

Ministry, Mission and Myth
in Early Christian Fortriu

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Abstract

This thesis offers a re-examination of the range of evidence pertaining to the ecclesiastical history of the Pictish kingdom of Fortriu from conversion to the early eighth century. The testimony of the main historical sources is examined critically, with particular attention to the ramifications for Adomnán's *Vita Columbae* and Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum* as sources for this period of Pictish history. It is argued that the former text contains two distinct and significantly different views of the place of Iona in Pictish ecclesiastical culture in this period, and that both texts, taken together, may be interpreted as showing that in the last quarter of the seventh century such views underwent marked change that corresponded with contemporary changes in Pictish political and ethnic identity and Iona's relationship with the new Verturian kings.

An array of evidence is put forward to show that the christianisation of Fortriu is likely to have begun in the late fifth century as a result of contact with British Christians south of the Forth, and that Iona's role in this process was exaggerated in the source material upon which Adomnán and Bede depended for information. Evidence from medieval hagiography and church dedications is employed to suggest that Columban activity in Fortriu in the sixth and seventh centuries was limited as compared to the work of native churchmen with no demonstrable ties to Iona. The basis of Northumbrian claims after 664 to ecclesiastical jurisdiction in northern Britain is explored, and the likelihood that there were meaningful Anglian influences on Verturian ecclesiastical culture in this period is also discussed.

The period of 'Ionan ascendancy' in Fortriu alluded to by Bede is assigned here to the early eighth century and is envisioned as having been linked to the establishment of 'Verturian hegemony' in Pictland. It is suggested that the prominence of the cults of such native saints as Seruan (Serf) in Fothriff, Itarnan (Ethernán) in Fife and Tarannan (Ternan) in Kincardineshire may be due to intensive patronage on the part of Verturian elites as these regions flourished in the wake of ethnogenesis that took place during the period under investigation, and that something of a similar phenomenon may account for the rise of the Columban *familia* in Fortriu at a time when the Verturian hegemony may be thought to have been extended into northerly regions where the *familia* was prominently established. The end of the Ionan ascendancy during the reign of Naiton f. Derilei is also considered, and it is argued that the king's behaviour was inspired by a desire to firm up and organise control over the Pictish Church.

Declaration

I declare that this dissertation has been composed by me, is my own work, and has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

James E. Fraser, B.A., M.A.

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Acknowledgements and Dedication

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By far my greatest debts, however, are owed to Morgyn Wagner, who despite so many distractions of her own has remained a steadfast friend and confidante without whose love and support all of my endeavours would be the poorer; it is to her that I dedicate this work.

JEF
February 2003

Conventions

ANNALISTIC DATES

When referring to Irish annalistic material, this study depends primarily upon the Annals of Ulster and refers to the editorial year and entry number assigned in the edition of Mac Airt and Mac Niocaill. In having recourse to other annals, *sub anno* dating, whether actual or editorial, is used, but these references are synchronised with *AU* when possible through the provision of the *AU* date in square brackets. A certain margin for error must be allowed for *AU* dating.

TRANSLATION

All references are to original texts in their language of composition. Quotations generally follow the English translations provided by the standard or most recent edition of each text, but many translations in this study deviate from these, usually without particular comment in the notes.

SPELLING

The spelling of personal names follows the principle, well-established in Irish scholarship and increasingly current among scholars of the rest of the early medieval British Isles, that contemporary vernacular forms should be preferred to modernised ones. For northern Anglo-Saxon names, particular recourse has been taken to the Durham *Liber Vitae* where such name elements as *Aeðil-* (rather than *Æthel-*), *-frith* (rather than *-frid* or even *frīð*) and *-wini* (rather than *-win* or *-wine*) appear consistently, and will be preferred throughout this study. Moreover, *Oswy* is here employed in place of the name rendered as *Osuiu* by Bede and generally accepted by scholars in the form *Oswiu* used by Stephanus. The vernacular form of this name is not readily apparent from these earlier forms, but the name is rendered into Latin as *Oswegius* in the *Historia de Sancto Cuthberto*, suggesting that its vernacular form was, as Ælfric supposed, *Oswig* (< **anso-wega*, 'god-warrior').

ABBREVIATIONS

Referencing conventions follow those of the *Scottish Historical Review*, and abbreviations employed in the footnotes generally follow the *List of Abbreviated Titles of the Printed Sources of Scottish History to 1560*, published as a supplement to the 1963 installment of that journal.

- ACamb 'Annales Cambriae', John Morris (ed.), *Nennius: British History and the Welsh Annals* (London & Chichester, 1980), 85-91.
- AClon 'Annals of Clonmacnoise', Denis Murphy (ed.), *The Annals of Clonmacnoise being annals of Ireland from the earliest period to A. D. 1408* (Lampeter, 1993).
- Adomnán, VC Adomnán, *Vita Columbae*, Alan Orr Anderson and Marjorie Ogilvie Anderson (eds.), *Adomnán's Life of Columba* (Oxford, 1991).
- AI 'Annals of Inisfallen', Seán Mac Airt (ed.), *The Annals of Inisfallen* (Dublin, 1988).
- Anderson, ESSHI Alan Orr Anderson, *Early Sources of Scottish History A. D. 500 to 1286*; Vol. 1 (Edinburgh, 1922).
- Anderson, KKES Marjorie Anderson, *Kings and Kingship in Early Scotland* (Edinburgh & London, 1973).
- Anon., VS *Vita Sancti Servani*, Alan Macquarrie (ed.), 'Vita Sancti Servani: The Life of St Serf', in *Innes Review* 44 (1993), 122-52, at 136-43.
- Anon., VSC Anonymous, *Vita Sancti Cudberti*, Bertram Colgrave (ed.), *Two Lives of Saint Cuthbert* (Cambridge, 1940).
- AT 'Annals of Tigernach', Whitley Stokes (ed.), *The Annals of Tigernach*, Vol. 1 (Lampeter, 1993).
- Atlas of Scot. Hist.* Peter G. B. McNeill and Hector L. MacQueen (eds.), *Atlas of Scottish History to 1707* (Edinburgh, 1996).
- AU 'Annals of Ulster', Seán Mac Airt and Gearóid mac Niocaill (eds.), *The Annals of Ulster (to A.D. 1131)* (Dublin, 1983).
- Bannerman, *Dalriada* John Bannerman, *Studies in the History of Dalriada* (Edinburgh & London, 1974).

- Bede, *HE* Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum*, Bertram Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors (eds.), *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People* (Oxford, 1991).
- Bede, *VSC* Bede, *Vita Sancti Cuthberti*, Bertram Colgrave (ed.), *Two Lives of Saint Cuthbert* (Cambridge, 1940).
- Breeze, *Frontiers* David J. Breeze, *The Northern Frontiers of Roman Britain* (London, 1982).
- Bromwich, *TYP* Rachel Bromwich (ed.), *Trioedd Ynys Prydein: The Welsh Triads* (Cardiff, 1978).
- CGSH Pádraig Ó Riain (ed.), *Corpus Genealogiarum Sanctorum Hiberniae* (Dublin, 1985).
- Charles-Edwards, *Ireland* T. M. Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland* (Cambridge, 2000).
- Clancy, 'Nechtan' Thomas Owen Clancy, 'Philosopher-King: Nechtan king of the Picts and Church Reform' (unpublished typescript).
- Clancy & Márkus, *Iona* Thomas Owen Clancy and Gilbert Márkus (eds.) *Iona: The Earliest Poetry of a Celtic Monastery* (Edinburgh, 1995).
- Cusack, *Conversion* Carole M. Cusack, *Conversion Among the Germanic Peoples* (London & New York, 1998).
- Duncan, 'Bede' Archibald A. M. Duncan, 'Bede, Iona, and the Picts' in R. H. C. Davis & J. M. Wallace-Hadrill (eds.) *The Writing of History in the Middle Ages: Essays Presented to Richard William Southern* (Oxford, 1981), 1-42.
- Duncan, *Kingdom* Archibald A. M. Duncan, *Scotland: The Making of the Kingdom* (Edinburgh, 1975).
- FA 'Fragmentary Annals', Joan Newlon Radner (ed.), *Fragmentary Annals of Ireland* (Dublin, 1978).
- Fél. Gormáin* Féilire Uí Gormáin, Whitley Stokes (ed.), *Féilire Huí Gormáin: The Martyrology of Gorman* (London, Henry Bradshaw Society, 1895).
- Fél. Óengusso* Féilire Óengusso Céli Dé, Whitley Stokes (ed.), *Féilire Óengusso Céli Dé: The Martyrology of Oengus the Culdee* (London, Henry Bradshaw Society, 1905).
- Foster, *PGS* Sally M. Foster, *Picts, Gaels and Scots: Early Historic Scotland* (London, 1996).

- Frere, *Britannia* Sheppard Frere, *Britannia: A History of Roman Britain*, 3rd edn. (London, 1998).
- Gildas, *DEB* Gildas, *De Excidio Britonum*, Michael Winterbottom (ed.), *Gildas: The Ruin of Britain and other works* (London & Chichester, 1978). The division of this work into three books follows M. Lapidge & D. Dumville (eds.), *Gildas: New Approaches* (Woodbridge, 1984), p. xii.
- HB *Historia Brittonum*, John Morris (ed.), *Nennius: British History and the Welsh Annals* (London & Chichester, 1980).
- Henderson, *Picts* Isabel Henderson, *The Picts* (London, 1967).
- Henry, *WGT* David Henry (ed.), *The worm, the germ, and the thorn: Pictish and related studies presented to Isabel Henderson* (Balgavies, 1997).
- Herbert, *IKD* Máire Herbert, *Iona, Kells, and Derry: The History and Hagiography of the Monastic Familia of Columba* (Oxford, 1988).
- Jocelin, *VK* Jocelin of Furness, *Vita Kentegerni*, Alexander Penrose Forbes (ed.), *Lives of S. Ninian and S. Kentigern* (Edinburgh, 1874).
- MacKinlay, *Non-Script. Deds.* James Murray MacKinlay, *Ancient Church Dedications in Scotland: Non-Scriptural Dedications* (Edinburgh, 1914).
- Macquarrie, *Saints* Alan Macquarrie, *The Saints of Scotland: Essays in Scottish Church History AD 450-1093* (Edinburgh, 1997).
- Mart. Donegal James Henthorn Todd and William Reeves (eds.), *The Martyrology of Donegal: a calendar of the saints of Ireland* (Dublin, 1864).
- Mart. Tallaght Richard Irvine Best and Hugh Jackson Lawlor (eds.), *The Martyrology of Tallaght* (London, Henry Bradshaw Society, 1931).
- Patrick, *Conf.* Patrick. *Confessio*, in A. B. E. Hood (ed.) *St. Patrick: His Writings and Muirchu's Life* (London & Chichester, 1978), 23-34.
- Patrick, *Ep.* Patrick. *Epistola*, in A. B. E. Hood (ed.) *St. Patrick: His Writings and Muirchu's Life* (London & Chichester, 1978), 35-38.
- Rivet & Smith, *PNRB* A. L. F. Rivet and Colin Smith, *The Place-Names of Roman Britain* (London, 1979).

- Scott, *PNPC* Archibald B. Scott, *The Pictish Nation, its People and its Church* (Edinburgh, 1918).
- Skene, *CS*
CS I William F. Skene, *Celtic Scotland: A History of Ancient Alban;*
CS II *Vol. I: History and Ethnology* (Edinburgh, 1876).
CS III *Vol. II: Church and Culture* (Edinburgh, 1877).
Vol. III: Land and People (Edinburgh, 1880).
- Stephanus, *VW* Stephanus the Priest, *Vita Sancti Wilfrithi*, Bertram Colgrave (ed.), *The Life of Bishop Wilfrid by Eddius Stephanus* (Cambridge, 1927).
- Thomas, *CRB* Charles Thomas, *Christianity in Roman Britain to AD 500* (London, 1981).
- Watson, *CPNS* William J. Watson, *The History of the Celtic Place-Names of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1926).
- Woolf, 'Matriliny' Alex Woolf, 'Pictish matriliney reconsidered', in *Innes Review* 49 (1998), 147-67.

Introduction

It is a disadvantage which affects the history of all churches, that it is almost inevitably viewed through the medium of the ecclesiastical prepossessions of the historian. This has been peculiarly the case with the history of the early church in Scotland, which has become the battle-field on which Catholic and Protestant, Episcopalian and Presbyterian, have contended for their respective tenets; and this evil is greatly aggravated when the basis of the controversy consists of such a strange mixture of fact and fable as that which characterises the history of the early Scottish Church, as it is usually represented.

– W. F. Skene

No area of Pictish studies has attracted more attention than the matter of the making of the Pictish Church, a phrase which, to paraphrase A. A. M. Duncan, is here ‘chosen advisedly’, since a Church, like a kingdom, does not ‘emerge’ but is ‘made by man’.¹ It is an old and in some ways a weary subject, characterised by imprecise terminology, impossible degrees of passionate certainty, and points of bitter dispute. It is also characterised by a comparatively static body of well known evidence, and as such has more readily invited repeated recapitulations of old arguments in new cladding than a growing and developing discourse. It may be thought somewhat surprising, then, that such a field of study as Pictish ecclesiastical history might be thought both viable and appropriate for an examination of this kind. Yet however weary it may seem, the field has not yet been exhausted, and what follows here has been guided at least in part by the belief that it can and should be reinvigorated. This study is concerned both with Picts and with their ecclesiastical history, but departs from existing historiographic trends in making no claim to an exhaustive consideration of ‘the Pictish Church’ as the concept is commonly understood. Such a new approach is of fundamental importance not just to the present work, but also to the future of the subject, and we cannot proceed without first establishing our remit here in clear terms.

In speaking and debating about ‘the Pictish Church’, past scholarship has been either explicit or implicit in its acceptance of the underlying unity that such a phrase embodies. W. F. Skene, for example, envisioned a northern Britain that was

¹ Duncan, *Kingdom*, 1.

neatly divided in the sixth century into 'four kingdoms within definite limits and under settled forms of government',² and this idea, along with the corresponding view that one of these four kingdoms was Pictish, has been remarkably tenacious in the historiography. As Bede famously understood it in the 730s, however, Pictland was divided by a frontier consisting of 'steep and rugged mountain ridges', a divide that finds an echo in the obit of the Pictish king 'Black' Talorc, called at his death in 782 'king of the Picts on this side of the Mounth' (*rex Pictorum citra Monoth*).³ To the north of this conspicuous divide, according to Bede, could be found northern (*septentrionales*) Picts living in an indeterminate number of *prouinciae*, the word that he normally uses to denote a distinct kingdom. On the other hand, the southern (*australes*) Picts occupied *regiones*, a term which Bede uses in all cases save one to refer to subordinate territories contained within a single kingdom or *prouincia*.⁴ Such an understanding of at least one prominent political frontier running through the midst of what has been called the 'Pictish Heartland' suggests that, with regard to Pictish political realities as contemporaries in the sixth and seventh centuries would have understood it, such a label, whatever its utility in other respects, might be no more helpful than Skene's problematic idea of a single Pictish kingdom.⁵ These are important questions for this study, since, if there was no 'Pictish kingdom' at a given time there can hardly have been a corresponding 'Pictish Church'.

The earliest surviving use of the term *Picti* in Classical sources occurs in a panegyric in praise of Constantius Chlorus. Like the Goths, in other words, the Picts spring suddenly into Classical literature in the later third century as an infamous threat to the imperial frontier, and are referred to sporadically in Classical texts thereafter.⁶ It is clear from these references that the *Picti* included the Calidonii-Calidones,⁷ who, in the first-century survey of northern British tribes preserved in the second-century geographical account of Ptolemy, had been located with one of

² Skene, CS I, 227.

³ AU 782.1.

⁴ Bede, *HE* iii.4; J. Campbell, 'Bede's *Reges* and *Principes*', Jarrow Lecture (1979), reprinted in *idem*, *Essays in Anglo-Saxon History* (London & Ronceverte, 1986), 85-98, at 86-87.

⁵ Foster, *PGS*, 12; see also references to Pictish 'heartlands' in I. Ralston, 'Pictish homes', in Henry, *WGT*, 19-34.

⁶ H. Wolfram, *History of the Goths* (London, 1988), 20.

⁷ On the names of the Calidonii-Calidones, see Rivet & Smith, *PNRB*, 289-91.

their frontiers unequivocally at the Beaully Firth. The other Calidonian frontier mentioned in this text is the gulf (*kolpos*) of the *Lemmannones*, which is more problematic to identify. As Professor Watson observed, the etymology of this place-name suggests association with the Lennox and the River Leven west of Glasgow, but the first-century tribal survey placed the Calidones in association with, but to the east of, the 'wooded hills' (*drumos*) named for them, almost certainly properly identified with Druim Alban.⁸ The Calidones seem therefore to have occupied eastern Inverness-shire and a surprising amount of highland country to the south of the Great Glen, including Atholl, where the place-names Dunkeld (*Dún Chaillden*), Rohallion and Schiehallion denote a hill-top enclosure or 'hill-fort', a 'rath' or 'ring-fort', and an 'otherworld hill' of the Calidones.⁹ This suggestion of two distinct low-lying Calidonian territories separated by the Grampian highlands has been thought to explain the variant name *Dicalydones* or 'double Calidones' preserved in the fourth-century history of Ammianus Marcellinus,¹⁰ though persistent doubts have been raised by modern scholars as to the believability of such geographical information.¹¹ Whether or not we must imagine that the first-century Calidones lived either on one side or the other of the Grampians, it is clear from the third-century account of Dio, who reported that other tribes had 'merged' with the Calidones and left their old names behind,¹² that by then some form of ethnogenesis had taken place in northern Britain, such that these other tribes had adopted Calidonian identity.

Study of the creation or rise of peoples, which may conveniently be referred to as 'ethnogenesis theory', passed from the social sciences to the study of late Antique and early medieval peoples in the 1960s through the work of Reinhard

⁸ On the *Calidonii* and their situation in Ptolemy's geography, see Watson, *CPNS*, 19-22; Rivet & Smith, *PNRB*, 289-91, 387.

⁹ Watson, *CPNS*, 21. *Dún Chaillden* occurs in the annals at AU 873.

¹⁰ Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae*, xxvii.8, in J. C. Rolfe (ed.), *Ammianus Marcellinus*, Vol. III (London & Cambridge MA, Loeb Classical Library, 1972); Watson, *CPNS*, 20; Rivet & Smith, *PNRB*, 338.

¹¹ See for example J. C. Mann & D. J. Breeze, 'Ptolemy, Tacitus and the tribes of north Britain', in *PSAS* 117 (1987), 85-91, at 90; their arguments, which take no account of Watson's work, have been rightly challenged by G. W. S. Barrow, 'The tribes of North Britain revisited', in *PSAS* 119 (1989), 161-63.

¹² Xiphilinus, epitome of Dio, lxxvii, in E. Cary (ed.), *Dio's Roman History*, Vol. IX (London & New York, Loeb Classical Library, 1927).

Wenskus and the Gothicist Herwig Wolfram.¹³ More recently, the subject has become fashionable among Anglo-Saxonists,¹⁴ but Pictish evidence has yet to be examined in detail in the light of this growing body of scholarship that recognises the creation of a people as being a largely artificial process. It has been shown that, in areas like northern Britain which had been inhabited by many small tribes in the first century, the development of large and enduring political communities like the third-century Calidones, dominated by a group 'capable of defining and enforcing a range of rights and duties owed to itself', was common in the first millennium in regions near imperial frontiers like that of the Romans.¹⁵ The rise of such a group, in this case from the first-century Calidonii, and its ability to define a new homeland for itself, in this case by absorbing neighbouring tribes, are two of the five key factors required to bring about a new ethnogenesis outlined by Professor Brooks.¹⁶ We ought therefore to expect that by the third century there was also a Calidonian *origo gentis* which bound the different Calidonian peoples together by providing them with a supposed common heritage, and also that symbols of Calidonian identity could be included in one's dress, hairstyle or adornment, and perhaps even in one's language.¹⁷

The name *Calidones* is Celtic, and seems to indicate 'very hard ones'.¹⁸ Study of the Gothic peoples has shown that such self-importance in a population name, as in *Ostrogothi* and *Vesi*, bespeaks an emic name – a name coined by the peoples in question for themselves. On the other hand, the understated and 'geographically determined' names *Greutungi* and *Tervingi* were etic names coined by each group for application to the other.¹⁹ On this model *Calidones*, being suggestive of self-importance, has the ring of an emic name coined by the Calidones in reference to themselves, and we should not be surprised if there was a corresponding etic name

¹³ A. C. Murray, 'Reinhard Wenskus on "Ethnogenesis", Ethnicity, and the Origin of the Franks', in A. Gillett (ed.), *On Barbarian Identity: Critical Approaches to Ethnicity in the Early Middle Ages* (Turnhout, 2002), 39-68, at 41-42.

¹⁴ N. Brooks, *Bede and the English* (Jarrow Lecture, 1999) offers a summary of the work done to date on ethnogenesis in an Anglo-Saxon context.

¹⁵ P. Heather, 'State Formation in Europe in the First Millennium A.D.', in B. E. Crawford (ed.), *Scotland in Dark Age Europe* (St Andrews, 1994), 47-70.

¹⁶ Brooks, *Bede and the English*, 5.

¹⁷ Brooks, *Bede and the English*, 5.

¹⁸ Watson, *CPNS*, 22; Rivet & Smith, *PNRB*, 250.

¹⁹ Wolfram, *Goths*, 24-25. The meanings of these names are as follows: 'rising sun Goths' (*Ostrogothi*), 'good (ones)' (*Vesi*), 'steppe and coast dwellers' (*Greutungi*) and 'forest people' (*Tervingi*).

for them coined by their neighbours. It is well known that the Calidones disappeared from the political map of northern Britain in the early middle ages, and the possibility that this came about through a replacement of their emic name in everyday usage by a geographically determined etic one cannot be discounted. On the other hand *Maeatae* is a similarly Celtic name that has been taken to mean 'those of the larger part', and such a prosaic and geographically-determined name is suggestive of an etic ethnonym coined by outsiders.²⁰ The Maeatae were, of course, the other great northern barbarian political community of the third century mentioned by Dio, who described them as neighbours of the Calidones.²¹ By virtue of the place-names Dumyat and Myothill in Stirlingshire this people can be located in the vale of the Forth,²² where in the first century lived the Dumnonii, a tribe whose territory seems to have extended from Ayrshire and Clydesdale into Stirlingshire and as far as Inchtuthil in southern Perthshire.²³ If *Maeatae* has the ring of an etic name (in which case we would expect it to have been coined by their Calidonian neighbours) one would expect the Maeatae to have coined a different, self-important emic name for themselves - a name, indeed, like *Verturiones*, the name of a Pictish people introduced to us by Ammianus Marcellinus, which passed into Irish as **Fortriu* from Late British and which has been taken to mean 'very powerful ones'.²⁴

Maeataic identity seems, like Calidonian identity, to have been adopted by other northern tribes over a wide area through a comparable process of ethnogenesis that had taken place during the second century. Archaeologists have noted 'strong hints' in the Iron Age archaeological record 'of a cultural break somewhere between the Firths of Forth and Tay',²⁵ and it is surely instructive in this regard that, according to Ptolemy, the Dumnonii, in the heart of whose territory the political centre of the Maeatae appears to have been located, had their northern boundary at more or less this very frontier. There are good reasons, then, to suspect

²⁰ Rivet & Smith, *PNRB*, 404; see also Watson, *CPNS*, 58-59.

²¹ Xiphilinus, epitome of Dio, lxxvii.

²² Watson, *CPNS*, 58-59.

²³ Rivet & Smith, *PNRB*, 343-44; Watson, *CPNS*, 24-25. Glen Devon in the Ochil Hills (Glendofona, 1271) may perhaps reflect a memory of the Dumnonii here, though Watson, *CPNS*, 438, believed it was 'probably for an early British *Dubona* or *Dobona*'.

²⁴ Ammianus, *Res Gestae*, xxvii.8; Rivet & Smith, *PNRB*, 496-97.

²⁵ I. Armit, *Celtic Scotland* (London, 1997), 80-81.

that the Ochil Hills, or perhaps the Gask Ridge, marked the political boundary that separated the Calidones and the Maeatae in the third century, and we cannot discount the possibility that *Maeatae* and *Verturiones* were one and the same *gens* bearing both an emic and an etic name. Current as an ethnonym in these early years of the third century, *Maeatae* remained so until at least the end of the sixth, and perhaps as late even as the end of the seventh century, when *Vita Columbae* applied the gaelicised form *Miathi* retrospectively to enemies of Áedán mac Gabráin.²⁶ To move into Gaelic nomenclature, then, we must allow for the possibility that the *Miathi* were the people of Fortriu, and that the presence of these two names in Iona-based sources – the one used in a late sixth-century context and the other first attested in the second half of the seventh century, reflects a shift in terminological perspective, with the emic name for this people finally supplanting the etic name. We are therefore faced with the parallel possibilities that the Calidonians came by the end of the seventh century to be known by their etic name while the ‘Verturians’ came to be known by their emic name, which would, were such possibilities borne out, be suggestive of ethnogenesis in Pictish northern Britain in the century or so following the *bellum Miathorum* of Áedán mac Gabráin.

The question of ethnogenesis is an important one when one turns to the study of early Christianity in northern Britain. If, bolstered by a view of the surviving list of Pictish kings as representing ‘a chronological consecutive succession of national rulers’,²⁷ one clings to the existence of a single Pictish kingdom from relatively early times, thus choosing to distrust Bede’s evidence about the significance of the Grampian highlands as a political frontier, one may envision and study a corresponding Pictish Church. If closer scrutiny can collapse such a model, however, leaving us with Bede’s several Pictish kingdoms and the possibility of key political frontiers approximating to the Mounth and perhaps the Ochil Hills as well, enduring into the seventh century, one must envision rather several Pictish communities of belief, each of which might in theory be studied separately as a ‘Church’. We have already seen that the obit of ‘Black’ Talorc is good evidence that the Grampians were still an important political frontier at the end of

²⁶ Adomnán, *VC* i.8-9.

²⁷ Henderson, *Picts*, 32. Anderson, *KKES*, 144-45, believed still further ‘that the names of the kings from Maelchon’s son onwards represent a single [matrilineal] lineage’.

the eighth century, and if the idea of *Dicalydone*s suggests that this was no less true in the fourth century it follows that by Bede's time this was a very old and enduring element of Pictish political geography that must be taken into account in any study of early Christianity in Pictland. In this study we shall therefore speak of a 'northern' and 'southern Pictish zone' in reference to the Grampians. Much less certain in this regard is the ongoing relevance of the Ochil Hills as a cultural or political frontier in the Early Historic period: if it was still significant in the eighth century it can, according to Bede's evidence, only have been a boundary between *regiones* of single *prouincia* encapsulating the entire southern Pictish zone. If, as seems likely, this frontier separated the Calidones from the Maeatae in the third century, its being overcome by the eighth century should be seen as having been the result of a new ethnogenesis that affected or even suppressed these identities in the southern Pictish zone. We have already pointed to a reference in *Vita Columbae* indicating that 'Miathic' identity endured to the end of the sixth century at least, and this suggests that any study of the christianisation and early ecclesiastical history of the Picts must allow for the possibility that those areas of the southern Pictish zone south of the Ochil Hills, or perhaps the Gask Ridge, had a significantly distinct early ecclesiastical history from areas north of this frontier.

The very real possibility of ethnogenesis in Pictland in the seventh century shall, then, be of interest to us in this study, since such a process will have had its ramifications for the early ecclesiastical history of the Picts. It will become increasingly clear that at the heart of this matter is the adoption of *Picti* as an emic ethnonym by peoples that had formerly considered themselves to be Calidones or Verturiones. The origins of the term have been hotly debated, with one of many controversies being whether it ought to be understood as emic or etic. The etic school have focused for the most part on the hypothesis that *Picti* was 'probably originally coined as a nickname by Roman soldiers, auxiliaries and *areani*', reflecting the tendency of the northern barbarians to tattoo themselves,²⁸ while the emic school have tended to follow the linguistic evidence put forward by Professor Watson and that vernacular Norse, English, Scots and Welsh forms and reflexes suggest 'that, while the form 'Picti' is certainly Latin, it is based on a genuine native

²⁸ Smyth, *Warlords*, 44.

form' based on *pect-* rather than *pict-*.²⁹ These different forms cannot be assumed to be independent, however, and can all have been derived from (or in the case of Welsh influenced by) Old English *peohta*, which is itself probably derived from *Picti*.

As far as Dio was concerned, in the third-century these two *gentes* were, collectively, 'Britons'.³⁰ This testimony agrees with both Irish and British vernacular usage. In Middle Welsh the word for the descendants of these northern barbarians was *Prydyn* (singular *Pryden*), suggesting an Old Welsh form **Priteni* (singular **Priten*); in Old Irish they were *Cruthin* (singular *Cruthen*).³¹ These words denote a native of any part of Britain, and it is surely instructive with regard to vernacular attitudes in the Roman period that in these languages words of such meaning continued to be applied to the natives of that part of the island that had not become Roman provincial territory. Such a belief that the northerners were (still) 'Britons' required both vernacular languages to adopt a new word for application to the Romano-British and their descendants, and in both cases this word was borrowed from the Latin *Britanni* (OI *Breatan*, *Breatain*; OW *Brython*).³² It is surely promising to note that Latin appears to have behaved in the same manner as the insular vernacular languages, making it possible to differentiate between cultured Britons and their uncouth northern neighbours. Whereas in the vernacular the inclination was to retain the existing term for a native of Britain for application to the barbarians, Latin retained *Britanni* to refer to British provincials, and introduced a new term, *Picti*, for application to the barbarians.³³ This looks as though the unflattering but popular literary image of the woad-smearing British barbarian was employed to emphasise how far the *Britanni* had come as compared to their estranged northern countrymen, and there is much to commend the argument that the Romano-British Latinist in particular would have sought to be able to make this differentiation. From the later third century onwards Latinists took to applying the

²⁹ Watson, *CPNS*, 67-68; the emic/etic debate is outlined by Rivet & Smith, *PNRB*, 438-40.

³⁰ Xiphilinus, epitome of Dio, lxxvii. It is often suggested that the Picts probably thought of themselves as 'Britons', but Rivet & Smith, *PNRB*, 281, advise caution on this point, pointing out, in reference to **Pritani*, that to suppose that this was an emic name 'perhaps implies a higher degree of national consciousness and unity than is warranted by what we know of tribal divisions... In many cases a people does not need to name itself; a name is often given by outsiders, foreigners, and only taken to itself by a people at a later stage'.

³¹ Watson, *CPNS*, 13-14.

³² Watson, *CPNS*, 14-15.

new pejorative term *Picti* to the Calidones and Verturiones, but we cannot allow ourselves to be fooled by the 'blanket' quality of the term into believing that such usage implies the formation of a single *gens* in Pictland, where two or even three *gentes* had been before. Neither ought we to expect a term like *Picti* to have been adopted for application to such a *gens*, nor the formation of a Pictish Church to have been possible, until such a process of ethnogenesis had taken place and a single *gens* had been conceptualised.

Until this ethnogenesis occurred, and we have already seen suggestion that it may not have occurred until the seventh century, the Calidones and Verturiones must have thought of themselves as separate *gentes* with distinct histories, symbols of identity and communities of belief, and the latter point is of central importance in studying the christianisation and early ecclesiastical history of the Picts.³⁴ It is striking that, just as our Classical sources inform us that northern Britain was inhabited by two *gentes*, the Iona chronicle made explicit reference to only two Pictish kingdoms, the one being clearly Verturian and ruled by the *rex Fortrenn* and the other being ruled by the *rex Athfoitle* or 'king of *Athfotla*' and so connected with Atholl with its clear onomastic indications of Calidonian identity.³⁵ The nature of the eighth-century political situation described by Bede does not sit easily with the idea that Atholl – or at least the modern region of that name – remained at that time distinct from Fortriu, but Stephanus, in discussing events of the early 670s, gives little indication of the existence of such unity in the southern Pictish zone at that time, referring to Pictish *populi* and *gentes*. Similarly, Bede himself reports that when Ecgfrith invaded Pictland in 685 he ravaged Pictish 'kingdoms' (*regna*), despite the fact that we know this invasion did not proceed any further north than Angus.³⁶ These references provide us with vital clues supporting the suspicion that sixth- and seventh-century Pictland was home to very distinct political and ecclesiastical communities. That being said, there is much that is uncertain here with regard to frontiers and nomenclature, and it will be necessary for this study to ground itself more firmly in these respects. By Bede's time the southern Pictish zone was home to

³³ I find myself in complete agreement with Anderson, *KKES*, 127-29, that *Picti* 'meant no more than "barbarians of north Britain"' and until the Pictish ethnogenesis had 'no cultural connotation'.

³⁴ Wolfram, *Goths*, 16, discusses the importance of religious tradition within the concept of the *gens*.

³⁵ AU 739.7.

³⁶ Stephanus, *VW* 19; Bede, *VSC* 27.

a single kingdom known to the Gaels as *Fortriu*,³⁷ and the early ecclesiastical history of this kingdom and its people shall be our focus in this study. We shall remain mindful, however, of the very real possibility that Fife, Stirlingshire and perhaps Strathearn (identified in the thirteenth century as *Fortriu* proper³⁸) had been culturally and politically distinct from Gowrie, Atholl and Angus until comparatively recently when Bede wrote, and of the corresponding possibility that this cleavage was both a significant factor in the early ecclesiastical history of what became the 'Verturian' kingdom,³⁹ and an ongoing factor in its ecclesiastical present in the age of Bede.

This study takes as proven the case, generally accepted among current scholars but by no means universally held, that the Calidones and Verturiones may, broadly speaking, be defined as 'Celtic' with regard to their language and the underlying character of their societies.⁴⁰ In both cases their populations are taken here as having been 'simply the descendants of the Iron Age tribes' of the Pictish zone, who may be seen as having organised themselves into distinct political communities that may be called tribal kingdoms, each of which was ruled by a king.⁴¹ We have already seen that, to avoid confusion or a misrepresentation of the past, some care is in order in how we use and understand the English term 'Pict' as an appellation. In this study we shall employ it as a collective label applicable to both the Calidones and the Verturiones in any period, and 'Pictland' will be used to denote areas inhabited by these Picts – hence, these terms may, potentially, be applied to Miathic areas south of the Forth that are more usually considered 'British'. The term 'Picti', on the other hand, will be used to distinguish those

³⁷ AU 693.1.

³⁸ On the problems associated with relying upon the thirteenth-century tract *De situ Albanie* to equate *Fortriu*, as is traditional, with Strathearn (and Menteith), see D. Broun, 'The Seven Kingdoms in *De situ Albanie*: A Record of Pictish political Geography or imaginary Map of ancient Alba?', in E. J. Cowan and R. A. McDonald (eds.), *Alba: Celtic Scotland in the Middle Ages* (East Linton, 2000), 24-42.

³⁹ The adjective 'Verturian', meaning 'pertaining to *Fortriu*' as developed by A. Woolf, 'The Verturian Hegemony: a mirror in the north', in M. Brown and C. Farr (eds.) *Mercia: an Anglo-Saxon kingdom in Europe* (forthcoming), 107-111, shall be employed as such throughout this study.

⁴⁰ The utility of the term 'Celtic' in the insular context has been challenged, particularly among archaeologists, but has been upheld in the Scottish context, with due and appropriate caution, by Armit, *Celtic Scotland*, 11-26. The adoption of Celtic ethnonyms by the Calidones and Verturiones is important evidence.

⁴¹ S. M. Foster, 'The Picts: Quite the Darkest of the Peoples of Dark Age Britain?', in Henry, *WGT*, 5-17, at 6. For discussions of contemporary Ireland, 'a country divided into many small kingdoms,

Calidonian and Verturian peoples who seem to have participated in the Pictish ethnogenesis that we shall assign here to the middle of the seventh century from those who did not.

Continental, Gaelic and British examples of kingship and over-kingship demonstrate fairly conclusively that no sixth- or seventh-century Pictish over-king is likely to have been capable of exercising effective, day-to-day authority over every Pictish potentate.⁴² In other words, whatever we decide was connoted by the designation *rex Pictorum* in the period encapsulated by this study, we should suppose that it represents a degree of power and influence significantly smaller than that enjoyed by the later medieval kings of Scots.⁴³ This study shall, then, avoid casual references to a pan-Pictish 'kingdom' or 'confederation', both of which terms carry political implications that would seem to be anachronistic for sixth- and seventh-century Pictish history, and this is bad news for the corresponding concept of 'the Pictish Church'. Eventually, perhaps even by Bede's time, the designation *rex Fortrenn* seems to have become synonymous with *rex Pictorum*, king of the Picti. Although the latter title was applied to sixth- and seventh-century Pictish kings in the tenth-century Irish Chronicle upon which our surviving Irish annals are based, the possibility that its application was done retrospectively and at a relatively late date means that it is difficult to ascertain much about these kings from such terminology.⁴⁴ Tacitus, in describing the native Iron Age Britons on the eve of Roman conquest, reports that 'once they obeyed *reges*; now they are torn between partisan and factionalised *principes*' (*olim regibus parebant, nunc per principes*

themselves combined into less stable overkingdoms', see Charles-Edwards, *Ireland*, 187-91; also F. J. Byrne, *Irish Kings and High Kings*, 2nd Edn. (Dublin, 2001), 7-8.

⁴² Duncan, *Kingdom*, 47, is far more comfortable with the idea of division than his contemporaries, allowing that 'a northern and southern over-king may have been usual in the sixth century', but arguing that by Bede's lifetime 'there was only one over-king and exceptions to this were unusual but not unknown thereafter'. Exceptional analogous examples include Visigothic Spain and Frankish Gaul; A. Woolf, 'Community, Identity and Kingship in Early England', in W. O. Frazer and A. Tyrrell (eds.) *Social Identity in Early Medieval Britain* (London & New York, 2000), 91-109, at 100-01, notes that 'German *Heerkönige* had taken over up-and-running provincial and Imperial structures and used them to enhance their own positions within the *gentes*'; this proved impossible for the Anglo-Saxons, these structures having been too badly eroded in Britain after 410, and where such structures had never been established, such as in Ireland and north Britain, such a degree of political unity was unheard of.

⁴³ Foster, *PGS*, 34; Hudson, *Kings of Celtic Scotland*, 11. For the view of the *rex Pictorum* as 'king of all the Picts', see for example Henderson, *Picts*, 34.

⁴⁴ On which see Anderson, *KKES*, 173.

factionibus et studiis <dis>trahuntur).⁴⁵ If we may roughly equate such *principes* with tribal kings, we may probably equate the *civitates* referred to elsewhere by Tacitus with native tribal kingdoms. On the continent, as is prefigured by Tacitus's Classical usage, *rex* remained a title reserved for men whose authority encompassed an entire *gens*.⁴⁶ In Hiberno-Latin, however, *rex* came to be applied to the office of kingship as represented by the vernacular term *rí*, and so could be used to speak of the most comparatively humble client-king in Ireland or, by extension, in Pictland. On the other hand, Bede's reference to the presence of thirty *duces* in the great army of Penda defeated at *Campus Gai* in 655 suggests that British Latinists shared the perspective of their continental colleagues with respect to the limited usage of *rex*,⁴⁷ allowing for the possibility that the term was used in a similar way by Pictish Latinists. We must suppose that in the fifth, sixth and seventh centuries, the Pictish political landscape included at least two (and probably more) *gentes*, each of which was still liberally provided with small tribal kingdoms. We do not know whether Pictish Latinists called the rulers of these smaller kingdoms *duces* or *reges*, and we cannot even be certain whether the Hiberno-Latin term *rex Fortrenn* denotes, like the Classical usage, royal authority that encompassed an entire *gens*, since in Ireland this term made reference to population groups of a different type than a polity like the *Verturiones*.⁴⁸

However their relative positions were denoted by vernacular and Latin terminology, Pictish tribal kings and over-kings will have striven against one another in an effort to dominate their neighbours. There seems little reason to doubt that Caesar's description of men among the Gaulish Celts 'who are regarded by their followers as having particularly great prestige' and who 'have the final say on all questions that come up for judgement and in all discussions of policy' provides us with an apt encapsulation of the nature of Pictish tribal kingship.⁴⁹ Indeed, the office of kingship in the early medieval insular zone, whether superficially Celtic or

⁴⁵ Tacitus, *De vita Iulii Agricolae*, §12, in R. M. Ogilvie & I. Richmond (eds.), *Cornelii Taciti de vita Agricolae* (Oxford, 1967).

⁴⁶ Woolf, 'Community, Identity and Kingship', 93-94.

⁴⁷ Bede, *HE* iii.24, the information for which may have come in part from British sources. On *duces* and *reges* on the continent, see Woolf, 'Community, Identity and Kingship', 97.

⁴⁸ Charles-Edwards, *Ireland*, 96-100.

⁴⁹ Caesar, *De Bello Gallico*, vi.11, in H. J. Edwards (ed.) *Caesar: the Gallic War* (London & New York, 1917).

Anglo-Saxon, was broadly similar in character between the different ethnolinguistic groups,⁵⁰ and it would seem that we ought to include the Picts in this statement. The spectre of matrilineal succession, rendering the Picts quite unique among their Celtic and Germanic neighbours, has long called into question the relevance to Pictland of such analogous contemporary evidence, and has, in recent years, been propagated and vigorously defended by some of the most respected scholars in Pictish studies. Isabel Henderson, placing her faith in a particular view of the evidence provided by the 'Pictish' regnal list, has argued, for example, that Bede's problematic evidence 'may safely be discounted' and that Pictish succession was always matrilineal, while Marjorie Anderson, in line with this same principle, ventured to compose a hypothetical genealogy of a single Pictish royal kindred.⁵¹ It is possible that some Pictish kin-groups placed more importance than was customary elsewhere on maternal descent within the kinship structure, but this is not matrilineality, the evidence for which has been shown by the work of several scholars to be quite flimsy, allowing us to be more confident of analogous evidence.⁵²

As a result, it is now more possible than ever before to argue that the Picts, like the more southerly Britons and the Gauls with whom they seem to have shared other cultural affinities, were similarly polytheistic in their native religious outlook in the Iron Age. Votive deposition in wells, rivers and other watery places is an attested feature of Iron Age religion in northern Britain,⁵³ and it is reasonable to believe that even in the seventh century there remained communities of traditional religious belief in parts of the Pictish zone of whom *Vita Columbae's* descriptions of well-worship may well be a caricature.⁵⁴ Place-name evidence speaks eloquently of the fact that the southern Picts at least worshipped in sacred settings to which the

⁵⁰ Woolf, 'Community, Identity and Kingship', 96.

⁵¹ Henderson, *Picts*, 31-32; Anderson, *KKES*, 169; summarised and re-affirmed by Duncan, *Kingdom*, 48-49. This model has since been followed or defended by D. P. Kirby, '...per universas Pictorum provincias', in G. Bonner (ed.), *Famulus Christi: Essays in Commemoration of the Thirteenth Centenary of the Birth of the Venerable Bede* (London, 1976), 286-324, at 297-99; M. Miller, 'Eanfrith's Pictish Son', in *Northern History* 14 (1978), 47-66, at 51; W. D. H. Sellar, 'Warlords, Holy Men and Matrilineal Succession', in *Innes Review* 36 (1985), 29-43, at 35-41; B. T. Hudson, *Kings of Celtic Scotland* (Westport, CT & London, 1994), 10-11.

⁵² Woolf, 'Matriliney', *passim*; see also Smyth, *Warlords*, 57-75; Foster, *PGS*, 37; Armit, *Celtic Scotland*, 77; A. Ross, 'Pictish Matriliney?', in *Northern Studies* 34 (1999), 11-22.

⁵³ See Armit, *Celtic Scotland*, 90-93.

⁵⁴ Adomnán, *VC* ii.11.

term *nemeton* was sometimes applied, probably denoting, as in other Celtic-speaking areas, sacred groves, caves or islands.⁵⁵ In addition, *Vita Columbae's* character of Broichan and his fellow *magi* might represent something of a druidic presence among the pagan Picts, but it is possible that this motif was entirely appropriated by Adomnán from Irish literary tradition.

The study of Pictish ecclesiastical history has been dominated by the matter of christianisation – not merely how and when Christianity came first to Pictland, but also how and when Pictish society became permanently and recognisably Christian. At particular issue in this regard has been the famous and influential monastery of Iona, the ‘prime *locus*’ of the cult of its founder St Colum Cille, and the degree to which this saint and his *familia* – ‘the denizens of churches subsidiary in some way to the prime *locus* of the saint’s cult’⁵⁶ – appear to have participated in the formative processes by which ‘the Pictish Church’ was made. Indeed, whether Colum Cille, who died in June 597, or the allegedly fifth-century figure of Nyniau of Whithorn deserves the credit for having brought the Christian religion to the Picts in the first place has been one of the great debates in Scottish church history. The former saint has recently emerged resoundingly triumphant from what has been an extensive, fascinating, and sometimes contemptible historiographic dialogue. The student of the christianisation of Fortriu finds him- or herself in an interpretative era which had its main genesis in a clutch of studies by a sequence of distinguished scholars beginning with Isabel Henderson’s comprehensive survey of Pictish studies in 1967, in which a *coup de grâce* was administered to the central debate of the preceding generation of scholarship.⁵⁷ This cleared the tables for the ‘Columban thesis’ put forward by W. F. Skene, who had argued in his three-volume *Celtic Scotland: A History of Ancient Alban* (1876-80) that the primary source material from early Christian Scotland demonstrated conclusively that Colum Cille was ‘the great apostle of Scotland’.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ See G. W. S. Barrow, ‘Religion in Scotland on the eve of Christianity’, in K. Borchardt & E. Bünz (eds.) *Forschungen zur Reichs-, Papst- und Landesgeschichte* (Stuttgart, 1998), 25-31.

⁵⁶ For definitions of the terms *locus* and *familia* as they were employed in Ireland, see C. Etchingham, *Church Organisation in Ireland A.D. 650 to 1000* (Maynooth, 1999), 93-96, 126-30.

⁵⁷ Henderson, *Picts*, 72-77.

⁵⁸ Skene, *CS III*, 99.

To Skene's mind, the Picts – all of them – had been converted to Christianity by this sixth-century Gaelic evangelist, and from that day forward their Church was 'in every respect a Scottish church, with a Scottish clergy supplied from Ireland', made up of Columban foundations 'spread over the whole nation of the Picts', who 'owed their civilisation to its influence, and entrusted the education of their children to its monastic schools', all of which was 'under the jurisdiction of the abbot of Hii or Iona'.⁵⁹ W. Douglas Simpson, although undoubtedly the most persistent of the twentieth-century opponents of Skene's Columban thesis, was not the earliest. In *The Historical Saint Columba* (1927), the first of his three main works outlining and refining the alternative thesis that the christianisation of the Picts was due primarily to missionary work performed by St Ninian (Nyniau) of Whithorn and his successors, Simpson acknowledged his debt to the 'great vigour and learning' of Archibald Scott, whose deeply sectarian *The Pictish Nation: Its People & Its Church* (1918) is toweringly emblematic of what Skene had condemned in his time as the 'evil' of 'polemical' historiography concerning the christianisation of Scotland.⁶⁰ Scott's vitriol was very much a response to Skene's Columban thesis, which he ascribed to 'Gaelic-everywhere-and-from-all-time' scholars.⁶¹ Refusing (usually for transparently sectarian reasons) to accept the contention that the Picts 'owed their civilisation' to Gaels, Scott argued that, instead, they had been converted to (and civilised by) the Christian religion through the efforts of Ninian and a cast of supposed pre-Columban successors to this saint, a mission which Skene had accepted as authentic but set aside because he believed that the Picts had apostatised.⁶² Scott challenged the evidence of such apostasy, putting forward the view that, after the foundation of Iona, there were two distinct ecclesiastical districts in northern Britain, one Ninianic, which 'continued to be the sole Church of the Picts of Alba', and the other Gaelic, 'founded at Hy (Iona) AD 563 by S. Columba'.⁶³ Simpson openly disagreed with Scott on some points, but wrote that 'so far as Columba is concerned, I feel myself substantially in agreement with Mr. Scott's

⁵⁹ Skene, CS III, 99; see also *idem*, CS I, 276-77.

⁶⁰ W. D. Simpson, *The Historical Saint Columba* (Aberdeen, 1927), p. viii; Skene, CS I, p. v.

⁶¹ Scott, *PNPC*, 21.

⁶² Skene, CS I, 157; *idem*, CS II, 39.

⁶³ Scott, *PNPC*, 1-2.

main position'.⁶⁴ Dissatisfied by the 'conspiracy of silence' of 'professed Celtic scholarship' with respect to Scott's work,⁶⁵ he reiterated and developed the Ninianic thesis in *The Historical Saint Columba* (1927), *The Celtic Church in Scotland: A Study of its Penetration Lines and Art Relationships* (1935) and *Saint Ninian and the Origins of the Christian Church in Scotland* (1940). Using a combination of historical analysis, archaeological and art historical interpretation (where his expertise was strongest), and evidence gleaned from place-names and church dedications – what he termed 'track charts of the saints' – Simpson supported Scott's view that 'long before Columba's time, Christianity was already widely spread among the Picts, who had their own organised Church – between which and Columba, if my reading of the evidence be right, there was either active hostility or, at best, a complete absence of co-operation'.⁶⁶

Simpson's opponents, however much they may have appreciated the breadth of his expertise as made manifest by his interdisciplinary approach, rightly questioned many of the basic assumptions that had shaped his model. It was particularly vulnerable to attack because of its dependence upon the evidence provided by the 'track charts' of dedications to various saints, interpreted by Simpson according to 'the canon that in the Celtic Church the monastic centres...bore always the name of the actual founder, or at all events, that of the founder of the parent monastery'.⁶⁷ His detractors soon succeeded in rendering this assumption and the historical model built upon it a 'bloodied corpse' deemed hardly worth exhuming for present consideration.⁶⁸ Half a century after the publication of Scott's major work on the Ninianic thesis, Henderson offered the last word on it, asserting that 'the virtually insurmountable difficulty of proving an early origin for the individual dedications renders them of little use', and that 'there is no good evidence for an active flourishing Ninianic Church existing side by side

⁶⁴ Simpson, *Columba*, p. viii.

⁶⁵ Simpson, *Columba*, p. viii.

⁶⁶ Simpson, *Saint Columba*, vii. The views of both Scott and Simpson relied to an extent upon the belief that the Gaels of Dál Riata were, in Simpson's words (*ibid.*, 21), 'squatters whose presence in Pictland was much resented'. For Simpson's use of 'track charts of the saints', see in particular *The Celtic Church in Scotland: A Study of its Penetration Lines and Art Relationships* (Aberdeen, 1935), 64-92; for his art historical argument, see *ibid.*, 93-100; this evidence is summarised more generally in *idem*, *Saint Ninian and the Origins of the Christian Church in Scotland* (Edinburgh & London, 1940), 95-103.

⁶⁷ Simpson, *Celtic Church*, 52-53.

with the Columban one in Pictland at any period'.⁶⁹ Almost a century after he had outlined it, Skene's Columban thesis – that Christianity was transported to Pictland by Colum Cille and his successors and that all Pictish Christians recognised the ecclesiastical authority of the abbot of Iona until the broad changes initiated by Naiton f. Derilei in the early eighth century – remained the only viable model for understanding the christianisation of Fortriu.

The main threat to the Columban thesis since it was reiterated by Henderson has not come from the direction of Whithorn. John MacQueen, who through a reconsideration of some of the evidence had earlier endeavoured to preserve the essence of the Scott-Simpson Ninianic thesis, has since made another attempt to invigorate some of his earlier conclusions, but recent work has highlighted grave and seemingly insurmountable problems within this Ninianic tradition, with the result that even Ninian himself has increasingly become something of a shade. Indeed, we must now doubt that he even existed.⁷⁰ Yet the Columban thesis too has fallen out of favour among scholars as a result of ongoing critical examination of the key primary sources. The overall effect of these most recent works of sophisticated scholarship has fostered increasing scepticism regarding the part played by Colum Cille himself in the christianisation of the Picts. Kathleen Hughes, fascinated with the Pictish 'lacuna' with regard to surviving historical texts, suggested that the main conversion period in Pictland was later than the *floruit* of Colum Cille, and that, until the eighth century, what few Christian communities existed were 'minor cells, established without royal patronage, exercising little influence on society', resulting in a dearth of Latinity among the Picts.⁷¹ This idea of a relatively late Pictish conversion entered into the historical mainstream when it was accepted and summarised by Professor Duncan in what remains, despite one notable later effort,

⁶⁸ For this apt metaphor see D. Broun, 'The Literary Record of St Nynia: Fact and Fiction?', in *Innes Review* 42 (1991), 143-50, at 145.

⁶⁹ Henderson, *Picts*, 71.

⁷⁰ J. MacQueen, *St Nynia: A study of literary and linguistic evidence* (Edinburgh & London, 1961); all references are to the second edition of this work, *St Nynia* (Edinburgh, 1990), unless otherwise noted. For further work along similar lines, see D. Brooke, *Wild Men and Holy Places: St Ninian, Whithorn and the Medieval Realm of Galloway* (Edinburgh, 1994), 23-30. For challenges to such views see Broun, 'Literary Record of St Nynia', *passim*; Macquarrie, *Saints*, 50-73; T. O. Clancy, 'The real St Ninian', in *Innes Review* 52 (2001), 1-28.

⁷¹ K. Hughes, 'Early Christianity in Pictland' (Jarrow Lecture, 1970), reprinted in D. Dumville (ed.) *Celtic Britain in the Early Middle Ages: Studies in Scottish and Welsh Sources* (Woodbridge, 1980), 38-52, at 51.

the standard textbook on the period for specialists, students, and general readers alike. Here, the christianisation of Fortriu is described as 'the work of many decades' on the part of Northumbrian (and not Columban) clerics operating in the seventh century, and it is argued that 'the apostles Ninian and Columba were important not only for what they achieved but also for what it later became politic to claim that they had achieved'.⁷²

The idea that neither Nyniau nor Colum Cille visited Pictland as an apostle and that the Picts remained unchristianised until sometime after Colum Cille's death has since won the support of most subsequent scholars,⁷³ though an important refinement has also been advanced in which Colum Cille is once again envisioned as having converted Bridei f. Mailcon and it is argued that British clerics recruited by Iona carried out the seventh-century missionary work attributed by Duncan to Northumbrians.⁷⁴ The present work seeks to assess the value of this dominant interpretative model with specific regard to the christianisation of Fortriu. In attempting to offer something of a new perspective on a body of familiar evidence which has changed but little since Skene's time, the principal aim of the present work is not to engender certainty – a goal which in most cases must elude the Picticist. It is an unfortunate consequence of the nature and tone of the more objectionable contributions to the prior debate on its subject that this study may potentially attract unwanted labels or, more worryingly still, provide grist to the enthusiastic mills of sectarian discourse, which continues to harbour a fascination with the period under examination. Our primary aim shall be to seek to redress a long-standing need for a balanced exploration of a legitimate and important historical problem, and to call attention to the fact that even the most deeply-rooted paradigms of Pictish studies are (of necessity) founded upon inference and hypothesis and so are open to challenge. Such is the nature of a discipline confronted with such a relative paucity of evidence, and few students of the early

⁷² Duncan, *Kingdom*, 69-72.

⁷³ See for example Herbert, *IKD*, 29-30; Sharpe, *Adomnán*, 2; Macquarrie, *Saints*, 81; Woolf, 'Verturian Hegemony'.

⁷⁴ Charles-Edwards, *Ireland*, 305-308. See also K. Veitch, 'The Columban Church in northern Britain, 664-717: a reassessment', in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* 127 (1997), 627-47, at 631, where Pictavia is described, despite the prevailing model, as 'an area dominated in the seventh century by the Columban Church'.

historic peoples of Britain and Ireland would gainsay the eloquent defence of inference put forward in a different context by Charles Thomas in 1981:

If we are to pursue the subject, and set out a framework of possibilities in the hope and the expectation that further research will assist others to get closer to historical realities, we have to walk along what amounts to a tightrope. That rope is anchored, at both ends, in time...We try very hard to remain upon this rope along its whole and narrow length. Otherwise, of course, we shall fall off; on one side, into an excessive timidity that restrains any enquiry or exploration at all, and on the other into formless quaking wastes that lie beyond the bounds of inference.⁷⁵

If we require little convincing on this point, we must nevertheless remain cognisant of the correspondingly unavoidable limits to certainty that must always characterise this or any other subject related to the Picts and allow for the formulation of plausible alternative models that fit and are faithful to the surviving evidence. It is just such a model that we shall endeavour to construct here. Our principal tool shall be the critical examination of our surviving documentary sources pertaining to the Picts during the period in question, with a particular focus upon trying to appreciate the nature and provenance of the sources upon which Adomnán and Bede relied in composing their understandings of early Pictish ecclesiastical history in *Vita Columbae* and *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum* respectively, two of the most highly-regarded of the works of the early medieval insular zone. The thinness of such evidence relating to the Picts has, of course, become so axiomatic among medievalists that the author has routinely encountered scepticism regarding the feasibility of the present study, but the end result will, it is hoped, assuage such fears and undermine any thought that the final word on this subject was put forward some time ago.

The ecclesiastical history of Fortriu may be taken to begin (predictably) with the advent of the Christian religion north of the Forth and the process by which the Picts of this region first transferred their spiritual allegiances from established local religious traditions to Christianity. The present work commences with a consideration of these same subjects through an assessment and reconciliation of a range of evidence, including the myths describing the main epoch of christianisation that were current among various groups within Pictland at the end of the seventh century. It moves on to attempt to catch glimpses of the ecclesiastical

history of Fortriu as it developed in the seventh century. Along the way we shall also encounter evidence of an ecclesiastical nature which seems to hint at the nature of political developments in sixth- and seventh-century Pictland, requiring us to make frequent mention of the *septentrionales Picti* of the northern Pictish zone who, as Bede understood it, adopted the Christian religion through the work of Colum Cille. There remains such room for doubt regarding the political allegiances and identities in our period of the Picts of so-called 'Pictish Periphery', consisting of the northern highlands, the northern Hebrides and the Northern Isles, that this northerly zone will be left largely unconsidered here as an area requiring further research.⁷⁶ We shall reserve the idea of a 'Pictish Church' – a centrally controlled and organised body serving and representing the *gens Pictorum* – until such time as seems appropriate from the evidence.

Indeed, an exploration of how Pictish ecclesiastical history progressed to the point at which 'Pictish Church' becomes an applicable term lies at the heart of the study. We shall see further indications that the idea of the *gens Pictorum* known to Bede arose only during the period under investigation and as a construct of the men of Fortriu, who seem in this period to have come to regard the rest of Pictland as a hinterland to be dominated and exploited. We shall of course consider the monastery of Iona, the actual achievement of its founder and his successors among the Picts, and the way in which the mythology surrounding that achievement and the monastery's role in evangelising and ministering to Picts evolved over the course of the seventh century in response to dynamic changes in Iona's political relationships and affiliations within Pictland. The imperialistic aspirations and Gregorian pretensions of the kings and bishops of seventh-century Bernicia and their collective influence over Pictish political and ecclesiastical affairs shall also be considered. At the heart of this study, however, shall be the Picts themselves, who are too often marginalised in the study of the early Christian insular zone as a people to be influenced, instructed and directed by its neighbours. We shall attempt to understand something of the way in which the ecclesiastical institutions of Fortriu developed over the course of the sixth and seventh centuries, and how the

⁷⁵ Thomas, *CRB*, 24.

⁷⁶ For the 'Pictish Periphery', see Foster, *PGS*, 12. A. Ritchie, 'The Picts in Shetland', in Henry, *WGT*, 35-46, offers the most recent detailed assessment of the Pictishness of Shetland.

ecclesiastical status quo was challenged by the onset of important political changes within Pictland during the lifetimes of Adomnán and Bede. Finally, we shall consider the making of the Pictish Church itself and the role played in this process by Iona and the Columban *familia*, in order to round out our examination of the Columban thesis and our impressions of the importance of this great monastic federation in the early ecclesiastical history of the Picts. What will emerge at the end of this study will be a new model – and it can only be a model – that, if it can replace neither the existing interpretative models nor reinvigorate the defunct Ninianic one, can at least, it is hoped, stand as a viable and acceptable alternative to these other views. As such, this work can promise neither certainty nor an end to the spirited historiographic debate in which it seeks to take part. Indeed, it seeks to do neither, having as its aims only to move its subject forward by opening up both old and new areas of debate and, above all, to suggest that we cannot hope to understand the Picts or their history, whatever the state of the evidence, unless we endeavour to do so on the Picts' own terms.

II

Across the Spine of Britain *Iona, Vita Columbae, and Pictish Christianity*

The king, puffed up with royal pride, acted arrogantly and would not have the gates of his fortress opened at the first arrival of the blessed man. Learning this, the man of God approached the very doors with his companions; he first signed them with the sign of the Lord's cross, and only then did he put his hand to the door to knock. At once the bars were thrust back and the doors opened of themselves with all speed...The king and the council were much alarmed at this and came out of the house to meet the blessed man with due respect and to welcome him gently with words of peace. From that day forward, for as long as he lived, that ruler treated the holy and venerable man with great honour, as was fitting.
– *Vita Columbae* (ii.35)

Observations made at the important monastery established on Iona in 563 by Colum Cille of Cenél Conaill comprise our richest body of evidence for the study of the early ecclesiastical history of Pictland. They include the 'Iona Chronicle', a set of annals kept at the monastery from its establishment until the middle of the eighth century,¹ the testimony of which we must set aside until later in this study because it appears to have contained no record of the christianisation of the Picts. More helpful for the present purposes are the praise-poem *Amra Choluimb Chille*,² the lost *liber de uirtutibus sancti Columbae* of Cumméne Ailbe, seventh abbot of Iona (657-69), the seventh-century poetry of Beccán mac Luigdech, and, of course, the *Vita Columbae* of Adomnán mac Rónáin, ninth abbot of Iona (679-704), justifiably considered by most scholars to be our most important textual source for the study of the Picts. *Vita Columbae* is among the most heavily-scrutinised of early medieval texts, having been carefully edited, re-edited, examined and re-examined by scholars from various disciplines. To various ends, the text has been extensively, and perhaps excessively, quarried and re-quarried for information about early medieval Ireland, Scotland and England, and in the past has been both trusted as more-or-less absolute fact and rejected as more-or-less utter fable. Because it lies at the very heart not just of the debate surrounding the dating of the inception of the

¹ On the existence of this lost source, see Henderson, *Picts*, 165-67; Bannerman, *Dalriada*, 9-26; Herbert, *IKD*, 22-23.

² References to *Amra Choluimb Chille* are to the edition of Clancy & Márkus, *Iona*, 104-14.

Pictish conversion period, but also of our understanding of the Picts themselves in the sixth and seventh centuries, it will be necessary to begin this study with a thorough examination of *Vita Columbae* with regard to its testimony about the Picts. This will enable us to return to the text time and again as we endeavour to negotiate our way through sixth- and seventh-century Verturian ecclesiastical history throughout the course of this work.

Amra Choluimb Chille and the Picts

Most recent commentators are agreed that *Amra Choluimb Chille* attributed to Dallán Forgaill, and not *Vita Columbae*, is our earliest Iona-oriented text which makes reference to Pictland, having been composed soon after the death of Colum Cille.³ In the absence of any annal record the poem provides indeed the earliest evidence that its subject travelled in Pictland, celebrating him as having been ‘the teacher who would teach the tribal-peoples of the Tay’ (*forcetlaid for-canad túatha Toí*).⁴ That Colum Cille engaged in instruction in Pictland can hardly therefore be doubted. We might even accept the view that this description of the saint as a *forcetlaid* (a word used to gloss the Latin term *magister*)⁵ is ‘perhaps the best evidence for Columba’s missionary work in Pictland’,⁶ although in so doing we must recognise that ‘the best evidence’ is reasonably poor, since such an interpretation of *forcetlaid* is hardly to be preferred linguistically. On the other hand, the poem’s reference to the *túatha* of the Tay is extremely important. Here we have the earliest available evidence outside of Classical sources of the existence of Pictish tribal kingdoms, and the claim later in *Amra Choluimb Chille* that the saint ‘subdued them with a blessing – the arrogant ones who surrounded the great king of the Tay’ (*cluidsius borb béolu bendacht/batar ic Toí toil rí*g) is similarly our earliest post-Classical reference to a Pictish over-king with the capacity to exert a degree of influence over tribal client-kings.⁷

³ See Herbert, *IKD*, 9-10; Clancy & Márkus, *Iona*, 96; Charles-Edwards, *Ireland*, 285.

⁴ *Amra Choluimb Chille*, §I, l. 15.

⁵ DIL

⁶ *Amra Choluimb Chille* §I, l. 15, in Clancy & Márkus (eds.) *Iona*, 104; see Sharpe, *Adomnán*, 31.

⁷ *Amra Choluimb Chille*, §VIII, ll. 5-6. I have here preferred the translation of Charles-Edwards, *Ireland*, 305, to Clancy’s ‘his blessing turned them, the mouths of the fierce ones who lived on the Tay, to the will of the king’.

The image thus created by *Amra Choluimb Chille* is that of a successful embassy on the part of a magisterial Colum Cille to the court of a Pictish 'great king' based on the River Tay that watered the heart of eighth-century Fortriu. Here, having seemingly overcome a certain amount of resistance to his presence, he was suffered to teach – either as a missionary or as a minister – among client-kingdoms over which this over-king exerted his authority. This reference to a 'great king of the Tay' is our earliest medieval reference, however oblique, to an over-king in the southern Pictish zone, but such a man cannot, for reasons outlined above, be assumed to have dominated all of the tribal kingdoms of what became eighth-century Fortriu. Indeed, as the Tay flows through Atholl and past Dunkeld, and waters what might therefore have been southern Calidonian territory before the Pictish ethnogenesis, we may doubt whether a 'great king of the Tay' in this period was able to extend his *imperium* south of the Ochil Hills. We might therefore be tempted to equate this title with the later-attested title *rex Athfoitle*. *Amra Choluimb Chille* and the vagaries of the political organisation of Pictland at the time of Colum Cille must be kept mind in considering the testimony of our other Iona-based sources.

In Search of Cumméne's *De Uirtutibus*

Analysis of the text of *Vita Columbae* has isolated an extensive tier of stories that, it has been argued persuasively by Máire Herbert, represents information recorded by formal deposition on the part of people who knew and remembered Colum Cille, probably taken during the abbacy of Ségéne, fifth abbot of Iona (623-52). These episodes are characterised by a lack of the more spectacular sort of miracles attested by the text, consisting instead of stories in which 'mundane events can take on the hue of the supernatural and chance remarks may be interpreted as prophetic pronouncements', so that 'the element of the marvellous throughout this stratum of the text lies in the interpretation of events rather than in the nature of the events themselves'.⁸ According to this argument, the source for this tier of stories was the lost *liber de uirtutibus sancti Columbae* (henceforth *De Uirtutibus*) composed in the middle of the seventh century by Iona's seventh abbot Cumméne Ailbe, which

⁸ Herbert, *IKD*, 16.

emerges from such a discussion as 'the most important source of Adomnán's information about the saint'.⁹ It would seem an important matter, then, to consider whether or not we can isolate what, if anything, Cumméne's *De Uirtutibus* (and so the generation prior to Adomnán's) had to say about the Picts. *Vita Columbae* makes thirteen references to Pictland and its inhabitants, although the term 'Pictland' does not occur as such in the text. Instead, we find the use of more indistinct phrases to delineate Pictish territory, and these merit close examination.

Pictland is mentioned five times by Adomnán in terms that are vague and essentially geographical, being described in terms of its location *trans* or *ultra* the mountains of Druim Alban (*dorsum Britanniae*) from Iona and Argyll.¹⁰ In contrast, in six of the remaining eight cases the text defines Pictish territory in political terms, with three references to the *prouincia* (and two to the *regione*) *Pictorum*.¹¹ It is notable that this latter political terminology was also used in the eighth century by Bede.¹² It is also notable that there is no overlap between these two systems of nomenclature: either one or the other is used in each episode. In only two of the thirteen references to Pictland in *Vita Columbae* does neither of these two formulae appear, with Colum Cille described instead as having been 'in prima fatigatione itineris ad regem Brudeum' ('in the first wearying journey to King Bridei') and having been 'iuxta Brudei regis munitionem' ('next to the fort of King Bridei').¹³ In the former case, it is Adomnán's use of the term *iter* that is notable: three times in the *dorsum Britanniae* corpus the saint is said to have been 'iter agens' ('making a journey').¹⁴ The term *iter* is never used in conjunction with the *prouincia Pictorum* formula, with Colum Cille being said instead in these instances, with slight variations in syntax, to have been 'staying

⁹ For Herbert's full discussion of Adomnán's source materials, see *IKD*, 13-26; see also Sharpe, *Adomnán*, 39-40.

¹⁰ Adomnán, *VC* i.34; ii.31; ii.42; ii.46; iii.14. Adomnán twice prefers the adjectival *Britannicus* to the genitive *Britanniae*.

¹¹ Adomnán, *VC* i.1; ii.11 (*prouincia* occurs in the text; *regione* in the title); ii.27; ii.32-34 (the latter two episodes relating to the first).

¹² Bede, *HE* iv.12 (and below).

¹³ Adomnán, *VC* ii.35; i.37. The literal translation of this phrase, 'in the first weariness of the journey to King Bridei', has been taken to indicate more than one journey made by Colum Cille; Sharpe, *Adomnán*, 336-37, however, takes the phrase as meaning 'the first time the saint climbed the steep path to King Bridei's fortress', which does not require more than one journey.

¹⁴ Adomnán, *VC* i.34; ii.31; iii.14.

for some days' in Pictland.¹⁵ As there is again no overlap between the two sets of stories with regard to this word choice, it would seem appropriate tentatively to include the *prima fatigatione itineris* story, which tells of Colum Cille's arrival at the stronghold of a Pictish king, as a sixth member of the *dorsum Britanniae* corpus with its use of *iter*.

Such terminological distinctions cannot, however, help us to classify the last remaining miracle into one or the other of our two bodies of episodes within *Vita Columbae*. In order to do so it is necessary to move beyond terminology to consider whether each corpus exhibits comparable degrees of internal cohesiveness and consistency in terms of their actual content, and whether their distinctiveness from one another goes any deeper. Among the miracles described by the *dorsum Britanniae* corpus, four are 'vertical miracles' concerned with the saint's prophetic abilities as proof of his relationship with the divine.¹⁶ Here, he foresees an attempt on his life, the longevity of an ill companion, the safe return to Iona of Cormac ua Liatháin from the *Orcades*, and the coming of angels to bear away the soul of a dying man. One healing miracle is described, and there is only one 'miracle of power', a 'vindication miracle' involving Colum Cille's forcing open of the gates of Bridei's fortress.¹⁷ In stark contrast, among the miracles described by the *prouincia Pictorum* corpus, all are concerned with miracles of power that take the form of 'vindication miracles'. Here, the saint drives off a demon and a water-beast, brings life to a dead boy, makes a stone float that becomes thereafter a relic of healing, and overcomes a contrary wind conjured against him by his sorcerous enemies. As in the *dorsum Britanniae* corpus, healing miracles appear here but are not prominent, but foresight – the most common of the miracles in the *dorsum Britanniae* corpus – occurs in only one *prouincia Pictorum* episode, and then is subsumed by the saint's having brought about the striking down and restoration to health of an enemy.

¹⁵ Adomnán, VC ii.11 (*per aliquo<t> demoraretur dies*), ii.27 (*per aliquot moraretur dies*), ii.32 (*per aliquot demorabatur dies*), i.1 (*aliquantis diebus manens*).

