

CRECEM CONIA  
XVIII DEBEANT CIEL  
HERUM RECIPITRS  
EXEPIES DECIONAS  
RATER QUI  
PROPRIOU  
TIO ECREDI  
TUR AUT PROI  
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NASTERIO. SIRE  
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PRO QUO ECRES  
SUSEST. SIC IN  
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Regulation, Learning,  
and Political  
Engagement:  
envisioning the  
perfect Christian  
community (c.500-  
900 AD)

# The diversity of early medieval monasticism

Monastic institutions in the Latin West (i.e. the territories of the old Western Roman Empire) often operated very independently in the early Middle Ages (500-900 AD)

- This played a part in their success in spreading and deepening the faith – early medieval monasticism was very adaptable: as discussed in lecture 2
- As a result, early medieval monasticism was extremely diverse: the type of monastic life was heavily dependent on their individual leaders and personalities and the way different monasteries found their place within late-Roman and post-Roman society.
- This also contributed to the somewhat chaotic picture of Christianisation in Europe. While the Council of Chalcedon (453 AD) had asked that monasteries were subject to local bishops throughout the Roman Empire, in the West – where the Roman Empire ended in 476 AD - many became powerful independent centres of Christian leadership, with closer relations to local post-Roman rulers than bishops enjoyed. In some cases abbots were even picking bishops (e.g. in the Irish tradition)!

**But, with the rapid unification and expansion of the Frankish kingdoms from the mid-8<sup>th</sup> century under Charles Martel, Pepin III, Charlemagne and Louis the Pious (the “Carolingian dynasty”), a large new Christian polity became the dominant power in the West.**

- To expand its power and engender social order across such a large area (the “peace of God”, as they called it), the Carolingians sought to standardise many aspects of religious practice. This would have a significant effect on Western monasticism and its relationship with society.





# The rise of “rules”

Despite significant diversity, monastic leaders were themselves keen to frame “Rules” that fixed practice more firmly. Through these rules, they sought to preserve the order and direction of the form of life they established as they gained more followers and to ensure that it continued after their deaths. Thus, monastic rules appeared very quickly in the evolution of monasticism in Egypt, Africa, and the Near East

## Rules of Pachomius

Pachomius (d. 348 AD) – an early leader of Egyptian coenobitic monks, discussed in lecture 1; his “Rules” contain a summary of how his monasteries came to be, some practical instructions he provided, as well as some allegories that relate different types of “bad monk” to different animals.

## Rules of Shenoute

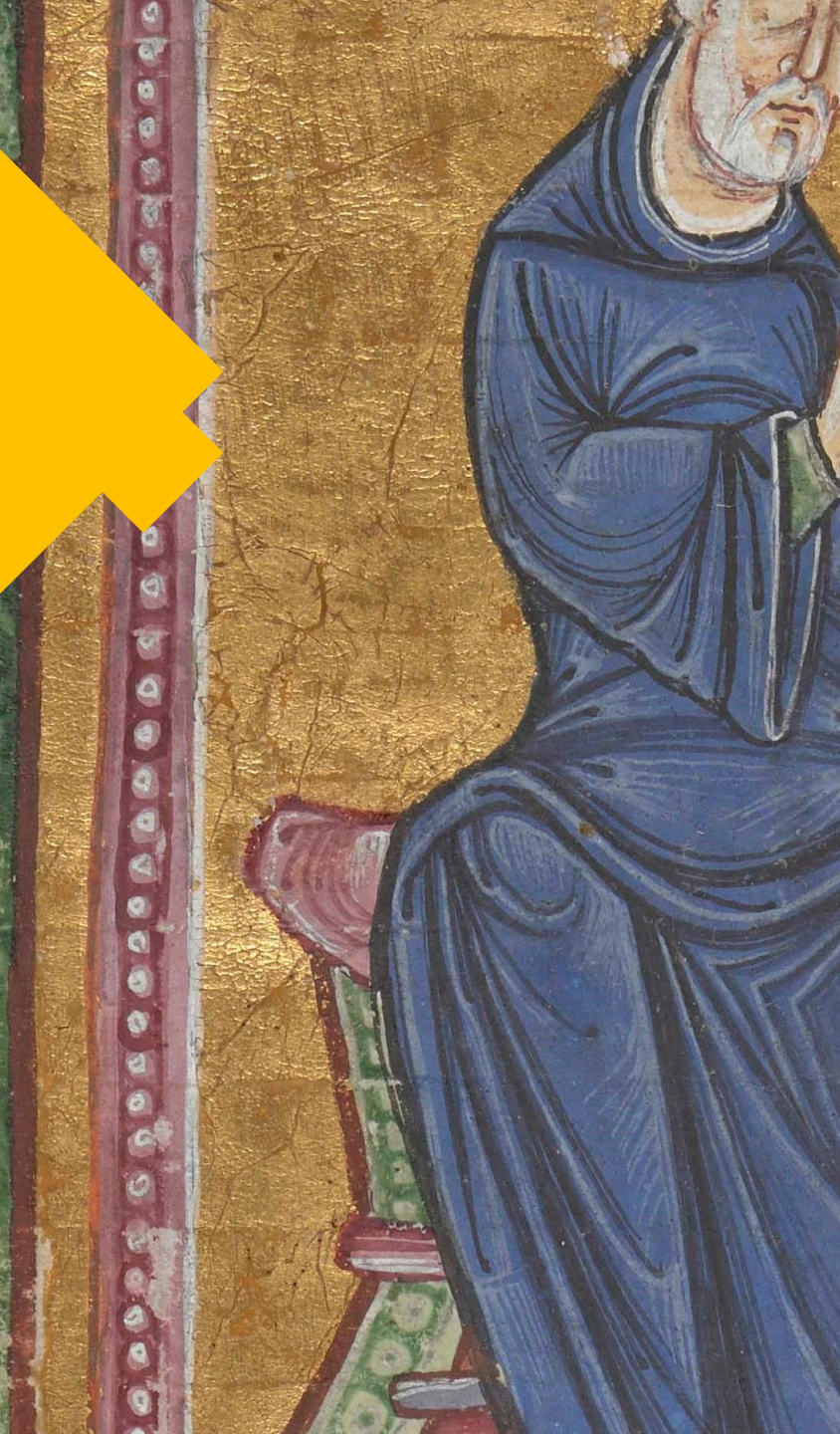
Shenoute (d. c. 465 AD) – a leader of the White Monastery, in Upper Egypt; his Rule demands a “covenant” to be openly sworn by all members concerning their behaviour in the monastery: the earliest known description of a monastic vow made publicly.

