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#### Availability

Available with prior consent of the CELT programme for purposes of academic research and teaching only.

#### Sources

##### Manuscript Source

Dublin, Royal Irish Academy, 23 E 25, Lebor na hUidre, p. 31-34; for details see MS 1229, in Kathleen Mulchrone, T. F. O'Rahilly et al. (eds.), *Catalogue of Irish Manuscripts in the Royal Irish Academy (Dublin 1926-70)* 3367-79. For a diplomatic edition see R. I. Best and Osborn Bergin (eds.), *Lebor na hUidre: Book of the Dun Cow (Dublin 1929)*.

Secondary literature (For literature about the Apocrypha, [click here.](#) )

Kuno Meyer, *Eine altirische Homilie*, *Zeitschrift für Celtische Philologie* 4 (1903) 241-43. [Meyer takes this homily from RIA Ms. 23 P 3 to be written in the Old Irish period, pointing out that paragraphs 4 and 6 are echoed, though in a different context, in the present electronic edition, and in LU fo. 32b.]

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Benjamin Hudson, 'Time is Short: The Eschatology of the Early Gaelic Church', in: Caroline Walker Bynum and Paul Freedman (eds.), *Last Things: Death and the Apocalypse in the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia 2000) 101-23.

Martin McNamara, *Apocalyptic and eschatological heritage: the Middle East and Celtic realms* (Dublin 2003).

The edition used in the digital edition

Whitley Stokes, *Tidings of Doomsday in Revue Celtique*. Volume 4, Paris, F. Vieweg (1879-80) page 245-57

Encoding

Project Description

CELT: Corpus of Electronic Texts

Sampling Declaration

The present text represents pages 245 and 247–257 of the published edition, including textual notes.

Editorial Declaration

Correction

Text has been proof-read twice.

Normalization

The electronic text represents the edited text. Words have been segmented in line with CELT practice.

Footnotes are marked `note type="auth"` and numbered.

Quotation

Direct speech is tagged `q`.

Hyphenation

When a hyphenated word (hard or soft) crosses a page-break, the page-break is marked after the completion of the hyphenated word. Soft hyphens are silently removed.

Segmentation

`div0`=the whole text; `div1`=the section. Page-breaks are marked `pb n=""`.

Interpretation

Names are not tagged, nor are terms for cultural and social roles.

Canonical References

This text uses the `DIV1` element to represent the section.

Profile Description

Use of language

Language: EN

Text is in English.

Language: GA  
Some text in Irish.

Language: LA  
Some words in Latin.

Language: GR  
One word in Greek.

Revision History  
(2004-10-07)  
Beatrix Färber (ed.)

File proofed (2); HTML file created.  
(2004-10-05)  
Benjamin Hazard (ed.)

File proofed (1); header and bibliography inserted from companion file; structural and content markup added;  
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(2004-10-05)  
Benjamin Hazard (Data capture)

Text scanned.

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Tidings of Doomsday: Author: [unknown]

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Tidings of Doomsday  
An Early-Middle-Irish Homily

The following homily, now for the first time printed,<sup>1</sup> is taken from pp. 31-34 of the lithographic facsimile of the *Lebor na hUidre* 'Book of the Dun Cow', a ms. of the early part of the twelfth century, preserved in the library of the Royal Irish Academy. Its value is threefold, first, as throwing light on the notions of the mediaeval Irish as to the other world, secondly, as a specimen of a little known homiletic literature, and, thirdly, as the situs of a large number of rare Middle-Irish words and forms. Thus in paragraph 1, *comfolbthaide*, which seems a mistake for *co-molbthaide*: cf. *molbhthach* 'praiseworthy'; 5, *terbod* (= *terpud*, Egerton 93, fo. 1. b. 1) .i. *innarbad no deligud*, O'Dav. 12. *sráinfitir*, 3d pl. b-fut. passive of the verb now written *sraoínim*. 14. *tóithenach*, O'Reilly's *taoitheannach*. 17. *congain chride* : cf. O'Clery's *eatla* .i. *ciamhaire*, *congain chroidhe*, *aithrige no déra*. 20. *sírrechtaidib*, cf. O'Clery's *sirrecht* .i. *truagh*: *riches*, dat. pl. *richessaib*, O. Ir. *richis* (gl. *carbo*) Z2 273, Corn. *regihten* gl. *pruna*, Br. *reguez*, Cath. *cicarach* 'ravenous', *cirriud*, cf. *cirr* 'comb', Rev. celt. I, 55. *aslom an ///Greek!* to me. 21. *brothgal* the vapour (gal) of burning flesh (*broth*. I. *feoil*, O'Cl.) 22. *tesmalta*, cf. *coneicsed-side do tesmolta andaine & acomairbairta bith*, LB. 211a *cin 'a drop'* O'R. 23. *tairthim splendor?* also in *tairthim flatho* LU. 132 and in the *Félire*, prol. 166. 24. *toichell* (*do-fo-chell*) .i. *imtheacht*, O'Cl. *dofochlenn an innsi*, H. 2. 16, col. 374: cf. *///Greek!*, *callis*. 25. *ammáin*, O'Reilly's 'amhain adv. only, alone'. The following forms are noticeable; the dat. sg. *spiritu* in para. 1 (perhaps a mistake for *spirit*, but cf. *dia mogha manchuine*, *Senchas Mór*, II, 22), the verbal forms *tancabair*, *tancaibair*, 5, 9, for Old-Irish *tancaid* 'venistis', for(f) *acsabar-si*, 18. *scerait* 19, 3d pl. redupl. fut. act. from *scaraim*. *doraga adveniet* 5, I 3, *ragait venient*, 1 5, 16, 17, J 8, and the secondary forms of the s-future *rosesed* (\**ro-sech'sed*) 2, and *tairsed* (\**tairicsed*) 24. W.S.

