

THE MEDIAEVAL ACADEMY OF AMERICA: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND PROSPECT

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THE purpose of this article is to record briefly the history of a movement which has resulted in the incorporation on December 23, 1925, of the MEDIAEVAL ACADEMY OF AMERICA, and to suggest something of the possibilities of this organization for the future. That such an article should appear in the first number of SPECULUM is altogether fitting; for this journal is to be the official organ of the Academy.

The initial impulse to this movement was the presidential address delivered by Professor John M. Manly before the Modern Language Association of America in December, 1920.¹ Since his analysis of the situation then existing in modern languages applied equally to the whole field of mediaeval studies in this country, and since his recommendations for a comprehensive and constructive programme point the way to a new era in American humanistic scholarship, I indicate something of the content of his address. After commending the Association for its fine record of achievement during its thirty-seven years of existence, Professor Manly emphasized the lack of organized cooperative activity in that body:

In the field of research we see that everything has been left to the individual members. Not only has there been no attempt to direct the investigations, there has been equally no attempt to bring together in any special way or for any special purpose members who are working on subjects closely related or capable of being made of mutual service. . . . No great author or period has been fully studied; no great text or body of related texts has been edited; no problem of literary history or criticism has been made the object of concentrated and consistent study. . . . The general impression produced by a survey of our work is that it has been individual, casual, scrappy, and scattering. . . . if we needed financial support for some important undertaking and were asked to justify our appeal by reference to what we have done, we could not point to large, unified achievements.²

¹ "New Bottles, The President's Address," *Publications of the Modern Language Association*, Vol. XXXVI, No. 1, March, 1921, pp. xlvi-lx of Proceedings for 1920.

² *Ibid.*, pp. xlvii-lviii.

Following this indictment, he suggested some important problems to be undertaken, and, after voicing the conviction that the necessary money for such tasks would be available if the cause was intelligently presented, he recommended that a programme be drawn up "for reorganization of the meetings with a view to greater specialization and greater stimulation of research; and the working out through carefully chosen committees of plans for important investigations and of methods of aiding individual investigators."

As a result of this recommendation one of the groups organized during 1921 chose as its subject "The Influence of Latin Culture on Mediaeval Literature," or, as it was later expressed, "Mediaeval Latin Studies." This original group was the nucleus of the present MEDIAEVAL ACADEMY OF AMERICA.

At the meeting of the Modern Language Association in Baltimore in December of the same year, this was constituted a permanent group or section. Its first session consisted of an animated committee-meeting at which the eighteen or twenty present carried on informal discussion, occasionally directing their remarks to the chairman when they had crystallized some suggestion. In the personnel of the group, in the trend of the discussion, and in the agenda of activities outlined for the following year, there was already a suggestion of a Mediaeval Academy of America. There were representatives — geographically well-distributed — from all departments of modern-language study in the leading American universities, as well as individuals from outside the academic circle, known to the public through their literary activities in modern fields. In response to an invitation of the chairman, Professor Rand had sent for discussion a comprehensive syllabus of suggested studies. This syllabus, along with numerous other suggestions which have been coming in for the past four years from the United States and abroad, may well form the basis for a programme of constructive studies to be considered by the ACADEMY. As to immediate procedure, all of those present recognized that, because of the vast scope of territory included in the subject assigned and because of the multitude of tasks to be undertaken, it was obviously impossible to make comprehensive assignments covering the whole field. So it was

agreed that a programme of work should be drawn up which would develop cooperation on the part of persons interested in Mediaeval-Latin literature. The following proposals were discussed:

1. To secure as complete a list as possible of scholars working in this field and, wherever possible, a statement of the tasks in which they are engaged.
2. To put workers in closely related projects into communication with one another.
3. To secure data as to what the colleges and the universities are doing in the field of Mediaeval Latin Studies.
4. To study possibilities for wider cooperation (i) with scholars in classics, history, philosophy, and related subjects or fields; (ii) with organizations and institutions, such as the Benedictine Order. It was suggested that in this group might be the beginnings of an Academy of Mediaeval Latin Culture.
5. To connect this group with scholars in the mediaeval field in England and on the Continent.
6. To concentrate upon a few concrete projects of general interest in this field, such as encouraging the introduction of specific courses in Mediaeval Latin in the graduate schools of the country.¹

