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ESCHATOLOGY AND REFORM IN EARLY IRISH LAW

The evidence of Sunday legislation*

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Although much scholarly attention has been devoted to apocalyptic and eschatological thought in medieval Ireland, this has largely been restricted to specific textual genres, such as vision literature, homilies, biblical apocrypha and theological tracts.¹ There has been little consideration of how the ideologies and rhetorical strategies of apocalyptic and eschatological thought translated more widely into other forms of discourse and helped to shape social or legal practices. A large corpus of vernacular legal sources survives from early medieval Ireland, but the nature of these texts is such that they remain a difficult and under-utilised source for social and cultural history.² Aside from the daunting linguistic challenge presented by the heightened register of the deliberately obscure prose in which some legal tracts are composed, a major obstacle to the use of legal sources for the study of medieval Irish society is that most of the surviving sources are legal handbooks – descriptions of the law, for use by lawyers – rather than legislation, edicts or promulgated law. The relationship between jurisprudence and *Realpolitik* is of course a vexed one for historians in any sphere, but historians of medieval Ireland seem more determined than most – for reasons which are by no means apparent – to see a disconnect between legal theory and legal practice. The legal tracts are often dismissed as archaic, fantastical and excessively detailed (as though, somewhat illogically, the abundance of information makes them less grounded in reality). In the few cases where we do have extant legislation, the presumption is that it was not widely or successfully enforced.³ This seems to be an ideological rather than an evidential standpoint.

Furthermore, in spite of decisive and important scholarship produced in the past 30 years by Donnchadh Ó Corráin, Liam Breatnach and others, a misleading dichotomy between ‘secular’ and ‘ecclesiastical’ law continues to hold sway, with only a token recognition of the fact that so-called secular law was composed by clerics, and ecclesiastical edicts were promulgated by kings, without any real acceptance of the historical implications of this state of affairs.⁴ Historians who wish

to avoid having to deal with legal sources at all can exploit trends in modern cultural history to dismiss the laws as proscriptive and normative, and therefore unreflective of social realities. Here I intend to examine the rhetorical strategies of the author(s) of one early Irish legal tract in order to explore what this can tell us about religious discourse and theological concerns in early Irish law, particularly in relation to intersecting ideas of eschatology and reform. Attempting to understand the reality of the law is as important as understanding its rhetoric, and I will therefore make a few observations regarding legal enforcement and implementation during the course of this discussion. I am going to focus on apocalyptic and reforming discourse in one particular piece of legislation, that is, *Cáin Domnaig*, the 'Law of Sunday', but I will conclude with some wider considerations that take account of the jurisprudential writings of early medieval Ireland as well as promulgated law.

As a point of comparison, a great deal of scholarship has been undertaken on Anglo-Saxon legal and administrative documents, investigating aspects of their rhetorical strategies and ideological underpinnings. The theological riches of Anglo-Saxon charters, for example, have been explored by scholars such as Simon Keynes and Levi Roach.⁵ Studies by these two scholars show how King Æthelred first viewed the devastating viking raids of the late tenth and early eleventh centuries as divine punishment for his own youthful misdeeds, but when his personal endowment of churches failed to appease God's wrath, he concluded that there must be some greater national sin at the root of England's misfortune. In the words of Levi Roach, 'once the king's personal repentance had proven insufficient to avert the viking threat the only natural conclusion was that the entire nation was to blame'.⁶ Simon Keynes's study of the apocalyptic fears that underlay the law code known as *Aethelred VII* is an illuminating account of how theological concerns could drive legislation, in this case enjoining the English people to partake in a nationwide initiative of fasting, prayer and penance in order to restore order to the kingdom.⁷ As we shall see, similar apocalyptic and reforming concerns seem to underpin aspects of early Irish legislation.

Roach has argued that two historical-theological perspectives intersected and were reconciled in the legislative and diplomatic evidence of late tenth- and early eleventh-century England, that is, an 'Old Testament' or 'penitential' form of discourse, which sees national misfortune as God's punishment for collective immorality, and a 'New Testament' or 'apocalyptic' form of discourse, which sees national misfortune and collective immorality as signs of the imminent End-time. As he notes, 'since infidelity and false belief would spread in the approach to the end, contemporary sinfulness possessed a deeply apocalyptic quality'.⁸ Roach has thus argued that 'the penitential and apocalyptic coalesced' and they 'were often employed in tandem'.⁹ I shall argue in relation to Irish law that, although the idiom may be different, the theological concerns are very much the same as those expressed in Anglo-Saxon charters and legislation.¹⁰ These modes of thought are particularly evident in legislation pertaining to Sunday observance, but we can also observe them in laws relating to the reciprocal obligations of Church and laity, such as alms-giving, the donation of first-fruits and the provision of pastoral care.

There have been some tentative steps towards explicating the theological principles which underlie the morality codified in early Irish law, particularly in the major seventh-century collection known as the *Senchas Már*.¹¹ Studies have focused particularly on the biblical and patristic sources upon which early Irish lawyers drew, and these analyses have shown the great debt of early Irish lawyers to Old Testament, and particularly Levitical, law, and to Augustinian thought. The opening of the *Senchas Már* focuses on the Fall, and uses Adam's taste of the fruit of knowledge as the foundational example of a breach of contract (in this case, between God and man).¹² The Fall was commonly used for legal purposes in Anglo-Saxon charters and legislation; however, its theological and legal significance was interpreted somewhat differently. For example, two of Æthelred's penitential charters 'contain proems meditating upon Adam's fall from grace, the event which had first brought sin into the world and made confession and penance necessary for man'.¹³ Indeed, more generally, the Fall was 'often used to justify the existence of secular authority, which had been necessitated by original sin'.¹⁴

One area of study that has been far more productive than the theology of Irish law is the use and function of narratives within legal and paralegal contexts.¹⁵ Many early Irish legal texts contain narrative episodes which are used in an exemplary sense as leading cases. Sometimes literary narratives are embedded within legal texts, but they are also found in the scholarly commentary and later interpretive material, which accreted around the older canonical legal texts during the course of the Middle Ages. Fangzhe Qiu has neatly summarised the status of these narratives thus:¹⁶

Some of them are part of the original canonical law texts, sharing in their authority; whereas some others from the glosses and commentary are apparently intended as illustrative specimens . . . or explanatory materials, and may never have entered the domain of public legal procedure. But different kinds of texts are often intelligible only through the interpretations and fuller narratives in later commentary; and explanatory specimens are meaningful only when read together with the canonical texts. The narratives are thus blended into the legal treatises on all levels to form a textual unity, an *object* grammatical and legal discourse.

