

Select Welsh Hagiography Through the Prism of the Doctrine of Predestination

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Abstract

This paper examines the hagiographies of Welsh Saints, known as the *Vitae Sanctorum* in Latin, or *bucheddau* in Welsh, for themes of the Christian Doctrine of Predestination and God's Providence. It argues that the hagiographies are useful for theological study, as was part of their original intention and that the authors overtly or covertly included these theological concepts in their stories. For the scope of the paper, the *Vitae* chosen are those found in the *Vitae Sanctorum Britanniae et Genealogie*, with the majority of the manuscripts residing in the British Library, Cotton Vespasian A. xiv. Of the eleven saints in the *Britanniae et Genealogie*, seven contained themes of Predestination. It begins with a brief overview of what is a hagiography. Since the hagiographies were written hundreds of years before the Reformation and the writings of John Calvin (which mainstreamed this doctrine), it continues with an examination of the concept and its presence in theological debate, from the early Church Fathers to the Medieval theologians. It summarizes the life of each saint, followed by evidence of the concepts of Predestination and God's Providence for each. It considers the contemporary monastic landscape when the *Vitae* were written and takes into consideration political and economic motivations for producing these works. It finds a substantial amount of attribution to God's Providence are Predestination in the works, making them of value for theological study.

Introduction

When looking at the growth of Church Doctrine in the medieval period, theologians turn to the texts and thinkers of the Scholastic age such as Anselm of Canterbury, Peter Abelard, Albertus Magnus, Bonaventure, and Thomas Aquinas. Their contributions to the development of Church doctrine and medieval tradition have logically taken center stage and tend to dwarf other contributions by other sources such as hagiography. Certain assumptions made about hagiographical texts contribute to their theological disregard. Since they are narratives that usually include miracles, they are assumed to reflect only the commoner's religion. Although this makes them valuable in detailing the religious and moral instruction of the people of God in a variety of contexts, they are usually dismissed as uncritical and unrelated to the actual formulation of the church tradition and doctrinal development. This essay will argue that one can find serious doctrinal statements and stances in the hagiographical texts and will focus on the concept of Predestination and God's Providence, the typical centerpiece of Reformed Theology, that was developed and spread at the time of the Reformation centuries after the authors wrote these works. As with many narratives, beginning with the Gospels themselves, the theology is interwoven into the story, the message that God predestines mankind for his or her journey and has absolute Sovereignty over events can be either overt or subtle, but either way, many of the *Lives* of the Welsh Saints contain this message.

Writing from a position that was supposed to influence the populace usually identifies the political motives of those who wrote the narrative texts. Some are the work of those who sought to elevate the importance and even lucrative potential of particular shrines or relics, or who hoped to control the behavior of the laity by giving them appropriate models of behaviour, or assist political aspirations of local patrons. Such judgments have often been made, however, without careful attention to the provenance of each specific text. The theological value of these texts varies, but, again, the value of each can only be determined by careful study. Another assumption about medieval narrative texts is that they may be of interest to the field of history but are not considered serious works for the study of systematic theologians (Mayieski, 2002). Historians find them quite useful as they are rich in

evidence to document specific lives and communities, evidence that is particularly helpful in illuminating the lives of “the people,” ordinary Christians otherwise unnoticed¹.

The *Vitae Sanctorum* or *Lives of Saints*

The *Vitae Sanctorum* or *Lives of Saints*, have been utilized by social historians in various ways. First, the Christian values and virtues proposed by the text are understood to reveal the social and religious ideals of medieval Christian society. The concrete historical details identifiable in the text give insights into the religious lives of persons otherwise not recorded: ordinary Christians and, especially, women of all classes. Lastly, the religious ideology of Christian faith has been seen in the texts as empowering women and other marginalized groups to act beyond the usual social boundaries of their class and gender (Sticca & Geary, 1996).

When considering the authors of the *Vitae*, identified or anonymous, there are several assumptions that can be made. The first is that they were immersed in Biblical lexicon and nuance, as they would have learned how to read and write by using the Bible as their grammar and literature text. Thus, not only did they construct theology entirely within the thought-world of the Bible, but that they would have had a high regard for the genres through which divine revelation was revealed: the narrative. Second, the early medieval theologians venerated the work of the Church Fathers and sought to continue it. For example, Athanasius of Alexandria used the life of St. Antony of Egypt to promote his views on Christ, and anyone reading Saint Augustine’s *Confessions*, realizes that it is much more than an autobiography, but it presents a Christ-centered worldview.

There is evidence that the medieval authors of saints’ lives understood their narratives as fully theological works (Mayieski, 2002). To them, there was no distinction between hagiography and theology. In fact, there was a conscious effort on the part of many of the authors of medieval saints’ lives to give their narratives

¹ For example, using *Vitae Sanctorum* has helped present historians glean much about the lives of medieval women: “Saints Lives as a Source for the History of Women, 500–1100,” in *Medieval Women and the Sources of Medieval History*, edited by Joel T. Rosenthal, “Intercession and the High Medieval Queen: The Esther Topos,” in *Power of the Weak: Studies on Medieval Women*, edited by Jennifer Carpenter and Sally-Beth MacLean and “Feminine Sanctity and Spirituality in Medieval Wales” authored by Jane Cartwright.

theological gravitas that could be utilized for instruction and admonition alongside the Gospels and the writings of the Church Fathers.

Welsh saints' Lives or 'bcheddau' are a rich and fascinating mosaic of stories about holy men and women who experienced divine intervention. They were written for religious instruction, historical record and social preservation. These holy figures have played a crucial role in shaping Welsh religious culture and identity. Most of the Welsh saints lived during the fifth and sixth Century, however few of the hagiographies were written prior to the eleventh century. They usually include all the traditions and legends associated with particular saints, especially their lineage, their miracles and their local connections, which are reflected in place-names all over Wales (Seintiau). According to these traditions, the saints performed miracles, fought with giants and monsters, were raised from the dead, raised the dead, started monastic houses, were missionaries and sometimes became martyrs for the faith. The fantastical miracles can detract from the edification purpose of these texts, but there is doctrine and Biblical instruction woven into them. Remarkably, the Doctrine of Predestination and God's Sovereignty appear in many of them. The Christian Church has debated the concept of Predestination and God's Sovereign Will (Providence) determining men's fates since the first Pope sat on the Throne of Saint Peter.²

In practice, there are very few early surviving saints' lives related to the development of the Welsh Church. The earliest generally accepted *Vita* is that of Saint Samson written in Breton monastery with other *Vitae* to follow most are written in Latin hundreds of years after the saints walked the earth (Petts, p 44). For the scope of this paper, I have chosen to examine the eleven Saints covered in *Vitae Sanctorum Britanniae et Genealogie*, first published in 1944. It provides the Latin texts with English translations of the Welsh saints found in Cotton Vespasian A. xiv, from the British Library, dated to the 1200. It also includes two who are not found in the Cotton Vespasian: Saint Beuno and Saint Winefride.

² There were likely debates among the earliest of Christian followers about this concept found throughout the New Testament, however for this paper, I am referring to official written statements or debates among recognized Church theologians.

Since most of the saints covered in the research are from the Cotton Vespasian, it is important to note the context of the collection. Robin Flower³ described the manuscript as written “in a number of Anglo-Norman hands of about 1200 all of the same general type and period, but of varying accomplishment” (Hughes & Dumville, 1980, p 53). It is an important source for a study of the Welsh Church and was utilized by Kathleen Hughes, who studied Welsh sources for her work *Celtic Britain in the Early Middle Ages*. She tells us that in the century before Vespasian collection was written, the Anglo-Normans had pushed their conquest across South and Central Wales. The ensuing changes, which will be discussed later in this paper, indicate a shift in not only the political and economic institutions of the land, but a new Church landscape as well. The Church would have to navigate these lands and figure out how to thrive in the new religious institutions. She states that “Where Anglo- Norman and Celtic influences met, there was sometimes inquiry into the historical or pseudo-historical past. It was both profitable and interesting for the monks to know of the origin and development of the traditions into which they had entered. So, they pursued their studies and speculations, and wrote up the results, or employed someone to do it for them...hagiographers were busy compiling or composing the Lives of Celtic saints. The clerics of the newly created see of Llandaf forged the brief for their claims to diocesan boundaries, re-writing charters and including Lives of saints” (Hughes & Dumville, 1980, p. 55).

From the eleven Saints whose Lives are covered in the *Sanctorum Britanniae*, seven contained elements and themes of Predestination and God’s Divine will, to varying degrees. These texts were written centuries before John Calvin’s *Institutes of Christian Religion*, which pushed these concepts to the forefront of theological debates during the Reformation. Therefore, plumbing these *Vitae* for their inherent doctrinal perspectives and Biblical allusions reminds the reader that these stories were more than folk tales for entertainment or cultural legacy. The term Hagiography, especially in the modern age, has implicit connotations which undermine its value for religious edification.⁴ However, if one

³ Robin Flower was a twentieth Century, Gaelic Celticist, Anglo-Saxonist, translator and Deputy Keeper of Manuscripts for the British Museum

⁴ When doing an internet search for the term hagiography, results such as a “biography that treats its subject with undue reverence” or “a very admiring book about someone or a description of someone that represents the person as perfect or much better than they really are”.

does not just focus on the miraculous or incredulous events that set a saint apart from the average believer, and the authors of these works were theologians, using the story for Biblical and Doctrinal instruction. In Medieval Britain, hagiography became the literary conduit for the teaching of a largely illiterate audience.