A further indication that, in their inception, the aims of the group reached beyond the Modern Language Association is found in the following excerpt from a letter from the present writer, chairman of the group, to Professor Manly, general chairman of all of the Modern Language groups, written two weeks after the meeting in Baltimore:

I have in mind an advisory council consisting of such men as Professors Rand, Haskins, Tatlock, Alien, Grandgent, Paetow, Mr Carl Van Doren, and others representing the various fields and academic departments of Latin cultural interests. *Such a council might possibly develop into an Academy of Mediaeval-Latin Culture with a definite program.*

And a paragraph from a letter by Professor Rand, written a little later, indicates that he, too, from the first heartily approved of this suggestion:

¹ See *Publications of the Modern Language Association*, Vol. XXXVII, March, 1922; Proceedings for 1921, pp. xlvī-xlix. The interested reader will find here also Professor Rand's syllabus.

The idea which you suggest of an Academy of Mediaeval Culture is certainly a splendid goal to look forward to. I can even imagine in the future that with the help of my friend, Ralph Adams Cram, the Academy will be locally situated in a Gothic monastery.

In these beginnings, then, and in all of the activities of this group and, later, of the committee of the American Council of Learned Societies up to the present, the interest has been centred primarily in Mediaeval Latin literature and in the varied aspects of Mediaeval Latinity. With this fact in mind the reader will readily understand why the group in the Modern Language Association turned at once to Professors Rand and Beeson. Obviously the first steps in any programme were to effect a simple organization, to discover the precise situation with regard to Mediaeval Latin in American educational institutions, and to encourage the introduction of specific courses in this subject in the graduate schools.

The first step taken to achieve these ends consisted in a conference between the chairman of the group and Professor Beeson, held in Chicago about two days after the session in Baltimore. The problem of an introductory course in Mediaeval Latin was the subject for discussion. Though at the present time there are several anthologies which might be used for such a course, no satisfactory text was then available. Professor Beeson finally expressed himself as willing to prepare an anthology for this purpose, provided he could be assured a publisher. A syllabus of the proposed selections, which he made during the following months, formed the basis for discussion in December, 1922, not only in the Modern Language Association but also in sections in the American Philological and Historical Associations. Professor Beeson's book appeared a few months ago.¹

During the spring of 1922 the organization of the committee in the Modern Language Association was completed. From the beginning two elements were kept in mind: that it must be national rather than sectional in character; and that it must enlist the services of the best Mediaeval Latinists from whatever department of study or from whatever learned society. In the first place, then, the country was divided geographically, with Professors Gerould and Tatlock as

¹ Cf. review, "A Handful of Helps to the Study of Mediaeval Latin," pp. 110 &., *infra*.

chairmen for the East and for the Pacific Coast respectively; the present writer was appointed chairman for the Middle West and executive secretary of the group. In the second place, Professor Rand was persuaded to accept the general or advisory chairmanship. As a result of this organization, a uniform programme was presented in December, 1922, at meetings of the American Philological Association, the Modern Language Association, and the Pacific Coast Philological Association. As announced in a bulletin issued during the summer of 1922, the main purpose of this organization was "to synthesize in a constructive programme the efforts of all individuals or groups from classics, history, modern languages, philosophy, and related fields who are interested in the Latin cultural aspects of the Middle Ages."

The first definite project of the committee indicated above was a survey of the condition of Mediaeval-Latin studies in the graduate schools of this country. A subcommittee consisting of Professors Tatlock, Cross, and Brooke analyzed the data collected and prepared specific recommendations. Through the courtesy of the editors of that magazine, their report appeared in *Modern Philology*, XXI (1924), 309-315. The last two pages are packed with valuable suggestions and recommendations which deserve careful consideration, at the proper time, by the Council of the MEDIAEVAL ACADEMY OP AMERICA. During this same year the secretary began to compile a mailing-list of those interested in the purposes of this group. This list now includes between five and six hundred names from all over the world. Indicative of the widespread interest in the various activities are letters received by the secretary from all parts of the United States, from Australia, Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Great Britain and Ireland, Holland, and the Scandinavian countries; also from a considerable number of business and professional people outside of the academic life.

