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Not by Bread Alone: St Brendan Meets Paul, the Irish Spiritual Hermit (*Navigatio Sancti Brendani*, Chapter xxvi)

Éamonn Ó Carragáin

In Chapter xxvi of the *Navigatio Sancti Brendani*, St Brendan, abbot of Clonfert, and the Irish monks who crew his boat, come to the island where they meet Paul, a hermit as Irish as themselves.[1] Both in Ireland and in Britain, Saints Paul and Anthony of Egypt were revered as the first monks, and there is no evidence that the author of the *Navigatio* does not share in this reverence.[2] His Spiritual Hermit ('Paulum eremitam spiritalem')[3] is not invented as an Irish rival to St Paul of Thebes,

[1] The present study expands, corrects and updates the discussion of Chapter xxvi of the *Navigatio* in my article 'The Meeting of Saint Paul and Saint Anthony: Visual and Literary Uses of a Eucharistic Motif', pp. 1–58 in Gearóid Mac Niocaill and Patrick F. Wallace (eds.), *Keimelia: Studies in Medieval Archaeology and History in Memory of Tom Delaney* (Galway: Galway University Press, 1988), pp. 31–8. I offer this updated version to Sr Benedicta to recall a fortunate encounter: some 20 years ago, she invited the late Canon Donald Allchin and me to dinner at her flat in Beaumont Street. During the meal, I told my two friends that a famous Collect for 25 March, 'Gratiam tuam' which seems to come from St Peter's in the Vatican in the 670s, might possibly have been composed by the then precentor of St Peter's, John the Archcantor. Canon Allchin suddenly asked Sr Benedicta whether she had to hand a copy of the Book of Common Prayer: of course she did. He then brilliantly discussed the translations Thomas Cranmer had made of 'Gratiam tuam' and other ancient prayers. In the Sarum Missal, Cranmer had come to know the prayer as a Postcommunion prayer. With the instinct of a great liturgist, he had reinstated 'Gratiam tuam' as the Collect for the Annunciation, its original Vatican use. Cranmer cannot have known that the Collect was composed for the Vatican basilica, possibly by the archcantor and abbot who had come to teach the liturgy of St Peter's in seventh-century Northumbria. As a direct result of that discussion, I added an Epilogue to my *Ritual and the Rood: Liturgical images and the Old English Poems of the 'Dream of the Rood' Tradition* (London and Toronto: British Library Press and Toronto University Press 2005, pp. 355–71) to trace some of the history of these prayers, in Anglican and in Roman Catholic uses, down to modern times.

[2] Quotations from the *Navigatio* are from Carl Selmer, *Navigatio Sancti Brendani Abbatis: From early Latin Manuscripts* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1959); translations from the *Navigatio* are based on J. F. Webb and D. H. Farmer, trans., *The Age of Bede* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Classics, 1965; repr. 1998), but with many silent changes to make the translation more literal. For discussions of the cult of Saints Paul and Anthony in Northumbria, in Wales, and in Ireland, see A. M. Allchin, *Celtic Christianity, Fact or Fantasy? An Inaugural Lecture, University College of North Wales, Bangor, 16 March 1993* (UCNWB, 1993), pp. 11–12 (I am grateful to Dr Richard Hawtree for this reference); Éamonn Ó Carragáin, 'The Meeting' pp. 31–2; and Id., 'Ruthwell and Iona: the Meeting of St Paul and St Anthony Revisited', pp. 138–44 in Marion Meek (ed.), *The Modern Traveller to our Past: Festschrift in Honour of Ann Hamlin* (Gretton, Northants: DPK, 2006).

[3] Selmer, *Navigatio*, p. 70, Chapter xxvi, line 8.

the first monk. Instead, the *Navigatio* proposes a theology, more developed than that of St Jerome who wrote the *Vita* of the Egyptian saint, of how a hermit can contribute to communal monastic life.[4] The Irish hermit finds his island hermitage in obedience to his abbot St Patrick; over many years, he comes to see the island of his hermitage as itself an icon of Christ's presence. However, this icon is only made fully real when a second Irish founder-abbot, St Brendan, arrives on the island, and hermit and abbot each publicly affirms, in the presence of St Brendan's monks, the graces the other has received.[5] Then, the Spiritual Hermit provides nourishment, from the transformed island landscape, for St Brendan and his companions on the next stage of their voyage.

The *Navigatio* sets forth a developed theology of spiritual reciprocity between abbots, hermit and community, by rewriting St Jerome's account of the meeting of St Paul the first hermit and St Anthony the Abbot: it is, in effect, a witty, though not irreverent, parody of Jerome. In my earlier study of Chapter xxvi, I used a musical analogy, suggesting that Chapter xxvi of the *Navigatio* interacts 'as it were in a form of counterpoint, with the corresponding details in the *Vita Sancti Pauli*; . . . to appreciate the sophisticated virtuosity of the *Navigatio*, it is necessary to have some recollection of the *Vita*'.[6] No doubt the author of the *Navigatio* felt that he could rely on his monastic readership for such recollection. He may have appreciated that Jerome had composed his *Vita Pauli Primi Eremitae* in counterpoint to Athanasius' famous *Vita Sancti Antonii Primi Abbatis*, in order to emphasize that the fundamental impulse in monasticism was eremitic rather than cenobitic. Jerome's reworking of the *Vita Antonii* has recently been termed a *contrafactum*. Like 'counterpoint', the term *contrafactum* has its origins in musical scholarship, and refers to the use of secular themes in religious music.[7] Jerome's *Vita Pauli* makes it perfectly clear that (to compose a modern *contrafactum* on a Rodgers and Hammerstein lyric) 'Oh, the hermit and the abbot should be friends'; but that the hermit came first, and that his heroism is admired, his rough clothing imitated, and his praises spread, by the abbot.[8] The *Navigatio* remakes that encounter to show even more clearly that hermit, abbots and community are each nourished by the others' charisms.

