



2019

## Insular and Carolingian Hymns

Peter Gavin Ferriby  
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2019

# Insular and Carolingian Hymns

Gavin Ferriby, *Sacred Heart University*



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# Hymns and Hymnody

## Historical and Theological Introductions

Volume 1: From Asia Minor to Western Europe

Edited by

MARK A. LAMPORT

BENJAMIN K. FORREST

and VERNON M. WHALEY



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INTRODUCTIONS

Volume 1: From Asia Minor to Western Europe

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## Chapter 9

# Insular and Carolingian Hymns

PETER GAVIN FERRIBY

### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

THIS CHAPTER INTRODUCES THE legacy of hymnists from the islands of Ireland and Great Britain, and continental Europe west of the Elbe River and north of the Alps and Pyrenees during four centuries, from ca. 500 to ca. 900 CE.

#### Insular Christianity in Ireland

Late Ancient Christianity arrived and spread in Roman Britannia by the third century CE, but its presence receded in the tumult following the Imperial Roman withdrawal ca. 410. The subsequent waxing Saxon presence carried traditional, Germanic beliefs and practices, and drove many (but not all) Romano-British Christians to the west coast, Cornwall, and Wales. By the early fifth century, Christianity was known in Ireland (never a part of the Roman Empire), associated with Palladius, Patricius, St. Bridget, and others. Because sources are sparse, early insular Christianity remains obscure, marked particularly by the growth of monastic communities in Ireland in the sixth century, which lent a distinctive character to its legacy



of worship, scriptoria, learning, and evangelism. Irish peregrini (pilgrims or wanderers) extended Irish Christianity both to northwestern Britain and to former Roman provinces and borderlands in Western Europe. For example, St. Columbanus (543–615) journeyed to Western Europe, and founded monasteries in Luxeuil, Bobbio, Chelles, St. Gall., and elsewhere

### Insular Christianity in Great Britain

Christian missions to the Anglo-Saxons came from two sources, Ireland and Rome (by way of Gaul). Irish monks self-exiled themselves to northwest Britain and founded monasteries, beginning with St. Columba on Iona ca. 563, and St. Aidan on Lindisfarne ca. 634. St. Columba was regarded as a hymnist in eighth- and ninth-century sources, and was reported by St. Adarnan (d. 704) to have written hymns for weekly use which do not survive. The *Liber Hymnorum* states in Irish that Pope Gregory I sent to St. Columba a cross and a booklet of “hymns for the week” (*immañ nā sechtmaine*).<sup>1</sup> The Roman or Romano-Gallican Christian mission, initiated by Pope Gregory the Great in 596 CE, reintroduced to Anglo-Saxon courts Christian practices with Roman or Gallican prestige. Centered further south in Canterbury, it also reclaimed the former Roman provincial capital at York in 627 CE. St. Theodore of Tarsus (Archbishop of Canterbury 668–690), and St. Hadrian, Abbot of St. Augustine’s Abbey (of Berber origins, d. 710), founded an influential school that taught music and liturgical texts.<sup>2</sup> Monastic centers at York, Wearmouth, and Jarrow supported scriptoria and the work of scholars such as the Venerable Bede (672/3–735) and the young student Alcuin of York (ca. 740–804).<sup>3</sup> These centers provided texts, teachers, and prestige for insular and Western European rulers from the seventh to the ninth centuries. They shaped and transmitted Late Roman Christian learning to those courts that shared cultural and political contexts (former Roman provinces, borderlands, and beyond) marked by overlaying languages, customs, and oral and written traditions.

1. Bernard and Atkinson, *Irish Liber Hymnorum*, 1:63 (Trinity College Library MS 1441).

2. *Adamnani Vita Sancti Columbae* 2.9, *Alio in tempore hymnorum liber septimaniorum sancti Columbae manu descriptus*, 131; Lapidge, “School” 62–66.

3. Blair, *World*, 225.

## Western European Christianity

The Frankish Merovingian dynasty (centered in present-day France) gave way to the Carolingian in 718, when Charles Martel became *de facto* ruler of principalities and kingdoms. Though in competition with both Vikings and eastern Slavs, his gravest threat came from vigorous Mediterranean Islamic caliphates whose expansion was stopped at the Battle of Tours in 732. His son King Pippin the Short (reigned 751–768) and Charles the Great (Charlemagne, reigned 768–814) took care to incorporate and transform previous Frankish liturgical, cultural, and political life. For example, numerous royal charters and documents respectfully cite *antecessores nostri* (our predecessors).<sup>4</sup> Charles the Great claimed the title Emperor in Rome in 800 CE. At his death in 814 his Empire embraced much of France, Germany, the Alps, the Low Countries, and Italy; Brittany and the islands remained outside. Carolingian cultural stability anchored the economic, legal, ecclesiastical, and educational reforms during his long reign and his son's, Louis the Pious (814–840). In 781 Charles invited Alcuin of York to teach his court and appointed him Abbott of St. Martin's at Tours in 796. Alcuin transmitted the work of numerous insular scholars, complemented by teachers from Rome and Byzantium, and codified many texts, precedents, and documentary genres that set patterns for later medieval Europe. Among those were hymnals compiled for use in monastic daily prayers or Offices.<sup>5</sup>

Alcuin's own few hymns have not found wide reception; his legacy though indirect was powerful. He introduced hymns into private prayer in the Tours prayerbook. His emendations in the Tours Bible provided a sound scriptural basis for later hymn composition and he may have been influential in early development of the New Hymnal (discussed below). His work underwrote Charles' reforms, particularly the *Admonitio Generalis* (*General Warning*, 789) which directed monasteries and cathedrals to establish schools for education in Latin, choirs to teach music and liturgy, and scriptoria for the copying and editing of manuscripts. Many manuscripts used a specific script (Carolingian minuscule) developed as a calligraphic standard recognizable across Europe, whose exceptional clarity allowed the interposition of early musical notation as it developed.<sup>6</sup>

4. Page, *Christian West*, 295; see also Pippin's grant of immunity to Corbie, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica: Diplomata Kar.* 1:40.

