



# The early Irish Stowe Missal's destination and function

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*In 1929 the great James Kenney argued that the early Irish Stowe Missal must have been produced as a private service-book which a priest could easily carry around with him, but in recent decades scholars have claimed, either explicitly or implicitly, a different purpose for it. The codicological arguments proposed by Kenney are nevertheless still valid and this paper will argue that close linguistic examination of the manuscript's liturgical contents supports the theory that the Stowe Missal was an itinerarium, a book for a travelling cleric.*

As one of very few surviving liturgical manuscripts from Ireland and the most complete, the Stowe Missal has long been the focal point for scholars interested in early Irish liturgy.<sup>1</sup> This dependence on a single volume, however, creates the risk of applying the knowledge gained from the Stowe Missal to the whole of Irish Christendom.<sup>2</sup> It is therefore important to employ due care in determining the volume's function and use. Notwithstanding these obvious caveats, the last century witnessed many theories about the Missal's destiny and purpose leading to the present, rather awkward, consensus seemingly based on Willibrord Godel's claim that it was made for private use, most probably within a monastery. His reasoning is based primarily on the perceived absence

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<sup>1</sup> Dublin, Royal Irish Academy, D. II. 3 (1238). For an edition, see G.F. Warner (ed.), *The Stowe Missal*, HBS 31–32 (London, 1906 and 1916).

<sup>2</sup> Or even a 'Celtic rite'; cf. M.J. Hatchett, 'The Eucharistic Rite of the Stowe Missal', in J.N. Alexander (ed.), *Time and Community: In Honour of Thomas J. Talley* (Washington, 1990), pp. 153–70.

of diaconal assistance in the mass service, although the baptismal rite makes explicit mention of a deacon.<sup>3</sup>

Godel's observation, however, was built on rather slight evidence, particularly when compared to the line of reasoning James Kenney employed in his analysis of the Stowe Missal in his monumental work of 1929, from which he concluded it was an *itinerarium*, a private service-book for a travelling priest.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, the later reaffirmations and restatements of Godel's view seem to be based mainly on scholars' desires to harmonize the evidence from the Stowe volume with prevailing views about the character of Irish worship and liturgy, and also with archaeological findings. In this essay I will return to the evidence of the manuscript itself, and by doing so will further substantiate Kenney's case, bolstering it with new linguistic evidence from the liturgical contents.

### Material aspects

Taken out of its beautifully ornamented *cumbdach*, or shrine (now in the Irish National Museum), the book that is labelled D. II. 3 (I238) in the Royal Irish Academy's library appears very modest. Measuring only 145 × 110 mm, it is much smaller than its closest continental counterparts, including the Bobbio Missal.<sup>5</sup> It contains sixty-seven folios of coarse parchment, of which the first eleven are dedicated to excerpts from the Gospel of John and the last three feature an Irish tract on the mass, also recorded in the *Leabhar Breac* ('the speckled book'), and three spells, all by different scribes to those who copied the missal, and added to it at an unknown date. The liturgical portion of the manuscript includes an *ordo* for Sunday Mass (fols 12r–38r), and *ordines* for Baptism (fols 46v–60r) and the Visitation of the Sick, including the administration of Extreme Unction and the last Communion (fols 60r–65r). Separating the missal proper from the *ordo* for Baptism are various

<sup>3</sup> W. Godel, 'Irish Prayer in the Early Middle Ages', *Milltown Studies* 4 (1979), pp. 60–99, at pp. 65–6. His observation is repeated by P. Ní Chatháin, 'The Liturgical Background of Derrynavlan Altar Service', *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquities of Ireland* 110 (1980), pp. 127–48, at p. 139; and J. Stevenson in the introduction to F.E. Warren (ed.), *The Liturgy and Ritual of the Celtic Church*, 2nd edn with introduction by Jane Stevenson (Woodbridge, 1987), p. lxi. For the diaconal assistance in the baptismal rite, cf. *Stowe Missal*, fols 57v–58r; cf. J.W. Hunwicke, 'Kerry and Stowe Revisited', *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* 102C (2002), pp. 1–19, there p. 3.

<sup>4</sup> J.F. Kenney, *The Sources for the Early History of Ireland; I Ecclesiastical. An Introduction and Guide* (New York, 1927), no. 555. Cf. also F. Cabrol, in *Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie* XI, 2 (1934), pp. 1440–1; F.J. Byrne, 'The Stowe Missal', in *Great Books of Ireland, Thomas Davis Lectures 1964* (Dublin, 1967), pp. 38–50, at p. 46.

<sup>5</sup> Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Lat. 13246 (180 × 90 mm.); E.A. Lowe (ed.), *Codices Latini Antiquiores: A Palaeographical Guide to Latin Manuscripts Prior to the Ninth Century*, 11 vols (Oxford, 1934–72), V, no. 653; K. Gamber (ed.), *Codices liturgici latini antiquiores*, Spicilegii Friburgensis subsidia 1, 2nd edn (Freiburg, 1968), no. 220.

prayers to be used in 'a mass for the apostles and martyrs and saints', 'a mass for living penitents', and one for 'several dead' (fols 38r–46r).

