

## IX.

# Life of Saint Cybi.<sup>1</sup>

HERE BEGINS THE LIFE OF SAINT CYBI,<sup>2</sup> A BISHOP.

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**S**aint Cybi,<sup>3</sup> whose festival is celebrated on the eighth day of November, that is on the sixth of the Ides of November, was one of the good servants of the heavenly Father. He was descended from the region of Cornwall, between the two rivers, Tamar and Limar, and his father was Solomon the son of Erbin, who was the son of Geraint the son of Lud. His father was a military chieftain, but he was brought up at school.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> From the Cott. MSS. in the British Museum, A, XIV.

<sup>2</sup> Cybi is pronounced *Kubby*.

<sup>3</sup> St. Cybi was the son of Selyf ab Geraint ab Erbin, and his mother was Gwen the daughter of Gynyr of Caer-gawch, and sister of Non, mother of Saint David, so that he was the cousin and contemporary of St. David, though apparently some years younger. St. Cybi is mentioned as having been present at the synod of Brevi, and it may be said that the memory of his presence is preserved in the name of the church of Llangybi, in the immediate neighbourhood of Llanddewibrevi. He was also the founder of Llangybi, near Caerleon, which confirms the probability that he was acquainted with Saint David. But he is more immediately distinguished as the founder of a religious society at Caergybi, or Holyhead in Anglesey, over which he was president. The anachronism which places him in the fourth century, and makes him acquainted with St. Hilary, bishop of Poitiers, may be attributed to the circumstance that one of his contemporary saints in that Island, was Elian, a name given by the Welsh also to St. Hilary; for in the Welsh calendar, Saint Hilary is called Elian Esgob. Besides the churches already mentioned, St. Cybi was the founder of Llangybi in Carnarvonshire.—Professor Rees's Essay on the Welsh Saints, pp. 162, 266.

<sup>4</sup> The genealogy of this Saint, as here given, differs from all the Achau Saint, according to which, he was the son of Selyf ap Geraint ap Erbin ap Cystennyn Gorneu. From the name of his ancestor, Cystennyn Gorneu, i. e. Constantine of Cornwall, our saint is generally represented as a native of the county now so called; this however is not so certain, the name being equivocal, for there was certainly a district so called in what is now the county of Hereford, over which reigned a prince, or petty king, Constantine the father

The blessed Cybi was seven years old when he began to read; afterwards he was in his own country for twenty years; then he went a journey to Jerusalem to worship the sepulchre of our Lord; afterwards he was with the most blessed Hilary, bishop of Poitiers,<sup>1</sup> and there he was fifty years, where he gave sight to the blind, and cleansed the lepers, and cured the paralytic, and the dumb, the insane and the demoniacs. Afterwards he received the episcopal degree from bishop Hilary; then he was admonished by the angel of the Lord to return to his own country, and there he was a short space of time. And he was asked Whether he would be the king of the Cornishmen, but he would not accept the power of the present world. And he went to his country with his ten disciples, who were Maelog, Libiau, Peulan, Cyngar and others.<sup>2</sup>

Afterwards Cybi came to the region of Edelygion,<sup>3</sup> and

in law of Pebiau king of Erging, as we are told in the *Liber Landavensis*. Pebiau was the father of Eurddyl, the mother of Dubritius, as we learn from the same authority, and Constantine, or Cystennyn Gorneu, of the *Liber*, would appear to have been living in the latter part of the fifth or beginning of the sixth century, corresponding in era with the ancestor of Cybi. There was also a district in Monmouthshire called Cornwall, (*Cernyw*) in which, by the way, is a place called to this day Gelly-weg, a name which occurs in the romance of Arthur, as the residence of a bishop, which may be sought for in vain in the west of England. Likewise there was another Cornwall in *Armorica*.—W.