After the meetings in December, 1922, it became evident that the interest had grown far beyond the organization with which it was then affiliated, and that some kind of reorganization which would give Mediaeval Latinists from the classics, history, and philosophy a place of equality with those from modern languages was necessary.

Two possibilities for such reorganization were considered by the committee: (1) the formation of an independent organization to be known as a society or academy for mediaeval studies; or (2) affiliation with some organization already in existence. At first the committee favored the former of these possibilities, but after correspondence and conference with Professor Haskins, chairman of the American Council of Learned Societies, Professor Rand, the general chairman, and the secretary, with the approval of the other two members, completed arrangements for the appointment of a committee on Mediaeval Latin Studies as a standing committee of the American Council of Learned Societies. The original committee as appointed by Professor Haskins consisted of Professors E. K. Rand (chairman), C. H. Beeson, M. De Wulf, G. H. Gerould, L. J. Paetow, J. S. P. Tatlock, J. W. Thompson, J. F. Willard, and the present writer as executive secretary. Since that time Professor H. M. Ayres and Mr John Nicholas Brown have been added to the committee.

During the year 1923 also, several other projects were proposed or initiated:

1. In response to urgent requests, Professor Paetow began a book, not yet completed, entitled *The Revival of Interest in Mediaeval Latin* with the following tentative table of contents: chapter i, "Latin in the Middle Ages"; chapter ii, "The Humanists and Mediaeval Latin,"; chapter iii, "Mediaeval Latin in the Modern Times"; chapter iv, "Latin as an International Auxiliary Language"; chapter v, "The Revival of Interest in Mediaeval Latin in the Twentieth Century." Each chapter is to include a critical bibliography.
2. In connection with the American Council of Learned Societies, the committee interested itself in the international project for a new Mediaeval-Latin dictionary. Professor Beeson, chairman of a special committee of the Council for this project, and American representative on the international committee, had attended the Union Académique Internationale in Brussels in April, 1922. The Union Académique Internationale, it may be explained here, is now committed to a Mediaeval-Latin lexicon to come down to about the year 1000. The organization is completed, the work distributed, and Paris is the centre, with Professor Goelzer of the Sorbonne as director.

3. Through Professor Gerould, in cooperation with the American Library Association, the committee proposed a plan for cooperative buying of Mediaeval-Latin materials so as to avoid unnecessary duplication. Professor Gerould suggested also a bibliography of Mediaeval-Latin materials in the libraries of this country. These are projects for the Academy to consider.
4. At the meeting of the British and American Professors of English at Columbia University in June, 1923, the active cooperation of the English scholars was enlisted. Dr G. G. Coulton of St Johns College, Cambridge University, agreed to sponsor the project in England. In the *Literary Supplement* of the *London Times* for November 1, 1923, appears a letter by him outlining the plans of the Committee and requesting the names of those interested. As a result of this announcement, between fifty and one hundred English scholars have written to Dr Coulton or to the secretary indicating their interest in the movement. The closing sentence of Dr Coulton's letter is significant as including a phrase which expresses one of the principal aims of the Academy: "To those who have felt the need of what the Provost of Eton once called, 'a clearing-house of mediaeval studies,' the energy of these American professors promises very effectual help." May our American Academy not be forgetful of its international opportunities!
5. The committee considered ways and means of publishing a journal devoted to mediaeval studies. It recommended that the publication contain, in addition to reports, special studies, reviews, and comprehensive bibliographies. And it suggested also a project for publishing in uniform edition translations of Mediaeval-Latin classics.
6. In November, 1923, the secretary prepared and mailed to almost four hundred persons interested in some aspect of Mediaeval-Latin studies a bulletin explanatory of the work of the committee.

In the meantime, while the Committee was getting its programme under way, Professor J. F. Willard, working independently, was preparing an annual bulletin on the progress of mediaeval studies in the United States. Through the courtesy of the University of Colorado, with some financial assistance from the American Council of Learned Societies this year, three numbers have already appeared.¹ These constitute a valuable and comprehensive source of information concerning the status of mediaeval studies in this country. In accordance with its general aims, the Committee for the past two years has

¹ *Progress of Mediaeval Studies in the United States of America*, compiled by James F. Willard, Professor of History, University of Colorado (Boulder, Colorado, May, 1923, 1924, 1925).

cooperated with Professor Willard by helping him secure data for this bulletin.

