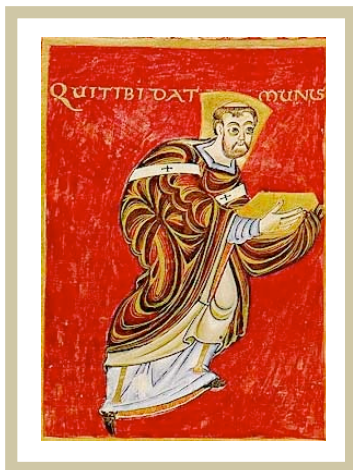


*St. Alcuin/Ealhwine of York (c.735-804), Deacon and Abbot of Tours.  
Feast Day Old Style May 20.*

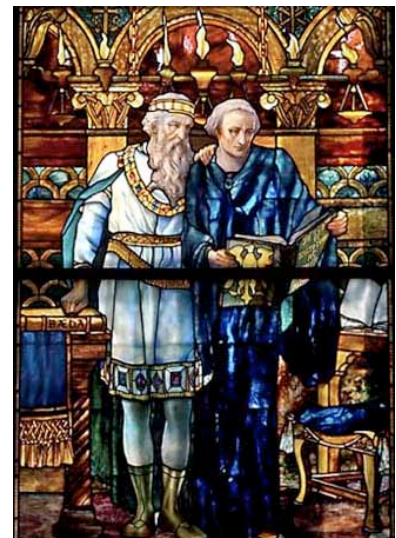
Although there was no process of canonization in Alcuin's time, Alcuin is usually given the title of saint, and he had a reputation for holiness. But he was first and foremost an educator, and there are some who will say that to be a good educator it helps to be a saint. In addition to being an educator,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



Alcuin began his career as headmaster at the school of the York Minster in Northumbria where earlier he was 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.

*Left: Egbert of York; Below Right: Charlemagne and Alcuin from a Tiffany window.*

By a chance encounter with Charlemagne, the emperor of the Franks, Alcuin's 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.

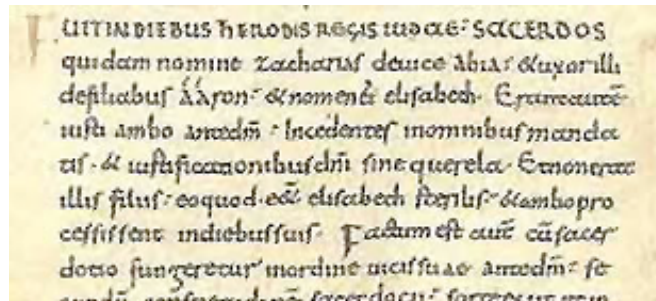




During Alcuin's lifetime the Carolingian miniscule script was developed which made it possible to standardize the Latin alphabet so that it was easily read by literate persons throughout the Holy Roman Empire. It was used for lectionaries, codices and for both Christian and pagan works. It is estimated that over 7000 manuscripts in the script survive. *Opposite:* Sample text in Latin.

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

*"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."*



**A Teacher of Teachers:** Above all else 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) 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 drew on both Saints Augustine's and Gregory the Great's emphasis on the necessary training of the clergy.



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

**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 Alcuin was named Abbot of the Monastery of Tours, founded by St. Martin in 372, 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...”*



**Alcuin's Memory in York Today:**

St Peter's School is the third oldest schools in the United Kingdom, founded in the City of York by St. Paulinus of York in 627. Alcuin, as we know, 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 shares its status with The King's School, Canterbury (597) and The King's School, Rochester (604.) Nothing remains of Alcuin's school except the tradition of education. An alumnus they might wish to forget was Guy Fawkes. Still, Alcuin would be proud.