The happy encounter between St Brendan and Paul the Irish Spiritual Hermit in Chapter xxvi contrasts sharply with the preceding three chapters (xxiii–xxv), which form a unified group. After the halls of ice of Chapter xxii, we move to mountains of hidden, and visible, fire: those chapters all draw on descriptions of northern

[4] Quotations from Jerome's *Vita Pauli* are taken from Pierre Leclerc, Edgardo Martin Morales and Adalbert de Vogüé, edd., *Jérôme: Trois vies de moines (Paul, Malchus et Hilarion)* (Sources chrétiennes, 508) (Paris: Cerf, 2007); translations from Carolinne White, *Early Christian Lives* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1998).

[5] Selmer, *Navigatio*, p. 72, lines 38–48.

[6] É. Ó Carragáin, 'The Meeting', p. 37.

[7] See Eleonora Vincenti, *Contrafacta: allusioni, modelli, rescritture da San Girolamo a Pietro Aretino* (Studi e Ricerche, 96) (Alessandria: Edizioni dell'Orso, 2011). Vincenti discusses Jerome's parody of the *Vita Antonii*, giving a full and useful survey of earlier discussion, on pp. 15–48; see also S. J. Davis, 'Jerome's *Life of Paul* and the Promotion of Egyptian Monasticism in the West', pp. 25–41 in William Lyster (ed.), *The Cave Church of Paul the Hermit at the Monastery of St Paul, Egypt* (New Haven and London: American Research Center in Egypt and Yale University Press, 2008), though this work is weak on the early medieval insular evidence.

[8] See Vincenti, *Contrafacta*, pp. 35–9.

(Icelandic?) volcanoes. Volcanoes implied that hell is physically and spiritually close at hand.[9] These terrifying landscapes thus have eschatological implications: in them, three of the four last things (death, judgement, hell) become central to the poem's narrative. It is only with Chapter xxvi that we are shown an icon of the fourth: we come to see that union with Christ (a foretaste of heaven) is even nearer, to the individual and to the community, than hell and its demons.

As soon as the Irish monks catch sight of the island of the infernal smiths (Chapter xxiii), Brendan feels uneasy: he does not wish to land, nor even to approach the island.[10] In spite of Brendan, the wind takes the boat straight towards it, willy-nilly. It is only when the boat is so close that the din of demonic forges can already be heard that Brendan protects himself and his companions from landing, by making the sign of Christ's victory towards the four cardinal points ('armauit se dominico tropheo in quattuor partes')[11] and by an explicit prayer to Christ for deliverance ('Domine, Jhesu Christe, libera nos de hac insula').[12] The island is quite without grass and trees ('ualde rusticam, saxosam atque scoriosam, sine arboribus et herba'[13]: when we find such a landscape again in Chapter xxvi the naked rock will not be a threat, but a symbol of Christ's presence). This terrifying island is dotted with slag-heaps and forges, and one of the island's smiths, 'a very swarthy, evil-looking man, with a bright red face',[14] hurls a piece of slag at Brendan's boat. As the monks flee, a whole army of demon-smiths attack them, throwing slag at them. Fortunately for the survival of Brendan's crew, the smiths are driven by hatred and strife among themselves as much as by hostility towards the Irish monks: some threw slag into the sea after the servants of God, but others threw the slag at each other.[15]

In Chapter xxiv, the theme of compulsion intensifies. One of the three monks who had followed Brendan out of the monastery is overcome by demonic possession. He suddenly leaps overboard, onto another volcano-like island. As Brendan and his crew sail away towards the south, they see the mountain vomiting forth flames: the demons, together with their captive Irish monk, are burning in the underground fires. The sequence of three infernal visions reaches its climax 7 days later, in Chapter xxv, when Brendan and his companions encounter Judas Iscariot, 'of all plotters the most wretched' ('Ego sum infelicissimus Judas atque negociator pessimus').[16] It is clear that these three islands are linked up underground, because Judas tells his Irish visitors that he was present when their brother was swallowed up. The mountain had vomited massive flames, as though to express its joy: that, Judas explains, is what it usually does when it swallows damned souls. Horrible though this third island is, for Judas himself

> this is no place of punishment. It is the spot where my loving Saviour grants me respite in honour of his Resurrection (for that day was the Lord's day). Sitting

[9] See Thomas O'Loughlin, *Adomnán and the Holy Places* (London and New York: T&T Clark, 2007), pp. 133–44.

[10] Selmer, *Navigatio*, p. 61, lines 4–5.

[11] Id., pp. 61–2, lines 8–9.

[12] Id., p. 62, lines 9–10.

[13] Id., p. 61, lines 1–3.

[14] Id., p. 62, lines 12–13.

[15] Id., p. 63, lines 26–28.

