

The Missionary Styles of Saint Columbanus and Boniface.pdf

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The Missionary Styles of Saint Columbanus and Boniface:
A Review of their Differences and Successes

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Summary

i Research Abstract & Thesis

Thesis: When looking at the missionary styles of Saint Columbanus and Saint Boniface, who was more successful and why?

It is important to study the missionary styles of Saint Boniface and Saint Columbanus, and compare them with each other, for they represent two differing styles of thinking in early Christian mission. This is something that should be studied, for by understanding the styles of each, and which was more successful, one can examine how they might apply to the future of mission. The proposed question emerged out of a base interest in the peregrinatio and St. Boniface, and the underlying study of the peregrinatio. From studying the peregrinatio to understand the theology behind it, the focus on Columbanus emerged. Through which the focus on missionary styles of Columbanus and Boniface, and who was more successful emerged. Sources were subsequently studied in order to gather an understanding of the missionary styles of both men, and which was overall more successful and why. To do this, the “Life’s” of both men were studied, in addition to several other sources focusing on Columbanus and Boniface.

As a result of this procedure, the understanding emerged that the missionary style of Columbanus was the peregrinatio, and that the missionary style of Boniface was his direct reliance upon the pope in Rome. Further, it was discovered that Columbanus never initially intended to be a missionary, but rather wanted to live a life devoted to God, and that his missionary work emerged as a byproduct of this. Whilst Boniface purposely wished to become a missionary to the Frisians. Through this, it was learnt that Boniface had a more lasting impact primarily due to his work with the Roman Catholic Church, for he was able to increase the power and influence of the papacy in Rome through his work. The implications of these findings in relation to how they might apply to the future of mission is twofold. First, the style of Columbanus teaches that one can become a missionary if they live a devout life dedicated to God. Second, it is evident that having the backing of, and connections to a large Christian organization can help a missionary, for having such things enables the new communities to have immediate support, as well as helps the organization in question to expand its reach. These results also make it clear that multiple styles of missionary work exist, which have their own benefits and drawbacks, and that such styles should be considered by potential missionaries.

ii Statement of Independent Work

Statement of independent work

Hereby I, Jon-Jacob van Oosterwyk Bruyn, declare and assure that I have composed the present thesis with the title “The Missionary Styles of Saint Columbanus and Boniface: A Review of their Differences and Successes,” independently, that I did not use any other sources or tools other than indicated and that I marked those parts of the text derived from the literal content or meaning of other Works – digital media included – by making them known as such by indicating their source(s).

Nijmegen, July 24, 2020

1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction

When examining the history of Christian mission it becomes evident that there is a turning point in the understanding and activities of the missionaries. Over roughly the first 600 years of Christian mission, a gradual development is evident, one which ultimately culminates in the activities of the Irish and Anglo-Saxons. It is this culmination that is of interest, for it is at this point when the Irish and Anglo-Saxons were most impactful on the continent. Although there are several Irish and Anglo-Saxon missionaries who were important, it is the lives of Saint Columbanus and Saint Boniface which will be examined, for they are two of the most well known of these missionaries. When looking at these two men, the question of their missionary styles will be posed, and their successes, or lack thereof, examined. The goal will be to determine who was more successful between the two of them, and why. Success in this context will be regarded as who had a more lasting impact overall. Columbanus is, of course, one of the Irish peregrinatio, which means that he purposely abandoned his homeland in order to live a life devoted to God, as will be seen. Whilst Boniface did not live the life of a peregrinatio, but rather connected himself with Rome, and as he preached his ties to Rome would only strengthen. It is these two men who will be assessed, and then compared.

1.2 Aim

The study of the missionary styles between Columbanus and Boniface, and who was more successful and why, is important to examine. For through the examination of the successes and failures of past missionaries, one is able to see what worked and did not work historically, and through this might be able to apply those elements to future missionary endeavours. In this way, one can shape their missionary endeavours to improve and be better than they otherwise may be. Thus, it is important to learn the answers behind which was more successful, for Columbanus and Boniface reflect two different missionary styles, and in order for one to assess which might be more useful in the modern world, one needs to understand the history behind both men.

This topic was selected in part due to it being the natural culmination of the study process on the topic of Irish and Anglo-Saxon missionaries, for that was an underlying interest. The underlying interest in the Irish and Anglo-Saxons emerged through undergraduate studies in the history of Catholicism and medieval Europe. Yet more than that,

it seems as though the selection of this topic was partly in answer to a calling by God. For the way the study progressed and evolved, and the way in which study at the university came to be, seems to have been guided along by God, and to have been in turn His calling. Therefore, the topic was selected in part due to an interest in the Irish Christians and St. Boniface, as well as in response to God's calling.

1.3 Research Approach

The steps of gathering research for this thesis went through several phases, starting with broad overviews, and gradually getting more focused. Three specific topics were studied when searching for sources, the peregrinatio, which led to Saint Columbanus, the missionary style of Saint Boniface, and an overview of the history of mission. It is important to mention that the research for this paper was interrupted by the Coronavirus pandemic, which restricted availability of sources and limited the resources available for use to a certain extent. That said, these limitations were overall relatively minor, and should not affect the paper in an adverse way. It must further be mentioned that there are several sources which were studied in regards for information, but from which little information was gathered, and although not directly cited throughout the paper, there is a potential that they had an influence in this paper and as such will be cited.¹ With regards to the sources on Columbanus, they were assessed specifically with regards to gathering an understanding of the concept of the peregrinatio, as well as understanding his missionary style and practices. As further information on Columbanus was gathered it was used to refine the concepts behind the questions being utilized to gather information. It is important to note that originally research was done on the peregrinatio as a generic topic, which gradually led to focusing on Columbanus, due to many of the sources constantly referring back to him.

Regarding the sources on Boniface, they were researched with the specific topic of his missionary work in mind. The starting point was to gather an understanding of his work, through reading his Life, and proceeding from there. It is important to note here that although Boniface spent parts of his career helping to administer church reforms in both the Frankish and Bavarian Churches, very little focus will be spent on this, as the main focus will be his missionary work. Further, sources in English in regards to Boniface which focused

¹ Columbanus, "Penitential of St. Columbanus," In *The Irish Penitentials*, ed. Bieler, Ludwig (Dublin, Ireland: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1963), 97-107; Bede, *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, trans. A. M. Sellar (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2011), III.

specifically on his missionary work were not always easy to come by, as they either focused on his church reforms, reiterated the “Life of St Boniface,” or were simply unavailable due to the effects of the pandemic.² A common way to acquire sources was referring to footnotes from other authors, which often referenced sources in German, rather than English. That said, the sources gathered on Boniface are still useful in providing an adequate understanding of Boniface’s missionary work, and despite the issues faced in gathering sources, are still sufficient for use in this paper.

With regards to the choices of texts selected, it is noteworthy to mention that there were several authors who had differing opinions than those presented in this paper. Of note is Ian Wood’s book *The Missionary Life*. This source differs specifically on the views of Columbanus and Boniface when compared to what is presented in this paper. These differing views are that Columbanus is not a missionary, as he spent most of his time amongst Christians rather than pagans, and that Boniface’s missionary attempts ultimately failed and he instead should be more known as a church reformer rather than a missionary. This source, although it is referenced by other sources, will not be used in terms of argument, specifically due to the fact that Wood’s opinions on Columbanus and Boniface differ from almost all other sources studied. Additionally, these statements by Wood appear to primarily be opinions, rather than facts, and he hardly includes any evidence explaining why he thinks these things.³ However Ian Wood is known as a scholar on medieval Frankish history, and does have other books which may cover these opinions in more detail, books which were not studied.

In regards to the texts selected to explain the history of early Christian mission, Fletcher’s *The Conversion of Europe* was selected to help provide the overview. The text was located as a reference in Palmer *Anglo-Saxons in a Frankish World*, as well as in several other sources on Boniface. It was used as the primary source for early mission work due to the succinct nature of the overview it provided. That said, if one wishes to look into the history of early Christian mission in more detail, Wood’s *The Missionary Life* and Bosch’s *Transforming Mission*, are among two books that are recommended. For they go into specific detail for the various missionaries in Western Europe after the 400’s, in the case of Wood,

² Two such sources that were unavailable for study were: *St Boniface and the German mission*, by C. H. Talbot and *The Greatest Englishman : essays on St. Boniface and the Church at Crediton*, by Timothy Reuter.

³ Ian Wood, *The Missionary Life: Saints and the Evangelisation of Europe, 400-1050* (Harlow: Pearson Education, 2001), 31, 59.

and into detail on the various specific eras and transformations that mission underwent throughout the years, in the case of Bosch.

1.4 Regarding Terminology

It is recognized that Columbanus, Boniface, and several other figures mentioned in this paper are Saints in the Catholic Church. That said, only the initial mention of the figure in each chapter will refer to them as ‘Saint’, subsequent mentions will drop the saint prefix. Additionally, if it is relevant to use the saint prefix to their name, after their initial mention, it will be shortened to ‘St’. Further, the paper will make little to no distinctions between various heresies unless it is relevant to the topic at hand. This means that a no distinction for the religion of figures in question will be made, whether they be Catholic, Coptic, Arian, Orthodox, or other, unless it is specifically relevant to the topic. Where necessary, footnotes will provide further information with regards to the various topics covered. In addition, the names of the areas as they were during the time period will be used. This means that ‘France’ will be referred to as ‘Gaul,’ ‘The Netherlands’ as ‘Frisia,’ and so forth. England, however, will still be referred to as ‘England,’ due to the name having been used at the time, and because any references within the paper are made to the region as a whole, rather than specific kingdoms that existed at the time on the island. Specific mentions of German regions will be referred to as they were in the sources studied.

In addition, Bible references will be used in a literal sense, with the presumption that they are true. The reason behind this is the fact that the figures studied, namely Columbanus and Boniface, would have believed the Bible to be wholly true, and as such their missionary styles were directly reflective of this belief. By extension, the history behind their missionary beliefs must be viewed as it would have been by them. This means that Bible references must be used in a literal sense in order to accurately reflect the beliefs of Columbanus and Boniface. This paper will not comment on the validity of these beliefs, or the interpretations of any specific Bible passages by those being studied. Instead it will present the passages being used as they relate to Columbanus and Boniface. The Bible translation used in this paper will be the Literal Standard Version (LSV), as recommended by Professor Michael Plattig, due to its accuracy for those wishing to study the Bible.⁴

1.5 Regarding the Primary Sources

⁴ Email Correspondence, May 27, 2020

Several key sources were found in regards to both Columbanus and Boniface, namely their respective “Life’s”, as well as the Sermons of Columbanus and the Correspondences of Boniface. When looking at these sources it is important to note their intended use. The two “Life’s” were intended to outline the Godly deeds of the Saints and show their successes and miracles. As such, there is a higher focus on the religious aspect rather than the practical aspect in each of the “Life’s”. That said, they still provide relevant information into the history of both figures and are useful in understanding their missionary styles. Both “Life’s” were written several years after the death of the person in question, but the writers did speak with those who knew the subject. Though some of the details are not completely accurate, and in Jonas’ “Life of Columbanus”, it has been noted that Jonas makes an incorrect reference to one of the Frankish Kings.⁵ For the most part the sources are reliable for understanding the lives of their subjects.

