

John Willinsky, *The Intellectual Properties of Learning: A Prehistory from Saint Jerome to John Locke* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018).

## OPEN ACCESS FINAL DRAFT

### Chapter Three Learning in the Early Middle Ages

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## Chapter 3

### Learning in the Early Middle Ages

“I have organized the diverse subjects, drawn from a range of authors and a mix of periods...in a coherent, organic whole.”<sup>1</sup> So boasts the fifth-century Roman, Macrobius Ambrosius Theodosius about all that he had achieved in assembling his *Saturnalia*, a compilation of writings that he arranged into a dialogue. “I judge nothing dearer than your education, and in making it complete,” Macrobius informed his readers in the introduction, “I have made a point of reading on your behalf, so that all that I have toiled through – in various books of Greek and Latin, both before and since you were born – might be available to you as a fund of knowledge.”<sup>2</sup> Macrobius was part of Late Antiquity’s encyclopedic tradition. Its artful compilation of texts at once suited monasticism in the selfless humility of the task and in making the most of a medieval shortage of sources. A variety of learning was bound together and brought within the walls of the monastery. The early Middle Ages, from the fifth to the tenth centuries, was “the age of the compilation,” according to Neil Hathaway, a historian at the University of California, Los Angeles.<sup>3</sup> The Oxford historian Richard W. Southern notes how “the work of extraction and arrangement was the true medium of the monastic scholars.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Macrobius, *Saturnalia*, trans. Robert A. Kaster (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), 5. Adding to this sense of the productive monastery, Georges Duby notes that, “virtually all the extant texts from a century-long period between 1030 and 1120 originated in the monasteries,” which was the “very period of monasticism’s triumph”; *The Three Orders: Feudal Society Imagined* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 174, 176.

<sup>2</sup> Macrobius, *Saturnalia*, 3.

<sup>3</sup> Neil Hathaway, “Compilatio: From Plagiarism to Compiling,” *Viator* 20 (1989), 19.

<sup>4</sup> R. W. Southern, *The Making of the Middle Ages* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953), 182. As well, a number of works by different authors were commonly and economically bound in a single book; it would be catalogued by the first title alone, as if all that was needed was to remind those who already knew its

Their writing often demonstrated, Southern observes, “the quiet, industrious unambitious mind at work reducing years of reading to an orderly form.”<sup>5</sup>

The one instance of this compiler’s art that shines above all other medieval instances was the seventh-century *Etymologies or Origins* (*Etymologiae originum*) by Isidore of Seville. Isidore was the bishop of Seville, appointed around 600, rather than a monk. Yet he declared himself Protector of Monks and his ordered compilation of sacred and secular, Christian and pagan, sources was intended to inform and enable learning with monastic communities. The monks had been his teachers while he was growing up, and he later composed for them a lenient monastic rule (*Monastica Regula*), “which he tempered most fittingly for use in this country and for the souls of the weak,” as his friend and colleague Braulio put it.<sup>6</sup>

Isidore was still working on the massive *Etymologies* when he died in 636. Braulio finished preparing the work, while also helpfully adding a table of contents and dividing it into twenty volumes.<sup>7</sup> It was not long before monastic scribes across Latin Christendom were turning out copies of this compilation that covered everything from

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contents where the collection might be currently stored; James Stuart Beddie, “The Ancient Classics in the Medieval Libraries,” *Speculum* 5, no. 1 (1930), 4.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 183. Southern: “The process of collection and arrangement gave an impulse to thought and to methods of enquiry which bore fruit in the schools and universities of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.”

<sup>6</sup> Cited in “Introduction,” in Isidore of Seville, *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, trans. Stephen A. Barney, W. J. Lewis, J. A. Beach, and Oliver Berghof (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 8. Martin Irvine reports that Isidore’s *Monastica Regula* included not just three hours a day for reading, but “as well... a period when the community would meet to discuss problems posed by *divina lectio* and the abbot was to explain difficult passages for everyone”; *Making of Textual Culture*, 218.

<sup>7</sup> In this earlier age before title pages, the *Etymologies* opened with a note to readers, in the case of one early edition, explaining the table of contents: “So that you may quickly find what you are looking for in this work, this page reveals for you, reader, what matters the author of this volume discusses in the individual books”; Isidore, *Etymologies*, 34. Ernst Robert Curtius notes that “the compilation is a literary genre which was highly popular and highly respected in late Antiquity,” while noting of Isidore that “to impart knowledge was his aim... the only possible literary form for such an aim was to collect and arrange excerpted matter”; *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, trans. by Willard R. Trask (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1953), 456.

grammatical forms to domestic furnishings. Within a decade or so of Isidore's death and the book's release, a version of it was to be found in Ireland. Nearly a thousand manuscript copies of some portion of this work survive to this day.<sup>8</sup>

It was not unusual for a bishop to make a gift to a monastery, even though these institutions were often set outside the bishop's realm of influence by papal decree. Isidore's gift of the *Etymologies*, however, went beyond anything typical, even as it proved something of a Trojan Horse. The Roman education that Benedict of Nursia had fled in disgust as a young man, Isidore of Seville brought in through the monastery gate and placed in the library chest, where it awakened the (pagan) intellectual interests that Benedict abhorred. *Etymologies* was both a source and model for the monastic community. As such, it has been said to be "arguably the most influential book, after the Bible, in the learned world of the Latin West for nearly a thousand years," by its modern team of editors and translators.<sup>9</sup>

The governing principle of *Etymologies* is that language is itself the source of knowledge. The true sense of the world is to be found in the origins and earlier uses of words: "Adam, as blessed Jerome informs us, means 'human' or 'earthling' or 'red earth,'" to take one example from Isidore's work, "for from earth was flesh made... Eve (*Eva*) means 'life' or 'calamity' or 'woe' (*vae*)."<sup>10</sup> This etymological approach required that Isidore do more than just compile authorities. He had to carefully order, integrate,

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<sup>8</sup> On the early Irish copy of the *Etymologies* based on an existing fragment, see Michael W. Herren, "Storehouses of Learning: Encyclopaedias and Other Reference Works in Ireland and Pre-Bedan Anglo Saxon England," in *Practice in Learning: The Transfer of Encyclopaedic Knowledge in the Early Middle Ages*, eds. Rolf H. Bremmer Jr. and Kees Dekker (Paris: Peeters, 2010), 10. J. N. Hillgarth reports that only Augustine has more manuscripts surviving from before 800 in Ireland than Isidore; "Ireland and Spain in the Seventh Century," *Peritia* 3 (1984), 5.

<sup>9</sup> Barney et al., "Introduction," *Etymologies*, 3.

<sup>10</sup> Isidore, *Etymologies*, VII.v.i.4 162. Note the unfortunate anagram that then ties *Eva* to *vae* (calamity).

and weave together pagan and Christian traditions around the origins of words, organizing a coherent whole out of the chaotic richness of language. As for his sources, if he called on Scripture more often than Virgil, he cited Aristotle ahead of Augustine, at least in terms of attributed quotations.<sup>11</sup>

To consider an instance, for the grammatical concept of the *negative*, in his section on Figures of Words and of Expressions, he draws, without noting his source, on a letter by Jerome for this rather unexpected example of expressing the negative through “wondering”: “What! I can scarcely survive; would I wish to fornicate?”<sup>12</sup> He then turns to Ovid (also without attribution, although he acknowledges them both elsewhere) for a “grieving” negative – “Woe is me, that no love is curable with herbs.”<sup>13</sup>

*Etymologies* represents both the medieval gift economy and proto-intellectual-property regime. The work was given to the monastic community by Isidore as something borrowed, plundered, synthesized, and created, with much of it found in others’ compilations. It was the systematic ordering of that knowledge that constituted the value and advance of this intellectual property. Isidore appears to have been aware, if not consistently, of the attribution and property issues involved in creating such a work. This sort of compilation forms an early test case in the historic formation of the scholar’s rights and responsibilities of use with others’ work (even as scholars today continue to work on identifying all whom he cited in this work).<sup>14</sup> Its textual descendants in the form of encyclopedias, dictionaries, anthologies, and reference works in general have

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<sup>11</sup> Determining the full set of sources for *Etymologies* is a scholarly project that is still underway; Barney, Lewis, Beach, and Berghof, “Introduction,” *Etymologies*, 11, 14.

