

## Study, Memorize, Compose

Medieval Icelandic bishops, especially the saints Þorlákr (d. 1133) and Jón (d. 1121), are portrayed as industrious and diligent schoolboys in their biographies. The tumultuous bishop of the turbulent *Sturlungaöld* (The Age of the Sturlungs), Guðmundr Arason (d. 1237), who was also regarded as a saint, had a different childhood, according to the *Prestssaga Guðmundar góða*, written shortly after the bishop's death, and the versions A and C of his fourteenth century biographies, that describe the six year old Guðmundr as a disobedient child:<sup>1</sup>

*Prestssaga:*

En fyrir því, at fjárlut þann, er Ari hafði átt, bar undan Guðmundi, syni hans, þá þótti frændum hans ráð fyrir honum at sjá at setja hann til bækr. Ok tekr Ingimundr prestr við honum at kenna honum ok fekk honum þar fyrst í fýðurbætr ok erfð, at hann var barðr til bækr. Hann var ólatr mjök, ok þótti þá þat þegar auðsýnt á athöfn hans, at honum myndi í kyn kippa um ódæld, því at hann vildi ráða við hvern sem hann átti. En fyrir þat var fóstri hans við hann harðr.<sup>2</sup>

(Because Guðmund could not inherit his father's property, his kinsmen decided that he would be best provided for by becoming a scholar. Ingimund the priest took charge of his education so that the immediate first-fruits he received from his patrimony was to be beaten to his books. He was very stubborn and soon showed that he resembled his father in

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<sup>1</sup> The account of Guðmundr's childhood is missing in version B. For a survey of the different versions of the *Guðmundar sögur*, see Stefán Karlsson 1993, 245–246. On the learned and native roots of the *Prestssaga*, see Ciklamini 2004, 55–74.

<sup>2</sup> *Sturlunga saga* I, 123. Editions of *Biskupa sögur* referred to in this article are *Sturlunga saga* I–II 1946 (*Prestssaga*); *Biskupa sögur* I–II 1858–78 (*Guðmundar saga* D); *Guðmundar sögur biskups* I 1983 (*Guðmundar saga* A); *Biskupa sögur* I 2003 (*Jóns saga*); *Biskupa sögur* II 2002 (*Þorláks saga*).

overbearing temperament and would seek to have his own way. Ingimundr was equally determined to keep him on a tight rein.)<sup>3</sup>

*Guðmundar saga A:*

[Þ]á þótti frændum hans þat ráðligast at setja hann til bækr, ok tekr Ingimundr fǫðurbróðir hans við honum, at kenna honum ok fóstora hann, ok tekr hann þat fyrst í fǫðurbætr at hann var barðr til bækr, hann var ólát<sup>4</sup> mjök, ok þótti þat þegar auðsætt, at honum mundi í kyn kippa um athöfn hans ok ódælleika, því at hann vildi ráða at sínum hluta, ef hann mætti, við hvern er hann átti, en fyri þat var fóstri hans harðr við hann ok réð honum mjök.<sup>5</sup>

(His kinsmen found it best that he became a learned man, and his uncle Ingimundr took him into his care and taught him. The immediate first-fruits he received from his patrimony was to be beaten to his books, he was very disorderly and it was obvious that he resembled his family in behaviour and difficult temper and would seek to have his own way. Because of that, his foster-father was strict with him and kept control of him.“

*Guðmundar saga C:*

Þótti þat ráðligast at sjá fyrir Guðmundi Arasyni ok vænast til lengstra þrifa at setja hann til bækr. Því tekr Ingimundr prestur við honum til fósturs, fǫðurbróðir hans. Tók Guðmundr þat fyrri en fé í fǫðurarf at vera barðr til bókar ok náms. Hann var mjök ólát<sup>4</sup> í fyrstu, ok því var fóstri hans ok frændi mjök við hann harðr ok hirtingasamr. Þótti þat auðsét í hans uppvexti at honum mundi í kyn kippa um ódælleika, því at hann vildi ráða at sínum hluta við hvern sem hann átti leikunum at skipta. Hann var þá sex vetra er Ingimundr tók hann til sín.<sup>6</sup>

(It was thought to be of best interest to Guðmundr and his future to make him a learned man, so Ingimundr the priest, his uncle, decided to foster him. The immediate first-fruits he received from his patrimony

<sup>3</sup> *Sturlunga saga* II 1974, 100–101.

