

Letter-writing in seventh-century Europe.

The case of Columbanus's *Epistulae*.

Submitted for the degree of Ph.D. in Medieval

History

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Summary

Carlo Cedro, Trinity College Dublin, PhD project 2017-2021

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Letter-writing in seventh-century Europe: the case of Columbanus's *Epistulae*

The goal of this project is to present a comprehensive commentary to the collection of five Latin letters attributed to the Irish abbot and monastic founder Columbanus (c. 550-615). He was the first Irish man of letters and, crucial for our understanding of the interactions between Ireland and the rest of Europe in the early Middle Ages, the first known Irish *peregrinus* on the continent. This study attempts to reconstruct Columbanus's personality as well as his thought-world by analysing the intellectual tool used by him to engage in early medieval ecclesiastic and theological controversies: epistolary prose.

The driving question of this research project is if and how these letters have been affected by the conventions of the epistolary genre and by the process of composition, re-elaboration, circulation, and eventual selection for a corpus of letters. In short, the letters of Columbanus will be treated as case-study for the criticism of Latin epistolary sources of the sixth and seventh century. Two of their characteristics justify this choice over other contemporary collections: firstly, they constitute a relatively small collection of just five items, but their content and typology are diverse. The letters are addressed to ecclesiastical authorities (Roman popes and a local council), but also to Columbanus's own monks. They deal with theological and ecclesiological intellectual debates, but also with questions of monastic obedience and patronage relationship. Their analysis therefore encompasses themes that are very frequently found in letter-writing in general. Secondly, they were composed by someone who was an outsider and did not belong to the ruling clerical class of the Frankish kingdoms. Columbanus's epistolary writings are not only the product of contemporary Latin practice, but they bear the mark of the education he received in his homeland. The sixth century is an obscure but crucial period of Irish history: one of the few possible avenues of research into early Irish monastic environments is a close inspection of the peculiarities and trends to be found in the works of the first Hiberno-Latin author. This means that linguistic, stylistic and formal differences with Continental epistolary material reveals more information about the cultural environment in which Columbanus spent his formative years, early Christian Ireland, whereas the similarities with the same materials highlight the fundamental features of Latin epistolography of the times.

Each chapter follows a source-critical template. The aim is to frame the content of each letter of the collection in light of both the complex interplay between the conventions of the epistolary genre as practiced by contemporary Latin authors, and the historical circumstances that have made Columbanus a key figure for the history of the western monastic movement. The introductory chapter first presents an up to date review of scholarly literature addressing the characteristics and problems presented by Late Antique and Early Medieval letter collections. This is followed by an overview of the numerous textual studies of Columbanus's *Epistulae* and of their role within the wider context and evolving perspectives of research on seventh-century Hiberno-Latin monasticism. Special attention is given to the reconstruction of the process of transmission of the letter collection. The introduction concludes with an explanation of the methodology employed in the analysis of the contents of each letter. The first chapter presents the text of Columbanus's letter to Pope Gregory I, usually referred to as *Epistula* I. The commentary highlights two aspects: its points of contact with the teaching of Latin rhetoric and the problems connected with the source texts employed by the author and their significance in the context of the Easter controversy. The next chapter presents the text of Columbanus's *Epistula* II, directed at a council of the Gallic Church. The commentary focuses on the overlap of the tone and style of the letter with those of Columbanus's homiletic material and on the author's rhetorical strategy of self-defence. Details concerning the actual contents of the Easter disputes are also discussed

within the frame of the most up to date research on the subject. The third chapter presents the text of Columbanus's second letter to the Roman Pontiff, *Epistula* III. It is the shortest letter of the collection, which reveals the writer's changing attitude in respect to the Easter controversy and his attempts at mediation. The fourth chapter presents the text of Columbanus's letter to his monastic community in Luxeuil, after his exile from Francia. The commentary highlights the stereotyped and didactic tone of the writing, questioning how much the surviving text captures the instructions left by the founding abbot to his community, and how much is, instead, a literary re-elaboration from a later period. The next chapter presents the text of Columbanus's letter to Pope Boniface IV, on the matter of the Three Chapters controversy in Northern Italy. Three main points are addressed by the commentary: the author's connections with the Lombard court, his level of familiarity with the theological and ecclesiological problems that the controversy involved, and any changes or similarities in his writing style and attitude towards the addressee compared to the letters on the Easter controversy. The final chapter attempts to organize the results of the previous analysis into various categories, namely: salient characteristics of the *Epistulae* compared to contemporary collections, in terms of style and contents; the historic context of the composition of the letters, with reference to Jonas's narrative in the *Vita Columbani*; the intended audience of each letter and the reconstruction of possible networks of epistolary exchanges; the relationship between the author and both his patrons on the one hand, and the monastic community on the other; the sources used by Columbanus and the main influences of his style and rhetoric.

The results of the project will demonstrate the author's proficiency and familiarity with the written letter form. It will be argued that reframing the discussion around the tone and contents of the letters in light of contemporary characteristics of epistolary literature will yield a portrayal of the authorial figure that is very different from that so far reconstructed by scholarly literature. Columbanus has been depicted as a solitary figure stirring polemic with all his contacts, but this work will show how, even though he was ready to make a determined stand for the liturgical practices of his homeland, he was well inserted in, and able to make use of the network of relationship between the secular and ecclesiastical authorities of his time, acting more like a diplomat than a disruptive and self-absorbed agent. Another significant result of the analysis of the textual and meta-textual characteristics of the letters will be to challenge the perception of the epistle as a fixed unchanging, product. It will be shown that it is likely that the texts as they exist in their present form are the result of re-elaboration, and that, after they had been delivered to the addressee, they were adapted in order to reach a wider audience. Finally, discussion of the literary sources available to Columbanus will condense into a general overview several years of philological debate as well as add a few significant items that have so far been neglected.

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In memoria di mia madre.

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INTRODUCTION.¹

The premise of this research is to consider the five letters that have been indisputably attributed to the Irish abbot and monastic founder Columbanus (c. 550 - 615) as part of a literary genre, epistolography, that enjoyed considerable diffusion and variety among his predecessors and his contemporaries, and not as self-sufficient entities.² It might be argued that Columbanus's *Epistulae* represent an interesting case study for the assessment of the level of literacy among Latin letter-writers at the beginning of the seventh century. His figure, often characterized as that of a traveller, is significant in both Continental and Insular Europe, being among the first Hiberno-Latin writers and the first representative of the Irish brand of monasticism on the continent. What will be suggested by this work is that his letters are not exclusively the product of one of these environments, but that they present characteristics adopted from both worlds, which ultimately derive from fourth-century Early Christian models. Columbanus's *Epistulae*, in spite of the lack of contemporary diffusion and of their problematic textual transmission, are a significant source for both the history of Irish Latin literature. The letter collection is (with the *Instructiones* or *Sermons* by the same author) the main intellectual output of the first Irish man of letters, a useful source for the history of the western European monastic movement, being a fundamental testimony for reconstructing the biography and activity of the founder of Luxeuil and Bobbio. Which works can be ascribed to Columbanus has been a hotly debated point for most of the twentieth century. Columbanus's authorship of the *Epistulae* has never been questioned but his

¹Because of limited access to libraries and physical copies of books following the COVID-19 pandemic, I would like to point out that there are some inconsistencies in the reference apparatus of the present work. The main issue is that, in the case of multiple critical editions of the same primary source, I was not always able to access the most recent and up-to-date. While working in lock-down conditions, I had to stop referencing a number of standard editions, that I had previously used but which were no longer available to me, and move to other editions of the same work that were more readily available. When possible I have given priority to the most recent and up-to date edition, especially those printed as part of the *Corpus Christianorum Series Latina* (henceforth CCSL), but when it could not be helped I relied on earlier edition of the same work from the *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum* (henceforth CSEL), the *Momumenta Germaniae Historica* (henceforth MGH), or the *Patrologia Latina* (henceforth PL). I often consulted the texts of primary sources as made available by the digital databases of the Library of Latin Texts by Brepols and of the *Patrologia Latina*. As neither of these resources offered full access to the edition's *Apparatus criticus* or to its page number, I did not rely on them for footnote reference unless they were the only way through which a text could be accessed. In that case, reference to page number is missing from the footnote.

²The reference edition for Columbanus's is that by G. S. M. Walker, *Sancti Columbani Opera*, *Scriptores Latini Hiberniae*, 2 (Dublin, 1957). The text and quotations here reproduced will be from this edition, unless otherwise noted.

Instructiones and his poetic works have been the object of much debate. In the present thesis the authorship of Columbanus will be assumed for the *Epistulae*, the *Instructiones*, the *Regular Coenobialis*, the *Regular Monachorum*, the rhythmical poems *De Mundi Transitu* and *Precamur Patrem*.³

Erat autem Columbanus homo vehemens feroxque natura: in 1902, Bruno Krusch introduced the main character of a hagiographic text he had been editing with a clear cut judgment on his nasty temperament.⁴ More than any other religious figure of his age, Columbanus remained the object of moral assessments of this kind in many scholarly works throughout the twentieth century and even in more recent times.⁵ While this can be seen as a testament to the literary abilities of Columbanus's hagiographer, Jonas of Bobbio, or simply as a reflection of the harsh disciplinary contents of the Rules transmitted under Columbanus's name, it is likely that the influence of Columbanus's *Epistulae* has had much more weight on the nature of these judgements. The five letters attributed to Columbanus supposedly offer the portrayal of a quarrelsome and unyielding man, who would endlessly appeal to his superiors in the ecclesiastical hierarchies in the context of various controversies, arguing and even demanding that they should adapt their stance to his own position. This portrayal has certainly some basis in the epistolary collection, but it should be remembered that the Columbanus who pleads, argues and admonishes in the letters is just as much of a literary character as the hagiographic Columbanus depicted by Jonas. This basic consideration is central to the present study and an unavoidable difficulty for reconstructing the

³This list is based on the present state of research as summarised by Donnchadh Ó Corraín, *Clavis litterarum Hibernensium: Medieval Irish books and texts (c. 400-1600)*, 3 vols. (Turnhout, 2017), I, 415-436. Lists of works attributed to him during different portions of the twentieth century can be found in James F. Kenney, *The sources for the Early History of Ireland. An Introduction and guide* (New York, 1929, repr. 1966), 190-203 and Richard Sharpe and Michael Lapidge, *A bibliography of Celtic Latin literature, 400-1200*, (Dublin, 1985), n639-642.

⁴Bruno Krusch, *Vitae Columbani abbatis discipulorumque eius libri duo*, MGH, *Scriptores rerum merovingicarum*, 4 (Hannover and Leipzig, 1902), 1-156:20.

⁵This attitude can be exemplified by the frequent references to Columbanus's austere personality in a study that was centred around his writing style. Johannes Smit, *Studies on the Language and style of Columba the Younger* (Amsterdam, 1970), 131 for example wrote that 'Columba was almost certainly bound to make enemies in Italy too; his obstinate stubbornness, his pedantry, his complete lack of diplomacy but above all the absence of any inner refinement ... will have aroused opposition'. More recent examples are less extreme but there are still instances of off-hand mentions of Columbanus harsh character. For instance Elva Johnston, *Literacy and identity in Early Medieval Ireland*, Studies in Celtic history (Woodbridge, 2013), 38 alluded to '[Columbanus's] own tendency towards provocative behaviour'.

figure of the historical Columbanus. It can only be tackled by acknowledging the importance of literary genre as a category of textual interpretation, one that should be applied to any information of historical value in the *Epistulae*.

For this same reason, the main methodological approach used by modern historians to integrate the narrative account by Jonas of Bobbio with information from the *Epistulae* should be the object of further scrutiny. Jonas of Bobbio wrote his *Vita Columbani* around the second half of the 630s. It is a classic hagiographic text, with a complex history.⁶ The first book is dedicated to a narrative of Columbanus's life: first his education in Ireland, then his *peregrinatio* that is, his ascetic exile, with the vicissitudes that he and his companions underwent while establishing the monastic foundations of Fontaines and Luxeuil in the Vosges mountains. Jonas's account puts much emphasis on Columbanus's miracles, on his relationship with the local Gallo-Frankish elites and especially, on his conflict with the rulers of the Burgundian kingdom. King Theuderic II and his mother Brunhild were, according to Jonas, antagonistic to Columbanus's efforts after his refusal to bless the king's illegitimate offspring.⁷ They forced Columbanus to abandon Luxeuil and exiled him back to Ireland but Jonas relates his eventual escape and further peregrinations into central Europe, taking him from Francia to Alemannia. After attempting to evangelise the people in the vicinity of modern day Bregenz, Columbanus crossed the Alps and died in Lombardy, where, having received support from the Lombard monarchy, he had founded his last monastery, Bobbio, in the valley of the river Trebbia in the Appenines. The second book of Jonas's *Vita* is concerned with the subsequent history of Columbanus's foundation and with the lives of Columbanus's

⁶The edition used in this work is that by Bruno Krusch, henceforth referred to as Jonas, *VC (Vita Columbani)*. An edition with Italian translation that makes use of manuscripts unknown to Krusch can be found in Michele Tosi, ed. *Vita Columbani et discipulorum eius* (Piacenza, 1965). An English translation has been prepared by Alexander O'Hara and Ian Wood: Jonas of Bobbio, *Life of Columbanus, Life of John of Réomé and Life of Vedast. Translated with Introduction and commentary by Alexander O'Hara and Ian Wood*, Translated texts for Historians, 64 (Liverpool, 2018), henceforth O'Hara and Wood, *Lives*. For a summary of the textual history of this work see the relevant section of their Introduction (37-41). On the figure of Jonas of Bobbio see Alexander O'Hara, *Jonas of Bobbio and the Legacy of Columbanus*, Oxford studies in Late Antiquity (Oxford 2018)

⁷Jonas *VC*, I, 18-20 (Krusch, ed. *Vitae*, 86-98). For the general historical context and the political background of the Merovingian kingdom of Burgundy see Ian Wood, *The Merovingian kingdoms, 450-751*, (London and New York, 1994), especially 126-139 in conjunction with Ian Wood, *The Vita Columbani and Merovingian Hagiography, Peritia*, 1 (1982), 63-80; Thomas M. Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland* (Cambridge, 2000), 344-366 focuses on the ecclesiastical background to Jonas's depiction of Columbanus's *peregrinatio* and of his relationship with the Brunhild and the royal court.

successors.⁸ What Jonas did not acknowledge at all, was Columbanus's problematic relationship with ecclesiastical authorities and his involvement in the Easter and Three Chapters controversies, in which he had supported heterodox positions. The general perception among scholars is that Jonas account is highly biased, and that only by supplementing it with information from Columbanus's own epistolary collection can a full picture be reconstructed. Emblematic of this attitude is Caitlin Corning's presentation of the sources for Columbanus's life: 'Jonas's *Life* is not an "objective" piece of history', but 'thankfully, some of Columbanus's own writings have survived and, while only presenting his point of view, they can be used in combination with the *Life* to gain a better understanding of the events in question'.⁹ While this attitude towards Jonas's narrative is certainly justified, it runs the risk of downplaying how the letters themselves are not a 'neutral' source. These reflect the conventions of their literary genre, and are greatly influenced by the specific circumstances surrounding their composition. In this project it will be argued that the letters of Columbanus are constructed around complex rhetorical strategies, and are ultimately performances similar to the public speeches of Late Antiquity, with which they share many aspects. Moreover, it will be argued that at least some of Columbanus's letters are not best understood as a 'real-time' snapshot depiction of the author's sentiments and opinions at the time of writing, but that it is reasonable to think that the texts as preserved are the result of various re-elaborations. Finally, related to this latter element, it should be noted that the expected audience for each letter, might not coincide with the stated addressee: the re-elaborations suggests that at least some of them were meant to reach a wider audience than what the salutation might indicate. In order to address these elements, the general characteristics of the epistolary genre needs to be discussed first.

1. Epistolary literature.

⁸ A classic study addressing the fall-out of Columbanus's actions on the Continent as well as the general situation of Merovingian monasticism is Friederich Prinz, *Frühes Mönchtum im Frankenreich, Kultur und Gesellschaft in Gallien, den Rheinlanden und Bayern am Beispiel der monastischen Entwicklung. (4. bis 8. Jahrhundert)* (Munich, 1989); more recently, Yaniv Fox, *Power and Religion in Merovingian Gaul. Columbanian monasticism and Frankish elites*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought, 98 (Cambridge, 2014).

⁹ Caitlin Corning, *The Celtic and Roman traditions: conflict and consensus in the Early Medieval church* (New York, 2006), 20-21.

Epistolary literature, that is letters and letter collections, is a significant source for the history of western Europe in the early Medieval period. The present work will attempt to provide a comprehensive re-evaluation of Columbanus's *Epistulae* under the specific angle of their literary genre. Epistolography is one that enjoyed significant diffusion in post-Roman Gaul, one of the environments in which Columbanus was engaged in his pastoral and intellectual activities. Even before the emergence of the *artes dictaminis* in the eleventh century, which would provide a further step in its codification,¹⁰ the epistolary genre had been a part of the Latin rhetorical tradition. Collections of letters, both large and small, as well as letters preserved as self-contained works are very common among the production of Latin Christian authors from the fifth century, up to the seventh. It could be argued that it was one expression of cultural continuity, a practice of the literate classes that was never abandoned. Latin authors of this age followed the example set by the great practitioners of epistolography of the late fourth century, such as Jerome, Paulinus or Augustine, who had in turn been influenced by both the Classical tradition of letter writing, and by the Christian model of the epistles in the New Testament.¹¹ The Episcopal class of the post-Roman kingdoms of Gaul was especially involved in the writing, in the exchange and in the collection of letters of various kind, owing to the common educational background and to the cultural prestige that such an activity had bestowed upon the early practitioners, such as Sidonius Apollinaris.¹² Another centre of epistolary activity was the Roman See, most notably the great collection of Gregory I at the end of the sixth century, and, continuing well into the seventh

¹⁰On the early *artes dictaminis* see William D. Patt, 'The early *ars dictaminis* response to a changing society' in *Viator*, 9, 1978 133-155 and Carol Poster and Linda C. Mitchell, eds. *Letter-writing manuals and instructions from Antiquity to the present* (Columbia, SC, 2007).

¹¹ Influence of the neotestamentarian epistles on Late Antique and Early Medieval epistolary production is widely acknowledged. See for example Cristiana Sogno, Bradley K. Storin, Edward J. Watts, 'Introduction', in Cristiana Sogno, Bradley K. Storin, Edward J. Watts, eds. *Late Antique letter collections. A critical introduction and reference guide* (Oakland, 2017), 1-10; Bronwen Neil, 'Letter collecting from Cicero to Late Antiquity', in Pauline Allen and Bronwen Neil, eds. *Collecting Early Christian Letters: From the Apostle Paul to Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, 2015), 3-17 and more recently Pauline Allen and Bronwen Neil, *Greek and Latin Letters in Late Antiquity. The Christianisation of a literary form*, (Cambridge 2020), 24-47. The epistles of St Paul have been put into the context of antique epistolography by several works. A classic study on the relationship of Christian letters with the epistolary production of Antiquity is Klaus Thraede, *Grundzüge griechisch-römischer Brieftopik*, (Munich, 1970); a more recent discussion of the epistolary qualities of the Pauline letters is Jeffrey A. D. Weima, *Paul the Ancient letter-writer. An introduction to epistolary analysis*, (Grand Rapids, MI, 2016).

¹²The prose letters of Sidonius are edited by Christian Lühjohann, *Gaii Sollii Apollinaris Sidonii Epistulae et Carmina*, MGH, *Auctores Antiquissimi*, 8 (Berlin 1887), 1-172.

century, albeit with a somewhat reduced output, there were also collections of letters assembled by the officials of the post-Roman kingdoms, with Cassiodorus's *Variae* providing the model for subsequent reorganization of the correspondence of the Frankish, Visigothic and Lombard courts.¹³ Finally, even the Roman tradition of verse epistles was not abandoned during this period but it continued in the poetic production of Venantius Fortunatus.¹⁴

Regarding the very definition of epistolary writing and the boundaries that set it apart from other genres, the general consensus is that they are very elastic to the point of being almost nondescript. For example, Derrida and Altman¹⁵ have expressed the opinion that, from the point of view of aesthetics, all literature can be considered epistolary, because the relationship between author and reader cannot be understood in other terms, and that everything that is not explicitly labelled as something else, can come under the definition of epistolary. A more practical approach, if letters are considered as sources for history, is that employed by Doty.¹⁶ This definition posits that a piece of writing is in the form of letter when it is sent, or meant to be sent, from a writer to an addressee, when it contains formally stylized components such as greetings, and when it bears reference or clear intent to being a letter. These indications can be integrated by those of Michael Trapp¹⁷ who specifies that letters are usually meant to overcome distance and that they are expected to be of relatively limited length.

a. General studies on epistolary literature

The main monography attempting to lay out methodological indications about how medieval letter and letter collections should be approached as a source for history is Constable's 1976 *Letters and*

¹³The most recent edition is Dag Norberg, ed. *S. Gregorii Magni Registrum epistularum*, CCSL 140 and 140a, (Turnhout, 1982); see also the earlier edition by Paul Ewald and Ludwig M. Hartmann, eds. *Gregorii I papae Registrum Epistolarum*, 2 voll., MGH, *Epistolae*, 1-2 (Berlin, 1899 and 1902).

¹⁴His poetic epistles have been edited by Frederick Leo, *Venantii Honori Clementiani Fortunati Presbyteri Italici Opera Poetica*, MGH, *Auct. Ant.* 4, 1 (Berlin, 1881)

¹⁵Jacques Derrida, *The post card: from Socrates to Freud and beyond*, translated by Alan Bass, (Chicago Press 1987) and Janet G. Altman *Epistolarity: approaches to a form*, (Columbus, OH, 1982).

¹⁶William G. Doty, 'The classification of epistolary literature' in *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, 31 (1969), 183-189.

¹⁷Michael Trapp, *Greek and Latin letters. An anthology with translations* (Cambridge, 2003), 6-7

letter collections.¹⁸ Constable insists on a flexible and inclusive definition of what can be considered epistolography and admits the difficulty of distinguishing between the nature of the letters as a testimony of historical facts and as literary construction. Nevertheless, he attempts to underline the features that can be consistently found in all of the epistolary writings of the period: firstly, from the point of view of letters are characterised by their representative function, that is their role in bridging a gap in communication; secondly from a formal point of view, their only recurring hallmarks are the opening and closing formulae of salutation, their relative brevity, and, possibly, the focus on just one major subject at a time. In addition to that, there is the social value attached to letters in terms of being instruments with which to build a network of connections among peers, as testified by the survival of the concept of epistolary *amicitia* from Antiquity. Regarding the evolution of epistolography, the fifth and early sixth century are considered the moment that shapes the genre in continuity of forms and phrasaeology with the practice of classical Latin authors. Jerome and Augustine are to be considered the major models that influence medieval letter writers while later authors such as Sidonius Apollinaris and Avitus of Vienne were responsible for establishing them as such. Constable suggests the existence of a sharp decline in the quantity and quality of letter collections from the mid-sixth century and the Carolingian age is only briefly touched upon as a period during which the formal conventions adopted by the *artes dictaminis* of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, which are considered the golden age of medieval letter writing, were being slowly established. Finally the survey highlights how the different stages of composition are to be considered when critically assessing a letter most importantly the gap existing between the dictation (for which the author is responsible) and the writing and between the original exemplar and the one surviving in a collection. Ysebart Walters's article 'Medieval letters and letter collections as historical sources: methodological questions, reflections and research prospective (sixth-fifteenth century)'¹⁹ also addresses

¹⁸ Gilles Constable, *Letters and letter collections in Typologie des sources du moyen âge occidental*, 17 (Turnhout, 1976)

¹⁹ Ysebart Walter, 'Medieval letters and letter collections as historical sources: methodological questions, reflections and research prospective (sixth-fifteenth-century)' in Christian Høgel and Elisabetta Bartolieds *Medieval letters between fiction and document* (Turnhout, 2015), 33-62. Brief descriptions of the methodological challenges of epistolary literature are found two other articles from the same volume.

methodological problems in the research on medieval epistolary literature. Three historical tendencies are shown to have always been present in the scholarship of epistolary collections, because of the very nature of letter writing. Firstly, historians have examined letters to figure out factual details not found in other sources, especially for biographical data or regarding a specific event. Secondly, because of the personal nature of letter writing, epistolary work have been considered suitable to be used as sources in reconstructing mentality and ideas for any given period of the Middle Ages; most significantly, they have been used in the study of medieval Christian culture and in tracing profiles of the spirituality of the most influential figures belonging to it. Thirdly, letter collections have been studied from a codicological point of view, in order to trace the formation of a larger corpus, as it is the case with papal decretals. However, the author's focus is on three more recent tendencies of scholarship, noticeable in works dating from the late 1970s onwards. The fact that there are points of contact between them and that they often overlap, even in the same work, is duly underlined, since the author's classification is simply meant to be an aid in identifying possible problems.

1. One tendency uses the instruments of philology and textual criticism, discussing questions of authorship, style, and epistolary topoi and neglecting the reconstruction of the historical context. In such works, letter writing is considered as a literary genre, and what is often attempted, is to find out to which stage of its evolution the specific letter collection that is being studied belongs to. The link between medieval letter writing and the Late Antique rhetorical tradition may be explored.
2. Since letters can be considered a meeting point of individuals and letter writing is a social practice, letter collections can also be approached from the point of view of social science. In terms of political and social connections between both individual and classes, Medieval letters have sparked interest because they display a high degree of conceptualization for the ideas of *amicitia* (inherited from Classical Antiquity) and

Wim Verbaal, 'Epistolary voices and the fiction of history', 9-31 and C.P. Gonzales, 'Un precedente del *ars dictaminis* medieval', 85-104. See also Pauline Allen, 'Rationales for Episcopal letter collections in late Antiquity' in Pauline Allen and Brownne Neileds, *Collecting Early Christian letters* 18-34 ; Ysebart Walter's considerations are the most developed.

caritas. These concepts have been considered to be at the core of the development of epistolary networks. Many studies have focused on different aspects of such networks: political, religious, intellectual, or erotic.

3. A third tendency might be described as leaning on the theory of communication and explores letter collection as a specific example of written communication. Themes discussed include the link between the development of literacy and the increase of epistolary exchanges, the distinction between oral and written fruition for both the writer and the addressees, and the role of messengers.

For the purpose of the analysis of Columbanus's *Epistulae* as a collection, such questions on editorial activity, as suggested by the article, provide a guideline to evaluate this aspect, with the aid of similar observations made by Constable and Allen.²⁰ However, it should be noted that, in the case of Columbanus's *Epistulae* the author's preferred method of investigation is severely limited by the state of the preservation of the collection (no surviving medieval manuscript tradition). Thus these points can only be addressed in a somewhat speculative way. Another indication which emerges from this article, is the possibility to attempt a classification of the *Epistulae* as either an artistic, didactic or merely archival collection, that is, to indicate their purpose as an organic work.

Among other surveys not uniquely focusing on the period with which this research project is concerned, Armando Petrucci's *Scrivere lettere*,²¹ despite being a work aimed for the general public, is remarkable in that it tries to include all of the diverse technical details concerning the actual writing and circulation of letters, for each of the ages under scrutiny, while, in terms of the actual contents of the large numbers of letters examined, it insists on the point that the underlying nature of epistolary writing is simple, that is, the fact that it enables communication over distances of space and time and that in its basic form it is mostly unchangeable. Since a significant part of the New Testament consists of epistolary writings and since patristic authors continued to write

²⁰Allen, 'Rationales for Episcopal letter collections in late Antiquity' 18-21. Gilles Constable, *Letters and letter collections*, 8-9.

²¹Armando Petrucci, *Scrivere lettere. Una storia plurimillennaria*, (Bari, 2008).

letters in the following centuries the study of formal epistolography is particularly well cultivated by Early Christian scholarship. Furthermore, in the context of this project it is important to know about the models that informed Columbanus's writing and the expectations of his readers, as it is clear that letter writers from this period had a significant influence on subsequent epistolography. Deissman's *Light from the Ancient East* has been considered a groundbreaking example in the use of a comparative methodology that tries to tie the New Testament letters to the wider context of the age by the analysis of surviving papyrus exemplars.²² On the other hand, his distinction between literary 'epistles', like pagan Greek and Roman exemplars, as a product of art and 'real letters', like the biblical exemplars, as a product of need, has been much criticised by later works and is no longer considered a viable way to classify letters. Klaus Thraede²³ developed the criticism of this classification by employing ancient epistolary theory to identify the *topoi* and rhetorical devices that are commonly found in epistolary writing from the pre-Christian era and proving that they are just as common in the New Testament. Furthermore, the section on patristic authors underlines some of the stylistic and thematic continuities between Ciceronian letters and the age of Jerome. Surviving didactic texts in Latin and in Greek from the first to the fifth century, including the tracts of the so-called Pseudo-Demetrius and Pseudo-Libanius as well as the closing portion of Julius Victor's *Ars rhetorica*, attest that letter-writing had received a certain degree of attention from the ancient schools of rhetorics. These didactic tracts, as well as miscellaneous references and indications about the art of letter writing found in the epistolary collections of both Classical and Christian authors have been collected in a short but helpful volume by Abraham J. Malherbe.²⁴ In the introduction to these works, much emphasis is posed on the similarities between rhetorical training and instructions for letter writing, and on the hypothesis that the latter was an integral part of basic education during Late Antiquity and it was probably followed up in secondary education through the practice of rhetorical *prosopopoieia*, that is the construction of

²² Adolph Deissmann, *Light from the ancient East. The New Testament illustrated by recently discovered texts of the Greco-Roman world*, translated by Lionel R.M. Strachan, (Oxford and Stoughton, 1910)

²³ Klaus Thraede, *Grundzüge griechisch-römischer Brieftopik* 162-164.

²⁴ Abraham J. Malherbe, *Ancient epistolary theorists*, Sources for biblical study, 19 (Atlanta, 1988).

the literary self in oratory and epistles.²⁵The tracts themselves are of two kinds: those that list various typologies of epistolary styles and provide samples for them and those that content themselves with more generic considerations. Their contents are generally descriptive and should not be considered manuals such as the later *artes dictaminis*. Anthologies of ancient letters such as Stowers's and Trapp's²⁶ attempt a content-based classification of a number of letters dating from the first century before Christ to the fifth century, using some of the categories found in the aforementioned ancient epistolary theorists as guidelines. Stowers draws a connection between the tripartite division of rhetoric in judiciary, political and demonstrative and the distinction between apologetic/accusatory letters, letters of advice and mediation, and letters of exhortation, praise and blame. However two categories that are apparently not content-based are added, that is familiar letters and friendly letters, which seem to imply an addressee-based classification. However the author makes it clear that these forms are to be understood as a collection of typified formulas that imply a family tie or a friendship but could also be sent with different purpose to unrelated individuals. Trapp, on the other hand, is more aware of the significance of letter collections as a form of literature, and adopts a more loose classification, distinguishing between private and official correspondence and utilising content to organise topics and themes, thus rendering showing more clearly that there are gaps between the theory (some of the texts of ancient epistolary theorists are also included in the anthology) and the practice.

b. Epistolary studies on Merovingian Gaul

The genre of epistolography enjoyed considerable fortune in post-Roman Gaul. Recent historiography has attempted to look at authors such as Avitus of Vienne, Ennodius of Pavia and Ruricius of Limoges employing the instrument for textual criticism developed by scholars of Classical and Late Antique epistolography. In summary, modern scholarship, represented

²⁵ Malherbe, *Ancient Epistolary theorists*, 1-11:6-7.

²⁶ Stanley K. Stowers, *Letter writing in Greco-Roman antiquity* (Philadelphia, 1989); Trapp, *Greek and Latin letters*, 34-46.

especially by the works of Ian Wood, Danuta Shanzer and Ralph Mathisen,²⁷ has favoured the approach that considers the collections, not the singular letter, as a literary product. This has contributed to highlight the cultural importance of such a practice, not only in terms of the history of post-Roman Latin literature, but most significantly, in relation to the adaptation of the episcopal class of Merovingian Gaul to the societal developments of its time. First of all, it has been recognized that the existence of a network of epistolary exchanges among the peers, had been one of the factors in shaping the collective identity of the bishops of southern France. The publication of letter collections and the care devoted to their style can be considered the way in which authors and readers made themselves recognisable as part of an elite, emphasising their shared education and rhetorical training. It has been suggested, moreover, that letter collections could have acted as a writing manual of sorts for courtiers and chanceries in Austrasia, Burgundy and Neustria, in a way that can be considered similar to the intention behind the publication of Cassiodorus's *Variae*.²⁸ Furthermore, the argument has been made that the traditional view of the presence of a decline of literature in Gaul from the mid-sixth century, as described for example by Gregory of Tours, ignores the continuity of a network of exchanges of elaborated, sometimes even poetic, epistles that extends well into the seventh century with the figure of Desiderius of Cahors.²⁹ It

²⁷ Among the many publications by these authors on the subject of Merovingian epistolographers, I. Wood and D. Shanzer's translation and commentary of Avitus of Vienne's letters and R. Mathisen's work on *codex Sangallensis* 190 are the most representative of their methods. Danuta Shanzer, Ian Wood, *Avitus of Vienne. Letters and selected prose*, Translated texts for Historians, 38 (Liverpool, 2002); see also Ian Wood, 'Letters and Letter-Collections from Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages: The Prose Works of Avitus of Vienne', in Marc Anthony Meyer, eds. *The Culture of Christendom: Essays in Medieval History in Memory of Dennis L.T. Bethel*, (London, 1993), 29–43 and Brendan McCarthy, 'The letter collection of Avitus of Vienne', in Sogno, Storin and Watts, eds. *Late Antique letter Collections*, 357-368; Ralph Mathisen, 'The *codex Sangallensis* 190 and the transmission of the classical tradition during Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages', *International Journal of the classical tradition* 5, 2 (1998), 163-194; Ralph Mathisen, *Ruricius of Limoges and Friends: A Collection of Letters from Visigothic Aquitania*, Translated texts for historians, 30 (Liverpool, 1999) and Ralph Mathisen, 'The letter collection of Ruricius of Limoges', in Sogno, Storin and Watts, eds. *Late Antique letter Collections*, 337-356.

²⁸ See the conclusions in Shane Bjornlie, *Politics and tradition between Rome, Ravenna and Constantinople: a study of Cassiodorus and the Variae 527-554* (Cambridge, 2013) and Shane Bjornlie, 'The letter Collection of Cassiodorus' in Sogno, Storin and Watts, eds. *Late Antique letter Collections*, 433-448. A slightly different take in Robin MacPherson. *Rome in involution: Cassiodorus Variae in their literary and historical setting*, (Poznan, 1989).

²⁹ Hope D. Willard, 'Letter-writing and literary culture in Merovingian Gaul', in *European Review of History: Revue européenne d'histoire*, 21,5 (2014), 691-710; Ralph Mathisen 'Desiderius of Cahors, last of the Romans', in Steffen Diefenbach, Gernot M. Müller, eds. *Gallien in Spätantike und Frühmittelalter*, Millenniumstudien, 43, (Berlin, 2013) 455-470.

should be noted that even authors who have criticised these conclusions for specific collections³⁰ have worked within the framework of this philological approach, putting considerations about the general structure of the collection ahead of discussion of individual letters. Finally it should be mentioned that the letter collection of Gregory I and of others Roman pontiffs have seldom been discussed under the perspective of the evolution of epistolography in scholarly literature, being mostly utilised as a complementary source for biographical or theological discussions as well as being the focus of studies investigating the origins of early canonistic collections.³¹

c. Epistolary works from Britain and Ireland

Finally, it is notable that the earliest Latin texts from Britain and Ireland have close ties with the epistolary genre. St Patrick's *Confessio* and his *Epistula ad milites Coroticiare* both public addresses meant to reach as large an audience as possible.³² They only fall short of having all of the formal characteristics of a contemporary letter because of their lack of a salutation and of clearly identifiable addressees. Patrick's works have been discussed under the lens of modern epistolary studies: the results have highlighted a dependence on biblical models but also noted his ability to employ the tools of literary elaboration and to pursue a well-defined rhetorical strategy throughout the letter, by way of allusions.³³ Similarly, Gildas's *De excidio et conquestu Britanniae* is described as an *epistula* by its own author.³⁴ Michael Lapidge has demonstrated how the structure of *De excidio* reflects the conventions of Classical demonstrative rhetoric, which, as shown for example by Julius Victor's tract, had a fundamental importance on the evolution of the epistolary

³⁰ Graham Barret and George Woudhuysen, 'Assembling the *Austrasian Letters* at Trier and Lorsch' in *Early Medieval Europe*, 24, 1 (2016), 3-57.

³¹ Introductory works that attempt to explain the rationale by which these collections came to be are Detlev Jasper and Horst Fuhrman, *Papal letters in the Early Middle Ages*, (Washington, 2001) and Brown Neil, 'Papal letters and letter collections', in Sogno, Storin and Watts, eds. *Late Antique letter Collections*, 449-465.

³² The edition used in this work is that by Ludwig Bieler, *Libri epistolarum sancti Patricii episcopi*, 2 vols. (Dublin 1993).

³³ Andrew Fear, 'St Patrick and the art of allusion' in Ruth Morello and A. D. Morrison, eds. *Ancient Letters. Classical and Late Antique epistolography* (Oxford, 2007), 325-348, with English translation of the letter. See also James Noel Adams, *An anthology of informal Latin 200 BC-900 AD* (Cambridge, 2016), 42-43 and 48-49 which focuses on the linguistic aspects.

³⁴ Gildas, *De excidio et conquestu Britanniae* ed. Theodore Mommsen, *Gildae sapientis de excidio et conquestu Britanniae*, MGH, *Auctores Antiquissimi*, 13 (Berlin, 1898), 1-110; references are henceforth made to Michal Winterbottom, *Gildas: the ruin of Britain and other works*, (Chichester, 1978) which translates and reproduces Mommsen's text with several significant changes.

genre.³⁵ In a way, Columbanus had geographically and culturally close precedents to draw inspiration from.³⁶ In addition to these instance of actual practice of the epistolary genre, it can be argued that theoretical reflections upon epistolary writings were not completely unknown in the cultural environment in which Columbanus received his education.³⁷ These were a minor part of the more general focus of the early Irish church on biblical exegesis, but surviving seventh-century commentaries on the epistles of the New Testament attest the authors' attempts at defining and describing the nature and purpose of written letters. In the exegetical work known as the *Expositio in septem epistulas catholicas* the author notes that 'every letter is a book, but not every book is a letter' and provides an etymology of *epistola* attributed to Jerome.³⁸ The author also argues that 'letters follow the manner of prophecies' because of their allusive nature and that the point of letters is 'to rebuke, to blame or to praise'.³⁹ Another, possibly related contemporary exegetical tract repeats the observation about the purpose of letters and about their similarity to the speech of prophets.⁴⁰ It should be noted that the authors of these texts might have been limiting their theoretical observations to the biblical epistles they were commenting upon and that they were not laying out generally agreed upon principles. Yet this would make them similar to the aforementioned ancient epistolary tracts, which are usually descriptive and not prescriptive, that is, they aim to provide samples and models of epistolary writings rather than build a set of

³⁵ Michale Lapidge, 'Gildas's education and the Latin culture of sub-Roman Britain', in Michael Lapidge and David Dumville, *Gildas: new approaches*, Studies in Celtic History, 5 (Woodbridge, 1984), 27-50:29 and 41-47; see also in the same volume Neil Wright, 'Gildas's writing style and its origins', 107-128. Lapidge's conclusion are accepted with a few caveats by David Howlett, *The Celtic tradition of Biblical style*, (Dublin, 1995), 72-79.

³⁶ Columbanus's familiarity with Gildas's work has been repeatedly noted: Michael Winterbottom, 'Columbanus and Gildas' *Vigilae Christianae*, 30 (1976) 310-317 and Neil Wright, 'Columbanus's *Epistulae*' in Michael Lapidge, ed. *Columbanus. Studies on the Latin writings*. Studies in Celtic history (Woodbridge, 1997), 29-92:84-87.

³⁷ On Columbanus's education under Sinilis and then in Bangor under Comgall see Aidan Breen, 'Columbanus's monastic life and education in Ireland', *The journal of Armagh Diocesan Historical Society*, 23, 2 (2011), 1-21 and Alex Woolf, 'Columbanus's Ulster education', in Alexander O'Hara, *Columbanus and the people of Post-Roman Europe*, Oxford studies in Late Antiquity (Oxford, 2018), 91-111.

³⁸ Pseudo-Hilarius, *Expositio in septem epistulas catholicas, praefatio*, ed. Rober E. McNally, *Scriptores Hiberniae minores*, CCSL, 108b (Turnhout, 1973), l. 45-47: *Aepistola est eloquium, in latina tradita expositio, hieronimo dicente, aepistolae, hoc est expono, in hebraeo euphuma. Sciendum est, si omnis epistola liber est. Omnis aepistola liber est; non omnis liber aepistola.*

³⁹ Pseudo-Hilarius, *Expositio in septem epistulas catholicas, praefatio*, (McNally, ed. *Scriptores Hiberniae minores*, l. 15 and 17): *Ob tres causas scriptae sunt epistolae: ut uitia reserarent, et uirtutes plantarent, et hereticorum causas excluderent and aepistolae morem prophetiam secuntur, quia omnis prophetia in enigmatibus involvitur.*

⁴⁰ *Commentarius in epistolas catholicas, in epistolae Iacobi* (McNally, ed. *Scriptores Hiberniae minores*, l. 9 and 16): *Quo exemplo conscripte sunt epistolae? Exemplo prophetarum.*

rules for epistolary prose. It would seem that the Insular authors of the fifth and sixth century and the early Irish church in particular were an integral part of the literary culture that produced the ‘golden age’ of epistolary collections on the Continent.⁴¹ In hindsight, it should not be considered unusual at all that Columbanus would resort to such a mode of expression: he had the examples of Gildas and Patrick and the attested interest of later Irish exegesis in the theoretical aspects of letter-writing could suggest that Columbanus’s training in Bangor might have included a similar perspective. Nor does the Insular tradition of letter-writing end with Columbanus’s collection: Cummian’s letter on the Easter controversy confirms that the epistolary form still had skilled Irish practitioners well into the seventh century.⁴²

2. Columbanus’s *Epistulae*

a. Walker’s edition of the letters

The text of the letter collection of Columbanus is found in a seventeenth-century manuscript from the library of St. Gallen.⁴³ It purports to be a transcript from a manuscript in Irish script from the Library of Bobbio by the St. Gallen monk Jodoc Metzler. The *editio princeps* of Columbanus’s works cured by Patrick Fleming was printed in Louvain in 1667. The letters are stated to have been transcribed from a single manuscript from the library of Bobbio (possibly belonging to the same family of Metzler’s exemplar), which is now lost.⁴⁴ The letter to Pope Gregory was not published by Fleming himself (who stated that the text was too corrupt)⁴⁵ but by his posthumous editor Thomas Shireen, possibly from another lost manuscript, though doubts have been raised about this,⁴⁶ and he may just have used Fleming’s notes. The point that needs to be stressed is that

⁴¹The definition has been used, among others by Allen and Neil, *Greek and Latin letters*, 2.

⁴²Cummian, *Epistola de controversia paschali*, ed. Maura Walsh and Dáibhí Ó Cróinín, *Cummian’s letter De controversia Paschali and the De ratione computandi* (Toronto, 1988), 55-97.

⁴³*St. GallenStiftsbibliothek 1346*, labelled M by L. Bieler in the *apparatus criticus* of Walker’s edition. Ludwig Bieler, ‘Notes on the text tradition and Latinity of St. Columbanus’s writing’ apud Walker, ed. *Opera*, lxxiii-lxxv, lxxv.

⁴⁴Patrick Fleming, *Collectanea Sacra seu Sancti Columbani Hiberni abbatis ... Acta et opuscula* (Louvain 1667), 108, labelled F in Ludwig Bieler ‘Notes on the text tradition’ apud Walker, ed. *Opera*, lxxv

⁴⁵Fleming, *Collectanea sacra*, 157

⁴⁶Labelled S in *Sancti Columbani opera*. Ludwig Bieler ‘Notes on the text tradition’ in *Sancti Columbani opera*, lxxiv n.6; Smit, *Studies*, 34.

presently, there is no surviving manuscript from Bobbio preserving the *Epistulae*.⁴⁷ Ludwig Bieler and Johannes Smit have suggested, on philological basis, by comparing Metzler's transcription with Fleming's work, that the former may have been in fact derived from the latter.⁴⁸ However, more recently, Alain Dubreucq is inclined to doubt this possibility, on the grounds of the anteriority of Metzler's transcription in respect to Fleming's, and he has remarked upon the need of a systematic collation between the two, so that it would be possible to assess whether there are two transcripts based on different manuscripts or on the same manuscript tradition as Michele Tosi, has suggested.⁴⁹ In 1892 Wilhelm Gundlach edited the letters and the poems attributed to Columbanus in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Epistolae*, III. The undisputed letters are published alongside the text of a sixth letter to a young disciple, later recognised as Columbanus's work, and of an *Epistola de solemnitatibus*, which is relegated among the *dubia* by Walker.⁵⁰ In 1957 G.S. M. Walker and Ludwig Bieler edited the corpus of Columbanian writings accompanied by facing-page translation. Though many shortcomings of this work have been pointed out,⁵¹ it remains the most authoritative edition. The text offered by Walker, is based on both Fleming's and Metzler's transcription, and it will be that referred to in this project, unless noted otherwise. The five letters are ordered chronologically and their order and dating will be adhered to here, unless otherwise noted. The text of the sixth letter exhorting the unnamed young disciple was published by Walker alongside the others, however, while its attribution to Columbanus is most

⁴⁷ According to Flavio G. Nuvolone, 'Il *Compendiolum Jonae*, il *Sermo de charitate Dei ac proximi*, il viaggio di Colombano a Roma e l'aggiogamento dell'orso', *Archivum Bobiense*, 4 (1982), 91-174:114-115 the loss might have occurred in the mid-seventeenth century, when the one manuscript preserving the *Epistulae* was sent to Rome for a never-realised printed edition by Costantino Gaetano. See also Michele Tosi, 'Arianesimo tricapitolino norditaliano e penitenza privata iroscozzese. Due piste importanti per riprendere la questione critica delle opere di Colombano', in *Archivum Bobiense* 10/11(1988/1989), 9-118, 13-15 and Paolo Todde and Flavio G. Nuvolone, 'Le lettere e la preghiera di S. Colombano: versione italiana con testo latino a fronte, apparato e commento', *Archivum Bobiense*, 22 (2000), 43-290:60-61. See the paragraph on the transmission of the *Epistulae* in the Conclusions chapter of this thesis.

⁴⁸ Smit, *Studies*, 35-38, following Bieler, 'Notes on the text', apud Walker, ed. *Opera*, lxxv, n.4.

⁴⁹ Dubreucq, 'L'œuvre épistolaire', 107-108 and Tosi, 'Arianesimo tricapitolino', 13. Dubreucq's criticism of Bieler and Smit's position echoes observations previously made by Todde and Nuvolone, 'Le lettere e la preghiera', 60.

⁵⁰ *Epistola De Solemnitatibus*, ed. Gundlach, *Epistolae*, 177-182; ed. Walker, *Opera*, 198-206.

⁵¹ Reviews expressing criticism include Mario Esposito, 'On the new edition of Opera Sancti Columbani' *Classica & medievalia*, 21 (1960), 184-203; E. Franceschini In *Aevum*, 31 (1957), 281-3; M.L.W, *Lainster Speculum*, 31, (1959)

likely correct, it has been noted that this work is more likely to be a sermon, since it has been transmitted by a different tradition and it is described as an exhortation by the manuscripts.⁵²

b. Textual studies on the *Epistulae*.

Following the publication of Walker's critical edition and translation, a number of works by authors of different nationality attempted to provide a new perspective on the authenticity of both prose and poetic writings but also on subjects such as Columbanus's level of education, his knowledge of Classical authors and of Classical Latin metres. Among those focusing on the letters, Johannes W. Smit's monography *Studies on the Language and style of Columba the younger* should be considered essential for two main reasons. Firstly, it provides an alternative reading to both Walker and Gundlach's text for many dubious passages. Some of his emendations have been questioned on various grounds,⁵³ however, the discussion is always quite insightful and by highlighting the most problematic aspects of the transmitted text, has provided other scholars with the instruments to develop their own theories and interpretations.⁵⁴ Secondly, in the last chapter of his dissertation, Smit attempted to dispel Walker's and Bieler's depiction of Columbanus's familiarity with Virgil and other Classical poets by showing how the reminiscences present in his works are in fact either derived from Latin Christian writings or had already become so common and idiomatic that they cannot be considered proof of a refined education.⁵⁵ A valuable consequence of this approach is that, in order to make the case for his argument, Smit has drawn a preliminary picture of the authors who had most influence on Columbanus's writing style and ideas. Smit underlines his familiarity with Jerome,⁵⁶ who in the *Epistulae* is often referred to as an unquestionable authority, and implies that Columbanus's language is not really different from that of most Christian authors of the Late Antiquity. The first part of this work addresses a number of inadequacies in the edited text, in the translation and in the interpretation

⁵² Wright, 'Columbanus's *Epistulae*', 58-59; Dubreucq, 'L'œuvre épistolaire', 106-107

⁵³ See reviews by P.G. Walsh *The Classical Review*, 23, 2 (1973), 275-276, R.E. Reynolds. in *Speculum*, 48, 1 (1973), 179-182 and Ludwig Bieler. in *Latomus*, 31 (1972), 896-901.

⁵⁴ For example see the quotations from Columbanus's text in Howlett, *The Celtic tradition of Biblical style*, 82-83, and Roy Flechner. 'Dagan, Columbanus and the Gregorian mission' *Peritia*, 19 (2005), 65-90

⁵⁵ Smit, *Studies*, 25-26

⁵⁶ Smit, *Studies*, 171 'Columba's linguistic usage was moulded by his through knowledge of the writings of the Church Fathers and most particularly by his reading of Jerome'.

offered by Walker and Bieler's *Sancti Columbani Opera*. The author's intention was twofold: on the one hand to disprove the then still common perception of Columbanus as widely read in the works of Classical Latinity, on the other, to question the attribution of the poetic works ascribed to Columbanus. What will be relevant to this research project is the strong emphasis put by Smit on finding links between the *Epistulae* and Early Christian literature. Furthermore, his suggestions for many emendations of Walker's edited text will be taken into consideration whenever uncertainty might emerge. Smit's work is best understood in the context of the contemporary ongoing polemic between supporters of the idea that the Irish had a key role in preserving Classical culture into the Early Middle ages and those arguing against it. A focal point of the debate was the authorship of the poetic works attributed by Walker and Bieler to Columbanus; Smit's attentive examination and dismissal of most of the Classical reference in Walker's *apparatus fontium* for the prose work of Columbanus should be considered as functional to his overall goal of distancing early medieval Irish culture from Classical sources.⁵⁷

Christine Mohrmann had prepared the ground for Smit's work in an article that offered a general evaluation of Columbanus's level of skill in the Latin language.⁵⁸ Mohrmann described the language employed by Columbanus as fundamentally distinct in its elaboration from that of contemporary authors, to the point of looking anachronistic for the standard of seventh-century Gaul. It is also explicitly differentiated from that of Patrick's, which is stated to be an example of colloquial Christian Vulgar Latin.⁵⁹ The main point raised by the author's observations is that, if compared with Patrick's, the higher level of formal correctness and elaboration displayed by Columbanus in the *Epistulae* can be explained by the Irish monk's bilingualism. Regarding the style, Mohrmann likens it to the mannerism of fourth- and fifth-century Gaulish writers, especially because of the florid rhetoric of the *Epistulae*. The suggested explanation for this

⁵⁷The revisionist point of view of the debate and Columbanus's work relevance to it are best summed up by Edmondo Coccia, 'La cultura irlandese altomedievale: miracolo o mito?', *Studi Medievali*, 8, (1967), 257-420. For a reaction of the opposite side see Ludwig Bieler, 'The humanism of st Columbanus', in Ludwig Bieler, (publ. Richard Sharpe), *Ireland and the culture of Early Medieval Europe*, Variorum Collected Studies series 263, (London, 1987), 95-102.

⁵⁸Christine Mohrmann 'The earliest continental Irish Latin' in *Vigiliae Christianae* 16, 1 (1968), 216-233.

⁵⁹For the author's considerations on Patrick see Christine Mohrmann, *The Latin of Saint Patrick. Four studies*, Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, (Dublin 1962).

feature is that Columbanus's style is informed by his knowledge of Gildas's, which is in turn an expression of the fourth and fifth century Gaulish cultural milieu. A certain degree of continuity with the Late Antique and Early Christian rhetorical traditions is detected, for example in the shift between different expressive registers in different works, according to their genre: elevated in the letters, simple in the *Instructiones*, prescriptive in the *Rules*.⁶⁰ Picking up on Mohrmann's suggestion of a strong similarity between Columbanus's Latin and Gildas's, Michael Winterbottom's 'Columbanus and Gildas'⁶¹ conducts a parallel discussion of Gildas's *De excidio* and Columbanus's letter to Pope Boniface in order to prove his point. In the first part the focus is on theme and concepts, in the second on stylistic choices. After noting that Columbanus references Gildas as an authority in his letter to Pope Gregory, Winterbottom lists a series of passages which show thematic similarity between the two works, arguing that sometimes Columbanus's text even displays significant lexical borrowings. In terms of style, Winterbottom directs the attention towards the peculiar word-order that is adopted by both authors in sentences that carry significant meaning. The conclusion of the article implies that the origins of what has been called Hisperic Latin can be traced back to the exasperation of tendencies present in Gildas's work by Irish scholars, and that in Columbanus's letters this phenomenon is already at work.

In 1997, a volume edited by Michael Lapidge sought to clarify the position of a number of works attributed to Columbanus in respect to their actual authorship. The main results of this group of studies were Clare Stancliffe's re-assertion of Columbanus's authorship of all of the sermons, the thirteen *Instructiones* traditionally attributed to him, as well as the removal of all metrical poems from the canon of his work.⁶² Among the collected studies of the volume, Neil Wright's paper's 'Columbanus's *Epistulae*' is the most detailed and comprehensive discussion of the Irishman's letters and should be considered an essential starting point for any further discussion of them. In the first part, a comparison is set up between the *praefatio* of Gregory of Tours's *Historia*

⁶⁰ Mohrmann, *The earliest continental Irish Latin*, 219

⁶¹ Michael Winterbottom 'Columbanus and Gildas', 310-317:311-313 and 315-317.

⁶² The history of the contested attribution of the *Instructiones* is summed up by Clare Stancliffe, 'The Thirteen Sermons attributed to Columbanus', in Lapidge, ed. *Columbanus. Studies on the Latin writings*, 93-203:93-96. For the conclusions about Columbanus's ability to write quantitative poetry see Lapidge, 'Epilogue: did Columbanus compose metrical verse?', 274-286.

Francorum and two paragraphs of Columbanus's letter to Pope Boniface. Wright argues that the two share many similarities: both authors have a fundamentally correct grasp of Latin grammar, albeit with some deficiencies on the part of Gregory; they show preference for short sentences, though, on occasion, they are able to master longer units; they skilfully manipulate word-order and the effect of the recitation of the text thorough rhetorical devices such as antithesis, chiasmus and hyperbaton on the one hand, and homoteleuton and alliteration on the other.⁶³ According to Wright, Columbanus's Latin does not distance itself too much from the standard of his time, even though there are traces of tendencies, such as the preference for unusual vocabulary and complex patterns of hyperbaton, that would be exasperated by later Insular works.⁶⁴ The second part of the paper is dedicated to trying to solve the problem posed by the interlaced patterns of hyperbaton and to answering the related question of whether Columbanus had knowledge of the rhythmical *cursus*. This detailed analysis follows up on what had been previously written by Winterbottom and Wright himself in various articles regarding this same feature in the Latin of insular authors such as Gildas and Aldhelm, Francois Kerlouégéan had put forth the hypothesis that an unusual interlaced disposition of adjective-noun couples often found Latin authors from a Celtic-speaking background, beginning from Gildas, should be considered a unique and easily identifiable characteristic of Celtic Latinity.⁶⁵ Through comparison with fourth and fifth century authors from the continent, Winterbottom and Wright had countered that such a pattern, while uncommon, is not unique, and it would be misguided to speak of a Celtic type of hyperbaton. However, they do concede that this stylistic feature is much more frequent in authors, who, as Columbanus and Aldhelm, had familiarity with the work of Gildas⁶⁶. In his essay on Gildas's prose style, Wright had concluded that instances of hyperbaton reflect both the need to elevate the tone to a poetic standard, and that of securing *cursus*-rhythm⁶⁷. The same might hold true for the style of

⁶³ Wright, 'Columbanus's Epistulae', 32-46

⁶⁴ Wright, 'Columbanus's Epistulae', 47-50

⁶⁵ Francois Kerlouégéan, 'Une mode stylistique dans la prose latine des pays celtiques', *Études celtiques* 13 (1972), 275-297.

⁶⁶ Michael Winterbottom 'A "Celtic" hyperbaton?' *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies* 27 (1976-78), 207-212 see also Michael Winterbottom 'Columbanus and Gildas', 315-17 and Neil Wright 'Gildas's prose style and its origins' 110-116.

⁶⁷ Wright, 'Gildas's prose style and its origins', 126.

Columbanus, but with some reservations. Whereas extreme changes in word-order in the *Epistulae* are indeed shown to have the function of underscoring significant passages by exasperating the rhetoric of antithesis,⁶⁸ the results of Wright's scansion of sentence endings make it dubious that Columbanus had a complete mastery over the practice of *cursus*.⁶⁹ Having applied the statistical method of analysis of sentence endings developed by Janson, the total percentage of sentence endings which show proper *cursus* endings such as the *planus*, the *velox* and the *tardus* is of 55.3%.⁷⁰ Wright notes that, while such frequency is not as high as it is in contemporary practitioners, thus rendering doubtful Columbanus's understanding of this technique, their high incidence when combined with hyperbaton might not be coincidental.⁷¹ Finally, the third section discusses the influences and the literary allusions which, as common contemporary literary practice would dictate, are very common in the *Epistulae*. Wright observes that the quotations from the Bible are derived from both the Vulgate and the *Vetus Latina*. It is argued that scriptural references are often used in an allusive way, to make veiled accusations against his opponents and conduct his own defence. The examples discussed are derived from the letter to the Gallic bishops and they rely on the ability of the reader to reconstruct the context of the passage that is being quoted, so that hidden implications of the words employed would emerge.⁷² Wright vigorously restate the case for Columbanus's familiarity with the works of Jerome, showing how the apparent discrepancies between his quotation and the accepted text of Jerome's letters are not the mark of a superficial knowledge but of a different textual tradition.⁷³ The picture of Columbanus's pool of references is completed by the writings of Rufinus, Sulpicius Severus and, to a lesser extent, Cassian of Marseille, Gennadius and Gregory I. However, what Wright really emphasises is the influence of the one other Insular author known to Columbanus: Gildas. Verbal parallels, stylistic preferences and the use of unusual poeticisms and rhetoric devices are extensively listed.

⁶⁸ Wright, 'Columbanus's *Epistulae*', 51-53

⁶⁹ Wright, 'Columbanus's *Epistulae*', 55-57

⁷⁰ Tore Janson. *Prose rhythm in Medieval Latin from the 9th to the 13th century*, (Stockholm 1975) 10-34. On rhythmical prose see also Howlett, *The Celtic tradition of Biblical style*, 22-23; H. Haghendahl *La Prose metrique d'Arnothe: contributions à la connaissance de la prose litteraire de le empire*, (Gotheborg, 1932); C.B. Faulhaber. 'The *Summa dictaminis* of Guido Faba' in James J. Murphy, ed. *Medieval eloquence, Studies in the theory and practice of Medieval rhetoric* (Berkley, 1978), 85-111.

⁷¹ Wright, 'Columbanus's *Epistulae*', 57.

⁷² Wright 'Columbanus's *Epistulae*', 60-65.

⁷³ Wright 'Columbanus's *Epistulae*', 71.

Thus, Wright delineates a context of conformity to the same literary tastes and type of argumentation for the authors of *De Excidio Britanniae* and of the *Epistulae*.⁷⁴

Columbanus's letter to Pope Gregory has been discussed by David Howlett in the context of his reconstruction of what he calls 'the biblical style'.⁷⁵ Its rules refer to the organization of the text and the structuring of the sentence according to chiasmus and parallelism, while the adjuncts are concerned with arithmetical correlations between words and also with rhythmical prose⁷⁶. Howlett points out that Columbanus's letter displays seven out of fifteen of the characteristics that had been stated to be rules and adjuncts of the biblical style. Namely:

- 1) ideas are stated and restated through a combination of chiasmus and parallelism.
- 2) Parallel and chiastic couples of nouns are grammatically related, for example in the salutation they are words of the third declension in the dative case.
- 3) Parallel members are linked by allusions to other texts, for example the second paragraph has the quotation from the Deuteronomy contrasting with the anecdote about insolence.
- 4) Parallel members are linked by word plays such as the etymological pun on Columbanus's name and the title of his addressee in the salutation.
- 5) Parallel and chiastic members are linked by rhyme and alliteration.
- 6) The text is mathematically constructed according to mean and extreme *ratio*.
- 7) Important words divide the text at regular intervals.

Notably, while rhythmical prose is considered by Howlett as one of the adjuncts of the biblical style, no passage among those listed in his chapter on Columbanus is shown to display such a feature. However, in his article 'Insular Latin writers rhythms', Howlett returned to the opening salutation of Columbanus's letter to Gregory and took a completely different stance on the

⁷⁴ Wright, 'Columbanus's *Epistulae*' 70-88. For Gildas's influence see also Neil Wright, 'Rufinus, Gregory of Nazianzus and Gildas' in Neil Wright, *History and Literature in Late Antiquity and the Early Medieval West* Variorum, (London, 1995), and Winterbottom, 'Columbanus and Gildas'.

⁷⁵ David Howlett *The Celtic tradition of Biblical style*, 91-102, David Howlett 'Two works of Saint Columban' in *Mittellateinisches Jahrbuch* 2, 8 (1993), 28-46 and David Howlett, 'Insular writers rhythms' in *Peritia*, 11 (1997), 53-116.

⁷⁶ Howlett, *The Celtic tradition of Biblical style*, 5-29

Irishman's knowledge of poetic prose by showing instances of clausular, that is quantitative and not rhythmical, sentence endings.⁷⁷ In terms of interpretation, Howlett has made use of the results of his stylistic analysis to frame the epistolary relationship between Columbanus and the Pope in an almost antagonistic manner, for instance, noting the lack of a *captatio benevolentiae* and stressing the element of reproach, that, while undoubtedly present in the letter, he understands to be meant by the author to be brought to the front by solving the intricacies of biblical style. However, Howlett's discussion being limited to the letter to Gregory, this interpretation falls short of the standard of recent scholarship on epistolarity which, whenever possible, tries to consider letter collections as a whole. The use of the biblical style may not be consistent in the *corpus* of Columbanus's letters, and if present, it may be used for a different purpose. Nevertheless, Howlett has listed, proven and discussed the use of biblical style in other letter writers close to Columbanus's area and time, most significantly, in Cummian's letter on the Paschal controversy.⁷⁸

In 2000 a new critical edition of Columbanus's epistolary collection by Paolo Todde and Flavio G. Nuvolone appeared in a special number of the journal *Archivum Bobiense*.⁷⁹ The edition presented itself as a complete revision of Walker's text, incorporating not only the editorial changes of his work and of that of Gundlach before him but also discussion of the textual emendations proposed by Smit and by subsequent scholarship. The edition offers abundant commentary and a facing-page translation in Italian, that at times is quite distant from Walker's English one or Jean Thiébaud's French one.⁸⁰ The major contributions of Todde and Nuvolone's edition are a complete re-evaluation of Walker's *apparatus fontium* and an in-depth investigation of the transmission of the letter collection.⁸¹ The results are especially significant for understanding Columbanus's approach to the Holy Scriptures: numerous quotations that escaped Walker have been highlighted and their relevance to the portion of the text in which they appear is

⁷⁷ Howlett 'Insular Latin writers rhythms', 58-59.

⁷⁸ Howlett, *The Celtic tradition of Biblical style* 91-102 and Howlett, 'Insular writers rhythms' 70-73.

⁷⁹ Paolo Todde and Flavio G. Nuvolone, 'Le lettere e la preghiera di S. Colombano: versione italiana con testo latino a fronte, apparato e commento', *Archivum Bobiense*, 22 (2000), 43-290.

⁸⁰ Jean Thiébaud, *Saint-Colomban, instructions, lettres et poems* (Paris, 2000).

⁸¹ See Todde and Nuvolone, 'Le lettere e la preghiera', 58-70.

fully explained. The commentary to the edition does not address the question of how Columbanus's *Epistulae* fit in within the larger context of Early Medieval epistolography, but more recent works have attempted to examine the letter collection under this specific lens. While Pierre-Yves Lambert focused on lexical and linguistic aspects, two short articles by Tommaso Leso and Alain Dubreucq were the first to point out Columbanus's ability of integrating into his own style common tropes of epistolary texts, such as demonstrations of humility and respect for epistolary *brevitas*.⁸² Both studies highlighted how Columbanus's letter collection is not integrated into the networks of epistolary *amicitia* of Frankish Gaul. They also suggest that it might have been assembled under the supervision of Jonas of Bobbio and that it did not enjoy widespread circulation as it did not offer a portrayal of the founding abbot that was consistent with the laudatory implant of Jonas's hagiographic work. Columbanus's involvement with the Easter controversy and with the Three Chapters schism feature prominently in the *Epistulae* and none at all in the *Vita*. The purpose of the present study is also to address this same point through a more in-depth interaction with the contents of each letters and to verify how this would compare with the results of these previous attempts.

3. Methodology

A literary text would reflect the conventions of the genre it was part of in the mind of the author, and there can be little doubt that seventh-century epistolography was a genre that was being both codified and experimented with, as it is the case for contemporary hagiography or historiography. On the other hand a letter does document itself: not only its composition and the circumstances that led to its writing, as it is the case for any other literary source, but also, since letters are generally written to overcome a physical distance as well as a temporal one, the fact that it might have been forwarded; that it had reached (or possibly not reached) its addressee or a larger audience; that archival copies of it were preserved by either writer or addressee or both; that it

⁸²See Alain Dubreucq, 'L'œuvre épistolaire de Colomban et les échanges épistolaires de son temps', in F. Schnoor and others, eds. *Gallus und seine Zeit: Leben, Wirken, Nachleben* (St. Gallen, 2015), 98-125; Tommaso Leso, 'Columbanus in Europe. The evidence from the *Epistulae*', in *Early Medieval Europe*, 21, (2013), 358-387, and Pierre-Yves Lambert, 'La culture de Saint Colomban à travers ses lettres' in Pierre Riche, ed. *Les écoles monastiques a haut moyen age*, (Luxeuil- le-Bains, 2013), 94-108.

was possibly selected to be part of a larger collection; the means, times and reasons of such selection; its circulation after it had reached its addressee. All of these elements are part of what can be termed the epistolary event, which is complementary to the epistolary text. However, historiography and literary criticism have approached letter writing by differently stressing one aspect or the other. The different approaches can be summarised in three categories: 1) studies which focus almost exclusively on the text of letters in their linguistic, rhetorical and stylistic elements; 2) studies that consider letter collections in their entirety as their object, detailing questions of authorship, composition and transmission of the macro textual whole. 3) Finally there are studies that stress the epistolary event in its social implications, discussing the role of letter writing in defining the public perception and status of the author, and describing networks of epistolary exchanges. This project will attempt to encompass all three of these approaches, given the small number of letter in the collection attributed to Columbanus.

In order to do this, a direct interaction with the epistolary text is required. An approach to the textual analysis that would suit the scope of the project would be to break down the *Epistuale* into increasingly more specific and focused sections. In this way three different operations can be conducted.

- a. Dividing the text of the letters between sections that display epistolary features and more generic sections
- b. Gaining an overall idea of which features of Columbanus's language are employed in which sections and how. These can be divided into two categories: linguistic, which includes aspects such as vocabulary and correctness of the language; rhetorical, which include both schemes, such as antithesis, hyperbaton and alliteration and tropes. Each of these categories should be put in relation to the section in which they appear and their frequency should be noted.
- c. Comparing such sections with the epistolary types described and practiced by Late Antique theorist and letter writers and consider whether they are consistent with them or something new has emerged.

At the end of this process the text of the letters will be broken up, and each individual section of the broken text will be labelled in an attempt to define its most significant characteristic. Such labels will reflect one or more of the following elements: 1) the function of the section in relation to its position in the letter (e.g. salutations and valedictions); 2) the function of the section in relation to the codified format of Late Antique public speeches (e.g. *exordium*, *propositio*, *argumentatio*, *excusationes*); 3) the tone of writing in the section, which is defined using terminology lifted from the aforementioned letter-writing tracts. It should be noted that, since these labels are derived from different traditions (i.e. the classical rhetorical tradition on the one hand and what can be understood of the theory of letter writing from the sources discussed above on the other), they describe aspects of the writing that can co-exist in each individual section. In the same way, some passages do not reflect characteristics that can be attributed to either of these theoretical frameworks; in this case the categories of ‘exegetical’ and ‘homiletic’ style, are used. This terminology is not used in any of the Late Antique tracts discussed so far, but it has been adopted in the present work as a way to highlight how close Columbanus’s *Epistulae* are to contemporary non-epistolary works. These preliminary operations will prepare the organisation of the commentary on each letter. From the most focused aspect to the broadest, this will include:

1. Lexical description: in the commentary to the letter this will be discussed under the heading of ‘Vocabulary’. This level pertains to specific vocabulary choices made by the author of the *Epistulae*. The relevance and history of specific words will be discussed both in light of the context of the author’s work and in that of contemporary epistolary literature.
2. Description of the grammatical and rhetorical structure of the sentences in a paragraph: in the commentary to the letter this will be discussed under the heading of ‘Structure and Style’. The next level would be to isolate syntactical units and detecting the features of rhetorical elaboration that characterise them. Such features would then be discussed under two different perspectives: on the one hand their frequency and role in Columbanus’s

letter collection as a whole, and on the other whether they are common features of other contemporary epistolary writings.

3. Description of the epistolary function and style of multiple paragraphs: in the commentary to the letter this will be discussed under the heading of 'Epistolary qualities'. Each letter should be broken down into sections that absolve a specific function. This should be done on the basis of the analysis of the rhetorical devices previously conducted. These functions might be described as either an example of the different epistolary styles described by theorist such as the Pseudo-Libanius or Julius Victor,⁸³ or by a new label devised on the basis of similarities between the *Epistolae* and contemporary epistolary literature, if such similarities should emerge. This is also the level in which general features of any given passage will be discussed: for example, if it contains tropes and figures of speech that are commonplace in epistolary literature; if it reflects a certain way in which the author has organized the letter, that is, if features of other genres such as homilies or public address are present; if the passage reveals something about the relationship between the author and his patrons or something about the intended audience and specific addressees.
4. Investigation of the sources used by the author: in the commentary to the letter this will be discussed under the heading of 'Sources'. Since identification of references to other works often relays on specific turn of phrase or on the general features of a given passage this level will be often conflated with the 'Vocabulary' and 'Epistolary qualities' sections.

After this in-depth analysis of the features of each letter, the Conclusions chapter will summarise the macro-textual aspects of the letter collection, putting together the elements emerging from the analysis of each individual text. Additionally in-depth discussion of the contents, transmission and

⁸³ Demetrius, *De elocutione*, 223-235, ed. W. Rhys Roberts, *Demetrius: on style* (Harvard 1932) see also Abraham J. Malherbe, *Ancient epistolary theorists*, 16-19; Julius Victor, *Ars Rhetorica*, 27 ed. C. Halm, *Rhetores Latini Minores*, (Leipzig 1863) see also Abraham J. Malherbe, *Ancient epistolary theorists*, 63-65; Ps. Demetrius, Τύποι Ἐπιστολικοί, ed. Valentin Weicher, *Demetrii et Libanii qui feruntur*, (Leipzig 1910) see also Abraham J. Malherbe, *Ancient epistolary theorists*, 30-39; Ps. Libanius, Ἐπιστολιμαῖοι Χαρακτῆρες, ed. R. Foerster, *Libanii opera*, (Leipzig 1927) see also Abraham J. Malherbe, *Ancient epistolary theorists*, 66-81.

date of each letter is going to be featured in the same Conclusions chapter. This is because such discussion will be built upon the results of the textual analysis conducted in each of the chapter addressing the individual letters.

A final methodological indication concerns Jonas's *Vita Columbani*. For the purpose of this work it is important that the character of Columbanus as represented by Jonas and the character of Columbanus as it emerges from the *Epistulae* remain separated. Since, ultimately, both are literary projections of the historical Columbanus, overlap is unavoidable, but in order to keep chances of confusion at a minimum, the textual analysis of the *Epistulae* has been conducted without relying on biographical information from the *Vita*, unless it is absolutely necessary for understanding the context in which each letter was composed.

CHAPTER 1: Columbanus's letter to Gregory I.

The text of all the letters as presented in this work follows Walker's edition, with the following additional indications: 1) *Italics*: scriptural quotation. 2) **Bold**: Emendations to Walker's text. George S. M. Walker, *Sancti Columbani Opera*, *Scriptores Latini Hiberniae* 2, (Dublin 1957). 3) When the text of the two seventeenth-century originals is discussed F indicates Fleming and Sheerin, *Commentaria sacra* while M indicates Jodocus Metzler, St. Gallen, SB, 1346, both followed by page number.

Epistula I

Section 1.1: *Salutatio*.

Domino sancto et in Christo Patri, Romanae pulcherrimo Ecclesiae Decori, totius Europae flaccentis augustissimo quasi cuidam Flori, egregio Speculatori, Theoria utpote **divina** †**castalitis potito**, ego, bar-iona, vilis Columba, in Christo mitto salutem.

1.1.1 Readings and vocabulary

The salutation poses one textual problem that should be solved in order to understand its full meaning.

Theoria utpote divinae Castalitis perito [Walker, 2,1,3]	Theoria utpote divina* castulitatis potito* <i>ita MS.</i> [F, 157]	Theoria utpote divina castalitis *potito * <i>Bob.</i> <i>posito</i> [M, 109]
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The main difficulty here is the term *castulitatis/castalitis*. Gundlach had ventured to conjecture *causalitatis* and *perito*⁸⁴; while the latter has been accepted by Walker, for the former he followed M and rendered the term as 'eloquence' on the basis of a gloss in St. Gall SB cod. 912: *castalitati de elogutione*.⁸⁵ However, Johannes Smit has put forth a complex but compelling argument that

⁸⁴Gundlach, ed. *Epistolae*, (MGH, *Epistolae* III), 156.

⁸⁵Walker, *Opera*, 3, n1; the gloss is listed by the *Corpus Glossariorum Latinorum*, CGL iv, 214. 4. The manuscript is St. Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek, 912; description in Elias A. Lowe, *Codices Latini Antiquiores. A*

denies the very existence of the word *castalitas* and radically changes the text and its meaning; this section of the salutation is emended, reading: *theoria utpote divina ac actuali statu potito* (=to him who possess insight into the things of God and who occupies a position in which he has a duty to act).⁸⁶

Smit's argument is three pronged: firstly the concordances of the cases in the sentence is rearranged so that it more closely follows the older exemplars; *divina* should be an ablative agreeing with *theoria* (which is also consistent with Columbanus's frequent use of hyperbaton), and *potito* ought to be preserved as it is found in the exemplars. Secondly, and most decisively, Smit argues that the gloss quoted by Walker was meant to explain this very text (thus positing that Columbanus's letter were known to the glossators and that the text was already corrupted in the eighth century) and, therefore it holds no real value⁸⁷. Supporting this view there are the fact that the glossary is from Northern Italy with Bobbio being a likely candidate as the place of origin, and the fact that other terms from the letter are glossed in it.⁸⁸ Smit understood this phrase as an explanation of the previous *speculator* [bishop], whose duties are both contemplative and bound to the *vita activa*. The first concept is rendered in the letter with *theoria divina*, the second, Smit argues, might have been referred to by a phrase containing the adjective *actualis*, for example *actualis status*, which would have been later miscopied by merging the conjunction *ac* with it, thus creating *castalitatis/castulitatis* of M and F. This double qualification of Pope Gregory, it might be added, does also reflect what Columbanus knew of the pontiff's activity as a writer. In this letter the Irishman requests a copy of his commentary on the book of Ezekiel (an exercise in

palaeographical guide to Latin manuscripts prior to the ninth century. Part VII: Switzerland, (Oxford 1956), 36-39.

⁸⁶Smit, *Studies*, 55, his translation.

⁸⁷Smit, *Studies*, 50-53.

⁸⁸Smit listed *Speculator, Theoria* and *Bar-Iona* (CGL IV, 284, 24; IV, 291,9 and IV 210, 46) and he argued that the glossators chose only terms from the beginning of the letter to Gregory; however it should be noted that a similar number of terms from *Epistulae* III and V are also found in this glossary. See the commentary to *Ep. V* for discussion of the possibility of another unique word from the letters of Columbanus being preserved in St. Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek, 912

theoria divina) and recalls having read the *Cura Pastoralis*, which helped the bishops in their practical obligations (*actualis status*).⁸⁹

As a counterbalance to this evidence, it must be remembered that one of the aims of the second section of Smit's work is to dispel the notion that Columbanus was well versed in Classical Latin poetry. Therefore, one should be wary of accepting his denouncing of *castalitas* as a ghost-word, since ultimately it is derived from the name of the fountain of the Muses in Classical poetry (*Castalia fons*). Nonetheless, the context in which the related adjective *Castalis* is used by other Christian authors does leave ground to argue that Columbanus would not have been likely to use *castalitas* as a synonym for the Holy Scripture (which is what is implied, as shown by Walker's translation as 'Divine Eloquence'⁹⁰). Before Columbanus, Paulinus of Nola had refused to invoke the Castalian muses, whereas, later on, Aldhelm would similarly deny any need to pledge to the Castalian nymphs, both of them claiming to derive their inspiration from Christ.⁹¹ If the Castalian spring, rather than being a synonym of eloquence, was treated by these two authors as a leftover from pagan times that needed to be abandoned, then it might be justifiable to think that Columbanus would not have used *castalitas* in a way that carried a positive connotation and that its appearance here is problematic, making it more likely to be a ghost-word, even when Smit's overall intentions are accounted for.

David Howlett, on stylistic grounds, has proposed to further emend the text to *Theoriae utpote divinae ac actuali statu potitori*.⁹² This has the advantage of being less convoluted in meaning and of preserving the homoeoteleuton that marks the other *cola* of the salutation (**Decori – Flori – Speculatori – potitori**). However it distances itself too much from F and M, especially in changing the ablative endings into genitive; Smit's rendition of this passage of the salutation is

⁸⁹ Columbanus, *Ep.* I, 9 (Walker, *Opera*, 10).

⁹⁰ See also Christine Mohrmann, 'The earliest continental Irish Latin', in *Vigiliae Christianae*, Vol. 16, 3/4 (1962), 216-233:222: 'As far as I can see, by *Divina Castalitas* Columban means Holy Scripture'.

⁹¹ Paulinus, *Carmen XV*, 30 ed. Wilhelm von Hartel, *Paulini Nolani Opera*, CSEL,30, II, (Wien 1894), 56: *Non ego Castalidas, vatum phantasmata, Musas*; Aldhelm, *Carmen de virginitate*, 24 ed. Rudolph Ewald, *Aldhelmi Opera*, MGH, *Auct. Ant.* 15, (Berlin, 1919), 353: *nec peto Castalidas metrorum cantica nimphas*.

⁹² David Howlett, *The Celtic tradition of Biblical style*, (Dublin, 1995), 82-83.

very speculative and, though it had been partially accepted by Ludwig Bieler,⁹³ it has been criticised by Robert Stanton, who has argued that, on the one hand, the glossary referenced by Smit cannot be considered to be related to Bobbio in any certain way, and, on the other, that his reconstruction of the palaeographical changes undergone by the passage is too unlikely.⁹⁴ The text as presented here marks the passage as corrupted (†), following Bieler's suggestion. Nonetheless, it should be noted that the wider context of the letter provides a useful reference that can be considered Columbanus's model for this phrase. A text extensively quoted in the opening of this letter, the tract *De ratione Paschali*, describes John the Apostle in these terms: *Iohanne scilicet evangelista et pectoris dominis accubatore, doctrinarum sine dubio spiritalium potatore*.⁹⁵ There are a few points of contact with the way in which Columbanus addresses Gregory in the other segments of this salutation: the use of appositions that require further specification in the genitive case, the use of hyperbaton (*doctrinarum ... spiritalium*), and the homoeoteleuton. In light of this and of the semantic overlap between the expressions *theoria divina* in the letter and *spiritalium doctrinarum* in the paschal tract, one might suggest to read the last word of Columbanus's phrase (*potito*) as *potatori*. This would imply that Columbanus was here referencing the text that supports one of his main arguments and, by doing so, recognising the apostolic authority of his addressee, albeit not Peter's but, unusually, John's.⁹⁶ This emendation would maintain stylistic consistency with the other segments, just as the solution proposed by Howlett, but the same objection raised against him would apply, namely that there would also be need to emend the case-endings of the words *theoria divina*, from ablative to genitive.

⁹³ Ludwig Bieler, Review of Smit, *Studies*, in *Latomus* 31, 3, (1972), 896-901: 898. Bieler accepted that *castalitas* is likely to be a ghost-word and that the gloss might be related to this text, but he considered Smit's emendation not certain, suggesting should be edited to: '*theoria utpote divina †castalitatis† potito. Lege ac actuali statu?*'

⁹⁴ Stanton, 'Columbanus, Letter I', 157-158.

⁹⁵ *De Ratione Paschali*, 7, ed. and trans. in Daniel P. McCarthy and Aidan Breen, *The ante-Nicene Christian Pasch: De Ratione Paschali. The paschal tract of Anatolius, bishop of Laodicea*, (Dublin, 2003), 48 l. 114-115 ('That is John the evangelist who reclined his head on the chest of the Lord, without doubt drinking in spiritual doctrines'); the editors also discuss the derivation of the theology of the passage from Origen's commentary on John, 122-123.

⁹⁶ On the significance of the apostle John in early Irish exegesis see Exequiel Monge Allen, 'The metamorphosis of *Eoinn Bruinne*: constructing John the apostle in Medieval Ireland', *Études Celtiques*, 43, (2017), 207-223. The evangelical image of John reclining his head on the breast of the Saviour as represented by the Latin Anatolius is at the root of the Irish epithet for John, 'John of the breast'.

Ego Bar-Iona (vilis Columba) [Walker, 2, 1,4]	Ego *Bargoma, vilis Columba* <i>sic MS.</i> [F, 157]	Ego Bargma, vilis Columba [M 109]
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In this case, Walker's text is generally accepted, but another interesting possibility was suggested by DuCange: *barginna*, meaning *peregrinus*⁹⁷; however passages from letters IV and V⁹⁸ make it clear that Columbanus is here referencing the Hebrew equivalent of his name; there can be little doubt that the phrase *vilis Columba* is meant to be a word play on the translation of Bar-Ionah as *filius Columbae*. It should also be noted that the term Bar-Ionah appears in Matth. 16, 17, where it is a patronymic, referring to Saint Peter. The fact that the letter is addressed to the bishop of Rome, successor of Peter, increases the likelihood that this was the term found in the original. It has been pointed out how the Irishman's appropriation of the name of the apostle might be considered provocative or tongue-in-cheek.⁹⁹ However one element needs to be brought up against this interpretation: Columbanus is aware of the existence and makes use of the exegetical tool of the *tres linguae sacrae* to highlight the significance of his chosen name, that is, he demonstrates to the reader that he knows of its Latin (*Columba*), Greek (*Peristera*), and Hebrew (*Jonah*) versions, both as a display of learning and its association with a mystical meaning (the dove of the Holy Spirit) and with significant figures (Peter the Apostle in this case, Jonas the prophet in letter IV and V).¹⁰⁰ This is more apparent in the previously mentioned passage of

⁹⁷ Du Cange, et al., *Glossarium mediae et infimae latinitatis*, éd. augm., Niort, L. Favre, 1883-1887, t. 1, col. 577c.

⁹⁸ Columbanus, *Ep.* IV, 8 and V, 16 (Walker, *Opera* 34 and 54). See commentary in Todde and Nuvolone, 'Le lettere e la preghiera', 83 n3.

⁹⁹ This opinion is expressed by Joseph F. Kelly, 'The letter of Columbanus to Gregory the Great' in Vittorino Grossi, (ed.), *Gregorio Magno e il suo tempo*, (Rome, 1990), 213-224: 223-24 and David Howlett, *The celtic Latin tradition*, 84. Kelly described the provocative aspects as immediately apparent to the reader, whereas Howlett presented Columbanus's attacks as cleverly disguised by his learned rhetoric.

¹⁰⁰ On the *Tres linguae sacrae* in exegesis, Bernhard Bischoff, 'Wendepunkte in der geschichte der lateinischen exegese im Frühmittelalter', in *Sacris Erudiri*, 44, (1954), 205-273: 207 and Robert E. McNally, 'The *tres linguae sacrae* in Early Irish Bible Exegesis' in *Theological Studies*, 19, (1958), 395-403. Later scholarship has questioned whether this is an exclusively Irish feature but does not deny that it is a common occurrence. See Joseph F. Kelly, 'A catalogue of Early Medieval Hiberno-Latin', in *Traditio*, 44, (1988), 537-71, Dáibhí Ó Cróinín, 'Bischoff's Wendepunkte fifty years on', in *Revue Bénédictine*, 110, 3/4, (2000), 204-237; Mark Stansbury, 'Irish Biblical exegesis' in Roy Flechner and Sven Medeer, *The Irish in Early Medieval Europe. Identity, culture and religion*, London, 2016, (116-130).

letters V,¹⁰¹ but knowledge of the context in which Columbanus had employed his name in other discussion, is enough to take away any mocking undertones from the way it is used in this salutation. In this case it allowed him to adhere to the tone of *humilitas* required by the context of the epistolary exchange, and at the same time stress the connection with his addressee since both Gregory and Columbanus find the figure of Peter to be relatable, for different reasons.

In terms of significance of the vocabulary employed, many terms stand out as carefully selected. The first honorific apostrophes attributed to Gregory, *pulcherrimo decori* ('to the most beautiful ornament') is typically Columbanian as the same words are used in a similar context in the letter to Boniface, to address once again the Roman pontiff (*pulcherrimo capiti*) and the Roman Church (*Ausonicus decus*) respectively.¹⁰²

In the following phrase, Europe (*Europa*) is mentioned here for the first time by an Irish author. For this reason, this salutation (along with that of *Ep. V*) has often been acknowledged as an important moment in the development of a European identity in the Medieval Latin world, whereas in literature that deals specifically with Columbanian monasticism it has been referred to as both a foundation and an exemplification of the continental dimension of the phenomenon.¹⁰³

What follows here is a brief overview of the connotation of the term *Europa* in this epistolary context. It might be possible to guess the geographical meaning that Columbanus attached to this

¹⁰¹ Smit, *Studies*, 142-146 has a detailed discussion of the passage from letter V, referencing the *tres linguae sacrae*; he describes Columbanus as 'at the head of a long row of Irishmen who will use the III *linguae sacrae*'.

¹⁰² Columbanus, *Ep. V*, 1 and 11 (Walker, ed. *Opera*, 36 and 48)

¹⁰³ For examples of literature addressing this passage from the point of view of the development of the idea of Europe see among others, Karl J. Leyser, 'Concepts of Europe in the Early and High Middle Ages', *Past and Present*, 137, (1992), 25-47: 30-31; Klaus Oschema, *Bilder von Europa in Mittelalter*, (Ostfildern, 2013), 123; Agostino Paravicini Bagliani, 'Il papato Medievale e il concetto di Europa', in Agostino Paravicini Bagliani, *Il potere del papa. Corporeità, autorappresentazione, simboli*, (Firenze 2009), 293-313:294-296, with special attention to the role of the papacy; the same approach in Gustavo Vinay, *Alto Medioevo Latino*, (Napoli 2003), 57-63; The European dimension of Columbanian monasticism has been linked to this passage in Alexander O'Hara, '*Patria, peregrinatio, paenitentia*. Identities of alienation in the seventh-century' in Walter Pohl and Gerda Heydemann, eds. *Post-Roman transitions. Christian and barbarian identities in the Early Medieval West*, (Turnhout, 2013), 89-124:116 and Valeria Polonio Felloni, 'Colombano Europeo?' in Luciano Valle e Paolo Pulina, eds. *San Colombano e l'Europa*, (Como-Pavia, 2001) 137-148; for a summary of how Columbanian studies had an impact on the modern idea of Europe see Alexander O'Hara, 'Introduction. Columbanus and Europe', in Id. ed. *Columbanus and the people of post-Roman Europe*. (Oxford, 2017), 2-17. Klaus Oschema, 'Columbanus and Europe', forthcoming, is an overview of both historiography and sources on this topic, first presented at the 2015 Bangor conference. I am grateful to Professor Oschema for providing me with his draft.

word; it is more complex to understand how its use can be related to Columbanus's Insular background on the one hand, and with the notion of primacy of the Roman See on the other. Columbanus would have understood the geographical meaning of Europe in the same way as the patristic texts he had read had presented it. Jerome had employed the term almost always as a cosmographical descriptor, that is, as the name one of the constituent section of the *oikoumene* (the inhabited world) together with Africa (or Lybia) and Asia.¹⁰⁴ In a similar way, in his *Dialogi*, Sulpicius Severus uses Europe in opposition to Asia, stating that because of the great deeds of Martin of Tours, the former region would no longer need to envy the numerous saints of the latter.¹⁰⁵ Since there are occurrences of expressions also found in the same section of Sulpicius's *Dialogi* the after both this passage and the salutation of Columbanus's *Epistula V*, it is reasonable to assume that this author had a direct influence on Columbanus's notion of *Europa*.¹⁰⁶ Though Columbanus is not known to have read it,¹⁰⁷ the best summary of how Europe was conceptualised by his favourite authorities is the geographical description by Orosius, in the first books of the *Histories against the Pagans*.¹⁰⁸ In this description, the islands of *Britannia* and *Hibernia* are indeed included within the boundaries of Europe. This might suggest that Columbanus could have, in theory, described his own background and education as just as much as 'European' as Gregory's. However, in this and other letters,¹⁰⁹ he also portrays the tradition of the western

¹⁰⁴ Jerome, *Adversum Jovinianum*, I, 48 (PL, 23, 280a); Jerome, *Commentariourum in Ezechielem prophetam libri XIV*, II, 5,2(PL, 25, 52b); Jerome, *Commentariourum in Danielem prophetam ad Pammiachum and Marcellam, librus unum*, 4, 7 and 7,6(PL, 25, 515a and 530a); Jerome, *Commentariourum in Epistolam ad Titum liber unus*, 1, 12. (PL, 26, 572a)

¹⁰⁵ Sulpicius Severus, *Dialogus*, III, 17 ed. Karl Halm, *Sulpicii Severi libri qui supersunt*, CSEL, 1, (Wien, 1866), 216 l. 5-8). *Cum vero ad Aegyptum usque perveneris, quamquam illa suorum sanctorum numero et virtutibus sit superba, tamen non dedignetur audire, quia illi vel universae Asiae in solo Martino Europa non cesserit*. Sulpicius and Jerome stand out as possible direct sources for Columbanus's understanding of the word, as both Jerome's letters and the *Dialogi* are quoted in the *Epistulae*. See Wright, 'Columbanus's *Epistulae*' 70-75 and 76-78. For the overall influence of this same Sulpicius's passage on the opening of the letter to Gregory see below and note 59

¹⁰⁶ *Doloris negotio iniungo* in the letter to Gregory I and *probrosium elogium* in the letter to Boniface IV, (Walker, ed. *Opera* 2, 1.12 and 36 l.24-25).

¹⁰⁷ On the other hand, the work was studied by Irish scholars, see for example, Olivier Szerwiniack 'Un commentaire hiberno-latin des deux premiers livres d'Orose, *Histoires contre les païens* (suite)', *ALMA: Bulletin du Cange* 65 (2007): 165–207. Moreover, one of most famous surviving manuscript from the library of Bobbio is the so-called Bobbio Orosius.

¹⁰⁸ Paulus Orosius, *Libri historiarum septem*, II, 10 and 23-28 ed. Karl Zangemeister, *Paulii Orosii Historiarum adversos Paganos libri VII accredit eiusdem Liber Apologeticus*, CSEL 5 (Wien 1882), 9 and 21-30.

¹⁰⁹ Columbanus, *Ep. I, 5: occidentis ecclesias*; Columbanus, *Ep. II, 5: fratrum vestrorum in occidente* and *omnis enim ecclesias totius Occidentis*; Columbanus, *Ep. V, 11 usque in occidua transmudalis limitis loca*

(*occidentales*) Churches as distinctive enough, from the point of view of his Continental addressees, that he can choose for himself the role of outsider. In this context, including in the salutation the term would remark one of the few elements that writer and addressee have in common: not only are they Christian, but they are also Christians who coexisted in the same part of the *oikoumene*.¹¹⁰ This appears rather generic but there is a second element at play: it is in this ‘European’ environment that the notion of apostolic primacy for Rome applies. The Roman bishop ‘as it were a most honoured flower’, as Walker translated, is clearly given a position of prominence.¹¹¹ This is even more explicit in the very similar salutation of the letter to Boniface IV, where the Pope is the ‘head of all the churches of the whole Europe’. Once again, the question of how this concept was understood by the writer can be framed in terms of whether Columbanus encountered this notion in any of the texts certain to have been known to him. In this case, it is easy to point to the fact that the one collection of canons cited by Columbanus in the letters, addresses the point of Petrine authority in the section that immediately follows the passage he quoted: it establishes that the Patriarch of Constantinople has the second place of honour after the bishop of Rome as Constantinople is the New Rome.¹¹² As it will be seen, this was a point of

(Walker, *Opera*, 8, 16 and 48). See Klaus Oschema, ‘An Irish making of Europe (Early and high Middle Ages)’, in Wolfram R. Keller and Dagmar Schlüter, eds “*A fantastic and abstruse Latinity?*” *Hiberno. Continental literary and cultural interactions in the Middle Ages*. Studien und Texte zur Keltologie, 12, (Munster 2017), 12-30 posits that Insular authors writing before the ninth-century were more likely to employ the word *Europa* when referring to the Continent, possibly expressing a negative reflection of the shared identity also implied by Columbanus’s use of *Occidentales*. Nevertheless, this appears to be a later development, since, as already observed, Columbanus’s *Europa* does include his home island.

¹¹⁰ Bruno Judic, ‘La notion d’Europe chez saint Colomban’, in Odile Wattel-De-Croizant, ed. *D’Europe à l’Europe III. La dimension politique et religieuse du mythe de l’Europe de l’Antiquité à nos jours*, Centre de recherches Piganiol et Christian de Bartillat, 2002, 139-153: 141 and n6 endorses the opposite view, that is, that the notion of Europe is used by Columbanus to mark his status of stranger, citing one contemporary work in which Europe, meaning ‘the Continent’ is distinct from the insular zones. However, it seems more reasonable that Columbanus would follow the patristic authorities he was acquainted with, on this particular point. Their understanding of the word is always cosmographical. Oschema, ‘Columbanus and Europe’, 6-7 has a brief overview of texts that exemplify this concept, including those previously referenced.

¹¹¹ Klaus Oschema, ‘An Irish making of Europe (Early and high Middle Ages)’, 17 remarked that, on the contrary, the mention of Europe might have diminished the recipient’s status from a position of universal pre-eminence. However, this does not seem to be a direct implication of Columbanus’s phrasing: if the Roman pontiff had a position of universal prestige, it would follow that he was also the foremost ecclesiastical authority in Europe, where his seat was located. Columbanus’s phrasing is simply stressing one aspect of the primacy. Oschema, ‘Columbanus and Europe’, 13 concedes these points.

¹¹² Columbanus, *Ep.* III, 3 (Walker, *Opera*, 24). The reference in the letter is to the second canon of the Constantinopolitan Council of 381; the third canon is the one that addresses the problem of primacy. Latin text by Rusticus the Deacon in Edward Schwartz, ed. *Gestorum Chalcedoniensium versio a Rustico edita. Actiones VII-XVI*, in *Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum*, II, III, 3, (Berlin and Leipzig, 1927-1932),

great concern for Gregory, his addressee. It is striking that in a text that was clearly familiar to Columbanus, the concept of the primacy of honour of the Roman See was framed in the same way as in contemporary debates at the highest level of the ecclesiastical hierarchy.

Moving on, the adjectival participle *flaccens* defines the condition of Europe; Walker translated it as ‘in her decay’. The verb *flacco* (to be flabby or flaccid) is a rare form.¹¹³ As observed by Howlett, it is possible to project its literal meaning onto the honorific title of ‘most August flower’, that is a flower that is drooping as in late summer, possibly indicating veiled disdain from Columbanus for his addressee.¹¹⁴ However, if one considered the contents of the *Epistulae* as a collection, it would not look unusual for this author to represent Europe as decaying in customs: a significant section of the letter to Boniface IV laments the lack of zeal that affects the Churches on the Continent, more specifically in Italy; *Epistula IV* laments the lack of commitment among his own community, while in this very letter as well as in the letter to the Council of Chalons the moral failings of the Gallic clergy are highlighted. Overall the portrayal of the environment surrounding the writer depicts a dismal situation, from the point of view of religious endeavour, to which the brief but significant references to political or social violence must be added.¹¹⁵

It is interesting to note that the context in which the word *Europa* is used by Gregory I in one of his own letters similarly involves both the notion of ruin and decadence and that of Roman Apostolic authority. In a letter to Emperor Maurice dated to June 594 Gregory wrote that:

Ecce cuncta in Europae partibus barbarorum iuri sunt tradita , destructae urbes, eversa castra, depopolatae provinciae; nullus terram cultor inhabitat; saeviunt et dominantur

110. Latin text by Dionysus Exiguus in Giuseppe Alberigo and others, eds. *Conciliorum Oecumenicorum Decreta*, (Bologna 1973). Translated in Norman P. Tanner, ed. *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, I, (Georgetown, 1990), 31-32.

¹¹³Stanton, ‘Columbanus, *Letter I*’, 156 translated it as ‘parched’, with reference to the form as found in Is. 19, 10. However, the participle form as used by Columbanus also occurs among other Late Antique Latin authors: in Lactantius, *De opificio Dei*, 8 (*PL*, 7, 35a) and in Claudianus Mamertus, *De statu animae*, I, 3, ed. August Engelbrecht, *Claudiani Mamerti Opera*, CSEL 11 (Wien 1885), 31 l. 21, with a meaning closer to Walker’s and Howlett’s translations.

¹¹⁴Howlett, *The Celtic Latin tradition*, 85. This is consistent with his description of this letter as an exercise in learned provocation.

¹¹⁵Columbanus, *Ep.* II, 2 and *Ep.* III, 2 (Walker, ed. *Opera*, 12 and 22) references the ‘stormy discords of this age’ which might prevent the regular holding of ecclesiastical councils and the ‘violent upheavals of the peoples’ which had prevented him from visiting Rome.

cotidie in nece fidelium cultores idolorum: et tamen sacerdotes, qui in pavimento et cinere flentes iacere debuerunt, vanitatis sibi nomina expetunt et novis ac profanis vocabulis gloriantur.

‘Behold, everything in the regions of Europe is surrendered to the power of the barbarians, cities are destroyed, fortresses are taken, provinces are left in devastation. No tiller inhabits the land. Every day, the worshippers of idols rage and rule over the murder of the faithful: and yet the priests, who should lie crying on the floor and on ashes, aspire to titles of vanity for themselves, and they glory in new and impious names’.¹¹⁶

The object of this passage is the previously mentioned polemic between the Roman pontiff and the Patriarch of Constantinople. Gregory is concerned with denying to John, his counterpart in Constantinople, any right to title of *universalis*, which he claims is only due to the Roman See, in light of its status.¹¹⁷The *flaccetis* in Columbanus’s letter is matched and even outdone by the Pope’s listing of all the evils that barbarians are causing in Europe. In both cases, there might be a rhetorical element at play: it can be conceded that naming Europe, a third part of the known world, would grant a broader scope and more impact to lamentations about the state of affairs of the time. Gregory’s outlook in respect to the state of Europe, though more concerned with grand politics than with the exercise of monastic discipline, was just as negative as Columbanus’s. At the same time one of the implications of the passage from Gregory’s letter is that *Europa* is the space in which the authority of the Roman Apostolic See, whose holders do not seek out ‘impious

¹¹⁶Gregory I, *Registrum Epistolarum*, V, 37 ed. Dag Norberg, *S. Gregorii Magni Registrum epistolarum*, CCSL 140a, (Turnhout, 1982), 309

¹¹⁷ On this controversy see Claudio Azzara, *L’ Ideologia del potere regio nel Papato Altomedievale (Secoli VI-VIII)*, Centro Italiano di Studi sull’Alto Medioevo, (Spoleto, 1997), 120; Robert A. Markus, *Gregory the Great and his world*, (Cambridge, 1997), 91-96; Robert A. Markus ‘Gregory the Great’s Europe’ in *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 31, (1981), 21-36; Rodrigo Laham Cohen, ‘*Me fatum appellat*. Tensiones entre Gregorio Magno y Mauricio’, in *Byzantion Nea Hellàs* 27, (2008), 177-202: 190-194.

names', is exercised. On this issue too, Gregory and Columbanus are on the same page. Overall Columbanus understood *Europa* in a way that was very similar to that of his addressee.¹¹⁸

Finally, *speculator* [=watcher] is another word that also occurs in the salutation of the letter to Boniface, and, also in light of a subsequent passage in the same work, its theological importance has been noted by scholars. Christine Mohrmann first questioned whether Columbanus presented a literal translation of the Greek ἐπίσκοπος or intended to reference the relation of the term with the watcher or sentinel from the book of Ezekiel (Ezek. 3, 17-21 and 33, 2-9).¹¹⁹ Johannes Smit, following her input, discussed the meaningfulness of this vocabulary choice at length.¹²⁰ In his analysis he argued that the context in which the word is used in letter V reveals that Columbanus related it to both said passages from the book of Ezekiel and to another passage from the book of Isaiah (Is. 21,5-8).¹²¹ According to Smit, by using the term *speculator* to address a bishop, Columbanus specifically applied to the episcopal status the obligations and responsibilities of the watchers or sentinels found in the biblical passages, namely *contemplatio* or surveillance, and speaking out against evil, or otherwise being held accountable for inaction. While Smit was making a subsidiary point for his main argument about the correct reading of *theoria utpote divinae Castalitis perito*, it is true that the attitude described is consistent throughout the epistolary corpus and, additionally, it is known from the latter part of this letter that Columbanus was interested in the exegesis of the book of Ezekiel. Finally, Damien Bracken has shown in detail how the *speculator* tradition is especially meaningful in the way it relates to the conception

¹¹⁸ 'When he [Gregory], or his contemporaries, spoke of 'Europe', the word still bore its ancient and geographically somewhat loose sense'. This observation by Markus, 'Gregory the Great's Europe', 34 is fundamentally correct but his reference to Columbanus's letters does not acknowledge that the Irishman was also willing to recognise Roman primacy in that space. Oschema, 'Columbanus and Europe', 11 puts it best: even without positing that he was directly influenced by Gregory's letter, Columbanus's use of the word could have followed a similar logic, expressing an idea that was "in the air".

¹¹⁹ Mohrmann, 'The earliest continental Irish Latin', 220

¹²⁰ Smit, *Studies*, 40-47; 40n8 explains Mohrmann's influence on his discussion.

¹²¹ Columbanus, *Ep. V*, 5 (Walker, ed. *Opera*, 40-42, 42 l. 8 *speculatoribus et magistris*, with references to Is. 21, 5-8 at 40 l.32-33: *immo per Isaiam Deus iuxta tui nominis interpretationem in speculam verae interpretationem ponat*, and reference to Ezech. 3, 17-21 at 42 l. 5-6: *Inde quia iuxta minas Domini sanguinis tantorum de manibus requirendum est pastorum*. Both of these citations are not acknowledged in Walker's apparatus). See Damien Bracken, 'Authority and Duty: Columbanus and the primacy of Rome', in *Peritia*, 16, (2002) 168-213: 189n90.

of the authority of Rome.¹²² Having pointed out that Columbanus is drawing from a very well-established exegetical tradition, his argument concludes that according to Columbanus ‘the bishop of Rome has special responsibility in the supervision of the faith, but that responsibility is not fulfilled until doctrine has been proclaimed to the faithful through the preaching and the wayward recalled to orthodoxy’.¹²³ Although Bracken applies this interpretation to the passage in letter V, there is no objection to drawing the same implications from the use of the word *speculator* in this salutation: on the contrary it would be proof of thematic consistency among the letters of the collection directed to Rome.

1.1.2 Structure and style

The salutation follows the pattern: title of the addressee (*intitulatio*) + name of the writer (*inscriptio*) + salutation *formula*. The titles with which the Pope is addressed, ‘Holy Lord’ [*Domino sancto*] and ‘Father in Christ’ (*in Christo Patri*) are also found in *Epistula* II and *Epistula* III, to address, respectively, the bishops at the synod and one of Gregory’s successors. It is reasonable to think that, for Columbanus, this was the standard way in which to address the episcopal class. Strictly speaking, the *intitulatio* of the letter only comprises these titles, the rest being a flattering addition by the writer, employing the technique of amplification. The three¹²⁴ following qualifications of the addressee are noun-adjective constructions in the dative case, disposed so as to make the homoeoteleuton (*-ori*) more noticeable. In the first construction, the word-order represents the first instance of Columbanus’s interlaced hyperbaton patterns (abAB). These are followed by the name of the writer, or rather names, (*Bar-Ionah* and *Columba*) in the nominative case, with the emphatic *ego* preceding them. The emphasis, it should be noted, is connected to the meaning of the adjective *vilis* and conveys the connotation of humility in a way that is similar to the salutation of letter V,¹²⁵ expressing the contrast between the writer lowly

¹²² Damien Bracken, ‘Juniors teaching elders. Columbanus, Rome and spiritual authority’ in Éamonn Ó Carragain, Carol Neuman de Vegvat, eds *Roma felix - Formations and reflections of Medieval Rome*, (London, 2007), 253-275 and ‘Authority and Duty’, 187-190 and 198-209.

¹²³ Bracken, ‘Authority and Duty’, 209.

¹²⁴ The fourth will not be considered here, since, as shown above the passage is corrupted and any reconstruction will be by necessity speculative.

¹²⁵ Columbanus, *Ep. V*, 1 (Walker *Opera*, 36) *scribere audet ... Palumbus*. (“Palumbus dares to write”)

position and the authority of the addressee. A translation might render this connotation through an expression such as: “I, Bar-Ionah, myself but a base dove...”. In summary even the *inscriptio* is not neutral or merely informative but performs a function in respect to the overall strategy of the letter. The verb of the *formula* is unusually made explicit, in the first person singular form (*mitto*).¹²⁶ David Howlett has argued that this salutation represents ‘a remarkable but unmistakable example of alliterative rhyming prose’, pointing to the careful arrangement of the dative endings and to the chiasmic disposition of the initial sounds of the words in first three sections (*Domino-et-patri-Romanae-pulcherrimo-ecclesiae-decori* and *Europae-flaccensis-augustissimo-flori*).¹²⁷ *Cursus*-like endings are present but not consistently employed (egregio speculàtori: *velox*; mitto salùtem: *planus*), so it could be said that the writer’s intention did not envision the use of such technique as part of the intended effect of the salutation when read out loud.¹²⁸

1.1.3 Epistolary qualities

Overall there is a high degree of rhetorical elaboration in this salutation, which, within Columbanus’s epistolary corpus, is surpassed only by that found in the letter to Pope Boniface. Still, there are a few similarities with *Epistula* V. In both letters the writer does not qualify himself as *peccator*, and the words *Europa* and *speculator* occur. Columbanus is unique among letter writers in including a geographical descriptor delimiting the authority of the person he is addressing in an epistolary salutation. While he is not the only author to add the title of *speculator* to that of *dominus* or *pater* for a bishop,¹²⁹ he is among first to do so. These factors alone suggest

¹²⁶ Carol D. Lanham, *Salutatio formulas in Latin letters to 1200. Syntax, style and theory*, (Munich, 1975), 32 and n63, describes Columbanus as the first Mediaeval letter-writer to spell out the verb of the *salutatio*. Following Smit, she argued that it is unlikely that Columbanus knew of Ovid’s usage of this kind of salutation.

¹²⁷ Howlett, *The Celtic Latin tradition*, 83. While such definition is clearly correct, his reconstruction of the clausular rhythmical structure of the salutation cannot be accepted, firstly, because it is based on a hypothetical version of the text that further emends Smit’s reconstruction, and, secondly, because of a lack of consistency, that is, none of the other salutations from Columbanus’s letters display clausular rhythm see David Howlett, ‘Insular Latin Writers’ Rhythms’, in *Peritia*, 11, 1997, 53-116:58.

¹²⁸ This is the result obtained applying Tore Janson’s notation in its broader sense, as exemplified by Neil Wright, ‘Columbanus’s *Epistulae*’, 36- 37 and 55-56 n103. All considerations on *cursus* will follow the guidelines set out there.

¹²⁹ In the letter collection of Desiderius of Cahors, the term *speculator* appears in the salutation of two letters directed to him by Paulus of Verdun and Chaenuulfus; Desiderius, *Epistolae*, II, 12 and II, 14 (Willhelm

that there is merit in regarding every word of the salutation as carefully selected for its meaning as well as for its impact on the audience in terms of sound. As seen above and as it shall be further discussed in respect to letter V, both *speculator* and *Europa* have connotations that are exegetical as well as rhetorical. Together with the evangelical *Bar-Ionah* they set the tone for the first part of the letter in which the writer, when referencing the authority exercised by his addressee, often adopts the epistolary style that has been named ‘paraenetic’ in key passages.¹³⁰ This consists in a combination of praise and exhortation, with the aim of shifting the sympathies of the audience towards his position. It is not surprising that the terminology employed in the salutation carries connotations and implied concepts that are suitable for this end; however, this is not the norm for contemporary epistolary literature, in which salutations are neutral, or limit their additional content to expressions of modesty. Columbanus diverges from the norm in loading the salutation with terminology that suits the overall oratory strategy pursued in the body of the letter.

While the presence of these first two elements of similarity with the letter to Boniface can be motivated by the way in which Columbanus conceptualised the Roman Church and its pontiff, the absence of *peccator* can be explained with the fact that its function, that of conveying the tone of *humilitas*, has been absolved by the exuberant sequence of admiring titles and superlatives for his addressee and the expression of self-debasement (*vilis*). One of the common recommendations for letter-writers was to avoid adjectives in the dedication so as not to appear to be engaged in flattery, yet Columbanus does not refrain from his usual descriptive exuberance, with the problematic *castalitate* being the only noun not accompanied by an adjectival expansion.¹³¹

Nonetheless, this salutation does not distance itself from common contemporary epistolary

Arndt, ed. *Desiderii Epistolae*, in MGH, *Epistolae*, III), 193-214: 208-9 and 210.II, 12 and II, 14 in Dag Norberg, ed. *Epistolae S. Desiderii Cadurcensis*, (Uppsala 1961), 59 and 66.

¹³⁰The interpretation of its characteristics offered here follows that of Stowers, *Letter-writing in Greco Roman Antiquity*, 91-95 who understands it as a special type of exhortation. Recommendations about how to write the paraenetic type of letters do not feature in the manual of Pseudo-Demetrius, but the term itself is employed elsewhere, Pseudo-Demetrius, *Τύποι*, 10 (Malherbe, ed. *Ancient epistolary theorists*, 31) when discussing letters of consolation. Pseudo-Libanius, *Ἐπιστολιμαῖοι Χαρακτήρες*, 5 and 52 (Malherbe, ed. *Ancient epistolary theorists*, 67 and 75) on the other hand provides a definition and an example for this typology.

¹³¹One such recommendation is in Pseudo-Libanius, *Ἐπιστολιμαῖοι Χαρακτήρες*, translated in Malherbe, *Ancient epistolary theorists*, 74-75. Additionally, even *castalitas* could be resolved in a noun-adjective pair according to Smit emendation. On Columbanus’s adjectives-heavy prose style Wright, ‘Columbanus’s *Epistulae*’, 47-53 where the patterns of the adjective-nouns group are discussed.

practices too much. Contrary to the letter to Boniface, the Pope is addressed with the honorific attached to his ecclesiastical rank (*Domino sancto et in Christo patri*), and the salutation *formula*, though unusual in making its verb explicit, makes use of the basic *mitto* instead of the more complex *scribere audet*. What is clear is that the writer displays awareness of hierarchical relationship within the Church, but does not perceive this as an obstacle to negotiations, rather, through its reference to the *speculator* exegetical tradition, he implies that it should be a guarantee that his addressee will listen to his concerns. The formal title of *domino sancto* already signals the reader that this should be read as an *epistola negotialis*, an official public letter, according to the distinction drawn by theorists.¹³²

To sum up, this salutation is anything but blunt and disrespectful, though employs terminology on whose implications the writer would rely for his arguments. Common contemporary epistolary models are not rejected or changed but integrated with the characteristics of Columbanus's own writing style (i.e. the artistic, adjective-heavy word-order) and with the rhetorical strategy employed throughout the letter. The writer appears to rely on the careful disposition of words and figures to convey two distinct messages: on the one hand the customary display of epistolary *humilitas*, on the other, that the discussion in the letter will take place in the stylistically refined language of theological debates. This last point would hold true especially if Smit's emendation of *castalitati* is accepted but even including this ghost-word of unclear meaning in the text, it is obvious that this section of the *intitulatio* alludes to Gregory's intellectual work, the object of Columbanus's action of persuasion but also a genuine source of knowledge for him, as attested by his requests for exegetical commentaries from the Pope. Additionally, his careful choice of words for the titles attributed to the addressees introduces a picture of his ideas about the dignity and authority with which he thought the Roman pontiff was invested.

Section 1.2: Exordium, paraenetic style.

Gratia tibi et pax a Deo Patre nostro et Domino nostro Iesu Christo. [Gal. 1,3 and Rom. 1, 7]
Libet me, o sancte papa, hyperbolicum tecum non sit, **interrogandum** de Pascha, iuxta illud

¹³² Julius Victor, *Ars Rhetorica*, De epistolis (Giomini and Celentano, eds. *Ars Rhetorica* 105)

canticum, *interroga patrem tuum et annuntiabit tibi, maiores tuos et dicent tibi* [Deut. 32, 7]. Licet enim mihi, nimirum micrologo, illud cuiusdam egregium sapientis elogium, quod dixisse fertur **quandam** videns **comtu** pictam, “non admiror artem sed admiror frontem” ad te clarum a me vili scribendo potest inuri: tamen tuae evangelicae humilitatis fiducia fretus tibi scribere praesumo et mei doloris negotium iniungo. Vanitas namque scribendi nulla est, ubi necessitas cogit quamvis maioribus scribi. Quid ergo dicis de Pascha vigesimae primae aut vigesimae secundae lunae, quod iam, tui tamen pace dictum sit, non esse Pascha, nimirum tenebrosum, a multis comprobatur calcenteris?

1.2.1 Readings and vocabulary.

Quondam videns scortum pictam [Walker, 2, 1, 10]	*Quandam videns *contupictam <i>*in MS quondam</i> <i>*f.compte pictam</i> [F, 157]	Quondam videns *fronte pictam <i>*in Bob. contupictam</i> [M, 110]
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Weighing against Walker’s emendation *scortum*, besides the arguments put forth by Smit,¹³³ there is also the fact that the word does appear in the works of Gildas, an author whose influence on Columbanus’s Latin is the most noticeable, but as an adjectival form of the first class, *scorta*.¹³⁴ If Columbanus had employed the word it would be likely that it would have been in the same form in which the authority he appeals to in this very letter had used it.¹³⁵ That this is the way in which reminiscences from Gildas’s work are employed by Columbanus is supported in the very same sentence by the use of the verb *inurere*, with the specific figurative meaning of “branding someone”, which is lifted from the opening of the *De excidio Britanniae*.¹³⁶ Smit’s proposal *comtu* (<*comptu*) *pictam* has been criticised on the grounds that it undermines the meaning of the

¹³³ Smit, *Studies*, 57-69

¹³⁴ Gildas, *De excidio*, 27, (Michael Winterbottom, ed. *The ruin of Britain*, 99) *sed scortas et adulterantes*; On Gildas’s influence see Michael Winterbottom ‘Columbanus and Gildas’ in *Vigiliae Christianae*, 30, 4, 1976, 310-317, and Wright ‘Columbanus’s Epistulae’, 84-87. Stanton, ‘Columbanus, Letter I’, 159 rejected *scortum* because it is a neuter noun.

