

BEDE'S ADDRESS TO ACCA IN THE *VERSUS DE DIE IUDICII*

**ALSO INVOLVING, PERHAPS, ALDHELM, BERHTWALD,
PASCHASIUS RADBERTUS, AND BYRHTFERTH**

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EVEN THOUGH BEDE'S address to Acca at the end of the *Versus de die iudicii* survives in manuscripts from only the middle of the ninth century and later, its different forms as well as its omission from some of the poem's earliest witnesses point to several stages in the work's transmission. Indeed, the version of the dedication most familiar to readers, which is found in only one manuscript, was probably created through the substitution of "serui" for the final word of its seventh line by Byrhtferth of Ramsey from a similar eight-line address also made during the Benedictine Reform.¹ It is thus discussed near the end of this chapter, making its inclusion here useful for comparison throughout:

Incolumem mihi te Christus, carissime frater,
protegat, et faciat semper sine fine beatum!
En, tua iussa sequens, cecini tibi carmina flendi;
tu tua fac promissa, precor, sermone fideli
commendans precibus Christo modo meque canentem.
Vive Deo felix et dic uale fratribus almis,
Acca pater, trepidi et pauidi reminiscere serui
meque tuis Christo precibus commenda benignis.

Dear brother, let Christ protect you safely for me and may He always make you blessed without end! Look: following your requests I have sung these songs of weeping for you; you keep your promises, I beseech you, made in trustworthy speech, now commending me the poet in your prayers to Christ.

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1 Byrhtferth included the *Versus* in his discussion of Bede in the *Historia regum* (for the address, see 50), a work first published by Roger Twysden (1652); *Historiae*, see col. 98.

Live blessedly in God, and give my regards to the good brothers, Father Acca, and remember your fearful and trembling servant, and commend me to Christ in your kindly prayers.²

A stylistic infelicity, the overlap of four words—three in the same form—in verses five and eight, weighs against attributing this version to Bede, especially because it is compounded by the failure of “meque” in its first appearance to join similar syntactic elements. Line five stands out as from a later revision.³ It is thus significant that this verse is not in the version presented here as Bede’s original.

Bede’s Seven-Line Address

By also naming Acca and surviving in five manuscripts, the seven-line version of the address has from the outset no less claim to descend directly from Bede’s autograph than the one with eight verses. The four readings which Michael Lapidge considers unique to it⁴—the last is found in place of “serui” in the other eight-line witnesses—are marked here in bold along with the correction of “berne” attributed here to Bede:

Incolumem mihi te Christus, carissime **pastor**,
 protegat, et faciat semper sine fine beatum!
 En, tua iussa sequens, **scripsi** tibi carmina **luctus**.⁵
 Tu tua fac promissa, precor, sermone fideli,
 Acca pater, trepidi et pauidi reminiscere **berne**
 meque tuis Christo precibus commenda benignis.
 Viue Deo felix et dic uale fratribus almis.

Dear shepherd, let Christ protect you safely for me and may He always make you blessed without end! Look: following your requests I have written for you these verses of mourning. Keep your promises, I beseech you, made in trustworthy speech, Father Acca: remember your fearful and trembling son and commend me to Christ in your kindly prayers. Live blessedly in God and give my regards to our nourishing brothers.

² From the edition and translation of Lapidge, *Bede’s Latin Poetry*, 178–79. Lapidge’s lineation includes a verse which Bede did not compose and so will not be used here.

³ In addition, the preceding word, “modo,” is metrical filler uncharacteristic of Bede.

⁴ Bede, *Bede’s Latin Poetry*, 59.

⁵ The argument that these manuscripts reflect what Bede wrote is strengthened by Alcuin’s use of “carmina luctus” at the end of line 49 in a conclusion similar in other ways to Bede’s *Versus de cuculo*, 269–70.

The readings “pastor” and the correction of “berne” to “uerne” are significant, because the one establishes that this version is indeed the original and the other provides a first indication that Bede and Acca had discussed a topic which might seem well outside the intellectual fields of their time, phonological change within languages.⁶ Two more features of the address, the metrical mistake in the use of “commenda” and a possible rhyme between “felix” and “almis” support these claims and with them point to the address as a profound if unexpected conclusion to an eschatological poem.

Before turning to these readings, it will be helpful to set out the five witnesses of this version followed by Lapidge’s descriptions for each. One which he identifies as part of this group is less relevant to the current argument because its address both lacks the verse which names Acca and is part of the text written in an early modern hand:

1. Cambridge, Trinity College, MS O.2.31 (1135)
(saec. X/XI, Christ Church Canterbury), fols. 41r–43v, 45r.⁷

It shares, however, the readings “pastor,” “scripsi,” and “luctus,” with four manuscripts which contain all seven verses. Their descriptions are followed by the readings for the last word of the fifth line and in one case a marginal gloss on it:

2. Cologne, Historisches Archiv der Stadt, MS Wallraf 137
(saec. XII; provenance Niederwerth), fols. 93r–95r; “bede”;
3. London, British Library, MS Cotton Domitian A.i, fols. 2–55
(saec. X^{med.} and X², St. Augustine’s, Canterbury), fols. 51r–54v;
“berne/uerne”;⁸

6 The Tower of Babel (Genesis 11.1–9) might have encouraged their interest in the topic. See Bede’s allegorical interpretation of these verses in his *Commentarius in Genesim*, 157–62.

7 The folios for the poem are now out of order. The text in the medieval hand ends on fol. 41v with line 146. An early modern hand has added lines 147–53 in the lower margin, and then completed the work on a separate paper sheet, fol. 45r. A facsimile is available through the Wren Digital Library, shelfmark O.2.31, <https://mss-cat.trin.cam.ac.uk/Manuscript/O.2.31>, accessed May 30, 2023.

8 Although Lapidge records the reading as “uerne,” the original is “berne.” Caie records “uernae,” commenting, “MS has *bernae* later changed to *uernae*”; *Old English Poem*, 133. While there are corrections in several hands in this section, it appears that the *u* written above the *b* is contemporary with the main scribe. It is a possible source for the dedication in the Trinity College, Cambridge manuscript, although it should be noted that an early modern hand has added line 155, indicating that it belongs before 154. See Brown and Biggs, *Bede*, 1:211.

