

**LATINITAS BRITANNIAE. LATIN IN THE MIDDLE AGES. BRITISH MEDIEVAL
LATIN.**

**STUDIES FOR MODERN AND MEDIEVAL LATIN
PROF. DR. DARCY CARVALHO
SÃO PAULO BRAZIL**

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Notes on Medieval Latin



Latinitas Britannica. Latin In Medieval Britain

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Latin In The Middle Ages . Latinitas Britanniae. British Medieval Latin.***

British Medieval Latin

Contents

- 1 Medieval Latin Linguistic Features, p. 1-5
- 2 Latin in Medieval Britain, p. 6-22
- 3 Britannia by William Camden , p. 23- 62
- 4 Vita Agricola by Caius Cornelius Tacitus, p. 62-76
- 5 Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum by Venerabilis Beda: p. 77- 95
- 6 Bibliotheca Historica Medii Aevi by August Potthast, p. 96-124
- 7 Praestanti Methodo Docendi ac Discendi Latinum by Guido Angelino p. 125- 129
- 8 Latin as International Auxiliary Language by Roland G. Kent, p.130- 137
- 9 Quae Latinitas sit Moderna by Terence Turnberg, p. 138-146
- 10 Medieval Latin and Modern Utilitarian Latin. Conclusions by Darcy Carvalho , p. 147-

BRITISH MEDIEVAL LATIN VEL LATINITAS BRITANNIAE



I

MEDIEVAL LATIN

Linguistic Features, Diversity, Spelling, Grammar and Vocabulary

“The Dictionary of Medieval Latin of British Sources (DMLBS)”

Source: <http://www.dmlbs.ox.ac.uk/british-medieval-latin/language/latin-in-the-middle-ages>

The presentation of the new “Dictionary of Medieval Latin of British Sources (DMLBS)” offers a complete introduction to medieval Latin covering its linguistic features, diversity, spelling, grammar, and vocabulary. We reproduce that essay as a general introduction to the Latin of the Middle Ages (500- 1500):

Medieval Latin is not just the language of the church

Medieval Latin Linguistic Features

“Two assumptions frequently made about Latin in the medieval period are that it was simply the language of the Christian church and that the standard of Latin use was universally poor and not worthy of interest.

“However, the huge number and range of texts produced in Latin during this long period clearly demonstrate that despite times when education dropped in standard (as can happen at any period of history) or was limited to a small percentage of the population, those who were able to gain an education, primarily in monastic and cathedral schools, produced texts on a wide variety of subjects and in a wide variety of styles, often combining elements from classical learning with Biblical and patristic elements alongside elements from contemporary culture and personal experience, and reflecting many of the changes and dramas that occurred during the period.

Medieval Latin presents extreme diversity

“If there is one way to characterize Medieval Latin, in fact, it is precisely its variety. In terms of the range of purposes for which Latin was employed, diversity was not new: as an everyday language previously, Latin had been used perfectly ordinarily for every function that language might be used for in speech and writing. Accordingly even in classical times the language had been diverse in its form too, usage differing according to the age or sex of the speaker, the topic of discourse, the register being used, and so on.

“However, we know rather less than we might wish about this variation in Classical Latin because of the limits of the surviving evidence. Written texts can give only indirect hints of the diversity of spoken Latin, the range of functions carried out in writing rather than in speech was clearly different, and the greater distance in time means that more material has been lost or destroyed in the intervening years.

Development and Role of Classical Latin

“More important still, though, is the fact that from the first century BC Latin developed a highly standardized prestige form, namely Classical Latin, which was adopted as the variety of the language used in many of the functions carried out in writing. This means that the surviving texts typically reflect some attempt at conformity to this standard to a greater or lesser degree. Furthermore the texts that have survived through the ages into the modern world have tended to be the most highly regarded ones, being giants of literature, oratory, poetry, and the like, and these were most likely to conform to or even define this standard. Indeed their transmission and survival was encouraged precisely by their Classical Latin status.

“Classical Latin, then, remained hugely influential as a standard for the language down to the medieval period and beyond. Great texts in that variety were read, and the sophistication of their language acknowledged in the writing of Latin in the Middle Ages, again with factors such as register and text type determining the extent to which writers would feel the need to attempt to conform to the Classical standard.

The result is that alongside texts that try hard to meet the Classical norms we find many texts, especially ones that are not highly literary (e.g. accounts), in which the pressure

Medieval Latin Linguistic Features

of tradition and great literature as a model was not felt so strongly and other influences — such as the effect of the contemporary everyday languages — can be seen.

Linguistic features of medieval Latin

“The ways in which writers used Latin free from the constraints of the Classical norms and the effects of this are the key to appreciating the diversity of Medieval Latin. There is a complexity that we can observe in written texts for the Middle Ages that we simply lack such good evidence for in the period when Latin was a native language. Far from being universally poor, we see the considerable skill of writers moulding the language to their needs.

“There are many dimensions in which the linguistic diversity can be observed. The range of text types is clearly one, and we might note especially the development of rhythmic and rhyming verse, which is found as a new poetic form besides poetry written in the Classical Latin verse forms (based on syllable weight). However, there are some important linguistic differences that are frequently encountered in Medieval Latin that can make it look different from the Classical language, sometimes quite markedly so.

Spelling of medieval Latin

“The most obvious difference in appearance between Medieval Latin and Classical Latin is in how words were spelled. Although Classical spellings were generally retained for inherited vocabulary, changes in pronunciation which had happened over the centuries — many the same as those which had led to the divergence of the everyday Romance languages from Latin and from each other — influenced the corresponding spelling of the words.

“Thus we often find *ci* before a vowel where the Classical spelling would have been *ti* (e.g. *racio* for *ratio*), and the diphthongs *ae* and *oe* which had come to be pronounced the same as the simple *e* sound are often written *e*. (We also find as a result examples where *ae* or *oe* are written where the expected spelling would be just *e*.)

“Other alternations in spelling arising from changes in pronunciation are the interchange of *b* and *v*, the insertion or deletion of *h*, the use of single consonants for double ones (and vice versa), and the substitution of *y* for *i*. Sometimes spellings were also influenced by the pronunciation of a word in the everyday local language related to or derived from the Latin word (or thought to have been so).

“For new vocabulary the writers often faced the challenge of having no certain model to follow. While writers of Latin still had some sense of words having ‘a spelling’, inherited from the standardized Classical language, this principle was already undermined by variation, and for borrowed vocabulary, the source language (Old or Middle English, Anglo-Norman French, etc.) typically had no single standard spelling that could be borrowed. Indeed, the word in the source language would usually have had slightly different pronunciations in different areas in any case. Moreover, frequently the borrowed vocabulary would contain sounds not found in inherited Latin vocabulary, such as the ‘sh’ sound of English and French. Writers would therefore use the Latin

alphabet as best they could to represent the words they wished to write. We find some extreme examples in British Medieval Latin of the resulting variation, such as ‘maeremium’ (‘timber’, borrowed from Anglo-Norman *merim* and related words, originally derived from Late Latin *materiamen*) which is attested in more than 50 different spellings (e.g. *maerremium*, *mahermium*, *maisremium*, etc.).

