

Introduction

One of the principal and oldest objects in the cathedral treasury at Trier is its manuscript 61, a large decorated codex of the eighth century, containing the four Gospels in Latin and accessory texts. With elaborate ornamental initials and sixteen full-page illustrations comprising a four-symbols page, tetramorph, ten canon tables, three Evangelist portraits, and an Incipit page with archangels, the manuscript ranks among the few surviving deluxe Gospel Books of the period, most of which were written in the British Isles. These include several thought to have been produced in Northumbria (the Codex Amiatinus, 1 and Lindisfarne, 2 Durham, 3 and Echternach Gospels 4) two from Kent (the Vespasian Psalter⁵ and Stockholm Gospels⁶) and two others, possibly from Ireland (the Book of Durrow, and the Book of Kells⁸) all of which are the works of individual scribe-artists trained in the Insular tradition. Two scribe-artists, however, created the Trier Gospels. One, identified as Thomas, 9 worked in the Insular tradition as well as in an alien Mediterranean style, the models for which must have been available in his scriptorium. His collaborator was a Frank, who wrote, by far, the larger portion of the text and decorated it with ornamental initials in the Merovingian style, indicating that the codex originated in an Insular foundation on the Continent.

As early as the end of the sixth century, Christian missionaries from the British Isles established monasteries in centers like Luxeuil (Columban, ca. 590), Bobbio (Columban, 612), Echternach (Willibrord, 697-698), and Fulda (Boniface ca. 746). ¹⁰ They brought manuscripts from home for the libraries of their new foundations and often installed scriptoria in which practitioners of Insular script and decoration provided additional books for their converts. As a collaboration between an Insular and a Continental scribe—artist, the Trier Gospels stands alone and prompts uncertainty among scholars about its origin.

Known provenance provides few clues. The manuscript is first mentioned in the inventory of the cathedral library at Trier in 1890,¹¹ but a note on the inventory's title page, stating that the author copied entries from an older catalogue,¹² suggests it may have been there for some time. Furthermore, F. Kugler describes having seen it in the cathedral in 1841.¹³ It is absent, however, from all medieval, seventeenth- and eighteenth-century inventories of the Trier treasury.¹⁴ Surely the cathedral would have acknowledged owning such an old and venerated deluxe manuscript. Some of its

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liturgical notations imply that it was made for the cathedral, but all such theories have proved unconvincing.¹⁵

Surprisingly little is known about the provenance of the books belonging to the cathedral library, most of which were acquired during the nineteenth century, including large bequests from Graf Christoph von Kesselstadt (d. 1814), Bishop Hommer (d. 1836), and the cathedral vicars Liess (d. 1874) and Blattau (d. 1887). The first, a group of manuscripts and printed books assembled at the time of the secularization of the monasteries during the French Revolution, is often cited without evidence as the source of the Trier Gospels, but recent research has revealed that the manuscript is not listed in the inventories of the Kesselstadt collection. To

There is proof, however, that the manuscript was not always at Trier. An addition in an eleventh- or twelfth-century hand on folios 5r and 9v - masses for the feasts of Saint Potentinus and his two sons Saints Felicius and Simplicius - containing the passage "sancti confessoris tui Potentini qui in praesenti requiescit ecclesia," places the Gospel book, at the time of the addition, in the church preserving the relics of these saints.¹⁸ At its foundation in about 920, the Premonstratensian Abbey Church at Steinfeld (Eifel), not far from Trier, received the relics of Potentinus and his sons from the nearby monastery at Karden. 19 How long the manuscript remained at Steinfeld and how it came to Trier remain in doubt. The proximity of the two towns would allow for continued contact over the centuries, yet documents do not indicate a significant association between the churches that would explain the manuscript's transfer. Its omission from the earliest extant catalogue of manuscripts at Steinfeld, completed in 1802 with 3,140 entries, 20 virtually precludes the likelihood that it was then still at Steinfeld. The monks may have taken the venerated Gospel Book when they fled the approaching French revolutionaries in 1794²¹ and sold it to a collector, who later gave it to the cathedral at Trier. In the end, however, this is mere speculation. When and how the Gospel book came to Trier are unknown.

