

creditor ei nobis hoc indicanti per suos nuntios, sicut medicus credit physico quatuor esse elementa.

- 18 *Summa Theologiae*, 1a. 1, 2.
- 19 *In Boethium de Trinitate*, q.2, art.13.
- 20 M-D.Chenu, *op. cit.*, p.99f.
- 21 *Summa Theologiae*, 1a. 1, 5.
- 22 *Veritatis Splendor*, London 1993, p.165. *The Instruction of the Ecclesial Vocation of the Theologian* by Cardinal Ratzinger of 24 May 1990 makes it clear that he thinks theologians are no part of the magisterium.
- 23 *Veritatis Splendor*, CTS London 1993, p.163.
- 24 D.Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, London 1971, pp.280 & 286, 30 April and 5 May 1944.
- 25 See F.S.Schmitt, "Die wissenschaftliche Methode bei Anselm von Canterbury und Thomas von Aquin", *Annalecta Anselmiana*, 4.2, 1975, p.35.
- 26 W.Pannenberg, *Theology and the Philosophy of Science*, London 1976, p.230.
- 27 J.Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests*, London 1972.
- 28 G.Ebeling, "Theologie", in *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, 3rd edition, Tübingen 1961, vol 6, col 763.
- 29 C.Ernst, *Multiple Echo*, London 1979, p.83.

## A Medieval Welsh Dominican Treatise on Mysticism

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The aim of this paper<sup>1</sup> is to draw to the attention of readers not conversant with Welsh the significance and importance of a work little known at present outside Wales but deserving of a far wider readership. This is the anonymous medieval Welsh prose treatise on mysticism called *Ymborth yr Enaid* (Sustenance of the Soul),<sup>2</sup> the third and sole surviving book of a larger work called *Cysegrlan Fuchedd* (Holy Living). *Ymborth yr Enaid* has several claims to distinction. First, it is the only example of a medieval Welsh treatise on mysticism, and for that reason, as well as its intrinsic merits, it is important in the context of medieval vernacular mystical writings. Second, it is the work of a man who was not only a considerable theologian and philosopher but also a very gifted artist. Third, the work represents a unique fusion of native Welsh bardic learning and mainstream scholastic theology, a fact which is not only remarkable in itself but also, in this case, far-reaching in its

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implications for the Welsh prose literature of the period generally, both religious and secular, not least with regard to such fundamental questions as the dating, provenance, and authorship of much of it. *Ymborth yr Enaid* is a work rich in variety and pregnant with significance.

Several factors have militated against the diffusion of *Ymborth yr Enaid* outside Wales, the main one being uncertainty as to whether it is a translation or an original composition. For, unlike the vast majority of medieval Welsh religious prose texts, which are translations of (usually) Latin originals, no such original has so far been discovered for this work, a situation which has hindered a proper understanding of it. It is hoped that this brief article will help to redress the balance.

It will be convenient to begin with a brief description of the content of the work accompanied, where necessary, by explanatory comments.

The treatise *Ymborth yr Enaid* is preceded by a stanza of praise to the Blessed Trinity apparently intended as an aid to induce a contemplative frame of mind in the reader before he proceeded to peruse the prose text, and corresponding to it are three other stanzas after the close of the treatise. Nor are these the only instances of verse that will be encountered where one might have expected prose. The subject matter of *Ymborth yr Enaid* is thus briefly stated at the outset:

The first part treats of the vices to be avoided and the virtues to be practised; the second part of divine love by which God and man are joined The third part treats of ecstasies which may come from that love and of visions which the Holy Spirit may give in the ecstasies and of the nine orders of angels.

It is, therefore, primarily a treatise on mysticism in three logically progressive parts. It will emerge later, however, that it is predominantly practical rather than speculative in character—a guide, in fact, to the attainment of mystical experience.

The first part is a mechanical, catalogue-like treatment—characteristic of the Middle Ages—of the seven deadly sins and the seven corresponding virtues needed to counteract their effect. For a modern reader, this is perhaps the least interesting part of the content of *Ymborth yr Enaid* but it is nonetheless a prerequisite to what follows.

The sins having been shunned and the virtues practised, it is now possible, in part two, for the virtuous to advance to the love of God. This love is divided into two kinds—*affective love* and *demonic love* but the term most commonly used by the author for the former is *affectionate love* and *foolish love* for the latter. Affectionate love has its origin in the love of God the Father for God the Son which is the Holy Spirit and descends from the Holy Spirit in the form of sparks into the Church,

described as the bride of Christ, and from there into the hearts of men. There are two kinds of affectionate love, love of God and love of neighbour, and the reader is urged to love God with all his might and his neighbour as himself. Every other kind of love is foolish love because it is misdirected, and eternal damnation awaits its practitioners.

Part three of *Ymborth yr Enaid* is concerned with the ecstasies and visions considered as natural concomitants of a life devoted to sanctity. This is by far the longest and most varied part of the treatise and falls naturally into four different sections.

In section one, the reader, having avoided sin and practised virtue, is now enjoined to devote himself to the divine love of the Blessed Trinity, bearing in mind Jesus in particular who, by virtue of his incarnation, is more easily apprehensible to man than the Father and the Holy Spirit. In order to illustrate his point, the author now relates in third person narrative form and at some length the experiences of an unnamed Dominican<sup>3</sup>—undoubtedly himself<sup>4</sup>—who, by following the steps prescribed, beheld a vision of the Blessed Trinity, described in detail, which then culminated in a brilliant vision of Jesus when a boy of twelve teaching in the temple. This account also marks a major change in the author's approach to his work, a change from the intellectual, impersonal theologizing of the preceding parts of *Ymborth yr Enaid* to a passionate spiritual fervour, accompanied by an increasingly coloured style, which adds great variety and richness to the work.

