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# Lectio Divina : nuns and reading in the sixth and seventh centuries

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**LECTIO DIVINA:  
NUNS AND READING IN THE SIXTH AND SEVENTH CENTURIES**

**A Thesis**

**Presented to**

**The Faculty of the Department of History**

**San Jose State University**

**In Partial Fulfillment**

**of the Requirements for the Degree**

**Master of Arts**

**by**

**Charlene M. Kellsey**

**December 1999**

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## ABSTRACT

### LECTIO DIVINA: NUNS AND READING IN THE SIXTH AND SEVENTH CENTURIES

by Charlene M. Kellsey

This thesis discusses the evidence for the degree to which women, in the role of nuns, were encouraged to be literate and read in the sixth and seventh centuries. Four monastic rules written specifically for women in the sixth and seventh centuries in Gaul by Caesarius of Arles, Aurelian, Donatus of Besançon and the anonymous *Regula cuiusdam patris ad virgines* are examined for the requirement that nuns learn to read. Additionally, letters, sermons and the *Vita* of Caesarius, a letter of his niece Caesaria, and *Vitae* of abbesses are examined to discover the extent to which nuns read and the nature of their reading. The extent of education for girls and the effect of the oral culture of this period on reading technique and memorization are also discussed. A conjectured continuity of the reading requirement from the fourth and fifth century monastic rules of the Egyptian desert to the sixth and seventh century rules for women in Gaul is demonstrated. Comparison of the women's rules with rules written for men at the same time illustrates the equality of reading expectations for both nuns and monks during a period in which women were not expected to meet the same requirements as men in any other area of life.



## DEDICATION

To my mother, Dorothy Stephan Kellsey, who encouraged my intellectual development by sending me to a good liberal arts college (Skidmore College) and who always believed I could do anything I set my mind to.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations are used in the notes to each chapter.

Bede, H. E.	<i>Historia ecclesiastica gentis anglorum</i>
MGH	<i>Monumenta Germaniae Historica</i>
AA	<i>Auctores antiquissimi</i>
Ep.	<i>Epistolae</i>
Ep. Merov.	<i>Epistolae Merovingici et Karolini aevi</i>
Ep. Sel.	<i>Epistolae selectae</i>
SRM	<i>Scriptores rerum merovingicarum</i>
SRG	<i>Scriptores rerum germanicarum</i>
PL	<i>Patrologia latina</i> ed. J.P. Migne (1844-1855)
PG	<i>Patrologia graeca</i> ed. J.P. Migne

## INTRODUCTION

With the final loss of a centralized Roman government in the West in the fifth century, the Roman aristocracy and administrative institutions left in Gaul had to govern on a more local level. At the same time, Germanic tribal kings were expanding their areas of control into the former Roman areas. By 528 Clovis had succeeded in becoming sole king of the Franks and in gaining control of most of Gaul and the kingdom of the Alemanni on both sides of the Rhine through conquest and assassination of his rivals. His court incorporated both Frankish aristocrats and Roman administrators; the Roman tax system and its concomitant paperwork continued.<sup>1</sup> Thus, the political change affected the society and a new amalgam of Germanic and Roman governing practices began to emerge.

Likewise, Christianity also changed during this period. The Gallo-Roman aristocracy had been Christian as far back as the late third century and most of the bishops in the early Merovingian period continued to come from those aristocratic families. In the absence of other political offices, the office of bishop increasingly became one of power, and aristocratic families strove to keep control over it. Few bishops had progressed through the lower clerical ranks before attaining the office. Moreover, in the sixth and seventh centuries full Christianization was not widespread outside urban aristocratic circles; paganism and agrarian rituals continued in the rural areas.<sup>2</sup> At the same time, an ascetic, monastic movement within Christianity, which had originated in the deserts of Egypt and Syria, was spreading to western Europe. Bishops

in Gaul began to write monastic rules that were influenced by the writings of men like John Cassian, who had visited the desert holy men, Augustine, who wrote a rule for the monastery he established at his see in Hippo when he became bishop, and Jerome, who translated into Latin the rule Pachomius had written for his monastic communities in Egypt, thus encouraging a more fervent religious element began to take root in European Christianity.<sup>3</sup> This monastic movement began to flourish in Gaul in the sixth century and included increasing numbers of monasteries for women. The women's monasteries were often founded by or for an aristocratic young woman, even sometimes a queen, who wished to lead an ascetic and fervent life dedicated to truly following the Gospels.

Almost no written works definitely attributable to women survive from this period,<sup>4</sup> so a picture of sixth and seventh century nuns has to be filled out from works written to or for them by the well-known men of the period. The works of the earlier Church Fathers had combined the late antique attitude, which considered women inferior and defective compared to men, with the Christian belief in the spiritual equality of women and men. Basil, bishop of Ancyra between 336 and 358, wrote: "virgins have a female body but repress this appearance of their body through *askesis* and become, through their virtue, like men, to whom they are already created equal in their soul ... So while in this present life they are equal to men in their soul only, but they limp towards equality in their female wrapping, they will gain, through virtue, full equality with these men [ascetics] who have already been made into the angels of the future life."<sup>5</sup> Basil of Caesarea (c. 330-379) and Gregory of Nazianzus (c. 329-389) echo this idea of women's equality in soul despite bodily weaknesses. In the West, Augustine (354-430) also shared

this view. He believed that the image of God resides in the rational mind and that women as well as men could attain the renewal of their minds that constituted salvation.<sup>6</sup> In the sixth century, several bishops in Gaul, beginning with Caesarius of Arles, felt that the nuns under their guidance needed a rule modified from men's monastic rules to take into account their weaknesses and special needs. These rules provide an opportunity to examine what was expected of nuns and what differences existed in the monastic lives of women and men. The sixth and seventh century monastic rules written for women form the basis of evidence for this thesis.

This thesis will examine the evidence for the degree to which women, in the role of nuns, were encouraged to be literate and to read. One scholar has pointed out, "To study the degree of literacy practised and appreciated by an individual or group in society, whether male or female, therefore, is to reach a fuller understanding of that individual or social group in terms of the written evidence they themselves have left behind."<sup>7</sup> The degree of literacy practiced and the kind of reading done by a social group that has left little written evidence of their own behind can, however, also lead to a fuller understanding of that group and those individuals in terms of the kind of intellectual life they were leading, what they were expected to learn and how they went about learning it. Women did not write treatises on the monastic life, not even for their fellow nuns, but the biographies of several abbesses praise them for the excellence of their teaching and spiritual guidance of their nuns, and sometimes monks, if theirs was a double monastery.<sup>8</sup> Women appear reflected in the works of exhortation and encouragement addressed to them and in the descriptions of their lives in hagiography.

The first two chapters of this thesis will treat the evidence for nuns' reading in the monastic rules written for them, as well as in several letters and the sermons and *Life* of Caesarius of Arles. What was the explicit reading requirement in these sources? Did it differ from that in the men's monastic rules of the same period? Is there any mention of what books the nuns read? The rules for nuns were all written in Gaul, but a monastic treatise for women written in Spain by Leander of Seville, and the *Rule of St. Benedict* from Italy, will also be considered for comparison. The third chapter will examine the education girls received which would enable them to read. How did schooling for girls change from late antiquity into the sixth and seventh centuries? Within the monastic context, did girls receive the same intellectual opportunity that boys did? The fourth and final chapter will discuss the essentially oral nature of most of early medieval culture. What was the place of literacy in this oral culture and how did orality affect the nature and process of reading? In particular, what was the nature of the religious reading done in the monasteries of women and men of this period?

Use of the term "lectio divina" is widespread in the writings of the Church Fathers and ecclesiastics of the fourth and fifth centuries.<sup>9</sup> Frequent reading of the scriptures to inform prayer and meditation was an essential part of monasticism from its earliest beginnings, but as the Roman world disintegrated in the West and Germanic peoples joined the Christian world, did this monastic tradition continue for women? No one scholar has written the definitive history of women's monasticism in Gaul in the sixth and seventh centuries, but much good work on early medieval women has appeared over recent decades. McCarthy's translation and analysis of the sources of Caesarius of Arles'

*Rule for Nuns* appeared in 1960,<sup>10</sup> and Mayo compared and analyzed the rules of Aurelian, Donatus and the anonymous *Regula cuiusdam patris ad virgines* in her 1976 Ph.D. dissertation.<sup>11</sup> More recently, McNamara has translated the *Vitae* of eighteen sixth and seventh century abbesses and holy women, making these works more accessible and bringing them together in one volume for easier comparison.<sup>12</sup> Klingshirn has translated the *Vita*, will and letters of Caesarius of Arles, and written a study of Caesarius and his shaping of the Christian community in Arles.<sup>13</sup> This study includes a section on the women's monastery he founded in Arles for his sister; although Klingshirn briefly discusses the major provisions of Caesarius's rule, he is more concerned with the means of support and the strict enclosure of the monastery than with the daily life of the nuns.<sup>14</sup>

Several scholars have written about literacy in the late antique and early medieval periods. Harris' comprehensive book covers literacy throughout antiquity, but his final chapter on late antiquity discusses the evidence for a possible decline in literacy in the third and fourth centuries.<sup>15</sup> He also discusses the place of written works within Christianity but disputes the contention that the Christian laity was more literate than the average Roman. Throughout antiquity literacy was the prerogative of the upper class. McKitterick argues for an equivalent literacy of women and men of the upper class in the Merovingian and Carolingian periods.<sup>16</sup> She presents manuscript evidence of nuns' scriptoria and original works such as hagiography and letters by women or likely to have been written by them. She also discusses the possibility of boys and girls of the laity having been schooled in the women's monasteries. In a more extensive article on nuns' scriptoria in the eighth century, McKitterick examines in detail manuscripts known, or



conjectured, to have been written in women's monasteries. On the basis of this examination she concludes that the texts copied were of high quality and the scribes were competent and understood what they were copying, with a level of education equal to other eighth and ninth century copyists.<sup>17</sup> Since almost all of the extant manuscripts come from the eighth century or later, McKitterick's conclusions naturally apply to that period. For the sixth and seventh centuries, more indirect evidence will have to suffice, but the existence of competent nuns' scriptoria by the eighth century hints at the possibility that they might have begun developing as communities of nuns began to be established in the sixth and seventh centuries.

In the area of education, to be discussed in Chapter 3, two scholars have brought together the scraps of evidence for antiquity and early Middle Ages. Marrou covers education throughout antiquity and discusses how children were taught and who was likely to have gone to school.<sup>18</sup> In a final chapter he covers the changes in education in the fifth and sixth centuries, especially the development of specifically Christian education. Riché continues and develops this account for the sixth through the eighth centuries in Gaul, Spain and England.<sup>19</sup> By means of an exhaustive examination of inscriptions and literary references, Riché develops a picture of the state of classical education and the development of Christian education during the early medieval period. He finds only a few references to the education of girls and the existence of educated laywomen.

Although literacy was well entrenched in the sixth and seventh centuries, at least among the upper class, much of early medieval culture was oral. Richter examines the

mostly oral culture of the Germanic peoples and discusses how historians can find evidence for it when, by definition, it left behind no written records.<sup>20</sup> When people from an oral culture become literate, they use oral techniques such as repetition in learning to read and often memorize their texts, thus making them oral again. Carruthers discusses these techniques in a very thoughtful book,<sup>21</sup> and several writers have pointed out oral characteristics of some of the biblical works the nuns would have read.<sup>22</sup> Chapter 4 will discuss orality and oral techniques applied to written texts, especially within the context of the meditative nature of religious reading. Evidence of these techniques discovered in a letter from one abbess to another will be presented.

Sixth and seventh century nuns were continuing a communal ascetic Christian tradition for women that arose two centuries earlier and that included literacy from its beginnings. In the early fourth century, an ascetic named Pachomius began founding communities of monks in Egypt to accommodate the increasing numbers of men wishing to lead an ascetic life. In 329 his sister Maria visited his monastery at Tabennisi and decided she wanted to follow the ascetic life as well. Pachomius had the brothers build her a monastery a short distance away and, probably because of the need to instruct her, wrote down the rules that the brothers used.<sup>23</sup>

Pachomius' rule includes explicit instructions on reading and the care of the books. The books were kept in an alcove by day but shut up in a case at night. Monks were allowed to take one for a week but were not to leave them unfastened when they were called to prayers or meals,<sup>24</sup> which implies that the books had some kind of cover which closed with a clasp or ties. Concerning reading, the rule states:

And if he is illiterate, he shall go at the first, third and sixth hours to someone who can teach and has been appointed for him. He shall stand before him and learn very studiously with all gratitude. Then the fundamentals of a syllable, the verbs, and the nouns shall be written for him, and even if he does not want to, he shall be compelled to read. There shall be no one whatever in the monastery who does not learn to read and does not memorize something of Scriptures. [One should learn by heart] at least the New Testament and the Psalter.<sup>25</sup>

Corroborating evidence that the nuns also lived by this rule exists in the *Lausiaca History* of Palladius, one of the important sources for the history of monasticism in Egypt. Palladius wrote this history around 419; it recounts his own experiences as well as stories he had heard about holy men and women in Egypt and the Middle East.<sup>26</sup> In Chapter 33 on the women's monastery founded by Pachomius, Palladius says that they lived with the same constitution and way of life as the men.<sup>27</sup> When Jerome translated the rules of Pachomius into Latin, one of the reasons he gave in his preface for doing so was to benefit Eustochium,<sup>28</sup> head of a women's monastery in Bethlehem, so that she "would have something to give the sisters as a rule of conduct."<sup>29</sup> Thus, women's monasteries in at least two places were using or were acquainted with a rule that required learning to read and the reading and memorizing of the Scriptures.

The learned Jerome, responsible for a translation of the Bible from the Greek and Hebrew into Latin and for exegetical works, also wrote lengthy letters to several aristocratic Roman women whom he had encouraged in the ascetic life. In one of the most well-known, letter 22 to Eustochium, Jerome expounds on the life a virgin should

lead, quoting and interpreting many biblical verses in support of his points. In one place he tells Eustochium to “read much and learn as much as possible. Let sleep creep upon you with a book in your hand, and let the sacred page catch your head as you nod.”<sup>30</sup> Not only must she read the Scriptures, but she must understand them, since he tells her if she is “ignorant about something or in doubt about a point of Scripture” she should ask a man of advanced years and understanding and reproachless reputation to explain it to her. Nevertheless, virtue is more important than understanding: “it is better to be serenely ignorant than to learn with some attendant risk.”<sup>31</sup>

In addition to the Scriptures, Jerome also directs Eustochium to read works by Tertullian, Cyprian and Pope Damasus (now lost) and the *De virginibus* of Ambrose in order to understand the blessings of a virgin’s life and the drawbacks of a married woman’s life.<sup>32</sup> But she is not to read the works of pagan authors because “what has Horace to do with the Psalter, Virgil with the Gospels, Cicero with Paul?”<sup>33</sup> Jerome then recounts his famous dream in which God accuses him of being a Ciceronian rather than a Christian because he kept his pagan books and read them. Eustochium must also “not be too eager to seem to yourself eloquent, or improvise humorous themes in lyric verse,”<sup>34</sup> skills of which aristocratic Roman women apparently were capable. So the image of Eustochium that emerges from Jerome’s letter is of an aristocrat with some classical education who became the leader of a women’s monastery in Palestine and immersed herself in study of the Scriptures and works of church fathers on leading an ascetic life of virginity.

Another Roman lady, Laeta, who was Eustochium's sister-in-law, wrote Jerome asking for advice on educating her young daughter. His letter in response encourages her to teach the child letters by means of a boxwood or ivory set of letters and teach her to write by tracing the letters on a wax tablet. Names of prophets or apostles should be the first words she learns to read when putting letters together. When she is older, she is to learn by heart verses from the Scriptures in Greek, but she should also be instructed in her own language of Latin so that her speech is correct and not spoiled by foreign words or accent creeping into it from those she hears. Books are to be her treasures, not because of their gilding and ornamentation but because of their correctness and accurate punctuation. Jerome then outlines a program for reading the Bible, beginning with Psalms and Proverbs, then the Gospels and Epistles, the Prophets and Heptateuch, Kings, Chronicles, Ezra and Esther. Only at the end of this study should she read the Song of Songs, because of its sensual language. She should avoid apocryphal writings but may read the works of Cyprian, letters of Athanasius and Hilary's commentaries on Scripture. She may read any other religious works, and Jerome does not forbid secular works, only saying she should read them in order to judge them rather than follow their advice.<sup>35</sup>

Laeta's daughter (Paula) had already been vowed to God before she was born. Jerome's letter outlines a lofty ideal for bringing her up to be a consecrated virgin, and she was eventually sent to her aunt Eustochium's monastery in Bethlehem. What is significant to this thesis is that a learned man of the church expected that a young woman taking up a consecrated life as a nun should read and study all of the Bible, some of it in Greek, and read works of interpretation as well.

These fourth and fifth century examples of reading expectations for ascetic women lead to the conjecture that rules written for the new women's monasteries being founded in the sixth and seventh centuries would have continued these expectations. Although external circumstances may have changed, there was continuity in the monastic tradition carried on by each writer who added to it. This thesis will examine the sixth and seventh century rules for women and other documents to discover whether the conjecture proves true.

<sup>1</sup> Patrick J. Geary, *Before France and Germany: the Creation and Transformation of the Merovingian World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 92. For the history of this period, see also A.H.M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire 284-602: a Social, Economic and Administrative Survey* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1964), especially vol. 1, 260-265; Peter Brown, *The World of Late Antiquity AD 150-750* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971); and Roger Collins, *Early Medieval Europe 300-1000* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991), especially chapters 7, 8, 10, and 14.

<sup>2</sup> Geary, *Before France and Germany*, 123-4; 135.

<sup>3</sup> Although Basil of Caesarea had written an early rule in the eastern part of the empire, there is no evidence of its influence on the rules of sixth century Gaul, although Benedict's rule, written at the same time in Italy does mention it. See the discussion of the sources for the rules in Chap. 1 below.

<sup>4</sup> Baudonivia's *De vita sanctae Radegundis* in *MGH SRM 2*, 364-95 and Caesaria's letter to Radegund in *MGH Ep. Mer.* 1, 450-453, are two notable examples and probably survived because they were associated with a queen. Some works that are currently identified as anonymous may have been written by women.

