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## Navigating the use of biblical numerology in Nauigatio Sancti Brendani

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NAVIGATING THE USE OF BIBLICAL NUMEROLOGY  
IN *NAVIGATIO SANCTI BRENDANI*

by

DARCY IRELAND

Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the degree of Master of Arts in Theology

at

Providence College

2015



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One wintry day during the spring semester of 2012, a theology postgraduate student at Providence College interested in Augustine and early medieval Greek patristics perused the Latin and classics section of the campus library. A little book in an earthy brown cover caught his eye. The fading gold lettering on the binding cover read: "THE VOYAGE OF SAINT BRENDAN." That book has changed my life forever. Here, I would like to deeply thank Dr. Sandra Keating for patiently helping me to steer the oars of the *curragh* "row-boat" that has been this thesis project. The encouraging words and many chats with Fr. John Vidmar and Dr. Patrick Reid helped me to make sure that the sails of the project were opened and closed at the right times. I'm thankful to Jonathan Wooding, Sir Warwick Fairfax Chair of Celtic Studies at the University of Sydney, for many wonderful discussions about the "big" text that is the subject of this project during this voyage. I'm grateful, too, to John Carey, Caitríona Ó Dochartaigh and my other friends and colleagues of the Department of Early and Medieval Irish at University College Cork, where I labored over a MA Celtic Civilisation degree during the 2013-14 academic year, for the ways in which they helped increase my knowledge of the waters through which my *curragh* has sailed. God used my family, particularly my mother, to provide allegorical sustenance so that I might continue unabated. Finally, I attribute the miraculous winds of my "voyage" to Julie Klarić, who has been supernaturally brought into my life for many reasons, pertinently to give me the motivation I needed to bring this voyage to an end.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- ACW* *Ancient Christian Writers*. 66 vols. New York and Ramsey, N.J.: Newman Press, 1946-2012.
- CCSA* *Corpus Christianorum, Series Apocryphorum*. Turnhout: Brepols, 1983—.
- CCSL* *Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina*. Turnhout: Brepols, 1953—.
- CSEL* *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum*. Vienna, Prague, Leipzig: Temsky, etc., 1866—.
- DIAS* The Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies
- NPNF*<sup>1</sup> *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Series 1*. Ed. P. Schaff. 14 vols. New York and Edinburgh, U.K.: T&T Clark, 1886-1900.
- NPNF*<sup>2</sup> *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Series 2*. Ed. P. Schaff. 14 vols. New York and Edinburgh, U.K.: T&T Clark, 1886-1900.
- PG* *Patrologia cursus completus. Series Graeca*. Ed. J.-P. Migne. 221 vols. Paris: J.-P. Migne and Garnier Frères, 1841-1880, rep. 1905.
- PL* *Patrologia cursus completus. Series Latina*. Ed. J.-P. Migne. 221 vols. Paris: J.-P. Migne and Garnier Frères, 1841-1880, rep. 1905.
- RIA* Royal Irish Academy
- TFC* *The Fathers of the Church*. 127 vols. Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1947-2013.
- VSH* *Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae*. Ed. Charles Plummer. 2 vols. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1910, rep. Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1997.

## I. Introduction<sup>1</sup>

*Navigating the influence of biblical numerology upon Navigatio S. Brendani*

One of the consequences of the life of Christ, among many, is the ambiguity that exists within the assortment of sacred texts that were written in the first number of centuries of the Christian dispensation. Certain passages within these texts, whether ultimately catalogued as canonical or apocryphal in regard, were more difficult to be accepted through an exclusively literal interpretation than other excerpts. Persons who sought to emulate the life of Christ were left with an ocean of mysteries in reading these texts from the literal perspective. Such late ante-Nicene and early Nicene thinkers as Origen, Jerome, and Augustine wrestled with these mysteries out of a desire to know the word of God insofar as could be fathomed for the benefit of the Church. These patristic writers not only discovered that Scripture could be read from several types of perspectives but also realized that a number of passages from the Scriptures could make sense only by considering them from more than the literal aspect.

A given thing within the Scriptures is typically analyzed from the literal perspective by default. However, that thing may have multiple meanings. Thus, that thing may point to another entity, which is a phenomenon that we call typology. For instance, canonical exegetes perceive a forthcoming type of Christ through the copper serpent in Numbers chapter 21. The Israelites that had been bitten by the *seraph* (“burning” snakes) are miraculously saved from their afflictions by staring at the copper serpent figure, which had been placed atop a standard by Moses (Numbers 21:6-9). The brazen serpent itself does not save, but the God that is typified through that brazen serpent as the second

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<sup>1</sup> Biblical citations in Latin throughout are primarily derived from Robert Weber, ed., *Biblia sacra Vulgata*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2007, c. 1969), but in consultation with J. Wordsworth and Henry White, eds., *Nouum Testamentum Latine [The Latin New Testament]* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1889, rep. London: Simon Wallenberg, 2007). Old Testament references in English translation are derived from Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler, trans., *The Jewish Study Bible* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2004). New Testament citations in English translation are derived from Amy-Jill Levine and Marc Zvi Brettler, trans., *The Jewish Annotated New Testament: New Revised Standard Version Bible Translation* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

person of the Holy Trinity saves humanity from destruction (John 3:14-15). An orthographical or pictographic denotation is not in itself an idea but it does bridge the gap between a reader and an idea or a truth.

The default literal aspect of the number serves as an indicator of the sum of occurrences of a particular entity within a group or the count of unique instances of a phenomenon over an arbitrary span of time or space. The number, like any thing within Scripture or other forms of literature, can be additionally registered as a literary symbol that points to other things or ideas. Indeed, the number has a solid and ancient history throughout many cultures across the world as a type of an entity. Numbers such as three and seven, for instance, have a long, well-documented history of being esteemed as symbols of significance amongst the Mesopotamians and, particularly for our purposes, the Hebrews.

Number symbolism, or numerology, is incorporated into the literature of Christianity as a consequence of its claim to be the foretold fulfillment and successor to Judaism. Number symbolism is a prevalent tool of biblical exegesis during the late antique and early medieval periods. The unhindered accessibility of the Scriptures, insofar as the patristic writers are concerned, requires the consideration and interpretation of the sacred texts from multiple aspects. Some passages may contain multiple meanings, which necessitates new ways of reading the Scriptures.

The vast amount of exegetical mining of the Scriptures by the patristic writers would lay the influential groundwork for the theological productions of the Hiberno-Latin literary movement of the eighth and ninth centuries.<sup>2</sup> Augustine, Eucherius of

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<sup>2</sup> For studies on Hiberno-Latin exegetical tradition, see Thomas O’Loughlin, *Early Medieval Exegesis in the Latin West: Sources and Forms* (Farnham, Surrey, U.K. and Burlington, V.T.: Ashgate, 2013); Thomas O’Loughlin, ed., *The Scriptures and Early Medieval Ireland*. Proceedings of the 1993 Conference of the Society for Hiberno-Latin Studies on Early Irish Exegesis and Homilectics. Instrumenta Patristica 31 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1999); Mario Esposito and Michael M. Gorman, ed., *Studies in Hiberno-Latin Literature* (Farnham, Surrey, UK and Burlington, V.T.: Ashgate, 2006); Damian Bracken, “Virgilius Grammaticus and the earliest Hiberno-Latin literature,” *Ogma: Essays in Celtic studies in honour of Próinséas Ní Chatháin* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2002), 251-261; Joseph F. Kelly, “Hiberno-Latin Exegesis and Exegetes,” *Annuaire Mediaevale* 21 (1981): 46-60; Bernhard Bischoff, “Wendepunkte in der

Lyons, Gregory the Great, Isidore of Seville, and Jerome were especially regarded by this tradition which was one of the ramifications of the *peregrinatio* movement that saw waves of ascetics permanently move from Ireland and surrounding islands to the European continent during the early medieval period.

*Nauigatio Sancti Brendani* (“The Voyage of Saint Brendan”; NSB)<sup>3</sup> is an exemplary product of the Hiberno-Latin exegetical tradition. On the surface, the title of the text suggests an actual voyage undertaken by the Irish Saint Brendan during the middle of the sixth century. Although it is quite possible that the text recalls a historical voyage in the same fashion that portions of the Scriptures recalls historical events to a certain level of accuracy, NSB can be unlocked of mysteries that are still left present after a study of the text from an exclusively literal aspect by consulting the patristic thinkers. A reading of NSB from a strictly literal sense, as Christopher Columbus is said to have done in his quest to find the so-called “New World”, leaves ambiguities in the same way that Scriptures leave ambiguities when read from exclusively one perspective.<sup>4</sup>

NSB resembles the Scriptures in that it exhibits a pattern of utilizing certain significant numbers throughout its length. Although it may be seen as acceptable to

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Geschichte der lateinischen Exegese im Frühmittelalter,” *Sacris Erudiri* 6 (1954): 189-279, revised and edited in Bischoff, *Mittelalterliche Studien. Ausgewählte Aufsätze zur Schriftkunde und Literaturgeschichte*, 3 vols. (Stuttgart, 1966-67, 1981), I:205-73, English translation by Martin McNamara, ed., *Biblical Studies: The Medieval Irish Contribution*. Proceedings of the Irish Biblical Association No. 1 (Dublin: Dominican Publications, 1976), 73-164; Robert E. McNally, *The Bible in the early Middle Ages* (Westminster, M.D.: The Newman Press, 1959).

<sup>3</sup> A list of manuscript witnesses compiled by Giovanni Orlandi can be found in Glyn S. Burgess and Clara Strijbosch, *The Legend of St Brendan: A Critical Bibliography* (Dublin: RIA, 2000), 13-26. The edition to be employed in this paper is Carl Selmer, ed., *Navigatio Sancti Brendani Abbatis* (Notre Dame, I.N.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1959), while the English translation to be consulted is John J. O’Meara, trans., *The Voyage of Saint Brendan: Journey to the Promised Land* (Dublin: Dolmen Press, 1976). A recent critical edition is acknowledged: Giovanni Orlandi and Rossana Guglielmetti, eds., *Navigatio sancti Brendani: Alla scoperta dei segreti meravigliosi del mondo*. Per Verba. Testi mediolatini con traduzione 30 (Florence: SISMEL — Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2014). A few useful resources for studies on the text are Burgess and Strijbosch, *The Legend of St Brendan*; Jonathan M. Wooding, ed., *The Otherworld Voyage in Early Irish Literature: An Anthology of Criticism* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2000); Glyn S. Burgess and Clara Strijbosch, *The Brendan Legend: Texts and Versions*. The Northern World 24 (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2006).

<sup>4</sup> One source that has argued this idea is Paul H. Chapman, *The Man who Led Columbus to America* (Atlanta, G.A.: Judson Press, 1973).

simply note that it takes Brendan three days to sail from one place to another, we must wonder whether this number is truly a veil behind which is found a greater truth as the same number is often employed in Scriptures as symbol. Because NSB uses the same significant numbers as the Scriptures do, we suggest that the author of NSB is using numbers in his work as literary symbols that represent spiritual revelations, especially since NSB is an exegetical product of the Hiberno-Latin literary tradition. Indeed, the anonymous author stokes numbers within NSB with multiple meanings.

The following study is divided into four chapters. First, we will briefly examine what we know of the life of Brendan and the historical context of the anonymous author who wrote NSB. The second part covers the literary context for NSB as well as tracing the place of NSB within that context to find the text's genre with the ultimate intention of proving that the text is theological in nature. The third chapter briefly surveys the history of number symbolism as literary device from ancient times through the Carolingian period of the ninth century A.D., particularly its reception and use by patristic and early medieval insular writers, the latter being active during the time of the composition of NSB. The final chapter applies the findings from the previous three parts to NSB to trace the use of biblical numerology throughout the text and arrive at a conclusion about the role of biblical number symbolism within the intended purpose of the text. Though a fair amount of scholarship has been conducted in tracing the allegorical nature of NSB, a noticeable and unfortunate gap in research on the thread of biblical numerology within NSB exists.<sup>5</sup> It is my hope through this study to begin an orderly construction of the bridge that leads to a far greater appreciation and understanding of the use of numerology as literary motif in NSB, if not entirely build it.

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<sup>5</sup> The standard treatment of the use of biblical numerology within NSB is John MacQueen, *Numerology: Theory and outline history of a literary mode* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1985), 18-25, 55, 57, 72. For treatments of the allegorical perspective of the text, see Dorothy Ann Bray, "Allegory in the *Navigatio Sancti Brendani*," *Viator* 26 (1995): 1-10, rep. in Wooding, *The Otherworld Voyage*, 175-186, esp. 178; O'Meara, introduction in *The Voyage of Saint Brendan*, ix-xxi, at xi, xv-xviii; Thomas O'Loughlin, "Distant Islands: The Topography of Holiness in the *Nauigatio Sancti Brendani*," in *The Medieval Mystical Tradition: England, Ireland, and Wales*. Exeter Symposium VI (ed. Marion Glasscoe; Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1999), 1-20; Thomas O'Loughlin, *Celtic Theology: Humanity, World and God in Early Irish Writings* (London and New York: Continuum, 2000), 176-8, 185-202, esp. 193-6.

## II. “*Father of nearly three thousand monks*”

### *The identity of Saint Brendan and the historical context of NSB*

The determination of indisputable answers to questions regarding the provenance, date, authorship, and genre of NSB proves to be a difficult proposition. What we know is that the text becomes part of Continental popular literature by the eleventh century, by which time a handful of the copies of the extant manuscript witnesses had been produced. We know that the text is part of popular literature during the medieval period because of the unusually vast number of copies that are extant. Giovanni Orlandi, in his bibliography of manuscript witnesses of the text, counts one hundred and twenty-eight manuscript witnesses spanning such languages as Latin, Anglo-Norman, Old French, Old Provençal, Old Italian, Catalan, Old Dutch, Middle Low German, Middle High German, and Middle English.<sup>6</sup>

The text centers on the mid-sixth century Munster Irish abbot Brendan, founder of a number of monasteries, including his flagship monastery at Clonfert. One day, an abbot named Barrind pays a visit to Brendan. The visitor recalls a voyage with Mernóc, who is another abbot and a former follower of Barrind. Barrind visits Mernóc’s idyllic monastic community on the Island of Delights (*insula deliciosa*). Mernóc sails with Barrind to an otherworldly island called the *terra repromissionis sanctorum* (“promised land of the saints”), an island where faithful Christians will await the second coming of Christ. Brendan is so moved by this story that he compels fourteen brothers of his community to sail with him to find the *terra repromissionis sanctorum* for himself. Three supernumeraries beg Brendan to let them join him on his voyage, a request to which he consents with a warning that they will not return to Ireland with Brendan. The men sail for seven years, organized into seven yearly cycles, though the text itself recounts in detail merely three of these cycles. Brendan and his monks encounter varied wonders of the ocean throughout the voyage, but have appointed ports of call for Holy Week and Christmas. Each of the three supernumeraries permanently leaves Brendan during a given

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<sup>6</sup> Giovanni Orlandi, “Manuscripts,” in G. S. Burgess and C. Strijbosch, *The Legend of St Brendan: A Critical Bibliography*, 13-26.

point in the voyage for a detailed reason, meaning that the voyage concludes with fifteen men as originally designed. Brendan is finally shown the *terra repromissionis sanctorum* during the conclusion of the seventh year of voyaging. A supernatural youth on the island tells Brendan to sail back to Ireland, where he is to tell his monastic community about the wonders of the sea and prepare for his death. His return to Ireland concludes the text as we have it.

The question of fixing a date to the text, which goes hand-in-hand with the determination of the text's provenance, is a matter of debate. Although each of the manuscript witnesses that are known and extant shows Continental origin, the majority of scholarship on the issue strongly holds that an Irishman is responsible for the initial form of the text. It is significant to note that even though no copies of the text have survived in Ireland, it does not strictly follow that the text, in any iteration, was not originally written in Ireland. Yet, Carl Selmer, in his critical edition of the text, holds that an Irishman in Lotharingia composed the text during the tenth century.<sup>7</sup> This view, though, has largely been rejected, with scholars instead looking for a place of origin in Ireland itself. The Hiberno-Latin text, as we possess it, dates to the turn of the ninth century. David Dumville argues for a date during the third quarter of the eighth century.<sup>8</sup> Jonathan Wooding disagrees, instead looking to a date between 795 and 850.<sup>9</sup> The complication in dating the text, though, is that the form of the text as we possess it is likely preceded by an earlier, lost version of NSB ("Ur-*Nauigatio*") written in either Hiberno-Latin or Old Irish during the second half of the eighth century.<sup>10</sup> Clara Strijbosch notes that in determining the dependence of the mid-ninth century *Immram Maile Dúin* ("The Voyage of Máel Dúin"; IMD) upon NSB, it is likely that discrepancies in details between IMD and

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<sup>7</sup> Selmer, introduction in *Nauigatio*, xxx-xxxii.

<sup>8</sup> David N. Dumville, "Two Approaches to the Dating of *Nauigatio Sancti Brendani*," *Studi Medievali* 29 (1988): 87-102, rep. in Wooding, *The Otherworld Voyage*, 120-132.

<sup>9</sup> Jonathan M. Wooding, "The date of *Nauigatio S. Brendani abbatis*," *Studia Hibernica* 37 (2011): 9-26.

<sup>10</sup> James Carney, "Review of *Nauigatio sancti Brendani Abbatis*," *Medium Ævum* 32 (1963): 37-44, rep. in Wooding, *The Otherworld Voyage*, 42-51, at 51; Wooding, introduction in *The Otherworld Voyage*, xv-xvi.

NSB may be explained by the hypothesis that the author of the initial form of IMD used the earlier, lost version of NSB, not the version known to us.<sup>11</sup>

The form of the text as we currently have it shows strong influence from a number of texts and diagrams which date from the first two centuries of the ninth century, including the *Félire Óengusso* (“The Martyrology of Óengus”),<sup>12</sup> the Apocalypse diagram from the Book of Armagh,<sup>13</sup> and, most importantly, Dicuil’s *De mensura orbis terrae* (“On the Measure of the Earth”), as demonstrated by Jonathan Wooding in his article on dating the text.<sup>14</sup>

### *The Historical St Brendan*

NSB, regardless of genre (to be addressed in **III**), is doubtless a text entrenched within the tradition of seafaring. The Irish commended Brendan for his voyages to the British isles and surrounding areas by the middle of the eighth century. Not a little has already been noted in scholarship about the “Celtic” fascination with the sea, which reflects in their written works by the early medieval period.<sup>15</sup> What had been an interest in the ocean merely intensified with the Christianization of Ireland during the second half of the fifth century and the consequentially emerging Irish and Hiberno-Latin

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<sup>11</sup> For further reading on the complicated relationship between NSB and IMD, consult Clara Strjibosch, *The Seafaring Saint: Sources and Analogues of the Twelfth-century Voyage of Saint Brendan* (trans. Thea Summerfield; Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2000), 125-131.

<sup>12</sup> The standard edition is Whitley Stokes, ed., *Félire Óengusso Céili Dé: The Martyrology of Óengus the Culdee* (London, 1905).

<sup>13</sup> See Appendix II (p. 92).

<sup>14</sup> Wooding, “The date of *Nauigatio*,” 9-26.

<sup>15</sup> A fine example is a letter from Columbanus to Pope Boniface IV in which the Irish saint employs a handful of allusions to the sea and sea-monsters to make his points about diligence in the Christian walk and proving the orthodoxy of the pope against heretical claims from peers in wake of the ramifications of the Fifth Ecumenical Council (Constantinople II, 553). G. S. M. Walker, ed. and trans. “Letter 5,” in *Sancti Columbani Opera*. *Scriptores Latini Hiberniae* 2 (ed. G. S. M. Walker; Dublin: DIAS, 1957, rep. 1970), 36-57, at 39, 49, 55.



hagiographical traditions beginning in the sixth and seventh centuries. Thus, the appeal behind the employment of Brendan as the protagonist of a voyage story lies in his renown as a navigator of the curious, vast ocean surrounding Ireland.

