

The Lilly Library Ricketts Ms 30

A 15th Century Oddity or Heresy?

By HOLLY BEAN, INDIANA UNIVERSITY

PART I—INTRODUCTION OF CONTEXT:¹

Coella Lindsay Ricketts, a calligrapher from Chicago, donated three hundred and thirty-two various texts to the Lilly Library at Indiana University in 1961. These objects include manuscripts dating from the ninth to the nineteenth century. Ricketts MS 30, “The Illegal Scriptures,” a Middle English Psalter-Hours from this collection, has escaped scholarly interest.² But the manuscript may be worth closer inspection. Kathleen Kennedy’s article, “Reintroducing the English Book of Hours, or ‘English Primers,’” describes seventeen other Books of Hours and Psalters that use Middle English, and only two combined Psalter-Hours, neither of which include MS 30.³ Ricketts MS 30 dates to the first quarter of the fifteenth century as a Psalter-Hours and is written in the period’s Middle English vernacular, but this is only one of the manuscript’s abnormalities; the first folia contain astronomical-astrological calendars unusual for such a text, as none of Kennedy’s studied manuscripts contain such tables. While it may seem that neither subject correlates with each other, in this essay I argue that Ricketts MS 30’s vernacular language and astrological tables come out of a common cultural origin. There are connections between religious texts in Medieval England and primarily secular astronomical and medicinal texts which, through the analysis of the contents of Ricketts MS 30

and the cultural context surrounding its plausible commission, make these connections less obscure.

Breaking down some of the abnormal parts of Ricketts MS 30 will answer some of the larger questions, but first, it is prudent to recognize what Ricketts MS 30 is and where it came from. As described by the Lilly Library’s vertical file on MS 30, Ricketts MS 30 is a vellum 11x8 cm manuscript, containing 246 leaves out of a supposed original 253. It is constructed in accordance with the Use of Sarum, a variant of the Roman Rite popular in Salisbury and more widely throughout the British Isles. It was most recently (c. 1900) bound by Riviere and Son in Moroccan leather. The manuscript has relatively simple decoration. There are sixteen illuminated initials, signifying that it is less likely to be an extremely ornate or expensive text. The script is in the Gothic style and the text is mostly in Middle English with Latin key words in red. The quality of the pages varies—some have signs of wear and text can be illegible. There are instances where ink has bled through and there are signs of patchwork visible in the last folia. The question of provenance is important to address because the earliest recorded known owner was a banker and collector named George C. Thomas, who bought the manuscript in 1924. The Lilly Library acquired it from C.L. Ricketts in 1961. The only visible sign of a previous owner is seen on fol. 84r:

1 Acknowledgements: During this process, I have made connections with professionals in various academic fields and it is because of their medieval expertise, excitement, and willingness to help me that I have been able to finish this Honors Paper. I wanted to thank Dr. Diane Reilly in the Art History Department for helping me choose a manuscript and for her continual support throughout the process. I would like to thank Dr. Karma Lochrie in the English Department for letting me pick her brain about Ricketts MS 30. I would very much like to thank Dr. William Newman in the History and Philosophy of Science and Medicine Department who graciously spent many mornings going through and explaining astrological and astronomical tables to me. I would like to thank Dr. Peter Guardino in the History Department who taught me the skills of doing a research project and continually supported me and his other students to preserve. Finally, I would like to thank my mentor of this research project, Dr. Deborah Deliyannis, for her support, guidance, expertise, and for sharing my excitement over this topic. I could not do this project without this support system and I hope to remain in contact with all of them.

2 **Psalter-Hours:** a single codex containing the Psalms as well as the various devotional texts included in a book of hours. For Ricketts MS 30 exposition, see Christopher de Hamel, et al. *Gilding the Lilly: a Hundred Medieval and Illuminated Manuscripts in the Lilly Library* (Bloomington: Lilly Library, Indiana University, 2010), 128. For further details on the Ricketts collection, see “Lilly Library Manuscript Collections,” Ricketts Mss., Lilly Library, accessed September 18, 2018, www.indiana.edu/~liblilly/lilly/mss/index.php?p=ricketts.

3 Kathleen E. Kennedy “Reintroducing the English Books of Hours, or ‘English Primers.’” *Speculum* 89, no. 3 (2014): 693-723. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43577033>.

the name “Ann Money” written in what may be eighteenth century marginal script.⁴

The original patron of the manuscript is unknown and even the plausible publication date is uncertain because it is unlikely that the complete manuscript is the commissioned original. At the beginning of Ricketts MS 30, there are thirteen consecutive folia that were likely added at a time distinct from the manuscript’s initial commission. This assumption is drawn from a blank page on 13v and the abrupt beginning of the Psalter which lacks an introduction or any indication of the beginning. This may be because the beginning of the Psalter was lost or that the four sections most similar to Somer’s *Kalendarium* — including an Arabic-Roman conversion table, Table of Leap Years, Table of Regulars, and a Saint’s Day calendar — were added later. It is possible that these sections were removed from another source or were intentionally commissioned at a different time. In these sections the date “1425” is visible, though whether or not it was the year the manuscript was commissioned is uncertain. It may be impossible to know for certain, but the analysis of these potential added sections contributes to the argument that Ricketts MS 30 is an abnormal manuscript which should be researched further.

Drawn to this manuscript’s discrepancies — given the presence of the date of c. 1425 — I decided to deconstruct and identify the specific abnormalities to research this particular manuscript and its larger cultural influences. Each individual section within the manuscript aligns with known manuscript styles or traditions, specifically with respect to the work of 15th-century astronomer John Somer. In order to compare the Ricketts MS to Somer’s elusive *Kalendarium*, I use Linne Mooney’s reproduction, *The Kalendarium of John Somer*, even though there are deviances between the two works. These mismatches on their own would be intriguing, but together create a platform from which to analyze and discuss larger historical issues such as ownership, the extent of religious heresy, and the cultural significance of astronomy. Still to be explored is why the owner commission such a text — which by that time was out of style — and why a Psalter-Hours combo was created in 1425, when Book of Hours overcame the production of combos in the thirteenth century and the invention of Gutenberg’s printing press was around the corner. Yet, as seen in Kathleen Kennedy’s article, two other Psalter-Hours in the Wy-

cliffe translation were commissioned around the fifteenth century, so a Psalter-Hours may not have been as out of the ordinary as believed by many scholars. These discrepancies may address the question of ownership, but there is only so much which analysis can address without making baseless assumptions. For example, while the manuscript may have the general Psalter-Hours structure, it is written in Middle English, the heretical language (as declared by Archbishop Arundel in the early fifteenth century) and not Latin, the orthodox language. This difference reflects the ideology and background of the commissioner of the manuscript and situates the Ricketts MS 30 in the highly debated topic of the vernacular, Middle English’s relationship with religious texts, and private devotion.

Similarly, the presence of astrological/astronomical tables in the front of a highly established religious text is noteworthy given that these tables do not fit in the traditions of their respective genres. And while it is probable that the patron of Ricketts MS 30 did not commission the manuscript, as it exists today, there is the question of when the Psalter-Hours section was written. It is possible that the Psalter-Hours portion was an older text, perhaps passed down between family members and the astrological/astronomical calendars were added later due to changing cultural interests. However, it is more likely that the religious textual sections date to the late fourteenth century around the Wycliffe translations, instead of following the Psalter-Hour tradition of the thirteenth century, as will be discussed. The 1425 date on the astrological/astronomical tables does indicate a specific choice on the part of the commissioner, but not necessarily for the original Ricketts MS 30 manuscript. A paleographical study on the type of Wycliffe translation and handwriting would quickly resolve the dating issue. This essay is a cultural introduction into a few abnormal components seen in Ricketts MS 30, which will become a lengthier analysis of this manuscript in the future.