Palaeographical evidence, together with the mention of Máel Ruain, the founder of Tallaght (d. 792), in the list of saints, suggests a date of composition for the original portion of the missal in the last decade of the eighth or the first quarter of the ninth century. Seemingly not much later, a certain scribe identifying himself as Móel Cáich made extensive alterations to the order of the Sunday Mass, deleting folios, adding new leaves, inserting texts in margins and on blank folios, and erasing original portions of the text and writing over them. Although his script is very distinct from that of the original scribe, George F. Warner in his edition of the missal contested that Móel Cáich's alterations were made relatively soon after the initial composition and that the difference in handwriting (and, I suggest, in liturgical preference) was to be attributed to a change in locality, rather than a lapse of time.<sup>6</sup>

This relocation of the Stowe Missal is to an extent corroborated by the difference in the geographical provenance of the saints featured in the litanies of both scribes. Although both lists contain saints from all over Ireland, the earliest of the litanies, placed in the canon, has a distinct predilection for Leinster saints, while Móel Cáich's list of saints, at the onset of the mass, seems to show a preference for saints from the middle of the island. Furthermore, the inscriptions on the *cumbdach* indicate that in the fourteenth century the missal was situated in the monastery of Lorrha (Co. Tipperary). If we interpret the mention of the well-known abbot, Máel Ruain, as an indication of a Tallaght provenance, the *cumbdach* inscriptions act as an additional witness to the removal of the manuscript from Tallaght at some stage. However, it is important to remember that the evidence for a Tallaght origin amounts to no more than the inclusion in the litany of the name of one abbot–saint of high reputation, especially celebrated by followers of the eighth-century *Céli Dé* reform movement.<sup>7</sup>

Kenney's case for the Stowe Missal as a *vade mecum*, a book for a travelling priest or missionary, is mainly based on the material aspects of the manuscript. With regards to the dimensions of the volume, Kenney quotes the Reverend Batholomew MacCarthy who remarked that the Stowe Missal was the smallest volume ever to pass under the title of 'missal'.<sup>8</sup> It is modest not only in size but also in its decoration, which is very sober, with the exception of the last page of St John's gospel, containing a depiction of the evangelist himself, and the first

<sup>6</sup> Warner (ed.), *Stowe Missal*, p. xxxvi.

<sup>7</sup> Kenney, no. 555; P. Ó Riain, 'The Shrine of the Stowe Missal, Redated', *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy C* 10 (1991), pp. 285–95, at pp. 294–5.

<sup>8</sup> Kenney, no. 555.

page of the missal, which features a large adorned capital 'P' for the litany *peccavimus domine* and a border made out of the figure of a cat and some swans. It seems that the original missal, considering its size and sober decoration, could have been completed within a week to ten days, and can therefore be regarded as a relatively inexpensive book and one that was meant to be portable.<sup>9</sup> Móel Cáich's subsequent emendations to the original text, labelled 'inconsiderate' by Kenney, suggest that this was a book whose principal purpose was a functional one.<sup>10</sup> The unkind nature of these revisions suggests that the missal was not regarded as an authoritative liturgy by the ecclesiastical centre which produced them. Similarly, if it had been viewed as a model text, one would expect more attention to have been paid to its decoration. In truth, the revision by Móel Cáich points not to the adherence to authority, but rather to a desire to have a liturgy that answered to the users' demands.

In an essay on the typology of liturgical sources, Niels Rasmussen put forward two criteria for determining the destination and function of a liturgical volume. He maintained that only from external form and liturgical content one can deduce the purpose of liturgical books of the Stowe Missal.<sup>11</sup> In this system of classification the material aspects, as described above, display a convenience and modesty that points to a priestly book, rather than a volume containing an authoritative ritual for an episcopal church or ecclesiastical centre such as a monastery. With regard to the liturgical evidence, Rasmussen, citing a late eighth- or early ninth-century Frankish manuscript which combines canon law with liturgy, now in Brussels (Bibliothèque Royale, 10127–10144), suggested it was important to consider the degree to which the rituals included in a codex were comprehensive in their coverage. In this respect, the Stowe Missal shares a quality with the Brussels manuscript described by Rasmussen as containing practically all the rituals a priest would need in order to exercise his duties. Lacking only the liturgy for a wedding ceremony (again, like the Brussels manuscript), a rite for which we have no early medieval Irish evidence whatsoever, the Stowe Missal enabled its user to preside over a Sunday Mass, to design and perform votive services, to baptize catechumens and to administer the last rites to the sick. Furthermore, certain elements of the rituals recorded in the missal support the theory of its use by priests, such as the seemingly fixed lections. Perhaps because a lectionary would have

<sup>9</sup> T. O'Neill commented on the duration of the missal's completion at the Roscrea Conference on 'The Stowe Missal and Other Treasures from Lorrha', Roscrea, May 2002.

<sup>10</sup> Kenney, no. 555.

<sup>11</sup> N.K. Rasmussen, 'Célébration épiscopale et célébration presbytérale: un essai de typologie', *Segni et riti nella chiesa altomedievale occidentale*, Settimane 33 (Spoleto, 1987), pp. 581–603.

been too bulky to carry easily, the missal proper supplied suitable lessons for every mass, focussing on the forthcoming sacrament and the reference to the Eucharistic service in the story of the Last Supper.<sup>12</sup> Their presence in the text can also be understood, as it was by Godel, as revealing the absence of any other cleric to read the lessons.

