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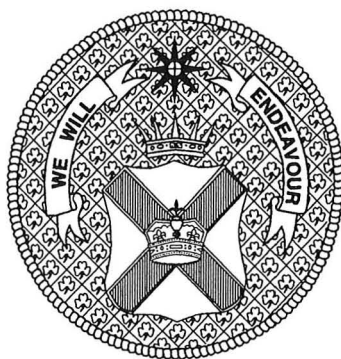
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IRISH OBSERVANCE OF THE THREE LENTS AND THE DATE OF THE ST GALL PRISCIAN (MS 904)¹

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INTRODUCTION

St Gall, Stiftsbibliothek MS 904, a copy of Priscian's *Institutiones grammaticae*, is one of the best known of the ninth-century manuscripts produced by Irish scribes. Its text of Priscian with accompanying glosses and construe marks, its addenda and marginalia connecting it with the Continental circle of Sedulius Scottus, and its insular script and illumination have engaged the attention of grammarians, historians and palaeographers.² Additionally, its large corpus of Old Irish grammatical glosses, which were added soon after the writing of the main Latin text, provides primary linguistic data for the study of Old Irish.³ Given the importance of this manuscript, a firm date for its writing would be most desirable.

At least four attempts have been made to establish a date. More than a century ago, in a major study of another Irish manuscript, Bruno Güterbock addressed *en passant* the dating of the St Gall Priscian,

¹ An earlier version of this paper was read at the Fifth Irish Conference of Medievalists, Maynooth, 1991; I am grateful to Professor Pádraig Ó Riain for his comments on that paper. I owe special thanks to Professor David Dumville, who suggested numerous improvements (especially bibliographical) to the present paper, and to Professor Liam Breatnach for a number of corrections. Where printed translations of Latin and Irish works are available I normally use them; otherwise the translations are my own.

² For palaeographical studies see Ludwig Traube, 'O Roma nobilis: philologische Untersuchungen aus dem Mittelalter', *Abhandlungen der philosophisch-philologischen Classe der königlich Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften* 19 (Munich 1892), 297–397, esp. 346–52; W.M. Lindsay, *Early Irish minuscule script* (Oxford 1910), 40–7, and *Notae Latinae* (Cambridge 1915), 485; and Johannes Duft and Peter Meyer, *The Irish miniatures in the Abbey library of St Gall* (Berne and Lausanne 1954), 72–3 and *passim*. For historical studies see Robin Flower, 'Irish high crosses', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 17 (1954), 87–97; Nora K. Chadwick, 'Early culture and learning in North Wales', in Nora K. Chadwick *et al.*, *Studies in the early British Church* (Cambridge 1958), 29–120, esp. 116–17; and D.N. Dumville, *Three men in a boat* (Cambridge 1997), 25–8. For grammatical studies see Heinrich Keil (ed.), *Grammatici Latini* (8 vols, Leipzig 1857–80), vol. 2, xiii–xvii; Maartje Draak, 'Construe marks in Hiberno-Latin manuscripts', *Mededelingen der Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen, afd. Letterkunde*, new series, 20 (10) (1947), 261–82; 263; and Maartje Draak, 'The higher teaching of Latin grammar in Ireland during the ninth century', *Mededelingen der Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen, afd. Letterkunde*, new series, 30 (4) (1967), 107–44; Pierre-Yves Lambert, 'Les signes de renvois dans le Priscien de Saint-Gall', *EC* 24 (1987), 217–38; and Rijcklof Hofman, *The Sankt Gall Priscian commentary, part 1* (2 vols, Münster 1996).

³ Whitley Stokes and John Strachan (eds and trs), *Thesaurus Palaeohibernicus* (2 vols, Cambridge 1901–3; supplement Halle 1910; reprinted Dublin 1975), vol. 2, 49–224 and 290 (hereafter *Thes. Pal.* II). On the language of these glosses see *Thes. Pal.* II, xxiii; and John Strachan, 'On the language of the St Gall glosses', *ZCP* 4 (1903), 470–92.

concluding that it belonged to either 845 or 856.⁴ Even before him, in a much-neglected monograph, Constantino Nigra had argued for a less specific but broadly compatible date of the first half of the ninth century.⁵ Drawing heavily on Nigra's research, W.M. Lindsay, in a palaeographical study of the manuscript, proposed a date between 844 and 869, giving tentative approval to Güterbock's 845 date.⁶ More recently, in an article on the ninth-century Céli Dé movement, Robin Flower conjectured that the St Gall Priscian was written 'by scholars from Leinster passing through Wales on their way to the Continent, in the years 845–846'.⁷ Although Flower did not explain how he arrived at this date,⁸ he was clearly influenced by the work of his predecessors.

Foremost among these was Nigra. He proposed a *terminus post quem* of 844, based on the evidence of a marginal note, *Ruadri adest* (p. 159),⁹ which he interpreted as a reference to Rhodri Mawr, king of Gwynedd (844–78), specifically to his campaign against the Vikings, culminating in the death of their leader, Horm, in 856.¹⁰ Likewise, Nigra established a *terminus ante quem* of 869 from the evidence of a Latin poem in the manuscript eulogizing Archbishop Gunther of Cologne,¹¹ a patron of Sedulius and his Irish circle. The poem was entered on a leaf left blank by the original scribe (pp 88–9, fol. 40)¹² and in Carolingian minuscule, both circumstances pointing to a later addition. Its fairly numerous grammatical and metrical defects, some of them rectified in another, contemporary hand,¹³ suggest a draft poem. And its references to Gunther as a ruling archbishop indicate that its composition was contemporaneous with its subject.¹⁴ All of this led Nigra to conclude that

⁴ Bruno Güterbock, 'Aus irischen Handschriften in Turin und Rom', *Zeitschrift für vergleichende Sprachforschung* 33 (1895), 86–105: 92 n. 2. His conclusion has been tentatively accepted ever since, notably by J.F. Kenney, *The sources for the early history of Ireland I: Ecclesiastical* (New York 1929; reprinted with corrections by Ludwig Bieler, New York, 1966), 675; by Flower, 'Irish high crosses', 93; and by Chadwick, 'Early culture and learning', 116–17. Traube, 'O Roma nobilis', 347, suggested an origin 'in der ersten Hälfte des 9. Jahrhunderts in einem irischen Kloster'.

⁵ Constantino Nigra, *Reliquie Celtiche I: Il manoscritto irlandese di S. Gallo* (Turin 1872).

⁶ *Early Irish minuscule script*, 40–7.

⁷ Flower, 'Irish high crosses', 93.

⁸ See now Dumville, *Three men in a boat*, 25–8, for suggestions about what Flower's unstated evidence might have been.

⁹ As noted by Nigra, *Reliquie Celtiche*, 13, the hand of the note closely resembles the hand of the adjacent main text.

¹⁰ *Reliquie Celtiche*, 12–13. The verb *adest* is usually translated as 'is present', but in this instance Nigra apparently interpreted it to mean 'is present to help/defend', a meaning well attested in medieval liturgical hymns. Dumville, *Three men in a boat*, 26, has noted another interpretation of *adest*, 'assumes kingship', conceivably referring to Rhodri's accession.

¹¹ Ludwig Traube (ed.), *Monumenta Germaniae Historica: Poetae Latini aevi Carolini III* (Berlin 1896), 238–40.

¹² After p. 78, the pagination skips to 88 and thereafter is always off by nine pages.

¹³ Characterized by Bernard Bischoff, *Mittelalterliche Studien* (3 vols, Stuttgart 1966–81), vol. 3, 45, as 'eine grobe irische Hand'.

¹⁴ *Reliquie Celtiche*, 9–10. Note especially the present and future tense verbs in the

the poem was entered in the already-completed manuscript of Priscian during Gunther's episcopacy, that is, sometime before 869.

Further evidence about Gunther's episcopacy led Nigra to suggest an even earlier *terminus ante quem*. Drawing on a contemporary monastic chronicle, the Annals of St-Bertin, Nigra sketched the long conflict between Gunther and the papacy over the Emperor Lothar's repudiation of Queen Theutberga in 857 and his remarriage to Waldrada.¹⁵ As a result of championing Lothar's cause, Gunther was deprived by Pope Nicholas of his episcopal powers in the latter part of 863 (before 25 October), although he did not agree to accept lay status until June/July 869.¹⁶ Nigra argued on the one hand that an encomiastic poem on Gunther's episcopal virtues was not likely to have been composed after the papal condemnation of 863 and on the other hand that the poem's portrayal of Gunther as a renowned and experienced administrator who was victorious over his enemies (*pacifer egregius praesul uenerabilis*) would belong to a period well into his episcopacy, which began in 850.¹⁷ Balancing these two considerations, he proposed a date for the poem *c.* 860, and thereby a *terminus ante quem* for the St Gall manuscript.

