RESOVIA SACRA
R. 31 (2024)

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THE LANGUAGES OF RELIGION IN MEDIEVAL BRITAIN – CHRISTIANITY

1 Introduction

The present contribution on Christianity is one of the two in this volume concerning languages of religion in medieval Britain, the other being devoted to Judaism. And while Judaism and Christianity are not the only systems of beliefs present in Britain in the Middle Ages, the two "religions of the book" practised

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there at the time have produced enough evidence to provide grounds for an in-depth analysis. It was, therefore, the unavailability of more tangible data for other forms of cult that dictated the choice of the two religions for discussion in the two papers.

In Britain, the older of the two is Christianity, having been introduced around the 2nd century AD to the mixture of Roman beliefs and native Celtic cults already present there (Watts 1991: 1). Despite social, historical and political adversity it experienced due to the withdrawal of Romans, arrival of the Anglo-Saxons, and influence from other cults, it firmly established itself in Britain by about 700 (Hutton 2013: 276). Due to its phenomenal propensity for assimilation, even Scandinavian invasions did not put a stop to its development.

Considering the vastness and multi-layered character of the topic of languages of medieval Christianity in Britain on the one hand, and the limited confines of any paper on the other hand, it is clear that the primary decision which needs to be taken is whether to cover one of the aspects in more depth, or to provide a broad panorama of the topic, which – out of necessity – only touches upon the multiple facets of Christianity. The approach adopted here is the latter. As a consequence of this decision, the paper is not intended to add to the knowledge concerning each of the discussed aspects of Christianity in Britain but rather to bring together the information concerning various aspects of the Christian religion in Britain studied in depth by theologians, liturgists, historians, historians of art, literary scholars and linguists, and present it all together from the point of view of the language used in each of the described contexts. Therefore, it is not the aim of the paper to present new findings on the sub-topics, such as preaching or religious writings, but rather collect the relevant information on each of them in one place, providing references to detailed specialist studies. Moreover, the vantage point afforded by the paper is that on the linguistic repertoire of Christianity as practised in medieval Britain in each of the discussed areas. This inexorably led to omissions as regards the treatment of each of these areas with respect to theological, literary or historical details.

The paper is divided into five main sections. Section 2 concentrates on the language spoken by God to people in Britain, i.e. the language of the Bible. This is followed by a discussion on the languages employed by people to talk to God, i.e. the languages of prayer and sacraments (Section 3). The next two parts of the paper concentrate on the languages used to talk about God in religious writings (Section 4) and sermons (Section 5). Section 6 is intended to tackle various forms of records pertaining to Christianity.

2 The language of God – Biblical translations

It is impossible to determine which parts of the Bible reached Roman Britain (Daniell 2003: 29). Clearly, however, after the Roman withdrawal (ca. 400 AD) and the ensuing weakening of Christianity, with a partial relapse into non-Christian beliefs (Pryce 2009: 145), it was only with Christian conversion of the Anglo-Saxons (beginning of the 7th century) that biblical texts were needed. From that period up to the end of the 9th century, 11 manuscripts with biblical texts survive and these mainly represent fragments of biblical texts, among them being one complete New Testament (Daniell 2003: 30).[1] The first complete Bible whose presence is recorded in England was the *Codex Grandior*[2] of Cassiodorus brought from Italy after the disbandment of the Vivarium (de Hamel 2001: 32–33; Daniell 2003: 36). It served as the basis of three copies of the Bible produced in Northumbria, one of which – the *Codex Amiatinus* created for the Pope – survives, being now the oldest (before 716) extant exemplar of the complete Vulgate as a single unit (de Hamel 2001: 33–34; Daniell 2003: 36). In the 9th century a southern scriptorium produced the *Codex Aureus* (Daniell 2003: 36). All of these were of course in Latin. But complete Bibles were a rarity, the biblical texts circulating mainly in individual books. Consequently, no complete Bible translation was made in the Anglo-Saxon period and only its parts were translated, usually in the form of interlinear glosses with the Latin text dominant (Daniell 2003: 44) but glossing was not the norm before the 14th century (Marsden 2011: 275). Some of the most frequently copied and translated books of the Bible were the Gospels (e.g. the Lindisfarne Gospels, Rushworth Gospels and West Saxon Gospels) and the absolute favourite – the Psalter (Charzyńska-Wójcik 2013: 1), whose glossed or partially-glossed texts survive in 15 manuscripts (Pulsiano 2001: xxi–xxvi; Roberts 2017: 37–40; cf. Daniell 2003: 46; Marsden 2011: 274).[3] To this number should be added an independent prose rendition (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS lat. 8824) of the text of the 50 first psalms into English authored by Alfred the Great (Marsden 2011: 278–279) followed by a metrical rendition of the remaining psalms.[4] Other biblical texts which survive in Old English in some form were the first seven books of the Old Testament, Proverbs and Ecclesiasticus (Daniell 2003:

1. Looking at the Bible as a unit is a medieval innovation and the presence of its complete text in a single codex a rarity (Boynton and Reilly 2011: 1–2).
2. This is based on Jerome's text as rendered from Greek rather than Hebrew (de Hamel 2001: 32).
3. For an in-depth study of the Anglo-Saxon psalters, see Toswell (2014). This number includes fragments of the lost N-Psalter found in Cambridge, Haarlem, Sonderhausen, Elbląg and Alkmaar. On the topic of the newly discovered fragments of this Psalter, see Porck (2021) for the Alkmaar fragments and Opalińska, Pludra Żuk and Chlebus (2023) for the Elbląg ones.
4. For a present-day English gloss of this translation, see Charzyńska-Wójcik (2013).

47; see also Marsden 2011: 281). Moreover, the Bible was a source of inspiration for Anglo-Saxon poetry and numerous quotes from the Bible can be found in religious and legal texts (Daniell 2003: 44–47, 51–55; Marsden 2011: 276–281).

