

Universal Multiple-Octet Coded Character Set
International Organization for Standardization
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Международная организация по стандартизации

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Title: On the glyph of LATIN LETTER CLOSED INSULAR G
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1. INSULAR G, CLOSED INSULAR G, and CAROLINGIAN G. The orthography of the Early Middle English *Ormulum* is remarkable in that it indicates three different reflexes of original /g/. Its author, Orm, uses Carolingian G for /dʒ/, as in *seggen* (Old English *secgen*) ‘to say’ [ˈsɛdʒən]; INSULAR G (Ϛ) for /j/ (this is the ancestor of yogh ȝ), as in *ȝiff* ‘if’ [jɪf]; and a unique CLOSED INSULAR G of his own invention for /g/, as in *goddspell* ‘gospel’ [ˈgɔdspɛl].

G g Ϛ ϛ Ϝ ϝ

Peter Baker suggests (see Figure 9) that the analysis of these letters should lead to an interpretation of “closed Insular g” as what we will call “Carolingian g with headbar”. We do not believe the evidence is sufficient to make this determination. Orm uses Carolingian Gg in Middle English for /dʒ/ and in Latin (where he does not use Insular Ϛϛ). Unfortunately none of Orm’s Latin text has any instances of initial capital G, but we can look at some contemporary texts to show that capital Carolingian had a distinctive C-like shape (Figures 1–3) and even a square one (shown in type in Figure 4). In fact some English texts use a C-like shape for the capital of lowercase ϛ. But Orm does not. His uppercase and lowercase Insular Ϛϛ and his uppercase and lowercase Insular closed Ϝϝ share the same shape (see Figures 5 and 6). We do not know what his capital Carolingian G would have had, but it is doubtless C-like, and his lowercase Carolingian g is unremarkable—so standard Gg glyphs are most probable.

Baker’s suggestion that Orm just put a crossbar atop a Carolingian g is a possible analysis, but putting a crossbar atop a capital G would make it look very much like an Insular Ϛ, particularly in manuscript, and Orm is not likely to have done that. Orm’s understanding of letters seems to be quite advanced, and he would not likely want to do something so ambiguous. In any case we believe that the evidence best suggests that Orm used Gg for /dʒ/ in English (perhaps this phoneme was used in the Latin he used), Ϛϛ for /j/, and that he modified the Insular letter, not the Carolingian one, by borrowing the downstroke of the top part of the g.

Shown on the left here are the Baskerville glyphs used in Evertype publications. Shown on the right are the glyphs in version 1.002 of Junicode (this version of the font does not have LATIN CAPITAL LETTER SCRIPT G). In red are glyphs which have been made out of glyphs found in that version, for reference as we discuss the shapes. (They were made quickly and without the care Baker puts into his font.)

G g G̃ g Ϛ ϛ Ϝ ϝ G̃ g Ϛ ϛ Ϝ ϝ

Baker suggests (Figure 9) a glyph \mathfrak{g} which looks like LATIN LETTER SCRIPT G with a crossbar, but Orm’s Carolingian \mathfrak{g} doesn’t really look like \mathfrak{g} —it looks more like \mathfrak{g} . In fact, all three of Orm’s \mathfrak{g} ’s share the S-shape which is most original to the insular letterform:



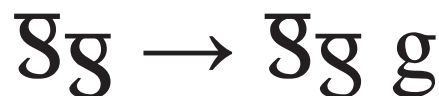
Because Orm does not use a shape like \mathfrak{g} we don’t believe there is a reason to prefer a \mathfrak{g} -shape to a \mathfrak{g} -shape for the Carolingian letter, and, because (unlike the usual Gg pairing) uppercase and lowercase \mathfrak{G} and \mathfrak{g} have the same shape in Orm’s hand, we stand by our analysis and the glyphs which have been ballotted and encoded. The letter is really LATIN CLOSED INSULAR G, and it is not *LATIN G WITH HEADSTROKE.

