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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Bede's Medical Books

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Abstract

This paper re-examines the medical texts used by Bede in *De temporum ratione* and *Retractatio in Actus apostolorum.* It has long been accepted that he had access to works by Pseudo-Hippocrates, Vindicianus and Cassius Felix. Yet idiosyncrasies evident from his quotations complicate matters. Each highlights connections with distinctive textual traditions evident in early continental manuscripts and, especially in the case of the alleged influence of Vindicianus, other works. It shows the close affinities that Bede's compendia had with Frankish medical miscellanies. In the process, we can also see something of how Bede dealt with a non-Christian body of knowledge, using it critically within his own intellectual projects.

Keywords: Bede; medicine; computus; biblical exegesis; Hippocrates; Galen; Vindicianus; Cassius Felix; manuscripts; Merovingian Gaul

Among the treasures in Bede's library was at least one medical compendium.[1] The famed teacher did not write much about medicine himself that we know. Instead, he studied the subject as part of a wide-ranging curriculum that embraced a kaleidoscope of knowledge suitable for interrogating scripture, nature and society, much as Isidore of Seville and other near-contemporaries urged.[2] Books for undertaking such intellectual projects took different routes to

[1] R. Love, 'The Library of the Venerable Bede', *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain 1: c. 400–1100*, ed. R. Gameson (Cambridge, 2011), pp. 606–32 at 623–4; M. Cameron, *Anglo-Saxon Medicine* (Cambridge, 1993), p. 28 and his 'The Sources of Medical Knowledge in Anglo-Saxon England', *ASE* 11 (1983), 135–55 at 146; F. Wallis, 'Bede and Science', *The Cambridge Companion to Bede*, ed. S. DeGregorio (Cambridge, 2010), pp. 113–26 at 115.

[2] E. Ahern, *Bede and the Cosmos: Theology and Nature in the Eighth Century* (London, 2020) and F. Wallis, '*Si naturam quæras*: Reframing Bede's Science', *Innovation and Tradition in the Writing of the*

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Wearmouth-Jarrow, with ad hoc networks and exchanges drawing works from Ireland, Spain, Gaul, Italy and North Africa over the years. As most of these manuscripts no longer survive, the question of what they were like and what routes they took is usually moot. With medical compendia, however, a reinvigoration of studies of the earliest manuscript evidence offers a fresh opportunity to reexamine the intellectual resources available to Bede.[3]

Bede's medical texts did not have simple transmission histories. He is usually recognised as having access to Pseudo-Hippocrates' *Epistola ad Antiochum*, Vindicianus's *Epistola ad Pentadium* and Cassius Felix's *De medicina*, which he could supplement with ideas he encountered in Isidore's *Etymologiae*, Pliny's *Historia naturalis*, and other works not directly about medicine such as grammars.[4] In the early continental compendia, the specifically medical texts tend to exist in varied forms. Some Greek texts, and especially the Pseudo-Hippocrates, existed in different translations, adaptations and summaries. Most Latin works were subject to alterations through some level of oral transmission and scribal cut-and-paste as material was reshaped to create new useful assemblages. Authorial authority was unsettled in the process – something painfully apparent to Augustine of Hippo, a friend of Vindicianus's, when he noted that texts proliferated under Hippocrates' name that were not accepted by experts as genuine.[5] With Bede's sources, Charles Jones noted in 1943 that there were potential issues of certainty because of the evident fluidity of their complicated textual histories.[6] The implications of that worry, however, remain unexplored.

The knowledge and use of medical texts by Bede stands at a contested point in the history of early medicine. For modern pioneers of the field such as Charles Singer – and many others after him to be sure – Bede represented one of the last witnesses

Venerable Bede, ed. S. DeGregorio (Morgantown, 2006), pp. 65–99. On Isidore in this context see now F. Wallis, *Isidore of Seville: on the Nature of Things* (Liverpool, 2016) and F. Wallis, 'Isidore of Seville and Science', *A Companion to Isidore of Seville*, ed. A. Fear and J. Wood (Leiden, 2020), pp. 182–221. Valuable wider insights can also be found in A. Dorofeeva, *Reading Nature in the Early Middle Ages* (Amsterdam, 2023).

[3] P. Horden, 'What's Wrong with Early Medieval Medicine?', *Soc. Hist. of Medicine* 24 (2011), 5–25; M. Leja, 'The Sacred Art: Medicine in the Carolingian Renaissance', *Viator* 47 (2016), 1–34 at 3–5 and her *Embodying the Soul: Medicine and Religion in Carolingian Europe* (Philadelphia, 2022). See also C. Pilsworth, *Healthcare in Early Medieval Northern Italy: More to Life than Leeches?*, Stud. in the Early Middle Ages 26 (Turnhout, 2014); N. Everett, 'The Manuscript Evidence for Pharmacy in the Early Middle Ages', *Writing the Early Medieval West*, ed. E. Screen and C. West (Cambridge, 2018), pp. 115–30; C. Burridge, 'Incense in Medicine: an Early Medieval Perspective', *EME* 28 (2020), 219–55 and her *Carolingian Medical Knowledge and Practice c. 775–900: New Approaches to Recipe Literature* (Leiden, 2024); C. van Rhijn, *Leading the Way to Heaven: Pastoral Care and Salvation in the Carolingian Period* (London, 2022), esp. pp. 195–202; J. T. Palmer, 'Merovingian Medicine between Practical Art and Philosophy', *Traditio* 78 (2023), 17–45.

[4] Cameron, *Anglo-Saxon Medicine*, p. 28; Cameron, 'The Sources of Medical Knowledge', p. 146; M. Lapidge, *The Anglo-Saxon Library* (Oxford, 2006), p. 205.

[5] Augustine, *Contra Faustum*, 33. 5, ed. J. Zycha, CSEL 25 (Vienna, 1891), 791. On the problem of authority see F. Wallis, 'The Experience of the Book: Manuscripts, Texts, and the Role of Epistemology in Early Medieval Medicine', *Knowledge and the Scholarly Medical Traditions*, ed. D. Bates (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 101–26 at 102–104.

[6] C. W. Jones, *Bedae opera temporibus* (Cambridge, MA, 1943), pp. 365–6 and p. 370.

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to rapidly failing late antique medical traditions, as theory and professionalism gave way to the imprecision and ambivalence of methodic-dominated 'monkish medicine'.[7] After Bede, so this grand narrative went, there was a dark age that stretched until Constantine Africanus and the Salerno School in the eleventh century. Yet as early as 1937, Loren MacKinney argued to the contrary that the eighth century witnessed something of a revival in medical knowledge, as suggested by the significant increase in manuscript production under the Carolingians.[8] The medicine might not always have been good but, as Peregrine Horden, Meg Leja and others have shown in recent years, it was often creative and valued.[9] A perception of 'monkish medicine' remained to an extent but redefined by more positive assessments about how it fitted within wider intellectual and popular cultures. Here Bede offers crucial evidence for both what was known and what people might do with that knowledge at the dawn of any purported revival. It also offers valuable insight into the intellectual preconditions of the better documented and well-studied corpus of early English medicine.[10]

Assessing Bede's medicine is made more challenging by the profile of the earliest extant manuscript evidence for medicine across Latin Europe.[11] There are no English or Irish medical manuscripts from as early as the eighth century, although the lacuna maybe looks less conclusive when it is noted that there are only four pre-Carolingian medical manuscripts extant from Gaul and one from Spain.[12] Later Insular and continental manuscripts do, however, likely reflect something of the medical knowledge of the earlier period. The problem is that

[7] C. Singer, 'A Review of Medical Literature of the Dark Ages, with a New Text of about 1110', *Jnl of the Royal Soc. of Medicine* 10 (1917), 107–60 at 107–13. General pessimism about medicine in the early Middle Ages is exemplified in G. Baader, 'Early Medieval Adaptations of Byzantine Medicine in Western Europe', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 38 (1984), 251–9 and V. Nutton, 'Early–Medieval Medicine and Natural Science', *The Cambridge History of Science 2: Medieval Science*, ed. D. Lindberg (Cambridge, 2011), pp. 323–40.