These narratives generally feature characters from the Irish historiographical scheme and thus serve to fabricate a historical authenticity – sometimes stretching back into the pre-historic era – for laws that were actually relatively recent creations. In relation to promulgated laws, however, it was usually ecclesiastical figures – Saints Patrick, Ciarán and Adomnán, for example – who were connected (with greater or lesser degrees of historical accuracy) with the legislation in order to give them the weight of authority. As Qiu has noted, the concept of including narratives in legal texts is highly unusual in a medieval European context,¹⁷ although we might perhaps look (for example) at the personal, narrative histories included in many

medieval charters and see again a comparable phenomenon expressed in a different mode and idiom, whereby a form of narrative can be used to add authority and legitimacy to a legal process.¹⁸ More pertinent to the present study are those literary narratives which circulated in early medieval Europe and served to illustrate the consequences of transgressing particular laws. It must be noted, though, that these Continental examples (discussed below) were usually transmitted independently of the legal codes to which they pertained and were not embedded within the law texts themselves. With these preliminary thoughts in mind, we can turn to the main subject matter of this study, namely, legislation concerning Sunday observance.

Sunday legislation and related sources

The observance of the Sabbath, as enjoined in the Hebrew Bible, was transferred in early Christianity to Sunday, the supposed day of Christ's resurrection, and Patristic authors argued to greater or lesser degrees that this day should be a day of rest and a day of worship.¹⁹ The issue of the observance of Sunday became an increasingly problematic one in the sixth century, but it was a problem which largely existed in a theological vacuum, since the New Testament has nothing to say about Sunday observance (and little to say about the Sabbath), and those who looked to the Old Testament for guidance could be (and often were) accused of 'Judaising' tendencies. An attempt to compensate for the lack of theological justification for a 'sabbath-like Sunday of rest and worship'²⁰ can be seen in the composition of the so-called Sunday Letter, which probably originated in sixth-century Spain or Gaul.²¹ As Haines has observed, the Sunday Letter 'reflects the desire for a more authoritative, indeed, a divine, statement on the subject'.²² Although the (fictional) narrative details of the origins of the Sunday Letter differ from version to version, the general thrust is that the Letter was composed by Christ himself and fell from heaven onto the altar either in Jerusalem or Rome. Copies of the Letter usually contain prohibitions regarding Sunday observance and outline in great detail the consequences of disobedience (national disasters, such as plague, famine, etc.) and, in less detail, the benefits of compliance (fertility and fecundity in this life; heavenly rewards in the next).²³ The Letter was immensely popular and survives in various Latin recensions, as well as in translations and adaptations in the major medieval European and Near Eastern vernaculars.

Two other types of text were connected with the Sunday Letter, namely, narratives that illustrated the consequences of failing to observe Sunday, and the so-called 'Sunday Lists'. The latter type consists of lists of varying lengths and detail, outlining events in salvation history that were thought to have happened, or were thought will happen, on a Sunday, from the first day of rest following the six days of Creation through to Judgement Day. Among the events listed in some letters are the ordination of Aaron as the first priest and Christ's miracles at the wedding in Cana and of the loaves and the fishes. Such lists served to elevate the significance of Sunday within the broad sweep of *Heilsgeschichte* and add much-needed weight to the flimsy theological justification for Sunday observance.²⁴

Narratives of punishment, or *Strafwunder*, also circulated – independently of the legal texts and conciliar decrees themselves – in early medieval Europe.²⁵ These were often embedded in broader hagiographical narratives or in homiletic texts, thus implicitly connecting the legal provisions with prominent holy men, and their presence in these distinct modes of discourse served to support and reinforce the legal prescriptions regarding Sunday observance, in a similar manner to the apocryphal testimony of the Sunday Letter. However, the Sunday Letter was viewed with suspicion by many ecclesiastical authorities, not least because of its audacious claims of divine authorship. Official prohibitions regarding Sunday observance were therefore usually enacted without any reference to the Letter. Legislation concerning Sunday observance was implemented across western Europe at different points throughout the early Middle Ages, but we can give the example of the eighth-century Bavarian *Lex Baiuvariorum*, which epitomises the general tone and nature of laws regarding Sunday observance:²⁶

If anyone does servile work on Sunday, for a freeman, if he yokes oxen and drives about in a cart, let him lose the right-hand ox. If, however, he cuts or collects hay, or cuts and collects a harvest, or does any servile work on Sunday, let him be warned once or twice. And if he does not correct himself, let him be beaten upon his back with fifty blows, and if he presumes to work on Sunday again, let a third of his property be carried off. And if he still does not cease, then let him lose his freedom and be a slave, because he does not wish to be free on a holy day. If he is a slave, however, let him be flogged for such a crime. And if he does not correct himself, let him lose his right hand, since such acts are prohibited that incite God to anger, and, furthermore, we will be punished regarding our crops and afflicted with want. Thus, this [work] is forbidden on Sunday. And if one is taking a journey with a cart or boat, let him pause from Sunday until Monday. . .

We can see in this example, from a different time, place and context, comparable ideas to those outlined above in relation to the charters of Æthelred, that is, of incurring divine wrath through a failure to adhere to certain moral standards; a divine wrath, moreover, that would bring about widespread calamities (invasion by foreigners in the case of the Æthelredian charters; famine in the case of the Bavarian Sunday legislation). The actions of each individual – no matter what their social status – could lead to collective disaster, and individual greed (the despoiling of churches in the Anglo-Saxon example; putting agricultural productivity ahead of spiritual duty in the Sunday laws) was a threat to society as a whole. Although, as noted, the Bavarian legislation does not draw directly on the Sunday Letter, its theological standpoint is the same: God's anger will be roused by a failure to observe the day of rest and divine worship, and collective punishments will ensue. The issue of Sunday observance was as significant in Anglo-Saxon England as elsewhere, and Dorothy Haines has characterised the English evidence thus:²⁷

The legislative record concerning Sunday observance in Anglo-Saxon England is characterised by continuity, as seen in the repetition of Ine's and Wihtræd's basic prohibition of work, though fines were adjusted to current standards. However, one can also observe a continued attempt to refine and modify this foundation: Æthelstan's codes temporarily attempt to introduce trade restrictions, and Edgar's appears to lengthen the time period to include Saturday afternoon and Monday morning. Yet the most comprehensive legislation in this area is linked to one man, Wulfstan of York, in work compiled during the first quarter of the eleventh century. His interest in this issue – and in the process of writing law itself – can be seen as parallel to that of the administrations of Charlemagne and his immediate successors. Both hoped to establish an ordered Christian society, a goal which required that the populace regularly participate in the rites of the Church and receive at least a rudimentary education in their Christian duties during the Sunday meeting. In order to ensure that this participation took place, the importance and sanctity of Sunday had to be understood by both secular and ecclesiastical authorities.

