To Hold Infinity in the Palm of your Hand

The Insular Pocket Gospel Books Re-evaluated

II Volumes: Volume I

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Abstract

While the small-sized early medieval manuscripts known as the "pocket gospel books" are well known to scholars of Insular art, the definition and interpretation of this codicological group are far from secure. This study provides a reassessment of these manuscripts, questioning the nature of their grouping, reappraising their individual uniqueness and theorising their common features. As such, it focusses on distinctive aspects of their physical structure, scripts and imagery to provide an interdisciplinary account, including broader points about the group and detailed case studies of specific features of individual manuscripts. More than this however, it takes these manuscripts as the starting point for an exploration of early medieval scribal and monastic culture, resituating them in a cultural world in which manuscripts more broadly, and especially gospel books, were central to personal piety, intellectual study and institutional identity alike.

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<u>Declaration</u>

I declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work and I am the sole author. This work has not previously been presented for an award at this, or any other, University. All sources are acknowledged as References.

INTRODUCTION

What's in a Name?

The "pocket gospel books" came into existence as a term and category in 1956 at the suggestion of Patrick McGurk who observed in his article "The Irish Pocket Gospel Book" that a number of small-sized gospel books from eighth- to ninth-century Ireland shared certain distinct features that warranted their consideration as a group.[1] The article quickly became a standard work of Insular manuscript scholarship and McGurk's characterisation of the pocket gospels gained widespread acceptance. It is testament to the stature of McGurk's scholarship that now, over sixty years since the article's publication, the pocket-gospel group is still described uncritically by scholars,[2] with the only major re-evaluation being that of McGurk himself in 1987.[3] Yet McGurk identified a diverse array of criteria for the group and, as he partly acknowledged in this later article, many of these features are also shared by other manuscripts within the Insular tradition, while others are exhibited inconsistently by the manuscripts within the group. His work, therefore, left the characterisation of the pocket gospels ambiguous.

Moreover, much about these manuscripts remains understudied. In the decades since the original publication, scholarly research has transformed our understanding of early medieval culture: its manuscripts, scribes, readers, users and patrons; its religion and politics. Despite this, the "pocket gospels" have for the most part been left behind by the scholarship. They have received limited further study, either as a group or individually.[4]

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[1] Patrick McGurk, "The Irish Pocket Gospel Book", *Sacris Erudiri* 8, 2 (1956), 249-70. Earlier work on the pocket gospel books can also be found in McGurk's unpublished PhD thesis, "The Architecture of Latin Gospel Books Before A.D. 800" (PhD Thesis, University of London, 1953).

[2] For example, Peter Harbison, *The Golden Age of Irish Art: The Medieval Achievement, 600-1200* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1999), 88-99; Bernard Meehan, "Irish Pocket Gospel Books", in *The St Cuthbert Gospel: Studies on the Insular Manuscript of the Gospel of John (BL, Additional MS 89000)*, ed. by Claire Breay and Bernard Meehan (London: The British Library, 2015), 83-102. For a recent more critical approach to the pocket gospels, see Carol Farr, "In Time, Out of Time: Two Case Studies of Recycled Evangelist Pictures", in *The Art, Literature and Material Culture of the Medieval World: Transition, Transformation and Taxonomy*, ed. Meg Boulton, Jane Hawkes and Melissa Herman (Dublin: Four Courts, 2015), 249-63, especially 256.

[3] Patrick McGurk, "The Gospel Book in Celtic Lands Before A.D. 850: Contents and Arrangement", in *Irland und die Christenheit, Bibelstudien und Mission*, ed. Próinséas Ní Chatháin and Michael Richter (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1987), 165-89.

[4] A few manuscripts in the group were the subjects of early monographs, for example: Hugh J. Lawlor, *Chapters on the Book of Mulling* (Edinburgh: David Douglas, 1897); John Gwynn, *Liber*

When a scholar mentions one of these manuscripts, they frequently note that it is a pocket gospel book, without any clear indication of what this designation implies. The group is treated as though it defines the manuscripts when, if anything, it should be the manuscripts that define the group.

Accordingly, this study aims to reopen the questions of whether it is justified to study these manuscripts together, and if so, how their grouping is most usefully defined. More than simply identifying shared features however, it aims to interpret them historically, culturally and, in particular, visually. In doing so it will analyse the manuscripts in greater depth than has previously been attempted, concentrating on the issues of how, why and by whom they were made, and raising new questions about the beliefs and attitudes coded into their design and decoration. First, however, it is worth establishing how the pocket gospels have been defined previously.

Characterisation of the Group

The first point to make about the characterisation of the group is that the name "pocket gospels" reflects very little of their identity. The term is something of a misnomer: they have, in fact, no clear association with pockets. The term "pocket book" was first used in the seventeenth century for small, portable books that could be carried in a "pocket", which at that time meant a small bag or pouch worn on the person.[5] Bernard Meehan suggested that McGurk may have adopted the term from the "Pocket Novels" produced by Penguin Books from the 1930s, or the French *Le Livre de poche* from the 1950s.[6] However, the term was first used in reference to small-sized Insular manuscripts much earlier: in 1910, Wallace

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Ardmachanus: The Book of Armagh (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 1913); Françoise Henry, "An Irish Manuscript in the British Museum (Add. 40.618)", *JRSAI* 87, 2 (1957), 147-66. For recent scholarship on individual pocket-gospel manuscripts, see especially: Carol Farr "Irish Pocket Gospels in Anglo-Saxon England"; Carol Farr, "In Time, Out of Time"; Katherine Forsyth, *Studies on the Book of Deer* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2008); Claire Breay and Bernard Meehan, eds, *The St Cuthbert Gospel: Studies on the Insular Manuscript of the Gospel of John (BL, Additional MS 89000)* (London: The British Library, 2015); Michelle P. Brown, "Ferdomnach and the Ninth to Twelfth-Century Books of Armagh: exuberant exhibitionist or accomplished antiquary?", in *Mapping New Territories in Art and Architectural History: essays in honour of Roger Stalley*, ed. F. Narkiewicz, N. NicGhabhann and D. O'Donovan (Brepols: Turnhout, forthcoming); I am most grateful to Professor Brown for allowing me to read her forthcoming article.

[5] "Pocket, n. and adj.", OED Online, Oxford University Press, retrieved November 10, 2014 from: http://www.oed.com.ezproxy.york.ac.uk/view/Entry/146402?rskey=ypGPTl&result=1&isAdvanced=false.

[6] Bernard Meehan, "Irish Pocket Gospel Books", 83.

Lindsay called the Cadmug Gospels "Boniface's pocket-copy of the Gospels",[7] a term echoed in 1912 by Kuno Meyer when he described it as a "Taschenexemplar des Bonifatius" (bag or pocket-copy of Boniface)—both long before McGurk coined the term.[8] More generally, scholars started calling small-sized medieval manuscripts "pocket books" from the nineteenth century—most notably the thirteenth-century "pocket bibles"[9]—and it is likely that McGurk had such traditions in mind when he adopted the term for these diminutive Irish gospel books. Indeed, he suggested that "they may have served the same purpose as the small Bibles or portable breviaries carried by the friars in later centuries".[10] The name may have particularly appealed to scholars for describing the Insular manuscripts due to the practice of carrying manuscripts in satchels attested in early-medieval Ireland and Scotland, for which McGurk suggested that the pocket gospel books may have been designed, although the evidence for this needs reviewing.[11]

Thus although the name alludes to the small dimensions of the manuscripts, which is certainly a defining feature, it also suggests modes of use, especially involving personal conveyance on the body, which have been assumed rather than rigorously argued and seem frequently anachronistic. One of the main aims of this study is to provide a more thorough analysis of the intended function of these manuscripts. In the meantime, the name "pocket gospel books" will be maintained here despite its disadvantages, because it has become universally established in the scholarship, and so has come to denote a type of manuscript easily called to mind by its invocation.

Apart from their putative relation to pockets, the pocket gospels were further defined by McGurk:

> the two most striking features about these Irish books are their desire for economy and the extent of their departure from the scribal tradition of that common classical measure, the uncial or half uncial book of the 4th, 5th and 6th centuries.[12]

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[7] Wallace M. Lindsay, *Early Irish Minuscule Script*, St Andrew Publications 6 (Oxford: James Parker, 1910), 4.

[8] Kuno Meyer, "Neu aufgefundene altirische Glossen", *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie* 8 (1912), 173–77, at 174.

[9] For example, William Morris, "Some Notes on the Illuminated Books of the Middle Ages", *Magazine of Art* 17, 1894, 83-88, at. 86.

[10] McGurk, "The Irish Pocket Gospel", 250.

[11] McGurk, "The Irish Pocket Gospel", 250. See Chapter 1.

[12] McGurk, "The Irish Pocket Gospel", 251-52.

To demonstrate this, he described a constellation of different features which he considered characteristic of the pocket gospels. These were mainly codicological, textual and graphic: small size; quires that are lengthy and irregularly constructed; gospel texts physically separated from one another, either by their placement each on a single overlong quire or on their own sets of quires; gospel texts belonging to an "Irish mixed-text family"; lack of textual accessories to the gospels; "scribal indiscipline"; and a decorative scheme consisting of evangelist portraits, decorated initials and a *chi-rho* page.[13] Yet of these many features, McGurk did not clearly distinguish which are found in all the pocket gospels and which are found in only some of them, or which are unique to the pocket gospels and which are common to other manuscripts produced in the Insular tradition. Together with these formal criteria, he also considered their national origins, regarding "Irishness" as a defining characteristic of the group. Likewise, he considered their function, identifying them as personal manuscripts which might have been used for individual study, have been carried on "wanderings", exchanged as personal gifts and treasured as relics of a holy person with whom they were associated.[14] This excess of diverse features means that despite its wide acceptance, the pocket-gospel group remains hazily defined.

Later scholars discussing the group have reiterated a selection of McGurk's criteria without significantly refining their definition. For example, Françoise Henry explained that they have in common small size, small script, frequent abbreviation of words, omission of prefatory texts, irregular use of columns and "all sorts of fanciful arrangements of text".[15] Kathleen Hughes listed a variety of McGurk's criteria, picking out "tiny size and minuscule hand" as the principal features.[16] According to Peter Harbison, the pocket gospels are defined in contrast to "the formal exercises in magnificence witnessed in the great Books of Lindisfarne, Lichfield and Kells", as "personal copies of the Gospels used for private reading and contemplation", with their typical characteristics being their size, the desire to economise, use of minuscule and cursive script, frequent abbreviations, omission of prefaces and inclusion of evangelist portraits and incipit pages.[17] While varying in the emphasis given

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[13] McGurk, "The Irish Pocket Gospel", 264, 263, 253; "The Gospel Book in Celtic Lands", 167-68, 170-71.

[14] McGurk, "The Irish Pocket Gospel", 249-50.

[15] Henry, "An Irish Manuscript", 152.

[16] Kathleen Hughes, "The Book of Deer (Cambridge University Library MS Ii.6.32)", in *Celtic Britain in the Early Middle Ages: Studies in Scottish and Welsh Sources,* Studies in Celtic History 2, ed. by David Dumville (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1980), 22-37, at 22.

[17] Harbison, *The Golden Age*, 88.

to particular criteria, such accounts have not questioned or presented an argued case for clarifying the definition of the group.

Perhaps the most significant result of this ambiguity is that even which manuscripts comprise the group remains debateable. Those that have been consistently regarded as constituting the pocket-gospel group are as follows (see Appendix):[18]

- Stowe St John (Dublin, Royal Irish Academy, D II 3, fols 1-11)
- Book of Dimma (Dublin, Trinity College Library, MS 59)
- Book of Mulling (Dublin, Trinity College Library, MS 60, fols 1-94)
- Mulling fragment (Dublin, Trinity College Library, MS 60, fols 96-99)
- Cadmug Gospels (Fulda, Landesbibliothek, Codex Bonifatianus 3)
- London, British Library, Add. MS 40618
- MacDurnan Gospels (London, Lambeth Palace Library, MS 1370)

However, other manuscripts are also sometimes included in the group, namely:

- Bern, Burgerbibliothek, Cod. 671
- Book of Deer (Cambridge, University Library, MS Ii.6.32)
- Book of Armagh (Dublin, Trinity College Library, MS 52)
- St Cuthbert Gospel of John (London, British Library, Add. MS 89000)

These discrepancies in the composition of the group reflect scholarly differences in opinion. Between his two articles on the subject, McGurk changed his mind about which manuscripts belonged to the pocket-gospel group: Bern 671 was included in the 1956 group but omitted in the 1987 revision; conversely, the Book of Armagh was absent from the original line-up, but Françoise Henry suggested that it should be considered with the group in her article of 1957 and it was tentatively included by McGurk in 1987.[19] The Cuthbert Gospel of John and the Book of Deer were both consistently dismissed from the group by McGurk but their inclusion was nevertheless advocated by Julian Brown and Kathleen Hughes respectively, who were followed by various subsequent scholars.[20]

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[18] Arranged alphabetically by city.

[19] Henry, "An Irish Manuscript", 151.

[20] Julian Brown, ed., *The Stonyhurst Gospel of Saint John* (Oxford: Roxburghe Club, 1969), 36; Hughes, "The Book of Deer", 22-24.

This study takes the most inclusive approach to the composition of the group. As will be explored over the course of this study, all the manuscripts listed above exhibit at least some distinctive features which might support their grouping. They are the eleven smallest gospel manuscripts surviving from the Insular tradition. They are all written in minuscule script except for the Cuthbert Gospel, which is written in capitular uncial.[21] Most, though not all, exhibit a concern to place each gospel text on its own separate codicological unit, either a single large quire or set of quires. Most contain evangelist portraits of the standing type. While these correspondences do not automatically justify the consideration of these manuscripts as a group, they do provide the basis for a discussion about their possible relationship.

As well as these formal features, it is also worth considering whether a case might be made for grouping these manuscripts on the grounds of function. Do their shared attributes suggest a shared function? Was McGurk right to identify them as personal manuscripts? To answer these questions fully, it is necessary to cast the net as widely as possible and consider the maximum number of candidates for the group. A manuscript might have been used in a similar way to the others despite not entirely conforming to certain formal criteria. Therefore, this study takes all the manuscripts listed above as its starting point. For ease of reference they are referred to herein as the pocket gospels, although whether this designation is justified will be assessed over the duration of this study.

General Features

Apart from all exhibiting at least some distinctive features, the degree of variation even between any given two of the manuscripts listed above further supports the argument for accepting the most inclusive view of the group. It seems arbitrary to exclude manuscripts on the basis of their unique features when the group is already notably diverse, just as the larger gospel books in the same tradition also are. Insular gospel books survive in a wide variety of types and designs, ranging from functional but plain examples such as the Royal Gospels, to astonishingly elaborate ones such as the Lindisfarne Gospels and Book of Kells.[22] In many ways the pocket gospels correspond closely to these larger relatives, or else display a range of

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[21] See Chapter 3.

[22] BL, Royal MS 1 B VII; BL, Cotton MS Nero D IV; Dublin, TCD 58. Richard Gameson, "The Royal 1. B. vii Gospels and English Book Production in the Seventh and Eighth Centuries", in *The Early Medieval Bible: Its Production, Decoration and Use*, ed. by Richard Gameson (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1994), 24-52.

variations consistent with the tradition as a whole.[23] Acknowledging rather than evading these correspondences is essential to assessing the group, since they further emphasise the significance of the pocket gospels' distinctive features, underlining the question of why these manuscripts diverge from the tradition in these particular ways.

The features that the pocket gospels share with Insular gospel books generally include parchment prepared in the way typical of the Insular world: thick, and with both sides scraped with pumice, thereby giving them a slightly raised nap so that the hair and flesh sides are difficult to distinguish from one another.[24] Their leaves are pricked in both margins and ruled in hard point after folding, although the ruling patterns vary between manuscripts.[25]

As with all medieval manuscripts, the pocket-gospel texts vary slightly from copy to copy. McGurk regarded the gospel texts of the pocket gospels as belonging to an Irish text family, an entity first proposed by Wordsworth and White in 1898.[26] However, recent scholars have been sceptical about such designations, calling into question the

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[23] On the Insular gospel book tradition, see for example: Partrick McGurk, *Latin Gospel Books From A.D. 400 to A.D. 800*, Publications de Scriptorium 5 (Paris and Brussels: Aux Éditions "Érasme"; Anvers and Amsterdam: Standaard-Boekhandel, 1961), 11-15; Nancy Netzer, "The Design and Decoration of Insular Gospel-Books and Other Litugical Manuscripts, c.600-c.900", in *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain*, vol. 1, c.400-1100, ed. by Richard Gameson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 225-43. On the distinctive features of Irish manuscripts, see William O'Sullivan, "Manuscripts and Palaeography", in *A New History of Ireland: Prehistoric and early Ireland*, ed. by Theodore William Moody, Dáibhí Ó Cróinín and Francis X. Martin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 511-48.

[24] Julian Brown, "Tradition, Imitation and Invention in Insular Handwriting of the Seventh and Eighth Centuries", in T. Julian Brown, *A Palaeographer's View*: *The Selected Writings of Julian Brown*, ed. Janet Bately, Michelle Brown, Albinia C. de la Mare (London: Harvey Miller, 1993), 179-200, at 184.

[25] Julian Brown, "The Earliest Irish Manuscripts and their Late Antique Background" in T. Julian Brown, *A Palaeographer's View*: *The Selected Writings of Julian Brown*, ed. Janet Bately, Michelle Brown, Albinia C. de la Mare (London: Harvey Miller, 1993), 221-41, at 234-5.

[26] John Wordsworth and Henry J. White, *Novum Testamentum Domini Nostri Iesu Christi Latine*, 1 Quattuor Evangelia, (Oxford: Clarendon, 1889-1898): x. They named this text family DELQR, deriving from the *sigla* for the texts of the Book of Armagh (D), BL, Egerton MS 609 (E), the Lichfield Gospels (L), the Book of Kells (Q), and the MacRegol Gospels (R), all of which contain certain common variants. It is worth noting that neither Egerton 609 nor the Lichfield Gospels were made in Ireland and the origins of the Book of Kells are strongly disputed.

distinctiveness and cohesiveness of the supposed "Irish" text family.[27] All the texts of the pocket gospels are now classed as mixed texts, comprising principally Vulgate with some Old Latin readings. Nevertheless, in Bonifatius Fischer's collation of the textual affiliations of Latin gospel texts up to the tenth century, the texts of the pocket gospels (with the exception of the Cuthbert Gospel) consistently rank among those with the fewest textual agreements with the Vulgate.[28]

Beyond gospel texts, the contents of the pocket gospels vary considerably. While most contain all four gospels, the Stowe St John and Cuthbert Gospel are stand-alone copies of the Gospel of John; and while most contain entire texts, the Stowe St John, the gospels of Matthew and Mark in the Cadmug Gospels, and the gospel texts of Matthew, Mark and Luke in the Book of Deer, are all abridged. Some manuscripts also contain other texts: the Book of Armagh contains an entire New Testament as well as hagiographies and other material relating to St Patrick and Martin of Tours; the Stowe St John was compiled into a composite volume with a missal from an early date; the books of Dimma, Mulling and Deer all include texts for masses for the sick.

Gospel prefaces are found in the books of Mulling and Armagh. In both cases these consist of Jerome's *Epistle to Pope Damasus*, the Monarchian prologues and Eusebian canon tables, while the Book of Armagh also includes gospel summaries and interpretations of the Hebrew names in each gospel.[29] In addition to this, despite neither having any canon

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[27] Thomas O'Loughlin, "The Biblical Text of the Book of Deer (C.U.L. Ii.6.32): Evidence for the Remains of a Division System from its Manuscript Ancestry", in *Studies on the Book of Deer*, ed. Katherine Forsyth (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2008), 3-31, at 4; Christopher Verey, "Notes on the Gospel Text", in *The Durham Gospels: Together with Fragments of a Gospel Book in Uncial, Durham, Cathedral Library, MS A. II. 17*, ed. Christopher D. Verey, T. Julian Brown and Elizabeth Coatsworth (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1980), 68-71, at 70-71.

[28] According to Fischer's collation of 462 gospel texts, the texts of the pocket gospels, identified by *sigla*, rank in order of closeness to the Vulgate as follows: 383, Hy (MacDurnan Gospels); 403, Hc (Book of Deer); 407, Hd (Book of Armagh); 408, Ht (Stowe St John), 411, Hn (Mulling Fragment); 417, Ha (Add. 40618); 421, Hi (Book of Dimma); 427, Hb (Bern 671); 436, Hm (Book of Mulling); 437 Hf (Cadmug Gospels). Bonifatius Fischer, "Die lateinischen Evangelien bis zum 10. Jahrhundert: Zwei Untersuchungen zum Text", ed. by Patrick McGurk und Florentine Mütherich, *Zeitschrift fuer die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der aelteren Kirche* 101 (2010), 119-44. On the text of the Book of Mulling, see Lawlor, *Chapters*, 55. On the texts of the Book of Armagh and MacDurnan Gospels, see Martin McNamara, "The Echternach and Mac Durnan gospels: some common readings and their significance", *Peritia* 6, 1 (1987), 217-22.

[29] It has sometimes been suggested that these prefaces may have been later additions; if so they cannot have been added more than a generation later than the original project, and may have been

tables, the MacDurnan Gospels includes marginal Eusebian section references and Bern 671 includes them only for Luke sections 9-78 (i.e. Luke 3:10-8:10; fols 38v-43r). The absence of prefaces from the other pocket gospels is uncommon among early medieval gospel books as a whole, but as McGurk noted, it is typical of those made in the Irish tradition, with large-sized examples including the MacRegol and St Gall Gospels.[30]

Extracts from other texts are also included in some of the manuscripts. In the Book of Armagh, extracts from Gregory's *Moralia In Iob* are included at the explicit to the Gospel of John.[31] The Cadmug Gospels contains a verse about the evangelists originating from the anonymous preface found in some copies of Juvencus's fourth-century *Historia Evangelica*. The same verse is also found in the MacDurnan Gospels, combined with lines from Sedulius's epic poem on the Gospels, the *Carmen Paschale*; although they are written in a relatively modern hand (sixteenth or seventeenth century?),[32] they may nevertheless have been copied from an early inscription that previously existed in the MacDurnan Gospels.[33] The inclusion of these verses in early medieval gospel books is well-attested: the Sedulius quatrain appears in the sixth-century St Augustine Gospels,[34] and the ninth-century Carolingian Gospels[35] and Athelstan Gospels;[36] the verse from the Juvencus preface appears less frequently, with the only other example being the ninth-century MacRegol Gospels (fol. 169v).

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contemporary. For the view that they are contemporary, see William O'Sullivan, "Insular Calligraphy: Current State and Problems", *Peritia* 4 (1985), 346-99, at 355; and Richard Sharpe, "Palaeographical Considerations in the Study of the Patrician Documents in the Book of Armagh", *Scriptorium* 36 (1982), 3-28. For more detail, see Appendix.

[30] Oxford, BodL., MS Auct. D. 2. 19 and St. Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek, Cod. Sang. 51. McGurk, "The Gospel Book in Celtic Lands", 168-69.

[31] See Chapter 4.

[32] Lawlor, *Chapters*, 24, suggests that it is a seventeenth-century hand. Farr thinks it likely to have been added by Archbishop Parker; Carol A. Farr, "Irish Pocket Gospels in Anglo-Saxon England" in, *Anglo-Saxon Traces, Collected Papers of the 2007 Meeting of the International Society of Anglo-Saxonists*, ed. Jane Roberts and Leslie Webster (Arizona: Tempe, 2011), 87-100, at 93.

[33] John O. Westwood, *Fac-similes of the Miniatures & Ornaments of Anglo-Saxon & Irish Manuscripts* (London: Bernard Quaritch, 1868), 69; Lawlor, *Chapters*, 24. It might be added that British Library Royal I. A. XVIII provides a comparable example of a tenth-century inscription that is preserved in a late copy in the same manuscript, made because the original was damaged or detached; Simon Keynes, "King Athelstan's Books", in *Learning and Literature in Anglo-Saxon England, Studies Presented to Peter Clemoes on the Occasion of his Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, ed. Michael Lapidge and Helmut Gneuss (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 153-59, at 169.

[34] Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 286.

[35] BL, Add. MS 11848.

[36] BL, Cotton MS Tiberius A II.

While they vary considerably in the extent and details of their decoration, the decorative scheme of the pocket gospels follows the clear formula which is typical of Insular gospel books of all sizes: at each gospel opening, a full-page evangelist portrait is usually positioned on the verso facing the gospel *incipit* page with decorated initials on the recto; additionally at Matthew verse 1:18 the name of Christ is rendered as an enlarged and decorated *Chi-rho* monogram. The pocket gospels present a couple of exceptions: the portraits of Matthew in the MacDurnan Gospels (fol. 4*v) and the Book of Deer (fol. 4v) both face the *Chi-Rho* pages instead of the gospel *incipit* as is usual; the portrait page in the Stowe St John is at the end of the gospel rather than the beginning. However, the Cuthbert Gospel and Bern 671 do not include any evangelist portraits, the Mulling Fragment probably also never had any,[37] and the evangelist portrait in the Stowe St John was probably a later addition.[38]

In the pocket gospels, as in Insular art generally, the evangelists are depicted in a variety of different forms and sizes. The most common is the "evangelist portrait", in which the human evangelist is depicted in a full-page miniature preceding the text of their gospel. Full-page miniatures featuring a single evangelist symbol sometimes replace evangelist portraits, as in the Book of Armagh and the Gospel of John in the Book of Dimma. The Stowe St John has an "accompanied" portrait, featuring the human evangelist as well as his eagle symbol. In some of the manuscripts other miniatures also appear; the Book of Armagh and MacDurnan Gospels both contain four-symbols pages, in which all four of the evangelist symbols are shown together arranged around a cross, in both cases preceding Matthew's gospel and thus acting as frontispieces to the entire gospel books. The Book of Deer contains three cruciform miniatures, one at the beginning and two at the end of the manuscript, that show four figures arranged in quadrants around a cross, as well as a host of marginal drawings. However, the Cuthbert Gospel, Mulling Fragment and Bern 671 contain no miniatures at all. This pattern of variation within the confines of a general programme of decoration corresponds to the decorative treatment of other Insular gospel books.

The details and significance of these features will be discussed in greater detail over the course of this study, but it suffices here to point out that in these respects the proposed pocket gospels are not particularly cohesive as a group and do not stand out as unusual within the Insular gospel-book tradition more widely. They display the same degree of affinity to tradition mixed with individual variation that can be observed in any Insular

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[37] There is no miniature included in the single gospel opening that survives in the Mulling fragment (Matthew-Mark). It is possible that a miniature could have been inserted on a single leaf although this would be unusual mid-quire. See Appendix; and Henry, "An Irish Manuscript", 156.

[38] See Appendix and Chapter 2.

gospel book. This suggests that rather than trying to narrow the group to make the constituent manuscripts conform more closely to one another, it is most appropriate to accept the group at its broadest and explore the reasons for the variations therein. From this perspective, all the manuscripts considered here may be perceived as valuable witnesses to the ways in which the essential format of the diminutive gospel book could be adapted to suit the needs of specific contexts.

Locations and Dates

One further advantage of this inclusive approach to the composition of the group is that the greatest possible diversity of places and dates of origin are included, giving a useful view of the whole pocket-gospel phenomenon. The exceptions to this are two gospel books from twelfth-century Armagh (British Library, Harley MSS 1023 and 1802), which share many features with the manuscripts discussed here, but which are so much later and from such a changed cultural context that they must be regarded as a separate if related phenomenon.[39]

The inclusion of manuscripts of varying dates and origins in the pocket-gospel group contrasts with the way in which they have sometimes been characterised in the past. McGurk regarded the pocket gospels as definitively "Irish", as reflected in his full name for the group. He interpreted the features noted above as departing significantly from contemporary practices of gospel-book making, deriving ultimately from archaic models that were preserved and imitated in Ireland long after they had been superseded elsewhere. For him, the pocket gospels were: "a recognizably conservative Irish type with both archaic and novel features".[40]

One of the reasons that Bern 671 was omitted from the group in McGurk's 1987 article was because it is probably not Irish, but rather possibly Cornish or Welsh.[41] The Book of Deer was excluded from the group on the basis that it is likely Scottish rather than Irish, although otherwise it corresponds to McGurk's pocket-gospel criteria more closely than several of his named pocket gospels do.[42] Likewise the Cuthbert Gospel, made at the

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[39] On these see, Jennifer O'Reilly, "The Hiberno-Latin Tradition of the Evangelists and the Gospels of Mael Brigte", *Peritia* 9 (1995), 290-309; and Brown, "Ferdomnach".

[40] Patrick McGurk, "The Gospel Book in Celtic Lands", 165-89.

[41] McGurk, "The Gospel Book in Celtic Lands", 174-75; on the origins of Bern 671, see Wallace M. Lindsay, *Early Welsh Script*, St Andrews Publications 10 (Oxford: James Parker, 1912), 10-16; Richard Gameson, "The Insular Gospel Book at Hereford Cathedral", *Scriptorium* 56, 1 (2002), 48-79, at 56-57.

[42] McGurk, "The Gospel Book in Celtic Lands", 174-75.

Northumbrian scriptorium of Wearmouth-Jarrow, was dismissed from the group by McGurk because its origins and scribal practices were not Irish.[43]

This study avoids the use of Irishness as a criterion for definition and exclusion in its assessment of the pocket gospel group. Indeed, the only manuscripts in the group that can be assigned with reasonable confidence to specific places of creation are the Book of Armagh and the MacDurnan Gospels to Armagh, the Cuthbert Gospel to Wearmouth-Jarrow and the Book of Mulling to St Mullins, Co. Carlow.[44] Thus although most probably were made in Ireland, it is possible that others were created elsewhere. For example, the Cadmug Gospels, kept at Fulda since at least the tenth century, may well have been made by Irish-speaking scribes on the Continent; or, as Wallace Lindsay suggested, it "may conceivably have come from the Cornish region", given that Boniface, with whom it is associated, came from south-west Britain.[45] The scarcity or indeed absence of surviving early manuscripts unequivocally known to have been produced in Celtic-language regions outside Ireland makes it difficult to identify possible examples of their output, but literary sources demonstrate that manuscripts were made in these areas and they undoubtedly shared close manuscript traditions with Ireland.[46]

Today, most scholars recognise that the scribal culture of early medieval Ireland was part of a broader European culture, which it enriched and was enriched by itself. It is thus artificial to examine Irish manuscripts in isolation and, accordingly, this study aims to resituate the pocket gospels within a broader context. However, all the pocket gospels discussed originate from Insular culture, the synthesising monastic culture that flourished in the areas inhabited by Celtic-speaking peoples and Anglo-Saxons, which constitute present-day UK and Ireland, in the period from *c*.600-*c*.800, as well as in their missionary outposts in continental Europe from *c*.700-*c*.800, and in later periods in Ireland.[47] Insular culture

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[43] McGurk, "The Architecture of Latin Gospel Books", 47.

[44] See Appendix.

[45] Wallace M. Lindsay, *Notae Latinae: An Account of Abbreviation in Latin MSS. of the Early Minuscule Period* (Cambridge: Camrbidge University Press, 1915), 321. See Appendix.

[46] Scotland, Wales and Cornwall have often been overlooked in scholarly debates about manuscript origins, for example in the whole of *CLA* only a single fly-leaf fragment is attributed to Wales (*CLA* VI: 828), even then only as "written in Ireland or Wales". See, Helen McKee, "Script in Wales, Scotland and Cornwall", in *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain* 1, ed. by Richard Gameson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 167-73.

[47] See the "Introduction" to Michael Spearman and John Higgitt, eds, *The Age of Migrating Ideas: Early Medieval Art in Northern Britain and Ireland. Proceedings of the Second International Conference on Insular Art held in the National Museums of Scotland in Edinburgh, 3-6 January 1991* (Edinburgh & Stroud: National Museums Scotland and Sutton, 1993), 1-2. See also George Henderson

had its own distinctive scribal tradition, and although some other manuscripts share individual features with the pocket gospels, overall they are not sufficiently similar to be regarded as part of the same phenomenon. Insular is therefore the preferred descriptor for the cultural milieu of the pocket gospels used in this study.

The implications of the dating of these manuscripts are also worth establishing. Most of the dates assigned to the pocket gospel books are broad and imprecise. In 1983 Laurence Nees lamented that "The dating of the small Irish illuminated Gospel books rests more on traditional consensus than on rigorous argument";[48] a pessimistic assessment that, in many cases, remains fairly accurate. Only the Book of Armagh can be securely dated—a reference in its colophon to the patron as Torbach, coarb of Patrick (literally "heir of Patrick"; in effect, abbot of Patrick's major foundation, Armagh) shows that it was made in 807-8, the sole year of Torbach's abbacy.[49] Nevertheless, the dates of the manuscripts included in this study range approximately between the late-seventh/early-eighth century in the case of the Cuthbert Gospel and the second-half of the ninth to the tenth century in the case of the Book of Deer. This period of at least two centuries between the production of the first and last surviving pocket gospels means that if they are understood as a group, it must be taken into account that this group was notably long-lived.

This span of dates defies the usual periodisation into which early medieval manuscripts have often been placed. Scholars of the early Middle Ages tend to regard *c*.800 as a significant date of change and disruption: the end of the period of Insular culture, the time of the establishment of Carolingian culture on the Continent and the beginning of the Viking period in Britain and Ireland (signalled by the raid of Lindisfarne in 793). Although art-historians often regard the Insular period as continuing as late as the twelfth century in Ireland,[50] many scholarly histories and catalogues assume the year 800 as a cut-off date.[51] In palaeographic studies this is deemed the time around which Insular minuscule script began

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and Isabel Henderson, *The Art of the Picts: Sculpture and Metalwork in Early Medieval Scotland* (New York, 2004), 15. For a defence of the term Insular in palaeography, see David Dumville, *A Palaeographer's Review*, 57-59.

[48] Lawrence Nees, "The Colophon Drawing in the Book of Mulling: A Supposed Irish Monastery Plan and the Tradition of Terminal Illustration in Early Medieval Manuscripts", *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies* 5 (1983), 67-91, at 91.

[49] See Appendix.

[50] E.g. Jonathan J. Alexander, *Insular Manuscripts, 6th to the 9th Century*, A Survey of Manuscripts Illuminated in the British Isles, 1 (London, 1978), 7.

[51] E.g. *CLA*; McGurk, *Latin Gospel Books*; Françoise Henry, *Irish Art in the Early Christian Period (to 800 A.D.)* (London: Methuen, 1940) and *Irish Art During the Viking Invasions (800-1020 A.D.)* (London: Methuen, 1967).

to take on characteristics of Late Celtic minuscule in Ireland, and abandoned in favour of a variety of Anglo-Saxon minuscules in England.[52] Yet the pocket gospels span this divide. Although they originate in the early Insular period, several of the manuscripts notably post-date it, extending well into the ninth and perhaps even the tenth centuries.

Yet the pocket gospels are not simply static and conservative. Although the later examples clearly evoke earlier traditions in their design, they also innovate and engage with contemporary developments in manuscript culture. It is thus overly simplistic to dismiss them as purely retrospective or conservative in character. Rather it should be acknowledged that the confined phases in which scholars tend to study early medieval manuscripts are of limited use in discussions of the pocket gospels, which extend over a period that is rarely addressed in a single scholarly work, or considered to be a "period" at all. In a span of centuries generally characterised by disruption, they demonstrate both a continuity of traditions and a responsiveness to contemporary developments that are at odds with the scholarly tendency to separate them into different constructed historical periods.

Transmission

The issue of the pocket gospels' long chronological span raises the questions of why a certain type of manuscript might have continued to be produced over the course of such a long period, how the idea was transmitted and whether its meaning changed over this time. Scholars have not previously suggested exactly what the relationship between the pocket gospels might have been or how any connection between them might have worked in practice. Today scholars are ever more critical of the vague concept of influence—treated as a passive process causing an inevitable osmotic transfer of ideas across time and space—that was often assumed in the past to explain the relationships between manuscripts.[53] Rather, influence is now regarded as a deliberate choice made by makers to reproduce, adapt and reject different features according to their needs and agendas. Any relationship between the pocket gospels has to be explained according to this principle.

In this regard, it is worth establishing from the beginning that in a few cases there appears to be a direct relationship between the surviving pocket gospels, though in most

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[52] David Dumville, "Palaeography of the "Book of Deer": the Original Manuscript and the Liturgical Addition", in *Celtic Essays 2001-2007* 1 (Aberdeen: Centre for Celtic Studies, University of Aberdeen, 2007), 183-212, at 186-88; Elizabeth Duncan, *"The Southampton Psalter": a Palaeographical and Codicological Exploration*, Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic Manuscript Studies 4 (Cambridge: Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic, 2004), 12-14.

[53] See Alixe Bovey and John Lowden, eds, *Under the Influence: The Concept of Influence and the Study of Illuminated Manuscripts* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007).

cases there does not. In particular, it seems likely that the makers of the MacDurnan Gospels knew and were influenced by the Book of Armagh. Various scholars have noted the strong palaeographic, decorative and textual similarities between the two, suggesting the likelihood that both were made at Armagh within at most a few decades of one another.[54] Yet perhaps the most decisive feature linking the manuscripts are the decorated initials of their *incipit* pages which are remarkably similar to one another.[55] On the Matthew *incipits* in particular, the L and I share the same spatial arrangement with an animal-head terminal on the lower leg of the L biting the stem of the I (Figs 1-2); likewise, on the Mark *incipits*, the INI monograms takes the same form, including the unusual double cross-bar on the N, with the letters TIUM written vertically alongside (Figs 3-4). The interlace at the terminals of the letters on the Mark incipits form the exact same knots except in inverse (that is, where a line crosses over the top of another line in the Book of Armagh, the equivalent line in the MacDurnan Gospels crosses underneath), suggesting that one was copied from the other, with the inversion of the interlace perhaps resulting from the technique of back-lit tracing onto the reverse of the page.[56]

A close and perhaps even direct relationship might also be surmised between the Book of Mulling and Add. 40618. The three surviving evangelist portraits in the Book of Mulling (Figs 6-7) display striking parallels with the Luke portrait in Add. 40618 (Fig. 5), the sole surviving miniature in the manuscript (fol. 21v). These all have the same design of frame: narrow at the upper and lower edges with broad vertical panels of decoration on either side and the evangelist's halo protruding over the top. The Add. 40618 Luke portrait also has his hands arranged the same way as John in the Book of Mulling (fol. 81v), and wears approximately the same costume except for the arrangement of a few individual drapery folds. The feet of Add. 40618 Luke are disposed in the same stance as the portrait on fol. 35v in the Book of Mulling except in reverse, so that in Add. 40618 the left foot is raised, in Mulling the right. Unfortunately, the fragmentary state of Add. 40618 limits the extent of this analysis, but it is evident that the portraits in these manuscripts have much in common, suggesting they were either based on a shared model, or one was based on the other.

The remaining pocket gospels are not similar enough to indicate that they were copied from one another, meaning that any relationship between them must be explained according to a different model. Why the above-mentioned manuscripts were copied from one

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[54] E.g. MacNamara, "The Echternach and Mac Durnan gospels", 217-22.; Ludwig Bieler, "Insular Palaeography: Present State and Problems", Scriptorium 3 (1949), 267-89, at 267; Brown, "Ferdomnach"; for more details see Appendix.

[55] Henry, *Irish Art During the Viking Invasions*, 104; Farr, "Irish Pocket Gospels", 89.

[56] I would like to thank Michael Brennan for discussing the techniques of copying interlace with me.

another and how and why the features of the other manuscripts were transmitted remain to be explored.

Cultural Context

As well as reassessing the definition of the pocket gospels, this study aims to better establish their cultural context, revealing the beliefs and motivations of the people that created them. Manuscripts are more than mere collections of formal features: they are creative accomplishments and the legacy of a rich cultural world. Such an approach is essential to the study of all historical artefacts, and particularly to gospel books. As the four books of the Bible that recount the life of Christ, the Gospels, attributed to the evangelists Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, are the most fundamental texts of Christianity. In the early Middle Ages, gospel books were vital to the performance of church services and liturgy, just as they were essential reading for pious individuals. Yet in most cases we know next to nothing about the people and places behind the objects. Therefore, the task of resituating the pocket gospels in their historical contexts has to start with analysis of the manuscripts: they themselves are the most eloquent testament to the cultural worlds from which they came.

In 1962 David Wright, reviewing McGurk's *Latin Gospel Books from A.D. 400 to A.D. 800*, commented that:

> If shown an early Gospel book today too many a Biblical specialist will look only at crucial passages in the text, a palaeographer may have eyes only for abbreviations or ligatures, or possibly only for pin pricks, and an art historian may turn the pages hastily in search of Evangelist portraits and decorated incipits. We need to remember that a scriptorium did not work merely to provide fodder for our various specialties, and that such an expensive and pious undertaking as the writing of a Gospel book was governed by numerous conventions which deserve our comprehensive study.[57]

Since then, many scholars have followed Wright's approach with the emergence of the new field of "manuscript studies".[58] This study aims to join them, considering the material structure, scripts, layout and images that together form each pocket gospel.

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[57] David Wright, review of *Latin Gospel Books from A.D. 400 to A.D. 800* by Patrick McGurk, *Speculum* 37, 4 (Oct., 1962), 637-43, at 637.

[58] To give but a few examples from the field of Insular manuscript studies: Nancy Netzer, *Cultural Interplay in the Eighth Century: the Trier Gospels and the Making of a Scriptorium at Echternach* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Michelle P. Brown, *The Book of*

Accordingly, all aspects of the manuscripts will be analysed in order to give the fullest understanding of the objects as a whole. This is not a traditional area of study in the discipline of art history. As Wright observed, art historical studies conventionally privilege images over objects. The way in which the art of manuscripts has traditionally been studied, through isolated reproductions of illuminated pages, especially serves to dematerialise these images and divorce art historical enquiry from consideration of the manuscript medium and context. However, no artwork can be separated from its material, and perhaps even less than most, a manuscript.

This study brings a particularly art-historical approach to the analysis of the manuscript-as-object. The format, texts, scripts, physical structure and miniatures of the pocket gospels are treated as being consciously designed to construct meaning and affect a reader's experience of the manuscript. As will be shown, this is consistent with the way in which early medieval people thought about the gospels. For them, reading and meditating on the Scriptures, in which all spiritual and doctrinal truth was held to be laid down, was an experience that might lead to divine wisdom and ultimately salvation.[59] For example, according to Gregory the Great (d. 604):

> What is meant by the name of heaven if not holy Scripture? How else are we illuminated by the sun of wisdom and the moon of knowledge and the stars of the examples and virtues of the ancient fathers?[60]

Cerne, Prayer, Patronage and Power in Ninth-Century England (London and Toronto: British Library and University of Toronto Press, 1996) and *The Lindisfarne Gospels: Society, Spirituality and the Scribe* (London: British Library, 2003); Benjamin C. Withers, *The Illustrated Old English Hexateuch, Cotton Claudius B.iv: The Frontier of Seeing and Reading in Anglo-Saxon England* (London and Toronto: British Library and University of Toronto Press, 2007).

[59] E.g. Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1990; 2nd edn., 2008), 162; Jean Leclercq, *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God: A Study of Monastic Culture*, trans. by Catharine Misrahi (New York: Fordham University Press, 1982), 32.

[60] *Homiliae in Hiezechihelem prophetam* I. 9. 30; trans. Armando Petrucci, "The Christian Conception of the Book in the Sixth and Seventh Centuries", ed. and trans. Charles M. Radding (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995), 19-42, at 37; "Quid enim caeli nomine nisi sacra Scriptura signatur? De qua nobis et sol sapientiae et luna scientiae, et ex antiquis patribus stellae exemplorum atque uirtutum lucent", *Homiliae in Hiezechiehelem Prophetam*, ed. Marcus Adriaen, CCSL 142 (Turholt: Brepols, 1971), 139.

Yet it is also clear that the pious reader was intensely aware of the physical and visual dimensions of the manuscript through which the divine text was transmitted to them. Scholars have shown how the sacred meaning of the text was made manifest in its visual presentation.[61] Contemporary texts show that medieval commentators saw significance in the materiality of manuscripts: for example, the famous Exeter Book Riddle 26 celebrates the wondrous and gruesome transformation from calf into treasure-bound manuscript, juxtaposing the violent death with the radiant resurrection;[62] and poetic inscriptions by Charlemagne's court scribes Godescalc (781-783) and Dagulf (794-795), describe the spiritual significance of the gold, silver and costly pigments used to ornament the manuscripts, because, in the words of Godescalc:

> The doctrine of God, written in precious metals, leads those following the
> light of the gospels with a pure heart into the shining halls of the kingdom
> flowing with light, and sets those who climb above the high stars of heaven's
> vault in the bridal chamber of the king of heaven forever.[63]

The manuscripts that are the subject of this study may not have been adorned in gold, but it will be shown that this intensely materialistic and spiritually informed approach to the gospel book as object underlies their construction at a fundamental level.

Chapter Outline

In what follows, the pocket gospels will thus be reassessed in order to question and clarify the nature of the group and to interpret them historically, culturally and visually. It is not possible to provide a comprehensive analysis of every feature of every manuscript within this study, although the reader may consult the catalogue of the pocket-gospel manuscripts in the Appendix for more details. Rather, each chapter will examine a feature that is particularly distinctive of the group, situating it in its historical context and showing that both practical and ideological motives can be understood to inform it.

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[61] E.g. Jeffrey F. Hamburger, *Script as Image* (Paris, Leuven and Walpole, MA: Peeters, 2014); Laura Kendrick, *Animating the Letter: The Figurative Embodiment of Writing from Late Antiquity to the Renaissance* (Columbus, Ohio: Ohio State University Press, 1999).

[62] *The Exeter Book*, ed. George Philip Krapp and Elliott Van Kirk Dobbie (New York: Columbia University Press, 1936), 93–4.

[63] "Sic doctrina dei pretiosis scripta metallis/ Lucida lucuflui perducit ad atria regni/ Lumen euangelii sectantes corde benigno,/ Scandentesque poli super ardua sidera celsi/ Collocat in thalmo caelorum regis in aevum", *MGH Poetae* 1.94; trans. Ganz, "The Preconditions for Caroline Minuscule", *Viator* 18 (1987), 23-44, 30.

The first chapter concerns the significance of small size, considering how this feature might be designed to make the manuscripts suitable for use as personal books for study, travel and gift-exchange. This is supported by references in contemporary texts which reveal a variety of personal uses for small manuscripts in the early Middle Ages; yet they also allude to the spiritual and eschatological significance of a small manuscript, suggesting that, at least partly, the small format itself might have been a bearer of meaning.

Chapter two turns to the binding and quire structure of the pocket gospels, assessing the evidence for scholarly claims that the manuscripts might originally have been intended for unbound use or use as booklets. While various complex processes will be shown to lie behind the physical structure of these manuscripts, it will be demonstrated that a spiritual understanding of the nature of the gospels is the likely impetus for the choices made in their design.

The third chapter considers the script of the pocket gospels, showing that while the use of minuscule is, on one level, calculated to keep the manuscripts small and to help tailor the space of the texts to the quire structure; for early medieval readers/viewers, it could also have meaning in itself. In particular, it might be regarded as a personal, intimate script, which might correspond to the use of the pocket gospels as personal manuscripts and hint at the deliberate construction of a relationship between scribe and reader.

The fourth chapter considers the layout of the text and the inclusion of diagrams in some of the pocket gospels, arguing that these refer to the reader's passage through the text and allude to eschatological themes relating to the Gospel's power to bring salvation to the faithful.

Chapter five considers the presentation of the evangelist portraits in the pocket gospels, suggesting that on the one hand, they might be a particularly intimate form intended for devotional use, yet on the other, certain features of the decoration of the manuscripts seem to incorporate messages that are intended to be more public in focus, suggesting that the characterisation of the pocket gospels as personal manuscripts is not as straightforward as it first appears.

In the conclusion, the larger problem of whether it is indeed justified to consider the pocket gospels as a group will be raised again and, if so, how is this group best defined. In the process, it is hoped that this study will not only aid in the understanding of these particular manuscripts and their relationship, but will provide new insight into the people and places behind them.

CHAPTER ONE
Size: "A Little Hand-Book"

On seeing a pocket gospel book, the first feature that strikes the viewer is its size. Their small format is the principal defining feature of the pocket gospels, alluded to in the name denoting the group. Table 1 shows the sizes of pocket gospels:[1]

Table 1: Dimensions of the Pocket Gospel Books

Manuscript	Dimensions of Leaves	Dimensions of Written Space
Cadmug Gospels	126 x 100	97-104 x 72-84
Add. 40618	129 x 105	100 x 75
Cuthbert Gospel	138 x 92	95 x 65
Stowe St John	145 x 112	120 x 90
Mulling fragment	155 x 120	120-130 x 95-105
Book of Deer	157 x 108	108 x 71
MacDurnan Gospels	158 x 111	89 x 46
Book of Mulling	165 x 120	130 x 90
Bern 671	161 x 116	117 x 82
Book of Dimma	175 x 142	145 x 115
Book of Armagh	195 x 145	140-160 x 105-120

Although their sizes vary, it is clear that when compared with other gospel books, and even with other manuscripts of any text, the pocket gospels stand out as remarkably small. This can be better appreciated when considered alongside the data from Elias Lowe's monumental *Codices Latini Antiquiores* (*CLA*), the comprehensive catalogue of Latin manuscripts produced before *c*.800. Of the 1,811 manuscripts recorded by Lowe, only 152 had a leaf height of under 200 mm, placing the pocket gospels among the smallest 10% of surviving early manuscripts of any kind (Graph 1). The figures are more striking when the sizes of the pocket gospels are plotted against the heights of the other Insular gospel books in *CLA*, where they form a distinct cluster at the smallest extreme (Graph 2). Among the surviving corpus of Insular gospel manuscripts, the average size is around 300 x 230 mm, although since survival favours the deluxe and hence generally larger manuscripts, the

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[1] Arranged in ascending order by leaf height.

average size of those that once existed may have been slightly lower. Nevertheless, the comparatively small size of the pocket gospels is striking.

Equally small uncial gospel books survive from the late antique tradition, and these may even have been an inspiration for the small-sized Insular gospel books.[2] Surviving examples include the fourth/fifth-century Codex Bobiensis (180-190 x 155-160 mm) possibly from Africa,[3] late-sixth-/early-seventh-century Harley Gospels from Italy (177 x 120 mm),[4] and the fifth-/sixth-century Chartres Gospel of St John (71 x 51 mm), probably also from Italy, which is even smaller than the smallest pocket gospel.[5] However, other than being small-sized gospel books, these manuscripts differ from the pocket gospels in all other respects: their physical construction, script and decoration are notably different.[6] Futhermore, they originate from a different time, place and scribal culture. These disparaties mean that while they may have partly inspired the Insular pocket gospels and certainly provide a useful point of comparison, they are not part of the same phenomenon and therefore should not be included in the pocket-gospel group itself. No other Latin gospel books of equal or smaller size than the pocket gospels survive from the period in which they were created: they are not only the eleven smallest Insular gospel manuscripts that have come down to us, but also—aside from the late antique manuscripts noted above—the eleven smallest gospel manuscripts included in *CLA*.

The following discussion addresses what might have informed the unusual choice to produce these gospel books in such a diminutive size, particularly considering what textual sources and surviving manuscripts can reveal about the ways in which small-sized manuscripts were used in the early Christian and early medieval periods. Much of this focuses on the clear link between small size and personal use of manuscripts, while drawing attention to the complexity of what personal use might entail. Indeed, many sources suggest that beyond their practical value, small manuscripts were often invested with considerable symbolic weight, raising the question of whether the diminutive dimensions of the pocket gospels may sometimes have represented an ideological choice.

Form and Function: Scholarly Interpretations

Although study of the pocket gospels has focussed much more on their codicological features than their historical significance, when scholars have considered their function, the small size of the manuscripts has led to the universal agreement that they were made as private

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[2] For the late antique tradition of gospel books of *c.*400-*c.*650, see McGurk, *Latin Gospel Books*, 7-10.

[3] Turin, Biblioteca Nazionale, G. VII. 15.

[4] BL Harley MS 1775.

[5] BNF MS Lat. 10439.

[6] See Chapter 3.

books for personal use. This explanation is understandable: the most natural format for a personal book is small-sized, allowing it to fit comfortably into a person's hands to be carried around and held to read; it potentially requires a lesser input of resources than a larger manuscript and therefore might be more affordable for an individual; moreover, a small format encourages intimate use, requiring a person to hold the object close to their eyes to read. Yet scholars have rarely engaged with the nuances of the meaning of a "personal book" and how one might be identified, providing only a small amount of evidence to suggest precisely how the pocket gospels may have been used.

The idea that the pocket gospels were designed as personal books originated with Patrick McGurk, who suggested that, unlike the majority of the early gospel books he surveyed, these were not made to serve a public and liturgical function. Instead he argued that the pocket gospels exemplify the type of gospel books sometimes featuring in Irish saints' lives: used for individual study, carried on "wanderings", exchanged as personal gifts and treasured as relics of a holy person who wrote or once owned them.[7] To illustrate how the pocket gospels might have been used, he noted the example of the Gospel of John belonging to Boisil of Melrose (d.661), which Bede describes Boisil studying with his pupil, Cuthbert.[8] McGurk's other examples are all taken from the *Lives* of sixth-century Irish saints found in the Book of Lismore, a fifteenth-century manuscript understood to preserve older texts.[9] He noted the *Life of Finian of Clonard* (d.549), in which, of the scholars who flock to learn from the saint's wisdom:

> None of the 3000 went from him without a *bachall* or without a gospel or
> without some well-known sign so that round these they built their churches
> and their cathedrals afterwards.[10]

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[7] McGurk, "The Irish Pocket Gospel", 249-50, 269.

[8] Bede, *Vita sancti Cuthberti*, VIII, ed. and trans. Bertram Colgrave, *Two Lives of Saint Cuthbert: A Life by an Anonymous Monk of Lindisfarne and Bede's Prose Life* (Cambridge, 1969), 180-85.

[9] MS in private hands: Derbyshire, Chatsworth House. Kenney thought that the material had been copied from a manuscript compiled at Clonmacnoise no later than the ninth century, James F. Kenney, *The Sources for the Early History of Ireland: Ecclesiasticsl* (Dublin: Four Courts, pt. 1997), 379.

[10] *Life of Findian of Clonard* 2642-45, trans. McGurk, "The Irish Pocket Gospel Book", 250. "Ocus atfiadhat ind eolaig 7 na scribenna conna dechaid nech dona tri mhilesin uadhasom cen bhachail no soiscél no comartha suaichnidh eiccin, cunadh impaibhisin rogabsat a reclesa 7 a cathracha iardain", ed. Whitley Stokes, *Lives of Saints from the Book of Lismore* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1890), 79.

Likewise, McGurk drew attention to the *Life of Senán*, in which the saint goes to Tours, finds St Martin writing a gospel, and asks Martin whether the hands that he sees writing would offer the Eucharist for him on the day of his death; Martin agrees and when Senán leaves, Martin gives him the gospel he was writing as a sign (*comartha*) of their union. The text adds that the manuscript is today called Senán's Gospel (*soiscél Senáin*).[11] McGurk also noted that the Lismore *Life of St Columba* similarly describes the saint travelling to Tours, where he "brought away the gospel that had lain on Martin's breast a hundred years in the earth, and he leaves it in Derry".[12]

McGurk regarded these hagiographical episodes as providing a context for the personal use of a gospel book which he associated with the pocket gospels, explaining that:

> The note struck by these spontaneous wanderings and personal gifts, however unlikely and dubious they may sound, suggests the type of Gospel Book much less formal and magnificent than exercises in the grand manner like the Book of Kells or the Lichfield Gospels. It is a note more appropriate to a characteristic product of the Irish church, that intimate, almost private form, the pocket Gospel Book.[13]

Yet whether these episodes do indeed provide reliable historical evidence for the intimate and private use of a gospel book is questionable. Notably, the Lismore texts all emphasise that the gospel book is important principally as an institutional symbol, with the *Lives* of Finian and Senán both emphasising that it is a sign (*comartha*)—the former even stating its equivalence to the staff (*bachall*) as a symbol of the authority of Finian's disciples' foundations.[14] The *Lives* of Senán and Columba both trace their gospel books back to Martin of Tours, a saint particularly venerated in Ireland as an exemplar of the monastic life, and both seem to infer audience awareness of a particular gospel book still extant at the time of the texts' composition. Thus these tales suggest the work of institutions retrospectively seeking to weave the hagiographies of their saints together with the histories of their manuscripts in order to invest the latter with greater sanctity and authority, and so promote their own reputations. Such histories need not include any historical truth and therefore do not provide a basis for interpreting the pocket gospels as books actually made for personal use.

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[11] *Life of St Senán* 2049-55, Stokes, *Lives of Saints*, 62 and 208-09.

[12] *Life of Colomb Cille*, 904-05; "Luidh-sium fechtus iarsin a Daire cu Toirinis Martain, co tuc in soiscél bei for Martain cét bliadne i talmain, conus-facaib i nDairi", Stokes, *Lives*, 27 and 175.

[13] McGurk, "The Irish Pocket Gospel Book", 250.

[14] See Chapter 5.

Yet these episodes do illustrate the desirability for a monastic centre to represent a gospel book as personally connected to a saint in order to affirm its role as an institutional and cult symbol. The possibility that the pocket gospels might draw upon the symbolic value of personal manuscripts was not recognised by McGurk, and has not been addressed in the subsequent scholarship. Other scholars followed McGurk in interpreting the pocket gospels as intimate, personal manuscripts, often focussing on the advantages of small-sized manuscripts for portability, amuletic use, gift exchange and in the liturgical rituals associated with the dead and dying.

The aim of this chapter is to reinvestigate the significance of the small size of the pocket gospels to uncover their intended use and meanings. It will consider whether these various characterisations of a personal book provide likely contexts for the creation of the pocket gospels, delving further than scholars have previously attempted into the evidence of textual sources and the manuscripts themselves. This discussion demonstrates how the pocket gospels might have been designed as personal manuscripts but also raises the question of whether this is the only or the best explanation for their distinctive proportions. It is possible that some might have been designed not simply to function effectively as personal books but also (or perhaps rather) to signify a function and identity as personal books while being intended for a more public audience. Thus, perhaps some of the manuscripts can be understood to take part in the same symbolic exercise as the hagiographies identified by McGurk.

Personal Books

In his rule, Benedict forbade all personal property, including books, asserting that:

> This vice especially ought to be utterly rooted out of the monastery. Let no one presume to give or receive anything without the abbot's leave, or to have anything as his own, anything whatever, whether book or tablets or pen or whatever it may be; for monks should not have even their bodies and wills at their own disposal.[15]

In this, Benedict fashioned the monastic community after the apostolic ideal of shared

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[15] *Regula Benedicti* 33; "Praecipue hoc vitium radicitus amputandum est de monasterio. Ne Quis praesumat aliquid dare aut accipere sine jussione abbatis, neque aliquid habere proprium, nullam omnino rem, neque codicem, neque tabulas, neque graphium, sed nihil omnino: quippe quibus nec corpora sua nec voluntates licet habere in propria voluntate"; ed. and trans. Justin McCann, *The Rule of St Benedict* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1972), 84-85.

property and the rejection of private ownership.[16] Yet in practice, medieval authors and communities found ways to reinterpret such precepts to encompass more pragmatic approaches to property.[17] Likewise, despite Benedict's ruling it seems that personal books could play an important part in early medieval monastic life, perhaps providing a convincing context for understanding the creation and early use of the pocket gospels.

That private hand-held books were used and prized in the late antique West is suggested by the adoption of the Greek word *enchiridion* as a loanword into Latin, referring to a little book that fits into the hand.[18] Augustine (d.430) wrote his work *Enchiridion* because, he explained, its recipient asked: "that I will make a book for you—an *enchiridion*, as they say—that you may have and not move from your hands".[19] Such use is also attested in Insular culture. According to Asser (d.908/09), King Alfred (849-899) compiled from adolescence a little book (*libellus*) of assorted texts, which he kept constantly on his person throughout his life and called his *enchiridion*.[20] According to Asser, Alfred determined:

> To study these flowers collected here and there from various masters and to assemble them within the body of one little book (even though they were all mixed up) as the occasion demanded. He expanded it so much that it nearly

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[16] E.g. Acts 4:32-34.

[17] E.g. David Ganz, "The Ideology of Sharing: Apostolic Community and Ecclesiastical Property in the Early Middle Ages", in *Property and Power in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Wendy Davies and Paul Fouracre (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 17-31.

[18] Greek ἐγχειρίδιον: ἐν (in) + χείρ (hand) + ιδιον (diminutive suffix); "enchiridion, n.", OED Online, Oxford University Press, retrieved October 28, 2014, from:
http://www.oed.com.ezproxy.york.ac.uk/view/Entry/61690?redirectedFrom=Enchiridion.

[19] *Enchiridion* 1. 4; "Vis enim tibi, ut scribis, librum a me fieri quem enchiridion, ut dicunt, habeas et de tuis manibus non recedat", ed. E. Evans, CCSL 46 (Turhout: Brepols, 1969), 49-114, at 49. This was an extremely common work in the early Middle Ages; for example, it is one of the thirty-four manuscripts included in the *c.*800 inventory of Würzburg library (BodL. Laud. Misc. 126, fol. 260r); McKitterick and Lapidge consider this list to reflect the interests of the Anglo-Saxon mission that founded the See of Würzburg in 742, and McKitterick notes that it is one of the books in the list that appears to have been so well known that only a short title, "enceridion", and no author, was given; Rosamond McKitterick, *The Carolingians and the Written Word* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 171; Michael Lapidge, *The Anglo-Saxon Library* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 148-49.

[20] Asser, *Life of King Alfred*, 24 and 88-89; ed. Stephenson, *Asser's Life of King Alfred*, 21, 73-79; trans. Simon Keynes and Michael Lapidge, *Alfred the Great: Asser's* Life of King Alfred *and Other Contemporary Sources* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1983), 75, 99-100, 268 (n. 208).

approached the size of a psalter. He wished it to be called his *enchiridion* (that is to say, "hand-book"), because he conscientiously kept it to hand by day and night. As he then used to say, he derived no small comfort from it.[21]

Asser also emphasised that Alfred collected in his book various services, psalms and prayers that he had learnt by heart, and that "he took it around with him everywhere for the sake of prayer".[22] Alfred's *enchiridion* was clearly not a gospel book, but it raises the possibility that the pocket gospels were used in a similar manner, carried around as a constant guide for study, prayer, memorisation and as a comfort to the soul.

Consideration of the few surviving early medieval manuscripts with dimensions as small as the pocket gospels reinforces the connection between small size and personal use by the faithful reader in a similar manner to Alfred's *enchiridion*. The pocket gospels have much in common with the types of small-sized manuscript that seem to have been designed to be read comfortably in the hands. These are typically around the same size or a little larger than the larger pocket gospels, approximately corresponding in size to a modern Penguin paperback. In these cases, the small size of the manuscript is clearly designed to correspond to the proportions of the human hand. The convenient size of these manuscripts contrasts with that of large, heavy manuscripts that must be laid on a table or lectern to read, ideal for a congregation to see from a distance or for a group to gather around to study and discuss, but unwieldy and scarcely portable for an individual.[23]

Significantly, the types of text that were produced in manuscripts of these hand-held dimensions are generally consistent with private reading material. Outside the gospel-book corpus, manuscripts with dimensions similar to or smaller than the largest pocket gospel comprise an assortment of texts, including patristic commentaries, tracts and hagiographies; however, a few notable groups may be identified. Psalters stand out as one of these: while

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[21] Asser, *Life of King Alfred*, 89; Keynes and Lapidge, *Alfred the Great*, 100; "Quos flosculos undecumque collectos a quibuslibet magistris discere et in corpore unus libelli, mixtim quamvis, sicut tunc suppetebat, redigere, usque adeo protelavit quousque propemodum ad magnitudinem unius psalterii perveniret. Quem enchiridion suum, id est manualem librum, nominari voluit, eo quod ad manum illum. die noctuque solertissime habebat; in quo non mediocre, sicut tunc aiebat, habebat solatium", ed. Stevenson, *Asser's Life*, 75.