Further, the Sermon’s of Columbanus were meant to help instruct those at his monastery in Bobbio in the style of spirituality developed by Columbanus, and not to instruct missionaries. However, some of the Sermon’s can be seen to contain elements of Columbanus’ overall missionary style, specifically the Peregrinatio, and as such are valuable to assess his style. It is important to note, however, that not all of his Sermon’s contain this information, and a focus will be placed solely upon Sermon 5 and 8 since those are the two sermons containing the most relevant information to the idea of the Peregrinatio. Boniface’s correspondences, on the other hand, were likely not meant to be studied in the manner they have been, and range from personal correspondence with Religious in England, to inquiries of the Pope, to his work on reforming the Frankish Church. That said, they do still provide valuable insight into his missionary work through the questions he asks of the Pope. They also provide primary sources for understanding Boniface’s appointment by the Pope as missionary to the Germans. Many letters exist, however only some will be evaluated as they are related to Boniface’s missionary work.

Overall, the four primary sources help to provide an understanding behind the motivations of both Boniface and Columbanus, which in turn helps to provide insight into their respective missionary styles and techniques. Despite the biases for the authors of the “Life’s,” and the intended audiences for Columbanus’ Sermon’s and Boniface’s

⁵ G. S. M. Walker, "Introduction," in *Sancti Columbani Opera*, ed. G. S. M. Walker (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1957), x.

Correspondence, all four sources still work to provide adequate information and relevant background on Columbanus and Boniface.

2 Overview of the History of Mission until Pope Gregory the Great

2.1 The Great Commission

Christianity has a long history of being a missionizing religion, meaning that adherents of the faith actively go out and preach the faith to outsiders, converting them to the faith. Throughout the history of Christianity the understanding of what it means to missionize has gone through many changes, including roughly the first 600 years of Christianity leading up to the time of Columbanus and Boniface. The origins of the idea of mission in Christianity originate at the end of Matthew in the New Testament. Specifically verses 18-20:

And having come near, Jesus spoke to them, saying, “All authority in Heaven and on earth was given to Me; having gone, then, disciple all the nations, immersing them into the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all, whatever I commanded you, and behold, I am with you all the days-until the full end of the age.”⁶

These verses comprise what is known as the ‘Great Commission,’ in which Jesus instructed his disciples, and by extension all Christians, to go out to preach to all nations on the earth and spread the faith. All subsequent ideas of Christian mission are based upon these verses, each based upon the understanding of these verses by the group of Christians in question. It is in these verses that the origins of Christian mission arise, and it is from here that the idea of mission in Christianity begins to develop.

2.2 Early Christianity until Constantine the Great

In the first few decades of Christianity’s existence it remained mostly disorganized, was primarily prevalent amongst Jewish communities, and spread solely throughout urban centres. The initial spread of Christianity throughout the Roman Empire happened quickly and without any predominant strategy or leadership.⁷ The cause for this spread is attributed to

⁶ Matthew 28:18-20 (LSV)

⁷ Richard Fletcher, *The Conversion of Europe: From Paganism to Christianity, 371-1386 AD* (London: Fontana Press, 1998), 14.

the fact that many Christian communities emerged along Jewish communication lines throughout the empire.⁸ The cause for this initial spread is due to Jewish traders and townsmen, and many of these communication lines included various Jewish communities throughout the Empire.⁹ However, despite the knowledge that this expansion occurred throughout Jewish communities and connections, Fletcher claims that it is difficult to attribute any specific missionary or group to these conversions.¹⁰ This expansion through Jewish lines of communication reflect the Jewish origins of Christianity, as well as the extent of the various Jewish communities throughout the empire.

An important factor in these expansions is that they were predominantly focused on urban communities, mostly cities, but also smaller communities and towns, with very little rural expansion.¹¹ The reason behind the lack of rural spread in the early years is due to the disdain towards rural areas and those living in the countryside by the citydwellers, as the countryside was seen as a place where beasts live.¹² Further, the peasantry of the countryside were considered dirty, smelly, and believed to live in conditions akin to that of beasts, and were treated essentially as outsiders by the citydwellers.¹³ Overall, those in the cities simply did not view the countryside as a place for mission, preferring to focus on the cities instead.¹⁴ As seen, throughout the first few centuries of Christianity, leading up to the time of Constantine the Great, the spread of Christianity was primarily focused in the cities, and initial spread began through the Jewish communities and trading routes.

2.3 Legalization of Christianity

The legalization of Christianity by Emperor Constantine the Great in the early 300's significantly helped the spread of Christianity, and began to change the understanding of missionary work in the empire. The legalization of Christianity began after the battle at Milvian Bridge in 312, for upon his success, Constantine ended the persecution of Christians. This gave Christianity imperial favour, which included the empire founding churches and taking an active role in ecclesiastical affairs.¹⁵ Further, as the empire officially became a 'Christian Empire', it was seen that 'Christian' and 'Roman' were the same thing, and

⁸ Fletcher, 14.

⁹ Wood, 6.

¹⁰ Fletcher, 14.

¹¹ Fletcher, 15

¹² Fletcher, 16.

¹³ Fletcher, 16.

¹⁴ Fletcher, 16.

¹⁵ Fletcher, 19-22.

therefore Christianity was only for those within the empire, rather than the barbarians outside the borders of the empire, for the barbarians were not even seen as worthy of the faith.¹⁶ Fletcher states that “throughout the whole period of the [Western] Roman Empire not a single example is known of a man who was appointed bishop with the specific task of going beyond the frontier to a wholly pagan region in order to convert the barbarians living there.”¹⁷ He clarifies that there was an exception to this, namely communities that converted to Christianity on their own, who could then request a bishop to come help preach to their people.¹⁸ The early Christian communities that did emerge outside the borders of the empire did so through trade and other similar relations, rather than through any specific missions.¹⁹ Thus, the only regions beyond the borders of the empire which received bishops were those that were already Christian, and no efforts were made to convert them.²⁰ Through this, it is evident that there was a view of elitism amongst those in the Roman Empire at the time, with the belief that Christianity was exclusively Roman. However, despite this, Christianity did still spread throughout the empire, namely amongst rural western Europe, in places like Gaul and Iberia.²¹ That said, Fletcher states that it took a long time to fully convert those in the countryside, for the missionaries needed to show that God was stronger than the local beliefs, as well as the fact that the old beliefs had been ingrained in the consciousness of the peasants for many years.²² Thus, once Christianity became legal, it began to be associated with the Roman Empire, and in turn, viewed as elitely Roman, leading to an emphasis on preaching to all those who lived within the empire, including the numerous peasants in the countryside.

2.4 Emergence of Monasticism

It was around the time of Christianity’s legalization that the idea of monasticism also began to develop. In the development of the idea of monasticism Fletcher notes that “the end of persecution meant that martyrdom must thenceforth be found only outside Christendom or be understood in a metaphorical rather than a literal manner.”²³ Monasticism was born through the understanding and actions of the desert fathers, and was likely facilitated by the

¹⁶ Fletcher, 25.

¹⁷ Fletcher, 25.

¹⁸ Fletcher, 25.

¹⁹ Fletcher, 66.

²⁰ Fletcher, 78.

²¹ Fletcher, 45-51.

²² Fletcher, 40-64.

²³ Fletcher, 26.

new peace for Christians in Europe.²⁴ Further, “ascetic monasticism offered a means of self sacrifice which was the nearest thing to martyrdom in a world where martyrs were no longer being made.”²⁵ A working definition for monasticism at this time is that monasticism was a manner of life in which one had to shed their individualism, to live as one heart and soul within a community, and was the building of a heavenly society on earth with the intent of liberating oneself from private cares and selfish anxieties.²⁶ Thus, due to the desire for self sacrifice in early Christians, and their inability to access conventional martyrdom, a form of ascetic self sacrifice emerged, forming the frameworks for monasticism.

2.5 St Augustine and the Emergence of the Peregrinatio

Within roughly the hundred years following the legalization of Christianity, the idea of monasticism was expanded upon by the writings of St. Augustine of Hippo. It is evident that a theology of mission appears in the many writings of Augustine, who viewed the Roman Empire on secular terms.²⁷ In Augustine’s *City of God*, he presented the idea that there is a community of Christians whose city is not of this world, and that they are peregrini on the earth.²⁸ There had been a history of believing that Christians existed on earth but their home was Heaven up until this point in Christian history, however, Augustine was the one who took this idea and connected it to the idea of the peregrinus.²⁹ Until Augustine redefined the idea, the concept of the peregrinus meant to be a foreigner, a stranger, or a person without kinship connections, and was often used for foreigners in the Roman Empire.³⁰ Augustine envisioned that a Christian must “become a peregrinus, an exile or pilgrim, make of his life a peregrinatio, a pilgrimage, cutting loose like a monk from the worldly ties that bind and accepting instead the liberating society and disciplines of the city of God.”³¹ Thus, it is clear that Augustine began to envision the idea of Christians living a life free from the ties of the world, instead focusing on the teachings of Christ.

2.6 Changing Attitudes

Over the 200 years following the legalization of Christianity, a broader approach to missionary work began to develop. The first signs of this can be seen through Augustine

²⁴ Fletcher, 26.

²⁵ Fletcher, 26.

²⁶ Fletcher, 27.

²⁷ Fletcher, 28-30.

²⁸ Fletcher, 30.

²⁹ Fletcher, 30.

³⁰ Fletcher, 30.

³¹ Fletcher, 31. See also Augustine, *City of God*, XIX.17.

envisioning a Christianity that is not confined to the Roman Empire.³² Further, Augustine was one of the first to write about an understanding that the “all nations” from Matthew 28:19 were more than just those within the borders of the Roman Empire, viewing them to include the barbarians in Africa, and everyone on the whole earth.³³ He further echoes the ideas of Paul by presenting the idea that none can believe if they do not hear of the message, and that perhaps missionaries should be sent.³⁴ Despite this, several years passed before any missionaries were actively sent beyond the borders of the Roman Empire. In this time, however, several bishops were sent beyond the borders to existing Christian communities, namely Ulfilas, who went to Gothic land across the Danube, and Palladius, who went to the Irish believers.³⁵ Ulfilas is notable, for although he was sent with the express order not to perform missionary activity, he presided over the translation of the Bible into the Gothic language around 348, which was then used to help preach to the people.³⁶ This is important, for Ulfilas’ translation was one of the first Bible translations into a language outside of the Greco-Roman world.³⁷ Overall, it can be said that the works of Augustine and the example of those such as Ulfilas and Palladius helped lay the groundwork to going out beyond the borders of the Roman Empire.

Despite the writings of Augustine, and the various bishops sent beyond the borders of the empire, it is not until Saint Patrick that the first elements of mission to those beyond the borders of the empire appears. Patrick, after having returned to Britain, began to feel a calling to preach to the Irish, and was subsequently consecrated as a bishop and sent.³⁸ Patrick was the first to act upon the idea that teaching to all nations means teaching the barbarians beyond the frontiers of the Roman Empire.³⁹ Patrick’s mission into Ireland was targeted specifically towards people who had little to no prior exposure to Christianity.⁴⁰ Several years later, Pope Gregory the Great sent several missionaries to the Anglo-Saxon people to convert them.⁴¹ Although the Anglo-Saxon people settled in Britania, which was a region that had been part of the Roman Empire, the people were not Christians, though there were still likely small

³² Fletcher, 31.

³³ Fletcher, 31.

³⁴ Fletcher, 31-32.

³⁵ Fletcher, 73-80.

³⁶ Fletcher, 77-78.

³⁷ Fletcher, 77-78.

³⁸ Fletcher, 84.