## Rules of Basil

Basil (330-379 AD) – an early monastic leader from the Near East; visited monasteries in Egypt as well as Syria; his monastic rules (originally written in Greek) were known and influential in the Latin West, but they become more important elsewhere: they become the most common set of instructions for monks in the territories of the Eastern Roman/Byzantine Empire

## Rules of Augustine

Augustine of Hippo (d. 430 AD) – a “Church Father” from North Africa, discussed in lecture 2: he wrote a set of instructions in Latin for both the male monks he led in later life at Hippo and for nuns. They had some influence in late antiquity, but become better known in the high Middle Ages (post 1000 AD).



# Rules in the Latin West

A huge diversity of rules are written from the 5<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> centuries in Europe

## **Cassian's Institutes**

Written by John Cassian (d. 435 AD), discussed in lecture 2, who comes to establish monasteries in Southern Gaul (modern day France). Perhaps the first set of practical instructions for monks written in Europe

## **Rule of Caesarius of Arles**

Caesarius of Arles (d. 542 AD) was a monk of Southern Gaul who followed in the tradition of Honoratus of Arles, mentioned in lecture 2, and lived at the latter's monastery on Lerins Islands.

## **Rule of the Master**

Anonymous, probably written in Europe c. 500 AD. His Rule focusses on practical instructions, but, more innovatively, also provides very detailed spiritual reasons for everything he commands

## **Rule of Saint Benedict (of Nursia)**

Benedict of Nursia (c. 480-550 AD), an Italian monk and abbot of Monte Cassino monastery, wrote a rule that would eventually become the most famous and influential rule in the Latin West. Builds on the tradition of the Rule of the Master (his most prominent influence); also shows knowledge of the rules of Basil and Augustine, as well as Cassian's *Institutes*

## **Rule of Columbanus**

Columbanus of Bangor (d. 615 AD), discussed in lecture 2, was an Irish monk who travelled to continental Europe and founded monasteries in Gaul, Germany and Northern Italy. His instructions for his monks were unusually rigorous: unlike most other Rules, his text lays down very precise – and quite harsh! – punishments for every form of monastic indiscipline

# The spread, mixing, and understanding of “rules”

- These rules found notoriety and popularity beyond the communities of their writers, and the following of a “Rule” associated with a celebrated monastic saint could be a sign of prestige
- Nevertheless monasteries exercised broad independence in which prescriptions they chose to follow, and how they chose to follow them
- Some communities cited multiple rules, and followed what was called a *regula mixta* (a “mixed rule”)
- In Frankish Gaul in the Merovingian and early Carolingian periods, it was quite common to say that you followed both the Rule of Benedict of Nursia and the Rule of Columbanus, as well as other observances derived from other rules or associated with the tradition of the monastery. Such “mixed rules” could be quite creative combinations and even produce new written Rules: e.g. the Rule of Saint Donatus
- Sometimes the rule of a monastery might not even be a written code. Monks might simply say they followed the example of a founding saint (whose *saint’s life* might contain some advice or a model). A “Rule” could even be understood as an oral tradition!