For all their immediacy and concrete detail, none of these arguments is entirely convincing (as Nigra constantly conceded). First, the *terminus post quem* of 844, based on the beginning date of Rhodri Mawr's kingship: assuming that the name Ruadri can be equated with Welsh Rhodri,¹⁸ does the St Gall note necessarily refer to Rhodri Mawr? And, even if it does, was he then king? Second, the *terminus ante quem*, based on the termination of Gunther of Cologne's episcopacy: the date of 863 is hardly firm because despite papal condemnation Gunther maintained control of the Cologne diocese and for a while even continued to perform the liturgical offices proper to a bishop.¹⁹ Yet in spite of these caveats

poem, ll 23–4: *Te voco, ut veniens Guntari limina tecti / Prospera percipias: nam bonus ipse suis.*

¹⁵ *Reliquie Celtiche*, 8–9. For a recent discussion of this *cause célèbre* see Shiona Airlie, 'Private bodies and the body politic in the divorce case of Lothar II', *Past and Present* 161 (1998), 3–38. The annals were edited by Félix Grat *et al.*, *Annales de Saint-Bertin* (Paris 1964), and translated by Janet L. Nelson, *The Annals of St-Bertin* (Manchester 1991). See especially s.aa 863, 864, 866, 867 and 869.

¹⁶ For the relevant papal letters see E.L. Dümmler and Ernst Perels (eds), *Monumenta Germaniae Historica: Epistolae Karolini aevi IV* (Berlin 1925), nos 18, 22, 29 and 31.

¹⁷ P.B. Gams, *Series Episcoporum Ecclesiae Catholicae* (Regensburg 1873–86; reprinted Graz 1957), 269, gives the date for Gunther's consecration as 20 April 850.

¹⁸ Note two instances where Rhodri's name is hibernicized as 'Ruaidhri(ge)' in the Annals of Ulster. See Seán Mac Airt and Gearóid Mac Niocaill (ed. and tr.), *The Annals of Ulster. Part 1: text and translation* (Dublin 1983), 332 (877.3 and 878.1).

¹⁹ Grat, *Annals of St-Bertin*, 111 (s.a. 864): *Guntharius autem in ipsa Cena Domini Coloniam ueniens, missas celebrare et sacrum chrisma conficere, ut homo sine Deo, presumpsit* (Nelson's translation, 116–17, 'That very Good Friday [*sic*, read 'Holy Thursday', 30 March] Gunther had reached Cologne, and presumed, godless man, to celebrate Mass and consecrate the sacred chrism')—a blatant demonstration of episcopal power. According to the same source, he still administered the see of Cologne, except for sacramental functions, as late as 866 (Grat, 126; Nelson's translation, 131). Gunther died

Nigra provided a plausible chronological framework of *c.* 840–70 within which to consider the composition of the St Gall manuscript. And his historical evidence offers a valuable counterpoint to the internal evidence developed by Güterbock.

Güterbock's dates of either 845 or 856, especially the earlier one, have long enjoyed privileged status. Both are based on a sequence of brief notes in Old Irish and Latin, occasional in character, entered on the upper and lower margins of pp 221–42 of the St Gall manuscript.²⁰ But were these notes written by the scribe of the main text, as Güterbock silently assumed? A positive answer requires proof because the notes have no validity as evidence unless they are contemporaneous with the writing of the manuscript. Complicating matters is the presence in the manuscript of a large body of textual glosses in Old Irish and Latin that were added by several scribes after the writing of the main text. Might not the scribes of these textual glosses also have written the entries singled out by Güterbock?

Almost certainly, that possibility can be ruled out. Whereas the notes are in the hands of the main scribes, the textual glosses are not. The latter are written in a tiny script, with a *ductus* quite different from that of the notes; they are crammed into the body of the text as close as possible to their lemmata²¹—in contrast to the notes, which are boldly written across the upper and lower margins; and they are purely textual, whereas the notes are occasional in character. Indeed, it is this very topicality of the notes that identifies them as contemporaneous with the writing of the main text. Thus, one comments on the time for meals (*tempus est prandii*, p. 228 *infra*); others mark the time of day (*grácad*, pp 220, 223b and 247; *medon lai*, p. 231a; *nox adest*, p. 246a);²² and, most tellingly, several complain about the quality of the parchment (*is gann membrum*, p. 228 *supra*) and the ink (*is tana a ndub*, p. 248b).²³

Mention has been made of the prominent location of these entries on the upper and lower margins. They are also purposefully positioned: on the vertical plane, at the very upper (or lower) margin of the page; on the horizontal plane, at the centre of the page (one entry), the centre of each of the two columns (two entries) or the left and right borders of either column (three entries). Such careful disposition is compatible with the practice of entering them immediately before copying the main text (using the ruling as a guideline), a hypothesis supported by their pious,

in 873. I am at a loss to explain the dates of 850–9 for Gunther's episcopacy given by Bischoff, *Mittelalterliche Studien*, vol. 3, 45.

²⁰ Printed in *Thes. Pal.* II, xx–xxii. I have followed Lindsay's identification of two main scribes, Maelpatricc (pp 1–157) and Coirbbre (pp 158–247). The notes highlighted by Güterbock occur within the section copied by Coirbbre. For details about the latter's hand see Lindsay, *Early Irish minuscule script*, 46.

²¹ Features that became very obvious when I saw the manuscript (March 1998).

²² These terms coincide with hours of the Divine Office (matins, none, compline, respectively), suggesting that their scribe was an ecclesiastic.

²³ Which I would translate as: 'the parchment is thin' and 'the ink is watery'.

invocatory content, including formulae traditionally used by Irish scribes as *probationes pennae*.²⁴

The main proof of their contemporaneity with the main text, however, lies in the similarity of their scripts.²⁵ Admittedly, the script of the main text shows considerable variation, but for any given page the hands of the entries and the main text are very similar. For example, the entry on p. 221 (see below) is identical not only in hand but also in size to the adjacent main text. The entry on p. 222, in its use of the abbreviation *p* for *pro* has the same exaggerated backward flourish of the bow through the shaft of *p* as found in the main text below it, as well as the same elongated (and inelegant) initial *s*. The entries on pp 226 and 233 are in a hand smaller than that of the accompanying main text but decidedly similar. The stanza of Old Irish on p. 229, written across the upper margin, is in an even smaller hand, presumably because the scribe wished to contain it within one line, yet its *d*, *t*, *g* and high *c* (in ligature) show striking similarities to those of the accompanying main text. Likewise, two notes on p. 247 share distinctive features with the main text: a *g* with the upper part of its bow protruding to the left and the lower part closed like an *o*; a short *r* whose first stroke does not go below the line; and an open-headed *a*.

From these marginal notes Güterbock singled out a sequence running from p. 221 to p. 242 that records the names of several saints and one ecclesiastical festival, all celebrated in late June and early July. However, within this group he missed or ignored entries for at least three other ecclesiastical festivals.²⁶ The full complement of entries (with appropriate dates) reads as follows.²⁷

- p. 221 in nomine Sancti Diormitii
- p. 222 Sanctus Diormitius oret pro nobis
- p. 223a feria Diormitii [21 June]
- p. 226 Mochoe Noindrommo [23 June]
- p. 229 [stanza in Old Irish; 24 June]²⁸
- p. 233 Satharnn Samchasc
- p. 236 Saulus qui fuerat, fit²⁹ adempto nomine Paulus [29 June]
- p. 240a Iob [30 June]
- p. 242a Aarón; Iulius [1 July]³⁰
- p. 242b sancta maria [1 July].

²⁴ See Charles Plummer, 'On the colophons and marginalia of Irish scribes', *PBA* 12 (1926), 11–44.

²⁵ The analysis that follows is based on a microfilm of the manuscript at the School of Celtic Studies, Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, kindly supplied by Ms Grace Toland.

²⁶ Those on pp 229, 240a and 242b.

²⁷ The relevant calendrical dates of the festivals are supplied in square brackets.

²⁸ Discussed below, p. 164.

²⁹ This word is omitted from the edition of *Thes. Pal.* II, xxii.

³⁰ Güterbock was uncertain whether 'Iulius' refers to the saint or to the month of that name; the former seems more likely. See Dumville, *Three men in a boat*, 27, who noted that Aaron and Iulius were celebrated together on 1 July in south-east Wales.

All of these festivals (with one notable exception) and the dates of their celebration are readily verifiable by reference to two ninth-century Irish martyrologies roughly contemporary with the St Gall Priscian, *Féilire Óengusso* ('The martyrology of Oengus') and The martyrology of Tallaght.³¹ As the festivals follow a chronological sequence from 21 June to 1 July, in step with the progression of copied pages, and, since they are entered in the hand of the main text, one may reasonably conclude that each was noted on the day of its celebration and entered on the page that the scribe was then copying.³²

The commemoration of Diarmait (assuming that he is to be identified with the saint of that name associated with Dísert, Co. Kildare) provides a *terminus post quem* for the present entries, since he died in 825. That he is invoked three times, twice directly, suggests a particular devotion to him³³ and perhaps the scribe's close ties with north Leinster and with the Céili Dé, of which Diarmait was a prominent member.³⁴ Also significant for dating purposes is the quatrain in Old Irish written across the upper margin of p. 229, *Gaib do chuil isin charcair/ni róis chluim na colcaid/truag insin a mail bachal/rot giuil ind srathar dodchaid*.³⁵ These lines (I believe) refer to the austerities and imprisonment of John the Baptist and, consequently, should be taken as a commemoration of his feast day, June 24.

