Ireland and Christendom

The Bible and the Missions

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Henry Wotton, Virgil of St Peter's at Salting
S. 415-420
420: "St. A. Boneif."
AC's condemnation of fiannas\textsuperscript{54}, the profession of arms practised by bands of roving warriors and recognized by secular law as lawful, has striking correspondence in the Latin Life of Colmán, the Vita sancti Colmani abbatis de Land Elo. This vita, "of fairly early date"\textsuperscript{55} contains much matter that does not form part of the conventional repertoire of Irish hagiography and, therefore, probably reflects genuine early traditions about the saint. Foremost in this matter are a series of anecdotes about Colmán's pacifism: he recruits a young man away from the military to the monastic life; he prevents a full-scale war between two Ulster tribes, and he confronts organized military bands (Lat. latrones), probably the same fiana who are condemned in AC\textsuperscript{56}. These agreements between internal, textual evidence and the external, historical record strengthen the case for Colmán's authorship of AC.

To sum up: AC demonstrates textual unity indicative of a single author. This author was a monk, who probably composed in the very early period of Irish monasticism, as suggested by various types of evidence in the text: the emphasis on Cassian and OT sapiential books; the non-Roman formula of renunciation at Baptism; the references to non-Christians in Irish society and perhaps also to the athlaech; the use of prosodic techniques borrowed from the oral tradition of the filid. That such disparate types of evidence should chronologically converge, strengthens their collective weight; together they offer strong support for the linguistic claims of Thurneysen and others that AC was composed ca. 600. Other references in AC lend plausibility to the manuscript claim that its author was Colmán mac(cu) Béognae.

\textsuperscript{54} § 25: "The four things that the profession of arms causes to mankind: It contracts territories; it increases enmity; it cuts off life; [and] it lengthens torments" (Irish text given above, p. 208, l.23). On fiannas, see K. Meyer, Fianaigecht, Royal Irish Academy Todd Lecture Series 16, Dublin 1910, p. ix. f.

\textsuperscript{55} Kenney, Sources, p. 400. He notes (p. 399, note 118) in one version of the vita the spelling Beugne for Colmán's name, which is older linguistically than Adomnán's Beogna.

\textsuperscript{56} Plummer, VSH I, p. 258—73, sections viii, xi, xiii, xiv, xxiii, xxvii, xxxvii.
Some remarks on Cummian’s Paschal Letter and the Commentary on Mark ascribed to Cummian

By
Maura Walsh

The letter of Cummian on the Paschal Controversy has often been considered a hodge-podge of dubious patristic quotations and imperfectly understood computistics, while the Commentary on Mark, attributed to the same Cummian by Bernhard Bischoff, is regarded as one of the finest examples of early Irish exegesis. Could the same man have written both works?

Preparation of a new edition of the Letter by myself and Daibhi Ó Cróinín has inspired a reappraisal of its author and his scholarship, for we have found that the letter has more structure and coherence than modern scholars have allowed. We can also show that Cummian was a scholar of integrity who did not invent or falsify sources. We are not the first to come to this conclusion, for J. E. L. Oulton wrote in 1957 that “my detailed study of the Epistle has convinced me that Cummian was a laborious and sincere student... The epistle is a mine of scriptural and patristic quotations and references... I believe that I have tracked them down, or nearly all...” Unfortunately, beyond tantalizing readers with the names of a few patristic writers that he believed Cummian used, Oulton did not provide any detailed proof of his claim. Rather, he promised an edition which never subsequently appeared.

However, I can now claim that I believe that we have tracked down all of Cummian’s sources, or nearly all, and they are far more numerous than either

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3 Bruno Krusch described the list of cycles in the letter as ‘das bunteste Mixtum von Echtem und Falschem — doch überwiegt das Letztere — was mir je vorgekommen ist’; see his paper, Die Einführung des griechischen Paschalritus im Abendlande, Neues Archiv 9 (1884), p. 101—169: 51. No less scathing was the verdict of Bartholomew Mac Carthy, AU 4, Dublin 1901, p. cxxix—cxl: ‘The list of cycles is perhaps the most ludicrous tissue of fact and fiction in existence.’


5 A lengthy search for Oulton’s papers proved unsuccessful.

216
Ussher’s or Migne’s editions would indicate. Oulton’s description of it as a mine of scriptural and patristic sources is not exaggerated. While I cannot give an exhaustive list of his sources here, I hope to indicate at least the breadth of his reading and learning.

The reader of Cummian’s Letter is beset by two main problems: the subject matter (Easter dating and the 7th-century Easter controversy) and the seemingly rambling and incoherent structure of the Letter. This difficulty of access has put the Letter in the strange position of being often cited but seldom read. For instance, the oft repeated claim that Cummian himself travelled to Rome is due to a simple misreading by Paul Grosjean, amongst others, which has been repeated many times, obviously without direct reference to the Letter.