Section two of part three, by far the longest one, is a lengthy, detailed, highly coloured and heavily rhetorical description of the friar's vision of Jesus when twelve years of age, touched upon in the previous section but fully described here. In some manuscripts this description is called *Pryd y Mab* (the Beauty of the Son). The whole of the boy's physique, raiment, and presence are systematically described and at one point the medium of expression turns from prose to verse when the author includes a song which the friar heard sung by the Holy Innocents in his vision. At the end of the piece the friar is told by the Son to love Him as much as he possibly can but also—very interestingly—to tell the poets to praise Him rather than the passing follies of the world.

In section three a series of specific instructions are given by the author to the reader as to how to achieve the full ecstasies and visions mentioned in the previous sections. Nowhere is the true purpose of *Ymborth yr Enaid* as a guide to practical mysticism more evident than here, and the reader is to induce the desired state by using the detailed descriptions of *Pryd y Mab* as an aid. There occurs also, as in the previous section, a passage of verse which is a translation of the famous Latin hymn *Veni Creator Spiritus* to be recited in the process of

approaching union with Christ.

Section four is a description of the nine orders of angels with which men will be placed on entering heaven according to their type of sanctity. This section serves the double function of concluding both the third part of *Ymborth yr Enaid* and *Ymborth yr Enaid* itself; hence the apparent lack of cohesion between it and the preceding sections.

It was seen above that *Ymborth yr Enaid* is preceded by a stanza of praise to the Blessed Trinity. Likewise its conclusion is followed by three beautiful *englyn* stanzas, describing a mystical experience which verbal correspondences with passages of *Ymborth yr Enaid* give every reason to suppose are the work of one and the same author.

It should be fairly clear from this outline, however brief, that *Ymborth yr Enaid* is a work of unusual variety, which can be seen most obviously in the contrast between the humdrum analyses of sin in the first part of the treatise and the rich artistry of *Pryd y Mab* in the third, or in the interspersal of verse with prose. Is the work, therefore, a translation of a lost original which the translator has heavily embellished with native Welsh material? Or is it, exceptionally, a native work whose author has made considerable but independent use of external sources? The distinction is crucial since in the first case the Welshness of *Ymborth yr Enaid* is secondary and the work essentially of alien provenance, whereas in the second it is primary and the work rooted in Wales.

It should be fairly clear from the above outline of *Ymborth yr Enaid* that by far the greater portion of it, viz. sections one to three of part three, centres on the author's own mystical experiences. It is only natural therefore to assume that they are in essence original, however many echos there may be of other sources. This is nowhere more apparent than in the *Pryd y Mab* section where extensive use is made of a distinctly native kind of rhetoric, consisting of the piling up of (mainly) compound adjectives, known as *araith* a fact which makes it highly unlikely that the passage is a translation. As for parts one and two and the final section of part three, although these are not so intimately connected with the rest of the work, close examination of them with certain Victorine works, whose importance for *Ymborth yr Enaid* was first noted by the late Mrs. C.M. Daniel of Bangor,<sup>5</sup> show that the author used these works very freely and independently as a rough frame, or to stimulate ideas, in the composition of his own work. It may therefore be concluded that *Ymborth yr Enaid*—with the obvious exception of the hymn *Veni Creator Spiritus* in part three—is a mainly original work in just the same way as are, for instance, such well-known English works as *Ancrene Riwe* or Julian of Norwich's *The Sixteen Revelations of Divine Love*.

Let us now turn to the subject of authorship. In the description of section one of part three of *Ymborth yr Enaid* we saw that the author was a Dominican. It is clear from his work that he was both a learned theologian and a mystic who could write with authority. He may have received his education at the Dominican *studium generale* (university) of Oxford or Paris, both founded in the second quarter of the thirteenth century, although, according to Dr. Oliver Davies, he is more likely to have been a *cursor* (who commented upon the Bible and Peter Lombard's *Sentences*) than a Master of Theology (which represented the very highest stage of medieval learning).<sup>6</sup> He may have been prior of one of the Welsh Dominican friaries when he wrote his work. He was also, however, as evidenced in particular by his mastery of the strict metre verse in his work, steeped in the traditions of the Welsh bardic order, and there is every reason to suppose that he was a member of that privileged establishment who later joined the Dominican order where he made a fruitful synthesis of native and scholastic learning. His closest parallel in this respect is the thirteenth-century Franciscan friar Madog ap Gwallter, author of skilled poems on religious themes.<sup>7</sup> That the author of *Ymborth yr Enaid* was a Dominican is hardly a matter of surprise since the Dominicans were the chief pioneers of learning and moral reform in the thirteenth century, and very likely the providers of the abundant body of Welsh religious and secular prose translations of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.<sup>8</sup>

More may be learned about the identity and activity of the author of *Ymborth yr Enaid* by comparison with another text. I have argued elsewhere<sup>9</sup> that the Bardic Grammar associated with the names of the fourteenth-century figures of Einion Offeiriad and Dafydd Ddu Hiraddug and usually attributed to the former was originally a thirteenth-century composition which underwent certain modifications in the following century in response to the altered circumstances of the Welsh bardic order in the aftermath of the Edwardian Conquest. Support for this view has recently been expressed by Dr. Rachel Bromwich.<sup>10</sup> Poets of a later age speak of a grammarian nicknamed Cnepyn Gwerthrynion,<sup>11</sup> and the early fourteenth-century poet Gwilym Ddu o Arfon, in his elegy to Trahaearn Brydydd Mawr, mentions a thirteenth-century poet of the same name whose verse is described as 'correct by Latin standards'.<sup>12</sup> Since a mastery of Latin would be a *sine qua non* for a medieval grammarian, Gwilym Ddu's reference to Latin may be no coincidence and it is quite likely that Cnepyn Gwerthrynion, besides being a distinguished poet, was also a grammarian and the author of the work wrongly ascribed later to Einion Offeiriad and Dafydd Ddu Hiraddug. Strong stylistic, verbal, philosophical, and thematic

similarities can be detected between *Ymborth yr Enaid* and the Grammar.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, like *Ymborth yr Enaid* it is a synthesis of native and ecclesiastical learning for which no Latin original has so far been discovered. If, therefore, this work may be ascribed to Cnepyn Gwerthrynion, there is no serious obstacle to considering *Ymborth yr Enaid* as well to be the work of the same man.