[8] L. MacKinney, *Early Medieval Medicine* (Baltimore, 1937), pp. 1–5.

[9] See n. 2.

[10] Among just the more recent studies of the Old English material and its sources see: D. Banham, 'England Joins the Mainstream: New Texts in Eleventh–Century Manuscripts', *Anglo-Saxon England and the Continent*, ed. H. Sauer and G. Waxenberger (Tempe, 2011), pp. 341–52; D. Banham, 'The Earliest English Culinary Recipes: Dietary Advice in Old English Medical Texts', *JMH* 49 (2023), 711–24; D. Banham and C. B. Voth, 'The Diagnosis and Treatment of Wounds in the Old English Medical Collections: Anglo-Saxon Surgery?', *Wounds and Wound Repair in Medieval Culture*, ed. L. Tracy and K. DeVries (Leiden, 2015), pp. 153–74; E. Kesling, *Medical Texts in Anglo-Saxon Literary Culture* (Cambridge, 2020); A. Van Arsdall, *Medieval Herbal Remedies: the Old English Herbarium and Early-Medieval Medicine*, 2nd edn (London, 2023); J. D. Niles and M. D'Aronco (eds.), *Medical Writings from Early Medieval English 1: The Old English Herbal, Lacnunga and Other Texts* (Cambridge, MA, 2023); C. Doyle, *The Reception of Latin Medicine in Early Medieval England: the Evidence from Old English Texts* (Woodbridge, 2025).

[11] For a recent survey see Palmer, 'Merovingian Medicine', pp. 21–30.

[12] The Merovingian-era manuscripts are: Bern, Burgerbibliothek, MS 611 (*CLA* 604b and 604e – Bourges, 720s, Galenic *De febribus* and recipes); London, British Library, Harley MS 5792 (*CLA* 203 – s. viii[1], recipes); Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Baluze 270, f. 95 (*CLA* 519 – c. 700, unidentified text on humours plus recipes); Sélestat, Bibliothèque Humaniste, MS 1B (*CLA* 830 – s. vii[2], capitula for lost medical book). The Spanish manuscript is Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, lat. 10233 + Bern, Burgerbibliothek, F 219. 3 (*CLA* 592 – s. vii[4/4], Oribasian *Synopsis* and Rufus *De podagra*).

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there have been few systematic efforts to ascertain how Carolingian evidence might transmit earlier knowledge, particularly compared with, say, modern study of early computus, which faces similar evidential challenges.[13] Aside from the evidence of Bede, it is apparent that there were a few medical books in Britain. In the mid-eighth-century, Bishop Cyneheard of Winchester told the Mercian Archbishop Lull of Mainz that his community had a few such books, even if they could not source or identify all of the exotic ingredients.[14] Medicine was also at least discussed at the school in Canterbury.[15] Archbishop Theodore, whose medical knowledge was grounded in both Greek and Latin learning, was said to have taught John of Beverley that one should not let blood while the moon is waxing and the flow of the ocean is increasing, i.e. in the first week after a new moon.[16] Aldhelm of Malmesbury, a product of the Canterbury school, once riddled about the use of beaver glands to combat plague (*pestis*) and seemed to have some formal knowledge about the properties of herbs.[17] Of course, medical knowledge in the south may well have been quite different to knowledge in Northumbria given that there was plenty of potential for different routes for transmission, especially with the Roman book acquisitions of the abbots of Wearmouth-Jarrow. A story in the Lindisfarne *Vita Cuthberti*, retold by Bede, might suggest that there was no northern *tabula rasa* before the eighth century, as a young Cuthbert was taught how to make a simple poultice by an 'angel' on horseback so that he could treat a swollen knee.[18] More than that is impossible to say without a closer look at Bede's reading and how it connected to the wider Western circulation of medical books.

Bede's Pseudo-Hippocrates, *Epistola ad Antiochum*

The only medical writing Bede actively cites by name is the *Epistola Hippocratis ad Antiochum* in his *De temporum ratione* (725).[19] The letter was actually a translation

[13] F. Wallis, *Bede: the Reckoning of Time* (Liverpool, 1999), pp. lxxxv–xcvi; I. Warntjes, 'Computus as Scientific Thought', *The Irish in Early Medieval Europe*, ed. R. Flechner and S. Meeder (London, 2016), pp. 158–78 at 178, n. 56; and throughout I. Warntjes, *The Munich Computus: Text and Translation. Irish Computistics between Isidore of Seville and the Venerable Bede and its Reception in Carolingian Times* (Stuttgart, 2010).

[14] *Bonifatius-Briefe*, no. 114, ed. M. Tangl, MGH Epp. Sel. 1 (Berlin, 1916), 247.

[15] M. Lapidge, 'The School of Theodore and Hadrian', *ASE* 15 (1986), 45–72 at 50; Cameron, *Anglo-Saxon Medicine*, pp. 27–8; Cameron, 'The Sources of Medical Knowledge', p. 145.

[16] Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica*, V. 3. 2, ed. M. Lapidge (Rome, 2010), p. 336. Such a view has no clear parallel in the most texts on phlebotomy in circulation. Lapidge, 'The School of Theodore and Hadrian', p. 50, n. 34 notes a text on the timing of bloodletting in St Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek, MS 44, 297–8 attributed to a Theodore, although it mentions nothing of the moon but rather health and time of day.

[17] Aldhelm, *Aenigmata*, ed. F. Glorie, CCSL 133 (Turnhout, 1968), I. 449; Cameron, *Anglo-Saxon Medicine*, pp. 25–6.

[18] Anon., *Vita Cuthberti* 1. 4, ed. and trans. B. Colgrave (Cambridge, 1940), pp. 66–9; Bede, *Vita Cuthberti prosa*, 1. 2 ed. and trans. B. Colgrave (Cambridge, 1940), pp. 168–71. For such poultices see Galen, *Ad Glauconem de medendi methodo*, 2. 9, ed. K. Kühn, *Claudii Galeni opera omnia* 11 (Leipzig, 1826), 118–22; Celsus, *De medicina*, 2. 33. 5, ed. F. Marx (Leipzig, 1915), p. 214; Oxford, St John's College MS 17, 177r.

[19] Bede, *De temporum ratione*, c. 30, ed. Charles W. Jones, CCSL 123B (Turnhout, 1977), 372–4.

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of a short work by Diocles of Carystus (d. *c.* 300 BCE) to King Antigones II, which offered dietary and lifestyle advice in relation to the seasons and humours.[20] Crucially, for Bede's purposes, at the end of his work Diocles divided the year by its solstices and equinoxes, as well as by the rising of Pleiades in the spring and their falling in the winter. This was material he could use to illustrate how ancient authorities recognised the ways in which nature imposed patterns on the calendar. The letter was well-known in Greek medical circles and circulated in Bede's lifetime within Paulus Aeginata's seven-volume epitome of medical knowledge.[21] More than one translation into Latin existed. The most frequently cited in modern scholarship is that added to Marcellus Empiricus's *De medicamentis liber* (*c.* 400) (= *Epistola* versio-α).[22] There are also three other versions that have been printed – descended from at least one but possibly two other translations – as well as further versions that have not received modern editorial attention.[23] The transmission is complicated further because a section on dietary advice for different seasons, the section that interested Bede, also circulated in similar forms elsewhere, including at the end of a Hippocratic *Epistola ad Maecenatem* and as an addition to the fourth-century *Medicina Plinii.*[24] The texts rarely diverged much in terms of substance, instead adding or omitting little points of detail or simply representing different choices of vocabulary and phrasing. None of them render Paulus Aeginata's presentation of Diocles' apparent original without some additions, omissions or other changes.

Charles Jones, when he edited *De temporum ratione*, saw clearly that none of the printed versions of the text matched Bede's quotation well.[25] He suggested that the text in St Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek, MS 751 might offer an alternative source.