What would appear equivocal, in the similarity of the above names, as pointed out by Mr. Wakeman, is however easily explained, by allowing Cystennyn Gorneu and Cystennyn Fendigaid, king Arthur's grandfather, to be one and the same person;—which, from a comparison of ancient Genealogies, Romances, and History, would appear to be the case. The similarity of names in various localities would therefore mark the territorial possessions of that Cornish Dynasty.—Ed.

<sup>1</sup> The mother of Cybi, was Gwen, daughter of Gynyr of Caergawch; he was therefore first cousin to Saint David, although perhaps some years younger; according to this legend he was contemporary with Maelgwn Gwynedd, all which prove that he flourished in the sixth century, and not in the fourth, which he must have done to have been consecrated by Saint Hilary, Bishop of Poitiers, as stated in this legend, and other accounts of him. This anachronism, Rowlands and Professor Rees attribute to the circumstance that one of his contemporary saints was called Elian, a name which the Welsh also give to Saint Hilary. This is perhaps the best explanation that can be given of the origin of the mistake as to the name, but it does not appear that Elian was a bishop, and therefore could not have consecrated our saint.—W.

<sup>2</sup> The names of his disciples afford another proof of his true era. Maelog was a brother of Gildas, Libiau of whose parentage we know nothing, is mentioned in the *Liber Landavensis*, page 446, in the time of bishop Berthgwyn. Peulan was the son of Pawl Hen, the preceptor of Saint David, Teilo, and others: all three must have lived in the sixth century. All three have their churches in Anglesea, which seems to show a connexion with Saint Cybi. Of Cyngar there is an uncertainty, owing to there having been several of the name, but the person here mentioned could not be the same as the cousin of the saint mentioned in a subsequent page.—W.

<sup>3</sup> Ethelicheaun, or Edelygion, can be no other than Eddlogan in Gwent, the name being so written, with some little difference, in the spelling in the records. This district was

king Etelic was there living at the time. Saint Cybi went down into his meadows, and spread his tent there. And king Etelic sent a certain man to see who were the men who had got down to his meadow. That man returning said, "They are monks." And immediately Etelic arose with his household to eject the monks from his land; and Etelic forthwith fell from his horse, and his horse immediately died, and Etelic and all his household became blind. Then Etelic prostrated himself on his face, and gave his body and soul to God and Saint Cybi; and immediately by the prayer of Saint Cybi, the attendants of Etelic, and himself, and horse were cured. Then Etelic gave for ever to Saint Cybi two churches, whereof one is Llangybi, and the other Llandaverguir;<sup>1</sup> and there Cybi left a small varicoloured hand-bell. Then Saint Cybi blessing king Etelic departed from thence to Menevia the city of Saint David, and there remained three days and three nights.<sup>2</sup>

From thence he sailed to Ireland, to the island of Arum, in which he resided four years, and there he built a church

one of the Commots of the Cantrev of Wentlwg, and was formerly of much greater extent than the manor to which the name is at present confined. The etymology of this name is obscure; if there is any dependance to be placed on this legend, it would seem to be derived from some petty prince of the name of Etelic, but no such person is noticed in the genealogies of the Gwentian reguli. In Sir John Price's description of Wales, prefixed to Wynne's history, it is called Eithaf-dy-lygion, of which the modern name Eddlogan may be the contraction.—W.

<sup>1</sup> The church of Llangybi is well known, but the situation of Llandaverguir we can only conjecture. No such name is now known, nor am I satisfied of its import, which is probably descriptive. Of the existing churches in the neighbourhood, that of Panteg, the patron saint of which is unknown, may have been the one meant, but several churches or chapels in the district have been destroyed. Panteg is however the adjoining parish to Llangybi.—W.

