

circles, as the book of Revelation bears witness: 'The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to shew unto His servants . . . and He sent and signified it by His "angel" unto His servant John' (i 1). Thus John did not claim to see the heavenly Christ, any more than did his predecessors in Jewish apocalyptic; he saw the 'similitude', the 'angel' of Christ, as did Ezekiel, Daniel, and the author of the Enochic visions. The same is true of the author of 4 Ezra, the very late Jewish apocalypse, the Latin of which gives *quasi similitudinem hominis* (xiii 2): this not only permits us to 'determine the Hebrew behind' the phrase (as Dr Charles rightly states), but through the Hebrew enables us to verify the continuity of the Figure in the visions of all the apocalyptists. That Figure is Ezekiel's 'Glory of Yahweh' who wears 'a similitude as the appearance of a man', and is the human form of the ancient Angel of the Lord, i.e. he is God in self-manifestation.

G. H. DIX.

ST SAMSON OF DOL.

THE name of Saint Samson of Dol is now little known in this island, even in South Wales from whence he came. He was no doubt the Samson who signed his name (in a Hexameter line) at the Council of Paris about 560 (Maassen *Mon. Germ. hist.* 'Concilia' vol. i, p. 146), and the founder of the Monastery at Dol, a little Breton town half-way between St Malo and Mont St Michel. He also founded another Monastery at Pental on the Lower Seine, which is believed to have perished in the Norman invasions.

St Samson's *Vita*, first printed by Mabillon, was very well edited from all the available MSS by M. Robert Fawtier in 1912. This text has now been translated into English, with an Introduction, by Mr Thomas Taylor, of St Just, a known writer on mediaeval Cornwall.¹ Mr Taylor's book will serve to introduce the reader to the curious subject with which it deals: the account of Brittany in early times (pp. xxiii-xxxv), with the two instructive maps of the country in the 4th and 6th centuries respectively, may be specially commended. We must, however, know the position that the *Vita Samsonis* holds in Breton historical study, in order to understand the scope of Mr Taylor's work and also its very serious defects.

Writing the early history of Brittany is like making bricks without clay and with nothing but an intolerable deal of straw. There is no Breton chronicle of early date and Gregory of Tours tells us little, but

¹ *The Life of St Samson of Dol*, by Thomas Taylor, B.D.: London, S.P.C.K., 1925.

there are plenty of wholly unhistorical legends, plenty of Saints' Lives that are rejected as unhistorical even by enthusiastic Celtic archaeologists—and there is the Life of Samson. It is the one document of its class, the claims of which to be regarded as *bona fide* historical can be considered seriously. But is it historical? In what sense is it historical? How far can we seriously trust anything in it? M. Fawtier asks (p. 78): 'What can we extract for the history of Brittany from a text like that of the *Vita sancti Samsonis*?' And he replies: 'Hardly anything at all, except that Samson is called, no doubt rightly, the founder of Dol and of Pental'. The death of Samson took place about 565; the oldest MSS are of the 11th century. But it is not so much a question of textual corruption, as of the historical qualifications of the author of the Life we possess.

Says Mr Taylor (p. xiv): 'M. Fawtier has been answered by the Abbé Duine and Professor Loth. It is a question of internal evidence involving scholarship and an intimate knowledge of language and religious literature. Here it must suffice to give, in brief, one or two of the points raised and their answers, leaving the reader to consult the bibliography for a further treatment of the subject'. In the pages that follow this statement (xiv–xviii) Mr Taylor mentions some of the 'points raised' and gives in a rather superficial way the solutions of M. Duine, to be found in his *Questions d'Hagiographie* (Paris, 1914).

M. Fawtier in his Introduction gives good reason for believing that all the forms of the tale of Samson, including those preserved in Welsh sources, are derived from what he calls 'Recension B', which he edits in full from twenty MSS. Three of these, called by him A, B, and J, are of the 11th century¹: M. Fawtier prints A, giving the variants in his footnotes. It will probably be a convenience to give here a rapid summary of the story.

First comes a Prologue, written in a very involved style, and dedicated to Tigernomalus, bishop of the 'apostolic' see (i. e. of Dol), which explains the author's sources. Then follows the *Vita* proper in sixty-one chapters. Samson, the son of well-to-do parents, was born in South Wales, after his father and mother had almost given up hopes of a child, like Samson of old (§§ 1–6). At an early age, being regarded as a child of miracle, he was dedicated to God and sent to the famous school of Eltutus, i. e. to Llantwit Major in Glamorganshire (§§ 7–9). Here he distinguished himself by learning and sanctity, so that he was early ordained Deacon by Dubricius the bishop. At the ordination a dove, sent from heaven, was seen by Dubricius and Eltutus resting upon

¹ A = Metz 195, B = Paris, Mazarine 1708, J = Paris, B.N. 11884. A is a good text, but with many mistakes, and BJ united seem to me to be generally right against A.

