INTERLINGUISTIC COMMUNICATION IN BEDE'S *HISTORIA ECCLESIASTICA GENTIS ANGLORUM*[1]

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1. Problems and approaches

The intellectual stimulus for this paper, and much of the thinking behind it, arose from my time at the University of Helsinki, first as a visiting doctoral student under Matti's supervision and subsequently as his colleague. The University of Helsinki is officially bilingual between Finnish and Swedish, while for my close colleagues most speaking, writing and reading of a professional nature was conducted in a third language, English. For me to enter this situation as a scholar interested in medieval multilingualism, whose personal background was in a monoglot segment of British culture and an indefatigably monoglot education system, was enormously mind-opening. And no-one provided a warmer welcome to my research on—or to my own aspirations to—multilingualism than Matti.

For Britain, the period from the fifth century to the eighth was crucial to the rise of English and Gaelic at the expense of the p-Celtic dialects (the ancestors of Welsh, Cornish, Cumbric and Pictish) which had been dominant a few centuries before. It is also traditionally assumed to be the time when British Latin, another competitor to p-Celtic which had taken root while Britain was under Roman rule, died as a vernacular language; nevertheless, Latin emerged from the period

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as an important language of writing and religion. The role in these developments of migration to Britain from the Continent and Ireland has been much pondered and debated, albeit for many years through archaeological and historical methodologies focused on ethnic identity and political structures rather than through linguistic approaches *per se*:[2] only recently have linguistic methodologies, reframing the issue in terms of language-shifts and -competition, started to gain prominence in the field.[3] Even recent work, however, has tended primarily to address the expansion of English and Gaelic only in its earliest stages—for which we have virtually no direct evidence.

The present article looks to a time when we do have some direct evidence, albeit of a problematic and limited kind: Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, completed around 731, supplemented by reference to other roughly contemporaneous Anglo-Latin texts.[4] For many years the main article devoted to Bede's portrayal of language-use in Britain was André Crépin's 'Bede and the Vernacular' of 1976, whose main concern was with the relationship between Bede

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2   For the historiography of these debates in England see Nicholas Higham, *Rome, Britain and the Anglo-Saxons* (London: Seaby, 1992), esp. 1–16; Nick Higham, "From Sub-Roman Britain to Anglo-Saxon England: Debating the Insular Dark Ages," *History Compass* 2 (2004): 1–29, DOI: 10.1111/j.1478-0542.2004.00085.x; Nick Higham, "Britons in Anglo-Saxon England: An Introduction," in *Britons in Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. Nick Higham, Publications of the Manchester Centre for Anglo-Saxon Studies 7 (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2007), 1–15; for Scotland see Alex Woolf, *From Pictland to Alba*, The New Edinburgh History of Scotland 2 (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 312–352.

3   Most work has focused on English: see prominently the articles in *The Celtic Englishes*, ed. Hildegard L. C. Von Tristram, Anglistische Forschungen 247, 286, 324, 3 vols. (Heidelberg: Winter, 1997–2003); in *The Celtic Roots of English*, ed. Markku Filppula, Juhani Klemola and Heli Pitkänen, Studies in Languages 37 (Joensuu: University of Joensuu, Faculty of Humanities, 2002); and in *Britons in Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. Nick Higham, Publications of the Manchester Centre for Anglo-Saxon Studies 7 (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2007). It should be noted, however, that place-names have long provided an important, if under-theorised, component in the debate; for a convenient summary of the *status quo* regarding England see Richard Coates, "Invisible Britons: The View from Linguistics," in the latter volume, 172–91, working paper available at <http://www.sussex.ac.uk/linguistics/documents/rc_britons.pdf>. For the Celtic-speaking regions see for example Woolf, *From Pictland*, 322–40.

4   *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, ed. Bertram Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors, corrected reprint (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991). Translations of this and other texts are my own.

and Old English poetry.[5] In 2001, Georges Tugene's *L'idée de nation chez Bède le Vénérable* opened up a range of useful perspectives on language in Bede's theology, and to some extent in his conception of nationhood.[6] I draw on this extensively below, but Tugene does not attempt to answer linguistic questions *per se*. But Bede presents us with one of our main windows onto the early history of North Britain and the expansion of Gaelic there, while recent studies have emphasised that the kingdom of the Northumbrians, in which he wrote, had only recently assimilated many areas whose inhabitants must to a significant extent have been speakers of p-Celtic.[7] Moreover, looking past the evidence afforded by Bede's own Latinity, his text also includes some slight but important evidence for the state of British Latin.

The *Historia ecclesiastica* generally provides two sorts of evidence for vernacular multilingualism: narratives and place-names. As Adams emphasised in his magisterial study of Roman bilingualism, anecdotal evidence about language contact is much inferior to that provided by documents like bilingual inscriptions.[8] A good number of early Anglo-Saxon inscriptions do survive but none offers parallel bilingual texts, while the parallel bilingual inscriptions surviving from the west and north of Britain are laconic, so Bede's anecdotal evidence is worth sifting.[9] It is problematic for two main reasons. Firstly, Bede's

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5   André Crépin, "Bede and the Vernacular," in *Famulus Christi: Essays in Commemoration of the Thirteenth Centenary of the Birth of the Venerable Bede*, ed. Gerald Bonner (London: SPCK, 1976), 170–192.

6   Tugene, Georges, *L'idée de nation chez Bède le Vénérable*, Collection des Études Augustiniennes, Série Moyen Âge et Temps Modernes 37 (Paris: Institut d'Études Augustiniennes, 2001).

7   David Rollason, *Northumbria, 500–1100: Creation and Destruction of a Kingdom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 57–109; Nicholas Higham, "Britons in Northern England in the Early Middle Ages: Through a Thick Glass Darkly," *Northern History* 38 (2001): 5–25; Alex Woolf, "Caedualla Rex Brettonum and the Passing of the Old North," *Northern History* 41 (2004): 1–20; Bethany Fox, "The P-Celtic Place-Names of North-East England and South-East Scotland," *The Heroic Age* 10 (2007): <http://www.heroicage.org>.

8   J. N. Adams, *Bilingualism and the Latin Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 9–14.

9   For England see generally Elizabeth Okasha, *Handlist of Anglo-Saxon Non-Runic Inscriptions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971) and her supplements in *Anglo-Saxon England* 11 (1983), 83–118; 21 (1992), 37–85; and 33 (2005), 225–81; for the west see for example T. M. Charles Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 163–172; and for the north Katherine Forsyth, "Literacy in Pictland," in *Literacy in Medieval Celtic Societies*, ed. Huw Pryce (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 39–61, available at <http://eprints.gla.ac.uk/2461>; "*Hic memoria perpetua*: The Early Inscribed Stones of Southern Scotland in Context," in *Able Minds and Practised Hands: Scotland's Early Medieval Sculpture in the 21st Century*, ed. Sally M. Foster and Morag Cross, The Society for Medieval Archaeology, Monographs 23 (Leeds: The Society for Medieval Archaeology, 2005), 113–134.

reconstructions of the past doubtless arose from a combination of knowledge from sources (of varying reliability), inference from his own experience, and invention, but it is hard to guess in what proportions. He discusses interlinguistic communication rather rarely, leaving many anecdotes when we (and perhaps he) would have liked to know more about how his characters communicated.[10] When Bede does mention interlinguistic communication, it is also hard to know how far his anecdotes represent the exception or the rule. Secondly, Bede wrote primarily to convey and support a raft of ideologies, on themes both political and theological, and any information he gives is liable to have been shaped or even invented to fit these.[11] If nothing else, studying Bede's portrayal of interlinguistic communication can help us to explore his promotion of these ideologies; but I argue that it is also possible to glimpse some details beyond them.

Meanwhile, place-names in the *Historia ecclesiastica*, which again received their most intensive study in the 1970s, represent a category of evidence so problematic that it does not even register in Adams's book.[12] Place-names are a distinctive lexical category; those given by Bede may sometimes reflect his sources more than his own onomasticon; and his scholarly interest in the etymology and semantics of toponymy will have given him conceptual tools for promoting ide-

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10 To give a few examples: when Augustine met the bishops and scholars of a British kingdom shortly after 600 (ii.2), did they converse in Latin, and if so how comfortably? When Cuthbert preached in the 660s in the mountains north and west of Melrose (iv.27), a region then only recently brought under Anglo-Saxon rule, did he (ever) speak Brittonic or Latin? And when the Irish monk Adomnán spoke to Abbess Æbbe of Coldingham around 680 (*HE* iv.25), did he use English, Irish or Latin?

11 For a recent survey and analysis of these issues see N. J. Higham, *(Re-)Reading Bede: The 'Ecclesiastical History' in Context* (London: Routledge, 2006).

12 Principally Barrie Cox, "The Place-Names of the Earliest English Records," *Journal of the English Place-Name Society* 8 (1975–76): 12–66; J. Campbell, "Bede's Words for Places," in *Names, Words, and Graves: Early Medieval Settlement. Lectures Delivered in the University of Leeds, May 1978*, ed. P. H. Sawyer (Leeds: The School of History, University of Leeds, 1979), 34–54 (repr. in *Essays in Anglo-Saxon History* (London: Hambledon Press, 1986), 99–119); Colin Smith, "Romano-British Place-Names in Bede," *Anglo-Saxon Studies in Archaeology and History* 1 (=B.A.R. British Series 72, ed. Sonia Chadwick Hawkes, David Brown and James Campbell) (1979): 1–19.

ologies through the handling of names.[13] But place-names offer one of our only opportunities to see an Anglo-Saxon dealing with other British vernaculars in practice, a process made more interesting by the fact that place-names were often potentially lexically meaningful. They also, again, shed light on Bede's relationship to Britain's Latin traditions.

Our traditional narratives present a situation between the fifth and eighth centuries in which p-Celtic dialects were lower status varietes than English, Irish and Latin in most if not all regions. This argument is largely teleological, being based on the later linguistic situation and the fact that in areas which switched from p-Celtic, p-Celtic place-names tended to be lost on a large scale. It is not without contemporary evidential support, however. Latin, Irish and latterly Old English were used extensively in monumental inscriptions; Brittonic was not, while if Pictish was, then it was largely in the form of the Pictish symbols rather than an alphabetic script.[14] While the language of writing was usually Latin—as Bede's own output emphasises—by Bede's time, Irish already had a lively tradition of vernacular literature.[15] If the ascription of a number of Irish texts to him reflects genuine literary activity, this provides a context for the decision of King Aldfrith of Northumbria (r. c. 65–705), the son of Oswiu king of Northumbria and Fína the daughter of Colmán Rímid, king of Tara, to write in Irish rather than English or Latin, in both of which he seems to have enjoyed considerable facility.[16] English began to be used for writing

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13 Witnessed most clearly by his toponymic glossary to I Samuel, *Bedae Venerabilis opera pars II: opera exegetica 2. In primam partem Samvhelis libri IIII; In regvm librvm XXX qvaetiones*, ed. D. Hurst, Corpus Christianorum, series Latina 119 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1962), 273–287, though its focus is geographical rather than linguistic. See further A. H. Merrills, *History and Geography in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 242 (and, for Bede's interest in geography, chapter 4 generally); Diane Speed, "Bede's Mapping of England," in *Travel and Travellers from Bede to Dampier*, ed. Geraldine Barnes and Gabrielle Singleton (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2005), 9–23, accessed from <http://www.c-s-p.org/Flyers/9781904303510-sample.pdf> April 30th 2008 (esp. 9–12); on etymology in Bede generally, see for example Damien Bracken, "Virgil the Grammarian and Bede: A Preliminary Study," *Anglo-Saxon England* 36 (2005): 7–21, DOI 10.1017/S0263675106000020, at 7–15, and references therein.

