

Four Celtic Saints

Should Columba be Scotland's Patron Saint rather than St Andrew? There is no doubt that to many medieval minds he was, judging by the language in which he is described by the anonymous poet/monk in the Office for St Columba from the 13th century Scottish *Inchcolm Antiphoner* with which we begin our programme. Columba's reliquary (which can now be viewed in the National Museum of Scotland in Edinburgh) was carried from Dunkeld to bless the Scottish army before the Battle of Bannockburn in 1314, and we may infer from this famous Scottish victory that Columba's advocacy before the heavenly throne was effective! Whatever we think of the political expediency which resulted in the eventual adoption of the Apostle Andrew as Scotland's patron, and the cultural fall-out which resulted from the Romanisation of an hitherto largely Celtic church, Columba remains very dear to the hearts of Scots, and to the world-wide Celtic diaspora, and his legacy continues to inspire and uplift new generations.

The manuscript from which the items of plainchant we sing tonight were taken belonged to the Priory of Inchcolm. Inchcolm, as the name suggests, is an island, and it holds a wind-swept location in the Firth of Forth. Originally occupied by a hermit who dedicated his devotions to St Columba, the kings of Scotland endowed a rich Augustinian monastery there, the extensive ruins of which may still be visited today and, along with Iona in the west and Dunkeld in the centre, is the eastern-most of the three Columban sites which form a girdle across Scotland.

On St Columba's Day (9 June) the Bishop of Dunkeld, to whose See the Priory belonged, authorised the burning of 20 candles upon the altar, and one can imagine their flickering flames slowly giving way to the light of dawn as the choir sang the Hymn *Aurora rutilat* at the beginning of Matins. The Priory's precarious location and the constant danger from English pirates is reflected in some of the prayers for protection which feature in the Office.

Scotland's other saints are less well-recorded in extant medieval music manuscripts, but we are fortunate to have another important survival from the 13th century: the *Sprouston Breviary*. Here we find, among others, a complete rhymed Office for St Kentigern, Patron Saint of the City of Glasgow. It is possible to reconstruct an entire Office of Matins for St Kentigern's Day which celebrates in the sequence of nine Lections and Responsories the miracles which appear as symbols in Glasgow's coat of arms: the bird, bell, fish, tree and ring. We shall include some musical highlights from this Office, ending with Responsory IX which includes a Prosa set to a medieval 'pop' melody of the 13th century.

Kentigern's uneasy relationship with St Serf, to whom he was apprenticed as a child, is reflected in some of the miracle stories found in the Office. *Qui elixas condiebat* celebrates one such miracle: St Serf's cook became ill and died, so the saint ordered Kentigern to cook dinner for all the workers who were bringing in the harvest. Kentigern, from laziness or pride, did not wish to do this, so he raised the cook from the dead instead!

Our selection ends with another curious miracle. Languoreth, Queen of Cumbria, had an adulterous relationship with one of her husband's lords. She gave the knight a gold ring that had been a gift from her husband. One day the King took a band of his men including Languoreth's lover out hunting and, as they slept in the middle of the day, removed the ring from the young man's hand and threw it into the river. When the King returned he demanded that Languoreth show him the ring and, when she could not, condemned her to death. Somehow she got a message to St Kentigern asking for help, and the saint dispatched a messenger to fish for a salmon to present to the King. When the King received a magnificent

salmon as a gift from Saint Kentigern he had it cooked and began to carve it himself, but as he opened the fish he found Languoreth's gold ring inside it. Because of this miracle he forgave the Queen and set her free. The Responsory *Jubente Petrus* and Prosa *Gens Cambrina* celebrate this story and form a fittingly joyful end to the Office of Matins for St Kentigern's Feast Day.

In the Library of Trinity College Dublin may be found three manuscripts (TCD 78, 80 and 88) from the 15th century which contain rhymed Offices for several Irish saints, including the nation's two Patrons: Brigit and Patrick. These two Offices include, besides other items, complete material for a full-length Matins, each comprising nine Lectons and Responsories. In the case of the Matins for St Patrick's Day, the final Responsory includes a Prosa which is set to the same popular melody as that which ends the St Kentigern Office.

