Lincoln Cathedral MS 182

T. A. M. BISHOP

COPIED probably at Abingdon, probably from a Continental exemplar, possibly before the end of the tenth century, Lincoln Cathedral MS 182 (Bede's Sermons on the Gospels) illustrates the work of a leading scriptorium to which not many extant manuscripts have been attributed.

Provenance. Although the manuscript has been in its present home since at least as early as the twelfth century, it can hardly have been written at Lincoln. That early ownership indicates origin is a general rule qualified by many exceptions; many manuscripts were circulated or dispersed soon after they were written; the inference, besides, cannot be applied to a manuscript if, at the supposed place and date of its writing, no writing-centre can be shown to have existed. There is no evidence of a pre-Conquest establishment at Lincoln capable of supporting the scriptorium that produced MS 182.

Origin, date. The ten hands of the Bede mostly belong to one of two types encountered in English Caroline minuscule; types so distinct as to suggest that they were modelled on the scripts of distinct Continental centres and, consequently, that well characterized specimens are not far removed from the English reception, c.950-60, of the Continental script. The type conforming to by most of the scribes of the Bede is a medium-large, plain, rounded but decisive script, found in English manuscripts from Abingdon, Winchester and Worcester and from other monasteries founded or reconstituted by Saints Aethelwold and Oswald. Both of these leaders of the monastic revival had lived at the great monastery of Fleury (Loire). Whether the type derives from Fleury models will be revealed when the script of Fleury, extant in numerous manuscripts of the ninth and tenth centuries, is analysed and illustrated. Its influence appears in a minute but important particular: the symbol '—' for est, understood to be a Fleury abbreviation. This occurs in several English manuscripts, some of origin at present unknown, some attributed to Abingdon. The symbol is freely used in Bede; and the Bede has a stronger link with Abingdon: the scribe of ff. 118-38, 161-81 was the scribe of ff.16 seq. in an Abingdon manuscript at Antwerp, Plantin-Moretus 190 (Boeuci). This may be taken as the starting point for a conjectural dating. 1. The Boeucius has been dated as XI/XI century; the plain energetic style of ff.16 seq. is outstanding in a context of more deliberate and artificial script; the scribe was probably senior to his colleagues. In the Bede his work, conforming to the style of most of his colleagues, is still uncertain and ingenuous,
LINCOLN CATHEDRAL MS 182

apparently that of a beginner; the Bede is probably earlier than the Boetius. 2. The generic style of the Bede may be regarded as developing and refining the strong plain script of some English books written in the second half of the tenth century. 3. The hand of one of the scribes (ff.80-97) resembles that of an Abingdon charter dated 993. The date of the Bede, therefore, probably falls within some liberal margin on either side of a point of time rather before than after the year 1000.

The Abingdon scriptorium. Not many pre-Conquest manuscripts have been attributed to the Abingdon scriptorium. The most useful evidence for the origin of manuscripts in a Benedictine house, that of early ownership by its library, is defective. Such evidence might be afforded by mere continuing collocation (in some place or other), but the surviving Abingdon books are widely scattered; they are not consistently inscribed; no catalogue of the abbey’s library is extant, apart from the brief notes made by Leland shortly before the dissolution. Yet Abingdon, founded and, until 963, governed by the protagonist in monastic reform, might be reckoned the leading English monastery of the period. The script of Abingdon, even before the full reception of the Carolingian, shows in some specimens of its Insular minuscule the influence of Continental models, and an austere reaction against the ornate Square minuscule practised in some unreconstructed clerical communities. The Caroline script of Abingdon and associated houses, including Aethelwold’s foundations at Winchester and Peterborough, seems well suited to service books (in which he is understood to have been specially interested) and Gospel Books. To the ultimate influence of Aethelwold’s abbacy may be credited the liturgica which, beginning in the second half of the tenth century, increasingly preoccupied English scribes in the eleventh. When (c.1020) a Gospel Book written in one of Aethelwold’s foundations was presented to Christ Church Canterbury, it came into the hands of a Christ Church scribe and artist whose work, extending later to other service books and Gospel Books, breaks with the tradition of a centre previously concerned with general literature, copied in a distinct type of English Caroline. Some fifteen or twenty English Gospel Books remain from the century before the Conquest: elaborate artefacts of which the planning and preparation, in any centre where they were undertaken, might benefit from experience built up in the scriptorium or represented in the exemplars, of whatever origin. Such a tradition might even help to improve the production of certain works of general literature: there is some slight evidence to suggest that the Abingdon scriptorium gained experience in copying Boetius, De Consolatione. The Bede, however, is an uncommon text, and the Lincoln Cathedral copy, fine and decidedly ambitious production as it is, betrays a compromise between the planning of the probably Continental exemplar and the practices of an English scriptorium.