Another text which shows close affinities with *Ymborth yr Enaid* is the remarkable verse translation of the *Officium Parvum Beatae Mariae Virginis* known as *Gwasanaeth Mair* (Service of Mary) of whose authorship there is no mention in the earliest manuscripts.<sup>14</sup> The most obvious similarity between *Ymborth yr Enaid* and this work is the presence in the former of a *verse* translation of the hymn *Veni Creator Spiritus* but closer scrutiny reveals striking correspondences in metre, style, expression and alliteration between three of the verse passages in *Ymborth yr Enaid* and passages in the *Gwasanaeth*.<sup>15</sup> It may also be significant that *Gwasanaeth Mair* is a translation of a version of the *Officium Parvum* which was very similar to that used by the Dominicans,<sup>16</sup> for *Ymborth yr Enaid* is the work of a Dominican.

The earliest extant text of *Ymborth yr Enaid* occurs in a manuscript written in 1346 by an anonymous anchorite of Llanddewibrefi, and most commonly known as *Llyfr yr Ancr* (The Book of the Anchorite). If, however, the attribution of *Ymborth yr Enaid* to the true author of the Grammar associated with Einion Offeiriad and Dafydd Ddu Hiraddug is correct, then *Ymborth yr Enaid* must have been composed sometime in the thirteenth century. The Dominicans reached England in 1221 before proceeding to Wales, where they were well established by the middle of the century.<sup>17</sup> We accordingly have a *terminus post quem* of c. 1225 for the composition of *Ymborth yr Enaid*. Furthermore, if the work has been influenced by the *Merure de Seinte Eglise* of St. Edmund of Abingdon, which was composed c. 1233, the *terminus* could be moved forward accordingly.

It is not so easy, on the other hand, to establish a *terminus ante quem*. However, in the Peniarth MS 20 version of that part of the Bardic Grammar known the *Prydlyfr* (literally, 'poesie book'), where instructions are given as to what kind of people it is the poet's function to praise and for what qualities, it is stated:

Two kinds of laymen are praised namely a lord and a nobleman. A lord, such as a king, or an emperor or a prince or an earl or a baron or another chieftain is praised for his strength ...

Since the various kinds of persons listed in the *Prydlyfr* must surely reflect the social milieu of the Welsh poets, for whom the Grammar was

specifically intended, at the time of its composition, the clear distinction between *arglwydd* (lord)—or, in the case of Wales, *tywysog* (prince)—and *uchelwr* (nobleman) implies a Wales where the two classes still existed separately, i.e. Wales before the fall of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd in 1282. It is, moreover, likely that *Ymborth yr Enaid* predates the Grammar since the final paragraph of the *Prydlyfr* where the poet is strictly forbidden to contaminate his art by engaging in *clerwriaeth* (roughly ‘minstrelsy’) looks very much like a philosophical and practical development of the words spoken to the author of *Ymborth yr Enaid* by the Son at the end of his vision in *Pryd y Mab*.

So far, therefore, it may be said that *Ymborth yr Enaid* was composed sometime between c. 1233 and 1282, but there are certain other factors which may be relevant in attempting a more accurate date. First, if I am right in attributing *Gwasanaeth Mair* as well to the author of *Ymborth yr Enaid*, it should be noted that this work, although a translation of a version of the *Officium Parvum Beatae Mariae Virginis* closely resembling the Dominican version, differs too much from that version to be considered an actual translation of it.<sup>18</sup> Since, however, the liturgy of the Dominican order was finally corrected in 1256,<sup>19</sup> it may be that the failure so far to classify the exact original of the *Gwasanaeth* is an indication that the translation was made before 1256 when the form of the *Officium* was not yet finalized. If so, the *floruit* of the author of *Ymborth yr Enaid* was in this period. Second, the fundamentally Augustinian theology of *Ymborth yr Enaid* is strongly suggestive of the earlier rather than later thirteenth century. Third, section one of part three of *Ymborth yr Enaid* where the author recounts his visions and ecstasies is strongly reminiscent in expression and ethos of many of the experiences recorded in the *Vitae Fratrum Ordinis Praedicatorum* of Gerardus de Fracheto, covering the years 1203-54,<sup>20</sup> as though they stemmed from the same world of pentecostal-like fervour.

It would appear, therefore, that *Ymborth yr Enaid* was composed around the middle of the thirteenth century—between c.1240 and c.1260. Support for this conclusion has recently been given by Dr. Oliver Davies, who believes that the unusual identification of human with divine love found in part two of *Ymborth yr Enaid* may be due to the influence of the Dominican theologian Richard Fishacre.<sup>21</sup> This view of love was first expressed by Peter Lombard in the twelfth century and later defended by Fishacre, the only medieval theologian of substance to do so. Fishacre (who died in 1248) strongly stated his case in around 1245 at Oxford, and since it is perfectly possible that the author of *Ymborth yr Enaid* received his education at Oxford, he could well have been directly influenced by Fishacre or his circle sometime during the

fifth decade of the century or soon afterwards.