As for the computistical intricacies, although they are fascinating in themselves, they are not what interest us here. Rather, it is the structure and sources of the Letter I would like to consider.

Cummian’s Letter is addressed to Ségène and Béccán of Iona, and it appears to be a reply to some charge directed at the southern Irish churches by the monks of the Iona community. That the Letter was not an unsolicited attempt by Cummian to win over the Iona monks to the so-called ‘orthodox’ reckoning of Easter seems clear from the wording of the text, for Cummian in his opening address refers to his own Letter as *verba excusationis meae* (969). Since no original document containing the Iona accusations seems to have survived, we have no sure means of knowing what it was precisely that Ségène and Béccán had criticised; but another passage in the Letter – *Si uero non habefis [sc. certiora prolata], silete, et nolite nos hereticos vocare* (913C) – clearly implies that one of the Iona charges was of heresy. But if we do not know exactly what the other charges were, the content of the Letter allows us to make certain deductions about them.

Cummian explains at the outset the *modus operandi* of his investigations:

> Hinc per annum secretus sanctuarium Dei ingressus (hoc est scripturam sanctan), ut ualui, inuolui; deinde historias, postremo cyclos quos inuenire potui. (969—70)

This is precisely the framework on which the subsequent discussion is based: Cummian deals firstly with the Old Testament passages which had established the foundation for the Jewish feast of the Passover. To clarify and interpret these passages he draws on various patristic commentaries and a number of pseudonymous tracts. He then turns to the New Testament, to those passages which provide the historical chronology for the events of Holy Week. These historical data are then related to the lunar limits for the feast which were set down in the

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Pentateuch, and the justifications for the peculiarities of the Christian observance are then set out. Having examined this scriptural testimony, Cummian then turns to his historias. These 'historical' witnesses are made up chiefly of the decretals of Church councils on the subject of Easter, which statements Cummian had found to differ from the practices of the Irish churches. More importantly, he states that these various councils had anathematised and excommunicated those who follow an Easter observance contrary to the one decreed by the four apostolic sees. In support of this statement, Cummian then enters a long discussion of Church unity, drawing his materials from the works of the Fathers. Hence, in this section, the historiae include decrees of Church councils, scriptural exegesis and general dogmatic commentary such as Cyprian's De unitate ecclesiae.

Finally, after these scriptural and patristic matters have been exhaustively examined, Cummian turns to the evidence of Easter cycles. He cites no fewer than ten such cycles by name, beginning with 'that which the holy Patricius, our father, brought and used', and closing with a cycle which he describes as the work of the 318 bishops assembled at the council of Nicaea (AD 325). These cycles have in common only that they disagree with the 84-year cycle of the Irish.

Having pondered on these questions for a full year — none too long a period for such an undertaking! — Cummian convened a synod of the principal southern Irish ecclesiastics at Mag Léne and they agreed to adopt the new, 'orthodox' method of calculating the date of Easter. Some time shortly thereafter, however, there arose a certain paries dealbatuus who made uncertain a number of those that had been decided, and the result was renewed confusion. It was decided, iuxta decretao sinodicum, to despatch a delegation to Rome in order to ascertain which was the method practised by the Holy See, and in the third year (sc. after the initial year in which the new cycle had first been adopted) some of the delegation returned with the news that the new cycle was indeed that of the Universal Church. Fortified by this, and by the sight of miracles wrought through the books brought back from Rome, Cummian composed his Letter and sent it as a reply to the criticisms leveled by the Iona community.

Cummian has been accused of heaping up biblical citations of dubious relevance to his arguments. The above summary of his Letter however indicates that the work has more structure and coherence than modern scholars have allowed. It might almost be said that Cummian's Letter is a carefully constructed legal document and one for which we may even cite a possible model. The hierarchy of


8 E.g., C. W. Jones, ed., Bedae opera de temporibus, Mediaeval Academy of America Publications No. 41, Cambridge, Mass. 1943, p. 109, writing of the Pseudo-Jerome Disputatio de Sollemnitatibus, remarked: 'I seem to note a similarity in the opening paragraph, with its mass of Biblical quotation that is only vaguely relevant, to the letter of Cummian to Seghine'.
authorities on which his judgement is based and the procedural approach to the solution of the problem may justly be compared with a (spurious?) canon of Innocent I which occurs in Book XIX (De ordine inquisitionis causarum) of the Collectio Canorum Hiberniensis:

Innocentius dicit: De his ergo causis, in quibus solvendi ligandique auctoritas est, XXII librorum veteris testamenti, quattuorque evangeliorum cum totis Apostolorum scriptis, si non appareat, ad divina recurrito scripta, quae graece hagiographa dicuntur; si nec in illis, ad cathedraliae ecclesiae historias catholicasque a doctoribus catholicis scriptas manum mitte; si nec in his, canones apostolicae sedis intuere; si nec in istis, sanctorum exempla perspicaciter explorata inspice. Quod si his omnibus inspectis huius questionis qualitas non lucide investigatur, seniores provinciae congrega et cos interroga; facilius namque invenitur, quod a plurimis unum sentientibus queritur; verus enim repromissor Dominus ait: 'Si duo vel tres', etc.