[20] Diocles, *Epistola ad Antiochum*, ed. P. van der Eijk, *Diocles of Carystus: a Collection of the Fragments with Translation and Commentary* (Leiden, 2000), pp. 310–21. On the Carolingian reception: Leja, *Embodying the Soul*, pp. 167–70.

[21] Paulus Aeginata, I. 100, ed. J. L. Heiberg, Corpus Medicorum Graecorum 9.1 (Leipzig & Berlin, 1921), 68–72.

[22] Marcellus, *De medicamentis liber*, ed. E. Liechtenhan, Corpus Medicorum Latinorum 5 (Berlin, 1968), 18–25; K.-D. Fischer, 'The "Isagoge" of Pseudo-Soranus: an Analysis of the Contents of a Medieval Introduction to the Art of Medicine', *Medizinhistorisches Jnl* 35 (2000), 3–30 at 10, n. 22.

[23] R. Laux, '*Ars medicinae*: ein frühmittelalterliches Kompendium der Medizin', *Kyklos* 3 (1930), 417–34 at 430–2 (= versio-β); H. Stadler, 'Epistola Pseudohippocratis', *Archiv für lateinische Lexicographie und Grammatik* 12 (1902), 21–5 (= versio-γ); A. Nelson, 'Zur pseudohippokratischen *Epistola ad Antiochum regem*', *Symbolae philologicae O. A. Danielsson octogenario dicatae* (Uppsala, 1932), pp. 203–17 (versio-δ). For an overview of manuscript witnesses, mostly organised by incipit and excipit, see P. Kibre, 'Hippocrates Latinus: Repertorium of Hippocratic Writing in the Latin Middle Ages (V)', *Traditio* 35 (1979), 273–302 at 275–80.

[24] See the dietic calendar from versio-γ ed. Stadler, 'Epistola Pseudohippocratis', p. 25. This is the version found in manuscripts of the *Epistola ad Maecenatem.* (Note that it is missing in the version included in Marcellus, *De medicamentis liber*, ed. Liechtenhan, pp. 26–32, probably because it just repeated Pseudo-Hippocrates). The addition to the *Medicina Plinii* is sui generis. As an addition, it was not included in either of the modern editions, by A. Önnerfors, Corpus Medicorum Latinorum 3 (Berlin, 1964), or by Y. Hunt (London, 2019). It is in Leiden, Universiteitsbibliotheek, VLO 92, 79r–v, St Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek, MS 752, pp. 80–1 (B. Bischoff, *Katalog der festländischen Handschriften des neunten Jahrhunderts*, 4 vols [1998–2014], no. 5845), and St Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek, MS 878, pp. 374–5.

[25] St Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek, MS 751, pp. 163–5 (Bischoff, *Katalog*, no. 5844 and A. Beccaria, *I codici di medicina del period presalernitano (secoli ix, x e xi)* [Rome, 1956], no. 133). Jones, *Bedae opera temporibus*,

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Exactly why he singled out this version is unclear and he did not go into detail. In fact, it is essentially a version of the text printed by Rudolf Laux as the *Dogma Hippocratis* (= *Epistola* versio-β) – indeed consulted by Laux for his edition – with a couple of minor differences and the omission of all details on the calendar from the winter solstice to the rise of Pleiades in the spring. What remains does not track with Bede's version particularly closely in terms of word choice, although we have to tread carefully because Bede was perfectly capable of rephrasing sources as necessary. The most distinctive point of connection is possibly his use of *crassitudo* to describe the thickness of black bile in autumn.[26] In winter, we might see something of Bede's phrase 'it is appropriate to eat very rich foods, and indulge in wine and sex' (*convenit comedere laetissimos cibos et indulgere vino et veneri*) in the *Dogma Hippocratis*'s 'it is appropriate to use very light [food] and sweet wine, and to persist in regular sex' (*convenit... utere levissmis et dulce vino et consueti veneris insistere*).[27] It is not quite enough to prove dependence as the *Dogma Hippocratis* is just one shortened version of a larger textual sub-tradition. There are two much longer relatives that have not been printed which have similar phrasings, including the famous *vade mecum* long but problematically associated with Walahfrid Strabo (d. 849) (otherwise a versio-γ variant but with the ending closer to versio-β).[28] To bridge the gap between these versions, and between these versions and Bede, one would have to postulate further lost versions or some creativity on behalf of our Northumbrian author.

One curious feature of Bede's text might identify an important variation in the textual tradition of versio-β and its relatives. Bede's text, for autumn, ordered the reader to 'use warm food and everything bitter, abstain from sex; and you will wash less' (*utere cibis calidis et acerrimis omnibus et abstine venerem et minus lavabis*). No other version contains the instruction about washing less. Diocles had, however, suggested at the same point in his original that one 'take the most bitter and most acid [substances], purge and labour sparingly, and abstain from sex'.[29] The instruction about work is replicated in the *Dogma Hippocratis* with a betacism (*minime lavorare* [for *laborare*], 'work very little') and a longer partial relative preserved in Mainz without the betacism (*minus laborare*, 'work less').[30] Both, incidentally, shared Bede's substitution of warm food for the acidic. It

pp. 365–6. Cameron, *Anglo-Saxon Medicine*, p. 28 notes only that Bede's version is 'close' to Marcellus's, which it is not.

[26] Compare *vires* in Marcellus's version (*De medicamentis liber*, ed. Liechtenhan, p. 24) and *pinguis* in Stadler's (p. 25).

[27] Bede, *De temporum ratione*, c. 30, ed. Jones, p. 373; Laux, '*Ars medicinae*', p. 432.

[28] St Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek, MS 878, pp. 327–31 (Bischoff, *Katalog*, no. 5862) with problems associating it with Walahfrid laid out in T. Licht, 'Revisiting the Question of Walahfrid Strabo's Autograph: New Evidence and a New Conclusion', *Jnl of Med. Latin* 32 (2022), 65–80. For related variants see Nelson, 'Zur pseudohippokratischen *Epistola ad Antiochum regem*', pp. 210–11. The Mainz manuscript is Vatican, BAV, Reg. lat. 1143, 135v–140r (Bischoff, *Katalog*, no. 6766). It contains yet another version of the text at 89v–92r.

[29] Diocles, *Epistola ad Antiochum*, ed. van der Eijk, pp. 320–1: 'καὶ προσφέρεσθαι δριμύτατα καὶ ὀπωδέστατα καὶ ἐμετοποιεῖσθαι ὡς ἐλάχιστα φιλοπονεῖν τε καὶ τοῦ συνουσιάζειν ἀπέχεσθαι'.

[30] Vatican, BAV, Reg. lat. 1143, 139v. See also the addition to the *Medicina Plinii* (as n. 22 above) which instructs 'minime laborandum'. A similar reading, 'parcius laboramus', is also found in *Epistola* versio-γ, ed. Stadler, p. 25.

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seems that Bede's text should have read *minus laborabis* (or, better, *laborare*) but for a basic copying error – perhaps reinforced by an earlier suggestion for spring to 'wash rarely' (*raro lavare*) which we will return to shortly.[31] Not all versions of *Epistola* versio-β's textual family included the imperative to relax. Jones's St Gallen manuscript and the *vade mecum* copy both suggested the reader fast less instead, perhaps through a shared contamination.[32] A short fragment of the text in the Italian Codex Salmasianus of *c.* 800, meanwhile, insisted at the same point 'you will strengthen less' (*minime robora*), having suffered a different textual corruption.[33] Overall Bede's text seems to have descended in part from a relative of the corruption-prone *Epistola* versio-β, perhaps closer to the Greek than some other versions in circulation.