[22] Asser, *Life of King Alfred*, 24; Keynes and Lapidge, *Alfred the Great*, 75; "secum inseparabiliter, orationis gratia", ed. Stevenson, *Asser's Life*, 21.

[23] For consideration of large format in Insular manuscripts, see Mary Garrison, "An Insular Copy of Pliny's *Naturalis Historia* (Leiden VLF 4 fols 4-33)", in *Writing in Context: Insular Manuscript Culture 500-1200*, ed. Erik Kwakkel (Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2013), 67-125.

most surviving psalters are medium sized,[24] a selection of early medieval psalters are pocket-gospel sized or only slightly larger. Of the few surviving Irish psalters, the oldest, the Cathach of Columba,[25] is only slightly larger than the largest pocket gospel (200 x 130 mm), while two later examples are properly pocket-gospel sized: the late-ninth/early-tenth-century Cotton Psalter (originally at least 180 x 130 mm according to Henry, although this is difficult to determine as the manuscript was badly shrunk in the Cotton fire),[26] and the Paris psalter-fragment dated by Elizabeth Duncan to the late-tenth century (150 x 105 mm).[27] Several Carolingian psalters are also comparably small, for example the Dagulf Psalter of *c.*783-95 (192 x 120 mm),[28] Montpellier Psalter of *c.*788 (213 x 125 mm)[29] and the early-ninth-century Galba Psalter (140 × 95 mm),[30] which was present in England from at least the early-tenth century. Later Anglo-Saxon psalters could also be markedly small, for example Rouen, Bibliothèque Municipale MS A. 44 from St Augustine's, Canterbury (176 x 113 mm), and BodL. MS Laud. Lat. 81 (83 x 60 mm), both dating from the late-eleventh century. The Ricemarch Psalter from Wales, *c.*1080, is likewise of a diminutive size (160 x 105 mm).[31] The recurrent selection of the Psalter to be copied in small dimensions undoubtedly corresponds to its widespread use in private devotion and memorisation.[32]

Another group of manuscripts worth mentioning are the Southumbrian prayer books of the late-eighth to early-ninth centuries. None are as small as the pocket gospels but they nevertheless display a clear relation between relatively small format and use in private

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[24] E.g. some Insular examples: Faddan More Psalter (National Museum of Ireland, 06E0786:13), *c.*800, 300 x 260 mm; Vespasian Psalter (BL Cotton MS Vespasian A. I.), mid-eighth century, 240 x 190 mm; Southampton Psalter (Cambridge, St John's College, MS C. 9.), tenth century, *c.*264 x *c.*180; Rouen Psalter (Rouen, Bibl. Municipale, MS 24 [A. 41]) tenth century, 240 x 160 mm.

[25] Dublin, RIA, 12 R 33.

[26] BL Cotton MS Vitellius F XI. Henry, "Remarks on the Decoration of Three Irish Psalters", *PRIA* 61, c, 2 (1960), 23-40, at 28

[27] BNF MS Français 2452, fols 75-84. Elizabeth Duncan, "Contextualising "The Rouen Psalter": Palaeography, Codicology, and Form", *The Journal of Celtic Studies* 5 (2005), 17-60, at 37-40.

[28] Vienna, Österreichisches Nationalbibliothek MS 1861.

[29] Montpellier, Bibliothèque de l'Université Montpellier, MS 409.

[30] BL Cotton MS Galba MS A. xviii.

[31] TCD MS 50.

[32] See for example, Robert Deshman, "The Galba Psalter: Pictures, Texts and Context in an Early Medieval Prayerbook", *Anglo-Saxon England* 26 (December 1997), 109-38. Martin McNamara and Maurice Sheehy, "Psalter Text and Psalter Study in the Early Irish Church (A.D. 600-1200)", *PRIA* C 73 (1973), 201-98. Diarmuid O Laoghaire, "The Celtic Monk at Prayer", in *Celtic Monastacism, Monastic Studies* 14, ed. L. Freeman (1983), 123-43.

reading and devotion. They comprise: the Harley Prayer Book (235 x 160 mm),[33] Royal Prayer Book (230 x 170 mm),[34] Book of Nunnaminster (215 x 160 mm)[35] and Book of Cerne (230 x 180 mm).[36] The modest size of these manuscripts is clearly a product of their function as personal books; as Michelle Brown has noted, they are of "a convenient, manageable size, easily read without a lectern, and evoke a comfortable intimacy in handling".[37]

Beyond size, the pocket gospels also share other features with these Anglo-Saxon prayer books that further support the possibility that they too might have been used for personal reading and prayer. As well as devotional prayers, the Royal Prayer Book, Book of Nunnaminster and Book of Cerne each contain extracts from the gospels: the Passion and Resurrection narratives in Nunnaminster and Cerne, and a wider selection of passages in the Royal Prayer Book, including Christ's healing miracles, the Matthean genealogy of Christ, Peter's profession of faith (Matthew 16:13-19), and insights into the Incarnation and divine nature of Christ from the gospels of Luke and John.[38] This not only shows that the Gospels were favoured texts for private prayer and meditation, but also serves as a parallel for those pocket gospels with texts that consist wholly or partially of gospel extracts.[39]

Furthermore, as in the prayer books, the selection of textual extracts in the pocket gospels is thematic: for example, Bernard Meehan has suggested that the passages in the Stowe St John converge on themes of eternal life, death and resurrection;[40] Heather Pulliam noted that the passages highlighted by marginalia in the text of John in the Book of Deer refer to themes of death, resurrection and testimony.[41] Some of the extracts selected in the pocket gospels also seem to comprise passages that focus on roughly similar themes to those in the prayer books; for example Dominic Marner has noted that the extracts from the gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke in the Book of Deer seem to emphasise, like those in the

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[33] BL, Harley MS 7653.

[34] BL Royal MS 2 A XX.

[35] BL Harley MS 2965.

[36] Cambridge, University Library, MS Ll.I.10.

[37] Brown, *Book of Cerne*, 42.

[38] Barbara Raw, "Anglo-Saxon Prayerbooks", in *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain* 1 c.400-1100, ed. Richard Gameson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 460-67, at 462; Brown, *Book of Cerne*, 151-55.

[39] Pocket gospels comprising extracts from the text: Stowe St John; Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke in the Book of Deer; gospels of Matthew and Mark in the Cadmug Gospels.

[40] Meehan, "Irish Pocket Gospel Books", 100-01.

[41] Heather Pulliam, "Beasts of the Desert: Marginalia in the Book of Deer", *Medieval Archaeology* 57 (2013), 83-110.

Royal Prayer Book, the role of Christ as healer.[42] In addition, a number of the prayers included in the Anglo-Saxon prayer books are Irish *loricae* (protective prayers), a series of abbreviated phrases from which are also included in the Book of Mulling (fol. 94v).[43] On the basis of these *loricae*, scholars have speculated that the Anglo-Saxon prayer books may have been compiled from Irish exemplars.[44] Therefore the small size and overlapping content of these manuscript genres supports the possibility that some of the pocket gospels might have been used like the Anglo-Saxon prayer books for private study and devotion, and it is even possible to posit a close taxonomical link between the groups.

Portable Books

Personal use of a manuscript could also be closely tied to an increased need for portability. Small-sized manuscripts such as the pocket gospels are well-suited to personal use not only because they can be held comfortably in the hands for reading, but also because they are convenient to take with their owner wherever they went, whether carried in the hands or in some form of container. Thus a number of scholars have suggested that the pocket gospels were designed to be transported by individuals, especially in satchels.[45] For example, Richard Gameson described portability as the "obvious motive" for small size, and Julian Brown suggested that the pocket gospels may "have been meant for use at Masses said by heart, and are small enough to have been worn round the neck by travelling priests".[46] Likewise, Gilbert Márkus asserted that "nobody would be likely to produce such books, with their tiny and cramped script, unless portability was a prime consideration. These books were made for walking".[47]

Yet specific evidence that the pocket gospels were used by travellers is limited. Some certainly moved far from their place of creation, but a variety of explanations could account for this other than use as travellers' books. In the colophon of the Stowe St John (fol. 11r), the scribe describes himself as a *peregrinus* (pilgrim), perhaps implying that he was itinerant; however, as the colophons of the Book of Armagh (fols 53v, 221v) and Book of

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[42] Dominic Marner, "The Sword of the Spirit, the Word of God and the Book of Deer", *Medieval Archaeology* 46, 1 (2002), 1-28, at 15.

[43] Lawlor, *Chapters*, 145-66; Nees, "The Colophon Drawing", 86-88.

[44] Brown, *Book of Cerne*, 154-55.

[45] McGurk, "The Irish Pocket Gospel Book", 249-50.

[46] Richard Gameson, "Materials, Text, Layout and Script", in *The St Cuthbert Gospel: Studies on the Insular Manuscript of the Gospel of John (BL, Additional MS 89000),* ed. Claire Breay and Bernard Meehan (London: The British Library, 2015), 13-40, at 13. Brown, *Stonyhurst Gospel*, 36.

[47] Gilbert Márkus, "The Sick and Dying in the Book of Deer", in *Studies on the Book of Deer*, ed. Katherine Forsyth (Dublin: Four Courts, 2008), 67-97, at 68.

Mulling (fol. 94r) also employ the topos of pilgrimage in the clear context of spiritual journey, the Stowe colophon most likely refers to the concept of interior pilgrimage rather than literal travel.[48]

Some of the pocket gospels were kept in satchels at a later date, raising the possibility that these later containers may have replaced earlier satchels that were used to transport them. For example, the Book of Armagh survives with a satchel dating from long after the manuscript's creation.[49] Likewise, the Cuthbert Gospel was reported to have been found within a satchel, now no longer extant, when Cuthbert's coffin was opened at Durham in 1104. An account of this event composed after 1123 describes the discovery of the Cuthbert Gospel within a satchel-like container of red leather (*pelle rubricata in modum perae*) and a badly-frayed silk sling.[50] Likewise Reginald of Durham (d. *c.*1190), writing in the last quarter of the twelfth century, describes how the Cuthbert Gospel was kept on the altar of St Cuthbert at Durham Cathedral in a box (*theca*), protected by three satchels (*perae*) of red leather, and when William Fitzherbert, Archbishop of York, visited St Cuthbert's tomb (*c.*1153-4), Reginald reports that this manuscript was hung around his neck.[51] However, since material appears to have been deposited in Cuthbert's coffin regularly for many centuries it cannot be assumed that these were contemporary with the manuscript.[52]

Intriguingly, the evangelist portraits in the Book of Deer depict the figures wearing what have been interpreted as book satchels around their necks (fols 16v, 29v and 41v; Figs 8-9).[53] The books, represented as schematised rectangles at the centre of the evangelists' chests, do not appear to be supported by the hands of the figures, especially in the case of Luke whose arms are outspread. A series of lines join the top of each book to the area beneath the evangelist's chin, giving the appearance of three straps suspended between the book and their neck. If these do represent book satchels then the images may be self-referential, alluding to the way in which the manuscript itself was intended to be used. However, there are problems with this interpretation: the straps of a book satchel might be

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[48] See Chapter 4.

[49] See Appendix.

[50] Brown, *Stonyhurst Gospel*, 3, n. 2.

[51] *Libellus de Admirandis Beati Cuthberti Virtutibus*, 91, ed. James Raine, Surtees Society 1 (London: Nichols, 1835), 197-201.

[52] See Richard Gameson, "History of the Manuscript to the Reformation", in *The Cuthbert Gospel*, ed. Breay and Meehan, 129-36.

[53] Hughes, "Book of Deer", 28; Jane Geddes, "Art of the Book of Deer", *Society of Aniquaries of Scotland* 128 (1998), 537-46, at 538; Marner, "Sword of the Spirit", 13-14; Isabel Henderson, "Understanding Figurative Style and Decorative Programme of the Book of Deer", in *Studies on the Book of Deer*, ed. Forsyth, 32-66, at 57, n. 10.

expected to go around the back of the figure's neck rather than meeting at the chin, and the scale-like pattern articulated between the supposed straps is hard to reconcile with the form of a satchel. Thus the objects have also been interpreted as house-shaped reliquaries, where the straps represent the contours of the roof.[54] In either case, the highly schematised nature of the images makes identification of these objects uncertain.

Yet evidence for transport in a satchel or for use during travel would not necessarily be expected to survive, and the idea that the pocket gospels were designed for portability certainly cannot be dismissed. Textual sources reveal ample evidence of the utility of small-sized manuscripts for travel; for example, manuscripts might be taken on journeys as aids for the travelling preacher, as in Gregory's *Dialogues*, where Abbot Equitius is described riding around the towns and villages in his region to preach to the people, carrying the sacred books (*sacri codices*) in little leather bags (*pelliceis sacculis*).[55] Pious travel-reading might also ensure that a monk remained profitably occupied while away from the monastery, as in the influential *Rule of the Master*, written probably in Italy in the sixth century, which prescribes that if a brother is sent on a journey longer than a day, "let him take with him from the monastery a small book (*codicillum modicum*) containing some readings, so that he can do at least a little reading whenever he takes a rest along the way".[56] It adds that if, however, the brother does not know the Psalms by heart, he must instead take along tablets inscribed with Psalms so that he can practise memorising them on the trip, further demonstrating that travel could provide an important context for reading and study.[57]

That manuscripts were used as travellers' reading material in this way in early medieval Ireland is supported by the apparent examples surviving from Irish peat bogs, namely the Springmount Bog Tablets inscribed with the Psalms and the Faddan More Psalter. The choice of text in both cases recalls the order in the *Rule of the Master* that travellers should use their journey to memorise the Psalms if they have not yet done so. In addition, the lightweight limp-leather binding of the Faddan More Psalter may have made it particularly well suited to travel, despite it being a relatively large-sized manuscript (300 x

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[54] Meghan Read Constantinou, "Books, Book Satchels, and Shrines in the Book of Deer (Cambridge University Library, MS Ii.6.32" (MA dissertation, University of Delaware, 2010).

[55] Gregory, *Dialogues* 1. 4. 168, ed. Jacques-Paul Migne, PL 77, (Paris: Migne, 1862), 149-430, at 172.

[56] *Regula Magistri*, 57: 4-5; trans. Luke Eberle, *The Rule of the Master* (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1977), 223; "Si uero in uiam longiorem dirigatur, codicillum modicum cum aliquibus lectionibus de monasterio secum portet, ut quavis hora in via repausaverit, aliquam tamen legat", ed. Adalbert de Vogüé, *La Règle du Maître*, 2, SC 106 (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1964), 268.

[57] *Regula Magistri*, 57: 7-9; Eberle, *The Rule of the Master*, 223; de Vogüé, *La Règle du Maître*, 2, 268.

260 mm).[58] It was also found with a bag, which has sometimes been speculated to have been designed to carry the manuscript, although the senior conservator for the manuscript, John Gillis, has expressed reservations about this, observing that the bag is too small for the manuscript.[59]

Yet perhaps the principal reason for travelling with a manuscript was spiritual. In Sulpicius Severus' *Dialogi*, his friend Postumianus reveals that he has carried a copy of Sulpicius' *Vita Martini* with him on his trip to Egypt:

> "I own it", said Postumianus, "and that book of yours is never far from my right hand. For if you recognize it, look here—(and so saying he displayed the book which was concealed in his dress)—here it is. This book", added he, "is my companion both by land and sea: it has been my friend and comforter in all my wanderings".[60]

Notably, although Postumianus' manuscript was a different genre of book from Alfred's *enchiridion*, Sulpicius describes it as a "friend and comforter" (*socius et consolator*), just as Asser described the latter manuscript as a "comfort" (*solatium*) to its owner.

Further, like an *enchiridion*, Sulpicius emphasises the relationship between Postumianus' manuscript and his hands, particularly his right hand. In the Bible the right hand has considerable spiritual significance: Christ is found at the right hand of God (Matthew 26:64, Mark 16:19, Luke 22:69, Acts 7:55, 1 Peter 3:22); the blessed are gathered at Christ's right hand at the Last Judgement (Matthew 25:33-34); the figure that sits on the heavenly throne at the Last Judgement (commonly interpreted as Christ), holds the book bearing the seven seals in his right hand (Revelation 5:1-8); and to have God at one's right hand is to be sure of salvation, as in Psalm 15:8: "I set the Lord always in my sight: for he is at my right hand, that I be not moved".[61] Through these allusions, Sulpicius indicates that for

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[58] See Chapter 3.

[59] John Gillis, "The Faddan More Psalter", a 9th-century manuscript discovered in a peat bog in 2006', lecture at the Grolier Club of New York, March 31 2016, online recording accessed https://vimeo.com/164540291.

[60] Sulpicius Severus, *Dialogi* 1. 23; trans. Alexander Roberts in *Sulpitius Severus, Vincent of Lerins, John Cassian*, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wallace, *NFPF* 2, 11 (Oxford and New York: James Parker and Christian Literature Co., 1894), 35; "Agnosco id quidem, Postumianus inquit, neque umquam a dextera mea liber ille discedit: nam si agnoscis (aperit librum qui veste latebat), en ipsum. Hic mihi, inquit, terra ac mari comes, hic in peregrinatione tota socius et consolator fuit", ed. Jacques-Paul Migne, PL 20 (Paris: Migne, 1845), 183-222, at 198.

[61] "Providebam Dominum in conspectu meo semper quoniam a dextris est mihi ne commovear".

Postumianus, carrying his manuscript on his journey signifies that, in a spiritual sense, he also carries God (as well as St Martin) with him. It gives him the comfort of knowing that a heavenly haven awaits him at the end of the long journey of life.[62]

The indications of textual sources that small-sized manuscripts were used by travellers and carried around by pious individuals are undoubtedly significant for the understanding of the group and it is tempting to suppose that some may have been used this way. Yet it is also worth emphasising that some of these sources, particularly the passages from Sulpicius' *Dialogi* and Asser's *Vita Alfredi*, clearly draw a connection between keeping one's manuscript at hand wherever one goes, and always keeping God spiritually close during the journey of life. This suggests that a small-sized, portable manuscript could be both practical and symbolic for its user.

Book as Amulet

As noted, the small size and eminent portability of the pocket gospels has led some scholars to suggest that they might have held an amuletic function.[63] An amulet is a personal device worn on the body, understood to hold the power to protect the wearer. *A priori*, the pocket gospels seem particularly suited to amuletic purposes: the gospels, containing the words and acts of Christ, are the most sacred texts of Christianity and therefore command an authority that could easily be perceived as real power, and the small size of the manuscripts means they could be easily carried and worn. Thus, scholars have often interpreted small-sized early medieval manuscripts, such as the fifth-/sixth-century Chartres Gospel of St John, as amulets.[64] However, it is worth considering whether there might be other explanations for the small size and reverential treatment of the pocket gospels, especially considering that amulet usage was consistently criticised by Church authorities.

The idea that the pocket gospels might have served as amulets hinges largely on the placement of the Cuthbert Gospel in the coffin of St Cuthbert, long thought to have taken

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[62] The concept of monastic life as a pilgrimage with the end destination of heaven was common in early medieval Ireland and elsewhere. See for example, Kathleen Hughes, "The Changing Theory and Practice of Irish Pilgrimage", *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 11, 2 (1960), 143-51; see also Chapter 4.

[63] On early medieval manuscripts as amulets, see Jean Vezin, "Les Livres Utilisé comme Amulettes et comme Reliques", in *Das Buch als Magisches und als Repräsentationsobjekt*, ed. Peter Ganz (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1992), 101-15; Don C. Skemer, *Binding Words: Textual Amulets in the Middle Ages* (Penn State Press, 2006).

[64] Bernhard Bischoff, *Latin Palaeography: Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, trans. Dáibhí Ó Cróinín and David Ganz (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990, rpt. 2003), 24. Other scholars who interpret this manuscript as an amulet include, Julian Brown, *Stonyhurst Gospel*, 30-41; Vezin, "Les Livres", 104.

place at his elevation in 698. Julian Brown presented the most detailed case for the apotropaic function of the Cuthbert Gospel within the iconographic context of the saint's coffin. Noting Kitzinger's interpretation of the figural groups on the coffin as "pictorial translations of litanies", where "prayer and art were […] fused in a deeper, magical union",[65] Brown suggested that this efficacious programme of imagery on the coffin was originally completed by placing the amuletic copy of John's Gospel within.[66] Following this assertion, Jean Vezin considered it clear that the amuletic power of the manuscript was the idea that inspired the deposit (l'idée qui a inspiré les auteurs de ce dépôt semble claire).[67] Extending this idea to the pocket gospels more generally, Brown further proposed that "it may be that all of them were intended to be worn as amulets".[68]

Julian Brown also interpreted the selection of the Gospel of John for a stand-alone manuscript as a further indication of amuletic use.[69] He found only six examples of Latin manuscripts containing one gospel alone from the period in question (including both extant manuscripts and textual references to lost manuscripts), all containing John: the Chartres Gospel, Cuthbert Gospel, Stowe St John, the lost gospel belonging to Boisil, the two gospels of John written in the Irish manner (*scottice scripta*) recorded in the St Gall book-list of *c.* 850, of which the surviving manuscript St Gall 60 is presumably one.[70] Noting that the Chartres Gospel and Stowe St John were both enshrined, Brown concluded that these manuscripts,

> Seem to attest an early medieval practice of placing a complete Gospel of St. John in a shrine, as a protective amulet; and it seems reasonable to conclude that our manuscript [the Cuthbert Gospel] was placed in St. Cuthbert's coffin to protect it.[71]

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[65] Ernst Kitzinger, "The coffin-reliquary", in *The Relics of Saint Cuthbert*, ed. Christopher F. Battiscombe (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1956), 202-307, at 279-80; Brown, *Stonyhurst Gospel*, 39-40.

[66] Brown, *Stonyhurst Gospel*, 41.

[67] Vezin, "Les Livres", 104.

[68] Brown, *Stonyhurst Gospel*, 36.

[69] Brown, *Stonyhurst Gospel*, 36.

[70] St. Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek, Cod. Sang. 60. Brown, *Stonyhurst Gospel*, 36. In addition to these, it is worth nothing that the Gospel of John in the Book of Dimma may have begun circulation as a stand-alone booklet and the Gospel of John is the only complete gospel included in the Book of Deer; see Chapter 3.

[71] Brown, *Stonyhurst Gospel*, 33.

More recently however, Richard Gameson has dismantled the long-held theory that the Cuthbert Gospel was interred with the saint in 698, pointing out that the manuscript could have been added to the coffin at any point between its time of manufacture and its rediscovery in 1104. Likewise, he rejected the amuletic explanation for its inclusion in the coffin, arguing that "it is difficult to see why the Lindisfarne community should have felt that a holy man like Cuthbert needed 'amuletic' protection in death".[72]

Further doubt is cast on the manuscript's use as an amulet by the scholarly re-evaluation of furnished burial practices in Anglo-Saxon England since Brown's work on the Cuthbert Gospel. While interment with grave goods used to be generally interpreted as pagan or superstitious, recent scholarship has noted the absence of evidence suggesting that the Church opposed the practice and has questioned the extent to which it was particularly related to spiritual beliefs. Instead, scholars now emphasise the social role of furnished burial in the public display of power and enactment of affiliations.[73] This seems a better explanation for the deposition of the manuscript in the tomb of Cuthbert, suggesting that it might have been presented to the shrine as a gift to cement the donor's allegiance to Cuthbert and his community.[74]

Moreover, the strong interest in the Gospel of John apparent in Insular culture generally and in the pocket gospels specifically can be explained in ways other than its supposed apotropaic power. The most likely reason is that this gospel was particularly preferred for devotional reading: for example, the Rule of Tallaght, a monastic rule from Tallaght, Co. South Dublin, dating from the 830s, records Mael Ruain's (d.792) reply when asked about reading: "It is an old custom", said he, "to read the portion for each night for a week from the Gospel of John, and the portion for each night for another week from the Book of Acts"; the text further adds that in Mael Ruain's time, "it was customary for each of them to recite the Psalms in private as far as the *interposita*".[75] Likewise, while the

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[72] Gameson, "History of the Manuscript", 129.

[73] See for example, Helen Geake, "Invisible Kingdoms: The Use of Grave-goods in Seventh-century England", in *The Making of Kingdoms*, Anglo-Saxon Studies in Archaeology and History 10, ed. T. M. Dickinson and D. Griffiths, (Oxford: Oxford University School of Archaeology, 1999) 203-15. Guy Halsall, "The Viking Presence in England? The Burial Evidence Reconsidered", in *Cultures in Contact: Scandinavian Settlement in England in the Ninth and Tenth Centuries*, ed. D. M. Hadley and J. D. Richards (Turnhout: Brepols, 2000), 259-76; Sally Crawford, "Votive Deposition, Religion and the Anglo-Saxon Furnished Burial Ritual", *World Archaeology* 36, 1 (March 2004), 87-102.

[74] For a speculative account of the possible instances in which the manuscript might have been presented to the Lindisfarne community, see Gameson, "History of the Manuscript", 129-36.

[75] Rule of Tallaght 17, "As sean-ghnáth", ar sé, "cuid gach oidhce do radh no do leughadh go ceann seachtmhaine do leabhar Eoin, 7 cuid gach oidhce go ceann seachtmhuine oile do do leabhar apstail";

enshrinement of several of the pocket gospels at a later date—the Book of Mulling, the Stowe St John and Missal, the Book of Dimma—indicates that they were regarded as sacred objects of power, this practice suggests the institutional recognition of a manuscript as a relic rather than its personal use as an amulet.

Evidence for the use of gospel manuscripts as personal amulets in early medieval contexts is mostly of a condemnatory kind. In his commentary on Matthew 23:5, in which Jesus derides the Pharisees' use of phylacteries (pieces of parchment inscribed in this case with the Decalogue, believed to protect a wearer), Jerome (d.420) extends Christ's criticism to anyone who carries books out of superstition but does not carry the knowledge of God in their hearts, especially condemning women who carry "little gospels" (*parvulis Evangeliis*):

> Now the Pharisees did not understand that these things need to be carried in
> the heart, not in the body. But chests and boxes hold books and do not have
> the knowledge of God. Among us there are superstitious little women who
> keep doing this up to the present day with little Gospels and with the wood of
> the Cross and with things of this sort. They have a zeal for God, to be sure, but
> not according to knowledge.[76]

This demonstrates both the talismanic use of small-sized gospel books in the early Christian period and the contempt for such practices held by the Church.

In an Insular context *c*.793-804, Alcuin also denounced the use of fragments of Scripture as amulets in a passage clearly evoking Jerome's comments above:

> They carry amulets [*ligaturas*], believing them to be something holy. But it is
> better to imitate the examples of the saints in one's heart than to carry their
> bones in little bags. And it is better to hold the written teachings of the
> Gospels in one's mind, than to carry them, written on strips of parchment

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18, "Na n-aonar fa gnath leo aige sion sabhail na psalm usque ad interposita", ed. and trans. Edward Gwynn, *Hermathena* 44, sup. 2 (Dublin: Hodges, Figgis and Co.; London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1927), 12-13.

[76] Jerome, *Commentarium in Evangelium Matthaei* 4.6; trans. Thomas P. Scheck, St. Jerome: *Commentary on Matthew*, The Fathers of the Church 117 (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2014), 260; "Non intelligentibus Pharisaeis quod haec in corde portanda sint, non in corpore: alioquin et armaria, et arcae habent libros, et notitiam Dei non habent. Hoc apud nos superstitiosae mulierculae, in parvulis Evangeliis, et in crucis ligno, et istiusmodi rebus (que habent quidem zelum Dei, sed non juxta scientiam)", ed. Jacques-Paul Migne, PL 26, 168.

[*pittaciolis*], around one's neck.[77]

Likewise, Bede claimed that he had seen people cured of snake-bites by drinking water containing scrapings from the leaves of Irish books.[78] His prose *Life of Cuthbert* describes how Cuthbert travelled around the remote villages of Northumbria dissuading people from turning to incantations or amulets (*incantationes vel alligaturas*) to protect themselves from plague, although there is no implication that these were manuscripts.[79]

Nevertheless, it is notable that in these Insular instances, it is scraps of parchment that are taken to hold amuletic power and, given that Alcuin's letter is clearly based on Jerome's critique, it is perhaps significant that he chose not to adopt the Church Father's specific derisory references to little gospel books. Alcuin does not deny that manuscripts could be powerful objects: indeed, his comparison of the strips of parchment to the bones of saints implies their equivalence to saintly relics, thus confirming rather than diminishing their identification as objects of power. Neither Jerome, Alcuin nor any early medieval authority ever doubted the holiness or efficacy of relics; rather, they denounced their use as personal amulets, and specifically as an empty substitute for genuine internalised knowledge of holy truths. Even Bede's reference to the curative power of drinking scrapings from books can be understood as an enactment of the common medieval trope of consuming the divine Word as a means to increased intimacy with God (and in this case, increased resistance to evil, as symbolised by the snakes' poison).[80] Both Alcuin and Bede accept that books were sacred, capable of bringing a reader closer to God, but they present this as unrelated to what they perceived as the uninformed and spiritually vacant use of amulets.

Overall these sources do not give strong evidence for Insular use of entire gospel books as amulets. It is certainly true that Insular saint's lives are full of miracles associated with manuscripts, especially gospel books, but these are invariably the manuscripts of saints

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[77] Alcuin, Epistle 290; trans. Claudia Rapp, "Holy Texts, Holy Men, and Holy Scribes: Aspects of Scriptural Holiness in Late Antiquity", in *The Early Christian Book*, CUA Studies in Early Christianity, ed. William E. Klingshirn and Linda Safran (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2012), 194-222, at 201; "Nam ligaturas portant, quasi sanctum quid estimantes. Sed melius est in corde sanctorum imitare exempla, quam in sacculis portare ossa; evangelicas habere scriptas ammonitiones in mente magis, quam pittaciolis exaratas in collo circumferre", ed. Ernst Dümmler, *MGH Epistolae Karolini aevi* II, (Berlin: Weidmann, 1895), 1-481, at 448.

[78] *Ecclesiastical History of the English People* 1. 1, trans. Bertram Colgrave and Roger A. B. Mynors (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 21.

[79] *Vita et miracula sancti Cuthberti*, 9. 15. 16-17, ed. Joseph Stevenson, *Venerabilis Bedae opera historica minora* (London: Sumptibus Societatis, 1841), 2, 67.

[80] See Chapter 5.

and take place in the setting of a community relic cult. Perhaps the most famous of these is the late-sixth- or early-seventh-century psalter, the Cathach (battler) of Columba, believed from an early date to have been written by St Columba, enshrined in the eleventh century, and carried into battle to ensure victory in the thirteenth century.[81] Another well-known description of power channelled through a saint's manuscripts is the posthumous miracle in Adomnán's *Life of St Columba*, in which the monks of Iona save the land from a drought by processing through the fields with Columba's tunic and manuscripts he had copied.[82] Such episodes clearly illustrate the role of manuscripts as relics in the cults of communities, but not their use as personal amulets.

Given that some of the pocket gospels are known to have been made in important and highly learned centres, it seems doubtful that they would have been used in ways that were widely considered disreputable by the Church, especially since orthodox practices can equally account for their features. Here it is worth noting again the importance of carrying the Word of God in one's heart, emphasised by Jerome and Alcuin. While they regarded knowledge of God carried in the heart as divorced from the practice of carrying the word of God in manuscript-form on the person, the descriptions by Asser and Sulpicius suggest that for others, the two could be closely linked. Indeed, in the preface to his *Enchiridion*, Augustine emphasised the link between keeping a manuscript always in one's hands and putting into practice its precepts:

> You have asked for an *enchiridion*, something you could carry around, not
> just baggage for your bookshelf. Therefore we may return to these three ways
> in which, as we said, God should be served: faith, hope, love. [...] If one is to
> have this wisdom, it is not enough just to put an *enchiridion* in the hand. It is
> also necessary that a great zeal be kindled in the heart.[83]

In this way, personal manuscripts could help their pious owners internalise sacred texts through reading and memorisation, could comfort them by reminding them of God's constant presence, and could inspire devotion in their hearts. Therefore, it is preferable to understand these manuscripts as exemplifying rather than contravening Jerome and

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[81] Although for interpretation as an amulet, see Skemer, *Binding Words*, 52.

[82] *Life of Columba*, II, 44, ed. Alan O. Anderson and Marjorie O. Anderson (London: Nelson, 1961), pp. 450-52. See Chapter 3.

[83] Augustine, *Enchiridion* 1. 6; Outler, 339; "tu autem enchiridion a nobis postulas, id est quod manu possit astringi, non quod armaria possit onerare. Ut igitur ad illa tria redeamus per quae diximus colendum deum, fidem spem caritatem [...] quae ut habeatur non breui enchiridio manus debet impleri sed grandi studio pectus accendi", CCSL 46, 50.

Alcuin's assertions that one should carry the Word of God in one's heart rather than on amulets. The pocket gospels should be understood as aids to the acquisition of greater knowledge of God, not empty substitutes for it.

Gift Books

One of the other possible uses McGurk envisioned for the pocket gospels was as "personal gifts", noting instances of manuscript-giving in Irish saints' lives.[84] We have seen that these texts are not reliable historical records in the way that McGurk used them, revealing more about monasteries' desires to craft saintly histories for their manuscripts than about early medieval manuscript culture. Yet many scholars have emphasised the importance of the system of gift-exchange in social relations of the early Middle Ages, within which manuscripts certainly played a part.[85] While there is evidence that manuscripts of all sizes could be gifts, examination of the specific instances in which small manuscripts were given shows how their size could have special meaning in this context.

At least one of the pocket gospels clearly did become a gift. As the inscription on fol. 3v records, the MacDurnan Gospels was given to Christ Church Cathedral, Canterbury, by King Æthelstan (r.924-939):

> Mael Brigte mac Tornáin propounds this gospel-book throughout the world, in
> a manner worthy of God; but Æthelstan, king and ruler of the Anglo-Saxons,
> gives it for ever to the metropolitan see of Canterbury.[86]

Nicholas Brooks has suggested that this gift was probably made during the time of Archbishop Wulfhelm (926-42), who appears to have had an excellent relationship with Æthelstan and to have played an important part in his politics and legislation-making.[87] At a similar time, Æthelstan also gave to Christ Church a sumptuous Carolingian gospel book (BL Cotton MS Tiberius A. ii), as recorded in the inscription on fols 15r-v. Thus the donation can

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[84] McGurk, "The Irish Pocket Gospel", 249-50.

[85] E.g. Janet L. Nelson, "The settings of the gift in the reign of Charlemagne", in *The Languages of Gift in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Wendy Davies and Paul Fouracre (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 116-48. John-Henry Wilson Clay, "Gift-giving and Books in the Letters of St Boniface and Lul", *Journal of Medieval History* 35 (2009), 313–325.

[86] Trans. Keynes, "King Athelstan's Books", 153; "+ MÆIELBRIÐVS · MAC/DVRNANI · ISTV(M) · TEXTV(M)/ PER · TRIQVADRV(M) · D(E)O ·/ DIGNE · DOGMATIZAT ·/ + AST · ÆTHELSTANVS ·/ ANGLOSÆXANA · REX · ET ·/ RECTOR · DORVERNENSI ·/ METROPOLI · DAT · P(ER) ÆVV(M) :·"

[87] Nicholas Brooks, *The Early History of the Church of Canterbury, Christ Church from 597 to 1066* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1989), 218.

be understood as a high-status political gift, cementing the allegiance between the king, the senior archbishop of England and his primatial see.

It is also possible that Æthelstan had received the manuscript as a gift himself. Although the inscription's reason for mentioning the eminent Irish ecclesiastic Mael Brigte Mac Tornáin (d. 927) is ambiguous, it seems to imply that he had owned the manuscript: an inference which accords well with the fact that among his various offices, Mael Brigte was *coarb* of Patrick, that is, abbot of Armagh, the centre at which the MacDurnan Gospels was almost certainly made.[88] Simon Keynes noted that since the inscription seems to imply a direct link between Mael Brigte and Æthelstan, it is most likely that the manuscript was given to Æthelstan either by Mael Brigte himself, in which case probably between 924 and 927, or in memory of Mael Brigte after his death, thus between 927 and 939.[89] If this is the case, it suggests that the manuscript was passed along a chain of gift-giving, accumulating prestige and symbolism with every link.

In line with this, several scholars have observed symbolic resonances within the inscription. Both Carol Farr and Michelle Brown have emphasised the significance of the wording that Mael Brigte propounds the gospel *per triquadrus* (throughout the world; or more precisely, throughout the three continents and four corners of the world). Farr noted that this evokes the apostolic command to preach the Gospel to the whole world, which "places Athelstan's gift to Canterbury within the universal context of the Church's salvation history".[90] Likewise, Michelle Brown suggested that this unusual wording emphasises Mael Brigte's office as the *coarb* of Patrick, the heir to the Apostle of Ireland, and might incorporate an older provenance inscription that stressed the central role of Armagh in the evangelisation of Ireland.[91] It certainly implies that the personal connection with Mael Brigte enhanced the importance of the manuscript and added symbolic weight to Æthelstan's gift.

Furthermore, Carol Farr has suggested that when Add. 40618 also reached Anglo-Saxon England in the early-tenth century, its refurbishment with additional evangelist portraits and new decorated initials, "may well have been to prepare the book as a gift".[92] Thus both the MacDurnan Gospels and Add. 40618 may have been adapted for new use in high-level gift-giving in Anglo-Saxon England in the tenth century. As Farr has shown, their Anglo-Saxon owners were clearly sensitive to the histories and identities of these

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[88] See Appendix. On the career of Mael Brigte, see David N. Dumville, "Mael Brigte mac Tornáin, Pluralist coarb (d. 927)", *Journal of Celtic Studies* 4 (2004), 97-116.

[89] Keynes, "King Athelstan's Books", 154.

[90] Farr, "Irish Pocket Gospels", 93.

[91] Michelle Brown, "Ferdomnach".

[92] Farr, "Irish Pocket Gospels", 97. On the alterations to Add. 40618 see also Henry, "An Irish Manuscript".

manuscripts. Although it is unclear exactly what role their small size played in shaping later owners' responses to them, the emphasis in the MacDurnan inscription on the connection with Mael Brigte suggests that small size in particular may have imbued the manuscript with a sense of intimate connection with past personages. Consideration of other small manuscripts that were given as gifts in the early Middle Ages serves to reinforce this theory.

One such example is provided by the colophon of the Book of Durrow (fol. 247v), the earliest surviving gospel book of the Insular tradition, dating from *c.*700.[93] This inscription is written in the same hand as the main text, although it is badly damaged by a combination of veneration, deliberate erasure and rewriting. In its present form it reads:

> I ask your beatitude, holy presbyter Patrick, that whoever holds in his hand
> this little book may remember [me] Columba the writer who wrote this gospel
> for myself in the space of 12 days by the grace of our Lord. Undersigned.[94]

However, Arthur Luce showed that it has been altered to insert the name of Columba, proposing that the original probably read:

> I ask your beatitude, reverend presbyter Patrick, that whenever you hold this
> little book in your hand, you would remember me who wrote this gospel for
> myself in the space of 12 days by the grace of our Lord. Undersigned.[95]

This inscription thus seems to record the presentation of a small-sized manuscript (*libellus*) of the gospels to one Patrick (almost certainly not the saint, although perhaps later thought to have been) as a gift from the scribe. It is unlikely to refer to the Book of Durrow itself, which is not particularly small (245 x 145 mm) and with 496 leaves of stately majuscule script and elaborate illuminations, certainly could not have been written in twelve days. It is possible that the manuscript is described this way for rhetorical purposes, but it is more likely, as Luce convincingly argued, that the inscription was copied from a different gospel

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[93] TCD MS 57.

[94] "Rogo beatitudinem/ tuam s(an)c(t)e praesbiter/ patrici ut quicumque/ hunc libellum manu te/nuerit meminerit colum/bae scriptoris. qui hoc scripsi/ m(ihi)met euangelium. per xii/ dierum spatium g(ra)tia d(omi)ni n(ost)ri s(ub)s(criptus)", ed. and trans. Arthur Luce, in *Evangeliorum Quattuor Codex Durmachensis*, ed. Arthur Luce, George Otto Simms, Peter Meyer, Ludwig Bieler (Olten, Lausanne and Freiburg: Urs Graf-Verlag, 1960), 19.

[95] "Rogo beatitudinem/ tuam s(an)c(t)e praesbiter/ patrici ut quandocumque/ hunc libellum manu te/nueris memineris mei/ qui hoc scripsi m(ihi)met euangelium per xii/ dierum spatium g(ra)tia d(omi)ni n(ost)ri s(ub)s(criptus)", Luce, *Codex Durmachensis*, 21.

book, perhaps one written by Columba or believed to have been, which possibly served as the exemplar for the Book of Durrow.[96]

The way in which the inscription frames the gift is notable. As with the *enchiridion* and Posthumianus' copy of the *Vita Martini*, the Durrow inscription refers to holding the manuscript in the hand. It implies that the manuscript's small size renders it more tactile, emphasising both its intimacy and the bond it symbolises between donor and recipient: the scribe wrote the manuscript with his hands, Patrick holds it in his hands. The small size of the manuscript permits this intimate handling, which creates a physical link between the one who holds it and the one who made and previously owned it. In contrast to the numerous colophons that beseech the prayers of whoever reads the text, in this case it is the physical touch of the manuscript that is expected to rouse Patrick's memory of the scribe.[97]

That this inscription was copied into a deluxe gospel book such as the Book of Durrow suggests the importance of its message for the community. Luce plausibly suggested that it was copied because the scribe was believed to have been Columba, even though he was not named in the inscription at time of copying.[98] In this case, the transfer of the colophon to the new gospel book was perhaps intended to imbue the Book of Durrow with the saintly inheritance of the original. It also implies that this *libellus* had become an object of considerable prestige and sanctity due to its personal connection with the individuals named in the colophon. The small size of this lost manuscript therefore seems to have enhanced its meaning as the token of a personal relationship when it was first given as a gift; it presumably then reinforced the historical connection between the manuscript and those individuals for later members of the community.

Inscriptions in another small-sized manuscript further exemplify the significance of size in framing a personal relationship by means of a gift-volume. Just as diminutive as a pocket gospel (192 x 120 mm), the Dagulf Psalter is an early Carolingian manuscript of great opulence, written entirely in chrysography except for the rubrics, with framed pages of display script at the opening of each of the three fifties sumptuously illuminated in red, purple, blue, gold and silver. It opens with an elaborate poem spanning both sides of the first leaf (fol. 4r-v) which suggests that the manuscript was made in the last quarter of the eighth century at the court of Charlemagne, and that it was twice a gift-book. The verses on fol. 4r are addressed by Charlemagne (r.771-814) to Pope Hadrian (incumbent 772-795), dedicating the manuscript to him as a gift: "To Hadrian, highest Pope and Blessed Father, I, King

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[96] Luce, *Codex Durmachensis*, 17-25.

[97] For many such colophons, see for example, Richard Gameson, *The Scribe Speaks? Colophons in Early English Manuscripts* (Cambridge: Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic, 2001).

[98] Luce, *Codex Durmachensis*, 17-25.

Charles, send greetings, Father, and hail!";[99] while on fol. 4v, Dagulf, the scribe, presents the manuscript to Charlemagne: "Pious king, wise leader, renowned in virtue and arms [...] Accept the work of your humble servant Dagulf".[100]

This manuscript must be understood within the wider context of Charlemagne and Hadrian's diplomacy. Charlemagne's enthusiastic expressions of devotion and deference in the Dagulf Psalter inscription belie a strained relationship and calculated political motives. Janet Nelson has shown that within the often-fraught relationship between the two, the social conventions of gift exchange were used as means of expressing strong political messages calculated to pacify or, on occasion, to rebuff the other.[101] Indeed, at some point around 784-791, Hadrian alleged that Charlemagne had plotted with King Offa of Mercia to depose him.[102] The Dagulf Psalter appears to have been planned as a gift for Hadrian at a time when Charlemagne wanted to improve their relationship and assure the Pope that he had no sinister intentions against him.

Notably, the inscription draws at length on the small size of the manuscript in its formulation of the relationship between Charlemagne and Hadrian:

Therefore, O priest, I piously dedicate this gift to you,

so that I, the son, might be able to address the mind of the Father.

And often when holding this little gift in your hand,

remember me in your pious and holy prayers.

And nevertheless, let this little book shine with moderate splendour,

and let the lofty poetry of David give pleasure to you.

May my little brook be supported by your river

And our little flowers seek the flower-bearing wood.

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[99] "Hadriano summo papae patrique beato/ Rex carolus salue mando ualeque pater"; trans. based on Franz Unterkircher, *A Treasury of Illuminated Manuscripts: A Selection of Miniatures from Manuscripts in the Austrian National Library* (New York: Putnam, 1967), 24.

[100] "Rex pie, dux sapiens, uirtute insignis et armis [...] Exigui famuli dagulfi sume laborem [...]"; trans. based on Unterkircher, *A Treasury*, 25.

However, it is unclear whether the manuscript ever actually reached Pope Hadrian; for a balanced summary, see Rosamund McKitterick, *Charlemagne: The Formation of a European Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 333-36.

[101] Nelson, "The Settings of the Gift", 135-38.

[102] Nelson, "The Settings of the Gift", 137.

> O rector may you flourish unharmed for many years and direct the church of
> God with the knowledge of doctrine.[103]

This portion of the dedication conspicuously plays with ideas of scale. It was part of the conventional language of gift-giving that donors would modestly describe their gifts as small and trifling, while recipients were expected to exalt them.[104] A fragmentary memorandum to Charlemagne's envoys to Hadrian instructs them to present gifts to the Pope apologetically, describing them with a double diminutive as *parva munuscula* (small little gifts).[105] Yet despite this modesty topos, it is clear that in the Dagulf Psalter the inscription genuinely refers to the small size of the manuscript, subverting the topos in order to emphasise that Charlemagne's "little gift" is anything but trifling.

The poem describes the psalter as a "little gift" (*donum exiguum*) and a "little book" (*libellus*) yet it may "shine with moderate splendour" (*modico niteat splendore*) and contains lofty poetry (*celsa camoena*). In this way, the small size of the manuscript is juxtaposed with the inherent holiness of the text, presenting its holiness as disproportionate to its dimensions. The poetry is lofty because the manuscript contains the divinely-inspired Psalms, while the "shining splendour" refers on one level to the extravagant use of chrysography, and on another to the splendour of heaven which is revealed in its pages, as the poem later adds: "golden words sounding, promise golden kingdoms".[106] Thus the inverted magnitude of the small but splendid book is itself presented as a source of wonder that emphasises the splendour and holiness inherent within the Psalter.

Charlemagne then continues to compare himself to the Pope by means of metaphors describing smallness and greatness, seeming to align himself with the manuscript as a small entity who is made great—in the case of the manuscript, by its sacred content, and in the case of Charlemagne, by his union with the Pope. In this way, the size of the manuscript is employed both as a symbol of Charlemagne's professed humility as well as Hadrian's holiness.

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[103] "Hoc vobis ideo munus pie dedo sacerdos,/ Filius ut mentem Patris adire queam./ Ac memorare mei precibus sanctisque piisque,/ Hoc donum exiguum saepe tenendo manu./ Et quanquam modico niteat splendore libellus,/ Davidis placeat celsa camoena tibi./ Rivulus iste meus teneatur flumine vestro,/ Floriferumque nemus floscula nostra petant./ Incolumis vigeas, rector, per tempora longa Ecclesiamque Dei dogmatis arte regas"; *MGH Poetae* 1, ed. Ernst Dümmler (Berlin: Weidmann, 1881), 91-92.

[104] See for example, Clay, "Gift-giving and books", 319.

[105] BNF MS Lat. 9008. Nelson, "The Settings of the Gift", 131.

[106] "Aurea verba sonant, promittunt aurea regna", *MGH Poetae* 1, 91-92. On the heavenly meaning of chrysography, see Hamburger, *Script as Image*, 23.

It is also notable that once again this verse links the small format of a manuscript, its owner's hands and their memory of the donor. Just as the scribe in the Durrow colophon hoped that Presbyter Patrick would remember him when he held his little manuscript, so Charlemagne hoped that Hadrian would often hold the Dagulf Psalter in his hand and remember him in his prayers. This lends further weight to the theory that the small size of a manuscript emphasised its nature as an object and through its increased tactility, created a physical link between distant people.

In this regard it is worth noting that the surviving original ivory covers of the manuscript, also mentioned in the poetic inscription, prominently depict hands (Fig. 10).[107] Each cover is divided into two panels surrounded by foliate frames; one cover portrays David ordering the Psalms to be written in the upper panel and performing them on his harp on the lower; the other cover shows Jerome being instructed by Pope Damasus to make his new translations of Scripture in the upper panel and dictating his work below. The hands of the figures are prominent in the centre of every panel: David's hands gesturing rhetorically as he addresses his scribes and plucking his harp as he composes; Jerome's hands receiving the Pope's missive from the hands of a messenger, and holding a book and gesticulating as he dictates to his scribe, whose hands inscribe the Church Father's words. Furthermore, at the centre of the Jerome cover, between the two panels, the hand of God is represented, with the Agnus Dei in the corresponding position on the David cover. Thus these images emphasise the central role of hands as instruments for composing, making and transmitting books, divinely guided by the hand of the ultimate author of all Scripture, God. Perhaps this emphasis is directly related to the intended use of the small handheld manuscript, implying that when Hadrian held the manuscript in his hands, he was not only establishing a physical link with its donor, Charlemagne, but also with the great canon of figures who were responsible for transmitting Scripture throughout history, including God himself.

That a small manuscript was a gift that allowed the donor to hold God in their hands coincides with John-Henry Wilson Clay's observations about gift-giving in the circles of Insular missionaries. He observed that while senders tended to downplay the value of their gifts according to modesty conventions, this was not the case with gift-books.[108] Moreover, recipients seemed to reserve their most effusive praise for the acknowledgement of manuscripts above other gifts; for example, Boniface's letter thanking Abbess Eadburg for the books she sent to him:

> May the eternal rewarder of all good deeds praise the dearest sister in the
> heavenly court of angels, for by sending gifts of sacred books she has consoled

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[107] Paris, Musée du Louvre, M.R.370 et M.R.371.

[108] Clay, "Gift-giving and Books", at 325.

with spiritual light a Germanic exile; for he who is bound to enlighten the
dark corners of the Germanic peoples will fall into the snare of death if he has
not the Word of the Lord as a lamp to his feet and a light to his path.[109]

Thus Boniface makes clear that gifts of sacred books are not like other gifts. Books console, illuminate, guide and save in a way that no other object can.

It seems therefore, that small manuscripts were indeed well-suited for use as gift-books, and that donors and recipients took full advantage of the symbolic resonances of the manuscripts' small size to create meaning. Although the MacDurnan Gospels was clearly given as a gift, it is not possible to know whether any of the other pocket gospels were. Yet the inscriptions associated with diminutive gift-books make clear that small size connoted personal connections with the people who had made and owned the manuscripts in the past, whose identities could be understood to infuse the manuscripts and augment their importance for later owners. They show that small manuscripts were used to articulate personal relationships at an informal level, reminding someone of an absent friend, or at an institutional level, forming a link with a historical person of importance, or in the world of diplomacy, of carefully negotiating alliances. The repeated references to hands in inscriptions suggests this personal significance of small manuscripts, but it also highlights their increased physicality. The unusual dimensions of a small manuscript can be understood to draw attention to their nature as objects to be touched and held, not only creating a physical link between people, but also between the people and God. Manuscripts of Scripture were bearers of God's Word, and holding a small manuscript was the closest one could come to holding God in one's hands. These meanings surely also apply to the ways in which people responded to the pocket gospels, even if they were not given as gifts themselves.

The Book of Life

Several of the pocket gospels include material associated with rituals for the dead or dying, prompting some scholars to suggest that they were used in administering last rites and commemorating the community's dead. This raises the question of what it was about these

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[109] Boniface, Ep. 30, trans. Clay, "Gift-giving and Books", 323. "Carissimam sororem remunerator aeternus iustorum operum in superna laetificet curia angelorum, quae sanctorum librorum munera transmittendo exulem Germanicum spiritali lumine consolata est, quia, qui tenebrosos angulos Germanicarum gentium lustrare debet, nisi habeat lucernam pedibus et lumen semitis suis verbum Domini, in laqueum mortis incidet", ed. Michael Tangl, *Die Briefe des Heiligen Bonifatius und Lullus*, *MGH Selectae 1* (Berlin: Weidmann, 1916), 54.

manuscripts that led to their association with mortuary rituals, and particularly whether this was related to their small size.

The Books of Mulling, Dimma and Deer were all augmented with services for the communion of the sick (that is, the dying) added on blank or inserted leaves between the gospel texts; although these additions are often dated textually to the eighth/ninth centuries, in all cases they appear to be written in the Late Celtic minuscule script used from the mid-ninth century until *c*.1000.[110] Likewise, the Stowe Missal, conjoined with the Stowe St John from the early-ninth century, contains the text of a "mass for the many dead" (*misa pro mortuis pluribus*) and a communion for the sick, among other liturgical texts.[111] No such documents are found in any larger Insular gospel books and indeed, these are amongst the earliest sources of any kind for the form of the *viaticum* following its emergence in the eighth century.[112]

That in all cases these texts are found in conjunction with pocket gospel books is surely significant. Kathleen Hughes thought that this might be related to the sacred status of the manuscripts, observing in regard to Mulling, Dimma and Deer, "it is interesting that all these three pocket-gospels have a mass for the sick, and it looks as if the gospel may have been used as a sacred object to help effect the cure just like any other relic".[113] However, Márkus has shown that the emphasis of these texts is not on healing the sick but on preparing them for death and resurrection; thus he argued that their occurrence exclusively in diminutive manuscripts was due to practical considerations, proposing that "these small books, with their gospels and ritual contents, are for a mobile clergy ministering to a widely scattered non-urban flock".[114] Nevertheless, a cleric performing the last rites at a person's death bed would not necessarily require a full or even abridged gospel book, and the small size of the pocket gospels would presumably have also made them suitable for other rituals practised without a lectern, yet with the exception of the Stowe St John and Missal there is

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[110] On the texts, see Frederick E. Warren, *The Liturgy and Ritual of the Celtic Church* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1881), 163-72; Kenney, *Sources*, 703-04; Márkus, "The Sick and the Dying", 67-97; on the script, see Dumville "Palaeography of the 'Book of Deer'", and Appendix.

[111] See Appendix.

[112] For a summary of the early medieval and especially Insular development of death rituals, see Christine Maddern *Raising the Dead: Early Medieval Name Stones in Northumbria* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013), 81-85 and Márkus, "The Sick and the Dying", 67-97.

[113] Hughes, "The Book of Deer", 36.

[114] Márkus, "The Sick and the Dying", 80.

little sign of any other liturgical use of the pocket gospels.[115] Thus it remains possible that both symbolic and practical motivations could have informed the addition of the texts for the communion of the sick to the pocket gospels.

This possibility is further supported by the appearance in the Cuthbert Gospel of four passages of text marked with marginal clusters of three, four or five dots at the beginning and end, accompanied with the marginal inscriptions "for the dead" or "concerning the dead".[116] Although scholars have generally interpreted this as indicating the manuscript's use at the translation ceremony for the body of St Cuthbert in 698, Richard Gameson has recently rejected this theory. Given these marked lections, he considers it more likely that one of the manuscript's uses, "quite possibly the main one", was to accompany the recitation of masses for the dead. He suggests that "its format [was] ideally suited for use as one of several service-books (or schedules) required", adding that if it was not originally bound with covers, "then it could even more easily have been included within a sheaf of relevant texts as part of a practical funerary manual or a collection of memorial masses".[117]

Yet while the correspondence between the pocket gospels and material associated with the rituals of death and commemoration is apparent, scholars have not fully explained the reason for this. In all but the Cuthbert Gospel, the tiny script and abundant use of abbreviations indicate that these manuscripts probably were not designed for reading aloud.[118] In all cases, the material pertaining to these rituals is later than the manuscript's original creation, if only slightly, suggesting that while their small size may have meant that they were well suited to hand-held use in ritual performances, this was probably not why they were made in a small format in the first place. It is worth asking then, whether there were other reasons besides straightforward practicality that caused several of the pocket gospels to be used in the service of the dead and dying within a few years or decades of their creation.

Accordingly, it is notable that manuscripts, and sometimes particularly small manuscripts, had close associations with death, the apocalypse and salvation in Insular culture. This stems from the text of Revelation in which books play a prominent role. In Revelation 5:1-9 John witnesses an enthroned figure holding "a book written within and without, sealed with seven seals"; the only one found worthy to open the book is the lamb

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[115] For the possibility that marginal crosses in Add. 40618 mark liturgical readings, see Farr, "Irish Pocket Gospels", 97-99, although she thought it unlikely that the manuscript was actually used in the liturgy due to its tiny script.

[116] *p(ro) defunctis*, fols 20r (John 5:21-4) and 27r-v (John 6:37-9); *de mortuoru(m)/mortuor(um)*, fols 28v-29r (John 6:51-4) and 51r-v (John 11:21-7).

[117] Gameson, 'History of the Manuscript', 130.

[118] See Chapter 3.

who is the lion of the tribe of Juda.[119] Exegetes made clear that this book represented Scripture and the lamb, Christ; in the words of Gregory:

> This book can refer only to sacred Scriptures, for it was opened by no one but Christ our redeemer, who became man, and by his death, resurrection, and ascension opened the way to all the mysteries it contained.[120]

Then again, in Revelation 10, John describes how an angel descended who "had in his hand a little book open".[121] A voice from heaven instructs John to take the little book from the angel, and the angel tells him to eat it. John does as commanded and finds the book sweet in his mouth but bitter in his belly; the angel then commissions him to prophesy to the nations.[122] Exegetes interpreted this as another reference to Scripture. Bede, for example, understands this little book as the same one described earlier in Revelation, representing Christian Scripture; he explains that to eat it is to "put it in your bowels, and write it on the breadth of your heart", because John had to "preach to the nations a Gospel which was indeed sweet with love, but made bitter by the persecutions he would have to bear".[123] At Revelation 20:12, "another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged by those things which were written in the books, according to their works".[124] Bede understands this as another reference to the books of Scripture, recording the deeds of the righteous according to which humanity is to be judged.[125]

Due to this emphasis, books are prominent in apocalyptic imagery. In *Maiestas Domini* scenes, based on the descriptions of Revelation 4, which are commonly found in

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[119] "Librum scriptum intus et foris signatum sigillis septem".

[120] Gregory, *Dialogues*, 4. 42, trans. Odo John Zimmermann, Fathers of the Church 39 (New York: Fathers of the Church, 1959), 253; "Quo videlicet in libro quid aliud quam sacra Scriptura signatur? Quam solus Redemptor noster aperuit, qui homo factus, moriendo, resurgendo, ascendendo, cuncta mysteria quae in eo fuerant clausa patefecit", ed. Jacques-Paul Migne, PL 77 (Paris: Migne, 1862), 149-430 at 400-01.

[121] "Habebat in manu sua libellum apertum".

[122] Revelation 10:9-11.

[123] Bede, *Commentary on Revelation* 2. 16. 10-15, trans. Wallis, *Bede: Commentary on Revelation*, 178-79. "Id est insere tuis uisceribus et describe in latititudine cordis tui [...] Cum perceperis, oblectaberis *diuine* eloquii dulcedine, sed amaritudinem senties, cum praedicare et operari coeperis quod intellexeris", *Expositio Apocalypseos*, ed. Roger Gryson, CCSL 121a (Turnhout: Brepols, 2001), 367. For discussion of this passage regarding reading and memorisation, see Carruthers, *Book of Memory*, 165.

[124] This book is mentioned elsewhere in the Bible: Psalm 68:29; Malachi 3:16-17; Philippians 4: 3.

[125] Bede, *Commentary on Revelation* 3. 36; trans. Wallis, 257-58; ed. CCSL 121a, 513-17.

early medieval manuscript miniatures and on Irish high crosses, Christ is depicted enthroned in heaven holding a book.[126] In his analysis of representations of books in early medieval miniatures, James Finn Cotter emphasised the poignancy of this symbol, concluding that "the book that appears in the *Majestas Domini* illuminations is the Book of Life, the Lord revealed in scripture, the source and end of being".[127] Further, images often make apparent the exegetical connection between the apocalyptic book and the gospels by representing the four evangelists in the form of the four living creatures of Revelation.[128] Such images clearly render the link between the transmission of the gospels and the coming end of the world, as prophesied in Matthew 24:14: "And this gospel of the kingdom, shall be preached in the whole world, for a testimony to all nations, and then shall the consummation come".[129]

The idea of the apocalyptic book clearly held an important place in Insular culture. Each monastic centre kept its own book of life (*liber vitae*), in which the community preserved the names of deceased members and other people of special importance to them. This document was kept on or near the altar and provided a focus for the prayers for the living and the dead included in each mass (except on Sundays) according to the early-medieval Roman liturgy.[130] Likewise, in mid-seventh- to early-ninth-century Northumbria, carved name stones that closely resemble books were placed around monastic graves, leading Éamonn Ó Carragáin to note that "it would appear that individual members of the community were accompanied to the grave with their own imperishable *liber vitae*".[131] In her extensive study of these carved stones, Christine Maddern has reinforced this view, proposing how they evoke the concept of the apocalyptic book to serve as the foci of memory and veneration for a community's dead.[132] These stones are the same shape as books; they include inscribed prayer requests comparable to manuscript colophons; they are decorated on one broad side like a book cover with cruciform imagery similar to manuscript covers or

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[126] See Chapter 4.

[127] James Finn Cotter, "The Book Within the Book in Medieval Illumination", *Florigelium* 12 (1993), 107-40, at 110.

[128] See Chapter 4.

[129] "Et praedicabitur hoc evangelium regni in universo orbe in testimonium omnibus gentibus et tunc veniet consummatio"; see also Rev. 14: 6.

[130] Éamonn O'Carragáin, *Ritual and the Rood: Liturgical Images and the Old English Poems of the Dream of the Rood Tradition* (London: British Library, 2005), 41-42.

[131] O'Carragáin, *Ritual and the Rood*, 41-42.

[132] Maddern, *Raising the Dead*.

carpet pages; and they are around the same size as manuscripts, some even pocket-gospel sized, with the smallest name stone being 191 mm high.[133]

Such ideas regarding the Book of Life as a symbol of an individual's salvation and the focus of their commemoration are likely to lie behind accounts of prominent figures from Insular monastic culture turning to books of Scripture at the end of their lives: both Bede and Boisil turned to the Gospel of John before death and Columba turned to the Psalter. Could it be that possessing a small personal gospel book was considered equivalent to carrying the book of life: an assurance of promised salvation for the faithful and a constant guide to living righteously? Given the number of pocket gospels that contain scribal colophons, several of which refer to themes of salvation, it is also worth considering whether writing one's name in the sacred book might have evoked the idea of having one's name in the Book of Life.[134] Perhaps these associations would even have been intensified after the manuscript's owner died, when it might have become a focus for the community's memory of the deceased, acting much like a Northumbrian name stone. The personal book thus might be regarded not only as a link with the departed member, but also as evidence of their salvation.