Many of Haines's observations are pertinent to the Irish evidence. Irish authorities (both secular and ecclesiastical) also sought to 'establish an ordered Christian society', ensuring that the laity participated actively in Christian life, received the sacraments, attended Mass and acquired a basic knowledge of doctrine and acceptable belief.²⁸ In the ninth century, legislation regarding Sunday observance played an important role in this endeavour. What is different about the Irish situation, however, is the form in which this legislation was articulated. Unlike other European responses, where Sunday legislation and the theological support of the divinely-authored Sunday Letter tended to be transmitted separately, Irish lawyers actively combined the Sunday Letter and Sunday List traditions with legislative action.

I use the term 'Irish Sunday Legislation' to refer to an associated group of three ninth-century documents that have generally been treated separately in modern scholarship.²⁹ These are the *Epistil Ísu* ('Letter of Jesus', that is, an Irish vernacular adaptation of the Sunday Letter),³⁰ the three *Strafvunder* or 'miracles of punishment',³¹ which are supporting narratives on the transgression of Sunday observance, and *Cáin Domnaig*, or the 'Law of Sunday'.³² I suggest that both the 'Letter of Jesus' and the *Strafvunder* are integral parts of the legislative documentation, and should be treated as such, hence my umbrella term to deal with all three elements together.³³ These texts have been dealt with inconsistently by previous scholars, and there has been a surprising reluctance to accept them as genuine legislation. Daniel Binchy did not include *Cáin Domnaig* in his monumental edition of the early Irish laws.³⁴ And Vernam Hull made the following inexplicable statements about the text:³⁵

Strictly speaking, C[áin] D[omnaig] is not a law tract. It does not form part of the *Senchas Már*, nor was it apparently ever enforced. Its author also remains unknown. Presumably he was not a brehon [i.e. professional legal

practitioner]. Rather he would seem to have been a member of a monastic establishment which he perhaps served in the capacity of a legal adviser. How versed he actually was in Irish ecclesiastical law is, however, a matter for conjecture.

Obviously a ninth-century text cannot form part of a seventh-century legal tract, but the fact that *Cáin Domnaig* is not part of the *Senchas Már* hardly prevents it from being defined as a law tract. There is no reason to suppose that its author was not a legal professional and I can see no reason to doubt his knowledge of the law. There is also no evidence to support the idea that the law was never enforced (although Hull's attitude has found purchase among other scholars); indeed, it is elsewhere described as one of the *ceithri cána Éirenn* ('four edicts of Ireland'), which would suggest that it was considered to be a law of some importance.³⁶ If we examine the structure of the 'Irish Sunday Legislation', we can see that – when taken in its totality – it resembles the general structure of many Irish law texts, collecting together the full range of supporting documentation which elsewhere in Europe would have travelled separately from the legislation (that is, the 'Sunday Letter', the 'Sunday List' and the *Strafvunder*), in order to lend legitimacy and historical weight to the law:³⁷

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| <i>Epistil Ísu</i> | Circumstances of composition Hortatory diatribe 'Sunday List' Authenticating narrative |
| <i>Strafvunder</i> | Legal prescriptions Three supporting narratives |
| <i>Cáin Domnaig</i> | Legal text Repetition of circumstances of composition and hortatory diatribe |

Other texts, composed and transmitted separately, worked to reinforce the ideology of the 'Irish Sunday Legislation', for example the narrative tale *Tochmarc Becfhola* ('The Wooing of Becfhola'),³⁸ whose plot centres on transgressions of the ban on travelling on a Sunday, and the eleventh- or twelfth-century poem on Sunday observance, which draws on the Sunday List tradition and looks both backwards and forwards to key events in salvation history which are said to have occurred on a Sunday, including Judgement Day:

A ndomnach doraga in bráth
is a eglá fil ar cāch,
'san domnach ticfá Crīst cain
do mes ar slūag[ai]b] Ādaim.

On Sunday will come the judgement, the dread of which is on all; on Sunday radiant Christ will come to judge the hosts of Adam.³⁹

This eschatological element is strongly present in the ‘Irish Sunday Legislation’. In considering the role of eschatological thought in the ‘Irish Sunday Legislation’ we shall also be able to observe something of the coherence and urgency of its social and theological message.

Eschatology and reform

If we examine some of the eschatological passages of the ‘Irish Sunday Legislation’ we can see the interconnections between theological concerns and social reform. Beginning with the opening text, the ‘Epistle of Jesus’, for example, the author of the Irish Sunday Letter draws on a range of eschatological ideas (both canonical and apocryphal) in order to articulate the relationship between behaviour in this life and punishment in the next:⁴⁰

Christ, Son of the living God, suffered cross and martyrdom on behalf of the human race, and rose from the dead on Sunday. Even on that account alone Sunday should be kept holy and on that day He will come to judge the living and the dead. It is right that everyone should heed it. Then, according to the greatness and the smallness of their sins, He will pass a just judgement on everyone.

‘Whosoever shall not keep Sunday’, says the heavenly Father, ‘within its proper boundaries, his soul shall not attain Heaven, neither shall he see Me in the Kingdom of Heaven, nor the Archangels, nor the Apostles’.

Whatsoever horse is ridden on Sunday, it is a horse of fire between the thighs of its rider in hell. The ox and the bondman and bondwoman on whom wrongful bondage is inflicted on Sunday, the eyes of all of them shed towards God tears of blood, for God has freed that day for them all. For not even people in hell are punished on that day.