The legend of Brendan as imagined in the minds of the early medieval Irish had reflected in hagiographical writings before the conception of the “*Ur-Nauigatio*”. The extant hagiographical works that focus on Brendan are *Vita prima Sancti Brendani* (“The First Life of Saint Brendan”; V<sup>1</sup>SB),<sup>16</sup> *Vita secunda Sancti Brendani* (“The Second Life of Saint Brendan”; V<sup>2</sup>SB),<sup>17</sup> and *Betha Brénnain* (“[Irish] Life of Brendan”; BB).<sup>18</sup> We must emphasize that these texts, as with any hagiographical text, must be scrutinized should we have any desire for historical accuracy due to remove in time between the claimed occurrence of events and authorship. We must also note the tendency amongst hagiographical authors to skew details for the sake of promulgating agendas<sup>19</sup> or exaggerating features of the saintly figures to uplift them as figures of emulation.<sup>20</sup>

Yet, V<sup>1</sup>SB and V<sup>2</sup>SB are recognized as source materials for the earlier, lost version of NSB, if not the version of the text as we have it. Although a relationship clearly exists between the Latin lives of Brendan and NSB, the intricacies of that relationship are very difficult to settle due to a series of confluences of episodes from NSB into the Latin lives which have been recognized in the manuscript witnesses of V<sup>1</sup>SB and V<sup>2</sup>SB. It should be

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<sup>16</sup> Charles Plummer, ed., *Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1910, rep. Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1997), I.98-151.

<sup>17</sup> Plummer, *VSH*, II.270-92.

<sup>18</sup> Charles Plummer, ed., *Bethada Náem nÉrenn: Lives of Irish Saints*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1922, rep. 1968), II.44-92.

<sup>19</sup> Adamnán, for instance, writes his *Vita Columba* “Life of Columba” for a number of reasons, one of which is to assert the influential power of the abbacy of Iona through solidifying the tie of succession between himself and the great abbot Columba before him. See Anderson and Anderson, ed. and trans., introduction in *Adomnán’s Life of Columba*, xlii.

<sup>20</sup> The clearly amplified details of the miracles attributed to Brigit in Cogitosus’ *Vita sanctae Brigidae* “Life of Saint Brigid” are collectively an exemplar.

noted that these conflation provide great insight as to the positive popular reception of NSB during the ninth and tenth centuries. During the same time as the writing of the Latin lives of Brendan, the *peregrinatio* movement began to grip early medieval Ireland. Legends of ascetic figures like Cormac, which is detailed in Adomnán's *Vita Columbae* ("Life of Columba"; VC),<sup>21</sup> began to emerge as Irish ascetics began to seek solitary islands and other places to complete their *opus Dei*. The movement was at its peak by the time the "Ur-*Nauigatio*" was being written.

A clue as to determining the interest in the author of NSB in selecting Brendan of Clonfert as the protagonist of his story lies within an episode of VC. In the third book of VC, we are told that Brendan (*mocu Alti*) joins three other abbots, Comgell (*mocu Aridi*), Cainnech (*mocu Dalon*), and the seafaring Cormac in a visit to Columba on the island of Hinba. Columba and his guests enter a church to observe the Eucharist on the Lord's Day. Once Columba has read from the Scriptures and the rites of the mass are being commemorated, "... a kind of fiery ball, radiant and very bright... continued to glow from the head of Saint Columba as he stood before the altar and consecrated the sacred oblation" until he has finished.<sup>22</sup> We are led to think that the only one of the four holy visitors to see this blazing ball atop Columba is Brendan because the text tells us that Brendan is the one able to see it and he afterwards tells Comgell and Cainnech about it. However, Cormac is nowhere mentioned in this episode except at the beginning. Although Cormac is the figure within this *vita* that is explicitly praised for his seafaring and whose seafaring likely served as a source of influence for the author of NSB, the voyaging Brendan is the only figure in this episode that we are unambiguously informed is able to perceive the divine light resting atop Columba during the mass.

It is hard to know the initial form of NSB due to the conflation of various voyage episodes from NSB into manuscript witnesses of the Latin lives of Brendan and the high

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<sup>21</sup> Adomnán, *Vita Columbae*, I.6, II.42, III.17; Anderson and Anderson, *Adomnán's Life of Columba*, 29-31, 166-171, 206-207.

<sup>22</sup> [...] *quendam crinosum igneum globum et ualde luminosum de uertice sancti Columbae ante altare stantis et sacram oblationem consecrantis tamdiu ardentem* [...] Adomnán, *Vita Columbae*, III.17; Anderson and Anderson, *Adomnán's Life of Columba*, 206-207.

degree of difficulty to determine the exact provenance and construction of the text. We do know that NSB relies upon a number of the voyage episodes within the Latin lives.

### III. “*Searching for seven years*”

#### *Towards determining the intended purpose of Nauigatio Sancti Brendani*

Although NSB has often been classified as a hagiographical text, the text is not a textbook hagiographical work.<sup>23</sup> A hagiographical work is defined as a loosely biographical work which features a glorified version of the birth of the saint, the raising of the saintly child by an ecclesial mentor, the miracle-filled adult ministry of the saint, and the repose of the saintly figure. The hagiographical work of a renowned person is often the product of the cult-following of the saint that is a consequence of the death of that figure, which means that the hagiographical work would be created at some arbitrary remove in time from the span of the life of that particular saint. NSB, though prominently featuring Brendan, a saintly figure, as its protagonist, does not recollect Brendan’s birth or any detail of Brendan’s life until sometime after he has become the founding abbot of Clonfert. NSB does not feature any miracles worked directly by Brendan with the possible exception of his supposed possession of prescience. This foreknowledge, however, is likely worked into NSB by the author to illustrate and emphasize his close communion with the omniscient God. Even though NSB features a number of elements reminiscent of an Irish or Hiberno-Latin hagiographical work, it is not one and cannot be categorized as a hagiographical text.

The Christianization of Ireland and establishment of monastic centers in Ireland during the fifth through seventh centuries include the transposition of the oral variant of what would become the *echtrae* (an adventure tale, literally “outing”; pl. *echtraí*) genre of early medieval Irish literature.<sup>24</sup> The most relevant but most controversial entry of the

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<sup>23</sup> For instance, one bibliography of Hiberno-Latin and early medieval Irish literature classifies NSB as a hagiographical work from Ireland. Michael Lapidge and Richard Sharpe, *A Bibliography of Celtic-Latin Literature 400-1200* (Dublin: RIA, 1985), 105-106:362.

<sup>24</sup> This may not necessarily be the case, as James Carney has pointed out. James Carney, “The Earliest Bran Material,” in *Latin Script and Letters A.D. 400-900: Festschrift presented to Ludwig Bieler on the Occasion of his 70<sup>th</sup> Birthday* (ed. J.J. O’Meara and Bernd Naumann; Leiden: Brill, 1976), 174-193, rep. in Wooding, *The Otherworld Voyage*, 73-90. On the parameters of defining a text as an *echtrae* or an *immram*, see David N. Dumville, *Echtrae and Immram: Some Problems of Definition*, *Ériu* 27 (1976): 73-94.

*echtrae* genre for our purposes is *Immram Brain* (“The Voyage of Bran”; IB).<sup>25</sup> NSB is clearly leaning on features from the *echtrae* genre, though we should note that the relationship between NSB and IB is currently indeterminate.<sup>26</sup> It is not definitive that NSB set any sort of precedent for being a text reminiscent of an *echtrae* that simply transposed its otherworld from under the Irish soil to somewhere across an ocean.<sup>27</sup> This idea of the transposition of the otherworld was in its infancy at this point in the progression of early medieval Irish literature. Yet, scholarship presently suggests that IB relies upon some form of NSB.<sup>28</sup>

The text features an overwhelming amount of reliance upon knowledge of early medieval Irish and Continental ascetic schema. The regular port of call on Christmas, on the island of the community of Ailbe, presents features of the monastic life that are similar to features of the Benedictine rule, which was not known in Ireland until after the beginning of the Carolingian period. The “Bigotian Penitential,” like NSB, is a Hiberno-Latin text written by an Irishman that clearly leans upon the Benedictine rule for influence.<sup>29</sup> It is the explicit borrowing from the Benedictine rule within this penitential that has compelled scholarship to look to Continental provenance for this penitential, though firmly within the Hiberno-Latin *milieu*.

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<sup>25</sup> The edition and translation of IB to be employed here is Séamus Mac Mathúna, ed. and trans., *Immram Brain: Bran’s Journey to the Land of the Women* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1985). For studies of the text, see Carney, “The Earliest Bran Material,” 73-90; Proinsias Mac Cana, “The Sinless Otherworld of *Immram Brain*,” *Ériu* 27 (1976): 95-115, rep. in Wooding, *The Otherworld Voyage*, 52-72.

<sup>26</sup> Jonathan M. Wooding (personal communication, February 7, 2015).

<sup>27</sup> John Carey, “The Location of the Otherworld in Irish Tradition,” *Éigse* 19 (1982-83): 36-43, rep. in Wooding, *The Otherworld Voyage*, 113-119, esp. at 113, 116.

<sup>28</sup> Carney, “Review of *Navigatio*,” 37-44, at 37, rep. in Wooding, *The Otherworld Voyage*, 42-51, at 42.

<sup>29</sup> Ludwig Bieler, ed. and trans., “Bigotian Penitential,” in *The Irish Penitentials. Scriptores Latini Hiberniae V* (Dublin: DIAS, 1963), 198-239, at 210-13; Michaela Zelzer, “Philological Remarks on the so-called *Navigatio s. Brendani*,” in *The Brendan Legend: Texts and Versions* (ed. Glyn S. Burgess and Clara Strijbosch; Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2006), 337-50, at 338-9; Martin McNamara, “*Navigatio sancti Brendani*. Some Possible Connections with Liturgical, Apocryphal and Irish Tradition,” in *The Brendan Legend*, 159-91, at 173.

The Hiberno-Latin text as we possess it has recently been associated with the Carolingian literary renaissance of the early ninth century. Concentrations of Irish ascetic intellectual activities begin to be established and cultivated throughout western Europe during this time, particularly due to the rule of Charlemagne. Vergilius started one of these monastic centers at Salzberg during the latter half of the eighth century. Robert McNally, in his doctoral dissertation,<sup>30</sup> strongly posits this monastic center at Salzberg as the place of authorship of the late eighth-century Hiberno-Latin tract *Liber de numeris* (“Book of Numbers”).<sup>31</sup> Its sister text, the pseudo-Isidorian *Liber de ortu et obitu patriarcharum* (“Book of the Life and Death of the Patriarchs”),<sup>32</sup> which was quite likely written by the same author, is also believed to have been written here. Both of these texts were initially attributed to Isidore of Seville, but it has been convincingly proven that Isidore could not possibly have written either tract.<sup>33</sup> Each of a majority of the current extant manuscript witnesses of *Liber de numeris* also contains a copy of *Liber de ortu et obitu patriarcharum*, especially amongst the oldest copies, which shows the intimacy in provenance and circulation which exists between the two texts.<sup>34</sup> One of the oldest extant

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<sup>30</sup> Robert E. McNally, *Der irische Liber de numeris: Eine Quellenanalyse des pseudo-isidorischen Liber de numeris* (Munich: Universität München, 1957).

<sup>31</sup> PL 83:1293-1302 [incomplete]; Lapidge and Sharpe, *Bibliography of Celtic-Latin Literature*, 209:778. A complete edition of the text is unfortunately lacking. For a full list of manuscript witnesses of *Liber de numeris*, see footnote (34). The edition in *Patrologia Latina* terminates at the beginning of the discussion of the number ‘3’. For studies of the text, see McNally, *Der irische Liber de numeris*; Marina Smyth, “The Irish *Liber de numeris*,” in *The Scriptures and Early Medieval Ireland* (ed. Thomas O’Loughlin; Turnhout: Brepols, 1999), 291-97; Robert E. McNally, “Isidoriana,” *Theological Studies* 20 (1959): 432-442, at 436; Robert E. McNally, *The Bible in the Middle Ages* (Westminster, M.D.: The Newman Press, 1959), 92; R. E. Reynolds, *The Ordinals of Christ from their Origins to the Twelfth Century* (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1978), 66-67.

<sup>32</sup> PL 83:1285-1294 [incomplete]; CCSL 108E; Lapidge and Sharpe, *Bibliography of Celtic-Latin Literature*, 209:780; Jose Carracedo-Fraga, “Irish Elements in the pseudo-Isidorian *Liber de ortu et obitu patriarcharum*,” in *The Scriptures and Early Medieval Ireland* (ed. O’Loughlin), 37-49.

<sup>33</sup> Smyth, “The Irish *Liber de numeris*,” 291-297, at 291.

<sup>34</sup> The following is the full list of manuscript witnesses of *Liber de numeris*: (1) Città del Vaticano, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Reg. lat. 199, ff. 92v-96v, 81r-88r; (2) Colmar, Bibliothèque Municipale, 39 (43), ff. 61r-176r; (3) Karlsruhe, Badische Landesbibliothek, Aug. Perg. CXII, *excerpta*; (4) London, British Library, Harley 495; (5) London, British Library, Harley 2361; (6) London, British Library, Royal 5.E.VI; (7) London, British Library, Royal 6.A.XI, ff. 123-141; (8) München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 14392 (Em. E 14), ff. 41v-117v; (9) München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 14497, *excerpta*; (10) Orléans, Médiathèque (*olim* Bibliothèque Municipale), 184 (161), pp. 90-240; (11) Paris, Bibliothèque

copies of *Liber de numeris* comes from a manuscript which also contains a copy of Eucherius' *Formulas of Spiritual Intelligence* and a copy of Isidore's *Etymologies*, thus unambiguously suggesting, if not exhibiting, the strong influence of these patristic works upon a tract firmly within the Hiberno-Latin literary tradition.<sup>35</sup>

In one episode of NSB, we find a handful of clues regarding insular literary influences on the text as we have it. Brendan and his monks, after their second visit to the paradise of birds, encounter a “devouring” beast that charges at their boat. Brendan's response is to pray, “Lord, deliver your servants as you delivered David from the hand of Goliath, the giant. Lord, deliver us, as you delivered Jonas [Jonah] from the belly of the [great] whale.”<sup>36</sup> Regarding the first part of Brendan's prayer, we find a similar plea by the author of the seventh-century hymn of Colman within the *Liber Hymnorum*: “... may He protect us, as He protected David from Goliath's hand” (*ronnain amal roanacht · Daid de manu Gólai*). A few lines later, the author of the hymn of Colman petitions God for the protection of his readers “[a]s He delivered Jonah the prophet from the belly of the whale—a bright deed...” (*A mal sōeras Ionas fáith · a brú mil mōir, monor ñgle...*).<sup>37</sup>

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Nationale de France, lat. 17875, ff. 226va-229rb; (12) Zürich, Zentralbibliothek, Car. C. 123 (288) I, ff. 1-126, ff. 45r-122r. The following is the list of corresponding citations of *Liber de ortu et obitu patriarcharum* within these witnesses: (1) ff. 65r-80v, 89r-92v; (2) ff. 1r-60v; (3) *excerpta*; (4-7) (Not in MSS.); (8) ff. 1r-41v; (9) ff. 7v-9r, 19v, 20v-23v, 23v-25v, *excerpta*; (10) pp. 2-90; (11) (Not in MS.); (12) ff. 1r-45v. As Marina Smyth has noted in her analytical piece on the text, the later copies of *Liber de numeris* in the English MSS. tradition clearly show a differentiated understanding of the original text, including an emended version of the section on the number ‘8’ to reflect the abrupt ending of the text as we have it (and, likely, how the text ends, since it is likely that the author never completed the purpose in writing the tract). For instance, the random Greek headers in the section on ‘8’ from the original text have been cleaned out of the text with the likely reasoning being, as Smyth supposes, that the section was viewed as “non-sensical”. Smyth, “The Irish *Liber de numeris*,” 292. Credit goes to *Archivio digitale della cultura medievale* “Digital Archives for Medieval Culture” provided by Edizioni del Galluzzo (Florence) for the list of manuscripts. <<http://www.mirabileweb.it/title/liber-de-numeris-title/126784>>. Accessed 6 June 2015.

<sup>35</sup> München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 14497. This manuscript dates to about 800.

<sup>36</sup> ‘*Domine, libera seruos tuos, sicut liberasti Daid de manu Golie gigantis. Domine, libera nos, sicut liberasti Ionam de uentre ceti magni.*’ NSB §16. Selmer, *Navigatio*, 45-48, at 45.12-14; O’Meara, *Voyage*, 39-42, at 40.

<sup>37</sup> Whitley Stokes and John Strachan, ed. and trans., *Thesaurus Palaeohibernicus: A Collection of Old-Irish Glosses, Scholia, Prose and Verse*, 2 vols. (Dublin: DIAS, 1903, rep. 1975), II.303.30, 304.37.

One of the texts that particularly impresses upon NSB, as we possess it, is the *Félire Óengusso*, which is believed to have been compiled during the conclusion of the eighth century or the beginning of the ninth century.<sup>38</sup> It is presently attributed to Óengus mac Óengobann, an esteemed member of the *celí Dé* (“companions of God”) ascetic movement that swept Ireland during the eighth and ninth centuries.<sup>39</sup> We find parallels between the epilogue of *Félire Óengusso* and NSB §16 that are fairly similar to those between the hymn of Colman and NSB §16. The epilogue features prayers to God pertinently highlighted by pleas for rescue from danger as He had saved Jonah “from the belly of the [great] whale” (*de brú céti magni*) and David “from the valour of Goliath’s sword” (*de gail claidib Góli*).<sup>40</sup>

If NSB does not directly reply upon the hymn of Colman or *Félire Óengusso* for influence in having Brendan petition to God for protection in the same way that He had shielded Jonah and David, then we can certainly deduce that the roughly contemporaneous texts were reading similar texts for inspiration as the respective authors encouraged a healthy ascetic lifestyle.

Since NSB cannot be properly and unquestionably catalogued as a hagiographical text or a member of the *immram* genre, then how do we categorize it, particularly as we attempt to perceive it from a theological perspective? Clearly, the text exhibits hagiographical elements, thus suggesting that the text can and ought to be read as a text teeming with theological undertones. It is also evident that the text shares a remarkable resemblance to the *immrama* that have been demonstrated to have been influenced in some form by NSB, such as IMD and *Immram Ua Corra* (“The Voyage of the Uí Chorra”;

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<sup>38</sup> On the matter of the composition and dating of the *Félire Óengusso*, see David N. Dumville, “*Félire Óengusso*. Problems of Dating a Monument of Old Irish,” *Éigse* 33 (2002): 19-34; Rudolf Thurneysen, “Die Abfassung des *Félire* von Oengus,” *Zeitschrift celtique Philologie* 6 (1907): 6-8.

<sup>39</sup> For studies on *Félire Óengusso* and its relationship to Óengus, see Louis Gougard, *Christianity in Celtic Lands* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1932, rep. Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1997), 162.

<sup>40</sup> Stokes, *Félire Óengusso*, 284:461-4, 285:481-4.



IUC).<sup>41</sup> Although I would argue that the text ought to be filed as a member of the *immram* genre, thus altering the parameters within which a text is labeled as an *immram*, the definition of the genre held by majority scholarship exclusively consists of texts written in the Old Irish and Middle Irish languages, thus shutting out Hiberno-Latin texts. Yet, NSB, like the texts that are indisputably *immrama*, promulgates a self-imposed exile by the protagonist to find a place to commune with God by sifting through a *deserta in oceano* (“desert in the ocean”). Each of the *immrama*, though, more strongly promotes its voyage as one of spiritual penitence than does NSB. The text as we have it is also strongly drawing from the Hiberno-Latin exegetical tradition that emerges during the time of the creation of NSB.

The purpose of the text as we possess it is to promulgate an ideal model of asceticism in response to the strengthening *celí Dé* reformation movement that was sweeping Irish monastic centers during the turn of the ninth century. The author does this by consulting a number of types of texts and beautifully fusing together a plethora of elements from these texts to create a loose, fantasized and allegorized reworking of a significant section of the Latin lives of Brendan. The focus of attraction for the text to its intended audience would have been the love of the sea held by a majority of the Irish, particularly the *peregrini* that may have yearned to return to their homeland.<sup>42</sup>

In one manuscript, we find a copy of NSB as well as a copy of Book IV of

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<sup>41</sup> Whitley Stokes, ed. and trans., “The Voyage of the Húi Corra,” *Revue Celtique* 14 (1893): 22-69; A. G. Van Hamel, ed., *Immrama*. Mediaeval and Modern Irish Series 10 (Dublin: The Stationery Office, 1941), 96-111.