It is possible to see, then, how the symbolism of a pocket gospel might make it particularly appropriate for administering to dying members of the community. Not only because exegetes interpreted all of Christian Scripture as pointing forward to the end of time when its mysteries will be fully revealed—an association that might be particularly accentuated by a small-sized gospel book given the description of the apocalyptic book as a *libellus* (Revelation 10:2); but also because a personal gospel book might be intimately associated with its owner's personal salvation. If its previous owner was a revered member of the community, their book might carry the comforting assurance that the dying brother would be following their forerunner to heaven. In this context, the manuscript might take on added significance if its deceased owner (or supposed owner) was revered as a saint. It is thus surely significant that several of the pocket gospels, including some of those containing texts for the communion of the sick, were associated with saints from an early date: the Book of Mulling with St Moling, the Book of Dimma with St Crónán, the Cadmug Gospels with St Boniface, the Book of Armagh with St Patrick.[135] Therefore it is likely that pocket gospel books came to be used for administering to the dying and commemorating the dead not

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[133] Maddern, *Raising the Dead*. This was also noted in her earlier PhD Thesis "The Northumbrian Name Stones of Early Christian Anglo-Saxon England" (University of York, 2007), Appendix 4, which includes an analysis of gospel book sizes correlated to the size of name stones.

[134] On themes of salvation in colophons, see Chapter 3; for colophon texts, see Appendix.

[135] See Appendix and Chapter 3.

because, as Hughes suggested, they were thought to have the power to cure the sick, but because they were thought to have the power to save.

Summary

Consideration of the texts and manuscripts surviving from the early Middle Ages suggests that the small size of the pocket gospels is indeed likely to be linked to use as personal books, combining practical usage with immense symbolic weight. It seems most convincing to regard them in relation to the types of small, hand-held books attested by texts and surviving manuscripts that were kept with their owner at all times, held in the hands or even worn, providing a source for study, prayer and memorisation, but also giving comfort to the soul and serving as a constant reminder of divine protection and the promise of salvation.

Central to this is the increased physicality of small manuscripts. The unusual format draws attention to their nature as objects, as suggested in the repeated association between small manuscripts and their owners' hands. These sources present touching the manuscript as a trigger of thought and memory, bringing to mind past owners or donors, prompting prayer, and making physical contact with God. Further, enclosing the manuscript in the hands could be understood to emphasise the interiority of its content and the inverted magnitude of the infinite significance contained within the tiny object.

This discussion has also touched upon some of the texts of the pocket gospels: the inclusion of prayers in some, and the emphasis on the Gospel of John in others, which also point to private devotions. Although many kinds of book could be used in this way—Alfred's *enchiridion*, Postumianus' *Life of St Martin*, the psalters and prayer books—a gospel book, as the fundamental text of Christianity seems particularly well suited to such use. Conversely, the addition of rituals for the dead and dying into several of the pocket gospels suggests that they came to be used by the community not long after their creation, reflecting the manuscripts' developing symbolic associations with salvation and perhaps with the power of saintly individuals.

In line with this, it has emerged how a small, personal manuscript might be intimately connected with its owners, past and present. In the context of gift-exchange, this could allow the manuscript to form a bond between donor and recipient, while for later owners, it could enhance the prestige and significance of the manuscript. For communities remembering their past members and perhaps venerating them as saints, their personal manuscripts might form a link of exceeding intimacy and holiness. Such manuscripts might thus become symbols of cult and community, as in the hagiographic examples cited by McGurk at the beginning of this chapter. This highlights the fine line between private devotional use of a manuscript and its public understanding as the relic of a saint, suggesting that the nature of a personal book could be complicated and liable to slippage between

categories. McGurk saw the pocket gospels as the genuine artefacts behind hagiographical accounts of saintly scribes and manuscript exchanges, but perhaps the pocket gospels are as highly constructed as the hagiographies.

This chapter has taken a broad perspective, aiming to set the pocket gospels within the context of early medieval manuscript culture to show how small size might affect manuscript function and meaning. To further understand the nature of the pocket gospels it is now necessary to consider their specific features, paying particular attention to the divergences between manuscripts. More detailed analysis of the manuscripts themselves lends support to these findings, serving to reinforce the characterisation of these manuscripts as personal books kept by the pious as a guide to salvation.

CHAPTER TWO

Significance of Quires and Bindings

Apart from their diminutive format, one of the distinctive features of the pocket gospels is their quire structure. In most cases, each gospel text is written either on its own single quire or its own set of quires. These are often irregularly sized and unusually large, which is a natural consequence of the single-quire gospels, but less explicable for those gospels spread over a set of quires, for which only the final quire of the gospel might be expected to display a variant length. These practices reveal a clear concern to arrange separate texts as separate codicological units. Yet, although this unusual approach to quiring is a distinctive feature of most of the manuscripts in the pocket-gospel group, there are exceptions, making it a problematic criterion for defining the group.

The various relationships of the gospel texts to the quires can be summarised as follows:[1]

Table 2: Relation of Quires to Gospel Texts

Each gospel on a single quire	Each gospel on a separate set of quires	Gospels not separated by quire
Book of Deer (Matthew, Mark and Luke)	Book of Deer (John)	Bern 671
Stowe St John	Book of Armagh	Mulling Fragment
Book of Dimma (Matthew and Mark)	Book of Dimma (Luke and John)	Add. 40618
Book of Mulling	MacDurnan Gospels	Cuthbert Gospel
Cadmug Gospels		

As is clear, although most of the pocket gospels divide their gospel texts by quire, some do not. While its bifolia were divided by nineteenth-century binders, earlier accounts report that the Mulling Fragment consisted of the remains of only one quire which spanned the last verses of the Gospel of Matthew and the first verses of Mark, demonstrating that each gospel was not reserved to a separate quire in this manuscript.[2] The gospels of Add. 40618 are not separated by quire, although their sizes are irregular and unusually large. The gospels of Bern 671 are also not arranged on separate quires, and furthermore its quires are

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[1] Arranged alphabetically by city.

[2] Lawlor, *Chapters*, 12. See Appendix.

all of a regular size, each a quinion (five bifolia). Similarly, the Cuthbert Gospel is written on regular quaternions (four bifolia). The gospels of the Book of Armagh are placed on separate sets of quires, but they are not particularly irregular: variant sizes only appear at the end of gospels, presumably in order to make them fit the text, and the quires are not large, the preference being for quaternions with a few senions and quinions.

There is an important distinction to be made between the practice of arranging each gospel on a separate set of quires and that of confining each to its own single quire. Neither is typical, but while comparable examples of the former exist, the latter is exceptional. The gospels are divided into separate sets of quires in a number of deluxe gospel books of Insular origin or connections: for example, the Lindisfarne Gospels, Trier Gospels,[3] Augsburg Gospels,[4] Barberini Gospels[5] and Book of Kells.[6] Additionally, despite McGurk's suggestion that the alignment of the quires with the textual divisions only occurs in gospel books,[7] it is occasionally also found in other manuscripts. In the tenth-century Irish Southampton Psalter, for example, the quires are tailored to fit the three divisions of fifty Psalms,[8] which in Insular psalters are often introduced by miniatures and decorated incipits in a manner similar to gospel openings.[9] Likewise the Leiden Priscian is arranged so that the end of quire one coincides with the end of Priscian's *Periegesis*, and the end of quire nineteen coincides with the end of book sixteen of the *Institutiones Grammaticae*, following the customary designation of the first sixteen books as "Priscianus maior", and the final two books as "Priscianus minor".[10]

Nevertheless, this practice is uncommon and its occurrence in several of the pocket gospels suggests that it may be especially related to the group, particularly when considered in conjunction with the exceptionally rare practice of placing each gospel on a single separate quire. The pocket-gospel manuscripts listed above are the only surviving examples of this practice from the period, and it is therefore striking that they are manuscripts of a similar

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[3] Trier, Cathedral Treasury, MS 61.

[4] Augsburg, Universitätsbibl. Cod. I.2.4°.2. Its quires are mostly quaternions with unusually-sized quires at the end of each gospel indicating, as Nancy Netzer has shown, that the scribes made up most or all of the quires as they proceeded. See Netzer, *Cultural Interplay*, 30-31.

[5] BAV Barberini lat. 570.

[6] TCD MS 58.

[7] McGurk, "The Architecture of Latin Gospel Books", 27; McGurk, "The Irish Pocket Gospel", 254-55.

[8] Cambridge St John's College MS C.9. See Duncan, *"The Southampton Psalter"*, 7-10, and Appendices 2 and 4, 30 and 31-38.

[9] E.g. Henry, "Remarks on the Decoration", 23-40.

[10] Leiden, University Library, BPL 67; Johann P. Gumbert, "The Irish Priscian in Leiden", *Quaerendo* 27, 4 (1997), 280-99, at 185-86.

type. Thus, although not all the manuscripts that might be classed as pocket gospels exhibit this feature, the fact that the only surviving manuscripts in which individual texts are each deliberately confined to a single over-sized quire are all small-sized Insular minuscule gospel books is doubtlessly significant. The more common practice of dividing each gospel onto its own separate set of quires is clearly related, both being designed to ensure that individual texts were contained on individual codicological units. It is apparent that the majority of the pocket gospels follow one of these practices (or both, as in the books of Dimma and Deer) and thus exhibit concern for textual discreteness.

The question of why the quires of many of the pocket gospels were structured this way also has implications for the nature of their bindings. As scholars have observed, the unusual tendency to place each gospel on its own separate quire or set of quires may indicate that the gospels were intended to be kept as four distinct volumes. If this is the case it suggests that they were probably not bound conventionally with boards and covers: each may have been stitched without a cover, or with only a light-weight limp cover, or they may have been kept together in a single loose cover or other container. However, it remains to be fully considered whether use as discrete volumes is indeed the best explanation for the unusual quiring practices of the pocket gospels, and whether it is thus justified to suppose that they were bound without boards or attached covers.

Scholarship on the Pocket Gospel Bindings and Quires

The idea that the pocket gospels might not have had substantial bindings and that they may have taken the form of detached four-volume copies of the gospels originated with Hugh Lawlor's 1897 study of the Book of Mulling. He observed that the manuscript was found in its shrine with its quires loose and unsewn, that its colophon refers to the manuscript as *haec volumina* (these volumes), and that the scribes had taken care to confine each gospel to its own separate quire, concluding that:

> The expression of the colophon is absolutely accurate—"haec volumina".
> These "volumina" were never (till these later days) bound together: but that
> each was separately stitched was, if my memory does not deceive me, vouched
> for by holes made for the purpose, in such of the sheets (making pairs of
> leaves) as time and rough usage had left in anything approaching their
> original condition.[11]

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[11] Lawlor, *Chapters*, 10.

When McGurk first introduced the pocket gospels, he restated this idea and applied it to the entire group as an explanation for their tendency to confine gospel texts to separate quires and for the apparent inconsistencies between the presentation of gospel texts in the same volume. Like Lawlor, he emphasised the vocabulary of the Mulling colophon, concluding that:

> The division of the Gospels into separate gatherings, then, the fact that often the Gospels seem to have been written by different scribes and, in the case of Dimma, had their frontispieces done by different artists working with different colours, may perhaps be explained by supposing that Irish books were not bound until a late date and that the Irish Gospels had separate quires because they were in fact separate volumes circulating in a satchel.[12]

Thus both Lawlor and McGurk regarded the pocket gospels as comprising manuscripts of the gospels in four volumes, stitched separately and not bound: by which they presumably meant stitched without a cover (although their interpretation would also permit the volumes to have been kept in a loose cover). The principal arguments in favour of this hypothesis are the structure of the quiring, the phrasing of the Mulling colophon, and the distribution of different scribes and artists within the same manuscript.

In investigating these deductions further, it is first necessary to consider the evidence for early medieval bindings in order to establish what forms of bindings were likely used in this historical context. Following this, the question of whether the pocket gospels were likely to have been used as detached four-volume gospel books will be considered, by analysing both the historical evidence for the practice as well as the evidence of the manuscripts themselves. Alternative explanations for the unusual quire structures of the pocket gospels will then be explored. As such, it is clear that several of the pocket gospels are composite volumes with complex histories of production, compilation and use. However, beyond these practical explanations, it is also possible that the unusual structures of many of the pocket gospel quires reveal more about the attitudes of their makers and users to the nature of the gospels and the manuscript as medium than they do about their functional applications.

Evidence for Early Medieval Bindings

Perhaps the clearest evidence against Lawlor and McGurk's suggestions that the pocket gospels were meant to be used as separate, unbound volumes are the early medieval bindings partially or wholly surviving for the Cuthbert Gospel, Cadmug Gospels, Book of

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[12] McGurk, "The Irish Pocket Gospel", 255.

Armagh and probably also the Stowe St John and Missal (Figs 11-13).[13] Wooden boards are retained for each of these (birch for the Cuthbert Gospel, oak for the others), all covered with red-stained leather (although in the case of the Stowe boards, the leather covering consists only of strips folded around the borders at the fore, head and tail of the board). The Cuthbert and Cadmug leather covers are decorated with impressed designs filled with pigment, and the former is also decorated with moulded vine motifs, while O'Neill reports that the Armagh leather is "decorated with tooled interlace patterns".[14] The Stowe covers are plain.

The survival of early medieval boards is rare, and it is striking that as many as four pocket gospels retain them; rarer still is the survival of early medieval sewing, which is preserved on the binding of the Cuthbert Gospel. Unusually, the Cuthbert Gospel binding comprises an unsupported sewing structure, meaning that the quires are not laced to supports (thongs or cords); rather the thread alone joins the quires together and attaches them to the boards, in these instances using a kettle-stitch.[15] In her article of 1949, Berthe Van Regemorter reported that the same unusual sewing technique was also used in the binding of the Cadmug Gospels, describing the bindings of the Cadmug and Cuthbert Gospels as "brothers"; however, the Cadmug Gospels was resewn in the 1960s, without any records or photographs being taken of the original sewing, so her findings can no longer be confirmed.[16]

The unusual structure of these bindings reinforces the idea that the pocket gospels might have served as books for hand-held personal reading. Although no other bindings from this early date survive for comparison, it seems likely that this choice of binding was guided by the size and function of the manuscripts. The unsupported sewing, which results in what Roger Powell described as a "rather floppy structure",[17] might be particularly suited to use in the hands, where the added strain on the spine (as compared to use on a book-stand) would be likely to damage a more rigid structure. Conversely, it is doubtful that such a binding would have been strong enough to support a large manuscript, prompting

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[13] See Appendix.

[14] Timothy O'Neill, *The Irish Hand: Scribes and their Manuscripts from the Earliest Times* (2nd edn. Cork: Cork University Press, 2014), 6.

[15] Binding terminology adopted from "The Language of Bindings Thesaurus", accessed 26/06/2016, from http://www.ligatus.org.uk/lob.

[16] Berthe Van Regemorter, "The Binding of the manuscripts of the Saints Cuthbert and Boniface" in Berthe Van Regemorter, *Binding Structures in the Middle Ages: A Selection of Studies*, trans. Jane Greenfield (Brussels: Bibliotheca Wittockiana, 1992), 43-51. See also, Nicholas Pickwoad, "Binding", in *The Cuthbert* Gospel, ed. Breay and Meehan, 41-63, at 49.

[17] Roger Powell, "The Binding", in *The Relics of Saint Cuthbert*, ed. C. F. Battiscomb (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1956), 362-74, at 367.

Christopher Clarkson to comment that, "to the modern observer the pure chain-stitch has a certain looseness, and it is difficult to imagine large parchment tomes such as Vaticanus, Sinaiticus, and Alexandrinus being well-enough supported by such a sewing".[18]

Another advantage of the unsupported, kettle-stitch sewing also corresponds to the physical structure of the pocket gospel books; that is, it allows much larger quires to be adequately supported. Assessing the best method of sewing the Stowe St John and Missal for its 1995 rebinding, Anthony Cains reported that "the gatherings are too thick to be sewn by conventional method; we need to refer to archaic binding's construction–kettle-stitch–horn-back binding".[19] In other words, he deemed unsupported kettle-stitch sewing to be the only method that could give the necessary support and flexibility to the lengthy quires of this manuscript (the largest is nine bifolia). Given that Add. 40618, the Book of Mulling, Cadmug Gospels and MacDurnan Gospels all contain quires as large or larger, it seems likely that such a method was originally used for the sewing of most if not all of the group.

Yet although such bindings seem eminently suited to pocket gospels, we cannot assume that all were originally bound this way; indeed, it may even be that the surviving bindings listed above are slightly later than original. In particular, doubts have been raised over the date at which the Cuthbert Gospel acquired its famous binding. In his examination, Roger Powell posited that the binding may slightly post-date the manuscript: querying the reason that the scribe left a single blank leaf (fol. ii) before beginning the text, he noted that the recto of fol. 1 "is noticeably shiny, as well it might be if the manuscript had been in use but unbound", and therefore wondered whether the blank leaf was "an addition, made necessary by the decision to bind".[20]

Furthermore, the quires of the Cuthbert Gospel each have two pairs of small holes along the fold, which are distinct from the v-shaped slots that take the sewing and the pin-holes that probably result from the pinning down of the quires for trimming and ruling. Julian Brown suggested that these were "to allow each gathering to be lightly stitched together, either before writing or afterwards, to keep the sheets in their proper order until

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[18] Christopher Clarkson, "Some Representations of the Book and Book-making, from the Earliest Codex Forms to Jost Amman", in *The Bible as Book: The Manuscript Tradition*, ed. John Lawrence Sharpe and Kimberly Van Kampen (London and New Castle, DE: British Library and Oak Knoll Press, 1998), 197-203, at 199.

[19] Anthony Cains, unpublished conservator's notes (1995), kept along with the manuscript: Dublin, Royal Irish Academy, MS D ii 3.

[20] Roger Powell and Peter Waters, "Technical Description of the Binding", in *Stonyhurst Gospel*, ed. Julian Brown, 45-55, at 50. Fol. ii was certainly present before the binding because it is part of the structure of the first quire; its stub is visible after fol. 8.

they were bound".[21] Yet although some large-sized deluxe Insular gospel books also display similar holes (for example, the Lindisfarne and Lichfield Gospels),[22] their presence in the Cuthbert Gospel might, as Nicholas Pickwoad has suggested, also support the possibility that the manuscript could have initially circulated in a sewn-form, perhaps without boards or covers, before receiving its present binding.[23]

Indeed, the use of manuscripts with quires stitched together but not attached to any boards—although perhaps kept in a limp cover, which may or may not have been attached— is well attested in the early Middle Ages. Insight into the possible form of such bindings may be gleaned from the rare examples of limp covers still surviving on a few Insular manuscripts of the works of Isidore from the library of Fulda Abbey. Van Regemorter dated these to the eighth and ninth centuries, although Szirmai favours a tenth-century date.[24] Each cover consists of a piece of thick parchment,[25] folded around the spine and extending from fore-edge to fore-edge like a wrapper. The manner of sewing is difficult to ascertain due to later repairs, but at least one was simply stitched to the cover.[26] The manuscripts are mostly written in Insular minuscule although their origin is unclear. It is tempting to suppose that inexpensive and unpretentious covers like these were common for patristic texts and other library books in the early Middle Ages, while it is hard to imagine that they could have withstood the intense day-to-day use of liturgical manuscripts, for example.

The use of limp covers is also attested in early medieval Ireland. The Faddan More Psalter was discovered in a peat bog with a limp cover of calf-skin lined with papyrus, apparently unattached to the manuscript (Fig. 86). John Gillis has observed that vegetable fibres found in the manuscript indicate sewing of the individual quires, but that there is no evidence that they were stitched to one another or to the cover.[27] Yet Gillis also thought it unlikely that the manuscript and cover were designed for one another: the cover (330 x 530 mm, total size unfolded) is larger than the manuscript (300 x 260 mm); moreover, two holes on the back-fold of the cover do not relate to any feature on the book-block, and probably

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[21] Brown, *Stonyhurst Gospel*, 57.

[22] Christophel De Hamel, *A History of Illuminated Manuscripts* (Oxford: Phaidon, 1986), 33.

[23] Pickwoad, "Binding", 45;

[24] Basel, Universitätsbibliothek, Cod. F III 15b (with sewing cords); F III 15c; F III 15d; F III 15f; and F III 15l. See Berthe Van Regemorter, "The Limp Bindings of Carolingian Manuscripts from Fulda", in *Binding Structures*, 139-50; John A. Szirmai, *The Archaeology of Medieval Bookbinding* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), 285-88.

[25] Though described as leather "which has become hard and dry with age", in Van Regemorter, "The Limp Bindings", 139.

[26] Szirmai, *The Archaeology of Medieval Bookbinding*, 287-88.

[27] Gillis, "The Faddan More Psalter".

derive from the sewing of a previous manuscript to the cover.[28] It is also worth noting that the quires of the Faddan More psalter do not appear to be tailored to the textual divisions of the manuscript, despite at least one early medieval Irish psalter, the Southampton Psalter, being designed so that quire breaks correspond with the "three fifties".[29] In Faddan More however, Psalm 51 starts on fol. 22r, part-way through the second quire. While the significance of this should not be overstated, there is certainly no evidence to suggest that the Psalter was designed from the first to be kept as loose quires. One might wonder then, whether the binding of the Faddan More Psalter represents typical practice, or is simply a make-shift solution employed in unusual circumstances. Yet regardless of whether its lack of attachment to the cover is taken to be anomalous, the Faddan More Psalter further attests the probable widespread use of limp covers in the early Middle Ages.

In addition to these surviving examples, the existence of manuscripts with limp covers or without covers is also attested in early medieval textual sources, often with Insular connections, although the ambiguity of medieval terminology complicates straightforward identification of binding types. For example, the use of manuscripts without boards and perhaps without covers is demonstrated in the ninth-century library catalogue of St Gallen.[30] This text records that the library possessed eight manuscripts in *quaternio* or *quaterniones* (a quire or quires), all of which were among the library's thirty *libri scottice scripti* (books written in the Irish manner).[31] There are also two manuscripts listed enigmatically as in *codicillo* (a small codex).[32] However, in regard to the pocket gospels, it is worth noting that none of these manuscripts were gospels: like the majority of the books in the library's collection, the gospel books were each listed as *in volumine* (a single bound volume, presumably with boards).[33]

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[28] Gillis, "The Faddan More Psalter".

[29] Elizabeth Duncan, *The Southampton Psalter*, 7-10 and "Appendix 2", 30.

[30] St Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek, Cod. 728, 4.

[31] Paul Lehmann, *Mittelalterliche Bibliothekskataloge Deutschlands und der Schweiz, I Die Bistümer Konstanz und Chur* (München: C. H. Beck'Sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1918, rpt. 1969), 71. While cautioning that the meaning of such terms is not always clear, Szirzmai identifies *libri sine asseribus*, *sine postibus*, *in quaterno* or *in pergameno* as terms used in medieval catalogues to indicate manuscripts in limp bindings, Szirzmai, *Archaeology*, 285. Although etymologically referring to quires of four bifolia, the word *quaternio* was commonly used in the Middle Ages to refer to quires regardless of their size, see Mariken Teeuwen, *The Vocabulary of Intellectual Life in the Middle Ages* (Turnhout: Brepols 2003), 190-91.

[32] *Instructio eclesiastici ordinis*; *Vita Sancti Hilarii*.

[33] The St Gall manuscripts in Insular script on a single quire are listed as: *De inventione corporis sancti Stephani*; *De relatione translationis sancti Galli in novam eclesiam*; *In natali innocentium*

Arguably, manuscripts of similar construction might also be inferred from Jonas of Bobbio's report in his *Life of Columbanus*, dating from 642, that Athala, the second abbot of Bobbio (incumbent 615-26), had the manuscripts of the abbey bound before his death (the only historical example that McGurk provided to support his theory).[34] Jonas describes Athala preparing for his expected death by putting the monastery in order: among the tasks carried out, he strengthens books with bonds (*libros ligaminibus firmat*) and, depending on how the ambiguous word *tegumentum* is interpreted, possibly also renews the book-covers (*tegumenta renovat*).[35] Yet Jonas does not make clear whether Athala had the manuscripts bound for the first time or simply had them rebound, nor what form the bindings took, making this a problematic source for interpreting contemporary binding practices.

Overall, the evidence for early medieval binding practices suggests that the pocket gospels, even those with surviving early medieval bindings, could have been fitted initially with much less substantial bindings. The fact that several of the pocket gospels were bound in the early Middle Ages—including some of those that feature texts confined to separate quires, such as the Cadmug Gospels, Stowe St John and Book of Armagh—does not mean that they were initially presented this way. Use of manuscripts bound without boards is well attested in Insular contexts, raising the possibility that at least some of the pocket gospels could likewise have been originally created without a full binding of boards and covers.

Haec Volumina: Four-Volume Gospel Books?

Yet the question of whether and to what extent the pocket gospels were bound is raised principally by their unusual quiring: specifically, by the assumption that the practice of placing each gospel text on its own quire or set of quires might have been intended to allow their use as discrete volumes. In order to understand the form in which the pocket gospels were made and first used, it is therefore essential to weigh the evidence for Lawlor and McGurk's suggestions that the pocket gospels were created to be used in four separate volumes.

Many early medieval manuscripts were made with each text confined to a separate quire, and it is clear that this was frequently done for reasons other than the production of a finished manuscript organised as multiple disconnected volumes. Perhaps most commonly it could be the result of scriptorium practice in which scribes collaborating to produce a

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legenda; *Item in regum*. Those on several quires are: *Bedae de arte metrica*; Liber I *Genesis*; *Orationes*; *Expositio in cantica canticorum*.

[34] McGurk, "The Irish Pocket Gospel", 255.

[35] *Vitae Sanctorum Columbani* 2. 5. 6 and 8; ed. Bruno Krusch, MGH, SRG (Hannover and Leipzig: Hahn, 1905), 237.

manuscript would each take responsibility for a particular text, each copying the words and assembling their own quires as they worked; such a system naturally forms a manuscript composed of texts on separate sets of quires.[36] In those pocket gospels in which the changes in text and quire also correspond to changes in scribe— for example, the Book of Armagh— such practices may have played a role in forming the structure.[37] However, this seems an unlikely explanation for the quiring of most of the pocket gospels, in which text/quire breaks do not align with scribal changes, and especially for those manuscripts in which each gospel is written on a single oversized quire—an unusual feature that can hardly be a simple reflection of scriptorium working practices.

Does this mean that the division of texts onto separate quires could be designed to allow the use of each gospel as a discrete volume? There is some historical evidence for the use of multi-volume gospel books, although it is by no means conclusive. For example, a possible reference to a four-volume gospel book is found in the early-sixteenth-century Aberdeen Martyrology, which records that St Ternan, the sixth-century bishop of the Picts, owned a gospel book in four volumes (*euuangelistarum quoque quatuor voluminibus*), encased in precious metals.[38] It adds that his miracle-working gospel of Matthew was still kept at Banquory at the time that the Calendar was compiled.[39] Despite the late date of this text, it is possible that the information it transmits is early: St Ternan had early medieval church dedications in both Scotland and Ireland and features in a list of saints from Scotland in a poem in the Book of Leinster version of the Martyrology of Tallaght.[40] Yet even if the manuscript genuinely was early medieval, the fact that it was circulating in separate gospel-volumes in the early modern period does not prove that it took that form when it was first made: like many of the pocket gospels, it could just as easily have comprised gospel texts each written on separate quires or separate sets of quires, which were split up in later centuries, perhaps for the purpose of relic-distribution.

The use of gospel books in multiple separate volumes may also be suggested by the liturgical texts of the *Apertio Aurium,* a pre-baptismal ceremony that took place during Lent,

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[36] For detailed analysis of the work of two scribes following this practice, see Netzer, *Cultural Interplay*, 28-44.

[37] For this suggestion regarding the Book of Armagh, see Sharpe, "Palaeographical Considerations", 5; and Brown, "Ferdomnach". See also below.

[38] Edinburgh University Library MS 50.

[39] David Laing, "An Obituary and Calendar of Scottish saints, extracted from the Martyrology for the use of the Church of Aberdeen, A Ms. of the Sixteenth Century", *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* 2 (1855–56), 256–272, at 264-65.

[40] Thomas Clancy, "Deer and the Early Church in North-Eastern Scotland", in *Book of Deer*, ed. Forsyth, 383.

that aimed to "open the ears" of catechumens to the essential texts of the Christian faith before their baptism. This ceremony is attested in Rome from the sixth century, although its origins may go back even earlier.[41] It appears to have been widely practised on the Continent up to the ninth century and it is clear that it was known in the Insular world as Bede mentions it twice.[42] The *Apertio Aurium* included a ritual called the *Traditio Evangeliorum*, designed to introduce the catechumens to the Gospels.[43] Several texts of the rite, including the seventh-century *Ordo Romanus* 11 and the eighth-century Gelasian text of the Gellone Sacramentary, instruct that four deacons, each carrying a gospel book, must process through the church and lay the manuscripts at the four corners of the altar. The priest then expounds the meaning of the gospels, explaining the origins of the evangelist symbols and how each illustrates the nature of its gospel, and the four deacons chant the *incipits* of their respective gospels in turn.[44] Could gospel books in four detached volumes—perhaps even pocket gospels—have been designed for use in the performance of this rite?

Various scholars have interpreted the ceremony as having influenced Insular gospel book design more generally.[45] For example, Éamonn Ó Carragáin has suggested that if illuminated gospel books were used during the ritual, the evangelists' picture pages could be shown to the congregation,[46] and noted that "it is of interest that in the Lindisfarne Gospels

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[41] Eric Palazzo, "La Mise en Action des Images dans l'illustration du Sacramentaire de Gellone: le Canon de la Messe et le Rituel Baptismal", *Codex Aquilarensis. Cuadernos de Investigación del Monasterio de Santa María la Real* 29 (2013), 49-60, at 53.

[42] Bede, *De Tabernaculo*, II, and *Ezram et Neemiam*, II. Brown, *Book of Cerne*, 110. Additionally, Ó Carragáin thought it likely that it was known and perhaps practised in Ireland, Éamonn Ó Carragáin, "Traditio Evangeliorum" and "Sustenatio": The Relevance of Liturgical Ceremonies to the Book of Kells", in *The Book of Kells: Proceedings of a Conference at Trinity College Dublin, 6-9th September 1992*, ed. Felicity O'Mahoney (Aldershot, 1994), 398-436, at 400.

[43] It appears in the Old Gelasian Sacramentary (BAV Vat. MS Reg. 316), the Missale Gallicanum Vetus (BAV, Pal. Lat 493), the Bobbio Sacramentary (BNF MS Lat. 13246), the Sacramentary of Gellone (BNF, MS Lat. 12048) and the Gelasian Sacramentary of Angoulême (BNF, MS Lat. 816).

[44] *Ordo* 11, ed. Andrieu, *Les Ordines Romani du haut Moyen Âge*, ed. Michel Andrieu, 6 vols (Louvain: Spicilegium Sacrum Lovaniense, 1931-1963) 2, 428; Sacramentary of Gellone (BNF, MS Lat. 12048), fol. 41v.

[45] See, Ó Carragáin, "Traditio Evangeliorum", 400-05; Éamonn Ó Carragáin, *Ritual and the Rood*, 143-44; Brown, *Lindisfarne Gospels*, 110-13; Jennifer O'Reilly, "Patristic and Insular Traditions of the Evangelists: Exegesis and Iconography of the Four-symbols Page" in *Le Isole Britanniche e Roma in Età RomanoBarbarica*, ed. Anna M. Fadda and Éamonn Ó Carragáin (Rome: Herder, 1998), 49-94, at 62-63.

[46] Ó Carragáin, *Ritual and the Rood*, 144.

each gospel is written on a separate set of quires".[47] However, he did not go so far as to suggest that such Insular gospel books were actually designed to be used in the *Traditio Evangeliorum*, preferring to understand it as an indirect influence on their presentation; for instance, he proposed that four-symbols' pages, such as that in the Book of Kells, are "visual equivalents" to the *Traditio Evangeliorum* and may have been intended to emphasise the "great ancestry" of the book by referring to what was thought to be ancient liturgical tradition.[48] Michelle Brown similarly noted that the ceremony raises the possibility that some early gospel books were bound as four separate volumes, and, though she doubted that it was used liturgically, suggested that the evangelist miniatures in the Book of Cerne might form "a visual summary of the ceremony *in aurium apertione*, which may have been remembered "archaeologically" as a concept even if the ceremony was no longer practised".[49]

Although it is possible that copies of the gospels in four detached volumes were used in the performance of this ceremony, it is worth noting that the surviving texts that describe the procession of the deacons, while somewhat ambiguous, seem to imply that they each carry an entire gospel book rather than a single gospel; for example in *Ordo Romanus* 11 the deacons proceed with four books of the gospels (*cum quattuor libros evangeliorum*), and in the Sacramentary of Gellone they process with four codices of the gospels (*cum euangelioru(m) codicib(us) IIII*).[50] This latter description of the codices in particular indicates that bound manuscripts are envisioned. Yet the small size of the pocket gospels makes them unlikely choices for use in liturgical performance: they would not have been visually striking at a distance and certainly their miniatures are too small to have been shown to a congregation. The ceremony rather seems to evoke the use of large, deluxe manuscripts, whose splendid lettering could be seen from afar and could impress the weight of the divine Word into the minds of the congregation.

However, even if they were probably not made to be used in this ritual, the utilisation of four codices to enact the exegetical theme of the individuality but essential harmony of the Gospels is likely pertinent to the quiring of the pocket gospels. Just as Ó Carragáin and Brown preferred to interpret the *Traditio Evangeliorum* rite as an indirect influence on Insular gospel book illumination, it may be that the pocket gospel quires reflect the same interest in giving codicological expression to the character and significance of the gospels. In this regard it is worth reconsidering the possible meanings of the colophon in the Book of Mulling, which as Lawlor and McGurk emphasised, refers to the manuscript as *haec*

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[47] Ó Carragáin, *Ritual and the Rood*, 173, n. 104, see also, 143-44.

[48] Ó Carragáin, "Traditio Evangeliorum", 405.

[49] Brown, *Book of Cerne*, 112.

[50] *Ordo* 11, 44, Andrieu, *Les Ordines Romani* 2, 428; Sacramentary of Gellone, fol. 41v.

volumina (these volumes). While this may imply that its five over-sized quires may have formed separate volumes, perhaps it also alludes to the exegetical theme of emphasising the individuality of the gospels.

In the early Middle Ages, the word *volumen* could have a broad semantic range. In the classical Graeco-Roman world, *volumen*, deriving from *volvere* (to roll), referred specifically to a manuscript in the form of a roll and was used in contrast to *codex*, which referred to a manuscript of folded leaves. In her study of the vocabulary of medieval books and book production, Mariken Teeuwen has shown that in the early medieval period, the words *codex*, *liber* and *volumen* could all be used interchangeably to mean "book" or "written text" in general, although Carolingian sources show that etymological origins of *volumen* were still known.[51] She adds that in this period, *volumen* was often used to imply a shorter written text, or a specific part of a work, in which case, "it could refer to a part within a book that was physically one entity, or to a part of a larger work that was a physical entity in itself: a "volume" in the modern sense of the word".[52] Thus when the Mulling colophon refers to *haec volumina*, it is worth asking whether it refers to the gospels as separate physical entities, as Lawlor and McGurk suggested, or as separate "works" in a conceptual sense.

It is thus worth examining other manuscript inscriptions that seem to make similar references. One such example is provided by the colophons of an eighth/ninth-century gospel book in Caroline minuscule from Murbach, in which the scribe, Ratfrid, seems to describe each gospel as a *libellus* (little book).[53] At the end of Mark (fol. 79v) the colophon in rustic capitals reads: "Ratfridus wrote this little book, let he who reads it pray for the scribe if he would have God as (his) protector";[54] then at the end of Gospel of John (fol. 172v): "Thanks be to God, Ratfridus wrote this little book".[55] Significantly, as with the Book of Mulling, this differentiation of the gospels as separate "little books" corresponds to the manuscript's codicology. Although the Ratfridus Gospel is larger than the pocket gospels (278 x 180 mm), the texts of Matthew and Mark are each confined to a separate set of quires, while the text of the Gospel of Luke runs onto the first leaf of the first quire of the Gospel of John by only ten lines, perhaps indicating that Ratfrid had intended the gospel text to end with the quire but miscalculated the space. The opposite miscalculation occurred in Mark's

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[51] Teeuwen, *Vocabulary of Intellectual Life*, 211-12.

[52] Teeuwen, *Vocabulary of Intellectual Life*, 212.

[53] Colmar, Bibliothèque Municipale, MS 15 (fols 1-172) (Previously Colmar, Stadtbibliothek MS 38). See *CLA* VI. 749; McGurk, *Latin Gospel Books*, no. 51.

[54] "RATFRIDUS SCRIPSIT HUNC LIBELLU(M) QUI LEGIT ORET PRO SCRIPTORE SI D(EU)M HABEAT PROTECTOREM".

[55] "D(E)O GRATIAS RATFRIDUS SCR(I)PSI(T) HUNC LIBELLUM".

Gospel, where the text was finished before the end of the quire, leaving a blank leaf (since excised) at the end of the text. The evidence of the quires and the colophons may therefore indicate that this gospel book took the form of perhaps four or two separate physical units. Yet it is worth noting that the slight overlap of the text of Luke onto the first quire of John seems to indicate that they were probably sewn together continuously. Indeed, the word *libellus*, the diminutive of *liber*, could refer equally to a small manuscript or a short conceptual work in the early Middle Ages, so that the precise meaning of the Ratfrid colophons is no clearer than the meaning of those in the Book of Mulling.[56]

This ambiguity is further highlighted by the fact that a gospel book could sometimes be described in the plural when it was almost certainly bound as a single volume. The mid-ninth-century Old English inscription in the mid-eighth-century Stockholm Codex Aureus (fol. 11)[57] records the presentation of the gospel book to Christ Church Canterbury with the words: "I, Earl Ælfred, and Werburg my wife, acquired these books from a heathen army".[58] Assuming it is not a grammatical error, the use of the plural, these books (*ðas bec*) in relation to a gospel book is again striking. Yet at 394 x 318 mm, this manuscript is one of the largest surviving Insular gospel books and would certainly require the support of a binding. Moreover, its quire structure does not correspond with its textual contents, so even if the manuscript had lost its binding at the time that Ælfred and Werburg presented it to Christ Church, it still would not have taken the form of a set of books.[59] In this case the inscription undoubtedly refers to the gospel texts as four separate works rather than the manuscript as comprising four physical entities.[60]

It seems possible that the Mulling and Ratfridus colophons might also partake in this rhetorical tradition of invoking the multiple texts of the gospels for effect. Rather than indicating that they were kept as independent physical entities, they might simply

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[56] On the meaning of *libellus*, see Teeuwen, *Vocabulary of Intellectual Life*, 179.

[57] Stockholm, Kungliga Biblioteket, MS A. 135.

[58] "Ic Ælfred aldormon 7 Werburg min gefera begetan ðas bec æt haeðnu(m) herge".

[59] Quires mostly of 7 leaves (3 bifolia with a singleton at the centre)—an unusual structure designed to maintain the alternation between purple and plain leaves of parchment throughout the manuscript. See Richard Gameson, *The Codex Aureus an Eighth-Century Gospel Book: Stockholm, Kungliga Bibliotek, A. 135*, EEMF 28 (Rosenkilde and Bagger: Copenhagen, 2001), I, 38. Further, the inscription cannot refer to the quires, as the Old English for quire was *cine* or *cwatern*, Joseph Bosworth and Thomas N. Toller, *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1898), 124 and 137.

[60] The Old English *boc*, like the modern English *book* (and the Latin *liber*), could refer to a literary work, a division of a literary work, or a physical object. Bosworth and Toller, *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, 99.

acknowledge that the texts were written on separate codicological units. In this regard, it is worth emphasising that for manuscripts with unsupported sewing (which almost certainly included most or all the pocket gospels[61]), the shape of the quires is readily apparent at the head and tail of the codex, even when bound into boards and covers (Fig. 14). It is therefore conceivable that a fully-bound manuscript could have been perceived as a collection of *volumina/libelli*. Perhaps both the physical structure and colophons of the gospel books were meant to visually and verbally emphasise the four separate gospel texts, just as they are emphasised performatively in the *Apertio Aurium* ceremony.

Yet the ultimate evidence for whether the pocket gospels are best understood as four-volume copies of the gospels must come from the structures and arrangement of the manuscripts themselves. These reveal some support for the possibility: for example, the frequent arrangement of gospel openings in which the first recto is left blank, the first verso contains a miniature and then the text begins on the second recto, creates a visually effective opening to the gospel but also has the advantage of providing an outer leaf that would shield the written pages from abrasion if they were kept as loose volumes.[62]

Despite this, the manuscript evidence from the pocket gospels, including those that are written with the gospel texts on distinct quires, strongly suggests that in most cases they were each designed to be sewn together as a single continuous volume. Sometimes, for example, material belonging with one gospel text overlaps onto a quire that contains an adjacent gospel: an arrangement that would have been extremely awkward if the quires were kept physically separate. Thus, in the Book of Dimma, the evangelist portrait of Mark is placed on the final verso of the quire containing the Gospel of Matthew (p. 30), and the text of the communion of the sick, added possibly in the ninth-century, is written continuously across the last leaves of the quire containing the Gospel of Luke and the first leaves of the quire containing that of John (pp. 99-103), showing that they were sewn together by at least this date. Similarly, while the other gospel texts in the MacDurnan Gospels end on the final verso of their quire, Matthew finishes on the first recto of the first quire containing the Gospel of Mark (fol. 69r), suggesting that the scribe was aiming for the text to end with the quire, but miscalculated the space. In the Book of Armagh, the prologues to the gospels of Mark, Luke and John are each found on the final leaf of the preceding quire (fols 53r, 67v and 89v), and the miniature of Mark's lion-symbol is also placed on the last verso of the last quire of Matthew (fol. 53v). In each of these cases it is clear that the scribes went to great

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[61] See above.

[62] For examples of this arrangement, see the gospel openings of the Book of Armagh, fols 32r-33r, 68r-69r; Book of Deer, fols 1r-2r, 4r-5r, 16r-17r, 29r-30r, 41r-42r; Book of Dimma, pp. 1-3, 53-55, 103-05; Cadmug Gospels, fols 1r-2r, 19r-20r, 33r-34r, 51r-52r.

effort to confine each gospel text to a separate set of quires, but the occasional extension of material onto the next gospel's quire indicates that they were almost certainly sewn together continuously.

Thus, evidence in favour of the four-volume gospel book theory seems to be slight and ambiguous and several of the pocket gospels with texts divided onto separate quires were almost certainly designed to be sewn continuously as a single codex. There is one further point made by McGurk in support of the theory: namely, that there are clear discrepancies between the presentation of the gospels in some of the manuscripts, particularly in script and decoration.[63] Such discrepancies would potentially make sense if the gospels were each kept as a separate physical unit, since it could be expected that individual volumes from a set of gospels might get lost, replaced or mixed-up. However, detailed analysis of the manuscripts themselves shows that this theory is at least debateable. Rather than being consistent with use as a four-volume manuscript, these disparities indicate the circulation of single-volume "booklets", particularly of the Gospel of John, which were later augmented with further texts and likely bound at a relatively early date. This provides a unique insight into manuscript production and circulation in the early Middle Ages, and raises fresh questions about the nature of the pocket gospels as a group, but it does not offer any support for the theory that some or all of these manuscripts were meant to be used as gospel books in detached volumes.

Booklets and the Genesis of Composite Manuscripts

Close examination of the inconsistencies across portions of several pocket gospels reveal that they were created through particularly complex processes of production and augmentation. These are best described according to the codicological terminology scholars have devised in order to categorise the myriad ways in which medieval manuscripts could encompass multiple texts and evolve in form and use. One such term is the "booklet", defined by Pamela Robinson as a small codicological unit of one or usually more quires that presents a self-contained text or group of texts. Such booklets may have been produced individually and circulated independently before eventually being bound with other material to arrive at their final manuscript-form.[64] According to the various criteria that Robinson outlined for

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[63] McGurk, "The Irish Pocket Gospel", 255.

[64] Pamela R. Robinson, "The 'Booklet': A Self-Contained Unit in Composite Manuscripts", in *Codicologica 3*: *Essais Typologiques*, ed. A. Gruys and J. P. Gumbert (Leiden 1980), 46-69; Pamela R. Robinson, "Self-contained units in composite manuscripts of the Anglo-Saxon period", in *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts: Basic Readings*, ed. Mary P. Richards (New York, 1994), 25-35.

identifying a booklet, it is manifest that several of the pocket gospels began their existence as booklets.[65]

Yet as Robinson made clear, there are many sub-types of booklet which require more precise terminology.[66] With regard to the pocket gospels, the terms advocated by Eric Kwakkel for describing the genesis of composite manuscripts of booklets are particularly helpful: "production units", which are "groups of quires that formed a material unity at the time of production";[67] "usage units", which refer to "the manner in which a production unit was used, separately or bound together with other usage units";[68] and "usage phases", which describes the composition of usage units at a particular time, recognising that a production unit might be part of different usage units at various points in its history.[69]

With these approaches in mind, it is possible to determine the genesis of some of the pocket gospels more accurately than has previously been attempted. As noted, the texts in the Book of Mulling are each arranged on a separate oversized quire and therefore they are each an individual codicological and textual unit. Thus, according to Robinson's criteria, Mulling may be described as a manuscript composed of five booklets (one of prefaces; four of gospels). However, according to Kwakkel's terminology, these booklets almost certainly comprise a single production unit: although the manuscript was probably written by several scribes, the scribal stints are reasonably well matched, with similar *mise-en-page* and only minor variants in abbreviation symbols and letterforms distinguishing them (the scribe of John preferring, for example, open-a and tall-c).[70] Additionally, the decorative scheme is consistent throughout, both in style and palette. Therefore, it seems likely that the manuscript was created as a single project, with the communion for the sick (fols 33v-34r) being a later extension to the production unit. Furthermore, whether or not they were physically connected, there is every indication that the booklets of Mulling were a single usage unit, since the Eusebian section numbers run alongside the text throughout, and the programme of correction to bring the text in line with the Vulgate, commenced probably not

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[65] For the criteria, see Robinson, "The "Booklet", 47-48.

[66] E.g. Ralph Hanna III, "Booklets in Medieval Manuscripts: Further Considerations", in *Pursuing History: Middle English Manuscripts and Their Texts* by Ralph Hanna III (Stanford University Press, 1996), 21-34; Johann P. Gumbert, "One Book with Many Texts: the Latin Tradition", in *Codices Miscellanearum: Brussels Van Hulthem Colloquium 1999*, ed. R. Jansen-Sieben, H. van Dijk (Brussels, 1999), 27-36.

[67] Erik Kwakkel, "Towards a Terminology for the Analysis of Composite Manuscripts", *Gazette du Livre Médiéval* 41 (Autumn 2002), 12-17, at 13.

[68] Kwakkel, "Towards a Terminology", 14.

[69] Kwakkel, "Towards a Terminology", 15.

[70] Lindsay, *Early Irish Minuscule Script*, 16; O'Sullivan, "Manuscripts and Palaeography", 535.

long after the manuscript was made, runs continuously through all four gospels.[71] In other words, even if it was not sewn together as one volume, there is every indication that the Book of Mulling was made as one codicological unit and it was always used as one complete copy of the gospels.

However, some of the other pocket gospels present more complex circumstances of production and use. In the Book of Dimma, the gospels of Matthew and Mark take the form of single-quire booklets while those of Luke and John are each written on a booklet of two quires. Yet in this manuscript, John is strikingly different from the other three gospels (Figs 15-16); while the script of the synoptic gospels is unskilled and irregular with the pages scarcely ruled, that in John is expert—"bold yet neat and regular", in the words of O'Sullivan[72]—with the pages carefully ruled and well set out. In contrast to the human portraits of the evangelists in the other gospels, the miniature that heads the Gospel of John portrays the evangelist's eagle symbol; it also uses a different and more vivid colour palette, as well as the technique of overlaying different colours to produce rich polychrome effects. These differences make it hard to believe that the synoptic gospels and the Gospel of John could have been made as a single production unit.

The most likely explanation for the discrepancies is that the Gospel of John was made first (although Lindsay hesitantly suggested that its script has a later appearance[73]), by a skilled scribe at a major scriptorium, probably as a stand-alone copy of John like the Stowe St John and Cuthbert Gospel. Then, it came into the possession of a smaller centre that lacked a strong scribal tradition, where the synoptic gospels were made to accompany it. The other alternatives are that the synoptic gospels were written first, presumably as a full gospel book, and then a much more skilful scribe added a new copy of the Gospel of John (perhaps the original was damaged or lost); or that the Gospel of John and the synoptic gospels were made independently and only joined together later. The former explanation, however, provides a simpler and more natural sequence of events. It is reasonable to suppose then, that the Gospel of John began circulation as a discrete production unit with a distinct usage phase before the synoptic gospels were added.

The synoptic gospels probably constituted a second production unit, which also became a single usage unit with the Gospel of John, forming the manuscript now known as the Book of Dimma. At this time, the gospels were probably also sewn together as a continuous physical unit, despite all four of the gospel texts being written as separate booklets, since as mentioned, the evangelist portrait of Mark, which is placed on the final

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[71] See Lawlor, *Chapters*, 42-43, 70-74.

[72] O'Sullivan, "Manuscripts and Palaeography", 535

[73] Lindsay, *Early Irish Minuscule Script*, 12.

verso of the quire containing Matthew (p. 30), would not otherwise work as an effective frontispiece to its gospel. That they were indeed sewn together as a single connected volume from an early date is demonstrated by the addition of the text of the communion of the sick (possibly ninth-century) written continuously across the last leaves of the quire containing the Gospel of Luke and the first leaves of the quire containing John (pp. 99-103). Therefore, although it is composed of booklets, it seems unlikely that the Book of Dimma ever took the form of a set of four separate volumes. Indeed, while the Gospel of John may not have been bound in its first usage phase, it is likely that when the synoptic gospels were created, the whole was probably bound in some form.

A similar scenario concerning the augmentation of a single-gospel booklet is provided by the Stowe St John. The gospel section of this manuscript, contained on a single quire, contrasts noticeably with the missal with which it was bound. The parchment of the gospel is thinner and of noticeably better quality,[74] and on the first recto (fol. 1r) and final verso (fol. 11v) its surface is shiny, as though these had once served as outer leaves. Additionally, the rulings and page layout of the two portions of the manuscript obviously differ; the gospel has one horizontal line of ruling to a line of script, the missal has two; the ruling is much heavier in the missal; the missal has fewer lines to a page than the gospel. Furthermore, they are also written in markedly different scripts, with the gospel text in a small minuscule and the missal in an unusual angular script which scholars characterise either as a compressed majuscule or a particularly grandiose minuscule (Figs 17-18).[75]

Moreover, the *incipit* pages of the gospel and missal are decorated in a different style and colour palette (Figs 19-20). In this regard, it is notable that the evangelist portrait, which is positioned unusually at the end of the gospel on the final verso of the quire (fol. 11v; Fig. 20), matches the decoration of the *incipit* to the missal on the facing page (fol. 12r), rather than the decoration of the gospel *incipit* (fol. 1r). The portrait page and missal incipit are painted in the same two colours—yellow and brownish-red—and have frames of the same approximate dimensions (98 x 76 mm), while the gospel *incipit* employs a wider palette—a different shade of yellow, reddish-purple, blueish-purple, pink and white—and a frame of differing dimensions (107 x 81 mm). These discrepancies suggest that the booklet of the Gospel of John began as an independent production unit, to which the missal was added in a later phase. In contrast to some suggestions that the compilation of the Gospel of John with

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[74] In my examination of this manuscript, I could not find a single hole in the parchment of the Gospel of John, while in the Missal there are many.

[75] Described as a compressed majuscule in *CLA* 268 and O'Sullivan, "Manuscripts and Codicology", 533; however, David Dumville argued that it is a "bold, angular, rather large Insular set minuscule in which majuscule R was regularly employed", *A Palaeographer's Review: The Insular System of Scripts in the Early Middle Ages* (Osaka: Kansai University, 1999), 121.

the missal was entirely random,[76] it is clear that the missal was carefully designed to accompany the gospel, with the evangelist portrait added in the same production phase as the missal, presumably designed to harmonise the two portions of the manuscript.[77]

Perhaps the most complex of the pocket gospels in its physical composition is the Book of Armagh. This manuscript has long been recognised as comprising as many as six sets of quires with self-contained texts, and although great care has clearly been taken to ensure that the scripts, *mise-en-page* and decoration remain matching throughout, certain discrepancies between booklets suggest that parts of the manuscript are likely to have had some degree of independence. However, there is little scholarly consensus as to which constitute distinct production and usage units, or what their sequence of production and compilation might have been.

The first to analyse the compilation of the manuscript was John Gwynn, who was convinced that the whole codex was the work of a single scribe, Ferdomnach, and interpreted the booklets as separate production units created at intervals over the course of the scribe's life.[78] Gwynn suggested that the earliest booklet was that consisting of the Pauline Epistles, which features differences in script, more frequent use of abbreviations, dissimilar decorated initials, thicker parchment and a different ruling pattern and weight to the rest of the manuscript. He further suggested that the Epistles might originally have been designed as an independent usage unit, noting that "the chafed and defaced condition of their first page [fol. 108r] seems to be indicative of such separate use".[79] However, the absence of wear on the outer leaves of most other quires led him to believe that when further booklets were produced, they were probably sewn together as a single continuous volume.[80]

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[76] George F. Warner, *The Stowe Missal*, 2 vols (London: Henry Bradshaw Society, 1906 and 1915), 1, xxxix.

[77] McGurk suggested that this arrangement might be based on some Armenian gospel books, McGurk, *Architecture*, 114; McGurk, "The Irish Pocket Gospel", 258; he presumably meant the Walters Gospels (Baltimore, Walters Art Museum, MS W.537), dating from *c.* 966, in which half-page miniatures of pairs of evangelists are presented at the end of the gospels of Matthew (fol. 72v), Mark (fol. 114v), and Luke (fol. 192r). McGurk also drew attention to the Merovingian Gundohinus Gospels (Autun, Bibliothèque Municipale, MS 3) dating from *c.*754, in which the four evangelist portraits are grouped at the end of the codex (fols 186v, 187r, 187v, 188r), on which see Lawrence Nees, *The Gundohinus Gospels* (Cambridge, MA: The Medieval Academy of America, 1987), 189-212.

[78] Gwynn, *Liber Ardmachanus*, cxxxiii.

[79] Gwynn, *Liber Ardmachanus*, cxxxiii-cxxxiv.

[80] Gwynn, *Liber Ardmachanus*, cxxxiii-cxxxiv. It is also worth noting that James Kenney, while generally following Gwynn's interpretation, seems to have perceived the manuscript in more volumes,

Challenging Gwynn's view, Richard Sharpe asserted that the manuscript was the work of three scribes.[81] Like Gwynn, he thought that the Pauline Epistles were created first and independently as a single production and usage unit, but he regarded the remainder of the manuscript as another single production unit made by two scribes working in unison. His suggested scenario for the production was that:

> Abbot Torbach handed over his study text of St Paul and asked the chief scribe to provide him with the rest of the New Testament and his favourite reading on the saints in booklets of the same convenient size. Ferdomnach promptly divided the work between a competent assistant and himself, and produced the book for the abbot.[82]

Although Sharpe observed that "the codex can be divided and used as six 'booklets'",[83] he did not explicitly propose that it was used in this way. Other scholars, however, have suggested that the booklets did indeed spend a period as separate physical units. For example, Françoise Henry has argued that the gospel section, which has its own set of quire signatures, might have circulated independently at one stage.[84] In her examination of the manuscript, Michelle Brown also observed: "signs of outer leaves of gatherings worn, which supports the disbound wrapper theory".[85] Yet the fact that the booklets are clearly designed to match one another in size, *mise-en-page* and decoration suggests that they were probably intended as a single usage unit (or a usage set?), with perhaps the exception of the Pauline Epistles, which was probably a single earlier production unit with a usage phase preceding its amalgamation with the other booklets.

Therefore, the evidence from within the pocket gospel books strongly suggests that the Gospel of John could circulate as an independent booklet, presumably unbound or bound only in lightweight limp covers; this was probably the origin of the Book of Dimma, Stowe St John and perhaps, if Powell was correct, the Cuthbert Gospel. The Pauline Epistles section of the Book of Armagh most likely also began its life as an unbound booklet, and it is

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suggesting that the changes in script between the various booklets, "make it probable that originally several of the divisions of the book were separate codices", Kenney, *Sources*, 338.

[81] Sharpe, "Palaeographical Considerations", 8; corroborated by Brown in "Ferdomnach".

[82] Sharpe, "Palaeographical Considerations", 5.

[83] Sharpe, "Palaeographical Considerations", 5.

[84] Henry, "An Irish Manuscript", 151. Note that Henry's account of the quire signatures as running I-X is contradicted by Brown, "Ferdomnach", who reports that the signatures start at the gospels and run xi-xx.

[85] Brown, "Ferdomnach".

possible that other sections of the book of Armagh were compiled in a more complex sequence than Sharpe suggested, perhaps having spent a period of their early existence as detached booklets. Although each of the remaining pocket gospels was almost certainly made as a homogenous production unit, the abraded first and last pages of some suggest the possibility that they may have been sewn together and not bound.

It is clear that in most cases, the impetus for placing gospel texts on discrete quires or sets of quires was not to allow them to be used as four-volume gospel books of disconnected booklets. Evidence for the use of gospel books in four volumes is limited and inconclusive, and in several of the pocket gospels, including those with gospels on individual quires, miniatures and prefaces are sometimes placed at the end of the preceding gospel's quire, strongly suggesting that they were designed to be sewn together as a single unit. Some pocket gospels are clearly composite volumes, containing booklets that probably had usage phases as unbound independent volumes before becoming part of the final manuscript. However, it was surely a vast exaggeration when McGurk supposed that all the pocket gospels, and even all Irish books, were not bound until a later period.[86] On the contrary, the evidence strongly suggests that the majority of the pocket gospels were sewn as continuous volumes from an early date, and also probably bound.

Sacred Codicology

If the placement of each gospel text on a separate quire or set of quires is unlikely in most cases to facilitate their use as detached volumes, how can the occurrence of this feature in seven out of eleven pocket gospels be explained? Rather than having a utilitarian purpose, and as perhaps implied in the Stockholm Codex Aureus description of *ðas bec*, we might explore the possibility that this form of quiring expresses attitudes towards the gospels as independent works of sacred Scripture and towards the manuscript as a medium for their transmission. We have already seen that the multiple texts of the gospels could be invoked rhetorically in manuscript colophons and performed before a congregation in the ritual of the *Apertio Aurium*. Perhaps the pocket-gospel quiring is intended to make a similar statement using the very material of the manuscript.

The first point to make in this respect is that the practice of compartmentalising each book of the gospels onto a separate codicological booklet suggests an unusual concern to conflate the book as an abstract work and the book as a physical object. The separation of the gospel texts onto separate quires seems to identify the individual gospel with the material of its physical transmission, extending the individuality of each gospel text, written by a separate (human) author, to the codicological level of its quires. The message is even more

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[86] McGurk, "The Irish Pocket Gospel", 255.

strongly expressed by those pocket gospels in which each text is written on a single lengthy quire; here, the material form of each gospel corresponds not only to the autonomy of its text, but also to its individual internal unity. In these manuscripts, each gospel is both a book in the literary sense and a book(let) in the physical sense.

It is clear from Armando Petrucci's study of the history of the relationship between the conceptual and physical book that the tendency to conflate these items is at odds with attitudes prevailing at the time that the pocket gospels were made. Petrucci has shown that unitary books are most closely associated with classical Graeco-Roman culture, in which manuscripts only contained one work by a single author. However at the end of the third century and the beginning of the fourth, the first miscellaneous manuscripts appeared— manuscripts in which multiple works by multiple authors were contained between the same covers—which, Petrucci argued, signalled a revolution in the conception of the book:

> The individual text segments, rather than being considered autonomous, were seen as parts of a whole, belonging to a textual stream neither interrupted nor interruptible: a conception quite typical of Christian written culture.[87]

Thus throughout the Middle Ages, the manuscript was understood as a container for texts, rather than as the physical extension of a single text: the book as physical object became disassociated from the book as abstract work. This was useful because it allowed the maximum number of texts to be preserved in the minimum amount of space, but it was also ideological. Presenting texts together created conceptual links between them, ultimately implying the unity underlying all Christian learning.[88]

Although not examined by Petrucci, the gospel book is an excellent illustration of how the transmission of texts in a single-volume manuscript could be employed ideologically to solidify connections between the constituent texts and bind them into a single whole. The gospels are, of course, four distinct texts, written by four distinct human authors, each recounting the life of Christ. Early Christian authors were faced with a major challenge in defending the canonical authority of the four gospels, both against accusations that their accounts are inconsistent with one another and against suggestions that their number should be expanded by any of the many apocryphal gospels in circulation.[89] In light of this, the customary transmission of the four books of the gospels in a single codex—the gospel book—

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[87] Armando Petrucci, "From Unitary Book to Miscellany", in *Writers and Readers in Medieval Italy*, 1-18, at 9.

[88] Petrucci, "From Unitary Book to Miscellany", 8-9.

[89] O'Reilly, "Patristic and Insular Traditions".

can be seen on one level as a codicological assertion of their unique authority, since it downplays the individuality of each text and its author in favour of stressing their totality as a single unit. Thus the very format of a gospel book encourages the reader to regard the four books of the gospels as a single book: a single gospel, ultimately inspired by a single divine author and recounting a single holy narrative.

A similar codicological statement of scriptural harmony was famously made by Cassiodorus in the sixth century when he created the first copies of the entire Latin Bible in a single volume or, as he termed it, a pandect. In an Insular context, this inspired a similar project among the monks of Wearmouth-Jarrow, resulting in the production of biblical pandects such as the Codex Amiatinus, which Christopher De Hamel has described as a "turning-point not only in book production but in the abstract concept of the Bible as a unity".[90] Implicit in the emphasis on the unity of Scripture by means of its compilation into a single codicological unit is the assumption that the material embodiment of Scripture is laden with significance that not only affects the reception of the texts but is central to their identity. For example, arguing for the importance of correcting biblical texts, Cassiodorus described the text of Scripture in an intensely materialistic way as the tunic of Christ:

> For rightly our fathers took great care that the tunic of the Lord the Saviour,
> which the fierce soldiers were not allowed to tear up [John 19:23–24], should
> not be left to the mercy of unskilled readers. Let the Holy Spirit hear in its
> most pure form what it has given, let it receive intact what it bestowed.[91]

Like Christ's garment, for Cassiodorus (and the Wearmouth-Jarrow community), the text of Scripture was seamless and indivisible; thus, creating a one-volume Bible allowed the inherent totality of Scripture to be realised in material form.

Yet while they share the conviction that the material form of the manuscript should be integrally connected to the meaning of the text, the gospel books with separate gospel-booklets express a slightly different message than the unifying pandect projects. The placement of each gospel text on its own separate codicological unit within the overall manuscript seems to reaffirm the individual identity of each gospel within the whole. In

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[90] Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, MS Amiatino 1. Christopher de Hamel, *The Book: A History of the Bible* (London: Phaidon, 2001), 34.

[91] *Institutiones*, 1.15.11. trans. James W. Halporn, *Institutions of Divine and Secular Learning and On the Soul*, Translated Texts for Historians 42 (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2004), 143. "Merito enim Patribus nostris de hac re maxima cura fuit, ne tunica Domini Salvatoris, quam truculentis militibus scindere non licuit, lectoribus subiaceat imperitis", ed. Roger A. B. Mynors, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961), 47.

these manuscripts, each book of the gospels is at once an individual physical booklet as well as one of four that together constitute a single greater book. In this way, the material of the manuscript enacts the theology, corresponding to the paradoxical characterisation of the four-fold distinctness and yet unity of the gospels—a theme which Jenifer O'Reilly has demonstrated to be of central importance in patristic and Hiberno-Latin exegesis and in Insular manuscript illuminations.[92]

O'Reilly has shown that the concern to defend the authority of the four gospels led commentators to emphasise the individual character of each gospel, its evangelist and his symbol, as well as to demonstrate their divinely ordained unity by reference to scriptural and cosmological groups of harmonious fours.[93] In the tradition of gospel-book production in particular, these themes are addressed in gospel prologues, canon tables, evangelist portraits and symbol pages.[94] Indeed, the aforementioned inscriptions found in gospel books such as the Book of Mulling, Ratfridus Gospels, and Stockholm Codex Aureus which emphasise the multiple texts of the gospels contained within, sometimes even by stressing the physical heterogeneity of the manuscripts' material structure, may also allude to these tropes of the gospels as a four-fold unity.

