

A MAN CALLED GALL

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## **ABSTRACT**

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This dissertation defines the journey undertaken by a monk named Gall, his magister Columbanus and ten other compatriots from the illustrious Irish monastery located in Bangor, in the northern part of Ireland to the European continent about the year 583 A.D. Their quest was purposed to reinvigorate a lapsed mass of Christians and bring the gospel to other idolatrous Franks and Allemani people in the same regions now recognized as France, Germany and Switzerland.

Historical fact, legends, miracles and myths centered about Gall and his companions were garnered by research from numerous sources including owned and borrowed texts, internet searches and pertinent articles. I had the privilege of visiting the St. Gallen Stiftsbibliothek, a UNESCO site located in the old walled City of St. Gallen providing exceptional access to a pictorial and written history of Gall.

Following a preface explaining how my personal interest was amplified through my Swiss wife, introduction to her family and many visits to Switzerland, my purpose was set to investigate and write about St. Gall whose name and history were not well known abroad.

Well along in my research I was interested in the possibility that St. Gall was not of Irish lineage as has been assumed by most historians. That possibility was enhanced since he was conversant in the native Allemanic languages frequently being called upon by his magister Columbanus to preach in their idiom. I suspected he may have been a native of the region and only educated in Ireland.

His story and legacy have become more established over the centuries, so much so that the year 2012 was designated as the Gallus Jubilee year, celebrating his coming to Switzerland in 612 A.D., a 1,400 year history.

In 8<sup>th</sup> Century Allemanic language

The St. Gall Lord's Prayer

*Fater unseer, thu pist in himile,*

*uuihi namun dinan,*

*qhueme rihhi dī'n ,*

*uuerde uuillo dī'n,*

*so in himili sosa in erdu.*

*prooth unseer emezzihic kip uns hiutu,*

*oblaz uns sculdi unsero,*

*so uuir oblazem uns skuldikem,*

*enti ni unsih firleiti in khorunka,*

*uzzer losi unsih fona ubile.*

## **DEDICATION**

My wife, Dr. Sophie Murray, was my staff of strength and encouragement throughout this entire process, without her constant loving support I could not have succeeded.

Finally, I wish to remember our deceased Swiss cousin, Sylvia Heiniger Hof, for her interest and the supportive materials she supplied throughout my work.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|  |      |
|--|------|
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....   | viii |
| LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.....   | ix   |
| Preface: A MAN CALLED GALL .....   | x    |
| Chapter  |      |
| 1. HISTORICAL OVERVIEW .....   | 1    |
| 2. THE EARLY LIFE OF ST. GALL .....  | 15   |
| 3. THE TRAVELS OF GALL AND COLUMBANUS WITH THEIR<br>COMPANIONS TO THE EUROPEAN CONTINENT ..... | 21   |
| 4. GALL'S INTRODUCTION TO THE EUROPEAN CONTINENT .....   | 38   |
| 5. THE ARRIVAL OF MISSIONARIES IN SWITZERLAND .....  | 52   |
| 6. MIRACLES ATTRIBUTED TO ST. GALL .....   | 61   |
| 7. LEGENDS .....   | 70   |
| 8. THE LEGACY OF ST. GALL .....  | 80   |
| ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY .....   | 94   |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY .....   | 104  |

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I also wish to acknowledge the encouragement and support of many of my fellow graduate students during the course of writing this dissertation, especially Dr. Eva Judruch who clothed me with her continued inspiration and advice.



## ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure:

|   |    |
|---|----|
| 1. The curragh .....  | 25 |
| 2. A self- drawn map of the route to European continent .....       | 33 |
| 3. Killing of two monks .....                                       | 42 |
| 4. The Execution of Brunhilde .....                                 | 52 |
| 5. St. Gall engaged in fishing on the Steinach .....                | 56 |
| 6. Curing a paralyzed beggar through Intercession of St. Gall ..... | 62 |
| 7. St. Gall and his deacon encounter two women “fiends” .....       | 64 |
| 8. Gall interceding to cure Duke Gunzo’s daughter .....             | 66 |
| 9. Spine Vitae of German Saints .....                               | 70 |
| 10. The bear brings wood to Gallus .....                            | 72 |
| 11. The death of St. Gall in Arbon .....                            | 81 |
| 12. Ivory Tablet Front Cover .....                                  | 84 |
| 13. Ivory Tablet Back Cover .....                                   | 84 |
| 14. Luitherus dedicates his antiphonary to St. Gall .....           | 86 |
| 15. Saint Gall portrayed as Bishop .....                            | 88 |
| 16. The bear, St. Gall and two fellow monks .....                   | 89 |
| 17. Saint Gall City Flag .....                                      | 89 |
| 18. Appenzell Ausser Rhoden Flag .....                              | 91 |

## **PREFACE**

### **A MAN CALLED GALL**

Until I met my wife in August of 1947, my knowledge of and interest in Switzerland was somewhat vague. Recently discharged from the U. S. Navy, I could better recite the islands of the South Pacific than recount the names of any major cities in Switzerland. Geneva, Zurich, and Bern came to mind after some prodding, however, I had never heard of the city of St. Gallen.<sup>1</sup>

During our seven year courtship, I listened to and was intrigued by the accounts of my future father-in-law's land. He, along with his coterie of fellow Swiss friends and visiting relatives, would regale me with folklore from another place and another time. I began to understand that in addition to cheese, chocolate, watches, and banks, Switzerland boasted of a rich history and culture. Perhaps as a grade school student in my native city of Elmira, N.Y., I learned that Switzerland claimed neutrality in times of war, but little else.

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<sup>1</sup> Executive Producer: Editorial officeweb FCh, Government Section, The City of St. Gallen is named after the Irish monk, St. Gallus, who founded a hermitage on the spot at the beginning of the 7th Century, Swiss Federal Chancery, Gurtengasse 5, CH-3003 Bern, Switzerland.

My future wife's father was born in the city of St. Gallen, in the canton<sup>2</sup> of St. Gallen in 1906. As a graduation gift from his father in 1926, he set sail for a year-long visit to the United States.

He always seemed to have one foot in New Jersey while the other was firmly planted in his hometown of St. Gallen. Hugo had a typical "Swiss Mentality" strange to me at first, but came to identify other relatives with this same rather intrusive and enigmatic nature. I describe this trait as insular and probing as to the business of others. Secrecy and privacy are valued qualities among the Swiss!

My upstate Irish Catholic childhood was indeed far removed from my new-found family affiliations. Dinner at Hugo's table often involved an extended afternoon and sometimes into the evening affair. Each course of food was served with glasses of fine wine and even dessert had its own alcoholic complement of cherry, plum, and pear brandies. In comparison, my own parents rarely introduced any alcoholic beverages to our dinners. Rarely did my parents imbibe. Now I had entered a new world of culture and enjoyed it.

In 1968, after our marriage and five children, aged three to thirteen, good fortune smiled upon our family and we were able to travel to Switzerland. It was my first visit, and we were met at Kloten Airport in Zurich by a host of relatives bearing bouquets of

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<sup>2</sup> Editor: Presence Switzerland, Admin.ch—The Federal State, Cantons: Switzerland is a multi-ethnic and multi-confessional nation shaped by the will of its people. It has been a federal state since 1848 and has a federal structure with three different political levels: The Confederation, the cantons and the communes. Switzerland is made up of 26 states known as cantons. They are states that originally united in 1848 to form the Confederation, to which they each relinquished part of their sovereignty, Bundesgasse 32.

flowers and extended kisses to welcome us. We were transported to my wife's family home situated high on a hill overlooking the city of St. Gallen where we would stay. Peering out the windows of this beautiful four story wood shingled house, I could see this entire city of St. Gallen nestled between two hills in the valley below. Church steeples rose high above the surrounding medieval buildings below. There stood before us the world famous abbey church known locally in German as the "Klosterdom." It was erected between 1755 to 1766.<sup>3</sup> It was here that my wife's Aunt Martha and Uncle Hans sang in the church choir each Sunday and Church holiday. It was Martha, a self-proclaimed church historian, who informed us that St. Gall was buried in the catacombs beneath the church, along with St. Othmar<sup>4</sup>, who was the first abbot of the St. Gall monastery. Her "absolute" authority was supported by the fact that her son was the private chauffeur for the bishop of St. Gallen. Whether or not I realized it immediately, my quest to learn more of this man called Gall had commenced. During the ensuing years, we would be privileged to visit Switzerland frequently.

A few years later we traveled to Ireland and visited The Trinity College Library (The Long Room) in Dublin. It was here that a chance discovery lighted a fire in my mind, and a connection to St. Gall that I would not forget. There in the same room as the

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3 Werner Vogler, ed., and James C. King, trans., *History of the Abbey, The Culture of the Abbey of St. Gall*, (Zurich, Switzerland: Chr. Belser AG fur Verlagsgeschafte, 1991), 22.

4 Michael Ott, *St. Othmar. The Catholic Encyclopedia Vol. 11*. (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1911). <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11351a.htm> (accessed 16 May 2013).

Book of Kells<sup>5</sup> on an adjacent wall, was an ancient map illustrating the travels of the intrepid Irish monks, their names and the routes they traveled through the continent of Europe. To my amazement, I noted the name of one monk recorded as St. Gall, with a detailed trail marking his travels to the continent from Ireland with Columbanus, ending at a place that was to become the city of St. Gallen. Imagine that, an Irishman with a Swiss city named after him!

My mind was now set. I would research all information available to me and discover the connection between my Irish lineage and that of my wife's Swiss roots. I began my quest with a visit to the abbey library, known to the Swiss as the Stiftsbibliothek, located in the center of the city adjacent to the Cathedral, which is called the Klosterdom. The Abbey Library is a UNESCO world heritage site built during the eighteenth century. Walking into this place transported me back to a time when books were laboriously inscribed manually and beautifully embellished by monks sitting on high stools. Upon entering this historic facility, I was immediately aware of an aura of sacredness and respect. Not unlike the library at Trinity College in Ireland, the high stacks were filled with leather-covered texts kept safely under lock and key. Showcases displayed open pages of books inscribed during the medieval period. Distinctive to the Stiftsbibliothek was a rule that shoes were to be removed before entering and soft scuff

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<sup>5</sup> The Book of Kells, An ornately illustrated manuscript, produced by Celtic monks around 800 c.e. It is the most lavishly illuminated manuscript to survive the Middle Ages. It is on permanent display at Trinity College Library in Ireland, <https://www.tcd.ie/Library/bookofkells/book-of-kells/> (accessed February 18, 2013).

slippers were provided in order to preserve the beauty of the exquisite inlaid parquet flooring. It seemed only natural that fellow visitors spoke in hushed tones, a sign of respect for the sanctity and grandeur of the place.

From my inquiry to the townspeople, I heard varying accounts with regard to the identity of St. Gall. Typical of human nature in any culture, the older citizens happily related the historical background of their city and its founding father, St. Gall. The more youthful were less interested and their knowledge of historical events was dependent upon the level of their education.

In my own mind, I imagined the journey of these monks, which began in Bangor, located in County Down in Northern Ireland. Their odyssey would have begun during the seventh century travelling south over the Irish Sea, crossing the English channel to the European Continent into what is now France and Germany. For St. Gall the years of missionary exploration and building monasteries would culminate in the Steinach Valley in the area now called Switzerland. I knew no details until inspiration prodded me to elect courses at Drew University to enlighten my knowledge of medieval European history.

Over the years and from that small group of monks there would develop the beautiful modern city of St. Gallen and, in that city, we would see the magnificent medieval library.

On another recent trip to St. Gallen, I had the good fortune to speak with Mr. Silvio Frigg, the area manager for projects, organization, security and inventory maintenance for the Stiftsbibliothek. He did inquire as to why an American, living in New Jersey, would select a study of the life and times of St. Gall as a topic for his dissertation.

Outside of the country this man Gall is not well-known. He listened to my reasons and leaned over his desk and whispered confidentially, “Some scholars have begun to doubt that Gall was originally from Ireland and suspect he might have been Alsatian.” This thought seemed preposterous, even radical. Mr. Frigg went on to explain that a professor at the University of St. Gallen had recently written a paper on the subject offering supportive evidence of that possibility. I processed this information with some difficulty. Would this new thought have an impact on my original thesis, or might I include it as an argument one way or the other.

For forty years, my wife and I have traveled twice annually to Switzerland. Our third daughter, Therese, immigrated to Switzerland in 1983 and lives in that storied city St. Gallen, to this day. Having a Swiss grandson born in 1995 has served to deeply ingrain our roots to St. Gallen. The fact that our daughter and young grandson speak in the native Allemanic dialect called *Schwyzerdutsch*<sup>6</sup> which was likely spoken in some form by the monk St. Gall, has taken on a most moving and profound meaning for me.

My purpose in writing this dissertation is to add to our knowledge and understanding of St. Gall. His reputation is not well-known outside of Western Europe. I intend to investigate some of the important opinions and information provided by Swiss scholars (Professor Dr. Max Schar and Dr. Gerold Hilti) who question whether St. Gall

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<sup>6</sup> University of Cambridge, Language Centre, Alsatian, An Indo-European language and a member of the West Germanic group, spoken by c. 5 million people mainly in the region of Alsace-Lorraine (northeastern France), as well as in Switzerland, Austria and southern Germany; also known as *Schwyzerdutsch* (in Switzerland) and *Allemannisch* (in Austria and parts of Germany).

originated in Ireland, and whether he was Irish at all. If he was not Irish, what was his lineage and from whence did he come?

Legitimate questions arise as to the reasons for St. Gall's relationship with St. Columbanus, leader of the group of eleven other monks who traveled to the European Continent from the monastery at Bangor under the tutelage of St. Comgall, in Ireland. Was the Rule of Columbanus too restrictive? How did the Rule of Benedict, adopted after the death of Gall by his successors, differ and might this have affected Gall's freedom to preach to the Allemanic inhabitants?

Other interesting questions arise regarding St. Gall and the reasons why he seemed to have had a contentious relationship with St. Columbanus. In studying the various histories, the question arises as to whether the popular notion that when Columbanus was prepared to leave, Gall is purported to have become strangely ill. He refused to travel on to Bobbio in Italy with St. Columbanus, who then proceeded to discipline him and impose a severe punishment regarding his right to celebrate Mass until after Columbanus's death. Was Gall really ill? Just what did Gall and his companions accomplish as they formed a nucleus of what would eventually become a great monastic community under the guidance of St. Othmar?



## CHAPTER 1

### HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Where and how early monasticism originated is important to our understanding of present day coenobitic communities. Over fifteen hundred years before the advent of Christianity there were varied forms of monasticism. In fact, most non-Christian religions have known some form of monastic life. Those practices have evolved into a variety of different forms, including the evangelistic monasticism practiced by Saints Gall and Columbanus.

Among the better known is the oldest practiced form of monasticism called Hinduism.<sup>1</sup> There were also many living as anchorites.<sup>2</sup> The former were hermits who, having broken all connection with society, lived in the forests, sometimes wandering in solitude, begging food and practicing poverty under the direction of a guru.<sup>3</sup> Even in pre-Christian Europe there were the Vestal Virgins<sup>4</sup> dedicated to long periods of chastity. Among the Greeks in the early sixth century, Pythagoras of Samos (c.560 c.480 B.C.) founded a religious community on the coast of Italy dedicated to developing the science

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1 Luc Bresard, *A History of Monastic Spirituality, The Monastic Phenomenon, Outside Christianity*, 2013. <http://www.scourmont.be/studium/bresard/01-prehistory.htm> (1967).

2 Random House Dictionary of the English Language, Anchorite is one who has retired to a solitary place for a life of religious seclusion, (New York, New York, Random House, Inc., 1967).

3 Bresard, *Monastic Spirituality*.

4 Elizabeth Abbot, *History of Celibacy*, (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2001). [http://departments.kings.edu/womens\\_history/vestals.html](http://departments.kings.edu/womens_history/vestals.html)

of mathematics.<sup>5</sup> Surely, the preceding types of communities may seem strange to those of us who thought of monasticism only in terms of a religious fervor related to Christianity within the confines of a monastery. However, to appreciate the why, the where, and the when of the monastic ventures of Saints Gall and Columbanus, we need to return to the early third century A.D. It is in the dry and inhospitable Egyptian desert that their story really begins.

According to James Darwas Chitty, the desert is really a simple place, because, “you only have to worry about beating the temperature, finding food and water, and not getting lost. But when you master these few things, a whole region of the world stands before you, unopened, ready to be explored.” “But one thread alone can give our story of the development of monasticism its true meaning, the search for personal holiness, the following of the Lord Jesus, whether in the solitary cell, or on the abbot’s seat, or the menial works of the monastery.”<sup>6</sup>

What breed of people were those who went to Egypt and why did they place themselves in such starkly dry and uncomfortable places as we might perceive them? Did those who went to the desert believe it to be such a forbidding and uncomfortable environment? Who were the people and what were the motivations prompting them to

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5 Anthony F. Beavers, *Pythagoras and the Pythagoreans*, <https://faculty.evansville.edu/tb2/trip/Pythagoras.htm>, February 20, 2014

6, Chitty, James Darwas, *The Desert A City: A Introduction to the Study of Egyptian and Palestinian Monasticism Under the Christian Empire*, (Yonkers, New York : St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, January 1, 1955).

abide in these harsh and unforgiving places? Realistically, there were varied ways of life for those seeking solitude and contemplation. Certainly, not all those who went to the desert were seeking a holy life. Surely there were many who sought to escape the authorities, evade taxes and, yes, even military service. In what kind of abode did they live, how did they clothe themselves, and on what types of food did they subsist?

We can well imagine the distinct variance between the well-tilled and irrigated fields surrounding populated settlements in Egypt and the desert beyond. Those desert areas could be seen as harsh landscapes, unrelentingly hot and dry during the day and cold by night. Those areas lacked water, edible vegetation, and were populated with poisonous varieties of small rodents and snakes. Those who sought isolation from the world around them found the desert an ideal place to excise the desire for the things of this world. Many of those who went to the desert were called hermits and considered holy people by the inhabitants of the surrounding villages. The people living nearby would often go to those living in the desert bringing them food and water while seeking their wisdom and advice.