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God to bless the hearers all!

Let everyone of them severally give his mind and his attention earnestly unto tidings of Doomsday, to wit, how the Lord will welcome the Saints and the Righteous to inhabit the heavenly kingdom, but how he will show sternness<sup>2</sup> to the Sinful and to the Unrighteous in banishing them into hell.

Jesus Christ, son of David, Saviour of all the world, the third Person of the high Godhead, who is co-eternal and equally to be praised with the Father and with the Holy Ghost, he it is that told these tidings a little while before his Passion, to set forth the appearance that he himself will have on Doomsday, with his Saints and with his Righteous ones, and to strengthen his apostles and his disciples, so that sadness for his suffering might not take hold of them, for he knew that the time of his Passion was at hand.

Matthew son of Alpheus, an Hebrew sage, the twelfth man whom Jesus chose into his household, the fourth man who wrote the Gospel of the Lord, he it is that wrote and revised<sup>3</sup> these tidings of Doomsday, as he heard (them) from the lips of his Master, namely, Jesus, and left them in remembrance with the Church, and spake in this wise.

When the Son of God and Man in one Person shall come with honour and with glory, and all his angels along with him, then will he sit on his throne and on the station of his glory) and all the human beings will be collected there in his presence, and he will make their division and their separation thereafter. He will set in order, forsooth, his Saints and his Righteous ones on his right hand; but the sinful and the unrighteous he will set in order on his left. It is then that the King will say to those that are on his right, 'Come ye, oh blessed ones, possess my Father's kingdom that hath been prepared for you from the beginning of the world! For I was in hunger and ye gave me food: I was in thirst and ye gave me drink; I was in need of a guesthouse and ye gave me hospitality; I was without raiment and ye gave me raiment: I was in sickness and ye came to watch me: I was in captivity and ye came to loose me and to help me.'

It is then that the Righteous will give this answer to the Lord: 'Oh Lord', say they, 'when saw we thee in hunger or in thirst and

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gave thee food and drink? when saw we thee in need of a guesthouse or without raiment, and gave thee hospitality and raiment? or when saw we thee in sickness or captivity and came to get tidings of thee and to loose thee?'

This then is the answer that the Lord will give to the Righteous: 'Every time', saith he, 'that ye have done good for the poor in my name, it is for me ye have done it.'

Those then are the six kinds of mercy by which the heavenly kingdom is bought. They are the six glassen doors through the which comes the light of eternal life into the Church. Those are the six steps whereby the Saints and the Righteous ascend to Heaven.

Then shall the Lord give also unto them that are on his left hand this bitter, awful answer, to wit, to the folk that

have not fulfilled his will and his command, and it is this that he shall say to them, casting them into hell: 'Depart from me, oh cursed ones, and go ye into the everlasting fire that hath been prepared for the Devil and his evil household. For I was in hunger and in thirst and ye gave me not food or drink: I was in need of a guest-house and raiment and ye gave me not hospitality or raiment: I was in sickness and captivity and ye came not to get tidings of me or to loose me.'

It is then that the impious ones shall give this answer to the Lord: 'Oh Lord,' say they, 'when saw we (thee) in hunger, or in thirst, or in need of a guest-house, or without raiment, or in sickness, or in captivity, and rendered not attendance nor lowly service unto thee?'

It is then the Lord will give an answer to them: 'Every time', saith he, 'that ye have not done good for the poor in my name, it is for me ye have not done it.'

Those then are the six chief things through the which hell is attained. Thereafter then the unjust shall be hurled headlong into hell's pain and into the everlasting punishment, but the Saints and the Righteous shall go into the life everlasting to inhabit heaven along with God and his angels for ever and ever.