<sup>42</sup> I find it highly fascinating to contrast this love of the sea by the early medieval Irish to the general disdain of the sea held by the Greeks during the contemporaneous Middle Byzantine period. “The Byzantines were afraid not only of mountains and wilderness but also of the sea. Byzantine literature is filled with images of storms or shipwrecks. Human life itself was depicted as a sea voyage, on which the individual was in constant danger of shipwreck. Dread of the sea was a fact of real life...” This fear of the sea in the Middle Byzantine sphere of influence is not unlike the allegory of the Irish monastic life as a vessel of God courageously sailing on an ocean teeming with unpredictable activity towards the afterworld that is Paradise, the Christianized Otherworld. We should note that the most highly valued monasteries at Mount Athos, the revered and ideal center of ascetic life in the Byzantine world, were situated close to the sea. Alexander Kazhdan and Giles Constable, *People and Power in Byzantium: An Introduction to Modern Byzantine Studies* (Washington: Dumbarton Oaks, 1982), 42.

Gregory's *Dialogues*, which covers multiple theological issues including the relationship between the body and soul. It is possible that this part of the *Dialogues* is consulted to attempt to understand the allegorical nature of the supernatural flame that lights the candles in the chapel of the community of Ailbe in NSB §12.<sup>43</sup> Another later witness contains NSB along with writings of Gregory, including, again, Book IV of his *Dialogues*, and, significantly enough insofar as concerns the eschatological nature of NSB, his *Homiliae in Hiezechichelem Prophetam (Homilies on Ezekiel)*.<sup>44</sup>

Given the purpose of NSB, the theological nature that flows throughout both the text and its sources of influence, and the questions that it poses as it promotes its purpose, the text ought to be classified as theological in nature regardless of specific genre. Wooding argues that the text should not be viewed as a biographical or truly hagiographical narrative, "nor a *miracula* of any conventional type; it appears to be more or less *sui generis* in structure."<sup>45</sup> It is credited with influencing the texts of a new genre of distinctly medieval Irish literature called *immram*, which, as we have shown, is firmly rooted in a theological spirit through its plot device of the penitential voyage. What we can conclude about the nature of NSB is that it is a theological text because both its purpose and its intended audience are ascetic in characterization.

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<sup>43</sup> Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bibliothek, Helmst. 445 (480).

<sup>44</sup> Rome, Biblioteca Vallicelliana Tomo VII. The standard edition of Gregory's *Homilies on Ezekiel* is CCSL 142.

<sup>45</sup> Jonathan M. Wooding, "The Munster Element in *Naugatio Sancti Brendani Abbatis*," *Journal of the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society* 110 (2005): 33-47, at 33.

#### IV. “*After the passage of many times...*”

##### *Biblical numerology in patristic and early medieval Hiberno-Latin tradition*

NSB, as we have seen in **III**, is a dense, but beautiful fusion of several literary motifs that work together to present an ideal eremitical model for its intended audience. One of the literary motifs used by the text’s author, biblical numerology, is a natural and virtually inevitable display of its emphasis upon the Scriptures, particularly the Psalms and the Apocalypse of John, for its construction. Before we can thoroughly discuss the employment of biblical numerology within NSB, it is necessary for us to define biblical numerology and briefly survey its provenance as a literary motif through the traditions which serve as the collective foundation of the early medieval Hiberno-Latin biblical exegetical tradition which influences NSB, namely the Jewish and Greco-Roman literary traditions.

Numerology, or number symbolism, for simply pragmatic purposes, is the study of the representation of a concept or idea through a number, almost always a positive integer, by an author with the intention of presenting something of significance. A consistent and deliberate pattern, within which is a correspondence between a significant idea, typically moral in underpinning, and a number, runs throughout a given work that especially employs numerology.<sup>46</sup> For instance, the positive integer seven frequently occurs across various ancient, ethnical traditions spanning across the globe as a symbol of prosperity and perhaps perfection.<sup>47</sup> It is an exegetical tool for biblical commentators, which is the primary link between NSB and various texts of the patristic and Hiberno-Latin literary traditions.

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<sup>46</sup> MacQueen, *Numerology*, 4.

<sup>47</sup> The exhaustive enumeration of examples to wit would far exceed the scope of this study. I provide one marginally relevant example here. In early medieval Welsh literary tradition, the plot of *Manawydan son of Llyr*, the third of the “four branches” of the *Mabinogi*, is resolved over seven stages which span seven years, during which the *cantref* Dyfed had been deserted by enchantment. Ian Hughes, ed., *Manawydan Uab Llyr: Trydedd Gaiac y Mabinogi* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2007); Sioned Davis, trans., *The Mabinogion* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 35-46; MacQueen, *Numerology*, 128-9; Jon D. Levenson, “Genesis: Introduction and Annotations,” in *The Jewish Study Bible*, 8-101, at 12 n. 1:1-2:3.

*Number symbolism in Jewish tradition*

The chief mediator of numerology in the Jewish tradition is the *Tanakh*,<sup>48</sup> which is the composite Hebrew Scriptures that consists of three sets of sacred texts: *Torah* “Law”, *Nevi'im* “Prophets”, and *Kethuvim* “Writings”. Although the history of the compilation, emendation, and arrangement of the sacred texts which are in the *Tanakh* is quite complex, the texts share in one tradition of number symbolism which was cultivated in much the same way as the dependence of various stories within the *Tanakh* upon the literary traditions of the surrounding peoples both contemporaneous and past, such as the Babylonians, the Akkadians, and the Egyptians.<sup>49</sup>

Significant numerals in the *Tanakh* include three,<sup>50</sup> seven,<sup>51</sup> forty,<sup>52</sup> and multiples thereof. The life of Moses in the *Torah*, for instance, finely employs the literary motif of numerology across the hypothesized Priestly, Yahwist, Elohist, and Deuteronomistic sources. According to the Priestly tradition, the only one of the four sources which

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<sup>48</sup> The translation of the Jewish *Tanakh* employed here is A. Berlin and M. Z. Brettler, *The Jewish Study Bible*.

<sup>49</sup> Levenson, “Genesis,” 9-10. The story of Noah and the flood has been hypothesized by a number of biblical scholars as a later Hebrew historical/literary interpretation of the ancient Mesopotamian text *Atra-ḥasīs* through its subsequent incorporation into the epic *Gilgamesh*. Patrick V. Reid, ed., *Readings in Western Religious Thought: The Ancient World* (Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1987), 9-23; W.G. Lambert and A.R. Millard, ed. and trans., *Atra-ḥasīs: The Babylonian Story of the Flood* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969).

<sup>50</sup> Mayer Gruber, “Job: Introduction and Annotations,” in *The Jewish Study Bible*, 1499-1562, at 1505 n. 1:1-3:1; Hindy Najman, “Ezra: Introduction and Annotations,” in *The Jewish Study Bible*, 1666-1687, at 1683-1684 n. 8:32.

<sup>51</sup> “The ideal number seven... signifies completion or totality...” Levenson, “Genesis,” 8-101, at 12 n. 1:1-2:3; Bernard M. Levinson, “Deuteronomy: Introduction and Annotations,” in *The Jewish Study Bible*, 356-450, at 382 n. 1, 386 n. 22; Gruber, “Job,” 1499-1562, at 1505 n. 1.1-3.1.

<sup>52</sup> “The number may be typological, indicating an indeterminate but long period of time: The catastrophic rain of the deluge lasted forty days and nights (Gen. 7:12), and Israelites were in the desert forty years.” Ziony Zevit, “First and Second Kings: Introduction and Annotations,” in *The Jewish Study Bible*, 668-779, at 675 n. 2.11; Jeffrey H. Tigay, “Exodus: Introduction and Annotations,” in *The Jewish Study Bible*, 102-202, at 191 n. 34.28; Zevit, “First and Second Kings,” 668-779, at 717 n. 18.8; Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler, “Psalms: Introduction and Annotation,” in *The Jewish Study Bible*, 1280-1446, at 1389 n. 95.8-11.

elucidates the death of Moses, the number of years of the life of the prophet is one hundred and twenty, which is also the product of three and forty.<sup>53</sup> The sources neatly categorize the life of Moses into three forty-year periods, each period correlating to the state of the Hebrew people for which Moses would stand before God as their mediator.<sup>54</sup> The first forty years are spent in Egypt, when the Hebrews are still in slavery and Moses discovers that he is an Egyptian only by adoption, thus throwing his ethnic identity into crisis.<sup>55</sup> The second forty years are spent in self-exile in Midian, where he is given his call by God to lead the Israelites out of bondage into the Promised Land. The third and final span of forty years is spent in the wilderness. Although the sin of Moses prevents him from entering into the Promised Land himself, God mercifully permits Moses a generous glimpse from the top of Mount Nebo, in the land of Moab. The danger of the burial site of Moses being frequented as a shrine leads God to bury Moses in an anonymous location, thus understating the importance of Moses in Jewish history and

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<sup>53</sup> Deuteronomy 31:2, 34:7. It should be noted that one-hundred and twenty is the maximum age permitted to human life by God before the flood account: “The Lord said, ‘My breath shall not abide in man forever, since he too is flesh; let the days allowed him be one hundred and twenty years’” (Genesis 6:3). Moses, for the Priestly tradition which is perhaps here influenced by the Yahwist source, lives to an ideal age as is befitting an ideal figure in Jewish tradition. Levinson, “Deuteronomy: Introduction and Annotations,” 356-450, at 438 n. 2; Weber, *Biblia sacra Vulgata*, 10, 278, 283-4.

<sup>54</sup> According to Exodus 7:7 (Priestly), Moses was eighty years old when he returned to Egypt from Midian and presented himself before Pharaoh. The *Tanakh* does not explicitly state that Moses was forty years old when he fled Egypt for Midian. However, one midrash, *Sifré on Deuteronomy*, holds that “Moses was in Egypt forty years, in Midian forty years, and led Israel forty years,” which is the likely source for the witness of Luke-Acts through the Christian martyr Stephen in Acts 7:23, as Gary Gilbert notes in his recent set of annotations of Acts. *Sifré on Deuteronomy* 357; Reuven Hammer, trans., *The Classic Midrash: Tannaitic Commentaries on the Bible* (New York and Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1995), 392; Gary Gilbert, “Acts of the Apostles: Introduction and Annotations,” in *The Jewish Annotated New Testament: New Revised Standard Version Bible Translation* (eds. Amy-Jill Levine and Marc Zvi Brettler; Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 197-252, at 212 n. 7:23; Weber, *Biblia sacra Vulgata*, 1708; Wordsworth and White, *Novum Testamentum Latine*, 296.

<sup>55</sup> Moses names his first son Gershom, taken to mean “a stranger there,” during his forty-year exile in Midian (Exodus 2:22), which is itself a type of the four hundred year plight of the Hebrew people in Egypt. It is through the alienation of Moses from his people that he learns the necessary empathy to accept his call from God and help shed the alienation of Israel from God’s promise. Cf. Patrick V. Reid, *Moses’ Staff and Aeneas’ Shield: The Way of the Torah Versus Classical Heroism* (Lanham, M.D.: University Press of America, 2005), 29; Thomas W. Mann, *The Book of the Torah: The Narrative Integrity of the Pentateuch* (Atlanta, G.A.: John Knox Press, 1988), 81.

tradition.<sup>56</sup>

We now arrive at the school of thought of Pythagoras as the bridge that closes the gap between the numerological traditions of ancient Judaism and Christianity. The number represents the essence of an arbitrary thing in existence. The number, as a symbol of a thing, then possesses a supernatural power. One, three, six, and ten hold especial importance to the Pythagoreans. One is synonymous with the Deity of the universe. Ten is the smallest positive integer that contains as many composite numbers as non-composite numbers and it is the sum of the first four positive integers, which are the four foundations of geometry. For these reasons, ten is paid an especial level of esteem by the Pythagoreans.<sup>57</sup> The subsequent followers of Pythagoras basically created a religion from the idea of number as symbol.

... it is not surprising to find that number was considered by the Pythagoreans as the fundamental element of many domains of nature and ethics. For example, the odd numbers were called *masculine* and the even numbers *feminine*. The sum of the first odd and the first even number, 5 (= 2 + 3; here, 1, being the primal foundation of all numbers, was not regarded as a number), was the symbol of marriage. A square number symbolized *justice* (render like for like). There were also less understandable associations: 6 was the number of the *soul*, 7 of *understanding* and *health*, 8 of *love* and *friendship*.<sup>58</sup>

The Pythagoreans gained a reputation for developing a mystically philosophical system that sought to explain everything in existence through positive integers. It was the

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<sup>56</sup> Deuteronomy 34:6b. Note here the striking parallels between Moses and Brendan in NSB. Giovanni Orlandi, "Brendan and Moses," in *The Brendan Legend* (ed. G. S. Burgess and C. Strijbosch), 221-240.

<sup>57</sup> Lucas N.H. Bunt, Phillip S. Jones, and Jack D. Bedient, *The Historical Roots of Elementary Mathematics* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1976, rep. New York: Dover, 1988), 82.

<sup>58</sup> Bunt, Jones, and Bedient, *The Historical Roots of Elementary Mathematics*, 83; Cf. Walter Hinderer, "Theory, Conception, and Interpretation of the Symbol," in *Yearbook of Comparative Criticism, Volume I: Perspectives in Literary Symbolism* (ed. Joseph Strelka; University Park, P.A. and London: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1968), 83-127; MacQueen, *Numerology*, 26-46.

Pythagorean concept of the understanding of the universe through the number that would serve as one of several major influences upon Plato, whose writings and followers, in turn, would influence prominent writers like Augustine in the early medieval period.<sup>59</sup>

The theological literature of the early Christian period contains the intention of shedding the misconception held by a number of skeptics within the Roman Empire that Christianity is merely the product of a moral and political revolution led by a Jewish teacher. The chosen way to attempt to dispose of this misunderstanding is by demonstrating that it is a composite fulfillment of prophecies concerning the Jewish tradition, particularly and centrally tied to a foretold and expected messianic figure. Justin Martyr labored in this very intention in the writing of his two apologetic works that were explicitly addressed to the Roman emperor (“First Apology”) and the imperial senate (“Second Apology”).<sup>60</sup> The proof of the direct continuation of the Jewish tradition through the budding Christian one inevitably necessitates the continuation of numerology within Jewish literature through its adoption and development into the emerging Christian literary tradition. Multitudes of parallels can be found. The twelve tribes of Israel correspond to the number of disciples of Christ. As Vincent Hopper notes, “Again it is possible to find a symbolic inference in Christ’s question, ‘Are there not 12 hours in the day? If any man walks in the day he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world.’”<sup>61</sup> Additionally, Christ, in appointing an intimate group of twelve disciples (Matthew 10:1, Mark 3:14, Luke 6:13) as well as a larger group of seventy messengers (Luke 10:1), parallels Moses, leader of the twelve tribes of Israel. When Moses feels overwhelmed in constantly watching and judging the Israelites during their trek from

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<sup>59</sup> Bunt, Jones, and Bedient, *The Historical Roots of Elementary Mathematics*, 122-123; Cf. MacQueen, *Numerology*, 29-31.

<sup>60</sup> Justin Martyr, *First Apology* (PG 6:328-441) and *Second Apology* (PG 6:442-471). The *First Apology* is addressed to the emperor Antoninus Pius (*ad Antoninum Pium*) (r. 138-161), while the *Second Apology* is addressed to the Roman Senate (*ad Senatam Romanum*).

<sup>61</sup> Vincent Foster Hopper, *Medieval Number Symbolism: Its Sources, Meanings and Influence on Thought and Expression* (New York: Columbia Univ., 1938, reprinted 1977), 72. See my “‘Without blinding darkness’: The imagery of light in medieval Irish voyage and vision tales” (master’s dissertation, University College Cork, forthcoming).

Egypt to Canaan, God suggests that he appoint seventy men to diminish his burden (Numbers 11:16).<sup>62</sup>

*Patristic writers on biblical numerology*<sup>63</sup>

We now arrive at the collective perspective of number symbolism held by one of the two most important influences upon NSB, which is the thought of the late antique and early medieval patristic theologians. For our purposes, we will concentrate upon only a few of the patristic thinkers, specifically Augustine, Eucherius of Lyons, Gregory the Great, Isidore of Seville, and Jerome. The writers of the Hiberno-Latin literary tradition, which includes the author of the form of NSB that we know, were strongly influenced by these particular patristic writers.

The reader of the Scriptures that is not versed in number symbolism, as far as Augustine is concerned, will fail to grasp the figurative or mystical aspects of various verses of the Scriptures.<sup>64</sup> The significance and usefulness of the perception of number as literary symbol is not lost on Eucherius of Lyons, who devotes an entire section of his brief *Formulas of Spiritual Intelligence* to biblically sacred numbers.<sup>65</sup> Gregory the Great liberally employs the idea of number as symbol, because he holds that the use of symbol is sometimes most appropriate for understanding Scriptures, especially the number,

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<sup>62</sup> Hopper, *ibid.*, 70-71.

<sup>63</sup> Thomas O'Loughlin, "The mysticism of number in the medieval period before Eriugena," in *The Perennial Tradition of Neoplatonism* (ed. J. J. Cleary; Leuven: Leuven Univ., 1997), 397-416, rep. in O'Loughlin, *Early Medieval Exegesis*, XIV:397-416.

<sup>64</sup> Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine* II.16.25.62, II.29.45.110 (CCSL 32:50, 63-64); *The City of God* XI.30 (CCSL 48:350; *NPNF*<sup>1</sup> 2:222-223); R.P.H. Green, ed. and trans., *Augustine: De Doctrina Christiana* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 84-85, 106-109; Mikael C. Parsons, "Exegesis 'By the Numbers': Numerology and the New Testament," *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 35 (2008): 25-43, at 38.

<sup>65</sup> Eucherius of Lyons, *Formulas of Spiritual Intelligence* (CCSL 66:1-76, at 72-76; PL 50:727-772, at 769-772; CSEL 31:3-62, at 59-62); Thomas O'Loughlin, "The Symbol gives Life: Eucherius of Lyons' Formula for Exegesis," in *Scriptural Interpretation in the Fathers: Letter and Spirit* (eds. T. Finan and V. Twomey; Dublin: Four Courts, 1995) 221-52, rep. in O'Loughlin, *Early Medieval Exegesis*, VII: 221-52.



which harmonizes with events and brings out edifying details about them.<sup>66</sup> Isidore of Seville holds that the employment of number as symbol ought not to be dismissed, but rather esteemed, because the number can be used to unlock a mystery that extends beyond the literal plane of thought. An arbitrary number in the Scriptures, Isidore expounds, may have such value that “[its] figurative meaning cannot be resolved except by those skilled in the knowledge of the mathematical art. . . . Indeed, through numbers, we are provided with the means to avoid confusion.”<sup>67</sup> The number as symbol is important for biblical commentary because the use of a number within Scripture is not necessarily accurate from a strictly historical perspective. A number provided for a given passage may be meant to be understood from a viewpoint which is not literal, but rather allegorical or tropological.<sup>68</sup>

In an attempt to provide a non-exhaustive understanding of the representations of a selection of integers by a handful of patristic writers, we sequentially begin with the numeral **one**, often seen as a type of divine unity.<sup>69</sup> Isidore holds that the quality of the church as a “universal entity” (*universitas*) derives from the numeral “one” (*unus*), because “it is gathered into a unity (*unitas*).”<sup>70</sup> Jerome agrees through his employment of the numeral as a symbol of unity in the discussion of the bonding of a man and woman

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<sup>66</sup> Gregory the Great, *Homilies on Ezekiel* I.2.9 (CCSL 142:22); G.R. Evans, *The Thought of Gregory the Great* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 10. For a brief discussion of the relationship between this work and the exegetical process of Gregory, see Scott DeGregorio, “Gregory’s Exegesis: Old and New Ways of Approaching the Scriptural Text,” in *A Companion to Gregory the Great* (eds. Bronwen Neil and Matthew Dal Santo; Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2013), 279-90.

<sup>67</sup> *Sic et alii in scripturis sacris numeri existent, quorum figuras non nisi noti huius artis scientiae solvere possunt [...] Per numerum siquidem ne confundamur instruimur.* Isidore of Seville, *Etymologies* III.4.1-4; Lindsay, Wallace M., ed., *Isidori Hispalensis Episcopi etymologiarum sive originum libri XX*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1911), III.4.1-4; Stephen A. Barney et al., trans., *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 90.

<sup>68</sup> Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine* III.35.51.121 (CCSL 32:111); Green, *Augustine: De Doctrina Christiana*, 188-9.