5. Brown, "Introduction," 20–33; Bullough, *Alcuin: Achievement*, 3–124 and 201–4; Jullien, "Les hymnes," 79–81; Ganz, "Le 'De Laude Dei' d'Alcuin," 390

6. Bullough, "Alcuin and the Kingdom of Heaven," 9; McKitterick, "Script," 221–22; Contreni, "Carolingian Renaissance," 713–15; Fassler, "Office of the Cantor," 104–5.

Successive contending branches of the Carolingian Imperial family were in frequent conflict, and their internal conflicts exacerbated the impact of Viking incursions, and speeded political dissolution. Carolingian cultural achievements endured in monasteries, cathedral chapters, and renewed contacts with Rome and Byzantium. Viking incursions and political instability also sapped the strength of insular Christianity, especially in Ireland and northern Britain. Anglo-Saxon textual codification flourished in the more stable West Saxon kingdoms and Æthelwold, Bishop of Winchester (reigned 963–984), whose reformed Benedictine scriptoria copied numerous manuscripts.

### Sources of Insular Hymns

Two manuscripts are particularly important. The first is the *Bangor Antiphonary* (Milan Biblioteca Ambrosiana C.5, ca. 680–691), a misnamed liturgical miscellany that includes twelve hymns in rhythmical Latin verse. This collection shows Gallican, Spanish, and Italian influences.<sup>7</sup> The second is *Liber Hymnorum*, preserved in two non-identical but overlapping manuscripts in Dublin (University College Library MS Franciscan A, and Trinity College Library MS 1441, both heavily glossed, ca. eleventh–early twelfth centuries). They transmit twenty-four hymns, with reference to psalmody, that originated far earlier, including *Altus prosator* (“High Creator”).<sup>8</sup>

These two collections present distinctive Irish traditions of syllabic metres, with devices reflecting ancient vernacular traditions of bardic poetry. Abecedarian hymns (four in the *Bangor Antiphonary* and five in *Liber Hymnorum*) utilized a mnemonic device for the memorization characteristic of the oral/textual cultural spectrum. Composition of new Irish hymns seems to have ceased in the ninth century, with exception of Sedulius Scotus (fl. 850) an Irish scholar who probably fled Vikings for Liege. On the continent, St. Columbanus’ *Rule* directed psalms to be sung but his instruction lacked other directions for Divine Office. His biographer Jonas wrote that he set out instructions for chant, but none survive. Although the hymn *Precamur patrem* (“Let Us Pray the Father”) has been convincingly ascribed to St. Columbanus, Irish hymnody seems not to have been widely diffused throughout the Gallican churches.<sup>9</sup>

7. Curran, *Antiphonary of Bangor*, 32, 115

8. Brannon, “Medieval Ireland,” 194; Fleischmann, “References to Chant,” 43–49.

9. Steverson, “Altus Prosator,” 327–28; Boynton, “Orality, Literacy,” 103–4; Davidson, “Irish Hymnody,” para. 7; Buckley, “Columbanus,” paras. 2–3; Black, “Divine Office,” 53–54; Kutsch, *Ionae Vitae Sanctorum Columbani*, 158; Curran, *Antiphonary of*

## Sources of Anglo-Saxon Hymns

The *Vespasian Psalter* (British Library, Cotton Vespasian A.i) contains three hymns glossed in Mercian dialect. The Venerable Bede discussed seven hymns in *De arte metrica* and several other hymns elsewhere that suggest that Anglo-Saxon communities were using a version of the Old Hymnal (discussed below). He also included Cædmon's nine-line creation hymn (ca. 675), *Nū scylan hergan hæfaenricaes uard*, (Now [We] Must Honor the Guardian of Heaven), in his *Historia Ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum* (Ecclesiastical History of the English People). Cædmon was an illiterate lay brother of Streonshalh (Whitby) while St. Hilda was abbess (657–680). According to Bede, Cædmon received the hymn in a vision or dream. The text was known to have been copied in twenty-one manuscripts (of which nineteen are extant) in Anglo-Saxon, and the text also survives in Latin (*Nunc laudare debemus autorem regni caelestia*).<sup>10</sup>

Successing generations of Irish and Anglo-Saxon scholars assimilated Continental and Anglo-Saxon hymns and liturgical usage. Their monastic communities, both insular and continental, followed Rules by Sts. Benedict, Columbanus, and others that provided stability, cohesion, and the pattern of daily prayer, known as the divine office, and used hymns compiled in Carolingian hymnals.<sup>11</sup>

## Carolingian Sources

Hymns are found in the numerous manuscripts that form the bases of modern, critical editions and scholarship. Each hymn underwent a particular history of transmission, reflecting oral, memorized usage on the threshold of textuality. Psalter-hymnals often compiled hymns with the Psalms. Antiphonaries (books of Psalm antiphons) sometimes included hymns, and indicated their use by citing the first lines (incipits). Scholars have traced three levels of compilation.<sup>12</sup>

First, the "Old Hymnal" has been identified on the basis of seventh- to ninth-century manuscripts and included as many as twenty-nine hymns,

*Bangor*, 50–58; Lapidge, "Columbanus," 107–10.

10. O'Donnell, *Cædmon's Hymn*; see also Colgrave and Mynors, *Bede's Ecclesiastical History*, 414–21; Wallace-Hadrill, *Bede's Ecclesiastical History*, 165–67.

11. Milfull, *Hymns*, 56–57; Jullien, "Les sources," 84; Boynton, McAlpine, and Neises, "Medieval"; Hen, "Rome, Anglo-Saxon England," 308–12; Black, "Divine Office," 57–66. A good introduction to the Divine Office is Collamore, "Prelude," 3–11.