PRIVATE DEVOTIONAL BOOKS: PSALTERS, BOOKS OF HOURS, AND COMPOSITES

Before the abnormal contents of Ricketts MS 30 can be dissected, it is necessary to understand the purpose of Books of Hours and Psalters, as Ricketts MS 30 is primarily a religious text existing outside of the popularity of Psalter-Hours composites. Psalters were the most common orthodox manuscript for private devotions until

⁴ Christopher de Hamel, et al. *Gilding the Lilly: a Hundred Medieval and Illuminated Manuscripts in the Lilly Library* (Bloomington: Lilly Library, Indiana University, 2010), 128.

the late thirteenth and early fourteenth century, when the popular Book of Hours replaced Psalters.⁵ Psalters, the Psalms, had different functions dependent on their specific patron. The Psalter, according to the Fitzwilliam Museum's Keeper of Manuscripts, Stella Panayotova, in her chapter, "The Illustrated Psalter: Luxury and Practical Use," "dominated the life of the religious."⁶ The specific divisions of the Psalms meant that they were strictly read at particular times of day and on specific days of the week. The order of the Psalms within the Psalter was mostly standardized but, overall, deviances were often a result of geographical differences and audience preferences. According to Calkin, the German and Irish early psalters were simple in their organization, dividing the fifty psalms into three parts. On the other hand, Roman Psalters were divided into eight parts while the English psalter varied. Even so, Panayotova argues that geography was not the most important distinction in which to categorize psalters, because the organization was dependent on the differences of audience, such as the monastic and the clergy of secular cathedrals. The monastic psalters grouped the Psalms based on illustrations to "reflect the focal points of monastic devotion, learning, and daily routine." Secular psalters grouped theirs similar to the Roman "liturgical or eightfold division" which Panayotova argues was the most common and systematic decoration.⁷

The function of psalters had non-clerical functions as well as religious functions. Primers, another term for psalters, were used to teach Latin to children and were also the first introduction into the Bible. Beyond childhood, psalters functioned throughout a lifetime and changing needs, so the Psalters typically stayed with a single patron or family over generations.⁸ The function did not end there, as illiterate religious patrons also used the Psalms as weekly readings based on the system of Matins, Primes and Vespers, and used the manuscript as a guide which they had already memorized through

their education in the church. The Psalters' most significant contribution to daily devotion was not just through the memorization and repetition of the Psalms, but the practical moral guidance.⁹ The popularity and seemingly universality of medieval psalters were the beginning of a wider individual devotion leading to the explosion of Books of Hours in the fourteenth century.

As private religious devotion began to deviate regionally and with a larger focus on the individual, Books of Hours began to circulate in the late 13th and early 14th centuries. Books of Hours were personal prayer books meant for daily devotion outside of the Psalms, and they were symbols of status. John Harthan, author of *Book of Hours and Their Owners*, argues that Books of Hours were vehicles for the elite Christian intellectual and for the masses.¹⁰ According to Harthan, Books of Hours transitioned and expanded from Psalters and their monastic audience to an even more secularized and general audience as anyone who was wealthy enough was able to commission an individualized Book of Hours for private devotion. Quickly, by the thirteenth century, Books of Hours were the most popular devotional manuscript and were highly individualized in their conception. The amount of illustration in a manuscript depended on the patron's wealth and intent. Many times people would own relatively simple Books of Hours as a symbol of their humility and piety, while to others an elaborate Book of Hours was a social symbol of wealth and status, such as the popularized and ornate *Tres Riches Heures du Duc de Berry* (c. 1411-1416).^{11,12}

Books of Hours were individualized by their decoration, but also through the range of individual and geographically specific devotional content. The principal text in Books of Hours was the Office of the Virgin, according to Calkins. Other typical texts included were a calendar for feast days, the Seven Penitential Psalms, and a Litany of Saints. Finally, most Books of Hours closed with the Office of the Dead.¹³ Other inclusions

5 Robert Calkins, *Illuminated Books of the Middle Ages*. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), 207.

6 Stella Panayotova, "The Illustrated Psalter: Luxury and Practical Use" in *The practice of the Bible in the Middle Ages: production, reception, & performance in Western Christianity*, ed. Susan Boynton and Diane J. Reilly (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 248.

7 Panayotova, 250.

8 Panayotova, 248.

9 Panayotova, 247.

10 Linne Mooney, *The Kalendarium of John Somer* (Athens: University of Georgia, 1998), 31.

11 John Harthan, *Books of Hours and Their Owners* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1978), 32.

12 "Labors of the Months from the Très Riches Heures," *The Public Domain Review*, August 1, 2018, publicdomainreview.org/collections/labors-of-the-months-from-the-tres-riches-heures/.

13 Catkins, *Illuminated*, 244.

or exclusions of texts may provide clues to the patron's individuality. The calendar is a major clue for any religious text because it lists the regional saints' days, which may provide clues to the manuscript's original location. Books of Hours held multiple individualized functions within society; they were not just daily prayer books, but also record keepers and albums meant for safekeeping.¹⁴ In general, Books of Hours were expensive until the late fifteenth century, when the printing press replaced handmade editions and the use of paper became popular, thus increasing the size of the both literate and illiterate audiences and decreasing in price.¹⁵

Psalter-Hours, the same category to which Ricketts MS 30 belongs, are an interesting category within the private devotional manuscript because Psalter-Hours were most popular in the thirteenth century, functioning as a transition between Psalters and Books of Hours. A manuscript of this type usually included the Hours of the Virgin, other Hours, and the Psalms.¹⁶ One of the best-known sections of Psalter-Hours was the Office of the Dead, meant for private mourning.¹⁷ The short period that Psalter-Hours were popular was a century before Ricketts MS 30's commission during the height of the Books of Hours popularity. As mentioned, while Ricketts MS 30 is a Psalter-Hours that seemingly dates to this tradition, more likely the manuscript dates to the late fourteenth century around the Wycliffe translations.

MIDDLE ENGLISH IN DEVOTIONAL BOOKS

Ricketts MS 30 text is mostly in Middle English. This is unusual because the use of the vernacular language was officially declared heretical by Thomas Arundel, the Archbishop of Canterbury, in the early fifteenth century. The place of Middle English within the scholarly discussion of heresy during the Middle Ages

often centers around the Wycliffite Bible, a popular and seemingly heretical Middle English translation of the Bible by theologian and professor John Wyclif (c. 1330–1384).¹⁸ Arundel's *De Hæretico Comburendo* (1401) recognizes specific attributes of illegal action of sects, such as Lollards, but also the creation of books, possibly one such as Ricketts MS 30, “of such sect and wicked doctrine and opinions they make unlawful conventicles and confederacies, they hold and exercise schools, they make and write books, they do wickedly instruct and inform people, and as such they may excite and stir them to sedition.”¹⁹ John Wyclif's vernacular translation of the Bible was founded on an ideal of achievable faith formed from the scripture in its most “naked” form, rather than a “political-ecclesiastical authority” process of achieving faith.²⁰ This was controversial to the authoritative power of the Catholic Church, as it questioned the methods in which scripture was presented to its subjects and thus the authority of the Church. It was presented in a manner in which ordinary people, if they could afford the translation and were literate, could read the Bible themselves — almost as a precursor to the Protestant movement in the sixteenth century. Even so, the scholarly discourse surrounding Middle English, heresy, and the Lollards, a controversial religious group, debatably, tied closely to the spread of the Wycliffite Bible since its translation, c. 1382, with the Wycliffite Bible is more nuanced than previously noted. The Wycliffite manuscript is most popularly connected with heresy, but is it a viable claim to deem all Middle English texts as heretical during the early fourteenth century? The centuries-long controversy surrounding the use of vernacular language in religious texts is based on the mostly agreed upon foundation that groups, specifically the well-known Lollards, used the Wycliffite Bible, a Middle English translation, as an outward declaration of

¹⁴ Mooney, *Kalendarium*, 35.