The Norman Conquest brought an abrupt standstill to religious translations which had to do with a perceptibly lower status of English, now ousted from numerous formal contexts by French. It was only in the 14th century that new biblical translations into English started to appear, and in the meantime the only new copies of parts of the Bible were in either Latin or French (Daniell 2003: 56). Most interestingly, the French translations of biblical texts owe their emergence to the translation culture of Anglo-Saxon England and its multilingual character, as the first renditions into this language – of the Psalter – appeared in the 12th century in England (e.g. the Montebourg Psalter and Eadwine Psalter).[5] Biblical stories were also adapted and appropriated in literary texts, such as *Orrmulum* or *Cursor mundi* (Marsden 2011: 284–285).[6]

After a long pause, one metrical and two prose translations of the Psalter into English appeared in the 14th century – an anonymous northern *Metrical Psalter* (early 14th century), a northern literal translation authored by Richard Rolle (first half of the century), and a Psalter known as the *Middle English Glossed Prose Psalter* created around the middle of the century. In the second half of the century appeared the first translation of the whole Bible from Latin into English. It is usually held that the rendition came in two versions – earlier and later[7] – and was completed by people gathered around John Wycliffe.[8]

3 The language of prayer

3.1 Mass

The liturgical core of the medieval mass was celebrated exclusively in Latin. Considering that this was not the language of the British population at large, the

5. See Rector (2010: 3–6) and Short (2015: 10).
6. For a discussion on allusions to and adaptations of the psalms, see Toswell (2014: 283–339).
7. Not all scholars agree with this. EV and LV are sometimes seen not as versions of the text but rather outcomes of a continuous revision of the text. For an account of the different approaches, see Lis (2017: 50–51).
8. On the topic of medieval Psalter translations into English and for references, see Sutherland (2015). See also Charzyńska-Wójcik (2013) for an account of the prose Psalter renditions into Old and Middle English and their possible source texts, as well as for their texts juxtaposed with Latin, and Lis (2017) for a study of lexical choices in the renditions. For more on the Wycliffite Bible and references, see Hudson (1988), Dove (2007), and Solopova (2017). With respect to glosses in the Wycliffite Bible, see Kuczynski (2019).

understanding of the individual parts of the mass among the laity cannot have been high. And yet, regular attendance appears to have been the case, there being evidence for it from about the 12th century (Brown 2003: 103).[9]

Although the mass itself was couched exclusively in Latin, from the 10th century onwards some of the priestly books came in the vernacular – Old English – and these could be texts concerning liturgical directions or computistical collections which regulated the liturgical calendar (Dyson 2019: 231; Thomas 2020: 21–22). There were also strictly liturgical books[10] (understood broadly, i.e. including the administration of other sacraments) which included – from the beginning of the 10th century – some elements, such as rubrics or glosses in Old English and these started to be present there to any extent in the 11th century (Gittos 2005: 69).[11] Importantly, the Old English elements are absent from the text read out by the priest during the mass.[12]

3.2 Divine office and devotions

3.2.1 The religious

The Divine Office was introduced to England towards the end of the 6th century by Augustin of Canterbury (Anlezark 2017: 198),[13] however, it was only at the end of the 10th century that regularity with respect to monastic life was

9. Cf. van Liere (2014: 209), who is much more circumspect in his approach to the issue, and Tanner and Watson (2006: 408–410), who discuss the requirement and its fulfilment on the basis of parish evidence. For consequences of failing to appear in church on prescribed days and penance for other breaches of obligations imposed on lay people, see Harvey (2006: 32–33), who discusses the religious life of the laity in late medieval Durham.
10. As emphasised by Dyson (2019: 190), the available evidence seems to contradict the widely accepted views concerning the lack of skills to perform pastoral duties on the part of secular priests, who – in his opinion – seem to have had ample access to liturgical books.
11. Thompson (2005) analysed one such manuscript in which 46 out of 67 folios are in Old English, with its sparse use on the remaining 20 folios. The majority of the texts within the manuscript concern confession and visiting the sick, which explains the use of the vernacular and ample space devoted to the utterances on the part of the penitent and/or parishioner, often in reported speech.
12. The only element which could be performed in the vernacular during the mass was a sermon (see Section 5).
13. As for Ireland, St. Columban provided a brief description of the Irish monastic office in his *Regula monachorum* (Taft 1986: 113–114), where he adjusted the number of psalms to be recited during the night to the season, with 75 of them prescribed for winter nights (Dyer 1999: 60).

imposed. It came with the adoption of "The Rule of St. Benedict" and remained in use in accordance with the *Regularis Concordia* (signed in 970) until the Norman Conquest and then – in all Benedictine foundations – on the authority of the *Consuetudines* issued by Lanfranc (archbishop of Canterbury). The monastic Office cycle consisted of eight services – Matins, Lauds, Prime, Terce, Sext, None, Vespers, and Compline – and a Mass.[14] Each of them was held in the language of the church, i.e. Latin. Monks were expected to know the Latin Psalter by heart (Reilly 2011: 120; Madigan 2015: 300).

In contrast to monastic orders, secular clergy observed two main services, which grouped together parts of the eight monastic hours. These were Matins and Evensong (Cuming 1969 [1982]: 8). These were also held exclusively in Latin.[15]

3.2.2 The laity

It was possible for laymen to attend Matins and Evensong performed in cathedrals, at least on Sundays (Cuming 1969 [1982]: 8). The two offices served as the grounds for the creation of the Book of Hours (Cuming 1969 [1982]: 8), which had become common among the laity by the 13th century (Morgan 2008: 306; van Liere 2014: 208),[16] replacing the Psalter, which had served as a personal prayer book in Europe already in the Carolingian times (van Liere 2014: 212).[17]. Interestingly, the content of Books of Hours was not standardised and varied greatly, at least initially (Duffy 2011: 8). It was "a miscellany of prayers" made for use by an individual (family) or a whole community, at home and sometimes at church, primarily for the purposes of private devotion (Hoskins 1901: xvi–xvii; Scott-Stokes 2006: 1). Despite its overall religious character, secular texts were

14. On use of the Bible, and the Psalter in particular, in liturgy, see Boynton (2011).
15. For a study on three main English Uses of the liturgical Office (texts, patterns of observances, and ceremonials used in a given diocese or geographical area), see Salisbury (2015).
16. With the spread of literacy, Psalters and Books of Hours came to be first owned by the higher nobility, then the gentry and by the end of the 14th century by wealthy townspeople (Brown 2003: 148; Duffy 2011: 4). In the 15th century Books of Hours were a part of the religious life of the middling class both in cities and in rural areas (Duffy 2011: 25). Laymen frequently took an active part in the decisions concerning the contents of the devotional books created for them by various members of the clergy, leading to their personalisation (Brown 2003: 148; Dufy 2011: 30–52).
17. In this context, see Panayotova (2011).
The increase in the ownership of Books of Hours was accompanied by a concomitant decrease in the bequests of the Psalters (Sutherland 2015: 15). Sutherland (2015: 15–16) observes, however, that this should not be taken as evidence of a shift from public to private devotions. In this context, see also Duffy (2011: 53–64).

sometimes included in such manuscripts (Scott-Stokes 2006: 1).[18] The very core of any such work was the Little Office, which contained "psalms, hymns and prayers for each of the […] canonical hours" mentioned above (Scott-Stokes 2006: 5), although not necessarily the whole office (van Liere 2014: 213).

