



Material Transformation?

Ireland: Betha Chiaráin Clúana meic Nois

I n-araili lo rochairigh a mháthair esium. ‘Doberat, tra,’ ol si, ‘gille bheaca in baile mil leo amuich asna miltenuibh dia muinderaibh, 7 nocha tabrai-si dhuinne.’ O’tcuala Ciaran innísín, luidh co araili topur, 7 línaid a lestar as, 7 bennachaidh cur’bhó mil togaide, 7 dobeir in mil-sin dia mháthair cur’bo buidhech. Et as í sin mil-sin rucad do deochain Uis i lógh a bhathis-sium.

On a certain day his mother rebukes him. ‘So,’ she said, ‘the little boys of the place bring honey from the hives to their people, but you do not bring it to us.’ On hearing that Ciaran went to a certain well, and fills his vessel from it, and blesses it so that it became choice honey, and he gives that honey to his mother so that she was grateful. And it was that honey he carried to Deacon Justus as payment for his baptism.

From: Stokes, W., ‘Betha Chiaráin Meic Nois’, in *Lives of Saints from the Book of Lismore* (London, 1890), pp. 117-34. Translation by Julianne Pigott.

Wales: Vita Sancti Illuti

Post hec prefatus rex esuriens prandere volvit, quem sanctus Illutus ad prandium invitavit. Invitatus humiliter descendit, et a vesania, quam solebat habere, mitigatus, resedit. Misit ministrum ad proximum stagnum causa piscandi; retraxit continuo cum rete piscem pinguem et eximium cum ondere gravi. Attractum et assatum apposuerunt regi; appositum nolvit gustare, quia sine pane et sale indecens sibimet videbatur apponi. Et Illutus panem et salem in illa hora non habens, orabat, dicens, ‘Effector omnium creaturarum, atque Donator donandorum potest efficere, si gustaveris appositum, habeas in gustato pisce a me, quod vis habendum.’ His rogatibus auditis, non est ausus rex rebellis respuere, sed comedit, et habvit diversorum generum ciborum sapes in una specie. Saciatus et sitiens repetivit derisorie vinum aut medonem sibi propinari. At ille utroque carens, precepit sibi dari de Fontana aqua haustum, et easdem preces, quas supra dixerat, protulit iterum, ut ex aquatico potu impleretur petentis desiderium. Potavit; potus sibi complacvit, et diversorum liquorum sapes, vini et medonis inprimis, in aqua solummodo invenit.

§ 8. *Of the stag tamed by saint Illtud, and of the king's wonderful meal on fish and water.*

After these things the aforesaid king, being hungry, desired to breakfast, whom saint Illtud invited to a breakfast. Being invited he descended humbly, and sat down, pacified from the madness which was wont to possess him. He sent a servant to a neighbouring pond to catch fish; he straightway drew in in his net a fish fat and fine of good weight. Taken and broiled they placed it before the king; when placed before him he would not taste it, because it seemed to him unbecoming that it should be placed before him without bread and salt. But Illtud not having that hour bread and salt, prayed (or said), saying, ‘The author of all creatures, and the giver of gifts, is able to bring it to pass that, if thou shalt taste what is placed before thee, thou shalt have from me, in the fish so tasted, what thou desirest to have.’ These requests being heard, the king dared not rebelliously refuse, but did eat, and had the tastes of diverse kinds of foods in one sort. Having had enough and being thirsty he asked jeeringly for wine or mead to be set before him. But he, lacking both, ordered a draught of well water to be given him, and offered again the same prayers, which he had uttered before, that the desire of the asker should be fulfilled from a drink of water. He drank; the drink pleased him, and the tastes of diverse liquors, especially wine and mead, he found in water alone.

From: Wade-Evans, A.W.B.M., *Vitae Sanctorum Britanniae Et Genealogiae* (Cardiff, 1944) (Text & Translation)

Anglo-Saxon England: Ælfric's Homily on Saint Basilus

Sum Iudeise man wolde. ge-wytan to soþan.
and be ðam halgan husle. þeah þe he hæðen wære,
and hlosnode georne be ðære liflican onsægednysse.
þa þuhte þam Iudeiscan. swylce he tó-dælde án cyld.
and him wearð ge-seald an snæd flæscas.
Heold swá þeah sumne dæl hám to berenne mid him.
hwæt hé sylf ge-seah. and siððan þæs on mergen.
Hwæt þa se biscop hine bliþelice gefullode.

be ðære halgan mæssan. hwylce mihte heo hæfde.
Eode pá to mæssan mid oðrum mannum.
Pá mid ðam þe basilus. to-bræc þæt husel.
eode swá þeah mid oðrum mannum earhlice tó husle.
and he sæp of ðæm calice eac swylce blóð.
and æt-æwode his wife. and ge-wis-lice sæde.
com tó basilie biddende fulluhtes.
and ealle his hiwan on þæs hælendes naman.

