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8 Healing

Healing, a primary function of the saints, is an important expression of their supernatural powers. People, beset by mysterious ailments, sought for and found explanation in an invisible world where spirits, either on their own initiative or at the instigation of unfriendly individuals, could meddle with a person's body, giving pain, sapping strength, or depriving the senses, but also found that there were people who could communicate with this world and its spirits and gain power in it, people who could overcome its forces and undo any harm. 'Primitive' religions all have members with supernatural powers whose control of spirits or influence with the gods permits them control of nature and healing, whether it involves leading a soul back from the dead or locating and counteracting subtle poisons and invisible agents, and whether it is done through ecstatic techniques or through the charms of sympathetic magic. These healers must be people of vision, whose senses extend beyond the immediate world so that they can see and find their way through the other-world. The existence of this visionary healer in Celtic society can be inferred from the linking together of the concepts of seer and healer in the Irish compound *fáthlag* (*vates-medicus*) which appears in such texts as *Táin Bó Cúalnge*¹ where it is applied to Fingán and in *Aislinge Meic Conglinne*.² There is very little, if any, distance between these medicine men, practitioners of white magic who deal with the powers of the other-world, and the saints, who are believed to enjoy direct communication with God, with a command on His powers. The difference is that, while performing the same function as the medicine man, the saint turns to only one God, rather than dealing with multiple gods and the whole spirit world.³

That the saints are noted for their healing abilities is shown in generalized lists such as those in *cywyddau* to Mechyll:

¹ Cecile O'Rahilly, ed., *Táin Bó Cúalnge from the Book of Leinster*, p. 101, l. 3657.

² Kuno Meyer, ed., *Aislinge Meic Conglinne*, p. 75.

³ For discussions of folk medicine and its practitioners (shamans, medicine men, conjurers), see: Don Yoder, 'Folk Medicine,' with its bibliography; *American Folk Medicine*, ed. Wayland D. Hand; and Mircea Eliade, *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy*.

Deillion efryddion ar frys
 Mechyll ller wyd am owchys
 oi gofidai dic afiach
 ag yn vn awr y gwnai'n iach⁴

(Blind men, cripples in haste, Mechyll, to where you are [?for an eager one] if severe sickness worried them, and at once would make them whole.)

and Tydecho:

Gwnaeth ddynion efryddion fry
 I rodio pob tir wedy,
 A dall a byddar allan'
 Weled a chlywed achlan.⁵

(He made crippled men above to walk every land afterwards, and blind and deaf could see and hear completely.)

But there are also specific healing miracles related of them. For example, David's first act of healing was at his baptism when his baptismal water gave sight and features to the blind *wynepclawr* who held him.⁶

Eilwaith y rhoes ei olwg
 I'r claf drem rhag clefyd drwg,
 Ei dad bedydd, dud bydawl,
 Dall wynepglawr, mawr fu'r mawl.⁷

(Again he gave his sight to the sick one of sight [one of poor eyesight] against a bad illness, his godfather, mortal people, a blind *wynepclawr*, great was the praise.)

The term *wynepclawr* (flat-face) is held to refer to some form of leprosy,⁸ and though not all the texts are clear on it, one receives the impression that this condition was healed along with the blindness.

Blindness is the ailment most frequently healed by the saints, with David himself restoring sight in two more specific incidents. Once, when his teacher Paulinus has lost his sight and is asking each disciple in turn to attempt curing him, the touch of David's hand on his face returns his sight immediately.⁹

⁴ Mechyll A l. 1-4.

⁵ Tydecho A l. 67-70.

⁶ Dewi A 4; B32; C6.

⁷ Dewi Fl. 37-40.

⁸ Iorwerth C. Peate, 'The Antiquity of Leprosy in Wales.'

⁹ Dewi A5; B32-33; C7.

Paulinus, gwn pa luniaeth,
 Dull o nych, dallu a wnaeth;
 Gwnaeth Dewi rôddi ar hynt
 Ei lygaid fal na lwygynt.¹⁰

(Paulinus, I know what condition, a type of feebleness, became blind; Dewi gave at once his eyes so they did not fail.)

