CORA Cork Open Research Archive
Cartlann Taighde Oscailte Chorcaí

Title	Historical chronology in the Early Middle Ages: the Venerable Bede's innovation and influence
Authors	MacCarron, Máirín
Publication date	2024-04-01
Original Citation	MacCarron, M. (2024) 'Historical chronology in the Early Middle Ages: the Venerable Bede's innovation and influence ', Il Tempo nell'alto Medioevo (Time in the early middle ages), Spoleto, Italy, 13-19 April, pp. 149-160. isbn: 978-88-6809-411-9
Type of publication	Conference item;Book chapter
Rights	© 2024 by Fondazione Centro italiano di studi sull'alto medioevo, Spoleto
Download date	2026-11-12 21:56:18
Item downloaded from	https://hdl.handle.net/10468/15841



UCC
University College Cork, Ireland
Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh

SETTIMANE DI STUDIO
DELLA FONDAZIONE CENTRO ITALIANO DI STUDI
SULL'ALTO MEDIOEVO

LXX

IL TEMPO NELL'ALTO MEDIOEVO

Spoleto, 13-19 aprile 2023

FONDAZIONE
CENTRO ITALIANO DI STUDI
SULL'ALTO MEDIOEVO
SPOLETO
2024

ISBN 978-88-6809-411-9

prima edizione: marzo 2024

© Copyright 2024 by « Fondazione Centro italiano di studi sull'alto medioevo », Spoleto.

SOMMARIO

Consiglio di amministrazione e Consiglio scientifico della Fondazione Centro italiano di studi sull'alto medioevo ..... pag. IX

Intervenuti ..... » XI

Programma della Settimana di studio ..... » XIII

JEAN-CLAUDE SCHMITT, *Penser les temps et les rythmes du Haut Moyen Âge* ..... » 1
Discussione sulla lezione Schmitt ..... » 35

CHRISTIAN ROHR, Tempus et tempestas: *Perceptions and explanations of weather and climate in the Early Middle Ages* ..... » 37
Discussione sulla lezione Rohr ..... » 67

IMMO WARNTJES, *The formation of medieval time-reckoning as a scientific discipline of Christian learning in seventh-century Ireland* » 69
Discussione sulla lezione Warntjes ..... » 105

FAITH WALLIS, *Astronomy and ratio in Bede's* De temporum ratione » 109
Discussione sulla lezione Wallis ..... » 147

MÁIRÍN MACCARRON, *Historical chronology in the Early Middle Ages: the Venerable Bede's innovation and influence* ..... » 149
Discussione sulla lezione MacCarron ..... » 171

GIORGIO STRANO, *La misura del tempo: quali strumenti?* ..... » 173
Discussione sulla lezione Strano ..... » 189

ANGÉLIQUE FERRAND, *Signes du Zodiaque et temps chrétien: lier cosmos et* Ecclesia ..... » 193
Discussione sulla lezione Ferrand ..... » 215

TINO LICHT, *Zeit und Zeitgeist bei Gerbert von Reims (†1003)* ..... » 219
Discussione sulla lezione Licht ..... » 233

Fabio Acerbi, *Tempo e cronologia a Bisanzio* ..... pag. 235
Discussione sulla lezione Acerbi ..... » 267

Pablo C. Díaz, *El tiempo monástico en Occidente (ss. IV-IX)* ..... » 269

Dominique Barthélemy, *La trêve de Dieu* ..... » 323
Discussione sulla lezione Barthélemy ..... » 397

Massimo Montanari, *I tempi del cibo* ..... » 401
Discussione sulla lezione Montanari ..... » 417

Jean-Pierre Devroey, *En ville et à la campagne: représentation et usages du temps* ..... » 423

Fabio Gasti, *Le età dell'uomo fra enciclopedismo, erudizione ed esegesi* » 491
Discussione sulla lezione Gasti ..... » 503

Giulio d'Onofrio, *La caverna del tempo. Essere, conoscere e temporalità nel pensiero altomedievale* ..... » 505
Discussione sulla lezione d'Onofrio ..... » 525

Rossana Guglielmetti, Omnia tempus habent: *l'esegesi patristica e mediolatina a Qoèlet 3, 1-8* ..... » 531
Discussione sulla lezione Guglielmetti ..... » 561

Gian Luca Potestà, *Tempi apocalittici, tempi messianici* ..... » 565
Discussione sulla lezione Potestà ..... » 589

Mario Casari, *Tempo sacro, tempo mitico, tempo storico: profezia ebraica, regalità persiana e cronaca araba nell'orizzonte temporale dell'Islam* ..... » 591
Discussione sulla lezione Casari ..... » 621

Enrico Zanini, *Stratificazioni di tempo. Il tempo archeologico tra passato e contemporaneità* ..... » 625

Maria Rita Digilio, *L'espressione del tempo nella poesia sassone* ... » 647
Discussione sulla lezione Digilio ..... » 679

Peter Orth, *Zeitbeschreibung und Zeitempfinden in lateinischen Dichtungen der Karolingerzeit* ..... » 681
Discussione sulla lezione Orth ..... » 713

Marek Thue Kretschmer, *Riflessioni sulla sincronizzazione di mito e storia nella letteratura latina altomedievale* ..... » 715
Discussione sulla lezione Kretschmer ..... » 749

EMORE PAOLI, *Il tempo dei santi altomedievali* ..... pag. 751

RENZO TOSI, Tempus edax. *Proverbi sul tempo nell'alto medioevo* » 789

TERESA DE ROBERTIS, *Il tempo della scrittura, il tempo nella scrittura* » 807
Discussione sulla lezione De Robertis ..... » 833

ELSA MARGUIN-HAMON, *Le Temps et les temps dans la tradition grammaticale du Haut Moyen Âge latin* ..... » 837
Discussione sulla lezione Marguin-Hamon ..... » 865

TINA ORTH-MÜLLER, Momentum, hora, tempus: *Lateinische Zeitbegriffe und ihr Bedeutungsspektrum* ..... » 869
Discussione sulla lezione Orth-Müller ..... » 891

GIULIANO MION, *« Ti chiederanno dell'Ora ». Tempo arabo e precedenti semitici. Qualche nota di filologia* ..... » 895
Discussione sulla lezione Mion ..... » 941

ERIC PALAZZO, *Temporalité et ornement: reconsidérer les bibles de Théodulf d'Orléans* ..... » 947
Discussione sulla lezione Palazzo ..... » 975

SAM BARRETT, *Musical Time in Performance of Early Medieval Latin Song* ..... » 981
Discussione sulla lezione Barret ..... » 1007

SIMONA COHEN, *Personifications of Time in Medieval Art* ..... » 1013
Discussione sulla lezione Cohen ..... » 1035

ERMANNO ARSLAN, *Tempo e tempi della moneta altomedievale* ..... » 1041
Discussione sulla lezione Arslan ..... » 1077

SACHA STERN, *Fictitious chronologies and calendar cycles in late antique and medieval Judaism* ..... » 1079
Discussione sulla lezione Stern ..... » 1113

FRANCO FRANCESCHI, *Tempi storici: periodizzazioni ed età della storia* ..... » 1115

MÁIRÍN MACCARRON

HISTORICAL CHRONOLOGY IN THE EARLY MIDDLE AGES: THE VENERABLE BEDE'S INNOVATION AND INFLUENCE

The Venerable Bede (c. 673-735) spent most of his life in the monastery of Wearmouth and Jarrow, in the kingdom of Northumbria, which he had entered at the age of seven[1]. He was a prolific writer and produced scriptural commentaries, homilies, grammatical treatises, hagiographies, histories, letters, and two works on time reckoning: the first was completed in 703 and is known as *De temporibus*; the second was completed in 725 and is called *De temporum ratione*[2]. *De temporum ratione* greatly expands on the contents of *De temporibus*, and also includes cosmography, which Bede had earlier dedicated a separate work to: *De natura rerum*, also written around 703. Indeed, *De natura rerum* and *De temporibus* appear to have been companion works, as they seem to have shared a preface[3]. In addition to his computistical works, Bede's other intervention in the history of time was his decision to use AD-dating as the major chronological

1. Bede provided a brief account of his life in the final chapter of the *Historia ecclesiastica gentis anglorum*, V. 24, in *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, ed. and tr. B. Colgrave and R.A.B. Mynors, Oxford, 1969, p. 566. For a discussion of Bede's self-presentation, see P. Darby and M. MacCarron, *The autobiographical statement of Bede the scholar in Ecclesiastical history 5:24*, in *Bede the scholar*, ed. P. Darby and M. MacCarron, Manchester, 2023, pp. 7-32.