12. Jullien, "Les sources," 159; Boynton, McAlpine, and Nieves, "Medieval," paras. 1–6; Gneuss, "Zur Geschichte," 64–72.

but no single surviving manuscript contains every one; no community used them all. St. Ambrose's hymns figure prominently (such as *Deus Creator omnium*, Creator of the Earth and Sky). Comprised of hymns for daily offices and Sunday, the Old Hymnal included five hymns for feast days (Christmas, Epiphany, Easter) and two for prominent saints, Peter and Paul, and St. John Baptist. The Old Hymnal was known both in Anglo-Saxon and Frankish realms, the provenance of key manuscripts.

Second, the "Frankish Hymnal" has been identified on the basis of manuscripts from northern France (Neustria) and southwest Germany (Swabia, Burgundia). An eighth-century expanded repertory (thirty-four hymns), it has been associated with Carolingian liturgical reforms between 750 and ca. 825. It provided a different hymn for each weekday at Lauds (the mid-morning office) and three Sundays in Lent.

Finally, an extensive expansion of the hymn repertory occurred in the "New Hymnal" found in continental and insular manuscripts of the ninth and tenth centuries. Probably an expansion of the Frankish Hymnal, its earliest versions comprised a repertory of thirty-five to sixty hymns and grew to one hundred or more during the tenth century: thirty hymns for the divine offices, forty-two for the *Temporale* (annual liturgical cycle), seventy-two for the *Sanctorale* (the annual cycle of saints' days), including Commons of Saints, and three for the dedication of a church. No manuscript contains every hymn. Forty-six manuscripts (ten from the ninth century) have been identified that preserve portions of the repertory, several of which preserve a typical repertory in liturgical order.<sup>13</sup> The New Hymnal likely reached Britain by the late ninth or early tenth centuries and has been identified in two forms: the *Canterbury Hymnal* (three manuscripts), and the *Winchester Hymnal* (four manuscripts and two prose paraphrases). Æthelwold of Winchester referred to the Winchester collection in his *Régulâris Concordia*, a document that guided the Benedictine Reform of Anglo-Saxon monasteries.<sup>14</sup>

While the weekly cycle of thirty hymns for the divine office changed little during later medieval centuries, the number of hymns for annual feasts and Saints days increased, but not consistently in every location. Given its

13. For example, see Zürich, Zentralbibliothek, Rheinau 83 (eleventh century), and Paris Bibliothèque Nationale lat. 11550, ca. 1030–1060; Boynton, McAlpine, and Nieves, "Medieval," "Sources and Transmission."

14. See (for example) Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 391 (Worcester, ca. 1065), and other eleventh-century manuscripts. Gneuss, "Zur Geschichte," 72–80; Bullough and Harting-Corrêa, "Texts, Chant," 505–8; Harting-Corrêa, "Make," 82; Boynton, McAlpine, and Nieves, "Medieval," "Sources and Transmission"; Milfull, "Anglo-Saxon Hymns," para. 2; Milfull, "Canterbury Hymnal," paras. 1–3; Milfull, "Winchester Hymnal," paras. 1–4; Milfull, *Hymns*, 8; Jullien, "Les sources," 67.

ninth-century provenance, the New Hymnal is usually held to reflect literary elaboration and liturgical reforms enacted during the reign of Louis the Pious and continued despite dynastic conflicts. Louis supported Benedict of Aniane (747–821) leader of an abbatial council in Aachen (817) that promulgated the *Codex regularum*, a platform for continuing reform of monastic houses and schools, and elaboration of the Benedictine Rule insofar as “the Rule of St. Benedict did not provide all the information necessary for the running of a monastery.”<sup>15</sup> The regularization of the developing cults of the Saints, and growing liturgical sophistication, as witnessed in the New Hymnal’s expanding *Sanctorale*, left an enduring legacy.

### Hymns and Music

The growth of the repertory factored in the continual renegotiation of the oral/written continuum that characterized early medieval music. Monks and clergy were expected to memorize a great deal of liturgy, and Scripture, the Psalms, canticles, and hymns of the daily, weekly, and annual cycles of the divine office. Manuscript conventions present hymn texts written in a prose format, without obvious separation of lines or verses. Usually a hymn begins with a large initial capital letter; each verse begins with a smaller. These capitals are often crucial for identifying a manuscript’s provenance and transmission. Words usually are not separated by spaces and are often split between lines. The manuscript text of a hymn was in practice more often a reference than a classbook or performance score, reflecting the office hymns’ persistent oral tradition of performance that endured longer than other genres.<sup>16</sup>

Musical notation as non-transcribable, staffless neumes can be found in eleventh-century manuscripts; some manuscripts also contain transcribable forms of hymn notation, and partial notation as glosses. In the Zürich manuscript cited above (fn. 13) nearly all the hymns were notated.<sup>17</sup> Later manuscripts sometimes notated all the verses to allow for metrical variants and liquescent vowels to be properly distributed through the scale tones. Earlier traditions employed a small repertory of melodies for many texts;

15. Fassler, “Office,” 34; De Jong, “Carolingian Monasticism,” 630–32.

16. Boynton, “Orality, Literacy,” 108–10, 119; Boynton, McAlpine, and Nieves, “Medieval,” “Texts and Notation”; Wieland, “Glossed Manuscript,” 172–73.

17. Only two additional manuscripts contain notation for all or nearly all of their hymn texts: Huesca, Archivio cathedral 1 and Verona, Biblioteca Capitolare, 109; see Boynton, McAlpine, and Nieves, “Medieval,” “Texts and Notation.”

after the early medieval period, separate melodies became assigned to hymns.<sup>18</sup>

Medieval chant was usually notated without metre; such notation probably reflected early medieval practice that did not prioritize rhythm. Many hymns had a musical range of a sixth, proceeding often in step-wise motion with carefully placed leaps that reveal the music's modal identity by focusing attention on the final pitch of a line. Hymns varied widely in style, with the greater melodic elaboration and wider range for important saints' days, especially Sts. Peter and Paul, St. John Baptist, and St. Martin of Tours.