[16] Id., p. 66, Chapter xxv, lines 18–19.

here is like being in the Garden of Delights, compared to the torments to which I can look forward this evening. My punishment is to burn like a lump of molten lead in a crucible, day and night, in the middle of yonder mountain, the home of Leviathan and his allies..... I come here to find respite from first to second vespers of every Sunday, from Christmas to Epiphany, from Easter to Whitsun, and on the feasts of the Purification and the Assumption of the Mother of God ["Meum uero refrigerium habeo hic omni die dominico a uespera usque ad uesperam, et in Natiuitate Domini usque in Theophaniam et a Pascha usque in Pentecosten et in Purificacione Dei Genitricis atque Assumpcione"].[17]

Judas' respite is granted in honour of Sunday, and hence of the Resurrection. Because in the next chapter (xxvi) Brendan and his company will be told how they will spend Lent, this present encounter with Judas (Chapter xxv) must have taken place on a midwinter Sunday, after Christmas and before Epiphany. Judas begs Brendan to lengthen his respite, from vesper-time on Sunday (when, liturgically speaking, Sunday ended) until Monday morning, and Brendan agrees. This act of mercy enrages the demons, especially because, as they explain towards dawn, during that Sunday night their prince, Satan, had flogged them savagely for not returning Judas after vesper-time, on time for his tortures. After a vivid altercation with the enraged demons, Brendan sets off with his crew towards the south.

At the beginning of Chapter xxvi, references to time are deceptive. We are told that the little island of Paul the Spiritual Hermit appeared to Brendan and his companions 'far off to the south, on the third day' ('Tercia uero die apparuit illis quaedam insula parua contra meridiem procul').[18] This is difficult to reconcile with the end of the chapter, where we will learn that the encounter with Paul the Hermit took place at the beginning of Lent: that penitential season would not begin until at least 5 weeks after Epiphany. But the phrase 'tercia uero die' recalls the credal clause proclaiming Christ's Resurrection ('On the third day he arose again from the dead'). References to 'the third day' echo through this chapter and the next. Brendan tells his crew that they can take things easy, and not to row too hard in case they tire themselves out: after all, Easter, which is soon to come ('hoc Pascha quod uenturum erit cito'),[19] will mark the seventh anniversary of their leaving Ireland. Time is telescoped to enable us to move smoothly from the infernal landscapes of the preceding chapters to positive images of Christ's presence.

Brendan gives a brief, though prophetic, summary of what lies ahead for his monks:

> In a short time you will meet Paul the Spiritual Hermit [Paulum eremitam spiritalem]. He has lived on that island for the past sixty years without any physical food ["sine ullo uictu corporali"]. Before that, he used to get food from some kind of animal ["a quadam bestia"].[20]

[17] Id., p. 63, lines 29–32.
[18] Id., p. 70, lines 1–3.
[19] Id., p. 71, line 11.
[20] Id., pp. 70–1, lines 8–11.

The name 'Paul' was evidently designed to recall the Egyptian Paul the Hermit. Indeed, some modern scholars have simply identified 'Paul the Spiritual Hermit' of the *Navigatio* with his Egyptian namesake.[21] But the adjective 'spiritalis' recalls the writings of an even more authoritative namesake of the Irish hermit. In his First Epistle to the Corinthians, St Paul of Tarsus had discussed the resurrection of the body in terms which posit a progression from what is 'animale' to what is 'spiritale':

> So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption: it shall rise in incorruption. It is sown in dishonour: it shall rise in glory. It is sown in weakness: it shall rise in power. It is sown a natural body: it shall rise a spiritual body [seminatur corpus animale | surgit corpus spiritale]. If there be a natural body, there is also a spiritual body [si est corpus animale | est et spiritale], as it is written: The first Adam was made into a living soul: the last Adam into a quickening spirit [factus est Adam in animam viventem | novissimus Adam in spiritum vivificantem]. Yet that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is animal: afterwards that which is spiritual [sed non prius quod spiritale est | sed quod animale est | deinde quod spiritale]..... Therefore, as we have borne the image of the earthly, let us bear also the image of the heavenly.[22]

The concept 'spiritalis' provides one key to the parody of Jerome's *Vita Pauli* in Chapter xxvi. The most famous characteristic of the Egyptian Paul was that he was, like the prophet Elijah,[23] nourished by bread from heaven. A raven brought him half a loaf each day, and when St Anthony came to visit him in his hermitage, the raven doubled the rations to a whole loaf.[24] The motif of heaven-sent bread was perfectly familiar to the author of the *Navigatio*: in Chapter xii, when Brendan and his companions reach the island-monastery of St Ailbe, the narrative of the *Navigatio* is clearly modelled on that of Jerome's *Vita Pauli*.[25] The 24 monks of St Ailbe's island community drink water from

[21] Selmer, *Navigatio*, p. 91 and note 92, simply identifies the hermit of Chapter xxvi as the Egyptian Paul: 'Paul, *primus eremita*, in conformity with the Irish equivalent of a desert, is placed on a deserted island in the Atlantic'. Selmer is followed by later scholars, for example, by Patricia M. Rumsey, *Sacred Time in Early Christian Ireland. The Monks of the Navigatio and the Céli Dé in Dialogue to Explore the Theologies of Time and the Liturgy of the Hours in Pre-Viking Ireland* (London and New York: T&T Clark, 2007), p. 10, note 68: 'A favourite figure in early Ireland; he appears on several High Crosses in the company of Antony, "Father of monks"'; see also p. 85, note 102. Notwithstanding this small slip, Rumsey's book is an invaluable guide to liturgical references in the *Navigatio*. Joannes Orlandi, *Navigatio Sancti Brendani*. Vol. 1: *Introduzione* [the only volume published] (Milan and Varese: Istituto editoriale cisalpino, 1968, pp. 110–13), provided a brief but more sophisticated statement of the relationship between Chapter xxvi of the *Navigatio* and Jerome's *Vita Pauli*; further discussion of sources and analogues for Chapter xxvi of the *Navigatio* can be found in Clara Strijbosch, *The Seafaring Saint: Sources and Analogues of the Twelfth-Century* Voyage of Saint Brendan (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2000), pp. 48–9, 120, 147, and in Jude S. Mackley, *The Legend of St Brendan: A Comparative Study of the Latin and Anglo-Norman Versions* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2008), pp. 214–22.