St. Antony (251-356 A.D.),<sup>7</sup> a resident of Alexandria in Egypt, was born to an affluent Christian family and became an eminent example of a desert monastic. As a child, he grew up with a younger sister in a Christian atmosphere being obedient to his parents while learning from his readings. Early on, he carefully practiced what he found

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<sup>7</sup> Lynn H. Nelson, *Lectures for A Medieval Survey, The Rise of Monasticism*, The Orb: On-line Reference Book for Medieval Studies, (<http://www.the-orb.net/textbooks/nelson/monasticism.html>) (2010).

efficacious, although he did not seem fond of learning letters. At the age of eighteen or twenty years, his parents died, and he was left to care for his younger sister.

Having been left quite comfortable, Antony began to contemplate the words of the gospels describing how the apostles left the comfort of their homes to follow in the footsteps of Christ. He heard how some followers sold their worldly goods and gave them to the apostles. One particular passage about Christ talking to the rich man, made a profound impression on Antony. “If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have, and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.”<sup>8</sup>

Antony adopted an austere life of self-deprivation; however, he found himself tempted in a variety of physical and spiritual ways. “Girding himself—Antony went out to the tombs that were situated some distance from the village. He charged one of his friends to supply him periodically with bread, and he entered one of the tombs and remained alone within, his friend having closed the door on him.”<sup>9</sup> Over a period of many years, Antony attracted large numbers of young men impressed with his holiness who joined him in the desert to learn from him; following his way of life. Eventually, his example became widely known far beyond Egypt. Collections of hermits spread far and wide, in and throughout the Eastern Roman Empire and thus began an ever expanding monastic movement.

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8 Matthew 19:21, *The New English Bible*, (United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 1970).

9 Athanasius, Forward by Scott Cairns, trans. Robert C. Gregg, *The Life of Antony*, New York, NY: Harper Collins Publishers, 1980)

It is reasonable to think that the monastic tradition described in the preceding paragraphs does not seem to mirror the monasticism practiced by Columbanus and Gall. I believe it was the restless spirit of wandering and seeking a better understanding of humankind that drove monks seeking their life's mission to the desert. It certainly was a precursor for those who would eventually leave their monasteries and embark on voyages to distant lands, facing dangers unknown to them. They also sought not only a deeper perspective of the universe as well as the people in it, and at the same time shared their knowledge, understanding and love of Christ. These were monastic men whose work was no less fraught with extreme deprivation and danger as was Antony's.

Living in the 21<sup>st</sup> century affluence of America it is difficult to convert our thinking process to that early desert spirituality based on the thought of some men. According to Ursula King in her book *Christian Mystics*, "Clement and Origen who at the end of the second century saw the vision of God as the goal and end of human life. Both had emphasized the combination of asceticism and mysticism which eventually became the basis for Christian monasticism."<sup>10</sup>

Consider Christ's temptation in the desert:

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And after fasting for forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. And the tempter came and said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, command that these stones become loaves of bread,' But He answered, 'It is written, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes forth from the mouth of God.' Then the devil took him to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple, and

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<sup>10</sup> Ursula King, *Christian Mystics, The Spiritual Heart of the Christian Tradition*, (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 1998), 37.

said to him, ‘If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written, He will command his angels concerning you, on their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.’”<sup>11</sup>

Many early Christians sought to identify themselves with Christ by seeking the quiet and isolation of the desert as did St. Antony. Early Western monasticism may be traced to 340 A.D., following a visit to Rome by St. Athanasius. It was he who first wrote about the Egyptian St. Antony. Antony’s parents raised him as a Christian, though he seemed to be somewhat withdrawn, standing apart from others his age, wanting to live as an unaffected person in his home. He was obedient and read scripture, taking seriously what he read and heard.

If we can return to the time of the original apostles, a more accurate picture emerges helping us to comprehend where the foundation of groups of believers in Christ’s words came together. In a different type of community all material things were held in common. That ideal community is clearly described in the Acts of the Apostles from the New Testament as follows:

And all who believed were together and held all things in common, and would sell their possessions and goods and distribute them among all according as anyone had need. And continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread in their houses, they took their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and being in favor with all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their company such as were to be saved.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Matthew 4:1-6, *The Holy Bible, English Standard Version*, (Wheaton, Illinois, Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers, 2001).

<sup>12</sup> Acts 2:44-47, *The New Testament of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Translated from the Latin Vulgate*, (Patterson, NJ: St. Anthony Guild Press, 1947).

Although the preceding description of community where all things were held in common provides us with a view of the early formation of Christian communities, it does not necessarily provide us a link to the early development of monasticism. There is some resemblance to a life of celibacy as they (the apostles) may have desired to live without the company of a woman to concentrate on spreading the word of Christ and build the Christian community.

There is no certain answer as to when, or even how early organized Irish monasticism came to Ireland. As early as the fifth century, other missionaries may have had a particular influence on bringing a form of what I would call monastic evangelization to Ireland. This distinctive type of “traveling monasticism” is unique in that it varies from organized individual missionary work under the aegis of the Bishops of the Church. They possibly may have traveled from Gaul and even Britain to Ireland.

To better understand where organized and educated Irish monasticism originated, and how it reached Ireland is significant. What is it that made the Irish personality a fertile field for the acceptance of knowledge, especially knowledge of Christianity? Even before Christianity, “the stage had been set for learning from the early groups of Druids and the bards carrying on the traditions of pagan culture and they taught history, poetry and law.”<sup>13</sup> It is no wonder that the Irish mind was attuned to the study and acquisition of knowledge.

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13 Benedict Fitzpatrick, *Ireland and the Making of Britain*, (New York, NY: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1921). 30-31.

Despite some prevailing views that Ireland was a conglomerate of warring tribes during the third century before the advent of Christianity, Cormac, the high-king, son of Airt, established an early species of university at Tara where three schools were established; “in the first the most eminent professors of the art of war were engaged, in the second history was taught, and in the third jurisprudence was profest.”<sup>14</sup>

Our view of Ireland as a place where clans of mindless Irish barbarians roamed is misleading. Christians were in Ireland before the advent of St. Patrick and indeed, there is good reason to understand that contained in the *Vita Secunda*, Life of St. Patrick there is added this interesting detail:

The most blessed Pope Celestine ordained Bishop the Archdeacon of the Roman Church, named Palladius, and sent him to the Island of Hibernia, after having committed to him the relics of Blessed Peter and Paul and other Saints and also given him volumes of the Old and New Testament. Palladius entering the land of the Irish, arrived at the territory of the men of Leinster....<sup>15</sup>

Research reveals two divergent views of the Irish people. Anthropologist Peter S. Wells states that the words “Celt and Celtic” can mean many different things. “Celt” usually refers to prehistoric Iron Age peoples from Continental Europe. The word was first known to us in the form of Keltoi, in the writings of Greek authors around the beginning of the fifth century (B.C.). These writings inform us that the Celts lived in

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<sup>14</sup> Benedict Fitzpatrick, *Ireland and the Making of Britain*, (New York, NY: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1921). 30-31.

<sup>15</sup> Francis Moran, Cardinal, *St. Palladius. In the Catholic Encyclopedia. Vol. 11.* (New York, NY: Robert Appleton Company, 1911), <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11424a.htm>- (accessed 26 Mar, 2013).



regions north of the city of Massalia, the site of modern Marseilles on the Mediterranean coast of France. The adjective “Celtic” often refers to medieval and modern traditions, meaning myths, legends, music, and other ethnic traditions. Celtic is also a linguistic term that refers to ancient languages such as Gaulish and Old Irish, and to modern ones of the same family, including Irish Gaelic, Scottish Gaelic, Welsh, and Breton.<sup>16</sup>

Richard Hooker, Professor at Washington State University, uses the words “Celt” and “Celtic” interchangeably, describing a monolithic culture that spread from Ireland to Asia Minor.<sup>17</sup> The earliest Celts who were major players in the classical world were the Gauls who controlled an area extending from France to Switzerland, having either migrated or invaded as far as Spain, and then crossed the Alps into Italy. The Celtic people, including those known as Druids, perceived their world differently from the way we do, linking geographical features to the spirits of the natural world. The foregoing ideas are based on literary information from myths, legends and folk traditions.

Early Celtic societies were organized around warfare, not as an organized process of territorial conquest, but rather as a sport. It focused on raids and hunting. When they came into contact with the Romans, they changed their strategy to a more organized defense against a larger army. Celtic society was both hierarchical and class-based. Tribes were led by kings and political organizations, and were divided into three groups:

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<sup>16</sup> Peter S. Wells, *Who, Where, and What were the Celts?* <http://www.jstor.org> (July, 1947). (accessed October 1, 2013).

<sup>17</sup> Richard Hooker, *European Middle Ages, The Celts*, <http://richard-hooker.com/sites/worldcultures/MA/CELTS.HTM>, (World Culture Home Page, 1997).

a warrior aristocracy; an intellectual class which included druids, poets, and jurists; and everyone else. A kinship based clan provided protection against other clans. Bloodshed was dealt with exact retribution. Professional mediators would settle disputes and exact reparations on the offending clan.

Early Celts were polytheistic. They worshipped gods from primitive Indo-European sources of Greece, Persia and India. The character of these Celtic gods is unknown, although they tended to come in threes. This triadic logic may have had much significance in the translation of Christianity into northern European cultural models.

The most important legacy that the Irish bequeathed to Europe was Irish Christianity. When St. Patrick (387-493 A.D.) arrived in the fifth century, Christianity had not yet fully penetrated the Celtic cultures. Much of what we call paganism today was actually a combination of Christianity and imported eastern religions. This version was in actuality Patrick's message to the Irish people.

The influence of St. Patrick was formed by his early history having been a native of the northwest province of Roman Britain and his exposure to the monastic centers of Gaul which prepared him for his future task. What is fascinating about Patrick was the six years he spent as a slave to Icelandic pirates. He managed to escape back to Gaul and return to his family. He was heavily influenced, learning about the beginnings of monastic life. Eventually, Patrick became a monk and belonged to a regular monastic community. He was also influenced to a large degree by the traditions of St. Augustine

and St. Martin of Tours as well. Exposure to these traditions is probably why he was attracted to missionary work and severe asceticism.<sup>18</sup>

This form of episcopal Christianity, which involved the organization of Christians as lay people under the control of bishops, was unsuited for the peoples of Ireland. Due to their disorganized rural society, Irish Christianity developed into a monastic style. Small Christian communities came under the leadership of an abbot. An entirely different form of Christianity evolved that differed from Roman Christianity.

The monastic centers thrived in Ireland. They operated nominally under the authority of Rome, though they exhibited relative indifference to Roman dictums. Conflict with the Roman Church was inevitable. A distinct feature of Irish Christianity was “wandering.” Some became monks in monasteries while others became “anchorites,” living reclusively while traveling around by themselves.<sup>19</sup>

According to Dom Louis Gougaud, O.S.B., “These early Irish missionaries were called peregrine, or those on a pilgrimage, usually a life-pilgrimage. Most of them walked everywhere they went. Because of their commitment to self-denial, they refused to ride any vehicle or animal overland. Not traveling on foot could bring excommunication and

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18 Jean Leclercq, *The Spirituality of the Middle Ages*, (New York, NY: Seabury Press, 1968), 32-35.

19 Richard Hooker, “The Celts” (Pullman, WA: Washington State University, 2014). Washington Web. Celtic Culture. <http://www.wsu.edu:8080/~dee/MA/CELTS.htm> (2014).

was considered as important as ‘continence and abstinence.’”<sup>20</sup> As to the clothing they wore, Tomas Cardinal O Fiaich describes the monks in this way: “Each wears a white tunic covered by a cowl and is tonsured from ear to ear. Many carried the pilgrim’s staff, a leather water bottle hanging from a belt and perhaps a gospel-book in its leather case slung across the shoulder.”<sup>21</sup> In addition, “J. M. Clark, among others reports that the hair that was left behind the tonsure was long and flowing and that they tattooed certain parts of the body, especially the eyelids.”<sup>22</sup>

The European continent during this time was in a state of rebellion, with uprisings and their resultant political consequences. As the Roman Empire expanded, the central government was unable to effectively rule the widely separated provinces. Territories in the Roman Republic were ultimately divided between members of the Second Triumvirate composed of Octavian, Mark Antony, and Marcus Aemilius Lepidus. Civil war broke out at the territorial borders, as loyalties changed from one leader to another.

The principal enemies of the Romans were the Germanic tribes that lurked behind the Rhine and Danube rivers. This tribal influence caused damage to the Roman

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20 Dom Louis Gougaud, O.S.B., *Gaelic Pioneers of Christianity*, (Dublin, Ireland, M. H. Gill and Son, LTD., 1923), 72-73.

21 Tomas Cardinal O Fiaich, *Columbanus in His Own Words*. Part II, An Island Monk <http://www.catholicireland.net/columbanus-in-his-own-words/> (accessed May 1, 2012).

22 Dr. Daryl McCarthy, A presentation: *Hearts and Minds Aflame for Christ: Irish Monks: A Model for making all Things New in the 21st Century*, (International Institute for Christian Studies, C. S. Lewis Foundation, September 28, 2007).

provinces both economically and culturally, and ultimately destroyed the Roman identity that had held the empire together.

As the Western Roman Empire crumbled, the new Germanic tribes upheld many Roman laws and traditions. Followers of Arianism, a 4<sup>th</sup> century heresy that denied the divinity of Jesus Christ, converted to the Catholic faith and gained loyalty among the Romanized population. In time, the Germanic rulers became more influenced by Roman law and gradually ceased to recognize their own tribal laws.

When the Western Roman Empire fell, a new era began in Western European history; the Dark and the Middle Ages. As the Germanic tribes interacted with Rome by the middle of the medieval period, central, western, and northern Europe had been converted to the Roman Catholic faith and acknowledged the Pope as the Vicar of Christ.

Richard Hooker further states, “While textbooks stress the descent of Europe from a classical culture, the face of Europe throughout most of the historical period was dominated by a single culturally diverse group of people; the Celts.”<sup>23</sup> The foregoing information sets the stage for twelve missionaries from Ireland, under the leadership of St. Columbanus, to leave their Irish Abbey, to travel to the shores of the European continent. Whether or not all of the monks originated from Ireland given the fact that the Bangor monastery was founded by Comgall, who surrounded himself with men “whose

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23 Hooker, *European Middle Ages*.

saintly life and scholarly attainments were the wonder of their age”<sup>24</sup> remains questionable. I believe that the fame of the abbey would have attracted the attention of parents, even those outside of Ireland, desirous of an exceptional classical education for their children. This might be especially true of those living on the continent seeing their Christianity being threatened.

In the midst of the sixth century while Christianity was suffering a period of erosion and diminishment in continental Europe, there arose in Ireland a new and vibrant brand of Christian missionary zeal. It is about the development of that zeal at the Abbey of Bangor and the resultant mission of twelve monks to the European Continent that this dissertation is directed. Particular emphasis is placed on St. Gall, a pupil of his magister, St. Columbanus, who led his group of twelve intrepid Irish missionaries on a journey over land and sea to the European continent. St. Gall in particular would have a profound and lasting effect among the Allemani in the regions of Alsace, Switzerland and parts of southern Germany.

This dissertation is devoted to the journey of one of those twelve brave souls, St. Gall, and the remarkable impact his missionary zeal brought to the lands of the Allemani in the company of his magister, Columbanus.

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<sup>24</sup> Canon James Hamilton, M.A., *A Short History of Bangor Abbey Through Fifteen Centuries*, <http://www.BANGORABBEY.org/history.htm>

## CHAPTER 2

### THE EARLY LIFE OF ST. GALL

The life of Gall (550-646 A.D.), recorded by three early biographies,<sup>1</sup> forms much of the substance of our knowledge of this relatively obscure saint. Many monks who found their way to the European Continent are known to us only by their Latinized names such as Gallus or Gall, which related to their names in Irish. A deed drawn up in 700 A.D. refers to Sancti Galluni, while only 45 years later does a deed refer to the form Gallus, while in the ninth century and thereafter the name becomes common. Most interesting was his familiarity with the Allemanic language. “some even assumed him to be Allemanic in origin even though in the history of St. Gallen, he was considered to be a devout Irishman.”<sup>2</sup>

*Vita Vetustissima*, the oldest of the three biographies, was discovered in recent times in the Archives of Zurich, Switzerland by Paul Schweitzer. It was likely to have been written at the end of the eighth century by an unknown author. The earlier part of the written fragment has been subsequently lost. Divided into two books, the first begins with the death of Columbanus, while the second book describes the burial of Gall.

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1 Three Early Biographies of Gallus: *Vita Vetustissima*, Author Unknown, written at end of eighth century, *The Life*, by Wettinus, written between 816-824 A.D., *The Life*, written by Walahfrid Strabo (the Squinter), before his death in 849 A.D.

2 Stefan Sonderegger, *German Language and Literature in St. Gall, The Culture of the Abbey of St. Gall*, James King, Werner Vogler, and Belser Verlag, (eds), (Stiftsarchiv St. Gall, CH-9001 St. Gall 1990), 164.

Author Wettinus wrote, *The Life* between 816-824 A.D, and it is also divided into two books. It's reported mediocrity, written in a stilted style, dictated the need for a better accounting from another author. Walahfrid Strabo, a scholar and later Abbot of Reichenau, left a fragmentary biography of Gall at the time of Strabos' death in 849 A.D. He divided his work into chapters, and followed Vita Vetustissima's accounting more so than that of Wettinus. Walafrid's style received higher praise from the medieval Latinists because "he wrote primarily for the edification of the faithful and in the second place, to glorify his monastery or order."<sup>3</sup>

According to many historians Gall is said to have been born in Leinster, Ireland about 550 (A.D.), the son of a noble family. There are some, by the same token, who doubt his Irish lineage. In any event, his devout parents dedicated him to the principles of service to his fellow man and saw to his care by placing him under the tutelage of St. Comgall, the founder and abbot of the great Irish abbey at Bangor, located in County Down, on the southern shore of Belfast Lough.

It was under the rigid discipline of St. Comgall, a strict and virtuous ascetic in this monastic school, that the scriptures were expounded, along with theology, logic, geometry, arithmetic, and music. According to this discipline, Gall rapidly advanced in piety and wisdom. Recognizing his intelligence and biblical scholarship, he was thereafter consecrated to the priesthood, at the proper age of thirty years.

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3 Maud Joynt, *The Life of St. Gall*, (Great Britain: Llanerch Publishers, 1927), 2-3.



