

The *Vita I S Brigitae* and *De Duodecim Abusiuis Saeculi*

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Abstract: ‘The *Vita I S Brigitae* and *De Duodecim Abusiuis Saeculi*’ considers several similarities in the lessons offered by the anonymous *vita* of Ireland’s famed Saint Brigit of Kildare and the sermons of *De Duodecim Abusiuis*, an Hiberno-Latin work of the seventh century generally fathered on Cyprian. Of particular importance here is the discourse that *De Duodecim* proffers concerning the *dives sine eleemosyna*, the *Christianus contentiosus* and the *pauper superbus*, which appears to be echoed in the interactions between Saint Brigit and her followers in the *Vita I*. Brief attention is also paid to the lack of such parallels in the *Vita S Brigitae* of Cogitosus, a text contemporary with *De Duodecim*. The presence of these parallels in the *Vita I* and their absence in Cogitosus provide clues to the evolution of the hagiographical dossier of Ireland’s chief female saint. In addition, it is hoped that the apparently-shared messages of *vita* and homily may also suggest potential avenues for additional future analyses.

The *Vita I S Brigitae*

The *Vita I S Brigitae* is so titled not due to any chronological or textual superiority, but simply because the Bollandists placed it as the first *vita* of Saint Brigit of Kildare in the *Acta Sanctorum* compilation of *Latin Lives*.¹ The most recent critical edition is that of Karina Hochegger, who also translates the text into German; a prior edition is that of Seán Connolly, though only his English translation of that work has been printed.² Both Hochegger and Connolly have also examined the manuscript tradition of the *Vita I*; Connolly pronounces the extant materials ‘essentially West German,’ the surviving copies dating from the ninth through the seventeenth century, an assessment with which Hochegger agrees (Connolly 1972, 69; Hochegger 2009, 89–98). According to Connolly, the ‘earliest and best manuscript’ dates to approximately 850 CE but, he emphasizes, this is not the *vita*’s archetype.³ In fact, the *Vita I* shares a close textual relationship with a macaronic *Life* of Brigit, the *Bethu Brigte*, which also dates to the middle of the ninth century.

1 Februius I, cols 0118F–0135A.

2 Hochegger 2009, 100–201; Connolly 1989; Connolly 1969–70. References throughout this essay provide the citation from Hochegger first, followed (for the ease of others who may follow me) by the chapter and page location in Connolly’s translation. All translations from Latin here, however, are my own unless otherwise indicated in the footnotes.

3 1972, 68. The manuscript in question is London, British Museum, Additional 34121.

The archetype of the Latin *Life*, therefore, must antedate both extant works and fall prior to 800 CE (Connolly 1972, 68; Ó hAodha 1978, ix, xiv–xvii).

Though there is broad acceptance that the origins of the *Vita I* must be older than the ninth-century *Bethu Brigitte*, no such accord exists with respect to the relationship between the *Vita I* and another text with which the *Vita I* possesses elements in common. This work, the *Vita S Brigitae* as written by Cogitosus, is printed immediately following the anonymous *Vita I* in the *Acta Sanctorum* and is thus sometimes also designated the *Vita II S Brigitae*.⁴ General scholastic opinion does agree that Cogitosus produced his *vita* of Brigit sometime in the third quarter of the seventh century (Connolly and Picard 1987, 5). The question that does not seem to have been answered to everyone's satisfaction is whether Cogitosus wrote before or after the *Vita I* was compiled, and whether either text drew upon the contents of the other directly or each independently used a now-lost third *Life*.⁵

The present work, however, does not seek to insert itself into that thorny and ongoing debate; for the purposes of this analysis, the *Vita I* will be taken as a text placing no earlier than the opening decades of the eighth century, following the arguments particularly of Karina Hochegger (2009, 89–98) and Kim McCone (1982). Indeed, instead of proffering a particular argument, the current endeavor constitutes a discussion of some interesting similarities between the *Vita I S Brigitae* and a homiletic of reasonably firm seventh-century date, *De Duodecim Abusiis Saeculi* (Concerning the twelve abuses of the age).⁶ Emphasis is also placed on the

4 Hochegger 2009, 18–58; Connolly and Picard 1987. For the Latin text one may also repair to *Acta Sanctorum* Februaris I, cols 0135B–0141E, but Hochegger's edition, which for both Cogitosus and the *Vita I* draws together the works of Colgan, the *Acta Sanctorum*, and *Patrologia Latina* into a single text, is more reliable.