Hagiography provided priests and theologians with the means to present their faith through the example of the saints' lives. There is a surprising amount of overt and subtle reference to Predestination, God's Sovereignty and Omniscience in *Vitae Sanctorum Britanniae et Genealogie*.

Wales in the Age of Saints

During the first four hundred years of the Christian age, Britain was occupied by the Roman army, thus in many parts of the country their cultures intermingled, and a Romano-British society was developed. By the end of the 4th Century the power of Rome was dissipating. It was at this time, in 383 CE. when the Roman occupation was ending and a new emperor of the Western Empire took the throne - Magnus Maximus, known as Maccsen Wledig by the Welsh. He was a General, stationed in Briton, who had a dream, known as Breuddwyd Maccsen Wledig (The Dream of Emperor Maximus). In it, he is enchanted by a beautiful Briton princess sitting on a throne and upon waking he consulted a local oracle who urged him to find her. In Celtic and Irish tradition this kind of experience is known as an *aisling*, which is a kind of dream that supplies a strong spiritual message to the dreamer. The purpose of Maccsen's dream is that it directs him to Elen, a princess in Britain who is also considered a founder of the Church in Wales (Evans, 2018). Hence, the prophetic dream indicates a predestined and foreseen fateful meeting as central to the historical narrative of the founding of Wales and the ruling dynasties to follow.

Christianity took root in Briton before the end of Roman occupation (Evans, 1967, p. 7). It is likely that Roman soldiers and travelers came to Britain from other parts of the Empire and helped spread the religion. Bringing with them the Latin Bible, festivals, the Holy Mass, and Church rites as well as the martyrdom tradition of the Saints. After the Romans left, the "pagan" Saxons invaded around 410 A.D. settling in the Southeast, which created a divide and separation between the Christians in the Northwest and their brethren in the rest of the country. Saint Dyfrig was born during a time of pagan rival. He became bishop of Ariconium in the

kingdom of Eryng and is said to have been made Archbishop of Wales by Saint Germanus of Auxerre. He is credited with keeping Christianity alive in Southeast Wales.

By the beginning of the fifth century Monasticism was well established in Wales as is attested by the very large number of place names prefixed "Llan". The Llan was originally an enclosure for burying the dead, however the term was later applied to the monastic buildings within a monastery. There was a long tradition of an ascetic form of monasticism who were akin to hermits (Burton & Stober, 2015, p. 7). At this time, the clas church, an autonomous community of secular canons, headed by a local abbot was the usual religious house arrangement in Wales. The monks in the monasteries were known as "saints" and the Fifth and Sixth centuries, the period during which the communities flourished in Wales, became known as the "Age of the Saints" (Evans, 1967, p. 11). From the Sixth Century onwards the names of notable saints were remembered and associated with particular places such as Saint Beuno at Clynog Fawr, Saint Winefride at Gwytherin, or St Padarn at Llanbadarn Fawr, amongst others to whom churches are dedicated.

One of the dominant narratives in the study of early medieval Christianity in Britain is that of the "Celtic Church" (Davies, 2004). The notion of a unifying Celtic strand of Christianity, distinct from the Roman influenced, Anglo Saxon Christianity brought over by Saint Augustine in 597 CE has been a key theme among historians and theologians (Petts, 2009, p. 12). The term "Celtic Church" can be misleading. The early saints of Wales were not part of a separate Church, as there was only one Christian church, and that a very loose affair, which allowed for a wide degree of local beliefs, traditions, and practices throughout the Christian world (Ross). To what extent the Celtic church grew in parallel fashion to the Roman Church it up for debate, but what is certain is that there were differences. For this paper, the relevant point is the adoption of Saint David as the Welsh national saint. There is evidence for the promotion of David as the national saint as a patron saint of the entire nation, as opposed to just a few of the kingdoms, dating back to the 10th century. (Petts, 2009, p. 11).

Writing the lives of the Saints: Hagiography

Writing about saints from the early Christian ages has been a practice from the beginning of the faith. It was regarded as a crucial way of communicating and continuing the record of faithful and the instruction of God to mankind. The first *Lives of Saints* appear in the New Testament and the Apocryphal Gospels. *The Book of Acts of the Apostle* is the first of this literary genre and is the precursor of what would follow, with its mixture of events, witnesses, conversion, martyrdom, persecution, miracles, and devoted lives to God. The focus of the early Saint's lives (*Vitae*) was of persecution and martyrdom, which were written down to be read on the anniversary of the martyr's death (the hagiographies rarely include a date of birth to celebrate, it is the death date that is commemorated). This annual reading created a cycle of readings for the church's liturgical calendar and each Saint has a his or her day of commemoration.

The various *Vitae* were meant to inspire and motivate Christian followers to be more Christlike, perhaps withstand persecution, offer hope for the future, as well as serve some possible underlying political or cultural purposes. Additionally, the saints who became martyrs had the ability to help the Church via intercession and miracles for their supplicants. Such power was respected, considered reliable, venerated, and, when demonstrated, reported and acclaimed (Pritchard, 2009, p. 12). This acclamation by the church's peasant folk was usually transmitted in the oral tradition and taken as a source of authority. These traditions of sanctity were taught in parallel with the Holy Scriptures and became integral to the history of local churches and communities. Thus, the doctrine that was infused in these stories, such as Predestination and God's Sovereignty over all events would have affected the audience's understanding of the nature of God.

The educated members of the Church wrote down the *Vitae*, compiled from these oral traditions and modelled on the classical texts of the ancient world (Evans, 1967). They combined oral and written traditions in a variety of records to include chronicles of major events, and legal charters. The *Vitae Sanctorum* became a specialized production which followed a common pattern. The main purpose was to demonstrate the sanctity of the saint. Most begin with the Saint's arrival on the scene, sometimes even in a prebirth prophecy, usually the birth, then the deeds,

miracles, founding of a church or holy site, persecution, vengeance, death and possible miracles post-mortem.

Definition of Predestination, God's Sovereignty and Calvinism.

Searching for evidence of Reformed Doctrine in the hagiography of Welsh Saints requires a definition of Reformed Doctrine, as well as a quick examination of the doctrinal landscape of Medieval Wales. To begin, the word *dogma*, from the Greek *dokein*, denotes that which is definite, that is what has been decided, thus it is fixed. So the church fathers speak of the of Christian doctrine as *divine dogma*, owing its authority to God (Bavinik, 2011, p. 4). According to Friedrich Schleiermacher, an eighteenth Century Reformed theologian, "Christian doctrines are accounts of the Christian religions affections set forth in speech and Dogmatic Theology is the science which systematizes the doctrines prevalent in the Christian Church at any given time" (Schleiermacher & Schleiermacher, 1963, p. 19). The quest for correct doctrine has been part of the Christian Church story since its formation. The scope of this paper does not permit an in-depth discussion of the quest, however it is important to note that the concepts of Predestination and Divine Sovereignty are the two concepts that become part of the popular debate during the Reformation by John Calvin.

Christianity, like all religions, relies on a combination of general revelation (proof in nature) and special divine manifestation directed to the recipient. For the Christian, there are key terms found in the Bible that express this revelation, they are: uncover, to see, to appear, to make known, manifest oneself and to speak. (Bavinik, 2011, p. 74). Prophecy is another mode of revelation in which God communicates His specific will to mankind. The address can be in audible form or dreams and visions that are directly from God or via proxy such as an angel or prophet. The Bible is packed with examples of this. The purpose of all revelation, either in creation, via prophets, saints, or in the Scripture, is that humans should know, serve, and honor God. This theme is interwoven throughout many of the *Lives* of the Welsh Saints, to include the Divine Revelation, where God's Will is plainly cited as the controlling hand in all that happens to the respective saint.

The crux of this paper is the concept of Predestination and the Sovereignty of God, which had been debated since the start of the faith, but gained more attention

during the Reformation by Ulrich Zwingli in the early 1500s and 50 years later by John Calvin, in his work *The Institutes of Christian Religion* which made a compelling argument for Providential Predetermination. In the chapter entitled “The Predetermination and the Providence of God”, he argues that God’s Providence is purposeful and all embracing, ruling both fate and fortuity. He states that predestination is “God’s eternal counsel by which he has determined what he wishes to do with each and every person” (Calvin & White, 2014). More recently, Loraine Boettner, the American Reformed theologian claims, “By the virtue of the fact that God has created everything that exists, He is the absolute Owner and final Disposer of all that He has made. He exerts not merely a general influence, but actually rules in all affairs of men” (Boettner, 1984, p. 3). This concept is still debated in the Christian Church today, and finding it so overtly stated in the Welsh Saints Vitae was quite striking.

