat in the queen's various parliaments rendering good service to the crown as a royal official but still speaking his own mind when occasion demanded. He frequently played the role of inquisitor and rackmaster and even resided for a time in the Bloody Tower, where he performed his disagreeable tasks after the Ridolfi conspiracy. As a diplomat he served on embassies to Portugal and the Netherlands. After his Portuguese mission in 1567 he became Elizabeth's recognized authority on the affairs of that country and at the end of the next decade was one of the strongest English supporters of the Portuguese pretender Don Antonio. Twice Wilson journeyed to the Netherlands during the turbulent seventies on the queen's business. Unlike his royal mistress he did not temporize in matters of foreign policy but rather became an unconditional partisan of William the Silent. In 1577 he returned to court to enter the privy council and share until his death in 1581 the office of principal secretary with Walsingham.

The England of the Tudors owed much to such versatile scholar-statesmen as Wilson and his friends Smith and Haddon. By fervent devotion to commonwealth and religion so vividly displayed in their writing and action, they helped their mistress and the realm weather many crises during the late sixteenth century. Civic humanism, as Professor Hans Baron has observed, was an important Renaissance theme. Wilson was but one of the statesmen, albeit a good model, who exercised this humanism.

[29]Wilson had a broad acquaintance with scholars apart from the Cambridge circle. He knew the old Henrician scholars Sir Thomas Chaloner and John Heywood and the Elizabethan Philip Sidney. On the Continent he met the great Spanish humanist Arias Montano and through him probably met the map maker Ortelius. Wilson received due recognition from contemporary scholars: John Parkhurst, bishop of Norwich, sent him epigrams for his perusal (see Parkhurst Epist., Cambridge Univ. MSS, Ee, II, 34, fol. 100 b.), while others contributed poetic praise in the prefaces of his written works. Daniel Rogers, an old friend and diplomatic colleague, wrote a series of epigrams in Wilson's honor; Thomas Hatcher, a Cambridge scholar, dedicated to Wilson his edition of Nicholas Carr's *De scriptorum Britannicorum paucitate* in 1576; another Cantabrigian, Thomas Bing, dedicated to Wilson his edition of Carr's Latin translation of Demosthenes.

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