In addition to the "Report on the Status of Mediaeval-Latin Studies" and Professor Willard's bulletin mentioned above, the prominent activities for the year 1924 were: the initiation by Professor Beeson of work in this country on the Mediaeval Latin dictionary; the recommendation of a committee to raise funds for a journal of mediaeval studies; the establishment of closer connections with the Continent; the preparation of a special bulletin by the secretary; and a gift of three thousand dollars to be used toward a journal of mediaeval studies. To discover what difficulties would develop in connection with the Mediaeval Latin texts assigned to America, Professor Beeson set to work under his supervision a group of graduate students at the University of Chicago. During the spring the secretary met Mr Jean Malye, general delegate of the Association Guillaume Budé, an organization which through lectures, bulletins, and a publishing house "is engaged in restoring French classical scholarship to its proper high position." Mr Malye expressed a keen interest in our work and offered to give it publicity in France through his bulletins. Several enthusiastic letters came to the chairman from Germany, including one from Professor Paul Lehmann, Traube's successor at Munich; and Professor Maurice De Wulf of the University of Louvain has been among the most enthusiastic supporters of our enterprise. During the holiday season of this same year, special sessions in the Modern Language Association, in the American Philological Association, and in the American Historical Association were devoted to Mediaeval Latin. Professor Paetow presented before Section L of the American Association for the Advancement of Science plans for the proposed journal of mediaeval studies and for the dictionary. During this same year Dr Francis P. Magoun, Jr. accepted the chairmanship of a special committee for Establishing an Annual Bibliography of Mediaeval Latinity. He drew up a plan for procedure and had the initial stage of the work well in hand when plans for SPECULUM and for the Academy delayed further immediate activities.

Since the chairman and the secretary of the Committee were con-

vinced that funds were an immediate and imperative need for the realization of their programme, they centred their main efforts on effecting an organization for this purpose. To consider this problem, the secretary, with the approval of the chairman, issued a call for a meeting of the Committee on Mediaeval Latin Studies in New York on January 2d, 1925. They invited for a joint-meeting at that time the special subcommittee on Founding a Journal of Mediaeval Studies, which had been appointed some months before by the American Council of Learned Societies and of which Professor H. M. Ayres was chairman. The important event of the meeting was a telegram from Professor Rand, who was unable to be present, announcing that Mr John Nicholas Brown had given three thousand dollars towards establishing the journal, hoping but not stipulating that the two committees would raise the additional three thousand then estimated as needed for the first year. As a result of the discussion which followed, the leadership of the financial campaign was delegated to Professor Ayres, and the goal for the necessary endowment of the journal was set at one hundred thousand dollars. At this same meeting it was voted as the sense of the Committee that ultimately an Academy of Mediaeval Studies should be formed; Professor Rand was nominated to the American Council of Learned Societies as editor-in-chief of the mediaeval journal to be established; Mr Brown, Dr Magoun, and the present writer were appointed a committee to draw up with Professor Rand nominations for an editorial board to be submitted to the Committee on Mediaeval Latin Studies.

As soon as the American Council of Learned Societies had approved the vote of the committee in nominating Professor Rand editor-in-chief and had authorized the appointment of the editorial board as indicated above, the committee specially appointed proceeded to draw up a list of nominations for the editorial and advisory boards. With the approval of the Committee on Mediaeval Latin Studies Professor Rand appointed the managing and the publishing editors. After the editorial board had been approved by the Committee on Mediaeval Latin Studies, and an advisory board of eighteen had been selected by the same committee from a list of twenty-nine names submitted, Professor Haskins, as authorized by the American

Council of Learned Societies at its January meeting, named the editorial body as now officially constituted. As a result of the vote of the Committee on Mediaeval Latin Studies, the title chosen for the new magazine was SPECULUM, A JOURNAL OF MEDIAEVAL STUDIES.