5 On the side of those who hold that the *Vita I S Brigitae* is prior and stands as a source for Cogitosus may be numbered, among others: Esposito 1935; Connolly 1972, 69 (at first); Sharpe 1982; Howlett 1998; McCarthy 2000 and 2001; Bray 2003; and Knight-Whitehouse 2005, 105. Among those who oppose this notion and view the *Vita I* as originating after the text by Cogitosus—with dates for the *Vita I* placing variously between the end of the seventh century and the middle of the eighth—may be counted Bieler 1962, 245; Ó Briain 1978, 122; Ó hAodha 1978, xiv–xxv; McCone 1982 and 1984, 34; Connolly (reversing his earlier view) and Picard 1987, 5; Connolly 1989, 6–7; Maney 1994; McKenna 2002, 66–8; Stalmans 2003, 191–290; and Hochegger 2009, 89–98. Stalmans relies heavily upon the chronology Sharpe 1991, 319–34, argues for a group of texts known as the O'Donohue Group, which are source *vitae* found in the three major compilations of such works from medieval Ireland. Sharpe's dating paradigm has since come under considerable challenge, and it is worth noting particularly the challenges offered by Mac Shamhráin 1996, 149 and—most especially—Breatnach 2005. A few scholars have avoided taking a solid stance on either side of the dating debate concerning the *Vita I S Brigitae*; these include: Sharpe 1991, 13–15 (revising his earlier view); Stancliffe 1992, 87–8, 100–101 (though she does suggest that the *Vita I* is more likely to be the later text); and Bishop 2004, 28–9.

6 The most useful published edition of *De Duodecim* is that of Siegmund Hellmann (1909). Aidan Breen's (1988) more recent doctoral edition and translation remain

location of each content parallel in the *Vita I* and its appearance in—or absence from—the closely-related *Bethu Brigte*. Additionally, a brief comparative glance is taken at the lack of such such parallels in *Vita S Brigitae* of Cogitosus. This study thereby hopes to provide both some clues as to the textual evolution of the dossier of Ireland's premiere female saint and fodder for further exploration.

De Duodecim Abusiis and the Vita I

De Duodecim Abusiis Saeculi is a lengthy Hiberno-Latin treatise on twelve key issues its author viewed as the cause of social and moral decay in the Ireland of his time. According to Aidan Breen, who has not only published numerous studies of the work but also edited and translated *De Duodecim* for his doctoral dissertation, this text may be dated with reasonable solidity to the middle decades of the seventh century (2002, 82–4). Breen divides the twelve societal ills in this sermon into two parts. The first six abuses, he writes, pertain to inappropriate, illicit or immoral behavior on the part of the individual, while the final six abuses turn to 'breaches of public order and morality' whether committed by 'general categories of individual' (such as paupers) or by persons in positions of power who, when they fail in their duties to society, bring about the ailments that become 'vices of the Christian corporate body' (2002, 78–9). The abuses specifically addressed are 'the wise man without good works' (*sapiens sine operibus bonis*), 'the old man without religion' (*senex sine religione*), 'the youth without obedience' (*adolescens sine oboedientia*), 'the wealthy man without alms-giving' (*dives sine eleemosyna*), 'the woman without modesty' (*femina sine pudicitia*), 'the chieftain without virtue' (*dominus sine virtute*), 'the contentious Christian' (*Christianus contentiosus*), 'the arrogant pauper' (*pauper superbus*), 'the unjust king' (*rex iniquus*), 'the negligent bishop' (*episcopus negligens*), 'the community without discipline' (*plebs sine disciplina*) and 'the people without law' (*populus sine lege*).⁷

Abusio IV and the reluctant almsgiver

One of the *De Duodecim* ills to show interesting parallels with the *Vita I S Brigitae* is the fourth abuse, 'the wealthy man without alms-giving' (*dives sine eleemosyna*). Here *De Duodecim* takes on the rich man who refuses to share his abundance with the needy, who chooses terrestrial goods over the treasures of heaven, providing thereby an expanded interpretation of the gospel injunction that a true believer must bestow all of his earthly belongings upon the poor in order to follow Christ to

unpublished, but the dissertation can be borrowed on microfilm from Trinity College, Dublin. References in this essay give Hellmann's text first, followed by that of Breen. Breen has printed his dissertation essays on the sources and dating of *De Duodecim*; in (Breen 1987) he accords *De Duodecim* a chronology of 630 x 650, while in (Breen 2002, 82–4), he slightly modifies this dating more toward the latter *terminus*.