There is certain internal evidence that the author of *Ymborth yr Enaid* wrote his work for a member, or members, of a cloistered male community,<sup>22</sup> probably a Dominican one. In view of the fact that he wrote his work in Welsh, not Latin, it is further possible that he had novices in mind whose knowledge of Latin and theology would be scant or non-existent; and if the ascription of *Gwasanaeth Mair* to the same author is correct, that work, too, might have been intended for the same readership. It could indeed be said that a work such as *Ymborth yr Enaid* would be a matter of necessity for the early Dominicans since St. Dominic bequeathed no body of spiritual doctrine, written or oral, to his followers.<sup>23</sup> *Ymborth yr Enaid* in fact, possesses a certain importance as the only known work of Dominican authorship from this period, in Latin or the vernacular, on spirituality.<sup>24</sup>

In which of the five Welsh Dominican friaries was *Ymborth yr Enaid* composed? If I am correct in ascribing *Ymborth yr Enaid* to Cnepyn Gwerthrynion, his name suggests that he hailed from the commote of Gwerthrynion in the western part of what is now Radnorshire, and the nearest Dominican friary would therefore have been at Brecon. Since the Dominicans were a highly mobile and international order, however, there was no essential link between a friar's place of birth and the friary (or friaries) to which he would be sent. Neither are there any linguistic features in *Ymborth yr Enaid* which might offer a clue as to its place of origin,<sup>25</sup> the Welsh prose of the period being on the whole highly uniform. There is nonetheless one suggestion which may be made. Since the author of *Ymborth yr Enaid* was writing for a religious community in Welsh, it may be that Welsh, rather than another vernacular, such as Anglo-Norman or English, was the main, if not the only, language of that community. This suggests that we should perhaps look to one of the friaries of north Wales—*pura Walia*—rather than one in south Wales, where the linguistic situation might be more varied, as the most likely place of composition for *Ymborth yr Enaid*. It is difficult to think of a more appropriate place than Bangor friary since the princes of Gwynedd Uwch Conwy were celebrated for the welcome they extended to the mendicant orders and for the close links which frequently existed between the two.<sup>26</sup> On the other hand, it must be admitted that we know next to nothing about the linguistic situation in the Welsh friaries generally, and one cannot dismiss the possibility that *Ymborth yr Enaid* might have been written for the Welsh-speaking members of a friary in south Wales which contained speakers of other languages as well.

It was noted earlier that *Ymborth yr Enaid* is the third and sole



surviving book of a larger work called *Cysegrlan Fuchedd* (Holy Living). How many books did *Cysegrlan Fuchedd* contain? In all probability, *Ymborth yr Enaid* was the final one. The preceding two books, as shown by the title of the overall work, were obviously religious in content, and since the final destiny of the virtuous, as shown by the closing pages of *Ymborth yr Enaid* is to be placed with one of the orders of angels, there can be little doubt that these pages concluded *Cysegrlan Fuchedd* as well as *Ymborth yr Enaid*. What, though, was the religious content of these two books since the spiritual aspect of the religious life is dealt with in *Ymborth yr Enaid*? The Dominican order possessed a certain duality, being in its external life apostolic and missionary, but in its internal, conventual, life virtually monastic.<sup>27</sup> The constitutions of the order were accordingly divided into two parts, the first (*prima distinctio*) laying down how the friars were to conduct themselves in their houses, and the second (*secunda distinctio*) describing the overall organization of the Order.<sup>28</sup> The subject-matter of the first two books of *Cysegrlan Fuchedd* could, therefore, have been the contemplative and active aspects of the Dominican Order, and it should be noted that Humbert de Romance, head of the Order 1254–63, wrote two works on precisely these two themes towards the end of his life.<sup>29</sup> The loss of the two books might in itself lend weight to our theory since, being of use and interest to Dominicans only, they would not, unlike *Ymborth yr Enaid* with its obviously wider appeal and literary qualities, have enjoyed a wider circulation which would help to safeguard their transmission. It may therefore be tentatively concluded that the treatise on mysticism *Ymborth yr Enaid* is the final book of a substantial tripartite work on the Dominican life in all its aspects, composed possibly for novices, which was added to the first two books in order to compensate for the dearth of spiritual literature among the early Dominicans. The theory advanced here of the content of the missing books of *Cysegrlan Fuchedd* has received strong support from Oliver Davies<sup>30</sup> and Thomas O. Clancy.<sup>31</sup>

The three most obvious influences which helped shape *Ymborth yr Enaid* as a work of thought are the work of St. Augustine (354–430), of Dionysius, the Pseudo-Areopagite (c. 500)—the two greatest single influences on scholastic thought—and the devotion to the Holy Childhood.

The thought of St. Augustine is nowhere more in evidence than in the second part of *Ymborth yr Enaid* where, at the beginning of the second paragraph, the author quotes Augustine's definition of love—'a certain life joining two things together, or desiring to join them'.<sup>32</sup> The discussion of the Blessed Trinity that follows is, to quote Oliver Davies,

'almost a summary of the doctrine contained in the first two books of Augustine's *On the Trinity*<sup>33</sup> and further on, the author's definition of *nothing as the absence and contrary of every substance* is an obvious echo of Augustine's famous definition of evil as *privatio boni*.<sup>34</sup>

The influence of Pseudo-Dionysus can be seen in the division of *Ymborth yr Enaid* into three logically progressive parts, for, as Pennar Davies has observed,<sup>35</sup> it corresponds essentially to the classical division of the spiritual life, associated chiefly with Dionysus, into three 'ways'—the purgative, illuminative, and unitive. His influence can also be seen, though several times removed, in section three of part three of *Ymborth yr Enaid* where the reader is instructed to call upon the various names of Jesus, for here we have a reflection of the cult of devotion to the Holy Name which stemmed originally from Dionysus' work *On the Divine Names*. Likewise, the closing section of *Ymborth yr Enaid* on the nine orders of angels goes back ultimately to Dionysus' *On the Celestial Hierarchy*