There was no standardisation as regards the language of Books of Hours either (Cuming 1969 [1982]: 8), although in England Books of Hours were *predominantly* in Latin until the end of the Middle Ages (Scott-Stokes 2006: 21), even those for women (van Liere 2014: 214). First Books of Hours in English started to emerge in England in the late 14th century (Hoskins 1901: xii). There was some freedom with respect to "[r]ubrics, headings, prayers of private devotion and other supplementary items" as these "could be in Latin or in the vernacular – Anglo-Norman French, English, or most exceptionally Gaelic – or in a combination of these languages" (Scott-Stokes 2006: 21).[19] Of the two main vernaculars, it was French that enjoyed greater currency in Books of Hours until the end of the 14th and the beginning of the 15th century (Scott-Stokes 2006: 21). As noted by Scott-Stokes (2006: 21–22), in the case of trilingual compilations, English was usually the language of later additions.[20]

However, as the literacy rate at the time was low (ca. 5% for England[21]), an overwhelming majority of the population were excluded from directly partaking in devotional reading. They were not, however, excluded from the spirituality shaped by such works (Brown 2003: 153). Nor were all of them excluded from listening to such works being read out loud. As remarked by Brown (2003: 154), although illiterate, peasants could be familiar with the language used in the

18. Some such works came to include forms of confession, with lists of various sins provided to enable the penitent to memorise all the sins they have committed (Scott-Stokes 2006: 5).
19. On the relationship between the dominance of Latin in the main text and the Clarendon Constitutions, see Scott-Stokes (2006: 22). Scott-Stokes (2006: 22–23) observes that the English-only Books of Hours produced at the time seem to have originated in Wycliffite circles. Also, as noted by Morgan (2008: 310 and 315), although various prayers (e.g. to God, the Holy Trinity, the Holy Cross, Mary and saints) incorporated into Books of Hours could come in Middle English, Anglo-Norman or Welsh, they still constituted a minority in relation to the portions of the text in Latin. In addition, the standard prayers, i.e. *Gloria*, *Credo*, and *Pater Noster*, if included, were usually in Latin (Morgan 2008: 308 and 315). It was generally the case that texts employed in the public liturgy were as a rule provided in Latin, as the authoritative language, and for paraliturgical texts it was permissible to employ a vernacular (Morgan 2008: 315).
20. There are 17 (more or less complete) extant English Books of Hours (and one fragment); they all come from a period between the end of the 14th century and at the beginning of the 15th century. For a complete list of the manuscripts, cf. Charzyńska-Wójcik and Wójcik (in press).
21. According to: https://ourworldindata.org/literacy (April 25th, 2025).

psalter, as evidenced during the events of the Peasants' Revolt of 1381, when according to records, their representative employed the language typical of the psalter, homilies and liturgy in general (Brown 2003: 152, 154).

Apart from that, each Christian was expected to be baptised in their local church, to attend Mass and receive sacraments there, and later on to be buried in the churchyard there (Geary 2001: 198).[22] It was in these local churches that all parishioners, peasants included, were to receive basic religious instruction. An opportunity for that was provided by sermons and occasions when parishioners participated in sacraments (Geary 2001: 199). In order for the process of learning to take place, at least parts of the instruction had to be given in the vernacular understandable to the laity at large and such recommendations were already issued by the Venerable Bede in the 8th century (Marsden 2011: 274). All Christians were expected to know the Lord's Prayer, the Hail Mary, the Creed, the Ten Commandments, and the seven deadly sins (Geary 2001: 202),[23] at least in a vernacular if not in the expected Latin, and after the Fourth Council of the Lateran (1215)[24] this knowledge was verified in the course of confession.

As mentioned above with respect to Books of Hours, the prayers used in public worship seem to have been known and recited in Latin.[25] This is not to say, however, that they were used in Latin by everyone and in all contexts. Bede encouraged those with no Latin to memorise the prayers in the vernacular and already in the 8th century there are mentions of (Old) English renditions of the Lord's Prayer (Opalińska *in press*). In the following centuries new versions appeared (e.g. those by Wulfstan and Aelfric), however, considering their diversity, it seems clear that no fixed form of the Lord's Prayer existed (Opalińska 2016: 17–18). Along with translations, *Pater noster* also received English paraphrases (Opalińska *in press*).[26]

As regards the place where the learning of the three basic prayers in Latin (the Lord's Prayer, the Hail Mary, and the Creed) was to take place, it was primarily in the church as the Creed was explained in the vernacular during some Sunday

22. See Harvey (2006), for an account of the actual parish life in late medieval Durham, and the clashes between the laity and the secular and monastic clergy.
23. On this topic, see also Shinners and Dohar (1998: 40), who provide an English translation from a statute of bishop John Gervais concerning the requirements as to the theological knowledge of children and adults.
24. For pastoral care and obligations of the laity after the Fourth Lateran Council, see for instance Tanner and Watson (2006) and Tanner (2009).
25. Schmitt (1981: 353–354) emphasises that the ability to recite the prayers in Latin did not necessarily entail their understanding.
26. There are three such extant verse paraphrases in Old English (Opalińska *in press*) and over 30 in Middle English (Opalińska 2023: 147).

sermons (Schmitt 1981: 345), and then family home, according to Schmitt (1981: 347). At the same time, the child's parents and godparents were obliged (at the baptism, see Section 3.3.2) to teach their wards the basic prayers, which might point to the opposite order of exposure to the prayers and would then suggest that perhaps the child first learnt them in their mother tongue and only later was exposed to the Latin version. The process of prayer acquisition is supposed to have begun around the age of seven (Schmitt 1981: 246). Overall, however, the reality must have presented a rather complex picture. Most importantly, the prayers were known not only in Latin but also in the vernacular.

3.3 Sacraments

3.3.1 Confession and extreme unction

In the ancient church, confession was a public unrepeatable act of avowal of sins made before the congregation and followed by a period of severe penance and exclusion from the fellowship terminated by the ceremony of public reconciliation (McNeill and Gamer 1938 [1990]: 4–13; Tentler 1977: 4–6).[27] The harshness of public penance prompted people to postpone confession until their deathbed and by the 5th century penitential practices in time of health had been virtually lost (McNeill and Gamer 1938 [1990]: 20). This set the stage for the appearance in the 6th century of a system of forgiveness born in the Irish monastic environment and based on the penitentials, i.e. manuals which provided classifications of sins and appropriate penance for each (McNeill and Gamer 1938 [1990]: 20; Tentler 1977: 9).[28] The system travelled to the Continent around 600 (Tentler 1977: 9).