<sup>4</sup> Stefán Karlsson changed the adjective “ólatr” (willing) in earlier editions, into “ólát<sup>r</sup>” (disorderly) which corresponds better to the portray of young Guðmundr. 1977, 121–131.

<sup>5</sup> *Guðmundar sögur biskups* I, 34.

<sup>6</sup> I am indebted to Stefán Karlsson (d. 2006), who kindly gave me permission to use his transcription of the yet unpublished version C of *Guðmundar saga* by Bergþ Sokkason.

#### STUDY, MEMORIZE, COMPOSE

was to be beaten to his books and studies. To begin with, he was very disorderly and therefore his uncle and foster-father was very strict with him and punished him. When he grew up it was obvious that he would resemble his family in difficult temper and would seek to have his own way. He was six winters old when Ingimundr took him into his care.)

Arngrímur Brandsson, the author of the youngest fourteenth century version, corrected the image of the young Guðmundr and describes him as an obedient and dutiful child, according to hagiographic tradition:

*Guðmundar saga* D:

[Þ]egar til bækr settr á skilníngr aldri, hlýðinn ok auðmjúkr sínum meistara, sem öllum öðrum, er honum vildu gott kenna, [...] en hann sat áðr hlýðinn lærisveinn fyrir síns meistara fótum.<sup>7</sup>

(Immediately put to study when old enough to understand, he was obedient and humble toward his master and everybody else who wanted to teach him good things [...] but before he had been an obedient disciple by his master's feet.)

Guðmundr Arason may very well have been a stubborn and difficult child, who needed a firm hand, but perhaps not “barinn til bókar” (“beaten to his books”) for that reason only. The expression “berja til bókar” could also be understood as a method of teaching. Studying in the Middle Ages and for considerable time afterwards meant word-for-word memorization of texts, especially biblical texts such as the Psalms. In medieval schools, teachers “beat grammar into” students by having them learn the required texts by heart. Physical methods were also a common practice, “it should be noted that beating was a constant aspect of education in ancient schools as well, for physical methods were thought to ensure that knowledge was securely impressed into the memories of schoolchildren”.<sup>8</sup> According to Mary Carruthers, the scourge was therefore not only useful to keep order and discipline, but also as a teaching aid.

Numerous and various studies on medieval memory have appeared in recent years. Scholars have written on collective memory, cult-

<sup>7</sup> *Biskupa sögur* II 1858–1878, 7.

<sup>8</sup> Carruthers and Ziolkowski 2002, 21.

ural memory and educated or artificial memory, as opposed to natural memory, and the training of memory in the Middle Ages.<sup>9</sup> One of the most influential treatises on memory and memory training was *Ad Herennium* which dated 86–82 BC. According to *Ad Herennium*, there were two types of memory: a natural memory and an artificial one. The artificial memory was strengthened or confirmed by training.<sup>10</sup> The fundamental principle in trained, educated memory is to divide the material to be remembered into pieces short enough to be recalled in single units and to key these into an easily reconstructable order. A long work is easier to remember if it is divided into short segments. An enumeration was also a mnemonic aid.<sup>11</sup>

The *Biskupa sögur*, biographies of Icelandic bishops (written ca. 1200–mid 14<sup>th</sup> century) are the most important sources of formal teaching and learning in medieval Iceland. *Hungrvaka* and *Porláks saga* tell of schools in the southern diocese at Skálholt. *Jóns saga* gives an elaborate description of the school founded by Jón Ögmundarson at Hólar in the northern diocese and its first teachers. The school and its industrious and learned atmosphere are depicted like a model monastery:

Þá var þat ekki hús nálíga er eigi væri nokkut iðnat í þat er til nytsemðar var. Þat var inna ellri manna hátttr at kenna inum yngrum, en inir yngri rituðu þá er náms varð í milli. Þeir váru allir samþykkir, ok eigi deildu þeir ok engi ofundaði annan. Ok þegar er hringt var tíða, þá kómu þeir þar allir ok fluttu fram tíðir sínar með miklum athuga.<sup>12</sup>

(At that time there was no house nearby where there was not done any work except what was found useful. It was the custom of older men to teach younger men, but the younger men wrote in the intervals when they studied. They were all in agreement and they did not dispute or envy each other. And when the bells tolled for divine office, they all came and sang their offices with much enthusiasm.)