4. Manchester, John Rylands Library, MS Lat. 116
(saec. IX^{2/3}, W. Germany, possibly St. Maximin, Trier),
fol. 11v; “bede”;⁹

and

5. Saint-Omer, Bibliothèque d’Agglomération, MS 115
(saec. XII/XIII, Clairmarais), fols. 90r–91r; “berne” with
“i. bonus natus heres” above.¹⁰

Although the reading “bede” and the gloss are not accepted as authorial, both are revealing responses to the passage. So too is the substitution of “committe” in place of “commenda” in the sixth line of the Manchester manuscript, correcting as it does a metrical mistake so “glaring” that Lapidge “is loath to attribute it to Bede.”¹¹

“Pastor,” the first of the three readings which appear consistently and exclusively in this version, provides conclusive evidence that it is Bede’s original; indeed, it identifies the event, Acca’s ordination to the priesthood around 700, which led him to write the poem. The background for these assertions appears at the end of Bede’s *Epistola ad Pleguinam* (708), his response to an accusation of heresy, where he asked Plegwine to have “our religious and very learned brother David” read the letter to Bishop Wilfrid and then added:

Ipsam quoque Dauid prae caeteris rogo ut, iuxta exemplum sibi cognominis pueri, furem spiritus nequam a fratre disipiente hortatu sanorum uerborum quasi dulci psalmodiae modulatione sedulus effugare contendat.¹²

Also I ask this same David, above all others, to follow the example of the boy whose namesake he is, and to exert himself sedulously to expel the madness of spirit from the unreasonable brother by the exhortation of healthful words, as if by the sweet modulation of psalmody.¹³

9 A facsimile is available through the Manchester Digital Collections at <https://www.digitalcollections.manchester.ac.uk/view/MS-LATIN-00116/1>, accessed May 30, 2023. The manuscript, the Psalter of St. Maximin, has been described by M. R. James, *Catalogue of the Latin Manuscripts*, 211–17.

10 A facsimile is available through the IRHT at <https://arca.irht.cnrs.fr/ark:/63955/md848p58qj13>, accessed May 30, 2023.

11 Bede, *Bede’s Latin Poetry*, 64.

12 Bede, *Epistola ad Pleguinam*, 626.

13 Wallis, *Bede: The Reckoning*, 415.

Citing Bede's description of Acca as a musician and theologian in *Historia ecclesiastica*, V.20, Faith Wallis has identified him as this "David."¹⁴ Bede's wording also reveals the friendship between the two, which, as I have argued elsewhere, probably began when they studied together under John the Arch-chanter at Monkwearmouth in 679/80.¹⁵

The use of "pastor" in the *Versus de die iudicii* not only supports Wallis's claim that Acca was also called David in Bede's circle but also shows that as in the *Epistola ad Pleguinam* the poet employed a detail from the Bible to contextualize an event in Acca's life, his ordination to the priesthood. Chapters 16 and 17 of 1 Samuel introduce the future king as a shepherd, most significantly when Samuel is sent by God to anoint Saul's successor only to find that Jesse's youngest son was "among the sheep" (16.11–13). In his *Commentarius in primam partem Samuhelis* Bede explained this event as foreshadowing Christ's incarnation, quoting among other verses, John 10.4: "I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me."¹⁶ In the address, Bede bound these themes together, first asking Christ, the anointed, to protect Acca and then requesting his friend in his new role as priest to do the same by praying for him.¹⁷ The change of "pastor" to "frater" loses the allusion to the specific event which led to the poem and obscures its meaning.

Like "pastor," the correction of "berne" to "uerne," which would of course normally be the work of a scribe, can be attributed to Bede confidently only if its unusual form plays a role in the message of the address. Yet the diversity of the readings as well as their later corrections also point to this conclusion. The two words are different spellings of the same lexeme, recorded in the *Oxford Latin Dictionary* as *uerna* but in the *Dictionary of Medieval Latin* as *verna*. The difference reflects the well-known development of Classical Latin /w/, the voiced labial-approximant, into Medieval Latin /v/, the voiced labial-dental fricative, which became standard in the Carolingian schools of the ninth century.¹⁸ As the opening chapter of *De arte metrica*

14 Wallis, "Why did Bede Write a Commentary on Revelation?," 28–29.

15 See Biggs, "Bede, John the Arch-chanter and Acca," which discusses *Historia ecclesiastica*, IV.16.

16 Bede, *Commentarius in primam partem Samuhelis*, 140; see also *Bede: On First Samuel*, 62, 324–25.

17 Bede was ordained in 703.

18 See Wright, *Late Latin and Early Romance*, 104–18; and Ruff, "Latin as an Acquired Language," 50–51.

indicates, Bede favoured the classical pronunciation.¹⁹ Here he separated the five vowels (*a, e, i, o, and u*) from the consonants, which he then divided into the “semivocales” (*f, l, m, n, r, s, and x*) and the “mutæ” (*b, c, d, g, h, k, p, q, and t*).²⁰ Excluding *u* from the semi-vowels and then stating that it has the ability, *potestas*, to act as a consonant indicate that he used /w/ instead of /v/. As a common pronunciation in sub-elite dialects of Latin which spread throughout the Empire and which is often referred to as Vulgar Latin,²¹ the fricative, however, would have reached England by Bede’s day through a variety of routes. The pronunciation of *u*, then, was an issue for John the Arch-chancellor to address as he regularized Monkwearmouth’s choir in 679/80.

