

## “Thronging Students by the Fleetload”: The Early Echternach Manuscripts and Post-Whitby Relations between Ireland and Anglo-Saxon England

A. Joseph McMullen  
Ph.D. student in English and Celtic Literatures and Languages  
Harvard University  
mcmull@fas.harvard.edu

### *Abstract*

This paper explores what the early Echternach manuscripts can tell us about relations between Ireland and Anglo-Saxon England in the eighth century. Although the scriptorium at Echternach (in modern-day Luxembourg) was part of a continental monastic house, it was founded at the end of the seventh century by Willibrord, an Anglo-Saxon. Willibrord was educated in Ireland (likely at Rath Melsigi) and manuscript evidence suggests that this Irish monastery provided both personnel and manuscripts for the initial missionaries. This paper will discuss what the evidence provided by these early Echternach-affiliated manuscripts can tell us about Hiberno-Saxon relations. The evidence from the eighth-century Echternach scriptorium suggests a much more complicated relationship than simply the Irish influencing the Anglo-Saxons in England: instead we find a trilingual manuscript culture (Latin, Old Irish, Old English) with influences coming from both the Irish and English. This paper will then further explain what this culture of mutual appreciation, teaching, and learning (with an overall goal focused on missionary conversion and manuscript production) can tell us about Hiberno-Saxon scholarly cooperation.

### *Résumé*

Cet article explore ce que les premiers manuscrits d'Echternach peuvent nous dire sur les relations entre l'Irlande et l'Angleterre Anglo-Saxonne dans le huitième siècle. Bien que le scriptorium d'Echternach (de nos jours en Luxembourg) fit partie d'une maison monastique continentale, il fut fondé à la fin du VIIe siècle par Willibrord, un Anglo-Saxon. Willibrord fit ses études en Irlande (probablement à Rath Melsigi) et le témoignage manuscrit suggère que ce monastère irlandais fournissait le personnel et les manuscrits po

ur les missionnaires initiaux. Cet article traitera de ce que le témoignage fourni par ces premiers manuscrits d'Echternach peut nous apprendre sur les relations Hiberno-Saxons. Le témoignage du scriptorium d'Echternach du huitième siècle suggère une relation beaucoup plus compliquée qu'une simple influence par les Irlandais sur les Anglo-Saxons en Angleterre; plutôt nous trouvons une culture manuscrite en trois langues (Latin, Ancien Irlandais, et Ancien Anglais) avec des influences venant à la fois des Irlandais et des Anglais. Cet article expliquera ensuite ce que cette culture d'appréciation mutuelle, d'enseignement et d'apprentissage (avec un objectif global axé sur la conversion missionnaire et la production manuscrite) peut nous enseigner sur la coopération savante

As Nora Chadwick once framed her study of the Celtic background of Anglo-Saxon England: “When the Anglo-Saxons came to England they came as an illiterate and barbaric people to a remote province of a dying Empire. By the close of the Anglo-Saxon period they had created an independent and coherent state, with a dignity and prestige which gave it a recognized place among the nations of Europe” (Chadwick, 1963: p. 323). This change was initiated, of course, by the coming of Christianity on two fronts: Gregory, the Great sent Augustine to southern England (specifically Kent) in 597 and King Oswald of Northumbria requested Aidan and an Irish delegation to come from Iona in 635 and settle at Lindisfarne. While the Romans labored in the South, the Irish had great success in the North and, indeed, as David Dumville notes, “All aspects of Northumbrian and Mercian Christianity in the first generation will have been Irish, making due allowance of course for the non-Irish circumstances in which the missions operated” (Dumville, 1981: p. 115). Lindisfarne would be ruled by Irish abbots until the 664 and Irish Christianity would continue to influence the Anglo-Saxons even after the decisive rejection of the Irish way of dating Easter at Whitby.<sup>1</sup> Though the Synod of Whitby marked a “formal break from the Northumbrian church’s institutional alignment with Ireland” (Wright, 2001: p. 352), it did not signal the end of Hiberno-Saxon relations, especially given the amount of training and education already provided by the Irish.<sup>2</sup>