<sup>2</sup> His visit to Saint David shows that he was contemporary with that saint, whether related to him or not. Whitaker in his "Cathedral of Cornwall," abandons the relationship of Saint Cybi to Saint David, and in his usual positive manner asserts that he was the son of Selyf, a king of the Cornish Britons, and brother of Saint Melgan; and that he was born in 325, went to Gaul, and was there ordained, returned in 369, visited Ireland in 370, and settled in Anglesey in 370, all which appears to have no better foundation than the imagination of the learned author, to make him contemporary with Saint Hilary of Poitiers, and the assumed era of Melgan, which seems antedated by more than two centuries; for the mother of Melgan was Haurilla the daughter of Ruval, or Howel, prince, not as the writer supposes of Devonshire in England, but of the Armorican district of the same name, who was killed in 524. This brings us back to the same period for the era of Cybi as before, and does not at all disprove the relationship between our saint and David, as it is probable enough that Selyf had two wives, one the mother of Cybi and the other of Melgan.—W.

in honour of Almighty God. And his cousin Cyngar<sup>1</sup> being an old man, Saint Cybi bought for him a cow with its calf, because, on account of his old age, he could not take any other food besides milk; and there his disciples bravely cultivated the land. It therefore happened that on a certain day, one of the disciples of Saint Cybi, named Maelog, went to the door of the residence of Crubthir Fintam to dig the ground. And Crubthir Fintam being angry, came to forbid him, and said, "Do not dig the ground at the door of my residence." Then Saint Cybi and Fintam went out together to the abbot of the island of Arum, who was called Enna, and he made peace between them; and it happened on a certain day that the calf of Cyngar's cow came to the corn-field of Crubthir Fintam, and the disciples of Crubthir Fintam came and took the calf, and tied it to a great tree. And Saint Cybi sent one of his disciples to Crubthir Fintam requesting that he might loosen the calf, and he would not loose it, for as yet Crubthir Fintam persevered in his anger. And Saint Cybi prayed to the Lord that the calf might come to its mother, for the old man Cyngar was almost dead for want of milk, for without the calf the cow would not give any milk. And the Lord heard the prayer of Saint Cybi, and sent the calf to its mother in a wonderful manner, with the tree to which it had been tied, and its roots. Then Crubthir Fintam prayed to the Lord that he might drive away, or destroy Saint Cybi from the island of Arum; but the Lord loved him, and an angel of the Lord came to Saint Cybi in his sleep, and said to him, "Go from this island to the eastern side." To which Saint Cybi answered saying, "May God destroy Crubthir Fintam from this island." And the angel said, "So shall it be."

Then Saint Cybi came to the southern side of the region of Mida, and there remained forty days and forty nights,

<sup>1</sup> The person here meant appears to be Cyngar ap Arthlog ap Ceredig, although if the pedigrees be correct, he was not strictly speaking in the degree of relationship indicated, however he was first cousin by the father to Saint David, and of course his contemporary but older.—W.

and he built there a church, which unto this day is called the great church of Mochop. And Crubthir Fintam hearing that Saint Cybi dwelt there, came and said to him, "Go to another place, for that land is as yet mine." Then Saint Cybi fasted three days that God might show to him what he should therefore do. And an angel said to Saint Cybi, "Go to the East." And Saint Cybi did so, and came to the plain of Bregh, and remained there seven days. And Crubthir Fintam, still his enemy, came to him and said, "Go to another place." Then Saint Cybi said, "I pray to Almighty God that he may show to me what I shall do." To whom said the angel, "Go to the right side." And he did so, and came to the region of Vobyun, and there remained twelve days. Crubthir Fintam still followed him, and said to him, "Cybi, go beyond the sea." Then Saint Cybi being angry, said to him, "All thy churches are so much deserted that there are not three to be found in the island of Ireland where there is singing at thy altar.

Then Saint Cybi sent his disciples to the wood, that they might cut down materials for a boat, which they immediately did, and they built it; and the boat having been made, Crubthir Fintam came and said to them, "Enter into that boat without a skin-covering, if ye are servants of God." To whom Saint Cybi replied with a prophetic answer, saying, "God is wonderful in his saints, the God of Israel himself, the blessed God, will give virtue and fortitude to his people." And Saint Cybi said to his disciples, "Place the boat upon the sea," and they placed it, and Saint Cybi, and his disciples entered the boat without a skin-covering, and immediately a raging tempest came on the sea, and his disciples were much afraid, and Saint Cybi confidently prayed to God, at whose request God divided the rock into two, and the boat leaped up between the two rocks, and at length they landed in the island of Anglesey. There Saint Cybi struck the rock with his stick, and water immediately flowed.

