

NOTES

THE "TRES LINGVAE SACRAE" IN EARLY IRISH BIBLE EXEGESIS

Etymological derivations and interpretations involving Hebrew, Greek, and Latin are a striking peculiarity of Hiberno-Latin writers.¹ The frequent occurrence of the question, *Quomodo dicitur in tribus linguis sacris*, is a well-established characteristic of the Irish biblical literature of the early medieval period. It serves as the introduction to the philological interpretation of Scripture in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin. Where this question of the three languages is raised in a Bible commentary of unknown origin, one can certainly conclude to the influence of the Irish tradition.² The Old Irish regarded these three languages not only as the languages of scholarship, but in a deeper, mystical way as *tres linguae sacrae*, sacred indeed, because they were employed in the suprascription of the cross of Christ to express to the world His kingship: "Erat autem scriptum: Iesus Nazarenus, Rex Iudaeorum. . . . Et erat scriptum hebraice, graece, et latine" (Jn 19:19).

In their regard for the sacred character of these three languages, the Irish biblical commentators resumed a venerable patristic tradition reaching as far back as Hilary of Poitiers (ca. 315–67), who very especially commended Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, the languages through which the mystery of God's will, the announcement of His kingdom, and the suprascription of the cross were transmitted to the world.³ The same tradition is continued and developed by Augustine, who regarded these languages as symbolic representations of three great historical realities. Hebrew is a symbol of the Law of the Jews, Greek of the Wisdom of the Gentiles, and Latin of the Empire of the Romans.⁴ The Irish were well acquainted with both Hilary's estimate of the role of Hebrew, Greek, and Latin in the history of salvation and Augustine's conception of these languages as symbols of world history.⁵

¹ An early non-biblical example is found in the *Vita sancti Columbae* of Adamnán (ca. 679): "nam licet diverso trium diversarum sono linguarum, unam tamen eandemque rem significat hoc, quod Hebraice dicitur Iona, Graecitas vero Peristera vocitat, et Latina lingua Columba nuncupatur"; ed. W. Reeves, *The Life of Columba* (Dublin, 1857) pp. 4–5.

² B. Bischoff, "Wendepunkte in der Geschichte der lateinischen Exegese im Frühmittelalter," *Sacris erudiri* 6 (1954) 207–8.

³ Hilary, *Tractatus super psalmos: Instructio psalmodum* 15 (CSEL 22, 13).

⁴ Augustine, *In Iohannis evangelium tract.* 117, 4 (*Corpus christianorum, ser. lat.* 36, 653; *PL* 35, 1946).

⁵ This Augustinian tradition is found in a number of different Irish works. Two examples are the Irish Pseudo-Bede, *Collectanea* (*PL* 94, 547D), and the Irish collection of

But just as important for the continuation of the tradition among the Irish is Isidore of Seville,⁶ whose influence in learned Irish circles was of major importance. His description of Hebrew, Greek, and Latin as "tres . . . linguae sacrae, quae toto orbe maxime excellunt" is repeatedly reflected in the Irish reverence for the sacred character of this linguistic triad. His *Etymologiae*, especially those sections in which etymology and philology dominate, and the great Bible commentaries of Jerome, who uses both Hebrew and Greek words in the interpretation of Scripture, provided the Irish with the learned aspects of these languages and showed them their importance for the philological exegesis of Scripture.⁷

The propensity, therefore, for employing this sacred triad of languages is rooted ultimately in the Bible itself and the Fathers of the Church. It is not an Irish invention, though the repeated recourse to Hebrew, Greek, and Latin in the exegesis of Scripture is peculiar to Hiberno-Latin Bible commentators. This peculiarity can be more exactly defined by a consideration of the philological method which the Irish employed, and the quality of the Hebrew and Greek on which their interpretation of the Scriptures rests.

Methodologically the philological exegesis of the Irish is restricted to single words and phrases which occur in the Bible text. No serious attempt is made to use philology for exegeting whole thought-patterns or for resolving difficult historical problems.⁸ Further, the Hebrew and Greek words which form the basis of the exegesis are frequently either excerpts from patristic sources⁹ or fragments left over from late antiquity.¹⁰ More often than not the Hebrew and Greek are pseudo in character, mere pretensions of learnedness or inventions of Irish fantasy.¹¹ Sometimes we find highly distorted

biblical questions and answers contained in Lyons 447 (376), fol. 106^r-152^v (s. ix); cf. fol. 144^r; B. Bischoff, *op. cit.*, pp. 224-26.