<sup>5</sup> Basil of Ancyra, "On the True Integrity of Virginité, to Letoios, Bishop of Melitene" *PG 30*, 669-809; quoted and translated in Susanna Elm, *Virgins of God: the Making of Asceticism in Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 120.

<sup>6</sup> Graham Gould, "Women in the Writings of the Fathers: Language, Belief and Reality," in W.J. Sheils and Diana Wood, eds., *Women in the Church* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), 5-7.

<sup>7</sup> Rosamond McKitterick, "Women and Literacy in the Early Middle Ages," in *Books, Scribes and Learning in the Frankish Kingdoms, 6<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> Centuries* (Aldershot, Hampshire: Variorum, 1994), 13: 1.

<sup>8</sup> See the *Vita Bertilae abbatissae Calensis* in *MGH SRM 4*, 534-46; trans. in Jo Ann McNamara and John E. Holborg, *Sainted Women of the Dark Ages* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1992), 280-88; and Bede's praise of Hild in the *Historia Ecclesiastica*, p. 247

<sup>9</sup> Denys Gorce, *La Lectio Divina des Origines du Cénobitisme à Saint Benoît et Cassiodore, I. Saint Jérôme et la Lecture Sacrée dans le Milieu Ascétique Romain* (Paris: Librairie Auguste Picard, 1925), ii.

<sup>10</sup> Mother Maria Caritas McCarthy, *The Rule for Nuns of St. Caesarius of Arles: a New Translation with a Critical Introduction* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University Press, 1960).

<sup>11</sup> Hope Mayo, "Three Merovingian Rules for Nuns" (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1976).

<sup>12</sup> McNamara and Halborg, *Sainted Women of the Dark Ages*.

<sup>13</sup> William E. Klingshirn, *Caesarius of Arles: Life, Testament and Letters*, Translated Texts for Historians, vol. 19 (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1994) and *Caesarius of Arles: the Making of a Christian Community in Late Antique Gaul* (Cambridge University Press, 1994).

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- <sup>14</sup> Klingshirn, *Caesarius of Arles: Making*, 117-124.
- <sup>15</sup> William V. Harris, *Ancient Literacy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989).
- <sup>16</sup> McKitterick, "Women and literacy in the early middle ages," 1-43.
- <sup>17</sup> Rosamond McKitterick, "Nuns' scriptoria in England and Francia in the eighth century," *Francia* 19 no.1 (1992), 1-35.
- <sup>18</sup> H. I. Marrou, *A History of Education in Antiquity*, trans. George Lamb, 3d ed. (New York: New American Library, 1964).
- <sup>19</sup> Pierre Riché, *Education and Culture in the Barbarian West, Sixth through Eighth Centuries*, trans. John Contreni. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1976).
- <sup>20</sup> Michael Richter, *The Formation of the Medieval West: Studies in the Oral Culture of the Barbarians* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994).
- <sup>21</sup> Mary Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought: Meditation, Rhetoric and the Making of Images 400-1200*. Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).
- <sup>22</sup> Robert C. Culley, *Oral Formulaic Language in the Biblical Psalms* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967) and Charles H. Lohr, "Oral techniques in the Gospel of Matthew," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 23 (1961), 403-35.
- <sup>23</sup> Susanna Elm, *Virgins of God* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 289.
- <sup>24</sup> Pachomius *Praecepta* 25, 100, 101. English trans. in Armand Vielleux, *Pachomian Koinonia* vol. 2, *Pachomian Chronicles and Rules* (Kalamazoo, Mich.: Cistercian Publications, 1981), 149, 162.
- <sup>25</sup> Pachomius *Praecepta* 139, 140; Vielleux, *Pachomian Chronicles*, 166.
- <sup>26</sup> *Palladius: the Lausiac History*, trans. and annotated by Robert T. Meyer, *Ancient Christian Writers: the Works of the Fathers in Translation*, no. 34 (Westminster, Md.: Newman Press, 1965), 5-8.
- <sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 95. For a more recent translation of the parts of the *Lausiac History* referring to Pachomius and his communities, see Vielleux, *Pachomian Chronicles*, 123-135.
- <sup>28</sup> Although her full name was Eustochium Julia, Jerome always refers to her as Eustochium, although this is not a feminine form of the name.
- <sup>29</sup> Vielleux, *Pachomian Chronicles*, 142.
- <sup>30</sup> *The Letters of St. Jerome* vol. 1, trans. Charles Christopher Mierow, *Ancient Christian Writers*, no. 33 (Westminster, Md.: Newman Press, 1963), 148.
- <sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 163.
- <sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 155.
- <sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 165.
- <sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 164.
- <sup>35</sup> Jerome, Letter 107; trans. W. H. Fremantle, *St. Jerome: Letters and Select Works*, *Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, 2<sup>nd</sup> series, vol. 6 (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Erdman's, 1996 reprint), 189-195.



## CHAPTER 1: THE SIXTH CENTURY

### CAESARIUS OF ARLES AND HIS SOURCES

In Gaul during the sixth and seventh centuries several women's monasteries were founded; concomitantly monastic rules written specifically for women began to appear. One scholar sees these rules as part of an attempt by bishops to reform and regularize the more informal practices of consecrated virgins and widows in their own homes, and restrict the greater freedom and rights of deaconesses and canonesses.<sup>1</sup> Another views the stricter cloistering of women as necessary to protect them from attack in a violent era and the separation from the secular world as important to their pursuit of the spiritual life.<sup>2</sup> The political motivations of imposing control and uniformity certainly became evident in the later Carolingian period. Even earlier precedents existed in the cloister practices of the Pachomian women's monasteries in Egypt and the monastery of Paula in Bethlehem in the fourth and early fifth centuries, where the women did not leave until death. Caesarius, bishop of Arles in southern Gaul, in his letters to monks and nuns sincerely writes of the monastery as a haven from the secular world where the religious can have the peace to prepare for eternal life.<sup>3</sup> Given the chaos of early sixth century Gaul, where during Caesarius' tenure as bishop, Arles was conquered and ruled by kings of three different Germanic tribes (Visigoths, Ostrogoths and Franks),<sup>4</sup> protection and safety were important. Yet, continuity with early monastic tradition would have been just as important to Caesarius. Whatever the motivations for their composition, the rules addressed to women were based on the same monastic tradition and writings of Church

Fathers as men's rules, giving at least some women access to the Christian intellectual milieu of their times.

Caesarius of Arles wrote the first rule explicitly for women,<sup>5</sup> known as the *Regula ad virgines* (hereafter referred to as the *Rule for Nuns*), when he established the monastery of St. John for his sister Caesaria in Arles in 512. He presented the nuns with the final revised version, which includes a recapitulation, in 534.<sup>6</sup> The major sources for Caesarius' *Rule* are the rule written by St. Augustine (c. 397) and the *Institutes* (c.420-424) of John Cassian used by the monastic community at Lerins. Caesarius, a monk at Lerins from 490-497, in addition to using Cassian's work, incorporated observances from the tradition of Lerins. His contact with Augustine's works appears to have come through a certain Julianus Pomerius of Mauretania who was a pupil of Augustine and taught grammar and rhetoric to Caesarius in Arles in 497.<sup>7</sup> Since Caesarius incorporated these two sources into his rule,<sup>8</sup> it would be useful to see what they had to say about reading before examining the *Rule for Nuns* itself.

Actually two texts attributed to Augustine<sup>9</sup> contain precepts for the monastic life: the brief *Ordo monasterii*, or *Regulations for a monastery*, which prescribes the times of the day for chanting the psalms and for manual labor and provides precepts about silence and obedience; and the longer *Praeceptum*, or *Rule*, which offers a little more detail about possessions, prayer, fasting, clothing, avoiding the temptations of the opposite sex, and avoiding or mending quarrels. In the *Ordo monasterii* we find the following sentences concerning reading:<sup>10</sup>

3. Let them work from early morning till noon and take leisure for reading from noon till three, and at three o'clock return the books.

7. When seated at table, they are to be silent and listen to the reading.

From the *Praeceptum* we have:

III, 2. Listen to the customary reading from the beginning to the end of the meal without commotion or arguments. Food is not for the mouth alone; your ears also should hunger for the Word of God.

V, 10. Books are to be requested at a definite hour each day; requests made at other times will be denied.

Several practices concerning reading in monasteries appear in these precepts. First, a substantial portion of time, three hours, was set aside for reading, presumably on an individual basis. Although the act of reading was more laborious than it is today, as will be discussed below, nonetheless three hours represents a significant amount of time in the daily routine. Second, the practice of having one person read aloud while the rest ate at mealtimes provided another form of reading in the monastery. The metaphor of the soul hungering for the word of God as the body hungers for food comes from the Bible;<sup>11</sup> the practice of listening to reading while eating fulfills both needs at the same time and imbues a daily necessity with a spiritual aspect. It also presents reading as an aural group experience in addition to the solitary, visual experience noted above.

We can also tell from these passages that monasteries apparently kept their books in one place, probably a locked cupboard, from which monks had to request them.

Chapter V, 9 of the *Praeceptum* mentions monks in charge of food, of clothing, or of

books which implies they were regular offices of some importance. Precept 3 from the *Ordo monasterii* also says the books are to be returned at the end of the reading period at three o'clock, which means they were dispensed and returned daily, rather than being kept by the individual monks or nuns for longer periods. These precepts demonstrate the care of the books taken in the monastery at a time when books were so painstakingly created and valuable and so essential to the spiritual life of the monks.

From the terse, practical rules of Augustine we turn to the works of John Cassian (c.365-435). Cassian spent his early monastic life in Palestine and lower Egypt learning about the life of perfection at the feet of the Desert Fathers, and he incorporated much of what he heard there as direct quotations in his works. He left Egypt when Theophilus, archbishop of Alexandria, began to take measures against the monks because of their supposed adherence to the discredited Origen. Around 400 he went to Constantinople, where he was ordained deacon by John Chrysostom, but he had to leave when Chrysostom was expelled around 404. He then went to Rome to inform Pope Innocent of John's difficulties, and at some time after that, probably around 415, he arrived in Marseilles, where he founded a house for monks and another for nuns. There Bishop Castor asked him to write his two major works, the *Institutes* and the *Conferences*.<sup>12</sup>

The *Institutes* were written to teach monks how to live in a monastic community. The first book discusses the clothing monks should wear; the next two books outline the order of prayers and psalms that will be said in common both day and night; the fourth book discusses the formation of aspirants to the community. Books V through XII discuss the vices that attack the soul and how the monk should overcome them. Thus,

Cassian's work differs from Augustine's rules in emphasizing the spiritual regulation of the monks rather than the practical details of daily life.

Most of the references to reading in the *Institutes* are made in passing. Reading is linked with fasting, vigils and prayer as one of the good practices that will help the monk overcome vices. It can also become a source of the vice of pride if the monk forgets the purpose of reading and becomes absorbed in displaying the amount of his reading for the admiration of others. Usually the word "reading" is used by itself (*lectio*), but occasionally John specifies that the holy scriptures are being read (II, 5:2 *divinarum scripturarum lectionibus*). John also includes the division of the monks' activities into reading of scripture, prayer and manual labor yet he does not specify how much time is spent at each. John gives some indication that reading was enjoyed since he specifies that obedience to the knock calling the monks to prayer must be immediate.<sup>13</sup> The scribe was not even to finish the letter he had begun inscribing, and the same applied to reading or repose in the cell. He includes preference for reading over work or obedience as one of the faults for which a monk must ask forgiveness by prostrating himself at the general meeting. Thus it appears that Cassian took for granted that the monks could read and that reading of scripture would be an important part of their spiritual formation.

His second work, the *Conferences*, was written for those pursuing the greater perfection of the eremitic life, and there he elaborated on the use of reading and memorizing scripture to inform meditation.<sup>14</sup> He also compares the beginning of the way to perfection to a child first learning to trace and pronounce letters, then syllables and words.<sup>15</sup> Whether children generally were still being taught to read at this time in

Gaul or whether Cassian was drawing on his own childhood experience is unclear, but he makes no provision for the monks learning to read in the monastery.<sup>16</sup> Although Cassian does not mention nuns in his works, it is known that he founded a house for nuns in Marseilles. It is hard to imagine that he would not have provided them at least with the benefit of his thought contained in the *Institutes*, thus linking the nuns directly to the original monastic tradition of Egypt.

In addition to Cassian's influence, some evidence indicates that at least one rule in a group known as the "Rules of the Fathers" was used at Lérins at the end of the fifth century.<sup>17</sup> These rules add an Augustinian element to Cassian's eremetical emphasis, adding charity, perfection of the community and the monastery as a model for the world to Cassian's emphasis on obedience, individual perfection and the monastery as a retreat from the world. Thus Caesarius was exposed to Augustinian influence in the monastic setting of Lérins as well as through his writings. The first *Rule of the Four Fathers* speaks only of the monks having leisure or freedom from work for God from the first hour until the third,<sup>18</sup> but in the so-called *Second Rule of the Fathers* one finds a reference to reading until the third hour.<sup>19</sup> The *Rule of Macarius* specifies meditating until the second hour but does not use the word "read".<sup>20</sup> The *Regula Orientalis* specifies reading until the third hour<sup>21</sup> and the *Third Rule of the Fathers* says the monks should read until the second hour.<sup>22</sup> Thus, while variation occurs in the term used to describe the monks' activity as well as whether the period extended until the second or third hour, all of these rules specify a period of time after Matins which would be free from work for the monks' private reading or communing with God. The only other

reference to reading in these early rules occurs in the stipulation that the Rule is to be read aloud to candidates before they enter the monastery. One finds no reference to reading aloud during meals as in Augustine's rules, only the admonition to be silent during meals and to speak only if asked a question by the abbot.

#### RULES FOR NUNS OF CAESARIUS AND AURELIAN

The first attempted monastic foundation for women in Caesarius' episcopal city of Arles probably was begun around 506 by his sister Caesaria. A monastery was being built for the women outside the city walls when it was destroyed by the Burgundians, who besieged the city in 507-8. Caesaria and her companions were sent to Marseilles for safety and probably stayed at the monastery for women founded by Cassian almost a century earlier. When a new monastery inside the walls was completed in 512 they were recalled to Arles and in the same year Caesarius presented them with his first version of the Rule for Nuns.<sup>23</sup> The oldest extant manuscript of this Rule is found in a ninth century copy of Benedict of Aniane's *Codex Regularum*,<sup>24</sup> in which Benedict had collected most of the existing monastic rules including several rules for women. Those for women included Caesarius' rule, a rule by Aurelian, Caesarius' successor as bishop of Arles, a rule by Donatus, bishop of Besançon, an anonymous *Regula cuiusdam patris ad virgines*, and a portion of a rule of Columbanus.<sup>25</sup>

Caesarius' *Rule for Nuns*, entitled *Statuta sanctarum virginum* in the manuscript, often is referred to as the *Regula ad virgines* or *Regula sanctarum virginum*. The rule

consists of forty-seven books, followed by a recapitulation in books 48-65, which was added later when the final version of the rule was presented to the nuns in 534. Books 66-71 include the liturgical order the nuns were to follow for reciting the Divine Office during the seasons of the religious year, and regulations for fasting. Books 72-73 conclude the rule and are followed by the signatures of Caesarius and seven other bishops and clerics.<sup>26</sup> This rule is longer and more detailed than Augustine's rules. The most important innovation is the requirement of strict cloistering; the nuns were never to leave the monastery until their death. Visiting family members, even women, were not allowed inside the monastery, and the nuns were not to take in lay children for schooling or to entertain the bishop at dinner. Caesarius also stressed giving up all property upon entering the monastery; the nuns were to share everything in common. They were not to have even a cupboard of their own, and no one was to have a servant. All must participate in the daily work between the times of prayer. This egalitarianism must have been difficult for some of the entrants from the upper class; indeed, this was one of the factors contributing to the famous rebellion in Radegund's monastery at Poitiers later in the century, according to Gregory of Tours.<sup>27</sup> Caesarius wanted his monastery of women to be a model of true Christian community for the city so he does not encourage extreme asceticism, but instead emphasizes charity between the sisters and the pursuit of spiritual perfection by avoiding pleasures of the flesh, fine clothes and food, and by filling the mind with the word of God. To this end, reading was an important part of the monastic life of the women, just as it was for monastic men.



Caesarius' rule contains more references to reading than the rules of Augustine. Several of the references resemble those of Augustine, which one would expect since his rules were major sources used by Caesarius, but they are not verbatim quotations. Chapter 19 reads: "At all times they shall give two hours, that is, from early morning until the second hour, to reading."<sup>28</sup> This is analogous to chapter 3 in Augustine's *Ordo monasterii*, yet Caesarius has reduced the amount of time for reading from three to two hours. He has also changed the time of day from early afternoon to early morning, probably due to the difference in climate between north Africa and southern France. The afternoon heat in Africa would have made it important to accomplish the work of the monastery in the morning, leaving reading for afternoon when it was too hot to go out, but this was not as necessary in France and Caesarius may have wanted the nuns to begin their day with reading so they would have material for meditation as they went about their tasks for the rest of the day. In fact, he states this in chapter 22: "Whatever work you may be doing at a time when there is no reading, always ruminate on something from divine Scriptures."<sup>29</sup> Caesarius also included the practice of listening to reading during meals in his rule in chapter 18: "They shall be silent while sitting at the table and they shall direct their attention to the reading. ... Not only should the mouth take nourishment for you, but also let the ears hear the word of God."<sup>30</sup> Caesarius has taken the passages above directly from Augustine's rules (see above), but he included additional times when the nuns were to listen to oral reading, in chapter 15: "During Vigils, in order that no one may become drowsy through inactivity, those works shall be done which do not distract attention from listening to the reading,"<sup>31</sup> and in chapter 20: " While the rest are working

together, one of the sisters shall read until Terce; moreover let not meditation on the word of God and the prayer of the heart cease.”<sup>32</sup> Here we have an instance of some kind of handwork being done during the reading of the night Office, in order to prevent drowsiness, and of some oral reading being done during the regular afternoon work period. For Caesarius, reading, meditation and prayer, and manual labor were not carried out separately but were intertwined throughout the day. It should be noted that Caesarius wrote his rule for cloistered nuns in an urban monastery. They did not have field work or land clearing to do as monks would in later times. The nuns’ manual work consisted of “wool-work”, i.e. carding, spinning, weaving fabric and sewing their clothing, as well as the cleaning and food preparation necessary in any household. This kind of work could easily be done in groups with one person assigned to read aloud to the group.