Now the glyphs used for INSULAR G \mathfrak{G} in Junius seem to be in the tradition of Edmund Fry’s typography, and that shape doesn’t “close” very easily. Orm’s insular \mathfrak{g} is decidedly S-like. Perhaps some alterations to Junius’ INSULAR G would be of benefit for CLOSED INSULAR G. See Figure 4.

In any case we do not believe that a $\mathfrak{g}/\mathfrak{g}/\mathfrak{g}$ distinction is what we have in the *Ormulum* (or $\mathfrak{g}/\mathfrak{g}/\mathfrak{g}$ either), and we maintain that $\mathfrak{g}/\mathfrak{G}/\mathfrak{g}$ are the right glyphs to use.

There are similarities in the ductus of all three letters in Orm’s hand. See Figures 7 and 8.

2. Glyph improvement. The reference glyph could benefit from a thicker closing loop taken from the \mathfrak{g} .



3. Bibliography

Fry, Edmund. 1799. *Pantographia: containing accurate copies of all the known alphabets in the world; together with an English explanation of the peculiar force or power of each letter; to which are added, specimens of all well-authenticated oral languages; forming a comprehensive digest of phonology*. London: Printed by Cooper and Wilson, for John and Arthur Arch, Gracechurch-Street; John White, Fleet-Street; John Edwards, Pall-Mall; and John Debrett, Piccadilly.

Wright, C. E. 1960. *English vernacular hands from the twelfth to the fifteenth centuries*. (Oxford Palaeographical Handbooks.) Oxford: Clarendon Press.

4. Figures.

heued. 7 iuuſſe hente ðæt wæde to be ðærnes. Hi diden heō in quaſ-
 ternie þar nades 7 ſnakes 7 pades 7 æron mine. 7 drapen heō ſpa.
 Sumne hi diden in crucechur ðis in an ceſte þar þas ſcort 7 nareu.
 7 undep. 7 ðide ſcærpe ſtanes þer inne. 7 þi engle þe man þær
 inne. ð hi bſæcon alle þe limes. In man of þe caſtles 7 æron lof
 7 gſi. ð 7 æron ſachenregeſ ðæt 7 a oþer thye men hadden onoh to
 be on onne. þar þas ſuamaced. ð is feſtred to an beom. 7 diden an
 ſcærp iren abuton þa mannes thſote 7 hiſ half. ð he ne mſhte nopi
 deſ partleſ. ne ſittē ne lien ne ſlepen. æc beſon al ðiren. Man
 þuſen hi drapen mid hūngæ. Ine can ne i ne ma tellen alle þe
 7 undep. ne alle þe pineſ ð hi diden 7 pæccemen on hiſ land. 7 ð laſte
 de þa. xix. 7 unte pile Stephne þas king 7 æuſe it þas iuerſe 7
 iuerſe. Hi laiden gæildeſ æthe tunef æin rēpile 7 elepeden it
 tenſerie. þa þe unſeccemen ne hadden nāmole to gſien. þa 7 æ
 ueden hi 7 brendon alle the tunef. ð þel iu mſhtes ſæren al a dæſ
 fare ſeuldeſ thu neure finden man in tune ſittende. ne land ti
 led. þa þas com depe. 7 flec 7 cæſe 7 butere. for nan ne þas o þe land.
 7 pæccemen ſturuen of hūngæſ. ſume ieden on ælmeſ þe þaſen ſū
 pileſicemen. ſume flugen ut of lande. 7 of neure gæt mare 7 ſæc
 hed on land. ne neure be the men þe ſe ne diden þan hi diden.
 for on gſiſhon ne for luren 7 northes cyrcne ne cyrcenard. æc nān
 all 7 god ð þar inne þas. 7 brenden ſſichien þe cyrcne 7 alte gædere.
 He hi ne for þaſen b land ne abb ne proſteſ. æc reueden mūnekeſ
 7 clerekeſ. 7 ænre man oþer þe ouer mſhtes. Gſi þa men oþer. m.
 coman 7 idend to antun. al þe tunſeipe flugen for heō. 7 enden ð
 hi þaſon reuereſ. þe biſcopeſ 7 leſedmen heō curſede ænre. æc þas
 heō nalt þar of. for hi iueron al for curſed 7 for ſuoen 7 for lo
 ren. þar ſæine tiled. þe erthe ne þar nan com. for þe land þas al
 for don. mid ſulce dædeſ. 7 hi ſæden openlice ð xpiſt ſlep. 7 hiſ ha
 lechen. Suile 7 mare þanne þe cummen ſæm. þe þolenden. xix. 7 unte
 7 for ure ſinnes.

