

Rereading the Sermons in the Leabhar Breac

Distinctive introductory and concluding passages

1. [Introduction] The Holy Spirit, the third person of the noble Godhead, co-eternal and consubstantial with the Father and the Son, is that Spirit who revealed these mysteries to Solomon, the son of David. This Solomon was the wisest of the men of the world, save Christ the Son of God, Saviour of the world.
In spirut nóem, in tress persu na diadachta uaisle, is comsuthain 7 is commolbthaige do'n athair 7 do'n mac, is é in spirut-sin ro-faillsig na runi-sea do Sholmain mac Davida. Is é in Solam-sin ba hecnaide do doinib domain, cenmotha Crist mac De, slaniccid in uli domain (Atkinson, *Passions and Homilies*, pp. 151, 401).
2. [Conclusion] The kings of that abode shall have youth without age, peace without strife, everlasting kingship without disturbance, great gladness without end for evermore : where they shall have the resplendent union of the company of heaven and earth, everlasting life that fadeth not, along with the sweetness and the joyousness of paradise ; where they shall have a vast abundance, a great unspeakable fulness of every good thing ; lack and want alone of evil, which there is weak and powerless ; there the holy and righteous shall shine amid the angelic dignity and brilliancy like the sun in the heavenly kingdom; there will be the peaceful union of both Churches, the terrestrial and the heavenly ; where there shall be the unity that is nobler than every unity—the unity of the noble, Almighty Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We implore the mercy of the high King, that we may all attain that unity, deserve it, and dwell therein, for ever and ever. Amen.
Is ed so bias do rigaib in dúnaid-sin .i. óitiu cen shéntaid, síth cen debaid, flathius bith-buan cen fuasnad, subachus dermáir cen forcend tria bithu; is ann-sin bias dóib oentu etrochta muinntire nime 7 talman; is and-sin bias dóib betha suthain cen crich cen erchra immaile fri somillsi 7 fri aibnes parduis; biaid dóib beos ind-sin immad do[fh]ulachta 7 comlanius dermár direccra cecha maithiusa; 7 terci 7 esbuid, merbe 7 lagatus cech uilcc; is and-sin taitnigfit na nóim 7 na fireoin i n-uaisle 7 i n-etrochta aingelacda amal grein is-in flaith nemda; aitt i mbia **oenta** sithamail na heclaisi cehtarda, nemda 7 talmanta ; aitt i mbia in **oentu** is uaisle oltás cech **oenta**id .i. **oentu** na trinóti uaisle ulichumachtaigi, athar 7 meic 7 spiruta noim. Alme troccaire ind riguasail; ro-hisam uli in **oenta**id-sin, ro-s-airillem, ro-s-aittreum; in secula seculorum, amen (Atkinson, *Passions and Homilies*, pp. 162, 413).

Dating of the Leabhar Breac sermons

3. Incidentally as we know that [*Fís Adomnán*] was written before the year 1106, we have a *terminus ad quem* for dating all the homilies (Mac Donncha, 'Medieval Irish Homilies', p. 61).

‘At this time...’

4. It is at this time the Christians celebrate the festival and commemoration of these two holy apostles, on the kalends of July [i.e. June 29] by the day of the solar month, on this present day as to the day of the week in the current year.

Is ann-sin tra airmnitnigit na Cristaigi lith 7 foraitmet na da noem apstal-sa; itat Kalaind Iúil ar-ái lathi mís greine, is-in lathi-sea **indíu** ar-ai lathi sechtmaine is-in bliadain hi-tam (Atkinson, *Passions and Homilies*, pp. 87, 330).

Sermo modernus/Thematic sermon

5. The thematic sermon, almost universally, began with a brief scriptural text, preferably taken from the day's liturgical readings in the evangelists or the day's lesson; it was thus closely linked to the cycle of the mass. The text was called a theme. Late Roman and early medieval preachers used whole readings as the texts for their sermons and medieval preachers were encouraged to do this as well; but the medieval thematic method, considered “modern” by the manual writers, took only a complete phrase or sentence as its starting point (Briscoe, *Artes Praedicandi*, p. 54).
6. Modern preachers have invented dividing the *thema* – what the ancients did not used to do – not simply for elegance, as some believe, but because it is useful to the preacher, because dividing the *thema* into several members provides the opportunity of dilatation for the further development of the sermon (Thomas Waleys OP, d. 1350, quoted in Wenzel, *Medieval Artes Praedicandi*, p. 66).

Distinctiones

7. The *Pater noster* is recited in a whispered voice for six reasons – first, to follow the advice given by, Christ to His Apostles – "O man of faith, when thou prayest, go into a secret place, and shut it behind thee, and there pray the Lord in secret" – secondly, as a distinction from the prayer of hypocrites – thirdly, for the honour and maintenance of the prayer itself, because to recite it in a whisper shows the completeness with which it is in the understanding and mind of each – fourthly, to show that the Lord is nigh to them who implore Him faithfully, even though it is in a whisper they make their intercession – fifthly, according to the practice in all counsel, for every secret counsel that exists between friends, is rightly held in a whisper – sixthly, for betrayal, because it is usual to betray one's enemy in a whisper ; and therefore the holy and righteous betray in this wise the old enemy, the devil, to the Heavenly Father, when they say in their prayer to Him, "deliver us from evil," i.e. from the devil (Atkinson, *Passions and Homilies*, p. 500).
8. By this reasoning the eight days are eight ages—from Adam to Noe, from Noe to Abraham, from Abraham to Moses, from Moses to David, from David to Christ, from Christ to the end of the world, then the age of the dying, and finally the age of the resurrection (Jacobus de Voragine, Sermon on the Circumcision, *Legenda Aurea*, tr. W. Ryan).
9. Uel significat eclesiam post sex etates huius mundi et septimam iudicii in octava sine fine resurgemus (Leabhar Breac homily on the circumcision of Christ, ed. MacDonncha).

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