¹⁶ C. Stancliffe, 'The Miracle Stories in seventh-century Irish Saints' Lives', in J. Fontaine and J. N. Hillgarth (eds.), *Le Septième Siècle Changements et Continuités* (London, 1992), 87-111, at 94-95 adopts Derouet's classification of miracle stories as 'vertical' or 'horizontal'.

¹⁷ On the idea of the 'vindication miracle' see Stancliffe, 'Miracle Stories in seventh-century Irish Saints' Lives', 97.

Looking past the nature of the miracles described, of the *dorsum Britanniae* stories, only one mentions explicit Pictish geography that a contemporary of the author could have identified, with the possible, but not certain, addition of the monastery of *Caillie Aufhinde*.¹⁸ Again in contrast, three of the five *prouincia Pictorum* episodes are set in explicit settings, all on the River Ness.¹⁹ This is not an area of conclusive diversion, perhaps, but given the terminological evidence we have seen and the apparent presence of two rather different mind-sets with regard to how Colum Cille's miraculous powers manifested themselves on his travels in Pictland, it would seem to be further evidence to suggest that we are dealing with two distinct sets of stories, written by two different people with different levels of familiarity with Pictish geography. Such a conclusion is reinforced by a third and particularly marked area of diversion between these two groups of Pictish episodes in *Vita Columbae*. In the *prouincia Pictorum* corpus, the Picts are explicitly and thoroughly heathen throughout; indeed it is this aspect of Pictish society around which the narrative revolves in all but one of the five episodes.²⁰ Here, the pagan Picts are 'stolidus' ('dull-witted') and 'obcaecante sensus' ('clouded in sense'). Their leaders include druids (*magi*) who are consistently hostile towards Christians, and Colum Cille engages in one explicit conversion, while in two additional episodes conversion is implied.²¹ On the other hand, we find no druids in the *dorsum Britanniae* corpus, where a pagan Pict appears in only one of the six stories and is described moreover in wholly favourable terms, showing no sign of antagonism towards Colum Cille or the Christian religion.²²

To return first to the matter of classification, the story that takes place *iuxta Brudei regis munitionem*, containing as it does a miracle of power in which the saint's voice is supernaturally amplified while singing a psalm, as well as explicitly pagan Picts and Pictish druids, would therefore seem to fit best within the *prouincia*

¹⁸ Adomnán, *VC* iii.14 is set at a place called *Airchartdan*, usually identified as Urquhart on Loch Ness; the location of *Cailli áufhinde* (ii.31) is not specified.

¹⁹ Adomnán, *VC* ii.27; ii.33; ii.34.

²⁰ The exception is *VC* ii.27, in which a water-beast is driven off and the non-Christian nature of the Picts, while mentioned, is not integral to the miracle.

²¹ Where the polytheistic Picts are said to have 'magnified the God of the Christians' (*VC* ii.27) and where 'the God of the Christians was glorified' (ii.32), there can be little doubt that mass conversion is implied; see, for example, MacMullen, *Christianizing the Roman Empire*, 1-9.

²² Adomnán, *VC* iii.14.

Pictorum corpus and may confidently be placed there. Similarly, while in the *prima fatigatione itineris* story the Pictish king Bridei is described as having been ‘puffed up with royal pride’ (*fastu elatus regio*) and ‘superbus’ (‘insolent’) when he met Colum Cille, there is no explicit suggestion here of his being anything but a Christian. The presence of a miracle of power in this story is perhaps suggestive of the *prouincia Pictorum* corpus, but the *dorsum Britanniae* corpus does include one other story set in a Pictish stronghold, and one might therefore expect a story like this one describing the saint’s arrival at that fortress. It is also notable that the *Amra*’s claim that Colum Cille ‘subdued them with a blessing – the arrogant ones who surrounded the great king of the Tay’, which would seem to allude to the same episode described in this story, in which the saint forces open the gates of Bridei’s fortress and wins the king over. Such considerations tip the balance of probabilities in the direction of the *dorsum Britanniae* corpus, and it is there that we shall assign it, while remaining mindful of a certain ambiguity about it.

It is a key point that, if the testimony of the *prouincia Pictorum* corpus is set aside for argument’s sake and not allowed to influence one’s interpretation of the *dorsum Britanniae* corpus on its own, there emerges little explicit indication in the latter that Colum Cille was dogged by polytheistic hostility in Pictland. On the other hand, and particularly if we allow the *prima fatigatione itineris* story to be included in the *dorsum Britanniae* corpus, we find that, with its reference to a successful embassy to a Pictish king despite the antagonism of an ill-defined (but not explicitly polytheistic) ‘hostile pursuer’ (*emulus persecutor*) – a king whose insolence was overcome by a miracle – this corpus seems generally to complement the testimony of *Amra Choluimb Chille*. In that event one could suggest that in both cases the material is based upon a common store of information about Colum Cille’s travels and works among the Picts – information that we know in the case of *Amra Choluimb Chille* to have come from the memories of the saint’s contemporaries. In this regard it is notable that Professor Herbert’s analysis of *Vita Columbae* has shown that a consideration of the setting of each episode and the manner in which each appears to have been transmitted to Adomnán reveals a division among the text’s Pictish episodes that corresponds quite closely (though not exactly) with the division outlined here on these other grounds (bold-type indicating overlap):

HERBERT: Narratives re. Pictland containing associations with Iona community: (i.12, Ardnamurchan), i.34, ii.27, ii.31, ii.42 (part), iii.14.
 DORSUM BRITANNIAE corpus: i.34, ii.31, ii.42, ii.35 (?), iii.14.

HERBERT: Narratives re. Pictland containing no clear associations with Iona community: i.37 (part), ii.11, ii.32, ii.33, ii.34, ii.35.
 PROUINCIA PICTORUM corpus: (i.1, preface), i.37, ii.11, ii.27, ii.32, ii.33, ii.34, ii.35 (?).

[HERBERT: Posthumous miracles witnessed by Adomnán: ii.46.]²³

Fig. A.

Vita Columbae's two voices with regard to the Picts.

The general agreement between these two quite different systems of classification must surely strengthen the conclusion that Adomnán's *Vita Columbae* contains two fairly distinct groups of stories set among the Picts. On the one hand we have the *dorsum Britanniae* corpus with its understated and largely 'vertical' miracles, its vague understanding of Pictish geography, its probable agreement with *Amra Choluimb Chille* and its tendency to rely upon the witness of members of the Iona community. On the other we have the *prouincia Pictorum* corpus with its 'horizontal' miracles of power, its precise northern geography, its prominent theme of Colum Cille's struggle with Pictish heathenism and its lack of references to eyewitnesses. The apparent presence of these two voices, and the fact that each corpus 'would be quite out of place in the context of [the other]', has been noticed before: Isabel Henderson has argued, for example, that our *prouincia Pictorum* corpus represents an account of the saint's first journey among the Picts, while our *dorsum Britanniae* corpus represents an indeterminate number of subsequent visits.²⁴ With reference to Professor Herbert's closer examination of the composition of *Vita Columbae*, however, it seems a rather more likely explanation that one of these two voices – specifically that underlying the less spectacular *dorsum Britanniae* corpus – is that of Cumméne Ailbe, extracted by Adomnán from the earlier *De Uirtutibus*.

We have only one explicit reference to Cumméne's work in *Vita Columbae*, an interpolation added by Dorbbéne, the scribe of the eighth-century Schaffhausen

²³ Herbert, *IKD*, 15.

²⁴ Henderson, *Picts*, 74-75; see also Sharpe, *Adomnán*, 333 ('it certainly seems possible, even likely', that VC ii.32-35 were drawn from a narrative account); Macquarrie, *Saints*, 89 n.46, ('Adomnán may have been working from two narratives which recorded visits to the Inverness area').

manuscript of the text.²⁵ Here, Cumméne is said to have written the following about a prophecy made by Colum Cille regarding Áedán mac Gabráin, king of Dál Riata:

'Indubitanter crede O Aidane quoniam nullus aduersariorum tuorum tibi poterit resistere, donec prius fraudulentiam agas in me et in posteros meos. Propterea ergo tu filiis commenda, ut et ipsi filiis et nepotibus et posteris suis commendent, ne per consilia mala eorum sceptrum regni huius de manibus suis perdant...' Hoc autem uaticinium temporibus nostris completum est in bello Roth, Domnallo Brecco nepot~~e~~ Aidani sine causa uastante prouinciam Domnall nepotis Ainmuireg. Et a die illa usque hodie adhuc in procliuo sunt ab extraneis: quod suspiria doloris pectori incutit.²⁶

'Make no mistake, Áedán, but believe that, until you commit some act of treachery against me or my successors, none of your enemies will have the power to oppose you. For this reason you must give this warning to your sons, as they must pass it on to their sons and grandsons and descendants, so that they do not follow evil counsels and so lose the sceptre of this kingdom from their hands...' This prophecy was fulfilled in our own time, at the battle of Mag Roth, when Áedán's grandson Domnall Brecc laid waste the territory of the saint's kinsman Domnall Ua Ainmirech. From that day to this the family of Áedán is held in subjection by strangers, a fact which brings sighs of sorrow to the breast.

Interestingly, one Pictish-related episode that uses the phrase *dorsum Britanniae* seems to make a very similar point:

Et hoc etiam ut estimo non inter minora uirtutum miracula connumerandum uidetur, de mortalitate quae nostris temporibus terrarum orbem bis ex parte uastauerat maiore. Nam ut de ceteris taceam latioribus Eoropae regionibus...ociani insulae per totum, uidelicet Scotia et Brittannia, binis uicibus uastatae sunt dira pestilentia, exceptis duobus populis, hoc est Pictorum plebe et Scotorum Brittanniae inter quos utrosque dorsi montes brittannici disterminant. Et quamuis utrorumque populorum non desint grandia peccata, quibus plerumque ad iracundiam aeternus prouocatur iudex, utrisque tamen huc usque patienter ferens ipse pepercit. Cui alio itaque haec tribuitur gratia a deo conlata nisi sancto Columbae, cuius monasteria intra utrorumque populorum terminos fundata est ab utrisque usque ad praesens tempus ualde sunt honorificata? Sed hoc quod nunc dicturi sumus ut arbitramur non sine gemitu audiendum est, quia sunt plerique in utrisque populis ualde stolidi qui se sanctorum orationibus a morbis defensos nescientes ingrati dei patientia male abutuntur.²⁷

This story too, I think, should be counted among the major miracles of power. It concerns the plague which twice in our time has ravaged a large part of the world...Everywhere was affected except two peoples, the Pictish population and the Gaels who lived in Britain, peoples separated by the *dorsum Britanniae*. Although neither of these peoples is without great sin, by which the eternal judge is moved to anger, nonetheless to this date he has been patient and has spared them both. Surely this grace from God can only be attributed to St Columba? For he founded among both peoples

²⁵ See Sharpe, *Adomnán*, 357-59 for a discussion of this passage.

²⁶ *Adomnán*, VC iii.5.

²⁷ *Adomnán*, VC ii.46.

monasteries where today he is still honoured on both sides. It is not without a sigh now that I say this, that there are in both peoples many foolish folk who ungratefully fail to recognise that they have been protected from the plague by the prayers of saints, and who abuse God's patience.

These two sentiments, presenting the sorrow of the author that his contemporaries have not afforded Colum Cille the respect he is deemed to deserve, would seem to be related, and it is interesting that in the first case the voice is explicitly Cumméne's, while in the second it is explicitly Adomnán's, who reports later in the chapter that he visited Northumbria during the second plague mentioned and was protected from harm.²⁸ This underlines the important point that, although one may suggest that the episodes which refer to Pictland with reference to the *dorsum Britanniae* were derived by Adomnán from Cumméne, nevertheless all of the language of *Vita Columbae* is Adomnán's, and if there are terminological distinctions being made in the text it was the later writer who made them. One wonders whether Adomnán was not moved to relocate Cumméne's point about his contemporaries to a new location in the text as part of an attempt to reiterate, with reference to a more topical illustration, what was to him an ongoing problem that had passed into the next generation.

The fact that the *dorsum Britanniae* material seems largely, indeed almost entirely, made up of those 'mundane events' that are deemed to be characteristic of the *De Uirtutibus* material within *Vita Columbae* leads us, along with the probable links between the *dorsum Britanniae* material and *Anra Choluimb Chille*, to the conclusion that Adomnán derived the former from the work of his predecessor, and that he had reasons for making this terminological distinction. The *prouincia Pictorum* stories, on the other hand, seem as likely to represent Adomnán's own contribution to *Vita Columbae*, though we shall see that these too may be thought to have been derived from source material. Such a suggestion is reinforced by the fact that, in his summary of the miracles performed by the saint in the opening chapter of the first book of his text, Adomnán both uses the *prouincia Pictorum* formula and, rather significantly, makes reference only to those miracles that appear in this corpus of episodes. It is certainly not impossible for the more spectacular miracles of the *prouincia Pictorum* corpus to have been attested by contemporaries of the saint,

but Adomnán is not inclined to make this connection, and there is no doubt about the 'large element of fiction', as the Andersons put it,²⁹ in these stories. Here we find Colum Cille striking terror into the hearts of his enemies with a thunderous voice, driving off a roaring water-beast, exorcising a well, restoring a dead boy to life, transforming a pebble into a healing relic that floats in water, and overcoming a contrary wind.

All of this seems much more like stock hagiographic fare than the testimony of eyewitnesses. Indeed, the passing resemblance between the court of Bridei in these stories, replete with *magi* like the powerful Broichan, and the court of Lóegaire mac Néill in Muirchú's *Vita Patricii* with its 'wise men, *magi*, soothsayers, enchanters and inventors of every black art' (*scivos et magos et aurispices et incantatores et omnes malae artis inventores habuerat*), seems particularly notable, along with the fact that both texts contain the idea of a saint vindicating himself against the foremost *magus* of the court.³⁰ Muirchú's text was composed after Cumméne's death,³¹ and any hints that the author of the *prouincia Pictorum* stories was familiar with it is strong evidence that the latter were introduced to the Columban dossier by Adomnán. A further hint at his authorship is the presence of a Gaelic slave-girl in one of the central *prouincia Pictorum* stories, in which Colum Cille, refused by Broichan in his request that she should be released, responds by creating a healing relic out of a pebble when God strikes the wizard down. The theme of release of captives is fairly widespread in clerical writing, but this episode nevertheless has an Adomnánian flavour. The ninth abbot of Iona was particularly concerned about the security of women and other non-combatants in times of war: their protection from violence was the object of his *Lex Innocentium*, also known as *Cáin Adomnáin* ('law of Adomnán'), and he is known to have made at least one journey to Northumbria to

²⁸ Adomnán, *VC* ii.46.

²⁹ A. O. Anderson and M. O. Anderson, *VC*, p. xxxiii.

³⁰ Muirchú, 'Muirchú's Life of St. Patrick', in A. B. E. Hood (ed.) *St. Patrick: His Writings and Muirchú's Life* (London & Chichester, 1978), §10, §20; this work also has Patrick raise the dead (§§23, 25). For a discussion of Adomnán's use of the image of the *magus*, placed in the context of Patrician and wider hagiography, see Charles-Edwards, *Ireland*, 191-96. Colum Cille's wind miracle (*VC* ii.34) is explicitly paralleled by Adomnán with one performed by St Germanus, while his encounter with the river monster (*VC* ii.27) appears to have been modelled on Sulpicius Severus' *Dialogi* (iii.9), on which see J. Borsje, 'The monster in the river Ness in *Vita Sancti Columbae*: a study of a miracle', in *Peritia* 8 (1994), 27-34, at 32.

³¹ On the dating of Muirchú's text, see Sharpe, *Adomnán*, 60-61.

negotiate, among other things, for the release of Gaelic hostages.³² By sharing these priorities with Adomnán, both here in this episode and elsewhere in the text, where the description of the murder of a young girl arouses a suggestive lament and the anger of the saint,³³ Colum Cille is put to use by the author of *Vita Columbae* to make statements of contemporary interest at the end of the seventh century, lending strength to Adomnán's own causes,³⁴ and this further ties the *prouincia Pictorum* corpus, once isolated, to the hand and pen of Adomnán.

Cumméne's *De Uirtutibus* and the Picts

It is probable on a number of grounds, then, including distinctive terminology, aspects of narrative content, setting and apparent transmission, that four, and probably five of *Vita Columbae*'s episodes set among the Picts were present in Cumméne's *De Uirtutibus*, now lost. This likelihood, as has been observed more generally about the presence of Cumméne's testimony within *Vita Columbae*, may be used as an important 'guideline to assist assessment of the evidence which it [the *Vita*] provides on historical matters'.³⁵ For the present purposes, it is important to note two things. The first of these is that no *dorsum Britanniae* episode makes explicit reference to the Picts as *Picti*, a matter to which we shall return presently. The second and more important point for the moment is that whereas the testimony of *Vita Columbae* has formed one of the pillars of the recent scholarly inclination to argue that the main period of christianisation in Pictland must be later than Colum Cille's lifetime, its *dorsum Britanniae* episodes, seemingly derived from that more historically reliable tier of the work attributable to Cumméne, are extremely ambiguous on this question, offering comparatively little to require that the historical Bridei f. Mailcon, for example, was anything but a Christian king. The saint correctly foresaw that a hostile person would set fire to a building in which his boat was being kept, blessed a sick companion, commended an Irish *perigrinus* to Bridei with the foreknowledge that the man would end up in the Orcades, and

³² AU 687.5 records that Adomnán 'brought back sixty captives to Ireland', probably from Northumbria (Adomnán, VC ii.46). AU 697.3 records that he 'proceeded to Ireland and gave the Law of Innocents to the people'; for a translation of this law, see Gilbert Márkus OP (ed.), *Adomnán's 'Law of the Innocents'* (Glasgow, 1997).

³³ Adomnán, VC ii.25.

³⁴ See Sharpe, *Adomnán*, 51, 329.

³⁵ Herbert, *IKD*, 25.

converted and baptised the household of Emcath. The last of these episodes is set explicitly at *Airchartdan*, Urquhart on Loch Ness, and we shall see that this northern setting is probably significant. If the story belongs here rather than in the *prouincia Pictorum* corpus, Colum Cille was also confronted initially by resistance on the part of Bridei, who was then convinced of the error of this decision by a miraculous opening of the gates of his fortress, which is very much in line with *Amra Choluimb Chille*.³⁶

That Bridei f. Mailcon also needed to be converted to Christianity is not clear here, and his adherence to the religion might be taken as implied. 'From that day forward', Cumméne appears to have assured his readers, 'the ruler treated the holy and venerable man with great honour as was fitting' (*ex ea in posterum die sanctum et uenerabilem uirum idem regnator suae omnibus uitae reliquis diebus ualde magna honorauit ut decuit honorificentia*).³⁷ Colum Cille is said to have arranged with Bridei, through his *regulus*, the safe conduct of Cormac ua Liatháin in the Orcades (another explicitly northern setting), who was thereby effectively protected from harm, and, as we have seen, to have been the impetus for the foundation of 'the monasteries where today he is still honoured' among the Picts. Moreover, the narrative of the *dorsum Britanniae* stories does not revolve, as the *prouincia Pictorum* stories do, around the heathenism of the Picts. Instead, it is explicitly not because Colum Cille occupied any significant apostolic role, but rather because he was the impetus for the foundation of monasteries among them (surely presupposing their Christianity) that he is described by Adomnán as being worthy of more esteem in Pictland than was being afforded him during the author's lifetime.³⁸ Finally, one may point out that the early Ionan sources, along with the silence of the contemporary 'Iona Chronicle', leave room for a great deal of doubt regarding the existence, much less the extent of a Pictish constituency within the *principatus* of Iona (to anticipate Bede's term below) as late as Cumméne's abbacy. The accusation that there are 'many foolish people who ungratefully fail to recognise that they have been

³⁶ The episodes in question here are Adomnán, VC i.34, ii.31, ii.42, iii.14 and, perhaps, ii.35.

³⁷ Adomnán, VC ii.35.

³⁸ Adomnán, VC iii.14; ii.42; ii.46.

protected from the plague' shows that the extent of the esteem in which Colum Cille was held among the Picts was limited rather than universal in Adomnán's lifetime.³⁹

Thus isolated, the *dorsum Britanniae* testimony is not, however, unambiguous on the matter of christianisation, for the saint is credited with the baptism of Emchath and his household at Urquhart, and this episode takes place *ultra* (as opposed to *trans*) *Brittanniae dorsum*. This might be taken to indicate that Colum Cille was likely to encounter Christians while crossing Druim Alban, but traditional communities of belief on the other side, but it is by no means clear that such an interpretation must be preferred, nor indeed that such a distinction should be made here between the Hiberno-Latin use of *trans* and *ultra*.⁴⁰ Even taken together with the testimony of *Amra Choluimb Chille*, this material is ambiguous – much depends upon how one interprets Adomnán's vague geographical terminology and what the *Amra* means by *forcetlaid* and even by *túatha*. There is nothing particularly decisive to allow one to conclude that the christianisation of the Picts must have taken place either before or after 563, and a case might be made either way, for even if the *Amra* is taken as referring to missionary activity we need not presume that this was the first missionary activity ever carried out among the *túatha* of the Tay, to say nothing of the potentially distinct ecclesiastical histories of the Picts living to either side of the Ochil Hills.

The vagueness of the *dorsum Britanniae* geography may be explained in one of two ways: either Cumméne was himself vague and Adomnán simply preserved his vagueness in *Vita Columbae*, or else Cumméne was more specific in his geographical references to Pictland and it was Adomnán who subsequently muddied these references. Of these two explanations the second looms as the more likely, in that one of the *dorsum Britanniae* stories is very specific in its geography, down to the Pictish place-name *Airchartdan*, Urquhart, 'beside the loch of the River Ness' (*secus Nisae fluminis lacum*),⁴¹ while another takes place in a deserted

³⁹ Adomnán, *VC* ii.46. For a similar interpretation of this sentiment as 'an appeal for recognition of his [Colum Cille's], and therefore Adomnán's, authority', see G. Márkus, 'Iona: monks, pastors and missionaries', in D. Broun and T. O. Clancy (eds.) *Spes Scotorum, Hope of Scots: Saint Columba, Iona and Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1999), 115-38, at 135-36.

⁴⁰ Sharpe, *Adomnán*, for example, makes no such distinction; see *VC* i.34; ii.31.

⁴¹ Adomnán, *VC* iii.14.

settlement 'on the bank of a stream near the point where it flowed into a loch' (*iuxta alicuius marginem riuoli stagnum intrantis*), and it is notable that the name of this loch does not occur here, though it does appear as *stagnum Lochdae*, or Loch Lochy in the table of contents.⁴² In the second case, it looks as though Adomnán excised the place-name *stagnum Lochdae* from the story, and it is therefore possible that he removed other place-names, and even, as already suggested, that he had good reasons for employing the vague *dorsum Britanniae* device when retelling Pictish stories derived from Cumméne's *De Uirtutibus*, namely to introduce a level of uncertainty about Cumméne's Pictish geography that Cumméne himself had not displayed. In that event we would have to envision a situation in which Adomnán felt it had become inadvisable to make such specific references to Pictish places like *stagnum Lochdae*, although Urquhart, Loch Ness and the Orcades were not a problem. At this point it is worth mentioning that *Vita Columbae* makes no mention of the River Tay, the only specific Pictish place-name mentioned by the *Amra*, which mentions it twice, and this becomes quite relevant here when one considers the fact that a River Lochay flows into Loch Tay at Killin, and that the small loch at its source was identified by Professor Watson as *stagnum Loogdae*, alongside which two Pictish forces fought a battle in 729.⁴³ There is every possibility, then, that Glen Lochay was the location of the *stagnum Lochdae* which provides the setting of this particular *dorsum Britanniae* episode, in which event it would emerge as a point of interest that Adomnán was happy enough to mention place-names in the northern Pictish zone, but hesitant when it came to this place-name south of the Grampians.

The implications of this line of argument are that Adomnán, not very long after the death of Cumméne, took a very different view than his predecessor as to how best to present Iona's relationship with Pictland and its past achievements among the Picts. In this regard it is significant that certain geographical references seem to have been muddied by Adomnán, that although his achievement in the northern Pictish zone is more clearly outlined, Columba's achievement in the southern Pictish zone is very ambiguous, and, finally, that Cumméne cannot be shown to have made reference to *Picti*. Similarly, in the Iona Chronicle, save in the

⁴² Adomnán, *VC* i.34; preface.

⁴³ *AU* 729.2; Watson, *CPNS*, 50.

obits of Pictish kings that were probably added retrospectively, the earliest application of this term to the Picts that must be contemporary with its annal record occurs in the record for 669. Here, Itarnan and Corindu are said to have died among *Pictores*, a usage that occurs again in 676, when many *Pictores* are said to have been drowned.⁴⁴ As evidence derived from silence this must be handled with caution, but it has already been suggested that the ethnogenesis by which the Calidones and Verturiones adopted *Picti* as an emic term did not occur until the seventh century, and it is therefore notable that there is no particular suggestion in the *dorsum Britanniae* stories that the peoples living east of Druim Alban were regarded by Cumméne as belonging to a single *ethnos* or *gens*.

Pictish Source Material in Adomnán and Bede

Changes in Iona's understanding of its relationship with Pictland and its role in the Pictish ecclesiastical past, and even in the changing face of Pictish politics, may be detected outside of Adomnán's *prouincia Pictorum* stories. There are also hints of the same phenomenon in the testimony of Bede, who, although he wrote some twenty years after Adomnán's death, does not seem to have had specific knowledge of the text of *Vita Columbae*. For this reason, it is particularly striking that his portrayal of Colum Cille's place in Pictish ecclesiastical history is broadly similar to that envisioned by Adomnán in the *prouincia Pictorum* corpus of *Vita Columbae*:

anno incarnationis dominicae quingentesimo sexagesimo quinto...uenit de Hibernia presbyter et abbas habitu et uita monachi insignis, nomine Columba, Britanniam praedicaturus uerbum Dei prouinciis septentrionalium Pictorum, hoc est eis quae arduis atque horrentibus montium iugis ab australibus eorum sunt regionibus sequestratae. Namque ipsi australes Picti, qui intra eosdem montes habent sedes, multo ante tempore, ut perhibent, relicto errore idolatriae fidem ueritatis acceperant, praedicante eis Uerbum Nynia episcopo reuerentissimo et sanctissimo uiro de natione Brettonum...Venit autem Britanniam Columba regnante Pictis Bridio filio Meilochon rege potentissimo, nono anno regni eius, gentemque illam uerbo et exemplo ad fidem Christi conuertit; unde et praefatam insulam ab eis in possessionem monasterii faciendi accepit...[S]uccessores eius usque hodie tenent, ubi et ipse sepultus est, cum esset annorum LXXVII, post annos circiter XXX et duos ex quo ipse Britanniam praedicaturus adiit. Fecerat autem, priusquam Britanniam ueniret, monasterium nobile in Hibernia, quod...Dearmach lingua Scottorum...cognominatur. Ex quo utroque monasterio plurima exinde monasteria per discipulos eius et in Brittania et in Hibernia propagata sunt, in quibus omnibus

⁴⁴ AU 669.2; 676.3. These third-declension references to *Pictores* in the nominative and accusative plural might even be thought to reflect back-formation from the genitive plural *Pictorum* at a time when the latter usage was new and unfamiliar enough for it to be uncertain that the native Pictish usage was in fact the second declension *Picti*.

*idem monasterium insulanum, in quo ipse requiescit corpore, principatum teneret. Habere autem solet ipsa insula rectorem semper abbatem presbyterum, cuius iuri et omnis prouincia et ipsi etiam episcopi ordine inusitato debeant esse subiecti, iuxta exemplum primi doctoris illius, quo non episcopus sed presbyter extitit et monachus; de cuius uita et uerbis nonnulla a discipulis eius feruntur scripta haberi.*⁴⁵

In the year of our Lord 565...a priest and abbot who was distinguished in the habit and life of a monk, called Columba, came from Ireland to Britain to preach the word of God to the *prouinciae* of the northern Picts, which is to say to those which are separated from their southern regions by steep and rugged mountain ridges. For these southern Picts, who have their seats within the same mountains, had long before, as they maintain, received the faith of truth in rejection of the error of idolatry – the Word was preached to them by Nyniau, a most reverent bishop and holy man of the nation of the Britons...Columba came to Britain in the ninth year of the reign of Bridei son of Mailcon, a most powerful king, and he turned that nation the faith of Christ by his word and example; and so received the aforesaid island [Iona] from them in order to establish a monastery...His successors hold it to this day and he himself was buried there at the age of seventy-seven, about thirty-two years after he came to Britain to preach. Before he came to Britain he had established a famous monastery in Ireland, called *Dearmach* in the Gaelic language...From both monasteries very many monasteries were propagated thereafter through his disciples both in Britain and in Ireland, over all of which the same island monastery, in which his body lies, used to hold the principate. This island always has a leader who is abbot and priest, to whose authority the whole *prouincia* must be subject, including, in an unusual arrangement, even bishops, follows the example of that first teacher, who was not a bishop but a priest and monk, of whose life and words some written records are held to have been preserved by his disciples.

It has been from this important passage, along with the strength of the testimony of the *prouincia Pictorum* stories, that, as Simpson noted in consternation, ‘the entire cumulative development of the Columban thesis, through medieval to modern readers, has been derived’,⁴⁶ namely that this famous mission marks the beginning of the christianisation of the Picts and that thereafter Iona dominated Pictish ecclesiastical affairs. Recent scholarship, however, has rightly emphasised that the value of Bede’s testimony depends directly upon the nature and reliability of his sources.

For some time, scholars have been in general agreement that this account of the Pictish conversion, which appears to be ‘reading history backwards from a Pictish standpoint’, must have been based upon information provided by one or

⁴⁵ Bede, *HE* iii.4.

⁴⁶ Simpson, *Saint Ninian*, 89-90.

more Pictish sources.⁴⁷ The nature of Bede's information has been the subject of controversy. It has been suggested that it was transmitted orally by the men who came to Wearmouth-Jarrow in the early eighth century to deliver a letter from the Pictish over-king Naiton to Ceolfrith, the abbot of the monastery.⁴⁸ Professor Duncan has shown, however, the likelihood that Bede used written material, although arguing less plausibly that the text of the letter itself served as his only written source for Pictish history.⁴⁹ There is little room for doubt that Bede's explicit statements that Colum Cille 'came to preach' among the Picts, and did so before the founding of Iona, have been sensibly interpreted as containing a 'Pictish-orientated' view of the actual facts.⁵⁰ It is stretching the argument too far, however, to presume that Bede's account, because its details are very likely to have come from Pictland, indicates that 'by the early eighth century Columba was accepted by the Picts as apostle to the Picts'.⁵¹

Given all that we have seen with regard to interventions made on the part of Adomnán to the *dorsum Britanniae* stories of *Vita Columbae* that have been seen here as having been derived from Cumméne's *De Uirtutibus*, it would seem likely that Adomnán was aware of Bede's Pictish source material, and that it was in response to its very specific views with regard to the importance of the Grampians in limiting the achievement of Colum Cille among the Picts that Adomnán put forward a *vita* in which the saint cannot be shown to have visited the southern Pictish zone, but is mentioned again and again in an explicitly northern context. Such a reaction on Adomnán's part suggests that the Pictish source in question was produced by

⁴⁷ Hughes, 'Early Christianity in Pictland', 39. The evidence for this important suggestion was first set out by H. M. Chadwick, *Early Scotland: the Picts, the Scots & the Welsh of southern Scotland* (Cambridge, 1949), 14, 27.

⁴⁸ D. Fahy, 'The Historical Reality of Saint Ninian', in *Innes Review* 15 (1964), 35-46, at 38, was non-committal about the nature of the evidence 'left behind' by these messengers; oral transmission is argued by Hughes, 'Early Christianity in Pictland', 39; D. P. Kirby, 'Bede and the Pictish Church', in *Innes Review* 24 (1973), 6-25. For the letter, see Bede, *HE* v.21.

⁴⁹ Duncan, 'Bede', 20-21. The suggestion that the letter was written on behalf of Naiton by Ecgberct, the Northumbrian-born Columban bishop, follows an hypothesis originally put forward by Kirby, 'Bede and the Pictish Church', 18-19, in which Ecgberht established himself in Pictland as part of his campaign against the particularist observances of the Columban *familia* and 'played a part in persuading the king of the Picts to approach [Ceolfrith] for guidance on the Easter question'. The unacceptability of this hypothesis will be addressed below. Prof. Duncan's model also adopts Kirby's argument that some of Bede's details 'can only have reached Bede from Iona'.

⁵⁰ Hughes, 'Early Christianity in Pictland', 39; Duncan, 'Bede', 19.

⁵¹ Duncan, 'Bede', 9. This has, however, been the line taken by Sharpe, *Adomnán*, 18 ('Bede is giving us a Pictish version of how they, as a people, were converted').

someone who was not to be gainsaid, and in all likelihood by a Pictish royal court that held very firm views about the place of Colum Cille in the early ecclesiastical history of Pictland. If it would seem therefore to have been in the light of this source that Adomnán composed his version of the saint's adventures among the Picts, the ways in which Adomnán and Bede differ in their portrayal of Colum Cille's Pictish achievement become very important, but no moreso perhaps than our ability to date the production of the putative source in question to the second half of the seventh century. As Professor Brooks has recently highlighted, two of the five main factors involved in ethnogenesis involve the acceptance on the part of the *ethnos* as newly defined of 'a common history or origin myth (often that of the dominant group)' and a corresponding "'collective amnesia" concerning awkward facts - especially the traditions of rival, older or subject peoples',⁵² processes in which the formulation of a common ecclesiastical history, thus underlining the formation of a new community of belief, is one of the more important elements.⁵³ That something like this appears to have taken place in Pictland in the second half of the seventh century is another indication, along with others we have already seen, that ethnogenesis was taking place among the Picts in this period.

In presenting his modified image of Colum Cille among the Picts, Adomnán would seem to have attempted to reconcile his Pictish source, Cumméne's *De Uirtutibus*, the *Amra Choluimb Chille*, and perhaps other texts, and it may have been because he was faced with different perspectives in each of these sources that his treatment of the earlier Ionan material seems so ambiguous except where it had mentioned the northern Pictish zone. Here Adomnán was free to portray the saint as an apostolic figure of a kind with Patrick, whose achievement came about through the coercive power of miracles performed in the face of intense heathen hostility. It seems valid to question assumptions that would characterise this material as Pictish 'legend' or 'folk-tale' that existed before Cumméne's death.⁵⁴ We have seen that the *prouincia Pictorum* corpus is relatively fantastic in nature, containing elements that resemble the Patrician and other dossiers, and their overall effect is to leave us in

⁵² Brooks, *Bede and the English*, 5.

⁵³ Wolfram, *Goths*, 14-16.

⁵⁴ Herbert, *IKD*, 29-30; Sharpe, *Adomnán*, 31. Sharpe suggests (p. 60) that these less reliable stories 'may have been derived from an oral source outside the community [of Iona].

little doubt that the stories reflect the familiarity of their author(s) with late seventh-century insular hagiology rather than with sixth-century Pictish history. Indeed, we have noted that Muirchú's Patrician text may have influenced this material, suggesting that Adomnán may have been inspired in composing his *prouincia Pictorum* stories by having read Muirchú and even, perhaps, the *Collectanea* written by Tírechán. Yet the likelihood that Adomnán and Bede had access to the same Pictish source, although highly important for this study, may offer neither portrayal of Colum Cille much in the way of historical reliability. We ought to be very cautious, for example, about the testimony of Bede that Iona was once dominant within the ecclesiastical affairs of Pictland, for one gets this impression from no other source, *Vita Columbae* included, and we ought to expect this to have been something that Adomnán would have made a great deal of, had it been present in his Pictish source, or he himself really believed it. Conversely, we ought to be similarly cautious about Bede's idea, endorsed by Adomnán, that Colum Cille and the Columban *familia* were not significant actors in the southern Pictish zone, for the *Amra* says otherwise and Cumméne's *De Uirtutibus* may be thought to have been in agreement with that poem in locating some of the saint's activities in Perthshire.

It would seem extremely important, however, that despite the claim put forward in Bede's Pictish source *Vita Columbae* fails to credit Colum Cille with the conversion of Bridei f. Mailcon and skirts the issue entirely. This too suggests that Adomnán was not convinced about the veracity of this claim, which he might otherwise have put to much hagiographic use, which may in turn be taken as a clue as to how the ambiguous claims of the *Amra* were being understood on Iona in Adomnán's time. It has been pointed out that the *dorsum Britanniae* stories offer little on their own to require Bridei to have been a pagan when he met with Colum Cille, and all of this lends weight to the Andersons' suggestion that Adomnán failed to mention this conversion because he was under the impression that Bridei and his familiars were already Christians in Colum Cille's lifetime.⁵⁵ The present argument offers the testimony of Cumméne as being, perhaps, a ready source for the later abbot's doubts about the claims he read in his Pictish source.

⁵⁵ Anderson & Anderson, *VC*, p. xxxiv.

The argument that the *prouincia Pictorum* stories were influenced by a Pictish source composed in the later seventh century renders it necessary to postpone until later in this study a discussion of this material and its context. Of more immediate concern is Bede's source material for the career of Nyniau, the other apostolic figure to appear in his account of the Pictish conversion, which has been the subject of much debate. Professor MacQueen's hypothesis, that this information came from a written source based on the testimony of a lost *Vita* of Nyniau kept at Whithorn,⁵⁶ has been challenged by Professor Duncan, who has argued that all of Bede's information about the Picts had a common provenance. A strong case has been made for believing, however, that Nyniau was never an historical figure,⁵⁷ and this argument has made it possible – indeed imperative – to consider the nature of Bede's Ninianic source afresh. I have argued elsewhere that Nyniau's story first appeared in a *liber* that is very likely to be later than Stephanus's *Vita Sancti Wilfrithi*, completed around 720.⁵⁸ It is now possible to argue that Nyniau, as an erroneous eighth-century literary construct, probably did not exist until after the Pictish *correctio* of 716-17 and so it is hardly likely that he was mentioned in Naiton's letter to Ceolfrith as Professor Duncan supposes. As there is no good evidence to suggest that his story was known, or his name constructed, before the beginning of the eighth century, and given the nature of the Ninianic hagiography as I have outlined it elsewhere, Bede's testimony regarding Nyniau may, for the most part, be safely discounted as a reliable source of evidence of the christianisation of the southern Pictish zone.

On the other hand, Bede's claim that the Verturian Picts 'had long before, as they maintain, received the faith of truth in rejection of the error of idolatry' (*multo ante tempore, ut perhibent, relicto errore idolatriae fidem ueritatis acceperant*) retains much importance.⁵⁹ The phrase '*ut perhibent*' here has generally been taken to indicate

⁵⁶ MacQueen, *St Nynia*, 3-4, 11.

⁵⁷ Clancy, 'Ninian', 21-25.

⁵⁸ J. E. Fraser, 'Northumbrian Whithorn and the making of St Ninian', in *Innes Review* 53 (2002), 40-59. In this article I suggest that Hexham is more likely to have been the source of Bede's Ninianic information than Whithorn. For the dating of *Vita Wilfrithi* see W. Goffart, *The Narrators of Barbarian History (A.D. 550-800): Jordanes, Gregory of Tours, Bede, and Paul the Deacon* (Princeton, 1988), 281-89.

⁵⁹ Bede, *HE* iii.4. On Bede's use of *prouincia*, see J. Campbell, 'Bede's *Reges* and *Principes*', Jarrow Lecture (1979) reprinted in *idem, Essays in Anglo-Saxon History* (London & Ronceverte, 1986), 85-98, at 86-87.

Bede's use of an oral source that he did not trust, but a survey of his use of the verb *perhibeo* indicates that *ut perhibent* ought to indicate 'as they maintain', whether in the sense of describing the nature of a revelation,⁶⁰ or, most commonly, in the sense of giving testimony, particularly as regards the high quality of evidence of veracity or sanctity.⁶¹ His use of the verb in the passive mood most commonly refers, rather interestingly, to material that seems to have come from sources in Kent, including *Liber Pontificalis*,⁶² and neither here nor in other cases of its use is there any reason to believe that Bede did not entirely trust the stories he was relating.⁶³ The same is true of his other uses of *ut perhibent*: in one case it is used in reference to miracles associated with one of his favourite native saints,⁶⁴ and in the other two seems to refer to information received from Celtic sources.⁶⁵ Given the evidence that he made use of a Pictish source, it would seem to be alongside this latter pair of usages that Bede's use of *perhibeo* in reference to Pictish information is to be best understood, with the sense that 'these are things that my sources (written or oral) maintain to be true, and I trust them enough to pass along what they say'.⁶⁶ There is no particular reason, then, not to take the active Latin verb *perhibent* literally here as meaning 'they do maintain'.⁶⁷

Bede's Pictish source, in other words, would seem to have come from Fortriu as ought to be expected given the probable connection with Naiton, and to have made no room in Verturian ecclesiastical history for an evangelising Colum Cille, maintaining instead that the southern Pictish zone 'had long before (ie. before Colum Cille) received the faith of truth in rejection of the error of idolatry'. That Adomnán appears to have shaped the Pictish episodes of *Vita Columbae* in recognition of this assertion presupposes its presence in his source, and it would therefore seem to have been Bede, having learned something of the flavour of a

⁶⁰ Bede, *HE* iii.8.

⁶¹ Bede, *HE* iii.15, iii.19, iii.27, iv.14, v.5, v.20.

⁶² Bede, *HE* i.15, i.26, iv.5.

⁶³ Bede, *HE* ii.16, iv.14.

⁶⁴ Bede, *HE* iv.19.

⁶⁵ Bede, *HE* ii.2, iii.5.

⁶⁶ Bede, *HE* i.1, iii.4, v.21. Only in one single use of *perhibeo* (*HE* iii.25) are grave doubts about what is being related expressed, in this case in the voice of Wilfrith, speaking at Whitby of his doubts about the wisdom of following the example of Colum Cille.

⁶⁷ *Ut perhibent* is translated literally and interpreted as a reference to a written Pictish source by Duncan, 'Bede', 3; 27.

Ninianic dossier that had only been pulled together a few years before he wrote, who fleshed out this Verturian claim by providing the information that 'the Word was preached to them by Nyniau, a most reverend bishop and holy man of the nation of the Britons'. A rejection of the historicity of this additional phrase need not require a rejection of the underlying claim that the ecclesiastical history of the southern Pictish zone was distinct from that of the northern one,⁶⁸ although the existence of such a claim is hardly a guarantee of its historical reliability. One cannot, however, reject out of hand the idea that southern Picts maintained traditions regarding their adoption of the Christian religion that were rather different than the Columban theses advanced by modern scholars, particularly given the doubts that Adomnán himself would seem to have had about the conversion of Bridei f. Mailcon.

Conclusion

In the final analysis the current trend towards dismissiveness regarding Bede's account of Colum Cille's mission to the Picts seems to be well-founded.⁶⁹ It also seems to be the case, however, that the testimony of *Vita Columbae*, long considered more trustworthy in this regard, is more complex than has hitherto been supposed. It consists of two layers of evidence, an earlier one extracted by Adomnán from Cumméne's *De Uirtutibus*, and a later one developed by Adomnán in recognition of, among other things, a Pictish source that limited the importance of Colum Cille as a force in Pictish ecclesiastical history to the northern Pictish zone. We have seen that it is not at all clear that Adomnán's perspective, even if it is not much later than the *floruit* of Cumméne, ought to influence us unduly in an attempt to come to terms with other evidence relating to the christianisation of the Verturian Picts, to which we will now turn our attention. It is also noteworthy that Cumméne's failure to make any reference to *Picti* or the *prouincia Pictorum* is further suggestive that, as discussed above, ethnogenesis took place in Pictland in the

⁶⁸ Unlike Ninian, the historicity of whose Pictish mission has only very recently been questioned, the claim of Jocelin of Furness, VK 34, that Kentigern, patron saint of Glasgow cathedral, worked as an evangelist in 'Albania', where he 'reclaimed that land from the worship of idols and from profane rights that were almost equal to idolatry', then built churches and monasteries and ordained priests and clerics, has long been dismissed. It should be noted that Jocelin places the Picts themselves in Galloway, a common mistake of the time.

⁶⁹ See Herbert, *IKD*, 28-29; Sharpe, *Adomnán*, 7; Macquarrie, *Saints*, 76.

second half of the seventh century. It is striking that the putative Pictish source used by Adomnán and Bede also appears to have been written in this same period, and the correspondence of these different sorts of evidence conspires to suggest that very significant shifts in ethnic and political identity were taking place among the Picts in this period. This, like the matter of Adomnán's sources, is a matter to which we shall return later in this study.

iii

A Strange Mixture of Fact and Fable Towards a model for the christianisation of Fortriu

Nothing is more difficult to control than our sense of what is likely.

– Ramsay MacMullen

The claims put forward by the abbots of Iona and by Columban clerics elsewhere in the seventh and eighth centuries regarding the role of Colum Cille and his successors in the establishment of Christianity among the Picts shall occupy much of our subsequent attention. In this chapter, however, we shall explore Bede's testimony that the Verturian Picts 'had long before, as they do assert, received the faith of truth in rejection of the error of idolatry', a claim which need not have any basis in fact. Our examination will consider this claim – evidently put forward by the men of Fortriu themselves (*ut perhibent*) – alongside a range of difficult evidence that would seem to support the contention that southern Pictish kings did indeed adopt Christianity 'long before' Colum Cille arrived in northern Britain. In the process we shall formulate a working model for understanding the nature of the conversion period in the southern Pictish zone that will, it is hoped, invite refinement, if not complete supersession, by further work and analysis. Recent work on the subject has shown that, when we speak of 'conversion' or 'christianisation' in this context, we mean primarily a process consisting of two central components: a royal decision to adopt the religion and the kind of 'mass conversion' envisioned by Adomnán when he wrote of one crowd of heathen Picts as having 'magnified the God of the Christians' (*deum magnificarunt christianorum*) as a result of the work of Colum Cille, or, of another group, that 'the God of the Christians was glorified' (*deus christianorum glorificatur*).¹

Modern missionary ethics question the validity of such scenarios of mass conversion, involving as they do large groups of people who may be 'brought to a change in their religious allegiance...without great dramatic, further consequences

¹ Adomnán, VC ii.27; ii.32.

in their manner of life'.² There is abundant evidence, however, to show that the phenomenon was common enough in the patristic period, during which mass conversions were considered perfectly genuine. Adomnán's perspective on the nature of missionary work in northern Britain suggests (even if we may doubt the historicity of these particular episodes) that those who laboured to evangelise among the early historic peoples of the British Isles operated with a broadly similar estimation of the validity of mass conversion. Moreover, careful consideration of recent scholarly discourse in the many disciplines that have contributed to conversion studies has stressed the currency and perceived validity of mass conversion as a tool in the repertoire of Christian missionaries among contemporary Germanic peoples. In addition, this work, by Carole Cusack, has provided a wider range of factors that may be thought generally significant in the christianisation of any early medieval tribal society to which, because of its emphasis on collectivity, 'it is inappropriate to apply versions of Christianity which focus strongly on individual, interior religious sentiment, because such a version of Christianity is alien to such a culture'.³ In this chapter we shall consider several of these factors, developed from general principles in conversion studies, as a guide in attempting to generate something of a theoretical framework to aid in understanding the christianisation of Early Historic northern Britain.

The most significant of these other factors – the conversion of kings – is deserving of particular attention, even if we are no better informed about it than about other aspects of the christianisation of Fortriu. Much has been made with regard to the early medieval Germanic evidence of those aspects of kingship that appear to have had their roots in Indo-European sacral kingship, where kings were, 'if not divine themselves, channels through which the power of the gods reached the people'.⁴ Indo-European society is understood to have emphasised the military success of its kings and their important role in maintaining the fertility of the land and the well-being of their people. In summary, as Cusack describes the sacral king, 'as priest he unites the people with the supernatural realm; as warrior he leads the

² R. MacMullen, *Christianizing the Roman Empire A.D. 100-400* (New Haven & London, 1984), 1.

³ Cusack, *Conversion*, 11. See also N. J. Higham, *The convert kings: Power and religious affiliation in early Anglo-Saxon England* (Manchester & New York, 1997), 14-19.

⁴ Cusack, *Conversion*, 93.

people to victory and increases his power through appropriating the power of slaughtered enemies; and as guarantor of the fertility of the land he ensures the physical well-being of the whole people'.⁵ The state of our evidence means that we cannot be certain that Verturian kings before christianisation were sacral kings, even if our ability to speak of the Calidones and Verturiones as having been among the various Celtic peoples of western Europe suggests that it would be surprising if it were otherwise. Such comparisons will allow, however, for only the most general of sketches with regard to kingship in the southern Pictish zone at the time of the first conversions to Christianity, since the paucity of Pictish evidence means that almost everything about their kings, including their sacrality in the polytheistic period, is difficult to demonstrate. That such sacrality obtained both among the Anglo-Saxons and in Ireland, where 'the image of the "sacral king", who acts as a mediator between human and divine and between society and nature, is strongly connected with the main ideological aspects of Irish kingship',⁶ suggests that we may continue to follow Professor Duncan in suspecting that among the non-Christian Picts 'there were tribal gods and that their relationship with the people and the times was the responsibility of the tribal king, descended from the eponymous tribal god and bringing fertility and well-being to the tribe if correctly chosen'.⁷ The place-name Schiehallion (< *Sídh Chailleann*, 'other-world-place of the Calidones') and, perhaps, the corpus of Scottish *nemeton* place-names, may be evidence of Pictish parallels of one element at least of Gaelic sacral kingship – an association between royal sites and the 'other-world'.⁸ This seems to be supported further by evidence suggesting that Verturian over-kings were (at least eventually) inducted by ceremonial inauguration at such sites as Scone.⁹ At such sites new kings may have held a 'wedding feast of kingship' that was symbolic of their marriage to their territory as a *rí túaithe* (as the Gaels understood this term), or to

⁵ Cusack, *Conversion*, 37.

⁶ B. Jaski, *Early Irish Kingship and Succession* (Dublin, 2000), 57-58; see also F. J. Byrne, *Irish Kings and High-Kings* (Dublin, 2001), 16-27.

⁷ Duncan, *Kingdom*, 35.

⁸ On the etymology of Schiehallion, see Watson, *CPNS*, 21; on the Scottish *nemeton* place-names see Barrow, 'Eve of Christianity', 25-31. On the significance of the *síde* and the *nemed* in royal inaugurations in Ireland, see Byrne, *Irish Kings*, 18-20, 27.

⁹ S. T. Driscoll, 'Political Discourse and the Growth of Christian Ceremonialism in Pictland: the Place of the St Andrews Sarcophagus', in S. M. Foster (ed.) *The St Andrews Sarcophagus: a Pictish masterpiece and its international connections* (Dublin, 1998), 172-73.

the wider *imperium* of an over-king.¹⁰ In addition, Germanic tribal kings were usually distinguished by descent from a god, even after christianisation when the essentially divine nature of such important ancestors had ceased to be believed or remembered. Woolf has suggested a possible Verturian parallel in drawing our attention to the possible connection between the name *Uerb*, from whom the seventh-century Pictish king *Nectus nepos Uerb* traced his descent, and the northern divinity *Uerbeia* attested by a dedication at Ilkley in Yorkshire.¹¹ In the final analysis, it would seem necessary to be ever mindful of kings in the discussion which follows, and to afford them particular consideration as we consider the evidence surrounding the adoption of Christianity in northern Britain.

Fifth- and Sixth-Century Historical Evidence

We have seen that a reasonable case can be made for believing that Bede and Adomnán provide us with invaluable information regarding claims that were being advanced in Pictland on behalf of Colum Cille and Iona during Adomnán's abbacy. Neither *Vita Columbae* nor *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum* can be said, however, to provide us with much more than tantalising hints regarding the christianisation of Fortriu. They are, nevertheless, very important hints. They suggest that, among the Verturian Picts of the early eighth century, the prevailing historical opinion was that their ruling elites had adopted Christianity 'long before' the end of the sixth century, and that on Iona the idea that Colum Cille had converted the 'great king of the Tay' met with some resistance on the part of Adomnán. The lengthy reign of the 'great king' in question, Bridei f. Mailcon, began about 550. It is just possible to accept on this evidence that he was probably a Christian, but neither of these texts can tell us how much earlier than this the christianisation of the southern Pictish zone was thought to have taken place. The testimony provided by Gildas (†570)¹² in describing the tribulations visited upon

¹⁰ On Irish inauguration rituals and the 'wedding feast of kingship', see Jaski, *Early Irish Kingship*, 58-72; we can only speculate regarding whether the Picts had any concept of the 'ruler's truth' or the 'blemished king', on which cf. Byrne, *Irish Kings*, 22-27; Jaski, *Early Irish Kingship*, 72-87.

¹¹ Woolf, 'Matriliney', 161n; see also Cusack, *Conversion*, 91-92. On *Uerbeia*, see Ross, *Pagan Celtic Britain*, 279.

¹² The death of Gildas is recorded at AU 570.3; also ACamb 570, where he is called 'wisest of the Britons' (*Britonus sapientissimus*). See, however, D. N. Dumville, 'Gildas and Maelgwn: Problems of Dating', in M. Lapidige & D. Dumville (eds.), *Gildas: New Approaches* (Woodbridge, 1984), 51-59, for a summary of the uncertainties surrounding Gildas' dates.

Roman and sub-Roman Britain in the fifth century in his *De Excidio Britanniae* would seem to provide at least a firm *terminus post quem* that can be substantiated from other sources. Among other picturesque epithets, he speaks of the *Picti* who contributed to the 'ruin' of Britain as having been 'exceedingly savage' (*vehementer savis*) and 'greedy wolves rabid with extreme hunger' (*ambrones lupi profunda fame rabidi*), who 'were readier to cover their villainous faces with hair than their privates and neighbouring areas with clothes' (*furciferos magis vultus pilis quam corporum pudenda pudendisque proxima vestibis tegentes*).¹³ Such language ought to leave us in little doubt that it was thought among British observers of the mid-sixth century that the *Picti* who had troubled their ancestors a century before had yet to adopt Christianity, even if *De Excidio Britanniae* at no point explicitly describes them as heathens. Support for Gildas's perspective may be found in the *Vita Sancti Germani*, composed at the end of the 470s by Constantius of Lyons,¹⁴ in which it is maintained that, in the time of Germanus of Auxerre, who visited sub-Roman Britain in the second quarter of the fifth century, the *Picti* were indeed non-Christians.¹⁵ The dubious context within which this claim is made may leave room for doubt, but at the very least *Vita Sancti Germani* shows that, as a literary motif, the heathenism of the *Picti* continued to have currency in Gaul as late as the last quarter of the fifth century.

It therefore seems quite unlikely that the christianisation of the southern Pictish zone can have begun in earnest before about 450. Whether or not the Picts had yet to adopt Christianity in Constantius's own time cannot, however, be determined from his text. The same may not be true, however, of *De Excidio Britanniae*. Gildas reports that, having caused much distress to the former Roman provincials of Britain, the Picts 'then first and successively sharply reposed' (*tunc primum et deinceps requieverunt*), an awkward phrase the sense of which seems to be that they 'then first adopted the restraint they have since generally maintained', albeit making thereafter (and down to Gildas's own time) 'occasional raids and

¹³ Gildas, *DEB* i.14-i.19.

¹⁴ On the date of *Vita Germani*, see R. Borius (ed.), *Constance de Lyon: Vie de Saint Germain d'Auxerre* (Paris, 1965), 44-46.

¹⁵ Constantius, *Vita Sancti Germani Episcopi*, iii.17-18, in Borius (ed.), *Vie de Saint Germain*.

devastations' (*praedas et contritiones nonnumquam facientes*).¹⁶ Molly Miller drew our attention to the likelihood that this lasting *requies*; the ongoing nature of which allowed Gildas to report that 'a cruel wound on a battered people is scarred over' (*indutiis desolato populo saeva cicatrix obducitur*),¹⁷ had its roots in 'a military and political event of outstanding importance, of which the results were permanent in spite of Pictish probes from time to time'.¹⁸ Among the potential candidates for such an event, christianisation and its political fall-out must loom large.

Having established 450 and 550 as useful *termini post* and *ante quem* respectively, as well as the possibility that it was the adoption of Christianity by southern Pictish kings that allowed for a marked decline in Pictish aggression against the *Britanni* by the second half of the fifth century and the subsequent 'scarring over' of the wounds of the latter,¹⁹ we may turn our attention to Patrick. In his *epistola* to the soldiers of Coroticus, Patrick, who seems to have died in the last years of the fifth century,²⁰ angrily characterises an indeterminate group of *Picti* as apostates (*apostatae*).²¹ This controversial testimony, and the way in which it is interpreted, is crucial to our understanding, speaking as it does of the period lying between our two *termini*, but it is difficult to know what to make of Patrick's remarks, much less how much weight ought to be assigned to them. In general, three different approaches have emerged as scholars have wrestled with this apostasy problem. The first, which we might call the 'literal' approach, applies to *apostata* its usual sense of one who has abandoned or rebelled against Christian teaching, with the obvious implication that the Christian religion had been established among the Picts in question before such apostasy. We have seen that this was Skene's understanding: he envisioned a general apostasy in Pictland,

¹⁶ Gildas, *DEB* i.21. The rendering of *tunc primum et deinceps requieverunt* as 'they then first adopted the restraint they have since generally maintained' is put forward by M. Miller, 'Bede's Use of Gildas', in *English Historical Review* 90 (1975), 241-61, at 250.

¹⁷ Gildas, *DEB* i.21.

¹⁸ Miller, 'Bede's Use of Gildas', 250.

¹⁹ D. N. Dumville, 'The Chronology of *De Excidio Britanniae*, Book I', in Lapidge & Dumville (eds.), *Gildas*, 61-84, at 68-69 posits 'the mid-450s' as the time indicated by Gildas by which 'Britain, or the relevant part of it, was free of Pictish and Irish armies', but, at 83, suggests the period c. 455 x c. 480 as that encapsulated by this chapter of *DEB*.

²⁰ The *floruit* of Patrick is, of course, much disputed; the lucid remarks of D. N. Dumville, *Saint Patrick* (Woodbridge, 1993), 13-18, make a better case, on the whole, than arguments that would place his death in the first third of the fifth century.

²¹ Patrick, *Ep.*, §§ 2; 15.



proposing that, although Nyniau had undertaken the mission ascribed to him by Bede, the Picts (along with many Britons) forsook Christianity in the face of Anglo-Saxon incursions, being 'either subjected by them or in close alliance with them'.²² A second approach that has emerged in relatively recent years, which we might call the 'terminological' approach, argues that, whatever Patrick meant to convey in his use of *apostata*, such terminology was not intended to be (and was not understood by the soldiers of Coroticus as) a reference to the religious realities of Pictland. This approach has produced arguments that the term simply implicates these *Picti*, whatever their religious persuasion, in the crimes committed by Coroticus,²³ that it conveys the meaning 'renegade' and denigrates polytheistic Picts that had never been Christians in the first place,²⁴ or that it makes reference to an abandonment of *romanitas* rather than to the rejection of Christianity.²⁵

A third approach, and the one taken here, sees Patrick's use of *apostata* as both acknowledging and condemning the nominal Christianity of the Picts in question. We need not, however, follow those earlier proponents of this 'contextual' approach who have seen Patrick's testimony as evidence of aberrations within Pictish Christianity.²⁶ It is reasonable to interpret Patrick's descriptions of the *Picti* with whom Coroticus is alleged to have allied as 'utterly iniquitous, evil and apostate' (*indignissim[i] pessim[i] apostat[ae]que*), and, perhaps, as a '*gens* that does not know God' (*gens ignoranti Deum*),²⁷ as accusations of heathenism. Such an interpretation may, however, make too much of these phrases, especially given their context. The *epistola* was written as a remonstrance to Christian men who in the seventh century were believed to have come from Clyde Rock to raid in Ireland and who, having killed a number of Irish victims, had sold their captives into slavery among the *Picti*. Patrick wrote to inform (perhaps to remind?) the soldiers of

²² Skene, *CS I*, 157; *idem*, *CS II*, 39. Henderson, *Picts*, 70-72, follows much the same line, 'that some time earlier in the century these particular Picts had been Christian', but that 'his [Ninian's] results were not lasting'.

²³ Dumville, *St Patrick*, 129-31.

²⁴ Macquarrie, *Saints*, 58-59.

²⁵ J. T. Koch, mentioned in papers given in Edinburgh in 2000 and 2001 as an extension of views published in '*Cothairche, Esposito's Theory, and Neo-Celtic Lenition', in A. Bammersberger and A. Wollman (eds.), *Britain 400-900: Language and History* (Heidelberg, 1990), 179-202. But see now Charles-Edwards, *Ireland*, 214n.

²⁶ Scott, *PNPC*, 137; see also MacQueen, *St Nynia*, 24.

²⁷ Patrick, *Ep.*, §§ 14-15. Patrick is not explicit about which *gens* 'does not know God'.

Coroticus that their king had actually acted against Christians rather than heathens, and that as a result he regarded their actions as contrary to Christian law. He castigates Coroticus and his warband as '[fellow-]citizens of demons' (*cives daemoniorum*) and as 'rebels against Christ' (*rebellatores Christi*), declaring that each man who has sinned has confirmed himself as a 'son of Satan' (*filius zabuli*).²⁸ This diatribe provides us with a clear impression of Patrick's rage and his sense of injury, and can hardly be taken as anything other than a calculated overstatement of his case made for emphasis.

If such accusations made against Coroticus and his men suggest that they were not nominally Christian, and that they had apostatised from the Christian religion (as *rebellatores Christi*), the *epistola* as a whole makes it clear that this was not the case. The question before us therefore becomes whether or not Patrick's denigration of the *Picti* is part of the same rhetorical and emphatic strategy. If, as Patrick claims, this particular group of *Picti* had made slaves of Christian converts taken captive in war, whether intentionally, unknowingly, or because they refused to acknowledge that they had converted, his characterisation of them as 'utterly iniquitous, evil and apostate' is not necessarily proof that they were not, like the people of Coroticus, nominally Christian men who in this instance had shown themselves to be, to Patrick's mind, *reballatores Christi*. Indeed, the term *apostata* seems indeed to acknowledge such Christianity and to use it as a basis of condemnation, and it has been reasonably argued that the degree of Patrick's outrage towards these *Picti* is further demonstrative of their Christianity, suggesting 'the horror of the orthodox for the unorthodox rather than for the heathen, who commonly receive more toleration'.²⁹ In other words, although it is clear enough that Patrick wished to portray these *Picti* as heathens, his accusations of apostasy against them are important indications that Christianity had reached the southern Pictish zone by the end of the fifth century, while seeming no more historically reliable as evidence of the abandonment of Christianity than his complaint that Coroticus and his warband were 'rebels against Christ'. The same would seem to be

²⁸ Patrick, *Ep.*, §§ 2, 19, 4.

²⁹ N. K. Chadwick, 'St. Ninian: A Preliminary Study of Sources', in *Transactions and Journal of Proceedings of the Dumfriesshire and Galloway Natural History & Antiquarian Society*, Third Series, Vol. 27 (1950), 9-53, at 15. See also previous note.

true of his apparent statement that these Picts did not know God, which differs little from his view that Coroticus had proven by his actions that he and Patrick 'are not of one fold and do not have one God as father' (*non sumus ex uno ovili neque unum Deum patrem habemus*).³⁰

This kind of exaggeration of wayward behaviour on the part of nominally Christian people is not uncommon in insular clerical writing. Gildas, for example, describes Arians and other heretics, whose nominal Christianity can hardly be doubted, as 'every kind of wild beast, brandishing death-dealing venom in their horrid mouths' (*omnes omnino bestiae ferae mortiferum cuiuslibet...virus horrido ore vibrantes*).³¹ Heresy seems an obvious target for such abuse, but Bede provides evidence that the unorthodox were not immune to it. Relating his version of the speeches made at the Council of Whitby in 664, he writes that, in response to protestations about the sanctity of Colum Cille and Áedán of Lindisfarne, Wilfrith of Ripon suggested that 'many will say to the Lord at the judgement that they prophesied and cast our demons and did many great works in his name, but the Lord will answer that he never knew them' (*multis in iudicio dicentibus Domino, quod in nomine eius prophetauerint et daemonia eiecerint et uirtutes multas fecerint, responsurus sit Dominus, quia numquam eos nouerit*).³² Again, the Christianity of the particularists represented by Colmán of Lindisfarne at Whitby is not in doubt, and here we have good evidence of the kinds of accusations that impassioned Christians of the period could make against other Christians. Another target for this kind of exaggerated outrage for moralistic effect, with direct bearing upon the matter of the Pictish apostates of Patrick's *epistola*, was the Christian who engaged in violence against his fellow Christians. Perhaps the best example in Bede's *History* is his uncharitable description of the British king Catguollaun as having been 'Christian by name and profession' (*nomen et professionem haberet Christiani*) but 'barbarian in spirit and

³⁰ Patrick, *Ep.*, § 11. The significance of this comparison between the 'volée d'épithètes violentes' directed by Patrick at the soldiers of Coroticus on the one hand and the Picts on the other was considered by P. Grosjean, 'Les Pictes Apostats dans l'Épître de S. Patrice', in *Analecta Bollandiana* 76 (1958), 354-78, who suggested (at 374-75) that both targets of the saint's abuse were Christian, and that Patrick was following Numbers 14:9 in his condemnation of them.

³¹ Gildas, *DEB* i.12.

³² Bede, *HE* iii.25. There is little reason to believe that Bede provides a verbatim account of what Wilfrith actually said.

disposition' (*animo ac moribus barbarus*).³³ As he did in the case of Patrick's description of the Picts, Skene, in an interesting parallel, took Bede literally here as suggesting that Catguollaun was an apostate,³⁴ but we need not think of him as having been any less Christian than Edwini was or Coroticus had been. Instead, we may attribute Bede's criticisms to the fact that Catguollaun allied himself with Penda, the famous non-Christian king of the Mercians, that he killed Northumbria's first Christian king, and that it was alleged to have been a consequences of that victory that the Bernicians and Deirans had apostatised.³⁵

In the final analysis, it seems only fitting that, in recognising Patrick's disgust at Coroticus and his Pictish allies for having spilled Christian blood and taken Christian captives, we ought to be cautious about making too much one way or the other of what has been described as 'a single ambiguous reference'.³⁶ Nevertheless, a degree of support for the view that the christianisation of the southern Pictish zone was at least underway by Patrick's lifetime may be provided in Patrick's own *Confessio*, in which he wrote that:

*quicquid mihi evenerit, sive bonum sive malum, aequaliter debeo suscipere et Deo gratias semper agere, qui mihi ostendit ut indubitalem eum sine fine crederem et qui me adiu[er]it...ut imitarem quippiam illos quos ante Dominus iam olim praedixerat praenuntiaturos evangelium suum in testimonium omnibus gentibus ante finem mundi – quod ita ergo vidimus itaque suppletum est.*³⁷

whatever happens to me, be it good or bad, I should accept it calmly and always give thanks to God, who showed me that I might place implicit and unlimited trust in him, and who helped me...so that I should follow to some extent the example of those who the Lord long ago foretold would proclaim his gospel as a testimony to all the *gentes* before the end of the world – and so we have seen fulfilled.

Taken as a whole, then, the testimony of Patrick may be seen as reasonably suggestive of the likelihood that the Christian religion was being propagated in the southern Pictish zone during his adult life. This is particularly true, of course, if one accepts the traditional identification of Coroticus with Clyde Rock. This stronghold lay in what had been in the first century the territory of the Dumnonii, which by the third century seems to have become the political heartland of the Maeatae, and if

³³ Bede, *HE* ii.20.

³⁴ Skene, *CS* II, 199.

³⁵ Bede, *HE* ii.20.

³⁶ Macquarrie, *Saints*, 59.

³⁷ Patrick, *Conf.*, § 34.

there is anything in the suggestion that this was still a meaningful political community in the fifth century, the presence of Christianity at Clyde Rock becomes suggestive that the religion had been adopted by kings across a Miathic zone that can have extended as far north as the Ochil Hills. This, like the other Patrician evidence, would place the advent of Verturian Christianity in the earlier half of the century defined by our firm *termini post* and *ante quem* derived from our other fifth- and sixth-century historiography above, which is to say in the latter half of the fifth century.

In Search of the Roots of Verturian Christianity

Our textual evidence, and perhaps also the example provided by the Patrician phenomenon in Ireland, has conditioned us to think about christianisation in terms of organised missionary activity and apostolic saints. Neither, however, are strictly necessary for christianisation to have taken place, whereas Christian activity of a more prosaic kind has been shown, as we shall see, to be very important in facilitating religious change. It is with this in mind that we may turn our attention to the many cemeteries of long-cist graves that have been discovered in the southern Pictish zone over the years, as well as a much smaller number found further north along the shores of the northern Pictish zone (see Map A). Cist burials of various types were relatively widespread in prehistoric northern Britain,³⁸ but long-cists containing extended burials seem to have become particularly popular in the zone between the Forth and the Tyne, territory occupied in the first century, at least in part, by Ptolemy's *Otadini*.³⁹ A distinctive tradition of cist-construction seems to have arisen in this zone, where the earliest demonstrably Christian cemeteries consist of these long-cist burials.

These cemeteries are neither uncontroversial nor lacking in interpretative problems. Most archaeologists would seem to agree with Professor Thomas in

³⁸ Armit, *Celtic Scotland*, 96-97.

³⁹ On this tribal name, see Watson, *CPNS*, 28; Rivet & Smith, *PNRB*, 508-09. It is clear from later Welsh forms of this name that the tribe was known in southern Britain as 'Uotadini', but J. T. Koch, 'Ovania and /wu-/, /vo-/ < Celtic /wo-/, /we-/ (, /wi-) in Pictish', in S. Taylor (ed.), *Kings, clerics and chronicles in Scotland 500-1297: Essays in honour of Marjorie Ogilvie Anderson on the occasion of her ninetieth birthday* (Dublin, 2000), 33-34, has pointed out that 'Pictish sources seem never to show initial /w-/', and it is therefore possible that 'Otadini' represents how this name was pronounced in northern Britain. The precise territory occupied by this tribe is a disputable point; it is possible that it was not continuous.

seeing them as belonging to 'a wider class of rural "undeveloped cemeteries" which actually ante-date the construction of small local churches in wood or stone, and which were frequently abandoned in post-Roman times in favour of cemeteries attached to such early churches'.⁴⁰ It is clear, however, that southern Picts continued to bury their dead in long-cists throughout much of their history, and we cannot therefore assume that all, or even most, long-cist Christian cemeteries north of the Forth are as early as the sub-Roman period. On the other hand, the argument that 'burials in long cists...represent Christian influence and ultimately Christianity' in seventh- and eighth-century Lothian,⁴¹ one of the pillars of the current interpretative model envisioning the christianisation of Fortriu as a phenomenon of the seventh century and later, has since collapsed. Many sites were discovered and disturbed long before the advent of modern archaeological practice and radiocarbon dating, but such developments have provided a certain amount of new evidence that some long-cist cemeteries north of the Forth were in use in the sixth century or earlier, thus corresponding, if long-cist burials are to be equated with Christian burial, with the present interpretation of our textual evidence.