¹³⁵ Columbanus, *Ep. I*, 6 (Walker, ed. *Opera*, 8) *et Gildas auctor*.

¹³⁶ Gildas *De excidio*, 1, 15 (Winterbottom, ed. *Gildas*, 89) *non pertimescas libertatis aureae decenti nota inuri*; Columbanus, *Ep. I*, 2, (Walker, ed. *Opera*, 2) *potest inuri*

subsequent *elogium: non admiror artem sed frontem*. Smit's suggested emendation would imply that *frontem* should be understood as forehead in its literal, anatomical meaning and not as 'cheek, boldness'. If that would be the case, it would not be clear why the *elogium* (in this context, 'judgment') should be considered "noteworthy" (*egregium*).¹³⁷ It might be best to consider the passage corrupt and read *quondam videns ꝥcontu pictam*. However, one might observe that Sheerin's suggestion of *quamdam* for *quondam* might help the case for Smit's emendation, by supplying an additional object to *videns* and allowing *comtu* to be interpreted as a limitative ablative. The presence of hyperbaton should not be an obstacle to this reconstruction, considering its frequency in Columbanus's prose. The sentence would thus translate to: 'that remarkable judgement of a certain wise man, which is reported that he had said upon seeing a certain woman colourfully adorned (*pictam*) with a head-band: I do not admire the art, but I do admire the boldness'.¹³⁸

The passage contains words that could be regarded as Columbanus's literary thumbprint.¹³⁹ First there is the Greek loanword *micrologo*, which is found again in the salutation of the letter to Boniface IV. Columbanus derived it from Rufinus's translation of the homilies of Gregory of Nazianzus but he did not understand it in its original meaning of 'prattler', 'pettifogger'. It would rather appear that he understood it as the semantic opposite of *eloquentissimus*, that is, very literally, 'one of very little eloquence'.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁷ Bieler, Review, in *Latomus*, 898

¹³⁸ See Stanton, 'Columbanus, Letter I', 159 who accepts Smit's emendation but puts forward this as a possible translation. Todde and Nuvolone, 'Le lettere e la preghiera', 83-84 follow Smit in both emendation and translation.

¹³⁹ This definition applies especially to the adjective *micrologus*, considering that its presence in the hymn *Precamur patrem* from the Antiphony of Bangor has been used to support the case for Columbanus's authorship of this text. See Michael Lapidge, 'Columbanus and the Antiphony of Bangor', in *Peritia*, 4 (1985) 104-116; reprinted with changes and additions 'Precamur Patrem: an Easter hymn by Columbanus?', in Lapidge, ed. *Columbanus. Studies on the Latin writings*, 255-63; Neil Wright, 'Rufinus, Gregory of Nazianzus and Gildas,' in Neil Wright, *History and literature in the Medieval west*, (London 1995), VI, 1-38:8-11 and Claire Stancliffe, 'Venantius Fortunatus, Ireland and Jerome: the evidence of *Precamur Patrem*', in *Peritia*, 10, (1996), 91-95 reference the same argument. Similarly, its use by Jonas, in the *Vita Columbani*, II, 10 (Krusch, ed. *Vitae*, 126), has been considered possible evidence of his knowledge of the Columbanian *Epistulae*.

¹⁴⁰ Smit, *Studies*, 59n5 did not recognise its derivation but was he was first in inferring its meaning from the letter to Boniface.

Less remarked upon by scholars but also occurring in the opening of the letter to Boniface is the term *elogium*, often translated very differently.¹⁴¹ Although it is not rare, as noted by Wright,¹⁴² it is important to note that its meaning in Latin had at this point moved from the neutral meaning of ‘short remark’ to a mostly negative connotation, to the point that Augustine could explain it with the word *vituperatio* (‘blame/vituperation’).¹⁴³ In Jerome’s letters *elogium* is often used to introduce a notable remark from a pagan personality (Cicero, for example) but also biblical quotes involving condemnations.¹⁴⁴ While it occurs elsewhere in Jerome’s works with the same semantic value,¹⁴⁵ the fact that both of the longer letters that Columbanus wrote to Rome include a significant *elogium* in their opening is perhaps telling of how much he was modelling his epistolary activity on Jerome’s. In this particular instance however, Columbanus’s writing is also close to another of his favourite *auctores*: in the closing passage of Sulpicius Severus’s third *Dialogus* the speaker recommends to one of his companion, who is departing for a journey, that he imposes on him a duty that is a source of grief (*negotium tibi nostri doloris iniungo*), that is, visiting the tomb of his friend Pomponius, to whom he must speak compassionate words, not a reproaching condemnation (*exprobrantis elogio*).¹⁴⁶ It is likely that Columbanus had this passage fresh in his memory when composing the incipit of his letter to Gregory, both because of the clear overlap with his sentence *et mei doloris negotium iniungo* and because of vocabulary choices both here and in the salutation: *flos*,¹⁴⁷ *Europa*, and *elogium*, whose meaning at this point should be evident.

¹⁴¹ Walker, *Opera*, 3 and 37 translated it as “(unusual) remark” in letter I and as “(abusive) speech” in letter V; Smit, *Studies*, as “(pithy) remark”; Bieler, *Review*, in *Latomus*, 898 as “verdict”; Stanton, ‘Columbanus, Letter I’, 152 as “(famous) remark”; Todde and Nuvolone ‘La preghiera e le lettere’, 83 and 185 as “(insolito) elogio” in letter I and, much more appropriately as “motto (oltraggioso)” in letter V.

¹⁴² Wright, ‘Columbanus’s *Epistulae*’, 46

¹⁴³ Augustine, *Sermo* 355, II, 3 (*PL*, 39, 1571)

¹⁴⁴ As examples of *elogium* as the word designating a remark or a quotation from a Classical author one can look at Jerome, *Epistula* 52, *Ad Nepotianum* ed. Isidor Hilberg, *Eusebii Hieronymii Epistulae*, CSEL 54, (Wien and Leipzig 1910), 429) and *Epistula* 123 *Ad Agheruchiam*, (Hilberg, ed. *Epistulae*, CSEL 56, 94), whereas it introduces a Biblical quotation in *Epistula* 60 *Ad Heliodorum* (Hilberg, ed. *Epistulae*, CSEL 54, 551) or *Epistula* 130 *Ad Demetriadem* (Hilberg, ed. *Epistulae*, CSEL 56, 198).

¹⁴⁵ For example Jerome, *Apologia adversus Libros Rufini*, 1, 17 and 3,5 (*PL*, 23, 411b and 461c) where again it refers to sayings of Classical authors.

¹⁴⁶ Sulpicius Severus, *Dialogi*, III, 18 (Halm, ed. *Sulpicii Severi libri*, CSEL 1, 216)

¹⁴⁷ Sulpicius Severus, *Dialogi*, III, 18 (Halm, ed. *Sulpicii Severi libri*, CSEL 1, 216): the speaker asks his friend to place a purple flower (*flore purpureo*) on the tomb he wants him to visit. Though Columbanus’s

In the previous sentence, the expression *hyperbolicum tecum non sit* is found. As it will be seen, the adverbial form *hyperbolice*, accompanied by the concessive *licet* is usually employed by Columbanus as a marker of figurative speech. However, in this instance it seems to be employed in a more literal sense, with most translators choosing a meaning closer to ‘excessive’.¹⁴⁸ The difference is justified, as Columbanus was following a common trend in patristic writing when employing the adverbial form, whereas this use of the adjectival form is quite uncommon and it should be clearly differentiated.

Finally, in the last sentence of the passage, there is the term *calcenteris*, which can only be understood within the larger context of writings on the Easter question.

A multis comprobatur calcenteris [Walker, 2, 3, 17]	A multis comprobatur *calcenteris * ita MS [F, 157]	A multis comprobatur *computariis *in Bob. cacalaenteris[M, 110]
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That the word as handed down by both exemplars was ultimately derived from the title *chalcenteros* [χαλκέντερος = with bronze guts], attributed to Origen by Jerome, and adopted by Rufinus, was first suggested by Sheerin himself.¹⁴⁹ In his edition Gundlach followed Metzler’s suggested emendation, while Walker followed Sheerin and Du Cange.¹⁵⁰ The word occurs in other

use of the word to address Gregory in the salutation might be thematically insignificant, it does contribute to the total of lexical borrowings from that passage

¹⁴⁸ Walker, *Opera*, 3 translated “Let it not be extravagant in your sight”; Smit, *Studies*, 69 followed him; Stanton, ‘Columbanus, *Letter I*’, translated similarly “may it not be excessive in your eyes”; Todde and Nuvolone, ‘Le lettere e la preghiera’, 83, translated “se non è troppo indiscreto al tuo riguardo”, likely attributing to *hyperbolicum* the meaning of ‘overweening’ or ‘insolent’ as found in glossaries cfr. DMLBS s.v. *hyperbolicus*.

¹⁴⁹ Jerome, *Ep.* 33 *Ad Paulam* (Hilberg, ed. *Epistulae*, CSEL 54, 253 and 255) and 43 *Ad Marcellam* (Hilberg, ed. *Epistulae*, CSEL 54, 318); In the letter to Paula, Jerome names Varro and the grammarian Dydimos of Alexandria as prolific pagan writers: the latter had in fact received the epithet of *chalcenteros* because of his immense literary production and Jerome only refers to him in this way. He then proceeds to set up a comparison with the production of the Christian writer Origen and proceeds to refer to him as *our* [i.e. the Christian] *chalcenteros*, in order to stress that his works are just as numerous as the pagans’. The letter to Marcella implies the same comparison as Origen is again referred to as *our chalcenteros*. Rufinus, *Apologia adversus Hieronimum*, II, 17, 20 and 21, (*PL*, 597c, 599b and 600b) refers to these same letters and to the epithet for Origen as coined by Jerome: *et istum quem modo Chalcenterum tuum vocas*; Sheerin, *Collectanea Sacra*, 161-162, refers to Jerome.

¹⁵⁰ Gundlach, ed. *Epistolae* 156; Du Cange, et al., *Glossarium mediae et infimae latinitatis*, éd. augm., Niort, L. Favre, 1883-1887, s.v. *calcenteris* t. 2, col. 021c

Paschal letters and tracts of the seventh century.¹⁵¹ This prompted Bartholomew Mac Carthy first, and Johannes Smit later, to advance the hypothesis that, because of the influence of how *chalcenteros* is used in the opening paragraph of *De ratione paschali*, the term had acquired the meaning of ‘skilled calculator’ among the Irish. Dáibhi Ó Cróinín, in a brief overview of the scholarly debate on the term, argued that the form in which the term appear in Columbanus’s letter to Gregory shows that, in his time, *chalcenteros* ‘was already common currency’ and that it came to denote ‘any (but particularly Greek) computist’.¹⁵² Columbanus is clearly attributing such broad meaning to the term, however, it is also possible that he, like Cummian,¹⁵³ was aware of the use of the word in Jerome’s writings, in which case the choice to employ it would be charged with implications that fall within the rhetorical structure of the arguments of the letter. Columbanus argues that approving of Victorius and condemning Anatolius would mean to condemn Jerome, by whom Anatolius was praised. In order to make this point clearer, the scholars who have condemned the celebration of Easter on the 21st and 22nd moon for its excessive darkness [*nimirum tenebrosum*] are immediately identified by a term linked with the orthodox – for Columbanus – tradition of calculations ultimately associated with Origen. In other words, this means that from the point of view of Columbanus, Anatolius, like Origen, could certainly be qualified as a *chalcenteros* because of the seal of approval in Jerome’s work, while Victorius could not. If this is the case, then it is likely that the usage of *chalcenteros* as a general descriptor for computists, as found in seventh-century Irish tracts, originated with Columbanus himself or in

¹⁵¹It occurs in *De Ratione Paschali*, 1 (Breen and McCarthy, eds. *The ante-Nicene Christian Pasch*, 45, l.18) *Sed et Origenis omnium eruditissimus et calculi conponendi perspicacissimus, quippe qui et Calcenterus vocatus est*. Similarly, Cummian, *De controversia paschali* (Walsh and Ó Cróinín, eds. *Cummian’s letter*, 62), uses it in relation to Origen. Other texts employ the term without references to Origen, seemingly as a descriptor for a category of scholars, in the same vein as Columbanus’s text here: the *computus* of AD 658 (transcription from Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 309, f. 45v, transcribed in Walsh and Ó Cróinín, eds. *Cummian’s letter*, 63n52) and the *Munich Computus*, 41 (Warntjes, ed. *The Munich Computus*, 122, l. 21)

¹⁵²Bartholomew MacCarthy, AU, 4, cxix-cxx, and n.6; Smit, *Studies*, 70-77; Dáibhi Ó Cróinín ‘Hiberno-Latin *calcenterus*’ in *Peritia*, 1, 1982, 296-297

¹⁵³That Cummian was aware of the origin of the term was first proposed by Mac Carthy, *Annals of Ulster*, 4 eds. W. M. Hennessy & B. Mac Carthy, Annala Uladh, *Annals of Ulster otherwise Annala Senait, Annals of Senat: a chronicle of Irish affairs from A.D. 431 to A.D. 1540*. 4 vols. (Dublin, 1887-1901, repr. [with fresh introduction and bibliography, ed. Nollaig Ó Muraíle] Dublin, 1998) (henceforth AU), cxx. This is because Cummian’s text is worded as in Jerome’s letter 23: *Origenem Calcenterum et vere Adamantium*; Cummian, *De controversia paschali* (Walsh and Ó Cróinín, eds. *Cummian’s letter*, 62).

the environment in which he was educated, where both Jerome's letters and *De ratione paschali* were studied. The original meaning of the word was known to Isidore of Seville in the mid-seventh century and widespread knowledge of his work might explain why this additional meaning phases out of usage in later texts.¹⁵⁴

1.2.2 Structure and style

The passage exhibits all the hallmarks of Columbanian epistolary prose: complex word-order, parenthetical insertions, accumulations of adjectival constructions and balanced antithesis. The period starting with *Licet enim mihi* displays a significant degree of complexity: subordinations of clauses and the use of indefinite verbal moods [*dixisse* in an infinitive construction; *videns*; *scribendo* in an impersonal ablative absolute construction¹⁵⁵]. In terms of codified tropes, the use of the *captatio benevolentiae* implied by the second biblical quotation should be noted; similarly the self-condemning content of the *elogium* is an example of irony and word-play. Walker's translation ('I do not admire the art but I do admire the cheek') is correct, but the double-meaning of *frons*=forehead and *frons*=boldness is lost. The meaning of the sentence is that the *sapiens* might not admire the woman's art (i.e. her ornamental headband/ *comtu*) but he does admire both her forehead (literally, because of the headband) and her boldness (the metaphorical meaning of *frons*). The writer admits that he could be branded [*inuri*]¹⁵⁶ with the same judgment, since Gregory might not admire his art (i.e. his writing style) but, when reading, he would be in a position to admire his boldness, that is the act of writing itself. While the excusatory remarks for one's inability to adhere to the canons of literary elegance are topical, Columbanus's insistence on his duty and right to speak up, even when it might reflect poorly on him, are a recurring feature of the *Epistulae*, especially evident in this letter and in the one to Pope Boniface. In terms of cultural context, Columbanus might be deriving the anecdote of the wise man's *elogium* from traditional

¹⁵⁴Isidore, *Etymologiarum libri*, vi, 7 ed. Wallace M. Lindsay, *Etymologiarum sive originum libri XX Isidori Hispalensis episcopi*, Scriptorum Classicorum Bibliothecae Oxoniensis, (Oxford, 1911), 234-235. An example of the term being phased out can be found in the Angers glosses to *De temporum ratione*; see Warntjes, *The Munich computus*, clxxxvi.

¹⁵⁵Smit, *Studies*, 68-69 and n27-28; Stanton 'Columbanus. Letter I', 152 followed Bieler's interpretation. Bieler, *Index Grammaticus*, s.v. *verbum infinitum*, *apud* Walker, *Opera*, 236.

¹⁵⁶The term is used with this meaning by Gildas (see note 48). There is no need to suppose an additional word-play related to the verb *pingere* from the *elogium*. See Smit, *Studies*, 65-66 for this different interpretation.

Early Christians diatribes on the ornaments of women.¹⁵⁷ The *quandam comtu pictam* is one of the few female figures in the *Epistulae*, however, her presence is merely that of a stereotype.¹⁵⁸

The following sentence of the *exordium* spells out the essence of another recurring device of the letters, the variation of the *topos* of modesty that Johannes Smit named *non praesumptione sed necessitate*.¹⁵⁹ The infinitive *scribi* should be understood to be impersonal. The whole sentence could be translated as ‘For there is no vanity in writing when necessity compels that one should write, even to his superiors’.¹⁶⁰ It can be compared with other similar passages from the other letters to the Roman pontiffs and overall is quite telling of the general attitude of Columbanus towards apostolic authority. The influence of the aforementioned passage from Sulpicius’s *Dialogi* on the incipit of this letter should be taken into account, though it cannot be said whether it is intentional and what its implications are, if any.¹⁶¹ It hardly seems to fit the context of both salutation and exordium and to the modern reader it simply signals how much Columbanus’s style was in debt to Sulpicius and Early Christian Gauls.

1.2.3 Epistolary qualities

This letter presents a bipartite structure, with the first part of the text, up to the words *sed haec de Pascha sufficient*, being distinct from the subsequent questions in both topic (the Easter question) and style (mainly paraenetic or hortatory). Only in the valediction the topic of the first part is brought up again. With this in mind, a reader can approach the opening section of the letter as the *exordium* of a short hortatory speech. According to the teaching of rhetorical tracts the *exordium*

¹⁵⁷On the origin of the anecdote Walker, *Opera*, 3n2 commented: ‘I have been unable to trace the source or hero of this story’ but he also recommended a parallel reading of Sir. 9,8: *averte faciem tuam a muliere compta*. Smit, *Studies*, 63-64 and 67-68 reported passages from Tertullian, Cyprian and Ambrose in which the practice of hair dyeing is condemned, concluding that ‘The anecdote of the sage and the vain woman ... can be situated in an early Christian milieu’. Bieler, *Review*, 898 agreed with him on this point. Stanton, ‘Columbanus. Letter I’, 159 followed Walker in pointing to Sir. 9.8. Todde and Nuvolone ‘Le lettere e la preghiera’, 85, referred to Smit’s discussion.

¹⁵⁸Elva Johnston, ‘Movers and shakers? How women shaped the career of Columbanus’, in O’Hara, ed. *Columbanus and the peoples*, 69-89: 71 and n12 this passage is included among those ‘stereotypical in tone’

¹⁵⁹Smit, *Studies*, 59-60. Other passages in which this rhetoric stratagem can be detected are Ep. II, III and V (Walker, ed. *Opera*, 16, l. 20-23; 22 l.34 and 52 l. 20-21)

¹⁶⁰Following Smit, *Studies*, 69. Todde and Nuvolone, ‘Le lettere e la preghiera’, 85, similarly translated according to Smit’s interpretation. Stanton, ‘Columbanus, Letter I’, 152 omits the verb in the translation.

¹⁶¹For the use of another passage from Sulpicius’s *Dialogi* that has clear contextual implications in Columbanus’s writing see Wright, ‘Columbanus’s *Epistulae*’, 76-78.

ought to introduce the topic and captivate the audience's attention and sympathy.¹⁶² In respect of the first function, Columbanus immediately presents his main concern to Gregory [*interrogandum de Pascha*], yet he does so while employing the language of epistolary *humilitas* [*nimirum micrologo, ad te clarum a me vili, scribere presumo, maioribus*]. In the closing sentence of the passage, through an apostrophe [*quid ergo dicis*], Columbanus formulates the question he has previously announced [*interrogandum de Pascha*]. He wants to know about Gregory's opinion on the celebration of Easter on the twenty-first and twenty-second moon but, while questioning him, he already presents the point of view that he wants his audience to endorse: Easter on the twenty-first or twenty-second moon is not the true Easter [*non esse Pascha*]. Two key concepts that dictate the argumentative structure of the letters are also introduced: that of the impossibility of a dark Easter [*nimirum tenebrosum*] and that of an established tradition that supports this view [*a multis comprobatur calcenteris*]. Overall the tone is apologetic before abruptly turning into exhortatory, with the writer acknowledging a foreseeable disagreement with his addressee [*tui tamen pace dictum sit*], but also having established that he confides in Gregory's evangelical qualities [*evangelicae humilitatis fiducia fretus*].

The second function of an *exordium*, captivating the audience, is performed through the *captatio benevolentiae* of the quotation from Deuteronomium and the displays of humility, including the reported *elogium*. As it happens with the salutation, there is a remarkable similarity with the corresponding section of the letter to Pope Boniface: firstly the use of a self-condemning *elogium*, then a remark about necessity compelling him to disregard the risk of presumption.¹⁶³ It might be possible that 'the train of thought' of both passages follows more or less the same beat,¹⁶⁴ but it is also possible that putting into practice recommendations and teachings about the proper way of writing a letter had lead Columbanus to develop a standard format for the *exordia* of epistles that were similar in tenor, aim and audience. While the insistence on necessity is truly unique to

¹⁶² Working from the definitions given by Martianus Cappella, *De nuptiis*, V, 545 ed. James Willis, *Martianii Cappellae De Nuptiis Mercurii et Philologiae*, (Liepzig, 1983), 192. *Exordium est noscendae causae preparans auditorem; eius virtutes sunt tres: ut attentum, ut docile, ut benevolum faciat auditore.*

¹⁶³ Columbanus, *Ep. V*, 2 (Walker, ed. *Opera*, 46) *Cui ego prior respondeo, non esse praesumptionem ubi constat esse necessitatem ad ecclesiae aedificationem*

¹⁶⁴ Smit, *Studies*, 65n18

Columbanus's rhetorical arsenal, it should be noted that other aspects such as the quotation from Exodus in the letter to Boniface is more in line with the practice of recurring to the Bible for such statements.¹⁶⁵ While the anecdote of the *quamdam comtu pictam* has not yet been traced to any source, even if the *sapiens* of this letter is understood to be a pagan rather than a Christian,¹⁶⁶ it would not be something unparalleled. For example there is a certain similarity with the way Cuthbert's Easter letter to Nechtan makes use of one of Plato's famous remarks.¹⁶⁷ Though not strictly a contemporary example, it would be an indication that in a similar intellectual milieu, Christian authors had no issue in including remarks by pagans in this very specific epistolary context, if it suited their purpose.

In evaluating Columbanus's adherence to contemporary epistolary models, biblical quotations can play the role of a useful indicator. The passage opens with the Pauline apostolic salutation. Following Gundlach, Walker only referenced Gal. 1,3, although as noted by Todde and Nuvolone, it is more fitting to consider this quotation a combination of that passage with Rom.1,7, the main difference being the repetition of the adjective *nostro*.¹⁶⁸ Columbanus would again borrow the opening words of the letter to the Fathers at Chalons from one of the Pauline salutation formulas [*gratias ago Deo meo*], which do not appear in the letter to the Galatians. Overall, it is uncommon to find these words in contemporary epistolary material, perhaps surprisingly. Possibly, just as the reference to *Bar-Ionah* in the salutation, Columbanus considered it to be fitting to address the successor of Paul and Peter with recognizable Apostolic words. On the other hand, the quotation from Deut. 32, 7, is commonly found not only in fourth- and fifth-century exegetical texts, but also in texts that are much closer in time and space to Columbanus. First of all, it is twice

¹⁶⁵ Gregory of Nazianzus, *Ep.* 51, (Malherbe, *Ancient epistolary theorists*, 59-61) encourages the use of a style adorned by 'proverbs or apophthegms'. Julius Victor, *Ars Rhetorica, De epistolis* (Giomini and Celentano, eds. *Ars Rhetorica* 105), recommends well-known proverbs.

¹⁶⁶ This would not be the only instance in the *Epistulae* in which Columbanus relates an anecdote that has a secular *philosophus* as its protagonist: Columbanus, *Ep.* 4 (Walker, *Opera*, 30): *Quidam philosophus olim sapientior ceteris eo quod contra omnium opinionem unum Deum esse dixerit, in carcere trusus est.*

¹⁶⁷ Bede, *HE*, 5, 21 (Plummer, ed. *Historiam ecclesiasticam*, 333; Plummer notes that the author of the letter is likely Bede himself, not Ceolfrid *Historiam ecclesiasticam. Notes*, 331-334. Still the point about how appropriate was the presence of one of Plato's remarks remains unaffected.)

¹⁶⁸ Todde and Nuvolone 'Le lettere e la preghiera', 83n4; the salutation of the letter to the Galatians reads *Gratia vobis, et pax a Deo Patre, et Domino nostro Jesu Christo*. That of the letter to the Romans reads *Gratia vobis, et pax a Deo Patre nostro, et Domino Jesu Christo*.

employed in monastic rules associated with Columbanus and his foundations.¹⁶⁹ In both these texts it underlines the prescription that monks and nuns should not do anything against the counsel of the abbot or abbess, but, on the contrary, seek it for every aspect of life. Secondly, it is featured in seventh-century Irish tracts on morality: *De duodecim abusivis* and the so-called *Penitential of Cummean*, approximately in the same context with which it appears in the aforementioned normative texts.¹⁷⁰ These two elements suggest that these words were well liked in monastic environments, as they related to both the monks' desire for an amelioration of spiritual state and the hierarchic ideal of dependency from the community's abbot.

Thirdly, what is most notable, is that this same quotation is a common occurrence in epistolary texts. Predictably, it mostly features in letters in which a master-student relationship exists, or should be supposed, between writer and addressee and in which doctrinal questions are expounded.¹⁷¹ The letter of Scarila to Fulgentius of Ruspe can be considered a paradigm for how the passage is used as a *captatio benevolentiae* of sorts when soliciting an answer from a superior.¹⁷² This aspect is certainly present in Columbanus, although it should be remembered that his objective was to make his addressee more sympathetic to his point of view, rather than simply asking for advice. In the letter of Faustus of Riez to the deacon Graecus, this quotation is also featured in the *exordium*, where the writer, before engaging in a confutation of his addressee's theological arguments, states that Graecus should have consulted masters and experts before

¹⁶⁹ The first instance is in the *Regula monachorum*, 14 (Walker, ed. *Opera*, 139); the second is the *Regula cuiusdam ad Virgines*, II (PL, 88, 1055a).

¹⁷⁰ *De XII abusivis*, 3 (Aidan Breen, ed. *De XII abusivis. A critical edition with translation and introduction*. PhD thesis, submitted 1988, 348). See also Breen, ed. *De XII abusivis*, 50-56 and Aidan Breen, 'The evidence of antique Irish exegesis in Pseudo-Cyprian *De duodecim abusivis saeculi*', *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, 87c, 1987, 71-101:72-76 has commented on the overlap between some sections of this work and the sermons, penitential and letters of Columbanus. It might be possible to add to his list of commonalities the use of the word *canticum* to introduce this versicle from Deuteronomium in this letter and that text. Cummean, *Liber de mensura penitientiarum*, 1, ed. Ludwig Bieler, *The Irish Penitentals*, *Scriptores Latini Hiberniae* 5, (Dublin 1963), 109-135: 109-110.

¹⁷¹ For patristic models see Jerome, *Ep.* 53 (Hilberg, ed. *Epistulae*, CSEL 54, 448 l. 1-2) which is also referenced by Columbanus in this same letter, see discussion of paragraph J; Gelasius, *Epistula ad Honorium* (PL, 45, 1764); for sixth and seventh century examples see Vigilus, *Epistola ad Valentinianum* (PL, 69, 51c); Taus of Saragoza, *Epistula ad Eugenium Toletanum* (PL, 80, 724c).

¹⁷² Fulgentius, *Epistulae*, 10. *Imperatorum desideria paternitatis vestrae multum desiderano peritiam quia scriptum est inquire patrem tuum et annuntiabit tibi, seniores tuos et docebunt te* (The wish of the unlearned ones for the expertise of your paternity is great, for it is written: question your father and he will answer, your elders and they will teach you). PL, 65, 377b

committing to writing.¹⁷³ It could be said that Columbanus employed the passage in order to show that he had taken to heart this particular bit of advice, excusing his boldness in writing with the need to conform with the universally agreed upon idea of seeking guidance from the episcopal class. In that respect, one might look at the African deacon Ferrandus's letter to the Romans Pelagius and Anatolius to find an even closer parallel with Columbanus's way of presenting this quotation. Even though the phrase from Deuteronomius is part of the valediction of the letter, it is a section that displays the traits of the paraenetic type of epistolary writing, just as Columbanus's *exordium* does.¹⁷⁴ The same passage is also used in the near-contemporary Easter letter by Cummian. At a closer inspection however, Cummian's usage of the Deuteronomium passage is much closer to that of the prescriptive and moralistic texts than to that of other epistolary works, since he refers to his questioning of his superiors, rather than to the act of writing to his present addressees.¹⁷⁵ Overall, this one textual feature of the letter to Gregory can be considered to reflect two aspects of Columbanus as a writer: on the one hand, his knowledge of the interpretations and prescription of the monastic intellectual environments influenced his style just as much as his arguments, on the other, he was not very far removed from letter-writers of the sixth-century in the process of composition of epistolary texts, as he expressed similar concepts through similar literary means. It seems unlikely that this last element was due to at least indirect knowledge of these letters, but it should be noted that Columbanus had certainly read Faustus's homiletic

¹⁷³Faustus of Riez, *Epistulae*, 7 ed August Engelbrecht *Faustus Reiensis and Rurici Opera*, CSEL, 21 (Wien, 1891), 200. *In tantae autem rei consultatione, in qua longe viam regiam reliquisti, aliquos expertae scientiae viros, eruditione atque aetate seniores, quibus credere facilius possis, interrogare debueras, secundum illud propheticum:interroga patrem tuum, et indicabit tibi; seniores tuos, et dicent tibi.* Translated in Ralph Mathisen, *Ruricius of Limoges and friends. A collection of letters from Visigothic Gaul.* Translated texts for Historians, 30 (Liverpool, 1999), 247 ('Moreover, in your consultation on such an important issue, regarding which you have deviated greatly from the royal road, you ought to question other men of expert wisdom, elders in erudition and age, whom you might be able to believe more easily, according to that prophetic proverb: ask your father and he will show you, your elders and they will tell you').

¹⁷⁴Ferrandus Diaconus, *Epistolae*, 6. PL, 67, 928a *Illud quoque tranquillitati Ecclesiarum proficere poterit, si nullus velit praescribere quid sequatur Ecclesia, sed tenere quod Ecclesia docet; ipsa Domino per Moysen in cantico Deuteronomii dicente: Interroga patrem tuum, et annuntiabit tibi; seniores tuos, et dicent tibi omnia.* Translated in Richard Price, *The acts of the Council of Constantinople of 553 with related texts on the Three Chapters controversy, Translated texts for Historians, 51, (Liverpool, 2009), 221* ("This also will contribute to the tranquillity of the churches, if everyone seeks not to lay down what the church should follow, but to hold what the church teaches; for this is what the Lord says through Moses in the canticle of Deuteronomy: 'Ask your father and he will teach you, your seniors and they will tell you everything.'"). *The reasons for which the tone of this letter maybe defined as paraenetic, as well as its points of contact with Columbanus's letter to Pope Boniface will be addressed in a subsequent chapter.*

¹⁷⁵Cummian, *De controversia Paschali*, l. 259-60 (Walsh and Ó Cróinín, eds *Cummian's letter*, 90-91)

work¹⁷⁶ and that he would eventually address the same topic of Ferrandus’s letter, the Three Chapters controversy, in his letter to Pope Boniface.

Section 1.3: Narratio, testes

Non latet enim, ut credo, efficaciam tuam, quantum Anatolius ‘mirae doctrinae vir’, ut sanctus ait Hieronymus, cuius Eusebius Caesariensis episcopus in ecclesiastica excerpta inseruit historia - et sanctus Hieronymus in suo hoc idem de Pascha opus collaudavit catalogo - de hac lunae aetate vituperando disputat; qui contra Gallicanos **rimarios** de Pascha, ut ait, errantes horrendam intulit sententiam, “Certe”- inquit- “si usque ad duarum vigiliarum terminum, quod noctis medium indicat, ortus lunae tardaverit, non lux tenebras, sed lucem tenebrae superant; quod certum est in Pascha non esse possibile, ut aliqua pars tenebrarum luci dominetur, quia solemnitas dominicae resurrectionis lux est, et non est *communicatio lucis cum tenebris* [2 Cor. 6, 14]. Et si in tertia vigilia luna excanduerit, non est dubium, lunam vigesimam primam vel vigesimam secundam exortam esse, in qua verum Pascha non est possibile immolari. Nam qui hac lunae aetate Pascha definiunt possibile celebrari non solum illud auctoritate divinae scripturae affirmare non possunt, sed et sacrilegii et contumaciae crimen et animarum periculum incurrunt, dum affirmant veram lucem posse immolari cum aliqua dominatione tenebrarum, quae omnibus tenebris dominatur”. Nec non in sancti dogmatis legimus libro: “Pascha id est solemnitas dominicae resurrectionis ante transgressum vernalis aequinoctii, decimae quartae lunae initium non potest celebrari”, ut scilicet aequinoctium non antecedit.

1.3.1 Readings and vocabulary

Contra Gallicanos primarios [Walker, 2, 3, 22]	Contra Gallicanos rimarios [F, 158]	Contra Gallicanos primarios [M, 110]
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¹⁷⁶Columbanus, *Instructio*, II, 1-2 (Walker, ed. *Opera* 68). The authorship of the quotation as well as of the sermon itself has been a hotly debated point. The conclusions reached by Clare Stancliffe, ‘The thirteen sermons attributed to Columbanus’, 194-199 are here endorsed: Columbanus authored the sermon and the description of Faustus as his teacher should not be understood literally. See Stancliffe, ‘The thirteen sermons attributed to Columbanus’, 93-96 for a review of the debate up to that point.

Walker followed Metzler and translated *primarios* as ‘authorities’. Maura Walsh and Dáibhi Ó Cróinín have argued that the correct reading has been preserved in F,¹⁷⁷ their argument being that *rimarius*, related to the Old Irish word *rimaire*, occurs frequently with the meaning of ‘computist’. *Rimarii* does indeed occur in *De Computo dialogus*¹⁷⁸ while *rima* is glossed as *numerus* in a number of erudite works including *De ratione computandi*.¹⁷⁹ Again, Columbanus’s model here was most likely *De Ratione Paschali*, in which the word is attested and from which he was about to quote extensively, arguing against the position taken by Gaulish computists. However, in that text, *rimarii* does not describe the computists from Gaul who argued in favour of the celebration of Easter on *luna* twenty-first, but the Africans who took issue with a nineteen-years cycle.¹⁸⁰ The editors’ commentary on the term acknowledges its use by later Irish computists, drawing a parallel with the analogous shift in the meaning of *chalcenterus*.¹⁸¹ Additionally, they qualify the term as a ‘pejorative’ and ‘dismissive’ reference, in light of the author’s harsh judgment on the Africans’ opinion and of etymological considerations.¹⁸² Such a disparaging overtone might be detected in Columbanus’s usage too.¹⁸³ The Irishman might have lifted the term from a later polemical section of the authority he was referring to, in order to apply it to their shared target, the Gaulish computists. If this is the case, he would not be using the term in a looser sense, as later tracts would do, but, contrary to his previous understanding of *chalcenterus*, he would display a clear grasp of the terminology of his source. As far as the

¹⁷⁷ Walsh and Ó Cróinín, *Cummian’s letter*, 33, n126; 117-118n8 cites a different example of the words being employed in computistical texts.

¹⁷⁸ *De computo dialogus*, in PL, 90, 647-652, 650 (*rima unde rimarii appellantur*) another instance of the word can be found in Jacopo Bisagni’s interim edition of *De divisionibus temporum*, Jacopo Bisagni, *From Atoms to the Cosmos: the Irish Tradition of the Divisions of Time in the Early Middle Ages*, Kathleen Hughes Memorial Lecture 18 (Cambridge, 2020), 61.

¹⁷⁹ *De ratione computandi*, 3 (Walsh and Ó Cróinín eds, *Cummian’s letter*, 118 l.11-12)

¹⁸⁰ The occurrence is in *De Ratione Paschali*, 12, whereas the Gallican computists are mentioned earlier (Breen and McCarthy, eds *The ante-Nicene Christian Pasch*, 52, l. 198 and 47-48, l.85-89)

¹⁸¹ Breen and McCarthy, *The ante-Nicene Christian Pasch*, 102; n.94 refers to Walsh and Ó Cróinín’s discussion.

¹⁸² Breen and McCarthy, *The ante-Nicene Christian Pasch*, 103; the African computists of the text are identified as Novatianists, with *rimariis* being considered an equivalent of disparaging terms usually applied to them by orthodox authors. Accordingly, the term is rendered simply as Novatianists in the translation, 69, l.1.

¹⁸³ Columbanus’s dislike of the Gaulish computists is echoed in *Ep. III, 2 istorum liber Gallorum, qui a nostris viris non receptitur* (“The book of these Gauls, which has not been accepted by our men”) (Walker, ed. *Opera*, 24). One cannot help but wonder if, on the basis of *De ratione Paschali*, he understood *rimarii* to designate ‘poor’ computists and *chalcenterii* to designate competent (i.e. orthodox) ones.

philological reconstruction of the text is concerned, suffice it to say that it was Ludwig Bieler's opinion that F was a less doctored text than M and that traces of the genuine peculiarities of the letters are more likely to surface in it, whereas editorial intervention was less restricted in M.¹⁸⁴ Considering this, and the fact that *primarios* is by far the more common word between the two and thus more likely to have been inserted by Metzler, whereas *rimarios* is the most relevant to the context, the preferred reading here will be *rimarios*. It should nevertheless be acknowledged that, because of its occurrence in *De ratione Paschali*, translating the term simply as 'computists' does not render the polemic connotation that the author possibly attributed to it.

1.3.2 Structure and style

This passage displays numerous parenthetical clauses and convoluted word order. The subordination of clauses is not as extreme as in other passages but no less than four incidental inserts can be counted before a quotation from another text is introduced. This is a substantial passage from the Paschal tract *De Ratione Paschali*. From the stylistic point of view, the most significant features are the litotes *non latet efficaciam tuam* ('It does not escape your diligence') and the complex hyperbata [*ut sanctus ait Hieronymus: avA; in ecclesiastica excerpta inseruit historia; abVA; in suo hoc idem de Pascha opus collaudavit catalogo: complex; horrendam intulit sententiam aVA*]. The former is essential for the writer to maintain a tone of epistolary *humilitas*: Columbanus writes as if presuming that his addressee is aware of the authority that is being discussed and that intervention is not needed to remind Gregory of it. The latter are as usual, an indicator of stylistic elaboration. There is no significant use of cursus-like endings in the passage. The gerundive *vituperando* can be understood to be in agreement with *aetate* (translating to 'about this age of the moon which should be censured') or as an impersonal ablative absolute (translating, as Walker did, to '[Anatolius] scathingly reasons').

1.3.3 Epistolary qualities

This section can be read as a continuation of the previous paraenetic *exordium*. The tone is similar, as the writer once again employs a second-person form [*tuam*] as part of an apostrophe.

¹⁸⁴Bieler, 'Notes on the text and tradition', apud Walker, *Opera*, lxxv.

Addressing directly his interlocutor, as if the writer is anticipating an answer that might be offered to his previous question, fits the format of the fictitious epistolary conversation that constitutes one of the ideals of Late-Antique letter-writing theory.¹⁸⁵ Overall, despite the elaborate stylistic choices, the standard features of an exhortatory letter are here easily detected. On the other hand, the subsequent insertion of two quotations from what the author clearly regards as authoritative texts on the matter of the Easter question, is functional to the rhetoric component of exhortations. In a public speech they would fit the role of witnesses (*testes*) inserted in the section called *narratio*, in support of the position of the author. However according to common practice *testes* would appear in the *argumentatio*, so it could also be the case that Columbanus is presenting these texts as a *iudicialis assertio*, that is a neutral juridical (in these case canonistic) appraisal of the circumstances discussed.¹⁸⁶ As it can be surmised from the rest of this letter and from the *Ep.* II and III, to the Gallic council and to another pope, Columbanus moved two main accusations against the Easter cycle of Victorius of Aquitaine: 1) since it reckoned the days of the lunar month during which the celebration of Easter Sunday was permitted (*luna* 16 to *luna* 22) in a way that allowed the moonless hours of the night to last longer than those illuminated by it, Victorius's cycle, on occasion, favoured a 'dark Easter'. 2) Since according to the followers of the *latercus* the equinox was dated to the twenty-fifth of March, whereas Victorius had fixed it on the twenty-first of March, his cycle would, on occasion, allow Easter to be celebrated before the other party's had computed the passing of the equinox. The quotation from the Paschal tract *De Ratione Paschali* bears witness to Columbanus's position as it contains an explanation of the first point and a condemnation of the celebration of the 'dark Easter' on *luna* 21 and 22. The second, from the *Liber ecclesiasticorum dogmatum*, attributed to the priest Gennadius of Marseille by modern

¹⁸⁵ See the observations collected in Malherbe, *Ancient epistolary theorists*, 12. Julius Victor, *Ars Rhetorica*, De epistolis. (Giomini and Celentano, eds. *Ars Rhetorica* 106). *Lepidum est nonnumquam quasi praesente alloqui* ('Sometimes it is amiable to write as if addressing one who is present'). An author known to Columbanus alluded to the ideal: Faustus of Riez, *Epistolae*, 7 *qua cum absente ... mihi aestimo colloquendo* and Faustus of Riez, *Epistolae*, 1 *quantum cum absente loqui possum* (Engelbrecht, ed. *Opera*, CSEL 21, 200 and 166) Mathisen, *Ruricius of Limoges*, 246-47 and 250 ('in which regard I think that I must speak with one who is absent' and 'to the extent that I can speak with an absent')

¹⁸⁶ The names of the parts of a speech and their functions are understood as laid out by Martianus Cappella, *De Nuptiis* V, 550 (typology of *narrationes*) and 560 (typology of *argumentationes*) (Willis, ed. *De Nuptiis*, 192-193 and 197)

scholarship, performs a similar function in respect to the second point, since it lays out the general principle that Easter cannot precede the equinox, though no relevant date is mentioned.¹⁸⁷

In this context, it is also noteworthy that the first quotation is introduced by presenting the endorsement by Eusebius of Caesarea and Jerome of the figure and work of Anatolius of Laodicea, to whom Columbanus attributed the Paschal tract he refers to. Eusebius had inserted a section of the Anatolian work in his *Ecclesiastical History*, whereas Jerome had greatly praised Anatolius paschal opus in his *De viris illustribus*.¹⁸⁸ Columbanus directly references the latter's words of approval [*'mirae doctrinae vir', ut sanctus ait Hieronymus*]. In developing his *argumentatio*, Columbanus makes it clear that this is an essential point of his peroration, since if Pope Gregory was to approve of Victorius's cycle, this would raise 'a question of faith between you and the aforementioned Jerome'. Additionally, the Irishman confesses that 'who goes against the authority of saint Jerome shall be a heretic and reprobate in the eyes of the Churches of the west'. The reference to *De viris inlustribus*, despite appearing in an incidental clause, is in fact a cornerstone of Columbanus's exhortatory efforts, purposefully included as a guarantee of the orthodoxy of his own stance on Easter dating. This reinforces the perception that the entire first half of the letter is structured as a classical exhortatory speech, with information presented in the *exordium* being used later on to build an argument. On the other hand, the quotation from Gennadius has a brief and simple introduction and, within the Columbanian corpus, it stands out as one of the few instances in which the writer does not insert generic praise or titles of approval for the authority he is calling upon. Not only did Columbanus feel the need to reinforce the point made by the quoted text [*ut scilicet aequinoctium non antecedit*] but he also abandoned, for this second topic, the additional guarantee of Jerome's approval. The question of why, in order to

¹⁸⁷ On exegetical and computational differences between the Irish *latercus* and the other cycles in relation to the Columbanian letters see Bruno Krusch, 'Die Einführung des griechischen Paschalritus im Abenlande', *Neues Archiv der Gesellschaft für ältere deutsche Geschichtskunde* 9 (1884), 99-169: 144-148; Bartholomew McCarthy, *AU*¹, 4, cxxvii-cxxx; Mosshammer, *Easter computus*, 223-4; Thomas Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland* (Cambridge, 2000), 392-3, 400-5, 408; Breen and McCarthy, *The ante-Nicene Christian Pasch*, 89, 126 and 142-143; Caitlin Corning, *The Celtic and Roman traditions: conflict and consensus in the Early Medieval church* (New York 2006), 26-8; Caitlin Corning 'Columbanus and the Easter controversy: theological, social and political contexts', in Roy Flechner, Sven Meeder, (eds) *The Irish in Early Medieval Europe. Identity, culture and religion* (New York, 2016), 101-15.

¹⁸⁸ Jerome, *De viris inlustribus*, 73, ed. Willhelm Herding, *Hieronimi de viris inlustribus liber. Accedit Gennadii catalogum virorum inlustrium* (Leipzig, 1879), 47-48

defend his position on the equinox, he would move away from the Anatolian text, which also agreed with his preferred system of reckoning on this same point, cannot be fully answered.

1.3.4 Sources

The author's key witnesses to his argument on the celebration of Easter represent the earliest known testimonies for both *De Ratione Paschali* and the *Liber ecclesiasticorum dogmatum*.¹⁸⁹ In respect to the quotation from *De Ratione Paschali*, Columbanus's wording does not have any meaningful deviation from that of the text transmitted by the manuscripts.¹⁹⁰ Furthermore, there is at least one manuscript testimony whose readings for the numeral that indicates the lunar dates on which Easter cannot be celebrated (*lunam vigesimam primam vel vigesimam secundam*) agree with those found in the quotation from the letter. Aidan Breen and Daniel Mc Carthy have shown that this is reason enough to suppose that the readings of the other manuscript witnesses of *De Ratione Paschali* have been tampered with, since they present diverging and inconsistent lunar dates.¹⁹¹

In respect to the quotation from the *Liber ecclesiasticorum dogmatum*, in Walker's text of Columbanus's letter, there are significant differences from the original in both the wording of the passage and the numeral of the lunar date.¹⁹² In Cuthbert H. Turner's edition of Gennadius's *Liber*, the Easter chapter reads:

¹⁸⁹ Rufinus, author of a Latin translation of Eusebius's original Greek work, reports the text from Anatolius's Paschal tract in the same passage in which Eusebius had inserted. Breen and MacCarthy, *The ante-Nicaean Christian Pasch*, 139-141, have shown that Rufinus's translation does not match Eusebius's Greek and that he was likely making use, as an independent source, of the Latin text known to Columbanus. This notwithstanding, Columbanus's quotation is the first from a portion of the text unrelated to that inserted by Eusebius.

¹⁹⁰ *De Ratione Paschali*, 4 (Breen and McCarthy, *The ante-Nicene Christian Pasch*, 47, l. 75-84 and apparatus). Variations at line 76 *lucem tenebrae*; line 79, *qui in hac*; line 81 *posse*.

¹⁹¹ See *De Ratione Paschali*, 4 (Breen and McCarthy, *The ante-Nicene Christian Pasch*, 47, l. 79-80 and apparatus) for manuscripts variants of the numerals. Breen and McCarthy, *The ante-Nicene Christian Pasch*, 89 for the hypothesis that Columbanus's text preserves the original reading.

¹⁹² The following discussion is a summary of my article 'Columbanus and Gennadius. Easter lunar limits in the Letter to Gregory I copied from the *Liber ecclesiasticorum dogmatum*', *Peritia* 32 (2021), forthcoming, where the manuscript history of the Easter chapters of Gennadius is addressed. This second quotation in the letter has not received as much attention as the first one: two in-depth discussions of the computus-related elements in the letter to Gregory I leave it completely unmentioned: MacCarthy, AU, 4, cxxvii-cxxx and more recently, Corning 'Columbanus and the Easter controversy: theological, social and political contexts', 101-15. On the other hand Krusch, 'Einführung', 124-25 discussed the provenience of the Gennadius's text, whereas Walsh and Ó Cróinín, *Cummian's letter*, 28n95 commented on this passage: "Both transcripts of

Pascha id est solemnitas dominicae resurrectionis ante transgressum vernalis aequinoctii et sextae decimae lunae initium, non potest celebrari eo tamen [in] mense natae.

‘Easter, the solemnity of the Lord’s resurrection, cannot be celebrated before the passing of the spring equinox and the beginning of the sixteenth moon, even if born in that month.’¹⁹³

In Walker’s edition and in the two seventeenth-century exemplars of the Columbanian letter, the quotation from Gennadius reads:

<p>Nec non in sancti dogmatis legimus libro: ‘Pascha id est solemnitas dominicae resurrectionis ante transgressum vernalis aequinoctii, decimae quartae lunae initium, non potest celebrari’ ut scilicet aequinoctium non antecedit. [Walker, <i>Opera</i>, 4, 1. 9-12]</p>	<p>Necnon in sancti dogmatis legimus libro: ‘Pascha id est solemnitas dominicae resurrectionis ante transgressum vernalis aequinoctii, XVI initium, non potest celebrari’ ut scilicet aequinoctium non antecedit. [F, 158]</p>	<p>Nec non in sancti dogmatis legimus libro: ‘Pascha id est solemnitas dominicae resurrectionis ante transgressum vernalis aequinoctii, decimae sextae lunae initium, non potest celebrari’ ut scilicet aequinoctium non antecedit. [M, 111]</p>
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Firstly, Columbanus’s quotation lacks the conjunction *et*: this can affect the meaning of the passage, as Turner’s text of Gennadius sets up two distinct conditions for the celebration of Easter, whereas in Columbanus’s quotation *initium* can be read as an apposition to *transgressum*, simply clarifying its meaning, although it is still possible to understand the sentence as laying out two distinct conditions. Columbanus’s quotation can thus be translated as either:

Columbanus’s letter read *decimaesextae / xvi initium*, which would be the Victorian limit. How this date got into Columbanus’s text we cannot explain”.

¹⁹³ Cuthbert H. Turner, ‘The *Liber ecclesiasticorum dogmatum* attributed to Gennadius’, *Journal of Theological Studies*, 7 (1905), 78-99: 99. This preliminary edition is here followed, in conjunction with Cuthbert H. Turner, ‘The *Liber ecclesiasticorum dogmatum*. Supplenda to *J.T.S.* vii 78-99’, *Journal of Theological Studies*, 8 (1906), 103-14. This work has been printed under the title *Liber de dogmatibus ecclesiasticis* in PL 58, 979-1000, which is a reprint of Geverhard Elmenhorst, *Gennadii Massiliensis Presbyteri Liber de Ecclesiasticis Dogmatibus Geuerhartus Elmenhorstius ex MS. promulgavit et notas addidit* (Hamburg, 1614). On the authorship of this text, see the letter by Frederick W. Puller *apud* Turner, ‘Supplenda’, 104-7; Germain Morin, ‘Le *Liber dogmatum* de Gennade de Marseille et problèmes qui s’y rattachent’, *Revue bénédictine*, 24 (1907), 456-72.

a. ‘Easter, the solemnity of the Lord’s resurrection, cannot be celebrated before the passing of the spring equinox, **at the beginning of the sixteenth moon**’, so that it should not precede the equinox.

b. ‘Easter, the solemnity of the Lord’s resurrection, cannot be celebrated before the passing of the spring equinox, **[that is], the beginning of the sixteenth moon**’, so that it should not precede the equinox

Secondly, while, on the one hand, in Metzler’s and Sheerin and Fleming’s transcripts the lunar date is the same as in Turner’s edition of the *Liber* (XVI or *decimae sextae*), on the other, Walker chose to emend it to *decimae quartae* (the fourteenth moon). His decision seems to have been motivated by the need to avoid the text becoming contradictory: if the sentence is understood to set two independent conditions for the lawful celebration of Easter, as in Gennadius’s original text, then the limit of *luna* 16 would imply that the *Liber ecclesiasticorum dogmatum* adhered to the Victorian Easter limits of *luna* 16 to 22. However, Columbanus had just condemned the celebration of Easter on *luna* 21 and 22, through the authority of Anatolius. Additionally, he would later explicitly define the correct limits as *luna* 14 to 20.¹⁹⁴ This contradiction, however, is only present if one chooses to interpret the meaning of the quotation as being the same as in Gennadius’s text, despite the lack of the conjunction *et* in Columbanus’s version; otherwise the text would be simply equating the passing of the spring equinox with the beginning of *luna* 16. This second interpretation, while grammatically possible, is meaningless in astronomical terms and in the context of the rules of Easter computus. Walker’s interpretation and subsequent emendation has been here preferred. There are two reasons for this: 1) The manuscript tradition of Gennadius’s *Liber ecclesiasticorum dogmatum* is consistent in phrasing the Easter chapter in a way that dictates two independent conditions for the celebration of Easter. 2) On the other hand, although a majority of the manuscripts adheres to the Victorian Easter limits, variant readings and

¹⁹⁴ Columbanus, *Epistula* I, 3 (Walker, *Opera*, 4) *Septem dies ... in quibus tantum legitime Phase Domini comedi mandatum est, qui a decima quarta luna usque ad vigesimam numerandi sunt.* (‘Seven days, in which the Lord’s Pasch is commanded to be eaten legally only, which are to be reckoned from the fourteenth to the twentieth moon’).

corrections of the numeral are attested from an early date in various exemplars, and it is possible that Columbanus had access to a recension that agreed with his point of view. The most significant manuscript witness that a variant reading preserving the lunar limit of the Irish *Latercus* existed is St Gall, Stiftsbibliothek, 238 where the numeral *quartae decimae* is spelled out in the Easter chapter (p. 434). This eighth-century manuscript is related to an earlier witness from Bobbio: either St Gall, Stiftsbibliothek, 238 is a copy of the seventh-century Bobbio manuscript, or the two descend by the same archetype.¹⁹⁵ This would only leave a scribal error as a possible explanation of why the two seventeenth-century transcripts report the initial lunar limit of Victorius's Easter cycle.

Section 1.4: Narratio, reporting style.

Quod utique Victorius in suo transgressu est cyclo et per hoc Galliae iamdudum invexit errorem, seu, ut humilis dicam, confirmavit inolitum. Quippe qua ratione utraque stare possunt, ut scilicet resurrectio Domini ante suam celebratur passionem, quod vel putari absurdum est, aut *septem dies* [Ex. 12, 15] Domini iussione in lege sanciti, in quibus tantum legitime Phase Domini comedi mandatum est, qui a decima quarta luna usque ad vigesimam numerandi sunt, contra ius fasque transcenduntur? Luna enim vigesima prima aut vigesima secunda extra ius lucis est utpote post medium noctis tunc temporis exorta, et, tenebris lucem superantibus, luci solemnitas nefas est, ut aiunt, agi.

1.4.1 Structure and style.

The text follows from the previous sentence directly by means of a relative nexus. Incidental phrases [*ut humiliter dicam; ut aiunt*] are still present, whereas hyperbata are of the type most common in the *Epistulae*, with a verb separating a noun-adjective pair [*in suo transgressus est cyclo; ante suam celebretur passionem*]. The construction of the verbal form *inveho* is regular [*per hoc Galliae iamdudum invexit errorem*: dative and accusative], but the adjectival use of

¹⁹⁵ See Turner, 'The *Liber ecclesiasticorum dogmatum*', 88 n. 1. The Bobbio manuscript is Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana O 212 sup. I could not examine the reading of the lunar limits for its Easter chapter, though Todde and Nuvolone, 'Le lettere e la preghiera', 87n9 provide a paleographic transcription. It would appear that it presently preserves the Victorian limits (*luna* 16) but this could be a later correction. For an extensive list of the variant readings of Gennadius's Easter chapter see the appendix to my article 'Columbanus and Gennadius'.

inolitum might be derived from Jerome.¹⁹⁶ The second period is another direct question, displaying a complex form of subordination of the sentence structure: a bipartite completive clause [*ut scilicet resurrectio domini ante suam celebretur passionem aut septem dies ... contra ius fasque*] depends on the main clause, and two distinct sets of relative clauses [1. *Quod ... absurdum est*; 2. *In quibus tantum ... mandatum est and qui a decima quarta luna usque ad vigesimam numerandi sunt*]. It is interesting to note that, while most of the passage constitutes a commentary of sorts on the previous two quotations, the expression *contra ius fasque* is possibly derived from another author referenced later on in the letter, Gildas.¹⁹⁷

1.4.2 Epistolary qualities.

The exhortatory tone is momentarily dropped in this passage, although the audience is once again engaged with a direct question. The figure of Victorious of Aquitaine is first introduced as if already familiar to the audience, with his cycle transgressing against the information presented by way of the quoted texts. The problem caused by his purported violation of the equinoctial rule is only briefly alluded to, reducing the entire matter to the self-evident absurdity of celebrating Easter before the Passion [*quod vel putari absurdum est*], whereas more details are added to the reasons for condemning the celebration of Easter on *luna* 21 and 22: firstly by referring to the Scripture [*Domini iussione in lege sanciti*] as the basis on which the seven days of Unleavened Bread are to be reckoned; then by presenting the correct way of reckoning them, from *luna* 14 to *luna* 20; and finally by re-stating the point made by the Anatolian text about the timing of the moonrise on those days. The passage is merely informative, but, as with the earlier *testes*, information and concepts introduced in the *narratio* are later developed in both the *propositio* and *argumentatio* sections. For example, in the case of lunar limits, the Scriptural reference here employed is later used to refute the Gaulish bishops' statement about not holding Easter with the Jews. Also introduced at this stage of the exhortatory letter is the notion that error has been allowed to grow [*confirmavit inolitum*], rather than openly endorsed. The first part of the

¹⁹⁶ Compare Jerome, *Commentariorum in Ezechielem prophetam libri*, VI230, *errorem inolitum significat*. (PL, 25 192b). Columbanus had read six books of Jerome's commentary; see below Ep, I, 9 (Walker, ed. Opera, 10).

¹⁹⁷ Gildas, *De Excidio*, 34, 4 (Winterbottom, ed. *The ruin of Britain*, 103 l.51)

propositio expands on this idea, with Columbanus openly stating that he cannot believe that his addressee has endorsed the Victorian reckoning. In the *exordium*, Columbanus has made it clear that that he is writing to one of his superiors in the Church, and structuring his arguments within the framework of epistolary *humilitas* [*ut humilius dicam*] is his way of acknowledging this.

Section 1.5: Propositio, paraenetic style

Quare ergo tu, tam sapiens, nimirum cuius carissima per orbem, ut antiquitus, sacrii ingenii diffusa sunt **lumina**, Pascha tenebrosum colis? Miror, fateor, a te hunc Galliae errorem acsi **scynthenium** iam diu non fuisse rasum; nisi forte putem, quod vix credere possum, dum eum constat a te non fuisse emendatum, apud te esse probatum. Aliter tamen et honestius tua excusari potest peritia; dum forte notam subire times Hermagoricae novitatis, antecessorum et maxime papae Leonis auctoritate contentus es. Noli te, quaeso, in tali questione humilitati tantum aut gravitati credere, quae saepe falluntur; *melior forte est canis vivus in hac problemate leone mortuo* [Eccles. 9, 14]; vivus namque sanctus emendare potest quae ab altero maiore emendare non fuerint. Scias namque nostris magistris et Hibernicis antiquis philosophis et sapientissimis componendi calculi computariis, Victorium non fuisse receptum, sed magis risu vel venia dignum quam auctoritate. Idcirco mihi timido, magis peregrino quam sciolo, precor tuae dirige fulcrum sententiae et mature punctum tuae placabilitatis, huic tempestati nos circumdanti compescendae transmittere non dedigneris; quia non mihi satisfacit post tantos quos legi auctores una istorum sententia episcoporum dicentium tantum:

1.5.1 Vocabulary and readings

This is the central portion of the letter, containing Columbanus's request. In its opening sentence, Smit's emendation of Walker's *flumina* to *lumina* is here preferred, as it is consistent with the writer's argumentation over light and darkness: his addressee's bright intellect [*lumina ingenii*] cannot allow a dark Easter [*Pascha tenebrosum*]. Other passages from the letters show that Columbanus was aware of former contacts between Rome and the Western Churches and possibly of its role in their establishment: the expression *ut antiquitus* might refer to how the influence of the Roman See must have seemed to Columbanus to have been somewhat restored,

through the actions and achievements of pope Gregory. One major point of difficulty is the word *scynthenium*, (perhaps ‘malignous growth’) is an *hapax legomenon* and its translation is contentious. Its use might find a parallel with an expression in *Epistula V*.¹⁹⁸ The other major point of difficulty in the passage, the adjective *Hermagoricae* has not been subjected to much attention by the early editors and commentators. More recent attempts to explain its meaning have come to very different conclusions. The spelling and position of the word is consistent between M and F, which makes the case for a scribal error more difficult to support. For the same reason, *Aremoricae novitatis*¹⁹⁹ does not seem appropriate. The only alternative is to propose an identification for the Hermagoras who is being referenced here.

Pier Franco Beatrice has proposed that Columbanus is alluding to the fabrication of the legend of st. Hermagoras, patron of Aquileia, on the part of the Roman Church, as a consequence of the developments of the Three Chapters controversy. In his interpretation of the text he states that ‘Gregory does not intervene with innovative measures on the Easter reckoning, limiting himself to defending the Paschal opinion of Pope Leo, maybe because he is afraid that the Gallic bishops would bring up in retaliation the fact that he was the author of the innovation regarding Hermagoras’.²⁰⁰ His conclusion, however, completely subtracts the word from its context, taking *novitatis* to refer to something that is alien to what was being discussed by Columbanus, and unrelated to the main object of the letter, simply because of a possible meaning of its qualifier. The sentence in which this adjective occurs is part of one of the possible answers which Columbanus anticipates Gregory could provide, once he is questioned about why he, the Pope, favoured the Victorian ‘dark Easter’. Columbanus states that Gregory might have not taken action against the error of Gaul (i.e. the Victorian reckoning of Easter) either because he approves of it

¹⁹⁸ Columbanus, Ep. V, 15 (Walker, *Opera*, 54. See also 5n2 where the parallel is highlighted.) Full discussion of the origin of the term in Walker, ‘On the *use of Greek* words in the writings of St. Columbanus of Luxeuil’, in *Archivum Latinitas Medii Aevi* (Bulletin Du Cange) 21 (1949/50), 117–31:125 and Smit, *Studies*, 81-87. Stanton, ‘Columbanus. Letter I’, 162-163, discussed the exact clinical meaning, suggesting ‘pustule’ rather than ‘rash’.

¹⁹⁹ Giorgio Cracco and Lellia Cracco Ruggini, ‘*Aremorica novitas?* Colombano e Gregorio Magno sullo sfondo di grandi tradizioni’ in *Rivista di storia e letteratura religiosa* 39, 2003, 201-225.

²⁰⁰ Pierfranco Beatrice, ‘Hermagorica novitas. La testimonianza di Colombano sullo scisma dei Tre Capitoli’, in S. Tavano, G. Bergamini, S. Cavazza, eds *Aquileia e il suo Patriarcato*. Pubblicazioni della Deputazione di Storia Patria per il Friuli, 29 (Udine 2000), 75–93

(which Columbanus cannot believe) or out of humility, since he would not want to depart from the tradition established by his predecessors, especially Pope Leo [*Aliter et honestius tua excusari potest peritia ... antecessorum et maxime papae Leonis auctoritate contentus es*]. Columbanus goes on to assure Pope Gregory that Victorius and his reckoning have not been accepted by the ancient Irish masters [*nostris magistris et Hibernicis antiquis philosophis*]. He is concerned with showing that the Victorian cycle (which he elsewhere denounces to have been written “in recent times”²⁰¹), no matter how well-established and respected in both Rome and Gaul, should be superseded by the older, correct tradition, which his Irish masters and himself represent. The closing sentence of the letter further supports the view that the point Columbanus is trying to make is that, rather than denouncing the Victorian cycle to be a *novitas*, a break with his predecessors, Gregory should consider returning to what had always been the correct tradition.²⁰² Having clarified what *novitatis* refers to, in the context of the sentence, its qualifier *Hermagoricae* remains to be explained, but it should be remembered that its connotation ought to be negative, as it is clear that Columbanus is stating that promoting innovations is something that Gregory would want to avoid in any case. Hermagoras of Temnos, a rhetorician whose theories were commented upon and criticised by Cicero, could be the famous character who bore the name from which the adjective used by Columbanus is derived.²⁰³ This is the solution favoured by Rainer Jakobi, on the grounds of his figure being referenced in Jerome’s letter to Paulinus, a passage of which Columbanus would later quote in this very text.²⁰⁴ He argued that Columbanus’s use of the words demonstrates his familiarity not only with the Jeromian source but also with the context from which this particular element is drawn, namely Cicero’s critique of Hermagoras’ systematization

²⁰¹ Columbanus *Ep.* II,7 (Walker, *Opera*, 18)

²⁰² Columbanus *Ep.* I, 12 (Walker, *Opera*, 12). On Candidus’s interaction with Columbanus see Dubreucq, ‘L’oeuvre épistolaire’, 112-113 and Stancliffe, ‘Columbanus and Shunning’, 115-116 and 120.

²⁰³ Cicero, *De inventione*, I, 6, in H. M. Hubbel, trans. Loeb Classical library, 386 (Cicero II), (Cambridge Massachusettes, 1949), 16-18. Stanton, ‘Columbanus. Letter I’, 162 identified this character with the third-century heretic Hermogenes, instead, though he does not provide a justification.

²⁰⁴ Rainer Jakobi, ‘Zum Humanismus St. Columbans’, in *Mittelateinisches Jahrbuch: Internationale Zeitschrift für Mediävistik und Humanismusforschung*, 41/2 (2006) 187-191; the mention of Hermagoras is in Jerome, *Ep.* 53 *Ad Paulinum*, 10 (ed. Hilberg, *Epistulae*, CSEL 54, 464, l. 8); another passage of the same letter is quoted by Columbanus, *Ep.* I, 5 (Walker, ed. *Opera*, 8), see commentary below. (ed. Hilberg, *Epistulae*, CSEL 54, 458, l. 12)

of rhetoric.²⁰⁵ It could be argued that Jerome's letter to Paulinus, being an exhortation for the study of the Scriptures, could have provided the Irishman with a model for epistolary paraenetic speech.²⁰⁶ However, a direct dependency of this passage from *De Inventione* seems unlikely, as all evidence seems to point to the possibility that most of Columbanus's knowledge of Classical texts had simply been passed on from patristic authors. On the other hand, traces of the Ciceronian controversy against Hermagoras can be easily detected in Late Antique rhetoric; hence it cannot be excluded that someone who, like Columbanus, had obviously a certain competency in the use of artistically elaborated prose, could understand the general context from which Jerome had drawn his reference to Hermagoras. At the very least he clearly attached a negative connotation to it. A parallel might be drawn with the term *chalcenterus*, as both words ultimately are examples of Columbanus re-interpreting Jerome's vocabulary, while only partially able to appreciate the material on which his *auctor* was elaborating. In conclusion, the word should be regarded a testimony of Columbanus's preference for learned and obscure references even when perorating one of his main arguments in the Easter dispute.

The term *philosophis* is also deserving of a brief mention. The way *philosophia* is discussed in later Irish material has prompted the observation that it was considered equivalent or at least 'coterminous' with the art of *numerus*.²⁰⁷ Columbanus's letter anticipates this attitude, as *Hibernicis antiquis philosophis* ('The ancient Irish scholars') is an apposition identifying 'our masters' [*nostris magistris*], but it is also equated [*et... et..*] with the explanatory *sapientissimis componendi calculi computariis*. This expression ('the most learned in calendar calculations') is once again an echo of the Anatolian tract, in which a similar title is attributed to Origen,²⁰⁸ thus leaving the impression that Columbanus wanted to depict an uninterrupted flow of orthodox computistical knowledge from Origen to himself, by way of both his Irish masters and Anatolius.

²⁰⁵ Jakobi, 'Zum Humanismus St. Columbans', 189-190.

²⁰⁶ A passage might have even influenced Columbanus's repeated allusions to the etymology of his name: Jerome, *Ep.* 53, 10: *Ionas, Columba pulcherrima, naufragio suo passionem Domini praefigurans*, (ed. Hilberg, *Epistulae*, CSEL 54, 458, l. 12)

²⁰⁷ The definition is from Faith Wallis, *Bede. The reckoning of time*, Translated texts for historians, 29 (Liverpool, 1999), xxv. The introductory questions and answers about philosophy from a seventh-century computistical text are cited as a justification for the remark: *De computus Dialogus*, *PL*, 90, 0649b see also J. Bisagni, *From atoms to the cosmos*, 58-60

²⁰⁸ *De ratione Paschali*, 1 (ed. Breen and Mc Carthy, *The ante-Nicene Christian Pasch*, 45, l.17-18)

Finally, the passage presents the first occurrence of one of the key-words of Columbanian identity, *peregrino*. However, even if the elaboration and codification of the ideal of *peregrinatio* and the legal status of *peregrinus* are to be dated to the sixth-century, before the departure of Columbanus to the Continent,²⁰⁹ it seems that the writer is here appealing to a situational personal attribute, rather than to an institutional privilege or to his standing in society. If one follows the premise of the letter as laid down in the *exordium* and *narratio*, two implications, from the writer's point of view, will be clear: 1) the error of computing *luna* 21 and 22 as legal dates for Easter is only found in Gaul 2) the arguments against it are common knowledge. The combinations of this two factors with the writer's concurrent position as an outsider [*magis peregrinus quam sciolo*] is what justifies the exhortatory tone of the whole letter. Rather than that of an expert on the matter [*sciolo*] the epistolary persona of Columbanus is that of someone who just happens to notice the blatant irregularities of a local system from the outside and denounces them to a competent authority. This 'concerned citizen' attitude is at the root of the paraenetic address to the pope, as the strategy of Columbanus is to present Gregory's eventual condemnation of Victorius as the only step necessary to the restoration of orthodoxy. In short, in this passage, Columbanus adopting the identity of *peregrinus* is functional to the development of his action of persuasion on the addressee. This does not exclude a dependency on the customs of the society of his home-island, but there is no explicit appeal to them, and the *peregrinatio* is merely included as one of the elements of his argumentation.

1.5.2 Structure and style

Beginning with another direct question, the passage stands out for the frequency of second-person forms, both verbs and pronouns, as it carries on with the apostrophe that had begun in the *exordium*. The word order is marked by various forms of hyperbaton [*clarissima ... flumina: complex; tua excusari potest peritia: aVA; sapientissimis componendi calculi computariis: abBA; tuae dirige fulcrum sententiae: aVA; post tantos quos legi auctores complex; una istorum sententia episcoporum abAB*] to which more frequent occurrences of *cursus*-like endings

²⁰⁹This is a hypothesis advanced in Thomas Charles-Edwards's seminal article, Thomas M. Charles-Edwards, 'The social background to Irish *peregrinatio*', in *Celtica*, 11 (1976), 43-59:58.

correspond, [Planus: *crèdere pòssum; èsse probatum; saepe falluntur; fuisse receptum;* Trispondiacus: *fuisse emendatum* (with hiatus); Tardus: *pòtest peritia;* Velox: *càculi computariis*]. However this feature does not seem consistent enough to suppose the author's intention behind it. The expression *a te non fuisse emendatum, apud te esse probatum* might be considered a form of parallelism, as the peculiar use of *apud* in this context has been explained by Ludwig Bieler²¹⁰ as a possible influence of Columbanus's native Irish. As for the main request, it should be noted that, contrary to *Epistulae* II, III and V, it is not expressed through a subordinate clause, but rather through a verb in the imperative form [*dirige*], albeit preceded by a parenthetical *precor*, a marker of epistolary 'conversational' style. The opening sentence of this section might be interpreted as mocking in tone, in view of the attested use of *nimirum* as a marker of ironic speech. However this is counterbalanced on the one hand by how this adverb is used with its literal meaning elsewhere in this same letter, and on the other by the subsequent use of a pandering expression [*punctum tuae placabilitatis*] and unironic figurative language, that is the imagery of a stormy sea as a metaphor for spiritual difficulties. Both of these find parallels with a similarly exhortatory section in *Epistula* III and in the letter to Boniface IV, respectively.²¹¹ Columbanus's admiration for Gregory's intellectual output is transparent in his later requests for exegetical material; here it can be supposed that, even if genuine surprise was not actually his reaction to Gregory's attitude towards the calculations of Victorius, it was certainly functional to setting up an *ad personam* argument which, as it shall be seen, moved from the virtuous modesty of his addressee. Finally the quotation from the book of Ecclesiastes is one of several examples of the author engaging in word-play with personal names [*papae Leonis= leone mortuo*]

²¹⁰ Bieler, 'Notes on the text tradition and Latinity', and 'Index Grammaticus', *apud* Walker, *Opera*, lxxxii and 237

²¹¹ Columbanus, Ep. III, 2 *vestrae mature punctum auctoritatis postulamus* (Walker, ed. *Opera*, 24). The use of maritime metaphor is very frequent throughout Columbanus's corpus, with the most elaborated passage being from the letter to Boniface IV, Columbanus, Ep. V, 3 (Walker, ed. *Opera*, 38). See discussion in Paolo Todde, 'Le metafore del mare nelle lettere di San Colombano in vista di una traduzione', in *Archivum Bobiense*, 8/9 (1986/1987), 151-174.

1.5.3 Epistolary qualities

The passage contains the main request that Columbanus has for his addressee: to support his case with a formal pronouncement [*sententia/punctum tuae placabilitatis*]. In terms of rhetorical structure, it follows the pattern of a *propositio ratione subiecta*,²¹² since it is preceded by a structured argument. Before requesting the support of Gregory's authority, the writer reasons that: a) because of Gregory's wisdom he cannot believe [*vix credere possum*] that he approves of Victorius's cycle [*apud te esse probatum*]. b) Hence it is his virtues, namely humility and seemliness [*humilitati aut gravitati*], that prevent him from acting against an aberrant tradition that his predecessors had not condemned, to avoid the unsavoury reputation of an innovator [*notam subire times Hermagoricae novitatis*]. c) However he points out that his Irish masters, whose authority is long established [*antiquis*] and based on skill [*sapientissimis*] have never recognised the authority of Victorius, implying that this is a precedent on which he could base his condemnation. Both the build-up of the argument and the phrasing of the request display the characteristic of the paraenetic style of letter-writing: the addressee receives both praise and exhortation, and a proverbial formula is used to underscore a point of the reasoning. The insertion of parenthetical verbal form (*fateor, quaeso, precor*) as well as the numerous second-person forms enhances the fiction of a dialogue between writer and addressee, with Columbanus's anticipations about Gregory's motivations for not condemning Victorius being treated as possible actual points of difficulty that he may raise.

In terms of contents, there are three points of note. Firstly the chosen topic for the *ad personam* argument in support of the *propositio*, which is about the authorities that uphold or condemn Victorius's cycle. Gregory is presented as supporting his predecessors out of humility. This might not have been entirely literary fiction, as in the closing of the letter Columbanus reports a similar statement by Gregory's agent Candidus. Appointed by Gregory in 595,²¹³ Candidus seems to have been among the first to have received Columbanus's complaints about Gallic Easter practice. His

²¹²See definition in Martianus Cappella, *De Nuptiis* V, 555 (Willis, ed. *De Nuptiis*, 55-556)

²¹³Famously, this date is provided by a letter of Gregory disposing that Candidus should send English slave boys to be instructed in monasteries, possibly in preparation for Augustine and Mellitus's mission to Britain Gregory I, *Reg. Ep.* VI, 10 (Hartman, ed. *Registrum Epistularum*, MGH, *Epistulae*, 1, 388-389).

answer, if Columbanus's report is accepted at face value, was that Easter calculations according to Victorius were already a firmly established tradition, and that for that reason alone they could not be changed. Columbanus might have thought that that line of reasoning belonged to Gregory himself and strengthened his request with an appropriate counter-argument. Secondly, Columbanus's reference to Pope Leo I (440-461) needs to be explained. It could be understood that what was here being targeted was Leo's commissioning and endorsement of the Victorian cycle.²¹⁴ However, it should be noted that Columbanus would later state that Victorius had composed his cycle *sub Hilario*.²¹⁵ Hilarius/Hilarus had been arch-deacon under Leo I and in this position he had written his letter of enquiry to Victorius and he is addressed as arch-deacon in Victorius's answer to it, which constitutes the prologue to the Paschal tables, certainly known to Columbanus.²¹⁶ Hilarius would have later become Leo's successor as Roman bishop; it should be remembered that even early recensions of those two documents, the letter to Victorius and his prologue, do present Hilarius as having the title of Roman bishop at time of his commission.²¹⁷ Hence, Columbanus might not have had a clear picture of Leo's position on the Victorian cycle, and attributed his commission wholly to Hilarius. What, instead, he might have been specifically referring to here, is Leo's previous defence of the traditional Roman limit of *luna 22*, against Alexandrian calculations and unrelated to Victorius's work.²¹⁸ Finally, the request for Gregory's judgment, stems from the unsatisfactory [*non mihi satisfacit*] pronouncement (*sententia* is the word used on both occasions) of certain bishops, who are not better described nor mentioned

²¹⁴On the events leading up to Leo and his arch-deacon Hilarius addressing Victorius see Wallis, *Bede. The reckoning of Time*, 1-li; Mosshammer, *The Easter computus*, 167-168 and 240 and Warntjes, *The Munich computus*, xxxvii-xxxviii; The text of Hilarius letter to Victorius and Victorius's prologue addressed to him is edited in Bruno Krusch, *Studien zur christlich-mittelalterlichen Chronologie: die Entstehung unserer heutigen Zeitrechnung*, Abhandlungen der Preußischen Akademie der Wissenschaften Jahrgang 1937, phil.-hist. Klasse 8 (1938), 4-52. Henceforth Krusch, 'Studien (1938)'

²¹⁵Columbanus, *Ep.* II, 7 (Walker, ed. *Opera*, 18)

²¹⁶Krusch, *Studien* (1938), 16-17. Columbanus, *Ep.* II, 7 (Walker, ed. *Opera*, 18) refers that "Victorius did not define anything whenever necessary, as he admits in his prologue" (*Victorius ubi necesse erat nihil definitum ut ipse in suo testato prologo*). This is the statement that implies Columbanus had direct knowledge of Victorius's writings.

²¹⁷Krusch, *Studien* (1938), 4-5 and 16-17, in *apparatus*. See also Charles W. Jones, 'A legend of st. Pachomius', in *Speculum*, 18 (1943), 198-210:205

²¹⁸Pope Leo's defended the Roman Easter against the Alexandrian dates in AD 444 and 455. Bishop's Paschasinus's answer to his first query and Leo's subsequent letter to Emperor Marcian are edited in Bruno Krusch, *Studien Zur Christlich-mittelalterlichen Chronologie: Der 84jährige Ostercyclus und seine Quellen*, (Leipzig 1880), 245-265. Henceforth, Krusch, *Studien* (1880)

again in the text. Their judgement, that is, Easter should not be celebrated with the Jews, is the object of the first part of Columbanus's *argumentatio*, as it shall be seen. From this alone, one can infer that this letter is part of a larger exchange, which extends to bishops close to the writer, as *istorum ... episcoporum* is an expression similar to one used in *Ep.* III to designate the Gallic bishops. However, it is not possible to know whether the author expected his addressee to be familiar with the personalities he was here referencing. If Columbanus did expect this of Gregory, it is reasonable to assume that he had informed him of who he had also contacted about the Easter question, either in a previous letter or with details to be transmitted orally by his letter-bearers. The sequence of events seems to be this: Columbanus submitted his grievances about a 'dark Easter' first to the bishops, possibly in the very first years of his stay in the Vosges mountains (593-594). Then, finding their answer unsatisfactory, he appealed to Gregory, at first (possibly in late 595) through Candidus, then with this letter. That Columbanus had been the initiator of the controversy might be implied by how he uses the word *sententia* for both Gregory's impending judgment and the past one provided by the bishops. What he might have been hoping for by addressing Gregory directly, was better consideration for the authorities [*post tantos quos legi auctores*] by which his understanding of Easter calculations was informed.

Section 1.6: Argumentatio, accusatory style.

Cum Iudaeis facere Pascha non debemus. Dixit hoc olim et Victor episcopus, sed nemo orientalium suum recepit commentum; sed haec soporans spina Dagonis hoc imbibit bubum erroris. Qualis rogo, haec tam frivola et tam impolita, nullis scilicet divinae scripturae multa testimoniis sententia: cum Iudaeis Pascha facere non debemus? quid ad rem pertinet? Numquid reprobi Pascha facere credendi sunt nunc utpote sine templo extra Ierusalem Christo tunc figurato ab eis crucifixo? Aut numquid ipsorum esse recte credendum est decimae quartae lunae Pascha, et non potius Dei ipsius instituentis Phase esse fatendum est, scientisque solius ad purum quo mysterio decima quarta luna ad transcensum electa est? Quod forte sapientibus et tui similibus aliquantulum praeluceat. Qui hoc opponunt licet sine auctoritate, Deo improperent quare non sua prescientia antea tunc praecaverit Iudaeorum contumaciam, ut, si nollet nos cum eis simul Pascha

facere, novem dies azymorum in lege praeciperet, ut vel nostrae solemnitatis initium finem solemnitatis eorum non excederet. Nam si vigesima prima aut vigesima secunda Pascha celebrandum, a decima quarta usque ad vigesimam secundam novem dies computabuntur, septem scilicet a Deo praecepti et duo ab hominibus aucti. Quod si licet hominibus augere per se aliquid divinae censurae, interrogo ne forte videatur contrarium esse illi Deuteronomii sententiae: *Ecce, inquit, verbum quod tibi dico, neque adicies ad illud neque auferes ab eo* [Deut. 4, 2].

1.6.1 Readings and vocabulary.

The following sentence from the passage is puzzling, not only for its grammar, but also for its overall meaning, as the interpretation of the Biblical reference it contains is contentious:

Sed haec soporans spina Dagonis hoc imbibit bubum erroris [Walker, 6, 4, 11-12]	Sed hoc soporans spina Dagonis hoc imbibit bubum erroris [F, 158]	[omittens; in marg. ad.]* In Bob. Inseritur: Sed haec soporans spina Dagonis hoc imbibit bubum erroris [M, 113]
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The omission in M seems to have been an error on the part of the copyist. Such oversights also occur for letter IV and V. Walker translated: “but our soporific sting of Dagon has drunk in this erroneous tumour”. Smit contested both the editorial choice of following M in reading the first *hoc* as *haec* and the lexical choices in his translation²¹⁹. There are several problems with this passage: firstly whether M or F should be preferred in reading the first pronoun; secondly the meaning of *spina* which Smit argues should be ‘trunk’ or ‘backbone’ because Columbanus is here referencing the biblical episode of Dagon, the idol of the Philistines, losing head and limbs in front of the Ark of the Covenant (I Reg. 5, 2-5), while only the trunk of the statue remained standing; thirdly the identity of what or whom is referred to with the expression *spina Dagonis*; fourthly whether the main verb *imbibit* and the participle *soporans* should be understood in their

²¹⁹ Smit, *Studies*, 88-96

transitive or intransitive sense; fifthly the meaning of *bubum*. Smit's discussion addressed most of these issues: *haec* (M) is disregarded as the *lectio facillior* and he argued that *bubun*, a masculine Greek medical term ought to be the correct reading for *bubum* and that, consequently, both the first and second *hoc* do not agree with it but supply the object to *imbibit*. He translated: 'but the sleeping trunk of Dagon, the inflamed arse of heresy swallowed this lie'.²²⁰ It should be noted, however, that other occurrences of a pronoun in prolepsis in Columbanus's opus are not similar to this one. Bieler's *Index Grammaticus* lists five occurrences, in all of which the pronoun stands in for a subordinate sentence, and not for a noun.²²¹ Hence, the reading *haec* is here preferred, even though it is usually F that preserves the best variant. Moreover, if the neuter *bubum* is preferred, the common hyperbaton pattern aVA would be also maintained and there would be no need to supply an object to *imbibit*.²²² While these considerations clear up the grammatical aspects of the passage, the meaning remains obscure, since, in order to translate *imbibit* one needs to know what the expression 'the sleeping trunk of Dagon' [*soporans spina Dagonis*] refers to. Smit's, Stanton's and possibly Walker's translation assume that *spina Dagonis* refers to Victorious of Aquitaine,²²³ which is not openly stated nor implied by the surrounding text.

Smit was correct in referring to the Old Latin version of 1 Reg. 5, 25 in order to understand *spina*.²²⁴ Similarly, on the basis of the same passage, the rare word *bubum* might refer to the plague of haemorrhoids afflicting the cities of the Philistines during the same captivity of the Ark of the Covenant. [1 Reg. 5, 9-12].²²⁵ What is missing, from both Walker's and Smit's picture is

²²⁰ Smit, *Studies*, 96

²²¹ Ludwig Bieler, *Index Grammaticus*, apud Walker, *Opera*, 234. Stanton, 'Columbanus. Letter I', 164 made a similar observation.

²²² Wright 'Columbanus's *Epistolae*' 90, lists the passage as an example of the most frequent pattern of Columbanian hyperbata

²²³ Smit, *Studies*, 92 and Stanton, 'Columbanus. Letter I', 163, explicitly affirm this, while Walker's translation 'our soporific sting of Dagon' is open to interpretation.

²²⁴ Smit, *Studies*, 91 referred to the reading of the passage in the *Codex Legionensis*, as per Blaise, *Dictionnaire latin-français des auteurs chrétiens*, s.v. *spina*. As a confirmation of this, it can be said that texts with similar readings must have been available to Irish authors in the seventh-century, as Ps. Augustine, *De mirabilibus sacrae scripturae*, 7 (PL, 35, 2178) similarly employs the expression *spina dorsi* when commenting on this same passage. However, this authors' exegetical interpretation is, as it shall be seen, very different from that of Columbanus and, instead, possibly influenced by his addressee's commentary, see Gregory I, *Expositiones in librum I Regum*, 72-75 (Verbracken, ed. 94-96).

²²⁵ Smit, *Studies*, 93-94 and Stanton, 'Columbanus. Letter I', 163-165 attempted to find an appropriate clinical term to translate *bubum*. Grammatically, Stanton's choice of a neuter noun seems more solid, but

that Columbanus might not be simply referencing this one Biblical story, but also the interpretation of its meaning as found in the writings of Bachiarus, (fl.400-420), a fifth-century author, whose background is rather obscure.²²⁶ In the apologetic tract *De Fide*, the Dagon passage is used by Bachiarus when exculpating himself from an accusation of heresy, which was apparently based solely on the poor reputation of his (now unknown) homeland. He commented:

‘It does not escape your discernment that, when, at the coming of the Ark of the Lord, the head of Dagon was broken into a hundred pieces, together with both feet, his trunk [*spina*] is described to have survived whole. For we understand that the head of Dagon, and, respectively, his feet, are the limbs of the world, that is, East and West, where, in the presence of the law, every perversity of errors is obliterated. Then it should be up to you to know what is the centre of the trunk [*medietas spinae*], in which up to this point the tangle of knots endures without resolution.’²²⁷

It is not clear from the text, but it seems likely, that Bachiarus meant that the *medietas spinae*, where the knots of error can be found, represents his homeland.²²⁸ What is clear, on the other

Smit’s discussion of the concept of heresy as a disease is also relevant. Todde and Nuvolone, ‘Le lettere e la preghiera’, 58 refer to Smit.

²²⁶The only near-contemporary source of information on Bachiarus, other than his own work, is Gennadius, *De viris inlustribus*, 24 (Herding, *De vir.* 82). In the historical introduction to the critical edition of Bachiarus collected works, Roger Collins concludes that, other than a tentative collocation of his activity during the two first decades of the fifth century, nothing certain can be said about him. José Carlos Martín-Iglesias and Roger Collins, *Bachiarus Opera*, CCSL, LXIXc (Turnhout, 2019), 5*-33*:32*-33*.

²²⁷Bachiarus, *De fide*, (Martín-Iglesias and Collins, *Bachiarus Opera*, 9-10, l. 84-91) *Non latet enim perspicaciam tuam quia, cum in adventu arcae Dominicae Dagonis caput in .c. partes cum utrisque pedibus comminutum sit, spina eius integra superfuisse describitur. Nos enim Dagonis caput sive pedes membra mundi, id est, Orientem et Occiduum esse sentimus; in quibus partibus sub praesentia legis omnis errorum contrita perversitas est. Tuum sit autem cognoscere quae sit medieta spinae, in qua adhuc nodorum compago dissoluta perdurat.*

²²⁸Michael Kulikowski, ‘The identity of Bachiarus’, in *Medieval Prosopography*, 24, 2003, 3-14:12-14, uses this same passage to argue for an Illyrian origin for Bachiarus. He puts forth the opinion that Illyricum should be the correct interpretation for *spina Dagoni*, being the ‘backbone’ of the empire, and being a notorious breeding ground for heresies in the fourth century. The question of the provenience of Bachiarus is a very contentious one. Collins, *Bachiarus Opera*, 13*-23* and 23*-30* discusses the history of the two main competing hypothesis: 1) Bachiarus was a Briton, and he is to be equated with Saint Mauchteus /Mochta, a disciple of Patrick who foresaw the birth of Columba, according to Adomnán’s *Vitae Columbae* (Anderson and Anderson, *Adomnán’s Life*, 4-5); 2) Bachiarus was an anti-Priscillianist writer from Gallaecia. I cannot say how much the Irishman Columbanus’s possible dependence from Bachiarus’s *De Fide* would weight against the arguments adduced to the refutation of the first hypothesis; that Columbanus could have considered the author of *De fide* a native of Hibernia might be hinted at by his previous use of the expression *Hibernicis antiqui philosophis*: this is remarkable when compounded with how Gennadius, *De viris inlustribus*, 24, (Herding, *De Vir.* 82) describes Bachiarus as ‘a man of Christian philosophy’, [*vir*

hand, is that the episode of the ruined body of Dagon in front of the Ark is interpreted as a metaphorical representation of the state of Christianity in the world: it is triumphant in the East and West (the blasted head and feet of Dagon), but it remains plagued by a knot of errors in the middle (the *spina*).

Moving back to Columbanus's text, one can see that this is the same interpretation he is relying on, in his reference to the *spina Dagonis*.²²⁹ He had previously depicted the dismissal of the work of Victorius by his Irish masters (*nostris magistris et Hibernicis antiquis philosophis*), Westerners like himself. Now, through a brief reference to the account of a second-century Easter controversy (as found in Eusebius/Rufinus and in *De ratione Paschali*²³⁰), he depicts the reaction of the Eastern Church to the argument once championed by Pope Victor, the same against which Columbanus is arguing: it is not proper for a Christian to celebrate Easter with the Jews [*cum Iudaeis facere Pascha non debemus*]. As the West maintained their orthodoxy by scoffing at Victorius, so did the Easterners maintain theirs, by refusing to accept that observation [*sed nemo orientalium suum recepit commentum*]; in contrast with their behaviour [*sed*] the *spina Dagonis*, which is neither East nor West, absorbed the tumour of error [*hoc imbibit bubum erroris*].²³¹ The

christianae philosophiae] rather than a priest or a bishop. However there are much more solid arguments that support the notion that Bachiarius's identification with Mauchteus/Mochta is a wilful conflation or error on the part of a sixteenth-century erudite, John Bale. See Collins, *Bachiarium Opera*, 17*-19* together with Mario Esposito, 'Arator. Lachten. Bachiarius', *The Journal of Theological Studies*, 30, 1929, 286 and M.H. McNerny, *St. Mochta and Bachiarius*, (Dublin, 1923). On Mochta see Richard Sharpe, 'Saint Mauchteus discipulus Patricii' in Alfred Bammesberger and Alfred Wollmann, *Britain 400-600: language and history*, Heidelberg, 1990, 85-93.

²²⁹ Additionally one can compare the way Bachiarius addresses the recipient of his apology (in the sentence preceding this quotation), with another passage from Columbanus's letter: Bachiarius, *De fide* (Martín-Iglesias and Collins, *Bachiarium Opera*, 9, l. 84) *Non latet enim perspicaciam tuam*, and Columbanus, *Ep. I*, 3 (Walker, *Opera*, 2, l. 24), *Non latet enim efficaciam tuam*. After the quoted passage Bachiarius's text goes on to explain that it is unfair that his place of origin [*provincia*] is being held against him, because receiving Christian baptism has given him his true homeland [*patria*] and quotes Ps. 38, 13: *peregrinus ego sum sicut omnes patres mei*. Bachiarius, *De fide* (Martín-Iglesias and Collins, *Bachiarium Opera*, 10, l.92). When this is compounded with how Gennadius informs us that Bachiarius 'chose *peregrinatio* to preserve the integrity of his purpose' [*peregrinationem pro conservanda propositi integritati elegit*], one can easily see how Columbanus could have developed an affinity for this author's work.

²³⁰ Rufinus, *Historia ecclesiastica*, V, 24, and 25 ed. Theodore Mommsen, *Die lateinische Übersetzung des Rufinus*, in Eduard Schwartz and Theodore Mommsen, *Die Kirchengeschichte*, GSC, *Eusebius Werke*, 2, (Leipzig, 1903), 490-497; *De Ratione Paschali*, 5 (Breen and McCarthy, *The ante-Nicene Christian Pasch*, 49, l.120-126)

²³¹ The imagery implies that the trunk of the statue of Dagon would be afflicted the same kind of plagues (which represents heresies) that would afflict his worshippers later in the same episode. Compare Columbanus's 'sleeping trunk of Dagon' developing 'a tumour of error' [*bubum erroris*] with Bachiarius's

Frankish bishops [*istorum ... episcoporum*] who are repeating Pope Victor's old argument, are perfectly placed to suit the geographical analogy of the *spina Dagonis* as a 'central' land that has embraced heresy: they inhabit a region that is to the east of Columbanus's native Ireland, but to the west of both those that his tradition might have called Easterners (such as his authority, Anatolius) and his addressee in Rome, leaving him out of the scope of the accusation. Bachiarius's exegesis is absolutely necessary to understand this sudden, and apparently random reference to the Biblical episode in Columbanus's text. Because of its geographical meaning, there would be no need to identify a personality hidden behind this expression.²³²

1.6.2 Structure and style.

The central section of the passage consists of four interrogative sentences, two of which rhetorically introduced by *numquid*. The 'judgment'[*sententia*] that the writer is about to argue against is emphatically reported twice, with a slight variation of the word-order. The word order is simple, when compared with the previous passage, though occasional form of hyperbaton are still used, and in one instance it is clearly chiasmatic. On the other hand, the sentence-structure is increasingly complex, with several participle and gerundive constructions. The period *Qui hoc opponunt ...non excederet* stands out as it includes several degrees of subordination, whereas elsewhere the writer proceeds to articulate his thought through the usual process of juxtaposition and accumulation.

1.6.3 Epistolary qualities.

What immediately stands out in this passage is the sudden abandoning of the apostrophe to Gregory on the part of the writer. Although a series of questions are asked, none of them are directly addressed to the reader, with only one second-person form present throughout the passage.²³³ This signals a change from the previous paraenetic tone, reserved for Gregory, to a

'centre of the trunk' [*medietas spinae*] on which a 'tangle of (heretic) knots' [*compago nodorum*] is displayed.

²³²For such an attempt see Roy Flechner, 'Dagán, Columbanus, and the Gregorian mission' in *Peritia*, 19, 2005, 65-90.

²³³ Columbanus, *Ep. I*, (Walker, *Opera*, 6 l. 20) *Quod forte sapientibus et tui similibus aliquantulum prae luceat*. Walker translated 'This may perhaps shed some light for scholars and persons like yourself'. Stanton, 'Columbanus. Letter I', 153 translated 'Perhaps this may shed a little light for wise men and others

different register, still suitable for epistolary writing but directed at another target. This, in turn, is because, in support of the request put forth in the *propositio*, the writer develops his *argumentatio* around the judgment he had received when submitting a similar interrogation on the matter of Easter to the bishops he has just mentioned. The judgment in question is that ‘Easter should not be celebrated with the Jews’, that is, on the fourteenth day of the lunation. Columbanus’s position on this, and, possibly that of all those upholding the limits of *luna* 14 to 20, was that if, according to calendar calculation, Easter Sunday was to fall on that day, there was no issue with its celebration, whereas others, upholding different lunar limits and among whom there were evidently the bishops in contact with his community, considered this practice to be a concession to Quartodecimanism, that is, the celebration of the Paschal feast on a fixed date (*luna* 14), without regard for the day of the week, as in accordance with Jewish customs.

Columbanus’s *argumentatio* follows two distinct techniques, both codified by Late Antique rhetorical teachings. The first is that of the *exemplum*²³⁴: the account of how Pope Victor had once supposedly pronounced a similar statement against Quartodeciman practice in the Eastern Church but this had not been accepted by it. The Easter controversy of the time of Pope Victor was settled by Irenaeus of Lyon, with both parties preserving the customs of their elders as they had received them.²³⁵ That Columbanus made use of such an episode would not appear at first to help his cause: after all, Victor had been arguing against the old and (by Columbanus’s time) universally considered heretical Quartodeciman Easter that had no regard for the weekday. However, Columbanus’s point here seems to be that his (and the Frankish bishop’s) judgment is so superficial [*tam frivola et tam impolita*] that it scarcely needed consideration even in that context, as it has nothing to do with Scriptural prescription on the Passover [*nullis scilicet divinae*

like yourself’; similarly Todde and Nuvolone, ‘Le lettere e la preghiera’, 91 translated ‘Un particolare che forse dovrebbe fare un po’ di luce ai sapienti e ai dotti simili a te’. All of these sound like a mild reproach to Gregory, but given that, in this passage, Columbanus’s criticism so far has been addressed to a judgment pronounced by bishops, *similibus* might simply refer to the episcopal status shared by Gregory and those subjected to Columbanus’s attack. A possible rendition would be: ‘this may perhaps shed a little light for learned men and peers of yours’.

²³⁴ See for example Martianus Cappella, *De Nuptiis*, V, 558 (Willis, ed. *De Nuptiis*, 196-197): the *exemplum* is part of one of the subdivisions of the typology of *argumentatio: circa rem* and *a similibus*

²³⁵ See Mosshammer, *The Easter Computus*, 48 and 110-111 for a re-telling of the episode

scripturae fulta testimoniis]. Furthermore, it seems likely that his main source for the re-telling of this episode was not , or not exclusively Eusebius/Rufinus's *Historia Ecclesiastica*²³⁶ but the same authority on which he based his condemnation of the 'dark Easter' on *luna* 21 and 22, that is the Latin Anatolius. *De ratione Paschali* has a brief section detailing the conflict between Victorius and the Easterners, and, even though the Quartodeciman churches of Asia are presented somewhat sympathetically, that same text goes on to affirm different principles immediately afterwards, namely that Easter should also fall on Sunday and is allowed to fall on any of the seven days computed from *luna* 14 to 20.²³⁷ Additionally, if one accepts that the reference to the mutilated trunk of Dagon from 1 Sam. 5, 25 depends from the exegesis of that biblical passage as found in Bacharius's *De Fide*, it will be clear that it is indeed the lazy shallowness of the bishops' criticism that is under attack. The *spinae Dagonis*, by which they are represented, is 'sleeping'[*soporans*], a term that elsewhere in the *Epistulae* denotes the guilt associated with inaction and laziness.²³⁸

With the following string of questions [*erotema*], and correlated hypothetical answers the authors attempt to guide the reasoning of the reader towards his same conclusions. This is a process known as *rationatio* and constitutes the second part of Columbanus's *argumentatio*. Ultimately the process aims to show that the statement that is being questioned implies absurd or heretical premises. In short Columbanus argues that 1) Easter does not belong to the Jews but to God alone,

²³⁶ The episode is narrated in Rufinus, *Historia ecclesiastica*, V, 22- 25 ed. Theodore Mommsen, *Die lateinische Übersetzung des Rufinus*, in Eduard Schwartz and Theodore Mommsen, *Die Kirchengeschichte*, GSC, *Eusebius Werke*, 2, (Leipzig, 1903), 490-497; Columbanus's authority, the Latin Anatolius, also inserted this episode in his discussion of Easter traditions, *De Ratione Paschali*, 5 (Breen and McCarthy, eds *The ante-Nicene Christian Pasch*, 49, l.120-126). However, it should be noted that neither in this text nor in Eusebius/Rufinus, Victor's argument is worded in the same way as in Columbanus's letter, that is, in a way that condemns the simultaneous celebration of the Jewish Passover and of the Christian Easter. A third text that reports Victor's arguments in the same terms as Columbanus does exists but its authenticity is contentious; one letter from the letter collection known as *Epistolae Viennensis* is purportedly from Victor himself and states: *Ut observent Pascha non cum Iudaeis negatoribus Christi, sed cum sequacibus apostolorum predicantibus veritatem Christi* ('They should not observe Easter with the Jews who denied Christ, but with the followers of the apostles who preach the truth of Christ'). *Ep.* 3 in Willhelm Gundlach, ed. *Epistolae Viennensis spuriae*, MGH, *Epistolae*, 3 (Berlin, 1892), 87-88.

²³⁷ *De Ratione Paschali*, 7 and 8 (Breen and McCarthy, eds. *The ante-Nicene Christian Pasch*, 49-50) *Illi quidem in xiii die mensis primi diem paschae observabant, secundum Evangelium, ut putabant* highlights the good will of the Quartodecimans but later *Sed nos usque ad xx lunam propter diem dominicam melius extendi pascha decernimus quam propter lunam xiiii diem dominicam anticipare* reaffirms the principle of always celebrating Easter on a Sunday.

²³⁸ Columbanus, *Ep.* V, 7 and 8 (Walker, ed. *Opera*, 42 l. 31 and 44, l. 12) *soporem ac noxium torporem and letalis sopor*

who exercised his omniscient judgement in setting down the condition for its celebration, including the lunar dates; 2) the celebration of Easter on *luna* 21 and 22 sanctions the addition of two ‘human’ days to those divinely established conditions, which is obviously at odds with an orthodox of interpretation of the Scriptures. The way in which this last concept is introduced, that is, through the quotation of Deut. 4,2 makes for a significant call-back to the accusation Columbanus had previously levelled against the bishops’ judgement, that is, how it was not supported by Scriptural testimonies. In the same way, Columbanus’s entire discussion of the lunar limits depends from the prescriptions in Lev. 23, 5-8. This section of the *argumentatio* also elaborates on some of the information introduced by the *narratio*, namely the correct reckoning of the seven days of unleavened bread, by addressing how that would be affected by the inclusion of *luna* 21 and 22. Overall, the epistolary conversation is dropped and the exhortatory tone is superseded by a reproachful or accusatory mode of expression. It should be noted that the writer employs a mild form of irony when presenting scriptural evidence: he paradoxically invites his adversaries (*improperent* is a jussive subjunctive) to blame God for not having shared their preoccupation with avoiding a simultaneous celebration of the Christian Easter with the Jewish Passover when laying down his law. An ironic tone would be consistent with the conventions of epistolary admonition or rebuke, which can be considered the negative equivalent of exhortative letters.

Section 1.7: Excusatio

Sed haec magis procaciter quam humiliter scribens, scio **euripum presumptionis difficillimae mihi nexuisse, enavigandum fore irrogans**. Nec loci namque nec ordinis est ut magnae tui auctoritati aliquid quasi discutiendo inrogetur et ridiculose te mei, nimirum Petri cathedram apostoli et clavicularii legitime insidentem, occidentales apices de Pascha sollicitent. Sed tu non tam me vile in hac re, quam multos et defunctos et viventes haec eadem quae notavi firmantes magistros considerare debes, et quasi cum eis trahere colloquium te crede; pie namque me scito licet saltuatim et hyperbolice, chilosum os aperire.

1.7.1 Readings and vocabulary

The first sentence presents clearly defective readings in both of the seventeenth-century versions of the text. Ever since Gundlach's work, editors have proposed a number of different solutions and emendations.

scio euripum presumptionis difficillimae me invexisse, enavigandum fore ignarus [Walker, 6, 5, 32-33]	scio euripum presumptionis difficillimae mihi nexisse, enavigandum fore irogus [F, 159]	scio euripum presumptionis difficillimae mihi nexuisse, enavigandum *forte irrogas *in Bob. fore [M, 114]
--	--	--

Walker and Smit incorporated Gundlach's suggestion *me invexisse*²³⁹ into their texts. However, one can provide a satisfactory translation even without accepting this emendation, with only minor alterations. This was done by Todde and Nuvolone²⁴⁰ and their version of the passage is here accepted. However their translation does not convey Columbanus's liberal use of one of his many maritime metaphors. A possible rendition might be: 'I know that I have plotted my course on the straits of the most dire impudence, imposing to myself that I must cross them'. The image of the straits also occurs in the letter to Pope Boniface and the word used, *euripus*, is a fairly uncommon poetic term, but it cannot be determined what was Columbanus's source in this case.²⁴¹ In respect to the other rare word in the passage, *chilosum*, Smit's explanation of it as a hypercorrect form of *zelosum* has been accepted by later editors and translators.²⁴²

²³⁹Gundlach, ed. *Epistulae*, 158, l. 18 and *apparatus*; Smit, *Studies*, 97-98

²⁴⁰Todde and Nuvolone, 'Le lettere e la preghiera', 92 with *apparatus* and 93n14: they propose Smit emendation of *irrogans* to *heroius* as the most likely alternative to their reconstructed text. Additional commentary on the passage in Todde, 'Le metafore del mare', 160-161 and Stanton, 'Columbanus. Letter I', 165. Stanton is critical of Smit's emendation and his reconstruction seems to be preferable to Smit's, and not too dissimilar from that here accepted.

²⁴¹Columbanus, Ep. V, 11 (Walker, Opera, 48 l. 29) *trans euriporum rheuma*. A phrase with similar poetic vocabulary, employed in the same passage, *trans turgescens dodrantem*, has been traced in various computistical manuscripts. See Jacopo Bisagni, 'A new citation from a work of Columbanus in BnF lat. 6400b' in Peritia, 24/25 (2013/2014), 116-122 and Jacopo Bisagni, 'Breton manuscripts and the transmission of Computus between the Celtic West and the Carolingian Empire' in *Kelten*, 82 (15/03/2020). It might be possible that the whole string of 'hiseric' phrases derives from the *prologus Colmani Nigri* cited by some of the manuscripts discussed by Bisagni. Also of note is the use of *euripus* (amidst other sea-related words found in Columbanus) in a passage from the letter of Abbess Eangyth to Boniface (AD 719-

More relevant to a general appraisal of the content of Columbanus's letters are the comparatively more frequent words *clavicularii* and *apices*. In respect to the former, it should be noted that this is chronologically one of the first instances in which *clavicularius*, meaning 'key-bearer' is specifically employed as a title for st. Peter. Columbanus, who used this word for the same saint also in the letter to Boniface, might have been influenced in this by Gildas's usage.²⁴³ However, while the word is attested in seventh-century Insular material²⁴⁴, it does not seem to be a common way to refer to st. Peter among Continental writers until the end of the eight-century.²⁴⁵ The other notable term, *apices*, is one of the words with which Columbanus describes his own letters. Walker's translation opts to render it as a plural, but it does not seem likely that the author was here referring to any piece of writing other than the one he was in the process of composing. It is possible that *apices* should be here understood in its broader meaning of 'written sign', since it occurs during a topical declaration of humility on the part of the writer. The general meaning of the passage is that Gregory should not be concerned with Columbanus's words in themselves but with the tradition they represent. In this context, referring to his letter as 'Western scribbles' [*occidentales apices*] is consistent with the author's goal of downplaying his personal role in the controversy, in order to excuse his previous boldness. Elsewhere in the letter, the adjective *occidentalis* is again used as part of a display of humility: despite the respect for the traditions of the Western churches, Columbanus does not refrain from assuming the perspective of his addressee and presenting the west as distant and irrelevant. Note, however, that when the term

722), which is very reminiscent of Columbanus's descriptions of the stormy sea. Compare Columbanus, *Ep.* V,3 (Walker, ed. *Opera*, 38 l. 12-21) with Boniface and Lull, *Ep.* 14, ed. Ernest Dümmler, *Bonifatii et Lulli Epistulaein MGH, Epistolae*, III, (Hannover, 1892), 231-384: 261, l.15-21

²⁴² Smit, *Studies*, 99-104; Stanton, 'Columbanus. Letter I', 154 translated 'I open my big mouth piously', following Smit; So did Todde and Nuvolone, 'Le lettere e la preghiera', 93.

²⁴³ Gildas, *De excidio*, 73, 3 (ed. Winterbottom, *The ruin of Britain*, 123)

²⁴⁴ Cumman, *De controversia Paschali*, (Walsh and Ó Cróinín, eds *Cumman's letter*, 68 l.89 and note 68-69). *Clavicularius* also appears in a hymn attributed to Cummeanus Longus, *In laudem Apostolorum*, l. 3 eds J. H. Bernard and R. Atkinson, *The Irish Liber Hymnorum*, (London 1898), 18. It is also used by Aldhelm, *Epistula ad Acircium*, and *De verginitate*, 25 (Ehwald, ed. *Aldhelmi Opera*, 68 l. 11 and 257 l. 3)

²⁴⁵ The one seventh-century occurrence of *clavicularius* as an epithet of Peter in Continental material is Isidore, *De ortu et obitu partum*, 68, *PL*, 83 0149b. A search through the *Patrologia Latina* database yields many more results for its use it after its appearance in the letters of Hadrian I during Carolingian times

apices is employed in *Ep.* III it clearly has its later meaning of rescript or official letter.²⁴⁶ Other authors²⁴⁷ do employ the term in both ways, so this is likely the case for Columbanus as well.

1.7.2 Epistolary qualities.

The preceding section had all but dropped the fiction of epistolary conversation, fully engaging with the rebuttal of a specific argument. Here, the author seems to acknowledge that this might be perceived as disrespectful towards established hierarchies, since those he has just depicted as his main adversaries have the same status as his addressee, within the church, all of them being bishops. Here the apostrophe to Gregory is picked up again and as usual, when faced with the possibility of being accused of insubordination, Columbanus falls back to apologetic language. This is a constant theme in the *Epistulae*, as there are many pages dedicated to a defence of his right to speak up in spite of his lower standing. Epistolary humility is the usual literary tool he resorts to in such situations. In this passage it is applied to both his person [*me vilem*] and his questioning of Gregory's authority [*ridiculose ... mei.. occidentales apices de Pascha sollicitent*]. In keeping with epistolary use, the addressee is correspondingly flattered, [*magnae tuae auctoritati*] with reference to his status in the hierarchy [*nimirum Petri cathedram et legitime clavicularii insidentem*]. However, this instance stands out in respect to other apologetic passages of the *Epistulae*. While in the *exordium* and *propositio* Columbanus justified his questioning in terms of mere necessity, here the *nonpresumptione sed necessitatis* argument is atypically ignored. The indignity of the writer is instead used to play up the masters [*magistros*] to whom he has already appealed. Gregory should consider this almost a debate [*quasi cum eis trahere colloquium te crede*] with the likes of Anatolius, Jerome and the other unnamed supporters of Columbanus's point of view, with the Irishman himself a mere mouthpiece of his teachers, 'dead and living'. The words *licet saltuatim et hyperbolice* are markers of figurative speech,²⁴⁸ and allude to this last concept. Overall the epistolary tone is tone is picked up again, with first and

²⁴⁶Columbanus, *Ep.* III, 2 (Walker, ed. *Opera*, 22, l. 33)

²⁴⁷For example, Aldhelm, *De Virginitate*, 21 (Ewghald, ed. *Aldhelmi Opera*, 251 l. 21) has the meaning of "shape, sign" but Aldhelm, *Ep.* 4 (Ewghald, ed. *Aldhelmi Opera*, 481 l. 9) mentions *epistolares litterarum apices*.

²⁴⁸See translation by Smit, *Studies*, 122. Stanton, 'Columbanus. Letter I', 154 and Todde and Nuvolone, 'Le lettere e la preghiera', follow Walker in translating *hyperbolice* with the meaning of 'excessively'.

second-person pronouns frequently associated in different constructions. *Excusationes* are classically inserted in a speech after a digression, or to justify one's tone. In this instance both needs are met, as the writer returns to his conversation with the recipient of the letters after having dedicated much attention to a third party's argument, while at the same time justifying the forcefulness of his speech towards the peers of his addressee.

Section 1.8: Argumentatio, paraenetic style

Tuum itaque aut excusa aut damna Victorium, sciens si illum laudaveris, inter te et supradictum Hieronymum fidei futurum fore negotium, qui nimirum Anatolium laudavit huic contrarium, ita ut qui unum secutus fuerit alterum recepere non poterit. Tua itaque consideret vigilantia ut in fide duorum supradictorum auctorum sibi invicem contrariorum probanda nulla sit inter te et Hieronymum in sententia promenda dissonantia, ne nobis *undique sint angustiae* [Dan. 13, 22], ut aut tibi aut illi consentiamus. Parce in hoc infirmis, ne scandalum diversitatis ostendas. Simpliciter enim ego tibi confiteor quod contra sancti Hieronymi auctoritatem veniens apud occidentis ecclesias hereticus seu respuendus erit, quicumque ille fuerit: **illi** enim per omnia indubitata in scripturis divinis accomodant fidem. Sed haec de Pascha sufficiant.

1.8.1 Structure and style

The first two periods are a further example of the writer's ability to manage long and complex subordination. Two features are of particular note. Firstly there is a peculiar use of the future perfect tense in hypothetical clauses.²⁴⁹ Ludwig Bieler has referred to it as one of the features of Late Latin that are more commonly found in Columbanus's prose works and explained its derivation from the language of law tracts: 'the legislator anticipates a moment when certain conditions will be fulfilled'.²⁵⁰ If this is the case, it is significant but also understandable for such feature to appear in this context. What is being discussed is Gregory's possible *sententia*, or judgement, of Victorius. A phraseology influenced by legal style is consistent with Columbanus's

²⁴⁹ The clause in question is *sciens si illum laudaveris, inter te et supradictum Hieronymum fidei futurum fore negotium*. As pointed out by Bieler, it is possible in this case to exclude that *laudaveris* is perfect subjunctive because other future forms appear in the apodosis (*fore*) and throughout the passage [*poterit, erit, fuerit*]. Bieler, *Notes on the text tradition*, apud Walker, *Opera*, lxxx

²⁵⁰ Bieler, *Notes on the text tradition*, apud Walker, *Opera*, lxxx-lxxxi

approach to the matter, since he had already framed the sources of his own argument against Victorius's Easter cycle as a *iudicallis assertio* or even as witnesses to his case. Additionally, it is consistent with his likely familiarity with monastic rules and prescriptive texts, in which this type of use of verbal tenses is frequent. The second remarkable feature is the participle construction *contra sancti Hieronymi auctoritatem veniens*, one of the few instances in which it has the substantive value in the *Epistulae*. Two instances of hyperbaton should be noted [*Tuum itaque aut excusa aut damna Victorium*: complex; *Tua itaque consideret vigilantia*: aVA], both occurring at the beginning of a period and clearly meant as a parallel, so that the apostrophe and the fictional epistolary conversation should be emphasised, as the second-person possessive adjective is given the first place. So far Columbanus has avoided depicting Gregory as an outright supporter of the Victorian cycle, preferring to represent him as simply overlooking the error of a 'dark Easter' because of either complacency or humility. The expression 'your Victorius' [*tuum ... Victorium*] is the one part of this letter from which Gregory's actual preference for the Victorian cycle can be deduced outright, even though it can also refer to the fact that Victorius had worked on it at the request of the Roman See. In the penultimate sentence [*illi ... fidem*], Walker emended the first word to *illae*, possibly in light of the plural of the following predicate [*accomodant*]. Here the reading of F and M is preferred, to be understood as a dative referring to Jerome.²⁵¹ The proposed translation is: 'For they accord undoubted trust to him [i.e. Jerome], throughout all things in the Holy Scriptures'. As it will be seen, this change is necessary for a better understanding of the cultural context of the letter, since it is revealing of the western churches attitude towards the authority of Jerome. The final sentence marks the end of the discussion of the Easter question (at least in a clearly structured way, as the topic will be brought up again in the valediction), and it mirrors the opening of the exordium *libet me ... interrogare de Pascha*.²⁵²

²⁵¹ Todde and Nuvolone, 'Le lettere e la preghiera', 94-95 strangely maintain the exemplars' reading in the critical text but translate "esse prestano una fede incrollabile alle Sacre Scritture", as if it were a nominative.

