

10. Notker and the Arrogant Chaplain

[37.] Erant illo in tempore sancto Gallo et alii coenobitae quidem sancti, quorum iustitiae apud Deum non sunt in oblivione; quorum quidem opera multa audivimus praeclara. Inter quos Hartmannus et ipse doctissimus, abbas coenobii post Salomonem, Waltrammus vero, cuius etiam melodiae, quis fuerit, non caelant; Ruodkerus, cuius supra meminimus, et alii quidem multi, cum sanctis sancti, cum electis electi. De quibus, quia longum est operi audita prosequi, tres solos quos assumpsimus, in exemplum posteris sufficere credamus.

Notkerus vero in his quae in capitulo suo praelibavimus, dies noctesque semper idem et novus, quod Ratpertus in scholis, hoc ipse in claustro praeter verbera, omni caritatis egit censura. Nam priorum permissio, magis autem et ortatu, iuveniores ad hoc idonei noctes diesque, quando ab orationibus quiesceret, velut in insidiis erant. Neque enim hora incompetens dicebatur, si codice in manibus quis cum domno Notkero loquebatur. Ipse autem cum propter regulae tenorem sibilis eos interdum et strepitu absturbaret, ab abbatibus ei per obedientiam, quod refutaret, iniunctum est.

Quam autem mellifluus in responsis fuerit, lacrimae eorum qui hominem viderant, testantur. Enimvero aetiam in spiritu Dei multa bonis et malis aut fortuna praedixit aut infortunia; sicuti, ut gratia exempli superiora repetam, cuidam Karoli elati animi capellano.

[38.] Nam rex idem, cum ob caritates agendas fratribus, ut solebat, coenobio veniret, totumque triduum gratia reverentiae conversantium ibidem moraretur, sanctisque nostris, ut et Rapertus scribit, munificus, abbate iam mutato, abire parasset, ille quidem elati animi capellanus virum Dei psalterio, ut solebat, assidentem praeteriens conspexit; agnitoque, quod is esset qui Karolo multa querenti pridie quesita resolveret, comitantibus ait: *Ecce, inquam, iste est, quo neminem aiunt in regno Karoli doctiorem. Sed ego, si vultis, illum*

[37.] At that time there were also other monks [dedicated] to St Gall, holy ones indeed, whose just deeds God has not forgotten; we have heard many notable things about them. Among them was Hartmann, also a most learned man, who became abbot of the monastery after Solomon; and Waltram, whose melodies do not conceal who he was; Ruodker, whom we mentioned earlier, and indeed many others—holy ones among the holy, elect among the elect. It would take too long to report everything I have heard about them, but we believe that the three we have chosen suffice by way of example.

But Notker, who nights and days was always the same, and yet also different, with regard to the things we mentioned in the chapter about him, acted with every charitable punishment, and this in person in the Cloister, just like Ratpert did in the schools, excepting the beatings. For by permission of the priors or, rather, at their urging, younger lads who were suited were in ambush by night and by day whenever he rested from his prayers. And no hour was said to be inappropriate for somebody to speak with Lord Notker with book in hand. Now although he himself occasionally frightened them away with hissing and noise, according to the meaning of the rule, the abbots enjoined him to do the things he had refused, out of obedience,.

The tears of those who have seen the man testify how honey-sweet he was in his responses. In the spirit of God he has also foretold many things, for good or bad, and fortunes or misfortunes—for example, if I may repeat things said above, to a certain chaplain of [King] Charles [who had] an arrogant [disposition].

[38.] For when, after the change of abbot, the same king came to the monastery to extend charity to the brethren, as he was wont to, and stayed there the whole three-day period out of reverence of those present, being generous to our saints (as Rapert writes as well), and had prepared himself to leave, that arrogant chaplain passed by [Notker], the man of God, who as usual was sitting at the psalter, and looked at him. Having recognized him as the man who on the previous day had resolved many questions to the inquiring [King] Charles, said to the company: “Behold, this is the man, I say, of whom they say that there is nobody in the realm of Charles who is more learned. But if you wish, I shall

tam praecellentissime doctum ad irrisionem vobis temptabo, et quod tantae famae vir omnino nesciat, interrogabo. Illis vero, ut hoc faceret, curiose rogantibus, accedunt pariter, salutant eum. Humilis ille assurgens, quid petant, quaerit. At ille infelix quem diximus: Scimus, inquit, homo doctissime, omnia te nosse. Quid autem Deus in coelo nunc faciat, a te cupimus, si nosti, audire.

