

# Theology on the Web.org.uk

*Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible*

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

---

A table of contents for the *Journal of Theological Studies* (old series) can be found here:

[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_jts-os\\_01.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_jts-os_01.php)

pdfs are named: [Volume]\_[1<sup>st</sup> page of article]

## NOTES AND STUDIES

## THE LIVES OF ST CUNGAR AND ST GILDAS.

THE fragment of the Life of St Cungar published in this JOURNAL in January 1919 (xx 97) contains the first half of the *Vita* as edited by Horstman in the *Nova Legenda Angliæ* (i 248-254). The two texts are substantially the same, but that of the *Nova Legenda* has undergone a stylistic revision which almost obliterates certain characteristic features of the original document. When these are recovered in their completeness—and this is now only possible for the first half of the Life—they suggest that the author is no other than Caradoc of Llancarvan to whom Geoffrey of Monmouth refers as his contemporary, and who is also the author of the Life of St Gildas ‘the historiographer of the Britons’. The suggestion does not depend on points of style alone: it is confirmed by parallels of a material kind in the incidents recorded of the two saints. Further confirmation is afforded by the more elaborate Lives of St Cadoc and St Iltyd, in the composition of each of which the two earlier Lives have been drawn upon in such a way as to shew that they lay together before the later writer or writers. So much remains to be done in the criticism of the Latin records of British saints that I venture to offer to those whose concern it may be the reasons which have led me to the conclusions thus briefly stated.

I. I first call attention to the frequent repetition of the same word, or the same root, in various formations. This goes far beyond the mere alliteration which unfortunately led Horstman to decide that the Life of St Cungar (of which we now have at Wells a twelfth-century fragment) was a late fourteenth-century production.<sup>1</sup>

## VITA SANCTA CUNGARI.

W. 99, 21. Dum quidam Constantinopolitanus *imperator* ab *imperatrice*, Luciria nominata, sperabat *generare* prolem, nullam *generabat*.

25. invocare quatinus omnium *donorum donator donaret* eis filium.

28. *acceptabilia* et *accepta* dona elemosinarum.

31. *feliciter concepit* et post *conceptionem felicium* generavit.

35. quia exaudierat petitionem postulandam, et insuper *perfecerat* ad *perfectionem impletam* ac *implendam* [H. i 248, 14: quia exaudierat

<sup>1</sup> I cite the Wells fragment as ‘W’, with the page and line of *J. T. S.* (*ut supra*), and the *Nova Legenda* as ‘H’, with page and line of Horstman’s edition. For the Life of St Gildas I have used Mommsen’s edition (‘M’) in *M. G. H. Auct. Antiquiss.* XIII i 107 ff.

petitionem postulatam, et insuper perduxerat ad perfectionem et impletam et implendam].

40. crevit ad *puericiam*, et gradatim *puer* bonae indolis florebat.

100, 13. donec . . . de iuvenis religione *ammirabili* (admirabantur) [H. 248, 33 : ita ut . . . de iuvenis religione admirarentur. W has no verb : a later hand has supplied 'gaudebant', but no doubt wrongly].

18. si possent inventum *occupare, occupatum* caperent [H omits occupatum].

32. *Elegerant* sui parentes et cives ipsum futurum imperatorem : sed maluit ipse tendere ad celestem *electionem*. *Electus* itaque dei famulus Cungarus *elegit* nativam terram deserere.

35. evangelicum preceptum quod *audistis* et estis *auditori* [H omits et estis auditori].

101, 10. *nominabant* et *nominant* [H omits nominabant et].

17. omnia que *dabantur* illi a regibus et divitibus, *data* continuo erogabat pauperibus [H omits data].

24. ex inproviso *vidit* aprum . . . ac *visum* *perterrui* : *territus* et fugitivus aper cursu solito recessit [H has preterivit for perterrui].

102, 8. *Macies* tenuaverat corpus *macrum* [H. 250, 11 : Macies tenuerat corpus eius pertenuae].

28. *affixit in terram*, et *in terra defixum* deseruit nec retrahere potuit [H omits et in terra defixum deseruit].

