MEETINGS WITH

REMARKABLE MANUSCRIPTS

Twelve Journeys into the Medieval World

CHRISTOPHER DE HAMEL

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PENGUIN PRESS
New York
2017

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An imprint of Penguin Random House LLC
375 Hudson Street
New York, New York 10014
penguin.com

First published in Great Britain by Allen Lane,
an imprint of Penguin Random House UK.

ISBN: 9781594206115 (hardcover)
ISBN: 9780698163386 (e-book)

Printed in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

FRONTISPIECE: Saint Louis as a child being taught to read under the direction of his mother Blanche of Castile, as depicted in the Hours of Jeanne de Navarre, Paris, *c.* 1334. (See p. 396)

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Introduction

This is a book about visiting important medieval manuscripts and what they tell us and why they matter. As first envisaged, it was to be called 'Interviews With Manuscripts', and indeed the chapters are not unlike a series of celebrity interviews. Actual interviews – traditional published interviews with well-known people – usually set the scene and describe the circumstances of how the encounters came to happen at all. They generally attempt to evoke something of the experience of meeting and interacting with the interviewees. You will already have had information in advance, of course, but what are the people like in reality, when they finally come to the door, shake your hand and usher you to a seat? The accounts may say something of their physical presence and perhaps their clothes, demeanour and style of conversation. We may all pretend that a well-known person is really no different from any other human being, but there is an undeniable thrill in actually meeting and talking to someone of world stature. Is he or she, in fact, charismatically impressive, or (as sometimes) rather disappointing? You might seek to discover how people became famous and whether their reputations are deserved. Listen to them and let them speak. A good interviewer may be able to elicit secrets which were entirely unknown and which the famous person had meant to keep quiet. There is even a certain voyeurism for the reader in eavesdropping as these intimate confessions are teased out.

The most celebrated illuminated manuscripts in the world are, to most of us, as inaccessible in reality as very famous people. To a large extent, anyone with stamina and a travel budget can get to see many of the great paintings and architectural monuments, and may stand

today in the presence of the Great Wall of China or Botticelli's *Birth of Venus*. But try – just try – to have the Book of Kells removed from its glass case in Dublin so that you can turn the pages. It won't happen. The majority of the greatest medieval manuscripts are now almost never on public exhibition at all, even in darkened display cases, and if they are, you can see only a single opening. They are too fragile and too precious. It is easier to meet the Pope or the President of the United States than it is to touch the *Très Riches Heures* of the Duc de Berry. Access gets harder, year by year. The idea of this book, then, is to invite the reader to accompany the author on a private journey to see, handle and interview some of the finest illuminated manuscripts of the Middle Ages.

Palaeographers, the general term for those of us who study old manuscripts, become accustomed to working in the reading-rooms of rare-book libraries, but these are sanctuaries as out of bounds to the general public as the tomb of the Prophet in Medina would be to me. Modern national libraries are among the costliest public buildings ever constructed, but few people actually penetrate as far as the exclusive tables set aside for consultation of the most valuable books of all. Some settings for studying manuscripts are stately and intimidating, and others are endearingly informal. Access is a secret of initiates, and formulas for admission and the handling of manuscripts vary hugely from one repository to another. This is an aspect of the history of scholarship often entirely neglected. The supreme illuminated books of the Middle Ages are cornerstones of our culture, but hardly anyone bothers to document their habitat.

Some of these great manuscripts may be known from facsimiles or from digitized images available on-line, as accessible and as familiar as authorized biographies of well-known people, but no copy is the same as an original. The experience of encounter is entirely different. Facsimiles are rootless and untied to any place. No one can properly know or write about a manuscript without having seen it and held it in the hands. No photographic reproduction yet invented has the weight, texture, uneven surface, indented ruling, thickness, smell, the tactile quality and patina of time of an actual medieval book, and nothing

can compare with the thrill of excitement when a supremely famous manuscript itself is finally laid on the table in front of you. You do not merely see it, as under glass, but really get to touch it and peer into its crevices. There will always be details which no one has seen before. You will make discoveries every time. Unnoticed evidence may be wrested from signs of manufacture, erasures, scratches, overpainting, offsets, patches, sewing-holes, bindings, and nuances of colour and texture, all entirely invisible in any reproduction. The questions manuscripts can answer face-to-face are sometimes unexpected, both about themselves and about the times in which they were made. There are new observations and hypotheses in every chapter here, elicited by nothing cleverer than engaging the originals. Look closely. Use a magnifying glass, if you like. Sit back: turn the pages and listen quietly to what the books tell us. Let them talk. Apart from anything else, this is enormously enjoyable and interesting. Medieval manuscripts have biographies. They have all survived through the centuries, interacting with successive owners and ages, neglected or admired, right into our own times. We will disentangle provenances which were entirely unknown. Sometimes these histories are very dramatic, as books take their place in European affairs at the highest level, from the bed chambers of medieval saints and kings to the secret hiding-places of Nazi Germany. *Habent sua fata libelli*. Some manuscripts have hardly stirred from their original shelves since the day they were completed; there are others which have zig-zagged across the known world in wooden chests or saddle bags swaying on the backs of horses or over the oceans in little sailing ships or as aircraft freight, for books are very portable. Many have at some time passed through commerce and the auction rooms, and the prices attached to them as they transited are a part of the changing history of taste and fashion. The life of every manuscript, like that of every person, is different, and all have stories to divulge.

A dozen manuscripts have been selected for interview here. No one really knows how many medieval manuscripts survive throughout the world – maybe a million, perhaps more – and the choice was very wide indeed. They are all potentially fascinating and even the plainest and scruffiest of those manuscripts would have offered up enough

material to fill a chapter of this book, but it might have made a less glamorous experience for the reader. We are going to be moving in grand company. As you sit in the reading-room of a library turning the pages of some dazzlingly illuminated volume, you can sense a certain respect from your fellow students on neighbouring tables consulting more modest books or archives, and I hope to share a flavour of that quiet satisfaction of associating with celebrated manuscripts, which for a short while are to become our intimate companions. Join me in a bit of self-indulgent namedropping. Among these titans I have tried to choose a representative range of different kinds of medieval book, not all Gospels and Books of Hours but also texts of astronomy, biblical commentaries, music, literature and Renaissance politics. We could also have opted for liturgy, medicine, law, history, romance, heraldry, philosophy, travel, or many other subjects widely covered in manuscripts of the Middle Ages. I have singled out volumes which seemed to me characteristic of each century, from the sixth to the sixteenth. They all tell us something about their times and the societies which made them.

I have been to see every one of these manuscripts for the purpose of writing this book. I had handled some of them before, but I came now with no particular expectations of what I wanted them to tell us, and any new revelations – and there are certainly some – were offered up by the manuscripts during the course of the encounters described here. The narrative will show this happening.

Manuscripts are not all the same size. The miniature nature of the illuminator's craft is part of the fascination of medieval manuscripts, but some of these books are enormous. Those who study the history of art exclusively from reproductions, either reduced in textbooks or magnified onto lecture screens, lose all sense of the relative scale of one manuscript to another. Throughout the Middle Ages there was a strong feeling for the hierarchy of things, both in the natural and the human worlds, often expressed by size. The book with the largest dimensions here is the Codex Amiatinus, a pandect (as it is called) of the entire Scriptures, written for public display. The smallest is the dainty Book of Hours of Jeanne de Navarre, made for the hands of a queen. When a

manuscript is delivered to your desk in a library, even before you open it, there is often an unexpected realization of how big or small it is. As a trick of design therefore, each chapter begins with a picture of the particular manuscript shown closed. That for the Codex Amiatinus is illustrated as large as the dimensions of this book will allow: the bindings of all others in turn are then shown at the start of each chapter in scale relative to that largest reproduction.

Certain themes will become clear as we proceed. Chapter One on the Gospel Book of Saint Augustine takes us into the age when a new Christian literacy was emerging from the collapse of ancient Rome. The Codex Amiatinus in Chapter Two is the oldest surviving Latin Bible, sent to Italy from the ends of the earth, as its dedication declares, by those who prided themselves on their Roman learning. The incomparable Book of Kells, forming Chapter Three, is a very different kind of manuscript of the four Gospels and we are immersed in that distant Celtic world where magic and belief are inseparable and eventually have a part to play in the modern sense of Irish national identity. Chapter Four is about copying manuscripts and copying cultures. The headlong race to the millennium and the anticipated apocalypse preoccupied the tenth century and they fill Chapter Five. The far-reaching and sober effects of the Norman Conquest of 1066 can be experienced graphically and first-hand in the manuscripts examined in Chapter Six. The twelfth century marks a major shift from monastic to secular book production, a watershed in the history of literacy and art, and is one of the under-appreciated turning-points of our civilization. In Chapter Seven we will decipher the name of the king who personally owned one of the finest Psalters of the time. In Chapter Eight we pick up a little book in Munich and find the songs of love and lust of the students and wandering scholars of the early thirteenth century. Chapter Nine introduces a delicate Book of Hours made for a king's daughter, who, like her manuscript, became the pawn of politics, in a tale which then stretches in an unbroken thread of possession from the troubled dynasty of Saint Louis of France to Hermann Göring. Chapter Ten on the *Canterbury Tales* brings the beginning of recognizable English literature and book publishing, with a sub-text on the responsibilities

owners. Some of the apparent mysteries of manuscripts interviewed here are solved by the sudden realization of more than one moment of production.

If there is a single theme which I would try to convey if we were actually undertaking these journeys together, it is what pleasure you can have in looking at manuscripts. I hope that something of the enjoyment emerges from these encounters. Of course I am the most biased person in the world, but I think that medieval manuscripts are truly fascinating at so many levels. I want to know everything about them. I want to know who made them and when and why and where, and what they contain and where their texts came from, why a particular manuscript was thought to be needed, and how they were copied and under what conditions and how these affected the format and size, what materials were used, how long the manuscripts took to make, why and how they were decorated and by whom (if they were decorated, and why not, if they weren't), and what they cost, how they were bound, who used them and in what way, how or whether they were retransmitted onwards in further copies, what changes were made to them later, where they were kept, how they were shelved and catalogued, how they have survived often against all odds, who has owned them, how they were bought and sold and for how much (for they were always valuable), under what circumstances they reached the custody of their current owners – and, at every one of these questions, how we can tell. We can enjoy ourselves poking impertinently into the affairs of men and women of long ago, and sharing the same original artefacts which gave delight to those people too.

The idea for this book arose out of a conversation with Caroline Dawnay. I had urged her, as I often do urge people without expecting anything to happen, to come to see the Parker Library any time she was in Cambridge. One day she turned up without warning, with half an hour to spare. She had never particularly looked at medieval manuscripts. We got out a volume of the Bury Bible, one of the first English books made by a professional illuminator, written around 1130. The enchantment of that wide-eyed encounter, for me as much as for

her, suggested the challenge of trying to convey to a wider audience the thrill of bringing a well-informed but non-specialist reader into intimate contact with major medieval manuscripts.

I have tried to avoid using technical terms known only to specialized historians. If these were actual visits to libraries, I would encourage you to interrupt if anything seemed unclear or too complicated. This should be as near to a conversation as a published book can be. For that reason, I have resisted the temptation to scatter the text with footnotes. I, for one, am incapable of reading any footnoted book without holding fingers between multiple pages, which slows the narrative and bores the layman. For those who care, and many will not, there are separate and discursive bibliographies and notes for each chapter. These have had their own problems of composition. I have been on familiar terms with some of these manuscripts, or have known about them, for more than forty years and I do not necessarily recall the sources of everything I have read. Worse than this, I am afraid that people have told me things and have suggested ideas, and I may have forgotten. I have tried to make acknowledgements in the text itself or in the notes. I am indebted too to all the curators who received my visits with good grace and often with information. We who work in palaeography are conscious of whole international networks of like-minded historians and bibliographers, and we gladly help one another when we can. We talk in the vestibules of libraries and gossip at conferences. We ask advice by email. We sometimes stay in each other's houses. I hope that it will become apparent that a book like this is only made possible by a lifetime of friends and colleagues.

There are two people I would like to single out at the beginning. The first, of course, is my wife, Mette, who has endured the writing for several years and who graciously appears as the subject of several jokes in the text. (This is a trick by me: she will have to read the book to find them.) The other is my old friend Scott Schwartz of New York, who discussed the project with me at its outset and helped define its parameters. Through a period of ill-health, now thank goodness abated, he read the first draft of every chapter as it was finished, and I owe much to his wisdom and perception. It is to him I dedicate this book.

CHAPTER ONE

The Gospels of Saint Augustine

late sixth century

Cambridge, Corpus Christi College,
MS 286

At the end of this chapter I will recount how Pope Benedict XVI and the Archbishop of Canterbury both bowed down before me, on live television, in front of the high altar of Westminster Abbey. Before reaching that very unlikely moment, however, we must follow the footsteps of a manuscript as it weaves through a millennium and a half of English history, encountering several popes and other archbishops of Canterbury on its journey. One of these archbishops was Matthew Parker (1504–75), who owned the book itself. Parker had attended Cambridge University, and he had been ordained a priest shortly before the Reformation in England. By lucky chance, perhaps through a family connection in Norfolk, he became domestic chaplain to Anne Boleyn, second wife of Henry VIII and queen of England from 1533 until her execution for treason in 1536. It was in Anne's circle that the first intimations of Lutheran reform had infiltrated the English court, and Parker was evidently caught up in that heady intellectual excitement of the religious renaissance of the time. In 1544, on the recommendation of Henry VIII, he was appointed Master of Corpus Christi College in Cambridge. Parker got married (a radical step then for the clergy), was deprived of his position under the reactionary Queen Mary, 1553–8, and in 1559 was summoned to London by the new queen, Elizabeth, daughter of Anne Boleyn, who made him the first archbishop of Canterbury of her

reign, with instructions to make the English Reformation absolute and irrevocable.

The reformed Church of England, as confirmed by Parker in what is known as the Elizabethan Settlement, was at least initially very different from the Protestantism of continental Europe. Martin Luther had looked back to the apostolic times of early Christianity, rejecting the papacy and undermining the Roman Church from behind by fielding a translation of the Bible derived from texts which were older and apparently more authentic than the standard fourth-century Latin Vulgate edition of Saint Jerome. Matthew Parker, by contrast, embraced the very early popes and the traditional line of apostolic succession from Saint Peter. Gregory the Great, pope 590–604, was one of Parker's heroes, not least because he had sent the first organized Christian mission to England in 596, dispatching a party of Italian monks under the command of one Augustine, prior of the monastery of Sant'Andrea in Rome. Saint Augustine of Canterbury, as he is now called, had then landed in Kent in south-east England in 597 and had convinced Ethelbert, king of Kent *c.* 560–616, to adopt Christianity. The missionaries from Italy had established a cathedral in Canterbury nearby and they founded a monastery outside the town walls, initially as a burial church, originally dedicated to Saints Peter and Paul, patron saints of Rome. Augustine himself became the first archbishop of Canterbury. The monastery he had set up was later renamed St Augustine's Abbey in his honour. It survived on the outskirts of Canterbury for almost a thousand years until its suppression under Henry VIII in 1538, in Parker's lifetime.

Matthew Parker was the seventieth archbishop in what he saw as a line of unbroken continuity back to Augustine. He persuaded himself that those early missionaries had intended to establish an entirely independent English Church, unfettered by Rome. As far as Parker was concerned, the development of religion in Europe was irrelevant after 597. Only England, in his interpretation, had managed to preserve the Christian Church in its primeval purity, as Saints Gregory and Augustine had intended. This, as he saw it, had been corrupted and subverted with the Norman Conquest (1066) and the centraliza-

feit and would revert instead to Gonville and Caius College, further up the street in Cambridge, together with wonderful pieces of Tudor table silver given also by Parker, which are very desirable. It was largely from fear of this awful penalty clause that relatively few outsiders were ever allowed in to see the books. For more than 400 years the Parker Library was notoriously (even scandalously) inaccessible to scholars, or at best it was quixotically and inconsistently available. It is with a certain inverted pride that I report that when I myself first asked to see a manuscript there in the mid-1970s, I was refused permission, and this is still the only library in the world to which I have ever been declined admittance. Excluding readers has meant, however, that every one of Parker's books remains safely on the shelves, and many are in astonishingly fresh condition, almost exactly as they were at the Reformation. They have been in their current possession longer than any other principal manuscripts we will encounter in this book.

In the late 1990s, the governing body of Corpus Christi College resolved to reverse this isolationism and to open up and to exploit their greatest tangible asset. They raised money from various sources, principally the Donnelley Foundation in Chicago, to endow a full-time curator. That same man who had been refused entrance twenty-five years earlier then duly applied and he was appointed in 2000. The fact that the Parker Library has become one of the most accessible and widely used rare-book libraries in the world, both in reality and through comprehensive digitization, is not remotely to my credit, but simply because times have changed and that was an expectation of the new position.