*Laurentius saga*, written in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, is the most detailed source on medieval schools in Iceland. The hagiographic nature of the

<sup>9</sup> Yates 1966; Carruthers 1990; Assman 1992; Carruthers 1998; Hubrath 1996.

<sup>10</sup> Yates 1966, 5–7; Carruthers 1990, 122–155; Hubrath 1966, 74–88.

<sup>11</sup> Carruthers and Ziolkowski 2002, 4–6.

<sup>12</sup> *Biskupa sögur* I 2003, 217–218.

*Biskupa sögur*, with their international motifs and topoi, has to be taken into consideration when they are utilised as sources, but their fundamental information has been found trustworthy.<sup>13</sup> All *Biskupa sögur* express respect and gratitude towards the teachers. In addition to the cathedral schools, schools were established at the church sites of Oddi and Haukadalur. Teitr, son of Bishop Ísleifr established the school at Haukadalur. There he taught Þorlákr Runólfsson, Bishop Gizurr's successor, but his best known student was Ari *fróði* Þorgilsson. Bishop Þorlákr Þórhallsson began his education at Oddi:

Sem móðir hans sá af sinni vizku með Guðs forsjá hve dýrigr kennimaðr Þorlákr mátti verða af sínum góðum háttum ef nám hans gengi fram, þá réðusk þau mæðgin í inn æzta hofuðstað í Odda undir hönd Eyjólfri presti Sæmundarsyni, er bæði hafði hofðingskap mikinn ok lærdóm góðan, gæzku ok vitsmuni gnægri en flestir aðrir.<sup>14</sup>

(When his mother saw, with her wisdom and God's foresight, how great a cleric Þorlákr would become, because of his fine ways, if he could further his studies, mother and son became part of the household in the most worthy church farm at Oddi, under the guidance of the priest Eyjólfur Sæmundarson, who was a noble and wise man, having more kindness and intelligence than most others.)

Icelandic bishops also sought education abroad. The first Icelandic bishop, Ísleifr Gizurarson was educated in Herford in Saxony and his son and successor, Gizurr Ísleifsson, also studied in Saxony.<sup>15</sup> Þorlákr Þórhallsson went to Paris and Lincoln, and his successor, Páll Jónsson, followed in his uncle's footsteps and studied in Lincoln. *Þorláks saga* tells briefly of Þorlákr's study abroad:

Ok fór hann af Íslandi, ok er ekki sagt af hans ferðum unz hann kom í París ok var þar í skóla svá lengi sem hann þóttisk þurfa til þess náms sem hann vildi þar nema. Þaðan fór hann til Englands ok var í Lincoln ok nam þar enn mikit nám ok þarfsælligt, bæði sér ok öðrum.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Foote 2003, ccxcii; Sverrir Tómasson 1988, 15–35.

<sup>14</sup> *Biskupa sögur* II 2002, 49.

<sup>15</sup> *Íslendingabók* 1968, 20–21; *Hungrvaka*, in *Biskupa sögur* I 2003, 5–14; *Jóns saga helga*, in *Biskupa sögur* I 2003, 82.

<sup>16</sup> *Biskupa sögur* II 2002, 52.

## RITUN OG ÞÝÐINGAR

(And he left Iceland, and nothing is told of his journey until he reached Paris where he dwelt at school as long as he felt was necessary for what he wished to learn. From there he went to England and stayed in Lincoln where he acquired much and useful education, both for himself and others.)

