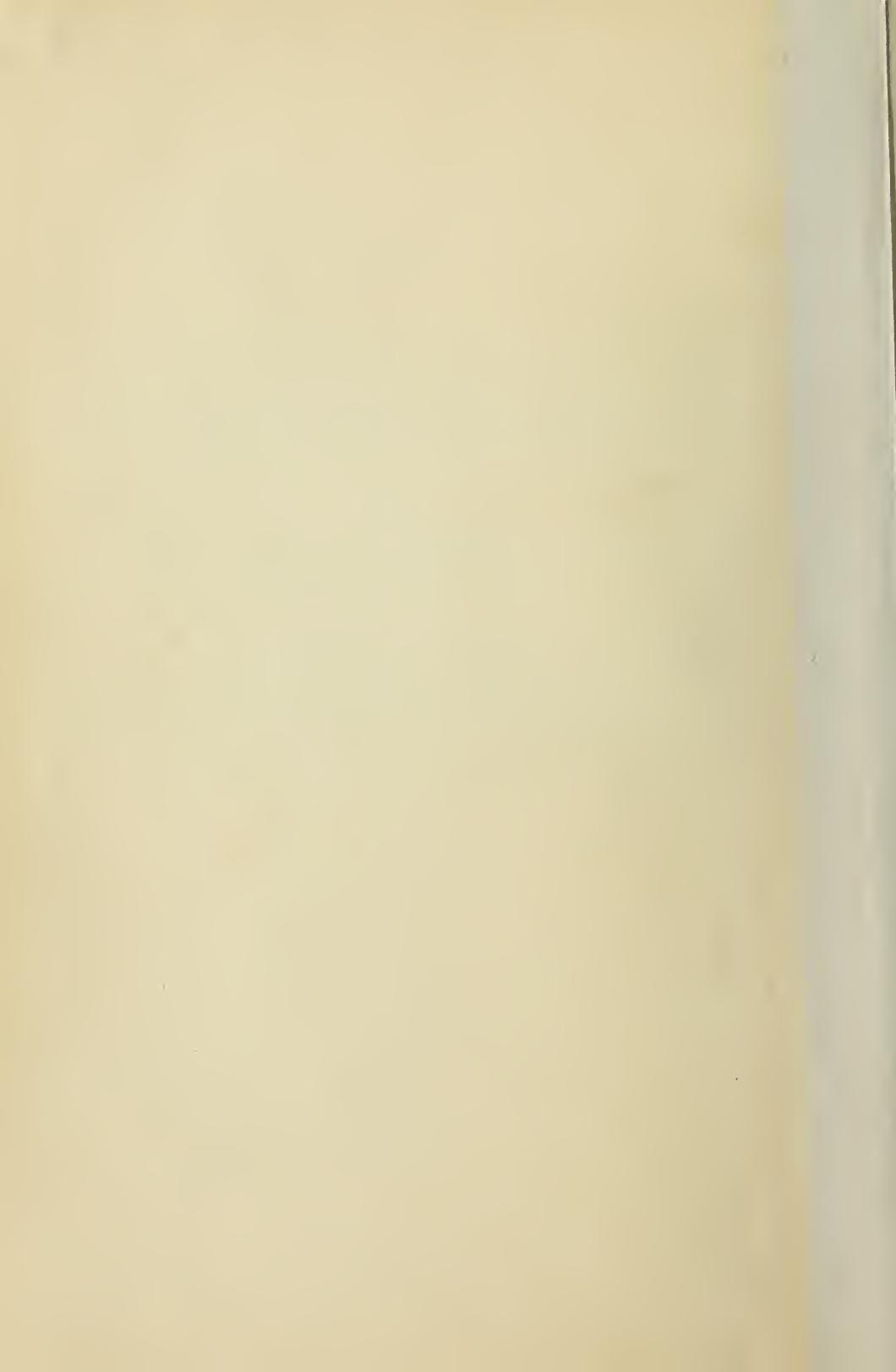


# HANDWRITING

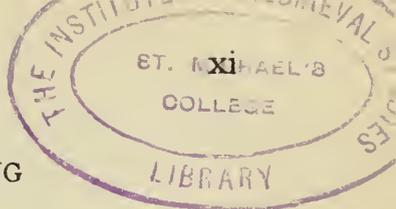
by

E·A·LOWE

reprinted from  
The·Legacy·of·the·Middle·Ages



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### iii. HANDWRITING

THE impulse to fashion signs and symbols to express ideas came late in man's development. Compared with his long sojourn on earth, his engraved and written records are things of yesterday. Yet, though his pictographs and early alphabets are of relatively recent date, they are thousands of years older than the characters with which we deal in this essay. They belong to alien civilizations, and do not concern us here. Our own letters, as is well known, go back to the Latins, who got them from the Greek colonists in Italy; who in turn borrowed them from the Phoenicians. But the particular forms of letters employed to-day both in writing and printing are not a direct inheritance from Rome; they are rather the creation of the centuries which transmitted, and in transmitting modified, that inheritance. They are, in short, the legacy of the Middle Ages.

While writing was establishing itself in the economy of man's life as the normal vehicle by which religious, legal, political, or literary traditions could be handed on, various questions of form inevitably arose. The answers to those questions became the laws of a new art. It is only by realizing that writing was an art, subject to rules and regulations and not a thing at the mercy of individual whim, that one can properly understand the history of writing. Calligraphy is distinguished by harmony of style. It is conscious of the methods by which it gets its results. Its forms are definite. If the art of writing was one of the latest of man's achievements, it was also one of the slowest in developing. Being itself an instrument of conservation, it was in the nature of things extremely conservative. Painting, sculp-

ture, literature, and even architecture change more from age to age than does writing. Once a type had found favour, it was apt to last for centuries. Thus we know that uncial and half-uncial scripts—the scripts in use when St. Jerome was revising and translating the Bible for Pope Damasus, the script in which our oldest texts of the Bible were written—lasted for five whole centuries; and the same long life may be surmised for *Capitalis Rustica*, the script with which Tacitus, Trajan, Pliny, must have been familiar, the script of our oldest extant manuscripts of Plautus, Terence, Virgil, Sallust, Cicero, Persius, Juvenal; the script too which engravers of the second century had begun using for inscriptions alongside of the older and more suitable *Capitalis Quadrata*. Other scripts, which came into being after the barbarian invasions, like the Beneventan in South Italy, the Visigothic in Spain, also lasted five hundred years each. The Irish script lasted even longer. If other minuscule scripts were cut short in their career, like the cursive types of north Italy, the Merovingian types in France, and the Anglo-Saxon script, there were in each case extraordinary historic events to account for the fact. For, though scripts seem to move down the ages with the majestic slowness of glaciers, they are not mere carriers or external instruments, but genuine manifestations of their age, bearing the marks of its vicissitudes. Thus writing, which is primarily but the humble medium for recording the deeds, thoughts, and interests of an age, by dint of being itself an art, becomes at once an expression and a register of the spirit which informs that age. Herein lies the peculiar interest that writing has for the student of culture in general.

The history of writing is so intimately bound up with the history of the book as to be inseparable from it. It was in the copying of books that handwriting found its main

expression as an art. It is with the writing found in books, then, that we are chiefly concerned in what follows.

If we examine our legacy in the matter of writing, we notice that, with the exception of Greece, Armenia, and the lands of orthodox Slavs, the Latin alphabet is used in all the countries of western civilization, and wherever that civilization penetrates beyond the Occident. The various forms of the Latin letters used to-day in printing and writing are, broadly speaking, of two kinds: the round or Roman, like the type of this page, and the pointed or so-called Gothic, which we call black-letter type. The Roman type is the normal one everywhere outside of Germany and Austria, where Gothic characters are still used extensively, though by no means exclusively. In still using the Gothic type the Germans are merely showing themselves more conservative than we are. They are preserving a tradition that has lived for over eight centuries. If we, on the other hand, read and write the clear, round, Roman type we have the Italian humanists of the fifteenth century to thank for it. For it was they who first broke with a venerable tradition by discarding the Gothic script which all Europe had been writing since the thirteenth century. Italy's example was soon followed by France, Holland, and then by England, all during the sixteenth century. It was only in the nineteenth century that the Scandinavian countries and Denmark gave up the use of the Gothic script. To-day Germany and German Austria are alone in clinging to the pointed black-letter style, though they use it mainly in their textbooks and books of belles-lettres and devotion.