Corpus Christi is one of twenty-nine independent colleges which make up the University of Cambridge. At any one time, it has about 260 undergraduate students. The oldest parts of the buildings date from its foundation in the mid-fourteenth century. Most readers with appointments to study manuscripts in the Parker Library now enter the college up several steps through the over-sized medieval-looking gatehouse in Trumpington Street, usually checking in first in the porters' lodge on the left, so that the library staff can be alerted. Ahead is what is known as New Court, a large quadrangle of manicured grass, striped

by constant mowing, enclosed on four sides by pale stone buildings in regency gothic style built in the 1820s by the architect William Wilkins (1778–1839). ('New' in England is always a relative term; the New Forest is eleventh century.) Tourists often gather around under the archway, photographing themselves and peeping in, curious for glimpses of undergraduates and employees of the college who live and work in rooms off staircases around the sides. Straight ahead is the entrance to the chapel, flanked by niches with statues of Nicholas Bacon, benefactor, dangling a purse of money, and Matthew Parker, with both hands on a book. The bursary is to the left of the chapel, Bacon's side, and the master's lodge on the right. The college dining hall is behind high lancet windows along the north side of the courtyard. The Parker Library fills most of the upstairs floor on the right-hand (southern) facade. Ring the buzzer at the tall gothic door in the far corner of New Court and you will be admitted into a dark lobby with a choice of a stone staircase rising up in front of you or an entrance immediately off to the right. Members of the public usually proceed in organized groups to the magnificent long high-ceilinged library at the top of the stairs, with walls lined with Elizabethan and later printed books and with bright-lit glass cases down the length of the room, displaying some of the library's finest manuscripts. Those who have come to study rare books will be let instead into the secure reading-room on the ground floor.

This room is not as large as upstairs. It was formerly the furthest extremity of the undergraduate library. It has pale green walls and a grey carpet. Mullioned windows on the south wall, generally shielded by blinds to reduce direct sunlight, look out over Saint Botolph's churchyard; those on the north face into New Court. The room is furnished with oak bookcases salvaged from the 1930s and with new purpose-built pale oak tables and fourteen matching chairs all inset with bright scarlet leather, a gift from the manuscript collector Gifford Combs. A glass plaque on the wall, designed by Lida Kindersley, records the opening of the reading-room by Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, on 21 June 2010.

We are about to look at MS 286, the oldest and by far the most precious book in the library. This is a privilege of being escorted by

the librarian: the Gospel Book of Saint Augustine is not brought out easily for casual readers. It is immensely fragile and vulnerable and for many people it still has a sacred and spiritual significance. For Archbishop Parker it would have had a primary value in his search for the foundation of Christianity in England in 597. The manuscript is stored in a burglar-alarmed and air-conditioned vault, where it is shelved horizontally in a stout fitted oak box, made in 1993 at the expense of an architect and old member of the college, Roger Mears, whose name is recorded on a leather label. Wait in the reading-room for a moment while I fetch it, carrying the box in with both hands and placing it on the table. We unclip the brass clasps and lift off the heavy lid, relieving the subtle pressure which keeps the book tightly closed when it is not in use. The volume nestles inside in a bed of firm archival thermoplastic grey foam. Lift it carefully out and lay it on one of the orange-covered padded book-rests on the library tables.

Those who meet famous people often remark afterwards how unexpectedly small the celebrated personage was in reality. For all its stature in English history, this is not a large manuscript, and it is even

The Gospel Book of Saint Augustine, open at the portrait of the evangelist Saint Luke, displayed in the Parker Library

mildly disappointing to some visitors who see it for the first time. It is about 10½ by 8½ inches, about 3 inches thick, quite light, insubstantial, and easy to hold in one hand. It is bound in plain oak boards slightly bevelled on their inner edges, with a spine of creamy alum-tawed goatskin, in the style beloved of the Arts and Crafts movement in England, especially championed and promoted by the binder Douglas Cockerell (1870–1945). The spine, which is now shadowed from handling, is ruled into six rectangles, one stamped in gold "MS 286" and another with a Maltese cross; at the foot are the letters "C.C.C.C." (for Corpus Christi College Cambridge). There is no other title. The manuscript was rebound for the college at the British Museum bindery in 1948–9 (it was returned to Cambridge in July 1949). The loan to London had one consequence. Attached to an end flyleaf is a standard British Museum note about the number of leaves dated July 1948, in the distinctive handwriting of Eric Millar (1887–1966), then Keeper of Manuscripts. The Assistant Keeper was at that time Francis Wormald (1904–72), who took the opportunity of examining the Gospel Book seriously when it was in the temporary custody of his department. Wormald subsequently gave his Sandars Lecture about it in Cambridge beginning on 29 November that year, a major step in the book's road to fame in the twentieth century.

The British Museum binders stitched the gatherings onto the tips of separate and protruding paper guards, fanning them outwards, so that the manuscript can be opened safely at 90° without bending the original parchment. This was fashionable conservation practice at the time, now no longer recommended because it rather unnaturally alters the original integrity of a book and, as the pages are turned, it can result in friction between gatherings. The binding has modern paper endleaves and it responsibly preserves an earlier paper leaf at the back from the previous rebinding in the mid-eighteenth century, together with a number of medieval flyleaves on parchment. The first two of these are plain, perhaps from the late Middle Ages. One, at least, has clearly been transferred from the end, where it served as the last leaf of the book up against the original back cover. Both it and the present final leaf have matching rectangular indentations and small rust holes

at the extreme top imprinted from what was must have been a riveted chain-hasp once attached to the upper edge of the lower board of the medieval binding. At some time the manuscript was evidently secured by a chain, with the front cover upwards.

We will come back later to a more detailed description of MS 286, but no one could resist a preliminary look inside the book itself. This is a chance which will not recur often. The manuscript comprises the four Gospels from the New Testament, in the Latin translation of Saint Jerome, taken from the original Greek of its four authors and rendered by him into the spoken language of Western Europe. The term 'Vulgate', which since the Reformation has carried critical overtones of being arcane and inaccessible to the common people, originally simply meant that it was the normal vernacular of the period. When this manuscript was made, Latin was still generally spoken, and Jerome, who died in 420, was then no more distant in time than (say) Walter Scott or Emily Brontë are to us. The Roman Empire had recently imploded. Rome had been sacked by the Visigoths in 410 and again by the Ostrogoths in 546, within living memory. It saved its identity by reinventing itself as a Christian empire. Saint Augustine's mission to England was the first conscious imperial initiative of the Roman papacy.

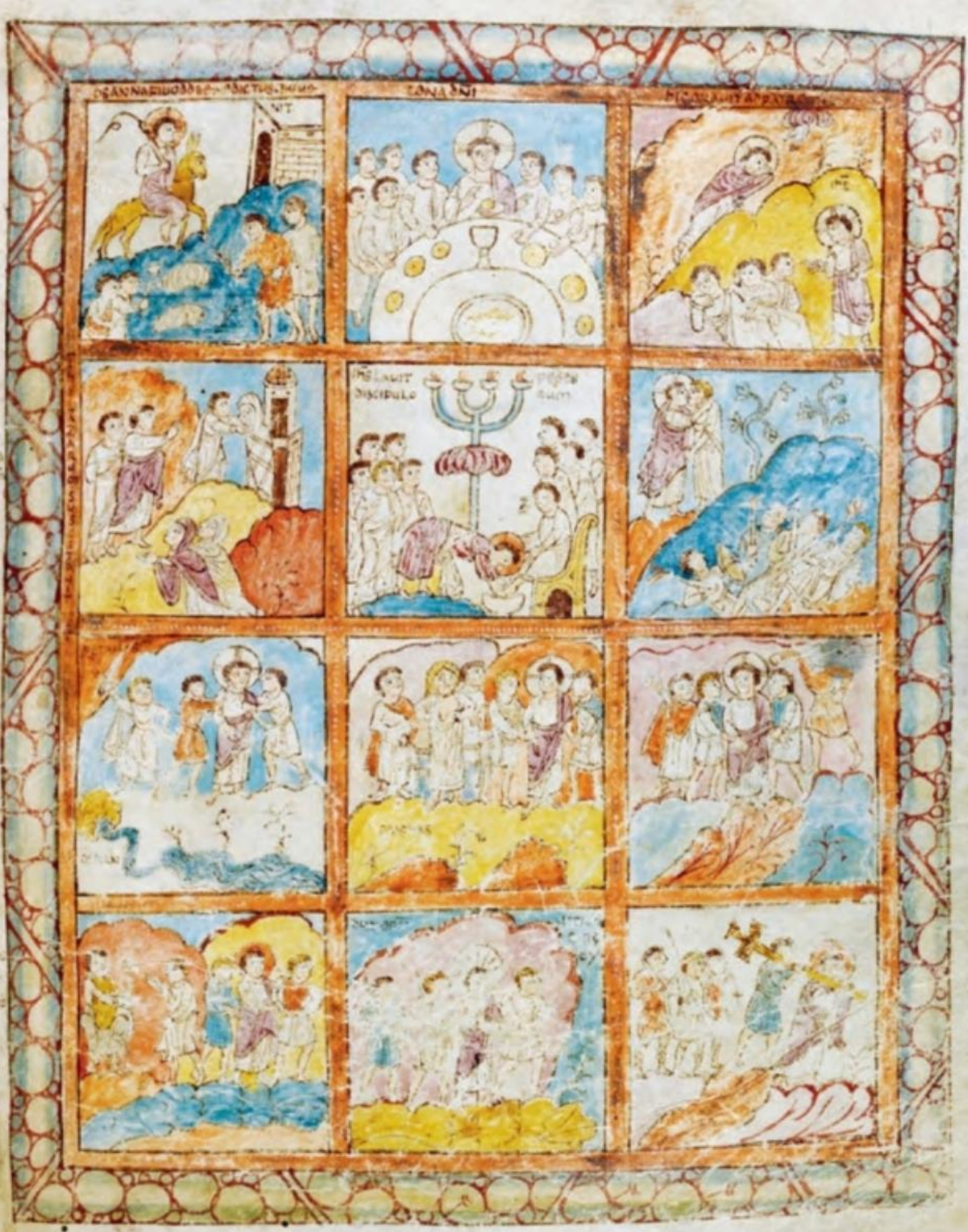
The manuscript opens mid-word in the *capitula* list preceding the Gospel of Matthew. These lists are tabulated headings or chapter summaries (although the early-medieval chapter divisions are different from the modern numbering, which was not devised until the thirteenth century). The first surviving words in the book are "[nine-] vitarum signum pharisaesis tradit", referring to Christ giving the Pharisees a sign from the men of Nineveh (in our numeration this is told in Matthew 12:41). There is quite a bit more missing in the manuscript before this, as we will see. The full text of Matthew's Gospel begins on folio 3r, "*Liber generationis* ih[es]u xp[ist]i filii david …", 'The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, son of David …' (Matthew 1:1). Its first two words are written in red (which is why I have given them in italics), faded to pale orange which is almost brown, and the opening 'L' is slightly taller than the next letter. It is restrained and subdued, without any exceptional ornament or emphasis for the opening of the

look back again at the text, 'And Isaac begat Jacob, [and] Jacob begat Judah and his brothers', breathe again, and so on. Winston Churchill typed his great speeches like this, so that they could be read at a glance and his famous oratorical pauses were graphically preordained in the layout of his script. It is an arrangement prepared primarily for reading aloud, which itself tells us something about the Gospel Book of Saint Augustine, which comes from a time of oral culture when most of the audience for the Scriptures was illiterate.

The second gospel, that of Mark, begins on folio 75r with its prologue and *capitula* list, and the text itself six pages later. The prologue and *capitula* list for the third gospel, Luke, are preceded by a full-page painting showing twelve scenes from the Passion within a grid of square frames (folio 125r). The actual opening of Luke faces a full-page portrait of the evangelist himself seated below an arch with his symbol of an ox above his head and scenes from his gospel in columns down the sides (folio 129v). This is the page we usually exhibit when the manuscript is on public view, since it is the only opening with both picture and text facing each other. It is not difficult to locate, for the exhausted manuscript now naturally flops open at this point. The final Gospel of John begins on folio 208r, similarly preceded by prologue and *capitula* lists. The whole book ends with the words "D[E]O GRATIAS" (strictly, that first word could probably also be expanded as "D[OMIN]O") and, further down "SEMPER AMEN". This is probably based on the formula 'Thanks be to God' used in the Mass at the end of any Gospel reading, but it is also applicable to the sentiment of the scribe himself, grateful and relieved to have finished single-handedly writing 530 pages of text. The words here are written in rustic capitals rather than uncials, since they are not part of the Scriptures, rather as we might use italics to differentiate other kinds of text. Blank pages at the very end of the manuscript are filled with copies of later charters and monastic records, including an interesting twelfth-century relic list.

There is a rather shocking souvenir of a previous visitor on the paper flyleaf at the back. It is a patronizing statement in Latin, informing the

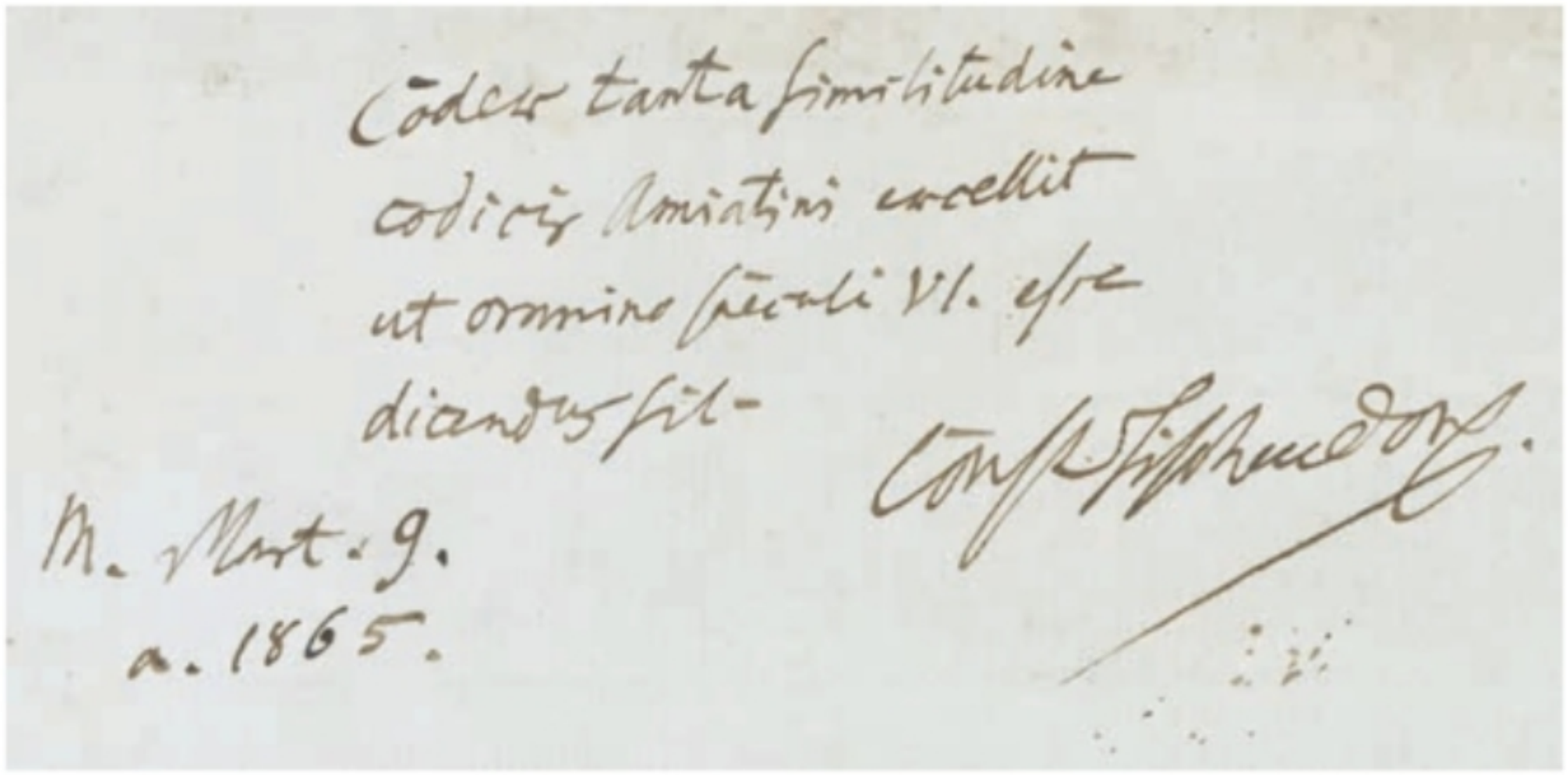
RIGHT: A picture page of the Gospels of Saint Augustine with multiple scenes from the Passion of Christ, from the Entry into Jerusalem through to the carrying of the Cross



world that the manuscript so closely resembles the Codex Amiatinus that it can be confidently assigned to the sixth century. It is signed "Const. Tischendorf". The Codex Amiatinus, which is the subject of the next chapter here, actually dates from a hundred years later and is not very much like this at all, except for being also in Latin uncials. Constantin Tischendorf (1815–74), of Leipzig, discoverer in 1844 of the Codex Sinaiticus, the primary copy of the Greek Bible, struts boldly and immodestly through nineteenth-century biblical scholarship. On the day he signed and dated his attribution, Thursday, 9 March 1865, he was in Cambridge to accept an honorary LLD from the university. The first times I looked at the manuscript I had not paused to read this crabbed inscription at all: it was pointed out to me ruefully by Archimandrite Justin Sinaites, librarian of the monastery of Saint Catherine on Mount Sinai, where Tischendorf is remembered today not as a hero but as the double-crossing purloiner of their greatest treasure, the fourth-century Greek Codex Sinaiticus.