With regard to the Stowe Missal's baptismal order, Marc Schneiders remarked that this is the earliest evidence in early medieval Europe for all the baptismal ceremonies being performed in one session. Whereas other contemporary liturgical books describe the rites according to ancient Christian practice, as being spread out over a number of Sundays in Lent, it is believed that in rural areas actual practice was more likely to conform to the Stowe Missal's arrangement.<sup>13</sup> This integration of all the catechumenical and baptismal rites into a day-long ceremony is in itself a strong pointer to a rural environment for the Stowe Missal, suggesting one in which it was not practical to extend baptism over several weeks (possibly because the priest might not be there every Sunday). Again this 'revolutionary' adjustment shows the Irish scribe's prioritizing utility over tradition.

In a paper on the knowledge of canon law among rural Frankish priests, Yitzhak Hen makes use of the evidence available in small handbooks, filled with liturgical and other religious material, one of which is the aforementioned Brussels manuscript. Hen offers two more characteristics to be added to Rasmussen's double yardstick in determining the typology of different liturgical books.<sup>14</sup> Firstly, he observes that a combination of liturgical books in a single volume, as is the case with the Brussels manuscript, which combines a sacramentary with a lectionary, alludes to a presbyterial destination. It is hard to judge the Stowe Missal against this criterion but one could argue that the interweaving of lections into the missal proper, as well as the inclusion of a very broad range of hymns, psalms and antiphons to be sung at communion time, removed the need for a lectionary, psalter or antiphony, just as the combining of a lectionary with a sacramentary in the Brussels manuscript did.

Hen's second addition to Rasmussen's criteria is the combination of various religious genres in one volume. Although the added extracts

<sup>12</sup> *Stowe Missal*, fols 15r–v (I Corinthians XI.26–32); (Móel Cáich) fol. 18r (John VI.51–7).

<sup>13</sup> M. Schneiders, 'The Origins of the Early Irish Liturgy', in P. Ní Chatháin and M. Richter (eds), *Irland und Europa im früheren Mittelalter: Bildung und Literatur / Ireland and Europe in the Early Middle Ages: Learning and Literature* (Stuttgart, 1996), pp. 76–98, at pp. 82–3, n. 34.

<sup>14</sup> Y. Hen, 'Liturgical Handbook for the Use of a Rural Priest (Brussels, BR 100127–100144)', in M. Mostert (ed.), *Organising the Written Word: Scripts, Manuscripts and Texts*, Utrecht Studies in Medieval Literacy 2 (Turnhout, in press); cf. also *idem*, 'Canon Law among Rural Priests: The Evidence of Two Carolingian Manuscripts from around 800', *Journal of Theological Sciences* 50 (1999), pp. 117–34, at p. 129.

from John's Gospel and the Irish tract are (palaeographically) very distinct from the liturgical contents, it seems probable that they are more or less contemporary with the missal and were added at an early stage.<sup>15</sup> Hence, it is fair to suppose that from an early stage, if not from the outset, the liturgical material was meant to be accompanied by biblical as well as doctrinal material. The Stowe Missal seems to have supplied its presbyterial user not only with the obvious practical support for the performance of his liturgical duties, but also with inspirational reading from the Scriptures and contemporary theology, possibly in order to assist him with the design of lessons and sermons.

If, therefore, this paper has made any headway thus far, it has displayed the many ways in which the line of reasoning employed by Kenney is still valid. In fact, Kenney's arguments are bolstered when the Missal is judged according to the fourfold model developed by Rasmussen and Hen for defining the typology of liturgical books, which leaves little doubt that the early Irish Stowe Missal had a presbyterial destination. In the following pages I would like to argue that, in addition, there are several indicators in its liturgical text which also suggest it was composed for a pastoral purpose.

### Evidence in the liturgy

The study of liturgical texts and their phrasings for information about social realities is usually carefully avoided. In a literary genre in which evolutionary tradition and authority seems to play such an important role, it often seems that individual liturgical textbooks cannot reveal anything more than precarious evidence on ritualistic practice or theology. In the volumes littered with age-old formulae it appears to be impossible and dangerous to determine their relevance to a specific time and place. Rasmussen clearly states that it is impossible to deduce the different forms of celebration from the liturgical texts themselves.<sup>16</sup> Recent studies, however, have shown historians confidently digging through liturgy in search of clues about historical mentalities and outlooks towards (ritual) religion and ideas.<sup>17</sup> Éric Palazzo regards the

<sup>15</sup> Kenney, no. 555; Warner (ed.), *Stowe Missal*, p. xliii.