The one exception to these readily datable feasts is the notice on p. 233, *Satharnn Samchasc* 'Saturday (the eve) of *samchasc*'. As indicated by its constituent elements, the term *sam-chasc* ('summer Easter') denoted a festival celebrated in early Ireland during summer (OIr. *sam-*) and modelled on Easter Sunday (OIr. *cásc*). Indeed, the connection with Easter Sunday was even closer because the celebration of *samchasc* was determined by the date of Easter in any particular year. As Güterbock

³¹ Whitley Stokes (ed. and tr.), *Féilire Óengusso Céili Dé/The martyrology of oengus the Culdee*, Henry Bradshaw Society 29 (London 1905; rpt. Dublin 1984), 141–60; and R.I. Best and H.J. Lawlor (eds), *The martyrology of Tallaght*, Henry Bradshaw Society 68 (London 1931), 51. These two works have recently been dated to 828–33 by Pádraig Ó Riain, 'The Tallaght martyrologies redated', *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies* 20 (1990), 21–38. See, however, Liam Breatnach, 'Poets and poetry', in Kim McCone and Katharine Simms (eds), *Progress in medieval Irish studies* (Maynooth 1996), 65–77: 74–5 (§4.4), who prefers Thurneysen's dating, 797–805/808.

³² See the palaeographical evidence given above, p. 163. Note also the adverbs *hodie* and *indiu* in two marginal notes: *feria cai hodie* (p. 50) and *de drochdub faigde dim (?lim) indiu* (p. 214) (*Thes. Pal.* II, xx and xxii).

³³ A near-contemporary Irish work, Teaching of Mael Ruain, §42 (see note 54 below) commends the custom of invoking a saint between every two psalms on the day of his/her feast. Compare also the festive triduum accorded the founding or patron saint of a monastery, as with the three homilies to St Patrick in the *Vita Tripartita*.

³⁴ The same conclusion about north Leinster provenance was reached by Robin Flower, *The Irish tradition* (Oxford 1947), 38, on the evidence of scribal invocations of St Brigid of Kildare no less than seventeen times (the closest rival saint has seven invocations); see also Flower, 'Irish high crosses', *passim*. However, Hofman, *Sankt Gall Priscian* I, 22–3, would link these invocations of Diarmait with Bangor.

³⁵ 'Take your corner in the prison; you will not gain either down or featherbed./Sad is that, O devotee of the rods;/the packsaddle of bad luck has clung to you' (*Thes. Pal.* II, 290; the translation is my own).

recognized, if the calendrical date of *samchásc* in the St Gall entry could be determined, it should be possible to work back to the date of Easter for that year. The latter information, when matched against Easter tables, would provide the years during the ninth century when Easter fell on that date.

To arrive at this determination, Güterbock made two assumptions. Firstly, he assumed that whoever wrote these marginal notes in the St Gall Priscian was a professional scribe with a regular daily stint. To calculate that stint, Güterbock used not only the evidence of the St Gall Priscian but also that of MS Vat. Pal. lat. 830 (the Chronicle of Marianus Scottus),³⁶ an eleventh-century manuscript of approximately similar dimensions in which the Irish scribe recorded in marginal notes how much he had copied on a particular day. In the latter manuscript, 35 folios (33–67) were copied in 34 days (28 June to 31 July 1072), and in the St Gall Priscian 22 pages (pp. 221–42), or eleven folios, were written in eleven days (21 June to 1 July), leading Güterbock to propose a standard daily scribal stint of one folio, or two pages. Because in the St Gall manuscript pp 221–3 (beginning) were written on 21 June, p. 226 on 23 June, p. 240 on 30 June, and p. 242 on 1 July, he calculated that the notice of *Satharnn Samchasc*, which appears on p. 233, would have been entered on 27 June.³⁷ Consequently, *samchásc* itself (he silently concluded) occurred on the following day, 28 June.

Secondly, Güterbock assumed that *samchásc* was celebrated on the sixth Sunday after Pentecost, marking the end of a seasonal (summer) observance of six weeks' austerities that began on Pentecost Sunday. Again, his evidence came from Vat. Pal. lat. 830, which contains two ecclesiastical calendars (fols 2r–3r and 18r–24v), both recording the festival of *aestiuum pascha* (a Latin rendering of OIr. *samchásc*) on the sixth Sunday after Pentecost. With 28 June as his base date for *samchásc* (from the previous calculation), Güterbock counted backwards a corresponding period of six weeks to arrive at 17 May for Pentecost, and thence back another seven weeks to arrive at a date for Easter of 29 March. As the only years in the ninth century when Easter fell on this date were 845 and 856, he concluded that one of these two years must be the date of the St Gall Priscian.

³⁶ See Bartholomew MacCarthy, *The Codex Palatino-Vaticanus*, no. 830 (Dublin 1892).

³⁷ 'Die Eintragung *satharnn samchasc* "*sabbatum aestivi paschae*" auf f. 233a gehört, wenn unsere annahme eines gleichmässigen pensums von zwei seiten pro tag richtig ist, dem 27. juni an' (Güterbock, 'Aus irischen Handschriften', see note 4). Hofman, *Sankt Gall Priscian* I, 16–17, attempted to reconstruct more precisely the daily stint for these critical pages, using Güterbock's chronological framework of 20–7 June, and positing as a criterion that the scribe's handwriting tends to deteriorate towards the end of the day. He concluded that most of p. 232 and all of p. 233, including the notice of *Satharnn Samchasc*, was copied on 27 June, and, more broadly, that his own research 'does not invalidate Güterbock's conclusion'. At my request he kindly re-examined the palaeographical evidence, from which he now concludes that the scribal stint for 22 June was 224b19–226a20 (rather than pp 224–5) and for 23 June 226a21–226b (rather than pp 225–6).

How reliable are Güterbock's two assumptions? His claim for a regular scribal stint of two pages per day, while plausible for the Vatican manuscript, runs into practical difficulties when applied to the St Gall Priscian. It fails to take into account the possibility of scribal breaks, notably for Sundays and major feast days.³⁸ It cannot always be tested because of the uneven distribution of marginal entries in the crucial section comprising pp 220–42: five on pp 220–3 but none for the next two pages (pp 224–5) or for pp 237–8. Most important, a neat calculation of two pages per day simply does not always agree with the evidence of the individual notes. Take, for example, the space intervening between the crucial note, *Satharnn Samchasc* (p. 233 *supra*) and the next festival note, commemorating the feast of St Paul on 29 June (p. 236): it amounts to three pages—not four, as might be expected from Güterbock's assumption of a two-pages-per-day scribal stint. Conversely, the entry for John the Baptist (24 June) on p. 229, which occurs four pages before that for *Satharnn Samchasc* (p. 233), should give for the latter a date of 26 June—a day earlier than the date proposed by Güterbock. At best one can say that the scribe of the St Gall Priscian averaged two pages per day and that Güterbock's proposed date (based on that assumption) of 27 June for the *Satharnn Samchasc* entry is plausible but by no means certain.

More serious problems attend Güterbock's assumption about the beginning date and the duration of the post-Pentecostal season of austerities that ended with *samchásc*. In the early Irish Church this season was called *samchorgus*, literally 'summer Lent',³⁹ a term indicating that it was modelled on spring Lent, just as its ending was modelled on Easter Sunday. It also had a counterpart in the season preceding Christmas, called *gamchorgus* 'winter Lent', hence the three Lents of the Irish Church.⁴⁰ In spite of its vernacular nomenclature and its widespread attestation in Irish sources, the practice of the three Lents did not originate in Ireland.⁴¹ Its origins are much earlier, going back to the diverse ascetical practices of the Early Christian communities.⁴² One such group was the Montanists, a heretical sect notorious for its strict

³⁸ For example, Hofman, *Sankt Gall Priscian* I, 16, noted on p. 237, 'a clear caesura in the manuscript, with which Güterbock did not reckon'. An entry on p. 170 recording the feast of Low Sunday (OIr. *minchásc*, literally 'little Easter'), may suggest that the scribe worked on a Sunday, although we must reckon with the possibility (as suggested to me by the late Dr William O'Sullivan) that the entry was retroactive. On sabbatarianism among late medieval Irish scribes see Plummer, 'Colophons and marginalia of Irish scribes', 24–5 and 33 n. 3.

³⁹ Cf. Welsh *g(a)rawys haf* 'summer Lent'; see John Fisher, 'The Welsh calendar', *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion* 1894–5 (1896), 99–145: 114.

⁴⁰ On which see John Ryan, *Irish monasticism: origins and early development* (Dublin 1931; reprinted with new introduction and bibliography, 1992), 92–3; and Charles Plummer (ed.), *Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae* (2 vols, Oxford 1910), vol. 1, cxx n. 1.

⁴¹ *Pace* Ryan, *Irish monasticism*, 392.