Many who see the manuscript exhibited now either venerate it piously, or laugh at its credentials, often with the Puritanical scorn still reserved for a supposed relic of any saint. (It is curious how people will accept that a medieval manuscript belonged to a secular celebrity – the Bible of Charles the Bald, for example – but the moment a saint is involved, they dutifully scoff at the credulity of others.) There are also those for whom the Gospel Book of Saint Augustine is still a religious relic of the highest spiritual value. There is a new book about it by the Episcopalian bishop of Arizona, written from the perspective of its religious significance to Christians today. When the manuscript was exhibited in the Fitzwilliam Museum in 2005, a visitor was seen by Stella Panayotova, curator of manuscripts there, weeping and kissing the ground in front of its glass case. These things matter to people, and we clearly need to weigh the evidence for Saint Augustine's ownership as objectively as we possibly can.

Humfrey Wanley (1672–1726), antiquary and early Anglo-Saxonist (and certainly no credulous Catholic), first made the post-Reformation case for identifying the volume in the Parker Library with Saint Augustine of Canterbury. He was one of the few early scholars allowed free


Codex tanta similitudine
codicis Amiatini excellit
ut omnino fraeli VI. esse
diendus sit-
Const. Tischendorf.
M. Mart. 9.
a. 1865.

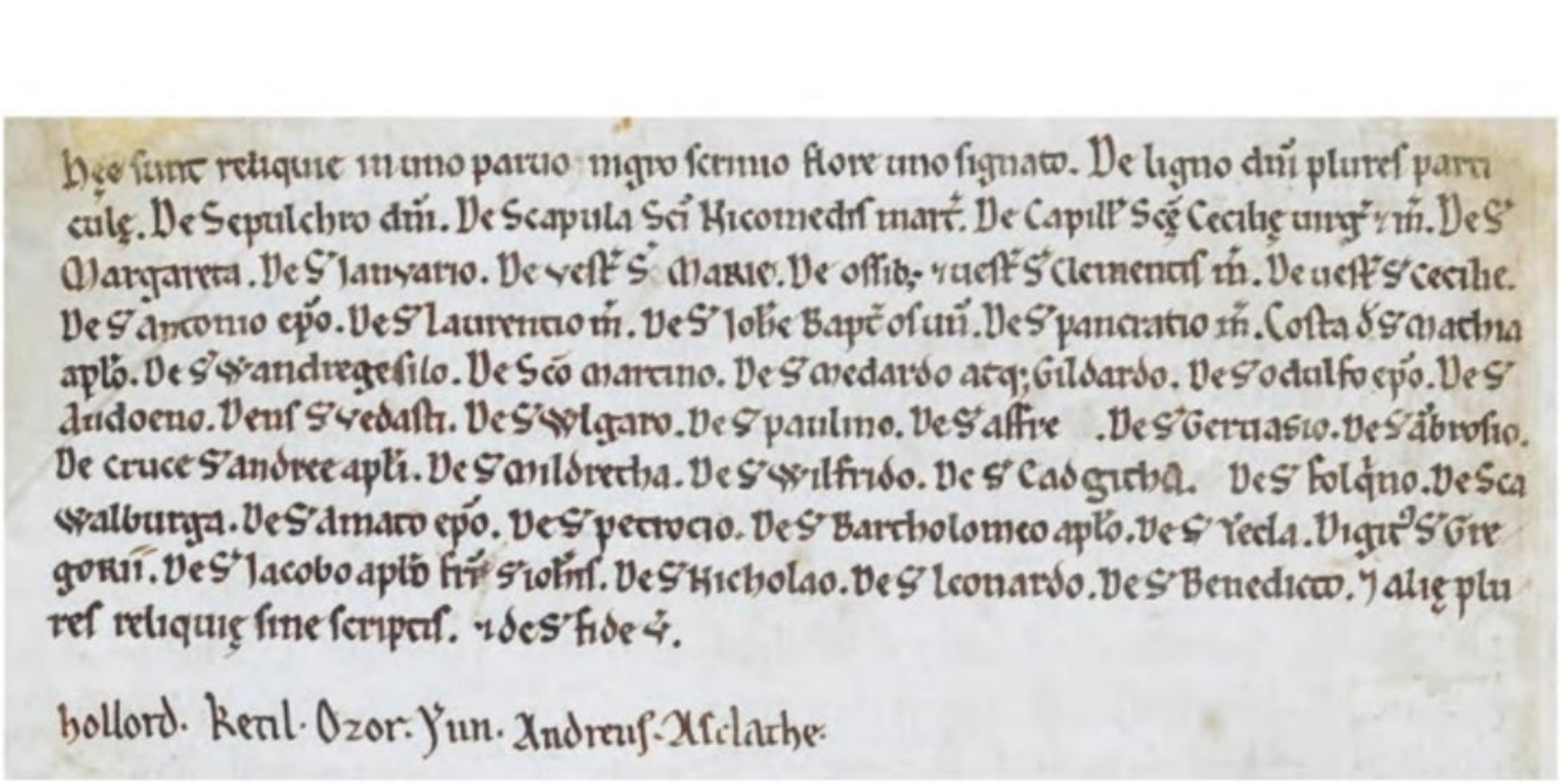
The note added by Constantin Tischendorf (1815–74) when he inspected the Gospels of Saint Augustine in 1865, comparing it with the Codex Amiatinus

access to Parker's bequest in Corpus Christi College, which he visited in 1699. He describes the Gospel Book succinctly but accurately in his account of the ancient literature of Northern Europe, published in Oxford in 1705. Wanley drew attention to Bede's account of Gregory the Great having sent Augustine from Rome, following this up with a gift in 601 of all the paraphernalia necessary for the use of the English Church, including "codices plurimos" ('very many books'). He cited the descriptions of two Gospel Books which an early fifteenth-century text from St Augustine's Abbey associated with Gregory's bequest, and he suggested that these two manuscripts must surely be this volume here in Cambridge, and another similar but undecorated Gospel Book in the Bodleian Library in Oxford. The identification of both books as having been brought to England by Saint Augustine was accepted unquestioned by other early antiquaries, including Thomas Astle (1735–1803), who published an engraving of our manuscript in 1784. It was already beginning its journey into the public eye.

The Bodleian manuscript was clearly owned in Anglo-Saxon England but it has no recognizable association with medieval Canterbury. Its previous history is unknown before its gift to the Bodleian in 1603 by Sir Robert Cotton. An early note in a lower margin suggests that a reading from the adjacent chapter 9 of John's Gospel was suitable for the feast of Saint Chad, which may indicate that the manuscript was used in Mercia,

Marcus euangelis
tadicit per ruinam p
tsaiae filias xq
indutus ose rone
discipulus sacerdo
tis ministrans
secundum ezechiel
leui ix conuersus
ad fidem xpi euan
celium initians con
cubsti ostendens
ineo quod deicere
risu odisse re et xpo
nam initium prin
cipii in uoce prophe
tae excelsa montis
insistens ordine
leuitici electionis
ostendit ad praedi
cans praedestina
tum iohannes filii
zachariae in uoce
angeli enuntian
tis se missum non

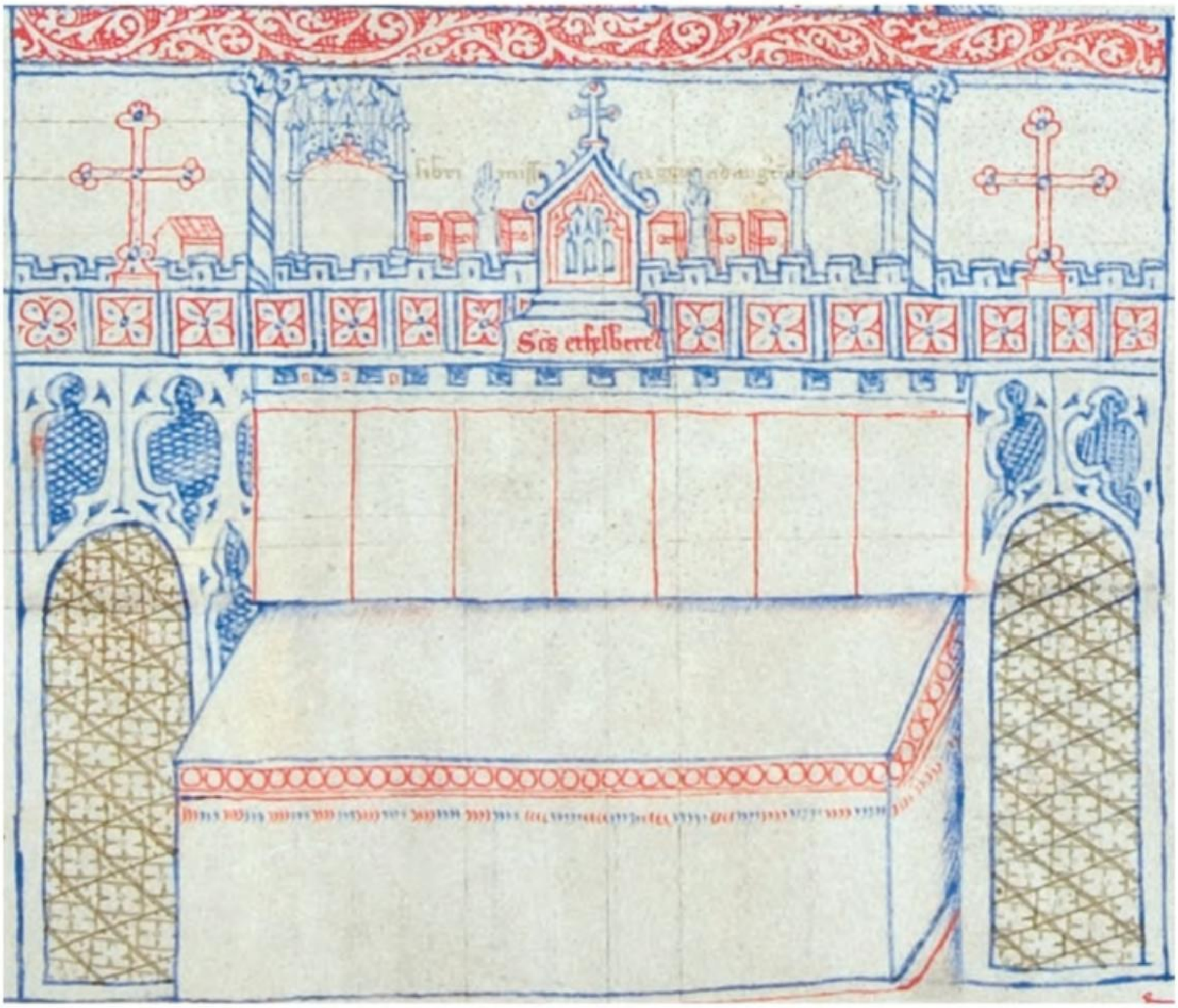
non factum sed cor
pus dni exuerbu
dei in aeuo cis annia
in initio euangelicae
praedicationis oste
deret aliquid hac de
censse reri cum nihil
carnis in dno esse ui
deat uenientis habita
culum ad edendum re
nosse exaliq in
seuerum uocis
quod inconsonantis
perodere sinueni re
de nig et perfecti
cunnel ne pugnantem
et baptismo dni
praedicans sed omni
corns non imbo
dii natiuitate cr
nisq; omnipotentis
uidi praedicepsco
tolus expositionem
scripturae


Hęc sunt reliquie in uno parvo nigro scrinio store uno signato. De ligno dñi plures parti culę. De Sepulchro dñi. De Scapula Sci Hicomedis mart. De Capill Sęę Cecilię uirg et m. De S Margareta. De S Ianuario. De uest S Marie. De ossib; et uest S Clementis m. De uest S Cecilie. De S Antonio epo. De S Laurentio m. De S Iohe Bapte ostium. De S pancratio m. Costa de S Wachna aplo. De S Wandregesilo. De Sco martino. De S Wedardo arq; Gildardo. De S Odulfo epo. De S Audoeno. Venit S Wedasti. De S Wlgaro. De S paulino. De S Alfre . De S Germano. De S Ambrosio. De cruce S andree apli. De S Wildrecha. De S Wilfrido. De S Cadgicba. De S Solano. De Sca Walburga. De S Amato epo. De S petrocio. De S Bartholomeo aplo. De S Cecila. Virgis S Gregorii. De S Iacobo aplo frs S Iohis. De S Hicholao. De S Leonardo. De S Benedicto. Alię plures reliquię sine scriptis. Ades S fide q.

hollord. Kenl. Ozor. Yun. Andreus. Aclarthe.

A list of relics owned by Saint Augustine's Abbey, including pieces of the True Cross and a finger bone of Saint Gregory, added in the Gospels of Saint Augustine

There are two principal medieval sources for the treasures preserved by the monks of that monastery in the belief that they had been entrusted by Pope Gregory the Great to Augustine at the time of the conversion of England. The first of these witnesses is the chronicle of St Augustine's Abbey by Thomas Sprott from the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century. It is known in two copies. Sprott mentions the Bible of Saint Gregory together with his Gospel Book ("et evangelia euisdem") among other relics, which included vestments sent by Gregory from Rome. The second text is a much more rambling antiquarian survey of the abbey dated 1414, the *Speculum Augustinianum* of Thomas Elmham, monk of the abbey. His original manuscript now belongs to Trinity Hall in Cambridge. Elmham writes at length about the venerable books which he calls the 'first fruits' of the entire English Church. He provides a sketch of the high altar of the abbey with six closed books drawn in red shown propped up on display on either side of the reliquary of King Ethelbert, with a caption above "*libri missi a gregorio ad augustinum*" ('books sent by Gregory to Augustine'). He describes the individual volumes, not all of them on the altar. Their number has now increased to include two Gospel Books. This was the reference cited by Humfrey Wanley in 1705. One of these manuscripts was described as shelved in the library, where it was stored with the two-volume Bible of Saint Gregory (now lost). Elmham says that its companion Gospel Book opened with ten canon tables and a prologue



Drawing by Thomas Elmham in 1414 of the high altar of Saint Augustine's Abbey, with the books sent by Saint Gregory propped up on either side of the reliquary of King Ethelbert

beginning "Prologus canonum …". These volumes, the Bible and Gospel Book in the abbey library, are clearly the same manuscripts as those mentioned by Sprott a century earlier. The second Gospel Book among the 'first fruits' listed by Elmham in 1414 was kept in the vestry, where it was known as the Gospels of Saint Mildred, on which (he says) a certain peasant in Thanet had sworn falsely and lost his eyes.

Mildred Budny (note her first name), who prepared a very long account of the decorated Anglo-Saxon manuscripts in the Parker Library published in 1997, suggested that MS 286 was probably to be identified with the Gospel Book of her saintly namesake. The earlier Mildred, who died around 700, was the daughter of a Kentish princess; she became abbess of the convent which her mother had founded at Minster-in-

Thanet in Kent, some twelve miles north-east of Canterbury. Saint Mildred was reputedly a great-great-granddaughter of Ethelbert, the king of Kent converted by Augustine, which might have provided a line of descent for an Italian manuscript brought to England in the Augustinian mission. The problem, however, is that if her Gospel Book was at Thanet (as it clearly was, since it took cruel vengeance on a perjuring peasant there), then it would have come to St Augustine's Abbey around 1030, when the all relics of Saint Mildred were translated across to Canterbury, whereas our manuscript was demonstrably already in St Augustine's by the tenth century at the latest. In short, if MS 286 is one of the two books described by Elmham, then it was surely the former, kept in the library. This may be consistent with the offset from a chain-hasp described above, since the library books were chained whereas liturgical books in the vestry were not. The Gospels of Saint Mildred, in turn, might then be a mutilated manuscript now divided between the British Library in London and the Parker Library, sometimes called the 'London–Cambridge Gospels', recorded independently on both portions as having been among the books sent from Gregory to Augustine but in reality made in England around 700, which makes it possible, just, that it could indeed have been owned by Saint Mildred.