36. Ini rex Anglorum *largissimus largitus* est . . .

103, 4. noluit visitare locum *honorandum*, nec faceret *honorabili* Cungaro . . . impedimentum [H recasts].

10. Multi itaque *reges* ut *viderent* locum a *regibus* non *videndum* . . . [H. 251, 1 : Multi itaque reges eundem locum improbe videntes . . .].

14. videt quod nolebat *respicere* : post *respectum* doluit . . . [H. 251, 5 : locum incaute intuitus est : quem postea cum vidisset . . . condoluit].

After this our fragment deserts us: but it will have been seen how the reviser gets more and more impatient of this annoying trick of style. In his revision of the remainder of the Life scarcely a single example of it has been allowed to survive.

#### VITA SANCTI GILDAE.

M. 107, 4. *Studuit studiosus* assidue . . . donec pervenit ad *iuventutem*, dum *iuvenis* factus . . .

8. *audita fama famosissimi* advenae.

9. audierunt ab eo vii *disciplinarum* scientiam subtilissime, unde ex *discipulis magistri* effecti sunt sub *magistrali* honore.

12. nec par ei *inveniebatur* nec poterat *inveniri*.

21. *vestitus* solummodo una *veste* : manducabat sine *saturitate satiatus* : tantum metando *praemium caeleste*, *caelestia praemia* erant ei in desiderio.

24. *reges timebant timendum*.

27. dum inciperet *praedicare*, retenta est vox *praedicationis* in *praedicante*, unde plebs *ammirata* est valde pro *ammirabili retentione*.

108, 2. praecipit illi *exire*, et postquam *exiverat* *vocavit* plebem ; quae *vocata* venit.

12. Arturi regis . . . quem *diligendum diligebat*.
19. audiens magnanimum *iuvenem talia fecisse et aequalia facere*, persecutus est victoriosissimum *iuvenem* et optimum . . . in *persecutione* autem hostili . . . *interfecit iuvenem* praedatorem: post illam *interfectionem* . . .
32. *monstravit* illi laudabilem campanam; *monstratam accepit*, *acceptam* emere voluit.
37. veniam postulanti *osculum* dedit, et *benignissimo* animo *benedixit osculanti*.
- 109, 8. rogavit Gildam doctorem ut regeret studium scholarum . . . et *rogatus rex* . . .
22. *frigescens* nimium: *frigus* erat ei dulce . . .
26. quae *cadebant* super saxa, et quae retinebantur *cadentia*, fecit rivum *effluere* de rupe alta, qui *effluxit* et *effluit* et manebit sine defectione aliqua.
33. *susceptus* vir *suscipiendus* a Glastoniense abbati docuit . . . *seminans semen seminandum* caelestis doctrinae.
43. ut *redderet* raptam: *reddita* ergo fuit quae *reddenda* fuerat.
- 110, 8. *visitabant* sancti viri illum *visitandum*.
18. cuius anima *requievit* et *requiescit* ac *requiescet* in caelesti *requie*.
20. Ynisgutrin *nominata* fuit antiquitus Glastonia et adhuc *nominatur* a Britannis indigenis.

I think it will hardly be doubted by any one who will carefully compare the items of these two lists that we have here either the work of one and the same writer, or else the most slavish copying of a peculiarly odious, idiosyncrasy. I have not found among the biographers of the British saints any parallels which would suggest that this was a feature of their literature: such instances as I have met with occur in writings which on other grounds must be regarded as influenced by these two Lives.

Arguments from style alone are apt to be fallacious, and a wider range of knowledge may possibly produce parallels which have escaped my somewhat perfunctory search. I pass on therefore to offer examples of common subject-matter, which is occasionally clothed in similar phraseology.

First let us compare the austerities of the two saints. Of St Cungar we read:

W. 102, 2. Perseveravit in hoc loco sibi placito indutus cilicio, ducens vitam inreprehensibilem in ieiuniis et crebris orationibus sine impedimento. Omni hora matutina intrabat in frigidam aquam, ibi permanens quandiu diceretur ab eo tribus vicibus dominica oratio; (et) revertebatur ad ecclesiam vigilans et exorans summi creatoris omnipotentiam. Nona hora autem utebatur ordeaceo pane, nunquam fungens ferculis nec saturitate. Macies tenuaverat corpus macrum: talem videntes dicebant illum esse languidum aut febricitatum. Vita heremitalis erat sibi dulcissima, secundum Pauli primi heremite et Antonii vestigia.