Any association with *Dogma Hippocratis*/versio-β still fails to position Bede's text as a whole because of other significant interpolations and variations, especially in the first half of his quotation. At the very beginning, for example, there is better overlap with the *Epistola* versio-δ, edited by Axel Nelson on the basis of two ninth-century manuscripts – although, for Bede's last clause, we have to fill a lacuna in versio-δ using the otherwise identical text printed as part of Pseudo-Soranus's *Isagoge*.[34] Bede, the *Dogma Hippocratis*, and *Epistola* versio-δ read together as follows:

Bede, *De temporum ratione*, c. 30, ed. Jones, pp. 372–3.	*Dogma Hippocratis*, ed. Laux, p. 431.	*Hippocratis ad Antiochum epist.*, ed. Nelson, p. 215.
Itaque exordium incipiamus a solstitio, id est, VIII Kalendas Januarias, ex qua die humor corporibus crescit usque ad aequinoctium vernum, qui sunt dies XC. Hoc tempus agit hominis fleuma, ex quo frequenter nascitur hominibus catarrum, et distillatio uvae, et punctio laterum, caligo et tinnitus aurium, et odorare nihil possunt. Tali igitur tempore utere calidis et laseratis, et	*Annus igitur exordium habet a verno tempore. Solstitium est VIII Kal. Ianuarii. Ex qua die corporis humor increscit quae causa hivernum aequinoctium praestat. Utere igitur calidissimis et optimis cibis, indulge vino, nec peperceris veneri.*	*Scimus autem et iam diximus, quia hiem tempus incipit a die VIII Idus Novemberis, usque in VIII Idus Februarias. Fleuma crescit ex qua nascitur cataro, distillatio uue, tussis plurima, punctio laterum. Oportet uti calidis et lasceraticis cibis, sinapem, apium, erugam, piper, agrimonia plurima; exercitatio corporis, meratum bibere; raro lavare, caput sine intermissionem*

(*Continued*)

[31] The use of future 'lavabis' instead of the imperative 'lavare' is curious but it is the most typical reading in early medieval manuscripts. Three of the earliest have it, all from Germany: Cologne, Dombibliothek, MS 103, 98r (Bischoff, *Katalog*, no. 1916); Vatican, BAV, Pal. lat. 1448, 55v (Bischoff, *Katalog*, no. 6578); and Vatican, BAV, Pal. lat. 1449, 70v (Bischoff, *Katalog*, no. 6580). Jones rendered the earlier sentence 'rare lavare caput, vero sine intermissione purgare' and it was translated accordingly in Wallis, *Bede: the Reckoning of Time*, p. 86. A spot-check of twenty of the earliest manuscripts suggests that early medieval scribes considered 'caput' to begin a new clause.

[32] St Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek, MS 751, p. 165; St Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek, MS 878, p. 331.

[33] Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, lat. 10318, p. 273 (Bischoff, *Katalog*, no. 4630).

[34] Pseudo-Soranus, *Isagoge*, c. 5, printed in *Medici antiqui omnes* (Vienna, 1547), 159v. The connection between these versions is noted in Fischer, 'The "Isagoge"', pp. 21–2, n. 51.

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(*Continued*)

Bede, *De temporum ratione*, c. 30, ed. Jones, pp. 372–3.	*Dogma Hippocratis*, ed. Laux, p. 431.	*Hippocratis ad Antiochum epist.*, ed. Nelson, p. 215.
optimis cibis piper habentibus et sinape; raro lavare; caput vero sine intermissione purgare; vino indulge; veneri non parcas dies XLV proxime.		*purgare, [veneri denique non parces].*
Let us begin therefore with the solstice, that is, with 25 December. From this day forward up until the equinox, a period of 90 days, moisture [humour] increases in bodies. This season activates a person's phlegm, so that people frequently catch catarrh, [suffer from] dripping of the uvula, pain in the side, weakness of vision, and ringing in the ears, and cannot smell anything. At such a season, take high-quality food, hot and seasoned with asafoetida, with pepper and mustard. Wash your head rarely. Purge without ceasing. Indulge in wine and do not refrain from sex for the first forty days.	The year has spring at the beginning. The solstice is 25 December. From this day, the moisture [humour] of the body increases, which prevails in the case of the wintery equinox. Therefore use the most warm and best food, indulge in wine, and do not refrain from sex.	We know, as we said, winter time begins on 6 November up to 6 February. Phlegm increases, from which catarrh is caught, dripping of the uvula, lots of coughing, and pain in the side. It is appropriate to use food that is hot and seasoned, [using] mustard, celery, rocket, pepper, lots of agrimonia. Exercise the body, drink unmixed wine, wash your head rarely, purge without ceasing, [and, finally, do not refrain from sex].

Bede's text and Nelson's are clearly connected by their list of seasonal ailments, the extended list of what makes food suitably warm, the instruction to wash rarely, and the encouragement to induce vomiting. No other versions of the text contain these, including Diocles' original. Despite their closeness, however, the texts quickly diverge. *Epistola* versio-δ is one of the more adapted versions of the *Epistola* tradition. The author-editor stripped out Diocles' framing of the year by solstices, equinoxes and observations of the position of Pleiades, and redefined the text by seasons, with consolidated dietary and lifestyle advice.[35] It would not have illustrated the particular point Bede wanted to make about the calendar in this form. But, it seems, that was not the form in which Bede encountered the text anyway, or at least not the only one. The more important point is that the text Bede had before him shows clear signs that at least two identifiable versions of the *Epistola* had been combined before the early eighth century. This was something he could have done himself, given that no other extant witness combines the variants in this way, but the textual tradition

[35] See Bede, *De temporum ratione*, c. 35, ed. Jones, p. 393 for his views on dating the seasons – also discussed below.

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is too chaotic to be sure. Either way, by deploying the text to his own calendrical ends, he was participating in a creative intellectual culture that was far from static.

The wider transmission history of the *Epistola ad Antiochum* revolves around different kinds of medical miscellanies. The earliest manuscripts of *Epistola* versio-β closest to Laux's text are all associated with copies of Pseudo-Apuleius's *Herbarius.*[36] There is no evidence Bede knew that work, however, so we may want to consider other contexts of transmission. The previously-mentioned Mainz manuscript BAV Pal. lat. 1143, for one, contained its relative of *Epistola* versio-β alongside Vindicianus's *Ad Pentadium* and a popular *Epistola de phlebotomia* which might point towards more of an epistolary miscellany.[37] A partial copy of that same version of the *Epistola* was added to a copy of a more substantial *Liber epistolarum* in a ninth-century Saint-Denis manuscript which already contained both *Ad Pentadium* and the *Epistola de phlebotomia.*[38] The two best *Epistola* versio-δ manuscripts contain the letter as part of a near-identical sequence that includes the *Sapientia artis medicinae*, the *Epistola de phlebotomia*, Vindicianus's *Ad Pentadium*, then the *Epistola ad Antiochum*, and finally Vindicianus's *Epitome altera.*[39] While none of these contain Bede's version of the text, they at least testify to a general tendency for the closest relatives of *Epistola ad Antiochum* to circulate in substantial epistolary collections. For a hybrid to have emerged, we would also need to assume some centres had more than one such collection. This is crucial as we turn to Bede's next source.

Vindicianus's *Ad Pentadium* (or not)

The second medical text that has been identified in *De temporum ratione* – although this time Bede did not explicitly identify it – is Vindicianus's *Ad Pentadium.*[40] Vindicianus was a famed physician in late antique North Africia whom Augustine considered one of the crucial personal influences in his turn away from Manicheism.[41] *Ad Pentadium* was not an original or major work, but a

[36] Pseudo-Apuleius, *Herbarius*, eds. E. Howald and H. Sigerist, Corpus Medicorum Latinorum 4 (Leipzig, 1927). The related fragments Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 15028 + Clm 29688 (*CLA* 1312 – s. vii$^{1/4}$) contain part of each text. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, lat. 10318, p. 273 is followed by APULEI PLATONICE EXPLICIT. St Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek, MS 751, included extracts from the *Herbarius* at pp. 176–82.

[37] W. Wiedemann, *Untersuchungen zu dem frühmittelalterlichen medizinischen Briefbuch des Codex Bruxellensis 3701–15* (Berlin, 1976); Leja, *Embodying the Soul*, *passim.*

[38] Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, lat. 11219, 41r–v (Bischoff, *Katalog*, no. 4670; Beccaria, *I codici*, no. 35). It is included in Kibre, 'Hippocratus Latinus V', p. 279 in the same family as that in the *vade mecum* St Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek, MS 878 but there are significant differences.