The script the Italian humanists introduced was not a creation of their own. It was not a new script at all. It was only a revival. Their passion for the classics brought in its wake an abhorrence of everything Gothic, which came to be a synonym for barbaric. A substitute for the Gothic

script had to be found. It was indeed found, as if made to order, in those very manuscripts of the classics for which the libraries of Europe were then being eagerly and diligently ransacked. It so happens that the great majority of the classics are written in the Carolingian minuscule of the ninth and tenth centuries. The clear, round, and comely characters of this script were to the humanist's eye the very antithesis of the Gothic. They fitted in admirably with his notion of a *scriptura antiqua*, a *scriptura Romana*. Thus the humanistic minuscule came into being. It was a conscious work of resuscitation achieved by a small band of men like Poggio, Niccolò Niccoli, Traversari, and their zealous followers. Petrarch was still Gothic-bound, though his hand is one of the clearest, for Italian Gothic never lost all the good features of its Caroline progenitor. Once launched the success of the humanistic script was assured. History repeated itself. The fitter script survived. Just as in the ninth century the Caroline minuscule drove many rivals from the field, so the humanistic minuscule was destined to triumph over its competitors. The countries with a strongly established Latin culture, Italy, France, Spain, were naturally the first to succumb to the fascination of the type which had such manifest beauty of form, and which purported to go back to the Romans. The northern countries, especially those that were never properly Romanized, and as a result of the Reformation came to feel a natural antagonism to things Roman, were slowest to adopt the new, so-called 'Roman' script, despite its obvious advantages. In Germany the process of Romanization was still further retarded by the false doctrine that Gothic was her national script, to cherish which was an act of patriotism. In reality, as we shall see, Gothic, which had been the script of all Europe, is nothing but a later development of the Caroline minuscule.

What is this Caroline minuscule which the Humanists

revived, and which became the basis of our script? How ancient is it? Where did it arise? What are its antecedents? Is it a unique phenomenon or part of a general movement? Did it originate in Rome, as some claim, or in France? Perhaps the best way of answering these questions would be to look back and examine the period immediately preceding the birth of minuscule, and follow its rise in the various centres of Europe. It is indispensable to take this rather extensive survey, for only by understanding the history of minuscule script can we gain an understanding of what was distinctive in the legacy of the Middle Ages.

For several centuries after the break-up of the Roman Empire scribes had been content to copy their Bibles, Missals, Jeromes, and Augustines, as well as their Livys, Ovids, and Juvenals, in uncial and half-uncial letters, that is, in those two book scripts, whose obscure origins go back to the fourth or even third centuries, and whose period of greatness falls in the fifth century for uncials and in the sixth for half-uncials. The notaries, public or private, no longer used the cursive formed by straight strokes, the everyday script known to Cicero, Seneca, or Suetonius, whose tablets would have been unintelligible to men of the fifth century; but a new cursive composed of curved strokes and of a new type of ligature; the beginnings of which we can trace back to the fourth century, and the importance of which lies in the fact that it became in time the basis of several calligraphic scripts. After the sixth century we become aware of a gradual deterioration. No real works of art, no literature to speak of, appears for several generations. Spelling begins to grow corrupt, the old scripts become more artificial. The old discipline is going. Traditions are breaking down or altogether dying out. But the torpor consequent upon the bankruptcy of the old

world, and confusion resulting from the migration of the Germanic nations and incessant wars, were not to last for ever. New life-forces begin to stir by the beginning of the eighth century. The foundations of a new Europe are to be laid in that century. It is during this period that new scripts begin to make their shy appearance. This is noticeable, not in one country only, but in nearly all, in Greek- as well as in Latin-writing countries—a clear indication that it was the result of a general condition.

By then the book trade, it must be remembered, had been dead for centuries. The scribes were no longer hired men, paid by author or publisher, but clerics and monks, who worked for the Church, whether they copied books for choir, parish school, or monastic library. Not only was there a distinct change in the kind of book copied, there was as great a change in the conditions of work, in its motives and rewards. This was already the case in the sixth century, as we gather from Cassiodorus' avowal that he feels 'of all bodily tasks a perhaps not unjust preference for the work of scribes (provided they copy accurately), since by reading and re-reading Holy Scripture they gain wholesome mental instruction, and by copying the precepts of the Lord they help to disseminate them far and wide'. Here the scribes' rewards, we see, are intellectual and spiritual; the books to be copied are religious. Cassiodorus loves this theme of the scribe, and continues characteristically thus: 'What happy application, what praiseworthy industry, to preach unto men by means of the hand, to untie the tongues by means of the fingers, to bring quiet and salvation to mortals, and fight the Devil's insidious wiles with pen and ink! For every word of the Lord which is copied deals Satan a wound. Thus, though seated in one spot, the scribe traverses diverse lands through the dissemination of what he has written.' These words describe an atmosphere and attitude utterly

foreign to the old Roman spirit. We are moving in a new world. And who would suspect these words of coming from a veteran politician? It was after a busy public career, as Chancellor of Theodoric and his successors that Cassiodorus retired, in his ripe old age, to his estate in Squillace in the extreme end of Italy, there to pass the end of his days in reading and writing. Although his interest, as we have seen, was mainly religious and his concern with Holy Scripture, he had many books of secular learning in his library, of which we are unusually well informed, and he explicitly recommends his monks to use them and copy them. From the rules of orthography and grammar which he lays down we can measure how low learning had already sunk by that time. Although he stands with his face averted from the ancient Roman past, the first man of letters, as it were, to step into the Middle Ages, as Petrarch may be said to be the first to step out of them—he is justly praised as the man whose zeal in the cause of letters has been largely responsible for the preservation of learning. For Cassiodorus lived and wrote at a critical moment, and it is safe to say that but for him, Petrarch and his fellow humanists would have had far fewer classics to revive, and the history of writing might have been very different from what it is. But the renaissance of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries was preceded by another renaissance which, though less brilliant, is of the greatest importance for classical learning and all-important, as we shall see, for the future of handwriting—I mean the Carolingian renaissance, when learning and the arts were once more pursued with vigour and zeal. Stir and movement were in fact evident for many decades before the reign of Charlemagne, as our manuscripts amply attest. During the whole of the eighth century we encounter on all sides earnest attempts at new forms of writing.

The old scripts evidently no longer answered to the needs of the times. The conditions for forming a new script, however, and the necessity for doing so, were not everywhere the same. It may be presumed that conditions were least propitious in Rome, the stronghold of the ancient majuscules. They must have been most favourable in those centres where the force of ancient traditions was felt least, where new experiments would receive the greatest encouragement.

The reasons why the old majuscule scripts had outlived their usefulness were varied and complex. For one thing, economic causes must have contributed to the disappearance of the more stately rustic, uncial and half-uncial scripts. The times of a plentiful supply of papyrus were no more. By the eighth century, a papyrus codex was the exception. Vellum and parchment were the rule. But animal skins were at all times expensive, and they must have been doubly difficult to procure after the disorganization resulting from devastating wars. Thus the supply of membranes could hardly keep pace with the demand, especially in centres where many books were copied. The exercise of economy became a necessity, and necessity is the mother of invention. The obvious way of saving vellum was to write more on a page. One way of getting more on a page was to make narrow instead of broad letters, to write a smaller script, in short, to use minuscule. It is this forced economy which made the Irish, probably an impecunious race even in the seventh and eighth centuries, squeeze more writing into a page than a decent regard for the reader's convenience would warrant, or good taste dictate. By writing a tiny, crowded script, by using subscript letters, and above all by abbreviating nearly every second word, they managed to get all that was humanly possible out of the available skins. And it is perhaps not a mere coincidence that the two centres from whence come most of our Latin palimpsests

QUI DEUS ILLI REXI HOMINUM MITES CENEDISCI  
IAMNE Q. ANIMORUM DESERUISUM IN ECC. AMINANXIS  
IESNE LACENTIESNERUSUSAI CONCIDITESILUMI  
NON ILLUM NOSTRI POSSUNT AIUTARE LABORES

PETRUS APOSTOLUS: HUIUS  
ELECTIS ADUENIS DISPERS  
SIONIS PONTICALIAE  
CAPPADOCIAE ASIAE ET BY  
THYNIAE. SECUNDUM  
PRAESCIENTIAM DEI PATRIS  
IN SCIFICATIONE CONSPEXIT

quia populi uelle adō est  
ambitum uoluntas quod adō sit  
<sup>quod cum iram</sup> <sup>atque diuinitatem</sup> <sup>liberantem</sup>  
In a m d i e x c o n s u e t u d i n e l o c a t a  
dicta in tellegi

TUNC UADIT AD SUMMUM  
SERUONIA HORRORUM  
NE QUI ORERET ET IN  
TRONICUM HABITARE  
IBI ET IUNIOUSSI  
MACHOMINIUS ILLUSPE  
LORAPROMBUSSIC  
CUM ET GENERATIONI



are both Irish foundations. How thoroughly the lesson of thrift had been inculcated in the followers of St. Columban and St. Gall, and how badly in need they were of writing material in the seventh and eighth centuries, may be surmised from the frequency with which the monks of St. Gall and Bobbio made use of membranes that had already been written upon. It was not out of contempt for the classics that Cicero's *De Republica*, Fronto's letters, Lucan and Juvenal were erased—for biblical and patristic texts suffered a similar fate—but out of sheer need of writing material.