It is unlikely that reliable dating information will be forthcoming from the majority of the cemeteries we know about, and there can be no doubt about the need for more work on undisturbed sites and more conclusive dating evidence. Nevertheless, despite the notoriously ambiguous nature of radiocarbon dating, archaeologists have become reasonably convinced that long-cist cemeteries in the southern Pictish zone extending south of the Forth are evidence of Christian burial in the fifth or sixth centuries, just as the textual evidence suggests should have happened.⁴² Perhaps the best known and most important southern Pictish example in recent years is the Hallow Hill cemetery in St Andrews, where radiocarbon dates

⁴⁰ A. C. Thomas, 'The Evidence from North Britain', in M. W. Barley and R. P. C. Hanson (eds.) *Christianity in Britain, 300-700: Papers presented to the Conference on Christianity in Roman and Sub-Roman Britain held at the University of Nottingham 17-20 April 1967* (Leicester, 1968), 93-121, at 107. The case for categorising long-cist burials as Christian is usefully summarised by E. Proudfoot, 'The Hallow Hill and the Origins of Christianity in Eastern Scotland', in B. E. Crawford (ed.) *Conversion and Christianity in the North Sea World* (St Andrews, 1998), 57-73, at 57. For a handy distribution map of long-cist cemeteries see *ibid.* 68. However, for a general discussion of the uncertainties implicit in burial evidence, including the long-cist phenomenon, see Thomas, *CRB*, 230-36.

⁴¹ Duncan, *Kingdom*, 69.

⁴² For a recent summary of views regarding long-cist cemeteries, see J. R. F. Burt, 'Long Cist Cemeteries in Fife', in Henry, *WGT*, 64-66.

from twenty of the over one hundred burials shows 'a bias towards the seventh century', but an earliest result of AD 460 ± 55 (uncalibrated). The consistency in cist-construction and grave-siting seems to demonstrate continuous use of this cemetery into the ninth century, with later and certainly Christian burials differing little from the earlier ones, suggesting that the cemetery was managed by the same community throughout its *floruit*.⁴³ More important to this discussion are the recent excavations on the Isle of May that have uncovered what is almost certainly a long-cist monastic cemetery at the northern end of the more expansive medieval burial ground. The northern part of the cemetery contained the remains of an entirely male population, half of whom died in advanced age, producing radiocarbon dates that range from 434-610 to 647-82.⁴⁴ These sites may be contrasted with the much more problematic Redcastle square-barrow cemetery on the coast of Angus, where the impressive remains of a woman in early adulthood, interred quite deep beneath what appears to be the largest barrow on the site, have produced a fifth- to sixth-century date range, tending towards the earlier part. The radiocarbon dates of this site show a bias rather earlier than Hallow Hill, and the cemetery may have gone out of use somewhat earlier as well, but again, the earlier burials show a high degree of consistency with those which, being of much later date, may confidently be seen as having been dug after the conversion period.⁴⁵ The dates and distribution of these square-barrow cemeteries have been interpreted as indicating that this burial practice arose in ostentatious nativist response to burial practices in long-cist cemeteries, thus fitting into a pattern observed elsewhere in the North Sea region, in which innovations in non-Christian burial practices are thought to act as

⁴³ Proudfoot, 'Hallow Hill', 62-65. The two 'foundation graves' are burials of children, both of whom appear to have been buried under cairns.

⁴⁴ P. A. Yeoman, 'Pilgrims to St Ethernan: the Archaeology of an Early Saint of the Picts and Scots', in Crawford (ed.) *Conversion and Christianity*, 75-91, at 82-83. The southern part of the cemetery contained skeletons of both sexes and mixed ages, most being male, producing radiocarbon dates from the seventh to the tenth centuries.

⁴⁵ D. Alexander, 'Redcastle Barrow Cemetery', in *Current Archaeology* 166 (1999), 395-97, at 396-97. I am grateful to Dr Alexander for having generously given me a copy of this piece. Charles-Edwards, *Ireland*, 117-18 notes that 'in the seventh and early eighth century ordinary laymen were still being buried in the cemetery traditionally used by their kindreds'; Redcastle may represent a Pictish example of this phenomenon.

‘extravagant investments and ritual re-inventions which Christianity is not suppressing, but provoking’.⁴⁶

Crop-marks in eastern Scotland suggest that there are countless other sites awaiting excavation that have the potential to demonstrate how typical or atypical is our most recent evidence and how reasonable is such an interpretation of the different distribution of long-cist cemeteries on the one hand and square-barrow cemeteries on the other. It is far too early to draw any definitive conclusions from our burial evidence on its own. A more equivocal interpretation of the square-barrow evidence suggests that such burials may have ‘something to hint to us about the hesitant process of royal conversion’ but stresses the ‘religious neutrality’ and ‘inconclusiveness’ of the supposed reaction excited by the new funerary practices.⁴⁷ It may be more helpful, then, to see such variations in funerary practices as being primarily ethnic, rather than primarily religious, in character, and to see these two different contemporary burial customs as markers of identity, to which religion will not have been the only, or even necessarily the main, contributing factor. In this respect the Ochil Hills, which in other ways appear to have been a significant cultural boundary in the Iron Age, and which have been taken here as roughly marking the frontier between the third-century Calidones and Maeatae, emerge again as a fairly clear boundary, with long-cists being typical of burials to the south, and square-barrows of burials north of this frontier. If one follows Driscoll in seeing the so-called Class I Pictish symbol-stone as being primarily expressions of local identity at the level of the large estate rather than as having anything to do with religion,⁴⁸ the observed correspondence of their distribution area with that of the square-barrow cemeteries in the southern Pictish zone become particularly instructive with regard to the latter as being expressions of Calidonian, or at least southern Calidonian, identity, since Class I stones are very rare south of the Ochil

⁴⁶ Smith, ‘Origins and development of Christianity’, 28-29. For an assessment of this phenomenon, see M. Carver, ‘Conversion and Politics on the Eastern Seaboard of Britain; some archaeological indicators’, in Crawford (ed.), *Conversion and Christianity*, 11-40, at 13-16 and *passim*.

⁴⁷ R. Fletcher, *The Barbarian Conversion From Paganism to Christianity* (New York, 1997), 125-26. Fletcher here criticises Carver’s interpretation of Mound 1 at Sutton Hoo, which figures prominently in the models proposed by Smith and Carver and applied by the former to the square-barrows.

⁴⁸ S. T. Driscoll, ‘Christian Monumental Sculpture and Ethnic Expression in Early Scotland’, in W. O. Frazer and A. Tyrrell (eds.), *Social Identity in Early Medieval Britain* (London & New York, 2000), 233-52, at 249.

Hills. We may therefore suspect that where we find the occasional transference of long-cist burial practices to the north of this frontier we are dealing primarily with evidence of a Miathic community having been established within Calidonian territory (and vice versa), in which event these funerary customs may well be representative as well of different communities of belief. In that event, we would expect Miathic communities north of the Ochil Hills to have been, in addition, Christian communities once the Christian religion had been adopted by the political community with which they identified, even if the extent to which christianisation did or did not shape the long-cist funerary custom is not yet at all clear.

Divergent burial practices of Early Historic date suggest, along with the distribution of Class I symbol-stones, that the Calidonian-Miathic political and ethnic division outlined above did indeed continue to be very meaningful into the early Christian period north and south of the Forth. Given the potential reach of Miathic political identity, any discussion of the earliest evidence of Christianity in the southern Pictish zone may therefore be instructive in understanding the equally murky early ecclesiastical history of the northern Britons south of the Forth and the Clyde, and vice versa. Indeed, the apparent seamlessness of both the distribution and the character of long-cist cemeteries from the Angus to the Borders is highly suggestive of a meaningful community centred on the plain of Manau in the Forth valley that included the people of Fife on the one hand and the (U)Otdinian territories of Lothian and the Borders on the other.⁴⁹ There is a great deal of evidence of cultural intercourse and close contacts between these regions in the Iron Age and extending as far back as the Mesolithic period (when such labels are barely appropriate).⁵⁰ We may presume that Iron Age lines of communication were supplemented by the Romans with the establishment in the first century of Dere Street, the great eastern arterial north-south road, which conveyed travellers along the western frontier of the (U)Otdinian zone between High Rochester and Lothian. The road provided access, sometimes by way of tributaries, to such harbour

⁴⁹ The extent of Manau is hinted at by the surviving place-names Slamannan and Clackmannan, and by the placement of a battle known from other sources to have been fought *in campo Manann* to a place 'between Haefe and Caere', or between the rivers Avon and Carron; cf. Watson, *CPNS*, 103-04, M. Swanton (ed.), *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicles* (London, 2000), 43 (MS E, *sub anno* 710).

facilities as those established at Cramond and Inveresk on the Forth, from which a ship might sail to Carpow or other ports on the Tay, and at the Antonine frontier it joined the Roman road extending into the southern Pictish zone as far as the Tay.⁵¹ Not surprisingly, there is every indication that the Roman frontier was easily penetrated. As the professional scouts of the Roman military, provincial and continental traders, slavers and others came northwards, being based either in Britannia or among the frontier peoples, that native ideas and artefacts were as likely as Roman ones to be disseminated along the east coast of northern Britain.⁵²

The possibility that these ancient and ongoing links were important in providing the southern Pictish zone with its first Christian contacts requires us to consider the christianisation of the (U)Otadini, and indeed of the wider northern British region, alongside our Pictish evidence. It is difficult to know how deeply Christianity, which appears to have been established in Britannia by the third century, had penetrated into Romano-British society by the end of the following century. The extent to which the citizens of the British diocese can be said to have been Christians when, in the early fifth century, its official links with Rome were severed is also problematic.⁵³ The Roman empire did not, after all, finally embrace the Christian religion as that of its establishment, to the exclusion of all others, until only about a generation before it lost or surrendered control of Britain, and by standards established throughout the empire, Roman Britain may be considered to

⁵⁰ Armit, *Celtic Scotland*, 24-26; 81; 85; see also I. Ralston & J. Inglis, *Foul Hordes: the Picts in the North-East and their background* (Aberdeen, 1984), 7-12; R. D. Oram, *Scottish Prehistory* (Edinburgh, 1997), 21-22; 47-55; 67; 100-01.

⁵¹ Frere, *Britannia*, 91 envisions Dere Street as forming the boundary between the (U)Otadinian and Selgovian zones, with Newstead and the Eildons situated in the territory of the latter; Breeze, *Frontiers*, 28-29, suggests, however, that these sites may have been (U)Otadinian. On Cramond and Inveresk, cf. Breeze, *ibid.*, 116. On Carpow, see D. J. Breeze, *Roman Scotland: Frontier Country* (London, 1996), 85. For a map of the Roman roads in this region, see *Atlas of Scot. Hist.*, 36.

⁵² Frere, *Britannia*, 286; Breeze, *Frontiers*, 139-44; P. Salway, *A History of Roman Britain* (Oxford, 1993), 477-78. In addition to slaves, the Romans appear to have extracted hides, wool and furs from beyond the frontier; in return, the natives appear to have extracted coins, jewellery and perishables from further south, along with innovative techniques in tool-making, weaving and other crafts. On the professional scouts of the Roman army, the third-century *exploratores* and the fourth-century *areani*, cf. Frere, *ibid.*, 166-67; Breeze, *ibid.*, 139-40; Salway, *ibid.*, 258.

⁵³ The most comprehensive study of this subject remains the first nine chapters of Thomas, *CRB*, who (43) is prepared to accept the existence of Christianity in Roman Britain in the early third century, referred to by sources of questionable authority, as 'not inconsistent with reasonable guesses on other grounds'.

have been 'relatively unchristianised'.⁵⁴ Nevertheless, there is no doubt that Christianity had become entrenched on the island, if only in pockets, by the beginning of the fourth century, when we know there were Christian churches present in Britannia to be destroyed in its comparatively mild Diocletianic persecutions.⁵⁵ A short time later, there were three British bishops, including the bishop of York, in attendance at the inaugural council of the Christian Church in 314 in Arles. Traditional religions had by no means been obliterated in Roman Britain by this date, nor indeed by the end of the Roman period,⁵⁶ but Fletcher's summary of the growth of Christianity in the fourth century is not entirely inapplicable to Roman Britain:

Imperial patronage colossally increased the wealth and status of the churches. Privileges and exemptions granted to Christian clergy precipitated a stampede into the priesthood. Devout aristocratic ladies acquired followings of clerical groupies, experimented with fashionable forms of devotion. Christian moralists were apprehensive that conversions were occurring for the wrong reasons – to gain favour, to obtain a job, promotion, a pension. As far as the historian can tell, their anxieties do not appear to have been misplaced. Fashion is a great force in human affairs.⁵⁷

There is evidence of a sharp decline in the appeal of paganism in Roman Britain after about 380, by which time an organised British Church had become established with the backing of an imperial administration riddled with (and in all likelihood dominated by) Christians.⁵⁸ On balance, there seems little doubt that there were more Christians in Britain at the dawn of the fifth century than one hundred years earlier, and the strength and influence of the Church that produced the accomplished thinker Pelagius in this period will have increased accordingly.

The question that concerns us at present, however, is the manner in which this process of christianisation reached beyond Britannia into the northern frontier zone occupied by the (U)Otdini and their neighbours. It is at this point that we

⁵⁴ Salway, *Roman Britain*, 267, 530-35. See also K. R. Dark, *Civitas to Kingdom: British Political Continuity 300-800* (London & New York, 1994), 18-20, 30-32.

⁵⁵ Salway, *Roman Britain*, 247. Thomas, *CRB*, 44, summarises Christianity in third-century Britain as a religion that was 'numerically very insignificant, had no particular geographical focus, and had up to then produced no one Christian thinker, martyr, or expatriate champion whose name could be snatched up in polished circles as that of a distant soul prominently gained for Christ'.

⁵⁶ For a discussion of fourth-century traditional religion in Britannia, cf. Frere, *Britannia*, 322-23; Salway, *Roman Britain*, 252.

⁵⁷ Fletcher, *Conversion*, 38.

⁵⁸ Frere, *Britannia*, 322-23; L. De Paor, *Saint Patrick's World: The Christian Culture of Ireland's Apostolic Age* (Dublin, 1993), 17.

may turn to the three main factors isolated by Cusack as having facilitated christianisation in early medieval Germanic societies: the appreciation of the fact that the divine needs of the local 'microcosm' may differ from those of the wider 'macrocosm'; the presence in the particular non-Christian society of an intellectual background that could be brought into line with Christianity; and, of course, support for the new religion on the part of the elite members of society.⁵⁹ It will be necessary to consider each of these factors in turn in a (U)Otadinian context. The evidence suggests that, in the northern part of Britannia, it was on the eastern side of the Pennines that Christianity became most entrenched, a perception which may be due in part to imbalances in archaeological activity. York, the administrative centre of this region, was also an episcopal seat, probably of a metropolitan bishop, and excavation has produced material evidence of a sort labelled class (3) by Professor Thomas, denoting that the presence of fourth-century Christianity in York is 'nearly certain'. Evidence of a similar grade has been unearthed further north on Dere Street at Catterick, and also at the frontier settlement of Corbridge within sight of (U)Otadinian territory, both of which locations have been put forward as potential seats of Romano-British bishoprics within the metropolitan see of York.⁶⁰

There can be little doubt that the (U)Otadini experienced regular contact with this part of Roman Britain throughout its existence. Indeed, all of the evidence points to the likelihood that this tribe submitted readily to the Romans in the Flavian period at the end of the first century and subsequently remained friendly with their Roman neighbours as a matter of policy or tradition, perhaps, by the crucial fourth century, adopting some form of imperial client status.⁶¹ As compared

⁵⁹ Cusack, *Conversion*, 23. This model is built upon the anthropological model of Robin Horton, see 12.

⁶⁰ Thomas, *CRB*, 106-13; cf. 99-103 for this system of classification. Class (3) evidence strengthens the testimony of class (2) evidence ('Christian presence reasonably probable') in York (*ibid.*, 126, 128) and class (1) evidence ('Christian presence no more than possible') in Corbridge (*ibid.*, 130). On the episcopal potential of Catterick and Corbridge, see *ibid.*, 191-93.

⁶¹ Frere, *Britannia*, 91-92; Breeze, *Frontiers*, 57-58, 96; but see A. P. Smyth, *Warlords and Holy Men: Scotland AD 80-1000* (Edinburgh, 1984), 15, who argues unconvincingly that such a situation cannot have obtained after the second century. Frere perceives ongoing treaty obligations between the Romans and the (U)Otadini from the Antonine period onwards (*ibid.*, pp. 133-34, 141). Excavations at Traprain Law, which according to Armit, *Celtic Scotland*, 103 'remains the best, perhaps the only, candidate for a pre-Roman tribal "capital" in the traditional sense' in Scotland, figure prominently in this discussion, showing it to have been an expanding, thriving, and romanised settlement into perhaps the fifth century. Breeze, *ibid.*, 152 asserts that 'Traprain Law was a town', although more recently, *Roman Scotland*, 114, he allows that 'the suggestion that Traprain Law was a temple and not a town cannot be dismissed out of hand'. Smyth, for his part, argues that Traprain is 'a special case'.

to southern Britannia, most of which experienced considerable synthesis with the political and social culture of the Mediterranean basin, the societies of the northern frontier tended to retain much of their traditional culture.⁶² However, there is evidence that, in the second century, the settlement patterns of the (U)Otadini began to change in response to their ongoing close relationship with the Romans, seeming to speak of an increased sense of security provided, presumably, by an accommodation with the Romans, as well as hinting that something approximating the Roman rural villa estate developed in the (U)Otadinian zone.⁶³ In the third century, Roman forts in (U)Otadinian territory became the forward bases of imperial *exploratores* charged with the task of keeping the frontier zone between the wall of Hadrian and the Tay under surveillance,⁶⁴ and it has been suggested that long-term communities of Roman entrepreneurs, such as those known to have become established beyond imperial frontiers elsewhere, became established in the (U)Otadinian zone during the Roman period.⁶⁵ This evidence is important for understanding the forces at work in bringing about the christianisation of the (U)Otadini and their Miathic neighbours, as we must be mindful of current models in conversion studies in which christianisation figures within 'longer term processes of change within cultural systems of which religion forms only a part'.⁶⁶

Over four hundred traditional divinities are attested in Celtic Gaul, the cults of something like three-quarters of which seem to have been confined to a particular locality. This suggests that among the Celtic Britons, too, most cults were quite small indeed, being associated with and protected by a divinity to which perhaps a single shrine existed.⁶⁷ Both Cusack and Higham have drawn attention to the theoretical framework proposed by the social anthropologist Robin Horton, who

⁶² The case for thorough Romanisation in Britain is summarised by Salway, *Roman Britain*, 355, who writes that 'its degree of Romanisation had been too great, not too little'. The case against this view, in which the British are said to have had adopted only 'the veneer of Roman ways', is summarised by Smyth, *Warlords*, 2-6.

⁶³ Frere, *Britannia*, 135. On 'the local equivalent of the high-status villas', see Breeze, *Roman Scotland*, 90.

⁶⁴ Frere, *Britannia*, 167.

⁶⁵ Salway, *Roman Britain*, 37. For a much more pessimistic (and argument-led) view, in which it is maintained that the (U)Otadini 'were not exposed to close enough contact with Rome for a sufficient length of time to have undergone any appreciable degree of Roman influence', see Smyth, *Warlords*, 15.

⁶⁶ Higham, *Convert Kings*, 21; see also Cusack, *Conversion*, 19.

⁶⁷ Frere, *Britannia*, 316-18. The effect of Romanisation upon traditional Celtic worship appears to have included such phenomena as euhemerisation of existing divinities, the *interpretatio* of a Celtic divinity

proposed that a perceived breakdown in the fibre of the 'microcosm' – the local society – when confronted by influences of a 'macrocosm' like the early medieval Christian west tends to be interpreted at the local level as abandonment or failure on the part of the divine defenders of the microcosm – the local divinities – in the face of the challenges posed by the divine defenders of the macrocosm.⁶⁸ In other words, if they had indeed placed themselves under the protection of the Romans, and if close contact with the Romans had led to changes in their society (both of which seem to have been the case), such developments are likely to have had cosmological ramifications for the (U)Otadini and for their Miathic neighbours. The sense that their traditional local divinities had retreated before those of the Romans, allowing them to become noticeably romanised, will have made them susceptible to christianisation when the Roman pantheon had, in turn, retreated before the Christian God. This, in the absence of concrete evidence, can only be guesswork, but at least it provides us with a basis for understanding the kinds of forces that may have been brought to bear upon the first (U)Otadini to accept baptism.

Similarly, social anthropology has shown that the intellectual framework of a non-Christian society can begin to orient itself towards cultural, cosmological and other concepts associated with Christianity through what may be called 'bottom-up' influences brought about by casual contact with ordinary Christians. It is unlikely 'that bottom-up conversion was ever in itself sufficient to win over a hostile society', but it may nevertheless be thought to have contributed, along with the disruption of traditional microcosms, to 'a receptive environment for Christian ideas' that helped to determine the ease or difficulty with which kings and other leaders could be persuaded to accept baptism.⁶⁹ Such influences became present among the Goths, for example, through their participation in the Roman army, as well as through normal contact with Christian traders and hostages living in Gothic territory; Prosper of Aquitaine noticed this phenomenon in the fifth century, and it has been posited that it was under similar circumstances that Christianity first

as a manifestation of a known classical deity, and the promotion over a wider area of what had been local cults.

⁶⁸ Cusack, *Conversion*, 13; Higham, *Convert Kings*, 20-21.

⁶⁹ Cusack, *Conversion*, 20.

became established in Ireland.⁷⁰ As we have seen, there would seem to be enough evidence of ongoing intercourse with the Romans, and indeed of romanisation, to allow for the suspicion that, in the fourth century, there were Christians among the Roman provincials to be found across the Miathic zone, even if locating these provincials has thus far proven difficult. At the very least, such Christians will have had the potential to exert a degree of bottom-up influence throughout the fourth century. As in the case of the threat posed to (U)Otadinian microcosms as a result of romanisation, however, there is no conclusive evidence of religious change or an early Christian presence to allow us to move beyond mere suspicion, and bottom-up influence on its own need not at any rate have led to christianisation.⁷¹

The most important factor in determining the success or failure of religious change in early medieval insular societies is the presence or lack of support for change on the part of local leaders, and particularly of kings. In the case of Britannia itself, christianisation had come about largely through imperial and episcopal initiatives that raised the status and appeal of the religion, as well as episcopal imprecations, 'wherever we look' across the empire, 'encouraging the landed elites, the people who commanded local influence, to take firm and if necessary coercive action to make the peasantry Christian - in some sense'.⁷² It is not inconceivable that conversion also became attractive to fourth-century leaders among the Maeatae for such common reasons among modern converts as 'improved access to power or social status, the desire to conform with kin or the wider community...or resource-access and advantages deemed the exclusive property of members of the [Christian] religious group'.⁷³ State coercion - the acceptance of baptism as part of reaching an accommodation with the Roman authorities - is also not impossible. It has been thought, for example, that a part of the Theodosian restoration of the northern frontier of Roman Britain after the 'barbarian conspiracy' of 367 may have involved

⁷⁰ Charles-Edwards, *Ireland*, 210; Fletcher, *Conversion*, 80-81; Cusack, *Conversion*, 39, 65.

⁷¹ Thomas, *CRB*, 101-02 has rightly classified the famous Traprain Law horde as 'irrelevant or dubious' as evidence of a Christian presence in the (U)Otadinian zone; evidence of sub-Roman literacy at Traprain is fairly secure (cf. Breeze, *Frontiers*, 152), but this may speak of Romanisation rather than Christianity. Recent excavations have uncovered 'a typical early Christian burial' and 'a sizeable medieval enclosure...in the same area, right on the very summit', which 'could be connected with a church or shrine' (NMS press release, Sept 2000), but these finds have yet to be dated or published.

⁷² Fletcher, *Conversion*, 40.

⁷³ Higham, *Convert Kings*, 19.

a programme to christianise the frontier peoples, although the main evidence for such a belief has been disputed.⁷⁴ The conservative quality of the spoken Latin that influenced the lexicon of the neo-Brittonic languages as they emerged in the fifth and sixth centuries has been taken as evidence of migration on the part of highly educated and romanised lowland 'refugees' into the highland zone, particularly in the unsettled period of fifth-century Anglo-Saxon expansion.⁷⁵ It is likely that most refugees of this kind were Christians, whether laymen or clerics, and such dislocations among the Romano-British elites may have been important in firming up the process of christianisation in the highland and frontier zones as the fifth century went on.

We have seen that textual analysis allows us to posit, if cautiously, the period 450-500 as having witnessed the first royal baptisms and mass conversions north of the Forth, if only in the region south of the Ochil Hills, and this would seem as significant for our understanding of the (U)Otdinian conversion as it is for Pictish history. The earliest incontrovertible extant evidence of Christianity beyond Hadrian's wall is the famous 'Latinus stone' at Whithorn, which may be dated fairly confidently to the fifth century; the earliest similar epigraphic evidence from further east seems to date from the sixth century, and this, along with the Ninianic myth, has suggested to Professor Thomas the likelihood that the christianisation of the (U)Otdini took place considerably later than that of the Solway area, and was accomplished from the direction of Galloway.⁷⁶ Yet we have seen that the north-eastern province of the old Roman diocese, which, whether overland or by sea, was both closer and more accessible to the (U)Otdini than Galloway or even Carlisle, gives every indication of having been more extensively christianised than the north-west. The dates applicable to the Latinus and other inscribed gravestones in Galloway demonstrate, along with the attested presence in the 430s of Christians in Palladian Ireland, that the process of christianisation was well underway beyond the old Roman frontiers of the insular zone by the middle of the fifth century. Their traditional links with Britannia, through which they are likely to have experienced

⁷⁴ For summaries of the debate, see Frere, *Britannia*, 341-42; Smyth, *Warlords*, 16-18.

⁷⁵ K. Jackson, *Language and History in Early Britain* (Edinburgh, 1953), 108-12.

an erosion of their microcosmic sense of themselves and, in the fourth century, bottom-up Christian influences, suggest that it is unlikely that the (U)Otdini were a century behind the Solway area in adopting the religion, particularly if the natives of Galloway were members of the Miathic political community (which is not at all certain). We may suspect that the Christian community of Corbridge on the Hadrianic frontier, or perhaps that of Catterick, both of which will have had connections with the bishop of York, provided the (U)Otdini with their first Christian leaders. Neither this nor the adoption of Christianity on the part of the (U)Otdini during the course of the fifth century can, however, be proven from the known evidence. The matter of dating seems likely on the basis of the Pictish evidence, but such possibilities remain possibilities only, requiring further investigation as new evidence comes to light.⁷⁷

Despite our present ignorance of the details, we may nevertheless suppose that the earliest Christians of Fortriu were Maeatae living north of the Forth, who were among several other northern British communities, including those on the Solway and below Clyde Rock, who converted to Christianity in the fifth century. They buried their dead in long-cist cemeteries as a function of their ethnicity rather than their religion, and they remained sufficiently a part of Pictish historical memory that something of their existence was remembered by their eighth-century descendants. It was therefore probably in outlying Miathic communities established north of the Ochil Hills, where long-cist cemeteries testify to their existence, that Christianity was first transported into the Calidonian zone by Miathic Christians. By virtue of their mere presence and interactions with their neighbours these Christians at the very least will have exerted some degree of bottom-up influence in the Calidonian zone, and particularly around the lower Tay where long-cist cemeteries are thickest on the ground,⁷⁸ thus introducing the natives there to the Christian intellectual framework while, perhaps, inspiring a limited number of

⁷⁶ Thomas, 'Evidence from North Britain', 97-108; see also *idem*, *Early Christian Archaeology of North Britain*, 15-16; *idem*, *CRB*, 294; the re-capitulation of this model by Smyth, *Warlords*, 35. On the dates of these stones, see Thomas, *CRB*, 283; 291.

⁷⁷ For an overview of the evidence that is sympathetic to the present view, see I. Smith, 'The origins and development of Christianity in North Britain and Southern Pictland', in J. Blair & C. Pyrah (eds.), *Church Archaeology: Research directions for the future* (Council for British Archaeology Research Report 104, York, 1996), 19-37, at 20.

⁷⁸ Smith, 'Origins and development of Christianity', 27.

conversions. When the time came, it may also have been an eminent Christian from among the Maeatae who was chosen to be the first bishop to take up residence north of the Ochil Hills.

There is additional evidence from Fortriu, this time onomastic and linguistic, which has long been taken as supportive of such a model. Among the consequences of the non-survival of the Pictish language is the unfortunate fact that we know little about the effects of Latin upon it at the time of conversion. However, it has been argued that it was through the medium of the northern dialect of either the Late British or the 'Archaic Neo-Brittonic' language that early Verturian Christians first encountered the fundamentals of their religion.⁷⁹ The evidence takes the form of the well-known corpus of surviving **ecles* place-names in southern and eastern Scotland, including five examples to be found in Fife and several more further north through the southern Pictish zone (see Map A).⁸⁰ This term for a 'church' was evidently borrowed into Early British from the Latin *ecclesia*, and its occurrence as a toponymic element in Scotland has been seen as important evidence that the vernacular vocabulary developed by the Verturian Picts to accommodate concepts of Christian worship was influenced by their neighbours to the south, since there are a number of **ecles* place-names south of the Forth.⁸¹ These place-names on their own provide only very rough dating evidence. Taylor has shown that in Fortriu they were being coined in the eighth century,⁸² and if there are good grounds for believing that most of the surviving Verturian examples were coined later in the Pictish period rather than earlier, it is interesting that the distribution of these examples shows no respect for the Ochil Hills as a boundary, which would also seem to indicate, according to arguments presented here, that they were coined

⁷⁹ 'Late British' is the label applied by Prof. Jackson to the common Brittonic vernacular language spoken in Britain from about the middle of the fifth century until the earlier half of the sixth, of which we may posit a Late North British dialect, cf. Jackson, *LHEB*, 4-5; 'Common Archaic Neo-Brittonic' is the label applied by Prof. Koch to its successor language 'spoken along the 800-mile span between the Rivers Forth and Loire', down to the time of the first extant written evidence, cf. J. T. Koch, *The Gododdin of Aneirin: Text and Context from Dark-Age North Britain* (Cardiff & Andover MS, 1997), p. xi-xii.

⁸⁰ See the distribution map of both of these phenomena in Proudfoot, 'Hallow Hill', 68.

⁸¹ The corpus of names is discussed by G. W. S. Barrow, 'The Childhood of Scottish Christianity: a Note on Some Place-Name Evidence', in *Scottish Studies* 27 (1983), 1-15. For a further discussion of **eglés* as an onomastic term in Britain, cf. Thomas, *CRB*, 262-65.

⁸² S. Taylor, 'Place-names and the early church in Scotland', in *Records of the Scottish Church History Society* 28 (1998), 1-22, at 4-7.

relatively late. These names are therefore less helpful as dating markers than the problematic long-cist cemeteries in dating the 'childhood' of Verturian Christianity. The evidence we have already seen suggests that it may have been as early as the fifth century that the term was borrowed into the language of the Maeatae, but the place-name evidence on its own can neither prove nor disprove this suggestion.

The possibility that the Christian religion passed through a (U)Otadinian filter before being adopted more widely among the Maeatae and transported to the earliest Calidonian Christians may provide a vital clue in forming some basic understanding of the nature of the phenomenon of christianisation among the southern Picts. It has been suggested that the leaders of the (U)Otadini were particularly open to the idea of maximising connections with the Romans. As a result, they may be suspected of having been more welcoming than most of their neighbours to the macrocosmic Christian God, more amenable to conversion, and, crucially, more capable of advertising to their Miathic and Calidonian contacts the benefits they themselves believed came with spiritual alignment with the Roman, or at least with the wider, world. The erosion of traditional Pictish microcosms, however, had evidently begun long before as a result of contacts with the Romans in Britain. The evidence suggests, as already discussed, that contact with the Roman zone brought new economic opportunities to the peoples of northern Britain, and that competition to acquire surpluses in slaves and other commodities for exchange will have led to increased levels of social differentiation within Pictish populations, while promoting the amalgamation of smaller groups in the interests of defence against predatory neighbours, leading to the Calidonian and Miathic ethnogeneses.⁸³ It is true that Tacitus speaks of the first-century Calidonians as making common cause against the Romans and 'ratifying the concord of their league with gatherings and sacrifices' (*coetibus et sacrificiis conspirationem civitatum sancirent*),⁸⁴ but economic forces and competition between native groups were probably as important as the threat of Roman raiding and invasion in bringing

⁸³ Heather, 'State Formation', 47-70.

⁸⁴ Tacitus, *De vita Iulii Agricola*, §27, in R. M. Ogilvie & I. Richmond (eds.) *Cornelii Taciti de vita Agricola* (Oxford, 1967), 93-124; henceforth *Agricola*.

about the ethnogeneses already discussed.⁸⁵ We may presume that the status afforded the divine protectors of the leagues mentioned by Tacitus and the *gentes* which were eventually to grow out of them was acquired at the expense of divinities of the local microcosms, and that this in turn facilitated the transfer of allegiance from these macrocosmic divinities to the Christian God.

Kings and Conversion

For those local Miathic and Calidonian sacral kings who had any choice in the matter, the decision to accept or reject baptism cannot have been an easy one. 'Royal hesitation' – the taking of great care and considerable time in contemplating the religious future – is a recurring feature of early medieval conversion, and in the case of Pictish kings such hesitancy may have been cultivated by *magi*.⁸⁶ We have seen that such decisions will have been influenced by the extent to which their peoples had already experienced bottom-up Christian intellectual influences and pressure from the macrocosm of Roman Christendom, and Germanic evidence shows that it was sometimes necessary to weigh the threat posed by the power of the macrocosm against the advantages that came with identifying with that power. While non-Christian Goths seem to have persecuted their Christian fellows more intensely in times of conflict with Rome, it is not impossible that at other times, individual kings actually petitioned their Christian neighbours to evangelise them in the quest for more power and influence within the local microcosm.⁸⁷ Patrick's *Confessio* contains an allusion to just such a situation, in which the saint has a vision of having been exhorted by the Gaels to return to Ireland 'and walk again among us' (*et adhuc ambulat inter nos*).⁸⁸ We may therefore suspect that not every Gaelic or Pictish community was passive about its stance towards Christianity. Patrick also speaks, however, of having 'to endure insults from unbelievers; and to hear criticisms of my travels; and to endure many persecutions, even to the extent of being put in prison' (*ab incredulis contumelias perferre, ut audirem obprobrium*

⁸⁵ See discussion in Heather, 'State Formation', 55-61; see also Duncan, *Kingdom*, 25; Breeze, *Roman Scotland*, 115-17; Oram, *Scottish Prehistory*, 104. A comparable phenomenon involving the formation of two 'confederations' in Ireland has now been posited by Charles-Edwards, *Ireland*, 158-59.

⁸⁶ Fletcher, *Conversion*, 123-24. On druids and the conversion of the Irish, see Charles-Edwards, *Ireland*, 189-91.

⁸⁷ Cusack, *Conversion*, 42, 44.

⁸⁸ Patrick, *Conf.*, §23.

peregrinationis meae, et persecutiones multas usque ad vincula), showing that some traditional communities of belief could be as unwelcoming as those represented by Muirchú and Adomnán.⁸⁹

In another passage, Patrick reveals not just the pivotal position of the king in determining the success or failure of evangelisation within a community and the challenges associated with preaching to one, but also the difficulties experienced by pagan kings in taking decisive action regarding christianisation:

Interim praemia dabam regibus praeter quod dabam mercedem filiis ipsorum qui mecum ambulant, et nihilominus comprehenderunt me cum comitibus meis et illa die avidissime cupiebant interficere me, sed tempus nondum venerat; et omnia quaecumque nobiscum invenerunt rapuerunt illud et me ipsum ferro vinxerunt et quartodecimo die absolvit me Dominus de potestate eorum et quicquid nostrum fuit redditum est nobis propter Deum et necessarios amicos quos ante praevidimus.⁹⁰

From time to time I gave presents to kings, quite apart from the payments I made to their sons who travel with me; however, they arrested me and my companions and that day were most eager to kill me, but my time had not yet come; they seized everything that they found on us and put me in irons; and fourteen days later the Lord released me from their power, and we had restored to us all our belongings for God's sake and the sake of the close friends whom we previously acquired.

From this we can appreciate that it was not only Patrick himself and the nature of his message that affected how he was received in the court of a Gaelic king: the extent of his affluence and the nature and quality of his gift-giving also seem to have been important considerations, as presumably were the identities of the men in his entourage and their political connections. The surviving evidence on the ground has suggested to one scholar that the adoption of Christianity among the Picts is most likely to have taken place at the local level, largely free of the direction of any single pan-Pictish ecclesiastical or secular authority.⁹¹ Patrick's evidence provides an indication of the various pressures that will have existed as such a piecemeal process progressed. In the absence of direct testimony from Pictland, there seems every reason to suspect that those who evangelised among the southern Picts will have encountered a similar range of welcoming and challenging situations, and that they enunciated the advantages of baptism in the broadest

⁸⁹ Patrick, *Conf.*, §37.

⁹⁰ Patrick, *Conf.*, §52.

possible terms, not all of which will have been spiritual in nature. It is a theme of early royal conversion stories that kings needed to be convinced that the new religion would 'bring victory, wide dominion, fame and riches'.⁹² Any of these advantages, and others besides, can as easily have appealed to a southern Pictish king.

It is only with regard to the possibility of political alliances that we can speak with any level of confidence in the Verturian context. Such alliances generally included, and sometimes revolved around, the arrangement of political marriages, and the influence of a Christian queen or consort in bringing about the conversion of a king is another common theme in stories about royal conversion.⁹³ While not speaking directly to this question, the mention in *Y Gododdin* of at least one apparently Pictish leader, called alternatively 'Cian's only young son from beyond Bannawg' and 'the young son of Cian from the Stone of the Venicones', as a participant in the attack on Catterick is useful evidence. The kinship of this shadowy figure with his British allies is implied by the A-text of the poem,⁹⁴ and is passing evidence that intermarriage across the Miathic zone did occur. Gildas suggests that fifth-century Pictish raiders settled as far south as Hadrian's Wall, a phenomenon that may be compared with contemporary Irish settlement in western Britain, which has been seen as establishing kinship and other links along which ideas like Christianity could travel.⁹⁵ Although she acknowledges the development of a literary *topos* over time, Cusack argues that a Christian wife 'would have been a factor of significance' in the decision-making of a king who was contemplating the adoption of Christianity, 'exposing him daily to the beliefs and practices of the new faith'.⁹⁶ The first Christian kings in the southern Pictish zone may well have been

⁹¹ Carver, 'Conversion and Politics', 27-29. Professor Carver's notions of an 'estate-based' Church that 'might have been an alternative *secular* structure which needed no bishops and no monasteries' and that such a structure characterised Pictish Christianity is not as convincing as his general observations.

⁹² Fletcher, *Conversion*, 122.

⁹³ Fletcher, *Conversion*, 123.

⁹⁴ *Y Gododdin*, stanzas B¹.13 and A.9 respectively, in J. T. Koch, *The Gododdin of Aneirin* (Cardiff & Andover, 1997); henceforth YG with Koch's stanza numbers (eg. YG B¹.13). It is possible that Heini map Neithon (YG B².26) is another Pictish figure.

⁹⁵ Gildas, *DEB* i.19; for a summary of the Irish settlements and their role in christianisation, see Charles-Edwards, *Ireland*, 161-62.

⁹⁶ Cusack, *Conversion*, 71.

motivated in part to convert to Christianity along similar lines, at the urging of Christian wives and their entourages.

It has been suggested, albeit in the context of Anglo-Saxon England, that over-kings may have been particularly amenable to the idea of baptism if traditional religion, and particularly 'the community-forming and -defining properties of local shrines', stood in the way of kings who sought to establish more wide-spread and broadly-based kingdoms.⁹⁷ Indeed, Higham has argued that:

Great kings arguably sought instruments capable of consolidating, reinforcing and extending their own power, and making the world over which they ruled more effectively plural than it had been hitherto, in their own interest. They found crucial allies in Christian bishops, who were generally prepared to place their skills, ideologies and organising capabilities at the disposal of convert kings in return for royal backing for missionary activity. That fact, beyond any other, made many of the greatest kings welcoming and committed patrons of Christian missionaries...In a sense, therefore, Christianity was adopted in England because systems of authority and organisation which were inherent within it offered attractive solutions to political problems confronting powerful kings and 'overkings'. It was not primarily the intellectual or spiritual message which attracted such kings...Rather, they clearly and visibly took over the ideas about organisation, hierarchy and authority which were on offer.⁹⁸

In such a model, the over-king and his *imperium* become the principal purveyors of the macrocosmic forces with which individual client-kings were forced to deal, and we may presume that, if we may apply it to the southern Pictish zone, the decision on the part of Pictish kings to welcome or resist baptism was informed by a range of concerns and issues, few of which may have been religious. If this is indeed how christianisation took root among the Picts, we must suppose that those who converted did so as a function of such things as loyalty or friendship, obedience or submission to coercion, while refusal of baptism was probably rooted in defiance of political authority, or in disloyalty or antagonism between kings.

References in a handful of sources, all of them relatively late, to the ecclesiastical significance of a Pictish king called *Nectan* or *Necton* tell us much more about later medieval literary trends than about early Pictish ecclesiastical history. It is not impossible, however, that this was the name of the over-king who was remembered by the eighth-century Verturian Picts as having been the first of their

⁹⁷ Higham, *Convert Kings*, 26.

⁹⁸ Higham, *Convert Kings*, 27.

number to be baptised and to set into motion the process envisioned by Higham. Our principal candidate in this regard would in any event have been *Necton Morbet f. Erip*. We shall see that this king appears to have been misidentified as the founder of St Brigit's church at Abernethy in one recension of the 'Pictish' regnal list.⁹⁹ He stands as the earliest unambiguously Christian king attested by this problematic source, while his brother 'reigned a hundred years and fought a hundred battles' (*c. annis regnavit et c. bella peregit*), a larger-than-life claim that, along with his clear love of violence, is perhaps best understood as an allusion to heathenism. This, along with the mid-fifth-century *floruit* assigned to Necton by the reign-lengths of the regnal list (one set of annals records the death of his brother in the 450s)¹⁰⁰ and his apparent kinship (real or constructed) with the seventh-century *nepotes Uerb* kindred (on whom see below), hints further that Necton Morbet was thought to have been the over-king who brought Christianity to Fortriu. Lingering traditions associated with this king may in turn explain the frequency with which a Pictish king called Nectan appears in such later works of hagiography as *Vita Sancti Boecii* and the *Breviary of Aberdeen*.¹⁰¹

Conclusion

No consideration of the nature of the christianisation of the Verturian Picts can be anything but a working model. We have put forward a number of hypotheses regarding these processes, in most cases following factors arising from the work of archaeologists, ethnogenesis theory and social anthropology, and it is hoped that some at least of these will stimulate further work on this subject, which has been too preoccupied with the alleged achievements of apostolic saints. Perhaps the most that we can say is that we have no reason to believe that the experiences of Verturian kings were much different from those of their counterparts elsewhere in Europe when it came to conversion. In the end, of course, while such considerations are interesting and valuable, we can only theorise as to the motivations and pressures which convinced individual kings in Fortriu to welcome baptism. It is

⁹⁹ Anderson, *KKES*, 247.

¹⁰⁰ AClon s.a. 449. The regnal list also makes Drust a contemporary of Patrick.

¹⁰¹ *Vita Sancti Boecii*, in C. Plummer (ed.), *Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae*, Vol. 1 (Dublin, 1997), 87-97, at 88-89; *Nectan* is also the name of the Pictish king in the office of St Triduana in the *Aberdeen Breviary* (see MacKinlay, *Non-Script. Deds.*, 476).

probably still necessary to make the point that it is by no means apparent, and cannot be assumed, that those who did so were under the impression that they had thereby rejected wholesale the traditional rituals, attitudes and behaviours of their ancestors or adopted at that instant a radically different world-view to the one they had always known.¹⁰² Baptism was the beginning of the process of christianisation, not the end of it, and although we need not doubt that baptism made new converts fully Christian in the sense of their membership in Christendom, its effects upon their daily life may initially have been slight.

About those Christian men and women who were responsible for bringing about and presiding over these first Verturian baptisms we know nothing, although the names of some of them may yet be imprinted upon the Scottish landscape awaiting discovery or recognition. We might compare such a situation with the fate of the memory of Palladius and his contemporaries in the historiography of Ireland, where their stories were forgotten by posterity or else became absorbed by the cult of Patrick.¹⁰³ We should not be surprised that something similar seems to have happened to the historical memory of the Verturian Picts, especially if much of the relevant activity had taken place in those parts of the Miathic zone that lay outside of the eighth-century kingdom of Fortriu. Nevertheless, Bede's *ut perhibent* phrase has been taken here as indicating that traditions relating to this period, lost to us today, did linger in Fortriu until at least the early eighth century. There are strong indications that the southern Picts received their new religion as a result of interconnections stemming from Miathic identity, particularly, with particular reference to that part of Miathic territory that would become southern Fortriu, links across the Firth of Forth, and that Christianity was brought north into Angus and southern Perthshire by the presence of Miathic communities in this more northerly zone. It is impossible, given the present state of our knowledge, to be precise, but the combined testimony of the textual, material and analogous evidence discussed thus far suggests that we may be reasonably confident that Christianity was established in Fortriu by the end of the fifth century. Perhaps the precocious papacy of Leo I (440-61) inspired missionary activity like that undertaken by Palladius in

¹⁰² As discussed by Higham, *Convert Kings*, 22-24.

Ireland,¹⁰⁴ but this study has not found evidence of such a mission, and we can no longer exploit the figure of Nyniau in this regard.¹⁰⁵ Those who will be troubled by the fact that, in the model put forth here, we have denied lowland Scotland the romantic figure of an apostolic saint, will no doubt find small comfort that in so doing we have done no more than to bring the Verturian Picts into line with the rest of Roman and sub-Roman Britain.

¹⁰³ De Paor, *Saint Patrick's World*, 39, where it is suggested that the Irish legends of Palladius were the result of his having been rediscovered in the chronicle of Prosper of Aquitaine by Irish scholars.

¹⁰⁴ For a view of the possible connections between Leo's papacy and missionary work in Ireland, see Thomas, *CRB*, 333-35.

¹⁰⁵ Nevertheless, Whithorn's claim to be the 'cradle' of Christianity in Scotland, or at least Galloway's 'priority in the story of Christianity in Scotland', has rightly been preserved and affirmed by Clancy, 'Ninian', 2: 'its priority is, quite literally, set in stone', a reference to the fifth-century and later inscribed stones in the region.

IV

Instructed in the *Doctrina Scottorum*

Colum Cille, the principate of Iona, and the Picts 563-669

After Edwini had been killed in battle, the kingdom of the Deirans, from which province were derived his lineage and the foundation of his royalty, passed to a son of his uncle Aelfric called Osríc...the other kingdom, that of the Bernicians, went to a son of Aedilfrith named Eanfrith...During the whole of Edwini's reign, the sons of King Aedilfrith, who reigned before him, together with many young nobles, were living in exile among the Gaels or the Picts, where they were instructed in the doctrine of the Gaels and born again by the grace of baptism.

- *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum* (iii.1)

In or about the year 603, Eanfrith son of Aedilric was killed in battle by the Gaelic warrior Máelumai mac Baetáin at a place called *Degsastan*, fighting alongside his more famous brother Aedilfrith, king of the Bernicians (593-616).¹ Their enemy was Áedán mac Gabráin, king of the Dál Riata, for whom this battle appears to have been the last significant engagement in an impressive military career spanning some thirty years.² Perhaps Aedilfrith, held the brother who fell at *Degsastan* in high regard, for the eldest of the Aedilfrithings to succeed their father as king also bore the name Eanfrith. It was a brief royal career for Eanfrith Aedilfrithing. It followed seventeen years of exile during which time the Deiran king Edwini son of Aelle held sway over the Bernicians, as Aedilfrith had himself held sway over the Deirans prior to his death in 616. Edwini was killed in turn at *Haethfelth* on 12 October 633, and within the next twelve months his victorious enemy, the British king Catguollaun, killed Eanfrith Aedilfrithing as well.³ In addition to losing his kingdom and his life, Eanfrith lost his place in history: according to Bede, he and Osríc son of Aelfric, who had succeeded Edwini as king of the Deirans, apostatised

¹ Bede, *HE* i.34, in which the name of the brother of Aedilfrith killed in the battle is called Theodbald; AT 600 gives *Eanfraith fr Etalfraich* as the name of the man killed in the 'battle of the Saxons by Áedán'. Neither of these brothers of Aedilfrith is attested elsewhere; perhaps both were killed in the battle.

² According to Adomnán, *VC* i.9, Domangart, one of Áedán's sons, 'fell slaughtered in battle in England', but annalistic evidence suggests that this took place several years before his father's invasion of Bernicia (and might, therefore, be thought as a potential motive for that invasion). Duncan, 'Bede', 16-18, posits two distinct battles, but in contexts that are questionable.

³ Bede, *HE* ii.20; iii.1. AU 632.1 records *bellum* between *Cathloen regis Britonum 7 Anfrith*; AT confuses Eanfrith with Edwini, recording that 'he was beheaded'. *HB* 61 names the place of Edwini's death as

from the Christian religion, and in consequence 'everyone who computes the dates of kings has decided to abolish the memory of those perfidious intervening kings and to assign this year to the next king, that is, Oswald' (*cunctis placuit regum tempora computantibus ut, ablata de medio regum perfidorum memoria, idem annus sequentis regis, id est Osualdi...regno adsignaretur*).⁴ Aedilfrith was born, lived and died a pagan, but his sons are said by Bede to have converted to the Christian religion during their long exile 'among the Gaels, or else the Picts, where they were instructed in the doctrine of the Gaels and born again by the grace of baptism' (*apud Scottos siue Pictos...ibique ad doctrinam Scottorum cathecizati et baptismatis sunt gratia recreati*).⁵ It is clear from Bede's subsequent narrative that both Oswald and his younger brother Oswy went into exile among Gaelic-speakers, but we may infer that it was rather among the Picts that Eanfrith Aedilfrithing abided in exile.

The Pictish king Talorcan f. Anfrith, who died in 657 and is credited with victory in battle at *Ráith Ethairt* in 654, was almost certainly the Apostate's son by a Pictish woman of royal descent.⁶ Eanfrith's exile seems to have taken place near the end of the twenty-year reign of a Pictish king called *Nectu nepos Uerb* (599-619) in the 'A' version of the 'Pictish' regnal list, who might reasonably be identified as Neithon map Guipno map Dumngual Hen, a roughly contemporary figure who appears in the 'Strathclyde' pedigree of Harleian MS 3859 four generations after Patrick's Coroticus (*Ceritic Guletic*) of Clyde Rock and nine after *Fer map Confer*, a name which may be thought at least reminiscent of *Uerb*.⁷ The son of Neithon map Guipno in this pedigree is Beli, and the likelihood that this man was the father of Bridei f. Bili, the Verturian king of the late seventh century, is underlined by the belief of the tenth-century author of *Betha Adamnáin* that Bridei's father was 'king of Clyde Rock' (*rígh Ala Cluaiti*).⁸ Although these references connect Bridei f. Bili with

Meicen. Catguollaun was, according to Bede, allied with Penda of Mercia at *Hæthfelth/Meicen*, but the latter is not said to have been involved in Eanfrith's death the next year.

⁴ Bede, *HE* iii.1.

⁵ Bede, *HE* iii.1.

⁶ AU 657.3 is Talorcan's obit; on *Ráith Ethairt* see below. This king appears as *Talorce filius Enfret .iiij. an reg* in the Pictish regnal list, Anderson, *KKES*, 248. For a reconstruction of the circumstances surrounding his birth, see Miller, 'Eanfrith's Pictish Son', *passim*.

⁷ Anderson, *ESSH*, p. clviii, with correction noted in Anderson, *KKES*, 245 (n70). See also Miller, 'Eanfrith's Pictish Son', 52.

⁸ Anonymous, *Betha Adamnáin*, §14, in M. Herbert and P. Ó Riain (eds.), *Betha Adamnáin: The Irish Life of Adamnán* (London, Irish Texts Society, 1988).

Clydesdale, into which Christianity had penetrated by the end of the fifth century, Beli's son in this 'Strathclyde' pedigree, Eugein, is the *wyr Nwython* ('grandson of Neithon') who defeated and killed Domnall Brecc of Dál Riata in a battle somewhere in Strathcarron in 642.⁹ This allows us to connect Bridei f. Bili to a royal dynasty that in the first half of the seventh century dominated much, if not all, of the old Dumnonian tribal territory which seems to have become the heartland of the Maeatae. This suggests in turn, in the light of the foregoing discussion, that the claim of the poem *Iniu feras Bruide cath* that at Dunnichen Bridei was fighting 'over the land of his grandfather' (*im forba a senathar*) ought to refer to Miathic territory south of an uncertain frontier between the Ochil Hills and the Tay, and which we shall suggest in this chapter was probably the Gask Ridge separating Strathearn from the Tay valley.¹⁰

These relationships clearly provide further grist to the mill regarding the suggestion that Fortriu remained divided into two distinct political communities as late as the seventh century. To the north of the Gask frontier lay a Calidonian zone dominated by 'the great king of the Tay'; to the south, a Miathic zone dominated by the kings of Clyde Rock and strongholds in the Forth valley and, it will be suggested here, in Strathearn. In 582 Áedán mac Gabráin led the Dál Riata to a Pyrrhic victory over the Miathi in a battle in Manau at the head of the Firth of Forth (*bellum Manonn*);¹¹ Macquarrie has drawn attention to evidence that Áedán made war upon the men of Clyde Rock during his military career, and given all we have seen it would seem unwise to assume that this evidence cannot originate from his war with the Miathi.¹² Surviving genealogical information has even suggested the possibility of drawing up a hypothetical agnatic Miathic kindred which might be called the *nepotes Uerb*, though in doing so one must acknowledge the uncertain identification of Neithon map Guipno, descendant of Fer map Confer, with Nectu

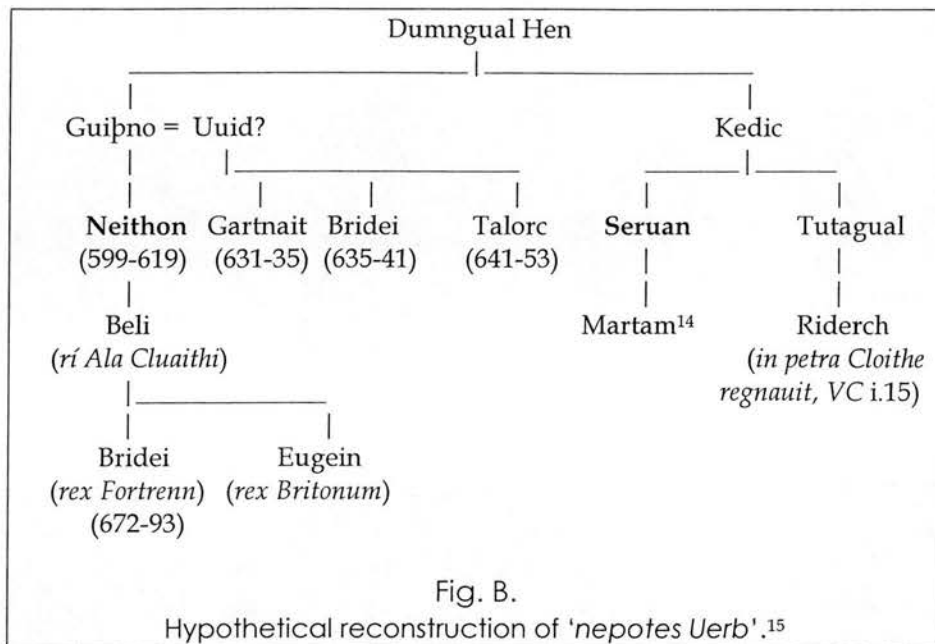
⁹ Eugein is called *wyr Nwython* in a stanza placed before the 'B' version of *Y Gododdin* that celebrates his victory over Domnall Brecc, attributed to *Hoan rege Britonum* in an addendum to AU 642.1.

¹⁰ FA §165.

¹¹ I have followed Anderson & Anderson, *VC*, p. xix-xx and Macquarrie, *Saints*, 104-08 in identifying the *bellum Manonn in quo uictor erat Aedhan mc. Gabrain* of AU 582.1 (cf. AU 583.3; AT 113-14; AI 583; ACIn 580; FA §3) with the *bellum Miathorum* described by Adomnán, *VC* i.8-9, won at the cost of the lives of over three hundred warriors, including two of Áedán's sons. As Macquarrie discusses, this is by no means an uncontroversial identification.

¹² Macquarrie, *Saints*, 108-09.

nepos Uerb, and the even more uncertain identification of Guipno map Dumngual Hen with Uuid, the father of the seventh-century Pictish kings Gartnait, Bridei and Talorc.¹³



It has been inferred from the diminutive nature of the name of Talorcán son of Eanfrith that his Pictish mother was a kinsman of Talorc f. Uuid,¹⁶ but even if one accepts this argument the identification of Uuid with Guipno is too uncertain for any suggestion that Talorcán and Bridei were kinsmen to carry much weight.

We may suspect that it was as a result of his Pictish wedding, and perhaps indeed a condition of it, that Eanfrith Aedilfrithing adopted the Christian religion which he later (allegedly) renounced. That he encountered and adopted Christianity among his Pictish hosts need not detain us, for the previous chapter has discussed the likelihood that the religion was well-entrenched – and not newly introduced – in the southern Pictish zone by the early seventh century. Yet there can be little doubt that Bede meant what he says when he reports that Eanfrith, despite having

¹³ Miller, 'Eanfrith's Pictish Son', 54-55. For employments of Miller's argument, see Woolf, 'Matriliney', 161 and Smyth, *Warlords*, 65.

¹⁴ Interestingly, according to Professor Jackson, *LHEB*, 488, the name Mordaf < *Marotamos ('Great Tay'), although we cannot assume that this must connect Mordaf/Martam or his family with the Scottish Tay.

¹⁵ This reconstruction follows that of Woolf, 'Matriliney', 161, with the integration of the pedigree ...Eugein map Beli map Neithon map Guiþno map Dumngual hen... extracted from the pedigree of Run map Arthgal, cf. Anderson, *ESSH*, p. clvii-vii; Skene, *Chron. Picts & Scots*, 15.

¹⁶ Miller, 'Eanfrith's Pictish Son', 51.

lived out his exile in Pictland, became familiar with the *doctrina Scottorum*. This leaves little room for doubt that, whatever the roots of southern Pictish Christianity, Gaelic and Gaelic-trained churchmen, and perhaps churchwomen, were at work among the seventh-century Picts. Their activities have been interpreted as 'the release of a flood of Irish influence throughout the country' – an inundation facilitated (within the Columban thesis) by the fact that 'the religious life of the Picts was in control of the head of the church in Dalriada'.¹⁷ This vision of Iona as having dominated Pictish ecclesiastical culture derives ultimately from the testimony of Bede, who wrote, following his Pictish source, that, once Colum Cille had established his monasteries at Iona and at Durrow, 'from both monasteries very many monasteries were propagated thereafter through his disciples both in Britain and in Ireland, over all of which [Iona] used to hold the principate (*ex quo utroque monasterio plurima exinde monasteria per discipulos eius et in Brittania et in Hibernia propagata sunt, in quibus omnibus idem monasterium insulanum...principatum teneret*).¹⁸ However, it follows from this important testimony only that Iona, in the indeterminate past, had maintained control over whatever Columban monasteries were established among the Picts – houses to which Adomnán referred when he spoke of Pictish monasteries 'where today he [Colum Cille] is still honoured'. Unless we imagine that in the sixth and seventh centuries the Picts were a single political community, and also that there were no other Pictish monasteries save those founded from Iona – which in the light of the Isle of May evidence seems highly unlikely – we must expect that the seventh-century Columban *familia* encompassed only a proportion of the monastic houses of Pictland, and that there were other houses and churches with different affiliations which did not recognise the *principatus* of Iona. In this chapter we shall explore the evidence which would seem to confirm this suspicion, while attempting to understand something of the nature of Pictish ecclesiastical culture during the century following the foundation of Iona.

St Seruan (Serf) and the Miathi

¹⁷ Henderson, *Picts*, 46.

¹⁸ Bede, *HE* iii.4.

Given the fact that he was deemed by the compilers of the 'Pictish' regnal list to have been the successor of Bridei f. Mailcon, it is reasonable to suspect that it was an army led by Gartnait f. Domnech (584-99) that brought about the death of the *Amra's* 'great king of the Tay' in a battle 'between the Picts themselves' (*inter Pictones inuicem*) at *Asreth* in *terra Circin* in 584, two years after Áedán mac Gabráin's campaign into Manau and battle with the Miathi, which may also have witnessed a battle in *Circin*.¹⁹ There is a distinct possibility, then, that Gartnait was a Miathic king and a relative of his contemporary, Riderch of Clyde Rock, and that Bridei f. Mailcon was killed in an opportunistic attempt to extend his power over him after his troubles with the Dál Riata, although Gartnait may also have been a Calidonian rival to Bridei's power. At any rate, there is no record that Colum Cille ever met with this king over the thirteen years between Bridei's death and the saint's own passing in June 597, hinting that Gartnait's political and ecclesiastical orientations were significantly different to those of his predecessor. One wonders, given the possibility that Gartnait was Miathic, whether ongoing aggressions of Áedán mac Gabráin in the southern Pictish zone during the early part of Gartnait's reign spoiled relations between Iona and the Miathic royal dynasty for some time after the energies of Áedán had run their course in the first decade of the seventh century. In addition, it would not be surprising if a king who was in all likelihood a rival or enemy of Bridei f. Mailcon did not follow his lead in welcoming relations with and supporting the propagation of the Columban *familia*. Reluctance to patronise the Columban *familia* need not, of course, be interpreted as a general reluctance to support the establishment of monasteries with connections with the Gaelic zone, but we need hardly expect there to have been more of such houses than monasteries and churches with more local and regional affiliations.²⁰

¹⁹ AU 584.3 (also 505.1); AI 584. AT 752 records the death of *Bruidhi mac Maelchon* in *cath Asreith in terra Circin inter Pictones inuicem*; see Anderson, *KKES*, 36-37, where it is argued that this is the record of the death of the sixth-century king misplaced by two 84-year cycles (752-168=584). On the possibility that the phrase *7 Eochaid Find 7 Artúr i cath Circhend in quo victus est Áedán* in AT 595 belongs to some other engagement, see Anderson & Anderson, *VC*, p. xx. Adomnán, *VC* i.9, says that these two sons of Áedán were killed fighting the Miathi, and it is therefore possible that *Circin* was in Maeataic territory; see Broun, 'Seven Kingdoms', 40-41.

²⁰ I would disagree with Macquarrie, 'Foundation legend of Laurencekirk', 102, that 'dedications in Pictland to saints associated with the *Scoti* are perhaps unlikely to be earlier' than 'the penetration of Gaelic clergy into the East' after the *expulsio* of 717.

Although we may be quite sure that they existed, evidence of substantial seventh-century Pictish Christians is neither immediately obvious nor free from doubt. We may begin our search with Seruan (*Seruanus*), the saint better-known today as Serf, and his very confused tradition. According to the surviving *Vita Sancti Seruani*, a text that appears to have been composed in the twelfth century,²¹ he was the son of a Canaanite king and his Arabian queen, was baptised by the bishop of Alexandria, remained in the city to be trained and ordained a priest, and then returned to his native Canaan, where for twenty years he held a bishopric. Commanded by God, Seruan is said to have left his homeland, slowly making his way towards northern Britain, and pausing along the way to become patriarch of Jerusalem and pope in Rome.²² Finally, the *Vita* relates,

*Et postea uenit de loco ad locum usque ad amnem que Forthe nuncupatur. Sanctus uero Edheunanus fuit abbas in Scotia tunc temporis, et ipse iuit obuiam Seruano usque ad insulam Ked, et suscepit eum cum magna ueneratione quoniam audiuit multa bona de illo...Sanctus Seruanus ait, 'Quomodo disponam familie et sociis meis?' Sanctus Edauddanus respondit, 'Habitent terram Fif, et a monte Britannorum usque ad montem qui dicitur Okhel.'*²³

Then he came from place to place as far as the river which is called Forth. St Adomnán was abbot in Scotland at that time, and he came to meet Seruan on Inchkeith, and received him with great reverence because he had heard many good things about him...St Seruan said, 'How shall I distribute my familia and companions?' St Adomnán replied, 'They will hold the land of Fife, and from the hill of the Britons to the hills which are called Okhel.

Later in the *Vita*, Adomnán is said also to have granted to Seruan the island in Loch Leven, now St Serf's Isle, upon which the saint is said to have founded the monastery that, like the island itself, bore his name thereafter.²⁴ The notion of Seruan's contemporaneity with the abbacy of Adomnán (679-704) is reinforced in the *Vita* through its mention that the 'king of Scotland' (*rex Scocie*) at the time of the saint's settlement there was *Brude filius Dargart*, 'who at that time held the kingship of the Picts' (*qui Pictorum tunc temporis regnum tenuit*).²⁵ This man was, as we shall see, *rex Pictorum* from about 697 to 706, and Wyntoun, who wrote his *Orygynale*

²¹ Macquarrie, *Saints*, 152-54. On the manuscript tradition associated with this text, see *ibid.*, 145-46 and D. Broun, 'A third manuscript of the Life of St Serf', in *Innes Review* 50 (1999), 80-82.

²² The saint's background is described in Anon., *VS*, 136-39.

²³ Anon., *VS*, 140.

²⁴ Anon., *VS*, 140.

²⁵ Anon., *VS*, 140.

Cronykil of Scotland as prior on St Serf's Isle, says that it was he, 'Brwde Dargardys sowne', rather than Adomnán, who donated the isle of Loch Leven to Seruan.²⁶

Similar confusion within the Seruanian tradition is evident in the *Vita*'s treatment of the subject of the saint's principal ecclesiastical foundation. Having already mentioned the meeting with Adomnán on Inchkeith, the *Vita* rather curiously goes on to suggest that their first meeting was *ad insulam Leuene* ('on the isle of [Loch] Leven'),²⁷ adding that after founding the monastery there:

*Seruanus igitur per septem annos...in ea mansit, et multorum animas lucrificet. Exinde exiens totam regionem Fif, construens diuersa diuina edificia summo Creatori circuit et perambulauit.*²⁸

So for seven years Seruan...stayed there, and won over many souls. Then going forth from there he travelled and went all around the land of Fife, building many churches for the highest Creator.

This claim suggests that these details were taken from an account which gave pride of place among the foundations of Seruan to the monastery of St Serf's Isle, even though, prior to this episode, the *Vita* notes that Culross was the saint's first foundation, having been miraculously demarcated and protected from the predations of the Pictish king. 'Brude' is said to have given him title to the site in perpetuity thereafter, and Culross is three times called the last resting place of the saint, all details which are likely to have been extracted from an account which described Culross as the prime *locus* of the Seruanian *familia*. A similar estimation of Culross is found in the hagiography of Kentigern, where Seruan is described as having been based there.²⁹ Additionally, however, the *Vita* records that Seruan died in his chapel at Dunning in Strathearn (*cella Dunenensi*); the importance of the place of the saint's death to his cult is evident from Wyntoun's source having placed it at Culross rather than Dunning,³⁰ and these contrary traditions may be taken as an important indication that the church of Dunning also preserved a tradition of its importance among the churches associated with Seruan.

²⁶ Anon., *VS*, 140; *Chron. Wyntoun*, v.12, ll. 5199-5226.

²⁷ Macquarrie, *Saints*, 152 notes that *Vita Seruani* and Wyntoun 'imply that [Loch Leven] was a daughter or subordinate church of Culross, like Dysart, Dunning and other places'; it is, however, the context that makes this implication, and as Macquarrie notes elsewhere (*VS*, 149 n1) the language of the *Vita* suggests the existence at the time of composition of 'two separate traditions of a first meeting between Serf and Adomnán, one connected with Lochleven, the other with Inchkeith'.

²⁸ Anon., *VS*, 140.

²⁹ Jocelin, *VK* 4-8.

Similarly ambiguous and problematic within the Seruanian dossier is the time of the saint's *floruit*. The text of the *Vita* clearly describes him as having been a contemporary of Adomnán and 'Brude', but there was a parallel medieval tradition, adopted by Walter Bower, that associated the work of Seruan with the fifth-century figure of Palladius:

*Predicacionis autem et sacramentorum ministracionis consortem sanctissimum virum Servanum habuit, quem ordinatum episcopum quia tante genti ministeria solus impendere pastoralia non suffecerat ad orthodoxam populo fidem docendam ac opus sollicitate perficiendum evangelii dignum per omnia suum effecit coadjutorem.*³¹

He [Palladius] had a most saintly man, Servanus, as a colleague in preaching and in the administration of the sacraments, who was ordained a bishop because he [Palladius] could not give pastoral care by himself to such a large nation. He made him his coadjutor, worthy in all respects, in order that he might instruct the people towards the orthodox faith and to accomplish conscientiously the work of the gospel.

There is little doubt that we must reject the historicity of this Palladian tradition, along with the dating evidence it implies, not least because it seems to have grown from an erroneous reading of Palladius's mission to the *Scotti* as indicating the inhabitants of Scotland rather than the *Scotti* of Ireland.³² This having been said, it is nevertheless significant that a tradition existed in which Seruan was assigned an earlier *floruit* than that outlined in his *Vita*, alongside which may be placed the tradition that understood Seruan to have been the mentor of Kentigern, whose impossibly long lifetime was presumably concocted in order to allow a man who was thought to have died around 612 to have been born in the old age of someone who was believed to have flourished with Palladius in the first half of the fifth century.³³ Outwith the Kentigern dossier, but perhaps because of it, this tradition is further alluded to, although never mentioned otherwise, in the title of *Vita Sancti Seruani* itself, where the saint is called the man 'who nurtured St Kentigern' (*qui nutriuit beatum Kentigernum*).³⁴ The late medieval compilers of the Breviary of Aberdeen, baffled by the existence of these parallel traditions, decided that there were actually two saints called *Servanus*, the one having been the fifth-century

³⁰ Anon., *VS*, 143; *Chron. Wyntoun*, v.12, ll. 5343-52.

³¹ *Chron. Bower* (Watt et al.), iii.9.

³² See Macquarrie, *Saints*, 148.

³³ *ACamb* 612.

³⁴ Anon., *VS* 136.

contemporary of Palladius, and the other having been the Israelite who came to Culross (ie. in the time of Adomnán, although this is not stated), underlining the ambiguity inherent in the accounts of the life of this saint.³⁵

The historicity of all of Seruan's alleged personal associations, whether within the Adomnán-'Brude' tradition or the Palladius-Kentigern one, should be considered suspect. That part of the *Vita* dealing with the saint's career before his arrival in Fife, in which he figures prominently in the Mediterranean and has continental adventures, has long been recognised as fabulous.³⁶ Nevertheless, as a result of the errors underlying the Palladian connection and the suspect historicity of the Kentigern dossier as presented by Jocelin, scholars have tended to prefer the rest of the *Vita* tradition in supposing that Seruan flourished around 700. The most recent treatment of the saint assembles the body of evidence supporting this view, theorising that, in coming to Culross, Seruan may have been 'filling the vacuum' created by the Anglo-Saxon abandonment of their Pictish see at Abercorn on the Firth of Forth in 685.³⁷ The key piece of evidence which seems to support this slight preference for the later *floruit* attested in the *Vita* is a note in the priory register of St Andrews, translated from the Gaelic records of the old Céli Dé monastery of Loch Leven, which records the donation of the island to Seruan by *Bruide f. Dargart*, there called *ultimus rex Pictorum* ('last king of the Picts').³⁸ We may treat this record very seriously, and will do so later in this study, but must also recognise that royal grants of this kind to a particular saint need not be interpreted as evidence that the saint in question was alive at the time of the grant. The idea of making a donation 'to' a saint seems to have been fairly standard language when making grants to the memory or *familia* of a saint, or to the church at the heart of the saint's cult, and

³⁵ Macquarrie, *Saints*, 147-51.

