

Vita Sancti Kebie,

BY

THE REV. S. BARING-GOULD.

THERE are extant two lives of S. Cybi or Cuby, both in Latin, and both in the same MS. Collection (Cotton Lib. Vesp. A. xiv) in the British Museum ; both are apparently independent translations from one Welsh original. The first has been published by Rees in his *Lives of the Cambro-British Saints*, Llandovery, 1853.

The MS. belongs to the 13th century. It contains a calendar, and lives of S. Gundleus, S. Cadoc, S. Iltut, S. Teliau, two of S. Dubricius, S. David, S. Bernac, S. Paternus, S. Cledauc, two of S. Kebi, S. Tatheus, S. Carantoc, and S. Aed.

The author of the Latin life of S. Gundleus seems to imply that he derived his narrative from a Welsh poem on the life of the saint, for he records the circumstances of the composition of this bardic effusion. And that the two lives of S. Cybi are taken from a Welsh original hardly admits of a doubt, for both narrate the same circumstances in the same order, and only differ in the rendering into Latin.

Solomon, the father of S. Cybi, was *princeps militiae*, i.e., Gwledig, or chief military officer, also called *Dux* of the British, and a local Cornish king.

The *Lives* give his pedigree differently from the Welsh genealogies. Solomon, according to the latter, was "ap

•

Gereint ap Erbin ap Cystennin Gorneu", whereas the *Lives* make him son of Erbin son of Gereint, whom they represent as son of the fabulous Lud, the builder of London.

There were two Gereints. The second was son of Caranog of the race of Cadell Deyrnllug, and was father of S. Eldad, Bishop of Gloucester, who was killed by the Saxons; and the Gereint, who had a church dedicated to him in Hereford, was probably this latter Gereint.

Assuredly the Welsh pedigrees are more likely to be right than the *Lives*, for they invariably call Gereint the son of Erbin, and derive his descent from Constantine, and there is absolutely no confirmation of the statement that Gereint was son of Lud.

The mother of Cybi was Gwen, sister of Non, the mother of S. David. "Ortus autem fuit de regione Cornubiorum, inter duo flumina, Tamar et Limar" (Vit. 1^{ma}). This is the principality of Gallewick, between the Tamar and Lynher, of which Callington is the principal town. There are, in the district, no churches that now bear the names of Solomon and Gwen as founders, but there are traces of the presence of Non and David, and possibly of David's father Xant, in Altarnon, Landew, and Lansant (Lezant). There is, moreover, a tradition of a visit of S. David to Cornwall, mentioned by the poet Gwynfardd, who says that he received there ill-treatment at the hands of a woman.¹

S. Wenn or Gwen has left traces of herself in Morval and S. Wenn, and possibly Llansalos may have been a foundation of S. Selyf or Solomon.

At the age of seven Cybi went to school, and lived thenceforth, till he was twenty-seven years old, in Cornwall.

¹ *Myvyrian Archaeology*, i, p. 270.

After that he started on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, and on his way home visited S. Hilary at Poitiers, who consecrated him bishop. This is an anachronism, as S. Hilary died in 366, nor does it help us if we suppose that a mistake has been made between Hilary of Arles and his namesake of Poitiers, for the former died in 449. It is not possible to put S. Cybi so early, when his grandfather Gereint fell at Llongborth in 522. In the *Lives* Elien Geimiad, his kinsman, has been confused with Hilary. As Rees, in his *Essay on the Welsh Saints*, has pointed out, Elien is very generally confounded with Hilary, as Geimiad (the Pilgrim) has been changed into Caimaid (bright) to correspond with the Latin Hilarius; moreover the name Hilary is rendered in Welsh Elian.¹

The *Lives* assert that Cybi remained for fifty years on the Continent. This is incredible, as shall be presently shown.

On his return to Cornwall, Cybi probably made his two important foundations of Duloe and Tregony. Duloe is remarkable as having adjoining it Morval, a foundation of his mother S. Gwen, and Pelynt, one of his aunt S. Non. Due North is S. Keyne, who was his cousin. If, as I conjecture, Lansalos was a foundation of S. Selyf, then his father was not far off. At Tregony again, we find in close proximity his aunt, S. Non, at Grampound.

How long Cybi remained in Cornwall we do not know. The *Lives* inform us that the natives desired to elevate him to the throne, but that he refused the honour. We know so little of the history of Cornwall at this period that we can do no more than conjecture that his father Solomon was dead, and that Catau, the Duke Cadour of Geoffry of Monmouth, had succeeded. Cadour was in turn

¹ Rees, *Welsh Saints*, 1836, p. 267.

succeeded by the turbulent Constantine, who was so violently assailed by Gildas in his epistle, *circ.* 545.

Immediately after this abortive attempt to raise Cybi to the throne, the saint left his native land for Wales. It is easy to read between the lines of the narrative and see that a disaffected portion of the Cornish endeavoured to put Cybi at their head against, probably, the violent Constantine; that this attempt failed, and that Cybi was obliged to fly for his life.