<sup>16</sup> 'Saisir les différentes formes de célébrations dans la période créative de la liturgie romaine est quasi-impossible à partir de l'observation de nos textes'; Rasmussen, 'Célébration épiscopale', p. 583. Cf. also the warning in E. Bishop, *Liturgica Historica* (Oxford, 1918), p. 298.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. E. Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars. Traditional Religion in England c.1400–c.1580* (New Haven and London, 1992); J. Bossy, 'Essai de sociographie de la messe, 1200–1700', *Annales Économique, Sociétés, Civilisations* 36 (1981), pp. 44–70; Y. Hen, *Culture and Religion in Merovingian Gaul* (Leiden, New York and Cologne 1995); F. Paxton, *Christianizing Death: The Creation of a Ritual Process in Early Medieval Europe* (Ithaca and London, 1990); É. Palazzo, *Liturgie et société au Moyen Âge* (Aubier, 2000).

anthropology at the basis of this academic exercise as clear-cut in the introduction to his book on liturgy and society when he observes that for a ritual to be effective it has to answer to social reality.<sup>18</sup> This implies that at the time of composition, in order for the liturgical material to be effective it must have been relevant to the particular religious setting for which the material was collected. This must even be true for the older formulae with perhaps outdated terminology. In the Stowe Missal, the Deprecation of Saint Martin, complete with references to non-existent authorities, is a prime example of such a case (cf. below).

The Irish Stowe Missal in particular provides us with some exceptional opportunities for such new liturgical research. Móel Cáich's revision shows the interest that was taken to ensure the liturgical content conformed with (local) standards and practical realities, and he himself had few scruples about altering the wording of particular prayers. The changes and additions made by him can therefore be safely assumed to have had relevance at the time of composition.<sup>19</sup> Móel Cáich's self-awarded freedom also helps to cast light by implication on the older formulae in the missal. As noted above, his seems to be a book in which usefulness prevailed over authority and tradition and he does not strike us as a scribe who would hesitate to amend or supplement an older formula to enhance its relevance. This holds especially true for the original scribe's unique addition in the *Hanc igitur*. There is no reason to assume Móel Cáich was not aware of the fact that this was a section added to the original prayer, giving him even greater permission to alter or cancel it. His choice, then, to conserve the enhanced formulae unchanged seems to have been a real choice, and reveals that these formulae had at least some relevance even at the time of Móel Cáich's efforts. It is thus with confidence, that we can examine the unique liturgical insertions by the scribes and the older formulae retained in the Stowe Missal for clues to the religious and social setting in which, and for which, the missal was created.

The most extensive of the unique additions is made in the *Memento* for the living, which is written in Móel Cáich's hand. The *Memento vivorum* is introduced by one of the very few rubrics in the Stowe Missal, stating that it is at this point that the names of the living are recited. This in itself may indicate it was used in a small monastic or lay community, since it could have proven to be rather impractical and time-consuming to recite all the names of the living in large ecclesiastical centres such as Armagh, Kildare or Tallaght.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Palazzo, *Liturgie et société*, p. 13.

<sup>19</sup> Hunwicke deduced their Irishness from linguistic evidence, 'Kerry and Stowe', p. 11.

<sup>20</sup> On the impracticality of the recitation of the names of the living in Merovingian Gaul, cf. Hen, *Merovingian Gaul*, p. 49.

The *Memento* commences with 'thy male servants (*famuli*) [names inserted here] and thy female servants (*famulae*) and all who are standing around'. The word *famulus* also features in the baptismal rite, in which it is employed for the catechumen. It seems we can therefore deduce that the word signifies the devout, (soon to be) baptized Christian, while the people standing around may have had a looser attachment to the church or were still to be converted. At any rate, the original opening of the *Memento* seems to have aimed at being all-inclusive. The *Memento* continues with the statement that these people offer this sacrifice of praise 'for themselves and all of their (loved ones), and for the redemption of their souls', at which point Móel Cáich adds more objects of prayer:

Pro stratu<sup>21</sup> seniorum suorum et ministrorum omnium puritate pro integritate uirginum et continentia uiduarum pro aeris temperie et fructum<sup>22</sup> fecunditate terrarum pro pacis redetu et fine discriminum pro incolimitate regum et pace populorum ac reditu captiuorum pro uotis adstantium pro memoria martirym pro remissione peccatorum nóstrorum et actuum emendatione eorum ac requie defunctorum et prosperitate itineris nostri . . .

For the position of their seniors and the purity of all leaders, for the chastity of the virgins and the modesty of the widows, for mild weather and fertility of fruits of the lands, for the return of peace and an end to differences, for the well-being of the kings and the peace of the peoples and the return of the captives, for the wishes of those standing here, for the remembrance of the martyrs, for the remission of our sins and the correction of their acts, and (for) the rest of the dead and the success of our journey . . .

This part of the insertion is especially concerned with resolving worldly and spiritual cares. The whole of the supplement is unique and cannot be traced back to a liturgical precedent. However, the first lines share much of its subject matter and its terminology with a non-liturgical text of Irish origin, Pseudo-Cyprianus's *De Duodecim Abusivis Saeculi*. In a section explaining how a good king will bring prosperity to his people, this seventh-century text (which itself seems to borrow from the vernacular tradition of instructive manuals for rulers, such as the *Audacht Morainn*) uses the words *pax populorum est . . . temperies aeris . . . terrae fecunditas*, 'the peace of the people is . . . moderation of the weather . . .

<sup>21</sup> For *stratu*?; cf. Warner, *Stowe Missal*, p. 11, n. 2.