2. On the titles used for these works over the centuries, see M. MacCarron, *Bede and Time: Computus, Theology and History in the Early Medieval World*, London and New York, 2020, pp. 23-24.

3. See F. Wallis, *Bede: the reckoning of time*, Liverpool, 1999, p. LXVI; and P. Darby, *Bede and the end of time*, Farnham, 2012, p. 20. The preface is available in C.W. Jones, *De natura rerum*, in *C.C.*, 123A, Turnhout, 1975, p. 189. On Bede's cosmology, see E. Ahern, *Bede and the Cosmos: theology and nature in the eighth century*, London and New York, 2020.

framework in his *Historia ecclesiastica gentis anglorum*. In doing so, Bede made AD-dating a historical chronology, which had far-reaching effects. Before examining Bede's use of AD-dating, which took place towards the end of his life, we will firstly assess his contributions to historical chronology from the beginning of his career, specifically his use of a shorter *anno mundi* in his world chronicles.

1. Bede's chronicles

Bede included world chronicles in both of his works on time. The two works, *De temporibus* and *De temporum ratione*, explain time according to seven divisions, which was a modified version of Isidore's eight divisions of time[4]. Bede wrote: *Tempora momentis, horis, diebus, mensibus, annis, saeculis et aetatibus diuiduntur* (« Time is divided into moments, hours, days, months, years, generations, and ages »)[5]. Both works are also, unsurprisingly, concerned with the calculation of Easter, which was a major concern of Bede's throughout his life. Indeed, *De temporibus* was written while the Easter controversy remained a live issue in Britain and Ireland, and the connections between chronology and computus will be returned to below. In Bede's works on time, his chronicles replace abstract discussions of the longer divisions of time, which are found in other such works[6]. In *De temporibus*, the chronicle directly covers the divisions of generation and age[7]. In both chronicles, Bede recounted world history from Adam to his time of writing, and measured time by counting the years from Creation, the chronological system known as *annus mundi*. However, the *annus mundi* used by Bede caused consternation in his own day and has garnered attention ever since.

4. See Isidore, *Etymologiae*, V.29.1, ed. W.M. Lindsay, Oxford, 1911. Bede dispensed with lustrum, which was a five-year period used by the Romans. The Irish computistical texts usually have fourteen divisions of time, see MacCarron, *Bede and Time* cit. (note 2), pp. 27-28.

5. *De temporibus* I, ed. C.W. Jones, in *C.C.*, 123C, Turnhout, 1980, p. 585, ll. 2-3; tr. C. Kendall and F. Wallis, *Bede: On the Nature of Things and On Times*, Liverpool, 2010, p. 107. Cf. *De temporum ratione* II, ed. C.W. Jones, in *C.C.*, 123B, Turnhout, 1977, p. 274, ll. 2-5.

6. Cf. Isidore, *Etymologiae*, ed. cit. (note 4), V.29-38. Bede's chronicles are at *De temporibus*, ed. cit. (note 5), XVI-XXII, and *De temporum ratione*, ed. cit. (note 5), LXVI.

7. See further MacCarron, *Bede and Time* cit. (note 2), pp. 48-54.

There were different *anno mundi* reckonings in the early medieval world[8]. Of the three in use by Christians, the earliest placed creation 5,500 years before the Nativity. This occurs in the chronicle of Julius Africanus and was more common in eastern chronography than western sources[9]. This reckoning was later replaced by a more enduring calculation which placed creation c. 5,200 years before the nativity; specifically, users of this chronology tended to equate the fifteenth year of Tiberius, when Jesus was believed to have been baptised by John the Baptist (Luke 3:1 and 21-3)[10], with 5,228 years from creation. This figure can be calculated from the information provided by Eusebius in his fourth-century chronicle, later translated into Latin by Jerome, in the notice for the beginning of Jesus's public ministry, even though the chronological system used in that chronicle was years from Abraham[11]. This chronology was based on the Septuagint version of the Scriptures, which was used in Greek and Latin Christendom. Bede, in contrast, looked to the Vulgate translation of the Old Testament for his chronology and dated the nativity to AM 3952; consequently, his reckoning placed the age of the world at the nativity as shorter by 1,247 years than the widely accepted view[12].

8. See Sacha Stern, *Fictitious world chronologies and calendar cycles in early Judaism and Christianity* in this volume.

9. See Alden Mosshammer, *The Easter Computus and the origins of the Christian Era*, Oxford, 2008, pp. 357-421. However, Sulpicius Severus dated the incarnation to AM 5500 in his chronicle: *Chroniques*, II.27, ed. G. de Senneville-Grave, Paris, 1999 (Sources chrétiennes, 441), pp. 286-288.

10. See Mosshammer, *Easter Computus* cit. (note 9), p. 18.

11. Eusebius-Jerome, *Chronicon*, ed. R. Helm, *Griechische Christliche Schriftsteller*, Berlin, 1956, pp. 173-174. This moment is one of the great points of chronological synchronism in this chronicle.

12. There has been considerable discussion about the origins of Bede's AM chronology. I am not convinced by the argument that Bede possessed an unknown chronicle that used Vulgate chronology: see MacCarron, *Bede and Time* cit. (note 2), pp. 78-80. This case was first stated by John Morris, who based his argument entirely on the second chronicle in *De temporum ratione* and did not engage with the *De temporibus* chronicle, the evidence from which undermines his hypothesis: Morris, *The Chronicle of Eusebius: Irish fragments*, in « Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies », XIX (1972), pp. 80-93. See also: D.P. Mc Carthy, *The status of the pre-Patrician Irish Annals*, in « Peritia », XII (1998), pp. 98-152; Id., *The Irish Annals: their genesis, evolution and history*, Dublin, 2008, pp. 118-67; Id., *Bede's primary source for*

The general explanation in modern scholarship for Bede's decision to adopt a shorter chronology is that he wished to forestall AM 6000, a date that was often thought to mark the end of the world, by placing the present-day further back in time[13]. Bede wrote *De temporibus* in AD 703, which equated with approximately AM 5904 following Septuagint chronology, or AM 4655 according to the chronology of *De temporibus*. The argument for apocalyptic considerations has been underlined by the negative reaction to Bede's AM chronology from his contemporaries, including an accusation of heresy made against Bede in the presence of his diocesan bishop, Wilfrid[14]. This charge appeared to come from an assumption that each age of the world should last for approximately one thousand years, following an overly literal reading of Psalm 89:4 (Vulgate) and 2 Peter 3:8, both of which appear to imply that, for God, one day is like a thousand years. Consequently, because Bede placed the incarnation in AM 3952, he was accused of believing that the incarnation took place in the fourth age of the world rather than the sixth age. This is obviously incorrect, however, because Bede explicitly placed the nativity in the sixth age in *De temporibus* XXII.