The idea that even the physical structure of a gospel book could be engaged in this exegetical tradition to make a statement about the character and authority of the gospels has been suggested by Michelle Brown, who commented that the placement of the gospels on separate sets of quires in the Lindisfarne Gospels shows that, "the distinct but inter-related witness of the four evangelists (a theme explored throughout the text and decoration of the Lindisfarne Gospels) was a consideration which also informed its physical manufacture at even the most fundamental levels".[95] It is thus worth considering further evidence that the physical aspects of a manuscript could participate in this theological discourse.

Despite the fact that scriptural harmony was most often codicologically expressed by gathering texts together into a material unity, the *Apertio Aurium* ceremony provides a striking example of the use of distinct physical manuscripts to demonstrate the four-fold unity of the gospels. In this ceremony, following the four-fold entrance of the gospels and their placement at the corners of the altar, the celebrant explains the four separate texts, with their four separate writers and four separate symbols, that all tell of the same truth. In

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[92] O'Reilly, "Patristic and Insular Traditions".

[93] O'Reilly, "Patristic and Insular Traditions".

[94] In the pocket gospels, Monarchian and Hieronymian prefaces and canon tables are both found in the Book of Mulling and Book of Armagh; evangelist portraits or symbol pages are found in all but the Mulling Fragment and Bern 671; four-symbols pages are found in the Book of Armagh and Book of Mulling.

[95] Brown, *Lindisfarne Gospels*, 202; see also 71.

this way, the manuscripts physically enact the concept of four-fold harmony that is central to the theological understanding of the texts: the manuscripts not only represent the gospels but also embody them. Although it is unlikely that the pocket gospels were intended to be used in the practice of this rite, it is possible that knowledge of it influenced their design and, at the very least, it demonstrates that the physical manifestation of a gospel book could be employed to express the theological precept of the fourfold individuality and yet perfect unity of the gospels.

As an additional example of this, multiple separate codices placed together in a harmonious scheme are sometimes represented in images of the period, particularly in illustrations of the *armarium*, or book-cupboard. For example, on a fifth-century mosaic in the Mausoleum of Galla Placidia, Ravenna, a figure usually identified as St Lawrence approaches the blazing iron grid of his martyrdom beside a book-cupboard containing four separate codices, labelled as the gospels (Fig. 21). The book-cupboard was commonly understood as an *imitatio* of the Ark of the Covenant in which the tablets of the divine Law handed to Moses were kept; thus Jenifer O'Reilly has suggested that in the Ravenna image, "the *armarium* succinctly pictures the fundamental exegetical concept that the Law, when spiritually understood, contains the Gospel".[96] The four codices of the gospels depicted within the single *armarium* stand in for all the books of the Bible, and the figure with the flaming grid probably represents the pious soul whose heart is filled with burning ardour when the Scriptures are opened to them, as in Luke 24:30.[97]

A similar image of an *armarium* appears in the Ezra miniature in the Codex Amiatinus, where it contains nine physical codices of the entire body of Scripture, including a single gospel book, with the prophet represented as a scribe working in the foreground (Fig. 22). While this image has been shown to embody many dense meanings, scholars agree that at its most basic it symbolises the perfect unity of the Christian revelation of Scripture.[98] On some level, the gospel books in which the texts are each written on a separate booklet can be seen as equivalent to an *armarium*: a holy receptacle for the holy books that compartmentalises and organises them but also draws them together, pointing to the

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[96] Jenifer O'Reilly, "The Library of Scripture: Views from Vivarium and Wearmouth-Jarrow", in *New Offerings, Ancient Treasures*, ed. Paul Binski and William Noel (Stroud: Sutton, 2001), 3-39, at 8.

[97] O'Reilly, "The Library of Scripture", 8.

[98] E.g. O'Reilly, "The Library of Scripture"; Paul Meyvaert, "The Date of Bede's "In Ezram" and His Image of Ezra in the Codex Amiatinus", *Speculum* 80, 4 (Oct., 2005), 1087-133, at 1114-15; Janina Ramirez, "Sub Culmine Gazas: The Iconography of the Armarium on the Ezra Page of the Codex Amiatinus", *Gesta* 48, 1 (2009), 1-18, at 5.

singular message behind all of Scripture.[99] The occurrence of this image in a Northumbrian manuscript shows that this iconography was familiar to the Insular world.

Turning to the pocket gospels themselves, these ideas of four-fold harmony embedded in the physical presentation of the manuscript can also be observed in the design of the surviving book covers of the Cadmug and Cuthbert gospels. The front and back covers of the Cadmug Gospels (Fig. 12) are each impressed with a rectangular border divided by a *Chi*-cross into four segments, each containing a triangle and a triquetra. This can be understood as an abstract representation of the four separate gospels as interrelated witnesses to Christ, where the four divided segments are arranged in a harmonious scheme, centred on the unifying cross.[100] Likewise the front cover of the Cuthbert Gospel (Fig. 11) represents a relief figure of a plant with one heart-shaped bud at the centre surrounded by four symmetrically arranged fruits encircled by its curling vines. This image is generally thought to refer to Christ as the "True Vine" of John 15:5: "I am the vine, ye are the branches".[101] Both Martin Werner and Leslie Webster, while considering a variety of multivalent meanings for the image, have mentioned that the image might refer to the fourfold harmony of the gospels.[102] On the cover of a gospel manuscript however, surely this was one of the principal meanings of this quadripartite scheme, illustrating that John's is one of four harmonious and life-giving gospels, each unique but sprouting from the same divine source.

For further illustration that the concern to place each text on a separate codicological unit could be informed by exegetical rather than practical considerations, it is worth turning again to the Book of Deer. In this manuscript, the placement of the Matthean genealogy (Matthew 1:1-17) on its own quire of three leaves (a binio, second leaf cancelled) cannot have had a practical impetus as this tiny booklet could hardly have been useful on its own. However, this practice corresponds to the Insular conception of the Matthean genealogy as a distinct text with its own theological import. As O'Reilly has demonstrated, in Hiberno-Latin

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[99] For the medieval trope of the mind as a well-organised book-cupboard or *arca*, see Carruthers, *Book of Memory*, 51-55.

[100] For further discussion of this design, see Chapter 4.

[101] Brown, *Stonyhurst Gospel*, 21; Martin Werner, "The Binding of the Stonyhurst Gospel of St. John" in *Insular and Anglo-Saxon Art and Thought in the Early Medieval Period*, ed. Colum Hourihane (Princeton, NJ: Index of Christian Art and Penn State University Press, 2011), 286-311; Leslie Webster, "The Decoration of the Binding", in *The St Cuthbert Gospel: Studies on the Insular Manuscript of the Gospel of John (BL, Additional MS 89000)* (London: The British Library, 2015), 65-82.

[102] Werner, "The Binding of the Stonyhurst Gospel", 303; Webster, "The Decoration of the Binding", 75.

exegetical treatises the names of Christ's human ancestors according to Matthew were understood to reveal the different facets of Christ's identity and the significance of the Incarnation, so that the genealogy was regarded as a microcosm of the four gospels.[103] The opening phrase, "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham", was taken to refer to the genealogy itself, and thus it was treated as a book in its own right.[104] Given such interpretations of the genealogy as a separate text, its placement on its own tiny quire in the Book of Deer clearly corresponds to the practice of placing distinct texts on distinct quires in order to make a theological point. Indeed, the distinct nature of the Matthean genealogy is further emphasised in the Book of Deer by an *explicit* placed after verse 1:17 (fol. 3r), announcing: "the prologue finishes, now the gospel according to Matthew begins".[105] Similar inscriptions as well as decorative breaks are used to divide the genealogy from the rest of the text of Matthew in many Insular gospel books, but the Book of Deer seems to be the only one to also signal its division by means of quiring.[106]

That quires could be accorded symbolic import in the early Middle Ages is further shown by the previously mentioned episode in Bede's prose *Life of Cuthbert*, in which Cuthbert and his dying mentor Boisil study the latter's copy of the Gospel of John. Boisil proposes to Cuthbert, "I have a book consisting of seven gatherings of which we can get through one every day, with the Lord's help, reading it and discussing it between ourselves so far as is necessary".[107] This suggests a conception of the quire structure as having significance that extends beyond the functional necessity of manuscript construction. For Boisil, the quires are not only units of textual division and study, but they are also numerically symbolic. The seven quires of his gospel correspond to the seven remaining days of his life and allude to the six days in which the world was created, plus one day of rest, in *Genesis*; the six ages of the world, plus the seventh age, the age of the world to come, in world history; and the various sets of seven that herald the Last Judgement in *Revelation*.

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[103] Jennifer O'Reilly, "Gospel Harmony and the Names of Christ", in *The Bible as Book*, ed. Van Kampen and Sharpe, 73-88, at 77.

[104] O'Reilly, "Gospel Harmony", 77.

[105] "finit prologus item incipit nunc Evangelium secundum Matheum".

[106] E.g. Lindisfarne Gospels open Matthew's gospel with "Incipit evangelii genealogia Mathei", then announce the *Chi-Rho* page with "incipit evangelium secundum Mattheum"; Bern 671 ends verse 17 with "finit prologus amen amen"; St Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek, Cod. Sang. 51 with "finit do quantum queo gratias ago meo". McGurk, "The Irish Pocket Gospel", 257. O'Reilly, "Gospel Harmony", 78-79.

[107] *Vita sancti Cuthberti*, VIII, "Est autem mihi codex habens quaterniones septem, quas singulis diebus singulas possumus Domino adiuuante legendo, et quantum opus est inter nos conferendo percurrere"; ed. and trans. Colgrave, *Two lives of Saint Cuthbert*, 182-83.

Thus Boisil's last days and the quires of his manuscript are linked with the whole of historical time from Creation to salvation.

In many cases, therefore, it seems probable that the placement of the gospels on separate quires in the pocket gospels, and perhaps also the references to the gospels as multiple volumes in manuscript colophons, has symbolic rather than functional significance. Given that unsupported sewing structures render the shape of the quires clearly visible at the head and tail of the codex (Fig. 14), the physically distinct booklets of the gospels would be visible even if the manuscript was bound into boards and covers, allowing their message to be perceived by readers. It is also worth noting the pieces of red leather glued to gospel incipits as leaf-tab markers on the MacDurnan Gospels and Cadmug Gospels; if these were original—as the close resemblance of the leather to that of the early medieval Cuthbert, Cadmug and Stowe bindings suggests—they would further serve to make the divisions of the gospel texts immediately visible on the closed codex.[108] Thus it seems likely that the placement of each gospel on its own quire or set of quires was motivated by an interest in emphasising the integrity of the biblical text of each gospel—a way of demonstrating through the physical structure of the manuscript that each gospel was indivisible and inherently perfect—while the joining of these booklets together within the same codex is a statement of their unity and harmony. Manuscripts that exhibit this practice physically manifest the concept of the one, all-encompassing book of the Gospel that is nevertheless made up of four individual booklets, separate and yet united between two covers. Thus the material of the codex itself makes an exegetical statement in defence of the harmony of the gospels.

The unusual conflation of the concept of the gospel as a work with the concept of the gospel as a physical manuscript that is integral to this message suggests a keen appreciation of the material dimension of the text. By calling attention to the materiality of the manuscript, the booklets show themselves to be more than mere passive media for the text but rather the physical manifestation of the gospels with the ability to realise and extend the meaning of the text. According to this interpretation, the material of the manuscript not only represents but physically and visually embodies the theological identity of the texts it transmits. This does not indicate a confusion between medium and message, but a deliberated and sophisticated use of materials in order to construct the gospel book as a sacred object.[109]

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[108] See Appendix.

[109] For discussion of later medieval understandings of the power of matter to make the divine manifest, see Caroline Walker Bynum, *Christian Materiality, An Essay in Religion in Late Medieval Europe* (New York: Zone Books, 2011).

Summary

The purpose of this chapter has been to show that the unusual quiring practices exhibited in the majority of the pocket gospels are the result of a variety of practices and motivations, some technical, others spiritual. The same feature can have different meanings in different manuscripts, defying generalisations. While this helps to illuminate little studied aspects of the culture of book production in the Insular world, it could be regarded as unhelpful for characterising the pocket gospel group. Yet even among the clear variety of purposes and practices, it is perhaps possible to detect some patterns and relationships in the pocket gospel quiring that can help us to understand the group further.

That at least three of the pocket gospels seem to have begun their existence as short booklets, probably without substantial bindings, suggests that they may have been relatively modest productions, probably intended for personal study. The surviving examples of parchment limp-bindings from Fulda as well as the references to such bindings in the St Gall library catalogue are all clearly associated with books that were used for study; this is hardly surprising as such bindings could hardly have withstood the day-to-day use in church services. It is worth noting that the booklet form and modest bindings do not necessarily indicate that these manuscripts were low-status or economical productions. Indeed, the booklet sections in the Book of Armagh were made for the abbot at one of the wealthiest and most powerful centres in Ireland. The booklet-gospels of John in the Stowe Missal and especially in the Book of Dimma are also accomplished in their script and decoration. These booklets are thus best understood as good-quality productions in a form that was suited to the modest purpose of study.

These interpretations also suggest the potentially widespread circulation of stand-alone copies of the Gospel of John, probably often unbound. The particular Insular interest in this gospel has been remarked upon by numerous scholars.[110] This discussion has shown that Julian Brown's list of six early medieval Latin examples of manuscripts containing the Gospel of John alone can be supplemented with the Gospel of John in the Book of Dimma, since it most likely began as a stand-alone copy of the text. The Book of Deer is also worth mentioning as John is the only full gospel text it contains, with the synoptic gospels being extracts only. It is thus notable that of the few surviving examples of stand-alone copies of the Gospel of John, four are pocket gospels and the Chartres Gospel is also miniature. Julian Brown thought that the reason for the Insular propensity for John's gospel was due to its perceived magical and amuletic powers, while Bernard Meehan has suggested that it is derived from the Columban claim of following the tradition of John the Apostle in the dating

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[110] See Chapter 1.

of Easter, and Richard Gameson has suggested that it was due to its use in masses for the dead; yet surely the preference for the Gospel of John in the pocket gospels indicates rather that it was particularly used for private devotional reading.[111]

For those pocket gospels in which each gospel is written on a separate quire or set of quires despite being made as a single production unit and bound from the start, it seems likely that there were exegetical reasons for the arrangement. The placement of the texts of the four gospels onto four distinct codicological units yet united into a single codex corresponds to patristic and Hiberno-Latin characterisations of the four gospels as each unique and yet all perfectly harmonious, four facets of the same spiritual gospel. This attributes considerable significance to the physical dimension of the manuscript, identifying each gospel with the material of its transmission. Such an approach seems to imply that the manuscript itself is the physical realisation of the Word of Scripture and indicates that the manuscript object was designed to engender respect and reverence.

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[111] Brown, *Stonyhurst Gospel*, 36; Bernard Meehan, "Introduction" to *The St Cuthbert Gospel*, ed. Breay and Meehan, 2-3; Gameson, "The History of the Manuscript to the Reformation", 130.

CHAPTER 3

Scripts and Scribes: "Scholarly Little Hands"

In considering what the design choices in the pocket gospels suggest about the manuscripts' relationships to one another and their nature as a group, it is essential to turn to another of their most distinctive features: their use of minuscule script. From the end of the seventh century, manuscripts in the Insular tradition employed a system of scripts within which gospel books and other sacred works of Scripture were usually written in high-grade, calligraphic majuscule scripts, while minuscule scripts were used for more general purposes, such as the creation of library books and letter writing.[1] It is therefore unusual and striking that all but one of the pocket gospel books are written in minuscule script. This chapter examines the possible reasons for this use of script in the pocket gospels, asking whether it might be understood as practical, symbolic or a mixture of both.

The distinctiveness of the use of minuscule script in the pocket gospels is demonstrated by outlining the Insular system of scripts. Within this system, the most formal scripts are known, according to Lowe, as majuscule, and according to Julian Brown's more specific nomenclature, as Insular uncial and half-uncial.[2] These large, round, imposing scripts are written with the pen held vertically and the nib trimmed to a wide, flat edge in order to accentuate the contrast between thin and thick strokes. The pen was lifted frequently and attention given to details such as serifs and head strokes. Certain forms of letter distinguish these scripts, especially the "oc"-shaped *a* (which Lowe regarded as the "shibboleth" by which Insular majuscule is identified), as well as *d*, *n*, *r* and *s*, one or more of which is always written in uncial form.[3] Although Insular half-uncial (unlike Roman half-uncial) is technically a four-line script, meaning that some letters have ascenders and descenders that exceed the headline and baseline, these are always shortened so that they do not compromise the effect of rotundity and compactness in the letters. Insular majuscule scripts were difficult to write and required the labour of highly trained scribes.[4] Such scripts took up a great deal of time and resources, being slow to write and occupying large amounts of parchment space.

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[1] Julian Brown, "The Irish Element in the Insular System of Scripts to AD 850", in Julian Brown, *A Palaeographer's View*, ed. Bately, Brown and de la Mare, 201-20, at 201-02; Michelle Brown, "Writing in the Insular World", *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain*, I, ed. Gameson, 121-66, at 156.

[2] See Lowe, *CLA* II, "Introduction", xi-xii; Julian Brown, "The Irish Element", 201-02

[3] Lowe, *CLA* II, "Introduction", xi.

[4] Michelle Brown, "Writing in the Insular World", 142-43.

In contrast, minuscule scripts were faster to write and more compressed. They were written with the pen held at a slant and with the nib trimmed to a point, meaning that the contrast between thick and thin strokes is not as great as in uncial and half-uncial scripts, and the tips of the strokes end in a point. Minuscules are four-line scripts, and their ascenders and descenders are often lengthened giving them an elongated, pointed appearance. They use different letter forms from uncial script, and often employ many ligatures and abbreviations—all features that facilitated faster writing and more economical use of the space on the page. In short, they were practical scripts designed for more everyday uses than majuscules, being well-suited for pragmatic literacy, glosses, commentaries, patristic, hagiographic and grammatical texts.[5] Julian Brown suggested that there was a hierarchy of Insular minuscules, which he named in ascending order of formality: current (very cursive), cursive, set (formal), and hybrid (mixed with elements of half-uncial).[6] Within this spectrum, the scripts of the pocket gospels are mostly cursive minuscule, although some tend towards set minuscule.

The use of Insular minuscule script for a gospel book is unusual (Graph 2). The pocket gospels are not the only surviving biblical books that are described as being written in minuscule in the early Middle Ages, but this is largely due to terminological issues relating to minuscule rather than any particular affinity between the scripts of the pocket gospels and those of the other manuscripts. In particular, the script that Julian Brown called Insular hybrid minuscule was sometimes used to copy gospel books, for example the Echternach Gospels (*c*.700; Fig. 23), Maaseik Gospels (first-half of eighth century; Fig. 24) and Royal Bible (early-ninth century; Fig. 25).[7] This script was written with a slanted pen but imitated the letter-forms and stately effect of Insular half-uncial. It was thus classed as a majuscule script by Lowe, and later scholars have questioned Brown's application of the term; for example, Ian Doyle rejected the idea that a technical detail such as the angle of the pen should be favoured over the letter forms and visual effect of the script to categorise it as minuscule rather than majuscule.[8] Brown's Insular hybrid minuscule scripts are certainly very different from the minuscule scripts of the pocket gospels, which make little attempt to imitate the effects of half-uncial and are notably cursive.[9]

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[5] Julian Brown, "The Irish Element", 202; Michelle Brown, "Writing in the Insular World", 156.

[6] Julian Brown, "The Irish Element", 201-02.

[7] BNF MS Lat. 9389; Maaseik, Kerkschatten van Sint-Catharina, Codex Eyckensis; BL Royal MS, 1 E VI.

[8] Anthony Ian Doyle, "A Fragment of an Eighth-Century Office Book", 17-18. For criticism of Brown's terminology, see also O'Sullivan, "Insular Calligraphy", 351.

[9] The period in question also saw the development and eventual establishment of Carolingian minuscule on the Continent, and from the end of the eighth century Carolingian gospel books and

This point is further reinforced by the example of the Cuthbert Gospel, the small-sized manuscript that McGurk rejected from the pocket gospel group on the grounds of its Northumbrian origin and Roman-inspired scribal practices, opining that "no book could be less Irish".[10] It is written in capitular uncial, a script that was unique to the romanising scriptorium of Wearmouth-Jarrow and visually dissimilar to the Insular minuscule scripts of the pocket gospels (Fig. 26). Yet capitular uncial was named because it was used for the lists of *capitula* in the Codex Amiatinus and its matching pandects, which were otherwise written in an uncial script that precisely imitates Roman uncial.[11] Compared to the Wearmouth-Jarrow uncial employed as the text-hand for other biblical volumes, capitular uncial is a small script with less calligraphic detail, less distinction between thick and thin strokes and with space-saving devices incorporated such as subscript letters and ligatures at line-ends—described by Richard Gameson as a "light-gauge" uncial.[12] Other surviving manuscripts in which the main text is written in capitular uncial include two fragmentary copies of Bede's *De temporum ratione*,[13] a text which, like most exegetical works, is generally written in minuscule in other surviving Insular copies.[14] Malcolm Parkes has suggested, therefore, that within the late-seventh-century Wearmouth-Jarrow system of scripts, capitular uncial was the house-equivalent to minuscule, and that in the Cuthbert Gospel, "the use of capitular uncial was clearly determined by the size of the book—it is a Wearmouth-Jarrow equivalent of an 'Irish pocket Gospel book'".[15] Thus the Cuthbert Gospel might be understood as a fusion of the pocket-gospel tradition with an uncial tradition of script and book-making.

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other deluxe manuscripts were often written in Caroline minuscule. However, this script is also notably different from the Insular cursive minuscule of the pocket gospels and must be seen as a separate and unrelated phenomenon. On the features of Caroline minuscule, see e.g. David Ganz, "Preconditions".

[10] McGurk, "Architecture", 47.

[11] Capitular uncial differs from text uncial in the forms of *g*, *n* and *t*, and its omission of the hair-lines at the tops of vertical strokes and forked serifs at the ends of horizontal strokes, which are features of the latter. Brown, *Stonyhurst Gospel*, 7.

[12] Malcolm Parkes, "The Scriptorium of Wearmouth-Jarrow", in Malcolm Parkes, *Scribes, Scripts and Readers: Studies in Communication, Presentation and Dissemination of Medieval Texts* (London: Hambledon, 1991), 93-120, at 95-96; Gameson, "Material, Text, Layout and Script", 25.

[13] Bückeburg, Niedersächsiches Staatsarchiv, dep. 3, Bedafragment III-VI B + Münster-in-Westfalen, Staatsarchiv, MSC 1243, fols 1v and 12v; Darmstadt, Hessiche Landes- und Hochschilbibl. MS 4262.

[14] E.g. Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, MS 15298; Nuremberg, Germanisches Nationalmuseum Kupferstichkabinett, Kapsel 536 SD 285.

[15] Parkes, "The Scriptorium of Wearmouth-Jarrow", 96-97.

The use of Insular minuscule script (or its equivalent, capitular uncial) in these small-sized gospel books is thus a distinctive feature within the Insular system of scripts, established from at least the seventh century. This coupling of small-format with minuscule script in the pocket gospels is consistent and can only be interpreted as deliberate. How can this be explained?

Scholarship on the Script of the Pocket Gospels

Scholars have advanced various explanations for the use of minuscule in the pocket gospels, generally emphasising its utility for saving space and accelerating copying, often while dismissing it as a lowering of standards. For example, McGurk understood the use of minuscule script in the pocket gospels as principally necessitated by an economy of resources, noting that their "scrappy tough parchment, the minute script and the maddeningly ingenious abbreviations are clearly indicative of a desire to economise".[16] His words were echoed by Peter Harbison, who observed that: "typical features of these books, other than their size, is the desire to economise by writing a minuscule script which quickly leads to an equally small cursive script, with frequent use of ingenious abbreviations".[17] Likewise, Herrad Spilling thought that minuscule was adopted in the pocket gospel books to speed up and economise production in response to increased demand for gospel books owing to the missionary expansion on the Continent in the eighth century.[18] Malcolm Parkes even regarded the compression of the text in some of the pocket gospels as demonstrating an indifference to the appearance of the page:

> Although Irish scribes established new principles of layout and presentation of texts, most Irish scribes were less concerned with the finish of a book than with the information it was to contain. They were inclined to compress as much information on the page as possible. Many of their manuscripts were produced in crowded tiny script with numerous abbreviations, as, for example, in some of the pocket-Gospel Books.[19]

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[16] McGurk, "The Irish Pocket Gospel", 252.

[17] Harbison, *The Golden Age*, 88.

[18] Spilling, "Irische Handschriftenüberlieferung in Fulda, Mainz und Würzburg", in *Die Iren in Europa im früheren Mittelalter* 2, ed. Heinz Löwe (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1982), 876-902, at 886.

[19] Malcolm Parkes, "The Contribution of Insular Scribes of the Seventh and Eighth Centuries to the 'Grammar of Legibility'", in *Scribes, Scripts and Readers*, 1-18, at 9.

Examining the pocket gospels themselves is necessary to see whether these theories are supported by the physical evidence. At the same time, it is also worth considering the cultural associations that minuscule might have held for early medieval manuscript makers and users. A script is not just a product of function but a bearer of meaning and it undeniably influences how the viewer responds to the manuscript before them. In his discussion of the emergence of Caroline minuscule, David Ganz has asserted that "any analysis of the reasons for adopting a new system of writing must explore the attitude to written language which such a system entails".[20] Following such an approach, the unusual adoption of minuscule script in the pocket gospels can be explained as an expression of a highly personal and intimate attitude to the written text and created manuscript.

Miniature Scripts for Miniature Manuscripts

At a fundamental level, the use of minuscule in the pocket gospels has to be understood as reciprocally related to small format: it is a small script corresponding to the small size of the manuscripts. Surely desire to produce a small-scale manuscript of the gospels influenced the choice to adopt minuscule, a script that allowed text to be written more densely. The compactness of minuscule might also be understood as instrumental to the practice of producing entire gospel texts on single quires in some of the pocket gospels—a feature that would be difficult to achieve in a more spacious script. Other aspects of the script and layout also reveal a concern to adapt the graphic presentation of the texts to use in a small format, both in order to compress the text into a smaller space as well as to improve its legibility on a reduced scale. This supports the supposition that minuscule was introduced in the pocket gospels as part of a broader scheme to tailor the design of the page to the requirements of a small-sized manuscript. Yet the fact that most of the pocket gospels display a marked concern to balance the compression of the text with the needs of clear legibility, often plainly privileging the latter, suggests that the desire to produce a small-sized gospel book was motivated by cultural preference rather than economic necessity. In most cases, it is clear that the makers aimed to create elegant, readable manuscripts in a small format rather than to cram the maximum amount of text onto the minimum number of pages in order to save the cost of parchment.

That scriptoria carefully tailored the physical structure and graphic layout of manuscripts to their intended format is explicitly stated by Cassiodorus in his *Institutiones*, where he mentions the adjustments needed to produce a small bible in one volume at Vivarium:

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[20] Ganz, "Preconditions", 23.

Moreover, on account of the abundance of reading, we decided that this pandect ought to be composed in a smaller hand in fifty-three quires of six bifolia, so that the density of the writing that stretched the copious reading could be contracted by the union.[21]

Thus for Cassiodorus, small script clearly served as a means of accomplishing his codicological vision of a one-volume Bible in more practical dimensions than the Codex Grandior. It is a pity that we do not know which script was employed in Cassiodorus' *Codex minutiore manu* and whether it could have influenced Insular manuscript design as other Cassiodorian bibles, for example the Codex Grandior and perhaps the Novem Codices, apparently did.[22] The script must have been small indeed or the overall dimensions of the pages must have been large—in order to fit the entire bible onto 636 leaves, the gospel-section must have taken up only around 76 leaves.

Whatever script Cassiodorus did use, it is certainly the case that the few surviving late antique gospel books that were produced in a small format employed uncial script. Compared to these, the minuscule of the pocket gospels is a far more effective solution to the problem of creating a small-scale gospel book. The spacious uncial scripts clearly restricted the amount of text that could fit on a page meaning that the overall length of the manuscript had to be extended. Minuscule, however, being a more compressed script, incorporating an increased number of ligatures and abbreviations and exhibiting simplified letter forms, allowed the gospel text to be written more densely on the page, facilitating the production of gospel books in smaller dimensions. Thus while the sixth-century uncial Harley Gospels, measuring 180 x 120 mm (130 x 75 mm), is a hefty tome of 469 leaves, the longest pocket gospel, the MacDurnan Gospels, 158 x 111 (89 x 46), is less than half as long with 217 leaves. The remaining pocket gospels are dramatically shorter still, with the next longest, the Book of Mulling, 165 x 120 (130 x 90), being only 94 leaves long. It is true that the Harley Gospels is also written with spacious *per cola et commata* layout, but the fragmentary fourth- or fifth-century Codex Bobbiensis, also written in uncial but with the text laid out continuously, retains a total of 96 leaves containing half of the Gospel of Mark and just over half of

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[21] Cassiodorus, *Institutiones* I. xii. 3. "Hunc autem pandectem propter copiam lectionis minutiore manu in senionibus quinquaginta tribus aestimavimus conscribendum, ut quod lectio copiosa tetendit scripturae densitas adunata contraheret", CPL 906, 37.

[22] See e.g. Brown, *Lindisfarne Gospels*, 155-56.

Matthew, suggesting that uncial gospel books with pages of small dimensions generally amounted to notably thick volumes regardless of layout.[23]

Given the likelihood in the early Middle Ages that there were greater numbers of small-format uncial gospel books surviving than the few now extant, it is feasible that such manuscripts were known in Insular culture. Lowe even thought that the Codex Bobbiensis was present at the Irish foundation of Bobbio in this period and alluded to the possibility that it might have influenced Irish book production, although later scholars have criticised this suggestion due to a lack of evidence.[24] Nevertheless, within this context the minuscule script of the pocket gospels can be understood as an innovation aimed at producing smaller and slimmer gospel books than had ever been achieved in past traditions.

Scholars have made similar observations in their study of the "pocket bibles" invented in the thirteenth-century.[25] For example, similar to the origins of the minuscule script of the pocket gospels, miniaturising the Bible was made possible by the development of "pearl script". Albert Derolez noted regarding this minute gothic script that, "its letter forms, because they are so small, are simplified, often irregular [...] and have few 'Gothic' refinements", yet he still characterised it as "intended to be a luxurious, high-level script", despite its simplification.[26]

That the use of minuscule script in the pocket gospels was calculated to produce a smaller manuscript is supported by other features that indicate the deliberate design of the page to be well adapted to a small format, many of which are comparable to the solutions adopted in the "pocket bibles" many centuries later. This is all the more remarkable since the early medieval manuscript-makers did not have the benefit of the extremely thin, almost translucent parchment which was one of the principal technological advancements that

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[23] The surviving text of the Codex Bobbiensis is Mark 8:8-*exp*.; Matthew *incip*.-15:36. McGurk, *Latin Gospel Books*, no. 106.

[24] Lowe CLA IV 465, but see Michael Richter, *Bobbio in the Early Middle Ages: The Abiding Legacy of Columbanus* (Dublin: Four Courts, 2008), 181-82.

[25] Chiara Ruzzier, "The Miniaturisation of Bible Manuscripts in the Thirteenth Century: a Comparative Study", in *Form and Function in the Late Medieval Bible*, ed. Eyal Poleg and Laura Light (Library of the Written Word 27 (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 105-25.

[26] Albert Derolez, *The Palaeography of Gothic Manuscript Books From the Twelfth to the Early Sixteenth Century* (Cambridge University Press, 2003), 100. See also Christopher De Hamel, "Portable Bibles of the Thirteenth Century", in *The Book: A History of the Bible* (London: Phaidon, 2001), 114-39, at 119.

permitted the creation of thirteenth-century pocket bibles.[27] The parchment of the pocket gospels is generally similar to that used in larger Insular manuscripts; this meant that smaller manuscripts had to be produced by modifying the text and graphic presentation of the page alone.

One such device designed to aid the legibility of small script is the two-column layout adopted in many of the pocket gospels, namely Add. 40618, the Book of Armagh, Book of Dimma, Book of Mulling and parts of the Cadmug Gospels. Richard Gameson has noted that while the text is arranged in long lines in the majority of early Insular manuscripts, a two-column format was often employed for manuscripts with very large pages or very tiny script. Thus he concluded that script size was an important factor in determining a manuscript's page layout, with scribes adjusting the layout to correspond to the number of words per line that the eye can comfortably follow. He even drew particular attention to the use of two-column page layouts in many of the pocket gospels, observing how it renders the small script more accessible to the reader and conversely, referring to the Mulling Fragment, how a long-line format is detrimental to legibility on such a small scale:

> In all these volumes the writing is so small that there are still up to eight words per column line. The inconvenience when such principles were not followed is illustrated by a gospel-book fragment in Dublin that measures around 155 x 120 mm, whose text is presented in thirty-six or thirty-three long lines of microscopic Insular minuscule—thereby achieving some fifteen very difficult to read words per line.[28]

Similarly, when manuscript-makers began to mass-produce pocket bibles in the thirteenth century, a two-column format was one of the features adopted in order to make the small and densely packed letters easier to read.[29]

Although Gameson singled out the Mulling Fragment as an example of a manuscript in which the page layout and script size are poorly adjusted to one another, it is worth noting that in most of the pocket gospels that employ the long-lines layout, particularly the MacDurnan Gospels, Book of Deer and Bern 671, the script is generally far larger, the written space smaller and the lines-per-page fewer than in those written in two columns. It thus

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[27] Laura Light, "The Thirteenth Century and the Paris Bible", in *The New Cambridge History of the Bible*, ed. E. Ann Matter and Richard Marsden (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 380-91, at 382. Ruzzier, "The Miniaturisation of Bible Manuscripts", 115-16.

[28] Gameson, "The Material Fabric", 26-27.

[29] Ruzzier, "The Miniaturisation of Bible Manuscripts", 118.

seems that in most of the pocket gospels, careful consideration was given to the relationship between script size and page layout in order to ensure ease of reading. Even in the Cadmug Gospels whose design appears at first glance to be thoroughly chaotic, alternating inexplicably between two-column and long-line page layouts, the script is generally noticeably larger on the pages written in long-lines (minims about 2mm tall) than on the pages written in two columns (minims approximately 1mm tall).[30] Therefore, the use of smaller script laid out in two columns or larger script in long lines can be understood as features that enhance legibility at the expense of space, further suggesting that while small scale was an important factor behind a number of the design choices in the pocket gospels, in most cases it was carefully balanced with other priorities relating to the manuscripts' use.

Another technique employed in the pocket gospels that indicates a desire to compress the text, thereby reducing the length of the overall manuscript, is the frequent use of abbreviation symbols to represent words or parts of words. Abbreviations were also heavily used in the thirteenth century to reduce the length of the text in order to produce the pocket bibles.[31] However, Insular scribes were the first to introduce an extensive repertoire of abbreviation symbols into book production, with their usage previously restricted to documentary and informal writing.[32] The abbreviation symbols used in Insular manuscripts are particularly distinctive and a high concentration of such abbreviations is considered a defining feature of Insular minuscule.[33] While the origins of the Insular system of scripts are highly contested, scholars broadly accept that the forms of Insular abbreviation symbols were developed in early Ireland from informal Roman writing, especially from the Tironian notes and *notae juris* found in late antique marginalia and legal texts.[34]

While abbreviations are usually used sparingly in Insular gospel books, they are plentiful in the pocket gospels. Wallace Lindsay found that the three pocket gospels he examined, the Book of Mulling, Cadmug Gospels and Book of Armagh, were among the manuscripts containing the most extensive range of abbreviations in his survey.[35] In her analysis of Insular abbreviation practices, Genny Tunbridge used the Book of Mulling as an example of a particularly densely abbreviated manuscript, noting that "on some pages, practically one word in two is wholly or partially represented by an abbreviated form"; on fol.

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[30] This rule is not always followed. On occasional pages (e.g. fol. 29r) the combination of tiny script, layout in long lines and lack of ruling means that the eye struggles to even follow a line across the page.

[31] Ruzzier, "The Miniaturisation of Bible Manuscripts", 118.

[32] Lindsay, *Notae Latinae*, 2-4.

[33] E.g. Brown, "The Irish Element", 201.

[34] Brown, "The Oldest Irish Manuscripts", 230-32.

[35] Lindsay, *Notae Latinae*, and Lindsay, *Early Irish Minuscule Script*, 4-30.

38v, for example, 188 abbreviations occur within the 392 words on the page (counting separately the combination of two or more symbols in the same word).[36] This heavy use of abbreviations in the pocket gospels contrasts with other Insular gospel books, clearly suggesting an increased concern to save space as part of a scheme to tailor their design to their small format.

However, while the use of abbreviations is evidently related to space-saving, there are also other motivations behind the practice. In Insular manuscripts more broadly, the extent to which abbreviations were used in a given manuscript was clearly modified according to various interrelated factors, including the nature of the text copied, script used and intended purpose of the manuscript. This appears to have been partly dependant on a sense of decorum relating to the text and script, since scriptural texts and formal majuscule scripts tend to be accompanied by restrained use of abbreviations, while they are abundant in study texts (such as grammars and commentaries).[37] However, as Tunbridge concluded based on the quantity of abbreviations occurring in different types of manuscripts, perhaps the most important factor in deciding the extent to which a text was abbreviated was the type of reading for which it was intended. Manuscripts designed for reading aloud were written out more fully, while those for reading silently were likely to be heavily abbreviated. This is because reading aloud requires the reader to translate the written forms quickly into spoken sounds, a process which abbreviations complicate and decelerate. However, a silent reader understands the written words visually, without the need to spell out the sound units, and therefore abbreviation symbols make no difference—one graphic symbol can represent a word as well as another.[38] Therefore, the extensive use of abbreviations in the pocket gospels is a technique designed to reduce the length of the text in order to produce a small manuscript-copy of the gospels, as well as an indicator that these manuscripts were designed specifically for private silent reading.

Moreover, the scribes appear to have regulated their use of abbreviations within the manuscripts according to the needs of legibility. Lindsay noted that in the Cadmug Gospels the most heavily abbreviated passages are the most well-known, suggesting that the scribe adjusted the presentation of the text according to the anticipated needs of a reader. He observed that non-standard abbreviations are found predominantly "in any familiar phrase

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[36] Genny Louise Tunbridge, "A Study of Scribal Practices in Early Irish and Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts" (DPhil. thesis, University of Oxford, 1992), 237-99.

[37] Tunbridge, "A Study of Scribal Practices", 237-99.

[38] Tunbridge, "A Study of Scribal Practices", 289-93. On the visual nature of Insular reading practices and its effect on manuscript design, see Parkes, "The Contribution of Insular Scribes".

where the reader would not be likely to make a mistake".[39] For example, describing a passage on fol. 59r, "ego sum pas(tor) bo(nus)" (John 10:11 and 14), Lindsey states, "the text was so familiar that the scribe did not hesitate to curtail the words, although neither *pas* for 'pastor' nor *bo* for 'bonus' are abbreviations that he would use elsewhere".[40]

Therefore, the use of minuscule scripts in the pocket gospels is best understood as informed by a desire to reduce the space occupied by the text to allow the production of gospel books in smaller, slimmer dimensions than had previously been achieved. In this, minuscule was accompanied by a host of other features, such as page layout and abbreviations, intended to compress the text and enhance its legibility on a small scale. These experiments in layout and format in many ways mirror the later developments in manuscript design aimed at producing pocket bibles for personal use in the thirteenth century. The evidence for such sophisticated manuscript design in the pocket gospels demonstrates a more concerted engagement with the needs of readers and the graphic potential of the manuscript medium than scribes in early medieval Ireland are generally credited with.[41]

Despite the suggestions of some scholars that the pocket gospels are manuscripts of heightened economy, it is clear that most of their layout features are motivated to a greater extent by a concern with economy of space than economy of resources. Small minuscule script and extensive use of abbreviations indicate a desire to save space, yet it appears that the scribes kept legibility in mind, frequently employing devices that clearly anticipate the needs of readers. Sometimes the scribes seem to have made design choices that are at odds with the desire to compress the text and utilise maximum space, notably the use of a long-lines layout with larger script in some manuscripts. Thus, while a smaller manuscript with fewer leaves certainly would have been cheaper to produce, the pocket-gospel scribes were often willing to compromise space in favour of the legibility and aesthetics of the page design. The concern to balance the compression of the text with the needs of clear legibility suggests that the impetus for producing a small-sized gospel book was to have an eminently readable copy of the gospels in a conveniently small format. This, as well as the prolific use of abbreviation symbols, lends strong support to the theory that these were personal manuscripts for private, silent reading.

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[39] Lindsay, *Early Irish Minuscule Script*, 9.

[40] Lindsay, *Early Irish Minuscule Script*, 9.

[41] E.g. Parkes, "The Contribution of Insular Scribes", 9.

"Scholarly Little Hands"?

Yet as noted, Insular minuscule was a script employed for much more than simply space-saving. It was the usual script of books used for study and reference, such as grammars and commentaries, and cursive minuscule appears to have been the elementary or "basic-grade" script used by the literate for letter-writing, glossing, note-taking, and other personal writings outside the realm of formal book production.[42] Indeed, the scripts of some of the pocket gospels closely parallel those employed in the rare survivals from this class of personal writing, such as the original letter written by Bishop Wealdhere of London (*c.*704-5),[43] the scholarly marginalia attributed to the hands of Insular intellectuals of the period such as Boniface, Willibrord and Eriugena, and anonymous personal notebooks such as the Reichenau Primer.[44]

With these types of script undoubtedly in mind, Julian Brown suggested that the use of minuscule in the pocket gospels, together with the second-rate quality of its execution, indicated that the manuscripts were made privately by individuals, presumably using their everyday handwriting:

> The script of the Irish pocket Gospel books is almost entirely cursive in every case, and in some cases negligent, which suggests an origin as books copied by individuals for their own use.[45]

Elsewhere (and with a somewhat contradictory value assessment) he described the scripts of the pocket gospel books as "neat and scholarly little hands",[46] implying that they were written in the everyday minuscule script of medieval scholars rather than in a formal book-hand script employed by specialist scribes. The underlying assumption behind this assertion is that great medieval scholars were not usually great scribes—that mastery of the canonised scripts of formal book-production required specialist scribal training which differed from the

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[42] Brown, "The Irish Element".

[43] BL Cotton MS Augustus II 18.

[44] St. Paul im Lavanttal, Benediktinerstift, Cod. 86a/1. For the suggestion that the script of the Book of Armagh is similar to Boniface's minuscule, see O'Sullivan, "Manuscripts and Palaeography", 536. On these scripts, see also Ganz, "The Earliest Manuscript of Lathcen's *Eclogae Moralium Gregorii* and the Dating of Irish Cursive Minuscule Script", in *Early Medieval Ireland and Europe: Chronology, Contacts, Scholarship: Festschrift for Dáibhí Ó Cróinín*, ed. Pádraic Moran and Immo Warntjes (Turnhout: Brepols, 2015), 597-624.

[45] Brown, "The Oldest Irish Manuscripts", 240.

[46] Brown, "The Irish Element", 217.

education that a textual scholar would receive. Following this reasoning, it is worth asking whether it is possible that the pocket gospels were created outside the context of formal book production, by individuals who were not specialist scribes and for whom minuscule was the script of their daily handwriting.

This refers us to problems at the crux of our understanding of early medieval scribal practice. The present picture of the contexts in which early medieval manuscripts were made remains incomplete and speculative, with scholars generally emphasising the lack of a single model for book production in the period. In his study of graphic culture in early medieval Italy, Armando Petrucci divided those who wrote books into four categories: (1) "true scribes", who were specifically educated for copying in formal or canonised scripts; (2) writers not fully trained in copying who nonetheless attempted to imitate canonised scripts; (3) writers of moderate or low literacy who wrote books in the elementary scripts that were the only ones they knew; (4) learned writers, especially scholars, teachers and prelates, who wrote in personal scripts usually "without particular attention to graphic/book qualities".[47] This analysis raises the question of whether such a division could also have existed in the Insular world and if so, whether the pocket gospels should be placed in the fourth or even the third category.

Answering these questions requires an assessment of the conditions of scribal production in Insular contexts: a subject which has been little studied. However it is likely that just as elsewhere, practices were diverse with scribes working in centres that varied vastly in size, level of organisation and the nature and extent of their output.[48] In one of the few studies specifically analysing the nature of early medieval Irish scriptoria, Kathleen Hughes noted that only a handful of exceptionally wealthy and powerful centres maintained a succession of scribes commemorated with obits in the annals over multiple generations: Kildare, Clonmacnoise, Armagh, Bangor and Clonard.[49] She explained that:

Where we can trace the scribe in the annals, he is usually at work in a wealthy environment, with a good deal of expensive equipment about him—vellum,

[47] Armando Petrucci, "Literacy and Graphic Culture of Early Medieval Scribes", Petrucci, *Writers and Readers in Medieval Italy*, 77-102, at 78-79.

[48] Richard Gameson, "Anglo-Saxon Scribes and Scriptoria" in *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain* 1, ed. Gameson, 94-120, at 96.

[49] Kathleen Hughes, "The Distribution of Irish Scriptoria and Centres of Learning from 730 to 1111", in *Studies in the Early British Church*, ed. Nora Chadwick (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958), 243–72.

ink, sometimes paints and gold leaf, exemplars to copy and adapt, and a building in which to practice writing and illumination.[50]

Yet many scribes must have engaged in manuscript-making other than those who were prominent enough to be commemorated in the annals; manuscripts must have been produced at centres beyond the elite few whose activities are well recorded.

Gameson has made a convincing case for a similar distribution of scriptoria in Anglo-Saxon England, suggesting that only a select few centres had the size, wealth and necessary institutional commitment to maintain a large-scale organised scriptorium, while many small provincial centres probably made manuscripts in a relatively informal, sporadic and ad-hoc manner.[51] For example, as part of his extended examination of diverse scriptorium practices and manuscript-production, he characterised the Royal 1. B. vii Gospels as a functional but unpretentious manuscript made by a major scriptorium for the use of a minor centre, and the Hereford Gospels as the *magnus opus* of a small provincial centre using all the resources it could muster.[52]

Organised collaborative copying according to set designs was certainly practised in early medieval Ireland. A glimpse of such a scriptorium at work is provided by the mid-ninth-century St Gall Priscian.[53] This manuscript appears mainly to be the work of two scribes assisted by a further two for short stints. Their various notes apparently written to one another, often with one scribe writing in the margins of the other's portion of work, suggest that they were copying together in the same communal space. One inscription (p. 203, col. a) even beseeches: "The <?intervention> of Patrick and Bridget on Maelbrigte that he may not be angry with me for the writing that has been written this time".[54] This seems to indicate, as Lindsay suggested, that the group was supervised by Maelbrigte, probably the

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[50] Hughes, "The Distribution of Irish Scriptoria", 262. No manuscript from early medieval Ireland survives that is decorated in gold; it is found in a small number of Insular manuscripts from Anglo-Saxon England, e.g. the Lindisfarne Gospels and Stockholm Codex Aureus.

[51] For the proposal of this distribution in Anglo-Saxon England, see Gameson, "Anglo-Saxon Scribes and Scriptoria", 102-03.

[52] Gameson, "The Insular Gospel Book at Hereford Cathedral", 48-79; "The Royal 1. B. vii Gospels", 24-52.

[53] St. Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek, Cod. Sang. 904.

[54] "< >thas patric ⏋ brig(it) ar mael bri(g)tae na(m)ba olcc amenma frim(m) (arin)scribund roscribad in dulso", ed. and trans. Whitley Stokes and John Strachan, *Thesaurus Palaeohibernicus: A Collection of Old-Irish Glosses, Scholia Prose and Verse*, 2 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1903) 2, xxi.

head of the scriptorium.[55] Moreover, this group of scribes clearly produced the manuscript according to a set design. Although the minuscule script of each scribe is distinctive, they are broadly similar—all skilfully written, around the same size, and well harmonised so that the scribal changes are not jarring. Likewise, the scribes maintain a constant *mise-en-page*, and regular system of decorated initials to introduce new chapters of the text, featuring similar pen-drawn zoomorphic and anthropomorphic motifs (Fig. 27).

It is likely that some of the pocket gospels were created in a similar environment of organised and directed copying, especially those made by two or more scribes working together, each using harmonised if not precisely matched scripts of high quality while maintaining a relatively constant layout and decorative scheme. The clearest example of this is the Book of Armagh, in which most the work appears to have been shared by Ferdomnach and an additional scribe.[56] Their scripts are some of the most accomplished surviving examples of Insular minuscule and are certainly the work of highly trained scribes (Fig. 28). They maintained a clearly readable and aesthetically pleasing graphic scheme throughout; moreover, this is highly similar to the graphic scheme of the St Gall Prisican, even down to the same distinctive form of quire signatures.[57] These graphic similarities may indicate that the St Gall Priscian was also made at Armagh, although scholars have previously argued that the manuscript was made in the neighbouring county of Down, either at Nendrum or Bangor, due to references to local saints in some of the glosses.[58] The fact that the scribes clearly followed a standardised design that was common to other manuscripts produced in the area nevertheless reinforces the impression that they were produced in an organised scriptorium environment and not by individual scholars working informally in their personal scripts.

Conversely, the two pocket gospels that provide the best examples of small-scale informal production by non-specialist scribes are the Cadmug Gospels (Fig. 29) and the gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke (but notably not John) in the Book of Dimma (Fig. 30). In these cases, the script is markedly untidy and inconsistent. Wallace Lindsay justly noted regarding the Cadmug Gospels:

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[55] Lindsay, *Early Irish Minuscule Script*, 42.

[56] Sharpe, "Palaeographical Considerations"; Brown, "Ferdomnach"; although note that Brown regards the manuscript as less of a collaborative effort than Sharpe, attributing more portions to Ferdomnach's hand.

[57] Signed with a capital Q with a cross through the tail, followed by a roman numeral, found in the lower margin of the final verso of each quire.

[58] Rijcklof Hofman, *The Sankt Gall Priscian Commentary*, 1 (Münster: Nodus, 1996), 21-23. It was obviously made at a major well-endowed centre, as the number of sources used in the commentary glosses suggests that the community had a sizeable number of books available to them.

> The irregularity of the script, which on some pages looks as if it had been rather scratched (under a magnifying-glass) by a pin than traced by a pen, and which varies in size and character, according as the writer had more or less space or time at his disposal.[59]

The script of the gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke in the Book of Dimma is not as scratchy as that in the Cadmug Gospels, but it is also untidy and erratic. In both cases the tops of the ascenders and descenders, the baseline and headline, are frequently not aligned, and therefore the script lacks the steady rhythm of more accomplished examples in which the minims form a straight trackway along the line of text, punctuated by the curves and flourishes of the diagonal strokes. Furthermore, in the Cadmug Gospels and Matthew, Mark and Luke in the Book of Dimma, there is minimal distinction between thick and thin pen-stokes, whereas in more skilful specimens of the script the variations in stroke-width produced by the narrow and broad edges of the nib are emphasised for expressive effect.

As well as the scripts themselves, the *mise-en-page* is haphazard and scribal conventions are not consistently followed. In parts, the Cadmug Gospels employs only frame ruling, so that the lines of text are neither straight nor evenly spaced and the columns are not of equal or regular widths. In the Book of Dimma, though some pages are ruled with horizontal text-lines and vertical bounding lines, others show no sign of ruling at all and the lines of text and the widths of columns are neither straight nor regular. These irregularities and inconsistencies further indicate that these manuscripts were not made in an organised scriptorium with a developed scribal tradition.

It is not clear how many scribes worked on the Cadmug Gospels due to the irregularity of the script.[60] It is hard to believe that such a scratchy and erratic script could be the scriptorium standard for a group of scribes and seems more likely to be the work of an individual whose script was consistently inconsistent. However, it seems that, on occasion, manuscripts could be produced by a team of inexperienced scribes: for example, Petrucci noted St Gall MS 911, probably written in south-west Germany at the end of the eighth century, involved more than twenty copyists who "shared certain defects owing to inexperience, such as wavy alignment, different-sized lettering, excessively hard strokes, and irregular pagination".[61] It is, therefore, difficult to say whether the Cadmug Gospels was made by an inexperienced scribe or within an inexperienced scriptorium.

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[59] Lindsay, *Early Irish Minuscule Script*, 5

[60] Lindsay, *Early Irish Minuscule Script*, 5.

[61] Petrucci, "Literacy and Graphic Culture", 91.

Both Lindsay and Bischoff thought that the gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke in the Book of Dimma were all written by the same scribe, although Lindsay posited that the first pages of Matthew (pp. 3-5), were written by a superior hand, perhaps the head of the scriptorium.[62] However, this script is of much the same type as elsewhere in the manuscript and it seems probable that it was the same scribe writing more slowly, avoiding some of the most cursive variant letter forms (especially *e*), and ruling the page more thoroughly.[63] Further, the particularly careful script of the first few pages seems to gradually shift into the more hurried cursive of the main portion of the manuscript without a clear break. The practice of beginning a gospel in a more formal script before adopting a swifter variant for the remaining text is otherwise attested in Insular gospel books.[64] It is thus likely that the synoptic gospels in the Book of Dimma were the work of a single inexperienced scribe. Therefore, it seems that in the Cadmug Gospels and the gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke in the Book of Dimma, the scribal practices are disorganised and the scribes unskilled. This strongly suggests that these manuscripts were not produced in formal scriptorium environments with strong scribal traditions, and could possibly have been created by individuals for their own use.

However, the majority of the pocket gospels are written in good quality scripts, neatly laid out on the page. Some may be the work of one scribe but others reveal scribal collaboration. The scripts of the Stowe St John (Fig. 17), Mulling fragment (Fig. 31), and Bern 671 (Fig. 32) are all competent; all seem to be the work of a single scribe, all are carefully ruled and laid out with a regular *mise-en-page*. The Stowe St John is meticulously ruled except for the final page. Although Bischoff described the script as "uncalligraphic", it is in fact neat and regular, with more rounded and widely spaced letters than in many of the pocket gospels. Variations in script and layout are used deliberately for effect rather than produced by inability. The *incipit* page (fol. 1r), for example, is written in a larger and less cursive script, the descenders on the final line of script on every page are lengthened, and the final lines (fol. 11r) are written in a larger and more cursive script. In the Mulling fragment the script is not as accomplished and regular as the otherwise similar script in the main part of the Book of Mulling, but it is still neat and able. The lines are straight and the pages are set out in a regular and orderly manner. However, the scribe seems to have misjudged the format, as the use of tiny script laid out in long lines makes the pages challenging to read. The script of Bern 671 is adept and fluid with a pointed aspect and slight lean to the right. It

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[62] Lindsay, *Early Irish Minuscule Script*, 12.

[63] Lindsay, *Early Irish Minuscule Script*, 12; *CLA* 275.

[64] E.g. the Echternach Gospels.

is also written in long-lines but the letters are larger and the margins wider than those in the Mulling fragment, so that the overall effect is far more readable.

Other pocket gospels display expert hands of outstanding quality. The contrast between the hand that copied the synoptic gospels in the Book of Dimma and that which copied the Gospel of John is highly pronounced. While the former scribe was inexpert (Fig. 30), the latter was clearly skilled. Unlike the first three gospels, John's is carefully ruled and features a regularised layout with generous margins (Fig. 33). It is evident that the scribe had much greater control of the pen, using the broad and narrow edges of the nib to create letters that seem to pulsate with thick and narrow strokes. It appears to be the work of one hand. Likewise, the Book of Mulling is well laid-out and written in a relatively consistent elegant script described by Bischoff as a "deft Irish minuscule" (Fig. 34).[65] The Book of Deer (Fig. 35) and MacDurnan Gospels (Fig. 36) are written in fine and orderly scripts by skilful scribes adept in the use of thick and thin strokes.

Add. 40618 is one of the best laid-out pocket gospels, with each page featuring two slender columns, carefully ruled, straight and uniform, set in generous margins (Fig. 37). The script is meticulously neat and the letters are well-formed, rounded and widely spaced, with a level of detail not found in any of the other pocket gospels; for example letter forms often include minute serifs. This is all the more astonishing considering the minuteness of the script, which features minims only about 1 mm high. The skill required to write this immaculate script at such a microscopic size must have been considerable. The manuscript seems to have been the work of two scribes: one wrote from the *incipit* to fol 51r and another from 51r to the end.[66] There are some minor variations in letter forms between them.[67] The second scribe's hand is more flourished and not quite as neat as the former hand, and the edges of the columns are not as perfectly straight.

Therefore, many of the pocket gospels do not fall comfortably into either the category of formal scriptorium practice or informal production by individuals. It seems that some are collaborations and some are solo efforts, some are written by more experienced scribes and some by less, without there necessarily being any correlation. This raises questions about the extent of specialist book production in this period and whether or not it is valid to assume a connection between scribal inexperience and private production, or between scribal virtuosity and institutional organisation. Clarification of these points will allow us to reassess the minuscule scripts of the pocket gospels themselves to establish whether they were indeed

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[65] CLA 276.

[66] The final page of the manuscript, the John explicit (fol. 66r), is a later replacement in a third hand, revealed in the colophon to belong to an Anglo-Saxon deacon named Eaduuardus.

[67] O'Sullivan, "Manuscripts and Palaeography", 536.

likely to have been made inexperienced or trained scribes, in a private or an institutional context, and to what extent they really are "scholarly little hands".

Textual evidence suggests that independent copying of the Gospels could be undertaken by the devout in the period. Discussing monastic education in the late antique and early medieval period, Claudia Rapp has argued that "there is some evidence to suggest that literate monks made it their task to copy their own codex with texts from Scripture".[68] For example, in his *Life of Hilarion*, Jerome tells how the elderly saint carried around a codex of the gospels (*evangeliorum codicem*) that he had written in his youth with his own hand (*quem manu sua adolescens scripserat*), and which was all that he owned besides his humble clothing.[69] Gregory of Tours likewise describes how as a young man St Leobardus, having resolved to reject the world, made his residence in a cell at the Abbey of Marmoutier, where he "began to make parchment with his own hands, and prepared it for writing; there he learnt to understand the Holy Scriptures and to memorise the Psalms of David".[70] Such instances underline the value of copying the Scriptures as an educational exercise, improving the novice's familiarity with the text and perhaps furnishing them with a copy that they could use for future reading and memorisation.

Yet the assumption that a pious intellectual was necessarily a less accomplished scribe who might only use a workaday script is questionable. The shortcomings of this assumption have been particularly highlighted by scholarly attempts to identify the work of noted intellectuals of the early Middle Ages. For example, a working copy of Eriugena's *Periphyseon* with annotations in the hands of two scribes writing in Insular minuscule, designated I[1] and I[2], has long attracted scholarly attempts to establish whether and which one of the scribes was Eriugena.[71] In these studies, indications of lesser scribal training are often cited as evidence for Eriugena's hand. For example, in the most recent of these studies, Dutton observed that the script of I[1], which he ultimately identified as Eriugena's, is "less

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[68] Rapp, "Holy Texts, Holy Men, and Holy Scribes", 205.

[69] Jerome, *Vita Sancti Hilarionis Eremite*, 35-36; ed. Jacques-Paul Migne, *Hieronymi Opera Omnia*, PL 23 (Paris: Migne: 1845), 29-54, at 48.

[70] Trans. Edward James, *Gregory of Tours: Life of the Fathers*, Translated texts for Historians 1 (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1985, 2nd edn. 1991), 127-28. "Ibique se, propriis manibus membrana faciens, ad scribendum aptavit; ibi se, ut Scripturas Sanctas intellegeret ac Davitici carminis psalmos, qui dudum excesserant memoriae, reteneret, exercuit", ed. Bruno Krusch, *Liber Vitae Patrum*, in *Gregorii Episcopi Turonensis Miracula et Opera Minora* III, MGH, Scriptores Rerum Merovingicarum I, 2 (Hanover: Hahn, 1885).

[71] Rheims, Bibliothèque Municipale 875. For a summary of previous scholarship on these hands, see Paul Edward Dutton and Édouard Jeauneau, *The Autograph of Eriugena*, CC Autographa Medii Aevi, 3 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1996).

cursive and flowing than much Irish writing", using few abbreviations and lots of erasures to correct failed penmanship; thus he argued that the hand is not that of:

> One whose training in a scriptorium had prepared him or her for scribal work and whose primary duty, chiefly in a monastery or cathedral, was to copy manuscripts under supervision.[72]

Conversely, he suggested that I²'s more extensive use of ligatures "may indicate a scribe who was trained to be efficient and economical in his use both of penstroke and parchment".[73]

Likewise, in the similar case of the Victor Codex which contains two glossing hands in Insular minuscule, one long suspected to be that of Boniface, one of the arguments suggested by Parkes in favour of identifying the hand of Glossator A as that of Boniface is that it "is characterised by the absence of certain ligatures".[74] In both cases, the glosses are thought to show the hands of a scholar and an amanuensis, where the latter is taken to have had more intensive scribal training. Yet if there is anything these studies have shown, it is the difficulty of distinguishing the handwriting of a scholar from an amanuensis. If the most significant difference lies only in the quantity of ligatures used by the latter, it is fair to assume that they must have received a broadly similar graphic training.

Indeed, in Insular culture there is evidence to suggest that intellectuals and members of the Church elite engaged in scribal work as a highly independent activity. Some of the most accomplished surviving examples of script from this period are the work of learned individuals working outside what can be properly termed a scriptorium. In this context, book-production outside a scriptorium context does not necessarily indicate a lack of scribal organisation and a reduction in quality. Gameson has noted that surviving Anglo-Saxon holographs (volumes copied entirely by a single scribe), include a "disproportionately high percentage of the very finest manuscripts".[75] This might be explained by interpreting Insular manuscript culture as particularly celebrating the exclusive works of exceptional individuals. Ganz has suggested that in most Insular writing centres, "the master scribe, rather than the

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[72] Paul Edward Dutton, "Eriugena's Workshop: The Making of the Periphyseon in Rheims 875", in *History and Eschatology in John Scottus Eriugena and his Time: Proceedings of the Tenth International Congress of SPES*, ed. James McEvoy and Michael Dunne, Ancient and Medieval Philosophy 1, 30 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2002), 141-67, at 147, n. 29.

[73] Dutton and Jeaneau, *Autograph of Eriugena*, 60.

[74] Malcolm Parkes, "The Handwriting of St Boniface: A Reassessment of the Problems", in in Malcolm Parkes, *Scribes, Scripts and Readers: Studies in the Communication, Presentation and Dissemination of Medieval Texts* (London: Hambledon, 1991), 121-42, at 124.

[75] Gameson, "Anglo-Saxon Scribes and Scriptoria", 107.

director of a collaborative scriptorium, was of particular importance", and in this culture, "displays of calligraphic virtuosity might well be prized above a uniformity of shared script".[76] This suggests that the use of minuscule to copy a gospel book cannot be taken as a straightforward indicator of individual copying by pious scholars, while conversely, if the pocket gospels were written by such individual scribes, there is no reason to suppose that their use of minuscule was due to any lack of scribal ability on their part.