In the light of the above canon the structure of Cummian's Letter becomes clear. No longer do his seemingly over-lengthy and elaborate discussions of the biblical evidence appear extraneous and inflated, and his initially obscure citations from the Fathers take on a more coherent purpose. What is more, the canon of Innocent provides a precedent, too, for the synod itself which Cummian convened at Mag Léne. For Cummian states that Auno igitur, ut predixi, emenso, iuxta Deuteronomium, interrogavi patres meos ut annuntiarent mihi; maiores meos ut dicerent michi ... quid sentirent de excommunicatione nostra a supradiceis sedibus apostoliciis facta ... At illis congregati in unum, etc. (976D) Doubtless the procedure was one followed generally in the Church and we need not assume direct dependence on the Innocentian canon. But that such a statement should be contained in the Irish collection strongly suggests that Cummian adhered consciously to an already established pattern of investigation and one which may have already received formulation in the canonical decrees of a seventh-century synod of Irish churches.

Cummian's investigations were careful and thorough and a glance at his sources shows that he had an impressive library.

First and foremost among his sources was, of course, the Bible. The majority of biblical citations in Cummian's Letter derive from the Vulgate text but we also find Vetus Latina readings and others which are either conflate or indeterminate. There are forty-five citations from the Bible (not counting mere allusions), and thirteen of those are embodied in quotations from secondary sources. The greater number of non-Vulgate readings occur, as we would expect, in the Old Testament citations, but since collation of the Vetus Latina for the greater part of the OT is incomplete it is not possible to offer a definitive assessment of Cummian's biblical sources.

The relative frequency of non-Vulgate readings in the Pauline Epistles is due, apparently, to Cummian’s use of a Vulgate or near-Vulgate text which occasionally preserved Old Latin readings. The possible influence of liturgical usage on the form of wording in the Letter must also be considered. In this regard, the occasional retention of Old Latin readings may simply reflect a conservatism in seventh-century Irish liturgical practice. It is also worth noting that Cummian, when quoting other authors, tends to reproduce faithfully the form of biblical citation that stood in his source.

It may be useful to comment on some of the citations. In one instance Cummian quotes a passage which he says he found in Leviticus; si quis et mundus est et in itinere non fuit et tamen non facit fase, exterminabitur anima illa de populis suis quia sacrificium Domino non obtulit in tempore suo. The citation is actually from Num 9:13. Cummian’s text reads facit for Vulgate fecit, a reading which Dr Frede has found nowhere else. It may possibly be a scribal error, and another instance occurs where Cummian refers to the Easter table which Patrick tulit et facit. Cummian’s other variation from the Vulgate text here, in tempore suo (Vulgate om. in), is slight; one could therefore describe this whole citation as Vulgate or near-Vulgate. A similar case occurs when Cummian cites Ex 12:2 as mensis iste uobis initium mensium. The Vulgate reading is principium mensuum. Although mensus is very common in Bible MSS, principium does not occur. However, initium mensium is the reading given by Krusch from the letter of Proterius of Alexandria on the Paschal question and that letter was contained in the southern Irish computus of ca. AD 658. In this case, if Cummian had the letter of Proterius to hand, he may have been unconsciously influenced by it when he reproduced Ex 12:2. On the other hand, a third such instance of variation from the pure Vulgate text occurs when Cummian cites Ex 12:17 as et custodietis diem istum in generationes uestras ritu sempiterno (Vulgate ritu perpetuo). However, an earlier passage in Exodus (12:14) reads et celebretis eam sollemnem Domino in generationibus uestris cultu sempiterno: it may be then that Cummian’s text is simply a conflation of the two passages. Another case of possible conflation is Cummian’s version of Col 2:16; fratres, nemo vos seducat in parte diei festi aut neomenia aut sabbato, quae sunt umbra futurorum. Corpus autem Christi. (Vulgate iudicet). The reading seducat occurs otherwise only in Ps.-Columbanus/Ps.-Hieronymus, Epistula de sollemnitatibus. But we find the phrase nemo vos seducat in Col 2:18, so here again, Cummian’s text may be the result of contamination. It must also be kept in mind, of course, that

10 This is the view of Professor Dr. Hermann Frede, Vetus Latina Institut, Beuron, for whose invaluable assistance we are very grateful.