Since Calvin lived centuries after the Welsh Saint’s hagiographers, they must have learned about this concept of Predetermination and God’s Providence from preceding theologians or the Scriptures. There is evidence that many of the early church fathers accepted the concept of Divine Sovereignty and Predetermination. While the Apostolic Fathers weren’t centered on expounding the doctrines of Sovereign Grace, or nearly any other doctrine for that matter; they wrote letters, not systematic theologies, as they were dealing with false teachers, persecution, survival and growing the faith (Gentle Reformation, 2011). However, through their writings, they were developing the consistent teachings that would be adopted by the Nicene Creed. The Catholic Church rejected the concepts of Reformed Theology that was developed centuries later, however the Reformers argued that their ideas were not new, but part of the Christian story from the beginning, found in the Holy Scripture itself and to which the early Church Fathers alluded. Until the 300s, the foundational Church Fathers peppered their letters and instruction with the theme of Predetermination and God’s Sovereignty. A few quotes, from many highlight this: Clemens Romanus, one of the first popes, writing circa 69CE speaks of the believers being chosen by God and God’s will never being thwarted, writing “...This blessedness comes upon those that are chosen of God by Jesus Christ our Lord” and “When He wills, and as He wills, he does all things; none of those things which are decreed by him, shall pass away” (McMahon, n.d.). Fifty years later, Ignatius, the

bishop of the church in Antioch, wrote seven letters to churches throughout the empire. These letters dealt with current events, so they don't delve too deeply into theological topics like Divine Election. But there are still numerous incidental references to it; In several of the letters' openings, Ignatius refers to his audience as those who are elect of God. He writes that the church at Ephesus was "predestined before the ages for lasting and unchangeable glory forever, united and elect through genuine suffering by the will of the Father and of Jesus Christ our God" (Theophorous). The church father, Justin Martyr wrote "God, out of all nations, took your nation to himself, a nation unprofitable, disobedient, and unfaithful; thereby pointing out, those that are chosen out of every nation to obey his will, by Christ, whom also he calls Jacob, and names Israel" (McMahon, n.d.). Around the same time, the writings of Irenaeus a disciple of Polycarp who was a disciple of the apostle John claimed "God predetermining all things for the perfection of man, and for the bringing about and manifestation of his dispositions, that goodness may be shown" (Gerigorian, 2013). Novatians, the second anti-pope and first theologian to write in Latin says "For, says he is said to be glorious in predestination, and predestination was before the foundation of the world, the order must be kept, and before him there will be, a large number of men appointed to glory". These quotes are a few of the many found in the writings of the church fathers spanning hundreds of years until the Reformation⁵.

St Augustine of Hippo is noted for his influence on the early Catholic Church and subsequently the western Christian tradition. In his defense against Pelagianism (who did not believe in Original Sin and said Man was free to choose salvation) declared "He therefore chose and predestinated us in Christ before the foundation of the world" and "He chooses us, not because we believe, but that we may believe; lest we should say that we first chose Him" (Augustine, 426). Preparing for his argument, he taught that humankind has no free will to believe until God infuses grace, which in turn results in saving faith ((Bright & Bonner, 1999, p. 232). 1Timothy 2:4 -6 was at the core of his argument; [God] desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of truth...[Christ] who gave himself as a ransom for

⁵ To see the many more, one can access a page from Puritan's Mind homepage; <https://www.apuritansmind.com/arminianism/calvinism-in-the-early-church-the-doctrines-of-grace-taught-by-the-early-church-fathers/>,

all which is the testimony given at the proper time. After years of study, Augustine concluded that God, being omnipotent, must get all that He desires and therefore since not all people put their faith in Christ, therefore God must not desire all persons to be saved, otherwise every human would be saved. According to Augustine, a person was moved by God to become a believer or not, by placing persons in circumstances God knew would cause them to make a make a fateful choice or act a certain way (Wilson, 2019, p. 66).

The debate over the Free Will vs Predestination continued over the centuries. Anselm of Canterbury, an Italian Benedictine monk who would become the Archbishop of Canterbury from 1093 to 1109 and sometimes ascribed with founding Scholasticism, as well as the ontological argument for the existence of God, weighed in on the matter during his time in Canterbury. He wrote a rationalization in his work *De concordia praescientiae praedestinationis et gratiae Dei cum libero arbitrio* (1107/08). He puts forth a very interesting discussion of this thorny issue by attempting to reconcile both. He concluded that foreknowledge and free will can co-exist writing that:

Surely, we ought not to doubt that God's foreknowledge and predestination do not conflict. Instead, just as He foreknows, so also He predestines. In the discussion about foreknowledge, we saw clearly that, without any inconsistency, some actions which are going to occur as a result of free choice, are foreknown. Therefore, reason and plain truth also teach that, without any inconsistency, some actions that are going to occur by means of free choice are likewise predestined (Anselm, 1108, section II:3).

The monasteries that would flourish in medieval Wales were influenced by the teaching of Augustine, of course the Augustinians, but also the Benedictines and Cistercians as well as we will be discussed later.

These quotes are a few of the many found in the writings of the church fathers spanning hundreds of years until the Reformation. It is not certain whether the hagiographers of the Welsh Saints were influenced by them, but many of their works clearly indicate similar points of view on the matter. They could have taken the concept directly from the Scriptures since the term predestination is a Biblical word and a Biblical concept (Sproul, 2016, p. 164). The term is used liberally by the Apostle Paul who makes clear that the agent of predestination is God, and in His

sovereignty he predestinates. “Human beings are the object of his predestination. In short, predestination refers to God’s sovereign plan for human beings, decreed by him in eternity” (Sproul, 2016).

The Hagiographies

Saint David

When examining the hagiography of Welsh saints, Saint David is a good starting point as he is arguably the most renowned, loved and his is the oldest written source. It includes themes of predestination. Practically all we know of him comes from the *Life of Saint David*, written by Rhygyfarch, son of Sulien the Wise. Sulien was Bishop of Saint David’s from 1072-1078 and again in 1080-1085. Rhygyfarch set out to preserve the information given in the ancient documents in the library at St David’s which had survived previous Viking plunder. He said he drew on “very old writings, some of them in the hand of Saint David himself and written in the old style of the ancients” (Evans, 1967). He wrote the *Life of Saint David* around 1090. Not long after, many other *Welsh Lives* were published. This is the time in history when Norman influence was encroaching on Welsh/Briton social conventions and sacred traditions; therefore part of the impetus to write these hagiographies was to preserve local customs, ecclesiastical traditions, and history (Wade-Evans, 2013, p. xiv).

Rhygyfarch’s *The Life of Saint David*, was not only the inspiration, but also the template used by many hagiographies that followed. The most recent translation is by Richard Sharpe and John Reuben Davies, *St David of Wales: Cult, Church and Nation* published to commemorate the fourteenth centenary of the death of the saint. Unfortunately, many manuscripts and books from the cathedral library of Saint David’s did not survive the Reformation zeal of the 1500s. According to Wade Evans the best copy of the *Life of St. David* or *Buchedd Dewi*, being the fullest and best-preserved copy, was written about 1200, a century after Rhygyfarch’s death; is contained in the Cottonian Codex, Vespasian A xiv, at the British Museum [now British Library], London (Wade Evans, 1923, p. 14). Rhygyfarch would have written his *Life* in Latin; however, there is the extant fourteenth-century Welsh *Life of St. David* (Oxford, Jesus Coll., MS. 2) appears to be an shortened version of Rhygyfarch’s.

Saint David's (Dewi Sant in Welsh) year of birth is uncertain. We know he was born in the century following the Roman occupation. According to the hagiography, he is the son of Sant, King of Ceredigion, and was begotten via the rape of his mother, the nun, Nonnita, aka Non whose life has a few allusions to that of the Mary the mother of Christ. She was a virgin before the rape and never would have sexual relations after the birth of David, thus not a virgin in the literal sense, however one in the symbolic sense, and the miracles to accompany Non's pregnancy echo those of Mary.⁶

David was born near Saint Bride's Bay, Pembrokeshire. He was educated at Henfynyw, Cardigan, he played a prominent part in the synod of Llanddewi-Brefi (in Cardigan) to suppress the heresy of Pelagius who denied the concept of original sin. Like Augustine before him, David stood strongly against the Pelagian heresy. By his compelling defense of Divine Providence and Grace of God at Brefi, David became an archbishop (or bishop). A few years later he settled the matter once and for all in the British church at the Synod of Victory held at Caerleon-on-Usk, Monmouthshire, which is where the Pelagian heresy in Britain died. He is credited with moving the seat of ecclesiastical government from Caerleon to Mynyw to its present location at Saint David's on the western shore (Wade Evans, 1923, p. 132).

Many miracles are ascribed to Saint David, beginning before his conception as his birth was foretold in a dream to both his father and Saint Patrick. His birth story alludes to the story of King Herod who believed the prophecy of the birth of the Messiah in Bethlehem, thus became paranoid for his throne and put out an order for the massacre of the innocent babies throughout the land in hopes to murder him. David's mother, Non also had to worry about a paranoid brutal tyrant prince in her land, who was told of the birth of her son by Druids and put out a similar order to massacre babies. She had to hide David's birth during a violent thunderstorm. However, God provided sanctuary with a ray of light to guide her to place of calm and safety. It is said that the pain Non felt during her labour was so intense that she grasped a rock so hard that it left finger marks and the stone splitting. *David's Life* includes many miracles, including the resurrection of a dead child and the restoration

⁶ Non's pregnancy was not the result of consensual sexual relations, and she remained celibate for the rest of her life, there was prophecy about the destiny of her son while he was still in the womb and her birthing experience was one of hardship accompanied by miracles.

of sight to a blind man. One of the notable miracles associated with him is the formation and rising of a hill beneath him as he preached to a large crowd, so the crowd could see him more clearly. During this incident, a white dove is said to have landed on his shoulder, thus many images of Saint David include a dove (Crampin, pps. 166-169, 2023).

