the Visigothic [24] script. These ‘minuscule’ scripts were quattuorlineal book hands: instead of the old two-line systems they appear written between four lines so as to accommodate individual ascenders and descenders. This characteristic, together with the interchange of capital and small letters in later styles, became an important element in the formation of Western calligraphy, giving scribes the possibility of introducing variations in an otherwise limited number of letterforms.

In the 5th century, Ireland, which had never been occupied by Roman legions, was converted to Christianity through the intermediary of the British Church — according to tradition by the Romano-British apostle St Patrick. Christianity introduced literacy, together with the Cursive Half-Uncial script, and the latter was soon taken up and modified in the newly established monastic centres. By the 7th century two distinct Celtic hands had emerged:

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24 Offices and Masses of the Monastic Liturgy: Spain, 10th century. A. Visigothic minuscule, a highly legible script which formed the basis of the New Roman Cursive and Half-Uncial letterforms. It was amongst the more successful of the national hands. The freedom from the rigidly political influence in most parts of Spain allowed this style to continue until the 12th century. (c) British Library, Add. MS. 5084, f. 1

25 An idealised miniature of the Evangelist St Matthew from the Lindisfarne Gospels (c. 700AD), composing his own gospel, accompanied by his symbol: an angel blowing a trumpet and what is probably the figure of Christ, both carrying books. In reality texts were first written on loose sheets and bound into a code only after all the pages had been completed. (c) British Library, Cotton MS Nero D. IV, f. 138

Insular Half-Uncial, a book hand resembling Roman Half-Uncial but less formal and more given to calligraphic elaboration; and Insular Cursive minuscule which had a tendency towards pointed features, ligatures, loops, and abbreviations. When in the 6th and 7th centuries Irish missionaries such as St Columba and St Columban founded monasteries in Britain (Iona) and on the Continent (Lindisfarne, Corbie, St Gall, Bobbio), Irish, or Anglo-Celtic Insular hands, were introduced to a much wider audience. The books produced in the Anglo-Celtic monasteries are among the finest achievements of Western calligraphy and manuscript illumination. The two most outstanding examples — often reproduced, often quoted — are without doubt the Book of Kells (probably copied in Iona in c.800AD), and the Lindisfarne Gospels (written on the holy island of Lindisfarne around 688AD [see Plate II and 25].
In 704AD the English cleric Alcuin of York (735–804AD) accepted Charlemagne's invitation and, as Abbot of St Martin's at Tours, took charge of the scriptorium to put into effect the emperor's ambitious plans for a wholesale reform of scholarship, education, and, with it, the standards for making books throughout his Western Empire. The most lasting and influential result of these efforts was the creation of a new style of writing Carolingian (or Caroline) minuscule [27]. This was a clear, round script of great harmony which used the four-line system, few ligatures and abbreviations, and often artistically embellished Capital and Uncial letters for headings. Written with the shaft of the pen pointing slightly to the right (instead of straight back over the shoulder), letters had to be formed deliberately, stroke by stroke, in the same way every time; it was a script easy to write and easy to read. One of Charlemagne's aims had been the standardization of texts, and Carolingian minuscule offered a disciplined alternative to the many National Hands and sub-Roman scripts used in his Empire. In the 9th century Carolingian minuscule spread rapidly throughout most of Western Europe but was not adopted in England before the second half of the 10th century, where it was then reserved mainly for Latin texts (Old English texts continuing to be written in Anglo-Saxon minuscule [28]). Carolingian minuscule dominated European book production for most of the 9th century. Then a new trend became noticeable. Letterforms changed from round to oval and became laterally more compressed. This new style (first adopted in St Gall, Switzerland) is now usually referred to as Protothic [see PLATE III]. It is both a book and a documentary script in the case of
the latter there is however a tendency towards the introduction of semi-cursive features (Maye, p.71). Up to a point Protogothic was a by-product of the easier way the pen could move over the page when held in a slanting position (as for Carolingian minuscule). However, held at this angle a straight-cut nib does not produce body strokes of full thickness, and, eventually, scribes began to choose an obliquely-cut nib which, remaining parallel to the top of the page, could create perpendicular strokes of maximum width.

