

Who's Who in the Prayer Book
May 20, St. Alcuin/Ealhwine (Ca.735-804), Deacon and Abbot of Tours.



Top: An early image of Alcuin. **Below Left:** Supposed bust of Charlemagne.

The Prayer Book gives Alcuin the title of saint, and although there was no process of canonization in Alcuin's time, he had a reputation for holiness.. He was first and foremost an educator, and there are some who will say that to be a good educator it helps to be a saint. In addition to being an educator, Alcuin was a Yorkshireman, a title in which he took great pride.



Aidan began his career as headmaster at the school of the York Minster in Northumbria, where earlier was earlier a student. Its library has been described as one of the most extensive in Britain at that time, and credit for its collections must go chiefly to Archbishop Egbert (reign: 767-778.) The students learned Grammar (Latin,) Rhetoric, and Logic. They also studied "time-reckoning," astronomy, geometry and arithmetic. Hopefully the students learned a little history, too.

By a chance encounter with Charlemagne, the emperor of the Franks, Alcuin found his peaceful life changed forever. Invited to the Frankish court as Charlemagne's advisor, he established a school in the palace (probably small and exclusive,) that was to become the pride of the emperor who was bereft of learning, but greatly desired it for himself and for his subjects. Transplanted from York, of whose beauties he wrote with great affection. Alcuin succeeded in transferring the academic structure of the York Minster's school to the continent, and a good thing it was, because when the Vikings captured York in 867, they sounded the death knell to scholarship in Northumbria.

Alcuin's world was not limited to teaching at the court; he was also interested in the restoration and preservation of manuscript including Bibles and liturgical books. At one point Alcuin asked Charlemagne for permission to send Frankish students to Britain to obtain books he needed for the palace school:

*Early
Exchange
Students*

"I find a great want of several things, particularly of these excellent books in all arts and sciences which I enjoyed in my native country, through the expense and care of my great master Egbert. May it therefore please your majesty, animated with the most ardent love of learning to permit me to send some of our young gentlemen into England to procure for us those books which we want, and transfer the flowers of Britain and France that their fragrance may no longer be confined to York, but may perfume the palaces of Tours."



The York Minster today rising above the medieval walls.

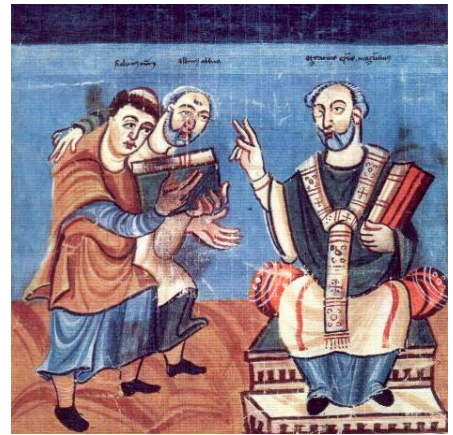
Homesick

Alcuin was able to return to England for three years (790-793.) He stayed at Wearmouth-Jarrow, Bede's old home, possibly searching for manuscripts to have copied. Eventually he was named Abbot of the Monastery of Tours, founded by St. Martin in 1027, where he was buried.

"In the morning, at the height of my powers, I sowed the seed in Britain, now in the evening when my blood is growing cold I am still sowing in France, hoping both will grow, by the grace of God, giving some the honey of the holy scriptures, making others drunk on the old wine of ancient learning..."

A Teacher of Teachers

Alcuin was a teacher of teachers, and his students went on to become builders of higher education in early Europe. His star pupil was the theologian Rabanus Maurus (Rabanus Maurus Magnentius, c. 780 – 4 February 856), not a household name, but one who held his own. Alcuin gave Rabanus the pet name of Maurus after Saint Maurus, who was a favorite of St. Benedict. Rabanus became a Frankish Benedictine monk and later the successor to Otgar as Archbishop of Mainz in Germany. He wrote extensively and in *De institutione clericorum* he brought into prominence the views of both Saints Augustine and Gregory the Great on the necessary training of the clergy.



Rabanus with Alcuin on his left, presents a copy of his book to Archbishop Otgar of Mainz.

Collect

O ETERNAL Lord God, who holdest all souls in life: We beseech thee to shed forth upon thy whole Church in paradise and on earth the bright beams of thy light and thy peace; and grant that we, following the good examples of thy servant Alcuin, and of all those who loved and served thee here, may at the last enter with them into thine unending joy; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

His Memory in York Today

St Peter's School is one of the oldest schools in the United Kingdom, founded in the City of York by St. Paulinus of York in 627. Alcuin was an early headmaster

St Peter's is a co-educational independent boarding and day school located just a few minutes from York City Centre, on the banks of the River Ouse. It is believed to be the third oldest school in the world after The King's School, Canterbury (597) and The King's School, Rochester (604.)