<sup>69</sup> Eucherius of Lyons, *Formulas of Spiritual Intelligence* X.1 (CCSL 66:72; PL 50:769; CSEL 31:59).

<sup>70</sup> Isidore of Seville, *Etymologies* VIII.1.2; Lindsay, *Isidori Hispalensis*, VIII.1.2; Barney et al., *Etymologies*, 173.

through matrimony as becoming “one flesh,” rather than more than one member.<sup>71</sup>

The number **two** as symbol, as E.W. Bullinger notes, is the natural contrast to the numeral one because it implies the existence of an item which is distinct from another item: “... *One* excludes all difference, and denotes that which is sovereign. But Two affirms that there is a difference—there is another...” However, Bullinger also is quick to point out that such a difference doesn’t necessarily imply connotations of evil, the difference from good: “This *difference* may be for good or for evil. A thing may differ from evil, and be good; or it may differ from good, and be evil. Hence, the number Two takes a two-fold colouring, according to the context.”<sup>72</sup> Augustine, for example, sees two as a symbol of divine love because it is the number of commandments offered by Christ as well as the number of days that Christ spends with the Samaritans, the people that were despised by the Jews, Christ’s countrymen.<sup>73</sup>

**Three**, being the number of members of the holy Trinity, is synonymous with God in His personages. The concept of the Godhead as being trinitarian by nature correlates to the need to love God with the heart, soul, and mind, each in its entirety.<sup>74</sup> Each creature that God has made features three characteristics — measure, number, and weight — because the finite creature, which is three characteristics united in one entity, is an imperfect image of the God who is three persons in one substance.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Jerome, *Epistle 123* 11 (CSEL 56:84; *NPNF*<sup>2</sup> 6:234).

<sup>72</sup> E. W. Bullinger, *Number in Scripture: Its Supernatural Design and Spiritual Significance* (Grand Rapids M.I.: Kregel, 1967), 92.

<sup>73</sup> Augustine, *Tractates of John 17.6* (CCSL 36:173-174; *TFC* 79:114-115).

<sup>74</sup> Augustine has Matthew 22:37 in mind here: “Jesus said to him [a doctor of the law]: ‘You shall love the Lord your God with your whole heart and with your whole soul and with your whole mind’” (*ait illi Iesus*[:] ‘*diliges Dominum Deum tuum ex toto corde tuo et in tota anima tua et in tota mente tua*’). Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine* II.16.25.64 (CCSL 32:50-51); Green, *Augustine: De Doctrina Christiana*, 86-7; Weber, *Biblia sacra Vulgata*, 1561.

<sup>75</sup> Augustine, *The Literal Meaning of Genesis* IV.3.7-IV.7.13 (PL 34:299-301; *ACW* 41:107-111); Augustine, *On the Trinity* VI.10.12 (CCSL 50:242-243; *TFC* 45:214-215).

**Four** developed significance in the Christian numerological tradition as the canon of sacred Scripture came to be formalized during the patristic period. It was not difficult to note the number of gospels of the ministry of Christ being four. This note came to be linked to the number of beastly attendants of Ezekiel, as each of these beasts came to be seen as a type of one of the gospels. Eucherius of Lyons slightly differs in that he connects the beasts of Ezekiel 1:5 to the four evangelists.<sup>76</sup> Four also represents the covering of the entire expanse of the world because it is the traditional number of ends of the earth.<sup>77</sup>

**Six**, for Augustine and Gregory, is a perfect number due to its composition from its aliquot parts. In other words, it is a perfect numeral because it is the sum of the consecutive positive integers one, two, and three.<sup>78</sup> God, in his orderliness, accordingly completed creation in six days.<sup>79</sup> Each one of the six days of creation is a type of one of the six ages of the existence of this world. This typological interpretation of the creation account in Genesis 1 is an idea that Augustine had popularized, if not formulated, which is called *sex aetates mundi* (“six ages of the world”).<sup>80</sup> The sixth day marks the creation of man. Thus, it is considered appropriate that the incarnation of Christ, the type of new Adam, marks the beginning of the sixth age. Further, the completion of the labor that is

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<sup>76</sup> Eucherius of Lyons, *Formulas of Spiritual Intelligence* X.4 (CCSL 66:72; PL 50:770; CSEL 31:59). “And in the midst thereof the likeness of four living creatures: and this was their appearance: there was the likeness of a man in them” (*et ex medio eorum similitudo quattuor animalium[:] et hic aspectus[:] eorum similitudo hominis in eis*). Weber, *Biblia sacra Vulgata*, 1267.

<sup>77</sup> Augustine, *Tractates on John* 17.6.1 (CCSL 36:173; *TFC* 79:113).

<sup>78</sup> Augustine, *The City of God* XI.30 (CCSL 48:350; *NPNF*<sup>1</sup> 2:222). The *NPNF*<sup>1</sup> translation of this chapter is appropriately entitled, “Of the perfection of the number six, which is the first of the numbers which is composed of its aliquot parts.” Cf. Augustine, *On the Trinity* IV.4 (CCSL 50:169-172; *TFC* 45:139-141); Augustine, *The Literal Meaning of Genesis* IV.6.13-IV.7.14 (PL 34:301; *ACW* 41:112); Gregory, *Morals on Job* XXXV.16.42 (CCSL 143B:1802; PL 76:773a); James Bliss, trans., *Morals on the Books of Job by S. Gregory the Great*, 4 vols. (Oxford: John Henry Parker, 1844-1850), IV.691.

<sup>79</sup> Gregory, *Morals on Job* XXXV.16.42 (CCSL 143B:1802; PL 76:773b); Bliss, *Morals on Job*, IV.691.

<sup>80</sup> Isidore follows this model in his chronicle of the history of the world, the *Chronicon* (PL 83:1017-1058; CCSL 112), but the schema is commonplace in patristic thought.

the earthly life of a man comes after he has endured six ages of maturation.<sup>81</sup> The numeral six is a symbolic representative for the completion of labor in every sense of the word.

**Seven** is an ideal number because it denotes life and the body, thus it symbolizes creation itself, as well as completion of anything. God rested on the day after the six days of creation. Thus, as Augustine exegetes, “In it is the rest of God, the rest His people find in Him. For rest is in the whole, *i.e.* in perfect completeness, while in the part [*i.e.* days of creation] there is labor.”<sup>82</sup> The beginning of the new heaven and new world as elucidated in the Apocalypse of John will mark the seventh and final age of existence. God’s designation of the seventh and final day of the week of creation as a day of rest is a forerunning type of the seventh and final age of existence that will mark an eternal rest for those who are saved for the New Jerusalem. The number of pillars upon which Wisdom, sometimes seen as synonymous with Christ, the pillar of truth, as well as the Spirit, is built is seven.<sup>83</sup> Similarly, Gregory holds that the number seven is significant not only because it designates spiritual completion but also “because every good work is performed with seven virtues through the Spirit” for the simultaneous perfection of faith and works.<sup>84</sup>

**Eight** is a numerical representation of spiritual rebirth or renewal. Eucherius of Lyons has this in mind in associating the number eight with the day of the Lord’s

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<sup>81</sup> Isidore, *Etymologies* XI.2.1-36; Lindsay, *Isidori Hispalensis*, XI.2.1-36; Barney et al., *Etymologies*, 241-243.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibi requies Dei, qua requiescitur in Deo. In toto quippe, id est in plena perfectione, requies; in parte autem labor.* Augustine, *The City of God* XI.31 (CCSL 48:350-351; *NPNF*<sup>1</sup> 2:223). The *NPNF*<sup>1</sup> translation of this chapter is aptly entitled, “Of the seventh day, in which completeness and repose are celebrated.”

<sup>83</sup> Isidore of Seville *Etymologies* VIII.1.3; Lindsay, *Isidori Hispalensis*, VIII.1.3; Barney et al., *Etymologies*, 173; Augustine, *Expositions on the Psalms* 150 1 (CCSL 40:2190-2191; *NPNF*<sup>1</sup> 8:681).

<sup>84</sup> *Septenarius in ea perfectus est, quia omne opus bonum septem per Spiritum uirtutibus agitur, ut et fides simul et opera consummentur.* Gregory, *Morals on Job* XXXV.16.42 (CCSL 143B:1802; PL 76:773b); Bliss, *Morals on Job*, IV.691-692.

resurrection.<sup>85</sup> Augustine parallels the Lord's Day with eight because it is the day following the Sabbath, the seventh and final day of the week. Eight is also a symbol for the New Testament and its abundance of promises of newness of life that come with them.<sup>86</sup> It is this newness of spiritual life that inspires Jerome to note that the number of days that the newly converted Paul spends with Peter in Jerusalem (Galatians 1:17-18) is fifteen, which is the sum of "the mystical numbers seven and eight."<sup>87</sup>

**Ten** represents the knowledge of God as creator as well as his creation.<sup>88</sup> This symbolism finds a tidy symbol in itself through the Decalogue, the indicator of the knowledge of God of the fallibility of his creation.<sup>89</sup> Gregory holds this view, expounding the spiritually legal significance of ten by holding that "no fault is forbidden further than by the ten words [*i.e.* precepts of the Decalogue]..."<sup>90</sup> Isidore writes little about the significance of the number, merely noting that it is regarded as a number symbolic of perfection.<sup>91</sup>

**Twelve** is a representation of the apostles of Christ as well as their role in divine judgment of the world.<sup>92</sup> Augustine expounds his interpretation of the number twelve as

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<sup>85</sup> Eucherius of Lyons, *Formulas of Spiritual Intelligence* X.8 (CCSL 66:73; PL 50:770; CSEL 31:60).

<sup>86</sup> Augustine, *Expositions on the Psalms* 150 1 (CCSL 40:2190-2191; *NPNF*<sup>1</sup> 8:681).

<sup>87</sup> [...] *hoc enim magisterio ebdomadis et ogdoadis futuris gentium praedicator instruendus erat* [...] Jerome, *Epistle* 53 2 (CSEL 54:445; *NPNF*<sup>2</sup> 6:97).

<sup>88</sup> Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine* II.16.25.64 (CCSL 32:51); Green, *Augustine: De Doctrina Christiana*, 86-87.

<sup>89</sup> Eucherius of Lyons, *Formulas of Spiritual Intelligence* X.10 (CCSL 66:73; PL 50:771; CSEL 31:60).

<sup>90</sup> *Denarius numerus in ea perfectus est, quia lex in decem praecepta concluditur, omnisque culpa non amplius quam per decem uerba cohibetur, atque, enarrante Veritate, operadores uinea denario remunerantur.* Gregory, *Morals on Job* XXXV.16.42 (CCSL 143B:1802; PL 76:773b); Bliss, *Morals on Job*, IV.692.

<sup>91</sup> Isidore of Seville, *Etymologies* XVI.26.9, 15; Lindsay, *Isidori Hispalensis*, XVI.26.9, 15; Barney et al., *Etymologies*, 334, 335.

<sup>92</sup> Eucherius of Lyons, *Formulas of Spiritual Intelligence* X.12 (CCSL 66:74; PL 50:771; CSEL 31:60).

symbol in an elucidation of the divine judgment to be given by God in the eschaton. His exegetical take on Matthew 19:28<sup>93</sup> is that He, the Son of God, will judge the world from a throne in company with His twelve disciples, each of whom will occupy a throne. “[F]or by the number twelve,” Augustine writes, “is signified the completeness of the multitude of those who shall judge.”<sup>94</sup> Seven, a number that Augustine knows to be a marker of perfection, is the sum of four and three, each of which is also a significant number. Relatedly, the product of four and three is twelve.

**Fifteen** is typically perceived through its recognition as the sum of seven and eight, the former being a symbol of divine perfection and the latter being a type of divine rebirth.<sup>95</sup> Similarly, the Sabbath is the seventh day of the week and is thus a label for the type of divine rest and perfection, while the Lord’s Day, the day after the Sabbath, is seen as the eighth day in sequence, thus underscoring its symbol of renewal. Thus, the Sabbath is paralleled with the Old Testament, while the Lord’s Day is associated with the New Testament. The number fifteen, as the sum of seven and eight, is the agreement of the promises of the two Testaments. The same sort of symbolism explains the number of the psalms collectively called the “Songs of the Ascent” (Psalms 119-133) to correspond to the number of steps of the Temple of Solomon.<sup>96</sup>

**Twenty-four** is particularly treated by Jerome in his *Commentary on Daniel*. He

<sup>93</sup> “Jesus said to them, ‘Truly I tell you, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man is seated on the throne of his glory, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.’” (*Iesus autem dixit illis, amen dico vobis, quod vos qui secuti estis me, in regeneratione cum sederit Filius hominis in sede maiestatis suae, Sedebitis et vos super sedes duodecim, iudicantes duodecim tribus Israhel*). Weber, *Biblia sacra Vulgata*, 1556; Levine and Brettler, *The Jewish Annotated New Testament*, 36.

<sup>94</sup> *Duodenario quippe numero uniuersa quaedam significata est iudicantium multitudo* [...] Augustine, *The City of God* XX.5 (CCSL 48:704; *NPNF*<sup>1</sup> 2:424); Dods, *The City of God by St Augustine*, 715.

<sup>95</sup> Jerome, *Epistle 53* 2 (CSEL 54:445; *NPNF*<sup>2</sup> 6:97).

<sup>96</sup> Eucherius of Lyons, *Formulas of Spiritual Intelligence* X.15 (CCSL 66:74; PL 50:771; CSEL 31:60); Augustine, *Expositions on the Psalms 150* 1 (CCSL 40:2190-2191; *NPNF*<sup>1</sup> 8:681); Thomas O’Loughlin, *Celtic Theology*, 195; Thomas O’Loughlin, “The Symbol gives Life,” VII:221-52, at 242 n.94.

holds that each of the passages of Daniel 7:9 and Apocalypse 4:2ff must be read with the other passage in mind to fully understand the eschatological vision that is being described by each author. He infers that the number of thrones which are established in the company of the throne of the Ancient of Days is twenty-four, one for each of the tribes of Israel and the apostles of Christ.<sup>97</sup>

**Forty** is perceived as the product of four and ten: “To live soberly according to this significance of the number ten—conveyed to us temporarily (hence the multiplication by four)—and abstain from the pleasures of this world, this is the significance of the forty-day fast.”<sup>98</sup> Thus, the numeral forty is synonymous with Lent, a commemoration of the number of days that Christ wandered in the wilderness so that he might be tempted by sin and not succumb to it. Although Jerome shares with common patristic thought on the significance of the number forty, he also distinguishes his thought on the matter through his bold description of its meaning by stating that forty is “the number which is always of affliction and punishment...” (*qui numerus semper afflictionis et poenae est [...]*). This perspective on the meaning of forty, for Jerome, defends the fasts of Moses, Elijah, and Christ.<sup>99</sup>

The value of the numeral **seventy** is perceived through its standing as a multiple of two smaller positive integers with established meanings. Seventy as a product of seven and ten, two significant numbers, encourages Augustine to exegete the seventy years of Jeremiah’s life as a spiritual type of the length of time “during which the church is amongst foreigners...”<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Jerome, *Commentary on Daniel* VII.9 (CCSL 75A:844-846); Gleason L. Archer, trans., *Jerome’s Commentary on Daniel*, 77-79.

<sup>98</sup> *In hoc ergo denario dum temporaliter nobis insinuat, id est quater ducitur caste et continenter a temporum delectatione uiuere, hoc est quadraginta diebus ieiunare [...]* Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine* II.16.25.64 (CCSL 32:51); Green, *Augustine: De Doctrina Christiana*, 86-87.

<sup>99</sup> Jerome, *Commentary on Ezekiel* IX.29.8-16 (CCSL 75:412). The provisional translation of line IX.874 is my own.

<sup>100</sup> [...] *quo est apud alienos ecclesia [...]* Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine* III.35.50.121 (CCSL 32:111); Green, *Augustine: De Doctrina Christiana*, 186-7.

*Biblical numerology in the early medieval Hiberno-Latin literary tradition*

The works of the patristic writers that we have covered are great influences upon the Hiberno-Latin literary tradition which experienced its zenith during the eighth and ninth centuries, when NSB was being written and undergoing some indeterminate number of stages of development and emendation. The Hiberno-Latin tradition, then, is the other significant influence upon NSB. Our brief survey of the reception and use of number as literary symbol by texts within the Hiberno-Latin tradition will most heavily concentrate upon the exegetical writings of Bede, which were known to the Irish by the time NSB was being developed. We will also consider a few other texts, including the incomplete pseudo-Isidorian tract *Liber de numeris*, the Irish *Sex aetates mundi*, and *In Tenga Bithnua* (*The Ever-New Tongue*) (though it is written in Middle Irish rather than Hiberno-Latin).

The conception of **one** as a representation of unity, particularly associated with the Godhead, carries into the Hiberno-Latin literary tradition.<sup>101</sup> The author of the *Liber de numeris* looks to the incomprehensibility, timelessness, and omnipotence of God in his exegesis of Deuteronomy 6:4 to demonstrate that the number one should be a symbol of God, the ultimate source of unity.<sup>102</sup> “For who, in heaven or on the earth, in eternity, in power, in the Trinity, in unity, in divinity, in humanity, is in position like God? For that reason alone, therefore, God is said to be one and the same...” (*Quis enim in coelo aut in terra, aut subtus terram in aeternitate, in potestate, in trinitate, in unitate, in divinitate, in humanitate Deo soli similis esse potest? Ideo itaque unus idem solus Deus dicitur [...]*).<sup>103</sup>

The number **two** is associated with division insofar as the author of the *Liber de*

<sup>101</sup> Bede, *On the Temple* I.13.8 (CCSL 119A:182-183); Séan Connolly, trans., *Bede: On the Temple*. Translated Texts for Historians 21 (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1995), 51-52.

<sup>102</sup> “Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD alone” (*Audi, Israel, Dominus Deus [noster] unus est*). Berlin and Brettler, *The Jewish Study Bible*, 379; Weber, *Biblia sacra Vulgata*, 243.

<sup>103</sup> *Liber de numeris* I.2 (PL 83:1293c). The provisional translation is my own.



*numeris* is concerned. According to this text, a given soul can tread upon one of two paths. While one path represents life, the other way symbolizes death. The way of life is synonymous with Christ, while the path that opposes Christ (the embodiment of life) “becomes dark and slippery” (*sit [...] tenebrae et lubricum*), as described through the words of Psalm 34:6. An example of this remove between life and death is the drastic differentiation in typology between the twin sons of Isaac, Jacob and Esau. The author explicitly has Romans 9:13 in mind in noting that God is making an immediate and typological point through the birth of Jacob and his eventual triumph over his brother, even though the older, but rejected Esau initially holds the birthright instead of his younger, righteous twin brother Jacob.

Duos filios Isaac habuit, unus Deos reprobus, et alter electus fuit. Sic enim Scriptura ait: *Jacob dilexi, et Esau odio habui*; et hoc non sine causa, quia ambo filii boni patris, et ambo uterini in utero bonæ matris, et tamen electus supplantavit reprobum in utero matris, et primogenita ei rapuit, et benedictionem patris; sed ideo hoc voluit Deus ita, quia omnes electi de Jacob sunt orti, et de semine ejus, et tamen reprobum non dereliquit Deus, quia Job et Dei servus, et rex ortus est ex genere ejus. Et ideo hoc breviter memoravi, quia mali de bonis, et boni de malis oriuntur.