“Finally, we must remember that writing materials were expensive in the Middle Ages, and it was extremely common for scribes to use abbreviations. Typically abbreviation was indicated by some form of mark or stroke made through, above, or immediately following the letter preceding the position of the omitted letter(s). Many modern editions of texts ‘expand’ such abbreviations to make reading the texts easier, but the correct way to expand such forms is not always clear, particularly at the end of a word, where scribes often seem to have used abbreviation as a convenient way to avoid giving a borrowed word an explicit (grammatical) ending.

Grammar of medieval Latin

“The most important differences in the grammar of Medieval Latin again lie in the greater flexibility allowed in the use of the various forms of words and constructions, alongside the general continuation of most of the Classical grammatical system.

“The inflectional system was not always used as consistently or rigidly as in Classical Latin. Thus, prepositions and verbs which would have been followed by a noun or adjective in one case in Classical Latin are not uncommonly found followed by a word in a different case. Similarly, conjunctions which in Classical Latin would have been followed by a verb in the subjunctive mood might be found followed by a verb in the indicative (or vice versa).

“Also, verbs which had been deponent in Classical Latin (i.e. had passive forms but active meanings) are often found used in active forms (in the same meanings).

“New constructions also arose, in some instances used as an alternative to existing ones. Most significant among these was the increase in use of the indirect statement construction consisting of *quod* or *quia* followed by a clause with a finite verb (sometimes indicative, sometimes subjunctive) instead of the Classical way of expressing the same meaning (using the accusative and infinitive construction).

The *quod* or *quia* construction had in fact already existed in the Classical language, but only in restricted circumstances, and it rose to prominence not only in Medieval Latin but also in the Romance languages (cf. modern French *je dis que ...*).

Vocabulary of medieval Latin

“The Dictionary of Medieval Latin of British Sources (DMLBS)” naturally concentrates on the vocabulary of the language and highlights the differences (or, rather, innovations) in this area. It is easy in this regard to overlook the simple fact that the vast majority of Medieval Latin vocabulary is vocabulary inherited from earlier stages of the language and used in ways and in meanings that were a normal part of those earlier period’s usage. Still, we see that inherited words frequently do develop or show new

Latinitas Britannica. Latin In Medieval Britain

meanings of various kinds, including restrictions of existing meanings, metaphorical and metonymic extensions of existing meanings, and meanings arising from connections with other related or similar words. For instance, we find *regulariter* in the sense of ‘in accordance with a monastic rule’, *pupula* can refer to the eye and a disease of the eye as well as to just the pupil, and *purare* ‘to free from dirt’ is found more generally than just the ceremonial context in the Classical evidence. The new meanings are usually found in addition to the continuation of one or more Classical ones; less often we find such words used only in new senses.

“Sometimes the changes in meaning even affected grammatical words, and as a result the grammar of the language has the appearance of having changed: for instance, we frequently find the pronouns *se* (‘himself, herself, itself’) and *eum* (‘him etc.’) interchanged.

“Writers were also able to coin new words. Sometimes these were based on existing Latin vocabulary, such as deriving new nouns in *-tio* from verbs in order to denote the ‘act or process’ of the verb (and often also the ‘product or result’ too), or adverbs from existing adjectives (e.g. *querule* ‘plaintively’ from *querulus* ‘plaintive’).

“The most striking type of new coinage, though, was of course the borrowed vocabulary. When a writer came across something to be expressed for which there was no existing Latin word (e.g. a new invention or social position) or the writer did not know the right Latin word, the typical response was to adopt and adapt a word from that writer’s native vocabulary, making minimal changes as necessary to fit it into the Latin grammatical system. Such changes might include adding a suitable inflectional ending, normally that of the most common pattern for that kind of word (e.g. the first conjugation endings for a verb).

Further Reading:

K. Sidwell (1995) *Reading Medieval Latin* (CUP)

Dag Norberg. *Introduction to Medieval Latin. Introdução ao Latim Medieval*

Karl Strecker. *Introduction au latin médiévale. Introduction to Medieval Latin*

British medieval Latin: Linguistic Features, Diversity, Spelling, Grammar and Vocabulary p. 1-5



Latinitas Britannica. Latin In Medieval Britain



II

LATINITAS BRITANNICA. LATIN IN MEDIEVAL BRITAIN

British medieval Latin as a living language

Latinitas Britannica. Latin In Medieval Britain

“As a living language Latin inevitably developed and changed while it was used all over Europe during the thousand years that we term the Middle Ages. Inevitably, too, it was used, and developed, in particular ways during the medieval period in Britain, as the result of changes in society to which it had to adapt.

Early Church Latin

“At the beginning of this period, the Latin used in these islands does seem to have been predominantly the language of the church, in the form of a Latin recognizable from classical texts but liberally larded with the language of the Latin Bible text, as seen in Gildas' polemical account of recent events in Britain, written in about 550. But even Gildas uses words that are not found elsewhere, such as *semidormitare* ('to be half asleep'), a compound of two words found in Classical Latin, *semi* and *dormitare*.

“Already at this stage we see that those who use Latin, whether for writing or perhaps also for speaking even at a time when the Romans have officially abandoned the country, do so surrounded by speakers of other languages. Writing of the coming of the Saxons to England some hundred years earlier, Gildas introduces the word *cyula* giving a Latin form to the Saxon *ciol*, which he explains as meaning 'long boat'.

“And yet Gildas himself is likely to have grown up speaking some form of Celtic language, and indeed Latin in medieval Britain was to see the influence not only of Saxon (as it developed over the centuries into what is termed Old English) and Celtic languages, but also of Norse (with the coming of raiders and settlers from Scandinavia in the centuries after the destruction of Lindisfarne in 793), French (after the Norman conquest in 1066), and Arabic (with the discovery of philosophical and scientific texts from the eleventh century). Greek too continued to be an important influence on the language, as it had been since classical times.

“While British Medieval Latin was certainly subject to numerous influences, which give it a distinctive character and represent its vitality, we might note that it was also highly regarded in its own day for its quality and standard. In particular, British Medieval Latin played a key role in mainland Europe in what might be thought of as the formal birth of some of the Romance languages.

“By the time of Charlemagne in the eighth century there had arisen considerable mutual influence (and interference) between the Latin language and the diverging everyday spoken Romance languages. Charlemagne's institution (or rather his development of his father's programme) of educational and cultural reforms brought about a clearer recognition of the separation between Latin and everyday language as a result of purifying the Latin language to bring it back towards its former classical and patristic heyday.

“The key source for this new purer Latin came from Britain, where the everyday languages were not themselves descended from Latin and their effect on the Latin quite different in quantity and nature. While Italian scholars were also influential, perhaps the most significant figure in the Carolingian renaissance, from a linguistic perspective, was the Northumbrian monk, Alcuin, who went from York to Charlemagne's court as a key advisor and for many years headed the Palace School in Aachen.

