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The Lindisfarne Gospels

by FRANÇOISE HENRY

*In this review article, Dr Françoise Henry, Director of Studies in Archaeology and History of Art at University College, Dublin, discusses fully the new and magistral edition of and commentary on the Lindisfarne Gospels produced in Switzerland in 1960.**

I SEEM to remember Mr Bruce-Mitford telling me that when he was in the Laurentian Library in Florence, he asked to have that monster of all manuscripts, the Codex Amiatinus, weighed for him. I do not know what the result of the operation was. But perhaps he will forgive me if I say that, when faced with the impressive text codex which comes as a companion to the facsimile of the Lindisfarne Gospels, I was seized with the same awed curiosity, so that my first impulse was to put it on the scales. The net result is: eleven and a half pounds. No need to say that such a formidable array of letterpress is difficult to grasp in its entirety, and that only some aspects of it can be dealt with in a short article—perhaps of necessity those closest to the personal preoccupations of the present writer.

The volume includes work by various authors, and the publishers are to be warmly congratulated for asking several well-known specialists to deal with the manuscript from different angles. The detailed treatment of the interlinear Anglo-Saxon gloss by Alan S. C. Ross and E. G. Stanley will be no doubt an invaluable document to linguists and that of the chemical composition of the colours of the illuminations of the Book of Lindisfarne and a few related manuscripts by Dr Werner, head of the Laboratory of the British Museum and Dr H. Roosen-Runge—as thorough an examination of the problem as can be made without direct analysis of the pigments—will put the approach to this side of ‘Insular’ manuscript decoration on a new footing.

But it is with the main bulk of the volume that I want to deal, with the contributions of two eminent scholars, Rupert Bruce-Mitford, Keeper of British Antiquities in the British Museum, and Julian Brown, who has now left the staff of the Department of Manuscripts in the British Museum for a chair in London University. They give us a joint historical study of the manuscript and then separate to deal one with the text and the other with the decoration.

Now the first point to be examined when dealing with the Book of Lindisfarne is the value and real meaning of the texts concerned with its authorship and origin, the colophon

* *Evangeliorum Quattuor Codex Lindisfarnensis*, by T. D. Kendrick, T. J. Brown, R. L. S. Bruce-Mitford, H. Roosen-Runge, A. S. C. Ross, E. G. Stanley, and A. E. A. Werner. *Urs Graf Verlag*, Olten Lausanne, 1960. 125 guineas.

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and a passage of the *Historia Dunelmensis Ecclesiae* of Symeon of Durham. As is well-known, the colophon dates from the 10th century. Aldred, prior of the community of Lindisfarne which had taken refuge at Chester-le-Street because of the Viking raids on the island (note 1), glossed the Book at that time and tells us that 'Eadfrith, Bishop of the Lindisfarne Church, originally wrote this book for God and for St Cuthbert and—jointly—for all the saints whose relics are on the island. And Ethilwald, Bishop of the Lindisfarne islanders, impressed it on the outside and covered it—as he well knew how to do. And Billfrith, the anchorite, forged the ornaments which are on it on the outside and adorned it with gold and with gems and also with gilded-over silver—pure metal. And Aldred, unworthy and most miserable priest, glossed it in English between the lines with the help of God and St Cuthbert.'

Eadfrith (or Eadfrid) was bishop-abbot of Lindisfarne from 698 to 721. Aldred probably wrote his translation around 970. Usually a colophon later by nearly three centuries than the manuscript itself would be held under grave suspicion. The same applies even more strongly to the confirmation of Aldred's statements given by Symeon of Durham, who repeats what he has no doubt read in the Book and adds to it a few imaginative touches in his usual manner, so that what he tells us has really very little additional value and should not be taken too seriously. When he says for example that Eadfrith wrote the Book 'with his own hand', are we to see in this, as our authors do, a 'primary Durham source', or simply a figure of speech (note 2)?

The authors not only consider the authority of the colophon as beyond discussion, but are at great pains to dispose of various hypotheses, such as that of F. C. Burkitt and Abbot Chapman (note 3) who made Aethelwald (or Ethilwald) the illuminator, or my suggestion that the illuminations are not by the hand of Eadfrith (note 4). They have probably made a convincing case (pp. 5-11, 123-125), from a careful study of some alterations to the decoration, for admitting that Eadfrith was the painter as well as the scribe. Having recently come to the same conclusion, partly for historical reasons which will appear later, I am particularly ready to adopt their findings on this point. But perhaps the statements of the colophon are a little too readily considered as binding on their own face value. If we have all more or less accepted their data, it is mostly because they fit well with the features of the manuscript, and also because we have followed that very cogent argument of Baldwin Brown (note 5) that anyone not relating a well-known tradition would have attributed the Book to St Cuthbert and not to such an obscure person as Eadfrith. So that a slightly less dogmatic and categorical attitude would have been welcome here. All that can be said is that the Book practically certainly comes from Lindisfarne and that the attribution to Eadfrith is likely without being absolutely certain.