Here we see the same idea emphasised above in the Bavarian law code (and elsewhere) that Sunday is a day of rest for all, including slaves and servants. However, the Irish author reinforces his point by adding the apocryphal motif that even the damned in hell are given respite from their punishment on a Sunday. The direct association between one’s actions in this life and the nature of the punishment received in the next is here given graphic life through the image of the ‘horse of fire between the thighs of its rider in hell’, and the exclusion of the transgressor from the rewards of the afterlife is made clear. Elsewhere in the ‘Sunday List’ section of the ‘Epistle of Jesus’, the eschatological significance of Sunday itself is explicated:⁴¹

On Sunday, moreover, the General Resurrection when Christ will come to judge the living and the dead, to all according to their good work.

On Sunday there shall be a renewal of every element in a form fairer and better than at present, as they were made at the first Creation, when the stars of Heaven will be as the moon, and the moon as the sun, and the sun

as the light of seven summer days, as it was in the first sun's light, even before Adam's sin.

On Sunday, Christ will divide the two flocks, namely, the flock of innocent lambs and of saints, and of the righteous from the goat-flock of the proud sinful ones of the world.

The entirety of the 'Sunday List' section is an amplified version of what we see in the Hiberno-Latin *Dies dominica* texts,⁴² and the section cited above hints at the influence of Christian Neoplatonism present elsewhere in medieval Irish eschatological thought, where the End-time is viewed as a return to beginnings, to the state of enlightened perfection that was present in every element before the Fall.⁴³ This, however, is inserted within two standard eschatological tropes (the judgement of the living and the dead, and their separation as the sheep from the goats) derived from the account of Judgement Day in the gospel of Matthew.

When we move into the legal prescriptions in *Cáin Domnaig*, although the subject matter becomes both more practical and more technical, we can see a continuation of the eschatological concerns of the 'Epistle of Jesus'. For example, in the section which outlines the punishment both for transgressors of the Sunday law and those who protect such transgressors, we read:⁴⁴

Any man who is in his immediate vicinity and any companion and any ne'er-do-well of the kin who does not sustain this spiritual directive, including the sanctity of Sunday and the observance of crosses and the provision for a three days' fast, he who shelters him and gives him refectio and does not hand him over to the kin to face justice, on him devolves his liability before men and his sin before God. Indeed, any hostage and any surety and any lord who does not sustain the rule of this Law, and any judge who does not give true judgements in accordance with this regulation, together with reading it aloud constantly on his part, and any warriors who do not respond to the law of God or of man, let the man who sues fast against them in the name of God and of Patrick so that He shall not hear them when it shall be most needful for them so that Patrick shall not be a spokesman for their souls. And any curse that from the beginning of the world has been put upon everyone who has violated the law of God and His commandments shall fall on pleading for them and reverencing them in the sight of God and of mankind, together with the malediction of the men of Ireland besides; and every hostage and every surety and any advocate who further them in their interests and requirements is outside the protection of God and of Patrick for a year thereafter.

The practicalities of enforcement are – here and elsewhere in the text – expressed within the context not only of earthly rewards and punishments (the standard fine for transgression is stated as being four heifers plus whatever clothes and chattels the offender happens to have on them at the time their transgression is witnessed) but also of eschatological ones. The text states that St Patrick who,

it was claimed, would act as an advocate for the people of Ireland at Judgement Day, will not intercede on behalf of anyone who transgresses the law. The idea that a judge should be ‘reading aloud constantly’ this text suggests at the very least the intention of public enforcement of the law; again, any judge who fails to uphold the judgements of *Cáin Domnaig* is threatened with exclusion from heaven and a lack of Patrician intercession on Judgement Day. Conversely, the opposite is promised to those who uphold the law:⁴⁵

Now whosoever shall prosecute this Law of Sunday without favour, without partiality, and without false pleading against even his father or his mother or his kinsman shall receive no harm therefrom in the sight of God or of man; and the complete blessing of the people of heaven and of earth shall be on him, as it has been bequeathed in the epistle that descended from Heaven on to the altar of Rome. This it is that has been ordained on the royal throne of Heaven. Therein the sanctity of Sunday is reckoned from the hour of late afternoon on Saturday to the end of matins on Monday.

Anyone, indeed, who shall violate the aforementioned sanctity of Sunday it shall be death for the soul of that one and for his offspring after him; and he shall have no share of Heaven along with Christ and His apostles. Any pestilence that God has brought on the races of mankind from the beginning of the world shall be brought upon the kingdom and upon the particular household in which there shall not be the sanctity of Sunday. For on account of the transgression of Sunday God brings pestilences on the fields.

Cáin Domnaig states that not only the offender but also his descendants will be excluded from heaven. As did the Bavarian law code, the Irish law code directly links ‘pestilences on the fields’ with the failure to observe Sunday. *Cáin Domnaig* also states that it is the failure to observe Sunday which ‘brings foreign races with avenging swords to bear [the people] in bondage into pagan lands’.⁴⁶ Just as James T. Palmer has shown in relation to Continental sources, the Irish law code demonstrates ‘an interest in embracing the “threat” of apocalyptic outsiders to encourage moral reform’, which was ‘less about proclaiming the End and more about directing responses to the present’.⁴⁷ The author(s) of the ‘Irish Sunday Legislation’ presses eschatological and apocalyptic rhetoric into the service of encouraging social and moral reform.

The reference in the extract cited above to ‘the epistle that descended from Heaven’ illustrates the mutually supporting nature of the ‘Irish Sunday Legislation’: *Cáin Domnaig* concludes by referring back to themes expressed in the ‘Epistle of Jesus’, and adds to the perception that these texts were intended to be read together. In the ‘Epistle of Jesus’ we are told that Conall mac Coelmaine, sixth-century abbot of Inniskeel, Co. Donegal, went on pilgrimage to Rome and made a copy of the ‘Sunday Letter’, which he brought back to Ireland and which was interred in his shrine. He subsequently revealed the contents and location of the letter in a vision to a cleric.⁴⁸ Conall is thus the holy man who lends further authority to the Sunday legislation and embeds it within an Irish historical

framework. For a law composed in the ninth century, it was all the more important to connect it back to a historical figure of some antiquity in order to fabricate historical weight for what is likely to have been a legal innovation.