³⁹ Fletcher, 86.

⁴⁰ Wood, 8.

⁴¹ Fletcher, 112.

Christian communities living within the Anglo-Saxon realms.⁴² Most famously, Gregory's mission is associated with 'non angli sed angeli' (not Angles but Angels), providing him with a specific viewpoint towards the Anglo-Saxons.⁴³ This viewpoint of Gregory is what caused him to send several missionaries to the Anglo-Saxon realms around the year 595/596, though it is likely that he was responding to a request, rather than initiating something himself.⁴⁴ The subsequent pope, Boniface V, continued to encourage the Anglo-Saxons to convert, and fully held the view that Christianity was the faith of all people under the sun.⁴⁵ Overall, there is an understanding that Christian mission only began to refer to 'all peoples' around the 7th century, and before that the phrase 'all nations' from Matthew 28:19 was interpreted solely as being those within the borders of the Roman Empire.⁴⁶ Thus, it can be seen that over the years the missionary attitude of those within the former Roman Empire began to change, something which began with the ideas of St. Augustine, and came to fruition through the actions of St Patrick and Pope Gregory the Great.

3. Saint Columbanus

3.1 Misconceptions about the Irish Church

Before examining Saint Columbanus and his missionary styles and techniques, the history of the Irish must briefly be touched upon. A common misconception that exists in the 21st century is that a separate 'Celtic Church' existed, one with unique traditions and beliefs. Further, it has been suggested that the idealized version of Irish Christians that many are aware of is the result of modern 'propaganda' and the writings of those from later time periods.⁴⁷ While it is true that the Irish Christians did have several unique traditions, the idea of a specific 'Celtic Church' is an anachronistic term. In reality, the Irish considered themselves no less Catholic than other Christians, as stated by Fletcher:

There never was a 'Celtic Church'. Irish churchmen repeatedly and sincerely professed their Roman allegiances: and if there were divergent practices between

⁴² Fletcher, 110-111.

⁴³ Fletcher, 113. My translation. For more information on Pope Gregory the Great and the Angles, see Bede, II.I.

⁴⁴ Fletcher, 114-116.

⁴⁵ Fletcher, 120.

⁴⁶ James T. Palmer, *Anglo-Saxons in a Frankish World, 690-900* (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols Publishers, 2009), 14.

⁴⁷ Ian Bradley, *Celtic Christianity: Making Myths and Chasing Dreams* (Edinburgh, United Kingdom: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), 1-3.

Rome and Ireland, well, so there were between Rome and Constantinople, or [Rome and] Alexandria [...] The terms 'Roman' and 'Celtic' are too monolithic. In terms of custom and practice, there were many churches in the sixth- and seventh-century Europe, not One Church. Christendom was many-mansioned.⁴⁸

Thus, it is important to keep in mind that although the Irish did have differing practices than those of Rome, they still considered themselves to be in allegiance with Rome. With this established, however, one must remember that although they held allegiances with Rome, their practices were not necessarily the same as those on the continent. Several key Celtic traditions included an absence of episcopal control, administration of penance, the ideal of pilgrimage, and of course their different dating of Easter.⁴⁹ These traditions may not have been unique to Ireland, but they have been used to reflect the idea of the 'Celtic Church'. Although this chapter will refer to the idea of the 'Celtic Church', the meaning will refer to the fact that there were different practices in Ireland, compared to the continent, rather than the Irish being a completely separate branch of Christianity.

3.2 Introduction to Irish Monastic Tradition and the Peregrinatio

As mentioned previously, the two main missionaries to the Irish were Palladius and Patrick, the latter of whom was the first to fully believe in preaching to those beyond the borders of the Roman Empire. As Christianity spread to the Irish, one of the most appealing aspects of it was monastic asceticism, and as such, asceticism grew alongside Christianity on the island.⁵⁰ This was because monasticism's focus on shared property and community connected quite well with the kinship structures of Ireland which existed on the island before its conversion.⁵¹ These kinship ties in Ireland were part of the pre-Christian traditions of Ireland, and were a key part of Irish society and law. In these Irish laws and traditions, one of the most severe punishments was exile, for it removed the person from his established kinsmen ties and community.⁵² This idea of exile being the most severe punishment in Irish law in turn directly corresponds to the ideas presented by Augustine regarding the peregrinatio, as previously established.⁵³ That being that the peregrinatio is a form of exile

⁴⁸ Fletcher, 92.

⁴⁹ Walker, xvi.

⁵⁰ Palmer, 61.

⁵¹ Fletcher, 91-92.

⁵² Fletcher, 93.

⁵³ Fletcher, 93.

from the things of this earth. Subsequently, “pilgrimage, in the sense of the ascetic renunciation of homeland and kinsfolk, [is key to understanding the conversion in the early middle ages]. Pilgrimage merged insensibly into mission. The monasteries founded by the exiled holy men had something of the character of mission status,” despite the fact that many were set up in non-pagan areas, although these sites were often on the margins of Christendom.⁵⁴ Along these lines, it is important to signify the importance of the fact that the peregrinatio included the voluntary action of cutting oneself off from one’s extended family (kinsfolk).⁵⁵ The voluntary aspect and renunciation of family are two key components in the peregrinatio. For the Irish, the peregrinatio became a key component behind their actions over the years, as will be seen through the actions of Saint Columbanus.

Further, the idea of monasticism and the peregrinatio are key to understanding the Irish. As previously mentioned, it was very common in Ireland to be drawn to monasticism, and many sought out the disciplined life of community and learning.⁵⁶ With regards to these lives, it is important to note that they were directly inspired by the monks in Egypt, however unlike in Egypt the Irish monks bound themselves to formal vows.⁵⁷ Despite this fact, there were very few written rules for the Irish monasteries, and the ascetic principles would instead form the basis of the communities.⁵⁸ Some of the important ascetic principles of Irish monasticism were the Irish penitentials, for they were key parts of Irish monastic law.⁵⁹ It was these penitentials which would comprise the basis for many of the formal vows taken by the Irish, as seen by their significance in monastic law. Further, there was the belief that the laity would be able to benefit from the penitentials, reinforcing their importance in ascetic Irish life.⁶⁰ As shown, the ascetic lifestyle of the Irish was very important to their Christian lives, to the extent that they took their devotion a step further than the Desert Fathers before them. With regard to the idea of the peregrinatio, it is important to mention that there was an inherent restless love of roaming amongst the Irish, one which taught them the ideal of

⁵⁴ Fletcher, 94.

⁵⁵ Oliver Davies, Introduction to *Celtic Spirituality*, ed. Oliver Davies and Thomas O’Loughlin (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1999), 19. Although almost every source on the peregrinatio includes this fact to some extent.

⁵⁶ Walker, xii.

⁵⁷ Walker, xii-xiii.

⁵⁸ Walker, xiv-xv.

⁵⁹ Rob Meens, *Penance in Medieval Europe, 600-1200* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 70-73. For more information on the Irish Penitentials see: *The Irish Penitentials*, ed. Bieler, Ludwig (Dublin, Ireland: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1963).

⁶⁰ Meens, 72.

pilgrimage.⁶¹ In connection to this it is important to mention that the Irish were driven by several factors, specifically their natural affections, missionary zeal, and the ‘wanderlust’ of their race.⁶² It is these factors that can be seen to be part of the basis behind the Irish peregrinatio and desire to travel for Christ. Additionally, it is important to mention that the Irish would establish monasteries as a key part of the missionary process, which in turn was strongly connected to the penitentials.⁶³ This further helps reflect the importance of monasticism to the Irish. Overall, it can be said that monasticism and pilgrimage are two key components to Irish Christianity, something which will be reflected in the writings of Columabnus, as will be seen later.

That said, there are alternative ideas, as seen by Palmer, who presents the idea that the origins of Irish mission arose from their unique outlook as being outside of the Roman Empire, specifically, “to take the command to preach to the ends of the Earth literally, helping to inspire an Irish Christian culture which took to heart the idea of mobile preaching and pastoral care.”⁶⁴ Although different than what most scholars present in regards to the peregrinatio, this view does connect with what was shown in the previous chapter, specifically in regards to the early Christian understanding with the borders of the Roman Empire being the ‘ends of the earth’. Overall, it is likely that being outside the Roman Empire and the history of Patrick’s mission did contribute to the Irish missionary mindset to some extent.

3.3 Biblical Origins

When looking at the Irish peregrinatio, it is important to understand the Biblical origins behind the idea. This can be found in Genesis 12:1, Luke 14:26-27, and Matthew 19:21.⁶⁵ These verses reflect two separate elements of the peregrinatio for the Irish. Genesis and Hebrews represent the idea of voluntarily leaving one’s homeland, whilst Luke and Matthew reflect the idea of abandoning one’s earthly possessions. Arguably the most important of these is Genesis 12:1, “And YHWH says to Abram, ‘Go for yourself, from your land, and from your family, and from the house of your father, to the land which I show

⁶¹ Walker, xvii.

⁶² Walker, xvii.

⁶³ Meens, 82-83.

⁶⁴ Palmer, 44.

⁶⁵ Palmer, 61; Katja Ritari, *Pilgrimage to Heaven: Eschatology and Monastic Spirituality in Early Medieval Ireland* (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols Publishers, 2016), 48-49.

you.”⁶⁶ This verse directly reflects the established idea of the peregrinatio, being the action of making one’s life an exile and pilgrimage and severing their ties to the earthly world. In connection, Matthew 19:21 reflects this when “Jesus said to [the young man], ‘If you will to be perfect, go away, sell what you have, give to the poor, and you will have treasure in Heaven, and come, follow Me.’”⁶⁷ This verse, and by extension Luke 14:26-28, represent the idea of giving up one’s earthly possessions. As presented previously, the peregrinatio revolves around the idea of abandoning one’s earthly possessions in favour of living a Godly lifestyle. Thus, each of these verses adequately reflect these ideas as presented, and in turn can be seen as part of the origin for the idea of the peregrinatio.

3.4 Introduction to St Columbanus

With the idea of the peregrinatio and its connection to the Irish established, it is now time to examine St. Columbanus and his missionary styles. It has been stated that the shift in missionary perspective first arose in St Columbanus.⁶⁸ To better understand this statement, one must first understand the background on Columbanus.⁶⁹ Columbanus was from the region of Leinster in Ireland, though the exact town is not known.⁷⁰ It is explained that the primary reason for Columbanus to leave Ireland was the advice given to him by a holy woman (anchoress) living in a cave to help him deal with attractive women who were tempting him.⁷¹ Following this, Columbanus travelled to the monastery of Bangor in Ulster, where he studied for several years before feeling called to go into the world.⁷² Following this call, Columbanus went first to Brittany, before finally heading to Gaul, where he lived a pious life and preached everywhere he went.⁷³ It is of note, however, that Jonas states that he went to Gaul because the Christian faith was weak there, whereas in his “Introduction,” Walker states that it is not clear why Columbanus initially chose Gaul, mentioning that it could have been because it was far away from Ireland, though he adds that Christianity in the region was struggling around the time that Columbanus arrived.⁷⁴ Thus, it is important to keep in mind that the

⁶⁶ Genesis 12:1 (LSV).

⁶⁷ Matthew 19:21 (LSV).

⁶⁸ Palmer, 14.

⁶⁹ For a more detailed background, see Jonas, “The Life of St. Columban.” or G. S. M. Walker, “Introduction,” in *Sancti Columbani Opera*, ed. G. S. M. Walker (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1957).

