

NOTES ON SOME MEDIEVAL ICELANDIC MANUSCRIPTS¹

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ISLANDICA of the Middle Ages—in the case of Iceland this is usually taken to mean from before the completion of the Lutheran Reformation in 1550—are almost entirely to be found in five great collections: the Royal Library and the Arnarnagnaean Library in Copenhagen, the National Library of Iceland (with which we may include for the present purpose the recently founded Arnarnagnaean Institute in Reykjavík), the Royal Library in Stockholm, and the University Library in Uppsala. None of these libraries is concerned in the present paper, the aim of which is to look at some of the very few items that got away and are to be found elsewhere.

It is not possible, however, to avoid referring to Árni Magnússon when discussing Icelandic manuscripts and their fates. If I say that he vacuum-cleaned Iceland of manuscripts I am not exaggerating, for his relentless, systematic search of the land resembles in retrospect nothing so much as the action of a vacuum-cleaner of unbelievable determination and suction-power. It is thanks to him that the medieval records of the history and literature of Iceland have in large measure survived, sometimes in originals that were snatched out of his burning house in Copenhagen, but sometimes only in copies made either by himself or by his well-trained copyists (and then usually corrected by Árni himself) of documents since lost through the carelessness of others.

Yet, as the most efficient of hoovers leaves some dust for the patient housemaid to clean off by hand, so even Árni did not get away with everything, and the manuscripts at which I shall now look have the common factor of having ended up in places remote

¹ A revised and shortened form of a paper entitled "Icelandic Manuscripts and Their Travels" given to the SCONUL seminar on medieval manuscripts held at Durham University, 21-25 September 1976.

from their origins, and so of not having received the attention due to them.

I begin where I started my search twenty-two years ago, among the manuscripts of the British Library. In spite of the large gifts by Sir Joseph Banks, and purchases from that unfortunate scholar Finnur Magnússon, this collection has only two codices of medieval origin, only one of which I propose to mention here. This is B.L. Add. MS. 4895, a much underrated book. It is a small, imperfect volume of 96 folios, ending abruptly in a collect for St. Christopher, the writing area of each page being a mere 73×54 mm. ; its particular interest lies in its content and provenance.

B.L. Add. MS. 4895 does not contain any direct note of ownership and neither the correspondence of Banks nor that of Ólafur Stephensen indicates any immediate provenance, though the fact that it came with two other devotional manuscripts of a similar kind which Ólafur obtained from the family of Bjarni Halldórsson (1704-73), shire-reeve of Húnavatnassýsla and by descent and marriage linked with one of the great book-collecting families of Iceland, the descendants of Magnús Jónsson "prúði", shire-reeve of Ísafjarðarsýsla (1514-91), makes this its most likely previous home. That the manuscript is of Icelandic origin there is no doubt, for in the first part of the Litany, which occupies folio 72 onwards, we find among the martyrs *Gudmunde* (i.e. Guðmundr Arason, Bishop of Hólar, 1203-37, never canonized formally either by Rome or by the Church in Iceland, but much venerated by the pious), and the two saints formally declared such by the Parliament of Iceland, if not by any other ecclesiastical authority, *Þorlákr* (Þórhallason, Bishop of Skálholt, 1178-93) and *Jón* (Ögmundsson, Bishop of Hólar, 1106-21) are duly entered among the bishops and confessors. There is also a long piece of devotional prose in Icelandic to which I shall return presently. The especial interest of the manuscript lies, however, in the fact that *Latin* writing from Iceland has virtually disappeared, and that this unpretentious codex is almost all that has survived from the rich collections evident from such sources as the Visitation Registers of Bishops Vilchin Hinriksson (Skálholt, 1394-1406) and Ólafur Rögnvaldsson (Hólar, 1460-95). This book bears no

sign of monastic origin or ownership ; on the contrary, it is most likely that it was made for a private person's use and that it came into the hands of Magnús prúði when he was a young man, and remained in his family as an heirloom until Bjarni Halldórsson's heirs, in an action which has been more than sufficiently described by Jón Helgason,¹ allowed it to go out of the country. It follows that for two centuries this book must have been used as a work of crypto-Recusant devotion, and it is perhaps not entirely inapposite that it now rests in the land of genuine Recusancy.