Patrick O’Neill has argued that the Irish mission to Northumbria was mainly a proselytizing effort aimed at educating a local clergy of missionaries, not scholars—implying that students would go to Ireland to pursue biblical studies.<sup>3</sup> Our main evidence for Anglo-Saxons traveling to Ireland to study comes from Bede’s *Historia Ecclesiastica*:

Erant ibidem eo tempore multi nobilium simul et mediocrium de gente Anglorum, qui tempore Finani et Colmani episcoporum, relicta insula patria, uel diuinae lectionis, uel continentioris uitae gratia illo secesserant. Et quidam quidem mox se monasticae conuersationi fideliter mancipauerunt; alii magis circueundo per cellas magistrorum, lectioni operam dare gaudebant. Quos omnes Scotti libentissime suscipientes, uictum eis cotidianum sine pretio, libros quoque ad legendum, et jmagisterium gratuitum praebere curabant (*HE* iii.27, p. 312).<sup>4</sup>

Although Bede neither approves of nor disapproves of this practice, there are certainly two schools of thought on the matter in early Anglo-Saxon England.<sup>5</sup> Aldfrith, ruler of Northumbria from c. 685-705, is probably our best example of an Irish-educated Anglo-Saxon who fully embraces Irish learning after likely being fostered in Ireland.<sup>6</sup> Not only is Aldfrith known as *sapiens* in the Annals of Ulster,<sup>7</sup> he also has a corpus of maxims in Old Irish attributed to Flann Fína (his Irish name).<sup>8</sup> On the other side of this debate is Aldhelm (d. 709) who, despite first being educated by an Irishman, champions the Canterbury school where he

would later study and, in letters to Heahfrith and Wihtfrith, disapprovingly wonders why they would want to go study in Ireland.<sup>9</sup> Aldhelm writes,

Perlatum est mihi rumigerulis referentibus de uestrae caritatis industria quod transmarinum iter gubernante Domino carpere sagacitate legendi succensa decreuerit...Absurdum enim arbitror sprete rudis ac ueteris instrumenti inextricabili norma per lubrica dumosi ruris diuerticula immo per discolos philosophorum anfractus iter carpere; seu certe aporiatis uitreorum fontium limpidis laticibus palustres pontias lutulentasque limphas siticulose potare in quis atra bufonum turma cateruatim scatet, atque garrulitas ranarum crepitans coaxat (Howlett, 1994: p. 58).<sup>10</sup>

Despite Aldhelm's protestations, Anglo-Saxons continued to study in Ireland after Whitby and into the eighth century. This starting point provides an under-researched avenue into the context of Hiberno-Saxon relations in the post-Whitby period. While it is more difficult to presume the degree of Irish influence in Northumbria, or, especially, in Mercia, at the end of the seventh century and the beginning of the eighth, if we know that certain Anglo-Saxons were studying *in* Ireland, the evidence of Irish influence becomes much more persuasive. In this paper, I propose to explore what the early Echternach manuscripts can tell us about Hiberno-Saxon relations from this period. Paleography can add a great deal of supportable evidence to the question of influence between the Irish and the Anglo-Saxons and, indeed, as Charles Wright notes, "The peripatetic and reciprocal nature of the 'cultural interplay' during this period is typified by the movement of Willibrord from Rath Melsigi to Echternach, where the Augsburg Gospel-book was produced" (Wright, 2001: p. 35). By exploring these manuscripts, I hope to be able to use paleographical evidence to further establish cultural influence.

### **The Early Echternach Manuscripts before and after the Mission from Rath Melsigi**

Over the course of the twentieth century and culminating with Julian Brown, a scholarly consensus emerged placing the provenance of three of the major early Insular Gospel books in Northumbria and it is only in the last thirty years that these claims have been challenged. Brown, Bruce-Mitford, and Kendrick note that the Lindisfarne Gospels, the Durham Codex, and the Echternach Gospels contain examples of a distinctive Insular half-uncial of phase II, going on to posit a Northumbria origin for the manuscripts.<sup>11</sup> Brown has gone further, arguing that all three codices were written and decorated by one man, the so-called Durham-Echternach Calligrapher, in Lindisfarne and has even gone so far as to argue that The Book of Kells came from a center subject to Northumbrian influence.<sup>12</sup> Dáibhí Ó Cróinín is one of the first to challenge this position, noticing this tendency to "locate most of