The manuscript readings, however, point back not to “uerne” but rather to “berne.” Cotton Domitian A.i, which has a “u” written above the “b,” provides the reading accepted here as authorial. Saint-Omer 115 has “berne,” which is also found in the eight-line version now in Damascus. The reading “bede” attested in the Cologne and Manchester manuscripts is more likely to have been inspired by “berne” than “uerne,” perhaps at a time when the first was not recognized by the scribe.²² “Berue,” which probably reflects a misinterpretation of minims, in the eight-line version in Worcester supports the claim that *berna* became less common over time. Only the eight-line addresses now in Salisbury and the British Library’s Cotton Cleopatra C.ii offer “uerne,” which is also the gloss on “serui” in the version attributed here to Byrhtferth.²³ And of course there is the gloss in the Saint-Omer manuscript. While an occasional mistake proves nothing, if the letters *b* and *u* were regularly confused when writing Latin in eighth-century Northumbria or by the later scribes who copied this work, one would expect to find variants of “beatum” and “benignis” in verses two and six, and of “uiue” and

19 See Lapidge, however, who proposes that while working on the Codex Amiatinus Bede followed the classical practice of not assimilating the consonants of prepositions prefixed to verbs, but later advocated the Late-Antique system of doing so; Bede, *Bede’s Latin Poetry*, 68–70.

20 Bede, *Libri II*, 36–39. He also discussed the Greek letters used in writing Latin.

21 See “Sub-Elite Latin in the Empire” and “Latin in Late Antiquity and Beyond” in Clackson and Horrocks, *Blackwell History of the Latin Language*, 229–304.

22 It is an intelligent guess, drawing on the identification of Bede as the author of the poem found in twenty-eight of the thirty-nine manuscripts that might provide an opening rubric; see Bede, *Bede’s Latin Poetry*, 40–41. It also balances Acca’s name at the beginning of the line.

23 It is in the hand of the second corrector, who according to Lapidge worked before the end of the twelfth century and “at times attempted to correct the content of Byrhtferth’s text”; Byrhtferth, *Historia regum*, lxxxix.

“uale” in seven. Lapidge records only the unrelated “diue” as the first word of line seven in an eight-line witness now in Worcester, and I have not found any other variants in the digitized manuscripts that I have consulted. An authorial correction appears, then, to be the source for subsequent scribal activity.

This reading draws attention to what modern scholars recognize as a confusion of *b* and *u* in some antique inscriptions, informal communications such as letters, and later manuscripts caused by the pronunciation of both letters in some forms of Vulgar Latin as /v/. According to József Herman it occurred in “wide areas of the Empire—in Italy, the Balkans, North Africa; much less so in Hispania, and hardly at all in Gaul.”²⁴ The claim here is that Bede also recognized this moment in Latin’s history and used it to note a confusion in his own time, the two pronunciations of consonantal *u*.²⁵ He was aided in this discovery by the work of an obscure late-antique grammarian, Martirius’s *De B muta et V vocali*, which Cassiodorus incorporated into his *De orthographia*.²⁶ Indeed, *berna* is the subject of a memorable comment:²⁷

ver et vir syllabae longae vel breves v vocalem loco positam consonantis habebunt, ut vertex, vergiliae πλειάδες, verbum, vir, virga, virgo, virtus, Virbius. excipitur ab hac regula tantummodo berna, quod nomen licet ego invenerim per v scriptum, tamen, quia inlustris memoriae audiui Memnonium, hominem omnis facundiae iudicem, se dicentem de hoc reprehensum a Romano quodam disertissimo, quod per hanc enuntiaverit litteram, nos quoque notamus ac temptamus rationem reddere quasi diversitatis causa. si enim berna domi genitum significet, id est οἰκογενής, commune est duum generum secundum veteres, trium vero secundum meam sententiam, et per b mutam scribitur. si vero temporale quoddam denuntiet, erit mobile: a vere namque vernus verna vernum fit, ut si quis dicat vernus sol, verna hirundo, vernum tempus, et v sicut prototypon eius in scriptura tenebit. his ita se habentibus possumus etiam intellegere bernam dictum esse eum qui in bonis hereditariis natus est: bona vero per b litteram supra dicta demonstrant.²⁸

The long or short syllables *ver* and *vir* have vocalic *v* used as a consonant, as in *vertex* [whirlpool], *vergiliae* πλειάδες [the Pleiades], *verbum* [word], *vir* [man], *virga* [branch], *virgo* [virgin], *virtus* [strength], and *Virbius*. *Berna* is

24 Herman, *Vulgar Latin*, 45–46.

25 Bede may also have been drawn to this problem by a similar confusion in early Old English between *f* and *b*; see Campbell, *Old English Grammar*, 21–24 and 179–80.

26 Both are edited by Heinrich Keil in volume 7 of *Grammatici Latini*, 143–216 and 165–99.

27 See Pugliarello, “Lingua scritta.”

28 Cassiodorus, *De orthographia*, 175–76.

the only exception to this rule, although I have found it written with a *v*. However, because I have heard Memnonius of illustrious memory, a judge in all matters of eloquence, say he was censured by a learned Roman for pronouncing it with the letter *v*, I too censure it, and will try to explain as if there were a reason for this variation. If indeed *berna* means “one born of the house,” that is οἰκογενής, it is [a noun] common to two genders according to the ancients, but common to all three in my opinion, and is written with the mute *b*. Indeed, if the word refers to a time of year, it changes gender: from *ver* comes *vernus*, -a, -um [as in *vernus sol*, the spring sun], *verna hirundo* [the spring swallow], *vernum tempus* [springtime], and in writing it keeps the *v* of its origin. Given this, we also understand *berna* to mean someone born into inherited wealth [*bona*]; the discussion above demonstrates that *bona* is written with *b*.

Judging by his name, Memnonius was a speaker of Greek, and yet in a reversal of roles he is corrected by a learned Roman for adopting the classical pronunciation of *uerna*. The explanation undercuts itself further by asserting—against traditional grammarians—that *uerna* referred not just to male and female slaves (“common to two genders”) but to anything associated with a household, permitting neuter endings as well. Finally, this mistake is compounded with an incorrect association of this word with spring and an implausible etymology, characterizing slaves as “born into inherited wealth.” A speaker such as Bede who followed the classical pronunciation of *u* might well have questioned Martyrius’s guidance.