The earliest attempt to determine its origin identified the scribe Thomas, unconvincingly and without supporting evidence, as the abbot, from 750 to 770, at the Irish foundation of Honau, an island in the Rhine near Strasburg. Not until 1916 were there introduced the notions of an Insular scriptorium at Echternach in the eighth century and of the affinity of several Trier miniatures to those in the Echternach Gospels, thought to have been brought to Echternach by its founder Willibrord. The Trier Gospels was attributed either to Echternach or, because of its Continental component and present location, to a Merovingian scriptorium nearby at Trier, where a manuscript from Echternach might have been copied. The Merovingian initials, when compared to those in manuscripts from northeast France, were thought to date the manuscript to between 770 and 780. New evidence appeared in 1932: a core group of four manuscripts, written by scribes whose names appear on charters from Echternach datable to the first quarter of the eighth century, suggested earlier dating for the Trier Gospels. Additional evidence for date and origin of the manuscript has not appeared in the last fifty years, although various dates – all in the eighth century – have been proposed. The script of the eighth century – have been proposed.



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Although most equally sumptuous manuscripts have been studied continuously and extensively for over a century, the Trier Gospels has been neglected, perhaps because, residing in Germany, it is physically isolated from other Insular manuscripts. Almost every survey of Insular manuscripts mentions it, but significant references among them are few. Some studies have focused on specific aspects of the various texts, ²⁶ provenance, ²⁷ and archetypes of the canon tables ²⁸ and four-symbols page, ²⁹ but basic questions like origin and date remain unanswered, as do the relationship of the manuscript to others of Insular and Merovingian origins, and the possible models that stand behind the miniatures and text. Although previous studies have noted that the source of several miniatures in the Trier Gospels was Mediterranean, ³⁰ analysis and reconstruction of the models have never been attempted.

Against such uncertainty, this monographic study represents a comprehensive examination. Given the absence of contemporary descriptions of practices in early medieval scriptoria, knowledge of the method followed and conditions surrounding the production of the Trier Gospels (and, for that matter, all other early medieval manuscripts) must be pieced together from bits of evidence gleaned from detailed analysis of its various components. The most effective means of carrying out this investigation is the separate examination of the individual texts, construction and arrangement of gatherings, scripts, ornamental initials, canon tables, and illustrations. Only the segregation of component features and motifs of the illustrations and their comparison with other Insular, Merovingian and Mediterranean examples could reveal the complex process and combination of sources that stand behind them. Chapters examining the constituent elements are arranged, not according to their order in the codex, but so as to complement the logic of the principal arguments. Although a detailed description has not been included at the beginning, the individual elements are fully described when discussed in subsequent chapters. Appendix A contains a summary description for reference.

By weighing the evidence provided by analysis of the manuscript's components, the study seeks to determine where and when the Trier Gospels was made; its sources and how precisely they can be reconstructed; where its scribe—artists were trained; how and why they divided labor; the circumstances under which they worked; what texts they used; what influenced the layout of pages and the construction of the manuscript as a whole; and finally, its place in the development of Insular and Continental book production and within the scriptorium of its origin. In a more general sense, the study helps to convey a more accurate picture of the enduring, but still relatively unexplored, question of the working practices of early medieval scriptoria. It also provides a clearer picture of the contributions of missionaries from the British Isles to Continental culture in the eighth century and the ways in which various cultural traditions came together on the Continent to form a new synthesis.



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Evidence for a scriptorium at Echternach in the eighth century

The question of origin of the Trier Gospels and its place within the history of Insular book illumination is bound up with the production of the scriptorium of the monastery at Echternach (Luxemburg) with which it has been tentatively linked. Indeed, in order to pursue localization of the Trier Gospels, it is necessary to evaluate briefly at the outset what is known of the history of this scriptorium and on what basis manuscripts have been associated with it.