The 'Irish Sunday Legislation' needs to be taken seriously as an attempt by the Church to regulate the behaviour of the laity in ninth-century Ireland, and to make the populace see the bigger picture of national well-being. It may seem more economically productive to tend one's fields on a Sunday, but ultimately this will incur God's wrath and bring punishment to the Irish people through major economic and social disasters: plague, famine, hostile invasion. Rather than seeing the 'Epistle of Jesus', the *Strafwunder*, and the *Cáin Domnaig* as separate pieces, we should read them together as mutually supporting texts, which authenticate the legislation in ways that are comparable to other Irish law texts. There is no greater *tempus, locus, persona* and *causa scribendi* than a letter from Christ himself, falling from heaven onto an altar in Rome. Conall of Inniskeel is used to attach the letter, and thus the law, to an established Irish ecclesiastical figure, in the same manner as other promulgated laws.

Eschatological rhetoric seems to have been an established feature of other promulgated law texts in early medieval Ireland. From among the surviving early Irish legislation, *Cáin Adomnáin* contains frequent references to its provisions being enacted 'until Judgement Day' and, more significantly, threatening not only transgressors of its statutes but also their descendants with exclusion from the kingdom of heaven.⁴⁹ The eschatological rhetoric of the 'Irish Sunday Legislation' is particularly heightened due to the association made in the 'Sunday List' portion of the 'Epistle of Jesus' with Judgement Day occurring on a Sunday. But what of the other jurisprudential writings of medieval Ireland? As noted above, much excellent recent scholarship has explored the way that Irish lawyers imbued their writings with authority by connecting them with figures from the Irish past, whether the pre-historic or early historic period.⁵⁰ Narratives of leading cases, with literary allusions to earlier kings and poets (whether imagined or real), suggest a legal tradition that looked back for its sources of authentication. However, even in this great body of material, it is worth examining how Irish jurists also looked forward. The sweep of salvation history extends to the end of time, and therefore apocalyptic imagery in the Irish legal texts is consonant with, not in opposition to, the concern with historical legitimation of the laws through narrative links with authoritative figures from the (legendary) past. One of those authoritative figures with whom many legal texts are linked is the poet and scholar Cenn Fáelad. I therefore conclude with the prophecy ascribed to Cenn Fáelad, which sees a breakdown in law and order as a fundamental sign of the End Times:⁵¹

And Cendfaelad spoke as follows in foretelling the end of the world:

Not near is the world that shall be.
 Customs will be poisonous.
 There will be biased courts.
 There will be false judgements for hire.

There will be judges without knowledge, without information, without learning.

There will be lords without wisdom.

There will be women without modesty.

There will be men without knowledge.

Wisdoms will come to grief.

Assemblies/courts will come to scorn.

Customs will be suppressed.

Nor will original possessions be strengthened.

There will be no court under just laws [*gloss*: i.e. there will not be a court afterwards according to justice at passing judgement]: the law of suing [*gloss*: i.e. concerning knowledge of the path (of judgement)]; the law of pleading [*gloss*: i.e. without being too high or too low]; the law of confirming [*gloss*: i.e. without going from one path (of judgement) to another].

There is much yet to be done in explicating the uses of eschatological rhetoric in early Irish law, but I hope this discussion of the ‘Irish Sunday Legislation’ has laid some groundwork, and has shown that, while Irish lawyers were placing their legislation within a historical framework (as Breatnach, Chapman Stacey, Qiu and others have demonstrated), it was a framework that simultaneously looked ahead to ultimate punishment or reward. When we are confronted with sources which see the implementation of justice as central to a well-ordered society, and the breakdown of the legal system as symptomatic of the coming of Judgement Day, then it is surely fruitful to consider these sources as evidence of the functioning and ever-changing society of early medieval Ireland, rather than dismissing them as the scholarly constructions of a people who inexplicably spent the best part of a millennium writing, reading, glossing, commentating on and updating laws that were never really implemented or enforced. The structure, content and dissemination of the ‘Irish Sunday Legislation’ indicates serious and ongoing attempts to ensure the spiritual well-being of the medieval Irish kingdoms in a manner which, though articulated according to the norms of Irish legislative writing, are comparable in theological and political terms to other medieval European attempts to regulate and enforce Sunday observance in order to protect individuals and communities from God’s wrath.

Appendix: the *Strafwunder* from Royal Irish Academy MS 23 N 10

Here I offer semi-diplomatic editions and translations of the three *Strafwunder* as they are preserved in Dublin, Royal Irish Academy MS 23 N 10. I have silently expanded abbreviations, added punctuation and capitalisation, and have supplied macrons to indicate long vowels. The Latin statement at the end of the third narrative has clearly been corrupted in the course of transmission, but I have reconstructed the most probable intended meaning in my translation.

The prosimetric nature of the narratives is a common feature of early Irish literature of every genre, including legal texts. These narratives were previously edited (without a translation) by Kuno Meyer from London, British Library MS Harleian 5280, but the texts in 23 N 10 preserve some older linguistic forms and are therefore important textual witnesses.⁵²

The boy who carried firewood

Aloaile cēile Dē and fēchtus dīa domnaig co n-acca nī: in ngilla mbec docum in luicc a mmbui 7 broсна conduidh lais. ‘Cedh do-gēntar frisan ngilla?’ ol a muinte frisin sruith. ‘Messemnacht Dé fair’, ol an sruith. Co nfaccatur ní: ro las in mbrosnau curro loisc inn ēdach boī uimbe .i. uman mac co n-ēruailt in mac dē. Uinnde dicitur:

In macān dīa domnaig.
tug in prosna go nglanbail.
loiscuis in prosna a uratán.
is baoī in macān gan anmain.

Once, on a Sunday, there was a certain *céle Dē*⁵³ and he saw something: a small boy coming towards the ecclesiastical precinct in which he was, and a bundle of firewood with him. ‘What shall be done with regard to the boy?’ said his *familia* to the senior cleric. ‘Judgement of God upon him’, said the senior cleric. They saw something: the bundle went on fire so that it burnt the clothing that was on him, i.e. around the boy, so that the boy died from it. Hence it is said:

The little boy on a Sunday
brought the bundle with pure fortune,
the bundle burnt his little cloak
the little boy was separated from his soul.

The cleric who cleared his path

Baī aroile dna sruith naille and ina reicles. Ticed ainggel Dē quga cecha nona cona cuid. Oc timcell reilgei dīa domnaig dó fo-cheird mbirruide mbig cona bachaill doun conair baoi furri. Tallad aire iarum in timtirecht nemdu-sin ōn trāth colaile. Uinde dicitur:

In sruith ro glan in conair.
dīa domnaig badit n-aithrach.
nīn tāinic in chuid nemda.
pua ro screamdau an aithper.