The key to the probable origin of the manuscript lies in the Icelandic prose passage on folios 85-89. Here is an invocation to the Holy Cross of great fervency, from all appearances an original work, since the Latinity of the rest of the book indicates that it would not have been necessary for the scribe or the owner to resort to translation. This passage is not without considerable literary power, and at one point (fo. 86^v) it uses an image of cracking and shattering rocks, darkening light and terror falling on all creation which is clearly descended from the climax of the *Dream of the Rood* on the one side and the cataclysm of *Völuspá* on the other.² The text of this passage reads as follows :

Fi(rir) þig sigradi nadulega hi(m)na k(onun) grin(n) ouin allz mankyns. Skalf oll iord þa er χρ̄r v(a)r pindr a þer oc sprungu biorg. Þrotnadi dagslios. oc döcknödu himintungl. hræddiz öll skepna at sia skap(ar)a sin deya. Fyrir þig uard daudin yfirstigin en(n) diofullin(n) bundin heluite roent. en heimrin(n) leystr paradis up(p) lokin. oc ladadr allr lydr oc eilifa fagnada þu en(n) helgi kross ert lykill him(na)rikis oc lifs m(ar)k man(n)a. Af þinu sigrskauti gledzt oll himna hird oc fagn(ar) guds kristni en(n) skamazt diöflar oc hneykiz allr ouina kraptr.

Translation :

Through thee the King of Heaven graciously conquered the enemy of all mankind. All the earth shook when Christ was tormented on thee, and the rocks cracked. Daylight faded and the heavenly bodies darkened. All created beings were terrified at seeing their Creator die. Through thee death was overcome and the devil bound, Hell ransacked and the world released, Paradise opened and all people drawn to an eternal joy. Thou the Holy Cross art the key to Heaven and

¹ Jón Helgason, *Ritgerðakorn og ræðustúfar* (Reykjavík, 1959), p. 111.

² *Dream of the Rood*, ed. B. Dickins and A. S. C. Ross (London, 1934), p. 27 ; *Völuspá*, ed. S. Nordal (2nd edn., Reykjavík, 1952), pp. 22-23 and 135 ff. ; also S. Nordal, "Three essays on *Völuspá*", *SBVS*, xviii (1970-1), 81 and 113, and J. Helgason (ed.), *Íslenzk miðaldakvæði* (Copenhagen, 1938), i. 235 ff., esp. 242.

the mark of life for men. All the Heavenly Host and God's Christian folk rejoice at thy victorious grasp, but the devils are put to shame and all the power of the enemies is put down.

Devotion to the Holy Cross centred in medieval Iceland round the church at Kaldaðarnes in Árnessýsla, where a popular crucifix formed a centre for the attention of the devout until it was desecrated and removed by Gizur Einarsson, the first Lutheran incumbent of Skálholt, in 1548. Many donations were recorded to it before the Reformation and poems in its honour, *Krosskvæði*, were a popular verse form which was to survive the ecclesiastical upheaval, as the most zealous Icelandic Evangelicals could not deny the existence of the Cross in the Gospels. We also find occasional outward signs of sub-Recusancy even in high places in the seventeenth century; thus Brynjólfur Sveinsson (Bishop of Skálholt, 1638-75) composed a Latin *Carmen Votivum de Cruce* of an impeccably medieval temper,¹ and at least one of the Priest-Vicars of his Cathedral, the Rev. Finnur Jónsson (v. inf., p. 295), was noted as a man of ecclesiastically antiquarian temper. Though the odds are that B.L. Add. MS. 4895 had gone to West Iceland long before their day, they indicate tendencies which would account for its survival.