This idea of individual scribes, working alone according to their own personal calligraphic standards is further supported by evidence that suggests that copying was regarded as a devotional activity, practiced by the learned and powerful for their spiritual advancement. Most famously, in his *Vita Columbae*, Adomnán frequently presents Columba copying scriptural texts in his cell, even on the night of his death, and he is introduced in the preface as being unable "to let even an hour pass without giving himself to praying or reading or writing or some other task".[77] O'Reilly has shown that Columba is depicted as a scribe in his *Vita* to underline his profound understanding of scripture, arguing that the responses of Columba and his monks to the task of copying reveal their level of advancement on their spiritual journey towards God, with Columba's intense and humble copying of the Scriptures demonstrating that he has internalised its wisdom and is living its message.[78] Michelle Brown has suggested that Eadfrith may have written and illuminated the Lindisfarne Gospels as a form of eremitic retreat.[79] The impression here is not of organised copying, but of solitary copying as a spiritual discipline and holy task. Yet there is no reason

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[76] David Ganz, "Risk and Fluidity in Script: An Insular Instance", in *Teaching, Writing, Learning to Write: Proceedings of the XVIth Colloquium of the Comité International de Paléographie Latine Held at the Institute of English Studies, University of London, 2-5 September 2008*, ed. Pamela R. Robinson (London: King's College London, Centre for Late Antique & Medieval Studies, 2010), 17-23, at 18.

[77] Adomnán, *Vita Columbae*, second preface; trans. Richard Sharpe, *Life of St Columba*, 106; "nullum etiam horae intervallum transpire poterat, quo non aut orationi, aut lectioni, vel scriptioni, vel etiam alicui operationi", ed. Anderson and Anderson, 6.

[78] Jennifer O'Reilly, "The Wisdom of the Scribe and the Fear of the Lord in the Life of St Columba", in *Spes Scotorum: Hope of Scots*, ed. Dauvit Broun and Thomas Owen Clancy (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999), 159-211.

[79] Michelle Brown, *Lindisfarne Gospels*, 109; "From Columba to Cormac: The Contribution of Irish Scribes to the Insular System of Scripts", *L'Irlanda E Gli Irlandesi Nell'Alto Medioevo, Spoleto, 16-21 Aprile 2009*, Settimane Di Studio Della Fondazione Centro Italiano Di Studi Sull'Alto Medioevo LVII (Spoleto: Presso La Sede Della Fondzione, 2010), 623-49, at 626-29.

to suppose that these scholarly scribes were inexperienced and, indeed, the Lindisfarne Gospels is a work of the utmost skill.

The desire for spiritual advancement through the patient labour of copying Scripture is also likely to underlie the number of elite ecclesiastics commemorated as scribes in the annals of Ireland. It has been observed that in the second-half of the eighth century and first-half of the ninth century, when the majority of the pocket gospels were made, the annals of Ireland increasingly describe individuals as scribes, anchorites and sages.[80] Often these roles were combined in the same person, with the mention of twenty-five people who were both scribes and anchorites all in the period of 796-936. O'Sullivan has observed that in the annals, the epithet of scribe was not "used simply to denote a copier of books, but implied a man of great learning, especially in Old Testament studies".[81] Indeed, according to the Annals of Ulster, Ferdomnach, scribe of the Book of Armagh was "the wise man and best scribe of Armagh" (*sapiens et scriba optimus Airddmachae*).[82]

Such evidence complicates the idea of a binary in which individual intellectuals wrote in workaday scripts while organised scriptoria wrote in formal scripts. Rather, it seems that practices were more mixed with the existence of both highly accomplished individuals and inexperienced scriptoria. This makes it difficult to assess the context in which the pocket gospels were written, since scribal inexperience cannot be taken to necessarily indicate individual production, just as scribal skill cannot be taken to indicate the work of a scriptorium. There are considerable differences in the skill with which the various scribes executed the scripts, suggesting that the pocket gospels were made by scribes from different backgrounds. Some are likely to be the work of scribes with little scribal training, others the labour of those who were highly skilled. Equally the manuscripts reveal a variety of scriptorium practices that suggest origins across the whole spectrum of monastic manuscript-making, from small informal workshops at minor communities, to large-scale highly organised scriptoria at elite centres, and perhaps also to independent copying by individuals, possibly as a form of devotional labour. Some of the pocket gospels may have been made by inexperienced scribes who knew no other script than cursive minuscule, but this cannot have been the case for all or even most of the group. Most were almost certainly made by experienced scribes, whether as part of an organised scriptorium or working independently. Therefore, the use of minuscule script cannot be taken as a simple indicator

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[80] Peter O'Dwyer, *Célí Dé: Spiritual Reform in Ireland 750-900* (Dublin: Carmelite Publications, 1981), 14.

[81] O'Sullivan, "Manuscripts and Palaeography", 536-37.

[82] *AU* 846.1.

of informal production and its employment in all but the Cuthbert Gospels must have had a specific impetus that transcended the manuscripts' different circumstances of production.

Overthrowing the Hierarchy

The assumption that the minuscule scripts of the pocket gospels are the work of individuals with limited scribal training is perhaps due to the modern palaeographic tendency to perceive early medieval scripts according to a ranked scale—the "hierarchy of scripts"—in which majuscule scripts are considered superior to minuscules, and especially cursive minuscule. The use of minuscule in a gospel book is usually regarded as a lowering of standards. For example, Julian Brown thought that "hybrid minuscule" was employed in the Echternach Gospels because it was a rushed job.[83] Spilling suggested that in the pocket gospels the use of minuscule script was prompted by an increased demand for gospel books necessitating faster production.[84] Palaeographers could be extremely dogmatic in their value judgements regarding the relation of minuscule to majuscule in the so-called hierarchy of scripts. Indeed, Lowe made the bafflingly illogical deduction that:

> Majuscule came before minuscule, not only in rank but also in time. [...] The attitude of the Insular scribes confirms it. The priority which they give to majuscule in the hierarchy of scripts is conclusive. Whenever a fine liturgical book was required it was written in majuscule, even though minuscule was known at the time. In writing a minuscule text the headings and colophons, for which it was customary to use an older and more dignified script, are in majuscule; in short, Insular scribes invariably give majuscule the place of honour, and that can only be because it is the older type.[85]

Despite such preconceptions, although people in the early Middle Ages evidently used and understood scripts in distinct ways, there is little to suggest that they understood them according to a hierarchical scale of superiority and inferiority.

On the contrary, the early medieval lexicon for scripts does not imply a clear sense of hierarchy. One surviving text that discusses the system of scripts, found in a commentary on Donatus perhaps written in Reims during the eighth to ninth centuries, lists uncials as *maximae*, which can imply an elevated rank ("the greatest") but can also simply mean the largest or oldest, and further notes that they are written at the beginning of books (*in initiis*

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[83] Brown, "The Irish Element", 209.

[84] Spilling, "Irische Handschriftenüberlieferung", 886.

[85] Lowe, "Introduction", *CLA* II, xi.

librorum scribuntur).[86] There is nothing qualitative in its descriptions of the remaining scripts: *litterae longariae* or *longae manus scriptum* (elongated letters or long-hand script); *litterae tunsae* (or *tonsae*, "shorn" letters) which the Irish use (*quas Scotti in usu habent*); and *virgiliae*, named after rods (*virgis*). Although it is not entirely clear to which scripts the writer refers, *longariae* or *longae manus scriptum* seems to suggest the lengthened ascenders and descenders of minuscule (or the lengthened strokes of cursive); the explanation of *virgiliae* as named after rods suggests straightness and angularity; the Irish *litterae tonsae* may suggest, as Bischoff proposed, the blunt, wedge-shaped terminals that are characteristically found on the ascenders of Insular letters.[87]

A similar text is found in a manuscript copied in the 790s and linked to the court of Charlemagne.[88] Here the scripts listed are *coequaria* ("equalised" script, probably Caroline minuscule); *antiquaria manus* (antique hand); *Virgiliaca manus* (hand relating to Virgil), which they now employ in Rome (*quae nunc Romae utuntur*); *epistularis* (letter hand); and *Scottica manus* or *Britannica manus* (Irish hand or British hand). Here the scripts are distinguished largely by their form and appearance or their cultural associations with different people and places, rather than by any strong sense of a hierarchy. Indeed, neither of these lists places the scripts in the hierarchical order proposed by modern palaeographers: in the former text, minuscule is listed second, in the latter it is first.

Further evidence that minuscule was not considered an inferior script but was valued and even considered sacred, is provided by Insular interpretations of the figure of Ezra. The priest Ezra was described as *scriba velox* (a swift scribe) in the Old Testament (Ezra 7:6). He was celebrated by the monks of Wearmouth-Jarrow as the archetypal holy scribe for his efforts in saving the destroyed Hebrew texts by writing them out from memory.[89] As Meyvaert and O'Reilly have pointed out, Bede twice discusses the report (originating from the non-canonical text, 4 Ezra) that Ezra devised new letter-forms in order to carry out his task more quickly, described by Bede as *leuiores litteras*.[90] O'Reilly translates this as "more

[86] Einsiedeln, Stiftsbibliothek, codex 172, p. 143. See, Ludwig Traube, *Perrona Scottorum: ein Beitrag zur Ueberlieferungsgeschichte und zur Palaeographie des Mittelalters* (Munich: Verlag der K. Akademie, 1900), 532-35.

[87] Bischoff, *Latin Palaeography*, 86.

[88] Berlin, Staatsbibliothek Diezianus B Sant. 66, fol. 346. See Ganz, "Pre-Conditions", 41-41; David Ganz, "The Study of Caroline Minuscule 1953-2004", *Archiv fur Diplomatik* 50 (2004) 387-98, at 393-94.

[89] See O'Reilly, "The Library of Scripture".

[90] Paul Meyvaert, "Bede, Cassiodorus, and the Codex Amiatinus", Speculum 71, 4 (Oct., 1996), 827-83, at 874. O'Reilly, "The Library of Scripture", 22-24.

smoothly flowing letters",[91] though it also suggests light, thin or nimble letters, all evocative of the qualities and appearance of Insular minuscule. Commenting on Bede's description of Ezra's *leuiores litteras*, Michelle Brown has suggested that "it is tempting to speculate whether this line of thought may, for example, have played a part in the development of an influential cursive minuscule in the Wearmouth/Jarrow *scriptoria*".[92] It certainly seems likely that Bede had minuscule script in mind when he wrote about Ezra's *leuiores litteras*, further indicating that, far from an inferior script, minuscule could be regarded as having considerable sacred value in certain contexts.[93]

The use of minuscule in the pocket gospels might further be regarded as challenging the idea of a "hierarchy of scripts", as it seems that the scribes did not consider cursive minuscule to be inadequate for copying the holy biblical texts. Indeed, the scripts of the pocket gospels, though small, are in almost all cases carefully written. Considerable attention is generally given to enhancing the appearance of the letters, taking advantage of the characteristic features of minuscule script to impart clarity and elegance to the finished page.[94] In all cases the scribes take care to include the Insular wedge-shaped terminals on the ascenders (created by rotating the pen while making the downward stroke). In Add. 40618 the scribe has gone to the trouble of frequently adding minute serifs to the tiny letters (Fig. 37). In others, particularly in the Book of Mulling and Book of Armagh, the scribes have exploited the effect of the slant-pen script whereby the greatest contrast in the breadths of strokes is seen on diagonal lines: by introducing extra angles into the curved parts of the letters they produced more diagonals, enhancing the variations in line-breadth. This adds to the dynamism of the script, making it appear as though the bodies of the letters swell and contract with thick and thin strokes.

Furthermore, the use of ligatures can be seen to possess aesthetic value as well as utilitarian, giving the script a flowing appearance. That the scribes appreciated the visual effect of ligatured writing is demonstrated by Ferdomnach's use of ligatures in his most calligraphic and flourished passages, notably on the *explicit* to John in the Book of Armagh (fol. 103r; Fig. 61). On this page, the gospel is written in a lozenge-shaped text block with the

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[91] O'Reilly, "The Library of Scripture", 24.

[92] Michelle P. Brown, "Building Babel: The Architecture of the Early Written Western Vernaculars", in *Omnia Disce: Medieval Studies in Memory of Leonard Boyle, O.P.*, ed. Anne J. Duggan, Joan Greatrex and Brenda Bolton (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 109-28, at 155.

[93] Meyvaert suggests that in the Codex Amiatinus miniature the script on the page that Ezra is shown writing resembles Tyronian notes, "Bede, Cassiodorus, and the Codex Amiatinus", 873-74.

[94] The only pocket gospel which might be thought poorly written and difficult to read is the Cadmug Gospels.

final lines (John 21:24-25) in large, exuberant, highly flourished letters.[95] The script of these lines is far more cursive than elsewhere in the book; the word *testimonium*, on line 11 of the lozenge, for example, is written with the letters *testi* all conjoined with ligatures (the letters *t* written on their sides), the *o* conjoined to the *n* in a spiral-shaped ligature, and the *-um* ligatured and written vertically on its side without pen-lifts. On the line below, the word *testimonium* appears again written differently: this time the letters of *testi* are all ligatured together, the *moni* is also united with ligatures, and the *um* is likewise ligatured and written vertically on its side without pen-lifts.

Use of such highly ligatured script for decorative effect is not unusual in the pocket gospels, although the extent to which Ferdomnach employed it and the level of virtuosity he achieved are unparalleled among surviving manuscripts.[96] There is no practical reason for such ligatures. They cannot have been time-saving, as it must have taken longer to devise such elaborate designs than to write a set script, nor space-saving as they are written in a larger script than elsewhere in the text. Rather, the emphasis seems to be on the scribe's ingenuity in finding different ways to connect the letters and morph them as far as possible from their standard forms while still retaining their essential legibility. Moreover, Michelle Brown has suggested that Ferdomnach's flamboyant cursive script may be a deliberate reference to the new Roman cursive script of antiquity, perhaps intended to evoke an autograph manuscript of St Patrick (fifth-century).[97] This suggests that scribes may have relished the greater scope for creativity and reference offered by cursive minuscule.

The idea that the minuscule scripts of the pocket gospels are used intentionally for their visual effect is also supported by the way in which they are often varied throughout the manuscript to articulate the structure of the texts. The Book of Dimma and Stowe St John, for example, begin their gospels in a more formal script then change to a less formal one after the first few pages. In the Cadmug Gospels, titles, colophons and the gospel *explicits* are written in a more cursive script. In some of the pocket gospels, the last line of the text or the page is written in a more cursive script than elsewhere, in the Cadmug Gospels' Luke *explicit*, (fol. 50v) for example. On most pages of the Stowe St John the descenders of the letters on the last line extend dramatically into the lower margin (Fig. 17), and in the case of the Cadmug Luke explicit (fol. 50v), form a sinuous frilled pattern (Fig. 38). The last line of a page or text being written in a more cursive manner is a phenomenon that Ganz has

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[95] For more detail, see Chapter 4.

[96] E.g. inscriptions in the MacDurnan Gospels, fol. 69r, or Cadmug Gospels, fol. 52r.

[97] Michelle Brown, "Ferdomnach". See below.

identified in a number of Insular manuscripts, including Cologne Dombibliothek 213, the Antiphonary of Bangor, the Durham Gospels (DCL A. II. 17) and the Book of Kells.[98]

While palaeographers in the earlier twentieth century would have described these features as instances of "scribal indiscipline",[99] Ganz has suggested that variation in scripts and localised use of cursive and flourishing indicate a scribal culture that favoured the calligrapher's range and prized the individual achievements of master calligraphers over the uniformity and easy reproducibility of script—a culture in which manuscripts exhibit, "different aesthetics and practices, which may allow more scope for risk and virtuosity rather than uniformity".[100] Although not all of the pocket gospels were written by virtuoso scribes, most can be understood as sharing a culture in which variation and individual expression were valued in script.

Therefore, the use of minuscule in the pocket gospels cannot be regarded as a lowering of standards, a sign of economy or incompetence. Far from a low-ranking script, minuscule was clearly valued in the early Middle Ages, as demonstrated through textual references and through its expressive and aesthetically informed use in the pocket gospels. It is clear that certain scripts were used at different points within the text, but rather than conceptualising this as a "hierarchy of scripts", implying a ranked and linear order, it might be better regarded as a system of scripts based on culturally understood notions of decorum, in which each script held certain aesthetic and cultural associations that made it more or less appropriate for the copying of a particular text, passage or manuscript. We have seen that minuscule was probably favoured in the pocket gospels because it allowed the creation of a conveniently small manuscript for personal use, yet it is worth asking whether any cultural associations could have also informed the use of minuscule in the pocket gospel books.

Saintly Hands and Scribal Intimacy

To Julian Brown the minuscule script of the pocket gospels principally suggested the informal handwriting of a scholar. Although it seems that the manuscripts were mostly written by experienced scribes, in some instances it is possible that the personal and scholarly connotations of minuscule might have been employed deliberately for effect. Might the use of minuscule in the pocket gospels be explained not as a result of being written by scholars, but because they were meant to look scholarly and to enhance the intimacy of the format?

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[98] For a full list of manuscripts exhibiting this feature and further discussion, see Ganz, "Risk and Fluidity in Script", 19-23.

[99] E.g. McGurk, "The Irish Pocket Gospel", 253; Lowe, "Introduction" in *CLA* 2, xii.

[100] Ganz, "Risk and Fluidity", 23.

In this regard, it is notable that several of the pocket gospels contain original colophons that suggest they were saintly autographs. In these instances, it is worth considering whether the script was deliberately used to suggest that the manuscript was written in the personal handwriting of a scholarly saint. In the Book of Armagh, after Patrick's *Confessio* (fol. 24v), comes a colophon: "up to this point Patrick wrote the volume with his own hand. The seventeenth of March is the day that Patrick was transported to heaven".[101] This presumably refers to the exemplar rather than the Book of Armagh itself. The colophon of the Book of Mulling (fol. 94r) claims that "Mulling is the name of the scribe", almost certainly referring to St Moling, Bishop of Ferns (d. *c*.694).[102] Moling cannot have copied the Book of Mulling as it dates from at least a century after he died, although it is possible, as Lindsay suggested, that the colophon was transcribed from a genuine autograph of the saint.[103]

Perhaps the cursive minuscule scripts of the pocket gospels were, in such cases, intended to enhance the impression of intimacy with their supposed saintly scribes. Michelle Brown has suggested that Ferdomnach's use of cursive minuscule may be deliberately intended to evoke the handwriting of St Patrick. The colophon implies that the text of the *Confessio* was copied from a manuscript thought to have been written by Patrick himself, and the note "book uncertain" (*incertus liber*), twice appearing in the margins of this section, may further suggest that it was copied from an old and timeworn exemplar. Brown noted that:

> Ferdomnach exhibits an excessive fondness, unparalleled elsewhere in the canon of Insular palaeography, for ligatures, monograms and other cursive features ultimately indebted to New Roman Cursive, which was the result of reforms to the Imperial Roman bureaucracy during the fourth century.[104]

Since new Roman cursive was most likely the script used by Patrick in the fifth century, she proposed that Ferdomnach's unusual script may have been inspired in part by the script of the earlier document, thought to have been written by Patrick, perhaps in new Roman cursive. Perhaps similar associations also existed in the other pocket gospels associated with saints.

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[101] "Huc usque volumen quod patricius manu conscript sua. Septima decima martii die translatus est patricius caelos".

[102] "[N]omen (autem) scriptoris mulling".

[103] Lindsay, *Early Irish Minuscule Script*, 17.

[104] Brown, "Ferdomnach".

The possibility that minuscule might be employed in an Insular context to imbue writing with a personal connection is supported by Cologne Dombibliothek 213, a manuscript of the early-sixth-century Italian canon law collection known as the *Collectio canonum Sanblasiana* copied in Insular majuscule, in which the signatures of the bishops appended to the decrees of the Church councils are written in minuscule (fols 16r-18v, 57v-58v, 60v-62r, 69r-v, 76v-78r and 90r-90v; Fig. 39).[105] David Ganz suggested that this indicates that the scribes perceived minuscule as a lower grade of script, but surely it rather suggests that the script was regarded as more intimate, evoking a person's handwriting and thus enhancing the impression of the bishops as real people lending their authoritative backing to the decrees.

Likewise, Lindsay noted that "Irish" cursive is used "most often of all", for subscriptions (colophons), "when a scribe at the end of his task subscribes his name, with some expression of delight (pious or other) that his task is done".[106] Although colophons written in scripts of all kinds survive, it is notable that they were often written using a more cursive style than the script of the main text. For example, in BNF MS Lat. 9382, a copy of Jeremiah, Ezechiel, Daniel and Minor Prophets, probably copied at Echternach in the first-half of the eighth century, the main text is written in Insular half-uncial, but the colophons (fol. 45v and 91v) in which the scribe reveals his name, Vergilius, and requests the reader's prayers, are written in Insular cursive minuscule (Fig. 40).[107] Likewise, in the St Gall 51 Gospels, the main text is written in Insular half-uncial but the colophon "amen amen, the labourer is worthy of his hire" (*amen amen dignus est operarius mercede sua*; p. 265, c.f. Luke 10:7) is written in an elongated tremulous script that becomes increasingly more cursive as the line proceeds (Fig. 41). In these instances, the transition from a majuscule script for the main text to a cursive minuscule for the colophon gives the impression of the scribe changing from a formal to an informal tone in order to address the reader personally. The scribe suppresses their personality in writing the main text, but allows themselves personal expression in the colophon. The use of cursive minuscule suggests the scribe's personal handwriting—or in the case of St Gall 51, an exaggerated version of it—thereby increasing the impression of the scribe as a real individual writing a personal message to the reader.

It is therefore notable that in most cases the colophons of the pocket gospels are generally written in the same script as the main text, sometimes on a new line with an enlarged initial or, in the case of Dimma, Cadmug and Stowe, on the same line without being

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[105] Ganz, "Risk and Fluidity", 19-20.

[106] Lindsay, "Irish Cursive Script", 301.

[107] David Ganz, "The Earliest Manuscript of Lathcen's *Eclogae Moralium Gregorii*", 608.

distinguished visually from the main text in any way (Figs 42-43). Thus the point at which the main text ends and the colophon begins can only be distinguished by reading. This gives the impression that that the scribe adopts the same tone and level of intimacy in both gospel and colophon. Within the personal manuscript of a saint, this might particularly enhance the reader's sense of the saint's presence.

As well as its associations with personal handwriting, minuscule's associations with the type of manuscript used by intellectuals for private study may have further enhanced the manuscripts' connections with scholarly saints. Out of the many instances in which Boniface requested books to be sent from England in his letters, only twice did he specify the appearance of the manuscripts: when he asked for a copy of the Epistles of Peter in letters of gold, "to impress honor and reverence for the Sacred Scriptures visibly upon the carnally minded to whom I preach";[108] and when he asked for a copy of the Prophets in "clear letters written in full" (*claris et absolutis litteris*), because, he explained "with my fading sight I cannot read well writing which is small and filled with abbreviations".[109] Here it is possible to infer a sense of decorum in Boniface's instructions, where an opulent manuscript is deemed appropriate for public display during preaching because it could help to communicate sacred messages to the lay congregation, but a learned bishop such as Boniface is expected to use manuscripts in small, abbreviated script for his own private study, except when his eyesight lets him down in old age. Boniface seems to suggest that visually splendid manuscripts are useful for the "carnally minded", whereas humbler ones are appropriate for the spiritually minded who can respond to the texts on a deeper level. It seems possible that the pocket gospels represent the latter—the kind of manuscript in small, abbreviated script, used by intellectuals such as Boniface for their private study.

These ideas are founded in the ambivalence about wealth that was characteristic of the Christian faith from its earliest days. They may be seen in the light of the comments made by Jerome in the preface to his translation of the Book of Job, where he poured scorn on the use of luxurious but badly-translated manuscripts with "letters an inch high", in contrast to his humble but more scholarly volumes:

> Let those who want them have old texts written on purple parchment with
> gold and silver letters, or as people say popularly with 'uncial letters'—written

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[108] Epistle 35, trans. Ephraim Emerton, *The Letters of Saint Boniface* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1940, repr. 2000), 42-43; "ad honorem et reverentiam sanctarum scripturarum ante oculos carnalium in predicando", Tangl, 60.

[109] Ep. 63, Emerton, 116; "caligantibus oculis minutas litteras ac connexas clare discere non possum", Tangl, 131.

burdens I call them, rather than books— as long as they allow me and mine to possess our poor leaves and to cherish emended codices rather than such beautiful ones.[110]

The implication once again is that those who are spiritually minded see beyond the superficial appearance of a manuscript to appreciate the sacred truth within: that the visually poorer manuscript is the spiritually richer. Such ideas about scholarly humility and decorum may have meant that manuscripts written in a small minuscule script, such as the pocket gospels, might be the type most expected to have been the personal possession of a saint.

These personal and scholarly connotations of minuscule are not only pertinent to those pocket gospels that were designed from the beginning to be associated with a saint, but also to those in which an effort was evidently made to ascribe the manuscript to a saint after their original creation. The Cadmug Gospels received an inscription at Fulda in *c.*891-899, claiming that "This gospel [...] St Boniface the glorious martyr of the Lord wrote with his own hands".[111] The colophons of the books of Dimma and Armagh were each doctored to associate them with the saints Crónan and Patrick.[112]

In some cases, perhaps these retrospective saintly attributions were partly inspired by the minuscule scripts of the manuscripts which may have suggested to later audiences a personal connection with the saint. In particular, it is worth considering whether the association of the Cadmug Gospels with the hand of Boniface may have been partly inspired by its cursive script. Although Boniface almost certainly did not write the Cadmug Gospels, annotations that most likely are his autograph, as Parkes has argued, survive in another manuscript from Fulda, the Victor Codex (Fig. 44).[113] This handwriting appears similar to the script of the Cadmug Gospels, not only because both are Insular cursive minuscules, but also because of their angularity and the tendency for the lines to run at a slanted angle. If the

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[110] "Habeant qui volunt veteres libros vel in membranis purpureis auro argentoque descriptos, vel uncialibus, ut vulgo aiunt, litteris onera magis exarata quam codices, dum mihi meisque permittant pauperes habere scidulas et non tam pulchros codices quam emendatos". Paul Mayvaert, "Uncial letters": Jerome's meaning of the term", *Journal of Theological Studies* 34, 1 (1983), 185-88, at 187. Jerome's precise meaning of "uncial letters" is debated, but he was probably referring to large letters— "letters an inch high", as it is often and most convincingly translated—since the word is probably derived from *uncia*, a Roman unit of both length and weight. See F. Madan, "Uncial or Uncinal?", *The Classical Review* 18, 1 (1904), 48-49 and Mayvaert, "Uncial letters".

[111] "Hoc evangelium s(an)c(tu)s bonifatius martyr D(omi)ni gloriosus [...] propriis conscripsit manibus".

[112] See Appendix.

[113] Fulda, Landesbibliothek, Codex Bonifatianus 1. See Parkes, "The Handwriting of St Boniface".

community at Fulda had remembered that Boniface wrote the annotations in the Victor Codex, it would follow naturally that they might later assume that the Cadmug Gospels, with its similar script, was also by the hand of the saint.

The possibility that the use of minuscule script in the pocket gospels may represent an interest in personal and especially saintly handwriting accords well with the clear evidence for the widespread appreciation of autograph handwriting in the early medieval period. The handwriting of a saint could have the power of a relic, as in Sulpicius Severus' *Life of Martin* where a girl is immediately cured of a terrible fever when her father, Arborius, places a letter by Martin on her breast; afterwards Arborius takes the girl to St Martin to be consecrated as a nun.[114] In a posthumous miracle in Adomnán's *Life of Columba*, in which the monks of Iona save the land from drought by processing through the fields with some of the Columban relics, it is notable that an integral part of the ritual is to read from the books he had copied. Adomnán explains that the monks decided that while the elders carried the relics through the fields:

> They should hold aloft the tunic, which was the one he wore at the hour of his
> departure from the flesh, and shake it three times. They should open his
> books and read aloud from them at the Hill of Angels, where from time to
> time the citizens of heaven used to be seen coming down to converse with the
> saint.[115]

This makes it clear that reading the books aloud is necessary to activate their power, and that the most desirable place to do so is the very spot in which the living Columba used to speak to angels. This implies that reading the books written by his hands simulates Columba's speech, so that through his manuscripts the saint can still converse with heaven and accomplish miracles. It seems that his presence, inherent in his handwriting, could be evoked by the act of reading.

According to Æthelwulf in his ninth-century *De Abbatibus*, the right (writing) hand of the divinely inspired scribe, Ultán, who had been a member of the unnamed Northumbrian community in the first third of the eighth century, was able to work

[114] *Vita Martini* 19. 1-2, ed. Jacques Fontaine, *Vie de Saint Martin*, 3 vols, SC 133-35 (Paris: Cerf, 1967-69), 1, 292.

[115] *Life of Columba*, II, 44, trans. Sharpe, 200; "aliqui ex nostris senioribus nuper aratum et seminatum campum cum sancti Columbae candida circumirent tunica, et libris stilo ipsius discriptis, levarentque in aere et excuterent eandem per ter tunicam qua etiam hora exitus ejus de carne indutus erat, et ejus aperirent libros et legerent in colliculo angelorum, ubi aliquando caelestis patriciae cives ad beati viri condictum visi sunt discendere", ed. Anderson and Anderson, 450.

miracles.[116] Æthelwulf tells how in life, Ultán was "a blessed priest of the Irish race, and he could ornament books with fair making, and by this art he accordingly made the shape of the letters beautiful one by one, so that no modern scribe could equal him"; the reason for his skill was that "the creator spirit had taken control of his fingers, and had fired his dedicated mind [to journey] to the stars".[117] Many years after Ultán's death, after his skeletonised body had been moved to a new tomb by the community, one of the dying brothers asked to be brought the hand with which Ultán had written the "Lord's mystic words"; naturally, the hand cured the invalid. These examples show that a saint's writing could be intimately linked to their presence and power and conversely, that the sacred task of writing God's Word could infuse the scribe themselves with sanctity.

It thus seems possible that in some cases at least, the minuscule scripts of the pocket gospels were intended to evoke personal handwriting, to enhance the sense of intimacy between reader and scribe. We have seen that when small manuscripts were given as gifts their inscriptions often emphasise the personal bond that they form between past and present owners of the manuscript.[118] If some of the pocket gospels were intended as personal gifts, perhaps the use of minuscule script was part of this construction of intimacy. Given the associations of minuscule with scholarly manuscripts and personal handwriting, it is possible that in some instances the script was deliberately used to suggest that the manuscript was written in the personal handwriting of a scholarly saint. In the pocket gospels, it seems likely that minuscule script was employed because it was understood as the most appropriate script for a small manuscript to be used for personal devotion and study. Yet in some instances—especially when the manuscript was intended to reference manuscripts associated with a saint, or even to counterfeit the work of a saint—it is possible that minuscule was used to evoke personal writing, therefore creating the impression of intimacy with a saint. Some of the pocket gospels may have begun as manuscripts for personal devotion and study, but gained associations with saints later, and in these cases the minuscule script may have contributed to or even first prompted the saintly attributions. Minuscule script might thus be understood as part of the construction of a manuscript as a relic.

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[116] See Lawrence Nees, "Ultán the scribe", *Anglo-Saxon England* 22 (1993), 127-46.

[117] *De Abbatibus*, viii; "presbiter iste fuit Scottorum gente beatus, comptis qui potuit notis ornare libellos, atque apicum speciem uiritim sic reddit amoenam hac arte, ut nullus possit se aequare modernus scriptor"; "cum digitos sanctus iam spiritus auctor rexit, et accendit sacratam ad sidera mentem", ed. and trans. A. Campbell, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), 18-19.

[118] See Chapter 1.

Summary

The question of why the pocket gospels depart from the usual conventions of the Insular system of scripts by transmitting the Gospels in minuscule may be answered in various ways, practical and symbolic. The use of minuscule is unlikely to be related to the training of the scribes or the nature of the centres in which the manuscripts were made as it appears that the pocket gospels were made by scribes from varied backgrounds, working in varied environments, although all seem to be aware of scribal traditions and most are reasonably or highly experienced at scribal work. Primarily, the use of minuscule was probably motivated by the desire to produce the copies of the gospels in a small format for use by individuals. As such, it was employed alongside a range of other layout devices that helped to achieve an effective presentation of text on a small scale. Yet the practicality of a feature does not preclude it from also being meaningful, and it is clear that minuscule was used expressively in order to enhance the reading experience.

The associations of minuscule with personal handwriting also affected the way that these manuscripts were understood. The intimate nature of a small manuscript combined with the personal implications of minuscule script were likely recognised by scribes and users from the start, as suggested by the frequent inclusion of scribal colophons in the pocket gospels. In certain instances, these associations were particularly exploited in order to construct a manuscript as a saintly relic, either initially or retrospectively, where the minuscule script heightened the impression that the manuscript was written by the hand of a saint. This might form a historical and spiritual link with the saintly scribe, whose presence might be understood to imbue the script with added sanctity and even the potential for miracle-working. Thus such manuscripts might be designed to identify them with a constructed category of personal book in order to give the impression of a personal encounter with a holy or even saintly scribe.

CHAPTER FOUR
Layout and Diagrams: Shaping the Text

In his early characterisations of the pocket-gospel group, one of McGurk's vaguer criteria was "scribal indiscipline", a quality he understood as closely related to economy of resources. He thought that this indicated relatively informal manuscript production:

> If the script and abbreviations show a wish to save space, the arrangement of the page in these books suggests scribal indiscipline. One expects margins to be sparse but one does not expect the scribes' habits of ruling and of using columns to be so varied.[1]

He went on to illustrate his point, noting that in the pocket gospels there is a tendency for the script to vary in its cursiveness and flourish within a manuscript, as well as a willingness to arrange columns and text-blocks in unusual and irregular forms. Yet just as we have seen that other features can be understood as deliberate and expressive, closer examination of the divergences in *mise-en-page* demonstrate that they too are hardly careless lapses that might indicate "scribal indiscipline", but rather deeply meaningful graphic choices.

In the years since McGurk's publications, scholarship has become more sensitive to the ways in which the arrangement of text can be expressive and meaningful. Scholars have paid greater attention to the semiotic relationships between text and image with the rise of concepts such as iconicity of script and the increased appreciation of the iconographic aspects of the tradition of diagrams. Through such devices, words and texts assume representational forms designed to emphasise and extend their meaning; in the words of Jeffrey Hamburger, "to adorn the word was to make a statement as to its significance and to shape that significance as well".[2]

This was particularly pertinent in the context of *lectio divina*, the practice of meditative reading in which the words of the text were interiorised and ruminated upon in order to bring the reader closer to God. In early medieval monastic contexts, reading—especially reading of the Scriptures, in which all spiritual and doctrinal truth was believed manifest—was an experience aimed at achieving divine wisdom, leading to salvation.[3] The most spiritually rewarding method of reading involved *meditatio* (meditation), which Mary

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[1] McGurk, "The Irish Pocket Gospel", 253.

[2] Hamburger, *Script as Image*, 5.

[3] Vivien Law, *Wisdom, Authority and Grammar in the Seventh Century: Decoding Virgilius Maro Grammaticus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 47-56.

Carruthers characterised as, "the activity which, in any individual reader, must succeed *lectio* [study] in order to make it profitable".[4] Through *meditatio* the reader interiorised the text, imprinted it on their heart and changed it into personal experience. As scholars such as Jean Leclercq have shown, it was thought that meditative reading of the Scriptures could lead to a higher state of contemplation, in which the soul of the pious reader transcended the earthly text, rose beyond the confines of the body, and briefly attained enhanced intimacy with God.[5] It seems likely that the decorated and pictorial writing found in early medieval manuscripts contributed to the process of *lectio divina*, where the reader's meditation on the verbal meaning of the text was augmented with meditation of its visual meaning as well.[6] Thus, the unusually shaped text blocks found in some of the pocket gospels fit into a broader tradition of manipulating the layout of text for expressive and meaningful purposes.

Closely related to these instances of shaped text was the early medieval development of the antique tradition of diagrams. Diagrams are pedagogical devices designed to clarify the relationships between material by organising it into a visual scheme.[7] They combine written labels with drawings and therefore exist as both texts and images at the same time.[8] Yet scholars have also shown that in medieval diagrams, the shapes and components are arranged not only to elucidate the physical relationships between subjects, but also to serve as instruments of visual exegesis.[9] Such diagrams incorporate iconographic elements transforming the diagram into a form of picture with symbolic meanings. Thus scholars including Carruthers have emphasised that the value of these exegetical diagrams is twofold:

> They serve as fixes for memory storage, and as cue to start the recollected process. The one function is pedagogical, in which the diagram serves as an informational schematic; the other is meditational and compositional.[10]

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[4] Carruthers, *Book of Memory*, 162.

[5] Leclercq, *The Love of Learning*, 32.

[6] See especially Hamburger, *Script as Image*, 10, and Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, 221-57.

[7] Kühnel, Bianca, *The End of Time in the Order of Things: Science and Eschatology in Early Medieval Art* (Regensburg: Schnell and Steiner, 2003), 160.

[8] Hamburger, *Script as Image*, 48.

[9] Anna Esmeijer, *Divina Quaternitas: A Preliminary Study in the Method and Application of Visual Exegesis* (Assen and Amsterdam: Van Gorcum, 1978), 30-31.

[10] Carruthers, *Book of Memory*, 332.

She argued that in meditative reading, these diagrams are "designed to call to mind the framework of a composition that each individual should ponder and elaborate further. They provide "places" for memorial gathering, *collatio*".[11]

This chapter considers the instances of pictorially shaped text together with the diagrams in the pocket gospels, proposing that such page layouts are informed by the diagrammatic tradition and serve as forms of diagrams in themselves. The occurrence of such devices is far from a characteristic feature of the pocket gospels since they do not occur in all the manuscripts in the group, while they are found in a broad range of other manuscripts ranging from computistucal and encyclopaedic works to a number of large-sized Insular biblical books.[12] Rather, it places them within a broader tradition, further demonstrating that the group cannot be examined in isolation. Yet the inclusion of these devices in some pocket gospels may still have a bearing on the nature of the group, as their meditative function further reinforces the identification of the pocket gospels as manuscripts designed for private, meditative reading. It will thus be demonstrated how the pictorially shaped text and diagrams in the pocket gospels may have served as foci for the meditative reader, aiding them in the process of *lectio divina* and perhaps affording them a glimpse of the heavenly sanctuary that they hoped would be the reward for their diligence.

An Iconography of Columns

In most of the pocket gospels, text pages are laid out conventionally, either in long lines or two columns, and while they do not always maintain a consistent number of lines per page, a clear effort is generally made to ensure a relatively uniform appearance throughout. However, there are several instances where the scribes departed from the layout established elsewhere in the manuscript in order to make particular text pages stand out visually from the rest, prompting questions about the motivation for this highly localised shift in layout.

One such example is in the Book of Mulling, which is written entirely in two columns except for both sides of the penultimate leaf of the manuscript (fol. 93r-v), preceding the John *explicit*, which are written in three columns (Fig. 45). This may have been intended as

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[11] Carruthers, *Book of Memory*, 333; for meditation on diagrams, see also Esmeijer, *Divina Quaternitas*, 32.

[12] Several of which will be mentioned over the course of this chapter; for scholarship on some specific instances, see Gameson, *Codex Aureus*, 47-50; Karen Corsano, "The First Quire of the Codex Amiatinus and the Institutiones of Cassiodorus", *Scriptorium* 41, 1 (1987) 3-34; Carol Farr, "The Shape of Learning at Wearmouth-Jarrow: The Diagram Pages in the Codex Amiatinus", in *Northumbria's Golden Age*, ed. Jane Hawkes and Susan Mills (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 1999), 336-44; O'Reilly, "Patristic and Insular Traditions", 79-80.

an archaizing or Romanising feature since this format has its precedents in fourth- and fifth-century deluxe manuscripts from the Mediterranean.[13] It is perhaps no coincidence that around the time that the Book of Mulling was made, the three-column format also underwent a moderate revival in Carolingian manuscripts thought to be inspired by ancient models, most famously in the late-eighth/early-ninth-century Theodulf Bibles and the Utrecht Psalter of *c*.820-830.[14] Lawrence Nees has identified Carolingian influence in the Book of Mulling and it seems possible that the three-column page layout is part of this.[15]

However, the adoption of the three-column format for one leaf only is unprecedented and implies a localised meaning. Significantly, these are the pages that contain the text of Christ's Crucifixion through to the post-resurrection miraculous catch of fish (John 19:12-21:12). If the three-column format is indeed intended to evoke the aesthetics of deluxe late antique manuscripts, then perhaps its reservation for these pages is a mark of prestige for the narrative and spiritual climax of the final gospel. On another level, the numerical significance of three might further relate to some of the primary themes of the text. The passage in question describes the three crosses at Golgotha (John 19:18) and the titulus on Christ's cross written in three languages (John 19:20), and it is commonly illustrated by compositions of three figures: Christ flanked by either Longinus and Stephaton or the two thieves. Thus the three columns of text perhaps allude to the groups of three associated with this particular passage.

Yet perhaps primarily, the number three evokes the Trinity. Indeed, earlier leaves of the Book of Mulling feature the formula *in nomine s(an)c(t)ae trinitatis* (In the name of the Holy Trinity) in the upper margins.[16] The same inscription is found in the margins of the Book of Deer (fol. 5r, partially trimmed).[17] The most developed elaboration on the Trinitarian theme in a scribal colophon is probably that in the Leiden Priscian:

Dubthach wrote these verses in a brief time/ forgive, reader, what you see written badly;/ on the 3rd day of the Ides of April/ in the 3rd year of the nineteen-year cycle/ on the 3rd day before Easter/ When the 3teenth moon

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[13] E.g. *CLA* III 363; VII 1018; VIII 1028 and 1174; addenda 1843. Bischoff, *Latin Palaeography*, 27-28.

[14] Stuttgart HB II. 16, London BL Add. MS 24142, Utrecht, Universiteitsbibliotheek MS 32. Bischoff, *Latin Palaeography*, 27-28.

[15] Nees, "The Colophon Drawing", see below.

[16] fols 23r, 24r, 24v, 25r, 26r-29r.

[17] On marginal prayer formulae in Insular manuscripts, see Wallace M. Lindsay, "Scribes and their Ways", in *Palaeographia Latina* 2, St Andrews University Publications XVI (London etc.: Oxford University Press, 1923), 20-30, at 25-26.

began/ on the 3rd hour after midday/ with 3 fingers/ with 3 instruments: pen, parchment, ink/ with the help of the 3nity.[18]

Here Dubthach implies that the Trinitarian God intrinsically guided his work of copying, as revealed by the date on which he completed his task, as well as the form of his own fingers in the writing position and the materials with which he worked. Perhaps the use of three columns in Mulling can be regarded as the pictorial equivalent of such inscriptions, similarly expressing the fundamental guidance of the Trinity in the act of copying, invoked in pious response to the account of the Crucifixion.

A parallel example of the visual invocation of the Trinity through a three-fold arrangement of text occurs in the Matthew *explicit* in Durham A. II. 10 (fol. 3v), where the Lord's Prayer in Greek, transliterated into Latin letters, is contained within an interlaced frame that seems to take the shape of three capital *D*s (Fig. 46). Cynthia Hahn has made the convincing case that in this frame, "the unnamed name, *Deus*, is initiated without completion in the three initials, letter D";[19] therefore, the whole can be read as a graphic invocation of the threefold God. Just as this composition simultaneously suggests a frame, the letter D for *Deus*, and a pictorial sign of the Trinity, the Mulling columns can be read at once as blocks of text, the Roman numeral III, and an abstract visualisation of the Trinity.

The Matthew Explicit *of the Cadmug Gospels: The Chi and the Four-fold Cosmos*

That this striking but highly abstract instance of shaped text was intended to be meaningful is further suggested by examples that are more explicitly iconographic, such as the page containing the Matthew *explicit* in the Cadmug Gospels (fol. 18v; Fig. 47). This page is divided into diagonal quadrants with the gospel text written in two triangular columns in the left and right quadrants, and in single lines across the top and bottom of the page. The scribal colophon and extracts from Pseudo-Juvencus' poem on the evangelists are written in

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[18] "Dubthac hos uersus transcripsit tempore paruo/ indulge lector q[uae] mala scripta uides/ tertio idus apriles/ tertio anno decenno cicli/ tertio die an pascha/ tertia decima luna incipiente/ tertia hora post meridiem/ tribus degitis/ tribus instrumentis, penna membrano, atramento/ trice trinitate auxilia", ed. Heinrich Keil, *Grammatici Latini 2: Prisciani Institutionum Grammaticarum* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1855), 13; trans. Gumbert, "The Irish Priscian", 280. See also the inscription in the same manuscript (fol. 166r), "Principium et Sapientia et munus ad adiuvandum me festina" (Origin and wisdom and Gift hasten to help me), Gumbert, "The Irish Priscian", 286

[19] Cynthia Hahn, "The Letter and the Spirit, The Power of the Letter, the Enlivenment of the Word in Medieval Art", in *Visible Writings: Cultures, Forms, Readings*, ed. Marija Dabello and Mary L. Shaw (New Brunswick, New Jersey and London: Rutgers University Press, 2011), 55-76, at 63.

four diagonal lines outlining the upper and lower quadrants, with a few words written horizontally inside the lower quadrant (Fig. 48). Altogether the negative space between the text forms a saltire cross, at the centre of which a small lozenge with capped corners is drawn.

In his study on pictorially designed script in the early Middle Ages, Hamburger has commented that the geometric disposition of text on a page, often written at different angles and orientations, seems designed to hamper rather than enhance legibility, probably in order to slow the reader down and make them consider more deeply what is written; he suggested that "to decipher the words, the reader must either crane his or her neck, walk around the book, or turn the book in the hands […] alternatives that suggest that the primary purpose might have been to force readers to turn the words over in their minds".[20] The likelihood that the manipulation of the shapes and directions of the text on the Matthew explicit page in the Cadmug Gospels is intended to encourage the reader to reshape and turn over their thoughts is further suggested by the geometrical symbolism of the page, which holds significance not only for the words on this particular page but for the perception of the manuscript and reading experience as a whole.

Of the motifs on the page, the cross dominates the composition, embracing the other elements in the extent of its broad arms. The saltire cross is identical with the Greek *chi*, the first letter of the word *Christos*. As such, the letter *chi* is an abbreviation of the name of Christ, as in the *nomen sacrum* "XPI" which is generally used in preference to the full Latin name of Christ in Insular gospel books.[21] Due to its shape, the *chi* is also a pictorial sign for the cross—as stated, for example, by Isidore[22]—so that it signifies Christ on multiple semiotic levels.[23] Its symbolic potency is fully exploited in Insular gospel books, most notably on the *Chi-rho* page: occurring at Matthew 1:18, the point in the text at which Christ's incarnation is first announced, on this page in Insular gospel books the *nomen sacrum* is spectacularly magnified in the manner of a gospel *incipit* and decorated with motifs that allude to profound Christological themes.[24] At its most basic then, the arrangement of text on the

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[20] Hamburger, *Script as Image*, 45.

[21] E.g. Hamburger, *Script as Image*, 11-16.

[22] Isidore, *Etymologiae*, 1.3.11, ed. Wallace M. Lindsay (Oxford: Clarendon, 1911); trans. Stephen A. Barney, W. J. Lewis, J. A. Beach and Oliver Berghof, *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 40.

[23] On the semiotics of Insular *Chi-Rho* monograms, see Carol A. Farr, "The Sign at the Cross-roads: the Matthean Nomen Sacrum in Anglo-Saxon Gospel Books Before Alfred the Great", in *Anglo-Saxon Studies in Archaeology and History* 16 (2009), 77-86.

[24] See for example: Suzanne Lewis, "Sacred Calligraphy: The Chi Rho Page in the Book of Kells", *Traditio* 36 (1980), 139-59; Farr, "Sign at the Cross-roads"; O'Reilly, "Gospel Harmony".

Cadmug Matthew *explicit* page can be understood as a revelation of Christ, whom the careful viewer can glimpse through the words of Scripture.

The central lozenge enhances this effect. Although its meaning is not overtly explained in any extant early medieval texts, the lozenge frequently occupies a prominent position in early medieval art where it is employed in ways that suggest a close association with Christ. For example, the mandorla of Christ is often shown as a lozenge in Carolingian *Majestas Domini* miniatures, associating it with Christ's Second Coming.[25] In Insular contexts the lozenge is perhaps best known for its recurrent appearances in the Book of Kells, for example at the centre of the *chi* on the *Chi-Rho* page (fol. 34r; Fig. 49), and at the centre of the four-symbols page prefacing the Gospel of John (fol. 290v; Fig. 50), the composition of which is also based on the *chi*-cross.[26] As well as the *chi*, the lozenge is often associated with the John incipit, in which the eternal nature and creative power of the *Logos* is mystically affirmed, leading scholars to identify the lozenge with Christ as the *Logos*, or Word.[27] Thus the combination of the *chi* and lozenge can be understood as a powerful multi-layered symbol of Christ.

Yet simultaneously, the design of the text page can also be understood to refer to the gospels themselves. Despite using the Cadmug Matthew *explicit* to exemplify his point that in the pocket gospels, "the scribes play their fantasies with script or space", McGurk also noted that the segmentation of the page looks "as if it was meant to receive the four symbols".[28] Although he did not develop the point further, his observation is significant. One of the graphic qualities of the cross is that it naturally forms four fields between its arms. This design was employed by gospel-book designers to produce the type of miniature known as a four-symbols page, in which the evangelist symbols are depicted each in one of the four quadrants formed by the central cross.[29] Although these generally take the form of an axial cross—as in two of the pocket gospels, the Book of Armagh and MacDurnan Gospels—the *chi*-cross forms the basis of the four-symbols in the Book of Kells (fol. 290v; Fig. 50),

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[25] E.g. Bianca Kühnel, *The End of Time*; Herbert L. Kessler, "Medietas/Mediator and the Geometry of Incarnation", in *Image and Incarnation: The Early Modern Doctrine of the Pictorial Image*, ed. Walter S Melion and Lee Palmer Wandel (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2015), 17-75, at 39-44.

[26] Lewis, "Sacred Calligraphy", 151.

[27] E.g. O'Reilly, "Patristic and Insular Traditions", 83; Hilary Richardson, "Lozenge and Logos", *Archaeology Ireland* 10, 2 (1996), 24-25, and "Biblical Imagery and the Heavenly Jerusalem in the Book of Armagh and Book of Kells" in *Ireland and Europe in the Early Middle Ages: Texts and Transmissions / Irland und Europa im Früheren Mittelalter: Texte und Überlieferung*, ed. Próinséas Ní Chatháin and Michael Richter (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2002), 205–214.

[28] McGurk, "The Irish Pocket Gospel", 253.

[29] E.g. O'Reilly, "Patristic and Insular Traditions", 85-94; Netzer, *Cultural Interplay*, 103-07;

creating a composition notably similar to that of the Cadmug Matthew explicit. As McGurk observed, to a viewer who is familiar with the tradition of four-symbols pages, the quadripartite design of the Cadmug page in the context of an Insular gospel book unmistakably recalls the four evangelists and their gospels. That it was indeed intended as a visual invocation of the evangelists is further suggested by the inscription on the upper right diagonal, *Matheus Marcus Lucas Johannis*, and the Pseudo-Juvencus verses on the evangelists written in the lower quadrant and on the facing page (fol. 19r).

In this way the Cadmug Matthew *explicit* can be understood as a schematic representation of a four-symbols page with the four fields left deliberately unfinished in order to prompt the viewer to complete the picture in their minds. Lawrence Nees has made a similar suggestion regarding the final page of the MacRegol Gospels (fol. 196v; Fig. 51). A frame of interlace panels divides this page into a grid of six compartments. The upper four compartments contain the Pseudo-Juvencus verses on the evangelists, with the lines pertaining to each evangelist contained in a separate segment. The lower two compartments, which are slightly shorter than the others, contain the colophon naming MacRegol as the scribe as requesting the reader's prayers. Nees proposed that in a reduced form:

> The upper part of the page, then, shows a cross surrounded by the four
> Symbols of the Evangelists', while the scribe is positioned humbly below, in
> the manner of a donor kneeling at the foot of the cross.[30]

Such emblematic versions of miniatures can be understood in much the same way as the triple *D*s in the Durham A. II. 10 colophon. They set an interpretative task that implicates the viewer in the image, making them a creative participant in the work of the page before them. That the image is only fully realised within the mind of the viewer parallels the process of meditative reading, where ideas are internalised and refashioned in the mind to attain their full significance. Through these processes therefore, the quadripartite design encourages the viewer to perceive the harmony of the fourfold gospel within the text of the gospel book, while the fundamental authority of Christ, whose life and teachings they set forth, is signified by the all-embracing cross.

Yet this arrangement also has further-reaching connotations. In early medieval thought, the four-fold harmony of the Gospel was seen to mirror the four-fold harmony of Creation, made up of numerous cosmological groups of four: four cardinal directions, four winds, four seasons of the year, four elements, four humours of the body, to name but a

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[30] Nees, "The Colophon Drawing", 83-84.

few.[31] In this regard, the Cadmug Matthew *explicit* can be understood as closely related to the tradition of computistical and astronomical diagrams used by early medieval commentators to organise knowledge of the universe into geometrical schemes, often focussed on these cosmological quaternities.

This symbolism is illustrated in the world maps found in two sister manuscripts from Salzburg, *c.*818-821, in which the three continents are represented within a diagonally orientated square-shaped world, with the four cardinal directions marked in medallions on the axes and the four elements marked similarly at the corners (Fig. 52).[32] Elsewhere in the cartographic tradition the world is almost invariably pictured as a circle, representing the *orbis mundus*. By departing from this tradition to represent the world within a square, the Salzburg maps emphasise the fourfold harmony of Creation and perhaps imply Christ the *Logos*, revealed through the sign of the lozenge throughout the universe. Moreover, the positioning of the medallions evokes the arms of a complementary axial and *chi*-cross, further suggesting the presence of Christ enclosing the universe.[33]

Lozenges were sometimes incorporated into cosmological *rota* diagrams such as an *annus-mundus-homo* diagram from a late-ninth-century astronomical-computistic encyclopaedia (Fig. 53). This represents the relationship between the four seasons of the year, four basic elements of the world and four humours of the human body within a *rota*, evoking the spherical shape of the universe, containing a *chi*-cross formed by the negative space between the labels, and a small lozenge at the centre of the composition.[34] In this way, the diagram not only aligns time, the world and the human body into a single harmonious fourfold scheme, but it also demonstrates the central position of Christ within that scheme: the creator of all, revealed in his Creation. The composition of the Cadmug Matthew explicit is notably similar to that of this diagram, perhaps making an equivalent statement about the omnipresence of Christ in the four gospels and in the quadripartite order of the universe. The idea is expressed explicitly in the *Maiestas Domini* miniature in the ninth-century Codex Aureus of St Emmeram (fol. 6v; Fig. 55), which shows Christ in a lozenge-shaped mandorla with the titulus: "Christ, the life of men and highest glory of the heavens, balances the quadrangular universe with wonderful division".[35]

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[31] O'Reilly, "Patristic and Insular Traditions".

[32] Munich, Bayererische Staatbibliothek, Clm 210, fol. 132v, and Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Codex 387, fol. 134r. Kühnel, *The End of Time in the Order of Things*, 154-55.

[33] Kühnel, *The End of Time*, 155.

[34] St. Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek, Cod. Sang. 250, 27. Kühnel, *The End of Time*, 141-42.

[35] "Christus vita hominum coelorum gloria summa librat tetragonum miro discrimini mundum", Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 1400. See, Kühnel, *The End of Time*, 234; Kessler, "Medietas/Mediator", 39-44.

This imagery may also have eschatological associations. As a schematic version of a four-symbols page, the Cadmug Matthew explicit belongs to a fundamentally eschatological image type since the evangelist symbols derive from the four "living creatures" surrounding the throne of God in the apocalyptic visions of Ezekiel and John.[36] This impression is reinforced by the central *chi*-cross, as the cross was widely understood to be the sign of the "son of man", which according to Matthew (24:30), will appear in the heavens to herald the Second Coming.[37] Indeed, the eschatological connotations of the cross are often highlighted in early medieval art, for example by its inclusion along with the alpha and omega symbols (Revelation 1:8, 21:6, 22:13), or its accompaniment with apocalyptic inscriptions, as in the case of a late-seventh or early-eighth-century plaque from Jarrow bearing the image of a cross with the inscription: "in this unique sign life is returned to the world".[38]

Moreover, as Kühnel has argued, the ultimate implications of cosmological diagrams and the geometrical iconography associated with them are likely to be eschatological, with the mapping of the world and the universe belying a desire for their destruction and heavenly recreation free from imperfection at the time of Christ's prophesied return.[39] Thus the lozenge of the *tetragonus mundus* was frequently employed in apocalyptic imagery, such as Carolingian *Maiestas Domini* miniatures including the St Gauzelin Gospels and Touronian Bibles including the Bamberg, Vivien and Moutier-Grandval Bibles (Figs 55-58).[40] Likewise, apocalyptic symbolism was embedded in diagrams composed around the shape of the lozenge as, for example, in the later Anglo-Saxon diagram made in *c*.1000 by Byrhtferth, a monk of Ramsey, but only transmitted in later manuscripts (Fig. 54), in which the initial letters of the cardinal directions in Greek are magnified to spell out the name ADAM, thus clearly identifying the lozenge as an image of the *tetragonus mundus*, while evoking the concept of Christ as the second Adam who rectifies the sin of the first and

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[36] Ezekiel 1:4-16, Revelation 4-7. On the derivation of the evangelist symbols, see O'Reilly, "Patristic and Insular Traditions", 53-58.

[37] See also, Revelation 7:2.

[38] "IN HOC SINGULARI SIGNO VITA REDDITUR MUNDO"; Jane Hawkes, "The Road to Hell: The Art of Damnation in Anglo-Saxon Sculpture", in E. Mullins and D. Scully, eds., *"Listen, O Isles, unto Me", Studies in Medieval Word and Image in Honour of Jennifer O'Reilly* (Cork, 2011), 230-42, at 232. For further instances of early medieval crosses with clear eschatological symbolism, see Kühnel, *The End of Time*, 56-64.

[39] Kühnel, *The End of Time*, 13.

[40] For other Biblical sources, see Isaiah 6:1-3; Ezekiel 1:4-28. Kühnel, *The End of Time*, 19-21. Kees Veelenturf, *Dia Brátha: Eschatological Theophanies and Irish High Crosses* (Amsterdam: Stichting Amsterdamse Historische Reeks, 1997), 27-68.

permits humanity to return to paradise.[41] In these ways, the compositional structure of the lozenge as the *tetragonus mundus* of the diagram tradition was used to evoke Christ's multiple roles in the creation, salvation and judgement of the world.[42]

Although no such image survives from early medieval Ireland or England, various scholars have posited that a visual tradition of associating the lozenge with the Second Coming probably existed in the Insular period. For example, Jennifer O'Reilly has inferred the existence of such iconography from Hiberno-Latin exegesis and four-symbols pages.[43] Ben Tilghman has made a similar case based on the apocalyptic letters alpha and omega identified inside a lozenge-shape on the Luke *incipit* of the Book of Kells.[44]

Indeed, in the Cadmug Gospels, the positioning of the geometrically arranged text at the Matthew *explicit* supports the likelihood that it was understood to bear eschatological significance. The closing lines of Matthew which form the design contain Christ's command to his disciples to go and "teach ye all nations; baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost", and end with Christ's promise, "Behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world".[45] O'Reilly has demonstrated the importance assigned to these words in Insular culture as an assurance of Christ's Second Coming, noting that the Matthew *explicit* is often emphasised in Insular gospel books.[46] Particularly noteworthy is the crucifixion miniature in the Durham Gospels which occurs on the verso of the final page of Matthew. The inscription on this miniature makes a clear link between the cross and the promise of resurrection and eternal life for the faithful:

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[41] Kühnel, *The End of Times*, 182-83. Faith Wallis, "8. Mathematics: 3. Fraction and Abacus Tables." The Calendar and the Cloister: Oxford, St John's College MS17. 2007. McGill University Library. Digital Collections Program. http://digital.library.mcgill.ca/ms-17 (accessed 21st October, 2016).

[42] Kühnel, *The End of Time*, 225-39; Kessler, "Medietas/Mediator", 39-44.

[43] O'Reilly, "Patristic and Insular Traditions", 87-90.

[44] Ben C. Tilghman, "The Shape of the Word: Extralinguistic Meaning in Insular Display Lettering", *Word & Image: A Journal of Verbal/Visual Enquiry* 27, 3 (2011), 292-308, at 297-98.

[45] Matthew 28:19-20, "ergo docete omnes gentes baptizantes eos in nomine Patris et Filii et Spiritus Sancti [...] ecce ego vobiscum sum omnibus diebus usque ad consummationem saeculi".

[46] Jennifer O'Reilly, "The Image of Orthodoxy, The Mysterium Christi and Insular Gospel Books", in *L'Irlanda E Gli Irlandesi Nell'Alto Medioevo, Spoleto, 16-21 Aprile 2009*, Settimane Di Studio Della Fondazione Centro Italiano Di Studi Sull'Alto Medioevo LVII (Spoleto: Presso La Sede Della Fondzione, 2010), 651-705, at 669-70.

[He] casting down the author of death, renews our life if we suffer with him/

He rose from the dead and sits at the right hand of God the Father/ So that

when we have been restored to life, we may reign with him.[47]

O'Reilly regarded this as alluding to the premonitory closing words of Matthew on the recto of the page, thus connecting the passage with the image and encouraging deeper engagement with their messages. The Cadmug Matthew *explicit* can be understood as schematised version of such a miniature, employing the abstract geometrical symbols of the cross, lozenge and quadripartite fields to visually evoke the themes addressed in the text: the all-embracing presence of Christ, the transmission of the gospels throughout the world, and the sign of Christ's apocalyptic return.

Moreover, the all-encompassing nature of the image, referring to the universal themes of cosmos, apocalypse and eternity, is further enhanced by the reoccurrence of its essential composition throughout the Cadmug Gospels. As well as the Matthew *explicit*, the image of the *chi*-shaped cross with triangular fields delineated between the arms appears on the front and back covers of the binding (Fig. 12), in which each triangle additionally contains a triquetra, and in the form of the *Chi-rho*, which encloses between its lower arms a triangle with capped corners containing a small cross (fol. 18v; Fig. 59). These form a mnemonic chain, where the reader recognises the visual similarity and mentally constructs bridges of meaning across the images.

Thus, the all-embracing arms of the *chi*-cross on the covers and the Matthew *explicit* suggest Christ extending to the four corners of the world and the four books of the gospels, as well as the apocalyptic harbinger: the "sign of the son of man in heaven". This idea is further reinforced by the image of the lozenge, or *tetragonus mundus*, suggesting Christ's role as the *Logos* who created the world and will return to recreate it anew. The triangles and triquetras encompassed by the *chi*-crosses might be understood to suggest the presence of Christ and the Trinity permeating the four corners and three continents of the world and, by extension, the four gospels. The Irish Reference Bible, for example, explains that the quadrangular world is divided into three parts, signifying the four gospels and the Trinity to which they testify.[48] The overall compositional similarity of the designs of the Matthew *explicit* and book covers to a four-symbols page, as well as the inscriptions referring to the evangelist symbols, evoke the apocalyptic image of the living creatures and suggest the

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[47] "Auctorem mortis deiecens vitam nostram restituens si tamen conpatiamur/ Surrexit a mortuis ... sedet ad dextram d(ei) patris/ Ut nos cum resuscitatos simul et regnare faciat", ed. and trans. O'Reilly, "Image of Orthodoxy", 674.

[48] O'Reilly, "Patristic and Insular Traditions", 81.

central role of Scripture in salvation history. Indeed, on the Matthew *explicit* page, the image's creation from the body of the text itself might further allude to this, suggesting not only the Creation of the universe by the *Logos*, but also the fulfilment of Scripture in the end times.