Another time, during his wanderings around the countryside establishing churches, David restores sight to Peibio, King of Erging.¹¹ Gildas, while sojourning in Rome, stops to give alms to a blind and mute beggar. He sprinkles blessed water on the man's face and places salt in his mouth, thus giving him both sight and speech.¹² This instance, and one involving a mother bathing her mute child at Gwenfrewi's well,¹³ are the only specific examples of healing muteness that I have collected, though there are many references to it in generalized lists of a saint's healing miracles. Deafness and lameness are also included in these generalized lists, which, whether in prose or in poetry, take on an almost formulaic nature, possibly derived from the four most common forms of healing in the New Testament. The pattern can be seen when it is said of Lleuddad that he was performing miracles 'nid amgen deilion i ueled, crupled y gerded, mudion y dywedud, bydeir y glywed'¹⁴ (Namely the blind to see, cripples to walk, mutes to speak, the deaf to hear), and again when John ap Hoel ap Llewelyn Fychan writes of Gwenfrewi's healing powers:

Y dall a wyl o'i dywyll wely,
 Y crupl gwan, oerddig gerdda i fyny,
 Y byddar mudwar a 'medy-yn iach.¹⁵

(The blind will see from his dark bed; the weak, cold and bitter, cripple will walk up; the gentle deaf mutes will leave whole.)

Of these four it is really only the healing of sight which receives any individual attention, an indication of the importance laid by people on this one of the senses. (In conjunction with the emphasis put on healing sight, recall the preponderance of punishments and constraints using blindness.) This is not limited, certainly, to the unconscious stressing of oral narratives, for it is recognized by conscious literary artists, by individuals examining their fears, and by psychologists, but it is interesting to note that verbal narrative is a suitable medium for expressing a return of sight, whereas drama, preferring the more visibly dramatic cripple taking

¹⁰ Dewi E l. 39-42.

¹¹ Dewi A6; B33; C8-9.

¹² Gildas A345.

¹³ Gwenfrewi A303.

¹⁴ Lleuddad A427.

¹⁵ GDLIM, p. 141, l. 60-62.

his first hesitant steps and throwing away his crutches, is not quite as effective a medium.

The casting out of devils, however, seems to be sufficiently dramatic for any medium. Dyfrig is approached by a wealthy man who beseeches him to free his possessed daughter who, even when bound, tries to drown or burn herself or to destroy things about her with her teeth. At Dyfrig's prayers, the bonds break, the demon flees, and the girl renounces the world, placing herself under Dyfrig's protection.¹⁶ While in Ireland, Samson releases a demonically possessed abbot, who, like the girl healed by Dyfrig, follows Samson.¹⁷ (The motif of a healed person following his healer will be taken up later.) Samson later uses the healing of a demonic count upon his arrival at court in Brittany to demonstrate his power. In Samson's later, Welsh Life,¹⁸ the king, upon hearing the good news, welcomes the saint warmly, though in the earlier, Breton Life,¹⁹ the king refuses to meet Samson and it is the count who urges him not to insult such a saint. Samson is also credited with another specific incident of exorcism. When he first arrives in Brittany, Samson meets a man who is lamenting and gazing out to sea and who says that he has been waiting for three days and nights for a healer from across the sea promised by God for the cure of the man's leprous wife and demonic daughter. Samson's prayers heal the two women.²⁰ Though there are a few general references to the healing of leprosy, this is (apart possibly from David's *wynepclawr*) the only specific incident of it which I have found.

Samson's Life seems to concentrate on casting out devils, just as David's does on healing the blind. While both saints do perform other types of healing, these form recurring themes in their Lives. It is difficult to know whether these saints were actually associated with these types of healing in the minds of the people, whether the compilers of their Lives had a penchant for certain types of healing, whether it is a leitmotif as with the stone and light miracles of David's and Cadog's births (see §2), or whether it is part of folk narrative's playing with the permutations of a single motif. David's healing of the blind *wynepclawr*, which is a sign of his holiness, is an involuntary act, the result of his holiness flowing over and affecting his surroundings; with Paulinus, David, demonstrating the humility appropriate to sanctity, has to be coaxed even to attempt the healing, as if his power were so bound and locked within him that he has to be encouraged to call it forth. These correspond well with the stages of development – the infant who has no control and is unaware of a boundary between himself and his environment and the disciplined child who has suppressed his naturalness and is very aware of a boundary between

himself and the outside world; who, whether in shyness or humility, dare not even look fully upon those around him; and who, like any adolescent, is unsure of what he finds within himself. When it comes to the healing of Peibio, we have no details beyond the bare statement, 'Odyna y rodes gwaret y Pebiawc, vrenhin Erging, a oed yn dall,'²¹ (Then he gave relief to Peibio, king of Erging, who was blind), but perhaps there is no need for more, for it is an action which the saint performs in the natural course of his activities, when he is a grown man, out in the world, with control over his powers and his actions. The permutations on Samson's casting out of demons suggest another type of differentiation. Samson is about to *depart* by ship when he is *summoned* to heal the Irish abbot, and he has just *arrived* by ship in Brittany when he learns he has been *awaited* for his healing. On either side of these incidents are two inland ones – one when he heals a man whom he himself has caused to be possessed as punishment, and one when he happens upon a demonic count at the Breton court. In the former case, healing is granted only in return for confession and penitence, but in the latter it is given gratuitously. I can not explain what significance these permutations may have, but they are worth noting in case additional evidence should at some time suggest an explanation. Other cases of playing on the permutations of a motif and of motifs concentrated around a particular saint will be noted as they appear.