14 See Forsyth, "Literacy".

15 See generally Andy Orchard, "Latin and the Vernacular: The Creation of a Bilingual Textual Culture," in *After Rome*, ed. Thomas Charles-Edwards (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 191–219.

16 Colin Ireland, "Aldfrith of Northumbria and the Irish Genealogies," *Celtica* 22 (1991): 64–78, accessed from <http://www.celt.dias.ie/publications/celtica> April 1st 2008; *Old Irish Wisdom Attributed to Aldfrith of Northumbria: An Edition of Bríatha Flainn Fhína maic Ossu*, ed. and trans. Colin A. Ireland, Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies 205 (Tempe, AZ: Arizona Center or Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 1999), 52–56; cf. Higham, *(Re-)Reading Bede*, 42–43.

glosses and probably law-texts around the later seventh century, and poetry—perhaps including some of our main long poems—during the eighth.[17] Writing in Brittonic might have begun by this time, but if so our evidence is for fewer and less diverse texts, while Pictish, as far as we can tell, never had a literary tradition.

As is to be expected, the present article largely supports this picture, but puts some flesh on the bones, and introduces some subtleties. I begin with Bede's depiction of the Synod of Whitby, proceeding to the evidence for Latin as a medium of spoken communication, and finishing with communication between speakers of different vernaculars. Bede's narratives afford no evidence for Latin as a spoken *lingua franca* between Anglo-Saxon and Irish churchmen, but do afford evidence for communication in the vernacular. This point is supported by Bede's ability to render some Irish names into English. However, Bede offers one or two hints that Britons retained their traditions of spoken Latin (whether or not Latin was still a mother tongue to any of them), including evidence for pronunciation which might derive from spoken communication. Moreover, it is possible to read his text to exhibit not only anxiety about obstacles in the way of Anglo-Saxons' access to Latin texts, but also a sense of competition with his British neighbours. Meanwhile, the prominence of Irish in Bede's conception of the Anglo-Saxon past contrasts with the virtual absence of anecdotal

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17 J. D. Pheifer, "Early Anglo-Saxon Glossaries and the School of Canterbury," *Anglo-Saxon England* 16 (1987): 17–44; for the early dating of Æthelberht's law-code see Lisi Oliver, *The Beginnings of English Law*, Toronto Medieval Texts and Translations 14 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 34–51; eighth-century poetry includes *Cædmon's Hymn* and that on the Ruthwell Cross and Franks Casket, *The Anglo-Saxon Minor Poems*, ed. Elliott Van Kirk Dobbie, The Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records 6 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1942), 105–106, 115–116; *Guthlac A* claims to have been composed during the lifetimes of the contemporaries of the eponymous saint (d.714), and I see no compelling reason to disbelieve the claim: Alaric Hall, "Constructing Anglo-Saxon Sanctity: Tradition, Innovation and Saint Guthlac," in *Images of Sanctity: Essays in Honour of Gary Dickson*, ed. Debra Higgs Strickland, Visualising the Middle Ages 1 (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 207–235, available at <http://www.alarichall.org.uk>, at 209; cf. Jeffrey J. Cohen, *Medieval Identity Machines*, Medieval Cultures 35 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), p. 121. For the key evidence that *Beowulf* and *Genesis A* should be eighth-century or little later see R. D. Fulk, *A History of Old English Meter* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992), 348–351.

reference to p-Celtic languages; there is also just enough evidence to argue that the absence of translations of p-Celtic names in the *Historia ecclesiastica* represents Bede's ignorance of p-Celtic as well as a desire to alienate Britons. Combining these approaches, we can perhaps perceive the power of vernacular English and Irish/Scottish ecclesiastical discourses to marginalise not only Brittonic-speaking, but also Latin-speaking Britons in the growing kingdom of Northumbria. This in turn affords new perspectives on the potential role of the Church in effecting language-change in early medieval Britain.

2. The Synod of Whitby

It is as well to start with Bede's single most striking portrayal of cross-linguistic communication, his detailed account of the Synod of Whitby (*HE* iii.25).

> Ueneruntque illo reges ambo, pater scilicet et filius; episcopi, Colman cum clericis suis de Scottia, Agilberctus cum Agathone et Uilfrido presbyteris. Iacobus et Romanus in horum parte erant; Hild abbatissa cum suis in parte Scottorum, in qua erat etiam uenerabilis episcopus Cedd, iamdudum ordinatus a Scottis, ut supra docuimus, qui et interpres in eo concilio uigilantissimus utriusque partis extitit... iussit rex et Agilberctum proferre in medium morem suae obseruationis, unde initium haberet, uel qua hunc auctoritate sequeretur. Respondit Agilberctus: "Loquatur, obsecro, uice mea discipulus meus Uilfrid presbyter, quia unum ambo sapimus cum ceteris, qui hic adsident, ecclesiasticae traditionis cultoribus; et ille melius ac manifestius ipsa lingua Anglorum, quam ego per interpretem, potest explanare, quae sentimus."
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> [And both the kings came there, that is both father and son; and the bishops Colmán, from *Scottia* (Ireland and Dál Riata) with his clerics, and Agilberct with his priests Agatho and Wilfrid. James and Romanus were on their side, and Abbess Hild and her followers on the side of the *Scotti*, which included even the venerable bishop Cedd, ordained by the *Scotti* long before as we described above; he also served as a very careful interpreter between the two parties in that council... The king ordered Agilberct too to make known his own practice, whence it had its origin, or by what authority it was followed. Agilberctus replied: "I request that my disciple, the priest Wilfrid, speak, because we both understand the same thing as the other supporters of our ecclesiastical tradition who sit alongside us here; and he can explain what we think better and more clearly himself in the language of the *Angli*, than I can through an interpreter."]

What I find striking here, and what seems to have escaped comment previously, is that without feeling any need for comment on the fact *per se*, Bede presented a major ecclesiastical meeting between people of different language backgrounds taking place not in what we might have assumed to be the *linga franca* of early medieval western Christendom, Latin, but in two vernaculars, English and Irish. It would be simple to assume that vernaculars were used at the Synod purely for the benefit of the kings present, since they were fluent in English and Irish but cannot be expected to have spoken Latin, and this is perhaps what previous scholars have silently concluded; any conclusions about the languages which churchmen of different language-backgrounds used, then, must be drawn from this passage only with caution. Even so, however, a close look at the detailed portrayal of interlinguistic communication which Bede offers here is revealing in a range of ways.

As I have mentioned, the complexities in interpreting any story of Bede's are numerous, but it is possible to establish some interpretative parameters. Bede's known (and perhaps only) source for the Synod of Whitby, chapter 10 of Stephanus's *Vita Wilfridi*, makes little mention of language issues.[18] According to Stephanus,[19]

> imperatum est ab Aegilberchto episcopo transmarino et Agathone presbitero suo, sancto Wilfritho presbitero et abbati suaviloqua eloquentia in sua lingua Romanae ecclesiae et apostolicae sedis dare rationem
> [Wilfrid, priest and abbot, was ordered by the foreign bishop Agilberht and Agatho his priest to present the case for the Roman Church and the apostolic seat with pleasing eloquence *in sua lingua*].

In sua lingua could mean 'in his own words', but also—and more obviously—'in his own language'.[20] The former interpretation is encouraged by Stephanus's dramatic portrayal of the participants agreeing about Saint Peter's guardianship of Heaven "una voce" ('with one voice'): although this is not to be taken as evidence for a common language, it promotes images of linguistic harmony rather than diversity, perhaps recalling of the Pentecost miracle in the Acts of the Apostles, 2.1–13, whereby the Holy Spirit enabled the Apostles to be heard by

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18 On the prospect of other written sources see Catherine Cubitt, *Anglo-Saxon Church Councils c.650–c.850* (London: Leicester University Press, 1995), 90.

19 *The Life of Bishop Wilfrid by Eddius Stephanus*, ed. Bertram Colgrave (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1927), 20 (ch. 10).

20 *Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources* (London: Oxford University Press, 1975–), s.v. "lingua."

each member of their diverse audience in his own language.[21] Bede, however, seems to have understood (or chosen to understand) Wilfrid to have been asked to speak in his native language.

In Goffart's reading of the *Historia ecclesiastica*, which saw Wilfrid's role in Northumbrian history to have been systematically downplayed, Bede wanted to ascribe Wilfrid's prominence over Agilberht more to the happy accident of his native language than his personal talents.[22] This could fit with Bede's claim earlier in the same book that Agilberht was dismissed from the West Saxon episcopacy because King Cenwealh, "qui Saxonum tantum linguam nouerat" ('who knew only the language of the *Saxones*') was tired of his "barbarae loquellae" ('barbarous speech;' *HE* iii.7). This has not widely been considered a plausible motive for the dismissal,[23] so conceivably Bede introduced the point partly to reduce our surprise at Agilberht's delegation of responsibility to Wilfrid at the Synod of Whitby. But Goffart's reading has recently met with convincing resistance,[24] and at any rate it seems unlikely that Bede would have developed Stephanus's fleeting hint at linguistic differences at the synod so thoroughly solely to explain Wilfrid's prominent participation. Bede's specification in the same chapter that King Oswiu was "illorum [Scotorum] etiam lingua optime inbutus" ('extremely able in their [the *Scotti*'s] language'), coupled with the details he provided about Cedd's role as an interpreter, shows an interest in the complexities of communication between

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21 Colgrave, *The Life of Bishop Wilfrid*, 22; *Biblia Sacra: Iuxta Vulgatam Versionem*, ed. Robert Weber, 2nd rev. ed, 2 vols. (Stuttgart: Württembergische Bibelanstalt, 1975), II 1699–1700.

22 Walter Goffart, *The Narrators of Barbarian History (A.D. 550–800): Jordanes, Gregory of Tours, Bede, and Paul the Deacon* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 311–312.

23 e.g., Crépin, "Bede and the Vernacular," 177; J. M. Wallace-Hadrill, *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People: A Commentary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 99–100; N. J. Higham, *The Convert Kings: Power and Religious Affiliation in Early Anglo-Saxon England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), 255. On Agilberht's language see further René Derolez, "Language Problems in Anglo-Saxon England: *barbara loquella* and *barbarismus*," in *Words, Texts and Manuscripts: Studies in Anglo-Saxon Culture Presented to Helmut Gneuss on the Occasion of his Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, ed. Michael Korhammer (Cambridge: Brewer, 1992), 285–292, at 287–289.

24 Higham, *(Re-)Reading Bede*, 63–69, esp. 65. For Goffart's own response to earlier criticisms, see his "Bede's History in a Harsher Climate," in *Innovation and Tradition in the Writings of the Venerable Bede*, ed. Scott DeGregorio, Medieval European Studies 6 (Morgantown: West Virginia University Press, 2006), 203–26. Cf. Keskiaho's article in this volume, pp. 126-28.

different language-groups that goes beyond a concern to reinterpret Wilfrid's role.