Medieval Latin in Britain not just a written language

“Latin in Britain was primarily a written language, used for communication by letter, for theological and educational texts, for administration and records, but it was also spoken and sung mostly in churches and monasteries from Biblical texts and in the words of the liturgy and also in monastic schools, as we see in the Colloquies of Ælfric and his pupil Ælfric Bata (writing around the year 1000), in which the children are taught, often through the use of humour, to converse colloquially in Latin, helped by an almost word-for-word Old English translation alongside the Latin text: if people were to speak Latin as an everyday language, they had to be given the words for everyday items and activities, for food, domestic and agricultural tools, animals etc. in what amounted to a beginners’ course in Latin as a foreign language.

“As society in Britain developed, bringing technological, social, and administrative changes, new words had to be invented or borrowed so that people could, for instance, refer to each part of the machinery of a mill, to parts of ploughs and carts and ships, or to the enormous variety of feudal dues and taxes when they were writing financial accounts, charters or legal records. As a result we find new words such as *essewera* meaning a drain, ditch or weir, ultimately deriving from Classical Latin *ex* and *aqua* and leading by way of Anglo-Norman and Old French forms of the word to the modern English word *sewer*”.

Further Reading:

R. Wright (1982) *Late Latin and Early Romance* (London)

WRITERS IN MEDIEVAL BRITAIN

“The vitality of Latin in the medieval world in general and especially in Britain is shown not only by the huge quantity of surviving text and its diversity, but also by the array of different writers and their reasons for writing in Latin. We know of more than 2,000 authors of British Medieval Latin by name and of these more than 500 are regularly quoted as sources in the DMLBS.

“Some specialized in particular types of writing, whether history, philosophy, science, devotional verse, etc. Others used their evidently broad education to make contributions in many fields of human intellectual endeavour.

“For the purposes of the DMLBS the project has always had a relatively inclusive definition of what is to be treated as British. The core of the corpus is represented by Latin texts produced in Great Britain, whether by British writers or by those who made Britain their temporary or permanent home. Indeed, some of the most important writers of Medieval Latin in Britain, including Anselm (and his predecessors at Canterbury Lanfranc and, centuries earlier, Theodore), fall into this latter category. This definition also encompasses the enormous wealth of documentary material produced in Britain over the centuries for public and private purposes by writers whose names we may not know.

“The DMLBS, however, also recognizes some other evidence of Latin as deriving from or reflecting British Medieval Latin. First, the DMLBS covers material composed by

Latinitas Britannica. Latin In Medieval Britain

British writers writing abroad, such as Alcuin and Boniface, the ‘Apostle of the Germans’. Second, the Dictionary covers sources from territories under the administration of the English crown, such as state and other documents from Normandy, the Channel Islands, Gascony, and Ireland during the relevant periods; this acknowledges the close connection to Britain of their content and their writers. Finally, the Dictionary also recognizes the broader competence of British Latin users to read Latin from around Europe, and it includes in particular the letters and other documents in Latin sent to British authors of Latin that are preserved in and among the collections of their writings.

The most significant British writers of Latin over the course of the medieval period. Further Reading:

R. Sharpe (1997) *A Handlist of the Latin Writers of Great Britain and Ireland before 1540* (Turnhout: Brepols)

Most of the writers regularly cited by the DMLBS are covered by the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography ([link is external](#)).

Early Medieval Britain

“Early medieval Britain was home to a vibrant culture of Latin writing. The earliest writer whose works are covered by the DMLBS is Gildas (fl. 540). He is the author of the invective *De excidio Britanniae*, in which he describes the downfall of Britain (including the invasion by Anglo-Saxons) as a result of its sinfulness and lack in faith. Although nothing is known about Gildas, his work reveals that he was widely read and had a good training in Latin and rhetoric, most likely sometime in the 5th century, when the Roman system of education and government in Britain was still functioning.

Missionaries sent to Britain for christianizing the Anglo-Saxons spread Latin

“After the collapse of the Roman empire and its government in Britain Pope Gregory the Great (c540–640) sent missionaries to Britain to christianize the Anglo-Saxons. In 597 Augustine, a former Roman monk, arrived in Kent. He became the first archbishop of Canterbury. By the time of his death (between 604 and 609) not only had King Æthelbert of Kent become Christian but Augustine had, according to Pope Gregory, also baptized 10,000 converts and put the first ecclesiastical structures in place. The first missionaries had brought books in Latin and ecclesiastical furniture from Rome, but they soon established schools to train the first native English clergy. In 668, Theodore of Tarsus (602–90), an exceptionally learned biblical scholar of Greek origin, was consecrated archbishop of Canterbury. He and his students at Canterbury wrote a number of biblical commentaries in Latin.

“In 704 or 705, Wealdhere, the bishop of London, sent a letter to his colleague Archbishop Brihtwold of Canterbury. This letter survives still in the original and is the earliest 'letter close' extant in the West.

Aldhelm (ob. 709 or 710), abbot of Malmesbury and bishop of Sherborne, was the first native Anglo-Saxon to have left a corpus of Latin writing. He had been a student of Archbishop Theodore in Canterbury. His works include about 100 riddles, two works

Latinitas Britannica. Latin In Medieval Britain

on writing poetry, and two works on virginity. He was one of the most influential Anglo-Latin authors.

THE VENERABLE BEDE (673–735).

“Perhaps the most famous Anglo-Saxon author, however, is the Venerable Bede (673–735). He lived from boyhood onward as a monk in the twin monastery Monkwearmouth-Jarrow. He had a fine education in grammar, biblical exegesis and science and made extensive use of the excellent library in his monastery. He was well read in Christian Latin and Classical literature.

“His most popular work is his *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, an account of the history of England from the Roman occupation down to 731.

“Apart from the *Historia ecclesiastica* Bede wrote over 50 homilies, numerous commentaries on the Bible, and three works on the reckoning of time.

“By the 8th century, Christianity and Latin learning were so well established in Britain that missionaries left the British Isles to bring Christianity and learning to what is now Germany.

“One of the best known of these missionaries was Wynfrith (675–754) who later changed his name to Boniface. Supported by Pope Gregory II he set up his own archbishopric at Mainz and the bishoprics of Salzburg, Eichstätt, Regensburg, and Passau. In the tradition of Aldhelm he wrote a number of riddles and treatises on metre and grammar, but he is best known for his letters, most of them addressed to popes, archbishops, and kings, but some also to his male and female followers in Britain.

“Another famous collection of letters survives from the Anglo-Saxon deacon, scholar, and teacher Alcuin of York (c735–804). He was a powerful figure at the court of Charlemagne before he became abbot of Tours. His contemporaries praised him for his learning and scholarship. He wrote texts on a great variety of subjects, including orthography, grammar, rhetoric, dialectic, astronomy, biblical exegesis, theology, and liturgy, and became so influential on European literary and ecclesiastical culture that he is now regarded as the architect of the Carolingian Renaissance.

“Hugeburg (late 8th century) lived as a nun in Heidenheim and is one of the few female British authors of Medieval Latin known by name. She wrote biographies of the missionaries Willibald, bishop of Eichstätt, and Wynnebald.

“Asser (ob. 908/9) was born and brought up in Wales and monk at St David's in the kingdom of Dyfed. He met King Alfred in about 885 gained the king's favour and agreed to spend about six months every year at the Alfreds court in Wessex. He was involved in teaching the king to read Latin and in the revival of learning in England.