Predestination in *Life of Saint David*

The concepts of Foreknowledge, Predestination and God's Providence are woven throughout Rhygyfarch's *Life*, which also includes several Biblical allusions. He boldly begins his text by declaring:

OUR LORD, although he loved and foreknew all his own before the creation of the world, has foretold some by many clear revelations. Thus that saint, whom baptism calls David but the people Dewi, became famous, not only because, thirty years before he was born, he was foretold by truth-telling oracles of angels, first to his father, then to Saint Patrick, but also because he was enriched with donations of mystical gifts. (Wade Evans, 1923)

While pregnant, Non went to hear Saint Gildas preach. When she was in the church when he had a experience akin to that of Zacharias, in the Book of Luke who was struck dumb by an Angel for doubting God's prophecy. Though Gildas was not struck totally dumb, he lost his ability to preach as soon as Non entered the building. He told the congregation to exit the church, to see if that would remedy the situation, however, Non did not leave and hid herself between the door and the wall. Rhygyfarch attributes this scene to Divine Provision and Gildas now becomes more like a John the Baptist figure declaring that the one to follow him will be greater than himself, stating:

But he, relying on divine providence said, 'Go thou outside, but let the people re-enter the church.' And every one came into his seat as before, and Gildas preached clearly as from a trumpet. And the congregation asked holy Gildas saying, 'Why couldest thou not the first time preach the Gospel of Christ to us, anxious to listen ?' And Gildas answered and said, "Call hither the nun, who went outside the church." And when the mother was questioned, she confessed that she was pregnant, and Saint Nonnita said, " Lo. I am with you." But he said, 'The

son, who is in the womb of that nun, has grace and power and rank greater than I, because God has given him status and sole rule and primacy over all the saints of Britannia forever, before and after judgment. Farewell, brothers and sisters. I am not able to abide here longer owing to the son of this nun, because to him is delivered sole rule over all the people of this island, and it is necessary for me to go to another island, and to leave the whole of Britannia to this woman's son.' (Wooding, 2007).

David became a zealous evangelist, founded a series of monasteries in Wales and England, and performed remarkable exploits throughout his ministry. Rhygyfarch reports that David encountered resistance from a druid and chieftain called Bwya who felt threatened by David's 'power and renown'. He assembled troops to kill David and his followers. However, the men were struck down by a sudden fever, and when they returned to their estates, they found that all their cattle had mysteriously died. This cleared the way for David to continue his mission, and *Bucchedd Dewi* states that this miracle was part of a divine plan: "the malice of enemies having thus been expelled by the good God, the monastic community in the Lord built a notable monastery in the place, which the angel had foreshown".

Predestination and prophecy play crucial roles in some of David's key life events. He was a critical figure in the existing fight against the Pelagian Heresy, though he was reluctant to attend the Synod at Llanddewi-Brefi to resolve this issue, however he does appear, saying he was predestined to attend it. He was reluctant, modestly claiming he had little to offer, but had to admit to having a foreknowledge via a prophecy that we would attend, thus he did. Even his death was foretold by an Angel; eight days prior to his death the Angel announced:

The long-desired day,'said he, 'is now reckoned near at hand'" The holy bishop recognised the friendly voice, and said to him with a joyful mind, 'Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace.' The brethren merely received the sound into their ears without distinguishing the words, for they had heard them conversing together and were fallen to the earth in terror. Then the whole monastery is filled with angelic harmonies and sweet-smelling fragrance. The holy bishop calling with a loud voice, with mind intent on heaven, says, 'Lord Jesus Christ, receive my spirit.' Again the angel speaks in a clear voice, the

brethren understanding the same, 'Prepare and gird yourself. On the first of March the Lord Jesus Christ, accompanied by a great host of angels, will come to meet you' (Wade Evans, 1923, p. 52).

The *Bucched Dewi's* Genealogy and Mass also include the concepts of Predestination. "Here begins the genealogy of Saint David, archbishop of all Britannia by the grace and predestination of God. David was the son of Sant..... Here ends the Life of Saint David, Bishop and Confessor". His Mass begins with "God, who did foretell thy blessed confessor and pontiff, David, by the announcement of an angel to Patrick, prophesying thirty years before he was born....through thy Son, our Lord, Jesus Christ, who liveth and reigneth with thee in the unity of the Holy Ghost, one God, world without end. Amen.

Saint Cadog and Saint Gwynllyw

The *Life of Saint Cadog* was compiled by Lifris, also known as Lifricus in the 12th Century, and is located in the Cotton MS Vespasian A xiv, though some passages are missing in this manuscript and have been supplied from a later copy found in the Cottonian Codex Titus D xxii (Wade-Evans, 2013, p.xv). Lifris was the son of Herwald, chief bishop in Southeast Wales from 1056-1104. Herwald was the last Bishop of Llandaff before the Norman Conquest, thus Lifris was raised during a period before the Norman influence on the Welsh Church, therefore it is exclusively Welsh in perspective. Lifris was most likely the head of the monastery at LLancarfan, founded by Saint Cadog. He is considered to have written of the *Life of Saint Cadog* at Brecon Priory hoping to save the records of Saint Cadog from destruction during the violence and chaos that ensued post Norman conquest (Evans, 1967, p. 23).

Though Saint Cadog is his subject, Lifris includes details of the life of Saint Gwynllwy as well as there is much overlap in their lives. Cadog was the son of King Gwynllyw Farfog of Gwynllwg, born around 500 CE. His kingdom was near present day Newport in Monmouthshire. His mother was Princess Gwladys of Brycheiniog (Brecon). It is said that she was so beautiful that Gwynllyw had kidnapped her and brought to his lands. Gwladys' father pursued Gwynllyw to rescue her, but King Arthur intervened to stop Gwladys' father from killing Gwynllwy and acted as arbiter resulting in nuptials for the couple.

Lifris tells us that Cadog worked miracles from the time of his birth; a heavenly light miraculously appeared in all four corners of his parents' home when he was born, and food was multiplied from empty cellars to feed the family and guests as well as mead springing up from the well where he was baptized (bringing to mind Jesus turning water in wine at a wedding and feeding multitudes from five fish and loaves). According to the *Life of Saint Gwynllyw*, he was the holiest of holy men, luminous with miracles and was diligent in admonishing his parents to behave well because the earthly kingdom does not last and that they should set their sights on heavenly things instead. Because of his apparent gifts from God, Cadog was sent to Saint Tatheus to attend his school in the old Roman town of Caerwent in Gwent. Saint Cadog appears in the *Life of St. Tatheus*, highlighting his miracle of carrying a red-hot coal without getting burned, prompting Saint Tatheus to recognize that he no longer had anything to teach Saint Cadog so he sent him back to his family.

Many of the miracles associated with Saint Cadog involve dreams, revelations and animals, therefore he is often considered the Welsh Saint Patrick. Some examples are: a mouse assisted him in finding a secret store of grain during a famine and wild boar resisted attacking him while he was in a forest which later became the spot where he built his first monastery because he was directed by a dream to that spot, where two tame deer helped him build this monastery, thus the name "Llancarfan" derives from the Welsh language and means "a deer church".

He is one of the founding fathers of monasticism in south Wales. A smaller monastery was started at Llanspyddid, near present day Brecon. He became friends with Saint Illtud and Saint Gildas. It was Gildas who looked after his monastery at Llancarfan while Cadog went on a mission near Glasgow (in Strathclyde) and then travelled to Cornwall, Ireland and Brittany.

After his missionary journeys, he became a hermit on Barry Island in South Wales until a rather remarkable event happened: While he was resting on Palm Sunday he was caught up in a cloud and transported to the city of Beneventum, (the whereabouts is debated), where he became a bishop and took the name Saint Sophias. He did missionary work among the Saxons where he was consistently attacked by Viking raiders. Finally, Saint Cadog who asked God if he could die a

martyr's death, was granted his prayer, and he was killed during one of the Viking raids.

Predestination in the *Life of St Cadog*

Lifris' *Life of Saint Cadog* carries the theme of God's Sovereignty and Providence throughout his work. It includes prebirth angelic revelation, attribution to God's will for events with the recognition of God predetermining events and guiding the heart's of men. The preface, which encapsulates the story, ends by saying "as a pilgrim, he arrived at last by the will of God in the land of the Cornishmen in the district, which is called Bodmin, and there for the whole of his life he served God most devotedly. Moreover, a very great monastery is built there in his honour and his festival is solemnly kept, like the chief solemnities" (Wade-Evans, 2013, p. 25).

He begins *the Life* by describing the miraculous light which appeared at Cadog's birth while drawing parallels to the prophecy of the book of Isaiah and declaring that Cadog was one of God's Elect. Lifris describes the miraculous birth as "beyond question manifest to all that the infant was really elected by God from his mother's womb according to that prophecy of Isaiah the prophet, 'From thy mother's womb have I chosen thee', and in another place, 'From my mother's belly the Lord hath called me' " (Wade-Evans, 2013, p. 29). Lifris then describes the vision which God gave to Gwynllyw to name his son Cadfael (later Cadog) and to put him under the tutelage of the Irish holy hermit, Meithui who, described him as my "Beloved pupil, elect servant of God".

God directs Cadog to choose a life of serving the Church and God, instead of inheriting his father's throne. He was an astute student and preferred Christian endeavors to worldly affairs. He was threatened with being forced to become the next King, and his response, according to Lifris was:

Free me, Lord Jesus Christ, from this danger. I am already desirous not to rule but to serve. Send me whither thou wilt for I will not now visit the threshold of my father.' Wherefore, because God provided that he should be a ruler of the Church, God gave him the knowledge of the Scriptures. And although it makes many to be proud, knowledge did not puff him up, but the more he excelled others in wisdom, the more he humbled himself before all (Wade-Evans, 2013, p. 35).