We now come to the final stage of the activities leading to the MEDIAEVAL ACADEMY OF AMERICA. On Friday afternoon, June 12, 1925, Mr John Nicholas Brown and Mr Ralph Adams Cram, in an afternoon meeting with Professor Rand at the Colonial Club in Cambridge, broached the idea of taking steps at once to found an academy which would include within its scope, in addition to Mediaeval Latin, all aspects of mediaeval civilization. The proposal was made the subject of discussion at a dinner at the Harvard Club in Boston on Friday evening, June 19, at which were present Professor Rand, Mr Brown, Mr Cram, Dr Magoun, and the present writer. At this dinner were drafted certain considerations. The first of these considerations represents a broadening of the aims drafted two years earlier by the Committee on Mediaeval Latin Studies:

- I. An Academy is essential to accomplish the ultimate objectives of the Committee on Mediaeval-Latin Studies: An understanding of the records of the Middle Ages and their significance in human history. This involves (1) Lists of **Documents**; (2) The edition or other reproduction of Documents; (3) Dictionaries and other linguistic **helps**; (4) Publications dealing with the whole field or with parts thereof; (5) The study of the relation of Mediaeval Latin to its Classical Background, to mediaeval vernacular literature, and to mediaeval and modern **life and thought**; (6) Provisions for research in the fields of Mediaeval Institutions, Mediaeval Art and Archaeology, Mediaeval **Literature**—various kinds of subventions.
- II. An academy will most successfully coordinate various projects already initiated or proposed in the mediaeval field. These include:
 1. SPECULUM, A JOURNAL OF MEDIAEVAL STUDIES
 2. Dictionaries
 3. Bibliographies
 4. Publishing projects of various kinds.

- III. An academy will be a coordinating agency for all individuals and groups interested in mediaeval culture.
- IV. An academy is the logical next step for those interested in mediaeval studies to take in order to become a coordinate organization in the American Council of Learned Societies.

Mr Brown and Mr Cram further pointed out that the proposal for an academy in the near future was a timely step in connection with *SPECULUM*, *A JOURNAL OF MEDIAEVAL STUDIES*, and other projects temporarily suspended because of lack of funds. Finally, it developed in the course of the dinner that pledges of six thousand dollars could be secured at once to initiate a national campaign. This proposal, with the accompanying considerations in support thereof, the secretary submitted to the Committee on Mediaeval Latin Studies in July. As a result of their approval of this proposal and of further resolutions submitted in October, Mr Brown (chairman), Mr Cram, and Professor Haskins were appointed a subcommittee on incorporation, and Mr Brown and Mr Cram accepted the invitation of the Committee to assume the financial leadership in the campaign for endowment.

It is well to pause here for a moment to summarize the more notable achievements of the Committee on Mediaeval Latin Studies during the past four years:

1. It has contributed its modest part toward the international revival of interest in mediaeval studies.
2. It has paved the way for international cooperation among students of mediaeval literature.
3. It has helped to develop a sense of solidarity and common purpose among individuals and organizations in America, interested in any aspect of mediaeval life and thought.
4. It has formulated a comprehensive and constructive programme of significance to all interested in the continuity of civilization.

5. Through the generous cooperation of Mr Brown it has made possible a publication devoted exclusively to matters mediæval.

On the other hand, many of the projects enumerated above, as well as other valuable proposals, still lie buried in the secretary's files. Some require further study and some require funds.

A capable and responsive committee, a large, interested group outside, and the American Council of Learned Societies, which since 1923 has given financial assistance for clerical expenses, have made possible these achievements of the past four years. At the moment of writing the secretary recalls especially the contributions of Professors Manly, Alien, Haskins, Beeson, Willard, and Rand. The first of these goes down in our records as the critic and the seer. With him stands Professor P. S. Alien, who in December, 1921, preceding the meeting in Baltimore, first suggested the possibility of an academy and outlined a general plan of action which has proved most useful. For the past three years Professor Haskins has been a constant and helpful counsellor. The merits of Professor Beeson's *Primer of Medieval Latin* speak for themselves. Here the only word is a tribute to him as the maker of a much needed text-book. In such a task there is little glory for the scholar; but for the making of this book a genuine scholar was essential. Estimated in terms of time and energy, his contribution to Mediaeval Latin studies has probably been greater than that of any other individual. It is a pleasure also to make special mention of Professor Willard's work as compiler and editor of the bulletins on the progress of mediæval studies in the United States. The fact that this is the contribution of a teacher in a western state-university, where conditions as to hours of labor and library facilities at best are not as favorable as in the leading universities in the East, is a splendid tribute to the individual initiative and spirit of cooperation of the mediæval scholars in this country. None has shown a finer and more generous spirit than Professor Willard, and the fact that a western state-university provided funds for such an enterprise is a hopeful sign in these days when even academic interests are too often primarily in immediate and material