⁷⁰ Walker, xii.

⁷¹ Jonas, “The Life of St. Columban,” 7-8.

⁷² Jonas, 9.

⁷³ Jonas, 11.

⁷⁴ Jonas, 11; Walker, xix-xxii.

reasons provided by Jonas should not necessarily be taken as complete fact, and that the situation was perhaps not as clear as is presented by Jonas.

From this point the story of Columbanus' life expands significantly, although only main points will be touched upon. In Gaul he went to the King of Austrasia and Burgundy, who requested him to stay, which in turn led to the founding of a monastery at Luxeuil, where many Christians could gather and learn from Columbanus' teachings.⁷⁵ Despite founding a monastery, Columbanus continued to wander the region, performing many miracles as he travelled.⁷⁶ After many years of life spent this way, Columbanus eventually had a falling out with the King, primarily due to his differing customs, and was expelled from Gaul.⁷⁷ That said, he did not wish to leave, and thus stayed in the region for a while longer stating, "it would not be pleasing to my Creator if I should go back to the home I left because of my love for Christ."⁷⁸ However after a while he did acquiesce and agreed to leave, if only to protect others, yet he made it only so far as Nantes before he was stopped by what Jonas refers to as God's will.⁷⁹ In the end, he had been in the region for almost twenty years, having left in 610.⁸⁰

Being prevented from returning to Ireland is the second turning point in Columbanus' life, with the first being his stay in Luxeuil, a shift which is evident in the text. As mentioned, he was prevented from returning to Italy by God's will, and after such he was asked by another Frankish King to go preach to the Alemanni, and went to Bregenz to proselytize.⁸¹ During this time, Columbanus made it clear that his eventual goal was to visit Italy, and throughout his journeys after his time in Nantes he identified himself as a pilgrim.⁸² For several years he remained in the region of Bregenz, preaching to and attempting to convert the Alemanni, having varying degrees of success.⁸³ It is mentioned that at one point Columbanus considered going to the Slavic Wends to preach, but was prevented by an Angel

⁷⁵ Jonas, 12-17.

⁷⁶ Jonas, 17-32.

⁷⁷ Jonas, 32-34.

⁷⁸ Jonas, 33-36.

⁷⁹ Jonas, 37-47.

⁸⁰ Jonas, 38; Walker, x.

⁸¹ Jonas, 47-53. The translation for Jonas' "Life" refers to them as Swabians, whilst Walker identifies them as Suebi. Other sources use the terms Suevi, Swiss, Alemanni, and German. The term 'Alemanni' is being used as that is the name I am familiar with for the people of the region in question.

⁸² Jonas, 47-52.

⁸³ Jonas, 52-53.

of the Lord who instructed him not to go.⁸⁴ Continuing on, Jonas states that once a feud between kings had ended, Columbanus finally went to Italy where he met the King of the Lombards in Milan.⁸⁵ After being permitted to settle where he pleased, Columbanus made his way to Bobbio, where he restored an old church and founded a monastery.⁸⁶ It is at this monastery in Bobbio where he eventually died on November 23, 615.⁸⁷ As evident by the sources, Columbanus lived a life devoted to following God's will for his life, one primarily of travelling and preaching. A good summary of Columbanus' life is provided by Walker, who explains that "all his activities were subordinate to this one end, and with the self-sacrifice that can be seen so close to self-assertion, he worked out his soul's salvation by the one true pathway he knew. He was a missionary through circumstance, a monk by vocation; a contemplative, too frequently driven to action by the voices of this world; a pilgrim on the road to paradise."⁸⁸

3.5 Introduction to Columbanus' Sermons

As established, the peregrinatio was a key component to Irish monasticism, and Columbanus has been said to have been one of the key figures in understanding the peregrinatio. A reflection of this idea can be found in the various sermons of Columbanus. As already mentioned, however, only the fifth and eighth sermon will be assessed, as they are the two which directly relate to the idea of the peregrinatio, and by extension, Columbanus' missionary style. The sermons of Columbanus were written during his time in Bobbio, towards the end of his life. In general, Columbanus' sermons were written with the intention to help those at the monastery in Bobbio to live a more spiritual life. That said, they do provide insight into the idea of the peregrinatio, which in turn reflects upon his missionary style. Thus, it is through his sermons where one can gather an understanding of what Columbanus' missionary styles were.

3.6 Sermon 5

In his fifth sermon, Columbanus explains the concept of life being a journey towards Heaven. Columbanus begins the sermon by presenting the idea that life is a constant, ever changing, journey, following up by explaining that one should press through life like

⁸⁴ Jonas, 56.

⁸⁵ Jonas, 59.

⁸⁶ Jonas, 59-60.

⁸⁷ Walker, x.

⁸⁸ Walker, xxxii.

wayfarers, seeking the true homeland.⁸⁹ Columbanus continues his sermon by explaining how life is to be thought of as a way and an ascent, or a journey, and that there is no point in reaching great heights in this life for one should not seek what can be found in the homeland in the journey.⁹⁰ Through this explanation, Columbanus connects the journey that is life to the idea that the things of life are temporary, and that only that which exists in Heaven is eternal. Further, this explanation is reminiscent of the peregrinatio through how one of the purposes of the peregrinatio was to leave one's home behind and travel for God. Although Columbanus does not directly mention the idea of leaving home to follow God, he does explain how the journey itself should not be considered one's home, and that one should not become at ease in it or make it their home, but rather that the focus should be on one's eternal possessions.⁹¹ By presenting the idea that the journey should not be considered one's home, Columbanus implies that the idea of life as a journey is reflective of the idea of the peregrinatio being a journey. Overall, it is clear that the fifth sermon distinctly helps to explain and describe that life is a journey, with Heaven being the final goal of the journey.

3.7 Sermon 8

When looking at the eighth sermon, Columbanus is further explaining the idea of life being a journey, whilst also connecting it to the idea of pressing on towards God. This is evident through how he begins by explaining that one's duty is not to love anything on earth, but rather to love and desire the things above, and to seek their home there, for one has no home on earth since the Father is in Heaven.⁹² The beginning of the eighth sermon directly connects to where the fifth left off, in part due to its connection to the idea of not focusing on the things of this world, but also through how it connects the idea of seeking one's home in Heaven rather than on earth. Following up with this, Columbanus makes a key statement, being that God is present everywhere by virtue of His power and the greatness of His divinity.⁹³ He also presents the idea that although God is present to everyone, everywhere, He remains invisible and unfathomable, yet is still known and present according to the degree of one's purity.⁹⁴ This connects to the idea that Columbanus is presenting life being a journey,

⁸⁹ Columbanus, "Sermon 5," in *Celtic Spirituality*, ed. Oliver Davies and Thomas O'Loughlin (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1999), 353-354.

⁹⁰ Columbanus, "Sermon 5."

⁹¹ Columbanus, "Sermon 5."

⁹² Columbanus, "Sermon 8," in *Celtic Spirituality*, ed. Oliver Davies and Thomas O'Loughlin (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1999), 355-356.

⁹³ Columbanus, "Sermon 8."

⁹⁴ Columbanus, "Sermon 8."

for it shows how one might be able to connect with God in order to better make the life journey to Heaven. It can also be seen that by making the statement that God is present yet unfathomable, Columbanus is showing how one should not focus on the things of this world, but rather on achieving purity through striving for the things of Heaven, for only then, as presented by Columbanus, can one connect with God. As the sermon continues, Columbanus explains that one should focus on being filled with the urgent longing of heavenly desires to ensure that one does not become ensnared by earthly ones, further reinforcing the idea of seeking one's home in Heaven.⁹⁵ Towards the end of the sermon, Columbanus expands upon this, providing an explanation that is suggested to be directly connected to the idea of the peregrinatio. Specifically, this is seen when he directs "us [to] keep this principle, therefore, that we should live as travellers and pilgrims on the road, as guests of the world, free of lusts and earthly desires."⁹⁶ By making such a directive, Columbanus is making a statement related to the idea of the peregrinatio, for as previously mentioned the peregrinatio was the idea of going out into the world and living as strangers and foreigners, as well as the peregrinatio being a pilgrimage to God.

3.8 Columbanus and the Peregrinatio

As stated, both sermons have a clear underlying theme, being that one should live as though life were a journey towards God, something which relates directly to the idea of the peregrinatio, being itself the journey to God. When taking a closer look at the sermons, and the underlying theme in particular, a better understanding arises of how they relate to the idea of the peregrinatio, and specifically the idea of monasticism as a pilgrimage. It is this idea of monasticism as pilgrimage, and specifically the idea of a journey to God, that can be seen as having been part of the specific missionary style of Columbanus. The other aspect was, of course, the peregrinatio, as explained previously. Indeed, the idea of monasticism as pilgrimage is directly related to the idea of the peregrinatio. Additionally, it is worth noting that these two sermons by Columbanus clearly reflect the previously established explanation of the peregrinatio by St Augustine. This further helps illustrate the relation between Columbanus' sermons and the idea of the peregrinatio. Though it is important to note that the idea of monasticism as a pilgrimage, as used by Columbanus, is more noticeable as a

⁹⁵ Columbanus, "Sermon 8."

⁹⁶ Columbanus, "Sermon 8."

metaphor, rather than a distinct connection.⁹⁷ That said, the connection between monasticism and pilgrimage is still present, and still a key part of what Columbanus is stating. Another important note is that Columbanus' idea of life as a pilgrimage, as presented in his sermons, was likely not referring to physical travel, but rather to an inner journey and orientation of one's life towards God, as evident by his focus on monastic stability.⁹⁸ However, despite this, the connection between the sermons and the peregrinatio still exists, specifically through how the values of both are deeply interconnected. Additionally, despite the intent being towards an inner journey, the idea of life as a journey to God has a clear correlation towards the idea of the peregrinatio, specifically through how the sermons of Columbanus suggest a direct reflection towards the ideals of the Irish monks who went on the peregrinatio.

Furthermore, a connection is evident between the spiritual pilgrimage, being the inner journey described by Columbanus, and pilgrimage as an actual journey, being that of the peregrinatio, when comparing Genesis 12:1 and Hebrews 11:8-10.⁹⁹ Specifically, when looking at these two verses through the lens of Abraham following God's calling, a clear connection between the two concepts is evident. In Genesis 12:1 this connection appears when "YHWH says to Abram, 'Go for yourself, from your land, and from your family, and from the house of your father, to the land which I show you.'"¹⁰⁰ Similarly, in Hebrews 11:8-10 the connection arises once more:

By faith Abraham, being called, obeyed, to go forth into the place that he was about to receive for an inheritance, and he went forth, not knowing to where he goes; by faith he sojourned in the land of the promise as a strange country, having dwelt in the dwelling places with Isaac and Jacob, fellow-heirs of the same promise, for he was looking for the city having the foundations, whose craftsman and constructor [is] God.

¹⁰¹

Both of these verses from the Bible reflect the idea presented by Columbanus, specifically that one should live in faith of God and as a pilgrim on Earth. A view that is

⁹⁷ Ritari, 48.

⁹⁸ Ritari, 85-86.

⁹⁹ Ritari, 48-49.

¹⁰⁰ Genesis 12:1 (LSV).