Lifris continues Cadog's hagiography with several accounts of Cadog's miracles. He recounts how an angel appeared in a dream to tell him to go to Scotland for seven years to convert the people there. He settled near the mountain Bannauc and founded a monastery. While in Scotland, he revives Caw Prydyn, once a ruler of the highlands who came to plunder the coastal region and was damned to hell for his actions. Caw is said to be the father of St Gildas and other saints mentioned in the Welsh genealogies (Whalley, 2008). Lifris' recording of these events do not use any language of predestination, however he ends the section by writing when Saint Cadog returns to Wales, when "The seven years' limit divinely fixed beforehand (or determined) having at length been completed..." (Wade-Evans, 2013, p. 85).

The Genealogy tells us that Saint Cadog's lineage begins with Augustus Caesar and runs through notable figures from Roman, Celtic and Christian history. Lifris concludes the genealogy by highlighting Saint Cadog's divine appointment and the hand of God securing his legacy:

Saint Cadog appointed thirty-six canons, who should continually and by their rule serve Nantcarfan church, which he himself founded from the beginning by the election of God and men according to the Divine purpose, and as many courts, in which the canons might have their buildings, and as many shares of arable land, wherein there were eighty acres, which were called from ancient times the possessions of the courts, which gardeners cultivated who had the task of arranging the grounds and gardens, and of guarding the guest chambers ; and moreover as many homesteads, wherefrom they had necessities of raiment and food (Wade-Evans, 2013, p. 124).

St Gwynllyw

The *Life of Saint Gwynllyw* derives from the ancient districts of Gwynllwg, as previously described. It is between the lower part of the river Ursk where his principal church was located, now known as Saint Woolo's Newport Monmouthshire. It is based on older material, partly poetic and was compiled around 1130 (Wade-Evans, 2013, p xiv). It too is in the Cotton MS Vespasian A xiv collection. There are some discrepancies between Lifris' *Life of Saint Cadog* and this version, however the basic details agree. Both portray him as a king and warrior who would regularly raid nearby kingdoms. Lifris describes him as "very partial to thieves and would incite them to commit robberies" but *the Life of Saint Gwynllyw* portrays him a just and fair ruler, beyond reproach. A big difference between the two

Lives is the marriage story. In the *Life of Saint Cadog*, Gladwss was abducted during a raid, when King Brychan refused to allow her to marry Gwynllyw and on the eve of the pitch of a huge battle was about to happen, Arthur intervened on his behalf, and the nuptials were successfully negotiated. But, according to the *Life of Saint Gwynllyw*, this battle never happened, and the nuptials proceeded without incident. He was a model king and asked for her hand, which was granted by Brychan willingly.

The different portrayal of Gwynllyw can be justified when examining the perspective of the author. The *Vitae Sanctorum* were meant to be read as sermons or stories to motivate and edify the faithful. Therefore, the saints are portrayed in favorable terms, with sins or weaknesses downplayed, left out or conquered. Thus, Lifris, writing about Cadog would not worry about casting Gwynllyw in a negative light, in fact it suits his purpose, as Cadog was the person responsible of his father's conversion, thus, the greater the sinner, the greater the conversion, as exemplified by the Apostle Paul.

According to his biographer, Gwynllyw was the eldest son of King Glywys, who agreed to share his rightful inheritance with his brothers upon his father's death. The biographer emphasizes that because he was a powerful warrior king, there was peace in his lands and his rule was just. The turning point in his life is the birth of his son Cadog, whose birth is recounted in a single, simple sentence: "After marriage his bride conceived; after conception she happily brought forth a son, Cadog (Wade-Evans, 2013, p. 175).

Just as in Lifris' version, Cadog is described as a Christ like figure, who is righteous from the start and admonishes his parents to not rule wickedly, but to be afraid of hell and rule in a manner that would earn them a place in heaven. After this, an angel appears to his parents with the message of salvation through Christ's work on the cross.

From that point forward, the couple lived austere and penitential lives in service to God. Gwynllyw's resolve is fortified by a dream in which an angel spoke to him, and he saw a vision of a white ox with a black spot. Gwynllyw then went on a mission to find the ox in his dream and when he did he founded a hermitage on what is now Stow Hill in Newport. Both he and Gwladys accompanied Gwynllyw into a hermit's life, fasting, eating a barren diet, and bathing in the cold waters of the Usk to show their piety. They were often visited by Cadog who encouraged them. A

well sprang forth on a hill where Gwynllyw prayed for water. Later they moved further apart, Saint Gwladys founding her own church at which is now Bassaleg.

When Gwynllyw was approaching death he sent for his son and Saint Dyfrig to attend him. He died peacefully and his body was buried under the floor of his church. Many miracle stories followed his death, involve healing, other of avenging miracles which due to desecration of the sacred space.

Predestination in the *Life of Gwynllyw*

Compared to Lifris' *Vita Cadog*, Gwynllyw's hagiography has fewer mentions of predestination or attribution to God's sovereignty. The first mention of Divine Election is in the angelic vision that follows Cadog's admonishment, where the angel appears to Gwynllyw and Gwladys, telling them that God has sent him to "convert you, earthly ones, to heavenly service; he calls upon you and invites you as a father does a son; he has chosen you and redeemed you...." (Wade-Evans, 2013, p. 175).

There are three other times when God's Providence and grace are acknowledged in the *Vita*. The first being Gwynllyw's dream of an ox, which prompts him to leave his palace and establish a holy place is described as predestined, for the writer tells us that "he journeyed until he arrived at the predestined little hill fort foretold by the angel that he might immediately abide (Wade-Evans, 2013, p. 177). The second is "God granting" the miracle of the fountain called Gwynllyw's Well, that sprang forth to quench his thirst, and the third is when the writer himself credits God with giving him the ability to write Gwynllyw's *Vita*, by stating that "A certain British versifier, versifying in British, composed verses on his own race, and in the British speech praises concerning the manner of the life of the most holy Gwynllyw and of his life miracles, which God for the love of him allowed him to do (Wade-Evans, 2013, p. 183) .

The Life of Saint Tatheus

The authority for the Life of Saint Tatheus or Tathyw is the eleventh Century anonymous *Vita Tathyw*, in the Cotton MS. Vespasian A. xiv. Additionally, some of the legends in the *Vita* occur also in the *Life of Saint Cadog*, where Tathyw is referred to by his pet name, Meuthi. What makes it unique compared to the other *Vitae* is it interspersed with some poetry.

Tathues is said to have been an Irish prince, the son of one King Tuathal (an Irish form of Tudwal). His pious parents encouraged him to join the Church instead of succeeding his father to the throne. He then, was instructed by an angel in a dream, to spread the Christian word in Wales. The young prince sailed across the Irish Sea with a handful of companions in a small boat without sail or oars, to let God determine their destination. They landed in Gwent and were welcomed by the local nobility.

He spent time as a hermit and founded a monastery at LLantathan. Tatheus then met King Caradoc who helped him establish a monastic school at Venta Silurum (Caerwent). He became the tutor of many learned men seeking wisdom and edification, as well as performed many miracles. As mentioned in previous *Vitae*, King Gwynllyw sent his seven-year-old son, Cadog to study under Tatheus, who later donated the land where Tatheus founded a church, in which he was buried when he died.

Predestination in the *Life of Tatheus*

The author makes clear that from the moment of his birth, Tatheus was chosen by God to be His instrument. When contemplating their son who caused them to despise secular things, we are told that they “were desirous to give back to God him, whom he had chosen, because the boy was trying to ascend thither whence he came at the first (Wade-Evans, 2013, p. 271).

The author credits the changing of Tatheus original plan to remain to Ireland, but to return to Britannia to an angel, who instructed Tatheus in a dream. God’s providence is illustrated when he was instructed to “proceed to the harbour, and thou will be able to cross to Britannia, as is arranged for these in whatever way I bid” (Wade-Evans, 2013, p. 273).

Of his first coming to his monastery, we are told it was by angelic exhortation that the donation was made by king Caradog. The author inserts poetry into the text: “The good, fertile, lofty, noble city of Caerwent, Granted me as my lot, by the grace of heaven to its citizens
a constant succour, whose care it is to defend you (Wade-Evans, 2013, p. 275). The verbiage “God granting” and “by the grace of heavens or God”, emphasizes the attribution to God’s will and hand in the destiny of his chosen.

There was an event where some noblemen set 147 horses free in a meadow where a cow was kept, the cow that was providing milk for a holy teacher and his

pupil. The horses trampled the meadow, and then were found dead because of a vengeful prayer. The esquires sought out Tatheus for redemption and to make amends. Tatheus, “the elect servant of God, pardoned the injury that they had done” and did not damn them. Rather he forgave them, they repented, and the horses were revived (thankfully!).

The last event that might be ascribed to predestination is when Tatheus leaves Gwent to find a place for a royal and civic palace, mounts and unbridled horse. He “suffered him to go wherever God might direct and lead him” (Wade-Evans, 2013, p. 279). The horse takes him along a journey (implication that God is directing the horse) where he finally ends up along the banks of the Severn. The horse paws at the earth, a spring wells up and he refuses to go further. To seal the deal, Caradog granted him the land.

Saint Beuno and Saint Winefride Hagiography

St Beuno is the most important saint of northern Wales, comparable to St David in the south (Sims-Williams, 2018, p. 1). He is the uncle and mentor of St Winefride, and the sources for both their *Lives* intertwine. Thus, this section will deal with both saints as they share several sources.