The influence of devotion to the Holy Childhood, an aspect of the devotion to the humanity of Jesus which gained momentum from the eleventh century onwards, is to be seen above all in section two of part three of *Ymborth yr Enaid* otherwise known as *Pryd y Mab* Since *Ymborth yr Enaid* was in this instance influenced by a widespread movement rather than the thought of one individual, this involves not so much tracing the influence to the ideas of a particular thinker as of discerning parallels with texts of varying authorship, date, and provenance. The earliest parallels, which also form the ultimate precedents for *Pryd y Mab* are to be found in the Scriptures, viz. the description of the Lover (i.e. God) in the Song of Solomon 5: 10-16, Psalm 44: 3; and Luke 2: 42 (*Et cum factus esset annorum duodecim*) Nearer to the time of the author of *Ymborth yr Enaid* one can point to the words of St. Anselm (c. 1033-1109) *O dulcissime puer quando te videbo? quando ante faciem tuam apparebo? quando satiabor pulchritudine tua? videbo vultum tuum desiderabilem in quem desiderant Angeli prospicere*,<sup>36</sup> or the *Tractatus de Jesu Puero Duodenni* of St. Ailred of Rievaulx (1109-67). There is also an early thirteenth-century Latin poem, *Vita Beatae Virginis Mariae et Salvatoris Rhythmica* containing a systematic physical description of the youthful Christ which might have influenced the author of *Pryd y Mab*.<sup>37</sup>

As regards the *design* of *Ymborth yr Enaid*,<sup>38</sup> the work was possibly influenced by the highly influential *Merure de Seinte Eglise*—or the *Speculum Ecclesiae*<sup>39</sup> as it is most frequently known in its Latin attire—of St. Edmund of Abingdon (c. 1180—1240), bishop of Canterbury, composed c. 1233.<sup>40</sup> This work exhibits some general similarities to

*Ymborth yr Enaid*.<sup>41</sup> First, both are practical in nature, of roughly similar length, the work of mystics for members of a cloister, and written in the vernacular (the original language of the *Merure* probably being French). Second, the threefold theme of the *Merure*, namely the contemplation of God in his creatures, in Holy Scripture, and in Himself, is reminiscent of the division of *Ymborth yr Enaid* into three progressive parts, and, in both, use is made of descriptions of Jesus or part of his life as a basis for contemplation and prayer. Finally, there are some verbal resemblances between the *Merure* and *Ymborth yr Enaid*

Besides these influences, however, which were part and parcel of the common European inheritance of the day, *Ymborth yr Enaid* also shows certain, less obvious, features which seem to derive from the author's specifically Welsh background. The first is the identification, already referred to, in part two of the treatise of human with divine love associated with Peter Lombard and Richard Fishacre. The contrast between the Augustinian position and that of the author of *Ymborth yr Enaid* is thus stated by Oliver Davies:

Love is not so much a supernatural force that enters into us, with its origins in the Trinity, but rather a staged reflex of the human mind or soul responding to divine love. Love is a re-enacting of the structures of the Trinity within the human self by a gradual approximation of the self to God through infused grace; thus the pantheistic problem of using love univocally of human love and the essence or being of God is avoided. Love bridges and unites, but it does not eliminate difference. The thrust of our Welsh text however is subtly different. By explicitly identifying human love (that is love of our neighbour as well as love of God) with the love that is the Holy Spirit in the Trinity, our author is suggesting that there is an identity rather than a continuity between God, as love, and the self as loving act.<sup>47</sup>

In view of the rarity of this concept, the question naturally arises why the author of *Ymborth yr Enaid* was attracted by it. The answer could be, as Davies has ingeniously suggested, the Welsh poetic theory of inspiration.<sup>43</sup> According to this, God himself was regarded as the inspirer of the poet's song to Him, and it very probably represents a Christianization of a pagan belief that the poet, when inspired, was possessed by an impersonal underworld power.<sup>44</sup> If, therefore, God's inspiration or grace could enter the poet so directly, then it is perhaps not surprising that a poet-theologian such as the author of *Ymborth yr Enaid* should find a certain congeniality in the notion that God's love too, of which his inspiring grace would be but one manifestation, should enter him in precisely the same way.

The second feature is to be seen in the final sentence of the *Pryd y Mab* section:

And tell the poets to whom I have given a share of the spirit of my delightfulness that it were righter for them to return to that spirit to adore me than to praise the foolish love of the empty perishable things of time.

The truly remarkable part of this passage is the words the *poets to whom I have given a share of the spirit of my delightfulness* since in them there is apparently expressed, and vindicated by Christ himself, the belief of the Welsh poets that God was the direct source of poetic inspiration. When one recalls the ambivalence or even hostility of the medieval Church towards poetry, especially vernacular poetry,<sup>45</sup> this utterance, divinely enunciated, is all the more striking. Without any known parallel in medieval European literature, it is 'a delightful reminder of the extent to which our visionary Christ is a Welsh one'.<sup>46</sup>

The third feature is the final section of part three of the treatise where a long and detailed series of instructions are given as to how to attain mystical union. What concerns us here is not the *impulse* to induce mystical experience so much as the actual inclusion of instructions to that end since this is something very difficult to parallel in medieval mystical literature,<sup>47</sup> and the explanation could once again lie in the author's bardic background. It is known that Irish and Scottish poets, both master and pupil, when composing their verse, followed an esoteric procedure which consisted of retiring into the privacy of a room devoid of light where they lay on a bed moulding their work in their minds until completed.<sup>48</sup> Although the evidence for Wales is highly tenuous,<sup>49</sup> there can be little doubt that the methods of the Welsh poets, whatever variations might have existed, were fundamentally the same. With this in mind, let us consider the second instruction given in *Ymborth yr Enaid*

And reject vices and practise the potent virtues, and prepare and order yourself in your bed after daybreak, or after midnight, following the first sleep or both, when you are sure that your nature is restfully and peacefully disposed, without too much excess or need.

And:

The best time you should seek it [a victorious ecstasy] is Saturday after midnight diligently till daytime or between night and day.