<sup>12</sup> Isidore, *Etymologies*, II.xxi.24–77.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Barney, Lewis, Beach, and Berghof, report in their Introduction to *Etymologies* that five of the projected twenty volumes in a scholarly edition, with full attributions, published by Belles Lettres in Paris had been completed by 2006; “Introduction,” *Etymologies*, 11.

continued to obscure, in some cases, and fully document, in other cases, what is owed to whom.<sup>15</sup>

For his part, Isidore was more set on the value of the compilation than on the accreditation. He addresses the matter of contribution and credit head-on in Book 10 of *Etymologies*, which deals with defining “certain terms for human beings” one of which is a *plagiarist*.

A plagiarist (*compiler*), one who mixes the words of another with his own, as pigment-makers customarily crush together diverse things mixed up in a mortar (*pila*). The poet of Mantua [Virgil] was once accused of this crime because of his taking verses of Homer and mixing them with his own, and was called by his rivals a plagiarist of the ancients. He answered them, “It takes great strength to wrest Hercules’ club from his hand.”<sup>16</sup>

Clearly aware of the plagiarism charges that accompany compilations – *compilo* means to plunder, pillage, steal, or snatch – Isidore upholds the skill, as well as the Herculean strength, involved in the compiler’s art. He is careful to locate the root of *compiler* in the mortar (*pila*), as the bowl within which something new is synthesized, as opposed to the pestle (*pilum*) that crushes what is placed in the *pila*. His is a right of use, from this intellectual commons, justified by its achievement of a greater scholarly art or value, with

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<sup>15</sup> For example, *Wikipedia* is now thoroughly engaged in these intellectual property questions of giving credit and establishing authority. See Wikipedia: Verifiability in *Wikipedia*. Also, on the Victorian use of sources in dictionaries, see John Willinsky, *Empire of Words: The Reign of the OED* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).

<sup>16</sup> Isidore, *Etymologies*, X.c.44 216.

the care – and no less scholarly value – of accrediting sources still to come. And, of course, Isidore’s definition of plagiarist turns out to be itself cobbled together, without attribution, from the work of Suetonius, Macrobius, and Jerome, who also wrote on this theme.<sup>17</sup>

The medieval compilation was originally known as a *florilegium*, a compound of *flos* (flower) and *legere* (to gather), with the emphasis on the beauty of the gathered flowers. It took on greater intellectual authority with the attribution and crediting of its contributors, if not always bearing the name of its original humble compiler. By the thirteenth century, the compilation was made up of carefully attributed excerpts in the form we would recognize today as an anthology.<sup>18</sup> The anonymous compiler of the twelfth-century *Florilegium morale Oxoniense* states, “I have inscribed the name of its authors next to each of the *dicta*, and arranged with that name similar or dissimilar *dicta*, by the same author or by others... that I thought would profit this school.”<sup>19</sup> What had also changed since Isidore’s day, some six centuries earlier, is that the compiler is now apologetic about intervening in the collection: “To this... unworthy type of compilation I have added, although somewhat unwillingly, what little part of my lengthy night labor it

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<sup>17</sup> Hathaway finds Isidore’s entry for *compiler* mirrors an unacknowledged earlier comment on the topic by Jerome, although he bases his etymology for the term on the pestle rather than the mortar; “*Compilatio*,” 25, 27, 28.

<sup>18</sup> When it comes to the etymology of *compile* (verb), the *Oxford English Dictionary* states that “the history is by no means clear,” citing Isidore’s equating of compiler with plagiarist, as well as the fourteenth century Old French for “constructed, built.” George Hardin Brown: “Medieval compilers did not conceal the fact that they were deriving their material from classical, patristic, and other medieval sources; they often cite their sources, ‘ut Augustinus dicit,’ etc.”; personal communication, July 1, 2013.

<sup>19</sup> Cited in Hathaway, *Compilatio*, 40. The citing was complicated by the extent of anonymous authorship, as Richard Gameson observes that “‘signed’ manuscripts are the exception not the rule in the early medieval Romanesque periods”; “Signed Manuscripts from Early Romanesque Flanders: Saint-Bertin and Saint-Vaast,” in *Pen in Hand: Medieval Scribal Portraits, Colophons and Tools*, ed. Michael Gullick (Walkern: Red Gull Press, 2006), 49.

was considered to require.”<sup>20</sup> Standards had shifted, and yet this compiler felt compelled to remind readers of the learned labors invested in creating a valued intellectual property, involving far more than simple copying.

### *Venerable Bede*

In 679, when Bede was but a young lad of seven years of age, he was, “by the care of my kinsmen,” as he describes it, “put into the charge of the reverend Abbot Benedict and then of Ceolfrieth, to be educated.”<sup>21</sup> He had entered the twin Benedictine monasteries of Wearmouth-Jarrow in the north of Anglo-Saxon England. He was to proceed through the holy orders of oblate, novice, and monk over the course of his life, while avoiding the role of abbot. What those 55 years at Wearmouth-Jarrow added up to was the quiet and humble triumph of monastic learning. Over the course of his life, Bede produced an amazing variety of works in history, grammar, orthography, rhetoric, hagiography, mathematics, chronology, biblical commentary, and geography, not to mention devotional poetry. “Amid the observance of the discipline of the Rule and the daily task of singing in the church,” Bede writes of this productive life, “it has always been my delight to learn or to teach or to write.”<sup>22</sup>

Bede’s life amounted to a transformative observance of the Rule of Benedict. He made teaching into a respectable vocation for the Benedictine monk and nun, where the Rule had limited teaching to abbot and prioress: “It is right that the master should speak

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<sup>20</sup> Hathaway, *Compilatio*, 40.

<sup>21</sup> Bede, *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, trans. Bertram Colgrave (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), 5.24 357.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.



and teach,” reads the Rule, “while the disciple should be made silent and listen.”<sup>23</sup> Bede overcame, with some pleasure, the earlier paradox of monastic learning. He successfully challenged Jerome’s declaration that “a monk’s function is not to teach, but to lament; to mourn either for himself or for the world.”<sup>24</sup> Rather, Bede’s stance was that learning was a rightful trade for monastics: “I have made it my business, for my own benefit and that of my brothers, to make brief extracts from the works of the venerable fathers on the holy Scriptures, or to add notes of my own to clarify their sense and interpretation.”<sup>25</sup> Through this educational embrace, Bede resolved the monastic paradox, introduced in the previous chapter, by identifying this selfless, or rather other-directed, property of learning that was engaged in taking up the world and opening what was learned for the benefit of others. “What Bede wanted to do and did superbly,” George Hardin Brown, Stanford English and classics professor, notes, “was educate, soberly, quietly, discreetly.”<sup>26</sup>

The value of this learning figures prominently in his celebrated *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*. He reports, for example, that the English were drawn to Irish monasteries in the sixth century by the reputation of the Irish for learned grace and generosity: “There were many in England, both nobles and commons, who... retired to Ireland either for the sake of religious studies or to live a more ascetic life [and]... devoted themselves faithfully to the monastic life, while others preferred to travel round

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<sup>23</sup> *The Rule of Benedict*, trans. Carolinne White (London: Penguin, 2008), 21.