Figure 1. Example from Wright 1960 (Plate 1, from the Peterborough version (1121–1155) of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle) showing G and g circled in red and blue respectively. This scribe does not use the insular letterforms 5 and 5.

37.

danne art tu rithypis 7 haue hure **g**odes draduelle mid he. þu
 dis ne foelid. Hane scule **g**odel erge bie uppe de dat nading
 ne mai de dertge. 7 his rare opene to sine beues. dat
 nabis he de ne yik yarueng. þus de rart de hali gatt de
 spekt. **g**ur althe dai durh deue selur de du gesikt oder
 iherst. bic par gif du pile. Se de nele dese hali lare of
 de hali gatt understaden. hlest hyat he seid dat atrey. no pidentem
 Vultus autē dū sup facietes mala ut dispdat dtra me
 morā eor. **G**odd he seid loked yradliche uppche de eue
 le dod. de for hil dradnelle ne pilled ihrike for di scal **g**odes
 yradde cunic on hē. If hie ha aut yrae and forhelen
 hem bade lif. ^{ame} saule. Of dese deadliche lande de hie on
 yunied 7 spa michel luringed. sva hie sauley iet forluse
 dat luingende land. þis dat ethe lif. for dan de hie wolde
 godes lare hlestē ne. **G**iet he seid dat her **g**e miend
 scal sva hie forlore dat me of hē ne scal neider ne spe
 ken ne penche. **G**iet seid dat hali yrit. **G**ur timet dū faci
 et bona. q autē duri cordis = corruet i malū. Se de ondrat
 godd he lat aūre de euel to done for his herge. Se de is
 of hard herte he nodratt nolt **g**odd. 7 for di he fard fro
 euele to euele. 7 fra seune to sene. hie bied mange me
 syde bespikene dat moe draded ane deadliche mā
 ne dane he dod godalmyti. de for dare yorldey scame
 ody for here scotte lue hē alfoesperied. 7 slead hie **g**ode
 ne saule 7 forheled dat ethe lif. for di us yarned ihu ch
 7 dus seid. **H**olite tūne eorū corp occidit. Animā autē

*ii dispdat de tra
 yemalā e
 02.*

Figure 2. Example from Wright 1960 (Plate 3, from *Vices and Virtues* (c. 1200)) showing G and g circled in red and blue respectively, alongside the insular letterform 5 used here for 3, circled in orange.