⁴² See William Smith and Samuel Cheetham (eds), *A dictionary of Christian antiquities* (2 vols, Hartford, Conn., 1873–80), vol. 2, s.v. 'Lent'.

discipline, which St Jerome castigated for observing three Lents during the year 'as though three Saviours had suffered'.⁴³ Elsewhere, Jerome identified one of these additional Lents as occurring after Pentecost:

Nonnulli putant idcirco post dies quadraginta passionis ieiunia debere committi licet statim dies pentecostes et Spiritus sanctus adueniens indicet nobis festiuitatem, et ex huius occasione testimonii Montanus, Prisca et Maximilla etiam post pentecosten faciunt quadragesimam, quod ablato sponso filii sponsi debeant ieiunare.⁴⁴

Yet despite Jerome's strictures the three Lents took hold in the Western Church, at least in the Gallican rite. Various Frankish and Carolingian documents testify to the observance of the primary Lent before Easter, a second before Christmas, and a third before the feast of John the Baptist (24 June).⁴⁵ Celtic Britain also shared this practice, to judge by the evidence of the sixth-century penitential documents known as the Penitential of Gildas, the *Synodus Aquilonalis Britanniae* and the *Excerpta Quaedam de Libro Daudis*. All three works contain the term *tres quadragesimae*, 'three Lents', referring to a period of penance that also served as a standard measure of ecclesiastical punishment. For example, *Liber Daudis* stipulates for a monk guilty of inebriation a relatively light penance of 40 days but for inebriation motivated by contempt a period of *tres quadragesimae*.⁴⁶ The frequency of the latter term in these documents, its representation by a shorthand notation (*iii xlmae*) and its imposition as a standard unit of penance (probably a commutation of one year's 'normal' penance) all indicate that observance of the three Lents was well established in British churches.⁴⁷

⁴³ ...nos unam quadragesimam secundum traditionem apostolorum toto nobis orbe congruo ieiunamus; illi tres in anno faciunt quadragesimas, quasi tres passi sint saluatores ('we fast for one Lent according to the tradition of the Apostles, with all the world in agreement with us; they observe three Lents in the year, as though three Saviours had suffered'), Isidore Hilberg (ed.), *Sancti Eusebii Hieronymi Epistulae*, Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum 54 (Vienna 1910), 313, ll 11–14 (no. 41, §4). See also Jerome's comment in *Aggaeum* (ed. Marcus Adriaen), Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina 76A (Turnhout 1970), 725, ll 438–9.

⁴⁴ In David Hurst and Marcus Adriaen (eds), *Matheum*, Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina 77 (Turnhout 1969), 57, ll 1324–9 ('For that reason certain people think that after forty days of suffering a fast ought to be undertaken, notwithstanding that immediately thereafter [the feast of] Pentecost and [the commemoration of] the Holy Ghost's coming indicates a celebration to us. And Montanus, Prisca and Maximilla observe a forty-day period of fasting even after Pentecost, on the evidence that since the spouse [sc. Christ] has been taken away [to Heaven] his children ought to fast.')

⁴⁵ The last would, if necessary, be completed after that festival; see Charles du Fresne sieur de Du Cange, *Glossarium mediae et infimae latinitatis* (10 vols, Paris 1937–8), vol. 6, s.v. *Quadragesima*. See also R.T. Hampson, *Medii Aevi Kalendarium* (2 vols, London 1841), vol. 2, 324 (and *passim*); and Nicolaus Nilles, *Kalendarium manuale utriusque ecclesiae orientalis et occidentalis* (2 vols, Innsbruck 1896–7; reprinted with new introduction by J.M. Hussey, Farnborough, Hants., 1971), vol. 2, 83.

⁴⁶ 'De Libro Daudis', §2, in Ludwig Bieler (ed. and tr.), *The Irish penitentials* (Dublin 1963), 70–1.

⁴⁷ From Britain it may have spread to Brittany. The first Life of Samson of Dol (?mid-eighth century) portrays a certain *Dubricius episcopus, quippe in sua domo commanebat*,

The term *tres quadragesimae* also appears in Irish penitentials, documents thought to have been modelled on the British sources named above.⁴⁸ The earliest of these penitentials, dating from the second half of the sixth and the first half of the seventh century, and attributed to Vinnianus, Columbanus and Cummiánus, frequently mention the term. In the Irish texts it denotes a period not only of ecclesiastical punishment (as with the British examples) but also of voluntary mortification for laypeople, suggesting that the observance had spread from a strictly monastic milieu to at least some of the laity.⁴⁹ For example, Vinnianus required the laity to abstain from sexual intercourse *tres quadragesimas in anno singulo*, an injunction repeated in the seventh-century Penitential of Cummean: *Qui in matrimonio, in tribus xlmis anni [debent abstinere]*.⁵⁰

Another seventh-century Irish witness to the three Lents is Tírechán's *Collectanea* (composed c. 680), which recounts how St Patrick fasted against God on Crúachán Aigle (Croagh Patrick) for 40 days and nights, on the model of the fasts of Moyses, Elijah and Christ.⁵¹ Although Tírechán has Patrick observe only one Lent, his reference to these three biblical figures implies knowledge of the threefold Lent. The same correspondence, implicitly attested as early as Tertullian's *De Ieiunio*, is made clear in the *Missale Gothicum*, one of the primary sources for the Gallican liturgy c. 700. Its Mass for the beginning of spring Lent (*Ordo Missae in Inicium Quadragesimae*) recalls that the 40-day fasts of Moses and Elias anticipated that of Christ, whose fast of 40 days set the model for all three Lents: *qui Moysi et Heliae per quadraginta dies ieiunantibus quadragesima dedicavit, deinde etiam in suo [sc. Christ] ipso ieiunio eundem nobis numero dierum ieiunii sollempnitate signavit*⁵²

initiante iam Quadragesima Paschae ... mos namque erat illi episcopo totam paene Paschae Quadragesimam in eadem duci insula ... (Dubric, qui y résidait dans son logis, tandis que le Carême paschal commençait déjà—en effet, c'était une coutume pour cet évêque de passer presque tout le Carême paschal dans cet établissement...'), Pierre Flobert (ed. and tr.), *La vie ancienne de Saint Samson de Dol* (Paris 1997), 196–7). Significant here is the qualifier *Paschae* in the term *Quadragesima*. Lent was normally denoted by *Quadragesima*—*tout court*—but a writer accustomed to the observance of three Lents in a year would naturally wish to define the one that he intended with a seasonal qualifier such as *Paschae*.

⁴⁸ See Kenney, *Sources*, 239–40, and Bieler, *The Irish penitentials*, 3.

⁴⁹ Perhaps the *manaig*, secular people tied to the monastic economy; see T.M. Charles-Edwards, 'The church and settlement', in Michael Richter and Próinséas Ní Chatháin (eds), *Irland und Europa: Die Kirche im Frühmittelalter* (Stuttgart 1984), 167–75.

⁵⁰ Bieler, *The Irish penitentials*, 92–3 and 116–17, respectively. This requirement is also stated in the vernacular literature; see CIH 1102.31 and Liam Breatnach (ed.), *Uraicecht na Ríar: the poetic grades in Early Irish law*, Early Irish Law Series 2 (Dublin 1987), 124.

⁵¹ Ludwig Bieler and Fergus Kelly (ed. and tr.), *The Patrician texts in the Book of Armagh* (Dublin 1979), 122–67: 152 (§38.1): *Et perrexit Patricius ad montem Egli, ut ieiunaret in illo quadraginta diebus et quadraginta noctibus, Moysaicam tenens disciplinam et Heliacam et Christianam* 'And Patrick proceeded to Mons Aigle, intending to fast there for forty days and forty nights, following the example of Moses, Elias, and Christ'.

⁵² L.C. Mohlberg (ed.), *Missale Gothicum* (Rome 1961), 47, ll 19–22 ('who dedicated the season of Lent to Moses and Elias because of their fasts of forty days; then by his own fasting he indicated to us the same practice with a solemn commemoration of [his] fasting for the [same] number of days'). Among the Irish, winter Lent was associated with Elias and summer Lent with Moses, according to a Middle Irish stanza added to *Félire*

More specific evidence about the Irish practice of the three Lents is found in Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*. In his oft-cited account of how English students flocked to Ireland, Bede singles out the Anglo-Saxon *peregrinus* Ecgberht, who lived there during the second half of the seventh century, imitating the austerities of his Irish teachers. For Bede the most remarkable of these austerities was the observance of two supererogatory Lents: *Cuius modum continentiae etiam XL diebus ante natale Domini, totidem quoque post peracta sollemnia Pentecostes, hoc est L^{mae}, semper obseruare curabat.*⁵³ Bede's account is valuable not only as a very early witness from an independent outsider but also because it elaborates on the cryptic references to the three Lents given in Irish sources.

Several centuries after Bede Irish ecclesiastical documents still bear witness to the observance. Especially relevant are two works from the first half of the ninth century associated with the Céili Dé, Teaching of Mael Ruain and The monastery of Tallaght. Their references to austerities observed during the three Lents generally, and *samchorgus* specifically, corroborate the contemporaneous reference to *samchásc* in the St Gall Priscian.⁵⁴

In the Latin sources cited above, the three Lents are called *quadragesima* (often written *xl*). Yet despite the apparent chronological specificity of the term, and the biblical model of Christ's 40-day fast in the wilderness (Mt IV.2), the meaning of *quadragesima* was not always so literal. In the Western Churches down to the end of the sixth century, *quadragesima* meant a six-week Lent from Quadragesima Sunday to Easter Sunday, as attested by Gaulish councils and Gregory the Great's homilies. Gregory's evidence is especially valuable because he expressly comments on the duration of Lent in order to complain that, since Sundays in the Western Church were not observed as fast-days,⁵⁵ the six-

Óengusso: Cargus eli isin gemrad... /corgus Ísu in-errach adbal, corgus Ísu in-errach adbal, corgus Moysi is tsamrad tall 'Another Lent in the winter ... / Jesu's Lent in vast springtime, Moses' Lent in summer there' (Stokes, *Martyrology of Oengus*, 42–3). For the biblical basis of these associations see 3 Kg. 19:8 and Ex. 34:28 respectively.