These first Irish penitentials were in Latin (Bieler 1963: 3–4). Around the same time penitential documents were produced in Wales, also in Latin, (McNeill and Gamer 1938 [1990]: 169–178) and in the second half of the 8th century such texts appeared in Old Irish (Bieler 1963: 47). These were not, however, original compositions but translations of the existing Latin texts (Bieler 1963: 47) and created, as is supposed by McNeill and Gamer (1938 [1990]: 3), for the benefit

27. Tentler (1977: 4) states that this formal system emerged around the middle of the 2nd century and was in use until the middle of the 7th century. Interestingly, it was possible to obtain absolution of mortal sins through secret works of satisfaction on condition of entering monastic ranks (Smith 2001: 18), and this, as pointed out by McNeill and Gamer (1938 [1990]: 13–14), was a public act in itself.

28. Some of the penitentials can be consulted in McNeill and Gamer (1938 [1990]), Bieler (1963), Haren (1998), and Frantzen (2010). See also a discussion on the penances assigned for particular sins in McNeill and Gamer (1938 [1990]: 30–35).

of lay people, although their primary addressees were the clergy. Anglo-Saxon penitentials started to be produced in the 7th century (McNeill and Gamer 1938 [1990]: 179). As in Ireland and Wales, they initially came in Latin. Nonetheless, "England was second only to Ireland in developing a vernacular literature of penance built around the private penitential system" and the first Old English vernacular penitentials can be dated to the 10th century (Frantzen 2010).[29] It is worth emphasising, however, that despite the questionnaires being predominantly in Latin, it seems more than likely that their content was translated orally by the confessor in the course of confession (McNeill and Gamer 1938 [1990]: 3) if any comprehension on the part of an average penitent is to be assumed.

The regulations of the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215[30] resulted in the creation of new manuals of preaching and hearing confessions (Pantin 1955: 191–218; Rider 2010: 329)[31] and these Latin texts continued to appear, albeit with a decreasing frequency, in various European countries until the 16th century (McNeill and Gamer 1938 [1990]: 49). Importantly, however, the new standards introduced by the Council required "that older vernacular penitentials would no longer be used

29. All extant Old English penitentials are available at *Anglo-Saxon Penitentials: A Cultural Database* (http://www.anglo–saxon.net/penance/index.php?p=index). See Frantzen (1983) for an in-depth study of Anglo-Saxon penitential literature.

30. The Council obliged each Christian to confess to their parish priest at least once a year.
The need to supply pastoral care was also met by members of the mendicant orders (Resnick 2019: 295). The popularity they enjoyed stemmed from their authenticity as they lived what they preached (Madigan 2015: 245). Dominicans were also favoured as confessors since not only did they receive careful theoretical and practical training for the role, but thanks to their mode of life they could also relate to people, take their intentions and conditions into account and as a result they did not burden them with extreme penances (Lawrence 1994 [2013]: 125–126; Madigan 2015: 244–245). Secular clergy were not as enthusiastic about friars as laity (Muessig 2002: 272–275; Wenzel 2005: 289) and some of them even tried to prevent people from confessing to friars (Resnick 2019: 295). Moreover, the obligation imposed by the 1215 Council to confess to one's parish priest also propelled the friction between secular clergy and friars. Predominantly, however, although confessions should be made to parish priest, it was possible to go elsewhere if this was deemed necessary or beneficial for the penitent (Smith 1998: 103–104).
Perhaps surprisingly, preaching to the laity was also performed by monks and canons regular (Campbell 2019).

31. Local bishops outlined the regulations and set out the units to be given in instruction to the laity in constitutions prepared by synods (Pantin 1955: 194). They also sent parochial clergy tracts, which could be copied and then kept by the priests to be learnt and consulted (Pantin 1955: 194). Later, in the 14th century the same needs were addressed by means of circular letters issued by local bishops without the need of holding a synod first (Pantin 1955: 194). See Pantin (1955: 195–218) for an account of these. And although the sources known to us do not mention the language in which they were issued, it is reasonable to assume that these were in Latin.

for the newly-defined sacrament" (Frantzen 2010). In England it resulted in a step back to Latin-only penitential texts, i.e. "a return to eighth-century standard practices" (Frantzen 2010).

When it comes to the actual confession, according to Tentler (1977: 82–83) and Biller (1998: 13), priests were to listen to it in a public place where it could be seen by others.[32] As Tentler (1977: 83) informs, the exchange of greetings was advised by some authorities,[33] followed by preliminary questions concerning the penitent such as their profession, social and marital status. Usually this was compounded with catechetical examination or instruction on the Lord's Prayer, the Hail Mary, the Creed, and, perhaps, the Ten Commandments (Pantin 1955: 192, Tentler 1977: 84). This was followed by the confession proper, augmented later by questions posed by the priest, and supplied by the penitentials, to establish if no sins were forgotten, hidden or unacknowledged.

Intuitively therefore, one is led to suppose that the language of confession would necessarily be that of the penitent since the priest could not realistically expect the laity at large to convey the exchange sketched out above in Latin. This is confirmed by Resnick (2019: 302), who states that in some cases it was possible to choose between Latin and vernacular.[34] When the priest was not fluent in a given vernacular, interpreters were employed (Smith 1998: 104; Resnick 2019: 302).[35]

Immediately related to the issue of confession was the sacrament of extreme unction, in which the ill were instructed to confess in their vernacular and were then anointed with the holy oil before they received communion (Lynch and Adamo 1992 [2014]: 302).