In summary, then, the claim of MS 286 to be the Gospel Book of Saint Augustine depends on four facts. They are: (1) Bede records that Gregory sent books to England with Augustine, and it is extremely likely that he did, and these would necessarily have included a copy of the Gospels; (2) a Gospel Book purporting to be one of those books sent by Gregory was recorded twice at St Augustine's Abbey in the Middle Ages where it was preserved with a Bible, also believed to be a relic of their founder; (3) MS 286 in the Parker Library was certainly in England by the late seventh century and was demonstrably at St Augustine's Abbey by at least the tenth century; (4) it had to have reached the abbey somehow, and it is of the right date and origin to have been sent from Italy in the late sixth century. That is generally as far as the evidence has ever been taken – very likely, on balance, but ultimately unprovable. The devil's advocate would argue that it might have come to England second-hand from anywhere in Southern Europe up to a century after its manufacture.

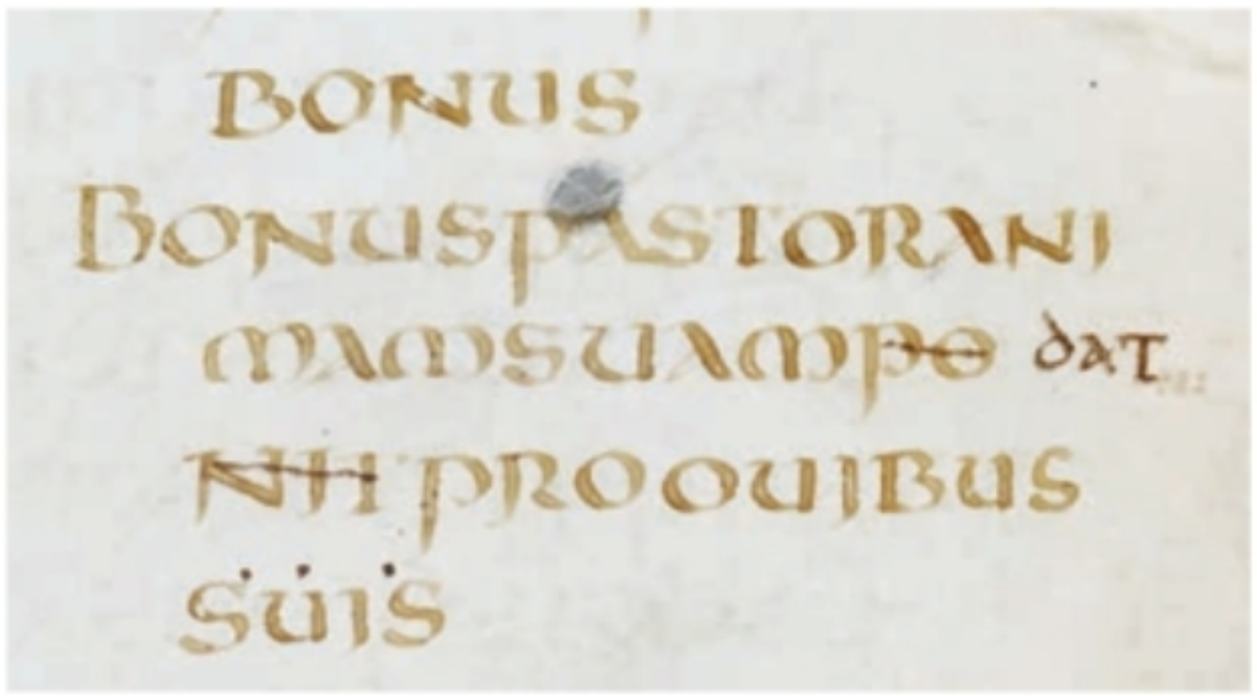
There is, however, another piece of evidence. A very interesting analysis of the text of the manuscript was published in 1933 by Hans Hermann Glunz (1907–44), of Frankfurt. He reaches a conclusion which is so astonishingly relevant to this discussion that I cannot understand why it has for so long been overlooked. Although Jerome's Vulgate translation gradually became standard in the Middle Ages, it replaced an earlier and less fluent version known as the *Vetus Latina* or 'Old Latin' text, which had circulated among Christians in the Roman Empire. The more accurate Vulgate had a slow start, and for several centuries many conservative users in Europe still preferred the familiar and homely Old Latin, which for a time survived in tandem. MS 286 in the Parker Library is recognized as more or less the oldest substantially complete copy of Jerome's new translation of the four Gospels in existence, no small claim. It has the *siglum* 'X' as primary witness in the family tree of the text. However, even Wanley noticed that it has many unexpected discrepancies from the standard Vulgate. Glunz documented these systematically, tabulating approximately 700 variants. Most are exceedingly slight or insignificant, comprising negligible differences of word order or spelling. In others the scribe has opted for readings taken from the Old Latin and not from the text of Jerome at all. Listen carefully, because here is where this gets very important. Gregory the Great, reputed donor of the Gospel Book to Augustine (and one-time possessor of the finger in the relic box at St Augustine's), was also a notable author of biblical commentaries. In the *Moralia*, his exposition on the book of Job, Gregory explains that both the Vulgate and the Old Latin were simultaneously in use in the Apostolic palace in Rome in his time, and that in his commentary he himself will be using the Vulgate, except where the wording of the earlier text seems better suited to his particular line of argument. Medieval pictures of Saint Gregory often show him writing while the Holy Dove whispers in his ear: it is as if Gregory received supernatural authority to his sometimes arbitrary editorial decisions.

Gregory also compiled homilies on the four Gospels, issued in 593,

OVERLEAF: The narrative of the shepherds in the field in the Gospels of Saint Augustine, with the Old Latin variant 'a son is born to us' corrected later to the Vulgate version 'born to you'

four years before the mission to England. One of the oldest manuscripts of that text is also in the Parker Library, MS 69, copied in the late eighth century. Here, then, is the crucial observation. Every time wording from the Old Latin appears in MS 286, it is also the reading substituted by Gregory in his homilies on the Gospels. The conclusion, although Glunz does not draw it explicitly, is that this is a text which can only have emanated from the household of Saint Gregory himself in Rome.

Let us look at some representative examples in the manuscript itself. On folio 134r is the famous account of the angel appearing to the shepherds in the field near Bethlehem. In column 1, line 16, the original scribe wrote, "natus est nobis hodie salvator" ('today a saviour is born to us"); a later hand corrects this in darker ink to the standard Vulgate reading "natus est *vobis* …" ('a son is born to *you*', Luke 2:11). The manuscript originally used Gregory's variant, derived from the Old Latin, which he chose, he says, because it still applies at a theological level in our own time, to us now and not just to the shepherds in history. Here is another. In the second column of folio 235v is the passage from John 10:11 in which Christ declares himself to be the good shepherd who will lay down his life for his flock. The scribe uses the Old Latin verb "animam suam *ponit* pro ovibus suis" (this is lines 20–21; a corrector changes it back to the Vulgate 'animam suam *dat*'). Gregory in his homily on the Gospel retains the older 'ponit', *places* his life for his sheep, rather than 'dat', *gives*, because, he explains, it implies a more conscious sacrifice by Christ. A third example is in the last line of folio 262r running on to the very top of folio 262v. It is the story of the moment after the Resurrection when Mary Magdalene first encoun-



John 10:11 in the Gospels of Saint Augustine, with the old Latin variant whereby the Good Shepherd 'places' his life for his sheep, corrected later to the Vulgate reading 'gives'

ters the risen Christ and mistakes him for the gardener (John 20:15). Jerome's Vulgate wording reads, "illa estimans quia hortulanus *esset*", with the verb in the subjunctive, 'she, believing that he might be the gardener'. The manuscript in the Parker Library and Gregory's homily on the text both preserve the present tense, from the Old Latin, "quia hortulanus *est*", 'that he *is* the gardener', because Gregory interprets it in a spiritual sense as an actual reality and not as an abstract possibility.

Glunz hints that Gregory must have prepared a kind of edition of the Vulgate, salted with Old Latin variants in order to be read in parallel with his own commentaries. Even if it were not as deliberate as this, perhaps Gregory simply used a manuscript of mixed parentage then available to him in his household. In either case, the coincidence is too great. MS 286 can only have descended from Gregory's scriptorium in Rome. For that reason alone, I think we can drop the cautious 'so-called' and can identify the manuscript with some confidence as having been among those known to have been sent to England from Saint Gregory himself.

The manuscript is still lying on its bookrest on the long table in the Parker Library. Like many late-classical manuscripts, its parchment is very thin and sometimes almost weightless. Not every leaf is exactly the same size, which suggests that we have something not so different from the book's original dimensions. Because the book is usually kept tightly closed in a vault in conditions of optimum temperature and humidity, its release into a room warm enough to be comfortable to humans causes the parchment to absorb moisture rapidly from the air and, unless checked, the pages begin to curl up alarmingly under our eyes, as if they were alive, a bit like those paper fish one used to buy in joke shops, which you placed on the warmth of your open hand and which then curled to indicate whether you were in love (they always did, causing ribald merriment when we were ten). Curiously, the pages of the manuscript curl towards the darker, former hair-side of the skin, precisely the opposite of the natural curve of the skin when it was around the animal. That, I am told by conservators, is because the fibres on the outer surface of any pelt are denser and less flexible

whereas those on the softer pliable flesh side expand rapidly as they take in moisture. It is not a permanent curl; a page flattens out again quite harmlessly as we turn to another.

Jiří Vnouček, specialist in parchment from the Royal Library in Copenhagen, tells me that the manuscript is mostly or entirely made from sheepskin, which seems coincidentally appropriate for Gregory, whose chosen name is a pun on *greges*, 'flocks', and who wrote the *Pastoral Care* and constantly defined himself as a shepherd. The pages are scored with guide lines into two columns of 25 lines each. As with almost all manuscripts, the person preparing the ruling has pricked the measurements through several pages at once for ease of consistent duplication: in this manuscript, unusually, the vertical line of prickings runs down the centre of each page rather than in the margins. The fact that there is only a single line of holes indicates that the pages must have been ruled before they were folded, since the prickings had to be joined up across a double opening.

The collation of the book is given below, according to the formula explained in the Introduction.* The pairs of leaves were arranged into gatherings which are, or were, mostly of eight leaves each, although single leaves are now missing at various points, as shown in the collation. In the right-hand corners of the last leaves of gatherings ii–x are original marks by the scribe for assembling the book in the right order. These are written as a letter 'Q' (for "*quaternum*", usually meaning four pairs of leaves) followed by a Roman numeral between 'IIII' and 'XII'. Therefore most of three quires – numbered 'I' to 'III' – are now missing at the beginning, probably twenty-two leaves altogether, assuming that each was of eight leaves. This would be about right for the general prologues, the ten canon tables described by Elmham probably with their usual explanatory letter from Eusebius to Carpianus, together with the preface to Matthew and the first pages of the *capitula* list for Matthew. There was also clearly once a full-page picture of the evange-

* 4 flyleaves + i^{2} [probably of 8, lacking i–v and viii, 5 leaves before folio 1 and one after folio 2], ii–x^{8}, xi^{9} [of 10, lacking iv, a leaf after folio 77], xii–xvi^{8}, $xvii^{7}$ [of 8, lacking viii, a leaf after folio 130], xviii–$xxvi^{8}$, $xxvii^{3}$ [of 4, lacking iv, a leaf after folio 205], xxviii–$xxxiv^{8}$, $xxxv^{4}$ + 4 flyleaves (blank except for the addition of medieval documents).

list Matthew under an arch, like that of Luke still surviving, for it left unambiguous red offsets imprinted onto the leaf which once faced it. Whether there was also once a page of multiple narrative pictures for Matthew, as for Luke too, is unknowable, but it is very possible. There was certainly a portrait of Mark facing folio 78r, where there is a leaf missing and faint offsets also appear. A text leaf is missing after folio 130r, with Luke 1:17–33. The lost portrait of John, unexpectedly, was not apparently opposite the opening of his Gospel, where there are no marks and no gap in the collation, but instead it faced the prologue, leaving slight marks on the adjacent page. A further page of multiple pictures, however, was at the very end, leaving ghostly traces of its presence on folio 215v. Those apart, the collation shows the manuscript to be intact.

The inclusion of integral pictures, even if only two now survive, is of importance too in assigning the manuscript to an origin under the patronage of Gregory the Great, since Gregory himself made a famous defence of the value of religious illustrations, writing to Serenus, bishop of Marseilles. Pictures, he said, are useful for teaching the faith to the unconverted and for conveying sacred stories to the illiterate. That would be exactly what Augustine would have needed. According to Bede, Augustine made an initial appointment with King Ethelbert of Kent, and showed him a picture of Christ painted on a panel, and then proceeded to preach.

Let us now look more closely at the two remaining full-page pictures. The first is the series of twelve little square scenes, set within a trompe l'oeil frame of red-veined marble. This is on folio 125r. It comprises four rows of three square pictures each, showing incidents from the Passion of Christ. To describe it as resembling a comic strip would be banal, but this is indeed a succession of graphic images telling a story in pictures. The subjects are, briefly, the entry into Jerusalem, the Last Supper, the Agony in the Garden, the raising of Lazarus (oddly out of sequence, and if there is a reason for this I cannot think of it), Christ washing the feet of the disciples, the kiss of Judas, the arrest, Christ before Caiaphas, the mocking of Christ, Pilate washing his hands, Christ led out to be crucified, and the carrying of the Cross. You will notice

that the Crucifixion and Resurrection, the central events of the Passion, do not appear. I would guess that the subsequent sequence of pictures, now lost from later in the manuscript, would have completed the story. On the same principle, the earlier page of scenes attached to Matthew's Gospel probably showed the life of Christ from his nativity to adulthood.

The second picture is the large portrait of Saint Luke, nine pages later. The evangelist resembles a white-bearded Roman senator, seated on a throne with his legs crossed, resting his chin on his hand and holding an open book on his lap. He is not shown in the act of writing, as he might have been in a Greek Gospel Book, but is listening thoughtfully for divine inspiration. The composition here may reflect some late-antique prototype showing a philosopher rather than an author. On either side of Saint Luke are marble columns, alternately red and green, with white marble capitals supporting a lintel and a great arch, all as if straight from a stately throne room in imperial Rome. Within the tympanum at the top is a half-length figure of a winged bull, the symbol of Saint Luke in art. Across the lintel are words about the ox, quoted from the *Carmen Paschale* of the fifth-century poet Sedulius; echoes from the corresponding verses on the symbols of the other evangelists (a man for Matthew, a lion for Mark, and an eagle for John), or sketches of the symbols themselves, occur on folios 2v, 78r and 207v, and are part of the evidence for similar portraits once present in the book. This is very early usage of these pictorial symbols, which derive from Ezekiel's vision of the throne of God (Ezekiel 1:10 and Revelation 4:7). The man, lion, ox and eagle will reappear in the Book of Kells (Chapter Three) right through to pictures of the evangelists in the Spinola Hours (Chapter Twelve). Between the pillars on either side of Saint Luke here are vertical rows of tiny pictures, six on each side, showing incidents from Luke's Gospel, from the annunciation to Zacharias (Luke 1:11) to Zacchaeus up the sycamore tree (Luke 19:4). The scenes are all identified precisely in the margins in an eighth-century English hand. Given that the minute scenes have little to distinguish them, the caption writer either had access to some larger and less generic version, such as a panel or a

luminated manuscripts at all, including the Book of Kells. It is not that gold was an especially rare commodity in the sixth century, for there are many examples from this period of Mediterranean jewellery and mosaics which are rich with gold. However, this is mostly a very muted manuscript. The two picture pages are stupendous rarities, but the text pages are undecorated, not even with initials. Instead, any gold would probably have been on the manuscript's original binding. The ancient flyleaf at the front has two faint lozenge-shaped green stains offset from some brass or copper fitting once nailed through the thickness of the covers, presumably pins for securing fittings of some kind. There is an image of a jewelled bookbinding in the sixth-century mosaics in the church of San Vitale in Ravenna, showing the Emperor Justinian accompanied by priests, one of whom is holding what is surely a copy of the Gospels, bound in boards covered in gold which is inset with ornament in green and white. There also exists a detached jewelled bookbinding of the late sixth or early seventh century still in the treasury of the cathedral of San Giovanni Battista in Monza, near Milan, to which it was given by Theodelinda (*c.* 570–628), queen of the Lombards. We

The jewelled book cover in Monza, probably from the Gospels presented by Saint Gregory to Queen Theodelinda, possibly the kind of binding once on the Gospels of Saint Augustine

know from his epistles that Gregory the Great had sent her a Gospel Book. It does not survive, but, if this is its cover, as is usually assumed, it may be a clue as to the type of binding likely to have been on MS 286, also sent from Gregory. The binding in Monza is of wood covered with gold framed and decorated on both covers with cruciform designs of gold filigree set with coloured stones and pearls between classical cameos. It is even possible that parts of some such binding could have survived on the Gospels of Saint Augustine until the period of looting at Reformation, when it would have been ripped off for the value of its metalwork and jewellery, in which violent process the twenty-two lost leaves at the beginning were torn away too.

