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Teilo [St Teilo, Eliau, Eliud]

(*supp. fl. c. 550*)

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Teilo [St Teilo, Eliau, Eliud] (*supp. fl. c. 550*), holy man and supposed bishop, was the founder of the episcopal church of Llandeilo Fawr in Dyfed. By the twelfth century he had been appropriated by the expanding see of Llandaff and erroneously turned into its second bishop. Along with David and Padarn, Teilo of Llandeilo was one of the most important saints in south-west Wales, although by the eleventh century his church had fallen within the sphere of the kingdom of Morgannwg in the south-east, which facilitated its eventual appropriation by Llandaff. His feast day is celebrated on 9 February. As a hypocoristic of a type very well attested among Irish and British saints of the sixth century, but only rarely thereafter, the name Teilo is good evidence for the saint's floruit, and for the antiquity of his cult. Although there are passing notices of Teilo in the twelfth-century lives of other Welsh saints, the main surviving accounts of his alleged life and deeds are two related versions of the *Vita sancti Teiliaui*. This life was composed as part of the ecclesiastical propaganda in the Book of Llandaff, compiled under Bishop Urban in the early twelfth century and intended to provide the episcopal church with a demonstrable early history. Consequently the information supplied about Teilo is of uncertain reliability at best. Much of the text seems to be a rewriting of material from a (lost) life of St David with the intention of elevating the position of Teilo and therefore, of course, that of the church of Llandaff. There is also a Middle English metrical life of Telyou preserved in BL, Egerton MS 2810, folios 94–99, which is based on the earlier *Vita* and was possibly composed at Gloucester.

The earlier version of the life of Teilo (traditionally attributed to Geoffrey, brother of Bishop Urban) states that he was of noble parentage, while the second version, contained in the Book of Llandaff, adds that he was born at 'Eccluis Gunniau', near Penally in Dyfed, and names his parents as Ensig ap Hydwn Ddu and Gwenhaf ferch Lliftonwy, thus making him the uncle of St Euddogwy. This link to Euddogwy (Oudoceus) was probably intended to provide Teilo with a suitable connection to his successor to the bishopric of Llandaff and casts suspicion over the whole genealogical scheme. Both versions claim that Teilo was a disciple of St Dyfrig *archipresul*, whom, it is claimed, he was to succeed as bishop of Llandaff. However, Rhigyfarch's life of St David, composed c.1090, has Eliud as disciple of David, perhaps suggesting that the connection to

Dyfrig was also a later invention at Llandaff. The *Vita sancti Teiliaui* also contains an elaborate description of the alleged journey of David, Teilo, and Padarn to Jerusalem, as well as an account of Teilo's visit to Brittany, including Dol. His death, at or near Llandeilo, is said to have led to a three-way conflict over possession of his body between the churches of Penally, Llandeilo, and Llandaff, which was resolved by its miraculous multiplication into three bodies—though the author of the life clearly regarded the one preserved at Llandaff as the original!

The information about the saint contained in this life has been coloured by the interests of Llandaff to such an extent that its reliability as a source for hagiographical (never mind historical) information about the original Teilo, patron of Llandeilo Fawr, is uncertain. However, evidence for the earlier history, or at least the existence, of his cult and episcopal church has been preserved in the marginalia entered into the so-called Lichfield gospels during the eighth and ninth centuries, when the manuscript was still housed at Llandeilo. These include land grants to 'God and St Teilo' (that is, his church) as well as manumissions and other documents witnessed by the 'bishop of Teilo'. In addition, the text in the Book of Llandaff entitled *Braint Teilo* ('The privilege of Teilo'), which was probably originally composed in the late tenth or early eleventh century, describes the privileges and immunities granted to the church of Teilo by the kings of Morgannwg (Glamorgan), and demonstrates that by that time the church of Teilo was located within the sphere of Morgannwg—a precondition of its eventual appropriation by Llandaff. The topographic evidence for the cult of Teilo in Wales further demonstrates that the appropriation of the saint and his church by Llandaff was a late development, since it is focused on Llandeilo and not Llandaff. The dedications are therefore concentrated in western Carmarthenshire (around Llandeilo) and western Pembrokeshire (in Penally and Daugleddyf), with extensions in Glamorgan (four dedications), Monmouthshire (four), Brecknockshire (two), and also in Radnorshire and Cardiganshire (with one dedication each). The distribution closely mirrors that of St David's cult, possibly reflecting the earlier association between these two important south-west Welsh saints. According to his Llandaff life, Teilo visited Brittany and consequently it is not surprising to find dedications to him there, especially in Cornouaille, including the church and parish of Landelau and the church of Landêliau in Plévin.

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