<sup>24</sup> Jerome, “Against Vigilantius,” in *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, 2<sup>nd</sup> series, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, *St. Jerome: Letters and Select Works*, vol. 6 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1954) 15, 423. Jerome goes on to reinforce the point: “Why, you will say, go to the desert?...that I may not be disturbed”; *ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> Bede, *The Ecclesiastical History*, 5.24, 357. Some years ago, Robert B. Palmer noted how “modern scholarship has said little about one other extremely important aspect of Bede’s genius, which the Middle Ages had long recognized in silence – his lucidity and precision as a textbook writer”; “Bede as Textbook Writer: A Study of His *De Arte Metrica*,” *Speculum* 34, no. 4 (1959), 573. Bede’s grammar texts demonstrated “a critical synthesis,” as well as a “sanity of selection,” in Palmer’s judgment; *ibid.*, 584, 574.

<sup>26</sup> George Hardin Brown, *Bede the Educator*, Jarrow Lecture 1996 (Jarrow: St. Paul’s Church, 1997), 1.

to the [monastic] cells of various teachers and apply themselves to study.”<sup>27</sup> Such was the force of Irish learning that “in the case of people suffering from snakebite, the leaves of manuscripts from Ireland were scraped, and the scrapings put in water and given to the sufferer to drink.”<sup>28</sup> Bede also celebrates the openness with which the Irish shared their learning: “The Irish welcomed them all gladly, gave them their daily food, and also provided them with books to read and with instruction, without asking for any payment.”<sup>29</sup>

Bede also did much to celebrate monastic learning in his writing, making it clear that it was integral to the institution. He wrote about the examples of Theodore, a Byzantine Greek who later became archbishop of Canterbury, and Hadrian, a North African who was elected abbot of St. Augustine’s Abbey in Canterbury. The two founded a school in England dedicated to the teaching of Greek and Latin: “Because both of them were extremely learned,” Bede explains, “in sacred and secular literature, they attracted a crowd of students into whose minds they daily poured the streams of wholesome learning.”<sup>30</sup> The reference to learning’s wholesomeness is directed against the common charge that it led to sinful pride and paganism (through secular literature). Where Benedict of Nursia fled his studies in sixth-century Rome to seek redemption in monastic

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<sup>27</sup> Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, 3.27 192.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 1.1 13. Bede reports that Ireland had no snakes, adding further mystery to how such powers were discovered; *ibid.* Irish monasteries also played a strong part in the revival of Latin literature, drawing on Virgil among others, as well as the study of grammar; Bernhard Bischoff, “Benedictine Monasteries and the Survival of Classical Literature,” in *Manuscripts and Libraries in the Age of Charlemagne*, trans. and ed. Michael M. Gorman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 137.

<sup>29</sup> Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, 3. 27, 192. Thomas Cahill refers to this specific Irish development as “a kind of university city to which came thousands of hopeful students first from all over Ireland, then from England, and at last from everywhere in Europe”; *How the Irish Saved Civilization: The Untold Story of Ireland’s Heroic Role from the Fall of Rome to the Rise of Medieval Europe* (New York: Doubleday 1995), 157.

<sup>30</sup> Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, 4. 2, 205. John Henry Newman credits Pope Vitalian for sending Theodore to Canterbury, regarding it as a historic turning point for monastic learning; “The Benedictine Centuries,” *The Atlantis*, 2 (January-July 1859), 14.

solitude and prayer, Bede celebrates Theodore and Hadrian's ability to build a community through their "extremely learned" teaching, as well as through the library at Canterbury, which they created for all to share.<sup>31</sup>

Bede also made much of his own library at Wearmouth-Jarrow, which was highly regarded in light of its roughly 200 volumes.<sup>32</sup> Bede credits the library's size to Benedict Biscop, who had founded Wearmouth and Jarrow in 674 and made repeated journeys to Rome for books.<sup>33</sup> Bede notes with some enthusiasm that Benedict "brought back a large number of books on all branches of sacred knowledge, some bought at a favorable price, others the gifts of well-wishers."<sup>34</sup> Toward the end of Benedict's life, Bede notes, "he gave orders that the fine and extensive library of books which he had brought back from Rome and which were so necessary for improving the standard of education in this church should be carefully preserved as a single collection and not allowed to decay through neglect or be split up piecemeal."<sup>35</sup> Abbot Ceolfrid, who was elected to succeed Benedict, then "doubled the number of books of the libraries in both of the monasteries

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<sup>31</sup> Putnam Fennell Jones notes that, "there is no evidence of any such passion for book-collecting in England before the coming of Theodore and Hadrian"; "The Gregorian Mission and English Education," *Speculum* 3, no. 3 (1928), 346.

<sup>32</sup> David Ganz, "Anglo-Saxon England," in *The Cambridge History of Libraries in Britain and Ireland, Volume 1 to 1640*, eds. Elisabeth Leedham-Green and Teresa Webber (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 95. Ganz includes an extensive list of works, from antiquity and medieval times, that Bede cited from, while noting that only one book, a Greek-Latin copy of Acts, is known to have survived from the library; *ibid.*, 100.

<sup>33</sup> Rosalind Love, "The World of Latin Learning," in *The Cambridge Companion to Bede*, ed. S. DeGregorio (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 43. See Michael Lapidge on the travel to Rome; *The Anglo-Saxon Library* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 77ff.

<sup>34</sup> Bede, "Lives of Abbots of Wearmouth and Jarrow," in *The Age of Bede*, trans D. H. Farmer (London: Penguin, 1965), 188. After Benedict told Egfrid, King of Northumbria, of his studies and books, the king "took to Benedict so warmly that he immediately gave him from his personal property an area of land comprising seventy hides" (enough for seventy families); *ibid.*, 188-189.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 196. No more than a few fragments from the library remain today.

with an ardor equal to that which Benedict had shown in founding them.”<sup>36</sup> Bede reflects that particular sense of the preserved and intact library as forming the natural center or commons of learning’s commonwealth.

Bede contributed much to that and other libraries with the 70 or so works that he composed, according to the advertisement with which he concludes the *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*.<sup>37</sup> He not only took on the role of publicist with these books, but humbly involved himself in all aspects of their production: “I myself am at once my own dictator, stenographer, and copyist.”<sup>38</sup> Working from the commonwealth of the library, Bede skillfully fashioned treatises, compilations, and commentaries for novices and the larger monastic community.

At times, Bede acknowledged the credit system that accompanies the scholar’s right of use, by noting the sources on which he drew in the margins of the page, “lest I be said to steal the sayings of my elders,” he wrote, “and to compose these as my own.”<sup>39</sup> This talk of theft is the intellectual property constant in this story, going back to ancient antiquity. It’s the proof that the text is a property. More often for Bede, however, such marginal notations fell to later scholars, who treated the text like a running literary puzzle. Beyond the marginal annotation, Bede introduced other refinements into the process by, for example, sending his work out for review and comment to various knowledgeable figures.<sup>40</sup> Or by including warnings about thorns among roses and bees amid honey in his use of Virgil, Pliny, and other classical writers for Christian ends,

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 201. Although Ceolfrid did trade “the magnificently worked copy of the Cosmographers [mapmakers] which Benedict had bought in Rome” with King Aldrid “for eight hides of land by the River Fresca,” it was a charitable act in support of the monastery of St. Paul; *ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> Bede, *The Ecclesiastical History*, 5.24, 357-360.