¹⁰¹ Hebrews 11:8-10 (LSV).

shown through how the Bible explains that Abraham was commanded by God to leave his homeland and go to a new land that was not known to him at the time. Further, these verses present the idea that one should live as a foreigner, a pilgrim, following God's commands in faith. Which in turn compares to what is presented by Columbanus, being that life on Earth is a journey and that this journey should be lived by seeking Heaven. These verses show both the idea of a physical journey, being that Abraham physically went out of his old land and to a new land that God showed him, and the idea of a spiritual journey, for Abraham sought after the city founded by God. The physical journey portion of these verses relates directly to the idea of the peregrinatio, as previously established, whilst the spiritual journey connects the ideas presented in the sermons of Columbanus. Put together, they demonstrate the idea of the joining of the ideas between the peregrinatio and the sermons, and show how it is possible for both to be joined as one.

Overall, these ideas presented in Columbanus' sermons can be seen as reflective of his missionary style. For, as seen, Columbanus did go off and found monasteries as he travelled throughout Europe, most notably in Luxeuil and Bobbio. Furthermore, Columbanus' sermons can be seen to be reflective of the larger understanding of the peregrinatio, something which can be seen as the foundation for Irish missionary understanding. Though, as mentioned, the idea of the peregrinatio is directly connected to the idea of monasticism. Something which Columbanus directly presents in his sermons, and which can be seen as influential in the understanding of Columbanus' sermons and missionary style. In the end, although much of his time was spent amongst Christians, Columbanus' actions directly reflect upon the base understanding of the peregrinatio and Irish monasticism.

4 Saint Boniface

4.1 Brief Introduction to the Anglo-Saxons

As previously established, the conversion of the Anglo-Saxons was initiated by Gregory the Great. For it was Pope Gregory who viewed the Anglo-Saxons along the lines of the 'non angli sed angeli' story, and subsequently sent several missionaries to their land to convert these so-called 'angels'. This in turn led to several missions across England, which contributed to the conversion of the Anglo-Saxon people. The conversion of the Anglo-Saxon people occurred throughout the years following the mission sent by Gregory. It is this background behind the Anglo-Saxon conversion, which subsequently is connected to the

Anglo-Saxon missionaries.¹⁰² Since a key figure in the conversion of the Anglo-Saxons was Pope Gregory the Great, his ideas can be seen to have permeated throughout the Christian mindset of the Anglo-Saxons at the time, which resulted in Gregory having influence amongst the Anglo-Saxons.¹⁰³ This in turn connects to the Anglo-Saxon missionary spirit to a certain degree. Prior to Boniface, several other missionaries went out from England to the continent. Most notable amongst these is that of Saint Willibrord, who went from Northumbria to Frisia, where he stayed as archbishop until his death.¹⁰⁴ Willibrord played a small role in the life of St Boniface, as will be seen. However, despite the fact that several missionaries went out from England prior to Boniface, this paper will focus on that of Boniface because it is evident that Boniface represents a turning point in the history of Christian mission.

4.2 Introduction to St Boniface

Now that the conversion of the Anglo-Saxons has been reestablished, it is time to turn to St Boniface. First, it is important to reiterate once more that St Boniface was more than just a missionary, he also helped reform the Frankish Church. However, as previously mentioned this will only briefly be touched upon, as the primary focus here is his missionary work. Further, it bears mentioning that Boniface's original name was Winfrith.¹⁰⁵ As shall be seen, the name 'Boniface' was bestowed upon him by the Pope when he took his vows. Throughout this and subsequent chapters, however, the name Boniface will be used, rather than Winfrith, to avoid confusion.

From an early age Boniface had desired to follow a religious life, and as a young boy eventually joined a monastery at Exeter.¹⁰⁶ After several years of hard work and studies, Boniface was eventually sent to the archbishop of Canterbury as a messenger.¹⁰⁷ Shortly after his visit Boniface began to desire to travel abroad, something he prayed about for a long time, before eventually being granted permission and funding from his brethren.¹⁰⁸ Upon receiving

¹⁰² Palmer, 27-28.

¹⁰³ Palmer, 43.

¹⁰⁴ For Further information, see Alcuin. "The Life of St. Willibrord." In *The Anglo-Saxon Missionaries in Germany*, translated and edited by C. H. Talbot, 3-22. London: Sheed and Ward, 1954. As well as Palmer, *Anglo-Saxons in a Frankish World*.

¹⁰⁵ Multiple spellings exist for Boniface's pre-ordination name, the name 'Winfrith' shall be used here as it is the one used by Palmer in *Anglo-Saxons in a Frankish World*. The translation of "Life of St. Boniface" used omits any mention of Boniface's pre-ordination name.

¹⁰⁶ Willibald, "The Life of St. Boniface," 1-2.

¹⁰⁷ Willibald, 3-4.

¹⁰⁸ Willibald, 4.

the blessing of those in the monastery, Boniface went to Frisia, where the king of the Frisians, Radbod, was persecuting the Christians living in the region.¹⁰⁹ Willibald, writer of the “Life,” goes on to mention that Boniface sought the permission of Radbod to preach in Frisia, though is unclear on the results of the request, and he follows up by stating that Boniface remained in Frisia for the summer, but was unsuccessful and returned to Exeter.¹¹⁰ As shall be seen, this was only the beginning of Boniface’s missionary life, and Frisia as a mission location will emerge several more times.

For a short while Boniface remained in the monastery of Exeter, however shortly after the abbot died, he set forth for Rome.¹¹¹ Once in Rome Boniface petitioned the Pope for permission to preach, which he felt called to do.¹¹² In response, the Pope sent him out to the Germans to see if they were ready to receive the Word.¹¹³ From here Boniface went forth to Thuringia, where he spoke with church elders and began preaching to the people.¹¹⁴ This, however, did not last long, and he soon returned to Frisia once he got word that Radbod was dead.¹¹⁵ In Frisia, he worked with Willibrord, the archbishop of Utrecht, in order to preach to Frisian people.¹¹⁶ This time in Frisia can be seen as a continuation of his earlier attempts to preach in the region. However, when Willibrord was older and knew he would be passing soon, he offered Boniface the position of archbishop of Utrecht.¹¹⁷ Yet Boniface declined, saying,

Most holy Bishop, you, as spiritual leader here, know full well that I came to Germany at the express command of Pope Gregory, of holy memory. As the envoy of the Apostolic See sent to the barbarian countries of the West, I freely gave my service to you and your diocese without the knowledge of my master, to whose service I am bound by vow even to this day. Therefore without the counsel and permission of the

¹⁰⁹ Willibald, 4. The title of Radbod is unclear, as some sources refer to him as ‘duke’ whilst others as ‘king’. This paper will use ‘king’, as that is what was mentioned in the main source used (Life of St Boniface). Further, multiple spellings exist for Radbod’s name, ranging from Radboud to Redbad. This paper will use Radbod, as again it is what was used in the main source.

¹¹⁰ Willibald, 4.

¹¹¹ Willibald, 5.

¹¹² Willibald, 5.

¹¹³ Willibald, 5.

¹¹⁴ Willibald, 5. The area of Thuringia is described in the book as being the area east of the Rhine and north of the Danube.

¹¹⁵ Willibald, 5.

¹¹⁶ Willibald, 5.

¹¹⁷ Willibald, 5.

Apostolic See and without its express command I dare not accept so exalted and sublime an office.¹¹⁸

Such a statement was likely used to help Boniface decline the offered position of archbishop of Frisia, though it still reflects the fact of Boniface's situation. After making this statement, Boniface returned to Germany and continued to preach there as instructed by the pope.¹¹⁹ Eventually, Boniface sent a letter to the pope to ask for guidance and provide a report on his work, to which the pope called him back to Rome.¹²⁰ In Rome Boniface subsequently provided his report to the pope in person, mentioning his successes in converting the German people.¹²¹ It is at this point that the pope appointed Boniface to the position of bishop, with the intent to preach to the German people, gave him the name of 'Boniface', officially changing his name from Winfrith to Boniface, and then sending Boniface back to Germany to continue his mission.¹²² As this shows, Boniface had strong ties to Rome, which were reflected in his responses to Willibrord when he attempted to appoint Boniface as his successor.

Upon his return to Germany, Boniface resumed his preaching, and in Hesse faced resistance to his preachings. In order to push back against this resistance in Hesse, Willibald reports that Boniface cut down a sacred oak tree that held religious significance to the pagans, and subsequently built a church on the spot where it once stood, an act which resulted in many conversions.¹²³ An important point to make is that as Boniface travelled throughout the region and preached he set up many churches and monasteries in areas where there were many successful converts.¹²⁴ Several years later, after working as he had been, Boniface returned to Rome for a third time, and Willibald reports that he preached and received much praise for his work whilst in Rome, before leaving to go north once more.¹²⁵ Although it holds little importance to his missionary activities, it is important to mention that Boniface played a significant role in helping to reform both the Frankish and Bavarian churches,

¹¹⁸ Willibald, 5.

¹¹⁹ Willibald, 5-6.

¹²⁰ Willibald, 6.

¹²¹ Willibald, 6.

¹²² Willibald, 6.

¹²³ Willibald, 6.

¹²⁴ Willibald, 6.

¹²⁵ Willibald, 7.

helping the former to align itself with Rome, and reorganizing the structure of the latter.¹²⁶ When he himself was getting older, Boniface took care of several things, settling them for his eventual death, and returned to Frisia, for that was where he had started.¹²⁷ In Frisia he spent much time preaching and travelling the countryside, eventually heading into the north of the region.¹²⁸ In the north he eventually made his way to Dokkum, where he was woken early one morning by a group of pagans, who proceeded to attack his camp and kill those located there, including Boniface.¹²⁹ It was at this point where Boniface met his end, martyred by those who he had been preaching amongst. As was common for writers of the Life of Saints at the time, Willibrord takes care to mention how Boniface accepted the martyrdom without resistance, and that he accepted his fate.¹³⁰ Overall, it can be seen that Boniface led a life of preaching in Germany, one with strong ties to Rome and the papacy throughout it all.

4.3 Correspondence of Boniface

During his time in Germany and elsewhere, Boniface had several correspondences with friends and relations, primarily back in England, but also with the pope in Rome. Written correspondences like these were common amongst the educated people at the time, and it was common for priests and bishops to write letters between themselves and others. With the correspondences of Boniface, many copies still remain of the letters he sent and those which were sent to him. This is something that does not always happen, as over the years it is common for written documents to be lost. Several of these correspondences can be used to help gather a better understanding of his missionary style, however it is important to note that their mention of this missionary style is not as clear as some other sources may have been. Further, it is worth noting that these correspondences not only contain letters written by Boniface to various relations in England, including abbots, abbesses, priests, and bishops, as well as to the Pope in Rome, but that they also contain letters written by those relations in England to Boniface, and by the Pope to Boniface. Something which reflects upon the fact that despite being in a pagan country, Boniface still maintained his connections to his homeland.

¹²⁶ Willibald, 7-8.

¹²⁷ Willibald, 8.

¹²⁸ Willibald, 8. This area is known today as the Dutch Province of Friesland.

¹²⁹ Willibald, 8.

¹³⁰ Willibald, 8.