Despite its erroneous nature, the accusation of heresy became something of a preoccupation for Bede. On learning of the charge, he aggressively defended himself by denouncing those who believed that the end of the world can be calculated in his letter to Plegwin, dated to AD 708, which he wanted to be read aloud at Wilfrid's court[15]. Bede defended his position again at the beginning of *De*

the Vulgate Chronology in his Chronicles in De temporibus and De temporum ratione, in *Computus and its Cultural Context in the Latin West, AD 300-1200: Proceedings of the 1st International Conference on the Science of Computus in Ireland and Europe, Galway, 14-16 July 2006*, ed. I. Warntjes and D. Ó Cróinín, Turnhout, 2010, pp. 159-89.

13. See R. Landes, *Lest the Millennium be fulfilled: apocalyptic expectations and the pattern of western chronography, 100-800 CE*, in *The Use and Abuse of Eschatology in the Middle Ages*, ed. W. Verbeke, D. Verhelst and A. Welkenhuysan, Leuven, 1988, pp. 137-211; P. Darby, *Bede's Time Shift of 703 in Context*, in *Abendländische Apokalyptik. Kompendium zur Genealogie der Endzeit*, ed. V. Wieser et al., Berlin, 2013, pp. 619-640.

14. Our evidence for these events comes from Bede who wrote a swift response to this accusation in his *Epistola ad Pleguinam*, ed. C.W. Jones, in *C.C.*, 123C, Turnhout, 1980, pp. 617-626.

15. See Darby, *Bede and the end of time* cit. (note 3), pp. 35-64; and P. Darby, *Heresy and*

temporum ratione, which he wrote almost twenty years later, and he added five chapters on eschatology after the world chronicle in that work to further underline that we are not supposed to know the day nor the hour[16]. The importance of anti-apocalypticism in Bede's later works has led many scholars to believe that such sentiments were the inspiration for his Vulgate chronology in 703. However, this is reading the evidence backwards because Bede seems little concerned with apocalypticism in the first chronicle. This is not to suggest that he was oblivious to apocalyptic thinking in 703. He would have encountered such sentiments in his sources, not least in a dating clause found in his computus exemplar, the 'Sirmond computus', that provides us with a date of AD 658 by noting that there are 141 years remaining until the end of the world[17]. However, Bede appears to have been shocked to encounter such thinking so close to home in response to *De temporibus*. Consequently, it seems that apocalyptic concerns were a secondary consideration when he wrote the first chronicle.

One indication of the lack of prominence of apocalypticism in *De temporibus* is the scarcity of AM dates in the first chronicle. The nativity is the only event dated from Creation, and that is done using both Vulgate and Septuagint chronologies: 3,952 and 5,199 years from creation[18]. The chronological framework of the first chronicle is generations and ages, rather than years, as Bede structured the work on the six ages of the world and the number of generations in each

authority in Bede's Letter to Plegwine, in *Cities, Saints and Communities in Early Medieval Europe: Essays in Honour of Alan Thacker*, ed. S. DeGregorio and P. Kershaw, Turnhout, 2020, pp. 145-169.

16. See *De temporum ratione*, ed. cit. (note 5), preface and LXVII-LXXI.

17. See D. Ó Cróinín, *The Irish Provenance of Bede's Computus*, in « Peritia », II (1983), pp. 229-247; repr. in Id., *Early Irish History and Chronology*, Dublin, 2003, pp. 173-190: the dating clause is on p. 177. See also Id., *Bede's Irish computus*, in Id., *Early Irish history and chronology*, Dublin, 2003, pp. 201-212 (pp. 209-210 for the dating clause); and M. MacCarron, *Bede, Irish computistica and Annus Mundi*, in « Early Medieval Europe », XXIII (2015), pp. 290-307. On the prevalence of apocalyptic countdowns in this period, see I. Warntjes, *The final countdown and the reform of the liturgical calendar in the early Middle Ages*, in *Apocalypse and Reform from Late Antiquity to the Middle Ages*, ed. M. Gabriele and J. Palmer, London, 2019, pp. 51-75.

18. *De temporibus*, ed. cit. (note 5), XXII, p. 607, ll. 2-4.

age. This structure is apparent in a ninth century manuscript of *De temporibus*, St Gall 250, where each entry of the *De temporibus* chronicle is presented separately and each line begins with an enlarged opening initial for the name of each patriarch or ruler, indicating the chronicle's emphasis on generations and reigns[19]. In contrast, Bede assertively used AM years throughout the second chronicle[20].

In addition, much of the discourse on Bede's choice of chronology in *De temporibus* overstates the homogeneity of the world chronicle tradition. Chroniclers from Eusebius in the fourth century to Isidore of Seville in the seventh century used a variety of chronological systems to underpin their work[21]. We have seen that Eusebius used years from Abraham, which was retained by Jerome in his Latin translation, and also by Prosper of Aquitaine in his fifth-century continuation. Prosper also introduced consular years from the year of the Passion, and created the *Annus Passionis* reckoning for events from the Passion to his own day[22]. Hydatius, who also wrote in the fifth century, began from where Jerome had ended and used Olympiads and Roman imperial years in his continuation[23]. In the sixth century, Cassiodorus used consular years in his chronicle; indeed, as Cassiodorus described it in the work's preface, this work is essentially a consular list with additions to cover world history[24]. Like Hydatius, Marcellinus Comes, writing in Constantinople, created a chronicle

19. St Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek, Cod. Sang. Gall 250: e.g. pp. 160-161 which shows the end of the fifth age and beginning of the sixth age: https://www.e-codices.unifr.ch/en/doubleview/csg/0250/160/.

20. This is reflected in the same St Gall manuscript which also contains *De temporum ratione*, St Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek, Cod. Sang. 250: e.g. pp. 368-369 showing the entries that close the fifth age and open the sixth age, https://www.e-codices.unifr.ch/en/doubleview/csg/0250/368/.

21. For a fuller discussion of the following, see MacCarron, *Bede and Time* cit. (note 2), pp. 64-73.

22. Prosper of Aquitaine, *Epitoma Chronicon*, ed. T. Mommsen, in *M.G.H. Auctores antiquissimi*, 9, Munich, 1981 (*Chronica Minora*, 1), pp. 385-485.

23. Hydatius, *Chronicle*, in *The Chronicle of Hydatius and the Consularia Constantinopolitana: two contemporary accounts of the final years of the Roman Empire*, ed. and tr. R.W. Burgess, Oxford, 1993, pp. 70-123.

24. Cassiodorus, *Chronica*, ed. T. Mommsen, in *M.G.H. Auctores antiquissimi*, 11, Berlin, 1894 (*Chronica Minora*, 2), pp. 120-161.

that continued from where Jerome's had ended in AD 378[25]. He also, like Hydatius, used different chronological systems to the work he was continuing, looking to the indiction cycle and consular years. Isidore of Seville in the seventh century had probably the greatest influence on developments in western chronography after the chronicle of Eusebius-Jerome. He was unusual in explicitly using *Anno Mundi* years as his overarching chronological system. Isidore produced two world chronicles with this chronology: the *Chronica Maiora*, and the *Chronica Minora* (or *Chronicon* B) contained within the *Etymologiae*[26]. However, although chronicle writing was not uniform in this period, when chroniclers engaged with the age of the world they consistently followed the Septuagint year-reckoning, even if not using AM chronology otherwise. Therefore, Bede's decision to use a different world chronology does diverge from the traditional practice, but chronological experimentation was part of the lively and dynamic nature of chronicle-writing in the early middle ages[27].

II. Bede's Vulgate chronology

Bede's primary reason for turning to the Vulgate for chronology was because he followed Jerome in thinking that the Vulgate version of the scriptures was more accurate. Jerome began his major translation programme in about 390 after he appears to have lost faith in the tradition of the Septuagint[28]. He had spent many years in close study of variant biblical traditions in an effort to improve Latin

25. Marcellinus Comes, *Chronicon*, ed. T. Mommsen, in *M.G.H. Auctores antiquissimi*, 11, Berlin, 1894 (*Chronica Minora*, 2), pp. 60-108; ed. and tr. B. Croke, *The Chronicle of Marcellinus: a translation and commentary*, Sydney, 1995.