<sup>38</sup> Cited by George Hardin Brown, *A Companion to Bede* (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell, 2009), 11.

<sup>39</sup> Cited and noted by Brown, *Bede the Educator*, 8.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 3.

following the examples of Jerome and Augustine.<sup>41</sup>

As a teacher, Bede emphasized the importance of listening to students, for “when one teaches it is very difficult to prevent some aspect of boastful pride stealing in.”<sup>42</sup> He also allowed that “not one and the same teaching is suitable for all,” but that what was for all was to “excite the hearts of the hearers to offer their good works to the Lord.”<sup>43</sup>

Working among those excited hearts, he expanded the scope of monastic learning. He demonstrated a new level of intellectual engagement with natural philosophy and scientific inquiry, where Augustine and others saw temptation and urged caution.

As well, Bede brought his own experience and observations together with the work of others, such as the Roman naturalist, Pliny the Elder.<sup>44</sup> He held that the world was a globe with latitudinal bands of climate difference, proposing that those who doubted that the world was round should take the time to climb a hill and glance around.<sup>45</sup> He considered the periodicity of the tides, noting “the great fellowship that exists between the ocean and the course of the Moon,” and making his calculations in days and minutes: “*It is as if [the ocean] were dragged forwards against its will by certain exhaltations of the Moon.*”<sup>46</sup> Here, he did not draw on Pliny nor Irish sources that

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<sup>41</sup> See Roger Ray, “Bede and Cicero,” *Anglo-Saxon England* 16 (1987), 1-15.

<sup>42</sup> Cited by T. R. Eckenrode, “Venerable Bede as an Educator,” *History of Education* 6, no. 3 (1977), 160.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 164.

<sup>44</sup> Richard C. Dales, *The Scientific Achievement of the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1973), 33. Love points out, in terms of Bede’s “rich fusion of distinct intellectual traditions,” that he also drew on “a Semitic focus on the ‘letter,’” that is, on the text’s literal level; “World of Latin Learning,” 41. M. L. W. Laistner contrasts Bede’s stance on the classical tradition to that of the seventh-century Abbot Aldhelm of Malmesbury, whose “poetry is steeped in Virgil, and in his prose writings he parades tortuous and artificial conceits of the late imperial rhetorical schools”; Bede is “very sparing” in drawing on “pagan authors”; “Bede as a Classical and Patristic Scholar,” in *The Intellectual Heritage of the Early Middle Ages: Selected Essays of M. L. W. Laistner*, ed. Chester G. Starr (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1957), 96.

<sup>45</sup> Wesley M. Stevens, “Bede’s Scientific Achievement,” in *Bede and His World: Jarrow Lectures 1979-1993*, vol. 2, ed. Michael Lapidge (Farnham UK: Variorum, 1994), 652.

<sup>46</sup> Bede, *The Reckoning of Time*, trans. Faith Wallis (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1999), 82-83.

had addressed the tides. Rather, he collected data over the course of more than two decades from a network of correspondents who recorded their local tidal patterns.<sup>47</sup> It was a rare early instance of collaborative empiricism, which he introduced as a corrective to others' accounts of the tides. This is the particular economy of texts, with learning, in which value is established through engagement with and correction of what is otherwise held in common, both in others' texts and, in this instance, what can be observed of the world.

Yet for Bede, scientific observation must retain its pious purpose. He begins *On the Nature of Things* (*De natura rerum*), another of his schoolbooks, with a prefatory verse of Augustinian caution: "In brief chapters, I, Bede, the servant of God, / Have lightly touched on the varied natures of things / and on the broad ages of fleeting time. You who study the stars above, / Fix your mind's gaze, I pray, on the Light of the everlasting day."<sup>48</sup> Once stated, he turns to what can be learned of the world: "Rains are formed from the little drops of the clouds," he writes in the chapter on precipitation, "they coalesce into bigger drops, no longer supported by the nature of air, sometimes driven by the wind, sometimes dissolved by the sun, they fall down in the form of rain to

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<sup>47</sup> Stevens, "Bede's Scientific Achievement," 657, 662-63. He names, among his sources of data, tidal information from Lindisfarne, Whithorn, and the Isle of Wight, noting the irregularities in lunar and solar tidal effects, as well as Springtides and Neaptides: "Those who live north of me on the same coastline usually receive and give back each tide sooner than I do, and those to the south much later"; *The Reckoning of Time*, 85.

<sup>48</sup> Bede, *On the Nature of Things, and On Times*, trans. Calvin B. Kendall and Faith Wallis (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2010), 71. Augustine objected to the *curiosi* who "look into spiritual matters with a terrestrial eye," where Bede is careful to look into terrestrial matters with a similarly aligned eye; cited by Richard Newhauser, "Augustinian *Vitium curiositatis* and its Reception," in *Saint Augustine and his Influence in the Middle Ages*, eds. Edward B. King and Jacqueline T. Schaefer (Sewanee: Press of the University of the South, 1988), 111. Yet Newhauser also reports on Augustine in a sermon objecting to those who rely upon empirical evidence (based on their five senses) in arriving at matters of faith, such as the resurrection of Christ; *ibid.*, 114.

the earth.”<sup>49</sup>

Bede also set a further standard for the scholarly integrity of medieval monasticism, beyond citing sources and soliciting reviews for work in progress. Relatively late in life, he started to learn Greek, which had been largely lost to the Latin West, to be able to better prepare and verify the classical sources he wanted to use for his work.<sup>50</sup> When he was accused of heresy – learning’s principal occupational hazard in the medieval era – he responded with detailed refutations, defending his autonomy as a thinker, although he was not above resorting to counter-charges that such criticisms were on the order of a ditty “sung stupidly by lascivious rustics at a drinking bout.”<sup>51</sup> And finally, he prepared a *Retraction on the Acts of the Apostles*, following the example of Augustine’s own late reconsiderations, in which Bede revised his earlier edition of this work, based in part on his newly acquired Greek.<sup>52</sup>

Within the Benedictine marking of the hours with bells, Bede demonstrated the value of making something more of monastic learning across a range of fields. It was to prove a critical turning point for monasticism. After Bede, study could be more than penitence, and monasticism more than a reenactment of the Fall and humankind’s expulsion from the Garden of Eden.<sup>53</sup> There had evolved a penitential arithmetic, in which each word copied in the scriptorium reduced one’s own or another’s time in

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<sup>49</sup> Bede, *On the Nature of Things*, 93.

<sup>50</sup> Roger Ray, “Who Did Bede Think He Was?” in *Innovation and Tradition in the Writings of the Venerable Bede*, ed. Scott DeGregorio (Morgantown: West Virginia University Press, 2006), 20-24.

<sup>51</sup> Cited by Ray, “Bede and Cicero,” 10. Elsewhere Roger Ray judges that Bede, when faced with criticism, “unleashed a blaze of vituperation in the great tradition,” referring presumably to the great tradition upheld today by the overheated letters section of the *New York Review of Books*, etc.; *Bede, Rhetoric and the Creation of Christian Latin Culture*, Jarrow Lecture 1997 (Jarrow: St. Paul’s Church, 1997), 10.

<sup>52</sup> Arthur G. Holder, “Bede and the New Testament,” in *Cambridge Companion to Bede*, 145.