It may be that the busy daily routine of the friary prompted the author of the treatise to prescribe the bed and night-time as the appropriate place and time for the seeking of mystical experiences; yet it is difficult not to see in these references a parallel with the methods of the Celtic bards. For if those methods could perhaps be accompanied by an influx of the Muse, could not the same methods also, at least to some

extent, be applied to the quest for an influx of the Holy Spirit? In this instructional part of *Ymborth yr Enaid* we may have an example of a mystic directing those under his spiritual care in a way analogous to how a master-poet would have taught his pupils.<sup>50</sup>

It says much for the author of *Ymborth yr Enaid* and his attachment to his native tradition that he succeeded in conforming his work to the scholasticism of his day while at the same time steering a subtly independent course.

It may be appropriate at this point to reflect a little on the merits of *Ymborth yr Enaid* as a work of religious thought. While the author does not rank with such masters as Augustine, Bernard of Clairvaux, or Thomas Aquinas, he was nonetheless a well-versed and highly competent theologian who was capable of expressing himself in the Augustinian theology of his day with masterly skill and clarity. His work is, however, flawed by his recourse to instructions for the inducement of mystical experience. According to Gerard Sitwell, commenting on this part of *Ymborth yr Enaid*, this 'represents a bad mystical tradition', and he goes on to say: 'The idea of trying to induce extasies and visions is absolutely tabu to the great masters ... This kind of thing was rife in the Rhineland in the 14th century. England seems to have been on its guard against it'.<sup>51</sup> And Saunders Lewis speaks of the 'quietism' of *Ymborth yr Enaid* and its descent in parts to sheer carnality.<sup>52</sup> The author may nonetheless be forgiven his aberration, which was probably the result of misguided zeal.

It is, however, undoubtedly as a work of literature that *Ymborth yr Enaid* has most claim to distinction and universality. Perhaps its single most consistent and striking feature throughout is the unfailing adequacy of the author's language to express whatever matter be in hand. When one bears in mind that the author might have had few, if any, Welsh precedents for his treatise, this is no small achievement. At the same time, though, it must be added that he was heir to a highly developed and diverse vernacular tradition of prose and verse which equipped him admirably for the execution of his task. Thus, in part one, the most technical part of all, the definitions never lack clarity and there is never any shortage of terms for the multifarious branches of the seven deadly sins. In this part of the work one could say that the author already had a pattern in the clear, concise definitions and analyses of the Welsh laws, to which passages of part one bear a distinct resemblance.

In part two of *Ymborth yr Enaid* the author is at ease in reproducing in his native tongue the formal methods and style of scholastic discourse with its ordered arguments and fine distinctions. He also, as Oliver Davies has rightly observed, 'shows great originality in the construction

of an appropriate Welsh theological idiom'.<sup>53</sup> The following passage is a fair example of these qualities:

Every other kind of love which is attached to another creature, except one which is loved for the sake of God, is foolish love, and does not proceed from the sparks of the Holy Spirit. And because it does not proceed from the circle of the Trinity, which is all substance, it turns on nothingness and is lost with nothingness. Nothingness is the absence and contrary of all substance. And for that reason it is outside the circle of all substance, and with it is sin: for sin is identical with nothingness. And for that reason sinners who abide always in their sins are lost with nothingness, because they have left that which is all substance by placing their foolish love on nothingness and attaching themselves to it. Moreover, just as the foolish love that is temporal and possessed of nothingness, or sinful and possessed of nothingness, attaches the lover to nothingness, so too does affectionate love that is eternal and substantial attach the lover to God, who is all substance, eternally.

Note the close, almost pedantic, reasoning of the author and the terms *foolish love* (W. *ynfytsersch*), *affectionate love* (*annwylserch*). Particularly striking are the compound adjectives represented by *temporal and possessed of nothingness* (W. *amserawldim*), *sinful and possessed of nothingness* (*pechawtdim*) and *eternal and substantial* (*tragywydawlbeth*), words which, as Oliver Davies says, have no obvious Latin equivalents and 'something of the colour of the bold terminology of contemporary German Dominican writers who were themselves attempting to render scholastic metaphysics in the language of the *Nibelungenlied*'.<sup>54</sup> In this part of *Ymborth yr Enaid* too one sees a certain natural indebtedness in the author to his native heritage, particularly the rigorous logic frequently seen in the Welsh laws and the great facility of the bardic diction of the period for forming new compound words according to need.

It is, however, in part three of *Ymborth yr Enaid*, and above all in *Pryd y Mab*—the description of Jesus when a boy of twelve—that we see the literary highpoint of *Ymborth yr Enaid*. In this passage the author employs his powers to the utmost not merely to describe his vision fully and accurately but, so far as possible, to re-enact it for the reader's benefit. The author, as Oliver Davies points out in his sensitive and perceptive analysis of *Pryd y Mab*, resorts to three main strategies in order to achieve his end: the employment of series of adjectives, mainly compound ones, to embellish the sentences, thus adding weight and dignity; extensive likening of the boy's appearance to the marvels of nature to convey a sense of his beauty; and the inclusion of gems to convey images of light but also perhaps to allay any homoerotic feelings which might otherwise be aroused. Here is an example of the author's use of simile:

And that blessed face was so fair and clear that no bodily creature, heavenly or earthly, could be likened to it: like white snow at Epiphany, or the white bloom of roses, or lilies, or apple blossom, or the gossamer on the heath, or shoots, or the brilliant celestial sun; like the moon in daytime, or the sailors' star, or Venus at her fairest in the celestial sphere, or the sun on a summer's day when brightest and radiating brilliant, shining brightness at mid-day in June in summertime.

In thus attempting to re-enact his vision rather than simply recount it, the author of *Ymborth yr Enaid* was, according to Davies, engaging in a form of *poetic* discourse, 'where the poetic function of language is understood to be one in which language not so much *reflects* reality as itself *becomes* the reality which is the object of our attention',<sup>56</sup> and although the medium of expression of *Pryd y Mab* is mainly prose, it is undoubtedly prose used with poetic effect. It should also be remembered that verse actually occurs in the middle of the passage when the author attempts to reproduce the words which he heard sung by the Holy Innocents. This poetological approach is exceedingly rare in the mystical literature of thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Europe and paralleled in only a handful of visionary texts, outstanding of their kind, by Meister Eckhart, Mechthild of Magdeburg, Hadewijch of Brabant, and Jan van Ruusbroec where an attempt is made to encapsulate mystical experience in literary form.