Several of the correspondences (letters) will be assessed, starting with the third correspondence, which is written by Pope Gregory II to Boniface. This letter explains some of the background on Boniface's mission, as well as providing details on the interaction between the pope and Boniface. The letter begins with the mention of how Boniface submitted his plans for the desired mission to Germany to Gregory, and Boniface's recognition of the pope's authority.¹³¹ This reflects the direct way in which Boniface sought the authority of the pope in order to go on his mission to the Germans. Further, it shows that Boniface believed that it was necessary to get approval of the pope before going on his mission. This correspondence concludes with the pope granting Boniface his mission to the German people, and the papal authority to go on said mission.¹³² Boniface receiving the blessing of the pope again represents the fact that Boniface secured papal authority to go on his missionary work. In the fifth correspondence Boniface takes his oath of office, and pledges his loyalty solely to the pope.¹³³ This, in turn, helps to illustrate just how committed Boniface was to the pope, for it represents the fact that Boniface made a solemn commitment to serve only the pope, which is seen in the "Life" when Boniface gets in touch with each new pope who is elected throughout his years in Germany. Further correspondences show that Pope Gregory II provided Boniface with not only instructions on how to be a good bishop, but also with introductions to the various city and church leaders that Boniface may encounter.¹³⁴ These letters help to further illustrate the connection Boniface had with the pope, and the ways in which Boniface relied upon Papal authority during his time as a missionary. Further, it can be seen that several other correspondences provide reflections upon the same lines. In several correspondences it is evident that Boniface would seek out the opinion of the pope for advice in his missionary work.¹³⁵ In another correspondence Boniface writes a letter to a relation in England seeking to help regarding one of the instructions given to him by the pope, and rather than desiring to counter the instruction, Boniface recognizes it

¹³¹ Correspondence III from Pope Gregory II to Boniface, 68, "The Correspondence of St. Boniface," In *The Anglo-Saxon Missionaries in Germany*, ed. C. H. Talbot, 65-149.

¹³² Correspondence 3 from Gregory to Boniface.

¹³³ Oath of Boniface, 70-71, "The Correspondence of St. Boniface," In *The Anglo-Saxon Missionaries in Germany*, ed. C.H. Talbot, 65-149.

¹³⁴ Correspondences 6-9, 71-74, "The Correspondence of St. Boniface," In *The Anglo-Saxon Missionaries in Germany*, ed. C.H. Talbot, 65-149.

¹³⁵ Correspondence XIV from Pope Gregory II to Boniface, 80-83, "The Correspondence of St. Boniface," In *The Anglo-Saxon Missionaries in Germany*, ed. C.H. Talbot, 65-149. Several other correspondences contain references to this as well.

and seeks to understand it.¹³⁶ Both such examples clearly present the fact that as Boniface did his missionary work, he would turn to the pope for advice, authority, and anything else he may desire during the work.

4.4 Boniface as a Missionary

As established by the evidence, it is clear that the specific missionary style presented by Boniface is one in which there is a direct relation between Boniface and the papacy. However, what must also be touched upon briefly is the worldview of the Anglo-Saxons. For there was a common belief amongst the Anglo-Saxons that the various German groups were of a common identity and culture, even if this was not always true.¹³⁷ Which means that the Anglo-Saxons often believed they held a common identity with the various Germans on the continent, namely the Frisians, Saxons, Hessians, Thuringians, Alemanni, Bavarians, and others. That said, the idea of there being a common cultural identity was not always true, and during this time many viewed themselves as part of the local tribe more so than as part of a larger German identity.¹³⁸ As previously established, there was a strong connection between the Anglo-Saxon missionary perspective, and the views of Pope Gregory the Great. This connection can be related to Gregory's idea of 'diversity within unity', which is the idea that there are many different voices brought together in a single faith.¹³⁹ This idea presented by Gregory can be seen as having had an influence on the Anglo-Saxons, in connection to the view of the Anglo-Saxons as angels, as previously mentioned. Additionally, through the viewing of the Anglo-Saxons as 'angels', it can be seen that Gregory inadvertently influenced the idea that the Anglo-Saxons were specifically chosen to go out and preach on the continent.¹⁴⁰ Such a belief further reinforces the aforementioned idea that Gregory the Great had an important influence on the outlook of the Anglo-Saxons. Overall, it can be said that to a certain extent Gregory the Great can be seen as the origin behind the Anglo-Saxon missionary outlook.

Further, it is evident that this influence can be seen through Boniface to a certain extent. This connection is that Boniface also had an understanding of a common Germanic

¹³⁶ Correspondence XIX from Boniface to Archbishop Nothelm of Canterbury, 89-90, "The Correspondence of St. Boniface," In *The Anglo-Saxon Missionaries in Germany*, ed. C.H. Talbot.

¹³⁷ Palmer, 47-50.

¹³⁸ Palmer, 47-50.

¹³⁹ Palmer, 43.

¹⁴⁰ Miriam Adan Jones, "A Chosen Missionary People? Willibrord, Boniface, and the Election of the Angli," *Medieval Worlds* Medieval Worlds, no. 3 (2016): 98-99, doi:10.1553/medievalworlds_no2_2015s98, 98. However, this view is not accepted by all scholars - *ibid*, 99.

identity between the Anglo-Saxons and the Germans of the continent.¹⁴¹ That said, however, this connection was not to the same extent as other connections may have been. For although Boniface did have the understanding of a common Germanic identity, it is evident in his “Life” that this was mostly amongst the Frisians and the Saxons. As when Boniface first went to preach in Frisia, his motivation was to preach to and convert his kin on the continent, and he even wished to go further into Saxony, though that was not possible at the time.¹⁴² This clearly shows the understanding of Boniface that there was, to some extent, a connection between the Anglo-Saxons and the Germanic people of the continent. Although as seen, this connection was limited to that of the Frisians and Saxons of the north, rather than all Germanic people. That said, this element did still have a significant impact on Boniface’s desire to preach, and should not be discounted entirely.

As mentioned, a significant element of the missionary style of Boniface was the influence of the papacy. For it can be seen that the papacy had a direct influence on the ideas of Boniface throughout his entire career as a missionary, beginning with his second trip to the continent.¹⁴³ This influence can be best summed up by the ninth correspondence from Pope Gregory to Charles Martel, which states that, “Boniface [...] is being sent to preach the faith to the peoples of Germany who dwell on the eastern bank of the Rhine.”¹⁴⁴ Evidently, it was important for Boniface to have the blessing of the pope, and on top of that, it is clear that the pope outlined a very clear mission for Boniface. An example of Boniface following the pope’s mission for him is evident in the aforementioned statement he gave to Willibrord, in which he stated that he could not remain in Frisia, as he was on a mission from the pope to preach to the German people.¹⁴⁵ Furthermore, the influence of the pope in Boniface’s missionary work is evident throughout Willibalds “Life,” as well as the correspondences of Boniface, as previously mentioned. This backing of the pope in his mission enabled Boniface to not only expand the Catholic Church, but also reform the Frankish Church.¹⁴⁶ This expansion of the influence of the Catholic Church, as well as the expansion of its adherents and power, further reflects the ways in which Boniface was connected with the papacy and

¹⁴¹ Palmer, 51.

¹⁴² Willibald, 4.

¹⁴³ Palmer, 52.

¹⁴⁴ Correspondence 9 from Gregory to Charles Martel.; Palmer, 53. *Anglo-Saxons in a Frankish World* presents the Latin text “ad predicandem plebibus germaniae gentis,” for this idea.

¹⁴⁵ Willibald, 5.

¹⁴⁶ David Bosch, *Transforming Mission* (New York: Orbis Books, 1991), p.235.

how it influenced his mission. Thus it can be seen that the influence of the papacy had a significant role on Boniface's missionary work.

This influence of Rome in Boniface's work can be further seen through the various areas of activity where Boniface operated. Throughout his time in Germany, the city of Mainz was a key location for Boniface and is where much of the Anglo-Saxon influences of his work can be seen.¹⁴⁷ The other key area of Boniface's work was the monastery at Fulda, which is where his body was taken after his martyrdom.¹⁴⁸ In these locations and others the churches established by Boniface share many common traits with the Old St Peter's in Rome, something which is likely done to emphasize their loyalty to Rome.¹⁴⁹ By taking traits from the main church in Rome and using them for the churches he founded in Germany, Boniface once again is showing how he is subservient to Rome in his work. Further, it shows how the churches and monasteries founded by Boniface were seen as being under the influence of Rome, rather than the local rulers in each area. Additionally, it is worth noting that many of the places in which Boniface founded monasteries were key locations of his missionary work.¹⁵⁰ Along these lines, the episcopal centres established by Boniface were founded based upon the advice of the pope, rather than solely upon the opinion of Boniface.¹⁵¹ Together, these facts once again emphasize how Boniface's missionary work was done with connection to Rome. For he would found monasteries which had their basis in the architecture of St Peter's in Rome, along key points of his missionary activities, following the specific advice of the pope. All of which points to a specific reliance upon the papacy for his mission work.

Another item of note with regards to Boniface, is that he kept relations with those in England. This can be primarily seen through the various correspondences between him and those in England. But it is also worth noting that Anglo-Saxon missionaries would often bring with them support from other Anglo-Saxons, and that many of those who went with Boniface were also from England.¹⁵² Although it merits mention that it was not unusual for missionaries to bring with them an entourage from their native homeland as they went out. In this instance, however, it is worth noting that because Boniface had a significant number of

¹⁴⁷ David Parsons, "Some Churches of the Anglo-Saxon Missionaries in Southern Germany: A Review of the Evidence," *Early Medieval Europe* 8, no. 1 (1998): 32-33, doi:10.1111/1468-0254.00038, 31.

¹⁴⁸ Willibald, 8.

¹⁴⁹ Parsons, 32.

¹⁵⁰ Parsons, 37-38.

¹⁵¹ Parsons, 39-40.

¹⁵² Jones, 105.

workers from England with him when he was martyred in Dokkum.¹⁵³ This suggests that new workers from England would often join Boniface throughout his time in Germany, although there is little evidence one way or the other in this regard. Further, the fact that Boniface kept relations with those in England is important, for there are several instances where Boniface would make requests for books from various people in England.¹⁵⁴ This shows that through these connections Boniface was able to both further his learning, and find answers to things that he was uncertain about. It also presents an implication that there were a lack of books during his mission work, and that as a result Boniface carried his learning with him in his head.¹⁵⁵ Although not particularly relevant to his missionary work, the fact that Boniface carried his learning with him via memory rather than physical books can be seen most clearly through several of his letters when he asks for guidance on certain spiritual elements.

Overall, it is clear that Boniface was strongly connected to Rome throughout his missionary work, and that this connection is reflective of his specific missionary style. For as demonstrated, Boniface would follow the advice of the pope in almost everything he did as a missionary, from the founding of new monasteries to the advice on where to go. In addition, the papal blessing which Boniface received before heading into Germany is indicative of his connection with Rome. It is this connection with Rome that can be seen as having played an important part in Boniface's mission as well as in the churches and monasteries he founded. This papal influence is evident all throughout his letters and Willibald's "Life of St Boniface," and shows Boniface's connection with the papacy. Finally, as seen, it is evident that the most significant element of Boniface's missionary work was that of his connection with the papacy in Rome.

5. An Examination of St Columbanus' and St Boniface's Missionary Styles

5.1 Brief Review of St Columbanus

Saint Columbanus was an Irish peregrinatio from Ireland who travelled through Gaul and eventually founded the monastery of Bobbio, where he died. Columbanus initially left Ireland in order to live a more spiritual life. As established, Columbanus' journey throughout Gaul was one in which he founded monasteries, is reported to have converted people, and

¹⁵³ Willibald, 8.

¹⁵⁴ Andy Orchard, "Old Sources, New Resources: Finding the Right Formula for Boniface," *Anglo-Saxon England* 30 (December 2001): 35-36, doi:10.1017/s0263675101000023, 15.