11 The Letter of Proterius was published by Bruno Krisch, Studien zur christlich-mittelalterlichen Chronologie [I]. Der 84jährige Ostercyclus und seine Quellen, Leipzig 1880, p. 266—278. See also Daibhi Ó Cróinín, The Irish provenance of Bede’s computus, Peritia 2 (1983), p. 229—47.

the text of the letter may have undergone some changes in transmission. This we
cannot measure since there is only one manuscript extant.

Cummian’s Letter, then, gives us a good example of the number of influences
that can be brought to bear on an author’s use of the Bible.

Besides the biblical texts on which he drew heavily, Cummian also had to hand
an extensive collection of patristic and technical works, a couple of which still
remain to be identified. He quotes directly from Cyprian, Origen, Jerome,
Augustine, Ambrosiaster, Dionysius Exiguus, Ps.-Anatolius of Laodicea, and Ps.-
Cyril of Alexandria, with indirect references to several others. A look at how he
refers to and uses some of these sources can give us a better idea of his library and
his learning than a list of names.

Cummian is a very careful scholar and almost invariably gives either the author
or the title of his source. In the case of Ambrosiaster’s Liber Questionum ueteris et
noui testamenti, he is even more specific and gives the numbers of the questions he
is citing. Souter, in the preface to his edition of this text, notes that there are three
revisions of this work in the manuscript tradition. The first comprises 150 quota-
tions of which 56 pertain to the Old Testament and 94 to the New Testament. The
second has 127 questions, numbered continuously and the third consists of 151
Souter provides a concordance of the three revisions, which shows that
Cummian had what Souter called recension 1. It does not represent the oldest or
most original recension. One of the questions which Cummian cites is often
found in computistical works, especially in Irish ones. However, it is interesting
to note that these texts do not identify their source, much less give the number of
the question.

Cummian had a good collection of the works of Jerome, including a number
of his letters. He quotes two, Ep. 146 ad Evangelium and Ep. 16 ad Damasum. What
kind of collection of letters he had is uncertain, but the Ep. ad Evangelium seems to
have preceded the Ep. ad Damasum. Oulton, in his article referred to earlier,
claimed that Cummian had preserved an original reading in the Ep. ad Damasum
in a section which has caused problems for editors up to the present day:

“Hinc”, inquit, “presidis fulta mundi Arriana premit rabies. Hinc in
tres partes scissa aeclesia ad se rapere festinat. Monachorum circa com-
monantium antiqua,” inquit, “in me insurgit auctoritas.” (973D)

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1 presides MS 2 fremit CSEL
3 Monachorum chorum MS 4 commaneentium CSEL

13 Several of the patristic citations dismissed as spurious by earlier commentators have
been identified and vindicated in the course of preparing the new edition of the letter.
14 Ed. Alexander Suter, CSEL 50, Vienna 1908.
15 See Dáibhí Ó Críinnín, A seventh-century Irish computus from the circle of
I do not know if Oulton intended to keep *chorum*, but I think that it is fairly obvious that it is perseveration. It was the *commorantium* which Oulton thought was the original reading of Jerome's letter. Not being a Hieronymian scholar, I cannot pronounce on this, but the reading may give a clue to the type of Jerome MS Cummian had. While no MS of Jerome now exists that reads *commorantium*, Cummian's *premit* as opposed to *fremit*, although possibly a misreading of insular *f*, is supported by one MS, Vindobonensis lat. MS 746 (saec. xiii).

Another quotation from Jerome, this time from *De Exodo in Ungilia Paschae*, also gives a clue to the MS tradition of Cummian's source. In this passage Jerome quotes Ps 73:14 as *in escam populis Ethioipibus*. Or so the text of Cummian's Letter has it. This was certainly not what Jerome wrote, but it is possible that this is what was in Cummian's exemplar, for this reading is found in MS Sessoriano 55 (saec. VII/VIII) of Jerome's homily.

Cummian also quotes a writing of *Originis Chalcentris* which up until recently had not been identified. C. W. Jones thought that it might be from a lost Ps.-Origenian text which was also quoted by Ps.-Anatolius, a 6th-century computistical forgery, apparently Irish. In fact, the Cummian citation is from Origen's Homily on Leviticus. (Ps.-Anatolius's Origen text remains unidentified.) At some point in transmission, Cummian's citation of Origen lost a phrase through haplography, and we have been able to restore it from the published edition. A further twist to the history of this Origen text in Ireland is that it is found on the original cover of an 8th-century MS of Fulda, which Herrad Spilling discussed in the paper which she presented to the conference in 1979. She claimed that the presence of the same Origen citation on the original cover of the Fulda MS as is found in Cummian strengthens her arguments for the Irish origin of this collection of little known and sometimes unique grammatical texts.

Cummian closes his letter with the phrase *Grandis Labor est Prudentia*. This may well indicate that Cummian had Pelagius in his library, since the formulation *Grandis Labor* seems to be exclusively Pelagian.

On the whole, Cummian's patristic library was solid, if not exciting, but it is my impression from his use of sources that he was working for the most part with more or less complete texts rather than a florilegium.

