

## IV.

# Life of St. Brendanus.<sup>1</sup>

HERE BEGINNETH THE LIFE OF SAINT BRENDANUS.

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The very holy Brendanus, the son of Finloc and the grandson of Altus, was descended from the race of Moginus Stragule, of the region of the Mumensians. He was a man of great abstinence, eminent in virtues, and president of near three thousand monks. And when he was in the exercise of his virtues, at a place which is called The Grove of Brendanew, it happened that there came to him in an evening, one of the fathers, whose name was Barurchus, and was a grandson of king Neil. And when the said father had asked him many questions, he began to shed tears, and prostrating himself on the ground, he continued his discourse. Saint Brendanus raised him from the earth, and kissing him said, "Father, we have sorrow by thy arrival, thou didst not come for our consolation; thou oughtest to bring joy to the brethren; on account of the Lord,

<sup>1</sup> From the Cott. MSS. in the British Museum. Vespasian, A. XIV.

show us the word of God, and refresh our minds by relating the divers wonders which thou hast seen in the ocean.

Then Saint Barurchus, when these words were concluded, began to relate respecting a certain Island, saying, "My young son, named Mernoc, a steward over the poor of Christ, departed from my presence, and wishing to live in solitude, found a very delightful island by a stony mountain. After a long time I was informed that he had several monks with him, and that God had through him performed many wonderful works. Therefore I went to visit him, and when after nine days I came near him, he hastened to meet me with his brethren, for the Lord had revealed to him my coming. And as we travelled in the aforesaid island, they proceeded to meet us, and we were as brethren from different bee-hives. For their dwelling places were scattered, yet their intercourse was unanimously founded in faith hope and charity. They took refreshment together for performing the work of God, and had one church; they had no other food than apples nuts and roots, and various kinds of herbs. The brethren, after their evening devotions, passed the night in their several cells until cock-crowing, or the ringing of the bell.

As we, and my son were walking over the whole island, he led me to the sea coast, towards the west, where was a little ship, and he said to me, "Go aboard the ship, and we will sail towards the eastern side, to an island that is called The promised land of the saints, which the Lord will very soon give to our successors." We therefore went aboard, and beginning to sail, clouds overwhelmed us on all sides, and to that degree that we could scarcely see either the prow or the stern of the ship. This having taken place for the space of an hour, a great light shone around, and land which was spacious, fruitful, and abounding in bearing apples appeared. And when the ship rested on the ground, we descended, and began to go around, and perambulated the island for fifteen days, and we could not find

its end. Also we saw no herbs without blossoms, nor trees without fruits, and its precious stones were of every kind. Moreover on the fifteenth day we came to a river which flowed from the eastern part towards the west; and when we reflected on all these things, we were in doubt respecting what we ought to do; we were desirous to pass the river, but we waited for the advice of God.

Whilst we spoke on these things among ourselves, there suddenly appeared one before us, with great splendour, who immediately called us by our names, and saluted us, saying, "O brave! good brethren, for God has revealed to you the land which he is about to give to his saints. For it is a moiety of the island, as far as the river, and it is not lawful for you to pass farther, therefore return to one of them." When he had said these things, we asked him if he were One, or by what name he should be called; who said, "Why dost thou ask, whether I am one, why dost thou not rather enquire respecting that island, for as thou see'st it now, so it remains, from the beginning of the world; therefore thou dost not want any meat or drink or clothing, for thou hast been one year in this island, and hast not tasted meat or drink, nor hast thou been oppressed with sleep; this darkness overwhelmed thee therefore, that thou mightest most certainly know the day, as there is never any blindness or darkness here; for our God Jesus Christ is its light. And unless men had acted contrary to the commandment of God, they would have remained in this pleasantness." Which we hearing, shed tears; and having rested, forthwith began our journey; and the aforesaid man came with us to the shore, where our ships were.

Having gone aboard our ship, the man was taken away, and we came through the aforesaid darkness to the delightful island, where when the brethren saw us, they greatly exulted on our arrival, having for a long time bewailed, saying, "Why, fathers, have you dismissed our sheep without a shepherd, wandering in the wood. And we have known our Abbot to depart frequently from us to some

place, and there remain, sometimes for a month, sometimes for two weeks or one, more or less." When I heard this, I began to comfort them, saying, "Brethren, do not think of any thing but what is good; our discourse without doubt is, Whether the gate of paradise is here, the island which is called The Land of Promise of the Saints, where night never takes place, and the day never ends." The abbot Mernos is frequently there, for the angels of God keep it; do not you know by the fragrance of our vestments that we have been in the paradise of God." Then the brethren answered, saying, "Father, we know that thou hast been in the paradise of God, for we have often proved it by the fragrance of the vestments of our abbot, by the odour of which our nostrils were held for nearly forty days. And I remained there two weeks with my son, without meat and drink, and had such corporal sufficiency that to others we appeared to be filled with wine. But after forty days, having received the blessing of the brethren and the abbot, I went back with my companions that I might return to my cell, to which I shall go to morrow."

These things being heard, the brother Brendanus, with his congregation, prostrated themselves on the ground, and glorified God, saying, "God is just in all his ways, and holy in all his works, who has revealed to his servants so great and such wonders, and is blessed in his gifts, who has this day refreshed us by his spiritual conduct.

These words being concluded, Saint Brendanus said, "Let us proceed to obtain refreshment, and to the new command of the body." And that night being passed over, and the blessing of the brethren being received, Saint Baruchus returned to his cell. Then Saint Brendanus chose fourteen from all his congregation, amongst whom was a most eminent young man, and worthy of God, one Maculus, who was elected from his infancy, and remained to the end of his life in the praises of God; which if any one would know his venerable life, he would find that his first works, and his latest were accounted eminent. These per-

sons being taken, he shut himself up in his oratory with them, and spoke to them, saying, " My dearest fellow-warriors, I request your advice and assistance, because my heart, and all my thoughts are united in one desire, if it is the will of God, that the land of promise of the saints of which father Barurchus spoke, should in the heart of my spirit.<sup>1</sup>     \*     \*     \*     \*     \*

<sup>1</sup> The Manuscript here ends abruptly with a few unintelligible words.