In addition to these passages on reading which have Augustinian precedents, Caesarius incorporates something new at the end of chapter 18, after the discussion of reading during meals: “All shall learn to read.”<sup>33</sup> This he inserted before the instruction to give two hours to reading every morning which begins chapter 19. While Augustine could just give the instruction to read for three hours and assume the monks already knew how to read, Caesarius finds it necessary to instruct that all the nuns must learn to read. There are several possible explanations for this necessity. One is that education had declined so much that not many children were being taught to read. If this were the case however, one would expect to find the same precept in Caesarius’ *Rule for Monks*. Yet his *Rule for Monks* has no mention of learning to read; the only precepts concerning reading are the directions to read until Terce and that someone should read aloud during

meals. Note that while the monks are to read for three hours until Terce, as in Augustine's rule, Caesarius requires the nuns to read for only two hours and then do manual work while someone reads aloud for the remaining hour until Terce. Since the *Rule for Monks* is briefer and omits other precepts found in the *Rule for Nuns* as well, the fact that the precept about all learning to read is missing from it is not conclusive. Since Caesarius also reduced the reading time for the nuns from three to two hours, we have some indication that he expected less of the women than he did of the men. As we have seen, there is a precedent in the *Rules of the Fathers* prescribing only two hours of reading for monks, so the amount of time set aside for reading varied even within men's communities. However, since Caesarius wrote rules for both monks and nuns and made the requirements different for them, this may represent an area he felt needed modifying for the specific needs of women. The requirement that all learn to read may have been a similar area.

This leads to the possible explanation that while boys were still taught to read, girls were not, even in upper class homes. In this regard, we find an interesting passage in chapter 7 of the *Rule for Nuns*, also an original contribution of Caesarius:

And if possible, never, or at best with difficulty, let little girls be received into the monastery, unless they are six or seven years old, so that they are able to learn their letters and submit to obedience. The daughters either of nobility or of common folk are never to be received so that they may be reared or taught.<sup>34</sup>

While undoubtedly written with the intent of preserving the strict cloistering and serious spiritual purpose of the monastery, this passage provides a rare glimpse of the treatment

of girls in sixth century Arles. Caesarius allows for the reception of girls as young as six or seven into the monastic life, thus making it necessary for the nuns to teach them to read. At the same time he prohibits the nuns from teaching the daughters of laymen who were not being committed to the monastic life. While this prohibition served to protect the nuns from excessive contact with laypeople, the fact that Caesarius had to make it seems to indicate that parents (both noble and common) were asking the nuns to teach their daughters. Thus not only did at least some parents want their daughters to learn to read, they also considered the nuns educated enough to teach them.

Another possible explanation of Caesarius' precept that all learn to read might be that while the upper class women coming into the monastery already knew how to read, women of other classes were being accepted into the monastic life who did not. Because Caesarius considered reading of the Holy Scriptures such an important part of the spiritual life, informing all the prayer and meditation, it seemed imperative to him that even these women learn to read. He had an egalitarian view of the monastic life and did not want the monastery to be split into an upper class group of educated nuns and a lower class group who did the manual work. Just as it was important for the upper class nuns to take their turn at all the manual tasks, so it was important for the lower class women to learn to read so they could participate fully in the spiritual life.

These ideals were not limited to the monastery. In several of his sermons<sup>35</sup> Caesarius exhorts the laypeople to whom he is preaching to spend three hours of the long winter nights in reading the sacred texts instead of spending half the night banqueting and getting drunk. If they claimed they were illiterate and could not read the Scriptures, he

exhorted them to hire someone to read aloud to them, just as merchants did for their business. Even farmers who had to work in the fields continuously could at least memorize a few texts such as the Creed, the Lord's Prayer and a psalm or two to meditate on while they worked, since they had no trouble remembering bawdy songs. While Caesarius' ideal of the Christian life was unrealistic for the majority of laypeople, the fact that he encouraged them to read the sacred texts themselves is an indication of how crucial he considered it for the spiritual life. Therefore, it is not surprising that he would require in his rule that all the nuns learn to read. Although it may have been less likely that women had been taught to read before entering the monastery than men, once they entered they were given the opportunity to learn and were required to read the texts of their religion for themselves.

The monastic tradition begun by Caesarius in his rules for nuns and monks was continued by his second successor as bishop of Arles, Aurelian. Although the date he became bishop is unknown, he was confirmed as papal vicar in 546 and died in 551.<sup>36</sup> He established two monasteries during his tenure, the Monastery of the Holy Apostles for men under the auspices of King Childebert I, and the monastery of St. Mary for women, and he wrote separate rules for them. He based his rules heavily on Caesarius' *Rule for Nuns*, but unlike Caesarius, Aurelian apparently wrote his *Rule for Monks* first. It is longer (fifty-five chapters versus forty chapters in the nuns' rule) and the nuns' rule shows some evidence of paraphrasing from memory of the monks' rule.<sup>37</sup> Moreover, many of the chapters in the two rules are identical.

Aurelian's rules have a more terse style, that of short precepts, than those of Caesarius. Caesarius often wrote a paragraph encompassing his precept and a reason for its benefit to the religious life. Nevertheless, most of the precepts of both men regarding reading are similar. Aurelian's rule contains the provision for reading aloud during meals, including the biblical quotation about man not living by bread alone but by the word of God (men chap. 49, women chap. 32). The provision in the Ordo (daily schedule of prayers) for reading until the third hour appears at the end of both of Aurelian's rules, identical for men and women. Aurelian includes the identical provision in both of his rules that all should learn letters (men ch.32, women ch.26). As we have seen, Caesarius only included this precept in his *Rule for Nuns* and Aurelian may have included it in both of his rules because the *Rule for Nuns* was his major source. Whether there was also an external reason for Aurelian to include the precept in his *Rule for Monks* when Caesarius had not is impossible to tell. It could be that Caesarius had inadvertently omitted it in his *Rule for Monks*. In any case both Caesarius and Aurelian felt it was important to mandate that nuns learn to read.

Another chapter in Aurelian's rules illuminates the reading process used in learning the psalms. The chapter is identical in the two rules (mens' ch.31, womens' ch.25):

While your holy souls study the Psalter, don't let the mind wander. Truly also don't count on work or speaking but on knowing psalms, as the prophet said: "Sing and understand." And this: "Sing with the spirit, sing with the mind;" fearing this: "Cursed is the man who does the work of God negligently."<sup>38</sup>

Aurelian was not requiring a simple rote memorization of the psalms but was advocating that the monks and nuns read, study, and chant the psalms with understanding. This intellectual process Aurelian required equally of men and women in the monasteries he founded. These chapters in Aurelian's rules represent an interweaving of ideas from two separate chapters in Caesarius' *Rule for Nuns*: "Likewise while the psalms are being chanted, it is not permissible to do any talking or to work" (ch.10)<sup>39</sup> and "While indeed you are praying to God in Psalms and hymns let that be meditated upon in the heart which is uttered by the voice" (ch.22).<sup>40</sup>

While Aurelian wrote in his own words recommending the same mindfulness and avoidance of distraction during the chanting of the psalms of the daily office that Caesarius had, he also extended the recommendation to the process of studying and learning the psalms. So learning and saying the psalms were not intended to be merely holy exercises but needed to engage the understanding of the nuns (or monks) chanting them. Earlier religions had relied on ritual to contact and propitiate the gods, and while the Mass and the Divine Office are Christian rituals, Christianity emphasizes the interior state of the worshipper rather than perfection of the ritual for the efficacy of prayer. The perfection of this interior quality was one of the aims of the cloistered religious life practiced by nuns and monks; mindful reading of the Scriptures was the means to further this aim.

## CAESARIUS AND CAESARIA: LETTERS, SERMONS AND *VITA*

Several other sources connected with Caesarius and the community of nuns at Arles include evidence about reading. A letter that Caesarius wrote to his sister Caesaria and her small community of ascetic women around 506, before the monastery was built for them inside the walls,<sup>41</sup> is a precursor to the *Rule for Nuns*. Written in a more flowing style than the precepts of the *Rule*, it remained popular for quite a long time.<sup>42</sup> In this letter Caesarius includes the suggestions to make time for reading before the third hour and to do handwork while listening to reading which he would later include in the *Rule for Nuns*. Several poetic phrases not found in the *Rule*, however, express the purpose and importance Caesarius attributed to spiritual reading:

it [the soul] should frequently read a passage itself or listen to someone else's reading with an avid heart. It should constantly draw the water of salvation from the fountains of divine scripture...<sup>43</sup>

For there are unfortunately those who, out of worldly vanity, are more eager to devote their efforts to worldly desires than to spiritual reading, since they wish for the sake of visual pleasure to acquire at huge cost and superfluous expense beautiful carpets, decorated tapestries, embroideries and the like. ... What good is it for a virgin to preserve the integrity of her body if she does not wish to avoid the enticements of her eyes?<sup>44</sup>



Preoccupation with worldly luxuries was inimical to salvation. Caesarius is suggesting that the nuns substitute spiritual reading for the concern for worldly beauty of other women.

Even the beauty of books and keeping them as material objects could be a hindrance to the soul's progress, as Caesarius says in one of his sermons:

many people, and perhaps pious ones, want to keep their numerous books shining and beautifully bound; they keep them locked up in chests, so that they may not read them themselves or give them to others to read. They do not know that it is of no advantage to have books and not read them because of worldly hindrances. If a book is well covered and shining but not read, it does not make the soul bright; but one that is continually read, and because of the fact it is often unrolled is not beautiful on the outside, makes a soul beautiful within.<sup>45</sup>

Although this sermon was undoubtedly addressed to laypeople, we can glean some information about reading practices from it. The books were kept locked in chests, as we saw in Augustine's rules, to protect them since they were valuable. Most important, however, is Caesarius' point that books should be continually read for the benefit of their content to the soul. The fact that a book could become worn on the outside from frequent use implies frequent rereading of the book. At a time when there was not a constant supply of new texts, reading was much more a process of meditating on the meaning of the passages. Moreover, since the Scriptures were considered the word of God, many passages probably were memorized through repetition as well as merely read.

The *Vita Caesarii Episcopi Arelatensis* or *Life of Caesarius*, written by a fellow bishop, Cyprianus, and two of Caesarius' clergy, Messianus and Stephanus, is another important source of information on the community of nuns at Arles.<sup>46</sup> It is a particularly valuable *Life* because all three men knew Caesarius and had witnessed some of the events they include, therefore it contains more interesting detail and fewer of the conventions and formulas found in many saints' Lives. The authors claim that they wrote the *Life* at the request of abbess Caesaria (the Younger, niece of Caesarius' sister who was the founding abbess) and her nuns:

You, Caesaria, who we honor as a virgin, together with the choir of fellow nuns entrusted to you, have been asking that we fulfill our obligation to recall and to write an account from the very beginning of the life and way of life of your founder, St. Caesarius of blessed memory.<sup>47</sup>

They also include a disclaimer common in saints' Lives asking that scholars not criticize their humble writing because it lacks ornate style and correct grammar. The works and virtues of their subject offer sufficient ornament. This is traditional Christian writing where the soul or substance is more important than the outer appearance. However, they add a reason for using plain language specifically for the nuns:

For the unadorned righteousness of the virgins of Christ deserves that nothing embellished [lit. "painted" or "dyed"] and nothing arranged with worldly skill be offered to please their eyes or ears. They should rather take up the words of the most unadorned of narratives flowing from the fountain of simple truth.<sup>48</sup>

Thus an interesting connection exists between this passage and chapters 44 and 45 of the *Rule for Nuns*,<sup>49</sup> in which Caesarius mandates that the clothing and bedcoverings should be plain and unadorned and no dyeing should be done because there should not be anything in the monastery “which does not please the spiritual but only the human eye.”<sup>50</sup> This echoes the passage from the letter to Caesaria quoted above about avoiding enticements of the eyes. So to the authors of the *Life*, ornate language also fell into this category of pleasing the human eye or ear (for those listening to it read aloud) and not the spirit. No mention of clothing is made in Caesarius’ briefer *Rule for Monks*. Benedict, in his *Rule*, says only that the clothing should be whatever can be obtained most cheaply in the area and that the monks should not grumble at the color or coarseness (chapter 55). It appears that women were considered more susceptible to enticements of the eye and needed to be protected from them, not only in the clothes they wore, but even in the books they read.

The Prologue to the *Life of Caesarius* also expresses what the authors consider to be the purpose for reading it: “Now then let each seek to follow in his life what he hastens to learn by reading.”<sup>51</sup> Reading the *Life* was to provide inspiration and a model of Christian sanctity for the nuns to follow. Caesaria’s request for a written *Life* was a request for further guidance in the holy life from the founder of her monastery. It was needed in written form because Caesarius was no longer alive to guide the community himself. The authors of the *Life* also included a passage about Caesaria the Younger and her nuns. After noting the death and burial of Caesaria the Elder, the first abbess of the monastery, and the succession of Caesaria the Younger, they wrote: “Her work with her

companions is so outstanding that in the midst of psalms and fasts, vigils and readings, the virgins of Christ beautifully copy out the holy books, with their mother [abbess] herself as teacher.”<sup>52</sup> As with Cassian, reading is equated with psalms, fasts and vigils as an important practice for the holy life. But we also learn that the nuns made copies of the scriptures. This is one of the few instances in the early Middle Ages of direct evidence for nuns copying manuscripts.<sup>53</sup> Even allowing for some flattery, since the *Life* was addressed to Caesaria, it is unlikely the authors would have written this if it were untrue, since their audience would have detected any falsehood regarding their own lives. Thus, it appears that the nuns, or at least some of them, could write as well as read and their abbess taught them to copy “beautifully.”

The younger Caesaria herself also wrote a letter that mentions reading in several places. She wrote the letter to Radegund, queen and wife of the Frankish king Clothar, who had left the king to found the monastery of the Holy Cross in Poitiers. Radegund and her abbess Richilda had apparently asked Caesaria to send them a copy of Caesarius’ *Rule for Nuns* because she says in the letter that she is sending it as they commanded. One of the sentences on referring to reading concerns listening to oral reading: “As attentively as secular men hear royal precepts read, so attentively may you listen when divine readings are read.”<sup>54</sup> Caesaria’s analogy emphasizes the importance of listening to the Scriptures by comparing them to royal precepts, and also indicates that the practice of reading documents aloud to an assembled group was not limited to the religious world. The practice of reading Scriptures aloud was adopted by the early Christians, continuing Jewish practice, and had become a formalized part of worship services.<sup>55</sup> It is therefore

not surprising that this practice of reading the Scriptures aloud to the assembled community became part of monastic practice as well. It does not necessarily carry the implication that the nuns could not read for themselves.

The other sentence concerning reading in Caesaria's letter in fact implies that all the nuns could read: "Admit no one who does not learn letters; all should memorize the Psalter, and as I already said, strive to fulfill in all things, what you read in the Gospels."<sup>56</sup> Caesaria's advice to Radegund for her monastery presumably reflects the practice at Caesaria's monastery. Caesarius, in the *Rule for Nuns*, had required that all the nuns learn to read, and he made provision for young entrants to be taught in the monastery. A generation later Caesaria's statement is ambiguous. She uses the present tense of the verb "to learn" which could have meant several things. It could have meant that no one should be admitted who was not considered capable of learning letters, limiting entrance to upper class girls. It could have meant that only those who had already learned letters should be admitted. Or, it could have meant that those who were unwilling to learn letters should not be admitted. Regardless, Caesaria was continuing the requirement that all the nuns be able to read. The rest of the sentence implies that one of the purposes of reading was memorizing the Psalter. This was a remarkable feat, since there are one hundred and fifty psalms. Each psalm is usually from six to twelve lines long, but psalm 119 is 176 lines long. Memorizing all of them would have taken considerable time and study and Caesaria made it clear that the nuns were expected to do it. They were also expected to read the Gospels as guides to how they were to attempt to live.

Caesaria's letter itself shows wide knowledge of the Bible as she peppered her text with quotes from the Psalms, Gospels and Epistles to support the points she was making to Radegund about how she and her nuns should live. In addition to sending a copy of Caesarius' Rule, she included advice from Caesarius' letter to Caesaria the Elder (discussed above, p. 29-31) concerning avoiding contact with men in order to preserve chastity and not trusting only in one's own conscience because of the insidious and dangerous nature of sexual desire. She quoted a phrase from Caesarius so we can be sure this was her source, but she expressed the idea in her own words. Caesaria also contributed an interesting original idea in the analogy she makes between ideas gleaned from the Scriptures and fine jewelry: "Constantly either read or hear divine readings since these are the ornaments of the soul; from these take precious pearls to hang from your ears and from these rings and bracelets."<sup>57</sup> Caesarius, in his letter to Caesaria the Elder warns against beautiful carpets, tapestries and embroideries, and, in his *Rule for Nuns*, against dyed clothing, as worldly desires which will distract from spiritual reading. Yet here Caesaria was telling her fellow nuns that wisdom from the divine readings actually is a beautiful ornament to the soul. It is an interesting analogy that would have appealed only to women and may have been intended to console them for the loss of things which they were no longer allowed to have. This letter, although addressed only to Radegund and Richilda, is as learned in Christian knowledge as Caesarius' sermons. With Caesaria as abbess and with the insistence on constant reading or listening to reading, it is likely that other nuns in the monastery at Arles were learned as well.

## LEANDER OF SEVILLE

From Arles in Frankish Gaul we turn to Seville in Visigothic Spain and a work by St. Leander. Born around 540, probably of Roman parents, St. Leander became bishop of that city by 579 and actively worked to convert the Arian king Leovigild and his sons Hermenegild and Reccared to orthodox Christianity, a task at which he was ultimately successful when Reccared converted after the death of his father. Leander had three younger siblings: Fulgentius, who became bishop of Astigi, near Seville, by 590 or 600; the more well-known Isidore, who succeeded his brother as bishop of Seville on the latter's death in 600; and a sister Florentina, who became a nun.<sup>58</sup>

Of interest to us is a treatise Leander wrote to Florentina when she entered a monastery, presumably in Seville although it is not named. Titled *De Institutione virginum et contemptu mundi*,<sup>59</sup> it consists of a long introduction discussing the advantages and blessings of virginity addressed personally to his sister followed by thirty-one chapters on various virtues with some practical precepts for the religious life. Technically, it is not actually a Rule since it does not include a daily schedule nor an outline of the Daily Office; nonetheless, later copyists modified it by omitting Florentina's name and sometimes called it a Rule. Since Leander was providing advice on the religious life for his sister, he elaborated more on the religious reasons for his advice, and his tone has an affectionate and fatherly quality rather than the strict and judgmental tone that Rules, by necessity, tended to have.