⁵³ Bk 3, c. 27, 'He was careful always to observe that ascetical practice even in the forty days before the birth of the Lord and the same also after the completion of the solemn celebration of Pentecost, that is, the fifty days' (Charles Plummer (ed.), *Venerabilis Baedae Opera Historica* (2 vols, Oxford 1896), vol. 1, 194. In his prose Life of St Cuthbert, Bede noted that Bishop Eadberht of Lindisfarne (†698) was accustomed to observe a second Lent (no doubt, winter Lent) during the 'forty days before the Lord's birthday' (*quadragesima ante dominicum natale dies*) (Bertram Colgrave (ed. and tr.), *Two Lives of Saint Cuthbert* (Cambridge 1940), 292–3 (c. xlii)).

⁵⁴ See E.J. Gwynn (ed. and tr.), 'Teaching of Mael Ruain', in 'The rule of Tallaght', *Hermathena* 44, 2nd supplement (Dublin 1927), §§1, 9 and 77; E.J. Gwynn and W.J. Purton (ed. and tr.), 'The monastery of Tallaght', *PRIA* 29C (1911–12), 115–79, §§24, 42, 48 and 86; and The Old Irish Penitential, cap. ii, §36: *Dlegair doib dano beith cen saill cen carna i trib corgusaib na bliadna* 'They [sc. laymen] are also bound to go without bacon or flesh-meat during the three Lents of the year', in E.J. Gwynn (ed. and tr.), 'An Irish penitential', *Ériu* 7 (1913–14), 121–95: 150–1; see also Bieler, *The Irish penitentials*, 264.

⁵⁵ Even with its reputation for austerity, the early Irish Church respected the Sunday exception. Thus, *Collectio Canonum Hibernenses* (bk 66, c. 19) condemns fasting on

week Lent in reality consisted of only 36 days: *dum sex dies Dominici ab abstinentia subtrahuntur, non plus in abstinentia quam triginta et sex dies remanent*.⁵⁶ To correct this deficiency a genuinely quadragesimal Lent was effected by moving the beginning of the fast (*caput ieiunii*) from Sunday back to the previous Wednesday (Ash Wednesday), thus adding four days. Gradually spreading during the seventh century, the practice of a genuine 40-day Lent was observed almost everywhere in the West by the mid-ninth century.⁵⁷

Which Lent obtained in early Ireland? The Old Irish word for the beginning of Lent, *init*, derives from Lat. *initium* (*quadragesimae*), a term used exclusively to denote Quadragesima Sunday. Thus, a late seventh-century Hiberno-Latin computistical tract, *De ratione computandi*, makes clear that Lent began on Quadragesima Sunday: *sequenti dominico die initium [sc. quadragesimae] erit*.⁵⁸ The early eighth-century legal tract *Bretha Crólige* stipulates that an injured, high-ranking, freeman's entitlement of condiments changes from salt meat to a Lenten fare of herbs on *cetdomnach di corgus* 'the first Sunday of Lent'.⁵⁹ The tenth-century *Bethu Phátraic* describes Patrick's Lenten fast on Crúachán Aigle as lasting *ó díe Šathairnd Initi co día Sathairn Cáscc*,⁶⁰ that is, from

Sunday; see Hermann Wasserschleben (ed.), *Die irische Kanonensammlung* (2nd edn, Leipzig 1885), 239–40. The Old Irish Penitential, cap. ii, §16, specifically forbade (and punished) fasting on Sunday: *Nech aines i ndomnuch tri faill no chaillti pendith .iii. main for uisci 7 bargin* 'Anyone who fasts on a Sunday through carelessness or austerity does a week's penance on bread and water' (Gwynn, 'An Irish penitential', 150–1; see also Bieler, *The Irish penitentials*, 261). The same point was made by Ratramnus of Corbie in his *Contra Graecorum opposita* (bk 4, c. 3), composed c. 868: *Scotorum natio, Hyberniam insulam inhabitans, consuetudinem habet per monasteria monachorum, seu canonicorum, vel quorumcunque religiosorum, omni tempore praeter Dominicam, festosque dies, jejunare, nec nisi vel ad nonam vel ad vesperam corpori cibum indulgere* 'the Irish people, inhabitants of the island of Ireland, throughout their communities of monks and canons and other types of religious, are accustomed to fast at all times except Sunday and feastdays; nor do they allow food for their bodies until about the hour of nones or vespers' (J.-P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologia Latina* (221 vols, Paris 1844–64), vol. 121, cols 315D–316A).

⁵⁶ 'since six Sundays are excused from fasting, no more than thirty-six days of abstinence are left', *Homilia in Evangelia* 16 (Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, vol. 76, col. 1137C).

⁵⁷ See E. Vacandard, in Fernand Cabrol and Henri Leclercq (eds), *Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie* (15 vols, Paris 1903–53), vol. 2, part 2, s.v. *Carême*, cols 2139–58: 2143–5.

⁵⁸ Maura Walsh and Dáibhí Ó Cróinín (ed. and tr.), *Cummian's letter De Controversia Paschali* and the *De Ratione Computandi* (Toronto 1988), 206 (§101).

⁵⁹ D.A. Binchy (ed.), 'Bretha Crólige', §46, *Ériu* 12 (1934–8), 1–77: 36–7: *Alidh cach aire...saill fora mes cach trata o oidci kalne cosin cetdomnach di corgus mad amm hi fornuastur ris. lus lubgoirt immurgu is ed tarsunn ales a corgus erraig* 'Every freeman...is entitled to salt meat on his dish (?) every twenty-four hours from New Year's Eve to the first Sunday of Lent, if it be during that period that he have been injured. On the other hand, garden herbs are the condiment to which he is entitled in the spring Lent'. A later (probably Middle Irish) commentator glossed the phrase *cetdomnach di corgus* with *init* (§46 n. 5).

⁶⁰ Kathleen Mulchrone (ed. and tr.), *Bethu Phátraic I: text and sources* (Dublin 1939), 71, l. 1296. This phrase renders Tírechán's *quadraginta diebus et quadraginta noctibus* (cited in note 51 above).

Saturday of *init* (in effect Quadragesima Sunday, since in Irish usage Sunday observance began late on the preceding evening) to the eve of Easter. Even as late as the early twelfth century, *init* in the Annals of Ulster (s.a. 1109) unambiguously denotes Quadragesima Sunday, or what would now be called 'the first Sunday after Ash Wednesday'.⁶¹

Yet this adherence by Irish ecclesiastics to the terminology of the older, six-week Lent would not necessarily preclude observance of an actual 40-day Lent. Witness how the Western Churches from the seventh century onwards preserved the formal liturgical beginning of Lent (and its concomitant terminology) immediately after Quadragesima Sunday, even as it began its actual Lenten fast four days beforehand on Ash Wednesday.⁶² The same possibility needs to be entertained in the discussion that follows on how the Irish calculated the dates and durations of their three Lents, especially summer Lent.

Not suprisingly, spring Lent (*corgus*) was the model, its traditional primacy reflected in the derivative terminology of the Irish words for the other two Lents of summer and winter (*samchorgus* and *ga(i)mchorgus* respectively). But the application of this model was problematic. Take winter Lent: its single point of reference was its termination date, Christmas Day (25 December), a feast that, because it fell on a Sunday only once every seven years, could not be properly modelled on Easter Sunday. No less problematic was calculation of the beginning date of winter Lent. Forty days of fasting (excluding Sundays) calculated backwards from Christmas Day would give 8 November, an awkward situation indeed, because the opening days of winter Lent would clash with the celebration of the major feast of St Martin on 11 November.⁶³

⁶¹ See Paul Walsh, 'Shrovetide and Inid', *Irish Book Lover* 26 (1939), 106–7. D.A. Binchy (ed.), *Críth Gablach* (Dublin 1941), 81 (s.v. *coe*) and 58 (s.v. *init*), translates *init* as 'Shrovetide', thereby implying that Irish observance of Ash Wednesday was in effect at the time that *Críth Gablach* was composed, in the early eighth century, but he offered no supporting evidence for this claim. Precisely when the Irish Church changed to Ash Wednesday observance is not clear. For what it is worth, Queen Margaret (1070–93)—who sought to bring Scottish observance of Lent into conformity with the rest of the West by decreeing that it should begin on Ash Wednesday rather than after Quadragesima Sunday—is represented as stating that the six-week Lent was then found in Scotland alone: *alioquin contra ipsius Domini auctoritatem et totius sanctae Ecclesiae vos soli repugnabitis traditionem* 'otherwise you alone resist the authority of the Lord himself, and the tradition of the entire holy Church', A.W. Haddan and William Stubbs, 'Turgot's Life of Queen Margaret', in Haddan and Stubbs (eds), *Councils and ecclesiastical documents relating to Great Britain and Ireland* (3 vols, Oxford 1869–8), vol. 2, part 1, 156–7; A.O. Anderson (tr.), *Early sources of Scottish history A.D. 500–1286* (2 vols, Edinburgh 1922), vol. 2, 59–88: 71. Certainly, the reformers of the Irish Church in the early twelfth century envisaged the observance of Ash Wednesday, as suggested by the use of the term *caput ieiunii* in Gilbert of Limerick's *De Statu Ecclesiae: In absentia vero episcopi, potest [sc. sacerdos] benedicere... cineres in capite jejunii* 'if the bishop is absent, a priest is allowed to bless the ashes on Ash Wednesday' (Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, vol. 159, col. 1000D).