²⁵² Howlett, *The Celtic Tradition of Biblical Style*, 90-91 highlights this and other structural parallels.

1.8.2 Epistolary qualities

After the previous excusatory section, the language of exhortation is once again displayed, as signalled by apostrophe, second-person forms and verbal forms such as imperatives [*excusa, damna, parce*] and exhortative subjunctive [*consideret*]. The notion that vigilance [*vigilantia*] should be exercised in matters of faith is a common theme in the *Epistuale*, with the letter to Boniface making this one of the key points of its paraenetic sections. Here it is less pronounced, although it should be noted that it similarly leads to a plea for Church unity.²⁵³ This ought to be considered the closing part of the *argumentatio* of Columbanus's exhortatory speech on Easter worship. However, instead of a *recapitulatio* or final peroration, an additional argument is found. It is based on a notion introduced by the *narratio*, namely that Jerome had expressed nothing but praise and approval for the figure and the works of Anatolius of Laodicea. Since Anatolius's prescriptions, as quoted by Columbanus are at odds with those of Victorius [*huic contrarium*], Gregory's endorsement of the latter's position would raise a 'a question of credibility' [*fidei ... negotium*] between himself and Jerome. The writer admits that this would put him in the difficult position [*angustiae*] of choosing between two authorities. This is an allusion to Dan. 13, 22 [*angustiae mihi undique*], in which Susannah reacts to a situation in which two equally destructive courses of action are presented to her. The same reference is used by Columbanus in Epistula IV and in his *Instructio* VII. In these other instances too, it is accompanied by the enunciation of two mutually excluding alternatives.²⁵⁴ Columbanus also forewarns his addressee that Jerome's authority is held in such high esteem by the western Churches, that anyone, whatever his status [*quicumque ille fuerit*] who would argue against it, would be considered a heretic or a reprobate. The following sentence [*illi ... fidem*] seems to imply that their reason for doing so is rooted in the Holy Scriptures.

²⁵³Compare Columbanus, *Ep.* V, 5 (Walker, ed. *Opera*, 40-42)

²⁵⁴Columbanus, *Ep.* IV, 4 (Walker, ed. *Opera*, 28), *Sed angustiae undique sunt, carissime; periculum si oderint, periculum si amaverint* ('Troubles on all side, my dear: danger if they hate, danger if they love') and Columbanus, *Instructio* VII, 2 (Walker, *Opera*, 92l. 10 and 12-14), *angustiae mihi undique* and *si necessaria solvas ... libenter donis*.

It is interesting to compare the structure of this line of reasoning with that found in a similar passage from Cummián's *Epistola de controversia paschali*, usually dated to 632/633. Having quoted first from Jerome's letter to Damasus,²⁵⁵ Cummián wrote:

'*Troubles on all side of me* [Dan.13, 22]. If I shout this with Jerome, interpreter of divine Scripture and opponent of all heretics, I am opposed by you. If I do not cry out, I am excommunicated by the universal Catholic Church to which the authority of binding and loosing was given by God'.²⁵⁶

Cummián, a generation after Columbanus, was arguing for the Victorian side of the Easter controversy, against the defenders of the *latercus* in Iona.²⁵⁷ Nevertheless, his understanding of Jeronian authority and the way he employed it in his arguments are very similar to those of Columbanus, who had taken the opposite stance on the Easter question. A first common element for both authors is the reference to Dan. 13, 22. If this was part of the text of the version of Jerome's letter to Damasus known to Cummián, it is reasonable to suppose that Columbanus was also drawing from, or alluding to, that same author. If not, it would then seem likely that this Biblical passage was an easy way to express the writer's anguish over being faced with two equally distressing options, and that it had become a *topos*. In respect to the way in which Jerome's authority is conceptualised in both letters, Columbanus's explanation of how the

²⁵⁵ Cummián, *De controversia Paschali*, (Walsh and Ó Cróinín, *Cummián's letter*, 76-79, l. 142-146 with translation and notes). For the context of the quotations from Jerome's letters and the textual variants of each passage see the editors' notes to line 137 and line 141. The portion of Jerome's letter quoted by Cummián is Jerome, *Ep. 16 ad Damasum*, (ed. Hilberg, *Epistulae*, CSEL 54, 69). In particular this passage: 'Therefore either two deceive or all deceive. *Troubles on all side of me!*(Dan.13.22)' [*Aut ergo duo mentiuntur aut omnes. Angustiae mihi undique!*]. It should be noted that the quotation from the book of Daniel is not found in the text of Jerome's letter as edited by Hilberg, but it is marked as part of that letter by the editors of Cummián's *Epistula*. It is not clear whether this is a decision based on some feature of the manuscripts. Previously Cummián had also quoted Jerome, *Ep. 146 ad Evangelum*, (ed. Hilberg, *Epistulae* CSEL 56, 310).

²⁵⁶ Cummián, *De controversia Paschali*, (Walsh and Ó Cróinín, eds *Cummián's letter*, 78-79 l. 146-149, with translation and notes). *Angustiae mihi undique! Si ego hoc clamavero cum Ieronimo, divinarum scripturarum interprete et omnium hereticorum impugnatore, a vobis impugnor. Si non clamavero ab universali aeclesia catholica excommunicor, cui alligand<i sol>vendique aucto<ritas> a deo data est.* The note to line 146 points out: 'Note that this passage which begins with Dan.13:22 continues in a construction which is exactly parallel to that which follows in Daniel ... Compare Columbanus, *Ep. 1*'. A portion of the text from this passage of *Ep. I* follows [*Tuum itaque ... recipere non potest*], but it misses out on Columbanus's own reference to Dan. 13, 22. [*nobis undique sint angustiae*].

²⁵⁷ See Walsh and Ó Cróinín, *Cummián's letter*, Introduction, 3-29 for a reconstruction of the dating and context of the controversy.

western churches ‘accord undoubted trust to him throughout all things in the holy Scriptures’ has a clear parallel in Cummián’s epithet for Jerome, ‘interpreter of divine Scripture’. Both Columbanus and Cummián’s preoccupation is with *auctoritas*,²⁵⁸ and they rhetorically present their own stance as supported by that of the Church’s Father. However, for Columbanus, siding with Jerome causes conflict with another *auctoritas* he wants to acknowledge, that of his addressee, Gregory. Cummián, on the other hand, does not refrain from implying that adversaries who accuse him of heresy,²⁵⁹ even when the authority of Jerome is on his side, are heretics themselves. In short, Columbanus was pointing out to his addressee that he did not want to be put in the same situation in which Cummián would have found himself more than thirty years later, namely having to choose between the *auctoritas* of Jerome and that of his addressee. That Columbanus recognised and appreciated the role of the Roman pontiff’s authority is made clear by this passage alone, since, if he the praise and deference shown to Gregory had been cleverly disguised mockery, one could expect that this passage would have carried the same allegation that Cummián would later make, rather than a warning. In summary, even though Columbanus and Cummián were arguing for opposite sides in the controversy and at a considerable temporal distance, these passages reveal that they not only shared the same high opinion of Jerome as an *auctoritas* of the Church but they also used it as a key concept around which they build similar arguments. This in turn might indicate that there is a degree of continuity in the attitude of Irish clergymen towards patristic authorities between the times of Columbanus’s formation and of Cummián’s. Faced with the same intellectual tool, epistolary prose, and discussing the same problem, where *auctoritas* lays in ecclesiastical controversy, their arguments followed more or less the same beats, differing only because of their attitude towards their respective audience.

Section 1.9: questioning style

Ceterum de episcopis illis quid iudicas, interrogo, qui contra canones ordinantur, id est quaestu; simoniacos et Gildas auctor pestes scripsit eos. Numquid cum illis communicandum est? Quia,

²⁵⁸Walsh and Ó Cróinín, *Cummián’s letter*, 76-77note to lines 140 and 143

²⁵⁹Cummián, *De controversia Paschali*, (Walsh and Ó Cróinín, eds *Cummián’s letter*, 74 l. 132) *Silete et nolite nos hereticos vocare*

quod gravius est, multi in hac provincia tales esse noscuntur. Aut de aliis, qui in diaconatu violati, postea ad episcoporum gradum eliguntur? Sunt enim, quorum in his novimus conscientias, et cum nostra parvitate id conferentes certum scire volebant, si sine periculo post hoc episcopi esse possint, id est aut post gradum solidis emptum aut post in diaconatu adulterium absconsum – tamen dico cum cleantillis adulterium; quod apud nostros magistros non minoris censetur esse facinoris

Tertio interrogationis loco responde adhuc, quaeso, si non molestum est, quid faciendum est de monachis illis, qui pro Deo intuit et vitae perfectoris desiderio accensi, contra vota venientes primae conversionis loca relinquunt, et invitis abbatibus, fervore monachorum cogente, aut laxantur aut ad deserta fugiunt. Vennianus auctor Gildam de his interrogavit, et elegantissime ille rescripsit; sed tamen discendi studio semper maius metus accrescit.

1.9.1 Vocabulary

This section is clearly thematically distinct from the preceding ones. The author questions his addressee on various points, focusing on the moral failings of the local Episcopal class. Some of these bishops are accused of illicit sexual relations [*adulterium*] which the author specifies happened before their ordination [*in diaconatu*] and with *cleanitllae*. Walker translated the word as ‘wives’, which is also the option chosen by Stanton. Todde and Nuvolone, instead, translated it as ‘concubines’.²⁶⁰ Scholars seem to agree that this term is a variant spelling of a similar word occurring in the Penitential that used to be attributed to Columbanus, in a passage which describes a similar situation to that of the letter. It reads: *si quis autem clericus aut diaconus vel alicuius gradus, qui fuit in saeculo cum filiis et filiabus, post conversionem suam iterum suam cognoverit clientelam et filium iterum de ea genuerit, sciat se adulterium perpetrasse et non minus peccasse quam si ab iuventutesua clericus fuisset* (‘Then, if a cleric or a deacon or a man of any order, who as a layperson had sons and daughters, after his conversion has again known his wife and fathered

²⁶⁰ Walker, ed. *Opera*, 9 l. 32. Stanton, ‘Columbanus’s letter I’, 157 and commentary 166. Todde and Nuvolone, ‘Le lettere e la preghiera’, 97 and n17. Notably, the other existing Italian translation of the letter to Gregory I, Aldo Granata and Inos Biffi, eds *San Colombano. Le opere*, (Milano, 2001), 18 repeats Walker’s translation.

a child from her, he should know that he has committed adultery and that his sin is no lesser than if he had been a clergymen since his youth’).²⁶¹The indication is likely derived from the earlier *Penitential of Finnian*, where the term is spelled *clentellam*; this derivation is likely referenced in this letter by Columbanus [*apud nostros magistros*].²⁶²As noted by Laporte, the union between a future cleric and a woman would have been legitimate: what constituted *adulterium* was retiring sexual relationships after the cleric pronounced his vows, something that would suggest that ‘wives’ would be the more accurate translation. The term has also been attributed an Old Irish etymology, *Ba(i)n-ché(i)le*, ‘female companion’.²⁶³Clare Stancliffe has highlighted how the terminology here used by Columbanus could be seen as a symptom of the cultural difference between Columbanus’s homeland, where the rigid moral standards of ascetic clergymen on sexual matters could be implemented, and Merovingian Gaul, where the standards of secular clergy were more relaxed. This same grade of difference of standard will be one of the central themes of Columbanus’s second letter.²⁶⁴

1.9.2 Structure and Style

The section, separated from the discussion of Easter by the previous remark *sed haec de Pascha sufficient*, is introduced by the same verb that had introduced the questions about Easter, *interrogo*. The opinion of the addressee is requested through an indirect interrogative clause [*de episcopis illis quid iudicas*], but the overall syntax of the passage is rather simple: the most frequent type of subordinate clauses are relative clauses, often used to define the categories of people about which the author is interested to know more [*qui contra cannes ordinantur; qui in diaconatu violati; quorum in his novimus consentias; qui pro Deo intuit et vitae ... loca relinquunt et, invitis abbatibus ... ad deserta fugiunt*], and other indirect interrogative clauses [*si sine periculo episcopi esse possint; quid faciendum est de monachis illis*]. Two questions through

²⁶¹ *Paenitentiale Columbani*, 8B (Walker, ed. *Opera*, 175). See also the editions by Jean Laporte, *Le Penitentiel de Saint Colomban. Introduction et édition critique par Dom Jean Laporte* (Tournai, 1958), 35 and Ludwig Bieler, *The Irish Penitentials*, *Scriptores Latini Hibernia*, 5 (Dublin, 1963), 100.

²⁶² *Penitentialis Vinniani*, 27 (Bieler, ed. *The Irish Penitentials*, 82).

²⁶³ Bieler, ed. *The Irish penitentials*, 244. See also Laporte, *Le Penitentiel*, 35.

²⁶⁴ Clare Stancliffe, ‘Columbanus and shunning. The Irish *peregrinus* between Gildas Gaul and Gregory’, in O’Hara, *Columbanus and peoples of post-Roman Europe*, 113-142:130. See also Columbanus, *Ep.* II, 8 (Walker, ed. *Opera*, 20). On the perception of female companions to Gaulish bishops see Brian Brennan, ‘“Episcopae”. Bishops’ wives viewed in sixth-century Gaul’, *Church History*, 54, 3 (1985), 311-323.

which the audience is addressed directly stand out: in particular the first one [*numquid cum illis communicandum est?*] should be considered a rhetorical question: the adverb *numquid* signals that a negative response is expected. Overall, the passage is marked by little to no rhetorical elaboration. As a confirmation of the lack of emphasis in this portion of the letter one could point to the limited number of hyperbata (type ABba: *simoniacos et Gildas auctor pestes scripsit eos* and VA: *quorum in his novimus conscentias* and *non minoris censetur esse facinoris*).

1.9.3 Epistolary qualities and sources

With this passage, the epistolary conversation completely changes direction: the exhortatory tone is dropped and the author questions his addressee about three disciplinary points. It could be said that this portion of the letter adheres to the models of requesting style of letter writing as described by theorists, though Columbanus is here asking for information, not material goods.²⁶⁵ The first question is about simoniac bishops, who had been uncanonically ordained for hire [*contra canones ordinantur, ide est quaestu*], whether communion with them should be maintained. Secondly, the author question whether communion should be maintained with bishops who had lapsed as deacons [*in diaconatu violati*] either by committing simony or by continuing to have sexual relationship with their spouse [*cleantillis*] after having been ordained. Columbanus refers that he is voicing the doubts of some bishops with whom he has had intimate conversation [*quorum in his novimus conscentias*]. The third question moves the focus away from secular clergy to regular clergy. The author asks the Pope's opinion about monks who abandon their monastery [*loca relinquunt*] because they want to pursue a more strict and ascetic lifestyle than that conducted under they present abbots. The addressee is presented with the possibility that said monks would 'lapse or run away to deserts' [*laxantur aut ad deserta fugiunt*]. Moreover, Columbanus point out to Pope Gregory that the problems he has just addressed have been discussed by people of repute among the western churches, Gildas and Vennianus, the author of

²⁶⁵Pseudo-Libanius, Ἐπιστολιμαῖοι Χαρακτῆρες, 54 (Malherbe, ed. *Ancient epistolary theorists*, 69 and 74).

the afore-mentioned Penitential, who is usually identified with a British bishop active in Britain and Ireland in the mid-sixth century;²⁶⁶ both are individually extolled as authorities [*auctor*].

The first such reference is likely to Gildas's *De excidio*. In his complaint about the clergy of Britain Gildas said that '[simoniac bishops] usurp with their unclean feet the seat of the apostle Peter, yet thanks to their gree they fall into the pestilential (*pestilentem*) chair of Judas'. There is a clear lexical echo of this passage in Columbanus's wording *pestes scripsit eos*.²⁶⁷ The second explicit reference is to an epistolary exchange between Vennianus and Gildas, with the latter providing guidance to the former. Scholars seem to agree that that particular letter by Gildas has partially survived among the so-called *Fragmenta Gildae*, transmitted by the *Collectio Hibernensis* and independently.²⁶⁸ This is the earliest known reference to the works of Gildas and Vennianus. Additionally, as shown in the vocabulary section above, there is the fact that one of the situations Columbanus described, namely, bishops who had been supposedly made unfit for their duty by having continued their relationship with their spouses, bears great resemblance to one described in Vennianus's *Penitential*, even in its vocabulary [*cleantillis*]. As Richard Sharpe and David Dumville have noted,²⁶⁹ it should be understood that Columbanus likely attributed to both authors a great degree of authority, possibly to the point that the definition of 'fathers of the church' could apply to them. However, he also seems aware that this authority is primarily recognised by the western churches, and their names might not have been known to his addressee.

This last remark is based on both the broader cultural context surrounding this letter and the tone of this passage. The registers of Gregory I's letters show that he had a vested interest in the

²⁶⁶ The name is spelled as Vennianus in F and as Venicianus in M. Uennianus is one of various alternative forms, which include Vinnian, Uinnianus and Uinniaus in the *Penitential*, Finnio in Adomnán, and the Irish forms Finnian and Finbar. His identification with either St. Finnian of Moville and St. Finnian of Clonard has been much debated see Pádraig Ó Riain, 'Finnian or Winniau?', in Prósínéas NI Chathain and Michael Ritter, eds. *Irland und Europa. Die Kirche im Frühmittelalter* (Stuttgart, 1984), 52-57; Richard Sharpe, 'Gildas as a father of the Church' in Dumville and Lapidge, *Gildas: New approaches*, 193-205:198 and in the same volume David Dumville, 'Gildas and Uinniau', 207-214.

²⁶⁷ Gildas, *De Excidio*, 66, 2 and 67 (Winterbottom, ed. *The ruin of Britain*, 118-119).

²⁶⁸ The text of the passage is edited by Arthur W. Haddan and William Stubbs, *Council and Ecclesiastical documents relating to Great Britain and Ireland*, 3 vol., I (Oxford 1869), 110-111. See also Friedrich W. Wasserschleben, *Die Irische Kanonensammlung*, 39, 7 (Liepzig, 1885) 175 and Winterbottom, *The ruin of Britain*, 87. For discussion of the transmission see Sharpe, 'Gildas as a father of the Church', 193-196 and 202-205.

²⁶⁹ Sharpe, 'Gildas as a father of the church', 201 and Dumville, 'Gildas and Uinniau', 207

supporting moral reforms among the Gallic clergy, with special attention dedicated to the problem of simony.²⁷⁰ It has even been speculated that Columba acted as an ‘informer’ of sorts for the Pope on these matters, an hypothesis which would be consistent with the much larger focus granted by Columbanus’s *Epistula* II to moral questions.²⁷¹ In any case his goals and Columbanus’s goals likely coincided, as far as moral reform of the clergy was concerned. It has been noted that Columbanus’s tone in asking direct question to his addressee is likely rhetorical, and it expects a negative answer: ‘should we really [*numquid*] keep communion with sinning bishops? Of course not!’. It might be possible that the Irishman was motivated by more than moral concerns in adding this series of question at the end of a lengthy discussion of the Easter question. His arguments about the celebration of Easter mainly rest on a text, the Latin *Anatolius* which was well known in his homeland but which he must have realized was little regarded in Gaul. He extolled the value of this text in the eyes of the western churches, but he might have been concerned that this would leave his addressee with the impression that all of the practices of the western sources rested on unique, or even suspicious authorities. Hence Columbanus’s reliance on western authorities, Gildas and Vennianus, on points on which he must have been positive that would receive the Pope’s support. Perhaps, his request for guidance was motivated by a desire to assert the orthodoxy of authors who were influent in his homeland but little known elsewhere.²⁷² Finally, it should be noted that Columbanus’s insistence on breaking off communion with lapsed clergy is consistent with the behaviour of one *Columbanum abbatem in Gallis*, described in the letter of Laurentius Mellitus and Justus to the the Irish, as preserved by Bede.²⁷³

²⁷⁰ See for example Gregory I, *Reg. Ep.* V, 58 and V, 60 (Hartmann, ed., *Registrum Epistularum*, MGH, *Epistolae*, I, 368-371 and 373-375) directed to Virgil, the bishop of Arles and king Childebert in the summer of 595, which are likely to be the closest chronologically to the writing of this letter.

²⁷¹ Stancliffe, ‘Columbanus and shunning’, 122-123 and 130-133

²⁷² A similar hypothesis has been ventured by Leso, ‘Columbanus in Europe’, 365; Stancliffe, ‘Columbanus and Shunning’, 125 argued that the questions do reflect Gildas’s and Vennianus’s influence of Columbanus’s studies but also how he might have found their contents contradictory and problematic. Kelly, ‘The letter of Columbanus to Gregory I’, 219-222 had argued that Columbanus was indeed trying to assert the importance of the western churches, but in an almost disrespectful and bullying way, in keeping with his evaluation of *Ep.* I as an insulting and reproachful letter.

²⁷³ Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, II, 4 (Plummer, ed. *Bedaee Historiam Ecclesiasticam*, 87-88)

Section 1.10: Excusatio

Humilius et purius haec omnia et multo plura quae epistolaris breuitas non amitti, per praesentiam interrogandam erant, nisi corporis infirmitas et meorum cura comperegrinorum domi me vinctum teneret cupidum ad te eundi, ut illam spiritalem vivi fontis venam vivamque undam scientiae caelitus fluentis ac in *aeternam vitam salientis* [Ioann. 4, 14] haurirem. Et si animus corpus sequeretur, Roma iterum sui rem sustineret contemptus, ut, quomodo docto narrante Hieronymo legimus, quosdam de ultimis **hyalini** litoris finibus olim venisse Romam, et, mirum dictum, aliud extra Romam quaesisse, ita et ego nunc te, non Romam, desiderans, salva sanctorum reverentia cinerum, expeterem; licet enim non me sapientem, sed esse sitientem fateor, hoc idem facerem si vacarem.

1.10.1 Vocabulary and sources

Quosdam de ultimis Hyelini littoris finibus olim venisse Romam. [Walker, 10, 8, 5-6]	Quosdam de ultimis heulini littoris finibus olim venisse Romam. [F, 159]	Quosdam de ultimis heluini littoris finibus olim venisse Romam. [M, 117]
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Walker interpreted the adjective *heluini/heulini* as referencing a Spanish placename²⁷⁴. This is because the anecdote that Columbanus is reporting originally identified the person/persons visiting Rome as a/ a group of Spaniard(s). Columbanus derived it from the previously referenced letter of Jerome to Paulinus, whose source for the episode was, in turn, a letter of Pliny the Younger.²⁷⁵ Johannes Smit and Neil Wright have brilliantly shown how Columbanus knew this letter in an alternative version to that preferred by Hillberg, the editor of Jerome's letters. The variant reading survives in the manuscript tradition.²⁷⁶ Not only that version of the text the visitors are a group of people (*quosdam*) and not a single person, like in Columbanus's, but it makes no mention of their Spanish origin. Hence, Smit suggested that 1) *Heluini/heulini* is an adjective

²⁷⁴ Walker, *Opera*, 11 n1

²⁷⁵ Jerome, *Ep. 53 Ad Paulinum*, 1 (Hilberg, ed. *Epistulae*, CSEL 54, 443-444 l. 16 and l.1-5). Pliny the Younger, *Epistulae*, II, 3.8, trans. Betty Radice, Loeb Classical Library 55 (1969), 86

²⁷⁶ See Smit, *Studies*, 105-109 and Wright, 'Columbanus's *Epistulae*', 70-71

agreeing with *littoris*, 2) it is a variant spelling of *hyalinus*, ‘clear’ or ‘glass-like’, usually said of water, thus translating to “from the last edges of the Ocean shore” and 3) that Columbanus might have been thinking of his native Ireland. Wright and Todde and Nuvolone followed his input, while Robert Stanton has argued against this interpretation, countering that *hyalinus* is seldom employed in this way by contemporary authors and going back to support the presence of a Spanish toponym behind the words *heluini/heulini*.²⁷⁷ While he does correctly point out that in Aldhelm’s writings the adjective *vitreus* is always employed in a similar context, Smit’s emendation is here preferred, as the similarity between the alternative text of Jerome’s letter and Columbanus’s phrasing appears to be a much stronger argument. A possible translation for whole phrase would be “[how]some men had once come to Rome from the extreme edges of the oceanic shores”

1.10.2 Structure and style

In contrast to the straightforward questioning from the previous passage, this section reprises a high degree of elaboration. The author accumulates subordinate clauses in two rather complex periods and employs such devices as alliteration (*vivi fontis venamvivamque*), proverbial idioms (*mirum dictum*), anthithesis and homeoteleuton (*non me sapientem sed essem sitientem fateor*). Structures that are typical of Columbanus’s rhetorically elaborated style can also be detected, such as the use of *licet* in a concessive clause and two ablative absolute constructions (*docto narrante Hieronymo* and *salva sanctorum reverentia cinerum*), with both of them standing out also because of their interlaced hyperbaton patterns (avA and abAB). An expression similar to the second of these two constructions is found in Gildas’s *De excidio* and Columbanus employed it again in the letter to Pope Boniface IV,²⁷⁸ where it is used to mark the exceptional status of the Holy Land even when compared to that of Rome, whose very own sanctity is here marked by a reference to

²⁷⁷ Todde and Nuvolone, ‘La lettera e la preghiera’, 98-99n20; Stanton, ‘Columbanus. Letter I’, 166-167

²⁷⁸ Gildas *De excidio*, 25 (Winterbottom, ed. *The ruin of Britain*, 98, l. 5-6) *salva sanctorum animarum reverentia*; Columbanus, *Ep. V*, 11 (Walker, ed. *Opera* 48 l. 34-36) *salva loci resurrectionis singularis prerogativa*

the ashes of the Apostles (*cinerum*). A deferential reference to the relics of Peter and Paul is always brought by Columbanus in any other instances in which the city of Rome is discussed.²⁷⁹

1.10.3 Epistolary qualities

Overall this section reads like a perfunctory acknowledgment of two widespread topoi of epistolary writing: firstly, the necessity of epistolary *brevitas* and secondly, the writer's desire to communicate with his addressee in person (*per presentiam*). It can be characterised as an *excusatio*, as the writer seeks to justify himself because his previous questioning might have appeared aggressive and unclear (*humilius et purius ... interroganda erant*) while adducing reasons for being unable to personally visit his addressee, namely infirmity (*corporis infirmitas*) and the duties to his monastic community (*meorum cura comperegrinorum*). Todde and Nuvolone indicate in their apparatus that Jerome's letter *Ad Evangelum presbyterum*²⁸⁰ was the likely source of Columbanus's way of phrasing his reference to epistolary brevity. However this concept occurs very frequently throughout Jerome's *Epistolae* and even the letter *Ad Paulinum*, which Columbanus is referencing in this passage, not only contains the usual remark about the required brevity of the epistolary form, but goes on to show that this could sometimes be no more than literary affectation, since Jerome in a later passage of the same epistle wrote that he 'had exceeded the measure of a letter'.²⁸¹ It can be assumed that Columbanus followed his example in paying lip-service to the recognised conventions of letter-writing while at the same time being willing to let necessity dictate the length of his own correspondence, since, with the exception of *Ep.* III, all of his surviving letters do not show any attempt at actual brevity. In order to introduce the equally conventional depiction of the writer being willing but unable to visit his addressee in person, Columbanus makes use of an anecdote reported by Jerome in the same letter. A group of people had ignored the lures of the fame Rome, travelling there only to visit the famed historian

²⁷⁹Columbanus, *Ep.* III, 3 (Walker, ed. *Opera*, 24, 131-32) *iuxta sanctorum cinerum* and Columbanus, *Ep.* V, 11 (Walker, ed. *Opera* 48 l.25), specifically mentioning the relics of Paul and Peter

²⁸⁰Todde and Nuvolone, 'Le lettere e la preghiera', 96n114; Jerome, *Ep.* 73, 3 (Hilberg, ed. *Epistulae*, CSEL 55, 16 l.8)

²⁸¹Jerome, *Ep.* 53, 6 and 9 (Hilberg, ed. *Epistulae*, CSEL 54, 452, 1.4 and 462, 1.5-6): *neque enim epistularis angustiae evagari longius patiebatur* and later *cernis me scripturarum amore raptum excessisse modum epistulae et tamen non implesse quod voluit*.

Livius, a spring of eloquence (*fons eloquentiae*). Similarly Columbanus writes that he would travel to Rome, noted to be unremarkable but for the relics of the apostles, for the sole purpose of listening to Gregory in person, himself a spring of Christian wisdom (*spiritalem vivi fontis venam vivamque undam scientiae caelitus fluentis*), like the evangelical fountain of eternal life (*ac in aeternam vitam salientis*). By creating this parallel Columbanus anticipates his subsequent requests for exegetical material composed by Gregory,²⁸²

Section 1.11: requesting style.

Legi librum tuum pastoralem regimen continentem, stilo brevem, doctrina prolixum, mysteriis refertum; melle dulcis egenti opus esse fateor; mihi idcirco sitiendi tua largire, per Christum precor, opuscula, quae in Ezechielem miro ut audivi, elaborasti ingenio. Legi Hyeronimi sex in illum libros; sed nec medium exposuit. Sed, si dignaris, aliqua nobis de tuis transmittite relectis in civitate, extrema scilicet de libri exposita; transmittite et Cantica canticorum ab illo loco, in quo dicit, *Ibo ad montem myrrhae et collem thuris* [Cant. 4, 6] usque in finem; aut aliorum aut tuis brevibus, deposco, tracta sententiis; et, ut totam exponas obscuritatem Zachariae, absconsam propala, ut tibi occidentalis in his gratias agat caecitas.

1.11.1 Structure and style

This brief section can be considered a prelude of sorts to the proper valediction of the letter. The author once again makes several requests, this time not of information but of reading material. The imperative mood is used for the last three requests [*transmittite; transmittite; tracta; propala*] in conjunction with parenthetical insertions [*si dignaris; deposco*] which keep up the illusion of a conversational tone. The first request is instead made through an infinitive clause that depends on the verb *precor* [*mihi idcirco sitiendi tua largire opuscula*], from which in turn a relative clause [*quae in Ezechielem miro elaborasti ingenio*]; subordination is also notable in the closing

²⁸²The imagery of the fountain of water of life eternal, derived from the evangelical episode of the conversation between Jesus and the Samaritan woman (Ioann. 4, 9-26) also occurs in Columbanus, *Instructio* XIII, 2-3 (Walker, ed. *Opera*, 118 l. 21-22 and 27-28). Columbanus in might have been drawing from an anonymous sermon *De Ascensione* preserved by an early Bobbio Manuscript, now Biblioteca Ambrosiana, O 212 sup., the same that preserves the oldest copy of Bachiarius's work. The edition consulted is that provided in appendix to Michele Tosi, 'Arianesimo tricapitolino', 113-117. See also Michele Tosi's commentary, 91-92

sentence, with two parallel purpose clauses [*ut totam exponas obscuritatem Zachariae* and *ut tibi occidentalis in his gratias agat caecitas*]. Nor is stylistic elaboration completely absent: the use of tricolon [*stilo brevem doctrina prolixum, mysteriis refertum*] should be noted as well as complex word-order [Type aVA: *tua largire per Christo precor opuscula; totam exponas obscuritatem Zachariae; miro ut audivi elaborasti ingenio; de tuis transmittite relectis; brevibus depono tracta sentiis; occidentalis in his agat caecitas*; type aBA: *extrema scilicet libri exposita*].

1.11.2 Epistolary qualities.

Request for books and reading material were not unusual within the epistolary exchanges of the literate class of Merovingian Gaul. In the case of Columbanus's letter to Gregory I, it may even be possible to trace the beginning of this exchange: Columbanus mentions having received and read Gregory's *Regula Pastoralis* [*librum tuum pastorem regimen continentem*] and in a letter from Gregory I's register of November 594 the bishop of Luni is warned not to retain a copy of that book which is meant for one *Columbus presbyter*, in all likelihood, Columbanus himself.²⁸³ The requests for other works seems to indicate that Columbanus was aware of much of the activity of the Pope. In particular his requests for the commentary on the last chapters [*extrema scilicet libri*] of the book of Ezechiel shows that the Irishman was very much up to date: homilies on chapter 40 of Ezechiel were delivered in Rome during the Lombard siege of 593.²⁸⁴ It seems likely that Candidus, Gregory's agent in Gaul, mentioned further on in the valediction, was the source of this knowledge.

As in the case with the previous request about disciplinary indications, it might be the case that Columbanus's intentions with these requests for reading materials were tied to his attempt at getting approval for his Easter cycle. There might be a subtle parallel set up between the figure of Jerome, whom Columbanus had endlessly praised as the ultimate source of authority, especially because of his praise for Anatolius, and that of Gregory I. Both had authored learned works on the

²⁸³ Gregory I, *Reg. Ep.* V, 17 (Hartman, ed. *Registrum Epistularum*, 298-299).

²⁸⁴ Gregory I, *Homiliae*, II, 10 (M. Adriaen, ed. *Homiliae in Hezechielem prophetam*, CCSL 142 (Turnhout, 1974)l. 610); see also the narration in Paul the Deacon, *Historia Langobardorum*, IV, 8 George Waitz and Ludwig Bethmann eds., *Pauli Historia Langobardorum*, MGH, *Scriptores rerum Langobardicarum et italicarum saec. IV-IX*, (Hannover 1878), 12-192:118-119.

book of Ezechiel; the implication of Columbanus's request is that Gregory, with his wisdom and interpretative work on the Holy Scriptures is a contemporary Jerome, who might also approve of the Easter cycle presented by Columbanus.²⁸⁵

Section 1.12: Vaedictio, apologetic style

Importuna postulo et magna sciscitor, quis nesciat? Sed et tu magna habes, quia de parvo minus et de *multo plus* [Luc. 12, 48] bene scis esse foenerandum. Rescribere te persuadeat caritas, exponere te non impediatur cartae asperitas, quia ira in errorem **fuit** et honor debitus cordi est a me tibi dari; meum fuit provocare interrogare rogare; tuum sit *gratis accepta* [Matth. 10, 8] non negare, foenerari *petenti* talentum et *panem* [Luc. 6, 30 and Matth. 14, 16-17] doctrinae, Christo praecipiente, *dare*. Pax tibi tuisque; meae indulge quod sic audacter scripsi rogo procacitati, beate papa, et oro ut pro me vilissimo peccatore vel semel in tuis sanctis orationibus ad commune dominum ores. Persuperfluum puto commendare tibi meos, quos salvator quasi in suo nomine ambulantes *recipiendos* [Matth. 10, 40] esse decernit. Et si ut audivi a sancto Candido tuo, hoc respondere volueris, temporis antiquitate roborata mutari non posse, manifeste antiquus error est; sed semper antiquior est veritas, quae illum reprehendit

1.12.1 Structure and style

As Smit argued, Gundlach and Walker's conjecture of *furit* for F and M's *fuit* is unnecessary.²⁸⁶ The sentence is an explanation of the expression *cartae asperitas* (harshness of the letter), and *ira* is Columbanus's own previous vehemence against the arguments of his opposition (the *error*). The text makes it even clearer that the writer has no intention to upset his addressee, but would rather want to pay him due respect (*honor debitus cordi est a me tibi dare*). The valediction is overall highly elaborated, with phrases loaded with rhetorical *ornatus* and near constant borrowing from the New Testament.²⁸⁷ Some of the phrases and terms employed are found

²⁸⁵ Jakobi, 'Zum Humanismus St. Columbans', 191 advanced this hypothesis.

²⁸⁶ See Smit, *Studies*, 203. The reference to Horace detected by Gundlach is also dismissed. While Todde and Nuvolone, 'Le lettere e la preghiera', 101 respected Smit's restoration of the exemplars' reading, Stanton, 'Columbanus, Letter I' 156 and 168 maintained both the emendation and the reference to Horace.

²⁸⁷ See Wrigt, 'Columbanus's *Epistulae*', 50 and 50n10, pointing out such devices as tricolon (*provocare interrogare rogare*), and balance antithesis and homeoteluton (*Rescribere te persuadeat caritas, exponere*

elsewhere in the *Epistulae* in passages that have a similar function.²⁸⁸ The valediction can be divided into three segments: an apostrophe (*Importuna postulo et manglea sciscitor.... Christo praecipiente dare*); the valedictory formulas proper (*Pax tibi tuisque ...recipiendos esse decernit*); a final exhortatory address (*Et si, ut audivi... quae illum reprhendit*). This last element is highly unusual in its placement in the letter's structure. In contemporary and near-contemporary epistolography, there are no comparable instances of an author carrying on a previous discussion (it should be remembered that Columbanus had moved away from the Easter matter in the preceding paragraphs), after the valedictory formulas. Only Columbanus's own *Epistula* III has a somewhat similar occurrence, in which a final argument is inserted within the valediction.²⁸⁹ Howlett's analysis of the valediction has shown how its elements are arranged in a way that mirrors those of the *exordium*, giving a chiasmic quality to the whole.²⁹⁰ However, he did not acknowledge this last period, which has no place within the stylistic and thematic patterns uncovered by him, since there are no semantic call-backs or repetition of contents from the section of the letter that one would expect it to be a mirror of, that is, the subsequent part of the *exordium*; this would not be the case if the tenets of what he described as the 'Biblical style' of writing were being upheld consistently by the author.²⁹¹ On the contrary the contents of the valediction lean back on notions introduced in the *narratio* and *propositio* of Columbanus's address to the Pope. The Easter practice of the author's adversaries is once again described as an *error*, as in the *narratio*, while a notion that was previously introduced in the *propositio*, that is,

te non impediatur cartae asperitas). The discussion of the Biblical references in Todde and Nuvolone, 'Le lettere e la preghiera', 101n24 and n25 is exhaustive.

²⁸⁸ Compare *pro me vilissimo peccatore* with Columbanus, *Ep.* I, 2 and 5 and *Ep.* V, 17 (Walker, ed. *Opera*, 2 and 8 and 56) *a me vili, me vile in hac re* and *orate pro me vilissimo peccatore*; compare *quod sic audacter scripsi rogo procacitati* with Columbanus, *Ep.* II, 9 (Walker, ed. *Opera*, 22) *date quaeso veniam meae loquacitati ac procacitati*; compare *ad comune dominum ores* with Columbanus, *Ep.* II, 6 (Walker, ed. *Opera*, 16), *pro Christo, communi Domino ac deo nostro* and *deprecor vos per communem Dominum*

²⁸⁹ Columbanus, *Ep.* III, 3 (Walker, ed. *Opera*, 24). The valediction begins with a recommendation for prayers but it concludes with a reference to a canon of the Council Constantinople, which support Columbanus's arguments in that letter.

²⁹⁰ Howlett, *The Celtic tradition of Biblical style*, 88-89

²⁹¹ Howlett, *The Celtic tradition of Biblical style*, 5-29, for a general description of its features. Among them, obviously missing from Columbanus's letters is a consistent use of clausal or rhythmical *cursus*, despite the author's criticism of Wright, Stancliffé and Lapidge's conclusions about Columbanus's lack of skill as a user of *cursus*: David Howlett, 'Insular writers rhythms' in *Peritia*, 11 (1997), 53-116:58-59. Howlett's reconstruction of the chiasmic pattern of the letter to Gregory is more convincing, yet incomplete, as it ignores the final sentence of the letter.

the fact that its perceived antiquity and hallowed status in the eye of Gregory should be superseded by those of the writer's own preferred system of reckoning, is here repeated with the very last sentence.

1.12.2 Epistolary qualities

The valediction uncharacteristically mixes different styles in its three parts. The tone is excusatory in the first part, prayful in the second, and exhortatory in the third. Despite the use of commendatory phrases that are common in Christian letters, overall, this final section of the letter reads like an additional defence of the writer's position, seeking to justify himself for having initiated a controversy. It is notable that the 'dark Easter' of Victorius is not explicitly mentioned, although it is clearly what Columbanus means with *error*. He excuses himself for his vehemence, by clarifying the target of his criticism (*quia ira in errorem fuit*) after having justified his repeated requests for pastoral and exegetical aid by complimenting his addressee (*et tumagna habes ... bene scis...*).²⁹² As pointed out by Clare Stancliffe, the verb *rescribere* might be a specific request for a written pronouncement on the questions posed, as opposed to an informal reply orally delivered through common contacts. The mention of Candidus, who might have commented on the Pope's behalf on the occasion of Columbanus's first clash with the Gallic bishops, justifies this supposition, as he was the most likely person to take up the role of common contact.²⁹³ The *error* against which Columbanus directed his attacks in the letter, is mentioned again in Candidus's reported comment (*antiquus error est*). Within this valediction, this ties together Columbanus's apology for his lengthy and forceful arguments against the bishop's judgement (if *ira in errorem fuit* is understood to refer to his *argumentatio*) with his rebuttal of Candidus's comment. It could be supposed that his reason for writing at length to Gregory might have been that he had found the argument that local Easter practice was too long-standing and deeply rooted to be replaced, even if otherwise orthodox, just as unsatisfactory as that of the bishops about the simultaneous celebration with the Jews. He was however, in no position to state this openly since he had to lean on Gregory's support to overcome local opposition: hence this anomalous, last-

²⁹²Wright, 'Columbanus's *Epistulae*', 80 argued that this expression has been lifted from Caelius Sedulius

²⁹³ Stancliffe, 'Columbanus and shunning', 116n8.

ditch polemic against Candidus and the overall exhortatory tone of the valediction and of the letter, which has been often misinterpreted as making light of his addressee's authority.

CHAPTER 2: Columbanus's letter to the Gallic Council

Section 2.1: *Salutatio*

Dominis sanctis et in Christo Patribus vel fratribus, episcopis, presbyteris ceterisque sanctae ecclesiae ordinibus Columba peccator Salutem in Christo praemitto.

2.1.1 Structure and vocabulary

When compared to the rhetorical flourish of *Ep.* I or of *Ep.* V, the salutation of this letter of Columbanus to a council of Gallic clergy is clearly more subdued. The format follows common contemporary practice. One can compare the salutation of this letter to general epistles sent by contemporary Roman pontiffs or powerful bishops such as Desiderius of Cahors to various local authorities in the way it takes care to separate the addressees by rank.²⁹⁴ The *intitulatio* reflects the status of the various addressees within the ecclesiastical hierarchy. The writer first employs the same formula found in the two of the letters to the Roman pontiffs, addressing the 'Holy Lords and fathers in Christ' (*Dominis sanctis et in Christo patribus*).²⁹⁵ However, this is expanded with *vel fratribus* in order to also include presbyteries and other clergymen. The use of this expression, that implies the same status for writer and a specific set of his addressees, is the strongest evidence that suggests that Columbanus had been ordained to priesthood. The term *frater* implies equal ecclesiastical standing; Bishops writing to other bishop could address the other as 'brothers', Columbanus had to differentiate between 'fathers' and 'brothers', bishops and priests. The rest of the *intitulatio* names the categories which the previous titles belong to: bishops (*episcopis*) and the lower orders of the church (*presbyteris ceterisque sanctae ecclesiae ordinibus*). It can be inferred that this was standard practice for any clergyman writing to an assembly.

²⁹⁴ Letters with collective salutations are commonly found in the register of Gregory I see for example Gregory I, *Ep.* II, 5; III, 14; III, 29; X, 19 (Ludwig Hartman, ed. *Registrum MGH*, Epistolae 1, 104; 173; 186 and Epistolae 2, 254). In the register of Desiderius a collective salutation that makes a distinction between the various ranks of the addressees Desiderius, *Ep.* II, 8 ed. Wilhelm Arndt, *Desiderii Carducensi Epistolae*, MGH, Epistolae 3, (Berlin, 1892), 207; a group of bishops are collectively addressed another group as 'brothers' in the letter that Lawrence, Mellitus and Justus sent to the Irish in Bede, *HE*, II, 4 (Plummer, ed. *Historiam ecclesiasticam* 87); Cummian, *De controversia Paschali*, l. 1-5 (Walsh and Ó Cróinín, eds *Cummian's letter*, 51) also has a comparable salutation, see *infra*.

²⁹⁵ Columbanus, *Ep.* I, 1 and III, 1 (Walker, ed. *Opera*, 2 and 22); notably, the letter to pope Boniface does not contain this title in its salutation.

The *inscriptio* is similarly restrained. The writer names himself *Columba*, as in other two salutations and in the body of *Ep. V*.²⁹⁶ The ideal of epistolary *humilitas* is acknowledged in the salutation by way of the apposition *peccator*. This specific word was not a common feature of salutations from early Christian letter-writers, but it was possibly an already well-established usage among Insular authors that might have been familiar to Columbanus.²⁹⁷ Both Patrick's *Confessio* and the *Epistola ad milites Corotici* have the writer attach the word *peccator* to his name to describe himself.²⁹⁸ A remarkable entry in the Annals of Ulster, under the year 534, not only registers the death of st. Mauchteus, disciple of Patrick, but also the *salutatio* of an otherwise unknown letter of his.²⁹⁹ This too includes the word *peccator* in the *inscriptio*, perhaps as a conscious imitation of the Patrician phrasing.³⁰⁰ There is the possibility that Columbanus imported this formula to the continent or that he acted as a trend-setter for its usage in epistolary network established by the monastic communities that survived him, since it seems to have become more frequent in the central decades of the seventh-century. For example, in the letter collection of Desiderius of Cahors, *peccator* occurs in eighteen salutations, albeit used alongside a more varied subset of expressions of humility such as *exiguuus*, *supplex* and *servus*.³⁰¹ Because of

²⁹⁶ Columbanus, Ep. I,1, Ep. IV, 1 and Ep. V, 16 (Walker, ed. *Opera*, 2, 22 and 56)

²⁹⁷ According to Ludwig Bieler, *Libri epistolarum sancti Patricii episcopi*, II, Commentaries, (Dublin 1993) 86, it was a rare form at the time, with only two other instances of the word *peccator* in letters by Christian authors of the fifth century attested, but only one of them in the salutation. A third occurrence should be added, namely, that of the letter of Bachiarus to Ianuarius, which reads *Ianuario Bachiarus peccator salutem optat*, Martín-Iglesias and Collinseds., *Bachiarus Opera*, 29, 1.3. Since Bachiarus's activity is dated to the first two decades of the fifth-century, this would be the earliest instance of *peccator* being used in a formal *salutatio*. Additionally, it should be noted none of the notable Gallic letter writers of the late fifth or early sixth century, Sidonius, Avitus, Ennodius employ the word in any salutation.

²⁹⁸ Patrick, *Confessio*, 1 and *Epistola ad milites Corotici*, 1 (Bieler, ed. *Libri epistolarum sancti Patricii episcopi*, I 55 and 91). Bieler also argued that the use of the word might have been dictated by genuine religious sentiment rather than protocol II, 86.

²⁹⁹ The entry reads *Dormitatio Muchti discipuli Patricii xiiii kl. Septembris; sic ipse scripsit in epistola sua Mauchteus peccator prespiter, sancti Patricii discipulus in Domino Salutem* ('The repose of Mochta the disciple of Patrick, August 20; thus he wrote in his letter: Mauchteus, a sinner, priest, disciple of Patrick sends greetings in the Lord') Hennessy and MacCarthy, AU, 46-47; his death is recorded both under the year 534 and the year 536 but only the first entry records the salutation.

³⁰⁰ Bieler, *Libri epistolarum sancti Patricii episcopi* II, 86n2; on the figure of Mochta, see Richard Sharpe, 'Saint Mauchteus discipulus Patricii', 85-93. The dubious identification of Mochta with the aforementioned Bachiarus should be recalled (see chapter 1, n. 151), with the similar use of *peccator* being another striking coincidence.

³⁰¹ As far as sixth-century letters are concerned, there are only two instances of the usage of *peccator* in the salutations belonging to the collection of the *Epistolae Austasicae*, both of them dating to the central decades of century; Nicetius of Trier, *Epistola ad Chlovisindam* and Germanus of Paris, *Epistola ad Brunehildem* (Gundlach, ed. *Epistolae Austrasicae*, 8 and 9, 119 and 122). *Peccator* occurs in the following salutations from the collection of Desiderius of Cahors, *Epistulae*, I, 2, 7, 8, 9, 11, 13, II, 3, 5, 7,

the lack of letter-writing manuals for the age it is difficult to define what would be the precise function and meaning of each of these humbling additions to the *inscriptio*. While some, such as *servus*, which is often found alongside the episcopal title, are connected to the status of the writer, it could be suggested that the increased presence of a word such as *peccator* might reflect an acquired sensibility to the practices of private penitence that Columbanian monasticism helped to popularise. Finally, *praemitto*, the verb used in the salutation, is peculiar in being a first person form. This aspect is similar to the formula in the letter to Gregory I but in this instance there is no first person pronoun that agrees with it, leaving a very awkward sentence structure. The very presence of a verb is a novelty,³⁰² so the awkwardness might be a side-effect of the author's deviating from the common practice of epistolary writing. It should be noted that the use of *praemitto* instead of *mitto* denotes a very precise intention on the part of the author: greetings are not merely 'sent' but 'sent forth' or 'sent in advance'.³⁰³ The choice of vocabulary anticipates the later discussion about the author's decision of not attending the synod in person³⁰⁴ and it partially sets the tone for the letter, which is certainly apologetic, but also an attempt at diplomacy between two quarrelling parties.

2.1.2 Epistolary qualities.

This kind of salutation, that of an individual addressing a collective body, is comparatively rare in epistolary material of the same age. For instance, Cummian would address his salutation to two notable leaders of the community in Iona, Segéne and Beccan, although both his wording (*cum suis sapientibus*) and the contents of his letter make it clear that the whole monastic body is the recipient of his message.³⁰⁵ Additionally, Cummian would present his adherence to the Victorian

10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16, 19, 20, 21 (Willhelm Arndt, ed. *Desiderii Episcopi Cadurcensis Epistolae*, MGH *Epistolae* 3, 194, 196-200, 204- 208, 209- 211, 213- 214). Jonas, *VC*, 1 (Krusch, ed. *Vitae*, 61) employs the term in the same way as Columbanus in his prefatory letter to the abbots of Bobbio and Luxeuil. Outside of the Gallo-Frankish environments one occurrence of *peccator* as part of the *inscriptio* can be found in the letter collection of Braulio of Saragossa, 26(*PL*, 80, 0674d) and in the afore mentioned letter by Cummian.

³⁰² Lanham, *Salutatio formulas in Latin letters*, 32-33

³⁰³ See Blaise, *Dictionnaire latin-français des auteurs chrétiens*, s.v. *praemitto*

³⁰⁴ Columbanus, *Ep. II, 7 Ego ire ad vos non ausus sum* ("I did not dare to come to you"), (Walker, ed. *Opera*, 18)

³⁰⁵ Cummian, *De controversia Paschali*, l. 4 and esp. 244-258, where the audience is collectively addressed (Walsh and Ó Cróinín, eds *Cummian's letter*, 51 and 90)

Easter principles as the fruit of collective deliberation.³⁰⁶ Though Columbanus too can be assumed to be voicing the consensus of his community, which is brought to the fore in the epistolary conversation,³⁰⁷ the way in which he frames his preference for the principles of the *Latercus* is rather personal and can again be seen as the stance of a single clergyman against the judgment of a collective body, thus echoing the mood of the salutation.³⁰⁸ The question of what kind of authority could support this unique attitude is the actual main theme of this letter, in which Columbanus will not engage in a detailed discussion of Easter principles, but will try to define what are the sources and limits of clerical authority.³⁰⁹

Section 2.2: Exordium, eusebetic style

Gratias ago Deo meo, quod mei causa in unum tanti congregati sunt sancti de fidei et bonorum operum veritate tractaturi, et, ut tales decet, *per exercitatos sensus ad discretionem boni ac mali de discutiendis iusto iudicio iudicaturi* [Heb, 5, 14 and Deut. 16, 18]. Utinam saepius hoc ageritis; et licet iuxta canones semel aut bis in anno pro tumultuosis huius aevi dissensionibus semper sic servare vos non vacat, vel quam celerrime, quamvis rarius, potissimum hoc vobis inesse studium, quo negligentes quique timorem haberent et studiosi ad maiorem provocarentur profectum. Ecce, inquam, Deo gratias, quod vel pro me de Pascha discutiendo occasio vobis sanctae effecta est synodi. Dominus noster Iesus Christus, ille *princeps pastorum* [1 Pet. 5, 4] praestet ut ad suae ecclesiae utilitatem vestrum prosit concilium; et ipse Deus, qui stare solet in *sinagoga deorum* [Ps. 81, 1], praesens inspiret corda suorum ad suam ex integro voluntatem sequendam ex virtute mandatorum, ut non de solo Paschae negotio quod iam diu ventilatum ac diu varie a diversis auctoribus iudicatum est, tractetis; sed etiam de universis necessariis observationibus canonicis, quae a multis, quod gravius est, corruptae sunt et dum dies iudicii propior nunc est quam tunc, aliquod adhuc districtius evangelicae religionis et apostolicae traditionis consilium iniretis; si

³⁰⁶ See the retelling of the events surrounding the synod of Mag Léne, Cumman, *De controversia Paschali*, 1,259-288 (Walsh and Ó Cróinín, eds *Cumman's letter*, 90-94)

³⁰⁷ Columbanus, *Ep.* II, 6 and 9 (Walker, ed. *Opera*, 16-18 and 22) first depicts his community of *peregrini*, living in the wilderness alongside the remains of the companions that have passed away, then appeals to the bishops by way of naming the various ethnic groups of his community.

³⁰⁸ Columbanus, *Ep.* II, 7 *confiteor conscientiae meae secreta, quod plus credo traditioni patriae meae* ("I confess the inmost convictions of my conscience, that I have more faith in the tradition of my homeland") (Walker, ed. *Opera*, 18).

³⁰⁹ A similar assessment in Bracken, 'Columbanus and the language of concord', 19

enim evangelica mandata diligenter inquiratis, non miror quod in eis aliquantulorum moribus contraria inveniatur.

2.2.1 Structure and style

The opening sentences of the letter are fittingly elaborated, displaying a number of rhetorical figures. There is a rhyming parallelism between the two future participles agreeing with the subject of the first clause (*tractaturi ... iudicaturi*), which also closes with a polyptoton, or play on the same word-stem (*iusto iudicio iudicaturi*). It is noteworthy that the term highlighted by this last device occurs twice more times in this same passage, once as a verb in the past tense (*iudicatum est*), and once as a noun (*dies iudicii*). The preoccupation of the author might have been to highlight how the assembled clergymen had been called to pronounce a judgment, but that this important task had to first take into account how its object, the celebration of Easter had already been subjected to past rulings. The reference to the day of judgment being ‘closer now than then’ (*dies iudicii propior nunc est quam tunc*) would be in contrast to that, as it pertains to the author’s exhortation about addressing the failing standards of many in respect to other canonical obligations (*de universis necessariis observationibus canonicis, quae a multis, quod gravius est, corruptae sunt*). His intention might have been to remind his addressees of how the eschatological perspective of the Judgment Day (*dies iudicii*) had to be their motivation for not focusing their attention exclusively on the Easter matter, lest their own ‘just judgment’ should be found wanting for not addressing other failings of their own. This would be consistent with the writer’s attempt to divert the audience’s attention from the Easter problem, as revealed by the antithesis in the second to last period (*non de solo Paschae negotio ... sed etiam de universis necessariis observationibus canonicis*). Word-order is at times marked by hyperbata, but it does not seem that these occurrences coincide with cursus-like rhythmical stress pattern.³¹⁰

³¹⁰ The hyperbata are of these types: aVA: 1. *tanti congregate sunt sancti*, 2. *hoc vobis inesse stadium*, 3 *ad maiorem provocarentur profectum*4. *Occasio vobis sanctae effecta est synodi*, 5. *vestrum prosit concilium*; aBA: *de solo Paschae negotio*; abBA: *pro tumultuosis huius aevi dissensionibus*; complex *aliquod adhuc districtius evangelicae religionis et apostolicae traditionis consilium*. Wright, ‘Columbanus’s Epistulae’, 89-91 distinguished between simple and complex instances of the aVA pattern. He also misattributed an instance of complex hyperbaton found in letter III to this passage, *omnes sedis apostolicae dulcissimus presidentes* etc.

2.2.2 Epistolary qualities

The numerous instances and juxtapositions of forms in the first person singular and second person plural³¹¹ are the mark of the conversational element of epistolary writing, although this is far less pronounced than in letters written for a single addressee. Overall the language used is that of the eusebetic, or pious style of letter writing. The author opens the letter with the Pauline formula of thanksgiving,³¹² and repeats it a second time [*Ecce inquam, Deo gratias*]. Todde and Nuvolone have also recognised another borrowing from the Neotestamentarian epistles: the expression *exercitatos sensus ad discretionem boni ac mali* is lifted from Hbr 5, 14. Damien Bracken has further noted how the original context of this second quotation discusses the growth of the individual as part of the spiritual body of Christ, a recurrent element in Columbanus's prose, that is even brought up in the closing section of this letter.³¹³ Employing such quotations without commenting on their context and meaning, as opposed to the exegetical effort visible in the remainder of the letter, is a stylistic choice aimed at attaining a tone of earnest devotion.³¹⁴ Additionally, there is the overall sense of the passage: Columbanus wishes that God will be able to work some good through the fact that many bishops and priests have gathered because of him, which can be considered a form of blessing, similar to those found in the formulas of valediction of the period. The passage absolves the function of the standard epistolary *exordium*: firstly, captivating the audience attention and goodwill by highlighting their role as just rulers and guides for the faithful; secondly, introducing the topic of the letter. However, both of these functions are integrated in the overall rhetorical structure of the letter and serve the author's purpose of diverting the epistolary conversation away from the minutiae of the Easter calculations towards what has been described as the real core of the dispute between the newly founded community

³¹¹ For example and most significantly: *quod vel pro me de Pascha discutiendo occasio vobis sanctae effecta est synodi* "if only for discussing Easter on account of myself, the occasion of a holy synod is produced for you".

³¹² This formula of thanksgiving is found in the salutations of Rom. 1,8; I Cor. 1,4 and 14; Phil. 1,3; Col. 1,3; I Thes. 1, 2 Columbanus's *Ep.* I and IV also employ Pauline formulas, but with emphasis on peace giving, rather than thanksgiving.

³¹³ Todde and Nuvolone, 'Le lettere e la preghiera', 104-105 and n2. Bracken, 'Columbanus and the language of concord', 42-43.

³¹⁴ For this reason the other Biblical allusion (Deut, 16, 18 *iusto iudicio iudicaturi*) identified by Todde and Nuvolone, 'Le lettere e la preghiera', 105n2 and n3, could simply be a reminiscence and not a studied reference to the paschal prescriptions of the Old Testament.

and the Gallic bishops, that is, the desire of full independence from the former from the others. The questions of what are the sources of authority within the church and what is the role of secular clergy would be at the root of the incompatibility.³¹⁵ Columbanus does acknowledge that the Easter controversy is the reason for which the assembly will discuss his situation [*vel pro me de Pascha discutiendo*], but he presents the synod as an occasion [*ocasio vobis facta est synodi*] granted by God to address the failings of many towards ecclesiastic obligations [*de necessariis observationibus canonicis a multis ... corruptae sunt*]. The allusion to the possible faults of the general mores of the Gallic church when compared to the evangelical standards [*si enim ...inveniatur*] will be further expanded upon in the following section of the letter, under the format of exegetical writing. It is also a mark of thematic continuity within the surviving epistolary corpus of Columbanus, since problems of ecclesiastical discipline were one of the secondary concerns of the letter to Gregory I.

Neil Wright has extensively commented upon Columbanus's appropriation of biblical quotes in this passage, in particular using it as an example of how knowledge of their context can add a layer of subtext to their usage throughout the *Epistulae*.³¹⁶ The first scriptural reference, from the first letter of Peter (1 Pet. 5,4) is derived from an epistolary exhortation to the elders (*seniores*) about caring for the faithful (the flock/*gregem* see 1 Pet. 5, 1-3) so that God, prince of the shepherds (*princeps pastorum*) may reward them. Wright pointed to how the subsequent discussion in the letter of Peter dwells on humility, and how this is mirrored by the same thematic development in this letter of Columbanus. One could also point to how the notion of teaching to the elders of the church, and the reversal of roles that teaching by example can imply, is not extraneous to the overall content of Columbanus's epistolary opus, different passages in this letter and in the letter

³¹⁵ Framing this as a monastic struggle from Episcopal control is the now classic interpretation of the conflict, first offered by René Laprat, 'Les rapports de Saint Colomban et de la Gaule franque aux vi^e et vii^e siècles' in *Melanges Colombaniens: actes du Congrès international de Luxeuil, 20-23 Juillet 1950*, (Paris, 1950), 119-141:133-137. Clare Stancliffe, 'Columbanus and the Gallic bishops', 210-213 expanded upon this notion pointing to the radically different outlook of both parties on the sources of ecclesiastical authority. Columbanus, with a monastic and Insular perspective would have looked at Scriptures and Ecumenical councils for guidance, whereas the bishops would have given priority to the ruling of local church councils, expression of the Episcopal ruling class.

³¹⁶ Wright, 'Columbanus's *Epistulae*', 61-64.

to Pope Boniface address the instances in which this eventuality may be necessary.³¹⁷ Furthermore, it should be registered that, if Wright is correct, this would be the second instance of Columbanus appropriating the authority of Peter for his epistolary persona, after claiming the name of Bar-Iona for himself in the salutation of the letter to Gregory. The second scriptural reference, to Psalm 81 (Ps. 81, 1) is also highlighted in Wright's analysis. The verses of the Psalm (Psalm 81, 3-4) that follow the expression employed by Columbanus [*synagoga deorum*] do represent God as a judge over the just and the sinners. This fits very well with the rhetorical emphasis with which Columbanus has described his addressee, engaging in the same activity [*iusto iudicio iudicaturi*]. In addition there might be what, according to Wright, might amount to a very oblique reference to the Easter controversy, as Ps. 81, 5 describes sinners as walking in the darkness [*in tenebris ambulanti*], an expression lexically close to how Columbanus would describe the party opposed to the *Lateranus* reckoning, as he would consistently describe the celebration of Easter on the twenty-first and twenty-second day of the lunar month as a 'dark Easter' [*Pascha tenebrosum*].³¹⁸

In the commentary to their edited text, Todde and Nuvolone argued that Columbanus's reference to the actions of the council causing 'fear in some reprobates and pushing the zealous even forward' (*quo negligentes quique timorem haberent et studiosi ad maiorem provocarentur profectum*) is another Pauline reference, specifically to 1 Tim. 19-23, a passage that discusses passing judgement over the *presbyteri*. The two editors suspected it to hide a nod to the case of the Bishop Desiderius of Vienne, condemned to exile by the council at Chalons to whom this letter is usually assumed to have been addressed.³¹⁹ This seems unlikely: firstly, from the point of

³¹⁷ In this letter Columbanus, Ep. II, 4 (Walker, ed. *Opera*, 14) *Si volueritis nos inferiores vos patres docere* ('if you fathers want us juniors to teach to you'). On this passage in the context of this topos see Bracken, 'Authority and duty', 203 and Bracken, 'Juniors teaching elders', 268-269. See also *infra*.

³¹⁸ Wright, 'Columbanus's *Epistulae*', 64. As shown by Wright, this interpretation is much more solid when the subsequent reference to I, Ioan. 2,6 is taken into account. See Columbanus, *Ep. I*, 3 (Walker, ed. *Opera*, 2) for the expression *pascha tenebrosum*. Stancliffe, 'Columbanus and the Gallic bishops', 210, agreed with Wright's interpretation.

³¹⁹ Todde and Nuvolone, 'Le lettere e la preghiera', 107-109 n.3 and 4. They also claim that the basis for the rest of the discussion is II Th. 2, 16-17, but I cannot see any parallel with that text. For Desiderius of Vienne see Jonas, VC, I, 27 (Krusch, ed. *Vitae*, 214). Translation of the passage and commentary on the chronology of his life in O'Hara and Wood, *Life of Columbanus*, 160, n354; Yaniv Fox, 'The bishop and the monk: Desiderius of Vienne and the Columbanian movement', *Early Medieval Europe*, 20 (2012), 176-

view of textual criticism, there is no exact word-by-word repetition of a scriptural expression as it is, instead, always the case with other such references noted by Wright; secondly, the association and cult of Desiderius of Vienne within the Columbanian monastic movement is a later development from the time of Jonas's writing of the *Vita*. As discussed by Yaniv Fox, the bishop and the Irish abbot were unlikely to ever have been on the same side, both politically and religiously, with the issue of the Easter reckoning dividing them and with Columbanus enjoying the patronage of the Burgundian court at a time in which Desiderius had already run afoul of the king Theuderic II and his grandmother Brunhild. His positive depiction by Jonas and association with Columbanus could be simply explained with the political climate following the victory of Chlothar II over the descendants of Brunhild.³²⁰

Finally, in terms of non-biblical sources, there is Columbanus reference to the "canons" that required clergy to assemble twice or once every year (*semel aut bis in anno*) depending on the circumstances. Walker, in his *apparatus fontium*, referenced both the rules of the council of Nicaea (325) and those of the council of Tours of 567.³²¹ Although Columbanus had access to material preserving the rulings of the early councils of Christianity, this passage is much more likely to have been based exclusively on Gallic material, because the wording as the justification for convening in a council twice or once per year are almost identical.³²²

Section 2.3: Exordium, exegetical style

Sed sufficiat significasse unumquemque ad sui redemptoris exemplum ac veri pastoris formam fore informandum, qui *humilitatem* primum *predicans* [Matth. 11, 29 and 4, 17], septemque

194, and *Power and religion in Merovingian Gaul*, 9-46 and 110-117 for an overview of the other sources detailing his relationship with the Columbanian movement.

³²⁰ Fox, 'The bishop and the monk', 179 and 181-183. However, Fox does not rule out that Columbanus and Desiderius may have known one another, yet this is impossible to establish on the basis of the surviving sources. The reconstruction of the events that led to the politicization of Jonas's portrayal of the Burgundian branch of the Merovingian family relies on Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, 352-368. See also Barbara H. Rosenwein, *Negotiating Space: Power, Restraint and Privileges of Immunity in Early Medieval Europe* (New York, 1999), 50-51.

³²¹ Walker, ed. *Opera*, 14.

³²² Columbanus, Ep. III, 3 (Walker, *Opera*, 24) quotes from the canons of the council of Constantinople; the wording of the Council of Tours of 567 is *ut bis ad synodum annis singulis metropolis vel comprovinciales sui in loco ... Deo propiciante convenient aut, si necessitas sicut actenus inevitabilis propedia propedit, vel semel in anno*. See Friederich Maassen, *Concilia Aevi Merovingici*, MGH, *Concilia*, 1, (Hannover 1893), 122.

beatitudinis, primae *paupertati spiritus* [Matth. 5, 3] iugens, in tantum docuit nomine sua *sequi vestigia* [1 Pet 2, 21], ut ad veram octavi diei circumcisionem *iustitiam* [Matth, 5, 10] sequendo perveniret; quia beatitudo octava martyrio terminatur, eo quod non solum agendo iustus, sed etiam pro iustitia sustinendo martyr, regni nimirum celesti cupidus, et cum similiter certantibus *coronatur* [Tim. 2, 5]. Dum ergo sicut scriptum est *qui dicit se in Christo credere, debet et ipsum ambulare sicut ei Christus ambulavit* [1 Ioann. 2, 6]– id est et pauper et humilis et veritatem semper cum persecutione hominum praedicans – et iterum, *qui volunt in Christo pie vivere persecutionem patientur*[Tim 3, 12], et quia *fides sine operibus mortua est in semetipsa* [Iac. 2, 17-20], et Dominus fatuis sola fide contentis respondet, *quia non novi vos* [Matth. 7, 23]et bene credentibus et *domine domine* [Matth, 7, 21] dicentibus promisit, quod non intrabunt in regnum caelorum; et dum non possunt vel sui esse discipuli vel digni se, *qui non renuntiaverint omnibus quae possident* [Luc. 14, 33], unusquisque se consideret, si haec fixe complevit aut sustinuit, ne alienus sit a discipulis domini nostri Iesu Christi, quia non debet degener esse filius et discipulus magistro non debet contraria praedicare;

2.3.1 Structure and style

The passage reads as a lengthy clarification of the previous euphemistic expression *in eis aliquantulorum moribus contraria inveniatur* (“in them [the evangelical precepts] you will find the contrary of the mores of quite a few people”), explaining what are the actual evangelical rules of behaviour to which the episcopate should conform to. It accomplishes this goal by employing two different formats of exegetical commentary. The first period [*Sed sufficiat ... certantibus coronatur*] does not address the Scriptures in full, but it incorporates the occasional verbal nod to them, as well as references to patristic commentaries.³²³ The syntax is complex, with the usual accumulation of subordinate and incidental sentences and participial forms. The prose is marked by word-plays and alliteration (*formam fore informandum; primum predicans*), as well as balanced antithesis [*eo quod non solum agendo iustus, sed etiam pro iustitia sustinendo martyr*].

³²³ According to Walker’s *apparatus* here Columbanus referenced Matt. 11, 29 and 4, 17; Matt. 5,3; I Pet 2,21; Matt. 5,10 and 2 Tim, 2,5. Additionally, he was making use of Jerome’s commentary, Jerome, *Commentariorum in Mattheum libri IV*, ed. D. Hurst and M. Adriaen, CSEL, 77, (Turnhout, 1969), 25.

In contrast to this more elaborated style, the second half of the passage [*dum ergo sicut scriptum est ... contraria predicare*] references the scriptures by way of much longer quotations and employs the type of explanatory and introductory markers for them that one would expect from a sermon (*id est ... et iterum*), an impression reinforced by the lack of rhetorical devices or hyperbata. The language is thus both allusive and didactic, because, while the writer implies the audience's familiarity with the concepts expressed by the Scriptures, on the other hand he makes his own exegetical exercise the necessary conclusion that should be drawn from those texts. In terms of vocabulary choices, emphasis is still placed on the concept of justice [*iustitiam sequendo; agendo iustus, sed etiam pro iustitia sustinendo martyr*] in keeping with the notion expressed very early in the exordium that addressees at the synod are primarily concerned with administering justice to their subjects but also among their own cohorts. It should be noted that the opening and closing main sentences are clear mirrors of each other, both containing an exhortation for each individual member of the audience (*sed sufficiat significasse unumquemque* and *unusquisquese consideret*) to conform to the example of Christ. This repetition cannot be considered an example of the chiasmic structures detected by David Howlett in Columbanus's letter to Gregory³²⁴ as the rest of the passage does not seem to conform to the tenets of the 'biblical style' established by the same scholar. However, there is a certain circularity in the development of the writer's line of reasoning. This feature might be the result of the influence of material originally conceived for an oral delivery, such as a sermon or a lecture.

2.3.2 Epistolary qualities

This section stands out from the previous one because the dialogic and conversational forms do not occur anymore. Rather than addressing his audience, the author comments on various scriptural quotation to expound on what are the ways in which the mores of 'quite a few' (*aliquantulorum*) of his adversaries are contrary to the evangelical ideal. As noted above, the passage is unusual in its unbalanced use of rhetorical devices and in its abundance of biblical

³²⁴ Howlett, *The Celtic Latin tradition*, 82-90 and 4-40 for the definition of Biblical style; in the letter to the Council, although concepts are stated and re-stated in a way that might suggest a chiasmic order, all the other 'adjuncts' of biblical style are not consistently found.

quotations, and inasmuch as it displays elements that would be more befitting of an exegetical sermon than of an epistolary address. Andrew Cain employed the term ‘exegetical style’ of letter writing as a label for those letters in the collection of Jerome that were composed with the sole purpose of explaining one or more biblical verses for the benefit of his correspondents.³²⁵ The same term can define this atypical passage by Columbanus, but there is a key difference between the two, even if one considers how much the Irishman modelled his own epistolary prose on that of Jeronian examples. Jerome reserved his commentary upon the Scriptures for specific requests of his addressees or he referred to it when in need to exemplify his work of translation. This passage, instead, is an unsolicited digression, functional to the explanation of a concept that is central to the writer’s main argument, as are similar instances of exegetical writing in Columbanus’s *Epistulae*, as for example the paragraph of this letter discussed in section 2.9. This mode of integrating the biblical text into a rhetorical piece that aims to deliver a convincing self-defence or an accusation might have been commonplace among early Christian authors, but it is possible to indicate a close precedent to Columbanus’s usage of it in Gildas.³²⁶

From the point of view of literary sources, it should be noted that perhaps this passage hides one of the few pieces of Augustinian exegesis to be found in Columbanus. The representation of the glory of martyrdom, that is the eighth beatitude, as the ‘true circumcision of the eighth day’ may be influenced by Augustine’s interpretation of the same as a figure of Christ’s resurrection.³²⁷ Possibly, the imagery is too common place and obvious to indicate this as a clear influence with any degree of certainty. Both Walker and Wright recognised the influence of Jerome’s

³²⁵ Andrew Cain, *The letters of Jerome, asceticism, biblical exegesis and the construction of Christian authority in Late Antiquity*, (Oxford, 2009), 218-19. His Appendix I, 207-219 classifies Jerome’s letters according to the categories of Ps. Libanius, with this additional category added at the end. He defines it as: ‘a letter devoted to the interpretation of the Bible, broadly speaking’. He lists 26 letters in this style from Jerome.

³²⁶ A comparable instance is Gildas’s insertion of long exegetical passages before and after his invectives against the kings and clergy of Britain. Gildas, *De Excidio*, 38-65 and 78-91 (Winterbottom, ed. *The ruin of Britain*, 105-118 and 125-133)

³²⁷ Augustine, *Contra Faustum libri*, 16, 26 ed. Joseph Zycha, *Augustini Opera*, CSEL 25,6 (Wien, 1891), 476 *ista resurrectio.. illa octavi diei circumcissione figurata est.* (‘ this resurrection ... has been prefigured by that circumcision on the eighth day’). Paolo Todde, ‘Spunti sul concetto di figura in riferimento alla VII^a lettera attribuita a Colombano’, in *Archivum Bobiense*, 18/19 (1996/1997) argued that the concept of Biblical pre-figuration, as found in this Augustinian passage was employed several time in Columbanus’s *Epistulae*.

commentary on the gospel of Matthew on the passage.³²⁸ Wright even argued that Columbanus was here making use of Jerome's exegesis in order to insinuate that his community was the object of persecution. This would be consistent with Columbanus's subsequent explanations of 1 Ioan. 2,6 and of 2 Tim. 3,12: the expression *to walk even as Christ walked* is explained with being 'poor, humble, and ever preaching truth under the persecution of men' (*et pauper et humilis et veritatem semper cum persecutione hominum praedicans*), with the second biblical quotation reinforcing the point made by the author's own exegesis.³²⁹ Yet, the focus is firmly on the necessity of consistency between predication and action on the part of Christian teachers and masters, in order to conform to the example of Christ, as stated earlier. This is clear from the subsequent biblical quotations, all of which extol the value of good works (Iac. 2, 17 and Mat. 7,21) and of renunciation of earthly goods (Luc. 14, 33). Moreover, Columbanus all but spells out that his main concern is the lack of moral consistency between what the clergy teaches and what it exhibits in its actions: 'a disciple should not teach against the master, else he should not be worthy of him'. Overall, this exegetical section of the letter reads like a discussion in abstract terms of what treating 'all of the necessary canonical observances' should mean to the fathers in the Council. Two observations can be made: firstly, it should be noted that Columbanus had previously contrasted [*non solum de Pascha... sed etiam de universis necessariis canonicis observationibus*] the council's judgment on the Easter issue and on questions of discipline. This in-depth explanation clearly indicates Columbanus wanted the latter to be the focus of his letter. Secondly, as observed by Clair Stancliffe, there is a certain thematic continuity with the letter to Gregory I, inasmuch as Columbanus's expression of dissatisfaction with the Gallic clergy morals can be linked with his denunciation of simony to the pope.³³⁰

³²⁸ Walker, ed. *Opera*, 12, in *apparatus*. Wright, 'Columbanus's *Epistulae*', 67. See Jerome, *Commentariorum in Matheum libri IV*, eds. D. Hurst and M. Adriaen, *Sancti Hieronymi Commentariorum in Matheum libri IV*, CSEL 77, (Turnhout, 1969), 25.

³²⁹ See Todde and Nuvolone, 'Le lettere e la preghiera', 110-111n6

³³⁰ Stancliffe, 'Columbanus and the Gallic bishops', 214 and 'Columbanus and shunning', 121-122. See also Dubreucq, 'L'oeuvre épistolaire', 118-119 for the relationship between Columbanus's remarks and Gregory I's pastoral action in Gaul.

Section 2.4: exhortatory style

qui enim non intrat per ianuam in ovilem ovium, ille fur est et latro et qui fugit [Ioann 10, 1] castigandi et resistendi vitiosis laborem, *mercenarius* [Ioann. 10, 13]est, non filius semper in ecclesia mansurus. Haec idcirco breviter tetigi, ut, si volueritis nos inferiores vos patres docere, hanc vocem veri pastoris et in opere et in ore semper habeatis, quam suae agnoscunt oves – *non enim audiunt vocem alienorum, sed fugiunt ab eo* [Ioann 10, 5], cuius vocem non agnoscunt, quae, nisi actualis sit, voci veri non concordat pastoris. Nec poterit sermo efficaciter penetrare animos disciplinatorum ab ore prolatus mercenarii hoc signum habens quod ipse primus non audit quod ab eo non auditur; et quod prior actibus contempsit magister, nudus non potest tradere verbo ad conservandi exemplum. Simul igitur omnes, sive clerici sive monachi, istos primum canones veros ac singulares domini nostri Iesu Christi simpliciter compleamus et sic postea, tumore superbiae deposito, unum in reliquis scribere curemus. Si omnes humiles simus et pauperes pro Christo voluntarii, qui *pro nobis pauper factus est cum dives esset*, postea per humilitatem de terra vitiorum ac per voluntariam evangelicae admonitionis paupertatem diversis cupiditatibus depositis curisque mortalibus detrusis, velut amputatis dissensionis ac discordiae causis, omnes filii Dei veram pacem et integram caritatem per morum similitudinem et unius voluntatis aequalitatem inter se invicem habebunt.

2.4.1 Structure and style

The tone and style of this section is consistent with the preceding one, centring around biblical quotations. The first part is a commentary to Ioann. 10, 5-13 in which the previous argument on the necessity of moral consistency is mixed with an exhortatory direct address to the fathers at the Council [*si volueritis nos inferiores vos patres docere ... hanc vocem semper habeatis*]. The second part is equally exhortatory in tone, as marked by the use of subjunctives [*compleamus* and *curemus*]. The emphatic nature of the address can be inferred by the hyperbata.³³¹ Vocabulary

³³¹ Complex: *filus semper in ecclesia mansurus*; aBA: *tumore superbiae deposito*; aVA: *suae agnoscunt oves, nudo non potest trader verbo, voci veri non concordat pastoris*; abBA: *per voluntariam evangelicae admonitionis paupertatem*. Wright, 'Columbanus's Epistulae', 89 also registers *velut amputatis dissensionis ac discordiae causis* as an example of pattern abBA, but the two genitives are not in grammatical agreement with each other but simply two coordinated substantives.

choices reflect the theological background of the disciplinary argument carried on by the writer: especially of note is the use of the adjective *actualis*, which denotes the realization in practice of the evangelical example. Bernard Bischoff has argued that the pairing of this concept with that of *theoria*, the contemplative aspect of Christian life, is a characteristic of Irish exegesis.³³² Finally one can note that the expression *integram caritatem* is also employed in Columbanus's *Epistula* III in a similar context.³³³ When related to a call for pacification between different factions, as in both instances of Columbanus's letters, the phrase could be translated as 'intact, full charity', that is, a sentiment that leaves no space to recrimination. The phrase also occurs with this meaning in the writings of one of Columbanus's preferred authorities, Faustus of Riez.³³⁴ Tracts such as this should be understood to be symptomatic of the legacy of a classic mode of expression in the act of mediation, what Damien Bracken has dubbed the 'language of concord' in the writing style of Columbanus.³³⁵

2.4.2 Epistolary qualities

Columbanus continues on the necessity of exemplary behaviour on the part of the clergy with a reference to the passage of the good shepherd in the Gospel of John. The section can be considered a rhetorical *excusatio*, as it addresses the audience, explaining the author's intention for a brief excursus from the maintopic as set out in the *exordium* (*Haec idcirco breviter tetigi ut...*). The two quotations from the Gospel should be understood as part of the same discourse, something that is impeded by the editor's choices of separating them in two different paragraphs (3 and 4, in Walker's edition). In the second half of the passage (*Simul igitur omnes..*), the mode of expression is again paraenetic or exhortatory, even though the audience is not addressed directly again. However, the first person plural is used (*compleamus* and *curemus*) compounded by a formula that equates the status of the writer and that of the recipients (*sive clerici sive*

³³² Bischoff, *Wendepunkte*, 220 see also Smit, *Studies*, 52-54, suggesting possible derivations

³³³ Columbanus *Ep.* III,2 (Walker, ed. *Opera*, 24) *cum integra caritate perseverantis*

³³⁴ Faustus, *Sermones*, 24 *Ad Monachos* II (Engelbrecht, ed. *Opera*, 318). The expression is also used in an epistolary context by Ruricius of Limoges, *Epistolarum Libri*2, 1 (Engelbrecht, ed. *Opera*, 372). Interestingly, it refers to the moment in which friends find solace in each other's presence through the exchange of letters. The language of mediation and that of epistolary *amicitia* often overlap.

³³⁵ Bracken, 'Columbanus and the language of concord', 20, referring to the text of *Ep.* III and 24, pointing to the writings of Gregory the Great as a possible influence.

monachi) within the limits of the ethical mandates that are being laid down. Columbanus develops his exhortation around two key concepts: on the one hand, the ‘tradition of fraternal correction’; on the other, his particular take on the convention of humility, which is turned into ‘the theological basis on which [he] stakes his right to speak out’.³³⁶ In respect to the first concept, it should be noted that it is a recurring element in Columbanus’s exhortations, seemingly being developed to allow him to address the faults of the secular clergy without overstepping hierarchical bounds.³³⁷ The subsequent appeal to ‘lay aside the swelling growth of pride’ [*tumore superbiae deposito*] as well as the call to follow the humility and poverty of Christ (2 Cor. 8, 9) prepares the ground for the main request in the next section. Humility and a willingness to live out evangelical pauperism are presented as the pre-requisite to resolve any internal ecclesiastical dissension. It goes without saying that, even though regular and secular clergy are supposed to be united in this, according to Columbanus the change in attitude should primarily involve bishops and priests and not his monastic community. How to deal with those not willing to ‘abandon various lusts’ (*cupiditatibus diversis depositis*) is precisely what he had questioned Pope Gregory about. Finally, although impossible to assess, the invitation to ‘write down unanimously’ (*unum in reliquis scribere curemus*) could be understood to refer to documents produced by the council. This might be suggested by Columbanus’s insistence on the use of the term *canones* throughout the letter, perhaps hiding an invitation to promulgate regulations in a way that is more considerate of the letter of Scriptural mandates.³³⁸

³³⁶ Both expressions are employed by Damien Bracken in relation to this passage in his comprehensive analysis of Columbanus’s relationship with ecclesiastical authority. See Bracken, ‘Authority and duty’, 197-198 and ‘Juniors teaching elders’, 267-269.

³³⁷ Columbanus, *Ep.V*, 10 (Walker, ed. *Opera*, 46) is the closest in wording: *merito vestri iuniores vobis resistunt* and *versa vice filii vestri in caput converse sunt, vos vero in caudam*. See Bracken, ‘Juniors teaching elders’, 263-266 for the Scriptural background of this tradition and Bracken, ‘Columbanus and the language of concord’, 37-43 for that of the body metaphors in discussions on ecclesiastic authority. It is on the basis of Bracken’s articles that an alternative translation by Tommaso Leso has been rejected. Leso, ‘Columbanus in Europe: the evidence from the *Epistulae*’, 372 translated ‘if you, fathers want to teach us, juniors’, which is admittedly more sensible in context but does not take into account Columbanus’s consistent attitude when correcting authorities.

³³⁸ Stancliffe, ‘Columbanus and the Gallic bishops’, 212-214 underlines the differences between the Gallic church, which relied on previous synodical documents in its proceedings and the expectations of Columbanus, who relied on the Scriptures and patristic *exempla*.

2.4.3 Sources

Aidan Breen has called attention to the similarities between this passage and the discussion of the ‘wise man without good deeds’ in the seventh-century Irish tract *De XII abusivis*.³³⁹ There are no verbal parallels nor any other clear sign of one text depending from the other, yet the meaning of the two passages is the same: the words of a preacher are meaningless to an audience, if not consistent with his actions. Breen argued that Columbanus shared a common source with *De XII abusivis*, noting that there are other similar instances of thematic proximity between other parts of that tract and several passages of Columbanus’s *Instructiones* and Penitential.³⁴⁰ This common source, on the basis of indirect evidence from common exegetical texts it draws from, is postulated by Breen to have been related to the Easter controversy and is designated as II by him.³⁴¹ No other scholarly work seems to have so far engaged with Breen’s hypothesis,³⁴² and it goes beyond the scope of the present work to review the evidence presented in his article. Nonetheless, it could be observed that the passages in which Columbanus would have made use of Breen’s II source³⁴³ share the same epistolary characteristics. They employ exhortatory language and engage with Scriptural quotations while at the same time the ‘conversational’ elements of the epistolary style, that is, apostrophes, use of second-person forms and parenthetical insertions, are minimal or completely absent.

Section 2.5: diplomatic style.

Multum namque nocuit nocetque ecclesiasticae paci morum diversitas et varietas traditionum; sed tamen si, ut dixi, venena superbiae et invidiae vanaeque gloriae per salvatoris nostri praeceptum ad exemplum dicentis, *Discite a me quia mitis sum et humilis corde* [Matth 11, 29] et reliqua humilitatis verae exercitiis curare primus festinemus, sine ullo deniceps scandalo omnes perfecti,

³³⁹ *De XII abusivis*, 1 (Breen, ed. *De XII abusivis*, 332-336 and discussion 52-53)

³⁴⁰ Breen, ed. *De XII abusivis*, 50-56 and Breen, ‘The evidence of antique Irish exegesis’, 73-76

³⁴¹ Breen, ‘The evidence of antique Irish exegesis’, 76-95 discusses the evidence related to *De XII abusivis*. However the evidence adduced to argue for its Paschal character not related to the content of the texts looks like a circular argument: ‘It [the paschal character of II] may also be inferred by the paschal context of Columbanus’ use of II in Ep. 2’.

³⁴² Bracken, ‘Authority and duty’, 203-204 and ‘Columbanus and the language of concord’, 42-45 acknowledged the existing link between Columbanus and *De XII abusivis* but did not engage with the hypothesis of a common source.

³⁴³ The other passages discussed by Breen are Columbanus, *Ep.* 2, 7; 8 and 9 (Walker, ed. *Opera*, 18 l. 17-24; 20-22 l. 30-35 and l. 1-18). Breen, ‘The evidence of antique Irish exegesis’, 96-97

odio deleto, sicut discipuli domini nostri Iesu Christi nos *invicem* ex toto corde *diligimus* [Ioann 13, 35]. Et si aliqua sit traditionum diversitas, sicut et de Paschate, dum non possunt humilis contendere, *neque talem consuetudinem habet ecclesia* [1 Cor. 11, 16] dum cito veteriora cognoscent, qui eodem proposito eodemque desiderio veritatis cognoscendae similiter quaerunt quid rectius sequantur, quando nemo vincitur nisi error et quando nullus in se sed in Domino gloriatur, quaeramus itaque simul, quaeso vos, o amatissimi patres ac fratres, et videamus qualis verior sit traditio – vestra an fratrum vestrorum in Occidente. Omnes enim ecclesiae totius Occidentis sicut in tomo responsionis meae quem vobis nunc misi, licet ante triennium scriptum, indicavi, non respiciunt fieri debere resurrectionem ante passionem, id est ante aequinoctium Pascha, et vigesimam lunam non excedunt, ne sine auctoritate Veteris Testamenti sacramentum Novi Testamenti agant. Sed haec alias; alioquin quod quidem illi sentiunt de Pascha sancto papae per tres tomos innotui, et adhuc sancto fratri vestri Arigio brevi libello hoc idem scribere praesumpsi.

2.5.1 Vocabulary

It is necessary to properly frame the terminology employed by Columbanus to designate some of his own writings in this passage within the conventions of contemporary letter-writers, as it is significant not only for appreciating his epistolary relationship with the Gallic and Roman clergy but also for the dating and composition of his epistolary works as a whole. However, Columbanus's vocabulary choices and phrasing leave much room for interpretation. The 'tome of my reply, which I now sent you, though written three years ago' (*tomo responsionis meae, quem vobis nunc misi, licet ante triennium scriptum*) has been variously identified by commentators.³⁴⁴ *Tomus* is a word often found to designate written material in epistolary exchanges (for example, the famous *Tomus ad Flavianum* by Pope Leo I) although a precise

³⁴⁴ Walker, ed. *Opera*, xxvi-xxvii and 17n1 identified it with the letter to Pope Gregory. This is now considered to be unlikely by most scholars. See for example Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, 368; Todde and Nuvolone, 'Le lettere e la preghiera', 117n19; Stancliffe, 'Columbanus and the Gallic bishops', 211 and 'Columbanus and shunning', 118-121; Flechner, 'Dagan, Columbanus and the Gregorian mission', 72-74; Dubreucq, 'L'oeuvre épistolaire', 114

contemporary definition of what distinguishes it from a *liber* or an *epistula* is not extant.³⁴⁵ The description of *tomus* by Isidore of Seville refers to the length quality and to the etymology of the object and does not specify it had any special meaning when used in the context of epistolary exchanges: ‘Third are tomes (*tomi*), which we call books or volumes. Homilies are spoken to the common people but tomes, that is books, are longer discourses (*disputationes*)’ and ‘[a slip (*scheda*)] is a thing still being emended, its name is Greek as is *tomus*’.³⁴⁶ Nonetheless it should also be remembered that other authors no less closer in time to Columbanus than Isidore did use *tomus/i* as a descriptor for written work sent as letters. This is especially true in respect to materials produced by the great church councils of the fifth century, which had great relevance to another ecclesiastical dispute of Columbanus’s times, the Three Chapters controversy in which he would also be involved.³⁴⁷ The issue is further complicated by the fact that Columbanus subsequently stated that the pope has been informed of the western churches’ Easter liturgy ‘in three tomes’ [*per tres tomos*]. The *tomus responsionis* can be plausibly inferred to have been a work of considerable length in which a single question, the Easter question, was discussed. This would sit well with how Columbanus refers to it as an attachment of the present piece of correspondence [*quem vobis nunc misit*]. If this is the case, the function of the present letter to the council would have been to accompany and cast a favourable light on the work which the assembly was meant to consult on the finer points of the Easter controversy. But this would also mean that Columbanus had also sent three similar but separate *tomi* dealing with the same points to the Roman pontiff on different occasions. This seems unlikely: rather, it is conceivable that the same word is used with a different meaning: the three *tomi* would be different sections, or ‘volumes’ of a unitary, but more complex work. In short, Columbanus’s first usage [*tomus*

³⁴⁵ For an example of *tomus* being used in the context of epistolary exchanges by a close contemporary of Columbanus see Gregory of Tours, *Libri historiarum decem*, 10, 19 ed. Bruno Krusch and Wilhelm Levison, *Gregorii episcopi Turonensis decem libri historiarum*, MGH, *Scriptores rerum Merovingicarum* 1, (Hannover, 1938) 511

³⁴⁶ Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiarum libri*, VI, 8 and 14 (Lindsay, ed. *Etymologiarum*, 234 and 239). Translated in Stephen A: Barney, W.J. Lewis, J. A. Beach, Oliver Berghoff, *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, (Cambridge, 2006), 139-140 and 142. See also 142n9 where the translator differentiates between the two usages of the word with the later usages being influenced by its etymology, ‘insert/cutout’.

³⁴⁷ Of note, other than the *Tome* of Leo I, is the mention of Proclus’s *Tome to the Armenians* in two tracts by Facundus of Hermiane, *Pro defensione trium capitulorum libri ad Iustinianum*, 1,1 and 8,4 *PL*, 67 col. 0530b and col.0718C. On this see Price, *The acts of the Council of Constantinople of 553*, 272.

responsionis] of the word can be linked with the already standing practice of referring as *tomus* to sizeable letters of dogmatic or generally theoretical content, whereas his second usage [*per tres tomos*] should be understood to be closer to Isidore's definition, detailing the material qualities of the work. It could be ventured that Columbanus's *tomus responsionis* could have been the pro-*Latercus* equivalent of Cummian's *Epistula de controversia paschali*, that is, a work structured around the investigation of Scriptural commandments, patristic writings and the comparison of the systems of reckoning known to the author. The editors of Cummian's letter have pointed out how its structure reflects canonistic prescription from the *Collectio hibernensis*; on the basis of the passage from the letter to Boniface IV, it could be argued that Columbanus was also aware of them and might have organised a doctrinal discussion along the same lines.³⁴⁸ Additionally, it has also been speculated that both the *tomus responsionis* and the three *tomi* to the pope could be dated to the year 600, in light of both the expression *ante triennium* and of the known divergences in the Easter date for the *Latercus* and Victorian cycle in that year, which might have caused Columbanus to prepare a defence of the position of his community.³⁴⁹ Finally there is the *brevi libello* that Columbanus sent to Arigius. This is the only appearance of this word in the corpus of Columbanus's writings, but Jonas of Bobbio recorded a 'short book of great learning' [*libellum florenti scientia*] composed by Columbanus in Milan against the Arian heresy.³⁵⁰ Just as the *libellus* to Arigius, this work does not survive, and it is impossible to assess whether they were akin in format and delivery, although it is reasonable to suppose that the *libellus* to Arigius was accompanied by a letter, similarly to the relationship that has been postulated between the *tomus responsionis* and this very epistle. In either case, what can be gathered from this brief analysis is

³⁴⁸Walsh and Ó Cróinín, *Cummian's letter*, 17-18 refer to the canon of Innocent I from the *Collectio Hibernensis*, 19 (Wasserschleben, ed. *Die irische Kanonensammlung*, 59), which contains a hierarchy of authorities that should be consulted on obscure points. They observed: "That such a statement should be contained in the Irish collection strongly suggests that Cummian adhered consciously to an established pattern of investigation and one that may have already received formulation in the canonical decrees". Compare Columbanus, *Ep.* V, 12 (Walker, ed. *Opera*. 50, l. 23-25) where a very similar hierarchy of authorities is formulated.

³⁴⁹See Dubreucq, 'L'oeuvre épistolaire', 114-115 and Stancliffe, 'Columbanus and shunning', 118-121 for a full discussion of correlation between Easter dates and occasions of writing for Columbanus

³⁵⁰Jonas, *VC*, 1, 29 (Krusch, ed. *Vitae Columbani*, 106-107). O'Hara and Wood, *Jonas of Bobbio. Life of Columbanus*, 167 and n385 translated *libellum* as little work and speculated that it might have not survived because it would have made Columbanus's pro-Tricapitoline attitude too apparent. Tosi, 'Arianesimo tricapolino', 63-71 suggested that Columbanus's *libellus* against the Arians survives in either the form of the symbol *Quicumque vuult*, preserved by a Bobbio manuscript or in that of Columbanus's *Instructiones*.

that Columbanus's epistolary activity was much more varied and outreaching than the surviving collection suggests. Just like the Gallo-Roman letter-writers of the early sixth century, Columbanus composed technical works on Christian doctrine and practice that were circulated among his epistolary contacts, with the intention of providing a common base for a confrontation. It could even be observed that while the surviving epistles often show signs of having been influenced by the format of orally delivered sermons, the lost works might have been an hybrid form of classical letters and technical tracts.³⁵¹

2.5.2 Structure and style

The passage is marked by complex sentence-structure and a large number of subordinate clauses which give an almost frenzied quality to the prose as whole. This is especially true for the central section, marked by two very long if-clauses [*si... curare festinemus* and *si aliqua sit traditionum diversitas...*], and no less than seven subordinate clauses, where the emphasis is further accentuated by devices such as chiasmus, homeoteleuton and hyperbata.³⁵² In contrast the latter part of the passage, where the characteristics of Easter in the west are describes, is much more rhetorically subdued, considering that subordinate clauses (such as the relative clause *quem vobis nunc misi* and the purpose clause *ne sine auctoritateagant*) are more linear, without being broken up by participle constructions. In short, while the rhetorical appeals to humility are still emphatic, the author takes every care to state his case on Easter in a balanced and comprehensive way.

2.5.3 Epistolary qualities

The author continues to build on the previously introduced concepts of Christian humility and adherence to ethical prescriptions from the Scriptures. However, in this passage, he moves away from the context in which it had been first introduced, that is, an exhortation for a more effective pastoral action. Instead, the exercise of Christian humility is presented as a pre-requisite for the

³⁵¹On the process of hybridisation of the letter form see Bronwen Neil, 'Continuities and changes in the practice of letter-collecting from Cicero to Late Antiquity' in Pauline Allen and Bronwen Neil, eds. *Collecting Early Christian Letters: From the Apostle Paul to Late Antiquity*(Cambridge, 2015), 3-17:15-16

³⁵²Chiasmus and homeoteleuton: *morum diversitas et varietas traditionum*. Hyperbata, aVA: *si aliquas sit traditionum diversitas; quails verior sit tradition.*

solution to the issue that has caused Columbanus to be involved with this particular council of the Gallic church in the first place, namely the differences in the celebration of Easter. At first, the problem of the *Latercus* Easter is presented in very generic terms (*multum namque nocuit nocetque ecclesiasticae paci morum diversitas et varietas traditionum*) and contrasted with the evangelic example (Matt. 11,29). The author progressively approaches the object of the controversy, introducing it in an incidental way [*sicut et de Paschate*] as a specific case of the previously mentioned ‘diversity of traditions’. Then it is presented as the equal counterpart of the Gallic clergy’s position that needs to be investigated [*quails verior sit traditio*]. Finally the key elements of the diverging reckoning of the Western churches are explained in full [*omnes enim ecclesiae ... agant*]. It should be noted that Columbanus does not endorse any position in the passage, but simply invites the council to inquire into matter [*quaeramus itaque simul, quaeso vos, amantissimi patres ac fratres*]. This reticence and seemingly even-handed approach is accompanied by a return of direct addresses and conversational turn of phrases, leaving the impression that the author wants to give a conciliatory and diplomatic tone to his writing. In terms of contents, the description of the Easter of the Western churches repeats the same points listed in the letters to Gregory the Great: Easter should not be celebrated before the equinox, and it should not exceed the twentieth day of the lunar month, even recalling the same reasoning based on the prescription of Leviticus [*ne sine auctoritate Veteris Testamenti sacramentum Novi Testamenti agant*].³⁵³

The name of Arigius of Lyon is of prime importance for dating the letter and identifying the council it addresses as the council of Chalons of 603 AD, of which there are no surviving acts.³⁵⁴

The question remains of whether Columbanus could count him among his supporters and patrons or if he had sent his *libellus* on Easter because he was the foremost of his adversaries among the

³⁵³ Columbanus, Ep. I, 4 (Walker, ed. Opera, 6).

³⁵⁴ *Concilia Galliae. 511-695*, ed. DeClerq, CCSL 148a, 263. The council is recalled by sources detailing the life of bishop Desiderius of Vienne, who was exiled by it under pressure from the Burgundian monarchy. See for example Fredegar, *Chronicorum liber quartum cum continuationis*, 24, ed. and trans. J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, *The fourth book of the Chronicle of Fredegar, with its continuations* (London, 1960), 15. The identification of Arigius with the bishop of Lyon has not been challenged since Gundlach’s edition; Gundlach, ed. *Epistulae*, 160 and Gundlach, ‘Über die Columban-Briefe’, 510-511. See also Walker, ed. *Opera*, xn7; Todde and Nuvolone, ‘Le lettere e la preghiera’, 119n23; Corning, *The Celtic and Roman tradition*, 29 and Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, 352n40, for the dating of Arigius’s episcopacy

Gallic bishops. Although there is little to no evidence that Columbanus's community had ever had the support of the local clergy, as opposed to secular patronage, it should be recalled that Arigius was a close collaborator of the dowager queen Brunhild and her grandson Theuderic II, who at this time were more likely to have still been very much supportive of the community in Luxeuil.³⁵⁵ Regardless of this, it is clear that Arigius was one of the most influential figures in the council since Columbanus felt the need to provide him with as much detail as he had offered to the Roman pontiff about the Easter reckoning of the Western Churches.³⁵⁶

Section 2.6: *Propositio*, questioning style

Unum itaque deposco a vestra sanctitate, ut cum pace et caritate meam comporetis insipientiam ac superbam, ut aiunt quidam, scribendi praesumptionem, quam necessitas extorsit, non vanitas, ut ipsa probat vilitas; et quia huius diversitatis auctor non sim ac pro Christo salvatore, communi domino ac Deo nostro, in has terras peregrinus processerim, deprecor vos per commune dominum, et per eum *qui iudicaturus est vivos ac mortuos* [2 Tim. 4, 1] adiuro, si mereamini ab eo agnosci, qui multis dicet, *amen dico vobis quia numquam novi vos* [Matth 7, 23] ut mihi liceat cum vestra pace et caritate in his silvis silere et vivere iuxta ossa nostrorum fratrum decem et septem defunctorum, sicut usque nunc licuit nobis inter vos vixisse XII annis, ut pro vobis, sicut usque nunc fecimus, oremus ut debemus. Capiat nos simul oro Gallia quos capiet regnum caelorum, si boni simus meriti; unum enim regnum habemus prossimum et *unam spem vocationis* [Eph 4, 4] in Christo cum quo *conregnabimus* [2 Tim. 2, 12], *si tamen* prius hic *cum eo patiamur* ut et simul *cum eo glorificemur* [Rom, 8, 17].

³⁵⁵Fox, *The bishop and the monk*, 178-181, and 192-193 discussed possible connections between Desiderius of Vienne and Columbanus with his community, concluding that they were not likely to have been allies at that point and that his positive portrayal by Jonas is affected by the subsequent political events. If this is the case, it stands to reason that Arigius, an adversary of Desiderius, was not by necessity also an adversary of Columbanus and that similarly, Jonas negative portrayal of Arigius was influenced by the political disgrace of Brunhild's line. See Jonas, *VC*, II, 1 (Krusch, ed. *Vitae Columbani*, 113) and translation, O'Hara and Wood, *Jonas. Life of Columbanus*, 179 and n163. The translators point out that there is implicit criticism of Arigius in the passage, since he failed as the teacher of Attala. Dubreucq, 'L'oeuvre épistolaire', 121 identified Arigius from the *Vita Columbani* as the contemporary bishop of Gap, not with the same person mentioned in this letter.

³⁵⁶Stanciliffe, 'Columbanus and the Gallic bishops', 211 put forth the notion that he Arigius had a hand in the collection of canons known as *Vetus Gallica*, and that, therefore, Columbanus's insistence on canons and law could be directed specifically at him

2.6.1 Structure and style

The passage can be divided into three distinct elements: an introductory *excusatio*, reproducing Columbanus's usual argument about his right to speak up out of necessity, [*unum itaque deosco ... probat vilitas*]; what could be described as the main request and the core of this letter [*et quia huius diversitatis ... oremus ut debemus*]; finally a reformulation of the same request in a more rhetorical appeal [*capiat nos simul.. cum eo glorificemur*]. As with the main request in *Epistula* III, the period is marked by a large number of subordinate and incidental clauses, and the prose is highly sophisticated, with liberal use of rhyme [*non vanitas, ut ipsa probat vilitas*], word-play [*capiat nos simul oro Gallia, quos capiet regnum coelorum*], parallelism [*sicut usque nunc licuit nobis ... sicut usque nunc fecimus*], homeoteleuton [*oremus ut debemus*], and hyperbata.³⁵⁷ It should be noted that Walker's edition does not recognise in full the biblical quotation at the end of the passage. Firstly, Todde and Nuvolone³⁵⁸ have correctly added a reference to Eph. 4, 4 in respect to the words *unam spem vocationis*. Secondly, while both the influence of 2 Tim. 2, 12 and Rom.8, 17 on the use of the word *conregnabimus* is acknowledged, the reference should be corrected to include only the latter passage as the words *cum eo patiamur* and *cum eo glorificemur* do reflect the wording of the rest of the Biblical passage.³⁵⁹

2.6.2 Epistolary qualities

As discussed by Johannes Smit, the opening sentence of this passage is one of clearest example of Columbanus developing the customary and topical excuses for the rusticity of his style into a more complex argument to advocate for his right to speak up when in need.³⁶⁰ The writer admits that he could be accused of 'foolishness and ... proud impudence in writing', but that the very rusticity of the text (*vilitas*), that is a supposed poor quality of the mode of expression, should be proof that he is intent in addressing his superiors is not vain or self-aggrandising but motivated by

³⁵⁷ Type aVA: *meam comporetis insipientiam; ipsa probat vilitas; si boni simus meriti; unum enim regnum habemus prossimum*; complex: *superbam, ut aiunt quidam, scribendi praesumptionem*;

³⁵⁸ Todde and Nuvolone, 'Le lettere e la preghiera', 120

³⁵⁹ Walker, ed. *Opera*, 16 in *apparatus*. Rom. 8, 17 reads *si tamen compatimur ut et conglorificemur*.

Columbanus does refer to 2 Tim. 2, 12 in a different letter: Columbanus, *Ep. IV*, 6 (Walker, ed. *Opera*, 32)

³⁶⁰ Smit, *Studies* 68-69 and 75. For other instances of this argument see Columbanus, *Ep. I*, 2; *Ep. III*, 2 and *Ep. V*, 2 and 16 (Walker, ed. *Opera*, 2; 22; 36 and 54).

necessity. Similarly to how this same theme is declined in the opening paragraph of the letter to Boniface IV, the topos *non praesumptione sed necessitate* is immediately linked with Columbanus status as an outsider and an ascetic (*pro Christo Salvatore ... in has terras peregrinus processeram*). Although Columbanus's focus on rhetorical parrhesia has been likened to that of near contemporary Insular authors, the interplay between his defence of 'free speech' and his identity of *peregrinus* is a unique and defining trait of his epistolary prose.³⁶¹

However, contrary to the writer's attitude in both that letter and letter to Gregory I, here, emphasis is put on himself not being the initiator of the controversy [*quia huius diversitas auctor non sim*]. This is functional to portray his monastic community as under attack, and to the claim that it is no longer allowed to live unmolested [*in his silvis silere et vivere ... sicut usque nunc fecimus*]. Yet these statements do not need to reflect the actual unfolding of the events, that is, there is no need to suppose that the Gallic episcopate was actively seeking out and persecuting those who did not celebrate Easter according to the cycle of Victorius of Aquitaine. As argued in the previous chapter, there are reasons to suppose that Columbanus had initiated the involvement of the Roman see with this matter, if not the controversy in its entirety, trying to bring to the attention of the pontiff what he thought were the faults of the Gallic reckoning. This portrayal of himself and his community might simply be part of his rhetorical strategy. Alternatively, it should be recalled that, according to Columbanus, one of the faults of the Easter cycle of Victorius was that it had been written in recent times and it was a novelty.³⁶² From his point of view, the diversity in customs with the West might have been a result of the Gallic churches accepting the new system. Hence, his phrasing and his appeals to unity might also reflect his conviction of upholding 'the older truth'.

In respect to the contents of the request itself, a final observations should be made. This peroration stands out for its collective character, being made on behalf of the whole ascetic

³⁶¹ Irene van Renswoude, *The rhetoric of free speech in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, Cambridge studies in Medieval life and thought (Cambridge, 2019), 153.

³⁶² Columbanus, Ep. I, 12 and Ep. II, 7 (Walker, ed. Opera, 12 and 18) are the passages in which this is stated most clearly

community living in the wilderness (*in silvis*). This is in stark contrast with the appeals in the letter to Gregory I and the letter to Boniface IV, both of which rely exclusively on the writer's argumentation, and not on depicting an existing group of virtuous Christian as under undue attack. Instead, this approach can be compared to the petition in *Ep.* III, because of the prevalence of the first person plural in it and because of its mention of the isolation in the wilderness (*in desertis sedentes*). This might be symptomatic of a shift of Columbanus's position within the controversy: while the letter to Gregory I requested that the pope should recognise the orthodoxy of the *Latercus* reckoning and consequently condemn the cycle of Victorius, here the focus of the petition is on maintaining the status quo, that is, the council is asked not to condemn the Easter practice of the monastic community. The emphatic appeal to tolerance in the name of the common Christian belief [*capiat nos Gallia quos capiet regnum coelorum*], is very telling of a new preoccupation of Columbanus: although he might have initiated the conflict by making his condemnation of the Victorian Easter known to the Pope, this major diversity of custom might have caused disruption with his neighbours³⁶³ to the point that the orthodoxy of his whole community was regarded as dubious.³⁶⁴ Hence, the letters written after the precipitation of the crisis with the Gallic episcopate to vindicate the orthodoxy of the *Latercus*, even inviting investigation into the matter, but what they explicitly request is only a confirmation of the community's pre-existing Easter custom, and much is made of both its ascetic lifestyle and isolation, which, as shown by letter III, should entitle the *peregrini* to live according their own rules.³⁶⁵ The reference to the twelve years that Columbanus and his monks have spent in the wilderness, which is usually employed to date his arrival in the Vosges around 591, should be understood in this context, providing a sense of the stability of the foundation to the audience. It is also interesting to compare the mention of the 'bones of our seventeen dead brothers' with the

³⁶³Perhaps already soured by his reporting to Rome on disciplinary issues; see Stancliffe, 'Columbanus and shunning', 120-121 for this hypothesis.

³⁶⁴Columbanus *Ep.* IV, 3 (Walker, ed. *Opera*, 28), writing after his exile in 610, Columbanus does mention the Easter question as a reason for animosity against Attala and the monks who had remained in Luxeuil.

³⁶⁵Various scholars have noted this shift. For example Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, 370; Corning, *The Celtic and Roman tradition*, 29-31 and 'Columbanus and the Easter controversy', 105-110 and Dubreucq, 'L'oeuvre épistolaire', 121-122.

appeal to the ‘ashes of the saints’ in *Ep.* III.³⁶⁶ Both occur during a final peroration for leaving the monastic community unmolested. It could be argued that Columbanus might have regarded the mention of his deceased companions with the same reverence with which he regarded the Roman martyrs, which is quite attuned to the reconstruction of the attitude of early Irish Christians towards ‘ascetic martyrdom’.³⁶⁷

Section 2.7: apologetic style

Ego scio quod multis superflua videbitur haec mea loquacitas; sed melius iudicavi ut et vos sciretis quae et nobis hic tractamus et cogitamus inter nos. Hi sunt enim nostri canones, dominica et apostolica mandata, in his fides nostra est; haec arma scutum et gladius haec apologia; haec nos moverunt de patria; haec et hic servare contendimus, licet tepide; in his usque ad mortem perseverare et oremus et optamus, sicut et seniores nostros facere conspeximus. Vos vero patres sancti videte quid faciatis ad istos veteranos pauperes et peregrinos senes; ut ego arbitror, melius vobis erit illos confortare quam conturbare. Ego autem ad vos ire non ausus sum, ne forte contenderem praesens contra apostolicum dictum dicentis, *noli verbis contendere*, [2 Tim 2, 14] et iterum, *si quis contentiosus est, nos talem consuetudinem non habemus, neque ecclesia Dei* [1 Cor. 11, 16]; sed confiteor conscientiae meae secreta, quod plus credo traditioni patriae meae iuxta doctrinam et calculum octoginta quattuor annorum et Anatolium ab Eusebio ecclesiasticae historiae auctore episcopo et sancto catalogi scriptore Hieronymo laudatum Pascha celebrare, quam iuxta Victorium nuper dubie scribentem et, ubi necesse erat, nihil definientem, ut ipse in suo testato prologo, qui post tempora domni Martini et domni Hieronymi et papae Damasi **post/per** centum et tre annos sub Hilario scripsit. Vos vero eligite ipsi quem sequi malitis, et cui melius credatis iuxta illud apostoli, *omnia probate, quod bonum est tenete* [1 Thess. 5, 21].

³⁶⁶ Columbanus, *Ep.* III, 3 (Walker, ed. *Opera*, 24 *sanctorum cineres*)

³⁶⁷ Claire Stancliffe, ‘Red, white and blue martyrdom’, in Dorothy Whitelock et al. eds, *Ireland in early mediaeval Europe: studies in memory of Kathleen Hughes* (Cambridge, 1982), 21-46:31-35 and Elva Johnston, ‘Exile from the edges: the Irish context of *peregrinatio*’, in Fletcher and Medeer, *The Irish in early medieval Europe*, 38-52:39-40

2.7.1 Readings and Vocabulary

In the penultimate sentence, the text as edited by Walker accepts a significant emendation, first suggested by Bartholomew Mac Carthy. However, the arguments for retaining the reading of the passage as found in Metzler’s and Fleming’s transcript are just as strong, in light of developments in the understanding the history of Easter cycles and the identification of the unique characteristics of the Insular *Latercus* supported by Columbanus.³⁶⁸

qui post tempora domni Martini et domni Hieronymi et papae Damasi per centum et tres annos sub Hilario scripsit [Walker, 18, 7,14-16]	qui post tempora d. Martini et domni Hieronymi et papae Damasi post centum et tres annos sub Hilario scripsit [F, 115]	qui post tempora dni Martini et domini Hieronymi et papae Damasi post centum et tres annos sub Hilario scripsit [M, 84]
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In the two seventeenth-century copies, the preposition *post* is repeated two times. The first time it introduces a generic relative dating for the writing of Victorius’s prologue. This consists of the mention of the three great figures that were each other’s near-contemporary: Martin, the bishop of Tours, Jerome, and Pope Damasus. The second time, it introduces a specific number of years, seemingly to specify the precise amount of time elapsed from the point previously introduced. This could be translated as ‘[the prologue] which Victorius wrote under Hilarus, after the times of the lord Martin and the lord Jerome and of Pope Damasus, [relative dating] after a hundred and three years [the time elapsed from the relative term of dating to Victorius’s writing]’. Victorius composed his prologue in the year 457, and such a phrasing would lead to infer that the year 354 was what Columbanus meant with his first dating clause. In nineteenth-century scholarship, the

³⁶⁸ Gundlach, *Epistulae*, 162 left the text unaltered. Todde and Nuvolone, ‘Le lettere e la preghiera’ 122-123 do not accept Walker’s text but, despite being the most recent edition of Columbanus’s letters, the rendition and commentary of this passage are presently wholly unsatisfactory. The editors do not correctly identify the *ciclum octoginta quattuor annorum*, that Columbanus is opposing to Victorius, describing it as the Roman cycle of Hippolytus, without mentioning the existence of another 84-year cycle, with a 14-years long *saltus* interval and different (solar) calendar limits, that is, the *latercus*.

prevailing opinion, expressed for example by Duchesne, Krusch and Mommsen³⁶⁹ was that Columbanus's mention of a one hundred and three years-long period before Victorius's writing was a reference to the calendar known as the *Chronograph of 354*.³⁷⁰ This also contained a list of Easter dates, but overall it seems out of place, as Columbanus had no way to associate it with any of the figures he had just mentioned. Bartholomew Mac Carthy pointed out that Columbanus had just admitted to have read Victorius's prologue to his Easter tables.³⁷¹ There, the Easter dates provided by the author are said to extend over a hundred and two years in the future [*per annos centos et duos futures*]. According to Bartholomew Mac Carthy, then, Columbanus had simply added the year of publication of the tables to the number he had read, and the grand total of one hundred and three years does not describe the time elapsed between the age of Martin, Jerome and Damasus, and the writing of Victorius's Easter cycle, but simply the numbers of future years that the tables had covered in their original format. Accordingly, he argued that the preposition *post* should be amended to *per*, following the text of Victorius's prologue.³⁷² As seen in the above tabulation, Walker accepted this emendation in his edition, translating '[Victorius] after the age of great Martin and great Jerome and Pope Damasus, under Hilary covered a hundred and three years with his compilation'.

A different interpretation of the original reading [*post*] has been proposed by Daniel Mc Carthy following the rediscovery and reconstruction of the *latercus* Easter cycle, as part of his arguments for attributing the devising of the rules and of the first tables of the *latercus* to Sulpicius Severus.³⁷³ In his reading, the phrase *post centos et tres annos* is again a chronological re-definition on the period elapsed from the previous relative dating, about the age of Martin, Jerome

³⁶⁹ Louis Duchesne, ed. *Le Liber Pontificalis. Texte, introduction, et commentaire*. I, (Paris 1886), xxxivn1; Krusch, 'Die Einführung', 147; Theodor Mommsen, ed. *Cronographus anni cccliini* MGH, *Auctores Antiquissimi*, 9, Berlin 1892,34.

