Celtic chant 🔓

Ann Buckley

The liturgical chant sung by the Churches of the Celtic-speaking peoples of the Middle Ages before they conformed to the *unitas catholica* of the Roman Church.

1.   Historical background.

The liturgical practices observed in Christian worship by Celtic-speaking peoples were developed in monastic communities in Ireland, Scotland, Cumbria, Wales, Devon, Cornwall and Brittany. However, Celtic influence was also evident in certain areas controlled by the Anglo-Saxons, such as Northumbria, and extended to the Continent through the efforts of Irish missionaries during the 6th and 7th centuries. Chief among these last was St Columbanus (*c*543–615), founder of the monasteries of Luxeuil and Bobbio. His followers spread the customs of the Columbanian abbeys throughout centres in what are now France, Belgium, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Italy and Spain. Several of the most important sources for the early Celtic liturgy are associated with the Columbanian foundations in Gaul.

It is somewhat misleading to refer to 'the Celtic Church', since there was no single, uniform institution under central authority, and medieval Celtic-speaking Christians never considered themselves 'Celtic' in the sense of belonging to a national group, although an awareness of common purpose may be said to have existed for a brief period during the late 6th century and the early 7th. Nonetheless, the term serves as a useful way of classifying regional and cultural distinctiveness, by identifying what was essentially a network of monastic communities that shared a similar kind of structure and between whom there was regular, sometimes close, contact.

Christianity in Celtic lands derived initially from converts in Roman Britain. Although little is known about the Romano-British Church other than that it was Gaulish in origin, it survived for several decades after the withdrawal of the Roman legions in 410, and it was from this environment that Christianity eventually spread throughout the entire Insular region. Many of the liturgical features of the Celtic Church were heavily indebted to Gallican rites – reflecting the Gaulish roots of Romano-British Christianity as well as continuing contact with Gaul from the 5th and 6th centuries – but also included elements of the Roman, Ambrosian, Visigothic, Palestinian and Egyptian Churches in the 6th and 7th centuries.

The Celtic Church in Brittany was established by British Christians fleeing the invasions of the pagan Anglo-Saxons in the 5th and 6th centuries. Ireland was traditionally converted by St Patrick (*d* 461), a British Christian, although his mission followed closely in the wake of the Roman Palladius in 431. The rapid rise of monasticism there consolidated the new religion in the 5th century, and resulted in the development of a system unique in the West in which the Irish Church was dominated by networks of powerful monastic houses rather than by diocesan bishoprics; this system explains the emphasis on the monastic liturgy in surviving sources.

In due course Gaelic-speaking monks under the leadership of Colmcille of Derry (St Columba; *c*521–97) established a church on the now Scottish island of Iona in 563. The monks of Iona engaged in a mission of conversion among the Picts of Scotland and established another in Anglo-Saxon Northumbria, founding the abbey and bishopric of Lindisfarne in 635. For some time Irish Christianity in Anglo-Saxon England co-existed with missionaries sent by the Roman church established in Kent by St Augustine of Canterbury. As the Roman mission expanded northwards, differences between the Irish and Roman traditions generated tensions, as Bede (673–735) recorded in his writings. These differences centred on the timing of the celebration of Easter, the form of the monastic tonsure and aspects of the rituals of baptism and ordination. The Northumbrian Church was eventually made to comply with Roman traditions at the Synod of Whitby in 664. Following this synod, Celtic traditions were gradually eroded in England by a series of Anglo-Saxon Church councils, in particular that held at Clovesho in 747, which decreed that the Roman liturgy and its chant should be observed throughout the province of Canterbury.

The regional practices of Celtic monks were gradually undermined elsewhere throughout Britain and Ireland, more quickly here, more slowly there, by pressure from Romanizing bishops and abbots to follow central authority (see Warren, 1881/*R*, 10ff; and Gougaud, 1911, Eng. trans., 1932/*R*). In Ireland an increasing degree of Roman influence may be assumed from the 7th century following the adoption of the Roman date for Easter in southern Ireland at the Synod of Mag Léna (*c*630) and in the northern part of the country at the Synod of Tara (692). The Easter question was also settled elsewhere in most Celtic-speaking regions over the course of the 7th and 8th centuries. But many aspects of Celtic ritual continued for much longer. Liturgical practices in Brittany, which since the 5th century had been closely connected with missions from Wales and Cornwall, were brought into line with Rome following the imposition of central authority on the monks of Landévennec in 818 by Charlemagne's son, Louis the Pious. Celtic practices in Scotland were formally suppressed through reforms introduced by Queen Margaret (*d* 1093; see Gougaud, 1911, Eng. trans., 1932/*R*, pp.329, 410–11).

The process of adaptation to Roman traditions continued in Ireland and Wales in the late 11th century and the 12th as the political and social structures of the Celtic populations were eroded by the Normans. Wales submitted to Canterbury with the election of Bernard, a Norman, to the See of St David's in 1115. In Ireland, Patrick, the second bishop of Dublin (1074–84), was consecrated at St Paul's Cathedral, London, and from then onwards the diocese of Dublin looked to Canterbury rather than Armagh, capital of the Irish See. Even before the formal establishment of the Normans in Ireland in 1172, reforms of the Irish Church were led from within by St Malachy (1092–1148), who was also responsible for the introduction of the Cistercian Order into Ireland. Similarly, St Laurence O'Toole, archbishop of Dublin from 1162, introduced canons regular into his cathedral and brought about reforms in the rituals and the chant (ed. Messingham, 1624, pp.384–5).

Several reforms were instituted also at the Synod of Cashel in 1172, convened by Henry II of England. Although changes were called for that would bring the Irish Church into line with Canon Law as observed in the English Church, no particular rite was recommended (Brannon, 1990, pp.22–3), nor were Celtic liturgical practices specifically discarded. But soon thereafter, a decree was issued in 1186 by Bishop John Comyn at a synod in Dublin, whereby it was stated that churches in the Dublin province should adopt the English Use of Salisbury (Sarum Rite). The situation for the rest of the country, however, was undoubtedly more mixed.

2. Liturgical structure.

The tribal, local and territorial qualities of Celtic societies were probably accompanied by a similar sense of locality and regional variation in liturgical and other monastic practices. Liturgical forms were open to outside influences, and tended to vary from one monastery to another. Yet while this general rule is apparent from surviving sources, there is insufficient evidence to make a systematic study or to map regional distinctions in detail. The oldest and most abundant information comes from Irish sources, which is why the Irish Church, including the monastery of Iona, is given greater emphasis here.