Founded by Saint Willibrord, Echternach was essentially an Insular center on the Continent with strong ties to both Rome and the Carolingian mayors of the palace.² Willibrord, who was born in Deira (Northumbria) in 658, spent his early years (from about age seven) at Ripon, a Northumbrian stronghold of the followers of Rome, under the tutelage of Bishop Wilfrid of York. In 678, because he opposed the partition of his large diocese, Wilfrid was deposed. Intent on appealing his case to Rome, Wilfrid crossed the North Sea and spent the winter of 678-679 preaching the Gospel to the Frisians. He then continued his journey to Rome. In the meantime, Willibrord, then twenty, joined the English community at the monastery of Rath Melsigi in Ireland.³ Like Ripon, Rath Melsigi was governed by a Northumbrian devoted to the Roman rite, the Abbot Egbert. In 690 Egbert sent Willibrord with eleven companions to the Continent to convert the Frisians. He was accompanied by eleven companions - a team of missionaries equaling the number of Apostles - some of whom may have been fellow Northumbrians and one of whom was Swithberht, who later returned from the Continent to Mercia to be consecrated by Wilfrid.⁴ Upon his arrival in Frisia, Willibrord came under the protection of Pippin II, Carolingian mayor of the palace and, shortly thereafter, he made his first journey to Rome. The purpose of this trip was to obtain the sanction of Pope Sergius and to collect relics of Roman Apostles and martyrs for use in the churches he would later construct in Frisia.⁵ Five years later, in 695, Willibrord made his second trip to Rome at the request of Pippin II, who sent him to Pope Sergius to be consecrated archbishop of the Frisian church. When he returned in 696, Pippin II provided Willibrord with an archiepiscopal see at Utrecht, which became the center of his ecclesiastical province.⁶

Several charters dating shortly after the establishment of Willibrord's see at Utrecht provide evidence for the foundation of Willibrord's monastery at Echternach. On



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I November 697 or 698, the Abbess Irmina, mother-in-law of Pippin II, gave to Willibrord her half of a family estate at Echternach including a small chapel and "monasteriolum." Additional gifts of land, furniture, and vestments made by Irmina to Willibrord at Echternach between 697–698 and 704 indicate that Willibrord's community was installed continuously at the "monasteriolum" during those years. Between 704 and May 13, 706, presumably to provide more spacious accommodation for his community, Willibrord constructed his own monastery there.

After 704, when Willibrord's community was installed in its own more ample quarters, there must have been an active scriptorium at Echternach. That such a scriptorium existed then is attested by four manuscripts, all written and decorated in the Insular style by scribes whose names appear on Echternach charters from the first two decades of the eighth century. Although never studied in detail, the resemblance of these four manuscripts to contemporary examples from Northumbria has always been observed. Most recently, their dependence on Irish exemplars from Rath Melsigi has been suggested primarily on the basis of the text of one of the manuscripts. 11

The first, a *Book of Prophets* (Jeremiah to Malachi), was copied at least in part by a scribe called Vergilius, whose name appears in verse at the end of Jeremiah.¹² This is undoubtedly the same Vergilius who wrote and signed charters for Willibrord in 709 and 721 or 722.¹³

Vergilius' half-uncial script and decorated initials in the *Prophets* are close parallels to those in two other codices probably by the same hand, the *Calendar of Saint Willibrord* ¹⁴ (pls. 58 and 59) and the deluxe Augsburg Gospels (pls. 60, and 63). ¹⁵ The latter codex contains an acrostic, the first and last letters of which read vertically "Laurentius vivat senio." This elderly venerated Laurentius, to whom the manuscript was dedicated, is most likely the same Laurentius who wrote four charters conveying properties to Willibrord in 704, 710, 718, and 721–722. ¹⁶ Probably a companion of Willibrord's on his mission to the Continent, Laurentius may well have been master of Willibrord's scriptorium. Indeed, Laurentius actually signed the *Hieronymian Martyrology*, which has been bound with the *Calendar of Saint Willibrord* since the eighth century. ¹⁷

Surely these four manuscripts associated with Echternach scribes are products of that scriptorium. If that is the case, the period between 704 and 722, when Vergilius and Laurentius were actively writing charters, suggests the manuscripts' date in the first quarter of the eighth century. Additional support may be derived from the names entered in *Willibrord's Calendar* in both the original and later hands, which have been shown to indicate that the manuscript was written between about 703 and 710. Appended to the *Calendar* is an Easter table for the years 703–721, suggesting a date within the first few years of the cycle.¹⁸