There was a certain other senior cleric, moreover, there in his oratory. An angel of God used to come to him every nones with his ration. While he was going around the burial place on a Sunday, he threw a small chip of

wood with his staff from the path that he was on. He was deprived of that heavenly ministrations from one canonical hour to the next. Hence it is said:

The senior cleric who cleared the path
on Sunday, it was regrettable for him
the heavenly ration did not come to him
the reproach was very [. . .].

The pilgrim who drove cattle

Buī aloile popul uc timcell reilge dīa domnaig co nd-aucatar ind tāin foluid isinn gurt ina fīnemna. ‘Berar ind tāin assinn gurt’, ol in popul. ‘Nīcon bēra[r]’, ol in sruith, ‘dāig in domnaigh’. Luid aloile ailiter do Gaoidelui buī isin manchaine do tapairt na tāna asinn gurt. Ad-fīadar dont sruith in nī-sin 7 nībo maith lais. As-pert an sruith: ‘Tabraid trī baicai tairis isin trāig paile ina tora tonn tuile’. Do-gnīthe in nī-sin. In cētna tonn dot-n-āinic nī fargaib finda fair. In tonn tānaisi nī fargaib croicend fair. In tres tonn nī fargaib fēoil for cnāim ndō. Inde dicitur:

Luidh alaile isin fīne.
dīa domnaig co n-āine
do-n-āngatur tēora tonna
cumdar lommai a chnāmha.

In diebus dominicis omne opus seruire pro reuerentia dominice resurexionis non obseruare in omnibus sollempnitatibus domini debuisse qui omnem diem propter nos fecit.

There was a certain group of people going around the burial place on a Sunday so that they saw a drove of cattle in the vineyard. ‘Let the drove be taken out of the vineyard’, said the people. ‘They will not be taken’, said the senior cleric, ‘because of Sunday’. A certain pilgrim of the Gaels who was in monastic orders went to bring the cattle out of the vineyard. That was told to the senior cleric and he did not like it. The senior cleric said ‘put three ties across him on the strand where the wave of the flood may reach him’. That was done. The first wave which came to him, it did not leave a hair on him; the second wave did not leave skin on him; the third wave did not leave flesh on a bone of his. Hence it is said:

A certain person went into the vineyard
on splendid Sunday.
Three waves came to him
so that his bones were [stripped] bare.

On Sundays every servile work out of reverence for the resurrection of the Lord is not to be done. And this ought to be observed on all holy days of the Lord, who made every day for us.

Notes

- * I am grateful to the editors of *Ériu* for permission to cite longer passages from the works of Vernam Hull and J. G. O’Keefe.
- 1 Elizabeth Boyle, ‘The Rhetoric and Reality of Reform in Irish Eschatological Thought, circa 1000–1150’, *History of Religions* 55.3 (2016): 269–288; *The End and Beyond: Medieval Irish Eschatology*, eds. John Carey, Emma Nic Cárthaigh, & Caitriona Ó Dochartaigh, 2 vols (Aberystwyth: Celtic Studies Publications, 2014), and references therein.
 - 2 For a guide to the nature and scope of the sources, and references to the scholarship thereon, see Liam Breatnach, *A Companion to the Corpus Iuris Hibernici* (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 2005).
 - 3 For example, in an otherwise astute and illuminating study, Elva Johnston in her *Literacy and Identity in Early Medieval Ireland* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2013) characterises the law texts as ‘limited by their inherently schematic nature’ (p. 135) and preserving ‘archaic knowledge and memories of vanished or vanishing institutions’ (p. 71). For instances of scholarly views regarding the lack of enforcement of Sunday legislation, see below.
 - 4 The seminal study is Donnchadh Ó Corráin, Liam Breatnach & Aidan Breen, ‘The Laws of the Irish’, *Peritia* 3 (1984): 382–438, but see also Liam Breatnach, ‘Canon Law and Secular Law in Early Ireland: the Significance of *Bretha Nemed*’, *Peritia* 3 (1984): 439–459 and his ‘The Ecclesiastical Element in the Old Irish Legal Tract *Cáin Fhuithirbe*’, *Peritia* 5 (1986): 35–50.
 - 5 Simon Keynes, ‘An Abbot, an Archbishop, and the Viking Raids of 1006–7 and 1009–12’, *Anglo-Saxon England* 36 (2007): 151–220; Levi Roach, ‘Apocalypse and Atonement in the Politics of Æthelredian England’, *English Studies* 95.7 (2014): 733–757 and his ‘Penitential Discourse in the Diplomas of King Æthelred “the Unready”’, *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 64.2 (2013): 258–276. More broadly, see also Rolf H. Bremmer, ‘The Final Countdown: Apocalyptic Expectations in Anglo-Saxon Charters’, in *Time and Eternity: the Medieval Discourse*, eds. G. Jaritz & G. Moreno-Riano (Turnhout: Brepols, 2000): 501–514.
 - 6 Roach, ‘Penitential Discourse’, 268–269.
 - 7 Keynes, ‘An Abbot’, *passim*. See also more broadly Catherine Cubitt, ‘Bishops and Councils in Late Saxon England: the Intersection of Secular and Ecclesiastical Law’, in *Recht und Gericht in Kirche und Welt um 900*, ed. W. Hartmann (Munich, 2007), pp. 151–167.
 - 8 Roach, ‘Apocalypse and Atonement’, 746.
 - 9 Roach, ‘Apocalypse and Atonement’, 750.
 - 10 Roach also notes the intersection of these theological views in the homiletic writings of Wulfstan; similarly, we can observe the same intersection in Irish homiletic texts, such as the hortatory diatribe known as ‘Adomnán’s Second Vision’: Boyle, ‘The Rhetoric’, 275–279.
 - 11 Damian Bracken, ‘Immortality and Capital Punishment: Patristic Concepts in Irish Law’, *Peritia* 9 (1995): 167–186 and his ‘The Fall and the Law in Early Ireland’, in *Ireland and Europe in the Early Middle Ages: Texts and Transmission*, eds. P. Ní Chatháin and M. Richter (Dublin: Four Courts, 2002): 147–169. See also Ó Corráin et al, ‘The Laws of the Irish’.
 - 12 Liam Breatnach, *The Early Irish Law Text Senchas Már and the Question of its Date*, E. C. Quiggin Memorial Lectures 13 (Cambridge: Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic, 2011).
 - 13 Roach, ‘Penitential Discourse’, 267.
 - 14 Roach, ‘Penitential Discourse’, 267–268. For discussion of *Adamsarenge* (‘Adam-proems’) see Heinrich Fichtenau, *Arenga: Spätantike und Mittelalter im Spiegel von Urkundenformeln* (Cologne: Böhlau 1957), pp. 147–151.