Among the main sources for Celtic liturgy are the *Cathach* ('Battler') of St Colmcille (**IRL-Da** s.n.), a Psalter written in Ireland sometime during the 6th and 7th centuries and one of the earliest examples of the Gallican type; the late 7th-century 'Antiphonary' of Bangor (**I-Ma** C.5 inf.), possibly copied at the Columbanian monastery of Bobbio, and the closely related Turin fragment (***I-Tn*** F.iv.1, fasc. 9; see Meyer, 1903), although the question remains as to whether the latter is a sister manuscript or an independent witness; the Stowe 'Missal' (**IRL-Da** D.II.3), copied in 792, probably at Tallaght, Co. Dublin, from an exemplar of not later than 650; the Gallican-Roman Bobbio Missal (**F-Pn** lat.13246), written during the 8th century, possibly at Bobbio; the 'pocket' Gospel books of Dimma (**IRL-Dtc** 59; from Roscrea, Co. Tipperary) and Mulling (**Dtc** 60; from Tech Moling, Co. Kildare), both of which date from the second half of the 8th century; and additions in the Book of Deer, a 9th- or 10th-century Gospel Book whose precise origin is unknown, but which belonged to the Columbanian monastery of Deer in Aberdeenshire since at least the early 12th century, when a Service for the Commemoration of the Sick was added (**GB-Cu** Ii.6.32, ff.28 *v*–29 *r*).

The Antiphonary of Bangor is a collection of hymns, collects and canticles for the Divine Office; despite being mediated through Bobbio, it represents the most important manuscript for an Irish Office. The Stowe Missal is the only surviving Irish sacramentary; it contains elements from the Roman rite that were incorporated soon after its compilation, combines aspects of the Gallican, Visigothic, Byzantine and Coptic liturgies with Irish compositions, and shares collects and prayers with Gallican sacramentaries such as the Bobbio Missal, with Roman, Gelasian and Gregorian sacramentaries, and with the Verona Collection (or Leonine Sacramentary).

The chief collections of hymns are found in the Antiphonary of Bangor and in the two manuscripts containing the *Irish Liber hymnorum* (**IRL-Dtc** 1441, and Killiney, Franciscan House of Studies, A.2), from the late 11th and early 12th centuries respectively. The *Irish Liber hymnorum* is an antiquarian collection based on now-lost liturgical books.

Elements of the Christian liturgy peculiar to the Celtic Churches are few; they include the symbolic use of fire at Easter, the Feast of All Saints, the sung Credo (see Bieler, 1963, p.118), as well as a preference for verse collects and hymns. The blessing of the Paschal Candle may be an originally Irish contribution (compare, for example, the vivid role of fire in the account of St Patrick's challenge to the Irish High King at Tara). The Antiphonary of Bangor is the only source for *Hymnus quando cereus benedicitur* ('the hymn sung at the blessing of the candle'), which may have been intended for this rite. Also, certain forms of private prayer and prayer formulae (such as litanies and verse collects), the penitential literature as well as the promotion of relics and saints' cults (which in Ireland developed particularly early) represent distinctive regional characteristics that spread to the Anglo-Saxon Church

and to continental centres of Insular influence. Devotion to saints often took on additional, extra-liturgical functions, their miraculous powers being invoked to intervene in local disputes and private quarrels. Saints' lives (*vitae*) contain many references to the power of their curses as well as of their blessings, reinforcing the impression that the supernatural influence traditionally associated with the druids was transferred directly from pagan practice (for recent surveys, see Sharpe, 1979; and Little, 1993, pp.154–85; see also Buckley, '"And his voice swelled"', 1995, pp.42ff, for discussion of saints' use of the power of music).

There is early evidence for the existence of music in Irish rituals in the rubrics of the Stowe Missal, the Gospel Book of Dimma and the Book of Mulling. Emphasis on the Psalter rather than the lectionary was also a characteristic feature, and Columbanus is known to have established a particular form of the Divine Office in his foundation at Bobbio, although it has not survived. Chanting psalms was a central part of the Office (see Fleischmann, 1952; Fleischmann and Gleeson, 1965), and hymn-singing played an exceptionally prominent role. A tantalising comment from Jonas of Bobbio, author of a *vita* of St Columbanus between about 639 and 643, refers to a cursus set out by the saint and containing instructions for the performance of chant (ed. Krusch, 1905, p.158). As for recovering the melodies of Celtic chant, only late sources contain any clues, and research is still at a preliminary stage. Nevertheless, the evidence is sufficient to provide grounds for further development, as will be indicated below.

3. The Divine Office.

Before the late 6th century, Celtic devotional sources are confined mainly to saints' *vitae* and thus do not shed much light on details of daily ritual. Sources from the 7th century include the Antiphonary of Bangor and the Turin fragment. In the 8th and 9th centuries, texts associated with the eremitic monastic movement whose followers were known as the Céli Dé ('Companions of God'), predominate and indicate a multiplicity of customs, as does the 'Rule of Tallaght' (ed. Gwynn, 1927). But it is thought that traditions became more uniform in these centuries as a result of increased communication between heads of houses.

There is considerable variation among the existing sources. The *Regula monachorum* and the *Regula coenobialis* of Columbanus, said to be based on the wisdom of his 'seniores' (predecessors), may provide a direct link with the monastery at Bangor, Co. Down, where he trained, but it reveals almost nothing of the liturgical hours or other aspects of the structure of daily life, focussing instead on the importance of self-discipline and similar principles of conduct (trans. Bieler, 1963, pp.32–9). Some information can also be gleaned from the *Vita Sancti Columbani* by Jonas of Bobbio and from the *Vita Sancti Columbae* by Adomnán, Abbot of Iona (679–704). In general, life in Irish monasteries was extremely austere in terms of food, clothing, sleep, and physical comfort of any kind. The Book of Mulling contains a directory or plan of a service, but it is unclear whether this represents the Daily Office or a Penitential Office.