The half-uncial script of the *Calendar*, *Prophets* and Augsburg Gospels were considered to be of Northumbrian origin¹⁹ until recently, when it was noted that the earliest Easter table in the *Calendar* (folio 44r), a single leaf added to one of the quires, was for the years 684–702. Given that during the first years of this cycle Willibrord was still in Ireland, the table was probably written at Rath Melsigi and brought by Willibrord to the Continent in 690, when it would still have been useful to him.²⁰

community, wimbroid constructed his own monastery there.

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Because the half-uncial script of this early Easter table displays the distinctive features of the similar half-uncial script in the other three early Echternach manuscripts, the immediate background of at least one of the earliest scripts practiced at Echternach may well be Irish. It has also been correctly observed, however, that, as there is no evidence that young boys went from Northumbria to Rath Melsigi (indeed Willibrord was already twenty), many of the scribes may have been taught to write in Northumbria before they left.²¹

That Echternach possessed a relatively large and prolific scriptorium throughout the eighth century is evidenced as well by the number of scribes writing documents during that period. In addition to Laurentius and Vergilius, charters were drafted by scribes called Elduinus, Docfa, Ansbaldus, and Richisus.²² Moreover, during his stay at Echternach between 783 and 785, the Anglo-Saxon missionary Willehad is said to have worked in the scriptorium copying several manuscripts, among them the letters of Saint Paul collected in a single volume.²³ The only datable examples from the middle of the eighth century, however, are additions to Willibrord's *Calendar*. A bifolium added around 760 contains specimens of both fine Anglo-Saxon minuscule and uncial scripts.²⁴

Based primarily on their provenance, a second group of manuscripts of the eighth century is usually thought to have been made at Echternach. In the absence of a medieval catalogue of the library's holdings, the principal support for assigning manuscripts to Echternach during the middle ages comes from the shelf mark applied to the first page of each of the library's volumes in the fifteenth century. The mark comprises a large letter often followed by a number and a short title usually beginning with "continet." All eighth-century books known to have the Echternach shelf mark are now in Paris. They were transferred by J.B. Maugerard in 1802 from Luxemburg to Paris during the Napoleonic wars.²⁵

The most famous of the codices bearing the shelf mark is the Echternach Gospels (pls. 55–57, 94–96), thought to have been written by the same scribe from Lindisfarne who wrote the Durham Gospels. The Echternach Gospels were probably written at Lindisfarne, but the possibility that the "Durham–Echternach calligrapher" migrated to Echternach and wrote the book there has also been proposed. Whether the Echternach Gospels is a product of the scriptorium at Echternach, then, remains an open question. The answer will come from more comprehensive study of the manuscripts securely assigned to the scriptorium. If written at Lindisfarne, the Echternach Gospels may have been brought by Willibrord to the Continent in 690. Willibrord also had later contacts with Northumbria, thereby providing other explanations for the movement of these Gospels from Lindisfarne to Echternach.

Other early manuscripts carrying the Echternach shelf mark are not deluxe editions but more simple library books. Two – a Jerome In Esaiam²⁹ and the first half of Augustine's De trinitate³⁰ – both in Anglo-Saxon cursive minuscule, are by the same scribe.³¹ Although the improbability of the two books by the same man arriving at the same foreign destination argues strongly that they were written at Echternach, this assignment is not certain.³²



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Several fragments, in a variety of Anglo-Saxon scripts, also either bear the Echternach mark or are bound in manuscripts bearing it: (1) two folios from an Augustine In Evangelium S. Iohannes;³³ (2) two folios with various Paschal texts;³⁴ (3) a single folio from Dionysius' Tabula Paschalis;³⁵ (4) a single bifolium from Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews;³⁶ (5) two folios from Bede, In apocalypsim;³⁷ (6) two folios from a sacramentary;³⁸ (7) a single leaf from a sacramentary;³⁹ and (8) two folios from an antiphonary.⁴⁰ Like the others carrying the Echternach stamp, these fragments require more detailed study of the script practiced at Echternach to determine their place of production.

