familiar and flawed "semi-Pelagians" (2–6). The decision not to translate some French (for example, 30, 189) as well as Latin text (112–15, 118–19, 122, 128, 143, 168), sometimes where the meaning is important to the argument, somewhat limits the book's accessibility. Yet Hwang has provided an original and useful introduction for readers first encountering Prosper.

Kevin Uhalde
Ohio University

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Christians and Pagans: The Conversion of Britain from Alban to Bede. By **Malcolm Lambert**. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2010. xx + 329 pp. $50.00 cloth.

I was delighted to open this book and read Malcolm Lambert's rueful confession of a conversion experience in the National Library of Wales. Lambert suddenly realized that the history of "British" Christianity must include the converts of Wales, Cornwall, and Scotland, and that even the Irish had helped with Britain's proselytization; further, that Britain's Christian traditions continued on the island's fringes while they seemed to disappear for a century or more in Anglo-Saxon territory, and that they contributed to the Christian revival of the seventh century. The problem of Britain's first Christians has puzzled English historians for centuries since there is little explicit evidence about their practices, beliefs, or communities. Although Lambert's new narrative of British Christianization tackles that undocumented period and graciously includes the Celts, I was disappointed to realize that this is still a very old-fashioned history. Lambert relies on Bede's eighth-century *Historia Ecclesiastica* for his teleology, using recent archaeological work only to substantiate and enhance Bede's account rather than challenge it. He also shares two of the monk's most medieval sensibilities: a reductive view of non-Christian religions and an assumption that Christianization was inevitable.

Lambert was further inspired to write by meditation on the work of his fellow medievalist, R. I. Moore. With Moore (*The Origins of European Dissent* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983]), he ponders the "crucial questions" of religious change, that is, "when, how, and even whether Christianity became the consolation of the simple in their misery, the source and frame of all their thoughts as the familiar picture of the age of faith would have us believe" (xviii). Lambert suggests that Christianity brought "consolation" to

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the "troubled lives" of Britons during the undocumented centuries of raids, invasions, and immigrations. After all, Christianity had so much more going for it than paganism, according to Lambert: it offered a moral system, promoted compassion and mercy regardless of social status, and came with prayers as well as saints (such a bargain!), whereas paganism was nothing but ungovernable magic. Christianity appealed to individuals concerned about their salvation, whereas polytheism was a crowd religion that "lacked the vitality to defeat Christian belief" (5). What is more, Christianity's doctrine of redemption affected "the minds and hearts of the poor just as much as [those of] the magnates" (xx).

Anyone who can deduce spiritual longing and private epiphanies from fragments of red slipware must have a pretty good "instinctive feel" for British Christianity, as Lambert phrases it. It takes imagination to see in the scanty debris either misery or consolation. The archaeologist Charles Thomas had that instinctive feel for imagining religion, according to Lambert, but not Martin Henig (although Henig does understand the "often illogical, highly flexible" paganism of Roman Britain, p. xvi). Like Henig, Lambert locates the Jesus cult as one among many different religions spreading through the imperial provinces of the second and third centuries. From Thomas's classic survey of archaeological evidence, supplemented by more recent reports, Lambert reconstructs the surroundings of Britain's first Christians—floor mosaics, lead cisterns used for baptism or as lavers, silverware decorated with the iconography of dolphins and shepherds, as well as bits of shabby pottery scratched with *chi-rho*s—and concludes that a small population of believers lived scattered across towns and farms of colonial Britain. Where artifacts are lacking and Bede is taciturn, Lambert uses placenames, genetic research, and familiar scraps of writing such as Continental hagiographies and the letters of the missionary Patrick (whose revelations and perseverance Lambert compares, surprisingly, to another famous escaped slave, Harriet Tubman, p. 51).

Lambert offers some sensitive visualizations of the likely past, for instance, when he uses Gildas's and Patrick's writings to suggest the fragile, failing *romanitas* of British congregations on the brink of invasion. But he combines these small insights with careless clichés, such as suggesting a reread of Tacitus's first-century *Germania* to understand sixth-century Germanic religions—which would be like reading Pliny to understand Anglo-Saxon Christians. He pays more attention, though, to Britons in Wales, Cornwall, and Scotland. Uinniau (also known as Ninian or Finnian) of the Candida Casa at Whithorn and Columcille of Iona get almost as much page space as Cuthbert and Wilfrid do in later chapters. There are lengthy discourses on Christian allusions (or lack thereof) in early Welsh poetry, the scholarly achievements of Irish churchmen, and ogham-carved stones.

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Lambert ably dramatizes the late sixth-century mission sent by Pope Gregory to the southern kingdom of Kent, turning it into a personal struggle by the missionary Augustine, first bishop of Canterbury, to reestablish a Roman presence at the edge of the known world. Lambert imitates Bede's emphases, rehearsing favorite episodes: the charming analogy of life as a swallow's brief flight, the infiltration of Northumbria by Celticizing monks, Oswald's life and cult, the unrelenting crankiness of Wilfrid, and the canonical efficiency of Archbishop Theodore. He differs from Bede in arguing that most Anglo-Saxon Christians came to value both Irish and Welsh styles of religion as well as the Romanizing authority of Theodore. But, just like Bede, Lambert's favorite Christians are the Northumbrians, who gave us Lindisfarne, Saint Cuthbert, the Codex Amiatinus, and, of course, Bede himself.

Lambert's ideas about religious change are closer to those of nineteenth-century missionaries than those of fifth-century Britons or seventh-century Anglo-Saxons. The archaeological evidence from Britain is rich with implications for lived and built religion and the slow shift in habits that eventually produced permanent communities of Christians. But in this book, the bones and stones are made to support a story about individual religious beliefs and motives. The narrative has heroes—the "pioneers" of Christianity, "natural leaders and motivators" such as Patrick, and "consolidators" such as Theodore—and bad guys—Wilfrid and the pagans who lacked compassion, believed in demons and magic, and really enjoyed warfare and heavy drinking. There are few women in the book besides the predictable Hild and Bertha, although the author does insist twice on page 298 that "queens mattered." Most troubling, though, is Lambert's conviction that Christian ideas were superior to any other religious concepts that ever flitted through British minds—like a sparrow in one window and out another—over six long centuries.

Nonetheless, I have to confess: I enjoyed this book. Lambert propels interesting characters through his narrative of spiritual achievement. I read with the same guilty pleasure I take from movies about ancient Britain, in which all the Romans speak with British accents, all the Britons are disguised as Picts, and the missionaries are mild and reasonable, just like Anglican pastors (no Wilfrid in the movies). I cannot recommend Lambert's book to impressionable graduate students—give them Thomas and Henig, along with Richard Sharpe, Thomas Charles-Edwards, and Ian Wood instead. Undergraduates and generally educated readers will understand and probably like this book, though, and it makes entertaining reading for professional medievalists.

Lisa M. Bitel
University of Southern California

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