B.L. Add. MS. 4895 has a post-Reformation companion, B.L. Add. MS. 4892 (written in the seventeenth century), in which there appears another devotion to the Holy Cross, a *Krosskvæði* which, if its deliberate archaïsation is not so wild as to make any dating impossible, is also from the fifteenth century. Unfortunately, there is no means of telling from this codex whether it was copied by a member of Magnús prúði's family or whether it merely fell into the hands of one of them, but the similarity of material opens an interesting field of investigation.

These two manuscripts form a convenient link with the first of the five manuscripts which are the central theme of these notes, the codices now in the possession of the John Rylands University Library, in that the first of these (Rylands Icelandic MS. 1), usually called *Codex Lindesianus* from its immediate

¹ See J. Helgason, *Handritasþjall* (Reykjavík, 1958), p. 112; a partial translation was printed in *Óðinn*, vi (1910), 72.

provenance,¹ has much in common with them. It also is a pocket-book, certainly written before 1473 (a date scrawled by someone on fo. 89^v), and with some probability in the first half of the fifteenth century. Besides containing a text of the computistical treatise *Rímþegla*, in a version which has been identified by Eiríkur Magnússon as a shorter version of the text of MS. Gl. Kgl. Saml. 1812, 4to,² a much-abbreviated Icelandic version of Honorius of Autun's *Sacramentary*, a calendar with strong English or Norwegian affinities and two Easter tables, this volume contains two items compiled in Iceland of a theological nature which have escaped the attention they deserve. The first of these is a very short Directory for a penitent (fos. 47^r-48^r) which, in its austere commonsense approach, has much in common with the more elaborate Causton Hall Directory.³ The Icelandic text reads :

Ef þu uillt idrazt synda þin(n)a þa sk(al)tu syng(i)a siau salma. Ef þu uillt andlig(a)n faugn(u)d hafa (og) treystaz miog gudz miskun(n) þa sk(al)tu syng(i)a þe(ss)a salma. Exaudi d(omi)ne iusticia(m) m(eam). Ad te d(omi)ne I(euau)i. D(eu)s in n(o)mine t(u)o. D(eu)s mis(er)eat(ur)n(ost)ri. D(eu)s in adiutoriu(m). In te d(omi)ne en sidara Inclina d(omi)ne. Ef þu uillt gud lofa (og) h(an)s almatt dyrka þa syng þu B(e)n(e)dic a(n)i(m)a m(e)a. Confitemini d(omi)n(o) q(ui)a b(o)n(us) og Laudate alla. Nu b(e)r so til ad þu u(er)dr i freistni mikilli (og) þik(i)r þi(e)r m(ar)gt yf(i)r g(an)ga ofritt edr ollett i mo(r)gu komi yf(i)r þ(i)c þa syng þu D(eu)s de m(i)s(ericordia) r(esponde). Exaud(i) d(omi)n(e) or(acionem) m(ea)m. Saluu(m) me f(ac) d(omi)ne. Mun Kristr tr(eyst)a þic og hallda þ(i)c so ad þin uerdi alldre u(m) þ(at) f(r)a m fr(ei)stat e(n) þu matt uel u(id) standaz sialfr. Þa er þi(e)r þikir aung(i)n leid retting þin(n)a manna þa er no(u)dþyn at syng(i)a þ(ess)a salmos. Usque q(u)o dominus. Deus aurib(us) n(ostris). Miser(er)e m(ei) d(omine). Exaudi d(eus) o(rationem) m(eam) et ne. In te d(omine) s(peravi) en(n) fyrra (og) muntu þa hugg(a)n (og) gledi af til kuamu gudz miskun(ar), ef þu sy(n)gr af ollu(m) hug. En ef þu ert heill (og) uel halldin(n) (og) gangi þi(e)r m(ar)rgt ad osku(m) þa syng þu t(i)l lofs gudi B(e)n(e)dica(m) dominum. B(e)n(e)dic a(nima) m(ea) et o(mn)ia. Exaltabo te D(eus) m(eus) r(ex). En huot s(em) þi(e)r gei(n)gr uel edr illa edr kemr yf(i)r þ(i)c freistni edr ofr(i)dr þa ertu skylldr til ad syng(i)a immnum trium pueror(um) af þ(u)i at eingi dauðligra man(n)a hefr uit t(i)l þ(e)ss edr mælsku ad lida þ(a)t h(uer)su mikill mattr fylg(i)r lofsong þessum er a skepnuna alla skal kalla og lofa suo skapara sin(n).

