

New Tools for Everyday Tasks. Otfrid and the Spread of Commented Editions of the Bible at Ninth-Century Wissembourg

Cinzia Grifoni*

This contribution engages with the emergence of commented editions of the Bible in the early medieval Latin West and illustrates their spread in the Carolingian Empire on the basis of the extant manuscript evidence. It describes their codicological and exegetical features starting from a comparison with the contemporary genre of the Byzantine frame catenae. Since the completion of a remarkably high number of commented editions can be ascribed to Otfrid of Wissembourg (d. after 871), the chapter discusses whether Otfrid might be regarded as a »cultural broker« of this new tool for biblical studies. To this end, it focuses on Otfrid's networks, interests and intended audiences, using three short poems by Walahfrid Strabo and Otfrid's own output, in particular his commented edition on Acts, as evidence.

Keywords: manuscript studies, biblical studies, Carolingian Empire, East Francia, commented editions, Otfrid of Wissembourg, Walahfrid Strabo, Hilduin of St- Denis.

While the study of the Bible has always been one of the main occupations of the Christian clergy, the scholarly tools produced and used for this purpose have varied considerably over the course of the centuries according to several factors: the skills and particular interests of the person at work, the cultural and economic resources they had at hand, the networks in which they operated and the kind of audience, if any, that they were addressing. With regard to their form, for instance, the tools used to both investigate and communicate the contents of the Bible could range from single glosses, which were meant to support private study and teaching, to extensive sermons and treatises addressing wider audiences.

Roughly between the sixth and the eighth centuries, a new tool for biblical studies emerged both in the Latin West and in the Byzantine East.

* Correspondence details: Cinzia Grifoni, Institut für Mittelalterforschung, Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Georg-Coch-Platz 2, 1010 Vienna, Austria; email-address: cinzia.grifoni@oeaw.ac.at
This article is part of the thematic section *Cultural Brokers in European and Asian Contexts. Investigating a Concept*, guest editors: Clemens Gantner and Cinzia Grifoni. To read all related articles, please access DOI: [10.1553/medievalworlds_no20_2024](https://doi.org/10.1553/medievalworlds_no20_2024).

This was an innovative book format that modern scholarship usually calls a »commented edition« when referring to the Latin output from western Europe¹ and a »frame catena« with regard to Greek manuscripts from the Byzantine East.² The most striking peculiarity of these codices was their layout. Each page was ruled so as to accommodate both a book of the Bible and a marginal corpus of explanations, similarly to modern annotated editions of Vergil and Dante.³ The present contribution will focus on the use of commented editions of the Bible in Carolingian Europe, considering in particular their spread in the East Frankish Kingdom. It will reflect on the possibility that the priest-monk Otfrid of Wissembourg (d. after 871) might have recognised in this book type a particularly fitting instrument for the study of the Bible in the context in which he operated as a teacher and exegete, and that he therefore decided to promote its spread.

Due to the lack of evidence, it is still unclear whether the almost contemporary emergence of frame catenae in the East and commented editions in the West was the result of cultural exchange or rather an independent, polygenetic phenomenon.⁴ At any rate, modern scholars assume that the idea for a companion book conveying a given primary text and its related explanations in one and the same volume developed from the widespread practice of annotating texts, which is attested from the Hellenistic period onwards (4th cent. BCE) and particularly for Late Antiquity. The fact that some extant late antique papyri display very wide margins would demonstrate that their producers anticipated that future readers would engage with that text and therefore left space for their annotations. This concerned especially Greek literature (e.g. Aristophanes, Callimachus) and legal instruction.⁵ In the first centuries of the Christian era, the annotating techniques were increasingly refined and systematized. From around the sixth century onwards, marginal annotations also began to play a significant role in the study of the Bible.⁶ For the Byzantine Empire, the name of Procopius of Gaza (d. c. 528) is often evoked as the *πρῶτος εὐρετής*, i.e. the inventor of Greek biblical catenae, that is to say comments that follow the biblical text concerned, although the debate about his contribution is still very lively.⁷

1 Holtz, *Manuscripts latins*, 156; Holtz, *Rôle des commentaires*.

2 The term »catena« (i.e. chain) is generally used to describe both exegetical florilegia of patristic extracts occupying the entire writing space of the manuscript page (this was maybe the older typology) and those books that accommodated the patristic excerpts in the margins of the related biblical text: Dorival, *Commentaires*; Bossina, *Autorschaft und Autorität*. Hugh A. G. Houghton introduced the English term »frame catena« (a translation from the German *Randkatene*) to distinguish the latter typology, on which the present contribution focuses: Houghton and Parker, *Greek New Testament commentaries*, 8-10. Here the authors mention the possible contemporary existence of similar book formats in the Jewish tradition for the study of the Hebrew Bible.

3 Both frame catenae and commented editions were also produced for the study of grammar, classical literature legal texts and, more rarely, Christian literature: Holtz, *Rôle des commentaires*; Bergmann, *Ansätze*. This contribution exclusively engages with commented editions of the Bible.

4 In the field of grammatical and literary studies, Nigel Wilson posits a cultural exchange around the fifth century and sees the Irish grammarian Filargirius as the possible broker of the compilatory technique between East and West; Wilson, *History of annotation*, 250.

5 McNamee, *History of scholia*, 277-285; Wilson, *Relation of text and commentary*, 106; Dorival, *Commentaires*, 382. Critique is exerted by Montana, *Greek scholiastic corpora*, 128-131.

6 Dorival, *Commentaires*, 368-375.

7 For the traditional approach, see Devreesse, *Chaînes exégétiques grecques*, 1087-1090; Dorival, *Biblical Catenae*, 72-76. Their position is challenged by, among others: Petit, *Chaîne grecque sur la Genèse*; Lamb, *New Testament Catenae in Byzantium*, 178-180; Houghton and Parker, *Greek New Testament commentaries*, 17-20. On Procopius, see now: Zaganas et al. (eds.), *Procopius the Christian Sophist*. For the distinction between »catenae« and »frame catenae«, see fn. 2.

With specific regard to the frame catenae, in which the biblical text is surrounded by related explanations, some scholars attribute their introduction to John Drungarios, whose activity is dated around 700.⁸ The earliest evidence of this latter book format in the Greek language is provided by a palimpsest codex. Extensive portions of a frame catena on the Gospel of Luke are extant in the inferior layer of the Codex Zacynthius (Cambridge University Library, MS Add. 10062). In eighty-six leaves and three half pages, this manuscript conveys the text of Luke 1.1-11.33 framed on three sides by an exegetical apparatus and introduced by a short preface as well as a chapter list.⁹ The dating of both the Gospel text and the marginal comment of the lower stratum of the Codex Zacynthius ranges between 700 and the middle of the ninth century.¹⁰ The modern edition of this early frame catena highlights a peculiar feature of its marginal explanations, which recurs in all books of this type: they all consist of a compilation of numerous exegetical excerpts which, in most of the cases, reproduce the selected passages verbatim. Moreover, they mostly indicate the names of the authors from whose texts the extracts were taken. Their names appear either in abbreviated or in full form.¹¹ We can see, therefore, that frame catenae as books were planned and ruled to accommodate an accurately prepared florilegium of different authoritative sources. The scholar responsible for their production aimed at explaining a biblical book by either selecting and reproducing several available interpretations, including at times discrepant approaches, or by concentrating on the output of either one or a few patristic authorities.¹²

Similar to frame catenae, commented editions from the Latin West accompanied a biblical book with an exegetical florilegium. In this case, the earliest extant evidence can be dated back to the eighth century without much doubt. It is a manuscript fragment that is nowadays held in the State Archive in Zurich (Zurich, Staatsarchiv, W I 3.19, ff. 24r-25v). According to Elias A. Lowe and the subsequent scholarship, the volume originally comprising this fragment was produced in around 800, probably in Ireland, then transported to the monastery of St. Gall and here reused at some point as binding material.¹³ The fragment consists of two folios which contain the chapters 2.6-3.15 and 16.4-42, respectively, of the Book of Ezekiel in the Vulgata version. The writing space was ruled in a three-column pattern: the biblical text was copied in the centre, while the margins accommodated a pre-established corpus of related explanations. These are selected extracts from the Homilies on Ezekiel by Gregory the Great, which mostly reproduce their model faithfully.¹⁴

8 Dorival, *Commentaires*, 368-375, quoting the prefaces John added to his catenae in order to explain his compilatory methods; Montana, *Greek scholiastic corpora*, 118-120.