“He helped translating Pope Gregory the Great's *Regula pastoralis* into English and wrote a biography of King Alfred in Latin.

“Abbo of Fleury (c940–1004) was one of the greatest scholars of tenth-century Europe. He was born and trained on the continent, but spent two years (985–7) in exile at the

Latinitas Britannica. Latin In Medieval Britain

abbey of Ramsey. Among his writings are works on computus, grammar, logic and canon law. He became an influential teacher in Ramsey.

“One of his students was Byrhtferth of Ramsey (c970–c1020). He was one of the most prolific authors of his time. His *Computus* consisted of tables, formulas, and rules for calculating the movable feasts of the Christian year and his glosses on Bede's works *De temporum ratione* and *De natura rerum* show the wide extent of his learning.

“One of the most learned scholars in late Anglo-Saxon England was Ælfric, abbot of Eynsham (c950–c1010). He was educated in Winchester and widely read. In his collections of sermons he cites from works by Augustine, Gregory the Great, Jerome, and Bede. He was not only an authority on church practice and canon law but also an adviser and counsellor to the king. Ælfric wrote not only in Latin but also in English. He is the author of a Latin grammar and a series of translations and paraphrases of the Old Testament.

“In addition to works by authors whose names we know, numerous texts by unknown authors have survived from this period, including glossaries, hymns, saints' lives, and law codes. Particularly important among the documentary sources in this period are the many charters recording grants of land or other property.



FROM THE NORMAN CONQUEST TO THE END OF THE 12TH CENTURY

“The period after the Norman Conquest was a period of great social change and of intellectual and literary productivity in Britain. Latin continued to be used as a *lingua franca* as people communicated and travelled beyond the boundaries of Britain, after William, Duke of Normandy had taken control as King William I, bringing people over from Normandy to take up positions of power in ecclesiastical and secular administration.

“This change in cultural leadership led to an increase in production of administrative documents, mostly involving possessions, the rights of the king, and legal matters. The Norman administrators inherited certain forms of document, such as the charter, examples of which survive in both Latin and Old English from before 1066, but new forms were introduced too.

“This period sees the start of the collection of Pipe rolls (named from the pipe-like shape of the tightly-rolled sets of membranes or sheets fastened together at the top), a series of financial records produced by the Treasury which survives almost unbroken until 1833! Another major source for the Latin of this period is the Domesday book, produced in 1086, as a survey of what each community possessed at that time and what taxes had existed there before the Conquest.

“Alongside such charters and accounts surviving from this period, most of them now preserved in the National Archives after having been stored in rather a casual way for many centuries in the Tower of London or in the Treasury at Westminster, we have

Latinitas Britannica. Latin In Medieval Britain

many literary works in Latin from this period, particularly from the twelfth century when government and language had both grown in confidence.

“It is hardly surprising that what were perhaps the two most dramatic events in the British history of the period, namely the Norman Conquest in 1066 and the murder of Thomas Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury, in 1170 should have given rise to numerous texts in the years following these events.

“The earlier event engendered such works as the epic poem on the Battle of Hastings by Guy of Amiens (ob. 1075) and the Deeds of William of Normandy by William of Poitiers (ob. after 1087), and the Deeds of the Dukes of Normandy by William of Jumieges, while the latter led to the writing of popular poems and hymns in praise of Becket, homilies on his martyrdom (by Gervase of Canterbury), biographies (as for example those by John of Salisbury and Edward Grim), accounts of miracles associated with him (e.g. the account by William of Canterbury), and letters from John of Salisbury who had worked for and corresponded with Becket during his lifetime.

“The dispute between Thomas Becket and King Henry II was not the first such clash between king and archbishop (or church) in this period: at the end of the 11th century St. Anselm had already come up against King William Rufus regarding the question of the relative power of ecclesiastical and secular, of papal and national authority, but Anselm emerged bruised but not murdered.

Anselm’s correspondence is of great interest not only in matters of ecclesiastical politics but also of spirituality, and his theological and philosophical works (in which he followed in the footsteps of his mentor and predecessor as Archbishop, Lanfranc of Bec) such as the *Cur Deus Homo* and the *Proslogion* are well worth reading too!

“Anselm’s spiritual works led the way in an extraordinary series of varied texts of the 12th century, composed by such great writers as Anselm’s pupil and biographer, Eadmer, Isaac of Stella and Ailred of Rievaulx. The interest in spiritual matters at this time is also exemplified by the continuing production of biographies of (largely British) saints, some of whom, like Anselm and Thomas Becket, were not only men of high spiritual standing but also great writers in their own right.

“Another series of peaks of literary achievement is formed by the histories that were written, many of them within a few years of each other in the second quarter of the 12th century. William of Malmesbury produced a *History of the English Kings* from the time of the Saxon invasion of Britain to the reign of Henry I, as well as an account of the deeds of a long series of bishops: he is clearly aware of previous British Latin historians such as Bede, Æthelweard and Eadmer. Orderic Vitalis seems to have been familiar, from his work as a monastic copyist, of the work of Bede and William of Jumieges before he composed his own *Ecclesiastical history*.

“Henry of Huntingdon draws on Bede, on the *Historia Brittonum*, and the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, as well as the lives of various saints, when he wrote his *History of the English*. Another of Henry’s sources for part of his work was the famous *History of the Kings of Britain* by his close contemporary Geoffrey of Monmouth who chose to write his history not of recent events but of the origins of British society in a mythical past,

Latinitas Britannica. Latin In Medieval Britain

tracing the rise of the kingdom of Britain, the period under King Arthur, and its decline under Cadwallo in the 7th century.



FROM THE 13TH TO THE 15TH CENTURY

“In its infancy, the DMLBS was sometimes referred to as a dictionary of ‘record Latin’. The project covers many other kinds of texts, of course, but it is true that records are the main source of new vocabulary in British Medieval Latin especially in this period; for instance, a manorial reeve ([link is external](#)), needing to record the purchase of a sieve, might use the Middle English word ‘ridel’ to coin the Latin word ‘ridellus’.

“Most of the records that we use date from the 13th, 14th, and 15th centuries, so this period is immensely important for the Dictionary; indeed, our first attestation for ‘ridellus’ meaning a riddle or sieve is from 1250.

“The other crucial development in this period was the rise of the universities. Following Bologna and Paris, the University of Oxford ([link is external](#)) took shape in the 1190s, and Cambridge ([link is external](#)) was close behind. While foreigners rarely studied and taught in Britain, British scholars often studied and taught abroad, and the ‘scholastic’ Latin they used as a lingua franca included a flood of new technical terms in fields such as philosophy and science.

“Important British Medieval Latin writers in this period include Robert Grosseteste ([link is external](#)) and Roger Bacon ([link is external](#)) in the 13th century and John Duns Scotus ([link is external](#)), William of Ockham ([link is external](#)) and John Wyclif ([link is external](#)) in the 14th.

Otherwise, it was business as usual for Latin, continuing the use of the language in earlier periods. Historical chronicles continued to be written by monks like Matthew Paris ([link is external](#)) and Ranulf Higden. Walter Bower's *Scotichronicon*, written in the 1440s, is particularly interesting for its portrayal of English aggression towards Scotland in the Middle Ages.