¹ It was acquired by the Library in 1901 with the manuscript portion of the Bibliotheca Lindesiana of the Earls of Crawford.

² E. Magnússon, "Codex Lindesianus", *Arkiv for Nordisk Filologi*, xiii (1896), 1-14.

³ W. A. Pantin, "Instructions for a devout and literate layman", *Mediaeval learning and literature presented to R. W. Hunt* (Oxford, 1976), pp. 398-422.

Translation :

If thou wouldest repent of thy sins, then thou shalt sing seven psalms. If thou wilt obtain spiritual joy, and be greatly comforted by God's mercy, thou shalt sing these psalms *Exaudi domine iusticiam meam. Ad te domine, levavi. Deus in nomine tuo. Deus misereatur nostri. Deus in adiutorium. In te, Domine* and, later, *Inclina, Domine*. If thou wouldst praise God and his omnipotence, then sing *Benedic, anima mea. Confitemini Domino quia bonus* (and) all the *Laudate* (psalms). Now if it should happen that thou enterest into great temptation and thou dost feel that many things go hard or evilly against thee, then sing *Deus de misericordia responde. Exaudi, Domine, orationem meam. Salvum me fac, Domine*. Christ will comfort thee and so support thee that thou wilt never be tempted beyond what thou canst thyself withstand. When there seemeth to thee to be no redress for thy injuries, then it is necessary to sing these psalms *Usquequo Domine. Deus auribus nostris. Miserere mei, Domine. Exaudi, Deus, orationem meam et ne* and the former *In te, Domine, speravi*, and thou wilt then receive comfort and joy from God's mercy if thou dost sing with all thy mind. But if thou art in good health and doing well, and many things go according to thy wishes, then sing to the praise of God *Benedicam Dominum, Benedic anima mea et omnia* and *Exaltabo te, Deus meus rex*. But whether things go well or ill with thee, whether thou art beset by temptation or by trouble, thou art under obligation to sing the *Imnum trium puerorum*, for no mortal man hath the wit or the eloquence to expound how great a power goeth with this song of praise that calleth on all creation to praise its creator.

The Psalms recommended show a very sensible approach to the situations postulated, though it is not quite certain which are the ones that the author intended. The ones which can be identified with certainty are Psalms 16, 25, 54, 67, 70, 31, 71, 86, 103, 17, 69, 13, 44, 34 and 145. The *Exaudi, Deus* refers to Psalm 55, and the *Confitemini Domino* to any of Psalms 106, 107, 118 or 136. "The former" *In te, Domine* could be either Psalm 31 or 71, and the *Miserere mei* could be Psalm 51, 57 or 58. It does not much matter, however, which of the alternatives the devout user picked, as the content is similar enough for the devotion to be effective.

A minor curiosity is the change of hand at folio 47^r, line 6. The condenser of the Honorian *Sacramentary* ended his work on line 5, with no indication of any continuation being necessary. From all the palaeographical indications, the compiler of this little treatise read the Honorian extract shortly after it had been made and clearly decided that there was room for improvement at a level more suited to popular devotion, and so added this small but interesting set of directions, all the more rare in that

hardly any such pre-Reformation religious instruction survives from Iceland. Taken with B.L. Add. MS. 4892 and 4895, the *Codex Lindesianus* provides a hitherto untouched field of investigation.