# The rise of the Rule of Saint Benedict

The eventual success of the Rule of Saint Benedict of Nursia in becoming the most widely recognised Rule is sometimes presented as an inevitability and a relatively rapid process. Traditional accounts reference:

- its quality (particularly its clarity and adaptability); it provided a good balance of instructions for ascetic “common life” and spiritual explanations. He also makes clear what social roles were acceptable for monks (e.g. charity to the poor, receiving and showing kindness to guests), as well as leaving a good amount of room for the abbot to modify observance depending on the circumstances of place and time.
- its promotion by the bishops of Rome (i.e. the papacy) from the time of Gregory the Great (who promoted the saint’s cult of Benedict), and its influence on Anglo-Saxon Christianity (beginning with Augustine of Canterbury, the Benedictine monk sent to England by Gregory) and Anglo-Saxon missionaries on the continent (e.g. Saint Boniface)
- the support of the great Frankish ruler Charlemagne, the first Carolingian Empire – who forges an empire covering much of Gaul, Germany and parts for Italy

Some truth to all of these, but a much slower and more contingent process in reality.

- While Benedictine Rule was of a quality and practicality that generated respect, this did not entirely diminish the respect for other rules and customs, especially where they were associated with the saintly founder of a monastery.
- The papacy might have been gaining respect at this time, but it carried relatively limited practical power in Western Europe. Anglo-Saxon monasticism and monastic missionaries were also heavily influenced by the Irish tradition (also represented on the continent by Columbanus); even if they played a part in promoting the Rule of Saint Benedict, they do not appear to have insisted on it being the sole observed norm.
- Even after Charlemagne decrees (in 802) that the Rule of Saint Benedict should have priority above other rules, he faces significant opposition to these initial attempts.

# Emperor Louis the Pious and Benedict of Aniane

More progress towards greater observance of the Benedictine Rule is made in the reign of Charlemagne's successor, Louis the Pious

- Louis prioritises the standardisation of religious practice in the Carolingian Empire. His chief religious advisor is another "Benedict" – Benedict of Aniane – who is a monk and a strong supporter of the Rule
- Under his influence, Louis organises the Synods of Aachen between 816 and 819 AD – bringing together monastic leaders from across the Empire – to standardise monastic observance, under Benedict of Aniane's guidance
- The support of Louis and negotiation at Aachen produced an agreement that Benedictine Rule would be standard, but with the addition of a range of customs that deviated somewhat from this.
- This action proves more decisive – but other Rules are still copied, and the manuscript evidence for the copying of the Benedictine Rule and the Aachen customs suggests that uptake of these regulations was more gradual



# Education and Monasticism

- Monasteries prove quite resistant to standardisation – it is only the insistence of the Carolingian Empire that gradually creates more uniformity
- But, in another way, they were still “normative” institutions in society, creating and setting standards for the world around them.
- This is most obvious in the field of education: in the early Middle Ages monasteries become the most important seats of learning in the Latin West