7 Breen 2002, 78–80 provides an excellent analysis of the twelve *abusiones*.

paradise.⁸ The sermon asserts that ‘No man can ever have (the) treasure (of heaven) unless he shows solace to the poor ... nor therefore should what prevents the needy from sleeping remain dormant in your treasuries’ (*Quem thesaurum numquam ullus hominum habere potest, nisi qui pauperibus solacia praestat ... Non ergo dormiat in thesauris tuis, quod pauperes dormire non sinit*) (Hellmann 1909, 38; Breen 1988, 354–5). What will remain on earth after death, the text continues, must willingly (*sponte*) be shared amongst the less fortunate; those who do not are greedy (*avari*) and ‘are called cursed by the most righteous judge’ (*a rectissimo iudice nuncupantur maledicti*), while those who are merciful are deemed to be blessed (*beati*) (Hellmann 1909, 40; Breen 1988, 360–363).

In the *Vita I* the wealthy individual to receive Saint Brigit’s censure is not male but female, a woman whose orchards overflow with apples. On a certain day the woman brings a ‘small gift’ (*munusculum*) of these apples to the saint, and as she is leaving she encounters a group of alms-seeking lepers. Brigit commands that the apples be divided among the hungry lepers, but the woman grabs back her given gift, saying she brought the fruit only for Brigit and her nuns. This act displeases Brigit, and she tells the woman ‘You are behaving wrongly by refusing to give alms. For that reason your trees will never again bear fruit’ (*Male agis prohibens eleemosynam dare; idcirco ligna tua non habebunt fructum in aeternum*) (Ch. 4.29, Hochegger 2009, 120; Ch. 32, Connolly 1989, 21). As a consequence of Brigit’s curse, the woman returns home to find her previously laden branches are now completely barren, a state in which they remain thereafter (Ch. 4.29, Hochegger 2009, 120; Ch. 32, Connolly 1989, 21).

That Brigit’s pronouncement is a malediction is made clear by its biblical origins. In declaration and effect, Brigit’s words echo those of Jesus, who condemns to eternal sterility a fig tree that lacks fruit to ease his hunger. Seeing the withered plant the next day, Peter exclaims, ‘Behold, the fig tree that you cursed has shriveled’ (*ecce ficus cui maledixisti aruit*).⁹ Brigit, however, does not seek apples, they are delivered to her; her curse, moreover, is not a consequence of being unable to assuage her own hunger but a response to the stingy action of the woman bringing the fruit. The Brigidine lepers may here be seen to fill the role of the *pauperes* discussed by *De Duodecim*, and the unwilling woman would then become the *dives sine eleemosyna*. Her initial gift to Brigit and to Brigit’s nuns is cast as rather paltry, a *munusculum* rather than a *donatio* or an *oblatio*, a tiny portion of the plentiful produce of her orchard and therefore an offering less of

8 Matt. 19,21: ‘And Jesus said to him, “If you wish to be perfected, go sell what you own and give it to the poor, and come follow me, and you will have treasure in heaven”’ (*ait illi Iesus si vis perfectus esse vade vende quae habes et da pauperibus et habebis thesaurum in caelo et veni sequere me*).

9 Matt. 21, 19, Mark 11, 13–14, 19–21; the citation is from Mark 11, 21.

generosity and more of grudging duty. When she snatches the small basket back from Brigit and refuses to divvy up its contents among the hungry lepers, she condemns herself as lacking in true almsgiving, as *avara*, and thus she earns the malediction that afflicts her trees.

This narrative is found among the first forty-five chapters of the *Vita I*. According to Kim McCone, the *Vita I* and the later *Bethu Brigte* independently utilize a third source, which he terms the *vita primitiva*.¹⁰ McCone (1982)—unlike Donncha Ó hAodha (1978, xiv–xxv), who also posits the existence of a lost primitive Life but holds that it is the *Bethu* that preserves it best—deems the *Vita I* the better representative of the primitive text, and specifically considers that it is in the first forty-five chapters of the *Vita I* that this representation is found. The anecdote of the stingy orchard-mistress in the *Vita I*, falling as it does in Chapter 4.29 of the Latin text, would thus suggest the content of the *vita primitiva* lying behind the *Bethu* and the *Vita I*.