Þorlákr lived abroad for six years after which he returned home to become a priest, and thereafter he became a prior in the first Icelandic Augustinian monastery, before finally becoming bishop of Skálholt. As a well-educated man, he must have felt the need to further education in Iceland. The following passage is in accordance with similar lives of confessors when describing his episcopal activities, but it also shows his interest in education:

Þorlákr byskup sá opt á helgar bœkr ok las yfir helgar ritningar, af því at hann gleymði eigi því er Jón postoli mælir í sinni bók: “Sæll er sá er les ok heyrir orð þessar bœkr ok varðveitir þá hluti er á henni eru ritaðir.”<sup>17</sup> Hann kenndi opt klerkum, bæði bœkr at lesa ok annat nám, þat er þeim var nytsamligt. Sá hann hve mikil nauðsyn á var gott at kenna, sem Davíð segir í psaltara: “Komið þér, synir, ok hlýðið mér, en ek man kenna yðr hversu Guð skal óttask.”<sup>18</sup> Jafnan var hann at riti ok ritaði ávallt helgar bœkr eptir dæmum Páls postola er hann sagði í sínum pistula: “Eigi ritum vér yður aðra hluti en þá er yður er mest þorf at lesa ok at vita.”<sup>19</sup>

(Bishop Þorlákr often studied sacred books and read the Scriptures because he did not forget what the Apostle John says in his book: “Blessed is he that reads and hears words of this book and keeps those things written there in his mind.” He often taught clerics, both to read books, and other studies useful to them. He saw how necessary it was to teach good things, as David says in the Psalter: “Come, you children and obey me and I shall teach you the fear of the Lord.” He was constantly writing and always wrote sacred books, following the Apostle Paul’s example: “For we write none other things unto you, than those which you mostly need to read or to know.”)

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<sup>17</sup> Rv 1:3.

<sup>18</sup> Ps 34:11.

<sup>19</sup> Cor 1:13. *Biskupa sögur* II 2002, 70.

While the hagiographer describes St Þorlákr's even temper he acknowledges that Ember days worried the bishop because:

[H]onum þótti þat ábyrgðarráð mikit at vígja menn er til þess sóttu langan veg ok hann sá þá mjök vanfæra til, bæði sakir lítills lærdóms ok annarra háttá sér óskapfelldra. En hann nennti þó varla at níta, bæði sakir fátækis þeira sjálfra ok fyrir sakir þeira manna er þeim hǫfðu kennt eða sínar jarteinir hǫfðu til sent. En sagði hann hverjum þeira greinilega hvat hverri vígslu fylgði til vanda ok fal þeim sjálfum ábyrgð á hendi ok þeim er þá sendu til.<sup>20</sup>

(He felt that it was a great responsibility to ordain men who had come to him from a long distance but whom he felt had faults, because of their lack of learning and other behaviour not to his liking. But he was reluctant to reject them, because of their poverty, and for the sake of those who had taught them or sent their tokens. But he told each of them of the responsibilities related to each ordination and made them and those who sent them feel this responsibility.)

The Psalter was used as a textbook to teach reading. *Þorláks saga* describes how Þorlákr studies the Psalter as a child: “Hann nam psaltara áðr en sundrskilja yrði börn móður hans ok fǫður, en lítit hafði hann bóknám annat í fyrstu.”<sup>21</sup> The recluse Hildir in *Jóns saga* taught a young boy to read: “Hon fóstaraði ok snauðan svein, þann er Ketill biskup veitti ok kenndi honum psaltara.”<sup>22</sup> Most of the prominent medieval grammatical literature and schoolbooks were known and used in 14<sup>th</sup> and fifteenth century Iceland and it may be assumed that such books had been used long before that. The use of grammatical *termini technici* used in the oldest grammatical treatises, the first being written in the latter half of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, could have been drawn from scholarly literature available to their authors.<sup>23</sup>

An amusing anecdote in *Jóns saga* indicates that schoolboys also secretly read literature not considered appropriate. It is told that Bishop

<sup>20</sup> *Biskupa sögur* II 2002, 76.

<sup>21</sup> *Biskupa sögur* II 2002, 48.