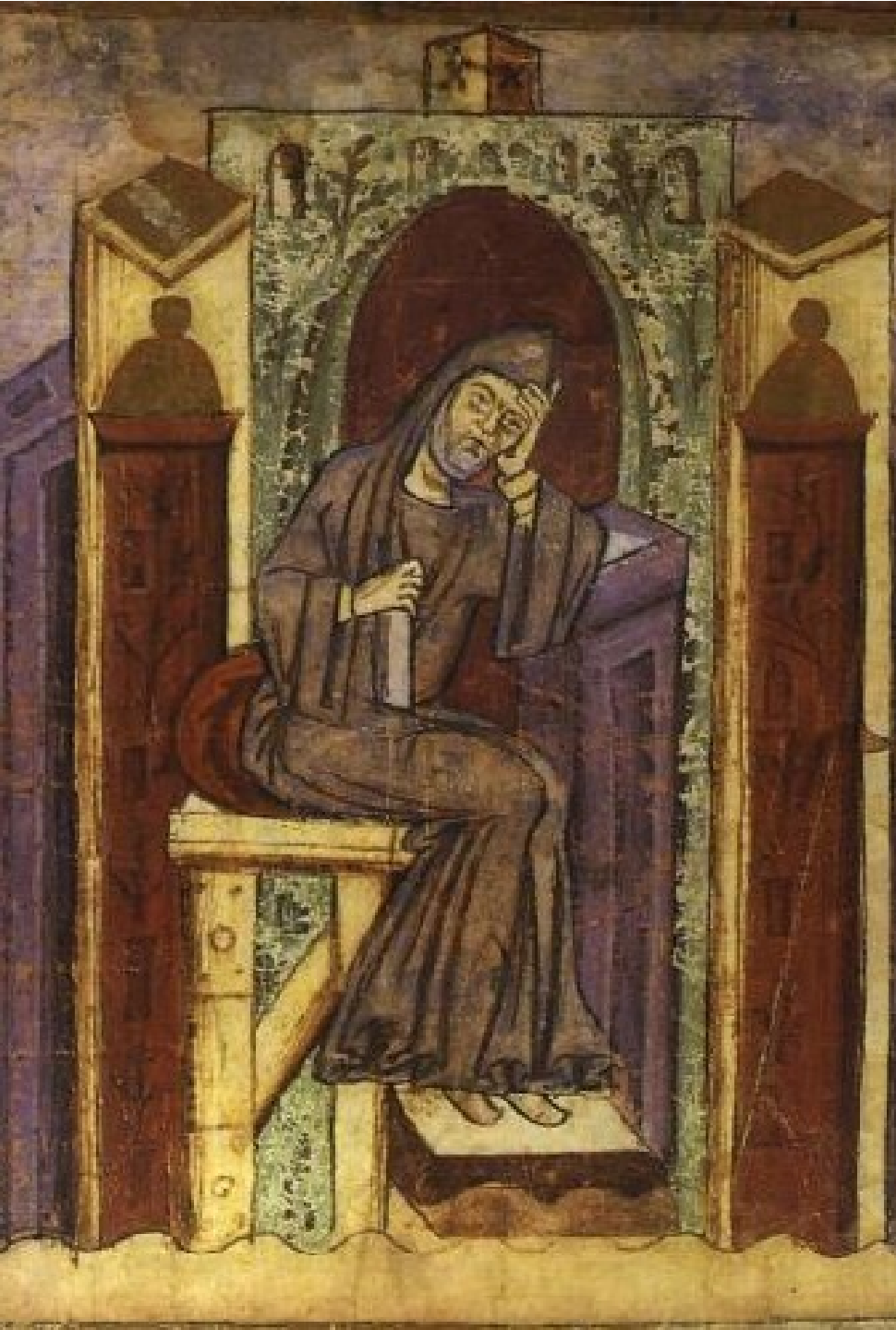
# The development of monastic schools

With the decline collapse of the Western Roman Empire (ended in 476 AD, municipal education (organised by urban authorities) became increasingly rare.

- Christians had already come to dominate intellectual culture, but now religious institutions become the only educational institutions of any significance
- Monasteries become particularly effective seats of learning: literacy is necessary for their contemplation of the Scriptures; the removal from a worldly life provides still greater time for their occupants to read, study and write.
  - Cassiodorus (d. 585 AD) – a Gallo-Roman noble, who founded a monastery at Vivarium in Southern Italy and became monk there - saw learned culture as a natural fit with the contemplative life. His *Institutes* are similar to a monastic rule in some respects, but focus primarily on the curriculum that the monks are to undertake.
  - Monasteries under Irish influence also frequently emphasise learning: e.g. the monasteries of Wearmouth-Jarrow (in Northumbria) and Saint-Gall (founded by followers of Columbanus) become very prominent intellectual centres in the Early Middle Ages.
- Some Christian educational institutions were organised by bishops and associated with the local Cathedral (“Cathedral schools”): they needed literate and educated priests who would be able to preach and administer church affairs effectively. Even these, however, were often to monastic influence.
  - The Anglo-Saxon Archbishop Egbert of York (d. 766) was certainly inspired by the commitment of the monks of Wearmouth and Jarrow in founding the influential cathedral school at York. He is a correspondent of the noted monks Bede and Saint Boniface (see Lecture 2).
  - Cathedral clergy sometimes came to live a semi-monastic life (living in a community, but not enclosed and with the provision of personal property), often based around the schools: such priests become known as “canons”.

# Monastic reading, pagan works, and copying

- Monastic education has a heavy focus on the Scriptures – as one might expect! – and theology; and from an early stage, there were monastic suspicions of “secular” [i.e. worldly] learning, and concerns about over-education leading to pride
- But beneath this, monastic education often continued and adapted many Roman norms: a formation in grammar and rhetoric – using earlier guides - was important as a complement to reading and understanding the scriptures.
- In addition: other works of pagan authors – philosophy, science, histories, letters and poems – were often preserved and copied by monks. Most classical Latin works come to us today because monks chose to keep them and use them, even if they held second place to the Bible and religious literature. Both Cassiodorus and Benedict of Nursia allow them in monastic libraries; Augustine also recommends their reading.
- What value were monks able to see in these works?
  - Man was made in the “image and likeness of God” (Genesis, 1.26) according to the Bible: thus even pagan writers, if misinformed on many things, could be thought to have useful – indeed God-given – things to say.
- Not all pagan works were necessarily well-read, and some were even criticised (for being worldly or even blasphemous). But still they were frequently copied alongside Christian works, since the act of copying (and decorating) books was seen as valid monastic “common labour” and part of “common life”, providing resources for the community that they might either use or exchange with the outside world.
- Cassiodorus presented the monastic scriptorium – where works, both Christian and pagan, would be copied – as integral to the life of a monastery: this institution would become common in the Benedictine monasteries of the Latin West