9 Houghton et al., *Palimpsest Catena of Codex Zacynthius*, 2-6.

10 Parker, *Undertext writing*. The author stresses that this frame catena was copied from an earlier model.

11 Houghton et al., *Palimpsest Catena of Codex Zacynthius*, 387-409.

12 Exegetical catenae have been catalogued and distinguished according to their different types, but only rarely edited or studied in depth. A remarkable exception is the project »Expositiones in Psalmos« carried out by Uta Heil and Sebastiano Panteghini (<https://expps.acdh-dev.oeaw.ac.at/expps/index.html>). The project aims at providing the first modern edition of (Ps.)-Athanasius' commentary on Psalms, which is transmitted in catenary tradition only.

13 Lowe, *Codices Latini Antiquiores 7.1008*, retrieved on 19 January 2024 from the web-page of »The Earlier Latin Manuscripts Project«: <https://elmss.nuigalway.ie/catalogue/1279>. See also: Holtz, *Manuscripts latins*, 156; Ferrari, *Before the Glossa Ordinaria*; Gorman, *Ezechiel fragment*.

14 Ferrari, *Before the Glossa Ordinaria*, 295-296.

While in f. 25 only the central column survives, f. 24 displays the original layout. The three-column pattern of the Zurich fragment characterises the vast majority of the ninth-century commented editions of the Bible still extant today.¹⁵ In the ensuing centuries, as the format increasingly spread and was finally adopted to disseminate the so-called *Glossa Ordinaria* of the Bible, the three columns would gradually be replaced by remarkably more complicated ruling schemes. In this regard, Carolingian commented editions constitute an essential step in the later development of the *Glossa Ordinaria*, with which they share key features as regards form and content. Both book types were designed to convey the text of the Bible and a pre-established set of explanations on each manuscript page. Moreover, the interpretation resulted in both cases from the selection and compilation of authoritative biblical commentaries. The marginal commentaries forming the *Glossa Ordinaria* probably originated in the episcopal school of Laon in the eleventh century and were afterwards developed in Paris, whence they spread to all western European schools and universities.¹⁶

Along with the similar page layout and the derivative nature of the marginal exposition, a further significant feature distinguishes exegetical frame catenae and commented editions from other (randomly) annotated Bibles: their marginal explanations were added by the producers of the book and not by later readers in the course of its reception. Indeed, the copyist(s) involved in the completion of these manuscripts would take care to write not only the main text but also the exegetical apparatus, although additions by later readers are not infrequent, of course. Moreover, the book designers played a central role in the shaping of the marginal annotations: they were responsible for selecting, compiling and in some cases also reworking and copying the explanations that now flank the main text, as Otfrid's case will show. In other words, they decided how the biblical text conveyed by the manuscript had to be understood, since they chose which interpretation would appear at its side. As a consequence, the marginal apparatus of both frame catenae and commented editions provide us with evidence of the working methods, exegetical focus and cultural resources of their particular designers; moreover, they enable us to speculate about the purposes and intended recipients of these books. This information is particularly relevant in a historical perspective if we can link the production of a frame catena or of a commented edition to a specific teacher or a specific school.

Such a link has rarely been established for the extant frame catenae. Although the »astonishing eclecticism« distinguishing each catena from the other has been pointed out,¹⁷ thus implying that each book mirrored the particular interests of single exegetes, modern scholars have rarely striven to trace their specific context of origin. Catenae still tend to be regarded as a cave of treasures with regard to patristic passages unattested elsewhere rather than as coherent books resulting from a precise editorial project.

15 A remarkable exception is the manuscript Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Reg. lat. 307, possibly produced at Lyon in the first half of the ninth century, which conveys the Gospels of Luke and John and the related marginal commentary in two parallel columns.

16 Smith, *Glossa Ordinaria*, 91-105; Andrée, *Origins of the Glossa Ordinaria*. Notably, a Carolingian commented edition of the Psalter survives among the Laon library holdings (see Appendix 1, item 14).

17 Petit, «Chaînes» exégétiques, 46.

More generally, the limited interest in studying these books in their own right derives from the negative judgement expressed by past historians and philologists alike, who emphasised the lack of interpretative originality in this type of commentary and saw them as evidence of cultural decadence.¹⁸

This hasty assessment has also affected the research on commented editions of the Bible produced in the Carolingian period, on which the present contribution concentrates. Only recently have they become the subject of scholarly investigation.¹⁹ In contrast to many frame catenae, most commented editions can be and have been linked to a specific scriptorium or a specific teacher, though not always with absolute certainty.²⁰ The main obstacle to a clear attribution is that none of these books contain explicit references to their designers. All Carolingian commented editions of the Bible are anonymous works; most of them contain no paratexts which could help to locate them in time and space. Their attribution to a specific scriptorium has to rely primarily on palaeographical and codicological analysis.

Commented Editions of the Bible from Carolingian Europe: An Overview

Thus far, I have been able to trace twenty-eight manuscripts or fragments of this book format originating from Carolingian Europe (see Appendix 1). Of these, nineteen witnesses, i.e. roughly two thirds of the total evidence, stem from the scriptoria of Fulda, Murbach, Salzburg, St. Gall, Wissembourg and maybe Würzburg. These centres were all located in the region of the Carolingian Empire, in which people spoke one of the languages grouped under the umbrella-term of Old High German. This area, often called *Francia Orientalis*, i.e. East Francia, in the contemporary sources, fell under the sway of Louis the German (d. 876) from 833 onward. An official East Frankish Kingdom under Louis's rule was first established after the Treaty of Verdun (843).²¹ A further six of the twenty-eight extant commented editions were produced in West Francia (Fleury, Lyon, Saint-Amand, perhaps Saint-Denis); two stem from northern Italy, while the above-mentioned fragment of Ezekiel held in Zurich probably originated in Ireland.²²

The assumed insular origin of the Zurich fragment has led modern historians to locate the emergence of commented editions in the British Isles and to regard Irish and Anglo-Saxon scholars as responsible for the spread of this book type on the continent.²³

18 Cf. Simonetti, *Biblical Interpretation*, 76: the »demand for anthologies and easily readable manuals ... is characteristic of literary and cultural decline in general«.

19 Gibson, *Glossed Psalters*; Grifoni, *Reading*; Grifoni, *Auf Otfrids Spuren*; Grifoni, *Commented editions*; O'Sullivan, *Book as bibliotheca*.

20 The starting point for the identification and dating of annotated editions is Bischoff, *Katalog*.

21 Innes, *State and Society*, 196; Groth, »*Karolinger*« und »*Ottonen*«, 25; Goldberg, *Struggle for Empire*.

22 For bibliographic information on the Carolingian commented editions of the Bible known to me, see the website of my current research project »Margins at the Centre. Book Production and Practices of Annotation in the East Frankish Realm«, accessed on 24 January 2024: <https://www.oeaw.ac.at/imafo/forschung/historische-identitaetsforschung/projekte/margins-at-the-centre/project-related-output>.

23 Holtz, *Manuscripts latins*, 156; Ferrari, *Before the Glossa Ordinaria*. The famous codex Fulda, Hessische Landesbibliothek, Bonifatianus 1 contains an annotated copy of the Epistle of James that shows similar patterns to those of a commented edition. The marginal explanations of the epistle were added on the continent, maybe by Boniface, the Anglo-Saxon missionary and archbishop of Mayence (d. 754), and by a fellow glossator. See: *Die Glossen zum Jakobusbrief*, ed. Aris and Broszinski. The manuscript confirms that this peculiar practice of annotation was widely used in insular and missionary contexts.

As a matter of fact, the earliest extant commented editions produced in continental scriptoria of the Latin West stem from centres with well-known insular connections, such as Fulda and Saint-Amand. It therefore seems reasonable to assume that insular scholars were the first to adopt this new tool for the study of the Bible in the Latin West, either developing it from scratch or perhaps adapting the model of the eastern frame catenae, with which they possibly had come into contact.