<sup>22</sup> *Biskupa sögur* I 2003, 253.

<sup>23</sup> Sverrir Tómasson 1988, 29–33.

Jón discovered the prospective Bishop Klængr reading aloud from Ovid's *De arte amandi*. However, although not among the pious books Klængr was supposed to study, reading Ovid has undoubtedly improved his Latin. We may assume that the art of memory was taught in Icelandic schools, to students who were also familiar with and trained in traditional oral culture and memory. *Jóns saga*, especially the *L* version, indicates that the hagiographer, possibly Bergr Sökkason, knew and used imagery and metaphors which were drawn from mnemonic technique, with its ingenious visual and pictorial methods.<sup>24</sup>

The manuscript AM 677 4to is one of the oldest manuscripts preserved in Iceland, dated to ca 1200.<sup>25</sup> It contains a remnant of a list of twelve vices, a translation of passages from *Prosperi Aquitani liber sententiarum excerptarum e scriptis Augustini*, and *Sancti Prosperi Aquitani ex Sententiis Sancti Augustini Epigrammatum liber unus*, and besides, homilies and the *Dialogues of St Gregory*. The epigrams were widely used as educational texts in medieval schools. They were attributed to Prosper Aquitanus (ca. 390 to ca. 490) and contain short passages from the works of St Augustin.<sup>26</sup> Remnants of the last two paragraphs from the “tólf palla ósómar” have been preserved in the manuscript:

...ti af himni. Kyrtil líkams kristis er kenning kristninnar. En sá er fyr utan raðning er útlendr er frá líkam Kristis. Slítum vér eigi ok þá þenna kyrtil heldr hlutu vér hann. Þat er at vér lesim eigi í sundr boðorð guðs, heldr veri hverr sem einn staðfastr í því er hann er til kallaðr.

<sup>24</sup> Ásdís Egilsdóttir 2006, 215–228. On the versions of *Jóns saga helga*, see Foote 2003, ccxiv–ccxli.

<sup>25</sup> *Katalog over Den Arnemagnæanske håndskriftsamling* 1892. The text is edited by Þorvaldur Bjarnarson in *Leifar fornra kristinna fræða íslenzkra* 1878, 2–18.

<sup>26</sup> The contents of this manuscript are minutely described by Konráð 1846, xc–xcviii. Before Konráð, Árni Magnússon had commented on the manuscript: „Aptan af opere theologico-morale, um tolf palla ósóma. Liber S. Augustini, qui dicitur Prosper. Est, nisi fallor, Prosperi Aquitanici liber Sententiarum ex S. Augustini operibus. Desunt nonnulla in calce (opus-theologico-morale).“ (AM 485 a 4to) Árni also listed all twelve vices on paper sheets attached to AM 677 4to, as an indication of what might be missing from the manuscript. See *Leifar fornra kristinna fræða íslenzkra* 1878, ii–iii.



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(...th from heaven. The cloak of Christ's body is the doctrine of Christianity. But those who do not belong to it are foreign to Christ's body. We should not tear this cloak apart but rather divide it. That is to say that we do not tear apart God's commandments, rather should every one of us be steadfast in his vocation.)

En tolfthi pallr ósóma er lýðr lagalauss sá er fellr í snöru glötnar.<sup>27</sup>

(But the twelfth step of vices are those who do not abide by the law and fall into the snare of damnation.)

The numbering of the vices and the segmentary nature of the text indicates that it could have been a handbook written for mnemonic purposes. Where modern handbooks are alphabetically arranged, other kinds of visual arrangements were used in premodern times, an imaginary model of Noah's Ark, a many-storeyed house with the same number of rooms of each level or steps of a staircase.<sup>28</sup> The "pallar" in this text can be understood as "steps", comparable to the fifteen "pallar" in *Mariú saga*, ch. 4. Each step has a symbolic meaning and reminds the audience of a corresponding Psalm to be sung:

Musterit merkir himinríki ok eilífa sælu með almátkum Guði. En fimtán pallar váru upp at ganga til musterisduranna, ok mátti eigi annan veg koma í musterit en of pallana at ganga, ok skyldi eigi skjótara fara en syngja sálm á hverjum palli. Ok eru þeir pallar síðan kallaðir *canticum graduum*, þat þýðizt palla lofsöngvar.<sup>29</sup>

(The temple signifies heaven and eternal happiness with almighty God. There were fifteen steps on the way up to the temple doors and no way to reach it but walk the steps, and nobody should walk so fast that he did not sing one psalm on each step. The steps are ever since called *canticum graduum*, the Steps of Praise.