⁶² See Fernand Cabrol in Cabrol and Leclercq, *Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie* II, ii, s.v. *Caput Jejunii*, cols 2134–7.

⁶³ A feast noted by one of the St Gall scribes on p. 70 (see p. 179 below). On the importance of St Martin in the early Irish Church see Paul Grosjean, 'Gloria Postuma S. Martini Turonensis apud Scottos et Britanos', *Analecta Bollandiana* 55 (1937), 300–48.

Whether in consideration of the latter problem or in deference to the older tradition, the Irish apparently followed the six-week Lenten model, counting back from 25 December. Thus, the early ninth-century versified martyrology *Féilire Óengusso* commemorates the beginning of winter Lent on 13 November,⁶⁴ exactly six weeks before Christmas.

Summer Lent posed a different set of problems. In contrast to winter Lent with its calendrically fixed *terminus ante quem*, summer Lent's single point of reference was a liturgically movable *terminus post quem*, the feast of Pentecost Sunday. Again, the model of the genuine 40-day Lent would not work properly, because to begin on the evening of Pentecost would inevitably mean ending in the middle of the (seventh) week thereafter, a possibility that flies in the face of the well-attested practice of ending summer Lent on a Sunday—implied in the notice in the St Gall Priscian of *Satharnn Samchasc*, 'Saturday (on the eve) of summer Easter'. By contrast, the alternative (older) model of the six-week Lent from Sunday to Sunday would seem to pose no problem: summer Lent would extend from Sunday evening of Pentecost to the eve of the sixth Sunday after Pentecost—precisely Güterbock's assumption in calculating the date of *samchásc* in the St Gall Priscian.

But when we look at Irish sources other than the one used by Güterbock, matters are not so straightforward. A marginal note in the early fifteenth-century *Lebor Breac*, *xl. laa ... o chengcigis co samchaisc*,⁶⁵ begs the question, since *xl* could be taken as a shorthand for the older system of six weeks (36 days of fasting) or read literally as 40 days of fasting. Another roughly contemporary manuscript, Oxford, Bodleian Library, Rawlinson B 512 (late fourteenth century), contains a Middle Irish poem on the computus, which identifies the (latest) date for Pentecost as the Sunday following lunar 4 June, and the corresponding date for *samchásc* as the Sunday after lunar 17 July:

Cetramad nat legait liuin
uathad amra esca iuin
domnach ina diaid, ni dis,
ise domnach Cingcigis.

Sechtmad dëac escai iuil
ise side fil fo diuig;
domnach iarsin, seqdo fasc,
isé domnach na Sam-Chasc.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ *ré notlaicc aird aurgaiss/ dogné init chorgaiss* 'before high Christmas thou shouldst make great prayer at the beginning of (Moses') lent' (Stokes, *Martyrology of Oengus*, 234).

⁶⁵ 'Forty days ... from Pentecost to summer Easter', *Leabhar Breac/the Speckled Book*, published from the original manuscript in the library of the Royal Irish Academy (Dublin 1872–6), fol. 90, l. 16.

⁶⁶ 'The fourth wonderful lunar day of June (which sluggards do not study): the Sunday thereafter (it is not insignificant), that is Pentecost Sunday. The seventeenth lunar day of July: it is that day that is last; the Sunday thereafter (a favourable report), that is the Sunday of summer-Easter', Paul Grosjean (ed.), 'A poem on the computus', *Irish Texts* 1 (1931), 52–4: 53, stanzas 7–8. The lunar reckoning of Pentecost in the first stanza is

as defined in these two stanzas, the period between Pentecost and *amchásc* comes to 42 days: a full lunar month of 29 days from 4 June to July plus thirteen additional intervening days. Apparently, the poem implies the observance of a six-week summer Lent after Pentecost.

The same definition of the (latest) date for *samchásc* in lunar terms occurs in a Turin fragment of an Irish liturgical calendar (probably twelfth century) as follows: *Domnach as nesam xuii esce iuil ise domnach amchaise insein*.⁶⁷ But how is one to translate this lunar dating into a solar date? The seventh-century Hiberno-Latin tract *De ratione computandi* states that since a lunar year consists of only 354 days an augmentation of eleven days is needed to align it chronologically with the solar year. In support, the work cites Isidore of Seville:

‘Dies epactarum sunt undecim, qui per singulos annos ad cursum lunarem ad crescunt. Nam, dum in anno’ communi ‘.xii. lunae .ccc.l.iiii. dies habent, remanent ad cursum anni solaris dies undecim, quos Aegyptii epactas uocauerunt, pro eo quod ad inueniendam lunam per totum annum adieciuntur.’⁶⁸

Achieving this harmonization requires either adding eleven days to the lunar date of 17 July or prorating the epacts (almost one additional day per month).

Apparently, the scribe of the Turin calendar preferred the former method. His note on the date of *samchásc* (cited in note 67) appears beside the three boxes in his calendar reserved for the solar dates of 27–9 July. Presumably, he arrived at this date by adding eleven days to lunar 17 July to translate the latter into the solar date of 28 July. Additionally, he defined *samchásc* as the Sunday closest to, rather than after (the formula in the Rawlinson poem), lunar 17 July, which, taken literally, would give a range of dates on either side of solar 28 July extending from 25 July to 1 August. On both counts, the dating of *samchásc* (latest occurrence) in the Turin calendar appears to undermine Güterbock’s assumption of a six-week summer Lent immediately after Pentecost, because the latter system would give the latest possible date for *samchásc* of solar 25 July.

Even more problematic is Güterbock’s assumption that summer Lent began on the evening of Pentecost. Pentecost was one of the most important feasts of the liturgical year, surpassed only by Easter and Christmas. Indeed, it was often joined with them, as in an Old Irish tract on the Mass in the Stowe Missal (early ninth century), which speaks in

problematic because it does not accord with the solar reckoning, according to which the latest possible date for Pentecost is 13 June.

⁶⁷ ‘The Sunday closest to lunar 17 July, that is the Sunday of summer Easter’, Fiorenza Granucci (ed.), ‘Il Calendario Irlandese del Codice D IV 18 della Biblioteca Nazionale di Torino’, *Archivio Glottologico Italiano* 66 (1981), 33–88: 63.

⁶⁸ Walsh and Ó Cróinín, *Cummian’s letter De Controversia Paschali*, 176. I am grateful to Professor Dáibhí Ó Cróinín for advice on the present computistical issues.

one breath of the special fraction of the communion host observed on these three feasts: ... *i nobli casc 7 notlaic 7 chenncigis*.⁶⁹ Because of their importance, these feasts commanded celebration beyond the day itself, sometimes a triduum but more usually an octave. Thus, it would have been judged improper on the very evening of their celebration to resume 'normal', quotidian observance, *a fortiori* to begin Lenten austerities.

Such sentiments about Pentecost in the Western Churches generally and in Ireland specifically are well documented. The earliest evidence of Western practice, from Rome during the papacy of Leo I (440–61), indicates that the octave was not observed and that fasting was deemed proper after the celebration of Pentecost. But even then the fast did not begin until the Wednesday following and was limited to two days in that week.⁷⁰ During the next two centuries Pentecost became more closely modelled on Easter (with its octave of celebration), so that by the time of Pope Gregory II (715–31) it had a full octave and no fast-days.⁷¹ The new observance of the Pentecostal octave that thus took hold is well attested on the Continent in the ninth century by numerous Carolingian councils. For example, a council held *ad ripas Danubii* in 796 asserted:

Scimus itaque sanctum venerandumque Paschae gaudium et adventum sancti Spiritus, id est Pentecosten, in die dominico fuisse conlatum et nos per unamquamque ebdomadam prima feria, id est dominico die, dominicae resurrectionis solemnem laetitiam et sancti Spiritus inenarrabilis presentiae gloriam [*sc.* Pentecost] celebramus.⁷²

Another council, held at Aachen in 817, this one legislating specifically for a monastic audience, forbade fasting in the week of Pentecost except in unusual circumstances.⁷³

⁶⁹ '... in the host of Easter and Christmas and Whitsunday [*sc.* Pentecost]' (Stokes and Strachan, *Theas. Pal.* II, 254, §17). Likewise, Gwynn and Purton, 'The monastery of Tallaght', 129, §6, refer to *na tri soldomnaib* 'the three chief feasts'; The Old Irish penitential, cap. ii, §36 (Gwynn, 'An Irish penitential', 150–1), lists Christmas, Easter and Pentecost as the three days in the year when a layman receives communion. The rule of Patrick specifies the same three days as those on which the monastic tenant (*manach*) must provide a meal for the clergy; see J.G. O'Keeffe, 'The rule of Patrick', *Ériu* 1 (1904), 216–24: 220, §14.

⁷⁰ *Quarta igitur et sexta feria ieiunemus* 'on Wednesday and Friday, therefore, let us fast', Antoine Chavasse (ed.), *Sancti Leonis Magni Romani Pontificis tractatus septem et nonaginta*, Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina 138A (Turnhout 1973), 497, l. 57 (tractatus 78). A similar fast was commanded in Gwynn and Purton, 'The monastery of Tallaght', 156, §68: *in ce[t]na cetain post Pensticostin* 'the first Wednesday after Pentecost'.