Protogothic reduced the cost of manuscript production, because writing took less time and the text could be written on less writing material. It is probably no accident that this style evolved in areas under the influence of the Normans and Angevins, whose patronage and administrative and ecclesiastical reforms initiated an increase in book production. Protogothic was basically a transitional style; in the 12th century it led towards the development of a complex hierarchy of formal and cursive scripts which are variously referred to as Gothic, Black Letter (so called because the density of letters deepened the colour of the page), or ‘Textualis’ (the variety of forms on one and the same page can make it look like a piece of woven material).

The Gothic system of scripts, though never universally admired, was used in most parts of Europe between the 12th and the 16th centuries (even later in some conservative areas). Already during the 12th century the lateral compression of letters which had characterized Protogothic, increased, curves became more angular, and (most important) the basic upright stroke of letters acquired a more compact and elaborate appearance. During the 13th and 14th centuries the letters became smaller and stiffer and despite the fact that in the following century the script regained its size, they remained narrow and rigid. Four grades of book hands are generally recognized. They are, in descending hierarchical order: textus quadrata (with square and diamond-shaped, consistently-applied feet); textus semiquadrata (which has sporadically-applied feet on some minims, others being just rounded off); and rotunda (30), which was to become the preferred script of Italy until the Renaissance (feet are simply rounded off with an upward curve of the pen). Though it was textus quadrata which had most claim to calligraphic excellence, textus quadrata was to become the model for the early (Gothic) printing types.

In the 12th century the Church monopoly on scholarship and learning began to decline and the gradual secularization of society led to the foundation of independent universities and schools. The monastic scriptoria remained active but gradually ceased to be the main centres of book production as the markets, now catering also for the needs of students, scholars and the newly wealthy merchant classes, expanded. In the towns, professional scribes set up workshops (see p.77) and formed themselves into guilds to protect their interests. Side by side with traditional book hands used in the scriptorium, less formal and more cursive hands gained prominence.
28 Quern Mary
Psalter, Magnificat,
London or East Anglia, c.1310–1315. An example of the highest
grade of Gothic book
hand (exclusively pre-
cursive). Despite the
generous proportions of
the script, the spac-
ing illustrates why this
form of writing was
often referred to as
black letters or
Teutonic.
BRITISH LIBRARY, ROYAL
MS D.6.CIV.1596

30 Decretals of Pope
Gregory IX (the Smith-
field Decretals), Ray-
mond's compilation,
with the glossa ordinaria
of Bernard of
Parsia. Written in
Italy, probably for
French use (the pro-
logue is addressed to
Paris University), it is
a good example of the
complexities involved
in the page layout and
the transcription of
texts often associated
with manuscripts pro-
duced for universities;
the illumination was
done in England. The
main text is written in
Italian Hesiodic
Gothic Book Script, a
more rounded form of
 Gothic popular in Italy;
the gloss surrounding
the main text is basic-
ally a smaller version
of the same script.
BRITISH LIBRARY, ROYAL
MS D.6.CIV.1348
Whereas Carolingian and Protogothic had served as book and documentary scripts, the new Gothic style saw the rediscovery of proper cursive hands. In England, during the 12th century, Protogothic semi-cursive developed (for documents) into a fully cursive style – English Cursive [11] – which linked letters and introduced a number of decorative new features (as, for example, loops). By the 14th century the French chancery had developed a distinct cursive secretary hand [32] which was introduced to England and Germany. From the late 13th century onwards, cursive forms were also used for books, especially those connected with professional university book production. In consequence a range of contaminated (that is, mixed) scripts occurred,
35 Narrative by James Hald who served as principal pilot in an expedition which sailed from Denmark to Greenland in c.1005AD. A late cursive English hand of rather low quality which combines features of various scribes with 'secretary'. The three lines underneath the drawing incorporate some Italic features.