3.3.2 Baptism, communion and confirmation

From the early 5th century baptism has been deemed necessary already for infants, for fear of their death (Orme 2001: 23). It seems that by around 1200 it was usual for the baptism to take place either on the day of birth or within days

32. Since confessional boxes did not exist at the time (it is a 16th-century invention; Tentler 1977: 82), the penitent was simply required to kneel (or sit according to some sources; Tentler 1977: 82) in front of the priest, unless they were a woman, especially young, in which case they were supposed to kneel at his side. Direct eye contact was discouraged so as not to inhibit the penitent.
33. Tentler (1977: 83) provides an example of such an exchange in Latin, where "Benedicite" of the penitent was to be met with "Dominus sit vobiscum."
34. This was also confirmed by Harvey (p.c.).
35. This provoked a discussion on whether interpreters could also be required to preserve the seal of secrecy (Resnick 2019: 302–303).

of it. The procedures for christening were set out in the *Manual* – a Latin service book. All of these rituals[36] were conducted in Latin and the godparents were expected to respond in Latin as well (Orme 2001: 28–30). When the ceremony was over, the priest charged the godparents with the task of ensuring that the baby was confirmed by a bishop at the earliest possible time. As noted above, they were also obligated to teach their godchild three basic prayers, the Lord's Prayer, the Hail Mary and the Apostles' Creed (Shinners and Dohar 1998: 142–144; Orme 2001: 29–30). In many cases these instructions were probably given in the vernacular (Lynch and Adamo 1992 [2014]: 287). Certainly, not all baptisms took such ceremonious form. Emergency baptisms were performed whenever there was a threat to the infant's life. In such cases those present at the birth or soon afterwards were obliged to baptise the baby. This took a simplified form as it was enough to wash the child, or at least its head, and say „I christen thee in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit", and the words could be uttered in Latin, English or French (Orme 2001: 25–26).

Immediately after the baptism the child received communion – a sip of wine as it could not eat solid food yet (Lynch and Adamo 1992 [2014]: 288). The next opportunity of partaking in the communion came on reaching the age of reason and from then on it could be repeated unlimitedly,[37] provided that it was preceded by due preparations, such as confession, sexual abstinence, fasting, and forgiveness of the experienced wrongdoings (Lynch and Adamo 1992 [2014]: 291). The Fourth Lateran Council formalised the practice, ordering that each Christian, having first confessed and done penance for their sins, should receive communion at least once a year (during Easter) in their own parish church (Lynch and Adamo 1992 [2014]: 291). The whole process, however, did not require any verbal participation on the part of the laity.

When it comes to the aforementioned confirmation, which was to follow the baptism, considering that the sacrament was administered by a bishop, it was doubtless done in Latin. If a bishop was present during the baptism, the child received confirmation as well (Lynch and Adamo 1992 [2014]: 288–289). As the

36. The ceremony began on the porch of the church, where the christening party were met by the priest, who was to instruct the baby (Orme 2001: 28). The christening itself took place in the church, by the font, where the priest entered into a dialogue (in Latin) with the child's godparents, who spoke on behalf of the child. Then the baby was anointed with chrism and immersed in the font three times (Lynch and Adamo 1992 [2014]: 287). See also Shinners and Dohar (1998: 142–144 and 162–165).

37. In fact, out of reverence for the sacrament, only few people dared take communion frequently (Lynch and Adamo 1992 [2014]: 292; Cross and Barnwell 2005: 13–14). Laity were sometimes given *eulogia* instead, i.e. bread which was blessed but not consecrated (Lynch and Adamo 1992 [2014]: 292).

episcopal presence was not a common occurrence, with time the two rites grew apart and confirmation became a separate sacrament, not tied to a particular period in life (Lynch and Adamo 1992 [2014]: 290; Tanner and Watson 2006: 404–405).

3.3.3 Marriage and holy orders

Marriage proved troublesome to the church, since there were no universal regulations allowing it to control the unions, so many marriages were contracted privately. It was only in the 15th century that a drop in clandestine marriages was noted (Ward 2006: 24). Throughout the early Middle Ages, it was a secular act and it only required that the present consent (although in no set form) be exchanged and the consummation follow (Ward 2006: 19–20; Donahue 2007: 16). During such informal marriages, the language of consent was necessarily that spoken by the couple. In the 12th century, marriage was defined by the church as one of the seven sacraments (Goetz 1993: 34) and was expected to be celebrated publicly (Ward 2006: 15), and yet in practice it was only in 1563 that it became necessary for the marriages to take place in a church (Lynch and Adamo 1992 [2014]: 300). The vows, however, seem to have continued to be exchanged in the vernacular spoken by a given couple.[38]

The alternative to marriage was joining holy orders, where celibacy was required. The sacrament, consisting in laying on of hands, was administered by a bishop and therefore the language of the ceremony was Latin. It set those ordained apart from the rest of society and the outward signs of this sacrament were the attire, tonsure, and mode of living (Lynch and Adamo 1992 [2014]: 301).

4 The language of religious writings

4.1 Biblical commentaries and devotional writings

The complexity of the biblical text with its multi-layered meanings has always generated the need for commentaries. Some of the earliest works focused on the different levels of Bible interpretation and until the 12th century they had built upon the patristic tradition (van Liere 2014: 142). One of the best known and most prolific authors of exegetical texts was the Venerable Bede (673–735).

38. See Shinners and Dohar (1998: 190–195), who provide a translation of a detailed description of the ceremony from the *Sarum Manual*.

A special type of commentary in a question-answer form (usually referred to as "insular" or "Irish" as they spread to continental Europe together with Irish missionaries), emerged in the 7th century and remained popular throughout the 8th century (van Liere 2014: 149). Commentaries of this type were concerned mainly with the literal meaning of the Bible and had a didactic purpose (van Liere 2014: 148–149). Needless to say, the language of these works was Latin.[39]

The type of "commentary" which allowed for both Latin and vernacular to be employed was to be found in glosses added to the biblical text, placed in the margins or interlinearly, frequently with the vernacular for the literal translation, e.g. the Vespasian Psalter (glosses added in the 9th century), the Lindisfarne Gospels (glosses added in the 10th century), and Latin for explaining the text (van Liere 2014: 151–152). An interesting example of glossing in Latin and vernacular is the 12th-century Eadwine Psalter, where the three Latin versions of the Psalter were accompanied by glosses in Latin, Old English, and Anglo-Norman.