The manuscript in the Parker Library is probably the oldest non-archaeological artefact of any kind to have survived in England (it is hard to envisage anything else continuously owned and in use in the country since the late sixth century). It is by some margin the oldest surviving illustrated Latin Gospel Book anywhere in the world. It is matched in date by hardly a handful of other illustrated Gospel manuscripts of comparable date from the Christian orient, and I would not care to assign absolute precedence to any of them. The most mysterious of all are the two volumes recently thrust into prominence following their rediscovery in the monastery at Abba Garima in northern Ethiopia, written in the Ge'ez language. Anything seems possible, in that mysterious culture fossilized from late antiquity. Parts of the Abba Garima manuscripts are perhaps very ancient indeed, and carbon dating of the pages sampled is said to have indicated a secure origin around the fifth to seventh century, which might otherwise have seemed hard to credit. They too include full-face portraits of the evangelists, staring out at us from framed compartments. More certain in date and better documented, however, are the famous Rabbula Gospels, in Syriac translation, signed by the scribe Rabbula in the year 586. That manuscript is now in the Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana in Florence. It is profusely and vigorously illustrated but is apparently overpainted (I have seen the original, where the colouring looks worryingly refreshed). There are also two marvellous Gospel Books in Greek with narrative pictures, utterly real, from around 600 or shortly before. Both are remains of

luxury codices written in gold or silver on purple-stained parchment, with delicate dancing illustrations. One is in the diocesan museum in Rossano, in Calabria, in south-east Italy, and the other is in the Bibliothèque nationale in Paris, known as the Codex Sinopensis from having been acquired in 1899 at Sinop on the Black Sea in northern Turkey. Those, with the Latin Gospels of Saint Augustine in the Parker Library, are the oldest illustrated copies of the Gospels known, and it is a rarefied gathering.

There is an extraordinary aside to this line-up of the sixth-century illustrated manuscripts. But for the merest chance, the Rossano Gospels might now also have been in the Parker Library. My energetic nineteenth-century predecessor as Fellow Librarian of Corpus was the black-bearded acquisitor and classicist, Samuel Savage Lewis (1836–91). His wife was Agnes Smith Lewis, one of the twin 'sisters of Sinai', extraordinary travellers and explorers of Levantine Christiandom in an age when such pursuits were almost exclusively male. In the biography she wrote of her husband after his death, Agnes Lewis tells of their visit together to Rossano in December 1889 to see the famous Gospel Book. No one could find it. Eventually it was tracked down to the house of an archdeacon, who kept it in a cardboard box in a drawer in his bedroom. The cleric and Lewis entered into whispered discussion over its value and the need for money to buy church furniture. The word "immediamente" was overheard. Back in Naples, these unexpected negotiations proceeded in earnest. The sum of £1000 was suggested. Mrs Lewis continues: "So after telegraphing home for funds, he formed a mad project of taking the train back to Rossano, arriving at mid-night, meeting the priests by appointment at the station, and returning with the purchased MS in his pocket by the next train." There was clearly a huge domestic row, as can happen on holiday, and Agnes Lewis, in a deplorable fit of Presbyterian righteousness, vetoed the deal. The rest of the Lewis private collection of books and antiquities is now still the property of Corpus Christi College.

When the Gospels of Saint Augustine arrived in England, it was probably initially a very practical book, not yet venerable enough to have become a relic. It would doubtless have been carried in processions

Saint Matthew, from the eighth-century Codex Aureus now in Stockholm, copied from a similar image once in the Gospels of Saint Augustine

and during the liturgy. It may have been used as an exemplar for copying other manuscripts. We would know this only if identical readings could be found in other Gospel Books of English manufacture, but too little survives to draw clear conclusions. According to Bede, a renewed interest in biblical scholarship took place in St Augustine's Abbey (not yet called that) in the time of Hadrian, abbot there 670–709. He was a North African by birth, fluent in Latin and Greek, previously an abbot in southern Italy. MS 286 is extensively corrected by English hands of the late seventh century, exactly the time of Hadrian, bringing it into line with the mainstream and conventional Vulgate, straightening out the Old Latin variants cited above. Some words are erased and rewritten, or are expunged by crossing out or marking with rows of dots, and alterations and more accurate phrases are inserted in darker ink. From that time onwards, then, the manuscript would no longer have had a text distinctive enough to tell us whether it was used again as an exemplar, but this is likely, given the authority conferred by its provenance.

Its pictures, however, undoubtedly had an enduring afterlife in Canterbury. Its evangelist portraits were copied into the Codex Aureus, a magnificent English Gospel Book of the mid-eighth century, now in the royal library in Stockholm. Frustratingly, the manuscript in Sweden is now missing its picture for Luke. Since the portrait of Luke is the only one which survives in MS 286, a direct comparison between the images of the two manuscripts is impossible. However, the Codex Aureus does furnish us with what are doubtless reliable reproductions of the lost miniatures of Matthew and John in the Gospels of Saint Augustine. Their compositions are almost identical to the surviving Luke picture, showing the authors seated under arches with their symbols in the tympana above. The Matthew miniature in Stockholm even has the little wispy plants which appear in the Gospels of Saint Augustine growing beside Luke's chair. It is not known where the Codex Aureus was made, except that it was stolen in the ninth century by a raiding party of Vikings and it was then ransomed back for gold by a couple in Canterbury, Aldorman Ælfred and his wife, Werberg, and so it is likely to have come from Canterbury originally. The symbol of the ox above Luke in MS 286 was also copied unambiguously into a Gospel Book now in the British Library, adapted from a whole Bible which was demonstrably made at St Augustine's Abbey in the later eighth century. The creature is exactly the same, lying with its limp-wristed hoof resting daintily across a book. This adds to the virtual certainty that MS 286 was indeed at St Augustine's long before the first charters were added in the tenth century.

The page with the rows of pictorial squares, like those in Ethiopian churches, had an even more long-lasting influence on English art. Most strikingly, the scene of the Last Supper at the top centre was copied in the late eleventh century, with negligible alteration, into the Bayeux Tapestry, no less, where the scene becomes Bishop Odo of Bayeux blessing a chalice at a round table, after the Normans had landed at Pevensey in September 1066. The Gospel Book of Saint Augustine therefore has a part to play in the argument that the Bayeux Tapestry was actually made in Canterbury. The design of multiple squares forming a narrative sequence is apparently echoed as late as the twelfth century in the prefatory cycle from the Eadwine Psalter, written in Christ Church

maybe ancient Christian manuscripts always did that, for their parchment is generally much finer than in later books, and perhaps one reason for carrying early Gospel Books open in processions at all was because this effect is astonishingly powerful and moving. I have to add, in the interests of scientific detachment, that it did not occur again in 2013.

Finally, I return to the incident with which I opened this chapter. It began with a tentative telephone call in June 2010 from Canon Jonathan Goodall, the archbishop of Canterbury's chaplain at Lambeth Palace, with what he called 'an interesting idea'. He explained to me that he and his colleagues were planning the visit of Pope Benedict XVI to England that September. This was only the second occasion when any reigning pope had been to Britain. The proposal, he said, was for the Pope and the Archbishop to preside jointly at an ecumenical service in Westminster Abbey. The reason for choosing the Abbey, rather than, say, the cathedrals of Canterbury (Anglican) or Westminster (Catholic), is because the Abbey is a 'royal peculiar', which means that it is subject directly to the Queen and is independent of the jurisdiction of Canterbury. Therefore the Pope and the Archbishop would be equal guests of the Dean, without the diplomatic delicacy of precedence. Westminster Abbey was also once, of course, a medieval Benedictine monastery, and (especially appropriately, in this context) one dedicated to Saint Peter. Would we, Canon Goodall wondered, consider allowing the Gospel Book of Saint Augustine to be carried into the Abbey in the procession and to be jointly reverenced by the Pope and the Archbishop after the reading of the Gospel text for the day?

The formal request trickled its way slowly through the bureaucracy of Corpus Christi College. Facilities for insurance and transport were put in place. On the morning of Friday, 17 September 2010, I was at the College well before six. The manuscript had been packed the previous night in a dark-blue bombproof case. We strapped it into its security van (not a police car) and I travelled with it down to London and along the Embankment to Westminster Abbey. By eight o'clock it was locked in the safe below the library in the east range of the cloister, in the care of Tony Trowles, Abbey librarian. The whole service was meticulously rehearsed from 11.30 onwards. We were all walked through our paces,

even the Archbishop, who was there (the Pope was not), and some last-minute modifications were made to enable appropriate but unobtrusive television coverage. For the rehearsals I used a modern book in place of the original.

By mid-afternoon the whole of Westminster was cordoned off by police. Security was very tight indeed. Re-entering the Abbey precincts shortly before four o'clock was difficult. A clergyman in the queue happened to recognize me, and I was hurried in, back to the cloisters, where we prepared the book onto a kind of modified red cushion, rather like an invalid's padded breakfast tray. We had been asked if the book could be opened at one of its picture pages but this seemed curatorially irresponsible. Instead we turned it to the Latin words of the designated Gospel reading for the service, Mark 10:35–45, so that the Pope would be able to venerate the actual text just read.

I was to be dressed in suitable academic regalia, the first time I had worn a Cambridge Ph.D. The manuscript and I were escorted to the Jerusalem Chamber by the west door of the Abbey (it was the room where Henry IV died). The affable Cardinal Archbishop of Armagh was already there. I sat in a corner with the manuscript on my lap. One by one, the heads of the various Christian churches of Britain arrived too, some already arrayed in underlayers of medieval finery, and others with trim little suitcases, from which mysterious apparel and ornaments were unfolded. Furtively watching them deck themselves, like walking Christmas trees, each after his or her own kind, was an unforgettable pleasure of the day. There were the moderators of the Presbyterian Church and of the Free Churches of England and Wales and of the United Reformed Church, chattering to bishops and archbishops; there were the presidents of the Methodist Conference and, in striking contrast, of the Council of Oriental Churches in the United Kingdom, with the Archbishop of Thyateira and Great Britain; and the Methodist and the Lutheran and the Salvation Army, and many others, gathering and robing.

By now the quiet anticipatory rumble of several thousand invited guests in the Abbey was eclipsed by singing and shouting from enormous and motley crowds in the street outside. The cardinal and I walked over and watched from the window. There was a swathe of

banners and flags and placards, protesting at and welcoming the Pope in equal measure. Probably Saint Augustine of Canterbury had encountered not dissimilar gatherings when he disembarked in 597. A canon switched on a television in the Jerusalem Chamber, so that we could watch the Pope's speech in Westminster Hall, which told us too when the papal entourage was about to cross the road towards the Abbey, which was the cue for our strange panoply to move out from the Chamber into places in the west end of the nave. Clutching the manuscript, I took up my appointed position at the memorial stone for David Lloyd George, beside a pillar. "Don't you sometimes think, What *am* I doing here?" I whispered to the polychrome verger beside me, holding the glittering processional Cross of Westminster. He looked puzzled. "No," he said; "not really. This is normal work for us."

The Pope's entrance through the west door was heralded by roars

Pope Benedict XVI in Westminster Abbey venerating the Gospels of Saint Augustine, held by Christopher de Hamel, watched by Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury

of the crowd in the street and the whirring of innumerable cameras, like the sound of thousands of birds taking flight. After the Pope was greeted and robed, we all set off in stately procession down the long gothic nave of the Abbey and up through the choir and across the mosaic pavement laid for Henry III in 1268. I placed the precious volume on the high altar, doubtless much as it would have been in Saint Augustine's Abbey in the early Middle Ages, and I bowed (a bit self-consciously) and moved to my seat in the adjacent sedilia. The long procession continued, culminating in the Dean, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and the Pope, with attendant chaplains. Later, after the reading of the Gospel (in English, by the Moderator of the Church of Scotland), my brief task was to bring the manuscript forward on its cushion to the Pope, who bowed in front of me and kissed the pages, and then to turn to the Archbishop, who did the same. My primary worry was not to slip over on the deceptively smooth medieval stone steps down from the high altar and back again. Tripping up, which I am capable of doing at the best of times, would have made spectacular television but would have been bad for the manuscript. Afterwards, during the singing of the Magnificat, the Dean censed the altar, endlessly waving the smoking thurible back and forth over the open manuscript, and I wondered what I would do if I saw a crumb of smoldering charcoal landing on the parchment.

In fact, all was well. Afterwards we could not even smell the incense on the pages. The Archbishop in his address recounted how the Church in England had ultimately been a papal foundation, represented by the Gospel Book sent here by Pope Gregory in Rome. At the scheduled moment, I carried the volume out again, back to my post on top of Lloyd George, and I watched the Pope pass by and out into applause in the dusk outside. When the congregation had dispersed and the streets of Westminster were reopened, the security van drove in through into Dean's Yard and we repacked the manuscript for its return journey. By the late evening it was safely home in Cambridge from its recaptured moment of medieval splendour, and, in the dark, back on its shelf in the vault, it reverted once again to being MS 286 in Matthew Parker's library.

CHAPTER TWO

The Codex Amiatinus

c. 700
Florence, Biblioteca Laurenziana,
Cod. Amiat. 1

Very little has survived above ground from seventh-century England. Traces of architecture of the period can still be seen in the west end of the parish church of St Peter at Monk Wearmouth, in the modern county of Tyne and Wear in the far north-east of England in what was ancient Northumbria. Despite being a designated World Heritage Site, however, the overall setting of the building there is disappointing today, in the suburbs of the modern industrial town and port of Sunderland, looking much like any Victorian parish church in a trim municipal park encircled by houses. There are neat notices on the lawn to the south of the church indicating outlines of recent archaeological excavations, but it takes more than my imagination to envisage this as a wild Dark Age landscape near where the great Wear river emerges into the North Sea (neither of which are now within sight of the church), given in 674 by Ecgfrith, king of Northumbria, for the foundation of a great monastery on the model of those in late-classical Rome.