In support of this likelihood is the appearance of the same tale in the *Bethu Brigte*. As in the *Vita I*, the *Bethu* episode also emphasizes both the scantiness of the woman's gift and the startling miserliness of her rejection of the lepers (Ch. 32, Ó hAodha 1978, 12, 29). It is additionally followed by a second anecdote in which another apple-grower brings a donation (*oblatio*) to Brigit. This latter offering, however, is given 'abundantly' (*habundanter*), and when the orchard owner also swiftly and freely disperses her fruit among the lepers she is rewarded with a blessing of productivity as instantaneous and permanent as the curse earned by her parsimonious predecessor (Ch. 33, Ó hAodha 1978, 12, 29).

In the *Bethu*, then, there is a stark contrast drawn between the cursed unmerciful and the blessed generous that strongly resembles the sermon of the *dives sine eleemosyna* in the fourth abuse of *De Duodecim*. The contrast in the *Bethu*, moreover, makes the lesson more clearly than does the *Vita I*; this greater illumination may suggest that in this case the shared source text of the *vita primitiva* may be better represented in the *Bethu Brigte* than in the *Vita I*. If true, the parallel could offer a challenge to McCone's theory of the *Vita I* as the best repository of the root *vita* from which many components after Cogitosus descend. There is, however, always the possibility that the increased detail of the *Bethu*'s version of the two wealthy women, one who gives scantily and grudgingly, while the other is freely generous, illustrates only the *Bethu* compiler's desire to crystallize the homiletic distinction drawn in *De Duodecim*. Thus, as tempting as it is to assert that the *Bethu* must be a better reflection of the *vita primitiva* here, it is just as likely that the *Bethu* compiler

¹⁰ McCone (1982) is one of a number of scholars to assert that the *Vita I S Brigitae* and *Bethu Brigte* draw from a common antecedent labeled the *vita primitiva*; this group includes Ó hAodha 1978, xiv–xxv; Stancliffe 1992, 87–8, 100–101; and Maney 1994.

added the additional tale of the generous apple-grower to make more obvious the consequences of stinginess as shown by the reluctant almsgiver.

Abusio VII and the pugnacious lepers

In the seventh abuse, *De Duodecim* focuses upon the problem of ‘the contentious Christian’ (*Christianus contentiosus*). Here the text inveighs against the individuals who have been baptized and professed the faith, yet who continue to display through their daily behavior a love not of Christ but of temporal things. This preoccupation with the worldly divorces the preoccupied from God and foments strife over the goods that are its focus, such as fine clothes or precious metals. The sole component of earthly existence that should receive a Christian’s care and devotion, argues *De Duodecim*, is the Christian’s neighbor (*proximus*). Though all else is transitory, *proximi* are ‘co-heirs of the (divine) king’ (*regis cohaeredes*) and therefore each one is ‘part of the heavenly kingdom on earth’ (*pars regni caelestis in terra*) and must be honored as such (Hellmann 1909, 47; Breen 1988, 386–9). Furthermore, the only way to truly be deemed a Christian is to live as Christ did; since Christ was not contentious, neither must any be who profess to follow him (Hellmann 1909, 48; Breen 1988, 388–91).

According to the *Vita I*, two lepers are taken into Brigit’s retinue of believers during one of her saintly progresses. Though the men are made welcome by the saint, they soon begin to quarrel and come to blows. Immediately, ‘the hand of the one who was the first to strike his neighbor’ (*Manus illius, qui prius percutiebat proximum*) stiffens in a fist and cannot be uncurled, while the other leper is unable to lower the hand he had raised to hit back (Ch. 4.31, Hochegger 2009, 122; Ch. 34, Connolly 1989, 22). The two lepers are compelled to stand immobilized in this fashion until Brigit comes to them, whereupon they do penance and are released to their former free movement (Ch. 4.31, Hochegger 2009, 122; Ch. 34, Connolly 1989, 22).