¹⁵ Alexandra Barratt, “THE PRYMER AND ITS INFLUENCE ON FIFTEENTH-CENTURY ENGLISH PASSION LYRICS,” *Medium Ævum* 44, no. 3 (1975): 264–79.

¹⁶ “Koninklijke Bibliotheek,” Bout Psalter-Hours, National Library of the Netherlands, accessed September 18, 2018, www.kb.nl/en/themes/middle-ages/bout-psalter-hours.

¹⁷ Panayotova, “Illustrated,” 249.

¹⁸ Shannon McSheffrey cites the following works as representative of this trend: “See Anne Hudson, *The Premature Reformation: Wycliffite Texts and Lollard History* (Oxford, 1988), 5, 17–18, 278–81; Curtis Bostick, *The Antichrist and the Lollards: Apocalypticism in Late Medieval and Reformation England* (Leiden, 1998), esp. 176, 194. Hudson's *Premature Reformation*, and Richard Rex's new short survey, *The Lollards* (Basingstoke, 2002), are the standard works on Lollardy; for thorough and up-to-date bibliography, see Derrick G. Pitard, ‘Bibliographies of Lollard Studies’, <<http://lollardsociety.org/bibhome.html>> (2003).” Quoted in Shannon McSheffrey, “Heresy, Orthodoxy and English Vernacular Religion 1480–1525,” *Past & Present*, no. 186 (2005): 48, JSTOR.

¹⁹ “De Hæretico Comburendo (1401) Text: Statutes of the Realm, 2:12S–28: 2 Henry IV,” Walter J. Ong -- Orality and Literacy, Rhode Island College, accessed September 18, 2018, www.ric.edu/faculty/rpotter/heretico.html.

²⁰ Kantik Ghosh, *The Wycliffite Heresy: Authority and the Interpretation of Texts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 86.

heresy.

Much of the contemporary scholarship around the heterodoxy debate, specifically centered on Lollards and the use of the vernacular is based off of one of the main recorders written in the 16th century, John Foxe. Due to the quantity of reports, Foxe's argument that there was a direct correlation between Lollards and the use of the English vernacular. He stated that "until the Reformation all religion expressed in vernacular terms was automatically considered suspect."²¹ This has been the main source of evidence for the contemporary debate assuming that anything related with the concept of heresy relates directly to the Lollards. Yet, more recently other accounts and debates, in both contemporary and historical contexts, have to come to light. Some of the alternative arguments include evidence for a European-wide trend for vernacular scripture in the 15th century, evidence of other groups spreading English translation, such as the 'Brethren of the Common Life' that did not receive legal repercussions from clerical authorities. Recently, seen in Eamon Duffy's 1990's research, is that instead of viewing the vernacular as heretical, instead due to the rise of the innovative and popularity of the English printing press knowing/learning the basic tenants of religion in the vernacular was actually encouraged by the Catholic Church.²² Though there is still a wide range of arguments circling the connection and assumption of Lollards having the ultimate connection to heresy, in this essay I use sources arguing contrary arguments to the still mainstream beliefs of modern day scholars.

Shannon McSheffrey, for example, argues that there is not enough evidence to ascertain that the Lollards "ever saw, possess or read anything from the corpus of Wycliffite writings."²³ In fact, McSheffrey argues that the working definition of "heresy" used is misleading. She quotes the thirteenth-century philosopher Robert Grosseteste's definition of heresy as "an opinion chosen by human perception contrary to Holy Scripture, publi-

cally avowed and obstinately defended."²⁴ This definition suggests that heresy is a deliberate choice of the individual, but actually, according to McSheffrey, heresy and orthodoxy may have had a more "permeable and situational border" than "strictly theological."²⁵ Many historians argue that using the vernacular in texts was a direct attack against the Orthodox Church, due to its connection to the Wycliffite Bible and thus a more individualized approach to transmitting theological teachings, but the transition to the vernacular may not have been an intentional act of rebellion. Instead, the use of the vernacular points to more prominent, changing attitudes towards class, gender, and national identity—and, to some degree, individual agency. These changing understandings of the relationship between the use of the vernacular and the Church results in new methods for the study of texts like Ricketts MS 30.

Kennedy's article interprets the other known seventeen English Psalters and Books of Hours as evidence of "a more nuanced understanding of vernacular religion in fifteenth century England" beyond theological arguments.²⁶ The most well-known evidence for the heresy of vernacular manuscripts is the Archbishop of Canterbury Thomas Arundel's (1353-1414) *De heretico comburendo* (Of the burning of heretics) in 1401 and the *Constitutions* of 1407 and 1409 which condemned the vernacular transcription of and use of religious texts, most specifically the Wycliffite Bible: "no such wicked doctrine and heretical and erroneous opinions, nor their authors and fautors, in the said realm and dominions, against the Catholic faith, Christian law, and determination of the holy church, which God prohibit, be sustained or in any way suffered."²⁷ These texts became the foundation for the modern debate over the role of Lollards and the use of the vernacular, now known as Middle English, as heresy against the Catholic Church. In reality, the doctrine was not enforced as a way to criminalize further vernacular texts even though his declarations are continually

21 McSheffrey, "Heresy," 51.

22 McSheffrey, footnote. "Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, 1400-1580* (New Haven, 1992), esp. 53-87."

23 McSheffrey, footnote. "Quoted in Matthew Paris, *Chronica majora*, ed. Henry Richards Luard, 5 vols., (Rolls ser., London, 1880), v, 400."

24 McSheffrey, 47.

25 McSheffrey, 49.

26 Kennedy, "Reintroducing," 693.

27 John Scattergood. "Erasing Oldcastle: some literary reactions to the Lollards rising of 1414" in Eiléan Ní Chuilleanáin and John Flood, eds., *Heresy and orthodoxy in early English literature, 1350-1680* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2010), 49; "De Hæretico Comburendo (1401) Text: Statutes of the Realm, 2:12S-28: 2 Henry IV."

used as evidence in support of the argument that there is a direct and automatic link between Middle English and heresy. According to Kantik Ghosh, even around 1400, there were still debates over vernacular texts and their levels of heresy.²⁸ Instead of a direct correlation between text and heresy, many are now arguing that heresy was seen through the eyes of the authorities, and that the arguments only existed in the elite sphere with little trickle-down effect. This led to discrimination against the holders of the seemingly heretical texts.