A more convincing ideological explanation for Bede's portrayal of the synod arises from his exegetical handling of the Pentecost miracle. As Merrills, building on the work of Tugene, has shown, the Acts of the Apostles was the text with which Bede engaged first and most often as a scholar, and his own *Historia ecclesiastica* was fundamentally indebted to it.[25] It might first be noted that in his commentary on the Babel story in Genesis, Bede claimed that a positive aspect of the division of language was that it left heretics split up and assailing one another's position rather than the Church's.[26] But despite Bede's passionate opposition to the non-Roman position in the Easter controversy, the multilingual character of the synod in his account can hardly be taken to represent the divergent bickering of heretics, since one side is right, and the overall outcome is a move (albeit partial) towards unity. The account does fit, however, with Bede's handling of the Pentecost miracle in his commentaries on both Genesis and Acts of the Apostles itself: unlike most early medieval commentators, he celebrated the linguistic diversity brought about by Babel, judging that, following the Pentecost miracle, "collecti ex omni natione quae sub caelo est populi, una et non dispari confessione ac fide, laudes et magnalia Dei resonarent" ('peoples, gathered from every nation under Heaven, were shouting the praise and greatness of God with a single and undivided confession and faith').[27] Bede's emphasis on multilingualism at Whitby almost certainly reflects this exegetical point.[28]

A desire to present unity of faith in multilingual communities, however, does not seem to me a sufficient explanation for Bede implying the absence of Latin as a *lingua franca* at the Synod of Whitby. One argument here is that the story does not actually end with unity, since Colman and some of his followers simply leave Northumbria (though Bede does wait until the following chapter before he admits this, facilii

25 *History*, pp. 240–49; Tugene, *L'idée*, 302–32.

26 *Bedae venerabilis opera, pars II: opera exegetica 1. Libri quatuor in principium Genesis usque ad nativitatem Isaac et eiectionem Ismahelis adnotationum*, ed. C. W. Jones, Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina 118a (Turnhout: Brepols, 1967), 161– 62 (3.11.8–9).

27 Jones, *Bedae venerabilis opera*, 152 (3.11.1). See further Robert Stanton, "Linguistic Fragmentation and Redemption before King Alfred," *The Yearbook of English Studies* 36 (2006): 12–26, at 19–23, on which this paragraph is based.

28 Cf. Merrills, *History*, 275–276.

tating a tone of unity at the end of iii.25). Another is that in the opening book of his *Historia ecclesiastica*, Bede famously portrayed Latin as a unifying language of the British Isles:

> Haec in praesenti, iuxta numerum librorum, quibus lex diuina scripta est, quinque gentium linguis, unam eandemque summae ueritatis et uerae sublimitatis scientiam scrutatur, et confitetur, Anglorum uidelicet, Brettonum, Scottorum, Pictorum et Latinorum, quae meditatione scripturarum ceteris omnibus est facta communis.
> [At the present time, just like the number of the books in which the divine law is written, one and the same wisdom of sublime truth and true sublimity is sought out and confessed in the languages of five peoples, namely the *Angli*, and *Brettones*, the *Scotti*, the *Picti*—and the *Latini*, which, through meditation on the scriptures, has been made common to all the others.]

This passage is, admittedly, problematic; my translation here is literal, to bring out points which will be important below. The key point here is that the passage surely shows that Bede was willing to identify Latin as a unifying language. It seems unlikely, then, that Bede would have claimed that the Synod of Whitby was undertaken in the vernacular if he actually believed it had been conducted in Latin.

If vernaculars were used at the Synod of Whitby for the benefit of the kings present, the choice may equally have been for the benefit of clerics: we have ample evidence that at Bede's time not only kings, but many monks and priests knew no Latin, nor could read; Bede himself stated in his *Epistola ad Ecgberhtum episcopum* that some Anglo-Saxon monks and priests "propriae tantum linguae notitiam habent" ('have familiarity only with their own language').[29] Bede did not remark on the presence of kings as the reason for communication in the vernacular even though his account is detailed with regard to their linguistic skills and the linguistic aspects of the synod generally. At any rate, kings and other laymen were frequently present at synods, so Whitby need not be unrepresentative.[30] Perhaps more interesting is

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29 *Venerabilis Baedae Historiam ecclesiam gentis Anglorum, Historiam abbatum, Epistolam ad Ecgberhtum una cum Historia abbatum auctore anoymo*, ed. Charles Plummer, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1896), I 409–410, at 410, cf. 418–419. See further the evidence gathered by Higham, *(Re-)Reading Bede*, 41–44 and Paul G. Remley, *Old English Biblical Verse: Studies in 'Genesis', 'Exodus' and 'Daniel'*, Cambridge Studies in Anglo-Saxon England 16 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 55–58.

30 Cubitt, *Anglo-Saxon Church Councils*, 44–49.

a tangential but nonetheless telling point: Bede presented Cedd as an interpreter for the parties. The only information which Bede gives in the *Historia ecclesiastica* which would explain Cedd's unusual abilities is that he had been trained by Finan on Lindisfarne (*HE* iii.21), which Bede characterised as Cedd's *domus* ('home'; *HE* iii.22). In Bede's conception, it was unremarkable that an Anglo-Saxon trained by Finan emerged fluent in Irish. Cedd's experience would be paralleled by that of the ninth-century bishop whom the Irishman Findan met among the Picts, "qui ... in Hibernia insula litteralibus erat studiis inbutus et eiusdem linguae notitia satis eruditus" ('who ... had been inbued with the study of letters in the island of Ireland and was well acquainted with the usage of its language'), except that Cedd did not go abroad to study, but merely to an Irish foundation.[31] This goes some way towards showing that the Irish vernacular was an important language for communication by churchmen in seventh-century England, even those whose Latin was good enough that they could become bishops.

Although the evidence is not unequivocal, then, the Synod of Whitby suggests that we should take Bede's statement that Latin had been made common to all the nations of Britian "meditatione scripturarum" ('through the study of the scriptures') not as a piously-phrased claim to the general use of Latin as a *lingua franca*, but to mean exactly and only what it says: that Latin was shared only as a literary, scholarly medium. This inference has ramifications for the history of multilingualism in three areas:

1. Whatever the specific impulses behind their use, it is clear that in Oswiu's Northumbria, as Bede envisaged it, English and Irish were both viable languages for ecclesiastical meetings, while what little we know of Cedd implies that to get ahead in an Irish-run monastery, one had to learn Irish; a young man wishing to make a career at Jarrow may have found English no less vital. If major ecclesiastical meetings and monastic education were conducted in the vernacular, then they were liable to affect the competitiveness

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31 Quoting from the text in Reidar Th. Christiansen, "The People of the North," *Lochlann: A Review of Celtic Studies* 2/*Norsk tidsskrift for sprogvidenskap*, supplementary volume 6 (1962), 137–164 (including a translation of the text by Kevin Ó Nolan pp. 155–164), at 151; this was reprinted from Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Scriptores 15.1 (Hannover: Hahn, 1883), available at <http://www.dmgh.de>, 502–506.

of vernacular languages as media of public discourse, particularly since, as Cubitt suggested, "provincial synods were probably the largest assemblies of their day."[32]

2.Although the significance of the point is hard to determine, the account emphasises that in some circumstances, it was easier to rely on interpreters than to use Latin as a *lingua franca*.

3.Despite the fact that Northumbria's inhabitants must have included Brittonic-speakers, clerics perhaps among them, Brittonic itself leaves no trace. This is merely an argument from silence, but as I discuss below, the silence in the *Historia ecclesiastica* is resounding. It seems that if these people wished to participate in a synod like that at Whitby, neither Brittonic nor Latin would help them: they would have needed access to the prestige vernaculars.

These points are generally consistent with other pointers towards the relative status of English, Irish, Brittonic and Pictish at Bede's time, sketched in my introduction. What they add are hints as to how these statuses were established and maintained.

3. Bede's attitudes to Anglo-Latin

Combined with the other evidence mentioned, then, the absence of Latin as a *lingua franca* from the Synod of Whitby can be used to question the potential status of Latin as a *lingua franca* in early medieval Britain. Certainly the evidence mentioned above—and the more extensive discussion afforded by Timofeeva in this volume—shows that we cannot simply assume, with Crépin, that

> Latin was all the more easily learnt as children entered the monastery quite young—Bede at seven—and henceforward were submitted to a kind of Latin intoxication. They had to learn Latin by heart, read Latin, chant Latin, speak Latin, write Latin, think Latin, dream Latin.[33]

Indeed, in at least some monasteries, English and Pictish novices may have been more likely to find themselves dreaming in Irish than Latin. However, although my arguments have relevance for how we guess

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32 Cubitt, *Anglo-Saxon Church Councils*, 39.
33 "Bede," 171; on Bede's Latinity generally see 173–174.

at the nature and quality of Latin-learning, that relationship is not simple. One reason for not speaking Latin would be complete ignorance; but it is also possible to read and write a language well without being able to understand a native speaker's speech at all. We also know that Latin accents varied according to educational policy and native language background, which could have affected communication between people of different educational backgrounds who could otherwise converse easily in Latin.[34]

Some of the evidence provided by Bede and contemporaneous Anglo-Saxon texts for Anglo-Saxons' inability to speak Latin is unambiguous; other evidence is susceptible of too broad a range of interpretation for it to be profitable to analyse it in detail here. What I want to pick up on here are two wider themes in Bede's writing, to contextualise my subsequent examination of his evidence for spoken British Latin: on the one hand the triumph of the Catholic Church over linguistic diversity, but on the other an anxiety at the difficulties for Anglo-Saxons of accessing the Church's teachings.[35]

That Bede considered Latin to be of high status, even in a specifically English context, is evident in various ways. One example is place-names: I have argued elsewhere that even where Bede did not know the Latin names of Roman places, sometimes he at least adverted to their previous identity by specifying that the names he gave were English.[36] This implies that they had had Latin names, and suggests that Bede was a little more sensitive to Roman naming-traditions in Britain than

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34 On Britons' pronunciation see below; and on Britons' and Irishmen's Anthony Harvey, "Notes on Old Irish and Old Welsh Consonantal Spelling," in *Celtic Linguistics/Ieithyddiaeth Geltaidd: Readings in the Brythonic Languages. Festschrift for T. Arwyn Watkins*, ed. Martin J. Ball, James Fife, Erich Poppe and Jenny Rowland, Amsterdam Studies in the Theory and History of Linguistic Science, Series IV: Current Issues in Linguistic Theory 68 (Amsterdam: Benjamins, 1990), 403–410; "Retrieving the Pronunciation of Early Insular Celtic Scribes: Towards and Methodology," *Celtica* 21 (1990): 178–190, available at <http://www.celt.dias.ie/publications/celtica>. On Irishmen's pronunciation specifically see Pádraig Breatnach, "The Pronunciation of Latin in Medieval Ireland," in *Scire litteras: Forschungen zum mittelalterlichen Geistesleben*, ed. Sigrid Krämer and Michael Bernhard, Abhandlungen (Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-Historische Klasse), neue Folge 99 (Munich: Verlag der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1988), 59–72; on Anglo-Saxons', Olga Timofeeva, this volume.

35 Cf. Tugene, *L'idée*, 294–302.

36 "The Evidence of Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum* for the Replacement of Roman Place-Names by English ones During the Anglo-Saxon Period," working paper available at <http://www.alarichall.org.uk> (when published the final version of the paper will continue to be available via this URL).

his explicit mention of such names would suggest. A few pointers also show that Bede considered that, where they had existed, Roman place-names were the more correct ones, the related vernacular forms being *corruptus*.[37] This leads on to the fact that Bede might at times give a (well-known) Roman place-name without an English equivalent even when he knew one, as shown by *Lugubalia*, named only in Latin in the *Historia ecclesiastica* but given the vernacular alternative *Luel* in Bede's earlier prose *Vita Cuthberti* and its anonymous source.[38] More prominent examples, whose vernacular names Bede must have known but never states, are *Eboracum*, York, known in Old English by the phonetically derived (though also folk-etymologised) name of *Eoforwic*, and *Doruuernis*, Canterbury, known as *Cantwaraburh*. This suggests the relatively high status of Latin in Bede's eyes.[39]

Turning to the narratives of the *Historia ecclesiastica*, Bede envisaged that one reason why the first Gregorian missionaries to England had contemplated turning back was that they did not know the language of the English. He made a point of the missionaries' acquisition of Frankish interpreters (*HE* i.23, 25), and also quoted Gregory's comment on Job 36.29–30 (essentially a statement of God's omnipotence),

> Ecce lingua Brittaniae, quae nil aliud nouerat quam barbarum frendere, iam dudum in diuinis laudibus Hebreum coepit alleluia resonare. Ecce quondam tumidus, iam substratus sanctorum pedibus seruit oceanus, eiusque barbaros motus, quos terreni principes edomare ferro nequiuerant, hos pro diuina formidine sacerdotum ora simplicibus uerbis ligant, et qui cateruas pugnantium infidelis nequaquam metueret, iam nunc fidelis humilium linguas timet.[40]

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37 "Rutubi portus, a gente Anglorum nunc corrupte Reptacæstir uocata" (i.1); "ad Lugubaliam, quae a populis Anglorum corrupte Luel vocatur" in the prose *Vita Cuthberti*, ed. Bertram Colgrave, *Two 'Lives' of Saint Cuthbert: A Life by an Anonymous Monk of Lindisfarne and Bede's Prose Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1940), 242 (ch. 27); see further on *Carlegion~Legacæstir* below.