During Late Antiquity (third to seventh centuries) Latin hymn texts shifted from the quantitative metres of classical poetry (based on syllables with long or short vowels) to syllabic metres based on stress. Irish hymnody in particular developed sophisticated features such as end-rhyme, internal rhyme, and alliteration found in Old Irish poetry. Hymn texts divided into verses required clearer, more repetitive musical form than chants for sequences, tropes, or non-metrical canticles. Four-line verses produced forms such as ABAB or ABCA in which the initial and final notes are the same for the first and last lines. Bede noted in the seventh century that hymns were sung in alternating choirs. This practice generally required each verse to be semantically complete and musically consistent (like psalms chanted in choir); enjambment is rare, and usually the verses respond to each other before the conventional closing, unison verse *Gloria Patri*.<sup>19</sup>

Given each hymn's particular path of transmission and compilation, secure attribution to individual hymnists is frequently impossible. Authorship or attribution, common in other genres, is very rare in liturgical manuscripts. Internal evidence (such as style, metre, or word-usage) is invariably insufficient; attribution to Ambrose is unreliable since many hymns were composed in imitation. Beyond the fourteen hymns now securely attributed to St. Ambrose, a handful of hymns can be attributed to late Antique hymnists Venantius Fortunatus (ca. 530–ca. 610), Caelius Sedulius (fl. 425–450), and Aurelius Clemens Prudentius (ca. 348–ca. 413) because they are excerpted from longer works with secure attributions known to Carolingians.<sup>20</sup>

Three Carolingian processional hymns have relatively secure attributions. The first is for Palm Sunday, *Gloria, laus et honor* (All Glory, Laud, and Honor) by Theodulf of Orleans (750–821). Josse de Clichtove

18. Boynton, "Orality, Literacy," 116, 120, 145; Stäblein, "Hymnus, B," 993–99.

19. Stevenson, "Altus Prosator," 341–42; Boynton, McAlpine, and Nieses, "Medieval," "Melodies of Hymns"; Björkqvall and Haug, "Formauffassung" 159–60.

20. Jullien, "Les sources," 58; Boynton, "Appunti," 17–19.

(1516) reported the legend that he wrote the poem for public performance, seventy-eight lines in an elegiac metre meant to imitate “pagan” poetry, while imprisoned for alleged involvement in a rebellion led by Louis the Pious’ nephew, Bernard of Italy (817). The “king” (Emperor Louis) heard Theodulf singing his hymn from his cell as he passed by on Palm Sunday and released him from prison (but did not restore his bishopric). Soon after Theodulf’s death it was adapted for processional use. His story gave rise to a performance practice in which the hymn’s opening verses were sung from an upper gallery by boys in remembrance of its author’s imprisonment. The first verse was repeated as a processional refrain, similar to processional refrains used in Venantius’ *Salve festa dies* (Hail Thee, Festival Day) and Prudentius’ hymn for the new light *Inventor rutili dux bone luminis* (Blest Lord, Creator of the Glowing Light). The second hymn, *Veni creator spiritus* (Come, Creator Spirit), for Pentecost is relatively securely attributed to Hrabanus Maurus (780–856), but not beyond question. (It is discussed further below.) The third hymn, the Marian processional *Ave beati germinis invicte rex* (Hail, unconquered King of the blessed seed) is the sole hymn reliably attributed to Notker Balbulus (“the Stammer,” 840–921) without, unfortunately, transcribable musical notation.<sup>21</sup>

Liturgy, hymns, and liturgical commentary resonated with political, cultural Carolingian conflicts, since they complemented the ritual proceedings of the Court, and enacted the reforms legislated by Emperors and Synods. Saturated with public meanings, hymns were embedded in elite doctrinal developments and vernacular cultural questions that inevitably resonated with politics and law.

## THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES

### Intellectual World

*Theologid* (theology) was not a word in widespread use in the early medieval world. Despite John the Scot’s (Eriugena) usage in *Periphyseon* Book 3, and his division of wisdom (practical, natural, theological, and rational, in general following Pseudo-Dionysius), few accepted “theology” as a descriptive term for a subject.<sup>22</sup> Anglo-Saxons and Carolingians spoke of *doctrina*, following St. Augustine, for example *De Doctrina Christiana* Book 1, and

21. Wulstan, “Gloria,” paras. 1–2; Boynton, McAlpine, and Neises, “Medieval,” “Authorship,” para. 1; Penn, “Latin Verse,” 90; Hiley, “Notker Balbulus,” para. 4.

22. Ganz, “Theology,” 759–60.



focused upon practical and moral concerns.<sup>23</sup> This focus tightly bound *doctrina* with education, liturgical practices, and reforms. The Venerable Bede summarized the New Testament rule, "First do, and then teach." Alcuin affirmed that the integrity of patristic teaching of faith and the truth of the church was a "public highway of apostolic doctrine," indeed "the royal road."<sup>24</sup> Benedict of Aniane characterized this road as "an acutely sensed experience [that] alone makes one a friend of God; it is through this wisdom that one becomes a friend of God and obeys him; in this manner faith will remain pure and will grow until faith's content [i.e., *doctrina*] is revealed."<sup>25</sup> *Doctrina* was moral rather than intellectual assent, and was embedded in liturgical and educational practices.