A group of eight roughly contemporary manuscripts written at least in part in a distinctive pointed Insular minuscule also bear the Echternach shelf mark:⁴¹ Jerome, Commentary on the Epistles of Paul;⁴² Alcuin, De dialectica, De rhetorica;⁴³ Epistles of Saint Paul;⁴⁴ Jerome, Liber interpretationis Hebraicorum nominum;⁴⁵ Jerome, Commentary on Matthew;⁴⁶ Alcuin, Life of Saint Willibrord;⁴⁷ and two codices of Tagius Samuhel, Liber sententiarium Gregorii Papae;⁴⁸ All have been assigned to Echternach in the first quarter of the ninth century on the basis of the inscription in the Commentary on the Epistles of Paul which is signed "Liber Adonis abbati," referring to the Echternach abbot of that name from 798 to 817.

Also usually assigned to the Echternach scriptorium is a psalter in Stuttgart used at Echternach in the ninth century.⁴⁹ Written in a fine English uncial, it is elaborately decorated in the Insular style with capitals based on Merovingian animal initials.⁵⁰ The Merovingian character of the initials provides evidence of origin in an Insular scriptorium on the Continent and, given the Psalter's provenance, one may reasonably conclude that Echternach is the Insular scriptorium in question. Even so, until the codex is examined more extensively, an Echternach origin may not be considered secure.⁵¹

A final group of manuscripts, all sumptuously decorated, is often associated with the Echternach scriptorium because of resemblances to either the Augsburg or the Echternach Gospels and because of their present location on the Continent. Among the group is the Trier Gospels, some of whose miniatures and initials closely resemble those in the Echternach Gospels and whose Merovingian uncial script and initials clearly indicate the book's production in a Continental scriptorium.

Another manuscript in this group is a small Gospel book from the Convent at Aldeneyck now in Maeseyck (pls. 73–77).⁵² Originally assigned to a southern English scriptorium around 770,⁵³ it has been variously attributed recently to Northumbria or a Continental center under Northumbrian influence⁵⁴ and, on the basis of the resemblance of its canon tables to those in the Trier and Augsburg Gospels, tentatively to Echternach.⁵⁵ If the Maeseyck Gospels are to be placed in Echternach, then the Gregory, *Homiliae in Ezechielem* in Carlsruhe⁵⁶ a manuscript written in a similar stately minuscule script, may have been produced there as well.

Bound with the Maeseyck Gospels is a fragment of nine folios consisting of an incomplete series of canon tables (pls. 65–72) and a single Evangelist portrait (pl. 64).⁵⁷ Given that the fragment appears not to fit paleographically with any of the manuscripts

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from the two great Northumbrian scriptoria, Wearmouth–Jarrow and Lindisfarne, there is speculation that it may have originated in York, an important center that must have had an active scriptorium, but with which no manuscripts can be definitely associated.⁵⁸ Owing to resemblances between these fragmentary canon tables and those in the Augsburg, Trier, and Maeseyck Gospels, it has been suggested that the Maeseyck Fragment had an Echternach origin as well.⁵⁹

Modern provenance and initial style have led scholars to propose Echternach as the source of a bifolium in Freiburg (pl. 53) from what must have been a sumptuously decorated Gospel book. 60 The fragment was discovered at the beginning of this century in an old rent roll in the abbey of Tholey, near Trier. Containing the preface and the first part of the chapter summaries for Luke, the Freiburg Fragment has two elaborate initials that have been likened to those in the Augsburg Gospels.

Alleged close parallels between the initials in the Gotha and Trier Gospels have suggested an association between the Gotha manuscript and Echternach.⁶¹ To this writer's eye, however, the initials in the two books bear little resemblance to each other. On the contrary, the Gotha Gospels contains a number of unusual textual features heretofore unnoticed, which are paralleled only in two Northumbrian books – the Royal Gospels in London⁶² and the Lindisfarne Gospels⁶³ – and which, therefore, argue strongly for its origin in Northumbria rather than Echternach.