“There were literary works, too, such as Gervase of Tilbury's genre-defying *Otia imperialia* (c1215), a sprawling miscellany written for the edification and amusement of the Holy Roman Emperor. And of course there were religious works, such as the guides for preachers written by Thomas of Chobham (c1225) and John Bromyard ([link is external](#)) (c1350), the spiritual meditations of Richard Rolle (c1340), and a 14th-century Latin translation of the Middle English *Ancrene Riwe*, a guide to life as an ‘ anchoress’ (nun).



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Latinitas Britannica. Latin In Medieval Britain

“In its infancy, the DMLBS was sometimes referred to as a dictionary of ‘record Latin’. The project covers many other kinds of texts, of course, but it is true that records are the main source of new vocabulary in British Medieval Latin especially in this period; for instance, a manorial reeve (link is external), needing to record the purchase of a sieve, might use the Middle English word ‘ridel’ to coin the Latin word ‘ridellus’. Most of the records that we use date from the 13th, 14th, and 15th centuries, so this period is immensely important for the Dictionary; indeed, our first attestation for ‘ridellus’ meaning a riddle or sieve is from 1250.

“The other crucial development in this period was the rise of the universities. Following Bologna and Paris, the University of Oxford took shape in the 1190s, and Cambridge was close behind.

“While foreigners rarely studied and taught in Britain, British scholars often studied and taught abroad, and the ‘scholastic’ Latin they used as a lingua franca included a flood of new technical terms in fields such as philosophy and science.

“Important British Medieval Latin writers in this period include Robert Grosseteste and Roger Bacon in the 13th century and John Duns Scotus, William of Ockham and John Wyclif in the 14th.

“Otherwise, it was business as usual for Latin, continuing the use of the language in earlier periods. Historical chronicles continued to be written by monks like Matthew Paris and Ranulf Higden. Walter Bower's *Scotichronicon*, written in the 1440s, is particularly interesting for its portrayal of English aggression towards Scotland in the Middle Ages.

“There were literary works, too, such as Gervase of Tilbury's genre-defying *Otia imperialia* (c1215), a sprawling miscellany written for the edification and amusement of the Holy Roman Emperor. And of course there were religious works, such as the guides for preachers written by Thomas of Chobham (c1225) and John Bromyard (c1350), the spiritual meditations of Richard Rolle (c1340), and a 14th-century Latin translation of the Middle English *Ancrene Riwe*, a guide to life as an ‘ anchoress ’ (nun).



THE 16TH CENTURY AND BEYOND

“Though vernacular languages were gradually growing in prestige, Latin continued to be an important language for written communication in Britain and Europe into the Early Modern period.

“In documentary sources there is no significant discontinuity in the use of Latin between 16th century and earlier periods: through the Tudor era (Henry VII to Elizabeth I, ob. 1603) Latin remains the standard language of official documents, both state (such as the Close Rolls, the Charter Rolls, and especially the Patent Rolls) and municipal (such as those collected in the corpus of the British Borough Charters).

Latinitas Britannica. Latin In Medieval Britain

“In the State Papers Domestic, a new series of government records inaugurated by the Tudor monarchs, Latin is the most common language after English.

“In the first quarter of the 16th century, England was still a catholic country and Latin the language of its Church. The 16th century was, however, a turbulent period of religious conflicts, marked by the separation of the Anglican Church from Rome (1534), the dissolution of monasteries, and the bloody religious persecutions and rebellions under both Mary and Elizabeth.

“Records of this dramatic time can be found in the polemical works of Stephen Gardiner (ob. 1555), bishop of Winchester and a key figure in the politics of the first Tudor reigns, and in the *Passio* (1550) written by the Carthusian monk Maurice Chauncy, which tells of the persecution of the monastic orders under Henry VIII.

“The wave of English nationalism after the separation from Rome and the promotion of the English language in Anglican liturgy and prayers did not lead to a complete prohibition or disappearance of Latin: records, registers, and cartularies of Anglican churches and bishoprics continued to be written in Latin well after the break from Rome; committed Anglican thinkers such as Bishop

“John Jewel (ob. 1571), the ‘bilious’ churchman John Bale (ob. 1563), and the theologian John Bekinsau (ob. 1559), use Latin in their respective works *Apologia ecclesiae Anglicanae*, *Index Britanniae Scriptorum*, and *De supremo et absoluto regis imperio*, this last a passionate defence of the supremacy of the king of England upon the British church. Even the scholar Roger Ascham (ob. 1568), a theorist of the use of the vernacular, wrote letters in Latin.

“Indeed, the sixteenth century coincided also with a time of revival and flowering of Latin, under the impulse of Renaissance and humanistic thinkers and writers, including in particular Desiderius Erasmus, passionate advocate of the purification of Latin from the alleged corruption of the Middle Ages.

“Several Englishmen became correspondents of his and their letters are collected in the *Opus epistolarum Erasmi*: particularly notable among his friends were Thomas More, whose work *Utopia* (1518) is one of the most important English humanistic works, and the Scottish chronicler Hector Boece (ob. 1536), author of a *Scotorum Historia*.

“Boece’s *Historia* is only one of the many historical works written in Latin in the century: among these, one can recall also the *Historia Quatuor Regum Angliae* by John Herd (ob. 1588), and, above all, *Anglicae historiae libri* by Polydore Virgil (ob. 1555), perhaps the most important historian of the Tudor era. Also in Latin is Camden’s *Britannia*, a historical and topographical survey of England and the last text by a named author to form part of the DMLBS corpus.

“In an era characterized by geographical and scientific discoveries, the role of Latin as the standard language of science, culture, and knowledge found a new foundation: in England, the physician John Caius (ob. 1573), co-founder of Gonville & Caius College in Cambridge, wrote his pioneering zoological works in Latin; the mathematician and astrologer John Dee used Latin to explain the meaning of his

Latinitas Britannica. Latin In Medieval Britain

exoteric symbol Hieroglyphic Monad (1564); the naturalist William Turner wrote his monumental herbal treatises in Latin. Latin continued also to be the technical language of law: an example of this is the Jus Feudale by the Scottish jurist Thomas Craig (ob. 1608).

“The DMLBS includes not just these texts but many others belonging to this era. The chronological limit of the Dictionary is the end of the 16th century, by which time Britain had long ceased to be medieval, but the continuity of the Latin language in Britain, which we can trace right back to the early medieval period, is clear.

“Indeed Latin continued to be ‘alive’ and attested in a large variety of sources, especially for international communication, well beyond this date through the 17th century and into the 18th century.



TEXTS IN MEDIEVAL BRITISH LATIN

“Latin in medieval Britain was the language of written culture, construed in its broad sense of collection of the ‘ideas, customs, social behaviour, products, or way of life’ (OED) of British society.

“The reasons for this are mainly the authority and tradition of Latin as the language of culture since Roman times and its use as the official language of the Western Catholic Church, but it also had a practical value as a lingua franca across the multilingual societies of Britain (first British and English, and then, after the Conquest, English and French) and Europe.