our early insular manuscripts in Northumbria” (Ó Cróinín, 1982: p. 361) and questioning whether this attribution is more about “pride or prejudice” than supportable evidence. He particularly refutes Brown’s assertion that a Mixed Italian script (the “Durham-Echternach Calligrapher” is especially noted for his Italian influence) must have come from England because it could not be readily available in Ireland and that though the Durham codex must have been *in* Lindisfarne at one point (based on corrections in emendations, marginalia, and punctuation), there is no verifiable evidence to suggest that it was absolutely written there (Ó Cróinín, 1982: pp. 353-6). Indeed, while the three Gospel books do share some decorative motifs, they display little agreement in texts, layout, quire arrangements, and choice of miniatures—prompting the question of why the same scribe would use such different styles. Ó Cróinín, focusing especially on the Echternach Gospels as a linchpin for the whole argument, maintains that an Irish provenance is just as likely for both the Echternach and Durham Gospels and posits Rath Melsigi, an Irish center for learning, as a viable alternative to Lindisfarne (Ó Cróinín, 1982: pp. 352-62).

Ó Cróinín has subsequently argued that Rath Melsigi (potentially Clonmelsh, Co. Carlow) and its missionaries can provide a possible key to many of the problems facing historians of Insular paleography and learning by using evidence of Rath Melsigi as a scriptorium which provided Echternach with some of its earliest manuscripts. Bede mentions that Æthelhun and Egbert are among those that go to Ireland to study (directly after the passage quoted above) and that they, in particular, went to Rath Melsigi.<sup>13</sup> Willibrord would later join them, before leading the Anglo-Saxon mission to Frisia and founding a monastery at Echternach in c. 698 (an undertaking that clearly seems to be based from Ireland). Ó Cróinín carefully argues that several of the earliest Echternach manuscripts were either first written in Ireland, probably at Rath Melsigi, or were written by Irishmen in the formative years of the Echternach scriptorium.

[turned in paragraph]

MS Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, lat. 10837 contains three sections: the Martyrologium Hieronymianum written by the scribe Laurentius, the famous Calendar of Willibrord and a Paschal table, and later Paschal tables for the years AD 760-797. Ó Cróinín notes that, along with the Calendar, there is an Easter table written in a different hand for the years AD 684-702. Using this table, and drawing the conclusion based from his work on the *computus* that a scribe would hardly ever pen a table for a nineteen year cycle preceding the date in which it was written, Ó Cróinín posits the original composition of this table c. 683, while Willibrord was still in Rath Melsigi (Ó Cróinín, 1984: 28-36). While he does not doubt that the Calendar itself was given its present form on the continent c. 702, the initial compilation of its exemplar seems to have occurred in Ireland and been brought to Rath Melsigi. Given the evidence of Rath Melsigi as, potentially, a thriving scriptorium, Ó Cróinín also explores the evidence of five or six Old Irish glosses in MS Paris Lat. 10399.<sup>14</sup> He believes, given the concentration of Old Irish glosses and that the contents of the manuscript were “heavily biased in favour of Irish texts” that “there are surely much stronger grounds for believing that the manuscript itself was penned by an Irishman” (Ó Cróinín, 1989: p. 136). Since these glosses are datable to the

early eighth century, it seems clear that, if the manuscript was not written at Rath Melsigi, Irishmen doubtlessly came with Willibrord to Echternach. According to Ó Cróinín's analysis of these manuscripts, Rath Melsigi—emerging as the “real source of inspiration” for the Anglo-Saxon missionary effort to Echternach—had to have provided both personnel *and* manuscripts for initial missionaries, as well as scribal expertise to make more (Ó Cróinín, 1984: p. 32).