As a result of efforts at bringing the practice in line with the regulations imposed by the Fourth Lateran Council and local constitutions produced in its wake throughout the 13th century, the late 13th and 14th centuries, saw the emergence of a great diversity of religious and moral treatises aimed at both the clergy and the laity. They were created, reworked and copied in Latin as well vernaculars. Brown (2003: 52) emphasises that church reformers of the 14th century were more than ever focused on the spiritual life of both the clergy and the laity. This concern found an outlet in the 14th and 15th centuries in the production of a number of texts (such as *Lay Folks' Catechism* or *Instructions for the Parish Priest*), frequently in the vernacular (Brown 2003: 52; Barratt 2008: 342).[40] Barr (2008 [2022]: 22 and 35) argues that pastoral vernacular texts granted the clergy an accessible vehicle to master their craft as the majority of parish priests were not graduates of advanced schools (Barr 2008 [2022]: 25).[41]

The 14th century also witnessed a proliferation of mystical writings whose intended audience did not consist exclusively of the clergy, and which presupposed a sound knowledge of the doctrine (Pantin 1955: 250). The most popular mystical works were those of Richard Rolle, Walter Hilton, Dame Julian Norwich, the anonymous author of the *Cloud of Unknowing*, and Walter Flete (Pantin 1955:

39. Van Liere (2011: 166–167) perceives Alfred the Great's reforms as an attempt to bring vernacular into the realm of the Bible studies.
40. See Pantin (1955: 220–243) for a variety of 14th-century vernacular works of this type produced in England and Barratt (2008) for a survey of religious texts produced in England both in Latin and in various vernaculars. As suggested by Rice (2013: 165–169), religious texts included in a single anthology could be aimed at both clerical and lay audience, with the former not necessarily acting as intermediaries.
41. On pastoral care accorded to women, see Barr (2008 [2022]).

244–247).[42] In addition to these, there were numerous anonymous mystical works produced in England at the time. As emphasised by Pantin (1955: 252), one of the most characteristic features of all mystical literature of the time is its vernacularity – these works were predominantly in English. As the mystics usually came from the north and east of England (Pantin 1955: 252), the most represented varieties of English were northern and eastern.

By the 15th century, contemplative spirituality, usually confined to monasteries and convents, had been present in the secular world more than ever before (Brown 2003: 54 and 182). The literary religious output of the 15th century "is rightly celebrated for its many notable English texts, patrons, and readers" (Wogan-Browne 2017: 171).[43] Interestingly, as argued by Wogan-Browne (2017: 171), its francophone component and supra-regionality should also be emphasised. It appears that "[a]longside English and Latin works, insular and continental French books continued to link various persons and places" (Wogan-Browne 2017: 175).[44]

Another type of devotion in the vernacular which spread fast in England from the 14th to the 16th centuries was that to the holy name (Lutton 2011: 119). In England it entered liturgy only in response to lay practice (Lutton 2011: 124 and 144). A vast body of works concerning this devotion are written in English and, importantly, in verse, which facilitated memorisation and circulation in oral forms in non-literate circles (Lutton 2011: 144–145).

4.2 Hagiography and miracle literature

The language of hagiographic texts reflects the language used by their clerical authors. In Anglo-Saxon England such texts were written in Latin and Old English,[45] whereas after the Norman Conquest they came predominantly, though not exclusively, in Latin and French.[46] This was possible as from the late 12th

42. See also Riehle (2014), and specifically for Rolle, Karáth (2018) and his other publications.
43. English was, however, by no means the only vernacular which served as a vehicle for the transmission of religious texts. See Hunt (2008) for a discussion on various, not only religious, 12th-15th century Anglo-Norman writings, Boffey and Edwards (2008) for a corresponding survey of Middle English texts, and Huws (2008) for religious literature in Welsh. For a discussion on Lollard literature, in Latin and vernacular, see Hudson (2008).
44. Wogan-Browne (2017: 175) makes that remark with East Anglian and Essex landscape in mind.
45. See Lazzari, Lendinara, and di Sciacca (2014) for a selection of papers devoted to various Anglo-Saxon hagiographic texts.
46. For instance, St Thomas Becket's life was described in Latin, Old French, Anglo-Norman, and Old Norse (translation from Latin) (White 2017: 174).

century French was in use "in historiography, hagiography, romance, sermon, biblical and para-biblical narrative and commentary, lyric and other genres" (Wogan-Browne, Fenster and Russell 2016: 402). When English regained its status in various areas of life in the 14th century, it also started to re-appear in hagiographic writings (Long 2006).[47]

A unique type of writing that is also typically associated with vernaculars are miracle collections. Documents like these, although written down by clergy, were in fact authored by the laity and reflect their use of the language, even if mediated and translated (White 2017: 175). For instance, a late 14th-century collection of miracles gathered for the purposes of the canonisation of Thomas Cantilupe studied by Richter (2000) consisted of 203 witness depositions presented orally in 90% in languages other than Latin, but recorded principally in the latter.[48] Clearly, then they must have been written by individuals fluent both in the vernaculars and in Latin. Recording these depositions in the universal language of the Church was a necessity: they had to be comprehensible for the ecclesiastical authorities entitled to pronounce verdicts in beatification and canonisation procedures. Their common language was Latin, so the choice of the language of record was pragmatic. The range of acceptable languages of the deposition, apart from Latin, French, English, and Welsh were allowed as well, was also dictated pragmatically: to ensure as wide a range of witnesses as possible. Interestingly, neither was the use of Latin limited to the clergy, some of whom opted for French instead, nor did the laity exclusively rely on vernaculars in their depositions (Richter 2000).

4.3 Artistic means of religious expression

Alongside written sources (not universally accessible) and preaching (which we will expand on in Section 5), additional channels via which biblical content and Christian doctrine permeated medieval mentality were art and theatre (van Liere 2014: 237; see also Bernard 2012: 97–104). However, art should rather be looked at as a means of reinforcing the stories already known to people (van Liere 2014: 238–239; Madigan 2015: 306–307) because in order to make sense of church drawings, one needed to be acquainted with the stories depicted in them in the first place (Duggan 1989; van Liere 2014). This must have happened either during sermons, or outside the church, perhaps thanks to non-liturgical

47. 15th-century English religious literature is discussed in great detail in a collection of essays edited by Gillespie and Ghosh (2011).
48. Richter (2000: 54) estimates that there are "no more than a dozen sentences [recorded] in languages other than Latin."

drama (see below) or religious writings one happened to hear read or recounted in informal contexts. Manuscript illustrations, as a part of the written resources not accessible to a great number of Christians, cannot have been a great source of biblical knowledge.