⁶ Isidore, *Etymologiae* 9, 1, 3 (ed. W. Lindsay, *Isidori Hispalensis episcopi etymologiarum sive originum libri XX*, Oxford, 1911). J. Kenney, *The Sources for the Early History of Ireland* 1 (New York, 1929) 146-47.

⁷ Among the works of Jerome which were well known and frequently used by the Irish are the *Quaestiones hebraicae in Genesin*, *Comment. in Ezechielen*, *Comment. in Danielen*, *Comment. in evang. Matthaei*, *Liber de nominibus hebraicis*, *Epist.* 20, 28, 73.

⁸ A good example is found in an unpublished chapter of the Irish Pseudo-Isidorian *Liber de ortu et obitu patrum* (Colmar 39, fol. 1^v [s. viii-ix] Murbach), where the question of the historical identity of Melchisedech is raised. The author cites here in a badly corrupt form St. Jerome's interpretation of Gn 14:18 based on the Hebrew (*Epist.* 73, 5; *PL* 22, 679).

⁹ Cf. *infra* nn. 21-25.

¹⁰ B. Bischoff, "Das griechische Element in der abendländischen Bildung des Mittelalters," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 42 (1951) 28-32.

¹¹ The most admirable treatment of the whole question of Greek in the early Middle Ages is by B. Bischoff, *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 42 (1951) 27-55. Cf. also M. L. Laistner, *Thought and Letters in Western Europe* (London, 1957) pp. 238-50.

Hebrew and Greek words, whose identity has been almost totally obliterated by the corrupt tradition in which they have been preserved. In this period, neither from a methodological nor from a philological viewpoint can there be any question of Bible commentators who have mastered these two languages or who have even a good schoolbook acquaintance with them.¹²

The following citations, examples of the use of the *tres linguae sacrae*, are for the most part taken from eighth-century and early ninth-century manuscripts, which show Irish influence in script, provenance, content, or style.¹³ The insistence on the Irish element here is not extraordinary, since it is well known how thoroughly the field of Bible exegesis was dominated in the late seventh, eighth, and early ninth centuries by the Irish monks both at home and abroad.¹⁴ An inspection of the following specimens, which adequately represent the philology of the Irish circles, yields two conclusions which are closely interdependent: (1) that Hebrew and Greek were not only *linguae sacrae* to the Bible commentators of the pre-Carolingian period, but more important still they were *linguae ignotae*; and (2) that in consequence of this ignorance of the two biblical languages the exegesis of Scripture in the Bible schools of the West reached one of the lowest points in its history.

A striking example of the inadequacy of Greek learning is found in the Irish Pseudo-Isidore (*ca.* 750), *Liber de numeris*, a work on number symbolism that originated in the Salzburg circle of St. Virgilius.¹⁵ The author's remarks on the Trinity are introduced by the following etymological notice on the names of the three Divine Persons:

Tres persone Trinitatis, in una magestate et potestate: Pater, Filius et Spiritus sanctus, que tres persone apud Hebreos sic vocantur: Abba, Ben, Ruha; apud vero Grecos: Pater, Bar. Quomodo autem grece Spiritus dicitur, adhuc non inveni. Illi tamen dicunt ageos, quod latine sonat sanctus. Abba pater, Ben filius,

¹² Cf., e.g., the enigmatic colophon, written in Greek majuscules at the end of the Irish *Liber de numeris* (Colmar 39, fol. 175^v [s. viii-ix] Murbach); B. Bischoff, *Die südost-deutschen Schreibschulen und Bibliotheken in der Karolingerzeit* 1 (Leipzig, 1940) 76, 190, 191. Another example is found in the Irish commentary on St. Mark by Cummeanus (?) (*PL* 30, 611A).

¹³ In paleographical questions I have followed B. Bischoff, *Sacris erudiri* 6 (1954) 189-281. The greater number of manuscripts which I cite are unpublished. Since most of the manuscripts are copies, one must be careful not to identify the date of the composition of the work with the earliest member of the manuscript tradition.

¹⁴ The greater number of works cited here cannot be traced directly to Ireland, though they are most certainly Irish. It is presumed because of the ultraconservative character of the Old Irish that an intellectual parallel exists between the Irish at home and on the continent.

¹⁵ R. E. McNally, S.J., *Der irische Liber de numeris* (Munich, 1957) pp. 154-56.