The heretical controversy may have targeted class differences during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. According to McSheffrey, "social status also conditioned how the act of reading in English was interpreted by authorities who prosecuted Lollards and by Lollards themselves."²⁹ Despite their activities against lower-class heretics, clerical authorities viewed the reading of vernacular scriptures among the elites as a "pious and laudable practice," thus already establishing a leniency to the privileged.³⁰ Lollards, on the other hand, with the most heretical reputation, were "mostly poor and ill-instructed men,"³¹ and the most public targets of the vernacular controversy. The Lollards, who wanted direct authority and knowledge over their own scriptures, were seen as "consciously choosing to disobey the authority of the church."³² Again, this rebellion was against the politicized and nonstandardized religious authority who chose the path to faith and not from an universal understanding of the scripture. The fact that after Archbishop Arundel's *Constitutions* the publications or spread of the vernacular texts did not slacken is also evidence that heresy may not have been as widely contested, and the narrative was still controlled by the elite authorities. Middle English texts, existed in all aspects of life, such as the popular lay devotional Books of Hours, and the more orthodox Psalter, but they did not receive the same heretical attention as did the Wycliffite Bible.

The historiography surrounding the Middle

English vernacular and heresy has mostly focused on the Wycliffite translations, thus has limited the attention given to other texts like, as defined by Kathleen Kennedy's "English Hours," and Hamel's "primers" that complicate the controversy due to their contradictory nature of heterodoxy and orthodoxy.³³ While the Wycliffite Bible was a direct affront to the Church in its content and transmission, "English Hours" were a combination of heresy (Middle English text) but also orthodoxy in the content of the text. As a Middle English Psalter-Hour, Ricketts MS 30 is one of these texts difficult to place in the discourse of heresy. These texts original functions were a part of the increasing "literacy of the laity."³⁴ By the 14th century, the popularity of Books of Hours as a genre was established strongly enough in a wide audience of differing classes that even in a vernacular translation, it may not have been targeted as heresy because if an authority attacked a lower class owner, then a wealthier owner would also have to be targeted, thus possibly eliminating class discriminations. The middle ground was the Psalter, already a more orthodox text and part of the Bible. Since the majority of the Psalter is direct scripture, the text encroached upon the territory of the Wycliffite Bible and due to this, psalters might have been flagged as a heretical text.

However, psalters also had another function. They were originally used to teach Latin, and I wonder how much may have changed with the increasing acceptance of Middle English in multiple classes and gendered realms. Gender influenced the short-spanned transitions between French, Latin and Anglo-Saxon languages. Susan Crane argued that after 1200 French was no longer the "primary language for even a majority of the elite in England" and by 1240 Latin and Anglo-Norman split into a hierarchy.³⁵ Latin was the learned elite male language, with the female "inferior" Anglo-Norman as secondary with the vernacular English as last on the hierarchy, but by this time Middle English quickly became

28 Ghosh, *Wycliffite Heresy*, 105.

29 McSheffrey, "Heresy," 68.

30 McSheffrey, 69.

31 F. D. Matthew, "The Authorship of the Wycliffite Bible," *The English Historical Review* 10, no. 37 (1895): 96, JSTOR.

32 McSheffrey, "Heresy," 80.

33 Christopher de Hamel, "Books of Hours 'Imaging' the Word," in *The Bible as Book: The Manuscript Tradition*, ed. John L. Sharpe III and Kimberly Van Kampen (London: British Library and Newcastle, DE: Oak Knoll Press, 1998), 137-143

34 Kennedy, "Reintroducing," 694.

35 Susan Crane, "Social Aspects of Bilingualism in the Thirteenth Century," in *Thirteenth Century England VI*, ed. Michael Prestwich, Richard Britnell, and Robin Frame (Woodbridge, U.K., 1997), 103-115 at 106, quoted in Alexa Sand, "Cele Hour Memes: An Eccentric English Psalter-Hours in the Huntington Library," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 75, no. 2 (2012): 198, doi:10.1525/hlq.2012.75.2.171

the main language of multiple classes making its literary instruction necessary, probably through Psalters.³⁶ With the appearance of Middle English in multiple religious texts and also other mediums such as medicinal and astrological/astronomical texts, Sand argues, there was a new respect for the language that correlated with “the growth of national identity” seen by the declining use of Latin, Hebrew and Greek in elite circles and the increasing use of Middle English.³⁷

Ricketts MS 30’s probable commission date around the mid-15th century complicates the question of ownership and heresy. When introduced to Ricketts MS 30, the first thing that grabbed my attention was the Lilly Library’s subtitle, “Illegal Scriptures.” The assumption of legality was made solely on its cultural context, due to the Archbishop’s *Constitutions*, and by the fact that it is in Middle English. It many seem like an obvious connection to the Lollard population, but there is not any specific indication of heresy and, by 1425, heretical texts seemed to be a category only applied by and useful by the higher authorities and not necessarily by the public. Hence, the original patron, if the manuscript was commissioned around 1425, may not have been a Lollard, nor an active rebel against the higher religious authority. The plural existence of heresy and orthodoxy complicates the question of ownership. It may have been a member of the possibly heretical Lollards, but those were typically poor men, and commissioning such a text as the expensive Psalter-Hours complicates things even further.

PART TWO—ANALYSIS & COMPARISON

The major function of Ricketts MS 30 is as a religious text containing both a Psalter and a Book of Hours. However, the most abnormal sections of Ricketts MS 30 are the astrological-astronomical tables in the beginning of the manuscript. As mentioned above, these tables may have been added later, but each table has a characteristic that is out of place with its typical genre. The questions surrounding these tables include their origin, purpose, and questionable cultural context.

The totality of these tables can seemingly be

traced back to one of the greatest known astronomers-astrologers of the fourteenth century, John Somer. Born in the 1340s, Somer studied at the Merton school of astronomy at Oxford University where his *Kalendarium* contribution to the field of study had an impact lasting for over a century. An exact date for Somer’s *Kalendarium* is not known. One of the earliest versions found is dated c. 1380, but his calendars changed as he continued to work until his death c. 1409. Somer, a Franciscan monk, was highly revered for his scientific work and Joan the Princess of Wales was one of several royal patrons.³⁸ Somer’s *Kalendarium* contained astronomical and medical information chronicling from 1001 to 1532, specifically detailing the Metonic cycles, eclipses, astrological signs, medical information connected to lunar and solar cycles, etc.³⁹ It was also not uncommon for Somer’s *Kalendarium* to be owned by lay people even though it was first made popular by the medical profession. Around 1430 Somer’s calendar was translated from Latin to Middle English. Somer was not the only expert in astronomy/astrology given royal patronage at the time. Nicholas of Lynn wrote within six years of Somer, but included different information in his *Kalendar*.⁴⁰

Somer’s *Kalendarium* had a larger medical foundation and less astronomical information, but in conversation with the Ricketts MS 30’s abnormal astronomical calendars, there seems to be more similarity between Ricketts MS 30 and Somer’s *Kalendarium* than with Nicholas of Lynn’s manuscript. The Ricketts MS 30 does not contain any of the medical prologues or additional medically specific texts such as the famed “Zodiac Man.” Another aspect which argues for Somer’s similarities to Ricketts is the language, because if it is a partial Somer calendar, it would be historically accurate that Ricketts MS 30’s similarities are also in Middle English, as will be discussed. According to Cornelius O’Boyle, the translation of Somer’s calendar into Middle English was for “instructing the sons of a northern noble family.” The calendar, owned by religiously minded people, used it to “plot the course of the church calendar for the current year and for many years ahead.”⁴¹ This reason seems to

³⁶ Sand, 198.