Materials, preparation. Folios numbered 1-196. The first quire being a six, and the first recto side a flesh side, it is probable that one leaf is missing before f.1, with a conjoint stub after f.6; one leaf is enough to account for the missing incipit and capitulation of Book I and the opening words (perhaps accompanied by a major ornament) of the first homily. Other lacunae in the text are original; no leaves are missing after f.1.

Size, etc. Mn. 315 x 235; the upper margins have lost material. The fairly large sheets varying in quality, are mainly very good, white on flesh sides; they are arranged with hair and flesh sides matching at openings, except for the opening between the first and second quires. (This last slight anomaly confirms that the first quire was originally a regularly constructed quaternion; the last leaf was cancelled in 'current correction' by the scribe, who had noticed an irreparable mistake, and who now re-wrote and resumed his copy on the first page of the succeeding quire; the first leaf of the first quire was thus reduced to a singleton, precariously placed, and has since dropped out). The collation is set out below with the apportionment.

Ruling, sometimes two sheets but mainly one sheet at a time, is on hair sides, and very incisive; the parchment has cracked in many places, especially along vertical rulings; there
are double bounding-lines from top to bottom and the first two and last two horizontal lines are ruled across; the written space is mm. 245 x 165, with 28 long lines (but two columns for the capitulation of Book II, f.77r).

The ink is dark brown or black; vegetable and metallic reds were used for some display script; the main component of some decorated initials is a faded brownish-red; a medium-large plain initial in blue (f.109r) is perhaps later than the original work.

**Apportionment, collation.** The exemplar, not bound, was given out to ten scribes in eleven portions, each to be contained in one quire or in two or in three consecutive quires.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Portions</th>
<th>Quires</th>
<th>Ff.</th>
<th>Scribes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st</td>
<td>I⁸, II¹² (3 cancelled)</td>
<td>1-17</td>
<td>i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>III⁸, IV⁸, V⁸</td>
<td>18-39</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>VI⁸, VII¹⁰ (6 canc.)</td>
<td>40-56</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th</td>
<td>VIII⁸, IX⁸, X⁸</td>
<td>57-76</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(end of Book I)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th¹⁰</td>
<td>XI⁸, XII⁸, XIII⁸ (2 canc.)</td>
<td>77-79</td>
<td>v, vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6th</td>
<td>XVI¹⁰, XV¹⁰</td>
<td>98-117</td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7th</td>
<td>XVI⁸, XVII⁸, XVIII⁸ (2 canc.)</td>
<td>118-38</td>
<td>viii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8th</td>
<td>XIX⁸, XX⁸, XXI⁸</td>
<td>139-60</td>
<td>ix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9th</td>
<td>XXII⁸, XXIII⁸, XXIV⁸ (4 canc.)</td>
<td>161-81</td>
<td>viii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10th</td>
<td>XXV⁸</td>
<td>182-9</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11th</td>
<td>XXVI⁸ (8 canc.)</td>
<td>190-96</td>
<td>ii</td>
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Fifteen of the twenty-six quires are of eight leaves, quaternions of four sheets folded, following the usual English practice. The proportion not arranged in regularly constructed quaternions is unusually large for an English manuscript, especially for a fairly ambitious example of English book production. The quires are not all well constructed: Quire I, when the scribe had finished with it, began with a singleton and ended with a stub; two quires have singletons at central openings. Except at the end of Book I quires and portions nowhere coincide with main divisions of the text. Scribe vii needed three extra lines in the last lower margin of Quire XV, at the end of his portion. All other portions have spaced-out script near - sometimes beginning a page or two before - the ends, and in some other passages of spaced-out script in mid-portion and mid-quire scribes are seen trying to proceed part passu with the exemplar. The contents of the exemplar, it seems, were not calculated for a physical re-planning; with a minimum of adjustment to English usage the exemplar was taken by the English scribes as a physical guide to their proceedings. Seven of the eleven portions contain each from twenty to twenty-two leaves; scribe vii made up his portion in two regularly constructed tens; six portions contain each two eights and a remainder. Doubtless a slovenly piece of work, by English standards, the exemplar seems to have been mainly in quiniones, quires of ten leaves. Quiring in tens is normal in 'Celtic' manuscripts; a Welsh or even Irish copy of Bede's sermons is not impossible; but Continental manuscripts, too, of various periods and from various centres, are quired in tens; some indications from the script suggest that that the Bede was copied from an exemplar written on the Continent, where, from the eighth century onwards, all his works were widely circulated.