The saints cure a number of injuries and ailments, including such varied ones as dropsy, palsy, stonies, and worms. Samson, with the miracle which makes his teacher realize the development of his powers, heals a man who has been bitten in the groin by a serpent.²² Cadog gives aid to a barren woman who promises to him her first child.²³ Iorwerth Fynglwyd records that Brigid provided a new limb for her stepmother:

Y dydd – morwyn ddedwydd wyd –
o'th ddawn oll y'th enillwyd,
coes dy lysfam, gam ei gwaith
draw, dâm, a dorrwyd ymaith:
tyfodd – mawr y gwnawd hefyd –
o'th rad goes a throed i gyd.²⁴

(The day you were won, a joyous/fortunate maid are you, through your gift/power, your stepmother's leg, the dame, yonder, her work twisted/untrue, was cut off: there grew, greatly it was done, too, by your grace, a leg and a foot together.)

Dyfrig, as an infant, cured his grandfather Peibio of a foaming mouth, thus

¹⁶ Dyfrig A79.

¹⁷ Samson A40; B17.

¹⁸ Samson B22–23.

¹⁹ Samson A54.

²⁰ Samson A52–53; B22.

²¹ Dewi A6.

²² Samson A18–19; B12.

²³ Cadog A55–57.

²⁴ Brigid A l. 9–14.

commanding the love of one who had tried to destroy him before he was yet born.²⁵ Deiniol performs a cure which involves a very common international motif when he relieves a maiden swollen by creatures dwelling in her body (Motif D2156.5.2). The prose Life tells of her casting forth from her mouth three horrible worms with four feet each.²⁶ Sir Dafydd Trefor, however, relates the incident slightly differently:

A bun, wedi chwyddo'i bol
Gan wenwyn drwg wenwynol
O ras y sant, pan roes hon
Yn 'i phen ddwr o'i ffynnon,
Afrifed bryfed, heb wres,
Beiriog o'i chorff a boeres.²⁷

(And a maid whose stomach was distended with evil poisonous poison, through the grace of the saint, when she put in her mouth water from his fountain, innumerable creatures, without heat, [?] from her body did she spit.)

This last cure was effected by means of the saint's well rather than by the saint in person. The saints often work through intermediary agents, which are especially useful after the saint's death. Wells and fountains are by far the best known and most commonly resorted to of these intermediaries. We are not limited to mediaeval texts for our knowledge of these fountains and wells which existed and were frequented before Christianity, which were taken over by Christianity for its own needs, and which survived even the Methodist revival, for we have testimony to their usage in the records of antiquarians and the collections by folklorists in recent years. The well which became perhaps the best known outside Wales is Ffynnon Wenfrewi at Holywell, but there are a great many with a more localized fame which were quietly resorted to through the centuries. Sir John Rhŷs records having been informed by T.E. Morris in 1893 that the oldest inhabitants of Llanfaglan, Caernarvonshire, could remember going to Ffynnon Faglan to obtain healing and that people still had faith in the curative powers of Ffynnon Beuno at Clynnog.²⁸ An informant for the Welsh Folk Museum recalls going with a friend to St Dogfan's well for the healing of a skin disease.²⁹ The faith and hopes which people placed in the healing available at these wells through the saints comes out very clearly as a real and living part of their belief when one realizes that the fifteenth-century poet Ieuan Llwyd Brydydd composed an *awdl* to St

²⁵ Dyfrig A76.

²⁶ Deiniol B392.

²⁷ Deiniol A l. 29-34.

²⁸ Rhŷs l.362-63.

²⁹ AWC, tape 3184.

Doged when going to seek relief at the saint's well after being thrown into a thorn bush by his horse and sustaining a very painful injury to his eye.

y llygad ny ad yn enwedig
ym gyssgu ar blu awr heb lewig
am breichiau llodau o wall a dig
y sudd yn vsuudd ag yn yssig³⁰

(The eye does not allow me particularly to sleep on feathers for an hour without fainting, and my arms, [?full] of loss and anger, are in splinters and bruised.)

It is recorded that he was healed by God and the saint. For a discussion of the history and customs of the healing wells, see Francis Jones, *The Holy Wells of Wales*. An examination of the founding of beneficial wells and fountains by the saints will be provided in §14.