The first abbot and founder of this new northern abbey was Benedict Biscop (*c.* 628–90), a local nobleman who visited Rome no fewer than five times in his life. These experiences clearly made a huge impact on his cultural outlook. He had decided to become a monk. On his third trip, in the year 669, he escorted back to England the seventh archbishop of Canterbury in succession to Saint Augustine, Theodore

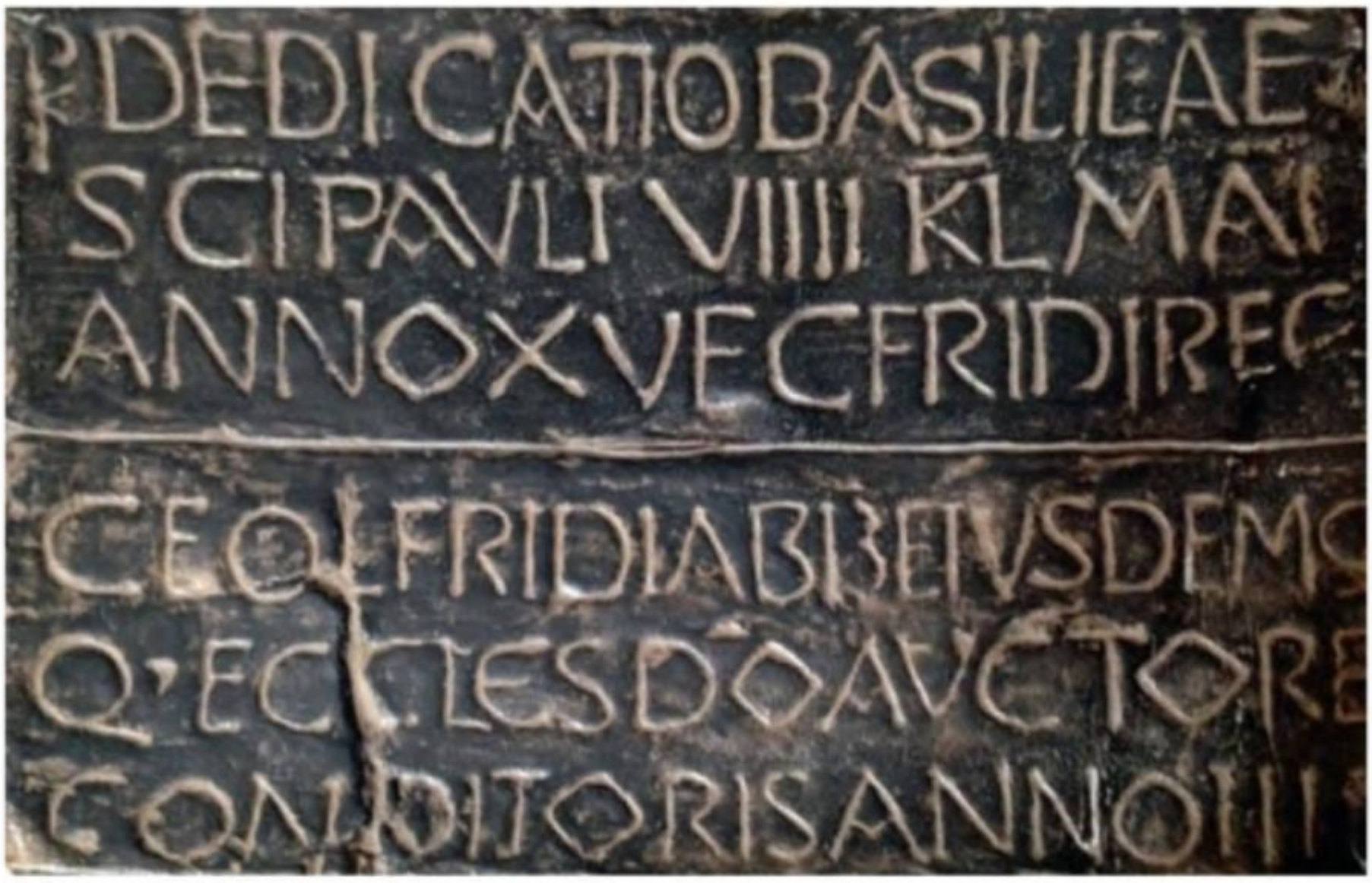
church. Abbot Benedict Biscop entrusted this task to Ceolfrith, who moved up to the new site with twenty members of the monastery, including Bede, who was then a young boy and a junior monk. The two foundations were conceived as one community, within manageable walking distance of each other. Modern historians commonly refer to the twin monasteries as 'Wearmouth–Jarrow', as if they were a single location, and it is customary to refer to 'the library' or 'the scriptorium' of Wearmouth–Jarrow as indistinguishable entities. Wearmouth was dedicated to Saint Peter and Jarrow to Saint Paul, the joint patrons of Christian Rome. It is likely that Ceolfrith transferred up to Jarrow the manuscripts that he had himself acquired in Rome, since Bede clearly had continued access to them, but they would nevertheless have remained the joint property of both churches. In 686, Ceolfrith was appointed abbot of both houses, and he remained living at Jarrow for a further thirty years.

The church of Saint Paul in Jarrow today is incomparably more evocative than its twin sibling further south. It is outside its modern town, in a beautiful grove of trees set with paths and benches, where I sat taking notes in the dappled sunlight. To the south side of the church are twelfth-century ruins of the monastery rebuilt on Ceolfrith's site, which, like that at Wearmouth, has now been fully excavated and is marked out clearly on the grass. The ground there, which was once terraced, slopes down steeply to the muddy banks of the slow-moving river Don, just before it joins the mightier Tyne as it flows out into the ocean. East of the church is the wasteland known as Jarrow Slake, and in the distance are the cranes and oil containers of the Port of Tyne dockyards. The proximity of the sea was a benefit to the builders and suppliers of the abbey, but also a danger, for the monastery was first sacked and looted by the Vikings in 794.

It was a Sunday morning when I was there. An old man joined me on my bench. I asked about the opening hours of the church. He said that the morning service would begin at eleven o'clock and I replied that I would be glad to attend it. He told me much more, not all of which I really understood, for the robust Geordie accent can still be impenetrable to southerners. Ceolfrith and the visiting Roman cantor

The church of Saint Paul in Jarrow, viewed from the north side: the tower and the east end are survivals from the Anglo-Saxon monastery

had doubtless conversed in Latin, which might have been easier. Inside the church itself we sat on wooden chairs in the nave, rather than in pews (my new companion disapproved of this recent innovation), and I could see up through the base of the tower into the tiny early chancel at the east end, which dates from the time of Ceolfrith himself. On its right wall, the southern side, are three tiny original seventh-century windows, one now set with recovered fragments of Anglo-Saxon coloured glass, the earliest known. Windows facing south were characteristic in early Irish churches too, for that was the direction of sunlight. The equivalent window on the north wall at Jarrow is modern, designed by John Piper and unveiled in 1985 by Diana, Princess of Wales. High above the chancel arch, inset into the wall and visible from the nave, are two tangent stone tablets with their famous contemporary inscription in Latin recording the dedication of this church of Saint Paul in 685, on IX Kal. May (23 April) in the fifteenth year of King Ecgfrith and in the fourth year of the founder Abbot Ceolfrith, who is mentioned here by



The stone recording the dedication of Jarrow Church in 685 in the fifteenth year of the reign of King Ecgfrith and the fourth of the abbacy of Ceolfrith

name. It was a moving experience to sit in prayer beneath words and names which would have been seen daily in that very same church by Ceolfrith and Bede so long ago. Whether the monks would have recognized much of the Anglican Sunday service is another matter. Large parts of both the choir and the sparse congregation were women. For the reading of the Gospel, however, the two priests, robed in green and white, processed out into the nave carrying the sacred book aloft with its elaborate covers closed: that would be imaginable with one of the manuscripts brought back from Rome in 680.

There are two related early eighth-century accounts of the copying of further biblical manuscripts here under the patronage of Ceolfrith. Given the rarity of any documentary references to Anglo-Saxon book production, these deserve to be looked at carefully. The first occurs in an anonymous life of Ceolfrith, evidently written by one of his monks. It records that Ceolfrith greatly enriched the furnishings of the church at Jarrow and that he added notably to the collection of books which he and Benedict Biscop had brought back from Rome. The author explains that Ceolfrith commissioned three further entire Bibles (or pandects – the word we encountered earlier), of which one was placed in

each of the churches of the twin monasteries, so that whoever wanted to read a passage from either testament could do so without difficulty. There is no certain date for this, except that it happened during Ceolfrith's abbacy, but these manuscripts are likely to have been begun in the last decades of the seventh century, and the work may well have continued into the beginning of the eighth century.

Bede, who was undoubtedly very familiar with the copy displayed in Jarrow church, supplements this account slightly in his *Historia abbatum*. He describes Ceolfrith as having brought a pandect of an 'old' translation of the Bible from Rome and having then increased the benefaction by making three further copies of it but according to the 'new' text instead. It is this last observation which is important. It is typical of Bede that he noticed and recorded which translation was being used. The scribes under Ceofrith's direction modelled their copies on the format of the great pandect they had received from Italy, but now they substituted its text to be that of Jerome's more modern Vulgate. That fact will become significant in the story.

One new Vulgate Bible for each of Wearmouth and Jarrow is understandable, although impressive, but a third copy? We can only speculate. Perhaps there were plans which never materialized for the foundation of a third Northumbrian house, as distinct but as indivisible as the Trinity (a conceit they would have liked); or perhaps – he would not be unique in this – Ceolfrith secretly wondered if his career would lead him yet further, perhaps as archbishop of Canterbury on Theodore's death or even as pope, and maybe he kept one volume in reserve for any new promotion he might be offered elsewhere. Both the anonymous *Vita Ceolfridi* and Bede tell us what happened eventually. At the advanced age of seventy-four, Ceolfrith decided to go back again to Rome and to take the spare third pandect with him as a gift for Saint Peter, prince of the apostles. (It was common medieval practice to refer to a church by the name of its patron saint, as if still alive: what is meant, of course, is the papal court.) The implication is that this announcement came as a surprise to the community of Wearmouth–Jarrow. We do not know his motive, any more than Bede did. Was Ceolfrith still privately hoping for an appointment in Rome, for which

he might need the Bible to ease the negotiations? Pope Constantine had died on 9 April 715, and Ceolfrith's decision to travel was probably made around the time that the news reached England. Or had there been some tacit understanding in 679 that he could take books from Rome to Northumbria in exchange for eventual transcripts? Both are possibilities. The *Vita Ceolfridi* records the exact words of an inscription which was inserted at the beginning of the volume, presenting it to Saint Peter from Ceolfrith, abbot of the English, from the furthest ends of the earth ("extremis de finibus"). In June 716, as the account tells us, this third pandect, already suitably inscribed, was therefore carried down that slope below Jarrow church into a ship in the river Don and into the Tyne and out to sea, accompanied by Ceolfrith and a retinue of monks. This is the first documented export of a work of art from England. Alas, Ceolfrith died on the journey in Langres in central France in September, and that, for over a thousand years, was the end of the story.

There is a famous early manuscript Bible in Italy known as the Codex Amiatinus. It was an ancient treasure of the monastery of San Salvatore on Monte Amiata, in southern Tuscany, from which it takes its name. It is recorded in a list of the abbey's relics dated 1036, describing it as being an Old and New Testament 'written in the hand of the blessed Pope Gregory'. An attribution to Saint Gregory the Great (*c.* 540–604) was a not unreasonable ascription, since it is written in Italianate uncials, very like the Gospel Book of Saint Augustine, and it was never doubted that it had been made in Italy. It opens with a full-page dedication which presents the book to the monastery of the Saviour (*Salvator*) from a Peter, abbot of the Lombards, 'from the furthest ends of the earth'. This is an echo of the wording of Deuteronomy 28:49. Even today, Tuscans regard all Lombards as people of an alien realm beyond the furthest frontiers of civilization (and vice versa), and the strangely worded inscription was contentedly accepted in San Salvatore at face value. The book is the oldest surviving entire manuscript of the Vulgate and it is still the principal witness for establishing the text of the Latin Bible.

from the eighth century. To the north side of the church is the cloister, which presumably at one time housed the library. There is a small monastery museum above the south range of the cloister. It was closed until four o'clock, despite our importuning a sleeping priest and several nuns, but, after an agreeably pleasant lunch and a stroll through the town, we obtained admission at the appointed hour and we saw wonderful medieval objects and textiles and many photographs of the famous Codex Amiatinus.

We learned from the museum displays that the documented history of the abbey goes back to 742. It joined the Cistercian Order in 1228. Charlemagne is reported to have stayed here in 800, on his way south to his imperial coronation in Rome. Pope Pius II – Enea Silvio Piccolomini, the humanist scholar – lived here during the summer months of 1462, as is commemorated by a Latin monument under the chestnut trees outside the church, which Nicolas declaimed for us into English. The emperor and surely the pope might very easily have been shown the precious codex. Because the manuscript was (and still is) the primary witness for the text of the Latin Vulgate, it assumed great importance during the Counter-Reformation. The beleaguered sixteenth-century Catholics felt threatened by Protestant translations of the Bible, which were newly taken directly from the original languages of the Scriptures, whereas they had only the Latin. The Codex Amiatinus, however, provided an apparently unassailable response to this. This reputedly sixth-century Latin 'Bible of Saint Gregory' was substantially older than any Hebrew manuscript known and at that time was matched by only one in Greek (in the Vatican). It was therefore a major piece of propaganda in the battle of textual precedence. In 1572, the general chapter of the Cistercians sent for it for consultation; so too did the advisors of Gregory XIII. The monastery refused to lend it. Eventually it was summarily demanded by Pope Sixtus V to be used as the principal source for preparing a new papal edition of the Bible, and the monastery had no choice. The book left for Rome on 12 July 1587 and was returned to San Salvatore on 19 January 1590. The Sistine Vulgate based on it was published in 1590 and then revised as the monumental Clementine edition of 1592, the Catholic response to Luther, which is still in print.

Like many Italian monasteries caught up by the modernizing secular politics of the Holy Roman Empire in the late eighteenth century, the Abbadia San Salvatore was summarily suppressed in June 1782. For several years the Codex Amiatinus might have been available to anyone enterprising enough to steal it. Its existence was reported in 1789 to the Grand Duke of Tuscany, Peter Leopold (1747–92, later emperor himself as Leopold II), as having been 'among the shadows and under dust, unknown as though lost'. He ordered it to be taken from Monte Amiata to Florence, first to the custody of a seminary and then soon afterwards to the Biblioteca Laurenziana, where it is now Cod. Amiat. 1, probably the library's most famous manuscript.

My first inquiry about seeing the Codex Amiatinus itself was met with refusal, that deep all-encompassing sigh of infinite regret which only the Italians have perfected: it is too fragile to be moved, I was informed, and it is too precious to be handled. In Italy, however, the word 'no' is not necessarily a negative. It is merely a preliminary stage of discussion. I am indebted to Laura Nuvoloni for advice and to Giovanna Rao for willingness to listen to my entreaty.

Half a century ago, the English archaeologist Rupert Bruce-Mitford described his experience of seeing the Codex Amiatinus for the first time:

> Having put in one's slip, and waited a respectable interval, one watches with awe two attendants, with a third to open doors, staggering in under the load. Half a dozen fat volumes have to be placed on the table, to take the strain off the binding, before one can open its covers. It is with trepidation that one ventures to produce the bicycle lamp with which one had planned to supplement, for minute scrutiny of the decoration, the inadequate light in Michelangelo's octagonal reading room.

As a picture of antiquarianism from long ago, this image seems difficult to credit in the modern world. Actually, my own encounter with Amiatinus was to be not so different.

The Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana is among the architectural and literary glories of Florence, one of the most achingly beautiful cities

The old reading-room of the Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, designed by Michelangelo, above the cloisters of the Basilica di San Laurenzo in Florence

in the world. Its core is the humanist library originally assembled by Cosimo de' Medici '*il vecchio*' (1389–1464), supplemented especially by the acquisitions of his grandson Lorenzo 'the Magnificent' (1449–92). After Lorenzo's death the books were ransacked, sold, and reacquired by the Medicis by now living in Rome. Eventually the collections were returned to Florence by Clement VII (Giulio di Giuliano de' Medici, 1478–1534), who commissioned Michelangelo himself to design a noble library for them over the cloisters of the Basilica di San Lorenzo, the family church of the Medici since 1419. It was completed in 1571 by the pope's collateral kinsman Cosimo I de' Medici (1519–74), Grand Duke of Tuscany, then with about 3000 manuscripts. It still retained something of the character of a dynastic library when Grand Duke Peter Leopold commanded Amiatinus to be brought here from the *extremis finibus* of his dukedom in the 1780s.

You approach the library through a gateway in the south-west corner of the Piazza di San Lorenzo, the square in front of the unfinished brick façade of the church. There are Italian and European flags over the entrance, and banners for whatever exhibition is currently on view.

It leads you, via a ticket office, into the cloister built in 1462. There are Renaissance monuments around the walls. In the middle is a pretty garden. I am sure that the fruit trees are oranges but my guidebook asserts them to be pomegranates. The stairs to the library are straight ahead, beside the tomb of Paulo Giovio (1483–1552, notable manuscript collector: I was glad to see him). The steps lead up past faded frescoes onto the upper level above the eastern range of the cloister. The first door is the public entrance into the staircase to the library room built by Michelangelo and still with its ranks of sloping book presses. The second door, beside a terracotta pot, takes you into the library office.

Two women were chatting. I said that I had an appointment to see a medieval manuscript. They placed a telephone call. A man in jeans appeared and asked if I spoke Italian: I replied in English, then French and German – "necnon etiam Latinam", I ventured hopefully – but he shrugged and informed me in Italian anyway (I hadn't even said who I was) that I must have come to see the *Bibbia Amiatina*. I agreed, relieved. He led me along through a series of low rooms lined with framed prints, past staff lockers and what are presumably entrances into secure book vaults on the right, below Michelangelo's interior above. By the far corner of the cloister we came to a little room evidently used for photography, with camera stands, filing cabinets of microfilms and a photocopier. Another man appeared. They pointed to a trolley with a bulky shape under a blanket. "Amiatina!" they declared, and the two of them, reminiscent of Bruce-Mitford's experience, together heaved it bodily onto the photographer's high table, and made to depart. There were no facilities for propping the book open safely, and I begged for something to place under the cover when I lifted it. They came back with the four volumes of the library's set of Briquet's *Filigranes*, not the first time those century-old reference books have proven woefully inadequate. Then I was left alone, entirely unsupervised throughout my visit, except by the occasional person who wandered through to use the photocopier.