Practices seem to have varied from centre to centre. For example, the *Navigatio Brendani*, a text of Irish origin probably dating to the late 9th or early 10th century and describing a voyage made by St Brendan (*c*486–575), includes a reference to perpetual singing of *Ibunt sancti* maintained by three choirs on an island where Brendan and his monks landed (Selmer, ed., 1959, p.50). The tale also includes a detailed description of a credible Irish office (Curran, 1984, pp.169–73; Stevenson,

introduction in Warren, 1881/*R*, pp.xlvii–viii). The custom of *laus perennis* ('perpetual praise'), whereby a part of the monastic community say psalms all of the time, was characteristic of the Gallican rite and was also attested in continental Columbanian monasteries (see Gindele, 1959). Jocelyn, in his 12th-century *Vita Sancti Kentigerni* (also known as Mungo; *d* 612), indicates that such a practice also obtained at St Asaph's, North Wales, although Kentigern's association with that centre is now considered unlikely (D.H. Farmer: *Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, Oxford, 1997, p.286).

The injunction to sing the Kyrie hourly is attributed to St Patrick, who is said to have recommended it because it was a Roman custom (though introduced from Greece). However, it was also practised in the Gallican Church from the 6th century (Bieler and Kelly, eds., 1979, pp.124–5) and the reference to Rome, however accurate, may well be due to the particular line of persuasion being emphasised in the Patrician text (Stevenson, introduction in Warren, 1881/*R*, pp.lxviii–lxix, and note 369).

4. Psalmody.

The Celtic Psalter, like the Gallican, was divided into three groups of 50 psalms each. The influence of southern Gaulish and Eastern practice on the Celtic Office is seen in the use of Psalm lxxxix at Prime, Psalms ciii and cxii at Vespers, and in the use of canticles. According to the Rule of Columbanus, psalm singing was central to the Divine Office. Columbanus arranged the psalms for each service into groups of three, called 'chori', a custom also described by Cassian of Marseilles (*c*360–435) in his *De institutis*, in relation to the churches of Palestine, Mesopotamia and other Eastern centres (see Stevenson, introduction in Warren, 1881/*R*, pp.xli, xlv and *passim* for further discussion of Cassian's influence in Ireland and Iona). The first two psalms were sung straight through and the third antiphonally – in other words, with the singers divided into two groups, one intoning the psalm verse, the other the response. However, psalm singing in unison seems to have been the practice on Iona, whence it reached Northumbria. Stephanus's *Vita Wilfridi* (ed. and trans. Colgrave, 1985, §47.98–9), written in about 720, contains a reference to the introduction, by the Anglo-Saxon bishop Wilfrid (*d* 709), of previously unknown antiphonal singing into Northumbria (Stevenson, introduction in Warren, 1881/*R*, pp.lxxvii–viii).

This practice of alternating voices is also referred to in an 8th-century Irish explanatory tract on the psalms in the form of a series of questions and answers. It is based on the commentaries of Cassiodorus (preserved in the 15th-century source **GB-Ob** Rawl.B.512), and contains a reference to antiphonal singing of psalms and the use of a string instrument:

> This is what David did in his last days. He selected four thousand chosen men of the sons of Israel to sing and practise the psalms always without cessation. One third of them for the choir, one third for the 'crot', one third for the choir and the 'crot'. The word *psalmus* applies to what was invented for the 'crot' and is practised on it. *Canticum* applies to what is practised by the choir and is sung with the 'crot'. *Psalmus cantici* applies to what is taken from the 'crot' to the choir. *Canticum psalmi* applies to what is taken from the choir to the 'crot'.

The discussion of terminology is a paraphrase of chapters 5–8 of Cassiodorus's *Expositio psalmorum* (*PL*, lxx, 15–16), in which the scribe has used the Irish term 'crot' (a lyre, later a harp) for Cassiodorus's 'instrumentum musicum' (ed. Meyer, 1894, pp.8–9, 31 n.275, 89 n.285).

While the Irish commentary is addressed to Old Testament practice, it is likely that it also had local contemporary significance. Huglo (1976, p.193) has highlighted references in the theoretical treatise *Musica enchiriadis* to the organal voice joining with instruments (*GerbertS*, i, 166 *b*), and to different instruments being used in octave doubling (ibid., 161 *b*). The *Scolica* and the *Musica enchiriadis* (both from late 9th-century northern France, perhaps in an Insular milieu) contain numerous citations of the *Te Deum*, which, as seen above, occupied a special place in the Celtic liturgies. Isidore of Seville (*d* 636) attests the use of a string instrument in the accompaniment of psalmody in Visigothic liturgies (Huglo, 1976, p.192); and in continental sources the use of instruments in the course of the Office is well documented, for psalmody, the singing of tropes, textless alleluiatic sequences and subsequent proses (but not for the choral Offices). Similarly Hucbald mentioned that a six-string chordophone ('cithara') was adapted for the purpose of teaching chant (see Huglo, 1986, p.189). As in other instances, the Celtic world may therefore be viewed not as a region apart but rather as sharing common ground with liturgical practices elsewhere. Yet the evidence is sparse, hence the enormous value of the Irish sources here (for more detailed discussion see Buckley, 'Music in Ancient and Medieval Ireland', in press).

In Irish narrative literature there are references to travelling clerics who sang psalms and other sacred texts to the accompaniment of a small string instrument described as *ocht-tédach* ('eight-string instrument'), which they carried about with them attached to their girdles. Gerald of Wales (?1146–? 1220) also referred to the practice by bishops and abbots and holy men in Ireland who in times past used to have a 'cithara' (undoubtedly a lyre, later probably a harp) on which they played pious music. Because of this, according to Gerald, St Kevin's 'cithara' was regarded as a sacred relic and still held in reverence in Gerald's time.

The wealth of iconographic evidence points also to the normality of these practices. Muiredach's Cross (early 10th century) at Monasterboice, Co. Louth, is a particularly detailed example in which a choir of monks is led in singing by two monks who play a lyre and some kind of wind instrument, perhaps a straight horn (for detailed discussion of this and other monuments, see Buckley, 1991, figs.7 and 40; see also Buckley, 1990, and '"A Lesson for the People"', 1995). The use of horns in Irish liturgical practice is strongly suggested by the contexts of archaeological finds and by the similarity of their decoration to other sacred objects such as bells and buckets. Bells associated with individual monks are found from all of the main Celtic regions, including Ireland, Scotland, Wales and Brittany. They had a specific form and were important objects of veneration, to the extent that shrines were constructed for bells associated with important saints (see Bourke 1980, 1982, 1983 and 1994).