WESTERN CALLIGRAPHY

34 Vita Clariti and Vengeance de la mort tresus Crist, compiled and written in Batarde (latest uncapitalised) by David Aubert, scribe to Philip the Good, Duke of Burgundy; Gent, 1478-95. The miniature at the top of the page shows (on the right) David Aubert presenting the manuscript to his patron; on the left he is depicted copying the text from an exemplar on to a single folio not yet bound into a codex.

BRITISH LIBRARY, ROYAL MS 64.A.I.14

33 Lactantius Institutiones divinae, 1–89, Netherlands, 1432. An example of Gothic hybrid script which, during the 15th and 16th centuries, was widely used for a variety of books.

BRITISH LIBRARY, HARE, MS 3154, f.7

tended either Bastard or Hybrid. Between the 15th and 16th centuries this new range of cursive scripts more or less supplanted the original book hands for all but the most formal manuscripts, an especially fine example being a style generally associated with the patronage of the Burgundian court in France known as Batarde (34). In England, Cursive and Secretary (35) remained in use (for administration and everyday handwriting) until the 16th century, when they finally gave way to copperplate writing (see p.176).

The Humanistic system of scripts, the last major calligraphic development before the printed book replaced the manuscript, began in Florence in association with an essentially literary movement called Humanism. Its founder, the poet Petrarch (1304–74AD), had been greatly interested in the collection and preservation of old manuscripts and fine penmanship. This enthusiasm
for antiquity, coupled with a scholarly interest in classical texts, led a group of scholar/author/scribes to attempt a serious reform of script and book design, and to replace the medieval, German Black Letter hands with an Italian system that could boast clarity, legibility and elegance. As a result of their studies and experiments two major new styles evolved. One, a round and formal Humanistic Book Script (36) was developed by Poggio Bracciolini (1380–1450) with direct reference to late Carolingian minuscule; it eventually served as prototype for 'Roman' type fonts. The second style, the Humanist Cursive Book Script (littera antiqua [37]), was invented by Poggio's friend, Niccolò Niccoli (1364–1437). Written with a narrow rounded nib, at reasonable speed, it was slightly inclined and became the inspiration...
for the printers' 'Italic'. These new styles were initially confined to centres like Florence, Venice, and, later, Ferrara and Naples; in 1403 Poggio introduced his new script to Rome (where he eventually took up the position of Papal secretary). Scribes at the Papal chancery, such as Ludovico degli Arrighi (see p.163), were also instrumental in promoting a modified Gothic chancery script into Humanistic Cursive (or Cancelloriae) (38). This hand, which could boast a high degree of calligraphic accomplishment, was at first only a documentary but later also a book script. From the late 15th century onwards Humanistic scripts (39) spread their influence throughout the rest of Europe, sometimes replacing, but more often mixing with, indigenous scripts (MPF p.127).

38 Pandolfo Colonnaio of Pienza (died 1504), Apologies and Dialogues, from Lucian, Written by Ludovico degli Arrighi in his favourite curvate Cancelloriae hand. This was developed from Gothic chancery hands by Humanistic scribes who (like Arrighi) were involved with chancery work as well as book production. Towards the middle of the century this script became a quite formal calligraphic book hand. Arrighi was the author of the first copia-book, printed in Rome in 1523, which initiated the profession of the writing master (see 43).
UPHOLDING THE LAW

Monks, ‘secretaries’ and writing masters

If you do not know how to write you will consider it no hardship, but if you want a detailed account of it let me tell you that the work is heavy; it makes the eyes misty, beats the back, crushes the ribs and belly, brings pain to the kidneys, and makes the body ache all over. Therefore, oh reader, tear the leaves gently and keep your fingers away from the letters, for as the hailstorm ruins the harvest of the land so does the unserviceable reader destroy the book and the writing. As the sailor welcomes the final harbour, so does the scribe the final line.