Although one must certainly take the loss of pertinent evidence in the course of the centuries into account, the marked imbalance in the geographical distribution of the extant commented editions (nineteen books from East Francia against nine produced elsewhere) suggests that if insular scholars played a pivotal role in disseminating this book type in Carolingian Europe, their East Frankish colleagues made the largest use of it. Perhaps it is no coincidence that commented editions were most widely used precisely in those regions of western Europe in which Latin was a foreign language, i.e. the British Isles and the eastern regions of the Carolingian Empire. Here teachers and priests met this linguistic impasse by using the vernacular in scholarly and pastoral contexts, both in oral and in written form. Maybe the notable spread of commented editions in both regions can also be explained in connection with their linguistic setting. With regard to East Francia, it is remarkable that the schools of Fulda, St. Gall, and Wissembourg, which distinguished themselves for the creation of Old High German texts in the course of the ninth century, were also the major hubs in the production of commented editions of the Bible in Latin. In these centres one can trace »the vivid Carolingian efforts toward *intelligere*, to make understood the Christian faith«, as Wolfgang Haubrichs put it.²⁴ It is worth verifying whether this effort was expended not only in the writing of vernacular texts but also in the compilation of commented editions. Although their marginal annotations were written exclusively in Latin,²⁵ the kind of explanation they convey and the register of Latin used enforce the impression that they aimed at matching the limited Latin skills of the average East Frankish readers, be they monks, priests or members of the lay elite. The commented edition on the Acts of the Apostles designed and penned by Otfrid at Wissembourg will provide a case study.

Considering the contents of the extant evidence, a further preliminary observation can be made. More than the half, i.e. fifteen out of the twenty-eight Carolingian commented editions known to me contain the Psalms (that is both manuscripts from northern Italy, four out of six from West Francia, nine out of nineteen from East Francia, see Appendix 1). The Psalms were a central text for the daily liturgy of the clergy. Moreover, they were the main point of reference for lay devotion and moral action. Finally, medieval children (and adults) learnt the Psalms by heart while learning to read (»le livre de lecture élémentaire«).²⁶ Commented editions of the Psalms provided the reader (or maybe also the hearer)²⁷ with a first interpretative approach to this central book in medieval life.

24 Haubrichs, *Vernacular literacy*, 18.

25 Of the twenty-eight commented editions listed in Appendix 1, only the MS Wien, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod. 1239 (item 24) contains some Old-High-German glosses. However, these were added some decades after its production: Grifoni, *Reading*, 735-739.

26 Riché, *Enseignement*, 55. See also: Grotans, *Reading*, 71-73.

27 For the possibility that the commented Psalter produced for the monks of St. Gall and still held in the abbey library (MS Sankt Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek, Cod. Sang. 27) was also intended for reading aloud, maybe during common meals, see: Grifoni, *Commented editions*.

It is therefore possible that not only the Psalter but also commented Psalters were used primarily in the first stages of both clerical and lay education. Considering the fact that West Francia and northern Italy almost exclusively produced commented editions of the Psalter, we can think that in these Romance-speaking areas of the Carolingian Empire commented editions were regarded as an elementary tool addressing beginners in their first approach to the Bible. Conversely, commented editions produced in East Francia were not limited to the treatment of the Psalter – although commented Psalters make up roughly half of the extant evidence from this region as well – but included several other biblical books: most of the Prophets, the Gospels, Acts, the Pauline and Catholic Epistles and Revelation. The study and meditation of these books were ideally required of all monks and clerics in their daily engagement with the Bible, but rarely concerned the laity. It seems, therefore, that commented editions were also regarded as an adequate tool for training the average members of the clergy in East Francia, and not only beginners in the study of the Bible. This striking difference might be due to the fact that East Frankish monks and clerics had more difficulties with Latin than their Romance-speaking colleagues.²⁸ As a consequence, their ability to engage with the Latin Bible and the traditional expositions in Latin, both for their private studies and for their pastoral and preaching duties, was generally hampered. These considerations do not include, of course, the most talented and industrious among the East Frankish clergy, Hrabanus Maurus, Walahfrid Strabo, Otfrid of Wissembourg and the likes. They were exceptions, although they are very present to our minds thanks to their contemporary renown and the wide distribution of their works. Unlike them, the average clergy probably needed, and was content with, manageable introductions to the Bible. These were provided in the vernacular (both in written and oral form) and also, I suggest, with commented editions in Latin.

At the present state of research, each extant commented edition from the Carolingian period can be regarded as a *codex unicus*, designed by a scholar for his own use or for the use of the local ecclesiastical, mostly monastic, community. Only in two cases, i.e. the commented Psalters nowadays held in Göttingen and Regensburg,²⁹ has a possible commission from the laity based on the lavish decoration of these manuscripts been suggested, but not demonstrated.³⁰ Although some patterns of textual transmission have been identified in the marginal annotations of the commented Psalters produced at St. Gall and in other centres connected with this monastery,³¹ no commented edition is an exact copy of another. Each book of this type was probably tailored according to particular purposes. Both the remark about the »astonishing eclecticism« of Byzantine catenae mentioned above³² and the observations made by Lesley Smith about the adaptability of the later *Glossa Ordinaria* to various needs and contexts³³ apply to Carolingian commented editions as well.

28 See Haubrichs, *Vernacular literacy*, 19: here the author stresses the difficulties the German-speaking clergy generally had with Latin.

29 See Appendix 1, items 11 and 12.

30 Gibson, *Glossed Psalters*.

31 O'Sullivan, *Book as bibliotheca*.

32 See fn. 17.

33 Smith, *Glossa Ordinaria*, 193: »The Gloss was used by different people in different ways, at different times and in different places. There is not a single »purpose« we can assign to the Gloss, one thing that it was »for«; rather, part of the Gloss's continuing success was that it proved itself adaptable to the needs of various users in various contexts.«

Otfrid: A Cultural Broker and his Transregional Network

Among the nineteen extant commented editions of the Bible from East Francia, six, perhaps seven,³⁴ were produced in the scriptorium of Wissembourg from roughly the 840s to the end of the century.³⁵ As a result of his palaeographical analysis of the Wissembourg collection, now held in Wolfenbüttel, Wolfgang Kleiber determined that the *magister* Otfrid (d. after 871) designed five of these commented editions himself and wrote the vast majority of their marginal annotations in his own hand.³⁶ More generally, Kleiber showed that precisely in the time of Otfrid's activity as a local teacher and exegete (c.840-870) the Wissembourg community experienced a remarkable cultural flourishing and benefitted from a significant growth of the library holdings.³⁷ Following Kleiber's assessment, modern scholarship agrees that Otfrid's choices and agency brought about a considerable change. He was the driving mind behind the unprecedented efforts towards a cultural enrichment in his community.³⁸ In this context, he introduced the innovative tool of commented editions of the Bible and completed the experiment that has made him famous to this day: a vernacular poem usually called the *Evangelienbuch* or *Liber Evangeliorum* by modern scholarship.

Considering the changes brought about by Otfrid's activity, he can be regarded as a cultural broker according to the definition of this concept by Clifford Geertz and Kurtis Schaeffer: cultural brokers are authoritative individuals who have the capacity to innovate in the cultural and social context in which they live by mediating between translocal and local groups.³⁹ In his function of teacher, Otfrid was certainly a figure of authority, who introduced new tools for the study of the Bible according to the needs of his community. In the following section, I will outline his translocal connections and the role they had in Otfrid's formation in order to show that Otfrid's achievements were not due to his inventiveness and ingenuity alone, but also resulted from the interplay with the members of his wider network, who inspired, supported and approved his innovative approach to the Bible. Surviving letters and poems enable us to trace the people included in this network as well as the sources of inspiration for Otfrid's work.

Otfrid is best known for his pioneering attempt to tell the life of Jesus in Old High German rhymes, harmonising the often-conflicting accounts of the Gospels. For the first time in German literature, Otfrid declared himself the author of his work, the *Evangelienbuch*, which he probably completed between 863 and 871. The dedication letters accompanying the *Evangelienbuch* provide us with relevant information for outlining the cultural and political networks in which he operated.⁴⁰

34 Bischoff, Katalog 3.6020, p. 353 declares that a fragment of a commented Psalter nowadays held in Strasbourg possibly originated in Wissembourg in the second quarter of the ninth century. For the moment, I prefer to exclude this evidence from this overview and present my analysis of the fragment in a future contribution.