26. *Chronica maiora*, ed. J.C. Martín, in *C.C.*, 112, Turnhout, 2003. Martín, in the introduction to his edition of this work, has demonstrated that Isidore produced two redactions of his greater chronicle in AD 615-16 and 626: pp. 119-242. *Etymologiae*, ed. cit. (note 4), V.38-39.

27. See R.W. Burgess and M. Kulikowski, *Mosaics of Time: the Latin Chronicle Traditions from the First Century BC to the Sixth Century AD*, I. *A historical introduction to the chronicle genre from its origins to the High Middle Ages*, Turnhout, 2013, e.g. p. 268.

28. See J.N.D. Kelly, *Jerome: his life, writings, and controversies*, New York, 1975, pp. 156-159. For what follows in this section, see MacCarron, *Bede and Time* cit. (note 2), pp. 81-85.

translations of the Septuagint. Jerome was especially concerned that certain passages in the New Testament referred to Old Testament texts not preserved in the Septuagint. He addressed this problem in the preface to *Questiones Hebraicae in Genesim* (c. 392) in which he outlined divergences between the Septuagint and Hebrew scriptures. He noted that the Evangelists and Paul « quote many things as if from the Old Testament, which are not contained in our codices »[29]. Jerome returned to this argument when defending his translation project in the Pentateuch preface where he offered several examples, including the piercing of Jesus' side with a lance which was presented as in fulfilment of biblical prophecy in John's account of the crucifixion: *Et iterum alia Scriptura dicit: Videbunt in quem transfixerunt* (« And again another scripture saith: They shall look on him whom they pierced »)[30]. The reference is to Zechariah 12:10, but this verse is not in the Septuagint. In restoring these verses to the canon of scripture, Jerome was helping Christians to see Christ in the Old Testament[31].

We know that Jerome's Vulgate translation was given special status at Wearmouth and Jarrow because the famous *Codex Amiatinus*, which left Northumbria for Rome with Abbot Ceolfrith in 716, is a full Vulgate Bible[32]. *Amiatinus* was one of three such Bibles completed at the time, with the other two remaining in Wearmouth and Jarrow[33]. Single volume biblical pandects were extraordinarily rare in this period and *Amiatinus* is the earliest complete Vulgate Bible that is currently known. Along with adopting Jerome's biblical text, the monks also included his accompanying

29. Jerome, *Quaestiones Hebraicae in Genesim*, prefatio, *P.L.*, XXIII, coll. 935-1010 at col. 937: *Sed et Evangelistae, et Dominus quoque noster atque Salvator, necnon et Paulus Apostolus, multa quasi de veteri Testamento proferunt, quae in nostris codicibus non habentur*; tr. C.T.R. Hayward, *St Jerome's Hebrew Questions on Genesis*, Oxford, 1995, p. 29.

30. John 19:37. See *Incipit prologus Sancti Hieronymi Presbyteri in Pentateucho*, in *Biblia Sacra Iuxta Vulgatam Versionem*, ed. R. Weber and R. Gryson, Stuttgart, 1969, repr. 1994, p. 3.

31. See P. Darby, *The Codex Amiatinus Maiestas Domini and the Gospel prefaces of Jerome*, in « Speculum », XCII (2017), pp. 343-371 at 366-367.

32. For the *Codex Amiatinus*, see C. Chazelle, *The Codex Amiatinus and its "Sister" Bibles: Scripture, Liturgy, and Art in the milieu of Bede*, Leiden, 2019.

33. See *Vita Ceolfridi*, XX and XXXVII, in *The Abbots of Wearmouth and Jarrow*, ed. and tr. C. Grocock and I. Wood, Oxford, 2013, pp. 78-121 at 98-99 and 116-119.

gospel prefaces in *Amiatinus*, indicating their importance and eloquently testifying to the esteem within which Jerome was held by this community[34].

The contemporary evidence from Bede's monastery provides ample context for his decision to turn to the Vulgate for chronology. We can assume that several members of the community spent many years on Ceolfrith's biblical project and can infer that the monastery possessed a full Vulgate text of the Old Testament prior to beginning their copying programme. The attention given to Jerome's biblical prefaces, and indeed to Jerome himself, in *Amiatinus* also indicates that they had accepted his arguments for the scriptural authority of the Hebrew tradition rather than the Septuagint[35]. Bede's exegetical works further support this view as he frequently compared divergences between the Septuagint and Hebrew scriptures and spoke of the 'Hebrew truth' (*Hebraica veritas*) following Jerome[36]. When Bede's orthodoxy was challenged after the appearance of his world chronology in *De temporibus*, he defended his position in the letter to Plegwin by appealing to the authority of scripture and church fathers such as Jerome, Eusebius and Augustine, and he referred to the 'Hebrew truth' – a defence he repeated in *De temporum ratione* many years later[37]. He didn't use the 'Hebrew truth' designation in *De temporibus* itself, instead simply noting that his chronology was according to the Hebrews, which differed to that of the Seventy[38]. However, the source of his chronology is nevertheless clear.

In attempting to explain Bede's choice of chronology, we should be aware that the authority of scripture may have been uppermost in his mind and especially Jerome's arguments for the pre-eminence

34. On Bede's regard for Jerome, see J. O'Reilly, *St Paul and the Sign of Jonah. Theology and Scripture in Bede's Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum* (Jarrow Lecture 2014), Jarrow, 2014.

35. See a quatrain in praise of Jerome in *Codex Amiatinus*, f. IV/3v. For discussion, see Darby, *The Codex Amiatinus Maiestas Domini* cit. (note 31), pp. 369-371.

36. See Kelly, *Jerome* cit. (note 28), p. 156. The phrase appears repeatedly in Jerome's biblical commentaries and occurs over 80 times in his writings.

37. Bede, *Epistola ad Pleguinam*, ed. cit. (note 14), III, VII, IX-XIII and XVI, pp. 618, 620, 621-623 and 625. *De temporum ratione*, ed. cit. (note 5), preface, p. 264.

38. See *De temporibus*, ed. cit. (note 5), XVII, XVIII and XX.

of the Hebrew over the Greek tradition[39]. Bede's concern with accuracy is also apparent in his willingness to use other sources, such as Josephus, to fill in the gaps in the scriptural record. For example, scripture doesn't provide the regnal years for Kings Samuel and Saul in the Old Testament. The chronicles of Eusebius-Jerome, Prosper and Isidore all ascribe 40 years to their combined reigns, whereas Bede's figure is 32, which he had taken from Josephus[40].

The evidence indicates that the integrity of scripture, not apocalypticism, was of greatest concern to Bede. This can perhaps be demonstrated in an examination of his use of *Anno mundi* chronology in *De temporibus*. As noted already, Bede only dated one event – the nativity – using AM chronology in the whole chronicle, and in that case provided the number of years given by both traditions: *Octauianus ann. LVI. Huius anno XLII Dominus nascitur, completis ab Adam annis IIIDCCCCLII, iuxta alios VCXCVIIII* (« Octavian reigned for 56 years. Our Lord was born in the forty-second year of his reign, when three thousand nine hundred and fifty-two [or according to others, five thousand one hundred and ninety-nine] years had passed since Adam »)[41]. Had forestalling AM 6000 been Bede's explicit concern, it is surprising that he would remind the reader of the other tradition at this point; in contrast, in *De temporum ratione*, he made no concession to Septuagint chronology when announcing the Incarnation[42]. Bede's presentation in *De temporibus* is reminiscent of someone comparing alternative traditions – as he frequently did in his exegesis – and opting for the more authoritative one, the 'Hebrew truth', without needing to ignore or denigrate the Greek translation.