Saints' burial places, though not as numerous as their wells, are equally effective for healing. This additional proof of holiness is mentioned in the Lives³¹ of Gildas, Cadog, Gwynllyw, and Teilo (for whom it is further taken as proof of which of three places received his true body [see §19]). The saints' possessions are also often of a beneficial nature. In Jerusalem, Teilo was presented with a bell which, among other virtues, had the power to heal.³² Oudoceus also had a healing bell, which was of gold but which originally had been fashioned out of butter as a drinking vessel.³³ Tatheus possessed a healing crosier fashioned out of a heaven-sent, golden horse-fetter.³⁴ Although the text is unclear as to whether or not David's crosier had any healing virtue, Ieuan ap Rhydderch's couplet on David's healing of Magna suggests that it did:

Da y gwnai Fagna a'i fagl
o farw yn fyw o firagl.³⁵

(Well he would make Magna with his crosier from death alive by a miracle.)

Giraldus Cambrensis reports the usage and effectiveness of Curig's staff for curing diseases upon the payment of a penny.³⁶ One of the more unusual agents is a wheat mill, built by Gildas, into which people could banish their ailments.³⁷ The Lives of both Cadog and Tatheus record that the

³⁰ Doged A394.

³¹ Gildas A381-83; Cadog A110;

Gwynllyw A180; Teilo A110.

³² Teilo A101.

³³ Oudoceus A129.

³⁴ Tatheus A278.

³⁵ Dewi E l. 77-78.

³⁶ Giraldus, I:1 (pp. 15-16).

³⁷ Gildas A351.

coals carried safely by Cadog in his garment provide health thereafter.³⁸ Cadog's Life relates that the coals were buried in the cemetery and were particularly beneficial to cattle brought there. These coals would seem to function in the same way and to involve the same powers as St John's fire over which cattle are driven to ensure their health. Cadog's Life also mentions healing fruit which grow on an island once inhabited by Cadog.³⁹

The one important type of healing which I have not yet discussed is that of raising the dead, which is the strongest possible statement of supernatural powers. Returning a person to life involves calling back his soul from the otherworld. There is no indication that any of the saints are actually psychopomps, but they have the necessary influence with the powers of the otherworld (as one would expect of men in direct contact with God) to obtain the return of a soul. In most cases, the saints include in this demonstration of power, in addition to recovering the soul, reforming the body – refastening a severed head to its neck, re-knitting the torn and scattered pieces of a body, and re-covering the bones with flesh.

Resuscitation after decollation is undertaken several times by Beuno, the most famous case being his raising of Gwenfrewi after she is slain by Caradog just upon her reaching the church door. In the Welsh Lives of Beuno and Gwenfrewi,⁴⁰ he presses the head to the body, covers the maiden with his cloak, tells the lamenting parents to be quiet, finishes saying mass, and then prays for her life. She rises, wiping the sweat from her face – a nice touch indicating that she is so much restored to her former state that she is even still hot from running. She is left with one mark, however, as evidence of her experience and that is a thin line, either white or red (depending on the text), around her neck.

Nod o amgylch nid ymgudd
Nod yr arf yn edau rudd, –⁴¹

(The mark around her neck is not concealed, the mark of the
weapon is a crimson thread.)

This motif of one small mark or defect left as proof of an occurrence appears a number of times in the material under discussion and is also very common internationally (Motif E12.1; cf. E33). In *Cymdeithas Amlyn ac Amic*, Amic's sons, when brought to life after their beheading, are described, 'a chreith ar vynwgyl pob un o nadunt val edeu sidan coch yn tystolyaeth yr gwyrrth a wnaethoed duw yr Amic,'⁴² (with a scar on the neck of each one of them like a red silk/satin thread as testimony to the

³⁸ Cadog A38–40; Tatheus A280.

³⁹ Cadog A98.

⁴⁰ Beuno A30; Gwenfrewi F402.

⁴¹ Gwenfrewi B l. 23–24.

⁴² J. Gwenogvryn Evans, ed., *Kymdeithas Amlyn ac Amic*, p. 26.