What we know of Saint Beuno is derived from a few sources. He first appeared in the 1135 anonymous *Vita Sanctae Wenefredae* (Saint Winefride). *The Hystoria o Uched Beuno* or *Buchedd Beuno* was written in the vernacular by the then anchorite of Llanddewi Frefi a few centuries later and is now at Oxford College MS2. This Welsh 'Life of St Beuno' gives us more insight to his life (Evans, 1967, p. 67). Somewhere between 1137-1140, Robert of Shrewsbury, writing in Latin, referred to a *Vita sancti Beunoi*, in his *Vita sanctae Wenefredae*, which is probably the inspiration if not the source of the anonymous *Vita sanctae Wenefredae*, and was the main source for the vernacular *Buchedd Beuno* (Sims-Williams). There is also reference to him in the ancient Book of Saint Beuno (now lost) allegedly written by St Twrog, a disciple of Beuno, at Clynnog. This is assessed as the source of the seventh through twelfth-century charters which outlined that Beuno received Clynnog from Gwyddaint, a cousin of Cadwallon, king of Gwynedd, 'for the sake of his name being written in St Beuno's Book' (Sims-Williams, 235). This grant is the main criterion for the dating of Beuno.

Two Latin *Lives* were written about Winefride, probably written independently of each other in the mid twelfth century. One was written by Robert Pennant, Prior of Shrewsbury, the *Vita et translation S Wenefredae* also known as *Vita Secunda*. The other's author is unknown and is referred to as the *Vita Anonymous*. Both *Lives* reveal much about Saint Winefride and Saint Beuno, their legends, traditions and history. These two *Lives* have formed the basis of later accounts of the life of Saint Winefride. Prior Robert of Shrewsbury's *Vita* is part of the Laudian collection in the Bodleian Library, MS. Laud Misc. 114. Robert wrote his *Life and Translation* circa 1137 -1138, presenting himself as a major figure in the latter (Callander, 2023, P 2). His account included the journey into Wales to gain Winefride's relics, which began in the second year of King Stephen's reign, a time of competing interests and chaos, where survival of the Church and Nobility was not guaranteed especially in the Marcher lands. Thus, having relics of a Saint renowned for healing and miracles bolstered Shrewsbury importance and income. There are extant three manuscripts of Robert's *Vita*, one dating from the twelfth century. There is only one surviving copy of the *Anonymous Vita*, also known as the *Vita Prima*, in a collection of four saints lives written in the early thirteenth century, perhaps in Worcester (Winward, 1999, p 14). It is now located in the British Library, Cotton Claudius A.v. fols § 135-99, and 138-45. Another theory is it was written by a monk, residing at Basingwerk Abbey, to highlight the importance of the nearby Winefride's Well during the contested time of control between the Normans and Welsh (Feiss et al., 2000, p 18-19). It is believed that these two lives were written independently of each other, but the similarities are most likely due to the common source, the above-mentioned *Vita sancti Beunoi*.

Furthermore, a third *Vita* was written, now preserved in British Library MS Lansdowne 436, dated to the fourteenth century. It is probably the work of a single reviser, it contains vitae for a total of forty-three different saints arranged in roughly historical chronological order, including the Life of Saint Winefride. All these *Vitae* show signs of deliberate conflation, modification, and adaptation. The redactor has carefully combined and reworked Winefride's two earlier Latin *Vitae* to create a new, composite version of her legend (Gregory, 2016).

The anonymous *Vita Sanctae Wenefredae* found in manuscript of c.1200 from Holme Cultram, Cumberland now at the British Library, Cotton Claudius A.v. fols 135-99, at fols 138-45. (Sims-Williams, 2018, p. 20) was mostly likely written

before her translation to Shrewsbury as it states that she rests at Gwytherin (§20). The main focus of the Anonymous *Vita* is her miracles at Holywell, and a majority of the narrative is about her relationship with her uncle Beuno.

Therefore, the examination of the hagiographies of both saints for themes of Predestination and God's Sovereignty must be made in conjunction with each other as their lives are intertwined. But for simplicity, each Saint will be discussed separately when possible.

Life of St Beuno

Saint Beuno was born in the mid sixth Century in Shropshire near the River Severn. According to his *Vita*, he was the son of Bugi and Beren. He was educated at the same monastery as was Saint Cadgog, in Caerwent and was instructed by Saint Tangusius, (Tangwn). He was trained and ordained there, and won the respect of the king, Ynyr Gwent, who gave him a gold ring and a crown, and himself became one of Beuno's disciples ((Evans, 1967, p. 67). The king also granted him land in present day Llanvynoe, in Herefordshire.

When Beuno's father was on his deathbed, Beuno returned to the land of his birth, and remained there after his father passed away. He built a monastery in Llanymynech, near the border between England and Wales. Legend says he planted an oak tree on his father's grave, that would strike dead any Englishman who walked under it but not harm a Welshman.

He then went to Berriew near Welshpool where Mawn, son of the King of Powys and a kinsman, gave him land, but Beuno did not remain there long because the English invaded. Beuno and his followers went to Meifod where Saint Tysilio was building a monastery, stopping there for 40 days before moving on to Gwyddelwern, near Corwen. Cynan Garwyn, king of Powys gave him land for a monastery, so he settled and built it.

It is here that the grandsons of Cynan, who were out hunting, came to the monastery rudely demanding hospitality. The obedient monks killed an ox cut it up and put it into a kettle to feed them, however God made it so that the meat never cooked, causing a young angry hunter to curse Beuno, but subsequently died by the end of that day, a not-so-subtle message about cursing the chosen of God!

From Gwyddelwern, Beuno went to Holywell where he built a church and then went to Gwynedd where Cadwallon, the new king traded with him by giving

him some land for a gold scepter and some cows. But he tricked Beuno, as the land was not rightfully his to give to Beuno, and when Beuno found this out, he tried to get his scepter restored, or get legitimate land, but Cadwallon denied him both. So Beuno cursed him and left. Cadwallon's cousin followed him, and offered Beuno his own land at Clynnog in Arfon to make amends for his cousin. It is here that Beuno built his main monastery where he spent the remainder of his life until his death on the Sunday after Easter, having a vision of heaven.

Life of Saint Winefride

Winefride, also spelled in various ways such as Wenefred, or Wenefreda, is the English name given to the Welsh Saint Gwenfrewi. Her two different Latin *Vitae* have overlap, but also have disparities. The following synopsis is a conflation of them. Saint. Winefride was born in North Wales in the early seventh century, a time where Christianity, though long established on the British Isles, was still growing. She is said to be a descendant of the early Welsh kings of Powys, (which is disputed by some scholars) and the only daughter of Teuyth a nobleman who was Lord over the area now known as Holywell and Tegeingl. Her mother Gwenlo was the sister of Saint Beuno, whose ancestry is traced to Anna, sister to king Arthur. Of note, this familial relationship is not made clear in the first two *Vitae* but gets introduced later via the lineage outlined in the Welsh genealogical tracts *Bonedd y Saint* and *Achau'r Saint*, perhaps to shore up her royal lineage or to explain the close and loving relationship between uncle and niece (Pepin & Feiss, 2000).

Saint Beuno, after a dispute with the local princes of Clynnog, decided to move closer to his sister and her important husband where he started a ministry. Winefride displayed not only an interest, but a gift for spiritual instruction. She made it clear to her father that she wanted to become a Bride of Christ and not of man. Her father, though realizing he would have no heir, accepted her choice. Saint Beuno, her uncle, became her mentor and tutor. The *Vitae* emphasize that they had a close and loving platonic relationship.

One Sabbath, Winefride remained at home while her parents attended Mass administered by Saint Beuno; Caradog, a local prince, was riding by and stopped at the house for refreshment and was so smitten by her beauty that he made aggressive advances. He proposed marriage, however he clearly planned on raping her. The clever Winefride escaped out a bedroom door and ran to the church. Caradog

pursued her and caught her just as she got to the church door. In a fit of anger, he severed her head with his sword. Her head rolled down the hillside into the church, and the body remained in the churchyard. When her uncle and her parents saw this, they were horrified, and Beuno covered her body with his cloak but then continued the Mass. Some sources say he cursed the wicked Caradog who fell dead on the spot and melted or was swallowed into the earth while others say that Caradog was killed by Winefride's brother, Owain, as an act of revenge.

After Mass, as he prayed, St Beuno took Winefride's head and reattached it to her body. She was resurrected; however, she would retain a scar that would become a permanent red necklace which was a testament her miracle of rising from the dead. After the "Lazarus" event, the two sat on a rock which was later called "Saint Beuno's rock," and her uncle promised that God would answer the prayers of anyone petitioning Him from that spot. Most notably, according to the *Vitae*, that is when water sprang forth from the spot of her fallen body and became a healing holy well from that day forward and a chapel was built over it.

Winefride was now more determined to live a holy life in monastery, and with her parent's consent, she established a monastery for women. There she led eleven virgins in a holy community, instructing them in the Christian faith. Saint Beuno, knowing she was well established, left to evangelize further afield. She greatly mourned his departure. Before his parting, she made a pact with him that she would send him a cloak or vestment every year. This cloak would be sent down river, yet it would arrive dry, and it would be unaffected by both rain and wind according to the *Prima Vita*.

She dedicated her life to serving God, evangelizing, and teaching. She ended up in Gwytherin in present day Conwy County Wales, where she was welcomed by her mother's cousin, Saint Elerius. He introduced her to his mother, Saint Tenonia, who was the abbess of nun's convent there. While there, Winefride became famous for her inspired teaching and outstanding example of chastity. She succeeded Thenonia as Abbess and spent the rest of her life there, dying circa 660 CE. Worth mentioning, the *Prima Vita* includes a pilgrimage to Rome and attendance at the Synod of Whitby, which Robert of Shrewsbury dismisses as highly unlikely.