35 The majority of the manuscripts held in the medieval library of Wissembourg were acquired in the seventeenth century by the Herzog August Bibliothek of Wolfenbüttel, where they are still located. The corpus is also available online in the digital library of the HAB, accessed on 27 January 2024: <http://diglib.hab.de/?db=mss&list=collection&id=weiss>. Butzmann, *Weißburger Handschriften*, provides a general description of the volumes.

36 Kleiber, Otfrid, 102-112.

37 Kleiber, Otfrid, 133-160. For a reconstruction of the holdings of medieval Wissembourg see: Hellgardt, *Die exegetischen Quellen*, 63-94.

38 Haubrichs, *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur*, 294: »Die neue kulturelle Blüte ist dem *magister Otfridus* zuzuschreiben«.

39 Geertz, Javanese Kijaji, 234; Schaeffer, Cultural brokers, 116.

40 The letters are included in *Otfrids Evangelienbuch*, ed. Erdmann.

To begin with, Otfrid sent a copy of his work to King Louis the German (d. 876), seeking his support. In the dedication letter, written in the vernacular, Otfrid praises Louis's virtues as a Frank, as the King of East Francia, as a soldier and a Christian, comparing him to the biblical King David, as was common in Carolingian panegyric. Based on this letter and on the first chapter of the work, a part of modern scholarship sees in Louis the German the commissioner of the *Evangelienbuch* and in the poem a significant tool for the identity formation of the Eastern Franks under Louis's rule.⁴¹ The second dedication letter was an official script as well. It addressed Liutbert (d. 889), former monk and teacher at Reichenau, at that time the archbishop of the ecclesiastical province Mainz, to which Wissembourg belonged. Otfrid explains his intentions in writing his poem (on this, more below) and the methods he had used for transforming his mother tongue from an oral into a literary language, thus asking for the archbishop's correction and approval. Closing the letter, Otfrid recalls that he had been a pupil of Liutbert's predecessor in the see of Mainz, i.e. of the great exegete Hrabanus Maurus (d. 856), teacher and abbot in Fulda. Modern scholars assume that Otfrid attended Hrabanus's theological and exegetical training in the 830s. Fulda certainly played a central role in Otfrid's formation. There he probably came in contact with the format of the commented edition of the Bible, since the Fulda scriptorium engaged with the production of this type of manuscript already in the first quarter of the ninth century (a wonderful commented Psalter nowadays held in Frankfurt is still extant).⁴² Moreover, Otfrid probably learnt from Hrabanus how to produce biblical commentaries by selecting and combining passages of the exegetical tradition, a technique that characterises all of Hrabanus's commentaries and, as we have seen, both the Byzantine catenae and the commented editions of the Bible. Finally, Otfrid probably saw at Fulda how the translation of Tatian's Gospel harmony into Old High German was carried out: this was a source of inspiration for his own vernacular project. The third addressee of Otfrid's dedication letters was Salomo I., bishop of Constance (d. 871), whom he praises as his knowledgeable and wise teacher. Salomo, who belonged to the highest Alemannic nobility and was connected to the monasteries of St. Gall and Reichenau through family and liturgical ties, was one of Louis the German's closest collaborators. Modern scholars speculate that Otfrid may have received his teaching at the king's court, although there is no evidence to prove this. The fourth and last letter sent by Otfrid along with the *Evangelienbuch* was directed to his St. Gall friends, the monks Hartmut, at that time head librarian and dean of the monastery, and Werinbert, known as a scribe and teacher at the local school. The friendship between Otfrid and the St. Gall monks possibly originated in Fulda or, more probably, was the fruit of the tight liturgical and cultural connections between these communities. For roughly thirty years, until 872, the monasteries of Wissembourg and St. Gall shared a very learned and influential abbot: Grimald, the archchaplain of Louis the German, who granted them economic resources and cultural exchange with the court and other monastic centres, in *primis* Reichenau.⁴³

41 Staiti, *Evangelienbuch*; Haubrichs, Laien, Klerus. Conversely, Dieter Geuenich argues that the vernacular output from Louis's time aimed primarily at communicating the Christian belief rather than at creating a shared cultural identity in the East Frankish realm: Geuenich, Ludwig, 322-329.

42 MS Frankfurt, Stadt- und Universitätsbibliothek, Barth. 32 (see Appendix 1, item 2); Gibson, *Glossed Psalters*, 80.

43 On Otfrid's dedication letters and his addressees, see Haubrichs, *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur*, 293-296.

A result of this interplay is evident in the fact that, perhaps initiated by Otfrid, the scriptorium of St. Gall produced three commented editions of the Bible in the time of Hartmut's service as librarian, dean (849-872) and then abbot (872-883).⁴⁴

Two further scholars were relevant in Otfrid's life and formation: Walahfrid Strabo (d. 849) and Hilduin of Saint-Denis. Three short poems in elegiac couplets transmitted exclusively within the codex Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Reg. lat. 469, fols. 25v-26v, provide us with evidence of Otfrid's bond with Walahfrid and Hilduin.⁴⁵ The manuscript consists of an anthology of Walahfrid's poetic output made in Fulda in the second half of the ninth century, possibly under the supervision of Rudolf of Fulda.⁴⁶ It transmits the earliest copy of *De cultura horticorum*, the metrical life of the monk Mammes (*De vita et fine Mamme monachi*) and a number of poems ascribed without much doubt to Walahfrid. Among these, three poems refer directly to a *presbiter Otfridus*: modern research identifies this priest with Otfrid of Wissembourg.⁴⁷ These texts have been mostly neglected by scholars dealing with Otfrid's biography,⁴⁸ although they provide evidence of a new significant stage in Otfrid's formation and display his devotion to books in a very enjoyable way. The poems occur in a first English working translation in Appendix 2. The first and longer one features Walahfrid delivering a *Comes*, i.e. a lectionary for the liturgical year, in Otfrid's name to Saint Dyonisius (Denis), the patron of the monastery of Saint-Denis near Paris. The priest Otfrid had in fact been robbed of his copy of the *Comes* by a local cleric during his stay at Saint-Denis, while he was accompanying Abbot Hilduin (*Hiltwini patris*) to court (*aula palatina*). We can imagine that a *Comes* was an indispensable tool for a priest and that Otfrid either possessed a private copy of this book or had brought along a Wissembourg codex. At any rate, he felt direct responsibility for this book. By God's will, so the poem says, he had managed to locate the thief and to accuse him of the theft in private. The thief denied it at first, but then restored the stolen book by hurling it into the rain. Miraculously, the *Comes* remained intact, and Otfrid was able to regain possession of it. He promised to craft a copy of it in his own hand (probably once he had returned to his scriptorium of Wissembourg) and to donate it to Saint-Denis as a token of thanks for the grace received. With the second poem Walahfrid shows Otfrid's talent as a scribe and recalls that he had completed a copy of an entire Bible at Hilduin's request while he enjoyed the peace of Saint-Denis. Otfrid indeed had impressive skills and endurance as a writer, as his five commented editions of the Bible show. In the third poem, Walahfrid remembers Otfrid's donation of a liturgical belt to Saint-Denis and his prayer to be remembered (this was perhaps Otfrid's parting gift to the Saint-Denis community).

44 Appendix 1, items 10 and 22-23; Grifoni, Commented editions.

45 Walahfrid Strabo, *Carmina*, ed. Dümmler, 407-408.

46 For a description of this manuscript, its origin and ensuing moves, see: Hennings, *Ostfränkische Sammlungen*, 69-78.

47 Although these short poems have been ascribed to Otfrid by a part of modern scholarship (Haubrichs, *Nekrologische Notizen*, 33-37; Hilduin of Saint-Denis, *Passio S. Dionysii*, ed. Lapidge, 18-20), both their contents and the context of transmission lead me to endorse the traditional attribution to Walahfrid (Walahfrid Strabo, *Carmina*, ed. Dümmler, 407-408; Haubrichs, *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur*, 296; Hennings, *Ostfränkische Sammlungen*, 70-71).

