



Trinity College Dublin

Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath

The University of Dublin

The Book of Kells

Work of Iconography, Book of Theology

The Loyola Institute
TRINITY COLLEGE DUBLIN

Soiscelae Mor Coluim Cille

- ▶ **‘PRIMH-MIND IARTHAI
DOMAIN’**

(‘the most precious object
of the Western world’)

- ▶ Annals of Ulster, 1007

Giraldus Cambrensis (Gerald of Wales)

- St Brigid's Church, Kildare (1185)
- *'among all the miracles of Kildare, nothing seems to me more miraculous than that wonderful book which they say was written at the dictation of an angel during the lifetime of the virgin [that is, Brigid].'*

What is the Book of Kells?

- ▶ A gloriously illuminated manuscript reproducing the text of the four gospels by Mathew, Mark, Luke and John.
- ▶ The text of the gospel that is copied
 - St Jerome
 - Old Latin Text



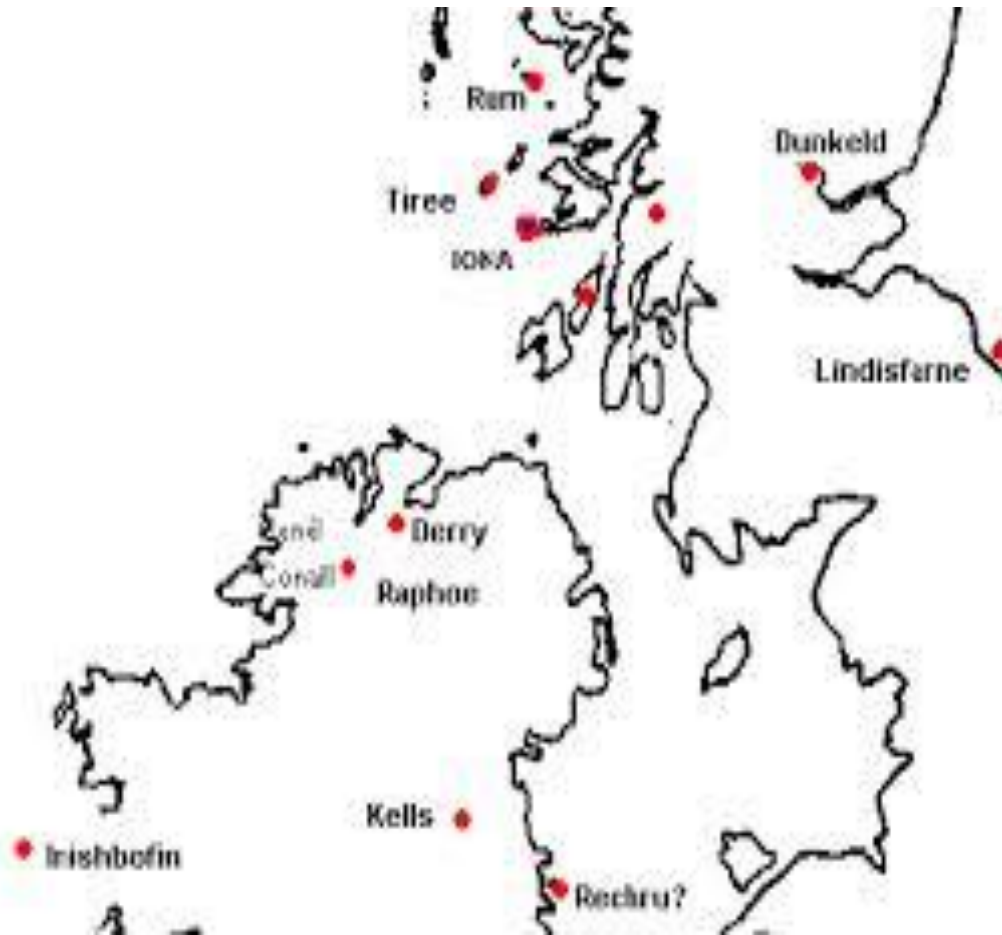
What is the Book of Kells?

- ▶ A concordance
- ▶ A listing and part explanation of Hebrew names
- ▶ A brief summary of the gospel narratives.

Soiscelae Mor Coluim Cille

- ▶ St Columcille and the Iona monks
- ▶ Monastery in Kells
- ▶ Stolen in 1006 for its ornamental cover/shrine
- ▶ Poem added in 15th c (folio 289v) – venerated as a relic of the saint

Iona ---- Lindisfarne --- Kells



Text and Context

- ▶ Literacy in Latin
- ▶ High culture
 - ▶ **Theological insight**
- ▶ Ecclesial structure
- ▶ 680 surviving pages, 340 folios

Dr Bernard Meehan Trinity College Dublin





Loyola Institute, TCD 16.2.2017

Multi-disciplinary Studies

- A work of art
- A cultural and historical treasure
- A book of technique and colour

Multidisciplinary study

Several mysteries surround the manuscript

- Where was it produced?
- For what purpose – liturgical use?
- By whom? How long did it take?
- What techniques were used to create the tiny, intricate, intensely complex decorations?
- How many artists worked on it?
- Why was it left unfinished?

Video Introduction to Kells: Part of a series

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rRGQPJIO5CM&index=2&list=PLv-RhiNUREDykcChUoc34bb5xOX4yFP>



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Thank You

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