In addition to this patristic library, Cummian also had a collection of Church canons. He quotes the decrees of the Nicene and Arles councils in their original form, without any of the later corruptions or interpolations. But the decision of the southern Irish prelates to send a delegation to Rome was, according to Cummian, *iuxta decretum sinodicum*; the decree is not otherwise identified by him but the implication of his wording seems to be that it is well-known. It is instructive at this point to give the full text of his statement:

16 Bedae opera de temporibus, p. 90.
Deinde uestum est senioribus nostris iuxta mandatum, ut si diversitas oborta fuerit inter causam et causam, et variauerit iudicium inter lepram et non lepram, irent ad locum quem elegit Dominus; ut si causae fuerint maiores, iuxta decretum sinodicum, ad capud urbiun sint referenda. (977 B)

This passage has been the subject of much discussion by scholars, conveniently summed up in an article by J. E. L. Oulton. He noted that Kenney, Louis Gougaud and J. C. McNaught all believed the reference in the Letter to be to either a canon from the *Collectio Canonum Hibernensis* or else the canon ascribed to Patrick, Auxilius, Iserninus and Benignus that is contained in the *Liber Angelii*. The texts of these two canons are as follows:

**Hib.:** Patricius: *Si quae questiones in hac insula orientur, ad sedem apostolicam referantur.*

**Liber Angelii:** Item quaecumque causa valde difficilis exorta fuerit atque ignota cunctis Scotorum gentium iudicibus, ad cathedram Archiepiscopi Hibernensis, id est Patricii, atque huius antistitis examinationem recte referenda.

Oulton pointed out the important fact that Cummian did not follow the procedure recommended in the *Liber Angelii*, for he makes no mention whatever of a *cathedra archiepiscopi Hibernensis, id est Patricii* (presumably Armagh). Oulton further rejected the Hib. as the source for Cummian’s canon, for he seems to have regarded that collection as too late to have been used by him. Oulton maintained that the real source of Cummian’s *decretum* was a letter of Innocent addressed to Viktricius of Rouen in AD 404. The relevant passages reads as follows:

*Si maiores causae in medium fuerint devolutae, ad sedem apostolicam, sicut synodus statuit, post iudicium episcopale referatur.*

Whether the Innocentian canon is genuine or not, Oulton thought it somehow characteristic of Cummian that he should have altered the words *ad sedem apostolicam* to *ad capud urbiun*, though he does not explain this alleged ‘characteristic’. The source of the text, he further surmised, could have been the canon collection of Dionysius Exiguus — whose Paschal tables were definitely known to Cummian — which contains a text of the Innocentian canon. However, unknown to Oulton,  

22 Bieler, *Patrician texts*, p. 188—190.  
23 He seems not to have considered the possibility that the canon contained in the Hib. could have circulated already in Cummian’s time.  
24 For discussion of this problematical text see Herbert Wurm, Studien und Texte zur Dekretalsammlung des Dionysius Exiguus, *Kanonistische Studien und Texte* 16, Bonn 1939, p. 129—130.
there exists in the *Collectio Canonum* a version of the same canon that may provide the missing link with Cummian's Letter. The text occurs only in manuscripts of the B-version, with just one exception: Karlsruhe; Badische Landesbibl., MS Augiensis XVIII, which is a representative of the A-version that occasionally contains readings from the B-text. Since Wasserschleben's edition was of the A-version there would normally be no expectation of finding readings from the B-text, but the Karlsruhe manuscript provides one of those exceptions in the present instance; hence Wasserschleben gives it hidden in a note:

*Canones Romanorum dicuntur: Causa uniuscuiusque provinciae non referenda ad alteram; si autem causa maior fuerint exortae, ad caput urbium sunt referenda.*

Only this text agrees with the precise wording of Cummian's Letter at this point. If it does derive from the Innocentian canon then it has undergone some interesting changes: firstly, Innocent’s phrase *sicut synodus statuit* has become *iuxta decretum sinodicum*; secondly (and more importantly), the phrase *ad sedem apostolicam* has been altered to *ad caput urbium*. This phrase does not feature in the *Liber Angelii* nor in the Hib. canon discussed above. Nor does it occur, for that matter, anywhere in the manuscript tradition of Innocent’s letter, which the Dionysiac collection gives in its original form. Oulton thought these changes were Cummian’s own, but it seems more likely that Cummian found the phrase already in the version of the canon that had been promulgated by an Irish synod some time before AD 632, for that would seem to explain his statement that the decision of the southern Irish ecclesiastics to send a delegation to Rome was taken *iuxta decreta sinodica*. This might also explain why he did not specify his source, as he did with every other Church decree he cites.