Another artistic means of expression for biblical contents was drama, which on a limited number of occasions, e.g. Easter, could take the shape of liturgical re-enactments illustrating some of the sequences sung in Latin during the liturgy (van Liere 2014: 254–255; see also Boynton 2011: 24–27 and Cochelin 2011: 69–74). The use of drama in non-liturgical settings was, however, more common. These dramas came both in Latin and in the vernacular and used biblical stories as a scaffolding,[49] adding dramatic details and frequently developing non-central characters (van Liere 2014: 255). Vernacular performances were often financed by guilds and took place outside the church walls, e.g. during the Corpus Christi procession, with different guilds acting out consecutive biblical scenes (Beadle 1987: 659–663; van Liere 2014: 256). The popularity of mystery plays – as they are known now – outlived the Middle Ages but their production was cut short by a ban imposed in the 16th century by Elisabeth I (Beadle 1987: 662–663; van Liere 2014: 256).[50]

5 The language of sermons

Some of the fundamental questions posed by researchers dealing with medieval preaching concern the relationship between the written sermon and the very act of preaching. There appears to be no conclusive evidence to prove that preachers read out their sermons, even though some of the manuscripts containing sermons might indicate their use in this capacity (Fletcher 2009a: 12). The majority of books of sermons appear to have been of consultive or literary value, and they either recorded what had already been said or supplied material for the upcoming sermon but cannot be assumed to represent verbatim what was actually said (Wenzel 2005: 16–20; Fletcher 2008: 318 and 2009a: 13; Johnson 2012: xviii).[51] In

49. Apocryphal texts were also a source of inspiration, as were patristic and scholarly sources (Beadle 1987: 657).
50. The tradition was revived in the second half of the 20th century (Beadle 1987: 662–663; van Liere 2014: 256).
51. Wenzel (2005: 3) distinguishes between sermons gathered in random collections and those preserved in sermon cycles, considering the former closer to the actual event of preaching and calling them “real sermons,” as opposed to “model sermons” offered in sources of the latter type.

other words, the precise relationship between the written sermon and what was actually preached remains obscure (Johnson 2012: xvii).

An interesting phenomenon was the creation of *reportationes*, i.e. sermons recorded in writing by a member of the audience and thus, as emphasised by Thompson (2002: 26), preserving what they (thought they) heard.[52] *Reportationes* frequently masked both the transition from the oral to the written medium (the fact of being a record of a sermon first delivered), and the transition from one language to another, as they themselves are often in Latin, or a mixture of Latin and the vernacular (Thompson 2002: 17).[53]

With respect to the language of preaching, it needs to be emphasised that the language of a written sermon is usually no indication of either how or in what language the sermon was delivered (Poleg 2011: 215; van Liere 2014: 224). As stated by Thompson (2002: 17), "[o]utside of sermons to the clergy, medieval preaching was virtually always in the vernacular."[54] Therefore, an important differentiation to make is that into sermons delivered to the clergy, predominantly in Latin,[55] and those preached *ad populum*. Considering how diversified the population of England was throughout the medieval period, the vernacular needs to be assumed to have meant different languages for different parts of society at different times.

The greatest problem faced by researchers is the issue of manuscript survival. No primary sources in the shape of actual sermons are left of preaching in Scotland, Wales or Cornwall, although the evidence for such preaching comes from different, less direct sources (Fletcher 2009a: 5–6).[56] The most abundant sermon

52. Interestingly, no *reportationes* have survived from Ireland (Fletcher 2009a: 245).
53. In this context, see Muessig (2010), who discusses, among other things, Latin *reportationes* of sermons delivered in French. For a parallel in Jewish sermons, see Charzyńska Wójcik and Lis in this volume.
54. See also Pantin (1955: 237); Shinners and Dohar (1998: 125–126); Wenzel (2005: 9); Poleg (2011: 205); and Madigan (2015: 308).
Interestingly, on the basis of the evidence from *exempla* (collections of plausible stories taken from life or literary sources used to ilustrate certain moral or theological points), it seems that the congregation sometimes did enter into a dialogue with their preachers, asking them questions; some members of the congregation interrupted them or even argued with them over matters with which they disagreed (Jones 2011: 26).
55. As noted by White (2017: 186), vernaculars were at times preferred even in monastic settings, possibly to avoid drawing attention away from the moral teaching to the literary aspects of the sermon itself.
56. As noted by Fletcher (2009a: 6), there is evidence that sermons were sometimes preached and/or translated into Cornish or Welsh. For instance, when Gerald of Wales and Archbishop Baldwin of Canterbury travelled through Wales to preach the crusade, they sometimes employed interpreters but, as claimed by them, linguistic barrier did not prevent their preaching from achieving its goals, even when the audience could not understand them (Putter 2006: 86–87). Gerald seems to have considered it redundant for the clergy to be fluent in

material in the British Isles originated in Ireland and England (Fletcher 2009a: 6). A plethora of homilies in Old English have survived from the Anglo-Saxon times (Wright 2002: 203)[57] and it is probable that preaching was a much more frequent phenomenon in England than it was on the Continent (Jones 2011: 3). Prior to the middle of the 10th century, homiletic sources had been mainly in Latin, but from that time on Old English homilies were in wide circulation. For the later Middle Ages there are manuscript sources containing sermons in Latin, Anglo-Norman, and English, with the extent of the use of vernacular divergent both between various milieus in which they were created and between particular manuscripts and texts within them.[58]

Schendl (2000: 80) points to a common pattern of code-switching in the sermons recorded in Middle English, where Latin biblical quotations serve as structural elements and are followed by English translations.[59] No apparent functions can, in turn, be postulated for English switches in Latin sermons (Schendl 2000: 80–81).[60] The mixing of languages in these texts did not, however, stem from the carelessness or linguistic inadequacy of the preacher (Johnson 2012: xxiv) and, as stated above, it is impossible to determine the actual language of delivery (Johnson 2012: xxiv).[61]

When it comes to Ireland, the 12th century witnessed the arrival of a sizeable wave of the French-speaking clergy and the expectations were not for them to learn Irish but for the remaining members of the clergy to be able to speak Latin or French (Neville 1990: 26). Surprising as it might be, in the late 13th century

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Welsh, it was only necessary "to be able to communicate a little with the natives" (Putter 2006: 99). Considering that Flemish was also one of the vernaculars in use in Wales at the time by Flemish migrants and their descendants (Putter 2006: 102–104), one might wonder if the sermons were not perhaps translated into that language as well. See also Shinners and Dohar (1998: 125–126).

57. Apart from those traditionally attributed to Wulfstan and Ælfric, over a hundred of sermons are anonymous (Wright 2002: 203). It is estimated that for the period between 1150 and 1350, 140,000 Latin sermons alone have survived in Europe (van Liere 2014: 214).

58. Once recorded, sermons could also be read by the laity (Fletcher 2009a: 29; Johnson 2012: xix). A good example of such compilations is *Myrrour*: an English rendition of a 13th-century Anglo-Norman cycle of sermons (Fletcher 2009a: 29). Apparently, already in the late 12th century, the demand for written sermons was on the increase (van Liere 2014: 220).