<sup>53</sup> Jacques Le Goff: “The Benedictine Rule imposes labor on monks in two forms, manual and intellectual, and both are penitences, in conformity with the ideology of the time.” *Time, Work, and Culture in the Middle Ages*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 110.

purgatory. Rather than redeeming past or original sins, Bede made it clear that learning was capable of producing its own fruitful garden, a bookish Eden held in common. In their subsequent veneration of Bede, monks and nuns recognized how intellectual labor created a common good, if only within the reaches of monasticism and not yet the world at large.<sup>54</sup>

The medieval Benedictine monastery could foster an intellectual life well, and well ahead of the professional intellectuals, whom Jacques Le Goff, an Annales School medievalist, sees emerging in the twelfth century: “A man whose profession it was to write or to teach – and usually both at the same time – a man who, professionally, acted as professor and scholar, in short an intellectual – that man appeared only with the towns.”<sup>55</sup> At the turn of the seventh century, Bede spent his days professing what he had learned and in that sense, he earned not only his keep, but a tenured place for a life of learning within the communal and sustaining work of the monastery. Learning could now enhance the abbey’s reputation as disciplined and divinely inspired, reflected in its regular production of illuminated manuscripts. As such, learning was contributing to the reputational economy of bequeathal by which the nobility founded and endowed monasteries (with more on this in the next chapter). The enclosure of this learning within monasticism, however, was about to be opened, through the vision of the Emperor Charlemagne, and turned into a larger public good.

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<sup>54</sup> R. W. Southern points to a “monastic monopoly of intellectual life” in England before the eleventh-century Conquest; “The Place of England in the Twelfth-Century Renaissance,” in *Medieval Humanism and Other Studies* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1970), 171. Bischoff notes that despite Benedict’s learning “limitation... the great historical role which the order of Benedict played in preserving classical Latin literature... [was] not... by chance, but rather in response to specific historical conditions”; “Benedictine Monasteries,” 135. I hold that the Rule of Benedict both limited learning and ensured the necessary conditions for it to take place within the Benedictine monastery.

<sup>55</sup> Jacques Le Goff, *Intellectuals in the Middle Ages*, trans. Teresa Lavender Fagan, (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1993), 6.



### *Carolingian Renaissance*

In or around 781, Charlemagne, King of the Franks and later Emperor of the Romans, approached Alcuin of York, who was a scholar and keeper of the library at the highly reputed cathedral school of York in England, to serve in his court. Alcuin had met Charlemagne in Parma earlier that year, catching the king's ear with his Bede-influenced learning. Charlemagne was captivated by "the most learned man anywhere to be found," in the words of his biographer and contemporary, Einhard, a monk who was to serve in the palace school that Alcuin organized for Charlemagne.<sup>56</sup> The king invited Alcuin to direct his educational efforts with the Franks, as part of an ambitious cultural revolution for court and kingdom. It led to what is now referred to as the Carolingian Renaissance, which extended into the ninth century.<sup>57</sup> "We are concerned," Charlemagne wrote in a charter setting out his vision, "to restore with diligent zeal the workshops of knowledge which, through the negligence of our ancestors, have been well-nigh deserted."<sup>58</sup>

Alcuin was given the opportunity to instruct Charlemagne, and under his tutelage, "the emperor spent much time and effort studying rhetoric, dialectic, and especially astrology," Einhard reports.<sup>59</sup> Alcuin was able to call on the king to support his studies: "I, your servant, need some of the rarer learned books which I had in my own country

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<sup>56</sup> Einhard, "The Life of Charlemagne," in *Two Lives of Charlemagne*, trans. Lewis G. M. Thorpe (London: Penguin, 1969), 79.

<sup>57</sup> Heinrich Fichtenau, *The Carolingian Empire: The Age of Charlemagne* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), 84-87.

<sup>58</sup> Cited *ibid.*, 87. Martin Irvine holds that Charlemagne "effectively made grammatical culture the law of the land"; *The Making of Textual Culture: 'Grammatica' and Literary Theory, 350-1100* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 13.

<sup>59</sup> Einhard, "The Life of Charlemagne," 79. Charlemagne is also known to have studied grammar with Pietro of Pisa, who also composed poetry that was issued under the king's name; Ronald G. Witt, *The Two Latin Cultures and the Foundation of Renaissance Humanism in Medieval Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 19.

[Northumbria] through the devoted efforts of my own teacher and through some labor on my own part.”<sup>60</sup> He proposed sending “some of our students to get everything we need” adding that “nothing [is] better for developing a life on the best principles than philosophy, discipline, and education.”<sup>61</sup> In a letter from 799, Alcuin noted how the king, in examining some of the work he commissioned from Alcuin, had its “errors noted and sent back for correction.”<sup>62</sup> “Yet, you could have corrected it better,” Alcuin then adds, “as you have not noted unscholarly statements and unorthodox expressions.”<sup>63</sup> He then further chastises his majesty by teasing him on the protocol of this learned economy: “The sponsor of the work should defend the writer.”<sup>64</sup>

Charlemagne also had Alcuin teach the members of his family, with the emperor’s sister Gisela and her daughter Rectruda earning the praise of their teacher “for the highest devotion in that most holy desire for learning,” as he put it in a letter.<sup>65</sup> Charlemagne also established a magnificent court library that emulated the literary glory of Rome’s libraries, which contained works of the Church Fathers, including the correspondence between Augustine and Jerome, and provided a written record of oral, legal, and folklore traditions. Charlemagne envisioned a restored and holy empire, with Latin taught as its unifying language for administrative and literary purposes. His emphasis on a broadly grammatical education, encompassing rhetoric, poetry, and history, led to massive copying of Latin literature from the Roman Empire, accounting for as much as three-

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<sup>60</sup> Alcuin, “To the King on Books, Learning, and Old Age (796),” in *Carolingian Civilization: A Reader*, ed. Paul Edward Dutton (Peterborough: Broadview, 1993), 107.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Alcuin, “To the King on the State of Learning in his Day (799),” in *Carolingian Civilization*, 108.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Cited by Joan M. Ferrante, “The Education of Women in the Middle Ages in Theory, Fact, and Fantasy,” in *Beyond Their Sex: Learned Women of the European Past*, ed. Patricia H. Labalme (New York: New York University Press, 1980), 10.

quarters of the classical Latin works that have survived.<sup>66</sup>

In pursuing these educational goals, Charlemagne challenged the insularity of the monasteries that dotted his kingdom. He charged its members that they “should not be content,” as he wrote, “with leading a regular and devout life, but should undertake the task of teaching those who have received from God the capacity to learn, each according to his abilities.”<sup>67</sup> Boys from all families were to be taught liturgy, Psalms, grammar, computation, and singing in the schools to be run by monasteries, with educational centers established in the cathedrals of a number of cities for teaching liberal arts to more advanced students.<sup>68</sup> Charlemagne brought about a vast, coordinated mobilization of educational resources that took Bede’s sense of learning as a community service and extended it to the Holy Roman Empire. It was undoubtedly a boon to learning, giving many more people opportunities, but learning assumed certain political properties in the consolidation and administration of empire in the Christian West, for the first, if not the last, time.

The task of bringing about the monastic transformation fell to Alcuin, who was regarded by some, as “a true monk without the monk’s vows,” as one biographer notes.<sup>69</sup> Alcuin saw to it that the monasteries set up external schools that could prepare clerks for

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<sup>66</sup> Witt, *Two Latin Cultures*, 29, n. 52.

<sup>67</sup> Cited by David Knowles, *The Evolution of Medieval Thought* (New York: Vintage, 1962), 71. Charlemagne complains in a letter that the writings “from a number of monasteries” was marked by “an uncultivated language caused by the neglect of learning”; cited by Theodore M. Andersson, “A Carolingian Pun and Charlemagne’s Languages,” in *Along the Oral-Written Continuum: Types of Texts, Relations and their Implications*, ed., Slavica Rankovic (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepolis, 2010), 365. Andersson notes that the title, Charlemagne the Corrector, was apocryphal but his reputation for learning was not; *ibid.*, 367.