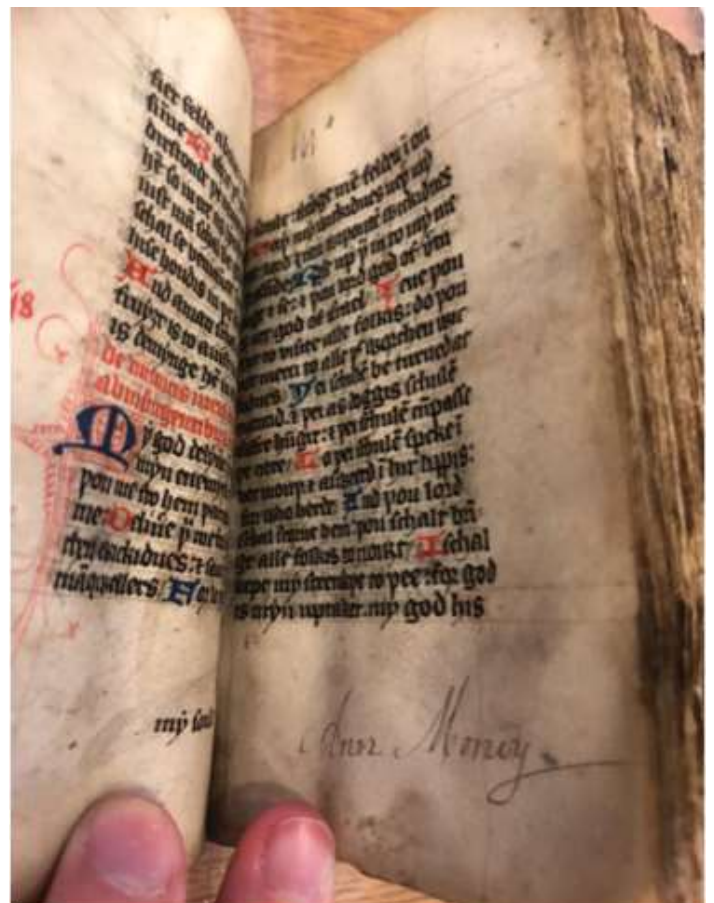
³⁷ Sand, 144.

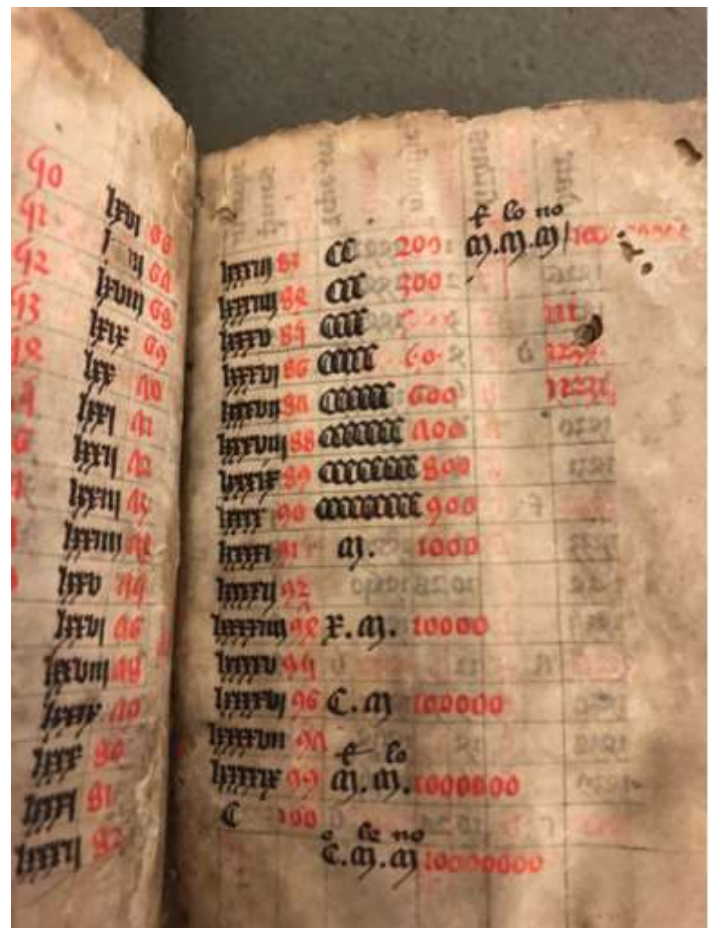
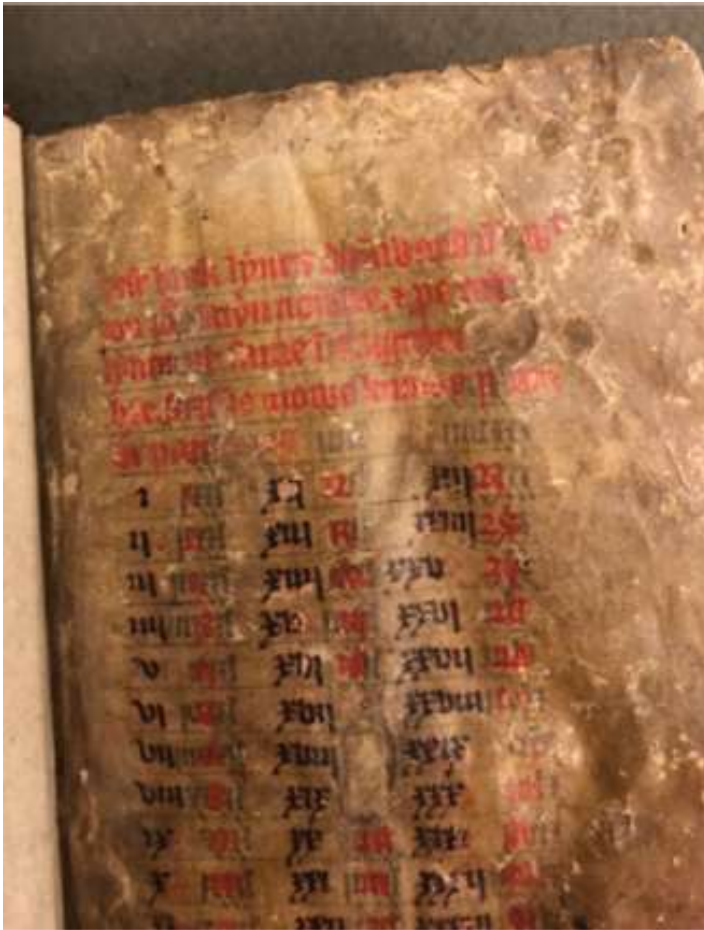
³⁸ Mooney, “Reintroducing,” 5.

³⁹ Mooney, 6.

⁴⁰ Mooney, 12.