Predestination in the *Lives of Saint Beuno and Saint Winefride*

The *Hystoria Uuched Beuno* uses subtle references to God's Providence and Predestination, beginning with conception of Saint Beuno. His parents were aged

without a child and were visited by an angel (reminiscent of Abraham and Sarah in the book of Genesis) who foretold them of the conception of Beuno. The angel also portends that the baby Beuno would be “blessed by God and be honourable before God and men”. It overtly states that the miracles performed by Beuno were through the power of God (Wade-Evans, 1923 p. 338). The *Vita* ends with a description of the end of Saint Beuno’s life, when he has a vision of the Trinity, Peter, Paul, angels and other saints and martyrs. Beuno claims the angels were singing “Blessed is he, who God has chosen, and hast received and who will dwell [with Thee] eternally” (Wade-Evans, 1923 p. 343).

The *Anonymous Vita* of Winefride is quite short and concise with a majority of it about the post-mortem miracles to include some political commentary as well. It’s only overt reference to God’s Sovereign control is at the beginning and end. The author tells the reader that it is God who disclosed the story of Winefride to us and ends by saying God alone works miracles and the credits Him with the miracles associated with Saint Winefride.

Robert of Shrewsbury, however, interlaces the theme of Predestination and God’s Divine Will throughout his *Vita*. He begins his *Prologue to the life of Saint Winefride, Virgin and Martyr* by explaining that he wrote his hagiography because he must “impart charitably to others what has freely been given to him from Heaven”. He then begins his story with Beuno, stating that after he built various churches he was “urged by divine utterance and went elsewhere to seek a dwelling shown beforehand to him by God, with the Holy Spirit truly guiding him and directing his steps for the benefit of many, he came to the manor of a certain great and powerful man by the name of Teuyth...” (Pepin & Feiss, 2000).

Robert weaves the theme of God’s Sovereignty and the concept of Predestination though out his entire narrative. St Beuno explained to Teuyth, that he was there because “he was sent by heavenly inspiration” which did not allow him to rest anywhere prior to his arrival. He claimed that he did not know why “Divine Providence which presages future events” directed him there, and that it did not happen by chance or without reason for the certain mystery and he believed that “all things are done by the Will of God alone, and the plans of man are always carried out under God’s direction.

He continues by persuading Teuyth to allow him to build a church on his property who agreed and asked Saint Beuno to intercede on Winefride’s behalf that

the “Lord might incline her will to His own.” He then placed Winefride under Beuno’s instruction, admonishing her to pay attention and learn. Robert comments that “God, foreknowing future events, did not allow this to happen in vain” and that God had opened her heart and mind. Robert also credits the work of the Holy Spirit, stating that it was “through the mercy of God inwardly inspiring her, increased daily in goodness and advanced in wisdom. Her soul fervently inflamed by the Holy Spirit” (Pepin & Feiss, 2000, p. 30). His writing is consistent with Calvin, writing in *the Institutes* over three centuries later; according to Calvin, Word and Spirit must always go together. Scripture gives us a saving knowledge of God, but only when its certainty is “founded on the inward persuasion of the Holy Spirit (Calvin, 1536).

It is interesting that Robert’s description of the pinnacle of Winefride’s story is without any mention of God’s Providence or Divine Will. This is the pivotal event, where Winefride evolves from being a devout young woman to a martyr and then saint. The entire event, from the meeting of lustful Caradoc with the virgin Winefride, her escape, her murder and her resurrection are all recounted without reference to God, Providence or a Divine Plan. Though there is no overt mention of God’s hand directing this miraculous event, Robert tells us that Beuno breathed life into her nostrils which alludes to how God gave life to Adam in the book of Genesis.

From that moment onward her life was dedicated to serving God, beginning with the the miraculous springing up of a Holy Well upon spot of her beheading (a common theme for Saints of Britain). She became a Bride of Christ who Beuno appointed as his successor when “God called” him elsewhere. (Pepin & Feiss, 2000, p. 41). According to Prior Robert, Beuno told Winefride, “God commands you to succeed to my labours and duties...For he orders you to bear the palm of singular merit before Him, and by example of your martyrdom and your profession of a good life He has determined that many in this world should be instructed in His love” (Pepin & Feiss, 2000, pp. 41-42).

Before departing, Beuno sat on a stone near the Holy Well and declared: “Whosoever on that spot should thrice ask for a benefit from God in the name of Saint Winefride would obtain the grace he asked if it was for the good of his soul”. Noting the number three, which has significance in the Christian tradition, referring to completeness and harmony and the Holy Trinity, he concluded his promise to Winefride saying “These three gifts significant of the privilege divinely conferred upon you will be granted to you by God, and while the world lasts, they will be

extolled in the reports of many people for the celebration of your memory and the glory of your praise” (Pepin & Feiss, 2000, p. 44).

Winefride remained at Holywell for seven years after Beuno left, seven being another significant number in the Bible representing perfection. Prior Robert peppers his writing about her flourishing as an evangelist giving the credit to God for giving her divine powers to persuade. He makes it clear that she did not have the ability to leave before the seven years were finished, but that she prayed for God to direct her to where she needed to go next. After much prayer it was revealed to her in a divine utterance to “go to Blessed Deifer” who “blessed by “divine utterance” would tell here to go next. (Pepin & Feiss, 2000, pp. 49-51). Upon reaching Defier, he told her God has not revealed to him anything about her plan, but after an all-night vigil, a “voice came from Heaven” giving him instructions and the next morning he reported to Winefride, that he had been “divinely taught” to go to a man named Saturnus for further instruction. Saturnus points her to Witheriace, a place of many saint’s relics, chosen by God on account of their venerable lives, and where she would find Saint Elerius who would tell her the final plan.

Prior Robert says that God, through the Holy Spirit told Saint Elrius about Winefride’s life and how she was coming to him for guidance. Winefride told him that in the same manner that God revealed her past to him, He must also reveal her future. He took her to Gwytherin, where his mother was the abbess of a convent of nuns. He instructed the nuns that Winefride was sent there by divine utterance, so she joined the convent, and became its abbess after the passing of Saint Elrius’ mother, Theonia. She was renowned in the region for her divinely inspired teaching, and Robert emphasizes that even Saint Elirius and other great men of North Wales “deferred much to her and revered her” (Pepin & Feiss, 2000, p. 62).

After spending over a decade there, God revealed to Winefride that He was calling her home, that “on a certain night, as she was devoting herself to prayers in the chapel, that the day of her death was very near”. It is assessed that Winefride lived to be around thirty, and Robert tells us that she was in pain and experiencing dissolution of the body. Elrius attended her at her time of death and had her buried next to his mother.

Prior Robert finishes his hagiography with accounts of miracles that pertain to postmortem Saint Winefride, often including verbiage of God manifesting the merits of the maiden or that God effected the person to come to the site. He then

credits the translation of her bones from Gwytherin to Shrewsbury Abbey as being prompted by the Holy Spirit, and that God had divinely led the monks to her grave.

As stated, purpose of this paper is to highlight the sizable number of themes of Predestination and Providence of God in the Welsh Hagiography that is featured in *Vitae Sanctorum Britanniae et Genealogie* and other sources. But it should be noted that concerning Prior Robert's most likely propaganda campaign to justify the translation of Winefride's bones from Wales to Shrewsbury, one can assume the motives for including such language of God Providential direction to justify what could be seen as a very questionable action by the monks in Shrewsbury. It seems obvious that Pennant's motivation was to enhance the reputation of his Abbey at Shrewsbury which was relatively new and needed a boost from saintly relics that would give it needed pilgrimage income. Prior Robert attributes the translation to the call of God and Saint Winefride herself, however it is unclear about the willingness of locals at Gwytherin to give up the bones of their blessed saint. He wrote about two monks at Shrewsbury who were healed by Winefride after drinking water from her well and reports that "On account of that the memory of the blessed virgin became more devoutly ingrained in the hearts of the brothers, so that they would judge themselves fortunate if they could attain even a small part of her most holy body. And although they thought it arduous and difficult and exceeding their powers, they nevertheless planned to try it. And knowing that nothing can resist the will of God, they prayed for God to become well-disposed towards them and to be their helper in the future, with whose power they did not doubt that any impossible or difficult things could come into their possession" (Pennant, 1137-1138, cited in Callandar, p. 96, 2023). He continues the story, to include the granting of permission by the Bishop of Bangor for the relics to be moved and indicates that Winefride herself wanted to be moved because the locals were neglecting her. He claims an unnamed "Leader of the land" told the monks, "I for my part would not have supposed you and your fellows to have taken up such a work without the will of God and the desire of the blessed virgin. For perhaps seeing that the veneration due to her is not paid by her own people, she desires to be taken away elsewhere, so that she might receive honour from foreigners, which her own people either refuse or neglect to bestow on her" (Pennant 1137-38, cited in Callandar, p.98, 2023). Hence, the relics of Saint Winefride were moved and welcomed to Shrewsbury with great rejoicing in 1138 and placed in the church of St Giles while a shrine was prepared in

the Abbey. Great throngs of pilgrims venerated the relics as they rested at St Giles and miracles were witnessed (Jobson, 2022). The bones were then taken to Shrewsbury Abbey as their final resting place.