³⁷⁰ See introduction and edited text, Mommsen, ed. *Cronographus anni cccliini*, and Michele Renee Salzman, *On Roman Times: the codex calendar of 354 and the rhythms of urban life in Late Antiquity*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1990)

³⁷¹ MacCarthy, AU, 4, cxxx, n3 first observed the possibility of an emendation. Walker, *Opera*, 19n1 accepts his emendation.

³⁷² Victorius, *Prologus ad Hilarum*, 10ed. Bruno Krusch, 'Studien zur christlich-mittelalterlichen Chronologie: die Entstehung unserer heutigen Zeitrechnung,' *Abhandlungen der Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften Jahrgang 1937, phil.-hist. Klasse 8* (1938), 4-52:25.

³⁷³ Daniel P. McCarthy, 'Origin of the *Latercus* Paschal cycle of the Insular Celtic churches', in *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies*, 28, (1994) 25-50:39-40

and Damasus. In this case, the date of AD 354, once again obtained by subtracting one hundred and three years from the moment of Victorius's writing (AD 457), would be significant as McCarthy had proposed that the same year was chosen by Sulpicius Severus as the starting point of his Easter cycle, the same that Columbanus was defending. The suggestion that Sulpicius had set the year 354 as the first year of his computations is based on two elements: 1) from the reconstruction of the *latercus* Easter tables it can be (retrospectively) inferred that AD 354 was the first of an 84-year cycle that observed the lunisolar principles of the *latercus*.³⁷⁴ 2) it might coincide with the year of the baptism of Martin of Tours, Sulpicius's master. Fixing the starting point of a Paschal cycle in that year would have been an act of deference on the part of his biographer and devotee, Sulpicius.³⁷⁵ Columbanus's devotion to Martin of Tours is attested by Jonas,³⁷⁶ but this passage is the only time he is mentioned in the letters, or indeed the entire corpus of Columbanian writings, even though at least a part of Sulpicius's works about Martin were clearly well known to him.³⁷⁷ His mention here, in the context of a dating clause, does help Daniel McCarthy's argument, since it would otherwise be random and only justifiable if it is admitted that Columbanus had a very confused understanding of the chronology of the fourth-century fathers. Yet Bartholomew Mac Carthy and Walker's emendation cannot be dismissed as a 'non-sequitur',³⁷⁸ in light of Columbanus's demonstrable propensity to rely on inter-textual connections and allusions in his writing. The fact that the text had just mentioned Victorius's prologue, makes

³⁷⁴ McCarthy, 'Origin of the *Latercus*', 35-38. The data from the re-discovered Padua manuscript of the Insular *Latercus* he discussed indicates that AD 438 was the starting point of an 84-year cycle. Aldhelm's letter to Geraint of Dumnonia names Sulpicius Severus as the author of Paschal cycle then (AD 680) in use by a few Insular churches (Aldhelm, *Epistula ad Geruntium*, ed. Ewald, *Opera* 483). Since Sulpicius's death is dated to circa AD 420, if he had indeed authored the *Latercus* cycle, he must have fixed its beginning at an earlier point than the date that can be reconstructed through the manuscript data. Hence the date of AD 354 (=438-84) as a likely candidate. According to McCarthy, Columbanus's possible indirect mention of the year is a confirmation of this deduction.

³⁷⁵ McCarthy, 'Origin of the *Latercus*', 38. Easter of 354 is argued to be a likely date for Martin's baptism on the basis of Clare Stancliffe's reconstruction of the chronology. Clare Stancliffe, *St. Martin and his hagiographer. History and miracle in Sulpicius Severus*, (Oxford, 1983), 121-124.

³⁷⁶ Jonas, VC, I, 22 (Krusch, ed. *Vitae*, 95). Translated in O'Hara and Wood, *Life of Columbanus*, 147

³⁷⁷ See the appreciation of Sulpicius's influence on Columbanus by Wright, 'Columbanus's *Epistulae*', 78, and Stancliffe 'The thirteen sermons', 126, in addition to the references pointed out and discussed in the previous chapter.

³⁷⁸ McCarthy, 'Origin of the *Latercus*', 39n54; an overview of the contrasting opinions on this passage is also found in Bernard Merdringnac, *Les saints Bretons entre legends et histoire* (Rennes, 2015), 195-213

an emendation on this basis difficult to immediately dismiss out of hand, even though both of the source texts are in agreement.

From the point of view of textual criticism, Walker's and Mac Carthy's emendation has the advantage of relying on a phrase from Victorius's prologue, the very work that Columbanus is describing. On the other hand, the attribution of the *latercus* to Sulpicius Severus has been accepted by scholars³⁷⁹ and the explanation of the original phrasing of this dating clause proposed by Daniel McCarthy is more convincing than the alternative possibility of a reference to the *Chronograph of 354*. Both the reading *post centum et tres annos* and *per centum et tres annos* are here reported as equally valid. It should be noted that preferring Walker's emended text does not take away from Daniel Mc Carthy's argument about the authorship of the 84-year Easter cycle. The mere mention of Martin of Tours in relation to it, all the more because of its uniqueness in the context of Columbanian writings, would leave enough space to argue that Columbanus associated his system of reckoning with the figure of this saint, lending much weight to the other points adduced for attributing its composition to Sulpicius Severus. That the chronological data emerging from this passage may refer to Victorius's prologue, as per Mac Carthy's and Walker's interpretation, would not change the meaning of the phrase that places the devising of the 84-year cycle in a well-defined fourth-century cultural environment, that, thanks to modern research on the *latercus* tables, can be narrowed down to that of Sulpicius Severus.

2.7.2 Structure and style

The passage is marked by a very emphatic tone. Firstly, there is the constant juxtapositioning of first-person and second-person forms [*et nos.. et vos...; ut ego arbitror, melius vobis erit; Vos vero... Ego autem ad vos ire non ausus sum; Vos vero eligite*], resulting in a constant apostrophe,

³⁷⁹ Among others, Blackburn and Holford-Strevens, *The Oxford companion to the Year*, 872 repeat Daniel McCarthy's argument in respect to this passage from Columbanus; Charles-Ewards, *Early Christian Ireland*, 406-407; Immo Warntjes, 'The Munich Computus and the 84(14)-year Easter reckoning', in *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* 207c (2007), 31-85: 34n10 and 65n103 and *The Munich computus*, xxxvii; Mosshammer, *The Easter computus*, 205 and 230; Corning, *The Celtic and Roman traditions*, 8. On the other hand Faith Wallis, *Bede: The reckoning of time*, Translated texts for historians, 29, (Liverpool 1999), lvi, specifically mentioned this letter and Columbanus's seeming ignorance of the author of the 84-year cycle as a reason to doubt its attribution to Sulpicius. Warntjes, 'Victorius Vs. Dionysius', 35n8 offered a rebuttal based on Daniel Mc Carthy's argument.

in keeping with the stylistic requirement of the conversational tone of epistolary prose. Secondly, the demonstrative pronoun *haec* is repeated in anaphora [*Hi sunt enim... in his fides nostra est... haec arma ... haec apologia... haec nos moverunt de patria ...haec et hic servare contendimus ...in his uque ad mortem perseverare*]. This feature usually underlines a key concept worthy of repetition, therefore it is of primary importance to correctly understand what are the pronouns referring to: in this case there can be no doubt that they are explained by the expression *dominica et apostolica mandata*, ‘the commandments of the Lord and of the Apostles’.³⁸⁰ Thirdly, though less markedly than elsewhere, there are occurrences of hyperbata.³⁸¹ Yet, the mark of epistolary *humilitas* is also present: the writer acknowledges that his verbosity [*loquacitas*] may look excessive and describes his community in words that maybe chosen to elicit sympathy from the audience: ‘poor old people and old pilgrims’ (*veteranos pauperes et peregrinos senes*; with chiasmus)

2.7.3 Epistolary qualities

Overall, the tone of the passage can be described as apologetic. This is both in respect to the writer’s attitude towards his audience and in respect to the function of the passage in the overarching argumentative structure of the letter. For the first aspect, one has to look at how Columbanus uses of the convention of making excuses for his verbosity [*loquacitas*], because of the pressing need of letting his point of view be known [*et vos sciretis quae et nos hic tractamus et cogitemus inter nos*]. This allows him to quickly recapitulate the points he had previously made: the unavoidability of the Scriptural mandates, emphatically reiterated by way of the aforementioned anastrophe, and necessity of leniency towards those who keep them, which is required from his clerical adversaries [*melius vobis erit illos confortare quam conturbare*]. Furthermore, he excuses himself from not having presented himself in front of the council [*Ego ad vos ire non ausus sum*] (‘I did not dare to come to you’). This is presented as a conclusion drawn from the

³⁸⁰ As discussed below, this expression is central to Clare Stancliffe’s interpretation of the letter as addressing the differences between Columbanus and his adversaries identified as sources of authority, respectively the Scriptures and the canons of Church Councils. Stancliffe, ‘Columbanus and the Gallic bishops’, 208-209.

³⁸¹ aVA: *in suo testato prologo*; aBA: *sancto catalogi scriptore*; AbBa: *Eusebio ecclesiasticae historiae auctore*.

Scriptural premises previously laid out, as the repetition of the quote from 2 Tim. 14 indicates.³⁸² As for the second aspect, he also committed to a last-ditch defence of his preferred Easter cycle, in spite of his previous comment about discussing its merits in other relevant texts.³⁸³ This defence is phrased in very personal terms [*sed confiteor conscientiae meae secretae*](‘but I confess to my innermost conscience’), in great contrast to how the discourse had thus far chiefly involved the whole monastic community, rather than the person of the writer. It could be argued that the phrasing and structure of the following sentence are reminiscent of judicial apologia and it does not seem unfitting that such a sentence occurs right after the speaker has addressed the reason why he had not presented himself in front of a court of sorts, that is, the council.

In terms of contents, his defence of the 84-year *Latercus* cycle follows the same points put forth in the letter to Gregory: it is authoritative in Columbanus’s native land [*traditioni patriae meae*], as is Anatolius who has been praised by Eusebius and Jerome. The relationship between the cycle and the figure of Anatolius is not commented upon, they are merely paired [*iuxta doctrinam et calculum octoginta quattuor annorum et Anatolium*]. What is new in respect to his previous writings is a synthetic description of the faults of Victorius’s calculations: he has no long-standing authority [*nuper dubie scribentem... post tempora* etc.] and has not given precise definitions when necessary [*ubi necesse erat nihil definientem*]. This last point has been used to argue that Columbanus had read Victorius prologue [*in suo testato prologo*] and was referring to the problem of Victorius’s ‘double dates’, that is certain entries of his Easter list that offered competing dates for certain years on the basis of distinct lunar limits.³⁸⁴ Another epistolary testimony of the seventh-century Easter controversy, namely the letter of the monk Leo to the

³⁸² Columbanus, *Ep. II, 4*, (Walker, ed. *Opera*, 16); in the previous paragraph a shortened version of the Pauline quote had been used to argue that there should not be contentions on account of the differences in the dating of Easter; here the same quote is given in full.

³⁸³ Columbanus, *Ep. II, 5*, (Walker, ed. *Opera*, 16); *Sed haec alias* (‘But this I leave to another time’).

³⁸⁴ On the double dates, see Mosshammer, *The Easter computus*, 241; Warntjes, *Munich Computus*, LXXXIV-LXXXV n. 228 and Warntjes, ‘Victorius vs Dionysius’, 86-7. Walsh and Ó Cróinín, *Cummian’s letter*, 29 and Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, 392-393 have interpreted this passage as addressing this issue.

archdeacon Sesuldum, mentions this last feature of the cycle of Victorius.³⁸⁵ Comparing Leo's concise but specific phrasing of the issue³⁸⁶ with Columbanus's vague statement *nihil definientem* gives an idea of the differences between the didactic style with which the Easter controversy was treated by many authors and the idiosyncratic way with which Columbanus explains his ideas: his approach is rhetorical, with every single technical point being coloured by his pre-existing stance on the matter. Hence, even the double dates, which were generally considered a weak element in the cycle favoured by his adversaries are only alluded to in an equivocal way. Finally the closing sentence of the passage, leading up to the quotation from 1 Thes. 5, 21, is a repetition of the invitation made in the *propositio*: Columbanus's addressees should humbly inquire into the Easter matter and decide which reckoning was orthodox.

Section 2.8: paraenetic style

Absit ergo ut ego contra vos contendam congregandum, ut gaudeant inimici nostri de nostra christianorum contentione, Iudaei scilicet aut heretici sive pagani gentiles – absit sane, absit; alioquin aliter inter nos potest convenire, ut aut *unusquisque in quo vocatus est in eo permaneat apud Deum*, [I Cor 7, 23] si utraque bona est traditio, aut cum pace et humilitate sine ulla contentione libri legantur utrique, et quae plus Veteri et Novo Testamento concordant, sine ullius invidia serventur. Nam si ex Deo est, ut me hinc de loco deserti, quem pro domino meo Iesu Christo de trans mare expetivi, propellatis, meum erit illud propheticum dicere, *si propter me haec tempestas est super vos, tollite me et mittite me in mare, ut commotio haec quiescat a vobis* [Ion. 1, 12]; vestrum tamen prius sit, more illorum nautarum naufragum conari eripere visceribus pietatis et ad terram navem trahere, sicut illi, licet ethnici, fecerunt, scriptura narrante, *et conabantur viri redire, inquit, ad terram et non poterant, quia mare ibat et exurgebat magis fluctus* [Ion 1, 13]. Postremo in calce dicti, licet praesumptuose, suggero ut, quia in *via* huius saeculi *spatiosa et lata multi* ambulantes currunt ad compita arcta, si aliqui *pauci* inveniuntur, qui

³⁸⁵ Leo monachus, *Epistola de computo paschali*, ed. and trans. José-Carlos Martín-Iglesias, 'La *Epistola de computo paschali* (CPL 2300) del monje León: nueva edición y estudio de una obra probablemente Hispano-Visigoda', in *Rivista di cultura classica e medioevale*, 56,1 (2019), 205-239

³⁸⁶ Leo Monachus, *Epistola de computo*, 2 (Martín-Iglesias, 'La *Epistola de computo paschali*', 230) *ubi duae ambiguae opiniones dies paschalis uno eodemque anno praefixit*

per *angustam portam et arctam, quae ducit ad vitam* [Matth 7, 13-14] iuxta praeceptum Domini, gradientur, potius a vobis ad vitam transmittantur quam prohibeantur, ne forte et vos cum Pharisaeis sermo Domini sugillet dicens, *vae vobis scribae et pharisei, quia clauditis regnum caelorum ante nomine et nec vos intratis, nec sinitis introeuntes intrare* [Matth 23, 13].

2.8.1 Structure and style

Despite the abundance of scriptural quotations, this passage of the letter does not engage in exegesis, but it presents another exhortation to the clergymen of the council. The author skilfully handles several complex subordinate clauses throughout the passage, although correlation [*aut ... aut ...*] and asyndeton (the main clause *meum erit illud propheticum dicere* and *vestrum tamen prius sit*) are also employed. Among verbal forms, exhortative subjunctives are predominant, but it should be noted that one hypothetical construction is in the indicative mood (*nam si ex Deo est ... meum erit*).³⁸⁷ As several first and second person plural forms show the epistolary conversation carries over from the previous passage; significantly they are even used in parallelism [*meum erit ... vestrum tamen prius sit*]. As the tone is still quite emphatic, hyperbata are relatively frequent.³⁸⁸

2.8.2 Epistolary qualities

As stated above, the writer continues to address his audience directly. The first exhortation of the passage [*Absit ergo ut ego ... absit sane, absit*] provides further justification to the writer's decision of not attending the council in person. The formulation is impersonal and with emphatic repetition [*absit, sane absit*]: in addition to the apostolic commandment about not engaging in dispute,³⁸⁹ the author suggests that only the enemies of the Christian faith [*inimici nostri*], would benefit from a quarrel between his party and that of the Gallic council. That these enemies are specifically identified with the Jews as well as with heretics and pagans, [*Judaei scilicet aut heretici sive pagani gentiles*] might be a subtle rebuke on the part of Columbanus in respect to the stance taken by the Gallic bishops about the *Lateranus* cycle, if indeed they had been accusing him

³⁸⁷ On Columbanus's use of indicative present and future in if-clauses see Bieler, 'Notes on the text tradition' apud Walker, *Opera*, lxxx and Mohrman, 'The earliest continental Irish Latin', 219

³⁸⁸ Type aBA: *denostra christianorum contentione*; aVA: *utraque bona sit traditio; libri legantur utrique; sermo Dominis sugillet dicentis*

³⁸⁹ See the quotations from Tim. 2, 14 and 1 Cor. 11, 16 in the previous section.

of being a Judaizer, as he had reported it to Pope Gregory.³⁹⁰ The second part of the exhortation [*alioqui aliter ... invidia serventur*] formulates a suggestion on how to settle the differences on the Easter question in a way that would not generate further disputes. Two mutually exclusive alternatives are given [*aut ... aut*]. If both traditions are found to be valid [*si utraque bona est traditio*] the parties are to continue to adhere to their established custom, as expressed by the quotation from I Cor. 7, 24. Alternatively, there is the proposal for an impartial examination of the authorities adduced by both parties [*cum pace et humilitate sine ulla contentione libri legantur utrique*], following which only the one that is most in agreement with the Scriptures should be maintained. It should be observed that neither of these proposed solutions are given a central position in a letter that supposedly discusses the Easter question. They are not part of a formal request, a *propositio*, but merely suggestions of different courses [*aliter alioquin*]. Since the author represents himself as unwilling to start an internal ecclesiastical dispute through his presence at the council that had summoned him, the focus of this exhortation centres on the idea of avoiding contention rather than on actually laying the groundwork for the realization of one of the two proposals.

The remainder of the exhortation confirms this: rather than ironing out the details of the two aforementioned proposals, the authors move on to engage in another key component of the paraenetic epistolary style: warnings and cautionary advice.³⁹¹ These are expressed at first by way of a parallel with biblical figures. Columbanus, as elsewhere in the *Epistulae*, adopts the persona of his namesake, the prophet Jonas,³⁹² claiming through his words that he will accept exile for the sake of maintaining peace. The Gallic bishops are identified with the pagan sailors that, before casting Jonas off the boat to placate the storm, had attempted everything in their power to return to land.

The implied warning is that, before sending Columbanus into exile the other party is under the

³⁹⁰ Columbanus, Ep. I, 4 (Walker, ed. *Opera*, 6) see the bishop's reported statement: *Cum Iudaeis facere Pasqua non debemus*. Columbanus, Ep. V, 3 (Walker, ed. *Opera*, 38) famously reports that no Irishman has ever been a heretic, a Judaizer, or a schismatic. (*nullus hereticus, nullus Iudaeus, nullus schismaticus fuit*). Possibly, after the accusations of Quartodecimanist leanings, Columbanus was very keen of distancing his community from any similar suspicion. In this passage of Ep. II there might be an additional layer of irony: by accusing Columbanus of being a Judaizer and stirring up an unnecessary quarrel among Christians, the bishops are actually giving to the Jews a reason to rejoice.

³⁹¹ Stowers, *Letter-writing in Greco Roman Antiquity*, 91 and 95

³⁹² Columbanus, Ep. IV, 8 and Ep. V, 16 (Walker, ed. *Opera*, 34 and 54)

moral obligation of finding any other viable peaceful solution that does not require driving off the monastic community. Such obligation is justified in the closing exhortation. Columbanus picks up again the theme first introduced in the *exordium* of the necessity of consistency between predication and pastoral action on the part of his addressees. His argument is that it should be the preoccupation of secular clergy to facilitate and not to hinder the ascetic pursuits of a monastic community, here described with the evangelical imagery of the few who do not use the wide roadway but hasten to climb to the narrow gate (Matt. 7, 13-14). Breaking the peace with a monastic community and driving them off from their voluntary exile would be against the very evangelical ideals, hence the previous recommendation about attempting every possible solution. The passage closes with a last evangelical warning (Matt. 23, 13) that directly leads to the following sections of the letter which further explains the duties and models set for secular and monastic clergy respectively and what should be the ideal of their relationship.

2.8.3 Sources

In his next letter to the Roman pontiff, Columbanus also employed I Cor. 7, 24 in an almost identical context: to describe the past peaceful settlement of an Easter dispute between pope Anicetus and the bishop Polycarpus, while exhorting his addressee to let his community keep to their tradition.³⁹³ Aidan Breen has argued that usage of this quotation by Columbanus is a significant element shared with the tract *De XII abusivis*, possibly indicating that they shared a common source, as previously mentioned, the lost Irish exegetical tract labelled II by Breen. According to him, Columbanus's subsequent directive about finding the practice that most agrees with both the Old and the New Testament [*quae plus Veteri et Novo Testamento concordat*] is also indicative of the author's reliance on the same exegetical source, as the expression is linked with the exegesis of Lc 5, 36 found in other texts that also have an affinity with II.³⁹⁴ Regardless of whether Columbanus was effectively relying on another text, it should be noted that, similarly

³⁹³ Columbanus, *Ep.* III, 2. The same quotation is also used in Columbanus, *Instructio* X, 4 (Walker, ed. *Opera*, 24, l. 30 and 104, l. 24. In all instances Walker mislabelled the quotation as I Cor. 7, 20)

³⁹⁴ Breen, 'The evidence of antique Irish exegesis', 96; the relationship between I Cor. 7, 24 and Lc, 5, 36 and the texts from which it can be inferred are addressed in the same article, 78-82

to his re-elaboration of the topos of modesty into the format *non praesumptione sed necessitate*, in his epistolary writings, he appears to have recast a commonscriptural reference as an exhortation towards ecclesiastical concord, as it best suited his needs. In both *Ep. II* and *Ep. III*, I Cor. 7, 24 is used to justify what all the parties involved in the Easter dispute would consider a compromise solution: recognising the validity of all tradition, so as not to break the peace within the Church. That this was a conscious re-interpretation of the scriptures, or, if Breen is correct, of pre-existing Irish exegesis, could be confirmed by the context in which I Cor. 7, 24 occurs in Columbanus's *Instructio X*. That sermon is not concerned with liturgical traditions, so the meaning of the quotation is a far closer to that of the original scriptural context: it is an invitation to persevere in following Christian humility and not a call to adhere to established traditions. The paraenetic nature of Columbanus's letter is most evident in this calibration of a scriptural reference to fit not only the rhetorical strategy of the written epistle but also the overall goals in this dispute: in this case, finding a space for peaceful coexistence without giving up on traditional practices.

Finally, as noted by Smit,³⁹⁵ it should be recalled that the phrasing with which Columbanus quotes from the book of Jonas is influenced by usage of the same passage in Rufinus's preface to his translations of the works of Gregory of Nazianzus.³⁹⁶ Others have noted how this text was likely to have been available both in sixth-century Ireland and in the early library of Bobbio.³⁹⁷ If indeed it was a well-known text, it would be enough to explain the verbal parallel, without positing that Columbanus was actually relying on the context of Rufinus's quote to accuse to his addressees of being jealous of his success.³⁹⁸ Additionally, this interpretation overlooks that in order to set up a full parallel between Columbanus and Jonas on the one hand and the bishop and the sailors on the other, another quotation from the book of Jonas is used (Jon, 1, 13), which finds no equivalent in Rufinus's text. Finally, while the prophet Jonas is a key element of the identity of Columbanus as

³⁹⁵ Smit, *Studies*, 115.

³⁹⁶ Rufinus, *Apologeticus. Praefatio ad Apronianum*, ed. Augustus Engelbrecht, *Tyranni Rufini orationum Gregorii Nazianzeni novem interpretatio*, CSEL 46 (Wien and Leipzig, 1910), 4-5

³⁹⁷ Michele Tosi, 'Documenti riguardanti l'abbazia di Gerberto a Bobbio' in *Archivum Bobiense*, 6/7 (1984/1985), 91-174:114. Wright, 'Columbanus's *Epistulae*', 74-76.

³⁹⁸ This is the opinion of Smit, *Studies*, 115, Wright, 'Columbanus's *Epistulae*', 75 and Todde and Nuvolone, 'Le lettere e la preghiera', 127n38

a letter-writer, coming up time and again in the entire collection, there is only one other reference to Gregory of Nazianzus, consisting of simple quotation.³⁹⁹

Section 2.9: homiletic style

Sed dicet aliquis: numquid nos non intramus in regno caelorum? Quare non potestis iuxta gratiam Domini si *efficiamini sicut parvuli* [Matth 18, 3] humiles scilicet et casti, *simplices* et innocentes *in malo*, *prudentes* tamen *in bono* [Rom 16-19], placabile set iram in corde non tenentes? Sed complere haec omnia mulieres saepe videntes et circa mundi facultates saepius rixantes et irascentes difficillime possunt. Idcirco nostri, semel mundo renuntianes et causas vitiorum ac fomites iurgiorum in primis amputantes, facilius nudos quam divites sermonem Domini posse complere arbitrantur. Ante istas etenim quattuor res regnum caelorum non intratur, sicut sanctus Hieronymus trium testis est et quarti Basilius, qui iuxta evangelici vim dicti mores exponunt infantium. Infans enim humilis est, non laesus meminit, non mulieres videns concupiscit, non aliud ore, aliud corde habet. Quae sicut dixi melius servabit *vacans et videns quod Deus ipse sit dominus* [Ps. 45, 11] quam universa videns et audiens. Nullus detrahat silentii bonis; nisi enim tepescant, secreti melius vivunt quam publici, excepta austeriore adhuc vita quae maiorem **licet** mercedem; ubi enim durior pugna, ibi gloriosior invenitur corona. Ipsi **ergo** non **credunt** bonis secretis, ut sanctus ait Gregorius, qui publica mala nondevitant. Inde sanctus Hieronymus haec sciens iussit episcopos imitari apostolos, monacho vero docuit sequi patres perfectos. Alia enim sunt et alia clericorum et monachorum documenta, ea et longe ab invicem separata. Unusquisque quod arripuit servet; sed toti evangelium et utrique, acsi unius corporis membra una consonantia, Christum *omnium caput* [Eph 1, 22] sequantur per sua propria mandata, quae sunt ab eo ostensa in caritate et pace perfecta esse. Quae duo perfici perfecte non possunt, nisi a veris humilibus et ab unanimis spiritualibus, Christi madata complentibus, Domino ipso testante, *Si diligitis me mandata mea servate, hoc est mandatum meum, ut dilagati invicem, sicut et ego dilexi vos, in hoc enim scient omnes quia mei discipuli estis, si vos invicem dilagatis.*[Ioann 14, 15, 15, 12 and 13, 35] Tunc ergo potest certa esse unio animorum et pax et caritas per spiritum sanctum diffusa

³⁹⁹In this same letter Columbanus, *Ep.* II, 8 (Walker, ed. *Opera*, 20) see below

visceribus credentium, quando similiter mandata divina complere omnes desiderant; nam quanta sit dissimilitudinis in actualibus studiis mensura, tanta erit paci set caritatis inter imperfectos fictura. Ut ergo *in caritate non ficta* [2 Cor 6,6] nos invicem amemus, domini nostri Iesu Christi praecepta diligenter consideremus, et intellecta complere festinemus, ut per suam doctrinam uno impetu fervoris nimii tota ad caelestia festinet ecclesia. Praestet hoc nobis sua gratuita gratia, ut omnes mundum horreamus et illum solum amemus illumque cum patre et spiritu sancto desideremus, cui gloria in saecula saeculorum. Amen.

2.9.1 Structure and style

Stylistically, the passage is elaborated, yet it is not one of the most convoluted or extreme within the *Epistulae*. From the linguistic point of view, it is notable that there are several instances of participle substantives [*tenentes, rixantes, irascentes, renuntiantes, amputantes, videns et auidens, credentium*], which are not frequent in the *Epistulae*. Word-order is not especially convoluted, although the usual hyperbata are present.⁴⁰⁰ In the same way, use of rhetorical devices is limited, although some staples of Columbanus's prose are recognisable such as anaphoras and tricolon [*non laesus ... non mulieres ...non aliud core*], parallelism (*ubi enim durior pugna, ibi gloriosior invenitur corona*) and antithesis with rhyming members [*quanta sit dissimilitudinis in actualibus studiis mensura, tanta erit pacis et caritatis inter imperfectos fictura*].

This lengthy section of the letter is very similar to Columbanus's sermons in structure, style and themes. It does not belong to the epistolary dialogue between writer and addressees, rather it is a digression apparently prompted by the imagery and the concepts discussed by the preceding exhortation, and it serves the purpose of clarifying and explaining them. The question 'are we really not entering the kingdom of heaven?' [*numquid nos non intramus in regnum coelorum?*] follows directly from the two preceding quotations from Matt. 7, 13-14 and Matt. 23, 13. The author expands upon the idea of 'entering the kingdom of heaven' which is alluded to in both of those quotations by putting this question into the mouth of someone from his audience [*sed dicet*

⁴⁰⁰ The hyperbata are: type bAB: *evangelici vim dicti* ; type aVA: *mores exponent infantium, maiorem licet mercedem, potest certa esse unio* and *tota ad caelestia festinet ecclesia*

aliquis]. The author's answer, phrased as another (rhetorical) question (*quare non potestis ... non tenentis?*), points to the qualities that, according to the same Gospel (Matt. 18, 3 compounded with a reference to Rom. 16, 19), are required for entering the kingdom of heaven. This way of framing a discussion as a tightly knit succession of questions (that may be rhetorical or attributed to the writer's audience) and answers should be considered an example of the technique of *ratiocinatio*, already employed by Columbanus in the letter to pope Gregory I. Moreover it is a close structural and stylistic parallel to several of Columbanus's own *Instructiones*. Rhetorical questions or questions prompted by considerations on the Scriptures are a recurring feature in the *Instructiones*. *Instructio* IV, X and XI open with a similar string of questions.⁴⁰¹ The next two periods in this section [*Sed complere haec ... posse complere arbitrantur*] establish the theme of the subsequent excursus: the path reserved for secular clergy on the one hand and that of monastic perfection on the other. It should be noted that, while Columbanus refers to 'our party' (*nostris*) when presenting the exercise of monastic asceticism, there is here no parallelism with a second-person pronoun or a direct address to his addressees, as it was instead in the previous exhortatory passage. In the same context, that of drawing distinctions between secular and monastic pursuits, one of the *Instructiones* employs a similar expression, *nostrae scholae disciplinae*.⁴⁰² This might help explain the point of view adopted by the writer in this section of the letter: it is not neutral but from within the ascetic community, as it would be expected in a sermon delivered by its leader. Overall this first part of the section reads like the *exordium* of a homiletic text, taking the moves from a scriptural reference and redirecting attention to a question of general interest, without a trace of the epistolary conversation that had been previously going on.

⁴⁰¹Columbanus, *Instructio* IV, 1 (Walker, ed. *Opera*, 78): here the questions are also prompted by a biblical quotation (from Heb. 12, 11). Columbanus, *Instructio* X, 1 (Walker, ed. *Opera*, 100): here the extended *ratiocinatio* and the string of rhetorical questions can be likened to what is found in *Ep.* II both because they represent a follow-up to biblical reference in a previous sermon and because the interrogatives are resolved by exegetical considerations. See especially *Instructio* X, 3-4 (Walker, ed. *Opera*, 103-104) arguments for understanding the *Instructiones* as a series of closely related homilies are found in Stancliffe, 'The thirteen sermons', 185-191. Similarly, Columbanus, *Instructio* XI, 1 (Walker, ed. *Opera*, 106) takes the moves from Gen. 1, 26 and through concatenated reasoning focuses on prescriptive quotes from the New Testament (1 Ioann. 4, 10 and Ioann. 14,15 and 15, 12). Note that none of these questions are addressed to the audience of the sermons or are part of an apostrophe as for example in *Instructio* VII, 1 (Walker, ed. *Opera*, 90)

⁴⁰²Columbanus, *Instructio* IV, 2 (Walker, ed. *Opera*, 80, l. 32).

The subsequent passage [*ante istas etenim quattuor res ... et longe ab invicem separate*] expounds on the answer to the exegetical question in the *exordium*. This is done by appealing to the works of Jerome and Basilus. The implications of this answer trigger other reminiscences from the works of Gregory of Nazianzus and the same Jerome. The author slowly builds an argument from a series of concatenated statements is indicated by the numerous instances of declarative (*etenim, enim*) and conclusive (*ergo, inde*) conjunctions. This culminates in the last sentence, which is the ultimate implication of the starting question and puts the distinction previously made about the merits of ascetic communities in unequivocal terms: ‘the patterns of clergy and of monks are different and widely distinct from one another’ [*Alia enim sunt et alia clericorum et monachorum documenta, ea et longe ab invicem separate*]. Usually the more didactic and explanatory passages of the *Instructiones* rely on biblical foundations, whereas here the burden of proof is carried by the testimony of ecclesiastical writers, especially Jerome. The preference accorded to him in this subject is consistent with Columbanus’s strategy in his defence of Anatolius: Jerome is a key witness in both cases. Although appeals to patristic authorities are much rarer in Columbanus’s sermons than in his letters, they are not wholly absent.⁴⁰³ Furthermore, these didactic or exegetical passages are usually followed by exhortations.⁴⁰⁴ Here the pattern is the same: having established his main argument the author exhorts to act in unity and underlines the importance of concord with the traditional metaphor of the church as the body of Christ⁴⁰⁵ and with a quotation from Ioann. 15, 12. The section concludes with a prayer in the first person plural [*horreamus, amemus, desideremus*] addressed to Christ. This too is a frequent feature of the *Instructiones*.⁴⁰⁶ In summary the section can be broken down as it follows:

-An *exordium* (*Sed dicet aliquis ... posse complere arbitrantur*)

⁴⁰³Famously, Columbanus, *Instructio* II, 1-2 (Walker, ed. *Opera*, 68) referred to one Faustus, likely Faustus of Riez, in very admiring terms

⁴⁰⁴Exhortatory language is common throughout the *Instructiones*. See for example Columbanus, *Instructio* II, 4; *Instructio* IV, 3; *Instructio* VI, 2; *Instructio* VIII is entirely exhortatory; *Instructio* IX, 2; *Instructio* X, 4; *Instructio* XI, 2; *Instructio* XIII, 3 (Walker, ed. *Opera*, 72, l. 3-13; 82, l. 8-33; 88, l. 26-38; 94-96; 100, l. 4-13; 104-106, l. 23-39 and 1-3; 108-110, l. 26-32 and 1-2; 118, l. 24-33)

⁴⁰⁵See Bracken, ‘Authority and duty’, 182-188 and Bracken, ‘Columbanus and the language of concord’, 37-45.

⁴⁰⁶Invocations, praise, and thanksgivings to Christ are found in all of the closing sentences throughout the *Instructiones*. In *Instructio* I, X and XIII, Trinitarian doxologies are also used, similar to the one employed in this letter (Walker, ed. *Opera*, 66, l. 17-18; 106, l. 5-7 and 122, l. 10-13)

-An exegetical/didactical section (*ane istas etenim quattuor ... longe ab invicem separata*)

-An exhortation (*unusquisque quod arripuit ... ad caelestia festinet ecclesia*)

-A prayer (*Praestet hoc nobis ... Amen*).

This structure is self sufficient and understanding its contents does not require knowledge of any other part of the letter. It might be possible that Columbanus was adapting a pre-existing sermon that followed the same pattern of the *Instructiones*. The moderate level of stylistic elaboration would be consistent with this hypothesis, as Columbanus's writing in the sermons does not reach the extremes that are present in the *Epistulae*. Even if this is the case, however, it should be noted that other sections of this letter that are more in line with the characteristics of epistolary writing have very strong ties with this lengthy excursus in terms of both themes and of array of sources employed by the author.

2.9.2 Sources

The first of the many patristic references in the passage can be easily identified. Columbanus's answer to his question, 'are we really not entering the kingdom of heaven?' is based on his understanding of Jerome's commentary to Matt. 18, 3-4.⁴⁰⁷ It should be recalled that Columbanus might have relied on the same commentary in a previous passage of this same letter.⁴⁰⁸ As pointed out by Neil Wright, Columbanus followed Jerome in explaining what are the qualities of children which, according to the Gospel, are the mark of those who would eventually 'enter the kingdom of heaven'. These qualities are humility (*infans humilis est*), lack of interest in the pursuit of vengeance (*non laesus meminit*) and of carnal desires (*non mulierem videns concupiscit*) and sincerity (*non aliud ore aliud corde habet*). However, while the author acknowledges that Jerome is the authority on which three elements from this list are derived, he also refers to Basil as the source for one of them (*sicut sanctus Hieronymus trium testis est, et quarti Basilii*). Walker indicated that the text that Columbanus was here referencing was Rufinus's translation of Basil's

⁴⁰⁷ See Wright, 'Columbanus's *Epistulae*', 68-69 for extensive commentary

⁴⁰⁸ Columbanus, *Ep. II, 3* (Walker, ed. *Opera*, 14-16); see note 31. Here the passage referenced is Jerome, *Commentariorum in Mattheum libri IV, 3* (Hurst and Adriaen, eds. CSEL 77, 157)

Interrogationes, 161 and 163.⁴⁰⁹ Previously, Gundlach noted that he had not been able to track the source of this reference.⁴¹⁰ Wright has considered Walker's identification to be unconvincing, whereas Clare Stancliffe pointed to a different passage from Basil's rule.⁴¹¹ It is not explicitly stated which of the three qualities, out of the four mentioned, Columbanus attributed to Jerome's commentary and which one to Basil's. However, the phrasing of the last three items in this short list clearly echoes Jerome's (*non laesus meminit; non mulierem videns; non aliud ore aliud corde*).⁴¹² It stands to reason that the quality that Columbanus derived from Basil is humility (*infans enim humilis est*). It could be argued that this is a very succinct summary of the two *Interrogationes* associated by Walker with this passage. Furthermore their contents is closely connected with Matt. 18, 3-4, just as Columbanus's reference. On the other hand, there is another text associated with Basil whose contents are close to the meaning of Columbanus's phrasing (*infans enim humilis est*). According to Adalbert de Vogüé, the monastic text known as *Admonitio ad filium spiritualem* is not a work of Basil of Caesarea, translated into Latin by Rufinus, but should be attributed to the sixth-century Abbot of Lérins, Porcarius.⁴¹³ If Columbanus's contemporaries had already identified this Latin text as a translation of the Cappadocian saint, it is a likely candidate as source for this reference, since at least two of its chapters extol humility as a key quality for monastic life.⁴¹⁴ To sum up, Walker's identification of the source of the reference

⁴⁰⁹ Columbanus, *Ep.* II, 8 (Walker, ed. *Opera*, 20 l. 18). Basilus, *Interrogationes*, 161 and 163 in *PL*, 103, 542b and 542d.

⁴¹⁰ Gundlach, ed. *Epistulae*, 163n1

⁴¹¹ Wright, 'Columbanus's *Epistulae*', 69n149; Clare Stancliffe, 'Columbanus's monasticism and the sources of his inspiration: from Basil to the master?' in Fiona Edmonds and Paul Russell, eds. *Tome. Studies in Medieval Celtic history and law in honour of Thomas Charles-Edwards*, (Woodbridge, 2011), 17-28: 21n36

⁴¹² Jerome's text reads: *non laesus meminit, non videns pulchram mulierem delectatur, non aliud cogitat et aliud loquitur*. Jerome, *Commentariorum in Mattheum libri IV*, 3 (Hurst and Adriaen, eds. CSEL 77, 157). The phrase *aliud ore aliud corde* is proverbial and very frequent in patristic writings and also a close paraphrase of Jerome's text. There should be no need to suppose it to have been derived from a different source, as in Todde and Nuvolone, 'Le lettere e la preghiera', 120n102.

⁴¹³ Adalbert de Vogüé, *Histoire littéraire du mouvement monastique dans l'antiquité*, 17 (Paris, 2003), 419-420. The text has been edited in 1955, Pseudo-Basil, *Admonitio ad filium spiritualem*, ed. Paul Lehman *Die Admonitio s. Basilii ad filium spiritualem*, Sitzungsberichte der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 7 (Munich, 1955). However, the text here consulted was that printed in *PL*, 103, 683d-700a. English translation by J. F. LePree, 'Pseudo-Basil's *De admonitio ad filium spiritualem*: A New English Translation' in *Heroic Age*, 13 (2010). Accessed December 2020 at <https://www.heroicage.org/issues/13/lepree2.php#pse1955>

⁴¹⁴ Ps. Basil, *Admonitio ad filium spiritualem*, 2, 10, 11. Explaining what are cultivated the virtues of the soul, the author writes: *virtus animae est humilitati studere* ('virtue of the soul is the love for humility'). Furthermore the tenth chapter of this work addresses humility as the single most important quality for

to Basil with the two chapters from the Latin translation of the *Interrogationes* has a connection with the same evangelical passage (Matt.18, 3-4) from which Columbanus has begun this exegetical excursus; there is no such connection with the text of Ps. Basil's *Admonitio*. Hence, this would be the least likely option, but it should be noted that the genre and provenience of this text is more in line with the kind of sources used by Columbanus in his letters, that is, ascetic literature that was available to the monastic movements centred around Lérins.⁴¹⁵

The next literary allusion in the passage has been traced to the works of Sulpicius Severus, which, regardless of possible connection of this same author with the Latercus cycle defended by Columbanus, are a constant presence in the *Epistulae* and *Instructiones*. They certainly exerted a great degree of influence from both the thematic and stylistic point of view in the *ars scribendi* of Columbanus. The expression *ubi enim durior pugna, ibi gloriosior invenitur corona* ('the prize is more glorious there where the fighting is hardest') is borrowed from Sulpicius's *Dialogi*.⁴¹⁶ Wright has argued that the original context of the quotation has some bearing on its meaning in Columbanus's letter. It could be interpreted as a statement on the higher virtue of monastic life, in keeping with the general theme of the passage, as well as a passing comment on the predicament of Columbanus's community, which needs to fight for maintaining their customs.⁴¹⁷ Yet, it is also simply possible that this particular phrase had struck the writer. A similar expression is used in *Ep. IV*, furthermore, Columbanus borrowed words and expressions from the *Dialogi* in the *exordium* of his letter to Gregory I, without any discernible additional meaning.⁴¹⁸ In the same vein, two subsequent borrowings from the letters of Jerome, are symptomatic of the great impact that this well-known texts had on Columbanus's formative years, to the point that phrases and

ascetic enterprises: *Fili, prae omnibus humilitati stude, quod est omni virtute sublimius, ut ad perfectionis fastigium possis conscendere* ('Son, pursue humility before all else which is the height of all virtues so that you can climb to the summit of perfection'); in the eleventh chapter humility is recommended as the ideal attitude for the praying man. See *PL*, 103, 686b, 692a-693a

⁴¹⁵ Thijs Porck, 'Columbanus's *De mundi transitu* in Early Medieval England: A New Source for an Old English Homily (Irvine VII) in Oxford, Bodleian Library, Bodley 343' in Winfried Rudolf and Susan Irvine, *The Anonymous Old English Homily: Sources, Composition, and Variation*, Medieval and Renaissance authors and texts, 25 (Leiden, 2020), 234-256 has convincingly demonstrated that the *Admonitio* was known to Columbanus and that it was one of the sources for his poem *De Mundi Transitu*

⁴¹⁶ Sulpicius Severus, *Dialogus I*, 12 (Halm, ed. *Sulpici Severi Libri* CSEL 1, 178)

⁴¹⁷ Wright, 'Columbanus's *Epistulae*', 77-78

⁴¹⁸ Columbanus, *Ep. IV,6* (Walker, ed. *Opera*, 34, l. 4-5). See the chapter on *Ep. I*, note 21.

expression employed by Jerome resurface in the *Epistulae* whenever a similar topic is touched. Jerome's *Ep. 58 ad Paulinum* is the source of Columbanus's claim that 'St. Jerome commanded bishops to imitate the apostles, whereas he taught monks to follow the fathers who were perfect' (*Inde sanctus Hieronymus haec sciens iussit episcopos imitari apostolos, monacho vero docuit sequi patres perfectos*).⁴¹⁹ Wright argued that Columbanus's phrasing is derived with minimal changes from an early eccentric tradition of the text, best preserved in a Lyon manuscript.⁴²⁰ Additionally, the phrasing of Jerome's *Ep. 14 ad Heliodorum*, another text addressing the qualities of monastic life, is also echoed by a subsequent passage [*Alia enim sunt et alia clericorum et monachorum documenta*]. Columbanus's understanding of the vocational distinction between monks and secular clergy is clearly marked by his reading of Jerome.⁴²¹

In the text presented above emendations suggested by Johannes Smit have been accepted.⁴²² These are necessary to understand that the reference to saint Gregory [*ut sanctus Gregorius ait*] is actually a reminiscence Rufinus's translation of Gregory of Nazianzus's *Apologeticus de fuga* and not to any work of pope Gregory I.⁴²³ As noted above, this is the second reference to this specific text in the letter, although here the phrasing is slightly different from the source. It is possible that this text was available to Columbanus, at least during the composition of this epistle, as it is notably absent from any other later writing. Additionally, this is not the only source that

⁴¹⁹ Jerome, *Ep. 58 ad Paulinum*, 5 (Hilberg, ed. *Epistulae*, CSEL 54, 534)

⁴²⁰ Wright, 'Columbanus's *Epistulae*', 71-72. The manuscript in question is Lyon, Bibliothèque Municipale, 600. Folio 21r lines 11-13 reads *episcopi imitentur apostolos et monachi perfectos patres*. If Wright is correct, then it is worthwhile to note that the version of the letter preserved in the manuscript is heavily abbreviated. Todde and Nuvolone, 'Le lettere e la preghiera', 133n47 describe the source manuscript as a gnomic collection from Jerome's opus. In the manuscript the passage quoted by Columbanus opens a new paragraph after a full stop. The text before the stop is also from Jerome's *Epistula 58* (Hilberg, ed. *Epistulae* CSEL 54, 531, lines 8-10 of the MS). It reads *ac sic de Hierusolimis et de Britannia aequaliter patet aula regni caelestis* ('and so the hall of the kingdom of heaven lies equally open from Jerusalem and from Britain'). This is remarkably similar to the rhetoric of Columbanus's final appeal in this same letter, in which he exhorts to consider 'Gauls, Britons or Irish or whatever nation we may be' to be part of the same body. A photographic reproduction of the manuscript can be consulted at https://florus.bm-lyon.fr/index.php?type_recherche=cote&choix_secondaire=Ms%200600&tri=; last accessed December 2020.

⁴²¹ Jerome, *Ep. 14 ad Heliodorum*, 8 (Hilberg, ed. *Epistulae*, CSEL 45, 55 l. 8). See also Wright, 'Columbanus's *Epistulae*', 72

⁴²² Smit, *Studies*, 112-116

⁴²³ Gregory of Nazianzus (Translated by Rufinus), *Apologeticus*, 7 (Engelbrecht, ed. *Tyranni Rufini orationum Gregorii Nazianzeni novem interpretatio*, 12 l.5-6). Walker, ed. *Opera*, 20 in *apparatus fontium* referred to Gregory I's *Regula Pastoralis* as the source of the passage. Both Wright, 'Columbanus's *Epistulae*', 74 and n168 and Todde and Nuvolone, 'Le lettere e la preghiera', 130-131 accepted Smit's emendation and recognised the same source as him.

Columbanus might have employed in this letter and nowhere else: Aidan Breen has argued that the biblical quotations used in this section as well as their order and the key points of Columbanus's closing exhortation are a major indicator of its dependence on the aforementioned hypothetical tract II, a source that Columbanus shared with the theoretical text *De XII abusivis*.⁴²⁴ Breen recognised the phrase *unusquisque quod arripuit servet* is 1 Cor. 7,24, a previously used quote shared with *De XII abusivis* in a passage in which he had recognised the influence of II.⁴²⁵ Moving from this point he argued that, because of consistency in tone and themes the remainder of this exhortatory section of the letter might preserve a trace of a similar concluding exhortation originally found in II.⁴²⁶ Breen admittedly conceded that this was impossible to prove on its own, but also claimed to have found a patristic source, namely, Fulgentius of Ruspe's *Ad Monimum*, with strong similarities with Columbanus's exhortation. He hypothesised that the postulated exhortatory section of the lost tract II ultimately depended on *Ad Monimum*, hence the similarity of this text with Columbanus's exhortation, which supposedly depended upon II.⁴²⁷ There are indeed biblical reference that Columbanus's exhortation shares with *Ad Monimum* especially Ioann. 14, 15 and 2 Cor. 6, 6. Eph. 4, 13 is also shared by the two texts but it should be noted that it is part of the valediction in Columbanus's letter, (*Ep.* II, 9) not of this homiletic exhortation (*Ep.* II, 8), with Breen ignoring the strong break interposed between the two by Columbanus's prayer and doxology [*praestet hoc nobis ... in saecula saeculorum amen*]. There is a slight thematic overlap: the author of *Ad Monimum*, like Columbanus touches upon spiritual unity (8,1 and 10, 7), unity of purpose in charity (9, 2-3 and 10, 1-2), and the metaphor of the body of Christ to represent ecclesiastical unity (10, 3-4). There is no clear verbal parallel although Columbanus's expression *ab unanims spiritualibus* is very close to *Ad Monimum* 10, 7 [*unitatem eiusdem*

⁴²⁴Breen, 'The evidence of antique Irish exegesis', 96-98.

⁴²⁵Breen, 'The evidence of antique Irish exegesis', 97n68. See also *De XII Abusivis*, 11 (Breen, ed. *De XII abusivis*, 424 l. 466-68).

⁴²⁶Breen, 'The evidence of antique Irish exegesis', 97-98

⁴²⁷Breen, 'The evidence of antique Irish exegesis', 98-99; Fulgentius of Ruspe, *Ad Monimum*, 2, 6-12 J. Fraipont, *Fulgentii Ruspensis Opera*, I,CCSL 91(Turnhout, 1968), 39-48 . The text consulted for this chapter is that printed in the *Patrologia Latina*, see *PL*, 65, 184b-190a but the paragraph are numbered according to Fraipont's edition as they appear in Breen's article for ease of comparison.

aedificationis spiritalis].⁴²⁸ Weighing against the existence of any relationship whatsoever between the two texts is the lack of any connection between the context of their composition: Columbanus's letter was making distinctions between secular and regular clergy in order to justify a peculiar custom of his community whereas Fulgentius of Ruspe was addressing a disciple's questions and doubts about a number of topics. It seems unlikely that Columbanus would have considered such a text to be of immediate use in his controversy with the Gallic clergy. The case can be made that the general structure of this passage of *Ad Monimum* had made its way into a text that Columbanus deemed to be authoritative. In Breen's words 'Columbanus has recast the argument and substance of an intermediary source', namely the postulated Irish exegetical tract II.⁴²⁹ This conclusion cannot be fully endorsed, as the textual proof is only circumstantial without any clear verbal borrowings. Yet, Columbanus's subsequent involvement in the Three Chapters controversy leaves enough room to argue that he was no stranger to Latin texts from Roman Africa. The theological and ecclesiological contents of *Epistula V* are in line with the writings of African pro-tricapitoline authors such as Facundus and Ferrandus the Deacon, sometimes even with close verbal parallels.⁴³⁰ If this is correct, it would be reasonable that Columbanus was also acquainted with the authoritative Fulgentius, or at least with a source that was adapting his text.⁴³¹

2.9.3 Epistolary qualities

The section cannot be labelled as exegetical, because, unlike Columbanus's previous excursus about the 'evangelical mandates' (*Ep.* II, 3) it does not contain direct commentary on the scriptures. The sermon-like quality and feeling of the writing is best described as homiletic. This should not be understood as a statement about the existence of a "homiletic style" of letter-writing, but simply as an ad hoc descriptor for a part of the text that breaks the convention of the

⁴²⁸Breen, 'The evidence of antique Irish exegesis', 99 pointed to 10,1 although there the verbal parallel is not as close.

⁴²⁹Breen, 'The evidence of antique Irish exegesis', 99

⁴³⁰ See the commentary to *Ep.* V,1-2 and 10 in the relevant chapter

⁴³¹ Assessing Breen's conclusion about II, namely that this hypothetical text was the product of Sinil's school in Bangor falls outside the scope of this project, but it would be an important addition to our understanding of the development of Latin learning in sixth-century Ireland. See Breen, 'The evidence of antique Irish exegesis', 99-101

epistolary genre. Like Columbanus's *confessio fidei* in Ep. III,⁴³² this is an insertion that, while not formulated in conventional epistolary terms, is functional to the overall strategy of the letter. The epistle is both an invitation to finding a diplomatic solution to the Easter controversy and a defence of the customs of his community: in this context the present passage provides an insider's perspective about said community very reason of existence, the pursuit of ascetic goals, as well as an appeal to recognising the different roles but ultimate unity of the members of the Church.

Even though the section is ultimately self-contained and has a structure similar to some of the *Instructiones*, it is thematically linked with preceding and subsequent discussions of the letter. While it is clear that the whole excursus about the role of monks and secular clergy has been prompted by the defence of ascetic pursuits in the preceding direct address to the fathers at the council, it should also be noted that the *exordium* of the letter touches upon the moral failings of secular clergymen, which here are briefly listed [*mulieres saepe videntes et circa mundi facultates saepius rixantes*]. Additionally, the exhortation towards unity in the conclusion of this homiletic excursus is immediately picked up again by the valediction, using the same body metaphor [*acsi unius corporis membra una consonantia* and *unius enim sumus corporis commembris*]. When coupled with the frequent borrowings and reminiscences from a large number of sources, these considerations raise a few questions regarding the drafting of this letter and the relationship between this theoretical excursus and exhortation and the other parts of the letter. If Columbanus had re-purposed a homiletic text initially meant for circulation within his community as a self-contained part of an *epistula negotialis* meant to be read by outsiders, it would be reasonable to suppose the existence of a discrepancy between the sources used in the letter at large and those used in the homiletic section, considering that this would then be independent works before the latter was adapted into the former. Instead, what can be observed is that there is a significant overlap: Jerome's Commentary on Matthew, Rufinus's translation of Gregory of Nazianzus and possibly the tract II postulated by Breen are used both in this excursus and in the rest of the letter. If the hypothesis that the present excursus originated as a text independent from the letter is

⁴³² Columbanus, Ep. III, 2 (Walker, ed. *Opera*, 24 l. 9-15) see commentary in the relevant chapter.

abandoned, these considerations would not cause any problem. Yet, the entire section stands out for its lack of epistolary characteristics and for its well defined structure. There are no markers of epistolary conversation, such as apostrophes or parenthetical insertions, no nods to the need for brevity nor to the distance separating the writing party and the addressees. Even if one is doubtful about understanding the initial *ratiocinatio* as an internal demarcation of sorts, the closing prayer and doxology still represent an anomalous strong break within the normal flow of epistolary prose.

A possible solution to these contradictions is to suppose that the letter as preserved is not the same text meant to be read at the council but a re-working of the actual letter to that includes independent homiletic materials, prepared by the author for publication and circulation among his patrons. The re-worked text would appear as a unit, since the author would have had one set of sources at his disposal at one time as well as an overall picture of the overall message of his composition. In other words, even though admittedly this hypothesis cannot be corroborated with any hard proof, it might be necessary to approach the letter as literary product, rather than a document, and to consider that the process of composition and publication might extend over time.⁴³³ The author might have felt the need to present his address to the council as rooted in strong ecclesiological considerations. This obviously leads to the question: who was the audience of the final product? The recurring themes of the letter might provide an answer. There was more than one party with a vested interest in the moral reform of the Gallic clergy and who needed to be convinced that the ascetic community of Columbanus was worthy of support: the Burgundian court, then clashing with the Gallic Episcopal class, and the Roman church with its pontiffs, that had previously received Columbanus's complaints.⁴³⁴ This would entail that while the letter might

⁴³³ On the meaning of the act of publishing a letter in Late Antiquity see Ralph Mathisen, 'The 'publication' of Latin letter collections in Late Antiquity', in Gernot Michael Müller, ed. *Zwischen Alltagskommunikation und literarischer Identitätsbildung. Studien zur lateinischen Epistolographie in Spätantike und Frühmittelalter*, Roma Aeterna, 7 (Stuttgart 2018), 63-84:66-67: "the act of circulation of dissemination was itself the late antique equivalent of publication ... circulated letters were constantly being edited". It should be noted that according to Mathisen this second point applies to textual emendations and interventions of the audience of the letter. It is reasonable to suppose that at times the author too might have been in a position to emend a text of letter that was already circulating.

⁴³⁴ Columbanus's role as a possible contact of Gregory I and Brunhild to orchestrate for the re-organisation of the Gallic church is best described by Stancliffe, 'Columbanus and shunning', 116-121

still show something of Columbanus's attitude towards the Gallic bishop and their stance over Easter, especially in his numerous calls for unity, these lengthy exegetical excursus on the moral primacy of regular clergy might have been added to gain favour in the eyes of an independent observer of the affair.

Section 2.10: Valedictio, eusebetic style

De caetero, patres, orate pro nobis sicut et nos facimus, viles licet, pro vobis, et nolite nos a vobis alienos reputare; unius enim sumus corporis commembra, sive Galli, sive Britanni, sive Iberi, sive quaeque gentes. Ideo gaudeamus omnes gentes in cognitione *fidei et agnitione filii Dei*, et festinemus *omnes occurrere in virum perfectum, in mensuram aetatis plenitudinis Iesu Christi*, [Eph 4, 13] in quo nos invicem amemus, invicem laudemus, invicem emendemus, invicem invitemus, invicem oremus, et cum eo regnemus invicem et exultemus. Date quaeso veniam meae loquacitati ac procacitati supra vires laboranti, patientissimi atque santissimi patres quique et fratres.

2.10.1 Structure and style

The valediction can be broken down into an exhortatory opening (*de caetero ... invicem et exultemus*), and an apologetic closing. Notably, the last words of the letter recall the initial *intitulatio* section of the salutation with the collective address to both bishops and priests [*patres et fratres*]. The language is emphatic with the two verbal forms being in the imperative mood [*orate, nolite ... reputare, date*]. The bulk of the exhortation taken up by the anaphora of *invicem* with a first person plural subjunctive verbal form. Even though the passage is fairly short two the author's mark of non-standard word-order is still present.⁴³⁵ The vocabulary reflects the author's usual choices when expressing humility, as all of the terms employed can be found elsewhere in the *Epistulae* in similar context [*viles, loquacitati ac procacitati*].

⁴³⁵There are two hyperbata: *nolite nos a vobis alienos reputare*, which is the only hyperbaton in Columbanus's work to involve a verbal form and *unius enim sumus corporis*, aVA type.

2.10.2 Epistolary qualities

The valediction adopts the same eusebetic style of the *exordium*. When compared to the valediction of the letter to Gregory I and of the subsequent letter to the Roman pontiff, the closure of *Ep. II* appears to be less original. The writer commends his community to the prayers of his addressees [*orate pro nobis*] while at the same time assuring them that they would do the same [*sicut et nos facimus*], as in many other Latin Christian letters. The other epistolary convention that can be easily detected is that of *humilitas*. The closing sentence asks forgiveness for instances of garrulity and boldness [*loquacitati ac procacitati*], whereas earlier the people of his party are qualified as *viles*. Like all the others declarations of humility in this letter, this fulfils the role of 'captivating the audience' sympathy: it reinforces the preceding appeal to unity, which takes up the majority of the valediction.

While the second part of this appeal [*ideo gaudeamus omnes ... et exultemus*] can be understood to be reinforcing the main request for peaceful coexistence between the two parties involved in the Easter dispute made in the body of the letter, the preceding usage of the imagery of the Church as a body made up of different members [*unius enim sumus corporis commembra*] is declined very differently than before. Columbanus specifically refers to a difference in geographical provenience [*sive Galli, sive Britanni, sive Iberi*] rather than a difference in status (regular or secular clergy) or in customs (upholders of Victorius's Easter or upholders of the *Lateranus*) which so far had been the differences he had mostly seemed to be concerned about. A possible reason for the change might have been to stress that there was an heterogeneous community backing the author of the letter, and yet it was united behind his requests. That the three names of people listed refers to the composition of his own foundations cannot be doubted: natives of Gaul were numerous among his followers, whereas *Iberi* should refer to the smaller group of Irish *peregrini*

that had followed him and *Britanni* to those who had joined the initial group once it arrived in Brittany.⁴³⁶

⁴³⁶Columbanus, *Ep. V*, 3(Walker, ed. *Opera*, 38), uses the term *Iberi* in a way that could only mean Irish. The presence of followers from Brittany is usually agreed upon by scholars see especially Ian Wood, 'Columbanus in Brittany', in O'Hara, ed. *Columbanus and the peoples*, 103-111.

CHAPTER 3: Columbanus's second letter to Rome

Section 3.1:Salutatio

Domino sancto et in Christo apostolico **Patri papae**, Columba peccator in Christo salutem.

3.1.1 Structure and style

The salutation has very different characteristics from those of the other two letters that Columbanus addressed to the then ruling Roman bishops, as it lacks the display of rhetorical skills and accumulation of noun-phrases that marks the salutations of *Epistulae* I and V. It consists of the same elementary structure of that *Epistulae* II and IV, albeit with the full title of a single addressee in place of many: A+ qualifications of A, N + qualifications of N, (in Christo) (verb) (salutem). The writer refers to himself simply as Columba, adding only the qualification of *peccator*. This is in keeping with the traditional epistolary *topos* of humility, though it is not as elaborated as it appears in the other two letters to the Roman See. Notably, this is the one letter in which the verb of the salutation is not made explicit. It should be remembered that Columbanus might be the first Latin author since Classical Antiquity to spell out the verb *mitto* in the salutation, and that, therefore, despite this instance representing a countertrend in his own epistolary opus, *Epistula* III is closer to common contemporary epistolary practice, in this particular aspect.⁴³⁷ The other notable aspect of the salutation is the lack of the name of the addressee. Fleming explicitly noted that this was a feature of the manuscript he consulted; nonetheless, he proposed to identify the addressee in pope Boniface IV, on the grounds that, after the passing of Gregory I, which is mentioned in the letter, the isolation of the community in Luxeuil would have caused the short pontificate of Sabinianus to pass unnoticed to them⁴³⁸.

⁴³⁷ Lanham, *Salutatio formulas in Latin letters to 1200. Syntax, style and theory*, 32.

⁴³⁸ Fleming *Collectanea Sacra*, 111. *Hic non exprimitur nomen Pontificis cui directa fuit epistula haec; Regarding the identification of the addressee with Boniface IV, Fleming wrote: cum enim ab obitu S. Gregorii, cujus hic fit mentio, usque ad mortem S. Columbani, quae anno primo Deusdedit Papae contigit, duo dumtaxat Romani Pontifices intercessisse legantur, Sabinianus et Bonifatius IV, et Sabinianus quinque solum diebus et 19 diebus iuxta Baronium ad annum Christi 604 in pontificatu vixerit; quo permodici temporis intervallum vix bene ad Columbanum in remotissima eremo cum suis segregatum, novi Pontificis fama perferri poterat.* Fleming was mistaken in his claim about the number of popes reigning from the death of Gregory I to the death of Columbanus. His own source, Baronius, lists Boniface III as pope from February to November in 607. See Baronius, *Annales Ecclesiastici*, XI, 80-83

Metzler's transcriptions reads *patri papae N*.⁴³⁹ While adopted by Walker in his edition, the use of *N* (for *nomini*) as a stand-in for the name of the pope during periods of vacancy might have been inserted by Metzler, especially in light of his preference for normalising the text, in order to conform to his own contemporary custom, so as to signal more clearly the lack of addressee. Scholars are in agreement in considering this feature a sign that the letter was composed during one of the periods of vacancy of the Roman See that followed the death of pope Gregory I. Gundlach, Walker and more recently, Alain Dubreucq have opted for 604 as the most likely date for the letter. Grosjean had noted that the vacancy in 606-607, a year long, would have given more time to Columbanus to hear about it and compose the letter accordingly.⁴⁴⁰ However, Walker and Dubreucq's arguments make the case for 604 more compelling, particularly when they relate the references to 'the seditions of the people that lay between us' with Paul the Deacon's account of a reprise of the Lombard campaigning in Northern Italy during the preceding year.⁴⁴¹ In any case, it is reasonable to think that, at the moment of writing, Columbanus did not know whether the See was still vacant or by whom it was occupied. This might explain the brevity and straightforwardness of the salutation of *Epistula* III: a neutral salutation would have been appropriate, if the addressee was an unknown quantity for Columbanus.

In respect to the macroscopic difference in elaboration of the salutations of the other two papal letters by Columbanus, the following observation could be made. It has been argued that *Epistulae* I and V represent but a fragment of a larger epistolary exchange, the first involving Columbanus, Gregory I and possibly his representative in Francia, and the second involving Columbanus, Boniface IV and the Lombard bishops and royal court.⁴⁴² *Epistula* III, on the other

⁴³⁹ St. Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek, Cod. Sang. 1346, 74

⁴⁴⁰ Wilhelm Gundlach, 'Über die Columban-Briefe 1. Die prosaischen Briefe', *Neues Archiv* 15 (1890), 497-526, 512; Walker, *Opera*, XXXVII; Alain Dubreucq, 'L'œuvre épistolaire', 115-116; Paul Grosjean, 'Recherchers sur les débuts de la controverse pascale chez les Celts' *Analecta Bollandiana*, 64, (1946), 200-245, 210.

⁴⁴¹ Paul the Deacon, *Historia Langobardorum*, IV, 28-29 (Bethmann and Waitz, eds. *Pauli Historia Langobardorum*, 125-126)

⁴⁴² Columbanus, *Epistula* I, 12 and *Epistula* V, 3 and 15 (Walker, ed. *Opera* 10-12 and 40, 54). On this topic see Bollough, 'The career of Columbanus', in Michael Lapidge, ed. *Columbanus studies on the Latin writings*, 1-28, 23-24; Joseph F. Kelly, 'The letter of Columbanus to Gregory the Great' in Vittorino Grossi, ed. *Gregorio Magno e il suo tempo*, Augustinianum, Rome, 1990, 213-224; Dubreucq, 'L'œuvre

hand, seems to be a first attempt at picking up again the epistolary conversation with one of Gregory's successors, an attempt that mainly consist in presenting a single request and in forwarding to the new pope the epistolary material of the pre-existing debate, involving pope Gregory I. The letter is referred to as a *cartula* meant to accompany other letters, as a brief summary of a previous discourse, that also carries its own independent request. When this is paired with the possibility that Columbanus might have had no knowledge of the character of the person that occupied the position he was addressing, his sobriety in displays of rhetorical skills in the salutation might also reflect the nature of *Epistula* III as a first attempt at re-establishing communication, where no argument is presented in detail and which commends other letters so that the debate might continue on the basis of what the new pontiff has to say about such written material.

Overall, this salutation, because of its simplicity, conforms to contemporary continental letters. It displays the formal respect that Julius Victor recommended for the *epistolae negotiales*, and avoids the accumulation of adjectives and titles that is discouraged by Pseudo-Libanius.⁴⁴³ Furthermore it reinforces the perception that the skillful elaboration of the salutations of *Epistulae* I and V were studied by Columbanus for those specific epistolary occasions and that they are not to be discounted as a mere formality, since the Irish monk, in this other instance, appears to have been comfortable with addressing the Roman pontiff in a more straightforward and plain, yet still respectful, way.

Section 3.2: Exordium, reporting style.

Iam diu omnes sedi apostolicae praesidentes dulcissimos omnibus presules fidelibus ac merito apostolici honori reverendissimos patres visitare spiritu et consolare cupiens, nunc usque votis pro diversis huius aevi fragoribus et tumultuosis gentium seditionibus interiacentium, ac si marina

épistolaire', 108-110; Leso, 'Columbanus in Europe', 360-364; Claire Stancliffe, 'Columbanus and shunning' in Alexander O'Hara, ed. *Columbanus and the peoples*, 120-123

⁴⁴³*Prefationes ac subscriptiones litterarum computandae sunt pro discrimine amicitiae aut dignitatis, habita ratione consuetudinis*. Julius Victor, *Ars Rhetorica, de epistulis* (Giomini and Celentano eds., *Ars rhetorica*), 106: 'Nevertheless, it befits someone who wishes to add an address to the letter type, not to chatter on, indeed not even to use adjectives, lest any flattery and meanness be attached to the letter'; see also Pseudo-Libanius, 'Ἐπιστολιμαῖοι Χαρακτήρες, (Malherbe, *Ancient epistolary theorists*) 74-75

trabe interclusus, satisfacere non potui, insuavi scilicet intransmeabilique non tam tithis visibilis quam intelligibilis dorso, quod optime nostis, opposito. Idcirco semel et bis satanas impedivit portitores nostrorum ad beatae memoriae papam conscriptorum Gregorium olim apicum in subiectis positorum, qui tibi quoque offerendi discutiendique a nostra transmittuntur vilitate non tam superba, ut per verba demonstratur, diabolica praesumptione, quam nostrae regionis ritus observantiaeque **calcalenterae** computationis necessaria probatione, dum non eosdem terminos scandunt libri nostrae provinciae et istorum Gallorum, qui a nostris viris non recipitur per duo loca magistri, sicut in epistolis nostrae parvitatibus, quantum potuimus, ad supradictum beatum papam, licet praesumptuose, indicare pro viribus studuimus.

3.2.1 Structure and style

That *Epistula* III is attempting to carry on a discourse that had been interrupted is what clearly emerges from the *exordium*, as it contains a brief account of why the writer has not been able to come to Rome, of his previous attempt to contact pope Gregory I, and of the object of the letters he had meant for him to receive. This section of the letter consists of two periods, whose level of elaboration is relatively complex. A number of participle constructions [*visitare spiritu et consolare cupiens; ... dorso, quod optime nostis, opposito*] and parenthetical clauses [*acsi marina trabe interclusus; ut per verba demonstratur; quantum potuimus; licet praesumptuose*] is used to further expand their structure, which already supports an accumulation of lengthy subordinations, such as the relative clauses found in the second one [*qui tibi quoque... probatione*]. In terms of rhetorical ornamentation, parallelism and antithesis are the devices employed, (chiefly in the *non tam[...] quam* constructions) though it is also significant that a number of the interlaced patterns of hyperbaton favoured by Columbanus are also found in this section. In the first period the participle construction [*cupiens*] that opens the letter contains two, while other two are present in the main clause; they are set up in a parallelism, with their respective pattern being aBbA, abAB, abBA and aBAb [*omnes sedis apostolicae praesidentes; dulcissimos omnibus presules fidelibus; diversis huius aevi fragoribus; tumultuosis gentium seditionibus interiacentium*]. In the second period other three instances of hyperbata are found, though their pattern is not as carefully

arranged [AbAcB: *papam conscriptorum Gregorium olim apicum; aVA: a nostra trasmittuntur viltate; complex: non tam superba, ut per verba demonstraaur, diabolica praesumptione*]. As suggested by Winterbottom and Wright the frequency of such patterns in any given passage might reveal the intention of the author of attaining a refined and artistically sophisticated level of prose style, though in none of these occurrences the word order is that of the ‘golden line’ of Latin poetry as it occurs elsewhere (two noun-adjective pairs separated by a verb abVAB)⁴⁴⁴. The description of the writer as in a sea vessel [*acsi marina trabe interclusus*] and of the impediments that have stalled his intention to visit Rome [*insuavi... dorso*] are examples of figurative speech (a similitude and an allegorical allusion) and, though the choice of maritime imagery is another common feature of the *Epistulae*, it is challenging to infer the actual meaning of the latter in context. The passage could be translated as ‘being opposed by the rough and truly impassable reef, which you know very well, of a sea that is intellectual rather than visible’. An analysis of the lexical aspect does little to clarify this metaphor. *Tithis* is discussed below, and its use might be simply due to stylistic preferences. *Dorsum* (literally ‘the back’), here part of an ablative absolute construction [*dorso... opposito*], is translated as ‘swell’ (of the waves) by Walker, though a translation that is better supported by dictionary use might be that of ‘undersea reef’ since the word can refer to the ridge or the crest of a hill or a mountain and in *Epistula V* the designated term for the mass of a wave is *molis*.⁴⁴⁵ Walker suggested that the metaphor ought to be interpreted as a reference to the Arianism of the Lombards⁴⁴⁶ who stood between Luxeuil in eastern Francia and the way to Rome. This view might have been influenced by the previous reference to ‘the turbulent upheavals of the peoples that lie between’ [*tumultuosis gentium seditionibus interiacentium*]. However, it could also be argued, as Fleming had done in the very first commentary to this text,⁴⁴⁷ that what those people represented is the ‘visible’ quality of the threats that had prevented the writer from visiting Rome, whereas the obstacle that the writer has

⁴⁴⁴ Michael Winterbottom, ‘Columbanus and Gildas’, 314-315; Wright ‘Columbanus’s *Epistulae*’, 70. On the models from which Gildas, and possibly Columbanus, who followed his example, drew this particular interlaced pattern see Wright, ‘Gildas’ prose style’, 112-127.

⁴⁴⁵ Columbanus, *Ep. V*, 3 in *Opera*, ed. Walker, 38

⁴⁴⁶ Walker, *Opera*, 23, n3

⁴⁴⁷ *Per thetis visibilem intellegit manifestas gentium seditionum et principum bella. Per invisibilem occulta daemonum cum homine proelia*. Fleming, *Collectanea Sacra*, 111.

found to be insurmountable is to be linked with the subsequent reference to supernatural and diabolical interference in the voyage of his letter-bearers [*Idcirco semel et bis satanas impedivit portitores nostrorum*]. It is impossible to infer from the text whether the latter references an actual episode, perhaps of insubordination or misunderstanding on the part of the letter-bearers, or is a generic appeal to the dangers posed by diabolical temptation, in order to explain away why personal or epistolary contact has not been possible up to this point. That the writer acknowledges the addressee's great understanding of the kinds of danger he is discussing [*quod optime nostis*], does little to clarify the issue, as the observation could be fitting for both interpretations, that is either the addressee had knowledge of that specific episode, or the writer expects him to be familiar with similar difficulties that might impede any epistolary exchange, which is not unreasonable considering that a constant activity of letter-writing would have been expected to be a duty for the bishop of Rome.⁴⁴⁸

3.2.2 Vocabulary

In terms of vocabulary the *exordium* does not distance itself too much from Columbanus's usual range of terminology. However there are two passages for which different variant reading must be accounted for, both pertaining to words that bear the mark of Insular Latin stylistic preferences.

Non tam tithis visibilis [Walker, 22, 2, 30]	Non tam (c) thetis visibilis (c) Non <i>tuthis</i> ut corrupte MS [F,110-111]	Non tam maris visibilis [M, 74-75]
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While Metzler's variant can be ascribed to his normalizing tendencies, the manuscript spelling as reported by Fleming can be accounted for as influenced by the variant *thytis* as found in glossaries.⁴⁴⁹ Additionally one could note that *tithis* (for 'sea') is commonly recognised as part of

⁴⁴⁸ Todde and Nuvolone, 'Le lettere e la preghiera', 139n2 suggest a completely different option: that Columbanus was simply making an allusion to 1 Thess. 2, 18 *voluimus venire ad vos ego quidem Paulus et semel et iterum: sed impedivit nos Satanas*. The Irishman's phrasing is likely to be derived from this passage, but this does little to clarify its meaning.

⁴⁴⁹ This spelling occurs, for example, in the St. Gallen *Abba-ababus* glossary of Northern Italian origin; St. Gallen Stiftsbibliothek Cod. Sang. 912; CGL, IV, 292, 1. The spelling *tethis* more attested, with three

the peculiar Hiberno-Latin or Insular Latin select vocabulary derived from glossary words, and even though this is but its second appearance in a work by an Insular author, it might be worth noting that it is used with the same connotation that it carried when used by Gildas that is, the sea is to be understood as a barrier.⁴⁵⁰ The second dubious passage involves a word used in the letter to Gregory, one of those attached to this *cartula*, and if that is the case, it might have been intended as an intentional echo.

Qui tibi quoque offerendi discutiendique a nostra transmittuntur vilitate non tam superba, ut per verba demonstratur, diabolica praesumptione, quam nostrae regionis ritus observantiaeque verae computationis necessaria probatione [Walker, 24, 2, 1-2]	Qui tibi quoque offerendi discutiendique a nostra transmittuntur vilitate non tam superba, ut per verba demonstratur, diabolica praesumptione, quam nostrae regionis ritus * observantiae, qua calcarent verae computationis necessaria probatione *f. <i>observantia</i> [F,110]	Qui tibi quoque offerendi discutiendique a nostra transmittuntur vilitate non tam superba, ut per verba demonstratur, diabolica praesumptione, quam nostrae regionis ritus observantia qua non caret vera computationis necessaria probatione [M, 75]
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Smit recognised in this passage another occurrence of the word *chalcenteros* and emended it thus:

quam nostrae regionis ritus observantiaeque calcalenterae computationis necessaria probatione.

He understandably dismissed Walker's identification of the words *quae calcarent* and *quae non carent* in F and M as a gloss on *terminos scandunt*, and he recuperated the spelling of the word

occurrences in the Leiden Glossary alone. CGL, V, 395, 29, 415, 63 and 426, 8. For another notable occurrence of the word, possibly related to the *Epistulae* see Jacopo Bisagni, 'A new citation from a work of Columbanus in BnF lat.6400b' 116-122.

⁴⁵⁰ Gildas *De excidio*, 19, (ed. Winterbottom, *The ruin of Britain*, 24) .In its next appearances in an Insular text, the *HispericaFamina*, the adjectival form of the word, directly lifted from Gildas, preserves on occasion the connotation of 'barrier'. Michael W. Herren, ed. *The Hisperica Famina. I The A text*, Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, Toronto, 1974, 108, l. 563 and commentary 122 and 145. Neil Wright has made use of this passage to underline the many connections between Columbanus's vocabulary and Gildas's. He also lists *trabs*, *intransmeabilis*, *dorsum*, and the antonymic couple *visibilis/intellegibilis* as derived from the same author. Wright 'Columbanus's *Epistulae*', 85-86

chalcenteros previously found in F⁴⁵¹ in order to explain them. The problem with this rendition, which in any case might be closer to the original text than Walker's, is the derivation of an adjectival form for *chalcenteros*. While, as stated above, the influence of the Latin Anatolius on the Irish computists' understanding and subsequent use of the word was significant, it is only attested as a substantive, and it qualifies the persons of the authors, not their work as Smit would have it in this case. It might be that, as Smit suggested, *chalcenteros* and its derivations had indeed become for some a byword for the Jeromian and Origenian tradition of works on the Easter reckoning, and his hypothesis is can only be strengthened by the textual echoes he detected between this passage and the one from *Epistula* I in which *chalcenteros* is more likely to have been used. On the other hand, considering that M and F agree in having a relative clause after *observantia*, and not an enclitic *-que*, the possibility remains that the text might have looked as it appears in Gundlach's edition: *quam nostrae regionis ritus observantis, quae calcarent, verae computationis necessaria probatione.*⁴⁵² In this case, however, the meaning and the subject of the verb *calcarent* would be problematic. *Calco* has the meaning of 'overcoming', 'trampling under feet', in *Epistula* V, where it occurs twice. It is also used in the heading of chapters of the *Regula Monachorum*, with the same meaning.⁴⁵³ It would be reasonable to think that it can be similarly translated here, but that meaning is difficult to work in the context, so that, should this reading be maintained, one would have to look for a different translation within the semantic range of the verb, thus renouncing the consistent pattern established by the other occurrences. Moreover, it would not be clear what the subject of *calcarent* might be, although it can be assumed to refer to 'those Gauls', which are mentioned afterward. There appear to be no decisive argument in favour of either option. Todde and Nuvolone favoured the reading *quae non carent* as found in M, but this is clearly the *lectio facilior* propped by the most doctored source.⁴⁵⁴ Smit's reading and his translation will be preferred here because they offer a simple solution without having to supply an hypothesis for an additional agent in the form of the subject of *calcarent*. However the caveat

⁴⁵¹ Smit *Studies*, 74-76.

⁴⁵² Gundlach, ed. *Epistolae*, 165

⁴⁵³ Columbanus, *Ep. V*, 5 and 17 in *Opera*, ed. Walker, 40 and 54. Columbanus, *Regula Monachorum*, 4. *De paupertate ac de cupiditate calcanda*, 5. *De vanitate calcanda*, in *Opera*, ed. Walker, 126-128

⁴⁵⁴ Todde and Nuvolone, 'Le lettere e la preghiera', 140

must be added that it might give a false impression of how common was the use of *chalcenteros* among the Irish. Finally, a remark can be made about the epistolary vocabulary: the passage mentions ‘the bearers [*portitores*] of our letters [*apicum*] once written to Pope Gregory of blessed memory’. *Apex* is used figuratively to indicate any kind of writing, but especially letters. Common occurrences of the term are used for notes that registers official correspondence, such as an imperial dispatch. For later insular authors, such as Aldhelm, it is synonymous with *littera*, as a generic term, having been adopted in common usage.⁴⁵⁵ Considering that the term *epistula* is used as an equivalent in this very passage, this might have been the case for Columbanus as well, though it is worth noting that when the term *apex* is used by him, it is in the context of an exchange with a higher authority⁴⁵⁶.

3.2.3 Epistolary qualities

The tone and content of the passage is close to what is expected from the reporting (αἰτιολογικός) type of letter writing, as described by Pseudo-Demetrius. In the words of the Greek epistolary theorist, the reporting style is used to give account of why something did not take place or will not take place.⁴⁵⁷ In this case, the writer informs the pope of why he has not been able to come to Rome and why some of his previous letters had not reached pope Gregory I. A summary of the contents of the letters that his predecessor was supposed to receive is added to this. While the language is emphatic (marked, for example, by an allegory) and there are marks of intentional elaboration of the prose style, (i.e. the hyperbata), this section performs the basic function of informing its audience about what has caused the existence of the letter itself. If one is mindful of the influence of ancient rhetoricians on the practice of Late-Antique letter writing, it would be clear that this section fits the characteristics required for the *exordium*, that is, the part of the

⁴⁵⁵ The use of *apex* when letter-bearers *-portitores* or *geruli-* are mentioned is common in the letters of Sidonius: Sidonius Apollinaris, *Ep.* 2,14; 4,5; 4,7; 5,16; 8,14; 9,5 (ed. Christian Lühjohann *Epistularum libri*, 35, 57-58, 89, 96, 147 and 153); Aldhelm mentions *epistolares litterarum apices* in *Ep.* 4 but the word preserves the generic meaning of ‘shape of a letter’ in *De virginitate*, 21 and 35, (Ehwald, ed. *Aldhelmi Opera*, 481 and 251, 271).

⁴⁵⁶ *Occidentalis apices de Pascha sollicitent.* Columbanus, *Ep.* I, 5, (Walker, ed. *Opera*, 8).

⁴⁵⁷ Pseudo Demetrius, Τύποι Ἐπιστολικοί, 16 (Abraham J. Malherbe, *Ancient epistolary theorists*, 39).

oration that contains an account of ante facts and the motivation of the speaker.⁴⁵⁸ What, instead, belongs to a different stage of the developments of letter-writing, is the *topos* of modesty that defines the writer's attitude towards the addressee and reflects the hierarchical nature of the Church as a society in this time. However, it is declined slightly differently from what is usual in the corpus of Columbanus's letters. Setting up a comparison with the earlier letter to Gregory I would highlight, as Johannes Smit had noticed, that the train of thought regarding the letters on the Easter controversy follows the same topical pattern found in *Epistula* I, which Smit dubbed *non praesumptione sed necessitate*.⁴⁵⁹ This consists in the writer apologising at length for both his lack of skills in writing [*ut per verba demonstratur; quantum potuimus; pro viribus*] and for presumptuously addressing a superior [*non tam superba... diabolica praesumptione; nostrae parvitatibus; licet paraesumptuose*], because he has to speak out of necessity [*necessaria probatione*]. This variant of the traditional *topos* of modesty occurs again in *Epistula* I, II, and V to the point that Smit regarded it as Columbanus's personal re-elaboration of it.⁴⁶⁰ However it is important to point out that in *Epistula* III it is not used in relation to the letter itself but to the contents of the other letters sent to Pope Gregory. The significance of this observation is that it makes harder to dismiss the use of the *topos* as a simple display of courtesy or a required formality. It would appear that the writer deemed it necessary to resort to this device whenever topics that were a great concern for him were pushed: the Easter controversy in this instance and in the letter to Gregory, the Three Chapters controversy later on. Throughout the salutation and *exordium* only the word *peccator* fits within the use of the *topos* of modesty as traditionally understood, as an expression of deference. In summary, from this textual section it would appear that Columbanus did not consider initiating epistolary exchanges with the Roman pontiff as something that required great displays of humility, but that, on the other hand, he was conscious

⁴⁵⁸ The definition and classification of *exordium* and that of its characteristics given by Martianus Cappella and Julius Victor might be a suitable term of comparison for a Latin text of the early seventh-century. Martianus Cappella, *De nuptiis*, V, 545-549 (Willis, ed. *De Nuptiis*, 192-193) and Julius Victor, *Ars Rhetorica, De principiis*, (eds. Remo Giomini and Maria Silvana Celentano, 67-71).

⁴⁵⁹ Smit, *Studies*, 76

⁴⁶⁰ Columbanus, *Ep.* I, 1-2, *Ep.* II, 10, *Ep.* V, 1,4, 11 in ed. Walker, *Opera*, 1,16,36 and 38-48

that introducing the Easter problem in an epistolary conversation might require an additional layer of diplomatic rhetoric.

Section 3.3: Excusatio

Itaque, ne si eadem iterarem ad te quoque scribendo, fastidium potius generarem quam ingenium probare utrorumque auctorum tibi ut decet **reservarem**;

3.3.1 Vocabulary and readings

Fastidium potius generarem, quam ingenium probare utrorumque auctorum tibi ut decet reserarem [Walker, 24, 2, 8]	Fastidium potius generarem, quam ingenium probare utrorumque auctorum tibi ut decet reservarem [F, 110]	Fastidium potius generarem, quam ingenium probare utrorumque auctorum tibi ut decet reservarem [M, 75]
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Walker's choice to read *reserarem* where F and M have *reservarem* can only be justified as an attempt to clarify the meaning of the comparative sentence subordinated to the apodosis, as the semantic range that *reservarem* covers supports neither a direct object (*ingenium*) nor an infinitive clause (*probare*). However there are major reasons for which *reservarem* should be here preferred: firstly both Metzler and Fleming do not signal alternative readings or the eventuality of a corrupted passage, as they often do for other dubious cases, adding value to the agreement of the text of their exemplars. Secondly, in both exemplars the words *ut decet* are marked as a parenthetical element. It cannot be said whether or not this reflects features in the original Bobbio manuscript, such as spacing and markings, however, it reinforces the perception that Walker was forcefully bending the text when translating *ut decet* as supporting the infinitive *probare* since the word-order clearly suggests that *ingenium* should be its object and not the object of the verb of the comparative subordinate (*reservarem/ reserarem*). In the *Epistulae* unusual disposition of words usually concerns name-adjectives patterns (the often mentioned hyperbata) and this would otherwise be one of the few instances of this phenomenon involving a verb and a depending

accusative (the other notable one is in this letter, *preces... fundimus*, for which, however, there are no other possible alternatives). As it happens, Walker's emendation *reserarem* (which he translates as 'disclose') suits perfectly the meaning of *ingenium* but cannot stand on its own, as the word-order indicates it should. In light of these considerations there are two alternatives: either to consider the passage corrupt or to adapt the meaning of *reservarem* so that it could support the infinitive clause. Todde and Nuvolone ultimately favoured this option.⁴⁶¹ A possible literal translation of the passage might be: 'therefore, I would avoid to engender boredom, should I repeat the same things in writing to you again, rather than save for you, as it is fitting, that you should examine the mind of both authors'.

3.3.2 Epistolary qualities

The section consists of a dependant hypothetical construction in which the apodosis is a purpose clause. The brief apologetic passage deviates from epistolary standards, even as they emerge from the corpus of Columbanian *Epistulae*. Excusatory language is usually employed to apologise for a digression or for lack of skill, whereas here it is used to justify the omission of additional argumentation to reinforce the request that is about to be expressed. It should be argued that this is a reflection of the nature of *Epistula* III: it is a *cartula* that relies on attached documentation to carry on a pre-existing debate. This section might be considered indicative of the fact that Columbanus might have conceptualised various categories of epistolary writings on the basis of the function that they performed, and that his terminology might be a reflection of this. It could also be noted that the understanding of this passage would require the addressee to already be familiar with the contents of the attached letters, simply because the identity of the *auctores* is not made explicit. Previously the writer has contrasted the books from his province with those of 'these Gauls' and has referred to an unspecified *magister*, who had not approved of them. However, no names are made. Now, the contrast is specifically between the authority of two writers. If the letter to Pope Gregory was one of those that the *cartula* commended, it would be easy to infer that this is a reference to Victorius of Aquitaine and to Anatolius, as the two have

⁴⁶¹ Todde and Nuvolone, 'Le lettere e la preghiera', 140

been similarly contrasted there.⁴⁶² Few alternatives have been proposed,⁴⁶³ but what matters is that, from the way the passage is constructed, it would appear that the addressee is assumed to have previous knowledge of the general content of the dispute. Columbanus might have been relying exclusively on the documentations by which this note was accompanied, but other alternative or additional methods of transmission of the information should not be discounted: he might have expected the letter-bearers to state his case in person, or trusted that memory of his exchanges with Gregory I had been retained by a part of the chancery of the Roman Church. Either way, this *excusatio* stands in for what in a classical speech would have been the *argumentatio*, not for the request (*propositio*) of this letter,⁴⁶⁴ but for that of the attached material. While this might not be a novelty in letter-writing, it shows that Columbanus was aware of the potentialities of the medium he was using, choosing to forgo the explanation of his arguments in this particular piece of writing so that attention could be focused on his new request, but at the same time relying on inter textual (and possibly contextual, if oral communication or memory were involved) means to make sure that his audience had a grasp of the controversy he was addressing.

Section 3.4: *Propositio*, supplicatory style

cum salutationum condignis officiis preces tantum ad te [...]

fundimus, ut nobis peregrinis laborantibus tuae pium sententiae solatium praestes, quo, si non contra fidem est, nostrorum traditionem robores seniorum, quo ritum Paschae sicut accepimus a maioribus observare per tuum possimus iudicium in nostra peregrinatione

⁴⁶² Columbanus, *Epistula* I, 5 in Walker, *Opera*, 8 *Tua itaque consideret vigilantia, ut in fide duorum supradictorum auctorum sibi invicem contrariorum probanda.*

⁴⁶³ Todde and Nuvolone, 'Le lettere e la preghiera', 140-141 have interpreted the passage as referring to two authorities who supported Columbanus's position, not to one in favour and one opposed, as the similarity with the quoted passage from *Epistula I* would suggest. Aldo Granata, *San Colombano. Le opere*. 51-52, n7 has proposed three pairs of authors referenced in the letter to Gregory: Anatolius/Jerome, which he favoured, Anatolius/Gennadius and Jerome/Gennadius.

⁴⁶⁴ The *argumentatio* is present in this letter but it is not concerned with the technicalities of the Easter question. See discussion below.

3.4.1 Structure and style.

This section constitutes the core of the letter. The request is expressed through a single period, of which a great part is taken up by a parenthetical insertion, which will be discussed as a self-contained section. Other than that, the structure of the period shows a careful management of complex subordination on the part of the author, albeit with rather short clauses. There are five clauses in total (again, excluding the larger parenthetical insertion), and while not all of them are dependant from each other, they are symmetrically organized so that only the third degree of subordination is reached: both of the relative clauses [*quo...*] and their respective dependant clauses, hypothetical [*si non contra fidem est*] and comparative [*sicut accepimus a maioribus*] depend from the initial completive clause [*ut nobis... praestes*]. It could be argued that the entire subsection formed by the cluster of subordinated sentences is arranged in a chiasmus that is signalled by verbal parallels among the different *cola*. In the central part *nostrorum seniorum* is recalled by the subsequent *a maioribus*, while the earlier *tuae sententiae* is reflected by the later *tuum iudicium* and finally the initial expression *a nobis peregrinis laborantibus* is mirrored by the closing *in nostra peregrinatione*. The crux of the chiasmus would fittingly fall on the words *ritum Paschae*, which is the object of the request. The reprisal in the use of hyperbata should also be noted [abAB: *tuae pium sententiae solatium*; aBVA: *nostrorum traditionem robores seniorum*; aVA: *tuum possimus iudicium*]. There is enough evidence to consider that the request was carefully composed so that the key concepts expressed by the chiastic pairings would stand out: firstly the condition of the petitioners as *peregrini*, which is made into an important argument later on in this letter; secondly the necessity of a pronouncement by the Roman see on the matter, which is what is actually requested; and thirdly the antiquity and authoritative quality of the Paschal tradition that is defended, which, it shall be recalled, was one of the main arguments in the letter to Gregory I. Another parallel with that letter might be found in the fact that the arrangement of the clauses and words in this section could be considered another display of the rules and adjuncts of what has been called the Biblical style, whose use and significance in

respect to *Epistula* I has been shown and discussed by David Howlett.⁴⁶⁵ However, in *Epistula* III this is limited to the order in which concepts are stated and restated, whereas the paradigms of the Biblical style as set out by Howlett are not as strictly adhered to by the writing, as none of the them can be detected reinforcing or signalling the chiasmus, for example no rhyme or alliteration is present and *cursus*-like endings are not employed throughout the passage, and, even though a few are recognisable, it would be difficult to ascertain whether these are intentional occurrences [*dispondeus dactylicus*: peregrinis laborantibus; *planus*: solatium praestes; *trispodiacus* [with assonance or vowel rhyme):traditionum seniorum; *tardus*: possumus iudicium.]⁴⁶⁶ Furthermore, the chiasmus does not involve the entirety of the letter but only a single sentence. In light of this, a general consideration on the Biblical style of writing could be made: while the stylistic elements grouped by Howlett under this bracket are certainly present in Columbanus's letters, it would be best to consider it a flexible model, from which the author could borrow or take away elements at need; while in *Epistula* I different section of the text appear to have been planned around pre-ordained chiasmic or parallel patterns, in *Epistula* III such stratagem is only employed once, albeit in the central part of the letter. In other words the author felt free to adapt a style of writing in which he was clearly adept, as analysis of the letter to Gregory testifies, but only so far as it was useful to elevate the tone of a modest request in a rather short letter. In conclusion, it is possible to state that the writer employed every means at his disposal to mark this passage as fundamental: the use of complex subordination, otherwise infrequent, the usual re-arranging of the word order

⁴⁶⁵ David Howlett, *The Celtic tradition of Biblical style*, 91-102. For the same author's consideration on the use of *cursus* by Columbanus see also David Howlett 'Two works of Saint Columban' 28-46 and David Howlett, 'Insular writers rhythms', 53-116.

⁴⁶⁶ Regarding the coincidence of *cursus* endings and occurrences of hyperbaton in the *Epistulae* see Wright, 'Columbanus's *Epistulae*', 57-58: 'The way in which he employs patter of hyperbaton and in conjunction with accentual rhythms suggests that the saint was not entirely ignorant of the *cursus*, even if he uses it in a seemingly intermittent manner'. His opinion is much less clear cut than Lapidge and Stancliffe's who completely rule out that Columbanus employed *cursus* in any way. Michael Lapidge, 'Epilogue. Did Columbanus compose metrical verse?' in *Columbanus, Studies on the Latin writings*, 274-285 and Claire Stancliffe 'The thirteen sermons attributed to Columbanus' in *Columbanus, Studies on the Latin writings*, 93-202. It should be re-iterated that the categories employed are those used by both Wright and Howlett, who both based their analysis on Tore Janson's work. Wright explained that his categories include a wide range of sentence endings for which Janson employed different notation; Wright, 'Columbanus's *Epistulae*', 55-56 n103; Howlett makes no methodological remarks on the much questioned validity of the *dispondeus dactylicus*, nor he mentions how he dealt with instances of hiatus. Howlett, *The Celtic tradition of Biblical style*, 21-22.

in complex patterns, and the highlighting of key concepts through their disposition in the sentence.

3.4.2 Vocabulary

Walker translated the words *cum salutationum condignis officiis* as ‘with the proper courtesies of greeting’. This might be interpreted as a generic platitude and dismissed; however, there is more to this expression than what transpires from such translation. It is possible to see how the meaning of this expression evolved in the context of epistolary writings, as it was still in use in the works of Late-Antique letter writers. The concept of *officium epistolaris* can be traced in both familiar and official correspondence.⁴⁶⁷ In the case of the former, it carries the connotation of an obligation that is born out of the expectation of reciprocity, which is an integral part of letter writing, while in case of the latter it describes the duty of answering to the letters of petitioners, which is attached to public offices. It is unsurprising for the writer of *Epistula* III to make a reference to this concept at the beginning of the petition, as a reminder of the fact that it expects an answer. Further evidence of this can be found in the words used. It has been established that Columbanus was well read in the works of Jerome and it has even been suggested that he modelled the *Epistulae* after the tone and style of his letters⁴⁶⁸. Now, similar expressions occur five times in total in the Jeromian letters, sometimes in a form along the lines of *officium salutationis reddere*⁴⁶⁹, which emphasises the idea of reciprocity. Not only it would be a likely assumption to state that Columbanus had familiarity with the idea of epistolary duty, given how frequently it appears in contemporary works, but also that its meaning in *Epistula* III was influenced by that expressed in Jerome’s letters. The adjective *condignis* that accompanies the phrase introduces said

⁴⁶⁷ Letter-writing as an *officium* is discussed in two monographs on the letter of Symmachus and of Paulinus of Nola and regarded as common among all the authors of the period in both works. See text and references to the letters of Jerome, Augustine, Sulpicius and others in Philippe Bruggisser, *Symmaque ou le rituel épistolaire de l’amitié littéraire*, (Fribourg, 1993) 4-16 and Catherine Conybeare, *Paulinus noster. Self and symbols in the letters of Paulinus of Nola*, Oxford Early Christian Studies, (Oxford, 2000), 24-27

⁴⁶⁸ Smit, *Studies*, 146 and Wright ‘Columbanus’s *Epistulae*’, 69

⁴⁶⁹ Jerome, *Ep. XLVII Ad Desiderium: reddat salutationis officium*; Jerome, *Ep. CIII Ad Augustinum: Promptum reddens salutationis officium*; Jerome, *Ep. CXII Ad Augustinum: Praetermitto salutationis officia*; Jerome, *Ep. CXV Ad Augustinum: reddo tibi per eum salutationis officia*; Fifth-century epistolographers such as Sidonius did employ similar expressions in slightly different forms such as *officium familiaritatis* or *iteratio salutationis*: Sidonius Apollinaris, *Ep. 2,11; 4,5; 4,10*; (Christian Lühjohann ed. *Epistularum libri*, 35, 57, 61).

notion of reciprocity. A literal translation that might convey the full meaning of the expression within the sentence would be: ‘we give prayers in abundance to you alone, with due courtesies deserving of replies’.

The passage refers to the entire monastic community sharing the condition of *peregrini*. The words is frequently used elsewhere in the letters,⁴⁷⁰ and both scholars and devote readers have attached great importance to it, as it expresses one of the concepts that defines Columbanus’s identity. However, as it shall be seen in the commentary to the valediction, the insistence on this term might be here motivated by the goals of Columbanus’s rhetorical strategy

3.4.3 Epistolary qualities.

The passage adheres quite strictly to the format of epistolary requests, when considered without the parenthetical insertion that follows *ad te*. Even when that interruption is taken into account, the features of the request reflect the supplicatory style as described by ancient epistolary theorists⁴⁷¹. The formulaic reference to the *officium salutationis*, the frequent use of second person pronouns and adjectives, and the lexical choices, such as the emphatic *fundimus preces*, mark it as such. Furthermore, there is the noticeable effort of arranging the request in a way that is both stylistically elaborate and capable of sending across a clear message, through the chiasmic disposition of its key concepts. In their precepts about the peroration of a cause in a public speech Late Antique rhetorical teachings distinguish between *nuda propositio*, in which case the request is presented in a simple statement, and *ratio subiecta*, in which case it is presented along with a summary of the reasoning that supports it.⁴⁷² The way the request is formulated in this letter straddles the line between the two models, with elements that could be developed into full arguments only briefly alluded to, in incidental constructions (that is the ablative absolute, the comparative clause, and the final specification *in nostra peregrinatione*), but nonetheless present and given due weight in the sentence through their positioning. As it shall be seen when

⁴⁷⁰ It occurs twice in the letter to Gregory, twice in the letter to the Gallic bishops, once here, and four times in the letter to Boniface IV.

⁴⁷¹ Pseudo Demetrius, ΤύποιἘπιστολικοί, 12 (Malherbe, *Ancient epistolary theorists*, 37)

⁴⁷² *Propositiones aut nudaae sunt aut ratione subiectae*; Martianus Cappella, *De Nuptiis*, V, 555, (Willis, ed. *De Nuptiis* 194-196)

discussing the section that contains the follow-up to this request, that can be once again correlated with the nature of *Epistula* III as an explanatory *cartula*. Whereas in the subsequent section arguments are omitted in favour of redirecting the reader to the attached correspondence, here they are simply skimmed over in rapid succession. To sum up, through the skilful handling of the complex subordination of clauses that the Latin language offers to those who can master it, and possibly through the use of insular Biblical style, the author frames his petition in a way that is both artistically appealing and functional to persuade his audience.

Section 3.5: Confessio Fidei

per dominum nostrum Iesum Christum et spiritum sanctum et per unitatem fidei nostrae, quae invicem est, qua unum *patrem nostrum qui est in caelis, ex quo omnia* [Matth, 6, 9], et unum redemptorem nostrum, filium Dei, *per quem omnia*, et unum spiritum sanctum, *in quo omnia*, [Rom. 11, 36] corde credimus et ore confitemur unum Deum esse in trinitate et trinitatem in unitate, unamquamque scilicet personam plenum dominum et totas tres personas unum dominum,

3.5.1 Structure and style

This parenthetical insertion marks an interruption of the epistolary discourse. On the basis of its position, that is, immediately preceding the main request of the letter, it could be argued that its purpose might have been that of conferring solemnity to it, as it mainly consists in defining one of the three elements in the name of which [per] that request is made. These elements are two persons of the Trinity, the Son [per dominum nostrum Iesum Christum] and the Holy Spirit [*et spiritum sanctum*], while the place that one would expect to belong to the Father is given to ‘the unity of our faith’ [et per unitatem fidei nostrae], which is the one that receives the most attention from the writer, who expands on it through two relative clauses that have their antecedent in it, and through other subordinates depending from the second one [*quae invicem est, qua unum... personas unum dominum*]. The most prominent stylistic mark is that of accumulation, through the repetition of the relative pronouns, which occurs five times in rapid succession in the first half of the passage, whereas, in the second half, the word-order alternates between parallel [*corde*

credimus et ore confitemur; unamquamque scilicet personam ... unum dominum] and chiasmic [*unum Deum esse in trinitatem et trinitatem in unitatem*] arrangement.

3.5.2 Epistolary qualities

As a whole, the passage reads like a formulaic confession of faith. The early Church declined the notion of *confessio* in three correlated but distinct ways: the *confessio peccatorum* was a statement of one's sinful condition; the *confessio laudis* expressed gratitude for the possibility of one's salvation and the *confessio fidei* attested the orthodoxy of one's belief.⁴⁷³ It stands to reason that the passage belongs to the latter category, because of the words *corde credimus et ore confitemur*. That such formulas had arrived in Ireland with the very first coming of Christianity is an obvious point; however, it is worth noting that their presence goes beyond the ritualistic use and they are consistently incorporated into Hiberno-Latin literary texts, both prose and poetry⁴⁷⁴.

The Trinitarian dogma is central in such statements. This is not unusual even within the limited scope of the writings attributed to Columbanus. In the letter to Pope Boniface IV, the brief profession of faith, although limited to the attributes of the Son (since Christology was the central factor in the Three Chapters controversy), is reminiscent of this passage⁴⁷⁵ both in contents, with its use of the Pauline epistles, and in style, with its accumulation of parallel clauses.⁴⁷⁶ In that case, however, the epistolary discourse is not interrupted, as that *confessio fidei* is an integral part of the theological *argumentatio* of that work. Furthermore, as it might be expected, since it is primarily concerned with the definition and implications of the Trinitarian faith, *Instructio I* has

⁴⁷³ On these distinctions see Cornelius Mayer, 'Confessio, Confiteri' in Cornelius Mayer and others, eds *Augustinum Lexicon*, I, Basel 1994, 1122-1134; Ernesto Valgiglio, *Confessio nella Bibbia e nella letteratura Cristiana antica*, Giappichelli, (Torino, 1980), 139-146; Pier Franco Beatrice, *La lavanda dei piedi: contributo alla storia delle antiche liturgie cristiane*, (Roma, 1983), 145; Ludwig Bieler, 'Note: The Creeds of St Victorinus and St Patrick', in *Theological Studies*, 9 (1948), 121-24

⁴⁷⁴ Michael W. Herren and Shirley Ann Brown, *Christ in Celtic Christianity*, (Woodbridge, 2012), 49-50. The list of the texts they referenced is by necessity short but convincing in light of lexical and thematic similarities: it is especially worthwhile to compare the wording of the *Lorica of Laidcenn* lines 1-2 with that of this text and of Columbanus's *Instructio I,2* as quoted below. *Lorica of Laidcenn* in Michael W. Herren, ed. and trans. *The Hisperica Famina II. Related poems*, Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, Toronto, 1987. 76-7.

⁴⁷⁵ Columbanus, *Ep. V*, 13ed. Walker, *Opera*, 52

⁴⁷⁶ Examples of parallelisms are: *verus Deus aeternus sine tempore et verus homo absque peccato ex tempore est; iuxta divinitatem coaeternus est patri, et iuxta humanitatem iunior est matre; manens in Trinitate, vixit in mundo*; citations are from Coloss. 2.9 and Eph. 4.10.

even more similarities with this *confessio fidei*, even down to the wording.⁴⁷⁷ The shorter formulation used in *Epistula* III differs from these other instances in its omission of a doxology and of a condemnation of diverging heretical beliefs. These comparisons might be enough to argue that the author, who up to this point has been strictly conforming to the style of epistolary writing, consciously switched to a register that would have been more appropriate in a very different context. This digression is recalled, in the main request, only by the subsequent incidental phrase *si non contra fidem est*. One might consider this *confessio* an implicit response to that dubitative remark: the faith professed here is orthodox, therefore whatever request might come from Columbanus would be orthodox as well. Herren remarked that presenting a confession of faith to shield oneself from an accusation of heresy while involved in a doctrinal dispute is a stratagem that can already be observed in the *Profession of Faith* of Pelagius, and notes the continuity in such use of the *confessio* format from Pelagius to Columbanus, through Patrick. While there is certainly a similarity in the way *confessio* formulas are used by these authors, it should be observed that Columbanus never wrote a profession of faith structured in clear cut article, like Pelagius did to defend himself, and that a direct derivation would be improbable⁴⁷⁸.

Section 3.6: Argumentatio, diplomatic style.

Constat enim nos in nostra esse patria, dum nullas istorum suscipimus regulas Gallorum, sed in desertis sedentes, nulli molesti, cum nostrorum regulis manemus seniorum, pro quibus defendendis sive ad vos, ut dixi, apostolicos patres, sive ad istos nostros vicinos fratres, nostros in Christo patres, scripsimus istas quas haec cartula tibi commendat epistolas, ut quia, dum meritis satisfacere non potuimus, utpote tumultuantibus potius quam ratiocinantibus, vestrae mature punctus auctoritatis postulamus, cum iudicio inter istos possimus vivere cum ecclesiasticae pace unitatis,

⁴⁷⁷ *Ubi habes in veritatem unitatem in Trinitatem et Trinitate in unitate*; Columbanus, *Instructio* I,2. (Walker, ed *Opera*, 60).

⁴⁷⁸ Herren and Brown, *Christ in Celtic Christianity*, 48-49.

3.6.1 Structure and style

The period is another example of Columbanus's ability to manage complex subordination, this time not in a symmetrical arrangement but rather, through the accumulation of clauses in quick succession, expanding the sentence to the sixth degree of subordination. The main clause [*constat enim in nostra esse patria*] carries the chief argument supporting Columbanus's request of official approval of the his community's Easter practice, namely that, as pointed out in the valediction, canons allow an isolated community to maintain their own rites. This is presented as an implication, signalled by *enim*, of the entire community being involved in a *peregrinatio*, the last word of the previous sentence. Complex patterns of hyperbaton appear again [abVAB: *nullas istorum suscipimus regulas Gallorum*; aBVA: *cum nostrorum regulis manemus seniorum*],⁴⁷⁹ the first arranged in the order of the classical 'golden line' and contrasting with the second in contents through a verbal parallel [*regulas* and *regulis*], although in this instance there is no chiasmic construction, something that might support the idea that this letter, as opposed to *Epistula* I, was not planned as a text organized around a single stylistic criterion.

3.6.2 Vocabulary

Epistula is the more neutral term for letter and it would not be possible to infer much from it, although it might be assumed that it does not refer to correspondence that had been identified by another term in *Epistula* II. This would rule out that the author was referring to the *tomo responsionis meae* attached to the letter to the council, the three *tomos* sent to the pope, or the *libellus* sent to Arigius.⁴⁸⁰ It is however possible for the *epistulas* (at least two) mentioned in this passage to have included both of the surviving letters of the corpus from an earlier date, namely *Epistula* I and *Epistula* II. As stated above, all of the correspondence with Pope Gregory might have been sent. Furthermore, it has been argued that the position of *Epistula* II in both the *Collectanea* and Metzler's copy points to the possibility that they were transmitted together.⁴⁸¹ On the other hand, it should be noted that *Epistula* I is far more likely to have accompanied this

⁴⁷⁹ Wright also listed as complex hyperbaton *istas quas haec cartula tibi commendat epistolas*; Wright, 'Columbanus's Epistulae', 92

⁴⁸⁰ Columbanus, *Ep.* II, 5 ed. Walker, *Opera*, 14

⁴⁸¹ Grosjean, 'Recherches', 210; Dubreucq, 'L'œuvre épistolaire', 116

cartula, as the name of its addressee does indeed appear, and that, if this is the case, it will weaken an argument based on the positioning of the letters, since the letter to Gregory is separated from *Epistula* III and II by one other letter in Metzler's copy and two in the *Collectanea*, because of the repositioning of *Epistula* IV.

3.6.3 Epistolary qualities

The author had previously justified himself for not engaging with the arguments which supports his point of view (or the point of view of his sources) in the Easter controversy, with the use of excusatory language and by redirecting the audience to his other correspondence. It is this section that should be considered the argumentative part of the text: it does not presents elements that are relevant to the Easter question but what the authors seems to regard as the decisive argument in support of his request to be granted confirmation to the practice of an older tradition. The section reads like a summary of why the writer's position should be favoured: firstly the custom of allowing isolated community to preserve their practice; secondly, that the antiquity and legitimacy of that practice is proved in the attached material; thirdly the irrational [*tumultuantibus potius quam ratiocinantibus*] attitude of his adversaries; finally, the fact that he is appealing to a higher authority for the sake of ecclesiastical peace. This last point especially qualifies the tone of the section as diplomatic [*πρεσβευτική*],⁴⁸² even more so than in the letter to the Gallic council, Columbanus argues for what would be a compromise, rather than the optimal solution.

Section 3.7: Argumentatio, exemplum

sicut sancti patres, Polycarpus scilicet et papa Anicetus, sine scandalo fidei, immo cum integra caritate perseverantes –unusquisque quod accepit servans et in *quo vocatus est permanens* – docuerunt.

3.7.1 Sources

This episode of ecclesiastical history from the second century is reported as an example of coexistence of different ritual practices. During the pontificate of Anicetus (possibly in the years

⁴⁸² Confront the example of a request made according to this style as given by Pseudo-Libanius; Pseudo-Libanius, Ἐπιστολμαῖοι Χαρακτῆρες, 75 in Malherbe, *Ancient epistolary theorists*, 79

157-60)⁴⁸³, Polycarpus, bishop of the Church of Smyrne, arrived in Rome and discussed several issues of conformity between the two churches with him. One point that could not be settled was the date of the celebration of Easter, Polycarpus was maintaining his own Church's tradition of celebrating on the fourteenth day of the month, without considering on which day of the week it fell, whereas the Roman Church made sure to celebrate on a Sunday. Despite the disagreement, and this is the point of Columbanus's *exemplum*, the bishops did not break communion with each other. Neil Wright correctly pointed out that it is very likely that Columbanus's knowledge of the episode was derived from Rufinus's translation of Eusebius's Ecclesiastical History and highlighted a few verbal parallels between that version and Columbanus's account.⁴⁸⁴ In both the translation and Eusebius's Greek text, which are here very close, the source of the story is a letter by Irenaeus of Lyon, to Pope Victor I, concerning the same issue, while trying to mediate between him and the Asian bishop Polycrates.⁴⁸⁵ Columbanus had already referenced it, in his letter to Pope Gregory I, when disparaging the words of Victor.⁴⁸⁶ The *Historia Ecclesiastica* was a fundamental text in monastic libraries and frequently referenced even in early Irish texts,⁴⁸⁷ however, it is possible that Columbanus attached great importance to Irenaeus's letter specifically because it was also referenced by the Latin Anatolius, a text that supported and granted authority to his arguments in his own ongoing struggle about Easter.⁴⁸⁸ The verbal parallel between that text's account of the clash between Victor and Polycrates and Columbanus's *exemplum* about Anicetus and Polycarpus are similar to those detected by Wright in relation to Rufinus's text, for

⁴⁸³ Eusebius and Jerome register the event under the CCCXXXIV Olympiad; Eusebius-Jerome, *Chronicon*, ed. Rudolf Helm, *Die Chronik des Hieronymus*, GSC *Eusebius Werke* 7, Berlin 1913, 203

⁴⁸⁴ *Plena fide, pace integra, et firma caritate*; Rufinus, *Historia ecclesiastica*, V, 24, 16-17, ed. Theodore Mommsen, *Die lateinische Übersetzung des Rufinus*, in Eduard Scwarz and Theodore Mommsen, *Die Kirchengeschichte*, GSC, *Eusebius Werke*, 2, Leipzig, 1903, 497; see Wright, Columbanus's *Epistulae*, 74, n166.

⁴⁸⁵ On the episode, and Irenaeus's letter, in the context of the early disputes about Easter see Mosshammer, *The Easter computus* 47-48.

⁴⁸⁶ *Dixit hoc olim et Victor episcopus sed nemo orientalium suum recepit commentum*. Columbanus *Ep.* I, 4, ed. Walker, *Opera*, 6.

⁴⁸⁷ Aidan Breen, 'A new Irish fragment of the *Continuatio* to Rufinus-Eusebius *Historia ecclesiastica*', in *Scriptorium*, 41-42, (1987), 185-204, 198-200; Daniel P. McCarthy 'The status of the Pre-Patrician Irish annals', in *Peritia*, 12 (1998), 98-152, 131-142, lists Insular annalistic material that might be derived from Rufinus.

⁴⁸⁸ Columbanus quotes from this text in his letter to Gregory: Columbanus, *Ep.* I, 2, ed. Walker, 1-2

example, with the reprisal of forms of the verbs *persevero* and *accipio*.⁴⁸⁹ It could be argued that the way the later episode is represented by the Latin Anatolius might have informed Columbanus's understanding of the entirety of the letter of Iraeneus as presented in the *Historia Ecclesiastica*, that is, emphasis is not put on the bishop of Lyon's irenic action but on the legitimacy of both parties in preserving pre-existing traditions.⁴⁹⁰ The argument put forth here is consistent with Columbanus's previous writings. That the theological framework of Columbanus's request in this letter has not changed, even though the contents of his petition are slightly different, is proved by the incorporation of the quote from I Cor. 7.24 [in quo vocatus est permanens] into this *exemplum*. In the letter to the Gaulish bishops, Columbanus had inserted the same quote in a more extended form⁴⁹¹ [*unusquisque in quo vocatus est in eo permaneat apud Deum*]. As opposed to his reference to Victor in *Epistula* I, here Columbanus uses the example of the ancient father not to defend the limits of his Paschal observance but to prove that different traditions can coexist and have claim to legitimacy, because of their antiquity.