Isaac had two sons, one rejected by God, and the other one was chosen. For Scripture thus affirms [it]: “*Jacob dilexi, et Esau [autem] odio habui*” [“Jacob have I loved, but Esau I have hated”]. This is not without cause, because both [of them are] sons of a good father and both [of them were] born of the same mother, in the womb of a good mother[.] [And] yet, the chosen one was usurped by the rejected one in the mother’s womb. [Jacob] snatched the birthright from [Esau], and his father’s blessing [with it]; But here, for this reason, God determined it in this wise, because all the chosen are descended from Jacob and [are] of his seed. God, however, has not forsaken the rejected, because [of] Job and the servant of God, and the King [*i.e.* Christ] was born from his race. [And] therefore,

I briefly relate [it] here, because evil arises from good, and good arises out of evil.<sup>104</sup>

Similarly, the author of the *Liber de numeris* identifies two “destructive and deadly roots” (*radices pestiferas et mortiferas*) of everything that lives, which compels the author to devote a section of the work to his thoughts on the sins of pride and envy.<sup>105</sup>

**Three** in the early medieval Irish and Hiberno-Latin exegetical traditions closely follows the patristic way of thinking. Three represents the persons of the Holy Trinity, namely the Father, the Son, and the Spirit.<sup>106</sup> Bede exegetes the numerical significance of the two pillars of Solomon’s Temple, each being eighteen cubits in height, that eighteen is the product of three — a symbol of faith in the Trinity — and six — a representative of the work of creation completed in six days — thus meaning that the righteous person gains awareness of pious belief through good deeds. Each of the two bronze pillars, according to Bede, is a symbol of the faithful believer in Christ gaining knowledge of the holy through works, such as a pillar standing before the Temple of God.<sup>107</sup>

**Six** is one of the most prevalent numerical symbols in the early medieval Irish and Hiberno-Latin literary tradition. The authors within this tradition were influenced by the patristic scheme of *sex aetates mundi*, particularly through the works of Augustine.<sup>108</sup> For instance, the eleventh-century Middle Irish chronicle *Sex aetates mundi* (“The Six Ages

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<sup>104</sup> *Liber de numeris* II.18, in full (PL 83:1301b-1302a). The provisional translation is my own. I thank Sandra Keating and Patrick Reid for proofreading my translation. For the Scriptural reference in the Vulgate (Romans 9:13), see Weber, *Biblia sacra Vulgata*, 1760.

<sup>105</sup> *Liber de numeris* II.6 (PL 83:1297a).

<sup>106</sup> *Liber de numeris* III.20 (PL 83:1302); Bede, *On the Temple* I.6.1-2, II.18.6, II.19.4 (CCSL 119A:160-161, 199, 208); Connolly, *Bede: On the Temple*, 23, 75, 86.

<sup>107</sup> Bede, *On the Temple* II.18.6 (CCSL 119A:199); Connolly, *Bede: On the Temple*, 75.

<sup>108</sup> Bede, *The Reckoning of Time* V.66-VI.71 (CCSL 123B:461-544); Faith Wallis, trans., *Bede: The Reckoning of Time*. Translated Texts for Historians 29 (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1999), 157-249.

of the World”) is a brief, but noble attempt to ascribe the entire history of the world into six ages in reflection of the six days of the creation of that world by God.<sup>109</sup> The number of ages of a man’s life is six, with the final age having no set length.<sup>110</sup> This Hiberno-Latin text likely drew upon the *sex aetates mundi* schema as envisioned by Isidore.<sup>111</sup> Bede, too, does not let this schema go unnoticed. Bede explicitly relies upon the “great authority” of Augustine to note the importance of the “many-sided perfection” of the number six by extensively quoting Augustine’s discussion of six in the fourth book of *De Trinitate* (“On the Trinity”).<sup>112</sup> Bede likely relies upon Gregory<sup>113</sup> in his conclusion that “the perfect works of good people are rightly wont to be symbolized” by the number six, “because the Lord completed the adornment of the world in the number six.”<sup>114</sup>

**Seven** is closely associated with six due to its employment in the *sex aetates mundi* schema, but it is also recognized for its significance that is inherited from Jewish number symbolism. The first recension of *In Tenga Bithnua* concludes with a beautiful and powerful description of the light that emanates from Christ and his heavenly realm, including the angels and saints. We are told that each and every angel, as well as each and every saint, of the heavenly orders emanates a brightness that is sevenfold greater

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<sup>109</sup> The standard edition and translation of this text is Dáibhí Ó Cróinín, ed. and trans., *The Irish Sex Aetates Mundi* (Dublin: DIAS, 1983), but also see Hildegard L.C. Tristram, ed., *Sex Aetates Mundi. Die Weltzeitalter bei den Angelsachsen und den Iren. Untersuchungen und Texte. Anglistische Forschungen* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1985); Kuno Meyer, “*Sex Aetates Mundi*,” *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie (ZCP)* 3 (1901): 17-20; Richard Irvine Best and Osborn Bergin, eds., *Lebor na hUidre* (“Book of the Dun Cow”) (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 1929) (LU). For a treatment of its authorship, see H. P. A. Oskamp, “On the author of *Sex Aetates Mundi*,” *Studia Celtica* 3 (1968): 127-140.

<sup>110</sup> A copyist of *Sex aetates mundi* has a sense of humor. He notes regarding the sign that a person is in the sixth and final stage of his or her life, “Senility, indeed, is the final stage of old age” (*Senium uero pars ultima senectutis*). Ó Cróinín, *Sex aetates mundi*, 66, 110:4a.

<sup>111</sup> Isidore of Seville, *Chronicon* (PL 83:1017-1058; CCSL 112).

<sup>112</sup> Bede, *The Reckoning of Time* II.39 (CCSL 123B:402-404); Wallis, *Bede: The Reckoning of Time*, 108-9. For Augustine’s discussion of the number six as symbol, see above.

<sup>113</sup> Gregory, *Homilies on Ezekiel* (CCSL 142:229, 284-285; PL 76:952d, 992a).

<sup>114</sup> *Nam quia in senario numero dominus mundi ornatum compleuit recte in eo perfecta bonorum solent opera figurari [...]* Bede, *On the Temple* I.3.4 (CCSL 119A:153); Connolly, *Bede: On the Temple*, 13.

than the sun, implying a channeling of perfection of radiance. Despite such an overwhelming amount of light, the brightness of Christ's face vastly overpowers the light of the angels and saints.<sup>115</sup>

The number **twelve** as a numerical symbol of divine judgment as allocated from Christ to the twelve apostles factors into the description of the measurements of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem in the *De locis sanctis* ("On the Holy Places") of Adomnán. In keeping with the recent interpretation of *De locis sanctis* as being a text less interested in measuring the physical dimensions of sacred places in Jerusalem than charting their allegorical dimensions as an example of biblical exegesis,<sup>116</sup> we should note that the number of lamps within the *sepulchrum* according to Adomnán's reckoning through Arculf is pedagogically deliberate. Regarding the legendary resting place of the Lord Christ's body, Adomnán "dictates" for Arculf, "Now in this *sepulchrum*, according to the number of the twelve apostles, twelve burning lamps shine always day and night... They are fed with oil and shine brightly."<sup>117</sup> The image with which we are graced is the burning spirits of the twelve apostles, who will judge the world at the eschaton with Christ, keeping vigilance over the worldly memorial of the Son of Man. Bede holds that the twelve apostles are typified as twelve stars which together make up the crown that adorns the head of the laboring woman (Apocalypse 12:1), which, in turn, is a type of the Church.<sup>118</sup>

Bede follows Augustine in attaching a symbolic meaning to the numeral **fifteen**, of which little else is remarked about the numerical symbol in patristic thought. Fifteen is

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<sup>115</sup> *In Tenga Bithnua* (1st rec.) §100 (CCSA 16:221, 223).

<sup>116</sup> Thomas O'Loughlin, "The Exegetical Purpose of Adomnán's *De Locis Sanctis*," *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies* 24 (1992): 37-53, rep. in O'Loughlin, *Early Medieval Exegesis*, VI:37-53.

<sup>117</sup> *In quo utique sepulchro dudena lampades iuxta numerum duodecim sanctorum apostolorum semper die ac nocte ardentes lucent... latus dexterum oleo nutrient praeifulgent.* Adomnán, *De locis sanctis* 1.2.12, lines 1-3, 5-6; Bieler, "De locis sanctis," 46-47.

<sup>118</sup> Bede, *Commentary on the Apocalypse* II.19 (CCSL 121A:387); Faith Wallis, trans., *Bede: Commentary on Revelation*. Translated Texts for Historians 58 (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013), 190.

the sum of seven, which denotes the sabbath rest, and eight, which is a representative of renewal or resurrection. Thus, fifteen, according to Bede, "...is sometimes taken to signify the life which is now lived in the sabbath rest of the souls of the faithful but will be brought to perfection at the end of the world by the resurrection of their immortal bodies."<sup>119</sup>

Bede is in close agreement with the patristic thinkers regarding the symbolic value of **forty**. In his discussion of the measurements of the Temple of Solomon, he notes that the product of ten, a perfect number, and four, a symbol of the covering of the earth, is forty. The forty years of suffering in the wilderness by the Israelites, whose liberation from the bondage of Egypt is a type of the freedom which Christians have from the death of sin, is a type of the suffering which occurs on earth for the promises of eternal bliss. "They were subjected," Bede writes, "to trials for forty years in order to draw attention to the hardships with which the Church contends throughout the whole world in observing the law of God." Bede reminds us that Christ fasted forty days in the wilderness and sojourned with the disciples after the resurrection for forty days.<sup>120</sup>

#### *Towards biblical numerology in NSB*

NSB is intended to be read as an ideal model of asceticism written for a target eremitic audience by beautifully meshing biblical exegesis, hagiography, elements of the *echtrae* genre, and familiar phrases from martyrologies and hymnals to present an idealized form of the legendary voyage of Brendan that would enchant a reader's attention. The text inspired the authors that would write the texts which would form the *immram* genre that depend upon NSB, though this ramification is probably not by design.

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<sup>119</sup> *Quindecim namque quae ex septem et octo constant solent non numquam ad significationem referre uitae quae nunc in sabbatissimo geritur animarum fidelium perficietur autem in fine saeculi resurrectione corporum immortalium.* Bede, *On the Temple* I.8.2 (CCSL 119A:167); Connolly, *Bede: On the Temple*, 31.

<sup>120</sup> *Exercetur enim temptationibus quadraginta annis ut labores ecclesiae quibus totum per orbem in obseruanda Dei lege [...] Bede, On the Temple* I.10 (CCSL 119A:172-173); Connolly, *Bede: On the Temple*, 39.

## V. “*Such a great multitude*”

### *Biblical numerology as literary device in Nauigatio Sancti Brendani*

NSB, in much the same way as the very Scriptures from which the anonymous author of the Hiberno-Latin text drew great inspiration, has a vast interest in the biblical value of number as symbol, if not numerology in the way in which we have analyzed it as literary motif. Dorothy Ann Bray, in her important article which thoroughly explains the allegorical nature of NSB, notes, for instance, that “the number seven and its multiples are obviously significant” in the text.<sup>121</sup> John MacQueen agrees that the purpose and narrative method of NSB “is basically allegorical and symbolic, with biblical numerology playing an important part.”<sup>122</sup> The structuring of the text alone should be telling of the significance of the number as symbol in a biblical context to the author. The number of years which Brendan voyages is seven, a perfect number, while the number of the yearly cycles of the ports of call which the author elucidates is three, another significant number.

NSB, in keeping with its purpose to promulgate an ideal model of asceticism, places an emphasis upon the importance of unity amongst monks. The numeral **one** is the symbol of unity, particularly for the understanding of the relationship between the members of the Godhead as three persons in one substance, in biblical numerology. The message of brotherly unity which is expressed through Psalm 132:1 — “How good and pleasant it is that brothers live together in unity” — is hinted in the description of Mernóc’s monastic community and it is quoted as the birds commemorate the liturgical hour of *nones* during Brendan’s first visit to their island.<sup>123</sup> When the supernumeraries are warned by Brendan about their respective fates before the voyage begins, he foresees one of the three latecomers, who has done a meritorious deed, not returning with them to

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<sup>121</sup> Bray, “Allegory in *NSB*,” 175-86, at 183; MacQueen, *Numerology*, 22-4.

<sup>122</sup> MacQueen, *Numerology*, 18.

<sup>123</sup> *Ecce quam bonum et quam decorum habitare fratres in uno*. NSB §§1, 11; Selmer, *Navigatio*, 4.26-7, 25.49-52; O’Meara, *Voyage*, 3, 21-2; Weber, *Biblia sacra Vulgata*, 937.

Ireland due to a call to pilgrimage with the inhabitants of the island of anchorites.<sup>124</sup> The text consistently presents situations in which the members of groups, particularly monastic ones, unite to sing or speak. The brothers of Brendan speak “as it were with one mouth” in agreeing to sail with him, saying: ““Only one thing let us ask for, the will of God.””<sup>125</sup> We are told that the singing birds chant psalms in unison, “as it were with one voice” (*quasi una uoce dicentes*), when Brendan and his brothers sail from their island after their first visit as well as when Brendan and his followers reach their island for their second visit.<sup>126</sup>

We recall that the number **two** as a numerological symbol is typically associated with the division between good and evil. Brendan, before the beginning of the voyage, eyes two of the three supernumeraries and foresees their fate during the voyage: ““But for you others [*i.e.* two] he [*i.e.* God] will prepare a hideous judgment.””<sup>127</sup> Clearly, the context in this situation suggests ensuing evil for these two supernumeraries. Indeed, while one is taken by a demon that has the guise of an Ethiopian boy (a medieval type of embodied malice) after a charge of theft, the other one is taken by another demon into hell, the home of Leviathan and his brood.<sup>128</sup>

**Three** as a symbol of the holy Trinity is generously documented. Additionally, three is a type of completion or perfection in both Christian and Jewish traditions. Indeed,

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<sup>124</sup> NSB §§5, 17; Selmer, *Navigatio*, 12.8, 49.3-4; O’Meara, *Voyage*, 9, 43. The fate of only one of the three supernumeraries being a call to monastic pilgrimage is likely a nod to the *peregrinatio* movement. The idea here is that the ideal model of asceticism offered through NSB accepts and encourages its adherents to participate in the movement. For treatments of the *peregrinatio* movement, see Gougaud, *Christianity in Celtic Lands*, 129-84; Thomas Charles-Edwards, “The Social Background to Irish *Peregrinatio*,” *Celtica* 11 (1976): 43-59, rep. Wooding, *The Otherworld Voyage*, 94-108.

<sup>125</sup> ‘*Unam tantum queramus, Dei uoluntatem.*’ NSB §2; Selmer, *Navigatio*, 9-10.1, 9, 13; O’Meara, *Voyage*, 7.

<sup>126</sup> NSB §§11, 15; Selmer, *Navigatio*, 28.108-11, 42-3.46.50; O’Meara, *Voyage*, 25, 37-8.

<sup>127</sup> *Vobis autem preparabit teterrimum iudicium.* NSB §5; Selmer, *Navigatio*, 12.9; O’Meara, *Voyage*, 9.

<sup>128</sup> NSB §§7, 24; Selmer, *Navigatio*, 15-16, 64-65; O’Meara, *Voyage*, 13, 55.

this number occurs more than nearly any other number in NSB, particularly to designate or recall the number of days of the passion and crucifixion of Christ, which in itself has been noted to be a soteriological symbol of perfection or completion. In one exemplar, Brendan and his monks are given three ports of call for the three feast days of Good Friday, Holy Saturday, and Easter Sunday: the Island of Sheep, Iasconius, and the Paradise of Birds.<sup>129</sup>

Returning to the deliberate structuring of the text, Bray notes the intensification of the eschatological undertones of the text as the story moves from one of the three detailed cycles (of seven one-year cycles) to another one. The third cycle, which is the seventh and final cycle total, is the most eschatologically charged in nature, presenting episodes like a portal to hell and types suggestive of New Jerusalem such as the crystal pillar and the clear sea.

The first cycle establishes the itinerary of the voyage both spatially and thematically; the second cycle establishes the regularity of movement and reinforces the theme of monastic life and stability. The events of the last cycle of voyaging echo those of the previous cycles and draw the theme to its conclusion.<sup>130</sup>

Once Brendan and his monks have endured a number of trials that is commensurate with a numerical representation of spiritual perfection, then they are finally allowed to sail through the fog and uncover the *terra repromissionis sanctorum*.

The knowledge that the number **four** has a history of employment as a literary symbol due to its association with the covering of the world is also found in NSB. Brendan, during his second visit to the Paradise of Birds, is informed by the messenger

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<sup>129</sup> NSB §§9-11, 15, 27; Selmer, *Navigatio*, 17-28, 40-45, 76-78; O'Meara, *Voyage*, 15-25, 35-39, 65-67. It should be noted that it is a three days' journey between the Island of Sheep and the Paradise of Birds (NSB §11): Selmer, *Navigatio*, 22.1-2; O'Meara, *Voyage*, 19.

<sup>130</sup> Bray, "Allegory in NSB," 175-186, at 184-185.



bird that God has ordained the saint and his crew to visit four ports of call during four times (seasons) of the year for each of the seven years which Brendan has to sail.<sup>131</sup> When Brendan discovers the crystal pillar, which is an allegorical type of preparation for the eschatological New Jerusalem, we are told that he measures the four sides of the net. Further, Brendan spends four days in measuring the four sides of the crystal pillar. On the fourth and final day of measuring, he finds a crevice within which are housed a crystal chalice and crystal patens. Finally, during the same cycle of voyaging as the one that includes the crystal pillar and the clear sea, Brendan and his men sail to an island of smiths. When Brendan discerns the spiritual peril that underlies this island, he prudently determines to sail away from it, but he is unable to do so. Brendan observes in his concern, "... 'the wind is bringing us directly there.'"<sup>132</sup> It is after Brendan hears the various sounds of the smiths fashioning their devices with hammers that he responds in a way that is appropriate to a *miles Christus* ("soldier of Christ"): "... he armed himself, making the sign of the Lord in all four directions..."<sup>133</sup> The author deliberately connects the patristic thought of Christ's covering of four corners of the world to Brendan, the soldier of Christ, arming himself by making the sign of the cross of Christ in four directions as the symbol of the protection of a sacred body that is approaching a spiritually corrupted space.

**Six** as a symbol in NSB is used in situations of completion of worldly labors by an individual or a group, whether the nature of those labors is good or evil. In an example of goodness, Brendan and his monks find an island of grapes of an unnaturally enormous size. The lushness of the fruits of the island tempts the voyagers to break their ascetic fast for the sake of enjoying the various fruits. Once Brendan finds six "copious" wells teeming with many kinds of roots and plants, he beckons his followers to enjoy the fruits

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<sup>131</sup> NSB §15; Selmer, *Navigatio*, 43.60-62; O'Meara, *Voyage*, 38. Significantly, the bird calls the voyaging of Brendan a "pilgrimage" (*peregrinacionis*), thus underscoring the purpose of the author's retelling of the voyage of Brendan through an allegorical lens.

<sup>132</sup> [...] *sed uentus illuc subtrahit nos recto cursu*. NSB §23; Selmer, *Navigatio*, 61.5; O'Meara, *Voyage*, 53.

<sup>133</sup> [...] *uenerabilis pater armauit se dominico tropheo in quattuor partes* [...] NSB §23; Selmer, *Navigatio*, 62.8; O'Meara, *Voyage*, 53. See also Selmer, *Navigatio*, 63.34-37; O'Meara, *Voyage*, 54.

of the island before the Creator.<sup>134</sup> The number of wells, which contain products of the God-given world, corresponds to the number of days that God uses to complete the creation of the world, a feat that He deems “good.”

In an exemplar of a twisted version of the idea of six as a symbol of completion of labors on earth, we look to the episode of unhappy Judas. After Brendan has beseeched God to protect Judas against the demons, they rebuke the saint by telling him: “Unhappy Judas will suffer double punishment for the next six days because you protected him in the night that has passed.”<sup>135</sup> The chosen number of days for the punishment of Judas is an attempted corruption of the holiness with which the number carries as a symbol of the completion of labor.

The numbers which recur the most often through NSB are one, three, seven, ten, and forty, all perfect numbers in the Jewish and the Christian dispensation which claim it as its inheritance and completion. The number **seven** “is thus the number which typifies the *terra repromissionis sanctorum*, and the seven-year voyage of Brendan and his companions is an allegorical recapitulation of the spiritual history of the world.”<sup>136</sup> The numeral seven represents the day in which the whole work of the Creator had already been finished, thus implying completion.<sup>137</sup> Vincent Hopper notes that “[t]he conception of 7 steps to perfection was a common medieval notion...”<sup>138</sup>

Most of the instances of the use of the number **eight** as symbol are employed as units of time that are meant to possess multiple exegetical meanings. It is not

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<sup>134</sup> NSB §18; Selmer, *Navigatio*, 53-55; O’Meara, *Voyage*, 46-47.

<sup>135</sup> ‘*Duplices penas sustinebit in istis sex diebus infelix Judas propter quod illum defendisti in ista preterita nocte.*’ NSB §25; Selmer, *Navigatio*, 69:67-9; O’Meara, *Voyage*, 59.

<sup>136</sup> MacQueen, *Numerology*, 22; Bray, “Allegory in NSB,” 175-86, at 183.