While Bede did not discuss *berna* or *uerna* in his work on orthography,²⁹ he certainly knew *De B muta et V vocali* and selected other examples which indicate his interest in the confusion.³⁰ Two entries concern examples within words: “excubiae per ·b·, exuuiae per ·u· scribendae” (*excubiae* [vigils] is written with a *b*; *exuuiae* [spoils] with a *u*);³¹ and “libidinosus a libidine per ·b·. Liuidus a liuore per ·u· proferendus. Larba per ·b·” (*libidinosus* [licentious], from *libido* is written out with a *b*; *liuidus* [grey] from *liuor* with a *u*; *larba* [spectre] with a *b*).³² Two more specifically concern initial sounds: “baluae, id est thyrae, per ·b· incipient” (*baluae* [double doors], that is *thyrae*, begins with a *b*);³³ and “uerbex, id est ouis, ab ·u· littera incipiendum” (*uerbex*, that is a sheep, begins with the letter *u*).³⁴ Moreover, the seven uses of *uernacu-*

29 Alcuin did, summarizing Martyrius’s story; Alcuin, *De orthographia*, 298.

30 For his knowledge of the work see Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Library*, 205.

31 Bede, *De orthographia*, line 416.

32 Bede, *De orthographia*, lines 612–13.

33 Bede, *De orthographia*, line 161.

34 Bede, *De orthographia*, line 1221.

lus (Genesis 14:14, 15:3, 17:12, 17:23, 17:27; Leviticus 22:11; and Jeremiah 2:14) in the Codex Amiatinus, the pandect made in Bede's monastery for St. Peter's in Rome,³⁵ all have an initial *u*.³⁶

The use of *uernaculus* in the Bible also raises the possibility that *uerna*, like *pastor*, had a particular resonance for Bede which could also have influenced his treatment of the word in the address. As he entered his covenant with God, Abraham feared that he had no natural heir: "addiditque Abram: mihi autem non dedisti semen et ecce vernaculus meus heres meus erit" (Genesis 15:3; "and Abram added, 'But to me thou hast not given seed, and lo: my servant born in my house shall be my heir'"). In commenting on this verse Bede contrasted the servant (*uernaculus*), Dammesek Eliezer, with Abraham's son and true heir, Isaac, but then explained that at the end of time the saved will be "not only of those elect who were going to be born of the flesh from his stock, but also of us to whom the Apostle says, 'and if you be Christ's, then are you the seed of Abraham' (Galatians 3:29)."³⁷ It is in this context that he then interpreted the command to circumcise all male offspring (Genesis 17:12) as a sign of the new covenant:

*Omne masculinum in generationibus uestris, tam uernaculus quam emptitius circumcidetur, et quicumque non fuerit de stirpe uestra. Significat gratiam regenerationis et immortalitatis ad omnes pertinere fideles, siue ex stirpe Abraham seu aliunde carnis originem ducant.*³⁸

*Every man child in your generations, he that is born in the house as well as the bought servant, shall be circumcised, and whoever is not of your stock. This signifies that the grace of rebirth and eternal life applies to all the faithful, whether they derive in the flesh from the stock of Abraham or from elsewhere.*³⁹

Although Bede apparently did not accept Martyrius's etymological suggestion, which associated slaves with inherited wealth, he might well have been sympathetic to its underlying theology.⁴⁰

35 See Gneuss and Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts*, no. 825, 589–90.

36 Fols. 19r, 19r, 20v, 20v, 20v, 104r, 539r; available online through the Wodl Digital Library, www.loc.gov/item/2021668243/, accessed July 17, 2024. Bede again quoted Genesis 15 in his *Nomina locorum* when he explained the etymology of Damascus as related to Abraham's slave Dammesek; Bede, *Nomina locorum*, 277.

37 Kendall, *Bede: On Genesis*, 272–73. On the date of this work, see Brown and Biggs, *Bede*, 2:43–45.

38 Bede, *Commentarius in Genesim*, 205.

39 Kendall, *Bede: On Genesis*, 284.

40 The theme appears again in 1 Corinthians 12:13, Galatians 3:28 and Colossians 3:11, although here *seruus* is used.

The next reading, “commenda,” which shifts the reader’s attention from a beginning consonant to a final vowel, plays a part, albeit in a surprisingly light-hearted way, in the address’s discussion of salvation. It is also linked to the corrected “berne” as part of the second promise which Bede asked Acca to fulfil, “commend me to Christ.” Yet here the mistake is not scribal but metrical. With its three long vowels the last two syllables of “commenda” cannot begin the dactyl required in the fifth foot of a hexameter;⁴¹ its *a* must be short for the verse to scan. This mistake is, as Lapidge calls it, “glaring” because unlike the vowels in the stems of words whose length must be learned unless they are long by position,⁴² those in inflections remain constant. In this case as he learned to conjugate this class of verbs Bede would have been told that its imperative singular was formed with a long vowel. Indeed, he covered this point in *De arte metrica*, explaining to his students, “in verbis primę coniugationis producuntur A et AS, ut *ama amas*” (in verbs of the first conjugation the final syllables A and AS are long, as, *ama amas*).⁴³

Yet Bede also included a chapter in this introduction to metrics entitled “Concerning the fact that the rules of the prosodists are often broken both by authority and from necessity.”⁴⁴ The use of “commenda” does not involve necessity, situations, for example, where a poet must use a word with four short syllables or a short one between two that are long. Instead, it fits with examples he provided from Sedulius that disregard, *contermno*, “the rules of grammarians.”⁴⁵ Although concerning a different ending,⁴⁶ Bede’s comment about a line from the *Paschale Carmen*, “clarifica, dixit, nomen tuum. Magnaque cęlo” (glorify your name, he said. And a great voice resounding from Heaven), is revealing: “in quo ut veritatem Dominici sermonis apertius commendaret, postposuit ordinem disciplinę secularis” (in this verse, in order to commend more clearly the truth of the Lord’s Word, he set aside the order of worldly learning).⁴⁷ As the poet asked for prayers in the address at the end of the *Versus de die iudicii*, he provided the new priest with a mistake for his

41 For Bede’s explanation of this rule, see Bede, *Libri II*, 96–97.

42 Bede, *Bede’s Latin Poetry*, 64.

43 Bede, *Libri II*, 82–83.

44 Bede, *Libri II*, 132–33.

45 Bede, *Libri II*, 134–35.

46 As Calvin B. Kendall notes, “the final syllable of *tuum* is long by position, where a short syllable is required”; Bede, *Libri II*, 137n62.