The most important section on reading in Leander's treatise is in chapter 15:

Your reading must be continuous and your praying uninterrupted. Your time and tasks should be divided, so that after you read, you pray, and after you pray, you read... But if there is manual labor to be performed or the body is to be refreshed by the partaking of food, let another nun read to you, so that while your hand or eyes are intent on work, your ears may feast on the grace of the Divine Word.<sup>60</sup>

Here Leander outlined the religious life as a constant round of reading and prayer. More clearly than Caesarius and Aurelian, who certainly valued reading, Leander gave reading equal value with prayer. He also indicated that during any manual labor or meal someone was to read aloud to the group. Further on in the same passage he explained why continuous reading was so important: "If, while reading and praying, it is still difficult to keep our slippery minds away from the enticements of the devil, how much more easily is the human mind swept into vices when it is not held in check by the reins of continuous reading and prayer?" (ch.15)<sup>61</sup> In this passage Leander showed a considerable understanding of human nature and how difficult it is to control the mind. By providing the mind with constant readings from the Scriptures, it would be easier for it to stay focused. Reading would also instruct the nuns what to pray for. So reading, whether individual or oral, was vital to the religious life.

Leander's understanding of human nature becomes apparent in several other chapters as well. In chapter 24, which discusses whether nuns should eat meat and the role of food and abstinence in the religious life, he says that not only meat but too much of any food is not good because: "Anything that is taken to excess makes the mind heavy; and if the stomach is distended with too plentiful food, it dulls the faculties of the



mind.”<sup>62</sup> Not only does fasting and abstinence have religious value in taming the will, but Leander saw that it had practical value in keeping the mind alert for prayer and reading. Anyone who had fallen asleep after a large meal would understand the truth of this observation.

Leander’s treatise also contains a chapter on dress. He warned against fancy clothing for several reasons, among them that it was care of the flesh instead of the soul and that fine clothes would attract the attention of men. Again, as we saw with Caesarius and Aurelian, women are seen as especially susceptible to the enticements of fine clothing. Like those before him, Leander recommends adornment of the mind instead of adornment of the body: “For then you will be truly adorned if you love, not the outer, but the inner habit; and then you will be well dressed if you have tried to attain resplendence of the mind rather than flashiness of garments.” (ch.10) <sup>63</sup> “Excel other women in the virtues of your mind, not of your clothes.” <sup>64</sup>

The analogy between clothing as adornment for the body and knowledge as adornment for the mind provides an interesting example of the frequent Christian use of concrete images to explain abstract ideas. As Caesaria did with the image of wisdom from the Scriptures as pearls to hang from the ears, Leander used an image of fine clothing that women would find familiar to explain the abstract process of developing the religious mind. Leander, Aurelian and Caesarius all expected nuns to learn the psalms and read the Scriptures in order to develop the Christian virtues as Cassian had expected of the monks he instructed in his *Conferences* and *Institutes*. Thus, women were considered as capable of learning as men at this time and these three writers encouraged

them. This is a marked contrast to twelfth and thirteenth century attitudes that excluded women from the developing universities ostensibly because of their inferior intellects.<sup>65</sup>

Leander also provided guidance to his sister on interpreting some of the passages of the Old Testament that she might have found disturbing. He explained that some things such as polygamy and animal sacrifices that were no longer permitted had been permitted in the past because they were preparation for the coming of Christ and his Church. He also encouraged a second level of interpretation of the literal stories: "All that you read in the Old Testament you should interpret in a spiritual sense, although it did actually happen; you must gather the meaning of spiritual knowledge from the truth of history." (ch.16)<sup>66</sup> This exhortation to interpret the Old Testament in a spiritual sense was based on an already long-standing tradition of biblical interpretation. Begun in the Greek-speaking east, allegorization, or finding the spiritual meaning behind the literal meaning actually goes back to classical times in allegories of Homer. The Jewish Philo of Alexandria and Christian Origen extended allegorization to biblical texts and the Latin Fathers in the west, Jerome, Augustine, Ambrose, and Gregory the Great, adopted it in their works.<sup>67</sup> Augustine's work, *On Christian Doctrine*, contains a discussion on studying and interpreting the words of the Bible, where he says that, "whatever appears in the divine Word that does not literally pertain to virtuous behavior or to the truth of faith you must take to be figurative."<sup>68</sup> This kind of interpretation of historical works requires knowledge and sophistication of which Leander clearly thought his sister capable. He even gave advice for reading the Cantic of Canticles (or Song of Songs), a rather erotic book of the Old Testament: "Pay no attention to the sound of the Cantic of Canticles as

it comes to your ears, for it invites the carnal pleasures of love on earth, but, figuratively, it also represents the Body of Christ and the love of the Church.” (chap.16)<sup>69</sup> Thus, he did not forbid his sister to read this book, which could have been seen as a danger to chastity, but instead provides her with a figurative interpretation to use when reading it. His mention of “the sound ... as it comes to your ears” may have meant it would be read aloud, but it may also have applied to individual reading, since at this time people usually did not read silently, but said the words to themselves as they read.<sup>70</sup>

These references to interpreting the Old Testament in Leander’s work are the first direct evidence for this period that women read the Old Testament. Caesarius and Aurelian, in their rules, only referred to divine readings without specifying what they included. The psalms were considered separately since they made up the content of the daily office that was said or sung in common. Caesaria, in her letter, used a great many quotations from the Gospels, the Epistles of Paul and the Psalms, but from the Old Testament there were only two references from Jeremiah and one from Ecclesiastes. Since it is possible that Caesaria could have gotten her Old Testament references from other works, such as Caesarius’ sermons, Leander’s advice on reading the Old Testament is significant. Here was a man, a bishop, expecting a woman not only to read the sometimes difficult texts of the Old Testament but also to interpret the literal text on an allegorical level. Although women’s outward lives were restricted to marriage or the monastery, and they could not preach or become bishops, their intellectual lives in the monastery were not restricted. At a time when there were no universities, intellectual life was developed by reading and meditating on the texts which women in monasteries could

do. They did not write treatises or sermons as men did because that would have meant entering the public arena and would have been preaching. But they did read, and as we have seen above, were encouraged to understand and interpret the Scriptures. Caesaria's letter to Radegund stands as one of the rare pieces of direct evidence we have that women absorbed this learning.

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<sup>1</sup> Donald Hochstetler, *A Conflict of Traditions: Women in Religion in the Early Middle Ages 500-840* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1992), 1.

<sup>2</sup> M. C. McCarthy, *The Rule for Nuns of Saint Caesarius of Arles* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University Press, 1960), 61.

<sup>3</sup> Caesarius of Arles, Letter 21; trans. William E. Klingshirn in *Caesarius of Arles: Life, Testament, Letters* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1994), 130.

<sup>4</sup> The Visigoth Alaric II until 507, the Ostrogoth Theodoric from 508-536, and the Frankish Childebert after 536. See Sister Mary Magdeleine Mueller, *Saint Caesarius of Arles: Sermons*, The Fathers of the Church, a New Translation (New York: Fathers of the Church, 1956), viii.

<sup>5</sup> Pachomius and Augustine had been content with copying their rules for men with few changes besides changing pronouns to the feminine form and substituting "sister" for "brother". See Adalbert de Vogüé and Joel Courreau, *Césaire d'Arles: Oeuvres Monastiques. Tome 1: Oeuvres pour les Moniales*, Sources Chrétiennes, no.345 (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1988), 68-9.

<sup>6</sup> McCarthy, *Rule for Nuns*, 9. Although McCarthy believes that Caesarius used his own briefer *Rule for Monks* as a source for his *Rule for Nuns*, Vogüé concluded from textual analysis that the *Rule for Nuns* was Caesarius' major monastic work and the *Rule for Monks* only a brief summary of it; Adalbert de Vogüé and Joel Courreau, *Césaire d'Arles: Oeuvres monastiques. Tome 2: Oeuvres pour les moines*, Sources Chrétiennes, no.398 (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1994), 7, 69 and Vogüé and Courreau *Oeuvres pour les moniales*, 423-4. Mayo follows the interpretation of Vogüé; Hope Mayo, "Three Merovingian Rules for Nuns" (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1974), 1:34.

<sup>7</sup> *Vita S. Caesarius* trans. Klingshirn, *Life, Testament, Letters*, 1.9.

<sup>8</sup> See the side by side comparison of the text of the *Rule for Nuns* with the equivalent passages from Caesarius' sources in McCarthy, *Rule for Nuns*. Although some words and phrases are identical, much of it is paraphrased.

<sup>9</sup> See George Lawless, *Augustine of Hippo and his Monastic Rule* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 121 ff. for a discussion of the attribution of authorship to Augustine.

<sup>10</sup> Quotations are from Lawless' edition of the Latin with his English translation, *Augustine of Hippo*, 74-103.

<sup>11</sup> Matt. 4:4 "But he [Jesus] answered, 'It is written, man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'" (quoting Deut. 8:3).

<sup>12</sup> See Jean-Claude Guy, *Jean Cassien: Institutions Cenobitiques* (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1965), intro., for Cassian's life and discussion of his dates. See also Owen Chadwick, *John Cassian* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968).

<sup>13</sup> Cassian, *Institutes* 4.2.

<sup>14</sup> See especially Cassian, *Conferences*, 14.10; Colm Liubheid, trans., *John Cassian: Conferences*, The Classics of Western Spirituality (New York: Paulist Press, 1985).

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.8 and 10.10.

- <sup>16</sup> See chap. 3 below for a discussion of the state of education in Gaul at this time.
- <sup>17</sup> See William E. Klingshirn, *Caesarius of Arles: the Making of a Christian Community in Late Antique Gaul* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 24-25 for a discussion of the evidence.
- <sup>18</sup> Adalbert de Vogüé, *Les Règles des Saints Pères Sources Chrétiennes*, nos. 297, 298 (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1982), 1:195.
- <sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:279.
- <sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:377.
- <sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:479.
- <sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:537.
- <sup>23</sup> The source for most of the historical events of Caesarius' life is the *Vita Caesarii* written after his death in 543 by companions, in G. Morin, ed., *Sancti Caesarii episcopi Arelatensis opera omnia nunc primum in unum collecta. II. Opera varia* (Maredsous, 1942). For an English translation, see Klingshirn, *Caesarius of Arles: Life and his discussion in Caesarius of Arles: Making*.
- <sup>24</sup> Now Munich Staatsbibliothek lat. 28118.
- <sup>25</sup> For a discussion of the manuscripts and textual tradition of these rules, see Mayo, "Three Merovingian Rules," 1:44-50.
- <sup>26</sup> For an English translation of the *Rule for Nuns* as well as analysis and comparison of parts of the Latin text with Augustine's texts, see McCarthy, *Rule for Nuns*.
- <sup>27</sup> Gregory of Tours *History of the Franks*, 9.39.
- <sup>28</sup> McCarthy, *Rule for Nuns*, 175.
- <sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 177.
- <sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 175.
- <sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 176.
- <sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 175.
- <sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 173.
- <sup>35</sup> Sermons 6, 7, 8, trans. Mueller, *Sermons*, 1:38-54. The Latin texts of the sermons may be found in G. Morin, *Sancti Caesarii Arelatensis: Sermones*, 2d ed., Corpus Christianorum Series Latina, 103 (Turnholt: Brepols, 1953)
- <sup>36</sup> Mayo, *Three Merovingian Rules*, 1:68.
- <sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:85 for discussion of this point.
- <sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:35; trans. by the author.
- <sup>39</sup> McCarthy, *Rule for Nuns*, 174.
- <sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 176-77.
- <sup>41</sup> Letter 21, also known as *Vereor*, trans. Klingshirn, *Caesarius of Arles: Life*, 129-39.
- <sup>42</sup> The *Liber Scintillarum* by the Defensor of Ligugé (c.700) and the proceedings of the Council of Aix-la-Chapelle in 816 contain quotations from it; a version for men has also been found. See Klingshirn, *Caesarius of Arles: Life*, 127.
- <sup>43</sup> Letter 21.3.
- <sup>44</sup> Letter 21.7.

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- <sup>45</sup> Sermon 2, trans. Mueller, *Sermons*, 1:25.
- <sup>46</sup> *MGH SRM* 3, 433-501; trans. Klingshirn, *Caesarius of Arles: Life*.
- <sup>47</sup> *Vita S. Caesarii*, 1.1; Klingshirn, *Caesarius of Arles: Life*, 9.
- <sup>48</sup> *Vita S. Caesarii*, 1.2; *ibid*, 10.
- <sup>49</sup> Klingshirn points out the connection in *Caesarius of Arles: Life*, 10, fn. 2.
- <sup>50</sup> *Rule for Nuns* chap. 45.
- <sup>51</sup> Klingshirn, *Caesarius of Arles: Life*, 10.
- <sup>52</sup> *Vita* 1.58; Klingshirn, *Life, Testament, Letters*, 39.
- <sup>53</sup> Other instances I am aware of are from the eighth century. See Rosamond McKitterick "Nuns' scriptoria in England and Francia in the Eighth Century," *Francia* 19, no.1 (1992): 1-35.
- <sup>54</sup> *MGH Ep. Merov.* 1.450.34. Thanks to Professor Noel Lenski, University of Colorado, for translation of this letter.
- <sup>55</sup> See Harry Y. Gamble, *Books and Readers in the Early Church: a History of Early Christian Texts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 204 ff.
- <sup>56</sup> *MGH Ep. Merov.* 1.451.40.
- <sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.452.28.
- <sup>58</sup> There is a brief summary of Leander's life in Claude W. Barlow, *Iberian Fathers. Vol. 1: Martin of Braga, Paschasius of Dumium, Leander of Seville*, *The Fathers of the Church: a New Translation* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University Press, 1969), 175-178. The major source for his life is Isidore's *De viris illustribus*, in *PL* 7, 1103-4, in which he includes a chapter on his brother.
- <sup>59</sup> See Barlow, *Iberian Fathers*, 179-189 for discussion of the mss. tradition.
- <sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 209.
- <sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 219.
- <sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 205.
- <sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 206.
- <sup>65</sup> "debilitas ingenii muliebris" quoted in Alcuin Blamires, "The limits of Bible study for medieval women," in *Women, the Book and the Godly* (Cambridge, Eng.: D. S. Brewer, 1995), 7.
- <sup>66</sup> Barlow, *Iberian Fathers*, 211.
- <sup>67</sup> See Beryl Smalley, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1941), chap.1 for a useful introduction to this topic.
- <sup>68</sup> Augustine *On Christian Doctrine* 3.10.14, trans. E.W. Robertson Jr. (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1958), 88.
- <sup>69</sup> Barlow, *Iberian Fathers*, 211.
- <sup>70</sup> Gamble, *Books and Readers*, 203.

## CHAPTER 2: THE SEVENTH CENTURY

### COLUMBANUS

At the end of the sixth century a new influence on monasticism came to the Frankish lands in the person of Columbanus, a monk from Ireland. After a good education in his boyhood, he became a monk at Bangor as an adult, and may have become the teacher entrusted with educating the young monks.<sup>1</sup> After some years at Bangor, Columbanus felt called to voluntary exile, a form of sacrifice particularly attractive to Irish monks, so he and a band of twelve companions went to Frankish Gaul, probably around 590. They appeared before the king<sup>2</sup> and were encouraged to stay, so they established a monastery in a remote ruined fort at Annegray, near the present Swiss border. The key elements of Columbanus' monasticism were a simple evangelical life of ascetic austerity with an emphasis on daily personal confession and penance. This austerity, together with Columbanus' apparent sanctity and charisma, soon attracted many vocations to his monastery and a larger site was needed to accommodate them, leading to the foundation of a second monastery in the Roman ruins eight miles away at Luxeuil, around 593. Rapid growth led to the establishment of a third monastery at Fontaine, and this expansion may have given Columbanus the impetus to write down his precepts for the monastic life, since he could no longer personally supervise all the monks.

Two monastic rules are attributed to Columbanus, the *Regula monachorum* and the *Regula coenobialis*. Both exist in shorter and longer versions; the longer versions



may have been the result of additions made by Columbanus' successors that became included as part of the text when it was copied.<sup>3</sup> The style of the Latin seems to indicate that both of the Rules were probably written in fragments over time as thoughts occurred to Columbanus during the daily routine of the monastery and were never polished into a final form but continued to be added to after Columbanus' death.<sup>4</sup> Although Columbanus' rules do not specifically address nuns, they were influential on later rules for women as will be seen in the discussion of the *Regula ad virgines* of Donatus below (p. 53).

The *Regula monachorum*, or *Rule of Monks*, was written for the individual monk and discusses the monastic virtues and how they could be attained. As in Caesarius' rules, Cassian's works influenced the discussion of the spiritual reasons for monastic practices such as fasting and obedience. The only discussion of the daily timetable occurs in chapter 7 which includes how many psalms were to be sung at the eight daily offices, with variations for winter and summer. This rule does not include the injunction about reading until the third hour that we found in earlier rules. The only mention of reading in the *Regula monachorum* is in chapter III on food and drink. While Columbanus prescribed daily fasting, which meant not eating meat and eating only one meal in the late afternoon, he warned against excess fasting which could become a vice. Eating daily was as essential as the other elements of the monks' daily life: "...since we must eat daily for the reason that we must go forward daily, pray daily, toil daily and daily read."<sup>5</sup> Columbanus included reading as equally important in the monks' day as praying and

working, just as Cassian had. So, although the Rule nowhere prescribed reading, Columbanus assumed it to be part of the monks' lives, informing their practice.