Research into the earliest years of Gall reveals a scarcity of valid information. His parents offered their son in the flower of his early youth as a sacrifice to the Lord and entrusted him to the teachings of his “spiritual leader” Columbanus. Contrary to reports that Gall was full of zeal and energy when the occasion arose, Joynt states that “he was not ambitious, was retiring, and fond of outdoor pursuits such as fishing.”<sup>4</sup> Perhaps he was both.

Gall left sparse information relative to his travels from Bangor to the European continent. I relied on large segments of written materials about St. Columbanus with whom Gall traveled along with eleven other monks. For instance, the Monk Jonas (7<sup>th</sup> century) wrote extensively on the Life of St. Columban (Columbanus), and their travels to and on the continent. Frequent references are made to Gall and his odyssey. Unfortunately, many written accounts of missionaries from Ireland have been lost. The works and biographies of Columbanus are of great value relating to their experiences on the continent.

Columbanus, an extraordinary man of destiny, was born in Leinster, Ireland in 543 A.D., eight years before Gall. His mother, a devout Christian, was convinced that her son had a brilliant future and chose his baptismal name with the utmost care. He was christened Columba, “the dove,” a new symbol of Christian teaching. Columbanus spent his earliest years under the watchful eye of his mother completely without mention of a

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4 Joynt, *Life of St. Gall*, 9.

father. She attended to his academic pursuits, mindful that if her son were to have a bright future, he must be literate. Columbanus learned the Latin alphabet using the Psalter as his primer. Studying the gospel of St. John, the Eagle of the Evangelists, young Columbanus became aware of a new vision.

A chance meeting with an old woman anchoress, living alone and meditating on the scriptures, gave fuel to Columbanus' vision for adventure. She told him of her desire to leave Ireland, travel overseas and to forsake her home for Christ. To her shame, she had not dared to go and instead lived in exile in the wilderness. The old woman convinced Columbanus to deny the voice of the flesh and flee from corruption. Although already attracted to a young woman, he was even more attracted to the old woman, and he strongly believed in her message.

Columbanus returned to school, his mind was made up. His mother, sadly disappointed by her son's decision to leave home to study at a monastery further north, was unable to stop him. He implored her not to stand in God's way. Weeping at her son's departure, she flung herself across the doorway. In an act that reveals the determined personality of Columbanus, as well as self-righteousness, he stepped over her, walked away, and warned his mother not to expect to see him again.

Each Irish monastery appears to have followed a rule of its own. Comgall, the founder of Bangor, must have recognized in Columbanus, academic gifts and placed him in a position of authority in the monastic school. It may be that the mother of Gall heard of the reputation of the Bangor school and entrusted her son, Gall, to Columbanus that he

be trained in the religious life. It became a symbiotic relationship that would pave the way for an odyssey in the making.

According to George Metlake, in his writing regarding the monastery at Bangor, Ireland, it was a typical early Irish monastic settlement. Surprisingly, early descriptions of the physical characteristics were shown to be very spare and built largely by the monks themselves. The following description paints a less than comfortable picture of this famous abbey at Bangor:

Grouped about a number of small, unpretentious oratories of wood or dry-piled stones were hundreds of wicker work huts, circular or triangular in shape. The larger ones served as guest-houses, workshops, kitchens, refectories, barns, etc.; the smaller ones were the cells of the monks, each affording accommodations for one or more persons.

Apart from the rest, and near to one of the oratories, stood the cell of the abbot. It was also of wood, but raised from the ground on tree-stumps, it made more show than its fellows and commanded a good view of the surroundings. The whole group of buildings was surrounded by a strong rampart of palisades or stone.<sup>5</sup>

Keeping in mind the locations of these monastic settlements similar to Bangor, materials used for construction must have depended on what was locally available and would vary considerably from site to site.

The curriculums taught at the monastic school of Bangor are described as being part of a rigorous education. The seventh-century biography of Columbanus reveals that as a youth he received instruction in “liberal letters,” grammar and religious doctrine. By “liberal letters,” scholars assume the presence, to a greater or lesser degree, of a classical

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<sup>5</sup> Metlake, *Life and Writings*, 31-32.

curriculum comprised of the trivium of grammar, rhetoric and logic, and the quadrivium of arithmetic, geometry, astronomy and music. He excelled in all of his studies, and his education would serve him well in his quest for serving his God.<sup>6</sup> Since Gall was his pupil, it is likely he was also schooled in the same curriculum.

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<sup>6</sup> Metlake, *Life and Writings*, 21-22.

### CHAPTER 3

#### TRAVELS OF GALL AND COLUMBANUS WITH THEIR COMPANIONS TO THE EUROPEAN CONTINENT

There can be little doubt that the band of twelve monks led by Columbanus, (543-615 A.D.) including Gall, were imbued with a wandering and adventuresome spirit, as they gathered to embark across the Irish Sea about the year 583A.D. That same restless spirit had driven their ancient Irish compatriots from their homeland to faraway lands from Iceland to Constantinople and Jerusalem, and many places in between.<sup>1</sup>

Roman Christianity had been introduced to the European continent early in the fourth century by the Roman emperor, Constantine I (ca. 280-337 A.D.), although other accounts indicate his birth to have been earlier. After a successful battle for control of the Western Roman Empire at Milvian Bridge in 312 A.D., which is said to have been preceded by a conversion to Christianity, he became sole ruler of the Roman world.<sup>2</sup>

Christianity flourished; several churches were founded. However, later on the condition of the Church among the Franks had fallen into a state of disarray, her inner life having perished, while worldly desires and ideas had filled the void and allowed paganism to flourish. The commitment of this band of monks was fired with a zealous

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<sup>1</sup> Julius von Pflugk-Hartung, *The Old Irish on the Continent, Transactions of the Royal Historical Society, Vol. 5* (1891), 75-102.

<sup>2</sup> Norman F. Cantor, *The Civilization of the Middle Ages*, (New York, NY: Harper Collins Publishers, Inc., 1993), 48-49.

spirit to bring Christianity to the kingdom of the Franks. It was just this atmosphere that inspired an open field of action based on a message of hope fixed on life beyond this world. So it was that Columbanus, Gall, and their companions were fearlessly inspired to embark on a perilous journey.<sup>3</sup> They would find themselves among the Franks, a people of a different ethnic origin evidenced by language, culture and lifestyle. Added to this amalgam would be a group called the Allemani.

The mindset of these rugged monks, undaunted by the prospect of sailing across rough waters, is exhibited by a poem believed to have been written by their leader Columbanus. The work is titled, “The Boat Song,” shown below and reveals some interesting details about the weather encountered, and the severe temptations to abandon their quest “when the loathsome foe assaults our hearts.” Columbanus spurs his crew on, encouraging them to emulate Christ as he overcame the temptations and wiles of Satan.

#### The Boat Song

Cut in the forests, swept down the two-horned Rhine,  
Our keel, tight-caulked, now floats upon the sea.  
Heia, men! Let the echoes resound with our heia!

The wild gusts swell, the slashing torrents fall,  
But manly strength has force to tame the storm.  
Heia, men! Let the echoes resound with our heia!

To earnest effort, clouds and tempest yield;  
Zeal and unceasing labor conquer all.  
Heia, men! Let the echoes resound with our heia!

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<sup>3</sup> von Pflugk-Hartung, *Old Irish*, 75-102.

Endure and save yourselves for better things;  
 O you who have suffered worse, this too shall end.  
 Heia, men! Let the echoes resound with our heia!

So when the loathsome foe assaults our hearts,  
 Tempting and shaking the depths of our hearts with passion,  
 Let your souls, men, remembering Christ, cry heia!

In resolution fixed, scorn Satan's wiles.  
 By virtues armed, defend yourselves with valor.  
 Let your souls, men, remembering Christ, cry heia!

Firm faith and holy ardor conquer all.  
 The ancient fiend, defeated, breaks his arrows.  
 Let your souls, men, remembering Christ, cry heia

The Source of Good and Being, the Highest Power,  
 Offers the warrior and gives the victor prizes.  
 Let your souls, men, remembering Christ, cry heia! <sup>4</sup>

From time immemorial, sailors have used chants as they bent their backs to challenge the wind and the sea. Even present day yachtsmen, sailors, and college crews use loud chanting songs to support themselves and their fellows. The *Boat Song* seems to be more of a prayer of supplication as well as an encouragement of collegiality and mutual support among the monks.

During Columbanus' time, the many men who undertook these travels left sparse details about their travel modes. For example, little is known about the conveyances they used to cross the open seas and perilous waters. Of what materials were their boats constructed, did they have sails, did they use oars, have navigational devices and how

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<sup>4</sup> Brian Tierney, *The Middle Ages, Volume I, Sources of Medieval History, 5th ed.*, (New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, 1992), 72. This "Boat Song" written by Columbanus captures the mood and the robust faith that animated the Irish monks, among them, St. Gall.

many men would their boats accommodate? What manner of food sustained them, and what kind of clothing and shoes did they wear to protect them from the harsh elements of the sea?

To better understand more about the type of conveyances used for sea-going voyages during the fifth and sixth centuries, I referred to St. Brendan (484-577 A.D.), known as the “voyager.” Brendan was born before Gall, at the end of the fifth century, near Tralee, County Kerry, Ireland. He embarked on a voyage with several monk companions to discover the “Land of Delight” that was written about in “*Navigatio Brendani*.” It is said that his voyage took him across the Atlantic Ocean. During the sixth century Columbanus and his crew members, including Gall, embarked on their voyage from Ireland to England and thence to the European Continent. This information provides a link to the type of boat used by Columbanus and his companions on their voyage to the European continent.

Brendan’s legendary adventures are revealed in *Navigatio Brendani*, which is not, according to scholars, a scientifically factual report of his attempt to sail to the Promised Land or Land of Delight geographically located on the North American continent. However, some scholars believe Brendan did indeed sail across the Atlantic Ocean because his story gave so many exact geographical specifications.<sup>5</sup>

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5 P. F. Moran, Archbishop, *The Voyage of Brendan the Abbot*, trans. Denis O’Donoghue, (Published D. O’Donoghue, Brendaniana, 1893).



There is proof that a journey as described in the *Navigatio* could have been possible in a type of boat the Irish call a “curragh.” That information is taken from a book written by Tim Severin called *The Brendan Voyage*<sup>6</sup> in which he outlines a design for such a vessel “based on three sources—ethnographic, literary, and archaeological.” From these sources details were garnered relative to materials used in the construction of a sea-going curragh that match favorably with the descriptions given of the boat used by Columbanus and his companions.



Figure 1. The curragh ‘St. Brendan (20090198) An original drawing for the booklet ‘Gram pound with Creed’ published in 1992 by Amy Bane and Mary Oliver.

Shown in Figure 1 is a picture of the curragh faithfully re-constructed by Tim Severin and his associates which could have been similar to that used by Columbanus and his crew. A brief description of the curragh is written as follows in the *Navigatio*: “St. Brendan and his companions, using iron implements, prepared a light vessel, with wicker sides and ribs, such as usually made in that country, and covered it with cow-hide, tanned in oak bark, tarring the joints thereof, and loaded provisions for forty days, with fat

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<sup>6</sup> Tim Severin, *The Brendan Voyage*, (New York, NY: The Modern Library, 2000).

enough to dress hides for covering the boat and all utensils needed for use of the crew.”<sup>7</sup>

Additional details tell us that the boat was built with central wooden ribs fore and aft, and required a covering of fifty or more oak-tanned hides. There would have been one or two square rigged masts probably consisting of a main and foresail. Overall, the boat would be about eleven meters in length and close to two and one half meters at the beam.

We also know that Brendan’s crew numbered at least fourteen according to the *Navigatio*, while Columbanus’ and his crew numbered twelve. This seems to have been a favored ideal number commemorating Christ’s twelve apostles. Among the crew were Gall and his older brother “Deicolus (Dicuill), afterwards founder of Lure who is stated in his Life (Bollandus) (Jean Bolland, Jesuit Scholar) *Acta Sanctorum* (Acts of the Saints), SS January 18) and also in the *Necrologium Sangallenese* to have been the uterine brother of Gall). Twelve men could be accommodated in a curragh the size described in the preceding paragraph.<sup>8</sup> The crew would have had to include a helmsman (to handle the rudder steering the boat), a navigator (to plot the course the boat would follow), riggers (to handle the sails), at least eight oarsmen (to handle the oars as required) and a captain (a leader to give orders). Gallus, according to his experiences, was familiar with being on the open waters as a fisherman and likely could have filled the roles of a helmsman,

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<sup>7</sup> *Latin Navigatio*, an English synopsis based on MS. Alencon, Chapter 4, Construction of the Boat, <http://www.curragh.sakurs.ne.jp/eng/navigation-eng.html> (accessed November 11, 2013).

<sup>8</sup> Figure 1, Copy of a curragh from Tim Severin’s, *The Brendan Voyage*, Modern Library, 2000. Image shown is a copy of the curragh built by Tim Severin using detailed information from the *Navigatio Brendani* (St. Brendan’s Voyage)

navigator or both. Given Columbanus' strong leadership qualities, he would have been the leader giving orders.

We can envision the missionary crew of monks gathering at their boat drawn up on the shore at Bangor loading their supplies for the voyage ahead. There were extra hides for repairing the boats, grease or fat for waterproofing replacement hides, extra oars, wood for internal repairs, small cauldrons for cooking, and simple wooden altars for Mass. They took few personal items such as psalters, a flask for drinking water, and implements for eating. Food for the journey would have been very plain, easily preserved items such as nuts, cheese, fish or meat preserved by pickling, salt curing or smoking.

Bread was a most important component of the diet during the medieval era. What type of bread could be preserved for storage on such a journey? The kind and quality of the leavened bread we are familiar with today is not to be confused with what was largely available during the Middle Ages. At that time, the custom of leavening the dough by the addition of ferment was not universally adopted. For this reason, the dough without leaven could only produce heavy and indigestible bread made very thin. These loaves served as plates for cutting up the other food and when they became saturated with sauce and gravy they were eaten as cakes, called trenchers.<sup>9</sup>

Finally, the time had come for the intrepid voyagers to launch their curragh into the waters of the Irish Sea at Bangor. Prayers having been said, one of which was surely

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<sup>9</sup> Melitta Weiss Adamson, *Food in Medieval Times*, (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, Inc., 2004), 157-158.

prayed aloud as they left their familiar homeland, friends and family is found in the Antiphonary of Bangor. Following are the opening lines taken from the *Antiphonary of Bangor*:

The Rule of Bangor is good, correct and divine,  
 Holy, constant, and exalted, just and admirable.  
 It is a ship dashed by the waves, but never overturned;  
 A bride prepared to celebrate her nuptials with the King.  
 A house full of delights and solidly builded on a rock...  
 A strong city, builded on a mountain, glorious to look upon...  
 A safe retreat, where the Saviour shelters His Father's flock.<sup>10</sup>

It is clear that the monks associated with Columbanus had adopted an arduous life of self-denial and asceticism over service to the needs of families and homeland for what was considered a more worthy cause. Many left their native lands for what they believed to be a great unknown and possibly heroic adventure to a place they had little knowledge of and a people they did not know. In some instances, they literally walked over the bodies of those who would plead with them to remain and do the Lord's work in their homeland.

There was some criticism of their motives which was openly expressed by contemporaries such as Gildas of Rhys, a sixth-century ecclesiastic. In one of his letters written around 540 A.D. he wrote,

the arrogant contrivances of those who eat bread by the measure but boast about it beyond measure; they use water but at the same time drink the cup of hatred; they

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<sup>10</sup> Metlake, *Life and Writings*, 33 footnote 1.

keep their vigils long; criticizing others who sleep; those who drag ploughs and plunge spades into the ground in presumption and pride.<sup>11</sup>

This was obviously a criticism of the fierce asceticism of some monastic practices prevalent at the time.

It is known that The Rule of Columbanus was extremely rigid and ascetic. An example of the Rules limiting characteristics, is the following excerpt from “Rule 8.

Concerning the mortification of the Will” exemplifying the harshness:

The mortification of the monk is threefold: he must never think what he pleases, never speak what he pleases, never go where he pleases. No matter how distasteful the command imposed upon him may be, he shall always say to his superior, ‘Not as I will, but as thou wilt ‘Matt.26:39 after the example of our Saviour, who says elsewhere:’ I came down from heaven, not to do My will, but the will of Him that sent Me.<sup>12</sup>

The preceding was excerpted from the *Regula Monachorum* and is a minor example of the “Rule” which is divided into ten chapters.

There is a clear distinction between the Rule of Columbanus and The Rule of St. Benedict as regards their tone and asceticism. I have excerpted a portion of the Rule of Benedict, Chapter 5: Obedience as an example:

The first degree of humility is prompt obedience This is necessary for all who think of Christ above all else. These souls, because of the holy servitude to which they have sworn themselves, whether through fear of Hell or expectation of

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<sup>11</sup> A monk of Ruys and Caradoc of Llancarfan, *Two Lives of Gildas*, trans. Hugh Williams, (Cymmrodorion Record Series, 1899).

<sup>12</sup> Metlake, *Life and Writings*, 75-76.

eternity, hasten to obey any command of a superior as if it were a command of God.<sup>13</sup>

Might this have been part of the reason for St. Gall's separation from Columbanus when they parted company and Columbanus traveled on to Bobbio? The issue will be addressed later in this dissertation.

The details of voyage, the waters they sailed, and the approximate routes they followed are outlined below and followed with a rudimentary map I have prepared.

Leaving from their beloved Bangor in the north of Ireland, they headed south, likely using Belfast Lough, an intertidal gateway to the northern part of the Irish Sea. No doubt this must have been a moment of mixed emotions heading off into the unknown from the relative safety of their home monastery at Bangor and the care of their beloved abbot Comgall.

The intrepid voyagers raised their eyes to see the high rounded promontory on their portside (left side), known as the Mull of Galloway located at the tip of Scotland. Upon reaching open waters, the thirteen men must have realized their adventure had begun in earnest.

Next, they would see Portpatrick, a local village hanging on to the extreme south-westerly tip of Scotland. They must have been awed by the steep cliffs and turbulent surf pounding the rocks as they fought to keep their curragh on course.

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<sup>13</sup> Anthony C. Meisel, and M. L. del Mastro, trans., *The Rule of St. Benedict*, (Garden City, NY: Image Books, Doubleday & Company, 1975), 54-55.