47 Bede, *Libri II*, 134–37.

petition to God so childish that it recalled their own first steps in learning to obey rules.

Moreover, as in the correction of “berne,” Bede may have intended the metrical problem involving “commenda” to draw attention to a development in Vulgar Latin, in this case the loss of the distinction between long and short vowels which had indeed been at the core of classical versification.⁴⁸ His mistake in other words was not caused by this change but exploited it as part of the address’s message.⁴⁹ Herman dates the merger of these phonemes “in particular [to] the two centuries preceding the end of the empire,” noting that it “probably...happened most rapidly in those areas where the language of the recently colonized population did not itself contain phonological length oppositions of this type.”⁵⁰ Indeed, the comment he quotes from Augustine’s *De doctrina christiana* (IV.10) to support this point, “Afrae aures de correptione uocalium uel productione non iudicant” (“African ears do not make a distinction between long and short vowels), might well have alerted Bede to the problem.⁵¹ In any case, because Old English had both, he would have recognized the system and expected his students to do so as well, as is shown by his extensive guidance on this issue in *De arte metrica*.⁵²

By focusing in the case of “commenda” on an inflection, however, he pointed to a simple solution: find a metrically similar third conjugation verb since its imperative singular would end in a short *e*.⁵³ Indeed, he may have hinted again at this remedy in the use of “uale” in the following verse if, as Richard Hillier has pointed out to me, it too is faulty due to an imperative involving the second conjugation *ualeo*.⁵⁴ In any case, “committee,” the

48 Bede might also have used “berne” to illustrate this problem since as a genitive singular its ending in Classical Latin would be the diphthong *-ae*, which forms a long syllable. The *-e* of the manuscripts reflects the shortening of Medieval Latin.

49 Richard Hillier has identified examples of first conjugation imperatives with a short final syllable in works by Cyprianus Gallus (*Heptateuchos*, Exodus lines 962 and 1242; and Leviticus lines 135 and 160; 90, 100, and 109) and Ennodius (*Hymnus sancti Ambrosii* (*Carmen* 1, 15), line 25; 253); private email. He explains that the first example in Cyprianus’s paraphrase of Leviticus, “neu sexum deturpa tuum,” is particularly significant because “as in the case of “commenda” there is no ‘necessity’ to shorten the vowel.” For Bede’s knowledge of Cyprianus see Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Library*, 206.

50 Herman, *Vulgar Latin*, 28–29.

51 For his knowledge of this work, see Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Library*, 199.

52 Bede, *Libri II*, 42–91.

53 Bede, *Libri II*, 82–83.

54 We are preparing a separate paper on this topic.

imperative of a third conjugation verb, appears in the Manchester manuscript in place of “commenda.”⁵⁵ Following Leslie G. Whitbread, who places the monastery where this manuscript was copied within the missionary activity of Willibrord, and recalling that Acca and Wilfrid had stayed with the archbishop of the Frisians on their journey to Rome (c. 703),⁵⁶ it is possible that the new priest prayed for Bede, corrected his metre, and presented a copy of the poem to their host, which was later recopied in the ninth century.

Further evidence for the claim that Bede referenced the phonological changes of Classical into Vulgar Latin appears in “felix” used at the caesura in the final hexameter. This double consonant /ks/ in the elite form of the language, which as Bede explained makes a preceding vowel long by position,⁵⁷ was often reduced in speech to the sibilant /s/.⁵⁸ The remarkable effect of this change is to transform the verse into one with leonine rhyme between “felix” and “almis.”⁵⁹ Indeed, Coena’s *Vive deo felix, Christi laurate triumphis* confirms this result by placing a partial borrowing from Bede into a six-line poem which uses one-syllable leonine rhyme.⁶⁰

Moreover, without naming the feature,⁶¹ Bede alluded to it in *De arte metrica*, through a discussion of a more complicated construction which, because of overlapping of endings in Latin, often results in leonine rhyme: “optima autem versus dactylici ac pulcherrima est positio, cum primis penultima ac mediis respondent extrema” (the best and most beautiful arrangement of a dactylic hexameter verse is when the next to the last word agrees

55 Lapidge considers this correction “an inspired conjecture”; Bede, *Bede’s Latin Poetry*, 65.

56 Whitbread, “After Bede,” 258; Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica*, III.13.

57 Bede, *Libri II*, 242–45.

58 Herman, *Vulgar Latin*, 47.

59 The *i* in each is long by nature, although establishing what constitutes rhyme might well have been part of Bede’s reason for composing the line. In an edition of the prose and metrical *Passio S. Dionysii* by Hulduin of Saint-Denis (c. 785–c. 860), Lapidge defines leonine rhyme as “involving identical vowels (or vowels + consonant(s)), which occur between the final syllable of a hexameter and the sound which immediately proceeds the strong, or penthemimeral, caesura in the third foot”; Lapidge, *Hilduin*, 173–74.

60 It is included in a letter to Lull; *Vive deo felix*, 262. CLASP offers two possible identifications for the author: Cyneheard, Bishop of Winchester (d. 778) or Cynewulf, Bishop of Lindisfarne (d. 782/3).

61 The name leonine rhyme does not appear until the twelfth century; see Lapidge, *Hilduin*, 173.

with the first word and the final word agrees with a word in the middle).⁶² Only two of the five examples which he cited from the *Paschale Carmen* involve the first and penultimate words, but all rhyme the one proceeding the caesura and the last. The example, however, in the final line of the *Versus de die iudicii* might still be unexceptional because, as Lapidge notes, Bede used this device in 12 per cent of the verses in the poem.⁶³ What makes it significant is that it appears in the first verse, “Inter florigeras fecundi caespitis herbas,” which prompts Lapidge to comment, “note the leonine rhyme... an intentionally striking effect at the beginning of the poem.”⁶⁴ Involving a phonological development, both the last line of an eschatological poem, which was part of the Latin of his day, it is more striking at its end.