Here it seems the lepers may bear some similarities to the *Christiani contentiosi* of *De Duodecim Abusiuis*. These men claim to be believers yet they nevertheless fight with each other over some unnamed and unimportant temporal thing. Not only does the punishment that paralyzes them thus prevent them from harming each other, but it also forces them to cease their dispute, to be humbled until they recognize their error and make appropriate satisfaction to Brigit and to God. That the lepers may bear a relationship to this *De Duodecim* sermon is particularly suggested by the use of *proximus*, rather than perhaps *socius* (associate, companion, friend) or *unus/alter* (the one/the other), to describe the relationship of the first leper to the second, a relationship *De Duodecim* declares to be—following the

words of Christ himself and using the same Latin term as both the Bible and the *vita*—the sole worldly element a true Christian may love.¹¹

As with the *Vita I* episode concerning the *dives sine eleemosyna*, this narrative of the argumentative followers is both among the first forty-five *Vita I* chapters and is also found in the *Bethu Brigitte*, again signaling an episode likely originating in the *vita primitiva* the two *Lives* hold in common (Ch. 34, Ó hAodha 1978, 12, 29). In the *Bethu* the lepers are healed not only of their argument-induced paralysis, but also of their leprosy, indicating a far more thorough cleansing of body and soul than is indicated in the treatment given the story by the *Vita I*. Just as with the example of the stingy orchard-owner, the narrative of the pugnacious lepers in the *Bethu* again either offers a better view of the now lost primitive text from which it and the *Vita I* descend, or it reflects the *Bethu*'s further elaboration of the *De Duodecim* paradigm upon which it appears to draw.

Abusio VIII and the arrogant lepers

Not only do the contentious lepers who come to blows appear to reflect the seventh abuse of *De Duodecim*, but they also have some parallels to the sermon of the eighth abuse, 'the arrogant pauper' (*pauper superbus*). Since even the wealthy are commanded to be humble, *De Duodecim* asserts, the poor have still less right 'to raise a mind inflated with the supercilious swelling of haughtiness against God' (*supercilioso superbiae tumore inflatam mentem contra Deum erigere*) (Hellmann 1909, 49; Breen 1988, 392–3). The sin of arrogance brought down the powerful, whether angels or wealthy men, so those who have no earthly substance have even less claim to an attitude of superiority than do those of property. Though the impoverished are compelled by life's exigencies to accept their status in this world, through their behavior they are themselves responsible for choosing their standing in the afterlife; the poor will only inherit heavenly treasures after death if, while alive, they behave with due humility.

For a humble pauper is called poor in spirit who, when he is seen to be outwardly indigent, is never exalted in pride, since humility of the mind is more able to seek the kingdom of heaven than is temporal poverty of worldly wealth. For the humble (*humiles*) who have well-possessed riches can be called poor in spirit, but the arrogant (*superbos*) who have nothing are doubtless deprived of the blessing (that is promised to the poor).¹²

11 Matt. 19,19: 'You must love your neighbor as you love yourself' (*diliges proximum tuum sicut te ipsum*).

12 *Pauper enim humilis pauper spiritu appellatur, qui cum egenus foris cernitur, numquam in superbiam elevatur, quoniam ad petenda regna caelorum plus valet mentis humilitas quam praesentium divitiarum temporalis paupertas. Etenim humiles qui bene divitias possessas habent possunt pauperes spiritu appellari, et superbos nihil habentes haud dubium est beatitudine paupertatis privari.* Hellmann 1909, 50; Breen 1988, 396–9. I

In addition to any potential ties between the eighth abuse and the argumentative lepers just discussed, the *Vita I* also preserves two chapters in which the arrogant/humble (*superbus/humilis*) pattern of *De Duodecim* seems to be portrayed. In the first such narrative, two lepers seek healing from Brigit. The saint prays, fasts, and blesses water, then commands the two men to bathe each other with the holy liquid. The first leper washed is instantly cured, but when Brigit commands him to bathe his fellow leper in turn, the now-whole man refuses and instead begins to brag about his own health. Brigit tells him again that he should do for his companion what was done for him, and again the hale man rebuffs her. Brigit then aids the remaining leper, healing him and providing him with clean robes. The chapter concludes with the following commentary:

(The cleansed man's) entire body was immediately stricken with leprosy because of his arrogance (*propter superbiam*), but the other man was healed because of his humility (*propter humilitatem suam*) and, rejoicing, he thanked God, who had healed him through the merits of Saint Brigit.¹³

The second *superbus/humilis* leper pair approach Brigit seeking not cleansing but alms. Unable to give them anything else, Brigit allows them to take her only cow. One leper thanks the saint, but the other is 'arrogant and ungrateful' (*superbus et ingratus*) and refuses to share the animal with his fellow leper. Brigit tells 'the humble leper' (*humilem leprosum*) to wait with her for a while to see what the Lord may deliver, and to 'let that arrogant man have the cow' (*ille superbus vaccam habeat*) (Ch. 12.78, Hochegger 2009, 166; Ch. 78, Connolly 1989, 37). The haughty leper attempts to depart with his bovine prize, but he cannot drive her alone and returns to Brigit to berate the saint for bestowing the cow upon him in such a half-hearted fashion that the animal was made fractious. Despite every effort by Brigit to calm the man he continues to heap verbal abuse upon her; annoyed (*displicuit*), Brigit tells him again to take the cow, 'though she will not be useful to you' (*sed tamen tibi non proderit*) (Ch. 12.78, Hochegger 2009, 166; Ch. 78, Connolly 1989, 37). When later that day a second cow is given to Brigit by another follower, she bestows it too upon the leper pair.