Nancy Netzer chronologically takes up where Ó Cróinín lets off, exploring manuscripts produced at the Echternach scriptorium and the growing “cultural interplay” between Insular and Mediterranean decoration and textual style. She examines five manuscripts written and decorated in the Insular style, signed by scribes who appear in Echternach charters from c. 700-20. The first is a Book of Prophets (Paris lat. 9382) copied by a scribe named Virgilius (the Latinized version of Fergal, an Irishman who wrote and signed charters for Willibrord in 709 and 721-2). Netzer explains how his hand parallels the Calendar of Willibrord and the Augsburg Gospels—using this transition to discuss how the exemplar of the Augsburg Gospels was likely an Irish copy of a Mediterranean Gospel book.<sup>15</sup> She then briefly surveys three other early eighth century Echternach manuscripts: a manuscript in Maeseyck (Church of St Catherine, s.n.), a codex in Trier (Cathedral Treasury, MS 61), and a bifolium in Freiburg-im-Breisgau (Universitätsbibliothek, Cod. 702). After explaining how these manuscripts were removed from Echternach, she reveals that the chronology of these Gospel books is significant in addressing the relationship of Echternach to Ireland and Lindisfarne and proceeds to argue a chronological range from earliest to latest: 1. Augsburg, 2. Maeseyck, 3. Trier, 4. Freiburg (Netzer, 1989: pp. 205-7). Since, according to Netzer, Trier and Freiburg contain Insular half-uncial of phase II thought to have been invented at Lindisfarne, she believes that, after the production of the earliest manuscripts, Echternach must have been in contact with Lindisfarne as well as Ireland. The implications of these findings suggest that a monastery like Echternach would have had considerable connections with both Ireland and Northumbria (if not “England”), making the Echternach scriptorium a center of “cultural interplay” where cross-cultural influences from Ireland and England (and the Mediterranean) came together in dynamic ways.<sup>16</sup>

### **What Can the Early Echternach Manuscripts Tell Us about Hiberno-Saxon Relations?**

The evidence provided by these early Echternach-affiliated manuscripts can tell us a good deal about Hiberno-Saxon relations and perhaps nothing more important than the completely verifiable fact that Irish connections persisted post-Whitby. As noted earlier, while the Synod of Whitby marked the formal break of Northumbria from Ireland (ie. Iona) because of disagreements over the dating of Easter (and, indeed, Irish abbots would no longer govern Lindisfarne after 664 with Bishop Colmán and thirty English monks leaving Lindisfarne to settle at Inishbofin and then Mayo), it did not mean a rejection of Ireland or even Irish learning (much of southern Ireland, for example, had already accepted the Roman dating of Easter at this time). David Dumville writes that, “Such influence [Irish influence after Whitby] could not be eradicated after 664; nor have we any evidence that this was a general desire on the part of any English clerics” (Dumville, 1981: p. 115). Nevertheless, the Synod of Whitby is the first and

most significant hurdle that any scholar of Hiberno-Saxon relations must cross, despite much evidence to the contrary.<sup>17</sup> By developing the evidence that Rath Melsigi provided personnel with scribal expertise and initial manuscripts for the mission to Echternach, as well as later Lindisfarne connections, it becomes very clear that, in this circumstance, Hiberno-Saxon relations were very strong for another fifty to seventy-five years at least.

With more verifiable evidence that Hiberno-Saxon relations persisted beyond Whitby, we can then take a more nuanced account of the evidence, which seems to prove that this relationship was much more complicated than simply the Irish influencing the Anglo-Saxons in England. To some degree, it shows that we might be looking in the wrong places, as some of the most exciting evidence comes from these continental manuscripts. Similar to how Julian Brown, et al., attempted to place the major early Insular Gospel books in Northumbria, a certain amount of “pride and prejudice” comes into the Hiberno-Saxon debate of influence: Celticists like to tout the fact that the Irish taught the Northern half of Anglo-Saxon England how to write (and therefore presume much the one-way street in terms of influence) and many Anglo-Saxonists like to ignore the debt owed to Irish missionaries, instead focusing on the Roman mission as the genesis of Christianity in England. These manuscripts, however, reveal a tri-lingual manuscript culture (Latin, Old Irish, Old English) with influences coming from both the Irish and English. Indeed, as Ó Cróinín concludes,

All in all, therefore, the new Paris discoveries add more evidence for the argument that the earliest Echternach manuscripts and their scribes represent a thorough integration of Irish and Anglo-Saxon techniques and interests. In their choice of texts, in their bilingual glossing of those texts, and in their script, the Paris fragments provide important corroborative evidence that the genesis of Hiberno-Saxon cultural relations is to be sought not just in Northumbria but in Ireland as well (Ó Cróinín, 1989: 138).