Cummian states in the Letter that, after consulting the evidence of the Bible and the various conciliar decrees of the Church, he finally turned to whatever cycles he could find, in order to see what each of them had to say about the dates of Easter. He cites no fewer than ten different cycles which, he says, differed from the Iona cycle *cuix ausctorem locum tempus incertum habemus*. MacCarthy has described the list as “perhaps the most ludicrous tissue of fact and fiction in existence” and scholars since then have tended to echo his sentiments. In fact, Cummian’s list shows that he had a good computistical library and had a good, if not perfect, grasp of computistics. If many of his texts are pseudonymous, he is on a par with his contemporaries in accepting them as genuine; even Bede thought Ps.-Anatolius was a genuine text. I will not comment here on all ten of the cycles that Cummian mentions, but I would like to discuss briefly the first:

*Primum illum quem sanctus Patricius papa noster tulit et facit, in quo luna a quartodecima usque in vicesima prima regulariter, et equinocciut a duodecimis kalendis aprílis observatur.* (975 C)

25 Wasserschleben, p. 61, note e.
MacCarthy, in characteristic fashion, wanted to emend the data, but there was no need or justification for such a procedure. The Easter date given here is in accordance with orthodox Alexandrian doctrine. This is the Easter observance which we might have expected Patrick, or more probably Palladius, to have brought from Italy or Gaul. It is possible, too, that this Patrician cycle was one of those objected to by the 6th-century Irish author of the Ps.-Anatolian Canon Paschalii.26

Interestingly there is, besides this mention in Cummian’s Letter, one other reference to the table of Patricius which has been overlooked by previous scholars. It occurs in manuscripts of the so-called Sirmond group that represents the southern Irish computistical collection of the mid-seventh century, whose exemplar was compiled ca. AD 65827. Cummian used many of the texts in that collection. Some of the surviving manuscripts in the group contain an epitome of Macrobius’s Saturnalia 112—1528, which is followed by some miscellaneous bits and pieces, mostly from Isidore and Virgilius Maro Grammaticus. Here in this jumble of excerpts, however, is preserved a mention of a Prologue of Patricius:

Patricius in prologo suo, secundum rationem Anatolii, hoc ius ostendit:
Notandum est quod in .xviii. ciclo .iii. or anni contrariae regulari
inueniuntur, quorum ratio diligenter arguteque animadueritenda est. Hoc est
annus .viii. lunaris secundum rationem Grecorum, et annus .xxvi. Item secun-
dum rationem Latinorum .iii. lunaris annus et .xxx. Item tribus annis in
.xviii. ciclo eadem aetas super KI Aprilis et Maii inuenitur: hoc est in anno

Whether or not the Prologue Patricii is the same text as Cummian referred to, there can be no doubt that the author of the Sirmond text thought of this work as the Prologue to an Easter table of Patrick. It is not unreasonable to assume that Cummian at least believed that the work he knew as cycle Patricii was the genuine table of St Patrick. Patrick seems, on Cummian’s evidence, to have introduced the Alexandrian reckoning to Ireland. His cycle survived long enough in the Patrician churches for it to be known to Cummian two centuries later, and he cites it as part of his case against acceptance of the Iona Easter cycle.

This brief and eclectic look at Cummian’s sources has shown him to have been an excellent and careful scholar. Although his letter is a wonderful patchwork of citations, Cummian still managed to present a flowing if not always smooth text in Latin which shows no particular signs in style or vocabulary of its Irish authorship. As regards both library and scholarship there is no doubt that he could have written a commentary on Mark.

26 So Jones, Bedae opera de temporibus, p. 84—85.
27 See Ó Crónin, The Irish provenance of Bede’s computus, p. 234—235.
28 An edition of the work is in preparation by Dáibhí Ó Crónin and Anna Carlotta Dionisotti.
29 I give the text here from the best manuscript, Oxford, Bodleian Library, 309, fol. 106°.
Interest in the Ps.-Hieronimian Commentary on Mark was reawakened some 30 years ago by the appearance of Prof. Bernhard Bischoff's "Wendepunkte in der Geschichte der lateinischen Exegese im Frühmittelalter". This commentary was influential in Irish circles, for it is used in a number of early Irish exegetical texts and one fragment heavily glossed in Old Irish survives in Turin (Bibl. naz. F IV I (no. 7) s. IX). Prof. Bischoff was convinced that the Commentary was, in fact, of Irish authorship and that the author was the Cummian who wrote the Paschal Letter. He pointed out that besides many features that are typical of Irish exegesis, such as use of the Monarchian prologue, special interest in the Eusebian canons and numerology, the use of the tres linguae sacrae, phrases such as *theorica post actualem vitam* and a modified *Quae est haec quaestio problematis*: the author also described skin-covered boats, referred to his nation as "a western nation, wild, untamed and barbarous" and finally, had a special interest in the Easter controversy. Far from disproving Irish authorship, the author's interest in the *Ecclesia Romana* finds an exact parallel in many Irish authors, not least among these being Columbanus and Cummian. Prof. Bischoff went one step further and ascribed the commentary to Cummian of the Paschal Letter on the basis of a reference in an Angers MS (not a MS of the commentary) to a *nouellum auctorem in Marcum nomine Comiano*. He pointed out both the interest in the Easter reckoning and the submission to the Church of Rome as common themes in the two texts.