<sup>22</sup> For *fructuum*.

fruitfulness of the land'.<sup>23</sup> This section itself has found its way into the eighth-century collection of canonical law, the *Collectio Canonum Hibernensis*, which features a quote from this passage, where it is attributed to Saint Patrick.<sup>24</sup>

The author responsible for the first part of the insertion into the *Memento vivorum* made a distinct effort to incorporate a section addressing the common worries and desires of the praying people 'standing around', and went so far as to borrow from non-liturgical material. The composer found the desired terminology in the deeply embedded Irish tradition confronting kings and ecclesiastical authorities with their responsibilities. While arguably not out of place in a prayer addressing the King of Kings, it remains a peculiar addition to a liturgical text. It is telling that the prayers to God reflected general desires well known and shared by the common people, featuring in vernacular as well as canonical traditions.

The insertion continues, directing the prayer to the well-being or memory of fellow Christians or loved ones.

. . . pro domino papa episcopo et omnibus episcopis et prespeteris et omni aeclesiastico ordine pro imperio romano et omnibus regibus christianis pro fratribus et sororibus nostris pro fratribus in uia directis pro fratribus quos de caliginosis mundi huius tenebris dominus arcsire<sup>25</sup> dignatus est uti eos in aeterna summae lucis quietae pietas diuina suscipiat pro fratribus qui uaris dolorum generibus adflinguntur uti eos diuina pietas curare dignetur pro spe salutis et incolimitatis suae tibi reddunt uota sua eterno deo uiuo et uero.

. . . for the lord bishop, the pope, and for all bishops and priests and for the whole ecclesiastical order, for the Roman empire and all Christian kings, for our brothers and sisters, for (our) straight brothers on the road, for (our) brothers whom the Lord deemed worthy to call from the dusky darkness of this world, so that the divine love receives them in the eternal quiet of the highest light for ever, for (our) brothers who have been beaten by various kinds of sadness, so that the divine love deems them worthy to heal, for the hope of

<sup>23</sup> Pseudo-Cyprianus, *De duodecim abusivis saeculi*, ed. S. Hellman, *Pseudo-Cyprianus De XII Abusivis Saeculi*, Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristliche Literatur 34 (Leipzig, 1909), p. 53; Kenney, no. 109; M. Lapidge and R. Sharpe (eds), *Bibliography of Celtic-Latin Literature* (Dublin, 1985), no. B339; *Audacht Moraimn*, ed. F. Kelly (Dublin, 1976). A later Hiberno-Latin homiliarium used the Ps.-Cyprianus text as well, cf. Lapidge and Sharpe, *Bibliography*, no. B565.

<sup>24</sup> *Collectio Canonum Hibernensis*, ed. Heinrich Wasserschleben, *Die irische Kanonensammlung* (Leipzig, 1885; repr. Aalen, 1966), c. 25:4 (pp. 77–8).

<sup>25</sup> For *arcesire*.

salvation [and for their safety they render their prayers to thee, eternal, living and true God.]<sup>26</sup>

Apparently regarding the original *Memento* as insufficiently inclusive or personal, Mól Cáich endeavoured to include and address all the people who ought to feature in a prayer for the well-being of the living. One remarkable result of his aim to be all-inclusive is that the dead feature twice in the supplement to the *Memento vivorum*. It seems, furthermore, that the reference to the Roman empire was not regarded as irrelevant, suggesting that this description was meant to stand for the Roman Catholic lands. This is possibly also the way the reference to the emperors and Roman armies in a prayer read earlier in the mass, St Martin's Deprecation, was read by the ninth-century Irish clerics.<sup>27</sup> The threefold description of 'our brothers', expresses the desire to describe certain people with specific concerns.

Although the insertion testifies to Mól Cáich's apparent mission to develop a more personal and broader *Memento vivorum*, both in respects to secular and clerical affairs, several elements remain puzzling. His juggling of the first and third person plural possessive pronouns in the first part demands attention. While he could be simply confused by the use of the subject 'they' in the original prayer, which seems uncommon and is not found elsewhere in the Stowe Missal's mass, the proximity of the words *peccatorum nóstrorum* and *actuum emendatione eorum* seems to belie this. Could it be that the first person plural refers to the celebrating priest (and his company), while the third person plural is reserved for the lay Christians present (as the first line of the *Memento* indicates)?<sup>28</sup> If so, it appears that the composer of the addition used it to cater for the celebrant's more personal entreaties. The subsequent plea for the 'success of our journey' also suggests that the celebrant is a travelling cleric, inserting a plea for his own onward expedition.<sup>29</sup>

The reference to 'our' brothers and sisters, words that are not used in the rest of the mass, may indicate a more exclusive, clerical, group of people than simply fellow-Christians. Is it possible that the brothers in the subsequent lines make up the ecclesiastical community this travelling priest belonged to, or even fellow itinerant clerics? The three

<sup>26</sup> *Stowe Missal*, (Mól Cáich) fols 24v–25r. The part between brackets is not unique.

<sup>27</sup> The text of this ancient intercessory prayer will be considered in more detail below.

<sup>28</sup> Hunwicke noted that the insertions in the *Memento vivorum* as well as the Prayer for the Departed (*Memento etiam*) have the appearance of having been uttered by a minister other than the celebrant. Regarding the first, however, he does not explain his analysis: 'Kerry and Stowe', p. 9, cf. p. 3.