⁴¹ Cornelius O’Boyle, “Astrology and Medicine in Later Medieval England: The Calendars of John Somer and Nicholas of Lynn,” *Sudhoffs Archiv*, vol. 89, no. 1 (2005): 1–22 JSTOR



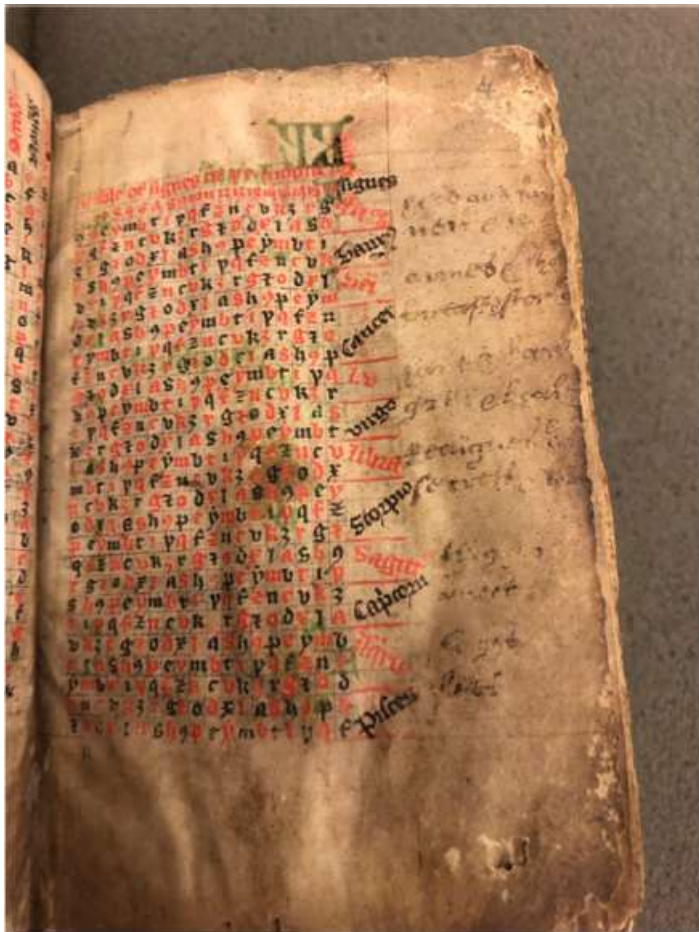


Manuscript page 80 from The Lilly Library Ricketts Ms. 30. The page contains a calendar table with columns for date, day of the week, and feast days. The text is written in a Gothic script, with some words in red ink (rubrication). The table is organized into two main sections, each with a header row. The first section covers the years 1214 to 1220, and the second section covers the years 1221 to 1227. The columns are labeled: date, day of the week, feast days, and feast days. The text is written in a Gothic script, with some words in red ink (rubrication). The table is organized into two main sections, each with a header row. The first section covers the years 1214 to 1220, and the second section covers the years 1221 to 1227. The columns are labeled: date, day of the week, feast days, and feast days.

date	day of the week	feast days	feast days
1214	a	1	8
1216	f	2	31
1218	e	3	20
1220	d	4	2
1222	b	4	24
1224	a	6	16
1226	g	1	1
1228	f	8	20
1230	d	9	12
1232	c	10	28
1234	b	11	14
1236	a	12	9
1238	f	13	31
1240	e	14	13
1242	d	15	24
1244	c	16	21
1246	b	17	28

Manuscript page 81 from The Lilly Library Ricketts Ms. 30. The page contains a calendar table with columns for date, day of the week, and feast days. The text is written in a Gothic script, with some words in red ink (rubrication). The table is organized into two main sections, each with a header row. The first section covers the years 1247 to 1253, and the second section covers the years 1254 to 1260. The columns are labeled: date, day of the week, feast days, and feast days. The text is written in a Gothic script, with some words in red ink (rubrication). The table is organized into two main sections, each with a header row. The first section covers the years 1247 to 1253, and the second section covers the years 1254 to 1260. The columns are labeled: date, day of the week, feast days, and feast days.

date	day of the week	feast days	feast days
1247	b	18	10
1249	a	19	2
1251	g	16	24
1253	f	17	13
1255	d	18	4
1257	c	19	18
1259	b	1	10
1261	a	2	1
1263	f	3	12
1265	e	4	6
1267	d	4	29
1269	c	6	10
1271	a	1	2
1273	g	8	22
1275	f	9	14
1277	e	10	29



follow more reliably with the Ricketts MS 30 additions and may provide clues about the possible owner or commissioner of the manuscript.

ARABIC-ROMAN NUMERAL CONVERSION TABLE

The first addition to Ricketts MS 30 is an Arabic-Roman numeral conversion table that does exemplify similarities to Somer's *Kalendarium*, yet is still an abnormality due to its seemingly out-of-date cultural context. Whether or not this page was added at a different time rather than c. 1425, it still remains at the front and is in poor quality. It is much darker and has a glossier finish due to exposure than any other folio within the manuscript. There is no other prologue or introduction to the manuscript as both Psalters and Somer's *Kalendarium* traditionally followed. The Hindu-Arabic numeral system is now the most common system in the world, but it was not always so. Though titled as Hindu-Arabic, the system has morphed from regional areas in India, Persia, and Southeast Asia and was introduced to Europe during the High Middle Ages, c. 1000-1250. Latin script may have influenced the glyphs once the system reached its height of popularity in the fifteenth century, eventually replacing Roman numerals.⁴² In John Somer's *Kalendarium* an Arabic-Roman numeral conversion table was customary because in the late 14th and early 15th centuries, it was still uncommon for all people to be familiar with the Arabic system. Thus, the table listed numerals one to sixty for practical purposes. According to Mooney, knowing beyond the number sixty was impractical because most frequent measurements did not exceed sixty, “there being 60 seconds and 60 degrees in a minute and 60 minutes in an hour.”⁴³ While Somer may have intentionally used sixty for mathematical purposes, the inclusion of the conversion chart in a religious text may have been just as useful as the numbers did not pass sixty often either, although the Psalms go to one hundred and fifty. There are many different arguments as to why so-called “Arabic” numerals replaced Roman numerals, but one of the most practical reasons may have been the economic advantage. Arabic numerals took up less space than Roman numerals and saved money during the manuscript commission.

By the early fifteenth century, and as the spread of the new system went beyond the academic realm, both John Somer's *Kalendarium* and religious texts such as Books of Hours or Psalters omitted these tables because people understood the system, thus making them irrelevant.⁴⁴ For this reason it is odd that an Arabic/Roman numeral conversion table would be included in Ricketts MS 30. The chart is the first part of the manuscript as mentioned. There is no earlier prologue, as seen in Somer's *Kalendarium*, so if this section was a part of a calendar it has been isolated and the only introduction is at the top of the first page stating that the black inked numerals are Roman and the red is Arabic/Latin script. The inclusion of the chart is uncommon and suggests that the chart may have been added at another point, because not only does the timing not correlate with the system's spread, by this point most literate people could understand the Arabic system, but also because the table exceeds the typical one to sixty. This chart converts numerals one to ten million over folia 1r, 1v, and 2r. These differences have raised questions about the continuity of the manuscript's production, use and ownership. Why did someone intentionally commission such a table in the mid-15th century and why exceed the typical chart to list up to ten million? So far, there is no special purpose or significance for the number ten million scientifically or religiously.

TABLE OF BISEXTILES

Another element of John Somer's *Kalendarium* seen in Ricketts MS 30 is the Leap Year Table, also known as a Table of Bisextiles.⁴⁵ The table typically seen within Somer's manuscript includes a timeline beginning with the year 1367, the birth year of King Richard II, one of Somer's Royal Patrons) until 1507, spanning 140 years. The main purpose of this calendar was to calculate the day of Easter for each year. Each table included a “dominical letter, the indiction, prime or golden number.”⁴⁶ Starting on January 1, a letter was assigned to that day listing from A to G, and the list would begin again each year starting on a different day. The dominical letter was the letter that fell on the first Sunday. Leap years, due to the extra day, have two dominical letters and red

⁴² J J, O'Connor and E F Robertson, “The Arabic Numeral System,” in *Arabic Numerals* (Jan. 2001), www-history.mcs.st-and.ac.uk/Hist-Topics/Arabic_numerals.html.

