

A READING IN THE CAMBRAI HOMILY

THE fragmentary text in archaic Irish termed the Cambrai Homily is preserved in Cambrai, Bibliothèque Municipale, MS 679, ff. 37 b – 38 b, and has been known to scholars of language since it was published by Zeuss in *Grammatica Celtica*. It has recently been a topic of interest to exegetes and historians in that it furnishes an early and explicit definition of the *trechenelæ martre* ‘three kinds of martyrdom’ categorized by colour as *baan-* ‘white’, *glas-* ‘blue’ and *derc-* ‘red’ in other medieval sources.¹ White martyrdom is described in the *textus restitutus* printed by the editors of the *Thesaurus palaeohibernicus* as follows: *issí in bánmartre do duiniu intain scaras ar Dea fri cach réet caris cé rucésa áini nú laubir n-oco* ‘This is the white martyrdom to man, when he separates for sake of God from everything he loves, although he suffer fasting or labour thereat’.² A reading of the microfilm of the manuscript at f. 38 a 17 appears to yield, *ceni cesa* ‘although he does not suffer’, and if this is the correct reading there is no need to emend the *na* of line 18 to *nú*. The definition of *bánmartre* would then be interpreted as: *issí in bánmartre do duiniu intain scaras ar Dea fri cach reet caras*³ *ceni cesa áini na laubir n-oco* ‘It is white martyrdom for man when he separates from everything he loves for God, although he does not endure fasting or labour thereby’.

Such a reading would seem to make sense and be in accord with the remainder of the text, where we read that the three kinds of martyrdom are ‘comprised in the carnal ones who resort to good repentance’, who separate from their desires (*scarde fria tola*), who suffer hardships (*céste saíthu*), who shed their blood in fasting and in labour for Christ (*tuesmot a fuil i n-áini ocuis 7 i laubair ar Christ*).

PRÓINSÉAS NÍ CHATHÁIN

University College, Dublin

¹ W. Stokes and J. Strachan, *Thesaurus palaeohibernicus* II (Cambridge 1901, repr. Dublin 1975) 244–7; R. Thurneysen, *Old Irish reader* (Dublin 1949, repr. 1981) 35–6. P. P. Ó Néill, ‘The background to the Cambrai Homily’, *Ériu* 32 (1981) 137–48, and C. Stancliffe, ‘Red, white and blue martyrdom’, in *Ireland in early Medieval Europe* (ed. D. Whitelock, R. McKitterick, D. Dumville, Cambridge 1982) 21–46, have discussed the content of the text.

² *Thesaurus* II, 247 line 2.

³ Following Thurneysen, *Old Irish reader*, 36 n. 19, in emending *MS caris*.