

MOST EXCELLENT OF ALL THE ARTS. ADELARD OF BATH & ARABIC

Astrology

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Abstract:

My thesis uses Adelard of Bath as a case study to understand the factors that led dozens of scholars in the twelfth- and thirteenth-century Latin West to seek out and translate Arabic works on the science of the stars, including texts on celestial divination and astral magic of a type previously unavailable to Latin Christians. I look to Adelard's institutional and cultural contexts to explain his endeavor. The sophisticated horoscopic techniques offered by Arabic texts aided Adelard in building a reputation for masterful erudition and deploying it to his social advantage. Horoscopic practices allowed Adelard to create certain knowledge about a wide range of topics and in a manner that implied he possessed masterful erudition. Celestial divination and astral magic therefore constituted an important tool for advancing Adelard's social standing in the competitive contexts of classroom and court Adelard inhabited. As a teacher specializing in the often under-studied quadrivium, the four mathematical liberal arts, Adelard could deploy horoscopic techniques to assert the relevance of his subject and to display his pedagogical prowess in the agonistic environment of twelfth-century education. As a courtier vying for favor, the Bathonian could use celestial divination and astral magic to offer monarchs, nobles, and other political actors a range of useful justifications, prognostications, and interventions that met the criteria for certain knowledge and were grounded in the authority of the learned quadrivium. These applications of the horoscopic techniques Adelard had drawn from Arabic sources aided the Bathonian in securing the patronage that was crucial to his livelihood and social standing. Celestial divination and astral magic thus represented answers to specific questions facing Adelard and his peers, questions that were historically contingent, grounded in the society and culture of the Bathonian's particular time and place. They show that the translations produced by Adelard and other Latin scholars of the twelfth century resulted not from an indiscriminate desire for knowledge, the mere availability of the texts, or some general epistemological osmosis, but from the specific needs and desires of human beings embedded in specific social structures, and they bespeak the fruitfulness of considering not only the texts but also the contexts of the people who made natural knowledge in the Middle Ages.

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1316; the oldest surviving Latin translation of the Elements is a 12th century work by Adelard, which translates to Latin from the Arabic.[1]. Adelard de Bada (Latin: Adelardus Bathensis) (c. 1080 – c. 1152) was a 12th century English scholar. He is known both for his original works and for translating many important Arabic scientific works of astrology, astronomy, philosophy and mathematics into Latin, as well as some ancient Greek texts in Arabic translation, which were then introduced to Western Euro Among Adelard of Bath's original works is a trio of dialogues or correspondence with his nephew. The earliest of these is De Eodem et Diverso (On the Same and the Different). It is written in the style of a protreptic. Each section of the liberal arts is divided into two parts. Presented first is a description of the allegorical figure representing the art, in which the importance of that art is indicated, followed by a summary of the doctrines of that art, as told by the allegorical figure who is presented as the founder or main proponent of that particular art. The second of this trio to be written is Adelard's most substantial work, Questiones Naturales (Natural Questions). It is in this text that Adelard of Bath receives his name, referring to himself as being 'Batoniensis'.