38 *HE* iv.29; *Two 'Lives' of Saint Cuthbert: A Life by an Anonymous Monk of Lindisfarne and Bede's Prose Life*, ed. and trans. Bertram Colgrave (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1940), 122 and 124 (anonymous text) and 242 (Bede's text).

39 For further discussion see Mehan and Townsend, " 'Nation', " 10–13.

40 *HE* ii.1, quoting Gregory, *Moralia in Job* 17.11.21 (*S. Gregorii magni Moralia in Iob*, ed. Marcus Adriaen, *Corpus Christianorum series Latina* 143, 143a, 143b, 3 vols. (Turnhout: Brepols, 1979–85), III 1346).

[Behold the tongue of Britain, which did not know anything other than to gnash incomprehensibility: it has begun to resound, in divine praise, the *alleluia* of the Hebrews. Behold the ocean, once swollen: now, laid low, it serves at the feet of saints; and the mouths of priests, through divine awe, bind its barbarous movements, which terrestrial rulers had been unable to tame with iron. And he who, faithless, never feared hordes of warriors, now, faithful, fears the tongues of the humble.]

Here Gregory contrasted the barbarous pre-conversion communication of Britain with the communication of Christians, which he specifically associates with a Hebrew word, *alleluia*. Bede interpreted the passage to refer to the English and although he was almost certainly wrong (since Gregory's words probably predate Augustine's mission),[41] his reading resonated with later Anglo-Saxons: the short, neumed hymn on the conversion of the Anglo-Saxons by Gregory and Augustine added at the end of the *Vita sancti Dunstani* on folio 89v of British Library, Cotton Cleopatra B. xiii, in a hand dating from the first half of the eleventh century, concludes with the lines

Ecce lingua brittannie
frendens olim barbarie .
In trinitate unica
iam alleluia personat .
Prouentv euuangelice .[42]
[Behold the tongue of Britain
once gnashing incomprehensibility:
now in the single trinity
alleliua resounds,
through success of evangelical [preaching].]

Gregory may not have intended his description to refer to a linguistic divide, merely to the distinction between foolish and Christian speech, but Bede seems to have interpreted his words as referring to linguistic difference: in the *Historia ecclesiastica*, the quotation sets the scene for the famous anecdote relating Gregory the Great's pun-

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41 Clare Stancliffe, "The British Church and the Mission of Augustine," in *St Augustine and the Conversion of England*, ed. Richard Gameson (Stroud: Sutton, 1999), 107–51, at 112.

42 Transcribed from *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts in Microfiche Facsimile: Volume 8, Wulfstan Texts and Other Homiletic Materials*, ed. Jonathan Wilcox, Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies 219 (Tempe, AZ: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2000), text 185, with dating from Wilcox's description in the accompanying booklet.

ning association of *Anguli* ('Angles') with *angeli* ('angels') reported by Bede later in the same chapter, a story also found in chapter 9 of the anonymous Whitby *Liber beatae Gregorii papae* (which may have been Bede's source, and which Gregory's words in the *Moralia in Job* may originally have inspired).[43] Bede's interpretation of Gregory fitted nicely with his views of the Pentecost miracle, but it also represented a colonial discourse of civilised centre and barbarous periphery, articulated with reference to linguistic difference, which Bede found himself replicating.[44] Accordingly, it is possible to read Gregory's puns, as recounted by Bede, on the one hand

> as wrenching the vernacular language away from its autonomous use by the English themselves ... imposing Latin upon it as the bearer of all spiritually authentic meaning

and on the other as "the beginnings of a negotiation between two languages rather than the imposition of one upon the other."[45] Either way, however, Bede's handling of Gregory emphasises the theme of the linguistic divide between Anglo-Saxons and the centres of Roman Christianity. It is also worth noting that in the Whitby *Life*, which can be read as representing a more assertive Anglo-Saxon stance to Latin than Bede's, the boys who are the subject of Gregory's pun talk to Gregory themselves, implying a degree of Latinity and presenting the English as the active party in making contact with Rome; but in Bede's text, the boys are slaves and do not speak for themselves.[46] As in the account of the Synod of Whitby when compared with Stephanus's version, Bede again tends to emphasise obstacles to Anglo-Saxons' Latin communication.

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43 *The Earliest Life of Gregory the Great, by an Anonymous Monk of Whitby*, ed. Bertram Colgrave (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1968), 90–94. A case for the literate origins of the story, opening up the possibility that Gregory's writings themselves could have encouraged it, is made by Michael Richter, "Bede's *Angli*: Angles or English?" *Peritia* 3 (1984): 99–114, at 102–105 and Alan Thacker, "Memorializing Gregory the Great: The Origin and Transmission of a Papal Cult in the Seventh and Early Eighth Centuries," *Early Medieval Europe* 7 (1998): 59–84, DOI: 10.1111/1468-0254.00018, at 69–70.

44 On Gregory see further Stanton, "Linguistic Fragmentation," 14–17; on Bede's response see further Merrills, *History*, 276; on colonisation see Uppinder Mehan and David Townsend, " 'Nation' and the Gaze of the Other in Eighth-Century Northumbria," *Comparative Literature* 53 (2001): 1–26.

45 Mehan and Townend, " 'Nation' ," 9–10.

46 Mehan and Townend, " 'Nation' ," 13–25.

In a similar vein, Bede envisaged the Pictish King Nechtan stating that he and his people wished to follow Catholic custom despite being "tam longe a Romanorum loquella et natione" ('so distant from the speech/conversation and nation of the Romans;' *HE* v.21). Moreover, when Abbot Ceolfrid's long Latin letter on the subject arrived, "cum praesente rege Naitono multisque uiris doctioribus esset lecta, ac diligenter ab his, qui intellegere poterant, in linguam eius propriam interpretata" ('it was read in the presence of King Nechtan and many learned men, and carefully translated into his own language by those who could understand it;' *HE* v.21). This brief phrase leaves us with some important uncertainties. We do not know who Bede envisaged to have been doing the translating here: Picts who understood Latin? Northumbrian monks? Irish ones? Nor need the translation have been into Pictish: Clancy has gathered evidence for "the hybrid and no doubt bilingual nature of the aristocracy" of Nechtan's court, and Nechtan himself, making Irish a serious possibility.[47] In any case, Bede's portrayal may be based more on the Latinity of Northumbrian kings than Pictish ones.[48] But Bede's emphasis on a lack of lay access to Latin learning remains clear.

Notwithstanding possible overtones of Latin as a colonising language in some of Bede's material, his emphasis on challenges to communication with Roman Christianity can be read thus far as a celebration of the Christian, and English, triumph over adversity. But Bede was also anxious that the English had been, and to a large extent continued to be, excluded from Christian discourses by their inability to speak Latin. I have mentioned some evidence for this in the previous section. We may add that he wrote a large number of Latin works intended to educate people whose Latin was less strong than his own, and apparently made some English translations too, for monolinguals among the laity, monks and priests.[49] He considered that to be as fluent in Latin as in English testified to great learning.[50] Chapter 21 of his *Historia abbatum* bluntly depicts the companions of Abbot Ceolfrith, who died in the Romance-speaking settlement of Langres

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47 Thomas Owen Clancy, "Philosopher-King: Nechtan mac Der-Ilei," *The Scottish Historical Review* 83 (2004): 125–149, at 146. See further section 5 below.

48 Higham, *(Re-)Reading Bede*, 43.

49 See Judith McClure, "Bede's *Notes on Genesis* and the Training of the Anglo-Saxon Clergy," in *The Bible in the Medieval World: Essays in Memory of Beryl Smalley*, ed. Katherine Walsh and Diana Wood (Oxford: Blackwell, 1985), 17–30.

50 *HE* iv.2; v.20.

(about forty miles north of Dijon) in 717, as remaining there "inter eos, quorum nec linguam nouerant, pro inextinguibili patris affectu" ('among those whose language/idiom they had not learnt/were not acquainted with, out of inextinguishable love for their father').[51] The text emphasises these monks' piety, but also—whatever their precise linguistic skills—their inability to communicate with the native Latin-speakers of Langres.

Numerous other anecdotes from Bede's time elucidating Anglo-Saxons' problems with Latin communication could be adduced—among them the request by the secular noble Berhtfrith that Wilfrid translate a papal judge   ment;[52] the apparent ability of Wilfrid's party to understand Pope John VI's Latin in contradistinction to his Greek;[53] Boniface's ability orally to translate a passage of scripture read out by the future Saint Gregory of Utrecht, which Gregory himself could vocalise but not understand;[54] or Boniface's own difficulty in discussing matters of theology orally with Pope Gregory II.[55] All are too open to interpretation to use as evidence for the precise detail of speakers' abilities, but all remind us of the extent to which Anglo-Saxons could find themselves struggling to cope in communicating with the Roman world.

4. British Latin
Anglo-Saxons' access to Latin clearly varied, and Bede preferred in his *Historia ecclesiastica* to strike a tone of communicative success, facilitated by divine beneficence against long odds. But I have suggested that we can also identify real anxiety concerning the obstacles between

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51 Plummer, C., *Venerabilis Baedae Historiam*, I 386.
52 Colgrave, *The Life of Bishop Wilfrid*, 130 (ch. 60).
53 Colgrave, *The Life of Bishop Wilfrid*, 112 (ch. 53).
54 *Luidgeri vita Gregorii Abbatis Traiectensis*, ed. O. Holder-Egger, Monumenta Germaniae historica, Scriptores (in folio) 15 part 1 (Hannover: Hahn, 1887), 63–79, available at <http://www.dmgh.de>, at 68.
55 *Vitae Sancti Bonifatii Archiepiscopi Moguntini*, ed. Wilhem Levison, Monumenta Germaniae historica, Scriptores rerum Germanicarum in usum scholarum separatim editi 57 (Hanover: Hahn, 1905), 28; see further Roger Wright, *A Sociophilological Study of Late Latin*, Utrecht Studies in Medieval Literacy 10 (Turnhout, Brepols, 2002), 95–109 (trans. from 'Latino e Romanzo: Bonifazio e it Papa Gregorio II', in *La preistoria dell'italiano: Atti della tavola rotondo di linguistica storica, Università Ca' Foscari di Venezia, 11-13 giugno 1998*, ed. J. Herman and A. Marientti (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2000), pp. 219–29).

Anglo-Saxons and the Latin language, and a sense of precariousness regarding achievements in Latin-learning. Different implications arise on both counts, however, from the sole explicit appearance of British Latin in the *Historia ecclesiastica*. Bede (*HE* v.9) tells us that the priest Ecgberht

> in Germania plurimas nouerat esse nationes, a quibus Angli uel Saxones, qui nunc Brittaniam incolunt, genus et originem duxisse noscuntur; unde hactenus a uicina gente Brettonum corrupte Garmani nuncupantur
> [knew that there were many peoples *in Germania* (on the Germanic-speaking Continent), from whom the *Angli*, or *Saxones*, who now inhabit Britain, are known to derive their stock and origin—for which reason they are incorrectly still called *Garmani* by the neighbouring nation of the Britons].