The second is a compilation on the mystical meaning of the parts of the human form, possibly drawing on Honorius of Autun, although apparently only by way of indirect reminiscence, but more clearly derived from the Aristotelian *Ta Physiognomonika*, through some unidentified Latin translation. Eiríkur Magnússon has demonstrated the importance of this treatise to lexicographers, and it is to be hoped that it will be examined in detail in due course.¹

Magnússon has also traced the codex back to the Hanoverian book-collector F. G. H. Culemann, at whose sale by Sotheby (8-10 February 1870) it was acquired by Ellis the bookseller, where Magnússon himself had seen it in February 1872, shortly after which it was acquired by Lord Crawford. Its provenance before Culemann is not recorded except for one inscription. On folio 1^v there is written in a clear seventeenth-century hand *sra Finnur Jónsson*; an examination of Sveinn Níelsson's *Prestatal og prófasta* reveals that only one man of that name was ordained in the seventeenth century, this being Finnur Jónsson, Priest-Vicar of Skálholt Cathedral (d. 1648).² Finnur died unmarried and childless, and his mother and nearest heir, to whom his effects would have gone, was the sister of the Rev. Jón Böðvarsson of Reykholt in Borgarfjörður, the second of the long line of scholar-incumbents of that parsonage, where the living remained in the hands of one member of the family until 1754 and where it would have come into the hands of another Finnur Jónsson, the distinguished church historian (Rector of Reykholt, 1732-54; Bishop of Skálholt, 1754-85; d. 1789), one of whose sons, the Rev. Halldór Finnsson, had a daughter who married the learned but impecunious Bishop Geir Vídalín (d. 1823). In the hands of their only surviving child, the thriftless Árni Vídalín, the Vídalín inheritance was scattered shortly before 1840. I have

¹ Magnússon, *op. cit.* pp. 11-14.

² Páll Eggert Ólason *et al.*, *Íslenzkar Æviskrár* (Reykjavík, 1949-76), ii, 10 (hereafter *ÍÆ*); Sveinn Níelsson, *Prestatal*, 2nd edn. (Reykjavík, 1948-51), 14, 99.

drawn up this line of descent as an indication of how a book such as the *Codex Lindesianus* could have descended from its one known early owner in Iceland to the first known owner outside Iceland, at a time when it could have passed out of the family because it was in the hands of an owner who cared nothing for it. In view of the nature of the family who succeeded to the property of the first Finnur, the book would have passed consistently through the hands of pious clerics until it reached Halldór Finnsson (as to why it should have gone to him rather than to his brother Bishop Hannes, the short answer is that Hannes's manuscripts ended up in the National Library of Iceland by a route that does not concern the present problem). After Halldór's death it would have descended to his episcopally married daughter as a preference, for Bishop Vídalín, though in other ways ineffective, was a man of not inconsiderable learning. That it escaped from the family with the last and not the penultimate generation is explained by its transmission through the mother, for the Bishop had no hold on his wife's property.

Rylands Icelandic MSS. 2-4 are a set of three paper copies of the medieval law text *Jónsbók*; 3 and 4 are paper copies in contemporary Icelandic bindings, with no apparent direct connection with a medieval original, the former written at Hólafell in Borgarfjörður in 1647-8, its only early owner noted being Þorvarður. The hand appears to be early eighteenth century, at which time the only likely identification would be Þorvarður Pétursson, *þénari*, "assistant", to Lawman Jón Eyjólfsson, who died in 1707. The latter copy is undated and in a poor cursive hand, containing one inscription in an early eighteenth-century hand by Arngrímur Bjarnason (?Steward of Skálholt, d. 1724), another in a late eighteenth-century hand by sr Rafn Jónsson (Parson of Hjaltabakki, d. 1807), and two inscriptions by the same man, *E. Ólafsson*, 1866 and *Signor Einar Ólafsson á bókinna*. Einar Ólafsson has not been identified, but this gives us a terminus post quem as to when the book left Iceland.