Rowing throughout the early part of the day, the monks would soon gain sight of the Isle of Man, a large rugged island located between the coasts of England and Ireland in the Irish Sea. They may have seen the megaliths constructed by the early inhabitants of that place. Typically they would begin to chant their offices on this waning afternoon with the waters beginning to roughen as they headed away from the lee of the island.

Out of sight of land and alone on the open sea, continuing to chant their office, their thoughts must have wandered. As night begins to fall and the watch changed, they saw ahead the dim outline of the monastery on the isle of St. Cybi. A Welsh native of Cornwall named Cybi had studied in Ireland becoming the founder and abbot of the monastery of St. Cybi. He set an example by leading a group of priests making a pilgrimage to a nearby island and overcoming their fear of attack by pirates on the open sea. Calmly, he reminded them that if their faith was strong enough they had nothing to fear. Surely this was an example of the thinking that motivated Gall and his comrades to sail on.

Night falls and the watch changes as wind and waves wash over the bow of their sturdy craft on their approach to the treacherous waters of Bardsey Sound. The small island is better known even today as the Isle of the Currents. It was here that another monastery site was established by St. Cadfan. (530-590 A.D.).

By now the monks had traveled nearly five hundred kilometers and must have known that off to their starboard (right side of the boat) to the west, lay the southern part of Ireland and their beloved homes in Leinster. Most would never see their families

again, nor did they know what perils the route ahead would hold. Certainly their evening office prayer was chanted with deeper meaning: “Now I will lie down in peace and sleep; for thou alone, O Lord, makest me live unafraid” (Psalm 4:8).

Columbanus, Gall and the crew of monks were now approaching a critical part of their voyage as they passed Ramsey Island, lying one kilometer off the coast of St David’s peninsula jutting out into the Irish Sea. It must have been a spectacular sight to see the cliffs inhabited by multitudes of chattering sea birds soaring over the roiling waters.

Just beyond the two small islands of Skomer and Skokholm, they would begin to feel the full force of the Atlantic Ocean, as they approached the Bristol Channel, the major inlet on the island of England. It is fifty kilometers across at its widest point and bears the full force and fury of waves and tides. This would seem to be a significant challenge for the best of mariners. Possibly, Gall’s knowledge of the sea from exposure to similar waters and his experience as a fisherman were guiding standards through this difficult part of their journey.

There began in earnest, the perilous crossing at the mouth of the Bristol Channel where the full force of the Atlantic Ocean’s waves, swells and perilous tides would try the bodies and spirits of twelve men. One can imagine their backs and arms ached and strained to keep their small craft aright. Soon they would see the welcoming southwest coast of Cornwall and the peaceful waters of Watergate Bay with some smooth sandy beaches. Here they would bring their sturdy curragh ashore beyond reach of the tides and



carefully unload what remained of their dwindled supplies. Most important, this moment must have reinvigorated their minds and spirits in thankful prayer as they contemplated their future journey. Here on this sandy beach they would assess and repair damages to the hull and interior of their boat, replenish fresh water and other supplies before planning the continuance of their odyssey.



Figure 2. A self-drawn map of the approximate route taken by Columbanus, Gall and their ten fellow missionaries on the voyage to the European continent.

In Figure 2, I have constructed a rudimentary map showing the approximate route taken from Bangor located in the north of Ireland to the Atlantic coast of Cornwall. It is here in Cornwall, a long distance from Bangor that the question must arise as to why the route taken to Brittany might not have been to sail around Lands End at the tip of Cornwall and directly across the English Channel to the mainland of Brittany. What was in the minds of these rugged men? I believe it was possible that their dedication was to

bring Christianity to inhabitants they met during the journey. The destination may have been less important than the conversion of those people encountered along the way.

There were three possible routes the monks could have traveled to reach the southern coast of Cornwall:

They could have walked overland in Cornwall. Portaging the boat would require the twelve men to carry their curragh overland. This method would have been extremely difficult and arduous over unknown terrain. They would surely face unforgiving obstacles through streams, hills and rocky landscapes, making this method most unlikely.

The second possibility might have been simply to trek across the Cornwall peninsula engaging the inhabitants of Cornwall with the message of Christianity. It is known that “certain monastic traditions, accepted by the Celts, lead us to believe that those who had adopted wandering out of pure asceticism most frequently traveled on foot. This form of mortification was in fact largely practiced; it was even compulsory for certain monks.”<sup>14</sup> I deem it most likely the preceding description is how the band of twelve monks would have reached the southern coast of Cornwall.

The third possibility would be sailing their curragh around the tip of Cornwall at Lands’ End to the English Channel. This voyage would have been fraught with the difficulty of unknown currents and winds of the open Atlantic Ocean. Their exposure to the open Atlantic would be a major test of their survival skills, dependent on the time of

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<sup>14</sup> Dom Louis Gougaud, O.S.B., *Gaelic Pioneers of Christianity, The Work and Influence of Irish Monks and Saints in Continental Europe*, (Dublin, Ireland: M. H. Gill and Son, LTD., 1923), 72.

year the group sailed. In addition, some accurate knowledge as to their destination on the continent of Europe would certainly be necessary.

Considering the ardent desire of this band of monks to proselytize those inhabitants whom they would encounter, I think it more likely they would have taken the overland route, because they were eager to meet as many inhabitants as possible to spread the words of Christ. In addition, there is some evidence existent to this day appearing on stone markers attesting to the presence of Columbanus. Upon reaching the southern coast of Cornwall and having a destination in mind for their trip to the continent, the band of missionaries could have used another small vessel or engaged a commercial sailing vessel to take them to Brittany.

Believing their destination to be close to the area of St. Malo on the coast of Brittany, they would need to acquire a seaworthy vessel to sail across the English Channel, again loading their sparse personal belongings and enough supplies to temporarily maintain them in a land in which they were not familiar. Sailing across a swiftly moving channel in unpredictable weather would certainly be a demanding trip. The distance for this leg of their voyage would be close to three hundred kilometers. Dependent on time, tide, and weather, their voyage to the mainland of Europe would require approximately two or three days, beginning a new adventure.

A sailing across the English Channel in any weather could be daunting and this trip would be no exception. The tides, the wind and rough seas become a major consideration and no doubt many of the crew, no matter how rugged, would be overcome

by sea sickness and disorientation. The thought has occurred to me that we tend to visualize these events in twenty-first century terms, making it more important to situate ourselves in a seventh-century mental mode.

Obviously, these twelve men had to do without any present day or even rudimentary equipment such as electronic navigation gear. They must have relied solely on equipment available, such as elementary compasses and sextants. If the nights were clear they may well have reckoned their route by the stars. By the same reasoning, I believe these men to have been of a different physique and imbued with a different mental attitude. Walking everywhere without benefit of using animals or carts, climbing over hills and mountains and carrying their worldly belongings enhanced rugged physiques and strong arms, legs and backs. Indeed, physical descriptions of the itinerant monks seemed to support the view of men with fearsome visages:

They wore coarse outer garments, in color as it came from the fleece, and under this a white tunic of finer stuff. They were tonsured from ear to ear across the front of the head, while the long hair flowed down on the back: and the eyelids were painted or stained black. Each had a long cambutta, or curved-headed staff: and slung from the shoulder a leathern water-bottle, a wallet for food, and a satchel which contained his greatest treasure—a book or two and some relics.<sup>15</sup>

Certainly this fearsome looking crew, in their small craft, was not immune to tossing about by the infamous winds and currents of the English Channel facing the open sea. Again they would be ravaged by bouts of sea sickness and doubts about survival as

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<sup>15</sup> Metlake, *Life and Writings*, 37.

the coast of Cornwall disappeared behind them and the dim outline of the coast of Brittany appeared before them.

## CHAPTER 4

### GALL'S INTRODUCTION TO THE EUROPEAN CONTINENT

What would this new land and its inhabitants be like? Though it is known that Christianity had been introduced and for a time flourished in the Frankish Kingdom, many Christians had lapsed and returned to some form of pagan practice. This certainly may not have been a comforting history to a band of twelve zealous monks. The lingering question in their minds must have been how they would be received in a land where Christianity had flourished for a time. It was, however, exactly the Irish ascetic ideal of making themselves pilgrims for Christ that they sought to bring the words of the gospel to those inhabitants in the Frankish Kingdom.

Finally in sight of land, a land they did not know, currents and tides with which they were not familiar, they undoubtedly sought a location for gently landing their craft. Good fortune would guide them to a sandy inlet where they would beach their boat in an area close to St. Malo (France). It was here they would unload their meager earthly belongings and prepare for the trek ahead through the unknown field and forest wilderness. To this day, there exists a granite cross bearing the name Columbanus located at the place of their landing and a village nearby bears his name.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "Columbanus Today: Places of his ministry,"  
<http://www.monasticireland.com/storiesofsaints/columbanus.htm> (accessed 09 Apr 2014).

To their dismay, the band of monks found that though the Catholic faith did exist among the inhabitants, constant wars and political rivalries had diminished Christian virtue. In addition, ecclesiastical discipline and lack of Episcopal leadership was non-existent. “The same vices were evident among the clergy as amongst the laity: excessive love of earthly goods, immorality, violation of oaths, and rebellion against the temporal and spiritual authorities.”<sup>2</sup>

To better understand the Franks and Allemani populations among whom the band of monks would be proselytizing it is important to know something of the milieu from which the Franks and Allemani came. “The earliest accounts of the Franks reveal a decentralized gentile entity who functioned as a generic, Roman, ethnographic category for opponents along the mid and lower Rhine.”<sup>3</sup> “Like the Franks the Allemani also appear to have been an amalgamation of groups reflecting an ethnic hybrid composition. The neutral, pan-Germanic character of the Allemani probably offered a collective term around which a diversity of groups could unite.”<sup>4</sup>

Over the first years of their odyssey, they would travel across the country preaching the Gospel to the inhabitants in a Frankish kingdom. One can imagine the impression their fearsome visages as previously described might well have frightened

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2 Metlake, *Life and Writings*, 55.

3 Ian Wood, ed., *Franks and Allemanni in the Merovingian Period: An Ethnographic Perspective*, (Rochester, NY: Boydell & Brewer Ltd., 1998), 11.

4 Ibid.

those they encountered. However, their humility and charity to all left a deep impression on those they met. The band of monks persevered throughout several years, traveling, preaching and doing many good works throughout the Burgundy countryside. Word of their good works where Catholicism had existed were received by Gontran, King of Burgundy, (St. Gontran, King and Confessor, 561-593) and grandson of Clovis I. After having been involved in barbarous actions against his brothers and the Lombards, he repented his part and became a protector of the oppressed.<sup>5</sup> Undoubtedly, the message preached by the band of monks had some influence.

Gall was one of twelve disciples who, according to most histories, accompanied Columbanus to Gaul in 585 A.D., where Columbanus established the Abbey of Luxeuil on the ruins of a Gallo-Roman castle. That Gall might well have joined Columbanus at Luxeuil in Burgundy from among the Alemannic speaking peoples lends another fascinating question to his history. According to Werner Vogler, in his historical sketch of the abbey of St. Gall, “To be sure, today Ireland as Gall’s point of origin is questioned by some.”<sup>6</sup> According to Professor Dr. Max Schar, who authored the book *Gallus, The*

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<sup>5</sup> Alban Butler, *Lives of the Saints*, eds. Benziger Brothers [1894], <https://www.at-sacred-texts.com/chr/lots/lots103.htm> (accessed March 2014)

<sup>6</sup> James C. King, ed., and Werner Vogler, trans., *The Culture of the Abbey of St. Gall*, (English version of the German original, *Die Kulture der Abtei Sankt Galen*, Paperback edition by Stiftsarchiv, St. Gall, CH-9001 St. Gall, 1990), 9.



*Saint in His Time*, thinks that Gall may have come from Alsace was Allemanic and may have had one Irish parent. He is joined in his thinking by Dr. Gerold Hilty.<sup>7</sup>

The rule under which Gall and his confreres lived had been, for the most part, adopted by Columbanus from those observed by the great Irish monasteries which, by Benedictine standards, were very strict. By all accounts, Columbanus appeared to have great powers of physical endurance, intellectual and moral strength. He also had the impetuosity of an ardent Irish temperament that was to play an important part in the future of Gall. An apparent truth is that Columbanus seemed to lack the same consideration as exhibited in the *Rule of St. Benedict*. His rule did not legislate concern for the abbot's election, relations with his monks, or the appointment of monastic officials with powers of delegation. This may have been linked to the reason for his eventual exile in 610 A.D. by King Thierry and his grandmother, Queen Brunehaut. This account varies from other accounts that I have read as to who really sent Columbanus into exile.

Gall, among a group of twelve, followed Columbanus into exile to the country now called Switzerland. Among his peers, he was the most fluent in French and German, and became a preacher around the region of Chur and Zurich. According to *The Life of St. Gall* written by Walahfrid Strabo, "Columbanus lay on Gall the duty of preaching to the people and calling them back from the errors of idolatry to the worship of God; for Gall

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<sup>7</sup> Gerold Hilty, *Gallus and the History of Northeast Switzerland*, (St. Gallen, Switzerland: VGS publishing community, 2001).

had received this favour from the Lord, that he had no small knowledge of the native idiom as well as of Latin.”<sup>8</sup>

At this point we may speculate how he became so fluent in the Allemannic language since he preached against the worship of false gods, particularly the pagan Wotan (derived from Odin, the chief god of Norse mythology) to whom offerings were made, and at one point threw their gilded idols into the Lake of Zurich. This so enraged the local tribes that Columbanus and his band of monks were physically assaulted and



Figure 3. Killing of two monks St. Gallen,  
Stiftsbibliothek, Cod. Sang. 602, p.37,  
Vitae of German Saints (<http://www.e-codices.unifr.ch/en/list/one/csg/602>)

driven from the region. At this point, they returned to the area of Bregenz on Lake Constance, referred to as the “Bodensee” by the Swiss people today. Even at Bregenz, the

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<sup>8</sup> Joynt, *Life of St. Gall*, 71.

inhabitants were angry at the forcible destruction of their idols and two of the monks were murdered as depicted in Plate 3 taken from the Stiftsbibliothek codices located in St. Gallen, Switzerland.

The group suffered from lack of food, or any support from the surrounding communities, and had to subsist on what Gall netted from the lake and found in the forest.

At some point it would seem that Gall, because of his experience and apparent knowledge of the Vosges wilderness areas would develop differences with Columbanus as how to manage and use the natural resources available. The group would have to rely on someone among them to replenish and maintain food, resources such as fish, wild animals, and edible vegetation. In addition, some understanding of raw materials available for building or rebuilding existing structures for habitation and worship would be necessary. The question then would be who among the group seemed best suited for that role.

There are several accounts of just how, in 612 A.D., Gall decided not to follow his magister on his mission to Italy. The most frequently told account was that Gall, taken ill with a high fever, could not continue the mission. Columbanus reacted by imposing a harsh punishment on him for breaking the important rule of obedience to his senior. Columbanus most likely perceived his illness as an excuse betraying weakness, and reacted by placing an interdict on Gallus, forbidding him to celebrate Mass until after his death. Accordingly, Gall faithfully obeyed his leader and did not celebrate Mass until

released from the interdict after Columbanus' death. This seems to have been a harsh, even undeserved reaction to a monk who had served Columbanus so devotedly. Given the prior description of Columbanus having an "ardent Irish temperament" and a rather rigid personality, it is not surprising that he might have reacted to Gall in this manner. Had this event not occurred, St. Gall would not have made a significant impact on that region of Switzerland.

Gall apparently had a strong desire to remain as a missionary among the people of the region who were called the Allemani, because of the spiritual gifts he may have acquired while at Bangor. Those gifts were necessary both linguistically, as an interpreter and skillful "fisher of men," in the group of Bangor missionaries. He certainly did not exhibit any weakness in his personality by remaining among an alien people under harsh physical circumstances.

There are differences in the tenor and intent of Monks Rule 1, of Columbanus and Chapter 5: Rule of Benedict regarding Obedience. The differences signify why Rule 1, of Columbanus appears far more austere and demanding.

#### Rule 1, Monks Rule of Columbanus<sup>9</sup>

##### Concerning Obedience

At the first word of a senior, all on hearing should rise to obey, since their obedience is shown to God, as our Lord Jesus Christ says: *He who hears you hears Me*. Therefore if anyone hearing the word does not rise at once, he is to be judged disobedient. But he who answers back incurs the charge of insubordination, and thus is not only *guilty of disobedience, but also, by opening*

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<sup>9</sup> Columbanus Hibernus, *Monks Rules*, Corpus of Electronic Texts Edition, <http://www.ucc.ie/celt/published/T201052/> (December 16, 2013).

*the way of answering back* for others, is to be regarded as the destroyer of many. Yet if any murmurs, he too, as though not obeying heartily, must be considered disobedient. Therefore *let his work be rejected*, until his goodwill be made known. [Emphasis mine]

But up to what measure is obedience laid down? *Up to death* it is assuredly enjoined, since Christ obeyed the Father up to death for us. And this He suggests to us saying through the Apostle: “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, Who though He was in the form of God, thought it no prize to snatch at to be equal with God; but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, and being found in fashion as a man, humbled Himself, being made obedient to the Father up to death, even the death of the cross.” (Philippians 3:15) Thus nothing must be refused in their obedience by Christ’s true disciples, however hard and difficult it be, but it must be seized with zeal, with gladness, since if obedience is not of this nature, it will not be pleasing to the Lord Who says: “And he who does not take his cross and follow Me, is not worthy of Me.” (Matthew 10:38) And thus He says of the worthy disciple, how that “Where I am, there is My servant also with Me.” (John 12:26)

#### Chapter 5: Rule of St. Benedict Obedience

The first degree of humility is obedience without delay.

This is the virtue of those who hold nothing dearer to them than Christ; who, because of the holy service they have professed, and the fear of hell, and the glory of life everlasting, as soon as anything has been ordered by the Superior, receive it as a divine command and cannot suffer any delay in executing it.