miracle which God had performed for Amic). In the German tale, 'The Four Clever Brothers,' birds which had been shot in half while still in the egg and then sewn back together, when eventually hatched, 'had only a little red streak across their necks.'⁴³ Beuno raises also another woman, Tigiwc daughter of Ynyr Gwent, after she is beheaded by her husband. Beuno had been sent for after his shepherds discovered the body, and so the woman explains to him what had happened.⁴⁴ Beuno is later forced into resuscitating the husband after he has been slain by Tigiwc's brother, Iddon.⁴⁵ Gildas also raises a beheaded person when he saves a woman slain by her husband for having conceived.⁴⁶ Padarn is involved in an incident which introduces additional motifs forming a motif cluster. One of his servants is killed in the woods by thieves. Padarn, when informed of this, goes in search of him, calling out his name. The severed head answers, 'Hic assum, domine,' so that Padarn locates it, rejoins it to the body and enables the man to rise alive.⁴⁷ In Cadog's Life, there is also an incident involving a servant (a carpenter) murdered in the woods; the saint seeking him (by prayer in this case, for the body carrying the head comes to him); and the severed head speaking. Llywri, a skilled Irish builder, is killed by his fellow workmen and sunk in a deep pool because of their jealousy of his skill.⁴⁸ When he does not return with the others, his children start lamenting, so that Cadog prays to learn the truth of the matter. The body arrives with its head, which says that if the saint will put it back on the neck he will tell the whole story. As with Beuno and Tigiwc, we have the raised person telling what had happened. When compared with the tales of Padarn's and Cadog's murdered servants, an incident in Tatheus' Life appears as an incomplete pattern, a motif cluster with one part missing. Two brothers who are trying to steal a ram drive the flock and its shepherdess to the woods, where they kill both the maiden and the ram.⁴⁹ The flock returns home and Tatheus prays to learn what has happened, but instead of the girl rising to tell her story, the brothers come to confess. Their confession gives a sense of incompleteness, due to the omission of the final motif in the pattern – the talking head. Possibly, the pattern was broken in order to account for a church which is said to have been built in the place of the shepherdess' martyrdom (Gwenfrewi and Tigiwc, however, were both restored to life and

⁴³ KHM 129, 'The Four Skillful Brothers,' *The Grimm's German Folk Tales*, transl. Francis P. Magoun, Jr. and Alexander H. Krappe.

⁴⁴ Beuno A33. A comparison of this incident and the Gwenfrewi one is found in Henken, *Traditions of the Welsh Saints*, §2: Beuno.

⁴⁵ Beuno A34.

⁴⁶ Gildas A360.

⁴⁷ Padarn A266.

⁴⁸ Cadog A66.

⁴⁹ Tatheus A280–82.

given monuments), or the change in pattern may have been to demonstrate God's mercy through substituting the brothers' confession, begging of pardon, and penance. (Cf. AT 780; Motifs D1610.5; E632.1; F511.0.4) Another possible explanation is the desire for realism and the consequent elimination of the least likely elements in the tale.

These murders all occur in the woods, a favorite place for danger and magic in oral tradition, a place where children are taken to be murdered (though the kind henchmen substitute a dog's heart and liver for the proof demanded by wicked step-parents), where ogres, witches, and fierce beasts are to be met, or where the leaves can cut one in passing. Distrust of the woods, based on people's fear of wild animals, of men lurking there, of being lost in them on a dark night, of the woods' ability to hide deeds from the outside world, as well as delight in the woods' bounties, shape the character and function of the woods in folk narrative. Although it is not specifically stated, one has the impression that Aelhaearn, too, is killed in the woods. Lewys Môn, in a list of people resurrected by Beuno, records:

Aelhaearn ddeuddarn, ddyddiau
ar wasgar esgyrn ei gymalau:
cnawd fu ladd cnud o fleiddiau:⁵⁰

(Aelhaearn in two pieces, for days the bones of his joints were scattered: a pack of wolves cut [his] flesh)

John Ray, in his *Itineraries*, provides the full story. Aelhaearn was torn to pieces by wild beasts for spying on Beuno's open-air, midnight devotions. Beuno put him back together, but could not find one of his eyebrows, and so replaced it by a bit of iron from his staff.⁵¹ Again, there is the one mark, which here explains the man's name (Aelhaearn = iron brow). The legend also provides example of another motif cluster. When an animal is cooked and eaten, but the skin and bones preserved with the intention of resurrecting the animal, it often happens that one person thoughtlessly chews a bone, thus causing one small one to be missing, and the animal, thereafter, walks with a limp or is similarly marred (Motif E33).

All of the resuscitations discussed so far have been of the recently-dead, but the saints also resurrected people after many years of lying in death. Patrick, when about to embark for Ireland, raised a man who had been buried in the sea-marsh for fifteen years (twelve years in the Latin texts),⁵² and Teilo raised a man named Distinnic by the river Cywyn.⁵³ The fact that they are both raised near water – one at the sea-marsh

⁵⁰ GLM, 7, II: 33–36.

⁵² Dewi A2; B30; C3.

⁵¹ *Itineraries of John Ray* (London, 1760), pp. 228–30; LBS I: 111.