### The Importance of Liturgy

*Doctrina* was fundamentally liturgical. On the islands, doctrinal controversies (such as that between Irish and Anglo-Saxon/Gallican customs regarding the calculation of the date of Easter) left little trace on hymns, which by contrast were deeply implicated in major continental doctrinal controversies, encompassed by terms such as Adoptionism, *the filioque clause*, trinitarian formulas, and eucharistic presence. Several persistent Carolingian anxieties wove through these disputes regarding the relationship of the papacy to the emperor, variations between Frankish and Roman practices, the widening divisions between the western and eastern churches, and dissension in the Imperial family.<sup>26</sup> These disputes were implicated in Carolingian doctrinal debates and debaters had differing views of tradition and authority that were often aligned with political or Imperial family factions. As public, liturgical events, the debates took place in front of rulers, whose decisions resolved them through the promulgation of collective ("catholic") *doctrina* as the Imperial faith. The ideal ruler was, in Alcuin's idealistic words, "Catholic in faith, a king in power, a priest in preaching, a philosopher in liberal studies."<sup>27</sup> Liturgy and hymns thus became a way of shaping traditions that transcended the record of these events.<sup>28</sup> Liturgical

23. Stock, *Augustine*, 194–98.

24. Pelikan, *Growth*, 13 (Bede, *Exposition of the Acts*, 1), 15 (Alcuin, "Against Felix," *MGH Epistolae* 4:337).

25. Leclercq, "Munimenta," 1:63.

26. Pelikan, *Growth*, 47–49.

27. Ganz, "Theology," 784.

28. McKitterick, "Liturgy" 37.

customs and commentary both invoked and supported royal and ecclesiastical authority. As Hrabanus Maurus wrote:

*Quid dicat Sanctus Spiritus Ecclesiis  
Cui Psalmista pari concordat grammate plebem  
Sic quoque nos semper oculis atque auribus est fas  
Intentis, fratres, discere verba Dei*

What the Holy Spirit speaks in the Church  
Through grammar the Psalmist brings to the people  
So brethren, we should strive always  
With eyes and ears intent to learn the Word of God.<sup>29</sup>

*Doctrina* constituted the core of learning and liturgy that was the basis of the royal monastic schools.

### The Importance of Education

In the revived schools, children both encountered *doctrina* when they entered a world of music.<sup>30</sup> They inhabited several linguistic worlds, and never forgot their first languages.<sup>31</sup> Every written text of the early medieval West, whether Latin or vernacular (*in rusticam Romanam linguam aut Thiotiscam*) must be taken as requiring an allied oral performance.<sup>32</sup> School children learned Latin by memorizing and singing the Psalter. Their interdependent oral and literate performances employed liturgical texts of overriding importance to reform their existing patterns of behavior and produce new ones.<sup>33</sup> Musical notation evolved as cues for memory and performance.<sup>34</sup> Some manuscripts record musical notation in both letters and neumes, suggesting a spectrum of orality and literacy, and a permeable frontier between them.<sup>35</sup> The schools enacted Carolingian education and liturgical reforms with great resolve in frequently difficult circumstances, as the reach of the gospel extended farther in the vernacular population.

29 Colish, *Study*, 64 (Migne, *PL* 107:203–4, epigram to *De clericorum institutione*).

30. Howe, *Before*, 211–2.

31. Contreni, “Carolingian Renaissance,” 731.

32. Brown, *Rise*, 87, quoting Council of Tours (813) Canon 7, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica: Concilia* 2: 288; Richter, *Formation*, 54.

33. Stock, *Implications*, 90.

34. Rankin, “Carolingian Music,” 292; Boynton, “Orality, Literacy,” 108–10.

35. For example, see Zürich, Zentralbibliothek, Rheinau 83 (eleventh century), and Paris Bibliothèque Nationale lat. 11550, ca. 1030–1060; Boynton, McAlpine, and Nieses, “Medieval,” “Sources and Transmission;” Boynton, “Orality, Literacy,” 108–10.

The use of hymns to teach grammar and poetic literacy was founded upon St. Augustine's analysis of St. Ambrose' hymn *Deus creator omnium* (God, Creator of All Things, used at Vespers on Saturday) in his *De musica*, book 6, which was a book about metre, not music as an art. Bede extended this teaching in *De arte metrica* (701), which mentions seven hymns in the Old Hymnal.<sup>36</sup> Hymns with interlinear glosses in the vernacular enabled instruction at the frontiers of orality and literacy, and familiarized students with doctrinal, literary, and legal conventions used in chapter, chancery, and court. A prime example is *Ut queant laxis*.<sup>37</sup> Attributed to Paul the Deacon (ca. 730–ca. 799), this hymn for the feast of St. John the Baptist teaches not only monastic virtues (such as asceticism and solitude) and *doctrina* (the biblical parable of the sower and the seeds), but also musical intervals. Its first verse became a medieval pedagogical standard and was the origin of solfege; each phrase began with a rising note of the modal scale.

<i>UT queant laxis</i>	Saint John, clean the guilt of the stained lips of your
<i>REsonare fibris</i>	servants, that they may resound the wonders of your
<i>MIRA gestorum</i>	deeds with loosened lips.
<i>FAMuli tuorum</i>	(Note: UT equals modern <i>do</i> and SI, for
<i>SOLVE pollute</i>	Sancte Iohannes, equals modern <i>ti</i> .)
<i>LABii reatum</i>	
<i>Sancte Iohannes</i>	

About two hundred years later Guido d'Arrezzo (ca. 991–1033) set the hymn to a new melody and employed it as a tool to teach chants quickly by associating its particular syllables and pitches with finger joints (the so-called "Guidonian hand"). This mnemonic device eased many of the challenges such memorization as described by Notker, who as a youth labored over the memorization of very long melismas (*longissimae melodiae*) and wrote verse Sequences (chants before the Gospel) to fit them, such as memory prompts.<sup>38</sup>

36. Boynton, McAlpine, and Nieses, "Medieval," "The Old Hymnal."

37. It is transmitted in manuscripts such as Vatican Ottob. 532 (ca. 800) and Bern, Burgerbibliothek Cod. 363 (ninth century, written by an Irish scribe, possibly Sedulius Scottus).