5.   The Mass.

As elsewhere in pre-Carolingian Europe, there was no standard Mass in the Celtic Church for all times and in all regions. Nonetheless, there is some evidence to suggest that the Mass may have become relatively standardized across Ireland in the 6th and 7th centuries. Information is scanty and is derived from the Stowe Missal, the Bobbio Missal and various fragments. The Irish Mass in these sources bears signs of significant Gallican influence, but it differs from the Gallican liturgy in its prominent use of Roman, Visigothic and, particularly, Eastern characteristics. The Gallican elements include the preparation of offerings before the entry of the celebrant; the litany preceding the Mass; the reading of diptychs (listing names of the dead) when the veil is lifted from the chalice; the breaking of the Host before the Pater noster; the Pax (the sign of peace); and the presence of communion antiphons. The

Roman elements, though often under-emphasised by some scholars, may well have been there from an early period, perhaps as far back as the mission of Palladius in the early 5th century (Gamber, 1967; and 1970, pp.87–8). As Stevenson has pointed out (introduction in Warren, 1881/*R*, pp.lxviii–xix), this places the presumed Romanizing reforms of the Irish Church in the 7th and 8th centuries in a different light, since the decrees demanding conformity with Rome may instead reflect long-standing practices (Warren, 1881/*R*, p.127). The Eastern elements seem to have been introduced into the Irish Church via the Gallican monastic centres of Lérins and Marseilles, whose traditions were described by John Cassian. The presence of Visigothic elements reflects close contact between Ireland and Spain (see Hillgarth, 1984), although in Irish monastic centres early acquaintance with Spanish authors such as Isidore of Seville may also have been via the Columbanian community of Bobbio (Curran, 1984, p.152).

The Mass was normally celebrated at dawn, although the 8th-century *Vita Sancti Galli* states that St Gallus (*c*550– *c*627), an Irish disciple of Columbanus and founder of the abbey of St Gallen, celebrated the service after Matins (Nocturns) when in other monasteries the monks would normally have returned to bed. It took place on Sundays and feast days, including saints' days which, as with other aspects of their veneration, appear to have been established at a particularly early period in Ireland. Private Masses seem also to have been customary, and on occasion priests were allowed to say Mass twice in one day (Warren, 1881/*R*, p.143). The tract in the Stowe Missal lists those items of the Mass that were sung, including the introit, prayers, Augment, lections of the Apostles, bigradual psalm, Gospel and Benediction (Fleischmann, 1952, p.46).

6. Hymns.

No hymns survive from British, Welsh or Breton sources apart from two late Breton hymns (Lapidge and Sharpe, 1985, nos.983–4; dating to the 12th and 11th centuries respectively). Collections of Hiberno-Latin and vernacular hymns represent the largest body of material from any Celtic region and are among the most particular and striking aspects of Irish liturgical practice. They were the result of a new fusion between Latin poetry and indigenous Irish verse forms, of which the chief characteristics are short lines with the extensive use of alliteration, internal rhyme and assonance.

The importance attached to hymns in the Celtic rite is made clear in a number of Irish literary tales and in references contained in liturgical books. They were a source of indulgence and grace, and in this connection the singing of the last three strophes was considered sufficient to earn a spiritual reward (see Stevenson, introduction in Warren, 1881/*R*, pp.lxxxviii–ix; Stevenson, 1996, pp.111–12 and n.56). They were also thought to give immunity against fire, poison and wild animals, and as a protection for travellers (ed. Plummer, 1910, i, p.clxxix; Fleischmann and Gleeson, 1965, pp.86–7; Buckley, '"And his voice swelled"', 1995, pp.42–3).

The main sources for hymns are the Antiphonary of Bangor and the *Irish Liber hymnorum*, but texts of Irish hymns may also be found in manuscripts from England and, in particular, the Continent where numerous Irish saints' cults grew up in the religious houses of Francia. Extant liturgical calendars from Frankish Gaul provide evidence for the active cults of over 40 Irish saints (Little, 1993, pp.180–81; Gougaud, 1911, Eng. trans., 1932/*R*, 142–58). For example, the Feast of Saint Brigid was celebrated *inter alia* at Rebais, Meaux, Nivelles, Senlis, Corbie, Marchiennes, St Amand and St Vaast. A 9th-century Bavarian litany includes invocations to Columbanus, Fursey, Patrick, Colmcille, Comgall, Adomnán and Brigid (Coens, 1959; *AH*, li).

The Hiberno-Latin hymn repertory is evidently influenced by, but nonetheless quite distinct from, other Western collections. As well as registering the influence of early Christian Roman authors, it includes, in particular, hymns from Gaulish sources, but it also displays a great deal of creativity in the composition of new hymns. Colmcille was said by Adomnán, his biographer, to have written a book of hymns for the week (*Hymnorum liber septimaniorum*), which suggests a weekly cursus of hymns on Iona with parallels with the *cursus hymnorum* of Caesarius of Arles (*c*470–543). This idea is supported also by the preface to the hymn *Altus prosator* in a manuscript of the *Irish Liber hymnorum* (**IRL-Dtc** 1441) where it is related that Gregory the Great (*d* 604) sent Colmcille a cross and 'immain na sechtmaine' ('hymns of the week').

The oldest recorded hymns of the Christian Church are the Gloria, *Te Deum* (of which the Antiphonary of Bangor represents the earliest manuscript tradition) and *Precamur patrem* (Antiphonary of Bangor, no.3), the last probably written by Colmcille at Bangor in about 580. The sources contain not only prose hymns but also rhythmic hymns and even collects, a feature that occurs only in Ireland and not in Gaul. The liturgical function of these hymns is not always clear, except for five in the Antiphonary of Bangor (nos.8–12) that bear rubrics indicating their use. Of these, *Sancti venite* (no.8) is the oldest recorded communion hymn. The Antiphonary of Bangor contains eight unica, and ten that were certainly intended for liturgical use. Some of them are related to saints' cults, for example, Irish saints such as Patrick, Comgall and Camelac, as well as 'international' figures who were particularly venerated in Ireland, such as the Virgin Mary and Martin of Tours. *Cantemus in omni die*, dating to the late 8th century or the early 9th and attributed to the Ionan monk Cú Cuimhne, is the oldest known Latin hymn to the Virgin.