Another reason why new book-scripts were emerging was the gradual dying off of the scribes who knew how to write the old ones. For one person capable of writing good uncial or half-uncial there must have been half a dozen who could write the everyday hand, the cursive of the notary. And if the single scribe of a community failed to train and educate a successor, calligraphic tradition naturally died out in that locality. This doubtless happened in many places during the invasions and other disturbances so fatal to the continuity of tradition, and thus generations grew up ignorant of the methods and manners of the old calligraphy. Yet communities which could not boast of a scribe might still have a notary, or some one who knew how to write down wills, conveyances, or other contracts. Wherever the Roman legions went there Rome's legal and administrative institutions followed. And the normal medium for recording legal transactions was the cursive script. Thus cursive was the *scriptura franca*, as it were, of the Roman Empire. Cursive remained even where calligraphy was lost. Cursive script is to calligraphy what dialect is to literary diction. It has a rank vigour and protean potentiality denied to calligraphy. It was out of the dialects of the Roman soldier and the peasant that the Romance tongues were evolved. Similarly it was out of the cursive hand that

new book-scripts sprang up in many districts. New life was needed in calligraphy. It came, as it usually does, from lower forms. For scripts, like populations, recruit chiefly from below.

There was one other important source out of which a new and economical script could be extracted. The best-known script of the early Middle Ages, next to cursive, must have been the half-uncial. It is itself an example of a calligraphic script formed by promoting cursive elements to a higher state. Conscious of its lowlier origin this script was less pretentious than the uncial, and having less dignity to maintain could without incongruity be written quite small and thus be used to make cheaper books. The small-type of half-uncial, thus produced, to which Traube (I dare say jestingly) gave the name of 'quarter-uncial', has the size and almost the form of minuscule, and, like minuscule, is written on the four-line principle, with the descending and ascending letters touching the first and fourth lines respectively. It differs from minuscule, to be sure, in the general effect, in that indescribable something, that bloom, which separates a fifth-century manuscript from an eighth. When the majuscule scripts no longer managed to hold their own, this small type of half-uncial, which existed in France as well as Italy, became, after slight modification due to the impact of cursive and uncial models, an obvious candidate for their place. How very successful a candidate it was one sees when one considers the fate of the Caroline minuscule. But it must not be thought that medieval scribes failed to realize, as some modern scholars do, that minuscule and half-uncial were two different scripts. To a ninth-century calligrapher a half-uncial manuscript, like the Basilican Hilary of the year 509, was written in majuscule characters and, as such, belonged to another and higher category than the script in which he was accustomed to



uocabuntur dies illi ::



**V**nic si quis uobis dixerit  
hic xps uultic uobite

**P**roterit enim seudo x  
saeudo profetae et



*eusebius*

*da broder*

*in drehen hatlo*

*secapman  
rea*

**M**atori in dno salutem

*geluend*

*rum oden*

**A**mmenius quocum

*alexandrinora*

*mid micle*

**A**lexandrinus magno

copy books. The ninth-century manuscripts written by the scribes of Tours prove that conclusively. And no one in that century can be said to be more conscious of the correct 'hierarchy' of scripts than the monks of St. Martin's at Tours.

The half-uncial and cursive scripts, then, must have been the common material everywhere ready to hand to serve as the basis of new scripts. How variously the basic ingredients were combined is seen from the divergent types which arose in the early Middle Ages.

The medieval contribution to writing, *par excellence*, is the minuscule. It took different forms in different countries, the most unusual developments coming from the outlying lands. Nations situated remote from Rome, and consequently less bound by her traditions, could give free play to native bent and strike out on lines of their own. This happened in the British Isles. The centuries between Gregory the Great and Charlemagne, which on the Continent were the darkest of the Middle Ages, were for Ireland a period of brilliant activity. Left to herself undisturbed for generations, she developed a monasticism and a liturgy of her own, with distinct Gallican traces, but very unlike Rome's; and being outside the general current she retained the antiquated mode of fixing Easter Sunday. What is of importance to us here, she developed a variety of Latin script, all her own, and her own characteristic system of abbreviation. The efforts of her missionaries in time extended beyond her own shores to Gaul, to the Alps, Italy, Germany, as the Irish foundations of Luxeuil, St. Gall, Bobbio, St. Kilian's testify. By way of Iona Irish teachers reach England and penetrate as far east as Jarrow. Willibrord, Aldhelm, Bede, sit at the feet of Celtic masters. These facts are in our histories. But they are also writ large on

the face of our manuscripts. 'Show me how you write and I'll tell you who your teacher was,' was profoundly true of the early Middle Ages. The oldest manuscripts of England are so like the Irish as to seem identical. This fact speaks volumes. To realize the fundamental character of England's indebtedness to Ireland in educational matters in the early period, we need only consider these simple facts: the manuscripts read and copied during the four centuries of Roman occupation, assuming that they were not lost or destroyed after the Germanic conquerors settled the island, must have been in 'capitalis rustica', or in uncials. The books England received with the great missions from Rome under St. Augustine and under Hadrian and Theodore, and those sent by Pope Gregory in 601, must have been mainly in 'littera Romana', or uncials. For the copy of the Gospels which tradition connects with St. Augustine's mission—it is now preserved at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge—is in uncial script, and the script justifies the tradition in point of age. Some of England's oldest charters (from south England) and her earliest dated biblical manuscripts (from north England)—I refer to the Cotton charters in the British Museum and to Ceolfrid's Bible now known as the Codex Amiatinus, and the Stonyhurst Gospel of St. John—are in the uncial hand. For all that, Rome's example was not strong enough to counteract the nearer influence of the Celtic teachers. For the predominant script of England, that which became her national script, is the script she learned from Ireland and not from Rome. At the Council of Whitby, the conflict between the Roman and the Celtic liturgy ended in a victory for Rome. The less dramatic conflict, however, between the two scripts, ended in a victory for the Celts.

To Ireland belongs the credit of having been the first to develop a minuscule in the true sense of the word. In the