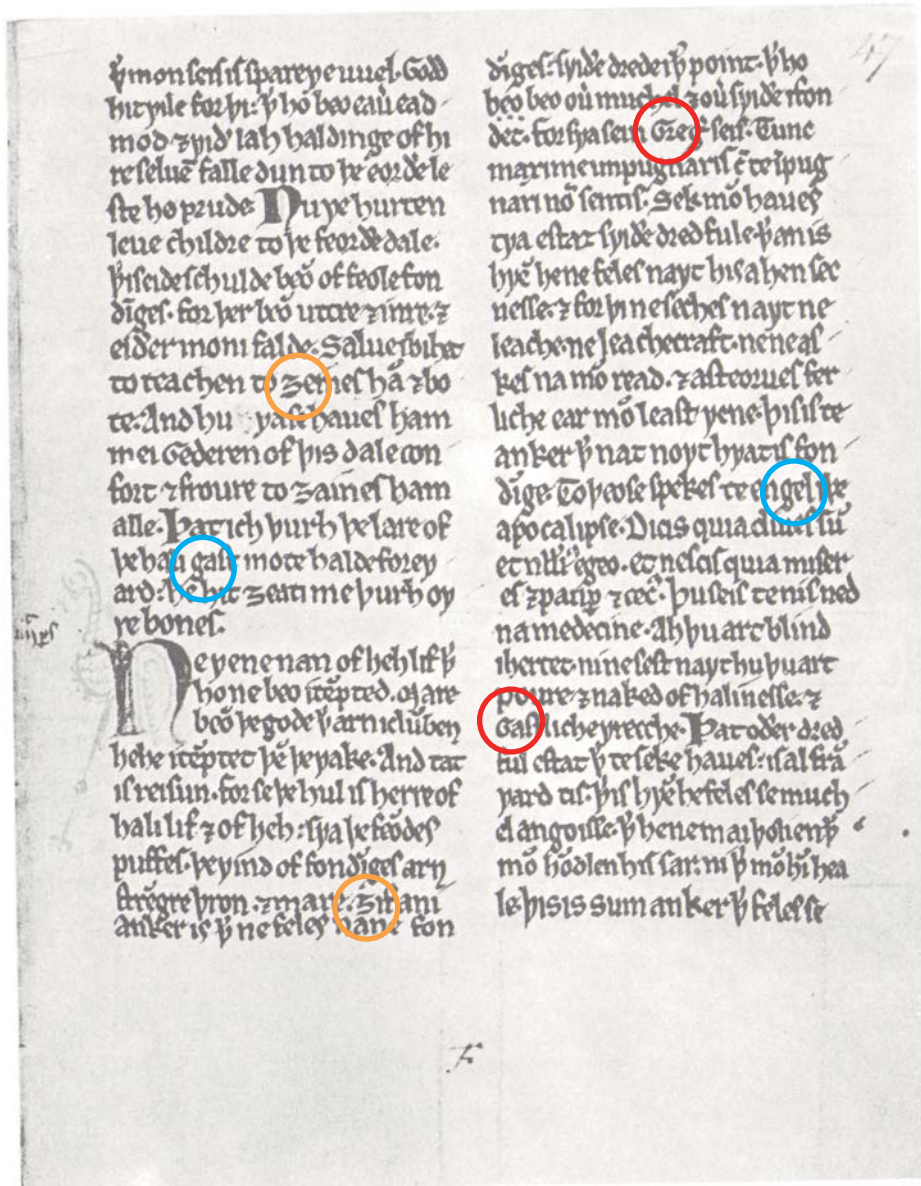


Figure 3. Example from Wright 1960 (Plate 5, from *Ancrene Wisse* (c. 1225)) showing G and g circled in red and blue respectively, alongside the reflex of an insular letterform of ʒ used now as 3, circled in orange.

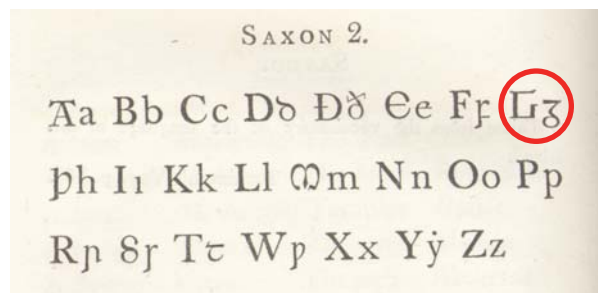


Figure 4. Example from Fry 1799:260 showing “Saxon” insular letterforms. This may inform the glyph shape of INSULAR G ʒ in Peter Baker’s Junicode font. Perhaps if that shape were revisited in Junicode with regard to the ʒ shape it might make design of ʒ easier.