48 But see Haubrichs, *Nekrologische Notizen*, 33-37.

If we accept the identification of the protagonist of these texts with Otfrid of Wissembourg, we must conclude that he was a pupil of Hilduin over a period of time impossible to quantify and that he followed him to court.⁴⁹ But which court? Hilduin became abbot of Saint-Denis in 814 and served as archchaplain at the court of his cousin, the emperor Louis the Pious, from 819 to 830. During the turmoil of the 830s, Hilduin took sides in defence of Louis's eldest son Lothar by detaching himself from Louis the Pious. For this reason, he was deprived of all his positions by the emperor in 830. While he was restored as abbot of Saint-Denis in 832, he no longer held any role at Louis's court. After the emperor's death in 840, Hilduin (along with Hrabanus Maurus and Walahfrid) remained at Lothar's side, who appointed him archbishop of Cologne in 842. By 843 at the latest, he was again deprived of the abbacy of Saint-Denis.⁵⁰ Considering these circumstances, Otfrid probably stayed at Saint-Denis during Hilduin's service as archchaplain (819-830) and followed him to the imperial court of Louis the Pious before Hilduin's conflict with the emperor in 830. Thus, Otfrid possibly visited Hilduin as a young priest-monk before his further training under Hrabanus at Fulda in the 830s and his subsequent activity as a teacher at Wissembourg.⁵¹ At Saint-Denis or at Louis's court he might have met Walahfrid, who was connected to Hilduin and had been chosen to be the tutor of young Charles the Bald in 829 thanks to Hilduin's support.⁵² Both Hilduin and Walahfrid had an Alemannic origin: Michael Lapidge assumes that Hilduin was trained at Reichenau under Abbot Waldo (who later became abbot of Saint-Denis before Hilduin) and therefore maintained relations with his home monastery and supported the Reichenau monk Walahfrid. In the time of Hilduin's abbacy, Saint-Denis and Reichenau were indeed connected by liturgical and cultural bonds, attested in multiple manuscript sources.⁵³ Saint-Denis also had close relations to Fulda: Hrabanus sent a copy of his *De laudibus sanctae crucis* to the Saint-Denis monks and wrote his commentaries to the Books of Samuel and Kings at Hilduin's request.⁵⁴

In sum, the proposed interpretation of Walahfrid's poems and the dedicatees of Otfrid's *Evangelienbuch* show that the Wissembourg teacher was part of a transregional network which included not only East Frankish centres such as Fulda, the Alemannic monasteries of Saint Gall and Reichenau, and Louis the German's court, but also the West Frankish abbacy of Saint-Denis. All in all, the sources analysed in this overview give an account of his strong connections to the intellectual, ecclesiastical and political elite of his time, who supported him with inspiration, forms, methods and resources for his own innovative work. Especially when seen in the wider context of his network, Otfrid's activity as a cultural broker, which I now move to describe, reveals itself to be a mediation between translocal impulses and local needs.

49 Otfrid's tie to Hilduin seems to also be confirmed by necrological entries analysed in Haubrichs, *Nekrologische Notizen*. Haubrichs stresses that Otfrid's name was included in the memorial books of the Saint-Denis community (*ibid.*, 36).

50 Hilduin of Saint-Denis, *Passio S. Dionysii*, ed. Lapidge, 8-55.

51 Haubrichs, *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur*, 294.

52 Hilduin of Saint-Denis, *Passio S. Dionysii*, ed. Lapidge, 28.

53 Vezin, *Relations*, 23-27.

54 Vezin, *Relations*, 20 and 29-30.

The Features of Otfrid's Exegesis and his Commented Edition on Acts

In order to appreciate Otfrid's innovative work for his community, we need now to outline the features of his exegetical output in the vernacular and in Latin. These have been studied in detail in relation to the *Evangelienbuch* and provide an important element of comparison for the analysis of his commented editions.

In the dedication letter to Archbishop Liutbert, Otfrid explains which reasons lay behind his innovative decision to bend the Frankish dialect of the Southern-Rhine region to the rules of a written language and of poetry in his *Evangelienbuch*. Otfrid recalls that some Wissembourg confreres and a noblewoman named Judith urged him to write valuable Christian poetry in the language of the people (*theotisce*) – which Otfrid equates with the Frankish language (*francisce*) shortly after in the letter – in order to counter very popular but unworthy secular songs. Moreover, they stressed that both the deeds of secular heroes and the life and miracles of Christ had been written in Latin, but that so far no one had made any effort to make God's words shine in their own language. Otfrid declares to Liutbert that he wrote his poem out of charity towards his brethren and the laywoman, so that all those who refrain from learning the message of the Gospels because of the difficulties involved in a foreign language, i.e. Latin, may understand the sacred words in their mother tongue through the *Evangelienbuch*.⁵⁵ As mentioned above, in the dedication letter to Louis the German and in the first chapter, Otfrid gives a further, very self-confident reason for his decision to write a Christian poem in the vernacular instead of Latin – so that God can be praised in the language of the Franks, not only in Latin and Greek, since the Franks are a noble people and faithful Christians. Based on Otfrid's statements and clues within the *Evangelienbuch*, modern research has provided many hypotheses regarding the audience Otfrid had in mind for his poem and its actual reception. The poem combines an empathetic narrative with the forms of an exegetical treatise, a sermon, a prayer and a theatrical performance.⁵⁶ Thus, it can be assumed that Otfrid envisioned both a readership and a listening audience the *Evangelienbuch*. Scholars have defined the possible readers as more or less educated people, belonging to the clergy and the laity, capable of understanding the exegetical content of the poem at least to a certain degree. The listeners are identified with uneducated monks and lay people who were at least able to understand the account of Jesus' life and the moral instruction conveyed by the *Evangelienbuch*.⁵⁷ For our purposes, it is important to stress that monks from the Wissembourg community are included by modern scholarship among the intended audience of Otfrid's poem. The more educated among them would have been able to read and meditate on the vernacular text and to communicate its contents to others; the less educated would have listened to someone reading the *Evangelienbuch* during the common meals in the refectory or on other occasions.

55 Otfrids *Evangelienbuch*, ed. Erdmann, 4, 5-29; Otfrid von Weißenburg, *Evangelienbuch*, trans. Hartmann, 7-9.

56 Otfrid von Weißenburg, *Evangelienbuch*, trans. Hartmann, XXVII.

57 Otfrid von Weißenburg, *Evangelienbuch*, trans. Hartmann, XXVIII-XXXI.

The strong didactic and catechetical character of the *Evangelienbuch* shows that Otfrid's main intention was to communicate the content and moral teaching of the Gospels to the widest possible audience, taking the contemporary multilingual environment into account. A similar didactic intention can also be traced in his five commented editions in Latin, with which he addressed primarily his Wissembourg brethren.⁵⁸

Compared to a traditional running commentary, which reproduces only those biblical words (lemmas) that are explained in the ensuing interpretations, commented editions had the great advantage of presenting an entire biblical book and its interpretation in the same volume. As mentioned above, Carolingian scriptoria adopted mostly a three-column layout of the page and placed the Bible in the central column and the annotations at its sides. These latter were as essential a component of the book as the biblical text and were therefore selected and combined by the designer of the commented edition. The space available in the margins imposed a limit on the length of the explanations, which were normally short, regardless of the kind of interpretation conveyed. The production of a commented edition required time and attention, as the annotations had to be arranged on the page in such a way as to relate precisely to the portion of text contained in the central column. Considering the fact that Otfrid wrote the vast majority of the marginal apparatus in his own hand, it is evident that he regarded this book format as worth the effort required for its crafting.