The conclusions to be drawn from these four readings are many, but most important is that together they confirm the seven-line version as Bede's. They also work together to create what might seem a surprisingly playful conclusion to a poem on the Last Judgement. This unexpected juxtaposition may be explained in part by noting that at this point in his life Bede would not have expected his audience to be wider than Acca and their close friends, the “nourishing brothers” of the last line. In *Historia ecclesiastica*, V.24, he dated the beginning of his writing to after his ordination to the priesthood (702), but a more significant change took place in 709 when Acca became Bishop of Hexham and so responsible for Monkwearmouth-Jarrow. Bede suddenly had greater claims on the scriptorium.⁶⁵ Yet the address is not an inside joke. Instead, it expresses Bede's confidence, which he shared with his friends, in God's plan for salvation, a plan in which they would play a part through their own lives as monks and priests. Through his writing, moreover, he established a distinct role for himself, explaining God's plan, which included not only studying the Bible but also, for example, the relationship between the natural world and time.⁶⁶ The address reveals another of his topics of inquiry, phonological change within languages.

⁶² Bede, *Libri II*, 102-3.

⁶³ Bede, *Bede's Latin Poetry*, 21. See also Lapidge's list of the percentages of leonine rhymes in twenty-five works from the *Aeneid* through the *Carmina* of the Carolingian poet Audradus Modicus; Lapidge, *Hilduin*, 177.

⁶⁴ Bede, *Bede's Latin Poetry*, 58.

⁶⁵ For evidence in support of this claim, see Brown and Biggs, *Bede*, 2:248-50.

⁶⁶ See Wallis, *Bede: The Reckoning*, lxiv.

Aldhelm's Six-Line Address

Bede's seven-line address became one with six through three kinds of changes: verbal substitutions ("frater" replaced "pastor"; "cecini," "scripsi"; and "flendi," "luctus"); the deletion of Bede's fifth verse; and the rewriting of his sixth. Because these revisions appear together in five manuscripts as well as in the first six verses of the eight-line address they almost certainly happened as the work of one person. This individual, moreover, seems likely to have had the ability to disseminate his revision not only in England but also on the Continent where most of its copies survive. As Abbot of Malmesbury and later Bishop of Sherborne, Aldhelm (d. 709) had scriptoria where the poem could be copied and a circle of friends with whom to share it. Moreover, as the author of a work on metrics, he might have been drawn to correcting the mistaken scansion of "commenda." The main reason, however, to assign this version to him is his knowledge of Martyrius's work and his use of *bernaculus* in personal epithets. It is on these points this discussion focuses, following the text and its manuscripts.

The six-line address cannot be the original because it lacks the verse which names Acca. A translation can be found at the opening of the one with eight lines:

Incolumem mihi te Christus, carissime frater,
 protegat, et faciat semper sine fine beatum!
 En, tua iussa sequens, cecini tibi carmina flendi.
 Tu tua fac promissa, precor, sermone fideli,
 commendans precibus Christo modo meque canentem.
 Vive Deo felix et dic uale fratribus almis.

Like the seven- and eight-line versions, it also survives in five manuscripts:

1. Leiden, Bibliotheek der Rijksuniversiteit, MS BPL 190
 (saec. X/XI, Saint-Bertin), fols. 27r–30r;⁶⁷
2. Montpellier, Bibliothèque universitaire (Section de médecine),
 MS 413 (saec. XII), fols. 7r–8r;
3. Stuttgart, Württembergische Landesbibliothek, Cod. theol. 8° 51
 (saec. X^{2/4}, Zwiefalten), fols. 89v–93v;⁶⁸

67 The manuscript is available through the Library's digital collections: <https://digitalcollections.universiteitleiden.nl/view/item/1613061>, accessed May 30, 2023. The reading "uel pastor" appears above "frater."

68 The manuscript is available at https://digital.wlb-stuttgart.de/index.php?id=6&tx_dlf%5Bid%5D=10296&tx_dlf%5Bpage%5D=1, accessed May 30, 2023. It lacks the second line.

4. Vatican City, Bibliotheca Apostolica Vaticana, Archivio S. Pietro, MS D. 171 (saec. XIII), fols. 182r–84r;⁶⁹ and
5. York, Chapter Library, MS XVI. Q. 14 (saec. XII/XIII; provenance York), fols. 48v–49r.

It should be noted here that other than its location in York, there is no indication that the last manuscript has a direct tie to Bede.

Aldhelm knew that *De B muta et V vocali* advised spelling *uerna* as *berna* and followed this practice in at least some of his writings. After listing both masculine and feminine first declension nouns in *De pedum regulis*, he provided a summary Martyrius's discussion, adding a detail significant here, that *berna* is related to *bernaculus*: "communia ut advena, berna, unde bernaculus, quod melius per .b. quam per digammon scribi veterum auctoritas orthograforum testatur, quia ver, unde vernum dirivativum ducitur, per .v. constat"⁷⁰ (common [to all three genders], like *advena* [stranger], is *berna* which the authorities on ancient orthography attest is better written with a *b* than with the digammon because [the noun] *ver* [spring], from which [the adjective] *vernum* is derived, is generally agreed to be written with *v*.) Indeed, Rudolf Ehwald uses this comment to justify printing *bernaculus* at the end of the salutation which begins the prose *De virginitate*: "Aldhelmus, segnis Christi crucicola et supplex ecclesiae bernaculus, optabilem perpetuate prosperitatis salute" (Aldhelm, dilatory worshipper of Christ and humble servant of the Church, [sends his] best wishes for perpetual prosperity).⁷¹ In this case, all the manuscripts read "vernaculus." Support for his decision, however, appears in two readings for the next use of the word, a description of the "subservient tranquillity" (*bernacula quiete*) which characterizes the life of bees and nuns.⁷² In New Haven, Yale University, Beinecke Library, MS 401 (4r), the original *b* has been erased and a *u* written in its place;⁷³ and in

69 Lapidge is mistaken when he provides the shelf mark as "D. 117." D. 171 is available at https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Arch.Cap.S.Pietro.D.171, accessed May 30, 2023.