⁵³ Teilo A109.

which forms the border between sea and land and which is ambiguously both and neither of the elements, and the other at a river, the border between lands – appears to be particularly significant. These liminal positions are appropriate places at which to reverse nature's laws by bringing the dead to life and to effect exchanges between worlds. Water is generally involved in the passage of souls, whether travelling to a western island or crossing the Styx. David also raised somebody by the water when on his way to the Synod at Brefi he stopped to resuscitate a boy by the river Teifi.⁵⁴

Mechyll is recorded as raising a giant:

cyfodi cawr oi fawr fedd
yn hor erw yn hir orwedd
ai enaid oedd bob vnawr
bygan mewn vfferndan mawr
myned ar cawr ir bedydd⁵⁵

(raising a giant from his big grave in the edge of an acre a long time lying and his soul was all the while bellowing in great hellish fire taking the giant to baptism)

Cadog also raised a giant. While building a monastery in Scotland, he dug up an enormous collar bone, so large a horseman could ride under it.⁵⁶ Cadog prayed to know its history, and the next day, the giant, raised from the dead, came to him. First, he begged not to be sent back to hell immediately, then told his tale of being a king from beyond Bannog and killed while on a raiding party, and finally gave his name as Caw Prydyn or Cawr. He was permitted to remain alive, serving Cadog, and trying to earn heaven in this second life.

There are a number of medieval analogues for this type of resurrection. One of the most commonly cited is the Gregory/Trajan legend. In an early record of this tale, written around 713 by a Whitby monk,⁵⁷ Pope Gregory sees a monument to the pagan emperor Trajan, learns of his act of justice to a widow, and weeps and prays for him, so that God permits him salvation. In another version, provided by Jacopo della Lana in a commentary on Dante, workmen discover a skull with its tongue still intact; Gregory bids it speak; it tells its story and name; Gregory inquires

⁵⁴ Dewi A16; C26.

⁵⁵ Mechyll A I. 37–41.

⁵⁶ Cadog A82–84.

⁵⁷ Robin Flower, *The Irish Tradition*, p. 6; Joseph Szövérfy, 'Heroic Tales, Medieval Legends and an Irish Story,' p. 187; Bertram Colgrave, ed. and trans., *The Earliest Life of Gregory the Great*, pp. 45–49.

further and learns about the widow; Gregory then brings Trajan to life and baptizes him.⁵⁸ Similarly, the Middle English (c.1400) tale of St Erkenwald relates that men working on the foundation of St Paul's find a tomb with a perfectly preserved body. Erkenwald prays for understanding and knowledge. The next day, he addresses the corpse, who answers him and relates his history including his being a Just Judge. Erkenwald, realizing his worthiness, wishes that he might baptize him with the baptismal formula. While he is reciting this, one of his tears drops on the man's face, thus effecting the baptism. The man tells of the heavenly bliss granted him and then crumbles into dust.⁵⁹ In the Irish material, the Life of Columcille (Columba) (c.1532) also provides a close analogue.⁶⁰ Columcille is walking by the river Boyne (note the water) when an enormous skull is brought to him. Columcille prays for knowledge of it, and so, the skull speaks, telling its name and history. Columcille then baptizes and buries the skull. In Tirechán's Life of Patrick, the saint and his men come across an enormous sepulchre, measuring one hundred and twenty feet in length. Patrick satisfies the men's curiosity by opening the tomb. A body thanks him for the respite from pain and asks to go with them. They refuse, but they baptize him so that he need not return to his painful torments, and bury him again.⁶¹ In the Life of Brendan, during his sea wanderings, the saint finds the body of a giant maiden (one hundred feet high; nine feet between her breasts; four foot long nose; seven foot middle finger), whom he resuscitates, baptizes, and questions. She says that she is one of the sea dwellers who pray and entreat for resurrection. Brendan gives her a choice of going to heaven immediately or returning to her people. She chooses heaven, dies, and is buried.⁶² In a 1938 collection of folktales, a tale was recorded of a voice speaking from rushes to some wandering priests, telling them that he was King Conor of Ulster and how he had died. One of the priests offers to baptize him, but he refuses upon learning that he must suffer death again. One of the priests weeps, and his tears falling on the rushes effect the baptism nevertheless.⁶³ Szövérfy, who considers the Gregory/Trajan, Erkenwald, and Irish examples all to be directly related rather than simply analogous, breaks all the legends

⁵⁸ Flower, *op. cit.*, p. 7; Szövérfy, *op. cit.*, pp. 185–86; *Comedia di Dante degli Allagherii col commento di Jacopo dalla Lana Bolognese*, ed. Luciano Scarabelli, II: 116–17; Gaston Paris, *La Légende de Trajan*; Arturo Graf, 'Traiano,' 2: 1–45.

⁵⁹ Ruth Morse, ed., *St. Erkenwald*. For further discussion, see Gordon Whatley, 'Heathens and Saints: St. Erkenwald in its Legendary Context.'