# Monastic education for the laity

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The quality of monastic education meant that it had an appeal for outsiders, even if they had no plans to become monks

- The aristocracy could use them to educate their children: e.g. the example of Oswald, future king of Northumbria, being educated in exile at Iona (see Lecture 2)
- In the Carolingian empire, such arrangements become particularly frequent
  - Notker the Stammerer (d. 912) - a monk of Saint-Gall - describes how the monks of his monastery asked Charlemagne for young men to educate, and how Charlemagne very willingly provided them (in his book "Deeds of Charlemagne").
  - Alcuin of York (d. 804) – not originally a monk, but a learned man from the cathedral school of York who becomes a member of Charlemagne's court. After he is given the monastery of Marmoutier near Tours in 796 (he is made abbot), the house expands to include a school that educates young aristocrats as well as monks.

# Monastic hospitality and charity

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Underpinning this educational service, monks were also becoming committed to a range of social services at this time.

- Christ's recommendations of charity to the poor, the hospitality shown to him by others, and his example of healing the sick are things that monasteries take especially seriously. This is despite their aspiration towards an unworldly life: in Christian ethics, the making oneself humble and poor etc. are seen as making one better able to care for others as well
- Hospitality to outsiders – including the sick – and charitable works can also be seen as practical supports to monastic life within society: a social role, a tangible example of 'giving back', which helped cement their place within society
- The Rule of Benedict provides clear guidance for receiving guests (without compromising monastic life) and commands the monks to "relieve the poor".
- By the end of the early Middle Ages, this extends to Benedictine monastic communities running novel institutions: hospitals (to take care of the sick), and almshouses (to care for the poor) –



# The Carolingian Empire – a monastic realm?

Over the course of this presentation, the context of the rise of the Carolingian Empire has been referenced frequently.

- The creation of a powerful polity covering much of the Latin West – albeit a polity that quickly splintered into several separate kingdoms – significantly affected Western monasticism.
- The Carolingian aristocracy valued monasticism – not least for the prayer it offered them – continuing the tradition of the preceding Frankish Merovingian kingdoms. They supported monastic institutions but also worked to standardise them under a more Benedictine form.
- Monastic institutions moreover influenced the wider religious idealism of the emperors and their courts: their educated men – like Benedict of Aniane – provided key advisors; and monastic schools were important in educating the aristocracy, providing both their religious and wider intellectual formation.



# The Carolingian Empire – a monastic realm?

- In the process, however, the dividing lines between monasticism and society were further blurred.
- Monks served the empire politically and intellectually, and served society more broadly through active work of hospitality and charity.
- Conversely, we find important men of the court becoming abbots - e.g. Alcuin of York – or otherwise effectively ruling monasteries: such occurrences were in fact at odds with the Rule of Saint Benedict in which abbots/abbesses were supposed to be elected by the monks/nuns from amongst themselves rather than be imposed from outside.
- We also find the spread of monastic-style education outside the monastery (e.g. cathedral schools).
- If the Carolingian empire itself was in some senses “monasticized”, there was the risk that the prestige of monks and monasteries as a separate, spiritual elite was becoming less clear.



# Sources - *Rule of Saint Benedict of Nursia, 516 AD* and *Rule of Saint Columbanus, c. 600 AD*

**Benedict of Nursia (c. 480-550 AD)**

- An Italian monk and abbot of Monte Cassino monastery
- Wrote a rule in Latin that would eventually become the most famous and influential rule in the Latin West.
- The **Rule of Saint Benedict** (516 AD) would be heavily promoted by the Carolingian Emperors from the early 9<sup>th</sup> centuries
- Despite some long-standing resistance, would become increasingly well recognised as the rule for monasteries in their territories

**Columbanus of Bangor (d. 615 AD),**

- Discussed in lecture 2: an Irish monk from Bangor who travelled to continental Europe and founded monasteries in Gaul, Germany and Northern Italy
- Found significant support from Merovingian (pre-Carolingian) Frankish kings and kingdoms.
- The **Rule of Saint Columbanus**, written in Latin c. 600 AD, was used quite widely in the Frankish realms
- The Fourth Synod of Macon (627 AD), a Frankish church council gave its support and consent to the use of this rule. In reality, it was often used by 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> century monasteries in combination with other rules, including that of Saint Benedict of Nursia