And they went to a certain river, and that river drew the arrogant man (*superbum*) with his cow into the depths, and he was absorbed and his body was never found, but the humble man (*humilis*) escaped with his cow.¹⁴

have chosen to follow Breen's translation of the final clause for better clarity; it literally reads 'are doubtless deprived of the blessing of poverty.'

13 *Et statim totum corpus eius lepra percussum est propter superbiam, alter vero sanatus est propter humilitatem suam. Et gratulatus gratias egit Deo, qui se per merita sanctae Brigitae sanavit.* Ch. 12.76, Hochegger 2009, 164; Ch. 76, Connolly 1989, 37.

14 *Et exierunt ad quandam aquam et illud flumen rapuit superbum cum sua vacca in profundum et absorptus est. Neque unquam inventum est corpus eius; humilis vero*

In both of these episodes haughtiness is punished while humility is rewarded. As expressed in the eighth abuse, the arrogant man will be subjected to divine censure whether powerful or poor; the pauper, therefore, cannot even claim the distinction of riches to excuse supercilious behavior, and if he lacks the humility that is not only proper before God but also expected of his station, he will lose even the opportunity to gain heaven. One *leprosus superbus* is re-afflicted with leprosy, the mark of an unclean body and soul and the punishment that befalls those who defy the Lord's chosen representative.¹⁵ The other *superbus*, for his part, is swallowed by the waves of a river much as were the enemies of God's people at the Red Sea (Exod. 14, 27). The *leprosi humiles*, by contrast, receive both earthly and celestial blessing. Just as does *De Duodecim*, then, the *Vita I* anecdotes clearly contrast *superbus* with *humilis*, and seem therefore to be a hagiographical vision of the sermon of the eighth abuse.

Neither of these arrogant/humble leper chapters can be found in the extant *Bethu Brigitte*, and both fall after the first forty-five chapters McCone and others have considered to best represent the *vita primitiva*.¹⁶ Their location in the later sections of the *Vita I*, however, suggests that they were among the components lost, either from the copy of the *vita primitiva* or from an intermediate text between the *vita primitiva* and the *Bethu*, and therefore could not be included in the abruptly-ended extant version of the macaronic work. In support of such a possibility is Kim McCone's observation that the mid-narrative conclusion of the *Bethu* was evidently present in the *Bethu*'s exemplar, which itself originally shared the full 115-chapter length of both the lost *vita primitiva* and the extant *Vita I S Brigittae* (1982, 121). As a result, then, the two arrogant/humble pauper oppositions seem likely to also have been contained in the *vita primitiva*.

Cogitosus, *De Duodecim*, and the Irish biblical culture

It must be acknowledged that the lessons of *De Duodecim Abusiuis* are, after all, drawn from biblical precedent; it is thus possible that the relationship between the Brigidine texts and *De Duodecim* may simply reflect a common interest in their shared scriptural passages. Such use of the Bible would accord with the general biblical culture not only of the early medieval West but of Ireland in specific, a culture scholars like Marina Smyth (1996) and Clare Stancliffe (2009) have explored. As Kim McCone emphasizes, 'the whole' of Ireland's medieval literary output both in Latin and in the vernacular 'was undoubtedly produced either in monasteries or by people who had received an essentially monastic education' (2000, 1). Irish

evasit cum sua vacca. Ch. 12.78, Hochegger 2009, 166; Chs. 78–9, Connolly 1989, 37.

15 See for example the leprotic retribution that descends upon Miriam for challenging Moses' authority in Num. 12.

16 See p. 26 above.

learning was dominated by knowledge of and inspiration taken from scriptural works (McCone 2000); parallels between texts based on biblical precedent, then, including the *Vita I* and *De Duodecim*, is in this sense rather unsurprising.