3.7.2 Epistolary qualities

This section is structurally part of the *argumentatio*, is introduced in a comparative subordinate clause. Labelling it as an *exemplum* can be justified by the fact that it performs its function in the same way in which rhetorical treatises described that *exempla* taken from histories should do, that is, it invites the audience to draw a conclusion on the base of similarities [*a simili*] of the

⁴⁸⁹ *Utrisque partibus in sua regula perseverantibus nec accepto antiquitus more declinantibus*. In *De ratione Paschali*, 7. Text as presented in ed. Daniel P. Mc Carthy and Breen, *The ante-Nicene Christian Pasch*, 49, 1.123-4

⁴⁹⁰ The text of the Latin Anatolius does display a few words of approval about Iraeneus: *contentio quaedam [...] quae in Iraeneo [...] rectissime pacata est*. However, the legitimacy of the Eastern Paschal tradition is much more heavily emphasised. On the contrary, Rufinus's translation greatly stresses the role of Iraeneus and his actions: *Haec Iraeneus agens nominis suis opus, pacem videlicet Dei ecclesiis concilians, scribit et non solum Victori, sed et diversis rectoribus similiter per epistolas adserit, quod nulla pro hac quaestione in ecclesiis Dei dissension debeat oboriri*. Eusebius- Rufinus, *Historia ecclesiastica*, V, 24,18, ed. Mommsen, *Die lateinische Übersetzung*, 497. Columbanus's use of the episode acknowledges the reasons of legitimacy that Iraeneus reported, without even mentioning his efforts as a peace maker, something that he would have been more likely to have done if he had additional knowledge of the controversy from a source that was not Rufinus. It could be mentioned in passing that one way in which Rufinus's account of Iraeneus might have influenced the Irishman is the use of an etymological play on words with the name of the bishop of Lyon.

⁴⁹¹ Columbanus, *Ep II*, 7, ed. Walker, *Opera*, 18. Walker, in his biblical index, classified this quotation as "peculiar" that is, belonging to neither the Vulgate nor any known Old Latin version, but it might be possible that he had simply committed a mistake in recognising the quotation, as he references I Cor. 7, 20 instead of 7,24 which is closer to Columbanus phrasing. Walker, *Opera*, 218.

circumstances [*circa rem*] between a known episode and what is being discussed.⁴⁹² On the subject of inserting anecdotes and histories, epistolary theorists recommended moderation and brevity but considered them one of the way in which audience could be captivated⁴⁹³. Columbanus reports the episode in allusive and concise way, albeit stylistically refined, with a single subordinated clause accompanied by the parallelism of the two participle constructions with a depending relative clause each [*quod accepit servans; in quo vocatus est permanens*]. This would reflect his willingness to respect the conventions of brevity and elegance in letter-writing but also the ability to adapt the tools of classical rhetoric to the epistolary format.

Section 3.8: Vaedictio, commendatory and exhortatory styles

Vale, dulcissime in Christo papa, memor nostri et in sanctis orationibus iuxta sanctorum cineres et in piissimis sanctionibus iuxta Costantinopolitanae synodi centum quinquaginta auctores, ecclesias Dei in barbaris gentibus constitutas suis vivere legibus, sicut edoctas a patribus, iudicantes.

3.8.1 Structure and style

The basic structure of the valediction clause is rather simple, displaying the classical use of *vale*, the addressee's title in the vocative case [*dulcissime in Christo papa*] and a formula of recommendation [*memor nostri*]. This is expanded upon with the correlation [*et.. et*] of the complements *in sanctis orationibus* and *in piissimis sanctionibus*, and a participle constructions, from which two other clauses depend [*auctores ecclesias Dei in barbaris gentibus constitutas suis vivere legibus, sicut edoctas a patribus, iudicantes*]. The structure would be that of a parallelism, with the two correlated *cola* mirroring each other, but it is broken by the fact that the preposition *iuxta* is used with two different meaning: in its first occurrence it translates to 'besides', 'next to' indicating physical proximity to the ashes of the martyrs, a recurring element in the passages in which Columbanus is addressing the Pope directly, whereas in the second

⁴⁹² Martianus Cappella, *De Nuptiis*, V, 557-8, ed. Willis, 196-197; Julius Victor, *Ars Rhetorica*, *De locis circa rem*, eds. Remo Giomini and Maria Silvana Celentano, 37-39.

⁴⁹³ This is recommended to be done with caution by Julius Victor, *Ars Rhetorica*, *De Epistolis*, eds. Remo Giomini and Maria Silvana Celentano, 105. See also Gregory of Nazianzus, Ep. 51, 5-6 and Pseudo-Libanius, Ἐπιστολμαῖοι Χαρακτήρες, 50 in Malherbe, *Ancient epistolary theorists*, 60 and 73

to 'according to' This allows the use of the participle construction that introduces one last decisive element to his argument about the legitimacy of maintaining diverging but pre-existing traditions, with a comparative clause [sicut edoctas a patribus] that alludes to what had been previously argued through the *exemplum* of Polycarpus and Anicetus..

3.8.2 Vocabulary and sources

That the Irishman Columbanus would employ the expression *in barbaris gentibus*, when writing to a Roman pontiff, is explained by the fact that it is an imperfect quote from, or rather, an allusion to, an authoritative text, that of the second canon of the second Ecumenical Council in Constantinople (381), of which different Latin translations existed at the time of Columbanus. Rusticus the Deacon had quoted the first three canons of this council in his translations of the acts of the council of Chalcedon (dated to 564-565), however, Columbanus's phrasing is closer to the versions of the canon found in the collection by Dionysius. The first reads: *eas autem quae sunt in barbaricis gentibus Dei ecclesias gubernari oportet secundum hanc quae per patres conusuetudo tenet*; whereas the Dionysian text has two more words in common with Columbanus's. It reads: *ecclesias autem Dei in barbaricis gentibus constitutas gubernari convenit iuxta consuetudinem quae est patribus instituta*⁴⁹⁴. This might imply that Columbanus had familiarity with a part of the Scythian monk's work, although his Paschal cycle is never mentioned in Columbanus's Easter letters, or alternatively, that he knew the canon in yet another translation.

3.8.3 Epistolary characteristics

The valediction is easily compared with that of the letter to Pope Gregory. The first part displays all the features that are expected in the epistolary genre, farewells and commendations, whereas the second concludes an argument that had already been brought up in the main body of the text. What sets it apart is the precise reference to a canon text, not just an appeal to a general principle. In addition, the tone is very different; if the categories employed by epistolary theorist are to be

⁴⁹⁴ Edward Schwartz, ed. *Gestorum Chalcedoniensium versio a Rustico edita. Actiones VII-XVI*, in *Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum*, II, III, 3, Berlin and Leipzig, 1927-1932, 110. The Dionysian text is that established by Giuseppe Alberigo, Giuseppe Alberigo and others, eds. *Conciliorum Oecumenicorum Decreta*, Bologna 1973. Translated in Norman P. Tanner, ed. *Decree of the Ecumenical Councils*, I, Sheed and Ward and Georgetown University Press, 1990, 31-32.

used, it would fit that of exhortatory speech, rather than that of the reproachful retort to Candidus's opinion found at the close of *Epistula* I.⁴⁹⁵ When requesting the pope's confirmation, the author had stressed that the condition of the community was that of *peregrini*, and subsequently their lack of interaction with the Gallic clergy, from which they consider themselves separated, even physically removed [*in desertis sedentes*]. To further underscore the point, the valediction provides a juridical context to the observation *constat enim nos in nostra esse patria*, which is not based on personal status alone, although that could be involved, as hinted by the reference to the *peregrinatio*, but on a precise understanding of the statutes of early Christianity. As in the letter to Gregory, Columbanus derogates from the usual, commendatory or devout, format of valedictions that simply asks for prayers, in order to sum up the argument that supports his most pressing concern.

⁴⁹⁵ *Manifeste antiquus error est; sed semper antiquior est veritas quod illum reprehendit.* Columbanus *Ep.* I, 12 (Walker, ed. *Opera*, 12)

CHAPTER 4: Columbanus's letter to the monastic community and to Attala

Section 4.1: Salutatio

Dulcissimis suis filiis discentibusque carissimis, fratribus frugalibus, cunctis simul monachis suis
Columba peccator in Christo salutem mittit

4.1.1 Epistolary qualities

Traditionally, this letter is considered to have been sent from Nantes, around the year 610, where Columbanus, having been exiled by Theuderic and Brunhild and waiting to embark for Ireland, addressed the monastic community he had left behind in Luxeuil. Metzler and Fleming both describe this letter as consolatory and Metzler explicitly refer to Theuderic and Brunhild in the title he assigned to this work. It is impossible to ascertain whether this title was also found in his source, the lost Bobbio manuscript.⁴⁹⁶ The consolatory nature of the letter is apparent in its central address to Attala. However, the author does not lament persecution as much as divisions and quarrels within the monastic community.⁴⁹⁷

The salutation clearly marks this letter as an *epistola familiaris*. The *intitulatio* does not include any formal reference to the status of the addressees within the ecclesiastical hierarchy. This might be inferred from the lack of the formula *in Christo* next to the address to writer's 'sons' and 'brothers', as it was instead the case with similar familial titles in *Ep. I, II and III*.⁴⁹⁸ The addressees are only collectively qualified as *monachi*, but this is not put into any kind of formal relationship with the status of the writer. The connection is instead emotional, with the adjective *suis* being a mark of affection that is not present in the salutations of Columbanus's *epistolae*

⁴⁹⁶Fleming, *Collectanea Sacra*, 131. Jodocus Metzler, St. Gall, Stiftsbibliothek 1346, 60. See Jonas of Susa, *VC*, I, 19-20 and 23 (Krusch, ed. *Vitae*, 90-93 and 97-98) and commentary in Wood and O'Hara, *Jonas of Bobbio*, 147-149.

⁴⁹⁷Clare Stancliffe, 'Jonas's life of Columbanus and his disciples' in John Carey, Máire Herbert, Pádraig Ó Riain, eds. *Studies in Irish Hagiography: Saints and Scholars* (Dublin, 2001), 189-220:205; Marilyn Dunn, 'Columbanus, charisma and the revolt of the monks of Bobbio', in *Peritia*, 20 (2008), 1-27:8-18 and Richter, *Bobbio in the Early Middle Ages*, 53-55 discussed the turmoil under Attala's rule in Bobbio. Their analysis of the motives of unrest can also be applied to Attala's earlier difficulties in Luxeuil, documented by this letter. Additionally, it is not explicitly stated that the narrative that informs us of these troubles, Jonas, *VC*, II, 1 (Krusch, ed. *Vitae*, 113-114) took place in Bobbio. The possibility exists that Jonas was recounting episodes from Attala's earlier stint as abbot in Luxeuil.

⁴⁹⁸ Columbanus, *Ep. I*, 1; *Ep. II*, 1; *Ep. III*, 1 (Walker, ed. *Opera*, 2, 12 and 22). Columbanus refers to the bishop of Rome as 'father in Christ' in *Ep. I* and *III*, whereas the clergymen attending the council addressed by *Ep. II*, are both 'fathers' and 'brothers' in Christ, meaning bishops and priests.

negotialis. Similarly, the adjectives *dulcissimis* and *carissimis* easily convey the emotional attachment of the writer to his audience. The one element of the *intitulatio* that cannot be explained as a standard display of epistolary affection is the adjective *frugalis*. While it allows the writer to display his usual preference for alliteration (*fratribus frugalibus*), no other salutation from patristic or Early Medieval epistolary literature makes use of this word. However, monastic literature from the fifth-century, including authors likely well known by Columbanus, frequently discusses *frugalitas* as a key feature of the communal life of monks.⁴⁹⁹ Walker translated the term as ‘careful’, whereas Todde and Nuvolone opted for ‘parsimoniosi’ (thrifty), a more specific meaning that does not seem to fit the context.⁵⁰⁰ A positive connotation should be assumed for this term: since Columbanus is addressing his followers as a whole (*cuncti simul*), he might be collectively bestowing upon them the recognition of an important monastic quality as a sign of his esteem. The *inscriptio* consists of the name of the writer in its usual form [*Columba*] and an expression of humility already used in the *epistolae negotialis* [*peccator*]. Even the salutation formula is more simple and standardised than usual. Even if the verb is made explicit, contrary to contemporary use, the form used is in the third person (*mittit*), so it does not cause the sentence structure to be awkward, as it had instead happened in *Ep.* II, where a first person form had been used. Overall this is the least creative and extravagant among the salutations in the *Epistulae*. Columbanus strictly adheres to the most basic format of address to a familiar audience, with few concessions to his usual, adjective-heavy, style. The contrast with the rhetorical flourish of the letters to Gregory I and Boniface IV is quite telling: Columbanus had no trouble addressing his audience in a more sober tone when the occasion demanded, hence, the more elaborated salutations need to be understood as the product of the deliberate effort to impress and convince his addressees.

⁴⁹⁹ A relevant example is the use of the term by Cassianus, whom Columbanus had likely read. *Frugalitas* is mentioned as a significant quality no less than eight times. See for example Iohannes Cassianus, *Conlationes*, 4, 16; 5, 11 and 13, 4 ed. Michael Ptschenig, *Iohannis Cassianus Conlationes XXIII*, CSEL 13 (Wien, 1886), 117; 132 and 365 where *frugalitas* is best understood as self-control, temperance. As late as the seventh century, this adjective would retain the same connotation see for example Aldhelm, *De Virginitate*, 37 (Ewald, ed. *Aldhelmi Opera*, 288, l. 1)

⁵⁰⁰ Walker, ed. *Opera*, 27 and Todde and Nuvolone, ‘Le lettere e la preghiera’, 147

Section 4.2: Exordium, eusebetic and advisory styles

Pax vobis [Ioann 20, 19] sicut Dominus optans dixit discipulis suis, sit et salus et sempiterna caritas. Haec tria tribuat vobis Trinitas cum eo et inter vos custodiat cum voto meo. Studii mei magnitudinem erga salutis vestrae intuitum solus novit qui dedit, et desiderium meum erga doctrinae vestrae profectum; sed quia iuxta sermonem Domini orta est *tribulatio et persecutio propter verbum*, [Matth 13, 21] nulla nunc alia admonitio vobis congruit, nisi ut caveatis ne sitis *terra illa petrosa*, [Matth 13, 5] quae semina non potest sui tenuitate caespitis accepta nutrire, ne et de vobis dicat Dominus *orta autem tribulatione et persecutione propter verbum continuo scandalizantur* [Matth 13, 21]. Nos ipsi scimus quod cum gaudio et fervore suscipimus verbum Domini; caveamus nunc ne simus *temporales*. [Matth. 13, 21 and Heb. 10, 36] *Patientia nobis necessaria est, ut probatio fidei nostrae*, sicut scriptum est *sit pretiosior auro* [1 Pet. 1, 7].

4.2.1 Structure and style

The style of this opening section conforms to the paradigms of ecclesiastical epistolary writing. The audience is directly addressed and the presence of numerous and contrasting first and second person forms gives a conversational quality to the whole. There is a marked difference with the *exordia* of Columbanus's public letters. While those fully comply with the elevated tone and elaborated rhetorical devices expected from the *exordia* of public speeches, here the language used is intimate and direct. The writer demonstrate a pious concern for his audience by immediately making it the object of his prayers, then moving on to exhort his community to remain steadfast in the face of persecution. This is done with a minimum of rhetorical embellishment and by substantially integrating scriptural quotations within the text. The only device used is a parallelism (*studii mei magnitudinem erga salutis vestrae intuitum ... desiderium meum erga doctrinae vestrae profectum*) and word-order is much more standardised than in Columbanus's usual prose (there is only one hyperbaton: *sui tenuitate cespiti*, aBA type). The closing period switches from addressing the audience directly to employing the first person plural in an exhortation. As in the letter to the Gallic council the writer assumes the perspective of

someone speaking from within the monastic community and in the name of the same, but there is no explicit claim to leadership on his part.

4.2.2 Epistolary qualities

Columbanus had quoted from the Pauline epistles in the opening lines of the letter to Gregory I and to the Gallic council.⁵⁰¹ In those cases it was the writer was engaging in diplomacy and providing an outsider's advice to ecclesiastical authorities, hence there were little to no traces in his epistolary persona of his role of leader of a monastic community. Here, instead, the initial greeting is borrowed from the Gospels, (Ioann. 20, 19; 21 and 26). It is the greeting used by Jesus when first appearing to the Apostles after his resurrection. As noted by Todde and Nuvolone,⁵⁰² the author intends to draw a parallel between the situation of the Apostles in that passage and that of the monks in Luxeuil at the time of his writing, since they had been left without a leader they were the object of the hostility of external forces, just like the Gospel's depiction of the Apostles after the death of Jesus. As stated above, Columbanus does not make any explicit claim to be the leader of the community he is addressing but his adoption of the words of Jesus and the simile set up by their usage implicitly qualify him as such.

The writer wishes for spiritual gifts, that is, peace, salvation and charity [*Pax, salus caritas*] to be bestowed by the Trinity upon his addressees, in accordance with his own prayer [*cum voto meo*]. The following sentences expresses his solicitude towards the spiritual wellbeing of the monks which is profound [*magnitudinem*] and ultimately derived from a divine plan [*solus novit qui dedit*]. However, there is an immediate contrast [*sed*] with a warning [*admonition*] about an incoming persecution, whose perpetrators and motives are not named here or anywhere else in this letter. The warning is given through the words of the Gospel's own explanation of the parable of the sower (Matt. 13, 18-23).⁵⁰³ The present passage mixes the language of the Gospel's explanation of the parable with the imagery of the parable proper In the parable of the sower, the

⁵⁰¹ Columbanus, *Ep. I*, 2 and *Ep. II*, 2 (Walker, ed. *Opera* 2 and 12). The salutations of the letters to the Galatians and to the Romans were referenced.

⁵⁰² Todde and Nuvolone, 'Le lettere e la preghiera', 147n1

⁵⁰³ The parable proper is found in Matt. 13, 1-9.

seeds falling into stony ground [*terra petrosa*] sprout immediately but are short-lived [*temporales*] in the face of adversity. The ‘tribulation and persecution on account of the Word’ [*tribulatione et persecutione propter verbum*] is not commented upon by the author, rather, his concern is to recommend dedication and patience in the face of it to his addressees. Columbanus is known to have been familiar with Jerome’s commentary on the Gospel of Matthew, which he had previously referenced in *Ep.* II. It is likely that this same work greatly influenced his understanding of the parable of the sower as well as the mode of expression of this warning. Jerome’s commentary⁵⁰⁴ draws attention to the adverb *continuo* (immediately) in the scriptural text and to how there is a difference between those who resist persecution for a while and those who immediately give up. Accordingly, Columbanus stresses the need to withstand adversity with the citation from the first letter of Peter (1 Pet. 1, 7) which emphasises the need for endurance [*patientia*] when faith is tested. Overall the tone of this *exordium* recalls the devoted (eusebetic) style of letter-writing in its very first line, whereas the warning in its latter part can be described with the label of advisory a coined by epistolary theorists.⁵⁰⁵

Section 4.3: Exordium, paraenetic style

Scitote quod **non** circa caduca contentio est, **circa regnum caelorum est**; non est novum, quod pugna sit et contentio **circa regnum**. Neque speretis quod nomine per se vos persequantur; daemones sunt in his qui invident bonis vestris; contra quos *arma dei* [Eph, 6, 13-17] arripite, quae demonstrat apostolus, et viam facite in caelum, **iugulatis** illis orationum ferventium acsi quibusdam sagittis. Quidquid enim cum fide et unanimitate oraveritis, dabitur vobis; sed videte, ut unum *cor et anima una* [Act 4, 32]sitis, ut mercede praesenti accipiatis quidquid salutiferus petieritis a patre domini nostri Iesu Christi nostroque communi omnium patre iuxta promissum Domni nostri dicentis, *si convenerint duo ex vobis super terram de omni re quamcumque*

⁵⁰⁴ Jerome, *Commentariorum in Mattheum libri IV*, 3 (Hurst and Adriaen, eds. CSEL 77) see also *PL*, 26 col. 0088b. *Attende quod dictum sit, continuo scandalizatur. Est ergo aliqua distantia inter eum qui multis tribulationibus poenisque compellitur Christum negare, et eum qui ad primam persecutionem statim scandalizatur, et corrui*

⁵⁰⁵ See for example Ps. Demetrius, *Τύποι Ἐπιστολικοί*, 11 (Malherbe ed. and trans. 36-37).

petierint, fiet eis a patre meo qui in caelis est [Matth 18, 19]. Alioquin si non unum velle et unum nolle habetis, melius est ut non simul habitetis.

4.3.1 Readings

The text presented above agrees with that reconstructed by Todde and Nuvolone and not with Walker's edition in respect to two distinct issues. In the first one Walker's text is emended even at points in which both of the seventeenth-century copies are in agreement.

Scitote quod circa caduca contentio est; circa regnum coelorum enim non est novum, quod pugna sit et contentio (Walker, ed. <i>Opera</i> , 26 , l. 15-17)	Scitote quod*non circa caduca contentio est, circa regnum coelorum est ; non est novum*ut pugna sit et contentio circa regnum (F, 131)	Scitote quod circa caduca contentio et circa regnum coelorum est ; non est novum, quod pugna sit et contentio circa regnum (M, 61)
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Following Gundlach,⁵⁰⁶ Walker emended the exemplars' *est* to *enim* and judged the second occurrence of the expression *circa regnum* to be an erroneous repetition on the part of the scribe. He also translated the term *caduca* as the accusative plural of *caducum* 'an unclaimed inheritance'. Yet, in patristic literature the same term occurs much more frequently as the substantivate form of the adjective *caducus*, meaning 'ephemeral' or 'fleeting' things.⁵⁰⁷ Additionally the plural form would remain unexplained and awkward, an indeed Walker ignored it in his translation. A closer adherence to the text transmitted by the two seventeenth century copies would resolve the issue. Todde and Nuvolone abandoned Gundlach's emendation of *enim* for *est*, reinstated the second occurrence of the phrase *circa regnum* and adopted Fleming's suggested insertion of a negative

⁵⁰⁶ Gundlach, ed. *Epistulae*, 166 l. 25-26 and in *apparatu*

⁵⁰⁷ Running a search for the term using the engine of the Patrologia Latina Database yields 704 results. In the first ten pages which include authors such as Hilary of Poitiers and Jerome, no occurrence of the term with the meaning attributed to it by Walker is registered.

(*non*) in front of *circa caduca*.⁵⁰⁸ This last minimal addition, while a departure from the texts of F and M, would allow to respect both the way in which *caduca* was employed by contemporary authors and the letter of the transmitted text as a whole. The sentence could then be translated: ‘know that the struggle does not concern fleeting things but it is about the kingdom of heaven; it is not a new event that there should be battle and struggle about the kingdom’. Secondly, Todde and Nuvolone restored the reading *iugulatis* from M and F in place of Walker’s *iaculatis*. The translation is slightly affected: while Walker’s read ‘make a path to heaven hurling these arrows, as it were, of earnest prayers’, the new text should be translated: ‘make a path to heaven once, so to say, your opponents have been slain by arrows of earnest prayers’. The position of *acsi* makes for an awkward translation, but even in this case it would be better to retain the readings of the exemplars, as they are in agreement.

4.3.2 Structure and style

The whole section addresses the audience directly. Most principal verbal forms are in the imperative mood [*scitote, videte, facite, arripite*], and the periods are not overly complex. The classic usage of the future perfect and future tense in dependant clauses [*quidquid ... oraveritis ... dabitur*] should be noted.⁵⁰⁹ As in the previous section word-order is kept simple (there is only one hyperbaton, *abA type communi omnium patre*). Gundlach and Walker have suggested that the expression *unum velle et unum nolle* might be derived from the works of Sallust. Smit, in his effort to verify Columbanus’s supposed knowledge of Classical authors, argued that the expression is only indirectly related to the occurrence in Sallust, having more likely been lifted from a passage in Jerome’s letter 130 that paraphrased it.⁵¹⁰ Both sides appear to be reading too much in the expression, which cannot be traced to any one author, because besides also occurring several times in various contemporary and near-contemporary patristic work, in the *usus scribendi* of Columbanus, citations are usually accurate down to the word, whereas here the texts discussed

⁵⁰⁸Todde and Nuvolone, ‘Le lettere e la preghiera’, 148-149. They also translated *caduca* ‘cose futili’ (ephemeral things)

⁵⁰⁹Bieler, ‘Note on the text tradition’, *apud* Walker, ed. *Opera*, lxxxix, noted that elsewhere Columbanus’s non-standard usage of the future tense was likely influenced by legal texts.

⁵¹⁰Gundlach, ed. *Epistulae*, 166n1 and Walker, ed. *Opera*, 26 l. 26-27 *in apparatus*. Smit, *Studies*, 199

by Gundlach, Walker and Smit all read *eadem velle et eadem nolle* and not *unum velle et unum nolle*.

4.3.3 Epistolary qualities

The language has here changed from admonitory to exhortative. There is an appeal to action [*scitote ... quibusdam sagittis*], an appeal to unity justified with scriptural excerpts [*sed videte ... in caelis est*] and finally another warning [*alioquin si non ... simul habitetis*]. Columbanus's prose follows familiar beats, as the concepts expressed here are a leitmotiv throughout the *Epistulae*. The same argumentative pattern is also found in the exhortations in the letter to the Gallic council. In particular, the emphasis on unanimity as a means to obtain divine favour was a strong element of the paraenetic conclusion of that letter.⁵¹¹ Similarly, the imagery of battle and violent strife as a metaphor for strict adherence to spiritual mandates and ascetic ideals is repeated in the midst of another call to action in the letter to Boniface IV;⁵¹² as noted by Todde and Nuvolone,⁵¹³ much of this imagery is derived from the letter to the Ephesians (Eph. 6, 10-17). In the same way, the description of people hostile to the monastic community as motivated by demonic forces [*daemones sunt in his qui invident bonis vestris*] has a parallel in *Ep.* III, in which Columbanus's letter-bearers are said to have been impeded by the devil.⁵¹⁴ It is impossible to determine whether Columbanus was alluding to the same people or obstacle on both occasions.

Section 4.4: advisory style

Ideo mando ego vobis ut omnes, qui mihi ex corde volunt consentire et sensum agnoscunt meum et amant, sint cum vero sequace meo Attala, qui aut sit ibi aut post me velit venire, suae sit electionis; suo enim sensui animarum vestrarum periculum; vos illi obedite. Sed si ille venire voluerit, Valdolenus sit praepositus, quia cito, Deo auxiliante, poterit intellegere certum; sed interim cavete, ne sit inter vos qui unum votum non habeat inter vos, *quicumque ille fuerit* [Gal 5, 10]; plus enim nocuerunt qui apud nos unanimes non fuerunt.

⁵¹¹ See Columbanus, *Ep.* II, 8 and 9 (Walker, ed. *Opera*, 20-22).

⁵¹² Columbanus, *Ep.* V, 8 (Walker, ed. *Opera*, 44)

⁵¹³ Todde and Nuolone, 'Le lettere e la preghiera', 149n7 and 8

⁵¹⁴ Columbanus, *Ep.* III, 2 (Walker, ed. *Opera*, 24)

4.4.1 Structure and style

The language of the passage is not very elaborated, since, even though it employs several subordinate clauses, they are not accumulated in an emphatic way but they follow a clear linear pattern, without the parenthetical asides and abundance of participle constructions typical of other sections of the *Epistulae*. Additionally, several clauses are simply coordinated by asyndeton. Once again the audience is addressed directly, with two verbal forms in the imperative mood [*obedite, cavete*] and two declarative clauses depending from a form expressing a command (*mando ut omnes ... sint* and *cavete ne sit inter vos*). Hyperbata are present but they are of a basic type (Ava/aVA type: *sensum agnoscunt meum* and *suae sit electionis*).

4.4.2 Epistolary qualities

This is the last section before the valediction of the letter in which the whole community of Luxeuil is addressed; the entirety of the central body of the letter is addressed to Attala alone. It is also the only instance in the *Epistulae* in which the author gives clear instructions to be carried out (*mando, obedite*) by his audience, as opposed to exhortations or petitions. This element alone shows that Columbanus had clear notion of his role of leader: even after he had been driven out of Luxeuil he reserved for himself the final word about who should be left in charge of those monks he had left behind because of his exile. These instructions are followed by another exhortation about maintaining unity of purpose (*sed interim cavete ... non fuereunt*). As noted by Todde and Nuvolone,⁵¹⁵ the phrasing is likely informed by the letter of st. Paul to the Galatians (Gal. 5,10) which reads *qui autem conturbat vos, portabit iudicium, quicumque est ille*. The instructions themselves pertain to two different scenarios: firstly, the monks ‘who want to agree with me from the bottom of their heart and who know and love my sentiment’ [*qui mihi ex corde volunt consentire et sensum agnoscunt meum et amant*] are invited to obey to Attala [*vos illi obedite*]. However, the message leaves up to his choice [*suae sit electionis*] the decision of either remaining at Luxeuil or follow after Columbanus in his exile. This opens up the second scenario envisioned by Columbanus’s instructions: should Attala to follow after him, the leadership should go to

⁵¹⁵ Todde and Nuvolone ‘Le lettere e la preghiera’, 150-151 and n14

Waldelenus. The word used to indicate this leadership (*praepositus*), also occurs in the *Regula Coenobialis* and in Jonas's *Vita*.⁵¹⁶ As noted by Wood and O'Hara,⁵¹⁷ in contemporary literature the term is specifically used for the monk left in charge of the community when the abbot is absent.

Identifying the figures mentioned in the passage is essential to understanding not only the purpose and meaning of this letter but also the moment and the reasons of its composition. Attala is certainly Columbanus's successor as abbot of Bobbio, a Burgundian noble and a major actor in both the development of the Columbanian monastic movement and the hagiographical writings of Jonas.⁵¹⁸ From Jonas's *Vita Columbani* it is known that the second scenario prospected by Columbanus in this passage came to pass: Attala followed after Columbanus and was with him at Bregenz and in Italy although the time of their reunion is not clear.⁵¹⁹ However, Jonas makes no mention of one Waldelenus becoming *praepositus* in Luxeuil. Eventually, it was Eustasius who would as abbot of Luxeuil, but it would not seem that this happened immediately after Columbanus's exile, as Eustasius was one of his companions in Bregenz.⁵²⁰ Jonas's silence on this point makes Waldelenus much harder to identify. Yet, one character with this name does appear in the *Vita Columbani*, but he is not a monk. Waldelenus, a duke of the Transjuran territories had met with Columbanus, who, in the hagiographical account, cured the sterility of his wife, Flavia. Their firstborn, Donatus, was educated in Luxeuil and later became the bishop of Besançon.⁵²¹

⁵¹⁶ Columbanus, *Regula Coenobialis*, 7 (Walker, ed. *Opera*, 150-152) and Jonas, *VC*, I, 10 (Krusch, ed. *Vitae*, 76).

⁵¹⁷ Wood and O'Hara, *Jonas of Bobbio*, 117n149

⁵¹⁸ On Attala, also known as Athala, Jonas, *VC*, II, 1-6 (Krusch, ed. *Vitae*, 113-119), a section usually referred to as the *Life of Athala*. Translated with commentary in O'Hara and Wood, *Jonas of Bobbio*, 178-188. Overview of his life in Paolo Bertolini, 'Atala, santo', in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, 4 (1962). On the basis of this letter, it is usually argued that Attala had also been abbot in Luxeuil during the first part of Columbanus's exile; see for example Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, 358; Bullough, 'The career of Columbanus', 17; Dubreucq, 'L'oeuvre épistolaire', 116 and O'Hara and Wood, *Jonas of Bobbio*, 86n5

⁵¹⁹ According to O'Hara and Wood, *Jonas of Bobbio*, 156n334 they were probably reunited in Metz, at the court of Theudebert II, where monks from Luxeuil had gathered according to Jonas, *VC*, I, 27 (Krusch, ed. *Vitae*, 101). Additionally, it is not clear whether the first chapter of *Life of Athala* is a narrative of events during his first tenure in Luxeuil or of a later period, during his time as abbot of Bobbio. Jonas, *VC*, II, 1 (Krusch, ed. *Vitae*, 113). See commentary by O'Hara and Wood, *Jonas of Bobbio*, 179n470.

⁵²⁰ Jonas, *VC*, I, 27 (Krusch, ed. *Vitae*, 103)

⁵²¹ Jonas, *VC*, I, 14 (Krusch, ed. *Vitae*, 79); on this duke Waldelenus see Horst Ebling, *Prosopographie der Amsträger des Merowingerreich von Chlothar II (613) bis Karl Martell (741)*, Beihefte der Francia, 2

Walker identified the persons preferred by Columbanus to act as *praepositus* in Attala's place with Donatus's nephew, Waldelenus, the founder and first abbot of Bèze.⁵²² Yaniv Fox has very convincingly shown that Walker's identification is anachronistic.⁵²³ As Waldelenus is attested as active as an abbot in a grant from the year 679,⁵²⁴ he cannot have been a monk in Luxeuil almost 70 years earlier, especially one with enough standing and experience to act as *praepositus*. The ninth-century *Life of Walaric of Leuconay* mentions that, while in Luxeuil, Columbanus assented to a request by a monk named Waldelenus who desired to leave the monastery and preach to the pagans, taking the protagonist of the *Life* with him.⁵²⁵ Although the later date of this text is an argument against its reliability, it is not impossible this Waldelenus was the same person mentioned by Columbanus in this passage.⁵²⁶ Columbanus's letters do not give the impression that converting the *gentes* was one of his priorities. However, it would be a remarkable coincidence that the one mention of this activity in the *Epistulae*⁵²⁷ is found in the same letter in which a monk who, according to a later source, was engaged in predication, is named. This is especially true in the absence of any evidence of Columbanus's *Epistulae* being widely read in Carolingian times, since the supposition that the source of the narrative in *Vita Walarici* was this very letter would then be rather unlikely. If the *Life of Walaric* can be trusted, one can speculate that Waldelenus's missionary effort was the source of Columbanus's remark about the attitude of the *gentes* in this same letter and the reason why he features so prominently in this opening section. Another reason could be Waldelenus's family background. The family and descendants

(Munich, 1974), 229; Prinz, *Frühes Mönchtum im Frankenreich*, 149-150 and Fox, *Power and religion*, 97-101, who also questioned whether the powerbase of his family was Cisjuran, rather than Transjuran.

⁵²² Walker, ed. *Opera*, 27n2; I was not able to access Walker's sources for this point, Jacques Roussel, *St. Colomban et l'épopée Colombanienne*, I (Besançon, 1941), 128. Walker described Waldelenus as a cousin of Donatus. Here their relationship is that reconstructed by Yaniv Fox, *Power and Religion*, 99. His genealogical table shows Waldelenus 'the Younger', to be son of Donatus's sister Aquilina and the grandson of duke Waldelenus 'the Elder'

⁵²³ Fox, *Power and Religion*, 106

⁵²⁴ Theo Kölzer, ed. n. 120 in *Die Urkunden der Merowinger*, 1, MGH, Diplomata, (Hannover, 2001), 306-308:308

⁵²⁵ *Vita Walarici abbatis Leuconensis*, 11 and 16 ed. Bruno Krusch, *Vita Walarici abbatis Leuconensis*, MGH, Scriptores Rerum Merovingicarum, 4, 157-175:164 164n2 and 167. Krusch referred to this letter of Columbanus in order to identify this Waldelenus.

⁵²⁶ Krusch (see previous note) and Fox, *Power and Religion*, 106 noted that this would not be the only pair of monks from Luxeuil leaving the monastery to found another house, citing the example of Amatus and Romaric of Remiremont.

⁵²⁷ Columbanus, *Ep.* IV, 5 (Walker, ed. *Opera*, 30)

of duke Waldelenus were the foremost amongst the non-Agilolfingian patrons of Columbanian monasticism; besides Béze, they sponsored female foundations and produced the most influential abbot of Luxeuil, Waldebert, who succeeded to Eustasius.⁵²⁸ It is conceivable that a member of the family group had joined Columbanus's community in the early phase of the settlement of Luxeuil and risen to a prominent role. This connection must remain speculative, as the very name Waldelenus is the only element on which it can be based.⁵²⁹ Having identified these two figures, observations can be made about the role they play in the overall structure and aims of the letter.

As stated above, Attala eventually left Luxeuil and rejoined with Columbanus. It should be remembered that the writer presents this text as composed at the moment of his imminent departure from the mainland, as he is waiting for a ship to be made ready.⁵³⁰ With this context in mind, the alternative offered by him to Attala, that of following after him [*post me velit venire*], appears to be rather puzzling. Was Attala expected to follow Columbanus to the point of embarking himself? That would be implied by the letter of the text, but it would also be an extreme take on the situation, in light of Jonas's or other contemporary narratives of the exiles from Luxeuil never portraying any of Columbanus's companions as willing to return, or, in this case, move to Ireland for the first time in order to follow him. As it will be seen, there are reasons to think that the closing paragraph and valediction of this letter are not a faithful testimony of the events preceding Columbanus's failure to depart by ship and subsequent escape back to Austrasia. They should rather be understood as a *post-eventum* fictional narrative crafted in the style of literary epistles. Likewise, this set of instructions and the alternatives offered to Attala might be a literary fiction. In this letter there is a sudden switch from addressing the whole community to singling out Attala for advice and a heartfelt lamentation of present circumstances. While there is ample precedence in Latin literary history for letters of advice and consolation between a senior intellectual and his junior, the structure of *Ep. IV* is unique in having such a conventional piece of

⁵²⁸ See Fox, *Power and Religion*, 99-108; however, it is not known how Waldebert was related to the main branch of the Waldeleni.

⁵²⁹ On the naming customs of familiar power groups in Merovingian Gaul and on the methodological caveats that apply to onomastic based connections see Fox, *Power and Religion*, 57-60

⁵³⁰ Columbanus, *Ep. IV*, 8 (Walker, ed. *Opera*, 34) together with Jonas, *VC*, I, 23 (Krusch, ed. *Vitae*, 97-98)

consolatory rhetoric follow a collective address. It should be considered conventional and literary because consolatory letters are a product of the tradition of demonstrative rhetoric in both Greek and Roman Antiquity.⁵³¹ Monastic literature appropriated this form and its influence is found in works that were read by Columbanus as well as in his own opus.⁵³² In light of this, it is not unlikely that this letter, although possibly containing the gist of an actual message sent by Columbanus from Nantes, had actually been composed at a later stage, when the author, having come in contact again with a section of his community, re-worked or adapted it as a *consolatio*, a show off piece masquerading as an *epistola familiaris* but intended to elicit sympathies for the exiled monks from an audience that was extraneous to the community. As it will be discussed, the aforesaid remark of the author about his desire to preach to the pagans might help to roughly date the occasion of writing to the period spent by the exiled monks at the court of Theudebert II or even later, during their relocation and stay in Bregenz. This is the only moment of Columbanus's career in which Jonas portrayed him as interested in taking up missionary work.⁵³³ If this is the case, by that time, Attala might have already rejoined with Columbanus's group and informed them about the turmoil and discontent with the Rule he had experienced there.⁵³⁴ Crafting a narrative in which his decision of leaving Luxeuil is sanctioned, and even suggested by the charismatic leader Columbanus might be one of the goals of this text.⁵³⁵ In the same way, naming

⁵³¹Extensive treatment of Christian Latin *consolationes* in Robert C. Gregg *Consolation philosophies: Greek and Christian Paideia in Basil and the two Gregories*, Patristic Monographs, 3 (Cambridge, MA 1975), esp. 75-78. A brief but exhaustive summary of the development of the classical *consolationes* and their relation with the literary epistle is found in John Howell David Scourefield, *Consoling Heliodorus. A commentary on Jerome Letter 60* (Oxford, 1993), 16-27. In Christian authors the focus of *consolationes* is mostly on the topic of mourning for a loved one: Jane F. Mitchell, 'Consolatory letters in Basil and Gregory Nazianzen', in *Hermes*, 96 (1968), 299-318 describes the re-elaborations of Classical mourning *topoi* by Christian letter-writers.

⁵³² Among the authors with whom Columbanus was familiar, Gregory of Nazianzus (in the translation by Rufinus), Jerome and Sulpicius Severus wrote consolatory letters. See for example Jerome, *Ep.* 39, 60, 66, and 118 and Sulpicius Severus, *Ep.* 2 (Halm, ed. *Libri qui supersunt*, 142-146). Columbanus's own poem *De mundi Transitu* (Walker ed. *Opera*, 182-184) is addressed to a younger disciple and its core exhortation of looking past mortality and to the ultimate goal of eternal life is found in many Christian *consolationes*.

⁵³³ Jonas, *VC*, I, 27 (Krusch, ed. *Vitae*, 101 and 104), tells that Theudebert II first suggested missionary work for the monks as a possibility. O'Hara and Wood, *Lives*, 156-157 and 162.

⁵³⁴See note 519

⁵³⁵That the charisma of Columbanus was what united a community profoundly divided by the strictness of the Rule and by customary difference is a view often expressed in secondary literature: Albrecht Diem, 'Monks, Kings and the transformation of Sanctity: Jonas of Bobbio and the end of the Holy Man', in *Speculum*, 82 (2007), 521-559; Albrecht Diem, 'Columbanian monastic rules: dissent and experiment', in Fletcher and Medeer, eds. *The Irish in Europe*, 68-85 in conjunction with Dunn, 'Columbanus, charisma and the revolt', 2-18 and 26-27.

Waldelenus as a possible leader might be an attempt to retroactively back up with the authority of the founder's approval the emerging figure of a mediator between the parties in which the community had divided. Alternatively, Waldelenus had effectively emerged as a leader in Columbanus's absence but, since they had not parted on good terms (the writer's care in the next paragraph in recommending to Attala to deliver his kiss to him might suggest as much), conceding and sanctioning this leadership might be considered an attempt at reconciliation with his party and possibly with patrons connected to him by family ties. Waldelenus having been hostile to Columbanus's and Attala's party would also explain Jonas's utter silence about him. In summary, these instructions should be discussed under the assumption that this letter acted as a literary tool meant on the one hand to send out an invitation to reconcile the broken community, and on the other to spread sympathy for Columbanus and the exiled party among an audience of possible patrons, among whom one might count king Theudebert II, and possibly king Chlothar II, as well as the Waldeleni family unit. Ultimately, however, interpreting Columbanus's dispositions here as effectively laid out post-eventum is only possible in light of the literary characteristics of the letter as whole. In analysing the subsequent address to Attala and the valediction this hypothesis will be further explored.

Section 4.5: advisory and paraenetic styles

Tu scis, amantissime Attala, qui sensui tuo onerosi sint; deponere eos continuo; tamen cum pace deponas et cum regulae unitate; tantum Libranum honora et semper tene Valdolenum; si illic sit cum congregatione, bene illi Deus faciat, humilis fiat, et meum illi da osculum, quod tunc festinans non habuit. Tu vero indolis imbuendae scis diu votum meum; si videris illic profectum animarum, sta ibi; si videris pericula, veni inde; pericula autem dico discordiae pericula; timeo enim ne et illic propter Pascha sit discordia, ne forte, *diabolo insidiante* [Eph. 6, 11], vos alienare velint, si cum eis pacem non teneatis; infirmus enim nunc sine me ibi stare videmini. Idcirco *cauti estote*, [Matth 10, 16] considerantes *tempus quo sanam non sustinet doctrinam*. Vos ipsos docete et qui velint audire; tantum inter vos non sit qui unum non sit. Paci enim maxime provide, *sollicitus semper servare unitatem spiritus in vinculo pacis* [Eph, 4, 3]. Quid enim prodest habere

corpus et non habere cor? Fractus sum, fateor, hac causa, dum volui totos adiuvere, qui *cum loquela illis, impugnabant me gratis*[Ps. 119, 7] et dum omnibus credidi, pene factus sum stultus. Ideo tu prudentior esto; nolo subeas tantum onus sub quo ego sudavi; scis iam guttulae seu meae scientiae parvitatem, didicisti non omnia omnibus convenire monita, quia mores diversi sunt et qualitates hominum longe distant inter se. Sed quid facio? Iam te ad laborem illum immensum provocabo quod ego fugio ipse; si aperuero doctrinae diversitatem, temperabo; ergo diversus esto et multiplex ad curam eorum qui tibi obedierint cum fide et amore; sed tu et ipsum eorum time amorem, quia tibi periculosus erit.

4.5.1 Structure and Style

The passage addresses Attala alone but for a few shorter clauses in which the audience is addressed with the second person plural [*Infirmius enim nunc ... stare videmini; idcirco cauti estote ... Vos ipsos docete ... inter vos non sit qui unum non sit*]. Todde and Nuvolone⁵³⁶ imply that this can be explained as the author switching the focus of his address to include Libranus and Waldelenus, whom have just been named. However, Attala had been previously singled out even after the other two monks had been mentioned [*Tu vero indolis ... veni inde*]. More likely, the author was being influenced by his scriptural sources: Todde and Nuvolone themselves point out the similarity of the address with Jesus's parting word of recommendation to his disciples in Matt. 10, 16.⁵³⁷ It should be noted that a similar change in the way the audience is addressed is also found in the letter to Pope Boniface IV.⁵³⁸ In that text, the change is justified by the author eventually referring to both the Pope and an assembly of clerics at the same time (*sancte pape et fratres*).⁵³⁹ In both cases the lack of consistency should be considered a mark of the literary nature of the surviving letters of this collection.

⁵³⁶ Todde and Nuvolone, 'Le lettere e la preghiera', 155n18

⁵³⁷ Todde and Nuvolone, 'Le lettere e la preghiera', 152n42. The reference is not found in Walker's edition. Similarly in n40 Todde and Nuvolone point out Columbanus's dependence from Eph. 6,11 which is here accepted.

⁵³⁸ See in particular Columbanus *Ep.* V, 1-8 using second person singular plural forms and 9-17 using second person plural forms (Walker, ed. *Opera*, 38-44 and 44-56).

⁵³⁹ Columbanus, *Ep.* V, 17 (Walker, ed. *Opera*, 56).

The syntax of the passage is simple, with short clauses and abundance of coordination by asyndeton, sometimes reinforcing a parallelism [*si videris illic profectum animarum, sta ibi; si videris pericula, veni inde*]. Word-order is equally less convoluted than in more emphatic passages.⁵⁴⁰ Unusually for the exhortatory passages of the *Epistulae*, several future imperative verbal forms are used. It should be noted that the author employs the future tense when making a recommendation about the kind of attitude that his audience should maintain in certain circumstances [*cauti estote; prudentior esto; diversus esto*] whereas the present tense is used when issuing practical instructions [*honora Libranum et semper tene Valdolenum; depone eos; vos ipsos docete*]. Parenthetical insertions such as *fateor* as well as rhetorical questions [*sed quid facio?*] give an informal, conversational tone to the whole passage.

4.5.2 Epistolary qualities

Initially, the author leaves more instructions for Attala alone, with special regards to his decision about leaving or remaining with the monastic community. He recommends the aforementioned Waldelenus to his as well as another monk, possibly of Irish origin, Libranus [*tantum Libranum honora et semper tene Valdolenum*]⁵⁴¹; according to Jonas's narrative Theuderic II exiled Columbanus and the other Irish *peregrini*, leaving only Gallo-Romans, Franks and Burgundians in the monastery of Luxeuil⁵⁴² but the presence of the Irishman Libranus among the faithful companions recommended to Attala, as attested by this letter, casts some doubt on this piece of information.⁵⁴³ Another warning is given, this time being more explicit on one of the issues dividing the community, the celebration of Easter [*timeo enim ne et illic propter Pascha sit discordia*] and all remaining monks are cautioned against remaining in Luxeuil without

⁵⁴⁰ Two hyperbata are found both of the aVA type: *meum illi da osculum* and *non omnia omnibus convenire monita*

⁵⁴¹ Already considered an Irishman by Jean Mabillon, *Annales Ordinis Sancti Benedicti occidentalium Monachorum Patriarchae*, I (Paris, 1703), 194-195; the identification is repeated by Walker, *Opera*, xix and 29n1; Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, 371; Bullough, 'The career of Columbanus', 9n31; Dáibhí Ó Cróinín, 'The political background to Columbanus Irish career', in O'Hara, ed. *Columbanus and the peoples*, 53-68:53n5 and O'Hara and Wood, *Lives*, 104 n91 and 143n268. Coincidentally, Librán was also the name of one of the companions of Columba of Iona. Anderson and Anderson, eds. *Adomnán's Vita Columbae*, 141-142

⁵⁴² Jonas, *VC*, I, 20 (Krusch, ed. *Vitae* 92). See O'Hara and Wood, *Lives* 142 and notes 266 and 267

⁵⁴³ O'Hara and Wood, *Lives*, 143n268 hypothesised that Libranus was held back by illness or old age

Columbanus (*infirmius enim nunc mihi ibi stare videmini*). The rest of the passage is clearly exhortatory in both language and contents.

This would appear to be at odds with the common interpretation of *Ep.* IV as a consolatory letter, but it is not necessarily so.⁵⁴⁴ Even though only one manual or treatise describing the structure of rhetorical *consolationes* survives from Late Antiquity, a section of a fourth-century treaty by Menander the Rhetor,⁵⁴⁵ it has been hypothesised that exhortations were one of their key components alongside commiseration and consolation proper. As observed by John H. D. Scourfield,⁵⁴⁶ there can be a certain degree of forcefulness in scholarly attempts to adapt an hypothetical structure derived from one source to describe various kind of surviving consolatory texts, yet this reconstruction seems representative of the tradition of *consolations* preserved in epistolary literature. Both Robert C. Gregg and Jane F. Mitchell noted that their proposed structure for *consolationes* matches with the contents of the sample letters found in the letter-writing manuals of Ps. Demetrius and Ps. Libanius.⁵⁴⁷ These components, exhortation, commiseration and consolation, can be aptly used to describe the structure of Columbanus's address to Attala: paragraph 3 and 4 in Walker's edition (sections 4.5 and 4.6 in this chapter) contain the exhortatory component, paragraph 7 (section 4.11) is the commiseration or lamentation, whereas paragraph 6 (sections 4.8, 4.9 and 4.10) contains the main consolatory address, interspersed with exegetical commentary. Notably paragraph 5 (section 4.7) is not part of

⁵⁴⁴Fleming, *Collectanea Sacra*, 131 as well as the title in Metzler's manuscript describe the letter as *epistola consolatoria*. In modern scholarship, even though this term is not usually employed, the earnest and emotional tone of the letter is emphasised: for example Kenney, *The sources*, 192 wrote that the letter shows 'the tenderer side of the author'; Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, 357 described the letter as 'one of the most moving documents of the early middle ages' whereas according to Dubreucq, 'L'oeuvre épistolaire', 23 this letter is the spiritual testament of Columbanus, beginning with 'a vibrant appeal to unity'

⁵⁴⁵It is attributed to Menander the Rhetor (fl. AD 300) and describes the patterns of funeral speeches, rather than consolatory literature in general: Menander, Περὶ Ἐπιδεικτικῶν, II, 9 ed. and trans. D. A. Russell and N. G. Wilson, *Meander Rhetor* (Oxford, 1981), 16

⁵⁴⁶Scourfield, *Consoling Heliodorus*, 26

⁵⁴⁷See Gregg, *Consolation Philosophies*, 54-62 identified the components as sympathy, exhortation and consolation. Mitchell, 'Consolatory letters in Basil and Gregory Nazianzen', 303 listed commiseration, exhortation and *paramythesis*. Ps. Demetrius, Τύποι Ἐπιστολικοί, 5 (Malherbe, ed. *Ancient Epistolary theorists*, 34-35) and Ps. Libanius, Ἐπιστολιμαῖοι Χαρακτῆρες, 25 and 65 (Malherbe, ed. *Ancient Epistolary theorists*, 70-71 and 76-77). Note that in Ps. Libanius the sample for the consolatory letter (*paramytheticos*, 72) is missing from the text, but the sample of a 'sympathetic letter' is nearly identical in contents to what these authors describe.

the structure of the *consolatio* and stands out as a self-contained *excusatio*. Although further subdivisions are possible, with different sections mixing lamentation with exhortation or consolatory statements with recommendations about upholding a certain set of moral standards, on the whole the address to Attala conforms with this tradition of consolatory address and deviations can be explained with the adaptive, hybridised nature of the letter from as well as with Columbanus's own idiosyncrasies as a letter-writer.⁵⁴⁸

Two elements are stressed by the author's exhortation: on the one end the pursuit of unanimity within the community, emphasised by the quotation of Eph. 4, 3 [*servare unitatem spiritus in vinculo pacis*], on the other, the need for Attala to be cautious [*cauti estote; prudentior esto*] and adaptable [*didicisti non omnia omnibus convenire monita; diversus esto et multiplex*]. These seem to be general reflections prompted by the practical instructions left to Attala in the opening of the address. The author had invited Attala to 'depose'⁵⁴⁹ (*depone*) rebels to pursuit peace and the unity of the rule [*cum pace ...et cum regulae unitate*] and expressed his concerns about the risks of prolonging his permanence in Luxeuil for the sake of a community that might have been divided beyond repair [*si videris pericula vene inde*]. Although the situation discussed is of an entirely different nature, that is, factionalism in an isolated monastic community, rather than the ecclesiastical controversies addressed by the public letters, the author once again insists on the need for unity and peace expressing himself through the 'language of concord' (see for example the expression *tantum inter vos non sit qui unum non sit*). Considering that his approach to both internal and external matters could not move away from this one perspective, that of maintaining

⁵⁴⁸ Of note is the fact that this consolatory address to Attala is 'a letter within a letter' according to the apt definition by Granata, *San Colombano. Le opere*, 59n17. On the other hand, the insertion of *excusationes* and the abandonment of the epistolary conversation to conclude an *excursus* are a hallmark of *Epistulae* with several instances in *Ep.*I, II, III and V

⁵⁴⁹ The meaning is unclear: Albrecht Diem, *The pursuit of Salvation. Community, Space, and Discipline in Early Medieval monasticism with a critical edition of the Regula cuiusdam ad virgines*, *Disciplina Monastica*, 13 (Turnhout, 2021), 521 noted that Columbanian sources do not have an equivalent to the monastic *excommunicatio* of the Benedictine Rule, however it seems likely that the term is used with that precise meaning. See Todde and Nuvolone, 'Le lettere e la preghiera', 153n15 who linked the expression with the similar disciplinary procedures found in Cassian. An alternative explanation would be to infer that Columbanus was here relying on the Insular practice of shunning: however, instances of the usage of this practice that can be inferred from the letters and from Jonas's narratives have invariably been about reactions of Columbanus from external threats, not a disciplinary method for the community. See Stancliffe, 'Columbanus and shunning', 130-138 and Johnston, 'How women shaped the career of Columbanus', 79.

unanimity within any ecclesiastical body dedicated to religious life, no matter if just a small community or the Gallic church at large, makes it clear that this message was a fundamental part of his Christian upbringing, to a degree not stressed enough even by Damien Bracken's insightful considerations on this type of language in *Ep.* II and V.⁵⁵⁰ However, contrary to the neutral point of view assumed by the author in the public controversies, here the point of view is that of someone who is himself struggling with maintaining the ideal of peace, having even failed to do so [*fractus sum, fateor, hac causa; si aperuero ad doctrinam diverstatem, temperabo*]. Possibly this is done to invest the addressee with the same authority of the speaker, now that he needs to face challenges from which even his teacher had shied away [*nolo sueas tantum onus sub quo ego sudavi; te ad laborem inmensum provocabo quod ego fugio ipse*].

Finally it should be observed that, chronologically, this is the last explicit mention of the issue of Easter in the *Epistulae*. The contents of the rest of the letter, especially in the address to Attala, seem to indicate that the strictness of the rule was creating tensions in the newly founded monastic community.⁵⁵¹ Yet, the Easter question is also described as a factor in the 'dangers of disagreement' [*discordiae pericula*]. The phrasing is somewhat ambiguous: it is not clear what party is responsible for alienating the monks [*alienare velint*] if peace is not kept with them [*cum eis*]. This last pronoun could refer to the Gallic bishops who are similarly addressed in a vague and disparaging ways in the three Easter letters.⁵⁵² Additionally, the participle construction *diabolo insidiante*, while reminiscent of Eph. 6, 11⁵⁵³ and linked with the previous usage of the same

⁵⁵⁰ Damien Bracken, 'Columbanus and the language of concord', 41-45 discusses the emphasis on unity and harmony in the early Irish tract *De duodecim abusivis*, which was likely known to Columbanus and exemplifies the degree to which the Early Irish church was imbued with the Christianised versions of the Classical conceits of *Concordia* and *Homonoia*. However, *Ep.* IV and its contents are not mentioned at all throughout the paper, giving the impression that these had only influence on matters of doctrine and ecclesiastical jurisdiction, discussed in the public letters. It would rather seem that monastic practice itself, or at least its ideal, reflected the pursuit of these conceits for each of the individual communities.

⁵⁵¹ Corning, *The Celtic and Roman traditions*, 29 noted that 'this letter contains advice in maintaining peace and unity within the community, specifically in terms of observing the correct date for Easter', but calendar issues are here treated as little more than a pretext for exacerbating existing factionalism rather than the root of the division. Other scholars do not assign this much weight to the Easter question. See for example Gilles Cugnier, *Histoire du monastère de Luxeuil à travers ses abbés 590-1790: Les trois premiers siècles, 590-888* (Langres, 2004), 30-35; Dunn, 'Columbanus, charisma and the revolt of the monks of Bobbio', in *Peritia*, 20 (2008), 1-27:8-18 and Richter, *Bobbio in the Early Middle Ages*, 53-55

⁵⁵² Columbanus, *Ep.* I, 4 *istorum episcoporum* and III, 2 *istorum Gallorum* (Walker, ed. *Opera*, 6 and 24)

⁵⁵³ Todde and Nuvolone, 'Le lettere e la preghiera' 152n40

passage in the *exordium* [*contra quos arma Dei arripite ... acsi quibusdam sagittis*], might indicate that forces external to the monastic community were at play. One can compare its usage with the reference to diabolical forces found in *Ep. III*.⁵⁵⁴ The later reference to a persecution which the community is undergoing⁵⁵⁵ seems to confirm that the author wanted to present hostile external forces exploiting the Easter controversy existing between the Irish expatriates and the Gallic bishops to further divide the community. Yet, the degree to which this situation influenced the unrest and played the role of motivating factor in Columbanus's exile cannot be ascertained by the contents of this letter alone.

Section 4.6: paraenetic style

Sed angustiae undique sunt, [Dan 13, 22] carissime; periculum si oderint, periculum, si amaverint. Scito utraque vera esse, inde vel odire vel amare; in odio pax, in amore integritas perit. Tene igitur te ad unius desiderii impetum quod meum scis cor desiderare. Scis me amare multorum salutem et secretum mihimetipsi, unum pro profectu Domini id est ecclesiae eius, alterum pro ipsius desiderio; sed haec vota sunt potius in me quam acta; in te vero sint perfecta, oro, quia me absente utraque potes vel ex parte conoscere; non iubens tamen scribo. Scito igitur meum ad totos iussum; et quia diversa sensi multorum vota ad firmitate regulae retinendam, ad radices ramos ligavi, qui sui fragilitate a mea parva declinaverunt firmitate, id est a doctrinae recesserunt veritate. Qui enim sensum meum servaverint, sic Deo serviant, eligentes semper sibi sapientiores et religiosiores, si tamen umilis sint et misericordes. Quicumque sunt rebelles, foras exeant; quicumque sunt obidientes ipsi fiant heredes. Haec tu observa et quicumque mei sunt ex integro; et propter unitatem et humilitatem, quamvis multi Christo vos dilatante et multiplicante sitis, ad eum, qui iuxta altare quod sanctus Aidus episcopus benedixit Deo sevierit, omnes aspiciant. Idcirco et tu, si me istorum persecutio....

4.6.1 Readings

Ad eum, qui iuxta altare quod	Ad eum, qui iuxta altare quod	Ad eum, qui iuxta altare quod
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⁵⁵⁴ Columbanus, *Ep. III*, 2 *semel et bis satanas impedit portitores nostrorum* (Walker, ed. *Opera*, 22)

⁵⁵⁵ Columbanus, *Ep. IV*, 4 *si istorum persecutio* (Walker, ed. *Opera*, 30)

sanctus Aidus episcopus benedixit Deo servierit, omnes aspiciant. Idcirco et tu si me istorum persecutio ... [Walker, 30, 4, 7-9]	sanctus Aidus episcopus benedixit Deo servierit, omnes aspiciant. *Idcirco et tu si me istorum persecutio * <i>suppletur</i> <i>haec sententia infra in Notis</i> [F, 132]	sanctus Aidus episcopus benedixit Deo servierit, omnes aspiciant. <i>Omittens</i> [M,64]
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F presents an incomplete sentence. The complete omission of the passage by Metzler might be explained with his tendency, apparent throughout his manuscript, of normalising the text whenever it presents difficulties, or, simply as a copying oversight. It apparently consisted in an invitation or suggestion to Attala, whom Columbanus had previously singled out among his disciples, and whom so far has been the only person directly addressed (hence the second person pronoun). According to Walker the lacuna in the text might not be very extensive and perhaps just a single word needs to be supplied; he suggested *sustulerit*.⁵⁵⁶ The notion that the apodosis might be elliptic of the verb could be supported by the wording of the subject as *et tu*; if one accepts this view, one must also accept that the unstated verb of the clause is also *aspice*, and the implication would be there was someone, celebrating by the altar of bishop Aidus, who was of significant status within the community in Luxeuil, because even Attala is invited to be respectful of him. Others have attempted to reconstruct the passage in a more elaborate way. Fleming proposed *ad vos denuo redire prohibuerit, me sequi poteris*, while Gundlach supplied the words *de medio sustulerit, omnibus prospice*.⁵⁵⁷ The first option is based on the author's earlier recommendation to Attala: come thence [*veni inde*]. Gundlach's suggestion, on the other hand, has much merit. As Walker would also do, he proposed *sustulerit* as the verb of the protasis because it fits semantically with subject and object (a persecution takes away Columbanus [from his community]). In addition he supplied a verb for the main clause that is related to that of the previous sentence but is different in its meaning. This would mean that the whole passage is

⁵⁵⁶ Walker, *Opera*, 31, n2.

⁵⁵⁷ Fleming, *Collectanea Sacra*, 136; Gundlach, ed. *Epistolae*, 167.

constructed around a parallelism: while everybody should pay respect (*omnes aspiciant*) to he who is celebrating by the altar, so Attala should look after everyone (*omnibus prospice*). It should be argued that Gundlach's conjecture is the one to be preferred here, in its meaning, if not in his wording. It is consistent with Columbanus's use of parallelism and binary sentence structures in the *Epistulae* and it does not need to postulate the existence of a figure rivalling Attala who was in charge of directing the worship in Luxeuil. A full translation of the sentence, if Gundlach's suggestion is accepted, would read:

'Let all have regard to him who ministers to God beside the altar that was blessed by the holy bishop Aid. Therefore, if the persecution of these people will face me, you, for your part, should look after everyone'.

Ultimately, the most significant aspect of this passage, even in its corrupted form is that the threat of persecution [*persecutio*], whose perpetrators are once again left unnamed, is kept distinct and separated from the major issue discussed throughout the rest of this section, that of disobedience and disagreement among the monk in Luxeuil. It would be a reasonable inference, even with the passage in this defective state, to assume that the author was facing an external threat in addition to internal tensions. Regardless of how this relates to Jonas's narrative about Theuderic II and Brunhild's assault on Columbanus, there seems to be a consistent pattern in this letter in the way in which threats to the writer's community are represented: tensions from within and persecution from the outside.

4.6.2 Structure and style

The language is typical of Columbanus's exhortatory speeches seeking elegant effects without overindulging in convoluted and expansive sentence structure. As in the preceding passage, most principal verbal forms are in the imperative mood, both present and future (*Scito*). The author employs a significant number of rhetorical figures: anaphoras [*periculum si oderint, periculum si amaverint*], chiasmus with *variatio* (*multorum salutem et secretum mihimetipsi*), homeoteleuton [*qui sui **fragilitate** mea parva declinaverunt **firmitate**, id est a doctrinae recesserunt **veritate***] and

parallelism [*quicumque sunt rebelles, foras exeant; quicumque sunt obedientes, ipsi fiant heredes*]. Underlining the increased emphasis, hyperbata become much more frequent.⁵⁵⁸ The author describes his decision of leaving the monks who still follow his rule together with those who have deviated from it using a metaphor: ‘I have bound the branches to the root, when in their fragility they have deviated from my small degree of strictness’ [*ad radices ramos ligavi, qui sui fragilitate a mea parva declinaverunt firmitate*]. As observed by Todde and Nuvolone,⁵⁵⁹ the imagery used recalls the practices of viticulture. Despite the abundance of such imagery in the Gospels, this particular phrase (*ad radices ramos ligavi*) seems to be wholly original to Columbanus, as there is no precise match with the action described in neither the scriptures nor in surviving Early Christian literature.

4.6.3 Epistolary qualities

The author continues in his exhortation. It is of note that a distinction is made between the recommendations and warnings to Attala, which are not to be understood as orders [*non iubens tamen scribe*] and dispositions to the rest of the monks which are explicitly called a ‘command’ [*meum ad totos iussum*]. The author has claimed for himself the leadership role, and addresses Attala as an appointed enforcer of his decisions. His addressee is warned against the perils of both envy and popularity: disagreement and factionalism would destroy the peace of the monastic community, whereas seeking to appease with concession would cause a departure from the standards of the *Rule* [*in odio pax, in amore integritas perit*]. There is little doubt that the word *integritas* refers to the monks’ compliance with the Rule, as the topic is brought up immediately afterwards [*ad firmitatem regulae retinendam*]. On a practical level, Columbanus’s calls to unity and peace translate into a blunt command: those who rebel against the rule should leave [*quicumque sunt rebelles, foras exeant*]. Finally, the assembly of the monks, which is presented as steadily growing in numbers [*quamvis multi Christo vos dilatante et multiplicante sitis*] is invited to respect [*omnes aspiciant*] the person administering the altar rites. The phrasing does not imply

⁵⁵⁸ Type abA: *meum ad totos iussum* and *ad firmitatem regulae retinendam*; Type aVA: *diversa sensi multorum vota; a mea parva declinaverunt firmitate* and *a doctrinae recesserunt veritate*.

⁵⁵⁹Todde and Nuvolone, ‘Le lettere e la preghiera’, 159n26

that this person is Attala himself, but neither does it exclude it. Such an interpretation is indeed likely but perhaps the passage is best understood as a generic invitation to display deference to the clerics invested with priesthood, whatever their allegiance. Neither the *Regula Monachorum* nor the *Regula Coenobialis* attributed to Columbanus contain similarly phrased prescriptions regarding the attitude of monks towards celebrating priests, so this invitation was probably dictated by the contingency, the author being preoccupied that the divisions among his monks should not impede normal performance of the prescribed altar-rites. The altar itself, and bishop Aidus who blessed it, have been the object of much speculation on the part of historians. Fleming suggested that Aidus was in fact Aridius of Lyon, whom Columbanus had mentioned as one of his correspondents in the letter to the Gallic council.⁵⁶⁰ Notably, in both instances the expression *sanctus episcopus* is used as a title. Bruno Krusch, while discussing a similar name occurring in the Luxeuil manuscript of the *Martyrologium Hieronymi* noted that it could be the name of an Irish abbot-bishop.⁵⁶¹ Following him and Walker's note, most scholarship is in agreement in considering the name to be of Irish origin.⁵⁶² Walker's suggestion about a portable altar that had been blessed in Ireland and brought over to the continent has been criticised as too fanciful.⁵⁶³ Ultimately the spelling preserved by both copies of the letter lends itself to be understood as the Latin form of the Irish name Áed.

Overall, the earnest but blunt tone of this exhortation and most of all the precision of the instructions transmitted by the author to his addressee seem to indicate that these passage contains a message that needed clarity and urgency. It is possible that the expulsion of the rebellious members as well as warnings against external threats were the gist of the communications sent back to Luxeuil by Columbanus in the early phases of his exile. Yet even here the prose display rhetorical and literary qualities. Besides the devices of *ornatus* listed above, a clear sign of literary

⁵⁶⁰ Fleming, *Collectanea Sacra*, 135. See Columbanus, *Ep.* II, 5 (Walker, *Opera*, 16)

⁵⁶¹ Bruno Krusch, 'Zur Afralegende und zum Martyrologium Hieronymianum' in *Neues Archive*, 24 (1899), 287-337:311

⁵⁶² Walker, ed. *Opera*, 31n1. See for example Bullough, 'The career of Columbanus', and Stevenson, 'The monastic Rules of Columbanus', in Lapidge, ed. *Studies on the Latin writings*, 17-18, and 209n32; Todde and Nuvolone, 'Le lettere e la preghiera', 159-161n30; Leso, 'Columbanus in Europe', 376; Dubreucq, 'L'oeuvre épistolaire', 123; Ó Cróinín, 'The political background to Columbanus Irish career', 53n5

⁵⁶³ Bullough, 'The career of Columbanus', 18n54 and Leso 'Columbanus in Europe', 376n98

elaboration can be seen in the opening quotation from Dan.13, 22 (*sed angustiae undique sunt*; not recognised in Walker's *apparatus*). The author is about to present to Attala the reasons why both the envy and esteem of the community could be equally dangerous to him. Presenting someone about to face two equally ruinous alternatives and expressing the anguish that this situation causes through the words of Susannah in Dan. 13, 22 is a recognisable pattern in Columbanus's writings. It occurs in *Instructio* VII, 2 and most significantly, in his closing exhortation to Gregory I on the matter of Easter. In the relevant chapter it has been discussed how Columbanus's rhetorical use of Dan.13, 22 is identical to that of Cummian in his Easter letter, with both of them probably depending from the same source texts.⁵⁶⁴ Hence, the occurrence of the same pattern here is likewise influenced by literary models and rhetorical goals. It is possible that it is an expression of genuine concern but certainly one that is highly stylised and carefully elaborated.

Section 4.7: Excusatio

Haec scripsi propter incertos exitus rerum. Mei voti fuit gentes visitare et evangelium eis a nobis praedicari sed †Fee. modo referente eorum teporem pene meum tulit inde animum.

4.7.1 Readings

Sed Fedolio modo referente eorum teporem pene meum tulit inde animum [Walker 30, 5, 11-12]	Sed fel. modo referente eorum teporem pene meum tulit inde animum [F, 132]	Sed modo Fee referente eorum teporem pene meum tulit inde animum. [M, 64]
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Though Walker's conjecture is to be dismissed,⁵⁶⁵ he is correct in hypothesising that the name of a person should be supplied here. Smit proposed *sed fel <s>inodo referenteeorum teporem pene meum tulit inde animum* ('but the bitterness of their coolness, as reported by the synod, quite took

⁵⁶⁴ Columbanus, *Instructio* VII, 2 and *Ep.* I, 8 (Walker, ed. *Opera*, 92 and 10). See here the relevant chapter for discussion

⁵⁶⁵ Columbanus has long since been shown not to have been the author of the poem *Ad Fedolium* on which Walker based his identification. Michael Lapidge, 'The authorship of the adonic verses *Ad Fedolium* attributed to Columbanus' in *Studi Medievali*, 3rd series, 18 1977, 815-850. And Michael Lapidge, 'Epilogue. Did Columbanus write metrical verse?' in *Columbanus studies on the Latin writings*, ed. Michael Lapidge, 274-285.

my mind away from that').⁵⁶⁶ Todde and Nuvolone suggested *sed fel modo referente eorum teporem pene meum tulit inde animum* (but the hostility of their behaviour which reveals their coolness quite took my mind away from that).⁵⁶⁷ Both of these conjecture run into the problem of normalizing the reading of M (*Fee*) into the word *fel* (poison, and figuratively, bitterness, hostility), which is the reading of F. Admittedly this does solve the anomaly of having an ablative absolute construction (*Fee. modo referente*) serve as the subject of the main verb, as is the case in Walker's translation. Nevertheless, since, as repeatedly observed, M consistently presents the *lectio facillior* and normalizes the text, it would be methodologically unsound to ignore the one instance in which its reading suggests a corruption of the transmitted text. From the point of view of palaeography, the two readings cannot be reconciled. It is difficult to imagine Metzler reading *e* for *l*; more likely it is Fleming's text presenting here a normalized reading for once. If the text is indeed corrupted, it would be reasonable to suppose that a personal name, possibly abbreviated, was originally found in the passage. The passage is not unique within the *Epistulae* in mentioning the abbreviated name of an individual who was known to the addressee but with whom a connection with Columbanus cannot be drawn from extant sources related to him. The other example would be *Agripp.* in *Epistula V*, whose name is in abbreviated form and whose proposed identity is that of Agrippinus, bishop of Como.⁵⁶⁸ The restored passage would simply translate to: 'but when *Fee.* recently reported their coolness, it quite took my mind away from that'. It should be noted that Columbanus usually qualified bishops as such in his letters, and that *Fee* might not have been of episcopal rank. Having safely dismissed Fedolius as a possibility, a likely alternative candidate for identification from contemporary sources can only be guessed. Donnchadh Ó Corráin suggested that *modo* should not be understood as an adverb but as a part of a lost Irish name: Felmedo, 'a dialectical syncopated form of Fedelmid'.⁵⁶⁹

⁵⁶⁶ Smit, *Studies*, 243-244

⁵⁶⁷ Todde and Nuvolone, 'Le lettere e la preghiera', 158-161 and n29

⁵⁶⁸ Columbanus, *Ep. V*, 3 (Walker, ed. *Opera*, 40 and 41 n1). On this identification see Angelo Roncoroni, 'L'epitafio si S. Agrippino nella chiesa di S. Eufemia ad Isola (Schaller - Könsgen, ICL 3449)' in *Rivista archeologica dell'antica provincia e diocesi di Como*, 162, 1980, 99-149 and Daniel Bollough, 'The career of Columbanus', 23-24

⁵⁶⁹ Donnchadh Ó Corráin, 'A crux in the fourth letter of Columbanus', *Celtica*, 29 (2017), 1-5

4.7.2 Epistolary qualities

The opening of this short passage reads like an excusatory remark for the blunt and direct exhortation that had just concluded. The author justifies his previous recommendations on the grounds of the uncertainty any future development [*propter incertum exitus rerum*] and confesses that he has moved away from his previous intention of engaging in missionary activity, adducing as a reason a report on the lukewarm attitude of the *gentes* to conversion. It must be assumed that his audience was already familiar with this intention, since it is not mentioned elsewhere in the letter. The terminology is open to interpretation: *gentes* is used in contemporary literature to refer to non-Christian people, but its only other occurrence in the *Epistulae* clearly refers to people who had already converted.⁵⁷⁰ In Jonas's *Vita* the term assumes various connotations.⁵⁷¹ In the passage in which Theudebert II proposes to the exiled monks to engage in missionary activity in Alamannia both the term *gens* and *natio* are employed,⁵⁷² whereas in the passage in which Columbanus contemplates travelling East to make an attempt to convert the pagan Wends only the proper name of the people in question is used [*Venetiorum qui et Sclaves*].⁵⁷³ As stated above, these episodes, which open and close chapter 27 of the *Vita*, are the only instances in which Jonas recorded any interest in active predication on the part of Columbanus. There seems to be little to no reason to doubt that Jonas's narrative portrays one of Columbanus's actual preoccupations, albeit a minor one that was later superseded. If the testimony of the ninth-century *Vita Walarici* is accepted, it might be likely that Columbanus's informant on the attitude of the *gentes* in question was an associate of Waldelenus and Walaric's missionary effort.⁵⁷⁴ A reference to this missionary enterprise would also explain why the author had previously contemplated that Waldelenus might not have remained with the rest of the community [*si illic est*].

⁵⁷⁰ Columbanus, *Ep. V, 2 nomen Dei per vos contententes utrimque blasphematur inter gentes* (Walker, ed. *Opera*, 38). Walker translated *gentes* as Gentiles, but the context indicates that the meaning is more generic, for example 'peoples'. See translation by Todde and Nuvolone, 'Le lettere e la preghiera', 187

⁵⁷¹ See discussion by O'Hara and Wood, *Lives*, 157n335. that

⁵⁷² Jonas, *VC*, I, 27 (Krusch, ed. *Vitae*, 101 lines 8 and 11)

⁵⁷³ Jonas, *VC*, I, 27 (Krusch, ed. *Vitae*, 194)

⁵⁷⁴ *Vita Walarici*, 11 (Krusch, ed. *Vita*, 164)

The remark on the author's intention follows the previous defective portion of the text [*si me istorum persecutio ...*], and it is also possibly corrupted (*fel/Fee*). Any attempt to understand the author's motive here needs to take this into account and by necessity move away from relying on the text alone. Reconstructing the circumstances of the epistolary event, that is, the lead up to the composition and circulation of the letter might help to correctly contextualize this remark within the structure of the surviving text. Modern scholarship has highlighted a consistent pattern in the behaviour of Columbanus's group of monks and *peregrini*: that of aiming for royal patronage whenever in need and wherever they happened to be.⁵⁷⁵ Columbanus's *Ep. V* even contains clear references to his current royal patrons, the Lombard king Agilulf and his queen Theodelinda.⁵⁷⁶ It is likely that their court was part of the intended audience of that particular text, even though the letter is addressed to the Pope: they had stakes in the ecclesiastical controversy that Columbanus was addressing. If one does not consider these circumstance in isolation but as symptomatic of the tendencies of Columbanus's approach to the epistolary medium, it could be argued that he had an eye of regards for his patrons or possible patrons in the composition and circulation of this letter too. A key piece of information comes from Jonas's narrative: king Theudebert had asked the exiled monk to preach in Alamannia. The mention of missionary activity in this passage might have been for his benefit. If the letter was circulated as a consolatory rhetorical piece to raise sympathy for the *peregrini* among possible patrons, the audience at Theudebert's court would have found out that Columbanus was originally intentionedto engage in predication. The purpose of this passage would be to suggest that the 'uncertain outcome of events' (*incertus exitus rerum*), that is the results of the community's exile, might be overcome by a patron willing to sponsor a renewed effort in predication. Furthermore, the author's subsequent decision to abandon that original purpose and the 'coolness' of the pagans which caused it would have appeared to be tied with the *persecutio* just discussed, that is, on the one hand circumstances had caused the author to

⁵⁷⁵See for example the conclusions of Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, 388-389 or those of Ian Wood, 'Jonas, the Merovingians and Pope Honorius' in Alexander Callander Murray *After Rome's fall: narrators and sources of early medieval history presented to Walter Goffart*, (Toronto, 1988), 99-120:106-109 for Luxeuil and Michael Richter, *Bobbio in the Early middle ages*, 8-12 for Bobbio. More recently Fox, *Power and Religion*, 26-28; O'Hara, *Jonas of Bobbio*, 38-45

⁵⁷⁶ Columbanus, *Ep. V*, 2, 8 and 17 (Walker, ed. *Opera*, 36, 44 and 54)

abandon the predication, on the other the negative attitude of the *gens* might have been the result of hostile external parties rallying them against the monks (although this can only be speculated, since the previous passage is defective).

Section 4.8: consolatory style

Lachrymosam tibi volui scribere epistolam; sed quia scio cor tuum, idcirco necessariis tantum allegatis, duri set ipsis arduisque, altero stilo usus sum, malens obturare quam provocare **lachrymas**. Foris itaque actus et sermo mitis, intus inclusus est dolor. En proruunt **lachrymae**, sed melius est obturare fontem; non enim fortis militis est in bello plorare. Non est hoc novum quod nobis contigit; hoc maxime cottidie praedicebamus. Quidam philosophus olim sapientior ceteris eo quod contra omnium opinionem unum Deum esse dixerit, in carcere trusus est. Evangelia plena sunt de hac causa, et inde sunt maxime conscripta; haec est enim veritas evangelii, ut veri Christi crucifixi discipuli eum sequantur cum cruce. Grande exemplum ostensum est, grande sacramentum declaratum est: Dei filius voluntuarius (*oblatus est enim quia ipse voluit*) [Is. 53, 7] crucem ascendit ut reus, *relinquens nobis*, ut scriptum est *exemplum, ut sequamur vestigia eius* [1 Pet, 2, 21]. Beatus igitur est qui huius passionis et huius confusionis fit partecipes.

4.8.1 Structure and style

The spelling of the terms *lachryma* and related words is that found in both exemplars and it has been restored. The style of the passage is concise, with cleverly constructed short clauses often juxtaposed by asyndeton. The first few lines fit into an overall chiasmic scheme similar to those identified by David Howlett in his analysis of the letter to Gregory I:

Malens obturare quam provocare lachrymas A

Foris itaque actus est sermo mitis B

Intus inclusus est dolor B'

En proruunt lachrymae sed melius est obturare fontem A

Clauses B and B' are tied by antithesis, whereas A and A' repeat key words in a chiasmic fashion.⁵⁷⁷ The author was aiming for elegance but also clarity as the lack of hyperbata outside of the very first sentence attests (type aVA: *Lachrymosam tibi voluit scribere epistolam*). Additionally, Wright singled out the phrase *non enim fortis militis est in bello plorare* ('It is not befitting of a strong soldier to lament in battle') as a *sententia* in the vein of the classical rhetorical tradition and an anaphoras is used to add emphasis to the last concept expressed in the passage [*grande exemplum ... grande sacramentum*].⁵⁷⁸ In terms of vocabulary one can note the use of the adverb *cottidie* (daily), which is rare in contemporary literature but frequently employed in works attributed to Columbanus.⁵⁷⁹

4.8.2 Epistolary qualities

The author continues to directly address a single member of his audience, Attala, explaining that, because he is aware of his possible doubts [*quia scio cor tuum*] he has refrained from openly expressing grief in the letter, even though he wanted to (*Lachrymosam tibi voluit scribere epistolam*). Barbara H. Rosenwein has argued that this phrasing is demonstrative of Columbanus's ambivalence towards the open expression of emotions. Her stance is that the only emotion whose open expression Columbanus unambiguously endorsed in the *Epistulae* was fear, having previously adduced as examples Columbanus's reticence in commendations and his warnings for Attala against being too ready to accept displays of affection, in this same letter.⁵⁸⁰

In this passage 'Columbanus managed to condemn a demonstrative emotive style while exploiting to the hilt'.⁵⁸¹ Yet this apophasis should not be taken at face value, that is, as way for the author to express emotions with which he is uncomfortable. As observed by Germana Gandino, the statement is best understood on a 'rhetorical and meta-rhetorical' plan: it is a commentary on the overall tone of the letter. The phrases *altero stilo usus sum* and *sermo mitis* can be interpreted in a technical sense, with reference to the teachings of Late-antique rhetoric. Gandino equates

⁵⁷⁷ See the criteria of Howlett, *The Celtic tradition of Biblical style*, 23-24

⁵⁷⁸ Wright, 'Columbanus's *Epistulae*', 51

⁵⁷⁹ Schaller, 'De mundi transitu', 252-253

⁵⁸⁰ Barbara H. Rosenwein, *Emotional communities*, 157-161.

⁵⁸¹ Rosenwein, *Emotional communities*, 161

Columbanus's *sermo mitis* with the *sermo humilis* of rhetorical theory.⁵⁸² While the circumstances depicted by the letter, namely, Columbanus's exile, require him to communicate practical dispositions and orders to his community, these might have been misinterpreted by the hostile forces threatening the community from the outside or met with internal resistance by rebellious portions of the community.⁵⁸³ Encasing them into the epistolary form allows for a degree of flexibility that the authors puts to good use by framing his instructions regarding his addressee's conduct as temporary leader of the monks as the exhortatory portion of a consolatory address to Attala, that is rooted in theological and moralistic considerations rather than focused on political expedients.

Coherently, the remainder of the passage displays the usage of a common consolatory *topos*, that of *exempla*; these are used to argue that exile and persecution are not a novelty but should be expected challenges in the daily life of preachers [*non est hoc novum ... cottidie praedicebamus*]. First, the author references 'a certain philosopher wiser at one time than the others' [*quidam philosophus olim sapientior ceteris*] incarcerated for believing in the existence of one God [*unum Deum esse dixerit*]. The insertion of a presumably pagan philosopher as the first *exemplum* is probably a sign of the influence of Jerome's consolatory letters, which, contrary to those of other patristic epistolographers, did include figures from Classical antiquity as paragons of virtue.⁵⁸⁴ It seems likely that the author was simply paying attention to the conventions of the genre and did

⁵⁸² Germana Gandino, 'Pratiche dello scambio epistolare nel mondo monastico' in M. Bottazzi, P. Buffo, C. Ciccopiedi, L. Furbetta, T. Garnier, (eds) *La società monastica nei secoli VI-XII. Sentieri di ricerca. Atelier jeunes chercheurs sur le monachisme médiéval Roma, 12-13 giugno 2014* (Trieste, 2016), 245-259:257-259.

⁵⁸³ Gandino, 'Pratiche dello scambio epistolare', 258-259 observes that Columbanus's indications about who should lead the community were subversive, if Luxeuil was a royal monastery in which appointing the abbot was a prerogative of the king. This hypothesis is based on the works of Ian Wood see Wood, 'The *Vita Columbani* and Merovingian hagiography', 76-78 and Wood, 'Jonas, the Merovingians and pope Honorius', 105-115. However, it bears repeating that, while the possibility of an external threat to the monastic community can be inferred solely on the basis of this letter, the identification of this threat with the actions of Theuderic II, Brunehild and the Burgundian court can only be made by relying on Jonas's narrative, not on Columbanus's contemporary account.

⁵⁸⁴ Ambrose for instance drew his *exempla* from the Old testament, see Charles Favez, 'L'inspiration chrétienne dans les *Consolations* de saint Ambrose', in *Revue des études latines*, 8 (1930), 82-91:86; Basil of Caesarea similarly employed biblical *exempla* in his consolations, see Gregg, *Consolation philosophies*, 191-196 and Mitchell, 'Consolatory letters in Basil and Gregory Nazianzen', 310-312 who also discusses a significant exception in Gregory of Nazianzus. Jerome's letter 60 famously lists several pagans as examples of fortitude, see Scourefield, *Consoling Heliodorus*, 33 and 17-119

not attach much significance to the anecdote he reported, hence the vagueness of the reference. Walker on the one hand, and Todde and Nuvolone on the other, propose Anaxagoras or Socrates as the unnamed protagonist of this anecdote.⁵⁸⁵ In any case the text quickly moves past this reference and follows up on the previous observation [*hoc maxime cottidie predicebamus*] by suggesting that the whole Christian message, starting from the Gospel should constitute an example for overcoming adversities [*evangelia plena sunt de hac causa et inde sunt maxime conscripta*]. In particular, Christ's *proskinesis* and passion [*Dei filius voluntarius ... crucem ascendit ut reus*] motivates true disciples to follow him [*eum sequantur cum cruce*]. Overall this is consistent with Christian *consolationes* in which 'it should not be necessary to supply consolatory arguments because these are already there in Christian doctrine'.⁵⁸⁶ This explains why the majority of Columbanus's consolatory address is taken up by exegetical considerations, as it will be seen.

Section 4.9: exegetical style

Inest enim ibi aliquid admirabile celatum; *quod enim stultum Dei est sapientius est hominibus, et quod infirmum Dei est fortius hominibus est* [1 Cor 1, 25]. Mirum in modum cernitur in stultitia sapientia innumerabilis et in infirmitate fortitude incomparabilis. Ergo ibi absconsa sunt omnia desiderabilia refrigeria, salutis mysteria; sed dura sunt, ut pretiosa sint; obscura sunt ut paucis sint digna; paucis vero digna, quia nimis mira sunt. Itaque patienter sustineamus omnia adversa pro veritate, ut simus participes Domini passionem; *si enim compatiamur, conregnabimus* [2 Tim 2, 12 and Rom 8, 17]. Quid his adiciendum est nisi perseverantia? Qui enim *perseveraverit usque in finem, hic salvus erit* [Matth. 10, 22]. In fine enim iudicium consistit et in exitus laus canitur. Sed ut sit perseverans, oret iugiter quisque auxilium Dei cum omni mentis humilitate; *non enim, inquit, volentis neque correnti, sed Dei miserantis est*, [Rom 9, 16] quia maior et *melior est Dei misericordia super vitam* [Ps. 62, 4], quamquam bonam, hominis; non enim digni sunt misericordia, nisi qui se miseros confitentur coram Deo et indignos se sentiunt salutis per se, nisi

⁵⁸⁵Walker, ed. *Opera*, 31n4 and Todde and Nuvolone, 'Le lettere e la preghiera', 163n33. The notion of a philosopher thrown in jail also brings to mind the opening passages of Boethius's *Consolatio*, especially if his recognition of one God is not taken literally but as an anti-Arian jab. However it is very doubtful that Columbanus had firsthand knowledge of Boethius's work.

⁵⁸⁶Mitchell, 'Consolatory letters in Basil and Gregory Nazianzen', 310

sola Domini misericordia de tantis pericoli eripiantur. Qui licet bonorum conscii sibi sint operum, tamen iudicia Dei temente et multa perpetrasse iniusta gementes in Dei solius pietatem humiliter confidunt; quorum timor perfectus plus placet quo plus humilitati studet; *beneplacitum* enim *Domino super temente eum et in eis qui sperant misericordia eius* [Ps. 146, 11]. Nullum itaque salvabit dextera sua (iuxta verbum Domini ad Iob quo iustificationem illius quibusdam potentiae experimentis quodammodo derisit dicens *et tunc confiteor quod salvare te poterit dextera tua*[Iob 40, 9]) nisi qui humiliter suam possibilitatem, et ipsam datam, exercuerit cum timore et tremore in voluntate Dei orans frequenter, *Ne proicias me a facie tua, et, ne repellas me a mandatis tuis* [Ps. 50, 13], quia saepe ut ait quidam magnitudo virtutis quibusdam fuit occasio perditionis, qui nimirum eo pulchriores sunt virtutibus ab humilitatis gradu descendunt. Inde scriptum est, *quo pulchrior es, descende, surge, et dormi cum incircumcisis* [Ezech 2, 19], acsi aliis verbis animae diceret superbae, quia tua sanctitate te elevasti in superbiam, descende inde modo et esto inter peccatores computando, quia nihil apud me est quod cum superbia efficitur.

4.9.1 Structure and style

The first part of the passage [*Inest enim ibi ... in exitu laus canitur*] relies on a quick succession of highly stylized periods with several rhetorical artifices. Biblical quotations are frequent but seamlessly integrated into the flow of the text. The remainder of the passage [*sed ut sit perseverans ... cum superbia efficitur*] has a less frantic quality; complex subordination is more frequent than asyndeton and Biblical quotations are more often introduced by *ad hoc* phrases [*inquit; iuxta verbum Domini ad Iob ... dicens; orans frequenter; inde scriptum est*]. In both subsection the audience is never addressed directly, although, curiously, a second person address is found when the author offers a sort of paraphrases of the message directed to an overly proud soul by the scriptures [*quia tua sanctitate te elevasti ... cum superbia efficitur*]. An example of parallelism as well as syllabic isocolon and homeoteleuton [*in stultitia sapientia innumerabilis et in infirmitate fortitudo incomparabilis*] gives an idea of just how sustained is the attention to the elaboration of the passage. In the subsequent sentence the use of *gradatio*, with anaphoras and homeoteleuton [*sed dura sunt, ut pretiosa sint; obscura sunt ut paucis sint digna; paucis vero*

digna, quia nimis mira sunt] allows the author to maintain great clarity of communication. Hyperbata are also more frequent than in the previous passages.⁵⁸⁷ The phrase *cum timore et tremore* is frequently employed in patristic writings but it is noteworthy that this same hendiadys is also found in two later seventh-century hiberno-latin works, the *Lorica of Laidcenn* and *Rubisca*. It is a small detail that does support the notion that Columbanus linguistic usage is an early product of the same stylistic tendencies found in the so-called ‘hisperic’ latinity.⁵⁸⁸

4.9.2 Epistolary qualities

The passage reads as a further exploration, made for the benefit of the reader, of the theological implications of the previously made point about Christ’s sacrifice being the prime example for consolation and the root of Christian life. As this doctrinal excursus lacks any apostrophe to the audience, (neither Attala nor the community at large are addressed directly), and since it is centred around a number of scriptural quotations, it could be argued that it is an example of the same exegetical style found in Columbanus’s letter to the Gallic bishops. Unlike that passage, however, this one is not self contained, but it follows organically from the previous consolatory address. In a sense, the theological discourse is a stand-in for other consolatory *exempla*, with the main message being that consolation can only be achieved through the Christian message. The author first focuses on the paradox of the Passion quoting from I Cor. 1, 25 [*quod enim stultum Dei est sapientius est hominibus et quod infirmum Dei est, fortius hominibus est*], explaining the qualities of the mysteries of salvation [*salutis mysteria*] and concluding with a short exhortation aimed at living up to the ideal [*taque patienter sustineamus omnia adverse pro veritate ut simus participi Domini passionis*]. The author cites 2 Tim. 2, 12 (*si enim compatiamur coneragnabimus*; see also Rom. 8, 17), which had been previously used in *Ep.* II, 6 to make precisely the same point.⁵⁸⁹ The next element introduced in the excursus is perseverance in upholding moral consistency with the Passion [*quid his adiciendum est nisi peverantia*], with reference to Matt.

⁵⁸⁷ Type aBA: *cum omni mentis humilitati; sola Domini misericordia; quibusdam potentiae experimentis*;
type aVA: *mlta perpetrasse iniusta; animae diceret superbae*.

⁵⁸⁸ The *Lorica of Laidcenn* and *Rubisca* are edited by Michael W. Herren, ed. *The Hisperica Famina II. Related poems*, Studies and texts 85 (Toronto, 1987), 72-88 and 94-192 line, 28 and line 4. On the relationship between Columbanus and ‘hisperic’ Latinity see Wright, ‘Columbanus’s *Epistulae*’, 47-48.

⁵⁸⁹ Columbanus, *Ep.* II, 6 (Walker, ed. *Opera*, 16)

10, 22. It should be noted that the word *finem* from the evangelical quote is explained in an eschatological perspective: ‘for judgment is held at the end, and praise is sung at the outcome’ [*in fine enim iudicium consistit et in exitu laus canitur*]. The Last Judgment figures prominently in Columbanus’s address to the Gallic bishop and to Pope Boniface IV, and in a very similar way, since both those instances are exhortations about upholding a consistent moral standard.⁵⁹⁰ Additionally, it is possible that a source other than the Vulgate is being referenced here since at least one other patristic work associates the phrase *in exitu laus canitur* with this same quotation from the Gospel of Matthew.⁵⁹¹ Moving on, the author recognises that to practice Christian perseverance requires praying for God’s help with humility [*auxilium Dei cum omni mentis humilitate*]. From the notion of humility the author builds a complex argument on the role of divine mercy [*Dei misericordia/Domini misericordia*] in the economy of salvation and how it makes humility and fear of God the most important factor in the attitude of the faithful, who without practicing it, would not be worthy of the same mercy [*non enim digni misericordia sunt nisi qui se miseros confitentur*]. The author argues that, even when good deeds are accounted for [*vitam, quamquam bonam hominis; qui licet bonorum conscii sibi sint operum*] none can be saved by themselves [*nullum itaque salvabit dextera sua*], but only by God’s grace [*nisi sola misericordia Domini de tantis periculis eripiantur*]. For this reason people should not take pride in their good deeds and virtues but remain firmly rooted in self-doubt and humility [*magnitudo virtutis quibusdam fuit occasio perditionis*]. This last notion is supported by an anonymous authority [*ut ait quidam*] which has been identified in a passage from Gregory the Great’s *Regula*

⁵⁹⁰ Columbanus, *Ep.* II, 2 and V, 15 (Walker, ed. *Opera*, 12 and 54)

⁵⁹¹ The phrase *in exitu laus canitur* cannot be found in the Vulgate but it is used in conjunction with Matt. 10, 22 and attributed to Solomon in the fifth-century dialogue known as Pseudo-Firmicus Maternus, *Consultationes Zacchei Christiani et Apollonii philosophi*, 3, 9 ed. Jean-Louis Feiertag, *Questions d’un païen à un chrétien. (Consultationes Zacchei Christiani et Apollonii philosophi)*, 2 vols. Sources Chrétiennes 401 and 402 (Paris, 1994), II, 232. The phrase is also found in Hilary of Poitiers, *Tractatus super psalmos*, XIV, 14 ed. A. Zingerle, *S. Hilarii Episcopi Pictaviensis tractatus super psalmos*, CSEL 22 (Wien, Prague and Leipzig 1891), 94, again with reference to Salomon. Because of limited mobility due to the COVID-19 pandemic I could not access the critical edition of the former text, so I presently cannot ascertain whether Pseudo-Firmicus Maternus depends on the earlier work by Hilary and whether their attribution of this saying to Solomon depends on a reading of the Old Latin text of the Bible. In any case, Columbanus was not the first to associate Matt. 10, 22 with that phrase and he likely depended on a similar tradition to that of the Pseudo-Firmicus Maternus.

Pastoralis.⁵⁹² As Todde and Nuvolone have pointed out,⁵⁹³ the influence of Gregory's text on the passage is much greater than Columbanus's hint makes it out to be, since not only the general notion that taking pride in virtues imperils the soul, but also both the quotation of Ezech. 32, 19 and the direct address to the proud soul are lifted from the *Regula Pastoralis*. This is the only instance in Columbanus's *Epistulae* for which it can be confidently argued that the author had encountered an *auctoritas* he referenced during his stay on the continent and not during his education in Ireland. The *Regula Pastoralis* is praised in the letter to Gregory I, and it is likely that one surviving letter of Gregory mentions sending a copy of this work to Columbanus.⁵⁹⁴

Overall the passage fulfils its role of consolatory *exemplum* by setting up a model of behaviour based exegetical considerations, in a way that is similar to the exhortatory address that closes the letter to the Gallic bishops. In this work, it has been speculated that that passage was heavily dependent on re-organised homiletic materials. This is also a possibility worthy of consideration for the central portion of this excursus, with its focus on the question of the correct attitude to have in prayer, because of dominant idea that good deeds and virtues account for little in obtaining salvation, when compared to the action of divine mercy. The theme of justification was the object of the works of one of Columbanus's most revered masters, Faustus of Riez.⁵⁹⁵ While Columbanus's take on the issue is compatible with Faustus's ideas, with both of them being fully

⁵⁹² Gregory I, *Regula Pastoralis*, 4 in *PL*, 77, 0125b. *Nam quibusdam saepe magnitudo virtutis occasio perditionis fuit; [...] Hinc namque superbienti animae dicitur: Quo pulchrior es, descende, et dormi cum incircumcisis (Ezech. 32, 19). Ac si aperte diceretur: Quia ex virtutum decore te elevas, ipsa tua pulchritudine impelleris ut cadas.* 'For greatness of virtue has often been the cause of damnation for some; [...] Hence to the soul growing in pride it is said: the better you are, come down and sleep with the uncircumcised. And it is openly said: since you are elevating yourself in the ornament of your virtues, by this same beauty you are compelled to fall'. Notably Columbanus repeats a very similar concept in the letter to Pope Boniface IV: Columbanus, *Ep. V*, 5 (Walker, ed. *Opera*, 42) *per seciratem pastorum in his regionibus deieci sunt et multi per prosperitatem infelicissimae abundantiae decepti sunt* 'in these regions many are falling into sin because of the self-assuredness of their shepherds and many are deceived because of the prosperity of a very unfortunate wealth'. Winterbottom, 'Columbanus and Gildas', 311-312, noted that this moralistic outlook is similar to that of Gildas in the *De excidio*. Columbanus might have chosen this passage out of all of Gregory's opus because it resonated best with the teachings of Insular asceticism, possibly represented by Gildas.

⁵⁹³ Todde and Nuvolone, 'Le lettere e la preghiera', 166-167.

⁵⁹⁴ Columbanus, *Ep. I*, 9 (Walker, ed. *Opera* 10). Gregory I, *Registrum Epistolarum*, 5, 17 (ed. Norberg, *Registrum*, CCSL 140a)

⁵⁹⁵ Faustus wrote two books *De Gratia* on the topic, (Engelbrecht, ed. *Opera*, 2-96)

orthodox,⁵⁹⁶ there are no verbal parallels to be found. Even more significantly, the long string of Biblical citations employed by Columbanus in the passage after the occurrence of Matt. 10, 22 (Ps. 62, 4 and 146, 11; Job 40, 9 Ps. 50, 13 and 118, 10) are not found in association with each other or with the topic of grace. The one exception is Rom. 9, 16 which is indeed used by Faustus but in a context that does not immediately reconcile with Columbanus's argument about the need for humility.⁵⁹⁷ The previous usage of Matt. 10, 22 in conjunction with the phrase *in exitu laus canitur*, attested in at least one other work, makes one suspect that an unidentifiable source was used for the rest of the passage as well. What was this source's stance on the theological problem of justifications and grace, as well as its relationship with the fifth-century debates between Pelagianists, Augustinians and moderates such as John Cassian and Faustus cannot be ascertained. The fact that the one identifiable source for this excursus is Gregory's *Regula Pastoralis*, that is, a Continental work, should invoke caution in using this passage to discuss the aftermath of the fifth-century controversy on the doctrine of justification in an Insular context.⁵⁹⁸ On the other hand, Columbanus's stance on the role of Grace is unambiguously orthodox and leaves little room to argue that he personally had Pelagian or semi-Pelagian leanings.

Section 4.10: consolatory style

Angusta, vides, porta [Matth 7, 13] est et paucis degressa perfectionis via, quae a laeva vitia, a dextera vanitatis et superbiae mala declinat. Gradiendum igitur est via regia ad civitatem Dei viventis per afflictionis carnis et contritionem cordis, per corporis laborem et spiritus humiliationem, per studium nostrum, officii rem legitimi, non meriti dignitatem et, quod his maius est, per Christi gratiam, fidem, speme et caritatem. Multa cerne pericula; cognosce causam belli, gloriae magnitudinem; fortem non nescias hostem, et libertatem in medio arbitrii; portam

⁵⁹⁶ Herren and Brown, *Christ in Celtic Christianity*, 25, 35, 79-80 and 143-145 identified both Faustus and Columbanus as proponents of semi-Pelagianism, that is, followers of Cassian, unwilling to accept Augustine's hard stance on predestination. This views should be balanced with the more critical take by Gilbert Márkus, 'Pelagianism and the "Common Celtic Church"', in *The Innes Review*, 56, 2 (2005), 165-213.

⁵⁹⁷ Faustus, *De Gratia*, 1, 1 and 9 (Engelbrecht, ed. *Opera*, 11 and 26-28)

⁵⁹⁸ For context see R. A. Markus, 'Pelagianism: Britain and the Continent', in *Journal of Ecclesiastical Studies*, 37,2 (1986), 191-204 and Gerald Bonner, 'The Pelagian controversy in Britain and Ireland', in *Peritia*, 16 (2002), 144-155. Subsequent mentions of Pelagianism by Bede as well as their occurrence in the context of the later developments of the Easter controversy are best explained by Dáibhí Ó Cróinín, "'New heresy for old": Pelagianism in Ireland and the papal letter of 640', in *Speculum*, 60, 3 (1985), 505-516.

intellege hostis apertam ab aquilone; ideo et Ierusalem ab aquilone aperitur, inde illa parte observat in aquilone inimicus habitans, inde scriptum est, *ab aquilone exardescunt mala super omnem terram*[Ierem 1, 14]. Si tollis hostem, tollis et pugnam; si tollis pugnam tollis et coronam – si haec sint, ubi fuerint virtus vigilantia, fervor, patientia, fidelitas, sapientia, stabilitas, prudentia sint necesse est, si non, strages – et, ut inferam, si tollis libertatem, tollis dignitatem.

4.10.1 Structure and style

The most notable quality of the passage is the abrupt return to directly addressing Attala in the second person [*vides, cerne, cognosce, nescias, intellege, tollis*], although this is done in an almost parenthetical way, without trying to set up a fictitious epistolary conversation. The tone carries a sense of urgency, accentuated by the use of asyndeton, chiasmus [*causam belli, gloriae magnitudinem*], litotes [*non nescias*], and repetition, culminating in a climax [*si tollis hostem ... si tollis libertatem, tollis dignitatem*]. However, the style is more plain, with no hyperbata present and only one participle construction [*habitans*].

4.10.2 Epistolary qualities

Once again, as in *Ep. II, 6*, the image of the ‘narrow door’ (*angusta porta*) from Matt. 7, 13 is used to represent the pursuit of an ascetic lifestyle. The expressions *studium nostrum* and *officii rem legitimi* refer to monastic endeavour, as they have clear parallels in Columbanus’s *Instructiones*.⁵⁹⁹ Thematically, the passage follows up the author’s previous warning about distrusting both hate and love [*periculum si oderint, periculum si amaverint*], with the additional warning that contrition and faith in the action of grace [*per Christi gratiam*] are necessary. The rest of the passage employs military imagery and language [*belli, hostem, inimicus, pugnam, coronam*], metaphorically representing the struggle of the ascetic, which is a common occurrence in the *Epistulae*.⁶⁰⁰ However, in light of the previous warnings throughout the text of this letter, the author’s choice of quoting from Ierem. 1, 14 and his insistence on ‘the foe dwelling in the north’ (*in aquilone inimicus habitans*) is probably another veiled reference to threats coming from

⁵⁹⁹ Columbanus, *Instructio* III, 1 and XI, 2 (Walker, ed. *Opera*, 72 and 108).

⁶⁰⁰ In this same letter see the previous reference to Eph. 13, 17. See also Columbanus, *Ep. II, 8* and especially *Ep. V, 7* and *8* (Walker, ed. *Opera*, 20 and 44).

the outside of the monastic community. In exegetical literature of the period north is the cardinal direction associated with demonic forces,⁶⁰¹ and Columbanus had already implied supernatural interference in the behaviour of their persecutors [*daemones sunt in his qui invident bonis vestri*]. Overall the tone of the passage is still consolatory but mixed with exhortation: the addressee is being rallied and encouraged through the conclusions drawn from the previous excursus.

Section 4.11: consolatory style (lamentation or monody)

Ecce quibus circumdamur adversitatibus et quibus circumluimur, acsi vorticum fragoribus, carissime discens, exceptis quae intrinsecus latent et intra nosmetipsos, cottidie militant contra nos. Ideo in tanti pericoli velle et currere, licet tuum, non est tuum; non enim sufficit virtus humana intra tantas contrarietates pervenire ad quod vult, nisi misericordia Domini et velle faciat vota gradientis compleri et currere, et prosperitatis lapsus et offendicuola casusque contrarios evadente, cursus inoffense finiri. Quapropter mentis humilitas meriti est causa, sine auxilio enim non potest adiuvari; non meretur superbus; induratur, derelictus; ingratus, non orans, indevotus est. Servus piger flagellatur in vita contemnitur famulatio; desperatus, etiam fastidio dignus viris maxime reputatur, quid ergo dicemus ad haec, o nos miseri, qui, antequam malis carere mereamur, bonis nobis blandimur et ante vitiorum depositionem perfectionem habere speramus? Totum scire cupimus; totum facere quod scimus piget, sperantes dicta pro factis rependere posse. Forsan hoc hic; nam illic non posse manifestum est ante Deum, quia ibi *non qui dixerit sed qui fecerit* [Matt 7, 21] salvus erit.

4.11.1 Structure and style

Here, the tone and stylistic choices are mostly consistent with the preceding section. The sentence structure is relatively simple, but for the excepting clause *nisi misericordia Domini et velle faciat* from which three coordinated infinitive clauses depend [*vota gradientis compleri et currere ... cursus inoffense finiri*], explaining the meaning of a substantivated infinitive [*velle*] and

⁶⁰¹ See Eucherius of Lyon, *Formulae spiritalis intelligentiae*, 2 (Wotke, ed. *Opera*, CSEL 31, 11). This notion was well ingrained in Irish environments before the end of the eighth century: famously, st. Brendan reached the entrance of hell while sailing northwards. *Navigatio Sancti Brendani*, 24 eds Giovanni Orlandi and Rosa e. Gulglelmetti, *Navigatio Sancti Brendani. Alla scoperta dei segreti meravigliosi del mondo*. Per Verba. Testi mediolatini con traduzione, 30 (Firenze, 2014), 88.

completed by participle construction [*prosperitatis lapsus ... evadente*]. Elsewhere, coordination by asyndeton is prevalent and word-order is completely standard. This does not mean that rhetorical *ornatus* is completely absent. There are example of tricolon [*non meretur superbus; induratur derelictus; ingrates, non orans, indevotus est*], parallelism with anaphora [*totum scire cupimus; totum facere quod scimus piget*], ellipsis [*forsan hoc hic*] and a rhetorical question [*quid ergo... habere speramus?*]. An evangelical quotation closes the passage (Matt. 7, 21). Todde and Nuvolone considered the figure of the ‘lazy servant’ (*servus piger*),⁶⁰² a reference to the parable of the talents (Matt. 25, 26) but that seems hardly appropriate to the context; more likely this is just a case of biblical phrases being so ingrained in Columbanus’s Latin that they resurface even when no connection is meant. Finally, it should be noted that Attala is singled out in a direct address for the last time, as ‘dearest disciple’ [*carissime discerns*], but that the closing sentences of the passage employ the first person plural [*dicemus, mereamur, blandimur, speramus, cupimus, scimus*], prefiguring the tonal switch of the letter from a dialogue with a disciple to an address to the community at large that will take place in the next paragraph.

4.11.2 Epistolary qualities

If the previous passages could be considered the proper ‘consolatory’ portion of Columbanus’s *consolatio* to Attala, the text here discussed should work as the final component of the classical structure of this type of rhetorical exercise, a lamentation or monody. Although the contents mostly repeat the points made in the exegetical section of the address, these are framed in a negative light. Whereas the previous passage ended on a high note, with one of Columbanus’s typical calls to action, here the focus is on the dangers that need to be braved and on the deleterious effect of one’s overconfidence in one’s virtue. External threats are represented by a sea-related metaphor [*quibus circumluimur acsi vorticum fragoribus*],⁶⁰³ but the focus is on internal struggles [*quae intrinsecus latent*], in the sense of the daily mastering of one’s impulses during the course of monastic life [*intra nosmetipsos cottidie militant contra nos*]. The remark

⁶⁰²Todde and Nuvolone, ‘Le lettere e la preghiera’, 172n133 and 173n61

⁶⁰³ See also Columbanus, *Ep.* III, 2 (Walker, ed. *Opera*, 22) *huius aevi fragoribus*. Wright, ‘Rufinus, Gregory of Nazianzus, Gildas’, 8 argued that the expression was borrowed from Rufinus. Todde, ‘Le metafore del mare’, 162 explicitly links the expression to the menace posed by the Merovingian courts.

might sum up Columbanus's take on the reasons behind the community dissatisfaction and rioting: these are born out of their inability to adhere to the humility and dedication required daily by ascetic pursuits.⁶⁰⁴ What follows is a brief recapitulation of the discussion about humility and Grace from the exegetical passage, even echoing a previous Biblical reference (*ideo in tantis periculis velle et curre*= Rom. 9, 16 *volentis neque currentis*). The repeated thesis is that human virtue does not guarantee salvation [*non enim sufficit virtus humana inter tantas contrarietas pervenire ad quod vult*], without the help of divine mercy [*nisi misericordia Domini*], and that such help can only be of use to those who have the merit of humility [*quapropter mentis humilitatis meriti est causa, sine auxilio enim non potest adiuvari*]. Gilbert Márkus has used this last statement to refute the idea that Columbanus ever displayed Pelagian tendencies.⁶⁰⁵ Paradoxically, Todde and Nuvolone have noted that the following rhetorical question has points of contact with a passage from Pelagius's own *Epistula ad Demetriadem*.⁶⁰⁶ A quick comparison might be set up:

Columbanus: *servus piger flagellatur in vita [...] quid ergo dicemus ad haec, o nos miseri, qui antequam malis carere mereamur, bonis nobis blandimur et ante vitiorum depositionem perfectionem habere speramus?* ('The lazy servant is chastised in life [...] What shall we say to this, we unhappy ones, who, before we deserve to be deprived of evil, delight ourselves with good, and who hope to obtain perfection before setting aside vices')

Pelagius: *et blandimur nobis si a malis fructibus non gravemur, qui damnandi sumus si a bonis steriles manserimus? [...] et qui acceptum talentum in sudario abscondit, quasi inutilis servus et nequam damnatur a Domino: nec minuisse solum, sed et non auxisse culpabile est.* ('Do we then flatter ourselves on not being weighed down by evil fruit when we are to be condemned for remaining unproductive of good? [...] and he who hides in a napkin a talent which he has received

⁶⁰⁴ This moralistic interpretation is consistent with the overall message of *Epistula V* to pope Boniface: the Church suffers internal strife because of lack of dedication and sloth. See Winterbottom, 'Columbanus and Gildas', 311-312.

⁶⁰⁵ Márkus, 'Pelagianism and the "Common Celtic Church"', 198

⁶⁰⁶ Todde and Nuvolone, 'Le lettere e la preghiera', 163 n62. See Pelagius, *Epistula ad Demetriadem* 15 in *PL*, 34, 1109; translated by Brinley Roderick Rees, *Pelagius: Life and Letters* (Woodbridge, 1991), 52.

is condemned by the Lord as useless and good-for-nothing servant: it is culpable not only to have diminished the talent but also not to have increased it')

At closer scrutiny, the similarities between the two texts are almost non-existent.. There is just one close verbal parallel, whereas all other instances of unmentioned texts referenced by Columbanus in the *Epistulae* have more, and even if both text reference the parable of the talents (which, as argued above, might not be the case for Columbanus's), their designation for the 'idle servant' is different (*servus piger* for Columbanus *inutilis servus* for Pelagius). Todde and Nuvolone's comment argues that the texts draw different conclusions from similar elements, but the rhetorical questions of both authors clearly have a markedly diverging focus: Columbanus contemplates the thought process of self-deceiving people, who think they are deserving of good while being practicing vices, while Pelagius equates self-delusion with the satisfaction of being rid of evil without doing any good.

Section 4.12: Valedictio, reporting and exhortatory styles

Nunc mihi scribenti nuntius supervenit, narrans mihi navem parari, qua invitus vehar in meam regionem; sed si fugiero, nullus vetat custos; nam hoc videntur velle, ut ego fugiam. Si in mare proiciar more Ionae, qui et ipse in hebraeo columba dicitur, orate, ut vice ceti sit quidam felici revocans remigio tutus celator, qui Ionam vestrum terrae reddat optatae. Sed iam nunc finem epistulae pergaminae cogitur, licet materiae magnitudine protendi longius compellatur; amor non tenet ordinem, inde missa confusa est. Totum dicere volui in brevi, totum non potui. Quae volui scribere, nolui pro diversitate voluntatum. Voluntas mea forte lenocinio non caret, fit voluntas Dei per omnia; ille si voluerit, votum scit meum. Vos videte conscientias vestras, si puriores et sanctiores sunt me absente; nolite me quaerere per amorem, sed per necessitatem tantum. Non sitis occasione hac destituitores, neque hac separatione libertatem quaereatis quae vos in servitutem vitiorum redigat. Meus est qui amat unitatem; non est meus qui separat; *qui enim non congregat* ait Dominus, *mecum dispergit* [Luc 11, 23]. Alioquin si videatis perfectionem a vobis plus elongari quam ante, et me sors a vobis separaverit, et non sufficiat Attala ad gubernationem vestram; quia fratres vestri hic in vicinia Brittonum sunt, vos totos insimul adunate in una parte,

quae melior sit, Deo volente, pertinebit mihi de vobis. Si vero vobis placent loca et Deus illic vobiscum aedificat, *crescite* ibi cum benedictione *in mille millia* [Gen 24, 60]. Orate pro me viscera mea ut Deo vivam.

4.12.1 Structure and style

The addressees are once again referred to collectively, without the author explicitly ending his address to Attala. The valediction is as rhetorically elaborated as the consolatory sections of the letters: the author employs standard features of his prose style such as antithesis and parallelism with anaphoras [*totum dicere volui in breve totum non potui; quae volui scribere, nolui pro diversitate voluntatem. Voluntas mea forte lencinio non caret, fiat voluntas Dei per omnia; meus est qui amat unitatem; non est meus qui separat*]. In the same vein, hyperbata are frequent (type aVA: *nullus vetat custos; terrae reddat optatae; votum scit meum*) with words arranged in very unusual patterns as for example *quidam felici revocans remigio tutus celator* where a chiasmic arrangement (abVAB) might be discerned. The use of participle constructions [*nun mihi scribenti, narrans mihi navem parari*] gives a dynamic quality to the portions in which the author relates events as they are happening. The second to last period (*alioquin si videatis ... pertinebit mihi de vobis*) displays a significant degree of complexity, with the main clause [*vos totos insimul adunate in una parte*] being preceded by a hypothetical clause with several coordinated clauses [*alioquin si ... et me sors ... et non sufficiat*] as well as followed by a purpose clause atypically introduced by *quo* [*quo facilius ... dimicetis*]. From this valediction alone a reader can appreciate both Columbanus's mastery of a brief and to the point mode of expression (asyndeton and antithesis), as well as of more long and articulated ones. Whereas the rest of the letter is heavily dependent on biblical citations, the valediction only makes use of one sentence from the Gospel of Luke (Luc. 11, 23)

4.12.2 Epistolary qualities

In the first part of the valediction, the author simply reports on what is happening to him while writing the letter: a ship has been made ready to return him to Ireland. He also speculates on what will be his future course of action [*nunc mihi scribenti ... terrae reddat optatae*]. The remainder of

the passage is an epistolary conversation with the entire monastic community, in which the author first engages in a brief *excusatio* [*sed iam nunc finem epistula ... votum scit meum*], then leaves general recommendations to all. If categorizing this text as the reporting type of epistolary style is simple, it is more difficult to ascertain whether its contents can be accepted at face value.