Of these the Lord says, ‘As soon as he heard, he obeyed Me’ (Ps. 118:104). And again to teachers He says, ‘He who hears you, hears Me’ (Luke 10:16). Such as these, therefore, immediately leaving their own affairs and forsaking their own will, dropping the work they were engaged in and leaving it unfinished, with the ready step of obedience follow up with their deeds the voice of him who commands. And so as it were at the same moment the master’s

command is given and the disciple's work is completed, the two things being speedily accomplished together in the swiftness of the fear of God by those who are moved with the desire of attaining life everlasting. That desire is their motive for choosing the narrow way, of which the Lord says, 'Narrow is the way that leads to life' (Matt. 7:14), so that, not living according to their own choice, nor obeying their own desires and pleasures, but walking by another's judgment and command, they dwell in monasteries and desire to have an Abbot over them. Assuredly such as these are living up to that maxim of the Lord in which He says, 'I have come not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me' (John 6:38). But this very obedience will be acceptable to God and pleasing to all only if what is commanded is done without hesitation, delay, luke warmness, grumbling, or objection. For the obedience given to superiors is given to God, since He Himself has said, 'He who hears you, hears Me' (Luke 10:16). And the disciples should offer their obedience with a good will, for 'God loves a cheerful giver' (2 Cor. 9:7). For if the disciple obeys with an ill will and murmurs, not necessarily with his lips but simply in his heart, then even though he fulfill the command yet his work will not be acceptable to God, who sees that his heart is murmuring. And, far from gaining a reward for such work as this he will incur the punishment due to murmurers, unless he amend and make satisfaction.<sup>10</sup>

Related to Obedience are harsh judgmental phrases: "does not rise at once, he is to be judged disobedient, incurs the charge of insubordination, by opening the way of answering back for others, is to be regarded as the destroyer of many, let his work be rejected."<sup>11</sup>

Comparing the preceding to the rule of Benedict relating to Obedience, note use of phrases based on reason:

The first degree of humility is obedience without delay, this is the virtue of those who hold nothing dearer to them than Christ, because of the holy service they have professed and the fear of hell and the glory of life everlasting, as soon as anything has been ordered by the Superior, receive it as a divine command.<sup>12</sup>

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10 Meisel and delMastro, *Rule of St. Benedict*, 54-55.

11 Ibid.

12 Ibid.

Gall was obedient to the rule of Columbanus throughout their labors together in the Frankish Kingdom and even unto his death. He may well have developed an underlying antagonism which increased his desire to minister to the Allemanic people on his own terms and in their idiom rather than be restricted to the seemingly intolerant dictums of Columbanus. Certainly though, there must have been in the minds of these dedicated men an earnest desire to leave all possessions and personal ties behind and dedicate themselves to one goal; the spreading of the gospel and the conversion of the Franks and the Allemani from their lost ways.

Apparently, Columbanus was endowed with contentious characteristics that certainly did not always enhance his relationships with the ruling class with whom he met, nor with all among his band of monks. The following quote from *The Life of St. Columban* clearly demonstrates that flaw in his personality.

His (Columbanus) conduct is perhaps best explained by his character, made up as it was of apparently irreconcilable elements. Gentleness was paired with inflexibility; love of peace and solitude with keen delight in argument and controversy. He was profoundly humble, but impatient of contradiction when he believed was in the right. He was most respectfully attached to the papal authority, but ready to beard the person in whom it was vested, if he thought the interests of the Church demanded it. He left home and kindred to win souls for Christ, but his patriotism was so deeply rooted and so exclusive that he could not make the lighter sacrifice of giving up the customs of his native land when it would to the advantage of his mission to do so.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Metlake, *Life and Writings*, 142.

It is possible that some of the characteristics ascribed to Columbanus in the preceding paragraph may have continued to cause Gall some pause over his continuing a mission to the Allemanic people among whom he had been directed to preach.

Initially it was thought Columbanus and his band of missionaries were welcomed into the Frankish kingdom in 592 A.D., during the reign of King Sigibert. This information was recorded by the Monk Jonas of Bobbio in northern Italy, author of *The Life of St. Columban*, during the seventh century. However, further research reveals that Sigibert died in 576 A.D. and could not have been welcomed by Columbanus and his group of monks. In point of fact, it was King Guntram who reigned at the time Columbanus and Gall arrived in 592 A.D.<sup>14</sup>

The band of monks were welcomed and requested by the king to settle in Gaul and not leave to go to other nations. In return Guntram promised to provide all that they (Columbanus and his band of monks) would require. However, Columbanus advised the king that he could not “cleave to external riches, lest haply we be found transgressors of the divine behest.” The king then Finally, I wish to honor our deceased Swiss cousin, Sylvia Heiniger Hof, for her interest and the supportive materials she supplied throughout my work. them:

If thou desire to take up thy cross and follow Christ, seek the tranquility of some wide wilderness; only leave not the land beneath my rule to go to the neighboring

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<sup>14</sup> Wood, *Franks and Alemanni*, 365.



peoples; thus thou canst both heap up reward for thyself and provide for our salvation.”<sup>15</sup>

Columbanus reconsidered the offer made by King Guntram and with his group traveled on foot to a site in the uninhabited wilderness called Vosegus, thought to be located in the Vosges Mountains. It is believed that over a period of many years (possibly twenty years) sites were established and built at Annegray, Luxeuil and Fontaines. Columbanus chose a place at Luxeuil where there were the ruins of a prior settlement adjacent to hot springs, having been at one time enclosed by walls. Here they built a small church.<sup>16</sup>

I would suggest at this juncture that Gall’s possible knowledge of building and structures was an invaluable asset to his magister, Columbanus in planning, renovating and erecting the monks’ living spaces and churches.

Traveling and settling in rugged and forested land inhabited by wild animals, such as bears and wolves, would require some knowledge of the forest including skills in hunting and fishing to maintain the group’s needs. Throughout the history written about Gall and Columbanus, Gall is frequently called upon by his leader to fulfill those needs, which required expertise and at minimum a previous experience with those skills. These attributes would become more critical for Gall and lend to the suggestion that he was

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<sup>15</sup> Joynt, *Life of St. Gall*, 65.

<sup>16</sup> Joynt, *Life of St. Gall*, 65.

very familiar with geography of the Vosges Mountains and may have originally come from the area.

Of considerable interest connected to St. Gall is an ancient

Latin-German vocabulary preserved in a parchment manuscript of the Stiftsbibliothek in St. Gallen, Switzerland. Tradition assigns the authorship to St. Gall. It contains a very complete list of words relating to building, agriculture, navigation, traveling, the human body, the seasons, the weather, the ordinary astronomical phenomena, and the flora and fauna of the country.<sup>17</sup>

What is extraordinary, Columbanus never seemed to have acquired sufficient knowledge of Merovingian German to preach to the Allemanni. Gall was perfectly versed both in the Frankish and Allemanian dialect.<sup>18</sup> The preceding quotes from *The Life of St. Columban* seem to further support the view that Gall may have been from the area of the Vosges and may have been sent by one or both parents to study in Ireland.

During their labors of building the settlements and small churches throughout the whole Frankish kingdom Columbanus and his followers became known for their wisdom and holiness. As a result of their example, they attracted followers throughout the entire kingdom. Many would eventually become members of their congregations as well as workers and monks. Their fame had spread throughout the whole of Gaul and the provinces of Germany.

There was, however, a hiatus in the work of Columbanus and his confreres, caused by Brunhilde. She reigned in lieu of her two illegitimate grandsons Theodebert II

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<sup>17</sup> Metlake, *Life and Writings*, 65.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

and Theoderic II. Both grandsons were minors being approximately ten and twelve years of age and incapable of fulfilling the tasks of governing. She was an immoral and crafty woman who did everything she could to govern in their stead. She imposed upon Columbanus at one point to bless them making the two seem legitimate in the eyes of her subjects. Columbanus's quick Irish temper was aroused, and he passionately replied to her, "Know this, that these boys shall never hold kingly scepter, for they are the offspring of incontinence and crime."<sup>19</sup> As a result of this confrontation, Brunhilde (also known as Brunhildie, a regent dowager queen) aroused local bishops regarding the date of Easter controversy between Columbanus and themselves. Finally, in the year 609 or 610 A.D. King Theoderic II, at his grandmother's bidding, banished Columbanus, Gall and their companions. They were ordered to leave the continent, return to Nantes and thence sail back to Ireland.

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<sup>19</sup> Metlake, *Life and Writings*, 144-147,

## CHAPTER 5

### THE ARRIVAL OF MISSIONARIES IN SWITZERLAND

After extended wanderings and confrontations on the way back to Nantes, Columbanus, and his band of loyal companions finally went aboard a merchant vessel which, due to a heavy storm, became beached. The captain of the vessel thought the monks had imposed a curse on him and ordered them off the vessel. It was here that Columbanus recognized an opportunity to escape the clutches of Brunhilde, who in the year 612 A.D. would instigate Theodoric II to murder his brother, Theodebert II.

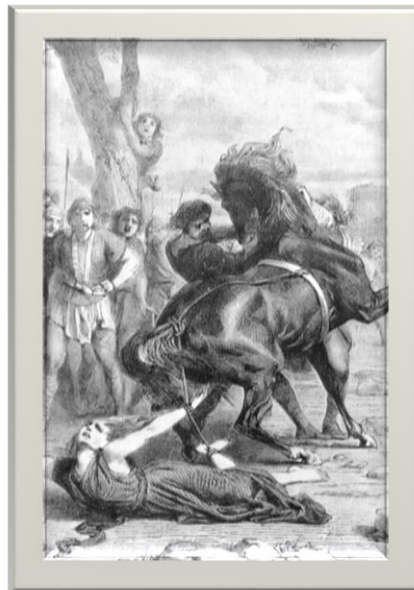


Figure 4. The Execution of Brunhilde  
<http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/4/4b/Brunhilde.jpg/300...Image>

Finally, in the autumn of 613 A.D. King Clotaire II led a rebellion against Brunhilde (Figure 4 ) capturing, torturing and murdering the eighty year-old queen, by having her dragged to death by a horse.<sup>1</sup>

Having been expelled from the Burgundy area as a result of Brunhilde's vengeful machinations, Columbanus and company evaded their near expulsion from the continent by entering the kingdom of Austrasia which, at the time, was ruled by Theodebert II. At the court of the king, they were welcomed to Metz, the then capital of Austrasia. Here, they had the good fortune to meet many of their confreres with whom they had worked to build the settlement at Luxeuil. The king was most solicitous to Columbanus and desired that he remain in his kingdom.<sup>2</sup> At this point, he asked the king if he might grant him safe conduct through Allemania to Italy.

To encourage them to stay with him, the king reminded Columbanus that there were large numbers of pagans yet to be converted on the other side of the Rhine and even offered him fiscal grants for many lands within the confines of his Austrasian dominion. Columbanus did not eagerly agree with the king by committing to any permanent arrangement and answered the king with these cryptic words: "I will tarry in your

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<sup>1</sup> George Rainsford, James Perry, and C. Walter, *The History of the Franks From Their Origin to the Death of Charlemagne*, 37-39, <http://www.cristoraul.com/MY-PDFs/Charlemagne-and-the-Franks.pdf> (January 5, 2014).

<sup>2</sup> Metlake, *Life and Writings*, 171.

kingdom for a time, and will make an attempt to spread the seed of Christian faith in the hearts of the people.”<sup>3</sup>

It must have been apparent that Columbanus was determined to travel to Italy in the future. Gall surely must have sensed that he might be imposed upon to remain with his magister for the pilgrimage to Italy. This situation seems likely to have set the stage for a future confrontation between Gall and Columbanus.

The missionaries chose a location that appeared well suited for building a settlement. It was located in the territory of Allemania close to the Limmat River, a tributary of the Rhine, flowing through the lake of Zurich. They came to a place called Tuggen on Lake Zurich located in the country now called Switzerland.

When the group of monks had settled among them, Columbanus chose Gall to teach the inhabitants about the Trinity and keeping the true faith. No matter how beautiful the location, Columbanus and his compatriots, including Gall, found the inhabitants to be cruel and irreligious. They were given to image worship and making sacrifices in honor of idols. Consumed with his missionary zeal, Gall set fire to the temples in which the inhabitants worshipped and threw all their offerings into Lake Zurich. Gall's actions so infuriated the inhabitants that they devised a plan to kill Gall and banish Columbanus from their midst.<sup>4</sup>

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3 Metlake, *Life and Writings*, 171.

4 Joynt, *Life of St. Gall*, 68.

What is surprising from a more temperate perspective, Columbanus was so angered by their plot to kill Gall, he pronounced a curse on the inhabitants. The curse included, “May their children fall easy prey to death and be driven to sudden frenzy ere they grow old; and may they themselves and the land they inhabit be oppressed by the power of tyrant.”<sup>5</sup> Columbanus was stirred according to what was termed his “righteous indignation” to pronounce a curse on those he had come to serve. The incident cited provides an example of what seemed to be his sudden irritability with those who were audacious enough to cross him. We will see later, how his temperament was directed not only to some of the Suevi<sup>6</sup> inhabitants of Allemania, but to some of those among his own group including Gall.

At this juncture, further research has revealed additional information concerning the possibility that Gall was not, as has been assumed, of Irish lineage. According to an article written by Dagmar O Riain-Raedel in 2004 and published in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, it is suggested that Gall could have been an inhabitant of the area.

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<sup>5</sup> Joynt, *Life of St. Gall*, 67-68.

<sup>6</sup> P. L. Kessler, Kingdoms of the Germanic Tribes – Suevi, 2002, <http://www.historyfiles.co.uk/KingsListsEurope/Germany/Swabi.htm#dukes of Swabia>. The Suevi (Suebi) were a confederation of Germanic peoples who came into existence by the first century A.D., and perhaps earlier. The core tribe had migrated from the southern Baltic coast in concert with many other Germanic tribes.



Figure 5. St. Gall engaged in fishing on the Steinach St. Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek, Cod. Sang. 602, p.42-Vitae of German Saints. (<http://www.e-codices.unifr.ch/en/list/one/csg/602>)

The only contemporary source for Gall information is Jonas of Bobbio's *Life of Columbanus*, written c.643. The preceding source at least proves his existence, but adds nothing to Gall's biography. It mentions him only once, and then not in the context of Columbanus's sojourn on the shores of Lake Constance. In an anecdote which he claims Gall had told him personally, Jonas relates how, during their early years at Luxeuil, Columbanus had rebuked Gall for fishing in a river different from the one he had recommended, as depicted in the preceding picture shown in Figure 5.

An early tenth-century St. Gallen codex incorporating Jonas's *Life of Columbanus* and that of Gall by Wettinus (St. Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek, MS 553) also contains genealogies of Brigit, Patrick, and Gall, attributed by the scribe to certain 'venerable Irishmen.' According to the preceding tenth century codex, Unuchun, an Irish king, was



succeeded by his son Kethernach, father of Gall. The latter's native name is given as Callech, in Latin Gallus. Brigit's genealogy states that she was of the same royal lineage as Gall.

On the basis of this evidence, it is not clear whether the Gall mentioned in the *Life of Columbanus* is identical to the founder of the hermitage near the River Steinach. Although the Irish descent of the monastic founder had never been previously doubted, the most modern commentators have suggested that he may not have been a follower of Columbanus, and that he may not have been Irish, but may have been a native of the region in which he founded his church. These suggestions have arisen to account for various difficulties with the sources. Gall receives no mention in the Irish annals, and *The Life of Columbanus* is silent concerning the sojourn of the saint's disciple Gall in Switzerland. Added to the preceding, there is confusion as to the proper form of his name; the generally used form Gall (Gallus in Latin) does not appear in an authenticated document of his church before 771 A.D.. Earlier charters and privileges refer to the establishment as *monasterium Sancti Galloni*, and even earlier ones as *ecclesia Sancti Caliani* or *Giliani*. This, together with the testimony of the genealogy, suggests that the accredited founder of St. Gallen may first have been known under some form of the Irish name Cellach, or Cellianus, which became transformed from Callech, or Gallech, to Gall.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Dagmar O Riain-Raedel, Gall (fl.615), *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2004), (<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/>) (accessed 13 Nov 2013).

Given the information concerning Gall in the article presented in the preceding paragraphs illustrates the changing view of him from a new perspective. That Gall may not have been a native Irishman casts some doubt on a relationship attributed to him by Strabo, the author of *The Life of St. Gall* contained in the book written by Maud Joynt. A quote from page 71 mentions that “Columbanus laid on Gall the duty of preaching to the people and calling them back from the errors of idolatry to the worship of God: for Gall had received this favor from the Lord, that he had no small knowledge of the native idiom.”<sup>8</sup>

In a prior footnote note on page 61 of the same book, author Walahfrid following classical usage, uses the term “barbari” to denote any people unacquainted with Latin and speaking a vernacular dialect.<sup>9</sup> It appears that not only could Gall converse in the Latin language with others among the group he was with, but was also conversant in the vernacular dialect. How did he become conversant in that dialect unless he either had extensive exposure to, or lived among, the people native to the area? In either situation, I would speculate that he had been either a native of Gaul and at some point traveled to Bangor in Ireland to be educated, or he was educated by other Irish missionaries in Gaul and joined their group.

The likelihood seems greater that one or both of Gall’s parents sent him to Bangor to be educated under the tutelage of St. Comgall, the founder of that great Irish monastery

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<sup>8</sup> Joynt, *Life of St. Gall*, 71.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 61.

which is said to have ruled over 8,000 monks at Bangor and in houses founded from Bangor.<sup>10</sup> The large size of the monastery at Bangor leads me to believe its reputation was known not only in Ireland, but on the European continent as well. It was at Bangor that Gall came under the influence of Columbanus and may have traveled back to the continent with him.

Of even greater interest concerning Gall is information written in George Metlake's work, *The Life and Writings of St. Columban*. A parchment manuscript exists which assigns its authorship to St. Gall himself, containing "a very complete list of words relating to building, agriculture, navigation, traveling, the human body, the seasons, the weather, the ordinary astronomical phenomena, and the flora and fauna of the country."<sup>11</sup> In addition, in another dictionary also of the seventh century, we find another grouping of words: "...under the following heads: trees, timber, iron utensils, vegetables, farming, animals, the human body, church vestments, sacred vessels, and other liturgical articles."<sup>12</sup> If the preceding works are ascribed to Gall, his background certainly is one that was central and vital to the mission work in the Frankish kingdom and further enhances the possibility he was indeed a native of the area and well-versed in the

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<sup>10</sup> James MacCaffrey, *St. Comgall, Bishop and founder of Bangor Monastery*, Ambrose Mooney, 2011. <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/04152c.htm> (December 18, 2013).

<sup>11</sup> Metlake, *Life and Writings*, 65.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

Allemanic language as well as Latin and Irish Script. His skills were essential to the success of the mission headed by Columbanus.