Saint Padarn

Saint Padarn, the last saint examined, is closely associated with Saint David and Saint Teilio. His story appears in Rhygyfarch's *Life of St David* and in the *Life of St Teilo* in the *Book of Llandaff* (Evans, 1967, p. 44). He also has ties with the legendary Arthur. There is little authentic material concerning him solely. His *Vita* can be found in the collection of medieval manuscripts; B.M. MS. Vespasian A, xiv. In this '*Vita*' he is said to have come from Brittany, but since Paternus was the Latin name of at least two other Breton saints, his life story was mixed up with the lives of other saints. This confusion was sorted by Canon G. H. Doble, who has tried to rectify the mistakes made by the Norman hagiologists that conflated the various Paternuses. He concludes that the supposed Breton origin of Saint Padarn can no longer be maintained. "Doble favours the view of modern scholars in seeking for a Welsh 'Llydaw' in south-eastern Wales. According to him, it is more logical that Saint Padarn came from British Isles as it explains the "distribution of the ancient churches bearing his name by assuming that he arrived in west Wales by sea... where his great church in Ceredigion is near the ocean and the cult spread locally"(Bowen). However, this study is not to determine the mistakes made by conflating three different persons into one story, but to look at the language used to describe the *Vita* and look for the themes of God's sovereign control.

The *Vita* is assessed to have been written in the twelfth century at Brecon Priory by a Norman clerk who most likely used a previous *Life* which was a comprehensive poem about Saint Padarn but was lost. In addition to the older *Life*, he used oral traditions as his sources of information as well as some direct copying from the *Vita St. David*. (Evans, 1967, p. 46). According to the *Vita St Paterni*, Padarn is Armorican by race, born of noble parents, Petran, his father, and Guean, his mother. He came to Wales from Brittany with a contingent of fellow monks who suggested that he take on a leadership role. He trained at Illtud's school, Cor Tewdws (Rees, 1853, p. 516). From there he founded a monastery and became its first Bishop, in Cardiganshire, which is now Llanbardarn Fawr, translated as the church of the great Paternus. Over 120 monks joined Paternus at Llanbarn Fawr.

He returned to Ireland, to become the arbiter between two warring kings. After the peace settlement was concluded, he returned to Wales where he went on a church and monastery building spree. It is at this time that Maelgwn Gwynedd, the sixth century King of North Briton, devised a trick to take lands from Padarn. However, after a trial by ordeal of which Padarn was proven to be telling the truth, and the King and his messengers were found to be liars, Padarn was able to retain his lands.

He made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem with Saint David And Saint Teilo. There is much overlap of this event in Rhygyfarch *Live of St. David* and the *Vita St Paterni* thus it probable that the author of *Vita St. Paterni* borrowed directly from Rhygyfarch. The Patriarch of Jerusalem ordained them as bishops and upon their return to Wales, they divided the land into three bishoprics to which the local kings concurred.

The author includes a rather interesting side note of an account with Arthur. Arthur visited Padarn and saw a tunic that he coveted, which was gifted to Padarn from the Patriarch in Jerusalem. He falsely accused Padarn of stealing it from him and demands it return. The righteous Padarn lays a curse on him, for the ground to swallow him up, and when it does, Arthur, buried to his neck begs forgiveness and makes Padarn his patron saint.

Padarn moved to Brittany (Letia) where he spent his final days and was buried in Vannes in France. The final chapter is the description of how Saint Padarn, Saint. David and Saint Teilo divided south Wales into three episcopates, with Padarn as bishop of Ceredigion.

Predestination in the *Life of Saint Padarn*

The author of *Vita Saint Paterni*, from the outset affirms predestination as he sums up his description of Padarn's parentage and how after his birth, his parents dedicated their lives to God, by saying "Therefore it was foreseen by God in harmonious sequence that as Christ was sprung from the Supreme Father. God of God, Light of Light, so saint Padarn was born of holy parents. For straightway that he was born, they followed Christ" (Wade-Evans, 2013, p. 252).

On his first trip to Wales, his fellow monks, who were his cousins, thought that he was close to being perfect and that he should become a leader. The *Vita* attributes his superb moral character to God, saying, "Since the Lord has made thee

to excel in morals, it behoves that thee shouldest rule over peoples for an example of life” (Wade-Evans, 2013, p. 255).

The author refers to Christ knowing His sheep in his depiction of Saint Padarn’s return to his fellow monks from his Irish peace mission. He credits God’s Providential hand to prompt Padarn to return and take care of his own flock after his arbitration mission. He says that like Christ knew his sheep, the same precept can be applied to Saint Padarn whose memory of his brethren left behind in Wales was prompted. With this calling, he returned to Wales.

The final overt references to God’s Providence and Predestination are in the pilgrimage episode to Jerusalem, which was ordered by a Heavenly Messenger, who gave the three saints the gift of tongues while they are there. The rest of the hagiography consists of miracles, encounters between good and evil and meeting with other saints, but there are no overt references to God’s providence and sovereignty.

Overview of the Monastic Orders of the Hagiographers

As discussed, Wales had a long tradition of ascetic monasticism, based around the community centric *clas* church. This arrangement was unfamiliar to the Normans who had moved into Wales by the mid-1090s. With them came the powerful patronage of nobility who donated lands and riches to the Benedictine orders, also known as the Black monks. These institutions remained dependent on priories of their English or Continental motherhouses, and this continued connection, manifest in so many ways much have reinforced that these were institutions under the influence of the foreign ruling elite (Burton & Stober, 2015). But it was not just the influence of the patron class, but the Order itself which impacted the doctrinal beliefs. While the Benedictine Order is most notable for the Rule of Saint Benedict there were other theological issues in discussion. Concerning predestination, Ratramnus, a ninth century Benedictine monk from the Corbie monastery in France weighed in the debate. He composed the two-book work *On the Predestination of God (De Praedestinatione Dei)*, in which he defended double predestination, positing that God predestined the fates of both the elect and the damned while objecting to the relation of predestination to sin (Peze, 2018).

The Normans brought the Benedictines to South Wales, however there they did not spread north as their political power did not extend that far north in the early

years after the invasion. This is a clear demonstration of how these monasteries were associated with the Norman invaders and their distribution coincides with the limits of their political power. It wasn't until the Norman military elite introduced abbeys deriving from the reformed Norman monastery of Savigny that we see the spread of the continental version of monasticism. This movement ushered in the Cistercians and Savignac, which would later become the favoured choice of the Welsh princes (Burton & Stober, 2015, p. 12).

There were fifteen Cistercian houses in medieval Wales, of which two, Basingwerk and Neath, were founded in the early 1130s as members of the order of Savigny, another of the reformed orders which in 1147 merged with that of the Cistercians. Two, Llanllyr and Llanllugan were houses of nuns. Of the eleven remaining, three were founded from continental mother houses (Burton). The success of the Cistercians in Wales mostly mirrored the political lots of the dynasties to which they were tied. Though they were part of an international order, they had localized customs that were based on a symbiotic relation with local Welsh rulers. First and foremost, the Cistercians provided the Welsh princes with power houses of prayer. The desire which patrons and benefactors articulated in their charters for the intercessions of the monks for the salvation of their souls or special status among the order or burial places on holy grounds. This relationship inherently came with pressure (stated or not) to keep their benefactors pleased.

The earliest Cistercian spirituality was based on poverty, charity and the *Rule of Saint Benedict*. The outward show of poverty was easily identifiable, such as austere living to strict spiritual standards. Yet poverty was not just a lack of possessions, but a spiritual state as well. In the Augustinian tradition the consequences of original sin and original guilt led inevitably to the vital need for the doctrine of predestination. "Of our own power" said Augustine "we can only fail" (Kinder, p.27, 2000). Thus, it is no surprise that the influence of the fifth century theologian can be found in the writings of twelfth Century Cistercian hagiographers.

The one key factor that links these *Saints' lives*, no matter the provenance, is the profound influence of the political climate. The twelfth Century revival of *Saints' Lives* can be directly or indirectly linked to the repercussion of the Norman Conquest (Petts, p 45). For example, *Rhygyfarch Vita S. David* was written at a time when

asserting the importance of Welsh saints' cults and ensuring the recognition of Saint David's as the holy See were on the political as well as the religious agenda. The vital way in which these *Saints' Lives* acted to promote the respective sects was by legitimizing their claims to the control of churches or episcopal jurisdiction. This was done by highlighting the antiquity and work of God's hand, that controls all events in their claims; by emphasizing royal lineage, miracles, and overtly stating that God had predestined these Saints for their holy mission on earth. This emphasis gives their story a source that cannot be questioned, otherwise one is, in essence, questioning God. But it can not be dismissed as a manipulation, for if one ascribe to Divine Providence in man's affairs, then it is merely reminding the reader of this impetus.

Conclusion

These holy figures, whose stories have been told by both Norman and Welsh hagiographers, have played a crucial role in shaping Welsh religious culture and identity. The narratives, which usually include all the traditions and legends associated with particular saints, emphasizing their lineage, their miracles and their local connections serve as a way to transmit history and culture over time. However, there is a deeper value as well, one that is often overlooked, especially in modern, secular society which dismisses religion and miracles. By looking for theological instruction and doctrinal development in these narratives, they are returned to their original purpose. The Doctrine of Predestination and God's Providence appear in many of them, whether straightforwardly or obliquely, the authors clearly indicate and not only the acceptance of the concepts, but propagate them in their *bucheddau*.

The Welsh Saints Lives are profitable for more than historical or cultural information; they can be a source of doctrinal transmission. They have value not just for their contemporary audiences, but for the Church and those studying theology today. Of course, they need to be read with a critical eye that discerns motivations of authors, historical context, notes discrepancies and questions phenomena. They are not doctrinal treatises, but the *bucheddau* include theology that is interwoven into the stories. Many of the *Lives* of the Welsh Saints instruct, either overtly or subtly, that God predestines and guides, by his providential hand, the lives of men and women.

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