DIGITISED MANUSCRIPTS

Add MS 89000

Date	c 698 - 4th quarter of the 13th century
Title	The St Cuthbert Gospel
Content	The St Cuthbert Gospel (formerly known as the Stonyhurst Gospel) is the oldest intact European book. Made in the late-7th century, the manuscript contains a copy of the Gospel of St John, and was apparently placed in the coffin of St Cuthbert (c. 635–687) when he was re-interred at Lindisfarne in 698. Cuthbert's coffin was subsequently removed to Durham, where it was opened in September 1104 on the occasion of the translation of his remains, and the book discovered inside:"Ewangelium Iohannis quod inuentum fuerat ad capud beati patris nostri Cuthberti in sepulcro iacens anno translacionis ipsius" (13th century note added on f. ii verso: "The Gospel of John which was found at the head of our blessed father Cuthbert lying in his tomb in the year of his translation"). A near-identical note in a 12th-century hand has been erased in the upper margin of f. 1r.An account of the miracles performed by St Cuthbert, composed at Durham in the 1120s or 1130s, records that when the outer lid of the coffin was raised in 1104, the monks saw "a book of the Gospels lying at the head of the board" (T. J. Brown, The Stonyhurst Gospel of Saint John, Oxford, 1969, pp. 2–5; Symeonis Monachi Opera Omnia, ed. T. Arnold, 2 vols, Rolls Series, London, 1882–85, i, pp. 247–61, ii, pp. 359–62). During a sermon preached on the day of the translation, Ranulf Flambard, bishop of Durham (1099–1128), showed the people a Gospel of St John in miraculously perfect condition, which had a satchel-like container of red leather with a badly-frayed sling made of silken threads. According to Reginald of Durham, writing in the 1160s or 1170s, William FitzHerbert, archbishop of York (1141–1147, 1153–1154), was shown a manuscript, apparently the St Cuthbert Gospel, when visiting Cuthbert's tomb at Durham in 1153 or 1154. The contents of the St Cuthbert Gospel are as follows:f. i recto–verso. An inserted, late-13th century leaf containing a court-roll of the prior of Durham, and not part of the original binding structure. Written no earlier than 6 August 1264 (heading on f. i recto, line 2).f. ii recto–verso. The original pastedown (?), with the note "Ewangelium Iohannis quod inuentum fuerat ad capud beati patris nostri Cuthberti in sepulcro iacens anno translacionis ipsius" on f. ii verso.ff. 1r–90v. The Gospel of St John.lower pastedown (formerly numbered f. 91). An 18th century, pasted paper leaf, recording the donation of the gospel-book to the English Jesuit College at Liège: "Hunc Evangelii Codicem dono accepit ab Henrico Comite de Litchfield, et dono dedit Patribus Societatis Iesu, Collegii Anglicani, Leodii, Anno 1769; rectore eiusdem Collegii Ioanne Howard: Thomas Phillips Sac. Can. Ton."There are late-7th-century marginal annotations on the following pages, marking offices for the dead:f. 20v "pro defunctis" (beside John v. 21);f. 27r "pro defunctis" (beside John vi. 37);f. 28v "de mortuorum" (beside John vi. 51);f. 51r "de mortuorum" (beside John xi. 21).

View: bindings

188 images available

Languages	Latin

Physical Description	Fos. ii + 90. Approximately 138 × 92 mm. Parchment codex (the lower pastedown is made of 18th-century paper). Note: the inserted leaf from the Durham court-roll has been numbered f. i, and the upper endleaf f. ii. **Script:** written in capitular uncial, with a few initials and red letters in text uncial. Marginalia on ff. 20v, 27r, 28v, 51r written in Insular cursive minuscule. **Binding:** original, late-7th-century binding, described in Brown, The Stonyhurst Gospel of Saint John, pp. 13–23, 45–55 (technical description of the binding by Roger Powell and Peter Waters). The boards are of the same size as the leaves, almost certainly of birch, about 2.5 mm thick and cut on the quarter. Shallow slots were cut in both faces of the boards from the holes to the back edges to accommodate the thread, which was made of flax and with an S-twist. There were neither thongs or cords; thread alone joins the boards to the sections, and the sections to each other. Covered in leather (either goat- or sheep-skin), stained a deep crimson on the outer surface, and about 1 mm thick. The leather was stuck to the board and moulded over the foundations of the design while it was still damp. The decoration of the boards was enriched by tooling and colouring lines on the surface, with the tip of a fine folder or a stylus. The upper board is decorated with a rectangular frame, with interlace patterns in the upper and lower fields and a larger central field containing a chalice from which stems project, terminating in a leaf or bud and four fruits. The lines of the upper board are filled in bright yellow, pale yellow and blue-grey. The lower board has a rectangular panel containing two step-pattern crosses, constructed on a grid, with the lines filled alternately with bright yellow and blue-grey. **Decoration:** simple red initials mark important sections in the text (e.g. ff. 1r, 2v, 5r, 11r, 12v, 21v, 25v, 27r, 30v, 33v, 36v, 38v, 45v, 49v, 53v, 55v, 56v, 59v, 63r, 64v), some of which are followed by small letters in red.
Ownership	Apparently produced at Wearmouth-Jarrow by a local scribe in the late-7th century.
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