Further, the following quote from Metlake's work again strengthens the probability that Gall was indeed a native Allemanian. "Columban himself, it seems, never acquired a sufficient knowledge of Merovingian German to be of any practical use to him for preaching; Gall, on the other hand, was perfectly versed both in the Frankish and Allemanian dialect."<sup>13</sup>

Considering Gall's apparent skills in linguistics and his obvious prominence in providing written glossaries of essential information regarding building, natural sciences of the body, and weather, it is difficult to see how Columbanus's mission could have been successful without him. Added to the foregoing observations, Gall's expertise in hunting and fishing in the wilderness kept his brethren and Columbanus successful at their mission.

It seems that Gall appears not to have been a gregarious, outgoing person and even appeared humble enough to obey his magister given examples of Columbanus's temperamental Irish outbursts. Gall's humility and obedience to the rule of Columbanus, were indeed, the qualities of a saint in the making.

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13 Metlake, *Life and Writings*, 65.

## CHAPTER 6

### MIRACLES ATTRIBUTED TO GALL

In this chapter some of the miracles attributed to Gall during his mission throughout the kingdom of the Franks are described in some detail, as well as several pictures contained in an early manuscript titled *Vitae of German Saints*. That manuscript, found in the Stiftsbibliothek in St. Gallen, Switzerland, consisting of 522 pages is written in the Allemanic, German language. It is a legendary of St. Gall, containing among other items the German lives of the St. Gallen Saints; Gallus (Gall), Magnus, Otmar and Wiborada. The book is also illustrated with 142 vivid images.<sup>1</sup>

Throughout the life of Gall and after his death, numerous miracles have been attributed to him and described in some detail. What of miracles? Here we come to a more difficult determination; I begin with the words of St. Thomas Aquinas written in his work, *The Summa Theologiae, Part I, Article 7* regarding miracles: “The word miracle is derived from admiration, which arises when an effect is manifest whereas its cause is hidden; as when a man sees an eclipse without knowing its cause... Now the cause of a manifest effect may be known to one, but unknown to others. Wherefore a thing is wonderful to one man, and not at all to others; so as an eclipse is to a rustic, but not to an astronomer. A miracle is so-called as being full of wonder; as having a cause absolutely

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1 Virtual Library of St. Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek, Cod, Sang. 602, Spine *Vitae of German saints*, B

hidden from all: and this cause is God. Wherefore those things God does outside those causes which we know are called miracles”<sup>2</sup> This does not mean that every unexplainable event that occurred during the life of Gall was a miracle.

After the death of Gall his merits continued to be gloriously manifested in signs and miracles. A number of those miracles are recounted by Joynt in *The Life of St. Gall*.



Figure 6. Curing of a paralyzed begger through Intercession of St. GallSt. Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek, Cod. Sang. 602, p.87-Vitae of German Saints (<http://www.e-codices.unifr.ch/en/list/one/csg/602>)

A man from another district had long been confined to bed having lost his sight and hearing. In addition, the soles of his feet were twisted back to his buttocks. He was reduced to such an extreme condition that only the movement of his chest showed he was breathing. He was carried to the Church of St. Gall in order to spend the night. At

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<sup>2</sup> St Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, (New York, NY: Benziger Brothers, 1948), 520.

cockcrow he was rapt by a sudden vision and saw four men dressed in garments of dazzling white enter the chapel. They proceeded to the altar chanting in harmony. When the prayers and chanting were ended, one of the men approached the pallet on which the sick man lay and said to him: “Wherefore dost thou spend the dread hours of darkness here alone? Only believe and thou shalt be henceforth safe from this malady. Rise then and go forth healed and free.” Immediately all his weaknesses vanished, and he returned to his friends healed.<sup>3</sup>

In Figure 6, copied from the St. Gallen Stiftsbibliothek,<sup>4</sup> apparently preceding the miracle described above. The picture portrays a monk giving the crippled man what appears to be a pair of trousers and new shoes having belonged to Gall. After donning the clothing, he was restored to full health. However, the picture indicates he has not yet been restored to a normal condition as he still uses the crutches and bows in obeisance to the monk as he was being healed. In the background the pallet on which he was confined and carried about by his friends is shown.

Another of the miracles attributed to Gall occurred during his lifetime as one day he bid his deacon to “take thy net and go to the pool, and I will follow thee as soon as I can. It may be the Lord will show us His accustomed bounty.”<sup>5</sup> The deacon went as

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<sup>3</sup> Joynt, *Life of St. Gall*, 127.

<sup>4</sup> Virtual Library at St. Gallen Stiftsbibliothek, Cod. Sang.602, 87, <http://www.e-codices.unifr.ch> (January 5, 2014).

<sup>5</sup> Joynt, *Life of St. Gall*, 80-81.

directed to the pool where he stood ready to cast his net into the water when standing on the opposite bank of the river were there appeared two “fiends” in the shape of two naked women, as depicted in Figure 7, looking as though they were going to take a bath and displaying their naked bodies openly.



Figure 7. St. Gall and his deacon encounter two women “fiends” St. Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek, Cod. Sang. 602, p.46-Vitae of German Saints (<http://www.e-codices.unifr.ch/en/list/one/csg/602>)

The two women began throwing stones, taunting him and saying, “Tis thou hast led yon man into the wilderness, one full of iniquity and malice, who hath ever failed us by his evil practices.”<sup>6</sup> The deacon returned to Gall telling him what he had seen and heard. Both men fell on their knees, and Gall prayed aloud, “hearken with favor unto my

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<sup>6</sup> Joynt, *Life of St. Gall*, 80-81.



prayer and bid these fiends quit this spot that it may be consecrated to Thy glory.”<sup>7</sup> Then, going to the pool they watched as the fiends turned and fled. Gall and the deacon let down their nets and caught all the fish they desired.

As they were removing the fish from the net, the voices of the two women were heard in the distance bewailing their fate and crying out, “Alas what shall we do? Whither shall we go? This stranger will not suffer us to dwell among men nor even abide in the wilderness.”<sup>8</sup>

It is interesting to note from the drawing that both of the nude women’s lower legs and feet are cloven shaped, indicating from time immemorial evil and uncleanness. Quoting from the Old Testament book of Leviticus 11:6-8, “...the pig, because it has a parted foot and a cloven hoof but does not chew the cud; you shall regard it as unclean. You shall not eat their flesh or even touch their dead bodies; you shall regard them as unclean.”<sup>9</sup>

This particular incident indicates the deacon and Gall were not immune from temptations of the flesh. Whether the women who appeared were real or a phantasm we cannot know. However, according to this particular incident the deacon and possibly Gall appeared to have resisted a moment of temptation which occurs to all humankind in one

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7 Joynt, *Life of St. Gall*, 80-81.

8 Ibid.

9 *New English Bible*, Leviticus 11:6-8.

form or another. That form may be evidenced by lusting after the flesh, power, money, food, or any other worldly enticement.

During Gall's lifetime another of the many miracles recorded in Maud Joynt's book, and found described and pictured in the *Vitae of German Saints* is the story of Fridiburga, the daughter of royalty. The beautiful young girl, daughter of the Duke Gunzo lay dying in her mother's lap having been seized with violent tremors when she spewed forth a foul stench from her lips like one already dead. The room reeked of vile fumes smelling like sulphur. After the unsuccessful invocation of two other bishops, the Duke called for the man of God, Gall, to come and cure his demonic child.



Figure 8. Gall interceding to cure Duke Gunzo's daughter St. Gallen. Stiftsbibliothek, Cod. Sang. 602, p.57- *Vitae of German Saints*. (<http://www.e-codices.unifr.ch/en/list/one/csg/602>)

Gall arrived and fell on his knees beseeching:

O Lord Jesus Christ, who for the salvation of all people didst condescend to take on Thee our flesh and be born of a virgin. For the glory of Thy name bid the

unclean spirit depart from this maid. That she, the work of Thy hand may be delivered from the proud foe who hath taken possession of her.<sup>10</sup>

Arising from prayer, he took the girl's hand, raised her and said, "In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, O unclean spirit, I bid thee come forth and leave this creature of God."<sup>11</sup>

The Duke's only young daughter opened her eyes and the evil spirit departed. From the girl's mouth a hideous black bird was expelled as shown in Figure 8. Duke Gunzo responded to Gall's care for his daughter with expensive gifts given the Duke by the king. When Gall and his disciples returned with the costly gifts, he proceeded to distribute them to the poor. One of his followers withheld a costly silver vessel which he suggested be held back for use during divine worship; however, Gall would have no part in it, relating from scripture words spoken by the apostle Peter, "Silver and gold have I none" (Acts 3:6).

It is clear that Columbanus, on leaving for Bobbio, was angered at Gall for staying behind and censured him severely by forbidding Gall to celebrate mass until he (Columbanus) died. This effectively would also deny Gall any elevation to the role of a bishop.

At this point the Duke offered Gall the high rank of bishop. Gall replied to him thus; "As long as my lord and father Columbanus lives, the ministry of the altar is forbidden to me, nor will I usurp it without his leave.... But it be the very truth thy will

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<sup>10</sup> Joynt, *Life of St. Gall*, 88-89.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

wait awhile till I send a letter to my abbot to tell him of thy wish, and if I have his permission, then I will undertake the charge offered me.”<sup>12</sup> At this juncture, Gall recommended his deacon Johannes for the post of Bishop.

Despite the disagreement and obvious friction existing between Gall and Columbanus, Gall, by declining the recommendation by Duke Gunzo to the designation of bishop, still remained obedient to the imposed censure of his ability to celebrate Mass.

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<sup>12</sup> Joynt, *Life of St. Gall*, 90.

## CHAPTER 7

### LEGENDS

All of the research information gathered in the previous chapters of this dissertation has dealt with recorded realistic information surrounded by the life and times of St. Gall. With any historical figure in history, legends do develop over time and assume a place in conjunction with recognized facts.



Figure 9. Spine Vitae of German Saints, St. Gallen, Siftsbibliothek, Cod. 602

Identified by the letters CESG,<sup>1</sup> the Signature shows the Contents and responsible places of origin. Pictures and descriptions are taken from information published by the Stiftsbibliothek, located in St. Gallen, Switzerland, and show a description of the work, a facsimile, and the binding on the work. For example, Cod. Sang. 602 shown on the spine of that rare book pictured, contains the Vitae of German saints titled *Vitae SS. Galli, Othmari, Wiboradae, & Aliorum SS.* In that Vitae are written: a legendary of St. Gall: containing among other things the German lives of the saints of St. Gall; Saint Gallus, Magnus, Otmar and Wiborada, illustrated with 142 vivid images.<sup>2</sup> The images taken from this book are used throughout this work to introduce visual as well as the written descriptions of incidents in the life of Gallus. The date of origin is thought to be 1451-1460 A.D.

In many dictionaries and thesauruses words such as legend, myth, and miracle are loosely described as having the same meaning. In order to dispel the notion that legends fall into that kind of amorphous grouping, we need to examine what legends are as opposed to myths and miracles. According to Delehaye, “legends should not be placed in the category of artificial compositions,” further, he states, “the legend has of necessity,

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1 Virtual Library of St. Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek, Codices Electronici Sangallenses (CESG), The Digital Abbey Library of St. Gallen, Provides access to the medieval library codices in the Abbey Library by creating a virtual library which at present contains 500 manuscripts. Last update: December 13, 2013.

2 Virtual Library of St. Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek, E-codices, Cod. Sang. 602:Spine, The date of origin of this work is thought to be 1451-1460 A.D.

some historical or topographical connection.”<sup>3</sup> The legends associated with St. Gall have both historical and topographical connections, as will be described in subsequent sections of this dissertation. Legend is defined as a narrative of human actions that is perceived by both the teller and the listeners to take place as their human history. Happenings are then in the realm of human possibility and they may or may not be true. Before the invention of the printing press, some stories or legends were passed on via oral tradition. Therefore, oral transmission cannot be excluded. Storytellers often claimed to have known a witness and regarded the narrative as actual history. Legends connected to historical events are believable, although not necessarily believed. They are more often passed on through written text.

There are several accounts of a legend about St. Gall and his encounter with a bear. I believe, despite the seeming improbability of certain accounts, there are believable elements in the story. As previously stated by Delehay, <sup>4</sup> this particular legend does have the elements of some historical and topographical connection. It does refer the imagery and imagined events to some real personage (Gall) as well as a witness, his companion (Hiltibrod), who was the deacon of Gall’s priest friend, Willimar.

The story is localized to a definite place and that is the one thing upon which the different accounts seem to agree. The locale is described as being near a waterfall in the

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<sup>3</sup> Delehay, Hippolyte, *The Legends of the Saints: An Introduction to Hagiography*, translated by V. M. Crawford, 1907 (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1961).

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 100-2.

forest. That location is likely a place fifty or more kilometers from the city of St. Gallen, Switzerland, and is presently called the Rhein Falls. Following is a fascinating account of Gall's encounter with the bear, translated from the original German:

History of the Bear in the Muehleleggschlucht:

Gallus and his companion Hiltibrod, came to an impassable waterfall, the Muehleleggschlucht. There they decided to stay the night and laid on the forest floor to rest. While Gallus lay awake, and Hiltibrod slept, a bear suddenly emerged. Gallus said to himself not to be intimidated even as the bear stood up on his hind legs. Gallus spoke to the bear thus: 'I order you in the name of the Lord to take wood to the fire.' The large animal obeyed and took wood to the fire. Gallus then took a whole loaf of bread out of his bag and gave it to the bear on the condition that the bear would never again come close to them. Hiltibrod who had heard everything, jumped up and said to Gallus, 'Now I know that the Lord is with you, even when the animals of the forest obey your word.' The bear never emerged again.<sup>5</sup>



Figure 10. The bear brings wood to Gallus  
St. Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek, Cod. Sang.  
602, p.44-Vitae of German Saints  
(<http://www.e-codices.unifr.ch/en/list/one/csg/602>)

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<sup>5</sup> Joynt, *Life of St. Gall*, 79-80.



Figure 10 is an illustration depicting the occasion described above. According to the preceding account a large bear emerged and confronted Gallus who was frightened. Through prayer he apparently gained the strength and wisdom to confront the bear and establish some mode of communication. Closer examination of the picture portrays the bear as somewhat smaller than described and the wood to be considerably larger than required for the fire. In the background, we can see a building that would not have been according to most accounts existent at the time. Possibly, this structure represents the individual or settlement Gall contemplated building in the future. It was Gall's intent to establish a settlement of monks in the area, characterized by individual dwellings for each of the monks.

There is another version of the event described in the preceding paragraphs taken from a different source that appears to be less dramatic. Shortly after Columbanus had departed for his venture to Bobbio, Gall, saddened by the departure of Columbanus, chose a retreat which, according to this version, would make his name immortal.

A deacon much given to hunting and fishing pointed out to him (Gall) a wild solitude enclosed within wooded heights, with abundant streams, but inhabited by bears, boars and wolves. 'If the Lord is with us who can be against us?' said Gall: and he set out with some provisions in his wallet, and a small net for fishing. As he walked on praying, his foot caught in the brushwood and he fell. The deacon ran to raise him up. 'No,' said Gall, 'here is my resting place forever.' There he arranged two hazel boughs in the form of a cross, attached to it the relics he carried around his neck and passed the night in prayer. Before his devotions concluded, a bear descended from the mountain to collect the remains of the traveler's meal. Gall threw him a loaf, and said to him, 'In the name of Christ,

withdraw from this valley; the neighboring mountains shall be common to us and thee, but on condition that thou shalt do no more harm to man nor beast.’<sup>6</sup>

Other versions of the preceding event have Gallus conversing with the bear, after having fallen into a briar patch and rescued by the bear. Along with other entertaining and less believable situations, the bear built a cabin, later to become Gall’s hermitage. The fact that so many of these stories were memorialized and have continued through the intervening centuries lead to the conclusion there is an element to be believed when we connect these imaged events to some real person. This particular event has been memorialized and stylized down through the years by numerous painters and talented artists and will be presented in later sections of this work.

The preceding legends should not be confused with myths since, “a myth is a term applied to anything that has no real existence, but is bestowed upon any hero who has lived solely in the imagination of the poet.”<sup>7</sup> Another more modern interpretation of myth is given by the structuralist, Claude Levi Strauss. An article in *The New York Times* dated November 4, 2009, reviews the last volume of his work titled *Mythologiques*. It suggests in his (Strauss’) view, “myths speak through the medium of humanity and become, in turn, the tools with which humanity comes to terms with the world’s greatest mystery: the possibility of not being the burden of mortality.” “The essence of a myth consists in a

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6 De Montalembert, Charles Forbes, *Monks of the West, from St. Benedict to St. Bernard*, Book VII, pgs. 456-457, William Blackwood and Sons, Edinburgh and London, 1829.

7 Delehay, Hippolyte, *Legends of the Saints, An Introduction to Hagiography*, translated by V. M. Crawford, 1907 (Notre Dame, IN, University of Notre Dame Press, 1961), 2.

personification of a force or of an abstract idea,”<sup>8</sup> or it may simply be a story contrived to explain some phenomena to an archaic period of humankind. It is obvious that the word myth in this context does not realistically characterize the types of events related in the history of St. Gall.

Interestingly, a modern twentieth-century writer, William Faulkner wrote a book titled *The Bear*,<sup>9</sup> which was the subject of a speech given at a conference of the Thomas Merton Society by Thomas DelPrete,<sup>10</sup> during which DelPrete referred to the work by the twentieth-century Trappist monk, Thomas Merton.<sup>11</sup> He commented that Merton saw Faulkner’s work as a “privileged area for wisdom in the modern world.” His comments shed additional light on why creative writing uses the same techniques found in the preceding “History of the Bear in the Muehleggschlucht”<sup>12</sup> probably written during the seventh century, have commonalities of spiritual symbolism to Faulkner’s *The Bear*.

In his work, a young hunter has a near-mythical meeting with a bear recognizing him just as Gall has a meeting with a bear with whom he converses and comes to

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8 Delehay, Hippolyte, and V. M. Crawford, *Legends of the Saints*, Chapter 1, page 2.

9 Faulkner, William, “The Bear,” *Adventures in American Literature*, Heritage ed. rev. (Orlando, FL: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1985), title page. (no reference to any page, just the book!)

10 Thomas DelPrete, Professor of Education, Clark University, Worcester, MA. *The Contemplative as Teacher, Learning from Thomas Merton*. Southampton, England, May 1996.