⁶⁰ A. O'Kelleher and G. Schoepperle, eds., *Betha Colaim-Chille*, p. 129, sect. 131; Szövérfy, *op. cit.*, pp. 189–90.

⁶¹ Whitley Stokes, ed., *Tripartite Life of St. Patrick*, II: 324–25.

⁶² Charles Plummer, ed., 'Betha Brenainn Clúana Ferta,' *Bethada Náem nÉirenn*, II: 61.

⁶³ Seán Ó Súilleabháin, *Scéalta Cráibhtheacha*, pp. 26–27, 'Conchobar Uladh agus an pháis' (Irish text), p. 306 (English summary); Szövérfy, *op. cit.*, p. 183.

down into a statement of their essential content, 'A saint restores a dead man's life, (baptizes him) and thus rescues his soul from the pains of hell.'⁶⁴ This statement is, however, too simplified; there are other essential elements, which, moreover, show divergent strains in the legends. The distribution of some of the elements may be clarified by reference to a chart (see over). One form of examination concerns itself with the theological implications of baptizing a dead pagan (Cadog avoids this problem by enabling Caw to earn salvation rather than simply granting it to him.), and another with the chronology and relationships of the various texts.⁶⁵ These studies are important, but they do not concern me here. What is of concern is that the themes are circulating, maintaining the basic motif cluster, and are linked to the motifs of other traditional narratives.

Indeed, the central element in all these tales appears to be not the baptism (which, as just pointed out, Cadog does not perform), but rather the dead telling their histories. The one time, in the Whitby Gregory/Trajan legend, that the dead man does not tell his own story, his history is still provided, told by someone else. Even in the legends of resuscitating the dead, the history may be told while baptism plays no part. As was noted with Tigiwc when raised by Beuno and with Cadog's builder, the resuscitated people tell their stories. This motif is also found in the non-hagiographical material. The best known of the Irish examples is when Muirgen, in search of the true history of the Táin Bó Cúalnge, calls up Fergus Mac Roich from the dead to relate it.⁶⁶ The same interest in history, along with demonstrating God's power, leads Patrick to summon the dead Cú Chulainn for the benefit of King Loegaire.⁶⁷ Flower explains, 'the use of the theme is plain, to authenticate the uncertain record of past things by the clear testimony of contemporaries called up from death to bear their witness.'⁶⁸ The immediate function of the history-telling within a particular text may change, providing stories from the past, testimony, warnings of the agonies of hell, or justification for why the pagan deserves baptism. Indeed, concerns with redemption and baptism, which are clearly of central importance to some of the analogues, particularly the

⁶⁴ Szövérfy, *op. cit.*, p. 191. Ludwig Bieler disagrees with Szövérfy on the close relationship of these tales and discusses their differences in 'Ancient Hagiography and the Lives of St. Patrick,' pp. 650–55.

⁶⁵ Gordon Whatley deals thoroughly with both of these points as he examines the development of the Gregory/Trajan legend against the changing background of medieval concepts and culture in his article, 'The Uses of Hagiography: The Legend of Pope Gregory and the Emperor Trajan in the Middle Ages.'

⁶⁶ Táin, p. 1.

⁶⁷ R.I. Best and Osborn Bergin, ed., *Lebor na Huidre: Book of the Dun Cow*, II. 9221–540; 'The Phantom Chariot of Cú Chulainn,' Cross & Slover, pp. 347–54.

⁶⁸ Flower, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

SOURCE	FORM IN WHICH DEAD MAN IS DISCOVERED			GIANT	SAINT PRAYS FOR KNOWLEDGE	DEAD MAN TELLS HISTORY	BAPTISM	TEARS	MORTAL STATE AFTER BAPTISM
	DEAD MAN IS DISCOVERED	GIANT	SAINT PRAYS FOR KNOWLEDGE						
Cadog	Prose Life (Latin)	collar bone	x	x	x	x	permitted to earn right to salvation	—	life
Mechyll	Cywydd (Welsh)	?body	x	?	?	?	x	?	?life
Gregory	Prose Life (Latin)	sepulchre	—	just asks	story told by someone else	granted salvation	x	x	death
	Prose Life (Latin)	skull	—	—	—	x	—	—	death
Erkenwald	Verse (Middle English)	body	—	x	x	x	x	x	death
Columcille	Prose Life (Latin)	skull	x	x	x	x	x	—	death
Patrick	Prose Life (Latin)	sepulchre	x	just asks	x	x	x	—	death
Brendan	Prose Life (Latin)	body	x	just asks	x	x	x	—	death
Priests	Folktale (Irish)	voice	—	x	x	x	x	x	death

Gregory/Trajan and Erkenwald legends, appear to be only Christian adaptations of an already existing pattern.⁶⁹

Although the saint's prayer for knowledge appears as a fairly strong element in the hagiographical analogues discussed (and is employed in Cadog's seeking information on the missing builder and Tatheus' trying to learn of the murdered shepherdess), it may be functional simply in moving on the story and have no greater significance except as an expression of the effectiveness of prayer. It may be simply a hagiographical elaboration on the means of summoning the dead man to tell his story.