Of St Gildas the account is remarkably similar :

M. 107, 17. Macies apparebat in facie ; quasi quidam febricitans videbatur gravissime. Fluviale aquam intrare solebat media nocte, ubi manebat stabilitus donec diceretur ab ipso ter oratio dominica : his peractis repetebat suum oratorium ; ibi exorabat genuflectendo divinam maiestatem usque diem clarum.

A little before this we read :

M. 107, 13. Ieiunabat ut heremita Antonius : orabat vir religiosissimus cilicio indutus : quicquid dabatur ei continuo impendebat pauperibus.<sup>1</sup>

It can scarcely be questioned that the same artist has drawn the two pictures, and his stock of ideas is as limited as his box of colours. We may add that each saint builds in two different places a church or oratory in honour of the Blessed Trinity, and each makes a pilgrimage to Rome.

When St Cungar was in search of a place of settlement, 'direxit suum iter *ad estivam* quam sic incole nominabant et nominant *regionem*' (W. 101, 10). The reviser has rewritten this passage thus : 'direxit iter suum ad partem quandam Britanniarum que vocatur *Somerset*, quam sic incole nominant *regionem*' (H. 249, 23). Now when St Gildas comes to Glastonbury, he finds King Melvas reigning in *aestiva regione* (M. 109, 32). I have not met with this latinization of Somerset elsewhere : but it seems to underlie the Welsh phrase in the Gwentian Brut y Tywysogion, where the year 683 we are told that Ivor and the Britons put the Saxons to flight, and 'acquired Cornwall, the Summer Country, and Devonshire completely. And then Ivor erected the great monastery in Ynys Avallen, in thanksgiving to God for His assistance against the Saxons.' I owe this reference to Freeman's article on 'King Ine' in the *Proceedings of the Somerset Archaeological Society* for 1872 (XVIII ii 37) : he is there illustrating the strange confusion by which the deeds of the Saxon Ina have been transferred to a Welsh prince Ivor. It is certainly curious from the point of view of the present enquiry that this Gwentian Chronicle is attributed to Caradoc of Llancarvan, the writer of the Life of St Gildas : I must leave it to others to say whether the coincidence has any real significance.

There is one other point which I would notice. The writer of the Life of St Cungar introduces a couple of hexameters, sometimes more, at various parts of his narrative. This feature does not occur in the Life of St Gildas : but at the end of that Life we have a couple of hexameters which presumably come from the pen of its writer :

Nancabanensis dictamina sunt Caratoci :  
qui legat, emendat : placet illi compositori.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. W. 101, 17 cited above.

II. We have now to consider the use made of these two Lives in the Lives of St Cadoc and St Ilyd preserved in the Cottonian MS, Vesp. A xiv, which is said to have been written *c.* 1200. First we note the parallels between the Life of St Cadoc and that of St Cungar.<sup>1</sup>

1. St Cungar on reaching Britain 'inquirebat et interrogabat diligenter in itinere loca congrua heremitaë'. Guided by an angel he comes to a spot 'aquis et arundineto ambitum'. Then in a dream the angel tells him that on the morrow he will see a boar, and there he is to build a dwelling-place and found an oratory. So on the next day 'ex inproviso vidit aprum iacentem in arundineo loco, ac visum perterritum; territus et fugitivus aper cursu solito recedit'. He builds an oratory 'in honore sanctae trinitatis'.

Similarly St Cadoc seeks a place of retirement: 'locum aptum ad dei servicium diligenter quesivit' (p. 31). He comes to a valley where 'nil aridi extitit, sed purulenta palus, nichil preter arundinetum', &c. An angel tells him in a dream that he will find a place to build his oratory where he sees a great white boar: 'setosum grandevumque aprum candidum, gressuum tuorum strepitu perterritum, exilire perspicias; ibique fundamentum templi tui in nomine sanctae trinitatis iacias.'

