

18. Brussels, Bibliothèque Royale 1650 (1520)

Aldhelm, prose “De laude virginitatis”

with glosses in Latin and OE

[Ker 8, Gneuss 806]

HISTORY: The manuscript dates from the 10c or early 11c, and was written in England. It has traditionally been associated with Abingdon (see Ker, *Cat.*, p. 3; Gneuss; Goossens 1974: 7; Porter 1996: 164), but Gwara (1997: 365) has suggested Canterbury as a likely place of origin, on account of its “style IV Anglo-Caroline script,” and because some of its glosses were copied into what is now BL, MS Royal D.xxiv, a Canterbury manuscript, though almost certainly from Abingdon. The text of the prose “De laude virginitatis” is Ehwald’s “B”. Ker believed on the basis of two identical glossing hands that, at the time, it formed one manuscript with Antwerp, Plantin Moretus Museum, MSS 16.2 [4] and 16.8 [5], and London, BL, MS Add. 32246 [164]. The Aldhelm glosses, above 5000, in four different hands, date from the first half of the 11c. In an extensive discussion of the glosses, Gretsich (1999: 132–84) does not confirm an Abingdon provenance, but concludes that the corpus of glosses is the accumulation of layers of work by several generations of scholars, and of the OE glosses, the most important contribution is by that of the latest hand, which she calls “CD”. According to Goossens (1974: 7, 16–27) the glosses were indeed written at Abingdon; they were copied almost verbatim in what is now Oxford, Bodleian Library, Digby 146 (1747) [370], also an Abingdon manuscript which remained at the Abbey until the Dissolution. It is not known when the manuscript was shipped to the continent, but notes in MS Plantin 16.8 show that that manuscript was still in England in the 16c (Ker, *Cat.*, p. 3). Notes on flyleaf ivr (2r) mentioning works by the 16c scholars Johannes Trithemius (1482–1516) and John Bale (1495–1563) suggest that humanists studied it in the middle of the 16c. It is known to have belonged to the Antwerp cartographer and scholar Abraham Ortelius (1527–1598) (van Langenhove 1941: 10; Goossens 1974: 8); afterwards, it ended up in the possession of the Antwerp Jesuits

(f. 1r 'Collegae soc. Jesu Antwerp' D.P'). It was studied by the humanist Jesuit Andreas Schottus (1552–1629) (Ker, *Cat.*, p. 7; Goossens 1974: 8), who mentions on the flyleaf (iii r) that the manuscript had been brought from England where it had escaped the iconoclasts' flames, and that he had put the quires in the right order. Marginalia from the later Middle Ages indicate that several quires had been misbound. Indeed, Ker holds that the four manuscripts mentioned above once formed one volume; they must have been separated sometime during the end of the 16c. Later this manuscript almost certainly formed part of the library of the Bollandists because in 1773 it passed to the Bibliothèque de Bourgogne in Brussels, which came to form part of the Royal Library in 1837.

[Note: The manuscript contains a considerable number of annotations from the 16c and/or early 17c and some from the later Middle Ages: f.iii r a note by Andreas Schottus, 'Huius Aldelmi elogiumf [*sic*] exstat in catalogo Scriptorum | Britanniae Ballaei'; f. iiiv modern pencil scribbles; f. ivr a biblio-biographical note on Aldhelm, in a 16c hand, 'ALDELMVS BLADVINVS, Yna Visisaxonum seu Occidentalium Anglorum | regis', with Schottus writing at the top: 'Pone et Verba Trithemij. | Ex Joh. Baleo', and at the bottom: 'Exempla Beatus Aldhelmus Sanctorum Sanctorum [*sic*] | virginum colligit, & idque exemplo B. Ambrosii | lib. 8 de virginitate, et Eusebii Caesariens. | lib VIII Histor. Ecclesiasticae'; f. 1r mark of ownership of the Antwerp Jesuits: 'Collegii Soc. Jesu. Antwerp. | D(omus) P(rofessa)' (ed. Goossens 1974: 6). The text also contains miscellaneous 16c or early 17c additions and corrections, identifying the title, f. lr, and the chapters, e.g. f. 1r 'CAP. I'; f. 4r 'CAP. III'; identifying sources of the text, e.g. f. 2r 'Virg. VIII. Æn. ver. 596'; correcting medieval Latin idiosyncrasies, e.g. f. 14r/17 'supp(re)ma(m)' with the first *p* crossed out; f. 27/20 'BABILLO' has the last three letters expunged and replaced by 'LA'; titles of sections were sometimes added, e.g. on ff. 45v/2, 46r/11, 46v/19, 48r/13. On ff. 8v, 16v, 32v notes in a late medieval hand indicate the correct order of the quires by referring to the first word of the following page, an indication that several quires were once misbound. On f. 8v this was later crossed out.]