esse dicitur qui nunc cepit  
nescire

**U**NGENTO EXMOPTUM  
DO OBTINENT COP  
PUS CLARITATEM DI  
MANENT IN FACULA  
SAECULORUM PER AE

TERNITUM: NESPI  
QUA NUNC CEPIT QUI  
SEMPER FUIT NATU  
RUE TUAE FILIUS DI  
UMMAE LUCIS TONIE

spice in me one  
numi' sel' p' RIC

**A**UDITE OMNES ANIMAS  
DOMINI SCAMEN ET  
VIRI IN XPO BEATI  
P. TENG EPISCUPI  
MO QUOD OBONO BACTA

SIMILATUR ANGELIS  
PERFACTA Q: PPTENUTA  
AE QUATUR APOSTOLIS  
DEAT XPI CUSTODIT

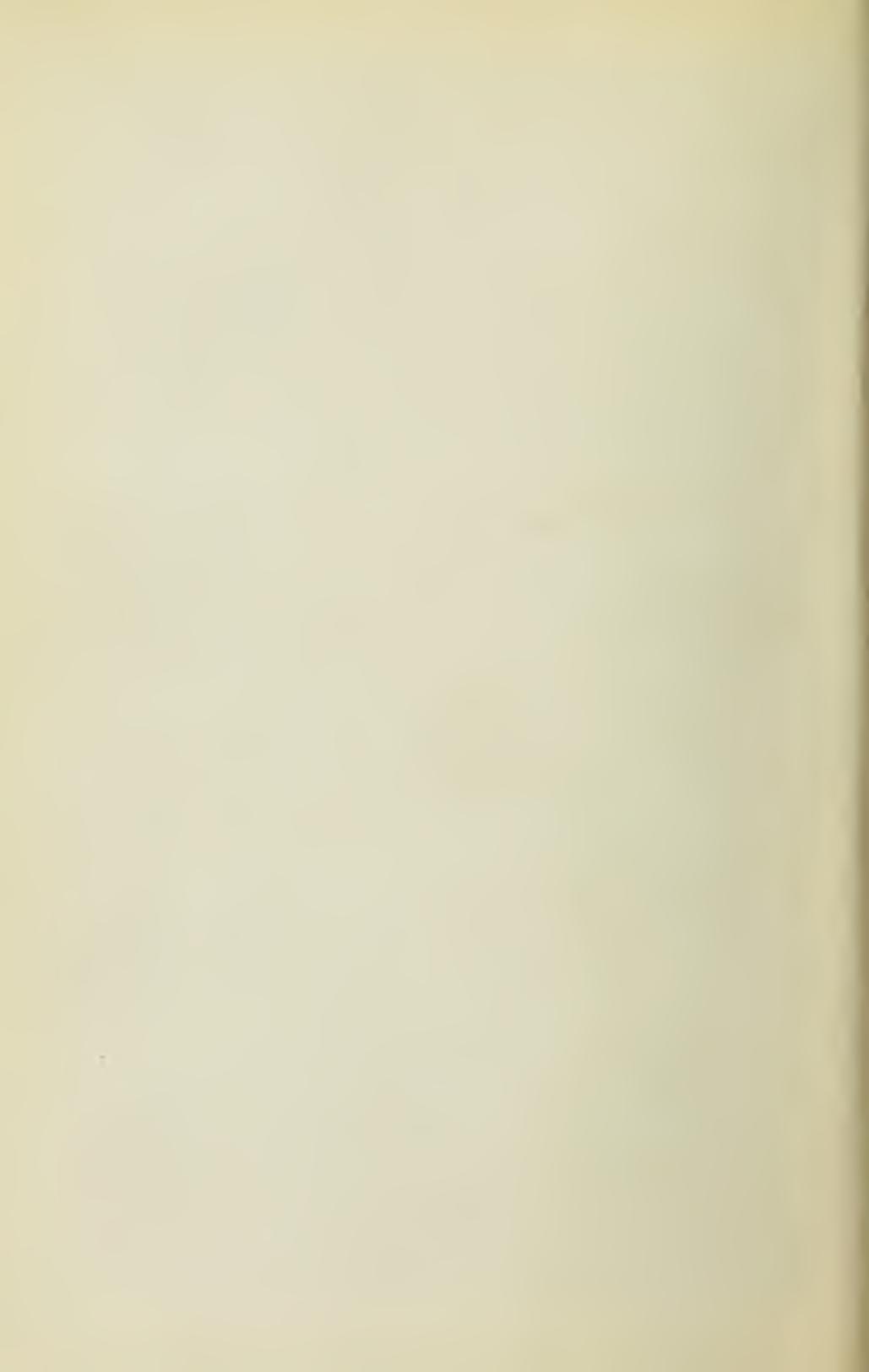
et nobis nat̄ ap̄os simonis canan̄s & simon̄ zelotar qui a  
templorum pontificibus occisi sunt. insuanis ciuit̄ p̄saranum

Januar̄ die 1<sup>o</sup> p̄p̄

**A** 1 **J**an̄ circūcisio d̄ni p̄ corporae qūnubente a selesio  
urbis praefec̄ cum die 1<sup>o</sup> hodie octauae d̄ caeli sunt  
cessate a sup̄stitionib: idolonum & sacrificis pullis a  
gladiationibus hac de causa occisus est. Inom̄ito step̄ani  
nicomed̄ eufrosini ep̄i p̄mani & alionū iiii. In neta euata h̄m̄ter  
In donoma 7ai iacta h̄racl̄. In aff̄ij uictor̄ pelicis narcissi  
anzini & alionū iiii. papa p̄niam̄ sacramini se sacramini uictor̄  
honorata leisi h̄m̄tas

& milite xxx.

Rauber̄ d̄p̄os sci seip̄i cum p̄b: suis. agustodano d̄p̄os agrippini ep̄i



Bangor Antiphonary, written between 680 and 691 (it is now in the Ambrosiana at Milan), we have an example of fully developed minuscule, with punctuation, separation of words and initials—all that we associate with minuscule. We are probably not far from the truth if we assume that the beginnings of this script go still farther back. But before developing a minuscule Irish calligraphers had created a majuscule, the Irish half-uncial as it is styled, of which the Book of Kells, a work of unsurpassed skill and artistry, is the most eminent example. We are still in the dark as to the appearance of the first Bibles and books of devotion which taught the Irish their letters and Christianity. We infer that they were not written in uncial characters, since Irish scribes seem utterly ignorant of this ancient type; but there is good ground for thinking that they were written in half-uncials, since Irish  $\alpha$  and  $\zeta$  could only have come from a half-uncial alphabet. The particular type of half-uncial which served as a model must have come by way of Gaul. It has certain uncial admixtures not found in the canonical half-uncial of Italy, which, to judge by its early dated examples, must have attained its full development during the fifth century. As the province lagged behind the mother-land, there is nothing inherently improbable in the supposition that a half-uncial type, with numerous uncial adhesions, was still largely in vogue in Gaul in the first half of the fifth century. The evidence of palaeography would seem to confirm the testimony of hagiography, both as to the period and the instrument of Ireland's conversion.

The English were apt pupils. In fact they improved upon their masters. For all its similarity to the Irish the English script is different. It is less bizarre, clearer and less crowded. Like the Irish, the English had both a majuscule and minuscule script. The Lindisfarne Gospels is the

English calligraphic counterpart to the Book of Kells. It is a book of rare beauty and superb craftsmanship. And in St. Willibrord's Calendar and Martyrology, which was written between 703 and 721, we possess an early example of English minuscule to match the Bangor Antiphonary. The high degree of excellence attained in this manuscript presupposes earlier stages and less perfect attempts, so that the beginnings of the Anglo-Saxon minuscule must go back well into the seventh century. Wherever the English and Irish went, there their books went with them. Their manuscripts are to be seen to this day at Saint Gall, Fulda, and Würzburg; and were to be seen at Bobbio, Corbie, Tours, Epternach, and elsewhere, before the monastic libraries were dispersed. But the English and Irish took not only their books but also their script with them. They teach it wherever they settle, and many are the books written by their continental pupils. Yet after a few generations, the Insular scripts yield to the influence of continental scripts, which finally supplant them. The Insular scripts, though first in the minuscule race, did not possess the cardinal virtue of clearness which distinguished the minuscule that eventually won the day.

Another country which early evolved a successful minuscule was Spain. And again, geographical position was largely responsible for the fact; the enormous vogue enjoyed by the works of Isidore Bishop of Seville must, however, have been an important contributing cause. During the whole of the seventh century, until Bede's writings began to circulate, Isidore's primacy was undisputed. His Etymologies was the most studied text-book of Europe, until it was supplanted in the ninth century by the encyclopaedia of Rabanus Maurus. The Saracen invasion indirectly helped the spread of Spanish learning. Spanish scholars migrated, and examples of the Spanish



ultra rationis culpa conpisco. nō est equū dōr lū tundo. ubi  
etiam in primo dōr dūat. Sed eō longius. ut pelutundia  
scetas. quōd nō dūōrūm dōlū tūte nisi pōximi nō dōsīa  
uelias. Sed et ille sub iudicio rēatū dōsīa quē tē  
quūm pōrē tūa. et rēb mīscāmōr quūm opus sīa uōt.  
Quūm mīscāmōr lōsu supflue locuatiōis oōsīa quē d  
offēndīa q̄ iudicōm. quē tē in uacōm uōtūm eētū  
ōmē uētūa. *Uacōmōr dōmōr cōr dō. et rē pō*  
ultra uia cōnōrīa in corde. uluacōpō fōrūa sē o  
Et quūm sīa illi uūmīa uē dōcēpōr. ubi s̄ full  
dōsī pōrē cōrīa uā. Et quū nō nō sīa in oōrē tōr u  
Idēo cōrē tōr uūmīa sīa. Mōn uē hūmīūm quē  
at quū pōrē cōrē tōr sē q̄ dōrīa quē dīxīa. Ego  
Lū uūōrīa sīa uīa. Uōrīa uacōm in corde cōnōrē dē



script reached Italy and Gaul. The *Orationale Mozarabicum*, now at Verona, must have reached Italy before 732. It is written in fully developed Visigothic minuscule, with perhaps a greater mixture of cursive elements than is permitted later. Scribes of Vercelli, Pisa, Lucca, Monte Cassino, of Fleury, Autun, Lyons, and Corbie, and scribes of centres which we cannot fix, came into contact with Visigothic scribes and methods, as chronicles and extant manuscripts attest. The Visigothic minuscule derives in the main from the half-uncial, supplemented by a few cursive elements (chiefly ligatures with *t*). The half-uncial which served as model was the one that has the uncial form of *g*; which may have been the prevalent type in Spain. This uncial *g* in the midst of minuscule letters, which is a Visigothic peculiarity, could hardly have come from any other source. Visigothic minuscule is neat, self-possessed, restrained, but not easy to read. The similarity between *a* and *u* is confusing. The form of *t*, as in the Beneventan, is a stumbling-block. Like the Beneventan, it follows the even tenor of its way for five centuries, undisturbed. It took an ecclesiastical council to suppress it. It is noteworthy that the script which was to supersede the 'Littera Toletana', as Spanish minuscule was called, was designated at the council as Gallic, not as Roman; just as in South Italy scripts not Beneventan were described as Gallic or French—showing that in the late Middle Ages the ordinary minuscule of Europe was regarded as French.