St Brigit continues to fascinate with her dual history and tradition as both pagan goddess and Christian saint. The adoption into her 'official' history of elements of pagan legend from the Dark Ages makes any celebration of her life and miracles considerably more colourful than many another saint. The Office of Matins from the TCD MSS describes only the legends of her childhood, although these have a wide range: from miracles that feature an increase of food and drink (clearly based on standard Christian ideals that have as their inspiration the feeding of the 5,000 by Jesus Christ) to distinctly pagan fire miracles. Incidentally, St Kentigern is also remembered by a similar miracle involving fire. The selection of Brigit material we include tonight particularly focuses on her authorisation and acknowledgement by both visiting angels and earthly prelates. Her 'accidental' ordination as a bishop continues to divide opinion within the modern Roman Catholic Church in the ongoing debate about the role and ministry of women.

It is fitting that we begin with St Columba – an Irishman who fled to Scotland from his homeland and became the founding father of Scottish Christianity – and end with St Patrick who may well have been born in Scotland, only to be kidnapped by Irish pirates and taken over the water to the nation he made his own, and the Offices for these four saints, each in their own way, shed a unique light on the spirituality not only of the middle ages, but also, more dimly, on that of the pre-Roman Celtic church.

Rebecca Tavener © 2007

Texts

*Aurora rutilat lucis prenuncia:
letos nos excitat a sompnolencia,
volentes celebre festum recolere
Columba venerabilis.*

*Qui fuit humilis, mitis, affabilis,
vultu vir hilaris, vir venerabilis,
ortu vir nobilis, vir statu stabilis,
corpore castus et mente.*

*Columba merita et signa singula,
factis prophetica, clara miracula,
vel dictis dicere vel scriptis scribere,
nemo novit totaliter.*

*Relinquens patriam caram Yberniam,
per Christi gratiam venit Britanniam;
per quem ydonea vite promordia
rex gentis sumpsit Britanniam.*

*O pater patriae, paster egregie,
Columba tribue nobis spem venie;
et labe criminum nostrorum omnium
nos munda sancte Columba.*

*Qui nobis tribuat peccati veniam,
reatum diluat et donet patriam;
nos tuos famulos, et omnes catholicos
commenda regi gloriae.*

*Sit laus perpetua, sit semper gloria
patri et filio sancto paraclito,
simplici Domino qui regit omnia
per cuncta semper secula. Amen.*

*Pater Columba decus morum
suscipe vota famulorum
te laudantem serva chorum
ad incursu anglicorum
et insultu emulorum.*

Volens Jesus linire gementem pro
contu vocavit Columbam de
foraminibus petre de cavernis materie.
Qui ad arcem reversus est.
Deferens autem clementie Dei
Columba in ore suo

*Os mutorum lux cecorum pes
claudarum porrige lapsis manum.
Firma vanum et insanum corrige.
O Columba spes Scotorum nos*

Dawn harbinger of light, glows red:
it rouses us glad ones from sleep,
wanting to reflect on the famous feast
of the venerable Columba.

Who was humble, gentle, approachable.
in appearance a cheerful man, a noble
by birth, a man steadfast in attitude,
chaste in body and mind.

No one knows totally, to say in words or
to write in script, the merits of Columba
and his songs, prophetic deeds,
evident miracles.

Leaving Ireland, the dear homeland,
through the grace of Christ he came to
Britain; through him the king of the British
people received a proper ordination.

O father of this land, excellent shepherd,
Columba, grant us hope of forgiveness;
from the blemish of the guilt of all of us,
cleanse us St Columba.

Who may grant forgiveness of sins to us,
absolve the guilty and vouchsafe this land;
commend us your servants and all
Church people to the king of glory.

Let perpetual praise and glory be to the
Father, Son and Holy Paraclete,
one lord who reigns over all,
world without end. Amen.

Father Columba, glory of our national
tradition, receive the prayers of your
servants, save this choir that is praising
you from attack by the English
and assault by rivals.

Jesus, wishing to relieve sighing in favour of
a song, called forth Columba from the
holes of the rock, from the hollows of timber.
This dove returned to the ark,
bearing, moreover, the sign of God's mercy
in his mouth.