Bede's sparing use of AM years in *De temporibus* also suggested

39. Cf. D. Fleming, *Hebraeam scire linguam: Bede's Rhetoric of the Hebrew Truth*, in *Imagining the Jew: Jewishness in Anglo-Saxon Literature and Culture*, ed. S. Zacher, Toronto, 2016, pp. 63-78 at 71-7. In her illuminating commentary on *De temporum ratione*, Faith Wallis suggested that Bede revised world chronology in the interests of historic accuracy: *Bede: the Reckoning of Time* cit. (note 3), p. 361.

40. *De temporibus*, ed. cit. (note 5), XIX. Cf. *De temporum ratione*, ed. cit. (note 5), LXVI, *s.a.* 2870 and 2890, where Bede identified Josephus as his source. See Josephus, *Antiquities*, V.1.29 and VI.13.5, ed. and tr. H. Thackeray and R. Marcus, *Loeb Classical Library, Josephus* V, Cambridge, MA, 1977, pp. 54-55 and 312-313.

41. *De temporibus*, ed. cit. (note 5), XXII, p. 607, ll. 2-4; tr. Kendall and Wallis, p. 126.

42. *De temporum ratione*, ed. cit. (note 5), LXVI, *s.a.* 3952.

he opted for the Vulgate chronology due to theological rather than chronographical concerns. This argument can, perhaps, be further supported by the mathematical inaccuracies in Bede's chronology of the sixth age. He noted that 703 years of the sixth age had elapsed at his time of writing: a date that is accurate, and can be confirmed using the Dionysian *argumenta* that provide the *annus praesens* earlier in *De temporibus*[43]. However, if one calculates the number of years according to the information provided for the sixth age in the chronicle the total adds up to 715[44]. This discrepancy can be relatively easily explained both by the regnal years Bede used, which are whole year-numbers and likely to have been rounded up, and the overly-long reigns attributed to some emperors, e.g. Heraclius. Such a large discrepancy does not occur in *De temporum ratione*, in which AM years are the major chronological system, because reigns in the sixth age are given according to years and months. Bede had received additional sources after writing *De temporibus*, which appear to have furnished him with more precise chronological information[45].

III. Computus and historical chronologies

A further argument for Bede's rejection of the Septuagint *anno mundi* may be found in texts associated with the Easter controversy. Computus and chronology were closely aligned in this period in large part because Easter tables require an accurate count of the years. Prospective chronologies are especially useful because an Easter table should be able to count forward indefinitely into the future: regnal years are of limited utility unless one elects to count forward indefinitely from a specific reign, as was the case with years from Diocletian used in Alexandrian Easter tables[46].

43. *De temporibus*, ed. cit. (note 5), XIV. On the Dionysian *argumenta*, see I. Warntjes, *The argumenta of Dionysius Exiguus and their early recensions*, in *Computus and its Cultural Context in the Latin West, AD 300-1200: Proceedings of the 1st International Conference on the Science of Computus in Ireland and Europe, Galway, 14-16 July 2006*, ed. I. Warntjes and D. Ó Cróinín, Turnhout, 2010, pp. 40–111.

44. Such a large mathematical discrepancy only occurs in the sixth age. See further in MacCarron, *Bede and Time* cit. (note 2), Appendix 3, pp. 165–172.

45. See MacCarron, *Bede and Time* cit. (note 2), pp. 96–116.

46. See Dionysius Exiguus, *Epistola ad Petronium*, in *Studien zur christlich-mittelalterli-*

One of the Easter reckonings that dominated in the early middle ages was that of Victorius of Aquitaine. Victorius used three chronologies in his computus, all of which were indebted to Prosper of Aquitaine's world chronicle. In the prologue, Victorius linked his Easter table with *anno mundi* reckoning, specifically the *anno mundi* chronology based on the Septuagint which placed the Passion 5,228 years after creation. He also used Roman consular years, and he counted time from the Passion, the *annus passionis* (AP)[47]. Prosper of Aquitaine appears to have instituted *annus passionis* chronology, as he began a new year-count with the Passion in his world chronicle, and the consular list in his chronicle also began at that point[48].

Bede despised the Easter table of Victorius, and consistently avoided the Septuagint *anno mundi* chronology used by Victorius[49]. I believe that Bede's primary reason for adopting Vulgate chronology was theological, but the association of Septuagint chronology with Victorius was also very likely to have been a concern for him. Bede's preferred Easter reckoning was that of Dionysius Exiguus, and both of his works on time advocated the Dionysian tables. Unlike Victorius, who created his own Easter table, Dionysius's Easter reckoning was a translation into Latin of Alexandrian tables. However, Dionysius replaced their year count from Diocletian, with incarnation dating (AD), which he paired with indiction years[50].

The Dionysian Easter table is, therefore, key to Bede's other chronological innovation: his use of AD chronology in his *Historia ecclesiastica gentis anglorum*, completed about six years after *De temporum ratione*. Easter tables relied on linear chronologies that could count forward indefinitely into the future. In using AD-dating in the *Historia*, however, Bede turned a useful prospective chronology into a historical chronology.

chen Chronologie. Die Entstehung unserer heutigen Zeitrechnung, ed. B. Krusch, Berlin, 1938, p. 64, ll. 11-12.

47. Victorius of Aquitaine, *Cyclus Paschali*, in *Studien zur christlich-mittelalterlichen Chronologie: Die Entstehung unserer heutigen Zeitrechnung*, ed. B. Krusch, Berlin, 1938, pp. 27-52.

48. Prosper of Aquitaine, *Epitoma Chronicon*, ed. cit. (note 22), pp. 410ff.

49. See e.g. *De temporum ratione*, ed. cit. (note 5), LI.

50. Dionysius Exiguus, *Cyclus*, in *Studien zur christlich-mittelalterlichen Chronologie: Die Entstehung unserer heutigen Zeitrechnung*, ed. B. Krusch, Berlin, 1938, pp. 69-74. Dionysius explained his incarnation dating in the *Epistola ad Petronium*: see above note 46.

IV. AD-dating in seventh- and eighth-century Britain and Francia

Dionysius Exiguus may not have 'invented' *anno Domini* chronology, Alden Mosshammer has convincingly argued that the manner in which he first introduced it suggests he was counting time from an accepted date, not a newly-invented one[51]; however, Dionysius certainly transformed this chronology's potential by using it in his Easter table. The evidence suggests he chose to count time from the incarnation because of the on-going Christological controversies concerning the nature and person of Christ; the mystery of the incarnation, and what it meant for God to become man, became increasingly important in arguments about the person of Christ in the Church's first centuries. Dionysius noted that he did not wish to preserve the memory of 'the impious persecutor', i.e. Diocletian, and instead counted from the beginning of Christians' hope, i.e. the Incarnation[52]. The significance of counting from the incarnation of the Lord was crucial for Bede, and we will return to that later. However, Bede was not unique in using incarnation dating.

From the late-seventh century onwards, AD dates begin to appear primarily in early medieval Britain and in the Frankish world, both regions where the Dionysian Easter table was in use. The oldest known example from Northumbria is in a poem by Lutting preserved in St Gall 254 in praise of his teacher, another Bede. The poet writes that this Bede died: *Sexagies decimus iam tunc et nouies nonus annus ab aduentu Christi de uirgine nati fluxerat, et trina triplex indictio uiuit* (« The ten-times-sixtieth [600] and nine-times-ninth [81] year had passed since the advent of Christ, born of the Virgin, and the ninth indiction was in effect »)[53]. That the poet used both AD and the indiction strongly suggests that he was a follower of the Dionysian Easter.