<sup>137</sup> Eucherius of Lyons, *Formulas of Spiritual Intelligence* X.7 (CCSL 66:73; PL 50:770; CSEL 31:60).

<sup>138</sup> Hopper, *Medieval Number Symbolism*, 18.

inappropriate that the number of days which Brendan uses to cross the clear sea, even with a favorable wind and full sail, is the same number as the numerical symbol for spiritual renewal or rebirth, eight.<sup>139</sup> Similarly, Brendan requires eight days to sail between the position of the crystal pillar and the island of smiths, a foretaste of the portal of hell.<sup>140</sup> The number of months that the bird proscribes to Brendan for voyaging between that island and the island of the community of Ailbe, a type of ideal monasticism, is eight.<sup>141</sup> We recall that even though the voyage of Brendan lasts seven years and is organized as seven one-year cycles, merely three of the seven cycles are elucidated, the final cycle being the most eschatologically charged as Brendan and his monks are prepared to sail by the portal of hell and towards the *terra repromissionis sanctorum*.<sup>142</sup> The third and final cycle represents spiritual preparedness of heart for Brendan to lead his monks through the greatest of trials in the ascetic life and be able to sail through the fog to glimpse the Promised Land of the Saints, close to the shores of Ireland, before returning to his home to die just as Moses glimpses Canaan from the top of Mount Nebo in Moab before his death. The units of time, the cycle through which the ideal ascetic must live in this life to reach the timeless Paradise, reflect Brendan's meritoriously renewed state of spirit.

**Twelve** is seldom employed as symbol within NSB, but one instance is not to escape our notice. Although we are told that the monastic community of Ailbe features twenty-four brothers under a spiritual successor to Ailbe, we are given a subtle but important detail regarding the arrangement of their bread at meals. The abbot explains to Brendan, "... There are twenty-four of us brothers here. Every day we have twelve loaves for our food, a loaf between every two." When the brothers commemorate a feast-day or a Sunday, each brother receives a full loaf. Since Brendan is visiting the community during

<sup>139</sup> NSB §21; Selmer, *Navigatio*, 58.26-7; O'Meara, *Voyage*, 50.

<sup>140</sup> NSB §§22-3; Selmer, *Navigatio*, 61.22.42-23.2; O'Meara, *Voyage*, 52.

<sup>141</sup> NSB §11; Selmer, *Navigatio*, 28.105-7; O'Meara, *Voyage*, 24. Cf. NSB §15; Selmer, *Navigatio*, 43.63-44.65; O'Meara, *Voyage*, 38.

<sup>142</sup> Bray, "Allegory in NSB," 184-5.

the Christmas feast-day, he observes that each brother has been given one full loaf of bread.<sup>143</sup> The custom of two brothers sharing one loaf of bread emphasizes the strength of the unity in the community to the point that they do not experience fatigue or signals of aging. The twelve pairs of ascetics sharing in the bread, a type of the body of Christ, points to the unity between the tribes of Israel and the apostles of Christ.

The number **fifteen**, which is the sum of Brendan and the fourteen singularly chosen monks (before they are joined by the three supernumeraries), is used to mark the number of days which it takes Barrind and Mernóc to walk around the *terra repromissionis sanctorum* before finding the dividing river.<sup>144</sup> Thomas O’Loughlin points out that the number fifteen is a difficult number for which to find a representation. However, O’Loughlin does find that the number of fifteen is described by Eucherius of Lyons in his *Formulas* as being the number of steps of Solomon’s temple. This work, particularly its chapter on numbers, was known in medieval Ireland. The author of NSB is noting that it takes the same number of days as the number of steps of Solomon’s temple — built as the house of the Presence of God in Jewish tradition — to reach the dividing river of the Promised Land of the Saints, the island that is lit by Christ, who needs no temple because He Himself supersedes the temple of Solomon.<sup>145</sup> We should also note that Brendan and his companions could have reached the *terra repromissionis sanctorum* in fifteen days — each day is a type of each monk who has been ordained to reach the blessed isle — had the three supernumeraries not interfered with the order of the original number.<sup>146</sup> The initial fifteen voyagers, Brendan and his fourteen monks, do eventually reach the island, but only after each and every one of the three supernumeraries has

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<sup>143</sup> *Nos sumus hic uiginti quattuor fratres. Omni die habemus duodecim panes ad nostrum refectioem, inter duos singulos panes.* NSB §12; Selmer, *Navigatio*, 28-37, at 32.57-60; O’Meara, *Voyage*, 25-32, at 28.

<sup>144</sup> NSB §§1, 2; Selmer, *Navigatio*, 5-6.40-4, 9.1-2; O’Meara, *Voyage*, 4, 6; O’Loughlin, *Celtic Theology*, 195.

<sup>145</sup> O’Loughlin, *Celtic Theology*, 195; Eucherius of Lyons, *Formulas of Spiritual Intelligence* X.15 (CCSL 66:74; PL 50:771; CSEL 31:60). See I Kings 8:10-13, Ezekiel 10:18, Apocalypse 21:1-27.

<sup>146</sup> MacQueen, *Numerology*, 21. Cf. NSB §6; Selmer, *Navigatio*, 12.4-5; O’Meara, *Voyage*, 9.

departed from the voyage in some fashion, thus restoring order through number.

Brendan, during his first visit to the island of the monastic community of Ailbe, becomes interested in the layout of the chapel of the community.

*Dum autem perfinissent debitum uespertinale, cepit sanctus Brendanus considerare quomodo illa ecclesia erat edificata. Erat Enim quadrata tam / longitudinis quam et latitudinis, et habebat septem luminaria, tria ante altare quod erat in medio, et bina ante alia duo altaria. Erant enim alteria de cristallo quadrato facta et eorum uascula similiter de cristallo, id est patene, calices, et urceoli, et cetera uasa que pertinebant ad cultum diuinum, et sedilia **xxiiii** per circuitum ecclesie. Locus uero ubi abbas sedebat erat inter duos choros.*

When they had finished the office of vespers Saint Brendan examined how the church was built. It was square, of the same length as breadth, and had seven lights — three before the altar, which was in the middle, and two each before the other two altars. The altars were made of crystal, namely patens, chalices and cruets and other vessels required for the divine cult. There were **twenty-four** seats in a circle in the church. The abbot, however, sat between the two choirs.<sup>147</sup>

This is one of a handful of instances in which Brendan actively or visually measures the dimensions of a symbol of sacred space, another one being the inspection of the crystal pillar during the final year of the voyage (§22). It is quite probable that the author has in mind the connection which Eucherius and Jerome make between twenty-four and the number of ancients which sit around the throne of God in Revelation (Apocalypse) 4:4. The author uses Brendan as the saintly figure through which the intended audience

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<sup>147</sup> NSB §12; Selmer, *Navigatio*, 33.82-34.90; O'Meara, *Voyage*, 29. Emphasis is mine.

observes a monastic community that is ready for the eschaton. A lack of illness and protection from spiritual harm mark to the reader the benefit which is to be found in consulting the community of Ailbe as a ideal model of asceticism. We should also note here that the abbot of this community, due to the especial level of holiness that marks his community, is free from any hindrances that would prevent him from foretelling the end of the voyage and the fates of the two remaining supernumeraries.<sup>148</sup>

The number **forty** is commonly used as the number of days that Brendan and his monks sail between islands. Brendan, as we have observed, has been paralleled and compared with the prophet Moses. Moses and the Israelites wandered for forty years before the next generation could enter the Promised Land. This span of spiritual fasting is a type of the forty-day fast of the wandering Christ in the wilderness, which, in turn, is remembered by the forty days of Lent. MacQueen notes that all three events share the unit of forty in some amount of time that “shares with them overtones of trial and preparation.”<sup>149</sup> One device used by the author of NSB for paralleling the patriarch Moses and the saint Brendan is the numerical symbol forty, which, as we have noted, is the representative of Moses’ life in the *Torah*.<sup>150</sup> Moses, the mediator of God, leads the people of Israel from Egypt to the Promised Land via a desert over the last forty years of his life. Similarly, Brendan, an ascetic of Moses’ God, guides his monks, people of Christ, after seven years, from the back of Iasconius to the *terra repromissionis sanctorum*, the “Promised Land of the Saints”, over a course of forty days.<sup>151</sup> NSB is basically an allegory of the monastic life in which Brendan leads his followers in a search for a *deserta in oceano*.

In a number of places within NSB, “innumerable” (*innumerabilis*) is an exaggerative

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<sup>148</sup> NSB §12; Selmer, *Navigatio* 36.120-122; O’Meara, *Voyage*, 31.

<sup>149</sup> MacQueen, *Numerology*, 19.

<sup>150</sup> See above (IV:20).

<sup>151</sup> NSB §28; Selmer, *Navigatio*, 78; O’Meara, *Voyage*, 67. See Hopper, *Medieval Number Symbolism*, 26.

adjective used to describe a situation of dire spiritual consequences or concern. In one example, after Brendan has rebuked the host of demons which seek to torment the unhappy Judas, it is stated that “[w]hen the evening hour had darkened the sea, an innumerable number of demons covered its surface in a circle, shouting” at Brendan.<sup>152</sup> The choice to present such a vast amount of demons in this situation is meant to increase the dramatic tension as well as tempt Brendan and his brothers to be overwhelmed by fear and despair. Nonetheless, Brendan chooses not to give in to their ravenous pleas for the unhappy Judas, instead relying on God to mercifully grant respite to the figure that had once betrayed Christ.

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<sup>152</sup> *Cum autem uespertina hora obumbrasset Thetim, ecce innumerabilis multitudo demonum cooperuit faciem Thetis in circuitu, / uociferantes [...]* NSB §25; Selmer, *Navigatio*, 68.48-50; O’Meara, *Voyage*, 58.

## VI. Conclusion

### *Navigating the influence of biblical numerology upon the purpose of NSB*

It is sufficiently clear through our thorough investigation of NSB that the text is teeming with deliberate employment of the number as allegorical symbol. Thus, the text fits well in utilizing this pedagogical motif to direct the eremitical target audience of the text as we have it, if not the hypothesized initial “*ur-Nauigatio*,” towards an ideal model of unlocking the mysteries of Scriptures to aid in living out an edifying monastic rule. The number of the followers of the abbot of the community of Ailbe in §12 is intentionally equated to the number of ancients seated around the throne of the God in Apocalypse 4:4 that both Ailbe and Brendan faithfully serve. The number of voyagers (including Brendan), which is fifteen, is also predetermined such that the number of voyagers remains fifteen when the boat reaches the shores of Ireland, the apparently disrupting influence of the supernumeraries to the significant nature of the set number of voyagers notwithstanding. The number of years that Brendan sails is appropriate to the biblical value of the number seven as an especially sacred symbol.

Given the intentionally allegorical nature of the text, we should note the emphasis upon the act of measuring spans of sacred features during the voyage of Brendan within the literary context. The account of the New Jerusalem in the Apocalypse, the recording of the measuring of the new Temple in Ezekiel, and the inspection of the Jerusalem in Zechariah 3 together serve as evidence that the treasured biblical idea of the measurement of sacred space to numerical symbols of perfection extends through texts like NSB to cover distances travelled within a voyaging schema and sacred entities scaled to include the time to cover such distances by the scope of allegory. We keep in mind the allegory of the life of an ascetic extended from the desert to the ocean as we note that this life is finite and can be measured just as sacred spaces can be measured with rods and cords. Adomnán’s *De locis sanctis* not only is the most convenient and probably best example of this phenomenon within the early medieval Hiberno-Latin literary context but also demonstrates that the early medieval Irish possessed an interest in the relationships



between time, space, dimension, symbolism, and holiness.<sup>153</sup>

We have observed through this study the great influence of the thought of Augustine, among that of other patristic theologians, upon the early medieval Hiberno-Latin exegetical tradition, most importantly on the author of NSB. In Augustine's *On Christian Doctrine*, he recapitulates the seven principles that together comprise *The Book of Rules* written by the theologian Tyconius. Pertinently, Augustine recalls his fifth rule regarding the "measurements of time." It is by this rule, Augustine summarizes, that "one can often discover or figure out indications of time in the holy scriptures that are not explicit." The rule operates through two fashions, one of which is through numbers. "By ordinary numbers," Augustine holds, "he [Tyconius] means those which scripture makes conspicuous use of, like the numbers seven or ten of twelve, and the others which scholars happily acknowledge as they read."<sup>154</sup> It is this rule of Tyconius through Augustine that ultimately influences a Hiberno-Latin writer to produce a beautiful reimagining of the voyage of Brendan with the liberal use of number symbolism and allegory to promote a model ascetic life.

This interpretation of NSB (as we possess it) as an allegorical perception of the ideal monastic life in light of the need of spiritual preparedness to reach the New Jerusalem of the eschaton is not a completely original idea.<sup>155</sup> However, the analysis of this approach to reading the text by noting the use of biblical number symbolism as an underlying literary motif in the text is the contribution of this study to multiple disciplines, particularly theology. NSB is one of the best exemplars, if not the greatest product, of the

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<sup>153</sup> Bede lauds the intricate beauty of the layout of Adomnán's *De locis sanctis* in the introduction to his abridged version of the text. Denis Meehan, ed., introduction in *Adamnan's De locis sanctis*, 5.

<sup>154</sup> ... *regula plerumque inueniri uel conici possit latens in scripturis sanctis quantitas temporum... Legitimos autem numeros dicit, quos eminentius diuina scriptura commendat, sicut septenarium uel denarium uel duodenarium et quicumque alii sunt, quos legendo studiosi libenter agnoscunt.* Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine* III.35.50.117, 120 (CCSL 32:110, 111); Green, *Augustine: De Doctrina Christiana*, 186-187.

<sup>155</sup> Ludwig Bieler, "Two Observations Concerning the *Navigatio Brendani*," *Celtica* 9 (1976), 15-17, rep. in Wooding, *The Otherworld Voyage*, 91-93, at 92.

early medieval Hiberno-Latin exegetical tradition because of its brilliant employment of number as symbol to delineate, map, and promote what Thomas O’Loughlin has called a “topography of holiness” through the allegory that overwhelms this retelling of an Irish saint’s legendary voyage to a *terra repromissionis sanctorum*.<sup>156</sup> The vital charting of symbolic numbers throughout the text helps the intended eremitic readers to have a practical model for knowing how best to be in the same spiritual state of readiness as demonstrated by the twelfth-century Welsh bard Meilyr through his *marwysgafn* “deathbed song.”

Pryd y bo cyfnod ein cyfodi,  
 Y sawl y sy’ m medd, armâa fi.  
 As bwyf yn addef, yn aros y llef,  
 Y llog a achef aches wrthi  
 ac y sy didryf didraul ei bri  
 Ac am ei mynwent mynwes heli,  
 Ynys Fair firain, ynys glân y glain:  
 Gwrthrych dadwyrain ys cain ynddi.

When the appointed time of our resurrection comes,  
 All who are in the grave, make me ready.  
 May I be in the abode, awaiting the call,  
 Of the monastery by which the tide rises  
 And which is a wilderness of unperishing glory,  
 And surrounding its cemetery the breast of the sea,  
 Island of radiant Mary, holy island of the saints:  
 Anticipating resurrection is fair there.<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> O’Loughlin, “The Topography of Holiness,” 1-20.

<sup>157</sup> Meilyr Brydydd, “*Marwysgafn Meilyr Brydydd*,” in *The Medieval Welsh Religious Lyric: Poems of the Gogynfeirdd, 1137-1282* (ed. and trans. Catherine A. McKenna; Belmont, M.A.: Ford and Bailie, 1991), 154-157.

The author of NSB produced the text in such a meticulous and beautiful fashion that the reader will be in the same spirit of receptivity of the Scriptures, in all of its aspects, as that spirit with which Brendan welcomed Barrind to visit his monastic community at the beginning of the text: “Show us the word of God and nourish our souls with the varied wonders that you saw in the ocean.”<sup>158</sup>

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<sup>158</sup> *Indica nobis uerbum Dei atque refice animas nostras de diuersis miraculis, que uidisti in oceano.* NSB §1; Selmer, *Navigatio*, 4.13-14; O’Meara, *Voyage*, 3.

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<sup>159</sup> This list is heavily abbreviated. For a recent list of MSS., see the list compiled by Giovanni Orlandi in Burgess and Strijbosch, *The Legend of St Brendan*, 13-26.

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APPENDIX I — NUMBERS IN *Nauigatio sancti Brendani*

| NUMBER | INCIDENT(S)  |
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| ONE    | <p>“Their [Mernóc’s monks] housing was indeed scattered, but they lived together as <b>one</b> in faith, hope and charity” (§1, O’Meara 3; cap. 1, lines 26-27, Selmer 4).</p> <p>The holy man tells Barrind that “[y]et for the equivalent of <b>one</b> year you have been on this island and have not tasted food or drink” (§1, O’Meara 5; cap. 1, lines 57-8, Selmer 7).</p> <p>The brothers of Brendan, in <b>one</b> oratory, speak “as it were with <b>one</b> mouth” in agreeing to the voyage: “Only <b>one</b> thing let us ask for, the will of God (§2, O’Meara 7; cap. 2, lines 1, 9, 13, Selmer 9-10).</p> <p>Brendan pitches his tent at Brendan’s Seat, “at a point where there was entry for <b>one</b> boat” (§4, O’Meara 8; cap. 4, lines 3, 5-6, Selmer 10).</p> <p>Brendan notes to the supernumeraries that: “<b>One</b> of you has done something meritorious...” (§5, O’Meara 9; cap. 5, line 8, Selmer 12).</p> <p>When Brendan and his brothers sail to Rocky Island, they find an opening “where <b>one</b> boat might enter” (§6, O’Meara 10; cap. 6, line 26, Selmer 13).</p> <p>Brendan, on Rocky Island, charges his brothers that <b>one</b> of the three supernumeraries will commit a theft (§6, O’Meara 11; cap. 6, lines 41-2, Selmer 14).</p> <p>When Brendan and his brothers are</p> |