At this point, one might have expected to find some kind of history of the monastery of Lindisfarne, from its foundation around 635 to the death of Eadfrith in 721 (note 6). A sketch of what is known (chiefly from Bede's writings) of its link with Iona from which it was founded by Aidan and of its connexion with the royal house of Northumbria at whose behest it was founded near the royal seat of Bamborough, would certainly have made further statements more intelligible; and a study of how far Lindisfarne may or may not have been in touch with Ireland and Iona at the time when Eadfrith was at work on the manuscript might have helped the authors themselves to make up their minds on some points which are essential in this story.

Instead, we are simply given biographies of the three people directly connected with the manuscript, Eadfrith, Aethelwald and Billfrith. The biography of Eadfrith (pp. 17-18) is a summary of his work as abbot of Lindisfarne. In fact it starts by the statement that 'of Eadfrith's life before he became abbot of Lindisfarne nothing at all seems to be known'

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and ends by the remark that 'it has been suggested that Bishop Eadfrith is the Ehfrid [*sic*] to whom a letter was addressed by Aldhelm.' To this a footnote is added: 'T. F. Tout in *Dictionary of National Biography*, xvi (1888), 306-307. But see R. Ehwald, *Aldhelmi Opera*, M.G.H., Auctorum Antiquissimorum XV (1919), 486-487.' Perhaps it is worthwhile to pause a little on these references. The article in the *D.N.B.*, in spite of its ancient date, is of some interest. After the indication (which would need discussion or qualification) that Eadfrith was a disciple of St Cuthbert, one finds this: 'He was one of the monastic bishops of the Celtic type rather than the more active Roman organizers. Though . . . he was orthodox in the question which separated the two churches, he lived in the spirit of the Columbas and Aidans', a very true statement, if one examines carefully the little that is known of Eadfrith's life and of his activities devoted nearly entirely to his monastery and the furtherance of the fame of St Cuthbert. And then: 'He is probably the Eahfrid to whom, on his return from Ireland, Aldhelm addressed a long and hardly intelligible letter.' This letter is certainly one of Aldhelm's most abstruse productions. It has been suggested (note 7) that it is a parody on a certain contorted Latin style favoured in Ireland and represented by the *Hisperica Famina*. Perhaps—though it still remains to be proven that the *Hisperica Famina* are of Irish origin. However, obscure as it may be, enough can be disentangled of that incredible Latin to make a few facts quite clear. Though it is in some cases hardly more than a paraphrase, Bishop Browne's translation (note 8), which gives the essential of the meaning, may serve us as a guide.

To his friend, Aldhelm writes: 'We have heard from newsmongers that you have arrived safe at the ambrosial shores of British territory, having left the wintry climes and storms of the island of Hibernia; where for a triple two year period ('ter bino circiter annorum circulo' (note 9)) you have drawn nourishment from the udder of wisdom.' Then he mentions that the 'coming and going of those who pass by the ships-track, the whirlpools of the sea, thence and hence, thither and hither, is so frequent, that it resembles some brotherhood of bees, busily storing the nectar in the comb.' He enumerates what they learn: the arts of grammar and geometry, the other six arts of physics (note 10) and the interpretation of texts through allegory. This worries him: 'I, miserable little man, revolved these things as I wrote them down; and I was tortured by an anxious question. Why, say I, should Ireland whither students, ship-borne, flock together . . ., why should Ireland be exalted by some ineffable privilege? As though here, on the fertile turf of Britain, teachers Greek and Roman could not be found. . . . The fields of Ireland are rich in learners, and green with the pastoral numerosity of students . . . And yet . . .' has not Britain got Theodore of Tarsus and Hadrian 'his companion in the brotherhood of learning, ineffably endowed with pure urbanity'? And he ends by a lurid description of Theodore 'surrounded by a crowd of Irish disciples who grievously badgered him as the truculent boar is hemmed in by a snarling pack of Molossian hounds', and tearing them 'with the tusk of grammar', and piercing them 'with the sharp and deep syllogisms of chronography, till they cast away their weapons and hurriedly fled to the recesses of their dens' (note 11).

This letter is fascinating because of the picture it gives of the state of studies in England in the late 7th century with its two rival poles: Ireland and Canterbury (note 12). But in addition it is essential in regard to Eadfrith: if it was really addressed to him, we have to reckon with the fact that he went to study in Ireland and spent six years there before 690 (date of the death of Theodore who is mentioned as alive in the letter (note 13)) and consequently before he became abbot-bishop of Lindisfarne in 698.

No need to say that there is no complete agreement about the identification of Eahfrid with Eadfrith (or Eadfrid). Ussher, who first published the letter in the seventeenth century (note 14), suggests it. Ehwald, in the edition of Aldhelm's works quoted by our

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authors, infers that the letter is addressed to King Aldfrid of Northumbria, who reigned from 684 to 704. This hardly bears investigation. The letter of Aldhelm is addressed: 'Domino, venerabili praeconio efferendo et sanctorum meritis magnopere honorando, Eahfrido.' There are letters of Aldhelm (who may have been his godfather) to Aldfrid, and a long poem of Aldhelm is dedicated to him. Everywhere he calls him 'Acircius' (from the north-west wind), a reference probably to Aldfrid's Irish ancestry (note 15). Besides Aldfrid did not go to Ireland as an ordinary student; he went to stay with his mother's people, and uncouth as Aldhelm may be at times he would hardly have had the bad taste of addressing to him his fiery diatribe on Irish scholarship.