51. Mosshammer, *Easter Computus* cit. (note 9), pp. 106, 339-356.

52. Dionysius, *Epistola ad Petronium*, ed. cit. (note 46), p. 64, ll. 11-12. See M. MacCarron, *Christology and the Future in Bede's Annus Domini*, in *Bede and the Future*, ed. P. Darby and F. Wallis, Farnham, 2014, pp. 161-179.

53. *Epitaphium Beati Bedani Presbyteri*, ed. and tr. M. Lapidge, *The earliest Anglo-Latin poet: Lutting of Lindisfarne*, in « Anglo-Saxon England », XLII (2013), pp. 1-26 at 21-22.

AD is also used in several charters from early medieval Britain. The oldest surviving authentic charter is the so-called 'Ismere Diploma' from Mercia, dated to 736: *anno ab incarnatione d[omi]ni n[ostr]i ih[es]u Xpi septincentissimo tricessimo. ui indictione quarta* (« the 736th year from the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ and fourth indiction »)[54]. Again, we have AD with the indiction. Several other charters with AD dates predate 'Ismere' but, as these are preserved in later copies, their authenticity has been questioned, particularly their dating clauses and witness lists[55]. However, a strong argument has been made for the reliability of two such charters from the kingdom of the Hwicce, in south-west Britain: the foundation charter for Bath from 676, and a grant for Ripple from 680, both of which refer to Dionysius by name indicating they knew his table (*anno recapitulationis Dionisii*)[56]. There is a strong probability that several other charters from this period also preserve authentic dating clauses[57]. What is most striking is the variety of ways in which the *anno Domini* dating clauses are presented; they usually use the word incarnation, but vary between calling it the incarnation of Christ, Lord, Jesus, Jesus Christ, or – as in Ismere – they use everything, *domini nostri ihesu Xpi*.

There is considerable evidence for AD-dating in Francia also at a relatively early stage. The role of the English pilgrim, Willibrord, who followed the Dionysian Easter may be key in this regard. Willibrord left a short autobiographical note in the margins of the month of November in his calendar. He recorded that he went to Francia in

54. London, British Library, Cotton MS Augustus II 3: S89, *Electronic Sawyer*, http://www.esawyer.org.uk/charter/89.html. See *Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms: Art, Word, War*, ed. C. Breay and J. Story, London, 2018, p. 137 for a full colour reproduction; and *English Historical Documents,* I. *c. 500-1042*, ed. D. Whitelock, London, 1979, pp. 492-494.

55. On the development of Anglo-Saxon charters, see P. Chaplais, *The Origin and Authenticity of the Royal Anglo-Saxon Diploma*, in « Journal of the Society of Archivists », III (1965), pp. 48-61.

56. S51; S52: see http://www.esawyer.org.uk/browse/sawyercat.html. See K. Harrison, *The Annus Domini in some early charters*, in « Journal of the Society of Archivists », IV (1973), pp. 551-557; Id., *The Framework of Anglo-Saxon History, to AD 900*, Cambridge, 1976, pp. 65-75; P. Sims-Williams, *St Wilfrid and two charters dated AD 676 and 680*, in « Journal of Ecclesiastical History », XXXIX (1988), pp. 163-183.

57. See S45, S42, S65, S243, S244, S248: http://www.esawyer.org.uk/browse/sawyercat.html. See further MacCarron, *Bede and Time* cit. (note 2), pp. 139-141.

anno sexcentessimo nonagessimo ab incarnatione christi (« in the year 690 from the incarnation of Christ »), he was ordained a bishop in *anno sexcentessimo nonagessimo quinto ab incarnatione domini* (« in the year 695 from the incarnation of the Lord »), and he was writing *annum septengentessimum uigessimum octauum ab incarnatione domini nostri iesu christi* (« in the year 728 from the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ »)[58]. Willibrord's manuscript also contains a 19-year Dionysian table, which confirms the source of his chronological choice[59]. In the first half of the eighth century we also begin to see AD dates appearing in Frankish annals – for example, the Lorsch annals, and the *Annales regni francorum* (Royal Frankish Annals), and in Frankish computistical texts[60].

The weight of evidence, consequently, reveals that AD-years were becoming increasingly popular in the first half of the eighth century in both Britain and Francia, and independently of Bede. However, in the available examples, all but Willibrord used AD for contemporary events, and Willibrord used it for recording events in his own lifetime. Bede's distinctive contribution was to apply incarnation dating to history, essentially transforming it into a historical chronology, which is why his intervention was ultimately so significant.

v. Bede's contribution and legacy

Bede used AD dates twice before he wrote the *Historia ecclesiastica*, and the development in his practice can be seen when we compare his earlier works with the *Historia ecclesiastica*. He used AD in the *Historia abbatum* (his history of the abbots of Wearmouth and Jarrow),

58. See *The Calendar of St Willibrord. From MS Paris Lat. 10837: Facsimile with transcription, introduction and notes*, ed. H.A. Wilson, London, 1918, and available online at: https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b6001113z/f90.double.r=ms%20lat. The calendar is at ff. 34v-40r, and the autobiographical note is f. 39v.

59. The Easter table immediately follows Willibrord's calendar in Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, BnF 10837, f. 40v. Wilson noted that the table and calendar are in the same hand: *Calendar of St Willibrord* cit. (note 58), p. ix.

60. For the Lorsch annals, see J. Palmer, *The Adoption of the Dionysian Easter in the Frankish Kingdoms (c. 670-c. 800)*, in « Peritia », XXVIII (2017), pp. 135-54 at 149-152; and R. McKitterick, *History and Memory in the Carolingian World*, Cambridge, 2004, pp. 106-9. *Annales Regni Francorum*, ed. G. Pertz, in *M.G.H. SS. rer. Germ.*, 6, Hannover, 1895.

written soon after 716, and in *De temporum ratione*, completed in 725. In the *Historia abbatum*, Bede used AD twice for contemporary and recent events: the foundation of Wearmouth in 674 and the death of Ceolfrith in 716[61]. In the *De temporum ratione* chronicle, he similarly used AD for recent events: the conversion of Iona to the Dionysian Easter, also in 716[62]; and he used older existing AD-dates, such as the beginning of Dionysius's Easter tables in 532, which was taken directly from the Easter table[63]. Bede significantly developed his practice in the *Historia ecclesiastica* by creating AD dates for events long in the past; in doing so, he was the first to recognise the potential of AD as a historical chronology.

To appreciate the complexity of the challenge facing Bede, let's briefly consider his evidence for chronology. This is the dating clause from the Council of Hatfield, preserved in book IV of Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica gentis anglorum*:

> *In nomine Domini nostri Iesu Christi Saluatoris. Imperantibus dominis piissimis nostris Ecgfrido rege Humbronensium, anno decimo regni eius sub die XV kalendas Octobres indictione octaua, et Aedilredo rege Mercinensium, anno sexto regni eius, et Alduulfo rege Estranglorum, anno septimodecimo regni eius, et Hlothario rege Cantuariorum, regni eius anno septimo; praesidente Theodoro gratia Dei archiepiscopo Brittaniae insulae et ciuitatis Doruuernis*
>
> In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour, and in the reign of our most religious lords, namely Ecgfrith, king of the Northumbrians, in the tenth year of his reign – 17 September and the eighth indiction – in the sixth year of the reign of Æthelred, king of the Mercians: in the seventeenth year of the reign of Ealdwulf, king of the East Angles; and in the seventh year of the reign of Hlothhere, king of Kent; Theodore by the grace of God archbishop of the island of Britain and of the city of Canterbury presiding[64].

This clause contains five independent chronological systems, none of which indicates to the modern reader when Hatfield took

61. *Historia Abbatum*, IV and XXIII, in *The Abbots of Wearmouth and Jarrow*, ed. and tr. C. Grocock and I. Wood, Oxford, 2013, pp. 22-75 at 32 and 72.