In addition to the obvious interest in hymns as sung poetry, some of their texts contain information on the ways in which they would have been performed (Fleischmann and Gleeson, 1965, pp.86ff; Stevenson, 1996, pp.113–14). For example, in the opening lines of *Cantemus in omni die* in the *Irish Liber hymnorum* the word 'varie' in the first line is glossed as 'inter duos choros' ('between two choirs'), while the third line refers explicitly to antiphonal singing:

> Cantemus in omni die concinentes varie
>
> conclamantes Deo dignum ymnum sanctae
>
> Mariae
>
> Bis per chorum hic et inde collaudemus Mariam
>
> ('Let us sing every day chanting in various ways, crying out to God the worthy hymn of the holy Mary. Twice, through the chorus here and the other over there, we should praise Mary')

And in *Ecce fulget clarissima*, a Vespers hymn from an Office for St Patrick (also in the *Irish Liber hymnorum*), reference is made in the ninth stanza to alternating voices and to stringed instruments:

> Psallemus Christo cordibus
>
> alternantes et vocibus
>
> ('We chant the psalms to Christ alternating with our strings and our voices')

Similarly, the structure of the hymn *Recordemur iustitiae* (Antiphonary of Bangor, no.3) by Comgall of Bangor implies the use of two choirs, with a subdivided congregation providing the refrain for each of the respective choirs. Each alphabetic stanza is followed by the first and second two lines of the refrain alternately.

Precamur patrem has an alleluia after the first and last strophes, perhaps indicating reponsorial singing by the congregation after each. The Matins hymn *Spiritus divinae lucis* (Antiphonary of Bangor, no.12) has a one-line refrain following each strophe, as does the 8th- or 9th-century *Celebra Iuda* with an alleluia following each pair of lines. Similarly, the *Exodus* canticle *Audite caeli quae loquor* in the Antiphonary of Bangor contains repetitions of the first verse at intervals, suggesting that it was used as a response, or possibly a refrain, sung by the congregation. Hymns without refrain are either short or confined to the last three stanzas, probably implying *cantus directaneus*.

All of this suggests the presence of a trained choir or of a soloist who took responsibility for the longer or more complex parts.

7. Notated sources.

There are no notated manuscripts from the Celtic regions dating from before the 12th century. Of those that survive, the overwhelming majority are sources of the Use of Salisbury (Sarum Rite), but not exclusively so, as in some cases their contents reveal evidence of local practice.

The Drummond Missal (**US-NYpm** M 627), an Irish manuscript dating probably to the first half of the 12th century, represents the earliest source. Its non-diastematic St Gallen-type neumes had long been thought indecipherable; however, recent work has shown that not only are they readable in outline, but realistic hypotheses may be put forward concerning intervallic relationships, melodic patterns and text-melody relationships. This missal was probably compiled at Glendalough, Co. Wicklow, during the period of reforms set in train by Malachy, and some of the material, including the notated chants, may have been copied in part from an exemplar that dated perhaps to as early as the 10th century – a period when Celtic chant was flourishing (see Casey, 1995).

Another link with pre-Norman Ireland is found in the hymn *Ecce fulget clarissima*. Its text is attested in several sources for the Office of St Patrick, but it survives with notation uniquely in the Kilmoone Breviary (**IRL-Dtc** 80, f.122). Most significantly, the earliest example of the text occurs in a copy of the *Irish Liber hymnorum* (**Dtc** 1441). Since there are no older sources for the melody, it is impossible to ascertain whether it too dates from an earlier period, whether it was newly composed or whether indeed it was imported from elsewhere. Its style is distinctive and shares characteristics with hymns in honour of other Irish saints that are not found in the Use of Salisbury. In view of the predominance of G-mode and tertiary rather than stepwise melodic movement, Germanic influence has been postulated (Brannon, 1990, p.283; and 1993, p.35). This is perhaps no surprise, given the concentration of Irish *peregrini* in that part of continental Europe. And while it may not be possible to establish in which direction the influence was moving, further work of a systematic and comparative nature can only help shed light on such questions.

From later, non-Insular sources, Stäblein has identified a number of melodies that are suggestive of Celtic practice. Among them are two antiphons preserved in a 13th-century breviary (of the Use of Bayeux) from Caen (**F-Pa** 279, f.214 *v*). The first is a setting of *Ibunt sancti*, a chant that, according to

Jonas, was sung by Theudoaldus, a monk also from Bobbio, on his deathbed after he had received the Last Rites (see Stäblein, 1973, pp.593–4). Another reference to the singing of *Ibunt sancti* in an Irish context occurs in the *Navigatio Brendani*, where it is described as being sung continuously by three choirs on an island visited by the saint (see Selmer, ed., 1959, p.50; Curran, 1984, pp.170–71).

The Caen manuscript is the unique source of this text with its melody, though departing from Jonas's version of the words in the second line by substituting a series of alleluias. Stäblein has reconstructed the original, which conforms exactly to the surviving melody (ex.1a). The text features the common Irish characteristics of assonance and alliteration; its melody is formed from two simple motifs in *ABA* form for the first line, repeated exactly in the second. This parallel structure is not characteristic of Roman chant and is found elsewhere only in the more elaborate structure of sequences and lais. Similarly, the repetition of the cell within the melodic line is also decidedly un-Roman.