<sup>68</sup> Witt records a ninth-century bishop of Lyon complaining that all of the emphasis on singing in the cathedral schools took from the students’ studies and was to be, in the words of the bishop, “stupidly and harmfully employed”; *Two Latin Cultures*, 36. Still, Witt concludes that “encouraged throughout the empire, these schools likely exercised a positive influence on elementary education and contributed, along with increased political stability, to a modest rise in literacy”; *ibid.*, 70.

<sup>69</sup> Cited by Andrew Fleming West, *Alcuin and the Rise of the Christian Schools* (New York: Scribner, 1899), 64.

local parish churches (as distinct from the novitiate classes held within the monastery for those intending to join the order).<sup>70</sup> Charlemagne did reinforce the enclosure and cultural restraint of women within monasticism: “On no account let them [nuns] dare to write *winileodas* (songs for a friend),” a capitulary in 789 reads, “or send them from the convent.”<sup>71</sup> But within the Carolingian Renaissance, the nunneries were no less actively engaged in learning and copying, with growing libraries and the preparation of new religious works that were often prepared in collaboration with monks.

For its part, the palace school took on the training of administrators, as court, cathedral, and monastery shared a mission of a Christian education informed by letters and the liberal arts.<sup>72</sup> Alcuin, in the spirit of Bede, prepared treatises and textbooks to supply the empire’s schools. He introduced geometry into Christian astronomical calculations of Easter’s dates.<sup>73</sup> He revitalized Pliny’s and Martianus’ astronomy, which was taught alongside that of Bede and Isidore of Seville.<sup>74</sup> It was all supported by the anonymously compiled *Liber Glossarum*, a massive alphabetical encyclopedic guide running in excess of one thousand pages, compiled from the works of Isidore, Augustine, Jerome, and a half-dozen others, with entries on medicine and the natural sciences,

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<sup>70</sup> A capitulary from 789 specifies that “in every monastery, instruction shall be given in the psalms, musical notation, chant, the computation of years and seasons, and in grammar; and all books used shall be carefully corrected”; cited by Knowles, *Evolution of Medieval Thought*, 72.

<sup>71</sup> Cited by Shari Horner, *The Discourse of Enclosure: Representing Women in Old English Literature* (Albany: State University of New York, 2001), 35.

<sup>72</sup> C. Stephen Jaeger, *The Envy of Angels: Cathedral Schools and Social Ideals in Medieval Europe, 950-1200* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994), 26.

<sup>73</sup> Stephen C. McCluskey, “Astronomies in the Latin West from the Fifth to the Ninth Centuries,” in *Science in Western and Eastern Civilization in Carolingian Times*, ed. Paul Leo Butzer and Dietrich Lohrmann (Basel: Birkhäuser, 1993), 144.

<sup>74</sup> Bruce Eastwood, “The Astronomies of Pliny, Martianus, and Isidore of Seville in the Carolingian World,” in *Science in Western and Eastern Carolingian Times*, 177.

among other topics.<sup>75</sup>

In 798, Alcuin was succeeded at court by Theodulf, who was made bishop of Orléans and abbot of a number of monasteries. Theodulf carried on Alcuin's educational campaign, instructing the churches to extend educational opportunities as a matter of spiritual principle: "In the villages and townships the priests shall open schools. If any of the faithful entrust their children to them to learn letters, let them not refuse to instruct these children in all charity."<sup>76</sup> In the case of the monastery schools, parents traditionally gave gifts large or small to support the education of their children.<sup>77</sup> In that spirit of charity, Charlemagne made provisions to ensure that on his death his magnificent library would be disbursed for the benefit of the poor, with many volumes ending up in the library of his son Louis the Pious who, with his wife Judith, remained patrons of learned writers, judging by the dedications in the books from that time.<sup>78</sup>

For his part, Alcuin assumed the position of abbot at the Tours monastery, where he devoted himself to improving the quality of the scriptorium's work. He wrote to Charlemagne about his concern that "punctuation adds greatly to the style of sentences, but its use has almost been lost by copyists owing to their lack of education. It seems to

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<sup>75</sup> David Ganz, "The *Liber Glossarum*: A Carolingian Encyclopedia," in *Science in Western and Eastern Carolingian Times*, eds. Paul Leo Butzer and Dietrich Lohrmann (Basel: Birkhäuser, 1993), 127-135.

<sup>76</sup> Cited by Knowles, *Evolution of Medieval Thought*, 72. In the ninth century, the Benedictine monk Rhabanus Maurus prepared a second encyclopedic work *De universo*, assembling, in his words, "many things concerning natural history and etymologies of names and words," seeking to "create something pleasing and useful," as he "continuously placed together, both the literal and spiritual meaning of each single thing"; cited by Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1990), 175.

<sup>77</sup> Constance Brittain Bouchard: "The large entry gifts that monasteries, nunneries, and cathedral chapters expected to accompany new ecclesiastics often seems to have required an outlay comparable to what it would have cost the parents to give a son a share of the inheritance or a daughter a dowry and set them up in the world"; *Sword, Miter, and Cloister: Nobility and the Church in Burgundy, 980-1198* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987), 59.

<sup>78</sup> Bernhard Bischoff, "The Court Library under Louis the Pious," in *Manuscripts and Libraries in the Age of Charlemagne*, 76-78.

need restoring in the work of copyists, just as fine scholarship and sound learning in general are beginning to be revived through your noble efforts.”<sup>79</sup> Alcuin took great care in selecting texts to serve as exemplars that would guide the copying of new editions. He paid special attention to advancing standards of orthography and punctuation, as well as the clarity of letter forms (in what became known as Caroline minuscule), all of which added to the readability and general quality of the texts.<sup>80</sup> The monastery’s considerable efforts in producing uniform Latin editions of key works furthered the sense that each work was an intellectual property, even as they collectively formed part of the communal property of the monastery. He had this monastic commitment to learning inscribed above the scriptorium entrance: “Writing books is better than planting vines, for he who plants a vine serves his belly, but he who writes a book serves his soul.”<sup>81</sup>

Alcuin was taking a stand on the sacredness of scholarly labor within the Benedictine monastery. If the Rule of Benedict lacked such learned concerns, Alcuin brought the Rule’s regard for discipline, rigor, and humility to bear on this scribal work. So began “the great age of the copying of Latin manuscripts, both patristic and classical,” according to the Cambridge historian and Benedictine, David Knowles.<sup>82</sup> These efforts would replenish the supply and circulation of books within monasticism and the Holy

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<sup>79</sup> Alcuin, “To the King on the State of Learning in his Day (799),” 109.

<sup>80</sup> West, *Alcuin*, 64-70.

<sup>81</sup> Cited *ibid.*, 72. Jacques Le Goff makes much of these uniform editions and new script: “It was the basis of a civilization, a development which gradually changed the way knowledge was transmitted and taught... the basis for the establishment of the universities”; *My Quest for the Middle Ages*, trans. Richard Veasey (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003), 13. Alcuin’s influential retirement into monasticism was also pursued by Paolo Diacono of Montecassino (the monastery of Saint Benedict), who is judged by Witt as “one of the architects of the Carolingian Renaissance,” and whose retirement led not only to his composition of “important didactic texts” but a “tradition of scholarship and production of manuscripts that continued, with several interruptions, into the twelfth century”; *Two Latin Cultures*, 57.

<sup>82</sup> Knowles, *Evolution of Medieval Thought*, 76. Knowles: The “gradual accumulation of clearly (and more correctly) written books was of inestimable value when the more comprehensive revival came two centuries later”; *ibid.*

Roman Empire.