62. *De temporum ratione*, ed. cit. (note 5), LXVI, *s.a.* 4670.

63. *De temporum ratione*, ed. cit. (note 5), LXVI, *s.a.* 4518. See also *De temporum ratione* 47.

64. *Historia ecclesiastica gentis anglorum*, ed. cit. (note 1), IV. 17, pp. 384-385.

place: it has been dated to AD 679[65]. Bede had to reconcile a whole range of sources in creating his AD chronology for the island of Britain. In using indiction dating, Hatfield would have been relatively easy to correlate with AD when using Dionysian tables. The challenge facing Bede grew more demanding the further back in time he went. However, his mental acuity in spotting the potential of AD to harmonise a whole host of conflicting chronological systems was extraordinarily innovative, and remains under-appreciated, perhaps because using AD as a historical chronology is both obvious and natural for us; in contrast, it was neither obvious nor natural to Bede's contemporaries.

Adherents of the Dionysian Easter tables who used AD years for contemporaneous purposes were practical innovators, but creating a retrospective chronology based on AD years was far more revolutionary. There is nothing in the earlier or contemporary sources to compare with Bede's creation of a retrospective *Anno Domini* timeline for the history of the island of Britain from Julius Caesar's invasion in the first century BC to his own day. Scholars of the ancient world are more familiar with the challenges posed and difficulties inherent in synchronising chronologies with later eras. Indeed, Denis Feeney has observed: « The ease and apparent naturalness of our dating system conspire to beguile us into overlooking the fact that all of the dates it generates are themselves ultimately synchronisms »[66]. This is equally true for early British history, as Bede's choice of chronology has similarly beguiled us. Analyses of the *Historia*'s chronology tend to dissolve into circular arguments, or resort to adding minor clarifications to Bede's chronology: for example, 'correcting' his date for the sack of Rome from 409 to 410, or the death of Gregory the Great from 605 to 604[67]. However, it is worth remembering that dating events such

65. On the date for the Council of Hatfield, see Harrison, *Framework* cit. (note 56), pp. 41 and 83-85.

66. D. Feeney, *Caesar's Calendar: Ancient Time and the Beginning of History*, Berkeley and London, 2007, p. 12.

67. See: D.P. Kirby, *Bede and Northumbrian Chronology*, in « English Historical Review », LXXVIII (1963), pp. 514-27; P. Hunter Blair, *The Letters of Pope Boniface V and the mission of Paulinus to Northumbria,* in *England Before the Conquest*, ed. P. Clemoes and K. Hughes, Cambridge, 1971, pp. 5-13; S. Wood, *Bede's Northumbrian Dates Again*, in « English Historical

as the sack of Rome to AD 410 is itself an act of anachronistic synchronism.

In creating a new chronological framework, Bede also differed from the standard early medieval practice of replicating the chronological data in his sources[68]. We can see Bede's process of chronological synchronism develop when we compare AD-years in the *HE* with the equivalent AM-years in his chronicles. In comparing Bede's AD-years for Roman emperors from the *Historia ecclesiastica* with AD-years calculated from his *anno mundi* dates from both of his chronicles, the variation between his sources becomes apparent. In particular, the nearer Bede gets to his own time the more accurate his AD dates in the *Historia* become, whereas the opposite occurs when converting his AM-years to AD[69]. This is because when calculating AD-years in the *Historia*, Bede almost certainly used Dionysian tables which contained AD and the indiction cycle in parallel columns: as many of his sources contained indiction dates (for example, the papal letters) these would have been relatively easy calculations, especially for events after the start-date of Dionysius's table in 532. The biggest discrepancies between Bede's AD and modern calculations occur in the first and second centuries. It is far more difficult to synchronise imperial years with a linear chronology, whether AM or AD: Alden Mosshammer has demonstrated the difficulty by arguing that the fifteenth year of Tiberius could equate with any twelve-month period from October 27 to December 29[70]. We can see how as Bede's imperial chronology moves forward in time, minor errors accumulate and the discrepancies between his chronicles grow.

Bede went to great lengths and considerable effort to create this new coherent timeline of the history of the island of Britain. While Bede's literate contemporaries would have been familiar with linear

Review », XCVIII (1983), pp. 280-296; R. Shaw, *The Gregorian Mission to Kent in Bede's Ecclesiastical History: Methodology and Sources*, London and New York, 2018, pp. 24-28.

68. See D.M. Deliyannis, *Year dates in the early middle ages*, in *Time in the Medieval World* ed. C. Humphrey and W.M. Ormrod, Woodbridge, 2001, pp. 5-22 at 16-21; M. MacCarron, *Bede, Annus Domini and the Historia ecclesiastica gentis anglorum*, in *The Mystery of Christ in the Fathers of the Church*, ed. J.E. Rutherford and D. Woods, Dublin, 2012, pp. 116-134 at 117-119.

69. See further MacCarron, *Bede and Time* cit. (note 2), Appendix 6, pp. 179-180.

70. Mosshammer, *Easter Computus* cit. (note 9), p. 18.

chronologies, both *anno mundi* and *anno Domini*, the truly innovative nature of using AD as a historical chronology may be apparent in the initial reaction to it, which is unenthusiastic at best.

The earliest extant manuscript of Bede's *Historia* is now generally believed to be the 'Moore Bede', written at Wearmouth-Jarrow within a few years of Bede's death, and possibly as early as 737[71]. Two additions immediately after the conclusion of the main text and written by the main text scribe will concern us. The first is on the same folio (128r) as the conclusion of Bede's work and includes notices for the years 731, 732, 733 and 734, known as the 'Moore Annals'[72]. These are clearly AD-years and the entries follow the format of Bede's chronological recapitulation in *Historia Ecclesiastica* V.24; despite their laconic nature, they offer important information about political instability in Northumbria around the time Bede was writing, including the deposition, tonsuring and restoration of King Ceolwulf, the dedicatee of the *HE*[73].

The other addition, known as the *Moore Memorandum*, begins on line five of the next folio (128v) and includes a Northumbrian king-list from Ida to Ceolwulf, followed by a very brief record of nine historical events. The *Memorandum* opens with *Anno dxluii* (« In the year 547 ») and the reign of King Ida of the Northumbrians, who ruled for twelve years. This is followed by sixteen kings: firstly, Ida's successors in the kingdom of Bernicia and then the kings of Northumbria with regnal years for each. This list is the only surviving evidence for the regnal years of the seven kings who preceded Æthelfrith. We know that Bede worked from similar regnal lists when compiling the *Historia*, as he briefly referred to them[74].

71. Cambridge, Cambridge University Library, MS Kk.5.16: https://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/MS-KK-00005-00016/264. *The Moore Bede: Cambridge University Library MS.Kk.5.16*, ed. P. Hunter Blair and R.A.B. Mynors, Copenhagen, 1959 (Early English Manuscripts in facsimile, 9).

72. Moore Annals, in *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, ed. cit. (note 1), p. 572. See J. Story, *After Bede: continuing the Ecclesiastical History*, in *Early Medieval Studies in Memory of Patrick Wormald*, ed. S. Baxter, C.E. Karkov, J.L. Nelson and D. Pelteret, Farnham, 2009, pp. 165-184 at 168-174 for discussion of the Moore Annals, and pp. 183-184 for an edition and translation.

73. See D.P. Kirby, *King Ceolwulf of Northumbria and the Historia Ecclesiastica*, in « Studia Celtica », XIV/XV (1979-80), pp. 168-173.

74. *Historia ecclesiastica gentis anglorum*, ed. cit. (note 1), III.1 and III.9, pp. 214 and 240.

