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Conganus

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Conganus († after 1150)

1. Name variants: Cogan, Coganus, Cogganus, Comgán, Congán, Congar

2. Places: Inishlounaght (Suir), Co. Waterford

3. Biography: In his celebrated vita of the Irish monk and reformer Malachy Ua Morgair, Bernard of Clairvaux († 1153) states that he wrote at the prompting of an Irish abbot named C. Later in the vita, Bernard states that Malachy had presented to 'our abbot Coganus' (sic) a young man who later lived at Suir, Co. Waterford, a Cistercian abbey probably founded from Mellifont c. 1147 and later known as Inishlounaght. On these bases, C. is generally assumed to have been abbot of Suir. Some modern authorities have alternatively considered C. and Coganus to be separate individuals, taking the former instead to have been an abbot of Bangor, but the scholarly consensus now implicitly rejects this distinction. The circumstances of C.'s life and career, including the dates of his birth or death, are otherwise unknown. He was clearly known to Bernard, and H. J. Lawlor suggested that he was one of the Irishmen whom Malachy left to study at Clairvaux, and that he may have been abbot of Killeshin, Co. Laois, before joining the Cistercians. For his role in the composition of the vita of Malachy, he drew the attention of early modern hagiologists and antiquarians. The Irish Franciscan scholar Patrick Fleming recounted in two letters to his confrère Aodh Buidhe Mac an Bhaire (Hugh Ward), of April and May 1623, how he had visited Clairvaux to search its library for letters by Malachy and C. to Bernard. Thaddeus Dowling († 1628), in his *Annales Hiberniae*, identified 'Cogganus' as patron of the church of Killeshin and credited him with having written a gesta of each of Malachy and Bernard, citing Nicholas Maguire († 1512), bishop of Leighlin, as his authority. In his discursive list of the writers of Ireland, the antiquarian James Ware († 1666) took C. as most probably associated with Suir, with a floruit of 1150, and repeated Dowling's claims regarding his authorship. Ware's editor Walter Harris († 1761), however, believed that C. had only supplied Bernard with materials. In either case, C. deserves at least partial credit for one of the most important historical and literary portraits of an Irish saint.

4. Cultus:

a. Relics: –

b. Liturgical commemoration: –

c. Patronage: –

d. Attributes: –

5. Fontes: Bernard of Clairvaux, *The Life of Saint Malachy*, transl. H. J. LAWLOR, Dublin, 1920, 4, 114; and transl. R. T. MEYER, *Kalamazoo* 1978, 13, 81, 129; J. CLYN / T. DOWLING, *The Annals of Ireland*, ed. R. BUTLER, Dublin 1849, 8.

6. Literature: A. GWYNN / R. N. HADDOCK, *Medieval Religious Houses: Ireland*, Harlow, 1970, 135; J. O'HANLON, *The Life of Saint Malachy O'Morgair*, Dublin 1859, 3–4; M. T. FLANAGAN, *St Malachy, St Bernard of Clairvaux, and the Cistercian Order*, in: *AHib* 68 (2015), 294–311, at 295, 298–299; J. WARE, *The History and Antiquities of Ireland*, ed. W. HARRIS, Dublin 1764, 71.

7. Illustrations: –

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