[22] 1 Cor. 15.42-49. Quotations of the Vulgate from *Biblia Sacra iuxta vulgatam versionem*, ed. Robert Weber and Roger Gryson (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, fourth edition, 1994); English quotations from *The Holy Bible* [Douay-Rheims] (London: Burns Oates and Washbourne, 1914), with occasional silent changes to bring it even closer to the Latin.

[23] I Kgs 17.6; see Leclerc et al., *Jérôme: Trois vies*, pp. 166–7, note 5.

[24] Chapter 11, par. 1: Leclerc et al., *Jérôme: trois vies*, p. 168.

[25] On St Ailbe and his cult, see Tomás O'Sullivan, 'The Miraculous Production of Water from Rock and the Impact of Exegesis on Early Irish Hagiography', *Eolas: the Journal of the American Society of Irish Medieval Studies* 3 (2009), pp. 19–50 (at pp. 38–42).

a clear spring at their communal meal, and, like the Egyptian St Paul, are providentially provided with bread, getting an additional loaf on Sundays and feast days.[26] No raven appears to them: 'Where the bread comes from . . . is unknown to us. All we know is that God, in his kindness, sends it to us by one of His creatures': this is a monastic community after all, not solitary hermits like Elijah or Paul of Thebes. A double ration of bread is provided when the Irish monks arrive. The phrase of the *Navigatio*, 'and now, on your arrival, we have been given double rations' ['Modo in aduentu uestro duplicem annonam habemus'],[27] clearly echoes the account of the meeting of St Anthony and St Paul in Jerome 'in honour of your arrival Christ has doubled his soldiers' rations' ['uerum ad aduentum tuum, militibus suis Christus duplicauit annonam.'].[28]

If Chapter xii describes an ideal monastery, Chapter xxvi describes, not the ideal hermitage (where food would of course be needed): instead, a landscape which shows that hermits are important because they attend fully to the 'one thing needful' (Lk. 10.42), the divine presence made manifest in Christ. St Brendan's initial description of Paul, that he has lived for 60 years 'without any bodily sustenance' ('sine ullu uictu corporali') directs us once more to I Corinthians, in this case to the 'spiritual food' ('escam spiritalem') which fed the Israelites in the desert:

> . . . our fathers were all under the cloud: and all passed through the sea. And all in Moses were baptized, in the cloud and in the sea: And did all eat the same spiritual food: and all drank the same spiritual drink: and they drank of the spiritual rock that followed them: and the rock was Christ [et omnes eandem escam spiritalem manducaverunt | et omnes eundem potum spiritalem biberunt | bibebant autem de spiritali consequenti eos petra | petra autem erat Christus].[29]

The island of the *Navigatio*, bare rock from which water springs, clearly refers to St Paul's phrase, 'and that rock was Christ'.[30] This island is difficult to land on, because it is as high as it is broad.[31] It is very small: just a stadium, less than 200 metres, in circumference:

> Cum autem appropinquassent ad litus, minime poterant aditum inuenire pre altitudine ripe illius. Erat autem parua et nimis rotunda illa insula quasi unius stadii. De terra uero nihil habuit desuper, sed petra nuda in modum silicis apparuit. Quantum erat latitudinis et longitudinis, tantum et altitudinis.[32]
>
> When they got close to the shore, they found it impossible to land because the cliffs were so high. It was small, and perfectly round, and about a stadium in circumference. It had no soil on top, just naked flint-like rock. It was just as high as it was long and broad.

[26] Selmer, p. 32, Chapter xii, lines 57–59.
[27] Ibid., lines 60–61.
[28] Leclerc et al., *Jérôme: trois vies*, ch. 10, p. 166, lines 13–15.
[29] 1 Cor. 10.1-4.
[30] See O'Sullivan, 'The Miraculous Production of Water from Stone', especially pp. 44–6 on Chapter xxvi of the *Navigatio*.
[31] Not nearly as difficult as landing on St Ailbe's island, in Chapter xii (Selmer, p. 29, lines 5–12); this relative ease presumably reflects the spiritual progress made by St Brendan's crew in the meantime.
[32] Selmer, p. 71, lines 11–16.

The phrase 'latitudinis et longitudinis' ('breadth and length') seems clumsy at first reading: if the island is perfectly round ('nimis rotunda'), there can be no distinction between its length and its breadth. But by using three words (length, breadth and height) to emphasize its three-dimensionality, the *Navigatio* hints that the tiny island has something about it of the Heavenly Jerusalem, where 'longitudo et latitudo et altitudo eius aequalia sunt' ('the length and the height and the breadth thereof are equal').[33] It is a foretaste only: the vast Heavenly Jerusalem will be foursquare, not round (Rev. 21.16), and made not of rock but of gold and precious stones. It will have 12 gates, 3 to each side; but it is only when the Irish monks have circled the hermit's island that they discern a tiny break in its perfect roundness:

> Cum autem circuissent nauigando illam insulam, inuenerunt portum strictum ita ut proram nauicule uix capere potuisset, et ascensum difficillimum ad ascendendum. Tum sanctus Brendanus dixit fratribus suis: "Expectate hic donec reuertar ad uos. Non licet autem uobis intrare sine licencia uiri Dei qui commoratur in hoc loco."[34]
>
> When they had sailed round that island, they came upon a narrow harbour, barely wide enough to let the prow of the boat pass through. The way to the top was very difficult to climb. Then St Brendan said to his brethren: "Wait here until I return to you. You are not allowed to land without the permission of the Man of God who dwells in this place."