The suggestion by Stubbs (*Dictionary of Christian Biography*) that the addressee is an abbot of Glastonbury has nothing to back it (note 16). So we are thrown back on Eadfrith as the most likely addressee, both from a historical point of view and by the great similarity of the names, and in this case his biography should include the possibility that he was Irish in education as well as in his way of life. This is of essential importance in regard to the decoration of the Gospels. In fact it is a key-point to the whole problem of 'Insular' manuscripts, as it may give an indication of how the Irish style did spread. The only honest statement to make on this is that one cannot be sure one way or the other, but that there is a strong probability that Eadfrith is Eahfrid and that consequently his training was Irish.

A point may be considered here: the question of the date of the manuscript. If it was written by Eadfrith, it has to be dated before his death in 721. But the authors insist that the Book must have been written and decorated before 698, when Eadfrith became bishop of Lindisfarne, because after that date he would not have had the time to attend to such an absorbing task (note 17). I must say I find this assertion quite amazing. Surely an abbot is not like a Director of the British Museum who loses automatically all right to work in his Department when he leaves it for the Director's office? In actual fact it would be enough to reflect on what was happening at about the same time in Iona, to think differently. It is shortly after Adamnan had become abbot of the metropolis of the Columban order (a much heavier assignment than the abbacy of Lindisfarne around 700) that his monks asked him to write the life of their founder (note 18), and the *Vita Columbae* was written by him in a few years in the midst of embassies to the court of Northumbria and of all the worries of the last stages of the Easter controversy (note 19).

If this be taken into consideration, we are left with a much longer period for the writing and decorating of the Book, perhaps 690 to 721. When it was started, we can hardly hope to know. But it is unfinished, as Bruce-Mitford has convincingly shown (pp. 122-123). Why then not assume that it was written in the last years of Eadfrith's abbacy (note 20), and not quite finished at his death?

If this late date be adopted, this would make the Book practically contemporary with the heyday of the scriptorium of Jarrow-Wearmouth. Julian Brown has shown (p. 94) that some peculiarities of layout and presentation have been influenced by the habits of the Jarrow-Wearmouth scribes, and, of course, the very pure Vulgate text proceeds from an Italo-Northumbrian exemplar such as were available in the Jarrow-Wearmouth library. If one accepts what is to my mind likely, namely that Ceolfrid took the Codex Amiatinus to Italy as soon as it was finished, this puts its writing, and probably that of the other 'pandects', in the beginning of the first quarter of the eighth century, and before A.D. 716, the date of Ceolfrid's departure. This is the very time when one would expect the non-Insular features of the Lindisfarne Gospels to appear under the influence of a fully active Jarrow-Wearmouth scriptorium.

Except for these few points, I do not intend to discuss Julian Brown's elaborate analysis

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of the problems connected directly with the text of the manuscript and the origin of its archetype, as this is too specialized a realm to venture into, and I shall pass now to the comparisons made by both authors with other manuscripts of the same period. The Book of Lindisfarne is really one of a series of luxury altar-books of more or less similar size which have in common with it the use of large, legible script of imposing appearance, with very few contractions, as well as an elaborate decoration. Of these, two have been singled out in this volume for an elaborate treatment: the Echternach Gospels (Paris, Bibl. nat. Lat. 9389) and the remains of a Gospel-book probably from the Library of Lindisfarne (Durham, Ms. A.II.17); Julian Brown has gone to great pains to study them and compare their script. The Echternach Gospels are written mostly in a large minuscule, but the juxtaposition of the first page, which is written in majuscule, with the script of the Durham manuscript (pls. 2 and 3) shows a remarkable similarity. In his view, they represent, together with the Book of Lindisfarne, the 'Lindisfarne scriptorium' (pp. 89 seq.). He considers that they are both by the same hand and that in both cases the scribe is also the author of the illuminations (p. 104, col. 2 (The Lindisfarne scriptorium)). Here intervenes one of these disastrous comparisons which can ruin an argument: we are shown on two opposite pages the Crucifixion of the Durham manuscript and the symbol of St Matthew of the Echternach Gospels (pls. 8 and 9) and we are asked to believe that they are by the same hand. Though minute comparisons of small details have been made here (p. 102), it is enough to stand back and view the photographs of the two illuminations in their general appearance to be convinced that they cannot possibly be due to the same man. So, either the same scribe wrote the two books and different painters were responsible for their decoration, or, much more probably, they are various products of a school of manuscript decoration where the script had become rather standardized (quite a normal thing with such a formal type of writing).