At the same time, however, the homiletic lessons shared between the *Vita I* and *De Duodecim* do not appear in the closely-related *Vita S Brigitae* of Cogitosus, a seventh-century production of this same biblical culture. Indeed, Cogitosus directly accesses New Testament example throughout his panegyric, depicting Brigit in the female image of Christ, as has been argued elsewhere by Michael Herren (Herren and Brown 2002, 167–9), myself (2010, 264–6) and Dorothy Ann Bray (2010). The sermons of the wealthy but stingy woman, the argumentative followers, and the uppity lepers, however, make no appearance in Cogitosus' text. It is worth taking a moment to consider some of the *exempla* of Cogitosus more closely to see if other components of *De Duodecim* may have any presence in this closely-contemporary *vita*.

Because Cogitosus and *De Duodecim* both access some of the same scriptural elements, several of the former's miracle tales do bear a passing resemblance to the sermons of the latter, but in each instance the attention of the two works is totally different. For example, Cogitosus recounts the fall of a nun from her vow of chastity, a lapse that results in her pregnancy. He neither dwells upon her sin, however, nor upon how she will reap its consequences. Instead, he uses the episode to showcase both the purity of Brigit's faith and the power of that faith to completely erase the nun's sin. Blessed by Brigit, the nun's pregnancy vanishes as if it had never been and the nun, now made pure through confession and penance, is restored to her community (Ch. 2.12, Hochegger 2009, 26; Ch. 9, Connolly and Picard 1987, 16).

Cogitosus' anecdote most closely resembles *Abusio V*, the woman without modesty (*femina sine pudicitia*). *Abusio V* attends to all the reasons a woman should be modest and to all the consequences for her if she is not. There is no specification of female religious; the tenets espoused are to apply to all women. Of the nearly two dozen or so benefits of maintaining *pudicitia*, the protection of chastity and restraint of libido (*libidinem*), desire (*cupiditatem*), and lasciviousness (*lasciviam*) are featured, but so also is the mitigation of behaviors like anger, quarreling, drunkenness, gluttony, and more. The sermon does state that a modest woman can delight 'in the hope of future blessedness' (*de spe futurae beatitudinis*) while an immodest woman gains little from men or from God; this future hope could have some correlation to the miracle story in Cogitosus. The emphasis throughout the *Abusio*, however, is on the proper actions and effects of true modesty (Hellmann 1909, 40–43; Breen 1987, 362–373). Cogitosus, by contrast, focuses on the saint's actions, not on those of the nun, and the latter's pregnancy is merely a means to the illustration of Brigit's holiness rather than the reflection of a homiletic message all its own.

Interestingly, the pregnant nun is also found in the *Vita I*, where the story lacks the biblical quotations Cogitosus liberally includes; otherwise the two anecdotes are nearly identical (Ch. 16.100, Hochegger 2009, 186; Ch. 103, Connolly, 45). Neither Cogitosus nor—in this case—the *Vita I* have the intense focus on the acts and their consequences that is so integral to the sermons of *De Duodecim*. This pattern is observable throughout a comparison between Cogitosus and his homiletic contemporary. Where the *Vita I* (and the *Bethu Brigitte*, where relevant) attend to the behaviors and their results—the curse on the stingy woman’s orchards, the lethal deluge sweeping away an arrogant pauper, the blessings granted a generous woman and a humble pauper, and so on—and thus fairly closely follow the outline of *De Duodecim*’s sermons, Cogitosus instead keeps his attention firmly on Saint Brigit. For him the actions of others provide merely the context for the further enumeration of miraculous evidence for Brigit’s sanctity. As a result, any seemingly shared components between Cogitosus and *De Duodecim* appear to result solely from the commonality of their biblical sources.

Though a full exposition of all such *comparanda* between Cogitosus’ *Vita S Brigitae* and *De Duodecim Abusiuis* would require another article, one final example is worth noting here. It will be recalled that in the parallels between *Vita I* and *De Duodecim* may be numbered *Abusio VIII*, the arrogant pauper; the *Vita I* illustrates this homily in part with the story of a pair of lepers, one humble and one arrogant, who seek Brigit’s cow as alms. This anecdote does put in an appearance in the *Vita S Brigitae*, but instead of the *Vita I*’s pair of paupers Cogitosus presents his audience with a single leper petitioner who is merely ‘ungrateful’ (*ingratus*) rather than, as in the *Vita I*, ‘arrogant and ungrateful’ (*superbus et ingratus*) (Ch. 12.78, Hochegger 2009, 166; Ch. 78, Connolly 1989, 37). Although impolite, he is neither abusive nor truly haughty, and unlike the later text’s echo of him, here he is pleased with Brigit’s charitable gift. Indeed, the saint bestows upon the fortunate fellow not only the requested cow but a cart for him to ride in and a calf which—laid in the cart—draws the cow along behind, avoiding the need for him to expend any energy in driving her (Ch. 3.18, Hochegger 2009, 30; Ch. 15, Connolly and Picard 1987, 17). Once again, instead of making the pauper the object of the lesson as do both the *Vita I* and *De Duodecim*, Cogitosus gives the pauper a minor supporting role in a drama that stars only Brigit.