<sup>29</sup> Hunwicke ignores the change in personal pronouns and regards the whole community as itinerant. He admits, however, that the *Hanc igitur* seems to point to a stable community: 'Kerry and Stowe', p. 14.

descriptions seem to fit this category very well, as it mentions them being on the road and the dangers they could face while travelling, such as unexpected death away from the community (in which case ignorance about their passing makes the incorporation of the deceased in the *Memento* for the living less inappropriate), and physical and emotional hardship. Thus, looked at closely, the wording of Móel Cáich's addition to the *Memento vivorum* seems to paint a clear and comprehensive picture of the social background in which it was used. This setting focusses on including all people, appealing to them by addressing common desires, borrowed from vernacular and non-liturgical material, and making a distinction between the congregation and its itinerant clergy.

Not much later in the canon the original scribe recorded two unique passages in the Stowe Missal's *Hanc igitur*. The prayer reads, with the inserted sections between brackets:

Hanc igitur oblationem seruitutis nostrae sed et cunctae familiae tuae [quam tibi offerimus in honorem domini nostri iesu chrsti et in commemorationem beatorum martirum tuorum in hac aeclesiae<sup>30</sup> quam famulus tuus ad honorem nominis gloriae tuae aedificauit] Quessumus domine ut placatus suscipias [Eumque adque omnem populum ab idolorum cultura eripias et ad té deum uerum patrem omnipotentem conuertas:] . . .

We beseech thee, Lord, kindly to accept this offer of our servitude but also of all thy servants, [which we offer thee, in honour of Our Lord Jesus Christ and in commemoration of thy blessed martyrs in this church that thy servant in honour of thy glorious name has built, and (we beseech thee to) snatch him and all the people from the worship of idols and to convert (them) to thee, God, the true almighty Father.] . . .<sup>31</sup>

The original scribe chose this prayer to record an insertion designed to address the builder of the church. Although the grammar is somewhat confusing, it appears that this includes a plea to snatch him from idolatry. Whereas Godel interpreted the passage referring to the servant establishing a church, I think rightly, as characteristic of the Irish missionary church, the later plea contradicts his identification of the servant in question as 'most probably the founding abbot'.<sup>32</sup> It is highly

<sup>30</sup> For *aeclesia*.

<sup>31</sup> *Stowe Missal*, fols 27r–27v. Brackets indicate added sections.

<sup>32</sup> Godel, 'Irish Prayer', p. 69; cf. Ní Chatháin, 'Derrynavlan Altar Service', p. 139.

unlikely that the founding abbot, often later on revered as a saint, would need to be snatched from paganism. J.W. Hunwicke has suggested that the servant mentioned here could be the local landowner who donated land or a building to a priest or anchorite for a church. Many small churches were private and proprietary churches owned by an ecclesiastical branch of a local aristocratic family.<sup>33</sup> Hunwicke seems to imply that in the early days of Christianity there was always the danger of a landlord reverting to paganism, especially in times of hardship.<sup>34</sup> The plea in the *Hanc igitur* thus addresses this worry, alongside a more neutral mention of the landlord together with the relics of the martyrs.

The fact that this plea extends to all the people hints that the prayer was intended to be used in areas in which Christianity was not yet conclusively established and unquestioned. The environment of the Stowe Missal seems to have been one in which those attending mass were predominantly laymen and -women, still at risk of reverting to paganism, as opposed to larger monastic centres where the congregation comprised both the regular clergy and their lay supporters. Whilst the possibility of lapsing into paganism is a *topos*, and one which was always in the minds of liturgists, this particular plea reveals a strong personal focus and as such the danger seems more imminent and real. This concern as late as the ninth century about returning to heathenism could be seen in the light of Colmán Etchingham's theory that, while routine pastoral care was prescribed to society as a whole, in practice there was only a small body of recipients.<sup>35</sup> In such a pastoral reality, the return to pagan beliefs and practices under rural Christians was a real and present possibility.

Alongside the explicit and unique elements in the *Hanc igitur* and the *Memento vivorum*, the more familiar formulae in the Stowe Missal's mass service also hint at the lay make-up of the audience. The above-mentioned prayers both share a focus on the spiritual well-being of all of the people, either by snatching them from idolatry or imposing peace between them. Here, the word *populus* clearly retains its traditional meaning of 'common folk' or even 'the lay population of a Christian community'.<sup>36</sup> The Augustinian oration, in what seems to be the priest's

<sup>33</sup> D. Ó Corráin, 'The Early Irish Churches: Some Aspects of Organisation', in D. Ó Corráin (ed.), *Irish Antiquity: Essays and Studies Presented to Professor M.J. O'Kelly* (Dublin, 1994), pp. 327–41, at pp. 337–8.

<sup>34</sup> Hunwicke, 'Kerry and Stowe', pp. 10–11, 13.

<sup>35</sup> C. Etchingham, 'The Early Irish Church: Some Observations on Pastoral Care and Dues', *Ériu* 42 (1991), pp. 99–118, at p. 99; *idem*, *Church Organisation in Ireland: AD 650 to 1000* (Maynooth, 2002), pp. 239–89. Although there might have been many practical obstacles to universal pastoral care, I do not agree with Etchingham's rigid division between *manaig* ('monk' or 'tenant of church-lands') and non-*manaig*.