Samson (§ 13). Two years later¹ the same sign was seen, when Samson was ordained Priest (§ 15). After a while Samson goes to a certain *insula*—apparently a dependent monastery is meant—in order to lead a stricter life (§§ 20, 21). From this place he was sent for to see his father, who seemed to be dying (§ 22): on the way his companion was nearly killed by a wild woman-of-the-woods, here called a *theomacha*, but Samson rescued his friend and the *theomacha* dies (§§ 26–28). When he reaches his home his father Amon confesses his sins and recovers from his illness, and both he and Samson's mother, his brothers, and his uncle and aunt and their sons—in fact, the whole family except Samson's sister—decide to adopt the monastic life (§§ 29–31). A little later, after several miracles, Dubricius appointed Samson to be abbot of his monastery, in succession to his aged predecessor, who had fallen into a well *per ineptam ebrietatem* (§ 36).² After a year and a half Samson paid a visit to Ireland, possibly to Howth near Dublin (§§ 37–39).³ On his return Samson retired to a hermit's life in a cave (§ 41), but was called from thence to be abbot of a monastery founded by St German, and presently was consecrated Bishop by Dubricius on the day of St Peter's Chair (§.42). The ceremony was marked by a special vision, in which Samson is consecrated by Peter and James the Lord's brother and John the Evangelist, so that when he awoke he, Samson, knew that he had been consecrated a High Priest (*summum sacerdotem*) by the Holy Spirit (§ 43). At the ceremony the dove was again seen (§ 44): the utmost pains is taken by the biographer to shew that Samson was duly consecrated to the highest ecclesiastical dignity by God and man.

In obedience to a vision Samson set out after Easter for 'Europe', i. e. Brittany, with holy vessels and books which were carried in a two-horse cart (§ 45). On his way, somewhere south of the Severn Sea, i. e. in Devon or Cornwall, he meets a holy man, *Iuniaus* by name⁴ (§ 46), demolishes an idol (§ 48), kills a serpent (§ 50), and finally sails across the Channel 'with very many monks' and above all with his cousin Henoc, from whose memoir the biographer professes to get his information (§ 52 and *Prol.* § 2). They land at Dol, a place the name of which the biographer appears to derive from the 'dolour' of a man whose wife

¹ Clearly *dubio* of the MSS is a corruption of *biduo*, as was seen by the scribe of one of the later copies. Dom Plaine's text also has *post biennium* (*Anal. Boll.* vi 93).

² Of Samson himself it is said *nunquam alius uidit eum ebrium* (§ 15). He was, besides, a strict vegetarian, and never slept in a bed (§ 36).

³ *In arce Etri* = in Dun Etair (§ 38).

⁴ As this saint's name is said to mean 'Light' in the British language it seems reasonable to write it *Viniaus*, and to identify him with the Uinniau, whose Penitential is quoted in the *Hibernensis* (see H. Bradshaw *Hibernensis* p. 37).

and daughter Samson heals ; there Samson founds his monastery and there after some years he dies.

The one event of Samson's life on the Continent that is related in the *Vita* is his visit to King Hiltbert, i. e. Childebert I, son of Clovis (A. D. 511-558), on behalf of Iudualus son of Ionas the *presul* of the country (§ 53). Ionas the rightful ruler had been killed and his young son Iudualus given up to Hiltbert by Commorus (§ 59), an 'external judge' (§ 53). Samson visited the king and performed several miracles, including the destruction of another serpent in a cave on the Lower Seine (§ 58), so that he obtained the release of Iudualus and permission to found a Monastery where the serpent was destroyed, i. e. at Pental¹: he then goes to the Channel Islands, where he and Iudualus raise an army that overwhelms Commorus (§ 59). So Samson dies in peace and honour at Dol.

A second book of the *Vita*, in sixteen chapters, by the same hand follows, and is also dedicated to Tigernomalus. It is really an exhortation to celebrate the festival of Samson, 'our patron' (§ 5), and adds very little to the first book, except one or two miracles. In § 15 the 'holy and venerable Bishop Loucher' is mentioned as being in the monastery on the occasion of a fire, but he is not called the Abbot.