These manuscripts are a product of collaboration between styles, a “cultural interplay” in which both sides contribute to the project. Strong evidence for this kind of milieu is somewhat unique in the study of Hiberno-Saxon relations and points towards a more complex cultural environment than generally acknowledged.

Lastly, the manuscript evidence for the Echternach scriptorium also makes the Hiberno-Saxon debate of learning and influence (both from the medieval and contemporary perspective) seem a lot less dramatic than Aldhelm so spectacularly (and perhaps theatrically) puts it in his letters to Heahfrith and Wihtfrith. Despite his criticisms, it remains that a “who’s who” of early Anglo-Saxon scholars were either educated by the Irish or in centers set up by the Irish. Not including figures like Aldfrith or Willibrord, Joseph Kelly notes that nearly all the great pre-Viking intellectuals (Bede, Alcuin, the authors of *Lives* of Gregory the Great and

Cuthbert, Benedict Biscop) come from the Irish-influenced North (Kelly, 1975: 35-47). While it is harder to prove the extent to which these later Anglo-Saxon writers were influenced by the Irish, especially given the rising prominence of the Canterbury school, we can see from the early Echternach manuscripts that the Irish and the Anglo-Saxons could work together peacefully and much to the other's profit.

[turned in paragraph]

I have briefly shown how paleography can add much supportable evidence to the question of influence between the Irish and the Anglo-Saxons and I believe that this evidence clearly establishes the "cultural interplay" at work in Rath Melsigi and Echternach in the seventh and eighth centuries. The Echternach manuscripts seem to suggest a culture of mutual appreciation, teaching, and learning with the overall goal being focused on missionary conversion and manuscript production. If Ireland were the best place to learn, it does not seem like the conclusions of the Synod of Whitby stopped Anglo-Saxons from going abroad or engaging with the Irish on a scholarly level. Instead of simply "drink[ing] thirstily from the briny and muddy waters, in which a dark throng of toads swarms in abundance," the Echternach manuscripts show Hiberno-Saxon scholarly cooperation to its fullest and reveal the extent to which such cross-cultural influences can become manifest in the manuscripts of that early age.

## Bibliography

### Primary Sources

COLGRAVE, Bertram, MYNORS, R.A.B. (eds.) *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969.

IRELAND, Colin (ed.), *Old Irish Wisdom Attributed to Aldfrith of Northumbria: An Edition of Bríathra Flainn Fhína maic Ossu*. Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 1999.

KENDRICK, T.D., BROWN, T.J., and R. BRUCE-MITFORD (eds.) *Evangeliorum quattuor Codex Lindisfarnensis*. Oltun et Lausanna Helvetiae: Urs Graf, 1956-60

VEREY, Christopher D., BROWN, T. Julian, and Elizabeth COATSWORTH (eds.) *The Durham Gospels: Together with Fragments of a Gospel Book in Uncial, Durham, Cathedral Library, MS A. II. 17*. Copenhagen: Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1980.

### Secondary Sources

BIELER, Ludwig. Ireland's Contribution to the Culture of Northumbria. In: BONNER, Gerald (ed.) *Famulus Christi: Essays in Commemoration of the Thirteenth Centenary of the Birth of the Venerable Bede*. London: SPCK, 1976, pp. 210-228.

BROWN, T. J. Northumbria and the Book of Kells. *Anglo-Saxon England* 1, 1972, pp. 219-246.

CAMPBELL, James. The Debt of the Early English Church to Ireland. In: NÍ CHATHÁIN, Próinséas and Michael RICHTER (eds.) *Irland und die Christenheit: Bibelstudien und Mission*. Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1987, pp. 332-46.

CHADWICK, Nora K. The Celtic Background of Early Anglo-Saxon England. In: Kenneth JACKSON and Nora K. CHADWICK (eds.) *Celt and Saxon: Studies in the Early British Border*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963, pp. 323-352.

CROSS, J. E. On Hiberno-Latin Texts and Anglo-Latin Writings. In: O'LOUGHLIN, Thomas (ed.) *The Scriptures and Early Medieval Ireland: Proceedings of the 1993 Conference of the Society for Hiberno-Latin Studies on Early Irish Exegesis and Homilectics*. Turnhout: Brepols, 1999, pp. 69-79.