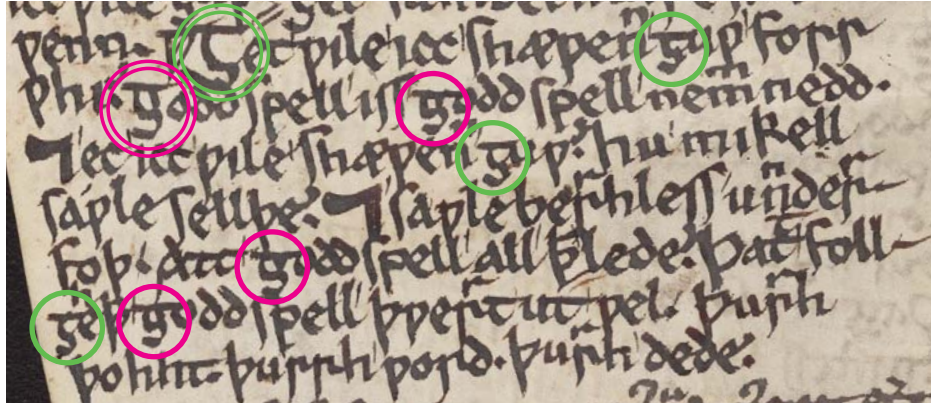


Figure 5. Text from the *Ormulum*, f. 9v, lines 99–106, showing uppercase and lowercase INSULAR G (circled in green) alongside uppercase and lowercase CLOSED INSULAR G (circled in red); the capitals are double-circled. Transcription of the text:

ƿ ſ ēt pile icc fhæpeñ g up forrphi:		ƿ faple beſhleft uñdeſfop.	
S oddfpell iff g oddfpell neſmnedd.	100	Att g oddfpell all þ lede:	
ƿ ec icc pile fhæpeñ g up:		ƿæt g oddfpell þpeſt ut pel.	105
Hu mikell fāple fellþe:		ƿuñh þohht. þuñh þord. þuñh dede:	

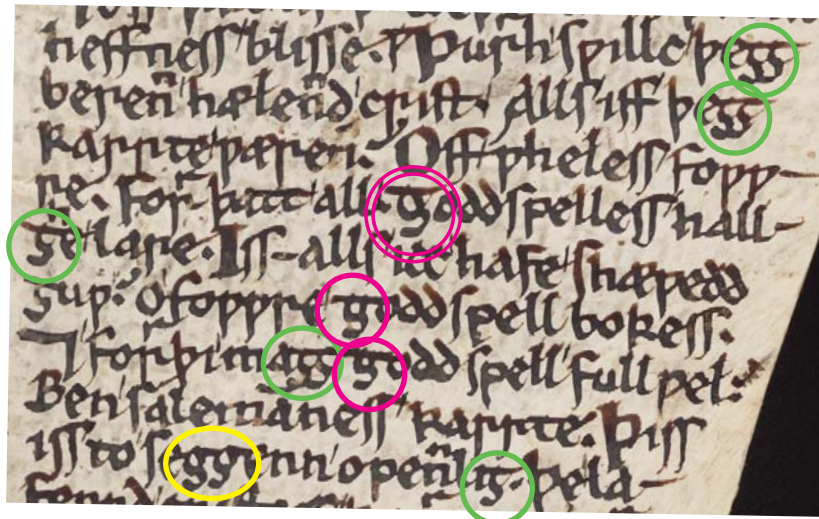


Figure 6. Example from the *Ormulum* f. 9r, lines 47–56 showing lowercase INSULAR G (circled in green) alongside uppercase and lowercase CLOSED INSULAR G (circled in red); the capital is double-circled. Circled in yellow is Carolingian g. Transcription of the text:

ƿ ƿuñh fpille g ess bereñ hæleñd criſt.		ƿ foſþi g oddfpell full pel:	
Allf iff g ess karpte pæpeñ.		Ben fálemāneff karpte:	
Off pheleff foppne. Foſ þatt all		ƿiff iff to g egenn g oddfpell	55
S oddfpelleff g oddfpell hall	50	þe lafernd criſteff karpte.	
lape. Iff — allf icc hafe fhæpedd g up:			
O foppne g oddfpellbokeff.			