11 Thomas Merton, “Baptism in the Forest,” *The Literary Essays*, (New York, NY: New Directions Publishing Corp., 1981). title page (again no reference to any specific page, just the book)

12 Muehleggschlucht, A steep gorge and waterfall over rocks on the Steinach River where Gall’s hermit cell was located. <http://www.gallus-pilgern.ch/08-St.Gallen-Arbon.htm>

recognize him by bringing wood for his fire. What is most important here is how Gall and the young hunter must have had some type of spiritual awakening by opening themselves up to the bear's presence. Only then, after stripping themselves of fear and those persistent attachments to physical things that impede spiritual growth can they truly grow. Both Gall and the young hunter have experienced a moment of theophany, better described as the appearance of a deity in visible form as a bear.

The written descriptions of Gall's experiences, as recorded in a history written about him dated 1451-1460 A.D., might well be classified as a hagiographic document. The term hagiography, according to Thomas Head is derived from Greek roots (hagios = holy, graphe= writing) and refers to the whole range of Christian literature concerning the saints, including lives of the saints, collections of miracle stories as well as sermons and visions.<sup>13</sup> A closer examination of the *Vita Vetustissima* contains a collection of miracle stories as well as representative pictures related to the healings, miracles and historical moments of Gallus's life and times. This document certainly enhances our knowledge and understanding of medieval missionary work, and the men who toiled to bring their form of Christianity to the continent of Europe.

According to Columbanus, the time had come for him and his cohort to leave the beautiful area around Bregenz to "seek another home." The area had fallen into the hands of unworthy rulers engaged in a fratricidal war with those whom he could not abide. His

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<sup>13</sup> Thomas Head, *Hagiography. The Orb: On-line Reference Book for Medieval Studies*, <http://www.the-orb...iography/hgio.htm>, first paragraph.

attendant, Chagnoald opined that rather they should “pray for Theodebert; obtain the victory for him over our common enemy.”<sup>14</sup> A clearly agitated Columbanus seemed to know that the victory of the “enemy” would cause them to seek a new location. This decision was seemingly part of his original plan to travel on to Italy.

Gall, on the day appointed for departure to Italy, supposedly was seized by a violent fever and asked Columbanus for permission to remain behind. Columbanus’s well-known Irish disposition would brook no excuse, citing his Rule that “at the first word of the superior all must rise to obey, because by obeying him they obey God.” “To withdraw oneself was in his eyes a deplorable weakness, which must be visited with severe punishment.”<sup>15</sup> This was to be the judgment, regardless of the 25 years of friendship, love and labor that was supposed to unite them. Columbanus proceeded to say to Gall, “Have your will then and remain here; but I command you not to presume to celebrate Mass whilst I live.”<sup>16</sup> This was indeed, by today’s standards, a harsh and unreasonable punishment. However, it seems during the sixth century, even among the general population, let alone religious orders, religious rules were a vital component of everyday social practice.

Notwithstanding, the seeming severity of Columbanus’s edict restricting Gall’s capacity to celebrate Mass, there was no reason to believe that animosity existed between

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14 Metlake, *Life and Writings*, 191.

15 Ibid., 192.

16 Ibid.

the two men. In fact, there is evidence to suggest communication between Bobbio, Italy, and Gall continued through the exchange of manuscripts.<sup>17</sup>

Gall, true to the vows of obedience, is said to have obeyed his magister until the death of Columbanus in the year 615 A.D. The two dedicated men had worked together for over 25 years. Gall's determination to remain among the people he was devoted to preaching and caring for gives us an insight to his character. It does seem quite possible that the Allemani may have been the people from whom he originated and felt bound to continue ministering to them.

Over the ensuing years St. Gall, by his exemplary sermons and instruction was able to attract numerous followers. He "built a small church and around it cells for the accommodation of his brethren; for he now had twelve followers...."<sup>18</sup>

Some three years after Gall's settlement had substantially enlarged, he was made aware in a dream that Columbanus had died. This was a moment characterized for Gall by sadness at the death of his long-time magister and companion mixed with the joy of being able once again to say Mass. He quickly informed his fellow monks to prepare for celebrating the occasion for the first time in three years. To verify the death of Columbanus he sent one of his deacons to Bobbio, Italy, so that the details of

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17 J. M. Clark. *The Abbey of St. Gall*, (London, England: Cambridge University Press, 1926), 22.

18 Joynt, *Life of St. Gall*, 100.

Columbanus's death might be confirmed. The deacon returned, carrying with him a letter from Columbanus and his abbatial staff as a sign of his forgiveness of Gall.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Joynt, *Life of St. Gall*, 101.

## **CHAPTER 8**

### **THE LEGACY OF ST. GALL**

Throughout this and preceding chapters, several works of art are presented through pictures, paintings, and carvings expressive of the time of St. Gall. The review and study of these works reinforces our knowledge and appreciation of the legacy Gall inspired and left for posterity. In particular, these studies reveal a rich tapestry of part of Switzerland's history that developed around him, his life and times, as well as the city of St. Gallen itself. There can be little doubt that St. Gall did indeed leave an invaluable legacy reflected in part by the numerous works of art inspired by his life as a monastic. This chapter begins by detailing the end of Gall's life, which for all intents and purposes, was certainly the beginning of the beautiful medieval city of St. Gallen. St. Gall had predicted, not only the location for building the first structures for a monastery, but the place where he would die and be put to rest. The incident occurred by a stream called the Steinach, (also known as the Muehleleggschlucht), only a short distance from the present city of St. Gallen located on the Steinach River.

That prediction took place as he and the deacon Hiltibrod journeyed their way through deep brushwood, where Gall's feet became entangled and he fell. As the deacon



extended his hand to help him to his feet, he said, “Suffer me to be; this shall be my rest forever; here will I dwell, for I have chosen it.”<sup>1</sup>



Figure 11. The death of St. Gall in Arbon  
St. Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek, Cod.Sang.  
602, p.83-Vitae of German Saints.  
(<http://www.e-codices.unifr.ch/en/list/one/csg/602>)

In October of the year 646 A.D., Gall traveled to a settlement called Arbon<sup>2</sup> where he became ill with a high fever and died. Upon hearing of his death the Bishop of Constance, Johannes, who was St. Gall’s “truest and most intimate friend”<sup>3</sup> was grief stricken. Johannes had been recommended by Gall, in lieu of himself, to take on the

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<sup>1</sup> Joynt, *Life of St. Gall*, 78.

<sup>2</sup> Arbon is a municipality located on the southwest shore of Lake Constance. It borders the canton of St. Gallen.

<sup>3</sup> Joynt, *Life of St. Gall*, 106.

mantle of Bishop for the See of Constance. Further, it was Gall who had been Johannes' teacher, friend and confidant over the years.

The Bishop Johannes then prepared to celebrate a Mass for his departed friend and afterward wished to visit the site of his burial as depicted in Figure 11.

Closer scrutiny of Figure 11 pictures in the background what appears to be an established town or city, which may be St. Gallen. However, we may presume that neither the type of burial place, nor the buildings with their advanced design probably existed at the time of St. Gall's passing in 646 A.D. This observation suggests to me the beginning of the legacy St. Gall was to leave to the region where he first established a dwelling place for himself and his followers.

The study of written history and legend is fascinating; however, the review of visual history and legend adds a more comprehensive understanding of the life and times of those subjects we study. Attention given to studying sculpture, paintings, icons, and their history helps us to see through the eyes of their creator. Here we may learn a different, and sometimes an even more elaborate account of history other than what was imagined through readings alone. By learning to become more observant of details shown through different media, our understanding and appreciation of St. Gall are improved. Of course, added knowledge often opens the door to more questions than answers, and stirs the desire to follow additional paths of discovery.

Two and a half centuries after the death of St. Gall (ca. 646 A.D.), and to the present day the story of St. Gall's encounter with a bear must have fascinated artists and

all manner of craftsmen. In particular, a talented monk by the name of Tuotilo (ca. 850-913 A.D.) gained fame as an outstanding carver of ivory.<sup>4</sup> His talent was evidenced in a particular way with two exquisite pieces of work which survive to this day in the Stiftsbibliothek located in the city of St. Gallen, Switzerland.

What is more impressive to me is the fact that after 250 years, Gall's experience with a bear seems to be a strong and enduring story that was told and retold. In fact, most main elements of the so-called legend certainly must have been widely known and became a singular segment of Gall's history told by those who lived with him.

Shown in figures 12 and 13 are two plaques designed as covers for the front and back of a gospel book titled the *Evangelium Longum*. This book was called *Evangelium Longum* due to its long shape and that it contained the gospel of St. Matthew which details the coming of Jesus Christ from His descendants, His birth, His death, and His Resurrection.

The front cover shown on Figure 12 with decorative vine carvings at the top and bottom segments shows in the center panel a representation of Christ in glory attended by angels, with the Holy Spirit represented by a dove and God, the Father. They are immediately below the figure of Christ in glory and are meant to show His triumph over death.

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<sup>4</sup> Ernest T. DeWald, *The Art Bulletin*, vol. XV, no. 3. (New York, NY: The Art Association of America, September 1933), 202-209.



Figure 12. Ivory Tablet Front Cover St. Gallen Stiftsbibliothek, cod. Sang.53: Evangelium Longum (Evangelistary)  
<http://www.e-codices.unifr.ch/en/list/one/csg/0053>



Figure 13. Ivory Tablet Back Cover St. Gallen Stiftsbibliothek, cod. Sang.53: Evangelium Longum (Evangelistary)  
<http://www.e-codices.unifr.ch/en/list/one/csg/0053>

The back cover (Figure 13), with decorative leaf carvings in the top third of the panel, also appears to depict a lion killing a lamb, possibly alluding to the blood of the lamb being shed for our salvation. The middle section shows the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary attended by angels as she rises in glory.

The lower panel is a representation of St. Gall with a wooden crook or walking staff called a “Cambutta” in his right hand and his left hand raised in what appears to be a blessing being given to the bear as the animal brings wood to the fire for him. Immediately to the right of that carving, Gall is shown placing a loaf of bread in the outstretched front paws of the standing bear. There also appears to be a reclining figure at

St. Gall's feet which may have been his deacon Hiltibrod mentioned in other versions of the legend.



Figure 14 Luitherus dedicates his antiphony to Saint Gall. Ca. 1135 Abbey Library of St. Gall Cod. Sang. 375, p. 235

There were other distinguishing features of the Abbey of St. Gall, during the time of the Rule of Benedict which were adopted under its founder Abbot Otmar (747 A.D.). Manuscripts were written as well as creative examples of sacred choral music.<sup>5</sup>

An example of antiphony written by a monk scribe named Luitherius and dedicated to St. Gall is shown in Figure 14. In this illuminated sheet St. Gall is shown bearded, tonsured, with a halo and a crook or shepherd's staff in his right hand as the monk Luitherus is shown in a kneeling position of obeisance to Gallus. The monk

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<sup>5</sup> Johannes Duft, "The Contribution of the Abbey of St. Gall to Sacred Music," in *The Culture of the Abbey Of St. Gall*, ed. James C. King and Werner Vogler (St. Gall, Switzerland: Stiftsarchiv, 2000). 57.

presents him with the antiphonary that he has prepared. The antiphon is titled “De Virginibus” in Latin and was written for the feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, indicated by the Latin words following the Alleluia which are *Specie tua pulchritudine*.<sup>6</sup> The preceding Latin words from the Book of Psalms 44:5 are translated into English as, Thy Comeliness and Thy Beauty.

The preceding antiphonary is thought to have been written ca. 1135 A.D.; however, the music itself may well have been composed by earlier monks named Notker I or Ratpert sometime late in the ninth century. What is also of interest, in a search for liturgical occasions dedicated to St. Gall, I found 379 throughout Austria, Switzerland and Germany.<sup>7</sup> The foregoing reveals that Gall’s popularity was not confined to Switzerland; despite the fact that he lived the life of a hermit. The monks of St. Gall seemed to have a significant impact in the field of liturgy.

The reputation of St. Gall living a life of austerity in the wilderness seems to permeate most of the history about him. In the preceding Figure 14, he is portrayed in the garb of an abbot carrying what has been referred to as a tau staff, the nineteenth letter (T) in the Greek alphabet.

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<sup>6</sup> Ivo Auf der Maur, “St. Gall’s Contribution to the Liturgy,” in *The Culture of the Abbey of St. Gall*, eds. James C. King and Werner Vogler, (Zurich, Switzerland: Belser Verlag 1990). 55.

<sup>7</sup> Search results for “Liturgical Occasion Galli.” Cantus. Grove Music Article. <http://bach.music.ca.cantus/search.asp.4/25/02>.



Figure 15. Saint Gall portrayed as Bishop The Prayer Book of Michelino Da Besozzo. The Pierpont Morgan Library, New York George Braziller, Inc., New York 10016.

In Figure 15, Gall is titled as a bishop, rather than an abbot as he is customarily shown. The crozier he now carries also signifies episcopal status. Wearing a pale blue cape lined with green over his habit, a bejeweled miter, and fine gauze like gloves, he turns his head to the right. The figure stands on a narrow patterned green ground. Delicately shaded pink flowers, six petals with light centers frame the image.<sup>8</sup> It is important to note that traditional renderings of St. Gall are in stark contrast to the traditional images and pictures of him. What this picture suggests to me is that the reputation and legend of Gall grew more popular and celebrated as time passed, keeping in mind that this work was believed to have been done ca. 1405. Most important is the

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<sup>8</sup> Patricia Corbett and Colin Eisler, *The Prayer Book of Michelino Da Besozzo*, (New York, NY: George Braziller, 1995). 72.

fact that Gall was not elevated to the rank of bishop. He had maintained his traditional simplicity of manner and dress throughout his life.

I have observed that the impact of St. Gall's life and accomplishments is of significantly greater importance throughout Europe than it has been in North America. This observation may well be due to the larger number of immigrants to America from Italy, Ireland and Germany who brought with them the lives of saints with whom they were more familiar. However, few people outside of Europe are acquainted with the many interesting histories, legends and myths related to him.

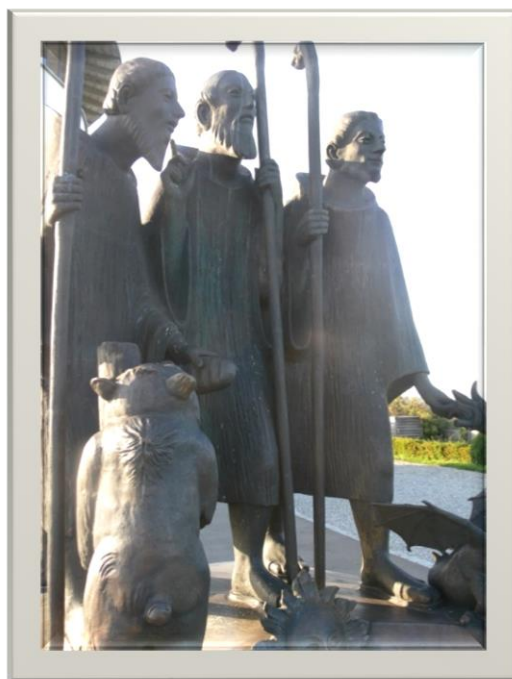


Figure 16. The bear, St. Gall and two fellow monks  
With their staffs Self taken picture



There are located throughout the City of St. Gallen today, numerous reminders of Gall's legendary association with the bear. These representations are displayed in a variety of media which are an integral part of his legacy. An attractive and permanent statue carved in stone is shown in Figure 16 as one of many art works throughout the canton of St. Gallen.



Figure 17. Saint Gall City Flag Taken from Swiss Cantons. [http://worldstatesmen.org/Swiss\\_Cantons3.html](http://worldstatesmen.org/Swiss_Cantons3.html), 2013.

It is interesting to note that the famed bear stories associated with St. Gall have a long medieval history since the seventh century which is evidenced by the bear's image being used as the identifying flag for the city of St. Gallen as well as the two small separate cantons of Appenzell. In Figure 17, the flag of the city of St. Gallen is shown. The city itself became an Associate Member of the Swiss Confederation (*Zugwandter Ort*) in 1454 A.D. and the Imperial Free City of St. Gall (*Stadt Sankt Gallen*) in 1457 A.D. Finally in 1802 A.D. it was incorporated into the Helvetic Republic.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> St. Gall City (Stadt Sankt Gallen), [http://worldstatesmen.org/Swiss\\_Cantons3.html](http://worldstatesmen.org/Swiss_Cantons3.html) (accessed December 3, 2013).

There is a historical, as well as amusing history concerning the two half cantons in Switzerland named Appenzell. One of the cantons is named Appenzell Inner-Rhoden (Catholic) and the other Appenzell Ausser-Rhoden (Protestant). Both claimed the same cantonal flag depicting the bear which originated with the legend of St. Gall as described earlier in this dissertation. The bear is that of the Abbot of St. Gallen who was the liege lord of Appenzell until 1403 when the district rebelled and seceded. The two cantons adopted the same flag changing the field from yellow to white and adding an erection on the bear as a defiant political gesture. The bear was meant to be a symbol of power, courage, might, and virility. The only unique feature representing showing on the Appenzell Ausser-Rhoden flag are Latin letters “V” and “R”, meaning “Vesser Rhoden.” In 1579 A.D., a simple printer preparing a calendar turned the Appenzell bear into a female bear by omitting the penis and thus nearly precipitating a war with St. Gallen. The war was avoided when copies of the offending calendars were destroyed.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> T. F. Mills, “Medieval History of the Flag,” 28 October 1997, <https://flagspot.net/flags/ch-ap.html> (accessed January 5, 2014).



Figure 18. Appenzell Ausser Rhoden Flag  
 FOTW "Flags of the World Image by  
 Pascal Gross WebSite 2010 Simon Dodds  
<https://flagspot.net/ch-ar.html>

In St. Gallen, numerous statues and remembrances of St. Gall are found throughout the city. The year 2012 was designated as the Gallus Jubilee year in St. Gallen celebrating the arrival of St. Gall in the valley of the Steinach River in 612 A.D. to 2012 A.D, a period of 1400 years. This period Zu Sankt Gallen was a medieval place-name recorded in 1290 A.D., which referred to the activity of St. Gall and the abbey named after him. Late in the seventh century, his grave was revered as a shrine, and he was revered as a saint by common acclamation despite the fact that there was no formal canonization procedure at that time.