2. Prince Pebian, who tried to rob St Cungar, 'ad modum cere ad ignis ardorem liquescentis, in conspectu omnium qui aderant liquescendo adnichilatus est' (H. 253, 21).

A violator of St Cadoc's shrine 'conspectu totius exercitus liquefactus est, prout cera ante faciem ignis' (p. 77).

3. St Cungar settled twelve canons at Congresbury, and twelve at his church in Wales, 'qui regulariter viventes deo servirent' (H. 253, 4).

St Cadoc settled thirty-six canons at Llancarvan, 'qui assidue et regulariter servirent ecclesie Nantcarbanensi' (p. 82).

4. Among phrases in common we find 'fluenta doctrinae', which comes so oddly in St Cungar's Life—'doctrinae suae fluenta seminabat per patriam' (W. 101, 14): but in St Cadoc's Life we have it in the more reasonable combination 'fluenta doctrinae flagrantius sitiens' (p. 36).

5. The occasional hexameters are also a common feature; and at the end of St Cadoc's Life there is a group of four, the last two of which give the writer's name:

Det veniam Christus, terrarum conditor orbis,  
cui scripsit vitam culparum, nomine Lifris.

We may next note parallels with the Life of St Gildas.

<sup>1</sup> The page-references for St Cadoc and St Ilyd are to W. J. Rees *Cambro-British Saints* (1853).

1. St Gildas brought back from Ireland a remarkable bell, which he determined to present to the *Apostolicus* of Rome. Lodging for a night at Llancarvan, he shewed the bell to St Cadoc, who desired to purchase it. St. Gildas refused to part with it, and proceeded to Rome, where he offered it to the Pope. But the Pope could not make it ring, and enquired whether anything had happened on the way. When told of St Cadoc's desire to buy it, the Pope said: 'I know the venerable abbot Cadoc, who has been here seven times, and thrice to Jerusalem. Go back and give it to him.' When St Cadoc received the bell, it gave forth a marvellous sound: 'unde remansit portantibus per Gualliam pro refugio' (M. 108, 28 ff).

In the Life of St Cadoc this story is greatly elaborated. The Pope is said to be Alexander—a chronological impossibility. He blesses the bell and makes it 'refugium totius Britannie firmum'. It seems practically certain that the later writer had the earlier form of the story before him, and dealt with it in a free and rhetorical fashion.

2. St Gildas taught school for St Cadoc at Llancarvan for the space of a year, and afterwards the two saints retired to two neighbouring islands in the Severn sea, 'scilicet Ronech et Echin' (M. 109, 15). These islands are now called Flatholme and Steepholme. The biographer of St Cadoc gives the explanatory note, 'insula Echni, que modo Holma vocatur' (p. 63). When St Gildas was on Echni 'missalem librum scripsit illumque sancto Cadoco obtulit . . . ideoque codex illi evangelium Gildae vocatur' (p. 66). In the Life of St Gildas this Gospel Book appears, but it is said to have been written during the year spent at Llancarvan.

3. The two incidents in the Life of St Gildas regarding K. Arthur have perhaps suggested the introduction of two Arthur stories in the Life of St Cadoc.

We conclude, therefore, that the writer of the Life of St Cadoc of Llancarvan had before him the Life of St Cungar, and probably also the Life of St Gildas—both of which Lives seem to have been composed by Caradoc of Llancarvan.

Lastly we come to the Life of St Iltud, a composition which extends over some twenty-five pages, whereas St Cadoc is made to fill twenty-six. St Iltud is the son of a king of Brittany. He early acquires learning as well as military skill: 'nullus eloquentior per totam Galliam Iltuto milite recitante philosophicam eloquentiam' (p. 159). He comes to Britain to visit the court of K. Arthur his kinsman. Then he takes service as 'magister militum' under K. Poulentus (who figures conspicuously in the Life of St Cungar). Presently he goes to St Cadoc, who recommends to him the eremitical life.

Among his austerities is the following :

Nocte media ante matutinas abluebat se aqua frigida, sic sustinens quamdiu posset ter dici oratio dominica ; deinde visitat ecclesiam, genuflectens atque orans summi conditoris omnipotentiam [cf. *supra*, p. 17].

