

12. Bern, Burgerbibliothek 671

Celtic pocket gospel book

[Ker 6, Gneuss 794]

HISTORY: A small, early 9c copy of the Gospels, a “pocket Gospel,” presumably a personal copy, having no apparatus such as canon tables, capitula, or prefaces; there are a few stray marginal references to lessons in Luke (ff. 37r–43r). Although it is of Irish type in size, lack of apparatus, and decoration, it is believed to have originated in a Brythonic region (Wales or Cornwall) and to have been in the possession of the church at Great Bedwyn, Wiltshire. According to Berger (1893: 57) it has a mixed Irish/A-S (i.e., Italian) text and Irish textual attributes (see note below, and McGurk 1987 [rpt. 1998]:174–75). Lindsay (1911: 795) posited a Celtic scriptorium based on the hands and abbreviations (*g*^o for “ergo,” *g*ⁱ for “igitur”); but Lindsay further argues that it must be from Cornwall rather than Wales because, first, its “insular” script (there are two main scribes writing in similar style) is not like Welsh script, still less like A-S (and therefore this would be the unique instance of an extant early Cornish manuscript [Lindsay 1922: 58]) and, secondly, because of the Alfredian acrostics added on the blank leaf f. 74v (Lindsay 1911: 495–96, 1912: 11), which implies a Wessex provenance. McGurk (1987 [rpt. 1998]: 250, 263) has said of the “pocket gospel book” that “[t]he form is at least indisputably Irish,” placing Bern 671 among a group of eight Irish pocket Gospels ranging from the 7c to approximately to 927 or a little earlier.

[**Note:** The relevant Irish gospel books, ranging in date from ca. 696 to ca. 927 and in size from 175 × 142 mm. to 125 × 112 mm., are: Dublin, Royal Irish Academy D.II.3 (the Stowe St. John, s. viii-ix); Dublin, Trinity College 59 (Dimma Gospels, s. viii or ix); Dublin, Trinity College 60 (Mulling Gospels, s. vii); Dublin, Trinity College ff. 95–98 (Mulling fragment, s. vii); Fulda, Landesbibliothek Bonifatius 3 (Cadmug Gospels, s. viii); London, BL Add. 40618 (s. viii², in England by s. x^{med}); London, Lambeth Palace 1370 [319] (MacDurnan Gospels, ca. 927). McGurk (1956 [rpt. 1998]: 174–5) links Bern 671 to this group on the basis that “[i]ts size and its exclusion of textual accessories and . . . its text bring it within the Irish orbit.” While its provenance has been placed in either Wales or south-west Britain (McGurk has

elsewhere called it a “West British Book” (1986 [rpt. 1998]: 45 n. 4), he shows it does exhibit filiations to an Irish textual tradition, e.g., the treatment of the first seventeen verses of Matthew as a prologue: Bern 671, 1r/27–28 adds to verse 17 ‘finit prologus amen | amen’ (cf. McGurk 1987 [rpt. 1998]: 257 and n. 1.)

In short, in form and manufacture, textual arrangement and content, the manuscript seems likely the product of an Irish-influenced center in Britain’s west or south-west.

Keynes and Lapidge (1983: 338) noted that by the 10c the manuscript was at Bedwyn, Wiltshire, “one of Alfred’s estates,” and Lapidge has suggested that the manuscript may have moved into an English ambit through the agency of Asser (Lapidge 2006: 50, n. 89). Lindsay believed the acrostics were composed by the scribe himself, given their inferior and confused state (1912: 10), and must have been written in the southwest before 899, the date of Alfred’s death. Confirming the southwestern provenance are, on final originally blank leaves, added OE documents of the 10c pertaining to places in Wiltshire and Berkshire. Förster (1941: 788–91) was of the opinion that the spelling of the OE showed traces of “keltisch-britischer” scribal practice.

The manuscript was in France by the 12c/13c (inscription of names in a French script, f. 77v), perhaps at Fleury, and was in the hands of a French owner as the signature (14c/15c) on the added strip at the end of the manuscript attests. It subsequently belonged to Pierre Daniel of Orleans (d. 1603) (Ker, *Cat.*, p. 5), who acquired many of his manuscripts from Fleury, and with the moiety of the Daniel collection it eventually came into the library of the French diplomat and scholar Jacques Bongars (1554–1612); Bongars willed his library to Jacques Gravisset, a Bern official, who willed it to the city of Bern in 1624 upon his marriage to Salome von Erlach; it entered the Burgerbibliothek in 1632 (for the history of the Bongarsiana Library see also the “History” of Bern, Burgerbibliothek 258 [11]).