Mouth of the dumb, light of the blind,
foot of the lame, stretch out a hand to the
fallen; strengthen the unreliable and correct
the mad. O Columba, hope of Scots, by the

*tuorum meritorum interventu
beatorum fac consortes angelorum.
Alleluia.*

intervention of your kindness, make us
colleagues of the blessed angels.
Alleluia.

Carne solutus pater Columba
*angelorum constipatus turma quibus
conregnat perhenni premio in
resultante celo. Sanctus, sanctus,
sanctus proclamatur Deo, alleluia.*

Father Columba, released from flesh and
pressed by the crowd of angels, with whom
he reigns as his eternal reward, and with
heavens resounding. They cry out to God:
Holy, holy, holy, alleluia.

O Columba insignis signifer,
*mentes mundo ne fallens pestifer
servis officiat maris discrimine.
Tuis ut placeat circumdatis
psallere. Tibi precleris condecet
proxime leticie. Huc aurem adhibe.*

O Columba, distinguished standard-bearer,
cleanse our minds lest the deceiving
destroyer injure your servants with danger
from the sea, that it may please those
around you to sing. To you before others it
is fitting that voices of joy be closest. Lend an
ear!

In septentrionali Wallia
*non longe ab Albania,
sancta colit ecclesia
Kentigerni sollempnia.
Cui volatilia fere piscis flumina
Parent ut mancipia domino clientela.
Eius flatu sopita pro invidia
Succendum in Scotia sine ignis materia.*

In the northern part of the Welsh territory
not far from the region of Alba,
holy church celebrates
The rites of Kentigern.
Him the birds, the beasts, the fish, the streams
Obey, as retainers subservient to the master.
When he blew, the little flame, extinguished
through ill-will, was rekindled in Scotland
without any source of fire.

O Paradoxe pontifex
*per orbis vasti climata,
Quem phalanges uraniae
et siderum officia
Et elementa omnia
alterna per prodigia
Clarum declarant Domino
qui poli regit dindima,
Ab illo nobis vendica
perhennis vite premia.
Magnificat ...*

O priest of matchless renown
throughout the regions of the whole world,
whose fame the squadrons of heaven,
the stars in their courses
and all the elements
by successive signs
proclaim to the Lord
who rules the heights of heaven,
from Him entreat for us
The rewards of eternal life.

Que elixas condiebat
*dapes in lebetibus
Hunc defunctum lamentatur
henus cum clientibus.
Sed culine redit vivus
Kentegerni precibus,
Albaniam fugientis
citatis amfractibus.
Siste gradum, prebe vadum,
fuga ponti reumata,
Doctor clamat ad quem amat
assequens vestigia.*

The man who used to boil the tasty dinners
in the cooking pots
died, and the master and his
Disciples all mourned his end.
But he returned alive and well
to his kitchen through the prayers of Kentegern
who then fled from the Alban region,
Hastening by devious routes.
'Provide a footing, grant a passage,
turn back the flowing tide,'
the teacher cries to his beloved pupil
As he pursues after him.

Sequence of Five Antiphons

Eya, laudes decantates iubilemus Domino,
Kentegernum venerantes laudum cum preconio.

Per coronam auream in peplo angelico
et columpnam flammeam notus est in cuneo.

Sospitate pristine mortuum mirifice
Kentegernus hominem reddidit et volucrem.

Benedictus Kentegernus gregem suam visitans
larvas fugat, egros curat, plebs exultat obvians.

Laudes Deo decantare suevit in frigidis
undis artusque siccare super frontem silicis.

Eia! Let us rejoice and sing to the Lord
honouring Kentegern and proclaiming his praises.
Swathed in bright angelic robes he was marked out from the
Company by a golden crown and a pillar of fire.
Wondrously to their former health Kentigern
restored a man and a bird.
The blessed Kentegern, when returning to his flock, drives out devils and
cures the sick. The people go out to meet him with gladness.
It was his wont to sing praises to God standing in the cold water
and to dry his body sitting on the bare rock.

Alme presul Kentegerne,
laudum digne iubilo,
qui dum lumen tenebroso
prebuisi populo,
lux scintilis splenduisti
crebis in candelabro.
Tibi laudes decantates
representa Domino.