The 'narrow harbour' ('portum strictum') puns on 'the narrow gate' ('angustam portam') of Matthew 7.13: 'Enter ye in at the narrow gate: for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction.'[35] The difficult climb to the top recalls the difficult path to the heights of contemplation. The most famous meditation on the stages of achieving contemplation was the Gradual Psalms or Songs of Ascent;

[33] Rev. 21.16.
[34] Selmer, p. 71, lines 17–21.
[35] 'Angustam portam' is found both in the Vulgate and in the Old Latin text of Sankt Gallen Cod. 50, p. 51 (online facsimile at www.e-codices.unifr.ch/en/csg/0050/5, consulted 20 July 2013). The *Navigatio* probably uses the variant 'strictum' here because it has already used 'angustus' when describing the difficult landing on St Ailbe's island: Chapter xii, p. 29, lines 10–12: 'apparuit illis portus angustus, tantum unius nauis receptio' ('a narrow harbour appeared to them, just big enough to take a single boat'). For a famous use of the 'portum/portam' pun, see Venantius Fortunatus, 'Pange lingua', Stanza 10 (the final stanza) where the Cross is seen as a ship carrying (Christ) the world's ransom (line 1), then as a sailor ['nauta'], preparing a port ('portum') for a shipwrecked world (line 2), and finally as [the door-posts] sprinkled by the sacred blood poured from the lamb's body (line 3: cf. Exod. 12.7, 22). To make sense, the 'portum' ('port') of line 2 has to be re-supplied in line 3 as an implied 'portam' ('door = doorposts') sprinkled with blood: 'Sola digna tu fuisti ferre pretium saeculi | Atque portum praeparare nauta mundo naufrago | quem sacer cruor perunxit fusus agni corpore'. For the hymn, see *One Hundred Latin Hymns, Ambrose to Aquinas*, ed. and trans. Peter G. Walsh and Christopher Husch; Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library, 18 (Harvard University Press: Cambridge, MA, and London, 2012), No. 20, and notes on pp. 422–4 (where however the implied pun is not noticed).

(Ps. 119–33 in the Vulgate, 120–34 in the Hebrew numbering).[36] The author of the *Navigatio* was certainly familiar with this set of psalms: on the Island of Steadfast Men (Chapter xvii), the monastic community had sung the Gradual Psalms together.[37] Appropriately, at the summit the Spiritual Hermit greets Brendan with 'Ecce quam bonum et quam iocundum habitare fratres in unum'[38] ('Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity'), the opening of the fourteenth (penultimate) Gradual Psalm. This psalm was seen to celebrate the fraternal unity that should reign in monastic communities; indeed, St Augustine had seen the psalm as having 'begotten' monasteries: here, the hermit welcomes the abbot and his community.[39]

The meeting of St Brendan and the Spiritual Hermit is set within a symbolic landscape: this shows, once more, that the *Navigatio* is composed in counterpoint to Jerome's *Vita Pauli*:

> Cum autem uenerabilis pater peruenisset ad summitatem illius insule, uidit duas speluncas, ostium contra ostium, in latere insule contra ortum solis, ac fontem paruissimum, rotundum in modum patule, surgentem de petra ante ostium spelunce ubi miles Christi residebat. At ubi surgebat predictus fons, statim petra sorbebat illum. Sanctus uero Brendanus cum appropinquasset ad ostium spelunce unius, de altera egressus est senex foras obuiam sibi, dicens: "Ecce quam bonum et quam iocundum habitare fratres in unum."[40]
>
> When the venerable father [Brendan] had arrived at the summit of that island, he saw two caves, the mouth of one facing the mouth of the other, on the side of the island which faced the sun's rising; and a tiny fountain, round like a plate, springing from the rock before the mouth of the cave in which the soldier of Christ lived. When the fountain sprang from the rock, the rock immediately re-absorbed it. As soon as St Brendan got to the mouth of one cave, the old man came out of the other, saying: "How good and pleasant it is for brothers to live in unity."

The two matching caves solve a structural problem in the narrative of Chapter xxvi. The most famous tableau in Jerome's *Vita Pauli* was the moment when Paul the hermit and Anthony the abbot settled how to break the heavenly bread:

[36] See the extensive discussions of the term 'canticum graduum' by Augustine, in his sermons on this set of psalms: *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, eds. Eligius Dekkers and Joannes Fraipont, *Corpus Christianorum Series Latina* XL (Turnhout: Brepols, 1956), pp. 1780–937, especially the sentence 'Et quis est iste mons quo adscendimus, nisi Dominus Iesus Christus?' (p. 1777, lines 30–31); Maria Boulding, with John E. Rotelle and Michael Fiedrowicz, trans., *Saint Augustine: Expositions of the Psalms*, 6 vols (New York: New City Press, 2000–04), vol. 5, pp. 497–526; vol. 6, pp. 13–189, especially 'Who is the mountain? Who else but our Lord Jesus?', vol. 5, p. 498. On the Gradual Psalms in Irish tradition, see Martin McNamara, *The Psalms in the Early Irish Church* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), pp. 187, 214, 231–3, 329–36.