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|  | <p>walking about the Island of Sheep, “they found various flocks of sheep — all of <b>one</b> colour, white” (§9, O’Meara 15; cap. 9, lines 10-11, Selmer 18).</p> <p>One of the brothers, heeding the command of Brendan, takes <b>one</b> sheep from the flock on the Island of Sheep (§9, O’Meara 16; cap. 9, line 15, Selmer 18).</p> <p><b>One</b> of the birds of the Paradise of Birds descends from the tree to converse with Brendan (§11, O’Meara 20; cap. 11, line 28, Selmer 23).</p> <p>The messenger bird of the Paradise of Birds tells Brendan that he and his brothers ““have now spent <b>one</b> year on your journey”” (§11, O’Meara 21; cap. 11, lines 44-5, Selmer 24).</p> <p>The birds of the Paradise of Birds, at the hour of vespers, chant, “as it were with <b>one</b> voice, beating their wings on their sides,” the words of Psalm 64.1 (§11, O’Meara 21-2; cap. 11, lines 49-52, Selmer 25).</p> <p>The birds of the Paradise of Birds, at the hour of nones, chant Psalm 132.1: ““How good and pleasant it is that brothers live together as <b>one!</b>”” (§11, O’Meara 23; cap. 11, lines 71-2, Selmer 26).</p> <p>As Brendan and his brothers sail away from the Paradise of Birds (the first visit), the birds chant, “as it were with <b>one</b> voice,” the words of Psalm 64.6 (or 99.9) (§11, O’Meara 25; cap. 11, lines 108-11, Selmer 28).</p> <p>When the forty and three days have passed in the effort to land on the Island of Ailbe (first visit), the brothers discover “a narrow landing-place... just</p> |
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|  | <p>wide enough to take <b>one</b> boat only...” (§12, O’Meara 26; cap. 12, lines 10-11, Selmer 29).</p> <p>Ailbe explains to Brendan that whenever the community celebrates a feast-day, ““God increases the supply to <b>one</b> full loaf for each brother...” (§12, O’Meara 28; cap. 12, lines 59-60, Selmer 32).</p> <p>Some of the brothers interpret Brendan as saying that they should drink <b>one</b> cup of the Soporific Well. These brothers were overcome by “a sleep of a (<b>one</b>) day and a (<b>one</b>) night” (§13, O’Meara 33; cap. 13, lines 18-19, 21, Selmer 38).</p> <p>When Brendan and his brothers prepare to flee the Island of the Soporific Well, the abbot advises that each brother has “a [<b>one</b>] cup of water... each day and equally for the roots” (§13, O’Meara 34; cap. 13, lines 29-30, Selmer 39).</p> <p>Brendan and his brothers, once reaching the Paradise of Birds (second visit), are greeted by the multitude of birds, and “all the birds chanted, as if with <b>one</b> voice,” the words of Apocalypse (Revelation) 7.10 and Psalm 117.27 (§15, O’Meara 37-8; cap. 15, lines 46-50, Selmer 42-3).</p> <p>Brendan tells his brothers: ““Three choirs of people are in that island [of the anchorites]: <b>one</b> of boys, another of youths, a third of elders. And <b>one</b> of your brothers will remain on pilgrimage there”” (§17, O’Meara 43; cap. 17, lines 3-4, Selmer 49).</p> <p>While the brothers are trying to determine which brother will stay with the three choirs, Brendan notes the brother: “The brother indicated was <b>one</b> of the three who had followed after Saint Brendan</p> |
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|  | <p>from his monastery” (§17, O’Meara 43; cap. 17, lines 7-9, Selmer 49).</p> <p>Each of the choirs rotates continuously, “<b>one</b> choir, however, at a time standing in <b>one</b> place and chanting...” (§17, O’Meara 43-4; cap. 17, lines 17-8, Selmer 50).</p> <p>In describing the three choirs on the Island of Anchorites: “The <b>first</b> choir was made up of boys in white garments...” (§17, O’Meara 44; cap. 17, lines 21-2, Selmer 50).</p> <p>Brendan is able to squeeze <b>one</b> fruit of the Island of Strong Men into twelve ounces (<b>one</b> ounce for each brother): “<b>One</b> fruit, therefore, fed <b>one</b> brother for twelve days so that he always had in his mouth the taste of honey” (§17, O’Meara 46; cap. 17, lines 65-9, Selmer 53).</p> <p>Between the Island of Strong Men and the Island of Grapes, Brendan divides the grapes, “<b>one</b> each among his brothers, and so they had food until the twelfth day” (§18, O’Meara 46; cap. 18, lines 7-8, Selmer 54).</p> <p>When Brendan and his brothers reach the fiery mountain, “[t]he <b>one</b> remaining of the three brothers” claims to be ‘powerless’ to resist his reception by a “multitude of demons to be tortured...” (§24, O’Meara 55; cap. 24, lines 7, 10-11, 14, Selmer 64).</p> <p>As Brendan, his brothers, and the steward are leaving the Paradise of Birds (third visit), “all the birds that were on the island began to say as it were with <b>one</b> voice” the words of Psalm 67.20a-21b (cf. <i>Thesaurus Palæohibernicus, Vol. 1</i>, p. 283) (§27, O’Meara 66-7; cap. 27, lines</p> |
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|            | 25-7, Selmer 78).   |
| <b>TWO</b> | <p>Barrind fasts for “<b>two</b> successive weeks” [or <i>fourteen</i> days] during the remainder of his stay with Mernóc and his brothers (§1, O’Meara 6; cap. 1, lines 80-1, Selmer 8).</p> <p>Brendan and his brothers supply their boat with enough boat hides “for the makings of <b>two</b> other boats...” (§4, O’Meara 8; cap. 4, line 10, Selmer 11).</p> <p>Brendan notes to <b>two</b> of the supernumeraries that: ““But for you others [<i>i.e.</i> two] he will prepare a hideous judgment”” (§5, O’Meara 9; cap. 5, line 9, Selmer 12).</p> <p>After the brothers depart from the Rocky Island, they “ate every <b>second</b> day” (§8, O’Meara 15; cap. 8, lines 7-8, Selmer 17).</p> <p>The fire which the brothers had lit upon the back of Iasconius during their first visit to him could be seen “over <b>two</b> miles away” (§10, O’Meara 18; cap. 10, line 19, Selmer 21).</p> <p>After Brendan and his brothers have left the Island of Sheep (first visit), they “ate always every <b>second</b> or third day” (§12, O’Meara 25; cap. 12, line 3, Selmer 28).</p> <p>Once Brendan and his brothers have landed upon the Island of Ailbe (first visit), “there appeared before them there also <b>two</b> wells, one muddy and the other clear.” The brothers succumb to the temptation of theft, but Brendan reproaches them (§12, O’Meara 26; cap. 12, lines 11-12, 13-16, Selmer 29).</p> <p><b>Two</b> signals result in the first meal with</p> |



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|  | <p>Ailbe, while a full loaf of bread sat between every <b>two</b> brothers (§12, O’Meara 28; cap. 12, lines 46-8, Selmer 31).</p> <p>Ailbe tells Brendan and his brothers that “[e]very day we have twelve loaves for our food, a loaf between every <b>two</b>” (§12, O’Meara 28; cap. 12, lines 57-9, Selmer 32).</p> <p>The occasion of Brendan’s visit is also a feast-day for Ailbe’s community — “Just now on your coming we have a <b>double</b> supply” (§12, O’Meara 28; cap. 12, lines 60-1, Selmer 32).</p> <p>Each of <b>two</b> pairs (four of the seven) of lights is situated “before the other <b>two</b> altars” (§12, O’Meara 29; cap. 12, lines 85-6, Selmer 33).</p> <p>Ailbe reveals to Brendan in the church that <b>two</b> of his brothers will not return to Ireland (§12, O’Meara 31; cap. 12, lines 127-30, Selmer 36).</p> <p>Some of the brothers interpret Brendan as saying that they should drink <b>two</b> cups of the Soporific Well. These brothers were overcome “by a sleep of <b>two</b> days and <b>two</b> nights” (§13, O’Meara 33; cap. 13, lines 19-21, Selmer 38).</p> <p>In describing the three choirs on the Island of Anchorites: “... the <b>second</b> choir was clothed in blue garments...” (§17, O’Meara 44; cap. 17, line 22, Selmer 50).</p> <p>After the three choirs had finished the sacrifice of the Spotless Lamb, we are told that “<b>two</b> members of the choir of youths carried a basket full of purple fruit and placed it in the boat,” then asking Brendan to give over the</p> |
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|                     | <p>supernumerary; then, the supernumerary follows “the <b>two</b> youths to their school” (§17, O’Meara 45; cap. 17, lines 49-52, 57-8, Selmer 52).</p> <p>Brendan notes, about the crystal pillar, that ““Our Lord Jesus Christ has... given me these <b>two</b> gifts [<i>i.e.</i> chalice and paten]...” (§22, O’Meara 52; cap. 22, lines 32-4, Selmer 60).</p> <p>Brendan finds <b>two</b> caves on the top of the Island of Paul the Hermit (§26, O’Meara 62; cap. 26, lines 22-4, Selmer 71).</p>   |
| <p><b>THREE</b></p> | <p>Barrind finds Mernóc “[a]t the end of a <b>three</b>-day journey” (§1, O’Meara 3; cap. 1, lines 21-22, Selmer 4).</p> <p>Brendan and his brothers choose to fast for forty days — “but for no more than <b>three</b> days at a time” — before sailing (§3, O’Meara 7; cap. 3, lines 2-3, Selmer 10).</p> <p>Brendan and his fourteen brothers stay for <b>three</b> days and <b>three</b> nights on “the island of a holy father, named Enda” (§3, O’Meara 8; cap. 3, lines 5-7, Selmer 10).</p> <p>The motif of <b>three</b> supernumeraries common to <i>immrama</i> (§5, O’Meara 9; cap. 5, lines 1-2, Selmer 11).</p> <p>Brendan, in chastising his brothers, decrees that the ““Lord Jesus Christ after <b>three</b> days will show his servants a landing-place and a place to stay [on Rocky Island]...” (§6, O’Meara 10; cap. 6, lines 22-3, Selmer 13).</p> <p>The band circle the Rocky Island for <b>three</b> days, and find an opening “on the <b>third</b> day about <b>three</b> o’clock...” (§6,</p> |

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|  | <p>O'Meara 10; cap. 6, lines 25-6, Selmer 13).</p> <p>Brendan, on Rocky Island, charges his brothers that one of the <b>three</b> supernumeraries will commit a theft (§6, O'Meara 11; cap. 6, lines 41-2, Selmer 14).</p> <p>“And so for <b>three</b> days and <b>three</b> nights God prepared a meal for his servants [on Rocky Island]” (§6, O'Meara 12; cap. 6, lines 60-1, Selmer 15).</p> <p>The man carrying the baked bread on the Island of Sheep “fell prone on his face <b>three</b> times at the feet of the holy father [Brendan]...” (§9, O'Meara 16; cap. 9, line 23, Selmer 18).</p> <p>It is a <b>three</b>-days' voyage between the Island of Sheep and the Paradise of Birds (§11, O'Meara 19; cap. 11, lines 1-2, Selmer 22).</p> <p>The man with the basket of baked bread from the Island of Sheep does indeed venture to the Paradise of Birds after <b>three</b> days to refresh Brendan and his brothers (§11, O'Meara 23; cap. 11, line 78, Selmer 26).</p> <p>The first <b>three</b> months after the first departure from the Paradise of Birds, before reaching the monastery of Ailbe, consists of being “driven here and there... over the space of the ocean” (§12, O'Meara 25; cap. 12, lines 1-2, Selmer 28).</p> <p>After Brendan and his brothers have left the Island of Sheep (first visit), they “ate always every second or <b>third</b> day” (§12, O'Meara 25; cap. 12, line 3, Selmer 28).<br/>The failure to land on the Island of Ailbe after forty days of sailing around it is</p> |
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followed by **three** days “in frequent prayer and abstinence” after which “a narrow land-place appeared to them...” (§12, O’Meara 26; cap. 12, lines 9-11, Selmer 29).

When Ailbe greets Brendan the first time, he “prostrated himself **three** times on the ground before embracing the man of God” (§12, O’Meara 26; cap. 12, lines 19-20, Selmer 29).

The first meal with Ailbe ends with **three** drinks (§12, O’Meara 29; cap. 12, line 70, Selmer 32).

**Three** (of the seven) lights inside the church of Ailbe are “before the altar, which was in the middle...” (§12, O’Meara 29; cap. 12, line 85, Selmer 33).

When Brendan and his brothers discover the Island of the Soporific Well, we are told that their victuals “had failed **three** days before” (§13, O’Meara 33; cap. 13, line 7, Selmer 38).

Some of the brothers interpret Brendan as saying that they should drink **three** cups of the Soporific Well. These brothers were “overcome by a sleep of **three** days and **three** nights” (§13, O’Meara 33; cap. 13, lines 19-20, Selmer 38).

It is “[w]hen the **three** days’ sleeping were up”, due to the Soporific Well, that Brendan advises that he and his brothers flee the island (§13, O’Meara 33; cap. 13, lines 24-5, Selmer 39).

When Brendan and his brothers prepare to flee from the Island of the Soporific Well, the abbot charges each brother to have a meal “... every **third** day up to Maundy Thursday” (§13, O’Meara 34;

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|  | <p>cap. 13, lines 28-9, Selmer 39).</p> <p>We are told after Brendan and his brothers have fled the Island of the Soporific Well: “After <b>three</b> days and <b>three</b> nights the wind dropped and the sea coagulated, as it were — it was so smooth” (§14, O’Meara 34; cap. 14, lines 1-2, Selmer 39).</p> <p>Indeed, as Brendan had charged his brothers on the Island of the Soporific Well, “[t]hey ate always every <b>third</b> day” (§14, O’Meara 34; cap. 14, line 7, Selmer 40).</p> <p>The steward on the Island of Sheep (second visit) clothes the brothers of Brendan and “served them for <b>three</b> days” (§15, O’Meara 36; cap. 15, lines 17-18, Selmer 41).</p> <p>Once Brendan and his brothers reach Iasconius (second visit), he chants “the hymn of the <b>Three</b> Children right to the end” (§15, O’Meara 37; cap. 15, lines 35-6, Selmer 42).</p> <p>Brendan pleads before the Lord for deliverance from the ‘devouring’ beast <b>three</b> times (§16, O’Meara 40; cap. 16, line 15, Selmer 46).</p> <p>The beast sent by God that delivers “the servants of Christ was cut into <b>three</b> pieces before their eyes” (§16, O’Meara 40; cap. 16, lines 21-3, Selmer 46).</p> <p>Once the brothers have brought the equipment from the boat onto the Island “full of trees”, Brendan charges them to take enough meat from the slain beast to last for <b>three</b> months (§16, O’Meara 41; cap. 16, lines 32-5, Selmer 47).</p> <p>Brendan and his brothers are kept on the</p> |
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|  | <p>Island “full of trees” for <b>three</b> months due a raging storm, by which the brothers have consumed all the flesh of the slain ‘devouring’ beast, as Brendan had predicted (§16, O’Meara 41-2; cap. 16, lines 43-9, Selmer 47-8).</p> <p>Brendan tells his brothers: ““<b>Three</b> choirs of people are in that island [of the anchorites]: one of boys, another of youths, a <b>third</b> of elders...” (§17, O’Meara 43; cap. 17, lines 3-4, Selmer 49).</p> <p>Once Brendan and his brothers approach the Island of Anchorites, “they saw the <b>three</b> choirs, as the man of God had foretold” (§17, O’Meara 43; cap. 17, line 15, Selmer 50).</p> <p>In describing the three choirs on the Island of Anchorites: “... the <b>third</b> [choir was clothed] in purple dalmatics...” (§17, O’Meara 44; cap. 17, line 23, Selmer 50).</p> <p>The three choirs chant in groups of <b>three</b> psalms at the major liturgical hours (every <b>third</b> hour), including <i>sext</i> and <i>vespers</i> (§17, O’Meara 44-5; cap. 17, lines 25-45, Selmer 50-2).</p> <p>After Brendan and his companions sail away from the Island of Strong Men, it is at <b>three</b> o’clock (<i>hora nona</i>) when the abbot charges the brothers to refresh themselves of the fruit (§17, O’Meara 46; cap. 17, lines 59-61, Selmer 52).</p> <p>Between the Island of Strong Men and the Island of Grapes, we are told: “After some days the holy father prescribed a fast for <b>three</b> days”; after the <b>three</b> days, a bird delivers a branch bearing “a cluster of grapes of extraordinary redness” (§18, O’Meara 46; cap. 18,</p> |
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|  | <p>lines 1-4, Selmer 53).</p> <p>Between the Island of Strong Men and the Island of Grapes, after Brendan and the brothers had been fed by the extraordinarily large grapes, “[a]gain the man of God renewed with his brothers the same fast for <b>three</b> days. Now on the <b>third</b> day, they saw an island not far from them [<i>i.e.</i> Island of Grapes]...” (§18, O’Meara 47; cap. 18, lines 9-11, Selmer 54).</p> <p>Even though the crystal pillar appears to be close to Brendan and his monks, “[s]till it took them <b>three</b> days to come up to it” (§22, O’Meara 50; cap. 22, lines 1-3, Selmer 58).</p> <p>Despite sailing within the shade of the crystal pillar until <b>three</b> o’clock (<i>horam nonam</i>), the monks “could still feel the heat of the sun” (§22, O’Meara 51; cap. 22, lines 22-24, Selmer 60).</p> <p>When Brendan and his brothers reach the fiery mountain, “[t]he one remaining of the <b>three</b> brothers” claims to be ‘powerless’ to resist his reception by a “multitude of demons to be tortured...” (§24, O’Meara 55; cap. 24, lines 7, 10-11, 14, Selmer 64).</p> <p>The number of days which pass between the episode of ‘unhappy’ Judas and the Island of Paul the Hermit is <b>three</b> (§26, O’Meara 60; cap. 26, lines 2-3, Selmer 70).</p> <p><b>Three</b> days and <b>three</b> nights of sailing pass after Paul the Hermit had left the monastery of Saint Patrick (§26, O’Meara 64; cap. 26, lines 64-5, Selmer 74).</p> <p>After Paul the Hermit had arrived upon</p> |
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|                    | <p>his rock, it is at <b>three</b> o'clock (<i>horam nonam</i>) when an otter gives him a fish to eat; Paul eats a <b>third</b> of the fish each day for <b>three</b> days, at the end of which the otter returns with a new fish, as before (§26, O'Meara 64; cap. 26, 70-8, Selmer 74-5).</p> <p>After Brendan and his brothers have left the Island of Paul the Hermit, we are told that they drank the water from the island "every <b>third</b> day" (§27, O'Meara 65; cap. 27, lines 4-5, Selmer 77).</p> <p>Brendan, between his journey from the Promised Land of the Saints to Ireland, stops for <b>three</b> days at the Island of Delights, the home of the abbot Mernóc (§28, O'Meara 69; cap. 28, lines 38-40, Selmer 81).</p>  |
| <p><b>FOUR</b></p> | <p>The messenger bird of the Paradise of Birds (second visit) informs Brendan that "God has ordained for you <b>four</b> points of call for <b>four</b> periods of the year until the seven years of your pilgrimage are over, namely, on Maundy Thursday..." (§15, O'Meara 38; cap. 15, lines 60-2, Selmer 43).</p> <p>Concerning the crystal pillar: "Then Saint Brendan measured the <b>four</b> sides of the opening of the net: it was about six to seven feet (<i>quattuor cubitis</i>) on every side" (§22, O'Meara 51; cap. 22, lines 21-22, Selmer 59-60).</p> <p>Brendan spends <b>four</b> days measuring the <b>four</b> sides of the crystal pillar; on the <b>fourth</b> day, he finds a crystal chalice and a crystal paten (§22, O'Meara 52; cap. 22, lines 26-30, Selmer 60).</p> <p>When Brendan realizes the danger of approaching the Island of Smiths, he "armed himself, making the sign of the</p> |



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|              | Lord in all <b>four</b> directions...” (§23, O’Meara 52; cap. 23, lines 8-9, Selmer 62).  |
| <b>FIVE</b>  | (None.)   |
| <b>SIX</b>   | <p>The messenger bird of the Paradise of Birds informs Brendan, “<b>six</b> [years] still remain [on his journey]” (§11, O’Meara 21; cap. 11, line 45, Selmer 24).</p> <p>While the brothers, on the Island of Grapes, are tempted by the fruits of the island to break their fasts, we are told that “[t]he venerable father found <b>six</b> copious wells full of flourishing plants and roots of many kinds” (§18, O’Meara 47; cap. 18, lines 17-20, Selmer 54).</p> <p>The demons attempt to rebuke Brendan by declaring: “Unhappy Judas will suffer double punishment for the next <b>six</b> days because you protected him in the night that has passed” (§25, O’Meara 59; cap. 25, lines 67-9, Selmer 69).</p> |
| <b>SEVEN</b> | <p>The demon that is expelled from the thieving supernumerary notes to Brendan that within the brother is “... where I have lived now for <b>seven</b> years...” (§7, O’Meara 14; cap. 7, lines 14-5, Selmer 16).</p> <p>The church of Ailbe is lit by <b>seven</b> lights (§12, O’Meara 29; cap. 12, lines 84-5, Selmer 33).</p> <p>The messenger bird of the Paradise of Birds (second visit) informs Brendan that “God has ordained for you four points of call for four periods of the year until the <b>seven</b> years of your pilgrimage</p>   |

are over, namely, on Maundy Thursday...” (§15, O’Meara 38; cap. 15, lines 60-2, Selmer 43).

The messenger bird of the Paradise of Birds (second visit) informs Brendan that ““after **seven** years and great and varied trials you will find the Promised Land of the Saints that you seek”” (§15, O’Meara 38; cap. 15, lines 65-7, Selmer 44).

A span of **seven** days elapses between the flight from the Island of Smiths and the spotting of ‘unhappy’ Judas by Brendan (§25, O’Meara 56; cap. 25, lines 1-2, Selmer 65).

When the brothers excitedly begin rowing in approach to the Island of Paul the Hermit, Brendan reminds them: ““It is **seven** years to the coming Easter since we left our fatherland [*i.e.* Ireland]”” (§26, O’Meara 60; cap. 26, lines 5-8, Selmer 70).

Paul the Hermit, when he tells Brendan that he is ““greater than a monk”” because God has provided for His needs without toil, reminds him that he and his brothers have sailed, under the provision of God, for **seven** years (§26, O’Meara 63; cap. 26, lines 44-7, Selmer 73).

**Seven** days pass between the day when Paul the Hermit had left the monastery of Saint Patrick and when he arrives on his island (§26, O’Meara 64; cap. 26, lines 67-8, Selmer 74).