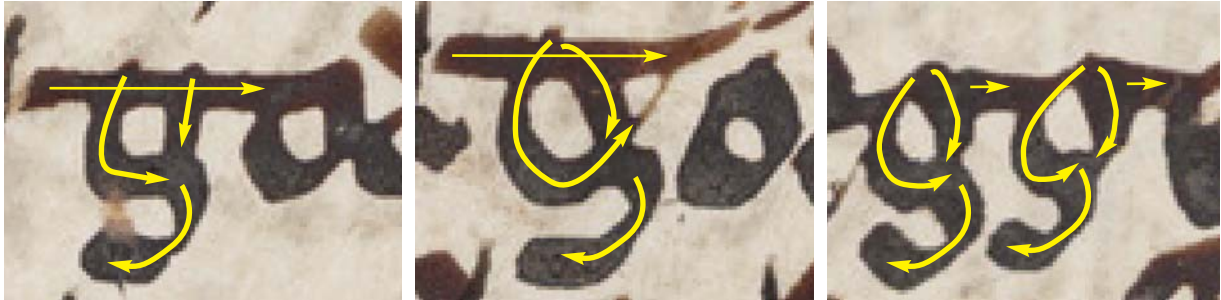


Figure 7. Text taken from Figure 6 above (lines 52, 50, and 55 respectively) showing what appears to be the ductus of the letters lowercase g, uppercase S, and two lowercase g's. There is nothing compelling here to suggest that CLOSED INSULAR G is necessarily based on a Carolingian original; the two downstrokes on the lowercase g are nicely parallel—just as a “closing stroke” on the insular ɣ would be! And again, the uppercase pair S/S have the same basic structure, and the latter does not look like a Carolingian G. Moreover, since Orm’s g does not look like script g, basing the glyph for g on that, as Baker suggests (see Figure 9) would be a mistake.

