

of Advent in Gregory the Great's *Liber Antiphonarius*, which combine the angelic salutation with Elizabeth's greeting, do not appear to have had an immediate impact on the surviving corpus of medieval liturgy. This paucity of evidence, make the four lines in stanza 152 of Blathmac's second poem all the more valuable as evidence for the dissemination of this liturgical formula in the West. This is particularly striking when one compares stanza 152 with the third verse in the additional poem to the Virgin Mary at the end of Carney's edition:

*Aue lat-su! cech bé de,
eter mná a bendachte;
aue, ar-foímae it brú
gein diandid comainm Ísu.*

'Hail to you! Whatever may come, O blessed amongst women. Hail! You will receive in your womb a being called Jesus.'⁷²

In this case, we are dealing with a relatively faithful translation of the biblical text of Luke 1:28, with replication of the Latin *Ave* as pronounced by the Angel Gabriel in the Vulgate. There is no indication of the influence of liturgical or devotional texts on this stanza. Carney dated the poem to the Virgin to c.700 AD and Blathmac's poems to 750-770. The question which immediately comes to mind, therefore, is whether something had happened in the intervening period. Can it be that the development of the use of the *Ave Maria* as a liturgical formula influenced Blathmac's choice of words? The middle of the eighth century is quite early for this form of Marian devotion in the West, the Eastern liturgy quoted above is probably mainly fifth century and the Roman evidence appears to date from the seventh century. Blathmac is thus an innovator who is fully up to date with the latest liturgical developments in Rome. As discussed above, the consensus among liturgists is that the words of the Angel Gabriel and the words of Elizabeth were not definitively coupled together to form the first half of the prayer which we know as the Hail Mary until sometime in the eleventh or, more likely, the twelfth century. Rather significantly, therefore, what we have in stanza 152 of the poems of Blathmac is the earliest extant vernacular witness from medieval western Christendom of the *Ave Maria* angelic salutation of the Annunciation, merged with the greeting of Elizabeth at the Visitation.

⁷² Ibid. 108-9, §3.

Postscript to Footnote 54: These lines echo the words of the Apostles' Creed: *crucifixus, mortuus, et sepultus, descendit ad infernos*, whereas stanza 197 (ll. 785-8) paraphrases the Nicene (or Constantinopolitan) Creed *et in Spiritum Sanctum ... qui ex Patre Filioque procedit, qui cum Patre et Filio simul adoratur et conglorificatur*.

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