Rylands Icelandic MS. 2 is a very different matter, however. This is a very beautiful paper manuscript written by one of the few scribes of the period before Árni Magnússon's clean sweep

of the land who can be identified with any certainty, Guðmundur Jónsson of Fróðá, who made this copy for Matthias Guðmundsson in 1665. Guðmundur was not only a good and accurate copyist, a faculty shared with many contemporaries, such as Árni Magnússon's grandfather, the Rev. Ketill Jörundsson, but he was also a much rarer thing in seventeenth-century Iceland, an accomplished draughtsman and colour worker in the limited field of colours allowed him by the vegetable inks that are available from Icelandic herbs. An examination of his decorated initials, with their curiously English workmanship (as on p. 145), led the present writer to suspect that he was working from an archetype of uncommon fineness where such an influence was discernible, and one medieval manuscript in particular suggested itself as of West Iceland provenance until a late date. This is the Codex Scardensis of the *Jónsbók*, a magnificent manuscript from about 1360 (now MS. AM 350 fos.), the owner of which at the crucial period was Eggert Björnsson the Wealthy of Skarð, where Guðmundur could easily have had access to it. As he was clearly working on a large scale for a patron for whom a superior effort was in order (the area of each page is 300×190 mm.), it is not surprising to find him taking details from a codex of which Halldór Hermannsson was to say later, "it is one of the few Icelandic works which can stand comparison with some of the best work of its kind made in foreign lands at the time".¹

How Rylands Icelandic MS. 2 passed from Matthias Guðmundsson to Lord Crawford we do not know, nor are we enlightened by its very ordinary binding. In the case of the fifth Rylands Icelandic manuscript, however, we are unusually well supplied with provenance data, though the manuscript itself presents several problems. It is a palimpsest, the present text being a *Jónsbók* without the "Long Addition" of Christian I, and hence earlier than 1451, though palaeographically it is from

¹ See *Skarðsbók*, facs. ed. Jakob Benediktsson (Corpus Codicum Islandicorum Medii Aevi), xvi (Copenhagen, 1943), 6-7; *Icelandic Illuminated Manuscripts of the Middle Ages*, ed. Halldór Hermannsson (Corpus, vii, Copenhagen, 1935), pp. 25-26. For biographical notes on Guðmundur, see *ÍÆ*, xi, 160; for his patron Mattías see Bogi Benediktsson, *Sýslumannaævur* (Reykjavík, 1881-1932), iii, 126-30. From the note on iii, 126 it is clear that this manuscript was in Iceland at the period at which Bogi was collecting his information (c. 1825).

a date not far from 1450. Owing to a green discoloration caused by the running of copper compounds at the time when the vellum was cleaned to make way for the *Jónsbók* text, it is extremely difficult to make out what the underlying text was. What is clear is that it was from a manuscript at least twice the size of the present codex, for the cutting has been done down the middle of the length of the original, and at times the writing of the later text runs the opposite way to that of the original. From the few words that can be deciphered, the original text was a liturgical work in an English hand from about 1300, apparently a large Psalter or a Benedictional, but as almost the only word definitely legible is a *Beati* at the top of the present page 352, it is not possible to make any definite statement.

On page 364, after the main text, appear the following records of ownership :

(1) Þorkatla Finnsdóttir a þessa lögbok með rettu en engin annar Anno 1635 Torfi Finnsson m.e.h.

(2) Eign Finns Þórólfssonar.

(3) Nu er hun að ríttum erfðum eign Finns Þórólfs Sonar það vottar Jon Torfason m.e.h.

Bílder hundrad hvor hana kaupar eður eignast af honum.

(4) Þessa lögbók fa eg underskrifaður Eruverðum höfðingsmanne og mínum elskulegum Bróður Jone Thorfasyne til frjalslegrar eignar, til merkis mitt nafn að Mula a Skalmarsnese þann 27 Decembris Anno 1659

Finnur Þórólfsson m.propria.

(5) Þessa logbok a eg Erlendur Gunnlaugs son.