³⁶ Smyth, *Warlords*, 127-8, 134, suggests that this 'emanated from the pro-Roman party in Pictland in the aftermath of the Easter Controversy', a view that goes back at least as far as Skene, *CS II*, 258, who suggested that these continental claims seemed 'to characterise the legends of those missionaries who promoted the great change by which a new order of clergy, under the influence of the Roman Church, superseded the Columban monks in the eastern and northern districts of Scotland; and probably the invention had no greater motive than to separate them, in a very marked manner, from the clergy of the older church, and to give weight and authority to their promotion of the influence of the Roman party'.

³⁷ Macquarrie, *Saints*, 156-57. On the abandonment of Abercorn and its consequences, see below.

³⁸ *Registrum Prioratus Sancti Andree*, in Bannatyne Club (eds.) *Liber Cartarum Prioratus Sancti Andree in Scotia* (Edinburgh, 1841), 113 (fol. 51.a.); for a full transcript of this source (with MS abbreviations

there are many examples of land grants made to saints who had been dead for centuries.

If there is every reason to suspect that Wyntoun's reference to 'Brwde' and his donation of Loch Leven to Seruan was based upon a record kept at that monastery (where Wyntoun wrote his chronicle), the rival tradition that the grant was made by Adomnán hints that both the king and the abbot of Iona were involved in the donation. This does not increase the likelihood that Seruan was actually alive when it was made. In fact, if we trust this evidence it does little more than provide an important *terminus ante quem* as regards the saint's *floruit*. Similarly, the invitation to Seruan to settle his *familia* in a particular area of Scotland, which Adomnán is alleged to have extended in a meeting with the saint at Inchkeith,³⁹ may indeed represent an historical decision relating to the ordering of an eighth-century ecclesiastical principate dominated by the *familia* of Seruan, but this too can have occurred long after the death of the saint. If the medieval tradition that Seruan was a contemporary of 'Brude' and Adomnán was based upon these grants (as seems probable) there is no particular reason to believe that the role played by Seruan in the *Vita Sancti Servani* is anything more than a figurative one – the symbol of a *familia* that honoured him as its patron and of an ecclesiastical principate that was affirmed or re-affirmed with royal participation between 697 and 704. While this, as we shall see, has important things to say about the nature of the ecclesiastical organisation of Fortriu at the beginning of the eighth century, it nevertheless undermines the idea that Seruan and Adomnán were contemporaries.

That he may not have been a contemporary of 'Brude' and Adomnán is not to say, however, that Seruan should be regarded as anything but an historical personage,⁴⁰ albeit one that is never mentioned by Bede or Adomnán, and does not appear in any of the many other texts that survive from this period in the early eighth century – an argument from silence which increases only marginally the likelihood that the saint's *floruit* belongs to an earlier and less well-documented time. Having said this, there is emphatically no reason to believe by default that the

expanded), see W. Reeves, *The Culdees of the British Islands as they appear in history: with an appendix of evidences* (Dublin, 1864, reprinted Lampeter, 1994), 125.

³⁹ It is possible that Inchkeith may have emerged in the tradition as the setting for this meeting because its church was known to be dedicated to Adomnán.

Palladian tradition is any more historical than is usually believed, except, perhaps, in its underlying testimony that Seruan flourished in an earlier period. The name *Seruan* (or *Serguan*) is extremely rare in Welsh literature,⁴¹ and it seems quite significant that it appears in a northern British context in the pedigree of Mordaf Hael, one of the 'three generous men of the island of Britain' (*tri hael enys Prydein*),⁴² whose father was Seruan map Kedic map Dumngual. This pedigree, if it can be relied upon, links Seruan map Kedic with the Miathic royal kindred outlined above (as shown in Fig. B), and suggests that he flourished in the middle third of the sixth century. There are no traditions to equate Seruan map Kedic with St Seruan, and an entry in the Gaelic tractate 'On the Mothers of the Saints' alleges that he was rather the son of Proc king of Canaan (*Serb m. Proic ríg Canandan*) and Alma, the 'daughter of a Pictish king' (*ingen ríg Cruithnech*).⁴³ Whatever one makes of this evidence, it remains notable nevertheless that we find this rare name being given to members of this particular kindred, suggesting the likelihood that, even if St Seruan was not Seruan map Kedic, he was a member of this kindred.

This likelihood is borne out by the distribution of commemorations of St Seruan at Scottish ecclesiastical sites (see Map D). The study of medieval church dedications as evidence of early Christian ecclesiastical activity is fraught with difficulties, primarily because it is only in the eleventh and twelfth centuries that such dedications begin to be attested in charters and other sources, and it is therefore impossible to know in most cases how much older an individual association between a saint and a church might be.⁴⁴ Apart from the testimony of the St Serf's Isle donation, the earliest independent evidence of Seruan's cult is the appearance of 'gilleserfis' as interested parties in a grant of the common of the

⁴⁰ Macquarrie, *Saints*, 154-55.

⁴¹ I am grateful to Graham Isaac (pers. comm.) for this information.

⁴² *Serguan map Letan* is listed (Harleian MS 3859, XVI) in the genealogy of Run map Neithon, tracing itself back through Constantine *magnus* to Augustus. For *Seruan* see Bromwich, *TYP* 5, 238. According to Bromwich (p. 508) the name *Seruan* developed from *Servandus*. See also Macquarrie, *Saints*, 148-49.

⁴³ P. Ó Riain (ed.), *Corpus Genealogiarum Sanctorum Hiberniae* (Dublin, 1985), §722.106. This may be a relatively late attempt to give Seruan a royal pedigree according to the understanding that the Picts were matrilineal.

⁴⁴ The problems were first outlined in the groundbreaking paper of O. Chadwick, 'The Evidence of Dedications in the Early History of the Welsh Church', in N. K. Chadwick, (ed.), *Studies in Early British History* (Cambridge, 1954), 173-88.

wood of Clackmannan in the middle of the twelfth century.⁴⁵ The relative lateness of this evidence may be compared with the problems associated with the Ninianic theses of Scott and Simpson, and must make us wonder whether the 'track chart' of Seruan is any more reliable as evidence of the Pictish period than is that of Nyniau. None of the places associated with Seruan in the twelfth century, save only the monastery of St Serf's on Loch Leven, bears toponymic witness to the fact, and only Tullibody, which is among a handful of places in Fothruff containing the onomastic element *both* indicating a church in the local vernacular,⁴⁶ can be said to have been a church-site in the Pictish period. In early Christian Wales, however, it seems to have been customary to name a church according to its place-name rather than by the name of a saint, and there are many examples from the continent where such place-names were later taken to represent the names of patron saints.⁴⁷ There is good reason, including apparent examples of the latter phenomenon, to suspect that this kind of locative naming of churches was also the common practice among the Picts.⁴⁸ Chadwick has argued that in Wales the cathedrals that since the middle ages have been named for or associated with prominent native saints were originally dedicated either to God alone, or else, like continental examples, to more universal figures, and were only rededicated to the likes of St Dewi and St Teilo in the seventh or eighth centuries, 'the centuries when elsewhere the catholic saint was often yielding before the local hero', a process which may be seen, again from the example of continental practice, as underlining the historicity of the local saint in question and his or her connections with the site.⁴⁹ Both Abercorn, the existence of which is attested by Bede, and Culross are certain to have been significant ecclesiastical sites in the Pictish period,⁵⁰ and the evidence of medieval dedications

⁴⁵ Watson, *CPNS*, 333.

⁴⁶ S. Taylor, 'Place-names and the Early Church in Eastern Scotland', in B. E. Crawford (ed.) *Scotland in Dark Age Britain* (St Andrews, 1996), 95, 101.

⁴⁷ Chadwick, 'Evidence of Dedications', 176, 178-79.

⁴⁸ Examples of locative ecclesiastical place-names from this study would include Abercorn, Abernethy, *Cenrighmonaid* (St Andrews), Tullibody, and Meigle. Examples of such names producing imagined names of saints in later times would include the Aberdeenshire saints Englacius (cf. Watson, *CPNS*, 318-19) and (probably) Machar.

⁴⁹ Chadwick, 'Evidence of Dedications', 185-87.

⁵⁰ Macquarrie, *Saints*, 151-52. The principal evidence at Culross includes early carved stones, a cross shaft, and the re-use of the site by the Cistercians in the thirteenth century.

to Seruan here may be taken as indicating, very generally, the heart of the area with which the saint had real relevance to seventh- and eighth-century locals.

With regard to lesser churches bearing such dedications there is more room for doubt, but there are a few points that militate against the idea that these Seruanian dedications belong entirely to dedicatory activity confined to the twelfth century. First is the appearance of Seruan in the *Vita Kentigerni*, which indicates that the cult of Seruan was something to be reckoned with at a local level in Fife and Lothian by 1164, and probably earlier, since it is likely that the saint figured in the source material used by Jocelin and his 'Herbertian' predecessor. Additionally, there is the donation of St Serf's Isle itself, the authenticity of which we have no particular reason to doubt, as both it and the alleged association between 'Brude' and Adomnán seem, as we shall see, to reflect the realities of the period. Moreover, although reasonably well-known today, thanks largely to the survival of *Vita Sancti Seruani*, there is no particular evidence that the cult of Seruan received the degree of later medieval patronage that seems to have been afforded such saints as Dewi in Wales and Ninian and Kentigern in Scotland, which 'probably tell us more of the development of the property and power' of the sees whose cathedrals were dedicated to these saints 'than anything about the movements or activities' of the saints themselves in life.⁵¹ There was no such cathedral in Scotland in the later middle ages; Dunblane cathedral in the midst of the territory defined by Seruan dedications was dedicated to Bláán of Kingarth, and the extent to which the churches of Seruan were provided with little advocacy of their own is illustrated by the fact that, while Dunblane held jurisdiction over the bulk of the Seruanian churches, Alva and Abercorn were detached parishes of the see of Dunkeld, while Kinneil, Dysart, Auchtermuchty and the monastery of St Serf's Isle were constituents of the see of St Andrews.⁵² The dedications to Seruan are, moreover, fairly localised, and all of this offers encouraging signs that what we see gives us an impression of the general extent of the saint's cult in Pictish times before the rise of

⁵¹ Chadwick, 'Evidence of Dedications', 187.

⁵² For the parishes of the medieval sees of Dunblane, Dunkeld and St Andrews, see *Atlas of Scot. Hist.*, 348-53.

Dunblane.⁵³ It is highly unlikely that every one of these dedications is as old as the Pictish period, but some probably are, while others will reflect ecclesiastical connections established by important Seruanian churches in that period and later, involving, among other things, the propagation of relics.

In other words the surviving evidence may be taken as indicating a sphere of influence allowing for active patronage of the cult of Seruan in the Pictish period extending from Strathearn in southern Perthshire and across Fothriff into the heartland of the Miathi – the plain at the head of the Firth of Forth known as Manau in the early middle ages. Driscoll has noted the likelihood, ‘if we impute a political motive to the patronage and sponsorship of saints’ cults’, that this kind of evidence ‘may represent the eroded footprints of ancient polities’ and that such saints gained favour because ‘they had kin-links with the ruling dynasties’,⁵⁴ both of which likelihoods are borne out in the case of Seruan by the evidence presented so far of distinct Miathic political identity into the seventh century and Seruan’s apparent links to the Miathic royal kindred. In addition, the locations of Seruan’s church at Culross and his fair at Abercorn, sites on opposite sides of the Firth of Forth, underlines the evidence already discussed that southern Fortriu, Manau and the (U)Otdinian zone were constituent territories of a single Miathic political and ecclesiastical community that was christianised by the end of the fifth century, and from which Christianity was brought north into the Calidonian zone by Miathic travellers and migrants. The Abercorn fair may indeed be a vital piece of evidence. Bede tells us that the *monasterium* of *Aebbercurnig* lay only two miles east of *Peanfahel*,⁵⁵ a Gaelo-Brittonic place-name that was later fully gaelicised to Kinneil. Abercorn itself is not mentioned in *Vita Sancti Seruani*, but the text does allege that after his meeting with Adomnán on Inchkeith:

*Postea sanctus Seruanus cum centum tantummodo sociis in comitatu suo uenit ad Kinel, et uirgam quam tenuit transmare proiecit et de ea arbor pomifera creuit, que apud modernos Morglas dicitur. Tunc angelus ad beatum uirum dixit, ‘Ibi erit requies corporis tui ubi arbor illa perpulcra creuit.’ Sanctus inde Seruanus uenit ad locum qui dicitur Culenros uolens habitare ibi.*⁵⁶

⁵³ For a recent discussion of the factors which are generally thought to increase and decrease the likelihood that commemorations of local saints reveal genuine early associations, see Taylor, ‘Seventh-century Iona abbots’, 35-36.

⁵⁴ Driscoll, ‘Christian Monumental Sculpture’, 247.

⁵⁵ Bede, *HE* i.12.

⁵⁶ Anon., *VS*, 140.

Then St Seruan came to Kinneil with no more than a hundred companions in his following; and he threw the staff he was holding across the sea, and a fruit-tree grew from it which is called Morglas by men of the present time. Then the angel said to him, 'That is where your body will rest, where that lovely tree has grown.' St Seruanus then came to the place called Culross, desiring to dwell there.

The symbolism of this miracle story, which would seem to have come from Culross, is intriguing, since it may preserve some kind of memory within the Seruanian tradition that an episcopate or *paruchia* associated with the saint – symbolised by his crosier – had travelled to Culross from the south side of the Forth, perhaps from a site at or near Kinneil.⁵⁷ Bede informs us that in 681, Trumwini was made bishop 'to the *prouincia Pictorum*, which at that time was subject to the *imperium* of the Angles' (*ad prouinciam Pictorum, quae tunc temporis Anglorum erat imperio subiecta*), and subsequently reveals that his episcopal seat was in the monastery of *Aebbercornig*.⁵⁸ According to Bede's own geographical understanding, however, Abercorn was not within Pictish territory, and it is curious that such a location was chosen in 681 to serve in this capacity unless, as suggested here, Abercorn had formerly been part of an ecclesiastical community extending as far north as Strathearn.

The church at Abercorn bore the only known medieval dedication in Scotland to the Deiran saint Wilfrith, whose episcopate (664-709) shall concern us later in this study.⁵⁹ If the church of this monastery, the physical form of which suggests it was established before the middle of the seventh century, had ever shared the Seruanian association implied by the local fair and, perhaps, by the Culross foundation legend, it is likely to have done so before the onset of Bernician political control over Lothian. This development is usually dated to the middle decades of the seventh century, and any new church established thereafter is not

⁵⁷ The story has obvious parallels with the foundation myth of Sletty; L. Bieler (ed.), *The Patrician Texts in the Book of Armagh* (Dublin, 1979), Additamenta §14, in which Fiacc Find founds the church, leaving a monastery founded by him and in which he has lived out his career, because an angel has informed him that 'it is west of the river in Cúl Maige that your resurrection is' (*is fri abinn aníar atá t'esérge hi Cúil Maige*). I am grateful to Professor Charles-Edwards for this reference.

⁵⁸ Bede, *HE* iv.12, iv.26.

⁵⁹ MacKinlay, *Non-Script. Deds.*, 264; MacKinlay does not cite his source that 'the site of the early monastic church at Abercornig was occupied at a later date by a Norman structure dedicated to St. Wilfrid, a small portion of which is still retained in the present parish church of Abercorn'. I am indebted to Alex Woolf for setting me on the trail of this reference.

likely to have been dedicated to a British or Pictish saint.⁶⁰ The main reason for a change in a church dedication – signifying a change in saintly patronage – was just such a change in worldly patronage.⁶¹ We know that in the case of Whithorn, the Bernicians resurrected an old British episcopal seat and envisioned the new Bernician episcopate as somehow continuous with the old British one (at the very least this is what they claimed to have done), and it has been proposed that it was this change in earthly patronage at Whithorn that occasioned the dedication of the church to St Martin.⁶² Professor Charles-Edwards has shown how the church of an Irish polity like the Dál Sailni, once forced into subjection, might be appropriated by an aggressive neighbour like the Uí Chóelbad so that its network of political and ecclesiastical relationships might serve as ‘an instrument of the drive by the Uí Chóelbad to subject the kingdoms to the north’,⁶³ and there are indications that this kind of thing was quite common as Anglo-Saxon dominion moved further and further west in Britain.⁶⁴ It is therefore also possible that the establishment of the Bernician episcopate at Abercorn, with jurisdiction over the *prouincia Pictorum*, was not a random act, but the deliberate occupation of an existing site that, as Professor Thomas has suggested, already had pretensions towards jurisdiction over churches north of the Forth, and this may explain the survival of the Brittonic place-name.⁶⁵ We might therefore envision a scenario in which, during their push through the (U)Otdinian zone to Manau in the middle third of the seventh century, the newly christianised Bernicians encountered and occupied a Miathic church dedicated to Seruan at Abercorn that had until then overseen a see or *paruchia* extending from the Earn to the Forth, whereupon the Abercorn community crossed the Forth to Culross and there established itself anew.⁶⁶ In that event, the territorial ruling credited to Adomnán in *Vita Sancti Seruani* can have been made necessary by such a

⁶⁰ For the dates of Abercorn see Thomas, ‘Evidence from North Britain’, 116.

⁶¹ Chadwick, ‘Evidence of Dedications’, 185.

⁶² See Fraser, ‘Northumbrian Whithorn’; Chadwick, ‘Evidence of Dedications’, 182.

⁶³ Charles-Edwards, *Ireland*, 60-63.

⁶⁴ See for example S. Bassett, ‘How the west was won: the Anglo-Saxon takeover of the west midlands’, in *Anglo-Saxon Studies in Archaeology and History* 11 (2000), 107-18, at 113 (and map at 108).

⁶⁵ Thomas, ‘Evidence from North Britain’, 114-16; *idem*, *CRB*, 291-92; Smyth, *Warlords*, 32. For a slightly different perspective of the relationship between Abercorn and Culross, see Smith, ‘Origins and development of Christianity’, 27.

period of instability within this putative *paruchia*, since it would not be surprising if, during this time, other Miathic churches sought to secure recognition as the new principal church. At some point after 709, the church at Abercorn would appear to have been rededicated to Wilfrith, but the local people seem to have continued to hold their fair in honour of Seruan.

Such a scenario, though it cannot be more than a plausible hypothesis, would seem to explain the fair at Abercorn, the interesting Culross foundation legend, and the strange decision to place Trumwini's Pictish episcopal seat south of the Forth. It requires, in addition, that the *floruit* of Seruan be significantly earlier than is suggested by his *Vita* since, in addition to the Abercorn evidence, the movement of the Bernicians into Manau in the middle of the seventh century, and the subsequent establishment of the Forth as the political frontier between the Northumbrian and Verturian kingdoms, suggests that any proliferation of the cult of Seruan in the Pictish period that shows no respect for this frontier must have taken place before it became significant. Our attention may indeed be drawn once more to Seruan map Kedic and his apparent sixth-century *floruit*, which would allow him to have been alive at a time when he could conceivably have tutored the historical Kentigern as tradition maintains (although this point should not be pressed). It would be unwise to place too much reliance upon such genealogical connections as indicating actual familial relations, but there remains much to suggest intimate connections between the royal kindred of the Miathi and the man whose cult came to dominate the Church in their political heartland before the Bernician incursions into that region that saw them take possession of Stirling by the 650s.

Abernethy, Itarnan and the *Regiones* of Fortriu

Definitive evidence and certainty elude us, of course, but it seems at least clear that nothing we have encountered so far requires us to assume that the abbots of Iona exercised any kind of principate over the churches or monasteries of the Miathi until such time as they began to fall under the jurisdiction of Lindisfarne as a result of Bernician expansion in the middle third of the seventh century. Instead, we

⁶⁶ Taylor, 'Early Church in Eastern Scotland', 95-96, has noted that Tullibole KNR and Bath near Culross, two instances of the *both* Pictish onomastic element signifying a church, were later associated

have seen a great deal of support for the idea that Strathearn, Fothriff, and the plain of Manau were regions of the eighth-century kingdom of Fortriu that had, as late as this same period of Bernician expansion, remained as politically and ecclesiastically distinct from the more northerly regions of the kingdom as the Maeatae had remained from the Calidonians in the more distant past. In that event it can hardly be surprising if Colum Cille's adventures in the dominions of Bridei f. Mailcon were of little or no interest to their contemporaries south of the Gask Ridge, nor that the southern Pictish zone would produce a claim in Bede's Pictish source to have been christianised before Colum Cille's time. On the other hand, it is possible that the activities of Colum Cille, confined as they seem to have been to a separate political sphere, did nevertheless have an impact upon the Miathic community of belief – a possibility that emerges from a consideration of evidence from lower Strathearn at Abernethy.

Version A of the 'Pictish' regnal list assigns the foundation of the church of Abernethy, one of the most important Verturian monasteries, to a king called *Nectonius* and reports, evidently from a foundation tradition, that

*Tercio anno regni eius Darlugdach abbatissa Cille Dara de Hibernia exulat pro Christo ad Britanniam; secundo anno aduentus sui immolouit Nectonius Aburnethige deo et sancte Brigide presente Dairlugdach que cantauit alleluia super istam hostiam.*⁶⁷

In the third year of his reign, Darlugdach abbess of *Cell Dara* came in exile for Christ from Ireland to Britain; in the second year after her arrival, Necton offered up *Aburnethige* to God and to St Brigit in the presence of Darlugdach, who sang *Alleluia* over this offering.

The foundation of Abernethy is particularly difficult to assess, for the various versions of the regnal list place it in the reigns of no less than three different kings. We are helped in this regard by the subsequent passage of this same foundation legend. This does not appear to be continuous with the foregoing one and is fairly clearly a later accretion, containing as it does Gaelic forms of place-names, an anachronistic-sounding reference to the king as 'Necton the great, king of all the provinces of the Picts' (*Nectonius magnus, rex omnium prouinciarum Pictorum*), and a

with Culross, but neither is explicitly known to have been a Seruanian church.

⁶⁷ Anderson, *KKES*, 247.

list of places claimed by the monastery.⁶⁸ There can be little doubt that this accretion has its origins in Abernethy itself, providing us with good evidence that, whatever may be recorded in various recensions of the regnal list, at the monastery in question it was remembered that a king called *Nectonius* had been its founder, effectively narrowing our options to *Necton Morbet f. Erip*, identified as the founder in List A, and *Neithon nepos Uerb*, who as *Nethan f. Ub* is identified as the founder in List F.⁶⁹ One of the traditions associated with the foundation of the church at Abernethy, included in version K of the 'Pictish' regnal list, dates it to '225 years and eleven months before the church of Dunkeld was built' (.cc. aunz et .xxv. aunz, et .xi. moys, deuaunt qu leglis de Dulkeldin).⁷⁰ If this could be relied upon, it would place the establishment of Abernethy in the late 580s, and the *floruit* of *Necton Morbet*, if he was an historical figure, would seem to have been something like a century earlier than this date.⁷¹ This early *floruit* is very difficult to reconcile with the abbacy of Darlugdach at Kildare, and it would be surprising, moreover, if the cult of Brigit were being propagated in northern Britain at such an early date. On the other hand, by the time of *Neithon nepos Uerb* Ireland was emerging as 'the resort of students anxious for advancement in the Christian Latin learning common to Western Europe',⁷² while a foundation in the late 580s would be contemporary with *Neithon*, albeit in the years before the kingship (or over-kingship) indicated by the regnal list.

This is hardly decisive evidence, but the balance of probabilities must swing in favour of a later foundation by *Neithon nepos Uerb*, and the likelihood that this was the founder of the monastery may be very important in understanding the eminence of Abernethy in the period of the Verturian hegemony established by *Bridei f. Bili* his grandson, a matter to which we shall return later in this study. Such a foundation would also require that Abernethy lay in Miathic territory dominated

⁶⁸ For a discussion of this *Nectonius magnus* passage, which in the manuscript of A begins with a coloured initial of its own and is 'perhaps no more than a fanciful elaboration on the theme of the earlier note, together with an inference from the list itself as to Nechtan's relationship to Drust son of Erp', see Anderson, *KKES*, 93-96.

⁶⁹ Anderson, *KKES*, 246-47, 272.

⁷⁰ Anderson, *KKES*, 287. Walter Bower, *Chron. Bower* (Watt et al.) iv.12 had access to two additional sources which dated the foundation of Dunkeld from that of Abernethy (226 years, nine months and six days; 244 years).

⁷¹ J. Bannerman, 'The Scottish Takeover of Pictland and the Relics of Columba', in Broun & Clancy (eds.) *Spes Scotorum*, 90 dates the foundation of Dunkeld to 814 which, if accepted, would place the foundation of Abernethy in 588

by Neithon *nepos Uerb* and his family, rather than within the dominions of Bridei f. Mailcon, 'great king of the Tay', which presents no problems if we allow the Seruanian evidence to suggest the Gask Ridge as acting as the frontier between these two *gentes*. Even if one prefers the tradition of an earlier foundation by Necton Morbet, the monastery of Abernethy, with its dedication to St Brigit, had clearly been founded by the time of the exile of Eanfrith Aedilfrithing near the end of the reign of Neithon *nepos Uerb*, but the likelihood that it was the latter king who established the monastery might be taken as suggestive of a new Miathic interest in Gaelic monasticism aroused in large part, perhaps, by Columban activities further north, much as Columbanus's career among the Merovingians seems to have heightened interest in Ireland on the Continent.⁷³ That Abernethy is likely to have been founded by the king who received them in exile may even be thought suggestive of where in the Miathic zone the Bernician exiles encountered the *doctrina Scottorum*.

It is can indeed be placed at the end of the sixth century, it is quite unlikely that the foundation of Abernethy had anything to do with evangelising in Strathearn or in Fife, where long-cist cemeteries at Hallow Hill and the Isle of May bear witness to comparatively early Miathic Christians, and even to an early Miathic monastery. There is no evidence, however, that the cult of Seruan was of particular interest to the political communities of sixth- and seventh-century Fife, which we may take as suggestive that the region was a distinct political community within the Miathic zone from the time that the cult became popular further west, and perhaps from the time of christianisation onwards. Here the most prominent saintly name from the Pictish period is that of Itarnan, an attested historical individual who died *apud Pictores* ('among the Picts') in 669, the year of Cumméne's death on Iona.⁷⁴ His name, although it often appears to have assumed various 'mangled or hypocoristic' forms as it passed through linguistic epochs from Pictish to Gaelic to Scots, is just visible in such place-names as *Kilrethni* (Kilrenny), *Aithernie* and *Madernin* (Madderty), and in dedications to such named individuals

⁷² Charles-Edwards, *Ireland*, 9.

⁷³ Charles-Edwards, *Ireland*, 8-9.

⁷⁴ AU 669.2.

as *Ethernen*, *Ithernan*, *Ydarnasius* and *Tuetheren*,⁷⁵ as well as Adrian, whose cult was based at the Isle of May. The Kilrenny, Aithernie and Isle of May commemorations, along with the ogham inscription EDDARRNONN on the Scoonie cross-slab, hint that the focus of his cult was in Fife, but it is interesting that we find a handful of dedications further north in Gowrie and southern Perthshire, where we find additional commemorations of a saint called 'Marnock' at Fowlis-Easter and a saint called 'Mernok' and 'Marnocus' at Boith (Map E). These latter two names have been interpreted as referring to the common Irish saintly name 'Ernán' (in the form 'M'Ernóc'), but the place-name *Madernin* suggests the possibility that it is 'Ernin', a hypocoristic form of Itarnan's name, rather than 'Ernán', that underlies the Fowlis-Easter and Boith dedications.

The cult of Itarnan cannot have been propagated in Pictland before the last third of the seventh century at the very earliest, and if we have already seen evidence to suggest that by this time ethnogenesis was underway such that the old Calidonian-Miathic frontier came under threat, the distribution pattern of these dedications to Itarnan is in line with this suggestion. It seems extremely likely, as we have seen, that Fife in particular had been christianised more than a century before his death, and it is therefore reasonable to propose, as we have done in our examination of the cult of Seruan above, that, although he may have become the principal native saint of this region as time went on, Itarnan was neither its apostle or the founder of its earliest Christian communities.⁷⁶ It has been supposed from the fact that his death was recorded in the Iona Chronicle that Itarnan was either a Gaelic Columban cleric or an Iona-trained British or Pictish one, and also that he 'may have played a significant role in the conversion of the southern Picts'.⁷⁷ Even if we imagine that our dedications to Itarnan are primary ones that reflect the actual activities of the saint, there is little reason to prefer the idea that he was an evangelist to the likelihood that he operated instead within an existing community of belief established by the work of prior missionaries and evangelists of whom we know little or nothing. In other words, the achievement of Itarnan, even moreso

⁷⁵ See Taylor, 'Early Church in Eastern Scotland', 99; Watson, *CPNS*, 321.

⁷⁶ Yeoman, 'Pilgrims to St Ethernan', 87, cautiously concludes that 'we cannot rule out the possibility of there having been Christian religious settlement and burial activity on the May before the mid-seventh century', which is to say before the *floruit* of Itarnan.

than Seruan, would seem to have had little at all to do with conversion, although it seems likely that he was an important figure in southern Pictish ecclesiastical affairs in the seventh century whose cult, unlike that of Seruan, was destined to become established at churches north of the Tay. This contrast between these two cults based in the Miathic zone of Fortriu, with that of Seruan remaining more-or-less contained in its traditional region while that of Itarnan appears to have gained a wider appeal across Fortriu is probably significant with regard to understanding Fife's place in Verturian politics in the eighth century.

Taken as a whole, the distribution south of the Tay of ecclesiastical sites associated with Seruan and Itarnan may therefore be taken as suggestive of the existence of distinct political communities that developed into regions (to employ Bede's terminology) of the eighth-century kingdom of Fortriu, though for part at least of the seventh century they and the *regiones* to the north of the Tay were home to two different *gentes* with distinct ecclesiastical histories and traditions. The Fife *regio* may be thought to have corresponded with the *Niuduera regio* mentioned by the anonymous *Vita Cuthberti*, the *regio* of the 'Niud-folk' whose name is preserved in the early forms of the place-name Newburn near Largo in southern Fife.⁷⁸ It is possible, but uncertain, whether either or both of these *regiones* represents an episcopate as well as a political community, though the primacy of the church of Abercorn over Strathearn, Fothriff and Manau has been suggested, and St Andrews and Hallow Hill would be the most likely location of a parallel primate for Fife.

Colum Cille and the Picts

There is much of which one must remain mindful, then, when turning one's attention to Colum Cille, his achievement among the Picts, and the activities of his successors in Pictland in the century following Iona's foundation. It has become a matter of general consensus that the compilation of the Iona Chronicle involved the incorporation of 'some form of written *aide-mémoire*' begun during Colum Cille's own abbacy (563-97),⁷⁹ but there is little annal evidence to suggest that the

⁷⁷ Yeoman, 'Pilgrims to St Ethernan', 75.

⁷⁸ Anon., *VSC*, ii.4; for Newburn (NO 442 051) see Duncan, *Kingdom*, 78. But see P. Hunter Blair, 'The Bernicians and their Northern Frontier', in Chadwick, *Studies in Early British History*, 137-72, at 168-69, who wondered whether *Niud-* derived from a Gaelic reference to Iudeu (eg. *mur nGiudan*; Ó Riain, *CGSH*, §722.106).

⁷⁹ Herbert, *IKD*, 22-23; see also Sharpe, *Adomnán*, 7.

Columban *familia* became established in Pictland during this period, and the silence of the annals about even his journey into the Pictish east, while it can be rationalized in many ways and is not conclusive of itself, cannot be ignored as allowing for the possibility not only that this journey went unrecorded in the Ionan *aide-mémoire*, but also that the saint left little or no record of himself in Pictland that remained extant to be added to the Iona Chronicle at any later time.⁸⁰ *Amra Choluimb Chille* speaks, as we have seen, of Colum Cille as having 'subdued them with a blessing - the arrogant ones who surrounded the great king of the Tay', and there would seem to be an echo of this in *Vita Columbae's* story in which the saint forces his way through the gates of the fortress of the arrogant Pictish king Bridei f. Mailcon. Adomnán organised his material so as to place this episode at a stronghold on the River Ness, but the possibility has been outlined above that Adomnán removed explicit references to Columban activity in the southern Pictish zone from his sources under the influence of Pictish source material, in which case this first meeting between Colum Cille and Bridei may well have been set by Cumméne on the Tay as the *Amra* suggests it should have been.

These various associations with the Tay on the one hand and with the River Ness, the Great Glen and an Orcadian subject-king on the other suggest, as we have seen, that Bridei f. Mailcon was a potentate whose dominions lay within a Calidonian zone that did not extend south of the Gask Ridge or the lower Tay, and is likely to have been based in Atholl on the upper Tay, where we find Dunkeld (*Dún Chaillden*) and other place-names with Calidonian associations, and which remained, as late as the middle third of the eighth century, the base of the *regnum Athfoitle*. In other words, as Kirby has surmised, Bridei was probably not, strictly speaking, a Verturian lord at all,⁸¹ though Bede's characterisation of him as *rex potentissimus* and his appearance in the regnal list suggest that during his reign Bridei was able to dominate client-kings both across much of what became northern Fortriu and in part at least of the northern Pictish zone, such that Galam Cennaleph,

⁸⁰ Duncan, 'Bede', 9 (n1) has suggested that, where version A of the 'Pictish' regnal list records of Bridei f. Mailcon that 'in the eighth year of his reign he was baptised by St Columba' (*in octauo anno regni eius baptizatus est a sancto Columba*, Anderson, *KKES*, 248), it must represent a Pictish annal record or Easter table that cannot have relied upon Bede. This is, however, difficult to establish in the light of recent work on the chronology of the development of the regnal list; see Nicholas Evans (Glasgow MPhil and ongoing work, pers. comm.).

who is said in the regnal list to have ruled *cum Briduo* and whose death in 580 is the earliest Pictish obit recorded in the annals,⁸² may be thought to have been Bridei's contemporary based somewhere within this Calidonian zone. We have seen that the Christian religion seems to have become established in the southern part of this zone as a result of the christianisation of existing Miathic communities within it, and this, along with the parallel evidence suggesting the presence of Calidonian communities in the Miathic zone, may be taken as important for understanding both why Bede's Pictish source claimed that the Verturian Picts had been Christians before the establishment of Iona, and why the sum of the information available to Adomnán at the end of the seventh century, including Cumméne's *De Uirtutibus*, suggested to him that the claim in this same source that Bridei f. Mailcon was converted to Christianity by Colum Cille should not be taken up.

Taken as a whole then, the evidence we have seen so far suggests that the process of christianisation had reached Atholl by the middle third of the sixth century, that this fact was part of the historical consciousness of the southern Pictish zone in the seventh century, and that Adomnán had no grounds to dispute it. The *dorsum Britanniae* story of the conversion of Emcath, however, suggests that traditional religious practices were far from being eradicated - and indeed may hardly have begun - among the northern Picts when Colum Cille arrived on the scene in 563. This is to be expected, since christianisation, and particularly the proliferation of the religion among the general population, is likely to have been a gradual process that was not completed for some time after the conversion of the main aristocratic and royal Pictish kindreds. Even on the Continent, by the sixth century it is only possible to say that 'a start had been made' with regard to christianising the country people of Europe, and

the operation was one which would continue to tax the energies of bishops for centuries to come. Country people are notoriously conservative. We may be absolutely certain that more than a few generations of episcopal exhortation or lordly harassment would be needed to alter habits inherited from time out of mind. Ways of doing things, ways that grindingly poor people living at subsistence level had devised for managing their visible and invisible environments, were not going to yield easily, perhaps were not

⁸¹ Kirby, 'Pictorum provincias', 294, although he refers to Bridei as 'king of Fidach'.

⁸² AU 580.3; Anderson, *KKES*, 248.

going to yield at all, to ecclesiastical injunction. But even granite will be dented by water that never ceases to drip.⁸³

It has been observed that, during the first century of Christianity in Ireland, Christian communities 'must have been islands in a pagan sea',⁸⁴ and the metaphor is undoubtedly as applicable to the more northerly parts of the *imperium* of Bridei f. Mailcon when Colum Cille first made his way into the Calidonian zone of Pictland.

Leaving aside the thrust of the testimony of the *prouincia Pictorum* set of stories, this Columban venture into Pictland does, as Macquarrie suggests, have all the appearance of a political embassy. Bridei has tended to occupy our attention, but it is notable that he is said by Adomnán, perhaps following Cumméne here, to have been *cum senatu* ('with a council') at his first meeting with the saint, a gathering that is said to have included an Orcadian *regulus*.⁸⁵ Adomnán, influenced perhaps by the Patrician mythology, seems to have taken this *senatus* as indicating Bridei's household (*familiares*). Jaski, however, has taken the reference as denoting the meeting of a formal assembly 'of nobles, kings and other high dignitaries to talk about politics and/or law, which was organised when the need arose'.⁸⁶ It is perhaps to this same assembly that *Amra Choluimb Chille* refers when it speaks of 'the arrogant ones who surrounded the great king of the Tay', while the fact that they needed to be 'subdued with a blessing' may suggest that Colum Cille sought to attend this *senatus* despite not having been invited. Nevertheless, he seems to have made productive contact with the *rex potentissimus* and to have received his assurances that clergymen given *commendatio* to the over-king by Colum Cille would be afforded safe conduct in the territories under the his influence.⁸⁷

It has been argued that Colum Cille's embassy to the court of 'the great king of the Tay' was inspired by the desire to make amends for the aggressions of Áedán mac Gabráin in Pictish territory in the 580s,⁸⁸ but the testimony of Bede's Pictish source that Colum Cille met with Bridei in the ninth year of his reign, which is to say in the twelve-month period following the eighth anniversary of his kingship in

⁸³ Fletcher, *Conversion*, 64.

⁸⁴ De Paor, *Saint Patrick's World*, 46.

⁸⁵ Adomnán, VC ii.35; ii.42. One wonders if this *regulus* was Galam Cennaleph.

⁸⁶ Adomnán, VC i.1; Jaski, *Early Irish Kingship*, 54.

⁸⁷ Adomnán, VC ii.42.

⁸⁸ Macquarrie, *Saints*, 81.

562, deserves to be taken very seriously.⁸⁹ This would place the embassy more than a decade before the beginning of Áedán's reign in Dál Riata, but only a few years after the very vaguely attested 'flight before Máelchú's son' (*fuga ante filium Maelchon*) of the late 550s.⁹⁰ Skene argued that Colum Cille's embassy to Pictland was inspired by this 'great reverse' in Gaelic fortunes in the west of northern Britain, and by the belief that by converting Bridei to Christianity he might pacify him.⁹¹ The latter part of this reconstruction is no longer convincing, but there is no reason to reject the general view that the embassy took place because of residual hostilities following the *fuga* – whatever event this alludes to and wherever it took place – that motivated Colum Cille to seek out the Pictish king shortly after the establishment of his monastery. In that event, it seems quite likely that, as Bede was informed, the matter of the proprietorship of Iona was raised and resolved at this meeting, even if we need not doubt the annal testimony that Conall mac Comgail believed the island was his to give in 563.⁹² The political savvy of Colum Cille and his understanding of the necessities of protocol can be safely assumed: if the 'flight' from Bridei was a recent memory there is no reason to suspect that the founder of Iona will not have sought as much protection and recognition of his title to the island as he could, including from a 'great king of the Tay' with some real or imagined claim to the island. The existence of such political tensions may, on top of the potential tensions already discussed, help to explain the *dorsum Britanniae* story of the attempt on Colum Cille's life by a 'hostile pursuer' during this same journey. It is surely unnecessary to attribute the presence of such hostility, as Skene did, to the heathenism of the Picts when Bridei f. Mailcon seems to have had a generally

⁸⁹ Bede, *HE* iii.4; for other recent views supporting an early dating for the mission to Bridei, see Henderson, *Picts*, 45; Charles-Edwards, *Ireland*, 306. His ignorance of Bridei's regnal years, however, meant that Bede had to resort to misleading chronological data in order to determine the year of this meeting, which he erroneously calculated as 565.

⁹⁰ This 'flight' (*fuga, immirge*) is recorded twice in AU (558.2, 560.1). Skene, *CS* I, 142 supposed that Bridei drove the Gaels out of much of Argyll, and it has only been comparatively recently that this view has been challenged (cf. for example Henderson, *Picts*, 44). Bannerman, *Dalriada*, 77-78 summarises the case for believing that Gabrán had interests among the British nations of the Old North, and it is not impossible that he and his people came to blows with Bridei in Breadalbane, which may be thought of as the southernmost part of the Caledonian zone. However, the precise details of this event are likely to remain obscure.

⁹¹ Skene, *CS* I, 142.

⁹² Bede, *HE* iii.4; AU 574.2. Like others before him, Macquarrie, *Saints*, 76, argues that Bede's testimony is 'less likely to be accurate than the evidence of Adomnán and the Annals', but, as Bannerman, *Dalriada*, 79, has shown, we need not see the two traditions as mutually exclusive.

antagonistic relationship with the Dál Riata throughout his reign. That Colum Cille was able to secure amiable relations with Bridei in such a political climate, including, it would seem, receiving permission to establish monasteries, to 'teach' (including no doubt advocacy of a particular monastic regime) and to preach to non-Christians north of the Mounth, would appear to testify to the achievement of the saint. It might also reflect, however, the Christian mores of Bridei, who may to some extent have placed his responsibilities as a Christian ruler ahead of any misgivings he may have had with respect to Colum Cille's political affiliations in the Gaelic west. This having been said, however, it is not impossible that by cultivating a relationship with a precocious Iona, Bridei hoped either to destabilise the currents of politics in the northern Pictish zone to his advantage, or even to augment his influence in the Atlantic periphery of his *imperium* (which to his mind may well have included Argyll and the Dál Riata).

There seems little doubt that it was because of the successful meeting between Colum Cille and the *senatus* of Bridei that clerics from Iona were able, in the following years, to begin establishing monastic communities among the Picts. The memory of these foundations is preserved in Bede and in *Vita Columbae*, but precisely where they were established is another and an important matter. Place-name evidence shows fairly conclusively that, as we might now expect, these Columban activities and those which followed over the course of the ensuing century were largely confined to Atholl and the northern Pictish zone (Map C), independent evidence that Bridei's sphere of personal and political influence was indeed Calidonian rather than Miathic.⁹³ We have seen that the Columban thesis demands that we suppose that earlier Christian inroads into Pictland like those discussed in the foregoing chapters 'were not lasting, and such foundations as survived rapidly fused with the Columban Church, forgetting and being forgotten by their mother church'.⁹⁴ The evidence discussed thus far does not support such a

⁹³ S. Taylor, 'Seventh-century Iona abbots in Scottish place-names', in Broun & Clancy, *Spes Scotorum*, 40-43; *idem*, 'Columba east of Drumalban: some aspects of the cult of Columba in eastern Scotland', in *Innes Review* 51 (2000), 109-28. The distribution of hand-bells of Irish type found in Scotland, with a notable cluster in Atholl, is probably also significant in this regard, although the dating of these artefacts is uncertain, see C. Bourke, 'The hand-bells of the early Scottish church', in *PSAS* 113 (1983), 464-68.

⁹⁴ Henderson, *Picts*, 72. Henderson, as was usual at the time, associates pre-Columban Pictish Christianity with Ninian.

view with regard to Fortriu, for if there is nothing to suggest Columban influence in the Miathic zone before the period of the Verturian hegemony, there is a decided lack of Columban dedication evidence in the coastal areas of Perthshire and Angus where long-cist cemeteries are so prevalent, hinting strongly at a continuous community of Christian belief with pre-Columban roots. It is possible, however, to envision something like the model outlined by the Columban thesis taking place in Atholl and in Strathmore, two regions that seem to have been under close royal control, and this may hint, as in the case of the evidence surrounding the cults of Seruan and Itarnan, at distinct Calidonian political communities (and perhaps episcopates) that developed into *regiones* of the kingdom of Fortriu.

There would seem to be traces of another *regio* in the making on the northern margins of what became the kingdom of Fortriu, representing another distinct Calidonian political community centred almost certainly on the stronghold of Dunnottar and including the church at Fordoun in Kincardineshire, dedicated to Palladius, the 'first bishop of the Irish', whose mission and resulting Irish cult appear, like the cult of Brigit established at Abernethy, to have been Leinster-based.⁹⁵ The link between Palladius and Fortriu would seem to have been St Ternan, who is himself commemorated at a number of churches in Kincardineshire and Aberdeenshire (Map B) and was associated with Fordoun in the eleventh-century *Vita* of Laurence of Canterbury, which appears to have employed Scottish source material of some description.⁹⁶ Here, the saint is called *sanctus Terenanus archipontifex Hiberniae* and is said to have come from Ireland to meet with Laurence at Fordoun, but the Aberdeen Breviary makes him a native of Scotland baptised and instructed by Palladius.⁹⁷ St Ternan shared his feast day (12 June) with Tarannan, a saint who is similarly identified with Palladius in glosses contained in some versions of *Félire Óengusso*, which also record that the saint is 'in Alba' (*ind Albain*).⁹⁸ Their common feast day and associations with Palladius and northern Britain are good evidence that, in Ternan, *Terenan* and Tarannan, we are dealing with a single

⁹⁵ Charles-Edwards, *Ireland*, 237-39.

⁹⁶ A. Macquarrie, 'An eleventh-century account of the foundation legend of Laurencekirk, and of Queen Margaret's pilgrimage there', in *Innes Review* 47 (1996), 95-109, at 99-101. For the reference to *Terenanus* see 105-06.

⁹⁷ Brev. Aberd., 'Ternanus', lectio prima.

⁹⁸ *Fél. Óengusso*, 148, where, however, the saint's name is rendered 'Torannán'.

saint, whose name is comparable to such Pictish names as Talorc(an) and Drust(an) and would seem to fit best within a Pictish milieu as Taran(an), the diminutive form of an attested Pictish aristocratic name.

Work on the *Martyrology of Tallaght* and its provenance suggests that Tarannan, by virtue of his appearance in this text as *ab Bendchair* ('abbot of Bennchor'), was being honoured as a saint on Iona in the middle third of the eighth century,⁹⁹ and also, since no attempt was made to distinguish it from the many other communities of that name, that his monastery of *Bendchar*, long ago identified as Banchory-Ternan on the Dee,¹⁰⁰ was the one that was most likely to spring to mind on Iona in a vague reference to *Bendchar* rather than, for example, the famous community of that name on Belfast Lough. This is important evidence that Tarannan and his monastery were, or became by the eighth century, more intimately associated with the Columban *familia* than other north-eastern clerics who seem to have appeared, like Itarnan, in the Iona Chronicle but who have no other demonstrable early links with Iona, though some seem to have had more general connections in the Gaelic ecclesiastical zone.¹⁰¹ Nevertheless, that Tarannan must therefore be thought to have been an Iona-trained Columban monk rather than an early abbot whose cult was later taken up by seventh- or eighth-century Columban clerics who had assumed prominence in Kincardineshire is hardly clear-cut. Indeed, the Palladian connection is suggestive of associations with Leinster not unlike those suggested by the importation of the cult of Brigit at Abernethy, and for this reason it is interesting that later glosses on the text of *Félire Óengusso* identify Tarannan with a saint whose cult was based in the Uí Chennselaig region of southern Leinster.¹⁰²

⁹⁹ Mart. Tallaght, 49; P. Ó Riain, *Anglo-Saxon Ireland: the evidence of the Martyrology of Tallaght* (Cambridge, 1993), 11-13. I am grateful to Prof. Thomas Charles-Edwards for pointing me in the direction of this work.

¹⁰⁰ Watson, *CPNS*, 300. Various relics associated with 'Ternan' were preserved at Banchory throughout the middle ages. *Fél Óengusso* confirms that this *Bendchar* was 'over the wide, ship-abounding sea' (*tar ler lethan longach*).

¹⁰¹ These saints have received comprehensive treatment by T. O. Clancy, 'Deer and the early church in the north-east', in K. S. Forsyth (ed.), *This Splendid Little Book: Studies on the Book of Deer* (Dublin, forthcoming).

¹⁰² *Fél. Óengusso*, 148. The saint in question is Mo-Thairen of Tulach Fortcheirn, who is also associated here with Druim Cliab in Tir Conaill.

That Tarannan was a native of Pictish Kincardineshire and a member of the most powerful local kindred seems likely enough, but whether he also went abroad to study as is alleged by the Aberdeen Breviary,¹⁰³ and whether such study was undertaken in Leinster, on Iona, or somewhere else, or whether he studied in Pictland and became associated with the Gaelic ecclesiastical world through an observance of his cult by Columban clerics who took control of Banchory-Ternan in the seventh and eighth centuries, must be left an open question. His *floruit* too must remain uncertain, though he must have died before the middle of the eighth century, and Professor Charles-Edwards has underlined the problems associated with expecting that the cult of Palladius, in eclipse in Ireland as early as the beginning of the seventh century, can have attracted the attentions of Pictish Christians much later than about 600.¹⁰⁴ The Abernethy foundation legend and the foregoing analysis of it, on the other hand, allow us to at least posit a period of time in the first third of the seventh century during which churches in the southern Pictish zone might be dedicated to a pre-eminent saints of Leinster at a time when Palladius was still among them, but in the final analysis we cannot assume that Tarannan's connection with Palladius goes back so far. At any rate, the area delineated by the distribution of commemorations of Tarannan in north-eastern Scotland may be interpreted as hinting at another putative *regio* of the kingdom of Fortriu which may also have been the basis of an episcopate.

The Columban *Familia* in Seventh-Century Pictland

Our evidence, thin as it may be, points to the likely prominence of bishops as the leaders of the Christian communities that became established among the northern Britons, including Neitan, the mysterious *sacerdos* commemorated in sixth-century Tweeddale.¹⁰⁵ The canons of the *Synodus Episcoporum*, a text associated with early sixth-century Ireland but which 'is likely to have resembled the British Church

¹⁰³ Brev. Aberd., 'Ternan', lec. ii.

¹⁰⁴ Charles-Edwards, *Ireland*, 237. Contemporaneity with Colum Cille is suggested by most of our late medieval sources; see Watson, *CPNS*, 298-99; *Fél. Óengusso*, 148; Macquarrie, 'Foundation legend of Laurencekirk, 105-06; Brev. Aberd., 'Ternan', lec. iii.

¹⁰⁵ The name of the subject of the sixth-century inscription *NEITANO SACERDOS* at Peebles seems to appear further down the Tweed at Nenthorn (*Naythinthern*, 1150), see Smith, 'Origins and development of Christianity', 21-23. It has been posited that the subject of the lost (and evidently mistranscribed) Peebles inscription *LOCVS SANCTI NICHOLAI EPISCOPI* was Ninian (*ibid.*, 21), but otherwise attested local saint, Neitan, would seem a more sensible candidate.

quite closely',¹⁰⁶ may be thought at least generally illustrative of early Christian communities in northern Britain. The text requires that Christians pay their debts and bring legal matters to their church rather than to a secular court. Interaction with 'heathen men' emerges as commonplace in the society described, but such folk are to be distrusted, their donations to churches are to be rejected, and Christians are not to swear oaths before *aruspices*. The text includes rules governing the behaviour of monks and nuns, but speaks of communities (*plebes*) under the close supervision (*paruchia*) of a bishop and served by clergymen bound to the *plebs*.¹⁰⁷ Within his *paruchia* the bishop was responsible for poor relief, the ransoming of captives, clerical discipline and at least some dispute resolution, and moreover he controlled access to the sacraments – no church could hold services unless he had consecrated it, and no visiting bishop or priest could operate in the *plebs* without his leave. In addition, of course, bishops were responsible for the training and ordination of new priests and the maintenance of the churches under their charge.

In the face of the evidence we have seen thus far in this study, there seems little reason to assume or expect that the Columban *familia* were the dominant ecclesiastical force within the *plebes* of sixth- and early seventh-century Fortriu, much less that without its help Christianity will have collapsed in the southern Pictish zone. Instead, we may infer from the evidence that Christianity had been prospering in the different *regiones* that became the constituent parts of the kingdom of Fortriu for generations before the foundation of Iona by Colum Cille. Both Bede and Adomnán emphasise that it was *monasteria* that were propagated among the Picts by Colum Cille and his successors, providing us with almost no information about the allegiances of non-monastic Pictish churches. This can hardly be surprising, since it emerges from this study that it was probably in his monastic thinking and practices that Colum Cille had the most to offer in terms of teaching among the Picts, and it is possible to interpret Bede's information that Iona 'for no short time used to hold together almost as one body the monasteries of the northern Gaels and all those of the Picts, as their *arx*, and exercised supervision over their communities' (*in cunctis pene septentrionalium Scottorum et omnium Pictorum*

¹⁰⁶ Charles-Edwards, *Ireland*, 245-50.

monasteriis non paruo tempore arcem tenebat, regendisq[ue] eorum populis praeerat) as suggesting that Pictish monasticism was extensively influenced by Iona in a way that is not reflected on the ground.¹⁰⁸ The examples of Abernethy and, perhaps, Banchory-Ternan show that it need hardly have been Iona that stood to expand its interests and influence whenever a royal patron in the southern Pictish zone was willing to found a monastery within which the *doctrina Scottorum* would be taught and a Gaelic saint venerated. Nevertheless, a proliferation of the particular brand of monasticism practised by Colum Cille and his successors among the Picts and the absorption of some or all of its precepts into the existing rules of many or most southern Pictish monasteries with no other connections with Iona might serve to explain Bede's view of the place of Iona in Pictish monasticism.¹⁰⁹

In Atholl, on the other hand, and in the northern Pictish zone, the Columban *familia* appears to have enjoyed a degree of royal patronage, although not, perhaps in any consistent way. It is possible that the foundation of the monastery of *Caille Aufhinde* by Fintan mac Áedo, recorded in the *dorsum Britanniae* corpus of stories in *Vita Columbae*, represents the establishment of a Columban community in an unidentified location in this zone,¹¹⁰ probably within the quarter-century following the saint's death (if not during his lifetime), but the monastery is otherwise unattested, and its having been founded among the Picts is not a certainty. There is no record that any of the first three men to succeed Colum Cille as abbot, Baíthéne (597-598), Laisrén (598-605) or Uirgno the Briton (605-23), traveled from Iona to Pictland, or indeed to Ireland, either to found new communities or to visit existing ones. Such silence on the part of the Iona Chronicle/Irish annals has so far been interpreted as an important touchstone in corroborating the testimony of other

¹⁰⁷ *Synodus Episcoporum*, in L. Bieler (ed.), *The Irish Penitentials* (Dublin, 1963), 54-59 ('First Synod of St Patrick').

¹⁰⁸ Bede, *HE* iii.3. The inconsistency between this passage and the account of iii.4 may represent Bede's use of another source, but it may equally represent his own conclusions, drawn from the information he is about to present.

¹⁰⁹ One might wonder, for example, how likely it is that cenobitic monasticism, apparently not well and truly established in Britain and Ireland until the early sixth century, and then only in the Atlantic zone, had reached the southern Pictish zone by Colum Cille's lifetime; see Thomas, *CRB*, 348-49, figure on p. 350; M. Dunn, *The Emergence of Monasticism: from the Desert Fathers to the Early Middle Ages* (Oxford, 2000), 138-46. See also Charles-Edwards, *Ireland*, 223-25 for a discussion of the evidence provided by Patrick, in whose writings 'there is no hint...that the road to a monastic life lay through the cenobitic community'.

¹¹⁰ Adomnán, *VC* ii.31.

evidence that Iona did not, as late as the abbacy of Cumméne, exercise *principatus* over all Pictland. It is therefore worth reiterating James Campbell's discussion of the dangers of arguing from such silence in this period in considering Irish activity in the early Anglo-Saxon church:

such knowledge as we have...is very incidental, derived from fragments of information. The fact that, were it not for Bede, we should be ignorant even of the significance of Aidan and his mission shows us how rash it would be to draw deductions from the silence of Irish sources about Irish activity in England. It is not unlikely, indeed it is probable, that there was a good deal of such activity of which we know nothing. It is important to bear in mind that in early eighth-century England there were scores of monasteries of the circumstances of whose foundation we are entirely ignorant.¹¹¹

There is little doubt, as Richard Sharpe has observed, that this important observation is also applicable to seventh-century Pictland,¹¹² but Campbell's example of Lindisfarne is a useful one with which to make a necessary point. It is certainly the case that it is only because of Bede that we know about the significance of Lindisfarne and its mission, but we need not rely upon Bede alone for evidence of the very *existence* of Lindisfarne, which is at least recorded in the Irish annals along with the successive obits of its three bishops, Áedán (634-51), Finán (651-61), and Colmán (661-64).¹¹³ Gilbert Márkus's examination of the testimony of *Vita Columbae* has led him to the important observation that 'Iona was not much interested in ordinary pastoral activity...when [she] was involved in establishing a missionary church, and then running it as a pastoral concern, she sent bishops', as in the case of Lindisfarne, and we may presume that this would also have been true north of the Forth.¹¹⁴ Yet there is no evidence of such bishops. The basic framework of knowledge regarding Lindisfarne contained in the annals is no doubt related to the fact that the monastery had close connections with Iona, a very special case because we know that a chronicle was kept there and that its information was preserved in the Chronicle of Ireland, so that it may be the best-documented Irish

¹¹¹ J. Campbell, 'The debt of the early English Church to Ireland', in P. Ní Chatháin & M. Richter (eds.) *Irland und die Christenheit/Ireland and Christendom: Bibelstudien und Mission/The Bible and the Missions* (Stuttgart, 1987), 332-46, at 340.

¹¹² Sharpe, *Adomnán*, 39, notes that 'while Adomnán may give the impression that Columba left a widespread legacy in both countries, the truth may be that expansion took much longer', supposing that 'Ségéne's abbacy may have seen much of that growth'.

¹¹³ AU 632.4; the obits of the bishops are recorded at AU 651.1 ('Áedán bishop of Saxons'), 660.1 ('Finán son of Rímid'), and 676.1 (Colmán bishop of *Inis Bó Finne*). Colmán's establishment of the church of Inisboffin after his departure from Lindisfarne is also recorded in the annals (AU 668.3).

monastery of the period. It is therefore in comparison with the example of Lindisfarne that the silence of the annals regarding the existence of a comparable missionary *paruchia* in Pictland is particularly remarkable, and we simply cannot dismiss out of hand the complete lack of proof that anything like a Pictish equivalent to the Lindisfarne mission to Bernicia was ever established by monks from Iona, even in Atholl or the northern zone.

That being said, we also have no evidence that any seventh-century abbot of Iona before Cumméne (Colum Cille excepted) ever made a long journey away from Iona to Ireland, much less to Pictland, and this is surely likely to reflect the fact that a detailed and contemporary chronicle was probably not begun on Iona until near the end of Cumméne's abbacy.¹¹⁵ Even as late as Adomnán's abbacy, the annals fail to notice the two voyages to Northumbria that he mentions himself in *Vita Columbae*, although a number of journeys to Ireland are noted, and it is impossible to believe that abbots of Iona in the first half of the seventh century did not make regular voyages to Columban communities on nearby islands and further afield in Dál Riata, even if the annals are silent on the matter. We cannot, therefore, assume that there was no Pictish component at all within the *paruchia* overseen by the abbots of Iona in the first third of the seventh century. The archaeological evidence of Christian burial in the late sixth century at the monastery at Portmahomack,¹¹⁶ along with the appearance of the name of Uirgno, Iona's fourth abbot, in place-names in Banffshire and Atholl,¹¹⁷ support the testimony of Adomnán and Bede, both of whom seem to have been following a Pictish source on this point, that the Columban *familia* became established in the northern Pictish zone during the time of Colum Cille himself, and in Atholl as the *Amra* suggests ought to have been the case, and that its interests and influence spread as the seventh century wore on. Uirgno died in 623 during the reign of Ciniod f. Lutrín (619-31), and hints at Columban activity in Banffshire and Atholl during this period might suggest that

¹¹⁴ Márkus, 'Iona: monks, pastors and missionaries', 123.

¹¹⁵ Sharpe, *Adomnán*, 43.

¹¹⁶ M. O. H. Carver (ed.), *Bulletin of the Tarbat Discovery Programme* 6 (2000), URL <<http://www.york.ac.uk/depts/arch/staff/sites/tarbat>>.

¹¹⁷ Taylor, 'Seventh-century Iona abbots', 52-54. For a review of Uirgno's British origins, see Herbert, *IKD*, 39-40.

Ciniod was another king of Calidonian heritage like Bridei f. Mailcon who actively supported the Columban *familia* on both sides of the Grampian highlands.

There is clearly a great deal which the foregoing reconstruction does not and cannot answer about Pictish Christianity in the first two-thirds of the seventh century, but in the final analysis, there would seem to be a great deal (in relative terms) of evidence to suggest that in much of the southern Pictish zone ecclesiastical jurisdiction was not exercised by Iona or by the Columban *familia*, but lay instead in the hands of local church leaders whose communities owed little debt to Colum Cille's monastery for their Christianity. Even in Atholl we may doubt that the Columban *familia* had any evangelical role in the seventh century, although it seems clear that here it rose quickly to some prominence and perhaps even to jurisdiction, requiring only that the political will existed to appoint Columban clerics to key ecclesiastical offices. If questions surrounding Pictish ethnogenesis suggest that we need hardly be surprised if that jurisdiction did not extend south of the Gask Ridge and the lower Tay into the Miathic zone, it is more notable perhaps that the coastal areas of northern Fortriu may also have lain outwith the control of Columban clerics, although this need not preclude the possibility of less formal influence in monastic and other practises – something which can also have extended south of the Tay. Nevertheless, there are indications that some Pictish potentates looked elsewhere than Iona in seeking to make connections with Gaelic ecclesiastical culture in order to acquire the advantages it was believed to offer.

Conclusion

It has been noted by Professor Herbert that *Vita Columbae* creates the impression that the monastery of Iona had regular and sustained contact with Ireland during Colum Cille's lifetime.¹¹⁸ The same impression is not created with respect to Pictland, and everything we have seen in this chapter and in the previous ones must incline us to prefer her view that 'Columban monasteries seem to have constituted Gaelic enclaves' among the Picts to any view which would posit Ionan domination of Pictland at any point before 669.¹¹⁹ However, it must also be noted that Columban monasteries do not seem to have been the only Gaelic enclaves

¹¹⁸ Herbert, *IKD*, 30.

¹¹⁹ Herbert, 'Legacy of Columba', 3.

among the seventh-century Picts that were capable of providing Eanfrith Aeðilfrithing with access to the *doctrina Scottorum* or of influencing Pictish ecclesiastical practices that may have been of some age. We cannot know with certainty whether Seruan, Itarnan, or Tarannan were ethnically Gaelic, Pictish or British, and even were such information available, its relevance in assessing the extent to which the ecclesiastical zones that have been associated with them here preferred Gaelic monastic traditions to Pictish ones (whatever the differences may have been) would be difficult to establish. Additionally, whether the fact of being known to an observer at Iona must prove anything regarding the ethnolinguistic character, training or ecclesiastical allegiances of men like Itarnan must remain an open question. It is perfectly possible that he had nothing at all to do with the Gaelic zone - although the example of Tarannan suggests that it is equally possible that he did - and we have seen that there is no reason that even a seventh-century southern Pictish cleric with clear Gaelic connections must be associated with the *familia* of Colum Cille.

Itarnan does not appear in any Irish martyrology or corpus of saints, and this, along with the fact that there is little in the archaeological evidence from the May to suggest that the monastery there maintained fundamental links with Iona or any other part of the Gaelic west, would seem to indicate that his Gaelic connections were limited. There seem any number of ways that Itarnan can have distinguished himself in the estimation of his Gaelic contemporaries such that his death was remarkable to them. He may have been particularly precocious, or a man of respected learning whose writings, although nothing survives of them, were known on Iona. He may have visited Iona, or been a regular visitor or correspondent with Columban monasteries in Atholl, as a result of ecclesiastical, personal, or other business. It is certainly not impossible that Itarnan was an Iona-trained cleric working among the Picts, or else that he spent some or all of his training in the Gaelic zone, but there is no particular reason to prefer either of these options to any of the innumerable, and in some cases more likely, plausible alternative possibilities. In any event, we cannot assume that even a Gaelic-trained Itarnan must have been working in furtherance of an Ionan principate among the southern Picts, the evidence for which is lacking as late as his death. Eanfrith

Aeðilfrithing would seem, as Bede reports, to have been 'instructed in the *doctrina Scottorum*', but the most ready explanation for this at our disposal, given all that we have now seen, may be that, having come to the court of Neithon *nepos Uerb* in 616 and taken a Miathic wife (which may well have required him to convert to Christianity), Eanfrith lived out the bulk of his exile in close proximity to Abernethy, a royal monastery with Gaelic connections founded by Neithon himself, and so became familiar with the *doctrina Scottorum* of its community without ever having set eyes upon a Columban cleric.

In the past, historians have found it notable that peace of a kind between the Gaelic west and the Pictish east appears to have followed the death of Áedán mac Gabráin. Skene attributed this to the pacifying influence of 'a powerful element of peace and bond of union in the Columban Church'.¹²⁰ It hardly requires the present study to render this explanation unconvincing, and we are no better served by the theories put forward by Scott, who believed that the congenitally aggressive Gaels were held in check militarily by the fact that they were 'on Pictish ground and subject to the Sovereign of Pictland', or by Bannerman, who suggests that 'f. Domnech' is a matronymic and that Bridei's successor was a Gael who extended the dominion of the Dál Riata into seventh-century Pictland.¹²¹ Other explanations for the appearance of peace between Gael and Pict in this period might wonder whether the appearance of peace is illusory, and related to the quality of the annal record in this period. Interestingly, there is also little evidence in the extant record of conflict between Picts and Bernicians during this period. Aeðilfrith seems to have had an understandably enduring reputation as an enemy of the Britons, whom he was said to have 'ravaged more than any ruler of the Angles' (*plus omnibus Anglorum primatibus gentem uastauit*),¹²² and that he was not similarly aggressive

¹²⁰ Skene, *CS I*, 276.

¹²¹ Scott, *PNPC*, 204; Bannerman, *Dalriada*, 93. There is little besides the similar names to commend Bannerman's argument; Gartnait f. Domnech appears to have been Áedán's older contemporary rather than his son, and the two men were likely bitter foes. Gartnait appears to have been a common name among elite families in north Britain. For a more convincing consideration of Gartnait mac Áedáin and his descendants, see D. N. Dumville, 'Cethri prímchenéla Dáil Riata', in *Scottish Gaelic Studies* 20 (2000), 170-91, at 187-88.

¹²² Bede, *HE* i.34. Bede adds of Aeðilfrith that 'no ruler or king had subjected more land to the English race or settled it, having first either exterminated or conquered the natives'. On Aeðilfrith's reputation, see P. Hunter Blair, 'The Bernicians and their Northern Frontier', in N. K. Chadwick, (ed.), *Studies in Early British History* (Cambridge, 1954), 137-72, at 153.

towards the Picts is interesting. It is not impossible that Eanfrith was married to Talorcan's mother before the death of Aedilfrith as part of some arrangement with a Miathic king, but any such arrangement would probably not have kept him from making war upon such a king had it suited his purposes. The Bernician's lack of aggression towards Pictish territory may therefore simply reflect the point that, as late as 616, there remained parts of the Miathic zone, as yet unoccupied by the Bernicians, that continued to separate Aedilfrith's dominions from Manau and Fife, and, provided no king elected to bring war to him from these parts, as Áedán had done, Aedilfrith was probably content to confine his belligerence to his neighbours.¹²³ At any rate, even if the appearance of peace represents the reality on the ground, there are obviously any number of explanations that do not also require Iona to dominate Pictish ecclesiastical affairs.

Isabel Henderson, writing at a time when such an argument was still very necessary, rightly asserted that 'there is no good evidence for an active flourishing Ninianic Church existing side by side with the Columban one in Pictland at any period'.¹²⁴ We have left Nyniau and the idea of a 'Ninianic Church' aside, but have nevertheless arrived, after a careful consideration of the evidence, at a point where it seems possible to argue that the underlying hypothesis of Scott and Simpson – that the *paruchia* of Iona was not unrivalled as an ecclesiastical force in Pictland in the first half of the seventh century – may now stand on somewhat surer ground than the opposite view against which both protested so vigorously for so long, and which has been dominant since Simpson set down his pen. We might go so far as to posit the existence, by the 660s at least, of the two 'Churches' dismissed by Henderson, the one Miathic and the other Calidonian, but this omits from consideration the possibility of significant internal divisions within these two spheres, not to mention ecclesiastical developments in the 'Pictish Periphery', and certainly cannot be demonstrated. It is also worth stressing that there is nothing to support the views of Simpson and Scott that these two 'Churches', even if they

¹²³ Macquarrie, *Saints*, 108-10 outlines the case for believing that Áedán mac Gabráin may have operated within the British sphere from time to time, and it may have been because of British connections and interests that he made war with Æðelfrith in 603.

¹²⁴ Henderson, *Picts*, 71.

existed, will have been anything other than fundamentally similar in the vast majority of their theology and their practices.

All the Bishops of Britain The Gregorian Plan and the Oswegian *imperium* 664-70

You, brother, are to have under your subjection those bishops whom you have consecrated as well as those who shall be consecrated by the bishop of York, and not those only but also all the bishops of Britain, under the guidance of our Lord God.

– *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum* (i.29)

Oswy son of Aedilfrith became Bernician king in August 642 (or thereabouts) in the aftermath of the death of his brother Oswald at the hands of the forces of the non-Christian Mercian king Penda son of Pybba. He held the kingship of his people for just under twenty-seven years, dying peacefully at the age of fifty-eight in February 670. In both the length of his reign and the non-violent manner of his death, Oswy Aedilfrithing was remarkable, and indeed unique among the seventh-century kings of the Bernicians and the Deirans. Nevertheless, it was, as Bede tells us, a ‘most troubled’ (*laboriosissimus*) career, in which ‘he was attacked by the heathen nation of the Mercians who had slain his brother, and by his own son Alchfrith, and by his nephew Oidilwald, the son of his brother and predecessor’ (*inpugnatus uidelicet et ab ea, quae fratrem eius occiderat, pagana gente Merciorum et a filio quoque suo Alhfrido necnon et a fratrue, id est fratris sui qui ante eum regnavit filio, Oidilualdo*).¹ Among his additional labours appears to have been the establishment, in the latter years of his own life (which were also the latter years of the lives of such notable northern churchmen Itarnan and Cumméne) of an *imperium* that included among his client-kings at least one in the southern Pictish zone. In this chapter we shall be concerned with assessing the nature and circumstances of this *imperium*. Our particular concern, however, will be understanding the basis of Anglian claims regarding ecclesiastical jurisdiction over the Picts before turning our attention, in

¹ Bede, *HE* iii.14. The accuracy of Bede’s placement of Oswy’s death in 670 has been a subject of doubt, but is supported by the king’s obit in AU 671.1 – see AU 680.4 (battle of the Trent, 679), AU 685.2 (Berct’s expedition, 684) and AU 686.1 (battle of Dunnichen, 685) for evidence that these events are consistently placed one year too late in the annals. K. Harrison, ‘The Reign of King Ecgfrith of Northumbria’, in *The Yorkshire Archaeological Journal* 43 (1971), 79-84, has pointed out that it is possible for Bede to have accurately preserved both the year of Oswy’s death and Ecgfrith’s regnal year at his

the following chapter, to the later years of this *imperium* under Oswy's son and successor Ecgfrith.