This is the tale of St Samson. It is not in itself a very exciting story, notwithstanding the miracles and prodigies, but if it be really founded on the reminiscences of a contemporary it would help to light up a very dark corner of the darkest period of European history. Mr Taylor's method of dealing with it is simple. He does not ask us to believe all the 'miracles' (p. xiii), but he assumes the complete *bona fides* of the biographer, and accepts his claim to have written 'at the beginning of the seventh century' (p. xxxviii). He then uses the various tales as exemplifications of the normal method of conducting services and ordinations in Britain in the sixth century—as if in the sixth century in Britain anything was normal or fixed or stable!

But indeed the first thing is to try and find out the real age of this pretentious *Vita*. At the end of the study it may be possible to attempt a reconstruction of the history of Samson, but we must begin by a critical examination of the *Vita* itself. I begin with the Biblical quotations, because this is a matter which can be treated separately.

There are about a dozen quotations or references to Biblical texts, which have been conveniently collected and printed side by side with the Latin Vulgate text by the Abbé Duine.² As a matter of fact the quotations differ very little from the Vulgate, and where they do differ there are only two points in which they agree with any known Old-Latin

¹ Pental is only named, proleptically, in § 38.

² F. Duine *Questions d'Hagiographie et Vie de S. Samson* pp. 43-45.

text: the quotation of Rom. viii 18 in *Vita* i 14 has *ad superuenturam gloriam* instead of *ad futuram gloriam*, and the quotation of Exod. xii 11 in ii 14 has *lumbos uestros* instead of *renes uestros*. In the first passage the source is clear: the quotation of Rom. viii 18 agrees with that in the *Moralia* iii 41 of St Gregory, our biographer's favourite author for imitation. The other is a well-worn proof-text, found in every collection (e.g. Cyprian's *Testimonia*, Bk. iii, and the *Speculum*). Even here Samson's biographer has one definitely Vulgate element in his quotation, viz. the use of the 2nd pers. pl. (*praecingetis*, where vg. has *accingetis*). And *manducebitis illud* for *comedetis illum*, in the same quotation, is not Biblical; it shews us that our author is quoting from memory.

In several of the other quotations the Vulgate text is clearly used. Thus in ii 14 = Jerem. xv 1 *ad populum istum* agrees with the Vulgate, while the Greek text has *πρὸς αὐτούς*. And in the paraphrastic reference to Ezek. xxxiii 11-16 in ii 5 *obliuiscar* corresponds to *obliuioni tradentur* (v. 13): it is only in the Vulgate that 'forgetting' occurs instead of 'not remembering'.

The quotations in Gildas, the contemporary of Samson, are quite different. In Gildas the Old-Latin element is prominent in the Gospels, perceptible in the Pauline Epistles. For Isaiah and Jeremiah Gildas uses the Vulgate, for the Minor Prophets and Ezekiel he has an Old-Latin text, as any one may verify for himself.

I cannot therefore agree with M. Duine that the quotations in our *Vita* afford any evidence for a special *version bretonne de la Bible* which differed in any striking way from extant texts, and therefore I cannot think that the almost unique word *theomacha* in i 26 f can be derived from a wholly hypothetical Old-Latin version of Acts v 39. In this verse *θεομάχοι* occurs in the Greek, which is rendered *Deo repugnare* in the Vulgate, *Deo repugnantes* in *d laud gig* and *perp*: by a lucky chance *h* is extant and reads *aduersus dm* [*pugnantes*].¹ Thus there is evidence that neither the European nor the African branch of the Old-Latin had *theomachi* in the text, and we must seek some other explanation for the word in our *Vita*.

Bede in his *Retractations* on Acts notes that *Deo repugnantes* is only one word in Greek, viz. *θεομάχοι*, and he adds that he thinks it worth while to notice this fact, so that when we find *θεομάχος* or *θεομαχία* in history-books we may know the meaning more clearly. Now the *Corpus* of Latin Glosses conducts us directly to the one place where we can find *theomachia* in a Latin text: it is at the beginning of Rufinus's translation of the Ecclesiastical History of Eusebius (i 2), a work doubtless as familiar to our biographer as it was to Victor of Capua. And the

¹ The margin is torn away, but the restoration is certain.

context is quite suitable, for it describes the wild life in the woods of early fallen Man. Our biographer, having to tell a tale of Samson's encounter with the wild woman-of-the-woods,¹ calls her a *theomacha* as being one whose whole life was a *theomachia*.