The first calligraphic minuscule frankly derived from local cursive was a French achievement—the minuscule now known rightly or wrongly as the 'Luxeuil' type. In saying this I have not forgotten early Italian attempts like the Josephus on papyrus, of the Ambrosiana, or Saint Jerome's *De viris illustribus*, of Vercelli, or their French counterpart represented by the St. Avitus on papyrus.

These are worthy efforts marking a stage between cursive and minuscule, but they do not attain to the level of calligraphy. St. Columban, who founded the monastery of Luxeuil, did not stay there long, and he probably took his best teachers with him when he was expelled from France. For it is a curious fact that Irish manuscripts have not reached us by way of Luxeuil, and the earliest extant manuscript from Luxeuil shows no trace of Irish influence. The Homilies of St. Augustine, written in the year 669, in French uncials (it is now at the Pierpont Morgan library) contains not a single Irish abbreviation, nor any other Insular 'symptom'. The same is true of the eighth-century manuscripts in the so-called Luxeuil minuscule. But it is not improbable that contact with the Irish, who, as we have seen, must have been in possession of a minuscule as early as the first half of the seventh century, first familiarized the French calligrapher with the idea of a minuscule script. At any rate, the 'Luxeuil' type is not merely an amateur attempt at writing Merovingian cursive in more or less orderly fashion. It is not one of those abortive efforts of which the eighth century witnessed many, especially in Italy. It has the expert flow of line, the finish and distinction, of a perfectly well-defined type, with a style of capitals for colophon quite its own, and characteristic initials possessing a grace of form and gaiety of colour hitherto unknown in Latin calligraphy. Although short-lived, it found favour far and wide in France and even beyond the Alps. Examples of this type exist to this day at Ivrea and Verona. North Italian scribes were manifestly charmed by the type, for they try to imitate it. It is quite possible that French scribes acted as teachers in Italy. In any case, the compliment paid the type in the attempted imitations is significant. It indicates the direction of the literary and artistic currents of the time, and is thus not without some





# DE TRIBUS CAUSIS

## CAUSARUM

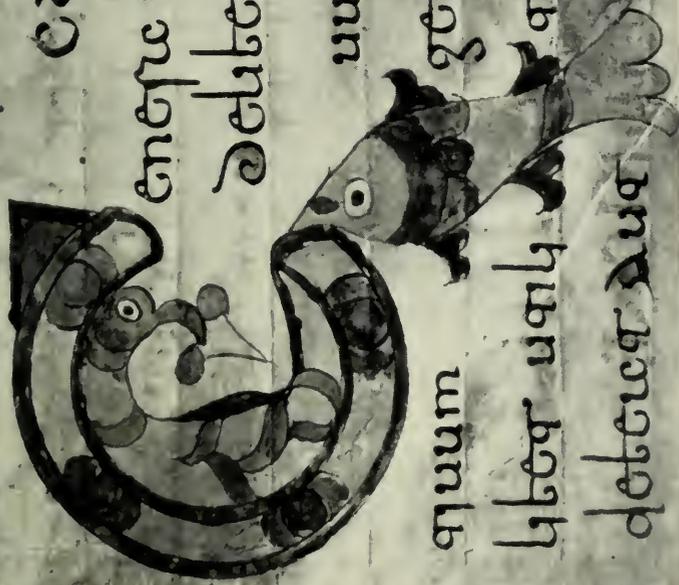
energe uenue sum qru suna ,

Debetur quum, Demons qru qru  
uum, Judiciale: Debetur

genus est. Inquis dequitus

quum  
liber uqru  
debetur dnu

non debetur fieri, qruce





bearing on the general question of the origin of the Caroline minuscule.

At Bobbio, St. Columban's Italian foundation, we find a totally different state of things. Irish tradition survived into the eighth century. The old manuscripts brought from Ireland are preserved, and later generations imitate them in both script and abbreviations. But in time native traditions reassert themselves, and during the eighth century numerous attempts are made to form a minuscule, out of local cursive, or out of half-uncial, or out of mixed material, the most successful of which are the types based on cursive. By the middle of the eighth century no distinctive type had been achieved. So that when Abbot Anastasius (*c.* 750) ordered a copy of Gregory's *Moralia*, it was written for him not in minuscule but in uncial. The uncials are of an awkward, debased type, and the initials, in which the human head and hands play a large part, are not works of art. It is a far cry from the expert writing and charming initials found in manuscripts of the so-called Luxeuil type written some decades earlier. Owing to the ancient manuscripts which Bobbio has preserved for posterity, there is a tendency to exaggerate its importance as a school of writing. In the eighth century its influence must have been negligible: as a matter of fact, there are clear indications that it was somewhat under the influence of French schools. Unimportant too must have been the position of the more ancient centre of Verona. It had had a glorious past. It still has incomparably the richest collection of ancient uncial and half-uncial manuscripts, written in its own scriptoria. But it did not manage to hammer out a minuscule of its own. It tried and tried. But the attempts based on cursive, as well as those based on half-uncial, remained mere essays. Its scribes possessed so little originality that they attempted to imitate French

models, which had probably reached them either from Reichenau or by way of Bobbio. When finally, in the ninth century, they succeeded in developing a minuscule, it was of the Caroline type, recalling vaguely the St. Gall and Reichenau variety. We know that their bishops Egino (†799) and Rothaldus (†840) had close relations with Reichenau. Archdeacon Pacificus (†840), through whom many new books came to Verona, was in touch with Corbie. Less well-known centres, like Vercelli and Novara, are far more successful than Verona. By the end of the eighth or in the early ninth century they are in possession of a well-developed minuscule based entirely on cursive, like the Beneventan. Their career, however, was cut short by the Caroline minuscule during the first half of the ninth century.

In central Italy, long after beautiful minuscule was being written in French centres, we encounter a pathetic example of scribal incompetence in the celebrated *Liber Pontificalis* of Lucca, written about the year 800. A scriptorium which countenanced such a hodge-podge of scripts, with uncial, half-uncial, and imitation Visigothic jostling elbows, had no standards, and was too backward to influence the course of writing. If Rome is the mother of the Caroline minuscule, as some palaeographers would have it, it is hard to reconcile the recalcitrant calligraphy of near-by Lucca with the exemplary performances of Corbie and Tours. But of the part played by Rome more will be said presently. In South Italy we have the great abbey of Monte Cassino, the mother house of western monasticism, and ancient centres like Capua and Naples. There too the universal need of a minuscule was felt, and by the middle of the eighth century a tentative script was formed out of the cursive. For a generation or two there existed some uncertainty and indecision, but after that we find strict conformity to a con-



leuatur huius a signatur. Corpus macer excessu  
 Nungarum; clarudio epularum petisse messer  
 hinc. n̄ distineo sua anhelena manu. nec  
 ille quesiuit. poposeraq; poculu. septuor con  
 uiuio celebrata. ne seruass qd̄ dieb; adu.  
 gaudii. lte. ansthae. ullius deniq; humani  
 affectus signa dedit. n̄ culatarnat̄ accusa  
 cot̄es afflicta. n̄ cul̄slos m̄st̄enat̄. Iuniorq;  
 obliuione. q; struatus. censendo nom̄ & effigies  
 p̄t̄uatus ac publicis laus demonstrat̄. d̄est̄at̄. n̄ al̄.  
 n̄ p̄ss̄o quesiuit̄ insignia. laussumi festid̄it̄.  
 Cuius pellat̄ & carlysta agere. honesto qd̄.  
 sed <sup>ab</sup> ex qd̄ d̄at̄ m̄r̄ op̄t̄enat̄ ansthae mul̄as.