DUMVILLE, David. Beowulf and the Celtic World: The Uses of Evidence. *Traditio* 37, 1981, pp. 109-160.

GRAHAM-CAMPBELL, James and Michael RYAN (eds.) *Anglo-Saxon/Irish Relations before the Vikings. Proceedings of the British Royal Academy 157*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.

HERREN, Michael W. Scholarly Contacts between the Irish and the Southern English in the Seventh Century. *Peritia* 12, 1998, pp. 24-53.

<http://ppg.revistas.uema.br/index.php/brathair>



- HOWLETT, D. R. Aldhelm and Irish Learning. *Archivum Latinitatis Medii Aevi (Bulletin du Conge)* 52, 1994, pp. 37-75.
- HUGHES, Kathleen. Evidence for Contacts between the Churches of the Irish and English from the Synod of Whitby to the Viking Age. In: Peter CLEMOES and Kathleen HUGHES (eds.) *England before the Conquest: Studies in Primary Sources Presented to Dorothy Whitelock*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971, pp. 49-67.
- IRELAND, Colin. Aldfrith of Northumbria and the Irish Genealogies. *Celtica* 22, 1991, pp. 64-78
- IRELAND, Colin. Aldfrith of Northumbria and the Learning of a Sapiens. In: Kathryn A. KLAR, Eve E. SWEETSER, and Claire THOMAS (eds.) *A Celtic Florilegium: Studies in Memor of Brendan Ó Hehir*. Lawrence: Celtic Studies Publications, 1996, pp. 63-77.
- KELLY, Joseph. Irish Influence in England after the Synod of Whitby: Some New Literary Evidence. *Éire-Ireland* 10, 1975, pp. 35-47.
- NETZER, Nancy. *Cultural Interplay in the Eighth Century: The Trier Gospels and the Making of a Scriptorium at Echternach*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994.
- NETZER, Nancy Netzer. Willibrord's Scriptorium at Echternach and its Relationship to Ireland and Lindisfarne. In: Gerald BONNER, David ROLLASON, and Clare STANCLIFFE (eds.) *St. Cuthbert, his Cult, and his Community to AD 1200*. Woodbridge, The Boydell Press, 1989, pp. 203-12.
- Ó CRÓINÍN, Dáibhí. Early Echternach Manuscript Fragments with Old Irish Glosses, In: Georges KIESEL and Jean SCHROEDER (eds) *Willibrord, Apostel der Niederlande, Gründer der Abtei Echternach*. Luxembourg: Editions Saint-Paul, 1989, pp. 135-43.
- Ó CRÓINÍN, Dáibhí. Pride and Prejudice. *Peritia* 1, 1982, pp. 352-62.
- Ó CRÓINÍN, Dáibhí. Rath Melsigi, Willibrord, and the Earliest Echternach Manuscripts. *Peritia* 3, 1984, pp. 17-49.
- O'NEILL, Patrick. Irish Cultural Influence on Northumbria: The First Thirty Years, A.D. 635-664. In: Benjamin T. HUDSON and Vickie ZIEGLER (eds.) *Crossed Paths: Methodological Approaches to the Celtic Aspect of the European Middle Ages*. Lanham: University Press of America, 1991, pp. 11-23.
- THACKER, A.T. Bede and the Irish. In: L.A.J.R. HOUWEN and A.A. MACDONALD (eds.) *Bede Venerabilis: Historian, Monk & Northumbrian*. Groningen: E. Forsten, 1996, pp. 31-59.
- WRIGHT, Charles D. Wright. The Irish Tradition. Phillip PULSIANO and Elaine TREHARNE (eds.) *A Companion to Anglo-Saxon Literature*. Malden: Blackwell Publishers, 2001, pp. 345-374.
- WRIGHT, Charles D. *The Irish Tradition in Old English Literature*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993.

---

<sup>1</sup> See especially Hughes, 1971: pp. 49-67; Kelly, 1975: pp. 35-47.

<sup>2</sup> For more on this topic, see also Bieler, 1976: 210-228; Campbell, 1987: 332-46; Wright, 1993; Herren, 1998: 24-53; Cross, 1999: 69-79; Graham-Campbell and Ryan (eds.), 2009.