<sup>36</sup> *Lexicon Latinitatis Medii Aevi* (Turnhout, 1975), col. 703; J.F. Niermeyer and C. Van de Kieft, *Mediae Latinitatis Lexicon minus*, rev. by J.W.J. Burgers (Leiden, 2002), cols 1060–1.

preparation prayer, makes it clear that the common folk are actually present when the celebrant prays 'ut pro peccatis meis possim intercedere et adstantes populi peccatorum ueniam promiriri', 'that I may be able to intervene for my sins and earn pardon for the sins of the people here standing'.<sup>37</sup> Without exception, those expected to attend include both men and women. This is shown to be the case in the unique insertions discussed above, as well as the original Gelasian part of the *Memento* for the living (*famulorum tuorum . . . famularum tuarumque*).<sup>38</sup> The same is the case in the prayers *Hás oblationes et sincera* and *Grata sit tibi*, with the latter even mentioning boys and girls.<sup>39</sup>

Before the Gospel, the Stowe Missal gives us the *Deprecatio S. Martini*, an intercessory of great antiquity, which seems to have been moved by the original scribe from its more usual place after the Gospel. Hunwicke suggests that this may have been done to make sure the catechumens and penitents, originally excluded from the *missa fidelium*, would still have a chance to hear, and participate in, this very clear and illustrative prayer.<sup>40</sup> The rubric introducing the Deprecation makes it clear that it is said *pro populo* and participation, in the form of the answer *oramus*, seems to have been shared by *omnes*.

St Martin's Deprecation features several sets of persons, after which the congregation voices its answer, 'we pray (for this)'. The inhabitants of the place where the mass is celebrated, that is presumably the audience, are explicitly mentioned and it is the sentence in which they feature that testifies to their lay nature. While the first set prayed for comprises the men of God, with the celebrant taking precedence for helping those present earn their salvation, the second stanza mentions *hoc loco et inhabitantibus in eo*, 'this place and the inhabitants of it', together with the devout emperors and the whole of the Roman army. The persons mentioned hereafter are all of a specific devout disposition, such as virgins, widows, penitents and almsgivers or those in particular circumstances such as travellers and seamen.<sup>41</sup> Although the mention of the Roman emperors (plural, so it cannot be referring to Charlemagne) and the Roman army appears to suggest this prayer should be dismissed as irrelevant to ninth-century Ireland, we should note that none of the scribes chose to alter or amend the text. The scribes of the Stowe Missal thus found it perfectly acceptable that the inhabitants of the place where the ritual was celebrated were not included in the list of secular clergy, nor in that of the virgins, widows or orphans. Instead, they were

<sup>37</sup> *Stowe Missal*, fol. 13r.

<sup>38</sup> *Stowe Missal*, (Móel Cáich) fols 24v–25v.

<sup>39</sup> *Stowe Missal*, (Móel Cáich) fols 21r–22r.

<sup>40</sup> Hunwicke, 'Kerry and Stowe', p. 7.

<sup>41</sup> *Stowe Missal*, (Móel Cáich) fols 16v–17r.

included with the secular rulers and warriors. Monastic clergy seeking to find their place in the Deprecation would probably identify themselves with the *virgines*, the word that mirrors the Irish *óg*, 'young, perfect, virginal'. The inhabitants, or congregation, seem to be as secular (or lay for that matter) as the emperors and their army.

Save for being included under the general labels of 'virgins' or 'all clerics', monastic clerics are notably absent from the Stowe Missal's prayers. The only exception is an addition by Móel Cáich in the *Te igitur*, in which the priest asks for blessing over the gifts of the church, for the defence of the pope, and for all who practise the orthodox and apostolic faith, at which point is added *et abbate nostro -n- episcopo*.<sup>42</sup> The double dignity of the senior member mentioned here suggests it was left up to the celebrant to choose which was appropriate, as it was not customary for an abbot to be also a bishop, even when his predecessor had held these two offices.<sup>43</sup> The incorporation by Móel Cáich of a cleric with a double dignity would for that reason quickly become out of date or, in the case of the missal's removal to other bishoprics, irrelevant.

Except for mentions of the celebrant or his direct superiors, there is never a sense of 'our' clergy. Instead the clergymen and -women are alluded to only in general and world-encompassing terms, negating the thesis that the missal was intended for use in a principally clerical environment or in front of a chiefly clerical audience.

### The Stowe Missal as a *vade mecum*

The evidence presented here therefore supports, rather than belies, Kenney's conjecture. While the Stowe Missal's material characteristics, its soberness in size and ornamentation and the inclusiveness of its liturgical contents all point to a travelling clergyman as the intended user, the wording of the formulae, especially the unique elements addressing personal and worldly cares, suggests it was intended for use in a small, probably newly converted community. There even seem to be explicit allusions to the wandering circumstances of the celebrant. The hypothesis put forward in this essay removes many of the awkward problems scholars have previously encountered. When Warner, with reservations, proposed the use of the missal as an authoritative liturgy for the *Céli Dé* stronghold of Tallaght, he did so on the grounds of the explicit mention of its founder Mael Ruain.<sup>44</sup> While there is no compelling

<sup>42</sup> *Stowe Missal*, (Móel Cáich) fols 24r–24v.

<sup>43</sup> Warner, *Stowe Missal*, p. xxxiii.