**Script, etc., ornament.** Most of the hands conform to the medium-large, bold, plain, energetic style of scribe ii (Plate I); his work is closely imitated by scribe viii, and its aspect closely resembles the mature work of scribe viii in Antwerp 190. In the two-column capitulation of Book II, and four succeeding pages of the fifth portion, the distinctly smaller script of scribe v has frequent Uncial-type d, which other scribes used only to avoid a clash with a descender from the line above. The influence of the probably Continental exemplar may account for instances of Continental non-Caroline a in two forms and (ff. 2r, 5v) Continental
ri and ro ligatures. The Fleury symbol for est, used by most of the scribes, may have been previously if only temporarily naturalized in the Abingdon scriptorium; but an instance of the Continental symbol for -quī-(f.144r) may have been picked up from the exemplar, with the fairly frequent suspension of -t for -itt, in uncommon verbs, and scribe ix's employment of the international special sign for us in abbreviating -bus. The archaic Insular symbol 's, post, occurs fairly often; an imperfect fusion of non-English and obsolete English practices is a sign that this is English Caroline of a fairly early date. Word-division is not everywhere correct; line-ends have a few apparently hyphens and an occasional trick of preserving the ligature in divided -e- and rendering it also in e -e-. Word-separation varies widely, some of the script being intentionally spaced-out, some (especially in the work of scribe ii) practically scriptura continua. Punctuation, mainly by high and low points, includes puncti elonari and versi; there are numerous accents, circumflex and acute. Citations are variously treated; scribes ii, vi and viii used the normal citation-marks in the margins; scribe vii used also red minuscules (e.g., ff.103v, 108r); other scribes distinguished citations by Rustic capitals. Insular omission-signs appear on ff. 167r, 182v. Explicitis and headings are mainly in red Rustic capitals (but red minuscules, written in the margin, on f.93v). The explicit of Book I (f.76v) is in alternate lines of red Square capitals and black Uncials. The ornament, which may reflect and translate the ornament of the exemplar, is at once typically English and apparently unique in English MS art. Besides decorative run-over signs (Plate I), it includes full-length and medium initials which recall the gold filigree work of an object recently excavated at Winchester, and dated c.1000 (Plate II).  

Notes

2 E. Pellicer, 'Memoria disiecta Floriacensia', Bibliothèque de l'École des Chartes cxvi (1959), pp. 14, 15. Occurring in Fleury MSS of the late tenth century, it suggests a continuing relation between Fleury and Abingdon (and perhaps other English houses).
3 (1) Lincoln 182; (2) Antwerp 47 (Priscian); (3) Antwerp 190 (Boethius, gloss); (4) Brussels, Royal Library 1650 (Aldhelm, gloss); (5) Brussels 1828-30 (Glossoria); (6) Copenhagen, Royal Library 1395 (Sermons); (7) B. M. Corr. MS. Cleo.D.1 (Virtusius); (8) Egerton MS 267, f.37 (Boethius, gloss); (9) Vatican, Reg. lat. 1283, f.114 (Misc.). (1) - (4) and (8) were probably written at Abingdon, (6) probably at Worcester; (7) comes from the library of St. Augustine's Canterbury. Perhaps normally used in expressing synonyms (and, consequently, in glosses) the symbol occurs in all contexts in Lincoln 182.
4 Ker, Catalogue, No. 3.
6 Cott. MS. Aug ii.38, B.M. Facsimiles iii, '993' (reduced).
9 Cf. ante, note (3), and Cambridge, University Library Kk.3.21, from Abingdon.
10 Taken to be one portion shared between two scribes; scribe v wrote ff.77-9.
11 Cf. Ker, Catalogue, pp. xxiii-cxxv, for the quiring of English pre-Conquest MSS.
12 He reappears in B. M. Harl. MS.3826 (Grammatica, etc.), using occasional Insular g.
13 Ante, note (3).

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