A deluxe edition of the *Collectio canonum* in Cologne (pl. 54)⁶⁴ contains numerous elaborate initials and half-uncial script strongly reminiscent of those in the Echternach Gospels. An inscription in the manuscript indicates that the book was in Cologne by the eighth century.⁶⁵ The association of the manuscript's Old English and Old High German glosses of the eighth century with a group emanating from Willibrord's mission supports an attribution to Echternach.⁶⁶ Historical links between Cologne and Echternach have also been invoked to suggest that the scribe, Sigibertus, who signed the manuscript, may have moved to Cologne from Echternach, where he wrote the manuscript, after Willibrord's death in 739. It has also been suggested that the exemplar for the manuscript may have been Italian,⁶⁷ and given Willibrord's trips to Rome such a manuscript might have been in the library at Echternach.

One final codex should be mentioned in connection with the scriptorium at Echternach, a fragmentary Gospel Book now divided between Cambridge and London.⁶⁸ Although the manuscript has full-page Evangelist symbols related to those in the Echternach and Trier Gospels, its provenance is purely English and, therefore, has traditionally been assigned to Northumbria.⁶⁹

Thus, a vague and problematic picture of the Echternach scriptorium in the eighth century emerges from the present state of scholarship. The manuscripts that have been proposed thus far as possible products of the scriptorium are summarized in the following list.



Evidence for a scriptorium at Echternach

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MANUSCRIPT

ABBREVIATION

attributed to Echternach scribes

Book of Prophets

Prophets

Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale

lat. 9382

Augsburg Gospels

Augsburg

Augsburg, Universitätsbibliothek,

Cod. I.2.4°2

Calendar of Saint Willibrord

Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale

lat. 10837 (fols. 34-41)

Calendar

Hieronymian Martyrology

Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale

lat. 10837 (fols. 1-33)

Martyrology

Echternach provenance

Echternach Gospels

Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale

lat. 9389

Jerome, In Esaiam

Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale lat. 9526

Augustine, De trinitate

Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale lat. 9538

Augustine, In Evangelium S. Iohannes

Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale lat. 10399,

fols. 42-43

Various Paschal texts

Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale lat. 10399,

fols. 35–36

Dionysius, Tabula Paschalis

Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale lat. 9527

Paul, Epistle to the Hebrews

Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale lat. 9528,

fols. 1-2

Bede, In apocalypsim

Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale lat. 10400

fols. 107-108

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Sacramentary

Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale lat. 9488

fols. 3-4

Sacramentary

Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale lat. 9488

fol. 5

Antiphonary

Paris. Bibliothèque Nationale lat. 9488

fols. 75-76

Jerome, Commentary on the Epistles of Paul

Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale lat. 9530

Alcuin, De dialectica, De rhetorica

Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica reg. lat. 1209

Epistles of Saint Paul

Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale lat. 10440

Jerome, Liber interpretationis Hebraicorum nominum

Paris, Bibltiothèque Nationale lat. 10443

Jerome, Commentary on Matthew

Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale lat. 9529

Alcuin, Life of Saint Willibrord

Stuttgart, Württembergische Landesbibliothek H.B.XIV.1

Tagius Samuhel, Liber sententiarium Gregorii Papae

Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale lat. 9565

Tagius Samuhel, Liber sententiarium Gregorii Papae

Ghent, Bibliothèque de l'Université 310

Stuttgart Psalter Stuttgart

Stuttgart, Württembergische Landesbibliothek

Cod. Bibl. 2º12

with Continental provenance and related to manuscripts associated with Echternach

Trier Gospels Trier

Trier, Cathedral Treasury MS 61

Maeseyck Gospels Maeseyck

Maeseyck, Church of Saint Catherine s.n.

Gregory, Homiliae in Ezechielem Carlsruhe Gregory

Carlsruhe, Landesbibliothek Aug.CCXXI

Maeseyck canon tables and Evangelist portrait Maeseyck Fragment

Maeseyck, Church of Saint Catherine s.n.

(bound with the Maeseyck Gospels)