38. Jullien, "Les sources," 64; Boynton, "Latin Glosses," 2; Boynton, "Orality, Literacy," 111–15; Harbison, "Hymn" 58; Chailley, "Ut Queant Laxis," 62; Dümmler, "Handschriftliche Überlieferung," 317–19; Boynton, "Boy Singers," 38–39. The Guidonian

## Liturgical Education and “Doctrina”

Hymns played an important role in expressing Carolingian *doctrina* about the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, and liturgical role of images. Both the pervasive authority of St. Augustine and customary liturgical usage led Carolingians to accept the addition of the *filioque* clause of the Nicene Creed (the Holy Spirit’s procession from the Father *and the Son*) without apparent internal debate.<sup>39</sup> Debate only began when Orthodox Eastern writers challenged this addition as unwarranted tampering with the text of the ancient Creed.<sup>40</sup> Carolingian defense of the *filioque* was colored by the ongoing Adoptionist controversy, the so-called “Spanish heresy” (because it was held to have originated with Felix of Urgel in Catalonia). This metaphor of adoption was meant to clarify the human nature of Christ as Son of God, but the term “adoption” unavoidably implied that Jesus, “very God and very man,” was an ordinary man if his divinity as the Son of God were merely adopted. Carolingian *doctrina* insisted that in Holy Baptism, Christ was the adopter, not the adoptee, which was the proper role of the baptized. Frankish elite families customarily fostered their children so this controversy had immediacy.<sup>41</sup> Sponsors “lifted” the child from the font, an ingenious adoption of an ancient practice by which such families acknowledged new-born children as they sought patrons and established alliances.<sup>42</sup> The sacrament of Holy Baptism in which candidates were adopted (lifted up) by the sacramental presence of Christ was performative, liturgical *doctrina* that redirected ancient custom.

Carolingian assertions of the *filioque* clause found expression in Hrabanus Maurus’ Pentecost hymn *Veni creator spiritus*. The sixth verse *per te sciamus da patrem noscamus atque filium* (“Let us know the Father and the Son by You [=Holy Spirit]” accorded with the conclusion that belief in the *filioque* clause is necessary for salvation. Exactly how this hymn was incorporated into worship is unclear; it was included in the *Temporale* of the New Hymnal in Paris Bibliothèque nationale lat. 11550 (a major eleventh-century manuscript that preserves an earlier source). It was also present in

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hand, illustrated in MS Canon. Liturg. 216 f. 168b recto, s. xv, held in the Bodleian Library of Oxford University, can be seen at [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Guidonian\\_hand.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Guidonian_hand.jpg).

39. Pelikan, *Growth*, 21.

40. Pelikan, *Growth*, 55.

41. Goetz, “Social,” 469.

42. Brown, *Rise*, 290, referring to the imperial letter to Ghaerbald, Bishop of Liege, “*in die apparitionis Domini multi fuerunt apud nos inventi qui volebant suscipere infantes de sacro fonte baptismatis*,” *Monumenta Germaniae Historica: Leges: Cap.* 1:241.

the Canterbury and Winchester hymnals identified by mid-ninth-century manuscripts in Britain, so it may have been in use well before 1049 (the first surviving identified use in the Council of Rheims).<sup>43</sup>

The authority and authorship of several hymns became an issue in the Trinitarian controversy over the hymn *Sanctorum meritis*, in the 840s still a relatively new, anonymous, and *not* with Patristic prestige. It has been identified in MS Düsseldorf Univ. B.3 (ca. 820), and appeared in the New Hymnal, to be sung at Vespers of Martyrs.<sup>44</sup> Archbishop Hincmar of Rheims (806–882) denounced the expression *trina deitas* (not “triune” but “trine” Deity, a neologism) found in its concluding verse:

<i>Te trina deitas unaque poscimus</i>	We supplicate you, trine and single divinity,
<i>Ut culpas abluas, noxias subtrahas.</i>	To wash away our sins and remove our faults.

Hincmar acknowledged the three Persons of the undivided Godhead: *una est divinitas, aequalis Gloria, coeterna maiestas*, one in divinity, glory equal, majesty coeternal in the words of the “Athanasian” Creed of Gallican origin. By contrast, to him the expression *trina Deitas* implied a plural deity, thus by implication dividing the co-equal Unity.<sup>45</sup>

Gottschalk (Godescalc) of Orbais (ca. 803–867/9) dissented. He cited six hymns to support his case, only one found in the Old Hymnal, providing a glimpse into the transition from the Old to the New. In response, to support *his* position Hincmar cited eleven hymns, three of which were in the Old or Frankish Hymnals. Both cited only two hymns in common from the New; *Sanctorum meritis* itself, and *Nunc sancte nobis spiritus* (Now, Holy Spirit; a hymn for Terce). Hincmar did not object to citing non-scriptural texts *per se* but sensed that they could become a source of heresy. Their arguments turned personal; Hincmar alleged that Gottschalk prophesied that he would be killed and Gottschalk would succeed him.<sup>46</sup> He also alleged that Gottschalk refused to accept *doctrina* in the hymns he sang every day as a child, claiming,

From the very beginnings of [his] childhood . . . [he] sang along  
with the monks with his lips, but could not perceive its sense in  
his heart . . . the hymn;

43. Hornby, “Veni,” para. 2; Jullien, “Les sources,” 127; Milfull, *Hymns*, 304–7; Penn, “Latin Verse” 92.

44. Bullough and Harting-Corrêa, “Texts, Chant,” 497.

45. Pelikan *Growth*, 64; Ganz, “Theology,” 767.

46. Gillis, *Heresy*, 191.

*O lux beata Trinitas, et principalis unitas  
Iam sol recedit igneus, infunde lumen cordibus*

O Trinity, most blessed light,  
O Unity of sov'reign might,  
As now the fiery sun departs,  
Shed thou thy beams within our hearts.<sup>47</sup>