- 15 Robin Chapman Stacey, 'Law and Literature in Medieval Ireland and Wales', in *Medieval Celtic Literature and Society*, ed. Helen Fulton (Dublin: Four Courts, 2005): 65–82; Liam Breatnach, 'Law and Literature in Early Mediaeval Ireland', in *L'Irlanda e gli irlandesi nell'alto medioevo* (Spoleto: Settimane di studio del Centro italiano di studi sull'alto medioevo, 2010), 215–238; Fangzhe Qiu, 'Narratives in Early Irish Law: A Typological Study', in *Medieval Irish Law: Text and Context*, ed. Anders Ahlqvist & Pamela O'Neill (Sydney: Celtic Studies Foundation, 2013): 111–141; Qiu, 'Narratives in Early Irish Law Tracts' (PhD diss., University College Cork, 2014).
- 16 Qiu, 'Narratives', 114–115.
- 17 Qiu, 'Narratives', 111.
- 18 Herwig Wolfram, 'Political Theory and Narrative in Charters', *Viator* 26 (1995): 39–51.
- 19 For an excellent overview of the early history of Sunday observance, see Dorothy Haines, *Sunday Observance and the Sunday Letter in Anglo-Saxon England* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2010): 1–19.
- 20 Haines, *Sunday Observance*, 14.
- 21 Haines, *Sunday Observance*, 54–56.
- 22 Haines, *Sunday Observance*, 14.
- 23 Haines, *Sunday Observance*, 36.
- 24 For the Anglo-Saxon Sunday Lists and their connections with the Sunday Letter see Clare Lees, 'The "Sunday Letter" and the "Sunday Lists"', *Anglo-Saxon England* 14 (1985): 129–151. Two Hiberno-Latin Sunday Lists were edited by Robert McNally in 'Dies dominica: Two Hiberno-Latin Texts', *Mediaeval Studies* 22 (1960): 355–361.
- 25 Haines, *Sunday Observance*, 10–14.
- 26 K. A. Eckhardt, ed., *Die Gesetze des Karolingerreiches, 714–911* (Weimar: Böhlau, 1934), II. 114–115: 'Si quis die dominico operam servilem fecerit, liber homo, si bovem iunxerit et cum carro ambulaverit, dextrum bovem perdat; si autem secaverit fenum vel collegerit aut messem secaverit aut collegerit vel aliquod opus servile fecerit die dominico, corripatur semel vel bis; et si non emendaverit, rumpatur dorso eius .I. percussioibus et si iterum praesumpsit operare die dominico, auferatur de rebus eius tertiam partem; et si nec cessaverit, tunc perdat libertatem suam et sit servus, qui noluit in die sancto esse liber. Si servus autem, pro tale crimine vapuletur; et si non emendaverit, manum dextram perdat. Quia talis causa vetanda est, quae deum ad iracundiam provocat et exinde flagellamur in frugibus et penuria patimur. Et hoc vetandum est in die dominico. Et si quis in itinere positus cum carra vel cum nave, pauset die dominico usque in secunda feria'. T. J. Rivers, trans., *Laws of the Alamans and Bavarians* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1977), 137.
- 27 Haines, *Sunday Observance*, 28.
- 28 Liam Breatnach, ed. and trans., *Córus Bésgnai* (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 2017).
- 29 For the dating, see Liam Breatnach, *Companion*, 210–212, which supersedes previous scholarship.
- 30 J. G. O'Keefe, ed. and trans., 'Cáin Domnaig', *Ériu* 2 (1905): 189–214.
- 31 Edited (from British Library MS Harleian 5280, without a translation) by Kuno Meyer in 'Mitteilungen aus irischen Handschriften', *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie* 3 (1901): 228. See appendix below for an edition and translation of the narratives from Royal Irish Academy MS 23 N 10. In both of these manuscripts, the narratives are immediately preceded by copies of the 'Epistle of Jesus' and followed by copies of *Cáin Domnaig*, which is further evidence for my contention that the three items should be treated as a textual unit.
- 32 Vernam Hull, ed. and trans., 'Cáin Domnaig', *Ériu* 20 (1966): 151–177.
- 33 For previous discussion of this material see Martin McNamara, *The Apocrypha in the Irish Church* (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1975): 60–63; Dorothy Whitelock, 'Bishop Egred, Pehred and Niall', in *Ireland in Early Mediaeval Europe: Studies in Memory of Kathleen Hughes*, ed. Dorothy Whitelock et al. (Cambridge:

- Cambridge University Press, 1982): 47–68; Fergus Kelly, *A Guide to Early Irish Law* (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1988); Charlene M. Eska, ‘Rewarding Informers in *Cáin Domnaig* and the Laws of Wíhtred’, *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies* 52 (2006): 1–11; Westley Follett, *Céli Dé in Ireland: Monastic Writing and Identity in the Early Middle Ages* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2006): 152–155. Most significant for the present purposes is the analysis in Breatnach, *Companion*, 210–212, which provides the linguistic evidence to show that all three elements could be contemporaneous, since there is nothing to rule out ninth-century dates of composition for the Letter, the narratives and the legislation itself. This date is supported by a brief (but problematic) entry in the Annals of Ulster for 887 which states *Eipistil do thiachtain lasin ailithir docum n-Erenn co Cáin Domnaigh & co foretlaibh maithibh ailibh*. (The pilgrim brought a letter to Ireland, with the ‘Law of Sunday’ and other good instructions.): for discussion, see Whitelock, ‘Bishop Egred’.
- 34 D. A. Binchy, ed., *Corpus Iuris Hibernici*, 6 vols (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1978).
- 35 Hull, ‘*Cáin Domnaig*’, 152.
- 36 In the (perhaps twelfth-century) notes on the *Féilire Óengusso*, cited in O’Keeffe, ‘*Cáin Domnaig*’, 190, and in the eleventh-century *Liber Hymnorum*.
- 37 On some formal similarities between *Cáin Domnaig* and another promulgated law, the *Cáin Patraic*, see Patricia Kelly, ‘The Rule of Patrick: Textual Affinities’, in *Ireland and Europe in the Early Middle Ages: Texts and Transmission*, ed. P. Ní Chatháin and M. Richter (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2002): 284–295.
- 38 Máire Bhreathnach, ed. and trans., ‘A New Edition of *Tochmarc Becfhola*’, *Ériu* 35 (1984): 59–91.
- 39 J. G. O’Keeffe, ed. and trans., ‘A Poem on Sunday Observance’, *Ériu* 3 (1907): 143–147.
- 40 ‘*Cáin Domnaig*’, §7–9, ed. O’Keeffe (my translation):
 Críst mac Dé búi rocés croch 7 martra dar cend in ciniuda dóine 7 asréracht ó marbaib dé domnaig. Cid aire sin namá ba sártha in domnach 7 is ann ticfa dia brátha do mess for búu 7 marbu. Is tacair do chách a fochell. Is and míastair mess díriuch for cách iar mét 7 laiget a cinad.
 ‘Nech nát comfa in domnach’, ol int athair nemdai ‘ina críchaib córib, ní conricfe a anim nem 7 ní ‘manacige dó frim-sa hi richiud nime ná fri harchangliu ná hapstalu’. Nach ech riadar isin domnach is ech tened bís hi n-gabul a marcaig a n-íffirn. Nach dam 7 nach mug 7 nach cumal forsa tabarthar sáebmám isin domnach, cít a súile uli déra fola fri Día, úair rosáer Día dóib al-lá sin. Ar ní piantar cid fir i n-íffirn and.
- 41 ‘*Cáin Domnaig*’, §15, ed. O’Keeffe (translation slightly adapted):
 I n-domnach ind esérgi chotchend dia tora Críst do mess for búu 7 marbu do chách ierna cáingnám.
 I n-domnach athnuigfíther in uli dúl i n-deilb bus áille 7 bus ferr oldás, amail dorónta ina cét-oirecc, intan mbete renna nime amail éscái 7 éscái amail gréin 7 grían amail sollsi secht samlathi, feib bóí isin cétna sollsi do gréin .i. ria n-imarbus Ádaim.
 I n-domnach etarscarfas Críst in dá trét .i. trét na n-úan n-endac .i. na nóeb 7 na firían, fri gaburtrét na pechtach n-diúmsach in domuin.
- 42 McNally, ‘*Dies dominica*’, 355–361.
- 43 Elizabeth Boyle, ‘Neoplatonic Thought in Medieval Ireland: the Evidence of *Scéla na esérgi*’, *Medium Ævum* 78. 2 (2009): 216–230.
- 44 ‘*Cáin Domnaig*’, §7, ed. Hull (translation slightly adapted): ‘Nach fer aicce 7 coimthechta 7 nach foglaith fine nad innestar in n-anmchairdes-sa eter soíri nDomnuig 7 forairi cross 7 imthairec tredain intí did-n-eim 7 nod-mbiatha 7 nachid-léici dia fh]ini fri indnaide cirt is fair téit a cin fiad doínib 7 a peccad fiad Día. Nach giall trá 7 nach aitiere 7 nach flaih nad innestar dlíged inna cáno-so 7 nach brithem nad bera fíru a rréir ind foruis-seo cona airléigiund oco do gréss 7 nach áes ócbatha nad freacair cert nDé na duini troscad airiu in fer ad-gair i persain Dé 7 Pátraicc arnacha-cloathar in tan bes ndilem ndóib 7 arnap aurlabrith Pátraicc dia n-anmannaib. 7 nach miscath

do-ratath ó tossuch domuin for cach n-óen con-ascar recht nDé 7 a timna for-bia a n-urlabrad 7 a n-airmitin fiad Día 7 doínib la mallachtain fer n-Érenn cen sodin; 7 is tar turtuguth nDé 7 Pátraicc cech gíall 7 cech aítire 7 nach feithem doda-incai i llessaib 7 adalcib co cenn mblíadnae’.

45 ‘*Cáin Domnaig*’, §9–10, ed. Hull (translation slightly adapted):

Sechip é trá ad-gara in cáin-seo in Domnuig cid fora athair no a máthair no a bráthair cen léab cen leithbi cen gú-acrae, ni nbia aurchót de la Día na duine 7 fort-mbia lán mbendachta muinntire nime 7 talman amal to-n-imarnath issind epistil do-rala de nim for altóir Rómæ. Is sí-side ro-hordaigeth for rí-g-s[h]uidiu nime. Is indi do-rímther soíre in Domnuig ó thráth iarnóna Dia Sathairn co fuine maitne Dia Lúain.

Nach áen trá cuillfes in soíri-sin in Domnuig bith aptha dia anmuin-sidi 7 dia claind inna diaid 7 nicon bia errann dó a nim la Críst cona apstalaib. 7 nach plág do-n-ucc Día for cenéla na ndóine ó tossuch domuin do-bérthar forsin túaith 7 forsan tegdis sainrid inna bia soíre in Domnuig. Ar is ar tairmthecht Domnuig do-beir Día plága forsa gurta.

46 Is ed do-beir cenéla echtranna co claidbib díglæ dia mbrith hi fognam i tíre geinte: Hull, ‘*Cáin Domnaig*’, §11.

47 James T. Palmer, ‘Apocalyptic Outsiders and their Uses in the Early Medieval West’, *Peoples of the Apocalypse: Eschatological Beliefs and Political Scenarios*, ed. Wolfram Brandes, Felicitas Schmieder & Rebekka Voß (Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2016), 307–320, at p. 316.

48 O’Keeffe, ‘*Cáin Domnaig*’, §20–22.

49 Pádraig P. Ó Néill & David N. Dumville, ed. and trans., *Cáin Adomnáin and Canones Adomnani*, Basic Texts in Gaelic History 2 (Cambridge: Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic, 2003).

50 See, for example, the references cited above in n. 15.

51 Roland Smith, ed. and trans., ‘A Prophecy ascribed to Cendfaelad’, *Revue celtique* 46 (1929): 120–125. Smith’s edition and translation of the prophecy are problematic, but the translation is sufficient to illustrate the general point I am making here.

52 Meyer, ‘Mitteilungen’, 228.

53 On the *céli Dé* (‘clients of God’, a self-perceived ecclesiastical élite) see Follett, *Céli Dé in Ireland*.