⁴³ Mooney, *Kalendarium*, 35.

⁴⁴ Mooney, 35.

⁴⁵ Mooney, 35.

⁴⁶ Mooney, 35.

or black ink distinguishing those years. The indiction, as described by Mooney, based on a fifteen-year cycle used by Imperial Rome, was used until the fourteenth century. The prime or golden number was shown in a column next to the dominical letters of the year. This number, based, on the well-known Ancient Greek Metonic cycle, is a nineteen-year lunar cycle dating back to the fifth century that dictated when a new moon would fall on the same day.⁴⁷ The golden number was that year's place in the Metonic cycle. This cycle was the foundation of astronomical/ astrological studies for centuries. The cycle fluctuates based on what calendar system is applied such as the Babylonian calendar, Hebrew calendar, and the Gregorian calendars.⁴⁸

The cycle's most well-known function is to compute the date of Easter as shown in this table in conjunction with a Table of Moveable Feasts as seen in John Somer's *Kalendarium*. A Table of Moveable Feasts was a chart of religious feast days including Ash Wednesday, Easter, Ascension, and Pentecost among others dependent on regional and personal preferences that applied the Table of Bisextiles information to calculate each year's date.⁴⁹ While this was common in Somer's popular *Kalendarium*, in Ricketts MS 30, there is only the Table of Bisextiles and not a list of feasts. At first look may seem as if the table is then useless, but due to differences of the tables this is not so. For starters, the dates do not match. Even though Somer's spans from 1367 to 1507, MS 30's Table of Bisextiles begins at 1425, even though the manuscript may have been commissioned at an earlier date because one would not need this kind of table for the past, only for the future. It runs until 1488 and while these numbers may seem arbitrary, this span actually can be split into three Metonic cycles included within Somer's larger range of information. This table is interesting because by only using the dates over a sixty-three year period instead of a 140-year period like Somer's *Kalendarium* could represent a more general life span for the patron's personal use. One person, not necessarily in a scientific or medical field, would not need all of that information, and more specifically, not want to pay for the extra folia needed for it. This table in Ricketts MS 30 takes up two folia without any excess space, which would

have been economically beneficial.

The Ricketts MS 30's Table of Bisextiles should be broken down in order to analyze the similarities and differences from Somer's own Table of Bisextiles. The table covers two folia and each page splits in half with five columns on either side. Each column begins with a vertical column of dates, sixteen rows down with every fourth year, leap years, in red ink. The next column is titled (in Middle English) 'lepe yer' and has an extra dominical number. The next column, fully in red ink, is titled as 'sundais' with a dominical letter listing from A to G, but because the chart does not begin with the beginning of time the letter at 1425 is G. These letters are not in alphabetical order and each year has a different number. The next column is prime/golden numbers starting at one in 1425, as it is the start of a new Metonic cycle. A wide ink border around a new cycle year, after nineteen years, also shows the Metonic cycle. The final column in each part is "Marche," possibly March. These numbers range from one to thirty, each for a day in March. This is an interesting addition because this does not exist in Somer's *Kalendarium*. These numbers calculate the full moon after the spring Equinox, first used to find the date for Easter. These discrepancies, the lack of the Table of Moveable Feasts, and the inclusion of the March column may imply that the patron wanted to only compute Easter's date and none of the other feasts. This may be a personal attitude towards Easter or an economic decision to save money. Finally, a larger question is why would a person need this type of table in the 15th century? According to Reginald Poole, the date of Easter was decided by religious and academic authorities and disseminated centuries earlier.⁵⁰

TABLE OF REGULARS

The next section present in Ricketts MS 30 is an astrological Table of Regulars, also known as a *Pagina regularis*. A Table of Regulars is a method by which to follow the moon's placement within the Zodiac cycle, first recorded by the Venerable Bede, one of the most prominent scholars in the eighth century over many disciplines, in his *The Reckoning of Time*, written in 725. The Table of Regulars, or, "The Signes of the Moone," as ti-

⁴⁷ Mooney, 36.

⁴⁸ Mooney, 33.

⁴⁹ "Liturgical Calendars | Table of Moveable Feasts," Liturgy Office, The Catholic Church in England and Wales, accessed September 18, 2018, www.liturgyoffice.org.uk/Calendar/Info/moveable.shtml.

⁵⁰ Reginald Lane Poole, *The Beginning of the Year in the Middle Ages* (London: British Academy, 1926).

tled in Ricketts MS 30, allowed for most anyone who had these two tables to calculate the moon’s location within the Zodiac, which was useful because zodiac signs had multiple functions that continued to be added to with the passing of time and continual interest in astrology. Bede argues that his Table, in the eighth century, was actually for a wider audience. Wallis translates, “Should someone rather less skilled in calculation nonetheless be curious about the course of the Moon, we have also for his sake devised a formula [*argumentum*] adapted to the capacity of his intelligence, so he might find what he seeks.”⁵¹ Even in 725AD there was already an interest in astrology and accommodations were made to ensure that a wider audience could participate for the purpose of computing Easter and other religiously-oriented dates. Of course, this does not mean that Bede was writing for the common person, but acknowledging a wider purpose and audience makes the case that there was a cultural interest in the moon and the Zodiac.

Originally, Bede’s table covered nineteen years, another example of the Metonic cycle, which corresponds with twenty-seven rows of seemingly random letters, but this is not random. In Bede’s table the letters only ranged from ‘A’ to ‘O’ because each letter represented two of the twenty-seven rows. It is important to remember that in the Latin alphabet ‘J’ was not its own letter, but was used in correlation with the letter ‘I’. With this method, by ‘O’ only one number is attached to it because of the unequal lunar, solar, and Zodiac cycles leaves space for the extra, inconsistent hours to fall from each cycle.⁵² The Zodiac signs were listed in the yearly cycle chronological order during a year. On the table each sign had multiple rows, typically two or three, yet it is only assumed that this may have been to break down the sign’s individual cycle to have a more precise location of the moon, such as in the first or second half of the cycle. This information was only useful if there was also a calendar-codex, as described in *The Reckoning of Time*, but there is no other information about Bede’s Calendar-Codex, so I have used the possible context in Ricketts MS 30 as a practical example of what may have been included in Bede’s. In Ricketts, the codex is a relatively simple chart of the months on the x-axis and 1-30, the days of

the month, on the y-axis. On each day of the month, there is a letter, starting from ‘A’ on January 1 to ‘O’. The codex is a necessary reference because in order to calculate the moon’s position within the Zodiac, one needed the corresponding letter and Metonic year to find the position of the moon. The Table of Regulars in Wallis’s translation of Bede is not the original one, but is a combination of a typical *Pagina regularis* and an ‘Old Welsh Computus.’⁵³