The *Regula coenobialis*, or *Communal Rule*, is basically a list of transgressions and faults that the monks might have committed and the punishments for them. The punishments were usually a certain number of blows, or fasting on bread and water, or saying additional psalms. The faults seem to have been noted as they occurred and there are occasional contradictions in punishments for the same fault. It was probably kept as a notebook by Columbanus and later abbots of his monasteries as a record of the decisions on punishments that they had made. The *Regula coenobialis* includes two brief mentions of reading. The first occurs in chapter 8: "He who advises a relative when learning some skill or anything enjoined by the seniors, that he should rather learn reading, [should be punished] with three impositions."<sup>6</sup> The sin here was not in learning reading but in encouraging the brother to do something other than what had been assigned by his superior, which was a sin against obedience. The Latin phrase used was "ut melius lectionem discat" where "reading" is a noun in the accusative case, so the meaning was probably closer to "he should rather learn a reading," i.e. a biblical passage or psalm, rather than "learn to read" which would have used the infinitive of the verb. The other mention of reading occurs in chapter 15, a section that was most likely added by the successors of Columbanus: "If preferring reading to work or obedience, [punish] with an imposition."<sup>7</sup> This echoes Cassian's passage cited above that indicates that reading might have been a preferred activity so the brothers had to be vigilant not to neglect work or obedience in favor of it.

As far as we can tell, Columbanus' monasteries contained only monks and he addressed none of his written works to women. Some evidence indicates, however, that women were among those who flocked to see and hear Columbanus because of his reputation as a holy man.<sup>8</sup> We also have evidence of his direct influence on Burgundofara, the future founder of the women's monastery of Faremoutiers, in Neustria, near the Seine south of Paris. In 610 Columbanus was expelled from Luxeuil and Burgundy for his uncompromising independence and for criticizing the bishops and the royal family. Although he was taken under guard to Nantes on the Atlantic coast where he was supposed to have taken ship for Ireland, for some reason the guards left. Columbanus then made his way back east through Neustria to Paris and Metz, where he met up with other monks who had had to leave Luxeuil. They proceeded to the area of Lake Constance in the kingdom of Theudebert in 611 but had to leave again in the spring of 612, when Theudebert was disastrously defeated by Theuderic, who had originally expelled Columbanus from Luxeuil. They proceeded to Italy where King Agilulf of Lombardy granted them a church and lands at Bobbio to build a new monastery.<sup>9</sup> During Columbanus' progression Neustria, a companion monk named Cagnoald took him to his family estate, where he met Cagnoald's sister Burgundofara. She was probably in her early teens at the time and Columbanus consecrated her to God. Four years later, after Columbanus' death in 615, his successor Eustace persuaded her father to honor the consecration rather than marry her off. With the help of her brother and Waldebert (who later succeeded Eustace at Luxeuil), she founded a monastery for women known then as Eboriac, later called Faremoutiers.<sup>10</sup> According to Bede,<sup>11</sup> several Anglo-

Saxon princesses joined the community at Eboriac, and one of them, Sedride from Northumbria, succeeded as abbess when Burgundofara died in 655. According to Ionas' *Vita S. Columbani*, the community at Eboriac followed Columbanus' rule, although Ionas does not specify which one, and the discipline of the group under the rule led many girls to Christ.<sup>12</sup> Ionas also mentions the founding of several other women's monasteries, including one at Paris under Aurea, one at Betoricensem built by Bethoara, and two built by Theudulfus for virgins, at Carantomo, above the river Milmandram, and near Nivernense. He explicitly states that the monasteries at Betoricensem and Nivernense were under the rule of Columbanus.<sup>13</sup> So clearly, Columbanus' rules and their assumptions about reading as an integral part of the monastic life influenced at least several women's monasteries in Gaul in the early seventh century. In addition to this direct influence, Columbanus' rules were used as a source by writers of two other rules for women, Donatus and the anonymous author of the *Regula cuiusdam Patris* discussed below (p.53). Mixed rules using elements of Columbanus' rules were widespread in the seventh and well into the eighth century.

#### BENEDICT'S RULE AND THE *REGULA MAGISTRI*

The next two rules for women to be considered draw on the *Rule of St. Benedict*<sup>14</sup> as well as on Columbanus' rules. Benedict wrote his *Rule* in Italy at approximately the same time that Caesarius was writing his *Rule for Nuns*, in the early sixth century. Although long considered an original contribution to monasticism, scholars more recently have concluded that the *Rule of St. Benedict* was heavily based on an anonymous prior

rule entitled *Regula Magistri* by Benedict of Aniane in his ninth century collection of monastic rules.<sup>15</sup> The *Regula Magistri* is three times as long as the *Rule of St. Benedict* and was not often copied because of its length, yet large sections of the two rules are identical.<sup>16</sup> It was probably written somewhere near Rome in the first decades of the sixth century.<sup>17</sup> Although the author is unknown and it is not clear whether it was written for a specific monastery, detailed prescriptions for monastic practice point to authorship by an abbot with experience in the monastic institution as well as with the weaknesses of men. None of the women's rules appear to have used it directly as a source, but since the rules of this period were in large part an attempt to codify monastic practice, and since the *Regula Magistri* includes more details of practice than the other rules, it is worth looking at, with caution, for what light it may shed on practices mentioned more briefly in the other rules.

With regard to reading, the *Regula Magistri* specifies a three hour period for *lectio*, between Prime and Terce in the winter and between None and Vespers in the summer, to accommodate the heat or cold better during the manual work periods. During that three hour period the monks were to separate into the groups of ten in which they were organized throughout the day for supervision by two priors.<sup>18</sup> One of the monks would read while the rest listened. During this same period children were taught their letters by one of the literate monks, and illiterate adults up to the age of fifty were to learn letters also. Other monks who did not yet know the Psalms by heart worked on memorizing them, also in groups. The author calls this the *opus spirituale*, or spiritual work, as opposed to the manual work they did during the rest of the day.<sup>19</sup> Thus, the

monastic activity of reading was more a group and aural activity than the modern understanding of “reading” includes. The same chapter also specifies that someone should read aloud during the manual work periods whenever a group of monks were doing the same work. Another chapter details the procedure for reading aloud during meals, each monk taking a turn for a week, and includes the same scriptural quotation about man not living by bread alone that Augustine and Caesarius included in their rules.<sup>20</sup> The *Regula Magistri* specifies that the rule itself was the book to be read during meals, except when laymen were present as guests of the abbot. On those occasions the abbot would choose another text.

Group reading was not the only form reading took, however. After None on Saturday and all day Sunday the monks did no manual work nor *opus spirituale*, and were allowed to read what they wished. This precept offers a rare reference to the monks being allowed personal choice of reading materials according to their own interests and demonstrates that individual reading, as well as group reading, occurred in the monastery. The *Regula Magistri*, however, also explicitly accommodates “hard-headed or simple brothers” who would not or could not learn letters; it assigned them more of the heavy work,<sup>21</sup> presumably during the reading periods. Thus, they were not denied the spiritual benefits of the monastic life.

Since Benedict wrote his precepts more concisely, the *Rule of St. Benedict* is considerably shorter than the *Regula Magistri*; nonetheless, many of the directions concerning reading are similar. Benedict also set different times for reading in winter and summer to accommodate the heat. In winter the monks read in the morning until Terce,

worked from Terce until None, then after the meal, read or worked on memorizing the Psalms. During the summer they worked in the morning until the fourth hour, then read from the fourth to the sixth hour; they then had their meal and were allowed to rest in bed until None, but might read if they wished, as long as they did not disturb any one else. This would have to have been private reading, since reading aloud would have disturbed the resting brothers. After this, they worked again until evening. On Sunday also they were given time to read.<sup>22</sup>

During the reading periods, Benedict ordered that a couple of the senior monks should go around the monastery to make sure no one was being lazy or talking instead of reading. This argues more for private, individual reading than the structured group reading outlined in the *Regula Magistri*. Benedict specified that during Lent each monk was to be given a book from the library to read through carefully, which also constituted private reading. He did include periods of group reading, however. One brother was to read aloud during meals for a week at a time, as in the *Regula Magistri*. Although Benedict says that “no one shall presume to read there from any book taken up at haphazard”<sup>23</sup> he does not say what book should be read, and we are left to speculate whether he intended the *Rule* to be read, as in the *Regula Magistri*. Benedict also added a period in the evening just before Compline when the monks were to gather and one was to read aloud to the group. In this chapter, he names books which might be read: the *Collations*, *Lives of the Fathers*, or other edifying book, but not the *Heptateuch* or *Books of Kings* from the Old Testament because they might be too disturbing just before bedtime to those of weak understanding.<sup>24</sup> In the last chapter, Benedict says that his *Rule*

is only a beginning in the monastic life and that to continue towards perfection the monks should read the Old and New Testaments, the *Collations*, *Institutes*, and *Lives* of the Fathers, and the *Rule* of St. Basil.<sup>25</sup> So in Benedict's *Rule* we have an indication that the monks read other books in addition to the Bible and the Psalms.

Although there are isolated instances of monks adopting the complete *Rule of St. Benedict* in Merovingian Gaul during the seventh century,<sup>26</sup> no evidence of nuns adopting it in its complete form exists. Nevertheless, it was influential as one of several rules used as a source for the practices of both women's and men's monasteries in the seventh century.

#### DONATUS AND THE *REGULA CUIUSDAM PATRIS*

The *Regula ad virgines* of Donatus of Besançon is an example of a mixed rule that combines elements from the rules of the major figures, Caesarius, Columbanus and Benedict. Donatus wrote it for the monastery he founded in Besançon for his mother, Flavia, after his father had died. We know of Donatus' life from *Ionas' Vita S. Columbani*.<sup>27</sup> Apparently, his parents Waldelenus and Flavia brought him to Columbanus to be baptized at a young age; he was educated in the monastery at Luxeuil (whether as a young monk or a layperson is not clear) and later he became bishop of Besançon.<sup>28</sup> He founded a monastery for men under a rule he constructed for them based mostly on the rules of Columbanus. Later he helped his mother found the monastery for women to which she retired.



According to the preface to his *Regula ad virgines*, Donatus had been asked by the abbess of the women's monastery, Gauthstruda, to look at the *Rule* of Caesarius as well as those of Benedict and Columbanus and select for her community the "choicest blooms" to excerpt into an Enchiridion that would help them improve their holy way of life.<sup>29</sup> Since he said he was now doing what she asked "at long last" and complains of corporal infirmities and senses obscured by darkness, we may assume he wrote it later in his life, probably in the 650s. It is interesting that although Gauthstruda was aware of the inadequacies of rules written for monks, especially Columbanus' preaching monks, and knew of the rule for women of Caesarius, she did not ask Donatus simply to send her a copy but instead asked him to compile the best precepts from all the rules for the benefit of her nuns. She asked not just for a document but for her bishop's spiritual guidance in choosing what precepts would best suit her community of women.

Donatus composed his rule mostly of quotations from the rules of Caesarius, Benedict and Columbanus, with some of his own contributions. But he skillfully rearranged and combined or summarized passages so that his *Regula ad virgines* stands on its own as a rule for women. While it includes the punishments for transgressions emphasized by Columbanus, and many sections, such as the one on Lent, from Benedict, the passages on reading are based on Caesarius' precepts. In chapter 20, Donatus prescribed reading from the second hour to the third and reiterated the importance of leaving time in the day for reading rather than gossiping. He also required someone to read while the rest were working so they would have something on which to meditate, which echoes Caesarius' precept in chapter 20 of the *Rule for Nuns*. In chapter 33,

Donatus included the precept for silence during meals while listening to the reading, thus taking food for the body while receiving the word of God in the ears, although he did not include the biblical quotation which his predecessors had. Donatus also repeated Caesarius' injunction against accepting girls younger than six or seven so that they would be able to learn letters and observe obedience when they came into the monastery (ch.6). Interestingly, in the chapter about not possessing anything (chapter 8), Donatus singles out tables and pens as items that the nuns are not to consider their own. Thus it is likely that they were using tables and pens to copy books if Donatus had to warn them against becoming too attached to these tools. The significance of Donatus' rule concerning reading is not that he added anything new but that he continued the tradition of Caesarius requiring the nuns to read and to listen to reading throughout the day. Although he included many passages from Benedict, he did not include Benedict's innovation of each monk receiving a book to read during Lent, nor the group reading before Compline. His rule was probably used in other monasteries besides Besançon, where the charters refer to a mixed rule of Benedict and Columbanus or a rule of blessed Benedict and in the custom of the monastery of Luxeuil.<sup>30</sup> So the tradition begun by Caesarius in the early sixth century was continued into the mid-seventh century.

The *Regula cuiusdam patris ad virgines* represents another example of a mixed rule, drawing on Benedict, Columbanus and possibly also on Donatus.<sup>31</sup> When Benedict of Aniane included it in his *Codex Regularum* he did not know who its author was and gave it the title under which it is known today. One theory proposed that it was written by Waldebert, the abbot of Luxeuil from 629-670, for Burgundofara when he helped her

found her monastery at Eboriac in 620. While this would be a neat solution to the authorship question, a more recent scholar sees the possible influence of Donatus' *Regula ad virgines* on this rule, making necessary a date after 650 and ruling out the foundation of Eboriac as the occasion for its composition.<sup>32</sup> This rule also depends more heavily on the *Rule of St. Benedict* than on the rules of Columbanus; although it includes the triple daily confession of the Irish tradition, the emphasis on punishments for infractions found in the rules of Columbanus and Donatus is absent. Instead, the emphasis is on love, both charity (*caritas*) towards the other sisters and spiritual *amor*. The *Regula cuiusdam patris ad virgines* is also written in a more eloquent style using paraphrasing extensively rather than verbatim quotations from other rules. The author has assimilated his sources, reorganized them and substituted different biblical quotations to illustrate the points he makes, thus creating an original work.<sup>33</sup>

This rule contains no daily timetable nor schedule of Psalms to be sung at the eight services, possibly because the copy Benedict of Aniane used for his collection may have been incomplete. The current version ends rather abruptly with a chapter on raising children in the monastery and has no concluding exhortation or words of advice, so it is impossible to tell how much may be missing. This is also the first rule for women which did not use Caesarius' *Rule for Nuns* as a source. Consequently it does not have the precept about reading until the third hour, nor the precept that all shall learn to read. It does include the precept about being silent during meals and listening to the reading, so that while the body is being refreshed the reading satisfies the soul.<sup>34</sup> Interestingly, like the *Regula magistri*, this rule specifies that one or more chapters of the rule was the text

to be read at meals. Since Benedict did not state this in his chapter on meals, although elsewhere he says that the rule should be read frequently in the community,<sup>35</sup> one might speculate that the author of the *Regula cuiusdam Patris* had some acquaintance with the *Regula magistri*. It might also be that reading of the rule during meals was common practice and these two rules are the only ones that happen to mention it.

Another mention of reading in the *Regula cuiusdam Patris* occurs in the chapter on work. The author says that while exerting themselves in manual work there is also time for the divine readings;<sup>36</sup> although he does not state explicitly that one read aloud while the rest listened, presumably that is what he meant. The author then states that the nuns were to do manual work from the second hour until the ninth, and at the ninth hour they customarily did reading. Although stated more tersely, this echoes Benedict's winter schedule of reading until the second hour, working through the day, and reading again after None.<sup>37</sup>

The last reference to reading occurs in the chapter on the care of children in the monastery. The children are to be kept under control, imbued with the fear of God and love of doctrine, and instructed in the cultivation of religion. They are to have practice in reading so that at a young age they learn to advance in leading a perfect life.<sup>38</sup> Caesarius, in his *Rule for Nuns*, remarked that children were only to be accepted into the monastery when they were old enough to learn letters, but this rule for women discusses their training and that they were to be taught how to read.

The monastic rules for women, and their sources, discussed in this chapter and the preceding one, demonstrate a continuity from the early sixth century to the last half of the seventh in the expectations monastic founders and bishops had for women to read the texts of their religion. While the erudition of someone like Jerome and his aristocratic lady correspondents may have waned in the tumultuous centuries of the Germanic invasions, a stronger monastic institution for women arose that encouraged all the women to learn to read, and through a written rule provided structured time for them to read and listen to the texts of their religion for the purpose of perfecting their lives. Although some parts of the rules for women were different from the rules for men, the reading requirements were basically the same.

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<sup>1</sup> See Donald Bullough, "The Career of Columbanus," in Michael Lapidge, ed., *Columbanus: Studies on the Latin Writings* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 1997), 1-28 for discussion of evidence for Columbanus' early life and education. The major source is *Ionas Vita S. Columbani* in *MGH SRG*, vol. 37.

<sup>2</sup> Which king is a matter of dispute that also affects the dating of his arrival in Gaul; see Bullough, "Career of Columbanus," 10.

<sup>3</sup> See G. S. M. Walker, *Sancti Columbani opera* (Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1957), xlv-lv for discussion of the extant mss. and the nature of the shorter and longer versions.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, xlviii.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 127.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 153. An imposition (*impositio*) was a set of anthems and responses followed by a genuflection; see Adalbert de Vogüé, ed., *La Règle du Maître*, Sources Chrétiennes, no.105 (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1964), 50.

<sup>7</sup> Walker, *Sancti Columbani opera*, 157.

<sup>8</sup> See the discussion of Donatus' mother Flavia below, p. 53.

<sup>9</sup> Donald Bullough, "The Career of Columbanus," 16-26.

<sup>10</sup> James O'Carroll, "Sainte Fare et les origines" in *Sainte Fare et Faremoutiers: Treize Siècles de Vie Monastique*, 2d ed. (Abbaye de Faremoutiers, 1956), 5.

<sup>11</sup> Bede, *HE* 3, 8.

<sup>12</sup> *Vita S. Columbani Liber II*, chap. 11, 257.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, chap. 10, 255-6.

<sup>14</sup> Since there are several titles given to Benedict's rule, we will use the most common English title as a matter of convenience.

<sup>15</sup> The theory of the priority of the *Regula Magistri* was first proposed in 1938 by D. Augustin Genestant. For summaries of the resulting debate see David Knowles "The *Regula Magistri* and the Rule of St. Benedict" in his *Great Historical Enterprises: Problems in Monastic History* (London: Nelson, 1963), 139-195 and Timothy Fry *RB1980: the Rule of St. Benedict* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press), 79-83.

<sup>16</sup> Fry, *RB1980*, 70.

<sup>17</sup> Vogüé, *Règle du Maître*, 221-233.