CODICOLOGICAL DESCRIPTION: Membrane, containing ii + 2 + 56 + ii leaves arranged HFHF, measuring on average 286 × 219 mm., except for f. 39 which has been trimmed unevenly to 286 × 192 mm.; written space 225 × 150 mm. The manuscript is ruled for 22 lines in drypoint from the hair sides of the sheets. Prickings are visible in the outer margins. There are single vertical bounding lines, continuing into the top and bottom margins. The top and bottom horizontal lines also continue into the margins. The conjugate bifolium 18/23 has 21 lines, the first and the last continuing into the margins, which implies that it cannot have been ruled together with the other folios in the quire. F. 36r has an extra line drawn in ink by a later glossator, which has been struck out. Writing is on the top-line. The main text is

written in anglo-caroline minuscule; chapters, unnumbered, are indicated by large red initials. The four different hands of the glosses are described by Ker (*Cat.*, pp. 7–8), who recognized the same hands in Antwerp, Plantin-Moretus 16.2 and 16.8, and by Goossens (1974: 45–50) who distinguishes a fifth hand writing in red ink. Initials are mostly in red, and are two to three lines high. Occasionally initials in brown ink occur, e.g. f. 4r/13. Here and there, letters and glosses have been erased and replaced. Late medieval marginalia indicate that the order of the quires used to be I (ff. 1–8), IV (ff. 25–32), III (ff. 17–24), II (ff. 9–16), V–VII (ff. 33–56) (Goossens 1974: 6, n. 1).

The manuscript is kept in a hard binding covered with stamped brown leather. The spine reads: 'Regia Bibl. Belgica'. At the front there are two unnumbered modern paper flyleaves [i–ii], presumably contemporaneous with the binding, followed by two 16c or 17c paper leaves numbered 1 and 2 [iii–iv] in pencil, the latter being smaller leaves pasted in. At the back there are two unnumbered modern paper flyleaves, presumably contemporaneous with the binding. F. 25 is damaged at the fore-edge of the bottom margin, and on f. 48r damage has been repaired.

COLLATION: I–VII⁸ (ff. 1–56).

CONTENTS (facsimile of entire manuscript, ed. van Langenhove 1941):

iii r (1r) (flyleaf) 16c note describing the contents, signed 'Andreas Schottus'.

iii v (1v) (flyleaf) blank except for library marks.

iv r (2r) (flyleaf) 16c historical note about Aldhelm.

iv v (2v) blank.

- ff. 1r–55v/15 Aldhelm, "De Laude Virginitatis" (prose): Dedication: 'REUERENTISSIMUS CHR(IST)I VIRGINIBUS omni(que) deuote | germanitatis . . . prosperitatis salutem'; text (f. 1r/12) IAMDUDUM AD PONTIFICALE PROFICISCENS CON|ciliabulu(m) frat(er)nis sodaliu(m) cateruis comitatus'; ends (f. 55v/15) 'paradysi geminę & cęlestis patriae pa`r`ticipes [corrected (16c) from 'pasticipes']. Amen. | FINIS' (Latin text ed. Ehwald 1919: 228–323) [on f. 1r, at the top, is the stamp 'Bibliothèque de Bourgogne', at the bottom the stamp 'Bibliothèque Royale'].

[**Note on glosses:** The text is richly provided with OE as well as Latin glosses, both interlinear and in the margin, written at different times by various scribes; sometimes there are several glosses to one word (glosses ed. Goossens 1974: 147–489). Ker (*Cat.*, pp. 6–7) identifies four distinct glossing hands, all of "s. xi²." Goossens identified four glosses damaged by trimming: nos. 8 (f. 1r/5), 15 (f. 1v/9–10), 64 (f. 1v/9) and 114 (f. 2r/5).]

2. f. 54v, left and bottom margins, a note in a contemporary hand: 'd(omi)ne ch(rist)e d(omi)n(u)s n(oste)r saluator | mundi. Inprimo gradu. . . . Amor uitę et(er)nę P(er)seuerantia bona usq(ue) i(n) fi|ne(m). Amen' (cf. Ehwald 1919: 216).
3. ff. 55v/18–56r/9 Biblical tags: 'Salomon dicit. Melior e(st) iniq(ui)tas uiri. qua(m) benefaciens mulier . . . absq(ue) p(ro)ximi. & p(ro)ximi n(on) potest esse absq(ue) d(e)i.' (the first quotation is identified in the margin, 16c hand: 'Eccl(es)i[asticus] 42 v. 14 | ergo Siracides | non Salomon').
4. f. 56r/10–20 Comment on Isaiah 42.3: 'CALAMU(M) QUASSATU(M) NON CON(T)ERET . . . qui uenit in hunc mundu(m) querere & saluu(m) | facere q(uo)d perierat' (in right margin, a 16c hand incorrectly identifies it as 'Isaia 43. v. 3'). [At the bottom of f. 56r is the stamp 'Bibliothèque de Bourgogne']
- F. 56v blank, but for the stamp 'Bibliothèque Royale'.

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