Cot̄it̄; at̄eicq; Lib̄r̄  
 v̄nd̄eim; E. N̄. Incip. v̄;  
 EDE MESSALINE.

conuulsa p̄ncipis dom̄; op̄at̄ epud  
 lib̄t̄as est̄at̄m̄nt̄. qd̄ del̄iḡt̄  
 uxore clarudio celibis uic̄at̄ in̄con̄en̄a. & el̄uou

sciously adopted style: the South Italian schools had found the type which suited them; and for half a thousand years their peculiar script which we call Beneventan reigned practically supreme in the lower half of the Italian peninsula. It is the one medieval script of purely cursive origin that boasted a long life. Its success in holding its own against the Caroline minuscule shows that the reform emanating from beyond the Alps did not have sufficient force to counteract the predominant influence of Monte Cassino. It is a script difficult to read; but for all that it is one of the remarkable achievements of the Middle Ages—both as to calligraphy and ornamentation. By the end of the thirteenth century it yielded to the ordinary minuscule of the rest of Europe.

Having mentioned Luxeuil and Bobbio, the foundations of St. Columban, one must not quite pass over St. Gall, the Irish foundation named after Gallus, one of St. Columban's followers. It became a great centre of learning; and as at Bobbio, we find here a considerable number of ancient Irish manuscripts and some palimpsests. Very little is known of what happened there during the seventh century, but by the middle of the eighth we have a definite attempt at a local minuscule, not based on cursive. Winithar, notary and scribe, and expert at neither job, has left us a number of his performances. The advantage of their Irish tradition may account for the fact that the monks of St. Gall were in advance of other Teuton centres. They cannot be said to have attained a successful minuscule of their own before the ninth century. It is not unlike the Caroline, except that it has a certain characteristic breadth and weightiness, allows the use of the *ri*-ligature, and shows a characteristic weakness for the *nt*-ligature, even in the middle of a word. The same type of minuscule was practised at Reichenau, the celebrated abbey on the Lake of Constance, with which

St. Gall had the very closest relations; and the influence of the St. Gall-Reichenau school extended beyond its immediate vicinity. But there were other Teutonic centres which ventured upon different lines; and many of these show as their common feature a dependence upon Insular models. The Germanic peoples as such made no new contribution to handwriting.

This survey of the critical period in the formation of minuscule scripts will fitly close with mention of the particular type which was destined to play the important role in the subsequent history of writing. I mean, of course, the Caroline minuscule. The origin of this script is still in dispute; it is my belief that its home was not Italy, but yet a land whose ties with Rome and ancient Italian traditions had never been severed. Manuscripts still exist which show that in centres like Lyons, Autun, Tours, Luxeuil, Corbie, and Fleury, the ancient Italian scripts—uncial and half-uncial—had been practised with signal success at the very time when Italy was at its lowest. We have already seen that France was the first country on the Continent to develop a minuscule based on cursive, and that this script which goes by the name of Luxeuil (but which was probably at home in quite other centres) possessed such charm and originality that it influenced Italian scribes—a significant fact which suggests the superiority of Gallic over Italian scribes of that period. The Luxeuil type was the ancestor of the so-called Corbie type—a bolder, more rigid, and more legible minuscule which still bore traces of cursive. This strongly conventionalized script, which also goes by the name of the *ab* type, soon won favour with various centres of north France and lasted into the ninth century. It was at the same monastery of Corbie, and while the *ab* type was being successfully practised in that region, that scribes were trying to evolve a minuscule, based in the main on



Ubi minor supbia datur blasphemata. Et iudas suos exhostat.

Ubi uida pugnante in se fecit tringentimlib; cecidit minor.

Ubi caput minoris & manū abscedi iudas precepit. & hierusoli

mammita,

## TRIBUS QUI SUNT PER

ægyptum iudeis. Salutem dicunt fratres  
qui sunt hierusolim iudei. & qui in regione  
iudee & pacem bonam. Benefaciat uobis dñs &  
meminerit testamenti sui. quod ad abrahā & isaac  
& iacob locutus est. Per uorū suorū fidelium.

rationes xl dices.

**X**PI autem gene

ratio sic erit

Cum errat & desponsata

inceder eius in cetera

ioseph. Ante quem

conuenerit inuen

te est in utero ha

bens despu sco.

**J**oseph autem uir

eius cum errat & iustus

et mollis eum tra

ducant. in alium

tum est cetero per  
prophetam dicens

**E**cce uirgo in utero

habebit & pariet

filium. & uocabunt

nomen eius emma

nuel. quod est in

ter pretatum

nobiscum dr.,

**E**xurgens autem

ioseph a somno. fecit

sicut precepit ei

12



half-uncial and free from cursive elements. Similar efforts were doubtless made in other French centres, but the first dated example of the new minuscule we call Caroline comes in fact from Corbie. I refer to the famous Bible written for Abbot Maurdramus (†778), which is preserved in several volumes at Amiens. The next very early example is the still more famous Lectionary of Charlemagne, of the year 781. The manuscript itself is written on purple parchment, in large uncial letters; but its scribe, Godesscalc, added a page of dedicatory verses, not in uncials, but in minuscule characters which we are accustomed to regard as Caroline. We do not know the exact atelier whence issued this beautiful volume. It is generally assumed to be the work of the 'Palace school'. Wherever it came from, it demonstrates that as early as 781 a beautifully formed minuscule existed, and that a specimen of it was considered worthy of being included in a book meant for the Emperor. Closely allied to this script of Godesscalc is that of the Ada Bible, another book of the period destined for royalty. This new type based on half-uncial, whose distinctive feature was the elimination of cursive elements, must have won the warm approval of Charlemagne and Alcuin. For the school in which it was to reach its greatest perfection—a level of calligraphic art unsurpassed, to my mind, in the annals of writing—was the school directly under the Emperor's patronage, in the Abbey where Alcuin was Abbot—the school of St. Martin at Tours. It is hard to say how large a part Tours played in the early evolution of this minuscule. It was, if we may judge by the rather mediocre essays made during the eighth century, probably a secondary part. Alcuin himself, we know, never got to France until after the birth of the Caroline minuscule.

The orderliness, simplicity, clarity, and dignity of the new script were virtues that made a special appeal to a man

like Charlemagne, who, as we know, was not above taking a profound interest in the labours of scribes. To the imperial approbation was added that of Alcuin. He too was in a position to appreciate the new minuscule, whose special quality of legibility contrasted so favourably with the difficulty of his native Anglo-Saxon hand. This double sanction gave to the script the greatest possible prestige. Among his other reforms Charlemagne had ordered a new and standard text of the Benedictine Rule, and a revision of the Vulgate and the liturgy; and these revised versions, everywhere in demand, became as it were the apostles and propagators of the new script. This, then, is the meaning of the so-called Caroline 'reform'. It was not, as has sometimes been naïvely pictured, the invention of a script by a single scholar and its propagation by order of an emperor. Scripts that survive have sturdier roots than that. It was rather the achievement, after manifold endeavours, of a type, the creation of which is a standing monument to the genius for form possessed in so eminent a degree by the peoples of Gaul, a type the intrinsic merits of which made its success certain. That it became, with such extraordinary rapidity, the dominant script of Europe, was due to a happy combination of political and literary circumstances attending its birth.

It did not take much more than a generation to win over all of the French schools to the Caroline minuscule. This conquest could not have been accomplished without much opposition and some heart-burning in those centres in which the new script meant the death of the old *ab*-type that had been practised with such great *éclat* throughout the reign of Charlemagne. But, almost as soon as in France, the new minuscule won adherents beyond the Alps. As if by miracle, the scribes of northern and central Italy cease writing their own local style and adopt the Caroline. Only



NEM AUISO FUISSET IN SINODA  
NUNTIAUIT.

EXPLICIUNT CAPITULA

# II DIALOGO

SEVERI

**Q**UO PRIMO CITUR  
TEMPORE RELIC  
TIS SCOLIS. BEATO  
MEURO JUNXI.

PLUCOS POSTDIES. EUNTE  
ADECCLESIAM SEQUEBAMUR.

INTER MEI SEMI NUDUS HI  
BERNIS MENSIBUS PAUPER

Torum manu praefsis. Longa linea  
copiosilactis effluere. Puer. sur  
rexit in colomis. Nos obstupefacti  
tantaere miraculo. id quod ipsa  
cogebat ueritas fatebamur. Non  
ēē sub caelo. qui martinum possit  
imitari.