Otfrid designed and completed a commented edition of the Book of Jeremiah, Isaiah, the Minor Prophets and the Gospels. Moreover, he collected in one codex a commented edition of Acts, the Catholic Epistles and Revelation.⁵⁹ Otfrid's marginal commentary, like the Byzantine frame catenae, is primarily the result of selecting and arranging exegetical excerpts from sources regarded as authoritative. However, there is a significant difference in the compiling method. While frame catenae generally combined extracts that had been drawn directly from authorial treatises and reproduced these more or less verbatim, Otfrid derived the material for his commented editions mostly from already circulating compilations or abbreviations of patristic commentaries, in which the original contents had already been summarized, adapted and combined to form a new text. This difference in adherence to the original patristic wording may explain why frame catenae typically include the names of the authors of the annotations, either in expanded or abbreviated form, while Otfrid usually does not add any *nomen auctoris* (with relevant exceptions). The comparison with the compiling method of the frame catenae sheds light on the fact that Otfrid's annotations were mostly the product of a two-fold process of filtering traditional patristic interpretation. As a consequence, they are essential in their content and simple in their Latin vocabulary and syntax. The material limitations imposed by the marginal writing space of the manuscripts do not explain Otfrid's different approach to the patristic tradition, since frame catenae were subject to the same constraints. Nor was it the lack of copies of patristic treatises in Otfrid's library that led him to use compilations instead of originals: as we have seen, the Wissembourg holdings grew considerably during Otfrid's time, especially in the field of biblical studies.

58 Grifoni, Reading, 725.

59 These are the manuscripts Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bibliothek, Codd. 32, 33, 36, 26 and 59 Weiss., respectively. They can be consulted online (see fn. 35).

Otfrid deliberately chose to use a compilation as his basic source for his commented editions, because they conveyed the kernel of the author's arguments in a Latin easier than the original. For instance, for his commented edition on Jeremiah, he reworked an abbreviation of his teacher Hrabanus's treatise; for his annotations on Isaiah, he used the compilation of Jerome's commentary by Josephus Scottus; for his commented edition of the Minor Prophets, he drew from an otherwise unrecorded abbreviation of Jerome's treatise on these biblical books. If it suited his purpose, Otfrid took care to enrich the abridged contents of his basic sources with additions he took directly from the works of the Church Fathers. For the Gospels of Matthew and John, for instance, which lay at the centre of his exegetical interest because of the *Evangelienbuch*, he added paragraphs from Augustine, Hilary of Poitiers and Gregory, to quote but a few: in all of these cases he introduced the related passages with the correct *nomen auctoris* in abbreviated form.⁶⁰ Otfrid's distinct preference for compilations also marks a point of contact with the biblical exegesis produced by his friend Walahfrid, who used not only the patristic tradition but also the derivative commentaries of his teacher Hrabanus, abbreviating, reformulating and combining them with other sources, as his running commentaries on the Pentateuch, Psalms and the Catholic Epistles show.⁶¹ This is a further example of the fact that Otfrid's methods and exegetical choices developed in the context of a cultural exchange with his teachers and his fellow scholars.

All of Otfrid's commented editions share the same method of compilation and the same attention to brevity and accessible Latin language. Moreover, they are all easy to consult, thanks to a sophisticated system of connections between lemmas and annotations by means of reference signs. Depending on the completeness of the basic source, Otfrid attached one or more explanations to each biblical verse, sometimes filling the marginal columns of his manuscripts to the maximum. In any case, he was generally careful to preserve the elegance and legibility of the page, thus supporting his brethren in their private study of the Bible.⁶²

A particular case in point is the manuscript Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bibliothek, Cod. 59 Weiss. (henceforth: MS 59 Weiss.), containing Otfrid's commented editions on the Acts of the Apostles, the Catholic Epistles and Revelation. The volume was produced under Otfrid's supervision probably around the middle of the ninth century.⁶³ Almost all the marginal explanations were penned by him and display the usual elegance and legibility of Otfrid's script. Conversely, the scriptural text is less elegant than in Otfrid's other books.⁶⁴ MS 59 Weiss. seems to have been Otfrid's first experiment in spreading the tool of the commented edition at Wissembourg, an experiment that he later refined in his other books.

60 For the sources Otfrid used in all his commented editions and his compilation methods, see Grifoni, Reading, 716-723.

61 Berschin, Walahfrid Strabo. Modern research has exclusively concentrated on Walahfrid's poetic, hagiographic and computistic works. The features of his biblical exegesis still need to be explored. His commentaries are derivative, but nevertheless worth analysing in order to understand which needs and readership he had in mind when preparing his explanations.

62 Grifoni, Reading, 725.

63 Butzmann, *Weissenburger Handschriften*, 196-198; Kleiber, *Otfrid*, 106-107.

64 Images of this manuscript are available from the digital library of the Herzog August Bibliothek, accessed on 27 January 2024: <https://diglib.hab.de/?db=mss&list=ms&id=59-weiss>.

The codex consists of 131 folios ruled in the usual three-column layout. The codicological analysis reveals that the three biblical books are not distinct units eventually bound together, but were rather planned to be included in one volume from the beginning. The central column contains only twenty-three writing lines to accommodate the Bible, a little less than the average twenty-seven of the other commented editions. The folios 1r-72r contain the biblical text of Acts, on which I will focus henceforth, according to the Vulgata version. They are divided into nine quires, the first of which is a ternio (fols. 1-6) conveying a preface and a chapter list of Acts, while the second quire consists of a quaternion with two added folios at the beginning (fols. 7-16). The remaining seven quires are regular quaternions.

The marginal columns of Otfrid's commented edition on Acts contain a small number of explanations. These derive from the combination of the two main expositions of Acts written in the Latin West before the ninth century, i.e. the *Expositio Actuum Apostolorum* and the *Retractatio in Actus Apostolorum*, both authored by the Anglo-Saxon monk Bede (d. 735).⁶⁵ In his preface to the *Retractatio*, Bede himself explains why he produced two different commentaries on this biblical book: he found it necessary to revise some of the explanations of the *Expositio*, correcting and deepening them on the basis of a Greek version of Acts (the »graecum exemplar«) that he had at his disposal.⁶⁶ Indeed, the *Retractatio* is full of linguistic considerations aimed at assessing the correctness and quality of the Latin translations from the Greek original.

The explanations contained in the two treatises were combined in MS 59 Weiss. according to two different criteria. First: as one would expect, the *Retractatio* was used for those verses that had not been commented on in the *Expositio*, for instance regarding Acts 2.27. Second: some annotations combine passages drawn from both commentaries by copying them one after the other (as in Acts 1.23; 2.28, etc.). Surprisingly, a rather large number of verses are not commented on in MS 59 Weiss. despite being interpreted in one or both of the Bedian works. This, together with the fact that Bede himself did not provide an exhaustive commentary and did not interpret every verse of Acts, explains the unusual scarcity of the marginal apparatus of MS 59 Weiss, in which the side columns are often only minimally filled, if at all.

It should also be stressed that the marginal annotations on Acts do not reproduce Bede's text verbatim, but abridge it and rework it into shorter and simpler explanations, although the almost empty margins did not impose any limitation or necessitate shortening. Very often, linguistic analysis, Greek terms or parallels with other passages in the Bible from Bede's commentaries are omitted: this is typical for Otfrid's method. Sometimes, however, also historical-literal explanations are abbreviated, which Otfrid otherwise tends to retain, for instance in his commented editions of Jeremiah and the Minor Prophets. A copying error made by Otfrid himself provides a clue to understand his treatment of the Bedian sources. Fol. 42v of MS 59 Weiss. contains Acts 16.16-23 in the central column.

65 Bede, *Expositio Actuum Apostolorum, Retractatio in Actus Apostolorum*, ed. Laistner. On the spread and use of Bede's works on the Continent, see Westgard, Bede. On the manuscript tradition of Bede's commentaries on Acts, see Bede, *Expositio Actuum Apostolorum et Retractatio*, ed. Laistner, XI-XLV

66 Bede, *Retractatio in Actus Apostolorum*, ed. Laistner, 103-104.

This segment of Acts was not explained in Bede's *Retractatio*, but only in his *Expositio*. Here Bede commented on the verses 17, 18 and 21. The right column of fol. 42v was left blank by Otfrid. In the left column he copied Bede's explanation of verses 17 and 21 only, omitting to reproduce the one related to verse 18 (see Figure 1). Otfrid's annotations are quite simple. Moreover, they are strictly connected to the words of the biblical text and the story they narrate. The first one on Acts 16.17 reads in English translation: »This is not a voluntary confession followed by the reward for the confession, but the mendacious spirit says true things driven by the fear of the Holy Spirit, not daring to hide his darkness any longer now that the light was present.«⁶⁷ The second one, on Acts 16.21, reads: »They speak of faith in Jesus, in whose name a spirit called Python had escaped. In fact, the Romans had already established that no divinity would be accepted without the approval of the Senate.«⁶⁸ At the end of his annotation on verse 17, Otfrid mistakenly copied the beginning of Acts 16.21 (»et adnuntiant morem«) and he immediately expunged it. This minimal detail is very revealing. It implies that Otfrid's exemplar was a running commentary, i.e. a commentary per *lemma*, in which Bede's explanation of verse 18 had already been skipped. On the basis of this evidence, I suggest that Otfrid used as his basic source an already available compilation, which combined and abridged Bede's two treatises on Acts. This compilation, which does not survive among the codices with Wissembourg provenance and which I was not able to detect in any other manuscript thus far, could have been prepared by Otfrid himself or by another scholar. From this short treatise, Otfrid selected the explanations and copied them, probably verbatim, into the marginal columns of MS 59 Weiss. He omitted to reproduce the biblical lemma, except for the one error described above, and linked his marginal annotations with the biblical text in the central column using reference signs. In so doing, he transformed an unambitious running commentary into a commented edition. Bede's name was lost in this process: neither the marginal annotations nor the few paratexts included in MS 59 Weiss. refer to Bede as the original author of the explanations. It is possible that the compilation that Otfrid used as his main source already lacked this reference.