In fact, to reduce the detailed comparisons to these two manuscripts only is the initial mistake of the chapters dealing with these comparisons (pp. 89 seq. and 246 seq.). Several other books have at least as much of a title to be considered here as these two, and they either get hardly more than a passing mention or are not quoted at all: the Lichfield Gospels, first, whose decoration is in places very close to that of the Lindisfarne manuscript and which is referred to only occasionally; and a ruined Gospel-book in the Bodleian (Rawlinson Ms. G.167) in which only one decorated page remains, the beginning of the Gospel of St Luke. This is even nearer to the corresponding page of the Lindisfarne Gospel than any page of the Book of Lichfield. Then the Echternach Gospels have a near twin, as far as the drawing of the Evangelists' symbols is concerned: the dismembered Gospel-book of which one fragment (in very bad condition) is in the British Museum (Cotton Ms. Otho.C.V) and the other (remarkably well preserved) is in the Library of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge (Ms. 197) (note 21). The relation between the two books would be very interesting to investigate, especially as the Cambridge manuscript shows a peculiarity of which there are one or two examples in the Echternach book, the use of the uncial G instead of the usual Insular type. Before one could start talking about a 'Lindisfarne scriptorium', all these manuscripts would have to be examined in detail, and compared one with the other. It would then probably appear that the Book of Lindisfarne has taken undue advantage of its perfect state of preservation. It is the only absolutely intact manuscript we have for that period, except possibly the Echternach Gospels and the Cambridge fragment, whilst it is only by a tremendous effort of imagination that one can visualize what the others were in their original state. In fact its relation to the Lichfield Gospels, which should have been one of the central points of this study, has been left practically out of the comparisons and discussions. Having had, a few months ago, thanks to the

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kind permission of the Dean of Lichfield, the opportunity to study the Lichfield Gospels with the invaluable help of Roger Powell who was at the time engaged in re-binding it, I have seen the strong suspicion of an early date for Lichfield which had come into my mind at my previous contact with the manuscript, a few years ago, turn into a quasi-certitude. Of the painters of the manuscripts of Lichfield and Lindisfarne, it is that of the Lichfield book who invents, creates, and who is a thoroughly original artist, whilst Lindisfarne has a slightly stilted, a trifle desiccated manner which savours of imitation.

It would be well at this stage to discard the old tripartite pattern which we have all used at one time for the development of Irish illumination: Book of Durrow—Book of Lindisfarne—Book of Kells. This was all right as an easy working hypothesis. But a thorough study of the manuscripts such as the one under consideration ought to bring us to a more flexible view of the problem. The Book of Durrow may well be not so much a forerunner as the representative of a style which may in a way lead to a dead end. On the other hand, in the early part of the 8th century (or perhaps in some cases in the late 7th), we are faced with a collection of large manuscripts. It is essential to remember that they are only the remains of what must have been an abundant production. The fact that we do not have a single psalter, when psalters must have existed by the hundred, and many of them must have been decorated, is the measure of our losses. Of these manuscripts, several (Durham, A.II.17; Rawlinson G.167; Otho.C.V.; Lichfield) are reputed to have a 'mixed' Irish text. Echternach has it for some parts at least. Lindisfarne is the only one which shows a pure Vulgate text of Italo-Northumbrian type. In view of these facts and until a detailed study of all the texts has been undertaken, it would be extremely unwise to embark on too categorical affirmations as to their origin. There is nothing impossible in the view that they represent a style which developed in some great Irish centre and of which the Lindisfarne Gospels would be a very faithful, but slightly dead imitation. This would fit very well with what may be the early history of Eadfrith and his connexion with Ireland (note 22). It would fit also with the atmosphere which may well have existed in Northumbria at the time when it was governed by a half-Irish king like Aldfrid. The hypothesis is in any case well worth considering.

In this case the whole study of the origin of the Lindisfarne ornament would have to be brought back one step further, right into Ireland where Bruce-Mitford seems to be always loth to follow it, instead of being started unconvincingly by comparisons with Sutton Hoo which avoid all the difficulties of the subject.

This hypothesis would even be reinforced by the remarkable study which he has made of evidence already pointed out by Baldwin-Brown but which had never been properly examined. In several decorated pages, especially on the back of the five 'carpet-pages', pricks and rulings can be seen and have been photographed, which show how the designs were made, either by the help of a fine grid, or of elaborate compass work (FIGS. 1 and 2). For the first time we can watch the draughtsman at work, not through a series of guesses such as those made by Romilly Allen (note 23) and even by Gabrielsson (note 24), but with the certitude of knowing how they proceeded. In fact the secret of the extreme regularity of the decoration lies in the use of these mechanical aids.