Edwini and the Gregorian Plan

After a period of deliberation, the Deiran over-king Edwini son of Aelle was baptised at York in his homeland on Easter Day, 12 April 627. Here, in the wake of this conversion, Paulinus established himself as bishop.² Bede's sources informed him that Paulinus had been consecrated as a bishop in Kent two years earlier, departing for the north in the company of Aedilburg, Edwini's Christian bride, and that during his episcopate he baptised extensively and built churches. At York itself, the building of a stone church was begun but abandoned when Paulinus was forced from his see after Edwini's death at *Haethfelth* in 633.³ Edwini evidently wrote to Rome requesting that the new see of York be elevated to metropolitan status and its bishop empowered to consecrate new metropolitans of Canterbury. Bede quotes from a letter in which Pope Honorius responded that, at the king's request, he was preparing to send a *pallium* to Paulinus.⁴ Thereafter Paulinus conducted himself as a metropolitan, duly consecrating another Honorius in the see of Canterbury, and Bede unreservedly refers to him as *archiepiscopus*.⁵ The sending of this *pallium* by Pope Honorius was in accordance with the plan for the ecclesiastical organisation of Britain enunciated by Gregory the Great, the author of the Anglo-Saxon mission, who had written to Augustine of Canterbury (regarding his own *pallium*) that

Lundoniensis ciuitatis episcopus semper in posterum a synodo propria debeat consecrari, atque honoris pallium...percipiat. Ad Eburacam uero ciuitatem te uolumus episcopum mittere, quem ipse iudicaueris ordinare, ita dumtaxat ut, si eadem ciuitas cum finitimis locis uerbum Dei receperit, ipse quoque XII episcopos ordinet, et metropolitani honore perfruatur; quia ei quoque, si uita comes fuerit, pallium tribuere Domino fauente disponimus...[P]ost obitum uero tuum ita episcopis quos ordinauerit praesit, ut Lundoniensis episcopi nullo modo dicioni subiaceat. Sit uero inter Lundoniae et Eburacae ciuitatis episcopos in posterum honoris ista distinctio, ut ipse prior habeatur, qui prius fuerit ordinatus...Tua uero fraternitas non solum eos episcopos quos ordinauerit, neque hos tantummodo qui per Eburacae episcopum fuerint ordinati, sed etiam omnes Brittaniae sacerdotes

death if we allow for the possibility that Ecgfrith's reign was not reckoned to have begun until sometime after 20 May 670.

² Bede, *HE* ii.14. According to ACamb, this event took place in 626, and Edwini's baptist was Rum map Urbgen; see also *HB* 63. Bede, for his part, is silent on this matter, but almost certainly gives us the proper year.

³ Bede, *HE* ii.9; ii.14; ii.16.

⁴ Bede, *HE* ii.17.

⁵ Bede, *HE* iii.25.

*habeat Deo Domino nostro Iesu Christo auctore subiectos, quatinus ex lingua et uita tuae sanctitatis et recte credendi et bene uiuendi formam percipiant, atque officium suum fide ac moribus exsequentes ad caelestia, cum Dominus uoluerit, regna pertingant.*⁶

the bishop of London shall always in future be consecrated by his own *synodus* and receive the honour of the *pallium*...To the city of York we wish you to send a bishop whom you yourself shall decide to consecrate, always provided that if this city together with the neighbouring localities should receive the word of the Lord, he is also to consecrate twelve bishops and enjoy the honourable metropolitan rank, for it is our intention, God willing, if we live, to give him the *pallium* too...After your death, he should preside over the bishops he has consecrated, being in no way subject to the authority of the bishop of London. There is, however, to be this distinction in honour, in future, between the bishops of the cities of London and York: that he is to be reckoned senior who was first consecrated...You, brother, are to have subject to your authority not only those bishops whom you have consecrated, but also those who shall be consecrated by the bishop of York, as well as all the bishops of Britain, under the guidance of our Lord God Jesus Christ, so that from the words and life of your holiness they may grasp both true faith and good living, and fulfilling their office faithfully and in righteousness, they may attain the heavenly kingdom when it shall please God.

This 'Gregorian Plan', to borrow Marion Gibbs's phrase,⁷ evidently informed by Gregory's understanding of the organisation of the British church in Roman times, was not fulfilled during his lifetime. Canterbury remained thereafter the seat of the southern metropolitan, while the establishment of the northern metropolitan in York did not come about for more than twenty years. The *pallium* may not yet have reached York from Rome when Edwini was killed and his bishop returned to Kent, allegedly because 'there seemed no safety except in flight' (*nil alicubi praesidii nisi in fuga esse uideretur*) as a result of the barbarity of Catguollaun and Penda, the victors of *Haethfelth*.⁸ Scholars have not emphasised enough that Bede's version of the subsequent events is suspiciously tidy. Paulinus does not return, allowing for the seamless incoming of Gaelic churchmen into Bernicia after 634 and the unrivalled primacy of their first foundation at Lindisfarne – a seamlessness enhanced by the wiping clean of the Paulino-Edwinian slate through the alleged apostasy of both the Bernicians and the Deirans in the interim. There are indications within the evidence that seem to run contrary to the neatness of Bede's narrative, suggesting not only

⁶ Bede, *HE* i.29.

⁷ M. Gibbs, 'The decrees of Agatho and the Gregorian Plan for York', in *Speculum* 48 (1973), 213-46.

⁸ Bede, *HE* ii.20.

that the memory of the Gregorian Plan for York was preserved during the period of Lindisfarne's ascendancy, but also that York's status was a key issue at the Council of Whitby.

York and the Columban Ascendancy

After the deaths of the alleged apostates Eanfrith and Osric, an army led by Oswald Aedilfrithing defeated and killed Catguollaun at *Denisesburn* in 634. Having secured *imperium* over the Bernicians and Deirans, Oswald invited a Gaelic bishop to come from Iona, establishing a monastery for him on the island of Lindisfarne.⁹ That Oswald chose to follow this course of action, allowing Áedán, as bishop of Lindisfarne, to exercise jurisdiction over the ecclesiastical affairs of all of his dominions, suggests that Paulinus, who never returned to the north, may have been *persona non grata*. That would hardly be surprising given the archbishop's Edwinian associations: at any rate, Paulinus lived out his days in Kent, taking up the see of Rochester where, according to Bede, at his death in 644 he left his *pallium* behind.¹⁰ Having been eclipsed in this way, the church of York was, nevertheless, never abandoned completely and never, so far as can be determined, brought fully enough under the jurisdiction of Lindisfarne to adopt its particularist practices. Instead, Paulinus's work was continued by his deacon James, who, as portrayed by Bede, 'remained for a long time in the church [of York] and rescued much prey from the ancient foe by teaching and baptising' (*multo exhinc tempore in ecclesia manens magnas antiquo hosti praedas docendo et baptizando eripuit*).¹¹ Indeed this deacon was still the leader of this community thirty years later when, as a member of the universalist party at Whitby, he is made by Bede to symbolise the continuity of the first mission to the Northumbrians, having given instruction in chant as it was done in Rome and in Kent, and having 'kept the true and catholic Easter with everyone he could instruct in the better way' (*uerum et catholicum pascha cum omnibus, quos ad*

⁹ Bede, *HE* iii.1-3. The Gaels appear to have known both the island and the monastery by a reflex of its British name, *insula Metcaut* (*HB* 63, 65). *HB* 64 gives the name *Catscaul* to the battle of *Denisesburn*. I can find no evidence to support the ubiquitous idea that Oswald lived on Iona (eg. Clancy & Márkus, *Iona*, 8); Charles-Edwards, *Ireland*, 312-14 is refreshingly silent on this point.

¹⁰ Bede, *HE* ii.20; iii.14.

¹¹ Bede, *HE* ii.20.

correctiorem uiam erudire poterat).¹² The fact that Bede chose not to emphasise the activities of the church of York in the period 633-64, stressing instead the achievement of Lindisfarne, can obscure neither the continuity represented by James and his community nor the fact that they were never brought around to Lindisfarne's way of thinking with regard to Easter and other observances. Instead, James appears to have kept a certain amount of distance from Lindisfarne, and to have kept up, as best as could be managed, the work which his bishop had begun.

Even after the death of Oswald at *Maserfelth* and the restoration of Edwini's family to the kingship of the Deirans,¹³ Oswini son of Osric chose a close relationship with Lindisfarne over the idea of a restoration of York to its former status.¹⁴ Within two years Paulinus too was dead. Oswy's choice of Edwini's daughter Eanfled as his bride in these years reveals a great deal about his political outlook in the first years of what he appears to have regarded, probably by comparison to the dominions of his brother and father before him, to be a truncated kingship. Bede relates that he 'could not live at peace' (*nec...habere pacem potuit*) with Oswini,¹⁵ the man whose elevation to the kingship denied him his brother's former *imperium* over Deira in the aftermath of *Maserfelth*, and this probably lay behind Oswy's strategic marriage to the daughter of his family's greatest rival. Shortly thereafter, Oswy became notably aggressive towards the Deiran king, and in his ninth year, shortly before the death of Áedán of Lindisfarne, he 'cruelly made an end of him' (*miserrima hunc caede peremit*) at Gilling on 20 August 651.¹⁶ Neither this episode, however, which left a permanent mark on Oswy's reputation, nor his marriage to Edwini's daughter, nor even his placement of his nephew Oidilwald

¹² Bede, *HE* iii.25. Bede undermines the Wilfrithian claim that Wilfrith introduced Kentish forms of singing to Northumbria, writing that 'with the exception of James already mentioned, the first singing master in the Northumbrian churches was Aeddi surnamed Stephen, who was invited from Kent by the most worthy Wilfrith' (*HE* iv.2).

¹³ Bede, *HE* iii.9. *ACamb* 644 refers to this battle as *bellum Cocboy*. Its location is much disputed.

¹⁴ Bede, *HE* iii.14.

¹⁵ Bede, *HE* iii.14.

¹⁶ Bede, *HE* iii.14. Bede maintains that Oswy had 'far greater resources' than Oswini in this confrontation, but this need not be taken of proof that Oswy was capable at this time of calling upon Pictish or even Gaelic tribute to support him, although perhaps it does suggest support from further afield among the northern Britons. It has been suggested to me by Alex Woolf (pers. comm.) that the Bernicians may have been more 'barbaric' than the Deirans in 649-51, and capable of legitimately mobilising a greater percentage of their population.

son of Oswald in Deira as his subject king, resolved this Deiran question.¹⁷ Instead, Oidilwald not only turned out for Penda at *Campus Gai* in 655 but is described by Bede as actually 'leading the enemies of his own uncle and of his native land' on that occasion. Clearly his nephew had rebelled against Oswy's *imperium*, and it is possible that Penda's *Campus Gai* campaign was undertaken on the pretence of supporting Oidilwald against Oswy.¹⁸

Having established a good working relationship, Oswy Aedilfrithing and Finán, Áedán's successor as bishop of Lindisfarne, sent the priest Cedda to work among the East Saxons, over whom he was subsequently consecrated bishop by Finán sometime during Oidilwald's reign in Deira. It may be inferred from what follows that Cedda was a Deiran, as the Deiran king had two of his brothers to hand when he 'asked him to accept a grant of land from him for the building of a monastery where the king both might come frequently to pray and hear the word of God, and might be buried when he died' (*postulauit eum possessionem terrae aliquam a se ad construendum monasterium accipere, in quo ipse rex et frequentius ad deprecandum Dominum Verbumque adiendum aduenire, et defunctus sepeliri deberet*), the result of which request was the foundation of Lastingham by one of Cedda's brothers.¹⁹ Bede relates that during this period, although he was assigned to work among the East Saxons, Cedda 'frequently revisited his own kingdom for the sake of preaching' (*saepius etiam suam...prouinciam exhortandi gratia reuisere*).²⁰ Such frequent preaching visits, along with the gifts Cedda received from the Deiran king and the fact that he was buried at Lastingham instead of in Essex, suggests that the relationship between the Deiran bishop of the East Saxons and the king of the Deirans was curiously close.²¹ Oidilwald was clearly inclined to go his own way as king of the Deirans, and we have seen evidence that there was a current of separatism with

¹⁷ Bede, *HE* iii.24. Bede says that Oidilwald 'ought to have helped them [Oswy and Alchfrith]' at *Campus Gai*, and unless this is an allusion only to Oidilwald's obligations to his kinsmen, it would seem to refer to his subject status. ...

¹⁸ Bede, *HE* iii.24; on the rebellion of Oidilwald see also D. P. Kirby, 'Northumbria in the Time of Wilfrid', in D. P. Kirby (ed.) *Saint Wilfrid at Hexham* (Newcastle, 1974), 19, and R. Abels, 'The Council of Whitby: A Study in Early Anglo-Saxon Politics', in *The Journal of British Studies* 23 (1983), 1-25, at 7.

¹⁹ Bede, *HE* iii.22-23. Bede says that he 'was acting as bishop of the East Saxons' while Oidilwald was still king of the Deirans.

²⁰ Bede, *HE* iii.23. Bede seems to have added *id est Nordanhymbrorum* here, obscuring the fact that 'his own kingdom' meant Deira.

²¹ Bede, *HE* iii.23.

regard to the jurisdiction and particularisms of Lindisfarne in the principal church of his kingdom. It is therefore difficult to escape the conclusion that the overtures made by the king to Cedda, resulting in the frequent visits of the latter to his native land, were related to this separatist sentiment in York. Indeed, we may suspect that Oidilwald was seeking to reorient his kingdom's ecclesiastical allegiances away from Lindisfarne by cultivating this relationship with Cedda, a native of Deira – although in the event Cedda would appear to have remained sympathetic towards Lindisfarne. Such a policy is not likely to have been a private initiative on Oidilwald's part, for such resistance to the ecclesiastical status quo was destined to survive him and is more likely to reflect the will of separatists within the Deiran political community – those whose grudge against Oswy in the wake of Oswini's murder had led to his foundation of Gilling, established, according to Bede, at the place of the killing 'for the sake of expiating this crime' (*castigandi huius facinoris gratia*).²² It is particularly notable that Eanfled, Edwini's daughter and Oswy's queen, may be thought to have been among this group of noble Deiran malcontents.

Alchfrith and the York Party

It may, therefore, have been as much to reassert and strengthen Lindisfarne's interests in Deira, as much in the furtherance of his own political ambitions, that Oswy, having removed the rebellious Oidilwald in 655, gave over six Deiran estates (along with six Bernician ones) for the establishment of new monasteries.²³ The prominence of Deirans of royal blood in these foundations, like Hild at Whitby and Trumhere, a kinsman of Oswini, at Gilling,²⁴ may further reflect such a programme. In this way Oswy can perhaps have hoped to mollify important Deirans who were being denied secular power, as well as to strengthen the bonds between the Deiran political community and Lindisfarne after Oidilwald's attempts at a divisive policy. With her kinsmen and kinswomen shunted off to these new monasteries, Eanfled seems to have emerged as the secular figure best able thereafter to bridge the various divisions between Oswy and the Deiran aristocracy. The extent of her influence, and of that of the lobby she represented, is particularly evident from the

²² Bede, *HE* iii.24; *HE* iii.14. On the Deiran reaction to Bernician overlordship see Charles-Edwards, *Ireland*, 315.

²³ Bede, *HE* iii.24.

Gilling episode, in which she compelled her husband to provide for a foundation that symbolised his iniquity. The individual who gained most from the support of this lobby appears to have been the young St Wilfrith, the son of a noble father closely associated with the royal kindred of the Deirans who was to become a disciple of Agilbert, bishop of the West Saxons. He appears to have followed his mentor to Deira, where they became members of the York party of Eanfled and Alchfrith son of Oswy, who had, in the meantime, received the kingship of the Deirans from his father after the ruin of Oidilwald.

At first glance, this important alliance between Oswy's son and Oswy's queen (who was not Alchfrith's mother) appears unlikely.²⁵ If he knew anything at all about Merovingian politics, a powerful Eanfled should have made Alchfrith uneasy and uncertain about his future prospects. At the time of his succession, he must have been mindful of the fact that Ecgfrith, the eldest of the sons of Eanfled and Oswy, was ten years old.²⁶ In a few years he would be old enough to contend with Alchfrith for prominence of position within their father's plans. Alchfrith himself had, after all, acquired his kingship by being handy as an alternative to Oidilwald when the latter became a nuisance to Oswy. Ecgfrith was, moreover, the grandson of the great Deiran king Edwini and stood to benefit from his mother's prestige among the Deiran aristocracy. Oswy's elder son, then, must have felt a certain insecurity regarding the longevity of his kingship, and under pressure to mobilise in the interests of preserving his own position, since he might be removed at a word once Ecgfrith was old enough to hold the kingship himself.²⁷ It was therefore only prudent for Alchfrith, in the years after 655, to begin assuring himself of supporters and allies of substance as insurance against any changes of mind on the part of his father. Of itself, such behaviour will not necessarily have smacked of rebellion or treachery, but whether by design or by accident, men in Alchfrith's position tended to attract support from among 'those who were dissatisfied with the

²⁴ On the foundation of *Streanæsþealh*, see Bede, *HE* iii.24. On Gilling, see iii.24 and iii.14.

²⁵ Being of marriageable age before 653 (Bede, *HE* iii.21), Alchfrith cannot have been Eanfled's son; *HB* 57 records that Oswy had another wife, Rieinmelth daughter of Royth (map Rum), who was almost certainly the mother of Alchfrith and his sister Alchfled. See Abels, 'Council of Whitby', 7.

²⁶ Ecgfrith had been a hostage of Penda, in the keeping of his wife Cynewise, at the time of *Campus Gai* (Bede, *HE* iii.24).

²⁷ The possibility that Ecgfrith was Oswy's favourite is explored by Abels, 'Council of Whitby', 7-8.

status quo'.²⁸ There would appear to have been a ready supply of such supporters among the Deirans in the shape of such separatists as remained after the downfall of Oidilwald. As the royal son Hermenegild counted Arians among his supporters in his differences of opinion with his catholic father King Leovigild in sixth-century Visigothic Spain,²⁹ so can Alchfrith have come to count agitators for universalist religious reform among his friends in seventh-century Deira. A key figure within this latter group will have been James, leader of the community of York, who may be thought to have had sympathies with both groups of dissidents.

More important still was Eanfled herself.³⁰ There can be little doubt that Alchfrith had everything to gain from establishing an amicable relationship with his stepmother, whose support can only have helped him in his dealings with the Deiran aristocracy, while perhaps decreasing the urgency of any threat posed by the spectre of Ecgrith. Eanfled's motive for entering into this alliance, however, is more difficult to understand. Neither she nor her sons stood to gain much politically from any stabilisation of Alchfrith's position. This is indeed a problem, since it is quite likely that it was Edwini's daughter, and not Oswy's son, who enjoyed the greater prestige and influence among the Deirans, who was the prime mover in their relationship and the effective leader of the York party. Such a conclusion is supported by Bede, who notes that the Easter controversy arose 'by the encouragement of those who had come from Kent or from Gaul' (*confirmantibus eis qui de Cantia uel de Gallis aduenerant*), suggesting that Eanfled (who had come from Kent) was there at the beginning, while Stephanus suggests that it was only after the controversy had started that Alchfrith invited Wilfrith back to Deira.³¹ Moreover, Pope Vitalian certainly seems to have believed that Eanfled was the leader of the reform movement, referring to her, in his letter to Oswy following Whitby, as 'our spiritual daughter' (*nostra spiritali filia*), extolling her 'pious diligence' (*pius studium*) and alleging that 'the whole apostolic see rejoices as one with us, just as her pious

²⁸ I. Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms 450-751* (London & New York, 1994), 83 in discussing an example of this same kind of process.

²⁹ Wood, *Merovingian Kingdoms*, 170-71.

³⁰ Bede, *HE* iii.24.

³¹ Bede, *HE* iii.25; Stephanus, *VW* 7. For a similar view of Alchfrith's position as regards Eanfled, see E. John, 'The Social and Political Problems of the Early English Church', in *Agricultural History Review* 18 (1970); *Supplement: Land, Church and People: Essays presented to Professor H. P. R. Finberg*, 39-63, at 42.

works smell sweet and blossom in the presence of God' (*cuncta sedes apostolica una nobiscum laetantur, quantum eius pia opera coram Deo flagrant et uernant*).³²

The key to the unlikely alliance between Alchfrith and Eanfled as regards the Easter controversy, seemingly against the interests of her sons, was that both depended upon the Deiran aristocracy for their ongoing support and influence. This was, of course, the same aristocracy that appears previously to have backed Oidilwald's separatist path regarding Lindisfarne. We may therefore suspect that James the Deacon and other separatist clerics were instrumental in bringing together those Deirans who shared a common dissatisfaction with the Oswegian hegemony in Northumbria, whether their separatist sentiment was directed principally at Oswy himself as over-king or at Lindisfarne and its particularist practices. After all, Paulinus's church in York had, during Edwini's reign, been the ecclesiastical centre of the most important kingdom in the Anglo-Saxon zone. As Deira dwindled to become a client-kingdom in danger of becoming base-client in status – a mere prize to be squabbled over by successive Bernician and Mercian hegemony – so did York become overshadowed by Lindisfarne through the efforts of Oswald. Nevertheless, there is reason to believe that, as Gibbs suggests, James and others cultivated an ongoing memory of York's place in the Gregorian Plan throughout this period.³³

The direction taken by Oidilwald was short-lived, his plans ruined by Oswy's victory at *Campus Gai*. In the aftermath, the Mercians, like the East Saxons, had been granted the dignity of their own bishop, while the Middle Angles and the Lindseymen had to be content with inclusion within the diocese of an extraneous bishop.³⁴ That the Deirans, like these client-kingdoms, were denied their own bishop can only have been a galling affront to an aristocratic community that could remember the days of Edwini, the ascendancy of Deira, and the metropolitan status

³² Bede, *HE* iii.29. The gift accompanying this letter – 'a cross with a golden key, made from the holy fetters of the apostles St Peter and St Paul' – would seem a fitting symbol of Eanfled's achievement as leader of the reformers (Oswy appears to have been given nothing). Admittedly, Alchfrith, having been eliminated by this time, is not likely to have merited the pope's consideration, whatever role he played in the reform movement.

³³ Gibbs, 'Decrees of Agatho', 219.

³⁴ On Lindsey, see *HE* iii.24.

of York.³⁵ We may suppose that such resentment provided the foundation upon which a significant York party, including universalists, dissatisfied Deiran aristocrats and proponents of the Gregorian Plan, was built. The leaders of this party may have supported Eanfled in her capacity as Edwini's daughter, but if they also gravitated to their new king as he cast his nets looking for supporters, they can have forced the two of them into an accommodation, perhaps despite themselves.³⁶ Their ability to work together must have been key to the success of the movement. She may have been something of a figurehead of the reformers, but Eanfled could never, in the face of resistance on Alchfrith's part, have offered men like Agilbert and Wilfrith the kind of safety that the king himself could provide them in Deira in the lead-up to the confrontation of 664. Alchfrith can hardly have been anything but sympathetic, at least publicly, if he hoped to earn the gratitude of, and increase his acceptability to, the aristocrats of his kingdom. There is no reason to expect that he was a passive ally once his die was cast. If it was not in his best long-term interests to support Eanfled, he may have hoped that through stronger ties with his nobles he would be able to resist his father in any future confrontation (and so avoid Oidilwald's fate), or else to assert the independence of his kingdom so that Eanfled and her sons ceased to be a threat. At any rate, he had little to lose in taking the risk, since a decline in his fortunes must have seemed a foregone conclusion as long as the status quo remained unchanged. He may have simply recognised participation in the reform movement as the best he could hope for and thrown his support behind it.³⁷

We must avoid using hindsight to draw conclusions, but it is difficult not to suspect that Wilfrith, who would in time be chosen to speak for the reformers at Whitby and then be put forward as a candidate for the episcopate of York, was being groomed for just such a future according to the plans of the York party. Stephanus may imply this through the claim that Agilbert spoke prophetically

³⁵ Bede, *HE* iii.21, maintains that the Mercian bishop held sway over Lindsey and Middle Anglia because of 'a shortage of bishops'; it is more likely that the ecclesiastical subordination of Deira, Middle Anglia and Lindsey was deliberate.

³⁶ The likelihood that the grass-roots (as it were) of the universalist movement were as important to its activities as Bede's named personages has been raised by Veitch, 'Columban Church', 629.

³⁷ Veitch, 'Columban Church', 630 has suggested that sympathies amongst the Columban clergy for his (possibly) paternal brother Aldfrith may have motivated Alchfrith to agitate against their influence.

about Wilfrith's episcopal future at his ordination as priest before the Council of Whitby.³⁸ This would seem to explain why this young man, who cannot have been very experienced in ecclesiastical matters, was given a ten-hide estate at *Stanforda* by Alchfrith and, in short order, was chosen from among the other prospective reform-minded clergymen of Deira to assume the abbacy of Ripon. His age, however, presented a problem, for he would not be thirty, and thus was technically ineligible for ordination as a priest or consecration as a bishop, until 664. It may be that his mentor Agilbert had been invited to Deira to oversee the episcopate of York in the interim, should the movement succeed in its plans before that year. Opposition to Wilfrith among the established ecclesiastical community appears to have arisen almost immediately. Bede tells us that upon his receipt of Ripon, the existing community, among whom was the future bishop and saint Cuthbert, 'was driven home, and the site of the monastery...was given to other monks to dwell in' (*domum repulsus est, et locus monasterii...aliis ad incolendum monachis datus*).³⁹ Despite whatever opposition his appointment had raised, Wilfrith remained at Ripon until he stepped out of his mentor's shadow and was made spokesman for the reform party at Whitby in 664.⁴⁰

Whitby and the Gregorian Plan

The most telling evidence that, as it pertained to the metropolitan status of York, the Gregorian Plan was remembered in Deira and raised as a key issue at Whitby is explicit language used by Stephanus of Ripon. He describes Colmán and Wilfrith as having been metropolitan bishops of the *civitas* of York,⁴¹ indicative of his understanding that both men had inherited, as it were, the status of Paulinus, the first metropolitan bishop. There are a number of reasons why we must reject the

³⁸ Stephanus, *VW* 9.

³⁹ Bede, *VSC* 8; *HE* iii.25. Bede is less hostile towards Wilfrith in the *HE* version of the story.

⁴⁰ Bede, *HE* iii.25. Bede maintains that 'the king [Oswy] ordered Agilbert to expound the method he observed, its origin and the authority he had for following it. Agilbert answered, "I request that my disciple, the priest Wilfrith, may speak on my behalf...he can explain our views in the English tongue better and more clearly than I can through an interpreter"'. See also Stephanus, *VW* 10.

⁴¹ Stephanus, *VW* 16, 10. Interestingly, although the same cannot be said for Áedán or Finán, Bede, perhaps influenced by Stephanus, never explicitly refers to Colmán as 'bishop of Lindisfarne'.

idea that Colmán thought of himself in such terms,⁴² and so it can hardly be surprising that this evidence that Wilfrith enjoyed metropolitan status as bishop of York has been dismissed as a further error of Stephanus's, or, as Eric John has indelicately asserted, proof that he 'is a barefaced liar who cannot be trusted in the simplest matters of fact', particularly since Bede gives no explicit evidence to support it.⁴³ If Stephanus can be believed, however, his testimony suggests not only that, in addition to the matters of Easter and the tonsure, the Council of Whitby dealt with the question of York's place within the Northumbrian church, but that the issue of its metropolitan status was also considered. Gibbs thought she could detect traces of an affirmation of York's metropolitan status by the papacy (later expunged by Canterbury copyists) in the time of Wilfrith's episcopate. Harkening particularly to Stephanus's hints and to the continuity represented by James the Deacon, she built upon this speculative point an argument that there was a faction, led throughout his *floruit* by Wilfrith, that laboured with the support of the papacy to preserve this aspect of the Gregorian Plan against various kinds of local opposition, particularly from the direction of a jealous Canterbury.⁴⁴ Valid objections to this thesis have since been raised, underlining its speculative nature and evidentiary deficiencies, but it has been acknowledged in principle that 'it would not have been unreasonable for Wilfrid to seek to raise the church of York to metropolitan status'.⁴⁵

It may be, however, that the evidentiary record contains more hints in support of this aspect at least of her thesis than Gibbs (who gave no thought to Oidilwald or the making of the York party) was aware of. In fact, she would seem to have missed additional indications that Wilfrith did indeed secure for himself (as he saw it) metropolitan status in the 660s, and that this issue, along with the question of the status of York, was an important element in Wilfrith's later disagreements

⁴² John, 'Social and Political Problems', 42. Charles-Edwards, *Ireland*, 423, has shown that Colmán might have thought of himself as a metropolitan, but he will hardly have done so for any reason associated with York or its history.

⁴³ John, 'Social and Political Problems', 42; see also Goffart, *Narrators*, 287.

⁴⁴ Gibbs, 'Decrees of Agatho', *passim*.

⁴⁵ N. Brooks, *The Early History of the Church of Canterbury: Christ Church from 597 to 1066* (London & New York, 1996), 72.

with Canterbury.⁴⁶ His grandiose consecration at Compiègne would seem good evidence of what was in Wilfrith's mind at the time. According to Stephanus:

*conventio magna facta est non minus quam duodecim episcoporum catholicorum, e quibus unus erat Aegilberctus episcopus. Qui omnes eum propter fidem suam indicatam grantanter et honorifice coram omni populo publice ordinaverunt et in sella aurea sedentem more eorum sursum elevaverunt, portantes manibus soli episcopi intra oratorium, nullo alio attingente, hymnos canticaque in choro canentes; sicque post spatium temporis ad sedem episcopalem Eboracae civitatis hunc emiserunt.*⁴⁷

there took place a large gathering of no less than twelve catholic bishops, of whom one was Bishop Agilbert. When they all had indication of his faith they ordained him publicly in the presence of all the people, joyfully and in great state, and as was customary for them they raised him up as he sat in a golden chair, the bishops carrying him by themselves with their hands, without the aid of others, into the oratory, singing hymns and chants in chorus. And so after a space of time they sent him back to the episcopal see of the city of York.

No doubt the story as presented is somewhat overdone: we certainly ought to be suspicious of the number twelve itself, which may be more hagiologically expedient than accurate. Nevertheless there would seem to have been many bishops present at this consecration, even if Stephanus exaggerates the number, in this suggests that it was no ordinary episcopal inauguration that Wilfrith sought and that Agilbert performed in Francia. We may therefore follow Stephanus's lead that 'Wilfrith of blessed memory had been appointed metropolitan bishop of the *civitas* of York' (*beatae memoriae Wilfritho episcopo metropolitano Eboracae civitatis constituto*),⁴⁸ and accept that those involved at Compiègne believed they were engaging in the consecration of a metropolitan bishop. Such a suggestion may be reinforced by the pomp and pageantry of Wilfrith's induction as described by Stephanus.

We must be in little doubt, given all that we have seen, that, at the very least, Stephanus genuinely believed from his information that Wilfrith had been metropolitan bishop of York from 669-78. The question before us is whether, as has

⁴⁶ It is on these two points, that there is 'no surviving indication that Wilfrid took any active measures to secure metropolitan rank at this time or later', or 'that the issue of York's metropolitan status lay at the centre of Wilfrid's quarrels with Archbishop Theodore and with his successor', along with a perceived silence of Stephanus, that Professor Brooks has rejected Gibbs' argument. See Brooks, *Church of Canterbury*, 72.

⁴⁷ Stephanus, *VW* 12.

⁴⁸ Stephanus, *VW* 21. Interestingly, the source from which Walter Bower extracted his annalistic-style notice of Wilfrith's birth described him as '*Sanctus Wilfridus Eboracensis archiepiscopus*', *Chron. Bower* (Watt et al.), iii.41.

been supposed, this was a belief concocted by Stephanus or his informants and omitted by Bede for reasons of historical accuracy, or whether *Vita Sancti Wilfrithi* speaks instead of a reality that had become so unpalatable by the early eighth century that Stephanus chose to be uncharacteristically reticent about it, and that Bede was happy to suppress it outright. Either way, Stephanus's testimony is far from silent on the matter of Wilfrith's metropolitan status. Professor Charles-Edwards has shown that 'lack of a papal pallium was not a fatal defect' in claiming metropolitan status – pre-eminence among the other bishops of a province – in either a Continental or an Irish context, provided the bishop involved could demonstrate convincingly to his colleagues 'a respectable antiquity for the pre-eminence of [his church]'.⁴⁹ In the case of York, such a demonstration will have been quite straightforward. There is a fair amount of material which suggests that it is not unreasonable to take seriously Stephanus's direct and indirect references to Wilfrith's metropolitan status. Bede, for example, rather awkwardly designates Tuda, the first universalist bishop appointed to succeed Colmán after his resignation after Whitby, as 'pontiff of the Christian family of the Northumbrians' (*pontificatus Nordanhymbrorum famulus Christi*),⁵⁰ a unique designation which may seek to obscure the fact that Tuda, who died in the first year of his pontificate, had adopted the title *episcopus metropolitanus*. At the very least, Bede's language suggests that the headship of the Northumbrian church was being conceptualised differently after Whitby than it had been before. Additionally, Bede reports that Oswy sent the first of Tuda's successors, Cedda's brother Ceadda, to Kent 'to be consecrated as bishop of the church of York' (*Eburacensis ecclesiae ordinaretur episcopus*), his first mention of an episcopate based at York after Paulinus.⁵¹

This is important evidence that can leave us in little doubt that the way in which the Northumbrian Church was organised shifted noticeably in the direction of the Gregorian Plan in the aftermath of Whitby. The fact that Ceadda was sent to Kent, rather than simply having been consecrated at home (with recourse, for

⁴⁹ Charles-Edwards, *Ireland*, 426-27.

⁵⁰ Bede, *HE* iii.26. Other uses of *pontifex* in *HE* by Bede refer to Pope Celestine (i.13) and Coifi, Edwini's high priest (ii.13), as well in quotations from the epitaphs of Gregory the Great (ii.1) and Theodore of Canterbury (v.8).

⁵¹ Bede, *HE* iii.28. There seem, for example, to have been plenty of canonical Gaelic bishops in Britain at this time.

example, to canonical bishops in Ireland), may also be taken as suggestive of an awareness of the Gregorian Plan. This required someone who had been appointed to the metropolitan see of York to seek his consecration in Canterbury, and this would seem therefore to be exactly what Ceadda was doing. Finally, the use of the term *synodus* with reference to Whitby is interesting. In contemporary Anglo-Saxon usage, it usually indicates 'assemblies of specially ecclesiastical character' convened under the authority of an archbishop, the *acta* of which are witnessed by him, a number of his subordinate bishops, and the king and his subordinates.⁵² That Whitby appears to have been convened under the authority of Oswy rather than that of an archbishop suggests to Cubitt that it was not in fact a *synodus* at all, but 'a royal council with an important religious dimension'.⁵³ It may be, however, that the fact that Whitby was remembered as a *synodus* by both Stephanus and Bede indicates some kind of recognition within the tradition (Stephanus's is explicit) of a metropolitan presence at the Council. Only a metropolitan bishop had the right to convene a synod of the bishops of a province, and it may be that either Tuda or Ceadda or Wilfrith, having been confirmed as a metropolitan at Whitby, enacted the decisions made there retrospectively.⁵⁴ On the whole, then, there are strong hints that Wilfrith's metropolitan status was not fabricated by Stephanus, but had indeed been established at Whitby as part of the decision to transfer the primacy of Northumbria from Lindisfarne to York.⁵⁵ The memory of this decision was clearly downplayed, even by Wilfrith's most avid supporters, within a decade of his death, and was thought best forgotten a decade later by Bede.⁵⁶ All of this places in a new light Theodore's perceived anxiety to make his presence known in Northumbria very quickly after his arrival in Canterbury in 669.⁵⁷

⁵² C. Cubitt, *Anglo-Saxon Church Councils c.650-c.850* (London & New York, 1995), 5-6.

⁵³ Cubitt, *Anglo-Saxon Church Councils*, 6.

⁵⁴ The designation of Whitby as a *synodus* might also explain Stephanus's belief that Colmán was a metropolitan, since either he or his informants may, believing that a *synodus* could only be summoned by an archbishop, have assumed that Colmán, the active bishop at the time, must have been a metropolitan.

⁵⁵ A conclusion now supported by Charles-Edwards, *Ireland*, 431-32.

⁵⁶ John, 'Social and Political Problems', 48-49, was thinking along these same lines even before the publication of Gibbs' ideas about the Gregorian Plan.

⁵⁷ J. Campbell, 'Elements in the Background to the Life of St Cuthbert and his Early Cult', in G. Bonner, D. Rollason & C. Stancliffe (eds.), *St Cuthbert, his Cult and his Community to AD 1200* (Woodbridge, 1989), 3-19, at 6.

There is reason to believe that Eata's expulsion from Ripon was both a calculated expression of dissatisfaction and the direct cause of the Council of Whitby.⁵⁸ The York party appears to have been as successful at this gathering as regards the Gregorian Plan as they were on the matter of universalism, and Abels has put forward a compelling explanation of Oswy's amenability on these matters.⁵⁹ Having accepted the orthodoxy of both universalist theology and the Gregorian Plan for church organisation in Britain, however, it is clear that Oswy refused to acknowledge Wilfrith, the York party's candidate (as subsequent events show), as a viable metropolitan bishop, regardless of the level of support he may have had within the victorious party at Whitby. The reasons for this refusal were doubtless many-fold, including a concern to keep the triumphant York party in its place after Whitby and a desire to confer leadership of the Northumbrian church upon one of Oswy's own partisans. The man for the job was a person of moderation who was broadly acceptable to the majority of the ecclesiastical establishment, and none of these characteristics are likely to have described Wilfrith. Oswy probably had good reasons to look elsewhere for his *episcopus metropolitanus* in the wake of Colmán's resignation and Tuda's untimely death. Stephanus, however, alleges that Wilfrith was chosen by both kings to succeed Colmán, 'in consultation with the wise-men of their nation' (*consilium cum sapientibus suae gentis*), never mentioning Tuda, and that after he had departed for Gaul to be consecrated, Oswy, 'moved by envy and at the instigation of the ancient foe, consented to allow another to forestall him in his see in an irregular manner' (*male suadente invidia, hostis antiqui instinctu alium praearripere inordinate sedem suam edoctus consensit ab his*).⁶⁰ Although he chose to follow Stephanus's chronology, Bede contradicts him in reporting, probably reliably, that it was Alchfrith alone who 'sent the priest Wilfrith to the king of the Gauls to be consecrated bishop for him and for his [kingdom]' (*misit Uilfridum presbyterum ad regem Galliarum, qui eum sibi suisque consecrari faceret episcopum*). His explanation that Oswy, in sending Ceadda to Canterbury, was 'imitating the actions of his son'

⁵⁸ Abels, 'Council of Whitby', 8-10.

⁵⁹ Abels, 'Council of Whitby', 11-16.

⁶⁰ Stephanus, *VW* 11-14.

(*imitatus industriam filii*) because Wilfrith 'lingered abroad for his consecration' (*in transmarinis partibus propter ordinationem dermorante*),⁶¹ is less convincing.

It is at this moment that Alchfrith utterly vanishes from the historical narrative of the seventh century, and we are justified in suspecting that much more was taking place at this time between Oswy Aedilfrithing and his son than we know about. We have seen that Bede tells us of Oswy that 'he was attacked...by his own son Alchfrith', but at no other point is this 'attack' discussed by Bede or by Stephanus. There can be no doubt that these details were consciously suppressed. This decision has affected how Stephanus and Bede remember the events surrounding the consecration of Wilfrith. Stephanus, in the following speech assigned to Wilfrith upon his first meeting with Alchfrith, seems to hint at some details of this period in a manner that matches Bede's testimony:

*Iesus Christus, filius Dei, praecepit discipulis suis et principi eorum Petro apostolo: Domum in quamcumque intraveritis, dicite: Pax huic domui [Matt. 10:12]. Huius pacis fundamenta primum inter corpus et animam in nobis ponere debemus, ut doctor gentium praedicavit, dicens: Pax Christi exultet in cordibus vestris [Col. 3:15]. Deinde inter nos et proximos pacem habere Iesus Christus praecepit, dicens: Habete sal in vobis et pacem habete inter vos [Mark 9:49].*⁶²

Jesus Christ, the son of God, taught his disciples and the apostle Peter their chief, saying, 'Into whatsoever house you enter, first say "Peace be to this house."' The foundations of this peace ought to be first of all laid within us, between body and soul, as the teacher of the gentiles declared, saying, "Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts." Then Jesus Christ taught that we must keep peace between ourselves and our neighbours, saying, "Have salt in yourselves and have peace with one another."

The repeated emphasis on peace here, including three successive scriptural quotations that focus on it, is arresting. We need not accept the memory of Alchfrith's culpability as evidence that Oswy was not the aggressor in the ruin of his son - if nothing else, the precedents of the murder of Oswini and the dispossession of Oidilwald demonstrate that Oswy was more than capable of bringing the sword to bear where Deira was concerned. It seems likely that tradition remembered the vanquished Alchfrith as having brought his ruin upon himself through his ambition. Viewed in this context, the point of this speech by Wilfrith, which seems to stress that, from the moment he met Alchfrith, Wilfrith advocated peace to him,

⁶¹ Bede, *HE* iii.28.

⁶² Stephanus, *VW*7.

may have been to assert that Wilfrith was not responsible for any belligerence Oswy may have suffered on the part of his son. Bede speaks of Wilfrith as Alchfrith's 'instructor in the Christian faith' on the matter of Easter,⁶³ and it is no great leap from this to the implication that Wilfrith, among others perhaps, guided Alchfrith's thoughts and incited him to violence against his father. Stephanus's text seems to protest against such an accusation, and it may be that the tradition that 'Wilfrith lingered abroad' at the time of his consecration, which is likely to have been true, was given particular emphasis by those who wished to distance Wilfrith from Alchfrith's perceived folly.

The vacant see of Canterbury seems to have played a key part in the last days of Alchfrith. Bede says that Ceadda, having found that Bishop Deusdedit had died, sought his consecration instead from Wine, bishop of the West Saxons, who was assisted by two British bishops. There is room for doubt here; Stephanus (and Bede following him) tells us that Ceadda remained in office for three years before he was replaced by Wilfrith,⁶⁴ which happened in 669, so that, if we trust this information, we can date Ceadda's consecration to 666, some two years after the death of the archbishop in 664. By this time, Oswy will already have met with Egberct of Kent and sent Wigheard to Rome to be made metropolitan of Canterbury, and he may indeed have already heard back from Rome that Wigheard had died on this journey and that the pope was considering whom he might send to take up the vacant see.⁶⁵ Such a scenario allows for the possibility that Oswy became concerned, his chosen candidate for Canterbury having died, about what sort of man might be sent from Rome. The hastiness of Ceadda's consecration in 666 may therefore reflect a desire to have him established as metropolitan at York before the pope had succeeded in finding a new archbishop for the see of Canterbury. This, according to the Gregorian Plan, would have given Ceadda a degree of seniority over his metropolitan colleague in Canterbury, and thus a certain amount of surety for Oswy against whomever might be chosen. Having perhaps been frustrated to this point in their desire to secure York for Wilfrith, Alchfrith and the York party (including

⁶³ Bede, *HE* iii.25. Stephanus's chronology of the Easter controversy, in which Alchfrith is a committed member of the universalist party before he summons Wilfrith to Deira, would appear to be an attempt to exonerate Wilfrith for having been responsible for influencing Alchfrith.

⁶⁴ Bede, *HE* v.19; Stephanus, *VW* 14.

Wilfrith himself) may well have seen this development as their chance to force Wilfrith into the primacy on the basis of a technicality – hence the decision to secure a more acceptable consecration in Compiègne through the good offices of Agilbert, now bishop of Paris, and perhaps those of Ebroin, *maior palatii* of Neustria.⁶⁶ This may, in turn, have been part of a larger campaign to manoeuvre Alchfrith into his father's over-kingship. If, as suggested above, Wilfrith's actions were those of a man seeking consecration to a metropolitan see, rather than a simple bishopric, they were also surely those of a man who expected such a consecration to be challenged, indicating that Ceadda's elevation had preceded it, even though, with the benefit of hindsight, both Stephen and Bede claim the opposite. There seems little doubt that Wilfrith and Alchfrith planned to challenge the validity of Ceadda's consecration before the new metropolitan – or as things transpired, the new archbishop – of Canterbury, or before the pope, and to argue that Wilfrith's consecration in Gaul should be preferred.

Bede's version of the relevant events, in which Alchfrith acts unilaterally in sending Wilfrith to Gaul, informs us that Stephanus's claim that Oswy and his son chose together to send Wilfrith to Gaul for his consecration is fantasy. We may rest assured that in this Alchfrith acted without his father's support or sanction, and that Oswy responded to this decision by eliminating his son. Stephanus maintains that, after the consecration of Ceadda, Wilfrith returned to his abbatial office in Ripon and abided there for the next three years, 'except for the frequent occasions when Wulfhere, king of the Mercians, out of sincere affection, invited him into his realm to fulfil various episcopal functions' (*nisi quod frequenter a Uulfario rege Merciorum ad officia diversa episcopalia in regione sua cum vera dilectione invitatus est*).⁶⁷ Bede is more vague about Wilfrith's return to Britain,⁶⁸ and given the unlikelihood of his return to a Deira in which his close ally and co-conspirator Alchfrith had just met his ruin and the suggestion that accusations of his complicity with the rebellious subject king were levelled against him, Stephanus's statement that Wilfrith spent a significant amount of time in the kingdom of the Mercians is probably essential to

⁶⁵ Bede, *HE* iii.29.

⁶⁶ Stephanus, *VW* 12. On Ebroin's involvement, see I. Wood, 'Northumbrians and Franks in the age of Wilfrid', in *Northern History* 31 (1995), 10-21, at 19.

⁶⁷ Stephanus, *VW* 14.

understanding the reality of the situation. Confronted with a lack of security north of the Humber, Wilfrith may be seen as having sought refuge in Wulfhere's kingdom. No doubt he continued to make nominal claim to Ceadda's metropolitan episcopate of York, but he probably remained safe from the clutches of Oswy in exile (for the second time in his life), a state of being with which Wilfrith would become increasingly familiar throughout the rest of his career.

Bede informs us that the controversy about Easter had first arisen during the episcopate of Finán, who died three years before Whitby, and speaks of the resurgence of this dispute after Finán's death as 'a still more serious controversy concerning the observance of Easter as well as about other matters of discipline in the ecclesiastical life' (*gravior de obseruatione paschae necnon et de aliis ecclesiasticae uitae disciplinis controuersia*), or, as he puts it elsewhere, a 'question of Easter and of the tonsure and of other ecclesiastical matters' (*quaestio de pascha uel tonsura uel aliis rebus ecclesiasticis*).⁶⁹ The idea that the controversy became *gravior* and, evidently, more wide-ranging and complex, is an interesting one. If, as has been suggested here, the Gregorian Plan was one of these 'other ecclesiastical matters' that Bede mentions in such dismissive language, we have further indication of the unpalatability of the whole affair to Bede. Writing seventy years after Whitby, long after it had been decided by Theodore that they had been in error to do so, the fact that the participants in the Council had endeavoured to recognise the metropolitan status of York must have been somewhat embarrassing, not just to the tradition represented by Bede, which admired Theodore, but also to that represented by Stephanus, which was more guarded about him. By Bede's time York was again striving to attain metropolitan, even archiepiscopal, status, and in such a climate it will not have been desirable to call undue attention to the mistakes (as they had by then become adjudged) made at Whitby regarding York's status. In other words, it may not have been until after Theodore became archbishop and, ultimately, rejected Wilfrith's claims to metropolitan status, that the history of this period became reoriented to obscure the York question and to focus the history of the important disputes of the 660s upon Paschal theology and questions of canonicity and

⁶⁸ Bede, *HE* iii.28; iv.2 places him in Kent.

⁶⁹ Bede, *HE* iii.25.

catholicity.⁷⁰ Nevertheless, we have seen that Bede, in discussing some of the key members of the York party, provides a number of important hints at the full nature of the disputes addressed at Whitby, as does Stephanus in his discussion of the years that followed the Council.

Fortriu and the Early *Imperium* of the Bernicians

As a last point in support of the present view that Northumbrian ecclesiastical leaders of the 660s were considerably mindful of the Gregorian Plan, we may return at last to the matter of the ecclesiastical history of Fortriu. Stephanus envisions Wilfrith as having presided as bishop over a *regnum ecclesiarum* which included Britons, Gaels and Picts. Bede carefully adds that his jurisdiction extended only 'as far as King Oswy was able to extend *imperium*' (*quousque rex Oswiu imperium protendere poterat*), but there is little indication of such qualification in the text of what appears to be a contemporary document recording Wilfrith's having spoken in Rome 'for all the northern part of the islands of Britain and Ireland, which are inhabited by the Anglian and British nations, as well as by the Gaelic and Pictish nations' (*pro omni aquilonali parte Brittanniae et Hiberniae insulisque quae ab Anglorum et Brittonum necnon Scottorum et Pictorum gentibus colebantur*).⁷¹ Awareness and application of the Gregorian Plan in the 660s provides a ready explanation for what would otherwise appear to be Wilfrith's temerity in advancing such claims, but this brings us no nearer to determining whether such Anglian involvement in the ecclesiastical affairs of the southern Pictish zone in the latter part of the seventh century was ever more than notional.

We have seen that the evidence seems to suggest that the main theatre of expansion of the power of Aedilfrith (584-616) was to the west of his native land rather than to the north.⁷² Having established himself as over-king of the Deirans and Bernicians in 616, Edwini son of Aelle (616-33), according to Bede, 'ruled over

⁷⁰ Another aspect of this re-writing of the history was the decision 'to abolish the memory of those perfidious kings' Eanfrith and Osric, and the very idea of the apostasy of Eanfrith and Osric, or at least that of the general apostasy of all Northumbria during their reign and the coincident crimes against the church alleged to have been perpetrated by Catguollaun and Penda, may be another aspect of this process, providing a break with the Paulinian past and a clean slate for Aedán and Oswald.

⁷¹ Stephanus, *VW* 21, 53; Bede, *HE* iv.3.

⁷² Bede, *HE* ii.2 discusses his attack on Chester, in which he is alleged to have ordered the massacre of monks.

all the nations, as much Anglian as British, who inhabit *Britannia*, save only the men of Kent' (*cunctis qui Britanniam incolunt, Anglorum pariter et Brettonum, populis praefuit, praeter Cantuariis tantum*).⁷³ This vague statement might be interpreted as indicating that he acquired some kind of influence over Pictish territory, but all of our explicit evidence suggests rather that Edwini, like Aedilfrith, conducted his military operations in the British west, and not in the north. Bede mentions his subjection of the British *Meuaniae* islands 'which are situated between Ireland and Britain' (*quae inter Hiberniam et Britanniam sitae sunt*), while *Historia Brittonum* records that he 'occupied Elmet and expelled Certic, king of that country' (*occupavit Elmet, et expulit Certic, regem illius regionis*).⁷⁴ Bede himself, moreover, suggests that his description of Edwini's sphere of influence ought not to be regarded as having included Pictish territory. He notes that while Oswald, as his predecessor, ruled 'within the same bounds' (*hisdem finibus*), Oswy in turn 'for a time held almost the same territory, and also overwhelmed and made tributary even Pictish and Gaelic *gentes*, who inhabit the northern parts of Britain' (*aequalibus pene terminis regum nonnullo tempore cohercens, Pictorum quoque atque Scottorum gentes, quae septentrionales Britanniae fines tenent, maxima et parte perdomuit ac tributarias fecit*).⁷⁵ This may be taken as indicating that the latter could not be said for Oswald or Edwini, and it would therefore seem that, as Bede understood it, the Picts remained outwith Edwini's sphere of influence.⁷⁶

The same would not appear to be true, however, of Oswald Aedilfrithing (634–42), described by Adomnán as 'emperor of all Britain' (*totius Britanniae imperator*),⁷⁷ who, Bede says, 'held under his sway all the *nationes* and *prouinciae* of *Britannia*, which are divided into four languages, being British, Pictish, Gaelic and

⁷³ Bede, *HE* ii.5.

⁷⁴ Bede, *HE* ii.5; *HB* 63. The 'Mevanian' isles have been thought to include Anglesey and Man, while 'Elmet' lay between the vale of York and the Pennine watershed, on the southwestern frontier of Deira. Edwini is called one of the 'three great oppressors of Anglesey' (*deir prif ormes Mon*) in one Welsh triad; other *trioedd* place him at battles in Rhos and on the Severn, Bromwich, *TYP*, 47–48, 167, 182.

⁷⁵ Bede, *HE* ii.5.

⁷⁶ Such an interpretation would seem to agree with Bede's implications elsewhere, both later in the *HE* (ii.9) and in his 'Greater Chronicle', J. McClure & R. Collins (eds.) *Bede: The Ecclesiastical History of the English People, The Greater Chronicle, Bede's Letter to Egbert* (Oxford, 1994), 332, ('unlike any of the Angles before him, he brought all the bounds of Britain, wherever either the Angles or the Britons dwelt, under his authority'). Perhaps in these cases Bede was deliberately vague, expecting that any confusion would tend to favour Edwini's memory.

⁷⁷ Adomnán, *VC*, i.1.

English' (*omnes nationes et prouincias Brittaniae, quae in quattuor linguas, id est Brettonum Pictorum Scottorum et Anglorum, diuisae sunt, in dictione accepit*).⁷⁸ Such grandiose claims are undermined to a certain extent by Bede's statement, mentioned above, that Oswald reigned 'within the same bounds' as had Edwini before him whereas Oswy his successor 'overwhelmed and made tributary even Pictish and Gaelic *gentes*', but may be explained at least in part by taking on board the possibility that the idea of Pictishness was beginning to change in the middle third of the seventh century. The siege of *Eten* (Edinburgh) of 638 has for some time been associated with the final subjugation of Lothian by the Bernicians, leaving open to them the way to the Forth,⁷⁹ and we may now add that, if there was a Miathic bishop or *princeps* based at the church of Abercorn who subsequently crossed to the other side of the Forth, he is likely to have done so at about this time. In the same year Domnall Brecc mac Echdach, king of the Dál Riata, was defeated in battle at *Glenn Mureson*,⁸⁰ and if Skene and Professor Jackson were right to suspect that this unidentified valley is located in central Scotland,⁸¹ it may be that the Miathi came under co-ordinated attack from two different directions in the middle decades of the seventh century when Manau and *urbs Iudeu* (probably Stirling), where Oswy, some twenty years later, would be accosted by Penda,⁸² fell under Bernician control.

Whether or not he managed it with the support of Domnall Brecc, the subjection by Oswald of the Miathic heartland and the occupation of Stirling below

⁷⁸ Bede, *HE* iii.6. For a discussion of the evidence relating to the subjection of the Gaelic west to the Bernicians in this period, see H. Moisl, 'The Bernician Royal Dynasty and the Irish in the Seventh Century', in *Peritia* 2 (1983), 103-26, at 116-20.

⁷⁹ AU 638.1; for detailed discussions see Hunter Blair, 'Bernicians and their Northern Frontier', 161-62; K. H. Jackson, 'Edinburgh and the Anglian Occupation of Lothian', in P. Clemoes (ed.), *The Anglo-Saxons: Studies in some Aspects of the History and Culture presented to Bruce Dickins* (London, 1959), 35-42; Koch, *Gododdin*, pp. lii-iv. Scott, *PNPC*, 313, believed that the *obsessio Eten* was intended to bring the borders of Bernicia closer to those of the Dál Riata, while Skene, *CS* I, 247-49, believed that it was Domnall Brecc who laid siege to *Eten* as part of an ongoing campaign, including the battles of *Calathros* and *Glenn Muiresan*, 'to wrest the district between the Avon and the Pentland Hills from the Angles'.

⁸⁰ AU 638.1; AT adds that *muindt Donall Bricc do teichedh* ('the household of Domnall Brecc was put to flight').

⁸¹ Skene, *CS* I, 247-49, identified *Glenn Muiresan* with the Mureston Water in Midlothian; Jackson, 'Edinburgh and the Anglian Occupation', 37, dismissed this as philologically impossible, but continued to suspect that the battle took place 'somewhere in central Scotland'. Only a few years later, of course, Domnall Brecc was fighting and falling in Strathcarron.

⁸² *HB* 64-65. On the identification of *urbs Iudeu* with Stirling, see K. Jackson, 'Bede's *Urbs Giudi*: Stirling or Cramond?', in *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies* 2 (1981), 1-7. For an interpretation of the evidence relating to Oswald's relationship with Cenél nGabráin, see M. Ziegler, 'Oswald and the Irish', in *The Heroic Age* 4 (2001), URL <<http://www.mun.ca/mst/heroicage/issues/4/ziegler.html>>.

Dumyat, thus effectively severing the territory controlled by the kinsmen of Bridei f. Bili into Clydesdale on the one hand and Fothriff and Strathearn on the other, would account for the idea that Oswald held Picts under his sway. These events may also, of course, be crucial for understanding the political and other forces that contributed to the Pictish ethnogenesis envisioned throughout the early part of this study. We need not, in other words, reject Bede's testimony regarding the extent of Oswald's *imperium* as 'gross exaggeration' or 'audacious fable',⁸³ and if there is little evidence that Áedán of Lindisfarne exerted any authority north of the Forth during the period of Oswald's *imperium*, it would seem notable that places like Inchcolm and Inchmahome, two church sites dedicated to Colum Cille, may have been established in Miathic territory during this period as 'staging posts on the Iona-Lindisfarne route'.⁸⁴

The Southern Pictish Zone and the Oswegian *Imperium*

The evidence suggests that Oswy Aedilfrithing (642-70) maintained or reasserted his brother's northern *imperium*, including the proposed Miathic component in Manau that lay on the route-way to the Gaelic west and Iona. It is also clear that, at some later point, he 'overwhelmed and made subject' what Bede calls 'the greater part of the *gens Pictorum*' (*gentem Pictorum maxima ex parte...subiecit*).⁸⁵ This is not likely to have occurred in the wake of Oswald's destruction, since there is every reason to suspect that Oswy was compelled at first to acknowledge the ascendant Penda as his over-king, who had probably been instrumental, both in 633 and in 642, in reaffirming the division of Northumbria into the Bernician and Deiran kingships.⁸⁶ It may also be significant that Domnall Brecc, as we have seen, was

⁸³ Scott, *PNPC*, 311-12. Skene, *CS I*, 252 and Henderson, *Picts*, 52 also reject Bede's claim.

⁸⁴ Taylor, 'Seventh-century Iona abbots', 43-52; *idem*, 'Columba east of Drumalban', 114. Taylor has argued for the existence of a route-way from Loch Lomond to Lothian and thence to Berwick-upon-Tweed, down the Whiteadder Burn, used by Gaels traveling between Dál Riata and Lindisfarne. Inchmahome, Inchcolm and Abbey St Bathans appear to be dedications to Columba and Baithéne along this route.

⁸⁵ Bede, *HE* iii.24.

⁸⁶ It was probably to reinforce such an arrangement that 'a hostile Mercian army, under the leadership of Penda, which had been cruelly devastating the kingdom of Northumbria far and wide, reached the royal *urbs* [of Bamburgh]' during the episcopate of Áedán of Lindisfarne (Bede, *HE* iii.16). On Penda's activities in East Anglia, see *HE* iii.18; on his influence in Middle Anglia, see *HE* iii.21. Bede may have been loathe to admit it, but there is every reason to believe that Penda, called 'king of Saxons' in the Irish annals (*AU*, *AT*, *AClon*) possessed the kind of influence previously held by the likes of Edwini

killed a few months after the death of Oswald in a battle in Strathcarron, since the support of the Dál Riata may have been very important in enabling the Bernicians to wage war on their northern frontier while Penda still lived. With the Deiran question seemingly foremost on his mind until 655, while almost certainly owing tribute to the vigilant and energetic king of the Mercians, it is difficult to see how Oswy can have been able to cast his eyes so far afield as the southern Pictish zone in the first decade and more of his reign. The earliest indication of Oswy's rise to prominence that we know about is the arrangement of the marriage of his daughter Alchfled to Penda's son Peada, king of the Middle Angles under his father. Bede says that Alchfrith, almost certainly Alchfled's uterine brother, had already been married to Penda's daughter Cyneburg, and convinced Peada to convert to Christianity, which Oswy required of him before he would allow him to marry his daughter.⁸⁷ His conversion, which is implied by Bede to have taken place in 653, need not be taken as indicating a change in Peada's allegiances from his polytheistic father to Oswy, since Bede stresses here that 'King Penda did not forbid the preaching of the Word, even in his own kingdom of the Mercians, if any wished to hear it' (*nec prohibuit Penda rex, quin etiam in sua, hoc est Merciorum, natione Verbum, siqui uellent audire, praedicaretur*). Penda must have arranged for his daughter's earlier marriage to Alchfrith, and it seems most likely that he was also involved in arranging the marriage of Peada and Alchfled. These two marriages need not indicate any loss of *imperium* on Penda's part, but they would seem to indicate his acknowledgement of the growing prestige of Oswy ten years after the death of Oswald. Nevertheless, it is probable that it was not until the death of Penda at *Campus Gai* two years later on 15 November 655 that the Bernician over-king, no longer a client-king, could think realistically about committing the necessary resources to a Pictish campaign. It was not until this great victory that, as Bede says, 'he freed his nation from the hostile devastations of the heathens' (*suam gentem ab hostili paganorum depopulatione liberauit*).⁸⁸

and Oswald for thirteen years, a term more lengthy than that of the latter, and almost as long as that of the former.

⁸⁷ Bede, *HE* iii.21. To be of marriageable age in 653, Alchflæd is not likely to have been a daughter of Eanfled, who probably was not married to Oswy until 644.

⁸⁸ Bede, *HE* iii.24. For a similar view see Kirby, 'Pictorum provincias', 289. *HB* 64 refers to the place of this important battle as *campus Gai* (*Gaii campus*, ACamb 656), which, Bede relates, lay in the district of

As we have seen, Talorcan, the son of Oswy's older brother Eanfrith who had allegedly apostatised as Bernician king and been killed in 634,⁸⁹ was probably a kinsman of his royal predecessor Talorc f. Uuid, but uncertainty surrounding whether or not Uuid may be identified with Guipno leaves us in doubt as to whether these men were members of the Miathic royal kindred outlined in the previous chapter. The acquisition of a Pictish kingship in 653 by his nephew (who may only have been a few years his junior) has been regarded as a critical factor in the establishment of Oswegian *imperium* north of the Forth, whether because Talorcan is assumed to have owed his succession to his uncle's support or to have been rendered obedient or indebted to Oswy in some other way, or because Oswy is assumed to have claimed to be his nephew's heir in 657 and to have annexed his *imperium* by inheritance.⁹⁰ In none of these cases, however, is Bede's language regarding how Picts were 'overwhelmed and made tributary' (*perdomuit ac tributarias fecit*) reflected. Success on the battlefield is surely implied, and there is no evidence of an Oswegian campaign north of the Forth before or during Talorcan's reign. There is therefore no particular reason to doubt that Talorcan acquired his kingship through his own qualifications of descent and personal excellence, nor to assume that he conducted himself as anything but an independent lord and king. This having been said, however, it is surely not beyond the realm of possibility that the two kings made something of their kinship in their dealings with one another throughout Talorcan's short reign, and the victorious Bernician host at *Campus Gai*, which appears to have begun its march from West Lothian, may even have included a body of Pictish warriors.

The key to understanding the Oswegian *imperium* north of the Forth may well begin instead with the death of Talorcan, who is succeeded in the 'Pictish' regnal list by Gartnait f. Donuel (657-63). There is no evidence of trouble or war

Loidis (modern Leeds takes its name from this regional name). According to Bede, Penda brought 'thirty legions of soldiers experienced in war and commanded by the most famous *duces*' to the battle, but fell with most of these *duces*, including the king of the East Angles. But according to *HB* 64, one of these *duces*, Catgabail, king of Gwynedd, escaped from the battle, earning himself the epithet *catguommed* ('battle-dodger').

⁸⁹ It may be noted that the identification of Eanfrith Aedilfrithing as Talorcan's father is no older than Skene and, although very probable, is not certain; see Miller, 'Eanfrith's Pictish Son', 1.

⁹⁰ See, for example, Smyth, *Warlords*, 61-62; Miller, 'Eanfrith's Pictish Son', 63. The inheritance hypothesis was advanced by Skene, *CS* I, 257-63, who characterised Talorcan as 'last independent king of the Picts'.

with Oswy or anyone else during Gartnait's reign, and he was succeeded by his brother Drust (663-71) in the year before the Council of Whitby. There are indications that these brothers were northern kings based in the Calidonian zone rather than in the Miathic zone that, if the foregoing arguments are taken on board, may be seen as having become severely truncated by Bernician expansion into Manau. Benjamin Hudson has posited that Drust may be identified with Drustan, the father of Talorcan f. Drustan, *rex Athfoitle*, a key figure in eighth-century Pictish politics.⁹¹ The two men are more likely to have been different individuals, but we might nevertheless compare the postulated relationship between Talorcan son of Eanfrith and his predecessor Talorc as betrayed by the diminutive suffix applied to the former's name. This allows for the argument that a similarly close relationship existed between Drust and the shadowy Drustan, whom we can confidently associate with his son's attested kingship in Atholl. To these hints that Drust f. Donuel and his brother were of northern extraction we may add the notice of Drust's death in the Iona Chronicle in 678, some six years after he had been cast from his kingship.⁹² Whether we attribute this obit to the exiled king's retirement to Iona or to his having established so important a relationship with the Columban *familia* that he remained notable on Iona even after his expulsion, the evidence we have seen in the previous chapter suggests that, on balance, Drust is most likely to have been a northern Pict like his putative kinsmen Drustan and Talorcan *rex Athfoitle*, and so a successor of Bridei f. Mailcon, the 'great king of the Tay'.

In assembling these hints regarding the origins of the sons of Donuel, we may, then, begin to attempt to envision the political situation that developed in the southern Pictish zone in the last third of the seventh century and led to the Pictish ethnogenesis. Drust f. Donuel, seemingly a northern potentate, and then in the first or second year of his kingship, was almost certainly one of the protagonists involved in the battle of *Luith Feirn* in 664, placed by the Annals of Ulster *i Fortriu* ('in Fortriu'). This engagement, our earliest reference to the existence of Fortriu, may have been nothing more than a challenge to Drust's succession which, to judge from the fact that he maintained his position for eight more years, he answered

⁹¹ On Talorcan f. Drustan, see AU 739.7 and below. For the identification of this Drustan with Drust f. Donuel, see Hudson, *Kings of Celtic Scotland*, 24-25.

successfully. On the other hand, *Luith Feirn* may equally mark the clash alluded to by Bede, by which the Oswegian *imperium* was extended over 'the greater part of the *gens Pictorum*'.⁹³ It seems fairly unlikely, however, that Oswy himself was free to organise, mount and fight a campaign north of the Forth in 664, for this was the year of the Council of Whitby,⁹⁴ in the aftermath of which the king appears to have been embroiled in ecclesiastical matters, including the selection of new metropolitan bishops for Canterbury and York after the deaths of Deusdedit and Tuda respectively. Other candidates to lead such a campaign, including Oswy's son and eventual successor Ecgfrith, by then nineteen years old, may be posited, but it is also possible that Oswy's military success against the Picts as reported by Bede came about as a result of his having sent support to a Miathic aristocracy that, after the fall of Manau to the Bernicians in the middle decades of the seventh century, were willing to offer Oswy tribute in return for help in dealing with Gartnait and Drust, who are likely to have become aggressive in the wake of the troubles experienced by their southern neighbours.⁹⁵ In other words, the battle of *Luith Feirn* in Fortriu may represent a Miathic victory over Drust f. Donuel, achieved through the support of Bernician arms. It is tempting indeed to speculate as to whether or not Bridei f. Beli, the Miathic dynast who would eventually expel Drust from his kingship in 671 and was a kinsman of Oswy's wife and son, was the real victor of *Luith Feirn*, and whether this battle marks the beginnings of Miathic expansion across the Tay. Such a scenario remains only one of any number of possibilities surrounding the mysterious battle of *Luith Feirn*, although there can be little doubt that this engagement is by far the most likely candidate for the event, given Bede's language, which brought about the Anglian conquest of new Pictish territory along with a submission to Oswy on the part of a Pictish king.

⁹² AU 678.6.

⁹³ On this battle, see Woolf, 'Verturian Hegemony', 107.

⁹⁴ For an overview of the controversies that have surrounded the dating of the Council, see Abels, 'Council of Whitby', 20-22.

⁹⁵ Although following a different rationale, Kirby, 'Pictorum provincias', 311-13 has also identified Gartnait and Drust with northern Pictavia and suggested that this 'made Oswiu's conquest easier'.

Anglian Clerics in Seventh-Century Fortriu?

Having been established as the metropolitan bishop of York, and with the power of Oswy behind his claim to the northern primacy outlined in the Gregorian Plan, Ceadda may, therefore, have been the first Northumbrian bishop who was able to cross the Forth in safety in order to press claims of metropolitan authority. He can also have conducted himself in a less authoritative way, commissioning subordinate clerics to travel into the southern Pictish zone to visit churches and meet with churchmen in Fife and Fothriff. There is no hint in the anonymous *Vita Cuthberti* that Cuthbert's alleged voyage from Melrose to a *regio Pictorum* in Fife was anything but routine, and although this is likely to speak of a slightly later period, there is no reason to think that similar journeys were not being undertaken by Anglian churchmen to Miathic regions under direct Anglian control during Ceadda's short pontificate in York.⁹⁶ It has been argued that among those Picts tributary to Oswy 'there can have been no question of the celebration of the Celtic Easter being tolerated in their churches'.⁹⁷ This probably overestimates the extent of Ceadda's real power beyond his borders, and we need not prefer this view, and the corresponding view of 'an intense Celtic revival' in church practises after 685, to the likelihood that the newly realised universalism of Ceadda's pontificate was not imposed at this time upon Pictish churches or monasteries because his influence was limited. We need not assume either that Anglian clerics will have been met with unreserved hostility everywhere they went in the southern Pictish zone. It seems quite possible that universalist observances and other matters were at least discussed by Anglian and Pictish clerics in this period, perhaps with the effect of introducing to the ecclesiastical culture of the latter the same universalist underclass that had abided north of the Humber for three decades before it finally emerged triumphant at Whitby.⁹⁸ Neither should we assume that influences flowed only in one direction, and it is notable that Pictish influences upon Northumbrian

⁹⁶ Anon., *VSC* ii.4. For a similar view of the routineness of Cuthbert's visit, see Kirby, 'Bede and the Pictish Church', 10-11.

⁹⁷ Henderson, *Picts*, 81.

⁹⁸ This possibility undermines Veitch's suggestion, 'Columban Church', 633, that the Anglian failure to convert the Picts to the universalist Easter suggests that their Pictish claims were 'largely titular'. We cannot know how far universalism did or did not spread among the Picts in this period, save that it appears not to have become the norm.

manuscript and epigraphic art is generally thought to date from this period and later.⁹⁹ As in the case of Áedán, it is difficult to know exactly what kind of evidence to look for in the search for Ceadda's influence north of the Forth, and it is certainly possible that he will have made dedications to Áedán, although he is more likely, perhaps, to have preferred more universal saints like Peter and the other apostles – dedications more usually associated with the post-*correctio* period of the eighth century.

Conclusion

With the death of Oswy on 15 February 670, the last of the Aeðilfrithings to hold the kingship of his people was laid to rest in the royal burial ground of the monastery of Whitby. During his lifetime of fifty-eight years, he and his brothers had experienced war and peace, exile and dispossession, kingship and *imperium*, and had participated in the christianisation of much of the Anglo-Saxon zone. Mindful of the Gregorian Plan for the organisation of the church in Britain, and throwing the weight of royal influence behind it during the reign of Oswy, the Twister's sons maintained an ongoing, if limited, interest in the ecclesiastical and political activities of their northern neighbours. Even during the reign of Oswy, when such ecclesiastical pretensions were backed up by military success, it is difficult to assess the real impact of Anglian religious activity north of the Forth. Perhaps the period of Oswegian *imperium* in the southern Pictish zone is more important for its legacy to those who rose to prominence in the years following Oswy's death – Ecgfrith, Bridei, and Wilfrith – than it is for what it itself achieved among the southern Picts. It would seem nevertheless to be the case, as we have seen both here and in the preceding chapter, that among scholars Iona and Gaelic Argyll have taken up more attention than is perhaps merited as potential sources of influence in the ecclesiastical development of Fortriu during the seventh century, while the Anglo-Saxon south continues to be worthy of considerable consideration.