The result of Otfrid's work was a single copy of the Acts of the Apostles enriched with an essential, mostly literal-historical explanation of several key passages of the book, which was meant to support the private study of Otfrid's confreres and indeed remained within the walls of the Wissembourg monastery in the ensuing centuries.

67 Bede, *Expositio Actuum Apostolorum*, XVI.33-36, ed. Laistner, 69: *Non uoluntatis ista confessio est quam praemium sequitur confitendi, sed timore spiritus sancti cogente uera mendax spiritus loquitur, non ausus luce praesente suas ultra celare tenebras.*

68 Bede, *Expositio Actuum Apostolorum*, XVI. 50-52, ed. Laistner, 70: *De fide Iesu Christi dicunt in cuius nomine pithonis spiritus exierat; iam enim decreuerant Romani ne quis deus esset acceptus nisi a senatu probatus.*

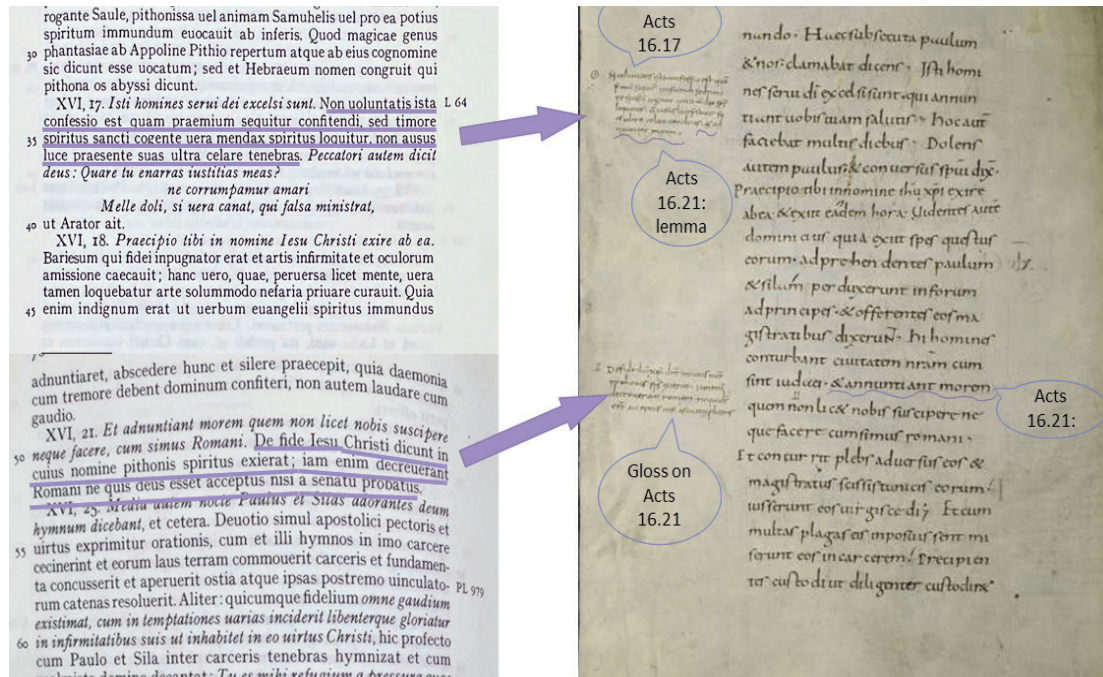


Figure 1: On the left: *Bede, Expositio in Actus Apostolorum*, ed. Laistner (CCSL 121) 69-70: Otfrid reused the underlined passages probably taking them from an abbreviation of Bede's commentary and not from Bede's *Expositio* directly. On the right: MS Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bibliothek, 59 Weiss., f. 42v: Otfrid's commented edition on Acts. The misplaced quote of Acts 16.21 at the end of the gloss on Acts 16.17 suggests that Otfrid did not draw his glosses from Bede's text directly but from an abbreviation of it.

Conclusions: New Tools for Everyday Tasks

The study, meditation and communication of the Latin Bible was an everyday task for the medieval clergy. The manuscript evidence shows that at least some of the monks and priest-monks at Carolingian Wissembourg needed tailored tools to fulfil these scholarly and pastoral duties, since the Latin of the Bible and exegetical tradition was a foreign language to them and their audiences. Vernacular translations of Latin texts conveying the essence of the Christian belief emerged (the Lord's Prayer, baptismal formulae, the Creed), which began to circulate in written form at Wissembourg and in the other Old High German-speaking regions of the Carolingian Empire around the end of the eighth century.⁶⁹

Otfrid's ingenuity and extensive connections led him to introduce yet other new tools for the study of the Bible and the communication of its message. On the one hand, he used the vernacular and authored a pioneering poem, which narrates and explains Jesus' life in a lively and emotional way.

69 Haubrichs, *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur*, 185-188 and 229-250; Richter, *Sprachenpolitik*.

His *Evangelienbuch* was probably intended to be read by the skilled ones and to be listened to by the unlearned, be they monks or lay people. On the other hand, he introduced commented editions and simplified the Latin of the exegetical tradition for their marginal annotations. This codicological and exegetical format already had a long history by Otfrid's time, having probably emerged in the sixth century, and an even longer future, given its late medieval reuse for the *Glossa Ordinaria*. In the Carolingian period, commented editions seem to have spread remarkably widely in East Frankish monastic schools, where they were used not only for the explanations of the Psalms, as in other regions of the empire, but also for the advanced study of the Scriptures.

Each extant commented edition has its own story to tell. Depending on the sources selected and rearranged for the marginal annotations, the content of the explanations, the presence of decoration and liturgical paratexts, different uses can be suggested, ranging from private study and preparation of sermons, to reading aloud during common meals or lay devotion. The commented editions Otfrid designed and crafted for his community share one main feature, which is particularly evident when one compares them with a typical frame catena: Otfrid always reused compilations of patristic material as his main source for the marginal explanations. While frame catenae were planned as erudite collections of authorial excerpts, and reproduced them mostly verbatim along with the reference to their authors, Otfrid preferred explanations that summarized authoritative interpretations without referring to the name of the quoted authority. The language of his annotations was no longer the Latin of the Fathers, but a simpler version of it, as regards both vocabulary and syntax. In this simpler Latin, he saw an adequate tool to match the skills of his confreres. Otfrid probably envisaged his commented editions as reference books, as precious storehouses that included what the average Wissembourg monk should know about the Bible.

In the light of his achievements, Otfrid can be regarded as a cultural broker. With the support of his translocal network he created new scholarly tools to match local needs and caused a change in the intellectual practices of his community. The innovations introduced by Otfrid with his commented editions influenced the later book production at Wissembourg: at least two commented editions survive, which follow in Otfrid's footsteps.⁷⁰

70 These are the MSS Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bibliothek, Cod. 58 Weiss., which includes in its first six folios a commented edition on Isaiah very similar to Otfrid's, and Wien, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod. 1239, which contains a spectacular commented edition of the Pauline Letters as well as a completely different edition of the Catholic Letters as regards the content and exegetical focus.