# Sources - *Rule of Saint Benedict of Nursia, 516 AD* and *Rule of Saint Columbanus, c. 600 AD*

Benedict: *On Silence*

Let us act in accordance with the saying of the Prophet: "I have said: I will watch my ways and keep my tongue from sin; I remained utterly silent, not even saying anything good" [Ps. 38[39]:1-2]. If therefore, according to this saying of the Prophet we must at times abstain even from good talk for the sake of silence, we must refrain from evil words so much more, on account of the guilt and penalty that comes from sin! Therefore, because of the importance of silence, permission to speak should only be given rarely, even to perfect disciples, even if their words concern good and holy matters that might teach; because it is written "in the multitude of words, sin is not lacking" [Prov. 10:19]. And in another place, it is said, "The tongue has the power of life and death" [Prov. 18:21]. For it is right that a master speak and teach; and it is right that a disciple hold his peace and listen. If therefore, anything must be asked of the Prior [assistant to the abbot], it should be done with all humility, subjection, and reverence, so that he who asks may not appear to speak more than is necessary.

Columbanus: *On Silence*

The Rule of silence must be diligently observed, for it is written: "The service of justice will be quietness and peace." [Is. 32.17] All unnecessary words must be avoided; except in cases of pressing need or usefulness, the monk must be silent, because, according to the Scripture, "in the multitude of words, sin is not lacking." [Prov. 10.19] Hence our Savior says: "For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned." [Matt 12.37] Justly indeed they will be condemned: those who will not, though able, speak just words, but rather, in their talkative nature, prefer to speak wicked, unjust, ungodly, vain, injurious, double-meaning, false, quarrelsome, abusive, shameful, absurd, blasphemous, harsh, and crooked words. These and similar words must never pass the lips of the monk, whose tongue must always be governed by prudence and right reason, so that he should not be betrayed by his talkativeness and fall into negative things and contradictions born of pride.

Columbanus: Extract from *Communal Rules*

He who speaks loudly without restraint, unless from necessity, should be punished with an imposition of silence or fifty blows [i.e. lashes]. Let him who makes excuses for his brother in this regard have the same penance. He who has replied to a brother by pointing something out, e.g. 'It is not as you say,' - except in the case of seniors speaking honestly to juniors - should be punished with an imposition of silence or fifty blows.



# Sources – *Rule of Saint Benedict of Nursia, 516 AD*

## *On receiving Guests*

All guests who present themselves are to be welcomed as Christ, for he himself will say: I was a stranger and you welcomed me (Matt 25:35). Proper honour must be shown to all, especially to those who share our faith (Gal 6:10) and to pilgrims. Once a guest has been announced, the superior and the brothers are to meet him with all the courtesy of love. First of all, they are to pray together and thus be united in peace; prayer must always precede the kiss of peace because of the temptations of the devil. All humility should be shown in addressing a guest on arrival or departure. By a bow of the head or by a complete prostration of the body, they are to be adored like Christ, because He is indeed welcomed in them. After the guests have been received, they should be invited to pray; then the superior or an appointed brother will sit with them. The divine law is read to the guest for his instruction, and after that every kindness is shown to him. The superior may break his fast for the sake of a guest, unless it is a day of special fast which cannot be broken. The brothers, however, observe the usual fast. The abbot shall pour water on the hands of the guests, and the abbot with the entire community should wash their feet. After the washing they will recite this verse: God, we have received your mercy in the midst of your temple (Ps 47[48]:10). Great care and concern are to be shown in receiving poor people and pilgrims, because in them more particularly Christ is received; our very awe of the rich guarantees them special respect. [...] No one is to speak or associate with guests unless he is asked; however, if a brother meets or sees a guest, he is to greet him humbly, as we have said. He should ask for a blessing and continue on his way, explaining that he is not allowed to speak with a guest.

# Sources – Benedict of Aniane – *Concord of Rules*, c. 817 AD

## **Benedict of Aniane (d. 821 AD)**

- Born Witiza, the son of the Aigulf, the Visigothic count of Maguelonne in southern Gaul/France, a subject of the Carolingian Emperor Pepin III.
- Educated at Pepin's court, and served at the court of Pepin's successor Charlemagne, and in his army
- Grows more attracted to religion and becomes a monk at the monastery of Saint-Seine in Burgundy, where becomes familiar with multiple Rules
- Attempts to start two monasteries of his own; the second, for which he chooses the Rule of Saint Benedict is highly successful and attracts many monks
- Becomes Louis the Pious's religious advisor; presides over the Synod of Aachen in 816-7 at which the Rule of Saint Benedict is prescribed for all monasteries in the Empire

## **Concord of Rules (c. 817)**

- Written around the time of the Synod of Aachen, in support of its work.