⁹⁹ Foster, *PGS*, 78.

VI

Under the Yoke of Captivity

Bridei f. Bili and the making of the *prouincia Pictorum*

When King Ecgfrith lived in peace with our bishop, the kingdom, as many bear witness, was increased on every hand by his glorious victories...for in his early years, while the kingdom was still weak, the bestial peoples of the Picts had a fierce contempt for subjection to the Saxons and threatened to throw off from themselves the yoke of servitude; they gathered together innumerable nations from every nook and corner in the north, and [behaved] as a swarm of ants in the summer, sweeping from their hills...When King Ecgfrith heard this, lowly as he was among his own people and magnanimous towards his enemies, he forthwith got together a troop of horsemen...[R]educed to servitude, the peoples remained subjected, under the yoke of captivity until the day of the king's killing.

- *Vita Sancti Wilfrithi* (§ 19)

On the afternoon of Saturday 20 May 685, Ecgfrith son of Oswy, king of the Northumbrians, was killed. According to the *Historia Brittonum*,

*fecit bellum contra fratruelem suum, qui erat rex Pictorum, nomine Birdei, et ibi corruit cum omni robore exercitus sui, et Picti cum rege suo victores extiterunt, et numquam addiderunt Saxones ambrorum ut a Pictis vectigal exigent.*¹

he fought a battle against his cousin (*fratruelis*), who was king of Picts, called Bridei, and there he fell with all the strength of his army, and the Picts with their king emerged as victors, and the Saxon thugs never increased thence to exact tribute from the Picts.

This record may have been influenced by the testimony of Bede, who wrote that Ecgfrith,

*cum temere exercitum ad uastandam Pictorum prouinciam duxisset...introducitur est simulantibus fugam hostibus in angustias inaccessorum montium, et cum maxima parte copiarum, quas secum adduxerat, extinctus anno aetatis suae XLmo, regni autem XVmo, die tertio decimo kalendarum Iuniarum...Ex quo tempore spes coepit et uirtus regni Anglorum 'fluere ac retro sublapsa referri'. Nam et Picti terram possessionis suae quam tenuerunt Angli, et Scotti qui erant in Britannia, Brettonum quoque pars nonnulla libertatem receperunt.*²

rashly took an army to ravage the *prouincia Pictorum*...The enemy feigned flight and lured him into narrow places in inaccessible mountains, and he was killed with the greater part of the forces he had taken with him, on 20 May, in the fortieth year of his age and the fifteenth of his reign...From this time the hopes and strength of the Anglian kingdom began to 'ebb and fall away'. For the Picts recovered their own land which the Angles had held, and the Gaels who were in Britain and some part of the Britons recovered their liberty.

¹ HB 57.

² Bede, HE iv.26.

The location of this battle has been identified as Dunnichen Hill near Forfar, following the contemporary testimony of the Iona Chronicle:

Bellum Duin Nectain uicisimo die mensis Maii, Sabbati die, factum est, in quo Ectfrith m. Ossu, rex Saxonum, .x.u. anno regni sui consummata magna cum caterua militum suorum interfectus est [la Bruidhi mac Bili regis Fortrenn].³

The battle of *Dún Nechtain* was fought on Saturday 20 May, in which Ecgrith son of Oswy, king of Saxons, who had completed the fifteenth year of his reign, was slain with a great body of his soldiers [by Bridei f. Bili, king of Fortriu].

Historia Brittonum records this engagement – the best-documented event in Pictish history – as the battle (*gueith*) of *Linn Garan*,⁴ and a consideration of the information contained within the various sources that bear witness to it allows us to understand something of the nature of the political situation north of the Forth during the reign of Ecgrith. Bridei f. Bili was both *rex Fortrenn* and *rex Pictorum* in the same sense, surely, that his enemy was both *Ultrahumbrensi-um rex* and *rex Saxonum/Anglorum*, neither having full political authority over every Pict or Saxon. Both the anonymous of Lindisfarne, who recorded that Ecgrith ‘was ravaging and laying waste the *regio Pictorum*’ (*Pictorum regionem depopulans...uastabat*), and Stephanus of Ripon, who wrote that he ‘had been slain and overthrown with all the flower of his army by the *gens Pictorum*’ (*occiso et cum omni optimo exercitus sui agmine a gente Pictorum oppresso*) may be thought to speak of a single Pictish *regio* and *gens*,⁵ though in each case the Latin may as easily be translated using the indefinite English article (‘a Pictish *gens*’) as the definite one (‘the Pictish *gens*’). We have seen that Bede tells us elsewhere that ‘the rashly daring King Ecgrith had taken an army against the Picts, and was devastating their kingdoms with cruel and savage ferocity’ (*Egfridus rex ausu temerario exercitum in Pictos duceret, eorumque regna atroci ac feroci seuicia deuastaret*), which allows for the possibility that sources from the 670s and 680s spoke of Bede’s *prouincia Pictorum* as consisting of individual kingdoms (*regna*) and,

³ AU 686.1; the attribution of the victory to Bridei occurs in AT. For a more detailed examination of the battle and its significance, see J. E. Fraser, *The Battle of Dunnichen 685* (Stroud, 2002).

⁴ AI 685 records the battle as ‘a great battle between the Picts’ (*cath mór eter Cruithnechu*), and HB’s use of *gueith* may also give this sense of an internal conflict, in that event referring in all likelihood to the kinship between Bridei and Ecgrith.

⁵ Anon., *VSC* iv.8; Stephanus, *VW* 44. The designation of Ecgrith as *Ultrahumbrensi-um rex* occurs in the latter.

as Stephanus notes in another context, of individual *populi* and *gentes*.⁶ On the other hand, the ideas of a single *gens Pictorum* and a single *prouincia Pictorum* binding together the Pictish *regiones* south of the Mounth were fairly clearly envisioned by early eighth-century Northumbrian writers. We have seen that the same is also true of their contemporary or near contemporary Adomnán, although there is no similar indication in the *dorsum Britanniae* corpus of stories in *Vita Columbae* attributed above to Cumméne, writing in the first half of the seventh century, nor any indication in these stories of any mention of *Picti* at all.

In the foregoing chapters we have explored the evidence which suggests that, as late as the death of Cumméne in 669, the Pictish *principatus* of Iona was a limited one confined largely, if not exclusively, to Atholl and the northern Pictish zone. There is also evidence suggesting that the Verturian ecclesiastical landscape was divided into a number of spheres of influence within which the cults of particular saints appear to have been favoured by the local people or by their leaders. The sense of political and ecclesiastical division created by this evidence is a good fit with the evidence of Pictish *regna*, *populi* and *gentes*.⁷ We saw in the previous chapter that a precocious Anglian element with hegemonic ambitions and Gregorian pretensions of metropolitan jurisdiction became introduced to this patchwork southern Pictish ecclesiastical milieu in the middle third of the seventh century, probably in the last decade of the reign of Oswy Aedilfrithing. It would seem that by this time at least insular commentators had begun to speak (or rather write) of the southern Pictish zone as *Fortriu*, hinting, as we have seen above, of an extension of the emic name of the Miathi, whose territory had until the middle decades of the century been confined to the lands south of the Gask Ridge, across Perthshire, Angus and Kincardineshire. It was suggested in the previous chapter that this process may have begun as early as the battle of *Luith Feirn* in Fortriu in 664 and such a major shift in Verturian politics, involving the rise to new levels of prominence and influence of a particular dominant group and a new conceptualisation by that group of its homeland, will in any event have created the optimum conditions for the Pictish ethnogenesis we have been envisioning in this

⁶ Bede, *VSC* 27; Stephanus, *VW* 19.

⁷ See Driscoll, 'Christian Monumental Sculpture', 247.

study. It is most likely to have been at this time, then, that the idea began to be propagated that the inhabitants of Fortriu were not separate *gentes* with distinct histories, symbols of identity and communities of belief, but a single *gens* with a common history to which the name *Picti* could be applied, like *gens Nordanhymbrorum* was being applied to the Bernicians and Deirans, as a fairly neutral emic term, even if at the same time the ascendancy of Verturian ethnic nomenclature was making the names *Calidones* and *Maeatae* (however they had developed in Pictish since the third century) obsolescent. Such a *gens* needed to formulate a new common history for itself, new symbols of common identity, and a new community of common belief, and we have already seen indications that both Adomnán and Bede made use of a Pictish source written after the time of Cumméne that provided the southern Pictish zone with a common ecclesiastical history that Adomnán would seem to have respected enough to alter aspects of the Columban dossier accordingly. In this chapter, and for the rest of this study, we shall consider the place made for Iona in this new ecclesiastical history on the one hand, and in the new Verturian community of belief on the other.

It has been argued above that it was decided at the Council of Whitby that the bishops of York retained the metropolitan status that had been conferred upon Paulinus in the days of Edwini, and that they were therefore entitled, according to the Gregorian Plan, to exercise ecclesiastical jurisdiction over the Pictish, British and Gaelic bishops of northern Britain. It has also been suggested that from the middle decades of the seventh century onwards, partly as a reflection of this belief, Anglian churchmen were not an uncommon sight north of the Forth, and may have had as much capacity to influence Verturian ecclesiastical culture as monks from the Gaelic zone. The Anglian approach to ecclesiastical jurisdiction in Fortriu changed between the death of Oswy in 669 and the appointment of Trumwini to the see of the *prouincia Pictorum* in 681, and in this chapter we shall explore these developments through an examination of the latter period of Bernician *imperium* north of the Forth and its effects upon Verturian political and ecclesiastical affairs. In the process we shall attempt to understand in particular the relationship between Bridei f. Bili and the various Anglian bishops based south of the Forth who in turn claimed primacy over the ecclesiastical affairs of the Picts.

Bridei f. Bili

The Gaelic poem *Iniu feras Bruide cath*, attributed to Riagail of Bangor, is yet another source of information about the battle of Linn Garan:

*Iniu feras Bruide cath
im forba a senathar,
manad algas lá mac Dé
conid é ad genathar.*

Today Bridei gave battle
over the land of his grandfather,
unless it is the wish of the son of God
that restitution be made.

*Iniu ro bíth mac Ossa
a ccath fria claidhmhe glasa;
cia do rada ait[h]irge,
is h-í i nd-hí iar n-assa.*

Today the son of Oswy was slain
in battle against iron swords;
even though he did penance,
it was penance too late.

*Iniu ro bíth mac Osa,
las(a) mbidis dubha deoga; who was wont to have dark drinks;
ro cúala Críst ar nguidhe
roisaorbut Bruide bregha.⁸*

Today the son of Oswy was slain,
Christ has heard our prayer
that Bridei would [avenge Brega?].

The implication here that it was through his grandfather, rather than through his father, that Bridei claimed his kingship in 671 corresponds with the testimony of the tenth-century *Betha Adamnáin* that his father's kingship was not based in Fortriu but at Clyde Rock,⁹ which, it has been argued above, became severed from the rest of the Miathic zone after the Bernician conquest of Manau. According to *Historia Brittonum*, the Verturian and Bernician royal protagonists at Linn Garan were *fratrueles*, a specific term of kinship indicating, as Woolf has shown, that Beli fathered Bridei by a paternal sister of Eanfled daughter of Edwini, who gave birth to Ecgfrith in 645.¹⁰ Beli may have died in 627,¹¹ only a year after Eanfled was born to Edwini and Aeðilburg, but at that time Edwini had two adult sons.¹² We may therefore surmise that he also had an adult daughter by their Mercian mother Cwenburg, and that Beli was married to this otherwise unknown daughter sometime after 616 (Fig. C). This marriage was, presumably, part of a political arrangement between the two kings in the years after 616, and Bridei f. Bili was at best a child, or perhaps an infant, when his father died with at least one adult son.¹³

⁸ FA §165. For other translations of the poem, see Skene, *Chron. Picts & Scots*, 402; Anderson, *ESSH* 1, 194-95; T. O. Clancy (ed.) *The Triumph Tree: Scotland's Earliest Poetry, 550-1350* (Edinburgh, 1998), 115.

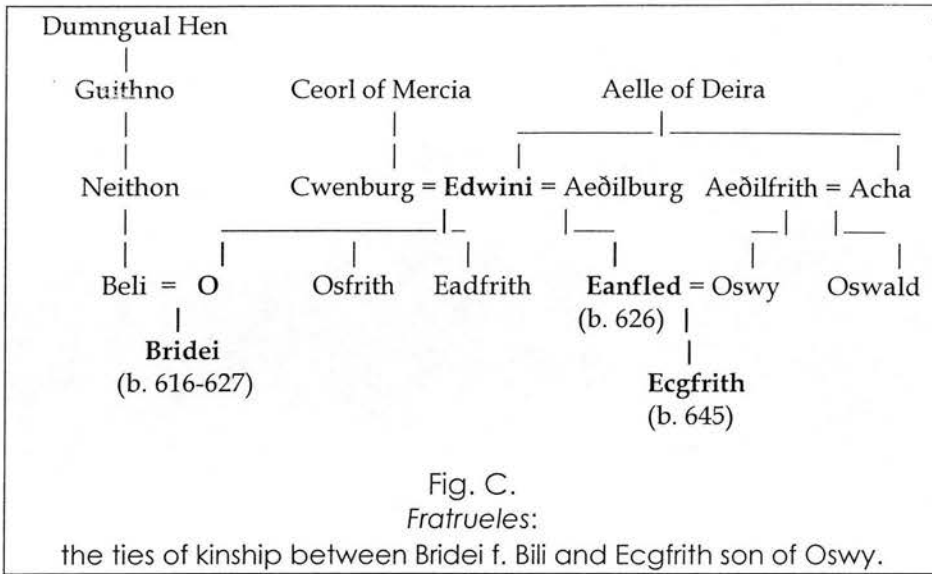
⁹ Anon., *Betha Adamnáin*, §14.

¹⁰ Woolf, 'Matriliny', 161-62.

¹¹ ACamb 627, although we cannot be certain that this Belin is Beli map Neithon.

¹² Bede, *HE* ii.9; ii.14; ii.20.

¹³ His son Eugein was king in the 640s (see Fig. B above), but we have no way of knowing when Eugein's reign began.



We can only speculate as to Bridei's fate in the wake of his father's death, but we need not assume that he remained at Clyde Rock. Depending upon the attitude of Beli's older children towards the young Bridei and his Anglian mother, Beli's widow and her entourage may have considered the court of her powerful father Edwini the safest place to be. It seems not unlikely, therefore, that Bridei can have been in the keeping of his grandfather Edwini until 633, after which, as his grandson, he would have posed something of a threat to Oswald (who may be suspected of having had a hand in the suspicious premature deaths of every heir of Edwini known to Bede)¹⁴ and to Oswy in their respective quests to subject the Deirans to their authority. As a son of Beli and grandson of Neithon, however, and a potential candidate not just for the kingship of Clyde Rock, but also for kingship north of the Forth, his potential utility as a political weapon can have outweighed this threat and saved Bridei from persecution or assassination. Though it is therefore a possibility, we cannot assume that Bridei spent the bulk of his adult years in Northumbria. However he passed the years between his father's death and the beginning of his Verturian kingship (671-93), it is nevertheless tempting, given their relationship – and particularly so if we can imagine that he was or became a member of the court – to follow Alex Woolf in his suggestion that Bridei f. Bili was

¹⁴ Bede, of course, makes no suggestion that the causes of the deaths of Wuscfrea son of Edwini and Yffi son of Edwini's son Osfrith in Gaul were anything but natural (*HE* ii.20); he also accuses Penda of the murder of Edwini's adult son Eadfrith in Mercia during the reign of Oswald (*HE* ii.20). The convenience of these deaths must nevertheless make us suspicious of Oswald's complicity in them.

'helped into his kingship' by Ecgrith in the aftermath of the latter's victory at the battle of the Two Rivers,¹⁵ about which Stephanus wrote that:

in primis annis eius tenero adhuc regno populi bestiales Pictorum feroci animo subiectionem Saxonum despiciabant et iugum servitutis proicere a se minabant; congregantes undique de utribus et folliculis aquilonis innumeras gentes...Nam, quo audito, rex Ecgrithus..statim equitatu exercitu praeparato, tarda molimina nesciens, sicut Iudas Machabeus in Deum confidens, parva manu populi Dei contra inormem et supra invisibilem hostem cum Beornheth audaci subregulo inuasit stragemque immensam populi subruit, duo flamina cadaveribus mortuorum replentes, ita, quod mirum dictu est, ut supra siccis pedibus ambulantes, fugientium turbam occidentes persequebantur: et in servitutum redacti, populi usque ad diem occisionis regis captivitatis iugo subiecti iacebant.¹⁶

In his early years while the kingdom was still weak, the bestial *populi* of the Picts had a fierce contempt for subjection to the Saxons and threatened to throw off from themselves the yoke of servitude; they gathered together innumerable *gentes* from every nook and corner in the north...When King Ecgrith heard this...he forthwith got together a troop of horsemen, for he was no lover of belated operations; trusting in God like Judas Maccabeus, he, with a little band of God's people, attacked, with the brave under-king Beornhaeth, an enemy host that was vast, and moreover was concealed. He slew an enormous number of people, filling two rivers with the corpses of the slain, so that, marvellous to relate, the slayers pursued a crowd of fugitives by passing over them dry-foot; and, reduced to servitude, the nations remained subjected, under the yoke of captivity, until the day of the king's killing.

This apparently decisive Bernician victory at the Two Rivers in the first years of the reign of Ecgrith may be taken as having coincided with the otherwise-attested expulsion of Drust f. Donuel from his kingship in Pictland.¹⁷ We have seen that the evidence suggests that Drust was a northern king based probably in Atholl, and it is perhaps easier to understand his expulsion from this kingship in 671 if we allow for the possibility that he had already been defeated by Bridei once before at *Luith Feirn* in 664. That he appears to have come into his kingship in this way suggests, at any rate, that Bridei secured his position through Bernician support, and it has been suggested above that something similar took place at *Luith Feirn* when Oswy was still king of the Bernicians, such that Bridei, made desperate, it has been argued, by the Bernician conquest of Manau, may well have become the instrument of the expansion of Anglian imperium into the southern Pictish zone. It is difficult not to wonder, given such a scenario, whether Bridei f. Bili was, in fact, the 'brave

¹⁵ Woolf, 'Matriliny', 161-62. The suggestion is further explored in Woolf, 'Verturian Hegemony'. For a different (and much less convincing) view, see Smyth, *Warlords*, 63-67.

¹⁶ Stephanus, *VW* 19.

subregulus Beornhaeth' referred to by Stephanus, but there is much room for doubt about this.

Fortriu and the Episcopate of Wilfrith

However Bridei f. Bili secured the kingship of Fortriu and superseded the expelled Drust in 671,¹⁸ he appears to have remained 'under the yoke' of his *fratrueis* for some thirteen years thereafter. This period of Bridei's kingship witnessed, among other things, the rise and fall of Wilfrith of Ripon as metropolitan bishop of York. Theodore of Tarsus became archbishop of Canterbury on 26 March 668 and arrived in Kent on 27 May 669,¹⁹ taking up an episcopate that had by then lain vacant for the better part of five years. On his way to Britain he received the hospitality of Agilbert in Paris, where he remained for 'a long time' in the company of Wilfrith's former mentor, who had consecrated his former disciple a few years earlier.²⁰ The new archbishop perhaps had it in his mind to learn the lay of the land in Britain and Ireland from Agilbert, who had spent many years in Ireland and among the Anglo-Saxons and had been present at the Council of Whitby. At any rate, it is likely that, before he had even met Wilfrith, Theodore had already been made well aware of his case against Ceadda by a man who favoured it.

For his part, Wilfrith seems, it has been argued in the previous chapter, to have been conducting himself at this time as a metropolitan bishop, albeit one in exile among the Mercians while Oswy remained hostile to him. He appears to have made good use of his time. In addition to the work discussed by Bede, in which he 'introduced into the English churches by his direction many controls in the furtherance of catholic customs' (*perplura catholicae obseruationis moderamina ecclesiis Anglorum sua doctrina contulit*), Stephen tells us that the Mercian king Wulfhere son of Penda 'granted to our bishop many pieces of land in various places, on which he forthwith founded monasteries for the servants of God' (*in diversis locis multa spatia terrarum...episcopo nostro concessit, in quibus mox monasteria servorum Dei constituit*).²¹

¹⁷ AU 672.6. Again, I take it that this entry appears one year too late in the annals.

¹⁸ Skene, CS I, 260-63, suggested that Two Rivers represents an invasion on the part of Drust of the Anglo-Saxon-held part of Pictish territory, and that the unsuccessful Drust was expelled; Anderson, ESSH I, 181, however, suggested that the expulsion of Drust preceded Two Rivers, having been brought about by Bridei when Oswy died, and that it was Bridei who was defeated at Two Rivers.

¹⁹ Bede, HE iv.2.

²⁰ Bede, HE iv.1.

²¹ Bede, HE iii.28; Stephanus, VW 14.

The metropolitan pretensions harboured by Wilfrith in this period, discussed at length in the previous chapter, may again be just visible in his *Vita's* report that Egberct, king of Kent, summoned him from Mercia to fill in for the absent metropolitan of Canterbury by ordaining priests and deacons.²² Doubtless he believed he had a strong case and an excellent reason to be optimistic about his future once the new archbishop arrived in Canterbury, and if it ever came to his attention that Theodore had been abiding with Agilbert in Paris his confidence will have been bolstered that much more.

Having arrived at last in Canterbury, Theodore toured throughout the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms. Arriving north of the Humber, as Stephanus relates it, 'he heard from the lips of true witnesses the bad story of the thing contrary to the canons; how, like a thief, one bishop had dared to snatch the see of another bishop' (*rem contra canones male gestam a veris testibus audivit, quod praedonis more episcopus alterius episcopi sedem praeeripere ausus sit*).²³ We may wonder whether such an accusation was also levelled against Wilfrith by Ceadda's supporters. Theodore decided in favour of Wilfrith on the grounds, Bede maintains, that Ceadda's consecration had not been regular (*non fuisse rite*), but Stephanus suggests that it was rather in claiming the see of York at all that Ceadda had been *contra canones*. It may therefore be the case, as suggested in the previous chapter, that the issue of catholicity was emphasised with the benefit of hindsight, obscuring other aspects of the dispute between Ceadda and Wilfrith.²⁴ Having secured the blessings of the archbishop, Wilfrith finally managed to establish himself in York in 669, and Bede's affirmation that Wilfrith 'was administering the episcopate of the church of York and of all the Northumbrians and the Picts besides, as far as the *imperium* of Oswy extended' (*administrante episcopatum Eboracensis ecclesiae necnon et omnium Nordanhymbrorum sed et Pictorum, quousque rex Osuii imperium protendere poterat*) would seem, as we have seen, to be a hint at his metropolitan and Gregorian pretensions.²⁵

²² Stephanus, *VW* 14.

²³ Stephanus, *VW* 15.

²⁴ Bede, *HE* iv.2.

²⁵ Stephanus, *VW* 16, 21; Bede, *HE* iv.3.

Wilfrith's tenure of the see of York began auspiciously and full of promise from his perspective. Shortly thereafter Oswy Aedilfrithing died and was succeeded by his son Ecgrith, who, since the ruin of Alchfrith five years earlier, had probably been client-king of the Deirans and may, through the influence of the York party which included his mother Eanfled, have been as disposed initially as Alchfrith had been to provide Wilfrith with a great deal of support and patronage. He and his brother Aelfwini, who had in turn become his brother's client-king of the Deirans after Oswy's death, attended the dedication of the new church of Ripon, at which

Stans...sanctus Wilfrithus episcopus ante altare conversus ad populum, coram regibus enumerans regiones, quas ante reges pro animabus suis et tunc in illa die cum consensu et subscriptione episcoporum et omnium principum illi dederunt, lucide enuntiauit necnon et ea loca sancta in diversis regionibus quae clerus Bryttannus, aciem gladii hostilis manu gentis nostrae fugiens, deseruit...Addens quoque sanctus pontifex noster inter alia bona ad decorem domus Dei inauditum ante seculis nostris quoddam miraculum. Nam quattuor euangelia de auro purissimo in membranis depurpuratis, coloratis, pro animae suae remedio scribere iussit: necnon et bibliothecam librorum eorum, omnem de auro purissimo et gemmis pretiosissimis fabrefactam, compaginare inclusores gemmarum praecepit; quae omnia et alia nonnulla in testimonium beatae memoriae eius in ecclesia nosta usque hodie reconduntur.²⁶

Standing in front of the altar, St Wilfrith the bishop turned to the people and read out clearly, in the presence of the kings, a list of the lands which the kings, for the good of their souls, had previously, and on that very day as well, presented to him with the agreement of and over the signatures of the bishops and all the foremost men; and also a list of the consecrated places in various parts which the British clergy had deserted when fleeing from the hostile sword wielded by the hand of our own nation...Our holy bishop also provided, among other good things, for the adornment of the house of God, a marvel of beauty hitherto unheard of in our times. For he had ordered, for the good of his soul, the four gospels to be written out in letters of purest gold on purpled parchment and illuminated; he also ordered jewellers to construct for their books a case all made of purest gold and set with the most precious gems; all these things and others besides are preserved in our church until these times as a witness to his blessed memory.

Thus well-provided-for, Wilfrith also seems to have busied himself early in his pontificate with the furtherance of the idea of continuity with the past and the *pallium* of Paulinus, commissioning the restoration of Paulinus's old church in York.²⁷ Bede notes that at some indeterminate time after he was killed at *Haethfelth*, Edwini's head was placed in this church, 'in the chapel of the holy pope Gregory, from whose disciples he himself had received the word of life' (*in porticu sancti*

²⁶ Stephanus, VW 17.

²⁷ Stephanus, VW 16.

papae Gregorii, a cuius ipse discipulis uerbum uitae susciperat),²⁸ and it is possible that this 'translation' was undertaken as a part of Wilfrith's restoration of the church of York as an additional symbol of continuity with the past.²⁹ After victories in battle over the Picts at the Two Rivers and over 'all the southern nations' (*omnes australes populos*) led by the Mercian king Wulfhere, Ecgrith rose to the height of his power, and Wilfrith found himself at the head of a *regnum ecclesiarum* that 'increased to the south among the Saxons and to the north among the British, the Gaels and the Picts' (*ad austrum super Saxones et ad aquilonem super Brittones et Scottos Pictosque...multiplicatur*).³⁰

According to Stephanus, Wilfrith ordained priests and deacons 'in every part' (*in omnibus locis*) of this great diocese, and the story of Cuthberct's journey to the *Niuduera regio* in the *terra Pictorum* suggests that we ought not to dismiss such a claim out of hand, at least with regard to Fortriu, where, initially at least, Bridei is likely to have remained friendly towards Ecgrith.³¹ We have at any rate enough casual references in contemporary or near-contemporary sources to the activities of Gaelic churchmen among the Picts and Anglo-Saxons, and of Anglo-Saxon and Pictish churchmen among the Gaels, to support the idea that the Anglo-Pictish frontier presented little barrier to travelling churchmen like Cuthberct and his two companions on either side of it. Most of this intercourse is likely to have been rooted in relationships, perhaps of some standing, between individual Verturian and Bernician monasteries, *familiae*, and secular churches, having little or nothing to do with the pretensions of the bishop of York. An enunciation of the latter after 664 probably ensured an ongoing, and perhaps an elevated, interest in Verturian ecclesiastical affairs among the Northumbrian clergy over the next twenty years, and a reciprocal interest in the Northumbrian Church on the part of Verturian clerics is hardly unlikely.

²⁸ Bede, *HE* ii.20.

²⁹ Anonymous, *Liber Beati et Laudabilis Viri Gregorii Papae, caps. 18-19*, in B. Colgrave (ed.), *The Earliest Life of Gregory the Great by an Anonymous Monk of Whitby* (Lawrence KS, 1968), contains a rather different story of the discovery of Edwini's bones, seemingly intact, and their translation to the church at Whitby. Elsewhere, Bede, *HE* iii.24, similarly records that Edwini was buried at Whitby, and makes no attempt to reconcile this with the idea that Edwini's head was buried elsewhere. Perhaps it was from Whitby that Wilfrith secured this relic.

³⁰ Stephanus, *VW* 19-21.

³¹ Stephanus, *VW* 21; Anon., *VSC* ii.4. Bede, *VSC* 11, refers to the Picts of this *Niuduera regio* as *Niduari*.

The Making of the *Prouincia Pictorum*

These were heady days indeed for Wilfrith, but they were not to last. It would seem that, upon his arrival in Britain in 669, with Oswy still a formidable king, Theodore was not yet prepared to challenge the decisions made at Whitby with regard to the York question, and was content, for the time being, to allow Wilfrith his metropolitan pretensions. Stephanus's objections to the expulsion of Wilfrith from his see, apparently written in the bishop's own voice, supports this view that, after an initial period of seeming acquiescence, Theodore began to take a very different view of Wilfrith's activities:

*Tertia deinde causa [dissentionis eorum] est, ut iussionibus et decretis Theodori archiepiscopi ab apostolica sede misso oportere cogebat oboedire, non illa significans canonica statuta, quae in principio episcopatus sui apud nos degens aut in novissimis temporibus vitae suae constituit, quando omnes ecclesias nostras ad canonicam pacem unanimiter convocavit, sed magis ea decreta, quae mediis temporibus suis, quando discordia inter nos in Bryttania exorta fuerat, statuit.*³²

Then the third cause [of their disagreement – ie. between Wilfrith and Aldfrith] is that he kept compelling us to obey the commands and decrees of Archbishop Theodore who had been sent from the apostolic see, not pointing to those canonical statutes which he made at the beginning of his pontificate among us, or in the last period of his life, when he called all our churches to harmony and ecclesiastical peace, but rather enforcing those decrees which he made in the middle of his time, when discord had sprung up amongst us in Britain.

There can be little doubt that Theodore, his purview as *archiepiscopus Britanniae insulae* having been established in Rome,³³ had a very different view of York's metropolitan claim than did Ecgrith and Wilfrith, perhaps even despite later protestations of the papacy itself in support of Wilfrith's case.³⁴ Plans to challenge Wilfrith may have been in place as early as 673 when, on 24 September, Theodore convened a council at Hertford, a meeting that Wilfrith did not attend in person, sending his proctors instead. The text of the proceedings of this council refer to Wilfrith as *Nordanhymbrorum gentis episcopus* ('bishop of the Northumbrian nation') rather than as *episcopus metropolitanus Eboracae civitatis*, a title which allowed for the extension of Wilfrith's metropolitan jurisdiction beyond the frontiers of the

³² Stephanus, *VW* 45.

³³ Bede, *HE* iv.17.

³⁴ Gibbs, 'Decrees of Agatho', 227-34. Gibbs suggests that the outright granting of a *pallium* to Wilfrith was not advisable due to the problems surrounding securing a workable frontier between York and Canterbury (pp. 222-23, 229) and engaging in the necessary protocols with respect to Theodore's position (pp. 226-27).

Nordanhymbrorum gens. It may therefore have been because this form of address was an affront to his perceived rights as metropolitan that Wilfrith decided to stay away from Hertford. It is significant that some of the resolutions enunciated by the council – those excerpted below – may even have been direct indictments of Wilfrith's recent activities:

- §2. *Vt nullus episcoporum parrochiam alterius inuadat, sed contentus sit gubernatione creditae sibi plebis* ('that no bishop intrude into the diocese of another bishop, but that he should be content with the government of the people committed to his charge').
- §3. *Vt, quaeque monasteria Deo consecrata sunt, nulli episcoporum liceat ea in aliquo inquietare nec quicquam de eorum rebus uiolenter abstrahere* ('that no bishop shall in any way interfere with any monasteries dedicated to God nor take away forcibly any part of their property').
- §5. *Vt nullus clericorum relinquens proprium episcopum passim quolibet discurrat, neque alicubi ueniens absque commendaticijs litteris sui praesulis suscipiatur* ('that no clergy shall leave their own bishop nor wander at will, nor shall one be received anywhere without letters commendatory from his own bishop').
- §6. *Vt episcopi atque clerici peregrini contenti sint hospitalitatis munere oblato, nullique eorum liceat ullum officium sacerdotale absque permisso episcopi, in cuius parrochia esse cognoscitur, agere* ('that both bishops and clergy when travelling shall be content with the hospitality afforded them, nor shall they exercise any priestly function without the permission of the bishop in whose diocese they are known to be').
- §8. *Vt nullus episcoporum se praeferat alteri per ambitionem, sed omnes agnoscant tempus et ordinem consecrationis suae* ('that no bishop claim precedence over another bishop out of ambition; but all shall take rank according to the time and the order of their consecration').
- §9. *Vt plures episcopi crescente numero fidelium auferentur, sed de hac re ad praesens siluimus* ('that more bishops shall be created as the number of the faithful increases – but at present we say no more about this').

*Quisquis igitur contra hanc sententiam, iuxta decreta canonum nostra etiam consensione ac subscriptione manus nostrae confirmatam, quoquo modo uenire eamque infringere temptauerit, nouerit se ab omni officio sacerdotali et nostra societate separatam.*³⁵

If anyone, therefore, shall attempt in any way to oppose or disobey the decisions confirmed by our consent and ratified by our signatures, according to the canonical decrees, let him know that he is excluded from exercising any priestly office and from our fellowship.

The key to Theodore's falling out with Wilfrith, then, may be reconstructed as having been not so much the metropolitan claims of the latter, but the nature of these claims. Wilfrith believed that his authority as metropolitan ran as far as the *imperium* of the Northumbrian kings extended, enabling him to interfere in the sees

³⁵ Bede, *HE* iv.5.

of British, Pictish and Gaelic bishops.³⁶ There may already have been upwards of twelve other bishops established throughout the Pictish, Gaelic and British parts of northern Britain which he could claim as suffragans, thus satisfying the Gregorian Plan without the need to divide the see of York itself. Indeed, if some of these other northern sees were reasonably large and co-terminous with such kingdoms as Clyde Rock, Dál Riata and Fortriu, Wilfrith can easily have thought it important to his dignity among such colleagues to keep the see of York competitive in this respect and co-terminous with his own kingdom. Theodore, however, was of a very different mind, probably, as Gibbs suggested, because of his commitment to preserve Canterbury's monopoly upon ecclesiastical jurisdiction beyond the Anglo-Saxon zone.³⁷ Already in 673 he was confining Wilfrith's metropolitan authority to the Northumbrian *gens*, a view that makes sense only if the archbishop intended as well to divide this province into smaller sees that would recognise that authority. Division of his see thus prefigured the thin end of the wedge for Wilfrith, and his opposition to such a scheme may be suspected as the cause of the opposition which led to the inability of the Council of Hertford to expound upon §9 in more detail. Theodore was not to be outdone, however, and after Hertford he had all the ammunition he needed to exclude the uncooperative bishop of York 'from exercising any priestly office and from our fellowship', since Wilfrith's vision of his authority was in violation of §2 (interference in the see of another bishop) and §8 (claiming precedence over other bishops 'out of ambition') of the decisions of the Council.

The powder-keg of the last stage of this dispute would seem to have been Lindsey, the subjection of which Ecgfrith secured through his victory over Wulfhere, probably in 673 or 674.³⁸ Stephanus implies that Wilfrith held sway as bishop over Lindsey thereafter, complaining that when he was expelled from his see in 678, Theodore partitioned it into three new dioceses. Bede disagrees, informing us that only two bishops were put in place in Wilfrith's old see: Bosa in York as bishop of the Deirans and Eata at Hexham (or Lindisfarne) as bishop of the

³⁶ A case recently summarised by Charles-Edwards, *Ireland*, 432-33, where it is suggested that Wilfrith 'perhaps wanted York to be the new, orthodox Iona'.

³⁷ Gibbs, 'Decrees of Agatho', 223-24.

Bernicians. This leaves us to infer that the third of Stephanus's bishops was Eadhaed, who, Bede tells us, was placed in Lindsey, although Bede himself makes no connection between Lindsey and Wilfrith.³⁹ Stephanus's version of the events may be taken as indicating that Wilfrith had indeed claimed authority over Lindsey in the aftermath of Ecgfrith's victory, while Bede's explicitly contrary position that Eadhaed's predecessor had been Seaxwulf, who had held jurisdiction in Lindsey as bishop of the Mercians,⁴⁰ and not Wilfrith, may be taken as that assumed at the time by Theodore. Having assumed jurisdiction as bishop over the Lindseymen without the authorisation of Canterbury, Wilfrith, already seemingly guilty of violating key canons of the Council of Hertford abroad in the insular Celtic zone, had now begun violating them at home among the Anglo-Saxons. That Theodore appears to have waited several years to impose upon Wilfrith the penalty enunciated at Hertford speaks of the support that the metropolitan bishop of York continued to receive in the meantime from the most powerful king of the Anglo-Saxon zone.

At last, as Bede reports it, 'there arose a dissension between King Ecgfrith and the most reverend bishop Wilfrith, and the same bishop was driven from the seat of his episcopate' (*orta inter...regem Ecgfridum et reuerentissimum antistitem Uilfridum dissensione, pulsus est idem antistes a sede sui episcopatus*).⁴¹ John has noted the likelihood that Wilfrith's close Mercian connections became of increasing concern to Ecgfrith in the latter half of the 670s, and there may be something to Gibbs's suggestion that, in the wake of the campaign undertaken in 676 by Aedilred of Mercia, who, 'at the head of a cruel army, devastated Kent, profaning churches and monasteries without respect for piety or fear of the divine' (*adducto maligno exercitu, Cantiam uastaret et ecclesias ac monasteria sine respectu pietatis uel diuini timoris fedaret*), Theodore and Ecgfrith reached an accommodation whereby the archbishop of Canterbury and the Northumbrian over-king would provide one another with mutual support with regard to asserting their respective primacy

³⁸ This battle took place sometime between the Two Rivers, dated here to 672, and the death of Wulfhere in 675.

³⁹ Stephanus, *VW* 24; Bede, *HE* iv.12.

⁴⁰ Bede, *HE* iv.12.

⁴¹ Bede, *HE* iv. 12. This characterisation of Wilfrith as an *antistes* may, as in the case of Tuda discussed in the previous chapter, be an attempt on Bede's part to obscure the use of *archiepiscopus* in a source discussing Wilfrith.

among the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms.⁴² Wilfrith may have had comparatively few friends left in Northumbria once Ecgfrith had turned against him. Oswy's resistance to his appointment in the previous decade, discussed above, is not likely to have been his alone, and some, perhaps many, of the Northumbrian clergy will have welcomed his fall in 678. We have already encountered accusations that seem to have been made against Wilfrith and challenged by Stephanus – that he was a troublemaker who had poisoned Alchfrith against his father; that his consecration in Gaul was invalid – and these may have been circulating among Wilfrith's detractors as early as 666 when he and Alchfrith challenged Oswy and Ceadda for control of the kingship and the episcopate of York. It is perfectly possible that in 678 many remained unenthusiastic about this man who could not be counted upon to be moderate with regard to maintaining continuity with and honouring the memory of the achievements and revered figures of the ecclesiastical community associated with the Columban ascendancy and the see of Lindisfarne.⁴³

Bridei f. Bili steps into the light of history in 681, when he is said to have 'annihilated' (*deletae*) the *Orcades*.⁴⁴ The previous year, the Irish annals record a siege of Dunnottar (*Dún Foither*), and since the time of Skene it has been suspected that *Dún Baite*, an unidentified stronghold besieged in 679, was also somewhere in Pictland.⁴⁵ Similarly, in the year following Bridei's Orcadian campaign, the annals record sieges of Dundurn (*Dún Duirn*) and Dunadd (*Dún At*). Woolf has argued that this impressive catalogue of engagements may reflect the establishment in this period of a new kind of political arrangement in Pictland – a Verturian regional hegemony realised through the strenuous efforts of Bridei, *rex Fortrenn*, capitalising upon the military and political strength he derived from his close relationship with the Bernicians and his ability to exploit and appropriate the 'tributary structures and mechanisms of overlordship learned from the kings of Bamburgh'.⁴⁶ It is hardly likely to be coincidental that this spate of intense military activity north of the Forth

⁴² John, 'Social and Political Problems', 51, Gibbs, 'Decrees of Agatho', 224. On Aedilred's campaign, which, for what it is worth, Bede discusses in the same chapter as, and immediately before, the expulsion of Wilfrith, see Bede, *HE* iv.12.

⁴³ That such continuity was important is discussed by Veitch, 'Columban Church', 630-31.

⁴⁴ AU 682.4. I take it, again, that the annals are a year out here.

⁴⁵ AU 681.5; 680.5. Skene, *CS* I, 263, identified *Dún Baite* with Dunbeath in Caithness.

seems to have begun, almost to the year, in the wake of Ecgrith's apparently decisive defeat on the Trent (*iuxta fluuium Treanta*) in 679, where Aedilred of Mercia secured a victory in which Ecgrith's brother Aelfwini was slain, news of which reached Iona.⁴⁷ Bede is somewhat reticent about this battle, choosing to emphasise the achievement of Theodore of Canterbury in smoothing over relations between the Mercians and the Northumbrians, but Stephanus saw it as an important turning point, describing the moving scene in which 'the body of the slain king Aelfwini was carried into York; all the people with bitter tears tore their garments and their hair' (*Aelfwini regis occisi cadaver in Eboracum delatum est; omnes populi amare lacrimantes vestimenta et capitis comam lacerabant*), and noting that 'his brother who survived him reigned, but gained no victory until the day of his death' (*frater superstes usque ad mortem sine victoria regnabat*).⁴⁸

In the previous year, after the expulsion of Wilfrith from York, Theodore had systematically dismantled the *regnum ecclesiarum* of York, bisecting it into its Deiran and Bernician constituencies and dispelling the spectre of Paulinus's *pallium* by consecrating Bosa and Eata as bishops subordinate to Canterbury. In addition to their effect and significance at home, these undertakings must have had an impact upon ecclesiastical affairs north of the Forth. In the short term claims to jurisdiction over Pictish churches would seem to have passed to Hexham (or Lindisfarne), but three years later – in the year of Bridei's attack on the Orcades – it was felt necessary to establish an episcopal seat for the specific administration of the *prouincia Pictorum*.⁴⁹ Although Bede wrote fifty years after the fact, Adomnán's use of this same phrase where it had not, perhaps, been employed by Cumméne corroborates the idea that the concept of a single *prouincia Pictorum* and indeed of a single *gens Pictorum* arose in northern Britain at about this time. Such a development would seem to go hand-in-hand with Woolf's argument, suggesting that, in the immediate aftermath of the battle of the Trent, Bridei set about a major and wide-reaching

⁴⁶ A. Woolf, 'Onuist son of Uurguist: *tyrannus carnifex* or a David for the Picts?', in M. Worthington and D. Hill (eds.) *Æthelbald, Beornred and Offa: the eighth century kings of Mercia and their world* (Oxford, forthcoming). See also Woolf, 'Verturian Hegemony'.

⁴⁷ Bede, *HE* iv.21; Stephanus, *VW* 24; AU 680.4. For more on the significance of this battle, see Fraser, *Dunnichen*, (forthcoming).

⁴⁸ Stephanus, *VW* 24. Stephanus believed that Aedilred's victory was divine punishment for Ecgrith, who had conspired in the deposition and exile of Wilfrith less than twelve months earlier.

⁴⁹ Bede, *HE* iv.12.

campaign not only to bring together into a single *prouincia* the *gentes* and *populi* of Fortriu, but also to extend the idea of a *gens Pictorum* still further, as far as he could push his *imperium* northwards into the northern Pictish zone. This may be taken as having involved the suppression of client-kingdoms as far afield as the Mearns and upper Strathearn into base-client-kingdoms (Bede's *regiones*) compelled to recognise his direct authority,⁵⁰ as well, perhaps, as the propagation both within and beyond the Verturian frontiers of the novel idea of a single *gens Pictorum* subject to the authority of a *rex Pictorum* based in Fortriu.

It has already been suggested that the choice of Abercorn as the location of Trumwini's seat may have been influenced by its former prominence, either as an episcopal seat or the prime *locus* of a *familia* of some antiquity within the Miathic community of belief encompassing Strathearn, Fothriff and Stirlingshire. Unless we are to assume that Theodore consented to the establishment of this new bishopric, and went through the trouble of placing Trumwini there, out of some 'largely titular' and unenforceable claim to jurisdiction over the *prouincia Pictorum* as *archiepiscopus Britanniae insulae*,⁵¹ it is necessary to conclude that Abercorn made about as much sense in 681 as the contemporary establishment of the newly-conceived bishoprics of York, Hexham, Lindisfarne and Ripon. Trumwini's appointment, then, addressed a real need. At the same time, there seems little reason to assume that this need was expressed entirely by the Bernicians: if all indications are that, after 679, Bridei became highly energetic, independent-minded and actively engaged in ethnogenesis (a situation which is likely to have led ultimately to the confrontation between the two kings at Linn Garan in 685), we may suspect the involvement of this precocious *rex Fortrenn*, perhaps even a royal invitation or demand that Abercorn be established in acknowledgement of a distinct (and newly conceived) community of belief that deserved recognition in the form of its own bishop. Whether or not Bridei spent as much time as has been suggested here among the Anglo-Saxons before becoming *rex Fortrenn* in 671, as a subject of the *imperium* of Ecgfrith he was probably under a certain amount of

⁵⁰ By 'base-client status' I intend something analogous to the Irish *aithechthúath* ('base-client túath') which, its own sovereign king having been removed from the equation, owed food renders and a share of judicial fines directly to the over-king, see Charles-Edwards, *Ireland*, 530. In Fortriu, this seemingly involved officials called *exactatores* (cf. AU 729.2).

pressure to be universalist in his observances and to do his utmost to enforce the same among the particularists of Fortriu. The possibility that he did indeed live much of his life in exile in Northumbria suggests that he may well have been personally inclined towards universalism anyway. At any rate, ongoing Northumbrian interest in the ecclesiastical affairs of the southern Pictish zone after Whitby is likely to have led to a situation in which Bridei, if he was universalist himself, was not alone in this, even if universalism (to judge from Bede) remained out of fashion among Verturian clerics in general – possibly because of Iona's influence in Atholl and the more northerly parts of Fortriu generally. Whatever Bridei's personal theology may have been, his apparent agenda regarding ethnogenesis and the establishment of Verturian hegemony is likely to have extended into the ecclesiastical sphere, with the organisational decisions made at Whitby with regards the proper place of existing *familiae* of Gaelic type within a church organised along Gregorian lines showing him the way forward. It is within this context that we should understand the rise of the concept of a *prouincia Pictorum* in the 680s – a single Pictish polity under the authority of Bridei, with a single ecclesiastical polity or 'Pictish Church' directed by a single bishop, in the first instance based at Abercorn. If, as has been suggested above, the southern Pictish zone consisted of several separate bishoprics up until that point, the suggestion of this argument would be that it was during the reign of Bridei f. Bili that these sees (along with the polities associated with them) began to be suppressed (or else reduced in status) to make way for the primacy of Abercorn within the *prouincia Pictorum*.

The *Prouincia Pictorum* and the Columban *Familia*

In order to assess the nature of the relationship between Iona, its Pictish *principatus* and this nascent Pictish Church established by Bridei f. Bili and Trumwini of Abercorn, it is necessary to return to Adomnán's *Vita Columbae*. The previous chapters of this study have sought to explore the origins of Pictish Christianity and to sketch something of an outline of its circumstances in the seventh century. We have seen as a result that the claims of the Pictish source that seems to have shaped the views of both Adomnán and Bede, and was almost

⁵¹ See Veitch, 'Columban Church', 633.

certainly composed during the kingship of Bridei f. Bili, that the southern Pictish zone was christianised before Colum Cille came to Pictland would seem to have basis in fact, and not just in political expediency brought about by political change and ethnogenesis. It has been argued in the first chapter that Adomnán both introduced new episodes involving Colum Cille's activities among the Picts to the Columban dossier, and, crucially, gave a new shape to older traditions in response to this Pictish source that emphasised the saint's achievement among the northern Picts. Despite this noticeable shift in Iona's view of its place in Pictish ecclesiastical history coinciding with the rise of the idea of the *prouincia Pictorum* and the Pictish Church, the monastery would appear to have enjoyed considerable influence in Atholl and, probably, further afield in the regions of the southern Pictish zone that lay under the *imperium* of the Atholl kings. If the sponsorship of a new conception of Verturian ecclesiastical history, in which an attempt was made to write Colum Cille out of the story, must reflect Bridei's overall attitude towards and strategy in dealing with the presence and influence of the Columban *familia* in Fortriu, this can only have been a part of that strategy.

The intended audience of *Vita Columbae* has been much considered by recent scholarship. The nature of its Gaelic audience has been disputed and there has been debate about a Northumbrian constituency, but there has, as yet, been little discussion of the possibility of a Pictish, or at least a 'Pictish-orientated', audience distinct from that included within the *familia* of Columba.⁵² At the outset of his work, Adomnán expresses concern that his use of Gaelic words for personal, tribal and place-names might be considered 'crude in comparison with the different tongues of foreign nations' (*inter alias exterarum gentium diuersas uilescunt linguas*).⁵³ This has been interpreted as a standard apology for having sometimes preferred the vernacular to Latin,⁵⁴ but Adomnán is explicit about 'different tongues' and 'foreign nations', making no mention of Latin, and this would therefore seem to be an allusion to an anticipated readership that did not speak Gaelic. Those who have taken this allusion seriously have tended to focus upon the possibility of an Anglo-

⁵² J.-M. Picard, 'The Purpose of Adomnán's *Vita Columbae*', in *Peritia* 1 (1982), 160-77, at 169-75; Herbert, *IKD*, 52-53, 142-46.

⁵³ Adomnán, *VC*, first preface.

⁵⁴ Sharpe, Adomnán, 241.

Saxon readership, while a continental one has also been considered a possibility. It seems unnecessary, however, to look so far afield when non-Gaelic-speaking Picts feature so often within the text itself, and when, even if the exact nature of the relationship between Iona and Pictish Christians as envisioned in the Columban thesis is open to question, there was an undeniable Pictish constituency within the Columban *familia* during Adomnán's abbacy – a constituency whose history and achievement were, moreover, being reviewed within Fortriu. In other words, we have every reason to expect that Adomnán should have been very mindful of a Pictish audience of *Vita Columbae*, and such an audience would seem to satisfy the author's description of a readership that was foreign and non-Gaelic in its speech.

Adomnán mac Rónáin assumed the abbatial office of Iona some seven years after the battle of the Two Rivers, and he and Bridei f. Bili continued to hold their respective positions of primacy for fourteen further years, until the death of the king in 693.⁵⁵ According to the regnal list, Bridei's successor, Taran f. Enfidaig, was *rex Fortrenn* – we might venture at this stage to call him *rex Pictorum* – for four years before being expelled in 697, presumably by his successor Bridei f. Derilei.⁵⁶ Interestingly, Adomnán tells us that Colum Cille once committed a certain Pictish nobleman called Taran, who was an exile, to the protection of a man in Islay, who soon had him murdered and so incurred the wrath of the saint and of God.⁵⁷ The Irish annals reveal that the historical Taran, obviously also a Pictish nobleman, travelled to Ireland two years after his expulsion, going, like Adomnán's character, into exile in the Gaelic zone.⁵⁸ Since this annal entry may be fairly certainly ascribed to the Iona Chronicle, we have every reason to suspect that the choice of the name Taran for this character in *Vita Columbae* was not coincidental. Adomnán, as abbot of Iona, had received the exiled Taran on the island and had presumably helped him to secure sanctuary in Ireland out of the reach of his rivals. In that event he may have made use of what would otherwise have been a general point in *Vita Columbae* about innocents to make, in addition, a particular point to the rivals of Taran f. Enfidaig.

⁵⁵ AU 693.1.

⁵⁶ AU 693.1; 697.1.

⁵⁷ Adomnán, VC ii.23.

⁵⁸ AU 699.3.

It is possible that Adomnán had further reasons for thinking about a Pictish audience that went beyond the purely ecclesiastical sphere. It has been said of Argyll in the 670s that its affairs ‘were very confused at this time’, and were ‘in a state of complete disorganisation’, but it seems unwise to assume that our own confusion indicates that the situation on the ground was any more confused than normal.⁵⁹ Cumméne reports that at the time of his writing the descendants of Áedán mac Gabráin were ‘still held down by strangers’ (*adhuc in procliuo sunt ab extraneis*) a state of being that probably endured as late as the time of Áedán’s great-grandson Domangart mac Domnaill, who, as we have seen, may be suspected of being subject to the dominion of Oswy as alluded to by Bede.⁶⁰ Domangart was killed in 672, and it would appear that Ferchar Fota of Cenél Loairn and Mael Dúin mac Conaill of Cenél nGabráin (and later his brother Domnall) began at about this time to contend with one another for *imperium* in the Gaelic west, and Ferchar must top our list of suspects with regard to killing of Domangart and the siege of Dunadd in 682.⁶¹ There is every possibility that this clash between Cenél Loairn and Cenél nGabráin invited the involvement of Bridei f. Bili in Gaelic affairs. We have seen that his successor was expelled from the kingship by Bridei f. Derilei. It has been shown that while ‘Derilei’ appears to be a feminine name – the name of Bridei’s mother – the name of the king’s father, ‘Dairgart’, is preserved, as we have seen in the third chapter, in *Vita Sancti Seroani*, Wyntoun’s *Cronykil*, and the priory register of St Andrews.⁶² This man, Derilei’s husband, has been identified by Thomas Clancy as Dairgart mac Finguine, a contemporary of Ferchar Fota, whose death is recorded in the annals and who was, seemingly, a direct descendant of Comgall, the eponym of the Cenél Comgaill of Cowal. The ramifications of such an identification are that Bridei and his brother Naiton, both of whose reigns as *rex Pictorum* we shall examine in the next chapter, were members of Cenél Comgaill (on their father’s side) whose claims to kingship in Fortriu must have passed through their mother’s

⁵⁹ Anderson, *ESSHI*, 182; Skene, *CS I*, 263–64. It is interesting that things begin to get ‘confused’ about the time that we start to get really detailed and contemporary information in the annal record, suggesting that the lack of such confusion in previous years is somewhat illusory.

⁶⁰ Adomnán, *VC* iii.5; Bede, *HE* iii.6.

⁶¹ *AU* 673.2; 678.3; 683.3. The 678 entry is expanded by *AT*, which mentions Ferchar Fota and the Britons as the protagonists of the battle of *Tíriu*.

⁶² Clancy, ‘Nechtan’, (2-3). It is also preserved in regnal lists D and K, possibly out of an awareness of the material indicated.

patrimony.⁶³ We do not know Derilei's parentage, although we may be reasonably confident that her father had been a Miathic over-king, and so probably a kinsman of Bridei f. Bili, through whom Bridei and Naiton claimed their inheritance. The mistaken glossing of the name 'Bruide' as *mac Deril* in the manuscript of the poem *Iniu feras Bruide cath* has been taken as indicating that Bridei f. Derilei was a grandson of the subject of the poem, Bridei f. Bili, so that Derilei was the latter's daughter, but such an identification must remain very tentative.⁶⁴

At any rate, this marriage between his kinswoman and Dairgart, perhaps the leader of Cenél Comgaill, a kindred which had once held the over-kingship of the Dál Riata, allows for a high degree of interest in Gaelic affairs on the part of Bridei f. Bili from relatively early in his reign. Indeed, more active forms of involvement are hardly unlikely, especially, as we have seen, after 679, the year in which Adomnán became abbot of Iona and Ecgfrith was defeated by the Mercians. The siege of Dunadd in 682 may represent an attack by Cenél Loairn upon Cenél nGabráin that was completely unrelated to the siege of Dundurn in that same year, but the violent death of Dairgart in 685 suggests that he and Cenél Comgaill were also involved in what may have been a three-way struggle for *imperium* in the Gaelic west in this period.⁶⁵ In that event, Dairgart may well have been able to depend to some extent upon his wife's Pictish kindred for support in his struggles, and it is possible that it was he who attacked Máel Dúin at Dunadd in 682, perhaps in a campaign that was somehow related to the siege of Dundurn.⁶⁶ Such a degree of Verturian participation in the politics of Dál Riata may even be hinted at in Adomnán's portrayal of Pictish animals in *Vita Columbae* as extremely aggressive and dangerous beasts that must be commanded to 'go no further' (*noles ultra progredi*) and sent

⁶³ Clancy, 'Nechtan', (2-4). For the death of Dairgart mac Finguine see AU 686.3/693.6; for Finguine's patrimony in the tractate *Cethri Prímchenéla Dáil Riata* [*Fingin m. Echdach, m. Loingsig, m. Comgaill, m. Domangairt, m. Meic Nisse Mair, m. Eirc*] see Dumville, 'Cethri Prímchenéla Dáil Riata', 179-82 and diagram at 183. Note, however, that *Míniugud senchasa fher nAlban*, in Bannerman, *Dalriada*, 41-44, places Conall mac Comgaill [l. 14], almost certainly correctly, between Comgaill and Loingsech in this pedigree.

⁶⁴ FA §165 (p. 54, note 3). The likelihood that this gloss is not a mistake is stressed by Kirby, 'Pictorum provincias', 303-04, but his argument is not particularly convincing.

⁶⁵ AU 686.3. There is another obit at AU 693.6, but AT has only the 686 entry.

⁶⁶ I see no reason to follow Moisl, 'Bernician Royal Dynasty', 121-23 in the ambitious assumption that Bridei's victory at Linn Garan was achieved by a 'Pictish-Irish alliance' including the Dál Riata and the Uí Néill, and it seems unlikely even that his army included men of Cenél Comgaill. Dairgart was killed

'terrified in swift retreat, as if being pulled back by ropes' (*retrorsum acsi funibus retraheretur uelociore recursu fugit tremefacta*).⁶⁷

Such an argument, if accepted, provides further evidence that Adomnán had a Pictish, and indeed a Verturian, audience in mind as he composed this work. There can be little doubt that the main purpose of the *prouincia Pictorum* corpus isolated within *Vita Columbae* in the first chapter of this study was to demonstrate and celebrate the sanctity of Colum Cille, and that it was put forward by Adomnán mainly for its utility in this regard. There are, however, other messages to be found here: that Colum Cille's embassy to Pictland in the second half of the sixth century was to a heathen northern Pictish people; that Bridei f. Mailcon, if not pagan himself, took counsel with *magi* at Inverness and was forced grudgingly by the surpassing miraculous powers of Colum Cille to accede to the saint's will; that many northern Picts who encountered Colum Cille became Christians as a result. As such, it is evident that Adomnán had accepted the general veracity of his Pictish source that sought to portray Colum Cille as the first Christian in the northern Pictish zone and the man who brought about its first conversions to the Christian religion.⁶⁸ This view of Colum Cille, of course, also underlies Bede's account, but Adomnán and Bede are not wholly reconcilable. Adomnán cannot be shown to share the view that Colum Cille had founded Durrow before Iona and had come to Britain 'to preach the word of God', and is silent on the matter of the donation of Iona to Colum Cille, which Bede's source attributed to the Picts and their king. In both cases we must presume that Adomnán took issue with such claims, but chose for good reasons not to dwell upon them or to contradict them explicitly. As we have seen, he seems to have been of a similar mind about the claim, found in Bede, that Colum Cille converted Bridei f. Mailcon to Christianity, leaving us with the impression that this was something put forward by Bridei f. Bili but rejected, or at least doubted, by Adomnán based upon what he knew about Colum Cille's dealings with Bridei from other sources. Given all that we have now seen about the likely origins of Bridei f. Mailcon and the likely nature of the Pictish ethnogenesis of

in 685, and one must wonder whether he and Cenél Comgaill became vulnerable to attack because Bridei f. Bili was under attack by the Northumbrians and could not send support.

⁶⁷ Adomnán, *VC* ii.26, ii.27; on which see Márkus, 'Iona: monks, pastors and missionaries', 116.

the last third of the seventh century, there would seem every possibility that the idea that the 'great king of the Tay' was a pagan in the time of Colum Cille was put forward by Bridei f. Bili in order to disparage Bridei f. Mailcon at a time when the former was actively seeking to secure control over the northern part of Fortriu. It is worth keeping in mind in this regard the evidence already discussed that the Pictish ethnogenesis may be seen as having involved the suppression of Calidonian emic and etic ethnic terminology and its replacement across the board by Verturian terminology. If the strategy employed by Bede's Pictish source would appear to have involved contrasting the antiquity of the Christianity of the southern Pictish zone, acquired a long time before Colum Cille, with the allegedly recent conversion of Bridei f. Mailcon, we may imagine that this strategy sought to undermine the position of the living descendants of Bridei f. Mailcon and his northern dynasty in Fortriu by suggesting that they were late-comers to Christianity, and that in this they demonstrated greater affinity for the northern Pictish zone than for the Fortriu where Bridei f. Bili now reigned.

If Bridei f. Bili may therefore be seen as having sidelined Colum Cille as a significant factor in Verturian ecclesiastical history, and moreover to have used the prominence of the Columban *familia* in Atholl as a political weapon to disparage his northern rivals, he may nevertheless be seen as having left room in his newly conceived *prouincia Pictorum* for that *familia*, which must have had a significant degree of real importance and influence. This emerges from a close look at Bede's account of early Pictish ecclesiastical history, in which the apostolic element of the Columban achievement serves only as an introduction:

In the year of our Lord 565...a priest and abbot who was distinguished in the habit and life of a monk, called Columba, came from Ireland to Britain to preach the word of God to the *prouinciae* of the northern Picts, which is to say to those which are separated from their southern regions by steep and rugged mountain ridges. For these southern Picts, who have their seats within the same mountains, had long before, as they do say, received the faith of truth in rejection of the error of idolatry – the Word was preached to them by Nyniau, a most reverent bishop and holy man of the nation of the Britons...Columba came to Britain in the ninth year of the reign of Bridei son of Meilochon, a most powerful king, and he turned that nation to the faith of Christ by his word and example; and so received the aforesaid island [Iona] from them in order to establish a monastery.

⁶⁸ For a further discussion of this motif in *Vita Columbae*, see Márkus, 'Iona: monks, pastors and missionaries', 120-21.

It is the way in which this passage concludes that is important here. It is apparent that the foregoing information is provided as a backdrop to the foundation of Iona, the monastery that stands as the real subject of the ensuing part of the account:

His successors hold it to this day and he himself was buried there at the age of seventy-seven, about thirty-two years after he came to Britain to preach. Before he came to Britain he had established a famous monastery in Ireland, called *Dearmach* in the Gaelic language...From both monasteries very many monasteries were propagated thereafter through his disciples both in Britain and in Ireland, over all of which the same island monastery, in which his body lies, used to hold the principate. This island always has a leader who is abbot and priest, to whose authority the whole *prouincia* must be subject, including, in an unusual arrangement, even bishops; which follows the example of that first teacher, who was not a bishop but a priest and monk, of whose life and words some written records are held to have been preserved by his disciples.

Considered in the historical context outlined in this chapter, Bede's testimony, taken as a whole, reads like nothing so much as a tract formulated to delineate, but also to rationalise and uphold, the organisational principles of the Columban *familia* in Pictland. The acceptability of these principles, of particular consequence to the northern Pictish zone beyond Fortriu, is based ultimately upon the fact that they follow the teachings and example of Colum Cille himself, the value of which are based in turn upon the saint's alleged apostolic activities among the northern Picts. That such a rationalisation became necessary during the three decades after Cumméne's death would seem to complement our previous arguments. If *Bridei f. Bili* was actively engaged in consolidating his power over Fortriu as a whole, and over Atholl in particular, in the last third of the seventh century, one of his main challenges will have been bringing Columban churches and monasteries into a *prouincia Pictorum* that was to be overseen by a bishop based after 681 in Abercorn. Such a policy, informed to some extent no doubt by the universalist organisational principles of the Anglo-Saxon zone, will have posed a threat to the way in which the episcopal function was regarded by Iona's Pictish *principatus*, but Bede's Pictish source would appear to have been prepared to allow the Columban *familia* its traditional management techniques within certain territorial limits.

There is an undeniable element of confrontation that running right through Adomnán's portrayal of the relationship between Colum Cille and the Picts. This aspect of *Vita Columbae* has been examined by Márkus, who notes that the saint is

portrayed as 'wooing the Pictish king, seeking that contract of mutual honour between saint and ruler, between monastery and kingdom'.⁶⁹ We may now argue that in this regard *Vita Columbae* probably encapsulates the Columban *familia*'s overall attitude towards the new developments in Pictish political and ethnic identity in the last decades of the seventh century. If there was something undeniably antagonistic about the stance taken by Bridei f. Bili towards the Columban *familia*, rooted no doubt in its former relationship with the royal dynasty of Atholl, it remained worthwhile in Adomnán's mind to woo the Verturian hegemon, taking on board his vision of Verturian ecclesiastical history, in order to establish a better relationship with him. That Bridei, for his part, was apparently prepared to leave the northern Pictish zone to Iona, as it were, suggests that he had little capacity to exert the kind of power and influence north of the Grampians that would have enabled him to challenge the ascendancy of the Columban *familia* in this region in the first place, and perhaps also that he was willing to be wooed by Adomnán and Iona, whose friendship could be a powerful weapon in increasing Verturian influence in the northern Pictish zone.⁷⁰ There would seem to have been nothing, in other words, in Bridei's hegemony-building policies that ought to be construed as anti-Gaelic in any real sense. In fact, this seems patently unlikely. Both he and his great victory were remembered fondly by later Gaelic writers. We have seen that his ancestors and their kin were not disinclined to patronise Gaelic clerics, although they seem to have avoided at that time offering support to the Columban *familia*, probably because of its associations with northern rivals. We have no reason to suspect that the Gaelic or even Columban connections of particular churches in Fortriu, such as Abernethy or Banchory-Ternan, were offensive to Bridei unless they refused to accept the new direction in royal ecclesiastical policy represented by the development of the source material known to both Adomnán and Bede and its new definition of the *prouincia Pictorum*. Similarly, and perhaps more obviously given

⁶⁹ Márkus, 'Iona: monks, pastors and missionaries', 135; on the confrontational nature of *Vita Columbae*'s Pictish stories, see *ibid.*, 132-34.

⁷⁰ The likelihood that Bridei and Iona had an antagonistic relationship allows for doubt about the apparent decision on Bridei's part to send Ecgfrith's body to Iona for burial after Linn Garan, on which, and for an alternative possibility with regard to Ecgfrith's burial, see Fraser, *Dunnichen*, 91-92. Ó Riain, *Anglo-Saxon Ireland*, 11-13, has shown that the presence of Ecgfrith in the *Martyrology of Tallaght* is strong corroborative evidence that he was buried in a Columban context, but Iona itself is not the only possibility.

the interpretation of his career presented here, we need not posit any particular animosity between Bridei and whatever Anglian churchmen were also operating north of the Forth during the episcopate of Trumwini. In fact, it is possible that Trumwini's agents were among the prime movers in Bridei's hegemonising programme, and among his most important advisors.

Linn Garan and the Pictish Church

Ecgfrith was killed at Linn Garan four years after Trumwini came north, and Bede reports that this momentous event signalled the end of Abercorn's short-lived pontificate over the *prouincia Pictorum*, implying that the bishop's retirement to Whitby took place immediately.⁷¹ That the victorious Bridei appears no longer to have had a use for Abercorn need not undermine the present argument that, during the time of his subjection to the authority of his *fratrueis*, he had been involved in, and perhaps instrumental in, the establishment of the see in 681, had co-operated with and cultivated a relationship with the bishop of the *prouincia Pictorum* until 685, and was generally sympathetic towards, and perhaps even enthusiastic about, the ecclesiastical culture and organisation of the Northumbrian Church. Thus envisioned, such sympathies, along with his overall agenda to expand Verturian hegemony in northern Britain, posed a threat to the customary liberties enjoyed by the *principatus* of Iona that had been established in the north since the days of the saint, and probably made a similar impression upon other established communities throughout the Verturian hegemony that sympathised with Iona, but about which we know nothing. In the case of the Columban *familia*, as usual the best-documented such institution of the period, the indications are that Bridei's ecclesiastical policy provoked a measured response which sought harmony with the new view of Colum Cille's Pictish achievement expounded by Bridei, and ultimately by both Adomnán and Bede. Elsewhere, however useful it had proven in the interim, and whatever its previous history as a place of religious importance to

⁷¹ Bede, *HE* iv.26. It is interesting that Trumwini chose the royal monastery of Whitby, and the company of Eanflæd and her daughter, as the place of his retirement. We know that Trumhere, the first abbot of Gilling, was a kinsman of Eanflæd's, and the combination of the shared *Trum-* element in their names and their apparent affinity with Edwini's daughter may suggest that Trumwini was also a kinsman of Oswy's queen. This would suggest that he may have been related in some way to Bridei f. Bili through their common kinship with Edwini, and this may explain the choice of Trumwini as bishop of the *prouincia Pictorum* in 681.

the Miathi of Stirlingshire, Fothriff and Strathearn, Abercorn evidently remained in Bernician territory after Linn Garan. Having perhaps become suddenly symbolic of the 'yoke of captivity' that had been so convincingly cast off by the 'iron swords' of Fortriu, Abercorn appears to have been cut adrift at that point from its northerly connections. That Trumwini and Abercorn were both made redundant is not surprising, but Adomnán's references to it in the next decade indicate that the idea of the *prouincia Pictorum* – a single Pictish ecclesiastical polity or, indeed, a Pictish Church – survived Linn Garan and the retirement of Trumwini intact, even if certain particulars about it must have changed, including the location of its primate.

We have seen reference to the foundation of Abernethy as having allegedly taken place over two centuries prior to the foundation of Dunkeld. The fact that this connection was made between these two churches suggests that Dunkeld, which clearly assumed primacy over the Pictish Church in the ninth century,⁷² replaced Abernethy in this role as Walter Bower, for what it is worth, learned in the fifteenth century from 'a certain chronicle of the church of Abernethy' (*quadam cronica ecclesie de Abirnethi*), in which it was recorded that this monastery had been 'the principal royal and episcopal seat, for some length of time, of the whole kingdom of the Picts' (*locus principalis regalis et pontificalis per aliqua tempora tocius regni Pictorum*).⁷³ We may now suspect that this was a role assumed by Abernethy from Abercorn after 685. Bridei's choice of Abernethy for this singular honour may now be linked with the likelihood, discussed in the third chapter, that this church and monastery had been founded on land donated by Neithon, the grandfather to whom Bridei's rights to his kingdom are connected in *Iniu feras Bruide cath*, enabling the over-king to establish what Márkus has called 'that contract of mutual honour between saint and ruler [in this case through the medium of his ancestor], between monastery and kingdom, between church and *túath*, which underlies so much hagiography'.⁷⁴ That the saint involved in this case was Brigit, rather than Colum Cille or Seruan or some

⁷² For a discussion of the evidence relating to Dunkeld's primacy, see J. Bannerman, 'Comarba Coluim Chille and the relics of Columba', in *Innes Review* 44 (1993), 14-47.

⁷³ *Chron. Bower* (Watt et al.) iv.12.