The other antiphon, *Crucem sanctam* (ex.1b), follows on the same folio in this manuscript, but unlike *Ibunt sancti* it is widely attested in sources from England, northern France, Italy, Spain and Switzerland. The four phrases are grouped in pairs, each with a different incipit (A, B, C and D) followed alternately by 'x' (with a half close) and 'x¹' (with a full close) (for further details, see Stäblein, 1973, pp.592, 595ff).
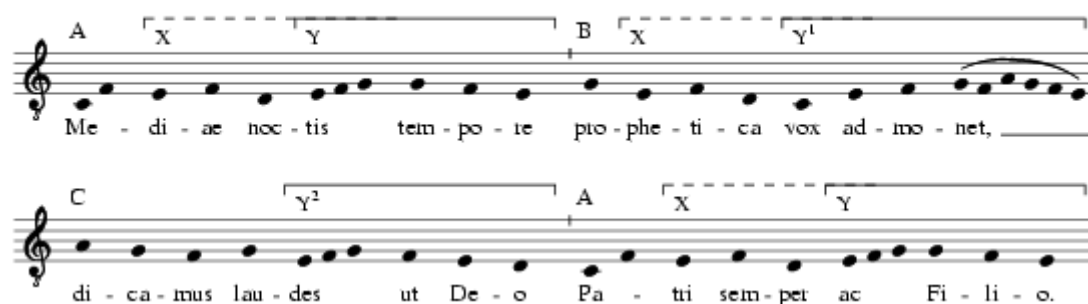

Ex.1   Two antiphons adapted from a 13th-century breviary from Caen (F-Pa 279, f.214v): (a) Ibunt sancti (b) Crucem sanctam

The hymn *Mediae noctis tempore* (ex.2), found with its melody in a central or south Italian hymnary from the first half of the 13th century (*D-B* Hamilton 688, ff.33–4), reveals textual and melodic characteristics similar to those of the antiphons from Caen. It is in origin a continental hymn, perhaps

from Poitiers, with a text dating to at least the 6th century (see Stevenson, 1995, pp.105–06). Its use in Ireland is attested as far back as the Antiphonary of Bangor (with the alternative reading: 'Mediae noctis tempus est').

Ex.2 First strophe of the hymn *Mediae noctis tempore*, adapted from a central or south Italian hymnary of the first half of the 13th century (D-Bsb Hamilton 688, ff.33–4)

Similarly, the upper and middle voices of the finely wrought polyphonic *Cormacus scripsit* preserved in Cormac's Psalter (**GB-Lbl** Add.36929, f.59 *r*), an Irish manuscript from the second half of the 12th century, consist of two phrases repeated exactly in sequence, in which respect it too resembles the form of *Ibunt sancti* (ex.3; the reconstruction is conjectural, for in the manuscript the voices are not accurately aligned and text is supplied only for the tenor). This is a remarkably early source for a three-voice composition and may well be indicative of more widespread practice (see Buckley, 'Music in Ancient and Medieval Ireland', in press). The lowest voice is believed to be an adaptation of a Sarum *Benedicamus* melody for use 'ad secundum *Benedicamus* extra tempus paschale' (**GB-SB** 175, f.135 *v*; see Harrison, 1967, p.76).

Ex.3 Transcription of colophon in three-part polyphony from Cormac's
Psalter (*GB-Lbl* Add.36929, f.59 *r*)

Cor - ma - cus scri - psit hoc psal - te - ri - um;

Cor - ma - cus scri - psit hoc psal - te - ri - um;

Cor - ma - cus scri - psit hoc psal - te - ri - um,

o - ra pro e - o. Qui le - gis hec,

o - ra pro e - o. Qui le - gis hec,

o - ra pro e - o. Qui le - gis hec,

o - ra pro se - se qua - li - bet ho - ra.

o - ra pro se - se qua - li - bet ho - ra.

o - ra pro se - se qua - li - bet ho - ra.

Ex.3   Transcription of colophon in three-part polyphony from Cormac's Psalter (GB-Lbl Add.36929, f.59r)

A similar construction occurs in a number of chants for the Office of Colmcille (Columba) from a 14th-century fragmentary antiphoner (**GB-Eu** 211.iv) believed to be from Inchcolm Abbey in the Firth of Forth, Scotland, an Augustinian foundation dedicated to the saint (ex.4).

Ex.4 Vespers responsory from the Office of St Colmcille (Columba), Inchcolm Antiphoner (GB-Eu 211.iv, f.2 r; 14th century)

O Co - - lum - - ba in - - sig - nis sig - - ni - fer,

men - tes mun - da ne fal - - lens pes - ti - fer

ser - vis of - fi - - ci - - - - - - at ma - - ris dis - cri - mi - - ne.

Tu - - is ut pla - ce - at in - cum - - da - tis psal - le - te.

Ti - bi pie - cet - e - ris con - de - cet pio - xi - - me

vo - - ces le - ti - ci - e. Huc au - - rem ad - hi - be.

Ex.4   Vespers responsory from the Office of St Colmcille (Columba), Inchcolm Antiphoner (GB-Eu 211.iv, f. 2r, 14th century)

In addition to those distinctive melodies – some of which are unica, others, with Sarum incipits, have been adapted to the recurring, more formulaic style – the remainder are from continental (Gregorian) and Sarum repertories, providing evidence that these were all used in tandem (see Woods, 1986–7). The distinction therefore suggests that the cellular, repetitive structure was a feature of an older Scottish and Irish practice that continued, at least in the veneration of local saints, for several centuries after the Romanizing reforms. As in the case of the Drummond Missal, the Inchcolm material may well represent a long history of continuous practice, dating to at least the mid-9th century when the relics of Colmcille were brought from Iona to Dunkeld, whose bishops were protectors of Inchcolm Priory (later Abbey).

Some other sources from medieval Celtic regions await further investigation. For example, the early 14th-century Sprouston Breviary (**GB-En** Adv.18.2.14B), which contains an Office for St Kentigern of Glasgow (also known as Mungo; see recording, 1997); this Office has links with that of St David in the Welsh Penpont Antiphonal (**GB-AB** 20541 E), also dating to the 14th century (Edwards, 1990), but neither appears to contain regionally distinctive chants. The earliest Breton sources are from the 9th century, but although they contain Offices for local saints, their melodies feature no regional distinctiveness (see Jordan, 1978).

Nonetheless, the examples discussed above challenge the generally received view that the music of the Celtic rite has sunk without trace. There are clear signs of a stylistically distinctive kind of melodic structure in both Irish and Scottish sources that suggest that some elements of Celtic Church practice did indeed survive long after the official imposition of Sarum. However, only after further enquiry might it be possible to classify them specifically as Celtic chant as distinct from chant used (and perhaps not exclusively so) in the Celtic regions. But at least there is some indication of common roots, or branches of a common tree. Through renewed work of this nature and detailed comparative study, a reconstruction of some of the characteristics of pre-Norman chant usage in the Celtic regions appears increasingly possible.