His ascription has not been accepted by all, and there are those who still doubt its Irish authorship. Dr Clare Stancliffe is one of those who do not accept Bischoff's conclusions on this text. In her article she objects on two major grounds, and since many scholars have found her objections convincing, I must comment on them first before going on.

Her first objection is that the Easter data in the text are not in accordance with known Irish practice. The commentator states:

\[ \text{Hic mutat tantum sacrificium, sed non mutat tempus: ut nos numquam coenam Domini, ante quartam decimam lunam faciamus. Qui facit in quarta decima resurrectionem: in undecima luna coenam Domini facit: quod numquam inuentum est, nec in ueteri Testamento, nec in nouo. (632C)} \]

Dr Stancliffe was mistaken in thinking that the text here argues for Easter limits of xvii—xxiii; here *luna xvii* refers not to the author's lower lunar limit for Easter, but to the lunar date of the historical Easter in accordance with standard Alexandrian doctrine. The limits xvii—xviii are not found anywhere at any time. The commentator is merely interested in showing that to celebrate Easter on *luna xiv* is imposs-
ible. In the Letter, Cummian wished to show the same thing, and his wording is very similar to the commentator's:

Quia si xiv. luna resurrectioni deputetur, ut uos facitis, xiii in sepulta et xii in passione prepostero ordine fiet. (972 B)

For this argument, Cummian definitely used the Cologne Prologue, a computistical text of obscure origins which is found together with Irish texts in a MS now at Cologne, and the commentator may have done so as well, although there is not enough evidence to be sure of this.

There is another passage on Easter in the commentary, however, which could possibly clinch Irish authorship. Commenting on Mk 14:1 erat autem Pascha et azyma post biduum the commentator says:

Pascha transitus interpretatur: Phase uero immolatio. In immolatione agni et transitu populi per mare, uel per Aegyptum, praefiguratur passio Christi, et redemptio populi de inferno, quando nos post biduum visitat, id est plenissima luna actate Christi perfecta, ut nec cum aliqua parte tenebrosa, carnes agni immaculati, qui tolit peccata mundi, in una domo, quae est una electa matris suae Ecclesia catholica, calcitae charitate, et armati uirtute comedamus, dicentes: Etenim pascha nostrum immolatus est Christus.

In the Epistola Cyrilli we find:

Ideo precipio uobis, ne facatis pascha in mense Martio in anno embolismo, sed in nonas kalendas Mai, ut in unitate ecclesiae catholicae uerum agnum ueri Israhelitae, immaculatum inmaculati comedamus, quia in una domo preceptum est Israheli carnali agnum anniculum comedere.

The Epistola Cyrilli is actually Ps.-Cyril, although it is based on a genuine letter of the 5th-century Alexandrian bishop. It is one of the so-called Irish forgeries and is very well known in Irish computistical circles. It is internally dated to 607 and was almost certainly written in Ireland. The Easter data of the genuine letter have been changed and additional material has been included. The passage on which the Mark commentator apparently draws is in the additional material and is not part of the genuine letter of Cyril.

The Paschal Letter quotes the Epistola Cyrilli, including the passage on which the Mark commentator may be drawing.

Dr Stancliffe, however, has another objection to 7th-century authorship and that is that Dom Morin claimed that the Mark commentary was used by Caesarius of Arles. The commentator says:

33 Krusch, Studien I, p. 227—235.
34 Krusch, Studien I, p. 344—349.
Et perducunt eum in Golgotha, quod interpretatur Calvaria. Tradunt Iudaei, quando in hoc montis loco immolatus est aries pro Isaac, ut ibi decolletur, id est Christus a carne sua, carnali uidelicet Iudaeae separetur. (638 B)

And in Caesarius we find:

Beatus Hieronymous presbyter scrispsit, ab antiquis et senioribus Iudeis se certissime cognovisse, quod ibi oblatus sit Isaac, ubi postea crucifixus est dominus Christus.

Prof. Bischoff felt that the dependency was the other way around, as he explained in a footnote in Turning-Points:

"It is a fallacy on Morin’s part to consider that the more definite statement in Caesarius of Arles is dependent on the more indefinite one on the offering of Isaac on Golgotha and then to surmise that the author of the commentary had the former before him under the name of Jerome. The relationship is rather the other way round"36.

The interesting problem here is that Caesarius says his source is Jerome. Jerome himself makes no similar statement and, of course, our Mark commentary traveled under the name of Jerome. However, because Caesarius is more detailed here, and otherwise does not seem to use the commentary, it would seem more probable that there was some intermediate source for both, perhaps travelling as Jerome. The two statements are different enough in detail and intent to make it unlikely that the commentator used Caesarius directly.