It is asked in the holy scripture whence it is that the Lord will come to the judgment of Doom, and how he will come, and wherefore he will come.

From Heaven, then, certainly the Lord will come to the judgment of Doom, as certifieth the royal prophet David the son of Jesse; but how he will come certifieth the same prophet, and it is this that he saith: 'It is manifest', saith he, 'that the Lord will come to the judgment, and he will not be not silent.' There will be a great fire

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flaming before him and a mighty storm around him on every side. It is for this that the Lord will come to the judgment, to decide on the human race both living and dead, as saith the same royal prophet, 'there shall be gathered together', saith he, 'the household of heaven and earth in the presence of the Lord on the Day of Doom.'

It is certain, then, that there will be made four troops of the human race on the Day of Doom. Now a troop of them shall be brought to judgment and shall go after their doom to pain and punishment. It is to them the Lord shall make the awful answer in banishing them from him: 'Depart from me, oh cursed, into the everlasting fire that has been prepared for the Devil and for his evil household.' It is these that do not fulfil by deed the good which they promise by lips. This is the name of that folk in the scripture, mali non valde, that is, bad, not greatly bad.

Another troop of them will not be brought to judgment, but to Hell they will go at once, without adjudication at all then, and they will be tortured thereafter through ages of ages without God's mercy to help them, for they do not put term, or law, or rule on committing their sins and the vices here, but every evil which is greatest they could to outrage God and men, it is this that they do. This is the name of that troop, mali valde, that is, what is worst of the human race.

Another troop of them will be brought to judgment, and they will go after their judgment unto reward. These are they that here make earnest repentance through grief of heart, and amend their former evils through virtues and fair deeds, and then they give alms of food and of raiment to the poor in honour of the Lord, and these hide the sins they have before committed, and the Lord remembers not for them there the evils they did here. It is to these that the Lord will say on Doomsday, calling them to Him unto heaven. 'Come now, O Blessed, to inhabit the heavenly kingdom!' This, then, is the name of that troop in the holy scripture boni non valde, that is, 'good

who are not greatly good'.

Another troop of them, however, will not be brought to judgment, but unto heaven and all golden rewards they will go at once without adjudication at all. With them it is not enough of good to fulfil everything that the divine scripture enjoins on them to do, so that they abound through their own virtues and through their fair ... and they do more of good than what is enjoined on them in the divine commands. It is to them ... that Jesus pledges and prophecies this great good ... in the gospel, that he will say to them, seeing them ... to him in the great convention of Doomsday. 'Since ye have left for me', saith Jesus, 'every good thing that ye had in the world, ye have come into my

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household and into my fellowship. Come ye now ... that ye may be along with me on twelve thrones, without adjudication on you. Ye are judging the human race'... Here a leaf seems lost.

... to inhabit Hell for ever. And it is they who shall be in the Devil's tents and camps. And they shall separate from the delight of this world which they loved, and from the faces of Heaven's household, that is, of the Angels and of the Saints and of the Righteous, after they have been a thousand years in the fire of Doom. For that is the length of Doomsday as the commentators on the holy canon declare.

Not happy then will be the road of those sinners: they get not drink nor food, but constant hunger, and great thirst, and great cold. It is they that will be brought thereafter to the Devil's house, with noise of despair, with heavy yearning sighs. Sad are the cry and shout, wailing and screaming, woe and hand beating, of those sinful people there, at the dragging of them to Hell's torture. But that will be sadness of repentance without profit thereon, for there their prayer will not be heard. For they prepared not at first while they were here in possession both of their bodies and their souls. Then will be shut the sinners' three locks, to wit, shutting of Hell for ever on them, and shutting of their eyes on the world to which they gave love, and shutting of the heavenly kingdom on them. Thereafter they will sit a merciless seat on glowing coals of great fire before the king of evil in the Glen of tortures, wherein they shall have heavy punishments, to wit, death without life: dark fire: life woeful, sad, foul, unclean: a place wherein shall be many dogs keen, greedy, gluttonous, broad-eared, longclawed, sharp-pawed, beside them. And toads, keen, rough, destroying one another. And adders poisonous, very swift, around the Devil's city. And lions fierce, rending. And many in their dark mass and in their dark light. A place wherein shall be birds hideous (?), taloned, fearful, made of iron. And stinking lochs, stormy, cold, hellish. Fires dark, ever burning. Red flags under feet. Swords maiming. Cats scratching and furrowing. Fiends torturing. Wounds without healing. Flame without quenching. Gag on tongues. Strangling on throats. Vexing on heads. Yelling and gagging on voices. Fettering on soles. A place wherein beside every evil shall be the Monster, conspicuous, awful, manyheaded, with crowds of red glowing coals. Somewhat of his description, to wit: a hundred necks upon him and a hundred heads on each neck, and five hundred teeth in each head. A hundred hands upon him, and a hundred palms on each hand, and a hundred nails on every palm. A place wherein existence is without lovingness,