Firstly, the modern reader is faced with appears to be the second *post eventum* prophecy in this letter. Just as the author's suggestion to Attala of leaving Luxeuil and re-joining his exiled master conforms with Jonas's account of the events, Columbanus's desire of returning back to land [*terrae reddat optatae*], despite the injunction of boarding the ship, fits neatly within the narrative of his hagiographer. Jonas wrote that, having sailed on the Loire until arriving in Nantes, Columbanus was urged to embark for Ireland by the bishop Suffronius and count Theudebald, in order to comply with the decree of exile by king Theuderic II. For this purpose, Columbanus himself suggested to have his possessions and his companions embark on a ship bound for Ireland, while he would sail on a 'skiff' [*scafa*] on the Loire until reaching the open sea.⁶⁰⁷ It is not clear what are the reasons behind this suggestion. Perhaps, as O'Hara and Wood remarked,⁶⁰⁸ it might have to do with the guards' possible complicity with Columbanus's subsequent escape, as he reports in the letter [*nam sed si fugiero, nullus vetat custos; nam hoc videntur velle, hoc ego fugiam*]. If this is the case, it would be the first instance of the two narratives, the letter and the hagiographical text, lining up significantly. Another matching detail of the two texts is the reference to the biblical shipwreck of the prophet Jonah. In the *Vita* Jonas of Bobbio refers that the ship carrying the Irishman's companions and his possessions was washed ashore by a miraculous wave and remained stranded for three days, inviting the comparison with the time Jonah spent in the belly of the fish.⁶⁰⁹ Columbanus had already (implicitly) compared himself to Jonah in the letter to Gallic bishops and will do it again in the letter to Pope Boniface IV.⁶¹⁰ Of significant note should be that in the latter instance Columbanus remarks that he has almost

⁶⁰⁷ Jonas, *VC*, I, 23 (Krusch, ed. *Vitae*, 97). Trans. O'Hara and Wood, *Lives*, 150-151

⁶⁰⁸ O'Hara and Wood, *Lives*, 151n305

⁶⁰⁹ Jonas, *VC*, I, 23 (Krusch, ed. *Vitae*, 98). O'Hara and Wood, *Lives*, 151n308 highlight the comparison and refer to this passage of Columbanus's letter.

⁶¹⁰ Columbanus, *Ep.* II, 7 and *Ep.* V, 16 (Walker, ed. *Opera*, 18 and 54)

survived the same shipwreck of Jonah [*cuius et pene subivi naufragium*] in a likely reference to this aborted voyage. In light of the previous observations and especially of this last element, it could be argued that the passage contains the first nucleus of an allegorical dramatization of events that the author had already experienced, one which is accepted and expanded upon in the *Vita Columbani*. Columbanus was already inclined to attributing significance to the Hebrew etymology of his name;⁶¹¹ he might have reworked the text of this message sent from Nantes to legitimise his charismatic leadership by building up his epistolary persona as that of an effective ‘double’ of the biblical Jonah.

A second reason to challenge a literal interpretation of the text is the dynamic representation of someone breaking the news about the ship to the author as he is writing [*Nunc mihi scribenti nuntius supervenit, narrans mihi navi parari*]. This dramatic setup really stands out when compared with contemporary epistolary literature, as no similar passage can be found. On the other hand, the writing and transmission of written message is often used as a literary device by authors of narrative genres. In the works of Gregory of Tours and Jonas of Bobbio receiving or reading a letter is often a moment of dramatic tension. In a way, Columbanus reproduced that mode of storytelling with regards to the previous stage of the epistolary event, the composition of the letter.⁶¹² Thirdly, and most decisively, the topical nod to the epistolary *topos* of *brevitas* is framed in a very emotional way, underlying the writer’s affection and desire to have more space to dedicate to his addressees. No matter how genuine was the sentiment behind the words, the phrasing is derivative and ultimately purposefully chosen for its literary qualities, because it is clearly reminiscent of the valediction of Jerome’s letter to Chromatius, Iovinus, and Eusebius.

Jerome’s text reads:

⁶¹¹ Columbanus, *Ep.*I,1 (Walker, ed. *Opera*, 2) had the word-play *Bar-Ionah, vilis Columba*.

⁶¹² On this topic see Volker Scior, ‘Stimme, Schrift und Performanz. "Übertragungen" und „Reproduktionen“ durch frühmittelalterliche Boten’, in *Übertragungen. Formen und Konzepte von Reproduktion in Mittelalter und Früher Neuzeit*, 77-100:81-82 on Gregory of Tours. For Jonas see in particular the episode of Clarus, Jonas of Bobbio, *Vita Iohannis abbatis Reomaensis*, 10, ed. Bruno Krusch, *Vita Iohannis abbatis Reomanensis auctore Iona*, MGH, *Scriptores Rerum Merovingicarum*, 3, 502-517:511; trans. O’Hara and Wood, *Lives*, 254. It could be argued that dramatic representations of the delivery of a letter were a staple of hagiographic literature from its inception. Jonas’s depiction of Clarus throwing John’s letter to the ground and spitting on it is highly reminiscent of an episode from the *Life of Anthony*. Rufinus, *Vita Antonii*, 86,3ed. Christine Mohrmann and G. J. M. Bartelink, with Italian translation by Pietro Citati and Salvatore Lilla, *Vita di Antonio*, *Vite dei Santi* 1 (Firenze, 1974), 163.

*Et miramini forsitan, quod in **fine** iam **epistolae** rursus exorsus sim. Quid faciam? vocem pectori negare non valeo. Epistolae **brevitas compellit** tacere: desiderium vestri cogit loqui. Praeproperus sermo: **confusa** turbatur oratio: **amor ordinem nescit.*** ('And perhaps you wonder that, already at the end of the letter, I started again. What to do? I am not able to deny the voice of my heart. The brevity of the letter compels me to be silent: my desire for you makes me speak. My speech is too hasty: my confused address is agitated: love does not know order').⁶¹³

Columbanus's wrote: *Sed iam nunc **finem epistula** pergaminae cogitur, licet materiae magnitudine protendi longius **compellatur**; **amor non tenet ordinem**, inde missa **confusa** est. Totum dicere volui **in brevi**, totum non potui.* ('But now the letter is compelled to approach the end of the parchment, although the gravity of the matter would require to further extend it. Love does not have order, hence, the missive is confused. I wanted to briefly say everything but I could not.')

The verbal parallels highlighted and the ideas expressed, especially the notion that 'love does not know order' [*amor non tenet ordinem*],⁶¹⁴ make it easy to argue that there is a direct connection between the two texts. That the author resorted to a prestigious literary precedent to phrase an emotional valediction gives credit to the hypothesis that was a carefully crafted and planned rhetorical set-piece, rather than something written on the spur of the moment, as its first sentence would have it. If the previous *post-eventum* prophecy might have been included in the letter to sanction the legitimacy of Attala's actions, this dramatic foreknowledge of Columbanus's eventual disobedience to the decree of exile and return to the mainland might have served the purpose of reinforcing his leadership role in the eyes of the audience and of potential patron in a moment of uncertainty.

The closing exhortatory portion of the valediction confirms this interpretation. The author repeats his earlier warnings about maintaining unity, however, this time he explicitly mentions his person and leadership as the focus around which the community should centre this unity: the monks who

⁶¹³ Jerome, *Ep. 7 ad Chromatium Iovinum Eusebium*, 6 (Hilberg, ed. *Epistulae*, CSEL 54, 30-31)

⁶¹⁴ Jerome, *Ep. 46 ad Marcellam*, 3 (Hilberg, ed. *Epistulae*, CSEL 54, 331) repeats a similar concept: *dilectionem ordinem non habere.*

seek it are ‘his’ [*meus est qui amat unitatem*]. The question of leadership within the community is at the forefront in the valediction: the author gives another alternative to his audience. If Attala is not able to govern the monastery, [*non sufficiat Attala ad gubernationem vestra*] the monks Columbanus has left behind should join with their brothers in Brittany [*fratres vstri qui hic in vicinia Brittonum sunt*], and elect someone out of their number [*quem toti eligeretis, interim vobis praesit*]. It is not clear whether Columbanus was referring to the group that had accompanied him to Nantes or to one pre-existing foundations with the words *n vicinia Brittonum*.⁶¹⁵ Columbanus does not completely leave himself out of the foreseeable future of the community [*si mihi liberum sit,, Deo volente, pertinebit mihi de vobis*], and he reiterates his cautioning against vices and diabolical interferences, that is, according to the interpretation given so far, internal rifts among the monks and external threats. Valdolenus is not mentioned again as an alternative to Attala’s leadership. This lack of consistency could be explained with the fact that the author had explicitly suggested Valdolenus for the office of *praepositus*, not abbot, although it might also be a sign that the surviving text can not be equated with the message sent from Nantes, but is a later re-elaboration. The formula used as the closure of the letter has been extensively commented upon by Todde and Nuvolone.⁶¹⁶

⁶¹⁵For context see François Kerlogueán, ‘Présence et culte des clercs irlandais et Bretons entre Loire et mont Jura’, in Jean-marie Picard, *Aquitaine and Ireland in the middle ages*, (Dublin, 1995), 189-206; Yaniv Fox, *Power and Religion*, 2-9; Alexander O’Hara ‘Columbanus *ad locum*: the establishment of the monastic foundations’, in *Peritia*, 26 (2015), 143-170, and Wood, ‘Columbanus in Brittany’, 110.

⁶¹⁶Todde and Nuvolone, ‘Le lettere e la preghiera’, 181.

CHAPTER 5: Columbanus's letter to Pope Boniface IV

Introduction to the Fifth letter: the Three Chapters controversy and the Lombard kingdom.

The fifth letter of Columbanus, addressed to Pope Boniface IV is the longest and most complex in the collection. It is primarily concerned with the fallout of the sixth-century Three Chapters controversy in the dioceses of Italy. To understand its contents one needs to be familiar with the events leading up to the schism between the Roman church and the church of Aquileia, as well as with the ecclesiological issues that were at the centre of the debate. Additionally, this is the only letters in which Columbanus explicitly mentions one of his secular patrons: namely, the Lombard king Agilulf and the queen Theodelinda. Any analysis of the letter needs to consider this factor and frame it within the context of diplomatic exchanges between the Roman *curia* and the court of the Kingdom of the Lombards.⁶¹⁷ Both of these topics, the Three Chapters controversy and the role of the Lombard court need to be briefly discussed before engaging in the analysis of the text.

Contrary to the other controversy in which Columbanus was involved, the reckoning of Easter, the Three Chapters question had little to do with the customs of his native land. It was a church-wide issue in which the Irishman had seemingly no personal stake, other than the interest of his patrons. The remote origins of the Three Chapters controversy are to be found in the politicization of the theological debates about Christology in the fifth and sixth century.⁶¹⁸ In 553 the Fifth

⁶¹⁷An early paper on this topic is Concepta Cahill, 'San Colombano e la controversia dei Tre Capitoli', in Associazione degli amici di S.Colombano eds., *Atti del Convegno internazionale di studi Colombanian. Bobbio 28-30 Agosto 1965* (Bobbio, 1973), 127-160, which argued that Columbanus was well-versed in the theological questions of the controversy, but it has been made obsolete by more recent research. An approach similar to that here described has been employed by Michael Herren and Patrick T. R. Gray, 'Columbanus and the Three Chapters controversy', *The Journal of Theological studies*, 45, 1 (1994), 161-170, albeit without much focus on the role of the Lombards. Similarly, Michele Tosi, 'Arianesimo Tricapitolino', 55-71 reconstructed the context of the Three Chapters controversy from a textual and theological point of view before engaging with Columbanus's writing, but he did not discuss his relationship with his patrons. Leso, 'Columbanus in Europe', 378-389 focused on Columbanus's attitude towards the papacy, without mentioning that *Epistula V* was part of a larger exchange that included the Lombard monarchy. Dubreucq, 'L'oeuvre épistolaire', 124-124 simply offers an overview of the contents of the letter.

⁶¹⁸For context see Patrick T. R. Gray, *The defence of Chalcedon in the East (451-553)*, Studies on the history of Christian thought, 20 (Leiden, 1979). An up-to date and comprehensive summary of the early phases, of the development and of the contents of the controversy can be found in Richard Price's introduction to the translation of the Acts of the Council of Constantinople, along with related texts. Price, *The Acts of the Council of Constantinople of 553*, I, 1-103. Additionally the collected essays in Celia Chazelle and Catherine Cubitt, eds. *The Crisis of the Oikoumene: the Three Chapters and the failed quest for unity in sixth-century Mediterranean* Studies in the Early Middle Ages, 14 (Turnhout, 2007) offer an

Ecumenical Council in Constantinople had condemned the writings of Theodore of Mopsuestia, some of those of Theodoret of Cyrrus and the letter of Ibas of Edessa to Maris as heretical, even though they had been accepted by the Fourth Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon in 451. These condemned items constitute the eponymous Three Chapters. Previously, the Fourth Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon had condemned the doctrine of Nestorius for postulating the existence of two distinct natures and two distinct *hypostaseis* in Christ, human and divine, and also the opposed miaphysite doctrine of Eutyches, that postulated just one, divine, nature in the person of Christ. It has been argued that the Fifth Council's condemnation of the Three Chapters had been supported by emperor Justinian as a way to entice the miaphysite communities of Egypt and Syria, who were closer to the doctrine of Eutyches, into re-approaching the 'orthodox' side, since they had shunned those texts, regarding them as too close to Nestorianism.⁶¹⁹ In the Latin-speaking west, the condemnation of the Three Chapters was met with strong resistance, especially by the bishops of Northern Africa and of Italy.⁶²⁰ Pope Vigilius (537-555) had initially opposed it, but he eventually surrendered and the Roman church fell in with the decision of the Council. This caused several Italian dioceses to break their communion with Rome, including the metropolitan sees of Milan and Aquileia. Modern scholarship has stressed that the division was caused by disciplinary and ecclesiological issues that the controversy had brought to the fore, rather than by

in-depth look at various aspects of the controversy. An introductory overview can be found in Robert Markus and Claire Sotinel, 'Introduction', 1-14 and Claire Sotinel, 'The Three Chapters and the Transformation of Italy', 85-120.

⁶¹⁹ The disputes over the Christological stance of Chalcedon had already seen imperial intervention with the controversy over the *Henotikon*, issued by emperor Zeno in 482. Price, *The acts of the Council of Constantinople of 553*, I, 2-5. For the conflict between Chalcedonians, Nestorianists and miaphysites, see Markus and Sotinel, 'Introduction', 2-7 and Richard M. Price, 'The Three Chapters Controversy and the Council of Chalcedon', in Chazelle and Cubitt, *The crisis of the Oikoumene*, 17-37:17-33. The term miaphysite has been preferred to 'monophysite', often found in historiography, since it is a pejorative as explained by Price, *The acts of the Council of Constantinople of 553*, II, 311. For Justinian's role see Markus and Sotinel, 'Introduction', 1-5: 'The controversy arose, paradoxically, from Justinian's project to restore imperial unity' and Price, *The acts of the Council of Constantinople*, I, 8-23 who stressed that the intention to win over the miaphysite churches does not entirely account for Justinian's resolve in pursuing the condemnation, which might have also been fuelled by personal conviction.

⁶²⁰ For Northern Africa see Yves Moderàn, 'L'Afrique reconquises et les Trois Chapitres', in Chazelle and Cubitt, *The crisis of the Oikoumene*, 39-82 and Price, *The acts of the Council of Constantinople of 553*, I, 109-111. For the reaction of the Italian and Gaulish dioceses see respectively Sotinel, 'The Three Chapters and the Transformation of Italy', 88-93 and Ian Wood, 'The Franks and Papal theology, 550-660', in Chazelle and Cubitt, *The crisis of the Oikoumene*, 223-241.

the theological contents of the writings condemned with the Three Chapters.⁶²¹ The African bishops, mostly responsible for the first backlash against the condemnation, were well-versed in the finest theological points of the writings of Theodore, Theoderet, and Ibas.⁶²² On the other hand, the level of understanding of the contextual theological debates on the part of the bishops of Italy and Gaul has been questioned by most scholars. In the Latin-speaking west, the negative response to the condemnation of the Three Chapters focused on stressing the validity of the Council of Chalcedon, with the implication that the Fifth Council, by overruling the Fourth on the one specific matter of the Three Chapters, had made its other provisions meaningless in their entirety.⁶²³

In Italy, the schism between Rome and the dioceses that followed the example of Aquileia was also influenced by a sudden and radical change in the political landscape, namely the Lombard conquest of 568/9. With the territory of the peninsula now split between the newly-established *Regnum Longobardorum* and the Roman holdouts cantered around Ravenna and Rome, there was almost no opportunity for effective communication between the Roman church and the dioceses in Lombard-controlled zones, which, for the most part, had refused to uphold the condemnation of the Three Chapters. In the two decades following the conquest, the state of near-constant warfare between the Lombards and the Romans caused the two main actors of the schism, the bishops of Milan and of Aquileia to flee into Roman territory. Laurentius, bishop of Milan, in exile in Genoa, eventually negotiated with Rome around 573, but his suffragans and the clergy of Milan who had

⁶²¹ On Vigilius and his opposition to the condemnation and subsequent acceptance see Price, *The acts of the Council of Constantinople of 553*, I, 42-58 on the Italians' immediate reaction to Vigilius's support to the condemnation see Sotinel, 'The Three Chapters and the Transformation of Italy', 88-93.

⁶²² This especially true for the chief defender of the Three Chapters in Africa, Facundus of Hermiane. His two successive theological treatises, *Pro defensione trium capitulorum libri XII and Epistula fidei catholicae in defensione trium capitulorum* are edited by Jean-Marie Clément and Roland Vander Plaetse, eds *Facundi episcopi Ecclesiae Hermianensis opera omnia*, CCSL 90A, (Turnhout, 1974), and 417-34. Two letters from the 540s show the immediate reaction to the beginning of the controversy. The letter of Pontianus to Justinian simply argues against condemning people that had died in peace with the Church, whereas the letter of Ferrandus the Deacon to Pelagius and Anatolius shows firm knowledge of the letter of Ibas. Pontianus, *Epistula ad Iustinianum imperatorem*, PL, 67, 996c-998a and Ferrandus, *Ep. VI*, PL, 922a-928b. Translated in Price, *The acts of the Council of Constantinople of 553*, I, 111-112 and 112-121.

⁶²³ See Price, *The acts of the Council of Constantinople of 553*, I, 30-33 and Sotinel, 'The Three Chapters and the transformation of Italy', 100-109. For the position of Aquileia see Giuseppe Cuscito, 'Aquileia e Bisanzio nella controversia dei tre capitoli', in *Aquileia e l'Oriente Mediterraneo I*, Antichità Altoadriatiche 12, (Udine, 1977), 231-62

not followed him in his exile and were living in the heartland of the Lombard realm, remained staunchly opposed to rejoining communion with Rome.⁶²⁴ The see of Aquileia, instead, was split in two: in the Venetian lagoon a Roman-supported see had rejoined communion, whereas on the mainland a breakaway schismatic faction also had a consecrated bishop.⁶²⁵ The latter might have been supported by the Lombards. Paul the Deacon recorded that king Agilulf was interested in installing his own candidate as patriarch of Aquileia.⁶²⁶ This was not the only instance in which the Lombard monarchy had been supportive of the schismatics. The most remarkable examples are the epistolary exchanges between, on one side, Gregory I and Constantius (Laurentius's successor as bishop of Milan) and, on the other, the Lombard queen Theodelinda and the abbot Secundus.⁶²⁷ These were successful attempts at negotiating truces between the Lombards and the Romans, but the matter of the schism was also a pressing issue. Traditionally, Italian historiography, following the work of Giampiero Bognetti, has considered this correspondence as the product of a conscious 'religious policy' with which the Lombard court tried to move away from its previous adherence to Arian Christianity. Endorsing the Tricapitoline schismatics would have allowed Agilulf and Theodelinda to better integrate the Lombards into the Italian context, without openly siding with Roman orthodoxy as it already enjoyed the support of their Byzantine enemies. In Bognetti's interpretation, Columbanus's activity and the foundation of Bobbio were elements of a long-term political strategy on the part of the Lombard monarchy.⁶²⁸ In more recent

⁶²⁴ Price, *The acts of the Council of Constantinople of 553*, I, 32. Sotinel, 'The Three Chapters and the transformation of Italy', 111-112. For the impact of the Lombard conquest and the establishment of the Lombard kingdom on the schism see Claudio Azzara, 'Il regno Longobardo in Italia e i Tre Capitoli', in Chazelle and Cubitt, eds *The crisis of the Oikoumene*, 209-222.

⁶²⁵ Azzara, 'Il regno Longobardo in Italia e i Tre Capitoli', 213-217

⁶²⁶ Paul the Deacon, *Historia Langobardorum*, IV, 33, (ed. Bethmann and Waitz, *Pauli Historia Langobardorum* 127). Azzara, 'Il regno Longobardo in Italia e i Tre Capitoli', 218-219.

⁶²⁷ Contacts between the Lombards and the schismatic bishops of Venetia might have dated back to the time of the conquest, if Paul the Deacon account of a meeting between Alboin and the bishop of Treviso has any basis is considered reliable: Paul the Deacon, *Historia Langobardorum*, II, 12 (Waitz and Bethmann, eds., *Pauli Historia Langobardorum*, 79). See three letters in Gregory I's registry: Gregory I, *Reg. Ep.*, IV, 37 to Constantius, in which he discusses how best to present the Three Chapters question to Theodelinda; Gregory I, *Reg. Ep.*, IX, 147 to Secundus; and Gregory I, *Reg. Ep.*, XIV, 12 in which he congratulates Theodelinda for the birth of her son while reassuring her that he will respond to the theological questions raised by Secundus (Hartmann, ed., *Registrum Epistularum*, MGH, *Epistolae*, I, 272-274 II, 144-148 and 430-432).

⁶²⁸ Giampiero Bognetti, 'Le origini della consacrazione del vescovo di Pavia', in *L'età longobarda*, 2 vols (Milano 1966), I 145-217 and Giampiero Bognetti, 'S. Maria foris Portas di Castelseprio e la storia religiosa

years this interpretation has been greatly reconsidered. First of all, the actual practice and the very existence of a seventh-century Lombard Arian church have been questioned. As a consequence, any interpretation of the Lombards' religious history that centred on the conflict between Arian traditionalists and Catholic (albeit initially schismatics) reformers can no longer stand.⁶²⁹ Presently the consensus appears to be that the reign of Agilulf and Theodelinda as well as Theodelinda's regency for their son Adaloald was marked by a shift not in religious policy but in the leadership style of the Lombard monarchy, which moved away from military kingship and closer to the forms and bureaucratic practices of the Roman and post-Roman courts.⁶³⁰ This would have required collaborating with the educated classes, especially clergymen who also happened to have been caught up in the schism with Rome; hence the Lombard interest in the controversy, which lasted well beyond the reign of the royal couple that welcomed Columbanus.⁶³¹ Among the Tricapitoline collaborators of Agilulf and Theodelinda, Secundus of Trent is of particular interest. He is mainly known as the author of a *Historiola* later cited as a source by Paul the Deacon, and

dei Longobardi', in Giampiero Bognetti, *L'età longobarda*, II, 179-302:214-215 and 283. These works have marked historiography until the early 21st century: see for example Valeria Polonio, *Il monastero di San Colombano di Bobbio dalla fondazione all'età carolingia*, (Genoa, 1962) and Alessandro Zironi, *Il monastero Longobardo di Bobbio: crocevia di uomini, manoscritti, culture*, (Spoleto, 2004). Tosi, 'Arianesimo tricapolino', 51-58 did not reference Bognetti but he hypothesised essentially the same role of missionary centre for Bobbio.

⁶²⁹This effort of re-interpretation for the religious history of the Lombards was started by Stephen C. Fanning, 'Lombard Arianism reconsidered', *Speculum*, 56 (1981), 241-58. In particular, Bognetti's hypothesis has been thoroughly discussed and refuted by Stefano Gasparri, 'I Germani immaginari e la realtà del Regno. Cinquant'anni di studi sui Longobardi', in Atti del XVI congresso internazionale di studi sull'Alto Medioevo, *I longobardi dei ducati di Spoleto e Benevento*, (Spoleto, 2003), 3-28. See also Stefano Gasparri, 'Columbanus, Bobbio and the Lombards', in O'Hara, *Columbanus and the People of Post-Roman Europe*, 243-259:251-255 with specific reference to Bobbio and Columbanus.

⁶³⁰ Christopher J. Wickham, *Early Medieval Italy*, (London, 1981), 55; Thomas S. Brown, 'Lombard religious policy in the later sixth and seventh century. The Roman dimension', in Giorgio Ausenda, Paolo Delogu, Christopher J. Wickham, eds., *The Langobards before the Frankish conquest*, (Woodbridge, 2009), 289-308 and Paolo Delogu 'Kingship and the shaping of the Lombard body policy' in Ausenda, Delogu, Wickham, eds., *The Langobards before the Frankish conquest*, 251-288:255

⁶³¹Tricapitoline schismatics were appealing to Arioald, the successor of Adaloald according to one papal letter: Honorius, *Epistola ad Hydatium* and *Epistola ad episcopos Istriae et Venetiae* in Willhelm Gundlach, ed. *Epistolae langobardicae collectae*, 2 and 3 MGH, *Epistolae* 3, 694-696. Furthermore both Paul the Deacon and the *Carmen de Synodo Ticinensis* attest the involvement of the Lombard king Cunipert with the assembly that eventually put an end to the Aquileian schism in 698. See *Carmen de Synodo Ticinensis*, ed. Ludwig Berthmann, *Carmen de synodo Ticinensis*, MGH, *Scriptores rerum Langobardicarum et Italicarum*, 189-191. Furthermore the Lombard court might have played a role in the actions of Agrestius, a schismatic monk from Bobbio, in his rebellion against Columbanus's rule: see Bruno Dumezil, 'L'affaire Agrestius: hérésie et régionalisme dans la Bourgogne du VII^e siècle', *Médiévales. Langues, textes, histoire*, 52 (2007), 135-152:136 and Andreas Fischer, 'Orthodoxy and Authority: Ionas Eustasius and the Agrestius Affair', in O'Hara, ed., *Columbanus and the people of post-Roman Europe*, 143-164. The episode will be discussed in the Conclusions chapter.

for crowning Adaloald in the hippodrome of Milan, an event clearly reminiscent of Late Roman practice and the most significant instance of the aforementioned change in the style of Lombard leadership.⁶³² However, if, as argued by Walter Pohl,⁶³³ he can also be identified as the addressee of one of Gregory I's letters about the Three Chapters controversy, it could be said that his profile is as similar to that of Columbanus as it can be possible for a Continental clergyman. Both men had not only corresponded with Pope Gregory, a powerful and influential figure, but debated against his positions (albeit on different topics); they both conducted an ascetic lifestyle;⁶³⁴ finally, they could both potentially present themselves as accomplished men of letters, Secundus with his *Historiola* and Columbanus with his literary epistles, such as *Epistula IV*, and his sermons. Upon Columbanus's arrival in Italy in 613, Secundus had been dead for some time.⁶³⁵ If the Lombards monarchs were interested in further pursuing the sympathy of the schismatics, they might have considered the Irishman as a candidate for succeeding to Secundus's position as their chief mediator. As it will be seen, the contents of *Epistula V* line up well with what is known about the stance taken by Secundus and by other Tricapitoline clergymen. It will be here argued that Columbanus was taking on a diplomatic role, and that Agilulf and Theodelinda were counting on him to both court the interest of the local schismatic clergy and to continue the dialogue with Rome started by Secundus. While there are a few textual elements that do not easily fit into this narrative, such as Columbanus's mentions of the Arianism of the king and of a letter written to reproach a known defender of the Three Chapters, this letter cannot be read in isolation, but should be considered part of a continuous diplomatic effort. On the one hand, its contents reflect the typical accusations against the effects condemnation of the Three Chapters as understood in

⁶³²Paul the Deacon, *Historia Langobardorum*, IV, 27 (Bethmann and Wait zeds. *Pauli Historia Langobardorum*, 125). For the figure of Secundus see Walther Pohl, 'Secundus von Trient' in Johannes Hoops, ed. *Reallexikon der germanischen Altertumskunde*, (Berlin, 2004), 638-639 and Walther Pohl, 'Heresy in Secundus and Paul the Deacon', in Chazelle and Cubitt, *The Crisis of the Oikoumene*, 243-264.

⁶³³Pohl, 'Heresy in Secundus and Paul the Deacon', 247.

⁶³⁴One can infer this of Secundus from the title of *abbas* with which Gregory addressed him in his letter to Theodelinda. Gregory I, *Reg. Ep.*, XIV, 12 (Hartmann, ed. *Registrum Epistularum*, MGH, *Epistolae*, II, 431). If one accepts Walther Pohl's identification of Secundus with the addressee of Gregory I, *Reg. Ep.* IX, 147 the case is even stronger as he is addressed as *sevo Dei in clauso* (Hartmann, ed. *Registrum Epistularum*, MGH, *Epistolae*, II, 142)

⁶³⁵Paul the Deacon, *Historia Langobardorum*, IV, 40 (Bethmann and Wait zeds. *Pauli Historia Langobardorum*, 133) dates his death to March, 612. Columbanus is generally agreed to have arrived in Italy in late 612 at the earliest.

the Latin world, on the other the presence and the interests of the Lombard monarchy loom large in the background behind Columbanus's epistolary persona.

Section 5.1: *Salutatio*

Pulcherrimo omnium totius Europae Ecclesiarum Capiti, Papae praedulci, praeclaro Presuli, Pastorum Pastori, reverendissimo Speculatori. Humillimus celsissimo, minimus maximo, agrestis urbano, micrologus eloquentissimo, extremus primo, peregrinus indigenae, pauperculus praepotenti - mirum dictum, nova res, rara avis – scribere aude Bonifatio Patri Palumbus.

5.1.1 Structure and style.

It should be preliminarily noted that this salutation has been the object of various stylistic and textual analysis as it constitutes the perfect summary of the many quirks of Columbanus's peculiar Latinity. Even though much of the attention of the textual scholars who have studied Columbanus's letter collection has been devoted to the dubious readings in *Ep. I*, this letter has often been considered the best example of the writing style of Columbanus, because of its length and complexity. Hence, here, the discussion of its stylistic characteristics will for the most part repeat observations made elsewhere and the focus will be on understanding the usage of the elements that have already been identified in an epistolary context.⁶³⁶ The salutation can be broken down in four elements: A. A noun phrase containing the title attributed to the addressee [*Pulcherrimo ... capiti*]. B. Four noun-adjective couples qualifying the addressee [*Papae ... Speculatori*], and seven adjectival couples qualifying the writer and addressee in relation to each other [*Humillimus ... praepotenti*] C. An incidental noun phrase qualifying the action of writing this particular letter [*mirum ... avis*]. D. A sentence that contains the actual formula [*scribere aude*] and the names of writer and addressee [*Bonifatio Patri Palumbus*]. In A the word order is marked by two hyperbata that create a chiasmus between the three noun-adjective couples and the sentence ending is rhythmical [*ecclesiarum capiti: tardus*]. In B seven out of eleven binary

⁶³⁶ Among the studies that have considered *Ep. V* exemplary see Mohrmann, 'The earliest Continental Irish Latin', 220-225 and 228; Smit, *Studies*, 117-160 but he also made use of *Ep. V* as a term of comparison when discussing other passages; Winterbottom, 'Columbanus and Gildas', 310n2; Todde and Nuvolone, 'Le lettere e la preghiera', 182-185; finally, Wright, 'Columbanus's *Epistulae*', 39-45 specifically discussed the salutation and the exordium of *Ep. V* in detail as a sample of Columbanus's style.

sections are rhythmical units [*planus*: Pàpae praedùlci, praecèlso Prèsuli Pastòrum Pastòri, agrèstis urbàno; *tardus*:mìnimus màximo, peregrìnus indigenae; *velox*: paupèrculus praépotèntis]. The couples that do not display rhythmical patterns are bound to one of the others by rhyme or homeoteleuton [pastòri... speculàtori and celsissimo... eloquentissimo...primo]. Alliteration of /p/ is present throughout the passage, achieved through formation of the superlative by the prefix *prae*-. In C the structure of the wording is still binary: there is a supinum construction [*mirum dictu*] and two noun-adjective couples [*nova res, rara avis*]. They all consist of idiomatic expressions of marvel or surprise. In D the closing is rhythmical (Pàtri Palùmbus: *planus*) and alliteration of /p/ is again present. The name of the writer is the one exception in the binary structure of the passage in which every word can be paired with one in its vicinity, either by morphological concordance or sense (*scribere audet* and *Bonifatio Patri* maintain the previous balance of binary elements). This level of elaboration for the opening salutation is only matched in the letter to Gregory I. As highlighted in Wright's analysis, hyperbaton and chiasmus are the two main instruments by which the general effect of the salutation, amplification, is achieved.⁶³⁷ Alliteration is a frequent feature of learned and artistic prose of many patristic but also near-contemporary authors. In this letter it occurs more frequently than in the rest of the *Epistulae*; in this, Columbanus was in line the literary trends of his time, as he maintained a certain control on the device (only seven out the first twenty words of the letter alliterate) and he did not indulge in forceful displays of his ability, such as one can find in later letters.⁶³⁸ What stands out in the salutation is the choice to emphasise epistolary *humilitas* by constructing seven couple of adjectives contrasting a negative attribute for the writer and a flattering one for the addressee [*humillimus celsissimo, minimus maximo, agrestis urbano, micrologus eloquentissimus, extremus primo, peregrinus indigenae, pauperculus praepotenti*]. In the letter to pope Gregory I Columbanus had similarly used the technique of accumulation when listing the titles and the qualities of his addressee, but there was no parallel listing of the negative qualities of the writer

⁶³⁷Wright, 'Columbanus's *Epistulae*', 41. On amplification in Early Medieval texts see Michael Winterbottom, 'Aldhelm's prose style and his origins', *Anglo-Saxon England*, 6 (1977), 39-76:62-70.

⁶³⁸On the, frequency of alliteration see the list of examples from a large number of authors in Winterbottom, 'Aldhelm's prose style and his origins', 49-50n3.

except for the term *vilis*.⁶³⁹ In surviving contemporary epistolary salutations there are no passages that resemble the device here employed by Columbanus. However, it is found in one epistolary text that is related to the early phase of the Three Chapters controversy, the letter of the Ferrandus the Deacon to Pelagius and Anatolius. In the valediction of this letter, the author defends his decisions of writing to those he considers his superiors in a codified display of epistolary *humilitas*: ‘For once asked, for the sake of obedience, I could not remain silent, answering as a disciple to masters, a man of no learning to learned men, a minor to his seniors’ (*Ecce, interrogatus, propter obedientiam silere non potui, respondens magistris discipulus, doctis indoctus, majoribus minor*).⁶⁴⁰ Even though the text does not have the same level of lexical and phonetical exuberance found in Columbanus’s salutation, there is the same accumulation of contrasting adjectives. As it will be seen this same letter can also be compared to *Ep. V* for the tone of its *exordium*. It is not necessary to infer a direct influence of the earlier text of Ferrandus on Columbanus, but here the similarity does show that his writing style employs the same techniques and devices already used by other contributors of this controversy. The two texts differ only because of the literary taste of Columbanus, who, as shown thus far, was prone to show off his knowledge and mastery of a hyper-technical vocabulary of literary derivation.

5.1.2 Vocabulary

Some of the words are also found in the salutation and *exordium* of the letter to Pope Gregory. Recurring terms are *Europa*, *speculator*, and the adjective *micrologus*. Additionally, the writer once again claims the status of *peregrinus* for himself and makes a pun on the meaning of his personal name, as he had done with *Bar-Iona* in the letter to Gregory, using the form *Palumbus* (ring-dove)⁶⁴¹ instead of *Columba* and pairing it with the proverbial expression *rara avis*.⁶⁴² The

⁶³⁹Columbanus, *Ep. I,1* (Walker, ed., *Opera*, 2).

⁶⁴⁰Ferrandus, *Ep. VI, 10* (*PL*, 65, 928a). Translated in Price, *The acts of the Council of Constantinople of 553*, I, 121. See note 622 for context.

⁶⁴¹Wright, ‘Columbanus’s *Epistulae*’, 40-41 and 48n77. A more ‘baroque’ use of alliteration can be found for instance in the works of Aldhelm, at the end of the seventh century. See for example the *exordium* of his letter to Headfrith, in which fourteen out of fifteen words alliterate in /p/. Aldhelm, *Ep. ad Ehfridum* (Ewhald, ed. *Opera*, 488)

⁶⁴²On the frequency of the expression in literature and on Columbanus’s possible derivation of it from patristic authors such as Jerome see Smit, *Studies*, 153-154n22 and 206-208 and Wright, ‘Columbanus’s *Epistulae*’, 60.

titles attributed to the addressee are *papa*, *presul*, *pastor pastorum*, *speculator* and *pater*. These give a complete reflection of Columbanus's conceptualisation of the Episcopal authority of the Roman bishop. As discussed by Damien Bracken,⁶⁴³ this letter brings together the imagery of three long-standing exegetical traditions with which, from the times of Pope Leo I (440-461) the bishops of Rome had represented themselves. These traditions are that of the helmsman (*gubernator*), that of the watchman (*speculator*) and that of the shepherd (*pastor*). All are included in the body of the letter and the latter two are already present in the salutation. *Speculator*, a literal translation of the title of *episcopus*, is a frequent occurrence in the *Epistulae*, strongly connected to a specific interpretation of the book of Ezekiel.⁶⁴⁴ Vigilance as a duty for the authorities of the Church is the strongest theme in the letter, a recurring element that brings together all of the exhortations of the writer. As Gregory I before him, Boniface IV is immediately addressed by Columbanus with a title that puts his responsibility as a guide for the Church at the forefront. On the contrary, *pastor pastorum* (shepherd of shepherds) a biblical-sounding relative genitive, is a more flattering term of address, which, like *pulcherrimo omnium totius Europae ecclesiarum capiti* (Most beautiful head of all the churches of the entirety of Europe, with complex hyperbaton) stresses the prominence and authority of the Roman church. That the term is meant to be flattering can be confirmed by the fact that in this letter, Columbanus would also use a similar term, *princeps pastorum*, for the advent of the Lord himself.⁶⁴⁵ It can be speculated that the positive impression left on Columbanus by Gregory I's *Regula Pastoralis* might have contributed to such a strong connotation for the word. As discussed in relation to its usage in *Ep. I*, it is this instance of the term *micrologus* that clarifies how Columbanus understood it as the semantic opposite of *eloquens*, while in the original Greek it bears the connotation of pettifogger as translated by Walker.⁶⁴⁶ The adjective *peregrinus* occurs two other times in the

⁶⁴³ Bracken, 'Authority and duty', 190, with reference to Leo I's letter 167 which also features all three of this representations.

⁶⁴⁴ See discussion of the term in the *Ep. I* chapter. Mohrmann, 'The earliest continental Irish Latin', 220; Smit, *Studies*, 40-47 and Bracken, 'Authority and duty', 186-190 and n90.

⁶⁴⁵ Columbanus, *Ep. V*, 4 (Walker, ed., *Opera*, 40)

⁶⁴⁶ See the relevant section in the *Ep. I* chapter. Michael Lapidge, 'Columbanus and the Antiphony of Bangor', 104-116; Neil Wright, 'Rufinus, Gregory of Nazianzus and Gildas,' 1-38:8-11; Claire Stancliffe, 'Venantius Fortunatus, Ireland and Jerome: the evidence of *Precamur Patrem*', 91-95.

body of the letter in relation to the writer's status. As it shall be seen, calling attention to this element is a significant part of the writer's overall rhetorical strategy for the exhortative sections of the letter, as it had already been in the other two letters to the Roman Pontiffs, and possibly even more so.

5.1.3 Epistolary qualities.

The salutation formula *scribere audeo* replaces that of *salutem in Christo (mitto)*, which is found in all of the other letters. It has no parallel in the surviving contemporary epistolary literature, further confirming the originality and creativity of this salutation. This is a rather radical departure from the usual epistolary forms that has never been noted by literary critics: for example, it does not fit any of the categories identified by Carol D. Lanham in her study of salutation formula. Lanham even wrongly claimed that there is no explicit verbal form in the salutation of *Ep. V*.⁶⁴⁷ The phrase is used again in the exordium (*qui non rogatus talia scribere audeo*). Considering that the exordium stresses the author's intention of speaking up and defends his right to do so, it is likely that he meant the tone of the salutation to compound epistolary *humilitas* with a focus on parrhesia. The qualification of the writer as *peccator* found in *Ep. II, III* and *IV* is not present which is another point in common with the letter to Gregory I; *humilitas* is not conveyed through this standardised apposition but through the many adjectival couples. Furthermore Boniface IV is not addressed with the formula *domino sancto et in Christo patri*, always associated with people of Episcopal rank not only in contemporary epistolary collections but by Columbanus himself in the other *Epistulae*. These last three elements, that is, formulary parts of the salutation, are all at great variance with standard practice. It should be considered a first hint that the text of the letter as preserved may be a literary re-elaboration of an actual missive, since the rhetorical emphasis seem to be prioritised over the formalities of an epistolary exchange. One last element of divergence from previous letters is the very name of the writer: Palumbus and not Columba. Perhaps the explanation is that the author was trying to invoke the

⁶⁴⁷Lanham, *Salutatio formulas in Latin letters to 1200*, 32 'the third and fifth [letter] omit a verb'.

imagery of an actual bird delivering his message.⁶⁴⁸ However it seems more likely that Palumbus was simply a variant of the Latin version of his name. Dáibhí Ó Cróinín has even argued that a computistical passage attributed to one Palumbus and quoted by the seventh-century tract *De ratione computandi* could be ascribed to Columbanus as the only Irish Latin author known to have made use of the name.⁶⁴⁹

The pairings of adjectives pertain to the semantic area of the topoi of *humilitas* and of the writer's *rusticitas*, which are further developed in the body of the letter. The accumulation of adjectives in the salutation is a feature that is explicitly advised against by Pseudo-Libanius's Ἐπιστολιμαῖοι Χαρακτῆρες.⁶⁵⁰ However it compares favourably with what Mohrmann and Winterbottom have said about the similarities of the character of insular prose with classical 'Asianism'. The accumulation of titles and qualifications is common, though not to this extreme, in letters by Insular authors, especially when addressed to high authority. Columbanus's flourish is at the head of a stylistic tradition that continues with Cummian's letter, which is the closest, culminates in the seventh century and it is still noticeable even in the early ninth-century, for example in Dungal's letter to Charlemagne.⁶⁵¹ Overall, the salutation seems to fully reflect the peculiarities of Columbanus's style and the wording foreshadows some of the major themes developed in the letter as well as the attitude of the writer towards the addressee. Columbanus does not question the authority and prestige of the Roman bishop but the elaborated and over-emphasised display of

⁶⁴⁸ Todde and Nuvolone, 'Le lettere e la preghiera', 183 and 185n4.

⁶⁴⁹ Dáibhí Ó Cróinín, 'A seventh-century Irish computus from the circle of Cummian', *Proceedings of the Irish Royal Academy*, 82 C 11 (1982), 403-430:426-427; Dáibhí Ó Cróinín, 'The computistical works of Columbanus', in Lapidge, ed. *Columbanus: Studies on the Latin Writings*, 264-271:270-271. See also Anonymous, *De Ratione Computandi*, 70 (Walsh and Ó Cróinín, eds. *Cummian's letter*, 178 and n5). Ó Cróinín cautioned against identifying this Palumbus with Columbanus without reserves, firstly because Columba and its variants was a common name and secondly because, even though the computistical details of the text do not go against the attribution, it is quoted in tracts of southern Irish origin and it would be unexpected for Ulster-educated Columbanus to be endorsed by them.

⁶⁵⁰ Pseudo-Libanius, Ἐπιστολιμαῖοι Χαρακτῆρες, 51 (Malherbe, *Ancient epistolary theorists*, 75)

⁶⁵¹ On Asianism and Insular Latin authors see Mohrmann, 'The earliest Continental Irish Latin', 230-231 and Winterbottom, 'Aldhelm's prose style and its origins', 70. Both authors actually caution against outright defining the adjective-heavy Insular prose as a form of Asianism, though they admit to a certain similarity. One can compare this adjective-heavy salutation by Columbanus in which 21 out of 39 words are adjectives with Cummian, *De controversia paschali* (Walsh and Ó Cróinín, eds. *Cummian's letter*, 57), salutation in which 12 out of 30 words are adjectives, including a similar antinomic couple (*magnis minimus*); with the salutation of the letter of Cellanus to Aldhelm, *Ep. III, (9) Cellanus ad Aldhelmum*, 1 (Ewald, ed. *Opera*, 480-481) in which 14 out of 40 words are adjectives and with the salutation of the letter of Dungal, *Ep. I, 1* ed. Ersnt Dümmler, *Dungali Scotti Epistulae*, MGH, *Epistolae*, 4 (Berlin 1895), 568-586:570 in which 12 out of 30 words are adjectives.

humility is functional to the subsequent exhortatory tone: it helps to portray himself as devoted but neutral in respect to the controversy that will be discussed.

Section 5.2: Exordium, apologetic style

Quis poterit glabrum audire? Quis non statim dicat: qui est iste garrulus praesumptuosus, qui non rogatus talia scribere audet? Quis talionis incentor non confestim in illud antiquum probrosum erompat elogium, quo Moysi Hebraeus ille, *qui faciebat iniuriam fratri suo respondit: quis te constituit principem aut iudicem super nos?* [Act 7, 27 and Ex 2, 14] Cui ego prior respondeo, non esse praesumptionem ubi constat esse necessitatem ad ecclesiae aedificationem; et si in persona cavillatur, non quis dico, sed quid dico, consideret. Quid enim tacebit peregrinus Christianus quod iam diu declamat vicinus Arrianus? Meliora namque *sunt vulnera amici quam fraudulenta oscula inimici.*[Prov 27, 6] Alii detrahunt laeti in secreto; ego tristis ac dolens arguam in publico, sed schismatis noxii mala, non impiorum pacificorum bona. Non igitur pro vanitate aut procacitate scribere vilissimae qualitatis homunculus tam praecelsis viris praesumo; dolor enim potius me quam elatio compellit vobis indicare humillima, ut decet, suggestionem, quod nomen Dei per vos contententes utrimque blasphematur inter gentes.

5.2.1 Structure and style.

The opening of the letter is syntactically straightforward: the author voices the point of view of a hypothetical addressee who questions why he should be listening to someone who has written without asking permission [*Non rogatus talia scribere audet*]. Three questions introduce the first Biblical quotation of the letter. The first sentence is a simple question. There is a relative clause in the second [*qui...scribere audet*] and a participle construction [*non rogatus*]. In the third question, which introduces the biblical quotation, there are two relative subordinate clauses [*quo...respondit and qui faciebat... suo*]. The first relative pronoun is an instrumental ablative [*quo*] and its antecedent is *elogium*, the second is a nominative and its antecedent is *ille*. The first two sentences introduce the idea that it is likely that someone might perceive presumption on the part of the writer, the third elaborates on it by introducing a biblical reference, which ultimately links the writer to the figure of Moses. As argued by Todde and Nuvolone the phrasing is reminiscent

of the *elogium* as quoted in Acts 7, 27 and not just of how it appears in Exodus 2, 14, the source identified by Walker.⁶⁵² In context, the quote in Acts 7, 27 is part of a retelling of the story of Moses by the deacon Stephen. The parallel evoked is clear: just like Moses was confronted with an abusive response and rejected by the other Hebrews, while attempting to mediate a dispute between two of them, the author might be confronted by the hostility of people who are actually in need of his mediatory intervention. A relative nexus [*Cui*] introduces the writer's answer to the opening questions. Stylistically this answer and the clauses with which it is further elaborated consist of an accumulation of antithesis and parallelisms, with clauses often juxtaposed by asyndeton [*non esse praesumptionem ubi constat esse necessitatem ad ecclesiae aedificationem*= parallelism with homeoteleuton; *non quis dico sed quid dico* = parallelisms and antithesis. *Quid enim tacebit peregrinus Christianus quod iam diu declamat vicinus Arrianus?*= antithesis and parallelism. *Meliora namque sunt vulnera amici quam fraudulentia oscula inimici*= antithesis. *Alii detrahunt laeti in secreto, ego tristis ac dolens arguam in publico*= antithesis and parallelism with homeoteleuton. *Sed schismatis noxii mala, non impiorum pacificorum bona*= parallelism and antithesis with homeoteleuton].⁶⁵³ Despite the abundant use of asyndeton, the author is also capable of complex subordination: there are two successive infinitive subordinates, one of which depends from the verb of a relative clause [*ubi constat esse necessitatem*], and a hypothetical construction in which the main verb of the apodosis is an iussive subjunctive [*consideret*]. The notion that necessity precedes and trumps over all other considerations is thus first introduced with much emphasis. The following period is more excusatory in tone. The writer once again making use of asyndeton and comparatives to underline that on the one hand, he does not write out of vain glory or vanity [*vanitate aut procacitate*] and on the other, that he is pained to highlight the troubles of the church [*dolor enim potius quam elatio*]. The exordium elegantly closes with a rhyme [*Quod nomen Dei per vos contendentes utrimque blasphematur inter gentes*].

⁶⁵² Todde and Nuvolone, 'Le lettere e la preghiera', 184n6 and 185n6; Walker, ed., *Opera*, 36 in *apparatu*; the text of Exodus 2, 13-14 reads: *dixitque ei qui faciebat iniuriam : Quare percutis proximum tuum ? 14 Qui respondit : Quis te constituit principem et iudicem super nos?* The text of Acts, 7, 27 reads: *Qui autem iniuriam faciebat proximo, repulit eum, dicens : Quis te constituit principem et iudicem super nos?*

⁶⁵³ Compare with Wright's extensive analysis of the passage: Wright, 'Columbanus's *Epistulae*', 42-43, who also points out the instances of balanced *cola*.

In spite of the great rhetorical elaboration of the passage, the word-order is mostly plain, especially if confronted with other emphatic passages from this same letter. Only three hyperbata are found.⁶⁵⁴

5.2.2 Vocabulary

In the opening sentence, the reading of both of the seventeenth-century sources is a nominative, *glaber*, not the grammatically correct accusative *glabrum*, which has been restored into the critical text by Walker and also by Todde and Nuvolone.⁶⁵⁵ It is likely that the incorrect term is due to a scribal error, as *glaber* does not seem to be attested as an accusative. The meaning is clearly that of ‘greenhorn’, as Walker translated or ‘novice’, as translated by Todde and Nuvolone, possibly ‘callow youth’. In the second biblical quotation from Proverbs 27, 6, as pointed out by Wright,⁶⁵⁶ the choice of vocabulary diverges from the Vulgate, which reads: *meliora sunt vulnera diligentis quam fraudulenta odientis oscula*. The author has apparently conflated two diverging readings of this passage that are equally frequent in patristic literature. One version is near-identical to the text of the Vulgate, and it is used for example by John Cassian and Caesarius of Arles.⁶⁵⁷ A second version is similar to Columbanus’s quote since it substitutes the terms *diligentis* and *odientis* with *amici* and *inimici*. The authors who use these two terms also have the phrase *voluntaria oscula* and not *fraudulenta oscula*.⁶⁵⁸ Combining the two readings does not equate to a deliberate artistic ‘improvement’ on the biblical source, as suggested by Wright. More likely, it is a consequence of the process of composition of the letters, with the author relying on his memory when quoting from various texts. Finally, attention should be called on the renewed usage of the term *elogium* to indicate a scathing remark, which had also been used

⁶⁵⁴ All of the aVA type with various degree of complexity: *in illud antiquum probrosum erompat elogium; Alii detrahunt laeti in secreto; humillima, ut decet, suggestione*. The second instance is not recorded by Wright, ‘Columbanus’s *Epistulae*’, 92-96

⁶⁵⁵ Walker, ed., *Opera*, 36 in *apparatu*; Todde and Nuvolone, ‘Le lettere e la preghiera’, 184n4.

⁶⁵⁶ Wright, ‘Columbanus’s *Epistulae*’, 42n52

⁶⁵⁷ See Caesarius of Arles, *Sermones*, ed. Germain Morin, *Sermones Caesarii vel ex aliis fontibus hausti*, CCSL 104 (Turnhout, 1953), 233; John Cassian, *De incarnatione Christi contra Nestorium haereticum libri septem*, 7, 27 in *PL*, 50, 260a

⁶⁵⁸ Ambrose and Augustine repeatedly used this reading of the quote in their works. See for example Ambrose, *Expositio psalmi cxviii*, 5, 16 and 15, 39 ed. Michael Petschening, *Ambrosius expositio Psalmi cxviii*, CSEL 62 (Wien and Leipzig, 1912), 90 and 351; Augustine, *Epistula 82 ad Hieronymum*, 31 and *Epistula 93 ad Vincentium*, 4 ed. K.D. Daur, *Epistulae LVI-C*, CCSL 31A, (Turnhout, 2005), 119 and 169.

in the exordium of the letter to Gregory I. In the relevant chapter, it has been remarked that *elogium* is one of the terms that the exordium of that letter had in common with a specific passage of Sulpicius Severus's *Dialogi*. The precise phrase used by Sulpicius Severus is *exprobrantis elogio*. In this passage Columbanus employs the related adjective *probrosus* to define the *elogium*, both terms carrying the meaning of 'reproachful'.⁶⁵⁹ It is further confirmation of the influence of Sulpicius not just on Columbanus's writing in general but on his understanding of specific Latin words.

5.2.3 Epistolary qualities

The first aspect of the passage that will be considered is its function. As it will be seen this letter is rather unfocused, without a clear defined structure. There are many excursus and rhetorical *excusationes* take up a significant amount of space. Even in the few opening lines the author's main preoccupation seems to be defending his decision of writing to the pope in the first place.⁶⁶⁰ Nonetheless, the emphasis and elaboration of the passage qualify it as a rhetorical exordium, as it certainly absolves the function of capturing the audience's attention. As discussed in the chapter about *Ep. II*, several of Columbanus's sermons open with a string of rhetorical questions. Here the author employs the same technique, another direct confirmation of the overlap between the epistolary and the homiletic style. The tone is unquestionably defensive: the author pretends to voice the misgivings of an hypothetical audience who would find him unexperienced [*glaber*], and consider him a presumptuous chatter [*garrulus presumptuosus*] and an agitator with undue scrupulous of justice (*incentor talionis*). In short, the writer pretends that his audience would not listen to him, because he lacks authority and appears to be overconfident in his judgment. As noted above, the author's defence begins when he puts the biblical *elogium* in the mouth of these hypothetical listeners, a device that invites the comparison between him and Moses and immediately clarifies that, like the patriarch before him, the author is doing work that is necessary for the growth of the Church [*ad ecclesiam edificationem*]. To answer the doubts about himself he has raised, Columbanus falls back again into his usual *non praesumptione sed*

⁶⁵⁹Sulpicius Severus, *Dialogi*, III, 18 (Halm, ed. *Sulpicii Severi libri*, CSEL 1, 216)

⁶⁶⁰As noted by Winterbottom, 'Columbanus and Gildas', 312.

necessitate argument, that presumption cannot be detected when someone speaks up out of necessity.⁶⁶¹ To this he adds an observation that will be picked up again in the body of the letter: his audience should not take issue with his status and position [*non quis dico*] but with the contents of his letter [*quid dico*]. The reproach ties in with his subsequent identification as a Christian *peregrinus*: though physically displaced from his native land, the author represents himself as a bearer of the positive values of its inhabitants. In fact, later on, the author will declare that in his homeland ‘it is not the station of a man, but his reasoning that matters’ [*non enim apud nos persona sed ratio valet*], a very similar sentiment to that expressed here.⁶⁶² While from the very beginning the insistence of the author on his status of *peregrinus* can be seen as an attempt to attribute a degree of neutrality, the neutrality of a casual observer, on his epistolary persona, here it also serves as a foil to the mention of a *vicinus Arrianus*. Columbanus asks: ‘Why should a Christian foreigner be silent about what an Arrian neighbour has long been saying openly?’ [*Quid enim tacebit peregrinus Christianus quod iam diu declamat vicinus Arrianus?*]. The structure of the sentence, marked by parallelism, is one of the hints that suggest that this figure should be identified with Columbanus’s patron, later explicitly introduced, the Lombard king Agilulf.

The identification of this *vicinus Arrianus* has been somewhat contested in scholarship, with most commentators missing out on the parallelism.⁶⁶³ Yet, Agilulf is the only person that is associated with Arianism in this letter, and he also is interested in the resolution of the controversy that Columbanus is about to address, just like the *vicinus Arrianus*. However, in one of the passages in which the king’s interest in the Three Chapters controversy is made explicit, Columbanus also refers to Agilulf as a ‘heathen king’ (*rex gentilis*).⁶⁶⁴ The contradiction between the two different definitions of the religious conviction of the king is only apparent. The main problem here is the

⁶⁶¹ See discussion in the *Ep. I* chapter based on Smit, *Studies*, 59-60.

⁶⁶² Columbanus, *Ep.*, V, 11 (Walker, ed., *Opera*, 48).

⁶⁶³ Fanning, ‘Lombard Arianism reconsidered’, 253n88 considered this to be a reference to non-descript Arian neighbours of the monastic community; Brown ‘Lombard religious policy’, 289 and Delogu ‘Kingship’ 255, adopt a similar stance. Piero Majocchi, ‘*Arrianorum abolevit haeresim*: the Lombards and the ghost of Arianism’ in Guido M. Berndt and Roland Steinacher, *Arianism: Roman heresy and barbarian creed*, (Farham, 2014), 231-238:233 is non-committal. Among the editors Gundlach and Walker did not offer any interpretation, whereas Todde and Nuvolone, ‘Le lettere e la preghiera’, 185n8 opted for explaining the expression as a ‘personification of a Lombard faction’.

⁶⁶⁴ Again, this element is introduced later on in the letter Columbanus, *Ep.* V, 8, 14 (*rex gentilis*) and 17 (Walker, ed., *Opera* 44, 52, l. 30 and 54).

actual meaning of the term *Arrianus* in this context. As discussed above, recent historiography has argued against the existence of an organised Arian church among the Lombards. According to the most recent scholarship, ‘Arianism’ does not correspond to any well-defined set of Christian doctrines and practices; rather, it is an umbrella term of sorts which usually refers to the homoian churches established within and outside the borders of the Roman Empire in the period between the Council of Nicaea (325) and the first Council of Constantinople (380). It remained in use among (orthodox) Christian polemicists that used it as a disparaging term for any such communities.⁶⁶⁵ One could compare Columbanus’s usage of the ‘Arian’ label with that of his contemporary Gregory I. In the majority of his writings the pope characterised the Lombards as pagans and idol-worshippers. Yet Gregory also associated the Lombard monarchy with support for Arian figures and practices. In the same vein, Jonas of Bobbio, Columbanus’s biographer, represented Lombard Arians harassing the monks of Bobbio as well as Lombard holding pagan ceremonies.⁶⁶⁶ In short Columbanus’s definitions and his attitude towards the Lombard’s religious sentiments were consistent with those of his contemporaries. As Pietro Majocchi and Marilyn Dunn have argued, the modern perception of Lombard ‘Arianism’ is derived from the action of the clerical class, who made use of polemical categories such as ‘heretic’ and ‘Arian’, when dealing with non-institutional forms of religious worship from society in general, forms which may have

⁶⁶⁵ A starting point for understanding this complex situation and the state of research are the essays in Berndt and Steinacher, *Arianism: Roman heresy and barbarian creed*, in particular for a general picture see Hanns C. Brennecke ‘Introduction: framing the historical and theological problems’ 1-20 and Ytzhak Hen, ‘Conclusions: the elusive nature of a Orthodox heresy’, 311-316; for the homoian churches see Uta Heil, ‘The homoians’, 85-116 and ‘The homoians in Gaul’, 271-298; Ralph Mathisen, ‘Barbarian Arian clergy, church organization and church practices’, 145-192 paints a picture of the kind of ‘Arian’ communities that existed within distinct ethnic groups: if there were ‘Arian’ groups among the Lombard they would have adhered to a similar pattern of behavior. The conclusions drawn in the volume have not met general approval; for a balanced assessment see the review by Manlio Simonetti, ‘Ario e l’Arianesimo’, *Adamantius*, 22 (2016), 637-639.

⁶⁶⁶ This one of the main arguments of Fanning, ‘Lombard Arianism reconsidered’, 342-343 with reference to Gregory I’s *Dialogi*. Gregory I, *Dialogorum libri IV*, 3, 27-28; and 3, 37 ed. Adalbert de Vogüé and Paul Antin, *Dialogues*, 3 vols. Source Chrétiennes, 251, 260 and 265 (Paris, 1978-1979 and 1980). I was unable to access the standard edition because of limitations due to the COVID-19 pandemic; corresponding passages in the *Patrologia: PL*, 77, 0284b-0285b and 0305b-0316a. Fanning, ‘Lombard Arianism reconsidered’, 252-253 also addressed the mention of Arianism in one of Gregory’s letters: Gregory I, *Registrum Epistolarum*, 1, 17 (Ewald and Hartmann, eds., *Gregorii papae registrum epistolarum*, I, 23). In the letter the Pope mentioned Authari (Agilulf’s predecessor) banning catholic baptism for Lombard children. Jonas, *VC*, I, 30 mentions Columbanus’s predication against Arians in Milan; II, 24 mentions the Arian duke Arioald harassing the monk Blidulf but II, 25 mentions *fanae cultoris*, ‘idol worshippers’ (Krusch, ed. *Vita Columbani discipulisque eius*, 107 and 147-149). Translated in O’Hara and Wood, *Lives*, 166 and 232-235.

or may have not included the remnants of pre-existing homoian churches.⁶⁶⁷ Columbanus is not interested in a correct description of the king's religiosity: he is following a rhetorical strategy that will become apparent later. Here, precisely because his religious leanings are characterised as unorthodox, the king's interest in the resolution of the Three Chapter's schism receives a negative connotation, as shown by the quotation from Prov. 27, 6, ('the wounds received from a friend are better than the deceitful kisses of an enemy'), that clearly should be applied to his and Columbanus's advice to Boniface IV. In the same way the contrast between Columbanus's willingness to discuss 'the evils of deadly schism' [*schismatis noxii mala*] and his reticence to discuss 'the good deeds of impious peace-makers' [*impiorum pacificorum bona*] is meant to signal to the addressee that the writer is fully orthodox, unlike his royal patron. With this important point clarified, the contrast between the pious Christian foreigner and the deviant secular ruler will return in the letter, and the initial negative connotation for the Lombard monarchy interest in the schism will be completely subverted. Columbanus will later imply that resolution of the schism on king Agilulf's terms would be the tipping point for him to turn to the true faith and that the commitment of an 'Arian' or 'heathen' king in the resolution of the matter of the Three Chapters is nothing short of a sign of miraculous divine intervention.⁶⁶⁸ The passage concludes with another short excusatory section in which the author expresses his concern about writing to 'such excellent men' [*tam praecelsi viri*] justifying himself with the conviction that he is compelled to write by the pain [*dolor*] that the schism is causing. The final, rhyming, observation contains the germ of one of the writer's main arguments against the schism: because of the infighting (*per vos contententes*), the church cannot attend to its mission of predication and the name of God is not praised by converted Christians but blasphemed by pagans [*nomen Dei ... blasphematur inter gentes*].

⁶⁶⁷Majocchi, 'The lombards and the ghost of Ariansim', 238; Marilyn Dunn, 'Lombard religiosity reconsidered', in Andrew P. Roach & James R. Simpson, eds., *Heresy and the making of European culture. Medieval and modern perspectives* (Farham, 2013), 89-109. Niels Everett, *Literacy in Lombard Italy c.568-774* (Cambridge, 2003), 262-265 argued that the Lombard only became associated with Arianism because of their migration into Italy, where earlier Latin and Ostrogothic homoian churches were well established.

⁶⁶⁸Columbanus, *Ep.* V, 8, 14 and 17 (Walker, ed., *Opera*, 44, 52, 54).

Michael Winterbottom has noted the parallels between Columbanus's insistence on parrhesia throughout this letter and the exordium of Gildas's *De Excidio*. Defence of one's right to speak at liberty when it is necessary is also a characteristic of the earliest known Insular Latin texts: Patrick's *Confessio* and *Epistola*.⁶⁶⁹ This characteristic constitutes a strong element of stylistic and thematic continuity between all of the earliest Latin writers from the insular context, in spite of the small sample of texts. However, before arguing for an early Insular school of Latin epistolography, it should be noted that parrhesiastic themes are also found in the aforementioned letter of Ferrandus the Deacon, one of the earliest examples of backlash against the condemnation of the Three Chapters. Ferrandus wrote in the exordium of his letter: 'For why should I long remain silent, if it were not because I am in fear – not of saying the truth about the issue that has recently arisen, but of speaking prematurely when the African churches are still silent? Nevertheless, since your command compels us, we shall utter frankly what we believe, so that you may deign to know that we are with you in heart, with you in faith, with you in good hope, and with you in unfeigned love.' [*Quare enim diu silerem, nisi trepidarem, non veritatem dicere de quaestione nuper exorta, silentibus sed adhuc Africanis Ecclesiis, ante tempus proferre sermonem? Simpliciter tamen, compellente jussione vestra, quod credimus loquimur, ut scire dignemini quia vobiscum corde, vobiscum fide, vobiscum secundum bonam spem, vobiscum in charitate non ficta*]. Note the similarities with the passage from the valediction that has been quoted previously: 'For once asked, for the sake of obedience, I could not remain silent, answering as a disciple to masters, a man of no learning to learned men, a minor to his seniors' [*Ecce, interrogatus, propter obedientiam silere non potui, respondens magistris discipulus, doctis indoctus, majoribus minor*].⁶⁷⁰ Ferrandus remarks on his long silence, he explains that, like Columba, he was worrying about speaking out of order, and he begins to speak up only when

⁶⁶⁹ Winterbottom, 'Columbanus and Gildas', 312-313. See Gildas, *De excidio*, 1, 1-2 and 15-16 (Winterbottom, ed., *The ruin of Britain*, 87 and 89); additionally the expression *vilissimae qualitatis* as used by Columbanus also occurs in Gildas, *De excidio*, 36, 4 (Winterbottom, ed., *The ruin of Britain*, 104). Patrick, *Confessio*, 9-11 and *Epistola ad milites Corotici* (Bieler, ed. *Libri epistolarum*, I, 61-63 and 91) expresses similar concepts though in the *Confessio* he motivates his fear of speaking up with lack of confidence in his abilities, similarly to Columbanus's display of fear of appearing presumptuous.

⁶⁷⁰ The passage from the exordium is Ferrandus, *Epistola* VI, 1 (*PL*, 67, 922a) whereas that from the valediction is *Ep.* VI, 10 (*PL*, 65, 928a). Translated in Price, *The acts of the Council of Constantinople of 553*, I 112 and 121

requested [*compellente iussione vestra*] by his addressees. The latter point seems to be a significant difference with Columbanus's *Ep. V*, since he writes even though he has not been questioned by the Pope on this matter [*non rogatus*]. Yet, as it shall be seen, Columbanus wrote the letter at the request of king Agilulf [*regis insistit iussio Agonis*].⁶⁷¹ Like Ferrandus, he could claim because of external forces he could not help but to speak up. Once again, there is a formal similarity between the two letters, this time between recurring rhetorical topics, whereas a stylistic similarity has been noted previously in the way epistolary *humilitas* is expressed by the two authors.

Overall the letter of Ferrandus frames some of its contents in a way that is remarkably close to Columbanus's approach in the *Epistulae*. For example Columbanus's statement about being a disciple of the Roman church recalls the way in which Ferrandus professed his obedience to his Roman addressees: 'For whatever it is that you express wisely, concisely and truly, we believe the same, we think the same, we utter the same.' [*Quaecunque enim sapienter, breviter, veraciter intimatis, eadem credimus, eadem sentimus, eadem loquimur*].⁶⁷² At the end of this letter Columbanus confesses his anxiety and trepidation when learning the news about the controversy: he describes himself as *attonitus* (astonished) and *in stuporem ac in sollicitudinem* (in surprise and in anxiety). On receiving news from Rome, Ferrandus describes himself as 'suffering great anguish'.⁶⁷³ Ferrandus recommended that his addressees should consider his letter in a spirit of charity (*propter charitatem*), just as Columbanus would recommend to Pope Gregory I some fifty years later.⁶⁷⁴ Finally, the African deacon made use of two biblical quotes that occur in Columbanus's *Epistulae* in similar context: 1 Thess. 21, which invites the faithful to hold firm in their tradition by retaining what is good [*omnia probate quod bonus est tenete*] and Deut. 32, 7,

⁶⁷¹Columbanus, *Ep. V*, 17 (Walker, ed. *Opera*, 54).

⁶⁷² Ferrandus, *Ep. VI*, 1 (*PL*, 67, 922a). Trans. Price, *The acts of the Council of Constantinople of 553*, I 112. Compare Columbanus, *Ep. V*, 3 (Walker, ed., *Opera*, 38 l. 34-36): *quidquid enim dixero aut utile aut orthodoxum, vobis reputabitur; laus enim magistri in discipulorum suorum doctrina est* 'whatever I will say that is either useful or orthodox should be counted as your merit: the praise of a master is in the wisdom of his students'.

⁶⁷³Columbanus, *Ep. V*, 16 and 17 (Walker, ed., *Opera*, 54 l. 25 and 33); Ferrandus, *Ep. VI*, 1 (*PL*, 67, 922a). Trans. Price, *The acts of the Council of Constantinople of 553*, I 112.

⁶⁷⁴Ferrandus, *Ep. VI*, 10 (*PL*, 65, 928a). Translated in Price, *The acts of the Council of Constantinople of 553*, I, 121; Columbanus, *Ep. I*, 10 (Walker, ed., *Opera*, 10).

which as noted in the chapter about *Ep. I* defines the optimal attitude in epistolary exchanges between disciples and teachers.⁶⁷⁵ The points of contact are remarkable but if Columbanus ever read Ferrandus's letter, he did not retain or understand the context of his defence of the Letter of Ibas, as his accusation against the position of the Roman church on the issue of the Three Chapters are confused and generic. An hypothesis could be ventured here: upon entering Lombardy and coming in touch with local schismatic clergymen,⁶⁷⁶ Columbanus, without any out previous knowledge of the controversy, had been sent or had collected documents that offered a partisan explanation of the Three Chapters affair, and Ferrandus letter could have been among them. The letter is likely to have met his approval, even if the technical contents eluded him. Like Columbanus, Ferrandus wrote in a sustained exhortatory tone, felt the need to justify his act of writing with parrhesiastic speech and argued for maintaining established traditions by quoting passages that are pivotal to Columbanus's own understanding of the same conservative notion. The epistolary persona of the Irish abbot certainly shared Ferrandus's attitude as a writer. The idea of a text from Latin Africa reaching Columbanus does not sound extravagant if one accepts Aidan Breen's hypothesis about a text by Fulgentius of Ruspe being an influence on the sources of Columbanus's *Ep. II*.⁶⁷⁷

Section 5.3: Excusatio

Doleo enim, fateor, de infamia cathedrae sancti Petri; scio tamen super me esse negotium, et quod prima fronte sub prunas, ut dicitur, faciem ponam. Sed quid mihi facies *coram hominibus*, ubi zelus fidei prodi necesse est? *Coram deo et angelis* [1 Tim. 5, 21 and Lc 12, 8] non confundar; laus est pro Deo coram hominibus confundi. Si exaudiar, commune lucrum erit; si despiciar, mea merces erit. Ego enim ut amicus, ut discipulus, ut pedissequus vester, non ut alienus loquar;

⁶⁷⁵Ferrandus, *Ep. VI*, 7 and 10 (*PL*, 67, 926b and 928a); Columbanus, *Ep. I*, 2 and *Ep. II*, 7 (Walker, ed., *Opera*, 2 and 18)

⁶⁷⁶See further discussion below of Columbanus, *Ep. V*, 3 and 16 (Walker, ed., *Opera*, 40 and 54).

⁶⁷⁷Breen, 'The evidence of antique Irish exegesis', 98 see the chapter about *Ep. II* for details.

5.3.1 Structure and Style

The phrase *sub prunas ... faciem ponam* is of problematic interpretation. There seem to be no unequivocal parallel in either biblical or patristic literature. Gundlach suggested derivation from Ez 24, 11 whereas Todde and Nuvolone argued that the derivation is from Prov. 25, 22 (also quoted in Rom. 12, 20).⁶⁷⁸ This latter passage reads: *prunas enim congregabis super caput ejus* ('you shall then collect burning embers upon his head'), a proverbial saying that has been interpreted to mean 'to aid your enemy'. It does not seem that this is the reasoning of Columbanus. In context, it seems that the expression refers to the author 'sticking out his neck' by meddling with a controversial matter; in the absence of other evidence it should be assumed that Columbanus either quoted an unknown proverb or made it up on the spot. Walker's translation is more than adequate and rather effective: 'yet I know that the affair is beyond me and that, at the first blush, I am as the saying goes, thrusting my face into the fire' [*scio tamen super me esse negotium, et quod prima fronte sub prunas, ut dicitur, faciem ponam*]. For the rest, this brief, *excusatio* is stylistically consistent with the rest of the exordium, with the use of antithesis [*Coram deo et angeli non confundar; laus est pro Deo coram hominibus confundi*], balanced antithesis parallelism adjoined by asyndeton [*si exaudiar, commune lucrum erit; si despiciar, mea merces erit*], and repetition [*ut amicus, ut discipulus, ut pedisequus vester, non ut alienus*].

5.3.2 Epistolary qualities

The passage opens with the sentence that absolves the second function of a rhetorical exordium: the writer announces that the pain that has moved him to write the letter concerns 'the disgrace of the seat of St. Peter' [*de infamia cathedrae sancti Petri*]. This is followed by the first excusatory digression of the letter, which takes the form of a declaration of intentions. The author repeats that he is writing about something that eludes him [*super me esse negotium*] but that he will nonetheless commit to it, at the risk of reproach [*coram hominibus confundi*], because it is unavoidable [*necesse est*]. This is because the author is speaking from an eschatological perspective [*coram deo et angelis non confundar*] as it will become clear in the body of the letter.

⁶⁷⁸ Gundlach, ed., *Columbani Epistolae*, 170; Todde and Nuvolone, 'Le lettere e la preghiera', 188-189n11.

Todde and Nuvolone argued that Columbanus abandons his previously established identity of foreigner with his insistence on speaking as ‘your friend, your disciple, your follower, not as a stranger’ [*ut amicus, ut discipulus ut pedissequus vester non ut alienus*].⁶⁷⁹ On the contrary, this would be a misrepresentation of Columbanus’s epistolary persona: the *peregrinus* is a foreigner but not an alien. With terms such as *discipulus* and *pedissequus* the author foreshadows his subsequent statement about the fact that all of his (orthodox) doctrine is derived from the teachings of the Roman church.⁶⁸⁰ The statement is prepared by the following long exhortatory metaphor about the ship of the Church.

Section 5.4, paraenetic style

ideo libere eloquar nostris utpote magistris ac spiritalis navis gubernatoribus ac mysticis proretis dicens, vigilate, quia mare procellosum est et flabris exasperatur feralibus, quia **nona** sola minax unda, quae, etiam **permota in** pontum, semper cautis spumosis concavae vorticibus, hyperbolice licet, de longe turgescens, extollitur, et ante se carbasa sulcatis **octo** molibus trudit, sed tempestas totius elementi, nimirum undique consurgenti et undique commoti, mysticae navis naufragium intentat; ideo audeo timidus nauta clamare, Vigilate, quia aqua iam intravit in ecclesiae navem *et navis periclitatur* [Jonas, 1, 4].

5.4.1 Readings and Sources

quia non una sola minax unda, quae, etiam per motum pontum, semper cautis spumosis concavae vorticibus hyperbolice, licet de longe turgescens, extollitur, et ante se carbasa sulcatis Orco molibus trudit (Walker, <i>Opera</i> ,	quia non a sola minax unda, quae, etiam per mota pontum, semper cautis spumosis concavae vorticibus hyperbolice, licet de longe turgescens, extollitur, et ante se calabra sulcatis octo millibus trudit (F, 139)	quia non a sola minax unda, quae, etiam per motum pontum, semper cautis spumosis concavae vorticibus hyperbolica licet de longe turgescens, extollitur, et ante se carbasa sulcatis octo molibus trudit (M, 90)
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⁶⁷⁹Todde and Nuvolone, ‘Le lettere e la preghiera’, 189n14

⁶⁸⁰ Columbanus, *Ep.* V, 3 (Walker, ed., *Opera*, 38 l.24-25)

Both Fleming's edition and Metzler's manuscript present problematic readings for this passage. The difficulties have been further exacerbated by Gundlach's rendition, which inserted a number of conjectures, likely in an attempt to highlight what the editor thought were stylistic references to Classical Latin poets.⁶⁸¹ Walker's edition did not register any Classical influence in its *apparatum fontium* but retained several of Gundlach's readings, most significantly a classical-sounding euphemism for death, *Orco*, where the readings of Fleming and Metzler were unequivocally *octo* (eight). Johannes Smit re-examined the passage and offered another reading that has been adopted in the text as presented here. Firstly, he cleared up the problematic syntax of Walker's rendition, pointing out there are two parallel declarative clause depending from the imperative *vigilate* (*quia mare ... feralibus* and *quia nona sola ... intentat*), and that the adverb *hyperbolice* does not modify the participle *turgescens* but that together with *licet* should be rather understood to be a marked of figurative speech (*hyperbolice licet*= though not in a literal sense).⁶⁸² Secondly, he noted that the problematic *non a sola* in the sources could be a scribal error for *nona sola* which would be consistent with the reading *octo* further on. The passage as emendated by Smit translates to: 'therefore I will speak freely as if to our masters and helmsmen of the spiritual ship and mystical pilots, saying: be vigilant, for the sea is stormy and whipped up by ferocious blasts, for a ninth, uniquely menacing wave which, also agitated into a raging sea, rises seething from afar out of the ever-foaming eddies of a hollow sea-crag (if I may speak figuratively), and drives the ship before it, after it has already sailed through eight masses of water; but a tempest of the entire element, exceedingly surging up from all sides and from all sides swelling, threatens the shipwreck of the

⁶⁸¹ Gundlach, ed., *Columbani Epistolae*, 170n1-5. For context see also Gundlach, *Über die Columban-Briefe*, 523-524.

⁶⁸² Compare the discussion of *hyperbolicum tecum non sit* in the chapter about *Ep. I. Columbanus, Ep. I, 2* (Walker, ed., *Opera*, 2)

mystical ship; therefore I, a timid sailor, dare to call out: be vigilant because the water has already entered the ship of the Church, and the ship is in danger'.⁶⁸³

This leaves the reader, as Smit has pointed out, with a problem of interpretation, not a problem of textual criticism. What does the ninth wave, the one singled out by a marker of figurative speech, [*hyperbolice licet*] stand for? And what do the other eight represent in this metaphor? Smit brilliantly resolved these interrogatives by pointing out that Boniface IV is the ninth reigning Pope since Vigilius's about-face and his endorsement of the condemnation of the Three Chapters.⁶⁸⁴ The author addresses Boniface as one of the helmsmen and pilots of the ship of the Church, but his lack of vigilance in the matter of the Three Chapters has added up to the error of his eight predecessor, standing out like a towering ninth wave that menaces the ship of the Church, while other troubles and errors still cause problems, as represented by the general commotion of the sea. The 'ever-foaming sea-crag' from which the tumult raises represents Vigilius's first misstep, which from the author's point of view is the root of the schism. This interpretation is consistent with the subsequent points raised in this letter: Columbanus later shows that he has been informed of the fact that the schismatics consider Vigilius at fault, 'the beginning of the scandal' and 'the cause of the scandal' [*caput scandali* and *causam scandali*]. Moreover the author shows an awareness of the fact that recitation of the name of Vigilius in the lists at Mass was a point of contention between factions, since the defenders of the Three Chapters to have died in communion.⁶⁸⁵ With this in mind, it does not seem unlikely that Columbanus would have also paid attention to the long duration of the controversy, and that he had been made aware that the churches of Northern Italy had broken communion with all of the followers of Vigilius, hinting at their number by way of this sea-metaphor. Finally, unrelated evidence from manuscript material seems to indicate that, even in the phase of its inception, the scriptorium in Bobbio preserved a written list of reigning popes that was sympathetic to the Tricapitoline cause. This hypothesis is the result of Luciana Cuppo's work on a twelfth-century

⁶⁸³For discussion of the syntax, Smit, *Studies*, 117-123. This translations differs from Smit on just one major element: the adverb *semper* is associated with *spumosis*, as per Walker's translation.

⁶⁸⁴Smit, *Studies*, 124-126

⁶⁸⁵Columbanus, *Ep.* V, 5 and 10 (Walker, ed., *Opera*, 40 and 46)

codex from Florence, now Bibliotheca Apostolica Vaticana lat. 1348.⁶⁸⁶ The manuscript contains a *Chronica pontificum Romanae ecclesiae* that had been listed by Louis Duchesne among the abridged versions of the *Liber Pontificalis*. Cuppo argued that it should be considered an independent composition since its earlier part, listing the names of popes up to the mid-seventh-century, contains original material that points to a Northern Italian origin.⁶⁸⁷ The list of popes is a *Chronica* rather than a catalogue, which emphasises historical events, most notably which popes suffered martyrdom, with significant divergences from the Roman tradition preserved by manuscript of the *Liber Pontificalis*.⁶⁸⁸ The most relevant divergence of this *Chronica* is the entry for Pope Silverius (536-537), which registers a condemnation of his successor, Pope Vigilius. The presence of this condemnation is indicative of the *Chronica*'s Tricapitoline's leanings, as vilification of Vigilius's papacy and claim of his illegitimacy were among the schismatics's frequent talking points.⁶⁸⁹ Cuppo went on to argue that the *Chronica* in BAV lat. 1348 is 'redolent of Columbanus of Bobbio' and that 'Columbanus and the author of the *Chronica* appear to have been kindred souls'. The justification of this assessment relies partly on linguistic evidence, since Cuppo has noticed traces of Hiberno-Latin usage in the text, but most of all on the attitude of the writer of *Chronica* towards Roman authority. Like Columbanus's attitude in *Ep. V*, the tone of the *Chronica* is extremely obsequious towards the Roman see, highlighting the prestigious connection with the early martyrs, but also, at the same time, extremely suspicious of Vigilius.⁶⁹⁰ Luciana Cuppo's conclusions about the *Chronica* in BAV lat. 1348 seem to imply that Columbanus, or at the very least, Tricapitoline supporters based in Bobbio and influenced by him, produced that text

⁶⁸⁶ Luciana Cuppo, 'The other book of Pontiffs: a view from Lombard Italy (Ms. BAV, Vat. Lat. 1348)' in Samuel Barnish, Lellia Cracco Ruggini, Luciana Cuppo, Ronald Marchese and Marlene Breu, eds., *Vivarium in context* (Vicenza, 2008), 54-75. The manuscript has been consulted in digitised form at the address

http://www.mss.vatlib.it/gui/console?service=present&term=@5Vat.lat.1348_ms&item=1&add=0&search=1&filter=&relation=3&operator=&attribute=3040 last accessed June 2021

⁶⁸⁷ Louis Duchesne, *Étude sur le liber pontificalis* (Paris, 1877), 109; Cuppo, 'The other book of pontiffs', 55-56.

⁶⁸⁸ Cuppo, 'The other book of pontiffs', 57-60.

⁶⁸⁹ The entry is Bibliotheca Apostolica Vaticana, lat. 1348 f. 185v; see Cuppo's transcription Cuppo, 'The other book of pontiffs', 73. On the damnation *Vigilii* see Cuppo, 'The other book of pontiffs', 60-61 and Rudolf Schieffer, 'Zur Beurteilung des norditalischen Dreikapitel-Schismas', *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 87 (1976), 167-201:182-183.

⁶⁹⁰ Cuppo, 'The other book of pontiffs', 63-66. Columbanus, *Ep. V*, 15 (Walker, ed., *Opera*, 54 l. 1-10) emphasises the example of the martyrs.

or left a mark on its very distinct tone. In light of the contents of *Ep. V*, specifically, in light of Columbanus's admission of having been contacted by members of the schismatic clergy upon arriving in Lombardy, and of his references to recitations of the name of Vigilus, it seems more likely that the relationship between texts should be reversed. The *Chronica* or a related text might have been submitted to Columbanus by his Tricapitoline contacts, possibly along with other partisan texts to provide him with context about the controversy with Rome.⁶⁹¹ Then, when writing to Boniface IV at the request of the Lombard king, Columbanus repeated some of the talking points of the schismatics, perhaps intentionally hiding them behind metaphorical language in order not to alienate the Pope. To sum up, Smit's emendation and re-interpretation of the metaphor as a reference to Vigilus and his nine successors who had remained firm in their condemnation of the Three Chapters, should be endorsed in full. It is consistent with the subsequent contents of the letter to Boniface, which reveal a preoccupation with keeping track of the use of the name of the pontiffs for the purpose of recitation. The interpretation is also consistent with the connections with the *Chronica pontificum Romanae ecclesiae* from BAV, lat 1238 uncovered by Luciana Cuppo. It is likely that Columbanus had not a very clear picture of the theological background of the Three Chapters controversy; however, passages such as this suggest that he had been exposed to the ecclesiological arguments of the schismatic faction. If this letter really represents an attempt at mediating between various parties, it stands to reason that the author would hide some of the more biased points of view behind elaborated metaphors.

5.4.2 Structure and Style

The author does not address his audience directly, rather he sets up the first of several sea-related metaphors signalled by markers such as *utpote*, which introduces the equation of the status writer's addressee with the masters, helmsmen and lookouts [*magistris, gubernatoribus, proretis*] of the ship of the church. The syntax is complex, with preference for subordination: a participle construction [*dicens*] introduces the imperative *vigilate*, from which two parallel declarative

⁶⁹¹ Cuppo, 'The other book of pontiffs', 61 pointed out that other manuscripts containing the *damnatio Vigilii* also transmit authors and texts referenced by the foremost defender of the Three Chapters, Facundus of Hermiane.

clauses depend, introduced by *quia*. These are expanded upon through coordinated clauses, [*et flabris... feralibus, et ante se carbasa ... trudit, sed tepestas ... intentat*] another subordinated, relative clause [*quae.. extollitur*], and participle constructions [*peromota, turgescens*, the ablative absolute *sulcatis octo molibus* and *undique consurgentis et undique commoti*]. The final periods repeats the same scheme, with a main clause introducing the imperative *vigilate* and a declarative clause introduced by *quia*. The emphasis of the metaphor is transmitted through several hyperbata.⁶⁹² Besides the anaphoric repetition of *vigilate*, the parallelism *undique consurgenti et undique commoti* should be noted as well as the wording of the last clause being very similar to one of the author's most often referenced biblical passages, the description of the storm from the Book of Jonas.

5.4.3 Epistolary qualities and sources.

The most notable feature of *Ep. V* is that, contrary to what has been established for the other two letters to Roman pontiffs, it does not follow any well-defined argumentative structure. After the exordium, paraenetic and exhortatory sections and *excusationes* follow each other in close succession. The first of these exhortations fully establishes the central theme of the letter: vigilance against both moral laxity and doctrinal error. One would expect that the latter would be the author's main focus, since the occasion of writing originates in a doctrinal dispute; however, it is clear that Columbanus gives precedence to pre-empting any lapse in virtue. In this sea-metaphor, while the numbered waves represent the doctrinal error of the Roman pontiffs, the 'tempest of the entire element' [*tempestas totius elementi*], represents the difficult conditions and poor moral standards faced by the church and it is this latter element that is said to threaten its downfall, represented by a shipwreck. As noted by Winterbottom, this blaming of divisions and infighting onto a lack of moral standards closely resembles Gildas's point of view in *De excidio*.⁶⁹³ The connection with Gildas's writings can also be seen in the choice of maritime

⁶⁹² Type aBA: *nostris utpote magistris; sulcatis octo molibus*; type aVA: *flabris exasperator feralibus*; type abAB: *cautis spumosis concaves vorticibus*; Wright, 'Columbanus's *Epsitulae*', 88-93 did not register the first of these forms; additionally there is another case of unusual word order that is not, strictly speaking a hyperbaton: the auxiliary verb *audeo* is separated from its infinitive *clamare* by the subject of the clause.

⁶⁹³ Winterbottom, 'Columbanus and Gildas', 311-312.

vocabulary and sea-related imagery. While, as stated above, Willehelm Gundlach, the earliest editor of the letters, tried to show the derivation of the metaphor's imagery from Classical Latin texts, it would actually be more helpful to look for parallel not only in patristic texts but also in near-contemporary ones and, such as Gildas, in order to try and identify Columbanus's sources.⁶⁹⁴ A possible influence on Columbanus's phrasing of the metaphor is Jerome's letter to Heliodorus which similarly describes a ship navigating dangerous waters: *inter cavas spumeis fluctibus cautes fragilis in altum cumba processit*. The verbal similarities even extend to another passage from this letter.⁶⁹⁵ Jerome's influence is evident here as in many other passages from the *Epistulae* but it is worth noting that the topical image of a ship in a stormy sea is recurrent in Insular literature of the period. There are some lexical parallels with Gildas's descriptions of ships sailing the turbulent sea, and even more with sea-related contents of the seventh-century *Hisperica Famina*. Cognates and derivatives of the word *spuma* (sea-foam) such as Columbanus's adjective *spumosus* for example, occur eleven times in the *Hisperica Famina*. Of the other sea-related words employed by Columbanus in this passage, *vortex*, *cautes*, *flabris* and *molis* all appear at least once in the *Hisperica Famina*. Some of the early lines of the poem in particular, evoke a similar representation of a shipwreck.⁶⁹⁶ Crags and the raging sea are also a prominent feature of the Hisperic-like poem prefaced by Jonas to the *Vita Columbani*.⁶⁹⁷ Texts that are more relevant to the point, as the image used is again that of a ship in a storm, are the preface of Muirchú *Life of St Patrick*, the concluding part of Cogitosus's *Life of St Brigit* and the preface of the Breton *Life of St Samson*. However, though Michael Winterbottom has shown them to have been at least

⁶⁹⁴ Smit, *Studies*, 172-186 argued against the parallels set up by Gundlach and tried to reconstruct the literary roots of the imagery of the turbulent sea; Todde and Nuvolone, 'Le lettere e la preghiera', 188, list the same literary parallels as Gundlach, but Todde, 'Le metafore del mare', 160-162 had attempted to look for patristic parallels.

⁶⁹⁵ Jerome, *Ep. XIV ad Heliodorum*, 10 (Hilberg, ed. *Epistulae*, CSEL 54, 59); see Winterbottom, 'Columbanus and Gildas', 313n10 and Todde, 'Le metafore del mare', 161. Columbanus, *Ep. V*, 8 (Walker, ed., *Opera*, 44) reads *fragilis ingenii cumba*.

⁶⁹⁶ *Hisperica Famina*, lines 17-18 ed. Michael W. Herren, *Hisperica Famina I: The A-text. A new critical edition with English translation and philological commentary* (Toronto, 1974), 64. For the frequency of the other words mentioned see Herren's analytical index, 216-234.

⁶⁹⁷ Jonas, *VC*, I,1 (Krusch, ed., *Vitae*, 66). Trans. O'Hara and Wood, *Lives*, 95 see also extended commentary on the poem in Appendix 5, 304-308

influenced by the aforementioned letter of Jerome, lexical overlap with this passage is minimal.⁶⁹⁸ A text that is both structurally and lexically very reminiscent of Columbanus's metaphor is an eighth-century letter from abbes Eangyth to Wyfrith-Boniface. It reads: *Tamquam spumosi maris vortices verrunt et vellunt undarum cumulos conlisos saxis, quando ventorum violentia et procellarum tempestates saevissime inormem euripum inpellunt, et cymbarum carinae sursum inmutate et malus navis deorsum duratur* ('Just as when the whirlpools of the foaming sea draw in and out the mountainous waves dashing upon the rocks, when the force of the wind and the violence of the storm drive through a monstrous channel, the keels of ships are upturned and masts are shattered'). The lexical similarities extend to the words *euripum* and *cymba* which Columbanus also employs in this same letter.⁶⁹⁹ It is difficult to establish whether Columbanus was drawing from any one particular set of texts in this case, since, as shown by Smit, the imagery of the ship of the church was frequent and variously developed in patristic literature. What stands out are the individual lexical choices, which although not overwhelmingly so, point in the direction of the existence of a consistent tradition of sea-related imagery shared by various Insular Latin texts. This impression is reinforced by the presence of other similar lexical overlaps in subsequent passages of this same letter. It is something of a paradox that, in the letter that bears the least relation to events and figures of his native island, Columbanus would display a great degree of familiarity with the same exuberant and lexically creative Latinity of the 'Hisperic' Irish Latin of the seventh-century.

Section 5.4: Excusatio

Nos enim sanctorum Petri et Pauli et omnium discipolorum divinum canonem spiritu sancto scribentium discipuli sumus, toti Iberi, ultimi habitatores mundi, nihil extra evengelicam et apostolicam doctrinam receipientes; nullus hereticus, nullus Iudaeus, nullus schismaticus fuit; sed fides catholica, sicut a vobis primum, sanctorum videlicet apostolorum successoribus, tradita est, inconcussa tenetur. Qua fiducia roboratus sum, acsi stimulatus, suscitare vos contra eos qui

⁶⁹⁸See discussion of their similarities in Michael Winterbottom, 'Variations on a nautical theme', *Hermathena*, 120 (1976), 55-58:57n13.

⁶⁹⁹Boniface and Lull, *Ep.* 14, 2 (Dümmler, ed., *Bonifatii et Lulli Epistulae*, 261 lines 15-21). Trans. Ephraim Emerton, *The Letters of Saint Boniface*, (New York, 1940), 14-18.

blasphemant vos et hereticorum receptores clamant ac schismaticos vocant, ut *gloriatio mea*, qua pro vobis fidus illis respondens locutus sum, non sit *inanis*, [1 Cor. 9,15] et illi confundantur, non nos.

Ego enim pro vobis promisi quod nullum hereticum Romana ecclesia defendat contra catholicam fidem, sicut discipulos ita decet sentire de magistro. Idcirco libenti animo et piis auribus necessariae insinuationem, praesumptionis meae suscipite; quidquid enim dixero aut utile aut orthodoxum, vobis reputabitur; laus enim magistri in discipulorum suorum doctrina est; ideo si *sapienter* locutus fuerit *filius*, *laetificabatur pater* [Prov. 10, 1: 15, 20]; et vestra laus erit, quia a vobis, ut dixit, processit; non enim rivo puritas, sed fonti reputanda est. Si vero aliqua tamquam zeli modum excedentis verba aut in altera contra Agrippinum, qui me movit ad scribendum, epistola inveneritis incondita, meae indiscretioni, non elationi, deputetis.

5.4.1 Structure and Style

The passage is very much less emphatic than the exordium or even than the preceding exhortation. In this section there is again a mix of parataxis and hypotaxis. The subordinated clauses used are of the comparative type [*sicut a vobis ... tradita est; sicut ... de magistro*], relative [*qua pro vobis ... locutus sum; quidquid enim dixero; qui me movit ad scribendum*] and hypothetical [*si ... fuerit* and *si vero aliqua ... incondita*] Of note is a usage of the future perfect in a subordinated clause [*dixero*] that Ludwig Bieler described as a widespread feature of Columbanus's Latin.⁷⁰⁰ The preference for a binary construction of the period, that achieves an antithesis while maintaining balance, resurfaces [*non enim rivo ... sed fontis ... est* and *meae indiscretionis, non elationi*] as well as the author's preference for tricolon and anaphora [*nullus hereticus, nullus Iudaeus, nullus schismaticus*]. Word order is again marked by hyperbata, but their minor frequency is a sign of a lack of rhetorical emphasis in this passage.⁷⁰¹

⁷⁰⁰ Bieler, 'Notes on the texts and Latinity', *apud* Walker, *Opera* lxxx.

⁷⁰¹ Type abA: *necessariae insinuationis praesumptionis meae*; type aVA: *verba ... inveneritis incondite*; complex: *omnium discipulorum divinum canonem ... scribentium*. Wright, 'Columbanus's *Epistulae*', 88 read *ultimo habitatores mundi* as a hyperbaton and he did not register the phrase here marked as complex hyperbaton.

5.4.2 Epistolary qualities

The passage amounts to another justification of the author's motivation in writing this letter. The parraesiastic element is juxtaposed to elements that are explanatory of the writer's background and of the circumstances that caused him to write. The latter are meant to bolster the former, and the passage cannot be considered as a neutral report of factual information as the focus of the writer remains firmly on asking the addressee to forgive his presumption and his lack of tact and literary ability. This is essential in order to correctly assess the information that the writer's provide about his personal history. Scholars have often used this passage to exemplify Columbanus's attachment to his Irish origins as well to argue that the connection between the early Irish church and the Roman church established with the mission of Palladius was known during his days.⁷⁰² There is nothing in the passage that prevents a reader from understanding it primarily as a declaration of almost nationalistic pride in the qualities of the Irish Christians and as a testimony of the fact that Irish affiliation with the Roman church was a result of well-remembered and known historical circumstances. However, one must look of the function that the passage absolves in the letter: the author is trying to build up his credentials as a neutral party in the dispute. He states that he has exposed himself with the schismatic party by already taking the parts of the Roman church and refusing to admit that the Pope and his followers are defending heretic positions [*pro vobis promise quod nullum hereticum Romana ecclesia defendat*]. This is a reference to an accusation later made explicit: the fifth Council and Vigilius had legitimised the heretics Nestorius, Eutyches and Dioscorus. The author is, in fact, repating one of the Tricapitoline faction's talking points.⁷⁰³ Columbanus was clearly in contact with Tricapitoline schismatics, but he presents them here as calumniators who wrongly claim that Rome has deviated from orthodoxy [*eos qui blasphemant vos et hereticorum receptores clamant ac*

⁷⁰²Kenney, *Sources*, 192-193 implied so in his summary of Columbanus's letter to Boniface IV. The editors of Columbanus, Walker, *Opera*, 39n1 and Todde and Nuvolone, 'Le lettere e la preghiera', 139n20 also understood this to be a reference to Palladius's mission as mentioned by the chronicle of Prosper of Aquitaine. The theory is also endorsed by Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, 375. For discussion of the passage in terms of development of an Irish ethnic identity see Johnston, *Literacy and identity*, 36; Leso, 'Columbanus in Europe', 50-51 and especially O'Hara, '*Patria, Peregrinatio, and Paenitentia*', 99-101.

⁷⁰³ Columbanus, *Ep.* V, 10 (Walker, ed. *Opera*, 46). See Herren and Grey, 'Columbanus and the Three Chapter controversy', 165-166

schisamticos vocant]. He justifies his unwavering trust in Rome [*fiducia*] with his idea that he, as an Irishman, has received from his masters the authentic and incorrupt [*inconcussa*] apostolic teachings of the successors of Peter and Paul [*sanctorum videlicet apostolorum successoribus*]. It was an idea that was already present in his defence of the Irish Easter against Gregory and Candidus.⁷⁰⁴ However, here it lacks the particular negative spin he had given to it when using the same notion for the Easter controversy. Columbanus had told Pope Gregory I that Rome, by accepting Victorius's reckoning, had deviated from the original orthodox rules for Easter which were still observed by his Irish masters. Here the argument is repeated with a positive spin: since the Irish church has never deviated from orthodoxy [*nullus hereticus, nullus Iudaeus, nullus schismaticus*], it must follow that those who had passed the catholic faith to them, the Romans, must have equally remained orthodox. The trust and pride in the author's own Irish education remains unaltered but the positive assumption here made on behalf of Rome is clearly at odds with the writer's previous accusations. This is a first sign that, although Columbanus has apparently taken the side of the Roman party in this controversy [*illi confundantur, non nos*], his goal is to facilitate a reconciliation or truce between the two sides by arguing that Rome should make the first step and publicly discuss the topic on the terms of the schismatics, with an open admission that they have not abandoned Chalcedon's condemnation of Nestorius, Eutyches and Dioscorus. His Irish identity is a merely rhetorical tool in the pursuit of this goal, as it had been in the letter to Gregory I and in *Epistula* III, in which, it should be remembered Columbanus had been eager to defend the originality and peculiarities of the Irish churches and not their conformity with Roman and Gallic practice.⁷⁰⁵ Additionally it should be noted that Columbanus's negative definition of the orthodoxy of the Irish church [*nullus hereticus, nullus Iudaeus, nullus schismaticus*], looks more like a statement about his personal history than about the conduct of his compatriots. The expression *nullus Iudaeus* is particularly telling: after all, not so long ago he had been accused of Quartodecimanism, that is, of 'holding Easter with the Jews', by the Gallic bishops. Finally the eschatological perspective of the writer might be perceived behind the

⁷⁰⁴ Columbanus, *Ep.* I, 12 (Walker, ed., *Opera*, 12) insists on the *antiquitas* of his tradition.

⁷⁰⁵ Columbanus, *Ep.* III, 3 (Walker, ed., *Opera*, 24), called upon the second canon of the first council of Constantinople to justify that his community should maintain the Irish Easter.

expression ‘the last inhabitants of the world’ or ‘the inhabitants of the world’s edge’ [*ultimi habitatores mundi*, where *ultimi* can be read as both a genitive and a nominative agreeing with either of the other two words]. However, the author’s focus when eschatological themes are later introduced explicitly in the letter lies firmly on the Roman martyrs, not on his own homeland, so perhaps this is just an exaggerated geographical indication. In short, the author is here trying to build up his epistolary persona as a that of naive *peregrinus*, who trusts in Rome because he trusts in his own upbringing and is dismayed when told about the Tricapitoline schismatics reasons for breaking communion with Rome. This is simply a way to justify how his exhortation to the Pope centres on egging him to engage with the schismatics on their own terms by addressing the nonsensical accusation of having accepted various and self-contradicting heresies.

Whether this attitude was entirely rhetorical fiction or at least partially genuine cannot be ascertained but the writer’s closing *Excusatio* can cast some light about how and when exactly he had come into contact members of the schismatic clergy, and about what attitude he reserved for them. As typical of his style, Columbanus asks his addressee to forgive his excessive zeal and to blame his agitated state, not his presumption [*zeli modum excedentis* and *meae indiscretionis non elationis deputetis*]. However this judgment is invoked for both this letter [*in hac ... epistola*] for ‘the other against Agrippinus, who has caused me to write’ [*altera contra Agrippinum qui me movit ad scribendum*]. Firstly, it can be inferred that the text sent to Pope Boniface was not meant to travel alone. The phrasing suggests that a letter addressed to one Agrippinus was also sent to the pope alongside the one addressed to him.⁷⁰⁶ This is one of Columbanus’s already established traits as a letter-writer; in two other letters he makes mention of having forwarded to his addressee documents that were relevant to the case being discussed, namely the letters on Easter that he had sent to Pope Gregory I and the *libellus* for Arigius, which he had attached to the letter to the council at Chalons, and the entire dossier on the Easter controversy that he had attached to his

⁷⁰⁶ This is inferred by most commentators: Walker, ed., *Opera* 41n1; Todde and Nuvolone, ‘Le lettere e la preghiera’, 195n24; Bullough, ‘The career of Columbanus’, 23-24; Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, 377; Leso, ‘Columbanus in Europe’, 365; Dubreucq, ‘L’oeuvre epistolaire’, 116-117. On the identity of Agrippinus see below.

second known letter to Rome, *Ep.* III.⁷⁰⁷ To be precise Columbanus did not send to the pope the same text that was sent to Agrippinus. Columbanus later wrote: ‘someone in his letters with which he greeted me almost on my entering the borders of this region, indicated to me that I should avoid you, as if you were slipping in the sect of Nestorius. Astonished, I briefly replied to him, ... but so that I may not go against truth in any way ... I have altered my response which I have sent to you to be read and discussed’.⁷⁰⁸ The circumstances described in this later passage is consistent with what Columbanus has explained so far about having received information from schismatic clergymen. If it is conceded that Columbanus is also referring to Agrippinus in this other passage, what was presumably attached to this epistle was a revised version of the letter sent to Agrippinus. As both are lost, their contents can only be hypothesised: if Columbanus’s description of his initial attitude can be taken at face value, it can be supposed that the initial answer was at least partially, a reproach to Agrippinus for raising suspicion on the Roman pontiff, while the re-elaborated response presented to the pope might contain the somewhat softened stance assumed by Columbanus towards the Tricapitoline schismatics once it had become clear that their positions was predominant in the region that Columbanus and his monks had entered even to the point of having been endorsed by local secular rulers, whom he might have counted on for support. If, on the other hand, Columbanus protests of unwavering loyalty to Rome are considered as mere literary fiction, it might be surmised that the altered response contained a stance than was less sympathetic to the schismatics than the original address to Agrippinus had been. Yet, in this case Columbanus would have had no reason at all to mention the re-elaboration to the Pope. Overall it seems that the first alternative is more likely and that Columbanus protestation of loyalty were, at least initially, genuine, being only re-purposed as a rhetorical tool, while later writing at the behest of the Lombard court.

What remains to be addressed is the identity of Agrippinus. The name is only given as *Agripp.* in Metzler’s and Fleming copies.⁷⁰⁹ Since the publication of Walker’s edition there has been general

⁷⁰⁷ Columbanus, *Ep.* II, 5 and III, 2 (Walker, ed., *Opera*, 16 and 20).

⁷⁰⁸ Columbanus, *Ep.* V, 16 (Walker, ed., *Opera* 54) see Latin text below

⁷⁰⁹ St Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek, MS 1346, 91 and Fleming, *Collectanea Sacra*, 139.

agreement among scholars in identifying *Agripp.* with Agrippinus, bishop of Como, an Italian city located to the north of Milan.⁷¹⁰ Agrippinus is known from epigraphic material: a funerary inscription originally found in the church of St Euphemia on the Isola Comacina and now preserved in the parish church of part of the later twelfth century-abbey.⁷¹¹ From these it is known that Agrippinus had been ordained bishop by the schismatic patriarch of Aquileia, that he had rejected the fifth Council but “honoured the four holy synods” and dedicated himself to predication in area of Lake Como, taking up residence in an island close to the western shore of the lake, the Isola Comacina.⁷¹² The dioceses of Como is known to have been unwilling to follow Milan back into the Roman fold already under the papacy of Gregory I who noted so in one of his letters. The reluctance has been theorised to have been born out of extreme veneration for the council of Chalcedon, in which a local bishop, Abbondius, had played a key role by leading the delegation that delivered Pope Leo’s *Tomus* to the assembly.⁷¹³ There seems to be little doubt that Columbanus’s first, if not his foremost informer on the matter of this controversy had presented him with a partisan version of the facts. It seems unlikely that the Irishman would have had previous knowledge of the circumstances surrounding the schism and that, although it served a purpose in the rhetorical strategy of this letter, his hesitation in accepting that the Roman church had fallen into heresy stemmed from a genuine reaction to such news. In conclusion, in terms of connections and network, this letter is best understood as part of a triangular exchange, in which

⁷¹⁰ I am not aware of any alternative identification in any publication. Walker’s source for this detail is provided in a note: Eugène Martin, *St Colomban*, (Paris 1905), 157-158. Martin does not credit this hypothesis to anyone else, simply presenting the reader with the information that Columbanus had been contacted by the bishop of Como on the topic of the Three Chapters controversy. Earlier works concerned with Columbanus do not seem to address this problem so the identification should be credited to Martin alone.

⁷¹¹ On Agrippinus see his entry in the *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*: Lidia Cerioni, ‘Agrippino’, in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, I (Rome, 1960). Bullough, ‘The career of Columbanus’, 24n74 noted how this entry ignores the possibility that he had been a correspondent of Columbanus. The text of the two inscriptions has been edited in Ugo Monneret de Villard, ‘Iscrizioni cristiane della provincia di Como anteriori al secolo XI’ in *Rivista Archeologica dell’antica provincial e diocesi di Como* 65-66, (1912), 1-176:24-26.

⁷¹² On Agrippinus’s activity, his connection with John, the patriarch of Aquileia, and the foundation of St Euphemia on the Isola Comacina and St Justina in Piona see G. Cuscito, ‘Agrippino di Como: un emissario del partito scismatico nella provincia ecclesiastica milanese’ and Cesare Alzati, ‘*Pro sancta fide, pro dogma patrum*. La tradizione dogmatica delle chiese italiane di fronte alla questione dei Tre Capitoli. Caratteri dottrinali e implicazioni ecclesiologiche dello scisma’, in *Como e Aquileia per una storia della società comasca (612-1751). Atti del Convegno. Como 15-17 ottobre 1987*, (Como 1991), 27-48 and 49-82

⁷¹³ Gregory I, *Reg. Epist.*, IX, 186 (Hartmann, ed., *Registrum Epistularum*, MGH, *Epistolae*, II, 178). On this theory see Giampiero Bognetti, *Como nell’Alto Medioevo*, (Como, 1951) 42; it has been endorsed by local historians such as Luigi Rovelli, *Storia di Como*, I, (Milan 1962), 84.

Columbanus took care to have the Roman party informed about his own correspondence with members of the opposing faction. In the same way, especially in light of the Lombard monarchy's involvement, Columbanus's letter to Boniface IV might have been meant to reach a wider audience that would have included Agrippinus and other exponent of the schismatic clergy.

Section 5.5: paraentic style

Vigilate itaque pro ecclesiae pace, subvenite ovibus vestris iam tamquam luporum terroribus pavidis, quae vos ipsos insuper nimium utpote pavore in alternantem circumactae convertibulum timent. Ideo dubitantes, partim venientes, partim vero recedentes, sicut veniunt, sic revertuntur, et semper in pavore sunt. Quamobrem utere veri, o papa, pastoris sibilis notaque voce et sta inter illas et lupos, ut, deposito pavore, tunc primum te ex integro cognoscant pastorem. Populus enim quem video, dum multos sustinet hereticos zelosus est et cito tamquam grex pavidus turbatur et inde non cito securus est, quia tantos Italia lupos habuit, quorum catuli vix toti possunt elidi, dum nimirum inter antra tanti enutriti sunt. Attamen *deleat* Deus tale *semen* [1 Reg. 24, 22] et nutriat gregem suum teque compungat; vigilanter insistas officio tuo pastoralis, *stans super custodiam*[Isa. 21, 8] tuam die ac nocte, ut videas *baculum* illum *nucem* [Ierem. 1, 11] quem *uncinum* [Am. 8, 1-2] postea videre merearis tempore fructus colligendi veros. Ut ergo honore apostolico non careas, conserva fidem apostolicam, confirma testimonio, roborata scripto, muni synodo, ut nullus tibi iure resistat. Noli despiciere consiliolum alienigenae, tamquam doctor illius zelantis pro te. Mundus iam declinat; princeps pastorum appropinquat; cave te negligentem inveniatur et *conservos* pugnis mali exempli *percutientem manducantemque cum ebriis et bibentem* [Matt. 24, 49], ne continua sequentia securitati; *qui enim ignorat, ignorabitur* [I Cor. 14, 38]. Non sufficit tibi, quod pro te ipso sollicitus sis, qui multorum curam suscepisti; *cui enim plus creditur, plus ab eo exigitur* [Luc. 12, 48].

5.5.1 Structure and Style

The audience is addressed directly, with frequent use of the imperative mood, switching from second person plural forms [*vigilate, subvenite*] to second person singular forms [*confirma, conserva roborata, muni, noli despiciere*]. This inconsistent use will continue throughout the letter.

Jean Laporte had suggested that this could be explained by supposing that two distinct letters by Columbanus, one addressed to the Pope alone, and another to the Roman clergy at large. In the preface to his edition, Walker convincingly argued against this interpretation, pointing out that passages in which the two different verbal forms are used are too well-integrated for this theory to be true.⁷¹⁴ Optative subjunctive is also found in this passage with unusual frequency, employed when the author is formulating a prayer [*deleat, nutria compungat insistat*]. Parataxis is prevalent in most of the passage. A relative nexus is used [*quamobrem*] and relative clauses are the most common form of hypotaxis. *Dum* introduces a temporal clause (the verb is in the indicative mood indicative), but it can be translated with an adversative value as Walker did: ‘though [the people] sustains many heretics’ [*dum multos sustinet hereticos*]. The rhetorical emphasis is still relatively subdued, although the technique of accumulation is used in the second period, in which three participle constructions [*ideo dubitantes, partim venientes partim vero recedentes*, with homeoteleuton] are immediately followed by three balanced coordinated clauses [*sic veniunt ... pavore sunt*]. In the same the period beginning with *ut ergo honore apostolico* is an example of balance: it opens and closes with two mirroring purpose clause [*ut ergo ... non careas* and *ut nullus tibi iure resistat*] that surround the main clause [*conserva fidem apostolicam*] and a tricolon of three coordinated clauses juxtaposed by asyndeton [*confirma testimonio, muni synodo, robora scripto*]. Hyperbaton is infrequent but present [type abA: *veri, o papa, pastoris; tantos Italia lupos*; type aVA: *multos sustinet hereticos; fructus colligendi veros*]. Biblical quotations are frequent. A first group is drawn from the Old Testament and it likely shows the influence of Jerome’s exegesis. The imagery of the almond staff [*baculum illum nuceum*] that turns into a shepherd’s crook [*uncinum*] derives from Jerome’s commentaries on the Book of Amos, in which a parallel is set up between the crook that appears in the text of Amos, 8, 1-2 and the *virga vigilantium* from Jeremiah 1, 11; Jerome’s own commentary on Jeremiah explains that the *virga vigilantium* mentioned in that verse can also be translated to *baculum nuceum*, so it could be said

⁷¹⁴ Jean Laporte, ‘Les sources de la biographie de Saint Colomban’, in *Mélanges colombaniens. Actes du Congrès international de Luxeuil. 20-23 Julliet 1950*, (Paris 1951), 75-80:78. Walker, *Opera*, xxxviii-xxxix.

that Columbanus's understanding of the two passages is steeped in Jeromian exegesis.⁷¹⁵ In the same way one of the quotes from the New Testament that cluster around the closing eschatological [*mundus iam declinat*] exhortation is likely lifted from another work of Jerome's, his letter to Heliodorus, which, as stated above is likely the source for the previous sea-metaphor. The quotation is from Lc. 12, 48 and it carries the same connotations: those in a position of authority should be mindful of the people who are given to their care, because divine justice would ask more from them [*cui plus creditor, plus ab eo exigitur*].⁷¹⁶

5.5.2 Epistolary qualities

The author repeats his exhortation to be vigilant [*vigilate*] and immediately engages his audience with another sustained metaphor. The people of Italy are compared to a flock terrorised by wolves in order to exhort the pope to step up to his duties as shepherd. The metaphor had already been used as the basis for moral and exegetical considerations in *Ep. II*. The most notable difference here is the geographic determinism: the author is explicitly using the imagery to describe the situation of the people [*populus enimquem video*] and the problems of a specific region [*tantos Italia lupos habet*]. The wolves that menace the flock of the Church represent a generic menace on the moral level and seem to be distinct from the heretics that the people suffer [*multos sustinet hereticos*]. That Columbanus is employing the metaphor to describe a moral menace, and not that of the spread of heresy, can be confirmed by both the subsequent passage in which he explains that the cause of the present crisis is simply the sin of sloth on the part of the shepherds of the church, and by the parallel that can be established with *Ep. II, 3*. As in the exhortatory address to the fathers at the council of Chalons, the author's perspective is once again eschatological. The Pope should be motivated in his action by the impending coming of the judgement. His action

⁷¹⁵ Jerome, *In Amos librum* 3, 8, ed. Marcus Adraien, *Commentarii in prophetas minores*, CCSL 76 (Turnhout, 1969), 12. Jerome, *In Hieremiam prophetam libri VI*, I, 1, ed. S. Reiter, *In Hieremiam prophetam*, CCSL, 74 (Turnhout, 1960), 11. Jerome actually wrote that *baculum nuceum* is the translation in the Septuaginta. Columbanus could have, in theory, lifted the expression directly from an existing Latin translation of the Septuaginta, as it has happened from other passages in this same letter. However, the association of the *baculum* with the *uncinum* that appears in Am. 8, 1-2 makes it clear that Columbanus had Jerome's interpretation in mind. See also Bracken, 'Authority and Duty', 191-197.