[39] St Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek, MS 44, pp. 187–217 (Bischoff, *Katalog*, no. 5530; Beccaria, 129); Uppsala, Universitetsbiblioteket, MS C 664, pp. 1–22 (Bischoff, *Katalog*, no. 6318; Beccaria, *I codici*, no. 117).

[40] Vindicianus, *Ad Pentadium*, ed. V. Rose, *Theodori Prisciani Euporiston Libri III* (Leipzig, 1894), 485–92. For an overview see L. Cilliers, *Roman North Africa: Environment, Society and Medical Contribution* (Amsterdam, 2019), pp. 133–5. In a Carolingian context: Leja, *Embodying the Soul*, pp. 171–3.

[41] Augustine, *Confessiones*, IV. 3. 5 and VII. 6. 8, ed. M. Scutella (Berlin, 1969), pp. 56–7 and p. 132.

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brief summary of Greek Hippocratic medical theory, translated into Latin to help Vindicianus's nephew grasp the basics of the subject. Like the *Epistola ad Antiochum*, it was popular in early Latin medical primers.[42] Close examination of the supposed influence of Vindicianus, however, may raise some doubts over the certainty of the identification.[43] Bede's text, like Vindicianus's, concerned the relationship between the seasons, the humours, and changes in personal character.[44] The intersections of these in the context of *De temporum ratione* reinforced the sense that there was an immutable natural structure to the calendar, helping in this case to counter Isidore's alternative dates for the seasons.[45] This was a live issue, evident in Gaul too in Bede's lifetime, and there were many ways to explore it.[46]

Charles Jones was actually hesitant in the notes to his critical edition of *De temporum ratione* to be dogmatic that Vindicianus was Bede's source for his reflections.[47] While the substance was more-or-less the same, it was clear that the wording was not, and there were some non-trivial differences in content. The text of Vindicianus could vary, as indicated by Valentin Rose's voluminous critical apparatus in the *editio princeps*; but never enough to explain Bede's text.[48] Jones noted a possible parallel with the *Disputatio Platonis et Aristolelis* first raised by that text's editor Herbert Normann.[49] Normann's suggestion, however, only covered the dominance of particular humours by season, which is too generic to be telling. Jones also suggested the possibility of influence from Pseudo-Soranus's *Isagoge* or the *Medicina Plinii*, but neither parallel is sufficiently strong to settle the matter.[50] Malcolm Cameron and Faith Wallis repeated only that Bede cited Vindicianus.[51] Closer inspection of the text, however, might suggest an alternative source.

[42] Beccaria, *I codici*, p. 490 notes at least twenty pre-Salernitan copies.

[43] Some key differences are outlined in R. Klibansky, E. Panofsky and F. Saxl, *Saturn and Melancholy: Studies in the History of Natural Philosophy, Religion, and Art* (London, 1964), pp. 62–4, but with focus on humoral tradition rather than on Bede's text.

[44] Bede, *De temporum ratione*, c. 35, ed. Jones, pp. 392–3.

[45] Isidore, *De natura rerum*, 7. 5, ed. J. Fontaine (Bordeaux, 1960), p. 203.

[46] For a different approach also from the 720s, juxtaposing calendric material, prognostics and Galenic theory, see Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, lat. 10756, 64v–68r and Bern, Burgerbibliothek, MS 611, 82v–85v, originally part of the same volume. See Palmer, 'Merovingian Medicine', pp. 42–3.

[47] Jones, *Bedae opera temporibus*, p. 370.

[48] Vindicianus, *Ad Pentadium*, ed. Rose, pp. 486–8. The only Carolingian copy omitted by Rose for his addition is St Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek, MS 751, pp. 340–1, which adds more variant readings. On a second recension witnessed by a now-lost Dresden manuscript see R. Fuchs, 'Anecdota Hippocratea. Die Epistula Vindiciani ad Gaium (oder Pentadium) nepotem suum und der codex Dresdensis Dc 185', *Philologus* 58 (N. F. 12) (1899), 407–21. On Bede in this context see J. Jouanna, 'La théorie des quatre humeurs et des quatre temperaments dans la tradition latine (Vindicien, Pseudo-Soranos) et une source grecque retrouvée', *Revue des Etudes Grecques* 118 (2005), 138–67 at 149–50.

[49] H. Normann, 'Disputatio et Aristotelis: Ein apokrypher Dialog aus dem früher Mittelalter', *Sudhoffs Archiv für Geschichte der Medizin* 23 (1930), 68–86, at 70–1 and 72–3 for the texts, and 83–4 for the comparison to Bede. Leja, *Embodying the Soul*, pp. 24–30.

[50] Pseudo-Soranus, *Isagoge*, c. 5, in *Medici antiqui omnes*, 159v. For the *Medicina Plinii* see n. 22 above.

[51] Cameron, *Anglo-Saxon Medicine*, p. 28; Wallis, *Bede: the Reckoning of Time*, lxxxiii (although with some hesitancy indicated with the use of a cf on p. 101, n. 319).

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The relevant passage of Bede comes in the first part of a chapter on the nature of the four seasons. The section Jones identified as a parallel with Vindicianus reads as follows (with Vindicianus for comparison):

Bede, *De temporum ratione*, c. 35, ed. Jones, p. 392.	Vindicianus, *Ad Pentadium*, ed. Rose, pp. 486-7.
Sanguis siquidem qui vere crescit, humidus et calidus; colera rubea, quae aestate, calida et sicca; cholera nigra, quae autumno, sicca et frigida; flegmata, quae hieme, frigida sunt et humida.	*Sanguis est fervens umidus et dulcis; cholera xanthe id est rubea amara viridis ignea et sicca, melena cholera id est nigra acida frigida et sicca, flegma frigidum salsum et umidum. Haec omnia crescunt suis temporibus. Sanguis crescit verno tempore… cholera rubea aestate… cholera nigra autumn… flegma vero hieme.*
Accordingly blood, which increases in spring, is moist and warm; red bile, which increases in summer, is warm and dry; black bile, which increases in autumn, is dry and cool; phlegm, which increases in winter, is cold and moist.	Blood is burning, moist and sweet; yellow bile – that is, red bile – is bitter, fresh, fiery and dry; melancholic – that is, black bile – is cool and dry; phlegm is cool, salty and moist. All increase in their own time: blood grows in spring time… red bile in summer… black bile in autumn… and phlegm in winter.

Bede's passage loosely tracks Vindicianus's but omits the tastes of the humours and offers a slightly different choice of adjectives for red bile. Such minor differences could simply be Bede adapting his source material as he wrote, especially as he does not indicate that he is drawing on a particular authority at this point. There are, however, other texts that fit Bede's wording better. One would be Galen's *Ad Glauconem*, which is intriguing as it is one potential source for Cuthbert's poultice.[52] Perhaps the most satisfying parallel, however, is the composite *Epistola Hippocratis et Galieni* found in the same Saint-Denis *Liber epistolarum* mentioned above as well as in a related copy from Western Francia.[53] This little-known text, as its label suggests, is another digest of basic ideas from Hippocratic and Galenic medicine. Crucially here, it not only describes the nature of the humours and their relationship to the seasons in the same terms as Bede, but it also describes the nature of the seasons themselves in a manner identical to another passage in the same chapter of *De temporum ratione* (where P = the Saint-Denis text and B = the West Frankish text):

[52] See n. 16. An excerpted version can be found in an early-ninth-century manuscript directly after a partial copy of Hippocratic *Epistola* versio-δ in Karlsruhe, Badische Landesbibliothek, Aug. perg. 172, 74v–75r (Bischoff, *Katalog*, no. 1678, 'Südwestdeutschland', s. ix[1]).