What were the qualities St. Gall displayed and what was it he said that caused him to be so esteemed among those to whom he ministered? How is it that his legacy has grown and continues to flourish, not only in St. Gallen but, I believe, throughout Europe and the Americas. Surely his vows of obedience were beyond reproach as were his complete dedication and selfless love for those countless numbers of people to whom he

ministered during his lifetime. Surely he continues to be an inspiration and model for those of us who have come to study his life and times.

The following rare words are attributed to St. Gall and form, to my mind, a wonderful legacy of admonition to those who would preach. Even to those of us who do not address others, more important lessons are in his simple advice to our inner selves.

He who desires to preach to others with fruit, must first preach to himself, treasuring up lessons of true piety in his own mind, imprinting deeply in his heart the sentiments of all virtues, and learning to practice first what he would afterwards teach others. Empty science fills with presumption, vain-glory, and pride, and neither reforms the heart, nor teaches that language which infuses true virtue into others, which can only proceed from experimental virtue. The gift of true spiritual knowledge cannot be obtained but by sincere humility, and purity of heart, which is freed from vices and earthly affections, and by holy meditation, which alone can give a heavenly tincture and frame to the mind, as Cassian says. As our food is assimilated to our flesh by digestion, so spiritual affections pass, as it were, into the very substance of our souls by pious meditation, and the exercises of holy compunction, divine love, and all other interior virtues; which he will be able to teach others who is possessed of them himself.<sup>11</sup>

Bringing these images of St. Gall together from an old city in the heart of Europe, along with the unique and historic achievements evidenced by its old library with its manifold works of language, literature, music, and art have been for me a labor of love. I know now that here is a supernatural power imbuing us with a sense of living and participating in history. Are not the living past and the living present how our comprehension of life as a whole evolves? St. Gall did set the tone that would help so many comprehend that what we wish to understand must be seen against the horizon of

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<sup>11</sup> Butler, *Lives of the Saints*, 338

human history before its true dimensions can be understood. I know what he did by the fruit of his works. The following quote from a former archivist of the Abbey of St. Gall forms a most appropriate salutation to St. Gall.

Sciences and schools in St. Gall could be compared very favorably with those of our own times, in all due proportion of course. At a time when even the ability to read and write was very rare and regarded as something extraordinary, and only a scholar could write even his own mother tongue, German, Latin, and Greek were already written in St. Gall; there the arts of poetry, rhetoric and logic were practiced; music, astronomy and pharmacy studied; and drawings, miniature paintings, carvings (bas relief) and embossed work created.<sup>12</sup>

Finally, the impact of the history of St. Gall cannot be underestimated. As Professor Doctor Werner Wunderlich of the University of St. Gallen so succinctly states, “The living past, the living present: between these two poles our comprehension of life as a whole evolves and everything we wish to understand must be seen against the horizon of history before its true dimensions can be determined.”<sup>13</sup>

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12 Ildefons von Arx, Archivist. *Histories of the Canton of St. Gall*, 1st vol, (St. Gall, 1810). 83.

13 Werner Wunderlich, Dr. Institute for Media and Communication Management, presentation at University of St. Gallen, (St. Gallen, Switzerland: 2008).

## ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

I have prepared and included the following Annotated Bibliography as a guide to some of the reference works used and referred to during the preparation of this dissertation. Each of the works referenced are part of a larger mosaic of the historical, cultural and pictorial events essential to understanding, to some degree, what life must have been like in the early medieval world of the sixth and seventh centuries, during the lifetime of St. Gall.

Gathering and reference to these sources was an integral part to understanding and attempting to discern differences related to the descriptions of the same events from different historical perspectives. Often the citations and notes attendant to disparate sources would lead me to an enhanced or expanded understanding of the relationships between Gall and Columbanus. In addition, I grew to better appreciate early medieval relationships between rulers of the different kingdoms as well as their relationships with the early church, especially with the papacy in Rome.

Abbot, Elizabeth. *History of Celibacy*. Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2001.  
[http://departments.kings.edu/womens\\_history/vestals.html](http://departments.kings.edu/womens_history/vestals.html)

This author cites the history of the female aspects of celibate monasticism, particularly among the Vestal Virgins, adding to our better understanding that monasticism and celibacy were not confined to males alone.

Adamson, Melitta Weiss. *Food in Medieval Times*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, Inc., 2004.

This author cites the different types of food, their ingredients and the methods of preparation in the medieval ages. What is very interesting is how and where these foods would be used particularly how they would be preserved for future use on long voyages.

Bracken, Damian. *Authority and Duty: Columbanus and the Primacy of Rome*. Peritia, Ireland: NUI Cork, Department of History, 2002. 168-213.

This author cites some of the earliest letters of Columbanus, the leader of those intrepid Irish monks who traveled as missionaries to the European continent. His letters reveal a truculent personality and interesting insight to his leadership style. This type of information is invaluable in assessing his relationship to Gall in particular.

Bresard, Luc. *A History of Monastic Spirituality, The Monastic Phenomenon, Outside Christianity*. 2013. <http://www.scourmont.be/studium/bresard/01-prehistory.htm> (accessed January, 2014)).

Long before Christianity, and the coming of Christ there was a monasticism practiced and it was called Hinduism. There were those who were hermits living in the desert (called anchorites) wandering about and begging food.

Cambridge, University of. *Language Centre Resources – German, Alsatian*. Cambridge, England. <http://www.langcen.cam.ac.uk/resource/german/german.php?c=8>

This site provides information on the languages spoken and their derivation. In particular the derivation of the Swiss language called Schwyzerdutsch thought to be derived from the ancient German Allemanic language. This was particularly relevant given the fact that a large percentage of the German speaking Swiss speak this language, including my wife, daughter and grandson.

Cantor, Norman F. *The Civilization of the Middle Ages*. New York, NY: Harper Collins Publishers, 1993.

This revised and expanded version of *Medieval History, The Life and Death of A Civilization* published in 1963, focuses on cultural, intellectual and religious history, considered within social and political contexts highlighting prominent personalities. I found this work very helpful in transposing my writing to a mode more connected to seventh century thinking.

Clark, J. M., *The Abbey of St. Gall*, London, England: Cambridge University Press, 1926.

The author provides valuable insight into the historical aspects of St. Gall's ability to speak the Allemanic language peculiar to the inhabitants situated by Lake Constance, better known as "The Swabian Lake". He also provides background information regarding Gall's relationships with the local tribes and the nature of their livelihood and worship of idols.

Cummings, Charles, OCSO. *Monastic Practices: Some external practices of Monastic life*. Kalamazoo, MI: Western Michigan University Cistercian Publications, 1986.

Cumming's book helps to explain some basic differences and similarities in monastic life and purpose in the present as compared to the medieval past.

De Breffny, Brian & Mott, George. *The Churches and Abbeys of Ireland*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1976.

Because of Ireland's checkered history in which religious struggles often coincided with national, political and social ones the ecclesiastical architecture was remarkably affected by contemporary events.

Del Prete, Thomas. *The Contemplative as Teacher: Learning from Thomas Merton*. Worcester, MA: Clark University, 1996. This was a portion of a speech given by Thomas Del Prete to the Thomas Merton Society, in Southampton, England.

In this conference on William Faulkner's *The Bear*, Del Prete refers to The Literary Essays of Thomas Merton, in particular to his essay titled *Baptism in the Forest*. Merton traces the journey of a young man who is drawn into the woods by the near mystical presence of a bear who sees him although he cannot see the bear. To know the bear recognizes him is a whole new experience, creating a whole new sense of himself in relation to the bear. The story of St. Gall's real encounter with a bear relates well to better understanding the meaning of the bear's presence to St. Gall and the believable aspects of his encounter with the bear.



De Montalembert, Charles Forbes: *Monks of the West, From St. Benedict to St. Bernard*: Boston, MA: Patrick Donahoe, 1872.

This work includes a detailed description of the Irish missionaries and their mission in Gaul, particularly Columbanus and his mission to Gaul and their experiences at Annegray and the settlement at Luxeuil. A great influx of disciples is realized as Columbanus struggles with leaders Brunehault and Thierry II. His subsequent expulsion and arrival at Nantes gives me a deeper insight as to his personality. In addition, his mission among the Alemans and St Gall's experiences with demons on the lake underscores the fragile relationship between Gall and Columbanus. A different description of St. Gall's encounter with a bear provides us with a clearer insight into his personality.

Editor, Presence Switzerland, Admin.ch: *The Federal State Cantons*: Bundesgasse 32. 2014,

An explanation of the word canton explaining what the word canton implies about the structure of the individual Swiss states and how they are shaped by the will of the Swiss people.

Corbett, Patricia and Colin Eisler. *The Prayer Book of Michelino Da Besozzo*. New York, NY: George Braziller, 1995.

An exquisite painting of St. Gall garbed in Bishop's robes with inscribed Latin Prayers to St. Gall is shown in this book. This picture underscores the fact that Gall was not made a bishop at this juncture and in fact, recommended his deacon, Johannes for the bishopric offered him. Though the painting is beautiful it is also idealistic and underscores the feeling among the people he served.

Fitzpatrick, Benedict. *Ireland and the Making of Britain*. New York, NY: Funk & Wagnalls.

This book brings into perspective the parts played by successive dynasties of Irish proconsuls in Britain and the series of stages in the vast apostolate which the Irish missionaries of civilization were carrying forward in almost every country of Europe. The work of medieval Irishmen constitutes a crowning glory of Irish history, as a service undertaken by members of one nation for the benefit of other nations.

Gougaud, Dom Louis, O.S.B. *Gaelic Pioneers of Christianity, The Work and Influence of Irish Monks and Saints in Continental Europe*. Dublin, Ireland: M. H. Gill and Son, LTD., 1923.

This book, in part, addresses the influence of Irish monks in continental Europe as related to certain practices involving how they traveled and what forms of transportation these peregrine did or did not utilize. Particular reference was made to those who adopted wandering out of asceticism traveling only on foot and in some cases thought to be compulsory. Some monks who did not travel on foot might have rendered themselves liable to excommunication.

Grotans, Anna. *Reading in Medieval St. Gall*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006. The teachings methods used in the medieval Abbey of St. Gall by the monk, scholar and teacher Notker Labeo (ca. 950-1022).

Anna Grotans examines the unique interplay between orality and literacy in Latin and Old High German helping me to understand the roots of the old Allemanic language as it relates to Swiss German as spoken today in the German speaking sections of Switzerland.

Hamilton, Canon James, M.A. *A Short History of Bangor Abbey Through Fifteen Centuries*. <http://www.BANGORABBEY.org/history.htm> (accessed October, 2013).

This is a short history of the founding of the Bangor Abbey located in northern Ireland between 552 and 559 A.D. under the abbacy of St. Comgall. The abbey was renowned for gathering together a group of monks known for their saintly lives and scholarly attainments, among them were St. Gall and St. Columbanus.

von Pflugk-Hartung, Julius. *The Old Irish on the Continent: Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, vol. 5. 1891. <http://www.jstor.org> (accessed November, 2013).

Julius Hartung details the experiences of the Irish monks and how they presented themselves in the realm of the Merovingians as converters of the heathens, and a disturbing element. This work aids in understanding that this group of Irish missionaries

were not always greeted with “open arms,” and in fact in many instances were a disturbing element.

Hennig, John. “Irish Saints in Early German Literature.” *Speculum*, vol. 22, no. 3. July, 1947.

An explanation the literary references made by a German to Columbanus and St. Gall and how well he became known by medieval Germans.

Hogg, Rev. Lewis M, M.A. *Letters and Sermons, The Old Catholics of St. Gall*, London, UK: Rivingtons, 1884.

A letter and information relative to the artifacts found related to St. Gall written in the Latin and ancient German and how they resembled the words used by the Swiss people he visited.

Holmes, George, ed. *The Oxford Illustrated History of Medieval Europe: The Spread of Christianity in Medieval Europe from 40-900 A.D.*, New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1988.

Our Western Civilization and particularly our forms of thought spring from medieval Europe, especially from the areas in which the Irish missionaries were active. In 400A.D. most Europeans worshipped one or more non-Christian gods and that began to change, particularly in the sixth and seventh centuries when St. Columbanus and St. Gall travelled and proselytized throughout Gaul.

Hooker, Richard. *The Celts*. Pullman, WA: Washington State University, 2009.  
[http://richard-hooker.com/sites/world cultures/WORLD.HTM](http://richard-hooker.com/sites/world%20cultures/WORLD.HTM)

Hooker relates good information about Celtic Society, Religion and the Gauls. His work shows that the author has written many other pages on different topics. There is considerable information on the Celt’s culture such as society and religion. Hooker refers to the Gauls, as “the earliest Celts who were major players in the classical world.”

Joynt, Maud, *The Life of St. Gall*, Prologue by Walahfrid Strabo, Facsimili of the 1927 Edition, Llanerch Publishers, Felinfach, UK 1927.

Interestingly, our knowledge of the Life of St. Gall actually derives from three early sources according to Joynt. The oldest is titled *Vita Vetustissima* written at the end of the eighth century by an unknown author. It is divided into two books, the first written by Walahfrid, a scholar at Reichenau and the second by Wettinus, a master of the external school of the monastery of between 816 and 824 A.D. Both books are preserved in the library of St. Gallen (Stiftsbibliothek). The story of Gall's life written by Walahfrid seems to offer the most detail of St. Gall's activity in what is now France and Germany. Each of the authors writes different descriptions of Gall's life.

King, James C. and Vogler, Werner, eds. *The Culture of the Abbey of St. Gall, An Overview*. St. Gall: Paperback edition by Stiftsarchiv St. Gall, 2000.

If one wishes to perceive and become acquainted with the early culture of the abbey of St. Gall and the monastic culture from which it derives the collection of art gives the reader an insight into the manuscripts and in part to the lives of the founders. The beginnings of the monastery on the Steinach takes one back to the early seventh century, proving to be an invaluable tool for my research.

LeGoff, Jacques. *Medieval Callings*: Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1990.

This work expands my knowledge of the rationale for Lords and Kings to give their lands a less precarious economic and administrative organization by allowing and in fact encouraging the founding of monasteries combined with the spiritual advantages they expected to gain. This is why the missions of the Irish monks who 'invaded' the continent between the late sixth and eighth century found strong local support in the rulers of the land, in particular the Franks.

Lawrence, C. H. *Medieval Monasticism, Forms of Religious Life in Western Europe in the Middle Ages*: Harlow, UK: Pearson Education Limited, 2001.

This work, particularly in Chapter 3 gives a very clear and concise description of early Irish monasticism and its beginnings in Ireland. The Rule of Columbanus is described in some detail with descriptions of the penitential severity associated with the rule as opposed to the Rule of Benedict by comparison appears mild. Columbanus's

relations with Merovingian royalty and the reasons for his subsequent exile are also treated more in detail.

MacGeoghegan, Abbe. *The History of Ireland, Ancient & Modern*: Dublin: James Duffy, 1884.

Here we are presented another version of the history of St. Gall and St. Columbanus with more detail on the locale of their travels in the Vosges mountains. Particularly interesting is Duke Gunzo's wish to reward St. Gall for miraculously curing his daughter of a demonic possession by offering him the bishopric of Constance. Gall humbly refuses on the grounds that his magister has placed an interdict on him for his refusal to travel on to Bobbio.

McCarthy, Daryl, Dr. A presentation: *Hearts and Minds Aflame for Christ: Irish Monks: A Model for making all Things New in the 21st Century*. International Institute for Christian Studies, C. S. Lewis Foundation, September 28, 2007.

This work reveals the civilization accomplished by Irish monks as they trudged their way across Europe leaving a legacy of faith, learning and civilization.

Metlake, George. *The Life and Writings of St. Columban*. Felinfach, UK: A Facsimile Reprint, J.M.F. Books, 1993.

Jonas, who wrote the life of Columbanus is, next to Fredegar, the most important historical document of the seventh century. He was proud of the ancient glories of his birthplace and duly impressed with accounts given by travelers he met about the austere manner of life among the foreign monks. He was so impressed he made up his mind to become a monk himself. He writes about Columbanus's stay among King Agilulf and Queen Theodolinda, where St. Gall was closely involved.

Ott, Michael. *St. Othmar*. *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 11. New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1911. <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11351a.htm> (accessed 16 May 2013).

An explanation of who St. Othmar was, as the abbot who succeeded St. Gall. He according to my wife's Aunt Martha was buried in the catacombs beneath the church alongside St. Gall.

Peters, Edward. *Monks, Bishops and Pagans*. Philadelphia: The University of Pennsylvania Press, 1975.

A second section of the author's book focuses on the theme of the monks and their place in early European society. In one section St. Gall was called upon by Columbanus who was unfamiliar with the Allemanic language to preach to the people and subsequently destroyed their idols. This aspect helps to fortify my theory that Gall was indeed a native Allemanian.

Severin, Tim. *The Brendan Voyage*. New York, NY: Modern Library, Random House, 2000.

The Brendan Voyage describes modern adventurer Tim Severin's attempt to duplicate an incredible pilgrimage according to legend that St. Brendan and his crew of monks made to Newfoundland. He describes the exact duplication of a diminutive boat sewn together with leather hides to demonstrate that such a voyage was possible and successfully made the voyage to demonstrate the monk's journey was not apocryphal. Such a boat may well have been used by Columbanus and Gall to travel to the European continent. I described their voyage on the supporting strength of their vessel.

A commentary on The Book of Kells describing the ornately illustrated manuscript, produced by Celtic monks.

This was a commentary describing the most lavishly illuminated manuscript to survive the Middle Ages. It is on permanent display at Trinity College Library in Ireland. It was here that during my visit to Dublin that I observed a map detailing the route of St. Gall to the European continent and finally reaching Switzerland.

Tierney, Brian. *The Middle Ages, vol. I, Sources of Medieval History*, 5th ed., New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, 1992.

This *Boat Song* is said to have been written by St. Columbanus. captures the mood and the robust faith that animated the Irish Monks, among them St. Gall.

Wood, Ian N., ed. *Franks and Allemanni in the Merovingian Period, An Ethnographic Perspective*. Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, 1998.

This work provides an ethnographic approach to the Franks and the Alamannis during the Merovingian period, during which Gall and his confreres worked and proselytized among that group of people. By concentrating on a limited group of people prevents excessive generalization as has been done about the people of early Medieval Europe who were on occasion referred to as a class of “barbarians.”

This book does show a competitive and violent society where church men and laymen were equally involved.

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