⁷¹⁶ Jerome, *Ep. XIV ad Heliodorum*, 9, (Hilberg, ed., *Epistulae*, CSEL 54, 58). The quotation is adapted from Lc. 12, 48 and it carries the same connotations as in Jerome's letter, see Wright, 'Columbanus's *Epistulae*', 72-73.

should take the form of an official defence of orthodoxy, and there is the first suggestion of the solution the author would argue for: a confession of faith in a synod [*muni synodo*]. Columbanus referred to himself as *alienigenae*, which could be considered an equivalent of *peregrinus*.⁷¹⁷ His subsequent suggestion that Boniface should accept his counsel as he would that of a doctor [*tamquam doctor illius zelantis pro te*] encapsulates the rhetorical conceit that causes him to stress his own status: as an outsider, he could be considered neutral and only speaking up for the good of his addressee and the entire church.

Section 5.6: paraenetic style

Vigila itaque quaeso papa, vigila et iterum dico vigila; quia forte non bene vigilavit Vigilius, quem caput scandali isti clamant qui vobis culpam iniciunt. Vigila primo pro fide, deinde pro operibus fidei iubendis vitiisque calcandis, quia tua vigilantia multorum erit salus, sicut contrario tua securitas multorum erit vastatio. Mittat te Isaias *in montem, qui evangelizas Zion* [Isa. 40, 9] immo per Isaiam Deus iuxta tui nominis interpretationem *in speculam verae contemplationis ponat* [Isa. 21, 5-8], in qua quasi cunctis mortalibus altior positus vicinisque caelium effectus, *exaltans quasi tuba vocem tuam annunties populo* [Isa. 58, 1] domini tui, tibi ab eo commisso, *peccata eorum et domui Iacob iniquitates eorum* [Isa. 58, 1]. Noli timere culpam mendacii; habes enim quod annuntiare debeas; multi enim, quod gravius est, per securitatem pastorum in his regionibus deiecti sunt et multi per prosperitatem infelicissimae abundantiae decepti sunt. Inde quia iuxta minas Domini *sanguis tantorum de manibus requirendus erit pastorum* [Ezech. 3, 17-21], vigilandum est diligenter, id est, praedicandum est frequenter verbum Domini, a pastoribus scilicet, ecclesiae speculatoribus et magistris ut nullus pereat per ignorantiam; si enim per socordiam perierit, suus sanguis in suum caput reputabitur.

5.6.1 Structure and Style

The tone and rhetorical emphasis become much more sustained in this passage. The author continues to address his audience directly, with verbs in the imperative moods [*vigila, noli*

⁷¹⁷ Blaise, *Dictionnaire latin-français des auteurs chrétiens*, s.v. *alienigenae* lists biblical example in which the word is used as equivalent of Gentile, ‘non-Jew’. Columbanus seems to be using it in its base sense of ‘foreigner’.

timere]. Anaphoras, alliteration and a word-play mark on the name of Pope Vigilius accentuate the urgency of the exhortation. The accumulation of rhetorical effect continues in the following sentence, in which balanced antithesis with homeoteleuton is used [*fidei iubendis vitiisque calcandis*]. Optative subjunctive [*mittat, ponat*] is used in sentences in which the writer formulates prayer, which incorporates several biblical quotations. The closing period of the passage is of increased syntactical complexity, with causal clause [*quia ... erit pastorum*] mirrored by purpose clause [*ut nullus pereat per ignorantiam*]. The main clause is taken up by a gerundive construction [*vigilandum est diligenter*], with a coordinated clause that sets up another parallelism [*predicandum est frequenter*]. The final hypothetical clause is coordinated by asyndeton, and the verb of the apodosis is in the indicative future tense [*erit*]. It is representative of those hypothetical clauses that Ludwig Bieler has described as influenced by ‘legal’ formulations.⁷¹⁸ Notably, *hyperbata* are present but they are not between elements of the phrase that should grammatically agree with each other, but between a noun and a genitive of specification [*multorum erit vastatio; de manibus requirendus erit pastorum*]. These are the only instances of genitive hyperbaton in the *Epistulae*.⁷¹⁹

5.6.2 Epistolary qualities and sources

The passage can be described as the prosecution of previous exhortation. If Columbanus had first expounded the traditional imagery of the Christian people as a flock towards which his addressee had to exercise his duty as a shepherd, here he focuses on another piece of traditional biblical imagery that had been already alluded to in the salutation: that of the watchman [*speculator*]. Columbanus’s attachment to this tradition has been noted by Johannes Smit. He argued that while exegetical speculation on the term can be traced back to Jerome’s commentaries on Ezekiel, the particular interpretation here used by Columbanus, which mixes the texts of the book of Isaiah

⁷¹⁸ Bieler, ‘Notes on the text tradition and Latinity’, *apud* Walker, ed. *Opera*, lxxxii.

⁷¹⁹ Wright, ‘Columbanus’s *Epistulae*’, 91-92 listed both as examples of the aVA type, without noting that they involved a genitive of specification, and not an adjective agreeing with the noun.

and the text of the book of Ezekiel is first found in sermons by Julianus Pomerius and by his student Caesarius of Arles.⁷²⁰

Damien Bracken has shown how Columbanus's usage of the imagery should be firmly placed alongside that of other Hiberno-Latin authors and texts, especially Cummian's letter and the tract *De duodecim abusivis*.⁷²¹ In Cummian's letter *De controversia Paschali*, the writer addresses the leaders of Iona in an admonitory tone through the words of the Book of Ezekiel alone: 'you should answer, according to Ezekiel, for the blood of each soul to the strict Judge' [*reddetis stricto iudice rationem de uniuscuiusque, iuxta Ezechielem sanguine anime*].⁷²² Bracken has argued that Cummian's admonitory tone is shared by Columbanus, who was applying disciplinary principles of the Insular churches to the Roman pontiff, having justified this approach with his claim that the Christian faith had arrived in Ireland from Rome.⁷²³ Yet, Columbanus is not formulating a warning or admonition about a specific point, threatening his audience with the divine retribution promised in the book of Ezekiel, as Cummian would later do in his letter.⁷²⁴ The reference is used to formulate a general principle, as it is typical of the paraentic style of letter writing, aiming at spurring his audience into action rather than at chastising them. Although the exegetical tradition both authors reference is the same, there is a subtle difference in the function each of them assigned to it in the letter: Cummian formulated an ultimatum, while Columbanus integrated it into an exhortation, as an explanation of what should cause his addressee to take action in order to resolve not a disciplinary or dogmatic issue but a lack of moral fortitude in the pastoral action of the church in Italy [*in his regionibus*]. He attributes the corruption of the moral standards to an excess of self-confidence on the part of the shepherds [*per securitatem pastorum*]

⁷²⁰Smit, *Studies*, 42-46; see Julianus Pomerius, *De vita contemplativa*, I, 20, 2 in *P.L.* 59, 434b-435a; Caesarius of Arles, *Serm.* I, 3-4 (Morin ed., *Sermones*, CCSL 103, 2-3).

⁷²¹ Bracken, 'Authority and Duty', 187-191; Bracken, 'Juniors teaching elders', 272-273.

⁷²²Cummian, *De controversia Paschali*, l. 114 (Walsh and Ó Cróinín, eds *Cummian's letter*, 74); another seventh-century Irish text that make use of the same Ezekiel passage is the *Collectio canonum Hibernensium*, 37, 22 (Wasserschleben, ed., *Die irische Kanonensammlung*, 160), which ultimately derives from Gregory I's homilies, thus having certainly entered Ireland after the times of Columbanus, so it likely has less to do with the tradition that Columbanus was relying on.

⁷²³ Bracken, 'Juniors teaching elders', 266 and 274-275; Bracken, 'Authority and Duty', 197 'This admonitory tone permeates Letter 5'

⁷²⁴Cummian, *De controversia Paschali*, l. 114 (Walsh and Ó Cróinín, eds *Cummian's letter*, 74) formulates an explicit threat: 'If they are led into error because of your obstinacy you shall answer etc.' [*si in errorem per vestram obsitnantiam inducetur, reddetis etc.*]

and to prosperity [*per prosperitatem felicissimae abundantiae*]. The focus on morality as well as the presence of the *speculator* passage from the book of Isaiah and not just Ezekiel suggests that Columbanus re-interpretation of the *speculator* tradition has much closer ties to the anonymous *De duodecim abusivis*. The section describing ‘the negligent bishop’ reads:

‘If, however you see the sword coming and you give no warning for the wicked man to turn from his way, that iniquitous man will die in his wickedness but his blood I shall require at your hand . But if you warn him of its coming , and he does not amend, he should truly die in its sinfulness, but you have saved your soul [Ez.3, 17-19 and 33, 7-9]. It is therefore proper that the bishop should attend diligently to the sins of all over whom he is set in eminence [Isa. 58, 1]to guard them’⁷²⁵

Columbanus’s moral preoccupation that ‘no one should be lost because of ignorance’[*nullus pereat per ignorantiam*] is perfectly reflected in this passage from the tract. The juxtaposition of the watchtower [*specula*] from Isaiah with the admonition from Ezekiel suggests that the author of the *De duodecim abusivis* was likely drawing from the same source as Columbanus. As hypothesised for the overlaps with this same text in *Ep. II*, the Irishman might have been adapting homiletic material from his homeland into epistolary prose.

In contrast to the body of the passage, which ultimately consists of an exegetical and doctrinal explanation of a generic statement about the consequences of the addressee’s actions [*tua vigilantia multorum erit salus, tua securitas multorum erit vastatio*], the opening does reference a specific figure, Pope Vigilius. His name is the basis of a pun, which in all likelihood references the Pope’s about face in respect to the condemnation of the Three Chapters: Vigilius was not very vigilant [*forte non bene vigilavit Vigilius*]. It has been suggested by Luciana Cuppo that Columbanus was not the first to make use of this pun, and that he intentionally echoed the prefatory letter of Jordanes’s *Roman History*, which reads: ‘I give thanks for your vigilance, most

⁷²⁵*De duodecim abusivis*, 10 (Breen, ed., *De XII abusivis*, 410-13), *Si autem videris gladium venientem et tu non adnuntiaveris ut revertatur impius a via sua, ipse quidem impius in iniquitate sua morietur, sanguine autem eius de manu tua requiram. Si autem adnuntiaveris et ille non fuerit reversus, ipse quidem in iniquitate sua morietur, sed tu animam tuam liberasti. Decet ergo episcopus omnium quibus in specula positus est peccata diligenter .*

noble brother Vigilus' [*Vigilantiae vestrae, nobilissime frater Vigili, gratias refero*].⁷²⁶ This seems unlikely: firstly, Columbanus does not seem to have been familiar with any work of history other than Jerome's and Rufinus's; secondly, the identification of the addressee of Jordanes with Pope Vigilus is not entirely certain; thirdly, Columbanus had already made an original pun employing the name of a Pope, Leo I, so it is not unreasonable to think that he came up with another for the occasion.⁷²⁷ More to the point, this confirms that Columbanus had heard from his sources at least a partial account of the origins of the controversy, which emphasised Vigilus's lapse. Such a narrative would be extremely antagonistic to Rome, others have survived in which Vigilus's suffering at the hands of his captors and forced approval of the condemnation are stressed.⁷²⁸ The epithet *caput scandali* (head of the scandal), which the schismatics have attributed to Vigilus, could be meant to contrast with the title that Columbanus attributed to Boniface IV in the salutation, *omnium totius ecclesiarum Europae caput* (Head of all the churches of the entirety of Europe), but it could also emphasise that Vigilus was the first to open a rift in the communion of the Italian churches, a scandal that had not yet healed under his successors. Again, this seems to suggest that Columbanus's contacts in Lombardy were interested in keeping track of the duration of the schism.

Section 5.7: Excusatio

Sed cur haec mordacius diu omnibus nota commemoravim, in subiectis subnectam. Faciunt enim et haec ad proposita suggestionis primae genera; ligata namque sunt simul utraque; ex his enim pendent illa; et ideo ista prima amputanda sunt; non enim curat de errore qui non curat de religione; hic namque totus consistit agon hic tota stat causa; hic ille *gladius bis acutus* [Apoc. 1,16], *pertingens usque ad divisionem carni set animae, compagum, medullarum, qui est discretor*

⁷²⁶ Jordanes, *De summa temporum vel origine actibusque gentis Romanorum*, 1,1 ed. Theodore Mommsen, *Jordanis Romana et Getica*, MGH, *Auct. Ant.* 5,1 (Berlin, 1882), 1. Luciana Cuppo, 'The other book of Pontiffs', 63.

⁷²⁷ Paolo Mastandrea, 'Corippo, Giordane, Colombano: nomi parlanti e allusioni reticenti', *Aevum Antiquum*, 11 (2011), 131-149:149 actually used Columbanus's pun to argue for the identification. Columbanus, *Ep.* I, 4 (Walker, ed., *Opera*, 4-6) punned on the name of Pope Leo I.

⁷²⁸ One such document is the *Epistula clericorum Mediolanensium ad legatos Francorum*, ed. Eduard Schwartz, *Vigiliusbriefer*, Sitzungsberichte der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Phil.-Hist. Abt. 1940, 2 (Munich, 1940). See Claire Sotinel, *Identité civique et christianisme: Aquilée du IIIe au VIe siècle* (Rome, 2005), 309-17 and Sotinel, 'The Three Chapters and the Transformation of Italy', 91-92.

cordis et cogitationum [Heb. 4, 12], usque ad os debet secare nervos. Hinc *sale* divino *sermo* noster *conditus* [Col. 4, 6] est, *omne* nempe *sacrificium sale* [Lev. 2, 13] aspergi praeceptum est; hinc scintillae de *igne* illo divino, quem Dominus *in terram mittere venit* [Luc. 12, 49], descendentes comburant *lignum, foenum, stipula*, quae male *superaedificantur* a multis *super fundamentum hoc* [1 Cor. 3, 12] admirandum, cui toti *superaedificamur* Christiani, super quod *nemo aliud potest ponere praeter id quod positum est, quod est Iesus Christus* [1 Cor. 3, 11]. Heu quanta *ghennae fomenta* ubique praeparantur de his infelicibus aedificiis, super quae comburenda sermo ille scintillans Domini, descendens de incendiis illius semper vivi immensitate, cecidit dicendo, *Attendite vobis, ne forte aggraventur corda vestra in crapula et ebrietate et curis huius vitae, et superveniat in vos dies illa repentina; tamquam laqueus enim superveniet in omnes, qui sedet super faciem universae terrae* [Luc. 21, 34-35].

5.7.1 Structure and Style

The passage opens with short clauses often juxtaposed by asyndeton and minimal subordination. Rhetorical emphasis is sought through various effects, for example alliteration [*in subiectis subnectam*] and altered word order.⁷²⁹ The sentences grow in length and complexity as several Biblical quotations are integrated into the phrasing. An optative subjunctive [*comburant*] and the accumulation of relative clauses [*quem Dominus ... quae male ... cui toti superaedificamur*] together with the anaphora of *hic* and *hinc* at the beginning of each sentence create an effect of climax that culminates in the closing exclamation [*heu quanta ghennae fomenta*]. The quotations are predominantly from the New Testament⁷³⁰ and are consistent with the eschatological meaning of the exclamation. There is no reason not to accept Gundlach's suggestion of an influence from Virgilius and Horace on Columbanus's phrasing.⁷³¹

⁷²⁹ Type of hyperbaton present are abBA: *ad proposita suggestionis primae genera*; type aVA: *totus consistit agone, tota stata causa, toti superaedificamur Christiani*; type aBA: *quanta ghennae fomenta*.

⁷³⁰ However Todde and Nuvolone, 'Le lettere e la preghiera', 206n75 correctly identified the quotation from Leviticus 2, 13.

⁷³¹ Gundlach, ed. *Epistolae*, 172 in *apparatu*. See Smit, *Studies*, 201-202 for details.

5.7.2 Epistolary qualities

The function of this section is to provide a justification for how the author had previously dedicated so much space to moralistic considerations, with their focus on the peril of divine retribution for wayward shepherds of the Christian flock, and, his attacks on *securitas* and *prosperitas*. Columbanus argues that these are connected to the foremost of his suggestions [*primae suggestionis*] and that these moral exhortations cannot be separated from it, rather it depends on them [*ligata namque simul sunt utraque, ex his enim pendent illa*]. Deficiencies in the behaviour of the clergy should be addressed first [*et ideo ista primum sunt amputanda*]. Though the language is vague and allusive, it would seem that the ‘proposed outline of my foremost suggestion’ [*proposita suggestionis primae genera*] refers to the author’s previous hint about summoning a synod, a suggestion that will be repeated several times in the rest of the letter. This would be consistent with the way in which the topic of a church council is approached in *Ep. II*: Columbanus had argued that the meeting should have been the occasion to set the mores of the Gaulish churches straight and then proceeded to engage the audience of the letter with a series of almost homiletic digressions that relegated the discussion of the Easter controversy to a side issue.⁷³² It could be argued that the author employed this same tactic, a form of rhetorical deflection which allowed him to avoid discussing theological and disciplinary details, in all of the controversy he was involved with. While this is possible, it seems more likely that there is genuine conviction behind Columbanus’s moralising arguments, if only because they heavily depend on a profound knowledge not only of the Biblical texts but also of the exegetical traditions of fourth and fifth-century authors and, possibly, as previously discussed, of exegetical tradition that were being elaborated in his homeland which are recognisable in later texts. The eschatological perspective, which here focuses on the theme of the flames of damnation [*quanta ghennae fomenta*], is another element of continuity with *Ep. II*, inasmuch as it relates to the duties of the guides of the church, while the quotation from Luc. 21, 34-35 which consists of a warning, is more in line with the theme of vigilance that permeates this letter to Boniface IV.

⁷³²See here commentary to Columbanus, *Ep. II*, 2-4 and especially 8 (Walker, ed. *Opera* 12-14 and 20).

Section 5.8: paraenetic style.

Vides quo terrore Dominus nostrum soporem ac noxium torporem ad vigilantiam suscitatur, ne imparati inveniamur. Ideo ego dixi; papa vigila tempo est *de somno surgere*, Dominus *appropinquat*[Rom. 13, 11-12] et prope iam in fine consistimus inter tempora periculosa. Ecce *conturbantur gentes, inclinantur regna*; ideo cito *dabit vocem suam Altissimus et movebitur terra* [Ps. 45, 7]. Ego quasi timidus, dum non sim fortis bellator, quia hostem adversariorum circumdedisse nos video te licet importunis clamoribus tamquam ducum principem suscitare conor; ad te namque totius exercitus Domini in his regionibus in campo potius torpentis quam pugnantis, et partim, quod lacrimabilius est, adversariis potius manus dantis quam resistentis periculum pertinet. Te totum expectat, qui potestatem habes omnia ordinandi, bellum instuendi, duces excitandi, arma corripere iubendi, aciem costruendi, tubas undique sonandi, certamen demum, te in fronte gradiente, ineundi; quia vae diu, ut apparet in hac regione, in hoc spiritali bello victi sumus etiam Christiani, vitiis primum carnalibus ac pomposa conversatione, deinde fidei vacillantis tepore, qua infirmata inimicis nostris dum non sensimus circumdati sumus triplicibus, qui dati sunt nobis ad vindictam nostrae luxuriosae securitatis. Omnium enim malorum causa est caeca prosperitatis securitas.

5.8.1 Structure and style

The author returns to address his audience directly using second-person forms [*vides, vigila, te, ad te, te totum*]. The main effect sought by the prose is once again accumulation, and it is achieved partly by the insertion of parenthetical clauses [*dum non sim fortis bellator; licet importunes; quod lacrimabilis est; dum non sensimus*] and partly by the repetition of similar constructions. These consist of two pairs of participle constructions organized in two parallel comparisons [*potius torpentis quam pugnantis* and *adversariis potius manus dantis quam resistentis*], and of seven successive gerundives, with their effect accentuated by homeoteleuton [*omnia ordinandi, bellum instuendi, duces excitandi, arma corripere iubendi, aciem costruendi, tubas undique sonandi, certamen demum ...ineundi*]. The preposition *dum* is atypically used to introduce a concessive clause with a subjunctive [*dum non sim fortis bellator*] whereas later takes

the indicative [*dum non sensimus*] and seemingly retaining its concessive value ('while we are unawares'). The closing *sententia*, 'for the blind security of prosperity is cause of all evils' [*omnium enim malorum causa est caeca prosperitatis securitas*] stresses its final words with abA type hyperbaton, but word-order in the passage is generally not used in an emphatic way.⁷³³

5.8.2 Epistolary qualities

The author picks up again his exhortation against sloth repeating his rallying cry for vigilance [*vigila*]. Thematically, there is continuity with the preceding eschatological perspective, which is the author's main justification for this homiletic excursus. Columbanus also employs another sustained metaphor, this time comparing the role of the Pope to that of a chief war leader [*princeps ducum*]. A military metaphor, inspired by the text of the letter to the Ephesians, had already been used by Columbanus in the *exordium* of *Ep. IV*.⁷³⁴ Here the spiritual war [*spirituali bello*] is depicted as in the process of being lost by the army of the Lord [*exercitus Domini*]. A positive outcome can only be achieved through the direct action of the Pope. The author's usual attack against sloth and inaction is reframed within the metaphor: Christians are being defeated by vices and moral laxity [*vitiis primum carnalibus ac pomposa conversatione*] which cause their faith to vacillate [*fidei vacillantibus tepore*]. This culminates in a clear formulation of what Columbanus confidently indicates as the cause of the entire controversy: the confidence and lack of discipline born in times of prosperity [*Omnium enim malorum causa est caeca prosperitatis securitas*].

The theme of the ruinous effects of abundance was a topical one among Latin writers of the fifth-century, inherited from Classical Roman historiography.⁷³⁵ It was a significant part of the message of Orosius's *Histories against the Pagans* and of other Christian historians who employed it to style their own works as a warning for their contemporary readers.⁷³⁶ One of Columbanus's models, Gildas was also part of this tradition of historiography, in various sections of *De*

⁷³³ The only other hyperbaton is of the complex type: *inimicis nostris dum non sensimus circumdati sumus triplicibus*.

⁷³⁴ Columbanus, *Ep. IV*, 2 (Walker, ed., *Opera*, 26)

⁷³⁵ Eoghan Ahern, 'Abundance, *luxuria*, and sin in Late Antique historiography', *Journal of Early Christian studies*, 25, 4 (2017), 605-631: 605-614

⁷³⁶ Ahern, 'Abundance, *luxuria*, and sin', 614-624

Excidio.⁷³⁷ His influence can be detected in Columbanus's inclusion of the trope in this letter.⁷³⁸ Moreover, there are close textual parallels between the two authors in the passage, likely indicating that Columbanus lifted some of his imagery from the Briton.⁷³⁹ Yet Columbanus's condemnation of *luxuriosa securitas* is not an unoriginal repetition of Gildas's take on the trope. While the narrative parts of *De excidio* follow the convention of contemporary historiography in associating this *topos* with the coming of the threat of barbarians, and in presenting the notion as existing as a necessary cog in the workings of divine justice,⁷⁴⁰ in the letter to Boniface IV it absolves the function of inciting the Pope to action and it is divorced from any one historical happening. To sum up, Columbanus adapted a trope commonly found in another genre, historiography, for the specific needs of his epistolary prose.

Section 5.9: Excusatio

Mirror, fateor, talem securitatem et unde hic letalis sopor totos pene cooperit; nescio quae corda, quae aures, qui sensus, quos nequaquam ignita ipsius Domini verba suscitaverunt ad vigilantiam zeli iugiter ferventis, ad contemptum mundi, ad paupertatem Christi, sicut multas gentes ita assueverunt. Ego enim de extremo mundo veniens, ubi praelia Domini praeliari spiritalis duces conspexi, et sperans in antea videre fortiores peritioresque huius sancti conflictus duces, et ita inveniens acsi quidam campi bellici roscidus cadaverum ac madidus post pugnam contemplator, stupeo et dolens ac timens ad teque tantum, qui unica spes de principibus es per honorem potens Petri apostoli sancti, respiciens plango tanti exercitus stragem. Sed quia fragili ingenii cymba non tam *in altum* [Luc. 5, 4] iuxta verbum Domini ducta est, quam adhuc in uno haereat loco (non enim charta totum comprehendere potest, quod animus, variantibuscausis, epistolae angustiis concludere voluit) – **dum** a rege rogor ut singillatim suggeram tuis piis auribus sui negotium doloris; dolor namque suum est schisma populi pro regina, pro filio, forte et pro se ipso; fertur

⁷³⁷ Gildas, *De excidio*, 21, 2 (Winterbottom, ed., *The ruin of Britain*, 96) with its condemnation of *luxuria* is a relevant example.

⁷³⁸ The influence has been recognised by Winterbottom, 'Columbanus and Gildas', 312 and supported by Wright, 'Columbanus's *Epistulae*', 84-86; see also Winterbottom's article on Gildas's preface, Michael Winterbottom, 'The Preface of Gildas' *De Excidio*, *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion* (1974/1975), 277-87.

⁷³⁹ Compare Columbanus's *potius torpenti quam pugnantis et ... adversariiis manis dantis* with Gildas, *De Excidio*, 73,2 and 25,1 (Winterbottom, ed., *The ruin of Britain*, 123 and 98)

⁷⁴⁰ Ahern, 'Abundance, *luxuria*, and sin', 624-629.

enim dixisse, si certum sciret, et ipse crederet - redeamus ad **liburnum**, quem iuxta ripam dimisimus.

5.9.1 Readings and sources

The text as presented here agrees with the changes suggested by Winterbottom and Wright.⁷⁴¹ Walker's reading *tum a rege rogor* has been restored to F and M's *dum a rege rogor* and the phrase *redeamus ad librum* has been made into the main clause of the very long and complex period that began with the causal clause *sed quia fragilis ingenii cumba ... ducta est*. The latter change makes it clear that this long period contains another of Columbanus sea metaphors which could be translated (omitting two lengthy parenthetical insertions): 'but since the fragile boat of my intellect has not yet been lead over the depths, according to the Lord's word, a boat, which has, thus far been stuck in the same spot ... let us return to the book, which we had left by the shore'. Commentators have been puzzled by the reference to a 'book' [*librum*]. Walker suggested that the *librum* is Justinian's original condemnation of the Three Chapters, while others argued that the *librum* is the epistle itself, with the general meaning of the metaphor being: 'let us return to the matter at hand after a digression'.⁷⁴² Neither of these explanations of *librum* seems satisfying. From the rest of the letter it would seem that Columbanus was ever only familiar with the decisions of the Fifth Council of Constantinople, not Justinian's original pronouncement against the Three Chapters, so Walker's interpretation is well off the mark. Moreover, the word *librum* is never used in the *Epistulae* to refer to the letter themselves: *charta* and *epistola* is used in this very passage, *pergamena* refers to the physical medium and while both *chartula* and *libellus* are used for short letters, *tomus*, not *librum*, is used for longer ones.⁷⁴³ Even though F and

⁷⁴¹ Winterbottom, 'Columbanus and Gildas', 310-311n5 and Wright, 'Columbanus's *Epistulae*', 49.

⁷⁴² Walker, ed., *Opera*, 45n3. Fleming's *editio princeps* was the first to suggest that the phrase is an idiomatic way to end a digression, Fleming, *Collectanea Sacra*, 149-150; *adagium est antiquum idemque sonat quod ad propositum, seu ad id, de quo antea sermo erat, redire*; Winterbottom, 'Columbanus and Gildas', 311n5 and Wright, 'Columbanus's *Epistulae*', 49 and Todde and Nuvolone, 'Le lettere e la preghiera', 215n70.

⁷⁴³ *Epistola* occurs in Columbanus, *Ep.* I, 8, *Ep.* III, 2, *Ep.* IV, 6 and 9 (*epistulae pergaminae*) and *Ep.* V, 3 and 8 (Walker, ed., *Opera*, 8, 22 and 24, 40 and 44). *Charta/ carta* occurs in Columbanus, *Ep.* I, 10, *Ep.* V, 8 (Walker, ed., *Opera*, 10 and 44). *Cartula* occurs in Columbanus, *Ep.* III, 2 (Walker, ed., *Opera*, 24). *Libellus* and *Tomus* occur in Columbanus, *Ep.* II, 6 (Walker, ed., *Opera*, 16)

M agree on this word, a case could be made that the original reading of the passage was *liburnum*, ‘a large ship’, for various reasons.

It is plain that in the opening causal clause Columbanus uses a nautical metaphor, describing his intellect as a fragile fishing boat [*cymba*] that does not dare to venture over the deeps [*in altum*]. The metaphor is then apparently discarded in the clause in which the *librum* is mentioned. However, the *librum* to which the writer invites himself to go back to, has been left ‘on the shore’ [*iuxta ripam*], which is not where one might usually expect to find a book, but it is a proper place for a maritime vehicle. Could *liburnum* (a large ship, a warship) be a word that was here lost to an accident of transmission and changed into *librum*? In this case there would be no need to wonder about which book is being referenced, and the nautical metaphor would not be forgotten halfway through the sentence. The meaning would fit the context of the letter: in the previous paragraphs Columbanus has been dwelling [*in uno haereat loco*] on the lack of zeal he has found in the Italian ecclesiastical provinces but, conscious of the request of the Lombard king, as he reminds himself in this very passage, he has to introduce the main request of the letter. The pope ought to resolve the Three Chapter dispute with ‘so to say, saint Peter’s knife, that is a true confession of faith in a synod’ [*cultello quodammodo sancti Petri id est vera in synodo fidei confessione*]. Before asking him to do so, he, the ‘timid mariner’ has to discard his timidity to follow God’s word [*iuxta verbum Domini*], an act that he expresses through this metaphor in which, in his intellectual effort, he has to leave an unsuitable fragile boat and he has to go back to a more sturdy *liburnus*.

Secondly, the usual form of the word for ‘large ship’ in Classical Latin is a feminine name of the first declension, *liburna*,⁷⁴⁴ whereas the present passage only allows that whatever words should be conjectured in place of *librum*, ought to be a masculine form agreeing with the accusative *quem*. A masculine variation of *liburna* is in fact attested in a glossary. Most significantly, it is recorded in St. Gall, Stiftsbibliothek, 912, which, it should be recalled, contains another *hapax*

⁷⁴⁴ The form is also attested in other Insular Latin texts, most significantly in *Hisperica Famina*, l. 415 (Herren, ed., *Hisperica Famina: I. The A text*, 96), where they also described as rather large (*ingentes*).

legomenon from Columbanus's *Epistulae*, the contentious term *castalitati* from the salutation of the letter to Gregory I.⁷⁴⁵ The St. Gall glossary appropriately explains the term *liburnus* as *grandis navis*, 'large ship'.⁷⁴⁶ Johannes Smit suggested that one of anonymous compilers of this eighth-century glossary had begun working on terms from the *Epistulae*, as the codex includes terms contained in the salutation of the letter to Gregory I. Smit proposed that glossators had only worked on a minimal part of the *Epistulae*, trying to justify how none of the more unusual terms used by Columbanus, such as *chalcenterus* or *dodrans*, are to be found in the codex as it stands today.⁷⁴⁷ Yet a significant number of words from the entirety of the *Epistulae* are glossed in the St. Gall codex. It is true that no examples from the more technical or peculiar parts of Columbanus's vocabulary are registered, but the glossary does include no less than 32 terms that appear in Columbanus's *Epistulae*.⁷⁴⁸ While a few among these, such as *idioma* or *pignora* are glossed in a way that does not reconcile with Columbanus's usage, it must be recognised the glossators have given apt and relevant definitions for almost all of Columbanus's sea-related vocabulary: words such as *cautis*, *flabris feralis*, *molis*, *minax*, and *trudit* which were used in the first of the sea-metaphors of this letter are all found in the glossary, alongside such 'Hispanic' words as *euripus*, *Thytis*, and *reuma*. Even the fragile boat found in this passage, the *cumba*, appropriately glossed *navicula modica* (a tiny boat) is registered in the glossary. The unusual word that has been conjectured, *liburnum* certainly belongs to a semantic area with which the anonymous glossators were deeply concerned. It can be conceded that this conjecture, especially in light of the Columbanian *hapax legomenon* preserved by the glossary [*castalitati*] might be a solution to the problems posed by the incongruous reading *librum* preserved by F and M. If the

⁷⁴⁵ Columbanus, *Ep.* I, 1 (Walker, ed. *Opera*, 2 and 3n1); full discussion of that glossary entry by Smit, *Studies*, 52-53.

⁷⁴⁶ St. Gall, Stiftsbibliothek, cod. 912, 153. See C.G.L., IV, 254, 46

⁷⁴⁷ Smit, *Studies*, 53. For a counter-argument see Stanton, 'Columbanus. Letter I', 157-158.

⁷⁴⁸ Words that appear in the *Epistulae* are here provided with reference to the numbered page of the codex and to page and line numbers in the *Corpus glossariorum Latinorum*, IV between parenthesis: *agrestis*, 15 (204, 43); *agon* (205, 10); *Bar-Iona*, 33 (210, 46); *castalitati*, 41 (214, 4); *cautis*, 46, (215, 34); *cenodoxia*, 52 (218, 1); *cumba*, 71 (224, 28); *deserta*, 75 (226, 38); *elogium*, 88 (231, 42); *euripum*, 94 (233, 48); *fateor*, 105 (237, 39); *flabris*, 106 (237, 54); *ferales*, 107 (238, 11); *hebes*, 121 (243, 22); *idioma*, 127 (246, 9); *incentor*, 133, (247, 58); *minax*, 165 (258, 19); *minas*, 167 (258, 23); *molis*, 168 (259, 1); *noxium*, 180 (262, 32); *permotus* 213 (271, 9); *pignora*, 219 (272, 48); *potitus*, 223 (274, 10); *probrosum*, 224 (274, 18); *reuma*, 246 (279, 50); *socordia*, 273 (286, 48); *theoria*, 290 (291, 9); *thytis*, 294 (292, 1); *thomus*, 298 (293, 3); *trudit*, 303 (294, 13); *yperbolice*, 319 (298, 22).

conjecture is accepted, the result would not only be a solution to a textual problem but also an indication that Columbanus's letter collection might have been read in the eighth-century by the compilers of St. Gall, Stiftsbibliothek 912.

If the second part of the extended sea-metaphor of this passage might suggest that the *Epistulae* were a source of lexical knowledge in the years after Columbanus's death, the first part, that is the image of the 'fragile boat of my intellect' [*fragilis ingenii cumba*] is indicative of Columbanus's own stylistic models. As previously noted, the phrasing is reminiscent of Jerome's *Epistola XIV*, but also of Gildas's *De excidio* and Cassian's *Conlationes*.⁷⁴⁹ It is notable that a similar phrasing can also be found in works by later Insular authors of the seventh-century, for example in Muirchú's *Life of Patrick* and in the *Epitomae* of Virgilius Grammaticus.⁷⁵⁰ It is possible that all these authors were each independently inspired by Jerome, yet it would seem that the phrase and general imagery was common fare among the early Insular Latin writers, which might suggest a certain degree of continuity not only in literary taste, but most significantly in the models to which prose writers adhered.⁷⁵¹

5.9.2 Structure and style

The passage once again is marked by accumulation: tricolon is used thrice [*quae corda, quae aures, qui sensus* and *ad vigilantiam zeli ... ad contemptum mundi, ad paupertatem Christi; pro regina pro filio et forte pro se ipso*], while in the second period of the passage several participle are found [*veniens; sperans; inveniens; dolens ac timens, respiciens*], weighing down the main clause [*stupeo*] and a coordinated clause [*plango*] with their depending subordinated clauses [the infinitive clause *in antea videre fortiores ... duces* and the two relative clauses *ubi praelia domini*

⁷⁴⁹ Jerome, *Ep. XIV ad Heliodorum*, 10 (Hilberg, ed. *Epistulae*, CSEL 54, 59) ***fragilis in altum cumba processit***; Gildas, *De excidio*, 106, (Winterbottom, ed., *The ruin of Britain*, 138), *navigationis periculis fragilis ingenii cumba iactanda est*; Cassian, *Conlationes, praef.* ed. Michael Petschening, *Iohannis Cassiani Conlationes XXXIII*, CSEL, 13 (Wien, 1886), 4, *tanto enim profundioris navigationis periculis fragilis ingenii cumba iactanda est*.

⁷⁵⁰ Muirchú, *Vita sancti Patricii*, 6 ed. Ludwig Bieler, *The patrician texts in the book of Armagh*, (Dublin 1979), 62-123:62, ***ingenioli mei puerilem remi cymbam deduxi***. Virgilius Grammaticus, *Epitomae*, 5, ed. and trans. Giovanni Polara, *Virgilio Marone grammatico: Epitomi ed Epistole* (Naples, 1979), 146 compares a *cumba* facing a storm to the mind of the scholar (*mens sapientis*).

⁷⁵¹ Winterbottom, 'Variations on a nautical theme', 55-56 discusses how the tradition of this imagery relates to the text of Cogitosus's *Life of st. Brigit* and the Breton *Life of st. Samson*.

... *conspexi* and *qui unica spes ... apostolic sancti*]. Word-order is again emphatic and convoluted.⁷⁵² The remainder of the passage has been used by Neil Wright to exemplify Columbanus's ability to manage complex sentences, and he has provided detailed commentary on its stylistic characteristics, identifying its main features in the balance that exist between the two sets of subordinated clauses that belong to two distinct parenthetical insertions [*non enim charta ... concludere voluit* and *dum a rege rogor ... et ispe crederet*].⁷⁵³

5.9.2 Epistolary qualities

The author confesses his bewilderment [*miror*] at the state of the churches in the Italian regions, and that he is not able to identify the source of the mortal sloth [*letalis sopor*] that he has just denouncement. The comparison of the Italian situation with the *gentes* that have been won over by the word of God [*sicut multas gentes ita assueverunt*] could be a reminder of what the author had previously established: the true faith arrived in his homeland from Rome, and there it was preserved uncorrupted. As a confirmation of this, there is the successive mention that the author 'has come from the extreme limits of the world' [*de extremo mundo veniens*]. If this is the case, it can be argued that it is the necessary preamble for the author's recollection of the heroic asceticism of his native land and the introduction of new metaphor. While in the previous passage the army of the Christian faith was depicted as facing imminent defeat, here the authors portrays himself as a spectator [*contemplator*] of a battlefield on which that defeat has already been inflicted and addresses the Pope as the only hope for the Christians [*unica spes*]. The point of this whole metaphorical set-up is the characterisation of the epistolary persona of the writer: once again his status of *peregrinus* is at the forefront of the communication. The writer's high expectations about the moral standards of the Italian Christian leaders in the ascetic struggle for moral perfection [*fortiores peritioresque huius sancti conflictus duces*] are derived from his experience with the model 'spiritual fighters' [*spiritalis duces*] of his native island and the implied knowledge that the latter derived their faith from the former. His stupor and sadness

⁷⁵² Hyperbata are Type abBA: *ignita ipsius Domini verba*; Type aVA: *in uno haereat loco*; Complex type: *fortiores peritioresque huius sancti conflictus duces; quidam campi bellici ... contemplator*.

⁷⁵³ Wright, 'Columbanus's *Epistulae*', 49-50.

[*stupeo et plango*] in front of the rests of the defeated army on the battlefield, that is, out of the metaphor, in front of the crisis of the schism are proofs of the good faith of the writer, as the sentiment of fondness for his masters is inextricably entwined with trust in, and admiration for the Roman Church. To sum up, the general effect of the metaphor is to justify the previous attacks against moral laxity with the unique perspective of the writer, who, as a devoted foreigner, cannot be accused of siding with the party opposed to Rome, but is seemingly speaking up against the Pope because of the pressing need of the crisis and out of a sense of duty. This sentiment will be made explicit in the subsequent *propositio*.

The second portion of the passage is similar to a typical rhetorical *excusatio*, albeit, as seen above, one aiming at moving on with the contents of the letter and not only at justifying a digression. The *excusatio* is broken up by two parenthetical statements. The first contains a re-tread of the usual *topos* of epistolary *brevitas*. Columbanus states that his parchment [*charta*] cannot contain everything he wants to say in the small space of the letter [*epistolae angustis*]. The formulation of the statement is clearly influenced by Columbanus's literary models and perfectly in line with the trends of contemporary epistolography.⁷⁵⁴

The second of these parenthetical insertions is much more complex: it contains the first mention of a request from king Agilulf [*a rege rogor*] and some speculations on the motives behind his interest in this ecclesiastical matter. The Lombard king had apparently requested that the Irish abbot should transmit to the Pope his own misgivings about the schism. The euphemism that refers to the king's feelings about schism, *sui negotium doloris* ('the matter of his grief') is the same that Columbanus had used in the letter to Pope Gregory to refer to his own doubts about the Easter calculations of Victorius.⁷⁵⁵ It is a first hint that, for all his undoubtedly heartfelt protests of trust and obedience to Rome, Columbanus's point of view is equally sympathetic to Lombard

⁷⁵⁴ The phrasing is reminiscent of Jerome, *Ep. 53 ad Paulinum*, 6 (Hilberg, ed., *Epistulae* CSEL, 54, 452); Jerome, *Ep. 70 ad Magnum*, 6 (Hilberg, ed. *Epistulae*, CSEL, 54, 708); Jerome, *Ep. ad Ctesiphontem*, 133 (Hilberg, ed., *Epistulae*, CSEL 56, 258). Ennodius, *Epistulae*, 9, 23 ed. Wilhelm Hartel, *Ennodii Opera omnia*, CSEL, 6 (Wien, 1882), 245 was still using a similar expression in times relatively closer to Columbanus.

⁷⁵⁵ Columbanus, *Ep I*, 2 (Walker, ed., *Opera*, 2) *mei doloris negotium*. It should be recalled that the expression is another example of Columbanus's literary reminiscences, having been lifted from Sulpicius Severus, *Dialogi*, III, 18 (Halm, ed. *Sulpicii Severi libri*, CSEL 1, 216).

monarch's efforts to end the schism. Agilulf had been actively supporting the schismatic patriarch of Aquileia, John,⁷⁵⁶ but the attitude of the Lombard court as presented in this letter is not one of unquestioned support for the defenders of the Three Chapters, rather Columbanus depicts them as sharing in his preoccupations and as hopeful to restore unity within the Church. While this clashes with what is known about Agilulf, it is consistent with what is known about his wife Theodelinda. A desire to reconcile with Rome by passing over or just ignoring the thorny issue of the Fifth Council is precisely what emerges from Gregory's letters to her, to Constantius and to Secundus, which, in a sense, are perfect mirror of Columbanus's own attempt at pacification.⁷⁵⁷ It is no surprise, then that the queen should receive a prominent mention and that she should be explicitly made out to have been, alongside her son, one of the factors that caused Agilulf to act in favour of the resolution the schism [*dolor namque suus est schisma populi, pro regina, pro filio*]. As rightly noted by Elva Johnston Columbanus 'need not have mentioned her so prominently', and his doing so is a first recognition of Theodelinda's influence, something that will receive further confirmation in the letter.⁷⁵⁸ Contemporary sources are in agreement in describing her as an active political player and an agent of the changes that occurred within the Lombard monarchy between sixth and seventh century.⁷⁵⁹ Paul the Deacon narrates that Theodelinda, daughter of duke Garibald of Bavaria was first married to the Lombard king Authari, and after his death, (589) was permitted to remain queen and to choose the next king of the Lombards by marrying the most suitable of their leaders.⁷⁶⁰ Having married Agilulf, she was instrumental in winning over

⁷⁵⁶ The episode is discussed by Azzara, 'Il regno longobardo e i Tre Capitoli', 217-218.

⁷⁵⁷ See Herren and Grey, 'Columbanus and the Three Chapters controversy', 163 and especially Pohl, 'Heresy in Secundus and Paul the Deacon', 247-249 'Gregory did not treat Secundus as a hard-core heretic but as someone in doubt who could be won over by reasonable argument. Of course, this was in line with the diplomatic caution that the Pope applied in his attempts to come to terms with the religious policy of the Lombard kingdom'

⁷⁵⁸ Johnston, 'Movers and shakers?', 84.

⁷⁵⁹ Pauline Stafford, *Queens, concubines and Dowagers. The king's wife in the Early Middle Ages*, (London, 1983), 137-138; see also Francesco Borri, 'Roman growing beards: Identity and historiography in seventh-century Italy', *Viator*, 45 (2014), 39-71: 39-41 for a more cautious take; Ross Balzaretti, 'Theodelinda, most glorious queen: gender and power in Lombard Italy', *Medieval History Journal*, 2 (1999), 183-207 has extensive discussion of all sources relating to Theodelinda, 186-188 discusses her correspondence.

⁷⁶⁰ Paul the Deacon, *Historia Langobardorum*, III, 30 and 35 (Waitz and Bethmann, eds., *Pauli Historia Langobardorum*, 109-110 and 113)

the Lombards and possibly the king himself to Christianity.⁷⁶¹ This traditional portrayal clashes with Columbanus's contemporary account. He portrays the king as hesitating on the edge of conversion, [*fertum enim dixisse, si certum scire et ipse crederet*], with the resolution of the Three Chapters being the one issue holding him back. However, neither Paul the Deacon's nor Columbanus's accounts are neutral: Paul the Deacon was echoing a tradition that can ultimately be traced back to Theodelinda herself,⁷⁶² while Columbanus was using the king's hesitations on matters of orthodoxy as an argument for his exhortation to the Pope, since the last section of this letter picks up again a suggestion first hinted in the exordium: that an 'Arian' or 'heathen' king's interest in the resolution of the schism is nothing short of a sign of divine intervention that should shake his addressee into action.⁷⁶³ While Agilulf's actual religious leanings cannot be ascertained through the evidence available,⁷⁶⁴ this is ultimately irrelevant: what matters is that this passage signals he, and perhaps even the Tricapitoline clergymen that he was backing and might have contacted Columbanus had shifted their overall objectives. From a position that supported those who contemplated strenuous opposition to Rome and exclusion from communion, he had apparently moved closer to his wife's attempts at reconciliation, provided that the Pope should make the first step and discuss the issue on the terms of the opposing party.

Section 5.10: Propositio, paraenetic style

Ne igitur hoc fune erroris longissimo liget latro antiquus nomine, causa schismatis incidatur, quaeso, confestim a te *cultello* quodammodo sancti *Petri* [Ios. 5, 2] id est vera in synodo fidei confessione et hereticorum omnium abominatione et anathematizatione, ut mundes cathedram

⁷⁶¹ Paul the Deacon, *Historia Langobardorum*, IV, 6 (Waitz and Bethmann, eds., *Pauli Historia Langobardorum*, 118)

⁷⁶² Through her commissioning of works that Paul would later use as sources, such as Secundus's *Historiola* and a continuation of the *Chronicle* of Prosper of Aquitaine: see Francesco Borri, 'Murder by death: Alboin's life, end(s) and means', *Millenium 8/2011: Jahrbuch zu Kultur und Geschichte der ersten Jahrtausends n. Chr.* (2011), 223-70:252-254.

⁷⁶³ Columbanus, *Ep.* V, 14 and 17 (Walker, ed., *Opera*, 52 and 54), see commentary below.

⁷⁶⁴ While Fanning, 'Lombard Arianism reconsidered', 254 suggested that Agilulf was unquestionably Catholic, but the situation is clearly more complex see Walter Pohl, 'Deliberate Ambiguity: The Lombards and Christianity', in Guyda Armstrong and Ian Wood eds, *Christianizing Peoples and Converting Individuals* (Turnhout, 2000), 47-58 and Walter Pohl, 'Memory, Identity and Power in Lombard Italy', in Yitzhak Hen and Matthew Innes eds, *The Uses of the Past in the Early Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 2000), 9-28: 17-19.

Petri ab omni errore, si quis est, ut aiunt, intromissus; si non, puritas agnoscat ab omnibus. Dolendum enim ac deflendum est, si in sede apostolica fides catholica non tenetur. Sed ut totum dicam, ne adulari ultra fas etiam vobis videar, dolendum quoque est, quod non vos priores pro zelo fidei, ut deceda diu, partem a vobis, recedentem, utpote qui potestatem legitimam habuistis, continuo, ostensa prius vestrae fidei puritate, condemnastis, nec excommunicastis; qua re vel infamare audent fidei orthodoxae sedem principalem. Scitis enim quam saeva animadversione a patribus in synodo Nicaena sancta damnati sunt innocentium criminatores. Sed haec dicens, non nesciens multas esse causas in moltitudine clamosa et acuta et tumultuosa, quae non permittunt haec ad purum usque investigare, non quia crederem sed quia nunc fieri debeant dixi. Si qui sunt rebelles contra veritatem vestri comprovinciales, tantum culpa includat hos; non enim ignem flare potest os farina aut alia materia plenum; omnis enim res laeditur vicina contrarietate; idcirco precor vos pro Christo, subvenite famae vestrae, quae laceratur inter gentes, ne perfidiae vestrae reputetur ab emuli, si amplius, taceatis. Nolite itaque amplius dissimulare, nolite tacere; sed potius emittite vocem veri pastoris, quam *agnoscunt* suae oves, quae *alienorum vocem non audiunt, sed fugiunt ab eo* [Ioann. 10, 3-5]. Ego instigo vos, meos patres ac proprios patronos, ad depellendam confusionem de facie filiorum vestrorum ac discipulorum, qui pro vobis confunduntur, et quod his maius est, ut caligo suspicionis tollatur de cathedra Sancti Petri. Inde conventum coge, ut ea, quae vobis obiciuntur, purgati; non enim lusus currus vobis obicitur.

5.10.1 Structure and Style

The author return to directly address his audience, again switching between using the second person singular [*a te; mundes*] and second person plural forms, which ends up being prevalent [*vobis; vos; a vobis; habuistis; vestrae; condemnastis; excommunicastis; scitis; vos subvenite; taceatis; nolite dissimulare; nolite tacere; emittete*]. The periods are relatively complex, with several degrees of subordination,⁷⁶⁵ however, the latter part of the passage is marked by shorter *sententiae* and coordinated by asyndeton. There is a significant use of figures of sound, such as homeoteleuton [*abominatione et anathematizatione; clamosa et acuta et tumultuosa*] and

⁷⁶⁵ Winterbottom, 'Columbanus and Gildas', 315 breaks down the sentence structure of the first period of the passage as an example of Columbanus's ability to write tight prose.

alliteration [*longissimo liget latro*], while word-order is marked by frequent hyperbata;⁷⁶⁶ overall, this passage shows an average degree of complexity and elaboration. Biblical quotations and allusions are not completely absent: while the closing sentence is a quotation from the Gospel of John which had already been used in *Ep.* II,⁷⁶⁷ there is also an allusion to Jos. V, 2, which is a word-play on the name of apostle Peter. The Pope's power to summon a synod is compared to the *cultello sancti Petri* ('knife of saint Peter'); in the aforementioned passage from the book of Joshua, the Lord commands to make stone knives for circumcision. The reading of the Vulgate does not lend itself to the wordplay, but several early Christian authors use the expression *cultellos petrinus*, which lend itself to be associated with the name of the apostle, as Columbanus did.⁷⁶⁸ The meaning of the allusion would be this: circumcision by stone knife was the mark of admittance into God's chosen people in the Old Testament, but among Christians a confession of the faith of the apostles, such as the one Columbanus is calling for, is the true mark of belonging to the people of God, the Church. Finally, as Todde and Nuvolone have pointed out, Smit's emendation *lusus scurrus* ('an improper joke') for F and M *lusus currus* ('a chariot race') is rather unnecessary. Columbanus reminds his audience of the seriousness of the matter by way of a comparison to a form of secular entertainment that was popular in his times.⁷⁶⁹

5.10.2 Epistolary qualities

Contrary to the other two letters addressed to Roman pontiffs, the letter to Pope Boniface IV does not appear to be structured as a public speech, with sections adhering to the functions prescribed by the manuals of rhetoric. Nonetheless, this passage can be compared to a *propositio*, the part of a public speech in which the main request is advanced. Compared to the *propositiones* of *Ep.* I and *Ep.* III the lack of formalities and of a *captatio benevolentiae* is apparent. The author asks his addressee to remove any motive for disagreement and schism by publicly proclaiming his

⁷⁶⁶ Type aBA: *hoc fune erroris longissimo*; Type abBA: *vera in synodo fidei confessione; ostensa prius vestra fidei puritate*; type aVA: *multas esse causas*.

⁷⁶⁷ Columbanus, *Ep.* II, 4 (Walker, ed., *Opera*, 14)

⁷⁶⁸ While the expression is used by Cyprianus, Firmicus Maternus and Augustine, the one author using it with whose works Columbanus was positively familiar is once again Jerome, *Adversum Iovinianum*, I, 18 in *P.L.* 23, 243.

⁷⁶⁹ See Smit, *Studies*, 127-129 for the reasons of his emendation; Todde and Nuvolone, 'Le lettere e la preghiera', 219-220n79

orthodox faith in a synod [*vera in synodo fidei confessione*] and with a condemnation of all heretics [*hereticorum omnium abominatione et anathematizatione*]. The request is given a veneer of neutrality with the final observation: the confession will cleanse the see of Peter only if the detractors are right about the fact that error has contaminated it [*si quis est, ut aiunt intromissus*]; if there is no error, the confession will simply reinforce the reputation of the Roman see [*si non, puritas agnoscat ab omnibus*]. After a brief explanation of the author's foremost sentiment when laying out this exhortation, the main request is repeated, this time in the form of an exhortation [*conventum coge*], however the structure of the passage is not as balanced as the chiasmic formulations identified in the letter to Gregory I by David Howlett.

The key concept of the passage, on which the author further elaborates, is *dolor*, 'grief'. The term does not define only the king's motivation for trying to resolve the schism, but also that of the writer's. The grief is caused both by the possibility that heresy has entered the see of st Peter [*si in sede apostolic fides catholica non tenetur*] and by the non-proactive attitude of the Roman church, which has not condemned the error of its adversaries [*quod vos proores pro zelo fidei ... condemnastis nec excommunicastis*] leaving itself open to counter-accusation [*quare vel infamare audent fidei orthodoxae sedem principalem*]. Here the author momentarily abandons the exhortatory tone of the previous request in order to introduce an element of reproach; this is an integral element of the paraenetic mode of letter-writing which juxtaposes positive and negative model of behaviour in order to better spur the audience. Moreover, such admonition is justified with the usual motive of *non praesumptione sed necessitate*, by way of a parrhaesiastic declaration [*quia nunc fieri debeant dixi*]. The address returns then to an exhortatory mode, when the author re-iterates his exhortation to speak up and dispel the doubts about the orthodoxy of the Roman see [*nolites itaque amplius dissimulare, nolite tacere; ego instigo vos*] having briefly re-employed the imagery of the good shepherd from the Gospel of John. The appeal to the Canons of the council of Nicaea is unclear, no relevant source has been found for the author's claim that the

Council had set forth a terrible condemnation for the accuser of the innocent [*innocentium criminatores*].⁷⁷⁰

Section 5.11: reporting and exhortatory styles

Hereticorum enim receptio, ut audio, vobis reputatur, quod absit credi verum fuisse, esse vel fore. Dicunt enim Eutychem, Nestorium, Dioscurum antiquos, ut scimus, hereticos, a Vigilio in synodo nescio **quam**, in quinta, receptos fuisse. Ecce causam totius, ut aiunt, scandali; si et vos sic recipitis ut dicitur, aut si et ipsum Vigilium scitis sic infectum defunctum fuisse, quare illum contra conscientiam recitatis? *Omne enim quod non ex fide peccatum est* [Rom. 14, 23]. Iam vestra culpa est, si vos deviasitis de vera fiducia et *primam fidem irritam feristi* [1 Tim., 5, 12]; merito vestri iuniores vobis resistunt et meritum vobiscum non communicant, donec perditorum memoria deleatur et oblivioni tradatur. Si enim haec certa magis quam fabulosa sunt, versa vice filii versi *in caput* conversi sunt, vos vero *in caudam* [Deut. 28,44], quod etiam dici dolor est; ideo et *vestri iudices erunt* [Luc. 11, 19] qui semper orthodoxam fidem servaverunt, quicumque ilii fuerint, etiamsi iuniores vestri videantur; ipsi autem orthodoxi et veri catholici, qui neque hereticos neque suspectos aliquos aliquando receperunt neque defenderunt, sed in zelo vera fidei permanserunt. Si igitur et isti non tales sint ut seniores ordine culpa tamen maiores iuste iudicent, certatim invicem veniam pro tam longa discordia postulante set utrique nullum contra rationem defendentes – nec vos hereticos nec ilii suspectos – quo utrique culpabiles celerius concordate.

5.11.1 Readings

In synodo nescio qua (Walker, ed., <i>Opera</i> , 46 l. 36)	In synodo nescio quam *f. qua (F, 141)	In synodo nescio qua *in Bob. quam (M, 98)
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Walker, contrary to Gundlach,⁷⁷¹ emended the reading *quam* to *qua* which had also been conjectured by Fleming and Metzler. His translation reads: ‘For they say that Eutyches, Nestorius

⁷⁷⁰ Walker, ed., *Opera*, 48 *in apparatu* indicates the 5th Canon of Nicaea as the source of Columbanus but that Canon is concerned with transferral of clergymen and regional Council. Todde and Nuvolone, ‘Le lettere e la preghiera’, 217n74, admit that the reference is unclear.

⁷⁷¹ Gundlach, ed., *Epistolae*, 174,1.4

Dioscorus, old heretics as we know, were favoured at some Council, at the fifth, by Vigilus'. This translation goes beyond the meaning of the text and already offers its interpretation. Walker presents Columbanus as someone who has very little information on the Fifth Council: according to Walker the expression *nescio qua* 'I do not know which synod' which he synthetically rendered as 'at some Council' is a comment of the author on his limited knowledge of the matter at hand. It is true that Columbanus does not display a profound familiarity with the theological contents of the Council, but he clearly had been informed about Vigilus's role in it. Since he knew one of the protagonists, it seems unlikely that he ignored how far back and when such Council had taken place, which is what Walker's editorial choice and his translation implies. If the reading *quam* is restored⁷⁷² a translation would read: 'For they say that Eutyches, Nestorius Dioscorus, old heretics as we know, were favoured at some Council, I do not know to what extent, by Vigilus'. This would be an admission of the writer's ignorance of the theological contents of the Fifth Council, which is consistent with what has been written in the letter so far. Columbanus had been informed by members of the schismatic clergy and by the Lombard court that communion with Rome had been broken because of Vigilus's acceptance of the decrees of the Fifth Council had put the Roman church under the suspicion of heresy, but he is here admitting that he does not know, or did not understand if told, how and to what extent were the heretics named by his informers restored into honour by the erring Pope. This interpretation seems to be preferable and is consistent with the stance that a diplomat trying his best at neutrality would take, since Columbanus could not dismiss what he had been told by his royal patrons and their clergy but he also could not force them to provide him with a non-partisan account of the events, hence his uncertainty.

5.11.2 Structure and Style

The audience is again addressed directly, keeping up the literary illusion of an epistolary conversation. Although the sentence-structure remains complex throughout the passage, the author is no longer seeking the rhetorical effect of accumulation. The dubitative quality of the

⁷⁷² This is the choice of Todde and Nuvolone, 'Le lettere e la preghiera', 220-221

author's various proposal and his uncertainty, likely due to the previously mentioned lack of information, transpire from the frequent use of hypothetical clauses [*si et vos sic recipitis; si et ipsum Vigilium scitis; si vos deviasitis; si enim haec certa magis quam fabulosa sunt; si igitur et isti non tales sint*]. Elaboration and embellishment are kept at a minimum and the word-order is straightforward, with only one hyperbaton [type aVA: *totius ut aiunt scandali*].

It should be noted that Walker's translation seems to miss the point of the last period of the passage as he interpreted the clause *si igitur isti non tales sint* to refer to the party of the Pope,⁷⁷³ while it is clear that the author is postulating the opposite case of the one he has just formulated: having described the possibility that the Pope's subordinates, that is, the schismatic clergy could be in the right [*qui semper orthodoxam fidem servaverunt, quicumque illi fuerint, etiamsi iuniores vestri*], he proceeds to describe what should be the course of action if they too are not orthodox. A possible translation of the last period [*si igitur et isti ... concordate*] should read: 'If then these adversaries of yours are not such people, that they would be able to pronounce a just sentence over their elders in the hierarchy, albeit also elders who are greater in their guilt, come to an agreement with them all the more quickly as you are both guilty; race to ask each other's forgiveness for such a long disharmony, provided that you both do not defend anyone going against reason, neither you the heretics, nor them people under suspicion.'

5.11.3 Epistolary qualities

The passage contains both narrative elements and exhortations. Starting from the former, it should be noted that they technically absolve the functions of a rhetorical *narratio*, since, for the first time, the actual contents of the accusation of heresy against the Pope, the main object of the letter, are spelled out. Even though he protests that he still disbelieves such rumours [*quod absit credi verum fuisse, esse vel fore*], Columbanus reports that he has heard that the Roman Church has accepted the rehabilitation of the heretics Eutyches, Nestorius, and Dioscorus because of Vigilius's actions at the Fifth Council [*dicunt enim Eutychen, Nestorium, Dioscorum, antiquos ut scimus hereticos, a Vigilio in synodo ... in quinta*], but he also admits that he does not know or

⁷⁷³ Walker, ed., *Opera*, 49 'If your party are not also of such character'

understand the extent of the rehabilitation [*nescio quam*]. His preoccupations are that his addressee and the rest of the Roman church could not only accept the rumoured restoration of these heretics but also honour Vigilus, by repeating his name during the mass, even if they are aware of his lapse [*quare illum contra conscientiam recitatis*]. There are various reasons for which this set of explanations diverges from the canonical form of a classical *narratio*. Firstly, it is out of order, since it does not precede the main request; secondly, the author does not provide all of the information about what has caused him to write, such as precisely how he had been informed of and by whom. These details are provided in unrelated passages. Thirdly, one would expect that the condemnation of the heretics or of the honouring of Vigilus would be backed by reference to relevant canons. This would follow one of the *genera* of a rhetorical *narratio*, the *iudicialis assertio*, which Columbanus had used in the letter to Gregory I. The quotation from 1 Rom. 4, 23 cannot be interpreted as one such *assertio* since it is a condemnation of the possible acceptance of Vigilus, not something that explains why Vigilus had lapsed.

In terms of theological contents, Columbanus's grouping of Eutyches, Nestorius and Dioscorus has been considered incongruous and baffling by most of the early scholarship, because Eutyches and Dioscoros were condemned as Monophysites, while Nestorius as Dyophysite, and Vigilus and the Fifth Council could not have approved two mutually exclusive interpretations of the divinity and humanity of Jesus Christ. Michael Herren and Patrick Grey have convincingly argued that what appears to be confusion and ignorance on the part of Columbanus need not be. Their discussion of the letters of Gregory I to Italian schismatics has shown that such an uncritical listing of incompatible heresies can be the 'code'⁷⁷⁴ by which the defenders of the Three Chapters expressed their conviction that by condemning the Three Chapters, the Fifth Council had refused each and every decision of the Council of Chalcedon. In short, the actual theological doctrines of the heresies in question is irrelevant to Columbanus's argument. As Herren and Gray put it: 'loyalty to, or betrayal of, councils is expressed in the language of condemnation or exoneration of

⁷⁷⁴Gray and Herren, 'Columbanus and the Three Chapter controversy', 165; the letters of Gregory I they discussed are the aforementioned letter to Constantius and a letter to the clergy of Ravenna. Gregory I, *Reg. Ep.* IV, 7 and VI, 2 (Hartmann, ed., *Registrum Epistularum*, MGH, *Epistolae*, I, 272-274 and 382).

the heretics they condemned'.⁷⁷⁵ Ian Wood has criticised this stance, on the grounds that theological ignorance was nothing new among western Latin authors, citing the confusion of Avitus of Vienne about the positions of Nestorius and Eutyches as an example: 'The apparent confusion of Nicetius or later Columbanus does not need to be explained away as a misunderstanding on our part: there were plenty of perfectly intelligent theologians in the West who were not aware of who had argued what when it came to debates about the nature of Christ'.⁷⁷⁶ While it is true that difficulty of communication could have seriously hampered the Transalpine clergymen's ability to keep up with the intense debates in the East or even in Italy,⁷⁷⁷ in the case of Columbanus's letter to Boniface, it bears repeating that the Irishman was not writing unprompted and on the basis of his own knowledge, but at the request of the Lombard court and on the basis of the likely partisan explanation offered to him by his schismatic contacts such as Agrippinus. It is entirely possible that Columbanus ignored that Eutyches and Dioscoros had taught that there was only one nature present in Christ and that Nestorius had, instead, argued for two distinct *hypostaseis* coexisting in his person, but what matters is that lumping the two stances together as a shorthand for the results of the Council of Chalcedon is consistent with what is known of the attitude of the Aquileian and other Tricapitoline schismatics, albeit indirectly, from sources such as the letters of Gregory I. Columbanus insisted on the figure of Vigilius and on the fact that celebration of his memory was possibly the main issue in the way of a reconciliation. This will not be possible 'until the memory of the lapsed is cancelled and consigned to oblivion'. [*donec perditorum memoria delatur et oblivion tradatur*]. The whole setup of this letter makes it clear that the author is repeating to the Pope the terms of the controversy as understood by the party that opposes him, while attempting to promote the author's own impartiality in order to lend credence to his call for unity.

The exhortatory portion of the passage [*Iam vestra culpa est ... celerius concordate*], is telling of Columbanus's attitude towards authority. Damien Bracken's work, which is focused on

⁷⁷⁵Gray and Herren, 'Columbanus and the Three Chapter controversy', 170

⁷⁷⁶Wood, 'The Franks and Papal theology', 232-233.

⁷⁷⁷Wood, 'The Franks and Papal theology', 234 cites Columbanus's ignorance of the name of the reigning Pope in *Ep.* III

Columbanus's conception of papal primacy, has shown that Columbanus was likely relying on one specific exegetical tradition that had already been endorsed by the predecessors of his addressee, even in this same context, the controversy over the Three Chapters.⁷⁷⁸ Columbanus admonishes his audience by reiterating the notion that, if the Roman church has deviated from orthodoxy [*si vos deviasitis de vera fiducia*], their subordinates [*vestri iuniores*], in this case the other bishops of the Italian provinces, are right in breaking off communion and resisting [*merito vobiscum non communicant*]. Their orthodox faith would give them authority to judge, in spite of their position [*et vestri iudices erunt qui semper fidem orthodoxam servaverunt ... etiamsi iuniores vestri videantur*]. If on the other end, the opponents of Rome are not orthodox themselves [*si igitur et isti non tales sint*], with both parties being marked by sin [*utriusque culpabiles*] a quick reconciliation between both parties and one which cuts all the ties with heresies and suspicions, is the only way left. It is worth noting that Columbanus had previously stated that there has never been a heretic, a schismatic among the Irish, and here the 'orthodox people and true catholics' that have, by virtue of their untainted faith, the power to pass judgement on the quarrelling parties are those who 'have never favoured or defended any heretic or suspect person'. Although implicit, this is the culmination of the author's effort to build up his own figure as that of a neutral observer that has every right to speak up from a position of unquestionable orthodoxy. The existence of the 'tradition of fraternal correction' identified by Bracken allowed him to criticise the division in the church while recognising the authority of his addressee; not only that but the author's parrhesiastic stance is made valid precisely because he is addressing authority, calling for the Pope to take action and in a sense, taking the place that should be his at the head of the efforts to reconcile the schism, but, that having been left vacant, has been temporarily taken up by the writer of this letter.

Damien Bracken has pointed to Columbanus's subsequent reference to Gal. 2, 11 as the main indicator of his acknowledgment of a 'tradition of fraternal correction' as present in the correspondence of Popes such as Pelagius I, Pelagius II and Gregory I, with the foundation of

⁷⁷⁸ Bracken, 'Juniors teaching elders', 262-267; see also Bracken, 'Authority and duty', 197 and Bracken, 'Columbanus and the language of concord', 32-33

such tradition having been laid down earlier by authors such as Cyprianus and later Augustine.⁷⁷⁹ Yet in this passage, Columbanus's conception of 'fraternal correction' might owe more to Jerome's exegesis because of the quotation from Deut.28, 44. In both his commentaries and his letters Jerome had repeatedly referenced the same passage when explaining how the Jews, after the vocation of the Gentiles, have turned from the head into the tail of God's chosen people.⁷⁸⁰ While not immediately related to ecclesiastical authority, Jerome's usage of the passage could have been associated by Columbanus with the exegesis of Gal. 2, 11 and hence with the whole 'fraternal correction' tradition derived from it, because this second passage is concerned with the controversy between st Peter, arguing for maintaining the traditions of the Jews, and st Paul voicing his support for the gentiles. The reference to Deut. 28, 44 would also be consistent with the previous reference to the knife of st Peter and the stone knives of circumcision: Columbanus seems to be prone to depict adherence to orthodoxy in his time by juxtaposing it with the shift from the law of the Old Testament to the law of the Gospel that happened during apostolic times.

Section 5.12: Excusatio

Sed indulgete mihi talia confragosa loca tractanti, si qua forinsecus verba aures pias offenderunt, quia consequentiae ratio historiae nihil me de quaestione praeterit permittit et libertas paternae consuetudinis, ut ita dicam, me audere ex parte facit. Non enim apud nos persona, sed ratio valet; amor autem pacis evangelicae totum me dicere cogit, ut vobis sit stupor ambobus, qui unus chorus esse debuistis, et magnitudo sollicitudinismae pro concordia et pacis vestra; *si enim patitur unum membrum compatiuntur omnia membra*. [1 Cor. 12, 26] Nos enim, ut ante dixi, devincti sumus cathedare sancti Petri; licet enim Roma magna est et vulgata per istam cathedram tantum apud nos est magna et clara. Quamquam enim Ausonici decoris, acsi augustissimus quoddam ac aetheris procul seiunctum climatibus promiscuis, urbis quondam conditae nomen nimio favore omnium prope gentium, totum per orbem usque in occidua trasmundialis limitis loca, triundalibus

⁷⁷⁹ Bracken, 'Juniors teaching elders', 266-267.

⁷⁸⁰ Jerome, *Commentarii in Isaiam*, 4, 17;8, 31 and 18, 31 ed. Marcus Adriaen, *Commentariorum in Esaiam libri I-XI*, CCSL 73 (Turnhout, 1963), 449 and 998 and eds Marcus Adriaen and Germain Morin *Commentariorum in Esaiam libri XII-XVII. In esaiam parvula abbreviatio*, CCSL 73a (Turnhout, 1963), 1922. For the letters see Jerome, *Ep. 129 ad Dardanum*, 7 (Hilberg, ed., *Epistulae*, CSEL 56, 175).

salutatim licet hyperbolice pelagi vorticibus undique consurgentibus mirum dictu non prohibentibus, longe laeteque vulgatum est, ex eo tamen tempore quo Dei filius homo factus esse dignatus est, ac in duobus illis ferventissimis Dei spiritus equis, Petro vide licet et Paulo apostolis, quorum cara pignora vos felices fecerunt, per mare equitans turbavit aquas multa set innumerabilium populorum millibus multiplicavit quadrigas, supremus ipse auriga cursus illius, qui est Christus, Pater verus, *agitator Israel* [4 Reg. 2, 12], trans euriporum rheuma, trans delfinum dorsa, trans turgescens dodrantem ad nos usque pervenit, ex tunc magni estis et clari, et Roma ipsa nobilior et clarior est. Et si dici potest, propter Christi geminos apostolos – dico ipsos *caelos* a spiritu sancto dictos, *Dei gloriam enarrantes* [Ps. 18, 2], de quibus infertur, *in omnem terram exivit sonus eorum et in fines orbis terrae verba eorum* [Ps. 18, 5]– vos prope celesti estis, et Roma orbis terrarum caput est ecclesiarum, salva loci dominicae resurrectionis singulari prerogativa. Et ideo sicut magnus honor vester est pro dignitate cathedrae, ita magna cura vobis necessaria est, ut non perdatis vestram dignitatem propter aliquam perversitatem. Tam diu enim potestas apud vos erit, quamdiu recta ratione permanserit; ille enim certus regni caelorum clavicularius est, qui dignis per veram scientiam aperit et indignis claudit; alioquin si contraria fecerit, nec aperire nec claudere poterit.

5.12.1 Vocabulary and sources

The passage is long and complex, not only because of syntax and word-order but also because of Columbanus's preference for obscure and rarely used terms. However, these can be helpful indicators of the literary influences on his prose, especially when one considers that this very passage has been indicated by literary critics as a prime example of all the most distinctive features of his style.⁷⁸¹

It is no surprise that a distinctive expression such as *confragosa loca* ('rough passages') is a recurring one in the works of Columbanus's favourite authority, Jerome. Notably, the patristic author used it in sea-related metaphor that clearly impressed Columbanus; additionally the

⁷⁸¹ Mohrmann, 'The earliest continental Irish Latin', 222-223; Bieler, 'The humanism of St Columbanus', 100-102. Both scholars highlighted how Columbanus's bombastic rhetoric is here nigh impossible to translate.

expression also occurs in the commentaries to the Book of Ezekiel, which Columbanus had read.⁷⁸² In the same way there might be a connection between the enigmatic expression *multiplicavit quadrigas* ('he multiplied his chariots') and a phrase used by Jerome in his commentaries to the Book of Isaiah, *populus Iudaeorum contra praeceptum Dei sibi equos etquadrigas multiplicaverit* ('the Jewish people, against the command of God increased the number of their horses and of their chariots'), although the meaning appears to be quite different, since Columbanus used the phrase to describe the conversion of many people, following the passage of the metaphorical chariot of the church.⁷⁸³ The central portion of the passage, from which that expression is derived, is also marked by its 'hispanic' vocabulary, that is, unusual terms which are also used or are similar to those of the *Hisperica Famina* and related texts. This portion consists of an extended metaphor, in which first the fame of the city of Rome and then the chariot of the church guided by Christ are represented while traversing the seas and reaching Ireland at the extreme edge of the world. There is little doubt that not only most of the lexical choices but also most of the imagery is connected to that group of texts, either because both their authors and Columbanus were tapping into the same pre-existing tradition or because these texts represent the culmination of the trends of the Latinity of early Christian Ireland.⁷⁸⁴ A third possibility would be that both of these explanations are true to an extent. While the passage shows that Columbanus used words such as *Ausonicus*, *transmundialis* and *triundalis* which only occur in the *Hisperica Famina* themselves or are preserved only by glossaries,⁷⁸⁵ other turns of phrase have clearly identifiable sources. For example, *undique consurgentibus* is lifted from another of Columbanus's favourites, the Latin Anatolius, and the word *clavicularius* ('key-bearer') in reference to St Peter is first attested in Gildas's *De excidio*.⁷⁸⁶

⁷⁸² Jerome, *Adversus Helvidium*, 17 in PL, 23, 201a; see Wright, 'Columbanus's *Epistulae*', 73n163; Jerome, *Commentarii in Ezechielem*, 11, 39 (Glorie, ed. *Commentariorum in Hezechielem libri XIV*, 1. 1908)

⁷⁸³ Jerome, *Commentarii in Isaiam*, 1, 54 (Adriaen, ed. *Commentariorum in Esaiam libri I-XI*, 199, 1. 7)

⁷⁸⁴ Critics seem to agree in considering Gildas's and Columbanus's prose, as the first stage of the trends that will characterise the *Hisperica Famina*, see Winterbottom, 'Columbanus and Gildas', 316; Winterbottom, 'Aldhelm's prose style', 53; Wright, 'Columbanus's *Epistulae*', 46-48.

⁷⁸⁵ *Hisperica Famina*, 1. 40, 58, 92, 117, 273 (Herren, ed. *The Hisperica Famina: the A text*, 66, 68, 70, 72, 76, 84); C.G.L. V, 396, 51.

⁷⁸⁶ *De Ratione Paschali*, 5 (Breen and McCarthy, *The ante-Nicene Christian Pasch*, 48) *Quae confidentiae roborati, profundissimum obscuratissimae computationis et improuisum pelagus, consurgentibus undique*

The climax of the whole metaphor, the tricolon *trans euriporum rheuma, trans delfinum dorsa, trans turgescens dodrantem*, is also a display of ‘hisperic’ vocabulary. The first and second members of the tricolon, ‘over the waves of sea-straits’ and ‘over the backs of sea-creatures’ contain glossary words and words that are found in the *Hisperica Famina*⁷⁸⁷ but the most remarkable element is the expression *trans turgescens dodrantem*. The word *dodrans*, usually translated as ‘three quarters’, had acquired the meaning of ‘tidal wave’ among Insular authors, so the phrase can be rendered as ‘over the swelling tidal flood’. The shift in meaning occurred because of a reinterpretation of a passage from Philippus Presbyter’s commentary on the Book of Job.⁷⁸⁸ Jacopo Bisagni, while investigating various computistical texts from manuscripts of diverse provenience but ultimately connected to Brittany, discovered several instances of a phrase clearly reminiscent of Columbanus’s phrasing, *tithis turgescens dodrantem*, with the first word being another ‘hisperic’ term, also occurring in the *Epistulae*.⁷⁸⁹ Moreover, while one of the manuscript he examined (Rome, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Reg.lat.123, fol. 77r) attributed the phrase to the aforementioned commentary of Philippus Presbyter, two others (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Lat. 6400B, fol. 277v and Laon, Bibliothèque Municipale, 422, fol. 41r) attributed it to the *prologus* of one *Colmanus Niger*, ‘Columbanus the Black’. Bisagni, in light of the lexical correspondence, has ventured to hypothesize that the *prologus* referenced in the manuscript is a lost work of Columbanus and that Columbanus or Colmán the Black was an alias of his.⁷⁹⁰ It seems unlikely that the phrase as it appears in the manuscripts is a reference to this letter. Firstly there are meaningful differences in the wording and secondly, the letters of Columbanus did not enjoy widespread circulation and none of them has ever been referred to as a

quaestionibus ac problematibus intumescens, ingrediemur, uerecundia contempta. For *clavicularius* see Gildas, *De excidio*, 73, 3 (Winterbottom, ed., *The ruin of Britain*, 123) and discussion in Chapter 1.

⁷⁸⁷ See note 132 in this chapter. For *delfinum* see *Hisperica Famina*, l. 175 (Herren, ed. *The Hisperica Famina: the A text*, 76)

⁷⁸⁸ Alan K. Brown, ‘Bede, a hisperic etymology and early sea poetry’, *Medieval Studies*, 37 (1975), 419-432:425-428.

⁷⁸⁹ Columbanus, *Ep.* III, 2 (Walker, ed. *Opera*, 22)

⁷⁹⁰ Bisagni, ‘A new citation from a work of Columbanus in BnF lat. 6400b’, 116-122 first announced the discovery of the passage in the Paris manuscript and formulated his hypothesis about its attribution, while Bisagni, ‘Breton manuscripts and the transmission of Computus between the Celtic West and the Carolingian Empire’ expanded on the context and listed other relevant manuscripts.

<https://kelten.vanhamel.nl/k82-2020-bisagni-jacopo-computus-brittany-manuscripts-columbanus-hisperic> last accessed July 2021. I am grateful to Dr Bisagni for personally discussing this passage with me.

prologus. It should be noted that even though the specific phrase *turgescetem dodrantem* is only ever found in this passage by Columbanus the word *dodrans*, with the meaning of ‘tidal wave’ is juxtaposed to words that are semantically similar to *turgescens* such as *tumente* in the *Hisperica Famina* and the verb *turgesco* in a poem by one of Aldhelm’s disciples.⁷⁹¹ Nonetheless, the hypothesis of Jacopo Bisagni has merits: first of all, both the *Epistulae* and the *Instructiones* attest that their authors had no qualms about re-using the same turn of phrase in different works,⁷⁹² so it stands to reason that one could find traces of lost tracts such as this *prologus* in the extant texts. Secondly, and more to the point, it would explain the emphasis on obscure, ‘hisperic’ vocabulary in a letter that has little to do with any of the traditions of Columbanus’s homeland: the author was re-elaborating or seeking inspiration from some of his older compositions. The influences on the imagery are rather telling: even if Columbanus was not the author of the text he was here referencing, it seems likely that he was re-elaborating a ‘proto-hisperic’ piece of prose literature, which in turn incorporated suggestions from biblical and patristic imagery. Johannes Smit and Paolo Todde have discussed at length such literary roots of Columbanus’s sea-metaphor in this passage, with special attention to patristic works.⁷⁹³ Here, in light of the hypothesis of Jacopo Bisagni it is worthwhile to consider the imagery of texts whose origins are geographically closer to Bangor, where Columbanus spent a significant, if much less known, part of his career. A passage from Gildas’s *De excidio* is thematically close to Columbanus’s depiction of the fame of Rome. Gildas compares the fame of Rome to an increasing flame that can reach the edges of the world, despite the swelling ocean [*oceani torrente*].⁷⁹⁴ The flame in Gildas’s text is comparable to another piece of frequent imagery, the fiery chariot of the sun carrying off the prophet Elijah [4 Reg. 2, 12], explicitly referenced by Columbanus with an expression lifted from the Vetus Latina version of the biblical episode [*agitator Israel*].⁷⁹⁵ The rising sun is another recurring element of

⁷⁹¹ *Hisperica Famina*, l. 402 (Herren, ed. *The Hisperica Famina: The A text*, 94) and *Carmen Aldhelmo datum*, l. 108-111 (Ewhald, ed. *Opera*, 523-528:526)

⁷⁹² For example one could point to the *elogium* in *Ep. I* and *Ep. V*, the repetition of the Trinitarian formula from *Instructio I* in *Ep. III*, or the phrase *cui pauca non sufficiunt plura non proderunt* found in *Ep. VI*, in *Instructio I* and *III* and in the *Regula monachorum*.

⁷⁹³ Smit, *Studies*, 190-197; Todde, ‘Le metafore del mare’, 170-173.

⁷⁹⁴ Gildas, *De excidio*, 5, 1-2 (Winterbottom, ed. *The ruin of Britain*, 90-91)

⁷⁹⁵ Smit, *Studies*, 197.

‘hisperic’ imagery, just as the onrushing tide, often referred to as the Titanian star [*Titaneus*].⁷⁹⁶ This figurative element in particular brings to mind the short poem with which Jonas of Bobbio introduces his narrative of the birth of Columbanus. The poem, clearly a product of ‘hisperic’ literary taste,⁷⁹⁷ describes the rising of the sun over the Irish coastline but Ian Wood and Alexander O’Hara have noted its exegetical parallels with this passage of Columbanus: ‘Now that the sun has reached Ireland it has reached its furthest point in the west, and its journey is complete. For Columbanus, the conversion of Ireland marked the culmination of the preaching of the Gospel ‘to the ends of the earth’.⁷⁹⁸ The eschatological undertones implicit in the allegorical image of Christ riding the chariot of the sun over the waves is consistent with the many other allusions to the incoming end of times found in this letter. Moreover, Christ the sun is an image that is present in Hiberno-Latin literature from its very inception, with the writings of Patrick.⁷⁹⁹

To sum up, Columbanus’s metaphor in this passage is marked by its peculiar ‘hisperic’ vocabulary and imagery. When coupled with Bisagni’s manuscript discoveries and his hypothesis about the existence of a lost *prologus* by Columbanus, it seems likely that the author was re-elaborating or drawing from pre-existing material that perhaps he had penned himself. The allegorical images used and the themes they convey belong to a clearly recognisable tradition, and one could point to several contemporary and geographically well-determined works to get a sense of what the text that might have served as Columbanus’s inspiration looked like.

5.12.2 Structure and style

The author continues to address his audience directly, with imperative verbal forms and personal pronouns in the second person plural. Throughout the passage the most emphatic and most stylistically sustained elements of Columbanus’s prose reach a new high point. Word-order is

⁷⁹⁶ See for example *Hisperica Famina*, l. 133, 303 and 364 (Herren, ed *The Hisperica Famina: The A text* 74, 86 and 92). Or Aldhelm, *Ep. V* (Ehwald, ed. *Opera* 490 l. 14-15) transl. Herren and Lapidge, *Aldhelm. The prose works*, 161

⁷⁹⁷ O’Hara and Wood, *Lives*, 303-308;

⁷⁹⁸ O’Hara and Wood, *Lives*, 307

⁷⁹⁹ Patrick, *Confessio*, 20 and 59-60 (Bieler, ed. *Libri epistolarum*, I, 68-69 and 89-90)

marked by complex and frequent hyperbata.⁸⁰⁰ There are example of antithesis [*non enim apud nos persona sed ratio valet*], parallelism [*tam diu enim potestas apud vos erit, quamdiu recta ratio permanserit; et ideo sicut magnus honor vester est pro dignitate cathedrae, ita magna cura vobis necessaria est; qui dignis per veram scientiam aperit et indignis caludit; alioquin si contraria fecerit nec aperire nec laudare poterit*], rhyme [*ut non perdatis vostra dignitatem propter aliquam perversitatem*], tricolon [*trans euriporum rheuma, trans delfinum dorsa trans turgescens dodrantem*]. Accumulation is the key feature of the whole passage, mainly achieved through parenthetical insertions, among which Columbanus's usual marker of figurative speech, *licet hyperbolice*, should be counted.

5.12.3 Epistolary qualities

This complex passage is ultimately an *excusatio*. The author asks forgiveness for speaking plainly, because he has laid out all the causes that have motivated his writing. The words used for these, *consequentiae ratio historiae* ('the order of the concatenated sequence of events') suggests that Columbanus was familiar with the terminology of rhetorics, since *historia* is indeed one of the *genera* of *narratio*. The term clearly refers to the preceding section, which, even if not strictly respectful of the manuals' prescriptions for a *narration*, it performs the function of one. As in the *exordium* of this letter the writer implores his audience to pay attention to his arguments, not his status, claiming that this is the custom of his homeland [*non enim apud nos persona sed ratio valet*]. This appeal is paired with another, one to the ideal of Christian unity and *concordia*, highlighted by the classic reference to 1 Cor. 12, 26. The metaphor of the body, derived from the letters of St Paul is always present in Columbanus's appeals to unity.⁸⁰¹ Here the Pauline reference is thematically consistent with the previous nod to the tradition of fraternal correction and to the

⁸⁰⁰Type bAB: *consequentiae ratio historiae*; type aBA: *aetheris procul seiunctum climatibus promiscuis*; type abBA: *in occidua transminudialis limitis loca; certus regni caelorum clavicularius*; type aVA: *orbis terrarium capitis est ecclesiarum*; Complex type: *in duobus illi ferventissimis dei spiritus equis; locis dominicae resurrectionis singularis prerogative*.

⁸⁰¹ See Columbanus, *Ep.* II, 9 and IV, 6 (Walker, ed. *Opera*, 22 and 34). For the tradition of Christian *Concordia* in *Ep.* V see Bracken, 'Columbanus and the language of concord', 40-41 and Todde, 'Le metafore del mare', 173

subsequent celebration of the apostolic authority of Rome, ultimately derived from the ‘twin apostles’ Peter and Paul.

This long excursus that celebrates the authority of Rome is born out of the reiteration [*ut ante dixi*] of the fact that the faith of the *Iberi* is bound to the faith of the see of Peter [*devincti sumus cathedrae sancti Petri*]. Moreover, the author makes it clear that it is the faith of apostolic see is the main cause of fame for Rome among the Irish. This elements recalls the way in which Columbanus had expressed his desire to visit Gregory I in Rome, with his reference to the story of those who ‘found in Rome something else other than Rome’.⁸⁰² In short the excursus: 1. highlights the fame of pre-Christian Rome; 2. sets up the image of Christ reaching the edges of the world on the chariot of the church, towed by a pair of horses representing the apostles Peter and Paul; 3. concludes that Rome has acquired even more fame and dignity as the seat of the ‘twin apostles’ [*geminos apostolos*]. The supremacy of the Roman church is expressed in terms that are very close to those used in the letter of Cummian.⁸⁰³

The excursus on Roman authority continues with an admonition: such great honour requires care [*cura*], and the power [*potestas*] associated with it is legitimate only as long as orthodoxy prevails [*recta ratio permanserit*]. The last image used is that of Peter as key-bearer of the kingdom of God, whom the addressee is encouraged to imitate. Once again the imagery of the *clavicularius* will be picked up again in Cummian’s letter, another confirmation of the consistent attitude of the early Irish Churches towards Petrine authority.⁸⁰⁴

Section 5.13: admonitory style

Cum haec igitur vera sint et sine ulla contradictione ab omnibus vera sapientibus recepta sint, licet omnibus notus est et nemo qui nesciat, qua iter salvator noster sancto Petro regni caelorum contulit claves, et vos per hoc forte superciliosum nescio quid prae ceteris vobis maioris auctoritatis ac in divinis rebus potestatis vindicatis; noveritis minorem fore potestatem vestram

⁸⁰² Columbanus, *Ep. I*, 8 (Walker, ed. *Opera*, 10)

⁸⁰³ Cummian, *De controversia paschali*, l. 276-278 (Walsh and Ó Cróinín, eds. *Cummian’s letter*, 94)

⁸⁰⁴ Cummian, *De controversia paschali*, l. 89 (Walsh and Ó Cróinín, eds. *Cummian’s letter*, 68). See Bracken, ‘Juniors teaching elders’, 273-274.

apud Dominum, si vel cogitetis hoc in cordibus vestris, quia unitas fidei in toto orbe fecit potestatis prerogativae, ita ut libertas veritati ubique ab omnibus detur, et aditus errori ab omnibus similiter abnegetur, quia confessio recta etiam sancto privilegium dedit claviculario, communi omnium nonno; liceat etiam iunioribus vestris sollicitare vos pro zelo fidei, pro amore pacis, pro ecclesiae unitate communis matris, quae nimirum intra viscera more Rebeckae discerpitur materna et dolet pro rixa ac intestino bello filiorum suorum et moesta luget divisionem viscerum suorum. Lacrimis in his opus est magis quam verbis, quomodo praevaluit inimicus Christiani nominis post filii Dei viva verba, post evangeliorum plenitudinem, post apostolicam doctrinam, post neotericam orthodoxorum auctorum scripturam, qui de Novo ac Veteri Testamenta sacramenta fidei diverso sermone aperuerunt. Corpus Christi dividere et membra separare et ipsius filii Dei, salvatoris mundi, tunicam scindere, quae est unitas – tuum est hoc artificium, diabole, quem *Christus, pax nostra, qui fecit utramque unum vincat* [Eph. 2, 14].

5.13.1 Structure and Style.

The author continues his excursus on Petrine authority, though he occasionally returns to address his audience directly [*vindicatis; noveritis; cogitetis*]. Subordination is again prevalent, with the passage opening with one of the rare instances of a causal *cum*-clause in the works of Columbanus [*cum haec igitur ... recepta sint*] and various hypothetical, causal and consecutive clauses making the first period just as long and complex as the meandering allegorical period in the previous section, if less lexically exuberant. In the same way, the rhetorical emphasis remains high: the author employs anaphoras [*pro zelo fidei, pro amore pacis pro ecclesiae unitatis* and *post evangeliorum plenitudinem, post apostolicam doctrinam, post neotericam ... scripturam*], rhyme [*prae caeteris vobis maioris auctoritatis ac in in divinis rebus potestatis vindicatis*] and long hyperbata are a frequent occurrence.⁸⁰⁵ The passage closes with an apostrophe to the devil [*diabole*], exposing him as the author of the internal strife in the Church and formulating the hope that Christ will defeat him and restore unity. Columbanus had already alluded to the supernatural intervention of the devil in ecclesiastical matters in his letters but such an apostrophe is rather

⁸⁰⁵ Type aBA: *communis omnium nonno* and *pro ecclesiae unitate communis matris*; type aVA: *sancto privilegium dedit claviculario*; type abBA: *post neotericam orthodoxorum auctorum scripturam*.

unusual in his works, only comparable to the apostrophe to the concept of ‘human life’ in *Instructio* V and to that of ‘human will’ in *Instructio* VII.⁸⁰⁶

5.13.2 Epistolary qualities

While this essentially a continuation of the previous excursus on the origins of the apostolic authority of the Roman See, the author adopts the admonitory mood of epistolary writing. Contrary to the prevalent paraenetic quality of Columbanus’s prose, the focus is not in inciting action on the part of the addressees thorough a mix of advice and praise, but simply to set out a warning. The author acknowledges the staus of the Roman pontiff as a successor to the apostle with an implicit nod to Matth. 16, 19 [*salvator noster sancto Petro regni caelorum contulit claves*] but warns the Pope that even thinking [*si vel cogitetis*] that this entitles the Roman church to greater authority and power over matters of doctrine [*ac in divinis rebus potestatis vindicatis*], will diminish its actual power in front of the Lord [*minorem fore potestatem vestra apud Dominum*]. As noted by Todde and Nuvolone, this is because the authority of Peter in the Gospel is tied to his confession of faith: only after recognising Jesus as the son of God, he receives praise and the title of key-bearer (see Matth. 19, 16). Hence Columbanus’s point here is that, by tainting its faith with suspicion, the Roman See is not living up to the duties from which its very authority originates.⁸⁰⁷

The simile between the strifing church and Rebecca feeling her twins fight in her womb and lamenting their discord [Gen. 26, 22-23] is meant to contrast the concord of the ‘twin apostles’ Peter and Paul in the previous passage. Elva Johnston has argued that the use of such generated imagery in this and similar passages of this letter could be a reflection of Theodelinda’s role in the Lombard court, where she worked to restore unity within the Church even as her own marriage was marked by religious differences, since Agilulf was likely not an orthodox Catholic.⁸⁰⁸ Yet, when Columbanus mentions the queen explicitly she is standing together with her husband in

⁸⁰⁶ Columbanus, *Instructio* V,1 and VII, 1 (Walker, ed. *Opera*, 84 and 90)

⁸⁰⁷ Todde and Nuvolone, ‘Le lettere e la preghiera’, 231n104.

⁸⁰⁸ Johnston, ‘Movers and shakers’, 84.

their appeal for a solution to the schism.⁸⁰⁹ As previously argued, this is consistent with the hypothesis that the royal couple was pursuing a common strategy, the diplomatic alternative that Theodelinda had initiated.

Finally it should be noted that the influence of Columbanus's Insular background is once more rather evident. The expression *lacrimis in his opus est magis quam verbis* ('there is more need for there than for words') is one of the many reminiscences of Gildas's work,⁸¹⁰ while the laceration of the tunic of Christ [*tunicam scindere*] as a metaphor for discord within the church also occurs in the tract *De duodecim abusivis*.⁸¹¹ Finally there is a list of the authorities that should stand guard over any deviation from orthodoxy: 'after the words of the son of God, after the fullness of the Gospels, after the apostolic teachings, after the recent writings of orthodox authorities' [*post filii Dei viva verba, post evangeliorum plenitudinem, post apostolicam doctrinam, post neotericam orthodoxorum auctorum scripturam, qui de Novo ac Veteri Testamenta sacramenta fidei diverso sermone aperuerunt*]. This hierarchy, albeit lacking any reference to the authority of the Old Testament, is reminiscent of the canon of Innocent I, 'on the order with which cases should be investigated', preserved in the *Collectio Hibernensis*, which is likely a codification of the common church practices around which Cumman would later organise the arguments of his own letter.⁸¹² That practices suggested by the canon would have put Columbanus in an uncomfortable position since the 'decrees of the apostolic see' [*canones apostolicae sedis*] is the grade of authority that immediately follows that of patristic authors he mentioned, but they would also justify his call for a synod, since 'gather and interrogate the elders of the province' is the final suggested procedure.

⁸⁰⁹ As mentioned before, Columbanus presents the queen's faith as one of the factors that motivated Agilulf to contact him, *Ep.* V, 8 while in the valediction they are pictured sending forth their appeals together *Ep.* V, 17 (Walker, ed. *Opera*, 44 and 56)

⁸¹⁰ Gildas, *De excidio*, 108, 4 (Winterbottom, ed. *The ruin of Britain*, 140).

⁸¹¹ *De duodecim abusivis*, 11 (Breen, ed., *De XII abusivis*, 424). See Bracken, 'Columbanus and the language of concord', 44-45

⁸¹² *Collectio Hibernensis*, 19 (Wasserschleben, ed. *Die irische Kanonensammlung*, 59); see Walsh and Ó Cróinín, *Cumman's letter*, 17-18

Section 5.14: *Confessio fidei*, paraenetic style

Ideo cito, carissimi, concordate et convenite in unum et nolite contendere pro antiquis litibus sed magis tacete et aeterno silentio ac oblivioni eas tradite; et si qua dubia sunt, divino iudicio reservate; quae autem manifesta sunt, de quibus nomine iudicare possunt, iuste sine *acceptione personarum* iudicate, sitque *iudicium pacificum in portis vestris* [1 Pet. 1, 17], et agnoscite vos invicem, ut sit *gaudium in caelo* [Zach. 8, 16] et in terra pro pace et coniunctione vestra. Quid vobis aliud defendere praeter fidem Catholicam si veri Christiani estis utrique? Non enim possum scire unde Christianus contra Christianum de fide possit contendere; sed quidquid dixerit orthodoxus Christianus, qui recte Dominum glorificat, respondebit alter, Amen, quia et ille similiter et amat et credit. *Unum itaque omnes dicite atque sentite* [Luc. 15, 7] ut utrique *unum sitis* [Ioann. 17, 11] toti Christiani. Nam si, ut audivi, aliqui in Christo duas substantias non credunt, heretici potius quam Christiani credendi sunt; enim salvator noster verus Deus aeternus sine tempore et verus homo absque peccato ex tempore est, qui iuxta divinitatem coaeternus est patri et iuxta humanitatem iunior est matre, qui natus in carne, nequaquam deerat de caelo, manens in trinitate, vixit in mundo; et ideo si scripta est in quinta synodo ut quidam mihi dixit, quod, qui duas substantias adorat, oratione suam divisam habeat, ille divisus est a sanctis et separatus a Deo, qui scripsit. Nam nos pro unitate personae, in qua complacuit *plenitudinem divinitatis inhabitare corpolariter*, [Coloss. 2,9] unus Christum credimus, divinitatem eius et humanitatem, quia *qui discendi ipse est, qui ascendit super omnes caelos, ut adimplerat omnia* [Eph. 4, 10]. Si quis aliter de incarnatione Domini senserit, hostis est fidei et abominandus est omnibus Christianis ac anathematizandus, cuiuscumque ordinis aut status aut gradus fuerit; nullus enim ad iniuriam Dei nomine honorare debet; ideo, quaeso vos pro Christo, nulli parcite, qui vos a Christo separare tentaverit; sed potius *ei in faciem resistite* [Gal. 2, 11], si quis, nolens recte credere, vos a fide catholica revocare voluerit.

5.14.1 Structure and style

The audience is addressed in a direct way in the beginning and closing part of the passage, with the author formulating exhortations through verbs in the imperative mood. The central portion of

the passage is taken up by a *confessio fidei*. Its syntax is simple, marked by coordinated clauses and limited subordination, mainly relative clauses and participle construction [*natus i carne ... manens in trinitate*]; condemnation of heterodox beliefs is expressed in hypothetical periods [*si scripta est .. divisus est a sanctis et separates a Deo; si quis aliter de incarnation senserit hostis est fidei*], in almost legalistic fashion. Stylistic elaboration is kept at a minimum, and, though allmarks of Columbanus's prose appear, alliteration [*cito, carissimi concordate et convenite*] and a rhetorical question [*quid vobis aliud defendere praeter fidem catholica si veri Christiani utrimque estis?*], word-order is not marked by emphatic hyperbata.

5.14.2 Epistolary qualities and sources

The author continues in his appeal for unity, mentioning once again the need for a council or synod [*convenite in unum*] and reiterating the need to consign past disagreement to oblivion [*aeterno silentio ac oblivione tradite*], another likely reference to the celebration of the memory of Vigilus. He expresses his belief that disagreement on matter of faith should be impossible because all disputing sides profess to be orthodox Christians [*non enim ego possum scire unde Christianum contra Christianum de fide posit contendere*]. Hence, for the first and only time in the letter the whole controversy is reduced to its core, a specific theological point, namely, the formulation of the doctrine of Incarnation and of the nature of Jesus Christ. As in *Ep.* III, the paraentic tone is momentarily abandoned in order to make a clear theological statement, however, contrary to *Ep.* III this *confessio fidei* contains both enunciations of the doctrine in the positive and condemnations of incorrect formulas, in alternated order. There is a first condemnation [*si ut audivi ... credenda sunt*], then a correct explanation of the same doctrinal point [*Christus enim salvator noster ... vixit in mundo*]; this is followed by a second condemnation, dealing with a different, but still erroneous, interpretation [*si scriptum est in quinta synodo ... qui scripsit*] and by another explanation of the point under scrutiny [*nam nos pro unitate ... ut adimpleret omnia*].

The way in which the author formulates his condemnations has not received much attention from scholars.⁸¹³ First, Columbanus states that if some do not accept that two natures [*duas substantias*] exist in the person of Jesus Christ, they are to be regarded as heretics. Secondly, he also condemns a version of the canons of the Fifth Council that he knows from hearsay [*ut quidam mihi dixit*]. According to Columbanus the canons of Constantinople prescribe that he who adores two natures in Christ should ‘have his prayer divided’ [*orationem suam divisam habeat*]. These two condemnations address the two heretical interpretations of the Incarnation dogma condemned at Council of Chalcedon, that of Eutyches and Dioscurus on the one hand, and that of Nestorius on the other. As discussed above, Columbanus had previously lumped them all together as the heresies rehabilitated by Vigilius’s actions at the Fifth Council. However, in this passage, only the dyophysite interpretation of Nestorius is explicitly linked with a pronouncement from the Fifth Council, while the existence of a monophysite position is just a current rumor [*ut audivi*]. The accusation of Nestorianism against the Pope on the part of a member of the schismatic clergy has precedent in pro-Tricapitoline literature, and Columbanus later refers that the person who first contacted him, likely the previously mentioned Agrippinus, had specifically accused the Pope about a Nestorianist lapse.⁸¹⁴ It seems that such an accusation was based on a misinterpretation of the ninth canon of the Council of Constantinople, which was, in fact, specifically anti-dyophysite, to the point of being one of the few decisions of the Council that met the approval of Eastern

⁸¹³ Todde and Nuvolone, ‘Le lettere e la preghiera’, 239n124 are the only one to acknowledge that Columbanus had been offered or had he himself conceived a wilful misinterpretation of the ninth canon of the Council of Constantinople that allowed him to present it as favouring Nestorianism. Herren and Grey, ‘Columbanus and the Three Chapters controversy’, 168 and Wood, ‘The Franks and papal theology’, 232-233 focus on the contradictory way in which both Nestorianism and Monophysitism are condemned, and not in the specific wording, while Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, 376-377 correctly assessed that Columbanus’s position was all about not giving up communion with Rome, while satisfying the schismatics with a Chalcedonian profession of faith from the Pope. All of these scholars do not make it clear that the Irishman was aware of the theological distinctions between the two heterodox positions

⁸¹⁴ As discussed by Herren and Grey, ‘Columbanus and the Three Chapters controversy’, 168-169 this accusation resembles that by bishop Nicetius of Trier against the emperor Justinian some fifty years earlier. See the precise description of Nestorian tendencies in Nicetius, *Ep. ad Iustinianum*, Willhelm Gundlach, ed. *Epistolae Austrasicae*, 7, MGH, *Epistolae*, 3, 110-153:118-119, translated in H. A. Pohlsander ‘A call to repentance. Bishop Nicetius of Trier to the emperor Justinian’, *Byzantion*, 70, 2 (2000), 456-473. Columbanus, *Ep. V*, 16 (Walker, ed. *Opera*, 54).

miaphysites.⁸¹⁵ Perhaps, as posited by Wood, this reflects the state of confusion in which even the schismatic churches versed, yet the fact that the first condemnation that Columbanus formulates is against ‘those who do not accept two natures in Christ’, that is the monophysites, it seems that the interpretation offered by Herren and Grey is more consistent with the full picture of the religious and political conditions of Lombard Italy. Columbanus is ‘making the charge that the Western church's leading see does not know where it stands on any of the main christological issues proceeding from Ephesus, Chalcedon, and Constantinople II’ and ultimately, perhaps in exchange for patronage in establishing a new foundation, acted as ‘an honest broker’, who mentions the concerns of the party on whose behalf he is writing, but whose personal interest is in a solution that would reinstate unity within the church on the basis of the already established authority of past church Councils, which, in his opinion should not be challenged in any way.

As far as Columbanus’s own formulation of christological doctrine is concerned, various influences have been noted. Columbanus’s reference to the two natures and to Christ humanity and divinity in relation to his mother and his father [*duas substantias ...iuxta divinitatem coaeternus est patris et iuxta humanitatem unior est matris*] has been considered to be close to the Christology of Pope Leo I and his *Tomus ad Flavianum*.⁸¹⁶ It should be remembered that defenders of the Three Chapters who suspected the Fifth Council of undoing the decisions of Chalcedon were especially concerned with preserving Pope’s Leo I’s contribution, which was seen as the greatest accomplishment of Western, Latin-speaking theologians. That Columbanus’s Christology in this *confessio fidei* owes a debt to this tradition of Latin theology can be confirmed by his use of Coloss. 2, 9, when arguing for the unity of the two natures of Christ against Nestorianist distortions. The quote appears to perform the exact same function in Latin anti-Nestorian works of the fifth century, for example, it is comparable to how John Cassian

⁸¹⁵ Eduard Schwartz, ed. *Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum*, 4, 1 *Concilium Constantinopolitanum secundum, Actio VIII, Canones*, (Berlin 1971), 217-219. Translated in Price, *The Acts of the Council of Constantinople of 553*, II, 123. See commentary in I, 34.

⁸¹⁶ See Walker, *Opera*, lxxi; Grey and Herren, ‘Columbanus and the Three Chapters controversy’, 167-168; Bracken, ‘Authority and duty’, 197.

framed his rebuttal of Nestorianism.⁸¹⁷ With this double condemnation of monophysites and Nestorian tendencies Columbanus can be firmly placed in the tradition of Chalcedon but a few scholars have also called attention to textual parallels that occur between his Christological statement and early manuscript material from Bobbio. Michael Lapidge has advanced the hypothesis that the hymn *Precamur Patrem* from the Antiphony of Bangor⁸¹⁸ had been authored by Columbanus in his youth: one of his main arguments is that two lines from the poem *non deest caelo/manens in Trinitate* have a parallel in Columbanus's *Confessio: nequequam deerat caelo, manens in Trinitate*.⁸¹⁹ While a few scholars have argued against Lapidge's attribution of the poem to Columbanus, regarding it as a later imitation of Columbanus's phraseology,⁸²⁰ yet one should also remember the *confessio fidei* from *Ep. III*, which as previously discussed, also shares its Trinitarian formula with hymnodical Irish material, as well as with Columbanus's own *Instructiones*. In light of this and of what has been previously said about the frequency of 'hispanic' language and imagery in this letter, it could be conceded that Columbanus could have been influenced by traditional formulation of Christology from his homeland, regardless of whether he was their author or not. In addition to this parallel, Michele Tosi has highlighted a certain similarity in the theological line of reasoning between Columbanus's *confessio* and the creed *Quicumque vult*. The *Quicumque vult* or Athanasian creed is one of the early Christian professions of faith and its earliest copy is preserved by a late seventh-century Bobbio manuscript.⁸²¹ Tosi presented a complex series of arguments in order to claim that Columbanus

⁸¹⁷Cassian, *De incarnatione Domini contra Nestorium*, 5, 4 ed. Michael Petschening, *Iohannis Cassiani Opera*, CSEL 17 (Wien, 1888), 306 best reflects the same concept expressed here by Columbanus, though the quotation appears also elsewhere in the tract.

⁸¹⁸ The manuscript is in Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, C 5 inf. F. 5v. See Transcription in F.E. Warren *The Antiphony of Bangor. An early Irish Manuscript at the Ambrosian Library in Milan*, II, (London 1895), 5-7.

⁸¹⁹ Lapidge, 'Columbanus and the Antiphony of Bangor', 108-110, reprinted with changes as Lapidge, 'Precamur Patrem: an Easter hymn by Columbanus?', 261.

⁸²⁰ Herren and Brown, *Christ in Celtic Christianity*, 284-288 with translation of the poem; other scholars seem to have endorsed Lapidge's attribution: Claire Stancliffe, 'Venantius Fortunatus, Ireland and Jerome: the evidence of *Precamur Patrem*', 91-95. The poem is attributed to Columbanus by Ó Corrain, *Clavis*, I, 430-431.

⁸²¹ The manuscript is Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, O 212 sup. f. 14r and 14v. A critical text is provided by Cuthbert H. Turner, 'A critical text of the *Quicumque vult*', *The Journal of Theological Studies*, 11, 43 (1910), 401-411. See also Tosi, 'Arianesimo Tricapitolino', 82-84. John N. D. Kelly, *The Athanasian creed. The Paddock lectures for 1962-1963* (London 1964), 82-87 argued for a Southern French origin, around the environment of Lérins.

himself had authored the creed, and that it should be identified with the *Libellus* against the Arians mentioned by Jonas in his *Vita*.⁸²² This suggestion has not been accepted,⁸²³ and hardly ever been discussed. Michele Tosis's arguments are marked by great attention towards the historical context and the religious situation in Lombard Italy at the times of the arrival of Columbanus but they suffer from a certain 'theological determinism' in matters of religious policy on the part of the Lombard court, ultimately derived from Bognetti's theories about the role of Bobbio in the conversion of the Lombards. In Tosi's view, Columbanus actively engaged in debating Arian clergy and constructed his own profession of faith, in the sermons, in the *Epistulae* and, supposedly, in the *Quicumque vult*.⁸²⁴ Moreover, Tosi expressed the existence of coherent strategy in the religious policy of the Lombard kings through the confusing category of 'arianesimo tricapitolino' (pro-Three Chapters Arianism), seemingly indicating that Agilulf and Theodelinda had seamlessly incorporated the Tricapitoline cause within the framework of a pre-existing Lombard Arian religious heterodoxy. This interpretation is incompatible with the prevailing and well-justified skepticism towards the existence of a 'Lombard religious policy' or even of active members of an Arian ecclesiastical hierarchy on the part of more recent scholarship. Nevertheless, Tosi's philological work remains highly valuable: most significantly his discussion of the textual parallels between Columbanus's works and the contents of Ambrosiana O 212 sup. The parallel he noted between the *Quicumque vult* and the present text is this:

Columbanus <i>Ep.</i> V, 13	<i>Quicumque Vult</i> , 31
<i>qui iuxta divinitatem coaeternus est patri et iuxta humanitatem iunior est matre</i>	<i>deus est ex substantia patris ante saecula genitus,</i>
([The Saviour] who is co-eternal to the Father according to his divinity, and younger than his mother according to his humanity)	<i>et homo est ex substantia matris in saeculo natus</i> ([Christ] is God generated before all ages from

⁸²² Jonas, *VC*, I, 29 (ed. Krusch, *Vitae*, 107)

⁸²³ Stancliffe, 'The thirteen sermons', 111-112n81.

⁸²⁴ Tosi, 'Arianesimo Tricapitolino', 61-81, 85-87 and 110-112.

	the substance of the Father and he is a man born in time from the substance of his mother)
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As Tosi observed, the same concept is expressed by Columbanus using a less formal vocabulary.⁸²⁵ Subsequent lines of the creed employ language closer to Columbanus's to express a variation of the same concept: *equalis patri secundum divinitatem, minor patre secundum humanitatem* (*Quicumque vult*, 33 'He is equal to the Father according to his divinity, he is lesser than the Father according to his humanity'). These parallels add to the previously noted usage of the Trinitarian formula from *Ep* III and *Instructio* I, [*trinitas in unitate et unitas in trinitate*]. Moreover Tosi noted other close lexical parallels between Columbanus's works and other two items from the same Bobbio manuscript that preserves the *Quicumque Vult*. These are the *Sermo de ascensione Domini* and the *Sermo de Trinitate*; Tosi convincingly illustrated verbal parallels, respectively, between the former and Columbanus's *Instructio* VIII and XIII and between the latter and Columbanus's *Instructio* I, III and *Ep*. VI.⁸²⁶ Examination of the relationship between these texts falls outside the scope of this project as it would require an examination of Ambrosiana O 212 sup. and a critical assessment not only of the *Epistulae* but also of the *Instructiones*. However, Tosi's philological cross-examination of Columbanus's opus with the contents of the codex Ambrosiano O 212sup. should be viewed in light of some of the results of the present project. The manuscript in question also contains the earliest copies of Gennadius's *Liber Dogmatum* and Bacharius's *De Fide*. As shown in the chapter about the letter to Gregory I, Columbanus was also certainly familiar with both of these texts. In short, all of the material preserved by this manuscript has parallels with, or has been quoted in both Columbanus's *Epistulae* and the *Instructiones*. Several hypothesis can be formulated in order to explain this, but

⁸²⁵Tosi, 'Ariansesimo Tricapitolino', 87

⁸²⁶ Tosi, 'Ariansesimo Tricapitolino', 89-92 and 92-96; because of limitations due to the COVID-19 pandemic, I was not able to access Germain Morin's edition of these text: Germain Morin, 'Deux pieces inédit du disciple de Fauste de Riez, auteur des doi-disant *Instructiones Columbani*', *Revue Charlemagne*, 1 (1911), 162-165. I relied on the palaeographical transcription from Ambrosiana O 212 sup. by Tosi, 'Ariansesimo Tricapitolino', 113-118

it cannot be ruled out that all of these texts predate Columbanus; that he had studied them during his education in Bangor; that he would reference them while writing on the Continent; and perhaps he even collected copies of these texts in a codex that ended up as a part of the earliest Bobbio library, from which the extant codex Ambrosiano O 212 sup. is derived. The matter deserves extensive investigation, as it can help present understanding of the transmission of one of the most important texts of early Christianity, the *Quicumque Vult*, or, at the very least clear up the precise nature of its connections to the writings of Columbanus.

To conclude, Columbanus's *Confessio fidei* is a central part of this letter, perhaps even thematically more significant than the section identified as the *propositio*. Contrary to the *confessio* in *Ep. III* it does not perform the function of granting solemnity to a certain passage or even simply proving the author's goodwill. Damien Bracken has shown that the reference to Gal. 2, 11 connects this confession to the overarching theme of the 'tradition of fraternal correction',⁸²⁷ whereas analysis of the influences on Columbanus has shown, that he relied on the partisan and unreliable account of his Tricapitoline contacts when he questioned the orthodoxy of the Fifth Council but also, on the other hand, that he enunciated his view of the Christological dogma in a way that was both traditionally Chalcedonian and likely influenced, as reflected by the influence of the *Quicumque vult*, by current theological Trinitarian tracts such as they circulated in Latin Christianity.

Section 5.15: Excusatio

Date, quaeso veniam mihi nimis iniurioso asperoque cuidam loquaci, qui de tali caus aliter scribere non potuit. Dum enim veritati per omnia placere volui, azima cum amaritudine non nesciens comedenda, soli Deo servivi, qui est benedictus in saecula. Ego germanitatem meam probavi et zelum fidei meae, dum malui rephensoribus locum dare, quam in tali causa os quamvis ineruditum non aperire. Idcirco quamvis trisulcus arcuato vulnere scorpius insorga in his, de quibus scriptum est *extendere linguam suam sicut arcum mendaci* [Ierem. 9, 3], qui nova quaeque licet epicroca iudicant, copes nimirum effecti hyperbolice, quique oliginosis celotes

⁸²⁷ Bracken, 'Juniors teaching elders', 264-266

palearibus, scriptis quibusque non lepidis invidae refragationis semper opponunt pellacias: sed quando rex gentilis peregrinum scribere Langobardus Scotum hebetem rogat, quando unda torrentis antiqui retro redundat, quis non mirabitur potius quam calumniabitur? Ego tamen non trepidabo neque in causa Dei linguas hominum formidabum, qui frequentius mentiatur quam vera loquantur, cum potius verecundiae resistendum quam ignaviae subiciendum sit, ubi necessitas cogat.