The rest of *Ymborth yr Enaid* is straightforward enough, but we may note the novel (in Welsh) terms *twofold trance* (*hun dwyvrwyt*), *threefold trance* (*hun dribrwyt*), and *victorious trance* (*hun uudugawl*) used in the instructional section following *Pryd y Mab*.

Regarding the passages of verse in *Ymborth yr Enaid*, these are all the work of a master of the strict metres of the day, but by far the most *poetic* is the *englynion* stanzas, arresting in their beauty of imagery and perfection of art. Here is the first:

As a brilliant, early wave-leap, like a candle,  
Before the day and its preparations,  
With the fair hue of morning at daybreak when there is gossamer  
on the tilth,  
Was the white, gentle flash which I saw.

The original reads like a distillation of the entire experience of the vision which the author of *Ymborth yr Enaid* tried so hard to communicate in *Pryd y Mab*. Paradoxically also, they are the more effective for the absence of any reference to the divine.

There is a good deal also which could be said about the wider importance of *Ymborth yr Enaid* for Welsh literature. For instance, if its author is to be identified with the author of the Bardic Grammar associated with Einion Offeiriad and Dafydd Ddu Hiraddug, it would

appear that he was involved in a clerically activated reform of the Welsh bardic order which took place about a century earlier than is normally believed. Moreover, certain stylistic resemblances between *Ymborth yr Enaid* and the Mabinogion justify one in asking whether these tales are really earlier than 1200, as generally believed, and whether—*mirabile dictu*—it may not have been the author of *Ymborth yr Enaid* himself who composed some of them.<sup>59</sup>

It is hoped that this account of *Ymborth yr Enaid* will have given the reader some idea of the manifold nature and multiple significance of this unique document. It was clearly the work of an artist of genius and mystic who responded to the divine call within the context and milieu of the ancient, noble, and cherished tradition of Welsh poetry, which was itself steeped in Christian thought and sentiment.

- 1 This is a greatly shortened version of R. Iestyn Daniel, *A Medieval Welsh Mystical Treatise* (Research Paper No. 9 of the University of Wales Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies; Aberystwyth, 1997).
- 2 For an edition of the treatise, see idem, *Ymborth yr Enaid* (Caerdydd, 1995).
- 3 His words are 'a certain member of the order of Friars Preachers'.
- 4 See further *A Medieval Welsh Mystical Treatise*, p. 4.
- 5 *Ibid.*, p. 6.
- 6 Oliver Davies, *Celtic Christianity in Early Medieval Wales: The Origins of the Welsh Spiritual Tradition* (Cardiff, 1996), pp. 177–8, n14. Davies further says: 'Had he been a Master, he would undoubtedly not have returned to Wales but would have exercised a teaching role at a major Dominican centre such as Oxford or Paris.'
- 7 See Rhian M. Andrews et al. (eds.), *Gwaith Bleddyn Fardd ac Eraill* (Caerdydd, 1996), pp. 347–92.
- 8 See R. Iestyn Daniel, 'Golwg Newydd ar Ryddiaith Grefyddol Cymraeg Canol', *Llên Cymru*, XV, rhifyn 3 a 4 (1987–8), 213–37; *Ymborth yr Enaid*, pp. xxii–xxxiv.
- 9 Idem, 'Awduriaeth y Gramadeg a Briodolir i Einion Offeiriad a Dafydd Ddu Hiraddug' in J.E. Caerwyn Williams (ed.), *Ysgrifau Beirniadol XIII* (Dinbych, 1985), pp. 178–208.
- 10 Rachel Bromwich, *Medieval Welsh Literature to c. 1400: A Personal Guide to the University of Wales Press Publications* (Cardiff, 1996), p. 15. Referring to the different version of the Grammar, Dr. Bromwich maintains: 'All derive from a common original of the thirteenth century believed to have been composed by a poet who may also have been a cleric.'
- 11 *Cnepyn* is the diminutive form of *cnap* 'knap, piece' and used of a person signifies someone of small physical stature; *Gwerthynion* is the name of an ancient commote in what is now Radnorshire.
- 12 See N.G. Costigan (Bosco) et al. (eds.), *Gwaith Gruffudd ap Dafydd ap Tudur, Gwilym Ddu o Arfon, Trahaearn Brydydd Mawr ac Iorwerth Beli* (Aberystwyth, 1995), p. 61. 25–6. The Welsh is *Ladin gyfiawn* which could also be interpreted '[like] measured Latin'.
- 13 *Ymborth yr Enaid*, pp. li–v.
- 14 Brynley F. Roberts (ed.), *Gwassanaeth Meir* (Caerdydd, 1961), p. lxxv.
- 15 See *Ymborth yr Enaid*, pp. 50, 105, 112.
- 16 Roberts, *Gwassanaeth Meir*, pp. xxi, xxx–xxxi.
- 17 *Ymborth yr Enaid*, pp. xxviii–ix.