Ruha spiritus sanctus. Pater tamen grecum est, et latine sonat genitor. Bar graece, filius latine dicitur.¹⁶

Another example of the employment of the three languages is the interpretation of the names of the books of the Old Testament. A typical illustration of the technique is found in the Irish compilation of questions and answers on biblical subjects which is found in a ninth-century manuscript:

INT Quomodo vocatur in tribus linguis iste liber <Genesis?>
 RP Bresith in ebraea lingua, quod interpretatur principium.
 Exameron in grecum, hoc est sex dierum.
 Genesis in latinum, id est mundi et hominis.¹⁷

The unknown author of the synopsis of the Pseudo-Gelasian Decree,¹⁸ which is found in the Irish *Liber de numeris*, has so reedited the second chapter of the Decree that almost all the names of the books of the Old Testament are found in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin. The derivation of the word *psalterium* is especially interesting because it allows us to trace back to Isidore's *Etymologiae* the source which underlies it: "Psalmorum liber qui NABLA hebraice, PSALTERIUM grece, Organum latine dicitur. . ."¹⁹ The same interpretation appears in a still more remarkable form in an early Hiberno-Latin commentary on the Psalms, which is contained in an unedited manuscript in St. Gall.²⁰ "Haec sunt nomina huius libri <psalmorum>

¹⁶ Pseudo-Isidore, *Liber de numeris* 10 (PL 83, 1302B); B. Bischoff, *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 42 (1951) 30; R. Bolgar, *The Classical Heritage* (Cambridge, 1954) pp. 122-23, 409. Note the corrupt orthography of *Ruha* for Jerome's *Rua* (*Comment. in Ezech.*; PL 25, 19D). Cf. Abelard, *Dialectica*, tract. 3, 1 (ed. L. M. Rijk, *Wijsgerige Teksten en Studies* 1 [Assen, 1956] 339) for the continuation of this curious etymology: "Bar graece, filius latine dicitur." *Abba* is clearly from Rom 8:16, while *Ben* is probably derived from Isidore, *Etym.* 7, 7, 19. I would like to thank George Glanzman, S.J., Professor of Old Testament at Woodstock College, for his kind assistance with the Hebrew questions involved in this and the subsequent notes.

¹⁷ Lyons 447 (376), fol. 106^v (s. ix): *Interrogationes vel responsiones tam de veteri quam novi testamenti*; B. Bischoff, *Sacris erudiri* 6 (1954) 224-30. Note here that the Hebrew article is not represented with *Bresith*.

¹⁸ E. von Dobschütz, *Das Decretum Gelasianum (Texte und Untersuchungen* 38; Leipzig, 1912) pp. 66-75.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 67. Cf. Isidore, *Etym.* 6, 2, 15: "Psalmorum liber Graece psalterium, Hebraice nabla, Latine organum dicitur." *Nablum* (1 Chr 15:16, 20, 28; 1 Mac 13:51) is a musical instrument, the lyre. *Nebel* (Jer 13:12) in Origen represents Hebrew *nēbel* or *nebel* (lyre).

²⁰ St. Gallen 261, p. 147 (s. ix¹); B. Bischoff, *Sacris erudiri* 6 (1954) 233.

apud Hebreos: sephir,²¹ spithamis,²² nabra; cum Grecis taloim,²³ psalmus,²⁴ psalterium; cum Latinis vero volumus,²⁵ vel laus vel organum." The interpretation rests on certain Hebrew, Greek, and Latin words excerpted from Jerome, Eucherius, and Isidore and woven into a triple triad of derivations from the three languages.

In this same commentary on the Psalms the author's investigation of the etymology of *diapsalma* is guided by Hilary, Jerome, Augustine, and Isidore. The conclusion to which the whole discussion leads is the expression of *diapsalma* in the three languages: "Zesalla vel sella in ebraea, diapsalma in greco, semper sonat in latinum intervallum orationis."²⁶

In a small collection of questions and answers on various aspects of the Bible,²⁷ we find a number of questions dealing with etymologies. The work, which is clearly a product of the Irish schools, probably originated in Upper Italy, perhaps even in Bobbio, in the ninth century or earlier. The author of this work proposes the following question on the word "evangelium": "Quomodo vocatur evangelium in tribus principalibus linguis? Ita, ethloem vel ethleum in ebraica, evangelium in greca, bona adnuntiatio in latina." The answer "ethloem vel ethleum" is peculiar to Irish biblical exegesis²⁸ and is found in a great number of Irish commentaries.²⁹

The Irish commentary, the *Interrogationes vel responsiones*, which has

²¹ Isidore, *Etym.* 6, 2, 15: "Titulus autem in psalmis Hebraicus ita est, Sepher Thehilim. . . ." *Sephir* stands for Hebrew *sēpher*.