In general, there is very little is known about Old Welsh modes of computus, except that it was a variation on calculation the date of Easter by the equinox and not through astronomical calculations. This method, due to the lack of standardized time keeping, based on the differences in the Julian and Gregorian calendars across Europe, had different dates of Easter.⁵⁴ The standard Old Welsh computus follows more closely to the Table of Bisextiles meant to calculate the date of Easter than Bede’s Table of Regulars based on the Zodiac and Lunar cycles. There are many differences between Bede’s Table and the one detailed in Ricketts MS 30, titled the “Table of Signes of the Moone.” The first major difference is the language. Bede’s is in Latin and the Ricketts’s codex and table are in Middle English, but follow the Latin alphabet structure. The codex goes to the number thirty-one instead of twenty-seven. Unfortunately, the information for February, March, and April either were not completed or were erased. The letters and months alternate between red and black. There are smaller variations on the table because in Bede’s the Zodiac signs take up different numbers of rows. There does not seem to be a reason for why one Zodiac has three rows and another has two, thus there will be some inaccuracies or variations to this formula if used in comparison to another table. Ricketts MS 30 has the Metonic cycle at the top and the Zodiac signs on the y-axis. The largest difference between the two is the lettering system. While there are still twenty-seven rows, one letter does not account for numbers as seen in Bede. Instead, in Ricketts MS 30 one letter correlates with one number. At first, this seemed to be an issue because there are twenty-three letters in the Latin alphabet, but twenty-seven are needed. In order to complete the table four additional letters were included, such as another

51 The Venerable Bede, *The Reckoning of Time*, trans. Faith Wallis (Liverpool University Press, 2012), 63.

52 Bede, *Reckoning*, 58.

53 Bede, *Reckoning*, 65.

54 E.C. Quiggin, “A Fragment of an Old Welsh Computus,” *ZCP VIII* (New York: G.E. Stechert & Co. 1912), 407-410, accessed September 18, 2018, www.maryjones.us/ctexts/computus.html.

‘Z’, a possible ‘con’ symbol which looks like the number ‘9’, a possible thorn symbol which looks like a ‘y’, but is pronounced as ‘th’, and finally, a possible ‘yogh’ symbol similar to a long ‘Z’ or the letter ‘3’ and sounds like a ‘g’, or ‘gh’ or ‘zh.’⁵⁵ With the addition of these symbols, the alphabet, without ‘J’, ‘V’, or ‘W’, is twenty-seven exactly before the cycle begins again.

In order to exemplify how such a chart worked, I will do a demonstration. If one wanted to know the Zodiac location of the moon on July 2 in the 12th year of the Metonic cycle, the actual year was unnecessary with the Metonic information so widely available. One would then reference the codex on folio 3v that dictates the letter ‘T’, and then one would turn to 4v. to the 12th year and find the letter ‘T’ and see it is in the middle third of Aquarius. As a last step, in attempts to most accurately calculate the moon’s position to the Zodiac, Bede’s and Ricketts’ tables should be cross referenced because the letter ‘T’ corresponds with the letter ‘K’ in Bede’s. Thus, one would find the twelfth year on Bede’s table and find the ‘K’. On this table, ‘K’ corresponds with the second half of Capricorn. This may seem like a mistake, but it is necessary to remember that neither of these charts are standard. Bede’s Table Capricorn has two rows and Aquarius has two rows, but in Ricketts MS 30 Aquarius has three rows which may cause shift differences between the charts. It is not an exact science due how time was measured in different parts of Europe and their corresponding local calendars.

While Table of Regulars in Ricketts MS 30 follows more closely with Bede’s *Pagina regularis* and may thus seem anachronistic (because, as mentioned, Bede was writing seven hundred years before Ricketts was commissioned), John Somer’s *Kalendarium* does have an interesting variation on the Zodiac. Somer’s Tables to Know the Sign of the Moon, with the Angle of the Moon table, demonstrates how important zodiac signs were centuries after Bede. According to Bede, Zodiac signs functioned to know the general location of the moon, but Somer expands on Bede to a more practical and immersive function.⁵⁶ Somer’s use of zodiac tables extended beyond Bede and in one way functioned as seasonal time

markers. According to Mooney, “The fixed signs, Taurus, Leo, Scorpio and Aquarius, are in the middle of the seasons and so are associated with stability.”⁵⁷ The others are moveable, also known as “cardinal” because they are associated with seasonal change. Somer’s signs function on a more individualistic manner than Bede does. This is most probably in Somer’s because of his best-known use of Zodiac signs in his *Kalendarium*, the Zodiac Man, which “was a common illustrated figure in medical manuscripts, almanacs, and even books of hours, both in England and on the continent”.⁵⁸ Though not directly related to Ricketts MS 30, it is useful to understand how widely used zodiac signs were in daily life activities for a wide audience. The Zodiac man connected the signs with specific body parts such as Aries and the head, and Taurus as connected with the neck and was meant for medical purposes; for example, instruction on bloodletting.⁵⁹ The relationship between astrology and medicine was closely related during the fourteenth century because while the Zodiac Man demonstrated how far spread culture was interacting with astrology scientifically, medically, and religiously, thus increasing the probable audience, it is not included in Ricketts MS 30. The commissioner, who probably knew of the Zodiac Man, did not include it in MS 30, but instead chose to follow Bede’s Table of Regulars in the midst of other Somer parts. Additionally, the inclusion of the Table of Regulars was not just as a showpiece either. In order to demonstrate that the table was still in use, there are marginal notes in Ricketts MS 30 that possibly date to the seventeenth century. This inconsistency raises the question if the beginning few folia were, indeed, commissioned with the rest of the Psalter-Hours and were thus an intentional choice of the owner, or were added later. If added later, where did this table come from and why was it included with materials most similar to John Somer’s *Kalendarium*?

Overall, it is still impossible to know the original owner, but some preliminary conclusions may be made about the patron’s personal decisions about the manuscript. As discussed, the religious portion of the manuscript may be older than the astrological/astronomical tables at the beginning, but even then probably only

55 “Letter Forms and Abbreviations,” Manuscripts and Special Collections, University of Nottingham, accessed September 18, 2018, <https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/manuscriptsandspecialcollections/researchguidance/medievaldocuments/letterformsandabbreviations.aspx>.

56 Mooney, *Kalendarium*, 41.

57 Mooney, 43.

58 Mooney, 45.

59 Mooney, 45.

dating back to the late 1380s. A person made the specific choice of having the religious text in a contentious, but rising in popularity, vernacular language. Additionally, a patron chose to include tables from John Somer's *Kalendarium*, but not his most well known medical tables, and Bede's Table of Regulars. Though there are other Middle English Psalter-Hours from the same time as Ricketts MS 30, the additional tables make the manuscript unique. If other tables exist in manuscripts like Ricketts MS 30, Kathleen Kennedy's article does not include which leaves the question of if other manuscripts followed the trend of astronomical/astrological tables within a contentious religious manuscript. This essay was a cultural introduction into a few abnormal components seen in Ricketts MS 30, which will become a lengthier analysis of this manuscript in the future. Some aspects that could be researched in more depth are: the exact Wycliffe translation, an artistic survey of the initials, differences in handwriting, use of specific ink, the condition of the pages and broader the specific order of the content, and geographic breakdown of the Calendar of the Saint Days. While there are elements of seemingly rebellious nature due to the Middle English and by calculating the information typically disseminated by the Church, it is very possible that the Ricketts MS 30 patron was the product of the cultural influences and trends of the early fifteenth century in a hodgepodge of a manuscript. This manuscript is important to future manuscript research because it complicates the historical assumption of authority in the perception of history and culture. Ricketts MS 30's abnormalities should be included in the scholarly research of Middle English religious texts because by challenging the established conventions surrounding known religious manuscripts, manuscripts such as Ricketts MS 30, provide an opportunity to delve into the individuality and relatively unstudied cultural trends that existed as an undercurrent of the fifteenth century.