70 Aldhelm, *De pedum regulis*, 185.

71 Aldhelm, *Prosa de virginitate*, ed. Gwara, 29 (ed. Ehwald, 229); translated by Lapidge, *Aldhelm: The Prose Works*, 59.

72 Aldhelm, *Prosa de virginitate*, ed. Gwara, 71 (cf. ed. Ehwald, 233); translated by Lapidge, *Aldhelm: The Prose Works*, 63.

73 The manuscript is available online at <https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/2015174>, accessed May 30, 2023. Gneuss and Lapidge date it to the beginning of the ninth or perhaps the end of the eighth century; Gneuss and Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts*, no. 857, 616–17. For this and the following manuscript, see also Gwara's descriptions and stemma; Aldhelm, *Prosa de virginitate*, 74–187.

Würzburg, Universitätsbibliothek M. th. F. 21 (fol. 4v), a *u* has been written above the *b*.⁷⁴ These corrections show Aldhelm's spelling being replaced by the conventional one.⁷⁵ Similarly, in Gotha, Forschungs- und Landesbibliothek, Mbr. I. 75 (fols. 23–69), an eighth-century copy of Aldhelm's *Carmen de uirginitate*, all three readings involving this word use *b* (lines 136, 1451, and 2409; fols. 28r, 47v, and 61v).⁷⁶

It is possible that Aldhelm not only used the spelling *berna/bernaculus* but adopted the pronunciation of *b* as /v/ more generally. In doing so, he might have been influenced in his early education by an Irish teacher or later by Theodore, who became archbishop in 669, and Hadrian during his studies in Canterbury.⁷⁷ If doing so was viewed as an affectation by the Northumbria clergy, the corrected "berne" in the *Versus de die iudicii* could have been directed at him.⁷⁸ Another possibility is that if Aldhelm became Abbot of Malmesbury before 679,⁷⁹ he might have sent students to Monkwearmouth to study with John the Arch-chanter. A letter of introduction read aloud to the monastery with the distinguished Roman abbot pausing over an unexpected spelling of *bernaculus* might well have been the moment Bede recalled in the address.⁸⁰

74 The manuscript is available online at <http://vb.uni-wuerzburg.de/ub/mpthf21/ueber.html>, accessed May 30, 2023.

75 See Gwara's explanation of his editorial practice on this point; Aldhelm, *Prosa de uirginitate*, 316–17*.

76 The manuscript is available online at https://dwb.thulb.uni-jena.de/rsc/viewer/ufb_derivate_00014774/Memb-I-00075_00051.tif, accessed May 30, 2023. It is described by Lowe, *Codices Latini Antiquiores*, 8:51 (no. 1207).

77 See Gwara's summary of his life (Aldhelm, *Prosa de uirginitate*, 19–34) and Rudolf Thurneysen's *Grammar*, 74–77. Gwara sees no way to resolve this question; 316–17. A further indication of confusion at Canterbury on this point appears in the *Épinal-Erfurt Glossary* where in the a-order section "berna" is glossed "higrae" (b 8). Apparently the first word of "verna hirundo" in *De B muta et V vocali* had been corrected to "berna," and the second glossed with an Anglo-Saxon word for "bird." The compiler then associated the correction with the gloss. On Aldhelm's relationship to this glossary see Lapidge, "Aldhelm and the 'Epinal-Erfurt Glossary,'" 141. The entry also appears in the *Corpus Glossary* separated by several entries from one which glosses "berna" as "seruus"; ed. Georg Goetz, 402. This confusion of *berna* with *higra* is perpetuated in Latham, Howlett, and Ashdowne, eds., *Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources*.

78 Some support for Bede having mixed views on Aldhelm appears in Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica*, V.18.

79 Lapidge posits this happened c. 680; "Aldhelm."

80 In addition to the letter already cited, he used *bernaculus* in three others; *Epistulae*, 1, 2, and 3 (476, 478, and 479). It also appears in his letter to Aldfrith, King of Northumbria, at the beginning of *De metris* (61).

The Eight-Line Address: Changes from perhaps Berhtwald to the Benedictine Reform

The eight-line version of the address quoted at the start of this chapter was created from the two earlier ones by someone who failed to recognize Bede's sixth verse, which uses "commenda," as the source of Aldhelm's fifth, and so added it and the line he had omitted to the end of his revision. The compilation must have taken place before Byrhtferth included the poem in the *Historia regum* and seems likely to have been done in the spirit of the Benedictine Reform—an effort to preserve everything Bede had written. Its five manuscripts support this claim by having been made in England, although they also introduce a complication because some include a spurious line written to conclude the poem after the address had been removed: "ac Dominum benedicere saecula per omnia Christum" (and to bless Christ the Lord through all time).⁸¹ The version Byrhtferth placed in the *Historia regum* did not contain the new verse, but it was added by a later scribe:

1. Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 139 (c. 1170, Durham), fols. 57r–58v; "serui" with "uel uerne" above.⁸²

It appears in two other manuscripts containing the eight-line address:⁸³

2. Salisbury, Cathedral Library, MS 168 (saec. XI^{ex}, Salisbury), fols. 85v–87r, "uerne"; and
3. Worcester, Cathedral Library, MS F. 57 (saec. XIII^{med}, Worcester), fol. 70r–v; "berue."⁸⁴

It is not, however, in the final two:

4. Damascus, Great Mosque, MS CGS 161/I and 162/I (saec. XII, England [?]): "berne";⁸⁵

81 The scribe who added the line marked his incorrect placement of it. For the reasons not to attribute this verse to Bede, see Bede, *Bede's Latin Poetry*, 176–77 and 60–61.

82 The description follows Lapidge's in his edition of the *Historia regum*, xvii. A facsimile is available through the Parker Library on the Web, <https://parker.stanford.edu/parker/catalog/qj220gv8417>, accessed May 30, 2023.