The form *Garmani* corresponds with a development of *er > ar* widespread in Vulgar Latin. This is attested in Roman inscriptions in Britain and also a number of Latin loan-words in Welsh (including the personal name *Garmon < Germanus*). Meanwhile, the development of *er > ar* is not attested in the insular Brittonic languages, so we must assume that *Garmani* represents a Latin form rather than a Latinisation by Bede of a Brittonic form.[56] Bede presents us, then, with a plausible British Latin usage.

Why did Bede comment at this point in his *Historia ecclesiastica* on what the Britons called the Anglo-Saxons? Ostensibly, he was simply providing some semantic evidence for the origins of the Anglo-Saxons; if we view his motives generously, we might say that he coupled it with a detail about British pronunciation as a point of philological interest. But this is an insufficient explanation: Bede had already discussed the Germanic origins of the Anglo-Saxons in detail, adducing a range of sources, without referring to Britons' usage of *Germani*.[57] The reason

Kenneth Hurstone Jackson, *Language and History in Early Britain: A Chronological Survey of the Brittonic Languages, First to Twelfth Century A.D.*, University of Edinburgh Publications, Languages and Literature Series 4 (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1953), 281; J. N. Adams, "British Latin: The Text, Interpetation and Language of the Bath Curse Tablets," *Britannia* 23 (1992): 1–26, at 12–13. For the appearance of the development in Breton see Peter Schrijver, "The Rise and Fall of British Latin: Evidence from English and Brittonic," in *The Celtic Roots of English*, ed. Markku Filppula, Juhani Klemola and Heli Pitkänen, Studies in Languages 37 (Joensuu: University of Joensuu, Faculty of Humanities, 2002), 87–110, at 99. Contrast *germanwr* cited below.

The information in *HE* I.15 may be a late addition to the work (Philip Bartholomew, "Continental Connections: Angles, Saxons and Others in Bede and in Procopius," *Anglo-Saxon Studies in Archaeology and History* 13 (2005): 19–30, at 20) but Book I's discussion of the Anglo-Saxons' migrant status would still be substantial without it.

why Bede brought Britons up in Book V was surely to underscore his claim that they had never tried to convert the English—contrasting them with Ecgberht, who desired to convert the relatives of the English.[58] This point affords an example of a key theme in the *Historia ecclesiastica*; my concern here, however, is to assess what Bede's jibe tells us about British Latin.

Firstly, the form *Garmani* implies continuity in the traditions of British Latin learning and pronunciation in a period which, falling between the remarkable Latin fluency of Gildas and the next extensive piece of British Latin prose, the *Historia Brittonum*, we have little clear evidence for British Latin.[59] British Latin pronunciation also appears to have extended beyond Bede's time: nearly three centuries later, this time in Wessex, the preface to Ælfric's *Grammar* comments that

> miror valde quare multi corripiunt sillabas in prosa, quae in metro breves sunt, cum prosa absoluta sit a lege metri, sicut pronuntiant "pater" Brittonice et "malus" et similia, quae in metro habentur breves. Mihi tamen videtur melius invocare D*eum* patrem honorifice producta sillaba, quam Brittonice corripere, quia nec Deus arti grammatice subiciendus est.
> [it absolutely amazes me how many people corrupt those syllables of prose which in metre are breves, when prose should be free from the rules of metre; thus they pronounce *pater*, *malus* and the like in the British way, which they have as breves in metre. To me, however, it seems better to invoke God the Father with a worshipfully enounced syllable, than to corrupt it in British fashion, because God is not placed below the art of grammar.][60]

This comment must reflect the partial preservation of etymological vowel-length in spoken British Latin, a phenomenon also attested in Latin loans into Welsh and which almost certainly shows continuity from the pronunciation of Latin as a mother tongue in Roman

58 Cf. Higham, *(Re-)Reading Bede*, 134–42.

59 For the prospect of Northern British Latin writing around Bede's time, see John Thomas Koch, *The 'Gododdin' of Aneirin: Text and Context from Dark-Age North Britain* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1997), cx–cxxvii.

60 *Ælfric's Prefaces*, ed. Jonathan Wilcox, Durham Medieval Texts 9 (Durham: Durham Medieval Texts, 1994), 115.

Britain.[61] Ælfric's south-western evidence encourages the conclusion that the distinctive British Latin to which Bede referred was part not only of an old but also an ongoing British tradition of pronunciation.

A second implication of the form *Garmani* is simply that Bede somehow knew of this pronunciation. It is possible that he had simply seen the form in one or more British Latin documents, in which case the form and usage could predate his own time; but if so, he was generalising dramatically to attribute the usage to the whole *gens Brettonum*. Moreover, although it is an argument from silence, it might also be supposed that a British Latin document mentioning *Garmani* in the sense of 'Anglo-Saxons' would have been an interesting source for Bede, and although he mentions the Briton Gildas, he mentions no other such source. On balance, Bede's statement suggests that Anglo-Saxons sometimes heard British Latin. It would be possible to hear it during the liturgy; but since *Germanus* is very unlikely to have occured in liturgical material in this sense, Bede's comments on its semantics indicate that other kinds of Latin communication took place, militating against the idea that Latin was never used as a *lingua franca*. Developing this point is hard because it is hard to guess whether Bede had heard *Garmani* first hand or knew it as hearsay (perhaps even as a comical stereotype). The furthest we can go is to note evidence that Bede had at least probably met people who had met British clerics.[62]

Either way, these points relate to a third implication, arising from Bede's own main point, which is to comment on the British Latin lexis: *Germani* was used of the Anglo-Saxons by the Britons, but it

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61 Melinda J. Menzer, "Speaking *Brittonice*: Vowel Quantities and Musical Length in Ælfric's *Grammar*," *Peritia*, 16 (2002): 26–39, at 28–30. At 33 she argued that *prosa* here refers specifically to liturgical texts, on the grounds that vowel-length would have a significant effect there, whereas "it seems extreme for Ælfric to express himself so passionately about how the Welsh speak Latin in everyday conversation." Her interpretation is possible, but Ælfric, like Bede (and perhaps indeed partly under the influence of the *Historia ecclesiastica*), may have objected so strongly to British Latin pronunciation because of its implications for cultural identity; it is noteworthy in this connection that the comments quoted were prominently placed at the end of his preface.

62 Perhaps the clearest evidence is that he knew Pecthelm (*HE* v. 13, 18, 23), who was made the first bishop over the see of Whithorn, then doubtless at least partly a p-Celtic speaking region, around 700 and who seems likely to have been in touch with Gallovidian traditions of the Brittonic saint Uinniau (known to the Irish as Findan and to the English, in this argument, as Ninian): Thomas Owen Clancy, "The Real St Ninian," *The Innes Review* 52 (2001): 1–28; James E. Fraser, "Northumbrian Whithorn and the Making of St Ninian," *The Innes Review* 53 (2002): 40–59.

seems that Bede considered that Britons not only mispronounced this word, but misused it too. Elsewhere, Bede only used *Germani* to denote Continental Germanic peoples, but the Britons used it of the English.[63] This claim is admittedly paralleled in our Welsh and British Latin sources only by the unique, poetic Middle Welsh compound *Germanwr* 'Germanic man,' since the usual term, in British Latin as on the Continent in Bede's time, was, in Latin, *Saxones* and, in Welsh (giving the Modern Welsh form), *Seisnig*—but since Bede's phonological information seems plausible, it is reasonable to consider his semantic information to be plausible too.[64] Bede seems to be suggesting that Anglo-Saxons know how they and their relatives should be named in Latin better than Britons do. Whether other Anglo-Saxons would have agreed with Bede is open to question: Aldhelm at any rate styled himself as "Germanicae gentis cunabulis confotum" ('nurtured in the cradles of the Germanic people') in chapter 142 of his *De metris* around perhaps the 670s.[65] An implication of the labelling of Anglo-Saxons as *Germani* which probably suited many Britons was that they properly belonged in *Germania* rather than in *Britannia*; Bede's comment, conversely, doubtless relates to his distinctive championing of the ethnic label of *Angli* for the Germanic peoples in Britain, marking a break with their heathen past and adverting to a narrative of divine sanction for their presence on the island.[66] At any rate, Bede shows that the usage of Latin ethnonyms had become a site of competition in his construction of Anglo-Saxon identities in contradistinction to British ones.

To Bede's fleeting textual evidence for the vivacity of British Latin, we may add a little onomastic evidence. Stancliffe has emphasised that Bede's spelling of the Brittonic names *Brocmail* and *Dinoot* seems to reflect Old Welsh spelling conventions, which suggests that these names, and the stories in which they occur, were accessed via British

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63 *HE* i.2, 15, 21; iii.13; cf. *De temporum ratione* XV (*Bedae venerabilis opera, Pars VI: Opera Didascalica*, ed. C. W. Jones, Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina 123a, 123b, 2 vols. (Turnhout: Brepols, 1975–77), II 331.

64 *Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru/A Dictionary of the Welsh Language* (Cardiff: Gwasg Prifysgol Cymru, 1950–2003), s.v; Richter, "Bede's *Angli*."

65 *Aldhelmi Opera*, ed. Rudolf Ehwald, Monumenta Germanicae Historica, Auctores Antiquissimi 15, 3 vols. (Berlin: Weidmann, 1919), available at <http://www.dmgh.de>, 202.

66 For a survey and development of this issue see Erin Thomas A. Dailey, "The *Vita Wilfridi* and the *Vita Gregorii*: Their Place in Early English Ethnogenesis," forthcoming; cf. Richter, "Bede's *Angli*."

Latin documents.[67] Rivet and Smith observed that Bede not only used a large number of Roman place-names which he could have learnt from known Roman or ecclesiastical texts, but also gave a number of place-names which are Latinisations of ancient p-Celtic names for which he seems not to have had Roman written sources: *Campodunum* (probably at Leeds; *HE* ii.14), *Cataracta/Cataracto* (Catterick, *HE* ii.14, 20, iii.14), and *Deruuentio* (referring to the Derwent in Yorkshire in *HE* ii.9 and 13 and the one in Cumbria in iv.29) appear nowhere else in surviving records. Rivet and Smith also inferred that Bede's form *Uenta* (used of Winchester, *HE* iii.7 *et passim*) probably came through "ecclesiastical tradition, presumably continuous in this instance from late Romano-British times," while none of our other surviving written sources for *Calcaria* (Tadcaster, *HE* iv.23) or *Lugubalia* (Carlisle, *HE* iv.29) was known to Bede.[68] Bede is also a key witness to the English adoption of the Latin name *Verulamium* (now St Albans) into English, apparently directly from Latin, as *Uerlamacæstir* (*HE* i. 7).[69] It is hard to doubt that Bede received at least some of these names ultimately from British Latin traditions.

