Carrera, Anunciación, and Carrera, María José (eds), with Carlos Herrero, Pilar Garcés (general editors), Berta Cano, Elena González-Cascos, and Ana Sáez (research editors) 2009: *Philip Perry's Sketch of the Ancient British History: A Critical Edition*. Newcastle upon Tyne, Cambridge Scholars. xx + 250 pp. ISBN 978-1-4438-0448-6. £39.99/$59.99.

This volume represents a discovery, as the first publication of a work by Philip Perry (1720–74), rector of the English College, Valladolid. It thus offers readers a novel double effect. It shows British Christianity as seen by a scholar previously unknown to most of us; and, since Perry was a Catholic exile, it offers a perspective different from that of the Protestant or sceptical writers who dominate British historiography. This means many surprises.

His history has five chapters. The first describes Roman Britain and how Christianity reached it, together with discussion of the British Church's doctrines (found to be the purest milk of orthodoxy). The second deals with Roman Britain's decline and the Church's sufferings from persecution and heresy. Then come the last days of Roman Britain, the scourge of Pelagianism, and (more hopefully) missions to the Picts and Irish. Chapter four sets out the coming of the Anglo-Saxons, the loss of Britain, and the age of the Saints. A last chapter informs us on Columba of Iona and his conversion of North Britain.

The Valladolid team hence offer a picture of Celtic Christianity as represented by an eighteenth-century cleric. It has many insights. For all his interest in the Celtic past, Perry was singularly free from romanticism. This is especially clear in his discussion of the druids. He calls their religion 'barbarous' (p. 12) and their customs 'cruel and abominable'. Despite their knowledge of astronomy and their belief in personal immortality (p. 13), they practiced human sacrifice. Perry thus seems to have approved of Augustus and Claudius for having these loathsome individuals exterminated (even if for political rather than humanitarian reasons).

So the interest of the volume is obvious. The editors have done their job well. They excel on Perry's sources, often citing the very volume that he used in the English College's library, including Camden's *Britannia* of 1637, Colgan's *Acta Sanctorum* of 1645, Dugdale's *Monasticon* of 1693, or

John Smith's Bede of 1722. The above and other points have been made by this reviewer in a notice for *The Welsh Journal of Religious History*, v (2010). Perhaps the best way of praising the edition further is by suggesting how researchers can use it for their own work. To update Perry's history in the light of modern research is a huge task, and the editors can be forgiven for not trying to do it here. On one question alone, they themselves point out (p. 189) that Perry's disagreements with Camden on the identification of British-Latin place-names 'merit independent study'. As with any new source, a reading of Perry thus sharpens the wits by presenting us with new problems. Amongst matters where we can advance Perry's discussion are the following.

- The name of the *Durotriges* (p. 7), a people of Dorset and south-east Somerset, is here corrupt. The correct form is *Durotrages*, as given in an inscription on Hadrian's Wall.
- The name of Boadicea (pp. 18–19) is corrected to 'Boudicca', but this is still not right. The correct reading is *Boudica* 'victorious one', with stress on the penultimate long vowel.
- *Bodotria* (p. 20), the name of the river Forth, can be corrected to *Boudra* or, later, *Bodra* 'defiled one' (compare Welsh *budr* 'dirty'), referring to the river's morasses and tidal flats.
- St Patrick's birth (p. 97) near Glasgow should be rejected by all (including patriotic Scots and Ulster Scots). Strathclyde had no Roman villas of the kind belonging to Patrick's father. There are reasons to locate (emended) *Bannaventa Tabernae* instead near Banwell in Somerset/Avon, an area of Roman villas by a coast open to Irish raiders.

Perry's curiosity is such that he even notices Welsh poetry, a subject normally of faint interest to the English. He comments (p. 125) on Maelgwn Gwynedd's 'bard named Taliesin, as famous for his bigotry as for his poetry, if what Rowlands relates of him be his genuine work'. Taliesin was active two generations later than Maegwn; and the task of sorting out his genuine poems from the apocrypha is best begun with Ifor Williams, *Lectures on Early Welsh Poetry* (Dublin, 1944).

St David's going to Whitland in Caermarthenshire (p. 141), where he was taught by St Paulinus, derives ultimately from the obscure

Wincdilantquendi in Rhygyfarch's Latin life of David. This form is corrupt and clearly meant nothing even to Rhygyfarch in the eleventh century. But there seems reason to take it as Old Kea, near Truro in Cornwall. This was the site of a Celtic monastery (a ruined church tower survives), and was formerly called Landegea, which surely lies behind the reading *-lantquendi*.

That Gildas 'passed over to Ireland to improve himself in philosophic and theologic matters under the celebrated doctors then flourishing in that island' (p. 147) also reflects a Celtic-Latin source, the *Iren* of Gildas's Breton-Latin life. Although some scholars take this (quite illogically) as 'Ireland', it makes better sense as a corruption of Old Welsh *Cerin* or Cirencester, Roman Britain's second city, which would have been famous for its schools of rhetoric and law. The implication is that these schools survived as late as the year 500, when Gildas attended them.

We may conclude in triumphant terms. Thanks to the outstanding care and industry of its Spanish editors, Perry's *Sketch* can now be read with ease. It deserves wide attention, and should be used by everyone concerned with the history of Christianity in early Britain.

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