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without friendship, in thirst, in hunger, in great cold, in great heat, in want of every good thing and in fulness of every evil thing, in union with the disunion of the fiends and the household of Hell. Then will be there woe and lamentation, wail and crying, groan and scream of every mouth, and a curse without resting from the sinners on their Abbot, to wit, on the Devil, for he it is that puts them in endurance of punishment for every evil they did

through his temptation, and a curse, too, from him on monks about him, to wit, on the sinners, since the greater is his own punishment for every evil they did through his seduction of them, inciting every evil.

Awful, in sooth, and hideous is that prison which the Lord has made for the Devil with his fiends, to wit, Hell. Low, now, and deep is its place. For though a millstone were cast into Hell's mouth, not sooner than at the end of a thousand years would it reach the bottom. The soul's journey, now, after coming from the body, is for a space of thirty years from top to bottom thereof, as is the opinion of certain persons. Strong is that prison's surrounding: it is full of fear, dread, danger, lamentation (?). Dark, black, hideous is its open mouth. It is a rock for chastening every soul that is tortured. It is a flame for burning. It is a scourge for smiting. It is an edge for maiming. It is a night for blinding. It is a fog for smothering. It is a cross for torturing. It is a sword for vengeance. It is an awful weapon for slaying and for cutting. It is a roaring (?) of tortures. It is a crowd of punishments. It is a drowning, it is a plaguing. It is a breaking: it is a bruising, it is a pollution, it is an exhaustion, it is a consuming, it is a hacking, it is a burning, it is a swallowing: it is high, it is low, it is very cold: it is very hot, it is narrow, it is wide: great is the stench of the steam of its burning flesh.

Now though one should be put in seven ages and though there should be a thousand years in each age of them, not more than the one and twentieth part of Hell's evils would he relate. But those are the chief details of Hell with its tortures. Beside it even the high kingdoms of the world, from sunrise to sunset, were not greater than a drop on the earth if thy dwelling were that dwelling and if thou wert appointing the habitation of that prison.

But the Saints and the Righteous, who have fulfilled the commands of the Lord and his teaching, will be called to glory, to honour, to veneration, into the eternal Life on God's right hand, for ever and ever, to wit, the folk of gentleness and tenderness, of charity and of mercy, and of every fair deed besides, a folk of virginity and penitence, and widows faithful for God's sake. Then shall there be a great noise and mighty

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sound of the pure souls stepping on the right hand of their King and their Lord in the heavenly Kingdom, in ranks of the King of heaven and earth and hell. A place wherein is the Light that excels every light, every splendour, without interruption, without darkness. Life eternal without death: clamour of joy without sorrow: health without sickness: youth without old age: peace without quarrel: rest without adversity: freedom without labour, without fatigue, without need of food or raiment or sleep: holiness without age, without decay: radiant unity of angels: delights of paradise: feasting without interruption among nine ranks of angels and of holy folks of heaven and holy assemblies of the most noble King, and among holy, spiritual hues of heaven and brightness of sun in a kingdom high, noble, admirable, lovable, just, adorned, great, smooth, honeyed, free, restful, radiant: in plains of heaven, in delightful stations, in golden chairs, in glassen beds, in silvern stations wherein everyone shall be placed according to his own honour and right and welldoing.

But indescribable are the amplitude and width of the heavenly kingdom. For the bird that is swiftest of flight upon earth, for him the journey of the kingdom would not end though he flew from the world's beginning until the end thereof.

Vast, then, are this fruitfulness and the light, the loveableness and the stability of that City: its rest and its sweetness, its security, its preciousness, its smoothness, its dazzlingness, its purity, its lovesomeness, its whiteness, its melodiousness, its holiness, its bright purity, its beauty, its mildness, its height, its splendour, its dignity, its venerableness, its plenteous peace, its plenteous unity. Yea, not fit is any creature to set forth the hundredth part of the description of the goodness of that City, but still it is better to relate this little of them than to be in silence.

Happily born, in sooth, was he who shall abide with deservingness and with good deeds and who shall be

taken to dwell in that City at doomsday! For he shall abide through ages without limit, without end, in the unity of the Church of heaven and earth, in the unity of the patriarchs and prophets, apostles and disciples of Jesus Christ, of the saints and holy virgins of the world, of the angels and archangels of the Lord, in the unity that is higher than any unity, the unity of the high, holy Trinity, Father and Son and Holy Ghost.

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