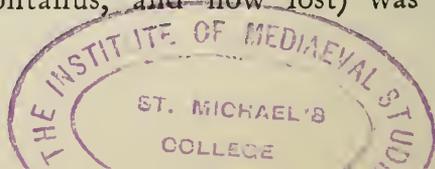
IIII  
CONSEQUENTI ITI DEM  
TEMPORE. ITERCUM EODE  
dum dioceses uisitat agebamus  
nobis nescio quae necessitate remo  
rantib; aliquantulum ille pro  
cesserat. Interim peraggerē  
publicum plena militanti; uiris



Spain, South Italy, Ireland, and England withstood the new influence. But, in the course of the tenth century, thanks to close contact with the Continent, the new script has won its way into England, where before long it assumes the predominant position, the Anglo-Saxon type having been relegated to the copying of vernacular. As for Spain and South Italy, as we have seen, they did not give up their own scripts until the twelfth and thirteenth centuries respectively.

It has been argued with great learning that Rome took a leading part in the evolution of the Caroline minuscule; that she was in the forefront of the movement, as befitted her position as 'caput ecclesiae'. It is pointed out that Rome had for centuries been an unfailing source for supplying the transalpine churches and monasteries with books; that as the centre of Christendom she required a large body of copyists, and, furthermore, the very existence of a book like the 'Liber Diurnus', the papal formulary, written in good minuscule of the ninth century, furnishes irrefragable evidence that the new minuscule was cultivated at Rome, and strong presumption that it started its career there. It is true that Rome had always been a great repository of books, especially of the older books; that it had been a great exchange centre, a book mart. But that is not the same thing as being an important centre for producing books. It has great works of art now, supremely great, but they are not Roman works. They are the performances of men from elsewhere, specially summoned to produce those works. Fra Angelico, Ghirlandaio, Raphael, and Michael Angelo were pressed into service to the greater glory of Rome. It was never during the Middle Ages, nor has it been since, a literary or artistic centre, although artists and litterateurs in great numbers have always flocked thither. We know for a fact that the copyists of Rome in the time

of Nicholas V were mostly Germans and Frenchmen. That was in the heyday of the Renaissance. Perhaps it was the same during the renaissance in Charlemagne's time. Rome, the centre of Christendom, the seat of ecclesiastical authority and administration, had of course a huge staff of officials; but hardly of book-scribes. The documents issued by the Curia, the papal bulls sent to the four corners of the earth, were not written by calligraphers, in a script which every one could read. The notaries of the Curia used a very singular and difficult script, which was unintelligible even to high prelates of the Middle Ages, as witness the predicament of Archbishop Ralph of Tours in 1075, who could make neither head nor tail of a privilege because it was written in 'littera romana'. This curial script is Rome's unique medieval contribution to handwriting. When it came to calligraphy she lagged sadly behind. It is impossible to point to any great school of writing at Rome during the Middle Ages, nor to Roman manuscripts of the eighth, ninth, or tenth centuries, remarkable either for beauty of script or illumination. This cannot all be due to the medieval habit of anonymity. For we have scores of beautiful manuscripts of the same period coming from known schools to the north and south of Rome. The true reason, however, is not far to seek. The Roman milieu was not favourable to the development of great schools of writing. Art does not flourish in an atmosphere of bureaucracy. But Rome's bureaucracy was cosmopolitan. Clerics from all over Christendom took part in the administration; so that a book like the 'Liber Diurnus', now in the Vatican Archives, if it was written at Rome, might none the less have been the work of a northern scribe. But this book came to Rome from Nonantola; another ninth-century copy, now at the Ambrosiana, came from Bobbio, and a third (known as the Claromontanus, and now lost) was preserved in



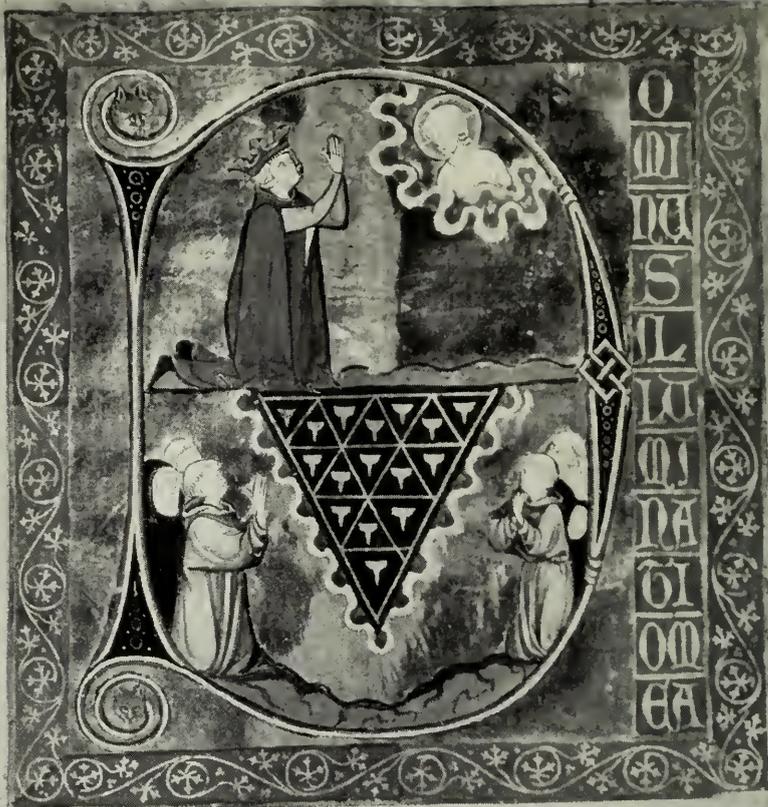
France ; so that it looks as if this book had an interest for places outside of Rome, and as if every copy need not be of necessity considered a Roman product.

There are other reasons which tell against Rome. During the seventh and eighth centuries—the critical period for minuscule—she shows no signs of literary activity, and her intellectual life is said to have sunk to a very low level. These are not the conditions which produce new scripts. Moreover, Rome, the mother of the old majuscule scripts, was not likely to abandon them earlier than other centres. She was far more likely to cling to them longest of all. Extant uncial manuscripts suggest that this was the case. Again, it was in France and not in Rome that the new minuscule soonest reached its height of perfection. Finally, it has been argued that the extraordinarily rapid spread of the new minuscule cannot be satisfactorily explained unless on the hypothesis that it originated in the most influential centre of Christendom, where the fashion was set for the rest of the world to follow. But, had this been the case, we should expect cities to the south of Rome, and very close to it, to be at least as much affected by Rome's influence and example as the distant cities of northern Italy, Switzerland, and France. But Veroli, and Sulmona, not to mention places farther south, wrote Beneventan and not Caroline minuscule. Is it conceivable that the whole of Southern Italy succumbed to Beneventan influence, when powerful and ubiquitous Rome pulled in the contrary direction? Why should Lucca, Verona, Bobbio, Saint Gall, Tours, Corbie, and Orleans write in accordance with the alleged Roman pattern, while Capua, Naples, Benevento, and towns on both shores of the Adriatic follow the model of Monte Cassino? The more reasonable explanation is that the Caroline minuscule had its origin in France, and that French influence did not penetrate as far as Southern Italy,

so that the influence of Monte Cassino remained predominant there. Our extant eighth-century manuscripts indicate that the course of the literary current, in Charlemagne's time and for a generation or two before, was from Gaul to Italy, and not vice versa. Lastly, the testimony of the ancients is on the side of France. By 'littera Romana' men of the Middle Ages understood two distinct scripts: the uncial characters of the book-hand and the curial cursive of papal charters. They did not use it to signify Caroline minuscule. On the other hand, 'littera Gallica,' or 'scriptura Francesca' was used to denote the ordinary or Caroline minuscule, as distinguished, say, from the Beneventan or Visigothic. It must be admitted, then, that Rome's part in the development of the new minuscule was that of a follower, not an initiator.

The second great contribution of the Middle Ages is the Gothic script. It may seem a far cry from the round Caroline minuscule of Charlemagne's time to this angular script; yet the one is the legitimate child of the other, in direct line of descent. For four centuries generation after generation transmitted the Caroline heritage substantially unaltered, yet never quite the same; and the accretion of these small variations produced in time a script astonishingly unlike the stock it sprang from. Owing to favourable conditions the Caroline script developed quickly and early attained its zenith. Perfection of form bred, as it usually does, artificial and adventitious elements: hair-lines, hooks, and flourishes. Once this fluid mass of mannerisms got set, as it were, and its innovations codified, a new style was at hand. The natural movement away from a round script like the Caroline was in the direction of an angular script like the Gothic; the reaction from a script whose letters are clear, well-defined, and unattached, was





7 salus mea: quem timedo

**D**ñs protector uite mee: a quo trepidabo.

**D**um appropiant sup me nocentes: ut  
edant carnes meas.

patrem nr̄m: daturum se nobis

**E**t sine timore de manu inimicorum  
nr̄orum liberati: seruiamus illi.  
In sc̄itate ⁊ iusticiam coram ipso: om  
nibz diebz nostris.