A certain Jewish man desired to know for a truth concerning the holy mass, what power it had, and concerning the holy housel, although he was a heathen. Then went he to mass with other men, and waited eagerly for the living sacrifice. Then, while Basil divided the housel, it seemed to the Jew as if he were severing a child; nevertheless he went with other men fearfully to the housel, and a piece of flesh was given to him, and he sipped moreover as it were blood from the chalice. Nevertheless he kept a portion to bear home with him, and showed it to his wife, and related truly what he himself had seen, and after this in the morning came to Basil, requesting baptism. So then the Bishop blithely baptised him, and all his household, in the Saviour's name.

From: Skeat, W.W., *Ælfric's Lives of Saints Part I* (London, 1882). (Text & Translation)

Scotland: Jocelyn's Life of Kentigern

Chapter xxxviii – De duobus basis lacte plenis, fabro cuidam, a Sancto Kentegerno missis. Qualiter lac in flumine effusum in caseum formatum est.

Erat quidam, in fabili peritus artificio, qui cudendo et fabricando, operibus viri Dei et monasterii usibus inserviebat; et stipendia sibi necessaria a Sancto recipiebat. Sanctus autem lacte in cibo et potu uti consueverat, quia ut superius diximus, ab omni liquore quo homo possit inebriari more solito abstinebat. De lacte ergo proprio recenter emulso vascula plena fabro suo jussit afferri; quia noverat artifices et mercennarios de proprio cido domini et patrisfamilias gratancius vesci. Cum autem bajulus per flumen Clud pertranssiret, vasorum opercula fortuito casu reserantur, lac totum in aquam effunditur. Sed, res mira et valde inusitata! Lac effusum nullatenus aqua inmiscetur, aut a sapore vel colore demutatur, sed sub inopinata celeritate totum insimul coagulatum, sed in caseum formatur. Nec inconvenientius casus iste consolidator tunsione fluctuum, quam alius quilibet confici solet compressione manuum. Portitor vero formellum casei ex aquis eripit, et fabro cui Sanctus miserat rem ex integro enarrans porrigit. Hoc signum insigne perplures conspexerunt, et qualiter fluidam in fluido elementim non sit conversum, aut liquefactum ammirantes obstupuerunt. Ipse vero faber, et alii multi de caso illo gustaverunt, et de eodem frustatim fragmina comminuta, pro reliquiis custodienda pluribus destrubuerunt. Sumpte autem hujusmodi relique multis in locis, temporibus multis, conservate sunt; et merita Sancti Kentigerni cara et clara, cariona et clariora, efficientes, in hoc facto declaraverunt.

Chapter xxxviii – Concerning the two vessels filled with milk which were sent by Saint Kentigern to a certain smith. In what manner the milk formed into cheese when it was poured into the river.

There was a certain man, skilled in the art of a smith, who served as a worker for the man of God and for the use of the monastery by forging and building, and he received from the saint his necessary wages. However the saint was accustomed to make use of milk as food and drink, because as we said above, it was his usual custom to abstain from all liquid by which a man is able to be intoxicated. Therefore, Kentigern ordered small vessels filled with fresh milk drained off from his own milk to be carried to this smith, because he knew that craftsmen and hired men enjoy with gratitude the food of their own lord and master of the house. However when the porter crossed over the river Clyde, the lids of the vessels opened by an accidental misfortune, and all the milk poured out into the water. But an exceedingly wonderful and strange thing happened! The milk which was poured out in no way mixed with the water or changed in taste or colour, but unexpectedly it quickly curdled all at once and was formed into cheese. And this cheese was not less properly strengthened by the beating of the waves than any other is accustomed to be thoroughly made by the pressing of hands. Indeed the porter snatched the cake of cheese away from the water and presented it to the smith, to whom the saint had sent him, and related the whole of the matter to him. Many saw this extraordinary sign, and they were astonished, wondering how the fluid element was not turned into fluid or made liquid. But the smith and many others tasted that cheese, and breaking it into small pieces, they distributed fragments of those same crumbs to many to be kept as relics. And the obtaining of relics of this kind has been preserved in many places and at many times, and has shown in these acts the beloved and shining merits of Saint Kentigern were made more beloved and more shining.

From: Penrose-Forbes, A., 'Vita Kentegerni', in *The Historians of Scotland Volume V*, pp. 159-243. (Edinburgh, 1872). Translation by Cynthia Whiddon Green, as part of an MA Thesis at the University of Houston December, 1998.