A look at the other known sources of the commentary indicates a library quite in keeping with a 7th-century Irish author. Unfortunately, a thorough study of the commentary’s sources has not yet been done. I was unable to attempt anything so ambitious with the library at my disposal and so am dependent on Dom Morin and G. Wohlenberg for my comments here37. Established sources for the commentary are the Monarchian Prologue on Mark; Jerome on Matthew and his Interpretatio Nominum Hebreorum; and Sedulius’s Carmen Paschale. Other suggested sources include Victorinus of Pettau’s De Fabrica mundi (very doubtful); Ambrose, Gregory, Homily 40 on the Gospels; Isidore, Allegoriae (doubtful); Arnobius, Exposiunculae in Evangelium; and Origen, Homelium in Leviticum38. It is to be hoped that a new edition and commentary on this text will be done in the near future.

Although I can bring very little concrete new evidence to bear, I am of the opinion that the commentary on Mark is of Irish authorship, and if my suggestion that the commentator used the Epistola Cyprii is accepted, we can say that Irish

36 Turning-Points p. 153 note 42 (= Mittelalterliche Studien 1, p. 215 n. 42.).
37 Morin, Un commentaire romain; G. Wohlenberg, Ein vergessener lateinischer Markuskommentar, Neue kirchliche Zeitschrift 18/6 (1907), p. 427—469.
38 Cf. Bischoff, Wendepunkte, p. 200 and n. 66; Commentary on Mark, PL 30, 630 B.
authorship is assured. But was the author Cummian, the writer of the Paschal Letter?

Only a lucky break which turns up a manuscript of the commentary with an ascription to Cummian could prove conclusively that the *nouellum auctorem in marcum nomine Comiano* wrote our commentary. But it is certainly tempting on a number of grounds to accept Prof. Bischoff's identification. The first part of this paper showed that the Paschal Letter was the work of an excellent scholar who had a very good library. He is obviously not only a computist but a biblical scholar as well. Until a thorough study of the sources of the commentary on Mark is done, we cannot say for certain if there is much overlap of sources, but we have noted three possible and important shared sources; the *Epistola Cyrilli*, the Cologne Prologue and Origen's Homily on Leviticus. There is also the fact that, as I have shown, the arguments on Easter reckoning found in the commentary are much closer to Cummian's own than has been realized in the past.

However, the case is not proven yet. We await an editor of the commentary on Mark, who, with luck, might finally put an end to speculation.
By Aidan Breen

Introduction

By way of introduction to the following analysis of the biblical text and usage of this important Hiberno-Latin text, it must be said that in the eighty years that have elapsed since the appearance of the first and only critical edition of it, no textual work whatever has been done on it and little attention of any kind paid to it apart from some work on its influence on Carolingian political thought. Hellmann's observations on the character of its biblical text were confined to the assertion, following Pamelius, that it made use of the Vulgate. Since then, however, the significance of a text of such early date (Heilmann 650—670; Kenney 630—650) using a quite pure text of the Vulgate over large stretches of both the Old and New Testaments would seem to have escaped scholarly attention. It will not be possible within the compass of this brief essay to put that circumstance fully to rights, for a number of reasons. Firstly, biblical text and patristic source usage cannot be separated and until a rigorous and thorough Quellenanalyse of the text has been completed, no complete account of its many biblical citations and allusions can be given. Secondly, practical considerations of space (and tedium!) do not permit a detailed parallel tabulation of every citation with the Vulgate and Vetus Latina, and only those variants which are of some textual significance or interest will be noted. Similarly, not all of the statements made regarding the author's use of certain patristic sources can be fully demonstrated, but their confirmation is a matter of no especial difficulty.

2 H. H. Anton, PSEUDO CYPRIAN, De duodecim abusivis saeculi und sein Einfluß auf den Kontinent, insbesondere auf die karolingischen Fürstenspiegel, Löwe, Iren. p. 568—617. This excellent article is by far the best account of the subject.
3 Kenney, Sources, p. 281f. I find myself in agreement with Kenney's dates, but for very different reasons.
4 Hereafter Vg. and VL. For the bulk of the OT the critical Vatican ed. Bibliorum sacrorum latinarum versionum ad codicim fidem, Rome 1926ff. was used. Otherwise P. Sabatier, Bibliorum sacrorum latinae versiones antiquae seu vetus Itala etc, Rheims 1743—49, repr. Paris 1751. For the NT the standard edition J. Wordsworth, H. J. White, H. E. D. Sparks, Novum Testamentum ... latine secundum editionem S. Hieronymi, Oxford 1889—1954. The sigla employed for the biblical MSS are those used in these editions for the Old and New Testaments respectively.