²² Eucherius, *Instructiones* 2 (CSEL 31, 149). The word *spithamis* is not identifiable as Hebrew or Aramaic.

²³ Isidore, *Etym.* 6, 2, 15.

²⁴ Eucherius, *ibid.*: "Spithames palmus" (*sic*).

²⁵ Isidore, *Etym.* 6, 2, 15. "Volumus" is an obvious corruption of "Volumen."

²⁶ Clm. 14715, fol. 1^r-1^v (s. ix^d); B. Bischoff, *Sacris erudiri* 6 (1954) 233. This Regensburg manuscript together with St. Gallen 261 (cf. supra n. 20) constitutes the manuscript tradition of the commentary. Cf. Jerome, *Epist.* 28 (PL 22, 433-35) for the source of the citation in the text. *Zesalla* has no meaning in Hebrew. *Sella* should read *selā* in Hebrew.

²⁷ Clm. 6235, fol. 32^v (s. ix med.): "Pauca de libris catholicorum scriptorum in evangelia excerpta"; B. Bischoff, *Sacris erudiri* 6 (1954) 238; B. Griesser, "Die handschriftliche Ueberlieferung der 'Expositio IV Evangeliorum' des Ps.-Hieronymus," *Revue bénédictine* 49 (1937) 283.

²⁸ "Ethloem vel ethleum" are unknown in Hebrew.

²⁹ Cf. Vienna, lat. 940, fol. 13^v (s. viii-ix): Commentary on Matthew: "Evangelium . . . ethlum vel ethlum in hebreo"; Lyons 447 (376), fol. 136^r (s. ix): *Interrogationes vel responsiones*: "Inde hebraicae vel siricae etlocum vel ethleum sit nominatum"; B. Bischoff, *Sacris erudiri* 6 (1954) 242-45; 224-30; B. Bischoff, *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 44 (1951) 31; K. Meyer, *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie* 8 (1912) 113.

been mentioned above,³⁰ proposes many curious etymologies, which are based on the three principal languages.

IN Apostolus quomodo vocatur in tribus linguis?

RP Siluanus in hebraea, Apostolus in greca, Missus in latina.

IN Quomodo vocatur epistola in tribus linguis?

RP Sylva vel sila in hebraica, Epistola in greca, Missa in latina.³¹

When the commentators attempt to explain the suprascription of the cross in the three languages, they not only employ a fictitious Hebrew and Greek, but they also present an interpretation of Pilate's formula, "Iesus Nazarenus Rex Iudaeorum," which is not only outside the Western tradition but clearly opposed to the sense of the words. The following examples are typical. In an Irish commentary on St. Mark's Gospel, which may be the work of a certain Cummeanus (ca. 650),³² we find the following interpretation of the suprascription: "Et erat titulus causae eius inscriptus, Rex Iudaeorum. Quod in titulis praenotatur psalmorum: 'In finem ne corrumpas'. Et hoc tribus linguis: Malach Ieudim, Basileus Exomologeton, Rex confitentium."³³ In an Irish commentary on St. Matthew's Gospel, which is found in a late eighth-century manuscript,³⁴ we read: "Hic est rex Iudaeorum. In tribus linguis erat adscribta, id est Basilius homologessius et Malchus Iudeorum et rex confessorum." A fuller statement of the same idea is expressed in the enigmatic Irish work, the *Prebium de multorum exemplaribus*.³⁵ This biblical compendium contains a series of questions and answers, which are to a large extent based on patristic sources. The etymological interpretation of the suprascription of the cross which the author presents is clearly in the Irish tradition:

Hoc est titulus in cruce Christi, quod scripsit Pilatus. In Ebraica scriptum est: Annum Basilion Toon Martyrion. In Grega dicitur: Visa Malchus Iudaeorum. Et in Latina hoc dicitur: Hic est Iesus Christus Rex Iudaeorum.³⁶

³⁰ Lyons 447 (376) fol. 150^r (s. ix); cf. supra n. 17.

³¹ *Siluanus* is rooted ultimately in the qal passive participle of *sālah* (*sālāh*) as a noun. We have the form *selua* (fem.) as a transcription of *sālāhā*. *Sylva* and *sila* are obviously connected. They are ultimately rooted in *salah*. The Syriac *sālāhā* means "apostle" and the Aramaic *šilhā* can be rendered "missile."