That this is conveyed simultaneously through the impressed drawing on the leather, through the shape of the words on the Matthew *explicit*, and through the single mystical letter of the *chi* on the *Chi-Rho* page, reinforces the idea of God's omnipresence throughout the manuscript, text, language and universe. This scheme suggests meditative reading and looking at the gospel book, informed by deep eschatological longing. Overall, the employment of such imagery in the gospel book might refer to its power to aid the soul of the reader in its journey to salvation, giving the reader/viewer a partial glimpse of the much anticipated end times when they could hope to be rewarded for their faith, for which their pious reading of Scripture has prepared them. That the image suggests these ideas without representing them figuratively might enhance the personal and meditative dimension of the image, providing the stimulus for the reader/viewer to create the experience of their own apocalyptic vision within their mind.

Reading the Way to the Heavenly Jerusalem in the Book of Armagh

Despite the Cadmug Matthew *explicit*'s focus on the vision of the living creatures, early medieval eschatological longing most commonly focussed on another element of the apocalyptic vision: the Heavenly Jerusalem. In the triple prologues to his commentary *On the Temple*, Bede discusses the various ways in which the faithful reader can find consolation in the pages of God's Word, ending with the statement that Scripture promises a future dwelling in the house of God:

> For this too we find in the consolation of the scriptures that "he has blessed those who fear the Lord, both little and great" (Psalm 113:21), and declared that there are many mansions in store for us in his Father's house (John 14:2).[49]

Then, addressing his friend and dedicatee Acca, Bishop of Hexham, he explains that he has

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[49] Bede, *On the Temple*, Prologue 2, trans. Seán Conolly, Translated Texts for Historians 21 (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1995), 2; "Nam et hoc in consolatione scripturarum inuenimus quia benedixit omnes timentes se dominus pusillos cum maioribus multas que nobis in domo patris sui mansiones esse declarauit", ed. David Hurst, CCSL 119A (Turnhout: Brepols, 1969), 143-234, at 144.

written this exposition so that, like John on Patmos, Acca might be moved to contemplate "the unfathomable mysteries of the heavenly mansions".[50] Bede thus makes clear that he regards the ultimate message of Scripture as eschatological, allowing the reader a glimpse of the eternal bliss they are promised in the heavenly city.[51]

Much the same message is likely to underlie the series of unusual meditative devices found in the Book of Armagh. This is demonstrated by the fact that three devices in this manuscript found at the John *explicit* (fol. 103r), the so-called *capitula* of Revelation (fol. 159v) and the Revelation explicit (fol. 170r) are all meditative instruments featuring complex interactions between word and image, which focus on an eschatological theme and centre on the multivalent form of the quadrangle. As such, they form a chain of meaning that recreates the inward journey of the meditative reader to the spiritual heights of contemplation. In doing this, the devices can be understood to encourage the reader/viewer to follow the visionary lead of John—believed in the early Middle Ages to have authored both his gospel and the Book of Revelation—through a life of inward contemplation to an eternal habitation in the Heavenly City.

Consideration of this begins with the design of the *explicit* page of the Gospel of John (fol. 103r; Fig. 61). On this page, the final verses of the text (John 21:20, *qui tradet* [sic]-end) are written in a central lozenge-shaped text block, ruled with double lines. Surrounding this central lozenge are extracts from Gregory's *Moralia in Iob*, written in two columns with their inner edges moulded around the shape of the lozenge, and in a triangular text block at the top of the page.[52] This pictorially designed text alerts the reader to its significance and challenges them with its interpretation. We have already seen that early medieval audiences attached considerable Christological, cosmological and ultimately eschatological significance to the shape of the lozenge; consideration of the chosen *Moralia* extracts in relation to the central text reinforces this message, emphasising the importance of the contemplative life as a means to eternal salvation.

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[50] Bede, *On the Temple*, Prologue 3; trans. Conolly, 3; "ad contemplanda infinita illa caelestium mansionum archana", ed. Hurst, 145. On this passage, see also Jennifer O'Reilly, "Bede on Seeing the God of Gods in Zion", in *Text, Image, Interpretation: Studies in Anglo-Saxon Literature and its Insular Context in Honour of Éamonn Ó Carragáin*, ed. Alastair Minnis and Jane Roberts, Studies in the Early Middle Ages 18 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), 3-29, at 22.

[51] On the Heavenly Jerusalem as the destination of redeemed souls, see Hebrews 11:16, 12:22, 13:14; Revelation 3:12, 21:2.

[52] Extracts from: (1) lib. VI. xxxvii. 56 (on Job 5:26), left-hand column; (2) V. vi. 9 (on Job 3:22), upper triangle and right-hand column lines 1-10; (3) V. iii. 4 (on Galatians 6:14), right column, lines 10-33; (4) IV. xxvii. 52 (on Christ's three miracles of raising the dead and Luke 9:60), right column, lines 34-end.

In his monumental edition of the Book of Armagh, the first work to mention the page, Gwynn only noted dismissively that the *Moralia* extracts "in no way bear on the text which they enclose".[53] Scholars have since questioned his interpretation but only one alternative has been suggested to date: Bernard Meehan, despite observing the strong themes of death and resurrection that run through the extracts, focused only on the ways in which they might highlight special preference for John and secondary status afforded to Peter, which he regarded as part of a Columban tradition of claiming authority from John, as in the case of the Easter Question at the Synod of Whitby (664).[54] However, though the Book of Armagh certainly displays a high regard for John, there is no evidence that it was ill-disposed towards Peter. Indeed, on the Jerusalem diagram Peter, paired with the first stone, jasper, is placed in prime position on the central eastern wall, flanked by all the other apostles.[55] Furthermore, the main church at Armagh was dedicated to Peter and Paul and, according to the *Liber Angeli* preserved in the Book of Armagh itself (fols 20v-22r), the church of Armagh possessed relics of Peter, among other Roman saints, making it highly unlikely that the manuscript presents anti-Petrine messages.

Closer consideration of the content of the *Moralia* extracts suggests rather that they were selected to emphasise the value of the contemplative life as a means to eternal salvation, for which John serves as an exemplar. The fundamentally eschatological significance of the selection is made apparent by the common concern of the extracts with deaths of various kinds—physical and spiritual, positive and negative—with the overall message that while humans are too weak to avoid sin entirely, by following a life of worldly denial and heavenly contemplation they can look forward to Christ's mercy and eternal life in heaven, whereas indulging in sin results in eternal death.

The majority of the extracts (numbers 1-3) concern the characterisation of the contemplative life as a kind of death for Christ. For example, the entire left column discusses Job 5:26: "Thou shalt enter into the grave in abundance, as a heap of wheat is brought in its season";[56] where Gregory interprets this as advocating making oneself "dead to the desires of the present life" through the life of inward contemplation.[57] He adds that this might be complemented by "burying" oneself in the active life through service to one's neighbours but

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[53] Gwynne, *Liber Ardmachanus*, cxxvi.

[54] Meehan, "Irish Pocket Gospel Books", 95-99. Breay and Meehan, "Introduction", 2-3.

[55] Thomas O'Loughlin, "The Plan of the New Jerusalem in the Book of Armagh", *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies* 39 (Summer, 2000), 23-38, at 34-35.

[56] "Ingredieris in abundantia sepulchrum sicut infertur acervus in tempore suo".

[57] *Moralia* VI. xxxvii. 56, trans. James Bliss, *Morals on the Book of Job*, Library of the Fathers of the Holy Church 18, 3 vols (Oxford: J.H. Parker, 1844-1850), 2, 355; "exstinctam a praesentis uitae desideriis"; ed. Marcus Adriaen, *Moralia in Iob Libri I-X*, CCSL 143 (Turnholt: Brepols, 1979), 325.

that the contemplative life, by which the faithful "rise into the love of God", is ultimately most desirable.[58] In the second extract, comprising the upper triangle of text and the first ten lines of the right column, Gregory expounds Job 3:22: "And they rejoice exceedingly when they have found the grave",[59] continuing to argue that "heavenly contemplation is a kind of spiritual grave wherein the soul is buried",[60] and concluding that "he is made rich by the grave, who, following the example of the righteous, is raised up in the excellency of contemplation".[61] In the third set of extracts, occupying lines 10-33 of the right column, Gregory discusses Galatians 6:14: "the world is crucified to me, and I to the world",[62] interpreting this as the state of a person who has abandoned all worldly affections and also escaped being tied down by all worldly business, so that "both are mutually dead to one another".[63] Thus these passages reiterate that through abandoning all earthly cares and devoting themselves to the spiritual life, the pious Christian might become "dead to the world", thereby assuring that they would be raised to eternal life—a recurring idea in the New Testament.[64]

This message is probably addressed directly to the monastic reader, celebrating their life of monastic seclusion and their contemplative reading of Scripture. Clare Stancliffe has shown that in Late Antiquity the idea of mortifying oneself in the present life to achieve eternal life in the hereafter was developed to characterise the ascetic monastic lifestyle as a form of non-literal martyrdom for Christ. She showed that in Ireland the notion of the ascetic life as a form of martyrdom took on added significance for monastic communities, with an elaborate system of colour classification developed for the different types of non-literal deaths, where monastic life was termed as "white" (or bloodless) martyrdom.[65]

The Book of Armagh's interest in the bloodless martyrdom of the monastic lifestyle is further underscored by the inclusion of the *Vita* of St Martin of Tours and other texts relating to the saint by Sulpicius Severus. St Martin was one of the principal saints held up as

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[58] *Moralia* VI. xxxvii. 56, trans. Bliss, 355; "in dei amore surgitur", ed. Adriaen, 326.

[59] "Gaudentque vehementer cum invenerint sepulchrum".

[60] *Moralia* V. vi. 9, trans. Bliss, 248; "diuina contemplatio quoddam sepulcrum mentis est quo absconditur anima", ed. Adriaen, 224.

[61] *Moralia* V. vi. 10, trans. Bliss, 249; "sepulcro ergo diues efficitur qui per exempla iustorum in contemplationis uirtute subleuatur", ed. Adriaen, 225.

[62] "mihi mundus crucifixus est et ego mundo".

[63] *Moralia* V. iii. 4, trans. Bliss, 245; "uicissim sibi utrique exstincti sunt", ed. Adriaen, 221.

[64] E.g. Romans 6:1-13, Galatians 2:19-21, Colossians 2:12-23 and 3:1-5.

[65] Stancliffe, "Red, White and Blue Martyrdom", in *Ireland in Early Medieval Europe: Studies in Memory of Kathleen Hughes*, ed. Dorothy Whitelock, Rosamond McKitterick and David Dumville (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 21-46, at 29-31.

an exemplar of non-literal martyrdom, an idea particularly expressed in Sulpicius's second epistle concerning St Martin, found on fols 220v-221v of the Book of Armagh, which Stancliffe identified as one of the chief sources for the Irish concept of white martyrdom.[66] Sulpicius describes how, despite not being persecuted like the early Christian martyrs, Martin nevertheless:

> Fully attained to the honour of martyrdom without shedding his blood. For what agonies of human sufferings did he not endure in behalf of the hope of eternal life, in hunger, in watchings, in nakedness, in fastings, in reproachings of the malignant, in persecutions of the wicked, in care for the weak, in anxiety for those in danger?[67]

The Book of Armagh gives special emphasis to this key passage by disrupting the continuous text in order to place each of the items in the list of Martin's ascetic activities on a new line. Given that these notions seem to have been popular in Irish monastic circles generally, and are highlighted in the Book of Armagh specifically, it seems likely that the extracts from the *Moralia* focusing on the desirability of making oneself "dead" to the corporal world through a life of contemplation refer to this concept of monastic life as white martyrdom.

Yet within the context of the John *explicit*, the repeated emphasis in the *Moralia* extracts on "burying" oneself in a life of contemplation is likely to refer particularly to the private contemplative reading with which the anticipated audience is engaged. This might be intended to aid the reader, reminding them of their purpose and encouraging them in their task. The particular emphasis in extracts 1 and 3 on the difficulties of trying to balance the contemplative and active lives for those with pastoral obligations supports the possibility that this reader was meant to be Torbach, Abbot of Armagh, who is named as the patron of the manuscript on fol. 52v. The desire for the contemplative life frustrated by the duties of pastoral leadership was a subject of great concern to Gregory who had accepted the burden of papal office (as discussed most fully in his *Regula pastoralis*), and probably also to Torbach in his own position of power and responsibility. Perhaps Torbach commissioned the

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[66] Stancliffe, "Red, White and Blue Martyrdom", 31-32.

[67] Sulpicius Severus, *Epistola II. Ad Aurelium Diaconum*; trans. Roberts, 46; "implerit tamen etiam sine cruore martyrium: nam quas ille pro spe aeternitatis humanorum doloro non pertulit passiones, fame, vigilis, nuditate, ieiuniis, opprobriis invidorum, insectationibus improborum, cura pro infirmantibus, sollicitudine pro periclitantibus?", Migne, PL 20, 178-80.

Book of Armagh as his own personal retreat in manuscript-form from worldly affairs into the seclusion of spiritual meditation.[68]

The remaining extracts on the John *explicit* page deal with the eschatological subjects of resurrection and judgement. The concern in the first three passages with making oneself "dead to the world" through the ascetic monastic life of contemplation is affirmed by the consoling message of Christ's mercy in the penultimate extract (number 4), which discusses Christ's three miracles of raising the dead (Mark 5:21-33, Luke 7:11-17 and John 11:1-24). According to Gregory, the three people that Christ resurrected represent secret, public and habitual sinners, but he concludes with the assurance that: "all these in mercy He restores to life".[69] The passage makes a clear exegetical link between Christ's resurrection miracles recounted in the gospel narratives and the Universal Resurrection at the end of times, therefore looking forward to the Second Coming of Christ, when the elect will rise from the dead and enjoy the eternal life that is the reward for rejecting the worldly life.

The alternative is broached in the final short extract (number 5), comprising the final six lines of the right column. Here, Gregory considers Luke 9:60, "Let the dead bury their dead".[70] He argues that this refers to sinners encumbering sinners with their approval, since:

> What else is it to "sin", but to lie down in death? and to "bury", except it be to
> hide? But they that pursue the sinner with their applauses, bury the dead
> body under the mound of their words.[71]

As such, he presents sin as a kind of death, warning against the perils of life lived impiously. He professes that by living a sinful life and encouraging others to sin, one predestines oneself to the eternal death of damnation. Thus the *Moralia* extracts expound the idea that "death to the world" through the monastic life of contemplation and discipline brings eternal life, while sinful life leads to eternal death—an eschatological message tailored to the concerns of the manuscript's monastic readers, quite likely Torbach himself.

Furthermore, the extracts can also be understood to comment on the central text of the John *explicit* which was similarly interpreted by patristic commentators as alluding to the value of the contemplative and active lives in preparing oneself for Christ's return at the

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[68] On the Book of Armagh as Torbach's personal reading material, see Sharpe, 'Palaeographical Considerations', and Brown, 'Ferdomnach'.

[69] *Moralia* IV. xxvii. 52, trans. Bliss, 218; "sed hos ad uitam miseratus reuocat", ed. Adriaen, 196.

[70] "Sine mortui sepeliant mortuos suos".

[71] *Moralia* IV. xxvii. 52, trans. Bliss, 218; "quid enim est aliud peccare quam occumbere? Sed qui peccantem laudibus prosequuntur, exstinctum sub uerborum suorum aggere abscondunt", ed. Adriaen, 197.

end of the world. Indeed, the layout of the page particularly invites the reader to draw connections between the central and surrounding texts by evoking the tradition of marginal commentaries. The Book of Armagh dates from around the time of the earliest surviving marginal commentaries, such as the Zürich Ezekiel fragment, written in Irish minuscule around the late-eighth or early-ninth century (Fig. 60).[72] As would become standard in the commentary tradition, the text of Ezekiel is written at the centre of the page with Gregory's commentary in two columns at either side, resembling the way in which the two columns of *Moralia* extracts enclose the central text of the gospel on the Armagh John *explicit*. This potentially cues the reader to interpret the *Moralia* extracts as serving a commentary function in relation to the gospel text. Yet the lozenge-shaped text block also sets the Armagh page apart from the commentary tradition, emphasising the pictorial dimension of the page and thus implying a deeper spiritual significance to the relationship established between the texts.

The last lines of John's gospel, integrated into the lozenge in the Book of Armagh, include Christ's exchange with Peter and John in which Christ reveals that he wants John "to remain till I come", while to Peter he says "follow thou me" (John 21:22). This ambiguous passage was interpreted by Augustine as alluding to Christ's Second Coming and judgement, where his instructions to John and Peter indicate the states of earthly and spiritual life. He explains that Peter symbolises the active life and John the contemplative life; Peter symbolises the Church on earth and John the Church in heaven; Peter symbolises the struggles of mortal life and John symbolises the blessed life to come.[73] These two apostles together encapsulate the human condition and, through their exemplary status, point the way to salvation. Therefore, the *Moralia* extracts concerning pious life and sinful death on the John *explicit* page might be understood to reinforce the portentous weight of Christ's final words, alluding to the Second Coming and indicating the way to deliverance.

In this context, the priority ascribed to the contemplative life in the *Moralia* extracts may particularly emphasise the role of John. Patristic and Insular writers considered John to be an exemplar of the contemplative life; for example, Augustine suggests that while the three evangelists of the synoptic gospels recount Christ's temporal actions in order to guide the faithful in this present life, and thus represent the value of the active life; John, who

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[72] Zürich Staatsarchiv W3.19.XII. See Lawrence Nees, "Words and Images, Texts and Commentaries", in Colum Hourihane, ed., *Irish Art Historical Studies in Honour of Peter Harbison* (Dublin: Index of Christian Art, Princeton University, in association with Four Courts, 2004), 47-69, at 50-51.

[73] *Tractates on the Gospel of John*, Tractate 124; ed. Radbodus Willems, *In Iohannis Evangelium Tractatus CXXIV*, CCSL 36 (Turnholt: Brepols, 1954), 680-88; trans. John W. Rettig, The Fathers of the Church 92 (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1995), 82-94.

focusses on the discourses of Christ which "introduce us to the knowledge of the unity of the Trinity and the blessedness of the life eternal", exemplifies contemplative virtue.[74] Moreover, Gregory characterises John as a martyr without open suffering, because of his endurance, love and resistance to carnal desires.[75] Apocryphal traditions regarding John reported that he had remained a virgin and died painlessly, as described in the Monarchian Prologue found in the Book of Armagh itself (fol. 89v).[76] Thus, he could be regarded as a role model for the monastic life of white martyrdom. Through his pre-eminent contemplation, John was also believed to have received the apocalyptic vision which he recounted in Revelation. Therefore, the emphasis on the contemplative life apparent in both the *Moralia* extracts and the central text of the John explicit is most likely to refer to the fundamental importance of following John's contemplative lead to make the spiritual journey to the Heavenly City.

The lozenge-shaped text block on the John *explicit* particularly highlights this ultimate eschatological meaning underlying the web of allusions on the page and can be understood to point forward to John's celestial vision. We have seen that the lozenge is a multivalent symbol and as such the shape of the text block can be interpreted a number of ways. Since the lozenge could be an image of Christ, the lozenge-shaped text block might be interpreted as revealing the presence of Christ in the words of the gospel themselves. Likewise, since the shape could represent the *tetragonus mundus*, the lozenge of words might evoke the creation of the world, spoken into existence by the *Logos*, and therefore recall the beginning of John's Gospel in which this is described. Furthermore, as the final words of the final gospel, this lozenge of words may also serve as a reminder that the end of the gospels and the departure of Christ is the beginning of the dissemination of Christ's word to the four corners of the world by the apostles, thereby anticipating the text of Acts which begins on the following page. The *tetragonus* of words might even illustrate the last lines of John's gospel, representing the world filled with writings about Christ: "But there are also

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[74] Augustine, *De consensu evangelistarum* 1. 5, trans. S. D. Salmond, *The Harmony of the Gospels*, *NPNF* 6 (New York: Christian Literature Company, 1888), 80; "quae trinitatis unitatem et uitae aeternae felicitatem insinuarent", ed. F. Weihrich, *CSEL* 43 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1904), 8. See also, Bede, Homily I. 9, ed. David Hurst, CCSL 122 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1955), 60-67; trans. Lawrence T. Martin and David Hurst, *Bede the Venerable, Homilies on the Gospels*, 2 vols, Cistercian Studies Series 110 (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications: 1991), I, 85-95.

[75] Gregory, *Dialogues*, 3, 26; ed. Migne, PL 77, 281-84; trans. Zimmermann, 161.

[76] Trans. Daniel J. Theron, *Evidence of Tradition: Selected Source Material for the Study of the History of the Early Church, the New Testament Books, and the New Testament Canon* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock, 1957), 59; ed. Peter Corssen, *Monarchianische Prologe zu den vier Evangelien* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1896), 7.

many other things which Jesus did; which, if they were written every one, the world itself, I think, would not be able to contain the books that should be written".[77]

Yet it seems likely that the primary association of the lozenge on the John *explicit* page was intended to be eschatological, as confirmed by its link with the only other page in the manuscript in which the text is arranged as a lozenge, the page of so-called *capitula* to the Book of Revelation (fol. 159v; Fig. 62). The use of the lozenge-shaped text block unmistakably serves to tie these pages together, so that the John explicit acts as a visual premonition of the opening of Revelation. One might even wonder whether the creators of the Book of Armagh were familiar with *Maiestas Domini* miniatures structured around a lozenge-shaped composition (Figs 55-58), and thus whether both the lozenge-shaped text blocks can be understood as schematic evocations of the *Maiestas*, just as the Cadmug Matthew *explicit* is a schematic version of a four-symbols page.[78] Moreover, both can be understood as meditative devices that through their carefully selected texts and visual layout evoke eschatological themes.

The so-called *capitula* occupy the whole of fol. 159v, facing the *incipit* to the text of Revelation on fol. 160r, and comprise a numbered list of fourteen key moments in Revelation.[79] While known to the scholarship as *capitula*, Thomas O'Loughlin has posited that this designation is misleading, since they neither divide the text into practical sections for reference (like a contents page), nor provide a descriptive summary or introduction to the text. Rather, they consist almost entirely of brief extracts drawn from irregular points in the text, probably serving a mnemonic function in the practice of meditation. According to O'Loughlin:

> Each is an aide-mémoire to the whole book that proceeds visually through the
> text [...] The reader is expected not to use these as a finding tool for a passage
> in the book, but by reading through these lemmata to recall visually the
> various scenes: as John the Seer saw and described, so you now see the vision
> in your own imagination.[80]

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[77] John 21:25, "sunt autem et alia multa quae fecit Iesus quae si scribantur per singula nec ipsum arbitror mundum capere eos qui scribendi sunt libros".

[78] For suggestion that a Carolingian *Maiestas* miniature might be the ultimate prototype for the Mulling diagram, see Nees, "The Colophon Drawing", and discussion below.

[79] For a transcription of the text, see O'Loughlin, "The So-called *Capitula* for the Book of the Apocalypse in the Book of Armagh (Dublin, Trinity College, 52) and Latin Exegesis", in *Early Medieval Ireland and Europe: Chronology, Contacts, Scholarship*, ed. Pádraic Moran and Immo Warntjes, Studia Traditionis Theologiae 14 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2015), 405-23, at 408-09.

[80] O'Loughlin, "The So-called *Capitula*", 415.

Thus he suggested that it might be better described as a "vision list" (the term henceforth employed here), rather than a list of *capitula*.

The presentation of the page further suggests the function of a meditative device with particular emphasis on the themes of Revelation. Attention is drawn to the visual dimension of the page not only by the lozenge-shaped text block but also by the use of particularly calligraphic script and the decorated initial A that forms the apex of the lozenge-shape. This decorated letter terminates with a profile human head and two beast heads, and encloses a five-pointed flower-like shape. Ben Tilghman has noted that the A has the crooked cross-bar of the Greek letter alpha, recalling Christ's identity as the "Alpha and Omega" (Revelation 1:8, 21:6 and 22:13), understood to allude to the creating *Logos* at the beginning of the world and the apocalyptic judge at the end.[81] It is also likely that the human head on the initial illustrates the opening words *Apocalipsis Ie(s)u Chr(ist)i* (The Revelation of Jesus Christ), representing either Christ revealed or a visionary witnessing the revelation—presumably either John or perhaps the meditative reader. In this regard, it is notable that the head looks directly at the text of the lozenge as though observing the words.[82] Furthermore, the placement of the page facing the Revelation *incipit* recalls the position of a frontispiece miniature, further cuing the reader to understand this text-page as a form of image that bears visual meaning relating to the text.

Both the John *explicit* and the vision list seem intentionally designed to stimulate reflection on the truths and mysteries of Revelation, centred around the shape of the lozenge. Yet they achieve this in slightly different ways: while the John *explicit* is a biblical text, the vision list is extra-biblical; the John *explicit* is a short passage of the Gospel, while the vision list forms an abbreviated summary of the entire book of Revelation; the John *explicit* focusses meditation on the abstract concepts of life and death, the vision list encourages the formation of clear mental images of the Last Days; and while the John *explicit* emphasises the premonitory nature of Christ's last words on earth, the vision list illustrates the realisation of his apocalyptic return. As such these pages can be understood as forming a meditative chain, linking key moments in the history of salvation and representing an intensification in terms of the scope, specificity and tangibility of the eschatological visions they offer. Yet both can also be understood as anticipatory, alluding to the texts that are about to be recounted as well as the final vision in the cycle.

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[81] Tilghman, "The Shape of the Word", 297-98.

[82] For the argument that a similar profile human head attached to an initial on fol. 219 of the Book of Armagh represents the meditative reader, see Eleanor Jackson, "Picturing the Pious Reader", *Pecia: Le Livre et l'Écrit* 17, Le Manuscrit, Entre Écriture et Texte 1 (2014), 65-91.

One curious feature of the vision list is that it does not include any explicit description of the New Jerusalem, the ultimate destination of the blessed described at length in Revelation 21. It mentions the heavenly sanctuary in terms of the Old Testament sanctuary of the desert—"and the temple of God was opened in heaven: and the ark of his testament was seen in his temple";[83] "and after these things I looked and the temple of the holy tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened and seven angels poured out"[84]—but it excludes any description of the heavenly city itself, despite its climactic position in John's vision as the culmination of salvation history. What could be the reason for this surprising omission?

Perhaps the vision list was intended to allude to the heavenly city without fully evoking its image so that the reader/viewer's mental vision of the Last Days would remain incomplete until they reach the final diagram at the Revelation *explicit*: the schematised representation of the Heavenly Jerusalem (fol. 170r; Fig. 63). This diagram occupies the same page as the last lines of Revelation and provides a harmonised representation of the holy city, as described in the visions of John and Ezekiel.[85] It belongs to a tradition of visual exegetic schemes originating in antiquity—examined, for example, by Anna Esmeijer—formed by "a cosmic-building or cosmic city with a square, rectangular or circular ground-plan divided orthogonally or diagonally into four".[86] Such plans often focussed on the Heavenly Jerusalem, since as Carruthers has emphasised, John's description of the Heavenly City was regarded from antiquity "not as a real thing, but as a cognitively important device to be painted in the mind for purposes of further meditation and prayer".[87] This tradition of diagrams was inherently eschatological in its allusions, and thus Esmeijer deduced that they principally express "the hope of redemption and the final attainment of the 'visio pacis' in the heavenly Jerusalem".[88]

In the Armagh diagram, the "foursquare" walls of the city are represented by a square border filled with interlace designs, with twelve gaps (three on each side), representing the twelve gates. The cardinal directions are labelled at the corners, underscoring the link

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[83] Vision 8, Revelation 11:19, "et apertum est templum Dei in caelo et visa est arca testamenti eius".

[84] Vision 10, Revelation 15:5 (+summary of 16:1-17), "et post haec vidi et apertum est templum tabernaculi testimonii sancti in caelo et septem angeli effudent".

[85] Revelation 21:2-22; Ezekiel 48. O'Loughlin, "The Plan of the New Jerusalem"; O'Reilly "The Library of Scripture", 31.

[86] Esmeijer, *Divina Quaternitas*, 73. In the Insular tradition, the plan of the Tabernacle in the Codex Amiatinus is a famous example.

[87] Mary Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought: Meditation, Rhetoric, and the Making of Images, 400-1200* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 222; Esmeijer, *Divina Quaternitas*, 73-96.

[88] Esmeijer, *Divina Quaternitas*, 74

between the foursquare city and the *tetragonus mundus*. Each gate is inscribed with the word *ang(elus)*, the name of one of the apostles, one of the tribes of Israel and a precious stone. This corresponds to John's description that the city in his apocalyptic vision:

> Had a wall great and high, having twelve gates, and in the gates twelve angels,
> and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the
> children of Israel. On the east, three gates: and on the north, three gates: and
> on the south, three gates: and on the west, three gates. And the wall of the city
> had twelve foundations, and in them, the twelve names of the twelve apostles
> of the Lamb.[89]

The inscriptions also conform to John's account that "the foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with all manner of precious stones",[90] as well as to the list of twelve stones that follows (Revelation 21:19-20).

Yet the diagram is not simply illustrative but also interpretative. The names and orderings of the tribes are a blend of the lists from Revelation 7:5-8 and Ezekiel 48:1-28, therefore it can be understood to illustrate the fulfilment of both Old and New Testament prophecy.[91] Of the several possible iterations of the apostles, the list on the diagram is taken from Matthew 10:2-4 (with the replacement of Judas Iscariot by Matthias).[92] As O'Reilly has shown, through the names of the Tribes and Apostles, the diagram suggests the Israelites' long journey through the desert to the Promised Land and the apostolic mission out of Jerusalem to the ends of the earth, symbolising the history and struggles of the Universal Church.[93] The precious stones might represent individual believers, as Peter entreated: "Be you also as living stones built up, a spiritual house […] Wherefore it is said in the scripture: Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious";[94] an idea developed by Bede to characterise the twelve stones of the Heavenly Jerusalem as symbolising the virtues and spiritual gifts of the elect.[95] The diagrammatic quality of the image, composed of geometrical

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[89] Revelation 21:12-14, "habebat murum magnum et altum habens portas duodecim et in portis angelos duodecim et nomina inscripta quae sunt nomina duodecim tribuum filiorum Israhel ab oriente portae tres et ab aquilone portae tres et ab austro portae tres et ab occasu portae tres et murus civitatis habens fundamenta duodecim et in ipsis duodecim nomina duodecim apostolorum agni".

[90] Revelation 21:19. "fundamenta muri civitatis omni lapide pretioso ornata".

[91] O'Loughlin, "The Plan of the New Jerusalem", 31.

[92] O'Loughlin, "The Plan of the New Jerusalem", 33.

[93] E.g. Bede, *Commentary on Revelation*, 3. 21. 13-14; O'Reilly, "The Library of Scripture", 31.

[94] 1 Peter 2: 5-6; "et ipsi tamquam lapides vivi superaedificamini domus spiritalis […] propter quod continet in scriptura ecce pono in Sion lapidem summum angularem electum pretiosum".

[95] Bede, *Commentary on Revelation*, 3. 21. 19-20.

shapes, symmetrically and statically arranged, visually evokes the order and harmony of the divine.[96] Furthermore, the double-bordered rectangle placed in the centre of the city, labelled *D(omi)n(u)s noster Ie(su)s Chr(istu)s* (Our Lord Jesus Christ), illustrates John's assertion that Christ is the temple of the city: "I saw no temple therein. For the Lord God Almighty is the temple thereof, and the Lamb".[97] Overall therefore, the diagram illustrates both the Old and New Testaments, the Church and the company of the elect, all fulfilled in Christ, residing in the harmony of the New Jerusalem.

In this way, the diagram serves as the culmination of the eschatological chain of meditative devices beginning with the John *explicit* and continuing to the Revelation vision list. It completes the reader's mental image by presenting them with the representation of the soul's final destination: the Heavenly city conspicuously omitted from the vision list at the beginning of the Revelation text. Moreover, with each of the devices in the sequence, the visions presented to the reader/viewer become more concrete. In the first two, the shape of the writing hints at a vision of the *tetragonus mundus*, but the main source of meditation is the text, leaving it to the reader/viewer to create their own mental images. In the final device, the viewer is presented with a schematised image of the Heavenly City which still leaves much to the imagination, but is undoubtedly a fuller portrayal of the apocalyptic vision than the previous diagrams. This seems to enact the soul's ascent from partial knowledge of God in the present life towards unobstructed vision of the divine in the life beyond.[98]

Moreover, the theophanic nature of these diagrams is emphasised by the placement of the first of these meditative devices at the John *explicit*. This can be understood to correspond to the pairing of the Gospel of John and the Book of Revelation in the minds of early medieval writers, not only because they were both thought to be written by John, but also because together they were seen to span the entirety of salvation history: John's gospel starts "In the beginning" with Creation, and his Book of Revelation ends with the Last Judgement and establishment of an eternal New Jerusalem. Thus John was seen as a witness to Christ from the beginning to the end of the world, from "alpha to omega". This idea is found, for example, in the so-called Monarchian Preface to the Gospel of John that appears in some Insular gospel books, including the Book of Armagh itself (fol. 89v), which explains that John:

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[96] E.g. Madeline H. Caviness, "Images of Divine Order and the Third Mode of Seeing", *Gesta* 22, 2 (1983), 99-120.

[97] Revelation 21:22. "templum non vidi in ea Dominus enim Deus omnipotens templum illius est et agnus".

[98] E.g. 1 Corinthians 13:9-12.

Wrote this Gospel in Asia, after he had written the Apocalypse in the Island of Patmos, in order that to whom the incorruptible beginning was ascribed in the beginning of the canon in Genesis, to Him also the incorruptible end might be attributed [employing] a virgin [as His instrument], since Christ said: "I am the Alpha and the Omega".[99]

The text of John's gospel in the Book of Armagh thus seems to emphasise this attribution, taking the reader from the opening words describing the creative *Logos* "In the beginning", to the apocalyptic *Logos*-lozenge at the end with its visual links to the Revelation text.

Therefore, in the Book of Armagh the recurring image of the lozenge or quadrilateral forms a visual link between the John *explicit*, the Revelation vision list and the diagram of the Heavenly Jerusalem, encouraging the reader/viewer to engage in extended meditation across the pages of the manuscript. Viewed together, they can be regarded as a chain of signs that produce meaning accumulated with every link, focussing the reader/viewer's meditation on the progress of salvation history as witnessed by John, and particularly on the role of Christ at the centre and the anticipated vision of the final days.

This reveals an intense interest in experimenting with different ways to present material textually and visually, combining aspects of text and image, diagram and commentary, to clarify relationships between texts on single or separate pages, even across the whole manuscript. While the Book of Armagh is by no means the only manuscript of its time to engage in these sophisticated word-image connections, it is one of the most elaborate examples and can be understood as a pioneer of the types of experimentation with format and presentation that would preoccupy manuscript-makers in the ninth century.[100]

Furthermore, this analysis reveals information regarding the composition of the Book of Armagh. The emphasis on the concept of becoming "dead to the world" in the *Moralia* extracts on the John *explicit* page accords with characterisations of the monastic lifestyle as a form of white martyrdom. This seems to address a monastic reader and implicate their own ascetic struggle for salvation with the narrative of the biblical texts, equating it with the universal striving of the faithful for reunification with Christ which culminates in the Heavenly Jerusalem. Given that the reading of Scriptures was held up as an essential

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[99] *Argument of the Gospel According to John*, trans. Theron, 59; "hoc autem evangelium scripsit in Asia, posteaquam in Pathmos insula apocalypsin scripserat, ut, cui in principio canonis incorruptibile principium in genesi, et incorruptibilis finis per virginem in apocalypsi redderetur, decente Christo: Ego sum A et Ω"; ed. Corssen, 7.

[100] E.g. Nees, "Words and Images".

meditative activity, and that the text-image pages in Armagh have been suggested primarily to facilitate meditation, the emphasis of the *Moralia* passages on the value of contemplation might even suggest to the reader that they might achieve their goal of eternal life by reading and using this very book.

Indeed, the manuscript includes several prayers at the ends of texts that ask for this very outcome. For example, the final leaf of the manuscript (fol. 221v) contains a lengthy prayer addressed to God the Father, which invokes the Son, Holy Spirit, the whole clergy of the heavenly Jerusalem, the fathers, prophets, apostles, Mary and Jesus Christ, to plead that God deign to assist "me" (the writer/reader/speaker) with a prosperous passage through temporal life, asking that "my little wisdom may find rewards in heavenly joy, merited throughout all eternity, amen". Likewise, the prayer on fol. 53v asks God to summon the writer/reader/speaker to the perfect life in this world, so that they might gain a place with the angels in the Heavenly Jerusalem forever.

If this anticipated reader was indeed Abbot Torbach, as suggested by the inscription on fol. 52v and perhaps by the allusions to pastoral responsibilities in some of the *Moralia* extracts, then it is possible to propose historical reasons for the particular emphasis on this eschatological theme. The annals record that Torbach died in 808, less than a year after the inscription recording his patronage of the Book of Armagh in 807. Although Torbach's birth date is unknown, the fact that his father, Gorman, Abbot of Louth, died fifty-four years earlier in 753, suggests that Torbach was probably an elderly man in 807.[101] Perhaps when he commissioned the manuscript he anticipated his impending death and wished to turn his thoughts to inward contemplation of the eternal life beyond. This would correspond with accounts in Insular hagiographies of saints turning to contemplation near the end of their lives, for example Bede's account that a few months before Cuthbert's death in 687, the saint withdrew from the active life of running his bishopric to the solitude of his hermitage on Farne, where:

> He rejoiced because, after a long and blameless active life, he was now held
> worthy to rise to the repose of divine contemplation. He rejoiced to attain to
> the lot of those concerning whom the Psalmist sings: "the saints shall go forth
> from strength to strength; the God of gods shall be seen in Zion".[102]

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[101] AFM 753.6.

[102] *Vita Sancti Cuthberti*, c. 17, trans. O'Reilly, "Bede on Seeing the God of Gods", 19. "Gaudebat namque quia de longa perfectione conuersationis actiuae, ad otium diuinae speculationis iam mereretur ascendere. Laetabatur ad eorum sortem se pertingere de quibus canitur in psalmo, Ambulabunt de uirtute in uirtutem, uidebitur Deus deorum in Syon".

O'Reilly has shown that Bede repeatedly used this phrase from Psalm 83:8 to describe the unobstructed vision of God that it was believed that the blessed would enjoy in the Heavenly Jerusalem.[103] Perhaps in keeping with this tradition, Torbach also sought solace in contemplation near the end of his life, realised through the practice of meditative reading, and the Book of Armagh was intended as a pilgrimage in manuscript-form that would prepare him for his spiritual journey to the Heavenly City.

The Mulling Colophon Drawing: Reader as Pilgrim

The idea of meditative reading as a spiritual pilgrimage, given clear expression in the Book of Armagh through its series of meditative devices leading to the diagram of the New Jerusalem, corresponds to early medieval assertions regarding the superior value of inner pilgrimage in relation to literal pilgrimage. Despite having taken up residence in the earthly city of Jerusalem, Jerome famously chastised other pilgrims following in his steps, asserting that:

> The city which we are to praise and to seek is not that which has slain the prophets and shed the blood of Christ […] Those who say the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, should give ear to the words of the apostle: "you are the temple of the Lord", and the Holy Ghost "dwells in you". Access to the courts of heaven is as easy from Britain as it is from Jerusalem; for "the kingdom of God is within you".[104]

Jerome's words are echoed in an Old Irish poem found in the margins of a ninth-century manuscript: "To go to Rome, much labour, little profit: the King whom thou seekest there, unless thou bring him with thee, thou findest him not".[105] This interior pilgrimage to the Heavenly Kingdom was achieved through abandoning the comforts of earthly ties and

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[103] O'Reilly, "Bede on Seeing the God of Gods".

[104] Jerome, Letter 58, trans. W. H. Fremantle, G. Lewis and W. G. Martley, *NPNF* 2, 6, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (Buffalo, N.Y.: Christian Literature Publishing, 1893) NPNF 6, 119-20; ed. Isidor Hilberg, CSEL 54 (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 1910), 529-30.

[105] "Téicht doróim mór saido · becc · torbai · INrí chodaigi hifoss · manimbera latt nífogbái", ed. and trans. Stokes and Strachan, *Thesaurus Palaeohibernicus* 2, 296.

dedicating oneself to the contemplative pursuit of heaven, including through reading and meditation on Scripture.[106]

Yet the Book of Armagh is not the only pocket gospel that alludes to the topos of interior pilgrimage in order to cast the act of meditative reading as a journey to the Heavenly City. On the final page of the Book of Mulling (fol. 94v; Fig. 65-66) there is an enigmatic drawing which is worth considering in this respect. This badly abraded page contains a brief text consisting of extracts from prayers and hymns, identified by Lawlor and Nees as a liturgical text; this is followed in the lower half of the page by a drawing comprising two concentric circles marked with twelve small crosses and inscriptions in Old Irish.[107] Four of the crosses are placed within or between the circles, next to the inscriptions "cross of the holy spirit", "< > with gifts", "< > with angels from above", and "Christ and his apostles", all written horizontally at a slight upward slant.[108] The remaining eight crosses are arranged in pairs outside the circles, tilted a few degrees anticlockwise from the four axes. The rest of the inscriptions follow the circular contours of the drawing. The cardinal directions are labelled on approximately the diagonal axes, with north at the lower left, east at the upper left, and so forth. The crosses are labelled at the top, "on the south-east", "cross of Mark", "Cross of Jeremiah"; at the right, "and on the south-west", "Matthew", "Daniel"; at the bottom, "and on the north-west", "cross of John", "Ezekiel"; at the left, "and on the north-east", "cross of Luke", and "cross of <Isaiah>".[109]

When this drawing was first discussed by Lawlor, he noted the early medieval Irish practice of building monasteries in the form of a *rath* (a ring-shaped enclosure fortified by an earthen wall), and of erecting monumental crosses at important locations around the settlement, leading him to hesitantly suggest that the drawing depicted the plan for a monastery.[110] In his reassessment, Nees noted that although the theory connecting the drawing with a monastery plan has "an undeniable aura of plausibility", the pairings of evangelists with Old Testament prophets are primarily associated in this period with Carolingian *Maiestas Domini* and *Maiestas Agni* miniatures. In a number of these, the image of Christ at the centre, either in the form of the enthroned figure of Revelation 4 or the lamb of Revelation 5, is surrounded by the four living creatures, representing the evangelists, along with four Old Testament prophets (Figs 55-58), leading Nees to suggest that a Carolingian model of this kind lay behind the Mulling drawing. He concluded that "the Book

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[106] E.g. Hughes, "The Changing Theory and Practice", 148: O'Reilly, "The Wisdom of the Scribe", 159-211.

[107] On the text, see Lawlor, *Chapters*, 145-66; Nees, "The Colophon Drawing", 86-88.

[108] Nees, "The Colophon Drawing", 69; Lawlor, *Chapters*, 167-68.

[109] Nees, "The Colophon Drawing", 69.

[110] Lawlor, *Chapters*, 167-85.

of Mulling drawing is neither simply a plan of a monastery nor simply a miniature, but instead a complex hybrid of the two".[111] Its purpose, together with the liturgical text on the same page, was considered apotropaic: it is "a concrete visual evocation of the divine majesty invoked in the prayers in order to protect both the monastic scribe as an individual and at the same time the monastic community of which he was part".[112] His ideas were further endorsed by Patrick Sims-Williams, who noted additional examples of the invocation of the evangelists and prophets in magical rituals.[113] However, I would instead emphasise the image's apocalyptic significance, interpreting it as alluding to the return of Christ at the end of time, the fulfilment of Scripture and the interior journey of the soul to the Heavenly Jerusalem. As such, it might be understood as meditative rather than apotropaic in function, being comparable to the meditative pages in the Book of Armagh which also focus on the ultimate destination of the soul in the Heavenly City.

The apocalyptic theme of the diagram is strongly suggested by its relation to *Maiestas Domini* miniatures. As Nees observed, its connection with this iconography is indicated by the unusual pairings of evangelists with Old Testament prophets, characteristic of Carolingian *Maiestas* imagery. Yet more than simply apotropaic, within the context of this iconography these pairings symbolise the ultimate fulfilment of both Testaments when the mysteries of Scripture are revealed through the opening of the book by the lamb (Revelation 5-8), and therefore are essentially eschatological in character. For example, Herbert Kessler has proposed that the *Maiestas* and Revelation miniatures in the Moutier-Grandval Bible from Tours c.830-c.840, deliver an interconnected message about the unity of the Old and New Testaments as both revealing Christ and pointing forwards to the consummation of Scripture in the end times. Serving as the frontispiece to the gospels, the Grandval *Maiestas* (fol. 352v; Fig. 58) depicts Christ surrounded by pairings of evangelists and Old Testament prophets, thus showing him to be the source of the four gospels and the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy.[114] The Revelation miniature at the end of the bible (fol. 449r; Fig. 64) extends this theme, portraying in its upper register the Lamb and the Lion of Juda flanking a large enthroned book, surrounded by the evangelist symbols, and below, an enthroned grey-haired man holding a canopied cloth along with the evangelist symbols. It is accompanied by the inscription:

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[111] Nees, "The Colophon Drawing", 85.

[112] Nees, "The Colophon Drawing", 88.

[113] Patrick Sims-Williams, *Religion and Literature in Western England, 600-800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 293

[114] Kessler, "Facies Bibliothecae Revelata", 163. BL Add. MS 10546.

The innocent lamb examines the laws of the Father/ Sealed with seven seals

by remarkable means./ Behold, new laws from the bosom of the old/ Are

clarified by nourishing spirits/ which have given light to many peoples.[115]

Thus, in line with exegetical thought, this presents the opening of the apocalyptic book in Revelation as the consummation of the Old and New Testaments by Christ.[116] Altogether, Kessler interprets the miniatures as illustrating the spiritual harmony of the entire Bible, in which the grey-haired man represents the promise that at the end of time, not only will the enigmas of Scripture be resolved but the blessed will also contemplate God directly.[117] The diagrammatic image of the Old Testament prophets and evangelists arranged around the circle containing "Christ and his apostles" in the Book of Mulling can be understood as a similar representation of the unification and fulfilment of the Old and New Testaments in Christ at the end of time.

As well as by the pairings of evangelists and prophets, the connection with *Maiestas* imagery is also suggested by the circular composition which mirrors the circular glory or clipeus surrounding Christ in many early *Maiestas* miniatures such as those in the Codex Amiatinus (Fig. 67) and Gundohinus Gospels (Fig. 68), both of which are also notable for including both Christ and angels within the roundel, as labelled in the Mulling Drawing.[118] In her discussion of *Maiestas* imagery, Bianca Kühnel made the persuasive argument that the circular clipeus is derived from cosmological rota diagrams and has eschatological significance as a representation of the spherical world, created and destined to be recreated at the end of time by Christ according to the divine order of beauty and perfection.[119] Other elements of the drawing are also closely related to apocalyptic imagery. For example, the elements labelled in the central circles of the Mulling drawing are all variously found within apocalyptic schemes accompanying Christ at the centre of the ring-heads of Irish high crosses.[120] Likewise, Christ is shown accompanied by angels and the twelve apostles on the

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[115] "SEPTEM SIGILLIS AGNUS INNOCENS MODIS SIGNATA MIRIS IURA DISSERIT PATRIS / E VETERI SINU NOVELLAE ALMIS PECTORIBUS LIQUANTUR ECCE QUAE LUCEM POPULIS DEDERE MULTIS", trans. Kessler, "Facies Bibliothecae Revelata", 174.

[116] See Chapter 1.

[117] Herbert Kessler, "'Facies Bibliothecae Revelata': Carolingian Art as Spiritual Seeing", in *Spiritual Seeing: Picturing God's Invisibility in Medieval Art* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), 149-89, at 178.

[118] On circular Maiestas miniatures, see Kühnel, *The End of Time*, 25-64.

[119] Kühnel, *The End of Time*, 25-64; see also Caviness, "Images of Divine Order", 107.

[120] For the dove of the holy spirit, see for example, Cross of Scriptures, Clonmacnois, east face; Muiredach's Cross, Monasterboice, east face. For angels, see Muiredach's Cross, Monasterboice, east

Second Coming miniature from the St Gall 51 Gospels (p. 267) and on the Ascension miniature in the Turin Gospels (fol. 1r), the latter also representing Christ in a circular clipeus (Fig. 69).[121]

The arrangement of the crosses around the circles on the Mulling drawing is further comparable to the ring-headed crosses positioned at the axial points around the outside of the rectangular frame of the Second Coming miniature in the Turin Gospels (Fig. 70), which are strongly reminiscent of monumental high crosses arranged around the apocalyptic scene.[122] The four frontal human heads and one trumpeting angel placed at each of the corners of the frame seem also to have cosmological implications, perhaps evoking the four winds, from which the elect are gathered in Matthew 24:31 and which are held back by the angels in Revelation 7:1.[123] Thus while none of these precisely parallel the Mulling drawing, it is clear that the composition and labelled elements are closely related to apocalyptic iconography.

Yet the drawing also resembles a plan for some form of structure. That the inscriptions specify the names and orientations of crosses seems to identify them as physical objects arranged within a space. Although there is little evidence to connect it with a monastery, real or imagined, the diagram does evoke the tradition of circular architectural plans associated with the Heavenly Jerusalem, of which several survive from the ninth century.[124] Despite the Revelation text describing the Heavenly City as "four-square" (Revelation 21:16), as depicted in the Book of Armagh diagram, it could also be portrayed in circular plan as, for example, in the Carolingian Valenciennes Apocalypse of the early-ninth century (fol. 38r; Fig. 71), sometimes suggested to be based on an Insular model.[125]

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face; Durrow, Co. Offaly, east face. For apostles, Arboe, Co. Tyrone; Monasterboice, West Cross, east face.

[121] Alexander, *Insular Manuscripts*, 44 and 61, plates 267 and 279. For discussion of these images, see O'Reilly, "The Image of Orthodoxy", 693-99.

[122] Their association with high crosses is also noted by Veelenturf, *Dia Brátha*, 81-82.

[123] interpreted them as personifications of the four winds by O'Reilly, "Image of Orthodoxy", 694; these are, however, usually shown as profile heads, see for example, Carol Farr, "The Incipit Pages of the MacRegol Gospels", in *Making and Meaning in Insular Art: Proceedings of the Fifth International Conference on Insular Art held at Trinity College Dublin, 25-28 August 2005*, ed. Rachel Moss (Dublin: Four Courts, 2007), 275-87, at 284-85; Kühnel, *The End of Time*, 157-58.

[124] See e.g. Keith D. Lilley, *City and Cosmos: The Medieval World in Urban Form* (London: Reaktion Books, 2009), 15-18.

[125] Valenciennes, Bibliothèque Municipale, MS 99. See Alexander, *Insular Manuscripts*, 82-83, and Peter Klein, *Apocalipsis de Valenciennes: Facsimile Edition*, 2 vols (Madrid: Orbis Mediaevalis, 2009).

Like the Mulling plan, the Valenciennes Apocalypse depicts the Heavenly Jerusalem by means of a series of concentric circles, in this case twelve. As with Mulling, the axial points around the circles are marked to imply the shape of the cross, here by the four sets of gates, and are labelled according to the cardinal directions: "ab oriente porte III" (three gates on the east side), "et ab aquilone porte III" (and three gates on the north side), "et ab occasu porte III" (and three gates on the west side), "et ab austro porte III" (and three gates on the east side). Just as Christ is labelled at the centre of the circle in the Mulling diagram, the *agnus dei* is portrayed at the centre of the Valenciennes Jerusalem, with a label bearing a variant of Revelation 21:23: "and the city hath no need of the sun, nor of the moon. For the glory of God hath enlightened it, and the Lamb is the lamp thereof".[126] Below the diagram John and the angel are depicted half-length, with the words "when the angel of the Lord showed Saint John the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God".[127]

The reason that the Heavenly Jerusalem was sometimes depicted as circular, contrary to its biblical descriptions, is likely to be due to the understanding of the circle as a symbol of perfection and an image of the cosmos, reflecting the central position of Jerusalem in the Christian world.[128] It is also possible, as Kühnel has proposed, that circular architectural plans such as the Valenciennes miniature evoke and are even informed by the tradition of plans associated with the Anastasis rotunda of the Holy Sepulchre complex in Jerusalem.[129] This raises the possibility that the Mulling diagram might also allude to the Anastasis rotunda and, by extension, its heavenly counterpart the New Jerusalem.

The Anastasis rotunda was a centrally-planned, domed building, constructed at the command of Constantine in the fourth century, and was believed to contain the empty tomb of Christ and thus to mark his place of resurrection.[130] It is described in detail and represented in plan in Adomnán's *De Locis Sanctis* of *c*.608, although as O'Loughlin has shown, this work was probably developed from topographical texts available on Iona rather than first-hand knowledge of the site.[131] Yet while the origins of Adomnán's plan of the Anastasis rotunda are debatable, its widespread legacy is evident. Four Carolingian copies

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[126] "Et civitas non eget sol nec luna nam claritas d(omin)i inluminavit eam et lucerna eius est agnus".

[127] "Ubi angelus d(omi)ni ostendit s(an)c(tu)m iohannem civitatem s(an)c(t)am hierusalem novam discendentem de caelo habentem claritatem d(e)i", c.f. Revelation 21:10-11.

[128] Lilley, *City and Cosmos*, 16-18.

[129] Kühnel, *From the Earthly to the Heavenly Jerusalem*, 128-37.

[130] Kühnel, *From the Earthly to the Heavenly Jerusalem*, 81-89.

[131] O'Loughlin, Thomas, "Adomnán's Plans in the Context of his Imagining "the Most Famous City"", in *Imagining Jerusalem in the Medieval West*, ed. Lucy Donkin and Hanna Vorholt (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 15-40.

survive, revealing notable similarities with the Mulling drawing. As in Mulling, the rotunda on these plans is drawn by means of concentric circles with labels to mark the key components. Both feature a similar organisation of space, where the central space contains the labels relating to Christ and the writing is (approximately) horizontal. For example, on the Vienna copy of *c*.836-859 (Fig. 72), the innermost circle, containing the tomb of Christ depicted as a rectangle, is labelled *sepulchrum d(omi)ni et XII luminaria* (the tomb of the lord and twelve lamps) and *tegorium rotundum* (round dome).[132] In both plans, the peripheral space surrounding this central circle is divided into four at the axes to imply a cross shape (by the small crosses in the Mulling drawing and by the three apses and entranceway in the Vienna drawing); the labels locate these additional features according to the cardinal directions and are written around the contours of the circle so that they circumscribe and emphasise the sacred central space. For instance, on the Vienna 458 plan, the outer space is labelled "rotunda" three times, the apses are labelled *altare in australe* (altar in the south), *altare in occidentali* (altar in the west), *eccl(esi)a cu(m) altare in aquilonare* (church with an altar in the North), and the entrance is labelled *oriens* (east).

The relationship of the Mulling drawing with the tradition of round building plans associated with the Anastasis rotunda reproduced in Adomnán's *De Locis Sanctis* can be understood to reinforce the apocalyptic overtones suggested by its references to *Maiestas* imagery. To early medieval Christians, the church of the Holy Sepulchre was a site of eschatological significance and a prefiguration of the Heavenly Jerusalem. In *De Locis Sanctis*, Adomnán emphasises that the Holy Sepulchre is pre-eminently holy because it is the *loco dominicae resurrectionis* (place of the Lord's resurrection).[133] Christ's resurrection was understood to be a prefiguration of humankind's general resurrection, and thus his empty tomb was taken as an assurance of the time when all tombs would be empty.[134] Kühnel has argued that this typological link between the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and the future Heavenly Jerusalem was carefully and deliberately fostered from the time of Constantine's building campaign onwards.[135] It was certainly apparent to Bede who created his own version of *De Locis Sanctis* based on Adomnán's, beginning his account of the holy places on earth by reference to the Heavenly Jerusalem: "Grant, O Jesus, that we may always press toward that homeland, which delights eternally in the highest vision of you".[136]

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[132] Vienna, Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek, Cod. 458, fol. 4v.

[133] *De Locis Sanctis* I. iv. 4, ed. Ludwig Bieler, CCSL 175 (1965).

[134] Kühnel, *From the Earthly to the Heavenly Jerusalem*, 81-89.

[135] Kühnel, *From the Earthly to the Heavenly Jerusalem*, 81-89.

[136] *De Locis Sanctis*, Preface, 9, trans. William Trent Foley and Arthur G. Holder, *Bede: A Biblical Miscellany* (Liverpool, 1999), 5; "da Iesu, ut patriam semper tendamus ad illam,/ Quam beat aeternum uisio summa tui", ed. Jean Fraipont, CCSL 175 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1965), 251.

Whether the Mulling diagram was inspired by a diagram of the Holy Sepulchre from *De Locis Sanctis* or an image of the circular Heavenly Jerusalem, or indeed another plan of a centrally-planned building belonging to this tradition, it is likely that the significance was the same. Just as Bede's internal pilgrimage to the Holy Land through the textual descriptions of *De Locis Sanctis* clearly led his thoughts foremost to the pilgrimage of earthly life leading towards the Heavenly City, all three plans can be understood to allude explicitly or implicitly to Christ's Second Coming, the resurrection of humanity and the final dwelling of the elect in the Heavenly Jerusalem. The choice to deviate from the Revelation text to represent the city as circular was on one level a reference to the *Anastasis rotunda*, and on another a symbol of the cosmic harmony of the spherical world, made and destined to be remade in perfection by Christ.[137]

Thus it is clear that the Mulling drawing is developed from apocalyptic iconography. It alludes to *Maiestas* images of Christ enclosed in a cosmological clipeus, surrounded by the evangelists and prophets, serving as a symbol of the final fulfilment of Scripture and the revelation of its mysteries; at the same time, it evokes the circular plans of buildings such as the *Anastasis rotunda*, with its promise of resurrection, and the Heavenly Jerusalem, its celestial counterpart and the place of the fulfilment of resurrection. As such, like the Armagh diagrams, it might be understood as a focus for meditation on the significance of Scripture and the rewards of the monastic labour of reading, affording its audience a glimpse of the city they might eventually inhabit.

Further consideration of the manuscript context of the Mulling drawing reinforces the view that this is the governing idea behind the image. While Nees interpreted the drawing based on the series of extracts from prayers and hymns occupying the upper half of the same page, it is worth extending this analysis to the colophon written on the recto of the leaf (fol. 94r). Now unfortunately part-illegible, this colophon reads:

> It is finished, amen, it is finished. O you who write, or examine, or even see these volumes, pray to God < > his mercy < > through the hilly path of the world < > highest. Mulling is the name of the scribe. The end of the four gospels.[138]

Although some of the key words are lost, the general sense of the colophon is clear.

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[137] C.f. John 1:3; Ephesians 1:10.

[138] "Φinit amen Φinit. o tu quicu(m)q(ue) scripseris (ve)l scrutatus fueris (ve)l etia(m) videris h(aec) volumina d(eu)m ora < mi>ssericordia(m) sua(m) < > p(er) clivosam mundi viam < > altissimum <n>omen (autem) scriptoris mulling dicitur. finiunt quator evangelia".

The "path of the world" (*mundi viam*) is comparable to the "perfect path in this world" (*perfectam in hoc saeculo uiam*), upon which the writer/reader/speaker of the colophon on fol. 53v of the Book of Armagh asks to be guided to eternal residence in the Heavenly Jerusalem.[139] The idea that the faithful must climb a hill or mountain to reach the pinnacle of the Heavenly City was also a common theme.[140] Thus the Mulling colophon clearly alludes to the concept of life on earth as a difficult journey to the highest destination of the soul in the Heavenly Jerusalem. In this regard, it is also notable that Sonid, the scribe of the Stowe St John, describes himself as a *peregrinus* (pilgrim) in his colophon (fol. 11r), as indeed another scribe does in a copy of Book II of Gregory's *Homilies on Ezekiel*, written in Insular minuscule at Freising (fol. 186v).[141] Given therefore, that travel and pilgrimage seem to have been scribal tropes, it is likely that the Mulling colophon also alludes to the idea of reading and writing the gospels as a mirror of the heavenward journey of the soul, able to permit the faithful reader a contemplative vision of heaven.

The Mulling drawing, therefore, continues the theme of earthly pilgrimage raised in the colophon on the recto of the leaf. The writer of the colophon prays to be guided on "the hilly path of the world" toward the highest destination; the drawing provides a vision of that destination. This parallels the way in which eschatological references can be seen to accumulate in the Book of Armagh before reaching their most direct expression on the final page of the Revelation text. In accordance with this, it is surely significant that the St Gall Gospels closes with the image of the Second Coming (fol. 267), pointing to an interest in illustrating the completion of the gospel book with the culmination of salvation history, or veiled allusions to it. This is likely to refer to the process of reading the gospels as a form of pilgrimage mirroring the pilgrimage of life, which can permit the meditative reader a glimpse of their heavenly goal. The drawing might therefore express the idea asserted by Jerome and the others that the Heavenly Jerusalem is reachable from every land, even in one's own monastery.

Summary

The examination of these instances of diagrammatic text and diagrams in the pocket gospels has highlighted their nature as meditative devices closely associated with the processes of *lectio divina*. Through incorporating iconographic elements—especially aniconic shapes such as the lozenge, circle and *chi*-cross—the texts themselves become images which guide the

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[139] See Appendix.

[140] See for example, Sedulius, *Carmen Paschale*, 1. 281-90, 334-50, ed. and trans. Carl Springer, *The Paschal Song and Hymns* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2013), 16-17, 20-21.

[141] Munich, CLM 6237 (CLA IX 1253).

reader to a deeper understanding of the gospel. The inclusion of diagrams evoking the image of the Heavenly City can be understood as closely related. Both types of device set interpretative tasks to reader/viewer, implicating them in the page, encouraging them to internalise ideas and complete them within their minds. Through their complex allusions, they provide the stimuli for the reader to create their own vision of the divine.

The placement of such devices at the ends of texts maps the passage of the soul through earthly life to the New Jerusalem onto the reader's passage through the text and the pages of the manuscript, reminding them of the ultimate goal of reading Scripture: the attainment of salvation. Thus they can be understood to comment on the power of the gospel text, the process of reading and the manuscript itself to serve as conduits to salvation. This suggests the idea of a manuscript as pilgrimage or as retreat, a place where the reader can find a closer connection with their spiritual yearning for the transcendental world beyond. Therefore, while these devices do not characterise the pocket-gospel group, they do illuminate the ways in which some of them were likely to have been used, reinforcing the idea that they might have been manuscripts used for private, devotional reading.

CHAPTER 5
Evangelist Portraits: Between Heaven and Earth

The type of miniature known to modern scholars as "evangelist portraits", are far from being portraits in the modern sense of the word, as they are not intended to represent any details about the appearance of the evangelists. Rather, they symbolize the theological significance of the gospel writers who revealed information about Christ to the world. The name comes from the classical author portraits from which the Insular evangelist portraits originally descended, although the tradition was developed almost beyond recognition by the Insular artists.

The pocket-gospel evangelist portraits show a remarkable degree of unity while also incorporating numerous individual features that suggest different nuances of meaning. The general presentation of the evangelists is notably consistent: in all cases, the figure is shown standing, facing forwards, gazing directly at the viewer and clasping a closed codex to their chest. They all wear classically-inspired costumes which nevertheless vary in their details, and they sometimes carry other items such as staffs, writing equipment and, in one case, a sword.[1] All the portraits are contained in some form of frame and are set against a flat background.