The "tólf palla ósómar" are followed by a collection of segments taken from the aforementioned works attributed to Prosper Aquit-

<sup>27</sup> *Leifar fornra kristinna fræða íslenzkra* 1878, 1–2. The „tólfthi pallr ósóma“ paragraph is preserved in full.

<sup>28</sup> Carruthers and Ziolkowski 2002, 5–6.

<sup>29</sup> *Mariú saga* 1871, 7.

anus. The conclusion is missing in AM 677 4to but it can be filled in after the fourteenth century manuscript AM 685 c 4to. One of the paragraphs, headed „Frá sönnum kunnleik“ (“Of true knowledge”) refers to the importance of the use of memorization:

Engi er saðr fróðleikr at inu góða nema til þess sé numinn, at unninn verði. Eigi nemr sá til mikillar nytsemi lög guðs ef hann hefir mjök mikit erfiðit fyrir at muna.<sup>30</sup>

(There is no true and good wisdom unless it is studied to be mastered. Nobody makes much use of studying the law of God if he has much trouble remembering.)

Several passages in *Porláks saga* correspond to the Prosper segments:

AM 677 4to:

En þat at mæla vel ok lifa illa þá er þat ekki annat en at fyrðæma sjálfan sik með sinni röddu. En þó sé verra bæði ok illa at gera.<sup>31</sup>

(He who speaks well but lives unrighteously condemns himself with his own voice. However, it is worse to do both things badly.)

*Porláks saga* A:

[E]r Isidorus byskup mælir, spakr ok heilagr, at bæði er nyttsamligt at nema mart ok lifa réttlíga, en ef eigi má bæði senn verða, þá er enn dýrligra at lifa vel.<sup>32</sup>

(As the wise and holy Bishop Isidore said, it is important to study well and live righteously, but if one cannot do both, it is more glorious to live righteously.)

AM 677 4to:

Rangt er at vanda of hvergi óhægindi er guð leggr á hendr mǫnnum en hitt er rétt at ganga léttlíga undir þat allt ok at heldr at sá skrifar þat allt fyrir synðir órar eða til dýrða oss ef betr mætti er umb oss skal dæma harðan dóm ef vér rom ranglátir, en miskunnar dóm ef vér rom réttlátir.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>30</sup> *Leifar fornra kristinna fræða íslenzkra* 1878, 7, Prosp. XXIV. *De scientia boni.*

<sup>31</sup> *Leifar fornra kristinna fræða íslenzkra* 1878, 3, Prosp. VI. *De vera Dei laudatione.*

<sup>32</sup> *Biskupa sögur* II 2002, 50.

<sup>33</sup> *Leifar fornra kristinna fræða íslenzkra* 1878, 9, Prosp. XXXV. *De toleranda varitate mundana.*

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(It is wrong to avoid any discomfort that God gives unto men, but it is right to bear it all lightly, for he who writes down all our sins or good deeds will judge us harshly if we do wrong, but with mercy if we are righteous.)

*Þorláks saga A:*

Sýndi þetta inn sæli Þorlákr byskup öllum þeim er iðrask vildu sinna andmarka, ok ef þeir vildu hans ráðum fylgja varð hann þeim feginn ok líknaði þeim linliga með léttbærum skriptum, eptir því sem sagði spámaðr Guðs, at á hverju dægri, er maðr vildi til Guðs snúask, at hann myndi þá lifa góðu lífi, en deyja eigi illum dauða.<sup>34</sup>

(The blessed Bishop Þorlákr explained it to all who wanted to repent their wrongdoings, and if they decided to follow his advice he was glad and healed them kindly with light confessions, as God's prophet said, that each day if a man wanted to turn to God, then he would have a good life and not die an evil death.)