The first four of these inscriptions show a family connection of considerable importance in the history of Icelandic manuscript tradition. Þorkatla Finnsdóttir (d. 1655) was the sister of the Rev. Torfi Finnsson (d. 1637), incumbent of Hvammur in Hvammssveit in Dalir, and was the daughter of the notable manuscript-owner Finnur Jónsson, Squire of Flatey, whose son, Jón Finnsson, Squire of Flatey, has won immortality by his great generosity in giving the famous codex *Flateyjarbók* to Bishop Brynjólfur Sveinsson. Þorkatla married Þórólfur Einarsson, Squire of Múli in Skálmarsnes in Mýrasýsla (d. 1650), and her son Finnur, a schoolboy at Skálholt, inherited the volume, as his school-friend Jón Torfason bears witness. Finnur himself (who died the following year) gave his friend the volume, valued (see

Inscription 3) at a "hundred", i.e. the equivalent of 120 ells of russet cloth (or a cow), and so the book passed out of the Flatey family to the Rev. Jón Torfason, Parson of Staður in Súganda-fjörður (c. 1636-1719). Parson Jón is unlikely to have let such a gift of friendship go in his lifetime, and its most natural descent to its first modern owner would have been Jón Torfason—the Rev. Ólafur Jónsson (his son)—Erlendur Ólafsson, shire-reeve of Ísafjörður and scholar (his son)—Ólafur Erlendsson, *lögsagnari* (shire-reeve's (non-graduate) deputy to his father) (his son). The second Ólafur died in 1790.¹ His children did not attain any particular important positions, the daughters marrying around the Middle West districts of Iceland, where Sir George Stewart Mackenzie and his two young medical friends, Henry Holland and Richard Bright, travelled in 1810 on their well-recorded visit to Iceland. Richard Bright (1789-1858),² afterwards a notable physician (the discoverer of "Bright's disease"), records his name in the book as an owner; as he is not known to have had any connection with Iceland again, he must have bought it in 1810. When it left his family is not recorded, as no auction appears to have been held of his library, and the next record we have is that the Rylands Library bought the codex from Messrs. Bernard Quaritch in 1919. Unfortunately the records Bernard Quaritch himself kept are at present inaccessible, and the chances of finding the relevant information are, the present writer understands from Mr. E. H. Dring, very remote, so whether Quaritch bought it directly from Bright's heirs or whether it came the firm's way at a later date is now an insoluble problem. So, unfortunately, is Inscription 5, for there is now no Erlendur Gunnlaugsson recorded, either in the biographical or genealogical works accessible, nor yet in the great census of 1703, Árni Magnússon's other enduring monument, who would appear to fit the bill as an owner of this manuscript; no Erlendur

¹ On the family of Flatey see *Flateyjarbók*, facs. ed. Finnur Jónsson (Corpus, i, Copenhagen, 1930), Intro., col. 6; also Bogi Benediktsson, op. cit. ii. 60, 65, and *ÍE*, ii. 15. On the Rev. Jón Torfason and his descendants, see *ÍE*, iii. 293; iv. 60; i. 443; iv. 41 and Bogi Benediktsson, op. cit. ii. 237-8.

² On Bright, see *DNB*, and also G. S. Mackenzie, *Travels in Iceland* (Edinburgh, 1811), *passim*.

Gunnlaugsson appears to have held a legal office in the period between 1719 (the death of Parson Jón Torfason) and 1810 (when Richard Bright obtained the manuscript), and certainly not in the first half of the eighteenth century, to which period the writing of the inscription points.

In recent years not much has been overlooked, but since 1950 no less than three portions of medieval Icelandic manuscripts have emerged into the daylight. One part of the lost section of *Heiðarvíga saga* does not concern us here,¹ but the other two fragments, less spectacular in content, come within this survey. The first, a collection of small portions of a manuscript from the early part of the fourteenth century containing a part of *Breta sögur* relating to the begetting of Merlin, was found in the sixteenth century binding of a sixteenth century manuscript of *Jónsbók* now in the Library of Trinity College, Dublin.² It will be considered by Professor Jonna Louis-Jensen in her forthcoming edition of this saga, so I will do no more than mention it here, as an example of how small, but valuable portions of medieval Islandica may still appear from unlikely places.