This essential figural type reproduced in all the pocket gospels is classified according to Albert Friend's influential typology of early evangelist portraits as the standing-type evangelist.[2] As he and later scholars have shown, this type appears to have originated in the late-antique eastern Mediterranean, with the earliest surviving examples including the evangelists depicted in the canon tables of the Syriac Rabbula Gospels of 586 (fol. 10r; Fig. 73);[3] those painted on the seventh-century covers of the fourth- or fifth-century Freer Gospels from Coptic Egypt (Fig. 75);[4] and the evangelist portraits of the early-seventh-century Ethiopian Abuna Garima Gospels (Fig. 74).[5]

As this was only one of several evangelist-types that made its way to Ireland and Britain in the early Middle Ages, the ubiquity of the standing-type evangelist in the pocket

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[1] See Appendix.

[2] Albert M. Friend, Jr., "The Portraits of the Evangelists in Greek and Latin Manuscripts", 1, *Art Studies* 5 (1927), 115-147. On standing-type evangelists in Insular manuscripts, see Lawrence Nees, *The Gundohinus Gospels* (Cambridge, MA: Medieval Academy of Americs, 1987), 84-111; Netzer, *Cultural Interplay*, 90-102.

[3] Florence, Biblioteca Medicea, Laurenziana, MS Plut. I. 56, fol. 9v.

[4] Washington, D.C., Freer Gallery of Art, F1906.298.

[5] Abuna Garima Monastery, MS 2.

gospels does not simply reflect availability of models.[6] Its significance for the characterisation of the group is moderated by the fact that, according to Nick Baker, the standing-type is the most common form of Insular evangelist portrait overall, accounting for around 62% of surviving examples.[7] They also appear, for example, in larger Insular gospel books such as the Book of Kells (fol. 28v), the Lichfield Gospels (pp. 122 and 218) and the St Gall Gospels (pp. 2, 78, 128 and 208). Yet the employment of the forward-facing evangelist as the sole type depicted in the pocket-gospel portraits may not be entirely the result of chance: that it accounts for 100% rather than 62% suggests that there may be a relationship between the group and the form of evangelist portrait chosen.

Although scholars have noted the preponderance of the standing-type evangelist in the pocket gospels, they have rarely ventured to explain it. When they have, the solutions have been excessively critical; for example, Henry suggested that the pocket-gospel evangelists are standing and forward-facing because this was the "simplest possible presentation" and avoided the artist having to face the difficulties of foreshortening that representing a seated figure would entail.[8] She also wondered if the preference for this type of figure was because "it lends itself better to a deformation into patterns".[9] Baker posited a more positive interpretation, noting that the design of the standing, forward-facing evangelist with a book draws attention to the gospels themselves, reminding the viewer of the source and ultimate goal of contemplation.[10]

Yet no scholar has explained the preference for this evangelist-type in the pocket gospels with regard to the specific identity and use of the group. Given that the pocket gospels appear to have been intimate manuscripts for private reading, this type of evangelist portrait can perhaps be interpreted as an intimate design intended to intensify the experience of meditative reading. We have seen that the makers of the pocket gospels carefully designed the manuscripts to give the sense of an intimate encounter with the divine. Might the design choices consistently made in the pocket-gospel evangelist portraits have been calculated to contribute to this effect?

In exploring this idea further, it is worth turning to early medieval image theory. Scholars have shown that in the early Middle Ages, images could have a power beyond modern understandings of art as principally aesthetic and illusionistic. Rather, for early

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[6] For the Mediterranean origins of seated-type evangelists, see Friend, "The Portraits of the Evangelists", 1, 134-49.

[7] Nick Baker, "The Evangelists in Insular Culture, c. 600-c. 800 AD", 2 vols (Unpub. PhD thesis, University of York, 2011), 117, n. 280.

[8] Henry, "An Irish Manuscript", 159.

[9] Henry, "An Irish Manuscript", 159.

[10] Baker, "The Evangelists in Insular Culture", 136.

medieval Christians, images were able to make the holy visible on earth.[11] The concept of tangible divine presence on earth is integral to Christianity, a religion based on the doctrine of Incarnation and in which the central ritual of the Mass involves the divine taking material form in the host. As such, painted or sculpted images of Christ and the saints belonged to a broader category of sacred objects that could allow people to witness the divine on earth, such as the bodily form of a living holy man,[12] the relics of a deceased saint,[13] the carefully designed visual rhetoric of saints' shrines and reliquaries,[14] and even the incarnations of the Word in the physical form of the codices of Scripture.[15] The same aura of sanctity was seen to pervade these objects and, as such, they were all treated in similar ways by the faithful: miracles were attributed to them, people responded to them with highly emotional and physical behaviour such as touching, kissing and weeping; while those who opposed such beliefs responded with revulsion and the violence of iconoclasm.[16]

Where such sacred objects were purposefully constructed, their makers developed what Cynthia Hahn has termed a "visual rhetoric of sanctity" in order to articulate divine presence and establish the relationship between the subject and spectator.[17] It is thus notable that many of the visual elements of the pocket-gospel evangelist portraits share a similar visual language with such devotional objects, suggesting that their makers might also have been concerned to signal the presence of the divine through the images.

Although previous scholarship on Insular evangelist portraits has generally focussed either on their formal characteristics or their exegetical symbolism rather than their

[11] For major studies in this field, see Hans Belting, *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image Before the Era of Art*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1994); Herbert Kessler, *Spiritual Seeing: Picturing God's Invisibility in Medieval Art* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000).

[12] Peter Brown, "A Dark-Age Crisis: Aspects of the Iconoclastic Controversy", *English Historical Review* 346 (1973), 1-34, at 12-15.

[13] Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), esp. 12-22.

[14] E.g. Cynthia Hahn, "Seeing and Believing: The Construction of Sanctity in Early-Medieval Saints' Shrines", *Speculum* 72, 4 (Oct., 1997), 1079-106, and "What Do Reliquaries Do for Relics?", *Numen* 57 (2010), 284-316.

[15] Kendrick, *Animating the Letter*, 4-9; Hamburger, *Script as Image*, 6-10; Andrew Louth, "The Theology of the Word made Flesh", in *The Bible as Book*, ed. John L. Sharpe and Kimberly Van Kampen (London: British Library and Oak Knoll Press, 1998), 223-28.

[16] Peter Brown, "Images as a Substitute for Writing", in *East and West: Modes of Communication, Proceedings from the First Plenary Conference at Merida*, ed. Evangelos Chrysos and Ian Wood (Leiden, Boston, Köln: Brill, 1999), 15-34, esp. 22-26.

[17] Hahn, "Seeing and Believing", 1080.

potential to realise divine presence, scholars have sometimes hinted at such a possibility by drawing connections between Insular evangelist portraits and icon paintings. For example, Michelle Brown has suggested that in the evangelist portraits of the Lindisfarne Gospels, the flat pink backgrounds, rectilinear frames and especially the "uncompromising frontal, engaging image" of John (fol. 209v), are highly evocative of icon paintings.[18] Likewise, Nick Baker has noted that with their frontal faces and wide-open eyes, standing-type evangelists are comparable to the typical presentation of figures in icons, perhaps suggesting the figure's communication with the viewer and encouraging contemplation of the image.[19]

Yet these ideas can be taken further. While certain features of Insular evangelist portraits, and especially the pocket-gospel evangelist portraits, clearly resemble icon paintings, this is perhaps primarily because they share in the visual rhetoric of sanctity associated with objects and images designed to convey divine presence and elicit veneration. According to the foundational work by Hans Belting, an icon in this period is defined as "a pictorial concept that lends itself to veneration", regardless of style, technique, medium, motifs, conventions or themes.[20] It exists to embody the heavenly authority on earth and is thus a representation in the literal sense of making the subject present again, allowing the faithful to experience a personal encounter with the saint.[21] We have already seen that the pocket gospels can be characterised as private books for meditative personal reading, and that the physical codex itself could be constructed in order to realise theological truths. Therefore it is worth considering how the evangelist portraits might extend the spiritual and meditative experience of reading Scripture by participating in a visual language that manifests the presence of the heavenly authority.

Intimacy and Remoteness

Perhaps more than anything else, holy objects and images were characterised by a state of flux between the earthly and the heavenly realms. This is because they derived their power from their claim to authentically represent holy figures who once had a historical existence on earth, but also to evoke the presence of such figures in their current eternal state as a transfigured beings. The need to express this to a viewer gave rise to a set of dichotomies which it will be helpful to explore in the pocket-gospel evangelist portraits: the intimate and the remote, the spatial and despatialised, the temporal and eternal.

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[18] Brown, *Lindisfarne Gospels*, 365, 367 and 370.

[19] Baker, "The Evangelists in Insular Culture", 126-28, 136.

[20] Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, 29.

[21] Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, 47.

Scholars have recognised that the relationship between spectator and saint mediated by an image or object is often governed by a binary of remoteness and intimacy. The power of the image lay in its ability to provide a personal encounter with the saint on earth, yet, the object also had to make clear that the saint resided in heaven in order to assure the saint's intimacy with God and thus their capacity to intercede on a petitioner's behalf. For example, Cynthia Hahn has noted that early medieval saint's shrines present themselves as sites "where it could be seen that heaven touched earth", with their visual rhetoric simultaneously suggesting that the saint in the tomb is "a resident of the City of God" while also giving the sense of the saint's distinctly local engagement, inviting "intimacy, touch, and proximity" and promising to act as a "patron" or "friend".[22]

In the pocket-gospel portraits the intimacy between spectator and saint is established through various means. In particular, the presentation of the figures seems to enact a mutual encounter between the subject and the viewer, where the standing, forward-facing figure-type directly confronts the onlooker, conveying a directness and intimacy of address—the figure always looks directly out of the image, meeting the eyes of the spectator and exchanging glances with them in a manner which seems almost to "break the fourth wall". Furthermore, the evangelists in the Book of Mulling and Add. 40618 are shown smiling slightly (Figs 5-7), a feature unique in evangelist iconography where serious, contemplative expressions generally prevail. Perhaps these warmer expressions are intended to foster intimacy between evangelist and viewer.

Yet at the same time, the images express the figure's separation from the terrestrial world and confirm their proximity to God in heaven. This is achieved partly through the unearthly appearance of the figures themselves. Several have eyes that appear otherworldly in colour or intensity; those in the Book of Mulling (Figs 6-7 and 76), for example, are strikingly blue and those in the Cadmug Gospels are bright purple (Fig. 77). Heather Pulliam has interpreted the greenish-blue eyes of the evangelists in the Lindisfarne Gospels as representing "the light of the church and her teachings shining out from the eyes of the evangelists", and similar symbolism may also apply to the eyes of the pocket-gospel evangelists.[23] However, the more direct impression they give is of otherworldly remoteness: as though the eyes of the figures penetrate from a world beyond.

The effect of remoteness is also created by the stylised rendering of the figures, giving them an immaterial appearance. Belting has suggested that icons were deliberately painted

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[22] Hahn, "Seeing and Believing", 1080.

[23] Heather Pulliam, "Eyes of Light: Colour in the Lindisfarne Gospels", in J. Ashbee & D. J. Luxford, eds., *Newcastle and Northumberland: Roman and Medieval Architecture and Art*, *BAA Conference Transactions* 36 (Leeds: Maney, 2013), 54-72, at 66.

in ways that made the figures seem ethereal, suggesting that, "the physical presence" that such an image conveys to us is counterbalanced by the immaterial "appearance" that distinguishes the person represented".[24] This perhaps applies even more fittingly to the pocket gospel evangelist portraits, where the departure from naturalism in favour of a geometric and linear representation of the figure could be seen as a type of idealism, meant to show the distillation of form to its divine geometrical essentials.[25] Indeed, Madeline Caviness used the Dimma Mark portrait to exemplify her suggestion that the stylised, geometrical renderings of Insular evangelist portraits have cosmological overtones, evoking the order and symmetry of divine perfection.[26] Perhaps this figural treatment was intended to identify the evangelists as citizens of heaven, since it was widely understood that the elect would be resurrected with their bodily forms raised to perfect proportions, as Augustine explains: "For all bodily beauty consists in the proportion of the parts [...] And thus there shall be no deformity resulting from want of proportion in that state in which all that is wrong is corrected".[27] Thus the stylised geometry of the pocket gospel evangelists can be understood to imbue them with the attributes of divinity and distance them from the disorder and corruption of earth.

Space and Spatial Ambiguity

Yet the effect of remoteness is not only conveyed through the rendering of the figures, but also through the ambiguous spatial construction of the images, seeming to locate the evangelists in a separate and spatially ambiguous world that evokes the higher reality of heaven. As is typical for Insular evangelist portraits, the backgrounds of the pocket-gospel portraits are always flat and seemingly despatialised. Usually they consist only of the blank parchment, though in a few cases they are coloured in hues that have particularly heavenly connotations. The backgrounds of the Mulling portraits on 35v and 81v (Figs 6-7) are a golden-brown colour which has probably discoloured from an originally more intense golden hue, and the background of the Luke miniature in Add 40618 (fol. 21v; Fig. 5) is purple. In the Bible and in exegesis, gold is the colour of Heaven. As discussed in the previous chapter,

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[24] Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, 100-01.

[25] On the sophisticated geometrical design of such evangelist portraits, see for example Robert D. Stevick, "The Plan of the Evangelist Portrait Pages in the "Book of Mulling"", *JRSAI* 121 (1991), 27-44.

[26] Caviness, "Images of Divine Order", 110-11.

[27] Augustine, *City of God*, 22. 19. 42-46, trans. Marcus Dods, NPNF 1, 2, (Buffalo: Christian Literature Co., 1887), 1-511, at 497; "omnis enim corporis pulchritudo est partium congruentia [...]. Proinde nulla erit deformitas, quam facit incongruentia partium, ubi et quae praue sunt corrigentur", ed. Bernard Dombart and Alphonse Kalb, CCSL 48 (Turholt: Brepols, 1955), 838-39.

early medieval viewers often pictured heaven based on the Heavenly Jerusalem, which is described in Revelation as being of "pure gold".[28] Heaven was also imagined on the basis of its Old Testament figurations: the Tabernacle, which God ordered Moses to cover with "the purest gold within and without";[29] and Solomon's Temple, in which "there was nothing […] that was not covered with gold".[30] Spiritually understood, shining gold represented the inner illumination of wisdom, and thus for Bede, the bright gold of the interior of the Temple prefigured the unlimited perception of the elect; as he explains, the gold, "represents figuratively that brightness whereby they rejoice in their heavenly country in the sight of their creator".[31] The use of the colour in the Mulling portraits may therefore indicate that the figure is glorified by the illumination of wisdom in heaven.

Likewise, the purple background in Add 40618 has imperial and royal connotations, suggesting Luke's habitation in the heavenly kingdom.[32] Indeed, the use of gold and purple manuscript illumination to evoke the heavenly kingdom is spelled out explicitly in the Godescalc Evangelistary dedication poem:

> Golden words are painted [here] on purple pages,
> The Thunderer's shining kingdoms of the starry heavens,
> Revealed in rose-red blood, disclose the joys of heaven,
> And the eloquence of God glittering with fitting brilliance
> Promises the splendid rewards of martyrdom to be gained.[33]

This impression of spatial ambiguity evoking the kingdom of heaven is reinforced by the frames that enclose the miniatures, which perhaps most decisively serve to establish the remoteness of the evangelists from the spectator. Although in art theory, frames have

[28] Revelation 21:18-21.

[29] Exodus 25:11.

[30] 1 Kings 6:22.

[31] Bede, *De Templo*, 1. 7. 6., trans. Connolly, 27-28. "quod intus in templo deauratum fulgebat claritatem illam qua in caelesti patria in aspectu sui gaudent creatoris figurate denuntiat", CCSL 119A, 164.

[32] For God as a king/heaven as a kingdom, see e.g. 1 Chronicles 29:10-12, Daniel 3:33, Matthew 3:2, Luke 17:20-21, Romans 14:17.

[33] Paris BNF MS Nouv. Acq. Lat. 1203, fols 126v-127r; trans. Paul E. Dutton, in Herbert L. Kessler, "The Book as Icon", in *In the Beginning: Bibles Before the Year 1000*, ed. Michelle P. Brown (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 2006), 77; "aurea purpureis pinguntur grammata scedis Regna poli roseo pate sanguine facta tonantis:, Fulgida stelligeri promunt et guadia caeli:, Eloquinumq(ue) d(e)i digno fulgore choruscans;. Splendida perpetuae promittit praemia vitae".

sometimes been dismissed as meaningless and extraneous to an image, most famously by Kant in his *Critique of Judgment*, modern thought has generally aligned itself with Derrida's more complex counter-argument that the frame is a conceptual boundary that is neither simply internal nor external to an image.[34] On one level, a frame signals that the picture within is important and worthy of attention; yet on another level, it serves to define an imagined space shown to be distinct from its surroundings, as in Alberti's memorable Renaissance description of the frame as an illusory window through which the subject of a painting is seen.[35] Various scholars have shown that medieval people also had a sophisticated understanding of the ontological potential of frames, often employing and subverting them to construct space and meaning.[36] Likewise, the pocket-gospel portraits frequently exploit the ambiguity of frames in their presentation of the evangelists.

On one level, the portrait frames can be understood as boundaries dividing the world of the viewer from the world of the subject: the earthly world from the celestial. In several cases, the nature of the frame as a device that proposes to act as a window into a space beyond is emphasised by its representation as an architectural portal. This particularly applies to the distinctive frames of the Book of Mulling (Figs 6-7 and 76), Add. 40618 (Fig. 5) and the Stowe St John (Fig. 20) which all have broad panels of ornament to the left and right sides with only a narrow band at the top and bottom. Frames of this kind exist in no other Insular evangelist portrait and, as Françoise Henry suggested, it is likely that they are highly stylised versions of architectural frames consisting of a portal with flanking columns.[37] These more explicit architectural frames are found in Insular evangelist portraits such as those in the Book of Kells (fol. 28v; Fig. 78), Book of Cerne (fols 2v, 12v, 21v, 31v; Fig. 79) and Stockholm Codex Aureus (fols 9v, 150v; Fig. 80), and ultimately derive from Mediterranean prototypes such as the Augustine Gospels (fol. 129v; Fig. 81).

If the distinctive frames found in some of the pocket gospels are interpreted as fictive architectural portals through which the space of the image is viewed, it may be that the images are meant to evoke panel paintings encountered within the setting of a church. In

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[34] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, trans. John H. Bernard (New York: Cosimo Classics, 2007) 45-46; Jacques Derrida, "Parergon", in *Truth in Painting*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Ian McLeod (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 61.

[35] Leon Battisa Alberti, *De Pictura*, 1. 19.

[36] See for example, Mayer Schapiro, "On Some Problems in the Semiotics of Visual Art: Field and Vehicle in Image-Signs", *Simiolus: Netherlands Quarterly for the History of Art* 6, 1 (1972-1973), 9-19, esp. 11-12; Pauline E. Head, "Peripheral Meanings: Frames in Old English Poetry and Anglo-Saxon Manuscript Illumination", in *Representation and Design, Tracing the Hermeneutics of Old English Poetry* (New York: SUNY Press, 1997), 55-88.

[37] Henry, "An Irish Manuscript", 159.

real-world usage, icon paintings were often located in architectural niches concealed by a curtain, which could be drawn back on ceremonial occasions to reveal the saint.[38] One such surviving example is the small intimate eighth-century wall painting of the Virgin and Child in the niche at Santa Maria Antiqua, Rome, which preserves traces of the attachments for a curtain on the surrounding wall (Fig. 82).[39] In this regard, it is notable that a curtain is depicted hung from the column-like vertical panels of the evangelist portrait in the Stowe St John (Fig. 20). This gives the impression that the figure of the evangelist has just been revealed and has emerged from the space behind the frame, suggesting the ritual performances employed to invoke the presence of the saint for veneration.

Yet while the frames, if they are read architecturally, can be understood as representing an outer portal through which the space of the image can be viewed, they can be simultaneously interpreted as part of the picture, representing a building within the same space as the figures. The Stowe St John particularly highlights this ambiguity: while its frame might be interpreted as a fictive niche hung with curtains and containing the image, details of its depiction also suggest that it should be read as an image of the veiled entrance to God's sanctuary. Curtains also occur in the evangelist portraits in the Stockholm Codex Aureus and in the Matthew portrait in the Lindisfarne Gospels (fol. 25v), in the latter case unveiling a mysterious bearded man, which Michelle Brown has noted might refer to the veil of the Tabernacle.[40] Likewise, Nick Baker has emphasised that architectural decorated frames in Insular evangelist portraits might represent the structures of heaven, linking the coloured interlace on many of these with the pillars hung with brightly dyed twisted linen at the entrance to the court of the Tabernacle.[41] The presentation of the Stowe curtain clearly evokes such imagery, reinforcing these interpretations.

Decorated with stripes of red and uncoloured parchment, the Stowe curtain hangs on conspicuous rings from a rail spanning the gap between the broad vertical panels of the frame, further identifying them as architectural columns, coloured a heavenly golden-yellow. This presentation corresponds to descriptions of the Old-Testament sanctuaries that prefigure the heavenly sanctuary; for example, God orders Moses: "Thou shalt make also a veil of violet and purple, and scarlet twice dyed, and fine twisted linen, wrought with embroidered work and goodly variety",[42] which is to be hung from gold-covered pillars

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[38] Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, 47-8.

[39] Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, 116-20; Per Jonas Nordhagen, *The frescoes of John VII, A.D. 705-707, in S. Maria Antiqua in Rome* (Rome: Bretschneider, 1968), 75-76.

[40] See Brown, *Lindisfarne Gospels*, 359, both for this interpretation and for further bibliography.

[41] Baker, "The Evangelists in Insular Culture", 121.

[42] Exodus 26:31, "facies et velum de hyacintho et purpura coccoque bis tincto et bysso retorta opere plumario et pulchra varietate contextum".

before the Holy of Holies in the Tabernacle, "And the veils shall be hanged on with rings, and within it thou shalt put the ark of the testimony, and the sanctuary, and the holy of holies shall be divided with it".[43] The curtain in the Stowe St John miniature, with its conspicuous rings and golden-yellow columns, seems to evoke this imagery, and perhaps its striped pattern even constitutes the artist's attempt to render the multi-coloured veil within the confines of an acutely limited palette.

In this case, the architectonic frame can be read as part of the image, further emphasising the evangelist's residence in the heavenly city. Indeed, in early medieval exegesis, the curtain (or veil) at the entrance to the Temple/Tabernacle is identified as framing heaven. For example, Bede interpreted the curtain outside the Tabernacle as heaven, which divides the members of the Church who still sojourn below from those that reign above.[44] Considering the similar veil hung at the entrance to the Holy of Holies in Solomon's Temple,[45] he further explained that "the constant drawing back of this veil according to the law signifies the opening of the heavenly kingdom which has been granted us through the incarnation of our Lord and saviour",[46] thus emphasising the veil as the heavenly threshold. The framing of the figure in the Stowe St John can be understood, therefore, to define the image as spatially distinct from the outside world, while also locating the space of the image in heaven.

Indeed, all the frames of the pocket-gospel evangelist portraits could be seen to carry the same ambiguity by representing a heavenly space within the image and an earthly space outside it, seeming to situate the figures ambiguously between the immaterial sphere of heaven and the physically defined space of earth. This is further suggested by the manner in which a number of the figures overlap or even weave through their frames, creating the illusion of space and identifying the frame as a physical structure integrated into the internal space of the image.[47] For example, the haloes of the evangelists in the Book of Mulling and Add. 40618, and the eagle in the portrait of Stowe St John, project in front of their frames (Figs 5-7, 20, 76), while the feet of the evangelists in the Cadmug Gospels (Fig. 77) and Mark in the Book of Dimma (Fig. 83) hang behind them; in the MacDurnan Gospels, a winged creature is interwoven in the upper border of the frame of the Mark portrait (Fig. 84) and in

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[43] Exodus 26:33, "inseretur autem velum per circulos intra quod pones arcam testimonii et quo sanctuarium et sanctuarii sanctuaria dividentur".

[44] Bede, *De Tabernaculo* 2, 8; trans. Holder, 80-81; ed. CCSL 119A, 72.

[45] Chronicles 3:14.

[46] Bede, *De Templo*, 1. 16. 2, trans. Connolly, 1995: 58; "huius ergo ueli sedula reuelatio secundum legem apertionem significat regni caelestis quae nobis per incarnationem domini et saluatoris nostri donata est", ed. CCSL 119A, 187.

[47] On images crossing the frame in medieval art, see Meyer Schapiro, "On Some Problems", 11.

the Book of Deer (Fig. 9), Luke's outstretched arms weave under and over the frame at either side.

Through their interaction with the frames the evangelists seem to bridge the heavenly and earthly realms, suggesting a mediatory role. This implies that the frame should not be seen as a window that allows observation, but as a portal, an opening that facilitates actual passage between heaven and earth. Furthermore, positioned as they are between the gospel texts, the evangelists' frame-breaking serves not only to bring them closer to the viewer, but also to the other gospels, suggesting connection and exchange between them that reflects the central theme in gospel exegesis of harmonious four-fold unity.[48]

Thus, the framing of the evangelist portraits contributes to the effects of both remoteness and intimacy: they divide but draw together, are both boundaries and points of connection. On the one hand the frame delimits its contents and distances them from the viewer, marking the boundary between the world of the viewer and the divine world of the image; yet on the other, it provides a limit which can be crossed, meaning that the contents can come closer to the viewer. Uncontainable within the frame, the evangelist figures mediate between the space of the divine and earthly, emphasising passage and facilitating an intimate encounter between saint and human.

Time and Eternity

This idea of the intersection of the heavenly and earthly in a single image is also expressed by the implications of time in the pocket-gospel evangelist portraits. According to Hahn, the visual rhetoric of sanctity is primarily "a rhetoric that condenses the holy past and the sacred present within the particularities of a given space".[49] Similarly, Belting explained that in the "cultic sphere",

> The present lies between two realities of far higher significance: the past and
> future self-revelation of God in history. People were always aware of time as
> moving between these two poles. Memory thus had a retrospective and,
> curious as it sounds, a prospective character.[50]

Like the shrines, icons and other constructs of sanctity, the pocket-gospel evangelist portraits can be understood to look back towards the events of biblical history and forwards to the promised events at the end of time.

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[48] O'Reilly, "Patristic and Insular Traditions"; See Chapter 2.

[49] Hahn, "Seeing and Believing", 1079.

[50] Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, 10.

One of the essential features of the standing forward-facing evangelist type is that it is strictly non-narrative and therefore timeless. Ancient commentators distinguished the narrative image, or *historia*, from the portrait, or *imago*, where the narrative exists only in the past and therefore could serve only didactic functions, while the portrait had an eternal presence that facilitated real access to the divine.[51] Even in the cases in which pocket-gospel evangelists hold writing equipment, the images do not narrate the historical event of the writing of their gospel since, in contrast to many Insular evangelist portraits, the figures in the pocket gospels are invariably shown carrying closed and apparently complete books. Rather, such objects serve as attributes—referring back to the earthly role of the historical figure, yet representing an eternal heavenly truth.

Yet more than this, the books carried by the evangelists can also be understood to refer to the future. In the pocket gospels, the consistent depiction of the books as closed codices held in the hands of the evangelists is striking in comparison to other Insular portraits, in which the evangelists are often shown with scrolls, with books frequently open or their scrolls unfurled, and occasionally with books not held but placed on a stand. The preference for portraying the evangelists with closed books in the pocket gospels might be intended to evoke the closed book described in Revelation which only the lamb is worthy to open, an event that commences the end of the world.[52] Indeed, as discussed in chapters 1 and 4, exegetes made clear that the book in Revelation represents Scripture: according to Bede, for example, this is because Scripture is, "covered by the whole fullness of hidden mysteries",[53] and it cannot be opened because "no angel, no righteous man, not even one who is released from the body of the flesh could uncover or investigate the mystery of divine law",[54] nor "contemplate the splendour of grace of the New Testament".[55] Thus just as the apocalyptic book was understood to represent the book of Scripture, the image of the closed gospel book in the pocket gospel evangelist portraits may thus allude to the apocalyptic book, perhaps serving as a reminder that the mysteries of Scripture cannot yet be fully comprehended on earth and that the reader's journey towards divine wisdom will only be completed in heaven at the end times. By reminding the reader of the spiritual goal of their

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[51] Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, 10; Kessler, "The Icon in the Narrative", in *Spiritual Seeing*, 1-18, st 1.

[52] Daniel 12:4, Revelation 5:1-8.

[53] Bede, *Commentary on Revelation*, trans. Wallis, 136; "omni latentium mysteriorum plenitudine tectum", CCSL 121A, 287.

[54] Bede, *Commentary on Revelation*, trans. Wallis, 137. "Neque angelus neque ullus iustorum etiam carnis uinculo absolutus mysteria diuinae legis reuelare uel inuestigare potuerunt", CCSL 121A, 287.

[55] Bede, *Commentary on Revelation*, trans. Wallis, 137, "contemplari splendorem gratiae noui testament", CCSL 121A, 287. See also Chapter 1.

gospel reading, the image of the evangelists' book might not only point forwards to the end of the world when the apocalyptic book will be opened and the truth revealed, but may also refer to the present manuscript that the reader holds in their hands. It might prompt the reader to consider how the labour of copying, reading and meditation invested in the book could help them to ensure a positive judgement from Christ in the last days.

Identification of the book in the image with the manuscript itself may be particularly encouraged in the instances where the books are pictured with a distinctive type of cover. While most of the books in the pocket-gospel evangelist portraits are shown as schematised rectangles, those carried by the Cadmug evangelists, Luke in the MacDurnan Gospels and the eagle symbol in the Book of Dimma, all feature distinctive bindings with a flap and three buttons at the front (Fig. 87). Book-bindings like this are not depicted in any other images, Insular or otherwise although they are attested archaeologically on the eighth-century Faddan More Psalter (Fig. 86).[56] It seems likely then, that the images portray a type of book-cover drawn from life, raising the possibility that they could even be self-referential images of the original covers of the manuscripts themselves. This possibility is partly undermined by the original or near-original surviving binding on the Cadmug Gospels which is entirely different from the bindings depicted on the evangelist's books. Nevertheless, it remains possible that in some instances at least, such details may have been intended to represent the manuscript itself, thus linking both it and the reader into the universal history of the transmission of Scripture.

This emphasis on the image of the book corresponds to the suggestion by Petrucci that images of the closed book developed iconic status in the early Middle Ages. He observed a shift in the representation of the book in the Latin West in which the early tendency to depict open codices displaying the words of Scripture yielded to a new preference after the sixth century for representations of the closed codex, often with a treasure binding. The image of the closed book, he suggested, thus acquired "the image of the closed reliquary, glowing with gems, rigidly presented for the veneration but not the comprehension of the faithful".[57] Indeed, the concealment of the sacred mysteries of Scripture within the closed book may be compared to the idea of obstructing the view of saintly relics. Cynthia Hahn has discussed the equation between seeing and understanding in the context of saint's shrines, where true seeing was thought to require preparation of the mind and exercise of proper *reverentia*; thus it was considered that the appropriate place to keep religious truths and treasures was in the interior, protected from profane sight.[58] Similarly, the concealment of

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[56] See Chapter 2.

[57] Petrucci, "The Christian Conception of the Book", 30.

[58] Hahn, "What Do Reliquaries Do", 305-09.

the gospels within the closed codices, pictured in the hands of the pocket-gospel evangelists, might be understood to depict the enshrinement of the text, elevating it to the status of holy object worthy of veneration, understanding of which requires vision on a higher level, facilitated by faith and contemplation.

The Heavenly Image

In these ways the pocket-gospel evangelist portraits can be seen to represent a flux between the heavenly and earthly, expressed through figural, spatial and temporal ambiguity. They invite intimacy and personal interaction, seeming to acknowledge the viewer with their face and body language, yet their immaterial and otherworldly appearance makes clear their detachment from earth. They are at once despatialised and intensely spatial, inhabiting a flat and spatially distinct world yet seeming to extend their presence into the world of the viewer by exceeding and interacting with their frames. Rejection of narrative means that the images are not tied to a particular historical moment but instead encapsulate all moments, past, present and future, so that they refer back to biblical history, forward to the promised day of judgement, and outward to the viewer in the present. This visual language strongly suggests the categories of holy object and image that were understood to provide a portal between earth and heaven by early medieval audiences.

This raises the possibility that the pocket gospel portraits might have functioned as holy images: instruments of supernatural power that could make the saint present and inspire veneration from the faithful. Indeed, through the use of architectural framing and the representation of fictive curtains, as well as other visual conventions such as flat backgrounds, frontal posture and wide gazing eyes, they may even allude to painted icons used for private veneration such as the small, intimate Virgin in the Niche at Santa Maria Antiqua. That the evangelist portraits sometimes received veneration is demonstrated by the localised staining on the face of the Matthew portrait in Book of Deer (Fig. 88); as Dominic Marner has suggested, it is likely that this damage was caused by devotional touching or kissing.[59] When exactly this effacement occurred is unclear, but the possibility that it was early medieval is supported by the comparable damage to the Crucifixion initial on fol. 152v of the Gellone Sacramentary of 790-*c*.804, which Celia Chazelle has argued was caused by veneration of the image during liturgical use of the manuscript in the Carolingian period (Fig. 89).[60]

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[59] Marner, "The Sword of the Spirit", 8-10.

[60] Celia Chazelle, *The Crucified God in the Carolingian Era: Theology and Art of Christ's Passion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 96-97.

Although a number of these arguments in favour of identifying the pocket gospel evangelist portraits as holy images could be advanced equally well for other Insular evangelist portraits, the unusually consistent representation of the standing, forward-facing evangelist-type and the closed codex in every pocket-gospel evangelist portrait remains striking and suggests a particular concern to facilitate an intimate encounter with the divine in these manuscripts. This may correspond to their small size and use for private reading. Scholars have shown that the practice of *lectio divina* was likely to have been extended to meditation on the images presented in a manuscript, and conversely that the veneration of icon paintings might have led to an increased reverence for the visual dimensions of the text.[61] Therefore, in the pocket gospels, the text and the miniatures were perhaps scrutinised, meditated on and prayed over as part of the same devotional exercise intended to bring the reader closer to divine wisdom and ultimate salvation.

In this regard it is notable that the pocket-gospel evangelists are depicted in ways that strongly suggest their residence in heaven, illuminated by the gold of divine wisdom and bearing the book of Scripture that is closed to human knowledge. This might be intended to remind the reader of the rewards of reading and transmitting Scripture, demonstrating the wisdom and perfection that they too can ultimately attain through their labours. That reading and writing the gospels could inspire the faithful to imitate the outstanding example of the evangelists is further suggested by the prayer at the end of the Gospel of Matthew in the Book of Armagh (fol. 52v), which requests:

> God of boundless kindness and ineffable tenderness, I presume to ask in a low voice that just as you made Matthew from a publican into a splendid apostle, thus through your mercy you deign to summon me to the perfect life in this world, and then to establish me amongst the angelic choirs of heavenly Jerusalem, so that I might be worthy to extol you with the musical praises of the archangels by the perpetual throne of infinite joy, through your only begotten son, who lives with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, for ever and ever. Amen.[62]

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[61] Brown, "Images as a Substitute for Writing", 30.

[62] "Deus, inmensae clementiae atque ineffabilis pietatis, submissa uoce rogare presumo, ut quomodo ex puplicano matteum preclarum apostolum fecisti, ita per missericordiam tuam arcessere me digneris ad perfectam in hoc saeculo uiam, atque anguelicis hierusalem caelestis choris collocare, ut perpetuo solio infinitae laetitiae ymnidicis archanguelorum laudibus conlaudare te merear, per unigenitum filium tuum, qui tecum uiuit in unitate spiritus sancti, per omnia saecula saeculorum. Amen".

It is thus striking that the evangelist portraits seem to depict the evangelists as splendid apostles in heaven, suggesting that they were intended to inspire the same reverence that prompted Ferdomnach's prayer.

Yet it is also worth noting that the evangelists can be simultaneously understood as representations of Christ.[63] In evoking the image of the apocalyptic figure with the book, such images refer to Christ at the second coming. The equivalence between Christ and the evangelists is also suggested by the metalwork cover of the Lindau Gospels (Fig. 85), on which four figures are arranged in a cross-shape: that there are four of them and that they adorn a gospel-book cover raises the expectation that they will represent the evangelists, but when the viewer looks more closely they see that the figures have cruciform haloes and are accompanied by a four-fold inscription that reads "Jesus Christ Our Lord", confirming that they should rather be understood as multivalent images of both Christ and the evangelists.[64] On a spiritual level, all four Gospels could be interpreted as images of Christ, since exegetes argued that each encapsulates a different facet of Christ's nature, and thus they provide four slightly different but entirely harmonious portrayals of Christ.[65] The extensive effacement through veneration on the Book of Deer Matthew portrait strongly suggests that on one level, it was understood as a representation of Christ.

Moreover, the repetition of the figure-type suggests the power and sanctity with which it was associated. According to Belting, duplication was essential to the transmission of sacred images as a means to extend their power. In the production of new icons, the scope of artistic variation was limited by the demand for the "truth" of authentic archetypes.[66] In this way the need to reproduce known sacred images caused certain formal types to take shape; in the words of Belting, "a particular form became the norm, the authentic became the type".[67] Furthermore the age of an icon raised its status, implying a venerable origin: "archaism as a fiction of age is one of the marks of identity that new cult images simulated".[68] In the case of the pocket gospels, this belief in the power of repetition to extend the efficacy of a sacred image may explain, in part, the retention of the forward-facing figure type over several centuries.

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[63] For suggestions of Christ-like elements in Insular evangelist portraits, see e.g. Michelle Brown, "Embodying Exegesis: Depictions of the Evangelists in Insular Manuscripts", in *Le Isole Britanniche e Roma in Età Romanobarbarica*, ed. Anna M. Luiselli Fadda and Éamonn Ó Carragáin (Rome: Herder, 1998), 109-27, at 124-26; and Nick Baker, "The Evangelists in Insular Culture", Chapter 4.

[64] "IES(US) CHR(ISTU)S D(OMI)N(U)S NOS(TER)".

[65] O'Reilly, "Patristic and Insular Traditions".

[66] Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, 19.

[67] Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, 19.

[68] Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, 14.

The MacDurnan Gospels: Remodelling the Evangelists

While the repeated employment of the standing, forward-facing evangelist-type in the pocket gospels strongly evokes the genre of holy image, indicating use for private, devotional meditation, the details of the evangelist portraits sometimes suggest a more public audience, further complicating the characterisation of the pocket-gospel group. A number of pocket-gospel portraits contain attributes that are not found in any other evangelist portrait, suggesting an interest in including novel features that depart from pictorial traditions. For example, some wear unusual costumes or shoes, some (as noted) bear books with distinctive covers, some carry staffs of various kinds.[69] It seems that the pictorial formula ensured recognisability of the subject while allowing artists the flexibility to incorporate distinctive features, imbuing each image with unique nuances of meaning. Moreover, the practice of copying the essential features of an overall model particularly serves to emphasise the details that have been changed, imbuing them with increased significance. How then, can these unique attributes be explained?

Consideration of these features suggests that there were two main motives for assigning novel attributes to the evangelist portraits: an inward-looking motive to direct the reader/viewer's meditation towards a particular spiritual theme relating to the evangelist and their gospel; and, in some cases, an outward-looking motive, referring to the most pressing concerns of the centres in which the manuscripts originated, perhaps in order to establish the manuscript as a symbol of institutional identity.[70] While the former explanation is perfectly consistent with the manuscripts' use in the private practice of *lectio divina*, the latter seems to anticipate a wider audience within the community and perhaps beyond. This raises further questions about how these manuscripts were used and who was expected to see them.

By focussing on the MacDurnan Gospels as a case study, clear evidence is given of the unusually rich imagery that could be involved in these images, with the added advantage of this manuscript having a reasonably secure provenance. Palaeographical, art-historical and textual evidence show that the MacDurnan Gospels was almost certainly made at Armagh in the ninth century and an inscription on fol. 3v suggests that early in its history it was owned by Mael Brigte mac Tornán (d. 927), who among other offices was *coarb* of Patrick *c.*888-

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[69] See Appendix.

[70] For the ways in which Insular gospel books more generally might have been used in the construction and augmentation of institutional and local identity, see e.g. Brown, *The Lindisfarne Gospels* and "Ferdomnach"; Carol Farr, "Commas and Columba, Power and Patrick: Restating the Archaic in the Book of Kells', in *Omnia Disce: Medieval Studies in Memory of Leonard Boyle, O.P.*, ed. Anne J. Duggan, Joan Greatrex and Brenda Bolton (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 129-54.

927.[71] Although scholars have generally been hesitant to assign a precise date to the manuscript, Michelle Brown has recently made a strong case for attributing it to the same generation as the Book of Armagh (*c*.807), and perhaps even to one of the same scribes.[72]

At the time that the MacDurnan Gospels was created, the church and monastic complex of Armagh, founded by Patrick in 445, was one of the chief ecclesiastical centres of Ireland and was engaged in fierce competition to extend its authority across the land.[73] Although the papacy would not officially grant Ireland an archbishop until the twelfth century, Armagh had claimed archiepiscopal supremacy over Ireland since at least the mid-seventh century when the *Liber Angeli* was probably composed, a text that affirms Patrick as the apostle of the Irish and his church, Armagh, as the sole archiepiscopal authority in Ireland, answerable only to Rome, with all other Irish churches under its jurisdiction.[74] Armagh clearly maintained these pretensions in the ninth century when the abbots of Armagh often feature in the annals on circuit around Ireland collecting tribute from subject churches and enforcing the Law of Patrick, as outlined in the *Liber Angeli*.[75]

These efforts to augment the power and territories of Armagh were accompanied by a cultural campaign to promote its history and the position of Patrick as the preeminent saint of Ireland. The period saw the composition of a spate of new *Lives* of Patrick in which the reputation of the saint was consciously enlisted to justify the privileges of Armagh.[76] One of the key manuscripts in this cultural campaign is the Book of Armagh, *c*.807, which contains a substantial collection of Patrician records, including the *Liber Angeli*, two *Lives*, and Patrick's *Confessio* and *Epistola*.[77] It is within this context of advanced learning and

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[71] See Appendix.

[72] Brown, "Ferdomnach".

[73] E.g. F. J. Byrne, "XVIII Church and Politics, c.750-c.1100", in *A New History of Ireland* 1, ed. Dáibhí Ó Cróinín (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 656-79.

[74] Richard Sharpe, "Armagh and Rome in the Seventh Century", in P. Ní Chatháin and M. Richter, eds, *Irland und Europa: die Kirche im Frühmittelalter* (Stuttgart, 1984), 58-72. Thomas *Charles*-Edwards, "The Primatial Claims of Armagh Kildare and Canterbury", *Early Christian Ireland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 416-40.

[75] E.g. *AU* 734.3, 789.17, 809.7, 811.1, 818.5, 831.5, 836.4, 846.9; *AFM* 784.10, 804.10, 817.12.

[76] *Vita Secunda* and *Vita Quarta*, eighth-ninth centuries; *Vita Tertia*, ninth century; *Tripartite Life*, in its present form late-ninth/tenth-century but likely derived from an earlier version *c*.800. See, Kenney, *Sources*, 133, 134 and 135; Ludwig Bieler, "The "Notulae" in the Book of Armagh", *Scriptorium* 8, 1 (1954), 89-97, and *Four Lives of St Patrick: Colgan's Vita Secunda, Quarta, Tertia, and Quinta, Scriptores Latini Hiberniae 8* (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1971); F. J. Byrne and P. Francis, "Two Lives of Saint Patrick: "Vita Secunda" and "Vita Quarta"", *JRSAI* 124 (1994), 5-117.

[77] See Appendix.

creativity, enthusiastic devotion to Patrick, and fierce ecclesiastical ambition that the creation of the MacDurnan Gospels must be understood.

If Armagh was keen to create and compile texts that promoted its political agenda, it seems feasible that it would also employ images and objects to similar ends. The case for this has been advanced by Cormac Bourke in his examination of Armagh's creative exploitation of relics and shrines.[78] Likewise, Michelle Brown has argued that Armagh enlisted manuscripts to this cause as well, proposing that both the Book of Armagh and the MacDurnan Gospels were designed to physically and graphically refer to early manuscripts associated with Patrick.[79] In regard to the MacDurnan Gospels, she drew attention to an entry in the Annals of Ulster for 553, which reads:

> The relics of Patrick were placed sixty years after his death in a shrine by Colum Cille. Three splendid halidoms were found in the burial-place: his goblet, the Angel's Gospel, and the Bell of the Testament. This is how the angel distributed the halidoms: the goblet to Dún, the Bell of the Testament to Ard Macha, and the Angel's Gospel to Colum Cille himself. The reason it is called the Angel's Gospel is that Colum Cille received it from the hand of the angel.[80]

Brown suggests that the MacDurnan Gospels may have been intended to represent or act as a substitute for the Angel's Gospel of Patrick, which, as Richard Sharpe has suggested, was likely a supposed relic of Patrick, fabricated in 553 or later.[81] She thus suggests that both the Book of Armagh and MacDurnan Gospels were made to emphasise the apostolic succession of Patrick's *coarb*.[82]

Although she did not discuss the illuminations of the manuscripts in depth, Brown briefly noted that the representations of the evangelists in the MacDurnan Gospels "with the episcopal pastoral crosier and a copy of the Gospels", further reinforce the message of

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[78] Cormac Bourke, *Patrick: The Archaeology of a Saint* (Belfast: Ulster Museum, 1993).

[79] Brown "Ferdomnach". See Chapters 1 and 3.

[80] Annals of Ulster, 553.3, "reilci Patraic do tabairt i scrin i cinn tri .xx.it bliadnae iar n-etsecht Patraic la Colum Cille. Tri minna uaisli do faghbail isin adhnucal, .i. a choach & Soiscela ind Aingil & Clocc in Aidhechta. Is amlaid so ro fhoghail int aingel do Colum Cille inna minna, .i. in coach do Dhun, & Cloc in Aidachta do Ard Macha, & Soiscela inn Aingil do Colum Cille fein. Is aire do-garar Soiscela in Aingil de, ar is a laim in aingil ar-roet Colum Cille h-e", ed. Donnchadh Ó Corráin and Mavis Cournane, trans. Pádraig Bambury and Stephen Beechinor, CELT.

[81] Sharpe, "Palaeographical Considerations", 24-25.

[82] Brown "Ferdomnach".

Armagh's episcopal primacy. More detailed consideration of the evangelist miniatures of the MacDurnan Gospels supports these ideas, showing that not only should they be understood as meditative aids facilitating contemplation on the meaning of the gospels, but they are also important witnesses to the cultural arm of Armagh's campaign to promote its archiepiscopal claims and raise the status of St Patrick.

Staffs

In considering how the evangelist portraits might construct meaning in these ways, it is first worth analysing in greater depth the staffs to which Brown alluded. The MacDurnan Gospels is unique for depicting the evangelists Matthew and Luke carrying crook-headed staffs. Matthew's is about as high as the figure himself and has a spike at the base (Fig. 90), whereas Luke's reaches only to about waist-height and has a blunt base that tapers slightly outwards (Fig. 91). Although these objects resemble a modern "crosier", this word has only been used to refer to the crook-headed staff of a bishop since the early modern period and in the later Middle Ages denoted a cross staff.[83] Early medieval sources refer to the pastoral or episcopal staff as either *baculus* or *virga* in Latin (both meaning stick, staff or rod); as *bachall* in Old Irish (loaned from Latin *baculus*); and occasionally as *cambutta*, a Hiberno-Latin word meaning crook-headed staff.[84]

Other than Brown, the only scholar to comment on the MacDurnan staffs to date is John Obadiah Westwood in 1850, who suggested that they are of "archaeological interest" for revealing the form of ecclesiastical instruments used in early medieval Ireland. As such, he identified Luke's staff as the "episcopal cambutta" and Matthew's as a "pastoral staff", although he did not elaborate on what he understood these to mean.[85] Building on these ideas, it is clear that the staffs held by the MacDurnan evangelists have strong priestly associations and may be paralleled by staffs representing the authority of church leaders, especially bishops. This is particularly suggestive given the context of the manuscripts' production at Armagh with its archiepiscopal ambitions.

Although the staff would become an important feature of episcopal iconography from the tenth and especially the eleventh century, such objects were rarely depicted in images as

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[83] "crosier | crozier, n.", OED Online, June 2015, Oxford University Press, accessed August 20, 2015, http://www.oed.com.ezproxy.york.ac.uk/view/Entry/44805?redirectedFrom=crosier.

[84] Phillipe Depreux, "Investitura per anulum et baculum. Ring und Stab als Zeichen der Investitur bis zum Investiturstreit", in *Vom Umbruch zur Erneuerung?*, ed. Jörg Jarnut and Matthias Wemhoff, (Munich: Fink, 2006), 169-83, at 172.

[85] John O. Westwood, "On the Peculiarities Exhibited by the Miniatures and Ornamentation of Ancient Irish Illuminated MSS", *The Archaeological Journal* 7 (1850), 17-25, at 20.

early as the ninth century when the MacDurnan Gospels was made. Crooked staffs do, however, appear in Irish and Pictish stone sculpture of the ninth to tenth centuries, generally as the attribute of ecclesiastics or the proto-abbatial figures Sts Paul and Anthony (Figs 92-95).[86] Elsewhere, in the Drogo Sacramentary of *c*.826-55, the bishop-saint Arnulf is depicted performing his pastoral duties with a crook-headed staff in a decorated initial (fol. 91r; Fig. 96).[87] The only other example of an evangelist with a staff is found in the Gellone Sacramentary of *c*.780-800, where an anthropomorphic initial shows Matthew's man-symbol with a staff and pallium, the principal attribute of an archbishop (Fig. 97).[88]

Yet despite their iconographic rarity, textual references show that staffs were widely used by bishops as sacred symbols for emphasising the spiritual dimension of their office across the early medieval West.[89] The transfer of a ring and staff at episcopal ordination ceremonies is testified from the time of Isidore of Seville in the seventh century.[90] It is also described in the eighth-century Irish canon law the *Hibernensis* as well as in Carolingian descriptions of episcopal ordinations, such as Rabanus Maurus' *De clericorum institutione*.[91] In Ireland, the widespread use of such symbolic staffs is demonstrated by numerous references in saints' lives as well as by surviving examples, known in the scholarship as crosiers.[92] According to Griffin Murray, the crosier is the second-most common religious artefact to survive from early medieval Ireland after the hand bell.[93] The majority of these, like the MacDurnan staffs, feature a crook-headed form with a distinctive "pendant drop" at the extremity. While most surviving examples are metalwork pieces far more elaborate than those pictured in the MacDurnan Gospels, a plain wooden example was also found in a bog

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[86] E.g. Papil cross-slab and shrine fragment and Bressay cross-slab.

[87] BNF MS Lat. 9428, see also fol. 54r. Cynthia Hahn, *Portrayed on the Heart: Narrative Effect in Pictorial Lives of Saints from the Tenth Through the Thirteenth Century* (Berkley, L.A.: University of California Press, 2001), 143-44.

[88] Palazzo, "La Mise en Action", 55.

[89] Depreux, "Investitura", 172.

[90] *De ecclesiasticis officiis,* II. 5 12, ed. Christopher M. Lawson, CCSL 113 (Turhout: Brepols, 1989), 60.

[91] *Hibernensis* 1.6, ed. and trans. Roy Flechner, "A study and edition of the Collectio canonum Hibernensis", unpublished PhD thesis: Oxford University, 2006; *De clericorum institutione* 1.4, PL 107, 300.

[92] On their role in *vitae*, see Lisa Bitel, "Tools and Scripts for Cursing in Medieval Ireland", *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome* 51/52 (2006/2007), 5-27.

[93] Griffin Murray, "Insular-type Crosiers: Their Construction and Characteristics" in Rachel Moss, ed., *Making and Meaning in Insular Art: Proceedings of the Fifth International Conference on Insular Art* (Dublin, 2007), 79-94, at 79.

near the early medieval monastery of Lemanaghan, Co. Offaly; the small cross incised on the end indicates that it was almost certainly of clerical use (Fig. 98).[94] However, it is unnecessary to precisely identify the objects pictured in the pocket gospels according to archaeological artefacts: they are better understood as generalised representations intended to evoke the idea of the staff rather than actual objects in use.

Given the widespread use of the episcopal staff in Ireland and elsewhere, it is likely that the staffs held by the evangelists in the MacDurnan Gospels would indeed have suggested to contemporary audiences the pastoral staff of a bishop. Yet the evangelists were not bishops, and are not particularly celebrated for their leadership or pastoral roles. Thus the significance of depicting the evangelists with episcopal staffs can be interpreted in two potentially complementary ways: as a spiritual message about the nature of the gospels, and as a message about the status of Armagh.

On one level, the depiction of the evangelists with pastoral staffs serves to conflate them with Christ, a tendency already noted in the pocket-gospel evangelist portraits more widely. The symbolism of the episcopal staff was based on the metaphor of the bishop as shepherd (*pastor*), and indeed it was designed to imitate the form of a shepherd's crook; thus for Gregory the Great, commenting on Exodus 12:11 (and reiterated in the *Hibernensis*), "What does the law indicate by the staff except pastoral guardianship?"[95] The ultimate Christian pastor, from whom the bishop derived his authority, was understood to be Christ, an idea based on biblical shepherd imagery. For example, in Psalm 22(23), God is the shepherd whose rod and staff comfort the speaker who assumes the role of sheep; in the New Testament, Christ is the good shepherd (*pastor bonus*) and prince of pastors (*princeps pastorum*).[96] The concept of Christ as "prince of pastors" is illustrated by a fifth-century mosaic in the Mausoleum of Galla Placidia, which shows him tending sheep wearing an imperial gold tunic with purple *clavi* and holding a golden cross as his staff (Fig. 99). Evoking these biblical precedents, the bishop's staff signalled that he was a representative of the divine pastor in line with the characterisation of the bishop as an image of Christ.[97] Depicting the evangelists with the pastoral staff thus enhances the impression that they are multivalent images of Christ, and may indeed have apocalyptic overtones, recalling Peter's

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[94] NMI 99E445:26.

[95] Gregory, *Homiliae in evangelia*, 2. 22. 9, trans. Hurst, *Gregory the Great, Forty Gospel Homilies*, 173; "Quid lex per baculum nisi pastoralem custodiam designat?", ed. Raymond Étaix, CCSL 141 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1999), 191. See also, *Hibernensis*, 1.6.

[96] John 10:11; 1 Peter 5:4.

[97] For which assertion, see *Hibernensis* 1.15.

assertion that "when the prince of pastors shall appear, you shall receive a never fading crown of glory".[98]

As well as Christ, the pastoral staff also suggests various biblical precursors to the role of bishop, all of whom might be perceived in the MacDurnan images. As the *Hibernensis* explains, the office of bishop originated with the divinely appointed Old Testament leaders Aaron and Moses before being passed on to the apostles in the New Testament.[99] In the Bible, Aaron and Moses are both described as working miracles with their staffs. Additionally, Aaron's rod blossomed to demonstrate his divine right to the priesthood and was eventually preserved as a relic in the Ark of the Covenant.[100] Christ entrusted the apostles with the pastoral role before his ascension, instructing the first bishop, Peter, to "feed my sheep".[101] Moreover, according to the Gospel of Mark, Christ sends his disciples to preach with the instruction that they should "take nothing for the way, but a staff only";[102] this staff was interpreted by Augustine (reiterated verbatim by Bede) as a symbol of the authority that the Apostles had received from Christ.[103] Therefore, the MacDurnan images could be understood to evoke the prophesied end times when the whole church, including apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and doctors, will be unified in Christ.[104]

Yet the images of the evangelists with the pastoral staffs are also unmistakably suggestive of the archiepiscopal claims of Armagh. Indeed, the *Liber Angeli* describes Armagh as "the see of the perfect pastor" (*cathedram pastoris perfecti*), referring to the pastoral guadianship of Patrick and his heirs.[105] Therefore, given that the manuscript was most probably owned by one *coarb* of Patrick, and may well have been made for one of his predecessors in this role, it seems likely that the evangelist's staffs were meant to allude to his authority and the supposed archiepiscopal preeminence of Armagh.

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[98] 1 Peter 5:4, "et cum apparuerit princeps pastorum percipietis inmarcescibilem gloriae coronam".

[99] *Hibernensis*, 1.3. On the characterisation of bishops as following such models, see Claudia Rapp, *Holy Bishops in Late Antiquity: The Nature of Christian Leadership in an Age of Transition* (Berkley, University of California Press, 2005), esp. Chapter 4, "Ascetic Authority".

[100] For miracles worked with their staffs, see Exodus 4:2, 4:20, 7:17, 8:5, 8:16-17, 9:23, 10:13, 14:16, 17:9, Numbers 20:11; on Aaron's budding rod, see Numbers 17:1-11 and Hebrews 9:4.

[101] John 21:15-17; see also, 1 Peter 5, Acts 20:28-9.

[102] Mark 6:7-9

[103] Augustine, *De consensu evangelistarum*, 2. 30. 71-74, CSEL 43, 175-80, trans. NPNF 6, 235-9. Bede, *Expositio in Evangelium S. Marci*, 2. 4, PL 92: 186-87.

[104] Ephesians 4:11-16.

[105] Ed. and trans. Ludwig Bieler, *The Patrician Texts in the Book of Armagh*, Scriptores Latini Hiberniae Series 10 (Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, School of Celtic Studies, 1979), 188-89.

The connection is all the more resonant because at the time of the manuscript's production, Armagh possessed the *Bachall Íosa*, a staff believed to have belonged to Patrick and, before him, to Christ himself. The *Bachall Íosa* first appears in the annals and *Vitae* towards the end of the eighth century at a time when Armagh was making a concerted drive to extend its authority.[106] Lucas has argued that this relic was one of the principal insignia of the abbot of Armagh, noting the close "physical association between it and the reigning abbot" apparent in annal entries from the eighth century onwards where it often seems to accompany him on his travels, many of which involve attempts to impose the Law of Patrick.[107] Thus with its link to Patrick and Christ, the doubly sacred *Bachall Íosa* embodied Armagh's divinely-ordained claim to episcopal primacy in Ireland.

Perhaps the inclusion of staffs in the evangelist portraits is intended to represent Patrick as the evangelist of Ireland. Patrick himself characterised his mission to Ireland this way in his *Confessio*, describing how, by bringing the gospel to the ends of the earth, he was able to participate in the fulfillment of Christ's final command to his apostles to spread the faith to the whole world and all the nations of the earth:[108]

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[106] The staff is first recorded in the annals in 784 (*AFM* 784.10)/789 (*AU* 789.17) when, along with the relics of Patrick, it was dishonoured by Donnchadh, son of Domnall, at the óenach at Rath Airthir; the account of how Patrick acquired the staff appears in Patrician hagiography in the *Vita Quarta* (ed. Bieler, *Four Latin Lives*, 77-78) and *Vita Tertia* (ed. Bieler, *Four Latin Lives*, 131), dated respectively to the last quarter of the eighth century and the ninth century (Byrne and Francis, "Two Lives of Saint Patrick", 8 and 10), both of which are thought to be based on a lost *Vita* probably dating from the early-eighth century (Bieler, *Four Latin Lives*, 9; Byrne and Francis, "Two Lives of Saint Patrick", 6). It is later recorded in the late-ninth/tenth-century *Tripartite Life* likely derived from an earlier version *c.*800 (Kenney, *Sources*, 135; Bieler, "The 'Notulae'"), in eleventh-century glosses to *St Fiacc's Hymn* in the Franciscan *Liber Hymnorum* (UCD MS A 2) (Kenney, *Sources*, 340); and the twelfth-century *Life* by Joceline.

[107] A. T. Lucas, "The Social Role of Relics and Reliquaries in Ancient Ireland", *JRSAI* 116 (1986), 5-37, at 13-14. In 784 (*AFM*)/789 (AU) the Staff of Jesus and relics of Patrick were dishonoured Ráth Airthir in Meath. For the abbots of Armagh going on official visits with relics/insignia of Patrick, see *AU* 811.1, *AU* 836.4, *AFM* 835.14, *AU* 845.1, *AFM* 843.12. In twelfth-century the Staff of Jesus is similarly identified with the office of Abbot of Armagh in Bernard of Clairvaux's *Life of St. Malachy of Armagh*, trans. Hugh J. Lawlor, Translations of Christian Literature V, Lives of Celtic Saints (London and New York: Macmillan Company, 1920), 54-55. The relic was later moved to Dublin and publicly burned in 1538 during the Reformation.

[108] Matthew 24:14 and 28:19-20; Acts 1:8. On this conceit, see Jennifer O'Reilly, "Islands and Idols at the Ends of the Earth: Exegesis and Conversion in Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica*", in Bède le Vénérable: Entre Tradition et Postérité, ed. Stéphane Lebecq, Michel Perrin and Olivier Szerwiniak (Villeneuve d'Ascq: IRHiS-Institut de Recherches Historiques du Septentrion, 2005), 119–145.

In this way I can imitate somewhat those whom the Lord foretold would announce his gospel in witness to all nations before the end of the world. This is what we see has been fulfilled. Look at us: we are witnesses that the gospel has been preached right out to where there is nobody else there![109]

The inclusion of the staffs in the MacDurnan evangelist portraits may be understood as part of the same programme as the hagiographies to depict Patrick in his evangelising role as the divinely ordained Apostle of the Irish.

Yet the images can also be understood to refer to the abbot or bishop of Armagh himself, perhaps the patron, owner and user of the manuscript, reinforcing his identity as heir to Patrick. Conceivably, when the abbot of Armagh went on circuit around subject territories displaying Armagh's relics, he might have carried the *Bachall Íosa* along with his personal gospel book, looking much like the evangelists depicted bearing similar staffs. It might thus enhance his authority as the bearer of God's Word, visually associating him with the historical transmission of the true faith through his identification with the evangelist portraits—from Christ to the evangelists and apostles, to Patrick the apostle of the Irish, and to himself as the present-day abbot of Armagh.

In this regard, it is worth referring back to the only close visual parallel to the MacDurnan staffs in evangelist iconography: the anthropomorphic initial of Matthew in the Gellone Sacramentary, a Frankish manuscript of the Gelasian Sacramentary, created *c*.790-800 (Fig. 97).[110] The initial occurs in the text detailing the *Apertio aurium* ceremony, at the point at which the priest begins to explain why the man is the symbol of Matthew (fol. 42r). It portrays the evangelist, haloed, wearing a pallium, holding in his left hand a book inscribed *Mateus*, and in his right hand the pastoral staff with a crooked head and spiked base, much like that of Matthew in the MacDurnan Gospels. Palazzo suggested that Matthew is depicted as a bishop in the Gellone Sacramentary in order to simultaneously represent the evangelist and the celebrant who, using the manuscript in the *Apertio Aurium* ritual, activates the text through his speech and performance, thus adding to the multi-sensory

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[109] Confession, 34. trans. Pádraig McCarthy, 2003, accessed 8th October, 2016, from http://www.confessio.ie/etexts/confessio_english#01. "ita ut imitarem quippiam illos quos ante Dominus iam olim praedixerat praenuntiaturos euangelium suum *in testimonium omnibus gentibus* ante *finem mundi*, quod ita ergo uidimus itaque suppletum est: ecce testes sumus quia euangelium praedicatum est usque ubi nemo ultra est", ed. Bieler, *Libri Epistolarum Sancti Patricii Episcopi*, Royal Irish Academy Dictionary of Medieval Latin from Celtic Sources, Ancillary Publications IV, (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 1993), 56-90, at 76

[110] Paris, B. N., lat. 12048.

dimension of the ceremony.[111] The evangelists portrayed with staffs in the MacDurnan Gospels may have been intended to represent the bishop/abbot of Armagh and the *Bachall Íosa* relic in much the same way, and when the manuscript was put to use in Armagh it created a similar multi-layered effect.