³² B. Bischoff, *Sacris erudiri* 6 (1954) 200-202; 257-58; Ps.-Jerome, *Comment. in evang. secundum Marcum* (PL 30, 662AB).

³³ The form *malach*, as it stands, is the ordinary transcription for "messenger," which is *mābāk*. The ordinary transcription for the word "king" is *malch*. However, in the Septuagint (1 Chr 9:41) we have a transcription *malach* for *Melek*. *Ieudim* is a good transcription of the Hebrew.

³⁴ Vienna, lat. 940, fol. 136^r (s. viii-ix); B. Bischoff, *Sacris erudiri* 6 (1954) 242-45.

³⁵ Clm. 6302, fol. 67^v (s. viii⁹).

³⁶ This is a good example of fictitious Hebrew and Greek.

The fourth example is taken from the Irish work, *Interrogationes vel responsiones*,³⁷ which, as we have already noted above, is a collection of questions and answers on biblical themes. The interpretation of the suprascription of the cross expresses in a fuller manner the same tradition that we have seen in the three preceding examples:

Et posuerunt super capud eius causam ipsius scriptam: "Hic est Iesus Christus Rex Iudeorum." Hic est titulus in tribus linguis: Primum, in hebraea ita legitur: Iesus Messias Malcus Iudeorum; in greca: Istin Sotyr Christus Basilion Exhomologisin. In latinum: Hic est Salvator unctus Rex Confessorum.³⁸

The derivation of the names of the four parts of the world in the three principal languages incorporates the ancient names Anatholis, Dissis, Arctus, and Missimbria, which are found in *The Book of the Secrets of Henoch*³⁹ and which very probably became the property of the early Middle Ages through the writing of Augustine.⁴⁰ The author's etymological derivations are presented in four triads:

IN Quomodo vocantur quattuor partes mundi in tribus linguis?
 <RP> Mestra vel Zarain ebraea, Anathole in greca, Oriens in latina.
 Emoreus in ebraea vel Negeb, Messembria in greca, Meridies in latina.
 Araba in hebraea, Dissis in greca, Occidens in latina.
 Sapum in hebraea, Arcam in greca, <A>quilo in latina.⁴¹

In the famous Irish commentary on the Catholic Epistles,⁴² which is preserved in the Badische Landesbibliothek in Karlsruhe,⁴³ the interpretation of the text, "Nec Ave ei dixeritis" (2 Jn 10), reproduces in a corrupt form Jerome's exegesis of Mt 10:12-13: "Ave grecum, id est pax tecum, quia enim grece dicitur here et latine have. Hoc hebreo siroque sermone appellatur

³⁷ Cf. supra n. 17.

³⁸ *Malcus* is a latinized form of *Malch*.

³⁹ *The Book of the Secrets of Henoch* 30, 13-14 (ed. R. H. Charles, *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament* 2 [Oxford, 1913] 449).

⁴⁰ Augustine, *In Iohannis evangelium tract.* 9, 14; 10, 12 (*Corpus christianorum, ser. lat.* 36, 98, 108); *In psalmum 95 enarratio* 15 (*Corpus christianorum, ser. lat.* 39, 1352).

⁴¹ Cf. supra n. 17. Neither *mestra* nor *emoreus* are Hebrew words. *Zarain* and *araba* may transcribe the stem from which one of the words for east (*ʔrḥ*) and west (*ʔrb*) are derived. However, in Semitic the word for east and west always has a *mem* prefix, i.e., "the place of coming forth" and "the place of going down." *Sapum* is a transcription of *šāpôn*, while *negeb* is the Hebrew word for "south."

⁴² J. Kenney, *op. cit.* 1, 277-78; A. Holder, *Die Reichenauer Handschriften* 1 (Leipzig, 1906) 531-32; M. Esposito, "A Seventh Century Commentary on the Catholic Epistles," *Journal of Theological Studies* 21 (1920) 316-18.

⁴³ Karlsruhe, Aug., CCXXXIII, fol. 1^r-40^v (s. viii-ix): *Commentarius epistulae Iacobi*; B. Bischoff, *Sacris erudiri* 6 (1954) 269-70.

salamiach sive salamach, id est pax tecum. . . .⁴⁴ This citation illustrates not only the decadent state of the patristic texts, but also a highly corrupted transcription of Hebrew and Greek words which were derived from these texts. It is to be regretted that we do not fully understand either the history of the patristic manuscript tradition in the pre-Carolingian period or the method which *magister* and *discipulus* employed in the patristic studies pursued in the Bible schools.