[37] Selmer, p. 51, line 32: 'et quindecim gradus cantabant sedendo', 'and they sang the fifteen Gradual Psalms while seated'.

[38] Ps. 132.1 (Iuxta LXX) (Hebrew numbering, 133:1); Selmer, p. 72, lines 28–29.

[39] 'Ista enim uerba psalterii, iste dulce sonus, ista suauis melodia tam in cantico quam in intellectu, etiam monasteria peperit': *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, eds. Dekkers and Fraipont, p. 1927; 'Those words of the psalm, this lovely sound, this song equally sweet as a melody sung or a message understood, has given birth to monasteries': *Expositions of the Psalms*, trans. Boulding et al., vol. 6, p. 175.

[40] Selmer, p. 71, lines 22–29.

> When they had given thanks to the Lord, they both sat down at the edge of a spring as clear as glass. Here a dispute arose as to which of them should break the bread and they continued to argue until the day had almost turned to evening. Paul argued that it was the custom for the guest to do so, while Antony countered with the rights of age. At last it was decided that they should hold the bread at each end, and then if each one pulled towards himself, he would keep the bit left in his hands ["Tandem consilium fuit, ut adprehenso e regione pane, dum ad se quisque nititur, pars sua remaneret in manibus"]. Then they bent over the spring and drank a little of the water, and offering to God a sacrifice of praise, they passed the night in prayer.[41]

In Jerome's tableau, the two monks sit together, so that their seated bodies flank the loaf which they break between them. The *Navigatio* now creates a tableau in which no bread will be broken; instead the round fountain is central. The two flanking caves provide an intriguing visual setting for the fountain, a puzzle only resolved when, 60 years later, Abbot Brendan stands in front of one cave and is recognized and greeted by the Hermit Paul who emerges from the other. Irish tradition saw dark places like caves as appropriate settings for the meditative concentration needed to compose stories and poetry.[42] Not only hermits, but other living creatures (animals especially) live in caves. Providence has provided the facing caves as a visual setting for the revelatory encounter, between hermit and founder-abbot, to take place 60 years after the caves first appeared. Monastic readers would have understood that when Brendan and Paul each stand before a cave and face each other across the fountain, they re-enact a tableau which makes it clear that the fountain symbolizes Christ crucified. The tableau provides a visual cue: it would have encouraged monastic readers to recall an ancient responsory, sung at the moment of Christ's death on Good Friday, which proclaimed that Christ 'will be known between two living creatures / animals' ('in medio duorum animalium innotesceris').[43] The rock not only produces the fountain but immediately reabsorbs any excess, so that the fountain, though not stagnant and therefore 'living water', remains round: not only like a plate, but also like a Eucharistic loaf.[44] In terms of I Corinthians 10:4 (quoted above) rock and living water together manifest Christ: the hermit has come to perceive that Christians are founded on[45] and nourished from[46] Christ, the rock, and can now share this central Christian insight both with St Brendan and with his monks. For the first 30 years an otter had brought the Spiritual

[41] Jerome, *Vita Pauli*, ch. xi: Leclerc et al., p. 168; trans. White, *Early Christian Lives*, pp. 80–1.

[42] É. Ó Carragáin, 'The Meeting', p. 36. Séamus Heaney gave the theme classic modern expression in his poem 'In Gallarus Oratory', *Door into the Dark* (London: Faber, 1969), p. 22.

[43] The responsory 'Domine audivi', based on the Old Latin text of the Canticle of Habbakuk: see É. Ó Carragáin, 'The Meeting', pp. 4–5, and idem, *Ritual and the Rood*, pp. 201–8. For a good recent discussion, see Richard N. Bailey, '*In Medio Duorum Animalium*: Habbakuk, the Ruthwell Cross and Bede's Life of St Cuthbert', in Elizabeth Mullins and Diarmuid Scully (eds.), *'Listen, O Isles, unto Me': Studies in Medieval Word and Image in Honour of Jennifer O'Reilly* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2011), pp. 243–52.

[44] Every surviving sculptural representation of Saints Paul and Anthony represents the loaf as round: see É. Ó Carragáin, 'The Meeting', pls I–XII.

[45] Cf. Eph. 2.20 and Col. 2.7.

[46] Cf. Jn 4.10; 7.38; 19.34.

Hermit a fish, with kindling to cook it, every third day, and always at the ninth hour.[47] The phrase 'on the third day' recalls the Resurrection; and, after his Resurrection, Christ had himself cooked a fish by the Sea of Galilee, so that his disciples could eat with him.[48] The ninth hour was the traditional time of Christ's death on the Cross.[49] Because of this, during seasons of fasting such as Lent, Mass was celebrated after the office of none: people did not break their fast until after the none-tide Mass.[50] During these first 30 years, the rock already provided the Spiritual Hermit with a trickle of water to drink, but that tiny stream had not yet achieved the fullness of a round pool. Water and fish: from the beginning of his stay on the island the Spiritual Hermit was already fully sustained by elements which Christ, in his death and after his Resurrection, had provided to nourish his disciples. Then, after 30 years, the otter and its fish disappear; instead, the Spiritual Hermit discerns the two caves and the round pool issuing from, and absorbed by, the rock: he will henceforth be sustained entirely from and through Christ. Paul the Egyptian hermit was clad in rough garments, but the Irish Paul is naked and covered by snow-white hair, so that only his face and eyes are visible: he has regained the naked innocence of a neophyte at baptism (his white hair gleaming like a baptismal robe), or of Adam in Paradise, before the Fall and its attendant shame.[51]