59. On this topic, see Fletcher (2009a).

60. See Schendl (2013) for more on the topic of late medieval macaronic Latin-English sermons, where the types of macaronic sermons distinguished by Wenzel (1994) are also discussed in detail. See Fletcher (2009b) for an analysis of macaronic medieval English sermons and the interpretation of the number and extent of switches as "a barometer" of the confidence in the vernacular.

61. In this context, see Muessig (2010).

complaints were voiced over the use of Irish – instead of the expected French – on the part of the mendicant friars (Neville 1990: 32). One can only presume that reliance on Irish occurred in the course of preaching. A century later, by about 1400, French fell into disuse to the advantage of Irish (Neville 1990: 32) and English.

As mentioned above in the context of lay devotions (Section 3.2.2) and sacraments (Section 3.3), in the wake of the Fourth Lateran Council, the clergy were obliged to perform a variety of tasks in the vernacular. One of the most important among their responsibilities was preaching and teaching the fundamentals of Christian doctrine (Wenzel 2005: 333–335). In order to ensure that parish priests know what to teach their parishioners, local bishops issued *pastoralia* setting out the units to be taught and some of them published short manuals containing the basic catechetical material (Wenzel 2005: 231). The laity were to be inculcated with all this knowledge in the course of the regular sermon (Wenzel 2005: 235).

6 Miscellaneous

6.1 Monastic records and accounts

Monastic records were by default preserved in Latin. It was not, however, the only language employed in such documents. With the passage of time, more and more English appeared in them, and – occasionally – "unexpected amount of French" as was the case with Durham, for instance (Rothwell 1999: 647). In these particular records, Latin, English, and French tend to appear in a single phrase and it is frequently impossible to tell them apart (Rothwell 2000).

Medieval administrative documents for English female convents (132 in total) have only been preserved from 27 houses (Oliva 2009: 90). They are predominantly in Latin and English, in which aspect as well as in their structure and content they resemble the accounts from male monastic houses (Oliva 2009: 90–91). Some of them, however, come only in French (Hunt 1997; June 2009 and Oliva 2009).

As regards library records from monasteries (Pouzet 2009: 266) and nunneries (Oliva 2009: 92), in the later medieval period, works in Latin, English, and French are all to be found there.

6.2 Epistolary documents

When it comes to the linguistic repertoire of epistolary activity of the clergy, Pahta and Nurmi (2011: 236) argue that it presents a picture where language mixing is the outcome of the linguistic skills both of the writer and the recipient, whose abilities the author needed to take into consideration.[62] The most frequent switches in English letters (in the 15th century) are into Latin, but the frequency ranges from author to author.[63]

6.3 Canonical visitations

Beginning in the early 13th century, there was a requirement on bishops to conduct canonical visitations of their dioceses (Shinners and Dohar 1998: 262). These could either evaluate the spiritual or material state of a given parish, or both at once. In the course of such inquiries, selected scribes noted down depositions given by the clergy and their parishioners, quite frequently in the vernacular, which was in the majority of cases the very language of such interrogations (Shinners and Dohar 1998: 262). It was only later that the notes were summarised and rendered into Latin to be preserved until the wrongs be amended (Shinners and Dohar 1998: 262).

7 Conclusion

The linguistic panorama of medieval Britain in the realm of Christianity is just as intricate as that of medieval Britain in general, with all the languages present there being a part of its fabric. One can, nevertheless, distinguish some general tendencies within this complex picture. Whereas the language in which one talked about God usually reflected the language of the author and addressee(s) of a given text, e.g. in preaching or religious writings, the language of public devotion, the liturgy, was in unison with the language of the institutional church – Latin. The Mass and the sacrament of Eucharist it entailed were without any exceptions in Latin. Some other sacraments allowed the use of the vernacular to a greater (confession) or lesser (christening) extent. By far the greatest variety, when it comes to the languages used, can be observed with respect to – first and foremost – preaching

62. For instance, in a series of letters exchanged between the bishop of Durham and the king in the first half of the 14th century, the dominant language is *perforce* Latin, with a sparing use of French and but a few lexical items from English (Rothwell 2000). However, as Rothwell (2000) concludes, Latin is incapable of expressing the concepts and ideas of the medieval society and thus the recourse to borrowings. Furthermore, the syntax of the text is that of French couched in Latin guise (Rothwell 2000).

63. Unfortunately, correspondence with non-English matrix was not analysed in Pahta and Nurmi's (2011) study.

and witness depositions – be they a result of canonical visitations or statements given in the course of miracle investigations. The broadest area of uncertainty is that of private devotions, in which the use of language would probably differ from person to person, context to context and devotion to devotion. When it comes to the language in which God spoke to the Christians in Britain, it would be predominantly Latin – with the help of visual arts. However, whereas in the Anglo-Saxon period some English translations – in a broad sense of the term – were available to a very limited number of people, mainly monks, with time renditions of parts of the Bible and finally the whole Bible (14th century) would appear in the later medieval period and it seems that this is more or less the time when God started to speak in English to a much greater proportion of English population.

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Summary

The paper provides an overview of the linguistic panorama of Christianity in medieval Britain. It brings together information concerning the languages in use in various spheres of Christian life at the time with a view to creating a composite picture. Within the paper three main areas may be distinguished: language use in the context of God speaking to people (i.e. biblical translations), language used by people addressing God (i.e. prayers, liturgy, sacraments) and that employed when talking about God (i.e. religious writings, sermons, church-related registers and documents).

Keywords: Christianity, church, language of religion, Latin, medieval Britain, vernacular.

JĘZYKI RELIGII ŚREDNIOWIECZNEJ BRYTANII – CHRZEŚCIJAŃSWO

Streszczenie

Artykuł zarysowuje językową panoramę chrześcijaństwa w średniowiecznej Brytanii. Jego celem jest zebranie informacji dotyczących języków wykorzystywanych w różnych sferach życia chrześcijańskiego w badanym okresie i nakreślenie obrazu tego zagadnienia. W artykule wyróżnić można trzy główne części: jedna poświęcona jest językowi, w którym Bóg przemawia do ludzi (tj. tłumaczenia biblijne), druga językowi, w którym ludzie zwracają się do Boga (tj. modlitwa, liturgia, sakramenty), a trzecia dotyczy języka używanego do mówienia o Bogu (tj. literatura religijna, kazania, dokumentacja i rejestry kościelne).

Słowa kluczowe: chrześcijaństwo, kościół, język religii, łacina, średniowieczna Brytania, język wernakularny.