This in itself is a splendid discovery of which Mr Bruce-Mitford can be justly proud. Perhaps the conclusion he draws from it is a little too sweeping, but all the same it may help us to understand the special aspect of the manuscript: 'Once these [principles] have been absorbed, anybody, whether Celt, Saxon or Australian aborigine, provided he can hold a pen and take pains, can achieve the most complex-looking Hiberno-Saxon designs of every type.' From this I would conclude that Eadfrith, being in fact a lot more developed than the Australian aborigine, absorbed the principles inculcated to him by some Irish

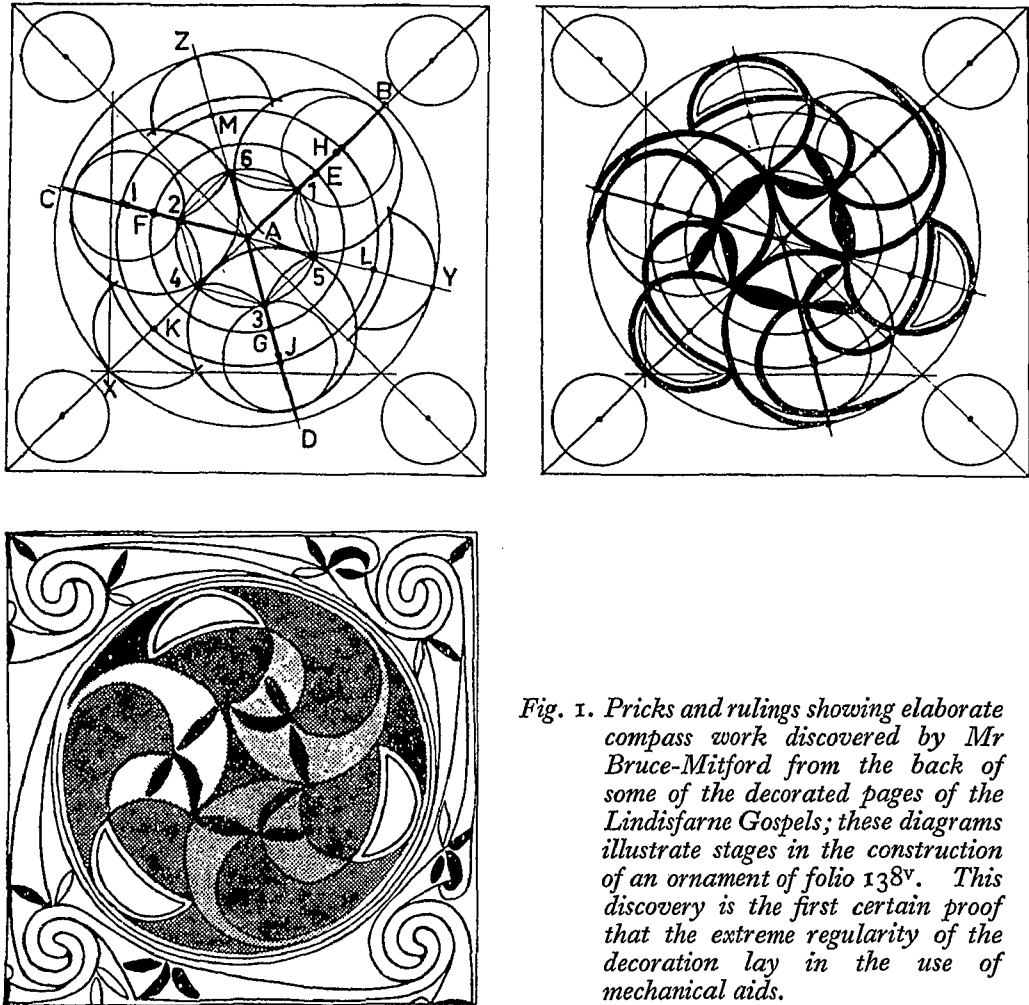


Fig. 1. Pricks and rulings showing elaborate compass work discovered by Mr Bruce-Mitford from the back of some of the decorated pages of the Lindisfarne Gospels; these diagrams illustrate stages in the construction of an ornament of folio 138^v. This discovery is the first certain proof that the extreme regularity of the decoration lay in the use of mechanical aids.

master, and possessing the method in all its intricacy, contrived to design a perfect 'à la manière de' of the real Irish stuff. But all the creative spirit which is necessary to make a work of art by means of any such recipe was gone. This is where it would be essential to distinguish between a well perfected *tool* (the geometrical layout), and the mind which uses it.

Another aspect of this is that the origin of the method, as far anyway as the compass-drawn circles and segments of circles are concerned (note 25), is to be found in Ireland. The Lough Crew bone-slips where the centres of the circles have remained marked on the bone are a good example of it, and Mr Jope has given another one in his excellent analysis of the various compass-centres from which the ornament of the bronze disc found in the Bann (Belfast Museum) was drawn (note 26). This only goes to reinforce the remarks made above.

In fact, if one tries to see where lies the inner defect of an otherwise remarkable study, I would be tempted to say that it is in a refusal to face the problem of the Northumbrian scriptoria. If their dual orientation had been indicated in the beginning, all would have