In addition to illuminating the varying diffusion of individual hymns, their respective backgrounds in the communities of Fulda and St. Denis influenced their analyses of language. Gottschalk was a monk, poet, and writer (though no hymns are ascribed to him), whereas Hincmar took a more legalistic approach to language as a bishop motivated by pastoral and administrative concerns.<sup>48</sup> Walafrid Strabo's *Libellus de exordiis* provides collaboration that such hymns touched on central Carolingian problems of authority, authorship, and tradition. Walafrid explored the origins and development of the liturgy and hymns. He began with Ambrose and considered his hymns alongside with the Psalms as praise. He defended the use of non-scriptural hymns with examples from such traditions as the Ambrosian liturgy in Milan, the Benedictine Rule's prescriptions, and other sources, and acknowledged that "many hymns are regarded as Ambrose's composition which he certainly never produced."<sup>49</sup>

Finally, the role of images in worship reflected the divergence of vernacular piety from the official *doctrina* of the literate elite. The *Libri Carolini* (*Caroline Books*), now attributed to Theodulf of Orleans, ca. 790, endorsed Pope Gregory the Great's view that pictures in churches were permitted to aid the illiterate, but offered little further encouragement to art in churches.<sup>50</sup> At the same time, Charles' own prolific artistic workshops in Aachen produced intricately decorated liturgical books. Vernacular piety regarded images highly, encouraged by vivid imagery in hymns such as Venantius Fortunatus' *Pange lingua gloriosi certaminis* (Sing, My Tongue, the Glorious Battle).<sup>51</sup> Written as a processional hymn for the arrival of relics in Poitiers in 569, it was repurposed in the New Hymnal for Nocturnes of Passion Sunday, and associated with the Veneration of the Cross. For example, the

47. Boynton, "Theological Role," 39–40 (Hincmar, "Collectio," Migne *Patrologia Latina* 125:578: *Gothescalcus ab ipsis rudimentis infantiae . . . cum monachis labiis cecinit, et sensus ejus percipere corde non potuit . . . cujus hymni initium est . . .*; English hymn translation by John Mason Neale.)

48. Nineham, "Gottschalk," 10.

49. Harting-Corrêa, "Walahfrid Strabo's 'Libellus,'" 161.

50. Chazelle, "Pictures," 140–41; Noble, *Images*, 194.

51. Boynton, McAlpine, and Nieses, "Medieval," "Role of Medieval Hymns," para. 6.

line *Crux fidelis, inter omnes arbor una nobilis* ("Faithful cross . . . be for all the noblest tree")—the image of the tree resonated with particular power in the Frankish imaginative landscape of sacred groves. The same vernacular preference for images and vivid verbal imagery prepared the way for the rise of eucharistic devotion in later centuries.

### CONTRIBUTION TO LITURGY AND WORSHIP AND NOTABLE HYMNS

Irish, Anglo-Saxon, and Carolingian hymnists contributed to an era of remarkable missionary energy in complex cultural, linguistic contexts, and left patterns for liturgy and education that have endured for centuries. Their hymns and hymnals endured, but their very endurance and textual stability has obscured the vitality of their origins.

Early medieval Christianity was characterized by the dichotomy between the doctrinal writings of the ecclesiastical élites, nurtured in their heritage of Latin texts, and the sensibilities of converts who often first encountered vernacular Christianity when those Christian élites formed alliances with the ruling warrior class. This dichotomy held sway not only in Frankish realms but also Great Britain and Ireland. Those élites, conscious of their prestige as the heirs of Late Roman Christianity, promulgated *doctrina* that has been characterized as rebarbative insofar as it offered a plurality of human texts (and practices) as the only adequate and authoritative interpretation of the divine text.<sup>52</sup> Hymns were embedded in those texts and practices; consequently, hymn *texts* break little new doctrinal ground. The enduring significance of hymns in the liturgy and worship of the Christian churches rather must be sought in their liturgical, educational contribution to missions, and to the daily structure of Christians' lives.

Latin, Greek, and Syrian Christians undertook wide-ranging missions to many far-flung peoples and realms in the four centuries 500 to 900 CE. As Latin Christianity engaged the cultures of northwestern Europe, its center of gravity began to tilt away from its origins in Mediterranean, urban cultures, and toward the *limes*, the former Roman frontiers. Irish, Anglo-Saxon, and Frankish Christians viewed the heritage of Latin Christianity not from Rome or Milan, but from Bangor, York, or Aachen. New Christian élites in these centers had to contend with powerful cultural heritages in this heterogeneous *middangeard* ("middle world," or *oikumene*) where older customs, genealogies, epics, and holy places had lost little sway.<sup>53</sup> The high

52. Ganz, "Theology," 761–62, "most Carolingian theology is rebarbative."

53. Brown, *Rise*, 301.

regard with which many Christian, literate élites held that ancient heritage can be seen in the startling program by which they consigned the epics, laws, and genealogies on *gēardagum* ("from the old days") to writing. These traditions were more than nostalgic entertainment; they ordered the unwritten behavioral codes expected of the ruling warrior class. *Hwæt! We Gar-Dena in gēar-dagum þeod-cyninga þrym gefrunon*: "How we have heard of the might of kings," as *Beowulf* begins.<sup>54</sup> Hrabanus Maurus' scriptorium in Fulda preserved Ammianus Marcellinus' account of ancient Germanic warriors and the *Hildebrandslied*; Tacitus' *Germania* was preserved solely at nearby Hersfeld; *Beowulf* was copied likely at Malmesbury; *The White Book of Rhydderch* (*Llyfr Gwyn Rhydderch*, Peniarth Mss. 4–5) at Strata Florida Abbey, reflecting stories far older. These same and similar far-flung scriptoria copied numerous Christian texts including the compilations called the Old, Frankish, and New Hymnals. As frequently performed, memorized texts, these hymns taught obedience to the Scriptures, stability, and the amendment of life, the traditional Benedictine monastic vows. Hymns underwrote this amendment of life (*conversatio morum*) in vernacular communities where the newly or minimally Christian population predominated. In succeeding centuries, the behavioral codes of the ruling warrior classes and servant classes came to embrace, at least in theory, specifically Christian virtues such as almsgiving and the protection of vulnerable populations. The élites contended with the power of vernacular culture by redirecting it through liturgical celebration that included memorized hymns.