83 In the absence of digital versions of the next four manuscripts, I have reproduced Lapidge's readings.

84 Whitbread notes that the Worcester manuscript is a close copy of the one in Salisbury; Whitbread, "After Bede," 258.

85 Bede, *Bede's Latin Poetry*, 54. Because the beginning of the poem has been lost, Lapidge does not assign this text to a group, but states it probably "belongs to the English recension"; 58n197.

and

5. London, British Library, MS Cotton Cleopatra C.II, fols. 166–72
(saec. XII, Peterborough [?]), fols. 167v–170v; “uerne.”

Unlike the manuscripts of the eight-line address that contain the spurious line, none of those with either seven or six verses do, a further indication that these are earlier.

The new line, moreover, opens the question of who removed the address, which happened either at the same time as Aldhelm’s revision or following it but before the earliest of the ninth-century manuscripts in which it survives. Lapidge has claimed that the decision was made by someone preparing the poem for Continental audiences unfamiliar with Acca.⁸⁶ Yet it would have also removed information about an author of obvious interest to the English missionaries of the eighth century and the Carolingian authors of the ninth.⁸⁷ Indeed, Alcuin, who seems likely to have played a significant role in the poem’s transmission from Northumbria to Charlemagne’s court,⁸⁸ clearly valued it as he quoted from it often.⁸⁹

Moreover, a three-line version preserved in both Nicholaus Mameranus’s edition of Paschasius Radbertus’s *De corpore et sanguine Domini* (1550) and Georg Cassander’s *Hymni ecclesiastici* (1556) may indicate that Bede’s address and Aldhelm’s revision were compared in Carolingian classrooms.⁹⁰ It contains three new readings identified here in bold and offers in its third line further evidence of the circulation of Bede’s text on the Continent:⁹¹

Incolumem mihi te Christus, carissima **proles**,
protegat, et faciat semper sine fine **beatam**,
meque tuis Christo precibus commenda benignis.

Dear daughter, let Christ protect you safely for me and may He always make you blessed without end; [and] commend me to Christ in your kindly prayers.

86 Bede, *Bede’s Latin Poetry*, 59.

87 For the eighth century, see the correspondence of Boniface and Lull discussed in Brown and Biggs, *Bede*, 1:27–33.

88 See Lendinara, “Alcuino e il *De die iudicii*”; and Bede, *Bede’s Latin Poetry*, 52.

89 See Brown and Biggs, *Bede*, 1:207–8 and 213–14.

90 Mameranus knew of two manuscripts but specified that he used one from the monastery of St. Pantheon in Cologne, which may have linked the poem specifically to Paschasius. This manuscript was probably also Cassander’s source since he lived in Cologne. His wider knowledge of medieval verse may have led to his correct attribution of the *Versus de die iudicii* to Bede. My thanks to Andrew Dunning and Matthew Holford for help in sorting out this material.

91 Mameranus, *Paschasii*, fol. 5v; and Cassander, *Hymni*, 344.

Like Aldhelm's revision this one distances the address from Bede by removing the verse with Acca's name, but then goes further in specifying a female addressee, specifically a daughter. While this change might show Paschasius adapting the *Versus de die iudicii* for his own use, it could also be a school-room exercise, demonstrating how a further development of Aldhelm's substitution of "frater" for "pastor" would lead to other changes. If so, the class may also have been asked to evaluate the relative merits of Aldhelm's revision of Bede's sixth line, which led to the syntactically problematic "meque canentem." A final point of discussion could have been the length of the last syllable of "commenda."

In this context, a more likely explanation for dropping the address is that Archbishop Berhtwald (690–731) attempted to remove a source of discord between Aldhelm, whom he appointed Bishop of Sherborne (705/6), and the Northumbrian clerics around Wilfrid, Acca's patron.⁹² A comparison of the numbers of witnesses of the different versions provides some further support for this claim. Lapidge's descriptions of the manuscripts reveals that there are four times as many texts of the poem without either an address or the spurious concluding line as there are of either Bede's or Aldhelm's versions.⁹³ These seem likely to have emanated around the same time as the original and Aldhelm's revision. Indeed, the decision may have been made in some haste since the abrupt conclusion the removal had caused was recognized only later. In contrast to the twenty manuscripts without this new line, only ten contain it. Canterbury would of course also be a likely place for a compiler or compilers during the Benedictine Reform to have found the previous versions of the *Versus de die iudicii*.

⁹² See Stephens, "Berhtwald." I am writing elsewhere on Aldhelm's letter to Wilfrid's abbots, which has not been firmly dated; see *Epistola* 9 (12), 500–502, in Adhelm, *Epistolae*, and Aldhelm, *Aldhelm: The Prose Works*, 168–70.

⁹³ Bede, *Bede's Latin Poetry*, 45–56.

Conclusion

These suggestions do not, of course, rely on a full collation of the manuscripts and so are preliminary. They do, however, draw attention to the version of the address which is almost certainly Bede's and use it to identify some likely stages in the poem's transmission. Out of the argument a final point emerges: the early circulation of the *Versus de die iudicii* occurred through letters, which as was usual for the time were discarded or lost after some, luckily, had been copied into volumes for libraries.⁹⁴ In the months leading up to Acca's ordination, Bede wrote the poem and then sent it to his friend and perhaps to other members in their circle. When Aldhelm received a copy, he concluded that the correction of "berne" was at his expense, leading to a revision which he circulated again through letters. The result was that a respectable number, five, of each survive. The fact to be explained, then, is the survival of some thirty manuscripts without either form of the address. Perhaps Berhtwald not only had them removed but used his authority as archbishop to discourage their circulation. This history had been forgotten by the time of the Benedictine Reform when a new admirer of Bede combined the previous versions into one which survives in four manuscripts and a fifth included by Byrhtferth in *Historia regum*. With its elimination of "berne" from the text this final version has done much to obscure our understanding of Bede's intent: he celebrated Acca's ordination and their shared faith in God's plan by recalling their earlier discussions which had included, perhaps, phonological developments within languages.

⁹⁴ See Brown and Biggs, *Bede*, 2:229–34.

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