The minimalist and maximalist interpretations of the evidence of the *Historia ecclesiastica* for British Latin are distant: at the extremes we might imagine Bede on the one hand chatting to a local British priest who spoke Latin as a mother tongue (Bede's racist attitude to Britons, in this reading, not precluding friendly relations with indi-

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67 "The British Church," 126–128. Paul Cavill, "Bede and Cædmon's Hymn," in *'Lastworda Betst': Essays in Memory of Christine E. Fell with her Unpublished Writings*, ed. Carole Hough and Kathryn A. Lowe (Donington: Tyas, 2002), 1–17, at 4-5, has made the same suggestion regarding Bede's spelling of the etymologically Brittonic name *Cædmon*. <m> in Anglo-Saxon spelling represented /m/, but in Brittonic and British Latin at this time, the graph would have been pronounced /v/, and had the name *Cædmon* been transmitted orally from eighth-century Brittonic, we would expect it to have been spelt **Cæduon* or **Cædfon* by Bede. However, *Cædmon* could have entered the English name-stock at a time when the consonant /μ/ still existed in Brittonic, which we would expect to see borrowed as Old English /m/, or might simply show assimilation to the Old English name-element *monn*. For a recent discussion of related evidence see Duncan Probert, "Mapping Early Medieval Language Change in South-West England," in *Britons in Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. Nick Higham, Publications of the Manchester Centre for Anglo-Saxon Studies 7 (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2007), pp. 231–44, at 237–40.

68 A. L. F. Rivet and Colin Smith, *The Place-Names of Roman Britain* (London: Batsford, 1979), s.vv. *Calcaria*, *Cambodunum*, *Cataractonium*, *Derventio*[1], *Luguvalium*, *Venta Belgarum*, quoting from 492; cf. Smith, "Romano-British Place-Names," 4–6 and 9, where he attributes Bede's form *Uenta* to Gildas.

69 Richard Coates, "Verulamium, the Romano-British Name of St Albans," *Studia Celtica*, 39 (2005): 169–76.

viduals), or on the other reading an imperial administrative document. What we probably can say is that for Bede, England's Roman past and its naming traditions had a legitimacy which English could not quite match up to, and somewhere in the tradition underlying the *Historia ecclesiastica*, some Roman names were being established from British Latin sources. The combination of these points with the evidence of continuity from Roman Latin to British Latin pronunciation, the communication of this pronunciation to Bede, and the fact that the British use of ethnonyms seems to have irked Bede hints that British Latin was reasonably vivacious.

Setting this reading alongside Bede's concerns about Anglo-Saxons' abilities in and access to Latin, we might even perceive a certain self-consciousness on Bede's part at the Anglo-Saxons' lack of a Latinate heritage in the face of a British society which both had a Latinate heritage and was maintaining it. In my translation of Bede's famous enumeration of the five languages of Britain above, I made a point of translating phrases like *lingua Anglorum* as 'the language of the English' even though they were an unmarked way of saying 'the English language.' The literal translation brings out two important points. The first is that Bede implicitly correlated language with ethnicity, a point which can be paralleled in other Anglo-Saxon sources.[70] The second is that Bede's phrase *lingua gentis Latinorum*, unlike the usual and less ethnically charged *lingua Latina*, *was* marked.[71] As Tugene emphasised, Bede's term surely implies that Latin was an ethnic language

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70 Tugene, *L'idée*, 294, suggested that "en fait, si langue et nation sont mises en relation à cette époque, c'est surtout dans les spéculations théoriques des clercs" ('in fact, if language and nation are linked in this period, this is primarily in the theoretical speculation of clercs'), perhaps influenced by Walter Pohl's influential "Telling the Difference: Signs of Ethnic Identity," in *Strategies of Distinction: The Construction of Ethnic Communities, 300–800*, ed. Walter Pohl and Helmut Reimitz, The Transformation of the Roman World 2 (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 17–69. But this surely underrates the fact that the Old English words *þeod* and *geþeode* could mean both 'nation' and 'language': Bede's correlation, I think, reflects deep-seated attitudes among Anglo-Saxons. Cf. Julia M. H. Smith, *Europe after Rome: A New Cultural History 500–1000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 17 (citing the Old English *Genesis A* lines 1684–1690: *Genesis A: A New Edition*, ed. A. N. Doane (Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1978), 161).

71 A rough and ready search of the *Patrologia Latina Database*, <http://pld.chadwyck.co.uk>, is sufficient to make the point: the strings *lingua Anglorum* and *Anglorum lingua* together produce 20 hits in 10 entries, whereas *anglica lingua* and *lingua anglica* produce 8 hits in 8 entries. By contrast, while the strings *Latinorum lingua* and *lingua Latinorum* produce one hit (and *Romanorum lingua*/*lingua Romanorum* three), the strings *latina lingua* and *lingua latina* afford 481 hits in 336 entries.

in some sense on the same level as the vernaculars of Britain.[72] His reading was that this reflects Bede's views on the Pentecost miracle, which celebrated lingustic diversity in doctrinal conformity,[73] a reading to which I have no objections. However, I also suggest that the term *lingua Latinorum* may have helped Bede to wrest a Latin-speaking identity from the Britons by linking it with an ethnic identity to which they had no claim. Bede avoided any implication of Latin as a native language of Britain at the beginning of his *Historia* by labelling it the *lingua gentis Latinorum* ('language of the people of the *Latini*'), and having emphasised that fact later by dividing Britain into four languages (those of the Britons, Picts, Irish and English, *HE* iii.6), his comment in Book V that Anglo-Saxons were called *Garmani* "a uicina gente Brettonum" looks like a slip, accidentally aligning the speech of the Britons with Latin. Perhaps, then, Bede's aside reveals more about the strength of British Latin than he meant it to.

5. Vernacular multilingualism

I turn now to the vernaculars in Bede's writing. I have already mentioned his prominent identification of four of these, those of the Britons, Irish, Picts and English (*HE* i.1; iii.6), but it is worth adding that Bede was also sensitive to variation within English itself. His comment that the noble origin of the captive thegn Imma was recognised by, amongst other things, his *sermones* ('utterances, speech') is in fact our principal evidence for the existence of social register in Old English at any period (*HE* iv.22). It is also possible that when Bede mentioned that King Cenwealh spoke only the *lingua Saxonum*, he was perhaps distinguishing it not only from Agilbert's Latin, but his own native *lingua Anglorum*: the famous list of kings who ruled "in regibus gentis Anglorum cunctis australibus" ('in all the southern regions of the people of the English') includes "Caelin rex Occidentalium Saxonum, qui lingua ipsorum Ceaulin uocabatur" ('Caelin king of the West Saxons, who in their language is called Ceaulin;' *HE* ii.5). It is not unlikely that this distinction between the Northumbrian *Cælin* and West Saxon *Ceawlin* reflects the spelling of the name in a written source of Bede's, so his comments here may simply reflect his desire to preserve the

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72 Tugene, *L'idée*, 55–58, and more generally and more subtly on 293–32.

73 T 293–32; cf. Merrills, *History*, 274–276.

spelling of his source while making it comprehensible to his audience; certainly Tugene inferred from Bede's decision not to linger on this point that "il ne s'intéresse pas aux implications politiques de la situation dialectale" ('he does not concern himself with the political implications of the dialectal situation').[74] All the same, Bede's words betray an awareness of dialectal difference, conceptualised along ethnic lines, and the possibility remains that they reflect Bede's awareness through spoken language of the West Saxon development known as palatal diphthongisation.[75]

Meanwhile, Bede is explicit that some Anglo-Saxons were monolingual English-speakers, from King Cenwealh to the many *idiotae* ('uneducated people') of Bishop Ecgberht's flock for whom he prescribed the learning of the Lord's Prayer and the Apostle's Creed in the vernacular (presumably meaning English, but conceivably other vernaculars too). When Bede does explicitly present bilingual Anglo-Saxons, he portrays them as exceptions rather the rule; and these appear concerning interactions between English and Irish. In addition to his account of the Synod of Whitby, we have his portrayal of Bishop Aidan's first preaching in Bernicia (in 635; *HE* iii.3):

> pulcherrimo saepe spectaculo contigit, ut euangelizante antistite, qui Anglorum linguam perfecte non nouerat, ipse rex suis ducibus ac ministris interpres uerbi existeret caelestis; quia nimirum tam longo exilii sui tempore linguam Scottorum iam plene didicerat
> [one was often touched by a truly beautiful sight as the bishop, who did not have a full command of the language of the *Angli*, was evangelising: that the king himself served as the interpreter of the celestial word for his ealdormen and thegns, doubtless because, the period of his exile being so long, he had learned the language of the *Scotti* thoroughly].

It is worth emphasising that *nimirum* ('doubtless, truly, evidently') here suggests that Bede was inferring how King Oswald knew Irish, so the point may be a better guide to what Bede thought plausible than to what actually happened. Either way, he does not seem to have viewed Irish as a normal part of an English king's accompishments.

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74 *L'idée*, 294.

75 Cf. Tugene, *L'idée*, 295. See further Wallace-Hadrill, *Bede's "Ecclesiastical History"*, 59, 220. Rollason, *Northumbria*, 117 suggested that "it is clear ... that 'Northumbrian' did not diverge greatly from other dialects of Old English and was certainly not the sort of distinctive language which would have contributed to defining a people's identity," but small linguistic variations can bear considerable cultural importance.

More striking, perhaps, is the otherwise unusual evidence provided here that Irish clerics learnt English—albeit, in Aidan's case, imperfectly. These inferences are consistent with Bede's description of how Aidan appeared unexpectedly sad at a feast held by Oswine king of Deira shortly before Oswine's murder in 651, and how Aidan's priest enquired why "suus lingua patria, quam rex et domestici eius non nouerant" ('in his native language, which the king and his household did not understand;' *HE* iii.14). Again, it seems that knowledge of Irish was not normal, and we might take as implicit in the story the idea tht Aidan and his priest were otherwise speaking English. These anecdotes supplement Bede's account of the Synod of Whitby to suggest that during Aidan's period of activity in Northumbria (c. 635–51) the ability to understand Irish in the courts of Northumbrian kings was not common, but also that most Northumbrians in royal circles would have heard Irish. If this was true in Oswiu's time, it would have been no less true in the reign of his son and successor Aldfrith (685–c. 705), whose mother tongue was Irish and whose upbringing had been at least partly in Ireland.[76]

Outside Bede's listings of the languages of Britain, p-Celtic languages, by contrast with English and Irish, are never mentioned as such in the *Historia ecclesiastica*—they appear only implicitly, in the form of names. Since Bede was keen on presenting the spread of the (Roman) Christian message as a triumph in the face of linguistic barriers, in the spirit of the Pentecost miracle, and objected to the Britons' (supposed) failure to evangelise the English, it made sense to imply that it would have been easy for them to talk to the English, contrasting this with the detail given on the linguistic challenges which Irish missionaries faced and overcame. The question here is whether we can move beyond this point to wider sociolinguistic conclusions.

A clue is of course offered by the roughly contemporary Anglo-Saxon mention of Brittonic in Felix's *Vita sancti Guthlaci* (composed between 714 and 754): Guthlac awakes one night in his hermitage thinking that he hears a noisy crowd, and

> verba loquentis vulgi Brittanicaque agmina tectis succedere agnoscit; nam ille aliorum temporum praeteritis voluminibus inter illos exulabat, quoadusque eorum strimulentas loquelas intelligere valuit.

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76 Ireland, "Aldfrith," esp. 67 – 68; Michael Lapidge, "The Career of Aldhelm," *Anglo-Saxon England* 36 (2007): 15 – 69, DOI: 10.1017/S0263675100000028, at 22–26.

[recognised the words of a speaking crowd and that British hordes were approaching his home; for he had lived among them in exile in the past events of other times, for which reason he was able to understand their *strimulentae* utterances.]