Just as Amiata is a great mountain, there is no denying that the Codex Amiatinus is a colossus. It is not so much tall, for many late-medieval choir books are of larger dimensions, but it is almost

unimaginably thick. Each page is about 20 inches high, but the spine – try to envisage it – is about 11½ inches across. The width tapers slightly towards the fore-edge. The manuscript is bound in very modern plain tan-coloured calfskin over wood with leather straps dangling from the lower board stitched with yellow thread and fitted with modern brass clasps which reach up to metal pins set in the edge of the upper cover. It looks, frankly, like a huge and expensive Italian leather suitcase. I raised the front cover, far too high from the table for the pile of Briquet volumes to support. There is a long shelf slip stamped 'Amiatino 1' enclosed and a recent photocopied sheet loosely tucked in from the Ministero per i beni e le attività culturali authorizing conservation, including full rebinding in 2001, naming the conservators as Sabina Magrini and Sergio Giovannoni. Although it is unmanageably bulky, there is satisfaction in the fact that they retained it as a single pandect, as so impressed Bede and the biographer of Ceolfrith, and the manuscript is not now arbitrarily subdivided into modern volumes for its librarians' convenience, like the Book of Kells (Chapter Three) or the Morgan Beatus (Chapter Five). Offsets of rust on the outer edges of the endleaves suggest that there were once metal fittings on the covers.

Out of interest, I attempted to pick the volume up. I can do so, using both arms, but not when the manuscript is open, for it would be simply impossible to hold without it sagging uncontrollably in the middle. Bruce-Mitford weighed it at 75½ lb, or, with binding, fittings, and travelling case, at an estimated 90 lb, comparable, as he unforgettably suggested, to the weight of a fully grown female Great Dane. A twelve- to thirteen-year-old boy is about the same.

The first eight leaves, which we will examine closely in a second, are fractionally smaller than the rest of the book, and are lavishly decorated. There is the precious dedication inscription under an arch on the verso of the first leaf, with the substituted names very apparent in much browner ink and not nearly as neatly executed as the unaltered writing. There on the facing page is the supremely famous Ezra portrait, the oldest English painting to which any absolute date can be assigned (i.e. not after 716). Familiar works of art abound in Florence, but there is still a thrill of recognition in encountering them in the

CODICIBVS SACRIS HOSTILI CLADE PERVSTIS
ESDRA DŌ FERVENS HOC REPARAVIT OPVS

emendations, and signs of consultation and reference over centuries. Apart from a few contemporary corrections and liturgical markings, probably from the original scriptorium in Northumbria, the manuscript shows almost no signs of use whatsoever. It is as if it were wrapped up and never opened. Perhaps that is precisely what did occur, if the monks of San Salvatore regarded it as a sacred relic of Saint Gregory rather than as a book with any practical use. The Psalms are now numbered in a post-medieval hand and there is discreet chapter numeration according to the modern system, which I could easily believe might date from the manuscript's exile in the Vulgate editors' offices in Rome in 1587–90. It is a sad truth that if you lend any precious possession reluctantly, it seldom comes back in precisely the condition in which it left.

The manuscript is mostly constructed in gatherings of eight leaves each.* At one time, scholars of Amiatinus speculated that its exotic preliminary quire might have been transferred from some other manuscript, perhaps of Italian origin, for it is so unlike the rest of the volume or anything known in any other extant medieval Bible. Two of the leaves are stained purple and one in yellow, entirely classical devices. However, it is now universally accepted that these pages are an integral if very unusual component of the volume, by the same English scribes and illuminators using the same pigments as the picture of Christ in Majesty for the New Testament on folio 796v, which is unquestionably an original part of the book, as the collation shows.

The presence of these opening pages leads us into another whole layer of extraordinary coincidence to that account of Benedict Biscop

* The collation is: i^{8} [a bifolium + 4 + 2 singles], ii–xxi^{8}, xxii^{4+1} [folio 173 is a single sheet], xxiii–xxiv^{8}, xxv^{4}, xxvi–xlvii^{8}, xlviii^{8+1} [folio 378 is a single sheet], xlix–lxvii^{8}, lxviii^{4+1} [folio 535 is a single sheet], lxix–lxxxix^{8}, xc^{4+1} [folio 708 is a single sheet], xci–cxviii^{8}, cxix–cxx^{8+1} [folio 941 and 950 are single sheets], cxxi–cxxx^{8}. The manuscript has original numerical quire signatures in Roman numerals in most lower inner corners of the last leaves of the gatherings, sometimes preceded by the letter 'Q' (*quaternion*) and sometimes not. A complication is that the first quire is not numbered (folios 1–8, all preliminary leaves), and the scribe's quire signature 'XXIV' is carelessly repeated, appearing at the end of what is thus actually the twenty-fifth gathering (folio 193v) and also at the end of the twenty-sixth (folio 201v). What the scribe would have called quire CXXVIII, the last in the manuscript, is therefore in reality the 130th gathering.

LEFT: Christ in Majesty, between the four Evangelists with their symbols, the full-page illustration preceding the New Testament in the Codex Amiatinus. The curve on the left is from the neck of the animal's skin

and Ceolfrith obtaining an 'immeasurable quantity of books' on their visit to Italy in 679. It involves a library of books assembled by Cassiodorus (*c.* 485–580), consul in the late Roman Empire, philosopher and prolific author, a Christian convert and a giant figure in the history of biblical scholarship. In his retirement, Cassiodorus had set up a kind of monastic research foundation in Calabria in the extreme south-east of Italy, called the Vivarium – the name alludes to the fish ponds on the estate – and he bequeathed his personal library to it. Furthermore, in the *Institutiones*, his textbook on divine and secular learning, Cassiodorus not only explained his method of subdividing and interpreting the Bible but he also described in detail how he had had his unique biblical apparatus incorporated into some of his own manuscripts. The details given correspond so exactly to what is in those first leaves of the Codex Amiatinus that the inescapable explanation seems to be that these are direct copies, and that somehow that 'immeasurable quantity of books' secured in Rome must have included some of Cassiodorus's own manuscripts formerly at the Vivarium, then back on the market. As so often with small and poorly endowed libraries, the Vivarium had failed to survive for long after its founder's death and its books were evidently dispersed or sold. If some (at least) were then bought by Ceolfrith, they would in turn have become available as exemplars for the scribes of Wearmouth–Jarrow in Northumbria. Bede, whose knowledge of classical learning was so astonishingly wide, perhaps had the fortune of access to purchases made from one of the finest private book collections of the late Roman Empire, and he may not even have realized that the manuscripts at Jarrow had once been owned by the great Cassiodorus himself.

In his *Institutiones*, Cassiodorus describes owning a huge pandect of a Latin translation of the Bible, which he called his '*Codex Grandior*', 'the larger manuscript'. Its Old Testament text, he says, was taken from Jerome's first revision of the Greek, rather than from the later Vulgate version newly translated from the Hebrew. It apparently comprised 380 leaves. Considering the extreme rarity then of any comprehensive one-volume Bibles in Latin, this manuscript was in all probability none other than that very same pandect in an 'old' translation brought back

from Italy by Ceolfrith. Cassiodorus says that he had inserted into his *Codex Grandior* a diagram of the layout of the Temple of Jerusalem, as described in Exodus 26. Exactly such a detailed plan appears on a double-page spread among the opening leaves of the Codex Amiatinus (folios 6v–7r). It shows the inner temple, the Tabernacle itself. In the centre is the Holy of Holies, with the Ark of the Covenant. Furthermore, Cassiodorus reports (this is all in book I, chapter 14, of the *Institutiones*), that he also included in the *Codex Grandior* diagrams of the different ways of dividing the text of the Bible according to Saints Hilary, Jerome and Augustine respectively. That is precisely what we find on folios 3r, 4r and 8r of Amiatinus.

The most famous and strangest of the preliminary pages is the so-called Ezra portrait, already mentioned, now placed as a frontispiece. It shows a haloed man in Jewish priestly garments sitting hunched up on a stool almost in profile, writing in a book half open on his lap. He has his feet on a low pedestal. Scattered around him are the various instruments of a scribe's occupation – stylus, dividers, pen, ink pot and what is probably a dish of pigment on a separate table. Behind him is an open cupboard, with panelled doors hinged back to reveal five sloping shelves on which are arranged nine books bound in decorated dark red covers. A very similar bookcase enclosing the four Gospels on shelves is depicted in a mosaic of Saint Laurence in the Mausoleum of Galla Placidia in Ravenna, datable to the second half of the fifth century, almost within Cassiodorus's lifetime. The carpentry of the furniture and the ornament carved around the cupboard shown in the Codex Amiatinus are extraordinarily delicate and sophisticated. There is an enlightened attempt at perspective. The ink pot throws a shadow on the ground, worth noting if only because it is usually said that shadows do not appear in European art until the fifteenth century. Simply as an illustration of a scribe drawn in England in the late seventh century, the picture is full of interest, not least in that he has no writing desk and he is working directly into a book on his lap, as scribes still do in Ethiopia today. As I was jotting this down and thinking

OVERLEAF: The plan of the Temple in Jerusalem in the Codex Amiatinus, similar to that described by Cassiodorus who inserted a comparable illustration into his *Codex Grandior*

how different it is from most images of a medieval scriptorium, I realized that I was at that moment taking my notes into a hard-bound exercise book on my own lap, because the Codex Amiatinus filled the entire table before me, leaving no room for anything else. For a moment, the scribe seated writing in front of a book cupboard might have been me beside the microfilm cabinets and reprographic equipment of the Laurenziana.

It is a strange subject, apparently showing an author drafting a text rather than a scribe copying one. The words in his book are indicated by disjointed scribbles: it is sometimes claimed that these are actual Tironian notes, a kind of early-medieval shorthand, but it is surely no more than the artist's representation of non-specific text. At the top of the page outside the frame of the picture is a couplet written in rustic capitals "Codicibus sacris hostili clade perustis / Esdra deo fervens hoc reparavit opus", meaning (more or less), 'The Holy Books having been destroyed by hostile disaster, Ezra, committed to God, restored this work.' This alludes to the occasion at the end of the captivity of the Jews in Babylon around 457 BC when the priest and scribe Ezra was sent back to Jerusalem and found that the Hebrew Scriptures had been forgotten and lost, and under divine guidance he reconstructed them from memory. It is this caption, as well as his Old Testament priestly costume, which identifies the man shown as Ezra.

Prefatory author portraits had probably been a feature of Greek texts since classical antiquity. We have looked at the Luke portrait in the Gospel Book of Saint Augustine (Chapter One). Ezra was not precisely an author. His contribution, if we take it at face value, was in preserving texts from the first part of the Old Testament – not of course the entirety of the Christian Scriptures, most of which dated from long after his lifetime. In many ways, a more appropriate frontispiece for a pandect of the whole Vulgate would have been an image of Saint Jerome writing, as does indeed often open many later medieval Bibles. The style here is so utterly Mediterranean that it must have been copied from the exemplar imported from Italy, presumably also in the *Codex Grandior*, although Cassiodorus does not mention the presence of such a picture there. It is commonly suggested that the painting in

Amiatinus is actually a misunderstood picture of Cassiodorus himself, who was, like Jerome (and Ezra, and Ceolfrith), a committed preserver and transmitter of the Bible after a period of chaos. Cassiodorus lived through the sack of Rome at the hands of the Ostrogoths in 546, and his little Christian oasis at the Vivarium was dedicated to keeping the Scriptures safe during the storms of barbarianism and apostasy. In his *Institutiones*, Cassiodorus not only describes his *Codex Grandior* but also what he calls the "novem codices", the nine separate volumes into which he had the text of the Bible divided and copied. The shelves in the cupboard behind Ezra in the picture show just that: nine biblical volumes with titles on their spines. In reproductions of the page these names are almost impossible to see but, by positioning the original manuscript so that it reflects the light, the nine titles become visible from their shine against a matt ground – the Octateuch, Kings and Chronicles with Job, eight books of history, the Psalms, the books of Solomon, the Prophets, the Gospels, the Epistles, and (lastly) Acts and Revelation. At best, only the first shelf could have applied to Ezra in historical reality, but all nine were in the library of the Vivarium. It would make better sense if the model for this picture had been a portrait of Cassiodorus. Whether Cassiodorus would commission a picture of himself is disputable, but his posthumous librarians and successors might easily have inserted such a hagiographic frontispiece into their late master's favourite *Codex Grandior*.

The use of this image of the scribe for different identities – Cassiodorus or Ezra – is perpetuated by a remarkable instance of pictorial transference further up the coast of Northumbria in the late seventh or first half of the eighth century: the portrait was exactly re-copied yet again, but this time its subject changes once more into the iconic frontispiece of the evangelist Saint Matthew in the famous Lindisfarne Gospels in the British Library. There the composition of the former 'Ezra' is precisely reutilized as a Gospel writer, to the exact composition of his posture, his hands on the open book, his sandals and two stools, one for himself and one for his feet.

From the scribe, let us turn to the script. The text of the Codex Amiatinus is written in uncials, the quintessential '*romana scriptura*',

Saint Matthew in the Lindisfarne Gospels of the late seventh or early eighth century, copied in Northumbria from the same model as the image of Ezra in the Codex Amiatinus

laid out, like the Gospels of Saint Augustine brought from Rome, in the double columns of long and short lines suitable for ease of reading aloud, '*per cola et commata*'. The uncial is utterly unlike the native-born majuscules and minuscules of Irish books, known to manuscript historians as the 'insular' style, which encompasses all the Celtic sphere of the British Isles. The contrast with Mediterranean uncials is further graphic evidence that the communities of Wearmouth and Jarrow were distancing themselves from Ireland and consciously imitated Roman writing practices. A possibility has to be that Benedict Biscop and Ceolfrith brought back trained scribes from Italy, to teach uncial to the English. On folio 86v of the Codex Amiatinus, in the prefatory material to Leviticus, are several clumsily written words in Greek, apparently asserting that one Lord Servandos was the maker of the book. That is not remotely an Anglo-Saxon name, and the sentence must have been copied uncomprehendingly from the exemplar, by someone who knew Latin but not Greek. Although the scribes closely modelled their work on Italian prototypes, they themselves were indisputably English. They are betrayed by distinctively insular marks of abbreviation and other

oddities found uniquely in uncial manuscripts which we know for certainty were copied in Northumbria.