¹⁵⁵ Orchard, 35-36.

encountered difficulties due to his differing traditions from those in Gaul. Although not a missionary in the traditional sense, for he spent little time amongst pagans, Columbanus still participated in missionary activities in converting people throughout his travels. These activities of Columbanus are known as the peregrinatio, and as previously mentioned are best seen through the sermons he gave at Bobbio. The concept of the peregrinatio as established is connected to the idea of monasticism as pilgrimage, and beyond that, it is the idea that one should live as if their life is a journey to God. It is this idea that can be seen as the specific missionary style of Columbanus, and is this idea of the peregrinatio which will be examined alongside the style of Boniface.

5.2 Brief Review of St Boniface

Saint Boniface was an Anglo-Saxon missionary who travelled from Exeter throughout continental Europe, from Frisia to Germany to Rome, and eventually back to Frisia where he was martyred. Boniface's initial travel to Frisia, and subsequent journeys to Rome and Germany, were undertaken with the specific purpose of preaching to, and converting, the pagans. As already mentioned, Boniface's travels through Germany were at the behest of the pope, who specifically gave Boniface his instructions on where to travel and what he was to do. These instructions were for Boniface to travel to the areas west of the Rhine and preach to the German people. As he preached, Boniface would often defer to the authority of the pope, and many correspondences exist which show this. It is this reliance upon Rome which can be seen as the specific missionary style of Boniface, for throughout almost his entire career as a missionary Boniface would steadily and repeatedly follow the desire of Rome. Notably his work, as established, helped to further the Catholic Church throughout Europe. Overall, it is the missionary style of being connected with the Catholic Church that will be examined alongside the style of Columbanus.

5.3 Similarities Between their Missionary Styles

When examining the missionary styles of Columbanus and Boniface it can be seen that there are several similarities in their styles. Although the similarities are not as distinct as the differences, they are still present. When examining the similarities of the missionary styles between the two, it is important to keep in mind their cultural differences. For Columbanus was Irish and Boniface was Anglo-Saxon, and as such each had different traditions and customs which contributed to their missionary styles. Along these lines, it is important to also make note that neither were contemporaries of each other, and were

separated by a period of roughly 100 years. Further, the differences in their missionary styles risk potentially overshadowing the similarities, however that shall be touched upon in the following section. As established, the missionary style of Columbanus is that of the peregrinatio, whilst that of Boniface is his reliance upon the Catholic Church.

Immediately when reading through the lives of both Columbanus and Boniface, a set of clear similarities emerges. The first of these is that both undertook similar practices in the regions they preached in, being that both founded monasteries and churches. This is likely due to the fact that from the 5th through 12th centuries the monastery was considered the centre of mission, in part because the monastery was a sign of a world ruled by the love of God.¹⁵⁶ Thus it would make sense for the two missionaries to rely heavily upon the foundation of monasteries as they preached and converted the people. It can further be argued that these monasteries were solidly in the realm of the missionary, and as such were directly connected to the idea of mission in western Europe.¹⁵⁷ The significance of the monastery can therefore be seen as having been a relevant and shared understanding which contributed to both the understanding of the Irish and the Anglo-Saxon missionaries. As stated, both Columbanus and Boniface founded several monasteries and churches throughout their time on the continent. Some of these monasteries include Luxeuil and Bobbio, founded by Columbanus, and Fulda, founded by Boniface. However, the founding of monasteries and churches is only one of the clear similarities between the two missionaries, the second being that both left their homelands. Although this is a clear similarity between the two, it has some specific differences, which will be assessed in the following section. When looking at both the “Life of St Columban” and the “Life of St Boniface” it is evident that both had a clear calling to leave their homeland and go into the world, which they answered.¹⁵⁸ It was this action that connected the styles of both, for not only did they undertake a similar style in regards to the spread of the monastery as they travelled, but they also were both monks who felt a specific calling to leave their homelands. Therefore, despite having underlying differences between these actions, it is evident that several similarities still remain.

Further, another similarity between both Columbanus and Boniface is their work with the Franks. Although briefly touched upon, Boniface did play a significant role in helping to

¹⁵⁶ Bosch, 230.

¹⁵⁷ Bosch, 233.

¹⁵⁸ Willibald, 4.; Jonas, 9.

reform the Frankish Church. The element of work with the Franks is noticeable in Columbanus' work, initially because he settled in Frankish land when he first came to the continent, and later because he went to the Alemanni in Bregenz at the request of a Frankish King. During the twenty years in which Columbanus remained in Gaul, he worked closely with various Frankish elements in the region, including the local kings. It is evident through the work of the various Anglo-Saxon missionaries, that there was a significant Frankish influence present in their work on the continent.¹⁵⁹ This can be seen through Boniface's life, and most notably in his work helping reform the Frankish Church. It is likely that the significant Frankish influence on the missionaries was done in order to expand Frankish influence and power in the regions.¹⁶⁰ Thus the common factor of Frankish influence is a similarity not because of the conscious attitudes of either Columbanus or Boniface, but rather because it was an unavoidable element of the lands in which they worked.

Another similarity that is often overlooked is how both recognized the authority of the pope, although to different degrees which shall be explored later. Boniface's recognition of the authority of the pope is very clear, for a key factor of his missionary style was his work with the pope. However that of Columbanus is less clear, but is nonetheless present in his work. This can be seen when, in Gaul, in order to deal with an argument in regards to the dating of Easter, Columbanus wrote several letters deferring to the knowledge of Rome on the matter.¹⁶¹ This shows that Columbanus did in fact recognize the pope, and that in his attempt to make clear the misunderstandings that arose during his time in Gaul he would defer to the supremacy of the pope. As mentioned by Walker, however, it is not known if the pope ever responded to Columbanus' letters.¹⁶² Thus, although not a similarity that is easily noticeable, nor one which is significant, both Columbanus and Boniface did recognize the authority of the pope. Overall, it can be seen that there were indeed similarities between their missionary styles, although they were not overly significant.

5.4 Differences Between their Missionary Styles

When assessing the differences in the missionary styles between Columbanus and Boniface, there are many more differences that arise and become apparent. It is these

¹⁵⁹ Rosamond McKitterick, "Anglo-Saxon Missionaries in Germany: Reflections on the Manuscript Evidence," *Transactions of the Cambridge Bibliographical Society* 9, no. 4 (1989): 317, <http://www.jstor.com/stable/41154664>, 291.

¹⁶⁰ McKitterick, 317-318.

¹⁶¹ Walker, xvi.

¹⁶² Walker, xvi.

differences which can be used to help better understand the specific missionary styles of both Columbanus and Boniface. As previously mentioned, the differences between the two are significant, and can at times overshadow the similarities between the two. The two most noticeable differences are in regards to the fundamental foundation of both of their reasons for going out into the continent, and their actions whilst on the continent. Further, these differences help form an important aspect of the identities of both missionaries, for it is the differences which help them to stand out. As these differences are studied, it is important to keep in mind that neither Columbanus or Boniface was inherently 'right' or 'wrong', but that both did what they believed was right in the eyes of God. They lived lives in accordance with their spiritual beliefs, and their respective missionary styles reflect their personal spiritual beliefs.

The first major difference is in regards to the recognition of the papacy. As previously established, this is also a similarity between the two, for Columbanus did in fact make a specific recognition of the pope's authority. However, that said, the similarity is overshadowed by the difference, for Boniface relied solely upon papal authority and blessing during his mission work in Europe, whilst Columbanus acted independently, only referring to the pope when he wanted to settle an argument. It is clear that Boniface's work was done as commanded by the pope, as he points out to Willibrord when he says,

Most holy Bishop, you, as spiritual leader here, know full well that I came to Germany at the express command of Pope Gregory, of holy memory. As the envoy of the Apostolic See sent to the barbarian countries of the West, I freely gave my services to you and your diocese without the knowledge of my master, to whose service I am bound by vow even to this day. Therefore without the counsel and permission of the Apostolic See and without its express command I dare not accept so exalted and sublime an office.¹⁶³

It is this statement that makes it blatantly obvious that Boniface's mission was undertaken at the express request and desire of the pope. Further, by making such a statement, Boniface is cementing his compliance with Rome, and eliminating any possibility

¹⁶³ Willibald, 5.

that he will act independently. This can also be seen in the third correspondence, where Pope Gregory II informs Boniface that,

We now place your humble and devout work upon a secure basis and decree that you go forth to preach the Word of God to those people who are still bound by the shackles of paganism. You are to teach them the service of the kingdom of God by persuading them to accept the truth in the name of Christ, the Lord our God. [...] Finally, we command you that in admitting within the Church those who have some kind of belief in God you will insist upon using the sacramental discipline prescribed in the official ritual formulary of the Holy Apostolic See.¹⁶⁴

Thus it is through this statement that the orders of the papacy can be seen. For through the commands of Gregory it is evident that Boniface is not only being instructed to preach to the pagans, but also to follow the specific teachings of Rome and admit those he preaches into the Church following the Roman style. For as previously mentioned there were several differing styles of Christianity during this time.¹⁶⁵ Therefore, it is clear that this major element of Boniface's missionary style was indeed his reliance and connections with Rome.

This reliance and connection with Rome is, in turn, a major difference between Boniface and Columbanus. For as previously established, Columbanus operated alone, and was not sent at the behest of the pope. Yet when examining Boniface, it becomes clear that he not only operated at the behest of the pope, but that he also maintained correspondence with his homeland. In fact, it can be seen that Boniface kept strong ties with his homeland, and would often send and receive physical objects, such as books.¹⁶⁶ Additionally, it is clear that "unlike Irish missionary pilgrims, English missionaries did not sever all ties with their past life, but remained embedded in their social networks, keeping open the possibility of return, and using their connections to secure moral and practical support."¹⁶⁷ It is clear then, that Boniface's actions were in direct contrast with those of Columbanus, which helps to further separate Boniface from Columbanus. As Columbanus had the impression that the peregrinatio was the removal of oneself from their kinship ties, and was basically an exile

¹⁶⁴ Correspondence 3 from Gregory to Boniface.

¹⁶⁵ Fletcher, 92.

¹⁶⁶ Palmer, 73-74.

¹⁶⁷ Jones, 105.

from their homeland, as previously established. Further, when Columbanus was faced with being sent home, events transpired that prevented him from being able to do so. Whether this was God's will preventing him from returning to Ireland, as presented in the "Life," or if it was a conscious choice, is unknown, but it is known that at Nantes Columbanus did not return home, but rather remained on the continent.¹⁶⁸ In fact, Columbanus' desire to never return home is in direct contrast with Boniface, who did return home briefly.¹⁶⁹ Thus it becomes evident that Columbanus actively worked to cut ties with his homeland, and lived the life of a peregrinatio, as he advocated for. Whilst Boniface, instead, never forsook his homeland as he went on his travels, but rather maintained strong ties with it.