“British society throughout the Middle Ages was essentially religious and Christian, and this reverberated in every aspect of life, including its written culture. Moreover, in Medieval Britain the Church, especially through the monasteries, was the most important centre of education and production of texts, generally written in Latin.

However, the Christian character of the texts and the circumstances of their production do not mean that the corpus of British Medieval Latin is simply a collection of sermons, theological or exegetical works, and liturgy (which actually form only a very small part of the overall corpus).

In fact, the range of texts written in Latin in medieval Britain is vast and includes all the possible forms of written texts and documents produced by a vibrant society: rolls and charters recording the life of the state, a city, or a manor, letters, legal documents, tax records, scientific works, philosophical treatises, poetry, histories and chronicles, glossaries, etc. etc.

It is true that the ‘quality’ of Medieval Latin was sometimes, indeed often, ‘inferior’ when measured against the standards of Classical Latin and its highest literary register, which forms a major part of what survives from the classical period. However, the apparent medieval diversity reflects not only the simple fact that Latin was no longer a native language but also that more evidence of how the language was used in different

Latinitas Britannica. Latin In Medieval Britain

functions has been preserved from the medieval period than is the case for Latin from the classical period: actually, the very ‘mediocrity’ and diffusion are signs of the vitality and productivity of Medieval Latin and of the culture using it.

Medieval Latin contrasts similarly with the use of Latin down into the early modern and modern period, after the Renaissance and — especially in England — the Reformation. A gradual increase in the prestige of the everyday vernacular languages led these languages to be used in place of Latin in many of its earlier functions. Thus the diversity of types of Latin texts and documents began to diminish. Alongside this, humanism and the Renaissance raised the amount of attention paid to Latin conforming to high Classical norms when used in its remaining high functions such as literature and science.

Further Reading:

F. A. C. Mantello & A. G. Rigg (1996) Medieval Latin: An Introduction and Bibliographical Guide (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press)

Medieval Latin: An Introduction and Bibliographical Guide by F. A. Mantello and A. G. Rigg (Editors). This is a massive wonderful rich book carefully composed by well-known international Latinists. It did not contain texts of mediaeval Latin though . It just fully describes the many areas and interesting research available for mediaevalist willing to study the many faces of the Latin language after the year 200 of our Christian Era. As Latin texts can now be easily obtained in internet, the lack of samples of mediaeval Latin does not reduce the extreme importance of this book for latin studies in general. The bibliographies are extensive thoughtful and very surprising. We can well regret that the articles could not be longer for the lack of space and multitude of topics.



THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF TEXTS WRITTEN IN LATIN IN MEDIEVAL BRITAIN. DOCUMENTS AND RECORDS

“Latin was the major language of record through the medieval period in Britain, and as a result there is a wide range of surviving documentary sources, many of which have been transcribed, edited, and published.

“From Anglo-Saxon England we have a body of charters issued by kings and others, which survive in the original, in later medieval cartularies, or in copies made by early modern antiquarians. The land survey and valuation in the Domesday Book provides an unparalleled picture of the land conquered by the Normans, its owners and its resources.

“Thereafter, England developed into one of the most notable medieval bureaucracies, with the great government departments of the Chancery and the Exchequer producing extensive documentation covering all aspects of the government not only of England, but of Wales, Ireland, Scotland (during the periods of English rule there), the Channel Islands, Normandy, and Gascony. All of these are reflected in the Dictionary, as are minorities within England, such as Jews or Huguenots.

“Many of these documents — the Pipe Rolls, the Patent Rolls, the Close Rolls, and the Gascon Rolls, for example — have been published, at least in part, and these published documents have been extensively excerpted for the DMLBS.

“For those that remain unpublished, our first editor Ronald Latham, formerly Assistant Keeper of the Public Records, was able to use his wide knowledge of the material in the Public Record Office (now part of the National Archives) to provide us with invaluable evidence excerpted from the manuscript sources. Others with inside knowledge have been similarly helpful.

“For Scotland we have been less fortunate and have to rely much more on printed sources. Medieval Scotland was a much smaller country than England, and its government was therefore less formal and bureaucratic, so the sources are fewer, but useful publications include the regesta of several kings of Scots (David I, Malcolm IV, William I, Robert I, David II), the Exchequer rolls, and the acts of the Scottish parliament.

“For both kingdoms and their various dependencies there are also large numbers of documents from sources other than government. Monasteries, cathedrals, boroughs, lordships, churches, universities, and other institutions generated documents, and many of these collections have been studied and edited, often by local record societies like the Surtees Society and the Oxford “Historical Society. These give us wills, court records, formulae for letters, land surveys and a wide range of other material.

“These very varied documents have been an especially rich source of material for study and this is particularly true from a lexicographical perspective. This is an area where the Latin language is particularly flexible and productive of new words. Anglo-Saxon charters tend to be written in a high style, full of orotund phrases, complex syntax, and learned vocabulary. Words like *cunctigena*, *protoplastus* and *solicola* are typical.

*“For most of our period, however, documentary Latin is a practical working language, where style takes second place to function, and indeed the writers may not have had a formal literary education. Classical Latin words are passed over for new forms, structures are simplified or improvised, and vernacular words are either Latinized or imported wholesale (often with the telltale preceding *le* which indicates a word in the vernacular, whether French or English).*

“These can have many sources — words derived from Old and Middle English, Scots, Anglo-Norman, Welsh, Irish, Scots Gaelic, Cornish, Old Norse, Gascon, Hebrew and other languages such as Spanish or Italian can be found. Sometimes which vernacular is favoured can be surprising: for example, for the word *noutegeldum* (neat-geld, manorial rent paid in cattle) forms deriving from the Old Norse *naut* are more common than those from the Old English *neat*.



THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES

TUTORIAL FOR BRITISH MEDIEVAL LATIN 1086 – 1733.

Latinitas Britannica. Latin In Medieval Britain

TUTORIAL FOR BRITISH MEDIEVAL LATIN 1086 – 1733.

“The National Archives of Great Britain publish for distance learning, a practical online Tutorial of British Medieval Latin 1086 – 1733. This tutorial is a beginners' guide to the Latin used in documents between 1086 and 1733. It is the first online tutorial to help you learn the Latin from this period. On the same site it is possible to access a more advanced Latin course. The tutorial covers Latin as used in England between 1086 and 1733, when it was the official language. Knowing medieval Latin, that is easier to learn than classical Latin, will help to read documents from a long and important period of the medieval history of the British Isles. After 1733, official documents were written in English. No previous knowledge of Latin is required. This tutorial is suitable for everyone who wants to learn Latin. All of the grammar is fully explained. No previous knowledge is required. You can practise by translating sentences taken from real documents held at The National Archives as, for example, some from the Domesday Book written in 1086. It is the earliest surviving public record.”

<http://apps.nationalarchives.gov.uk/latin/beginners/>

The National Archives also supplies a course on medieval paleography. All that a student of Latin needs to learn, immediately, is how to conjugate verbs and decline nouns and pronouns. This can be acquired in any of the many introductory grammars available on line as those listed by Edonnelly on his site Great Books on Google and the Internet. Brazilians can find Latin school books in Archive. Org Darcy Carvalho Creator. In Europe, a site similar to that of Edonnelly is Lexilogos mots et merveilles d'ici et d'ailleurs. Vatican documents for the last 2000 years can be found on the site Documenta Catholica Omnia. What we find nowhere can be found on Gallica Bnf or on German sites such as Camena.