The Spiritual Hermit tells his, very Irish, life story to St Brendan and his monks. He had joined St Patrick's monastery aged 10; after 50 years as a monk, he was serving as custodian of the community cemetery. One day, when he was digging a grave in which to bury a deacon, an unknown old man appeared to him and directed: 'Don't dig the grave there, because it is someone else's grave.' Paul asks his visitant who he is. 'Don't you know me? I am your abbot' says St Patrick, who tells Paul he had died the day before ('Heri enim migraui de seculo': St Patrick presents his own death as an exodus from the world).[52] He is to be buried in the grave Paul has been digging ('Ipse est enim locus sepulture mee').[53] The Abbot shows Paul another place where the deacon is to be buried, and commands Paul, having buried the deacon, to go to the seashore next day and embark on a boat, steered by Providence, which will bring him to 'the place where you will await the day of your death' ('que te ducet ad locum ubi expectabis diem mortis tue.').[54] He is to tell no one about this ghostly visitation or these instructions. This detailed narrative is inspired by the motif, common in Irish hagiography, in which an angel reveals to an Irish abbot his 'Place of Resurrection', *locus Resurrectionis*, where he with his community around

[47] On the significance of otters, see Richard Bailey, 'In medio duorum animalium', pp. 248–50.
[48] Jn 21.9.
[49] Mt. 27.46.
[50] Joseph A. Jungmann, *The Mass of the Roman Rite: its Origins and Development*, 2 vols (Dublin, 1951–55: reprint, Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1986), vol. I, pp. 245–52. This regulation provided a practical motive for the anticipation, in various European vernaculars, of 'the ninth hour' into 'noon' or its equivalents.
[51] *Vita Sancti Pauli*, ch. xvii: Leclerc *et al.*, *Jérôme: Trois vies*, pp. 180–1; White, *Early Christian Lives*, pp. 83–4.
[52] Selmer, p. 73, line 58.
[53] Ibid., lines 58–9.
[54] Ibid., lines 61–2.

him are to await the Day of Judgement and the resurrection of the body.[55] Evidently St Patrick the Abbot has had supernatural instructions about where, precisely, he is to be buried; he now in turn directs Paul how to get to his own place of Resurrection. Jerome's Paul died and was buried by lions, but the death of the Irish hermit is not described: instead, his abbot has given him his final mission: 'as I was told in advance, here I must wait in this flesh for the Day of Judgement' ('Et hic debeo modo, sicut fuerat mihi promissum, expectare diem iudicii in ista carne.').[56] He has become an image of Christian identification with Christ: 'for that rock was Christ' on which he lives, and from the rock he drinks living water, from a pool as round as any Eucharistic loaf. When St Brendan arrives Paul is 150 years old: he has already lived a full psalter of years.

The little 'port' which appeared to Brendan and his monks seems designed to recall, not only the narrow gate ('portam') of Matthew 7.13, but also a Eucharistic rite: just before communion, a sliver of the loaf was broken off and inserted into the wine of the consecrated chalice. The Irish vernacular liturgical tract in the Stowe Missal sees the priest as re-enacting, at this moment, the role of Longinus on Calvary. The commentary envisages the Mass celebrated in an oriented church, in which the priest, standing before the altar (with his back to the congregation) to perform the rite, would have faced east:

> The particle that is cut off from the bottom of the half which is on the [priest's] left hand is the figure of the wounding with the lance in the armpit of the right side; for westward was Christ's face on the Cross, to wit, *contra civitatem*, and eastward was the face of Longinus; what to him was left to Christ was right.[57]

If the narrow port which interrupts the perfect roundness of the little island does indeed refer to this moment just before communion, then the little island should be understood to symbolize precisely that the Eucharistic breaking of bread proclaims 'Christ, and him crucified'.[58] Its shape recalls the moment when the spear opened

[55] On the motif, see Hubertus Lutterbach, 'Der *locus resurrectionis*: Ziel der irischen *peregrini*: zugleich ein Beitrag zur Eschatologie im frühen Mittelalter', *Römische Quartalschrift für christliche Altertumskunde und Kirchengeschichte* 89 (Rom, Freiburg, Wien: Herder, 1994), pp. 26–46; on the importance of the idea for the layout of Irish monastic sites, see Tomás Ó Carragáin, *Churches in early Medieval Ireland: Architecture, Ritual and Memory* (Yale: Yale University Press, 2010), pp. 73, 80, 85, 149–50, 274–5.
[56] Selmer, p. 76, lines 87–88. The phrase 'in ista carne' is reminiscent of Job 19.26: 'in carne mea videbo Deum' ['and in my flesh I shall see God'].
[57] *Thesaurus Palaeohibernicus: A Collection of Old Irish glosses, Scholia, Prose and Verse*, eds. Whitley Stokes and John Strachan, 2 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1901–03), Vol. II, p. 254, par. 15. The rite of *Commixtio* is clearly represented in the image of the Meeting of Saints Paul and Anthony on the Nigg Stone, Easter Ross, Scotland: there a sliver is cut into the lower left quadrant of the round Eucharistic loaf: É. Ó Carragáin, 'The Meeting', pp. 8–14; *Ritual and the Rood*, pp. 158–60; Isabel Henderson, '"This Wonderful Monument": the Cross-slab at Nigg, Easter Ross, Scotland', in *New Offerings, Ancient Treasures: Studies in Medieval Art for George Henderson*, eds. Paul Binski and William Noel (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 2001), pp. 115–47 (at p. 125). On the phrase 'contra civitatem', perhaps see Isa. 65.12, quoted in Rom. 10.21.
[58] 1 Cor. 2.2: 'Iesum Christum | et hunc crucifixum'.