⁷¹ See Joseph Pascher, *Das liturgische Jahr* (Munich 1963), 234–9.

⁷² 'And so, recognizing that the sacred and venerable joy of Easter, as well as the coming of the Holy Spirit (that is, Pentecost), was bestowed on Sunday, we celebrate for a week each, on the first ferial day (that is, on Sunday) the solemn joy of the Lord's resurrection and the glory of the indescribable presence of the Holy Spirit' (Albert Werminghoff (ed.), *Monumenta Germaniae Historica: Concilia aevi Karolini I* (Hanover 1906), II 175, 18–21. See also *Concilium Moguntinense* [813], *Monumenta Germaniae Historica: Concilia aevi Karolini I* (Hanover 1906), 269–70, §36.

⁷³ Article 51: *Ut in hebdomada pentecosten non flectantur genua et non ieiunetur, nisi statuti fuerint dies ieiunii* 'So that in the week of Pentecost there is no genuflecting and no

In Ireland the same extended celebration of Pentecost week is attested in contemporary works. The anonymous author of a late eighth-century Hiberno-Latin commentary on Luke explains why Christmas has an extended celebration by pointing to the parallel practice of Easter and Pentecost with their respective octaves.⁷⁴ The early ninth-century Rule of the Céli Dé, for all its ascetic severity, allows three days of celebration each for the eight major feasts of the ecclesiastical year, among them Pentecost: *As e sin meudughadh do bhí ara ccuid bidh isna hocht feilibh... i ngach noinib do tri noinib na hocht feili.*⁷⁵

Most explicit is the *Navigatio Sancti Brendani*. This narrative of St Brendan's voyage to the Promised Land of the Saints was attributed by its editor, Carl Selmer, to an Irish author working in Lotharingia in the early tenth century.⁷⁶ More recent scholarship favours a date of the late eighth or ninth century and emphasizes the Irish character of the *Navigatio*.⁷⁷ Indeed, the work is not merely Irish, it is firmly grounded in the realities of early Irish monastic life, the practices of which it depicts in considerable detail. Special attention is given to the liturgical observances of Brendan and his monks, especially the celebration of the Divine Office and of feast days. Prominent among the latter is Pentecost, which the *Navigatio* portrays as a major feast lasting for a full octave, during which Brendan and his monks are allowed to prolong festivities. Thus, in the first year of the voyage Brendan is told by a hermit to sail to the Paradise of Birds immediately after Easter: *ibique manebitis usque in octauas Pentecostes*. And so he does: *Sanctus Brendanus mansit in eodem loco usque in octauas Pentecostes... post octo dies fecit nauium*

fasting—unless [extraordinary] days of fasting are decreed', Alfred Boretius (ed.), *Monumenta Germaniae Historica: Capitularia regum Francorum I* (Hanover 1883), 347.

⁷⁴ *Quare non obseruat unam diem sollemnitatis natiuitatis Christi, ut est Paschae et Pentecosten? Vt mundarentur dies septimane quos maculauit peccatum Adae*, J.F. Kelly (ed.), *Commentarius in Lucam*, Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina 108C (Turnhout 1974), 15, ll 84–7. I translate as follows: 'Why does the Church not observe merely the single day of the feast of the Nativity of Christ—likewise for the feasts of Easter and Pentecost? So that during the days of a full week those people will be purified whom the sin of Adam stained'. See also Gwynn and Purton, 'The monastery of Tallaght', 129, §6, where Dublithir urges Maelruáin to relax his ban on beer at least 'for the three chief feasts', even if he cannot bring himself to prolong this privilege after or before those three days (*cenibad iarum na riam*). Dublithir's reference to *iarum* implies recognition of an extended celebration of the three great feasts.

⁷⁵ 'That is the increase in their food during the eight festivals... at every noon meal of the three noons of the eight principal feasts' (my translation), Gwynn, 'The teaching of Mael Ruain', 28–9, §45. The eight festivals (including Pentecost) are listed in the Stowe Missal, see F.E. Warren, *The liturgy and ritual of the Celtic Church* (Oxford 1881; 2nd edn with additions by Jane Stevenson, Woodbridge, Suff., 1987), 259 n. 54.

⁷⁶ Carl Selmer (ed.), *Navigatio Sancti Brendani Abbatis* (Notre Dame, Ind., 1959), xxvii–xxix. See also Kenney, *Sources*, no. 203.

⁷⁷ See James Carney's review of Selmer in *Medium Aevum* 32 (1963), 37–44; and D.N. Dumville, 'Two approaches to the dating of *Navigatio Sancti Brendani*', *Studi Medievali*, third series, 29 (1988), 87–102, who dated the work not later than the third quarter of the eighth century, leaving open the possibility that it was composed by an Irishman on the Continent. For a ninth-century date see Giovanni Orlandi, *Navigatio Sancti Brendani I: Introduzione* (Milan 1986), 75–97.

onerari...⁷⁸ In the following year he receives the same instructions: *navigate ad insulam...ubi fuistis in preterito anno a Pasqua usque in octauas Pentecosten*...⁷⁹ Likewise, in the final year (of seven) Brendan and his crew repeat the pattern: *Ibique demorati sunt usque ad octauas Pentecosten*.⁸⁰ Significantly, when they resume their oceanic peregrinations after the last two Pentecostal octaves the next stage of their voyage lasts for 40 days, a likely reflection of summer Lent observance.⁸¹ By all accounts the celebration of Pentecost in the first half of the ninth century, both on the Continent and in Ireland, was prolonged after the Sunday, either for at least three or, more generally, for seven days. Such well-documented observances make it most unlikely that the St Gall scribe would have begun summer Lent as early as the evening of Pentecost Sunday.

What then of the evidence adduced by Güterbock from the two calendars of Marianus Scottus, which imply that summer Lent began immediately after Pentecost?⁸² It is well known that medieval calendars are 'highly individual'⁸³ in their liturgical usage; they reflect such variables as the ecclesiastical status, the place of origin and the place of worship of their compilers. The two calendars from which Güterbock drew his evidence were written by Marianus himself or by a scribe to whom he dictated.⁸⁴ They reflect his own liturgical observance as an *inclusus* who was required to devote feast days such as Pentecost to prayer and study.⁸⁵ If Marianus was not allowed to celebrate the great feast days, how much less likely the discretionary octaves that followed them. Thus, the evidence of Marianus's calendars cannot be applied to the St Gall Priscian.

⁷⁸ Selmer, *Navigatio*, 19 and 27 (cc 9 and 11), respectively; translated by J.J. O'Meara, *The voyage of Saint Brendan* (Dublin 1976), 17 and 23–4, as follows: 'and there you will remain until the octave of Pentecost'; 'Saint Brendan remained where he was until the beginning of the octave of Pentecost...After eight days Saint Brendan had the boat loaded...'

⁷⁹ Selmer, *Navigatio*, 41 (c. 15), 'steer for the island...where you were last year from Easter until the octave of Pentecost' (O'Meara, *The voyage*, 36). See also Selmer, *Navigatio*, 43: *nobiscum festa Paschalia usque in octauas Pentecosten* 'the Easter feasts until the octave of Pentecost with us' (O'Meara, *The voyage*, 38).

⁸⁰ Selmer, *Navigatio*, 77 (c. 27), 'There they stayed until the octave of Pentecost' (O'Meara, *The voyage*, 66).

⁸¹ Selmer, *Navigatio*, 44 (cc 15–16): *Consummatis itaque diebus festis, sanctus Brendanus fratribus precepit preparare nauigium...et ferebatur per quadraginta dies navis* 'When the feast days were over, Saint Brendan ordered his brothers to prepare to sail...and their boat was carried along for forty days' (O'Meara, *The voyage*, 39); and *Navigatio*, 77–8 (cc 27–8): *Transacto iam tempore sollempnitatum...sumpserunt dispendia quadraginta dierum. Erat autem nauigium eorum contra orientalem plagam quadraginta dierum* 'When the season of feast-days was over...they took on board provision for forty days. Their voyage was for forty days towards the east' (O'Meara, *The voyage*, 66–7).

⁸² Güterbock, 'Aus irischen Handschriften' (as in note 4 above), 94 and 97–8.

⁸³ C.R. Cheney's phrase, in *Handbook of dates for students of English history* (London 1945; reprinted with corrections, London, 1996), 40.

⁸⁴ Güterbock, 'Aus irischen Handschriften', 92.

⁸⁵ See the late ninth-century *Regula Solitariorum* (c. xl): *Dominicis vero diebus sive festis, orationi tantum et lectioni vacent* 'on Sundays and feast-days they should spend their time in prayer and reading only', Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, vol. 103, col. 631B.

In a broader perspective the conflicting evidence in Irish sources about the beginning date and duration of summer Lent admits of another explanation. Just as in the Western Churches generally the observance of spring Lent was expanded to 40 days by making it begin on Ash Wednesday but the nomenclature of the older, six-week Lent (36 days) was preserved, so, arguably, in early Ireland the notion of a six-week summer Lent after Pentecost was maintained but with appropriate adjustments for liturgical realities.