Reference: *A Benedictine Reader*, ed. H. Feiss et al., 57ff (Collegeville, 2019)

# Sources – Benedict of Aniane – *Concord of Rules*, c. 817 AD

## 14.1-From the Rule of Saint Benedict

The fourth step of humility is that if, in this very obedience, harsh, contrary, or even unjust things are imposed, the monk must embrace patience with a quiet conscience and endure without growing weary or departing. As Scripture says: “The one who perseveres to the end will be saved.” [Matt. 10.2] Likewise: “Let your heart be strengthened and endure the Lord.” [Ps 26.1] And showing that the faithful should even endure all adverse things in the service of the Lord, it [Scripture] says - in the voice of those suffering -, “On account of you we are given up to death all day long, we are counted as sheep for the slaughter.” [Ps. 43.22; Rom. 8.36] And secure in the hope of divine reward, they continue, rejoicing and saying, “But in all these things we overcome because of him who loved us.” [Rom. 8.37] And likewise, in another place Scripture says, “You have tested us, God, you have tested us with fire as silver is tested by fire, you have led us into a trap, you have placed burdens on our backs.” [Ps. 65:10-11] And to show that we should be under a superior, it continues saying, “You have put people over our heads.” [Ps. 65.12] Those who show patience in adverse or unjust things also fulfil the command of the Lord that “if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also”; that “if anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, hand over your coat as well”; and that “If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles.” [Matt. 5.39-41] As Paul the apostle said, they should endure “false brothers” and “bless those who curse them.” [2 Cor. 11.26; Cor 4.12]

## 14.2-From the Rule of Saint Macarius

When you have suffered injury, you must keep silent. Do not know how to cause injury; be able to endure it when it is done to you. Do not let empty counsels lead you astray, but instead hold steadfast in Christ. You must not consider any relatives closer to you than the brothers who are with you in the cell.

## 14.3-From the Rule of Saint Basil

Question: How does someone become ready to accept even danger on account of the command of the Lord?

Answer: Indeed, first let him both reflect that for us the Lord himself became “obedient” to his Father “to the point of death,” [Phil 2.8] and let him be certain that “the command” of the Lord “is eternal life,” [Jn. 12.50] as it is written. Then, in the next place, let him also believe the Lord who says that “whoever wished to save his soul will lose, but whoever loses his soul for me and on account of the Gospel will save it.” [Mk. 8.35; Lk. 9.24]

# Sources – Cassiodorus - *Institutes*, c.

## 550 AD

**Cassiodorus (d. 585)**

- Italian, from a family that had held prominent positions in the late Western Roman Empire
- In early life, serves the Ostrogothic king Theodoric the Great (d. 526), whose dynasty ruled Italy in the period immediately following the fall of the Western Roman Empire
- Retires from public life as the Ostrogothic kingdom of Italy collapses; eventually establishes a monastery at Vivarium in c. 544

## **The Institutes**

- Likely written by c. 550, and perhaps composed over an extended period of time
- Written for his monks to provide an introductory guide for what his monks should read and learn.

Reference: <http://faculty.georgetown.edu/jod/texts/cass.inst.html>

# Sources – Cassiodorus - *Institutes*, c. 550 AD

When I realized there was such a zealous and eager pursuit of secular [i.e. classical, non-Christian] learning, and that the majority of mankind hope to obtain worldly wisdom from it, I was deeply concerned that Holy Scripture lacked public teachers, since secular authors certainly have a powerful and widespread tradition. Together with blessed Agapetus, Pope of Rome (reign 535-6), I made efforts to collect money to found Christian schools in the city of Rome and employ learned teachers from whom the faithful might gain eternal salvation for their souls and fine, pure eloquence for their speech. They say that such a system existed for a long time at Alexandria and that the Hebrews are now using it enthusiastically in Nisibis, a city of Syria. But since I could not accomplish this task because of continual wars and raging battles in the Kingdom of Italy - for peaceful endeavours have no place in a time of unrest - I was moved by divine love to devise for you [his monks at Vivarium], with God's help, these introductory books to act as a teacher. Through them, God willing, I believe that the textual disposition of Holy Scripture and a compact sketch of secular writings may be unfolded.

[...]

In the first book I have presented [Christian] teachers of the former ages who are always available and prepared to teach you, not so much by their speech as through your eyes.

[...]