Christ's side, so that blood and water, Baptism and the Eucharist, can flow forth to nourish all creation with Christ's life. In his hymn *Pange lingua* Venantius Fortunatus had dramatized this idea in a brilliant swerve from the microcosm of Christ's body to the macrocosm of the Universe:

> Mite corpus perforatur; sanguis, unda profluit
> *His tender body is pierced, and blood and water flow from it:*
> Terra, pontus, astra, mundus quo lauantur flumine.[59]
> *in its flood earth, sea, sky and the Universe are cleansed.*

The hermit, after he first welcomed and recognized Brendan, told him to invite his crew onto the summit of the island; and greeted each monk by his name. Like Brendan, they see the symbolic island landscape as Paul himself has come to see it.[60] Though there is no implication that they have become as heroic as Paul, they can all benefit from the insights his attentive fidelity has attained. Paul now prophesies the final stages of their seven-year adventure, and provides sustenance for St Brendan and his crew for their next voyage, which will take 40 days and end on Holy Saturday. They are to fill their vessels from the water that springs from the rock. When they have filled their vessels he blesses them, as once more they set off towards the south. During their Lenten voyage, water from the rock-island of the man of God is their only sustenance: drunk every third day, it ensures that, like Paul, they are satisfied and without hunger or thirst ['et erat illis cibus tantum aqua, quam acceperant ab insula uiri Dei, per triduum reficiendo sine ulla esurie et siti permanentes leti omnes.'][61] On Holy Saturday, as Paul had foretold, they arrive at the island where they are to celebrate Easter. We were not told how long it took them to fill their vessels with water from the rock, nor on what day precisely they left Paul's *locus resurrectionis*. But if their voyage took 40 days, it must have begun on the Monday or Tuesday after the First Sunday of Lent: certainly well within its Octave. This provides us with the final key to the witty *contrafactum* of Jerome in Chapter xxvi.[62] Any monastic reader throughout Europe would have known that the Gospel for the First Sunday in Lent was Matthew 4.1-11, the fullest account in the Gospels of Christ's 40 days' fast and his temptations in the desert: this lection had provided a rationale for the Lenten season. The first temptation is about bread (and rock):

> And the tempter coming said to him: If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. Who answered and said: It is written, "Not in bread alone doth man live, but in every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God" ["Non in pane solo vivet homo sed in omni verbo quod procedit de ore Dei"].[63]

[59] Walsh et al., *One Hundred Latin Hymns*, No. 20, Stanza 7, and notes on pp. 422–4. For further references to the motif, see É. Ó Carragáin, *Ritual and the Rood*, pp. 6, 150–1.

[60] Selmer, p. 72, lines 30–34.

[61] Id., p. 76, chapter xxvii, lines 4–5.

[62] Chapter xxvi of the *Navigatio* is not the earliest Irish *contrafactum* of the meeting of St Paul and St Anthony. In the early eighth century, Adomnán, in a subtle parody of Jerome's narrative, told how St Columba honoured Crónán, whom he perceived to be an (incognito) bishop, by declining (as a mere priest) to break the Eucharistic bread with the bishop, at the community Mass: *Vita Columbae*, Book I, Chapter xliv, discussed in É. Ó Carragáin, 'Ruthwell and Iona', pp. 139–40; Id., *Ritual and the Rood*, pp. 156–7.

The act of reading itself was valued, in monastic culture, primarily as food for prayer. A monastic reader of the *Navigatio* would have understood Chapter xxvi in relation to the act of meditative reading (the effort to 'heare . . ., read, marke, learne and inwardly digeste')[64] on which he or she was engaged:

> The fragmentation of the concept of prayer inevitable upon its more schematic analysis has made the use of such terms as "reading", "meditation", and "prayer" misleading. For Anselm and his predecessors these were different aspects of the same thing, not separate exercises in their own right. Reading was an action of the whole person, by which the meaning of a text was absorbed, until it became prayer. It was frequently compared to eating – "Taste by reading, chew by understanding, swallow by loving and rejoicing," and the text "O taste and see how gracious the Lord is" was applied more often to the reading of the scriptures than to the Eucharist before the twelfth century.[65]

The paragraph just quoted provides an excellent modern guide to the way in which an early medieval monastic audience would have heard or read Chapter xxvi of the *Navigatio*, enjoyed its wit, and learnt from it how hermits inspire and sustain monastic communities.

[63] Mt. 4.3–4. For the uses of Mt. 4:1–11, see Theodor Klauser, *Das römische Capitulare Evangeliorum: Texte und Untersuchungen zu seiner ältesten Geschichte*, I: Typen (Münster: Aschendorff, 1971), p. 19, No. 56, and all later lectionaries; Ursula Lenker, *Die westsächsische Evangelienversion und die Perikopenordnungen im angelsächsischen England* (Münchener Universitäts-Schriften, Philosophische Fakultät, Texte und Untersuchungen zur Englischen Philologie, 20) (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1997), p. 309, No. 67.

[64] First Prayer-Book of Edward VI, Collect for the second Sunday in Advent: *The First and Second Prayer Books of Edward VI* (London: Dent, Everyman's Library, 1910), p. 34.

[65] Sr Benedicta Ward (trans.) *The Prayers and Meditations of St Anselm* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1973), Introduction, pp. 43–4. I am grateful to the late Malcolm B. Parkes who in 1973, when this book first appeared, perceived its importance, and recommended strongly that I buy a copy and, as he then put it, 'inwardly digest' its implications.