**E**t tu puer p̄ph̄a altissimi uocaberis: pre  
ibis enim ante faciem dñi parare ui  
as eius.

**A**d dandã sciẽtiã salutis plebi eius: in  
remissionem peccator̄ eor̄.

**P**er uiscera misericordie dei nr̄i: in qui  
bz uisitauit nos oriens ex alto.

**I**lluminare hys qui in tenebris ⁊ in  
umbra mortis sedent: ad dirigen  
dos pedes nr̄os in uiam pacis.

**M**agnificat anima mea dñm.

**E**t exultauit sp̄s meus in  
deo salutari meo.





a script in which the individuality of single letters is sunk in the harmony of the whole.

These general tendencies begin to take shape by the end of the twelfth century. It is the period when Gothic architecture comes into being. The spirit that informs that architecture is the self-same one that breathes new life into the degraded Caroline script. And the new style which the Gothic builders immortalize in stone is shaping also the appearance of the written letter. Open one of the many thirteenth-century Psalters or Books of Hours, and you seem to be looking at the text as through a series of Gothic windows—an effect produced by emphasizing the vertical and pointed and eliminating the round strokes, the prevalence of the heavily shaded upright strokes endowing the page with the mysterious semi-darkness of a Gothic chapel, in which all the elements are blended into a harmonious whole. The Gothic script is difficult to read. It has the serious faults of ambiguity, artificiality, and overloading. It is the child of an age that was not bent on achieving the practical, the age of St. Louis and St. Francis. It is as if the written page was to be looked at and not read. Instead of legibility its objective seems to be a certain effect of art and beauty, which it accomplishes by loving care bestowed upon each stroke and by the unerring consistency of its style. It is a product of the north, with the mysticism of the north, lacking Italian clarity as northern skies lack it. It never took a real hold in Italy. The finest examples come from France, Flanders, and England. In their way they are as perfect examples of Gothic art as is the Sainte Chapelle. The spirit of the Middle Ages lives nowhere more than in such Gothic manuscripts.

Roughly speaking, the Gothic script lived from 1200 to 1500. During these three centuries it was the script of all Europe, as no script had ever been before. This is not to

say that regional differences did not exist. The Gothic script in Italy tends to be roundish, in France and England it is angular. Everywhere, however, it follows certain curious rules of its own. The cardinal rule is, that if a letter ends with a bow and the following letter begins with one, the two letters are written conjoint. Other rules are the use of *z* for *r* after a letter ending in a bow, the use of uncial *d* ( $\delta$ ), and of *s* (not *j*) at the end of words. The joining of bows gave the line a look of compactness, a look already noticeable in Beneventan manuscripts as far back as the end of the eleventh century.

A script like the Gothic was bound to be repugnant to the taste of the Renaissance. The humanistic minuscule (the revived Caroline) was certain to drive it from the field. But this might have taken centuries had not the invention of printing hastened the process. If it is true that 'the Gothic sun set behind the colossal press of Mayence', it was not because the first printers were unfriendly to Gothic. The earliest-printed books were exact reproductions of Gothic manuscripts. They owed their success to the closeness of the imitation. They took over bodily all the difficult conjoint letters and even all the numerous abbreviations. Only initials and rubrics were left blank for the miniator to fill in by hand. Very soon types were also cut in exact imitation of the humanistic script, and many are the beautiful incunabula in this roman type. At first the Roman was used in Italy for all sorts of books, as the Gothic was in Germany. Gradually there was a tendency to reserve the Roman for editions of the classics, to use a plain Gothic for other books in Latin and a sloping Gothic for books in the vernacular. For legal books in Anglo-French a special type was used. As was to be expected, the local variety of handwriting influenced at first the form of type. The German printers who settled in Italy used a roundish type





ELLEM. NOBIS NVNC  
de anima humana breuiter  
conscripturis tantum ingenii  
facultatis & eloquentie dari  
si optata fierent: ut in hac tā  
obscura & tam abstrusa ma-  
teria de qua philosophi uaria & inter se di-  
uersa ac pene contraria scripsisse comperun-  
tur: non nulla precipua & singularia in me-  
dium asferre possemus: sed quoniam tantam  
in rebus ipsis difficultatem inesse latereq; con-  
spicimus: ut cicero romane eloquentie prin-  
ceps cum de anima differeret ac quid foret  
in preclaro illo tusculanarum disputationum  
dialogo diligenter & accurate perscrutare-  
tur: magnam quandam de eius origine loco  
& qualitate dissensionem fuisse describat: &  
laetantius quoque uir doctissimus atq; elegan-  
tissimus cum de eisdem conditionibus in cōme-  
morato de opificio hominis opusculo inuestig-  
aret in hunc modum scribens dixisse deprehen-  
ditur: Quid autem sit anima non dum in ter-  
philosophis conuenit: nec fortasse conueniet.

Cepſi & ſublato montem genitorum petiui :  
PVB: VERGILII MARONIS  
AENEIDOS LIBER III:



OSTI QUAM RES  
ASIAE TRIA  
MIQUE EVER  
TERI GENTEM  
IMMERITAM VISUM SUPPE  
RIS CECIDITQUE SUPERBVM

Ilum et omnis humo fumat Neptunia troia  
Diuersa exilia : et diuersas querere terras  
A augurijs agimur diuin : classemqz sub ipsa  
Antandro : et phnigiqz molimur montibus Ida  
Incerti quo fata ferat ubi sistere detur  
Contrahimusqz viros iux prima receperat estas  
Et pr Anchises dare uentis uela iubebat  
Littora tu prius lachrimas portuqz relinquo  
Et campos ubi troia fuit seror exul i altum  
Cu socijs natoqz penatibus et magnis dijs  
Tena procul uastis colitur mauortia campis



of Gothic to meet the taste of their public. After 1480 many printers began to buy their punches and matrices instead of making their own type, with the result that the same type is found in many places. The Roman type came to dominate the romance lands, Gothic continued to flourish in Teutonic countries—as we know, it is still the predominant script of Germany and German Austria. Only in the last century was it abandoned in Scandinavia. Its hold upon England may be seen from the fact that to the end of the eighteenth century ‘English face’ was the designation for black face or Gothic. It survives with us to-day only as an ornamental script, to be used where legibility is a matter of indifference, as in church windows, tombstones, wood carving, portals, and, for some inscrutable reason, in the word **Whereas** at the beginning of clauses in a legal instrument. Before the close of the fifteenth century Aldus Manutius had a type cut for him, modelled on cursive, which gave us our italic characters. To the Roman, Gothic, and italic types were added the majestic characters of the ‘capitalis quadrata’ to use as capitals. The printer’s equipment was complete. It is substantially his equipment to this day.

The hand we use in writing to-day has had in the main the same history as the book hand; except that the written characters have been even more conservative than the printed. In England the humanistic cursive became known in the Renaissance, but ‘the sweet Roman hand’ had a long struggle. Gothic characters persist into the eighteenth century. In Germany the Gothic script is the one still commonly taught in the schools.

The Legacy of the Middle Ages, then, is the legacy of Rome, with modifications developed in the course of transmission. The generic name we give to the modified

legacy is minuscule. We have seen that when the majuscule scripts became obsolete, scribes everywhere tried to evolve a script to take their place. It was based on cursive, or on half-uncial, or on mixed material. Of the various attempts, the most successful was the type which was evolved in Gaul in the time of Charlemagne, and which we call Caroline minuscule. It became rapidly the predominant script in all lands save Spain, South Italy, and these islands. The Caroline script gradually developed into Gothic, which became the script of all Europe before the Renaissance, but which the humanists discarded for a revived Caroline. This humanistic minuscule and the Gothic were the scripts practised when printing was invented. And these two types were taken over by the printers, and survive to this day. Of the two, the type in general use is the one that originated in France and was brought to light again in Italy—the type we call Roman. Thus it is to France and Italy, the two lands in which the roots of Roman civilization went deepest down, that we owe the particular forms of the letters we write and read to this day.

E. A. LOWE.





**FOR REFERENCE**

**NOT TO BE TAKEN FROM THIS ROOM**

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