The other is an item of some importance, however, for it is the only known specimen of what must have at one time have been a common object in Iceland, a glossed manuscript. Codex Vindobonensis 2713 is an interlineal gloss of the Psalter, imperfect in that it only contains that portion from Psalm xvi. 8 to Psalm ciii. 6.³ The glossing is not complete; the glossator frequently leaves out words or even the greater parts of verses (e.g. Ps. cii. 21, 22), and does not always gloss the Latin in the correct case (e.g. Ps. xxvi. 4, where he merely glosses *omnibus* as *oll* rather than *alla* or *öllum*). The original Vulgate text is, as far as can be ascertained from photocopies, an English manuscript from around 1300; the gloss is in a hand of c. 1500-20, and, from its

¹ It is fully transcribed and described by Jón Helgason in *Árbók Landsbóka-safns Íslands*, vii-viii (1950-1), 127-35.

² The original volume was TCD MS. L3.23 (now TCD MS. 1023), a sixteenth century *Jónsbók*.

³ I am greatly obliged to Professor Oscar Bandle of the University of Zürich and Docent Dr. Otto Mazal, Director of the Department of Manuscripts and Incunabula, Austrian National Library, Vienna, for their kind help with this manuscript: neither must, however, be held responsible for my opinions.

general appearance, a rather unpractised hand. Dr. Necker of Bonn, in an unpublished dissertation examined by Professor Bandle, has come to the conclusion that the manuscript is from the last monastic foundation in Iceland, the Benedictine house of Skriða, founded by Bishop Stefán Jónsson of Skálholt in 1495.¹ No manuscript has hitherto been known to have survived from this house, and if this were true, then this manuscript would indeed be a treasure. But an examination of the few marginalia in the codex hardly support the attribution; indeed, the only recognizable proper names (in the margin alongside the latter part of Ps. xliii) have led the present writer to look elsewhere for its provenance. In this margin is written the inscription *Heiðarligum Mañe Guðz orða þienara Thorsteini* in a stiff seventeenth-century book-hand, and, a little lower, a *Groa* attempted to write her name, as she also began to do on the last extant page. A search through biographical and genealogical dictionaries for a likely combination of a parson named Þorsteinn with a daughter Gróa produced only one such combination. At the older monastic foundation of Munkaþverá in Eyjafjörður there was as incumbent from 1650 to 1667, the Rev. Jón Runólfsson, whose daughter Steinvör married another learned man, the Rev. Þorsteinn Illugason, incumbent of Vellir from 1658 to 1698 (and formerly Master of Hólar Cathedral School), one of whose children was a daughter named Gróa. This daughter married another cleric, and their son, the Rev. Runólfur Gíslason, was for a while Priest-Vicar of Skálholt Cathedral (d. 1735)²; he died unmarried, and his sister's children and heirs were described as "unlearned", and would in consequence be very likely to allow an ancient manuscript to go to an outsider. According to Dr. Necker, the codex reached Vienna in (or by) 1764. Dr. Mazal, following the accessions record, merely notes it as having been acquired by the Imperial Library between 1716 and 1795, almost certainly from a Danish owner (as may be seen from a piece of paper containing a most uninformative note about the manuscript, in Danish in a cursive hand of the mid/late eighteenth century, bound in at the end). This would fit in well with a

¹ Finnur Jónsson, *Historia ecclesiastica Islandiæ* (Havniæ, 1772-78), iv. 113-21.

² *IÆ*, ii. 251; v. 211; ii. 62-63; iv. 17; ii. 36.

descent from Parson Þorsteinn Illugason via his Priest-Vicar grandson, as allowing time for the manuscript to have been acquired (perhaps as a payment for a trading-debt) by a Dane who afterwards turned it to good account abroad. It also allows for more than one Danish owner, should this have been the case. In any case, this latest discovery is one that demonstrates the futility of expecting no more medieval Islandica to appear from unexpected repositories, and, together with the manuscripts which form the central part of this study, it shows that there is still much to be found.