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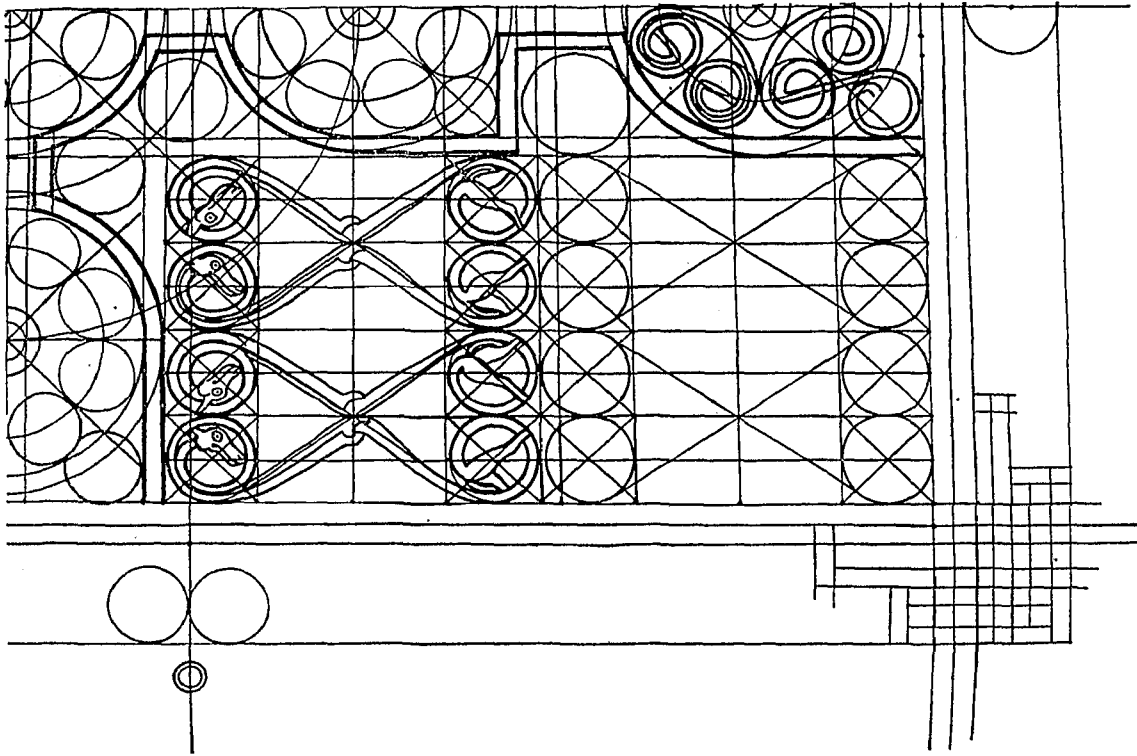


Fig. 2. Geometrical basis of a section of the 'carpet-page', folio 26^v, of the Lindisfarne Gospels.

been clearer: Lindisfarne, where the tradition of seeking inspiration and even tuition in Ireland survived a long time, perhaps in fact late into the eighth century, and Jarrow-Wearmouth which showed a short but intensive spell of imitation of Southern manuscripts under Benedict Biscop and Ceolfrid. This cannot have started before 674, date of the foundation of Wearmouth, and it was in full swing in 716, date of the departure of Ceolfrid with the completed Codex Amiatinus. But here one has to beware of going too quickly: for several years, the monasteries were a-building; Jarrow in fact was not founded until 681 or 682. Then came the plague which lasted, it seems, practically without interruption from 685 to 687 and was so violent that at one time there was nobody left in Wearmouth but the prior and a little boy (probably Bede). These are hardly good conditions for the development of a scriptorium. In fact it hardly seems likely that it got into its stride before the last years of the 7th century (note 27). There is no proof whatsoever that the Stonyhurst St John Gospel, obviously a work of the scriptorium, was buried in the coffin-reliquary of St Cuthbert at the time of the translation of the relics in 698 (note 28), as is often said and as is assumed by our authors. All we know really is that the Amiatinus was finished in 716, when Ceolfrid took it to Italy. So, for fifteen or twenty years there was between Tyne and Wear a centre where Italian script and Italian miniatures were imitated with incredible perfection and very little creative and inventive power.

Meanwhile, everything pertaining to book-art, script and decoration, was learnt at Lindisfarne probably from the time of the foundation (A.D. 635) from Irish masters. The art of the book was by that time very old in Ireland and had seen probably more than two

centuries of experiments and improvements. Of this we have an early witness in the Cathach and several landmarks in the seventh century, ending by the Antiphonary written at Bangor (note 29) in the middle of the century and the copy of the *Vita Columbae* made in Iona probably around 690 by Dorbbene (note 30). These are not altar-books, but ordinary reading-books. They show, however, in the second half of the seventh century a well developed tradition of book-writing which is quite compatible with the existence of luxury manuscripts done in the same scriptoria or similar ones (note 31). The presence of Adamnan and anyway the importance which the monastery had taken in the course of the centuries would prepare us to accept Iona as one of these centres. The literary personality of Columbanus and his Latin, far better than that currently written on the Continent, casts an extraordinary light on the development of a monastery like Bangor (note 32) from which he started for the Continent in 590, seven years before the arrival of St Augustine in England. The fact that it produced the Antiphonary some fifty or sixty years later (note 33) shows that it had quite an efficient scriptorium at that time. Lismore is also beginning to emerge as such a centre of exegetic and hagiographical activities in the 7th and 8th centuries (note 34) that it must have had a considerable library, and inevitably some scribes. Clonmacnois most probably indulged in similar studies in that period. All these monasteries inevitably produced books which could influence the scriptorium of Lindisfarne.