He took with him ten disciples, of whom four are named Maeloc, Llibio, Peulan, and Cyngar. Cyngar was, in fact, his uncle, the famous founder of Congresbury, in Somersetshire, which he had abandoned probably on account of the incursions of the Saxons. Cyngar was now an aged man, "Consobrinus ejus Kengar erat senex."

On leaving Cornwall, Cybi went to Morganwg, where he was not at first well received by the king, Etelic. We meet with this name in the *Liber Landavensis*; Etelic is there represented as son of Judael, King of Morganwg. Finally, the King surrendered to Cybi two sites for churches, Llangybi and Llandeверguer. The former is in Monmouthshire, the latter site has not been identified.

Cybi does not seem to have remained long in Morganwg. He went to Porthmawr, near St. David's, where he tarried three days, and thence crossed into Ireland, and made no delay till he had reached the island of Aran Môr, where he placed himself under the direction of S. Enda.

Enda had obtained a grant of the island from Ængus MacNadfraich, King of Munster, who fell in battle in 489, and Enda can hardly have founded his abbey there much before 486. He is supposed to have died in 540.

Cybi still had with him his disciples; and the account in the *Lives* is confirmed by what we hear of S. Enda, that

he did have in Aran a disciple Libio, who is the Lebiauc or Llibio of the *Vita*.

In Aran S. Cybi remained four years. There he built a church. His uncle Cyngar was with him, and was so decrepit with age that he could eat no solid food. Consequently Cybi bought a cow with its calf, to supply milk for the old man.

Melioc or Maeloc, the disciple of Cybi, cultivated a patch of land near the cell of another monk, named Fintan the Priest (Crubthir-Cruimthir) Fintan. This led to angry altercation, as Fintan considered this to be an encroachment. S. Enda was called in to make peace between them, but the grievance rankled in Fintan's mind.

The calf, moreover, strayed, and got into the meadow of Fintan, whereupon the disciples of Fintan impounded it; and tied it to a shrub (the *Life* says—a big tree, but there are not now and never were trees in Arran). The calf managed to tear up the shrub and ran back to its mother.

Fintan was furious and betook himself to prayer. He called on God to drive or blot Cybi out of the island, "deprecatus est Dominum, ut fugaret vel deleret Sanctum Kebium de insula Arun, quia Deus amavit eum."

An angel was accordingly sent to Cybi to tell him to go. Doubtless the angel was a peace-loving monk, who saw that there would be incessant quarrels so long as these two angry saints were near each other in a confined island.

Accordingly Cybi departed for Meath, and there fasted forty days and nights on one spot, so as to secure it as a foundation for himself for ever, according to the well-known Celtic custom, described by Bede. The place Mochop is Kilmore of S. Mocop, near Artaine. But Fintan followed him there, and on the pretext that the land belonged to himself, drove Cybi away.

The Cornishman, along with his disciples, now went into Magh Breagh, the great plain in which is Kildare, but remained there only seven days, as the implacable Fintan pursued him, stirred up the people against him, and expelled Cybi and all his men.

Cybi next betook himself to Vobium or Vobyun by the sea, a district I cannot identify unless it were the country of the Hy Faelain, Ofaly. Fintan once more pursued him, and by some means or other was successful in again obtaining his expulsion. Cybi now solemnly cursed Fintan—"May all thy churches be deserted, and may never be found three churches singing at thy altar in all Ireland."

Thereupon Cybi and his disciples—to the number of twelve—entered a wickerwork coracle and passed over to Wales. On reaching the coast the boat got among rocks off the Carnarvon shore, and was almost lost; however, all on board got safe to land, and Cybi founded a church at a spot then called Cunab, but now Llangybi near Pwllheli, where, with his staff, he elicited a spring that bears his name to this day.

Maelgwn, King of Gwynedd (d. 547), was hunting, when a goat he pursued fled for refuge to S. Cybi. The King went to the cell of the Saint, who entreated that he might be given as much land as the hound could run the goat round. "And Cybi let loose the goat, and the hound pursued it through all the promontory (*i.e.*, Lleyln), and it returned again to the cell of S. Cybi."

Afterwards, a rupture occurred between Maelgwn and the saint. Maelgwn was a very immoral man, and what especially gave offence was that he had been brought up in the ecclesiastical state, and had deserted it. Cybi got the upper hand—the particulars are not recorded—and the King surrendered to him his *castellum* in Anglesey,

which thenceforth bore the name of Caergybi, and thither the Saint removed with his monastic family.

Here he again met with Elian the Pilgrim, who had ordained him, and who had a church at Llanelian. According to tradition they were wont to walk along the cliff to meet each other at a spot called Llandyfydog, the one from the east the other from the west. Another friend with whom Cybi here associated was S. Seiriol, of Penmon.