Conclusions

The present analysis of similarities in lesson and content between the *Vita I S Brigitae* and *De Duodecim Abusiuis Saeculi* has, it is hoped, offered intriguing fodder for the debate concerning the evolution of Brigit of Kildare’s dossier. The seeming correspondences between the sermons of the *dives sine eleemosyna* and the *Christianus contentiosus* in *De Duodecim*, the hagiographical portrayals of the

Vita I, and the anecdotes of the surviving text of the *Bethu Brigitte* make it likely that the source shared by these two *Lives*, the so-called *vita primitiva*, also contained these same correspondences.

Further, the close correlation of episodic sequence and content between the truncated *Bethu* and the lengthy *Vita I* suggests that the former *Life* as it survives is a copy of a prior exemplar from which the final third of its leaves had been lost; before this damage occurred the *Bethu*-archetype would have had the same number of chapters as are now found in the *Vita I*. Both the *Bethu*-archetype and the *vita primitiva* behind it would therefore also have contained the two narratives concerning the arrogant and humble paupers, echoing the *De Duodecim* discussion of the *pauper superbus*. It moreover seems possible that the anecdotes of the generous women, which set the positive example in opposition to the stingy orchard owners of the current *Bethu*, may also have been found in these root *Lives*.

In addition, the seventh-century *vita* of Brigit by Cogitosus does not seem to have drawn from *De Duodecim*'s closely-contemporary sermons even where the basic plotlines are very close to those of later *Lives*. Cogitosus places Brigit at the forefront of every anecdote he recounts, consistently emphasizing the potent purity of Brigit's faith. While this theme certainly does have a prominent place in the eighth-century *Vita I*, an equal emphasis is given by the anonymous *vita* compiler to Brigit's followers and petitioners. In the *Vita I* Brigit is who she is as much because of those who surround her as because of the faith and grace she possesses.

This distinction is likely due to the fact that Cogitosus wrote to attract pilgrims to Brigit's shrine at Kildare, a shrine he lovingly describes at the end of his commemoration of the saint (Ch. 8.37–8, Hochegger 2009, 54 and 56; Ch. 32, Connolly and Picard 1987, 25–7). The *Vita I*, by contrast, is more concerned with demonstrating Brigit's connections with the people and places over which her foundation claimed leadership (McCone 1982, 122–3; Connolly 1989, 7–10). The extant material does not permit the determination of whether the shared anecdotes of the two *vitae* signal the direct adoption of material from Cogitosus by the *Vita I* or the mutual use of a lost third source. What is apparent is that the correlations between the *Vita I* and *De Duodecim* represent the differences between a catalogue of miracle *exempla* meant to impress the faithful into visiting Kildare and a lengthier homiletic *vita* intended to educate a congregation on its relationship with its matron saint and her church.

Ultimately the evidence is insufficient to demonstrate effectively that the anonymous Irish hagiographers of either the *Vita I* or of its predecessor, the *vita primitiva*, drew directly from *De Duodecim*. Sadly that also prevents using *De Duodecim* to make any assertions concerning the dates of these constituent *Lives*. It is only possible with any degree of certainty to attend to the relationships between the hagiographical works. It is already established that the *Vita I S Brigitae* must

fall prior to the ninth-century *Bethu Brigitte* and that it is likely both draw from the *vita primitiva*; it is further possible to argue that the *Bethu* descends from a *Bethu*-archetype that also has its roots in that primitive Latin Life. This set of ties between these works of the early middle ages in Ireland is visible in the presence or absence of shared anecdotes that appear to echo the lessons in *De Duodecim Abusiuis Saeculi*. Despite the limitations of the evidence, then, it is at the very least possible to glean clues to the development of the Brigidine dossier. It is also hoped that the echoes that bounce from one text to the next may offer tantalizing hints that invite further examination in future.

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