CODICOLOGICAL DESCRIPTION: ff. 77 + two fragments (ff. 78–79). Page size 160 x 115 mm. Fairly thick, well-scraped vellum has browned, arranged HHHH. Leaves ruled on recto for 33 lines.. Writing area 115 x 90 mm. Text in dark brown ink, excepting two-line note at f. 77v in light brown ink. The leaves containing OE have been added to the end of the manuscript. Early modern foliation in ink in upper right hand corner on recto. Vertical prickings both sides of writing area. The added leaf ff. 78–79 is an unevenly trimmed former binding strip of thick vellum; f. 78 is 90 mm. x 66 mm., its stub, f. 79, is 90 mm. x 22 mm.; f. 78 has paste on the bottom, the stub, f. 79, covered in paste. F. 75 is blank on recto, ruled on verso

for 19 uneven lines; writing area measures 122 × 82 mm. F. 76 also ruled for 19 lines. F. 77 was originally ruled in the same manner but has been reruled on the verso after line 4 for approximately 36 very narrow lines (only 2 lines of this ruled space have been written on). The Gospels begin in a Celtic insular minuscule (variously thought to be Irish or Welsh or —after Lindsay— Cornish), with a hand change to a Celtic insular cursive at f. 43r/21. Canon-table collations run in margins of part of Luke, ff. 38r-41v. A third scribe added in text-ink the acrostics at f. 74v. Initials decorated in insular Hiberno-Celtic style with animal motifs at f. 1r ('L'), f. 1v ('XPI' monogram with serpent heads), f. 23r ('IN' monogram with dogs' heads), f. 36r ('Q' with dogs' heads, one at the top at end of inward curl bites down on the letter), f. 59r ('IN' monogram with cross inset); a vegetal ornament in A-S style appears at f. 75v. The added (ca. 1000?, cf. Homburger 1962: 31) title to the Gospel of John at bottom f. 58v is in rustic capitals. The OE documents at ff. 75v-76v are in A-S minuscule. A Latin scribble appears at bottom of f. 75v, 'm(is)erere nobis'.

F. 1r bears a *Bibliotheca Bernensis* bookstamp. Cover of white vellum over wood boards (17c).

[Note: The describer wishes to thank Marlis Stähli, of the Zentralbibliothek Zürich, for information about Bern Bb 671 (p.c. August 1996).]

COLLATION: I¹⁰ (ff. 1–10), II¹⁰ (ff. 11–20), III¹⁰ (ff. 21–30), IV¹⁰ (ff. 31–40), V¹⁰ (ff. 41–50), VI¹⁰ (ff. 51–60), VII¹⁰ (ff. 61–70), VIII⁸⁺² lacking 8 (ff. 71–77 + 78–79; f. 78 a former binding strip, its stub numbered '79').

CONTENTS:

1. Gospels (written in a Celtic, probably Cornish, insular script, by two hands (hand change at f.43r/21); for a discussion of hand and a full list of abbreviations used, see Lindsay 1912):

f. 1r/1–22/34 Gospel of Matthew: Matt. 1.1–17: 'Llber generat(io)nis ih(es)u (ch)r(ist)i filii david filii abraham . . . Finit p(ro)logus. | amen amen'; ff. 1v /1–22v/34 Matt. 1.18–28.20: 'CHR(IST)I autem generat(io) sic erat. Cum esset dis|ponsata mater eius maria ioseph anteq(uam) | conuenirent inuenta (est) in ut(er)o h(abe)ns de sp(irit)u s(an)c(t)o'; ends: '7 ecce | ego uobisc(um) sum omn(i)b(us) dieb(us) usq(ue) ad (con)sv(m)-matione(m) sæculi. | Amen am(en)'.

ff. 23r/1–35v/38 Gospel of Mark: 'INit(i)um evangelii ie(s)u chr(ist) i s(icut) s(c)riptu(m) (est) i(n) p(ro)fet(a) ecce | mitto angelvm mevm an(te) facie(m) tva(m) q(ui) p(rae)parauit | uiam tva(m) ante te. uox clamant(is) i(n) deserto parate | uiam d(omi)ni rectas facite semitas

e(ius)'; ends: 'illi (autem) | p(ro)fecti p(re)dicer(un)t ubiq(ue) d(o)-
m(in)o [cooperante] 7 sermone(m) (con)firma(n)t(e) seq(ue)ntib(us)
eos signis.'