Casula

The possibility that the MacDurnan staffs refer to Patrick and the *Bachall Íosa* is further supported by another unusual feature of the Luke portrait of the MacDurnan Gospels (Fig. 91), as well as all four evangelist portraits in the Cadmug Gospels (Fig. 77) and the Matthew symbol of the Book of Durrow (Fig. 100). In contrast to the classically-inspired toga-like garments typically worn by Insular evangelists, these are dressed in long, straight cloaks with conical silhouettes. These cloaks correspond to descriptions of the *casula*, an outer garment originating in secular roman dress that was adopted for church use from an early date and in later centuries evolved into a liturgical vestment with a prescribed form (the modern "chasuble").[112] The form of the *casula* in the early Middle Ages is explained by Isidore as "a hooded garment, named as a diminutive of hut (*casa*), because it covers the whole person, like a small hut".[113] This description seems well suited to the long conical-shaped garments of the evangelists, which rather resemble a *clochán* (Irish beehive hut) in outline. It is even possible that the shape articulated around the shoulders of Luke in the MacDurnan Gospels was intended to suggest a lowered hood.

When the MacDurnan Gospels was made, the *casula* would likely have held strong priestly associations. This is evident in the decree from the Carolingian *Concilium Germanicum* of 742, presided over by Boniface, archbishop of Mainz, that "priests and deacons not wear cloaks in the fashion of the laity, but *casulae* in the custom of servants of God", showing that by this period the *casula* was considered a distinctively clerical garment among the Insular Continental diaspora at least.[114] Likewise, the eighth-century Insular miscellany known as the *Collectanea* of Pseudo-Bede lists the *casula* as one of the items of clerical clothing in its explanation of the seven ordinals of Christ.[115]

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[111] Palazzo, "La Mise en Action", 56-60.

[112] For the *casula* as an ordinary garment with no specific religious function, see Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*, 22. 8.

[113] Isidore, *Etym.* XIX, xxiv, 17, trans. Barney, Lewis, Beach and Berghof, 387; "casula est vestis cucullata, dicta per diminutionem a casa, quod totum hominem tegat quasi minor casa", ed. Lindsay.

[114] *Concilium Germanicum* 742, 7, "Decrevimus quoque, ut presbyteri vel diaconi non sagis, laicorum more, sed casulis utantur, ritu servorum Dei", ed. P. Labbé and G. Cossart, *Sacrosancta Concilia Ad Regiam Editionem Exacta* VI, Tomus sextus ab anno DCXLIX ad annum DCCLXXXVII (1671), 1535.

[115] PL 94, 539-60, at 553-55. See below.

The deep red colour of the garments worn by the evangelists in the Cadmug Gospels and Luke in the MacDurnan Gospels further reinforces their association with the *casula* and the ideals of priesthood. In patristic colour commentaries, scarlet was widely understood to symbolise charity; Gregory, for example, interpreted the scarlet on the vestments of the high priest Aaron as showing that the mind of a pastor should be "intent on the precepts of charity".[116] Notably, Rabanus Maurus proposed that the *casula* symbolises charity because it is the uppermost garment, just as charity is the highest of the virtues, and asserted that "without charity or a *casula*, a priest ought neither to come near to the altar, nor present the offering, nor to pray".[117]

On one level, therefore, the image of the evangelist wearing the clerical *casula* may be intended to prompt contemplation on the priestly nature of Luke's Gospel. O'Reilly has shown that patristic and Insular gospel commentators commonly identified Luke with the symbol of the sacrificial calf and the office of priest.[118] For example, in his *Plures Fuisse*, Jerome relates each of the four living creatures in Ezekiel's vision to one of the four evangelists, where Luke is prefigured in the calf because his gospel opens with an account of the priest Zachariah making offerings at the Temple.[119] In his homilies on Ezekiel, Gregory also emphasises that Luke is the calf because his gospel opening alludes to the role of priest and particularly reveals the sacrificial aspect of Christ's redemption of humanity.[120] Further, the Hiberno-Latin commentary of *c*.750-775 found in the ninth-century manuscript Munich, Clm 6235, explains that Luke wrote according to the "rule of priests", while Matthew wrote according to the rule of faith, Mark according to the rule of the prophets, and John according to the rule of Christ.[121] Therefore, the image of Luke wearing the clerical *casula* may direct the viewer's thoughts to these exegetical characterisations of Luke's gospel, evoking the image of Christ as high priest and sacrifice.[122]

Yet like the staffs depicted in the same manuscript, the *casula* worn by Luke in the MacDurnan Gospels may have been particularly meaningful in the context of ninth-century

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[116] Gregory, *Regula Pastoralis*, II. 3. 68, trans. James Barmby, *Pastoral Rule*, NPNF 2, 12 (New York: Christian Literature Company, 1895), 11; "cum mens ad praecepta caritatis tenditur", ed. Floribert Rommel and R. W. Clement, CCSL 141 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1953).

[117] "Sine hac charitate vel casula, nec sacerdos ipse ad altare appropinquare debet, nec munus offere, nec preces fundere", PL 107, 308.

[118] O'Reilly, "Patristic and Insular Traditions", 53-77.

[119] *Commentariorum In Evangelium Matthaei*, PL 26, cols. 15-18. See also, Augustine, *De Consensu Ev.*, 1, 3.

[120] *Commentariorum in Hiezechielem*, CCSL (1964), Hom. IV, 1-3.

[121] O'Reilly, "Patristic and Insular Traditions", 69.

[122] E.g. Hebrews 7:27, 10:12.

Armagh. Notably, the *casula* is one of the attributes ascribed to Patrick in a verse associated with his early hagiographies. This is found in various forms in several manuscripts, the earliest being a Latin version in Muirchú's seventh-century *Life*, entered into the Book of Armagh, *c.*800 (although Muirchú claims to have translated it from an earlier Irish-language version).[123] The texts present the verse as a prophecy made by the pagan druids concerning the arrival of Patrick into Ireland. Comparing the versions shows that Patrick's "house with a hole in its head" in the Latin is equivalent to the "cloak hole-head" in the Irish, demonstrating that the Latin translator evidently understood Patrick's cloak to be a *casula*, a garment that covers the body like a small hut (*casa*):

There shall arrive Shaven-head,	Adze-head will come
With his stick bent in the head,	Over mad-head sea,
From his house with a hole in its head.	His cloak hole-head,
He will chant impiety	His staff crook-head,
From his table in the front of the house;	His table in the west of his house;
All his people will answer "Be it thus, be it thus".[124]	All his household will answer, Amen, Amen.[125]

In this verse, therefore, the *casula* is one of the features selected for caricaturing Patrick and the coming priesthood, along with the tonsure, crook-headed staff and church services. Given that the figure of Luke in the MacDurnan Gospels not only wears a "cloak hole-head" but also holds a "staff crook-head", and that the manuscript likely originated from Armagh, the centre of Patrick's cult and the place at which the earliest manuscript witness to the verse, the Book of Armagh, was made and kept, it seems probable that this figure would have evoked Patrick and his followers to the community that produced it.

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[123] Irish versions are found in the Franciscan Liber Hymnorum (see below), Egerton copy of the *Tripartite Life* (BL Egerton MS 93, p. 34) and in the Leabhar Breac *Homily on St Patrick*; Latin versions in Muirchú's *Life of St Patrick* in the Book of Armagh, the *Vita Secunda*, chp. 27, xxii, and Probus's *Life of St Patrick*. See Byrne and Francis, "Two Lives of Saint Patrick", 92; Bieler, *The Patrician Texts*, 76-77, 200; J. Travis, "A Druidic Prophecy—the First "Irish" Satire", *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* 57, 4 (Dec. 1942), 909-15.

[124] "Adveniet ascicaput/ cum suo ligno curuicapite,/ ex sua domu capite perforata/ incantabit nefas/ a sua mensa ex anteriore parte domus suae,/ respondebit ei sua familia tota 'fiat, fiat'". Version from Muirchú's *Life of St Patrick,* Book of Armagh, ed. and trans. Ludwig Bieler, *The Patrician Texts*, 76-77.

[125] "Ticfa tal-cend/ dar muir merr-cend/ a brat toll-cend/ a chrand crom-cend/ a mias a n-iarthair a thige huile/ frigserat a muinter huile Amen Amen". Version from Franciscan *Liber Hymnorum* (UCD MS A 2), ed. and trans. Travis, "A Druidic Prophecy", 910.

Simultaneously however, the figure may also represent the owner or user of the manuscript. Carol Farr has suggested that several illuminations in the Book of Kells depicting figures wearing a garment resembling a *casula*. For example the figures on the John *incipit* (fol. 292r; Fig. 101), may refer to deacons, whose duty it was to prepare the altar and read from the gospel book during the liturgy wearing a *casula*, as set out in the pseudo-Bedan *Collectanea*.[126] She suggests that if it was used liturgically, some of the imagery in the Book of Kells may have been addressed especially to deacons in order to assist their reading and explanations of the gospels.[127] It is possible that the evangelist portraits which feature *casula*-type costumes refer to and address themselves to the clerics that used them in a similar manner. Perhaps, like the staffs, the *casula* contributes to the effect of conflating the *coarb* of Armagh with the figures of Christ, evangelist and Patrick.

Writing in Red

There may yet be a further reference to Armagh's institutional identity in the MacDurnan evangelist portraits. In his portrait, John is shown clasping a closed book and a scribal knife in his left hand and dipping a quill-pen into an inkwell with the right (fol. 170v; Fig. 102). In itself this is not particularly unusual, a number of extant Insular portraits depict the evangelists as scribes. Some of these show the evangelists in the act of writing: for example Matthew, Mark and Luke in the Lindisfarne Gospels, Luke and John in the MacRegol Gospels, all four evangelists in the Barberini Gospels, the evangelist on fol. 1 of the Maeseyck Gospels and Matthew in St Gall Cod. 1395. More rarely evangelists are shown, like John in the MacDurnan Gospels, holding writing equipment but not writing, with their book closed; for example, the evangelist on fol. 12v in the Book of Mulling (Fig. 76) and John in the Book of Kells (fol. 291v; Fig. 103).

However, a further level of meaning is given to John's writing equipment in the MacDurnan Gospels by the striking detail that his inkwell is portrayed containing red ink. Inkwells are used by the evangelists in the Barberini Gospels, John in the Book of Kells, Luke in the MacRegol Gospels, Matthew in St Gall Cod. 1395, Luke in the Book of Cerne and the evangelist on fol. 12v of the Book of Mulling; most of these are of a similar chalice-like shape to the MacDurnan inkwell but the ink contained within them is either not visible or else black (Fig. 105). Outside the corpus of evangelist portraits, the Ezra miniature in the Codex Amiatinus portrays the scribe using a shallow dish divided into two compartments, one containing black ink and one containing red (Fig. 104); Gameson has suggested that this

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[126] PL 94, 555A, Carol Farr, *The Book of Kells, Its Function and Audience* (London and Toronto, 1997), 154.

[127] Farr, *Book of Kells*, 154-5.

echoes a Byzantine tradition of depicting the evangelists equipped with both black and red ink, presumably for writing the main text and rubrics.[128]

Yet the unusual red colour and chalice-like design of the inkwell in the MacDurnan Gospels uniquely evoke the blood of the Eucharist, suggesting Christ's death and the salvific power of his blood. While numerous studies have shown that the use and understanding of colour is culturally and historically specific, the association of red with blood is universal and strongly attested in early medieval sources.[129] The Last Supper and the Crucifixion were connected by Christ's followers from an early period;[130] as was the idea that the shedding of Christ's innocent blood in sacrifice cleansed humanity's sins and brought redemption for sinners.[131] In the MacDurnan image, Christ's salvific death on the cross is also suggested by the cruciform frame that surrounds the miniature.

The inclusion of this arresting detail may be explained as a spiritual comment on the nature of John and his gospel. Blood and the Eucharist may be particularly associated with John as the evangelist who leant on Christ's breast at the Last Supper, the first Eucharistic meal.[132] He was also present at the Crucifixion and is the only evangelist who describes the piercing of Christ's side causing the issue of blood and water—the sole point in the gospels at which it is specified that Christ's blood was spilled.[133] Likewise, within the distinctively Hiberno-Latin exegetical tradition of associating the four evangelists with the apocryphal four paradisal liquids, John is paired with *vinum* (wine) in both Pseudo-Jerome's *Expositio quatuor evangeliorum* and Pseudo-Isidore's *Liber de numeris*.[134] The vine imagery on the front cover of the Cuthbert Gospel of John may also relate to this Eucharistic siginificance attributed to John.[135]

Moreover, John's scribal role is emphasised in *Revelation*, where he serves as God's notary, writing epistles to the churches.[136] He is also presented with a "reed (*calamus*) like unto a rod (*virgae*)",[137] interpreted by Bede as a scribal reed pen (*calamus*), which he proposes represents a staff of sacred office not unlike those discussed above:

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[128] Gameson, "The Material Fabric", 82.

[129] In an Irish context, see for example, Stancliffe, "Red, White and Blue Martyrdom".

[130] 1 Corinthians 11:23-27;

[131] E.g. Romans 3:24-5, Ephesians 1:7, Colossians 1:14; Hebrews 9: 11-17.

[132] John 13:23.

[133] John 19:34.

[134] Also Matthew, honey; Mark, milk; Luke, oil. Other texts adopt alternative pairings. O'Reilly, "The Hiberno-Latin Tradition", 293.

[135] See Chapter 3.

[136] Revelation 1:19-3:22.

[137] Revelation 11:1.

In the reed, he receives the office of writing the Gospel. It is not superfluous with futile elegance, but is like the sceptre of justice, the sceptre of the kingdom of God. For it describes Christ's eternal kingdom.[138]

In other words, the reed pen is like a rod because it symbolises the authority of the scribe just as the sceptre symbolises the authority of a king, since by communicating Scripture John governs its divine truths.

Likewise, the chalice-like inkwell included in the evangelist portrait of John in the Book of Kells has been interpreted as particularly revealing John's special status (Fig. 103). Drawing on Augustine's commentary on John 1:1, Pulliam suggested that the image illustrates the idea that John drank the Word directly from Christ's breast, which he transmits for others to receive through the act of writing.[139] Jennifer O'Reilly argued that this evangelist portrait can be understood as a multivalent image of Christ as the ultimate author of the gospel.[140] Thus in the MacDurnan Gospels, the eucharistic ink might emphasise the sanctity of the scribal calling and the inherent divinity of John's gospel.

Yet as well as commenting on the nature of John and his gospel, the image of Christ's blood as ink creates a powerful image suggesting Christ's real presence in every word of the text, and specifically in the very manuscript in question, given the red colouring used in its illumination. Although blood imagery became central to late medieval European piety, it is relatively unusual in the early Middle Ages.[141] Yet the metaphor of the ink of Scripture as the blood of Christ appears in Isidore's *Etymologiae*. Describing the tools of copyists, Isidore explained:

The tip of a quill is split into two, while its unity is preserved in the integrity of its body, I believe for the sake of a mystery, in order that by the two tips may

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138 Bede, *Commentary on Revelation*, trans. Wallis, 179; "in calamo ministerium euangelii scribendi percipit, qui non inani nitore superuacuus, sed similis est uirgae aequitatis, uirgae regni dei. Regnum enim Christi describit aeternum", CCSL 121A, 367.

139 Pulliam, *Word and Image in the Book of Kells* (Dublin: Four Courts, 2006), 183-86.

140 O'Reilly, "St. John the Evangelist", 193-97.

141 See for example, Caroline Walker Bynum, *Wonderful Blood. Theology and Practice in Late Medieval Northern Germany and Beyond* (Philadelphia, 2007); Martha Rust, "Blood and Tears as Ink: Writing the Pictorial Sense of the Text", *The Chaucer Review* 47, 4 (2013), 390-415.

be signified the Old and New Testament, from which is pressed out the sacrament of the Word poured forth in the blood of the Passion.[142]

Isidore's particular characterisation of Scripture as the "sacrament of the Word", thus suggests that Christ is physically present in the very material of the manuscript in the same way he was understood to be present in the sacrament of the Eucharist.

The idea that reading Scripture is equivalent to imbibing the Eucharist is particularly emphasised by the chalice-like design of the inkwell in the MacDurnan Gospels. This draws on the widespread medieval metaphors of reading as consumption, tasting as knowing, and learning as nourishment.[143] One essential way in which the faithful could receive spiritual nourishment from Christ was by consuming him in the form of the Word, through their reading of Scripture. This link between consuming the Eucharist and consuming the Word was made explicit by Jerome commenting on Ecclesiastes 3:13:

> Since the Lord's flesh is the true food, and his blood is the true drink, according to anagogy, the only true good in this present world is to eat his flesh and drink his blood, not only in the mystery [the Eucharist], but also in reading Scripture. The true food and drink, which is taken from the Word of God, is the knowledge of the Scriptures. [144]

In this way, the implication that John might have written his text in the blood of Christ might be regarded as commenting more generally on the nature of reading as a eucharistic act and the salvific power of Scripture.

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[142] *Etym*. VI: 14. 2. Trans. Barney, Lewis, Beach and Berghof, 2006: 142. "pinna […] cuius acumen in dyade dividitur, in toto corpore unitate servata, credo propter mysterium, ut in duobus apicibus Vetus et Novum Testamentum signaretur, quibus exprimitur verbi sacramentum sanguine Passionis effusum." ed. Lindsay, 1911. See also *Ambrose, Expositio evangelii secundum Lucam*, 5. 105, CSEL 32, 224-25. O'Reilly, "St. John the Evangelist", 196.

[143] On the metaphor of reading as eating, see: Kendrick, *Animating the Letter*, 29; Hamburger, *Script and Image*, 10; Carruthers, *Book of Memory*, 165-68; Leclercq, *The Love of Learning*, 73; Jackson, "Picturing the Pious Reader", 75-79.

[144] Jerome, *Commentarius in ecclesiasten*, "Porro, quia caro Domini verus est cibus, et sanguis ejus verus est potus, juxta ἀναγωγή, hoc solum habemus in praesenti saeculo bonum, si vescamur carne ejus, et cruore potemur, non solum in mysterio, sed etiam in Scripturarum lectione. Verus enim cibus et potus, qui ex verbo Dei sumitur, scientia Scripturarum est", ed. Jacques-Paul Migne, PL 23 (Paris: Migne, 1845), 1039. On the same subject, see also Jerome's explanation of Psalm 145, *Breviarium In Psalmos*, ed. Jacques-Paul Migne, PL 23 (Paris: Migne, 1845), cols 1250-51.

Yet the idea of Christ's physical and digestible presence within the written text of Scripture emphasises the sanctity of the manuscript copy itself as the container and conduit of divinity. This affects how the reader understands the physical manuscript before them, contributing to the argument previously set out that the materials of the pocket gospels are often constructed to manifest divine presence. That red manuscript illumination could indeed refer to Christ's blood in this period is demonstrated by the Godescalc Evangelistary dedication poem cited above, in which Godescalc asserts the connection between the red colour of the manuscript's leaves and Christ's blood, making clear that like celestial gold, the red of Christ's salvific blood reveals the salvation that can be gained through reading the manuscript.[145]

In the MacDurnan Gospels, the implication that through his blood, Christ is present in the very ink of the text is enhanced by the copious use of red ink within the manuscript, most frequently as ornamental rows of dots. Such lines of red dots are commonly used to outline initials in Insular manuscripts from the seventh century onwards and ultimately derive from late antique decorated initials.[146] In the MacDurnan Gospels they not only decorate the initials but surround the figures of the evangelists (Fig. 102) and rove between the lines of the text to mark run-overs and divide lists. In the Matthean genealogy in particular, red dots make up the bowl of the chalice-like initial I, and frame and intersect the entire text of Christ's human descent (Fig. 106). As O'Reilly has shown, Patristic and Insular commentators considered Matthew's genealogy of Christ to reveal how Christ became flesh, ultimately leading to his redemption of the world through his human death on the Cross.[147] In this context the lines of red dots seem to take on added significance, suggesting droplets of blood or bloody punctures in the material of the page. Other scholars have sometimes noted the deliberate conflation of red dots with blood in early medieval textual ornament; Herbert Kessler, for example, has suggested that in the crucifixion miniature in the prayerbook of Charles the Bald (823–77), Christ's wound takes the unusual form of a ring of red dots in order to associate it with manuscript ornamentation (Fig. 108).[148] Likewise in the Book of Kells, Meehan has drawn attention to the use of rows of red dots surrounding an interlinear depiction of a lion beneath the words *guttae sanguinis* (drops of blood, Luke 22:44; Fig. 109).[149] These allusions emphasise the materiality of the ink and page, blurring the boundary between medium and image.

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[145] See above.

[146] See e.g. Brown, "The Oldest Irish Manuscripts", 240.

[147] O'Reilly, "Gospel Harmony", 75-78.

[148] Schatzkammer der Residenz, MS s.n., fols 38v–39r. Kessler, "A Sanctifying Serpent".

[149] Bernard Meehan, *The Book of Kells: An Illustrated Introduction to the Mansucript in Trinity College, Dublin* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1994), 165-71.

Considering this, it is also worth noting the Carolingian gospel book, BL Harley MS 2795, which is written entirely in red ink except for a few key passages that are written in gold (Fig. 107), and Aldred's tenth-century glosses in the Lindisfarne Gospels, which are written in black ink up to John 5:10 but in red ink thereafter. Michelle Brown suggested that Aldred's change of ink was intended to accord John's gospel particular distinction.[150] Given John's eucharistic associations and the prevalence of ink-as-blood analogies, it seems likely that the use of red ink in both Harley 2795 and Aldred's glosses was intended to give visual expression to the idea that the gospels, and especially John's gospel in Lindisfarne, are the sacrament of the Word manifested in Christ's sacrificial blood.

Moreover, in the MacDurnan Gospels, John is also shown with a scribal knife, used for erasing mistakes and making prickings in manuscripts. This inclusion is unusual in this period, with the only other instances in Insular evangelist portraits being Matthew in St Gall 1395 and Matthew and John in the Barberini Gospels. Perhaps John's scribal knife could be seen as extending the metaphor: if the ink is Christ's blood then perhaps the book is Christ's body, and by piercing him the scribal knife enacts the Passion. Thus the violence of creating a manuscript re-enacts the violence of Christ's death, which was itself a creative act as it produced the possibility of salvation.[151]

It is clear then, that John's writing equipment and especially his red ink might prompt the reader to engage in extensive meditation on the divine nature of John's gospel, on the salvific power of Scripture and on the material significance of the manuscript itself. In addition to these, the allusion to the blood of Christ in the MacDurnan Gospels may have had special meaning in the context of its production at Armagh. According to the *Liber Angeli*, Armagh possessed a cloth stained with the blood of Christ that had been sent from Rome along with relics of the Roman martyr-saints Peter, Paul, Stephen and Lawrence. The text states that the city of Armagh, "ought to be venerated in honour of the principal martyrs" whose relics resided there, and even more so because of the gift "beyond praise above other things [...] the most holy blood of Jesus Christ the redeemer of the human race in a sacred linen cloth".[152] Thus Armagh's control of these Roman relics is presented in the *Liber Angeli* as affirming its position as the highest spiritual and legal authority in the country: the Rome of Ireland.

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[150] Brown, *Lindisfarne Gospels*, 97.

[151] E.g. Exeter Book riddle 26, ed. Krapp and Dobbie, 93-4.

[152] Liber Angeli 19. "beneficii prae omnibus inenarrabilis [...] sacratimssimus sanguinis Iesu Christi redemptoris humani generis in sacro lintiamine simul cum sanctorum", ed. and trans. Bieler, *The Patrician Texts in the Book of Armagh*, 186-87.

Given the other objects depicted in the evangelist portraits in the MacDurnan Gospels that are closely related to to Armagh relics and the cult of Patrick, perhaps the blood-filled inkwell in the John portrait likewise references the blood-relic of Christ possessed by the church at Armagh. It seems likely that in conjunction with one another, the representation of crooked staffs in the evangelist portraits of Matthew and Luke, the *casula* in the evangelist portrait of Luke, and the well of bloody ink in the John portrait in the MacDurnan Gospels would have caused an early medieval resident of Armagh to reflect on their church's own relic collection and all it symbolised.

Furthermore, the image of John with his writing equipment may also suggest the scribe of the manuscript itself, or indeed the patron. Torbach, the *coarb* of Armagh who ordered the Book of Armagh and who Michelle Brown suggested may also have commissioned the MacDurnan Gospels, was described as scribe (*scríbhnidh*) and lector (*leghthóir*) in his obit.[153] In addition, four bishops of Armagh are described as scribes in their obits in the annals between 749 and 889.[154] If the manuscript was owned or used by one of these powerful *coarb*/bishop-scribes, perhaps the image of John as scribe would take on an added degree of self-referentiality, suggesting the devotional activities to which the owner dedicated himself.

Incarnating the Heavenly Image

When the *coarb* of Armagh went on circuit and attended the *oenach* (assembly) with the relics and insignia of Armagh, the aim must have been to create an impressive spectacle, visually reinforcing the authority that Armagh claimed for itself. Perhaps in this context, the *coarb* might have looked much like the evangelists pictured in the MacDurnan Gospels, wearing sumptuous ecclesiastical costume, surrounded by Armagh's two most important relics of Christ, the *Bachall Íosa* and the holy blood, and perhaps also clutching his miniature-sized copy of the gospels. Like the relics, his gospel book was likely to have served as both an expression of genuine piety as well as evidence of his authority, evoking the presence of Christ lending divine support to his rulings. The evangelist miniatures of the MacDurnan Gospels would reinforce this message, visually associating the *coarb* and the Armagh relics with the sacred text of Scripture and implying the divine approval of both Patrick, the apostle of Ireland, and Christ, the ultimate authority. Thus these images can be

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[153] *AFM* 807.18. Brown, "Ferdomnach".

[154] *AFM* 749.10, Congus, scribe and bishop; AU, 852.1, Forannán, scribe, bishop and anchorite; *AFM* 861.2, Maelpadraig, bishop, scribe, anchorite, and intended abbot of Armagh; *AU* 893.1/*AFM* 889.17, Mochta, bishop, anchorite, and scribe.

understood as expressions of Armagh's episcopal claims to embody the apostolic and priestly traditions of good leadership set out in the Bible.

Although it is an understudied topic, it is likely that other gospel books incorporated references to the objects and ideas that were central to the communities that made and used them. For example, Donncha MacGabhann has recently suggested that there are references to relics of Columba in the canon tables of the Book of Kells.[155] In the pocket gospels specifically, it may be significant that the Cadmug Gospels, one of the few gospel books that depicts the evangelists in *casula*-type garments, was used and possibly created in the context of the eighth-century Insular mission to the Continent and was attributed to the hand of Boniface by the late-ninth or early-tenth century.[156] We have seen that Boniface decreed that priests and deacons must wear the *casula*: could the Cadmug evangelists have been intended to promote the ideals of Boniface's reform movement in their adoption of the *casula*? They also carry manuscripts with buttoned-syle covers and small staffs, perhaps these features are meant to suggest the apostolic calling, given that Boniface characterised work on the Continent as an apostolic mission.[157]

Summary

The standing-type evangelists of the pocket gospels thus appear to have certain distinctive associations. As with the diagrams already discussed, they particularly suggest eschatological themes since the figures are repeatedly depicted bearing closed codices, evoking the apocalyptic vision of Christ with the book that cannot be opened by anyone but him. Simultaneously, they suggest the image of saints in the bliss of the heavenly city, to which the reader might aspire. This directs the reader/viewer's mind in meditation on the ultimate fulfilment of the gospel at the end of time and the spiritual rewards of reading Scripture.

Like other features of the pocket gospels, the evangelist portraits also serve to construct the material sanctity of the manuscript. Through the spatial treatment of the frames and figures, they suggest the idea that the manuscript is a portal through which the reader can access the divine and, likewise, through which the divine can reveal itself to the reader. The references to ink as blood and the book as the body of Christ further imply the presence of Christ throughout the material of the manuscript. These devices can thus be understood as part of a greater programme to construct the manuscript as a sacred object.

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[155] Don MacGabhann, "The Making of the Book of Kells: Two Masters and Two Campaigns", PhD thesis, SAS University of London, 2016. I owe my thanks to Dr. MacGabhann for allowing me to read his unpublished work.

[156] See Appendix.

[157] E.g. Parkes, "The Handwriting of St Boniface", 135-38.

Yet in other ways, the evangelist portraits of the pocket gospels suggest somewhat divergent conclusions. On the one hand, the consistent employment of the standing, forward-facing figure type—a type that particularly suggests a holy image of a saint in heaven—suggests private devotional use of the manuscripts, involving meditation and veneration; on the other, some miniatures incorporate features with clear political and institutional meanings, suggesting a public audience and a function as the insignia of leading figures in the community. In this regard, it is notable that the repetition of clear figural types incorporating unique and meaningful features suggests the reproduction and adaptation of old and sacred archetypes. Perhaps this type of miniature was first employed because it suited the needs of private, devotional reading, but over time it gained connotations with certain revered manuscripts, perhaps themselves considered relics, and continued to be employed in reference to these. These later manuscripts were far more public in their function and thus their evangelist portraits were adapted to include elements pertinent to the concerns of the communities and institutions in which they were made and used. Thus, there may be a chronological dimension to the evangelist portraits of the pocket gospels: a possibility that is worth exploring further in the conclusion.

CONCLUSION

At the end of this study, it is time to return to the opening question: what is a pocket gospel book? Further, how can this group be understood historically and what can these manuscripts add to our understanding of early medieval culture? Answering these requires extending the period of analysis backwards to the time before the making of the extant pocket gospels and forwards to their passage through the centuries. So far the focus here has been on the design of the pocket gospels at the time of their creation, yet this represents only a brief moment in their story: it is the culmination of many earlier events and influences, and the beginning of what would be long object biographies. First, however, it is worth summarising how the features of the pocket gospel books suggest that the group should be characterised.

Characterisation of the Pocket Gospel Books

This account has made clear that characterisation of the pocket gospel books is complex, combining to some extent both form and function. The main formal features that define the group are small size and use of minuscule script. These, as well as a variety of other features included in some of the manuscripts, indicate a function as personal books. Yet this could itself encompass a variety of more specific uses, especially private meditative reading and devotion, but also public display in the construction of identity. This means that while there are some clear strands of connection between these manuscripts, they also exhibit a considerable degree of individual variation. In order to interpret the possible meanings of this disparity for the nature of the group, it is worth summarising those features of the pocket gospels which relate to the manuscripts' use.

The personal function of the pocket gospels is suggested partly by their small size, which makes them eminently portable and comfortable for hand-held use by an individual. Their minuscule script can also be understood as facilitating this type of use, since along with a variety of other layout features, it helps to achieve the manuscript's small size. Its connotations of personal handwriting perhaps also emphasised personal use, giving a sense of scholarly modesty and intimacy that were perhaps deemed appropriate within the Insular system of scripts for the private manuscript of a studious individual. Use in the hands may be further indicated by the unsupported sewing structures that survive on the Cuthbert Gospel, that were reported to have been present on the Cadmug Gospels, and that were most likely employed for other pocket gospels. The flexibility that these structures afford a manuscript's spine would help it endure the added strain of such use compared to that on a bookstand.

More specifically, the pocket gospels' use in private reading is suggested by the concern for ease of legibility evident in the design of pages, while the frequent abbreviation of words particularly indicates silent reading. The likelihood that some of the pocket gospels were originally made as booklets with probably no more than limp parchment bindings further suggests that they were intended for study, as such bindings would probably not have been sturdy enough to sustain heavy liturgical use. The pocket gospels' role in personal reading also likely accounts for the particular interest in the Gospel of John evident in several examples. The Cuthbert Gospel, Stowe St John and the Book of Dimma all probably first constituted stand-alone copies of the Gospel of John, and in the Book of Deer the only unabridged gospel text is John's. This recalls the assertion in the Rule of Tallaght that the Gospel of John, along with the Acts of the Apostles, should be used as daily reading, as well as Boisil's special selection of this gospel as his final object of study with his pupil, Cuthbert. These instances highlight the value that the Insular world placed on the Gospel of John for reading and study, explaining why it may have been particularly favoured for use in a small-sized personal manuscript.

The style of personal reading for which the pocket gospels were designed was most likely the type known as *lectio divina*: the spiritual exercise of pious meditative reading that sought enhanced intimacy with God through pondering the mysteries of his Word. In several of the pocket gospels such practices are suggested by the inclusion of meditative devices consisting of diagrammatic text. These can be understood as stimuli for meditation, encouraging the reader to visualise and shape the ideas within their mind, so achieving their own form of divine vision. Examples of these are the *chi*-cross shaped Matthew *explicit* in the Cadmug Gospels, the lozenge-shaped John *explicit* and Revelation vision list in the Book of Armagh, and diagrams such as the plan of the Heavenly Jerusalem in the Book of Armagh and the cryptic plan in the Book of Mulling. Through marking the reader's passage through the text and alluding to the heavenly rewards that they could expect for their diligent reading, such devices also provide points of reflection on the process of reading itself, evoking ideas of reading as spiritual pilgrimage towards a heavenly destination.

The apparent concern in some of the pocket gospels to emphasise their nature as holy objects may also be understood as part of this wider effort to demonstrate the holiness of meditative reading as an intensely spiritual act of contact with God. The placement of each gospel text on a separate physical unit, either its own single quire or set of quires, seems to have been foremost motivated by a desire to assimilate the semantic value of the quires with the sematic value of the texts, thus identifying the physical manuscript as the embodiment of the Gospel. As well as emphasising its inherent sanctity, this means that the union of the gospel booklets in the form of the gospel book materially enacts the theology of gospel harmony. Furthermore, the repeated figural type in the pocket gospels' evangelist portraits—

standing, forward-facing and holding a closed codex—expresses a "visual rhetoric of sanctity", reminiscent of icon paintings, that seems to articulate divine presence and inspire veneration.

Yet in some cases, this concern to emphasise the sanctity of the manuscripts may indicate their more public or communal use as objects of authority, seemingly contradicting their identity as private, personal books. In the evangelist portraits of at least the MacDurnan Gospels and probably others such as the Cadmug Gospels, the inclusion of attributes that are pertinent to the community for which the manuscript was created seems to imply a wider audience than a single private owner/user. The MacDurnan evangelist portraits appear to represent the most sacred relics of Armagh and, as Michelle Brown suggested, Ferdomnach's exuberant cursive script in the Book of Armagh may reference a New Roman Cursive hand attributed to St Patrick. The forms of the manuscripts themselves may even have been intended to evoke manuscript relics, as Brown suggested in regard to the MacDurnan Gospels and the lost Gospel of the Angel mentioned in the annals. Moreover, the implausible claim of the original colophon of the Book of Mulling that St Moling was the scribe, was perhaps intended to associate the manuscript with a genuine autograph manuscript of Moling or else to entirely fabricate a new relic of the saint. Incorporating such references might have been calculated to promote the interests of the institution and its principal cult, as well as to augment the personal authority of the manuscript's owner by association with these important cult objects and their saints. This raises the possibility that for elite users, carrying a copy of the gospels may have been as much a statement of authority as a pious aid for private edification.

Thus, while the pocket gospels exhibit some clear correspondences in form and function, they also suggest some inconsistencies that complicate the group's definition: specifically, they reveal a notable tension between private and public use. While this category of small personal manuscript seems to have been made for personal study and meditative reading, it also appears to have been liable to slippage into the public realm. In order to understand these apparent anomalies, it is necessary to consider the possible mechanisms for the group's transmission.

Transmission of the Pocket-Gospel Type

Although their correspondences in both form and function suggest a relationship between the pocket gospels, in most cases, they are not sufficiently similar to indicate that they were copied directly from one another. As noted, it is likely that there is direct influence between the Book of Armagh and MacDurnan Gospels, and the Book of Mulling and Add. 40618, but the relationship between the rest of the pocket gospels is best explained by the presence of a common codicological concept guiding their production. Moreover, it appears that this

concept maintained currency among diverse individuals and communities over an extended time span. Consideration of how and why the idea of a pocket gospel was transmitted can help to clarify both the meaning of individual manuscripts and their relationship as a group.

Although most of the pocket gospels seem to have been made around the second-half of the eighth century to the first-half of the ninth, the earliest surviving example, the Cuthbert Gospel, was made in the late-seventh or first few decades of the eighth century, while the latest in this study, the Book of Deer, was made in the late-ninth or tenth century. Beyond this, Armagh continued to produce manuscripts following the same tradition as late as the twelfth century (British Library, Harley MSS 1023 and 1802),[1] while at the other end of the chronological span, it is likely that non-extant manuscripts belonging to the pocket-gospel tradition predated the surviving examples. The Cuthbert Gospel particularly implies this since its relationship with the later pocket gospels, strongly suggested by its use of capitular uncial script, is best explained by supposing that it was inspired by their lost forerunners. While the format of the Cuthbert Gospel had no discernible legacy in Northumbria, the strong Irish provenances of the majority of the pocket gospels suggest the likely origin of the type in Ireland. The idea that the monks of Wearmouth-Jarrow were inspired by Irish manuscripts agrees well with the known influence of Irish scribal practice on seventh-century Northumbria.[2] If it is accepted that the Cuthbert Gospel was probably created in response to lost manuscripts in the tradition of the pocket gospels, it pushes the date of these pocket-gospel precursors back to at least the seventh century. This suggests that by the time that the majority of the surviving pocket gospels were made, the codicological type to which they belong was already well established.

The role of such lost manuscripts as "missing links" provides a practical answer to the question of how the pocket-gospel type was transmitted. The poor survival rate for early medieval manuscripts, and Irish manuscripts in particular, is widely recognised.[3] It is thus likely that the surviving examples represent only a fraction of the manuscripts of this type that once existed. For instance, the little gospel book thought to have been written by Columba, the colophon of which was copied into the Book of Durrow, may have been a pocket-gospel prototype. A further lost pocket gospel may be inferred from the Soicéal Molaise, an eleventh-century book shrine from Devenish, Co. Fermanagh, which measures 86 x 165 x 141 mm, suggesting that the lost manuscript that it once held, reputedly a gospel book written by St Molaise (d.564), was pocket-gospel sized.[4] If this codicological type was

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[1] Brown, "Ferdomnach".

[2] E.g. Brown, "The Irish Element".

[3] See for example: Sharpe, "Books from Ireland"; O'Corrain, "What happened to Ireland's medieval manuscripts?".

[4] E.g. Raghnall Ó Floinn, "The Soiscél Molaisse", *Clogher Record* 13, 2 (1989), 51-63.

once more widespread, it seems likely that these lost examples provided vehicles for the transmission of the distinctive formal features and codicological concept that are shared by the surviving pocket gospels.

Yet beyond these practical considerations, it is also worth asking why this concept of the pocket gospel book apparently maintained such currency among a wide range of communities over several centuries. The transmission of this codicological category must be understood as a complex process, undoubtedly shaped by many factors and individual decisions at different times and places. Indeed, one of the main aims of this study has been to show how each of the manuscripts was tailored to the unique needs of the people and communities for whom it was made. It would be over-simplistic, then, to supply a monolithic explanation for what was certainly a complex phenomenon. Nevertheless, it is possible to advance a broad hypothesis concerning the development of the codicological model which underlies the surviving pocket gospels, shaped as it was in each instance according to the needs and interests of their makers.

On the one hand, the development and proliferation of the codicological concept of the pocket gospels must partly derive from a practical impetus. It has been shown that they offer excellent solutions to the needs of personal reading and devotion, constituting convenient gospel manuscripts to be taken wherever their owners went. Literary references demonstrate that manuscripts were used this way in the early Middle Ages and provide evidence for the value which users accorded such small personal manuscripts for study, memorisation, prayer and spiritual comfort. Yet on the other hand, there are also clear indications that non-utilitarian reasons were also likely to have played a part in the transmission of this manuscript type. It has been shown that a number of the features of the pocket gospels suggest a concern to construct the manuscripts as sacred objects, that some are highly self-conscious in the ways in which they exploit the format to promote ideological interests, and that a surprising number were either designed to be associated with the personal manuscript of a saint or else acquired such associations shortly after their creation. This renders practical explanations alone unsatisfactory for understanding the extended transmission of the pocket gospel category; rather, these tendencies seem to imply that the type held symbolic or ideological value which made it particularly worthy of reproduction. How can these factors be reconciled?

A possible theoretical model for interpreting the development and proliferation of the pocket gospels according to both practical and ideological factors is provided by a parallel instance of codicological transmission from an entirely different context. As is well known, around the year 300, one of the most important developments in codicological history took place: the codex replaced the roll as the favoured form of manuscript in the Graeco-Roman world. Scholars have long recognised that this major technological change appears to have

been linked to Christianity, since the earliest surviving codices are predominantly Christian and the rise in the codex and its displacement of the roll coincide with the rise in Christianity and the decline of Roman paganism. Yet the nature of this relationship remains unclear: scholars accept that neither the practical advantages of the form nor the socio-economic conditions of antiquity can adequately account for the spectacular triumph of the codex.[5] They therefore agree that, as Harry Gamble proposed: "there must have been a decisive, precedent-setting development in the publication and circulation of early Christian literature that rapidly established the codex in Christian use".[6] In other words, some important early Christian documents circulating as codices are likely to have established the religious authority of the codex, propelling it to preeminence as the typical form for Christian manuscripts.

The rarity of surviving manuscripts and even literary references to manuscript formats from the first few centuries of Christianity means that precise identification of these influential early codices is highly speculative. Colin Roberts first suggested that the Christian preference for the codex may have derived from a venerated autograph copy of the Gospel of Mark in codex form.[7] Later he and Theodore Skeat alternatively suggested that Jesus's pronouncements may have first been recorded on tablets, following the Judaic tradition of using tablets to record Oral Law, and that these may have developed into a primitive form of codex, setting the precedent for subsequent Christian manuscripts.[8] In contrast, Michael McCormick suggested that the codex format was adopted by the first few generations of apostolic and sub-apostolic Christian leaders because its easy portability compared to the roll suited their itinerant lifestyle; subsequently, when Christianity became more stable, the codex continued to be employed for Christian texts because people "associated this form of book with the venerated memory of those early travellers and teachers".[9] Further, Gamble proposed that since the codex was able to accommodate longer texts than a roll, its use may have been prompted by the desire to compile all the Epistles of Paul into a single volume for

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[5] E.g. Colin Roberts, "The Codex", *Proceedings of the British Academy* 40 (1st Jan, 1954), 169-204; Colin H. Roberts and T. C. Skeat, *The Birth of the Codex* (London: Oxford University Press, 1983); Michael McCormick, "The Birth of the Codex and the Apostolic Life-Style", *Scriptorium* 39, 1 (1985), 150-58; Harry Y. Gamble, *Books and Readers in the Early Church: A History of Early Christian Texts* (Yale University Press, 1995), 49-66.

[6] Gamble, *Books and Readers*, 58.

[7] Roberts, "The Codex", 169-204. See also, Roberts and Skeat, *The Birth of the Codex*, 54-61.

[8] Roberts and Skeat, *The Birth of the Codex*, 54-61.

[9] McCormick, "The Birth of the Codex", 154-58, quote at 58.

study and reference, and that these early single-codex copies of the Pauline Epistles set the precedent for the format of later Christian manuscripts.[10]

While it is beyond the scope of this study to debate the relative merits of these theories, it is significant to note that they all presuppose a two-stage model for the establishment of the codex as the format of choice for Christian manuscripts. They agree that the initial impetus for the development within the first few generations of Christianity was probably practical, after which the use of the codex form was maintained and extended due to the authority and symbolic connotations that it had accrued by association with the early Christian copies and their users. Might a similar model be used to explain the transmission of the pocket gospel form?

There are reasons to suppose that the earliest manuscripts made in the pocket-gospel tradition were designed as practical personal manuscripts for the use of pious individuals but that, preserved after their owners' deaths by their communities, they acquired new significance as they came to be revered in memory of the esteemed leader or colleague. In some cases, these individuals may have been raised to sainthood, causing their manuscripts to assume the status of relics. Other institutions may have been inspired to make their own versions of these manuscripts, exploiting the particularly personal connotations of this codicological type to evoke (or fabricate) an intimate connection with their founder saints. When later powerful individuals had their own personal manuscripts made, they used them not only for study and meditation, but also to model their own image through an appeal to the authority of the earlier revered figures by reference to their manuscripts.

Such a gradual canonisation of the form and concept of a pocket gospel book would explain a number of the unusual features of the surviving manuscripts. Some of these might represent design choices that were initially made for practical reasons but that acquired new meanings over time and became fossilised as part of the pocket-gospel design, reproduced even in instances in which they served no practical purpose. The unusual quire structure of the majority of pocket gospels may provide an example of this. We have seen that the placement of each gospel text on a separate quire or set of quires occasionally corresponds to the use of standalone booklets of single gospel texts, but that most of the pocket gospels were almost certainly designed from the first as continuous bound gospel books. This suggests that in the majority of cases, the placement of each gospel text on a separate codicological unit and combining them into a single manuscript was most likely motivated by an interest in manifesting the four-fold harmony of the gospels. Yet it is possible that this practice began as a practical feature in manuscripts that were kept in detached booklets. These manuscripts were later bound, acquired holy significance over time, and new manuscripts were made that

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[10] Gamble, *Books and Readers*, 49-66.

were designed to reference them. Some of these adopted a quire structure similar to the prototypes even though they were intended to be bound from the first. The perceived spiritual significance of containing each gospel within its own codicological unit most likely contributed to people's concern to retain this feature even when there was no utilitarian reason for it.

This sequence of development would also explain the typical arrangement of gospel openings in which the first recto of the gospel-quire is blank, followed by an evangelist miniature on the verso and the *incipit* of the text on the second recto. This arrangement may initially have been designed to protect the first text-page of an unbound booklet from abrasion but was later retained because it was aesthetically and symbolically effective. Thus, while the pocket-gospel quires may proclaim the four-fold identity of the gospels, it is likely that they do so with reference to other gospel books whose reputations inspired their imitation.

Another possible example of the gradual canonisation of the pocket gospel form is the repeated employment of the standing, forward-facing, codex-bearing evangelist type. This may originally have been used because its particular visual rhetoric made it suitable for veneration in the manner of an icon, thus enhancing the meditative and spiritual experience of reading the gospel book; however, it seems that it became established as part of the pocket gospel formula. The pocket gospel evangelists are not sufficiently similar to have derived from a single source, but their general consistency makes it likely that they refer directly or indirectly to a select number of authoritative precedents. Thus, the link between this image type and the pocket gospel category was probably established by one or a few highly influential manuscripts at an early date. As Belting explained, the duplication of religious images in the early Middle Ages was generally founded on a belief in the sacred authenticity of an original which could be transferred to copies. It is therefore likely that this type of evangelist portrait came to predominate in the pocket gospels because it was understood to constitute an essential element of a venerated gospel book, allowing its sanctity to be reproduced in new manuscripts. Indeed, given the apparent references to Patrick in the MacDurnan evangelist portraits, it is possible that in some instances these saintly images of the evangelists may have been identified with the saints themselves. The development of such associations might have further validated the use of the evangelist portraits as sites for symbolic reference, leading to the incorporation of an array of attributes pertinent to the manuscript's patron and community, as most notably in the MacDurnan Gospels.

The use of minuscule script might also be understood to follow a similar pattern, evolving from practical and private significance, to symbolic and public. It has been shown that the use of minuscule is best understood as part of a scheme to produce a comfortably legible gospel book on a small scale, yet in some instances it is likely that the connotations of

minuscule with personal handwriting also contributed to the manuscript's symbolic meaning, enhancing the impression that the manuscript was written by the hand of a saint.

The pocket gospel category can thus be understood as an evolving codicological concept over the period in which they were created. Their transmission was probably motivated initially by the desire of pious individuals to possess a personal gospel book for their study, but it is likely that from an early date this form became closely associated with revered and saintly figures and the prestigious establishments that they founded. This led to its emulation for symbolic purposes, though interpreted slightly differently in every case according to the particular context of creation. Such a model would explain the correspondences and also the differences between the surviving pocket gospels, as well as the otherwise contradictory indications of both private and public use.

It is worth asking whether any of the surviving pocket gospels represent the kind of utilitarian manuscript presupposed in the first phase of this model: manuscripts created purely for private study. These might be expected to show no sign of having been consciously designed for a public audience: presumably modest examples with little decoration and without apparent institutional or cult references. It is not absolutely clear that any of the pocket gospels fit this description, although some come closer than others. Bern 671 is probably the best candidate: lacking both miniatures and colophons, and decorated only with pen-drawn initials at the gospel *incipits*, this manuscript seems more concerned with utility than symbolism and display. Yet while it is the plainest and apparently least publicly conscious pocket gospel, Bern 671 probably dates from the ninth century and is thus one of the later members of the group, undermining any assumption that the chronology of their development might be simply linear.

The Cuthbert Gospel, notably the earliest surviving manuscript of the group, also presents a likely example of a pocket gospel made principally for study. Its lack of internal decoration, its clearly legible script and elegant but modest aesthetic would make it ideal for personal reading and show little sign of anticipated public display. Yet it is also notable that in contrast to the pages of the manuscript, the outer cover is richly decorated. This may suggest that it was designed to be read privately but to be seen closed by a wider public, perhaps when it was carried by its owner. Given its high quality and venerable legacy, if it was made as a private manuscript for an individual, it would likely have been for a principal leader such as one of the abbots of Wearmouth-Jarrow—Ceolfrid (*c*.690-716/7) or Hwaetberht (716/7–740s)—or else the bishop of Lindisfarne, Eadfrith (698-721) or Æthelwold (721-740). Perhaps we can imagine one of these men reading his personal copy of the Gospel of John for private edification, but also carrying it around to be seen in his hands by a wider audience of onlookers. This alerts us to the possibility that even a manuscript designed for study might have had a dual function as a sign of personal authority, and that

while a manuscript might appear modestly decorated and scholarly on the inside, it may once have had an elaborate cover that conveyed other messages to spectators on the outside.[11]

In considering whether any of the surviving pocket gospels may have been the kind of utilitarian personal manuscript that hypothetically inspired the group, it is also worth mentioning the Stowe St John and the Gospel of John in the Book of Dimma. Both probably originated as stand-alone booklets, and while they contain high-quality decoration, neither seems, in their original state, to have incorporated evangelist portraits, thereby eschewing one of the main points of reference in the pocket gospels more widely (the Dimma St John opens with a miniature of the eagle symbol of John, the Stowe St John probably did not originally include an evangelist miniature). It is notable, however, that when they were each augmented with other texts, these did incorporate standing-type evangelist portraits, which perhaps shows a later concern to extend their ties to the codicological concept of a pocket gospel. Additionally, both contain original colophons that lack saintly references, although the Stowe colophon requests prayers from a reader, thus anticipating an audience of some kind.

Though the evidence is ambiguous, it is likely that few or none of the surviving pocket gospels were designed to be entirely private in their use. None are likely to belong to the formative class of manuscripts that probably inspired the codicological category. This corresponds to the conditions recognised by Julian Brown, in which the earliest Irish manuscripts, and indeed the earliest Insular minuscule manuscripts, have not survived and their features can only be inferred from their descendants.[12]

An Ongoing Story

While the prehistory of the pocket gospel group remains highly obscure, their later history is more easily traceable and shows that these manuscripts continued to bear significance for their owners and users long after their initial creation. Moreover, it is clear that they continued to change their character according to the needs of different contexts. This further reveals a gradual evolution from personal use for reading and devotion towards public use as a symbol of authority, supporting the idea of a two-stage model for the transmission of the pocket gospel type.

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[11] For the argument that the earliest surviving book covers were designed to convey ideas about Christianity to a congregation, rather than to reflect the book's contents for a reader, see John Lowden, "The Word Made Visible: The Exterior of the Early Christian Book as Visual Argument", in *The Early Christian Book (CUA Studies in Early Christianity)*, ed. by William E. Klingshirn and Linda Safran (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 2012), 13-47.

[12] Brown, "The Oldest Irish manuscripts".

Since coming into being, most of the pocket gospels were altered to suit the needs of new times and places. Such alterations sometimes seem to have been intended to better adapt the manuscript for reading and study. For example, probably no more than a few years after it was made, the Book of Mulling had Eusebian section numbers added and its gospel text edited to bring it more closely in line with the Vulgate.[13] However, changes to other pocket gospels make clear that within a few decades of their creation, they were being used for more public functions.

The addition of liturgical texts to several pocket gospels suggests the desire to convert them from personal to communal use. In some cases this may partially result from a lack of resources at the centres at which these manuscripts arrived, necessitating the use of any available manuscript in the liturgy. However, in most cases, these manuscripts were likely to have been enlisted into liturgical use for symbolic reasons. The specific inclusion of rites for the dying in the Book of Dimma, Book of Mulling, Book of Deer, and the marking of lections for masses for the dead in the Cuthbert Gospel, are most convincingly understood as reflecting a perceived link between the personal gospel manuscript and personal salvation. The association with saints as the one-time owners of the manuscripts may also have partly accounted for their increased use in liturgical rituals: just as the monks of Iona were able to evoke the miracle-working presence of Columba by reading the books he had written with his own hand, perhaps using a manuscript associated with a saint to administer the last rites was thought to entrust the dying into the saint's care.

Several of the pocket gospels were also used for the preservation of legal documents. In Bern 671, legal records were added in 920s-930s at Bedwyn, Wiltshire, concerning land holdings, payments and manumissions. A ratification of the privileges of the church of Armagh by Brian Boru, King of Ireland, was entered into the Book of Armagh between 1002-1010. Charters were inscribed in the MacDurnan Gospels in the eleventh and twelfth centuries recording the rights and lands of Christ Church, Canterbury.[14] The Book of Deer had charters, land grants and a foundation legend added in twelfth century at Deer, Aberdeenshire. These demonstrate the institutional importance of these manuscripts as the preferred places of safekeeping for the documents most fundamental to these centres' rights and identities.

Other events and changes suggest a concern for the symbolic construction of the manuscripts. The placement of the Cuthbert Gospel in Cuthbert's coffin at some point between 698 and 1104 (but probably in the earlier part of that period given the manuscript's excellent condition), is most convincingly understood in the context of a public event calculated to affirm the authority and affiliations of the saint and his community, suggesting

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[13] Lawlor, *Chapters*, 42-43, 70-74.

[14] Farr, "Irish Pocket Gospels", 94.

the manuscript's symbolic value as an object of authority. The gift inscription in the MacDurnan Gospels, added by King Æthelstan between 924 and 939, emphasising the personal connection between the manuscript and its past user Mael Brigte Mac Tornáin, shows that an interest in the ownership history of the manuscript served as a key component of its sacred significance. Other added provenance inscriptions were specifically saintly in their references, for example the inscription added to the Cadmug Gospels between 891 and 899, claiming that it was written by the hand of St Boniface.

Likewise, in the Book of Armagh and Book of Dimma, the desire to associate the manuscript with a saint led to the destruction of the evidence of the original scribes' names, although in both cases the dates for this action are unclear. The attempted erasure of Ferdomnach's colophons in the Book of Armagh was presumably intended to prevent them from contradicting the possibility that the manuscript was written by St Patrick. This may have been relatively late in its history. Although the manuscript seems to have been known as the *canóine patraicc* (Canon of Patrick) since at least 937 when it is mentioned by this name in the Annals of the Four Masters, this may simply recognise that it contains important documents relating to the saint; it is thus unclear when the manuscript was first attributed to Patrick. In the Book of Dimma, the erasure of the scribe's name from the colophons and its replacement with the name "Dimma", was probably contrived to associate it with a gospel book written for St Cronán by a scribe named Dimma, as recorded in a twelfth-century *Vita* of St Cronán. Richard Best palaeographically dated these erasures and the rewriting to the late-tenth or early-eleventh century, although dating the script of an isolated word is necessarily imprecise.

The increased weighting of the pocket gospels with public and symbolic importance culminated in the eventual enshrinement of several members of the group. The Annals of the Four Masters record the enshrinement or possibly the treasure binding of the *canóine patraicc*, most likely the Book of Armagh, in 937, although the shrine is now lost. Shrines do survive for the Stowe St John and Missal (earliest parts dated to 1026-1033), Book of Dimma (mid-twelfth-century) and the Book of Mulling (1403). The entombment of the Cuthbert Gospel with the saint at an unknown time between the late-seventh century and 1104 can also be understood as a form of enshrinement.

These acts of enshrinement and entombment negated use of the manuscripts for reading and study, thus completing their transformation into sacred objects. Some of the pocket gospels probably remained partially accessible after their enshrinement, as shown by the inscription added to the Book of Armagh between 1001 and 1010 in the presence of Brian Boru. Likewise, Cuthbert's coffin was probably opened many times between the manuscript's interment and its rediscovery in 1104, although there is no evidence that it was ever removed in this period. However, the Mulling, Dimma and Stowe shrines were all nailed shut, entirely

preventing access to or even vision of the manuscripts inside. The Dimma and Stowe manuscripts had nails driven through them while they were in their shrines, leaving green-stained perforations that can be observed running through the leaves of the manuscripts and the shrines.[15] Paul Mullarkey has suggested that this apparently irreverent act might be understood as a form of "decommissioning" ritual.[16] This was perhaps intended to transform their identity from a functioning book to an exclusively numinous object.

Regardless of whether they were made entirely or mostly inaccessible, it is clear that the enshrinement of these pocket gospels recreated them as relics: powerful and holy objects of institutional prestige. Paradoxically, as the importance of the manuscripts increased, their role in transmitting their own meanings decreased: they became the sacred core, enclosed, invisible and now unchangeable, while the outer shrines became the new site for messages and mediation between manuscript and audience.[17] Indeed, the various inscriptions that the shrines accrued over the centuries show that they became foci for secular patronage, revealing the desire to harness the power and prestige of these objects for political purposes.

The later histories of pocket gospels thus reveal an evident development over the centuries from private use in reading and study to public use by institutions as they grew in prestige and gained traditions associating them with saints. Yet this process most likely began early in the history of the pocket gospel group, before many of the extant examples were created. While some of the pocket gospels had saintly associations conferred on them retroactively, others were designed from the beginning to give the impression of saintly connections and to carefully articulate their own holiness. Rather than contradicting their coherence as a group, this enduring tendency to evolve towards public use and relic-status can be understood to confirm their shared identity as personal manuscripts, since it seems that their personal connotations were responsible for giving rise to their identification as the possessions of saints.

Broader Relevance

This study has shown how these manuscripts were constructed through their physical structure, script, layout, diagrams and miniatures to adhere to a preconceived codicological group as well as to express the unique concerns of the people and communities who made and used them. It has revaluated these often-ignored manuscripts and shown their sophistication and historical importance. Yet while these are worthwhile aims in themselves,

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[15] Anthony Cains, unpub. conservator's notes, Royal Irish Academy D II 3. See Appendix.

[16] Paul Mullarkey, "Keeping our Word: The Book Shrines of Dimma and Mulling and their Relationship with other Manuscripts, Covers and Shrines", unpub. conference paper at "The Wandering Word: the travels of insular manuscripts", Trinity College, Dublin, Friday 6th May, 2016.

[17] See Cynthia Hahn, "What Do Reliquaries Do for Relics?", *Numen* 57 (2010), 284–316.

a number of additional issues have been raised that are relevant not only for the understanding of these particular manuscripts and their grouping, but for the perception of early medieval manuscripts and intellectual culture more broadly.

One of the primary insights that this study offers concerns our understanding of early medieval Ireland. Underrepresented in the corpus of surviving manuscripts, understudied in comparison with other major scribal cultures, and sometimes distorted by the concerns of the country's modern history and politics, the culture of early medieval Ireland remains relatively obscure and often unsatisfactorily treated. It is too often studied either in isolation from the rest of Western Christendom with an emphasis on its exceptionalism, or else as a preparatory stage for the development of Anglo-Saxon and Carolingian manuscript culture, after which it is seen to lose relevance. This study has shown that neither approach is appropriate: the sophistication of many of these manuscripts demonstrates that the scribal culture of Ireland continued to be an innovating force long past the traditional Insular period and is undoubtedly worth studying for its own merits. Equally, it is clear that early medieval Ireland was fully in touch with a wider European Christian culture to which it was both contributor and recipient. While the pocket gospels are closely associated with Ireland and its areas of strongest influence, they are best understood as a unique expression of attitudes and practices that were more broadly common across the early medieval West, as many of my comparanda have shown.

These attitudes and practices constitute further points of wider significance to be drawn from this examination. Studying the pocket gospels contributes to our understanding of the ways in which early medieval people thought about books, reading and religion, and especially how they perceived these in relation to their deepest concerns for meaning and fulfilment in their lives. Considered in conjunction with contemporary writings about reading and Scripture, features of these manuscripts suggest their special role in private meditative reading and prayer, while also reflecting on that process to remind the reader of the greater purpose of their labour. The pocket gospels imply that the ultimate significance of reading is eschatological: for example, the Book of Armagh, Book of Mulling and Book of Deer all conclude with images that more or less explicitly represent the Heavenly Jerusalem, the ultimate homeland in which the elect are destined to dwell eternally (Revelation 21). Likewise, the pocket-gospel evangelist portraits seem to situate the figures in a heavenly space that evokes the Heavenly City, and they suggest images of the figure with the closed book described in Revelation 5, widely understood as an apocalyptic vision of Christ. Through these eschatological references, the pocket gospels assert the belief that the ultimate goal of reading is salvation: that a life spent devoting oneself to Scripture and following its precepts leads to heavenly rewards and that a small foretaste of those rewards can be gained through the transcendent task of reading. The experience of reading is thus

presented as a microcosm of the experience of life, with both journeys leading to higher intimacy with God.

The expression of these attitudes through every element of these manuscripts' design has particular methodological implications for our study of early medieval manuscripts. Modern scholarship shows a growing engagement with ideas of materiality and the agency of objects and a number of studies have begun to explore how these might apply to medieval objects, manuscripts in particular. The pocket gospels offer an ideal case study for extending these analyses. By virtue of their distinctive size, their physical dimensions are inherently highlighted so that the pocket gospels can be understood as manuscripts particularly preoccupied with their own materiality, as emphasised in contemporary texts that repeatedly reference the hands in relation to small-sized manuscripts. Other features such as the structures of the quires, designed to manifest the four-fold gospel, extend this idea by identifying the manuscript as a sacred object through which a user can make contact with the divine. Likewise, the visual play on ink as the blood of Christ found in the evangelist portrait of John in the MacDurnan Gospels shows the extent to which people perceived sacred meaning within the materials of the manuscript.

Here, it is worth noting Carruthers' explanation of a medieval literary work as positing, "the idea or meaning that lies within speech as some sort of construct partly independent of and greater than the words from which it is constructed".[18] In other words, a work has a transcendent sense or meaning that the medium of the words allows the audience to comprehend. In a manuscript this might be taken further. The way in which the pocket gospels are designed suggests that the sacred meaning of the gospels was understood to be comprehensible not only through the words of the gospel text, but throughout every aspect of the manuscript medium: the physical structure, layout and script of the text, the decoration and illumination. All the features that make up the manuscript, far from being passive vehicles for the text, are signifiers in their own right that were meaningful to their makers and are essential to scholarly study.

Yet these matters are secondary to the people who made and used these manuscripts: the real but frequently invisible subjects of this study. Through their objects, I have attempted to reveal something more of the thoughts and practices of those who otherwise appear to us only as a name in a colophon, if that. Through their emphasis on manuscript materiality, the universal significance of the book, and the spiritual ascendancy of the experience of reading, these manuscripts are highly self-reflexive, demonstrating their own role in the history of scriptural transmission. They suggest that they themselves are manifestations of the eternal Gospel, and elevate the reader's task to universal proportions.

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[18] Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, 235.

The personal nature of the manuscripts is key to this: for their owners they seem to have served as sources of study, prayer and memorisation, as well as comforts to the soul and a constant reminder of divine protection and the promise of salvation for the faithful. Thus, even more than most manuscripts, the pocket gospels as a group reveal intensely personal connections to their owners past and present, and their hopes for their personal salvation.