It turns out, in fact, that the voices are those of demons—whose Brittonic speech is characterised as "strimulentas loquelas." *Strimulens* appears to be a *hapax legomenon*, presumably with some onomatapoeic quality; Colgrave offered 'sibilant,'[77] but whatever the case it seems not to have been a positive characteristic: manuscripts A_2, E_2 and G (of which A_2 is a tenth-century Anglo-Saxon manuscript) give the unambiguous "barbaras loquelas" ('barbaric speech'). Likewise, although the Old English translation of this passage (of uncertain age, but probably written by the end of the ninth century) mentions simply a "mycel werod þara awyrgendra gasta on bryttisc sprecende" ('great troop of those accursed spirits speaking Brittonic'), the focus of interest for the translator is shown by his title for the chapter: "Hu þa deofla on brytisc spræcon" ('How the devils spoke in Brittonic').[78] Rather than being an incidental detail in an exemplum on the theme of faith, the fact that the demons speak Brittonic becomes the message of the story. Moreover, the fact that Guthlac understands Brittonic seems to require explanation, suggesting that this was an unusual skill for aristocratic or monastic Anglo-Saxons. Together, these points suggest that Brittonic was viewed as an ugly language for a demonised people, a view presumably arising from general racism rather than some specific gripe about Britons' failure to evangelise the English. Such views would, of course, have made Brittonic less competitive in English public spheres.

A little more purchase on Bede's attitudes to Irish and Brittonic is afforded by his handling of place-names. There are, naturally enough, far fewer Irish place-names than English ones in the *Historia ecclesiastica*—only four—but Bede handles them in much the same way as the English ones: he accurately translates *Dearmach* as "campus roborum" ('field of oaks;' iii.4) and *Inisboufinde* as "insula uitulae albae"

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77 *Felix's Life*, 111.
78 *Das angelsächsische Prosa-Leben des hl. Guthlac*, ed. Paul Gonser, Anglistische Forschungen 27 (Heidelberg: Winter, 1909), 135–136; as pointed out by Cohen, *Medieval Identity Machines*, 144. On dating see Jane Roberts, "Hagiography and Literature: The Case of Guthlac of Crowland," in *Mercia: An Anglo-Saxon Kingdom in Europe*, ed. Michelle P. Brown and Carol A. Farr (London: Leicester University Press, 2001), 69–86, at 77–80, 84–85.

('island of the white calf;' iv. 4). Nor were these the only occasions when he sought to mediate unfamiliar Irish names to his audience. On introducing the *Dalreudini* in the first chapter of the *HE*, Bede etymologised their name as deriving from that of their leader Reuda, proceeding to add that the *Dalreudini* must be named after him "nam lingua eorum daal partem significat" ('because in their language *daal* means a *pars* ('part', here in the sense 'dynasty')'). Earlier references in Scottish and Irish sources show that the name *Reuda* has its origin in the Irish cultural zone, and Bede's story seems likely too to represent a Dál Riatic origin myth, strengthening the evidence for ties between him and Irish-speaking sources.[79] Not only does Bede correctly mediate the Old Irish word *dál* into Latin, but in doing so he will have prompted his readers to recall the similar Old English word *dāl* 'a part,' not least because it seems in Northumbrian usage to have been as common as the better-attested form *dǣl*.[80] Meanwhile, on the two occasions when Bede gives etymologically Irish names without translating them (*Rathmelsigi* iii.27, *Mag éo~Muig éo* iv.4), he does specify that they *lingua Scottorum appellatur*, both showing that he at least recognised Irish in these cases and mitigating possible confusion and so alienation on the part of the reader.[81] How much Irish Bede knew cannot be judged from this evidence, but it suggests at least a superficial knowledge of core vocabulary and a willingness to mediate between Irish names and Latin textuality on much the same terms as English ones.

Bede's handling of English and Irish names contrasts with his handling of names derived from the name-stock of Britain's p-Celtic speakers; these are numerous in the *Historia ecclesiastica*.[82] Some,

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79 James Fraser, "Dux Reuda and the Corcu Réti," in *Cànan & Cultur/Language and Culture: Rannsachadh na Gàighlig 3*, ed. Wilson McLeod, James E. Fraser and Anja Gunderloch (Edinburgh: Dunedin Academic Press, 2006), 1–9.

80 *Dictionary of the Irish Language: Based Mainly on Old and Middle Irish Materials* (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 1913–75), available at <http://www.dil.ie>, s.v. "1 dál;" *Dictionary of Old English: A to G online*, ed. Angus Cameron, Ashley Crandell Amos, Antonette diPaolo Healey, et al. with web interface by Peter Mielke and Xin Xiang (Toronto: DOE project, 2007), <http://www.doe.utoronto.ca>, s.vv., esp. "dāl" §B.

81 Accordingly, when Bede mentions the island of Iona (*Hii* iii.3), which was associated for him with the Irish monk Aidan, he does not claim its name to have been Irish—and indeed it is not, rather being of obscure etymology.

82 Moreover, I have suggested that Bede may have alluded to more Brittonic names tacitly by specifying that some names were *lingua Anglorum*, implying that there may have been alternative forms: "The Evidence of Bede's *Historia*".

admittedly, are of obscure etymology even to specialists today (e.g., *Badonicus mons*; *HE* i.16), or are old Roman names functioning in the *Historia ecclesiastica* as Latin names (as with the examples given in the previous section). Others still may have been too fully assimilated to the Old English name-stock for their p-Celtic character to have been noteworthy or even apparent (e.g., the tribal name *Bernicii*; *HE* ii.14 *et passim*). Even so, we may list at least seven reasonably transparently meaningful p-Celtic place-names in Bede's text—more, at any rate, than the transparently meaningful Irish place-names in the text: *Alcluith* ('rock of the Clyde'), *Aebbercurnig* ('mouth of the Cornie'), *Bancor* ('wattled fence'), *Carlegion* ('fortress of the legions'), *Mailmin* ('bare hill' or 'prince's edge'), *Mailros* ('blunt promontory' or 'bare moor'), and *Peanfahel* ('end of the wall', with an Irish second element).[83]

By contrast with English and Irish names, there is no straighforward case of Bede translating a p-Celtic name. He did translate *Densisesburna*, whose first element seems etymologically to be p-Celtic (ultimately from Brittonic **dubno-* 'deep'); but Bede simply interpreted this as a personal name, inflecting as an Old English strong noun, so seems not to have recognised it as p-Celtic.[84] According to Bede, *Alcluith* "lingua eorum [Brettonum] significat petram Cluith; est enim iuxta fluuium nominis illius" ('in their [the Britons'] language means "rock of the Clyde," because it is next to a river of that name;' *HE* i.12). But in both *Alcluith* and *Cluith*, he gives not the Brittonic form *(Alt) Clut* (the etymon of the English name *Clyde*), but the Irish form *Cluith* (more properly *Cluithe*), while his sense *petra* for *al(t)*- is closer to the sense of Old Irish *ail* 'rock, boulder' than the medieval Brittonic sense of 'cliff, hill, slope, height; shore'.[85] Bede surely knew this word and its meaning through sources rooted in Irish rather than Brittonic language (whether Hiberno-Latin or Irish itself, spoken or written). This bolsters the evidence given above for his ability to translate Irish names and detracts from his ability (or willingness) to interpret Brittonic. The point may be supported by Bede's form *Mailros*, modern *Melrose*,

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83 *HE* i.1, 12, ii.2, 14, iii.26; Cox, "The Place-Names," 29, 31, 34; Fox, "The P-Celtic Place-Names," appendix s.vv. *Abercorn*, *Milfield*, *Melrose*; for *Alcluith* see below.

84 Cox, "The Place-Names," 44.

85 Jackson, *Language*, 309–310; *Dictionary of the Irish Language*, s.v. "ail;" *Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymry*, s.v. "allt;" O. J. Padel, *Cornish Place-Name Elements*, English Place-Name Society 56–57 (Nottingham: English Place-Name Society, 1985), s.v. "als."

whose first element is etymologically the Brittonic *mailo-*, but which we would expect to see in Old English as *mēl-* or *mǣl-* because of the phonological history of the two languages: Jackson argued that rather than a (very) archaic form here, we have influence of the Irish cognate *mael*.[86] The Irish influence displayed here is also attested in the earlier, anonymous, Lindisfarne *Vita sancti Cuthberti*, emphasising that it was not unique to Bede.[87]

Carlegion appears in a more confusing context, the sole occasion when Bede not only gives an English alternative to a Roman name, but also a Brittonic one (*HE* ii.2):

> rex Anglorum fortissimus Aedilfrid collecto grandi exercitu ad ciuitatem Legionum, quae a gente Anglorum Legacaestir, a Brettonibus autem rectius Carlegion appellatur, maximam gentis perfidae stragem dedit
> [that most mighty king of the English Aedilfrid, after gathering a great army, wrought huge destruction of that faithless nation at *Ciuitas Legionum* [the city of legions], which is called *Legacaestir* by the people of the English, but more accurately *Carlegion* by the Britons].

This is one of Bede's clearest examples of anti-British rhetoric, but at the same time he concedes that the Welsh place-name *Carlegion* is 'more proper' (*rectius*) than the English *Legacæstir* on account of its greater similarity to the Roman Latin form *ciuitas Legionum*. Campbell suggested that this represents "interest in toponymy for its own sake," but even if so, it is surely also favourable to Welsh, if only as a specific concession motivated by *pietas* towards the Christian Roman past.[88] Conceivably one might read Bede here to be opposing the linguistic rectitude of the Welsh to their moral degradation—but the point hardly arises lucidly from Bede's phrasing. A possible alternative explanation is suggested by the prospect that *ciuitas legionum* was not an old Roman name, but an invention of Bede's; if so, Bede would have been inventing the name primarily on the basis of the vernacular names (taking the Welsh *legion* as the basis for *Legionum* and the English -*cæstir*, and perhaps the Welsh *car-*, as the basis for *civitas*), and may have wished to support his inference by emphasising *Carlegion*'s puta-

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86 Jackson, *Language*, 326–327.

87 e.g., Colgrave, *The 'Lives'*, 78 (ch. 3); cf. Donald Bullough, "A Neglected Early-Ninth-Century Manuscript of the Lindisfarne *Vita S. Cuthberti*," *Anglo-Saxon England* 27 (1998): 105–138, at 116–117.

88 James Campbell, *The Anglo-Saxon State* (London: Hambledon, 2000), 141, n. 52.

tive proximity to the Latin.[89] If so, we perhaps have another example of ideological slippage in the *Historia ecclesiastica*, as Bede effectively concedes Britons' proximity to Britain's prestigious Roman heritage; it suggests that Felix's negative portrayal of Brittonic was not an entirely straightforward or uniform attitude even for Bede.[90]

It is clear that we have relatively fewer p-Celtic names, if any, being glossed into Latin than Irish or English ones. One possible explanation for this would be simple ignorance of p-Celtic on Bede's part. If so, it would show that an early eighth-century English monk was more likely to know some Irish than what was probably the most widely spoken language apart from English in his kingdom. However, Bede might have chosen to make foreign-sounding Irish forms more familiar while suggesting the otherness of the Britons by leaving names in their language untranslated. That ignorance was at least involved is suggested by several factors. In the case of *Alcluith*, Bede does translate a p-Celtic form when it seems to be mediated through Irish. Moreover, Bede characterised the Picts as "gentem innoxiam, et nationi Anglorum semper amicissimam" ('a harmless people, and always very friendly towards the nation of the *Angli*;' *HE* iv.26) and generally presented them favourably. Bede specifies one place-name as being in the language of the Picts: *Peanfahel*. The second half of this word has been Gaelicised (from -*gwawl* 'wall' to the Irish cognate *fál*, in the genitive form *fáil*), creating a curious mixture (contrast Irish *cenn fháil, the direct etymon of modern Kinneil, and the p-Celtic attestation *Penguaul*).[91] Of all the p-Celtic names in the *Historia ecclesiastica*, one would most have expected Bede to explain *Peanfahel*, had he under-

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89 An interpretation voiced, apparently independently, by Smith, "Romano-British Place-Names," 6–7 and P. J. C. Field, "Gildas and the City of the Legions," *The Heroic Age* 1 (1999): <http://www.heroicage.org>. That Bede equated *civitas* and *cæstir* was shown by Campbell, "Bede's Words," 34–37.