- ff. 36r/1–58v/26 Gospel of Luke: 'Q(uonia)m qvidem mult(i) conat(i)
s(un)t ordinare narrat(io)ne(m) | q(ue) in nobis (con)plete s(un)t
reru(m) s(icut) tradider(un)t nobis q(ui) ab i(n)it(io) | ipsi uider(un)t
et m(i)nistri fver(un)t sermonis'; ends: '7 erant in templo laudantes 7
benedicentes d(eu)m. | amen finit. Amen' (canon tables in margins of
ff. 38r-41v).
- f. 58v/31–74v/18 Gospel of John: INITIUM S(AN)C(T)I EUUANGELII.
S(E)C(UN)D(U)M IOHANNEM. || 'IN p(ri)ncipio erat uerbum 7 uer-
bum erat apud d(eu)m 7 d(eu)s erat u(er)|bum h(oc) erat in p(ri)ncipio
apud d(eu)m'; ends: 'q(ue) facit ie<su>s q(ue) scri|bant(ur) p(er) sin-
gula nec ipsum arbitror mundum cap(er)e eos q(ui) scribendi sunt |
libros. Amen finit'.
2. Two acrostics on King Alfred the Great (pr. Hagen 1877: 11, nos. IX–X,
corrected texts pr. and tr. Lindsay 1912: 10–11, pr. Lapidge 1981: 83, tr.
Keynes and Lapidge 1983: 192, 338):
- a. f. 74v/19–25 'admiranda m(i)hi mens (est) t(ran)scurrere gesta . . . diuino
s(upe)r astra frui p(er) secula uultu d' (Schaller and Könsgen 1977: no.
302);
- b. f. 74v/26–31 'en t(ibi) discendant e celo gratie tote . . . Docte pe(re)grine
t(ran)scurrere rura sophie D' (Schaller and Könsgen 1977: no. 4458).
- [Note: Acrostic initials and finals are large but have lower case forms and run: (right)
'a|e||f|r|e|d|e||f|r|e|d' (left) 'a|e||f|r|e|d|æ||f|r|e|d'; of the finals running down the
right margin, some serve as final letter of the poetic line, most are extrinsic to it.
Lapidge (1981:81–83) tentatively attributes the verses to John the Old Saxon.]
- f. 75r blank
3. Four OE documents pertaining to Great Bedwyn, Wiltshire, and Lam-
bourn, Berkshire (10c) (ed. Vetter 1877: 354–55, Meritt 1934, Förster
1941: 761–95):
- a. f. 75v/1–6 (concerning payment of a tithe at Bedwyn and Lambourn): '†
æþelweard cyð ceolbrehte þæt ic wille þæt | þu agife þa twegen dælas
þære teoðinge | from bedewindan. 7 fram lamburnan . . . betweoh him
swa ðe ge|metlic þynce:- hæn [sic]' [between this entry and the next
four or five lines of OE have been erased];
- b. f. 75v/14–76r/12 (rules of a guild upon death of a member): '†n þyses ge-
gildes gerædnes is gif | hyrra hwylcum foret sit gebyrige . . . breon ealþ
7 mid þri' [ends incomplete];

- c. f. 76v/1–10 (manumission of the bondwoman Byrhtgyth by Eadwine, at Bedwyn) ‘Her cy þ(æt) eadwine geuþe wynsige 7 aþelnop | his men þæt he moste adon byrhtgyþe . . . 7 on ealles þæs folces.’
- d. f. 76v/11–17 (Ecgywynn’s testimony to her manumission by Eadwine, at Bedwyn): ‘þis is ecgywynnes `gewitnes´ þ(æt) eadwine hyre geuþe . . . 7 on ealles þæs folces.’

[Note: Meritt (1934: 343) sees items 3a and 3b as written in two similar but distinct hands; 3c and 3d are written in a still different hand of a smaller, thicker, more rounded ductus.]

f. 77r blank

4. Miscellaneous later notes and scribbles:

- a. f. 77v/1–4 List of names, including those of the Seven Sleepers (11c/12c): ‘Aubertus. Gauterius. Amelina. Conidos. | Nomina <sep>te(m). dormientiu(m). Maximianus. | Malchus. Marthinian(us). Dyonisius. | Iohannes. Serapion. Constantinus’ (pr. Vetter 1877: 355–6);
- b. f. 77v/5–6 List or inventory of types of gold and silver vessels (12c/13c): ‘Descriptio filacterior(um) u(e)l uasor(um) auri 7 argenti . . . quor<um> op<er>c<u>la [. . .]’ (pr. Vetter 1877: 357; cf. Ios. 6.19);
- c. f. 78r (on parchment strip) signature and seal with initials (14c/15c): ‘Vourietus | vincent de | cyrerio.’
- f. 79rv (stub contiguous with f. 78) blank.

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