There is evidence to show that these commentators were able to give the correct etymology of the sacred names, *Christus* and *Iesus*,⁴⁵ and there is even evidence to show that they had a certain facility in writing these two names in Greek letters.⁴⁶ I will cite here only one example, which I have taken from an Irish collection of *Quaestiones vel glosae*, which dates from the early ninth century: "Iesus in hebreo, Sothyr in greco, Salvator in latino. Christus in greco, Messias in hebreo, Unctus in latino."⁴⁷

In the Irish *Liber de numeris* we find the etymological derivation of the word *littera* in the three principal languages: "Apud hebreos, sephir; apud grecos, gramma; apud latinos, littera."⁴⁸ And in another passage of the same work the author is struck with the realization that the angelic hymn of praise to the Trinity always resounds with "Almus! Ageos! Alleluia! Et in his vocibus A semper precedit. Almus namque aebraice, Ageos grece dicitur, quod latine Sanctus sonat."⁴⁹ One sees here in a very primitive, simple form the tendency, which I believe to be Irish, to relate the letters of the alphabet

⁴⁴ Karlsruhe, Aug., CCXXXIII, fol. 37^v (s. viii-ix); Jerome, *Comment. in evang. Matthaei* 1, 10 (PL 26, 66A). *Salamiach*, as it stands, is not Hebrew. In the manuscript it is written with a long accent over the *i*. It is possible that the copyist of this manuscript had before him an exemplar which read *Salamlach*, and that in transcribing he mistook the *l* for *i longa*; hence, *Salamiach* with a long accent. Cf. W. M. Lindsay, "Collectanea varia," *Palaeographia latina* 2 (1923) 30-52. *Salamach* is a good transcription for "your peace." Note the use of the second person singular masculine suffix in *-ach* for Massoretic *-ka*.

⁴⁵ Ps.-Jerome, *Comment. in evang. secundum Marcum* (PL 30, 611C); cf. supra n. 32; Clm. 6235, fol. 49^v (s. ix med.), an Irish commentary on St. Luke's Gospel; B. Bischoff, *Sacris erudiri* 6 (1954) 260. Probably the source of the citation in the text is Isidore's *Etym.* 7, 2, 6-7.

⁴⁶ Ps.-Jerome, *ibid.*; M. Laistner, *op. cit.*, p. 242.

⁴⁷ Angers 55 (48), fol. 11^r (s. ix¹); B. Bischoff, *Sacris erudiri* 6 (1954) 238-39. Cf. also the gloss on the *Hymnus Sti. Colmani Mic Ui Cluasai* in *The Irish Liber Hymnorum* 1 (ed. J. H. Bernard and R. Atkinson, *Henry Bradshaw Society* 13; London, 1898) p. 28.

⁴⁸ *Liber de numeris* 3, 31; Colmar (Murbach) 39, fol. 94^r-94^v (s. viii-ix); R. McNally, *op. cit.*, p. 61. *Sephir* does not mean a letter of the alphabet but rather a book or an epistle.

⁴⁹ *Liber de numeris* 3, 36; Colmar (Murbach) 39, fol. 96^r-96^v (s. viii-ix); R. McNally, *op. cit.*, pp. 62-63.

to Christian revelation, to join theology and grammar together in a mystical relationship.⁶⁰

The examples which I have presented above are far from exhausting all the possible usages of the three principal languages which occur in Irish biblical commentaries and are far from giving a complete characterization of the exegesis which is in question in this study.⁶¹ When, however, the whole picture of the Bible exegesis of the early Middle Ages is finally drawn, one will be able to see more clearly the futility of exegesis without philology, and the hopelessness of theology without exegesis.

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⁶⁰ Bern 417, fol. 105^v-108^v (s. ix): "De litteris latinis quidam sapiens interpretatus est"; H. Hagen, *Anecdota Helvetica* (Leipzig, 1870) pp. 302-5; Karlsruhe, Aug., CXII, fol. 3^v-13^r (s. ix): "A vocalis est"; R. McNally, *op. cit.*, pp. 37, 38, 42; *Liber de numeris* 7, 43: Colmar (Murbach) 39, fol. 161^r-163^r: "Septem littere sunt"; R. McNally, *op. cit.*, pp. 173-77.

⁶¹ As a continuation of this note I have prepared a separate study of the nomenclature of the Magi in the Hebrew, Greek, and Latin of the early Irish biblical commentaries. It forms another curious manifestation of Irish fantasy in the field of biblical exegesis.