<sup>18</sup> This organization of the monks echoes the practice in Pachomius' monasteries, where he organized the monks into smaller houses, each supervised by a housemaster, and this organization was maintained at meals and prayers. See Pachomius *Praecepta*, trans. Armand Vielleux, *Pachomian Koinonia* vol. 2.

<sup>19</sup> *Regula Magistri* chap. 50; Vogüé, *Règle du Maître*, 225.

<sup>20</sup> *Regula Magistri* chap. 24; *ibid.*, 123.

<sup>21</sup> *Regula Magistri* chap. 50; *ibid.*, 239.

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- <sup>22</sup> *Rule of St. Benedict* chap. 48; trans. by Cardinal Gasquet (New York: Cooper Square, 1966), 84-87.
- <sup>23</sup> *Rule of St. Benedict* chap. 38; *ibid.*, 71-72.
- <sup>24</sup> *Rule of St. Benedict* chap. 42; *ibid.*, 76-77.
- <sup>25</sup> *Rule of St. Benedict* chap. 73; *ibid.*, 123-124.
- <sup>26</sup> Altaripa in Albi in 625 and the diocese of Autun in 670; see Rosamond McKitterick, *The Frankish Kingdom under the Carolingians 751-987* (London, New York: Longman, 1983), 110.
- <sup>27</sup> *Vita S. Columbani* Liber I, ch. 14.
- <sup>28</sup> He was bishop by 626 when he signed documents at the Council of Clichy; see Hope Mayo, "Three Merovingian Rules" (Ph. D. diss., Harvard University, 1974), 1:120.
- <sup>29</sup> The text of Donatus' *Regula ad virgines* is available in *PL* 87:273-298. A preliminary translation based on this text is in Jo Ann McNamara and John E. Holborg, "The Rule of Donatus of Besançon: a working translation" *Vox Benedictina* 2 no.2 (1985), 85-107. Mayo, "Three Merovingian Rules" based her analysis and transcription on reexamination of the oldest extant mss. of Benedict of Aniane's *Codex Regularum*, now Munich Staatsbibliothek lat. 28118.
- <sup>30</sup> Mayo, "Three Merovingian Rules," presents this argument on 1:12 and 1:183.
- <sup>31</sup> The text of the *Regula cuiusdam Patris ad virgines* may be found in *PL* 88:1051-1070 and in Mayo, "Three Merovingian Rules," 2:142-213. The author is not aware of an English translation; precepts cited are paraphrased translations by the author.
- <sup>32</sup> See Mayo's argument in "Three Merovingian Rules," 1:217.
- <sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:219.
- <sup>34</sup> *Reg. cuiusdam Patris* chap. 9; *ibid.*, 2:177-8.
- <sup>35</sup> *Rule of St. Benedict* chap. 66; trans. Gasquet, 118.
- <sup>36</sup> *Reg. cuiusdam Patris* chap. 12; Mayo, "Three Merovingian Rules," 2:183-8.
- <sup>37</sup> *Rule of St. Benedict* chap. 48; trans. Gasquet, 85.
- <sup>38</sup> *Reg. cuiusdam Patris* chap. 24; Mayo, "Three Merovingian Rules," 2:212-13.

### CHAPTER 3: EDUCATION FOR GIRLS IN LATE ANTIQUITY

Although reading and writing were widely diffused through the Greek and Roman world, and the political and social elite who ran the institutions of the Empire were universally literate, mass literacy did not exist. There was no economic need for an educated workforce and thus no incentive for the governing class to provide subsidized schools for the masses. Even middle class tradesman or craftsmen did not necessarily need to be literate, since they could hire scribes to handle their correspondence and accounts, and the wealthier ones could rely on slaves educated for that purpose. The illiterate were not necessarily ignorant, however, since they could listen to political news in the forum and attend recitations and performances of poetry and drama, but education in reading and writing was limited to a fairly small percentage of the population. <sup>1</sup>

In the western part of the Roman Empire in the first three centuries, private tutors often provided the early education for children of the wealthy but some schools were provided by municipalities for the children of other classes and slaves were often sent to them as well. Primary schooling began around age seven and was taught by a *litterator* (lettered man) or *magister ludi* (schoolmaster). This early schooling consisted of learning to read and write by copying and reciting selected passages from classic authors; eventually, through repetition, the passages were memorized. Knowledge of history, geography and other subjects was also gained through reading these passages. Only a privileged few went on, at age twelve, to study with a *grammaticus* with whom they learned more of the intricacies of Latin grammar and how to prepare a text for reading aloud with expression. Preparation of a text required considerable knowledge and



understanding. Since texts were usually written with no punctuation and no spaces between words, the student had to mark the text to show word division, accents, long or short vowels and pauses. Fewer still went on, between ages fifteen and twenty, to the study of oratory under the tutelage of a rhetor.<sup>2</sup>

A few scattered references support the conclusion that girls were allowed to attend school with boys, although it is likely that fewer girls than boys actually attended. Martial, in his Epigrams, twice speaks of a *magister* teaching boys and girls.<sup>3</sup> Although Martial pictured his ideal wife as not too clever, and satirists such as Juvenal and Lucian poked fun at highly educated women, Augustine felt that the ideal wife should be literate, or at least easily taught.<sup>4</sup> Although the evidence is not decisive that aristocratic women were as literate as the men, neither is there explicit evidence of illiteracy among them. The practical requirements of running a large household would support the need to educate daughters and a few women became true intellectuals, as Sallust testifies when he called Sempronia learned in Greek and Latin letters.<sup>5</sup>

In Gaul, inscriptions mention grammarians and rhetors in quite a few cities (including Arles, Lyons and Besançon) over the course of the first four centuries of our era.<sup>6</sup> The fourth century Gallic writer Ausonius mentions municipal schools maintained at city expense in Lyons, Besançon and Toulouse<sup>7</sup> and mentions that his daughter went to school.<sup>8</sup> In Arles, at the end of the fifth century, educated writers such as Firminus, a correspondent of Sidonius Apollinaris and Ennodius, and his friend grammarian Julianus Pomerius, with whom Caesarius studied briefly, were still providing some elements of classical education.<sup>9</sup>

As the Germanic tribes began to overrun the Western provinces and the Empire began to collapse, education must have been affected by the concomitant political and economic instability. In the southern areas of Gaul, such as Provence, Aquitaine and Burgundy, Roman civic institutions continued for awhile under Germanic rule. Indirect evidence, such as the continued use of Latin inscriptions on monuments and tombstones and the public posting of documents indicate some continued ability to read and write.<sup>10</sup> A Christian writer of the late fourth century, however, laments that the tradition of educating children in letters and reading was becoming obsolete through neglect.<sup>11</sup> An additional problem was developing in the higher levels of education. The form of Latin being taught was conservative and artificial, based only on texts of earlier writers such as Virgil and imitated by contemporary writers such as Sidonius Apollinaris. This form was becoming increasingly distant from the spoken language of everyday life, and thus education based on it was becoming less useful.<sup>12</sup>

At the same time that classical city- or state-supported education was declining, a new form of education was developing in the Christian church. Although writing and books were not the main means of proselytizing in the first three centuries, Christianity was a religion devoted to its sacred texts, much as was its parent religion, Judaism. By the third century learned commentaries began to appear, and written works were also used in religious controversies, both to defend Christianity against its critics and for doctrinal controversies within it.<sup>13</sup> In the early centuries, Christians did not set up their own schools but sent their children to the established schools and provided their religious and moral training at home. Christians were increasingly troubled by the many pagan

references in the texts used in the schools, however. One consequence of this was praise for early desert monks, such as Anthony, who were illiterate, as the Apostles were presumed to have been, yet who nevertheless gained great holiness.<sup>14</sup> Others, such as Jerome and Basil, recommended substituting names from the Bible for characters in mythology as the first words children learned to read, and then giving them verses from Proverbs and the Psalms to read in place of verses of the pagan poets.<sup>15</sup>

Pachomius, the early founder of communal monasticism in Egypt, supported this Christianization of education for monks and nuns by requiring that they learn to read, setting aside time in the day for reading, and providing for the circulation of books between the monastic houses. The analysis above of the rules for nuns shows that this type of learning was continued when monasticism came to Western Europe in the fifth and sixth centuries. Several of the rules stated that children could be accepted at the age of six or seven, when they were capable of learning letters, and they were then educated completely within the monastery, using only Christian texts. Several writers, including Caesarius,<sup>16</sup> clearly stated, however, that only children destined to remain in the monastic life should be admitted to education in the monastery. Confinement of serious Christian education to the monasteries, however, presented the Church with a problem. Where were good candidates for bishoprics to be found? The practical solution became to select learned monks to fill vacant sees. In the fifth and sixth centuries, most of the bishops in southeastern Gaul were former monks of Lérins, and in central Gaul most were from Marmoutier, two early prominent monasteries.<sup>17</sup>

The combination of monastic Christian education and the decline of classical schools as the Germanic invasions continued initiated a large change in Christian culture. In the fourth and fifth centuries many laymen as well as clerics had studied with grammarians and rhetors and, as a result, they wrote religious poems, hagiography and theological treatises in the classical manner. Adaptation of books of the Bible into hexameter verse was especially popular. For example, Avitus (ca. 450-518), bishop of Vienne in Burgundy and member of a prominent Gallo-Roman family,<sup>18</sup> wrote five poems in hexameter paraphrasing the stories of Creation, the Fall, the Judgment, the Flood and the Exodus from Egypt from the books of Genesis and Exodus.<sup>19</sup> But as more of the bishops began to come from a monastic background and were unable to appreciate classical texts, they developed a hostility to profane knowledge. Caesarius, who studied only briefly with a grammarian, compared the liberal arts to the plagues of Egypt and said that the poets fed sensuality and philosophers misled untrained minds into doctrinal deviation.<sup>20</sup> Church councils in the early sixth century began to pass canons forbidding bishops from reading any profane works.<sup>21</sup>

At the same time, bishops needed educated priests, clerks and lectors to assist them in carrying out their duties, especially as conversion efforts led to increases in the Christian population. They began to gather semi-monastic communities around themselves to serve those needs and provide an apprenticeship for future priests, since there were no seminaries yet. Young boys would begin as lectors, learning to read the biblical texts aloud for church services. They would learn dogma, liturgy and canon law as they progressed to deacon and finally priest.<sup>22</sup> The Second Council of Toledo in 527

made the practice explicit in Canon 1, directing that children (i.e. boys) intended for the priesthood should be instructed in the church under the direct supervision of the bishop as soon as they received the tonsure.<sup>23</sup>

As the Church spread outward from the urban centers, this system of education was extended to the parishes. The Second Council of Vaison (probably initiated by Caesarius) directed parish priests to gather boys as lectors and give them a Christian education in order to prepare successors to themselves.<sup>24</sup> Thus village schools, not widespread during antiquity, grew up. Unfortunately, since this type of Christian education was focussed on preparing priests, girls were excluded. Where Martial had spoken of schoolmasters teaching boys and girls, Gregory of Tours, in the sixth century, spoke of a hermit, St. Patroclus (d. 576), who built a chapel near Nérís and began to teach boys in the study of letters.<sup>25</sup> The only alternatives left to girls were education in the monastery for those destined to be nuns and private education at home in aristocratic families.

Evidence exists that aristocratic families did continue to educate their children in reading and writing and basic religious and secular subjects. In the fifth century, Fuscina, sister of bishop and poet Avitus of Vienne mentioned above, apparently received a good classical education within her aristocratic family. In a poem on the merits of the celibate life addressed to her, Avitus said:

You understand syntax and metrics, can read a phrase properly and so can add grace to another's verse as you read. What need is there for me to explain everything? Use the good sense your education has given you and with a manly

zeal turn what you know or what you have merely skimmed in your reading into a work of virtue (*sanctus labor*).<sup>26</sup>

He reminded her of the books of the Bible she had read and should read again, but also tells her to read the Christian poets of her own day. Gregory of Tours (538-594) noted, on the one hand, that the boys attending clerical schools did not have noble or senatorial fathers and, on the other hand, that Christians of senatorial rank were educated by their parents.<sup>27</sup> Aristocratic families would probably still have had some books of the ancient authors passed down in their families. Mothers seem to have been part of this educational effort. Caesarius, in a sermon to the monks of Lérins, said: “This holy island once welcomed my insignificant self into its affectionate arms. Like an illustrious and incomparable mother and a nurse who gives all good things, she made every effort to educate and to nourish me.”<sup>28</sup> Caesarius’ metaphor provides some indication of the educational function aristocratic mothers served, which they could not have done if they themselves had not been educated.

Other brief statements testify to the learning of at least a few high-born women of this period. Fortunatus (ca. 540-ca. 600), poet and biographer of Radegundus, quoted the epitaph of a woman named Eusebia who was “as skillful with the pen as with weaving,”<sup>29</sup> although this may only have meant that she was skilled at copying books. In the early sixth century, Abbot Eugippius in Italy compiled an extensive compendium of excerpts from Augustine’s works and sent a copy to a noblewoman named Proba. She was one of the daughters of Quintus Aurelius Memmius Symmachus, of an illustrious Roman family; her sister Rusticiana married Boethius in 507.<sup>30</sup> Proba herself became a nun

(whether in a community or in her family home is not clear). Eugippius' excerpts were on Christian culture, exegetical learning and the usefulness of profane knowledge for exegesis. The purpose of this work was the training of Christian scholars; Eugippius must have thought Proba capable of benefiting from it. Proba also corresponded with Fulgentius (467-532), bishop of Ruspé in North Africa, who was also a correspondent of Eugippius. Although her letters do not survive, two letters he wrote to her are very erudite. The first one (Epistle 3) is a lengthy treatise on virginity and humility, based on Scripture but developing the religious meaning in long complex sentences. In his second letter to her (Epistle 4), Fulgentius praises her letter calling it "a letter which displays with certain evidence not only your zeal for good works but also the humility of your heart."<sup>31</sup>

Another example of a learned woman was Brunhilda, wife of one of the Frankish kings, Sigebert I. When he was murdered in 575 in the internecine struggles with his brothers, she had their son Childebert II educated first by the mayor of the palace, then by Waldelenus, known to Gregory of Tours, and then took over his education herself. Although it is not known what this education consisted of, Pope Gregory the Great (590-604) addressed a letter to her in Latin praising her for both the governing of the kingdom and the education of her son.<sup>32</sup> At the very least, she must have been able to read his Latin, or understand it when it was read to her, and it is not likely that the Pope would have praised her for educating her son in military matters.

In the seventh century, as education became completely religious, learned Christian women continued to appear. Bede devoted a chapter of his *Historia*

*ecclesiastica* to the life and death of abbess Hild (d. 680) of Streonaeshalch (later Whitby). Great-niece of the Saxon King Edwin, she was converted to Christianity along with her family by Paulinus, the first bishop of Northumbria. Bishop Aidan, who had convinced her not to leave for a monastery in Gaul and appointed her abbess, gave her instruction and guidance along with “other devout men”.<sup>33</sup> That instruction must have been substantial, including the study of Latin for reading the Scriptures, because Bede further noted that “those under her direction were required to make a thorough study of the Scriptures and occupy themselves in good works, to such good effect that many were found fitted for Holy Orders and the service of God’s altar. Five men from this monastery later became bishops ...” Even in her long final illness she continued “to instruct the flock committed to her, both privately and publicly.”<sup>34</sup> So although there are no surviving writings attributed to her, many men in the double monastery she presided over went on to distinguished ecclesiastical careers. A letter exists from her successor as abbess, Aelflaed (654-713), a daughter of King Oswy, who had been raised in the monastery. Written to an abbess on the Continent commending to her care a third abbess who was traveling to Rome, she wrote competently in Latin, which was not her native tongue.<sup>35</sup>

Gertrude, who with her mother Ida founded the double monastery of Nivelles and Fosse (c.640), was another learned seventh century abbess. According to her *Vita*, she sent messengers to obtain relics and holy books from Rome and Ireland “for teaching divine song to ignorant folk.”<sup>36</sup> Later she delegated the administrative cares of the monastery to brothers (for external affairs) and sisters (for household affairs) so that she could devote herself more fully to “vigils, prayers, readings and fasts” with the result,



according to her biographer, that “she committed a whole library of divine law to memory and could publicly clarify for her auditors the shadowy mysteries of allegories which the Holy Spirit revealed to her.”<sup>37</sup> Gertrude was member of an aristocratic family; her father Pippin was mayor of the palace under Dagobert. She was educated at home by her mother Ida, who supported her refusal, when she was very young, to marry the son of the Duke of Austrasia, picked out for her by the king, in favor of espousal to Christ as a nun.<sup>38</sup> Although she and her mother did not found their monastery until after her father’s death fourteen years later, presumably she was studying the Scriptures during that time. It is interesting that, after her period of more intense study in the monastery, her biographer attributes her ability to explain the mysteries and allegories of Scripture to the Holy Spirit, not to any learned bishop or saint who she might have consulted for guidance. His statement that she was “exhorting and preaching the word of the Lord to herself and others,”<sup>39</sup> although presumably only within the monastery, indicates a role as teacher of her monks and nuns equal to that of bishops for laypeople.

Another great seventh century abbess, Bertila, was partially responsible for assisting the development of monastic learning in Anglo-Saxon England. Bertila was designated the first abbess of Chelles when Queen Balthild founded that monastery ca. 658 or 659. By the 660s her reputation for learning and instruction had reached Anglo-Saxon kings, possibly through Balthild who was Saxon, and they were requesting that she send some of her disciples to help found monasteries in their land.<sup>40</sup> They also sent some of their daughters to Chelles, one of whom was Hild’s sister Hereswith, either for their education or to become nuns.<sup>41</sup> Bertila’s *Vita* testifies that she did send some of her

monks and nuns as well as “many volumes of books” in response to their requests,<sup>42</sup> so Anglo-Saxon monasteries received the example of a learned abbess both through the personal testimony of those she sent as well as through books, which were most likely copied in her monastery.