In the second book on the arts and disciplines of liberal studies [i.e. classical pre-Christian texts], a few things might seem unsuitable [for monk]; and yet in this material there is little harm to the person [...] so long as he keeps his faith firm. Whatever has been found in Divine Scripture on such matters will be better understood if one has a prior acquaintance with these works. It is well-known that, at the beginning of spiritual wisdom, information on these subjects was sowed by God, which secular teachers afterwards cleverly transferred to their own works.

# Sources – Ermoldus - *In Honour of Emperor Louis* (c. 826-8)

## **Ermoldus Nigellus/Niger (Ermoldus the Black – active between 824-30)**

- A poet, who lived at the court of Pepin of Aquitaine (d. 838). Clearly educated, but it is not known where
- Pepin had been made King of Aquitaine by his father, the Carolingian emperor Louis the Pious.
- Ermoldus accompanied Pepin on his military campaign in Brittany in 824
- He was exiled for some crime to Strasbourg c. 826-8, but returns to Pepin's court afterwards

## **In Honour of Emperor Louis (c. 826-8)**

- A poem written in Latin, Ermoldus tells us that he composed it during his exile
- Its purpose is pretty clear: to win Louis's favour, so his exile could be ended and he could return to Pepin's court.
- It is thus a document designed to praise the emperor.
- As a result, it is not particularly reliable for the history of the events he describes
- But it is a fine piece of writing that reveals much about the culture – and, above all the cultural aspirations - of the society he lived in (the Carolingian aristocratic courts)
- The following extract describes Louis the Pious's foundation of the Benedictine Monastery of Inde (near Aachen, Western Germany), at the instigation of his religious advisor, the Benedictine monk Benedict of Aniane

Reference: *Patrologia Latina* 105, 569- 640 [My translation from Latin]

# Sources – Ermoldus - *In honour of Emperor Louis*

This monastery, built by these men [Louis the Pious and Benedict of Aniane], was called Inde and took the name from the river which ran before its gates.

Three miles separated the monastery from the royal Palace, in the town of Aachen, of which the renown has carried far.

This most agreeable place was previously home to long-horned deer, bears, buffalo and wild goats.

But the pro-active Louis chased off these wild animals, and skillfully built a place that was pleasing to God.

He hurried to found it, and enriched it with the best things.

There, Saint Benedict, your pious rule flourishes.

The same Benedict was the father of this house.

And Louis was both Caesar and abbot there.

# Sources – Alcuin - *Book of the Virtues and Vices*, c. 801-4 AD

## **Alcuin of York (d. 804)**

- An Anglo-Saxon (i.e. English). Born in Northumbria, probably in the 730s.
- Perhaps from an aristocratic background: he is educated at the prestigious cathedral school of York, established by Archbishop Egbert (d. 766 - a correspondent of Bede and Saint Boniface from lecture 2)
- Becomes a deacon (not a priest) at York Cathedral, and a leading teacher of the school.
- Meets Charlemagne on a trip to Rome and is invited to join his court in 761; he leads a school at Charlemagne's palace and becomes a key advisor
- Despite not being a monk, he is made abbot of the Marmoutier abbey outside Tours in 796; the house expands to include a school that educates young aristocrats

## **Book of Virtues and Vices**

- Written in Latin by Alcuin at Marmoutier for Wido, count of the Breton March in c.801-4
- It is intended for his spiritual instruction but became a very popular work – present in over 140 manuscripts

Reference: *Patrologia Latina* 101, 613-38 [My own translation from the Latin]



# Sources – Alcuin - *Book of the Virtues and Vices*, c. 801-4 AD

I have composed this for you, dearest son Wido, in brief words, just as you asked, so that through this little book you may have a manual in your sight every day. Reading it, you will be able to consider what you ought to avoid or what to do. And through the individual adversities or prosperities of this life, you may be encouraged to find how you should to ascend to the highest perfection.

Do not be frightened by your lay condition and secular way of life, as if this condition might bar you from entering the doors of heaven. For just as the blessings of the kingdom of God are preached in the same way to all, so the doors of His kingdom open equally to every sex, age, and person according to their merits. There is no distinction there, between those who were lay or cleric in the world, rich or poor, junior or senior, unfree or lord. Rather, each, according to the merits of their good work, will be crowned with perpetual glory.

# Select Bibliography

A. Diem, “Monastic Rules”, in P. Reynolds (ed.), *Great Christian Jurists and Legal Collections in the First Millennium* (Cambridge, 2019, pp. 214-236.

(I will share a copy on the IS soon.)

R. Kramer, “Teaching Emperors: Transcending the Boundaries of Carolingian Monastic Communities”, in E. Hovden, C. Lutter, and W. Pohl (eds.) *Meanings of Community across Medieval Eurasia: Comparative Approaches* (Leiden, 2016), 309-337.

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