[53] Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, lat. 11219, 18v–20r and Brussels, KBR, 3701–15, 9r–10r (Bischoff, *Katalog*, no. 708; Beccaria, *I codici*, no. 6). There is a corrupt second version in Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, lat. 11219, 103r–v. The text is slightly different again in the twelfth-century Anglo-Norman manuscript London, British Library, Sloane MS 2839, 70r–71r (Beccaria, *I codici*, no. 81).

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Frigida et humida flegma [est B]. Humidius vero et calidus sanguis [est B]. Calidum et siccum fel rufum. Siccum et frigidum fel nigrum ... In quattuor partibus cognovimus [cognoscis B] esse [aetates P, divisum B]: vernum et aestatem, autumnum et hiemem [hiems B]. Istorum temporationes sunt: in aetate vernum tempus calidum et humidum; aestiuum calidum et siccum; autumnum siccum et frigidum; hiems frigidum [et humidum P]. Primum ver, sanguinem abundare scito; aestate fel rufum; autumn fel nigrum; in hiemi flegma.

Phlegm is cold and moist. Blood is humid and warm. Red bile is warm and dry. Black bile is dry and cold ... We know the ages to be divided into four parts: spring and summer, autumn and winter. The weathers of them are: in spring time it is warm and moist; in summer it is warm and dry; in autumn it is dry and cold; in winter it is cold and moist. First, in spring, you will know blood to abound; in summer red bile; in autumn black bile; in winter, phlegm.

The imperfect yet close relationship between the three texts continues:

Bede, *De temporum ratione*, c. 35, ed. Jones, p. 392.	Vindicianus, *Ad Pentadium*, ed. Rose, pp. 487–8.	*Epistola Hippocratis et Galieni*
Et quidem sanguis in infantibus maxime viget, in adolescentibus cholera rubea, melancholia in transgessoribus id est, fel cum faece nigri sanguinis admixtum, phlegmata dominantur in senibus.	*Dividuntur etiam hi umores quattuor per quattuor aetates, id est flegma in pueris cum sanguine ab ineunte usque in annos XIIII, exinde cholera reubea dominatur cum parte sanguinis in iuvenibus usque ad annos XXV, exinde usque in annos XLII maxima pars sanguinis dominatur cum cholera nigra, exinde usque ad summam aetatem sicut in pueris flegma dominatur.*	*Singulos istos scito per diversas aetates regnare: maxime infantibus sanguinem, iuvenibus fel rufum, maturis fel nigrum, flegma in senibus.*
Indeed, blood thrives greatly in infants, red bile in adolescents, melancholy in transgressors – that is, when black bile is mixed with bits of blood – and phlegm dominates in the old.	These humours are divided into four by the four ages, that is phlegm in childhood with blood from birth until the fourteenth year, then red bile dominates with part of blood in youth up to the twenty-fifth year, then up to the forty-second year the greater part of blood dominates with black bile, then up to the greatest age phlegm dominates just as it does in childhood.	You will know each of these dominates in different ages: blood greatly in infants, red bile in the young, black bile in the mature, and phlegm in the old.

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Again, Bede could be simplifying and adapting Vindiciamus as he went along, but if so, he had introduced some substantive changes, particularly here with the omission of phlegm from childhood and blood from adolescence. His words are generally closer to the *Epistola Hippocratis et Galieni* but for the small departure in the introduction of the common synonym melancholy for black bile. The final part of the discussion includes more differences:

Bede, *De temporum ratione*, c. 35, ed. Jones, pp. 392–3.	Vindicianus, *Ad Pentadium*, ed. Rose, pp. 488–9.	*Epistola Hippocratis et Galieni*
Item sanguis eos in quibus maxime pollet facit hilares, laetos, misericordes, multum ridentes et loquentes. Colera vero rubea facit macilentos, multum tamen comedentes, veloces, audaces, iracundos, agiles. Nigra bilis, stabiles, graves, compositos moribus dolososque facit. Flegmata, tardos, somnolentos, obliviosos generant.	*Sanguis facit homines boni voti simplices moderatos blandos euchymos seu <suci> plenos. Cholera rubea facit homines iracundos ingeniosos acutos leves macilentos, plurimum comedentes et cito digerentes. Cholera nigra facit homines subdolos cum iracundia, avaros timidos tristes somniculosos invidiosos, frequenter habentes cicatrices nigras in pedibus. Flegma facit homines corpore compositos, vigilantes, intra se cogitantes, cito adferentes canos in capite, minus audaces.*	*Ergo singulis hominibus singuli humores regnantur. Sanguis facit animam laetiorem, fel vero rufum velocem atque audacem, nigrum fel firmiorem atque graviorem, flegma pigrum atque inmobilem. Sic ergo infantes rubicundi et laeti sunt, iuvenes natura veloces atque audaces, maturiores aetate graviores, senex vero propter flegma est piger et inmobilis.*
Likewise, in those whom blood dominates the most, it makes people cheerful, happy, merciful, smiley and talkative people. Red bile makes people thin (although they eat much), swift, bold, hot-tempered, and agile. Black bile makes people solid, serious, composed of habit, and crafty. Phlegm generates [people who are] tardy, sleepy and forgetful.	Blood makes men who are well-intentioned, straightforward, moderate, charming, of good humour or full [of moisture]. Yellow bile makes men who are hot-tempered, intelligent, sharp, light-spirited, thin, and eat a lot and digest quickly. Black bile makes men who are deceitful with a hot-temper, avaricious, timid, sad, sleepy, invidious, and frequently having black scars on their feet. Phlegm makes men who are composed of body, vigilant, reflective, have quick-growing white hairs on their head, and are less bold.	And so each of the humours dominates in each person. Blood makes the soul happier, red bile swift and bold, black bile firmer and more serious, phlegm lazy and immobile. And so infants are ruddy and cheerful, young people are swift and bold in nature, the more mature of age are more serious, and the old are lazy and immobile.

Bede's version seems to associate blood with greater levity than Vindicianus had, black bile with more solid personal characteristics, and phlegm with less mental sharpness. The *Epistola Hippocratis et Galieni* agrees better with Bede on these matters. The one point that counts for Bede having a copy of a text closer to

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Vindicianus is in the assertion that a predominance of red or yellow bile forms people who eat a lot. There is no reason to suppose that Bede did not have both texts, especially given their appearance together in the West Frankish version of the *Liber epistolarum.*[54] On the whole, at least, it does not seem that Vindicianus was Bede's principal source.

The nature of Vindicianus's letter makes the importance of a source such as the *Epistola Hippocratis et Galieni* less surprising. Vindicianus was himself clear to his dedicatee Pentadius that what he was doing was translating 'from medical books of Hippocrates' (*ex libris medicinalis Hippocratis*).[55] Hippocrates' theories of the four humours had, however, never extended into outlining their associations with the seasons or characteristics.[56] As Jacques Jouanna has shown, interest in taste, characteristics and the seasons only began with Galen's commentaries on Hippocrates' works.[57] Further Greek writers had developed their own versions, often contributing to a proliferation in pseudonymous medical productions.[58] Vindicianus's translation represented only one possible version transmitted through one possible conduit. In that context, it is notable that in Greek there is a pseudo-Galenic *De humoribus* that would stand as a better source for Bede's comments on characteristics, with blood associated with joyousness and phlegm with laziness.[59] There is no known Latin translation of *De humoribus*, but the *Epistola Hippocratis et Galieni* might now at least indicate one route of transmission for the underlying ideas in Latin.

The circulation of the *Epistola Hippocratis et Galieni* was sufficiently small that it is known only – to my knowledge – from versions of the *Liber epistolarum.*[60] There is good reason to suggest the archetypes of these books stretch back before the Carolingian period. The Latin of the texts is more in keeping with the increasingly vernacularised prose that dominated in Gaul before Charlemagne's reforms.[61] That a version of the *Liber epistolarum* was known earlier in Gaul is

[54] Brussels, KBR, MS 3701–15, 1r–2r.

[55] Vindicianus, *Ad Pentadium*, ed. Rose, p. 485.