<sup>3</sup> See O'Neill, 1991: pp. 11-23.

<sup>4</sup> "At this time there were many in England, both nobles and commons, who, in the days of Bishops Finan and Colman, had left their own country and retired to Ireland either for the sake of religious studies or to live a more ascetic life. In course of time some of these devoted themselves faithfully to the monastic life, while others preferred to travel round to the cells of various teachers and apply themselves to study. The Irish welcomed them all gladly, gave them their daily food, and also provided them with books to read and with instruction, without asking for any payment" (Colgrave, 1969: 313).

<sup>5</sup> Bede is generally considered a Roman apologist whose attitude to the Irish, "[at best] has been deemed ambiguous, and at worst he has been accused of deliberately undervaluing, and indeed suppressing, the Irish contribution to the early church in Northumbria" (Thacker, 1996: p. 31). Nevertheless, his high opinion of Aidan and his respect for the personal austerity and scriptural learning of the Irish is generally regarded.

<sup>6</sup> Colin Ireland argues that Oswiu, a Northumbrian king, fathered Aldfrith on a high-status woman of the Cenél nEógain and that Aldfrith was reared, educated, and fostered among the Irish. See Ireland, 1991: pp. 64-78

<sup>7</sup> See Ireland, 1996: pp. 63-77.

<sup>8</sup> See Ireland, 1999.

<sup>9</sup> For example, Aldhelm writes, *Quur inquam Hibernia(,) quo cateruatim istinc lectitantes classibus aduecti confluunt ineffabili quodam priuilegio efferatur. (A)csi istic fecundo Britanniae in cespite dedasculi Argiui Romaniue(;) Quirites reperiri minime queant. Qui caelestis tetrica enodantes bibliothecae problemata sciolis reserare se sciscitantibus ualeant.* ("Why, I ask, to Ireland, whither assemble the thronging students by the fleetload, exalted with a sort of ineffable privilege, as if here in the fertile soil of Britain teachers who are citizens of Greece and Rome cannot be found, who are able to unlock and unravel the murky mysteries of the heavenly library to the scholars who are eager to study them?") Howlett, 1994: pp. 41, 44-5.

<sup>10</sup> "It has come to my attention from the reports of newsmongers regarding the intentions of your Charity, that you have decided to undertake, with the Lord as your pilot, a journey across the sea [to Ireland], since you have been inflamed by a keenness for study. I think it absurd to spurn the inextricable

---

rule of the New and Ancient document and undertake a journey through the slippery paths of a country full of brambles, that is to say, through the troublesome meanderings of the (worldly) philosophers; or surely, (it is absurd) to drink thirstily from the briny and muddy waters, in which a dark throng of toads swarms in abundance and where croaks the strident chatter of frogs, when there are clear waters flowing from glassy pools” (Howlett, 1994: p. 59).

<sup>11</sup> See Kendrick, Brown, Bruce-Mitford, 1956-60.

<sup>12</sup> See Verey, Brown, and Coatsworth, 1980; Brown, 1972: pp. 219-246.

<sup>13</sup> *HE* iii.27.

<sup>14</sup> This manuscript contains six texts, three regarded as Irish computistical forgeries (Pseudo-Athanasius, Pseudo-Anatolius, and Pseudo-Theophilus), Augustine’s *De Genesi ad Litteram*, Gaudentius’s *De Paschae Obseruatione*, and an excerpt from the Book of Numbers—all of these texts are about the Paschal question. See Ó Cróinín, 1989: pp. 135-43.

<sup>15</sup> Nancy Netzer, “Willibrord’s Scriptorium at Echternach and its Relationship to Ireland and Lindisfarne,” *St. Cuthbert, his Cult, and his Community to AD 1200*, ed. Gerald Bonner, David Rollason, and Clare Stancliffe (Wolfeboro, NH: Boydell & Brewer, 1989), 203-12, at 205-7.

<sup>16</sup> See also Netzer 1994.

<sup>17</sup> An example offered by Hughes (1971, p. 57) is the evidence of the Council of Chelsea (816) which leveled a heavy attack against Irish bishops in Mercia—ultimately proving that they had to be there.