things. Finally, to the influential leadership, the tireless energy, the wise judgment, and the tempered optimism of Professor Rand all of us are most deeply indebted.

The next chapter in the development of mediaeval studies in America is still to be written. The purpose of the MEDIAEVAL ACADEMY OF AMERICA as formulated by the incorporators is clear: To conduct, encourage, promote and support research, publication, and instruction in Mediaeval records, literature, languages, arts, archaeology, history, philosophy, science, life, and all other aspects of Mediaeval civilization by publications, by research, and by such other means as may be desirable, and to hold property for such purpose. The activities of the group in the Modern Language Association and of the Committee of the American Council of Learned Societies have been merely a preparation for the attainment of these larger objectives. The hope of the Committee on Mediaeval Latin Studies is that its heritage to the ACADEMY will be a combination of a comprehensive vision and practical projects. The interpretation of a thousand years of civilization is no small task, especially when as obscured and complex as those of the Middle Ages. It is a task which will require the cooperation and the creative energy of students of art, archaeology, folk-lore, government, law, literature, medicine, philosophy, theology and all other branches which help us comprehend our mediaeval ancestors. And it is a task fully as significant for modern civilization as the more notable discoveries in the field of the natural sciences. To accomplish this task, one of the functions of the new ACADEMY will be that of a coordinating office, a national and international clearing-house for all matters mediaeval. This means that the ACADEMY will not take over the activities of any institution, corporation, or learned society now in existence; rather will it foster that interest and coordinate activities already in being.

Finally, the ACADEMY will provide means to enable scholars to complete important investigations. Monographs or books on mediaeval themes will not need to be published abroad or at the partial expense of the author as has been the case of two notable works of the last few years. For all of these projects money is needed. Conser-

vative estimate places the minimum requirement at one million dollars. For such a need only Professor Manly's epic appeal is adequate:

The cynical among you are still objecting that such undertakings cost money, and that while money is poured out in large sums for research in physics and chemistry and metallurgy and botany and every other branch of the physical sciences, this support of research is due to the fact that business men see immediate practical returns from the development of these subjects. That it is easier to obtain money for subjects of this kind is true, but it is very far from being true that men and women of large wealth are interested only in subjects that pay in money. They are interested in any subject that awakens their imaginations by its significance for the large problems of human history and *destiny*. Astronomy has for many years obtained large sums for the equipment and support of the most subtle and recondite researches. No doubt astronomy has many practical uses, but it is not these which have enabled it to obtain the funds it needed: it has won by its appeal to the imagination of men. We of the humanities have been too reticent, too lacking in human fellowship. We too have stars in our firmament, systems as mysterious and fascinating as comets or double suns, but we have too seldom invited the public to look through our telescopes and share our visions of the strange and interesting processes by which the chaotic chatter of anthropoid apes has been organized in the wonderful fabric of human speech or their formless outbursts of emotion have after many centuries issued in lyric and drama. . . .

There is ... plenty of money in the world, and the men and women who control it are ready to give it freely for visions — visions of all kinds — visions of food for starving peoples, visions of wider opportunities for cramped lives, visions of astronomical discoveries, or of excavations of long-buried civilizations, visions of dead poets and painters and lawgivers, visions of man in every stage of his long climb up from his feeble and brutish beginnings.¹

Our immediate task is to rise "to the highth of this great argument" and give men and women of wealth a vision of the wonderful possibilities of this new MEDIAEVAL ACADEMY OF AMERICA.

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¹ Professor John M. Manly, "New Bottles, The President's Address," *Publications of the Modern Language Association*, Vol. XXXVI, No. 1, March, 1921, pp. lii, lvi-lvii of Proceedings for 1920.