Although the nature of education and the institutions responsible for it changed drastically between the fifth and seventh centuries, some girls still managed to learn to read and some women became quite learned. In some areas learning to read Latin meant learning a foreign language, as it did for Hild in England and probably did for Gertrude and Bertila in Frankish northern Gaul. In other areas, like Burgundy and Provence, it meant only learning a more formal and artificial form of their native tongue, as it did for Fuscina and Caesaria. Unlike the men of this period who could write works of biblical and theological interpretation, women were limited to writing letters, a very few of which survive, and teaching their sisters, and sometimes brothers, in the monastery. The evidence for their learning comes indirectly, through hagiography, usually written by men (although Baudonivia’s life of Radegund is an exception) and letters of advice, exhortation and sometimes praise written to them by bishops, who were often their relatives. What emerges is a picture of equality in capacity for intelligent men and women from aristocratic families to gain the education necessary to read and interpret the Scriptures, which was necessary for salvation as well as the highest intellectual activity of that period. Avitus explicitly stated that he considered men and women equal in their capability, in the presence of God’s grace, of using reading and knowledge to progress towards salvation.<sup>43</sup>

Inequality did exist, however, in the institutions in which boys and girls could gain their education. While boys could be educated in monasteries, in episcopal and parish schools, and at home, girls could be educated only in monasteries or at home. While boys did not have to make a final decision on becoming a priest before receiving education in the parish school,<sup>44</sup> in monasteries the commitment was final. Inequality also existed in opportunities to use education. Men could become priests and bishops, or monks, or they could use their education in clerical service in the royal bureaucracies already developing. Women could either become nuns in enclosed monasteries or they could marry, which precluded much of an intellectual life, given the cares of running a household and childbearing. This is not to say that a few women did not have great intellectual influence over their peers and over others outside the monastery; they certainly did, as can be seen in the examples just cited. For every abbess whose story is known there also must have been many anonymous nuns under her care who were encouraged to read and understand the Scriptures both by her personal instruction and by the rules developed for women's monasteries which have been examined above (chaps. 1 and 2). But because they did not write works of their own which have come down to us, the evidence is limited to the great abbesses who merited hagiographic treatment.

Despite the limitations placed on women by social conditions which required their protection by monastery walls or husbands or other male family members, women were considered capable of learning letters and reading and interpreting Scripture. At least in the religious milieu, they were considered coequals in the struggle for salvation. The voiced disdain for women's intellectual capacity of later centuries was not heard in that

earlier period. After discussing the fact that the resurrected Christ appeared first to his women followers at the tomb, Avitus said:

It follows that virtue and danger are common to both men and women. There is no difference in our hearts. Each is capable of willing what is right if grace is present. To attain this, however, the lives of either sex must sweat and never rest from the struggle.<sup>45</sup>

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- <sup>1</sup> William V. Harris, *Ancient Literacy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 22. Harris thinks classical scholars in general overestimate the level of literacy.
- <sup>2</sup> H. I. Marrou, *A History of Education in Antiquity*, trans. George Lamb, 3d ed. (New York: New American Library, 1964), 358-81.
- <sup>3</sup> Martial *Epigrams* 8.3.15-16 and 9.68.1-2; quoted in Harris, *Ancient Literacy*, 239.
- <sup>4</sup> Augustine *Soliloquies* 1.10; quoted in Marrou, *History*, 369.
- <sup>5</sup> Sallust *Bellum Catilinae* 25.2; quoted in Harris, *Ancient Literacy*, 252.
- <sup>6</sup> Marrou, *History*, 397.
- <sup>7</sup> Ausonius *Gratiarum actio* 7.31; quoted in Marrou, *History*, 408.
- <sup>8</sup> Ausonius *Ep.* 22.33; quoted in Harris, *Ancient Literacy*, 309.
- <sup>9</sup> Pierre Riché, *Education and Culture in the Barbarian West Sixth through Eighth Centuries*, trans. John Contreni (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1976), 31.
- <sup>10</sup> Riché, *Education and Culture*, 21.
- <sup>11</sup> *Comm. in Epist. ad Eph.* 4.11-12, formerly attributed to Ambrose; quoted in Harris, *Ancient Literacy*, 308.
- <sup>12</sup> Harris, *Ancient Literacy*, 308.
- <sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 299.
- <sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 302.
- <sup>15</sup> Marrou, *History*, 440-1.
- <sup>16</sup> Caesarius, *Rule for Nuns* chap. 7; M. C. McCarthy, *The Rule for Nuns of Saint Caesarius of Arles* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University Press, 1960), 173.
- <sup>17</sup> Marrou, *History*, 444.
- <sup>18</sup> See the discussion of his family in George W. Shea, *The Poems of Alcimius Ecdicius Avitus* (Tempe, Ariz.: Medieval & Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1997), 1-2.
- <sup>19</sup> *MGH AA* 6.2: 203 ff.; English trans. in Shea, *Poems*.
- <sup>20</sup> Sermon 99; quoted in Riché, *Education and Culture*, 84.
- <sup>21</sup> Councils presided over by Caesarius and by Isidore of Seville in Spain include the prohibition. See Marrou, *History*, 427.
- <sup>22</sup> Marrou, *History*, 444. Caesarius is a prime example, his biographers having been members of his episcopal community.
- <sup>23</sup> *PL* 84, 335; cited in Riché, *Education and Culture*, 126.
- <sup>24</sup> *Concilia Merovingici Aevi*, *MGH Leges* 3, *Concilia* 1.56 canon 1; cited in Riché, *Education and Culture*, 128.
- <sup>25</sup> Gregory of Tours *Vitae Patrum* 9.2; quoted and translated in Edward James, *Gregory of Tours: Life of the Fathers*, 2d ed., *Translated Texts for Historians*, vol.1 (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1991), 67. Although Gregory used the word “pueros” which can mean children, as James has translated it, the word has a strong connotation of “boy” or “lad” and Martial used “puer” and “virgo” when he meant boys and girls. Patroclus

also founded a monastery for young girls in Nérís, which seems to support the widening separation between boys' and girls' education.

<sup>26</sup> Shea, *Poems*, 143.

<sup>27</sup> Riché, *Education and Culture*, 209.

<sup>28</sup> Caesarius Sermon 236, quoted and translated in Riché, *Education and Culture*, 109.

<sup>29</sup> Fortunatus *Carmina* 4.17.8-9 in MGH Auct. Ant. 4-1, 100.

<sup>30</sup> Johannes Sundwall, *Abhandlungen zur Geschichte des ausgehenden Römertums* (Helsinki, 1919; repr., New York: Arno Press, 1975), 159-162.

<sup>31</sup> *PL* 65.324-344. English translation in Robert B. Enos, *Fulgentius: Selected Works*, Fathers of the Church: a new translation vol. 95 (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University Press, 1997), 310-340.

<sup>32</sup> Gregory the Great, Epistola 6.5 in *MGH Ep.* 1, 383; quoted in Riché, *Education and Culture*, 222.

<sup>33</sup> Bede *HE* 4.23; English trans. Leo Sherley-Price, *A History of the English Church and People* (New York: Penguin Books, 1968), 247.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> *MGH Ep. Sel.* 1.8.

<sup>36</sup> *Vita Sanctae Geretrudis* in *MGH SRM* 2:447-74; English trans. JoAnn McNamara and John E. Holborg, *Sainted Women of the Dark Ages* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1992), 225.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 223.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 227.

<sup>40</sup> *Vita Bertilae abbatisae Calensis* in *MGH SRM* 4:534-46; English trans. in McNamara and Holborg, *Sainted Women*, 286.

<sup>41</sup> Bede, *HE* 3.8 and 4.23; trans. Sherley-Price, *History*, 154 and 246.

<sup>42</sup> McNamara and Holborg, *Sainted Women*, 286.

<sup>43</sup> Shea, *Poems*, 140.

<sup>44</sup> Riché, *Education and Culture*, 128.

<sup>45</sup> Shea, *Poems*, 140.

## CHAPTER 4: ORALITY, LITERACY AND THE NATURE OF READING

Discussion of the requirement for nuns to read in the sixth and seventh centuries necessitates examination of the nature of reading during this period, and of religious reading in particular. What did it mean in concrete terms for the nuns' rules to require all of the nuns to learn to read? The process of reading during the late antique and early medieval period was very different from the modern process of rapid, silent reading to extract new information by educated people in a culture dependent on the written word and inundated by vast quantities of printed materials. Early medieval culture, both Germanic and Gallo-Roman, was to a large extent an oral culture with only a small percentage of people having direct access to literate culture.<sup>1</sup> Books were scarce and expensive to produce. Education in basic reading and writing was by no means universal. Most people received their political news, religious edification and entertainment aurally in the form of edicts read aloud in public, sermons preached in church and performances of players and poets.<sup>2</sup> Examining the nature of oral culture will shed some light on the nature of reading in the early medieval period and studies on the specialized nature or religious reading will illuminate the kind of reading done in the monasteries of both women and men.

By the beginning of the sixth century many Germanic kingdoms ruled over the former western half of the Roman Empire. During the Empire, an elite literary culture existed as well as a bureaucracy which used written records, and Christianity, with its emphasis on sacred written texts, had begun to spread widely. Many people, however, existed on an entirely oral (though not necessarily ignorant) level, receiving information

in the public forum.<sup>3</sup> With the spread of the Germanic kingdoms, the social situation became more complex. The Germanic cultures were basically oral, with a more oral method of cultural storage and transmission than the Romans. Given the relative recency of writing as a method of cultural storage and the rarity of a written literature among the thousands of languages that have existed,<sup>4</sup> oral cultures such as theirs had existed for a long time and had developed a certain sophistication of organization. The major areas of that organization included the legal and political area of directives that became precedents for decisions, the retelling of the tribal history and deeds of the ancestors, and the training of the young in both areas through retelling and repetition.<sup>5</sup>

With the superimposition of a relatively small population of Germanic peoples over a larger Roman population in Gaul, Italy and Spain, the cultural situation became confused and remains problematic for modern researchers due to the scattered nature of the surviving sources and their inherent bias towards written Roman culture. Since this is a large and multi-faceted topic, only a few aspects of relevance to this study will be examined. One aspect of importance involves the position of Latin as a spoken language during the early medieval period. Several theories have been promoted from the early twentieth century to the present,<sup>6</sup> but the current theory<sup>7</sup> contends that Latin continued to be spoken, although with an increasing colloquialism in syntax and vocabulary, until the Carolingian reforms, which tried to return to a more “correct” Latin thereby causing an irrevocable split between the spoken and written language. The fact that no examples of the Frankish language survive, other than a few specialized words, argues for the rapid adoption of spoken Latin by the Franks in Gaul.<sup>8</sup> Thus nuns learning to read in both



northern and southern Gaul were likely learning to read the language they spoke, although this cannot be known with certainty. By contrast, in Anglo-Saxon England and in Ireland nuns had to learn Latin as a foreign language when they learned to read, adding an extra level of difficulty to the process of learning to read.

The position of Christianity during this period represents another important aspect of the cultural situation. Many of the Germanic tribes had converted to the Arian form of Christianity before they moved into western Europe and thus had exposure to written works, at least through their priests. Unfortunately, the extent of their use of written works cannot be determined since virtually all Arian works were destroyed in order to avoid heretical contamination when a people later converted to orthodox Christianity. The Frankish king Clovis was the first Germanic king to convert directly from paganism to orthodox Christianity, around 500, and several fairly strong centers of Christianity developed around men such as Caesarius of Arles and Gregory of Tours. The extent of Christian conversion beyond those centers is difficult to discern, but given the inherent conservatism of traditional cultures and the early stage of development of recruitment and training for the priesthood, it is unlikely that it was widespread. Thus, in spite of the relatively large number of Christian written sources, the percentage of the population who were committed Christians was probably not large,<sup>9</sup> and the percentage who chose the monastic life was even smaller. Thus the number of people who had need of reading for religious purposes would have been small.

Theories about oral literature can provide some understanding of the nature of works heard in an oral culture. Milman Parry and Albert Lord first constructed a theory

of the oral nature of early epic literature, especially Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, by studying a modern oral culture in what was then Yugoslavia.<sup>10</sup> Aside from the revolution it caused in literary studies, their theory was valuable in awakening scholars in other fields to the essentially oral nature of traditional cultures, including those of the early Middle Ages. Because of the modern emphasis on written texts and the difficulty of recovering information about oral cultures of the past, the literate portion of medieval society is probably overrepresented in historical studies.<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, careful examination of statements about the culture (including negative ones) in the written sources, and study of some of the genres of literature which were meant to be delivered orally can give scholars a better understanding of early medieval society and the way people thought.

Briefly, Parry and Lord discovered that poets in traditional oral cultures actually created their poems in the act of performing them. Using a stock of ready-made phrases of different meters, called formulas, and a set of traditional themes and story patterns, and interacting with their audience who were familiar with these themes and patterns, they recreated the poem each time they performed it. Thus the basic nature of the poem was preserved over time as new poets learned and performed it. Word for word reproduction was a meaningless concept since there was no text to which to compare the performance until, like the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, it was captured in writing at some point.

Many scholars began to apply this theory of oral-formulaic composition to written texts so that, by analogy with known orally composed texts, they could pinpoint whether a particular text was orally composed. While this approach is somewhat problematic in

terms of the interpretation of a given text,<sup>12</sup> recognition of formulaic aspects in medieval texts, including religious texts, is important in the context of this study because “formulism mechanically affects its [the written text’s] performance: it aids recitation from memory, conditions reading by its repetitiveness, and serves the retention of text in memory.”<sup>13</sup> In fact, the early medieval period represents a period of interaction between pre-literate and literate cultures, within society and within individual writers and readers, and the written texts often reflect this transition. While application of the oral-formulaic theory to written texts cannot absolutely prove the original oral composition of those texts, it is clear that oral characteristics carried over into written texts as stylistic characteristics and those oral characteristics aided the oral performance of the written work.

Characteristics of orality which have been observed in performances of oral cultures are all geared towards making the ideas easier to remember. The major characteristic observed by Parry and Lord was the formulaic combinations of words which were reused whenever a particular idea came up. Examples include the “wine-dark sea” of Homer or the king as “ring-giver” in Anglo-Saxon poetry. Often parallel or antithetical formulas were clustered to reinforce the idea expressed and make it more memorable. Redundancy is also a characteristic of orality. In oral discourse, since the speakers and hearers cannot easily review what has already been said as one can with written texts, the mind has to proceed slowly and keep close to the focus of the discourse. Redundancy aids that process. In oral composition the speaker needs to keep speaking while composing his next thought; redundant expressions of the previous thought gives

him time to do this. While this is less important when the speaker is presenting a previously written text, it will still help him memorize the text and it also helps the listeners avoid missing ideas due to poor acoustics or distractions.

Another characteristic of orality is the use of additive rather than subordinative clauses. One example occurs at the beginning of the biblical book of Genesis where each new detail is introduced with “and”. Although some modern translations have varied the words introducing each clause for a more literate culture, the “ands” in the original Hebrew text and Latin translations provide a more rhythmic and memorable text for oral recitation. Oral compositions also tend to use expressions that are concrete and come from human experience rather than abstract expressions. This may account for many of the metaphorical expressions used by early medieval Christian writers in their attempts to explain abstract Christian concepts to their listeners. Caesaria’s comparison of texts of the Bible to pearl earrings, rings and bracelets for the nuns, noted above (p. 36), is an example of this concretizing process. Everyone could understand the value of pearls and rings; comparison of the words of biblical texts to them emphasizes the value of the words. Oral compositions also often have an agonistic tone, expressing polarization between good and evil, villains and heroes, virtue and vice. Polarized concepts are more easily remembered than less extreme differences and the exaggerated expressions of praise or vituperation that were often used enhanced this memorability.<sup>14</sup>

Oral characteristics have been discovered in some of the biblical texts which early nuns would have been reading and hearing. One scholar examined the Book of Psalms in the original Hebrew and found a fairly high clustering of formulaic phrases in a small

group of individual psalms.<sup>15</sup> Since psalms of several different types and from different historical periods were brought together in this Book, it is not surprising that they are not uniform. It is also not clear, without further investigation, whether formulaic phrases carried over into the Latin translation of the Book of Psalms. However, several of the psalms in the Latin version include the repetitive and additive characteristics. For example, Psalm 29 repeats “*vox Domini*” in many lines; Psalms 135 and 136 add line upon line describing God and his actions, beginning each line with “*qui*”; and Psalm 150 has the sound of a litany, consisting of nine lines beginning with “*laudate eum in.*” The additive nature of the lines beginning with “and” in Genesis has been noted above; this also occurs in the Gospels, where many lines also begin with “and.”<sup>16</sup> The so-called beatitudes, too, demonstrate the repetitive litany characteristic, where each line begins with “*beati.*”<sup>17</sup> Another scholar has discovered a concentric symmetry of structure characteristic of traditional oral texts as well as formulaic language in the Gospel of Matthew.<sup>18</sup>

While the scriptures contain oral characteristics, they had become written texts long before the early medieval period, and written texts encourage the preservation and repetition of established forms of the text. Repetitive rereading almost automatically leads to memorization, and the oral features in the works would have made this easier. Monastic readers also actively sought to memorize large amounts of the scriptures, however, because of the nature and purpose of religious reading. Religious readers consider the scriptures to be a rich and deep resource with an endless potential for providing new meaning. No amount of rereading could ever exhaust its potential and in

fact, rereading is essential for plumbing its depths of meaning.<sup>19</sup> For the early medieval monastic reader, works of this value were worth storing in memory where nothing could destroy them and where they would always be available for meditation. Reading provided the food for meditation and many metaphors of eating, digesting, and ruminating on the Word of God appear in medieval works on the religious life.<sup>20</sup>

References about women memorizing and rereading appear in late antiquity. Jerome said in one of his letters that Paula “had the scriptures by memory” (what part of the scriptures he meant is unclear) and admonished Paula to make sure that the sisters in her convent were not ignorant of the Psalms and learned Holy Scriptures daily.<sup>21</sup> Palladius (c.363-c.431) tells of Silvania, sister of Rufinus, who, in her ardor for sacred learning, spent most of the nights reading and rereading the same work seven or eight times.<sup>22</sup> The requirements for reading and learning the Psalms found in the sixth and seventh century nuns’ rules represent a codification and continuation of the practice of earlier Christian women.