Along these lines, a further difference must be established, being the reason behind why Columbanus and Boniface went to the continent, for each had a different reason. With Columbanus it is clear that his reason for leaving was not to preach or perform missions, but rather it was a result of the desire to go out into the world.¹⁷⁰ This connects with the established understanding of the peregrinatio, as presented by Augustine, which was that one should become an exile, cutting themselves loose from the worldly ties that bind them as they live their life as a pilgrim.¹⁷¹ Thus Columbanus adhered to the understanding of the peregrinatio, for he cut his ties with his homeland, and went out into the world with the purpose of orienting himself towards God, and living a pious life. For, mission was not the main focus of Columbanus, but rather a byproduct of the drive to leave his homeland and live a life of pilgrimage.¹⁷² However, when examining the reason behind why Boniface left, it becomes very clear that he had the express purpose of going out specifically to preach. For it is explicitly stated in his "Life" that he desired to go out and preach to those in Frisia.¹⁷³ Thus it is clear that Boniface's travels to the continent were in response to an inner call to mission, and that he did not go because of an inner desire for personal perfection, but rather that he went solely to spread the Gospel.¹⁷⁴ Therefore, it is evident that another key difference between Boniface and Columbanus is in the reason behind why they went out. For Boniface

¹⁶⁸ Jonas, 47.

¹⁶⁹ Palmer, 67; Willibald, 4-5.

¹⁷⁰ Jonas, 9.

¹⁷¹ Fletcher, 31. See also Augustine, *City of God*, XIX.17.

¹⁷² Ritari, 53-54.

¹⁷³ Willibald, 4.

¹⁷⁴ Bosch, 235.

went with the explicit intent of preaching, and Columbanus went with the intent of living a life in such a way as to better know God.

Overall, it is evident that there were several important differences between the missionary styles of Columbanus and Boniface. These differences are rather important, for they provide the framework behind understanding not only why Boniface and Columbanus travelled in the way which they did, but also help to set both apart from each other and allow a clear distinction between the two to be made. However, the differences between Celtic and Anglo-Saxon missionary styles can perhaps be best summed up through saying that “for Celtic monks preaching and mission were unplanned appendages to their penitential roaming far from home; for the Anglo-Saxons however, peregrinatio (pilgrimage) was undertaken for the sake of mission.”¹⁷⁵ In this instance, the Celtic monk was Columbanus, and the Anglo-Saxon was Boniface. Therefore, it can be said that the differences between Boniface and Columbanus are rooted in their core understandings behind why each of them went out on mission.

5.5 Summary on who was more Successful and why

As established, despite the similarities between Boniface and Columbanus, it was their differences that ultimately separated them from each other. With the key difference being their missionary style and their reason for going to the continent. The question of who was most successful must then be asked. In this instance, success will be defined as the lasting impact of each man. However, before answering that question a few parameters must be established. First, it is important to note that both Boniface and Columbanus were successful in their own ways, as will be seen. Further, it can be argued that a common element of success is to be remembered, and since both men are being studied to this day, they are both clearly remembered, and as such, were successful. In answering this question on who was most successful, the overall lasting impact of both men will be examined and reflected upon.

When examining Boniface, his success becomes clear before one even reads too much about him, for many scholarly sources refer to him in an esteemed way. With some even claiming him to be the “greatest Englishman [ever]” as a result of his influence on the

¹⁷⁵ Bosch, 235.

continent.¹⁷⁶ Statements such as these make it difficult to assess the success of Boniface accurately, for as Palmer mentions, studies of Boniface are tainted by the culture and upbringing of the scholar.¹⁷⁷ However, this statement about Boniface being the greatest Englishman to ever live will be set aside, for its contribution is only helpful in further tainting studies on the topic. Instead the lasting elements of Boniface will be examined in much the same way as those of Columbanus.

First, the success of both men will be reflected upon, for in their own ways, both Columbanus and Boniface were successful. Columbanus was successful in his missions work, for he founded several monasteries in Europe, and it has been argued that the Irish missionary style (the peregrinatio) is responsible for the spread of monasticism in Europe.¹⁷⁸ It is through this spread and establishment of monasteries on the continent, that Columbanus was successful. Two of these monasteries, the monastery at Bobbio and Luxeuil, which were founded by Columbanus, are still around to this day.¹⁷⁹ Thus, it can be seen that through the establishment of monasteries, and their lasting existence, that Columbanus was successful to a certain degree. In regards to Boniface's success, it is clear that he was successful through two regards, both are in relation to his connection to the papacy. These two factors are his missionary work in Germany, and his work at reforming the Frankish Church. As previously mentioned, his reforms in the Frankish Church are not being considered as part of his missionary work in this paper, and thus only a brief mention of them will be made. His work reforming the Frankish Church was important, for it helped to bring Frankish Christianity into the influence of Rome. The missionary work of Boniface in the regions east of the Rhine and north of the Danube were part of his successes, for they helped to not only spread Christianity in these regions, but they also helped spread the authority of the pope. It is these elements, but especially his work in expanding the authority of the pope, that can be seen as Boniface's successes.

Ignoring the comments about his greatness, it is evident through the facts surrounding his life that Boniface was overall more successful than Columbanus. This is most clearly seen

¹⁷⁶ Bosch, 235; Orchard, 15. The idea of Boniface being the Greatest Englishman to ever live appeared several times throughout the sources studied.

¹⁷⁷ Palmer, 10-12.

¹⁷⁸ Bosch, 236.

¹⁷⁹ For the monastery at Luxeuil see: <https://www.amisaintcolomban.org/abbaye-aujourd'hui.html>; for the monastery at Bobbio see: <http://www.comune.bobbio.pc.it/sottolivello.asp?idsa=9&idam=&idbox=20&idvocebox=166>

through how he worked with the papacy in his missionary work in Germany. For it is by working with the pope, and being sent by the pope, that Boniface made his greatest impact. This is due to the fact that as he spread Christianity to Frisia, Hesse, Thuringia, and the other areas where he worked, he was also spreading the authority of the pope, which in turn brought those regions into communion with Rome. By bringing them into communion with Rome, Boniface helped to expand the authority and power of the pope, as well as help unite western Christendom together under Rome. The influence of Rome can be seen through how Boniface would often found churches along similar designs to Old St Peter's in Rome.¹⁸⁰ It can also be seen through the various letters which were sent back and forth regularly between Boniface and the pope, in which Boniface would seek advice on how to solve certain situations. For with Columbanus, the only time he wrote to the pope was to settle a dispute regarding the dating of Easter, whilst Boniface wrote frequently and often to the pope for advice and to provide updates on his progress.¹⁸¹ By writing frequently to the pope, Boniface was able to ensure that his work in preaching and spreading the Gospel was done in accordance with the views and beliefs of Rome, thereby helping to spread Roman Catholicism amongst the people whom he preached to. It was this constant contact with Rome that can be seen as being a key element to helping Boniface expand the authority of the pope throughout his mission work in Germany.

For by expanding the influence of Rome, it is clear that Boniface had a much more significant lasting influence on Europe. This is due to the fact that rather than facing strife during his work due to having differing beliefs, as was the case of Columbanus, Boniface was able to gain the patronage of the pope.¹⁸² Although Columbanus was successful, for as established he did contribute to the spread of monasticism in Europe and found two monasteries which survive to this day, he did not have the same impact on Europe that Boniface had. As Boniface can be seen to have helped expand the influence and authority of the pope, and by connection the Catholic Church. An examination of the successes of both shows that Columbanus' successes lie in his establishment of monastic centres, such as Luxeuil and Bobbio. Whilst Boniface's success lies squarely in his relation to the pope, and his consistent and constant contact with the papacy. A further argument can be made that by

¹⁸⁰ Parsons, 32.

¹⁸¹ Walker, xvi. See also several of Boniface's correspondences, Correspondence 6 and 14, for example.

¹⁸² Jonas, 32-34; Correspondence 3 from Gregory to Boniface.

maintaining contact with his homeland, Boniface was further able to expand his network and successes, and as such these connections can also be considered a beneficial aspect to his missions work. Therefore, it is evident that although both Boniface and Columbanus did have successes in their missionary work, it was Boniface who was most successful due to his connections with the pope.

6 Conclusion

Overall, a clear development in the understanding of Christian mission through the first 600 years of Christianity can be seen. This development in turn has a direct correlation to the missionary styles of both Saint Columbanus and Saint Boniface. For as established, a clear timeline of the understanding of mission developed over the years, starting with a strong connection to the Roman Empire, and eventually evolving into the beginnings of the idea of purposely sending missionaries out to preach to new regions and areas. It is this development that led to the work of Columbanus and Boniface, who each contributed to both the development of mission, as well as the spread of Christianity, although each in their own way. For Columbanus was a peregrinatio, and his missionary work was specifically done as a result of him leading a pious life, one as an exile for Christ. Whilst Boniface, on the other hand, specifically went out to preach to the people of Frisia and Germany, gaining the patronage of the pope along the way, and spending his life preaching and reforming the church. As seen, both Columbanus and Boniface had very different and distinct missionary styles.

It is these missionary styles that can be used to understand the successes of both men. With Columbanus, his missionary style of the peregrinatio, and with it the establishment of monasteries and the spread of monasticism in Europe. This has been established as a clear success of Columbanus, for many of the monasteries he established survive to this day. Boniface's missionary style is best seen as his connection to the pope, and reliance upon the papacy for advice and authority. Which is in turn a clear success, as established, for it was through this connection to the pope that Boniface was able to unite Catholicism under Rome, and to spread and strengthen the influence of the pope. It is this significance in expanding the authority and influence of Rome that helped to make Boniface the more successful of the two, for his influence and impact has likely contributed to shaping Europe into what it is to this day. For without his connections with Rome, perhaps Boniface might not have been as

successful as he was, and if not, then perhaps Christianity in Europe would have been vastly different.

With such evident successes in the missionary styles of both men, it begs the question on what can be learned from them. Whilst there is no clear answer to this, and any answer obtained will be shaped in accordance with the views of those asking, a few things should be considered. First, one must not discount the fact that Columbanus' missions work developed naturally as a result of his life as a peregrinatio and his living a pious and holy life. Second, it was through having his connections to Rome that Boniface was successful, as he connected the new Christians to an established network of Christendom in Europe. Finally, it should be considered that both Columbanus and Boniface lived in a much different time than today, which in turn influenced their actions and worldviews. Although these elements are important to consider, they are not the only important factors, nor are they perhaps the most important. Regardless, perhaps there is something to be learnt from these men, and if so, then the one studying them should make note of their missionary styles and successes.

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Summary

When looking at the history of Christian mission, a turning point is evident around the 6th and 7th century. Key to this turning point are Saint Columbanus and Saint Boniface. When examining the missionary styles of both men, the question arises of who was more successful and why. When researching the texts, however, this was not the main question initially posed. The search for information began with a generic understanding and interest in the Irish peregrinatio, and from there it led to a specific focus on Columbanus. This was because many of the sources pointed to Columbanus as being key to understanding the peregrinatio. From there a specific topic of comparing the missionary styles of both Columbanus and Boniface emerged, in part due to the interest in the Irish and their peregrinatio, and in part due to an underlying interest in St. Boniface. From this point, sources were examined in regards to understanding the missionary styles of Columbanus and Boniface. As the sources were studied, an examination was also taken on who was more successful, and on the differences between the two.

Once the research was gathered, and an outline prepared, the paper was written. The main findings of the missionary style of Columbanus was that he used the peregrinatio, and the missionary aspect of his work came about as a byproduct of him living a pious and devout life focused on living life as a journey to God. For Boniface, the findings were that his missionary style was to preach and spend his time doing things in accordance with the Catholic Church, seeking feedback and advice from the pope through all that he did. Additionally, Boniface would also found churches and monasteries as he travelled, establishing them in accordance with the Roman style. Overall, the conclusion was that Boniface had a more lasting impact due to his connections with Rome, which led to the new converts being brought into communion with the Catholic Church in Rome. Thus, his success was expanding the influence and power of the papacy.

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