[56] The best point of reference here is Hippocrates, *De natura hominis*, 7, ed. J. Jouanna, Corpus Medicorum Graecorum 1. 1. 3 (Berlin, 2002), 182–6. On the late-antique Latin version see M. Vázquez Buján, 'La antigua traducción Latina del tratado *De natura humana* del *Corpus hippocraticum*', *Revue d'histoire des textes* 12–13 (1982–3), 387–96.

[57] J. Jouanna, 'The Legacy of the Hippocratic Treatise *The Nature of Man*: the Theory of the Four Humours', in his *Greek Medicine from Hippocrates to Galen* (Leiden, 2012), pp. 335–59 esp. pp. 339–40. Galen, *In Hippocratis de natura hominis commentarii*, 1.32 and 1.40, ed. I. Mewaldt (Leipzig, 1914), pp. 42 and 51; Galen, *De placitis Hippocratis et Platonis*, VIII. 6. 17, ed. P. De Lacy. Corpus Medicorum Graecorum V. 4. 1.2 (Berlin, 1878), 517.

[58] See n. 3.

[59] Pseudo-Galen, *De humoribus*, 9, ed. A. Schmidt, 'Ps.-Galeni liber de humoribus critice editus' (unpubl. PhD diss., Univ. of Göttingen, 1964), pp. 11–12; Jouanna, 'The Four Humours', p. 347.

[60] Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, lat. 11219 and Brussels, KBR, MS 3701–15. The differences between the two manuscript witnesses can make hypothesising potential ancestors difficult. The 'West Frankish version' contained Vindicianus's *Ad Pentadium* and two versions of the *Disputatio Platonis et Aristolelis*, for instance, while the Saint-Denis version contained none of those works. Neither originally contained any version of the *Epistola ad Antiochum*, although we have already seen that a relative of versio-β was added to the Saint-Denis copy.

[61] Wiedemann, *Untersuchungen*, pp. 57–67; K.-D. Fischer and H. von Staden, 'Ein angeblicher Brief des Herophilos an König Antiochos, aus einer Brüsseler Handschrift erstmals herausgegeben',

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also suggested given that a Merovingian compilation, the *Teraupetica*, quoted from one of the letters to defend medicine in a Christian worldview in its preface.[62] A similar move is made in the preface to the earlier *Tereoperica* or *Practica Petrocelli*, which might also have Merovingian roots.[63] Both of those texts were copied in Saint-Denis alongside the *Liber epistolarum*, underlining their close connection. Further interconnection can be seen in an Anglo-Norman manuscript that brings together elements from the two Carolingian witnesses, with the same version of the *Epistola ad Antiochum* added to Saint-Denis collection, the *Epistola Hippocratis et Galieni* in a different form, and the *Disputatio Platonis et Aristolelis*, all as appendices to the *Tereoperica.*[64] From this later evidence, we might suspect that there was a more unified Gallic family of texts than the ninth-century manuscripts directly admit. If Bede did know the *Epistola Hippocratis et Galieni*, then it is highly likely one of his compendia belonged to this tradition.

Cassius Felix's *De medicina*

The third major medical text identified in the Bedan corpus was Cassius Felix's *De medicina.*[65] According to an annotation in a thirteenth-century manuscript, Cassius produced his work in 447, although it is not at all clear what weight can be given to that suggestion.[66] He is assumed to be a North African medic who was able to access and translate Greek sources, and who was steeped in both logical and methodic traditions.[67] The text's presence in Britain could be through the North African scholar Hadrian at the Canterbury school. That might, however, be an overly reductive suggestion, given that the work was used widely across early medieval Latin Christendom, notably in the *Tereoperica* we have just encountered from Merovingian Gaul.[68] Despite this popularity, the early

Sudhoffs Archiv 80 (1996), 86–98 at 86 and 89, n. 18. On linguistic developments in the period, often drawing on medical sources, see J. N. Adams, *The Regional Diversification of Latin 200 BC–AD 600* (Cambridge, 2007).

[62] See A. Ferraces Rodríguez, 'Un recetario medico inexplorado: los *Teraupetica* (con una tentative de restitución y traducción des prefacio)', *Revue des études tardo-antiques* 8 (2018–19), 25–65, at 27–8 with transcriptions at 55–7. No connection is made, however, between the reconstructed preface and the letter preserved in Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, lat. 11219, 12r and Brussels, KBR, MS 3701–15, 7r. See Palmer, 'Merovingian Medicine', pp. 25–6 and nn. 38–9.

[63] L. López Figueroa, 'Estudio y edición crítica de la compilación médica Latina denominada *Tereoperica*' (unpubl. PhD diss., University of Santiago de Compostela, 2011), esp. pp. 88–9. On its early English history see D. Maion, 'The Fortune of the So-Called *Practica Petrocelli Salernitani* in England: New Evidence and some Consideration', *Form and Content of Instruction in Anglo-Saxon England in the Light of Contemporary Manuscript Evidence*, ed. P. Lendinara, L. Lazzari and M. D'Aronco, Textes et Etudes du Moyen Âge 39 (Turnhout, 2007), 495–512.

[64] London, British Library, Sloane 2839, with the *Epistola Hippocratis et Galieni* at 70r–v.

[65] Cassius Felix, *De medicina*, ed. A. Fraise (Paris, 2002).

[66] Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, lat. 6114, 1r.

[67] Cilliers, *Roman North Africa*, pp. 160–7.

[68] G. Sabbah, 'Le *De Medicina* de Cassius Felix à la charnière de l'Antiquité et du Haut Moyen Age', *Tradición e Innovación de la Medicina Latina de la Antigüedad y de la Alta Edad Media*, ed. M. Vázquiz Buján (Santiago de Compostela, 1994), pp. 11–28. For Cassius's borrowings see López Figueroa, '*Tereoperica*', pp. 35–42.

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manuscript history is literally fragmentary, with the five fuller pre-1000 witnesses all comprising only incomplete witnesses to the work. None of these, in fact, contain the single chapter that Bede used, although, as we shall see, it is known excerpted elsewhere.

Bede's use of Cassius came in his *Retractatio in Actus Apostolorum* as he discussed the story of Paul healing Publius's father of dysentery (Acts 28. 8). In his original commentary on *Acts of the Apostles* he had only addressed the spiritual value of Paul healing a non-believer.[69] It seems that, as he had read more and accumulated new books, such a reading was no longer completely satisfactory. Disease was something that had physical causes and its own logic, all of which demanded explanation to illuminate scripture. Without reference to Paul this time, Bede copied out Cassius's Hippocratic explanation of dysentery (here with the standard modern text of Cassius with differences underlined):

Bede, *Retractatio in Actus apostolorum*, 28, ed. Laistner, p. 162.	Cassius, *De medicina*, 48. 1, ed. A. Fraisse, p. 136.
Dysenteria est passio intestinorum, causatio cum ulceratione, qua excluditur egestio sanguinolenta, aut fellita, aut alia immutatio humoris, sed noxia a veteribus iudicatur quae nigram egestionem ab initio ostenderit. Nam Ippocrates in Aphorismis sic ait: "Dysenteria a felle nigra incipiens, mortifera." Sequitur autem patientes iugis adsellatio inferioris ventris, aliquando viridis, aliquando mucilaginosa, etiam et rasuras cum guttis sanguinis emittunt, cum morsu intestini et umbilici. Insomnietatem patiuntur et fastidium, frequenter et febriculam.	*Est autem dysenterica passio intestinorum causatio cum ulceratione ex qua excluditur egestio sanguinolenta aut fellita et alia immutatio humoris. Et illa noxia a veteribus nuncupatur quae nigram egestionem ab initio ostenderit. Nam Hippocrates in aforismis sic ait "Dysenteriae a felle nigra incipientes mortiferae." Sequitur autem patientes iugis assellatio inferioris ventris, aliquendo fellita, aliquando viridis et sanguinolenta, aliquando mucillaginosa. Et rasuras cum gutta sanguinis emittunt, cum morsu intestinorum et umbilici. Insomnietatem patiuntur et fastidium, frequenter et febriculam.*
Dysentery is suffering of the intestines, a disease with ulceration, which gives out a bloody discharge, bile, or other change of humour. But [this] harm is judged by the ancients something that shows a black discharge from the beginning. For Hippocrates in the *Aphorisms* says this: 'Dysentery is deadly if it starts from black bile.' (*Aph* IV. 24). It follows long-term patients give out faeces from their lower intestine, sometimes green, sometimes mucusy, and [sometimes] scratched with drops of blood, with pain in the intestines and navel. They frequently suffer sleeplessness, unwillingness to eat, and light fever.	Dysentery is suffering of the intestines, a disease with ulceration, from which a bloody discharge, bile, or other change of humour is given out. And this harm is called by the ancients something that shows a black discharge from the beginning. For Hippocrates in the *Aphorisms* says this: 'Dysentery is deadly if it starts from black bile.' (*Aph* IV. 24). It follows long-term patients give out faeces from their lower intestine, sometimes with bile, sometimes green and bloody, sometimes mucusy, and [sometimes] scratched with drops of blood, with pain in the intestines and navel. They frequently suffer sleeplessness, unwillingness to eat, and light fever.