Memorization was not necessarily accomplished only by repetition. The *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, attributed to Cicero by medieval writers, described a technique of memory for orators which involved constructing a mental image of a house and placing images of the material to be recalled in the various rooms.<sup>23</sup> Hugh of St. Victor, in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, described a method for memorizing the Psalms which involved the number of the Psalm, the *incipit* or first words, and verse numbers to which the words of each line or verse would be attached in memory.<sup>24</sup> The essential features of these and similar mnemonic techniques include imaginative creation of a storage system in the

mind, division of the matter to be memorized into small units for quick storage and rapid recall, and repetitive reading, which was usually vocalized or subvocalized, of the units being memorized.<sup>25</sup>

While references to this type of memorization technique are absent in the early medieval period, indirect evidence suggests that some form of this technique was being used. One of the results of this technique is that the memorized units can be recalled in any order and individually. It is not necessary to run through a whole Psalm to recall a particular line. Lines can be quickly recalled from widely scattered parts of the text because they are not stored sequentially but by a kind of address tag. The consequences of this facility are seen in the written works favored by monastic writers. The *florilegium*, or anthology of short extracts from earlier Church fathers and other writers makes sense in this context because readers could easily memorize the short sayings and appreciated the effort of the writer in pre-selecting and dividing the best parts of other writers for their use. Likewise, the commentary on a biblical book was a popular genre and usually proceeded verse by verse because that was how religious readers knew the work.<sup>26</sup> For the writer with a large memorized store, each verse was a gathering place for other texts, associated in some way in the mind of the writer with the verse in question. While consonance or similarity were often the reasons for texts to be associated in a writer's memory, assonance or dissimilarity were also causes, which is why some of the texts gathered seem unlikely to the modern mind.<sup>27</sup>

The letter of Caesaria to Radegund, described above (p. 34-36), is an excellent example of this associative technique brought about by the memorization of texts. The

letter is full of quotations and paraphrases of individual biblical verses from widely scattered sources. There are sixteen citations from the Psalms, thirteen from the Gospels (mostly from Matthew and Luke), seven citations from seven different Epistles and only four from the Old Testament books of Jeremiah, Ecclesiasticus and Proverbs.<sup>28</sup> Each of the quotations is only one line, no more than about ten to fourteen words, which is a comfortable length easily memorized.<sup>29</sup> In one place, Caesaria says to Radegund, “May you be mild and humble, patient, obedient.”<sup>30</sup> To reinforce this injunction she then adds biblical quotations brought to mind by the word “humble.” “Listen to the Lord as he says: ‘Over whom shall I rest unless over the humble and quiet? He put down the powerful from their seat and he exalted the humble.’” These two lines do not come from the same place. The second line comes from the Magnificat of Mary in Luke 1:52 and is in the third person. The first line represents an approximation of Matthew 11:29 and is in the first person representing Jesus speaking. To the mind which was a storehouse of biblical lines they belong together here because they both speak of humility.

In another place, Caesaria has conflated two slightly different lines from the Psalms because they both contain the phrase “the eyes of the Lord.” Caesaria’s line reads: “the eyes of the Lord over those fearing him and his ears to their prayers.” Psalm 32:18 contains the line “the eyes of the Lord over those fearing him” but nothing about ears. Psalm 33:16 has “the eyes of the Lord over the just, and his ears to their cries.” Because of the similar wording at the beginning of these two lines, Caesaria has combined them and to her recipients, also steeped in biblical verses, it would have sounded about right.



Memorization of texts made sense for practical as well as religious reasons. Not only were books scarce, they were difficult to read. From ancient times, Greek and Roman books were written in *scriptura continua*, a continuous series of letters uninterrupted by spaces or punctuation. The major task in learning to read was learning to decode these streams of letters into discreet words and sentences. Without the aid of visual word recognition which modern readers have, ancient and early medieval readers relied on oral recitation that allowed them to recognize words as they sounded them out.<sup>31</sup> After many repetitions the reader would be able to “read” the text fluently, but the repetitions would also have helped fix it in memory. The Irish and Anglo-Saxons began writing manuscripts with spaces separating words by the late seventh century<sup>32</sup> because for them Latin was a foreign language and reading aloud would not have helped them recognize words they were used to hearing, but this innovation was not adopted by Continental scribes until the mid-tenth century.<sup>33</sup> So the nuns of Gaul would have been reading unseparated texts. Caesaria’s nuns probably also copied the biblical texts by an oral process of dictation. *Scriptura continua* codices are not easy to copy visually, and the errors found in them are caused by aural problems such as errors of pronunciation, decoding and memory. Graphic errors, such as transposed letters or accidentally repeated lines, which appear later in visually copied manuscripts, generally do not appear in *scriptura continua* manuscripts.<sup>34</sup>

In conclusion, it appears that the nuns living under the rules developed for them in the sixth and seventh centuries were part of an essentially oral society in which they took on a specialized role as monastics. They learned to read for the purposes of their role

which were meditation and prayer and for those purposes repetitive reading and memorization were the favored techniques, blending literacy with an essentially oral way of organizing thought. The examples from Caesaria's letter demonstrate a similarity in this regard to the far more numerous writings of men and indicate an actual application of the injunction to read found in the rules for women.

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<sup>1</sup> William V. Harris, *Ancient Literacy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 323-37, estimates only 10-15% were literate in antiquity. With the decline of schools discussed above, this number could only have diminished.

<sup>2</sup> See Michael Richter, *The Formation of the Medieval West: Studies in the Oral Culture of the Barbarian* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), 106-111, for discussion of popular players and poets in the early Middle Ages.

<sup>3</sup> Harry Y. Gamble, *Books and Readers in the Early Church: a History of Early Christian Texts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 8.

<sup>4</sup> Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: the Technologizing of the Word* (London; New York: Methuen, 1982), 7.

<sup>5</sup> Richter, *Formation*, 83.

<sup>6</sup> Itzhak Hen, *Culture and Religion in Merovingian Gaul AD 481-751* (Leiden; New York: E. J. Brill, 1995), 21, summarizes the schools of thought on this issue.

<sup>7</sup> This theory is represented by Roger Wright, *Late Latin and Early Romance in Spain and Carolingian France* (Liverpool: Cairns, 1982) among others.

<sup>8</sup> Hen, *Culture and Religion*, 24.

<sup>9</sup> Peter Brown has characterized Christianity in this period as "an archipelago of little islands of 'centrality' scattered across an 'unsown sea' of almost total indifference" in "The saint as exemplar in late antiquity," *Representations* 1,2 (1983), 9.

<sup>10</sup> The basic texts are: Adam Parry, ed. *The Making of Homeric Verse: the Collected Papers of Milman Parry* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971) and Albert B. Lord, *The Singer of Tales* Harvard Studies in Comparative Literature, 24 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960). There is a good short summary of the development of the theory in the bibliographical essay by John Miles Foley, "Oral literature: premises and problems," *Choice* 18 (1980), 487-96.

<sup>11</sup> Michael Richter makes this point strongly in *Formation*, 100-101.

<sup>12</sup> Franz H. Bäuml "Medieval texts and the two theories of oral-formulaic composition: a proposal for a third theory," *New Literary History* 16 (1984), 43.

<sup>13</sup> D. H. Green, *Medieval Listening and Reading: the Primary Reception of German Literature 800-1300* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 5.

<sup>14</sup> These characteristics of orality (and others) are deduced and elaborated on by Ong in *Orality and Literacy*, 37-49.

<sup>15</sup> Robert C. Culley, *Oral Formulaic Language in the Biblical Psalms* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967).

<sup>16</sup> See for example Matt. 14:34-36. The Latin Vulgate is available in *Biblia Sacra iuxta Vulgatam versionem* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1983).

<sup>17</sup> Matt. 5:3-11.

<sup>18</sup> Concentric symmetry has a pattern of a b c x c b a with x representing the most important section around which parallel ideas are arranged. See Charles H. Lohr, "Oral techniques in the Gospel of Matthew," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 23 (1961), 403-435.

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- <sup>19</sup> Paul J. Griffiths, *Religious Reading* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 46.
- <sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.
- <sup>21</sup> Jerome *Epistola* 108, 20 & 26.
- <sup>22</sup> Palladius, *Historia Lausiaca*, 55.
- <sup>23</sup> Described by Mary Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought: Meditation, Rhetoric and the Making of Images 400-1200* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 7.
- <sup>24</sup> Griffiths, *Religious Reading*, 50.
- <sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.
- <sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 55.
- <sup>27</sup> Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought*, 19.
- <sup>28</sup> The letter is in *MGH Ep. Merov.* 1, 450-53 and the editor, W. Gundlach, provides the biblical citations in the margins.
- <sup>29</sup> Griffiths, *Religious Reading*, 49 says the upper limit of memorizable units in English is twenty words.
- <sup>30</sup> *MGH Ep. Merov.* I, 451, line 5.
- <sup>31</sup> Paul Saenger, *Space Between Words: the Origins of Silent Reading* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 4.
- <sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.
- <sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 100.
- <sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

## CONCLUSION

Examination of the monastic rules written for women in the sixth and seventh centuries by Caesarius of Arles, Aurelian, Donatus of Besançon and the anonymous author of the *Regula cuiusdam Patris* has shown a consistent requirement that nuns spend a significant amount of time reading. Although the number of hours and the time of day for individual reading may have varied, reading was considered as important as praying in the monastic life. In addition to individual reading, listening to one nun read aloud as the others did manual work or ate their meal was also included in all of the rules. This reading requirement was essentially the same in the women's rules as in the rules for men written at the same time by Caesarius and Aurelian and as in the *Rule of St. Benedict* for men.

The conjectured continuity of reading expectations for women from the fourth and fifth century sources to these sixth and seventh century rules is apparent. Although Jerome's more detailed and personal recommendations are not found in the rules, nevertheless the essential importance of reading to the monastic life found in Jerome's letters, Cassian's works on the practices of the desert hermits and Pachomius' rules for the communal life was continued in the rules for nuns of the sixth and seventh centuries. Pachomius' injunction that learning to read and memorizing scriptures should be required of every monk, even if he did not want to, was echoed in Caesarius' requirement for the women that "All shall learn to read" and in Caesaria's exhortation to Radegund not to allow any nuns in her monastery who did not read.<sup>1</sup>

What books the nuns were to read is not explicitly stated in the sixth and seventh century rules, apart from the Psalms which had to be memorized, and unspecified scriptures. Jerome had outlined in his letters a reading program that included all sections of the Bible, as well as works by Ambrose, Cyprian, Athanasius, Hilary and Tertullian. Benedict, in his rule, had mentioned the Old and New Testaments, *Collations*, *Institutes* (presumably of Cassian), *Lives of the Fathers* and the *Rule* of St. Basil. Whether any of these books were available to the nuns is difficult to discover. McKitterick has discovered, in manuscripts she attributes to eighth century nuns' scriptoria, works such as Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History*, Jerome's letters, and works of Augustine, Gregory the Great, Cassiodorus, and Isidore of Seville.<sup>2</sup>

Between Benedict in the early sixth century and the nuns' scriptoria of the eighth century there is no mention of specific books in women's monasteries. Caesaria's letter to Radegund in the mid-sixth century includes quotations almost exclusively from the New Testament, with only three from books of the Old Testament and one quotation from Caesarius' letter to her aunt Caesaria. In the seventh century, abbess Bertila sent books to the monasteries in England, but whether they were only copies of the Scriptures and liturgical works or included other works is not mentioned in her *Vita*. One can only speculate that at least a few of the great sixth and seventh century abbesses would have been able to procure copies of works by the church fathers to inform their meditation and the instruction of their nuns.

In the matter of education for reading, it appears that the number of classical schools and rhetors suffered a general decline by the fourth and fifth centuries. The

disruptions caused by the warring between Germanic tribes for territory in the early sixth century, especially in Gaul, probably eliminated schooling in the struggle to survive. When relative stability returned, bishops were becoming the locus of power in the urban centers, and Christian episcopal and parish schools were developing to train Church personnel, just as classical schools had trained clerics and bureaucrats for the Roman government. Girls were excluded from the new schools on principle because they could not become priests. Their only alternative, outside of the family, remained schooling in the monasteries, which had a tradition of receiving children as young as six or seven and educating them for the monastic life.

Several of the well-known abbesses of the sixth and seventh centuries were sent to monasteries at a very young age and brought up and educated there. Aelflaed, a daughter of King Oswy, was sent to Hild's monastery at Hartlepool (before she moved to Whitby) very early in her life,<sup>3</sup> and the younger Caesaria likely entered the monastery at Arles as a child because the elder Caesaria, who was abbess, was her aunt and it was expected she would succeed her aunt as abbess. Other abbesses participated in founding their monasteries as adults and had already received their basic education within their families; they then continued their self-education through reading and rereading the Scriptures and what works of interpretation they could obtain. Examples of adult founding abbesses include Gertrude, founder of Nivelles, and Bertila, founder, with the help of Queen Balthild, of Chelles, both in the mid-seventh century.

Since the monastic rules written for women include the same provisions as the men's rules regarding hours to be spent reading and memorizing, the necessity of

learning to read for those who were illiterate, and the equal importance of reading with fasting, vigils and prayer, it seems likely that monastic education was basically the same for women and men. Certainly in double monasteries, such as Chelles, where the abbess was instructing both the monks and the nuns in interpretation of the Scriptures for the spiritual life, women's and men's education would have been the same.

Early medieval, as well as late antique, society was a predominately oral culture. The Germanic cultures adopted literacy for the same purposes that late antique culture had used it: in the service of the government, for laws, charters, tax records, etc., and in the service of the Church, for canons promulgated by councils, and for reading the sacred texts of the Christian religion. Women were encouraged to pursue literacy only for the last-named of these purposes, but in monasteries at least, literacy was required.<sup>4</sup> Although women were not allowed to pursue some of the uses of literacy in early medieval culture, nuns were part of a literate minority within their larger culture.

When oral cultures produce epics, historical works and other poetry, these works have characteristics that help the oral poet remember, reconstruct and recite them. Features such as short fixed word formulas, repetition of ideas in different words and parallel structure assist the memory. When oral cultures begin to write down their works, these features continue to appear as aspects of the style. Some biblical books contain these oral elements because they originated orally and only later were written down. When oral cultures adopt literacy, they continue to use the oral techniques they are familiar with when learning a new work. Reading aloud and repetition, while using a written text, encourage memorization, which makes the text available orally in the



absence of the written page. This can be seen in Pachomius' rule which mentions memorizing the New Testament and Psalter.<sup>5</sup> The *Regula Magistri* also directs monks who already knew how to read, to spend the reading period learning the Psalms by heart until they could recite them to the abbot.<sup>6</sup> Jerome praised Eustochium's mother Paula for knowing the Scriptures by heart<sup>7</sup> and Gertrude, abbess of Nivelles, is said in her *Vita* to have "committed a whole library of divine law to memory."<sup>8</sup> Literacy had not yet transformed oral culture in the sixth and seventh centuries; the written text was merely a more efficient way to communicate and distribute the texts more widely and in the process standardize them. But monks and nuns continued the oral practice of storing the texts in memory.

Memorization of texts served the purpose of religious reading well. Unlike reading for new knowledge or entertainment, religious reading is concerned with depth of meaning and providing intellectual food for meditation. When a nun or monk had committed large sections of the Scriptures to memory, that material was available for meditation day or night and while doing manual tasks. The mind filled with biblical texts begins to make connections and associations between texts from different books, as was seen in the letter of Caesaria to Radegund (p.84-85 above), and can draw examples from those texts to illustrate a point being made. The purpose of religious reading is not to contribute to new or original knowledge, but to interpret the sacred texts with ever-increasing understanding and use them to further the spiritual goal of union with God. Memorization of texts served that purpose.

Through examination of monastic rules written specifically for women and letters and *Vitae* reflecting their lives, a fuller understanding of one social group in sixth and seventh century society has been reached. Nuns were a small group in actual numbers and personal details are available only for abbesses, who were mostly from upper class backgrounds. But the life outlined for them in the rules was equivalent to that of their monastic brethren. They were expected to engage in the same intellectual work of reading, memorizing and meditating on the Scriptures. Whether all communities or all nuns lived up to that requirement cannot be known but the fact that the requirement existed is significant. In no other area of early medieval life were women allowed, much less encouraged to meet the same requirements as men.

The continuity of the reading requirement for nuns from the fourth and fifth century rule of Pachomius and letters of Jerome through the sixth and seventh century rules is also significant. In a period of great social change from Roman to Germano-Roman society, the monastic life continued the basic form established in the deserts of Egypt and attracted an increasing number of people, both women and men, to enter or found new monasteries. This monastic movement would become one of the key features of medieval society.

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<sup>1</sup> Pachomius *Praecepta* 139-140; trans. Armand Veilleux, *Pachomian Koinonia* vol. 2, *Pachomian Chronicles and Rules* (Kalamazoo, Mich.: Cistercian Publications, 1981), 166; Caesarius *Regula ad virgines* chap. 18; trans. M. C. McCarthy, *The Rule for Nuns of Saint Caesarius of Arles* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University Press, 1960); Caesaria's letter in *MGH Ep. Merov.* 1.450 line 40.

<sup>2</sup> Rosamond McKitterick, "Nuns' scriptoria in England and Francia in the Eighth Century," *Francia* 19, no. 1 (1992), 3.

<sup>3</sup> Bede *HE* 3.24; trans. Leo Sherley-Price, *A History of the English Church and People* (New York: Penguin Books, 1968), 183.

<sup>4</sup> Although there must have been some charters and administrative documents associated with women's monasteries, it is not clear that women would have been involved in writing them. Outside business was usually conducted by a representative appointed by the bishop. Monastic women also used their literate skills for corresponding with each other and with learned men, as seen in the letter of Caesaria to Radegund and the eighth century correspondence of Aelflaed with Boniface.

<sup>5</sup> Pachomius *Praecepta* 139,140; trans. Veilleux *Pachomian Chronicles and Rules*, 166.

<sup>6</sup> *Regula Magistri* chap. 50; Adalbert de Vogüé, *La règle du Maître*, Sources Chrétiennes, no. 105 (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1964), 225.

<sup>7</sup> Jerome Letter 108.27; trans. W. H. Fremantle *The Principal Works of St. Jerome*, Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, 2d series (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Erdmans, 1996), 209.

<sup>8</sup> *Vita Sanctae Geretrudis* in *MGH SRM* 2:447-74; trans. JoAnn McNamara and John E. Holborg, *Sainted Women of the Dark Ages* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1992), 225.

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