Scio, inquit ille, et optime scio. Nunc enim facit, quod semper fecit; utique et tibi quam mox facturum est. Exaltat enim humiles, et humiliat superbos. Abibat temptator ille et irrisor, a suis irrisus, parvi pendens quod sibi futurum dixisset. Sonatur continuo ad concursum et laudes caesaris abituri. Arripit ille infelix futurus labarum, eo die ordinis sui, dominum antecedendi. Et equo superbo invecus, ante portas civitatis offendens cecidit, et misere in facie collisus, crus confregit. Committitur abbati novo Hartmuoto suffecto Perinhardo procurandus. Cui ipse tandem praesagium Notkeri omnemque huiusmodi rem cum aperuisset, desiderabat viri Dei, si se invisere dignetur, absolutionem et praesentis benedictionem. Quod cum ille despective de Notkero audiens, nihil sibi mali eius vaticinio assereret contigisse, coagulari fractura illa nullis fomentis, nullis adunari valuit ligamentis. Supplicatur tandem media quadam nocte a miserantibus clamores eius Notkero. Qui dum adveniens crus contrectasset, confestim conbullire illud sensit confractus, didicitque severe de caetero humilia sentire.

get that exceedingly learned man to become your laughing-stock, and shall ask something about which this famous man is completely ignorant.” While they were curiously asking him to do it, they all approached and greeted [Notker]. Rising humbly, he asked what they wanted. But that unlucky [chaplain] of whom we spoke said: “We know, most learned man, that you know everything. But now we desire to hear from you, if you happen to know, what God is doing in heaven right now.”

“I do know,” [Notker] replied, “and I know it very well. He is doing now what he has always done, and what he will soon be doing to you. For he lifts the humble, and humbles the proud.” The tempter and mocker walked off, derided by his companions, but unimpressed by what [Notker] had said would happen to him. Then the sound was given for the assembly and praises of the emperor, who was about to depart. The soon to be unfortunate [chaplain] grabbed the banner, as he was tasked to do that day, and went before the lord. Riding on a stubborn horse, he bumped and fell before the gates of the city, was miserably hit in the face, and broke his leg. He was given to the care of the new abbot, Perinhard, who had been appointed in Hartmuot’s place. When [the chaplain] had revealed Notker’s prophecy and the whole matter to [Perinhard], he expressed the wish [to receive] the absolution and blessing of this man of God, if [the latter] would condescend to visit him. [The abbot], hearing disdain for Notker, declared that nothing bad had happened to him because of the prophecy, and was able to close the fracture without any dressings or ties. Finally, at midnight some time later, those who took pity on his crying pleaded with Notker. And when he arrived and felt the leg, the [chaplain with the] broken [leg] immediately sensed it cauterizing together, and learned the severe lesson to think only humble thoughts in future.

11. Abbot Solomon and the Art of the Book in St Gall

[22.] Sancto Gallo etiam, in nullis fortunis immemor eius, duas tabulas eburneas de eiusdem scriniis attulit; quibus alias magnitudine equipares rarissime videre est; quasi sic dentatus elephans aliorum fuerit gigas. Erant autem tabulae quondam quidem at scribendum ceratae, quas latere lectuli soporantem ponere solitum, in vita sua scriptor eius Karolum dixit. Quarum una cum sculptura esset et sit insignissima, altera planitiae politissima, Tuotiloni nostri politam tradidit sculpendam. Quibus longioris et latiori moduli Sintrammum nostrum scribere iussit euangelium, ut quod tabulis abundaret, auro et gemmis Hattonis ornaret. Hoc hodie est euangelium et scriptura, cui nulla, ut opinamur, par erit ultra; quia cum omnis orbis cisalpinus Sintrammi digitos miretur, in hoc uno, ut celebre est, triumphat. Mirari autem est, hominem unum tanta scripsisse; quia in nominatissimis locis plerisque harum regni partium, Sintrammi characteris libri, sancti Galli obsides, habentur ...

[28.] Raro autem deinceps homo videndus est, in quem largitor omnium bonorum tantum suorum congerat donorum. Erat enim homo praeter decore faciei dotem, et statura procere, doctus et disciplinatissimus. Scribendi lingua manuque artifex. Lineandi, et capitulares literas rite creandi prae omnibus gnarus, ut in apicibus *l.* et *c.* longi euangelii primis videre est. Quas episcopus, ut aiunt, probans quid in talibus adhuc posset, lineans aurificabit.

[22.] Never unmindful of St Gall when in good fortune, he devoted two ivory tablets for the saint from the same shrine. [Tablets] of that size are only very rarely seen elsewhere—as if the elephant was the one giant among other [elephants]. These tablets had once been covered with wax for the purpose writing. In his biography of Charlemagne, Einhard said that [the Emperor] used to put them on the side of his bed when he went to sleep. Of these [two tablets], one was carved and of the finest quality; the other had a polished flat surface. He gave that flat polished one to Tuotilo to have it sculpted. And he commissioned our Sintram to copy a Gospel of longer and wider measure, so that [the book], outstanding for its tablets, could also be decorated with Hatto's gold and precious stones. This is now an Evangeliary [St Gall, Stiftsbibliothek, MS 53], the like of which there is none, in our opinion, for while the whole world on this side of the Alps admires [the work of] his fingers [in general], he triumphs in the one fact that it is famous. It is a marvel that one man has copied so much...

[28.] One rarely sees another man in whom the generous Giver of all good things has piled up so many of his gifts. For aside from the handsomeness of his visage, and his tall stature, he was learned and exceedingly well educated. He was a master in writing with tongue and hand, more knowledgeable in painting letters and creating them in the right way, as in the letters “L” and “C” which are the first to be seen in the Evangelium longum. People said that the bishop [Salomo] provided it with gold leaf to show how skilled he still was in this art.

The Evangelium Longum

St Gall, Stiftsbibliothek, MS 53 (c.895)