Bibliography

Editions

F.E. Warren, ed.: *The Manuscript Irish Missal Belonging to the President and Fellows of Corpus Christi College, Oxford* (London, 1879)

G.H. Forbes, ed.: *Missale Drummondiense: the Ancient Irish Missal in the Possession of the Baroness Willoughby de Eresby* (Burntisland, 1882)

B. MacCarthy, ed.: 'On the Stowe Missal [diplomatic edition]', *Transactions of the Royal Irish Academy*, 27 (1886), 135–268

F.E. Warren, ed.: *The Antiphonary of Bangor* (London, 1893–9) [incl. facs.]

H.J. Lawlor, ed.: 'The Kilcormick Missal: a Manuscript in the Library of Trinity College, Dublin', *Transactions of the Royal Irish Academy*, 31 (1896–1901), 393–430

J.H. Bernard and R. Atkinson, eds.: *The Irish Liber hymnorum* (London, 1898)

H.J. Lawlor, ed.: *The Rosslyn Missal: an Irish Manuscript in the Advocates' Library, Edinburgh* (London, 1899)

K. Meyer: 'Das Turiner Bruchstück der ältesten irischen Liturgie', *Nachrichten von der königlichen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen, philosophisch-historische Klasse* (1903), 163–214

G.F. Warner, ed.: *The Stowe Missal: MS D.II.3. in the Library of the Royal Irish Academy, Dublin* (London, 1906–16) [i: facs.; ii: edn with index of liturgical forms and pls.]

R.-J. Hesbert, ed.: *Le tropaire-prosaire de Dublin: MS Add. 710 de l'Université de Cambridge (vers 1360)* (Rouen, 1966) [incl. facs.]

L. Bieler and F. Kelly, eds. and trans.: *The Patrician Texts in the Book of Armagh* (Dublin, 1979)

Primary sources

T. Messingham, ed.: *Florilegium insulae sanctorum* (Paris, 1624)

J.S. Brewer, J. Dimock and G. Warner, eds.: *Giraldi Cambrensis opera* (London, 1861–91/*R*)

A.W. Haddan and W. Stubbs, eds.: *Councils and Ecclesiastical Documents Relating to Great Britain and Ireland* (Oxford, 1869–78)

K. Meyer, ed. and trans.: *Hibernica minora: being a Fragment of an Old Irish Treatise on the Psalter* (Oxford, 1894)

B. Krusch, ed.: Jonas of Bobbio: *Vita Sancti Columbani*, MGH, *Scriptores rerum Merowingicarum*, 4 (Hanover, 1905), 61–152

C. Plummer, ed.: *Vitae sanctorum hiberniae* (Oxford, 1910)

E. Gwynn, ed. and trans.: *The Rule of Tallaght* (Dublin, 1927)

G.S.M. Walker, ed.: *Sancti Columbani opera* (Dublin, 1957)

C. Selmer, ed.: *Navigatio S. Brendani abbatis* (Notre Dame, IN, 1959); Eng. trans. in D.H. Farmer, ed.: *The Age of Bede* (Harmondsworth, 2/1983), 211–45

A.O. Anderson and M.O. Anderson, eds. and trans.: *Adomnán's Life of Columba* (Edinburgh, 1961/*R*)

J.J. O'Meara, trans.: *Gerald of Wales: The History and Topography of Ireland* (Harmondsworth, 1982)

B. Colgrave, ed. and trans.: *The Life of Bishop Wilfrid by Eddius Stephanus* (Cambridge, 1985)

Secondary sources

F.E. Warren, ed.: *The Liturgy and Ritual of the Celtic Church* (Oxford, 1881/*R*1987 with introduction by J. Stevenson)

W.H. Frere: *Bibliotheca musico-liturgica* (London, 1894–1932/*R*)

L. Gougaud: 'Celtiques (Liturgies)', *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York, 1908), 2969–3032

H. Jenner: 'The Celtic Rite', *Dictionnaire d'archéologie et de liturgie*, ed. F. Cabrol and H. Leclercq, 2/2 (Paris, 1910), 493–504

L. Gougaud: *Les chrétientés celtiques* (Paris, 1911; Eng. trans., rev., 1932/*R*1992, with introduction by J.-M. Picard, as *Christianity in Celtic Lands*)

A. Fleischmann: *The Neumes in Irish Liturgical Manuscripts* (thesis, University College, Cork, 1932)

A. Fleischmann: 'Die Iren in der Neumen und Choralforschung', *ZMw*, 16 (1934), 352–5

L. Gougaud: *Les saints irlandais hors d'Irlande* (Leuven, 1936)

L. Gougaud: 'The Remains of Irish Monastic Libraries', *Féil-sgríbhinn Eóin Mhic Néill: Essays and Studies Presented to Professor Eoin MacNeill*, ed. J. Ryan (Dublin, 1940/*R*), 319–34

A. Fleischmann: 'References to Chant in Early Irish MSS', *Féilscríbhinn Tórna: tráchtaisí léanta in onóir don Ollamh Tadg Ua Donnchadha* [Festschrift Torna: essays and studies presented to Professor Tadhg Ua Donnchadha], ed. S. Pender (Cork, 1952), 43–9

G. Hand: 'The Psalter of Christ Church, Dublin (Bodleian MS Rawlinson G. 185)', *Reportorium novum*, 1 (1956), 311–22

G. Hand: 'Cambridge University Additional Manuscript 710', *Reportorium novum*, 2 (1958), 17–32

W. Hawkes: 'The Liturgy in Dublin 1200–1500: Manuscript Sources', *Reportorium novum*, 2 (1958), 33–67

M. Coens: 'Les litanies bavaroises du *Libellus precum* dit de Fleury (Orléans MS 184)', *Analecta bollandiana*, 77 (1959), 373–91

C. Gindele: 'Die gallikanischen "Laus Perennis"-Klöster und ihr "Ordo Officii"', *Revue bénédictine*, 69 (1959), 32–48

J. Leclerq: 'Documents on the Cult of St Malachy', *Seanchas Ard Mhacha*, 3 (1959), 318–36

L. Bieler: *Ireland: Harbinger of the Middle Ages* (London, 1963)

A. Gwynn: 'The Irish Missal of Corpus Christi College, Oxford', *Studies in Church History*, 1 (1964), 47–68

A. Fleischmann and R. Gleeson: 'Music in Ancient Munster and Monastic Cork', *Journal of the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society*, 70 (1965), 79–98