⁷⁴ Márkus, 'Iona: monks, pastors and missionaries', 135.

other saint, may be less significant than the fact that the *rex Pictorum* had familial associations with the church and the lands thereabouts.⁷⁵

Abernethy would not be the only Verturian monastery to benefit from new levels of royal attention and patronage extending from the establishment of the Verturian hegemony and the Pictish Church both during and after Bridei's reign. It was argued in the second chapter, for example, that we may take seriously the tradition that Adomnán and the Pictish king 'Bruide' became involved, albeit in the years after Bridei's death, in setting the territorial boundaries to be occupied by the *familia* of Seruan. It has been argued that this story, rather than offering evidence of the saint's *floruit*, reflects the reorganisation of this territory into an ecclesiastical *regio* which, having perhaps been dominated by Abercorn in the first instance, became focused upon the monastery of Culross, which thereafter remained the prime *locus* of the cult and *familia* of Seruan. Similar attention would seem to have become lavished on such monasteries as St Andrews, Meigle, and St Vigean, though none of these perhaps was founded until after 685, but any ecclesiastical reorganisation that might have gone with it is not likely to have been instant, but rather a gradual process that began with the rise of the Verturian hegemony, was provided with a secure future by the Verturian success at Linn Garan, but was only partly underway at the death of Bridei f. Bili in 693.

Conclusion

In *Vita Columbae*, Adomnán provides us with a vivid, if necessarily incomplete, portrait of the ecclesiastical landscape of northern Britain viewed from Iona around 700. However much we must admire the scholarship of the ninth abbot of Iona and his mastery of his craft, this chapter, in conjunction with those that have come before it, has shown that we would be remiss if we failed to appreciate that this portrait is, fundamentally, a snapshot taken during a period when the view from Iona was far from constant. Cumméne, writing a generation earlier, looked across a very different ecclesiastical landscape – one that had not yet been transformed by the exertions of Bridei f. Bili in the interests of political and

⁷⁵ Nevertheless one wonders whether Abernethy was selected from among a list of potential sites precisely because its Brigitine dedication (within the ecclesiastical milieu of the *prouincia Pictorum*) was as close to a non-committal decision as was possible with regard to prejudicing the cults of the various

ecclesiastical hegemony and ethnogenesis in and beyond Fortriu. A case can be made for believing that in Atholl – a territory destined to become a *regio* of the kingdom of Fortriu – the Pictish *familia* of Colum Cille responded to this new situation by re-thinking its history and that of its patron saint. Adomnán appears to have been keen to revise and repackage the Columban dossier to reflect these new developments, and so would seem to have put forward a different idea of Colum Cille's achievement among the Picts than had Cumméne before him. Such inconstancy would seem to be mirrored by the varied fortunes of the famous story of Colum Cille's prophecy regarding the grandson's of Áedán, deemed essential by Cumméne in the 660s, irrelevant, apparently, by Adomnán in the 690s, and then topical and worth restoring by Dorbbéne as he copied out the Schaffhausen manuscript of *Vita Columbae* shortly after Adomnán's death.

This later period, in which there remained important issues to be resolved within the newly-conceived Pictish Church, is the subject of the next chapter, where we shall see Iona take on something of the role assigned to it by Bede in his most ambitious claims on its behalf. It remains only to assert, as we have already done in the previous chapter, that the *imperium* held by the Bernician kings in Fortriu from about 664 until the death of Ecgfrith emerges from this chapter as having been very important in the history of the Pictish Church. On the one hand, it provided Ceadda (666-69), Wilfrith (669-78) and Eata (678-81) with the necessary security to exercise something of the jurisdiction to which they believed they were entitled among the Picts according to the Gregorian Plan. On the other, it introduced to Fortriu an able and dynamic overlord and afforded him the tools, support and facility to establish an unprecedented degree of political and ecclesiastical hegemony north of the Forth. On the whole it would seem that Northumbrian influence on the course of Pictish ecclesiastical history was not insignificant, and had become important several generations earlier than the '*correctio*' of Naiton. Yet there is no reason to think that the southern Picts were passive in this process, nor that the current of influence flowed in one direction only.

saints favoured by individual elite families. It may even have sent a message to the Gaelic element within the Pictish Church that it was more than welcome within the new order.

VII

A Nation (and a Naiton) Reformed The sons of Derilei and the Ionan ascendancy

He enforced what he said at once by royal authority. The nineteen-year Easter cycles were forthwith sent out to be copied, learned and enacted through all the provinces of the Picts, while everywhere the eighty-four-year cycles were obliterated. All ministers of the altar and monks received the tonsure in the form of a crown; and the reformed nation rejoiced to submit to the newly-found guidance of Peter, the most saintly prince of the apostles, and to be placed under his protection.

- *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum* (v.21)

The future of Iona's Pictish *familia* appears to have been a matter of concern for Adomnán, who complained in *Vita Columbae* that there were in Pictland 'many foolish people who ungratefully fail to recognise that they have been protected from the plague by the prayers of saints', and specifically by the prayers of Iona's founder. We have now seen that such concerns appear to have gone much deeper than a general desire to see Colum Cille afforded greater esteem by the people of northern Britain, having been aroused by the ecclesiastical policies of Bridei f. Bili, whose vision for the *prouincia Pictorum* as examined in the previous chapter would seem to have threatened the continuity and unity of the *principatus* maintained by Iona over its daughter houses in the northern and southern Pictish zones. It has been argued above that this crisis arose as a result of important political developments in Fortriu after the expansion of Bernician *imperium* into the central belt of Scotland in the middle decades of the seventh century, precipitating war and ethnogenesis in the southern Pictish zone and a rethinking of Verturian ecclesiastical history and the place of Iona in the Pictish present and future. The result was a relationship between Bridei f. Bili and Iona that was clearly strained, but not without hope for improvement, accounting both for that certain degree of antagonism which underlies Adomnán's treatment of Pictland in *Vita Columbae* and for Bridei's having acknowledged that Adomnán's community did have a place, however redefined, in the new *prouincia Pictorum* and its Church. By Bede's time, the Pictish ecclesiastical history outlined during the reign of Bridei had seemingly become part of the historical mainstream, but there is also a clear suggestion in

Bede's testimony that, in the generation following the completion of *Vita Columbae*, Iona's relationship with the Verturian political and ecclesiastical community underwent a great deal of change. Having been kept at, but within, arms length by Bridei f. Bili, the Columban *familia* would seem to have enjoyed something of a resurgence in the southern Pictish zone in the early eighth century, such that Bede, as we have seen, could relate that Iona 'for no short time used to hold together almost as one body the monasteries of the northern Gaels and all those of the Picts, as their *arx*, and exercised supervision over their communities'. It is the course of events that made such a claim possible, as well as the general triumph on the part of the Columban clergy of northern Britain in dealing with the Verturian kings of the period, that we shall examine in this chapter.

Bridei f. Derilei and the Pictish *Origo Gentis*

The reign of Bridei f. Derilei as *rex Pictorum* was comparatively short (697-706), but it was nevertheless an eventful period, and one of great importance to this study. We have seen that he was the son of Dairgart mac Finguine, and, like his father, a direct descendant of the eponym of Cenél Comgaill, the Gaelic inhabitants of south-eastern Argyll. His right to claim over-kingship in Fortriu must, as we have seen, have lain in the unknown patrimony of his mother, Derilei. The fraternal relationship between Naiton f. Derilei and Talorcan f. Drustan, the *rex Athfoitile* put to death in 739,¹ indicates that Bridei, Naiton and Talorcan shared this woman as their mother.² Her other husband, Drustan, has been taken above as having been a younger kinsman of Drust f. Donuel, the man driven from his kingship in the wake of the battle of the Two Rivers in 671 and who died in exile (perhaps on Iona) in 677, some eight years prior to the death of Dairgart.³ We have also seen evidence to suggest that Drust and his family had their power-base (like Talorcan f. Drustan) in Atholl. All of this information allows for the following reconstruction of the familial relationships of the sons of Derilei:

¹ AU 739.7; AU 713.7.

² There can be little doubt that Derilei, the mother of three kings (at least), two of whom claimed the Pictish *imperium* through her own parentage, was the daughter of a king and a kinswoman of Bridei f. Bili. Naiton himself had sons who were old enough to be killed in battle in 710 (AU 710.4), while Talorcan was still active in 739, and this may be taken as indicating that she was married to Dairgart of Cenél Comgaill before she was married to Drustan.

³ AU 672.6; AU 678.6; AU 686.3.

Indeed, a number of parallels between the careers of the two Brideis would seem to emerge from our thin evidence. Both may be seen as having struck first at Dunnottar in securing their hold on the Verturian hegemony. The political bases of both kings may be placed with some confidence in the Miathic zone of Fortriu (in the case of Bridei f. Derilei, some of this evidence is yet to be discussed). Finally, both seem to have driven into exile a rival king of northern heritage with probable connections with both Atholl and Iona. The circumstances surrounding Taran's expulsion from his kingship must remain a mystery. Whether he succumbed to some legal challenge mounted by Bridei or was driven out of Fortriu as the latter asserted his control over the hegemony established by the victor of Linn Garan, the events of 697 may well have been comparable with the suppression of independent Deiran kingship by the kings of Bernicia. This took place in the middle decades of the seventh century and resulted in Oswy's ability by the 650s to place his own candidates in the client-kingship of the Deirans. We have seen that, in the latter case, these political developments had important ecclesiastical ramifications for the ascendant Bernician *imperium*, and there is reason to believe, as we shall see, that something similar took place in the *prouincia Pictorum* as a result of the extension of Verturian hegemony northwards in the last decades of the seventh century.

Like his illustrious elder namesake, and indeed like most men of similar ambition, Bridei f. Derilei appears to have had to fight his way into the kingship by marching against (or defending) such places as Dunnottar and clashing with Taran, and to have fought throughout his reign to maintain it. Within a year of the expulsion of Taran, a Pictish force, presumably under Bridei's direction, won a seemingly resounding victory in battle over the Northumbrian *dux* Berctred son of Beornhaeth, who was slain in the engagement.⁶ Although he put together an impressive military record, however, there are indications that it was not by the sword alone that Bridei endeavoured to consolidate his position as *rex Pictorum* in these early years of this reign. These are provided by Bede in his famous *origo gentis* purporting to explain the origins of the Picts in Britain:

⁶ AU 698.2; Bede, *HE* v.24. There is a possibility that the Northumbrians marched on Fortriu in 698 in support of the ousted Taran; it is equally possible, however, that it was Bridei who was the aggressor. Berctred's father Beornhæth was evidently the *audax subregulus* who fought alongside Egrith in his great victory at the Two Rivers in 671.

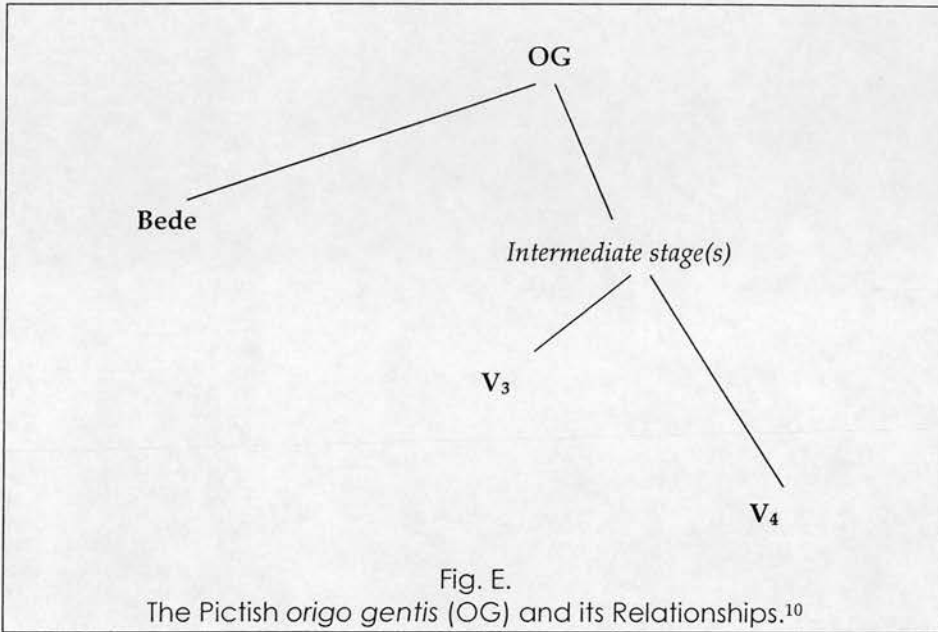
In primus autem insula Brettones solum, a quibus nomen accepit, incolas habuit; qui de tractu Armorico, ut fertur, Britanniam aduecti australes sibi partes illius uindicarunt. Et cum plurimam insulae partem incipientes ab austro possedissent, contigit gentem Pictorum de Scythia, ut perhibent, longis nauibus non multis Oceanum ingressam, circumagente flatu uentorum, extra fines omnes Britanniae Hiberniam peruenisse, eiusque septentrionales oras intrasse atque, inuenta ibi gente Scottorum, sibi quoque in partibus illius sedes petisse, nec inpetrare potuisse... Respondebant Scotti quia non ambos eos caperet insula, 'sed possumus' inquiunt 'salubre uobis dare consilium, quid agere ualeatis. Nouimus insulam esse aliam non procul a nostra contra ortum solis, quam saepe lucidioribus diebus de longe aspicere solemus. Hanc adire si uultis, habitabilem uobis facere ualetis; uel, si qui restiterit, nobis auxiliariis utimini.' Itaque petentes Britanniam Picti habitare per septentrionales insulae partes coeperunt...Cumque uxores Picti non habentes peterent a Scottis, ea solum condicione dare consenserunt, ut ubi res ueniret in dubium, magis de feminea regum prosapia quam de masculina regem sibi eligerent; quod usque hodie apud Pictos constat esse seruatum.⁷

At first the island was inhabited only by Britons, from whom it receives its name, who sailed from the land of Armorica to Britain, as it is said, and appropriated to themselves the southern parts of it. And when they had taken possession of the most part of the island, beginning from the south, the race of the Picts, so they maintain, sailed out from Scythia into the ocean in a few ships, carried by the winds beyond the furthest bounds of Britain, and reaching Ireland. Landing on its northern shores and finding there the race of the Gaels, they asked permission of them to settle in those parts, but this was refused them...The Gaels replied that the island would not hold them both, 'but we can', they said, 'give you some good counsel as to what to do. We know of another island to the east not far from our own, which we often see from afar on clear days. If you will go there, you can make a settlement for yourselves; but make use of our help if anyone resists you. And so the Picts went to Britain and proceeded to occupy the northern parts of the island...And as the Picts had no wives they asked them of the Gaels, who consented to give them only on condition that where the matter came into doubt, they should choose their kings from the female royal line rather than from the male; which persists down to this day among the Picts, as is well known.

For obvious reasons, this myth has always figured prominently in the debates about Pictish matriliney, but it is far more important for what it has to tell us about Pictish ethnogenesis, since 'ethnogenesis theory' has long recognised that the formulation of an *origo gentis* like this is of key importance in the ethnogenesis process, being a crucial tool in the arsenal of any dominant political group seeking to define or re-define a political community according to a supposed common heritage.⁸ The relationship between Bede's Pictish *origo* and an array of myths in Gaelic revolving around the *origo gentis* of the Cruithni, a Gaelic ethnonym that in Bede's time could be applied either to the Picti of northern Britain or to the Dál nAraidi of Ulster, was

⁷ Bede, *HE* i.1.

examined by Gearóid Mac Eoin, who isolated four early branches of what he thought was a single tradition, and concluded that three of these are linked, related almost certainly to an *origo gentis* from which Bede's *origo* also descends, an *origo* that may be referred to as OG.⁹



In attempting to understand something of OG it is necessary to consider first how the different traditions stemming from it handle the ultimate origins of the Picti-Cruithni. Only two of the three linked Irish stems isolated by Mac Eoin actually do this, and place the origins of the Cruithni in Thrace. Bede, of course, differs from the Irish tradition in placing the origins of the Picti in Scythia. Mac Eoin saw this as an innovation on Bede's part; it is surely significant, however, that one branch of the Irish tradition, V₄ above, says that the Picti-Cruithni (and both ethnonyms are used) were called in addition *Agathirsi*, and were descended from Gelon son of Ercol.¹¹ The first of these references identifies the Picti-Cruithni with the *Agathirsi*, an ancient people mentioned by Vergil in the fourth book of the *Aeneid* as being *picti* or 'painted'.¹² Professor Watson, who was of course aware of the Irish tradition, argued that the source of Bede's Pictish *origo* had therefore identified the Picti of northern Britain with Vergil's *picti Agathirsi*, from which

⁸ Brooks, *Bede and the English*, 5.

⁹ G. S. Mac Eoin, 'On the Irish Legend of the Origin of the Picts', in *Studia Hibernica* 4 (1962), 138-54.

¹⁰ Mac Eoin, 'Irish Legend of the Origin of the Picts', 153.

¹¹ See Mac Eoin's summaries, 'Irish Legend of the Origin of the Picts', 142-45.

identification stemmed the idea that the Picti were Scythians, for Servius, in his late fourth-century *Commentary* on the *Aeneid*, noted that the Agathyrsi in question 'were a Scythian people' (*populus Scythiae*).¹³ Servius seems therefore to have known something of a Scythian *origo gentis* recorded by Herodotus, in which Heracles fathers three sons in Scythia, two of whom, Agathyrus and Gelonus, are eventually forced into exile.¹⁴ The first of these figures is the eponym of the Agathyrsi of Vergil and V₄ of the Irish tradition, and if this Scythian connection ties V₄ rather closely to Bede's Pictish *origo*, Mac Eoin pointed out that this close relationship between them is apparent in other respects, though it is equally apparent that neither of the two is derived from the other.¹⁵ Since Bede does not mention Agathyrsi, and V₄ does not mention Scythia, we have good reason to conclude that it was their common source, OG, which mentioned both Scythia and the Agathyrsi, in which event it would be the Thracian connection put forward by the Irish tradition that we ought to see as innovative. The matter would seem to be clinched by V₄'s reference to the Picti-Cruithni being descended from Gelon son of Ercol, who is evidently the same person as Herodotus's Gelonus son of Heracles.

There are no other suggestions that whoever formulated V₄ knew Herodotus, and the idea is most unlikely. As Professor Watson observed, it was in fact Vergil who knew Herodotus and who paved the way for the introduction of Gelon son of Ercol into V₄ by mentioning a *picti* or 'painted' people called *Geloni* in the second book of the *Georgicon*.¹⁶ This enables us to glimpse the author of OG at work, noting in his Vergil the existence of two Classical peoples referred to as *picti*, one of which at least he could trace through Servius's *Commentary* on the *Aeneid* to Scythia, the other which he somehow managed to trace to Heracles. It would seem unlikely, given the apparent importance of Servius's *Commentary* in the early medieval Latin syllabus,¹⁷ that, having got as far in his research as the Agathyrsi and the Geloni, this author can then have failed to follow Servius in placing the

¹² Vergil, *Aeneid*, iv.146.

¹³ Maurus Servius Honoratus, *Commentary on the Aeneid of Vergil*, l.146; Watson, *CPNS*, 60-61.

¹⁴ Herodotus, *History*, iv.10. Herodotus did not believe this Greek story; nor did he believe the native Scythian origin myth, preferring a third alternative.

¹⁵ Mac Eoin, 'Irish Legend of the Origin of the Picts', 151.

¹⁶ Vergil, *Georgicon*, ii.115.

¹⁷ A. Burnyeat, pers. comm.

Agathyrsi in Scythia.¹⁸ After all, Servius himself, having identified the Agathyrsi, stated that by *picti* Vergil did not mean 'having marks pricked in, like the *gens* in Britannia, but finely painted, namely with hair of an agreeable sea blue'.¹⁹ If we may take it that Professor Watson rightly supposed that it was this conceptual association made by Servius, bringing together thoughts about the British Picti and Vergil's painted Agathyrsi, that encouraged tracing the Picti to Scythia, it would seem almost impossible for OG to have misplaced them in Thrace. In that event, we must see the transformation of OG's Scythian Picti into Thracian Cruithni as an Irish innovation.

A plausible explanation for this innovation emerges when one considers for a moment the evidence of two stems of the Cruithnic tradition that Mac Eoin regarded as earlier than OG. Insofar as one of these places the Cruithni in Ireland before the coming of the Gael and gives no thought to northern Britain, and the other has them meet the Gael in Germany and join them in their invasion of Ireland, we may suspect that neither stem actually had anything at all to do at first with the Picti of northern Britain.²⁰ Instead these traditions are best explained as having revolved in the first instance around the ancestors of the Dál nAraidi of Ulster: only in one recension of one of these stems is any mention made of northern Britain, and here the text seems to be following a later tradition.²¹ Nevertheless, in one of these stems the Cruithni are made to carry off the wives of the Gael when the latter arrive in Ireland, forcing them to intermarry with the Túatha Dé Danann, while in the other the Cruithni are promised Gaelic help in winning Irish territory to settle in. These ideas of needing to intermarry with the native population of Ireland for lack of women, and of being promised Irish help in conquering territory for themselves, seem to have made it into OG and thence into Bede's Pictish *origo*, suggesting that, in addition to his Vergil and his Servius, the author of OG made use of early strands of the *origo gentis* of the Dál nAraidi-Cruithni in formulating his Pictish *origo gentis*. It may therefore be suggested that V₄, though aware of the Scythian connection in OG, chose to relocate the ancestors of the Picti-Cruithni to Thrace in order to

¹⁸ We must imagine such a failure in order to argue that Bede's source mentioned only Agathyrsi and Gelon son of Ercol, and that it was Bede himself who connected them with Scythia.

¹⁹ Servius, *Commentary*, I.146.

²⁰ See Mac Eoin's summaries, 'Irish Legend of the Origin of the Picts', 140-41.

reconcile OG with one of these early stems, in which the ancestors of the Dál nAraidi-Cruithni were Thracian in origin.²²

In other words, it emerges from this analysis that, although he knew material from the Dál nAraidi-Cruithnic *origo gentis* and appreciated the possibility of making enough of an identification between the Picti-Cruithni and the Dál nAraidi-Cruithni to appropriate ideas from this material, to have then put forward the view that the Picti-Cruithni were Scythian in origin, rather than Thracian, was an un-Gaelic thing for the author of OG to have done. It is perhaps not surprising, in that event, that there is precious little else to suggest that OG emphasised any real links between these two peoples known to Gaelic-speakers as Cruithni. With these points in mind we may consider the view of Professor Watson, endorsed, it would seem by Mac Eoin, that OG was Irish in provenance and that Bede acquired access to it (in some form) from Ireland.²³ This seems unlikely when, on the one hand, it would seem to have gone against the grain of Irish ethnography in making the Picti Scythian in origin, and on the other, to have failed to explore the obvious potential ethnographic link between the Dál nAraidi and the Picti, which is very difficult to believe of a Gaelic writer who knew both peoples as Cruithni. None of the traditions that actually discuss the Pictish-Cruithnic conquest of northern Britain – all of which seem to stem in some way from OG – gives the slightest indication that some offshoot of the Picti-Cruithni were left behind in Ulster. This is argument from silence, but surely everything we know about early medieval ethnography conditions us to believe that a Gaelic audience would expect some kind of discussion, in an *origo*, about these two different groups of Cruithni, even if only to explain why the obvious association stemming from their common name is not made manifest on the ground. That the author of OG felt no need to enter into such a discussion, while making no suggestion, from what can be reconstructed of his work, that any Cruithni were left behind in Ireland when the Picti moved on to northern Britain, is strongly suggestive that he was not Irish, or at least that he was not writing for a Gaelic audience. Instead, he seems to have made identifications with Vergil's *picti Agathyrsi* and *picti Geloni*, and, if it is not a later interpolation,

²¹ Mac Eoin, 'Irish Legend of the Origin of the Picts', 141

²² Mac Eoin, 'Irish Legend of the Origin of the Picts', 141.

with the city of Pictabis (now Poitou),²⁴ all of which shows that he and his audience were thinking of the Picti as *Picti* and not as *Cruithni*. At this stage we may at last notice the fact that Bede actually implies once again with the phrase *ut perhibent* ('so they maintain') that his Pictish *origo gentis* came to him from a Pictish source, something which the foregoing discussion makes that much more likely, since we would not expect a Pictish author to feel constrained by trends in Irish ethnography, nor a Pictish audience to identify meaningfully with the Dál nAraidi in Ulster, whatever their two names in Gaelic might suggest.

Wolfram has pointed to examples in other *origo* narratives in which women seem to be introduced either to 'sacrifice their entire past and cultic existence for the salvation and survival of the tribe and thus legitimize the new ethnogenesis', or else to stand 'for the conservative layer of society that opposed the change of cult, that is to say, a new...ethnogenesis'.²⁵ In the case of the Pictish *origo gentis*, which we may now suppose with some confidence to have come from Pictland itself, the Irish women fall firmly into the former category: it is their becoming the wives of the Picts that paves the way for the new ethnogenesis in northern Britain, though they do not quite 'sacrifice their entire past', as a result of the condition placed upon the Picts with regard to succession. Trends in the writing of an *origo gentis* suggest that OG should have attempted to limit the Pictishness that was its subject to 'a select few peoples', or at least to delineate who within what has been envisioned in this study as a potentially diverse political community was and was not to be considered truly Pictish according to the new ethnogenesis.²⁶ Insofar as we can glimpse the Pictish *origo gentis* we cannot demonstrate that it offered a listing of the truly Pictish peoples of northern Britain, but its apparent inclusiveness with regard to Gaelic heritage is quite fascinating. Furthermore, our ability to recognise, as outlined above, that matriliney was not regular among the Picts, and was very probably not even common, suggests that one of the main purposes of OG was to

²³ Watson, *CPNS*, 60.

²⁴ Mac Eoin, 'Irish Legend of the Origin of the Picts', 143-44. Poitou (Pictavia) took its name from the Pictones, a Gaulish people mentioned in many Classical sources (eg. Caesar, Strabo, Ptolemy, Ammianus).

²⁵ H. Wolfram, '*origo et religio: ethnic traditions and literature in early medieval texts*', *Early Medieval Europe* 3 (1994), 19-38, at 22-24.

²⁶ Wolfram, *Goths*, 20.

underline the legitimacy in Pictland of claiming kingship through one's female ancestors.

These two aspects of the Pictish *origo gentis* revolving around the role assigned to Irish women are, as Clancy has suggested, crucial for our understanding of when OG is most likely to have been composed, since the *origo* as presented by Bede can hardly have been more topical than in 697 when Bridei f. Derilei, a man of Gaelic patrimony who claimed his Pictish kingship through his mother, came to power in Fortriu.²⁷ The fact that OG underlines the legitimacy of that claim, while portraying Gaelo-Pictish parentage as having been the catalyst that brought about the first Pictish ethnogenesis is powerful evidence that OG was written in Fortriu in the earlier part of the period 697-724 when the sons of Derilei were kings of Fortriu.²⁸ Such a date is important, for wider trends in ethnogenesis suggest, as already mentioned, that the formulation of an *origo gentis* was extremely important in the whole process, and condition us to expect no great period of time to have passed between significant fluctuations in Pictish identity on the one hand, and the composition of OG to provide the Picts, as newly-conceived, with a common *origo* on the other. This is yet another indication that ethnogenesis was indeed underway among the southern Picts during the period to which it has been assigned earlier in this study.

The Making of the Ionan Ascendancy

Whatever support Bridei may or may not have enjoyed from his Cenél Comgaill kinsmen in the legal and military struggle that lay between himself and the Verturian *imperium*, there is a body of good (by Pictish standards) evidence to suggest that he also actively cultivated support of a different kind from elsewhere in Dál Riata. At the heart of this policy would seem to have been the establishment of a close working relationship between the king and Adomnán, by then the most eminent man in the ecclesiastical affairs of Dál Riata. Adomnán appears to have had

²⁷ Clancy, 'Nechtan', 5 suggests that this passage speaks of the kingship crisis of the late 720s, when Naiton f. Derilei had been deposed; this may explain Bede's decision to include this story in *HE*, but the myth itself is more likely to have been generated by Bridei, the first of Derilei's sons to claim the kingship through her, than by his brother and successor. See also Woolf, 'Matriliney', 150.

²⁸ One wonders whether the *origo's* mention of the early Picts having had recourse to the support of Gaelic *auxilium* in the interests of overcoming resistance and securing a place in northern Britain for the *gens Pictorum* also hints that the sons of Derilei too relied upon Gaelic *auxilium*, in the form of the support of warriors of Cenél Comgaill, in securing and maintaining their kingship.

a great deal of use for this relationship. It must have been early in his reign that Bridei became a guarantor of the *lex innocentium* which the ninth abbot of Iona 'gave to the people' (*dedit populis*) in the year of Taran's expulsion.²⁹ It has been suggested in the previous chapter that the episode of *Vita Columbae* involving Taran, 'who belonged to a noble family of the Picts but who was living in exile', alludes in some way to the situation in which the historical Taran found himself after his expulsion, and was written with his rivals, and perhaps Bridei f. Derilei himself, in mind as an audience. If so, the decisions taken by Adomnán in taking on board the historical framework of his Pictish source, as described above, along with his having bypassed Taran f. Enfidaig as a potential guarantor of his *lex innocentium* and, perhaps, his having described his Taran character as a nobleman rather than as a king, may be taken together as both a major gesture of support of the recent activities of Bridei f. Bili and his younger namesake, and a clear statement of willingness to work with the Verturian kings in developing their plans for the northern Pictish zone, where Iona maintained many long-standing interests. Such an exchange of mutual support between *rex Fortrenn* and abbot of Iona at the outset of the younger Bridei's reign set the stage for a new era in Verturian ecclesiastical history, for there are indications that the extent of their cooperation went much further than a common acceptance of a particular view of Fortriu's ecclesiastical past and such matters as the protection of innocents.

The main textual evidence for this is, as we have seen, the appearance of both Bridei and Adomnán in *Vita Sancti Seruani*, where the latter is credited with having donated St Serf's Isle in Loch Leven to Seruan for the foundation of a monastery and for having assigned to his *familia* 'the land of Fife, and from the hill of the Britons to the hills which are called [the Ochils]'. It is interesting that the territory denoted here, if *mons Britannorum* may be taken as indicating Clyde Rock (Dumbarton), encompasses the Miathic heartland that has factored so prominently in much of the foregoing analysis, but it is very difficult to know whether such details are actually later accretions to this tradition. For his part, Bridei is credited here with having affirmed that Seruan might keep the site of the church of Culross

²⁹ AU 697.3. *Bruide mac Derilei rí Cruithintuathi* is guarantor §91, see M. Ní Dhonnchadha, 'The guarantor list of *Cáin Adomnáin*, 697', in *Peritia* 1 (1982), 178-215, at 181, 214.

'in perpetual alms' (*in perpetuam elemosinam*),³⁰ which has been taken above as a hint at its establishment as the prime *locus* of the most important *familia* within this *regio* so recently rested, at least in part, from Northumbrian control by the efforts of Bridei f. Bili at Dunnichen, and perhaps by his own subsequent victory over Berctred son of Beornhaeth in 698. Bridei is also said by both Wyntoun and the priory register of St Andrews to have made the Loch Leven donation associated by the *Vita* with Adomnán. The fact that we know these two men to have been confederates in other matters gives us little reason to doubt the general authenticity of these traditions that speak of their co-operation in Fothriff, even if some of the details may be doubted, and even if, as we have seen, we need not assume that Seruan's *floruit* belongs to the end of the seventh century. Instead, we may acknowledge that *Vita Sancti Servani* seems to hint at the involvement of Bridei and Adomnán in some kind of organisation of ecclesiastical territories which included the reorientation of the churches of southernmost Fortriu around the monastery of Culross. Such a decision may be compared with the establishment of an episcopal seat at Abernethy, making it, in the much later words of Bower, the *locus principalis regalis et pontificalis* of the *regnum Pictorum*. Brecc of Fortriu was perhaps bishop here at his death in 725,³¹ and, as discussed in the previous chapter, this decision may be credited to Bridei f. Bili in the years following his victory at Linn Garan and the disestablishment of Northumbrian *imperium* north of the Forth. The scraps of evidence that point to such developments would seem to hint at an ecclesiastical reorganisation of Fortriu in the wake of the Pictish ethnogenesis of the last third of the seventh century, establishing a new community of belief encompassing the whole of the *provincia Pictorum*. If the work seems to have begun in the last decade of the reign of Bridei f. Bili, more work was apparently required in the time of the younger Bridei, involving, no doubt, the creation of new bishoprics or the reorientation or affirmation of existing ones such that all acknowledged themselves as suffragans of the bishop of Abernethy. At the same time, the king may have been looking to extend his authority beyond the Mounth into the northern Pictish zone.

³⁰ Anon., *VS*, 140.

³¹ *AU* 725.7.

Having been a significant but perhaps minor player in the ecclesiastical history of Fortriu as a whole up until this point, the Columban *familia* appears to have risen to prominence south of the Mounth in the nick of time to become much more extensively involved in the new Pictish Church than even the notable part played by Adomnán (whether directly or by proxy) in Fothriff. Taylor has shown that, while the main toponymic term used to denote a church within this *regio* was Pictish (*bod*), the Gaelic word *cell* seems to have become active as a toponym further east at some point before about 800. The key piece of dating evidence for this cluster of *cell* place-names in east Fife is the roll of saints commemorated by them, prominent within which is a certain Dúnchad, whom Taylor has identified as Dúnchad mac Cinn Fáelad, who held the *principatus* of Iona (*principatus lae*) from 707 until his death in 717.³² Taylor has surmised from this and other similar evidence in Atholl and Easter Ross that Gaelic Columban churchmen became uncommonly active in the ecclesiastical affairs of east Fife and these areas of the northern Pictish zone during the *floruit* of Dúnchad, probably as advocates of universalism, and based, in the case of Fife, at 'some important early church establishment, with Scottish or Irish connections and high political standing'.³³ Surely the new episcopal church at Abernethy, with its proximity to east Fife and the Brigantine dedication of its monastery, is an ideal fit for such a description. This allows us to envision not just significant (and seemingly unprecedented) levels of Columban activity in both Fothriff and Fife during the period roughly contemporary with Bridei f. Derilei and his brother and successor Naiton, but also potentially the establishment of a Columban churchman (perhaps even Brecc himself) as bishop of Abernethy and thus metropolitan or *prím-epscop* of Fortriu. On the other hand, St Vigean's north of the Tay bears a dedication to Féichín, the abbot of Fore (*Fobar*) in Westmeath who died of *buide Chonail* in 665.³⁴ To judge from the sculpture which survives there, this was another very important Pictish monastery, but its Gaelic connections, like those of Abernethy, would appear to have lain outside the Columban *familia*.

³² AU 707.9; 717.1.

³³ Taylor, 'Early Church in Eastern Scotland', 98; see 98-101 for a full discussion of the evidence.

The weight of the evidence would seem to suggest more than that the Pictish ethnogenesis and the establishment of the Verturian hegemony brought with it the establishment of a single Pictish Church and all of the ecclesiastical reorganisation this entailed. It also seems that as Bridei f. Derilei and his brother Naiton became involved in this process they installed Columban churchmen like Dúnchad mac Cinn Fáelad in some, perhaps many or even most of the more important ecclesiastical posts in the kingdom. As Bede understood it, Adomnán and his successors as abbot of Iona would have had *principatus* over such ecclesiastical leaders as head of the *familia* to which they all belonged, and this, *de facto*, will have given Iona authority over the Pictish Church if the see of Abernethy was conferred upon a Columban bishop. There would seem to be a reasonable candidate for such a bishop in Brecc, although this must remain uncertain. Unfortunately, the details of how such ascendancy was made manifest on the ground, whether through 'alms' owed by Verturian churches to the heir of Colum Cille or by some other arrangement by which the status of Iona was acknowledged, are probably forever obscure. Such a situation was perhaps something of a return to form for part at least of the Pictish Church in regions that had formerly been subject to the kings of Atholl, and Taylor has called attention to the prominence within the Atholl cluster of Columban dedications of the names of Adomnán and Cóeti, the latter having been a contemporary of Dúnchad and another of the guarantors of *lex innocentium*, whose obit in 712 designates him as *episcopus Iae* ('bishop of Iona').³⁵ Clancy has broached the possibility that Cóeti's principal area of pastoral concern as bishop was not Iona itself, but a Pictish see which included both Iona and churches in Atholl.³⁶ We can only speculate, but it is tempting to suppose that *episcopus Iae* and *episcopus Athfoitile* might have been co-equal designations at this time, and that Cóeti was one of the Columban bishops whose appointments to Verturian sees would provide an obvious basis for Bede's impressions regarding Iona's former place in Pictish ecclesiastical affairs.

³⁴ On the death of Féichín, see AU 665.3; AI 666.5; his Life, 'Vita sancti Fechini abbatis de Fauoria', in C. Plummer (ed.), *Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae*, Vol. II, (Dublin, 1997), 76-86, makes him abbot of Fore. For the identification of Vigean with Féichín, see Watson, *CPNS*, 321-22.

³⁵ AU 712.1. *Ceti epscop* is guarantor §21; see Ní Dhonnchadha, 'Guarantor list', 180, 191. For the dedication evidence see Taylor, 'Early Church in Eastern Scotland', 101-02. For a suggestion that Cóeti was Anglo-Saxon, see Charles-Edwards, *Ireland*, 308.

We can do no more than guess as to why Bridei f. Derilei welcomed a relationship of this kind with Iona and the Columban *familia*. It may be instructive that a similar kind of process may be envisioned as having taken place within the Bernician hegemony in the 650s and 660s, when Oswy, having succeeded in finally subjecting the Deirans to Bernician domination, found himself compelled nevertheless to make a number of ecclesiastical concessions to them at Whitby. Perhaps something similar took place in Pictland at the end of the seventh century, with the Ionan ascendancy in Fortriu emerging as a key concession on the part of successive *reges Pictorum* of Miathic heritage who were determined to solidify their dominion over Athfotla and potentates even further afield beyond the Mounth. The combination of the open view of Gaelic heritage taken in the Pictish *origo gentis*, Bridei's own Gaelic patrimony, and his possible reliance upon Cenél Comgaill military and legal support in the early years of his reign may also have been significant factors in shaping his willingness to entrust to the Columban *familia* ascendancy within his Church. It must be pointed out that there is little evidence to suggest that Cenél Comgaill must have felt any particular sense of fellowship with the abbots of Iona, who appear to have thrown their lot in with Cenél nGabráin from an early date. Yet the fortunes of Cenél nGabráin had been in decline since (arguably) the reign of Domnall Brecc, after the killing of whose grandson Eochu in 697 this kindred appears to have been well and truly eclipsed.³⁷ Given such developments in Dál Riata, it is possible that, by embracing the Columban *familia* and providing it with such promising opportunities in Fortriu, Bridei hoped not only to strengthen himself as *rex Pictorum*, but also to raise the profile of his Cenél Comgaill kinsmen in the eyes of the leading men of Iona. It is even possible that Bridei f. Derilei was largely unfamiliar with the political and ecclesiastical 'mechanisms of overlordship' established in Fortriu and its hegemony by his elder namesake – mechanisms that Bridei f. Bili may have 'learned from the kings of Bamburgh'³⁸ – and that he elected (perhaps as Oswald had done in Bernicia) to

³⁶ Clancy, 'Philosopher-King', (6).

³⁷ AU 697.4. Eochu (*Eochu ua Domnaill*) was also guarantor §85 of *Cáin Adomnáin*, which suggests that Iona's lot was still thrown in with Cenél nGabráin during Adomnán's lifetime, a conclusion fully supported by Adomnán's treatment of this kindred in *Vita Columbae*. See Ní Dhonnchadha, 'Guarantor list', 181, 212.

³⁸ Woolf, 'Onuist', forthcoming.

import alternative mechanisms from the Gaelic zone with which he felt more comfortable in order to maintain as much control as possible over his kingdom's affairs. It is important to remain mindful, however, of the fact that Adomnán appears to have been very willing to work with the Verturian kings, which suggests that we cannot overlook pressure from Iona as an important factor in Bridei's decisions, and there is every possibility that the connection between the Northumbrian king Aldfrith (685-705) and the monastery where he had become 'a man most learned in the scriptures' (*uir in scripturas doctissimus*) applied additional pressure to Bridei f. Derilei,³⁹ who may well have wished to avoid a situation in which his rivals and enemies to the north, south and west might develop a sense of common purpose through their common regard for Iona.

Ascendancy and the Management of the *Familia*

It may be that this establishment of Ionan ecclesiastical ascendancy in Fortriu near the end of the abbacy of Adomnán, who died in 704, will serve to help us in understanding the somewhat vexed matter of developments in the headship of Iona over the next generation. It would appear to have been Conamail mac Failbi who succeeded Adomnán, but the annals record that Dúnchad obtained the *principatus* from him three years before Conamail's death in 710.⁴⁰ This has been interpreted as the beginning of some bitter Easter-related or other schism within the monastery, or, more recently, as 'terminological flexibility' within 'a single eclectic system'.⁴¹ One wonders, however, whether this unprecedented cleavage of the responsibilities associated with the headship of Iona was made necessary after Adomnán's death by the extra work involved in overseeing the monastery's now greatly expanded Pictish interests. In such a model, Dúnchad may be seen as having become the *de facto* leader of Iona's *principatus*, including its affairs in northern Britain, in 707, while Conamail continued to lead the community of Iona itself as abbot until his death in 710. Thereupon Dúnchad appears to have assumed the abbacy himself and to have served as both *abbas* and *princeps* until his own death in 717. That Dúnchad was able to act in both capacities where Conamail was not may

³⁹ Bede, *HE* iv.26.

⁴⁰ AU 707.9; 710.1.

⁴¹ Etchingam, *Church Organisation in Ireland*, 92-93. For recent reviews of the schism issue, see Herbert, *IKD*, 57-60; Sharpe, *Adomnán*, 74-75; Veitch, 'Columban Church', 635.

suggest that by 710 the Ionan ascendancy in Fortriu had experienced a degree of decline, with perhaps fewer Verturian offices of importance being offered to Columban churchmen by Naiton f. Derilei (who succeeded his brother as *rex Pictorum* in 706). On the other hand, one might imagine that Dúnchad had laid sufficient groundwork in the previous three years to enable most of the day-to-day supervision of the Verturian church to be done by its Columban bishops. Cóeti *episcopus Iae* died in 712 as we have seen, and in the next year Dorbbéne (probably the scribe of the Schaffhausen manuscript of *Vita Columbae*) 'obtained the *kathedra* of Iona' (*kathedram Iae obtenuit*), a phrase which Etchingham has defined as having 'primarily episcopal associations'.⁴² We need not, therefore, envision Dorbbéne as having mounted any challenge to Dúnchad's authority as *abbas* and *princeps Iae* – and if this remains a possibility it is also possible that he simply succeeded Cóeti in his episcopate – perhaps as *episcopus Athfoitle* – dying a mere five months after his appointment.

The fact that it was another three years before Faelchú mac Dorbbéni, at the age of seventy-four, was appointed to succeed Dorbbéne in the *kathedra Iae* is, on this alternative model, an interesting development.⁴³ In order to explain how such an apparent hiatus in the office of *kathedra Iae* can have arisen after 713, it is necessary to speculate about a particularly difficult body of thin evidence that seems to speak of political tensions in Fortriu in that year involving Naiton f. Derilei and his half-brother Talorcan f. Drustan. Naiton's brother Ciniod f. Derilei was killed in 713, and in the same year 'Talorc f. Drustan [was] tied up by King Naiton his brother' (*Tolargg filius Drostain ligatur apud fratrem suum Nectan regem*), hinting that Talorcan was either involved in or suspected to have been responsible for Ciniod's death.⁴⁴ It is difficult to know what to make of these events, to which our apparent hiatus in the *kathedra Iae* might also be connected. We have seen indications that Talorcan was a descendant, or at least a kinsman, of Drust f. Donuel within the royal kindred that has been envisioned here as including Bridei f. Mailcon, and it is possible that the killing of Ciniod and the binding of Talorcan were the results of an attempt on the part of the latter to capture the kingship of

⁴² AU 713.5; on *kathedra Iae* see Etchingham, *Church Organisation in Ireland*, 92.

⁴³ AU 716.5.

Atholl or even of Fortriu for himself. In that event, one could envision how Talorcan, with his connections with Atholl with its long-standing Columban associations, and Cóeti and Dorbbéne, in their respective capacities as *episcopus Iae* and holder of the *kathedra Iae*, can have become or been suspected as having become complicit in the killing of Ciniod f. Derilei. Although such a reconstruction of the events of 713 is of necessity very speculative, it will serve nevertheless to underline the point that our apparent three-year hiatus of the *kathedra Iae* can have come about because Naiton arranged, for these or any other reasons, his own episcopal appointment to this see without recourse to Dúnchad as *princeps* of Iona.

The details of this reconstruction are clearly open to question, but it seems unlikely to have been a coincidence that these complexities in Iona's leadership arose on the one hand during the time of Ionan ascendancy in the *prouincia Pictorum*, and seem to have resolved themselves on the other after that ascendancy had come to an end, pointing to the likelihood that the two developments were related phenomena. Whether or not the responsibilities of Cóeti and Dorbbéne in the new offices envisioned here extended to other parts of the Columban *familia* in Dál Riata and Ireland is unclear and may perhaps be doubted, given that such divisions appear to have been necessary only during the time of the Ionan ascendancy in Pictland, and so may be interpreted as having served related needs. Dúnchad mac Cinn Fáelad died in 717, and it may have been the 'expulsion of the *familia Iae* across Druim Alban by King Naiton' (*expulsio familiae Iae trans Dorsum Brittaniae a Nectano rege*) in that same year which enabled the aged Fáelchú mac Dorbbéni, who had taken up the *kathedra* in the previous year, to take up the *principatus* and abbacy of Iona, only to pass the responsibilities of *princeps Iae* to Feidlimid in 722.⁴⁵ By this time, five years after the famous *expulsio*, the need for such a cleavage in the headship of Iona would seem to have passed: Iona may well have maintained enough ongoing interests in the northern Pictish zone (and elsewhere in northern Britain) beyond the effective reach of Naiton's *imperium* to keep a separate *princeps* occupied, but Professor Herbert's suggestion that Feidlimid's appointment may have been brought about by the advanced years (and

⁴⁴ AU 713.4; 713.7.

⁴⁵ AU 717.4; AU 722.6.

so failing health) of Fáelchú, who died two years later at the age of eighty-two, is also worthy of consideration.⁴⁶

The direct and circumstantial evidence is reasonably strong, then, that Bridei f. Derilei and his successor actively cultivated a relationship with Adomnán and the Columban *familia*, perhaps as part of a multifaceted campaign intended to motivate northern potentates, and those in Atholl and its dependencies in particular, to commit more readily than they had done during the reign of Bridei f. Bili to the Pictish ethnogenesis and its vision of a single *gens* and *prouincia Pictorum* ruled by a Verturian *rex Pictorum* whose heritage was ultimately Miathic. The political consequences of this scheme are difficult to evaluate. There are nevertheless many indications that, in the ecclesiastical sphere, it provided Columban churchmen with unprecedented levels of influence within the Church and kingdom of Fortriu. Such a development, which has usefully been described as ‘an extension and formalisation of Iona’s influence’ in Pictland,⁴⁷ is clearly in contrast with the situation described in the earlier chapters of this study, in which the influence of Iona has been envisioned as being limited to particular regions. Even as recently as the previous generation, Pictish Columbans and the Columban *familia* appear generally to have perceived Bridei f. Bili as an antagonistic and somewhat threatening figure as a result of the revisions that arose in the way in which Pictish ecclesiastical history and the Verturian community of belief were being newly conceptualised during his reign. This matter, it would seem, was one of many that were resolved in Iona’s favour after the death of Bridei f. Bili and the production of *Vita Columbae*, where there is little indication that the Ionan ascendancy described by Bede had yet taken shape.⁴⁸ Indeed *Vita Columbae*, in which Adomnán took pains to align the Columban dossier as it pertained to the Picts with the new historical outlook of the Verturian kingdom, was probably a crucial step in the whole process,

⁴⁶ AU 724.1; Herbert, *IKD*, 60. Fáelchú seems to have been succeeded as both *abbas* and *princeps* by Cilléne Fota, who himself died in 726 (AT). It seems possible that Feidlimid’s term as *princeps* had been pre-arranged to terminate upon Fáelchú’s death.

⁴⁷ Clancy, ‘Nechtan’. He believes it was influence ‘over’ *Pictauia* rather than ‘in’ it.

⁴⁸ There is of course the matter of the connection made between Bridei f. Bili and Adomnán in *Betha Adamnáin* §14, where it is maintained that Bridei was dear to Adomnán and buried on Iona. Given all that we have seen, it seems very possible that it was Bridei f. Derilei/Dairgart whose tomb could be found on Iona, and that traditions about this Bridei became confused at some later stage with his more famous namesake, the victor of Linn Garan.

since in this respect it could serve as a concrete signal to the Verturian kings that Iona was willing and able to play by their rules in the Pictish sphere.

We have already drawn parallels between Bridei f. Derilei's situation in the 690s and that of Oswy Aedilfrithing in the 660s, but in other ways, the reign of Bridei may be seen as having mirrored that of Oswy's brother Oswald, who spent his formative years in exile in Dál Riata and thereafter privileged the Gaelic churchmen that he invited into his kingdom (and who probably relied upon the support of Gaelic retainers at *Denisesburn*). The parallel would indeed seem to go even further, in that Bede's statement that Oswald 'was moreover a nephew of King Edwini through his sister Acha, and it was fitting that so great a predecessor should have so worthy a kinsman to inherit both his religion and his kingdom' (*erat autem nepos Eduini regis ex sorore Acha, dignumque fuit ut tantus praecessor talem haberet de sua consanguinitate et religionis heredem et regni*) may be taken as an indication that Oswald too made something of his mother's patrimony in order to lay claim to *imperium* over the Deirans.⁴⁹ Moreover, the evidence discussed throughout this study suggests that the Ionan ascendancy established by Bridei, like that established by Oswald, would probably have resulted in the sidelining of important constituencies within the existing ecclesiastical framework of Fortriu, and particularly in those parts of the kingdom where the churches had no prior associations with Iona. As in the Anglian example, this would seem to be instructive in understanding the reaction against the Columbans that was to take place in the next generation. Whatever form such constituencies took in Fortriu, they may be thought to have found themselves in a position comparable to that of James the Deacon in York between 633 and 664 when the Paulinian traditions of Deira were eclipsed by those associated with Lindisfarne, and it may be that, as had been the case among the Angles, concerns regarding the observational particularisms of Iona emerged in Fortriu as an aspect of this opposition.

Naiton f. Derilei and the *Correctio*

It was to this period, then, which may be roughly dated 697-717, though probably after the production of *Vita Columbae*, that Bede referred when he described the Ionan ascendancy in Pictland as having been in place 'for no short

time' (*non paruo tempore*), while his use of the imperfect tense (*arcem tenebat*) anticipates his description of the *correctio* of the *gens Pictorum* later in Naiton's reign.⁵⁰ It is a logical extension of both the Columban thesis and more recent views of the lateness of the Pictish conversion that this *correctio* ought to represent a major turning point in the ecclesiastical history of the Picts, and as such it has attracted a great deal of scholarly comment. That the place of Iona and the *familia* of Columba in the christianisation and early ecclesiastical history of the Picts has, according to the present argument, tended to be overestimated, and that the *correctio* may be seen instead as the abandonment of an ecclesiastical policy that was no more than a generation old, would seem to render this a much less pivotal event in Pictish history. As a political decision and a remarkable *volte-face* in ecclesiastical allegiances it is, however, hardly less interesting as a result, and it may be noted that for particular regions like Atholl it was probably as significant as has traditionally been believed. Most interpretations of the evidence relating to the Pictish *correctio* have seen Naiton as having engaged in a conscious effort to bring his kingdom into closer political alignment with the Northumbrians, whose own reformation had taken place some fifty years earlier at Whitby. Recent variations on this theme have included, for example, the suggestion that the *correctio* was a shrewd attempt on Naiton's part to bring about an alliance with the Northumbrians and so to end 'profitless border skirmishes',⁵¹ as well as the argument that, by reforming his Church, the Verturian over-king was seeking to undermine the traditional links between Northumbria and Iona, a situation which until then had presented 'undertones of political encirclement' to the Picts.⁵² This idea that the *correctio* was essentially an act of international diplomacy brought about by external political factors, is, however, unsatisfying on a number of levels. The Council of Whitby, as far as we can tell, was brought about almost entirely in response to political and ecclesiastical pressures internal to the Oswegian hegemony. With this example in mind there can be no particular reason to prefer the traditional view

⁴⁹ Bede, *HE* iii.6.

⁵⁰ The possibility 'that the real cultural dominance of Iona [in Pictavia] came at the end of the seventh and not the sixth century' has been raised, if given short shrift, by Veitch, 'Columban Church', 636.

⁵¹ Henderson, *Picts*, 60. See also Foster, *PGS*, 90; Smith, 'Origins and development of Christianity', 32; Veitch, 'Columban Church', 639-40.

⁵² Kirby, 'Bede and the Pictish Church', 18.

which, it must be said, is reminiscent of Skene's misguided belief that the Picts and the Gaels of the seventh century enjoyed peaceful relations because common ecclesiastical allegiances provided an effective deterrent to military activity. Whatever may be thought of his appeal to Ceolfrith of Wearmouth-Jarrow, a matter to which we shall return, we have no evidence that Naiton made any kind of corresponding overture to the Northumbrian king Osred, and Professor Duncan is probably correct in his view that other political factors were responsible for the apparent cessation of large-scale campaigns across the Forth.⁵³

The *correctio* took place, according to Bede, as a result of decisions made at a *consessus* ('assembly') attended both by 'many learned men' (*multi uiri doctiores*) versed in Latin and by his *optimates* ('nobles'), a gathering which, on the surface at least, sounds similar to the Council of Whitby in 664.⁵⁴ The traditional dating of this *consessus* places it around 710 solely from the context into which Bede, who provides no more explicit date, inserts the relevant chapter into his text.⁵⁵ Professor Duncan has shown, however, that the Easter controversy is hardly likely to have been topical until 712, the first time during Naiton's reign that the conflicting Easter cycles produced divergent dates for the festival, and has put forward a convincing case for believing that it was not until this divergence had taken place that the issue became the subject of anxiety and close attention.⁵⁶ It has been suggested above that the sons of Derilei may have relied in part upon political, legal and military support provided by their Cenél Comgaill kinsmen in making good their claims to the Verturian kingship and maintaining their security, and this ought to draw our attention to a 'conflict among Cenél Comgaill in which two sons of Nectan mac Dairgarto were killed' (*immbairecc apud genus Comghaill ubi .ii. filii Nectain m. Doirgarto iugulati sunt*).⁵⁷ This clash took place in 710, some four years after the

⁵³ Duncan, *Kingdom*, 62. There can be little doubt that Prof. Duncan is on the right track in drawing our attention to 'the internal weakness of Northumbrian kingship' in this period, leading to the murder of Osred in 716, and political instability in both kingdoms in the generation after 711 would seem as good an explanation as any for 'the peace of the eighth century' – although this phenomenon would repay closer examination.

⁵⁴ Bede, *HE* v.21. Presumably these *uiri doctiores* would have been characterised as *sapientes* (or *ecnai*, 'scholars') in Ireland, see Charles-Edwards, *Ireland*, 264-66.

⁵⁵ Bede, *HE* v.21.

⁵⁶ Duncan, 'Bede', 26-27. The previous divergence had taken place in 702. See also Hunter Blair, 'Bernicians and their Northern Frontier', 172, who suggested that Naiton's exchange with Ceolfrith is unlikely to have taken place before the Anglo-Pictish war of 711.

⁵⁷ AU 710.4.

death of Bridei f. Derilei, and may be thought to signal an end to whatever support his successor Naiton had continued to enjoy from their father's kindred.

The troubles of the *rex Pictorum* thereafter went deeper than the personal tragedy of having lost his sons. In the following year, the Anglian *praefectus* Berctfrith appears to have avenged the death of Berctred thirteen years earlier by bringing about 'the slaughter of the Picts in the plain of Manau' (*strages Pictorum in Campo Manonn*), which can only have deepened Naiton's difficulties and intensified whatever crisis may have arisen in his affairs as a result of the events of 710.⁵⁸ In 712 Congal mac Dairgarto, one of the paternal brothers of the *rex Pictorum*, seems to have died of natural causes,⁵⁹ and we have seen that in the next year a further crisis arose revolving around the killing of his full brother Ciniod f. Derilei, the activities of Talorcan f. Drustan and, perhaps, the allegiances of the Columban cleric Dorbbéne who held the *kathedra lae* at the time. We have very few details relating to these events, but at the least they seem to speak of an extended period of conflict between Naiton and his relatives on either side of Druim Alban in the years leading up to the *correctio*, involving his Cenél Comgaill kinsmen on the one hand and Talorcan, his maternal half-brother, on the other. Naiton appears to have bought himself some breathing room in 713 by taking Talorcan into custody, but it would seem nevertheless that controversy regarding Easter arose within a Verturian hegemony that had recently become deeply embroiled in a high degree of political intrigue stemming from dynastic in-fighting, a situation not entirely dissimilar to that within which the Anglian Easter controversy had arisen in the early 660s.

Professor Herbert is no doubt on the right track, then, in suggesting that Naiton's *volte-face* regarding the Ionan ascendancy is quite likely to have been related in some way to these political crises that seem to have begun as early as six years previously with a rift within Cenél Comgaill.⁶⁰ The possibility that, as has been suggested above, Talorcan and Dorbbéne had reached some kind of accommodation before the events of 713 would seem to be a particularly interesting

⁵⁸ AU 711.3; Bede, *HE* v.24 s.a. 711. Bede records only that Berctfrith '*cum Pictis pugnavit*' ('fought with Picts'), and may have chosen not to mention the scale of his victory in deference to Naiton, who he clearly admired. Berctfrith may well have been a close kinsman of Berctred's, see Hunter Blair, 'Bernicians and their Northern Frontier', 170-71.

⁵⁹ AU 712.4: '*Congal m. Doirgarto moritur*' ('Congal son of Dairgart dies').

⁶⁰ Herbert, 'Legacy of Columba', 4.

one in coming to terms with Naiton's dissatisfaction with the ecclesiastical *status quo* established by Bridei. At any rate, the effect of this crisis period may well have been that the *rex Pictorum* felt deprived of a significant degree of the support that had been so important in securing and maintaining the kingship of his brother Bridei, leaving him vulnerable to attack both from outwith and within the *prouincia Pictorum*. That being said, although Naiton himself has always figured prominently in interpretations of the *correctio*, Henderson has allowed for the possibility that the impetus towards reform may not have lain entirely with the *rex Pictorum*, suggesting that churches which had been influenced by the Northumbrians during the 'occupation' period were probably reformist in outlook.⁶¹ We need not doubt the significance of the role of the over-king himself in bringing about religious change, but it would seem necessary to emphasise that, as we have seen in this study, significant Anglian influences will have been palpable in the churches of the southern Pictish zone from as early as the 660s. The prominence of Naiton in our sources, then, need not imply that the *correctio* was entirely his doing, nor that he was not assisted, guided and supported by a wider reformist movement among the native clergy.

David Kirby would seem to be in general agreement on this point, but introduces to the drama of the *correctio* the figure of Ecgberct, the Anglian-born Columban bishop who, according to Bede, had abandoned the idea of undertaking a mission to the Continent, preferring instead to become involved in the reformation of the particularisms of the Columban *familia*. Kirby has convincingly argued that this decision on Ecgberct's part is likely to have been more-or-less contemporary with the adoption of universalist observances by Adomnán,⁶² who, as abbot of Iona, held the ultimate authority within the *familia* to which Ecgberct was attached. He goes on to suggest, moreover, that Ecgberct thereafter worked both in Ireland and in Pictland, striving to bring his fellow Columbans into line with Adomnán's universalist agenda until, having succeeded in implementing reformation on Iona itself in 716, he remained in that monastery until his death in

⁶¹ Henderson, *Picts*, 71.

⁶² Kirby, 'Bede, Iona and the Picts', 18.

729.⁶³ It was Ecgberct who Kirby suspects, advised Naiton to consult with the abbot of Wearmouth-Jarrow on the matter of Easter. Professor Duncan has pushed this suspicion further, proposing that the very idea of becoming involved in reforming the observances of his Church was neither Naiton's own nor suggested by reform-minded Pictish clerics, but can instead only have come to the *rex Pictorum* from a mission led by Northumbrian churchmen.⁶⁴ Ecgberct, it is suggested, was the leader of this mission, and Professor Duncan argues in addition that, having persuaded Naiton of the necessity of the *correctio*, Ecgbert wrote on his behalf a letter to the abbot of Wearmouth-Jarrow, a source from which, Professor Duncan believes, all of Bede's Pictish information is derived.⁶⁵ More recently, Kirby's thesis has been taken still further by Raymond Lamb, who has suggested that Ecgberct was also a significant influence in the ecclesiastical developments of eighth-century Orkney.⁶⁶

There would seem to be little reason to doubt that Ecgberct did indeed serve as a source of some of Bede's information (particular with regard to his own career), but the possibility that he played anything like so important a role in the Verturian *correctio* is contradicted explicitly by Bede. We are told that Ecgberct, when he was stricken with plague in 664 while a pupil in Ireland, made a vow to God that, in return for his life, he would, among other things, 'live in exile and never return to the island of his birth, that is, Britain' (*adeo peregrinus uiuere uellet, ut numquam in insulam in qua natus est, id est Britanniam, rediret*).⁶⁷ Bede's fondness for this particular story, which he ascribes to a priest who had heard it from Ecgberct himself, cannot be doubted, for he reminds his readers of Ecgberct's vow later in his narrative.⁶⁸ We can be left in no doubt that Bede believed the vow to have been fulfilled, since he would not have made so much of the story had he known, or even suspected, that it had in fact been abandoned. Aware of this problem in his thesis,

⁶³ Kirby, 'Bede, Iona and the Picts', 18-19. Ní Dhonnchadha, 'Guarantor list', 180, 193-94, has identified Ichtbricht episcop, guarantor of the *lex innocentium*, as Ecgberct, but this identification has been challenged by D. Ó Cróinín, 'Rath Melsigi, Willibrord and the Earliest Echternach Manuscripts', in *Peritia* 3 (1984), 17-49, at 25-26.

⁶⁴ Duncan, 'Bede', 22.

⁶⁵ Duncan, 'Bede', 1-42 *passim*.

⁶⁶ R. Lamb, 'Pictland, Northumbria and the Carolingian Empire', in Crawford (ed.), *Conversion and Christianity*, 41-56; see also Foster, *PGS*, 90, who argues that Ecgberct was 'almost certainly' the 'prime mover' behind Naiton's appeal to Wearmouth-Jarrow.

⁶⁷ Bede, *HE*, iii.27.

⁶⁸ Bede, *HE*, iv.3.

Kirby is compelled to paraphrase what Bede actually says by suggesting that Ecgberct vowed only that he would 'live always in a foreign land', and both he and Professor Duncan suggest that Bede must not have been aware of Ecgberct's involvement in the *correctio*.⁶⁹ However, the entire Ecgberct thesis hinges upon Bede's statement that he had lived his ecclesiastical life in exile among the Gaels and the Picts,⁷⁰ and Professor Duncan even suggests that Bede suppressed the place of Ecgberct's death (Iona) in order to make his vow appear to have remained fulfilled.⁷¹ Such arguments smack of special pleading: surely Bede would simply have suppressed the story of Ecgberct's vow altogether had he suspected that the man had forsaken it.

How then, ought we to resolve the apparently contradictory statements made by Bede that Ecgberct never returned to Britain, and yet lived in exile among the Gaels and Picts? In fact, there is little reason, especially in light of all we have seen in this study, to presume that these statements are contradictory at all. Instead, we may infer from Bede that it was understood in the early eighth century that one could be living among the Gaels and Picts without setting foot upon the island of Britain. To do so, one had simply to travel to Iona as Ecgberct did, and to live in the monastery which, although today it is generally viewed with regard to its place and significance within the Gaelic zone, had nevertheless maintained connections with the northern Pictish zone since Colum Cille's time, and which, since the death of Bridei f. Bili, had been afforded an ascendant place within the Pictish Church. Bede gives clear evidence that (even if modern observers have had difficulty seeing Iona as anything but an Irish monastery) Pictish observers of the early eighth century, based on views put forward, it has been argued here, in the time of Bridei f. Bili, considered the island to have been Bridei f. Mailcon's to donate in the 560s, and there is every reason to think that one might be said at the time to have been living among both Picts and Gaels while living on the island.⁷² Bede, moreover, in summarising Ecgberct's career before his journey to Iona in 715, indicates that the

⁶⁹ Kirby, 'Bede and the Pictish Church', 18-19; Duncan, 'Bede', 35.

⁷⁰ Bede, *HE*, iii.27.

⁷¹ Duncan, 'Bede', 35-41.

⁷² I am grateful to Professor Charles-Edwards for reminding me that Bede, *HE* iii.3, describes 'those parts of Britain' (*illas Brittaniae plagas*) opposite Iona - which is to say Lorne, Morvern and Ardnamurchan - as being inhabited by Picts.

Pictish element of his exile did not become a factor until after that date,⁷³ hinting further at Iona as the place of his Pictish exile. Ecgberct, then, is quite unlikely to have had much at all to do with the Verturian *correctio*, and is most likely to have come to Iona directly from Ireland at the summons of Dúnchad.

Bede is all but silent about the ramifications of the *correctio* for the future of the Ionan ascendancy within the Pictish Church, merely indicating through his use of the imperfect case that such an ascendancy had become by his own time a thing of the past. It is from the Irish annals that we know that Iona, by this time intimately connected with the Pictish Church, adopted the universalist calculation of Easter in 716, and that this was followed in the next year by the 'expulsion by King Naiton of the *familia* of Iona beyond Drum Alban'.⁷⁴ The construction of Bede's narrative notwithstanding, we are permitted to wonder whether it is really necessary to posit a lengthy delay of six years between the Verturian *correctio* and the reformation of Iona. It is generally accepted that the monastery of Iona was founded by Colum Cille in 563 as recorded in the Irish annal tradition, no doubt based at this point upon the Iona Chronicle itself. Bede appears to have had access to conflicting traditions, only one of which – that Iona had been established in the ninth year of the reign of Bridei f. Mailcon – can be reconciled with the annals. Bede, however, was clearly unaware that Bridei's reign began in 554 and could not use this information to generate a date for the foundation of Iona. He gives instead the year 565, which must be the result of a calculation made from other chronological information. Although he does not give the date, Bede clearly knew that Colum Cille died in 597 at the age of seventy-seven, but his statement that this was 'about thirty-two years after he came to Britain to teach' (*post annos circiter xxx et duos ex quo ipse Britanniam praedicaturus adiit*),⁷⁵ being erroneous (in fact it was thirty-four years later), is less likely to be responsible for the 565 calculation than a further calculation itself from the received dates 565 and 597.⁷⁶

The 565 calculation would therefore seem, as Professor Duncan has argued, to have been based upon the information that the particularist Easter reckoning

⁷³ Bede, *HE* iii.4. Here Ecgberct's exile is in *Hibernia* only.

⁷⁴ AU 716.4; AU 717.4.

⁷⁵ Bede, *HE* iii.4.

remained in force on Iona 'for a very long time, no less than 150 years, up to the year of our Lord 715' (*tempore non pauco, hoc est usque ad annum dominicae incarnationis DCCXV per annos CL*).⁷⁷ This date too, as it happens, is problematic, since Bede seems to have telescoped into a single year the known date of Ecgberct's arrival on Iona in 715 and the claim that 'by him they were corrected and brought to the true and canonical Easter Day' (*correcti sunt per eum et ad uerum canonicumque paschae diem translati*),⁷⁸ a reform which (as we know from the annals) did not in fact take place until the following year. Nevertheless we may accept 715 as a fairly firm date for the summoning of Ecgberct to Iona, and if this summons was issued in reaction to the *correctio* the *consessus* is hardly likely to have taken place much earlier than this year. On the other hand, the very real possibility that Iona was expected to adhere to whatever decision was made by Naiton and his *consessus* has been broached by Professor Duncan, who suggests that the king will indeed have been thinking along such lines.⁷⁹ It is difficult to envision a scenario in which Dúnchad and the Columban *familia*, having thrown their lot in with the Pictish Church so extensively in the time of Adomnán and Bridei, would not have been fully involved in Naiton's *consessus*, and although a delay is hardly impossible, it seems quite plausible that Iona committed itself to follow fully the decisions reached at this gathering. We may therefore infer that the Verturian *correctio* and the acceptance of the universalist Easter calculation on Iona took place together in 716, in which event we might imagine that Ecgberct and others were summoned to Iona in the previous year to participate in a conference convened by Dúnchad in anticipation of the *consessus*. The role played by Ecgberct at such a council may indeed be embodied in Bede's understanding of his achievement, particularly, for example, if he served as a prominent advocate or spokesman in support of reform.

Although it seems fairly likely that, as had been the case at Whitby, the *consessus* included interested parties from outwith Naiton's kingdom, we have little grounds for assuming that the reform movement itself was driven by such visitors.

⁷⁶ This seems a more likely explanation than that proposed by Prof. Duncan, 'Bede', 6, that either Bede or his source got the number *xxx et duos* from a misreading of *xxxu*.

⁷⁷ Bede, *HE* iii.4; see Duncan, 'Bede', 10.

⁷⁸ Bede, *HE* iii.4.

It seems far more likely instead that there was an active reform party within the Pictish Church itself. No doubt such a party will have included among its members those who harboured resentment for the Ionan ascendancy sponsored by the sons of Derilei. It is also the case, however, that, according to Ceolfrith of Wearmouth-Jarrow, Adomnán himself had acknowledged the unorthodoxy of the eighty-four-year Easter cycle, and it is possible, as Clancy has suggested, that he, Cóeti, Dúnchad, and other key figures within the Ionan ascendancy were active advocates of Paschal reform within the Pictish Church.⁸⁰ It is difficult to believe that the *correctio* and the *expulsio* of 717 were unrelated developments, especially if the former took place only a year before the latter,⁸¹ but they seem nevertheless to have been the result of distinct decisions on Naiton's part, both of which are likely to reflect internal political concerns as much as concerns aroused by theology or international relations. The unlikelihood that the *familia lae* supported its own *expulsio* in 717, then, is no guarantee that a number of Columbanus of high standing had not supported the *correctio* only a year earlier – perhaps indeed in the ultimately vain hope that such acquiescence might convince Naiton to reconsider his antagonistic position regarding the looming *expulsio*. At any rate, Bede provides us with hints, albeit vague ones, about the existence and influence of such a Verturian reform party when he informs us that the king had been perfectly capable of becoming well-versed in the theological arguments involved in the Easter and tonsure controversies without having had any recourse to Wearmouth-Jarrow, and that he was also already in possession of the nineteen-year Easter table. Naiton is likely to have acquired both of these faculties from a native reformist party which, Bede makes clear, had helped the over-king in making up his mind to sanction the reformation of particularist practices in Fortriu even before the *consessus* had met.

The Appeal to Wearmouth-Jarrow

⁷⁹ Duncan, 'Bede', 21-22. Professor Duncan's belief that the Pictish king came to Iona in 717 and expelled into Pictland (ie. *trans Dorsum Britanniae*) those clerics who still refused to accept the *correctio* (pp. 35-36) is, however, quite unconvincing.

⁸⁰ Clancy, 'Philosopher-King', (9-10), expanding on an argument first made by Taylor.

⁸¹ But see Veitch, 'Columban Church', 641, whose reconstruction of the activities of the Columban clergy in Pictland in the early eighth century requires, among other things, 'the refutation that there was a connection' between the *correctio* and the *expulsio*.