<sup>44</sup> Warner, *Stowe Missal*, p. xxxvii.

reason to deny Tallaght a role in the missal's composition, its revision, which Warner himself thought was the result of a change in locality, as well its material aspects, appear to contradict Warner's view of it as being regarded as authoritative. The apparent absence of a deacon in the Stowe Missal's mass service was interpreted by Godel as pointing to a private, monastic use.<sup>45</sup> We have seen, however, that the baptismal rite of the Stowe Missal specifically features diaconal duties and Hunwicke subsequently assumed there was also a place for a minister of the third order in the Sunday mass. In fact, he found signs of a distinct separation of the deacon's task outside the church building while the celebrant continued the *missa fidelium* inside, a thesis for which he found corroboration in archaeological evidence.<sup>46</sup>

Yet, it was another purported witness to the early Irish liturgy, the so-called Irish Palimpsest Sacramentary of Munich, and the desire to reconcile the evidence of that manuscript with the Stowe Missal that caused most confusion. The Munich manuscript is a truly unique witness to the early Gallican liturgy.<sup>47</sup> While the date and place of its composition are very difficult to determine, palaeographic evidence seems to suggest that it was probably copied in Northumbria by someone trained in the Irish tradition in or around the third quarter of the seventh century, which makes it at least a century older than the Stowe Missal.<sup>48</sup> The two books differ greatly: the Munich manuscript conforms to the style of contemporary continental sacramentaries with proper texts for feasts, while the Stowe Missal lacks any texts for specific dates on the calendar. This difference has puzzled many scholars studying early Irish Christianity and has led to various attempts to unify the two manuscripts into one theory of 'Irish liturgy'.

Klaus Gamber chose to regard the Munich Palimpsest Sacramentary as an anomaly, dismissing it as a witness to a purely Irish liturgical tradition.<sup>49</sup> Marc Schneiders, however, was preoccupied with reconciling the liturgy of the Stowe Missal with that of the Munich sacramentary. Schneiders theorized that the Stowe Missal was designed to be accompanied by a book containing the specific texts for feasts, such as the Munich Palimpsest, a theory which he stated meant that 'we no longer have to explain why there are two types of liturgy in Ireland, that

<sup>45</sup> Godel, 'Irish Prayer'.

<sup>46</sup> Hunwicke, 'Kerry and Stowe'.

<sup>47</sup> Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 14429, fols 1–61, 64–71 and 73–82. Edited in A. Dold and L. Eizenhöfer (eds), *Das irische Palimpsestsakramentar im Clm 14429 der Staatsbibliothek München*, Texte und Arbeiten 53–54 (Beuron, 1964).

<sup>48</sup> Y. Hen, 'Rome, Anglo-Saxon England and the Formation of the Frankish Liturgy', *Revue Bénédictine* 112 (2002), pp. 301–22, at pp. 312–13.

<sup>49</sup> Gamber quoted by L. Eizenhöfer, 'Zu dem irischen Palimpsestsakramentar in Clm 14429', *Sacris Erudiri* 17 (1966), pp. 355–64, at pp. 358–9.

represented by the Stowe Missal and that found in the Munich Palimpsest, nor should we wonder about the limited number of prayers available in the Stowe Missal; they were to be supplemented by a book of the type of the palimpsest sacramentary'.<sup>50</sup> John Hennig suggested a similar relationship between the Martyrology of Tallaght and the Stowe Missal.<sup>51</sup>

These theories involving a supplement to the Stowe Missal suppose its use in a stationary community and are designed to resolve the 'problem' of the missal's limited contents. Both, however, disregard the material aspects of the Stowe Missal in this respect. It is quite unclear why a volume, whose design suggests it was always intended to be small, and portable, was to be accompanied by another book. Moreover, the five formulae incorporated in the 'mass for the apostles and martyrs and saints' show that there was no immediate need for a supplement, as these seem to have been purposely devised to provide a priest with instruments to celebrate any feast of the sanctoral cycle.

I would, moreover, like to maintain that there have never been enough grounds for the comparison of the two volumes and for the subsequent confusion. It is, firstly, extremely doubtful whether the Munich sacramentary was indeed composed on Irish soil, while, second and more importantly, there has never been a reason to suppose uniformity in Irish religious celebration to begin with. I therefore object to such attempts to compare these two disparate books; instead the evidence really only demonstrates that the early medieval liturgy came in various shapes and forms. Even with so little Irish evidence, it is safe to assume that early Irish liturgy was just as much subject to evolution, deviation and variation as other 'liturgies'. The profound disparity between the two liturgical volumes must be considered to be a pointer to a difference in the intended use of liturgical manuscripts. The Munich Palimpsest Sacramentary displays liturgy in its richest, de luxe, form; while the material and liturgical evidence presented in this essay compels us to view the Stowe Missal's soberness and simple usefulness as belonging to the missionary and pastoral side of Irish Christendom. Accepting the existence of this distinction will allow us to learn more about the place of liturgy in people's lives.

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<sup>50</sup> M. Schneiders, 'The Origins of the Irish Liturgy', quote on p. 83.

<sup>51</sup> J. Hennig, 'The Function of the Martyrology of Tallaght', *Mediaeval Studies* 26 (1964), pp. 315–28, at pp. 320–4; cf. P. Ó Riain, 'The Tallaght Martyrologies, Redated', *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies* 20 (1990), pp. 21–38, at p. 38.