Appendix 1 – Commented editions of the Bible from Carolingian Europe

	Signature	Date and origin	Content
1	Zurich, Staatsarchiv, W I 3.19 (ff. 24 r - 25v)	end of 8 th cent., Ireland?	Ezekiel
2	Frankfurt, Stadt- und Universitätsbibl., Barth 32	c.800, Fulda	Psalter
3	Ivrea, Bibl. Capitolare, LXXIX (28)	c.815, Saint-Amand	Pauline Ep.
4	St. Gallen, Stiftsbibl., Cod. 1395, p. 440- 441	9 th cent., 1 st qu., Ful- da? St. Gall?	Pauline Ep.
5	Dillingen, Studienbibl., XV fragm. 26 + Oslo, SC, 74	9 th cent., Milan (?)	Psalter
6	Strasbourg, Archives d'Alsace, Archive du Bas Rhin, Fragm. 151-J-60	Second quarter of the 9 th cent. (?), Wissembourg?	Psalter
7	Vatican City, BAV, Reg. Lat 307	800-850 Lyon	Gospels of Luke and John
8	Augsburg, Diözesanmuseum St. Afra DMA 1002 (olim Bistumsarchiv 6)	9 th cent., 2 nd half, Würzburg? Glosses: 10 th cent., 1 st half, Fulda?	Gospels
9	München, BSB, MS Clm 7665 + Clm 7673 + Clm 7679 (fragments)	9 th cent., 2 nd half, Germany	Psalter
10	St. Gallen, Stiftsbibl., Cod. 27	9 th cent., 2 nd third, St Gall	Psalter
11	Fragments in Munich, Regensburg and Prague ⁷¹	9 th c., 2 nd third, St Gall (?)	Psalter
12	Göttweig, Stiftsbibl., Cod. 30 (rot) / 2 (schwarz)	9 th cent., 2 nd third, St. Gall	Psalter
13	Eremo Camaldoli, Arch., s.n. + Washington/ DC, Museum of the Bible, Leaf from the »Psal- ter of St. Romuald« (formerly Oslo, Schøyen Coll., 620)	9 th cent., 2 nd third, Northern or Central Italy Or: South Germany Or: St. Amand? Salz- burg 9 th cent., 1 st third	Psalter
14	Laon, Bibliothèque Patrimoniaie Suzanne Martinet, Ms. 14	9 th cent., 2 nd third, St. Denis?	Psalter
15	Colmar, Archives d'Alsace, Archive du Haut Rhin, Fragm. 86 (13)	9 th cent., 2 nd third, probably Murbach	Psalter

71 These are the fragments München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 29315/3; Regensburg, Bischöfliche Zentralbibliothek, fragm. IV.2.1 and Praha, Národní galerie Inv. Nr. K 7314, originally belonging to the same manuscript.

16	Wolfenbüttel, HAB, Cod. 26 Weiss.	c.840-870, Wissembourg	Gospels
17	Wolfenbüttel, HAB, Cod. 32 Weiss.		Jeremiah
18	Wolfenbüttel, HAB, Cod. 33 Weiss.		Isaiah
19	Wolfenbüttel, HAB, Cod. 36 Weiss.		Min. Proph.
20	Wolfenbüttel, HAB, Cod. 59 Weiss.		Acts; Cath. Ep.; Rev.
21	Vercelli, Bibl. Capitolare, CXLIX (136)	9 th cent., 2 nd -3 rd qu., Salzburg	Psalter
22	St. Gallen, Stiftsbibl., Cod. 41	9 th cent., 3 rd qu., St. Gall	Prophets (Isaiah, Ho- sea, Zechari- ah, Daniel)
23	St. Gallen, Stiftsbibl., Cod. 50	9 th cent., 3 rd qu., St. Gall	Gospels
24	Wien, Österr. Nationalbibl., Cod. 1239	9 th cent., 3 rd qu., Wissembourg	Pauline and Cath. Ep.
25	Vercelli, Bibl. Capitolare, LXII (2)	middle to end of 9 th cent., Northern Italy?	Psalter
26	Firenze, Bibl. Medicea Laurenziana, Cod. Ashb. 54	end of 9 th cent., Northeast France	Psalter
27	Troyes, Médiathèque Jacques-Chirac, Ms. 615	end of 9 th cent., Paris?	Psalter
28	Orléans, Médiathèque, Ms. 48 (45)	end of 9 th cent., Fleury	Psalter

Appendix 2 – Three Poems by Walahfrid Strabo about Otfrid⁷²

1

The priest Otfrid offered these gifts
 in your honour, holy father Dionysius, because his prayer was heard.
 This is what happened: Otfrid had lost a book called Comes,
 which someone had stolen through secret deceit,
 when, not long ago, he was serving at court
 and was busy obeying father Hilduin.
 While, beside himself, he was searching everywhere,
 he asked in prayer for the help of our merciful God,
 when suddenly some force revealed
 to his senses, sad because of the time already elapsed, where the stolen object was
 and that the book had been covered by a very thin layer of earth
 in the centre of the building, which derives its name from the cappa.⁷³
 While he searched everywhere for the perpetrator with vigilant attention,
 the thief, pretending to be there to pray, took away the book he had hidden.
 Confused in his heart with fear and wavering concern,
 Otfrid felt ashamed for that authoritative person and was very sorry for the damage.
 In the end, such a decision settled in his troubled soul:
 he would accuse the thief of the crime face to face.
 Returning alone to visit the rooms already known to him
 he approached him – the thief was indeed a member of the clergy.
 Unrolling with accommodating words his conscience aware of the evil done,
 he heard furious outrages coming from that lying mouth.
 Indeed, pale in his livid face, the cleric threatened to avenge with death
 the sacrilege of a crime attributed to him.
 To make it short, Otfrid left. He regretted to himself
 the causes of that unjust episode and the pitfalls of evil.
 Returning back, he spent the dark hours of the entire night
 in tears and prayers in his solitary bed,
 now imploring the divine will with a contrite soul,
 now repeating the promises he had made to you, o father Dionysius,
 that he himself would return to you a similar book
 through his own work, after that one had been found again.
 There was no delay. Shortly after, Otfrid heard the noise of something
 falling on the steep roof and the thud of the returned book.
 And he rushed out to collect the dry gifts under the sky, in a spot
 where much rain runs down from the roofs.

72 MS Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Reg. lat. 469, fols. 25v-26v. The poems were first edited in Walahfrid Strabo, *Carmina*, ed. Dümmler, 407-408, to which I refer for the Latin text.

73 A chapel is meant here.

Through the intervention of the saints, thanks to an unprecedented miracle,
 the book was not stained by any spot even in the midst of the rain,
 although it had fallen down open with immeasurable violence:
 indeed, the thief had removed all the clasps from it.
 Remembering your help, St Dionysius, and his promises,
 Otfrid offers his thanks, consecrating himself and the gift.
 Support him before the high throne of God with your prayers and merits.
 Wherever he is, may he obtain every good request of his.

2

This series of divine books in their entirety
 was written by Otfrid out of love for God the Highest,
 supported in this task by your peace, St Dionysius, and obeying
 to the sweet commands of Hilduin, father and lord.
 Grant him the honour of your reward, o Christ.
 After the gifts in this world may he obtain eternal good.

3

Make worthy of the sacred order, o Christ, all who gird themselves with this zona⁷⁴.
 May whoever wears this ornament remember Otfrid from now on.

Acknowledgements

The research leading to these results has received funding from the Austrian Science Fund (FWF) under the Elise Richter Programme, Project No. V-811G »Margins at the Centre«. I would like to thank Ingrid Hartl and the anonymous reviewers of this contribution for their valuable comments and suggestions.

74 A liturgical belt for clerics.

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- Fig. 1: On the left: Bede, *Expositio in Actus Apostolorum*, ed. Laistner (CCSL 121) 69-70: Otfrid reused the underlined passages probably taking them from an abbreviation of Bede's commentary and not from Bede's *Expositio* directly.
- On the right: MS Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bibliothek, 59 Weiss., f. 42v: Otfrid's commented edition on Acts. The misplaced quote of Acts 16.21 at the end of the gloss on Acts 16.17 suggests that Otfrid did not draw his glosses from Bede's text directly but from an abbreviation of it.