Good Bishop Kentegern,
worthy to receive exultant praise,
when you brought light to
the people who were in darkness,
you shone out with many a bright jet of
flame as a light set on a candlestick.
Into the presence of the Lord
bring us who sing your praises.

Jubente Petrus Domino
inescat piscem hamulo
in quo reperto statere
didragmam jussit solvere.
Sic Kentegerni merito
regina piscis baiulo
de stagno aurum attulit
quo velut insons claruit.

At the Lord's command, Peter
entices a fish with a little hook.
Inside he finds a coin, and the
Lord bade him use it to pay the tax.
Likewise, by the merits of Kentegern,
the fish brought to the queen's messenger
the gold ring out of the deep, through
Which her apparent innocence was famously
demonstrated.

Gens Cambrina cum regina
Plaudite trepudio.
Vibex, fletus, dolor, metus
et mortis condicio
jam cassantur et purgantur
vitali remedio.
Limpha celat quod revelat
ixtis here clanculo.
Latet regem per quam legem
diletur cum anulo.
Ensem tortor condit, orror

People of Cambria together with the queen,
rejoice in exultant dance.
Weals and weeping, grief and fear
and imminent death
now loose their hold and are purged away
by a life-restoring remedy.
The water conceals what the fish
strangely reveals to the lady.
The king cannot understand by what
procedure she receives the bounty of the ring.
The executioner puts away his sword, her

sedatur pre gaudio.
Laudes ergo Kentegerno
decantat hec conscio.
Metham auro quo reperto
traxit de ergastulo.

Adest dies leticie
quo sancta virgo Brigida
de tenebris miserie
transit ad regna lucida.

A statu puericie
Deo servire studuit
dono pollens mundicie
sponso superno placuit.

In signum pudicicie
altaris quod exaruit
manus tactu virginee
lignum repente viruit

Hec est laurus Hibernie
cuius viror non marcuit
plena misericordiae
nulli petenti defuit.

Per secla sine terminis
soli Deo sit gloria;
qui prece tante virginis
nos ducat ad celestia.
Amen.

In albis clerici
vestibus celici
natam sanctificant
aquis baptismatis
liquore chrisomatis
hanc Deo dedicant
Post vestem candidam
collatam Brigidam
sanctam specificant.

Totus orbis Brigide
plaudat in amorem
puritatis floride
currat in odorem.

Virgo decoratur
honor amplus ei cumulatur,
Synodus instabat,
nova Brigida stella micabat,
sacra cohors plaudit
quia signum celitus audit.

terror subsides in joy.
Therefore this assembly sings praises
to Kentegern
who, by finding this ring, brought the queen
up from a prison-cell.

*The day of rejoicing is here,
When the holy virgin Brigit
From the dark vale of misery
Crosses over into the realm of light.*

*From earliest childhood
She strove to serve God
By her gift of chastity, mightily
She found favour with her heavenly spouse.*

*In token of her modesty
The touch of the virgin's hand
Made the altar's dry wood
Grow suddenly green again.*

*She is the laurel of Ireland
Whose greenness never faded,
Full of merciful compassion,
She never failed any petitioner.*

*Throughout the endless ages
To God alone be glory,
That through the prayers of such a virgin
He may lead us up to heaven.
Amen.*

*Heavenly ministers
Clothed in white
Sanctify the child
With the waters of baptism,
Seal her with holy chrism,
And dedicate her to God.
After Brigit
Is robed in light
They proclaim her holy.*

*Let all the world, for love
Of Brigit, clap its hands
And hasten to savour
The sweetness of purity.*

*The maiden shone in splendour,
Great honour was heaped upon her;
The synod cried out in fervour,
Brigit blazed as a new star,
The holy gathering acclaimed her,
Hearing a sign from heaven.*

Presbyter hanc aliam
denunciat esse Mariam.

Lux Brigida Lagenie,
caracter castitatis,
cella patens clemencie,
resina pietatis,
posce tue familie
levamen a peccatis;
post transitum miserie
quietem claritatis.