MANUSCRIPT OF SILCUS BEATUS

These words, written by the scribe in the colophon of a 12th-century manuscript, illustrate the way he himself sees his position: neither an artist in harmony with nature, nor a mystic looking for the hidden face of Allah in a combination of letters, but simply a craftsman.

In Imperial Rome, where form followed function, the calligrapher was mainly a scribe, that is, a抄写员. The level and standard of his work was to a large extent dictated by the text: elegant book hands for the copying of literary works which were commissioned by (and sold to) the educated elite, and quick cursive styles for chancery documents, letters, administrative notices and instructions, which served the infrastructure of the huge empire. Calligraphy originated in the first category but flourished greatly when the two styles began to influence each other.

Roman society was highly literate. Excavations in Rome and Herculaneum show library rooms in most houses. There were at one time 26 public libraries in Rome alone (Julius Caesar had planned to establish one shortly before his assassination). The subsequent demand for texts made publishing quite a lucrative business. Competition was keen, if not at times unfair; the edicts of the Emperor Diocletian (301AD) set out the maximum prices to be charged for writing a hundred lines of text in documentary as well as in first- and second-class book hands (IV: p.43). By the middle of the Imperial period there were two types of scribe: librarii, copyists who used formal book hands (no doubt those written in a good hand sold better), and scribes, personal secretaries and government servants who employed documentary and cursive scripts. But though writing and literacy were considered of great importance (many citizens, especially those belonging to the great and wealthy families were well versed in Latin and Greek), the position of the scribe was often ambivalent. Indeed, in many cases he would be a slave, or a freedman, and as one discovers on examining the forms of recorded names – quite often a slave of Greek origin.

The sack of Rome by the Goths in 410AD brought about the destruction of most public and private libraries and resulted in an almost total loss of the existing literary output. Book production and the continuation of literacy (together with that of existing book styles) passed into the hands of the newly emerging Christian Church whose very existence depended on the authority of written Biblical texts. The monasteries which sprang up all over Europe during the latter part of the first Christian millennium needed books, but these were in short supply and, to begin with, only available in Rome, from where they had to be fetched (often after a lengthy and difficult journey) and then copied. This need for authentic copies was recognized by the founders of the great monasteries. The rules laid down by St Benedict (c.480-547AD) after the foundation of Monte Cassino (529AD), made it obligatory for monks to set aside certain hours of the day for study and writing. Other monastic houses followed suit and soon all the large monasteries in Ireland, Britain and on the continent of Europe had their scriptoria where books brought back from Rome, or on loan from other monasteries, could be painstakingly copied by dedicated and often gifted monks who worked not only as scribes, but also as illuminators or bookbinders. Those scribes were, however, first and foremost copyists; they were never considered artists, and they became calligraphers because of the subject matter they wrote. Their importance to the monastery lay in the fact that by copying the sacred texts they provided material for study, devotion (and most important) the conversion of heathens to Christianity. As such they were of great value to the community; indeed an Irish law prescribes the same punishment for the murder of a scribe as for a king or bishop (UMB p.11). Nevertheless scribes had no special status except the one they already held within the monastic hierarchy. If we know their names it is very often because of their place within the community. For example, St Columba (524-597AD), much praised as a scribe, was the founder of Iona, and Endrith, who wrote the Lindisfarne Gospels, was also Abbot there.

Talented and willing scribes were not always easy to find and Otto, an 11th-century Abbot of St Martin’s at Tournain, wrote that he used to delight in the number of scribes the Lord had given him ‘for if you had gone into the cloisters you might in general have seen a dozen young monks sitting on chairs in perfect silence, writing at tables carefully and artificially constructed’ (MD p.8). Monastic scribes worked long hours to make use of the daylight (candles and fires were strictly prohibited for the safety of the manuscripts) and the only interruption in their daily chores were prayers and feast days. Though they wrote in silence they did not always suffer in silence (40) in the margins and at the end of a good many manuscripts we can find complaints about stiff and frozen hands, a desire for better writing material, or wine (‘now I have written the whole thing for Christ’s sake give me a drink’), or even just a good meal, and occasionally also a note stating that the