The legend tells how Cybi sent his disciple Caffo to fetch fire from a smith, and the pupil returned bearing red hot charcoal in the lap of his habit. After this ensued a rupture between them, the occasion of which is not told. The writer of the first life merely records, out of place, and in a fragmentary manner: "And S. Cybi said to his disciple Caffo, depart from me, we two cannot get on together. And he went to the town called at this day Merthir Caffo, and there the Rosswr shepherds killed Caffo. Therefore the blessed Cybi cursed the shepherds of Rosswr." This comes in in the middle of the story of Cybi and Maelgwn, thus:—"Tunc capra ad sancti Kepii casulam, refugii causa, velociter cucurret; et dixit sanctus Kepius ad discipulum suum Caffo, Recede a me, non possumus esse simul et invenit capra refugium," &c. The second *Life* omits the passage relative to Caffo.

Now it is very significant that it was on the meeting of Cybi with Maelgwn that Cybi was obliged to dismiss Caffo from his attendance, and that shortly after some of Maelgwn's people should fall on and kill Caffo. When we learn that Caffo was the brother of Gildas, the whole is explained. Caffo was first cousin to Cybi, and very probably the estrangement between Maelgwn and the Saint was due to the publication of Gildas's intemperate and scurrilous epistle, in which Maelgwn was singled out for

invective of the most insulting character. We can well understand that the King was ill pleased to have the cousin of his reviler settle on his lands, and that he only consented to tolerate his presence on condition that he should dismiss the brother of Gildas. We see also a reason for the murder of Caffo. The shepherds took up the quarrel and slew Caffo in revenge for the abuse poured on their King.

S. Cybi died on November 8, certainly after 547, the date of Maelgwn's decease in the Yellow Plague.

It is not possible to admit that the age of the saint was seventy-two when he returned from the continent to Cornwall, but that may very well have been his age when he returned finally to Britain, after the four years spent in Ireland. His uncle was, indeed, still alive—but may have been nearly ninety. S. Enda, to whom he had gone was almost certainly his senior, and he died in or near 540.

Of the disciples of S. Cybi we have seen that Libiauc or Libio is known on Irish testimony to have been in Aran with S. Enda. He came to Wales with Cybi and founded Llanllibio in Anglesey. Paulinus or Peulan was the son of Pawl Hên, of Ty Gwyn, whose monumental inscription is now in Dolau-Cothi House, Carmarthenshire. He founded Llanbeulan in Anglesey. Another disciple, Maelauc or Maeloc, was the son of the Cornish Gereint, and was Cybi's first cousin, probably he was a good deal younger than his master, for after having founded a chapel at Llanfadog, under the church of his fellow pupil at Llanbeulan, he left and became a disciple of S. Cadoc, and finally settled at Llowes in Elfael in Radnorshire.

It is not possible to determine who was Cybi's great adversary, Crubthir Fintan. Finnan or Fintan is a very common name among the Irish Saints, and of a great many of them nothing is known. From the curse pro-

nounced by Cybi, which we may suppose was held to have been accomplished, Fintan his adversary obtained no extended cult in Ireland. There is indeed a Cruimthir (Crubthir) Finnan marked in the Irish Martyrologies on February 9, as of Droma Licci, in Leitrim, but this can not be the man, as according to the *Life*, Cruimthir Finnan was a person of influence in Leinster, and not in Northern Connaught. A Crubthir Fintain, however, occurs in the Martyrology of Donegal on July 13, of Killairthir, the site of which has not been satisfactorily determined.

It is conceivable that the departure of Cybi from Aran was due to the death of S. Enda in 540, and this will well agree with the date of his arrival in Wales, about 542.

If we suppose that he was then aged seventy-two, then he arrived in Ireland in 538, sixteen years after the fall of his grandfather in the battle of Llongborth (Langport in Somersetshire). We may conjecture that it was due to the defeat of the Britons in that battle, that Cyngar Gereint's son was obliged to escape from Congresbury to Cornwall.

Taking Cybi to have lived to the age of 84, he would have died in 554.

The *Lives* of S. Cybi seem to me to deserve more regard than has hitherto been paid them, for the statements made in them receive remarkable corroboration from various quarters.

According to both *Lives* Cybi died on November 8. His feast is, however, very variously observed. In the Calendar prefixed to the *Lives*, in the same MS., his day is given as November 7. A Welsh MS. Calendar of the 15th cent. in Jesus College, Oxford (xxii), gives Nov. 5, so also the Welsh Calendar of 1670, in *Agoriad Paradws*, & Welsh Calendar in the Iolo MSS., on Nov. 5. Ab Ithel,

in his, gives Nov. 6, and a Welsh Calendar copied by W. ap W. in 1591, in the British Museum (Add. MSS. 14,882), gives Nov. 6. The parish feast at Tregony is observed on October 4. That, however, at Duloe is on November 9.

It may not be uninteresting to have the genealogy of S. Cuby or Cybi set forth as given by the Welsh authorities.