F.Ll Harrison: 'Polyphony in Medieval Ireland', *Festschrift Bruno Stäblein*, ed. M. Ruhnke (Kassel, 1967), 74–9

K. Gamber: 'Die irischen Messlibelli als Zeugnis für die frühe römische Liturgie', *Römische Quartalschrift für christliche Altertumskunde und Kirchengeschichte*, 62 (1967), 214–21

K. Gamber: *Missa romensis: Beiträge zur frühen römischen Liturgie und zu den Anfängen des Missale romanum* (Regensburg, 1970)

B. Stäblein: 'Zwei Melodien der altirischen Liturgie', *Musicae scientiae collectanea: Festschrift für Karl Gustav Fellerer zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. H. Hüschen (Cologne, 1973), 590–97

M. Huglo: 'Les instruments de musique chez Hucbald', *Hommages à André Boutemy*, ed. G. Cambier (Brussels, 1976), 178–96

P.G. Jordan: *The Liturgical Music of Medieval Brittany: a Study of the Manuscript Sources and Musical Variants* (diss., Harvard U., 1978)

R. Sharpe: 'Hiberno-Latin Laicus, Irish Láech and the Devil's Men', *Eriu*, 30 (1979), 75–92

C. Bourke: 'Early Irish Hand Bells', *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*, 110 (1980), 52–66

C. Bourke: 'Les cloches à main de la Bretagne primitive', *Bulletin de la Société archéologique du Finistère*, 110 (1982), 339–53

C. Bourke: 'The Hand-Bells of the Early Scottish Church', *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland*, 113 (1983), 464–8

M.E. Curran: *The Antiphonary of Bangor and the Early Irish Monastic Liturgy* (Blackrock, 1984)

J.N. Hillgarth: 'Ireland and Spain in the Seventh Century', *Peritia*, 3 (1984), 1–16

M. Lapidge and R. Sharpe: *A Bibliography of Celtic-Latin Literature, 400–1200* (Dublin, 1985)

M. Huglo: 'L'organum à Landévennec au IXe siècle', *Etudes celtiques*, 23 (1986), 187–92

I. Woods: '"Our awin Scottis Use": Chant Usage in Medieval Scotland', *JRMA*, 112/1 (1986–7), 21–37

I. Woods: 'The Scottish Medieval Church: Sources and Information', *Medieval Studies: Skara 1988*, 107–116

P.V. Brannon: *A Contextual Study of the Four Notated Sarum Divine Office Manuscripts from Anglo-Norman Ireland* (diss., Washington U., 1990)

A. Buckley: 'Musical Instruments in Ireland from the Ninth to the Fourteenth Centuries: a Review of the Organological Evidence', *Irish Musical Studies*, i: *Musicology in Ireland*, ed. G. Gillen and H. White (Blackrock, 1990), 13–57

O.T. Edwards: *Matins, Lauds and Vespers for St David's Day: the Medieval Office of the Welsh Patron Saint in National Library of Wales MS 20541 E* (Cambridge, 1990)

A. Buckley: 'Music-Related Imagery on Early Christian Insular Sculpture: Identification, Context, Function', *Imago musicae*, 8 (1991), 135–99

P.V. Brannon: 'The Search for the Celtic Rite: the TCD Sarum Divine Office MSS Reassessed', *Irish Musical Studies*, ii: *Music and the Church*, ed. G. Gillen and H. White (Blackrock, 1993), 13–40

L.K. Little: *Benedictine Maledictions: Liturgical Cursing in Romanesque France* (Ithaca, NY, and London, 1993)

C. Bourke: 'The Hand-Bells of the Early Western Church', *Irlande et Bretagne: vingt siècles d'histoire: RennIes 1993*, ed. C. Laurent and H. Davis (Rennes, 1994), 77–82

A. Buckley: '"And his voice swelled like a terrible thunderstorm … ": Music as Symbolic Sound in Medieval Irish Society', *Irish Musical Studies*, iii: *Music and Irish Cultural History*, ed. G. Gillen and H. White (Blackrock, 1995), 11–74

A. Buckley: '"A Lesson for the People": Reflections on Image and Habitus in Medieval Insular Iconography', *RIdIM/RCMI Newsletter*, 20 (1995), 3–9

S.G. Casey: *The Drummond Missal: a Preliminary Investigation into its Historical, Liturgical, and Musicological Significance in Pre-Norman Ireland* (thesis, U. of Pittsburgh, 1995)

J. Stevenson: 'Irish Hymns, Venantius Fortunatus and Poitiers', *Aquitaine and Ireland in the Middle Ages*, ed. J.-M. Picard (Dublin, 1995), 81–110

W. O'Sullivan: 'Notes on the Trinity *Liber hymnorum*', *The Compleat Binder*, ed. R. Powell (Turnhout, 1996), 130–35

M. Schneiders: 'The Origins of the Early Irish Liturgy', *Ireland and Europe in the Early Middle Ages: Learning and Literature*, ed. P. Ní Chatháin and M. Richter (Stuttgart, 1996), 76–98

J. Stevenson: 'Hiberno-Latin Hymns: Learning and Literature', *Ireland and Europe in the Early Middle Ages: Learning and Literature*, ed. P. Ní Chatháin and M. Richter (Stuttgart, 1996), 99–135

T.O. Clancy and G. Márkus: *Iona: the Earliest Poetry of a Celtic Monastery* (Edinburgh, 1997)

A. Buckley: 'Music in Ancient and Medieval Ireland', *A New History of Ireland*, 1, ed. D. Ó Cróinín (Oxford, in press)

A. Buckley and S.G. Casey: *Liturgical Sources for the Veneration of Irish Saints: an Annotated Checklist* (forthcoming)

Recordings

Scottish Medieval Plainchant: Columba, Most Holy of Saints, Capella Nova, cond. A. Tavener, ASV 129 (1992) [incl. notes by I. Woods Preece]

The Miracles of St Kentigern, Capella Nova, cond. A. Tavener, ASV 169 (1997) [incl. notes by G.M. Hair]

Crossroads of the Celts, Altramar, Dorian (1999)

In Honor of St Patrick: Chant for his Feast, The Schola Cantorum of St Peter's in the Loop, dir. J.M. Thompson, Collegeville, MN (1998)

See also

Bede

Litany, §3(ii): Litanies in non-Roman Western liturgies: Celtic