In the Book of Lindisfarne the two traditions can be felt: the script is of Irish origin, the Vulgate text is of Italo-Northumbrian type. The ornaments are partly Irish in origin and partly (the portraits chiefly) borrowed from Mediterranean models. Whatever Germanic animal-interlacing there is may well have come after being adapted and elaborated in Ireland where it will remain for centuries one of the staple ornaments.

If the clinging to the Irish majuscule script shows the strength of the Irish element in Lindisfarne, it is even more striking to see the use of an Irish script in Jarrow-Wearmouth two or three decades after the death of Ceolfrid, in the Leningrad Bede (note 35). There, some of the classical scripts are still used for titles, while a minuscule of Irish type served for the text itself. So even in that stronghold of classical script, the Irish methods reappear once the initial impulsion slows down.

Considering all this, one may well wonder if the type of ornament found in the Book of Lindisfarne is not simply a reflection, and a rather desiccated one at that, of the live and creative schools of book-decoration which probably existed in Ireland at the time when, in my opinion, it is likely to have been decorated, that is to say around 710-720 (note 36).

NOTES

(1) The community was to settle eventually at Durham.

(2) In the same way the story of the Book being lost at sea and retrieved undamaged—a standard type of legend, told of many manuscripts—ought not to have been taken seriously.

(3) J. Chapman, O.S.B., *Notes on the Early History of the Vulgate Gospels* (London, 1908), p. 9; F. C. Burkitt, 'Kells, Durrow and Lindisfarne', *ANTIQUITY*, 1935, 34.

(4) *Irish Art* (London, 1940), 77.

(5) *The Arts in Early England*, v (London, 1921), 337-41.

(6) The fact that it is to be found in E. G. Millar, *The Lindisfarne Gospels* (London, 1923), 1-3, did not absolve the present book from giving us something similar.

(7) See: J. F. Kenney, *The Sources for the Early History of Ireland* (New York, 1929), 257.

(8) G. F. Browne, *St Aldhelm, his Life and Times* (London, 1903), 262 sqq.

(9) This contorted way of saying *six* is found again in the letter to indicate the *six* arts of physics.

(10) Ehwald suggests for these—from analogy with another text of Aldhelm—the quite likely list: arithmetic, music, astronomy, astrology, mechanics, medicine.

(11) Aldhelm himself had been taught first, as far as we know, by an Irishman, Maeldubh or Maelduin, then by Theodore of Canterbury.

(12) For the journeys of Irish students to Ireland it completes in a very useful way the famous text of Bede (*Hist. Eccles.*, III, 27), which relates to the state of affairs at the time of the plague of 664.

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(13) Theodore and Hadrian arrived in England in 669. The letter obviously dates from a time when they had been teaching for a good while, probably 680-85.

(14) J. Ussher, *The whole Works* (Dublin, 1631), iv (Sylloge), 448-453; see p. 453.

(15) Aldhelm uses the same expression, in the letter quoted above, in connexion with Ireland. Oswy, Aldfrid's father, like his brother Oswald, lived a long time in exile in Ireland, where he became a Christian ('Osuiu a Scottis edoctus ac baptizatus', *Hist. Eccles.*, III, 25). There, as Bishop Browne tactfully puts it (*op. cit.*, 271), he 'married or did not marry' Fina, a princess of the Northern Uí Néill, a grand-niece of St Columba. Aldfrid, in consequence it seems of his alleged illegitimate birth, was first passed over in the royal succession, his younger brother Egfrid succeeding Oswy. Upon the death of Egfrid, however, St Cuthbert advised calling back Aldfrid from 'the Islands of the Scots' and he became king (Bede, *Vita S. Cuthberti* (prose)). He is called Flann Fina in Irish documents. The *Annals of Tigernach* mention his death thus (A.D. 704): 'Alfrith mac Ossu—Fland Fina the Irish call him—Rex Saxon fuit'; at the wrong date of 694, the *Annals of Inisfallen* have a similar entry; in the *Fragments of Irish Annals* published by O'Donovan, there is, at the year 704: 'The death of Flann Fiona, son of Ossa, king of Saxonland, the famous wise man, the pupil of Adamnan.' Adamnan himself calls him: 'my friend king Aldfrid' (*Vit. Col.*, II, 46). He enjoys the reputation of a famous poet in Irish, though none of the poems attributed to him goes back to his time. Most of what is known about him is summed up in two notes: one in Reeves's *Life of St Columba* (185-6), the other in C. Plummer's edition of the *Historical Works of Bede* (vol. II, 263-4).

(16) For other identifications, see: Kenney, *Sources*, 227.

(17) Also they assume that it was made to order for the translation of the relics in 698, a not very likely procedure.

(18) *Vita Col.*, preface.

(19) *Vita Col.*, end of Book II. See: Kenney, 431-32 for the date of the redaction of the *Vita Columbae* (mostly before 685, but finished in the following years). A. O. and M. O. Anderson, *Adamnan's Life of Columba* (London, etc., 1961), pp. 5-6, favour a slightly later date. Adamnan's journeys to the court of Aldfrid took place in 686-7 and 688-9.