Cadog's raising of Caw brings in a motif not appearing in the Gregory/Trajan and Irish analogues. Caw is the only one in these analogues to remain alive. (Mechyll's giant may have also, but we cannot be sure.) As mentioned earlier, Caw may have been left alive to avoid the theological complications of immediate baptism; however, his acceptance of the role of Cadog's servant, digging for him, is paralleled by many of the resurrected in the Welsh material, who sometimes serve the saint and sometimes follow him in the service of God. The man raised by Patrick after long years in the sea-marsh follows him to Ireland and eventually becomes a bishop. The boy raised by David while on route to Brefi follows the saint. The boy resuscitated by Samson as proof that he, Samson, by the power of God, could do what the people's idol could not, follows Samson and becomes a clerk.⁷⁰ Tigiwc is given a choice by Beuno whether she will return to her home or remain with him serving God; she chooses the latter. (Note this offer of a choice. Cadog gives the builder a choice of remaining alive or returning to death; he chooses to go immediately to eternal life. The same decision is made by Brendan's giant. It is possible that Caw also had a choice for there is an element of agreeing to terms in accepting the conditions of a second life.) Gildas must convince the pregnant woman whom he had raised not to follow him immediately, but rather to remain in her father's house until after her child's birth and then go to a nunnery.

While redemption or a second chance to earn it appears in all of these analogues (though in varying degrees of functional importance), two motifs mark a division between the Celtic and non-Celtic examples – giants and tears. All of the figures raised in the medieval Celtic texts are giants, but not in the non-Celtic materials.⁷¹ This concept of the heroes

⁶⁹ Joseph Falaky Nagy has come to the same conclusion on the Christian element in these tales in his article 'Close Encounters of the Traditional Kind in Medieval Irish Literature,' where he gives a more thorough discussion of the dead providing testimony of the past and of the otherworld, suggesting that it is even an independent genre.

⁷⁰ Samson A50–51; B21.

⁷¹ Joseph Nagy points out that not only are these dead [witnesses to the otherworld] perceived as giants but that they also tend to be connected with the *fian*. 'Close Encounters . . .', pp. 137–38.

of an earlier age being greater and mightier is familiar to us from sources such as Genesis 6:4 ('The Nephilim [giants] were in the earth in those days, and also after that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bore children to them; the same were the mighty men that were of old, the men of renown.'). In the Irish texts, we have Oisín, who on his return from Tír na n-Óg meets people who marvel at his size and tell him of Finn and 'his race of might and mighty kin.'⁷² And in the *Dream of Rhonabwy*, Arthur comments on 'y dynion bychein' (the puny fellows) declaring that, 'truanet gennyf vot dynyon ky vawhet a hynny yn gwarchadw yr ynys honn gwedy gwyr cystal ac a'e gwarchetwis gynt'⁷³ (I am wretched that men as vile as this keep this island after warriors as good as those who kept it formerly). Rachel Bromwich suggests that Caw was credited with gigantic dimensions due to hagiographers deriving his name from *cawr* (giant), but the existence of the other giants and the general theme would seem to make this explanation unnecessary.⁷⁴ Nora Chadwick suggests that Caw may be a *scál*, a term applied to the disembodied spirits of the dead or supernatural beings. He may have been such in an earlier version, but his remaining alive would seem to discount it in this variant.⁷⁵ The only revived Celtic figure who is not a giant is the folktale character who speaks with the priests.

The distribution of tears effecting the baptism matches that of the giants. The tears appear in the non-Celtic cases of Gregory/Trajan, Erkenwald, and the folktale of the priests, but not in Celtic tales involving giants. Since the folktale is the only one of the texts not from the medieval period, it may reflect the influence of non-Celtic analogues. The distribution of motifs indicates two strains involved in this tale type – one Celtic and one non-Celtic, with possibly a further division in the Celtic between Irish and Welsh, based on whether the revived person remains alive or returns to death.

⁷² Cross & Slover, p. 454.

⁷³ Melville Richards, ed., *Breudwyt Rhonabwy*, pp. 6–7.

⁷⁴ TYP, p. 302.

⁷⁵ Chadwick, 'The Lost Literature of Celtic Scotland,' p. 121. For a discussion of the term *scál*, see Chadwick, 'Lug Scéith Scál Find – Elegy of Labrad Loingseach.'