<http://www.lexilogos.com/>

<http://www.edonnelly.com/google.html>

The important part of the learning is the contact with real texts of classical and medieval authors, Church Latin and Vatican documents. Students of medieval latin should also read classical authors in juxtalinear or interlinear translations. What we learn from British medieval Latin gives access to Latin texts of other regions of Europe, because Medieval British Latin is the same Latin used by the Roman Church, to christianize the whole of Europe, after the fall of the Roman Empire.

“In the Middle Ages history was understood as a linear process with a beginning and an end. History began with the creation of the world by God and would end with the Final Judgment. God was understood to be the creator of and ruler over world and time. It was the aim of historiography not only to relate what has happened, but also to educate, to encourage to do good, and to warn against doing wrong.

“Modern research divides ‘historiography’ into different genres. Chronicles are a detailed and continuous register in order of time, in prose or verse, usually without literary ambition. They not only give us information about events in the past, they also convey the historical, political and cultural attitudes of their writers and their medieval

Latinitas Britannica. Latin In Medieval Britain

audience. One of the most famous examples is the Old English Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. It was originally compiled in the late 9th century at the court of King Alfred the Great, drawn from a variety of earlier written sources, including Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica* and now lost annals. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle provides the basis for our knowledge of Anglo-Saxon history. Often, the authors of chronicles are unknown, especially when they record the history of a specific region like the *Chronica regum Manniae et Insularum* (1000–1374) or of a reign, like the *Chronicles of the reigns of Edward I and Edward II* or the *Chronica Pontificum Ecclesiae Eboracensis*.

“Major centres for the production of chronicles were monasteries. Monks were literate, they could read and write and knew Latin, and were often keen to record the history of their monastery, especially if they could use it to defend rights and property against claims from other monasteries or laymen. Examples for monastic chronicles are the *Chronica Buriensis* (1212–1301) or the *Chronicon abbatiae de Evesham* (c700–1214). John of Worcester's *Chronicon ex chronicis* (Creation–1140), Gervase of Canterbury's *Chronica* (time of Augustine of Canterbury to 1199) and Ralph of Coggeshall's *Chronicon anglicanum* (1066–1224), to name just a few, were written by monks in, and often for, their monasteries.

“Texts like Gildas' *De excidio et conquestu Britanniae*, Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, to name just two influential historical narratives of the Anglo-Saxon period, or post-Conquest chronicles like William of Malmesbury's *De gestis regum Anglorum* and *De gestis pontificum Anglorum* and Matthew Paris's *Historia Anglorum sive historia minor* (1066–1253) and *Chronica majora* (Creation–1259) not only give us information about historical events, but are influential literary works in their own right. Similarly influential became Henry of Huntingdon's *Historia Anglorum* which covered the period from 55 BC to 1154. Although Orderic Vitalis's *Historia ecclesiastica* (1–1141) deals at least in part with English history, it was written and circulated in Normandy.

“Annals are like chronicles a narrative of events, but they were written year by year in retrospective, recording significant events of the past year. Similar to chronicles, they were often written in monasteries, like the *Annales Cestrenses* (Creation–1297) or *Annales monasterii de Oseneia* (1016–1347) or recorded the 'official' history of a city (like the *Annales Londonienses*, 1195–1311) or a reign (like the *Annales Regis Edwardi Primi*, 1285–1307, or the *Annales Ricardi Secundi*, 1392–9).



LITERATURE

“The number of texts we can define as specifically literary in this period of the use of Latin in Britain is relatively small as Latin was primarily used for practical purposes rather than for texts that had an entertainment value or an inherent value as well-crafted works of art. Still, many practical texts show important inherited or innovated literary features in their form or style.

“Since it was the Christian church which became the chief education provider from the early Middle Ages, the curriculum was inevitably dominated by study of the Bible and

Latinitas Britannica. Latin In Medieval Britain

of the works of the Church Fathers, such as Jerome and Augustine. And yet familiarity with some of the great products of Classical Latin literature, such as the works of Vergil, Ovid, or Juvenal, did not die out since such texts were often used not only to teach about various literary forms and to provide elegant Latin phrases but also for education about ancient myths, historical figures, and ethics, all of which could be used by the Latin writers of the Middle Ages.



POETRY

“It is true that we have few examples of attempts to emulate the epic poetry of Ovid, Vergil, or Lucan, or the witty love poetry of Ovid, or the satirical poems of Juvenal, partly because such poetry would have been regarded as largely irrelevant to the lives of those who were sufficiently educated to write it and read it. We do, however, have such epic poems as the retelling of the Trojan War in by Joseph of Exeter and the recasting of contemporary events by Guy of Amiens in his poem about the Battle of Hastings.

“In later years we also have satirical works of poetry and prose directed against traditional subjects such as women, marriage, and human weakness and also against specific targets within the church — in a few anonymous Goliardic poems and in works by Walter Map, Nigel Wireker, Gerald of Wales, and Laurence of Durham, for example. And we have works of urbane anecdotal amusement, such as the *De Nugis Curialium* (‘Courtiers’ Trifles’) by Walter Map and the *Otia Imperialia* (‘Recreation for an Emperor’) by Gervase of Tilbury.

“Among shorter verse forms, we find several collections of riddles from the Anglo-Saxon period. Much other verse throughout the medieval period was composed for some practical purpose, for instance epitaphs, hymns and other devotional texts.

“One notable development in Medieval Latin poetry was in the form of the verse used. Writers continued to use the most popular Classical Latin verse forms that depended on the weight of each syllable, the dactylic hexameter and the elegiac couplet, while occasionally introducing slightly different rules for their usage. Interest in verse forms is demonstrated from an early stage in the medieval period by such detailed handbooks on the subject as Aldhelm's *De metris* and *De pedum regulis* and Bede's *De arte metrica*. Alongside this quantitative form of verse, rhythmical verse, formed from combinations of stressed and unstressed syllables, became increasingly popular. The use of rhyme, after a slow start, exploded onto the scene from the eleventh century, with a variety of end-rhymes and internal rhymes employed for example by writers of religious verse such as John of Howden and Walter of Wimborne, and by writers of satirical verse, as in the rhyming, punning attacks of Michael of Cornwall on his fellow poet Henry of Avranches.



SAINTS' LIVES

Latinitas Britannica. Latin In Medieval Britain

“If, however, we look at literature as something beyond an elegant leisure-time pleasure we see that many literary genres that had developed in classical antiquity were successfully adapted to the new social and religious context, often by way of literary developments in late antiquity. For example, the writing of biblical and allegorical epic by Sedulius and Prudentius influenced the work of the twelfth century writer of the *Architrenius* while the biographies of desert saints and early ascetics by such writers as Athanasius, Jerome, and Sulpicius Severus inspired the numerous lives of British saints active in Britain or in Europe written in both prose and verse throughout the medieval period, works such as the *Life of St. Cuthbert*, the *Life of Guthlac*, or the adventures of St. Brendan.