From thence Saint Cybi came to the place which is called

Cyndaf, and there remained some time, and he said to one of his disciples, namely Caffo, "Go and bring us some fire." And Caffo went to the house of a certain smith, named Magwrn; and Magwrn asked the disciple, "From whence didst thou come?" The disciple answered, "I came from my master Cybi," and Magwrn asked him, "What would he have." To which the disciple answered, "I wish to have fire." and Magwrn said, "I will not give fire to thee, unless thou wilt carry it in thy bosom." And Caffo said, "Place the fire in my bosom." And Magwrn placed it, and immediately Caffo returned to his master Cybi, carrying the fire placed in his bosom without even the hem of his shirt being burnt.

At that time king Maelgwn<sup>1</sup> reigned over the provinces of North Wales; and it happened that on a certain day he went out to the mountains for the purpose of hunting, when he saw a she goat, and he excited his hound to catch it; then the goat ran swiftly to the cottage of Saint Cybi for the sake of shelter; and Saint Cybi said to his disciple Caffo, "Depart from me, we cannot be together," And he came to a town, which at present is called Merthyr Caffo, and there the shepherds of Rosiwr killed Caffo; and therefore the blessed Cybi cursed the shepherds of Rosiwr, with their mistress. And the she-goat found shelter, and king Maelgwn followed it unto the cottage of Cybi, and the king said to him, "Let the goat go away," and Cybi said, "I will not let it go, unless thou wilt save its life." And the king being angry said, "If thou wilt not let it go away, I will remove thee from that land." And the blessed Cybi said, "It is not in thy power to remove me from the land, but it is in the power of God, yet I will let loose the goat to thee, if thou wilt sacrifice it to Almighty God, and give to

<sup>1</sup> Maelgwn Gwynedd, who is said to have died in 460, but probably a few years later. The story is consistent all through, as it proves the era of Cybi to have been the latter part of the sixth century, from his several contemporaries mentioned. Excepting his consecration by Saint Hilary of Poitiers, which must be a mistake, and abating the miraculous parts of the relation, it probably gives a correct outline of the life and labours of the Saint.—W.

me the land which thy hound has gone about." And the king said, "I will willingly sacrifice it." And Saint Cybi let loose the goat, and the hound followed it through all the promontory, and it returned again to the cottage of Saint Cybi. And afterwards there arose a contest between king Maelgwn and Saint Cybi; but he could not resist the servant of God. And therefore he granted his castle to Almighty God, and holy Cybi, as an offering of perpetual alms, who there slept with Christ in great honour, on the sixth of the Ides of November.

And a multitude of angels came, and took his most holy soul to heaven, to be in the company of the patriarchs and prophets, in the unity of the apostles and evangelists, in the unity of the martyrs and confessors, in the unity of the virgins and all the righteous saints, and in the unity of the heavenly church; where there is day without night, tranquillity without fear, and joy without end, where there are seven eternal things, life without death, youth without old age, joy without sorrow, peace without discord, light without darkness, health without sickness, and a kingdom without change. They are blessed who dwell with Abel and Enoch and Noah, with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, with Moses and Aaron, and Joshua the son of Nun, and with the twelve prophets and the twelve apostles, and with all the saints, from the beginning to the end of the world, with twenty orders of angels, with the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost, in peace and joy, and in purity and health, without hunger and without nakedness, with abundance for the whole body, and without any evil about a youthful liberal fair and eternal king. Let us request of Almighty God that we may deserve to possess that blessedness, through the intercession of the blessed Cybi, for ever and ever. AMEN.