On the Curriculum of the Arts of the Trivium
at St. Gall from c. 850—c. 1000

L. M. DE RIJK

1. The School of St. Gall from its origin to the days of Notker Labeo (died 1022)

From the hermitage founded about the year 613 by St. Gall, one of the companions of St. Columban, there arose at the beginning of the next century an abbey that has been one of the most famous centres of intellectual and spiritual life in Western Europe.

A patron of the original cell, Waltraf, appointed in 720 an Alamannic priest, one Othmar, who himself had been educated in Rhaetia, custodian of the cell. From that time onwards the cell became a true monastery, where the rule of St. Benedict was kept, so that we may consider Othmar to have been the first abbott of St. Gall. During his abbacy (720-759) the St. Gall School was founded.

After Othmar's death there began a long period of friction with the bishop of Constance about the independency of St. Gall Abbey. As late as 780 Charlemagne acted in the matter by confirming a charter according to which St. Gall became dependent on the see of Constance. His successor, however, Louis the Pious (814-840), made St. Gall a royal monastery. The settlement of the long-drawn conflict may be seen as a favourable condition for a truly spiritual and intellectual development of the Abbey and its School. From this moment, the Abbey did not only increase in material prosperity, but it was also fortunate enough to be directed by a series of well-educated abbots.

The first flourishing period of the School was under Abbot Gozbert (816-837), an enthusiastic and active patron of learning and art. This high-tide is also reflected in the productivity of the scriptory at St. Gall,

1 The only claim of this introductory chapter is to provide a general background that may serve as a starting-point and a basis for further doctrinal investigation. I am much indebted for it to the clear expositions by J. M. Clark, The Abbey of St. Gall as a Centre of Literature and Art, Cambridge, 1926. § 1. Historical Introduction, 1-17. See also Gabriel Meier O.S.B., Geschichte der Schule von Sankt Gallen im Mittelalter, Jahrbuch für Schweizerische Geschichte x, Zürich 1885, pp. 35-127; the history of the Abbey is dealt with on pp. 36-98.
3 substituted for that of St. Columban; see Clark, op. cit., 3-4; 26; 58.
4 For an account of the material prosperity and expansion of the Abbey, see Clark, op. cit., 5-7.
which shows, in Gozbert’s days, an increasing number of characteristic features: it is the period of the Alemannic-St. Gallian minuscule.

His successor was a powerful Frankish nobleman, Abbot Grimald (841-872). Although he was not a monk but a secular priest, Grimald nevertheless had been appointed by Louis the German, who wanted to endow his Court Chaplain and Chancellor with the rich monastery. Grimald had been educated by Alcuin (or Alchvine, as he spelt himself) in the Palace School of Charlemagne and afterwards in Italy, as Notker Balbulus tells us: ... apud quem (sc. Alcuinum) et dominus G(rimaldus) primo in Gallia, post vero in Italia, liberalibus est disciplinis imbutus. I found in a tenth-century manuscript, now at Poitiers (cod. 184 (288)), formerly belonging to the Library of the Benedictine Abbey of Fleury (cod. 254), a heading over a work entitled De dieta ciborum which heading mentions a certain Grimaldus as being baiulus et comites sacri palatii.

In the days of Abbot Grimald a vivid exchange of ideas between St. Gall and other famous schools promoted its development. In fact, there were good connections between the schools of Fulda, Mainz, St. Gall and Reichenau. Grimald is not only reported to have worked in Reichenau, but he was also an intimate friend of Hrabanus Maurus, Otfrid of Weissenburg and Walafrid Strabo, abbot of Reichenau (842-849, also trained at Fulda), all of whom dedicated books to him. Moreover, abbot Grimald sent the monk Hartmuot, later his deputy and after his death his successor, together with Werimerbert and Engilbert for instruction to Fulda, where they were among the pupils of Hrabanus Maurus and fellow-students of Otfrid of Weissenburg. At Fulda, or at Mainz, the later Abbot Salomo II of Constance was a pupil of Liutbert, who was archbishop of Mainz from 863 to 889. We have a letter of

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1 For the time before Gozbert, see A. Bruckner, Die Scriptoria Medii Aevi Helveticae: Denkmäler Schweizerischer Schreibkunst des Mittelalters, ii, 11.1-24; for Gozbert’s abbacy, ibid., 24-34 and iii, 21-23.
2 De Gestis Caroli Magni i 9, edited by G. H. Pertz in Mon. Germ. Hist. s.s. ii, (1829) 734.33-34.
3 ff. 70-73 incipit opusculum Grimaldus (!) baiulus et comites sacri palatii ad karulum regem de dieta ciborum et nutritura anciptrum(!) .... Inc. Si a(c)cipiter(!) fastidit, hoc autem ei facies ad commendendum(!). Flores de cidonia lib’ i ... etc.
4 See A. Bruckner, op. cit. ii, 14, n. 90 and Ermenrich of Reichenau, Epistula ad Grimaldum xxx, 567.
7 Grimald was (probably as early as from 847) Arch-chaplain of the East-frankan king, which function compelled him to leave St. Gall frequently for fairly long periods.
8 See E. Dümmler, op. cit., 137-138; also M.V.G. (= Mittheilungen zur vaterländischen Geschichte) xiii, 36, and J. M. Clark, op. cit., 60.