How might such adjustments have been made? One point of reference was certain: whatever system was used, summer Lent would end on the eve of Sunday. That much is clear, both from the model of Easter Sunday and from the reference in the St Gall Priscian gloss to *Satharnn Samchasc*, which implies that *Samchasc* fell on a Sunday. As for the beginning date, the two most likely possibilities are: (1) the first Sunday (evening) after Pentecost, as described in the *Navigatio Sancti Brendani*, followed by a six-week Lent; or (2) the Wednesday after Pentecost, as implied in the Céli Dé documents, initiating a genuine 40-day Lent that concluded on the seventh Sunday after Pentecost. In both cases the result would be the same: *samhásc* would fall on the Sunday seven (not six) weeks after Pentecost.

Since the seventh Sunday after Pentecost also marks fourteen weeks after Easter and given that in the Western Churches the date of Easter could range from 22 March to 25 April, the corresponding range for *samhásc* would be from 28 June to 1 August. Consequently, the earliest possible date for the Saturday vigil of *samhásc* would be 27 June. From the St Gall festival entries quoted above, it is evident that the *samhásc* vigil (noted on p. 233) fell on a date after 24 June (John the Baptist, noted on p. 229) and before 29 June (St Paul, noted on p. 236). Of the four days so defined (25–8 June, inclusive), the first two are rendered irrelevant by the earliest date of 28 June established above for *samhásc*, leaving only 27 and 28 June as possibilities. The latter date should probably also be ruled out because it would mean having *samhásc* on 29 June—a date already spoken for with the notice of St Paul's feast, which (for all its importance) would have ceded place to *samhásc* had the two coincided. That leaves 27 June as the most plausible date for the St Gall notice of *Satharnn Samchasc*, and consequently for *samhásc* itself the date of 28 June. Equating 28 June with the seventh Sunday after Pentecost would in that year put Pentecost on 10 May and Easter on 22 March.

The latter is remarkable because it represents the earliest possible date for the occurrence of Easter. Just how remarkable becomes clear from Easter tables, which show that in the seven centuries from 500 to 1200 Easter fell on 22 March only six times, once in each century except the eighth. Moreover, such an unusually early (or late) calendrical date for Easter causes correspondingly early (or late) occurrences of the movable feasts dependent on Easter. Indeed, the effect on these latter feasts, when measured against calendar months and the commencement of major

seasons, can be even more dramatic than the date of Easter itself. For example, the year 1014 was notable because (among other reasons) Easter fell on its latest possible date of 25 April. Yet the Annals of Ulster record not this remarkable fact but the more dramatic consequence that the Sunday following Easter, Low Sunday (*minchásc*), fell on 2 May and thus decidedly within summer: *Minchaise i samradh isin bliadain-si quod non auditum est ab antiquis temporibus*.⁸⁶ The previous occurrence, in 919,⁸⁷ was also noticed in the same terms, and likewise the next occurrence in 1109.⁸⁸ In all three instances the annalist singles out *minchásc* because it, not Easter, broke a significant chronological and psychological barrier by occurring in the season of summer.

Remarkably, the St Gall Priscian also has a marginal entry noting the feast of *minchásc* (p. 170), the only movable feast (other than *Satharnn Samchasc*) mentioned among a dozen notices of ecclesiastical festivals. In this case the extraordinarily early date of Easter on 22 March (as argued above) would cause *minchásc* (and thus the end of the Easter octave) to fall in March (29 March) and *samchásc* to fall not only in June, but before the feast of Paul (29 June)—another chronological curiosity. Arguably, these notices of *minchásc* and *Satharnn Samchasc* were entered in the St Gall Priscian because of their dramatically early dates of occurrence in the year of writing, both ultimately determined by Easter falling on its earliest possible date of 22 March. The only year in the whole of the ninth century (indeed since AD 604) when Easter fell on 22 March was 851, the date proposed here for the completion of the St Gall Priscian.⁸⁹

APPENDIX

Assuming the date of 851 for the completion of the St Gall Priscian and using the evidence of the marginal notes, one might hazard a reconstruction of the chronology of its copying. Obviously, at least two major assumptions must be made: that no major hiatus occurred once copying began; and that the marginal notes cited here are contemporaneous with the copying of the main text. Such contemporaneity seems assured for the first note of interest (in ogham), *feria cai hodie*, which occurs on the opening page of the fourth quire (p. 50). Unfortunately, the reference to *cai* is unclear, but the use of *feria* rather

⁸⁶ ‘Low Sunday [2 May] was in summer this year, which was not heard of from ancient times’: Mac Airt and Mac Niocaill, *Annals of Ulster*, 446–7 (1014.1).

⁸⁷ Mac Airt and Mac Niocaill, *Annals of Ulster*, 368–9 (919.1): *Minchaise ala laithiu do Samradh* ‘Low Sunday on the second day of summer’.

⁸⁸ Mac Airt and Mac Niocaill, *Annals of Ulster*, 548–9 (1109.1): *Minchaise ala laithiu do Shamhradh* ‘Low Sunday on the second day of summer [2 May]’.

⁸⁹ This date not only accords with the broad framework of 840–70 outlined by Nigra but also fits comfortably with his narrower *terminus ante quem* of c. 860, as it allows sufficient time for the manuscript to reach the archdiocese of Cologne and for Gunther’s reputation to grow, circumstances that underlie both the composition and the insertion of the encomiastic Latin poem.

than *fél* to signal its celebration suggests a Latin entry; perhaps *cai* is a variant spelling of *Gaii*, genitive of *Gaius*. The latter name occurs once in *Félire Óengusso* (under 20 February), referring to Pope *Gaius*,⁹⁰ and several times in The martyrology of Tallaght, referring to an early Christian martyr, including commemorations on 4 and 27 October (twice).⁹¹ But *Gaius* the martyr is a relatively obscure saint whose appearance in the St Gall Priscian seems odd. Twenty pages later (p. 70) the scribe notes the feast of St Martin (*fel Martain*) on 11 November. If the notice of *feria cai* refers to a 27 October commemoration of *Gaius*, the correlation of time and copied pages between the two feasts would suggest a steady rate of copying, approximately two pages per day. Applied retroactively, this pace of copying would suggest a starting date for the manuscript in early October—presumably of 850.

After p. 70 the next significant entries are a much-quoted stanza on p. 112⁹² describing foul weather at sea (and consequently no Viking attacks)⁹³ and two pages later a comment from the scribe that he is cold.⁹⁴ Located 34 to 36 pages after the notice of St Martin's feast on 11 November, these comments should in theory mark a further 17–18 days' work, thus giving a notional date for their writing in late November or early December, but the reality of limited daylight and winter weather (to which the entries attest) may have meant a more protracted period of copying, perhaps extending to late December or even January. Consonant with a seasonally induced slower pace of copying is the next datable entry, on p. 170, recording the festival of *minchásc*, Low Sunday (29 March in 851) approximately 28 'normal' working days after the previous two entries.

As *minchásc* marks the end of the octave of Easter, an earlier notice eleven pages previously (approximately five working days) on p. 159, of 'Ruadri'⁹⁵ may have signalled his arrival for Easter. On the recto of the same folio (p. 158) the invocation of the Virgin Mary, *s[e]n [a noi]b ing[e]n*, may commemorate the Annunciation, a fixed feast that fell on 25 March. Some 34 pages further, pp 203 and 204, the first folio of the thirteenth quire, contain two Old Irish stanzas celebrating the music of the blackbird and the song of the cuckoo,⁹⁶ perhaps reflecting a correlation between the time of copying and the advent of summer—whether these stanzas are *ad hoc* compositions or are taken from another source hardly matters here. Approximately one quire later,

⁹⁰ Nigra's conjecture, *Reliquie Celtiche*, 15–16. See also Damian McManus, *A guide to ogam*, Maynooth Monographs 4 (Maynooth 1991), 132–3.

⁹¹ Best and Lawlor, *Martyrology of Tallaght*, 84. See also Whitley Stokes (ed. and tr.), *Félire Húi Gormáin/The martyrology of Gorman*, Henry Bradshaw Society 9 (London 1895), 190 (4 October).

⁹² On the faulty pagination see note 12 above.

⁹³ *Thes. Pal.* II, 290.

⁹⁴ *mar uar dom* 'I am very cold'.

⁹⁵ Discussed above, pp 160–1.

⁹⁶ *Thes. Pal.* II, 290.

at p. 221, the notice of Diarmait's feast on 21 June begins the series of datable entries that ends on p. 242 with the festival commemorations for 1 July.

Thereafter, only seven pages (pp 243–9) have survived, completing the fifteenth quire, which ends abruptly in the middle of a sentence: *Nam uocatiuus quoque intransitiue secundis adiungitur uerborum personis cum proprius sit naturaliter ...*, corresponding to a point about one-third of the way into *Institutiones*, book 17 (section 67). Clearly, part of the original manuscript is missing, but how much? The remaining text of the *Institutiones* (two-thirds of book 17 and all of book 18), amounting to 448 sections, would require at least another 70 pages of manuscript.⁹⁷ Assuming that the pace of copying (about two pages per day) evident in late June was sustained, the manuscript is likely to have been finished in early August. On this evidence the St Gall Priscian manuscript was begun in October 850 and completed in August 851.

⁹⁷ This conclusion is based on the calculation that on average a page of the St Gall manuscript corresponds to six sections of the modern printed text of Keil, *Grammatici Latini* II–III.