(20) This is also the time when he got Bede to write his prose *Life of St Cuthbert*, which is dedicated to Eadfrith and was finished just before his death in 721.

(21) Another fragment (canon-tables) in the British Museum (Royal MS 7.C.XII) may also have belonged to the same manuscript. See: E. A. Lowe, *Codices Latini Ant.*, II, no. 125.

(22) That style was probably not fully developed at the time (A.D. 680-85?) when he may have gone to Ireland. But he would be likely to keep in touch.

(23) *Celtic Art* (London, 1904), 272-76.

(24) R. Gabrielsson, *Kompositionsformer i senkeltisk orneringstil* (Stockholm, 1945).

(25) Also probably as far as the grids are concerned, as I hope to show in a coming publication.

(26) E. M. Jope and B. C. S. Wilson, 'The Decorated Cast-Bronze Disc from the River Bann near Coleraine', *Ulster Journ. Archaeol.*, 1957, 95 sqq.

(27) This, of course, has a bearing on the Book of Durrow. It is assumed all through the volume under review that it is 'a Northumbrian manuscript', by which is probably meant that it is ascribed to the Lindisfarne scriptorium, though the question is not discussed in detail (the clearest statement on its being Northumbrian is probably the footnote 3, page 90). Nobody, so far, has ever demonstrated conclusively that it is (see on the subject, *inter alia*: the articles of A. Clapham and F. C. Burkitt in *ANTIQUITY*, 1934 and 1935, and F. Masai, *Essai sur les Origines de la miniature dite irlandaise* (Bruxelles-Anvers, 1947) (Lowe's opinions on it seem to have varied greatly (*Cod. Lat. Ant.*, II, no. 273 and Preface)). The main reasons which have been advanced are of various types: *A*, the presence of a page with animal-interlacing of Anglo-Saxon type; *B*, the comparatively pure Vulgate text, thought to be of Italo-Northumbrian type; *C*, the orderly appearance of the script. Of these, *A* is part of the strong Anglo-Saxon influence which is manifest in all Irish metalwork at the end of the seventh century and the beginning of the eighth and may be a consequence of the Irish missions in England and the presence of numerous English students in Ireland, *B* is open to discussion, as the Gospel text is not so very pure Vulgate (see: H. J. Lawlor, 'The Cathach of St Columba', *Proc. R.I.A.*, 1916), may not be of Italo-Northumbrian type (see: *Evangeliorum Quattuor Codex Durmachensis* (Olten-Lausanne-Fribourg, 1960), Introduction by A. A. Luce, pp. 3 sqq.) and is accompanied by pre-Vulgate preliminaries; as for *C*, why assume that when a luxury book has an orderly appearance it is necessarily Northumbrian? In fact there, the implied reason is that it would show an influence from these very orderly scriptoria of Jarrow and Wearmouth; but in that case the Book of Durrow would have to be dated very late: one cannot at the same time date it of around 675 and see in it an influence of Wearmouth, founded the previous year, or of Jarrow which did not exist then. Apart from that it looks a bit odd to assume without discussion that it is Northumbrian when there is now a volume in the same collection where Dr Luce is at great pains to show that it is really Irish. Slight lack of co-ordination. . . .

ANTIQUITY

(28) The coffin of St Cuthbert having been opened at the time of the exodus of the monks from Lindisfarne and several relics, including perhaps books, having been stuffed into it at that time, the presence of the volume now in Stonyhurst College on a ledge above the head of St Cuthbert when the coffin was opened in 1104 does not prove anything (see: *The Relics of Saint Cuthbert* (Oxford, 1956), 27 and 356; see also: E. A. Lowe, *English Uncial* (Oxford, 1960), and D. Wright, 'Some notes on English Uncial', *Traditio*, 1961, 441).

(29) Milan, Ambrosian Library, Ms.C.5.inf.

(30) Schaffhausen, Town Library, Generalia, Ms.1.

(31) A comparison of the minuscule script of the *Vita Columbae* with that of the Echternach Gospels would show a great analogy in the script, and even, taking into consideration the very different purpose

of the books, in the small initials surrounded with dots.

(32) See: G. S. M. Walker, *Sancti Columbani Opera* (Dublin, 1957).

(33) The Antiphonary is dated to the middle of the seventh century by the poem on the abbots of Bangor which it contains. See: F. Warren, *The Antiphonary of Bangor* (London, 1893-95).

(34) P. Grosjean, S.J., 'Sur quelques exégètes irlandais', *Sacris Erudiri*, 1955, 67 sqq.; see also K. Hughes, 'An Irish Litany of Irish Saints compiled c. 800', *Analecta Bollandiana*, 1959.

(35) E. A. Lowe, 'A key to Bede's Scriptorium', *Scriptorium*, 1958, 182 sqq.

(36) No need to say that if this view be adopted, there is no more room for the nice little piece of science-fiction by which the Ardagh chalice and the Tara brooch are annexed to Lindisfarne (pp. 250 sqq.).

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