The following sentences are also to be compared with passages cited above from the Life of St Cungar :

p. 167. largiter dabat quicquid dabatur in manibus [cf. W. 101, 17].

p. 172. cotidie (nona) hora in pane ordiceo et aqua solvebat ieiunium, fercula respuebat . . . macies quoque tenuaverat faciei superficiem [cf. W. 102, 7 ff].

The king's provost Cyblim having offended against St Iltyd,

p. 731. Deus summus ultor fecit illum quasi mollitam et liquefactam ceram ardore igneo liquescere [cf. H. 253, 21].

When we have said that there is a reference to 'Paulus et Antonius, primi heremite', and that the writer breaks out into occasional hexameters, we need not further labour the proof that he has had before him the Life of St Cungar.

In the Life of St Gildas the most attractive episode is the story of the bell. Here we find it in another shape. St. Iltyd, persecuted by K. Meirchiaunus, hides in a cave, and not even his friends can discover him (p. 174). A messenger of St Gildas chanced by that way, bearing a bell which the 'historiographer' was sending as a present to St David. As he passed the cave, the bell rang of itself. Its sweet sound drew forth the hidden saint, who rang it thrice and asked what was its destination. When the messenger had delivered it to St David, that holy bishop failed to make it ring, and hearing what had happened in the way sent it back as a gift to St Iltyd, whose hiding-place was thus made known.

In later days this bell was fatal to K. Edgar : for it was stolen without his knowledge when he was on an expedition against Glamorgan. Although he made amends to the utmost of his power, he died on the ninth day afterwards. This reminds us of K. Edgar's involuntary intrusion on the domain of St Cungar which was forbidden to kings: that offence, although atoned for, was punished by the king's death nine days later.

Thus we have found that in both these Lives the Life of St Cungar has been freely drawn upon, alike for incidents and for phraseology. The Life of St Gildas seems to have suggested incidents which reappear in a modified form. The later biographies are long and laboured, full of crude fancies and miracles. It may seem hardly worth while to spend time upon them. But the students of the Arthurian legend have found



it necessary to turn to them,<sup>1</sup> and for this reason, if for no other, it is desirable to place them in their true setting and to mark them off from the earlier Lives of which they are partly imitations.

Caradoc of Llancarvan was, as we have said, a contemporary of Geoffrey of Monmouth, whose *Historia Regum Britanniae* was written c. 1136.<sup>2</sup> The Durham MS of the Life of St Gildas was written in 1166; and of the Life of St Cungar we have a twelfth-century fragment. These two Lives may have been written at any time between 1120 and 1150. The two later Lives were probably composed towards the end of the twelfth century. They give no evidence of acquaintance with the work of Geoffrey of Monmouth, and the Arthurian material which they contain testifies to Welsh tradition before or soon after his time. Our enquiry therefore may be thought to have a certain literary value apart from its hagiographical interest. I must ask pardon for trespassing in these fields, and daring to write, as Nennius would say, 'quasi garrula avis vel quasi quidam invalidus arbiter': and I gladly repeat the last words of his *Apologia*: 'Cedo illi qui plus noverit in ista peritia satis quam ego.'

J. ARMITAGE ROBINSON.

### IS ECCLESIASTES A TRANSLATION?

THE title of this Note is phrased as a query, because the matter is not clear to my mind. But I have had for some time a feeling that the style of Ecclesiastes is, in certain respects, unsatisfactory and disconcerting, and the answer which to me raises the least difficulty and satisfies most of the data is that what we have is not an original but a translation. I cannot offer a demonstration of this, but I venture to hope that my remarks will not be out of place as a suggestion.

The Book called Ecclesiastes, itself a rendering of the extraordinary Hebrew title *Kohéleth*, is a most original work. Especially is this the case if we think of originality as a quality displayed rather in getting to grips with the essentials of a problem than in saying brilliant things about the surface of it. The author, considering the ancient problem of the unequal distribution of what are generally supposed to be the desirable things of life, passes on to consider the nature of real happiness, real success. He comes to the conclusion that a good deal of what passes for success is in itself worthless, and that the only positive good

<sup>1</sup> See especially the admirable work of R. H. Fletcher in his *Arthurian Material in the Chronicles* (1906) pp. 105 ff.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 45.