The Carolingian Renaissance glowed like a comet across the medieval sky of the Latin West. It was soon eclipsed by the civil wars that engulfed Charlemagne's empire through the ninth and tenth centuries. Charlemagne's educational initiative, guided in good part by Alcuin, placed education back into the public realm, where it was not to be easily dislodged. The schools reemerged from the conflicts most notably in the form of the cathedral schools at Chartres, Orléans, Paris, and elsewhere. They grew into their own educational movement, preparing churchmen and other administrators in scholastic disputation and theological reasoning (leading up to the emergence of the universities in the twelfth century).

Sustaining the monastery schools proved more of a challenge. Boisterous schoolchildren shattering the silence of the cloisters was always going to be a little trying for the monks and nuns.<sup>83</sup> Abbots often agreed to tutor the children of the nobility, perhaps with an eye to later beneficence, and sometimes hired a schoolmaster, as well as a room set apart from the monastery, for the education of the children.<sup>84</sup> Charlemagne had shaken the otherworldly remoteness of monasticism with his schooling-on-command but it was a momentary tremor in a long history of monasticism, at least until the Late Middle

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<sup>83</sup> In 817, Benedict of Aniane led a council of Frankish abbots that sought to prevent monasteries from operating schools; David Knowles, *The Monastic Order in England: A History of its Development from the Times of St. Dunstan to the Fourth Lateran Council 943-1216* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1950), 487-488.

<sup>84</sup> Roger Bowers, "The Almonry Schools of the English Monasteries, c. 1265-1540," in *Monasteries and Society in Medieval Britain: Proceedings of the 1994 Harlaxton Symposium*, ed. Benjamin Thompson (Stamford: Paul Watkins, 1999), 179. In the fifteenth century, the English abbeys in Burton upon Trent, Evesham, and Reading operated free grammar schools apart from the monastery; Nicholas Orme, *Medieval Schools: From Roman Britain to Renaissance England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 286-287.

Ages when charitable schools became a common undertaking of monks and nuns.<sup>85</sup>

### *The Monastic Gloss*

The story so far has featured a number of landmark works of medieval monasticism, Jerome's *Vulgate*, Isidore's *Etymologies*, Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*. These are, in a sense, the easy cases in identifying works that exemplify what's involved in the intellectual properties of learning. They speak to monasticism giving rise to the composition, production, enhancement, and circulation of works that possessed intellectual qualities that went well beyond the institution's original goal of pious retreat into salvation. These works were rare enough across the centuries that make up the Middle Ages, and, as such, misrepresent the regular life of the mind in abbey, convent, and priory. This chapter opened with Isidore's compilation, itself a common scriptorium genre, and I close it with the humble gloss.

The medieval art of the *gloss* also begins with reading. A nun or a monk who encountered a difficult or unfamiliar term, thought it helpful to inscribe a translation or a synonym just above the word. To offer an example, one ninth-century reader thought to insert, in a tiny hand, the old Irish word *Cennalar* (headache) above St. Paul's phrase, *stimulus carnis* (thorn in the flesh; I Cor 12:7) in the *Codex Paulinus Wirzburgensis*.<sup>86</sup> It was just one of 3,000 such glosses in the manuscript, helping to open the work, in this case, to other Irish readers. Or, more elaborately, in the margins of Martianus' *De nuptiis*

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<sup>85</sup> Monasteries ran almonry schools in a room set aside for almsgiving often by the monastery gate; Nicholas Orme, "For Richer, For Poorer? Free Education in England, c.1380–1530," *Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth* 1, no. 2 (2008), 181. The abbots at the English monastery in St. Albans were noted for providing twenty-eight loaves of bread each week to poor scholars in the early fourteenth century, while the Launceston Priory in Cornwall later allowed poor students to sit with the monks for a daily meal; Orme, *Medieval Schools*, 208.

<sup>86</sup> "The Würzburg Glosses," *Anglandicus* [Blog], March 7, 2011, online.



*Philologiae et Mercurii*, a scribe added a point of clarification and correction:

“According to Hildebertus the sentence is like this: ‘I, the Greek, shall not abandon...’ – taking ‘graia’ as a nominative. In truth, however, it is a plural accusative, that is: ‘In the order of discourse I shall not neglect the things that are Greek.’”<sup>87</sup> Mariken J. Teeuwen, a medievalist at the Huygens Institute, University of Utrecht, provides this second example, while noting how scholarship “has long discarded [glosses] as unimportant scribbles of anonymous monks, obscuring the main text.”<sup>88</sup> For Teeuwen, “they tell the story of the transmission and transformation of learning” through the early Middle Ages.<sup>89</sup> In taking up this “marginal scholarship,” Teeuwen holds that “the margin was the perfect place for dissent and debate: contradictions were displayed and discussed.”<sup>90</sup> And the margins worked for such “discussion boards” because the books were held and read in common.

Readers’ glosses brought Cicero and Boethius to bear on Martianus and then, in other texts, brought Martianus to bear on Boethius.<sup>91</sup> Their glosses drew on multiple sources in multiple languages: Latin, Greek, Hebrew, and the vernaculars. The marginal notes in Arabic found in a tenth-century copy of Isidore’s *Etymologies*, for example, further attest to the work’s influence in the Al-Andalus region of Iberia.<sup>92</sup> Glosses grew

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<sup>87</sup> Cited and translated by Mariken Teeuwen, “The Pursuit of Secular Learning: The Oldest Commentary Tradition on Martianus Capella,” *The Journal of Medieval Latin* 18 (2008), 36.

<sup>88</sup> Mariken J. Teeuwen, “Marginal Scholarship: The Practice of Learning in the early Middle Ages (c. 800 – c. 1000),” Unpublished project description, Huygens Institute, The Hague, NL, online.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Mariken J. Teeuwen, “Glossing in Close Co-operation: Examples from Ninth-Century Martianus Capella,” in *Practice in Learning: The Transfer of Encyclopaedic Knowledge in the Early Middle Ages*, eds. Rolf H. Bremmer, Jr. and Kees Dekker (Paris: Peeters, 2010), 85.

<sup>91</sup> Teeuwen, “The Pursuit of Secular Learning,” 46.

<sup>92</sup> Dorothee Metlitzki, *The Matter of Araby in Medieval England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), 16.

in scope and ambition, sometimes drawing on a shorthand reputedly devised by Cicero's scribe Tiro to make the most of available marginal space.<sup>93</sup>

The glosses spread like a learned vine across the vellum page, filling the spaces between the lines and trailing down the margins. By the ninth century, it was common to add glosses that identified the sources of material quoted, and otherwise uncredited, in the main text.<sup>94</sup> By the twelfth century, the gloss was “the principal apparatus of the academic reader,” notes Oxford paleographer Malcolm Beckwith Parkes, with scribes recasting the layout of the page to ensure that this “inherited material – the *auctoritates*” could be brought forward with each new copy of the work.<sup>95</sup> In preparing to copy a well-glossed text, the scholar-scribe sometimes lay out a marginal space for the glosses to be copied, creating a dense border of commentary hemming in the original text. In other cases, scribes carefully wove the glosses of one or many scholars together into full-fledged commentary that became its own text.<sup>96</sup>

The gloss could alter the intellectual properties of a text. It might make a classical work *safe* to read by pointing out its contribution to the Christian pursuit of salvation.<sup>97</sup> It helped to open a work for new readers, setting the text within an interpretative framework, established by scholarly references and didactic points. It offered a marginal

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<sup>93</sup> Teeuwen, “The Pursuit of Secular Learning,” 43.