Carolingian and insular hymns in the liturgical daily Offices fostered an infrastructure of time equally important with the Christian infrastructure of space—the Christian landscape that had to contend with potent imaginative landscape and monuments to ancient prestige such as springs, stones, circles, and trees.<sup>55</sup> Building their new infrastructure of space, Carolingian, Irish, and Anglo-Saxon Christians co-opted holy sites such as Bath or Glastonbury, and associated ancient deities with saints such as Bridgid of Kildare. Building their new infrastructure of time, they created or adapted genres such as hagiographies and hymnals. Far from rebarbative, such hymnals (even when combined with other texts, such as antiphons) cultivated liturgical prayer in an orderly, teachable pattern. Although St. Augustine did not say precisely *qui bene canit bis orat* ("the one who sings well prays twice"), the Augustinian penumbra extended its cachet to early medieval educational and ecclesiastical reforms that favored the textual stability of

54. Walkden, "Status," 484.

55. Brown, *Rise*, 315.



well-ordered hymnals. Christians' lives were shaped by the flow of such liturgical time.

Hymns from Ireland, Great Britain, and the continent 500–900 CE set enduring medieval patterns of both monastic praise and community processional singing. As performative texts, such hymns enacted the Christian story as an exercise of religious power that both vied with and supplemented ancient cultural memories central to the exercise of royal power. In a world of memorized texts, they mediated times and seasons within the Christian saga of the world's salvation. For example, the Irish Latin *Precamur patrem* ("Let Us Entreat the Father," forty-two verses) highlighted the Christ's role in salvation history. Written during St. Columbanus' time at Bangor, ca. 590, it appears in the Bangor Antiphony and several continental manuscripts and contains an Alleluia after the first and last verses, suggesting responsorial performance at Holy Saturday and Eastertide. Although the hymn's imagery of light draws on several literary sources (Caesarius of Arles, Cassian, Jerome, and Sedulius), it uses syllabic stress in a distinctively Irish pattern.

Another variety of such performative hymns developed from the *lorica* genre of Irish prayer, of which the earliest example is by Laidcenn mac Buith Bannaig of Clonfert-Mulloe, d. 661. The genre (*lorica* from Latin for hauberk) invoked God's protection, from the practice of inscribing such invocations on warrior's armor. Sechnall (Secundinus, early fifth century) or Colmán Elo (d. 611) wrote *Audite omnes* legendarily for St. Patrick, abecedarian in structure, which closes with verses calling on God's safeguard: *Atomriug indiu niurt trén togairm trindóit*, Irish now known as "St. Patrick's Breastplate," or "The Deer's Cry," expanded the *lorica* genre by presenting God's work in all creation, Christ, and the saints. Centuries later it was the basis for C. F. Alexander's "I Bind Unto Myself Today," set to an Irish melody adapted by Sir Charles Villiers Stanford.<sup>56</sup>

Irish Christians also contributed the abecedarian *Altus prosator* ("High sower," ca. 650–700), found in *Liber Hymnorum*, and continental ninth-century manuscripts. Like *Precamur patrem*, its twenty-three verses proclaimed the salvation history of God in Creation. The trinitarian Creator before all time is the *Prosator* or sower (unusual Latin, an Irish trait). This hymn is an outstanding example of highly compressed liturgical theology for the education of early medieval Christians, everything they should have remembered. Traditionally associated with St. Columba, evidence suggests that it may have originated in Iona. Hrabanus Maurus' reworked version of thirteen verses, in his poem *De fide catholica*, influenced later hymns. In

56. Lapidge, "Columbanus," 109–16; Stancliffe, "Venantius Fortunatus," 96–97; Bieler, "Hymn," 123; Stevenson, "Altus Prosator," 344–48.

the *Liber Hymnorum*, the very early *Cantemus in omni die* ("Let Us Sing in Every Day") by Cu Chuimhne of Iona (d. 747) is one of the first hymns to praise the Blessed Virgin Mary.<sup>57</sup>

The infrastructure of time in office hymns can be seen in *Nocte surgentes vigilemus omnes*, for Sunday summer nocturnes. Found in the New Hymnal, it has been linked with Alcuin though probably was not written by him. In Sapphic metre (11.11.11.5), it was translated by Percy Dearmer as "Father We Praise Thee Now That Night Is Over." *Iam lucis orto sidere* in Ambrosian metre and possibly as old as the fifth century, was the daily hymn for Prime (morning office) throughout the year in both the Old and the New Hymnals.<sup>58</sup> It accrued many textual variants, some dedicated to local saints, and was translated by Neale, "Now That the Daylight Fills the Sky." *Nunc Sancte nobis Spiritus*, the daily hymn for Terce, is a similar example, translated by Neale as "Come Holy Ghost, with God the Son." *Veni Creator Spiritus* was translated by Martin Luther (*Komm, Gott Schöpfer, heiliger Geist*), and paraphrased by John Cosin, "Come Holy Ghost, Our Souls Inspire."

Early medieval hymns left a legacy of structured time in organizations dedicated to performative oral and scribal literacy, education, and outreach both in Latin and the vernacular. Codified by patterns that have endured for centuries, these hymns and hymnals contributed to the growing organizational stability, renewed cultural heritage, and amendment of the lives of Christians in northwest Europe. From that lived, historical context, these hymns suggest antecedents for the modern complexities, challenges, and opportunities of liturgical proclamation and enculturation in both the elite and vernacular cultures of the twenty-first Christian century.

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57. Davidson, "Irish Hymnody," para. 4.

58. Milfull, *Hymns*, 124-531.

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