Regnum mundi respuit
virgo Deo grata:
mira res, quam voluit
et est impetrata,
oculus nam crepuit
ne sit maritata.
Hunc Deus restituit
postquam est velata
facies plus placuit
Cristo reformata.

Ecce fulget clarissima
patricii solempnitas,
in qua carne deposita
felix transcendit sidera.

Qui mox [a] pueritia
divina plenus gratia
vitam cepit diligere
dignitatis angelice.

Hic felici prosapia
ortus est in Britannia
perceptoque baptisate
studet [ad] alta tendere.

Sed futurorum prescius,
clemens et rectus Dominus
hunc direxit apostolum
hybernie ad populum.

Erat namque hec insula
bonis terre fructifera,
sed cultore ydolatra
mergebatur ad infima.

Ad hanc doctor egregius
adveniens patricius
predicabat gent[il]ibus,

*The priest proclaimed
That Brigit was a second Mary.*

*Brigit, light of Leinster,
Embodiment of chastity,
Open shrine of clemency,
Balm of true devotion,
Request for your family
Relief from their sins,
And after earthly woes are past,
The peace of eternal day.*

*The maiden dear to God
Despised the kingdom of this world:
Strange the thing she prayed for,
And yet her petition was heard,
For her eyeball burst and melted
To prevent her becoming a bride.
And God restored her eye
After she took the veil
And the new beauty of her face
Was still more pleasing to Christ.*

*Behold the shining brightness
of the solemnity of Patrick
when, having laid aside his body,
he happily ascends to heaven.*

*Already from his boyhood
he was filled with divine grace
and began to love the life
of angelic dignity.*

*This man of a blessed lineage
was born in Britain
and after receiving baptism
strove to attain the heights.*

*But the merciful and upright Lord
knowing the shape of future things
directed this apostle
to the people of Ireland.*

*For this island was
fruitful with the earth's good things
yet dragged down to the lowest point
by its idolatrous worship.*

*When he arrived here
the distinguished teacher, Patrick,
preached to the heathens*

quod tenebat operibus.

Confluebat gentilitas
ad ejus sacra monita
et respuens diabolum
colebat regem omnium.

Gaudebatque se liberam
remeasse ad patriam,
qua serpentis astutia
olim expulsa fuerat.

Qua propter, dilectissimi,
huius in laude presulis
psallamus christo cordibus
alternantes et vocibus.

Ut illius suffragio
liberati a vitio
perfruamur in gloria
uisione angelica.

Laus sit patri in filio
cum spiritu paraclito,
qui suo dono gratie
misertus est hybernie. Amen

Dum baptizandus, cuidam ceco
uenerabilis puer traderetur Trino miraculo
futurus sancte trinitatis servus declaratur.
Arida namque terra manu pueri signata
protulit fontem quo cecus lota facie lumen
et legendi recepit artem. Trino.
Gloria patri et filio et spiritui sancto. Trino.

Hic incursu piratico parentum sublatu de
domo traditus est scotorum seruicio.

Magni patris sunt miranda merita patricii.
Cui dominus ostendit
locum purgatorii, Quo uiuentes se
expurgent, Delinquentes filii
Dono purga nos patrici tui adiutorii
diluens prece felici quod habemus uicii.
Cui.

**Mente munda
letabunda**
plaudat presens concio

that which he lived in his life.

*The heathens assented
to his sacred warnings
and spitting out the devil
worshipped the King of all.*

*And rejoicing to be free
they returned to their homeland
from which they had once been expelled
through the serpent's cunning.*

*Therefore, most beloved,
let us in turn sing psalms
with heart and voice to Christ
in praise of this bishop,*

*So that with his help,
freed from vice,
we may fully enjoy
the angelic vision in glory.*

*Praise be to the Father, in the Son
with the Spirit Paraclete,
who by his gift of grace
has shown mercy to Ireland. Amen*

*When the venerable boy was handed to a
blind man after his baptism, he was
declared a future servant of the Trinity by
three miracles. For dry ground signed with
the cross by the boy's hand produced a
fountain. Washing his face in this fountain
the blind man saw and received the gift of
reading.
Glory be to the Father and to the Son and
to the Holy Spirit.*

*During a raid by pirates Patrick was
abducted from his parents' house and,
handed over to the Irish, became a slave.*