<sup>94</sup> M. B. Parkes, “The Influence of Concepts of *Ordinatio* and *Compilatio*,” in *Medieval Learning and Literature: Essays Presented to Richard William Hunt*, ed. J. J. G. Alexander and M. T. Gibson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), 116-117. On the influence of gloss on page layout and design, also see Clemens and Graham, *Manuscript Studies*, 39-43.

<sup>95</sup> Parkes, “The Influence of Concepts of *Ordinatio* and *Compilatio*,” 116.

<sup>96</sup> The scribes also overstepped at times, weaving the gloss *into* the text proper; Raymond Clemens and Timothy Graham, *Introduction to Manuscript Studies* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007), 39.

<sup>97</sup> Alastair Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship: Scholastic Literary Attitudes in the Later Middle Ages*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988), 29.

zone of dispute and dissent in interpretation and learning.<sup>98</sup> In this sense, the gloss formed the intellectual connective tissue, pulling together works and communities of readers within this monastic community.<sup>99</sup> The accumulated glosses around a text were also compiled into separate encyclopedic glossaries, such as the well-known Carolingian *Liber glossarum*, thought to have been assembled by the nuns of Corbie.<sup>100</sup>

Apart from very avid annotators, such as John the Scot from the ninth century, only a few of those who glossed have been identified.<sup>101</sup> The art of this largely anonymous glossing flourished in the ninth century, particularly among the classical texts that were beginning to attract more attention both at monastic centers such as Corbie and Auxerre-Fleury, and at Laon and other cathedral schools. With sharpened pens in hand and ink nearby, readers found it a duty and a pleasure to identify the relationships among words, meanings, and ideas through marginal notes and diagrams, all within the relative isolation and silence of the monastic learned life. Whether they were masters or pupils prepping for class, or scholars working in the library, they engaged in a common form of reading to learn within the manuscript culture of monasteries and schools, with no reason to think that this increased interest in the intellectual properties of canonical texts reduced the reader's spiritual experience of the text.

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<sup>98</sup> In addressing the force of learned discourse in modern Europe, Michel Foucault speaks of the commentary's power: "Commentary's only role is to say *finally*, what has silently been articulated *deep down*. It must – and the paradox is ever-changing, yet inescapable – say, for the first time, what has already been said, and repeat tirelessly what was, nevertheless, never said"; "The Discourse on Language," in *The Archeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon, 1972), 221. Foucault also sets commentary apart from *discipline*: "In a discipline, unlike in commentary, what is supposed at the point of departure is not some meaning which must be rediscovered, nor an identity to be reiterated; it is that which is required for the construction of new statements"; *ibid.*, 223.

<sup>99</sup> By the thirteenth century, the academic disciplines of theology and law within the universities had developed their own glossing style and format; Parkes, "The Influence of Concepts of *Ordinatio* and *Compilatio*," 120.

<sup>100</sup> Herren, "Storehouses of Learning," 3; Teeuwen, "The Pursuit of Secular Learning," 49.

<sup>101</sup> Teeuwen, "Glossing in Close Co-operation," 85.

For the reader-scholar-scribe, the page served “a *collecting* purpose, *gathering* as much knowledge... as possible from as many sources as possible,” as Teeuwen notes of the copious glosses accumulated by editions of Martianus’ *De nuptiis*.<sup>102</sup> The glossaries drew on (and directly cited) the biblical commentaries of Jerome, Augustine, and Bede, integrating them directly into the text commented upon, exposing them to more readers. It invited a discursive, if marginal, exchange among generations of the learned.<sup>103</sup> The resulting text and paratext were clearly directed toward a different type of reading and engagement than the spiritual *meditatio* or *lectio divina* of the early Middle Ages.<sup>104</sup>

Much of this marginal work had to do with accreditation of authorship. The term author (*auctor*) is rooted in the classical Latin form of “the seller at auction,” according to nineteenth-century Harvard philologist James B. Greenough, which he relates to “a reliable guarantor, a good authority.”<sup>105</sup> This does imaginatively combine value and reputation in authorship. Think of Pliny anxiously prefacing his work with a list of the authorities on whom he claimed to have drawn, selling the work to his readers as much as crediting his sources. Those who glossed and commented did as much by weighing in on the authority of the *auctor* and the text’s sources. It has the effect of placing a work’s author and its sources among its intellectual properties, as some understanding of these elements adds to the sense that readers made of texts, as well as their ability to refer to it

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<sup>102</sup> Teeuwen, “Glossing in Close Co-operation,” 94. Teeuwen: “These scribes [who copied the glosses as part of the texts] were, it seems, the very scholars that studied the text, working together to obtain the maximum result. The scholar jotting down the first layer of glosses was supplemented and corrected by a second scholar, who added glosses in the (sometimes tiny) spaces still left blank”; *ibid.*, 95.

<sup>103</sup> The commentaries of Jerome and Bede, for example, were later transcribed as a marginal gloss in Bishop Hugh’s twelfth-century manuscript of the Gospel of St Mark, with verses surrounded by Jerome’s extensive commentary in a smaller hand on the left side and Bede’s even more extensive commentary (at least for Mark 1:3) on the right, with additional glosses, one-to-two lines thick, between each line of Mark; *Gospel of Mark Belonging to Bishop Puiset*, British Library, London, online.

<sup>104</sup> Parkes, “The Influence of the Concepts of *Ordinatio* and *Compilatio*,” 115-116.

<sup>105</sup> J. B. Greenough, “Latin Etymologies,” *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*, 4 (1893), 145.

in their own work. Out of this glossing tradition evolved, it seems fair to conclude, the more formal scholarly apparatus of footnotes, tables of contents, and indexes.

Across the early Middle Ages, the monastery remained an intellectual center for scribal editing and copying of manuscripts, as well as Scriptural commentary. What Isidore of Seville introduced into monasticism with his *Etymologies* was a provocation for further inquiry. To find such a reference work in the library chest was to be invited to dig deeper into the intellectual properties of texts, to look up the history of words and concepts, which can be constructed, Isidore made clear, out of a careful culling of texts (if not consistently credited). The spiritual value of such learning and the delight in its production in such works of reference were qualities that were venerated in Bede. He opened the monastery, by his example and by what he celebrated in others, to greater learning.

Charlemagne did as much for an empire. And there are signs that the emperor's efforts came from a genuine interest in learning, which created many new opportunities for his subjects. Yet Charlemagne's investment in learning also advanced the empire's administrative order by training a generation of officials in Latin to aid in governing its diversity of peoples. He introduced an educational mission into new settings, perhaps most influentially with the cathedral schools that became a hotbed of scholasticism as an early school of thought in the West. Yet it was Alcuin who made it clear – in a life divided between serving as court minister of education and his later role as abbot – that for all that he achieved in educating an empire, the monastery alone offered him the institutional dedication needed to lead a team in skillfully preparing editions of canonical works that furthered the intellectual qualities and properties of learning.

Throughout all of this, nuns and monks continued to humbly gloss the texts that they were reading, looking to further open the text for the next reader, locating a source, sparking debate, enriching engagement. The margins of the text were understood to offer a commons for exercising this shared stake in the text, as it served the text and readers, with that marginalia finding its way into future editions or a text of its own. By the ninth century, this greater involvement in the production of intellectual properties through editing and glossing had become part of monasticism and its patronage economy. It is this economy that distinguishes, in good part, learning's intellectual property. In the next chapter, I examine the properties of the patronage responsible for the institutional autonomy and stability so vital to the learning that Isidore, Bede, and Alcuin pursued and that would continue to be an influence on learned institutions in the West.