5.15.1 Structure and Style.

After asking his audience to once again pardon his audacity, [*date quaeso veniam mihi*], the author abandons the format of the epistolary conversation, which he had kept alive throughout his admonitions and theological explanations. Walker, following the indications of Metzler, regarded the central portion of the passage as corrupted, in particular, marking the word *celotes* with a *crux desperationis*.⁸²⁸ Johannes Smit has argued that the passage needs no emendation, only a careful understanding of the terminology employed by Columbanus.⁸²⁹ Todde and Nuvolone have more or less ignored Smit's suggestions, proposing their own translation.⁸³⁰ Here it will be argued that Smit's translation is the most accurate. His justification for the specific translations of problematic terms such as *copes*, and *oliginosis celotes palearibus* is based on parallels with patristic literature and glossary entries, rather than on classical texts, as Todde and Nuvolone's explanations do.⁸³¹ Moreover his interpretation has tighter stylistic and thematic connections to the rest of the letter: for example, translating *copes* as 'curved knives', to be used to tear apart a vest, evokes the previously used traditional imagery of the tunic of Christ being torn apart, a representation of inner strife within the Church. The passage [*Idcirco quamvis trisulcus ... opponunt pellacias*]

⁸²⁸ Metzler, St. Gall Stiftsbibliothek 1346, 105 *In Bob. inserebatur haec omnia absque sensu: locus corruptus, cui mederi nequeo.*

⁸²⁹ Smit, *Studies*, 130-140.

⁸³⁰ Todde and Nuvolone, 'Le lettere e la preghiera', 242-245. Their translation diverges from Walker's and Smit's in respect to these clauses: *qui nova quaeque licet epicroca iudicant, copes nimirum effecti hyperbolice, quique oliginosis celotes palearibus, scriptis quibusque non lepidis invidae refragationis semper opponunt pellacias* which they translate 'They, who judge every new thing even when transparent, and who, once enriched in an hyperbolic way like racehorses crowned by olive garlands, always oppose the deceits of a jealous resistance to whichever inelegant writing'. Their translation hinges on understanding the Greek word *epicroca* in its metaphorical and not primary meaning, it follows Walker's on the translation of *copes effecti* and it argues for the word *copes* to be derivative of the Greek κέλης 'racehorse'.

⁸³¹ Smit, *Studies*, 137-139. Todde and Nuvolone, 'Le lettere e la preghiera', 243-245n136 justify their translation of *celotes* with references to Gellius and Pliny the Elder

should be translated as : ‘Therefore although the scorpion with his tri-forked tongue, with his curved sting may rise up in those of whom it is written: they bent their tongues like a bow of falsehood, who support everything that is new even though it is but a threadbare garment, thus making themselves into knives, (speaking figuratively), and who, these envious people with their proud fat necks always oppose the deceits of their jealous antagonism to whatever writings that are lacking in elegance.’ This translation distances itself from Smit’s only in translating *in his* as ‘in those’ and not ‘against those’, since the latter translation would imply an accusative *in hos* and would be non-sensical as the people represented by the scorpions rising its tail and those represented by the *arcum mendacii* from Ierem. 9, 3 are clearly meant to be the same. The stylistic adornment of the passage consists mainly of parallelism and homeoteleuton [*non trepidabo neque in causa Dei linguas hominum formidabo; qui frequentius mentiantur quam vera loquantur; potius verecundiae resistendum quam ignaviae subiciendum*] and in a return to emphatic word-order.⁸³²

5.15.2 Epistolary qualities

As argued by Smit, the passage is ultimately another *excusatio* which makes use of Columbanus’s usual *non presumptionis sed necessitate* argument. It is one of its most extended and articulated uses: not only the author admits his discomfort [*azyma cum amaritudine non nesciens comedenda*], but he highlights how he has given ground to his detractors to argue against him [*dum malui reprehensoribus locum dare*], simply by speaking up. Perhaps the phrase can be interpreted as a reference to other members of this epistolary exchange, possibly the aforementioned Agrippinus, who, dissatisfied with Columbanus’s moderate take on the Tricapitoline question and with his insistence on seeking reconciliation with Rome, could have depicted the Irishman himself as a hopeless heretic. These nebulous detractors are the object of the next piece of metaphorical and figurative language of the letter, this time fulfilling the role of

⁸³² The hyperbata are: type aVA: *azyma cum amaritudine non nesciens comedenda*; type abBA: *trisulcus arcuato vulnere scorpius*; type aBA: *oliginosis celotes palearibus*; complex type: *rex gentilis peregrinum scribere Longobardus Scotum hebetem rogat*.

an invective. The imagery used is derived once again from the works of Jerome and from traditional Early Christian exegesis.⁸³³

An interesting parallel with contemporary epistolary literature can be found in king Sisebut's letter to Theodelinda and her son Adaloald. The Visigothic king, likely writing during Theodelinda's regency for her son (616-620), addressed an exhortation to the Lombard court, inciting them to act against the spreading of the Arian heresy among their people.⁸³⁴ When depicting the damaging actions of the heretics, Sisebut uses the expression *per scorpionum vulnerati uncati aculei* ('wounded by the curved sting of the scorpions'), remarkably similar to Columbanus's *trisulcus arcuato vulnere scorpius* in the depiction of his own critics. It should be remembered that the motive of the stinging scorpion is a common metaphorical depiction of heresies and heretics, occurring no less than four times in the works of Jerome alone, so it is not necessary to suppose that Sisebut was influenced by Columbanus's letter to Boniface IV. Rather, even though Sisebut appears to be rather unconcerned, or completely ignorant of, the Three Chapters crisis,⁸³⁵ the parallel could help in tracing the historical profile of Columbanus's unnamed adversaries. Doing away with Bognetti's and Tosi's interpretation of monolithic Tricapitoline and Arian factions at the court of Theodelinda and Agilulf, one is left with a group of clergymen who have accused the Pope and are hostile to Columbanus's diplomatic action at some time between late 612 and 615 and with another group of clergymen of heterodox leanings, stirring up troubles a few years later according to Sisebut, who could have labelled them as Arians in the same uncritical way in which Gregory I and Columbanus had, possibly even projecting an evaluation of the past of his own kingdom onto the confusing situation in Lombard Italy.⁸³⁶ It is not a stretch to suppose that these two groups of clergymen might have been one and the same. Theodelinda, as attested by her correspondence with Gregory I had been looking towards collaboration with the Roman church, even if seemingly sympathetic to the Tricapitoline cause as

⁸³³ Extensive discussion in Smit, *Studies*, 132-139.

⁸³⁴ Sisebut, *Ep. Ad Theodelindam et Adalaldum* ed. Willhelm Gundlach, *Epistolae wisigoticae*, 9, MGH *Epistolae*, 3, 658-690:671-675. On the dating and composition of this letter see Oriol Dinarès, 'La carta de Sisebut a Adaloaldo y Teodolinda: el reino arriano en la perspectiva de un rey visigoto del siglo VII', *Hispania Sacra*, 71, 144 (2019), 379-388.

⁸³⁵ Dinarès 'La carta de Sisebuto', 380n12.

⁸³⁶ Dinarès 'La carta de Sisebuto', 386.

exposed by Secundus; this letter of Columbanus seems to suggest that during the final years of his reign Agilulf was following a policy similar to that of his wife, backing Columbanus's diplomatic approach even if before he had shown open support for the Aquileian schismatics. This shift to a stance more open to dialogue might have sidelined groups of Tricapitoline 'hardliners' who had no interest in reaching an agreement with Rome. These, a group which perhaps included Agrippinus, seem to be those who supplied Columbanus with a clearly partisan interpretation of Vigilius's actions and of the decrees of the Fifth Council, and those who are here being referred to, who could have criticised his *germanitatem* ('frankness' or 'genuinity') in approaching the Pope. During Adaloald's reign (616-626) a split in the Tricapitoline faction between moderates who followed Theodelinda's policies and those unwilling to compromise could have led to the religious unrest detected by Sisebut. It would also explain the hostility of the Aquileian schismatics to the Columbanian houses of Bobbio and Luxeuil during the Agrestius affaire as narrated by Jonas, and their willingness to seek out support from king Arioald, who had ousted Adaloald from power.⁸³⁷

Finally, it should be noted how, for the first time, the author employs the term *Scotus* to define his own ethnic identity, having previously consistently used the term *Iberi* to refer to the Irish. The author is here reiterating a rhetorical conceit introduced in the *exordium* and that which will be further expanded upon in the valediction of the letter: the fact that a sinful local king, [*rex gentilis*] a 'heathen king', like 'Arian' a catch-all term for heterodoxy and not a doctrinal definition of Agilulf's religious preferences, has joined forces with a dull-witted [*hebetem*] travelling foreigner [*peregrinum*] in order to end a schism of the church, is a source of immense wonder [*quis non mirabitur?*] and nothing short of proof of divine intervention. The conceit makes full use of the *topos* of epistolary *humilitas* and of the Christian idea that divine providence can act through the most lowly means. In this context, the terms *Longobardus* and *Scotus* are best understood as carrying a negative connotation. This would have been no surprise for the Pope as far as *Longobardus* is concerned, with the recently founded kingdom being a perennial threat and source

⁸³⁷ Jonas, *VC*, II, 9-10 (Krusch, ed. *Vitae*, 123-130). Translated in O'Hara and Wood, *Lives*, 193-204; Honorius, *Epistola ad Hydatium* and *Epistola ad episcopos Istriae et Venetiae*, (Gundlach, ed. *Epistolae langobardicae collectae*, 2 and 3, 694-696)

of military anxiety for Rome. On the other hand, *Scotus* had been used before in Christian sources to define the Irish⁸³⁸ but Columbanus's usage could be considered influenced by the connotation that the terms has in the works of Gildas and even of Patrick, where it refers to one of the bands of maradeurs who plagued Britain.⁸³⁹ Placing, by way of a very significant hyperbaton, the Lombard brigand-king right next to the author himself as an inelegant 'Scottish pirate' would fit the generally self-deprecating mood of this rhetorical conceit. Moreover, the seventh-century *Origo gentis Langobardorum* refers to Agilulf as *dux Turingus de Thaurinis* 'the Thuringian duke of Turin' and the possibility that Columbanus's patron was not an 'ethnic' Lombard but a leader of one of their confederated subgroups has been contemplated by scholars.⁸⁴⁰ It does not seem likely that Columbanus would have attached importance, or even known about this detail, since Agilulf was at this point uncontested leader of the Lombard kingdom, but it cannot be excluded, as he likely addressed him not by the name with which he is mainly referred to by Paul the Deacon, but as Ago,⁸⁴¹ the name he is attributed by the *Origo*. If this is the case, perhaps, even Columbanus's own self-definition as a *Scotus* might have been born out of the specific context of this passage and he would have not recognised himself as *Scotus* in other circumstances.

Section 5.16: paraenetic style

Igitur, ut ad id loci regrediar unde digressus sum, rogo vos, quia multi dubitant de fidei vestrae puritate, ut cito tollatis hunc naevum de sanctae cathedrae claritate; non enim decet Romanae ecclesiae gravitatem haec instantis levitatis fama, ut qualibet vi possit moveri a soliditate, verae fidei, pro qua tot martyres sui suum sanguinem fuderunt, malentes mori quam convelli. Numquid enim, si in nostris temporibus persecutio venerit ultima squammae illius invisae, cuius corium vix universae naves poterunt portare [Iob 40, 26], non usque ad sanguinem resistemus adversus peccato repugnando [Heb. 12, 4], sicut patres nostri fecerunt, apostolos dico et tot martyres? Si

⁸³⁸Most significantly, Prosper, *Chronicon*, ccciv, ed. Theodor Mommsen, *Prosperi Tironis Epitoma Chronicon*, MGH, *Auct. Ant.* 9, (Berlin 1892), 473, recorded that Pope Celestinus had sent Palladius as the first bishop for 'the Scots who believe in Christ' [*ad Scottos in Christum credentes*]

⁸³⁹Gildas, *De excidio*, 14, 1; 19, 1 and elsewhere (Winterbottom, ed. *The ruin of Britain*, 93, 95); Patrick, *Epistola ad milites Corotici*, 2 (Bieler, ed. *Libri Epistolarum*, I, 92).

⁸⁴⁰*Origo Gentis Langobardorum*, 6 ed. Georg Waitz, *OrigoGentis Langobardorum*, MGH, *Scriptores rerum langobardicarum et italicarum*, 1-7:5.

⁸⁴¹See Smit, *Studies*, 160.

gravis fuit persecutio in initio fidei, quanto magis in fine, de quo Dominus dicit: *putasne veniens filius hominis inveniatur fides in terra?*[Luc. 18, 28]Et iterum: *nisi brevitati fuissent dies illi, non fieret omnis caro salva* [Matt. 24, 22]. Felix, quem mors ante tollat quam infirmus neget. Dicit tamen electos ibi futuros, de quibus nimirum praedixit discipulis suis: *ecce ego vobiscum sum omnibus diebus usque ad consummatione saeculi* [Matt. 28, 20].Cum itaque electi futuri in diebus illis periculosioribus ceteris ante etiam ac retro incomparabilibus sustinebunt, Domino roborante, maiora, cur nos in tutioribus adhuc ac securioribus vel pro fide nostra, qua ethnicis ac Iudaeis ac hereticis differimus, non sustinebimus, Domino adiuvante, minora?

5.16.1 Structure and style

The author briefly return to address his audience directly [*rogo ... ut tollatis*], but formulates his rhetorical interrogations in the first person plural [*resistemus; differimus; sustinebimus*], thus placing himself on the same level as his audience. Once again preference is given to complex periods with several degrees of subordination. Of note is a *cum*-clause with the verb in the indicative mood [*cum itaque ... sustinebunt maiora*], which is set up in a parallel construction with the main clause of the period [*Cur nos ... non sustinebimus ... minora*]; the parallel is highlighted by two specular ablative absolute constructions [*Domino roborante* and *Domino adiuvante*]. Rhetorical emphasis is sought only through interrogations and an exclamation [*felix quem mors ante tollat quam infirmus neget*], while the word-order is relatively plain.⁸⁴² As in the ‘exegetical’ passages of *Ep. II*, biblical quotes are both introduced in an explicit way [*de quo Dominus dicit;et iterum; de quibus nimirum praedixit discipulis suis*] and inserted in the structure of each period.

5.16.2 Epistolary qualities and sources

The passage moves back to a paraenetic tone since, although a large portion of it is dedicated to exegetical considerations about the last persecution at the end of times, these serve the purpose of arguing that, if the Pope has been wronged by his accusators who doubt his faith [*multi dubitant*

⁸⁴² Three hyperbata can be found: type abBA: *haec instantis levitates fama*; type aVA: *persecutio venerit ultima*, and *gravis fuit persecutio*. Wright, ‘Columbanus’s *Epistulae*’, 88-92 attributes these instances to Walker’s paragraph 16 and not 15.

de fidei vestrae puritate], he should maintain his faith as if undergoing a minor persecution [*minora*]. Columbanus's audience should find both motivation and solace in knowing that past martyrs have suffered for the faith without wavering [*malentes mori quam convelle*] and that the last persecution at the end of times will be much more severe, but there will still be people who will leave through it and be saved [*electi in diebus illis*]. Firmness [*soliditate*] derived from knowledge of these spiritual truth, the author argues, will be necessary to scrape the wart [*hunc naevum*] of the accusation of heresy against the Roman See.

The role of the martyrs, especially Peter and Paul, in establishing the catholic faith of Rome has been one of the recurring themes of the letter, and it is here associated with the eschatological tension that permeated Columbanus's appeals to spiritual and moral vigilance. In order to make this association Columbanus uses very specific imagery to refer to persecution at the end of times. This will be enacted by the devil, here referred to as 'that abominable dragon' [*squammae illius invisae*], as in the Apocalypse, but simply named *squamma*, which is a synecdoche mentioning the part 'a scale', for the whole. As Eucherius of Lyon had done, Columbanus identifies the Leviathan from the Book of Job with the eschatological dragon, even citing the same versicle as the bishop of Lyon, from an Old Latin translation of the Bible, which reads 'should all the ships in the world come together they could not lift the hide of its tail' [*Omnes naues si conueniant, non sustinent corium caudae eius*].⁸⁴³ It is possible that there is connection between this description of the devil, which, ultimately is one of Columbanus's many sea metaphors, and the occurrence of 'hisperic' vocabulary and phrases in previous passages. It should be remembered that one of his truly 'hisperic' phrases, *turgescens dodrantem* is cited in connection to the commentary on the book of Job by Philip the Presbyter, the tract that is the likely origin for the 'hisperic' misinterpretation of words such as *dodrans* and *gurgustum*.⁸⁴⁴ The Leviathan from the Book of Job is also relevant in the development of the imagery of the tidal monster of the early Irish vernacular tradition,

⁸⁴³ Eucherius, *Instructionum ad Salonium libri, I, de Job*, 3 ed. Carmela Mandolfo, *Formulae spiritalis intelligentiae. Instructionum libri duo*, CCSL 66 (Turnhout, 2005), 101, l. 405. The biblical passage is accepted in the Greek Septuaginta but omitted in the Vulgate see Pierre Sabatier, *Bibliorum sacrorum Latinae versiones Antiquae*, I (Paris, 1743), 904n26. Besides Eucherius, Columbanus seems to have been the only author to cite it. Todde, 'Le metafore del mare', 168-169 ventures into a biographical interpretation of the imagery without pointing out its biblical origins.

⁸⁴⁴ Brown, 'Bede, a Hisperic etymology and early sea poetry', 421.

which also figures in computistical manuscripts.⁸⁴⁵ Perhaps Columbanus, as in the case of the allegory of Christ riding over the waves, was here relying on exegetical texts (perhaps that *prologus* that could be attributed to him?) from which the ‘hispanic’ tradition of sea imagery was also derived.

Section 5.17: Excusatio

Sed talia suadenti, utpote torpenti actu ac dicenti potius quam facienti mihi Ionae hebraice, Peristerae graece, Columbae latine, potius **tamen** vestrae idiomate linguae nanto, licet prisco **inter hebraeos** nomine, cuius et pene subivi naufragium, veniam, quaeso, sicut saepe rogavi, date, quia necessitate magis quam cenodoxia scribere coactus sum, dum quidam litteris suis, quibus me primo pene ingressu in huius regionis terminos arripuit, vos mihi cavendos, tamquam in Nestorii sectam decedentes, significavit. Cui attonitus respondi in brevi, ut potui, non credens suae allegationi; sed ne ullo modo veritati essem contrarius, iuxta suam epistolam et iuxta meam bonam de vobis aestimationem – ego enim credo semper columnam ecclesiae firmam esse in Roma- responsum variavi, quod vobis direxi relegendum ac concertandum, sicubi contra veritatem venit; non enim me inter irreprehensibiles profiteri audeo. Post hanc autem scribendi occasionem insuper regis insistit iussio **Agonis**, cuius postulatio me in stuporem ac in sollicitudinem posuit multeplicem; quippe quia non sine miraculo reor esse, quod video. Reges namque Arrianam hanc labem in hac diu regione, calcando fidem catholicam, firmarunt; nunc nostram rogant roborari fidem. Forte Christus pie nunc nos respicit, cuius favore omne nascitur bonum. Nos valde miseri sumus, si nostra de parte scandalum amplius fiat.

5.17.1 Readings

Sed talia suadenti, utpote torpenti actu ac dicenti potius	Sed talia suadenti, utpote torpenti actu ac dicenti potius	Sed talia suadenti, utpote torpenti actu ac dicenti potius
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⁸⁴⁵JacquelineBorsje, ‘The movement of water as symbolised by monsters in early Irish texts’, *Peritia* 11 (1997) 153-170. See also Bisagni, ‘Breton manuscripts and the transmission of Computus between the Celtic West and the Carolingian Empire’, 3 and his discussion of the contents of Laon, Bibliothèque Municipale, 422. I must thank Dr Bisagni for pointing out this possible connection and the relevant references to me.

quam facienti mihi Ionae hebraice, Peristerae graece, Columbae latine, potius tantum vestrae idiomate linguae nancto, licet prisco utor hebraeo nomine, cuius et pene subivi naufragium, veniam, quaeso, sicut saepe rogavi [Walker, 54, 16, 19-21]	quam facienti mihi Ionae hebraice, Peristerae graece, Columbae latine, potius *tantum vestrae idiomate linguae *nancto, licet prisco *inter hebraeo nomine, cuius et pene subivi naufragium, veniam, quaeso, sicut saepe rogavi *al. tamen * al. nuncupato *al. nitar[F, 144]	quam facienti mihi Ionae hebraice, Peristerae graece, Columbae latine, potius tantum vestrae idiomate linguae nacto, licet prisco inter Hebraeos nomine, cuius et pene naufragium subivi, veniam, quaeso, sicut saepe rogavi [M, 107]
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The passage presents a number of difficulties, but the main one is whether *utor*, which was first introduced by Gundlach, as a way to explain the ablative *hebraeo*, in F should be maintained⁸⁴⁶. While Walker chose to do so, it has been rejected by Smit, Bieler and Wright⁸⁴⁷. As a consequence the ablative *prisco nomine* had been changed into a nominative, the subject of concessive clause introduced by *licet* and whose predicate (*est*) is omitted. Smit has justified this choice on two basis: firstly that it is possible that an original *nomen eius* (written *nomen ē*) was changed due to a palaeographical error. Secondly, having drawn attention to the lexical parallels with a passage found in Adomnan's *Vita Columbae* he argued that, similarly, the focus of the passage ought to be on how Jonas/Peristera/Columba is a particular meaningful name⁸⁴⁸. He translated: 'I am called Jonas in Hebrew, Peristera in Greek, and above all Columba in Latin, for in the sound of your language I have received a name so rich in meaning –however ancient and venerable among the Jews – from him whose shipwreck I have also almost undergone'. This translation however puts undue emphasis on the Latin version of the name [*latine potius*]. It is

⁸⁴⁶ Gundlach, ed. *Epistolae*, 176

⁸⁴⁷ Smit, *Studies*, 158-159; Bieler, Review in *Latomus*, 897; Wright, 'Columbanus's Epistulae', 58

⁸⁴⁸ Smit, *Studies*, 142. The passage in question is Adomnan, *Vita Columbae*, 2. *Vir erat [...] providentia creditur*.

clear from the context that Latin is most definitely not the only language for which the name is ‘rich in meaning’ (*tantum*; the translation is here strongly influenced by Adomnan’s passage). Furthermore, this translation would leave unexplained why Columbanus would embark on an etymological excursus on his own name in the middle of one of his many *excusationes* [*veniam quaeso*]. The solution might be found in the fact that the similarities with Adomnan’s passage are misleading, and emphasis is not put on the special meaning of the name but on the fact that it was carried by a man who was reluctant and more inclined to argue than to act [*torpenti actu atque dicenti potius quam facienti*] when carrying out God’s mission (just as Columbanus perceives himself to have been). Columbanus is here referencing the biblical narrative, in which the prophet Jonah first attempted to escape from God’s command (Jonah, 1, 3-16) then displayed propensity to speech, with the last episode of his book revolving around two of his remarks (Jonah, 4). The choice of word (*torpenti actu*) might even reflect Jonah’s sleep on the ship during his escape; fighting against sloth is a recurring theme in the *Epistulae*, usually expressed through vocabulary connected to sleep.

By accepting Fleming’s suggestion of *tamen* for *tantum* and integrating it with Smit’s other emendations, Bieler’s rendition is less faulty and suits the context⁸⁴⁹. One could translate the whole passage along these lines: ‘I ask pardon for me, as I give you such advice, as if I was sluggish in deeds and speaking rather than doing (having received the name – Ionas in Hebrew, Peristera in Greek, Columba in Latin, preferably (*potius tamen*) in the sounds of your language – though it is an ancient name among the Jews (*inter haebreos*), of him whose shipwreck I too have almost undergone)’. Finally, as mentioned above, the readings of F and M suggest that Columbanus was referring to Agilulf as Ago, a name attested in multiple sources.⁸⁵⁰

5.17.2 Structure and Style

As in the previous passage, the audience is addressed only once, with a verb in the imperative mood [*date*]. Even though the passage mainly consists of an account of the circumstances

⁸⁴⁹Bieler, Review in *Latomus*, 897

⁸⁵⁰Smit, *Studies*, 160

surrounding the composition of the letter, rhetorical elaboration is rather significant. Accumulation is the most sought after effect: in the opening sentence it is obtained through the quick succession of rhyming participle constructions [*sed talia suadenti, utpote torpenti actu ac dicenti potius quam facienti*], while throughout the rest of the passage parenthetical clauses [*quaeso, sicut saepe rogavi, ut potui, ego enim credo semper ... in Romam*]. Subordination is prevalent, though coordination by asyndeton is also present. Word-order is emphatic, with several hyperbata.⁸⁵¹

5.17.3 Epistolary qualities

The function of this passage is partly that of the many other *excusationes* found in this letter: once again the author requests his audience's pardon for speaking plainly, with the justification that necessity [*necessitate*] and not vainglory [*cenodoxia*] has motivated in. Uncharacteristically, the passage is also partly an account of the circumstances surrounding the composition of the letter: in all of his other letters this function is absolved by the *exordium*. Columbanus's summary of previous events right before his valediction to Boniface IV finds no parallel in his own epistolary production,⁸⁵² and it seems to be a rarity in letters by other authors. However, it should be noted that the contents of Cumman's letter is organised along very similar lines: the synod of Mag Léne, the subsequent debate and the sending of envoys to Rome, all events which have led up to the author's decision of writing to the abbot of Iona, are narrated in a reporting passage, right before a final peroration and the valediction.⁸⁵³ Similarly, most of the events which Columbanus had previously only alluded to, are here narrated in an orderly fashion.

Columbanus recounts how someone wrote a letter to him [*quidam litteris suis*], as soon as he had entered Italy [*in huius regionis terminibus*, with an accusation of Nestorianism against the Pope [*in Nestorii sectam decidentes*]]. He further explains that he has briefly responded to this unidentified

⁸⁵¹ Type aBA: *vestrae idiomate linguae; prisco inter hebraeos nomine; iuxta meam bona de vobis aestimationem*; type aVA: *regis insistit iussio Agonis; in solitudinem posuit multiplicem; nostram rogant roborari fidem*.

⁸⁵² Columbanus, *Ep. IV*, 8 (Walker, ed. *Opera*, 34) could be considered close enough as it is an example of reporting style; yet that passage presents itself as real-time depiction of the writer's actions, not of previous events.

⁸⁵³ Cumman, *Epistula de controversia Paschali*, l. 256-288 (Walsh and Ó Cróinín, eds. *Cumman's letter*, 90-94).

character [*respondi in brevi*], adjusted the contents of this first answer [*responsum variavi*] and sent it to Rome [*quod vobis direxi relegendum ac concertandum*]. Apparently unrelated to this set of events, is the command [*iussio*] of king Agilulf. As previously stated, it seems likely that the unnamed person who first wrote to Columbanus is Agrippinus, who had been previously indicated as the person who first motivated Columbanus's decision of writing to the Pope, and whose letter the author has seemingly attached to the present one.⁸⁵⁴ If this unnamed character is indeed Agrippinus and he can be identified with the bishop of Como of the same name, the situation described by Columbanus would allow to reconstruct his itinerary into Italy, or at least its last stages. As suggested by Angelo Roncoroni, combining this information with the knowledge that Agrippinus was operating in the northern reaches of Lake Como, it seems likely that Columbanus had crossed the Alps following the existing Roman roads, reaching the west bank of the lake from present-day Val Chiavenna.⁸⁵⁵

The letter received by Columbanus alleged that the Pope had fallen prey to the Nestorian heresy. Columbanus had previously referenced a clearly doctored quotation of the canons of the Fifth Council that made it look as if the doctrines of Nestorius had been the object of its approval. In light of this passage, it seems likely that that particular bit of misinformation had been transmitted to him by way of this first letter. It is difficult to assess whether, even among the schismatics, there was a genuine belief that the Pope had lapsed into a very specific heresy. On the one hand, the accusation of Nestorianism is consistent with another misinterpretation of the whole controversy, the one found in the letter of Nicetius of Trier to Emperor Justinian.⁸⁵⁶ On the other, both that letter and this one emphasise the role of the Fifth Council in rendering the decision of Chalcedon null and void, thus rehabilitating both Eutyches's monophysism and Nestorius's dyophysism. Perhaps this discrepancy depends on how information circulated in Tricapitoline

⁸⁵⁴ Columbanus, *Ep. V*, 3 (Walker, ed. *Opera*, 40)

⁸⁵⁵ Angelo Roncoroni, 'L'epitaffio di S. Agrippino nella chiesa di S. Eufemia ad Isola', *Rivista archeologica della dell'antica provincia e diocesi di Como*, 162, (1980), 99-149:143 and n63; Bullough, 'The career of Columbanus', 23n69 criticised Roncoroni's suggestion. However, if the identification of Agrippinus is accepted, Columbanus's wording here can only be interpreted in the way Roncoroni did.

⁸⁵⁶ Nicetius, *Ep. ad Iustinianum*, (Gundlach, ed. *Epistolae Austrasicae*, 7, 119), translated in H. A. Pohlsander 'A call to repentance.', 466, initially accomanated Euthyches and Nestorius, but the accusation formulated against Justinian is clearly of Nestorianism. See Grey and Herren, 'Columbanus and the Three Chapters controversy', 168.

circles: from the letter of Columbanus it would seem that a version of the canons of Constantinople was among the material used to incriminate the Pope, but both Columbanus's confession and the point of contact that his letter has with documents such as the letter of Ferrandus the Deacon suggest that he had been exposed to material that stressed the authority of the Council Chalcedon, and the damage that the Fifth Council had done to its decision. It could be ventured that Columbanus had formed his ideas about the Fifth Council from a variety of sources, perhaps pushing different accusations. Since the policy of diplomatic re-approachment with Rome pursued by the Lombard court ante-dates his arrival in Italy, one hypothesis could be that the parts of Columbanus's exhortation that align more with the eventual goal of re-establishing communion might have been supported by Agilulf, Theodelinda and the Tricapitoline clergymen at their court. These would be elements such as the insistence on not celebrating the memory of Vigilius, and the need for a new Council. Instead, elements such as this explicit accusation of Nestorianism or the doctored understanding of the canons of Constantinople would be the result of Columbanus's contact with Agrippinus or other possible members of a 'hardliner party', who was bent on keeping its distance from the Roman see.

As noted above, it is significant that Agilulf's *iussio* is kept distinct from the first phase of Columbanus's interaction with members of the schismatic clergy. In the context of the letter, this mention of Agilulf represents the culmination of a rhetorical conceit aimed at gaining the attention of the Pope. Columbanus states, this time explicitly, that the fact that Agilulf is trying to reinforce unity within the church [*nostrum rogant roborari fidem*], is a sign of divine intervention [*non sine miraculo reor esse*], and approval [*Christus pie nunc nos respicit*]. Columbanus's rhetorical strategy here would only be effective if the Lombard monarchy had been previously known as a centre of heterodoxy. By all means, this appears to be the case, with Columbanus's reiterating that Agilulf, *rex gentilis*, reigns over a people that have helped to strengthen [*firmaverunt*] the Arian heresy [*Arrianam hanc labem*]. As observed by Fanning,⁸⁵⁷ this does not mean that Columbanus considered the Lombard kings to have been Arian themselves, but that he was aware of past and present openings to heterodox clergymen. The ambivalent attitude of the

⁸⁵⁷ Fanning, 'Lombard Arianism reconsidered', 254n26

Lombard monarchy towards possible surviving remnants of Arian churches is here confirmed by Columbanus, who, likely familiar with Gregory I's preoccupations, used it as a sort of rhetorical leverage when perorating his case. One needs not assume this to be a reference to any specific event, such as Authari's prohibition against Catholic baptism, rather, there is merely the presence of heterodoxy in the background, which the newly established Lombard monarchy would not or could not completely silence.⁸⁵⁸ Columbanus simply threatens the Pope with the possibility that such forces could return to be a privileged interlocutor of the Lombard court if the schism is not resolved.

Finally the last bit of *ethopoieia* or 'character-building', of the *Epistolae* should be noted. Columbanus had already called attention to the mystical meaning of his name in the letter to Pope Gregory. Here, anchoring the notion of a special significance of his name to the Irish exegetical ideal of the *tres linguae sacrae* he repeats that he carries the name of the prophet Jonah, 'whose shipwreck I too have almost undergone' [*cuius et pene subivi naufragium*]. This last phrase needs to be connected with the narrative of Jonas of Bobbio on the one hand, and with the valediction of *Ep. IV* on the other. Already aware of the Biblical suggestions carried by his name, Columbanus integrated an episode of his life into the character of his epistolary voice. Not only that voice, carrying Jonah's name, should be listened to, as Jonah has been listened to in Nineveh, but the person sending out the message is a second Jonah, who had undergone the same defining experience in his life, a shipwreck. Most notable is the continuity with *Ep. IV*, where the authorial voice of Columbanus was wishing to undergo said shipwreck.⁸⁵⁹ After his return to Francia and his journey to Italy, Columbanus has become Jonah in every aspect, not just the name.

Section 5.18: Valedictio, exhortatory style.

Rogat itaque rex rogatque regina, rogant te toti, ut quam celerrime possit fieri, fiant omnia unum, fiat ut patriae pax, pax fiat mox fidei ut toti deniceps grex unus Christi fiat. Rex Regem, tu

⁸⁵⁸Majocchi, 'The Lombards and the Ghost of Arianism', 238 and Dunn, 'Lombard religiosity reconsidered' 106 speak respectively of moderate religious tolerance on the part of the Lombards and of the 'microcosm' of popular religious practices and cults interfering with institutional Christianity. Both elements need to be taken into account.

⁸⁵⁹ Columbanus, *Ep. IV*, 8 (Walker, ed. *Opera*, 34)

Petrum, te tota sequatur ecclesia. Quid suavius pace per bella? Quid dulcis coniunctione fratrum diu separatorum? Quam alacer annos supervenit pater post multos? Quam suave diu expectanti matri narratur adventus? Ita Deo patri pax filiorum gaudium erit in aevum saeculorum et laetitia ecclesiae matris tripudium fiet sempiternitas. De cetero, sancte papa et fratres, orate pro me, vilissimo peccatore, et meis comperegrinis iuxta loca sancta et sanctorum cineres et praecipue iuxta Petrum et Paulum, viros similiter et magnos magni regis duces ac fortissimos campi felicissimi bellatores dominum crucifixum cum cruore sequentes, ut mereamur Christo haerere, placere, gratias agere eumque cum patre et spiritu sancto sine fine laudare vobiscum, cum omnibus sanctis hic et in aeterna saecula saeculorum. Amen.

5.18.1 Structure and Style

The valediction is highly emphatic and elaborated. The central section is taken up by Columbanus's usual string of rhetorical questions, while the initial and closing sections directly address the audience. Once again the mode of address switches from second person singular [*tu; te*] and second person plural [*orate*]; however, this time it is clear that while at first the author is singling out the Pontiff, he later addresses the Roman church at large [*sancte papa et fratres*]. Various devices are used, all of them common occurrences of Columbanus's writing style. The passage opens with alliteration [*Rogat itaque rex rogatque regina, rogant te toti*], and elaborated constructions such as chiasmus with anaphora [*fiant omnia unum, fiat ut patriae pax, pax fiat mox fidei, ut toti deinceps grex unus Christi fiat*], parallelism [*Rex regem, tu Petrum, te tota sequatur ecclesia; Deo patri pax filiorum gaudium erit in aevum saeculorum et laetitia ecclesiae matris tripudium fiet sempiternitatis*] and tricolon [*Christo haerere, placere, gratias agere*]. Even word-order often follows a chiasmic disposition [*magnos magni regis duces; fortissimos campi felicissimi bellatores; quam alacer annos supervenit pater post multos*], with other types of hyperbaton being also found [type aVA: *omne nascitur bonum; tota sequatur ecclesia*]. Todde and Nuvolone amended Walker's text by reinstating the reading *rex regum* instead of *rex regem*.⁸⁶⁰

⁸⁶⁰ Todde and Nuvolone, 'Le lettere e la preghiera', 252 and 253n160.

The text as presented follows Walker, because his choice is stylistically consistent with the rest of the letter.

5.18.2 Epistolary qualities

The valediction can be divided into three stages: 1. A first exhortation that sums up and reiterates the need for unity, naming the author's patrons and his addressee [*Rogat itauq rex ... sequatur ecclesia*]. 2. A string of rhetorical questions that highlights the positive results of the actions requested by the writer [*quid suavius pace ... fiet sempiternitatis*]. 3. The usual request for prayers on the writer's behalf, here, as in *Ep.* I and III, accompanied by a special mention of the relics [*cineres*] of the Roman saints [*de caetero, sancte papa ... saecula saeculorum. Amen*].

As noted by Elva Johnston,⁸⁶¹ this valediction is the culmination of several thematic strands of the letter, not last the characterization of the church as a mother [*ecclesiae matris*] and the active role of the queen in this bit of diplomatic activity [*rogatque regina*]. Other strands brought together in this last plea for unity are the authority of the pontiff, a father who should return home to the mother church [*quam alacer annos supervenit pater post multos*], and how this authority is just a reflection of that of the martyrs, particularly Peter and Paul, [*sanctorum cineres et precipue iuxta Petrum et Paulum*] for whom the imagery of the bloody battlefield of Christian life is brought up again. Overall, the final plea of Columbanus is one for unity and reparation of past misunderstandings. His diplomatic stance is consistent with that found in past interactions between Pope Gregory I and queen Theodelinda; this leaves the door open for further speculation about the role of Bobbio in the subsequent ecclesiastical history of the Lombards. Even though Giampietro Bognetti's idea of a 'missionary centre' is now outdated, scholars such as Michael Richter have postulated that the legacy of Columbanus's calls for unity can be seen in the role played by Bobbio and its scriptorium in the eventual resolution of the schism.⁸⁶² However, even this proposition is difficult to prove. From the contents of this letter, it seems that the schism had caused divisions and factions that were always changing and in flux: while Columbanus was trying to reach out to the Pope and to the Lombard royal couple at the same time, it cannot be

⁸⁶¹ Johnston, 'Movers and shakers', 84.

⁸⁶² Richter, *Bobbio in the Early Middle Ages*, 88.

ruled out that the main audience for this letter were those members of the schismatic clergy that had first contacted him. To suppose that Bobbio as an institution and a royal foundation took up Columbanus's mediating role, while possible to a certain extent, does not take into account how the goals and methods of the various faction with a vested interest in the Three Chapters controversy might have changed overtime. What is clear is that, while from the point of view of the theological debate among Eastern Christianity Columbanus's letter is 'astonishingly ill-informed',⁸⁶³ from the limited perspective of the political situation in Northern Italy, Columbanus the *peregrinus* left a document that addressed the concerns of more than one party, appealed to the Pope by referencing complex exegetical traditions, and showed himself to have gathered information at the best of his abilities

⁸⁶³ Price, *The Acts of the Council of Constantinople of 553*, I, 34.

CONCLUSIONS

1. General characteristics of the collection

The following table offers a summary and an overview of the structural characteristics of the letter collection in its entirety.

	<i>Epistula I</i>	<i>Epistula II</i>	<i>Epistula III</i>	<i>Epistula IV</i>	<i>Epistula V</i>
a. Typology	<i>Epistola negotialis</i>	<i>Epistola negotialis</i>	<i>Epistola negotialis</i>	<i>Epistola familiaris</i>	<i>Epistola negotialis</i>
b. Structure	Mixed: Structured <i>Exhortatio</i> with an inquiring section	Unstructured <i>Exhortatio</i>	Structured <i>Exhortatio</i>	Structured <i>Consolatio</i>	Unstructured <i>Exhortatio</i>
c. Tone	Paraenetic and interrogatory. Strong parrhesiastic elements.	Paraenetic and apologetic. Strong parrhesiastic elements.	Pleading and apologetic.	Consolatory and paraenetic.	Paraenetic. Strong parrhesiastic elements.
d. Traces of re-elaboration	Not present	Present	Not present	Present	Present

a. Typology

The one consistent classificatory indication of Late Antique letter-writing theory is the division between *epistulae familiares* and *negotiales*.⁸⁶⁴ Columbanus's epistolary collection can be said to reflect this traditional categorisation. *Epistula IV* can be considered part of the former typology, because of its intimate and emotionally charged language. Among the other letters, *Epistula III* is certainly the most formal: Walker stated that it is 'short and business-like, but the involved word-order shows a certain striving after style'.⁸⁶⁵ His judgment about the letter is fundamentally correct. The 'striving after style' does not appear to have been idle or mere courtesy, but part of a sustained rhetorical strategy aimed at immediately directing the attention of the reader to the most urgent messages of this note, while relying on attached material to further the peroration of the

⁸⁶⁴The clearest description of the division in Late Antiquity is Julius Victor, *Ars Rhetorica, De epistolis* (Giomini and Celentano, eds. *C. Iulii Victoris Ars Rhetorica*, 105).

⁸⁶⁵ Walker, ed. *Opera*, xxxvii

author's cause. In short, 'business-like' would be an appropriate description of this letter because of its adherence to the features of the *epistolae negotialis*, even though the definition does not capture the urgency of author's request, which transpires from the carefully elaborated and artistic prose with which he perorated his case. The same observation can be applied to *Epistulae* I, II and V, though these longer works do not certainly attempt to respect the criterion of epistolary *brevitas*.

However, in the case of Columbanus's collection, this categorisation should not only be understood to be a distinction between formal and informal letters and not even only between private and public correspondence. Rather, this classification reflects the attitude of the author towards the subject matter and the audience: *Epistulae* I, II, III, and V are close to Julius Victor's definition of *negotialis* because they treat 'official and weighty matters' [*sunt argumento negotioso et gravi*] but they are also the letters that reach out beyond the confines of Columbanus's community, addressing external authorities. In *Epistula* IV on the other hand, the author concentrates his attention towards the inner workings of such community, even though it is likely that the epistolary text itself, as a literary product, might have been meant to present an idealised version of Columbanus's leadership abilities to potential patrons, as it will be later discussed. Interestingly, this distinction between an external and an internal focus in the collection, reflects a similar distinction that modern scholars have noted in the works of Jonas of Bobbio. Jonas's account of the violation of the *septa secretiora* of Luxeuil by Brunhild and Theuderic emphasises the separation between the inner, sacred enclosure of the monastic foundations and the external, morally corrupting space outside.⁸⁶⁶ Mirroring this distrust of the outside world, every single letter by Columbanus that attempts to reach out of the confines of his community dedicates ample space to the stigmatization of the decaying customs of outsiders, with

⁸⁶⁶ Jonas, VC, I, 19 (Krusch, ed. *Vitae*, 88). Trans. O'Hara and Wood, *Lives*, 136-137. See Albrecht Diem, *Das monastische Experiment: die Rolle der Keuschheit bei der Entstehung des westlichen Klosterwesens*, (Münster i. W., 2005), 187, 255-256, 262-263 and 314-319; Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, 358; Mayke De Jong, 'Monastic prisoners or opting out? Political coercion and honour in the Frankish kingdoms', in Mayke De Jong and Frans C. W. J. Theuvs, *Topographies of power in the Early Middle Ages*, (Leiden, 2001), 291-328: 297; O'Hara, *Jonas of Bobbio*, 207-208; Johnston, 'Movers and shakers', 79-80.

special reference to secular clergymen. The letter to Attala and the rest of the community on the other hand, while containing several warnings and admonitions, is a consolatory address that reinforces the emotional bond between the abbot and the monks. In these contrasting attitudes, Columbanus's collection is possibly influenced by the same ideological defence of asceticism that inspired Jonas's depiction of monastic spaces.

b. Structure

It should be remembered that the epistolary genre is particularly elastic in its definition and that the letter form in the Late Antique and Early Medieval periods, lent itself to be adapted and hybridised in various ways. Columbanus's letters are a clear example of this. *Epistula* I and III can be grouped together in terms of structure as they both adhere to that of a classical public speech, according to the teachings of demonstrative rhetoric. Both deviate from the paradigm: the letter to Gregory I adds a series of questions for the addressee that are unrelated to the subject matter of the body of the letter,⁸⁶⁷ while *Epistula* III abbreviates the *argumentatio* by redirecting the reader to attached materials.⁸⁶⁸ *Epistula* II and V should also be paired as structurally similar. They both play around with the canonical structure of a public speech, missing out on some parts and placing others out of order: for example, *Epistula* V relegates what should be the *narratio*, which provides the details to the background of its composition, to its closing paragraphs.⁸⁶⁹ Both letters contain a series of lengthy moralistic excursus whose connection with the matters at hand is only justified by the author's overall rhetorical strategy. Finally, *Epistula* IV is clearly meant to be a consolatory address, as it respects their characteristics both structurally and tonally.

c. Tone

Paraenesis is the key to understanding several of the *Epistulae* apparent contradictions. The supposed aggressive and irreverent tone of Columbanus as detected by scholars such as Joseph

⁸⁶⁷ Sections 1.5 to 1.9 in the *Ep.* I chapter.

⁸⁶⁸ Section 3.3 in the *Ep.* III chapter.

⁸⁶⁹ Section P in the *Ep.* V chapter.

Kelly and David Howlett⁸⁷⁰ can be explained by the author's approach to epistolary exhortations. In *Epistula* I, II and V Columbanus alternates between praise and reproach for his addressees, with the aim of motivating his audience into action. This is ultimately the goal of paraenetic letters:⁸⁷¹ the aim of *Epistula* I was to obtain a condemnation of Victorius's Easter cycle from Gregory I; *Epistula* II aimed at convincing the clergymen at the Council that they should not act against the monastic community of Luxeuil; *Epistula* V is a strong call for the Pope and all the parties involved in the Three Chapters controversy to act in the interest of restoring communion among Christians.

Not only is this attitude consistent with the depiction of the paraenetic style of letter-writing in ancient theoretical tracts, it is also one that is also found in one of Columbanus's models, the letters of Jerome. Andrew Cain listed 20 letters from Jerome's collection that are marked by a paraenetic tone.⁸⁷² Of particular note is *Ep. 53 ad Paulinum*, a text which exerted a great deal of influence on Columbanus's letter to Gregory I, as several references and reminiscences have emerged in Columbanus's text.⁸⁷³ Columbanus mimicked Jerome's alternate use of positive exhortation and drastic warnings, even when addressing one of the highest ecclesiastical authorities. This particular form of epistolary style balances moment of open praise of the addressees with dramatic representations of the catastrophic results they would face should their choices no longer reflect their adherence to the virtues that caused them to be praised in the first place. Not understanding this aspect might leave the impression that, as a contemporary reader assessed, Columbanus's letters consist of 'a distasteful mix of haranguing aggression and oily obsequiousness'.⁸⁷⁴

⁸⁷⁰ Kelly, 'The letter of Columbanus to Gregory I', 223 and Howlett, *The Celtic Tradition of Biblical style*, 90-91.

⁸⁷¹ Stowers, *Letter writing*, 94-106.

⁸⁷² Cain, *The letters of Jerome*, 214-215 with reference to Pseudo-Libanius's definition of paraenetic style, Pseudo-Libanius, *Ἐπιστολιμαῖοι Χαρακτῆρες*, 5 (Malherbe, ed. *Ancient epistolary theorists*, 69)

⁸⁷³ Jerome, *Ep. 53 ad Paulinum*, (ed. Hilberg, *Epistulae*, CSEL 54, 442-465); See the relevant passages in the *Ep I*, chapter, sections 1.3 and 1.7.

⁸⁷⁴ The quotation is from Alice V. Tyrrell, *Merovingian letters and letter writers*. Publications of the Journal of Medieval Latin, 12, (Turnhout, 2019), 53. This book is the latest attempt to discuss Columbanus's letters as an epistolary collection. I was not able to directly access it because of restriction caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The quotation is included as very emblematic of the effect of

Even in *Epistula* IV one could detect elements of the paraenetic style of letter writing: the sections that in a Classical *consolatio* would require an exhortatory tone are written in a way that is highly reminiscent of the moralising reproaches found in Columbanus's *Epistulae negotiales*.⁸⁷⁵ In *Epistula* III, the paraenetic tone is momentarily set aside: the prevailing epistolary style can be defined as apologetic or even pleading. It is a symptom of a shift in Columbanus's position in respect to the Easter controversy. His letter to Gregory is exhortatory, denouncing the faults of the Easter cycle of Victorius and inviting the pope to condemn it; the letter to the Gaulish council still argues that the tradition followed by Columbanus is more authoritative than that of the Gauls, but remarks that peaceful coexistence of diverging traditions is an option. This last point becomes the object of *Epistula* III and the goal of Columbanus's rhetorical strategy for that particular text.

In respect to their tone *Epistulae* I, II and V also share a stronger emphasis on the right of the author to speak up against a perceived injustice. Parrhesia is a common feature of Late Antique epistolography and rhetoric, but in Columbanus's collection it mostly takes the form of the *non praesumptione sed necessitate* topos. Discussion of his criticism of ecclesiastical authorities leads to the same conclusions reached by Damien Bracken, that is, it is mostly rooted in exegetical and ecclesiological traditions, that of 'fraternal correction' and that of *Concordia*. While Columbanus justified his open criticism of ecclesiastical authorities as a common practice of his homeland in the letter to Pope Boniface IV,⁸⁷⁶ it has been shown that the notion is introduced as a rhetorical ploy to play up the neutrality of the epistolary persona of the *peregrinus*.

d. Re-elaboration

The hypothesis that the text of the surviving letters is the result of successive re-elaborations and might not reflect the text received by the addressee mainly rests on internal evidence:

Columbanus's epistolary paraenetic style on modern readers. It is retrieved from Ralph Mathisen's review of the book, <https://scholarworks.iu.edu/journals/index.php/tmr/article/view/31443/35544>, last accessed September 2021.

⁸⁷⁵ See section 4.3, 4.5 and 4.6 in the *Ep.* IV chapter.

⁸⁷⁶ See section 5.13 in the *Ep.* V chapter.

Columbanus's admission of having changed the contents of the letter he sent to Agrippinus when forwarding it to Rome suggests that this might have been the case even for the surviving letters.⁸⁷⁷

This is a summary list of the sections of the surviving letters that appear to have been re-elaborated, the possible purpose of such a re-elaboration and the moment in which it might have taken place.

- *Epistula II*: Section 2.9 is the main indicator of a possible re-elaboration, because of its structural similarity with Columbanus's homiletic materials. As previously suggested, this specific moralising excursus as well as other briefer passages in which the author addresses the faults of contemporary secular clergymen in Francia appear to be subsequent additions to the text of the letter. The re-elaboration might have occurred soon after the council of Chalons had convened, with the author circulating a version of the letter that emphasises the need to attend to the failing moral standards of the local churches. This would have appealed to both the monastic community's secular patrons, in light of Brunhild's known efforts in support of Gregory I's reforming actions, and to the Roman *curia* directly, with which Columbanus had been in contact over the matter of Easter.
- *Epistula IV*: Columbanus's indications to Attala in section 4.4 and section 4.5 might have been written post-eventum. In the same way his the pre-figuration of his eventual escape from being returned to his homeland as depicted in section 4.12 is a post-eventum prophecy that lines up consistently with Jonas of Bobbio subsequent narration. Here, it has been speculated that the re-elaborated letter might have been prepared for circulation among potential patrons, with the Waldeleni and king Chlothar II as likely candidates. However, the reference to missionary activity in section 4.7 could suggest that the court of Theudebert II, brother to Columbanus's previous patron Theuderic II, was the preferred audience for the re-elaborated work, as he is the only secular figure to show an interest in the conversion of pagans in Jonas's narrative.

⁸⁷⁷See section 5.16 in the *Ep.* V chapter.

- *Epistula V*: The letter lacks a well defined structure and formal elements in the salutation are overlooked in favour of rhetorical emphasis. Section 5.13 has rich and unusual vocabulary and imagery, which, it has been speculated, might reflect textual traditions from Columbanus's Irish background, including a possible reference to a *prologus* that might be ascribed to Columbanus himself, while the author's *confessio fidei* (section 5.15) blends several sources of diverse provenience together, including one supplied by the author's own epistolary contacts. This diversity and lack of a clear focus suggest that, while the letter might have reached its actual addressee, Pope Boniface IV, the text as it survives is more of a rhetorical performance meant to reach out to all of the parties involved in the Three Chapters controversy, including the author's patrons. Perhaps the definitive version of the letter dates to Columbanus's stay in Milan, at the court of Agilulf and Theodelinda, but, since his involvement in the controversy dates back to the very moment of his entrance into Lombard-controlled territory,⁸⁷⁸ it could be argued that Columbanus had quite some time to re-invent both his reply to Agrippinus and to contact the Lombard royal couple. He might have also used this period to re-work his letter to Rome to be palatable to them as well as to the Pope, while distancing himself from intransigent parties on both sides.

2. Date and transmission of the letter collection

The traditional date of each letter has not been questioned thus far. From the textual analysis and from considerations about the collection in its entirety, a few observations about the can be made; these in turn might help understand how, when and why the whole collection came to be.

a. Transmission and date of *Epistula I*.

Out of all the Columbanian epistolary corpus, the letter to Gregory I has enjoyed the most attention in secondary literature. As its first editor, Thomas Sheerin remarked, a large number of passages in this letter present very difficult readings, and they might be regarded as corrupted.

⁸⁷⁸ See section 5.16 in the *Ep. V* chapter.

Nonetheless several attempts at emending them have been proposed to the point that *Epistola* I should be both considered the most studied out of the corpus of Columbanian letters and the one whose text has been subjected to the most dramatic changes by various editors and literary critics. In addition to this, the letter to Pope Gregory I has a history of textual transmission that is slightly more complex than that of the other four. While it is reported in both Metzler's manuscript copy and in Sheerin's and Fleming's *editio princeps*, and it occupies the last position of the collection in both works, the opinion of more recent editors and critics is not in agreement about the number and identity of the manuscripts from which each of the one of the seventeenth-century editors derived their text. It was Gundlach's and Walker's opinion⁸⁷⁹ that the text edited and published by Thomas Sheerin in the *Collectanea Sacra* might not originate from the same source of the other letters, which were discovered in a codex found in Bobbio and edited by Patrick Fleming, whereas Ludwig Bieler and Johannes Smit⁸⁸⁰ contested that it would not be necessary to postulate the existence of another manuscript containing *Epistula* I, since Sheerin's remarks on the published text could also mean that it is derived from Fleming's unpublished work on it, as preserved in the same Bobbio codex. Attempting to resolve this issue would require to look at both Fleming and Sheerin's wording in their presentation of the letter, and at what can be inferred about the lost Bobbio manuscript.

In the general introduction to Columbanus's letters of the *Collectanea Sacra* the object and addressees of only three of them are initially enumerated (Walker's letters III, II and IV) and explicitly stated to be derived from the Bobbio codex, whose poor state (*pervetusto sed mendoso satis*) is remarked upon.⁸⁸¹ Letter I and V are mentioned in the final sentence of the introduction: *praeter jam memoratas & hic subjectas Epistolas extant aliae plures eiusdem Sancti tum ad Gregorium Magnum, tum ad praefatum Bonifacium transmissae*; however the author (presumably

⁸⁷⁹ Gundlach, ed. *Epistolae*, 154; Walker, ed. *Opera*, xxxv.

⁸⁸⁰ Bieler, 'Notes on the text tradition and Latinity of St. Columbanus's writing' apud Walker, *Opera*, lxiii-lxxv, lxxiv, n6; Smit, *Studies*, 33-37.

⁸⁸¹ Fleming, *Collectanea Sacra*, 108

Fleming)⁸⁸² also states that those are yet to be edited at the moment of his writing (*quarum omnium non est adhuc nobis facta copia*).⁸⁸³ Nonetheless, the letter to Boniface IV is published immediately after the three mentioned and no comment is to be found about how, at what stage and by whom it was eventually edited.⁸⁸⁴ The most likely inference is that Fleming was eventually able to complete his work on it. The reason for this is that, on the other hand, in the introductory *argumentum* of the letter to Gregory, Sheerin's editorial intervention is made explicit, something, which - it should be reasonable to assume - would have been also present in the *argumentum* of the letter to Boniface IV, had he been responsible for the work done on it. It is in this *argumentum* that the sentence that has generated controversy about the manuscript transmission of this letter is to be found. Sheerin writes: *Cæterum Epistola, ut hic iacet, sensum in multus evertunt mendæ crebræ, & fere inemendabiles nisi collatione melioris MS. quæ causa fuisse videtur P. Flemingo eam in sua collectione prætereundi. Verum ego seorsim repertam, quia nimis sero, cæteris Epistolis iam tunc imprimi coeptis, adiungendam resolvi, eam malui licet omnium fere prima sit ordine temporis, ultimam prodire, quam diutius delitere, præcipue quod Paschaliū Cyclorum peritos iuvare possit ad certius investigandum* ('For the rest, the letter, as presented here, is upset in many ways by several errors and it is almost impossible to correct without collation with a better manuscript. For this reason, it would seem that P. Fleming omitted it over in his collection. However, having found it separately, since it was already too late, with the other letters having just reached the print, I resolved to add it to the collection, I preferred to issue it as last, even though it should almost be the first of all in chronological order, than to further delay, mainly because it can help the experts on Paschal cycles in more accurate investigations').⁸⁸⁵ According to Gundlach and Walker then, the words *seorsim repertam* refer to another manuscript copy discovered by Sheerin, while Bieler and Smit have interpreted them so that they might refer to 'Fleming's transcript of Epist. I, which he had laid aside',⁸⁸⁶ perhaps because they had noticed

⁸⁸²There are no indication of further editorial intervention by Sheerin, outside the letter to Gregory; cfr the *Brevis notitia de Collectore*, in *Collectanea sacra*, v.

⁸⁸³Fleming, *Collectanea Sacra*, 109

⁸⁸⁴Fleming, *Collectanea Sacra*, 138

⁸⁸⁵Sheerin, *Collectanea Sacra*, 157

⁸⁸⁶Bieler, *Notes on the text*, lxxiv, n6

how in the preceding sentence the letter is considered *in sua* [i.e. Fleming's] *collectione*. One might consider how the following factors give considerable strength to Bieler's position:

-Because of the presence of the letter to Boniface IV among the published material, which, together with the letter to Gregory, is described as not yet edited in the introductory note, it might be reasonable to speculate that, in his lifetime, Fleming might have completed at least preparatory work on both letters, of whose existence he was aware of, but which he had not yet edited, at the stage in which the introduction was written.

- In the *Argumentum* Sheerin describes at length the faulty state of the letter to Gregory I and regards its collation with another manuscript copy as necessary, something he would have implemented and not merely written about, had he had access to two different traditions, that is the one from the Bobbio codex or Fleming's notes from it (which clearly were available to him, because of the inclusion of the letter to Boniface), and the one discovered by himself.

- The order in which the letters are arranged, especially in respect to the position of *Epistula* I, is almost the same as in M. In F the order in the chapter about the prose letters is *Epistulae* III, II, IV, V, I; in M the order is *Instructiones, Exhortatoria Sancti Columbani in conventu ad fratres, Epistula* IV, *Instructio* XIV (or *Epistula* VI), *De octo vitiis, Epistulae* III, II, V, I.⁸⁸⁷ Similarity in the order could also mean that Jodocus Metzler himself had only access to Fleming's note from the Bobbio codex. However Alain Dubreucq has refuted this argument, which Smit had previously endorsed, on the basis of the chronology of Metzler's visit to Bobbio.⁸⁸⁸ A possible alternative is that both F and M might reflect the order in which letters III, II, V and I appeared in the Bobbio original. Sheerin's protestations regarding the fact that the letter to Gregory should have been printed first, because of its anteriority, and that it was not so because he had found it too late,⁸⁸⁹ might be explained by the fact that he had found it among Fleming's material where it was

⁸⁸⁷ See the comparative table in Todde and Nuvolone, 'Le lettere e la preghiera', 62.

⁸⁸⁸ Smit, *Studies*, 35; Dubreucq, 'L'oeuvre épistolaire', 106-107. Fleming's journey to Italy dates to the 1620s (cfr the *Brevis notitia de Collectore*, in *Collectanea sacra*, v), while Dubreucq dates Metzler's sojourn in Bobbio to 1611.

⁸⁸⁹ See the quotation above, Sheerin, *Collectanea Sacra*, 157. The positioning of *Epistula* IV will be discussed further on.

indeed last, as in Metzler's copy of the Bobbio exemplar. In conclusion, postulating the existence of the letter to Gregory in another, still lost, manuscript tradition, different from the corpus transmitted by the equally lost Bobbio codex seems to be an unnecessary complication. To mark this, references to the text of this letter as it appears in the *Collectanea Sacra* have here been labelled F, and not S as in Walker's *apparatus criticus*.

In respect to the reception of *Epistula I*, it would be tempting to describe it as the one text by Columbanus that was explicitly referenced by early material not produced by Jonas. A passage in the hagiographic *Vita Sadalbergae*, written around 680 in Laon, mentions 'There still exists the writings of the same blessed father Columbanus to the blessed and most eloquent man Gregory, pope of the Roman Church, which asked about the conduct of the watch of the shepherds [...] moreover, the same venerable man answered with mellifluous writings to the aforementioned father'.⁸⁹⁰ It is fair to say that the author of this text had knowledge of Columbanus's epistolary work, yet, the wording of the sentences cannot be put in univocal correlation with *Epistula I*, even though pope Gregory is the addressee. Firstly, the words *de pervigili pastorum cura* are a clear reference to Gregory's *Regula Pastoralis*, a work which, in *Epistula I*, Columbanus states to have already read, before asking for more reading material and guidance in exegesis and interpretation of the Scriptures.⁸⁹¹ Secondly, from what Columbanus writes in *Epistula III*, it is possible to infer that a letter sent to pope Gregory on the subject of Easter (likely to have been *Epistula I*) did not

⁸⁹⁰*Extant eiusdem patri Columbani scripta ad beatum et facundissimum virum Gregorium ponteficem Romanum, quae de pervigili pastorum cura elicit, [...] Set et idem venerabilis vir ad praefatum patrem melliflua remisit scripta*; Bruno Krusch, ed. *Vita Sadalbergae abbatissae Laudunensis*, 1,2 in MGH, *Scriptores rerum Merovingicarum*, 5 (Hannover and Leipzig, 1910), 51-52; On the *Vita Sadalbergae* see the translated text and commentary in Jo Ann McNamara, *Sainted women of the dark ages*, (Duhram and London, 1992), 195-219, 176-194; The reference to Columbanus's epistolary works had been previously noted by François Kerlouégan, 'Grégoire le Grand et le pays celtiques' in J. Fonataine, R. Gillet and S. Pellistrandi, eds. *Grégoire le Grand*, (Paris, 1986), 589-586; that the writer of the *Vita Sadalbergae* was well acquainted with Jonas's *Vita Columbani* is clear from a previous passage, see Alexander O'Hara, 'The *Vita Columbani* in Merovingian Gaul' in *Early Medieval Europe*, 17, (2009), 126-153; Alexander O'Hara, *Jonas of Bobbio*, 144-150. However, the author of the *Vita Sadalbergae* did not derive their reference to the letters to Gregory by Columbanus from Jonas because the correspondence between the two goes unmentioned in the *Vita Columbani*.

⁸⁹¹*Legi librum tuum pastorem regimen continentem*; Columbanus, *Epistula I*, 9, (Walker, *Opera*, 11). Section 1.9 in the *Ep. I* chapter; incidentally, it might be observed that the verb *elicio*, used in the *Vita Sadalbergae* is well suited to describe Columbanus's elegant epistolary requests as they can be found in *Epistula I*.

receive answer,⁸⁹² whereas the author of the *Vita Sadalbergae* explicitly remarks on the reciprocity of the exchange. A likely explanation to these problems is that the passage constitutes a testimony of an epistolary contact between the two churchmen which antedates *Epistula* I, and that, as suggested by Claire Stancliffe, the ‘mellifluous writings’ sent back by Gregory consisted in the copy of the *Regula Pastoralis* which the Irishman would then praise in *Epistula* I.⁸⁹³ However, it cannot be ruled out that the author of the *Vita Sadalbergae* had also familiarity with the surviving letter to Gregory I; a revealing lexical choice would be the adjective *melliflua* in relation to the written works of Gregory, since it is reminiscent of their description in *Epistula* I: ‘I confess that [your] work is sweeter than honey to the famished’.⁸⁹⁴ This inferred instance of an author’s knowledge of the Irishman’s letters is rather isolated and, while it might attest that at one point copies of a possibly larger collection were preserved in Columbanian houses, it would not change the perception that circulation of the *Epistulae* was not widespread.

Since the publication of Walker’s edition, most scholars have agreed with his proposed date of AD 600.⁸⁹⁵ Walker derived it from two passages of *Epistula* II, which was addressed to a synod at Chalons and referenced a previous epistolary exchanges between the Irishman and Pope Gregory. The first reads ‘as I have noted in the *tomus* of my reply, which I have now sent you, though written three years ago, all the Churches of the whole West consider that the Resurrection should not take place before the Passion’; the second: ‘for the rest, I have informed the Holy Father of what they [i.e. the westerners] think about Easter, in three *tomos*’.⁸⁹⁶ Since the same word is used, Walker understandably inferred that the letter to Gregory was one in the group of three *tomos* directed to the Holy Father, and that it was one and the same with the *tomus* written three years

⁸⁹² Columbanus, *Epistula* III, 2, Walker, ed. *Opera*, 22. Section 3.2 in the *Ep.* III chapter.

⁸⁹³ Claire Stancliffe, ‘Columbanus and Shunning’, 113-143, 122, following observations by Kerlougueàn, ‘Grégoire le Grand et les pays celtiques’, 589 and 595n3

⁸⁹⁴ Melle *dulcius egenti opus esse fateor*; Columbanus, *Epistula* I, 9 (Walker, ed. *Opera*, 16). Section 1.9 in the *Ep.* I chapter.

⁸⁹⁵ There are a few significant exceptions: Thomas Charles-Edwards suggested ‘after 595, but probably not much later’, Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, 368; Roy Flechner assigned to *Epistula* I a date ranging from 595 AD to 603 AD, as he did not consider Walker’s arguments for 600 AD cogent enough. Roy Flechner, ‘Dagán, Columbanus and the Gregorian mission’, 71; Claire Stancliffe made a convincing case for dating *Epistula* I to 596 AD, Claire Stancliffe, ‘Columbanus and Shunning’, 123; on her arguments see discussion below.

⁸⁹⁶ Columbanus, *Epistula* II, 5 in (Walker, ed. *Opera*, 16). Section 2.5 in the *Ep.* II chapter.

before by Columbanus, whose described contents match with those of *Epistula I*.⁸⁹⁷ The synod at Chalons is commonly dated to 603, hence the date of 600 for *Epistula I*. It has been pointed out that the identification of *Epistula I* with one of the three *tomos* should not be considered certain, but, that, nonetheless, the date of 600 should not be rejected, as other circumstances lend it some likelihood.⁸⁹⁸ Firstly there is the reference to Candidus, who was appointed as administrator of Saint Peter's patrimony in Southern Gaul in 595 AD.⁸⁹⁹ Thus, the letter could only have been written after that date. Additionally, one can consider the passage in which Columbanus disparages the belief that 'we should not hold Easter with the Jews'⁹⁰⁰ as indicative of the possibility that the letter was written on the occasion of *luna 14*, as reckoned by Paschal cycles then in use in Eastern Francia, coinciding with the celebration of Easter by Columbanus and his disciples, who followed their own style of reckoning. Such an occasion did indeed occur in 600 AD: the Easter cycle of Victorius allowed the celebration of Easter on April 10, on *luna 21*, so that *luna 14* would fall on April 3, which was also the date of Easter according to the 84-year cycle followed by the Columbanian community.⁹⁰¹

However, a series of arguments put forth by Claire Stancliffe would suggest that, while it is likely for Columbanus to have written to Gregory in the year 600, *Epistula I* would not be a testimony of the epistolary event that occurred in that year, and that it could be ante-dated to 596. Both Stancliffe and Roy Flechner have pointed to the Gregory's letter to the bishop of Luni in November 594 as possible evidence of the earliest contacts between the pope and the Irishman.⁹⁰² In this letter Gregory asks the bishop not to retain the copy of the *Cura pastoralis* that has been sent his way since it is meant to reach *domno Columbo presbytero*. The identification of this

⁸⁹⁷ See discussion of the term in the *Ep.* II chapter, Section 2.5.

⁸⁹⁸ Dubreucq, 'L'oeuvre épistolaire', 114

⁸⁹⁹ Gregory I, *Ep.* VI, 10 (Hartmann, ed. *Registrum Epistularum*, I, 388-389) is addressed to Candidus as he is departing for his post and dated to September 595.

⁹⁰⁰ Section 1.4 in the *Ep.* I chapter.

⁹⁰¹ See the tables of Easter dates in Corning, *The Celtic and Roman Tradition*, 25 and Stancliffe, 'Columbanus and shunning', 119.

⁹⁰² Gregory I, *Reg. Ep.* V, 17 (Hartman, ed. *Registrum Epistularum*, 298-299). Flechner, 'Dagán, Columbanus and the Gregorian mission', 73-74 and Stancliffe, 'Columbanus and shunning', 121.

Columbus with Columbanus has been questioned,⁹⁰³ however, if correct, it would complement the information that can be gathered from the *Vita Sadalbergae*, (namely that one of Columbanus's letters to Gregory received a response) and permit to ante-date the beginning of the correspondence between Gregory and Columbanus to the earliest phase of the latter settlement in Luxeuil, early in the year 594 AD, with a greater likelihood. Columbanus might have been the initiator of the epistolary exchange, and, as observed by Stancliffe, one of Gregory's informant on the decaying customs of the Gallic clergy. However, this might also mean that he was likely to have initiated the debate on the Easter dating. In 594 and 596 the Victorian Easter would have fallen on *luna 22* and on *luna 21* according to the 84-year cycle. Furthermore, for the year 597 Victorius's tables allowed for the celebration of Easter on *luna 22* (though also providing an alternative date).⁹⁰⁴ The structure of Columbanus's *Epistula I* could support this interpretation, as it opens with an accusations against the upholding of a 'dark Easter' on *luna 21* and *22*, whereas the defence of the celebration of Easter on *luna 14* is a secondary point, framed as a pre-emptive response to foreseeable counter-accusations. As it has been shown, according to the rules of rhetoric, Columbanus's attack against the dark Easter, takes up the *narratio* section of his letter, with the excerpts from the Latin Anatolius and Gennadius in the role of witnesses; his defence of *luna 14* is part of the *argumentatio* and it is one of two instances in which he makes use of the technique of *ratiocinatio* (anticipating a likely objection that might be raised by the other party and answering it). Finally, if Columbanus was indeed moving accusations with a letter to Gregory in 596, it would mean that, as Stancliffe observed, 'this first letters may not even have counted as one of the three with which Columbanus informed the pope of the Western Churches opinions' about Easter'.⁹⁰⁵ The terminology employed in that passage of *Epistula II* would support this: even allowing for the flexibility of the epistolary genre, it would be unusual for Columbanus to describe *Epistula I* as a *tomus*. From what can be gathered about the use of this word in respect to

⁹⁰³Dáibhí Ó Cróinín, 'Tale of two rules: Benedict and Columbanus', in Martin Brown and Colmán Ó Clabaigh, eds. *The Irish Benedictines: a history*, (Dublin 2005), 11-24:21

⁹⁰⁴The issue of 'double dates' in Victorius's cycle is notorious. See discussion in the *Epistula II* chapter with reference to Mosshammer, *The Easter computus*, 241; Warntjes, *Munich Computus*, LXXXIV-LXXXV n. 228 and Warntjes, 'Victorius vs Dionysius', 86-7.

⁹⁰⁵Stancliffe, 'Columbanus and shunning', 120

epistolary writing, *Epistula* I lacks one fundamental characteristic of an epistolary *tomus*, that is, the focus on a single theological topic, as it addresses other points besides Easter. Thus, *Epistula* I is here considered to have been written in the year 596, as part of an exchange begun in 594, that can be summarised in this way:

- 594, early months: Columbanus writes to Pope Gregory I for the first time.
- 594, November: Gregory has sent a copy of the *Cura Pastoralis* to Columbanus.
- Late 595/Early 596: Columbanus approaches Candidus on the matter of Easter.
- 596 (after Easter?): *Epistula* I is written and sent to Rome as Columbanus is not satisfied by Candidus's response.
- 600: Columbanus writes to Rome again. This time the letter is a *tomus*, possibly containing technical or exegetical material but it does not receive any answer.

b. Transmission and date of the other letters.

There are no compelling reasons to doubt the traditional dating of the other surviving four letters. *Epistula* II can be dated to 603, thanks to its concomitance with the synod in Chalons. *Epistula* III can be dated to 604, in the aftermath of the council.⁹⁰⁶ The indicative dates of 610 and 613 for *Epistula* IV and V are to be accepted, as no additional precision seems possible. However, as noted above, a few considerations can be made about the transmission of *Epistula* IV.

In Metzler's copy of the Bobbio manuscript, Columbanus's letter to his community in Luxeuil is not grouped with the other four, but it is interposed between the possibly spurious address *Exhortatoria Sancti Columbani in conventu ad fratres*⁹⁰⁷ and the so-called *Epistula* VI (or *Instructio* XIV). In the *Collectanea Sacra*, instead, it is placed between *Epistulae* II and V. While it is impossible to say what was the original order in the lost Bobbio manuscript, a few observations about this difference can be made. Firstly, in M, the texts preceding and following

⁹⁰⁶Following Walker, ed. *Opera*, xxxvii who in turn followed Krusch, *Vitae*, 8 and Gundlach, 'Über die Columban-Briefe', 511. The argument for dating the letter to 607 as proposed by Paul Grosjean, 'Recherches sur les débuts de la controverse pasclae chez les Celtes', 209 has not been considered in more recent scholarship.

⁹⁰⁷Edited by Walker among the *spuria*, Walker, ed. *Opera*, 206-209

this letter are similar to it in their content. The *Exhortatoria* consists of an address to the community, as the opening of *Epistula IV*; on the other hand, the instructions to Attala, Columbanus's successor in Luxeuil, found in the body of the same letter, are paralleled by the contents of the subsequent text (*Epistula VI*), which also consist of instructions to a monk who is the writer's junior. The *Exhortatoria* is not attested anywhere else other than in M, while *Epistula VI* and the subsequent *De octo vitiis* appear in the Turin manuscripts of the *Instructiones* and *Regulae*.⁹⁰⁸ It could be argued that Metzler's copy reflects the order of the original exemplar and that it was organized as a collection of texts by Columbanus, which displayed an increasing degree of epistolary characteristics: the series of sermons, (*Instructio I* to *XIII*), texts to be circulated within the community (*Exhortatoria*, *Epistula IV*, *Epistula VI*, and *De octo vitiis*) and finally the public correspondence of Columbanus (*Epistulae III*, *II*, *V*, *I*, all of which address ecclesiastical authorities). Once again, the distinction between *epistolae familiares* and *negotiales* appears to be a criterion that affected not only the contents of the letters but also the manner of their transmission. One could object that the series of the *Instructiones* and the other homiletic texts are not letters, and that, therefore, the compilers of the material could not have organised the material of the manuscript in terms private and public correspondence. Yet, this observation is negated by the fact that the *Instructiones* are explicitly referred to as *epistolae* not only in Metzler's copy of the lost Bobbio manuscript, but also in the two surviving ninth-century manuscripts in Turin. Metzler titled the *Instructiones* as *Instructiones seu Epistolae sancti Columbani abbatis*.⁹⁰⁹ Torino, Biblioteca Nazionale Universitaria, MS. G. VIIa and Torino, Biblioteca Nazionale Universitaria MS. G. V. 38 titled *In nomine sancte Trinitatis liber epistolarum sancti Columbae abbatis incipit*. Moreover, *Instructio V*, preserved separately in seven other manuscripts is also referred to as an *Epistola*.⁹¹⁰

⁹⁰⁸ See Walker, *Opera*, xxxv, xxxix and lxi; Smit, *Studies*, 33-38; Todde and Nuvolone, 'Le lettere e la preghiera', 61-63 and 69-70. The manuscripts preserving the series of the *Instructiones* are Torino, Biblioteca Nazionale Universitaria, MS. G. VII. and Torino, Biblioteca Nazionale Universitaria MS. G. V. 38.

⁹⁰⁹ St. Gall, Stiftsbibliothek, 1346, 1.

⁹¹⁰ See Walker, ed. *Opera* 60 and 84, *in apparatus*.

The order in which the letters are found in the *Collectanea* might be then regarded as the result of Fleming's editorial intervention: *Epistula IV* is the only text of the first group to preserve an intact salutation and a clearly recognisable valediction. Therefore, it can be hypothesised that Fleming and Sheerin grouped this one text of the first group with Columbanus public correspondence because the parts that characterised it as a letter of its more explicit epistolary characteristics. However, the loss of the original copy is an obstacle to any clear-cut conclusion: one cannot completely discount the possibility that it was Metzler himself who arranged the material of his copy in such a way, following similar criteria to those described and that the *Collectanea* might, instead, provide a more accurate description of the organization of the Bobbio manuscript. The hypothesis that Metzler's copy is a faithful reproduction of the 'Book of Letters of Saint Columbanus the abbot' mainly rests on interpreting the position of *Epistula IV* as an expression of the distinction between *epistulae negotiales* and *familiares* as well as on the fact that homiletic materials are described in epistolary terms by the manuscript tradition.

c. The transmission of the collection

If it is postulated that Columbanus's letter collection was originally preserved in a single manuscript from Bobbio, and one whose contents are faithfully reproduced by Metzler's copy, it would be legitimate to inquire whether the surviving catalogues of the library of Bobbio registered such an item. The lost tenth-century catalogue of the library of Bobbio as reproduced by Muratori does not seem to reference any such volume.⁹¹¹ The catalogue of the library of Bobbio in 1461, instead, does contain a few useful references.⁹¹² Item E 65 registers 'Examples of various letters written to people of diverse status' and among them there are 'five letters of Saint

⁹¹¹ Ludovico Antonio Muratori, *Antiquitates Italicae Medii Aevii*, III (Milan, 1740), coll. 817-823. The catalogue is reproduced with reference to surviving manuscripts in Alessandro Zironi, *Il monastero Longobardo di Bobbio. Crocevia di uomini, manoscritti e culture*, (Spoleto, 2004), 139-157. See Todde and Nuvolone, 'Le lettere e la preghiera', 64 for the hypothesis that n. 168-172 and n. 654 might contain the letter collection. They conclude that this is unlikely.

⁹¹² The fifteenth-century catalogue of the library of Bobbio is preserved in Torino, Biblioteca Nazionale, F.IV.29 and edited by Amedeus Peyron, *Inventarium librorum monasterii Sancti Columbani de Bobio*, in Amedeus Peyron, ed. *M. T. Ciceronis orationum pro Scauro, pro Tullio et in Clodium fragmenta inedita*, (Stuttgart-Tübingen, 1824), 1-67. See Zironi, *Il monastero Longobardo*, 127-138 and 160-165 for a list of surviving Bobbio manuscripts and for a hypothetical list of the possession of the monastery in Lombard times. Both are derived from the 1461 catalogue.

Columbanus'. The entry redirects the reader to item C 48, but this entry only registers works of Claudius of Turin and of Dungal of Pavia.⁹¹³ Moreover entry G. 70 registers one letter of Columbanus (*Columbani abbatis epistola*) after several works of Gregory I.⁹¹⁴ The first entry does confirm that five letters of Columbanus were preserved as a unitary collection, but there is no way to ascertain whether they are the same five that Fleming purported to have found in the faulty codex from Bobbio. In the same way, there is no way to ascertain whether the individual *Epistola* transmitted with the works of Gregory I is in fact a letter: as it has been seen Columbanus's *Instructio V* has been transmitted individually and referred to as an *Epistola* in the manuscript tradition.⁹¹⁵

The notion that the five letters were transmitted as a distinct unit and separately from the *Instructiones* clashes with the previous hypothesis about Metzler's manuscript copy faithfully reproducing a 'book of letters' containing both. Todde and Nuvolone have attempted to reconcile the evidence from the catalogue with the evidence from Metzler's copy by supposing that the latter is in fact derived from the preparatory work of one Dom Tiberio Zulfo, librarian at Bobbio in the early seventeenth century, who would have transcribed the *Opera Omnia* of Columbanus from various manuscripts and then made it available to both Metzler and Fleming, thus explaining the similarities between the two works.⁹¹⁶ In 1609 Zulfo had authored a brief history of Columbanus and the early abbots of Bobbio on the basis of materials from the library and overseen the earliest transferral of books from Bobbio to the Biblioteca Ambrosiana.⁹¹⁷ In their conclusion and in the proposed *stemma codicum* Todde and Nuvolone argue for a distinct transmission for the *Instructiones* on the one hand and the *Epistulae* on the other. An early manuscript in Irish script containing the five *Epistulae* would have been consulted by Zulfo,

⁹¹³ Peyron, *Inventarium*, 20 and 13. The entry reads *Epistolae quinque sancti Columbani. Vide in littera C 48*. Entry C 48 reads: *Claudi Taurinensis episcopi Apologeticum atque rescriptum adversum Theudemirum abbatem. Dungalii response contra perversas eiusdem sententias. De venerationis crucis et sanctorum reliquiis. Pauca quemda excerpta unde supra de picture. Parvi vol. asser.*

⁹¹⁴ Peyron, *Inventarium*, 21.

⁹¹⁵ Todde and Nuvolone, 'Le lettere e la preghiera', 64 argued that this second entry makes the possibility that Sheerin had accessed to a different manuscript version of *Epistula I* more plausible. Yet they still note that his wording is ambiguous.

⁹¹⁶ Todde and Nuvolone, 'Le lettere e la preghiera', 66-68.

⁹¹⁷ See Nuvolone, 'Il *Compendiolum Jonae*', 104-115.

Metzler and Fleming; Metzler would have reproduced the contents and order of Zulfo's transcription, while Fleming, after having consulted Zulfo's hypothetical work, would have maintained the five *Epistula* as a distinct unit.⁹¹⁸ Todde and Nuvolone imply that the re-positioning of *Ep.* IV in Metzler's manuscript would have been a decision made by Zulfo.

These conclusions have certainly merit, in light of the contradictory evidence from the St. Gall transcript and the Bobbio catalogue, yet such evidence does not preclude the possibility that *Instructiones* and *Epistulae* were originally part of the same collection. The fact that the ninth-century Turin manuscripts and the manuscripts transmitting *Instructio* V as an individual work refer to Columbanus's homiletic works in epistolary terms should not be discounted. This nomenclature reflects an early tradition: Paris, Bibliotheque Nationale, 13440 is one of those transmitting *Instructio* V as an *Epistola* and it dates to the eighth century.⁹¹⁹ It is possible that an original collection of all of Columbanus's 'epistolary' work was dismembered: the *Instructiones* were put together with the Rules and Penitential, as in the two surviving Turin manuscripts while the five *Epistulae* marked by the clearly recognisable *salutationes* and *valedictiones* were transmitted together and filed with other letter collections, as per the 1461 catalogue entry. If Todde and Nuvolone's suggestion of a preliminary collection of material from Zulfo and the notion that Metzler's work depended on it is discounted, the hypothesis that Metzler's copy reproduces the features of an original 'Book of letters of saint Columbanus' is still valid: the catalogue entry might have simply failed to register the presence of the *Instructiones* in the lost manuscript. After all, the entry already contains a possible error, that is, the mysterious reference to entry C 48 which is clearly unrelated to Columbanus's letters. Finally, Metzler stated that his copy is derived from a manuscript *litteris hibernicis confecto*⁹²⁰ but none of the surviving manuscript for the *Instructiones* presents traces of Irish script. It would have been odd for him to premit this observation to the *Instructiones*, if this characteristic can only be attributed to the manuscript from which he derived the five *Epistulae*.

⁹¹⁸Todde and Nuvolone, 'Le lettere e la preghiera', 68-70.

⁹¹⁹ See Walker, ed. *Opera*, xl for a full list.

⁹²⁰ St. Gall, Stiftsbibliothek, 1346, 1.

d. The formation of the collection

Scholars are in agreement in assigning a role to Jonas of Bobbio in the formation of this letter collection. He is often described as the archivist of the monastic community, because a passage of the *Vita* implies that the hagiographer was responsible for archiving the correspondence of Columbanus's successor Attala.⁹²¹ The same scholars have argued that the limited circulation of the collection and its preservation in a single manuscript copy can be attributed to a desire to present a sanitised version of Columbanus's activity, consistent with Jonas's portrayal. Jonas had to omit and obfuscate Columbanus's involvement in the Easter and Three Chapters controversies, since, by his time, it was already apparent that the Irishman had been arguing on behalf of the losing side, and could have been accused of heterodoxy.⁹²² Could the lack of circulation of the letter collection reflect the intention of suppressing the controversial material found in the letters, most prominently, Columbanus's opposition to the Easter cycle of Victorius, in order to promote the image of the saint that is depicted in the *Vita Columbani*? It is tempting to give a positive answer, but comparison with other epistolary materials would suggest caution. For example, the collections of the letters of Ruricius of Limoges, of Faustus of Riez and of Desiderius of Cahors,⁹²³ despite their lack of any controversial content, are not attested outside of a single manuscript. Similarly, the letters of Avitus of Vienne and of Ferreolus of Uzès, much praised by contemporaries, are preserved by a rather threadbare tradition in the case of the former and they are entirely lost in the case of the latter.⁹²⁴ Letters, and especially letters of this age, which tried to

⁹²¹ Jonas, *VC*, II, 9 (Krusch, *Vitae*, 124), trans. O'Hara and Wood, *Lives*, 195, see commentary in n566.

⁹²² The theory has been proposed by Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, 363, with emphasis on Jonas's attempt to legitimise Chlothar's usurpation of the descendants of Brunhild; Corning, *The Celtic and Roman Tradition*, 51-55; Leso, 'Columbanus in Europe', 362-363 and 389; Dubreucq, 'L'oeuvre épistolaire', 110, 113 but contrary to other scholars Dubreucq does suggest that the collection of Columbanus's epistolary material was begun in Luxeuil, 126; O'Hara and Wood, 34, 53, 136n240, 169n383, 195n166 and 197n577; O'Hara, *Jonas of Bobbio*, discussed various aspects of Jonas's silences and omissions: 51-72 with reference to the Easter and Three chapter controversy; 83-84 with references to changes in the Rule; 148-149 also addresses the issue of the *damnation memoriae* of the descendants of Brunhild.

⁹²³ See the works of Ralph Mathisen on St. Gall, Stiftsbibliothek, 190: Mathinsen, 'The *codex Sangallensis* 190'; Mathinsen, *Ruricius of Limoges and Friends*; Mathinsen, 'The letter collection of Ruricius of Limoges'.

⁹²⁴ Shanzer and Wood, *Avitus of Vienne*, 28-47. As in the case of Columbanus's collection, a manuscript that was available in the seventeenth century has now been lost. However the happy survival of an early

follow the Ciceronian paradigm of being ‘one half of a conversation’ are inherently difficult to understand outside context, most of them being copied as examples of style, and not for the transmission of their contents. Columbanus’s letters address topics that might have become downright obscure less than 200 years later. In the case of the Three Chapters controversy, for example, this is demonstrated by Paul the Deacon, who wrote about it in the *Historia Langobardorum*, but whose understanding of its origins and contents was confused at best.⁹²⁵ Additionally, the *Vita Columbani* mentions two letters written by the saint to the kings Theuderic and Chlothar, both of which have not been preserved at all, despite the fact that their contents seemingly corroborated Jonas’ narrative. There might be enough reasons to consider that mere chance and accidents of transmission had just as much of a role in limiting the circulation of these letter as the will to suppress information might have had. This does not mean that Jonas’s *Vita* did not have a role in the lack of widespread circulation for the *Epistulae*, but this aspect has certainly received too much emphasis in recent scholarship. As shown in the chapter about *Epistula IV*,⁹²⁶ Jonas integrated Columbanus’s own account of his exile and shipwreck into his own narrative, so his approach to the contents of the *Epistulae* is more mixed than the downright censorship depicted by modern scholars. Even Jonas’s role in the formation of the collection, while still the most likely hypothesis, should be framed in a more dubitative way: his activity as Attala’s archivist and the transmission of the letter collection clearly belong exclusively to the context of Bobbio. However, as stated above, the one mention of Columbanus’s extant collection in an early medieval manuscript, that from the Life of Sadalberga, belongs to a Transalpine context. It is even possible that that particular mention does not refer to the extant letter of Columbanus to Gregory I, but to the hypothesised lost letter from 594. This could suggest that the earliest work of selection and preservation from Columbanus’s personal archives might have begun in Luxeuil, and reached Jonas at Bobbio only at a later date.

copy on papyrus puts it in a somewhat better position. The papyrus copy is also helpful in showing that epistolary texts were indeed grouped with homiletic materials at times.

⁹²⁵For example the account in Paul the Deacon, *Historia Langobardorum*, III, 26, (Bethman and Waitz, eds. *Pauli Historia Langobardorum*, 105-107) see Pohl, ‘Heresy in Secundus and Paul the Deacon’, 259-260.

⁹²⁶Section 4.9 and 4.12 in the *Ep. IV* chapter.

e. Summary of Columbanus's epistolary works

Finally, the following table offers a recapitulation of Columbanus's career as a letter writer, including letters whose existence has been inferred and letters that are now lost but are mentioned in both narrative sources and in the surviving collection itself.

Letter	Date	Source	Addressee	Potential audience	Contents
Lost letter to Gregory I	594	Existence inferred from the <i>Life of Sadalberga</i>	Pope Gregory I,	Local bishops and secular patrons (Burgundian court?)	Easter controversy. Conduct of the local clergy.
<i>Epistula I</i>	596	Preserved by Metzler and Fleming	Pope Gregory I	Local bishops and secular patrons (Burgundian court?)	Easter controversy. Conduct of the local clergy
Lost <i>Tomus responsionis</i>	600	Mentioned in <i>Epistula II</i>	Gallic bishops	Local bishops and secular patrons (Burgundian court?)	Easter controversy. Technical aspects.
Lost <i>Tomus</i> to Gregory I	600	Mentioned in <i>Epistula II</i> and III	Pope Gregory I	Local bishops and secular patrons (Burgundian court?)	Easter controversy. Technical aspects.
Lost <i>Libellus</i> to Arigius of Lyon	600-603	Mentioned in <i>Epistula II</i>	Arigius of Lyon	Local bishops and secular patrons (Burgundian court?)	Easter controversy. Technical aspects.
<i>Epistula II</i>	603	Preserved by Metzler and Fleming	Council at Chalons	Local bishops and secular patrons (Burgundian court?)	Easter controversy. Conduct of the local clergy
Lost letter(s) to Theuderic II	603-610	Mentioned in Jonas, <i>VC</i> , I, 19 (Krusch, ed. <i>Vitae</i> , 189) ⁹²⁷	Theuderic II	Local bishops and secular patrons (Burgundian court?)	Reproach of the king's marital conduct.
<i>Epistula IV</i>	610	Preserved by	Monks in	Potential	Consolatory

⁹²⁷ Possibly more than one letter. The Renaissance scholar Antonio Possevino mentions a whole book of letters on this topic among Columbanus works. See Antonio Possevino, *Antonii Posseuini Mantuani Societatis Iesu Apparatus sacer ad scriptores veteris, & noui Testamenti Tribus tomis* (Venice, 1606), 339.

		Metzler and Fleming	Luxeuil and Attala	secular patrons (Chlothar II and Theudebert II?)	address
Lost letter to Agrippinus	612/613	Mentioned in <i>Epistula V</i>	Agrippinus of Como	The papal <i>curia</i> , the Lombard court and Milanese clergy	A defence of the Roman Church (?)
<i>Epistula V</i>	613	Preserved by Metzler and Fleming	Boniface IV	The Lombard court and schismatic clergy	Appeal to unity and for a resolution of the Three Chapters schism
Lost letter to Chlothar II	614/615	Mentioned in Jonas, <i>VC</i> , I, 30 (Krusch, ed. <i>Vitae</i> , 223)	Chlothar II	????	Reproach and advice for the king.

3. The contents of the letter.

This final discussion is meant to summarise the most significant aspects of the contents of the collection, as they have emerged from the analysis of the individual section of each letter

a. Epistolary *topoi* and other epistolary characteristics.

The authors of the *Epistolae* demonstrated a strong degree of familiarity with the most frequent clichés of epistolary writings: he mentions and laments the necessity of *brevitas*; he provides frequent demonstrations of *humilitas*; he expresses the wish to physically reach his addressee; most importantly, throughout the letters the illusion of a fictional dialogue with the absent addressee is maintained, through incidental phrases, apostrophes and sometimes by anticipating possible reactions and questions of the audience. The adjective-heavy salutations, while displaying much more elaboration than most contemporary examples follow the general Early Medieval trend of progressively complex and theologically charged epistolary salutations.⁹²⁸

Where Columbanus distances himself from the famous letter-writers of Late Antique Gaul is first and foremost in his inability to employ rhythmical *cursum*. The present work cannot but confirm

⁹²⁸ Lanham, *Salutioformulas in Latin letters to 1200*, 13-42.

the conclusions reached by Wright, Stancliffe and Lapidge:⁹²⁹ although Columbanus's usage of hyperbaton and creative word-order coincides with emphatic passages, these only seldom coincide with the occurrence of any of the codified patterns of sentence endings of rhythmical *cursus*. Even David Howlett's methodological objection to the statistical analysis by the aforementioned scholars does not seem to apply. Although there are a few passages in which *cursus*-like ending seem to have been applied to limited sections of a letter (such as the salutation of *Ep. V* and section 5.4 of *Ep. III*) these instances are not consistent enough to be compared to Howlett's own reconstruction of a limited usage of *cursus* in Patrick's *Confessio*.⁹³⁰ In the same way, it cannot be said that the careful organisation of the text along a chiasmic pattern detected by Howlett in respect to the letter to Gregory I is a consistent feature throughout the *Epistulae* although sections from *Epistula II, III and IV* do display a limited adoption of the chiasmic pattern he described. Moreover, it has been noted that his reconstruction of the structure of *Epistula I* does not take into account the anomalous salutation, which not only cannot be chiasmically paired with any preceding section of the letter but is also rather unique in its function and tone.⁹³¹

One last formal element that distances the *Epistulae* from contemporary correspondence is the relatively low frequency of formal titles for address for the writer's addressee. As seen in the discussion of the salutations the formulas of *domino sancto in Christo patri* and *Fratris* are used in the first to address bishops and clergymen. Notably these are absent from the salutation of *Epistula V*. The writer does occasionally address his audiences as *patres and fratres* in the body of the letters but titles of address such as *vestra sanctitate* ('your holiness'), which are frequent features of contemporary epistolary culture, are rare throughout the *Epistulae*.⁹³² In *Epistula I*,

⁹²⁹ Wright, 'Columbanus's *Epistulae*', 55; Stancliffe, 'The thirteen Sermons', 157-159; Lapidge, 'Epilogue', 274-286.

⁹³⁰ Howlett 'Insular Latin writers rhythms', 58-59. As previously stated Howlett's demonstration of the use of quantitative rhythm in the sentence endings of Columbanus's *salutatio* to Gregory I is made problematic by his adoption of reconstructed readings for the corrupted text. Howlett, *The Celtic tradition of Biblical style*, 91 and Howlett, 'Insular writers rhythms', 70-73.

⁹³¹ See discussion of section 1.10 of the *Ep. I* chapter.

⁹³² For the analysis of honorifics in Late Antique epistolography the classic study is Mary Bridget O'Brien, *Titles of address in Christian Latin epistolography to 543 a. D.* Patristic studies, 21 (Washington, DC, 1930). More recently Shanzer and Wood, *Avitus of Vienne*, 395-406 have tabulated all of the honorifics occurring in Avitus's epistolary collection, which demonstrate both creativity and the writer's need to acknowledge the status of his addressee.

Gregory I is addressed with the periphrasis *tua peritia* ('your discernment') and *tua vigilantia* ('your vigilance');⁹³³ In *Epistula* II the honorific *vestra sanctitate* is used only once to address the fathers at the council.⁹³⁴ In *Epistula* III the honorific *vestrae auctoritatis* is used only once to address the Pope.⁹³⁵ No comparable expression is found *Ep.* IV and V. While this is understandable for the former it is plainly anomalous for the latter, as it is addressed to the highest authority of the Latin Church. This feature might be another hint of the artificial, literary nature of the letter. Additionally, perhaps this anomaly can be explained by the fact that Columbanus, while familiar with the more universal features of the epistolary genre, was cut off from the networks of epistolary *amicitia* of Gaul and possibly unaware of the preference of local letter-writers for such pandering titles of address.

b. The epistolary networks of Columbanus

The results of the present work confirm Alain Dubreucq's overall impression about what the letter collection of Columbanus reveals of the author's relationship with the existing epistolary networks of his time: 'It also appears that the correspondence of Saint Columban is clearly different from that of the authors of the preceding period, such as Saint Avitus or Ruricius of Limoges. It is that of a *peregrinus*, who was not integrated in the networks of correspondence and friendship of his time'.⁹³⁶ This is not to say that Columbanus did not establish a wide range of epistolary contacts but his motivations and the nature of such contacts were fundamentally different from those of previous, contemporary or even later Continental epistolographers such as Desiderius of Cahors. Columbanus was not bound to the *officium epistolaris* by his position: he was not a bishop who needed to oversee administration and maintain contact with his peers. His letters, with the exception of *Ep.* IV are motivated by liturgical or doctrinal questions and part of

⁹³³ Columbanus, *Ep.* I, 3 and 5 (Walker, ed. *Opera*, 2 and 8) see sections 1.3 and 1.6 in the *Ep.* I chapter.

⁹³⁴ Columbanus, *Ep.* II, 6 (Walker, ed. *Opera*, 16) see section 2.6 in the *Ep.* II chapter.

⁹³⁵ Columbanus, *Ep.* III, 2 (Walker, ed. *Opera*, 24) see section 3.5 in the *Ep.* III chapter.

⁹³⁶ Dubreucq, 'L'oeuvre épistolaire', 127 'Il apparaît aussi que la correspondance de saint Colomban se différencie nettement de celle des auteurs de la période précédente, tels saint Avit ou Rurice de Limoges. C'est celle d'un *peregrinus*, qui n'était pas intégré dans les réseaux de correspondance et d'amitié de son temps.' Yet Dubreucq is not correct in his assertion that Columbanus does not respect the epistolary clichés of his time (125); as discussed these are present but as mere nods to a literary genre, and do not imply the existence of a network of *amicitia*.

larger exchanges surrounding specific controversy. Doctrinal letters are not absent from the collections of Avitus and Faustus of Riez, but by the late sixth-century this type of epistolary writings had become a minor part of epistolary production. On occasion, such letters were written, but, as in the case of Columbanus, they were addressed to distant and official authorities. As seen in the *Ep. 5* chapter, Nicetius's letter to Justinian on the Three Chapters controversy is a prime example of this. The letters to the monks and Attala is the only one comparable to contemporary examples in its intentions and audience. In it Columbanus emphasises his role of leader of his community, which puts him in a position comparable to that of a local bishop.

Another aspect that distinguishes Columbanus's epistolary network is the complete absence of women among his correspondents. This is consistent with what is known of Columbanus's attitude towards women, including what transpires from the collection itself. The *Vita* and the contents of *Epistula II* makes it clear that frequentation of women was, for Columbanus, a prime obstacle on the path of achieving ascetic perfection. Nonetheless, this attitude is uncommon among letter-writers: Columbanus's primary source of inspiration, the letter collection of Jerome, has a large number of religious women as addressee while later Insular epistolary collection, that of Aldhelm and Boniface, will include several letters addressed to ascetic women. One could not help but wonder if two of most important women in Columbanus's career, Brunhild and Theodelinda, both well-known for their correspondence with Gregory I, had not attempted to initiate an epistolary exchange with the Irish abbot, and what his response could have been.

c. The epistolary persona of Columbanus

Columbanus's letters are those of a persistent but subtle diplomat who addressed potentially hostile authorities while assuming the role and attitude of a counsellor and advisor, stressing his claim to be only writing because the best interest of the whole Church is at stake. That he was writing as a diplomat, rather than as the lone defender of traditions that were unheard of on the Continent, is apparent when one considers his final letter to Pope Boniface IV. This is written in the same tone and it is also explicitly defining itself as an attempt at mediation between the Pope and the

writer's patrons, the Lombard court, who are explicitly stated to have requested him to write in the first place. Had Columbanus been such an unapproachable character as often represented, king Agilulf and queen Theodelinda would not have enlisted him as an ambassador in their attempts to negotiate with Rome on the Three Chapter schism.

That of the diplomat or advisor is only one of the many faces of Columbanus's multi-sided epistolary persona. An aspect that is often discussed in secondary literature is that the *Epistulae* frequently make mention of the author's status of *peregrinus*. This fact is often discussed in relation to the Irish ascetic practice of *peregrinatio pro amore Dei* as well as a significant element in the interplay of ethnic, religious and social factors with which the author defined his own identity. The contributions of Columbanus to the Early Medieval monastic movement are marked by a constant appreciation for ascetic exile and isolation and an ideological emphasis on existential precariousness. It is noteworthy that Jonas's narrative in the *Vita Columbani* emphasises this same aspect of Columbanus's character, especially in the opening chapter. It is one of the few elements for which there is a direct parallel between Columbanus's character in Jonas's text and the self-representation of the author of the *Epistulae*. As suggested in Thomas Charles-Edwards's seminal article, the status of *peregrinus* conferred a significant amount of authority in Early medieval Ireland; hence, possibly, Columbanus's claim to the position of mediator and advisor among kings, queens, and the highest ecclesiastical authorities.⁹³⁷ However it should also be noted that all of the instances in which the writer's or his companion's status of *peregrini* is mentioned are functional to the overall argumentation of the letter. Presenting himself as an outsider allowed the author to project semblance of impartiality upon his advice. This is very noticeable in the letter about the Three Chapter controversy, in which Columbanus famously claimed that he has travelled from a place in which there has never been a heretic or a schismatic. Giving a positive connotation to his Irish background and tying it with his present condition as a traveller, allowed him to distance himself from the local factions and add weight to his own

⁹³⁷ Charles-Edwards, 'The social background to Irish *peregrinatio*', 43-59. Furthermore one should consider the more recent suggestion of Columbanus's possible relationship with the royal Leinster family of the Uí Bairrche, Dáibhí Ó Cróinín, 'The political background to Columbanus's Irish career', in O'Hara, ed. *Columbanus and the peoples of Post-Roman Europe*, 53-68.

advice. In the same way, in *Epistula* III, Columbanus reminded the reigning pope that while their neighbours disagreed with their Easter reckoning, his community was composed of ascetic *peregrini* who asked nothing better than be left alone in their deserts. This works as an appeal to the addressee's empathy but one which could also factor into the writer's subsequent legalistic appeal to the third canon of the Council of Constantinople, which permitted that isolated communities could maintain the traditions of their founders. Finally, throughout the *Epistulae*, but more frequently in the fourth and fifth letters the author draws parallels between himself and the biblical prophet Jonah, pointing out the similar meaning of their name and that, like the prophet, he had experienced a shipwreck. This comparison is an integral part of the construction of the character of the authorial voice in the letters, a process that can be indicated with a technical term of the Late Antique rhetorical tradition, *prosopoieia*. The choice of adopting the literary mask of a prophet fits well with the perspective of a diplomat or advisor. Just as Jonah was an inadequate man who was moved to preach repentance to avoid the destruction on Ninive, Columbanus, *vilissimae qualitatis homunculus*, as he labelled himself, absolved his duty only in the face of possible disasters striking the Church. However, considering that these parallels gain more space in the letters in which the monastic community has more relevance, it might also be symptomatic of Columbanus's charismatic and exemplary type leadership he had adopted, as discussed by scholars such as Albrecht Diem and Marilyn Dunn.⁹³⁸

d. Doctrinal contents: computus.

Can *Epistulae* I, II, and III be described as Easter letters? The answer seems obvious, but a close examination of the text has highlighted how, even though controversy over the calculations for the celebration of Easter provided the occasion of writing, technical details are rather scarce. *Epistula* II dedicates much space to moral and ecclesiological considerations and, like *Epistula* III, for a complete discussion of the issue, it redirects the audience to the materials attached to it: the *tomi* to Gregory I and the *libellus* to Arigius. It has been here hypothesised that these texts

⁹³⁸Diem, 'Monks, Kings and the transformation of Sanctity', 521-530; Diem, 'Columbanian monastic rules: dissent and experiment', 68-85 and Dunn, 'Columbanus, charisma and the revolt', 2-18 and 26-27.

might have resembled Cummian's letter *De controversia Paschali* in the organisation of their contents. *Epistula* I does contain a minimum of technical discussion of elements of the science of computus. However, while Columbanus engages directly with the exegetical aspects of the reckoning of Easter,⁹³⁹ astronomical observations of the phases of the moon and calendar dates are dealt with quotations from authoritative texts: the Latin Anatolius for the first aspect and Gennadius's *Liber Dogmatum* for the second. Perhaps this can be explained by the exhortatory nature of the text: the author needed to be as concise and compelling as possible, since unlike Cummian, he was not addressing a community of peers but a higher authority. Getting bogged down in details would have made his requests less appealing and perhaps even leave his flank open to accusations of technical errors and incompetence. It is not surprising then, that the letter shows no occurrence of technical terms, with the possible exception of the broad categorisation of computists as *Chalcenterii* and *Rimarii*, likely derived from the text of the Latin Anatolius. Furthermore, *Epistula* I does not give any sort of description of the cycle preferred by Columbanus, with the author simply criticising the aspects of Victorius's cycle of which he does not approve: the celebration of Easter on *luna* 21 or 22 and the possibility of its occurrence before the equinox, whose date is not explicitly stated. Only in *Epistula* II Columbanus's preferred cycle is referred to as the '84-years cycle', but emphasis is put not on its workings but on the fact that it is consistent with the teachings of Anatolius who carries the seal of approval of Eusebius and Jerome.⁹⁴⁰ In short, in *Epistula* I and II Columbanus frames the controversy in terms of orthodoxy and of authority, not of precision of calendar reckoning.

To conclude, these can be considered Easter letters in the same in which subsequent seventh-century letters such as Cummian's and Aldhelm's are. They are not technical tracts but they capture the theological framework with which the authors attempted to refute any accusation of heresy for his party and turn any such attack on its head, accusing the heterodoxy of their opponents. There is, of course, the major distinction that the authority to which both Cummian

⁹³⁹ See the discussion of terms of Easter as dictated by *Leviticus*, Columbanus, *Ep* I, 6, (Walker, ed. *Opera*, 6) section 1.4 in the *Ep*. I chapter.

⁹⁴⁰ Columbanus, *Ep* II, 7 (Walker, ed. *Opera*, 18) section 2.7 in the *Ep*. II chapter.

and Aldhelm appealed while arguing against supporters of the *Latercus* was that of the Roman church, an almost perfect mirror to Columbanus's situation.

e. Doctrinal contents: theological aspects

Columbanus's Trinitarian formulas comply with what considered orthodoxy in his time but their derivations is rather obscure. The textual relationship between the two *Confessiones* in *Epistula* III (section 3.5) and V (section 5.15), dogmatic texts such as the Athanasian creed, Columbanus's own *Instructiones* and Irish hymnology is an argument that has been barely touched by the present work and is worthy of independent investigation. A re-examination of the *Instructiones* in light of the analysis conducted on the sources of the *Epistulae* might cast some light on their relationship with other theological works, and with the material from codex Ambrosiano O 212 sup.⁹⁴¹

In terms of ecclesiological conceptions, Columbanus's esteem for concerted action at church councils and his reliance on their decrees as the ultimate authority could suggest a certain influence from the works of supporters of the Three Chapters such as Facundus and Ferrandus the deacon. However, this attitude was already present in the letters about the Easter controversy,⁹⁴² and possibly it can be ascribed to a mindset already present in the Irish church, as exemplified by a previously reference passage from the *Collectio Hibernensis*.⁹⁴³ If this is accepted it would be necessary to postulate a certain dynamism in the reception of Christian dogma and liturgical practices from the Continent on the part of the earliest Irish church. In *Epistula* I, Columbanus presented the vivid picture of the ancient *philosophi* of Ireland examining the Easter cycle of Victorius and finding its faults worthy of ridicule. Columbanus echoed their scorn in respect to the actions taken by Pope Leo in support of Victorius.⁹⁴⁴ Yet those same *philosophi* must have had enough intellectual elasticity to find Pope Leo's Trinitarian doctrines to be much more worthy of consideration, since not only did their pupil Columbanus formulate his Christology in a way

⁹⁴¹ See the discussion in the chapter on *Ep. V*, section 5.15.

⁹⁴² See Columbanus, *Ep. III*, 3 (Walker, ed. *Opera*, 24) with the appeal to the canons of the council of Constantinople, section 3.7 in the *Ep. III* chapter.

⁹⁴³ *Collectio Hibernensis*, 19 (Wasserschleben, ed. *Die irische Kanonensammlung*, 59), see discussion in the *Ep. V* chapter, section 5.14.

⁹⁴⁴ Columbanus, *Ep. I*, 4 (Walker, ed. *Opera*, 4-6). Section 1.3 in the *Ep. I* chapter.

that is rather similar to Leo's, but he was also sympathetic to a schismatic party whose ultimate goal can be described as the preservation of Leo's accomplishments at Chalcedon.

Finally, the eschatological tension permeating the *Epistulae* cannot go unmentioned. It is likely that Columbanus derived it from his favourite authorities and from the constant exercise of an ascetic lifestyle. Yet, in light of recent scholarship on Irish contributions to the elaboration of calculations for the date of the end of times and of Columbanus seemingly expertise on matters of calendar reckoning, it could be speculated that the Irish abbot had a precise date in mind.⁹⁴⁵ There is no doubt that Columbanus's depiction of the end of times in *Ep. V* is best understood within an Irish cultural context. His reference to the dragon Leviathan as a *squamma* leads back to the reception of Philippus Presbyter's commentary on Job as a source for unusual vocabulary among 'hispanic' writers.⁹⁴⁶ Yet the aforementioned lack of any technical detail in his Easter letters precludes any speculation about his preference for any of the pre-existing dates of the end of times to be adopted by him as the most likely.

f. Use of sources

The present work cannot but confirm what other scholars have said about Jerome's letter collection as a model and source of inspiration for Columbanus. An aspect that is seldom highlighted is that Jerome and Columbanus are two of the few letter writers from Late Antiquity who did not have episcopal status at any point of their career. This simple consideration might help understand the reasons for the great degree of influence exerted by Jerome's collection on the epistolary works of the Irishman. Moreover, as repeatedly observed in respect to *Ep. I* and *II*, Jerome is presented as one of the ultimate authorities on matter of doctrine in the opinion of the

⁹⁴⁵ See James T. Palmer, *The apocalypse in the Early Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 2014), 86; for a view that attributes a more pro-active role to Irish computists in the elaboration of count-downs see Immo Warntjes, 'The final countdown and the reform of the liturgical calendar in the Early Middle Ages' in Matthew Gabriele and James T. Palmer, eds. *Apocalypse and reform from Late Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages* (London, 2019), 51-76 and especially Immo Warntjes, 'A.D. 672. The apex of apocalyptic thought in the Early Medieval Latin west' in Veronika Wieser, Vincent Eltschinger and Johann Heiss, *Cultures of Eschatology, Cultural History of Apocalyptic thought*, 3 (Berlin, 2020) 642-673.

⁹⁴⁶ Columbanus, *Ep. V*, 15 (Walker, *Opera*, 54), section 5.17 in the *Ep. V* chapter.

Western churches, an attitude that Columbanus shared with the next Irish letter writer, Cummian.⁹⁴⁷

This last aspect is not just an attribute of Columbanus's reference to Jerome. Throughout the *Epistulae* the author is rather keen on promoting authorities that are held in high regard in the west. The mention of Gildas and Uennianus in the letter to Gregory I is the most obvious example.⁹⁴⁸ One could also read the frequent allusions to the works of Sulpicius Severus in the same way, considering that the *Latercus* cycle can most likely be attributed to him and that Columbanus could have been aware of that origin.⁹⁴⁹ Moreover Columbanus clearly had sources in common with the tradition of early Irish exegesis as it can be reconstructed from texts such as *De duodecim abusivis*. The Latin Anatolius, another text that can be described as fundamental for our understanding of the early western churches, is extolled not only for its computistical contents, but also for its depiction of the resolution of conflict, and its influence can be seen by the appearance of some turn of phrases that Columbanus derived from it in contexts that are unrelated to discussion of the Easter question.⁹⁵⁰ Discussion of the other authority quoted by Columbanus's on the reckoning of Easter, Gennadius's *Liber dogmatum* has led to an overall re-assessment of its significance, with the result of the discovery of traces of a textual tradition, that of St Gall, Stiftsbibliothek 238, that was likely associated with the *Latercus* cycle.⁹⁵¹

The present work has confirmed the findings of many other scholars about major influences on Columbanus's *Epistulae*, such as Rufinus, Gildas and Gregory I. It has also pointed out that there is a broader range of texts that in a way or another affected Columbanus's epistolary writings. There is the possible role of African authors on Columbanus's understanding of the Three Chapter question, the influence of moralistic and exegetical texts on portions of *Epistula* II and *Epistula* IV, and the puzzling reference to the works of Bachiaris in *Ep.* I which ties back into the

⁹⁴⁷ See discussion of Columbanus, *Ep.* I, 5 (Walker, *Opera*, 8), section 1.6 in the *Ep.* I chapter.

⁹⁴⁸ See discussion of Columbanus, *Ep.* I, 7 (Walker, *Opera*, 8), section 1.7 in the *Ep.* I chapter.

⁹⁴⁹ See discussion of Columbanus, *Ep.* II, 7 (Walker, ed. *Opera*, 18), section 2.7 in the *Ep.* II chapter.

⁹⁵⁰ See discussion of Columbanus, *Ep.* III, 3 (Walker, ed. *Opera*, 24), section 3.7 in the *Ep.* III chapter and of Columbanus, *Ep.* V, 11 (Walker, ed. *Opera*, 48) section 5.13.

⁹⁵¹ Full discussion in my article 'Columbanus and Gennadius', *Peritia*, 32 (2021) forthcoming.

question of Columbanus's sources for his dogmatic statements.⁹⁵² This is because Bachiarius's *De fide* belongs to the aforementioned group of dogmatic texts, among which there is also Gennadius's *Liber dogmatum*, that appear to have close ties with codex Ambrosiano O 212 from Bobbio on the one hand and Colummbanus's overall works on the other.

4. Final considerations.

The analysis conducted on the text on the *Epistulae* and the previous considerations on the macro-textual aspects of the collection have emphasised features of Columbanus's writing that usually receive little focus in historical analysis of his career as a monastic founder. The portrayal that has emerged highlights his qualities as an original theological thinker and as a diplomat. His contribution to the ecclesiastical controversies of his time can only be understood on the basis of this collection as it is mostly glossed over by Jonas's *Vita*. The aim was not to invalidate the overall portrayal of his actions which, in most modern scholarly works qualify him as quarrelsome and unyielding polemist, but to understand the tool he had at his disposal when engaging in such controversies, epistolary prose. Analysis of the medium has resulted in a more nuanced portrayal of the writer: a capable, if somewhat stubborn, diplomat whose appeals for unity, whether within his own community or within the church at large, no matter how conceited and stylised, always sound genuine in their earnestness.

Finally, analysis of the epistolary prose has confirmed that, while Columbanus was familiar with the overall characteristics of the genre, and can be characterised as adept letter-writer, his letters are consistent with what little is known of the tradition of his homeland. It might be possible to speak of an 'Insular school of letter-writers' distinguished by a mode of discussion of specific ecclesiastical problems that is always geared towards moralising exhortations and eschatological tension. Its most apparent characteristics would be a great focus on scriptural exegesis, a strong element of parrhesia and a vocabulary that could be described as 'hisperic' or 'proto-hisperic'.

Such a school can be considered to have started with the writings of Patrick and Gildas, peaked

⁹⁵² See discussion of Ferrandus the Deacon in the *Ep.* V chapter, section 5.2; discussion of Pseudo-Basil and Pseudo-Firminus Maternus in the chapters about *Ep.* II and *Ep.* IV, section 2.7 and section 4.7. Discussion of Bachiarius in the *Ep.* I chapter, section 1.4.

with Columbanus's collection and Cummian's letter, and was still exerting its influence in the late seventh century, on the letters transmitted by Bede and on the collection of Aldhelm. Future investigation of seventh-century epistolary literature should take this aspect into account, and perhaps even begin to investigate similar regional characteristics in letter-collections from Visigothic Spain and Lombard Italy.

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