*The merits of our holy father Patrick are to
be revered. The Lord showed him the place
of purgatory where those who have sinned
may cleanse themselves.
Purify us, Patrick, with the gift of your help,
and wash away our sins through your
powerful prayer.*

*With a clean heart
the people gathered here
rejoice and applaud*

patrem tantum
uirum sanctum
laudans cum tripudio
ffons emanat
cecum sanat
ipsius oracio
et altare
fert transmare
leprosum in fluuio
plebs peruersa
est conversa
erroris ab inuio
christi cedit
et obedit
per hunc euangelio
ergo totis
sancto uotis
canamus patricio
ut nos mundet
et muniet
precum purgatorio. Quo. Gloria patri.

*so great a father
and holy man
praising him with dance.
A fountain springs up
and Patrick's prayer
heals the blind man.
The altar in the water
carries the leper
across the sea.
A people gone astray
is converted
from the futility of error;
through Patrick
it yields to Christ
and obeys the gospel.
Therefore we sing
to St Patrick
with all our desire
that he may cleanse
and strengthen us
through a purgatory of prayer.*

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CANTY

Micaela Haslam Anne Lewis Rebecca Tavener

Canty was formed by Rebecca Tavener in 1998, the 900th anniversary of the birth of Hildegard of Bingen, and it comprises the regular female singers with Cappella Nova, Scotland's leading early music vocal ensemble. As individuals, the singers bring to the group a wealth of experience, both as soloists and as members of other distinguished ensembles. Together with regular collaborator, harpist William Taylor, they explore a unique repertoire combining Medieval music and contemporary works written specially for them. Their first CD *Wings of Wisdom*, featuring chant by Hildegard von Bingen and from medieval Scotland, was released on the Dorian label. *Flame of Ireland* (Sanctuary *Gaudeamus*) was their second recording and it features world premiere recordings of 15thc Irish chant for St Brigit of Kildare. Their third disc, *Felix Femina* – medieval Scottish polyphony, has just been released (Sanctuary *Gaudeamus*) and was described by Andrew McGregor as having a 'transcendental quality that absolutely suits the music' (CD Review, BBC Radio 3). In 2007 they will record an Office for St Patrick from the same Irish manuscript.

Canty has appeared in many distinguished festivals and venues at home and abroad, including the Edinburgh Festival, Galway Early Music Festival, Spitalfields Festival, Edinburgh International Harp Festival and the National Centre for Early Music in York. The group's diary is rapidly filling with concerts, residencies and workshops. Future projects include commissions from Sir John Tavener and other composers, leading to a new CD of contemporary and medieval music for Linn Records, along with further research and experimentation to develop a truly indigenous style of performance for Medieval music from Celtic homelands.

www.cappella-nova.com/canty

'The quality of the voices is outstanding' Early Music

'Magical, mystical, even erotic' The Scotsman

'Intoxicating and truly spiritual' Jersey Evening Post

'The singing is gorgeous' American Record Guide

'Voices that angels might envy' Green Man Review

'The combination of voices and instruments is spellbinding' Early Music Today

'Voices carrying clearly through the stonework like messengers from another age' The Herald

'Irresistibly attractive' The Daily Telegraph

'Serene timbres that would be the envy of similar medieval music groups'

The Irish Times

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WILLIAM TAYLOR

Bill Taylor is a specialist in the performance of ancient harp music from Ireland, Scotland and Wales, and is one of very few players investigating these repertoires on medieval gut-strung harps, wire-strung clarsachs and Renaissance harps with buzzing bray pins. He is a contributor to the New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians, and serves as convener of the Wire Branch of the Clarsach Society. He has been resident in Scotland for many years, where he teaches and works with Ardival Harps in Strathpeffer. Aside from accompanying Canty, he performs with the Highland early music group Coronach, the duo

The Art of Musick and the Belgian Late-Medieval ensemble Quadrivium. Bill teaches community music classes through Fèis Rois and is a guest lecturer at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama in Glasgow. As a teacher of historical harps, he is frequently invited to lead workshops in the UK, Europe and the USA, including regular appearances at the Edinburgh International Harp Festival.

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