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End of Fellowship report
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DURHAM B.II.20 AND THE *P*-FAMILY OF *LIBER DE ORDINE CREATURARUM*

Durham, Cathedral Library, B.II.20 contains a copy of the *Liber de ordine creaturarum*, a text there ascribed to Augustine of Hippo (354-430) but which, in fact, originates from seventh-century Ireland. The anonymous author of the *Liber de ordine creaturarum* endeavours to describe the universe from its creation by God to its inevitable conclusion, and in so doing discusses both theological issues, such as the super-celestial waters and the purgatorial fires, and quasi-scientific questions, such as whether the Earth is round or flat, the phases of the moon, and the nature of the tides. Considered to be a product of Isidore of Seville (c. 560-636) until 1953, when Manuel Díaz y Díaz demonstrated its Irish provenance in his edition of the text, the *Liber de ordine creaturarum* is closely related to another Irish document, the proto-scientific *De mirabilibus sacrae scripturae* (datable to 654/5 through internal evidence). The popularity and influence of the *Liber de ordine creaturarum* is reflected in the fact that Bede would employ it as a source for his *De rerum natura* (c. 703), avoiding its suspiciously semi-Pelagian (and potentially heretical!) aspects, and that copies survive in over twenty manuscripts from Durham to Prague, transmitted to the Continent by Irish and Anglo-Saxon missionaries. The copy of the *Liber de ordine creaturarum* which now belongs to Durham Cathedral was procured by Robert de Graystanes (d. 1334), an unsuccessful candidate to that bishopric, while he was at Durham's house of studies at Oxford, and is noteworthy for being the only copy of this text which contains illustration.

The Durham *Liber de ordine creaturarum* belongs to a small family of five copies made in England between the end of the twelfth and beginning of the fifteenth centuries, all hypothesised by Díaz y Díaz to derive from a lost eleventh century copy which he entitled *p*. The surviving members of the *p*-family of texts are (in order of production): Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodl. 633 (*saec.* XII); Worcester, Cathedral and Chapter Library, MS F 57 (*saec.* XIII); Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Laud. misc. 345 (*saec.* XIII or *saec.* XIV); Durham, Cathedral Library, MS B.II.20 (*saec.* XIV): and Cambridge, Peterhouse, MS 193 (*saec.* XV). It is worth noting that Worcester, F 57 also contains copies of the seventh-century Irish texts *De duodecim abusivis saeculi* and *De mirabilibus sacrae scripturae*. The later Oxford copy, in agreement with Durham, attributes the text to Augustine, and the Cambridge copy is found amid texts attributed to Augustine, though a later hand has noted Isidorian authorship in the margin; the Worcester copy attributes the text to Isidore.

The IMEMS Library Fellowship afforded me the opportunity to examine most of these texts; it was my hope to discern what, if any, evidence of usage or alteration might be discovered from the various copies. Indeed, while the Durham copy contains little in the way of marginalia, save for a few note-marks to passages which must have been of some

relevance to a past reader, the copyist made some effort to disguise the twelfth chapter of the work as it was often deemed heretical, an obfuscation which also exists in the Worcester copy. The copies now at Oxford do not make any attempt to hide the offending chapter. This is curious as it has been suggested that the later Oxford copy is a product of Durham and it includes chapter headings not found in any of its *p*-family precursors but which do broadly correspond to the earliest copies, suggesting that the copyist at Durham may have had more than one version before him.

One of the more intriguing curiosities found in the Durham and Worcester texts is the existence of a handful of ‘encrypted’ lines. This ‘encryption’ of sections of text was brought to my attention by a paper given by Sarah Gilbert as part of the Hunter 100 Project under the auspices of the Cathedral and the Department of History at Durham. The fact that the Durham and Worcester copies of the *Liber de ordine creaturarum* share the same encoded sections, coupled with the fact that the copyists made some effort to hide the more controversial element of the text, suggests a relationship worth investigating in greater detail. The Worcester copy is also suffused with notes, marginalia, and concordances, a full investigation of which I hope to undertake in due course.

I hope to continue this study by examining Cambridge, Peterhouse, MS 193, which has been hypothesised to be a product of Durham. I aim to produce an article discussing the *p*-family of the *Liber de ordine creaturarum* and its eccentricities once I have examined all its members, wherein I will duly acknowledge the assistance of IMEMS and the libraries at Cambridge, Durham, Oxford, and Worcester.