It was because he had already made up his mind that the *rex Pictorum* was able to pledge before the fact that he and his people 'would always follow the customs of the holy Roman and apostolic church, insomuch as they might learn them, remote as they were from Roman language and blood' (*morem sanctae Romanae et apostolicae ecclesiae semper imitaturum, in quantum dumtaxat tam longe a Romanorum loquella et natione segregati hunc ediscere potuissent*).⁸² This pledge, along with the promise that, with assistance, the over-king would build a stone church 'after the fashion of the Romans' (*iuxta morem Romanorum*) and dedicate it to Peter,⁸³ is known to us, of course, because Naiton very famously sent an embassy to Ceolfrith, abbot of Wearmouth-Jarrow, and asked him to compose an explanation of the 'catholic observance of holy Easter' (*catholica sancti paschae obseruantia*) by which the king 'might carry through [the *correctio*] easily and with greater authority' (*facilius et maiore auctoritate perficeret*) and 'would be able to confute more convincingly those who presumed to observe Easter at the wrong time' (*potentius confutare posset eos, qui pascha non suo tempore obseruare praesumerent*).⁸⁴ It would seem to be largely because he made this gesture to Ceolfrith that scholars have suspected the *correctio* of being only part of a wider political agenda by which Naiton sought to establish a more amicable relationship with the Northumbrians. There can be little doubt that Verturian ecclesiastical culture of the eighth century, such as it can be identified, shows clear evidence of interaction with Northumbrian ecclesiastical culture, but we have seen above that Naiton's appeal to Wearmouth-Jarrow is at least as likely to speak of existing connections, growing from seeds planted during the Oswegian period, as it is to speak of the first establishment of such ecclesiastical contacts. Bede, who has been suspected of having drafted his abbot's reply to the *rex Pictorum*, is, at any rate, quite clear about Naiton's motives in making his appeal to Ceolfrith: he was simply seeking to make the implementation of his decision to reform the Pictish Church easier by arming himself with arguments that were more authoritative and convincing than the ones he already had to hand from the reformists among his own clergy.

⁸² Bede, *HE*, v.21.

⁸³ Bede, *HE*, v.21. For a consideration of the significance of this church, see Fraser, *Dunnichen* (forthcoming).

⁸⁴ Bede, *HE*, v.21.

Wearmouth-Jarrow was a logical place to seek such arguments. Not only was Ceolfrith's monastery, as Kirby has argued, 'perhaps the most powerful Romanising influence in Northumbria' at the time,⁸⁵ but, unlike Abercorn, Hexham, Lindisfarne and York, it also had no history of involvement or interference in the *prouincia Pictorum* during the period of Bernician *imperium* north of the Forth. Ceolfrith, then, loomed (at least in theory) as a disinterested observer whose views on Easter could be presented as devoid of any underlying political agenda, unlike, we may presume, those that were advanced by those on either side of this politically-charged debate within Fortriu and the wider Verturian hegemony. Ceolfrith could moreover also consult with a certain member of his community in order to produce an authoritative exposition on the matter, for Bede had completed his *computus* in 709. The fact that Bede had only a vague notion of Iona's hagiographic tradition suggests, as Kirby has pointed out, that his information about Colum Cille and his achievement among the Picts did not come from Iona,⁸⁶ and it has been argued above that his source, like Adomnán's, was produced as part of an 'official' history of sorts expounded in the time of Bridei f. Bili. This material was likely transmitted to Bede at Wearmouth-Jarrow from the court of Naiton, who by then had become hostile not just to Iona's particularisms, but also to the Ionan ascendancy within his Church. We may therefore suspect that this was information included by Naiton in order to give Ceolfrith some grounding in the historical background of the dispute and the nature of the arguments he was being enlisted to confute.⁸⁷

Bede also leaves us in little doubt as to the real objects of Naiton's concern. There seems little reason to suppose that the Columban *familia* alone among the clerics in Fortriu 'presumed to observe Easter at the wrong time', but the final section of Wearmouth-Jarrow's response, following the detailed enunciation of Paschal *computus* and the proper tonsure, is highly indicative of the letter's intended audience:

Neque uero me haec ita prosecutum aestimes quasi eos, qui hanc tonsuram habent, condemnandos iudicem, si fide et operibus unitati catholicae fauerint; immo

⁸⁵ Kirby, 'Bede and the Pictish Church', 13.

⁸⁶ Kirby, 'Bede and the Pictish Church', 15.

⁸⁷ One wonders whether the speeches assigned to Colmán by Bede at *HE* iii.25 are not in fact founded upon Columban arguments that Bede discovered in his source material relating to the Pictish *correctio*.

confidenter profiteor plurimos ex eis sanctos ac Deo dignos extitisse. Ex quibus est Adomnán abbas et sacerdos Columbiensium egregius, qui cum legatus suae gentis ad Aldfridum regem missus nostrum quoque monasterium uidere uoluisset, miramque in moribus ac uerbis prudentiam humilitatem religionem ostenderet...qui quidem quantum conspectis ecclesiarum nostrarum statutis profecisset, probauit, cum reuersus ad Scottiam postea gentis eiusdem turbas ad catholicam temporis paschalis obseruantiam sua praedicatione correxit; tametsi eos qui in Hii insula morabantur monachos, quibusque speciali rectoris iure praerat, necdum ad uiam statuti melioris reducere ualebat. Tonsuram quoque, si tantum sibi auctoritatis subesset, emendare meminisset.⁸⁸

But do not suppose me to have pursued the argument thus far as one who holds wearers of this tonsure as contemptible who have upheld catholic unity by faith and works; on the contrary, I assert confidently that many of them were holy men and worthy in the sight of God, among whom was Adomnán, the renowned abbot and priest of the Columbans, who was sent with a mission from his people to King Aldfrith – he wished to view our monastery, and showed wonderful prudence, humility and devotion in word and in deed...[He] proved how much he had profited by seeing the observances of our churches, for afterwards when he had returned to Ireland he led large numbers of that people to the catholic observance of Easter by his preaching. Nevertheless he could not bring to the better ways the monks of Iona, over whom he presided as lawful leader; if his influence had been sufficient, he would have made it his business to correct their tonsure also.

Bede tells us that Naiton had Ceolfrith's letter read aloud at the *consessus*, and translated into Pictish as well. There can be little doubt why he did so. Henderson, who has expressed surprise that 'the role of Columba and Iona in the Church history of the Picts is entirely ignored' in Bede's account of Naiton's message to Ceolfrith, such that 'it is as though the Columban Church ruled from Iona did not exist',⁸⁹ would seem to have missed the implications of this passage and its explicit condemnation of Iona. Yet this letter also very clearly upholds the memory of Adomnán, in concert with whom, it has been argued here, Bridei f. Derilei developed the Ionan ascendancy after 697, whose stance on the Paschal question Ceolfrith admired. As such Ceolfrith provided Naiton with the ability to pass judgement against Iona not just on the matter of Easter, but on its continued ascendancy in Fortriu, without simultaneously disparaging the policies of his own brother – not to mention whatever Columban leanings he may have exhibited himself in the years following Bridei's death. Instead, Ceolfrith's authoritative response enabled the *rex Pictorum* to portray his condemnation of the particularists

⁸⁸ Bede, *HE* v.21.

⁸⁹ Henderson, *Picts*, 82.

of the Columban *famila* as being, in effect, a continuation of the work begun by Adomnán (and Bridei?). This was no doubt exactly the kind of help he hoped to receive from Wearmouth-Jarrow, and it is little wonder that, as Bede relates, the king was 'delighted' (*gausius*) by the letter.

Expulsio: The Unmaking of the Ionan Ascendancy

The evidence would seem fairly strong, then, that the Verturian *consensus* and *correctio* were intended from the beginning to single out the Columban *familia*, or more particularly the *familia lae*, for particular discredit among whichever other groups also exhibited particularist observances. We know from the testimony of the Iona Chronicle (Bede makes no mention of it) that this decision was a prelude to a second key political decision made the next year (if the 716 dating of the *correctio* is accepted). Naiton's brother had evidently believed that the realisation of his political ambitions depended upon his ability to maximise levels of goodwill between himself and Adomnán, to the point of placing Columban clerics in ascendancy within his Church. Within only a decade after Bridei's death, however, Naiton seems to have reached the view that his own political ambitions, no doubt shaped by the tribulations of the previous few years, required that he jettison this innovative ecclesiastical programme adopted by his late brother. Naiton had emerged from this crisis period with the kingship still in his grasp, but the struggle to maintain his *imperium* had cost him two of his sons and one of his brothers. Bede informs us that, once the decision of the *consensus* had been announced, it was enforced throughout Naiton's dominions 'by royal authority' (*regia auctoritate*) with notable success, and, as we have seen, we might also attribute Iona's Paschal reform of 716 to this development.⁹⁰ Naiton had not, however, finished dealing with Iona, and in the next year, as we have seen, he ordered the 'expulsion of the *familia lae* across Druim Alban'.

Past scholars have found it tempting to suppose that Columban intransigence in Pictland regarding the *correctio* was responsible for this *expulsio*, but such stubbornness seems unlikely after reformation was accepted on Iona itself. Bede, for what it is worth, provides no indication that the *correctio* encountered such resistance. We may therefore share in Professor Sharpe's suspicions that Naiton had

other reasons for carrying out the *expulsio*.⁹¹ The key to understanding the situation would seem to be the phrase *familia lae*, which, as Etchingham has pointed out, appears in every other instance of its use in Irish sources from the seventh and eighth centuries to denote 'simply the congregation of Iona itself' as distinct from the otherwise attested *familia Columbae Cille*, 'where affiliation to a wider Columban network would appear to be intended'.⁹² This would seem to be an important distinction, since Ceolfrith's letter too had explicitly condemned the monks *in Hii insula*, not the *familia Columbae Cille*. The implications of such terminology would seem to be that it was not the entire Columban *familia*, which had been established in Atholl and the northern Pictish zone for generations, that was forced out of Fortriu in 717. Instead, those expelled seem to have been only 'the congregation of Iona', perhaps a general reference to Iona-based clergy who had been sent among the Verturian churches to defend the interests and exercise the authority of the *princeps* of Iona, perhaps also collecting renders on his behalf.

The *expulsio*, then, is best understood as signifying the dismantling of the Ionan ascendancy by Naiton. It represents, in other words, the ultimate rejection of the argument that Iona, as head of the Columban *familia*, ought to be permitted to exercise *principatus* over every Columban monastery, bishop and cleric in Pictland.⁹³ It is tempting to suspect that the appointment on Iona of Faelchú mac Dorbbéni to the *kathedra lae* on 29 August 716,⁹⁴ an office that has been interpreted here as episcopal and envisioned as encapsulating Pictish territory, was an affront to Naiton in some way and aroused in Fortriu the opposition evident in the *expulsio*.⁹⁵ In any event, as Professor Herbert reminds us (and as Etchingham's analysis of the terminology makes more plain), there is little reason to suppose that a 'repatriation'

⁹⁰ Bede, *HE* v.21.

⁹¹ Sharpe, *Adomnán*, 76-77.

⁹² Etchingham, *Church Organisation in Ireland*, 126-27. As Etchingham notes, according to the traditional interpretation of the *expulsio*, the 717 usage of *familia lae* appears to be an exception to his argument, but the likelihood is rather that his argument is as applicable here as elsewhere.

⁹³ The fact that the *familia lae* had been expelled despite its concessions on the matter of Easter might perhaps explain its reluctance to reform the tonsure, which took place two years after the resolution of the Paschal controversy (AT 718).

⁹⁴ AU 716.5.

⁹⁵ We need not envision here an attempt on Dúnchad's part to reacquire control over the see of Fortriu; if Naiton had made his own appointment to this see in 713, it is more likely that Faelchú's see was envisioned as including parts of northern Pictish territory into which Naiton had begun, or intended to begin, extending his *imperium*.

of sorts of Verturian monastic and secular churches – and perhaps more northerly churches – which at that time, for whatever reason, considered themselves subsidiary to the *princeps* of Iona ought to be taken as indicating that the clergy and *familiae* of these churches and monasteries were expelled from the Verturian hegemony along with their Iona-oriented leadership.⁹⁶ The annal entry of 717 makes no such claim. Instead, we might consider as a useful parallel the transfer of power that took place under the direction of Oswy at the reformed Lindisfarne in 664, where it is clear that, while some members of the community chose to retreat to Iona with their intransigent leader Colmán, others chose to stay behind in conformity with the new order.⁹⁷ It should hardly be surprising if some Pictish examples were similar to the rather different situation described by Bede as having arisen in reformed Ripon in the early 660s, in which the suggestion is that most or all of the existing community abandoned the monastery in a show of solidarity with their ousted leader.⁹⁸ On the whole, however, it seems likely that, as was the case in Bernicia and Deira after 664, the Pictish Church included many prominent churchmen and churchwomen who, although they had been dutiful members of the *familia Columbae Cille* in the years prior to the *expulsio*, and perhaps continued thereafter to think of themselves in broadly similar terms, were content after 717 to look to the Abernethy, rather than to the *princeps* of the Ionan *paruchia*, for support and direction.

Current thinking regarding the Council of Whitby stresses the evidence of continuity between the periods preceding and following it, and for this reason we must guard against the assumption that the *correctio* and *expulsio* resulted in drastic revolutionary change across the Verturian ecclesiastical landscape.⁹⁹ It is perfectly possible, for example, that this period of reform was followed by something of a restoration of the situation that has been envisioned here as having obtained in the seventh century, in which the Columban *familia* flourished among the Picts, if largely in Atholl and the northern Pictish zone, despite receiving comparatively

⁹⁶ Herbert, 'Legacy of Columba', 4. See also Sharpe, *Adomnán*, 77.

⁹⁷ Bede, *HE* iii.26. For a discussion of the different factions that seem to have emerged as a result of the decisions of Whitby, see Charles-Edwards, *Ireland*, 320-21, 336-43.

⁹⁸ Bede, *VSC* 8; *idem*, *HE* v.19. Bede may be creating a false impression here; it may be that only some of Cuthbert's peers were of a like mind with him in electing to follow Eata back to Melrose.

⁹⁹ See for example Veitch, 'Columban Church', *passim*.

little attention in most of Fortriu.¹⁰⁰ Bede, presumably still informed by correspondence originating in Naiton's court soon after the *correctio*, reports that it was put into effect 'through all the Pictish *prouincia*' (*per uniuersas Pictorum prouincias*),¹⁰¹ the terminological shift between *prouincia* and *prouinciae* being suggestive perhaps of the influence of Naiton in the *prouinciae* of the northern zone beyond the Mounth. It has been supposed that Naiton, who was deposed in 724, was acting from a position of relative weakness at the time of the *correctio*. It is true that this decision bears all the marks of a significant gesture made towards political and ecclesiastical opponents who had emerged from among the *uiri doctiores* and *optimates* of Fortriu and its hegemony during this period, but it is also the case that Alfred Smyth's depiction of Naiton as 'an insecure king about to be swamped by those very influences he sought to curtail' envisions a degree of weakness on the part of the *rex Pictorum* that cannot be detected in Bede's narrative.¹⁰² The *expulsio* may be taken as indicative instead of his continuing power and influence in the different *regiones* of Fortriu, if not throughout the entire northern Pictish zone, a conclusion supported by Naiton's having been able to take his half-brother Talorcan into his power in 714. We need not doubt, however, that these were sensitive political times, and it is inadvisable to assume that Naiton, himself a former patron of the *familia Columbae Cille*, will have discouraged the ongoing bestowal of patronage upon important Columban churches once they had accepted reformation and ecclesiastical reorganisation. In other words, we need not expect that the Columban *familia*, although deprived of ascendancy and cut off from recourse to the *princeps* of Iona by the *expulsio*, found eighth-century Fortriu to be more inhospitable than sixth and seventh-century Fortriu had been. Indeed it would be surprising if, having established footholds in the *prouincia Pictorum* during the period of its ascendancy, the Pictish Columban *familia* did not continue to enjoy higher levels of attention, prestige and patronage among the Verturian Picts as a whole than had been forthcoming to it at any point prior to the death of Bridei f. Bili in 693, when it had remained largely confined to Atholl and the northern Pictish

¹⁰⁰ This allows for something of the continuity envisioned by Veitch, 'Columban Church', 643-44, if not on so grand a scale.

¹⁰¹ Bede, *HE* v.21.

¹⁰² Smyth, *Warlords*, 75.

zone. There is even every possibility that the Ionan ascendancy of the previous years simply gave way to a Columban one that no longer recognised the supremacy of Iona, though the example of Northumbria suggests that we ought to expect a significant amount of change in personnel in the highest ecclesiastical offices in the wake of the *expulsio*, reflecting new attitudes about patronage.

Class II Monuments: The Maturing of the Pictish Church

We may imagine that Bridei f. Bili was familiar with the manner in which Bernician over-kings like Oswy and Ecgfrith had selected particular churches within their dominions, like York, Whitby and Lindisfarne, for a high degree of royal patronage. We have already seen the degree of opulence that was on display within Wilfrith's church at Ripon when he was still a beneficiary of the good graces of Ecgfrith and his brother Aelfwini. The evidence suggests that, from the time of Bridei onwards, Pictish kings and potentates were similarly attracted to the idea of expending resources in this way. Our primary surviving evidence for this phenomenon is the wonderful corpus of surviving early Christian monuments of eastern Scotland, and in particular the Pictish monuments of the so-called Class II type. Art-historians continue to date these works, characterised in particular by the distinctive cross-slab monument, to the eighth and ninth centuries for the most part, while associating their advent to the establishment of the 'reformed Pictish Church'.¹⁰³ Bede, famously, informs us that Naiton enlisted the help of Anglian builders to erect a new stone church to be dedicated to St Peter, and, although they have not survived, Driscoll must be right to emphasise that it was very probably these lost church buildings like Naiton's, and not the impressive surviving sculpture, that were the real focus of attention and patronage at the time of their currency.¹⁰⁴ It is difficult not to follow Henderson in her suspicion that the Class II phenomenon was associated in some way with new trends in stone-based ecclesiastical architecture in Pictland that are traditionally held to have begun with Naiton's *correctio* and the new stone church of St Peter which symbolised it,¹⁰⁵ even

¹⁰³ Henderson, *Picts*, 85-86. For more recent re-affirmations of these dates, see for example A. Ritchie, *Picts: an introduction to the life of the Picts and the carved stones in the care of Historic Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1989), 31; D. Mac Lean, 'The Northumbrian Perspective', in Foster (ed.) *St Andrews Sarcophagus*, 179-201, at 182-85.

¹⁰⁴ Driscoll, 'Political Discourse', 175.

¹⁰⁵ Henderson, *Picts*, 132.

if the arguments of the previous chapter may suggest that Bridei f. Bili is as likely a candidate as Naiton to have begun importing new trends in at least church dedication. Like Class I symbol stones, Class II monuments are found in Pictish regions both within and outwith Fortriu, but there is a decided bias in their distribution, with the northern Pictish zone being much less liberally provided with them than the southern. The suggestion that arises from this is that Verturian churches received relatively high levels of royal and aristocratic patronage as compared to churches elsewhere, providing strong hints that, to whatever extent the Verturian hegemony succeeded through the eighth and ninth centuries in absorbing smaller *regiones* and continuing to expand its power and influence into other parts of northern Britain, the kingdom of Fortriu forged by Bridei f. Bili and his immediate successors remained at its political heart. At the same time, however, it nevertheless seems to be the case that particular churches beyond (sometimes far beyond) these two regions were able to do reasonably well for themselves after the *correctio*, even in areas with strong Columban traditions like Moray and Easter Ross.¹⁰⁶

There is little reason to see in the advent of Class II monuments evidence of a fundamental change in the religiosity of the Picts, either from traditional religion to Christianity or from particularist to universalist religious sensibilities.¹⁰⁷ They would seem instead to speak of the development of new needs within the particular churches that erected them, including the need for a highly public form of expression directed towards larger and more diverse audiences than those of the Class I stones, as well as the need for highly visible affirmations of the relationship between a church and its aristocratic and royal patrons.¹⁰⁸ Such needs would appear to speak, not of religious change, but of new political developments within Fortriu and the Verturian hegemony leading to an increased tendency among potentates to devote resources towards the endowment and enrichment of churches, and perhaps also of higher levels of aristocratic revenues with which to make such gestures. This phenomenon was not confined to the Picts among the peoples of northern Britain,

¹⁰⁶ For a distribution map, see *Atlas of Scot. Hist.*, 54. Interestingly, there is little surviving evidence that, by the end of the Pictish period, Pictish churches in Fife and Strathearn received anything like the same level of patronage as appears to have been afforded those in Gowrie and Angus.

¹⁰⁷ Driscoll, 'Political Discourse', 173.

but in the particular case of Pictland, such socio-political developments are likely to reflect the rise of the kings of Fortriu and their hegemonising efforts in their relationships with their neighbours, leading to redistributions of wealth and innovations in what Foster has characterised as 'the residence of power' and the 'currency of authority'.¹⁰⁹ One result of these processes was the development of ecclesiastical sculpture with distinctively Pictish characteristics, which Driscoll attributes to the Pictish Church of the eighth and ninth centuries having its own particular strategies in the furtherance of 'centralizing religious activity and identifying it with the secular land-owning elite'.¹¹⁰ This having been said, and given the likelihood that Pictish and Anglian artists can have had a certain amount of access to one another's artistic traditions for generations before Naiton's time, we may suspect, even if the surviving examples of Class II sculpture post-date the *correctio*, that the socio-political preconditions for the production of such 'blatant evidence for the association of the Church with its secular peers' were in place and growing before Naiton's reign began.¹¹¹ As such, we ought to be cautious about looking solely to Naiton's alleged 'admiration for all things Northumbrian' or the supposed 'Pictish-Northumbrian *rapprochement*' attributed to him, rather than to general cultural contacts of different types spanning the period 664-724, in order to explain why the decoration of the Class II monuments 'show the Pictish sculptors freely participating in the evolution of the Hiberno-Saxon style'.¹¹²

Conclusion

There can be no doubt, in the final analysis, that the Ionan ascendancy within the Pictish Church about which Bede was informed, and which, as a result of Bede's testimony, has traditionally been seen as characterising Pictish ecclesiastical history from the time of Colum Cille to the *correctio* of Naiton, did indeed exist. However, the sum total of the evidence discussed in this study suggests that the primacy of Iona in Fortriu obtained for only a relatively brief period, and that it emerged under the direction of Bridei f. Derilei as a result of his particular personal

¹⁰⁸ Driscoll, 'Political Discourse', 173-74.

¹⁰⁹ Following two of the chapter-titles of Foster, *PGS*.

¹¹⁰ Driscoll, 'Christian Monumental Sculpture', 251.

¹¹¹ Foster, *PGS*, 95. That the development of relief cross-slabs in Northumbria can have pre-dated the *correctio* is discussed by Mac Lean, 'Northumbrian Perspective', 180-82.

¹¹² Henderson, *Picts*, 132.

and political circumstances. His predecessor, as we have seen in the foregoing chapter, had had rather different personal and political concerns, and so had approached the establishment and management of the Pictish Church in a rather different way. Conversely, his brother and successor Naiton, for similar reasons, was subsequently compelled to do away with Ionan ascendancy in favour of different political and ecclesiastical arrangements. If the snapshot provided by Bede has tended to lead to an exaggeration of the importance of Iona and the Columban *familia* within Pictland prior to 697 or so, the immediate ramifications of the *correctio* and *expulsio* for these clerics have also tended to be exaggerated, and there is reason to believe that the Pictish Columban *familia* was in a better and more secure position throughout Pictland as a whole at the end of Naiton's reign than it had been in the years prior to the Ionan ascendancy when it had come under pressure from the Pictish ethnogenesis and *Bridei f. Bili*. The cost of this security was the severing of official ties with Iona and the acceptance of Naiton's terms for incorporation into the nascent and still developing Pictish Church, within the making of which the Columban *familia*, although it had played no small part, had been only one actor among many. From 717 onwards control of the Columban constituents of the Pictish Church ceased to be invested in leaders whose ecclesiastical authority stemmed from the *exemplum* of Colum Cille.¹¹³ The resulting alienation of this community from the authority of Iona may be seen as a key development in determining the subsequent character of the Pictish Church and kingdom.

¹¹³ Bede, *HE* iii.4.

VIII

Conclusion

Ministry and mission in early Fortriu

Pictavia was named after the Picts, whom, as we have said, Cinaed destroyed; for God, by reason of their wickedness, decided to make them alien from and void of their heritage because they not only spurned the Lord's mass and precept, but also refused to be held equal to others in the law of justice...And in his sixth year, King Custantin and Bishop Cellach pledged themselves on the hill of belief near the royal city of Scone that the laws and disciplines of the faith and the laws of churches and gospels should be kept in conformity with the Scots.

- 'Chronicle of the Kings of Alba' (§§ 2, 26)

There can be little doubt that the remarkable monastery of Iona played an active and important role in shaping the foundations of the medieval Scottish kingdom. Its relationships with important potentates in Argyll and the northern Pictish zone in the sixth and seventh centuries would repay detailed study, but although the same may be said for its participation in the transformation of ninth-century Fortriu into the Gaelic kingdom of Alba, neither matter has concerned us here. Instead our focus in this study has been Fortriu in the sixth, seventh, and early eighth centuries, and it has been argued that the work of the Columban *familia* in this important region involved monastic innovation and ministry to a Christian people and, in certain areas and in Fortriu itself for a brief period, ecclesiastical leadership and management. Further north, its main work among the Picts may still have been ministry among a partly christianised people rather than mission to a thoroughly polytheistic one, although a certain amount, and perhaps a great deal, of evangelisation must factor among its activities. Such arguments, if accepted, need hardly diminish the achievement of Iona in our eyes: the *familia* found itself in something of a similar situation in Ireland, where few would question the importance of its contribution. Our conclusions will do little damage to the reputation of Iona as 'a major force in the church, as well as being an influential artistic and literary centre'.¹ In this regard, this study is hardly 'anti-Columban' in any meaningful way, and as such is happily unlike much of the work that has

¹ Clancy & Márkus, *Iona*, 16.

sought in the past to challenge and set aside – rather than to take a place alongside – the persistent and long-lived Columban thesis. Indeed, the present work denies this eminent monastic community little save the complete Pictish monopoly conferred upon it by that interpretative model, having concluded instead that the Columban *familia* was only ever one of many potential stimuli to ecclesiastical thought, influence and direction in sixth- and seventh-century Pictland, and that its primacy in these regards and in the shaping of early Pictish Christianity can be neither demonstrated nor assumed in the face of thin evidence.

It has been necessary to leave many questions unanswered, only some of which may prove unanswerable. Perhaps most obvious among these are questions surrounding other parts of contemporary northern Britain and the ways in which their ecclesiastical histories may or may not fit in with the models outlined here. The ‘Pictish Church’ has not been taken here as equivalent to the collective body of all Pictish Christians; nor has the ‘Pictish ethnogenesis’ been taken as having involved the participation of all of the peoples modern scholars think of as having been ‘Pictish’. Instead, both of these phenomena have been envisioned as Verturian constructs first conceived during the reign of Bridei f. Beli, both of which served important functions in the furtherance of the interests and hegemonic programme of this king and his successors. Bede’s testimony suggests that Naiton’s *regia auctoritas* in 717 extended beyond the Mounth, but the extent to which it did so is not clear, particularly if one takes seriously the reservations expressed here regarding assumptions that such regions as the Northern and Western Isles, or even, for that matter, Deeside, were, or considered themselves to be, ‘Pictish’ *prouinciae* even by the early eighth century. The meaningful division of Pictland into northern and southern zones, and the presence of distinct political and ecclesiastical communities within those zones as late as the middle third of the seventh century, have been recurring themes throughout this study, and it has been because of this fragmentary nature of Pictish northern Britain that we have seen fit to focus here on Fortriu, leaving scope for further work elsewhere.

On the whole, the historical evidence for the ecclesiastical history of the northern Pictish zone is comparatively poor, even by Pictish standards.² Recorded Verturian attacks on Dunnottar and the *Orcades* in the late seventh century are suggestive that, at least from the time of its emergence under Bridei f. Beli, the Verturian hegemony could muster a considerable northern reach as required. Yet the northern Pictish zone and Fortriu appear to have remained self-consciously distinct as late as Bede's lifetime, and there are enough significant hints of discontinuity to leave room for doubt as to whether the northern *prouvinciae* ever became less peripheral to the minds of successive Verturian hegemon. There are nevertheless intriguing examples of the existence of the cults of seemingly Verturian saints in Aberdeenshire, for example Itarnan at Rathen and Seruan at Monkegie,³ and also of the culting of prominent north-eastern saints like Drosten, Talorcan, and Fergus in the southern Pictish zone.⁴ It is possible that such evidence reflects centralising pressures experienced within this part of the northern Pictish zone from the direction of Fortriu, but it may be that some other and later phenomenon is responsible.

A very different situation may have obtained within the Orcadian zone. It is evident from one *dorsum Britanniae* story in *Vita Columbae*, which speaks of an Orcadian potentate who was the client-king (*regulus*) of Bridei f. Mailcon,⁵ as well as from the attack on *Orc* in 580 or 581 by Áedán mac Gabráin, that this zone did not lie completely beyond the *imperium* and interest of sixth- and seventh-century kings further south. Similarly, the campaign which brought Bridei f. Beli northwards to bring about the 'annihilation' of the *Orcades* in 682 may be taken as suggesting that he considered the Orcadian zone to be within his sphere of interest, while the 'battle over the Orcadians' (*bellum for Orcaibh*) recorded in 709 may represent a reassertion

² With regard to the study of other contemporary regions, the way forward has been shown by T. O. Clancy's examination of the evidence relating to Deeside, 'Deer and the Early Church in the North-east', in K. S. Forsyth (ed.), *This Splendid Little Book: Studies on the Book of Deer* (Dublin, forthcoming). I am grateful to Dr Clancy for advance notice of this work, which has been helpful in streamlining the scope of the present study.

³ On Itarnan's associations with Rathen (and possible inscriptions at Newton and Brodie MOR), see Watson, *CPNS*, 321; MacKinlay, *Non-Script. Deds.*, 140-41; Yeoman, 'Pilgrims to St Ethernan', 77. There are also Ernán commemorations at Leochel parish (now united to Cushnie) and at Inchmarnock parish (now suppressed in Glenmuick, Tullich and Glengairn), see MacKinlay, *Non-Script. Deds.*, 75. On Seruan's associations with Monkegie, see MacKinlay, *Non-Script. Deds.*, 489.

⁴ On these north-eastern saints see Clancy, 'Deer'.

of Verturian *imperium* in this zone in the time of Naiton.⁶ However, these annal records also suggest, along with the *dorsum Britanniae* story, that there was a disproportionately high degree of Gaelic interest in this most northerly zone of Britain, and it may be that, during the period 581-682, it lay largely beyond the *imperium* of any Verturian king. Without doubt there are examples of Class I symbol stones in this zone, found mostly in Orkney proper and concentrated in northern Skye and a few spots along the coasts of Sutherland and Caithness. We may remain uncertain, however, whether such monuments are conclusive proof that Pictish ethnogenesis ever reached these areas in any meaningful way, and whether they might represent a relatively short-lived period of 'Picticisation' in some key northern areas between the 680s and the onset of 'Norsification' at some undetermined point in the eighth and ninth centuries. In other words, it is possible to see these northern symbol stones as having arisen as a result of a conscious adoption by some Orcadian potentates of Pictish identity whether before or after the establishment of the *prouincia Pictorum*, rather than as proof of the ancient Pictishness (whatever this means) of the languages, cultures and societies of the Northern and Western Isles.

The likelihood of such a scenario may be supported if one were to accept Lamb's vision of the prominence in Orkney of the cult of St Peter, the patron saint, according to Bede, of the Pictish *gens correcta*, as typified by the so-called 'Peterkirks'. Lamb has interpreted this phenomenon as evidence that the christianisation of Orkney was undertaken by Pictish missionaries and did not take place until after the *correctio*.⁷ On the other hand, it would seem as likely, if we may indeed date these dedications to the eighth century, that such a propagation of the cult of the patron of the *prouincia Pictorum* represents a fundamental ecclesiastical reorganisation of Orkney relatively soon after the *correctio* coinciding with its absorption into the Pictish Church established by Bridei f. Beli and reformed by Naiton. Such an argument would, however, require some explanation as to how (and further exploration as to whether) Pictish churches founded or re-dedicated in the early eighth century were able to survive the subsequent period of Norse

⁵ Adomnán, VC ii.42.

⁶ AU 709.4.

religion in the Northern Isles with their dedications intact. At present it remains at least possible to see the 'Peter-kirk' phenomenon and the Pictish sculpture of the Orcadian zone as part of the same phenomenon – the importation of Pictish political and ecclesiastical trappings, along, perhaps, with other aspects of Pictish culture, in the last generation or two before the beginning of the Scandinavian period in this part of the British Isles. In addition, the 'Peter-kirk' phenomenon, and perhaps in the plantation of the cults of Verturian saints in Aberdeenshire, might be seen as examples of a process in which, as Foster has argued, the *correctio* of 716 was used by Naiton and his successors as a tool for the consolidation and extension of their *regia auctoritas* across much of northern Britain:

Land was granted to the Church whose clergy, in tandem with the nobility, acted as the king's local agents and representatives. The local nobles derived additional authority by their association with this fashionable, new source of power which also widened their career opportunities. Its pastoral system was a means of extending and establishing an ideology which was pro-State. The Church was also able to assist in administrative matters...In return the Church obtained the land (and associated rights) which it needed both to survive and to generate wealth for its own works.⁸

It may be that such a process was instigated differently within the Moray firthlands and Aberdeenshire on the one hand, where the cults of locally prominent saints appear to have continued to enjoy high levels of patronage at home and, perhaps, some propagation within Fortriu, and the Orcadian zone on the other, the evidence from which may speak of a sharp break with the ecclesiastical past, and perhaps even of something approaching Verturian colonisation of the Orcadian zone under the auspices of St Peter. At any rate, Taylor has called attention to the cluster of *cill* place-names in Easter Ross, which has been tentatively associated with the figure of Curetán, a guarantor of the *lex innocentium*, who is placed by Irish martyrologies at the unidentified *Ross Mind Bairend* and has long been associated with Rosemarkie on the Black Isle.⁹ There is good reason to suspect that this man was a key figure within the *correctio* movement,¹⁰ and it may have been under his direction as bishop

⁷ Lamb, 'Pictland, Northumbria and the Carolingian Empire', 41-56.

⁸ Foster, *PGS*, 90.

⁹ *Curetán epscop* is guarantor §22; see Ní Dhonnchadha, 'Guarantor list', 180, 191. For the *cill* cluster see Taylor, 'Early Church in Eastern Scotland', 102-03; see also Clancy, 'Philosopher-King', (7).

¹⁰ Kirby, 'Bede and the Pictish Church', 17-18.

that the Pictish Church of Fortriu made headway into the northern Pictish zone and the 'Pictish periphery' beyond it.

There is also the matter of the later ecclesiastical history of the Verturian hegemony and kingdom as it developed throughout the eighth and ninth centuries. It has long been supposed, for example, that the resurgence of the Columban *familia* in the ninth century and the disappearance of Pictish symbols from monumental sculpture are symptomatic of the gaelicisation of the Picts, and the possibility that there was an ecclesiastical component in this latter process is in need of exploration. It has been argued here that Atholl and the north were the principal theatres of operations for Columban clerics in Pictland in the sixth and seventh centuries – and perhaps continued to be so after the *expulsio* – and the primacy of Dunkeld within the kingdom of Alba raises questions about Cinaed mac Ailpín, his potential connections with Atholl, and the political role played by this *regio* in the later Pictish period. There is also the matter of the cult of St Andrew and the tradition which associates its introduction at St Andrews, first mentioned (*Cinrigh Monai*) in 747, with Onuist son of Uurguist (729-61) on one hand, and with Regulus of Patras on the other.¹¹ If this tradition may be believed,¹² it may hint at the ecclesiastical policies of Onuist, whose lengthy and important reign lies beyond the scope of the present study. It may be mentioned, however, that the ethnographic trend across western Europe in the earlier middle ages was to fit one's *origo gentis* into the historical and ethnographic traditions of the Romans on the one hand and into Christian historical traditions on the other.¹³ For the author of OG, as we have seen, such harmonisation seems to have been more important than, for example, harmonisation with ethnographic traditions in Ireland. There is nothing particularly 'Christian' about the Pictish *origo gentis* insofar as we can glimpse it today, but it is surely striking that the Scythians claimed St Andrew as their apostle,¹⁴ and it would seem at least possible that the framers of the Pictish *origo gentis* were aware of this Andrean connection with Scythia, and that both the importation of the cult of Andrew and the saint's subsequent prominence in Scotland are owed ultimately to

¹¹ AU 747.10. The place-name would seem to be *cinn rígh monaid* ('end of the king's hill), perhaps Gaelicised from Pictish **penn ri monith*. For the foundation legend, see Broun and Taylor (forthcoming).

¹² On which see the forthcoming work of Broun and Taylor.

¹³ Wolfram, *Goths*, 4.

the Pictish author of OG and his troll through Classical literature in the early eighth century.

W. Douglas Simpson, in reference to his own work in making sense of much of the same evidence considered in the foregoing pages, wrote in triumph that 'the Church of the Picts has now been restored to its true position'.¹⁵ Eighty years later, the present work can hardly claim so much. It will have served its purpose if it has marshalled the necessary range of primary evidence, if it has offered plausible interpretations of this material, and if, in the construction of the resulting models for understanding the first few centuries of the ecclesiastical history of Fortriu, it has produced a viable criticism of the Columban thesis. No doubt the conclusions we have reached here will fail to satisfy everyone at all points, and, if such unanimity is hardly possible given the nature of our evidence, it is in any case hardly desirable. Instead, it is hoped that the work that has been performed in this study will stimulate fresh and fruitful debate in an area of inquiry that has been too long dominated by the sectarian and the chauvinist, and too long obsessed with the figure of the missionary saint. Many of its conclusions demand testing and re-testing by historians, archaeologists and other scholars, and some – perhaps most – of its models will require refinement, re-thinking or out-and-out rejection as new interpretations and new evidence come to light. The potential for such transience does not, however, invalidate the enterprise itself, for we may follow Simpson in taking solace in the words of Bury, who wrote in defence of his hypotheses regarding St Patrick that his 'reconstructions may fall tomorrow, but if they are legitimate, they will not have been useless'.¹⁶

Scholarship, perhaps in anticipation of the 'alienation' of the Picts 'from their heritage', has tended by and large to cast them in a passive role with regard to their early ecclesiastical history, assigning the prime agency in the development of their ecclesiastical culture first to Iona and a Gaelic zone that has long been envisioned as the crucible of the 'real' Scottish nation, and latterly to Anglo-Saxon Northumbria and the increasing influence of Continental culture. This Pictish passivity is an image that is reinforced, if largely unconsciously, by the recurrent employment of

¹⁴ D. H. Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints* (4th ed., Oxford, 1997), 21.

¹⁵ Simpson, *Saint Columba*, 35.

the ubiquitous term 'Hiberno-Saxon' in describing the achievements of Christian culture in the wider early medieval insular zone, with the implication that Pictish ecclesiastical culture was a by-product of Gaelic and Anglo-Saxon influences, with a negligible capacity to exert the same kind of influence, instruction or direction either upon the Picts themselves or upon their neighbours. An analysis of this paradigm lies outwith the scope of this study, but it emerges from all that we have seen here that such an analysis would hardly be unwelcome. The evidence, thin as it may be, allows instead for Pictish agency at every turn in the course of early Verturian ecclesiastical history - agency in adopting the Christian religion from their British neighbours and, in turn, from one another (and perhaps even in seeking out conversion); agency in welcoming or resisting the presence of ecclesiastical communities originating from particular Gaelic *familiae*, depending upon both the political circumstances of these *familiae* and the political and other inclinations particular to individual Pictish polities; agency in making the most of Northumbrian political and ecclesiastical ambitions north of the Forth; agency in successive attempts to organise and reorganise a Church conforming to current but variable political climates. If we cannot be certain of anything else presented here, at the very least we may stand assured, given all that we have seen, of the dynamism and complexity of Pictish northern Britain and its political and ecclesiastical culture in the period under investigation, and also of the need for sophisticated, nuanced and balanced approaches to the matter of the christianisation and early ecclesiastical history of the Picts. Only in this way can we as scholars do justice to this intriguing, creative and important insular people which, over the course of several centuries, laid down at least some of the foundations upon which the medieval Scottish church and kingdom were erected.

¹⁶ J. B. Bury, *The Life of Saint Patrick and his place in history* (London, 1905), viii.

Appendix: Dedications to Pictish saints

It has been deemed desirable, for the sake of completeness, to include in this appendix those dedications of Pictish saints discussed in the text that have been assembled and analysed previously by other scholars. In such cases, the previous work is indicated, and should be consulted for a full discussion of the evidence, which will be presented here in greatly abridged form.

I. COLUMBAN SAINTS

This corpus has been isolated and examined by Simon Taylor in three studies, which will be cited here as (Taylor, 1996) [*Place-names and the Early Church in Eastern Scotland*, in Crawford (ed.) *Scotland in Dark Age Britain*], (Taylor, 1999) [*Seventh-century Iona abbots in Scottish place-names*, in Broun & Clancy (eds.) *Spes Scottorum*], and (Taylor 2000) [*Columba east of Drumalban: some aspects of the cult of Columba in eastern Scotland*, in *Innes Review* 51 (2000)].

- i.1. **ABBAY ST BATHANS**, BER. Baithéne, church and place-name (Taylor, 1999).
- i.2. **ABOYNE**, ABD. Adomnán, church, tree and well (Taylor, 1999).
- i.3. **ARDEONAIG**, PER. Adomnán, place-name (Taylor, 1999).
- i.4. **CAMPSIE**, PER. Adomnán, church (Taylor, 1999).
- i.5. **DALMENY**, WLO. Adomnán, church (Taylor, 1999).
- i.6. **DULL**, PER. Adomnán, church, well and fair (Taylor, 1999).
- i.7. **DUNKELD**, PER. Colum Cille, church (later cathedral) and well (Taylor, 1999).
- i.8. **FERN**, ANG. Adomnán, place-name (Taylor, 1999).
- i.9. **FORGLEN**, BNF. Adomnán, place-name and well (Taylor, 1999).
- i.10. **FORTINGALL**, PER. Adomnán, place-names (Taylor, 1999).
- i.11. **FORVIE**, ABD. Adomnán, church (Taylor, 1999).
- i.12. **INCHADNEY** (NN 782 467), PER. Coetti, place-name (Taylor, 1999).
- i.13. **INCHCOLM**, FIF. Colum Cille, church and place-name (Taylor, 2000).
- i.14. **INCHKEITH**, FIF. Cóeti, place-name; Adomnán, reference in *Vita Sancti Servani* (Taylor, 1999).
- i.15. **INCHMAHOME**, STG. Colum Cille, church and place-name (Taylor, 2000).
- i.16. **INSH**, INV. Adomnán, church and place-name (Taylor, 1999).
- i.17. **KILMAVEONAIG**, PER. Adomnán, place-name (Taylor, 1999).
- i.18. **KILUNAN**, STG. Adomnán, place-name (Taylor, 1999).
- i.19. **LOGIERAIT**, PER. Adomnán, place-names; Coetti, place-name (Taylor, 1999).
- i.20. **PITLOCHRY**, PER. Colum Cille, fair and well; Uirgno, well (Taylor, 1999).
- i.21. **PORTMOHOMACK**, ROS. Colum Ciille, place-name and archaeological remains.
- i.22. **RATHEN**, ABD. Adomnán, well and place-name (Taylor, 1999).
- i.23. **ROWARDENNAN**, STG. Adomnán, place-name (Taylor, 1999). *Not on map.*
- i.24. **SUY CHUMMENN**, NAI. Cumméne, place-name (Taylor, 1999).
- i.25. **TOMINTOUL**, BNF. Uirgno, well in Kirkmichael parish (Taylor, 1999).
- i.26. **YESTER**, ELO. Baithéne, defunct place-name (Taylor, 1999).
- i.27. **KILCONQUHAR**, FIF. Dúnchad, place-name (Taylor, 1996).
- i.28. **KILDUNCAN**, FIF. Dúnchad, place-name (Taylor, 1996).

II. SERUAN

- ii.1. **ABERCORN**, WLO. The *monasterium* at *Aebbercurnig*, abandoned as the seat of the Bernician bishopric *ad prouinciam Pictorum* in 685, is mentioned by Bede (*HE* iv.12, iv.26). The medieval church there was dedicated to St Wilfrið, but there are hints of an earlier Seruanian association in the local fair (*PN*, 127-29) and in the name of 'Sanct Serffis Law' or 'Serflaw', recorded in the barony of Abercorn in 1526 (*CPNS*, 151).
- ii.2. **AIRTHREY**, WLO. The *domus* of Seruan in *Atheren* is mentioned in *VSS*. The place is identified as Airthrey by MacKinlay and others, the medieval church here was evidently dedicated to Seruan (*ACDS*, 484).
- ii.3. **ALVA**, CLA. Seruan is said only to have spent the night in a peasants house in *Alueth* in *VSS*; the earliest record of his church in *Alueth* is in 1260 (*ACDS*, 484), and the saint's well on the glebe nearby is recorded in 1272 (*CPNS*, 332).
- ii.4. **AUCHTERMUCHTY**, FIF. Not mentioned in *VSS*. The 'pait myre de Sanct Serf' there is not attested before 1591 (*CPNS*, 332).
- ii.5. **BURNTISLAND**, FIF. Not mentioned in *VSS*. The medieval church at Kirkton of Burntisland (NT 232871), not attested before 1243, was consecrated in that year in Seruan's name (*ACDS*, 486).
- ii.6. **CARDROSS**, DMB. Not mentioned in *VSS*. The medieval church at Kirkton of Cardross opposite Dumbarton Rock (NS 389752) is believed to have been dedicated to Seruan because of a nearby spring known as 'Sheer's' (*ACDS*, 488). *Not on map*.
- ii.7. **CLACKMANNAN**, CLA. Not mentioned in *VSS*. The medieval church, not attested before 1246, was consecrated in that year in Seruan's name (*ACDS*, 484).
- ii.8. **CREICH**, FIF. Not mentioned in *VSS*. The medieval church, not attested before 1400, dedicated to Seruan (*ACDS*, 486).
- ii.9. **CULROSS**, FIF. The *ecclesia* founded and dedicated by Seruan in *Culenros*, which became a Cistercian abbey in 1217, is mentioned in *VSS*. The place (*Cuillen-ros*) also appears as the saint's chief seat in the tract on the mothers of the Irish Saints (earliest mention of him?), and in *VK*.
- ii.10. **DUNNING**, PER. The *cella* of Seruan in *Dunenensi* is mentioned in *VSS*; the earliest record of it outwith *VSS* is in 1219 (*CPNS*, 332).
- ii.11. **DYSART**, FIF. The *spelunca* ('cave') in *Deserto* where Seruan performed miracles and contended with Satan is mentioned in *VSS*; it is said that '*locus ille in honore sancti sancti Seruani factus est sacer usque in hodiernum diem*' ('that place is held sacred in honour of the thrice-saintly Seruan right up to the present day'), but there is no mention of a church there. Nevertheless, the medieval parish church was dedicated to Seruan (*ACDS*, 487).
- ii.12. **KINNEIL**, WLO. *Kinel* is mentioned as the place from which Seruan cast his staff across the Forth to Culross in *VSS*, but no church is mentioned, and the place is given no further associations with the saint.
- ii.13. **KINROSS**, KNR. Not mentioned in *VSS*. The medieval church, not attested before 1249, was consecrated in that year in Seruan's name (*ACDS*, 484).
- ii.14. **MONKEGIE**, now Keithhall, ABD. Not mentioned in *VSS*. An altar dedicated to Seruan in the medieval parish church is mentioned in 1481, and 'St Serve's Hill' lies to the south of the church, and was the site of the saint's fair.
- ii.15. **MONZIEVAIRD**, PER. Not mentioned in *VSS*. The church dedicated to Seruan there is recorded in 1219 (*CPNS*, 332), and the saint's well lies nearby (*ACDS*, 488).
- ii.16. **ST SERF'S ISLAND** in Loch Leven, KNR. The *monasterium* founded on *insula Leuene* by Seruan is mentioned in *VSS*. It became a Céli Dé community and was transferred into the possession of the see of St Andrews in the tenth century. Andrew of Wyntoun

became prior of this monastery in 1396, and there wrote his *Orygynale Cronykil* (cf. *ACDS*, 484-85).

- ii.17. **SYDSERF**, near North Berwick, ELO. Not mentioned in *VSS*. Recorded as *Sideserf* in 1290 and as *Sideserfe* in 1296, this name of this hill appears to be from the Gaelic *suidhe* (later *suidhe*) *Seirb*, 'Serf's seat' (*CPNS*, 151). East Lothian no other Seruanian associations, and this place-name may had been coined under the influence of *VK*.
- ii.18. **TIBBERMORE**, PER. Not mentioned in *VSS*. There was a chapel dedicated to Seruan in that part of the medieval parish north of the Almond. It was rebuilt and restored as a vicarage in 1484. The medieval parish of St Serffs, later absorbed into Redgorton parish, lay in this same district, just to the east (*ACDS*, 488).
- ii.19. **TILlicouLTRY**, STG. The saint is said to have performed a miracle in *Tuligculterin* in *VSS*, but no church there is mentioned.
- ii.20. **TULLIBODY**, CLA. The saint is said to have performed a miracle in *Tuligbotuan* in *VSS*, but no church there is mentioned. The place-name itself contains the element *both*, which Taylor has shown to be a Pictish term for a church.
- ii.21. **TULLIEDENE**, now Tullybannocher, PER. Not mentioned in *VSS*. The church dedicated to Seruan there is recorded in 1220 (*CPNS*, 332).

III. TARANNAN

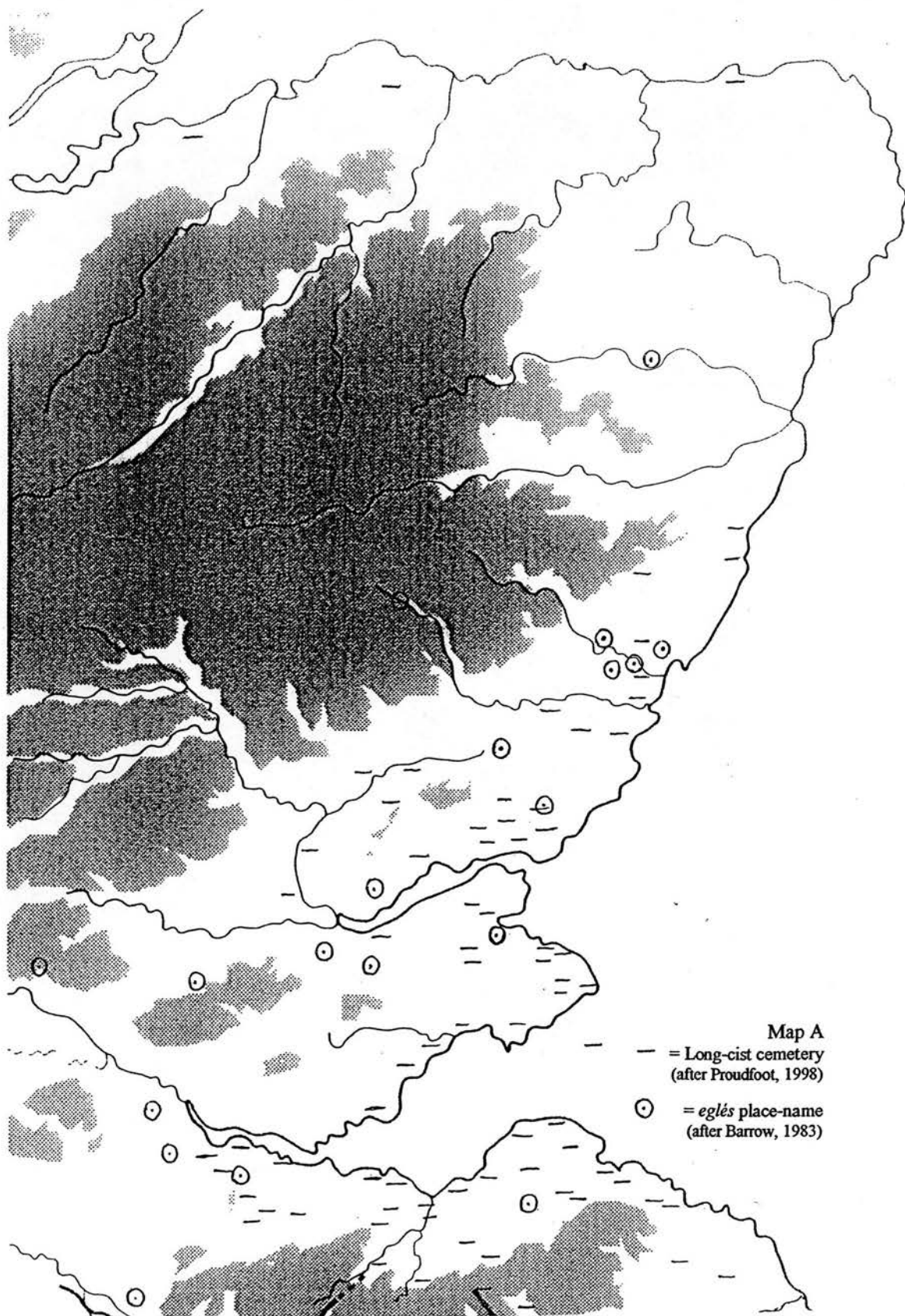
- iii.1. **ARBUTHNOTT**, KCD. The medieval church, the earliest record of which is in 1242, was dedicated to 'Ternan'.
- iii.2. **BANCHORY-TERNAN**, ABD. The medieval church was dedicated to 'Ternan', whose name also appears in the place-name. The saint's bell (*ronecht*) was kept in the care of a dewar. St Ternan's market was held here, near the saint's well (MacKinlay, *Non-Script. Deds.*, 107).
- iii.3. **BELHEVIE**, ABD. The medieval chapel was dedicated to 'Ternan' and lay on 'St Ternan's Land' (MacKinlay, *Non-Script. Deds.*, 108).
- iii.4. **FINDON**, ABD. The medieval chapel was dedicated to 'St Tarnan', whose well was nearby (MacKinlay, *Non-Script. Deds.*, 108).
- iii.5. **FORDOUN**, KCD. An inscribed stone ('PIDARNOIN') has been interpreted as bearing the name Ethernan, but we may suspect, given his associations with this area, that the name is Tarnan in a genitive form with the initial 'T' lenited/aspirated to 'D'.
- iii.6. **NEWTON**, ABD. Inscribed stone again thought to bear the name of Itarnan, but which may instead bear the name Tarnan.
- iii.7. **SLAINS**, ABD. The medieval church was dedicated to 'Ternan', whose well is in the garden of the manse (MacKinlay, *Non-Script. Deds.*, 108).

IV. ITARNAN

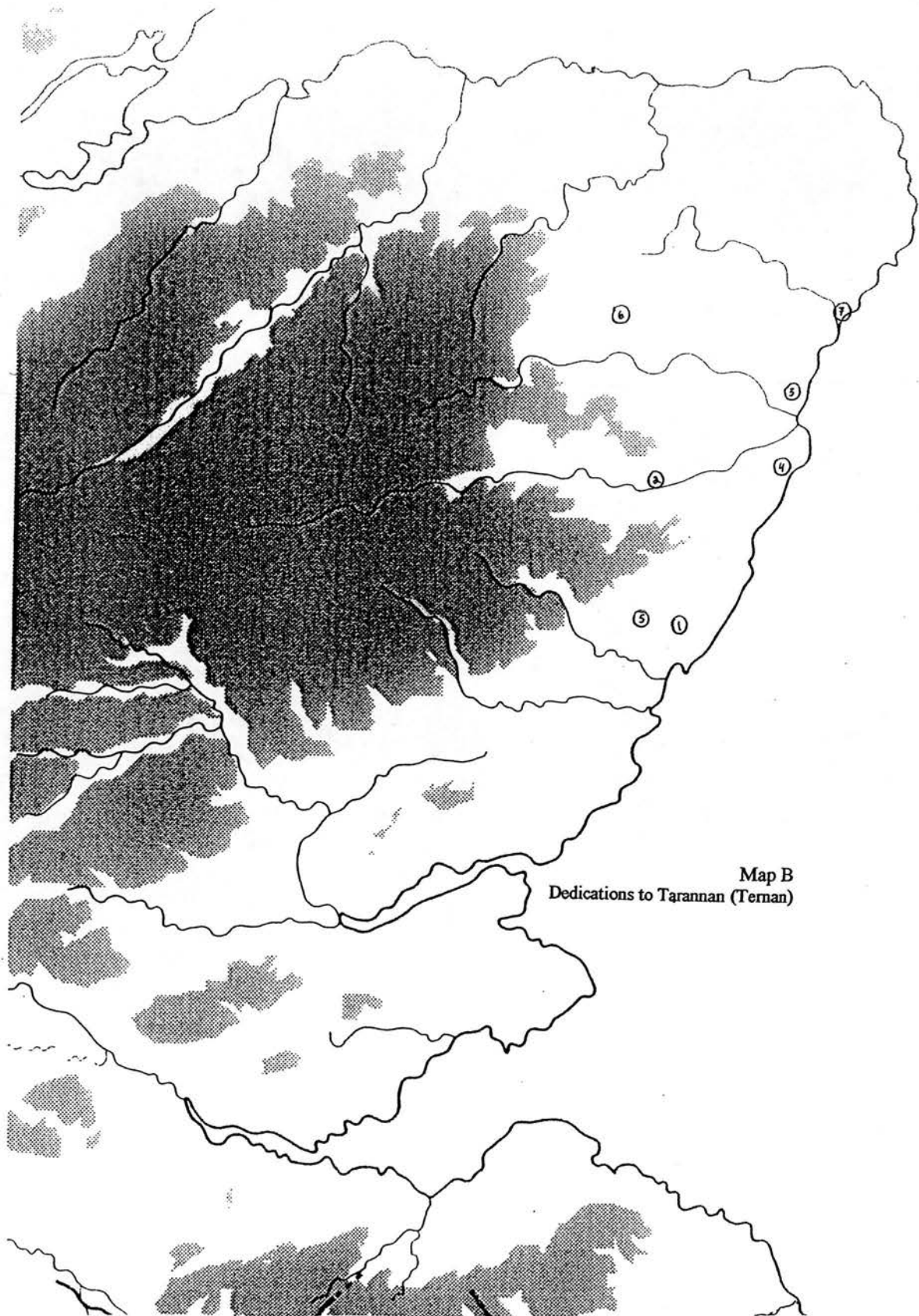
- iv.1. **AITHERNIE**, FIF. A cross-slab from Scoonie in this parish was inscribed in ogham with the name EDDARRNONN, and Taylor supposes that the place-name contains this saint's name as its second element.
- iv.2. **BENHOLM**, KCD. The site of 'St Marny's well' (Watson, *CPNS*, 292).
- iv.3. **BOITH**, ANG. Location unidentified, somewhere in Panbride parish, close to Monikie. The chapel was granted to the church of Brechin in 1348, along with the estate of Botmernok (<*both-Mernok*), first mentioned itself in 1219, on condition that the vicar of Monikie would say mass in the name of 'St Marnocus' every Sunday (Taylor, 'Church in Eastern Scotland'; MacKinlay, *Non-Script. Deds.*, 75).
- iv.4. **FORFAR**, ANG. The fair of 'St Tuetheren' was held here (Watson, *CPNS*, 321).

- iv.5. **FOWLIS-EASTER**, PER. The medieval church, the earliest record of which is in 1242, was dedicated to St 'Marnock' (MacKinlay, *Non-Script. Deds.*, 74).
- iv.6. **ISLE OF MAY**, FIF. *Sanctus Ethirninus de insula de May* is mentioned in a donation recorded in the priory register of St Andrews (p. 383).
- iv.7. **KILRENNY**, FIF. The place-name is thought to denote the church (*cill*) dedicated to 'Ethernan' (Taylor, 'Church in Eastern Scotland').
- iv.8. **MADDERTY**, PER. The *ecclesia Sancti Ethernani de Madernin* is recorded in 1200; the saint's name is otherwise spelled *Ithernanus* and *Ydernasius* in later sources (Watson, *CPNS*, 321).
- iv.9. **RATHEN**, ABD. The foundation of the church is attributed to *Sanctus Ethernanus episcopus* in *Brev. Aberd.* Nearby is 'St Ethernen's (or 'St Eddran's') Slack, supposed to be the saint's hermitage (Watson, *CPNS*, 321; MacKinlay, *Non-Script. Deds.*, 140-41).

Map A. Distribution of Long-cist Cemeteries and *Eglés Place-names

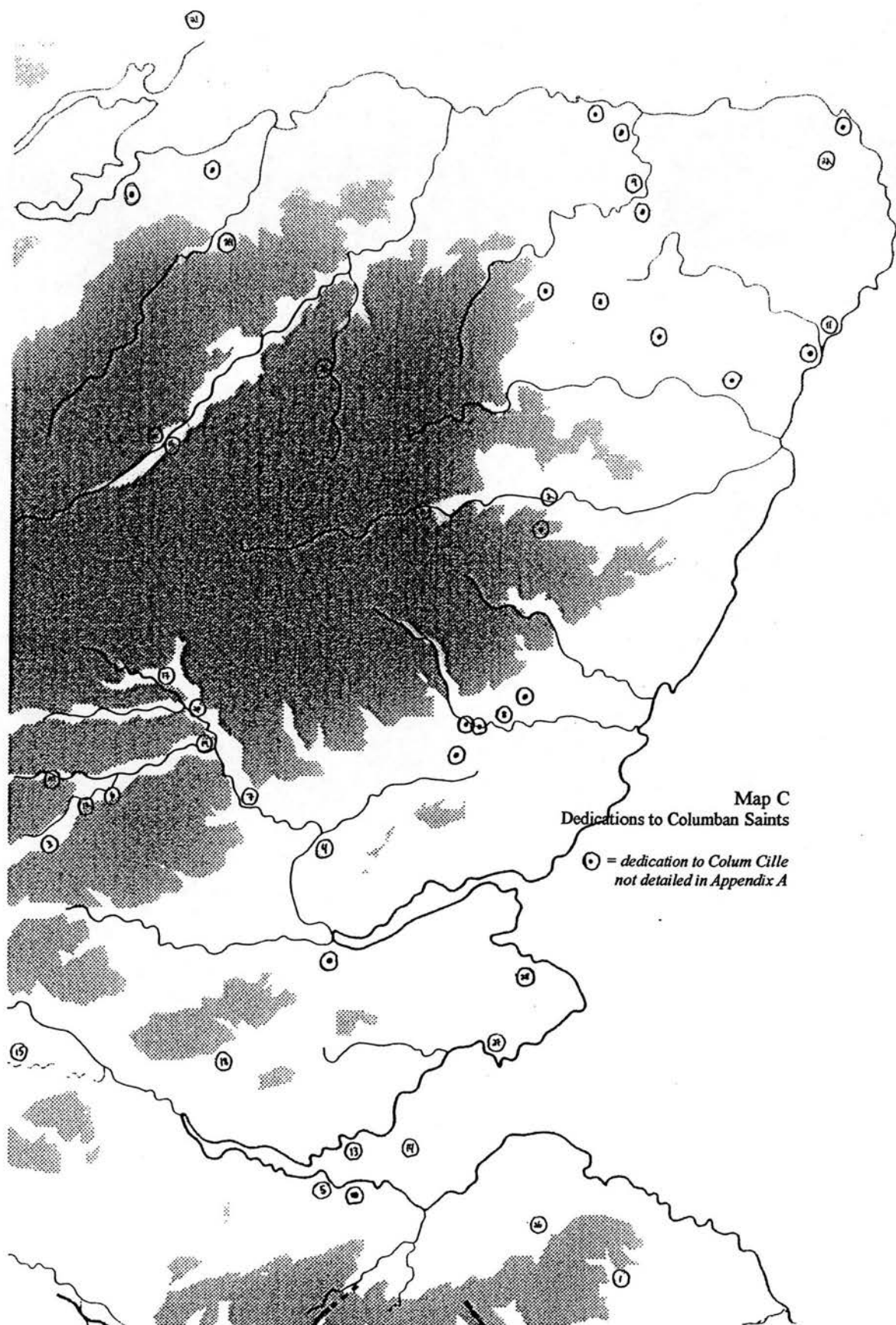


Map B. Dedications to St Tarannan

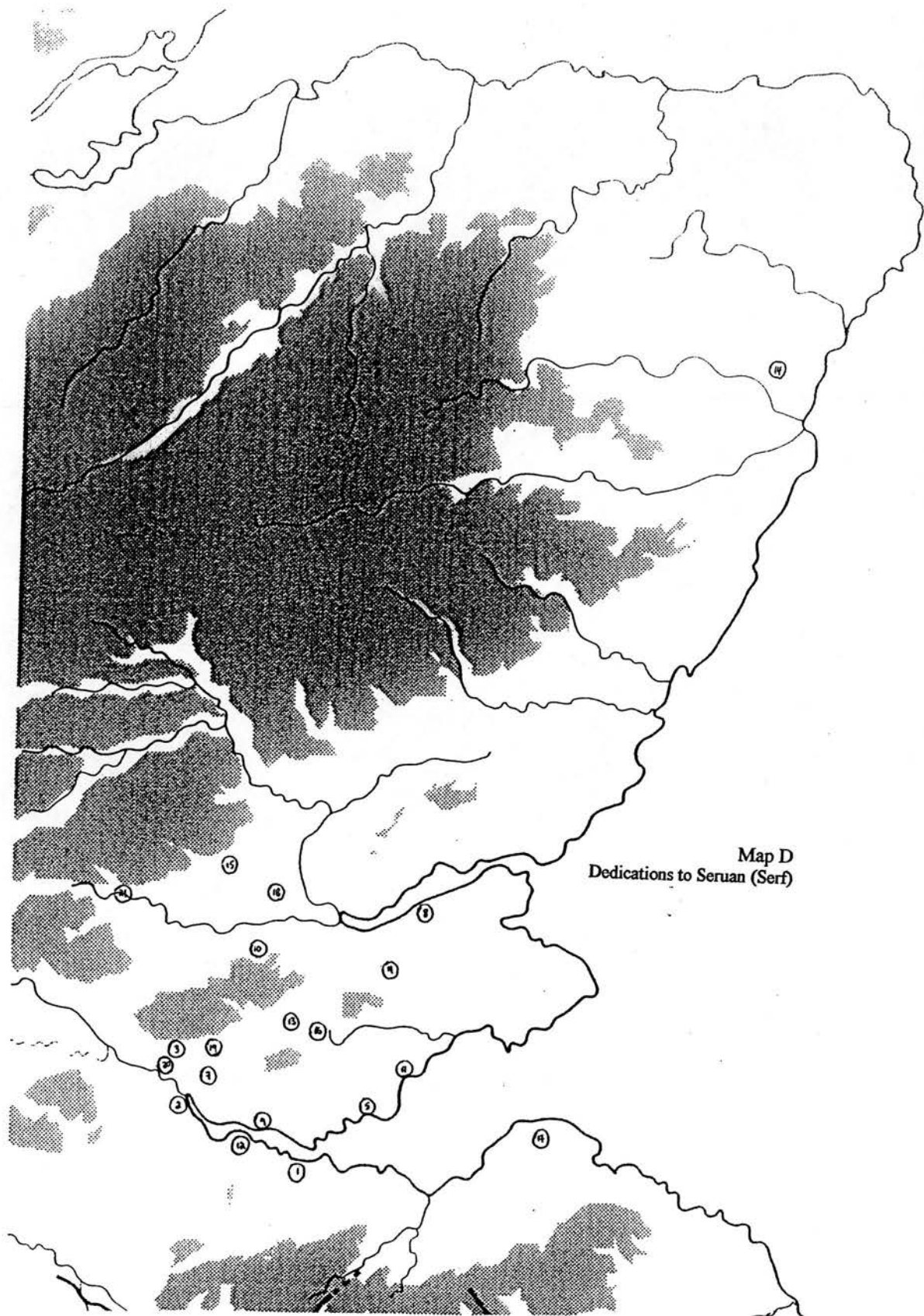


Map B
Dedications to Tarannan (Ternan)

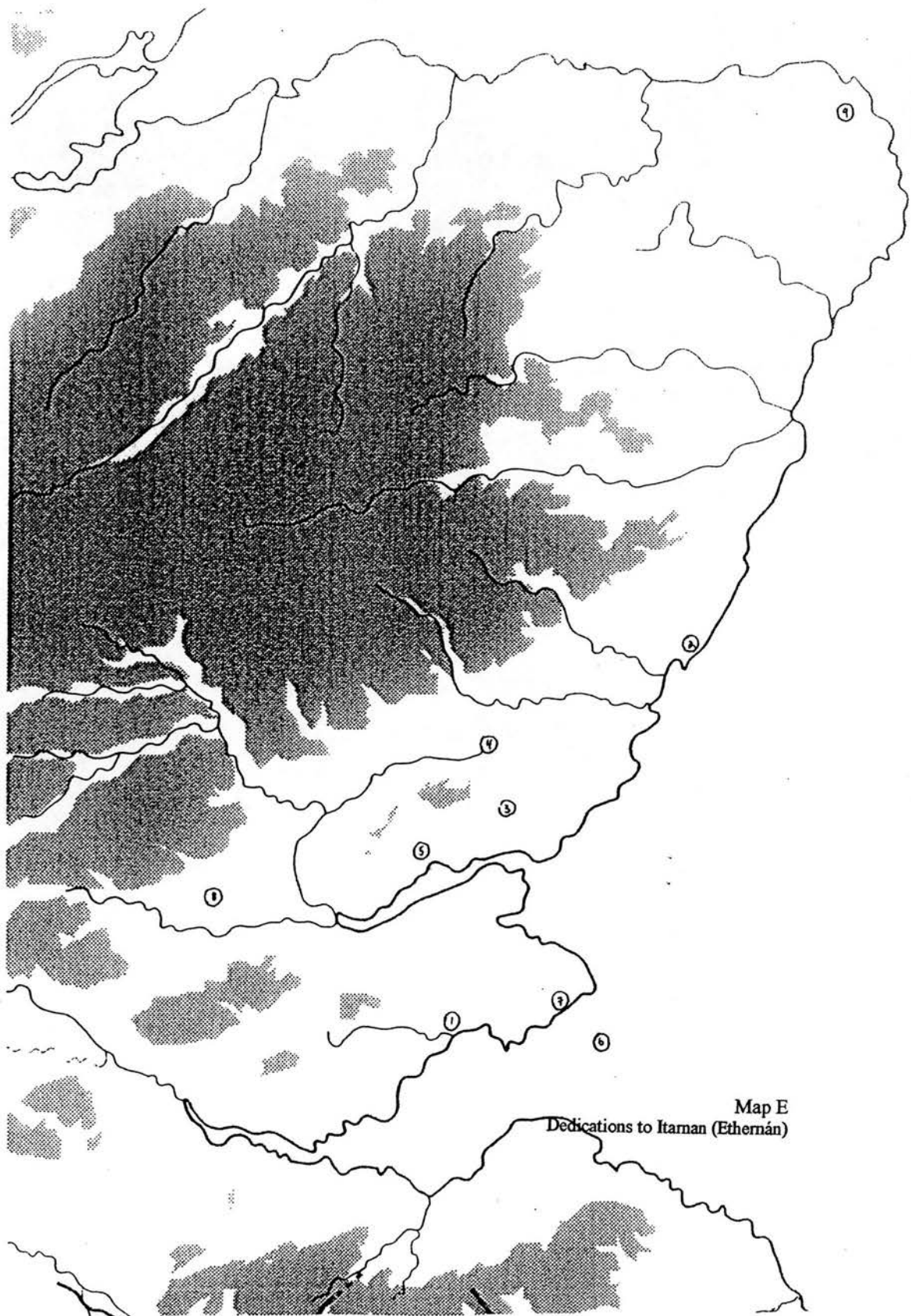
Map C. Dedications to Columban Saints



Map D. Dedications to St Seruan



Map E. Dedications to St Itarnan



Map E
Dedications to Itarnan (Ethernán)

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