

J. LEEMANS & L. JOCQUÉ, *Corpus Christianorum 1953-2003:*
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CORPVS CHRISTIANORVM SCRIPTORES CELTIGENAE

The sub-series *Scriptores Celtigenae* of *Corpus Christianorum Series Latina* originated in April 1987 by an agreement between Brepols Publishers on one side and the Royal Irish Academy and the Irish Biblical Association on the other for the publication of Latin exegetical material believed by a number of scholars to have originated in, or be connected with, Ireland. The significance of this event and this sub-series will be better evaluated when viewed against the reason behind it and the movement that led up to it.

A major incentive for the publication and critical examination of unpublished material possibly arose from the tradition that the study of Scripture was central to the early Irish monastic school system, coupled with the dearth of exegetical material evidence for the works studied or composed in the early Irish schools (500-800). Matters changed in 1954, with the publication in *Sacris Erudiri* of Professor Bernhard Bischoff's seminal essay "Wendepunkte in der Geschichte der lateinischen Exegese im Frühmittelalter," and its now celebrated "Irish symptoms" as to why the forty or so works presented by him for the period 650-800 should be regarded as having Irish origin or connections.

Interest in the importance of these new texts was kept alive principally by Robert McNally and the publication of some of them in *Scriptores Hiberniae Minores* (SL 108BC; 1973-1974). At the time of his death in 1978 McNally had almost completed work on four other Hiberno-Latin texts not in Bischoff's list (*Catechesis Celtica*, *Liber de numeris*, Homiliaries of Verona and of Cracow). Interest in the importance of these texts grew during the 1970s and 1980s, and in 1986 the Irish Biblical Association and the Royal Irish Academy entered into an agreement to critically edit and publish a list of major Hiberno-Latin exegetical and homiletic works. Both these bodies were very happy when in 1987 agreement was reached with Brepols Publishers to have the works published in the prestigious series *Corpus Christianorum*. In a note prefaced to each volume of the sub-series the Irish Editorial Committee records its gratitude for the facilitation accorded to the

venture at every stage by Brepols through their representative Roel Vander Plaetse.

From the scholarly point of view the sub-series is highly relevant for at least two reasons. One is that the key texts of the sub-series will be the unpublished material identified by Dr Bischoff in his 1954 essay. The biblical commentaries and introductions represent a literary activity of some hundred and fifty years (650-800), which in Bischoff's view differs essentially from that of the patristic age and from that of the early continental Middle Ages. In this corpus there is a concentration on the Gospel of Matthew, with nine commentaries or introductions of his list of thirty-nine having to do with this gospel. There is a family similarity between the various writings. Furthermore, material in some of these earlier writings is closely related to what we find in later exegetes such as Rabanus Maurus (d. 856) and Paschasius Radbertus (d. 865), phenomena which require explanation and merit examination. Critical edition of the material is a pre-requisite for any such inquiry. A further indication for the importance of the sub-series importance is that it provides and will provide material for the database for the *Royal Irish Academy Dictionary of Medieval Latin from Celtic Sources* project, currently being processed and published by Brepols. This dictionary project in good part explains the presence of *Celtigenae* in the title. Dr Bischoff himself was strongly convinced of the Irish origins or connections of the works he listed in "Wendepunkte". His view is not shared by all scholars. By its title the Editorial Board does not in any way wish to preempt the outcome of the current discussion, which will be immensely helped by the critical edition of the works.

These two factors ensure the scholarly relevance and impact of the sub-series now and in the years ahead.

The *Scriptores Celtigenae* fits very well into the *Corpus Christianorum*. As is clear from the *Clavis Patrum Latinorum*, the *Corpus Christianorum* editors pay great attention to the approach to Christian literature through chronology, region, and form of writing. Before the inception of the sub-series *Scriptores Celtigenae* there were other similar and

related sub-series such as the *Scriptores Hiberniae Minores*, already noted, and the *Grammatici Hibernici Carolini aeni* (CM 40-40D). This new sub-series will span the periods covered by the patristic *Series Latina* (pre-735) and the *Continuatio Mediaevalis*. As a sub-series it is original in that its chief concern is writers believed to belong to Celtic nations (Ireland, Scotland, Wales, Brittany), and includes material of an exegetical, homiletic and theological nature.

The sub-series began as part of a movement to systematically explore early and medieval Irish ecclesiastical learning and culture, particularly with regard to the text and interpretation of the Bible, homiletic and theological learning and apocryphal literature. The sub-series makes provision for the discussion of these matters in the introductions to the various volumes. It hoped, indeed expected, that the same sub-series also will arouse more general interest in these subjects. In fact, one facet of the current discussion is the reappraisal of the texts brought to scholarly attention by Bischoff and their relevance or otherwise for Irish and medieval learning.

Indeed, it can be said that the field of Hiberno-Latin studies offers many challenges for the decades to come. The first has to do with Biblical textual criticism. In the introduction to his catalogue of Latin Exegetical material, both Hiberno-Latin and that showing Irish influence (650-800), B. Bischoff grants that the greatest defect in this list in “Wendepunkte” is that hardly anything can be said concerning the biblical text of the books commented on. He rightly notes, however, that the base for future research on the history of the Latin text of the Bible in Ireland is broadened by the new works he lists and studies. One of the challenges arising from the new research is precisely the scientific examination of the Bible text in Ireland, particularly that of the Gospels. Of some thirty Irish or Celtic Gospel Books only less than ten have been fully collated. A plan for the coordinated systematic study of the remainder seems indicated. In fact there may well be room in some series for just such a sub-series as “Irish Latin Gospel Texts”. Specific Gospel readings can be very significant for tracing Irish or Celtic influence. As an example I may instance the (Irish) Old

Latin reading *conseruator salutis* at Luke 2:11 (for *saluator* of Vulgate and general Old Latin) found in Old Latin texts only in the Irish *Usserianus Primus*, and in the fragment in St Paul in Kärnten but occurring in this Hiberno-Latin material in the comment on the verse in the *Reference Bible*, in the Vienna 997 commentary on Luke, many times in the exposition of this text in the *Catechesis Celtica* and in the *Homiliarium Veronense* (published in the sub-series). Another instance is the interpolated text (related to John 19:34) in Mat 27:40, an interpolation almost universally in Irish Gospel texts and only once elsewhere, and also in the new commentary material.

Another line of development in this area should be the comparison of the commentary material with evidence from Irish apocrypha and related material. This Irish material is now being published by Brepols in the *Apocrypha Hiberniae*, a sub-series to *Corpus Christianorum Series Apocryphorum*. There seems to be a particularly strong interconnectedness in the Infancy Narratives.

In some recent discussions on the Irish nature or connections of the material first brought to attention by Bernhard Bischoff in 1954, a lot of attention has been paid to what Bischoff called the “Irish symptoms” of this body of literature. I believe the time has come to pass on from these symptoms or criteria advanced almost half a century ago. Research has moved forward since then. As the material is now being critically edited in the sub-series *Scriptores Celtigenae* and other publications a larger picture is being presented. There will be question of identifying the interrelationships of these works, or portions of the works and of ascertaining their relationship, if any, to Ireland or Irish circles on the Continent, and thereby clarifying the intuitions of Professor Bernhard Bischoff, Robert E. McNally and other pioneers in this field.

These, I believe, are some of the main challenges for future research in this field, a challenge given greater focus by the ongoing work in the sub-series *Scriptores Celtigenae*.

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Scriptores Celtigenae: Dictionary of Medieval Latin from Celtic Sources
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