The second part of the *Moore Memorandum* begins after the notice for Ceolwulf's reign with a reference to Paulinus baptising 111 years ago (presumably a reference to the beginning of his mass baptisms of Northumbrians in 626)[75]. The following eight events are also all dated from the author's *annus praesens*, and they have led to the list being dated to 737[76]. It is striking that the scribe, who has just finished with Bede's *Historia*, which used AD-dating, opted for an entirely different way of measuring time here; indeed, this is almost the opposite of Bede's AD-years, which count time forward from a significant event in the past, while this method counts backward from the present. Its limitations as a historical chronology are obvious: as Peter Hunter Blair pointed out, any document using this system was only valid for the year in which it was written[77].

A similar practice is evident in another early manuscript of Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica*, the so-called 'St Petersburg Bede'. In the margins of book V.24, that is, Bede's recapitulation of events, in this manuscript, small Roman numerals were written in the same hand as the text alongside the AD years, which similarly appear to count back from the scribe's *annus praesens*[78]. These examples suggest that Bede's contemporaries may have struggled with *anno Domini* as a historical chronology and certainly appear to underline the unusual nature of his endeavour. Indeed, Bede himself dated his letter to Egbert, from 734, by the indiction rather than AD, suggesting he used *annus Domini* dating for specific purposes[79].

75. *Historia ecclesiastica gentis anglorum*, ed. cit. (note 1), II.14, pp. 186-188.

76. See P. Hunter Blair, *The Moore Memoranda on Northumbrian History*, in *The Early Cultures of North-West Europe*, ed. C. Fox and B. Dickins, Cambridge, 1950, pp. 245-257 at 252-257; D.N. Dumville, *The two earliest manuscripts of Bede's Ecclesiastical History?*, in « Anglo-Saxon », I (2007), pp. 55-108 at 59-65.

77. Hunter Blair, *The Moore Memoranda* cit. (note 76), p. 252.

78. *The Leningrad Bede: an eighth century manuscript of the Venerable Bede's Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum in the Public Library, Leningrad*, ed. O. Arngart, Copenhagen, 1952 (Early English Manuscripts in facsimile, 2). Hunter Blair, *The Moore Memoranda* cit. (note 76), p. 252; Dumville, *The two earliest manuscripts* cit. (note 76), pp. 65-71 and Plate II; and Story, *After Bede* cit. (note 72), p. 174. Dumville and Story draw attention to similar notations in the sister copy of the 'St Petersburg Bede', London, British Library, Cotton MS Tiberius A XIV.

79. *Epistola ad Ecgbertum Episcopum*, in *The Abbots of Wearmouth and Jarrow*, ed. and tr. C. Grocock and I. Wood, Oxford, 2013, pp. 124-161 at 160.

That AD-dating became a dominant global chronology is undeniable. And that Bede applied it in his *Historia* at the same that many of his contemporaries in Britain and Francia were also turning towards AD is also clear. However, Bede's contribution was unique. In applying a chronology that counted from the incarnation when relating the history of his own people, Bede deliberately and consciously underlined the Christian and universal character of his *Historia ecclesiastica gentis anglorum*. This is neither local nor 'national' history, for, in Bede's view, the conversion of his people at the ends of the earth fulfilled the biblical work of providence as foretold in the Old Testament and confirmed in Christ's last words to the disciples at the end of Matthew's Gospel: *euntes ergo docete omnes gentes baptizantes eos in nomine Patris et Filii et Spiritus Sancti* (« Going therefore, teach ye all nations: baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost »)[80]. For Bede, the incarnation was the fundamental moment in human salvation and the process of salvation would be completed when all peoples became members of the universal church, the Body of Christ. Bede's every AD date, therefore, connected events on the island of Britain with the great Christian story of salvation. This chronology was mediated to him through the Dionysian Easter tables, but his extensive corpus, and especially his exegetical works, reveals the levels of meaning that the incarnation had for him. Bede counted time from the incarnation of the Lord (*ab incarnatione Domini*) in the *Historia ecclesiastica* because he wanted to remind his readers that the promise of salvation revealed at the incarnation was fulfilled in the conversion of his own people at the ends of the earth. Just as his *Anno mundi* chronology in the world chronicles was informed by theological concerns, his chosen chronological apparatus in the *Historia ecclesiastica* served as a concise and meaningful creedal statement.

80. Matthew 28:19.

Discussione sulla lezione MacCarron

Warntjes – *The introduction of a linear timeline was a major step in late antique / early medieval history writing, rooting this in Christ's life another. In Gaul, both had been achieved in Prosper of Aquitaine's chronicle that counted the years from Christ's passion. Prosper was read in the insular world of the seventh century, and in Bede's eyes this chronicle was probably discredited through Victorius of Aquitaine citing its author by name and employing his chronological framework*, anni passionis. *In Easter calculation, Bede's preference of years from the incarnation over years from the passion directly reflect his preference of Dionysius over Victorius. In history writing, was Bede's introduction of AD a reaction to the reception of Prosper's count of years from the passion that Bede despised as the linear timeline used by his enemy Victorius?*

MacCarron – *Thank you for your question. I agree that the introduction of a linear timeline in late antique / early medieval history writing was significant, as was counting time from Christ's life. However, I don't believe that Bede's introduction of AD-dating in the* Historia ecclesiastica *was a response to Prosper's initiative in his chronicle. The role of genre is, I think, important here. Prosper introduced his* annus Passionis *alongside consular years within a world chronicle in which the overarching chronology was years from Abraham, adopted from Jerome's translation of Eusebius – though Prosper began his chronicle with Adam, rather than Abraham. Bede had already exercised his independence of mind in world chronicles in using an* annus mundi *based on the Vulgate, and eschewing the Septuagint* annus mundi, *which underlay the age of the world in most western chronicles (even if AM*

was not a work's main chronological system). However, had Bede selected years from the incarnation specifically to refute Prosper's years from the Passion, I would expect to see significantly more AD dates in Bede's chronicles: there are no AD dates in Bede's first chronicle, and just two in the second. The association of AP with Victorius' Easter cycle would not have endeared that reckoning to Bede. However, what may have been more significant for Bede is that the AP reckoning inaugurated by Prosper – and used by Victorius – began in the fifteenth year of Tiberius, the traditional date for Jesus' baptism, and the date of the Passion for those who believed that the synoptic gospels show that Jesus' public ministry lasted for only a few months. Bede specifically rejected such beliefs and followed John's Gospel, as did Eusebius, in believing that Jesus' public ministry lasted for a minimum of three years. Consequently, Bede and others (e.g. Cassiodorus) dated the Passion to the eighteenth year of Tiberius. This means that the anni passionis *of Prosper and Victorius was inaccurate in the eyes of people like Bede and presumably, therefore, deemed unusable. When Bede came to write the* Historia ecclesiastica*, I believe that he selected AD-dating for positive, not negative, reasons. He wasn't reacting to competing chronologies; rather, he was doing something completely new in using a chronology that wasn't in his historical sources to situate his own people, in a consistent fashion, within the framework of Christian providence in a work of* historia*. (It is also worth noting that Bede's creation of AD years was a considerably more difficult task than Prosper faced when creating AP because Prosper based his AP years on consular years, which already provided a year-by-year record of past events. This was not the case for AD, which only came to be used as a year-by-year record in Dionysian Easter tables from 532. Bede also had access to indiction years from the fourth century but they were not available as a straightforward year-by-year record, like consular years, because indiction years are a repeating 15-year cycle and, consequently, need to be combined with another chronological system to be useful for works of history). Contemporary theological and liturgical sources familiar to Bede underlined the coherence of Jesus' life by emphasising the harmony of incarnation, passion and resurrection. The incarnation occurred first and is, as Dionysius Exiguus wrote, the beginning of Christians' hope; it was from this beginning that Bede counted time in the* Historia ecclesiastica.