While Brendan wonders about the great fog which surrounds the Promised Land of the Saints, his steward and guide says: ““That fog encircles the island for which you have been searching for **seven** years”” (§28, O’Meara 67; cap. 27, lines 8-9,

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|              | Selmer 78-9).   |
| <b>EIGHT</b> | <p>The man with the basket of baked bread on the Island of Sheep tells Brendan that he will bring them provisions ““after <b>eight</b> days”” [when they leave the Paradise of Birds] that will last until Pentecost (§9, O’Meara 17; cap. 9, lines 34-6, Selmer 19).</p> <p>Brendan, on the Paradise of Birds, has the boat loaded with the provisions of the steward <b>eight</b> days after Easter (§11, O’Meara 24; cap. 11, lines 97-8, Selmer 27).</p> <p>The messenger bird of the Paradise of Birds informs Brendan: ““After <b>eight</b> months you will also find an island which is called the Island of the Community of Ailbe and there you will celebrate Christmas Day”” (§11, O’Meara 24; cap. 11, lines 105-7, Selmer 28).</p> <p>The number of days for “Saint Brendan, even with a favoring wind and all his canvas stretched to the full, to cross the clear sea” is <b>eight</b> (§21, O’Meara 50; cap. 21, lines 26-7, Selmer 58).</p> <p>The number of days between the departure from the crystal pillar and the approach of the Island of Smiths is <b>eight</b> (§§22-3, O’Meara 52; cap. 22, lines 42-3, cap. 23, lines 1-2, Selmer 61).</p> |
| <b>NINE</b>  | <p>The brothers spend vigil on the back of Iasconius (second visit) from matins “until about <b>nine</b> o’clock...” (§15, O’Meara 37; cap. 15, lines 41-2, Selmer 42).</p>   |
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| <b>TEN</b>      | When Brendan and his brothers arrive at the Island of Anchorites: “It was <b>ten</b> o’clock when they put in at the landing-place on the island” (§17, O’Meara 44; cap. 17, line 24, Selmer 50).   |
| <b>ELEVEN</b>   | <b>Eleven</b> brothers of the monastery of Ailbe greet Brendan and his brothers after Ailbe receives his guests (§12, O’Meara 27; cap. 12, line 32, Selmer 30).   |
| <b>TWELVE</b>   | <p>Ailbe tells Brendan and his brothers that “[e]very day we have <b>twelve</b> loaves for our food, a loaf between every two” (§12, O’Meara 28; cap. 12, lines 57-9, Selmer 32).</p> <p>After the three choirs had chanted the psalms for matins, “they chanted <b>twelve</b> psalms in the order of the Psalter” (§17, O’Meara 45; cap. 17, lines 39-40, Selmer 51).</p> <p>Brendan is able to squeeze one fruit of the Island of Strong Men into <b>twelve</b> ounces (one ounce for each brother): “One fruit, therefore, fed one brother for <b>twelve</b> days so that he always had in his mouth the taste of honey” (§17, O’Meara 46; cap. 17, lines 65-9, Selmer 53).</p> <p>Between the Island of Strong Men and the Island of Grapes, Brendan divides the grapes, “one each among his brothers, and so they had food until the <b>twelfth</b> day” (§18, O’Meara 46; cap. 18, lines 7-8, Selmer 54).</p> |
| <b>FOURTEEN</b> | Barrind fasts for “ <i>two</i> successive weeks” [or <b>fourteen</b> days] during the   |

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|                    | <p>remainder of his stay with Mernóc and his brothers (§1, O’Meara 6; cap. 1, lines 80-1, Selmer 8).</p> <p>Brendan selects <b>fourteen</b> brothers out of his entire community with whom to share his plans for a voyage (§2, O’Meara 7; cap. 2, lines 1-2, Selmer 9).</p> <p>Brendan and his <b>fourteen</b> brothers stay for three days and three nights on “the island of a holy father, named Enda” (§3, O’Meara 8; cap. 3, lines 5-7, Selmer 10).</p> <p>Ailbe reveals to Brendan in the church that he and <b>fourteen</b> of the brothers will return to Ireland (§12, O’Meara 31; cap. 12, lines 126-7, Selmer 36).</p> |
| <b>FIFTEEN</b>     | <p>Barrind and Mernóc walked around the Promised Land of the Saints ““for <b>fifteen</b> days”” before finding the dividing river (§1, O’Meara 4; cap. 1, lines 40-4, Selmer 5-6).</p> <p>It is <b>fifteen</b> days after the beginning of the voyage that “the wind dropped” and the brothers “set themselves to the oars...” (§6, O’Meara 9; cap. 6, lines 4-5, Selmer 12).</p>  |
| <b>TWENTY</b>      | <p>After Brendan charges his brothers to let loose the oars and let God direct their boat’s direction, “[t]he boat, therefore, was carried around for <b>twenty</b> days” (§14, O’Meara 34; cap. 14, lines 4-5, Selmer 39-40).</p>   |
| <b>TWENTY-FOUR</b> | <p>The man with the basket of baked bread from the Island of Sheep warns Brendan</p>   |

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|                      | <p>not to drink of the fountain on the Paradise of Birds: “if a man drinks it, sleep will overpower him and he will not awaken for <b>twenty-four</b> hours” (§11, O’Meara 23; cap. 11, lines 82-4, Selmer 26-7).</p> <p>Ailbe tells Brendan and his brothers at the first meal that “[t]here are <b>twenty-four</b> of us brothers here” (§12, O’Meara 28; cap. 12, line 57, Selmer 32).</p> <p><b>Twenty-four</b> seats are situated in a circle within the church of Ailbe (§12, O’Meara 29; cap. 12, lines 87-9, Selmer 33).</p>   |
| <p><b>THIRTY</b></p> | <p>Brendan tells his brothers that Paul the Hermit had “got food from an animal (<i>bestia</i>)” during his previous <b>thirty</b> years on his island (§26, O’Meara 61; cap. 26, lines 10-11, Selmer 71).</p> <p>Paul the Hermit tells Brendan and his brothers: “I have been ninety years on this island, living on fish for <b>thirty</b> years and on the food afforded by the well for sixty years. I lived for fifty years in my native land. The sum of the years of my life until now is one hundred and forty” (§26, O’Meara 64-5; cap. 26, lines 84-7, Selmer 76).</p> |
| <p><b>FORTY</b></p>  | <p>It is after <b>forty</b> days on the Promised Land of the Saints that Mernóc returns to his brothers with “fragrance exuding from our abbot’s clothes...” (§1, O’Meara 6; cap. 1, lines 78-80, Selmer 8).</p> <p>Barrind, “after <b>forty</b> days [with Mernóc]”, receives the blessing of Mernóc and his brothers and sets off for home” (§1, O’Meara 6; cap. 1, lines 83-</p>  |

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|  | <p>4, Selmer 8).</p> <p>Brendan and his brothers choose to fast for <b>forty</b> days — “but for no more than three days at a time” — before sailing (§3, O’Meara 7; cap. 3, lines 2-3, Selmer 10).</p> <p>Brendan and his brothers supply their boat with “supplies for <b>forty</b> days...” (§4, O’Meara 8; cap. 4, line 11, Selmer 11).</p> <p>The initial victuals indeed last for <b>forty</b> days, and it is on that day when “an island [Rocky Island] appeared to them towards the north...” (§6, O’Meara 10; cap. 6, lines 13-5, Selmer 12).</p> <p>When Brendan and the brothers attempt to land on the Island of Ailbe (first visit), “the wind drew them away from landing. They, therefore, had to circle the island for <b>forty</b> days...” (§12, O’Meara 26; cap. 12, lines 5-7, Selmer 29).</p> <p>The messenger bird of the Paradise of Birds (second visit) tells Brendan that once he reaches the Promised Land of the Saints, he “will live [there] for <b>forty</b> days, and afterwards God will bring you back to the land of your birth [<i>i.e.</i> Ireland]” (§15, O’Meara 38-9; cap. 15, lines 67-8, Selmer 44).</p> <p>After Brendan and his brothers have sailed from the Paradise of Birds (second visit), “... their boat was carried along for <b>forty</b> days” before encountering the ‘devouring’ beast (§16, O’Meara 39; cap. 16, lines 1-2, Selmer 45).</p> <p>Once Brendan has permitted his brothers to eat of the fruits of the Island of</p> |
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|              | <p>Grapes: "... for <b>forty</b> days they fed on the grapes and on the plants and roots of the wells"; after that time, they loaded as much sustenance as possible onto the boat (§18, O'Meara 47; cap. 18, lines 23-6, Selmer 55).</p> <p>Paul the Hermit informs Brendan that he will sail for <b>forty</b> days before reaching the Island of Sheep (third visit), then, eventually, he will stay on the Promised Land of the Saints for <b>forty</b> days (§26, O'Meara 65; cap. 26, lines 90-6, Selmer 76).</p> <p>Brendan, as he is departing the Paradise of Birds (third visit), loads enough provision for <b>forty</b> days, then sails towards the east for <b>forty</b> days, then the great fog of the Promised Land of the Saints is met after the <b>fortieth</b> day (§28, O'Meara 67; cap. 28, lines 1-7, Selmer 78).</p> <p>The number of days which elapse between the landing of the boat upon the shore of the Promised Land of the Saints by Brendan and the discovery of the river which divides the island is <b>forty</b> (§28, O'Meara 67-8; cap. 28, lines 14-7, Selmer 79).</p> |
| <b>FIFTY</b> | <p>Brendan is told by Paul the Hermit that the latter had been "brought up in the monastery of Saint Patrick for <b>fifty</b> years..." (§26, O'Meara 63; cap. 26, lines 51-2, Selmer 73).</p> <p>Paul the Hermit tells Brendan and his brothers: "I have been ninety years on this island, living on fish for thirty years and on the food afforded by the well for sixty years. I lived for <b>fifty</b> years in my native land. The sum of the years of my life until now is one hundred and forty" (§26, O'Meara 64-5; cap. 26, lines 84-7,</p>   |



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|                              | Selmer 76).  |
| <b>SIXTY</b>                 | <p>Brendan informs his brothers that Paul the Hermit has been living in his island ““for <b>sixty</b> years without any bodily food”” (§26, O’Meara 61; cap. 26, lines 9-10, Selmer 70-1).</p> <p>Paul the Hermit tells Brendan and his brothers: ““I have been ninety years on this island, living on fish for thirty years and on the food afforded by the well for <b>sixty</b> years. I lived for fifty years in my native land. The sum of the years of my life until now is one hundred and forty”” (§26, O’Meara 64-5; cap. 26, lines 84-7, Selmer 76).</p> |
| <b>EIGHTY</b>                | <p>According to Ailbe, Christ has fed his community in the described fashion with the loaves ““from the time of Saint Patrick and Saint Ailbe, our father, for <b>eighty</b> years until now”” (§12, O’Meara 28; cap. 12, lines 62-3, Selmer 32; <i>see</i> cap. 12, lines 116-7, Selmer 35).</p>  |
| <b>NINETY</b>                | <p>Paul the Hermit tells Brendan and his brothers: ““I have been <b>ninety</b> years on this island, living on fish for thirty years and on the food afforded by the well for sixty years. I lived for fifty years in my native land. The sum of the years of my life until now is one hundred and forty”” (§26, O’Meara 64-5; cap. 26, lines 84-7, Selmer 76).</p>  |
| <b>ONE-HUNDRED AND FORTY</b> | <p>Paul the Hermit tells Brendan and his brothers: ““I have been ninety years on this island, living on fish for thirty years and on the food afforded by the well for sixty years. I lived for fifty years in my native land. The sum of the years of my life until now is <b>one hundred and forty</b>””</p>   |

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|                               | (§26, O'Meara 64-5; cap. 26, lines 84-7, Selmer 76).  |
| <b>THREE THOUSAND</b>         | Saint Brendan was "... father of nearly <b>three thousand</b> monks" (§1, O'Meara 2; cap. 1, lines 3-4, Selmer 3).  |
| <b>INNUMERABLE/MISCELLANY</b> | <p>During the first stay on the Island of Sheep between Maundy Thursday and Holy Saturday, the brothers find that "[t]he sheep were <b>so numerous</b> that the ground could not be seen at all" (§9, O'Meara 15; cap. 9, lines 10-2, Selmer 18).</p> <p>Brendan tells his brothers that Iasconius is "but a fish — the <b>foremost</b> [i.e. <i>first</i>] of all that swim in the ocean" (§10, O'Meara 19; cap. 10, lines 24-5, Selmer 21).</p> <p>Brendan espies a great tree covered with "a <b>great multitude</b> of birds" that was "all collected <b>together</b>" (§11, O'Meara 20; cap. 11, lines 20-1, Selmer 23).</p> <p>When Ailbe and Brendan are walking towards the monastery of Ailbe (first visit), they pace a distance of roughly <b>two hundred</b> yards (<i>unius stadii</i>) (§12, O'Meara 26; cap. 12, lines 22-23, Selmer 30).</p> <p>"The venerable father [Brendan] remained there [i.e. the Paradise of Birds, the second visit] the <b>number</b> of days indicated" (§15, O'Meara 39; cap. 15, lines 75-6, Selmer 44).</p> <p>Amidst the temptation of the brothers to break their fasts on the Island of Grapes, Brendan allows them to have fruit: "He then returned to his brothers, carrying</p> |

with him some of the **first** fruits of the island...” (§18, O’Meara 47; cap. 18, lines 20-1, Selmer 54).

The fish of the clear sea “were so **numerous** that they looked like a city of circles as they lay, their heads touching their tails” (§21, O’Meara 49; cap. 21, lines 7-8, Selmer 57).

Each side of the crystal pillar, according to the measurements of Brendan, is equal in length, “namely about **seven hundred** yards (*[m]ille quadringentis cubitis*)” (§22, O’Meara 51; cap. 22, lines 25-6, Selmer 60).

The burning slag that the smith throws at Brendan and his brothers “passed more than **two hundred** yards (*unius stadii ultra*) above them” (§23, O’Meara 53; cap. 23, lines 20-1, Selmer 62).

The bombardment of burning lumps from the Island of Smiths begins after Brendan has sailed the boat “about a [*i.e.* **one**] mile (*unius miliarii*) away from the spot where the [first] lump fell...” (§23, O’Meara 54; cap. 23, lines 24-5, Selmer 63).

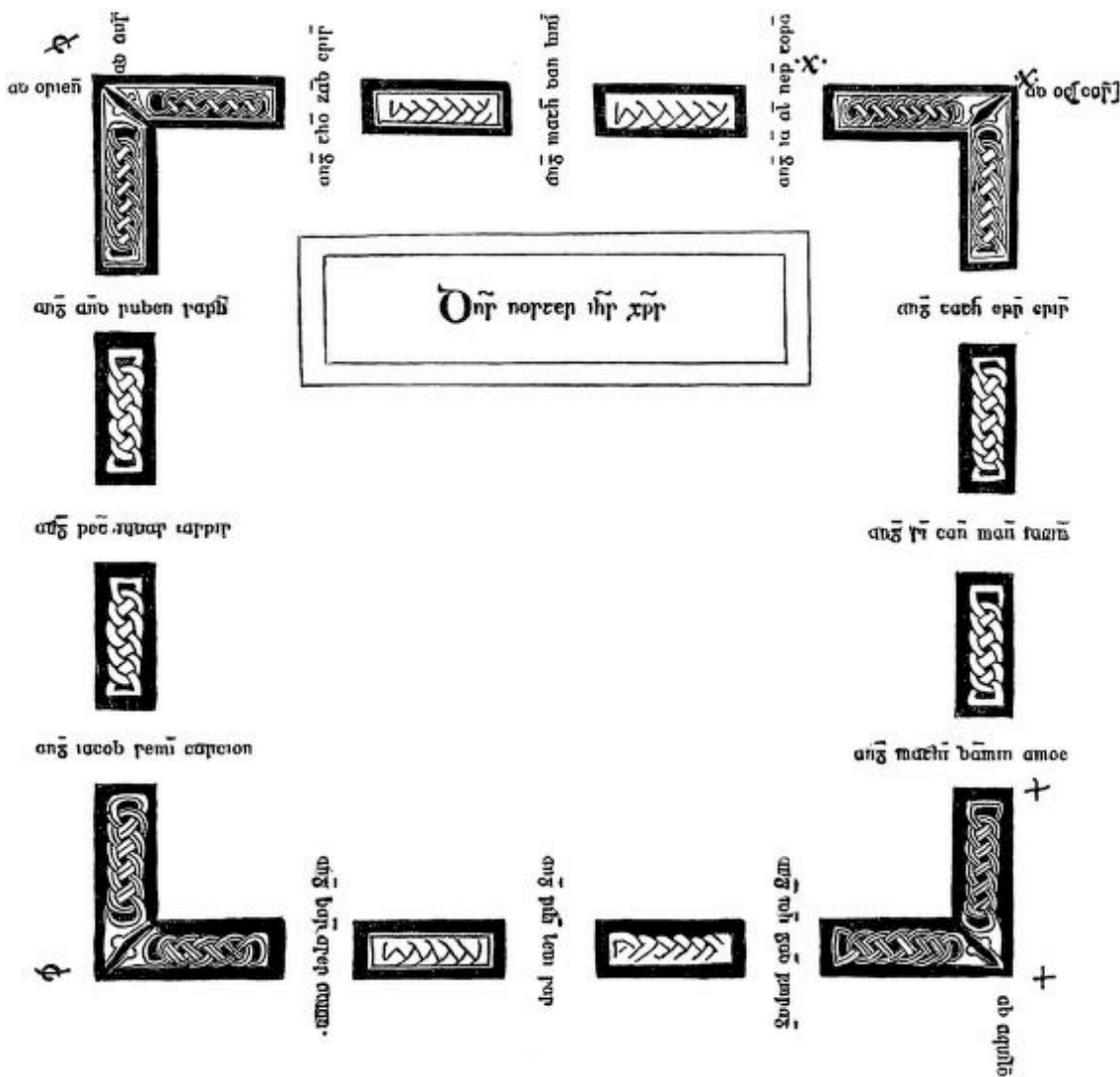
When Brendan and his brothers reach the fiery mountain, “[t]he one remaining of the three brothers” claims to be ‘powerless’ to resist his reception by “a **multitude** of demons to be tortured...” (§24, O’Meara 55; cap. 24, lines 7, 10-11, 14, Selmer 64).

Concerning ‘unhappy’ Judas, “[w]hen the evening hour had darkened the sea, an **innumerable number** of demons covered its surface in a circle, shouting” at Brendan (§25, O’Meara 58; cap. 25, lines 48-50, Selmer 68).

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|  | <p>When the evening after the Lord's protection of 'unhappy' Judas through Brendan had passed and Brendan began to sail away, "an infinite number (<i>infinita multitudo</i>) of demons was seen to cover the face of the ocean..." (§25, O'Meara 59; cap. 25, lines 60-2, Selmer 69).</p> <p>The Island of Paul the Hermit is described as being "... small and circular — about <b>two hundred</b> yards (<i>unius stadii</i>) in circumference" (§26, O'Meara 61; cap. 26, lines 13-14, Selmer 71).</p> <p>The youth of the Promised Land of the Saints informs Brendan: "After the passage of <b>many times</b> (<i>multa... temporum</i>) this land will become known to your successors, when persecution of the Christians shall have come" (§28, O'Meara 69; cap. 28, lines 30-2, Selmer 80).</p> |
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APPENDIX II — The “New Jerusalem” diagram in the Book of Armagh<sup>160</sup>

Below is the pedagogic diagram that is a compromising transposition of the descriptions of the eschatological New Jerusalem found in Ezekiel chapter 48, Apocalypse 21:1-22:5, and Hebrews 12:22. The diagram is in *Liber Ardmachanus* “Book of Armagh” fol. 171<sup>r</sup>.



<sup>160</sup> The diagram is found in John Gwynn, ed., *Liber Ardmachanus: The Book of Armagh* (Dublin: RIA, 1913), 335. <<https://archive.org/stream/cu31924091179337#page/n647/mode/2up>>. Accessed 29 June 2015. For a solid analysis of the diagram, including its purpose and construction from the biblical sources, consult Thomas O’Loughlin, “The Plan of the New Jerusalem in the Book of Armagh,” *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies* 39 (2000): 23-38, rep. in O’Loughlin, *Early Medieval Exegesis*, IX:23-38.