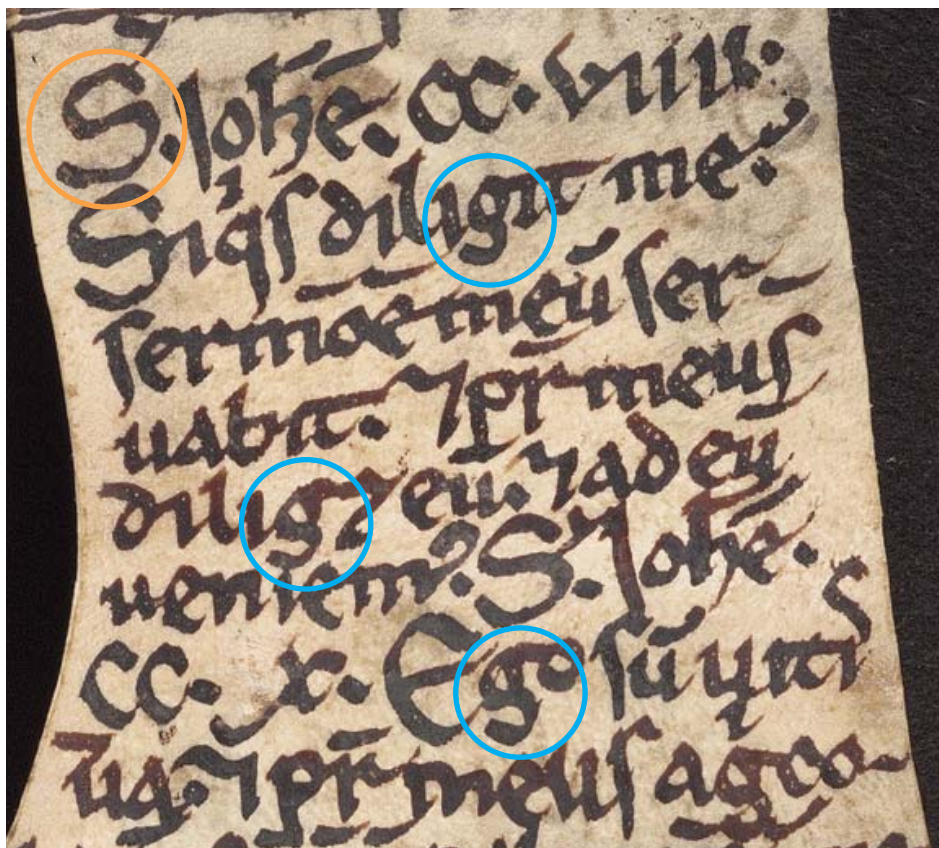


Figure 8. Text in Latin from the *Ormulum* f. 8r showing lowercase Carolingian g with an S-shape alongside uppercase S which has the same shape.

I was very pleased to see the additions for Orm and his 12th-c. Ormulum in 14.0—the text is horrible poetry but a great linguistic resource, and Orm's peculiar characters are needed to do it justice. As you might expect, I've been busy adding these characters to Junicode.

The interpretation of U+A7D0 and 1 ("closed insular g") in Latin Extended D struck me as odd. Arthur Napier (History of the Holy Rood Tree, 1894, pp. 71-2, here: https://www.google.com/books/edition/History_of_the_Holy_Rood_tree/WRpEAAAAYAAJ?hl=en) described Orm's peculiar g, used for plosive /g/, as "a kind of compromise" between the insular g (U+1D79) used in Old English texts and the Carolingian g (like either the two-loop g or U+0261) used in writing Latin from about the mid-10th c. onwards. As to structure, you can see in the attached (taken from the same page of the online facsimile as in the Everson/West proposal for these characters) that Orm's U+A7D1 (number 3 in the image) is nothing more than the Carolingian g of number 1 (perhaps with the horizontal stroke at upper right drawn a little higher) with an additional horizontal stroke added at upper left. (The two strokes are not continuous, though they appear intended to be understood as a single top stroke.) The top of the Carolingian loop is usually plainly visible, rising slightly above this two-part horizontal stroke. The insular g (number 2), by contrast, has a single horizontal stroke at the top and an s-like shape descending from it. This lower shape is structurally quite different from the bottoms of numbers 1 and 3, which are the same. (I'll spare you the details.)

In short, I wouldn't call number 3 a "closed insular g" at all, but rather "g with top horizontal bar" or the like.

The result of this misinterpretation of the MS letter is that the Unicode reference character is slightly absurd:



The Junicode interpretation is (far from pretty, but), I would say, more true to the MS letter-shape:



The Unicode reference character is important, I think, since most font makers seem to copy these exotic characters from the code charts without ever consulting the MSS they're based on.

I'm not sure this matter is worth such a long exposition as this (sorry!), but I thought I'd mention it anyway. Font makers are soon going to start putting U+A7D0 and U+A7D1 in their fonts, and the results are going to be unfortunate.

Best,
Peter

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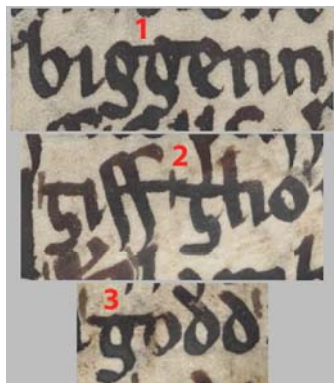


Figure 9. Text of the e-mail on this topic sent by Peter Baker to Deborah Anderson, 2021-09-21.