90 It is perhaps also worth noting that Bede's reference to the monastery at Whithorn, as "locus, ad prouinciam Berniciorum pertinens, uulgo uocatur Ad Candidam Casam, eo quod ibi ecclesiam de lapide, insolito Brettonibus more fecerit" (*HE* iii.4) could ostensibly refer to a translated British name (or even simply give a British Latin name). However, the earliest form of the English name, Symeon of Durham's *Huuitern* (cited by Daphne Brooke, "The Northumbrian Settlements in Galloway and Carrick: An Historical Assessment," *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* 121 (1991): 295–327, accessed from <http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/catalogue/adsdata/PSAS_2002/pdf/vol_121/121_295_327.pdf> 30th April 2008, at 318), shows that it itself derives from *hwīt ærn* 'white building', so Bede's reference may only be to the English name.

91 Clancy, "Philosopher-King," 142.

stood it, because he names it as the place where the Antonine Wall starts, and the name indeed means 'the head/end of the wall'. Indeed, in view of the fact that Kinneil today lies three or four kilometres to the west of the wall's historic terminus, Dumville has argued that as

> physical evidence for the line of the easternmost sector of the Wall disappeared, the name 'End of the Wall' (in whichever Celtic language) moved westward in pursuit of its monument.[92]

This would emphasise the name's continued transparency during the early Middle Ages. Admittedly, Bede seems for other reasons to have emphasised the otherness of the Picts, which might again have encouraged him not to translate a place-name of theirs (and conceivably to have given it in a linguistically hybrid form),[93] but equally, he seems to have made use of some Pictish sources, indicating, in Evans's assessment, "a relatively high regard for Pictish scholarship."[94] If nothing else, *Peanfahel* again suggests that Bede was learning his north British place-names through Irish-speakers (whether ethnically *Picti* or *Scotti*); nor does it discourage the inference that he could not understand Brittonic words.[95]

    Bede's handling of etymologically Celtic place-names coheres with his anecdotal evidence to suggest a sociolinguistic context in earlier eighth-century Northumbria in which Irish was more familiar than p-Celtic dialects, and the medium in which information about

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92 David Dumville, "The Eastern Terminus of the Antonine Wall: 12th- or 13th-Century Evidence," *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland*, 124 (1994): 293–298, accessed from <http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/catalogue/adsdata/PSAS_2002/pdf/vol_124/124_293_298.pdf> April 9th 2008, at 297.

93 Merrills, *History*, 283–286.

94 Nicholas Evans, "The Calculation of Columba's Arrival in Britain in Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* and the Pictish King-Lists," *Scottish Historical Review* 88 (2008): 183–205, at 203.

95 A further piece of evidence for Bede's ignorance of p-Celtic would arise from the arguments of Thomas Clancy and James Fraser that the name of Saint Ninian (*HE* iii.4) is a scriabl error for the Brittonic *Uinniau (Clancy, "The Real St Ninian;" Fraser, "Northumbrian Whithorn"). If they are right, the misreading was probably not Bede's own, but it is likely to have been that of another Northumbrian monk, and Bede clearly did not perceive an error. While one might envisage an Anglo-Saxon trying to detach the saint from his Brittonic cultural background by wilful minim-confusion, this would be an extreme course (and an informed Anglo-Saxon with this intention could have turned to Uinniau's Hibernian identity as Finnian, or stressed his Roman identity, as Bede did with St Alban): the likelihood would be that it simply represents ignorance. That said, John MacQueen, *St Nynia* (Edinburgh: Donald, 2005), has resisted the reinterpretation of the name.

the northern p-Celtic-speaking regions was being transmitted to Northumbria. Before the establishment of English and Irish as major languages in Britain, Brittonic was already in competition with vulgar Latin, as shown by Latin influence on Welsh and the fate of the Celtic languages elsewhere in the Roman Empire. Later, however, p-Celtic languages were threatened rather by English and Irish, which came to replace them entirely in North Britain. This correlates with the hint that Bede was more familiar with British Latin than Brittonic, and with the fact that Irish is by far the most prominent competitor to English as a vernacular in the narrative material of the *Historia ecclesiastica*.

6. Conclusions

A (perhaps the) crucial factor in the competitiveness of a language is the way in which it is used in the home and the family (not necessarily co-terminous institutions in Anglo-Saxon England), and particularly in interaction between parents and children. Despite some fascinating glimpses into this sphere, however, it is probably fair to say that its history is beyond our reach for early medieval Britain.[96] What is not (entirely) beyond critical investigation today is the sociolinguistic history of public spheres: meetings, speeches, written texts and naming. A language's viability in public use is probably less crucial to its competitiveness than its viability as a home language,[97] but languages' prominence or usefulness in public discourse can still be a decisive factor in their competitiveness, particularly when multilingual people choose which language(s) to transmit to their children.[98] Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum* offers a unique range of evidence for early medieval language contacts in Britain, including a number of stories and remarks about interlinguistic communication and the status of different languages, and a range of evidence for Anglo-Saxons' reception of place-names in the different languages of Britain. Admittedly,

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96 e.g., *HE* v.2, on John of Beverley healing a dumb youth; the Middle Welsh lullaby *Peis Dinogat*, which can plausibly be considered a North British composition roughly of Bede's time: Koch, *The 'Gododdin'*, 126–129, 233–234.

97 Cf. Salikoko S. Mufwene, *The Ecology of Language Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 172–180.

98 Cf. the insightful approaches of Alex Woolf, "Apartheid and Economics in Anglo-Saxon England," in *Britons in Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. Nick Higham, Publications of the Manchester Centre for Anglo-Saxon Studies 7 (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2007), pp. 115–129, accessed from <http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/history/staff/alexwoolf.html>.

to say this is at one level a statement of our ignorance: Bede's evidence was shaped by a range of variables which we are ill-placed to control, and is accordingly susceptible of an extremely wide range of interpretations. All the same, he provides a glimpse of the processes of contact and change which allows us to qualify a history of language change in pre-Viking Britain otherwise constructed mainly on the basis of place-names.

Bede's concern about Anglo-Saxons' limited access to Latin is abundantly clear, but taken together, a number of hints also point towards his sensitivity to Roman and British Latin-language traditions in Britain. British Latin maintained features of vulgar Latin pronunciation as well as some distinctive semantics; Bede disliked both, but the fact that he saw fit to snipe at them in an aside may itself be evidence for the vigour of British Latin—and arguably for Bede's own anxiety at the fragility of Anglo-Saxons' Latin heritage relative to Britons' deeper traditions. Bede's evidence also suggests that British Latin was heard rather than merely read, and not only heard in the liturgy. However, we also have some evidence that by the decades around 700—whether more in Bede's time or the 660s is hard to guess—Latin would not have afforded its speakers much leverage at major ecclesiastical meetings in Northumbria, and perhaps also, therefore, in Irish-speaking regions. It seems that such meetings were, at least at times, being conducted in English and Irish, even when we might imagine Latin to have been a useful *lingua franca*. This does not tell us anything definite about the upper levels of Latinity in the early Anglo-Saxon and Irish churches, since the choice of language may have been influenced by the presence of less learned participants, but Bede also implies that it would be unsurprising for an Anglo-Saxon in an Irish monastery to learn Irish, suggesting the prevalence of vernacular languages in Irish and English ecclesiastical discourse at this time.

Thus although British Latinity may have been in better shape in Bede's time than surviving texts would suggest, this may not have much helped British clerics to advance their interests. Nor would Brittonic apparently serve clerics well. Grocock has said that "there is no evidence in Bedan writings ... of Celtic languages being in common use in Northumbria in Bede's day," but I suggest that this can be mod-

ified.[99] Bede portrayed a seventh-century Northumbria in which Irish was not widely spoken, but in which it was probably widely heard. The past which he described, however, was one in which p-Celtic languages had no voice. Despite proving willing and able to translate significant numbers of English and Irish place-names, Bede almost never translates any of the numerous p-Celtic names in his work, even when writing about the Picts, towards whom he appears to have been well disposed. This evidence correlates broadly with the pejorative view of Brittonic expressed by the roughly contemporary *Vita Guthlaci*. Bede's evidence does not tell us anything about how widely p-Celtic dialects were still spoken in Northumbria in terms of space, either in his own time or in the times he described, but it does hint that to communicate with the Anglo-Saxon clerical elite, a p-Celtic speaker would probably have needed to use another language—whether English or, perhaps, Latin or Irish.

As this summary emphasises, Bede's evidence inevitably relates more to ecclesiastical life, the stress placed in potentially contemporaneous texts like the *Gododdin* elegies and *Beowulf* on reaping praise and being heard in council in the secular world being little represented. But there is a methodological virtue to be made of the necessity of borrowing Bede's ecclesiastical focus, and I will close by emphasising it: adducing ecclesiastical sources to the history of language-contact in early medieval Britain emphasises that churches and churchmen were not outside the mechanisms affecting the competitiveness of languages. The possible role of this section of society specifically in promoting linguistic change has not received much attention. However, according to chapter 17 of the *Vita Wilfridi*, Northumbrian kings gave "loca sancta in diversis regionibus, quae clerus Bryttonum, aciem gladii hostilis manu gentis nostrae fugiens, deseruit" ('holy places in various areas which the clergy of the Britons, fleeing the blade of the hostile sword wielded by the hand of our nation, deserted') to Bishop Wilfrid and his monastery at Ripon in and before the 670s.[100] A number of recent commentators have argued that this suggests that Wilfrid had an active role in extending English speakers' control over upland and western Northumbria.[101] Likewise, the Ruthwell Cross, raised in

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99 Christopher Grocock, "Bede and the Golden Age of Latin Prose in Northumbria," in *Northumbria's Golden Age*, ed. Jane Hawkes and Susan Mills (Stroud: Sutton, 1999), 371–382, at 371.
100 Colgrave, *The Life of Bishop Wilfrid*, 36.
101 Rollason, *Northumbria*, 100 and following note.

the eighth century in what is now Dumfriesshire, bearing a poetic Old English runic inscription, invites interpretation as a statement of Anglophone dominance of the ecclesiastical public sphere in a region which was at that time still in significant part Brittonic-speaking.[102] Phythian-Adams inferred that

> it seems inconceivable that at the end of the seventh century Cuthbert, for example, did not preach in their own language to those local people in whose midst he himself had been brought up in the British area of the Tweed basin

and Fox's recent toponymic work does not discourage the idea that there were many Brittonic-speakers in the region in Cuthbert's day.[103] But even if Cuthbert knew Brittonic, that does not mean that he chose to speak it. Churchmen could be major landowners; they organised and otherwise provoked public meetings of considerable import, offered desirable spiritual and educational services, and controlled the written word. Although we cannot be sure of how the usage spread, it is widely accepted as plausible that the promotion of the ethnic term *Angli* in Bede's scholarship had a direct effect on the development of ethnonyms in English.[104] The language-varieties favoured by nineteenth-century Christian missionaries affected the development of colonial languages and other *linguae francae*; the same may be true of their early medieval counterparts.[105]

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102   Fred Orton and Ian Wood with Clare Lees, *Fragments of History: Rethinking the Ruthwell and Bewcastle Monuments* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 121–139.

103   Charles Phythian-Adams, *Land of the Cumbrians: A Study in British Provincial Origins A.D. 400–1120* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1996), 87; Fox, "The P-Celtic Place-Names."

104   e.g., Richter, "Bede's *Angli*".

105   e.g., Mufwene, *The Ecology*, 63–64.

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