RHETORIC AND SERMONS

The study of rhetoric continued in the medieval curriculum, as can be seen not only in the production of rhetorical handbooks such as the works of John of Garland and Gervase of Melkley or works on the art of preaching by Thomas Chobham and John Bromyard, but also in the writing of powerful sermons, such as those of Bede, or (in the twelfth century) Gilbert of Hoyland, Ailred of Rievaulx, Baldwin of Canterbury, and John of Ford and works of theological discussion, such as the dialogues between Christians, Jews, and pagan philosophers by Gilbert Crispin.



LETTERS

Not surprisingly, the writing of letters provided an opportunity for the production of works of a high literary standard, while also being of a personal nature, even when the letters also served a practical purpose: the collection of St. Anselm’s letters offers many examples of pieces of exquisite intellectual and literary beauty. The letters of Alcuin, Gilbert Foliot, John of Salisbury, and Peter of Blois are also full of historical, theological and literary interest.

Columbia Edu supplies a corpus of medieval epistolae, Latin text with English translations. <http://archive.today/epistolae.ccnmtl.columbia.edu>

HISTORY

Another classical genre that thrived in the Middle Ages was that of the writing of history, often in a highly elegant and literary style, from the work of Gildas in the sixth century, through the great histories — whether of recent events or of times long gone — of Bede, William of Malmesbury, Orderic Vitalis, Geoffrey of Monmouth, and Matthew Paris.

DEVOTIONAL AND MYSTICAL LITERATURE

An important area of literary activity which is perhaps less clearly connected with classical literature is that of devotional and mystical literature, works of spiritual direction or records of personal mystical experience, of which there is an abundance in the later Middle Ages, such as the meditations of St. Anselm, some of the writings of

Latinitas Britannica. Latin In Medieval Britain

Ailred of Rievaulx, the meditations by a solitary of Farne, and the writings of Richard Rolle.



PHILOSOPHY. SCIENCE. THEOLOGY. MEDICINE. MUSIC. LAW

“In the 8th century, the British scholars Bede and Alcuin of York produced works on grammar and on calendrical computation, as did Ælfric of Eynsham, Abbo of Fleury, and Byrhtferth of Ramsey in around 1000. Otherwise, though, the first half of our period, down to the Conquest, has left us with few texts that are obviously academic besides biblical commentary.

“As Europe became urbanized in the 12th and 13th centuries, however, higher education began to flourish like never before, and the intellectual output of the new universities of Bologna, Paris, and Oxford in particular was prodigious. The second half of our period, from the Conquest down to the Renaissance and beyond, is accordingly much more fertile.

“In theology, the discursive meditations of Anselm of Canterbury (c1100) began to give way to ‘scholastic’ works with a resolutely systematic structure. This change was cemented by Peter Lombard’s Sentences (c1157), which provided a standard framework for theologians from Alexander of Hales (c1225) onwards. Scholastic theology was also distinctive for its engagement with Aristotelian philosophy, an increasing amount of which was being translated into Latin after 1120; a fascinating witness to the early stages of this process is John of Salisbury’s Metalogicon (link is external) (1159). Among the many outstanding British scholastic theologians, the most important were John Duns Scotus (link is external) (c1300) and William of Ockham (link is external) (c1325).

“Philosophy increasingly overlapped with theology in this period. Writing about the location of angels, for instance, a typical 12th-century theologian might muster various scriptural and dogmatic authorities before concluding that angels were created in the highest heaven rather than the firmament; a typical 14th-century theologian might instead use angels’ lack of spatial extension as a pretext for a philosophical discussion of the continuum (link is external). But there were also works of philosophy per se, especially commentaries on the newly-translated works of Aristotle. In the 14th century, the contribution of Oxonians like Thomas Bradwardine to logic in particular was outstanding, leading Richard de Bury to portray Paris as having to catch up: ‘our English subtleties, which they denounce in public, are the subject of their furtive vigils’ (Philobiblon, 1344).

“Science, too, overlapped with theology, the thought being that one could study God via His creations. Following in the footsteps of the Greeks and the Arabs, though, a succession of British authors also produced texts that were purely scientific, including

Latinitas Britannica. Latin In Medieval Britain

Adelard of Bath, Robert of Chester, and Alfred Shreshill in the 12th century, Michael Scot, Robert Grosseteste, and Roger Bacon in the 13th century, and Thomas Bradwardine, Richard of Wallingford, and Richard Swineshead in the 14th. Among British Latin works we find one of the greatest medieval encyclopaedias, the *De proprietatibus rerum* of Bartholomaeus Anglicus (c1245). Areas of interest to the medieval scholar ranged widely, including such fields as mathematics, optics, zoology, and botany.

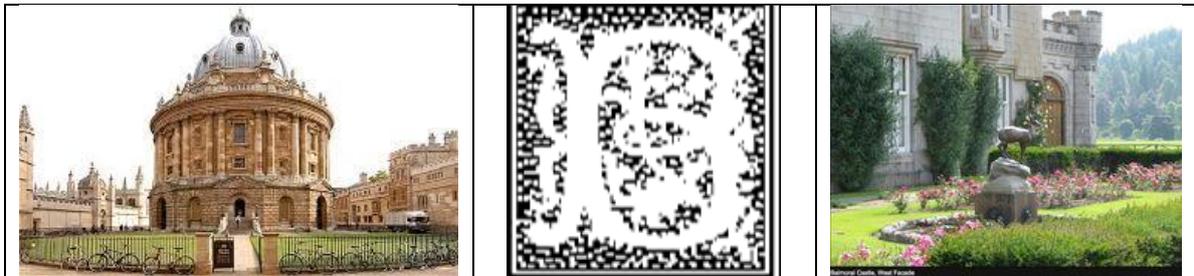
“For medicine, a practical subject often closely associated with the study of plants, two major British Medieval Latin sources are Gilbert the Englishman's *Compendium medicinae* (c1250) and John Gaddesden's *Rosa anglica medicinae* (c1313). We also have the anonymous *Prose Salernitan Questions* (c1200), a miscellany that answers questions like ‘Why are drowned women found face-up?’ (The answer, of course, is because of the hollowness of the womb and the sponginess of the breasts.)

“Musical theory provides us with some of our most challenging texts in the form of treatises by John of Garland and Walter Odington in the 13th century, Robert Handlo and John Hanboys in the 14th, and John Hothby in the 15th.

“We find important linguistic texts, on grammar, spelling, and use of vocabulary throughout the medieval period.

“Finally, we have several legal treatises, from the 12th-century canonistic writings of Richard de Morins (an Englishman abroad in Bologna) to the common-law works of Henry of Bracton (c1250) and John Fortescue (c1470)”.

Finis Operis



LATINITAS BRITANNIAE. LATIN IN THE MIDDLE AGES. BRITISH MEDIEVAL LATIN.

**STUDIES FOR MODERN AND MEDIEVAL LATIN
 PROF. DR. DARCY CARVALHO
 SÃO PAULO BRAZIL**

2014

Notes on Medieval Latin