- 18 Roberts, *Gwassanaeth Meir*, p. xxxi.
- 19 *Ymborth yr Enaid*, p. lvii.
- 20 Idris Foster, 'The Book of the Anchorite', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, XXXVI (1950), 208–9, *Ymborth yr Enaid*, pp. lviii–ix.
- 21 Davies, *Celtic Christianity*, p. 127.
- 22 *Ymborth yr Enaid*, p. lx.
- 23 *Ibid.*, p. lxi.
- 24 This view was confirmed for me by the distinguished Dominican historian Simon Tugwell O.P. in a letter dated 6 October 1990: 'I am unaware of any Dominican vernacular works as early as the 2nd quarter of the thirteenth century. Recent scholarship has certainly identified some German vernacular works earlier than had been thought but, so far as I know, they are still only late 13th century.'
- 25 *Ymborth yr Enaid*, p. lix.
- 26 See Glanmor Williams, *The Welsh Church from Conquest to Reformation* (Cardiff, 1962), *passim*.
- 27 *Ymborth yr Enaid*, pp. lxii–xiv.
- 28 The earliest extant constitutions of the Dominicans belong to the year 1228, the text of which was edited by H. Denifle, 'Die Constitutionen des Predigerordens von Jahr 1228', *Archif für Literatur- und Kirchengeschichte des Mittelalters*, 1 (1885), 165–227.
- 29 *Ymborth yr Enaid*, p. lxiv. The titles of the works are *Expositio super Constitutiones Fratrum Praedicatorum* corresponding to the *prima distinctio*, and *De Officialibus Ordinis Praedicatorum* corresponding to the *secunda distinctio*. Texts in J.J. Berthier (ed.), *Humbert de Romans: Opera de Vita Regulari* (2 vols., Romae, 1889), II, pp. 1–178 and 179–371 respectively.
- 30 Davies, *Celtic Christianity*, p. 121.
- 31 In his review of *Ymborth yr Enaid* in *New Blackfriars*, LXXVII (1996), 474–5.
- 32 *De Trinitate* VIII, x (‘*quaedam vita duo aliqua copulans, vel copulare appetens*').
- 33 Davies, *Celtic Christianity*, p. 125.
- 34 E.g. *Contra Adversarium Legis et Prophetarum* I, 5.
- 35 W.T. Pennar Davies, *Rhwng Chwedl a Chredo* (Caerdydd, 1966), p. 117.
- 36 Quoted in Foster, 'The Book of the Anchorite', 210.
- 37 *Ibid.*, 209–10; *Ymborth yr Enaid*, pp. xlvii–viii. For the text, see A. Vögtlin (ed.), *Vita Beatae Virginis Mariae et Salvatoris Rhythmica* (Tübingen, 1888), the section from pp. 108.3124–116.3351.
- 38 On what follows, see also *Ymborth yr Enaid*, pp. lvi–vii.
- 39 H.P. Forshaw (ed.), *Speculum Religiosorum and Speculum Ecclesia* (London, 1973).
- 40 M.D. Legge, *Anglo-Norman in the Cloisters* (Edinburgh, 1950), p. 96.
- 41 For a brief but useful account of the *Merure*, see W.A. Pantin, *The English Church in the Fourteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1955), 222–3.
- 42 Davies, *Celtic Christianity*, pp. 125–6.
- 43 *Idem*, '“On Divine Love” from The Food of the Soul: A Celtic Mystical Paradigm?', *Mystics Quarterly*, XX, no. 3 (1994), 92–3; *idem*, *Celtic Christianity*, p. 91.
- 44 On this Christianization, see further N.R. Costigan (Bosco), 'Awen y Cynfeirdd a'r Gogyneirdd' in M.E. Owen & B.F. Roberts (eds.), *Beirdd a Thywysogion* (Caerdydd, 1996), pp. 14–38.
- 45 Davies, *Celtic Christianity*, p. 116.
- 46 *Ibid.*, p. 141.
- 47 I am grateful to Oliver Davies for drawing my attention to this point in conversations.
- 48 J.E. Caerwyn Williams, *The Irish Literary Tradition* (translated by P.K. Ford; Cardiff and Massachusetts, 1992), pp. 161–3.
- 49 See, e.g., R. Iestyn Daniel, 'Rhaglith i Awdl gan Sypyn Cyfeiliog: Dogfen

- Hanesyddol?', *Dwned*, I (1995), 63–5.
- 50 In the case of Ireland, it is known that pupils were assigned their tasks at night-time to be completed after a day's work by the following night, Williams, *The Irish Literary Tradition*, pp. 161–2..
- 51 Gerard Sitwell O.S.B. from a letter dated 1967 to Mrs. C.M. Daniel, Bangor.
- 52 Saunders Lewis, 'Pwyll y Pader o Ddull Hu Sant', *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*, II, part 4 (1925), 288.
- 53 Davies, *Celtic Christianity*, p. 127.
- 54 *Loc. cit.*
- 55 *Ibid.*, pp. 137–9.
- 56 *Ibid.*, p. 140.
- 57 *Ibid.*, pp. 136, 140.
- 58 See *A Medieval Welsh Mystical Treatise*, pp. 25–7.
- 59 *Ibid.*, pp. 27–31.

## Reviews

**EMBODYING FORGIVENESS. A THEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS** by L. Gregory Jones *William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1995, XIX + 313 pp, \$28 (hb), \$18 (pb).*

Although forgiveness is a central theme of Christian faith and practice there are surprisingly few theological analyses of it. This recent work of L.Gregory Jones is therefore very welcome.

The 'therapeutic' tendency in modernity, he says, trivialises forgiveness and makes it seem easy. It distorts the grammar of Christian forgiveness by offering people pale imitations of the Christian notions of community, sin and compassion. An opposing modern tendency regards forgiveness as too difficult, ineffective in responding to injustice, perhaps simply impossible. Faced with the cycles and patterns of sin which can dominate the lives of individuals and communities, what power has forgiveness? Nietzsche dismissed it as an immoral glorification of weakness.

Bonhoeffer presides in the first part of the book. He resisted the false light of 'therapeutic forgiveness' and the darkness of violence and oppression. His struggles illustrate how forgiveness costs, a truth most clearly seen in the death of Jesus in which the disciples are called to share. For Bonhoeffer grace cannot come cheap, there is no grace without judgement, forgiveness and repentance must go together. For Jones the witness of Maximilian Kolbe shows how forgiveness may be