AM 685 c 4to:

Sætta þá er sundrþykkir eru.<sup>35</sup>

(To reconcile those who were in disagreement.)

*Þorláks saga A:*

Þorlákr byskup samþykkði þá ok sætti er áðr váru reiðir ok sundrþykkir.<sup>36</sup>

(Bishop Þorlákr reconciled and made agree those who had been in anger and disagreement.)

The purpose of this text in AM 677 4to, which is arranged in short, enumerated segments, could have been to make a collection of material to be studied and memorized. Once the texts had been studied and memorized, they could be rearranged and reused in a new context. Mary Carruthers has pointed out that medieval writers regarded memory and recollection as an active, creative process: „Re-collection

<sup>34</sup> *Biskupa sögur* II 2002, 72.

<sup>35</sup> *Leifar fornra kristinna fræða íslenzkra* 1878, 17. Prosp. LXXIX. *De vera bonitate*.

<sup>36</sup> *Biskupa sögur* II 2002, 70.

was essentially a task of composition, literally bringing together matters found in various places where they are stored to be reassembled in a new place.<sup>37</sup> Furthermore, the work of reciting texts from the poets or from the Bible by heart, as kind of grammatical *memoria*, the painstaking, concentrated memorization was needed to adequately furnish an educated, creative mind and provide it with a rich inventory for inventing new compositions.

In *Þorláks saga*, the Bible is quoted extensively in order to show that Þorlákr was bestowed with God's mercy and was a true follower of Christ. The quotations point out the highlights in Þorlákr's life and personality. The first reference explains the importance of a worthy name, when the bishop's name is invoked. His personality and pious behaviour is explained according to the Scriptures. Special emphasis is put on his even temper, modesty and ability to reconcile disputes. While describing Þorlákr's virtues, his vigils, praying and fasting are illustrated with biblical quotations and his daily reading, writing and teaching are emphasized. Negative characteristics, such as speech problems, are justified with biblical references. The bishop's strictness is justified in the same way and counterbalanced by describing his kindness which also has biblical analogues. Chapters containing several references seem to be of special importance to the biographer. Chapter VI draws attention to Þorlákr's good character and portrays him and his fellow priest Bjarnhéðinn of Kirkjubær as true followers of the Apostles. The same applies to the following chapter on Þorlákr's monastic life. Every aspect of his daily life is shown to have biblical analogies. The deathbed scene does not contain direct quotations but it reflects the crucifixion narratives in the Gospels. Interestingly, there is only one biblical quotation in the miracle section, the explanation perhaps being that there the emphasis shifts from the saint to the common people, the saint's beneficiaries. The virtuous Þorlákr is shown as a model Christian and his portrait is drawn according to the Apostle Paul's descriptions of episcopal virtues in his letter to Titus (Tit 1:7–9), from which the biographer quotes.

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<sup>37</sup> Carruthers and Ziolkowski 2002, 1.

In 1953, the British scholar Gabriel Turville-Petre, one of the first scholars to recognize the value of translated saints' lives, maintained that religious writing had taught Icelanders how to write secular sagas, teaching them not "what to say but how to say it."<sup>38</sup> We may add to these much quoted words that when Icelanders began to write hagiography, the translated works also told them what to say. The first Icelandic saints' lives show that the hagiographers knew how to do their job. They were both familiar with and copied the structure and ideology of hagiography. *Þorláks saga* bears witness to the hagiographer's knowledge of the lives of confessors and biblical and other religious texts, which he could have had access to in written form, but also kept in his memory and recalled from previous studies. The text could have been composed in accordance with the methods described above, by studying, memorizing and re-using standard texts. The hagiographer of *Þorláks saga*, who may have been "barinn til bókar" in the more gentle sense of the words, has probably learnt by heart some of the quotations he uses in his text. He tells the story with the help of the quotations and uses them to emphasize Þorlákr's character and events in his saintly life.

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<sup>38</sup> Turville-Petre 1953, 142–143.

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