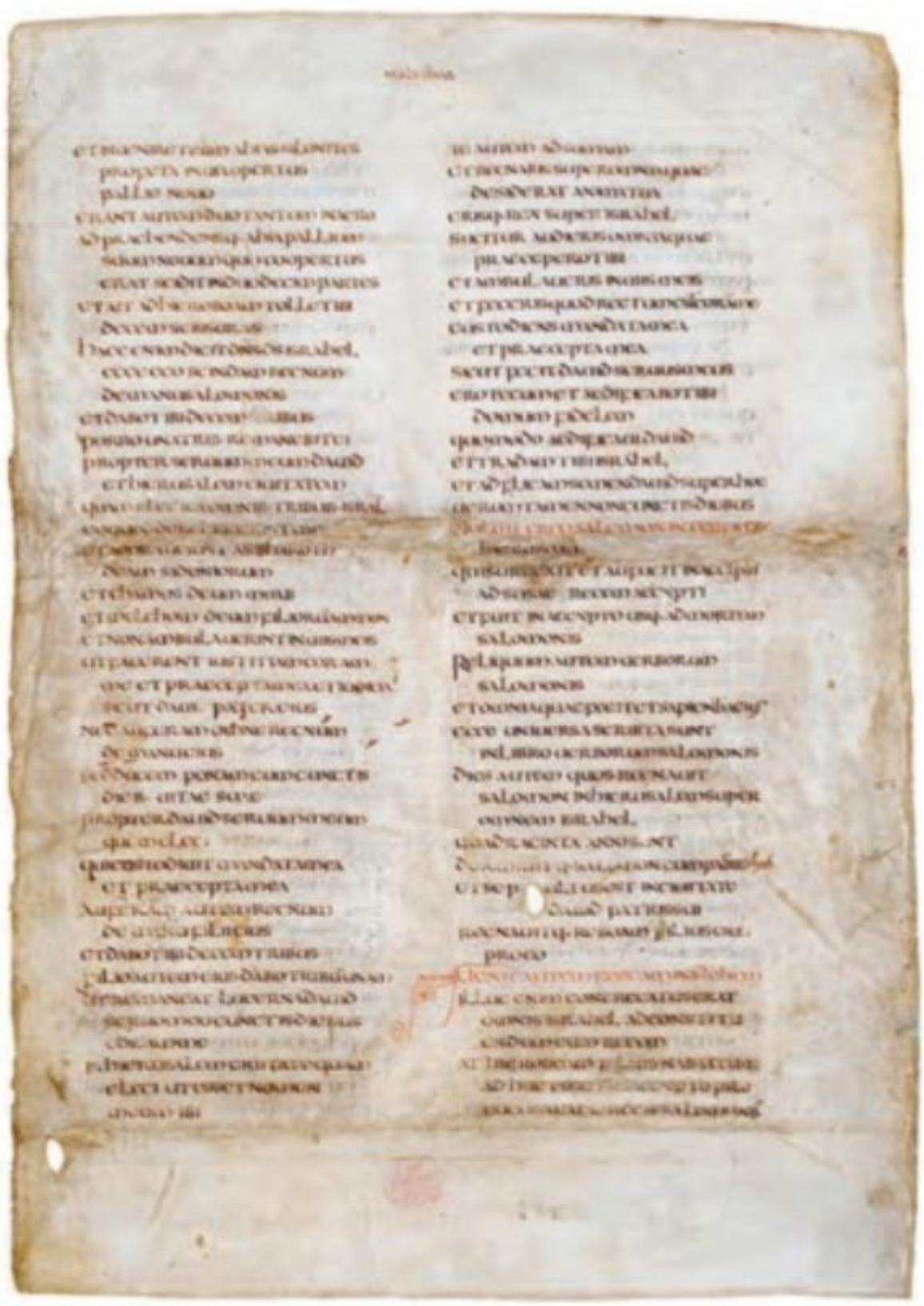
It is frequently observed that in the use of script alone one can see the utter difference of cultural outlook between Wearmouth–Jarrow, modelled on Rome, and Lindisfarne, the Irish island foundation some fifty miles to the north, where manuscripts were routinely copied in the contrasting insular hands. In reality and in commonsense likelihood, the communities drew on each other. For all its Roman script, the Codex Amiatinus shows traces of a distinctively insular practice in the opening words of some texts, using what is known as 'diminuendo', beginning large and decreasing in size letter by letter. An example is at the opening of Genesis. The first words are "In principio", 'In the beginning …' (folio IIr). The 'I' is big, seven times the height of normal text, the 'n' is not so large, and the 'p' is smaller still, as the scale slowly reduces and merges with the size of the writing. That is a characteristic of Irish manuscripts, and there are extreme examples in the Book of Kells (Chapter Three). The scribes of the Codex Amiatinus must have encountered it at Lindisfarne. In exchange, as we saw, the Lindisfarne monks derived their pattern for Saint Matthew from the *Codex Grandior* at Jarrow, and tiny uncials were used in their lovely early eighth-century 'Saint Cuthbert Gospel', now in the British Library, as dainty and weightless as Amiatinus is vast and bulky, apparently interred at an early date with the body of Saint Cuthbert, who had been enshrined on Lindisfarne in 698.

Some sense of the scale of the scriptorium and the tightness of its organization is conveyed by the fact that no fewer than seven and maybe as many as nine different scribes seem to have worked on the Codex Amiatinus. Some hands are of larger size than others, and this is very noticeable in the breaks between different biblical books. Their stints were clearly apportioned in distinct clusters of texts. As the collation showed, several gatherings comprise unusual numbers of leaves, all corresponding to ends of books: xlviii (9 leaves, end of Chronicles, folio 378v), lxviii (5 leaves, end of Isaiah, folio 535v), and xc (5 leaves, end of Tobit, folio 708v). Each of these also represents a change of scribe. An odd-leafed gathering is only likely to have been necessary if

the following text had already been begun. Multiple scribes were thus working simultaneously.

Parchment for manuscripts as large and as extensive as entire pandects would have required skins of a huge number of animals. No more than a single pair of leaves could have been prepared from each pelt. The 1,030 leaves of the Codex Amiatinus would have utilized skins of 515 calves or young cattle. For all three pandects commissioned by Ceolfrith, this must be multiplied by three. It is sometimes asserted, without evidence, that a grant of land made to Wearmouth–Jarrow in 692 was in order to provide sufficient pasture for an increased herd necessary for making the bibles. In reality, farming a couple of thousand animals need not have been abnormal for a large and well-organized rural community over the thirty years of Ceolfrith's abbacy, especially as cattle furnished many necessary products in addition to their skin. These included meat for the daily dinners of many active monks, and also horn, glue, bone and probably blood fertilizer for agriculture. Although the quality of the parchment is generally good and beautifully soft to the touch, there is a certain home-made feel which one would not encounter in (say) the fifteenth-century Visconti manuscript in Chapter Eleven or the Spinola Hours in Chapter Twelve. Some pages of the Codex Amiatinus are spotted; others include original flaws and excised holes which the scribes have worked around; sometimes parchment is so fine that it is almost illegible through transparency (such as folio 810); some pages are shorter than others or lack corners, where the scribes have had to make do with skins which were slightly too small (such as folios 613, 735, and others). Many non-specialists in manuscripts may doubt what I am about to say (and perhaps some palaeographers will too), but if I had not known that the Codex Amiatinus was English, I might have suspected this simply from its feel and especially the smell of the pages. I have no vocabulary to define this, but there is a curious warm leathery smell to English parchment, unlike the sharper, cooler scent of Italian skins. It might simply be the result of English scribes using different kinds of animal – such as calf rather than sheep – or the use

RIGHT: The opening of Genesis in the Codex Amiatinus, showing the characteristically insular practice of the opening letters diminishing in size in the first words of the text



William Greenwell, collector of British antiquities and librarian of Durham Cathedral, together with the leaf of a late seventh-century manuscript Bible which Cuthbert Turner found framed in the hall of Greenwell's house in September 1908

Jarrow, the provenance sounded suitably plausible, although it is hard to believe that Greenwell, no modest antiquary (in either sense), could make such an astonishing find and forget to mention it to anyone for almost twenty years.

The likely source was revealed in 1911 when W. H. Stevenson (1858–1924), fellow and librarian of St John's College, Oxford, published his catalogue for the Historical Manuscripts Commission of the muniments of Lord Middleton at Wollaton Hall, Nottingham, one of the great English houses built in the 1580s. Stevenson reported having found ten more leaves and three tiny fragments from the same uncial manuscript, used in sixteenth-century bindings in the archives of the Willoughby family, later ennobled as Barons Middleton. They all comprised further pieces from III–IV Kings. By now there was no doubt that these twins of Amiatinus must indeed have been astonishingly lucky survivals from one or other of the pandects assigned by Ceolfrith to the

churches of Wearmouth or Jarrow. In 1938, the Willoughby pieces were sold for £1000 to the British Museum too. A further leaf from Ecclesiasticus was found by Nicholas Pickwoad as recently as 1982 among the estate papers of the Bankes family at Kingston Lacy, a property owned by the National Trust. That fragment is now on indefinite deposit at the British Library. My chauffeur on our outing to Monte Amiata, Nicolas Barker, at that time head of conservation at the library, had a part in its identification, passing it on to his colleague in the department of manuscripts, Janet Backhouse. She noted that it too was connected with Wollaton Hall, in that it had been used as a wrapper around manorial deeds of an estate in Dorset which was bought from Sir Francis Willoughby of Wollaton in November 1585. Believe me, I have myself painstakingly trawled the shelves of the Willoughby archives in Nottingham, in the vain hope of finding more pieces. All I can report is having seen the various transcripts and cartularies there in which Stevenson found his fragments, some still with spectral mirror-image offsets of late seventh-century English uncial. If I had to guess, I would suspect that Greenwell's leaf was truthfully also from Lord Middleton's archive, and that maybe Stevenson sent him the discoveries for advice on the identification, with an improper invitation that he might retain one, highly unofficially, in gratitude for his help.

Very probably, the pieces are all remains from a Bible which was at one time owned by Worcester Cathedral. The evidence for this is that the Willoughby archives also disgorged similar pieces of a large manuscript of almost identical dimensions containing eleventh-century transcripts of Worcester charters. We know that Offa, king of Mercia 757–96, is reputed to have given a great Bible to Worcester, and that Wulfstan, bishop of Worcester 1062–95, ordered the cathedral's charters to be copied into the 'Bible of the holy church'. Offa's Bible was described in the twelfth century as having been written in Rome, which probably means that it was in uncial script. Since King Offa's daughter married the king of Northumbria in 792, there is a possibility that one of Ceolfrith's Bibles came to him during diplomatic exchanges between the realms in the late eighth century, perhaps when Jarrow was sacked by the Vikings in 794.

I took my set of photographs of the Greenwell and Willoughby leaves to Florence to compare with the Codex Amiatinus itself. Of course this has been done before, first by Cuthbert Turner in 1909, following his dinner with Canon Greenwell, and especially by Richard Marsden for his *Text of the Old Testament in Anglo-Saxon England*, 1995, which has been an important source for me throughout this chapter. However, there is a satisfaction in matching up the pandects word by word.

Mostly the text of the two manuscripts is absolutely identical, as one would expect (and hope) with copies made from the same exemplar in the same scriptorium, or one from the other. Occasionally there are tiny verbal variants, such as "oblectavit" (Eccelesiasticus 35:25) on the Kingston Lacy leaf, and "oblectabit" in Amiatinus, which make no difference whatsoever to the sense of the text. There are two points where they differ significantly. The Willoughby leaves in the British Library make no break between the end of III Kings and the opening of IV Kings, except for a tiny *chi-rho* monogram in the margin and a fractionally enlarged letter 'P' for "Praevaricatus" (in the numbering of a modern Bible this is 2 Kings 1:1). In the Codex Amiatinus the break between the two books is marked absolutely unambiguously. III Kings ends on folio 303v with the word "FINIT" and ten lines are left blank. IV Kings opens on the next page with a line in red ink and a big indented initial three lines high.

There is no textual reason why there needs to be an arbitrary break between the third and fourth books of Kings, for the narratives follow on seamlessly, and the two parts all form a single uninterrupted text in the Bible in Hebrew. A division into separate books, however, occurs in the Greek version of the Old Testament, known as the Septuagint. On the face of it, the exemplar available at Wearmouth–Jarrow presumably had no break either, for a scribe would have been unlikely to overlook it. By the time that Amiatinus was being copied soon afterwards, an editorial decision had been made to bring the Latin into line with the Greek custom and to separate the texts, an adaptation so convenient that all Latin Bibles since Amiatinus did the same, and indeed all modern

OVERLEAF: The end of III Kings and the opening of IV Kings in the Codex Amiatinus, showing the clear break between the two texts. The curve at the bottom is again from the animal's skin

et universa quae fecit
et domus eburnea quam
aedificavit
cunctarumque urbium
quas exstruxit
nonne scripta sunt haec
in libro verborum dierum
regum israhel.
dormivit ergo achab
cum patribus suis
et regnavit ochozias filius
eius pro eo
Li Josaphat filius asa regnare
coeperat super iudam
anno quarto achab regis israhel.
triginta quinque annorum erat
cum regnare coepisset
et viginti et quinque annos
regnavit in hierusalem
nomen matris eius azuba
filia salai
et ambulavit in omni via asa
patris sui
et non declinavit ex ea
fecitque quod rectum est
in conspectu dni
verumtamen excelsa
non abstulit
adhuc enim populus sacrificabat
et adolebat incensum
in excelsis
pacemque habuit iosaphat
cum rege israhel.
reliqua autem verborum
iosaphat
et opera eius quae gessit
et proelia
nonne haec scripta sunt
in libro verborum dierum
regum iuda
sed et reliquias effeminatorum
qui remanserant in diebus
asa patris eius abstulit
de terra

necerat tunc rex constitutus
in edom
Rex vero iosaphat fecerat
classes in mari quae navigarent
in ophir propter aurum
et ire non potuerunt quia con
fractae sunt in asiongaber
Tunc ait ochozias filius achab
ad iosaphat
vivant servi mei cum servis
tuis in navibus
et noluit iosaphat
dormivitque cum patribus suis
et sepultus est cum eis
in civitate david patris sui
regnavitque ioram filius
eius pro eo
Lii Ochozias autem filius achab
regnare coepit super
israhel in samaria
anno septimo decimo
iosaphat regis iuda
regnavitque super israhel.
duobus annis
et fecit malum in conspectu dni
et ambulavit in via patris sui
et matris suae
et in via hieroboam filii nabat
qui peccare fecit israhel.
servivit quoque baal.
et adoravit eum
et inritavit dnm deum israhel.
iuxta omnia quae fecerat
pater eius

finit

PRAEVARICATUS EST AUTEM
MOAB IN ISRAHEL. POSTQUAM
MORTUUS EST AHAB
CECIDITQUE OBOZIAS PER CANCELLOS
CENACULI SUI QUOD HABEBAT
IN SAMARIA
ET AEGROTAVIT MISITQ; NUNTIOS
DICENS AD EOS
ITE CONSULITE BEELZEBUB
DEUM ACCARON
UTRUM CIUERE QUEAM DE IN
FIRMITATE MEA HAC
ANGELUS AUTEM DNI LOCUTUS EST
AD HELIAM THESBITEN
SURGE ASCENDE IN OCCURSUM
NUNTIORUM REGIS SAMARIAE
ET DICES AD EOS
NUMQUID NON EST DS IN ISRAHEL
UT EATIS AD CONSULENDUM
BEELZEBUB DEUM ACCARON
QUAM OBREM HAEC DICIT DNS
DE LECTULO SUPER QUEM
ASCENDISTI NON DESCENDES
SED MORTE MORIERIS
ET ABIIT HELIAS REUERSIQ; SUNT
NUNTII AD OBOZIAM
QUI DIXIT EIS QUARE REUERSI ESTIS
AT ILLI RESPONDERUNT EI
UIR OCCURRIT NOBIS ET DIXIT AD NOS
ITE ET REUERTIMINI AD REGEM
QUI MISIT UOS
ET DICETIS EI HAEC DICIT DNS
NUMQUID QUIA NON ERAT DS
IN ISRAHEL, MITTIS UT CONSULAS
TUR BEELZEBUB DEUM ACCARON
IDCIRCO DE LECTULO SUPER
QUEM ASCENDISTI NON DESCENDES
SED MORTE MORIERIS
QUI DIXIT EIS CUIUS FIGURAE
ET HABITUS EST UIR QUI
OCCURRIT UOBIS
ET LOCUTUS EST UERBA HAEC
AD ILLI DIXERUNT UIR PILOSUS
ET ZONA PELLICIA ACCINCTUS RENIB;
QUI AIT HELIAS THESBITES EST
MISITQUE AD EUM QUINQUAGENARIUM
PRINCIPEM ET QUINQUAGINTA
QUI ERANT SUB EO
QUI ASCENDIT AD EUM SEDENTIQ;
IN UERTICE MONTIS AIT
HOMO DI REX PRAECEPIT
UT DESCENDAS
RESPONDENSQ; HELIAS DIXIT
QUINQUAGENARIO
SI HOMO DI SUM DESCENDAT IGNIS
E CAELO ET DEUORET TE
ET QUINQUAGINTA TUOS
DESCENDIT ITAQUE IGNIS E CAELO
ET DEUORAUIT EUM ET QUINQUA
GINTA QUI ERANT CUM EO
RURSUM MISIT AD EUM PRINCIPEM
QUINQUAGENARIUM ALTERUM
ET QUINQUAGINTA CUM EO
QUI LOCUTUS EST ILLI
HOMO DI HAEC DICIT REX
FESTINA DESCENDE
RESPONDENS HELIAS AIT
SI HOMO DI EGO SUM DESCENDAT
IGNIS E CAELO ET DEUORET TE
ET QUINQUAGINTA TUOS
DESCENDIT ERGO IGNIS DE CAELO
ET DEUORAUIT ILLUM
ET QUINQUAGINTA EIUS
ITERUM MISIT PRINCIPEM
QUINQUAGENARIUM TERTIUM
ET QUINQUAGINTA QUI ERANT
CUM EO
QUI CUM UENISSET CURUAUIT
GENUA CONTRA HELIAM
ET PRAECATUS EST EUM ET AIT
HOMO DI NOLI DESPICERE
ANIMAM MEAM ET ANIMAM
SERUORUM TUORUM
QUI MECUM SUNT
ECCE DESCENDIT IGNIS E CAELO
ET DEUORAUIT DUOS PRINCIPES
QUINQUAGENARIOS PRIMOS
ET QUINQUAGENOS QUI CUM EIS ERANT.