[69] Bede, *Expositio Actuum Apostolorum*, 28. 8, ed. M. L. W. Laistner, CCSL 121 (Turnhout, 1983), 96.

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The differences between the two are obviously minor, with no implications for the meaning of the passage overall. Perhaps importantly, two of the readings found in Bede ('sed... noxia iudicatur' and 'etiam et') can also be found in an early Carolingian medical book from late-eighth or early-ninth-century Dijon in which the compiler has excerpted the same single chapter.[70] As there is no full copy of the text that contains these readings, these two must be descended from the same lost early exemplar, with Bede's copy more degraded than the Dijon version. It does not help us to know if Bede had a full copy of Cassius Felix's work or just an excerpt within an assemblage like the Carolingian compendium. It does at least highlight yet another possible Gallic connection.

The connection with the Dijon compilation, even if only in passing, takes us to a more creative kind of Frankish medical miscellany. The Burgundian compiler had a wide range of books to draw from, including the Pseudo-Galenic *Liber tertius* of Galen's *Ad Glauconem*, from which assorted recipes and other medical notes were excerpted. There were also yet more idiosyncratic versions of the Hippocratic *Epistola*, Vindicianus's *Ad Pentadium*, the *Epistola de phlebotomia*, and the *Disputatio Platonis et Aristolelis*.[71] To this mix was added hagiographic material on Cosmas and Damian, whose cult was strongly associated with healing, helping to Christianise the assemblage.[72] This kind of restless appropriation and reuse of different kinds of material to create distinctive medical compendia already had a long history by *c.* 800.[73] Some books entering early English libraries likely also had this eclectic character, making the idiosyncrasies in Bede's quotations readily explicable.

The possible Merovingian aspect of Bede's medical learning here is brought further into focus with Bede's choice of material to illuminate the passage from Cassius. He tells a long story from Gregory of Tours' *Historiae*, a work he seems only to have obtained late in his life, detailing a 'dysenteric' epidemic event of 580.[74] Gregory, who was certainly interested in medicine himself, gives details about the various reported symptoms and the reactions of different parts of the population.[75] In the middle of the story, the bishop mentions that many countryfolk worried about

[70] Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, lat. 11218, 105r (Bischoff, *Katalog*, no. 4669; Beccaria, *I codici*, no. 28).

[71] For a full overview of the contents see M. Vázquez Buján, 'La transmission Latina de los *Aforimos* Hipocráticos en el códice Paris, BNF, Latin 11218', *Revue d'histoire des textes*, n.s. 13 (2018), 195–243 at 196–205 and Beccaria, *I codici*, pp. 161–5. The version of Pseudo-Hippocrates' *Epistola* is included by Kibre, 'Hippocratus Latinus V', 279 in the same family as St Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek, MS 878 and Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, lat. 11219 but all three are quite different to each other, exposing the significant danger of cataloguing by incipits.

[72] Leja, *Embodying the Soul*, pp. 150–5.

[73] Palmer, 'Merovingian Medicine', pp. 28–30.

[74] Gregory of Tours, *Historiae*, V. 34, eds. B. Krusch and W. Levison, MGH SS rer. Merov. 1 (Hanover, 1951), 239. On the implications of this extract for Bede's historical writing now see J. Merrington, 'Bede and Gregory of Tours: a Reconsideration', *EHR* 140/602 (2025), 1–29. See also M. McCormick, 'Gregory of Tours on Sixth-Century Plague and Other Epidemics', *Speculum* 96 (2021), 38–96.

[75] E. James, 'A Sense of Wonder: Gregory of Tours, Medicine, and Science', *The Culture of Christendom*, ed. M. E. Meyer (London, 1993), pp. 45–60; F. Wallis, 'Gregory of Tours' Nosebleed', *Une traverse des savoirs*, ed. P. Heuzé and Y. Herant (Laval, 2008), pp. 417–36; Palmer, 'Merovingian Medicine', pp. 38–9 and 43–4.

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internal pustules that bubbled beneath the skin before bursting. This is something that sounds more in-keeping with the effects of *yersinia pestis* (plague) than dysentery – a fact possibly glaringly obvious after the traumas of the seventh century in Britain.[76] Perhaps on that basis, Bede edited that one sentence out of Gregory's story for its inconsistency. More than that, however, it shows Bede obtaining books from Merovingian Gaul and refashioning both his thinking and his sources in response. In Bede's Northumbria, as in Gaul, medicine was a valued part of wisdom. It was not to be received passively but rather put to good use to assess occurrences methodologically. Here, we can see Bede doing exactly that.

Conclusions

Paying attention to the idiosyncrasies of Bede's medical sources reveals much about what kind of compendia he might have had available. Most crucially, recognising the better fit of the *Epistola Hippocratis et Galieni* for his information on the parallels of humours, character and the seasons points towards access to a version of a *Liber epistolarum* tradition in circulation in Gaul. This kind of epistolary collection generally included a substantial collection of short primer texts and would fit with knowledge of Vindicianus and Pseudo-Hippocrates too. It was, however, also the product of an unstable and creative textual world in which new assemblages and new versions of texts were common. That Bede's version of Pseudo-Hippocrates seemed indebted to at least two recognised versions of that text fits that intellectual world perfectly. So too does the fact that his extract from Cassius Felix is best paralleled in a stand-alone excerpt in a Burgundian miscellany that mixed letters, recipes and other kinds of text to establish a Christianised medical education. There was assuredly a potential role for the transmission of texts from other routes, such as via Theodore and Hadrian at Canterbury, as these are not mutually exclusive options. The important point is that Bede's medical books would not have looked out of place in the Frankish world either.

Bede's creative use of his sources, meanwhile, was also in-keeping with the ways medicine was absorbed into post-Roman Christian intellectual cultures. To raid medical books to illuminate the calendar and comment on scripture had only limited pedigrees. It makes sense, however, as an extension of Isidore of Seville's educational panoramas or the playfulness of the Canterbury school. As he obtained new books, he critiqued his information, found new parallels, and adjusted conclusions as necessary. Like the best minds, Bede rarely stood still. Neither did the intellectual cultures around him. In his proper wider European context, we can see Bede much more in keeping with his times, as people creatively used a varied late-antique inheritance to make sense of the complex

[76] J. Maddicot, 'Plague in Seventh-Century England', *Plague and the End of Antiquity: the Pandemic of 541–750*, ed. L. K. Little (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 171–214 and R. Naismith, 'Economic Change, Silver, and the Plague of 664–687 in England', *P&P* (forthcoming, available early access https://academic.oup.com/past/advance-article/doi/10.1093/pastj/gtae048/7945767). For background see now R. Singer, 'Contextualising Edix Hill: First-Pandemic Plague and Britain', *EHR*, 139/600 (2024), 992–1026.

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world around them. It did not necessarily make for good medicine. It did, however, make for an engaged philosophy.

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