Was he perhaps guided to this by having read the Note in Bede? I have not found any other use of Bede's *Retractatio*, but the curious interpretation of Solomon's Porch as meaning peace and unity (*Vita* ii 3), which is alluded to by M. Duine, p. 45, may very well have been suggested by Bede's remarks in his Commentary on Acts iii 11.² Bede died in 735: if we admit that the biographer of St Samson had read his commentaries, it brings down the date of the work into the 8th century or the beginning of the 9th.

It has been proved by M. Duine that our author borrows from Jerome's Life of Paul the Hermit and Sulpitius Severus's Life of St Martin, but his favourite source for quotation and imitation is the Gospel Homilies of Gregory the Great, whom in ii 4 he quotes as *quidam sapiens*, and in ii 5 as 'Scripture'. St Gregory died in 604: it is known that his chief works were very early brought into general circulation, but this kind of citation surely implies the kind of inaccurate familiarity which is engendered by long use. And how long did it take for St Gregory's works to find their way into *Brittany*?

The important passage in *Prol.* § 2, where the biographer of Samson gives an account of his sources, is so confused that it is necessary to quote it in the Latin. He says:

'Primo omnium credi a me uos uolo quod non iuxta adinventionis meae temeritatem nec iuxta inordinata et incomposita audita haec uerba collecta sunt, sed iuxta hoc a quodam religioso ac uenerabili sene, in cuius domo ultra mare ipse solus Samson †fundauerat†, ille per octogenerios fere annos catholicam religiosamque uitam ducens, propissimeque temporibus eiusdem . . . Samsonis, †mater eius tradidisset† auunculo suo sanctissimo diacono (qui et ipse diaconus consobrinus esset sancto Samsoni), mihi ueraciter affirmabat . . . et non solum hoc sed etiam quamplura ac delicata de eius prodigiis actibus, quae citra mare in Britannia ac Romana³ mirabiliose fecit, uerba supradictus sanctus diaconus, Henocus nomine, congruis stilibus polite ultra mare adportauit, et ille . . . senex semper ante me in istud monasterium commanens pie legere ac diligenter faciebat'.

Thus an old man, eighty years a monk, had told the author many things about Samson, and had read to him the memoir of his deeds in Brittany and France which the deacon Henoc, Samson's cousin, had

¹ She had eight sisters (i 27), and no doubt they are a form of the famous Nine Witches of Gloucester whom we meet with in Welsh legend (*Mabinogion* p. 96).

² *Saluato per apostolos Israele concurret omnis mundus ad limina ueri et pacifici Salomonis.*

³ That is, in Brittany and the rest of France. .

written and carried overseas. This Henoc was the old monk's uncle.¹ Our author tells us expressly that this Henoc accompanied Samson to Dol (i 52). Professor Loth and Mr Taylor cannot believe that Henoc brought from Britain to Dol an account of what happened in Brittany, so they insert an *et quae* between *uerba* and *supradictus*. But there is no trace of this in the MSS, and it seems to me that another explanation must be found.

Whatever the date or the good faith of the biographer of Samson, he clearly wrote at Dol as a member of the community, and as an old man (ii 1, and *ultimus*, Prol. § 3). Why was he chosen? Clearly because he had information which no one else had. It is noteworthy that no appeal whatever is made to common tradition about the life of Samson, except how the Saint long after his death caused a shower of rain to extinguish a fire in the monastery bake-house (ii 14 *ad fin.*). Our author, therefore, had a special qualification for his task above the rest of the monks at Dol, and what this was may, I think, be deduced from the passage I have quoted, obscure as it is in places. It was that, though he now lived at Dol, he had been a monk in Britain, almost certainly at Llantwit itself. The 'old man', who had instructed our author, was therefore a monk of Llantwit in Wales.

In accordance with this we find a number of places in which our author speaks in the first person. They are the following:—

- i 7 = p. 106^{4,5} 'I was in Eltut's magnificent monastery'.
- i 11 = p. 109¹³ 'I know what the question was that puzzled Samson'.
- i 20 = p. 120⁶ 'I was in Piro's *insula*'.
- i 38 = p. 135⁸ 'I know this brother lived at Pental from letters sent to me'.
- i 41 = p. 137¹¹ 'When I was in Britain the place where Umbraphel, Amon and the Irish brother lived was had in honour'.
- i 42 = p. 138¹ 'I have heard read the summons sent to Samson'.
- i 48 = p. 144³ 'I have been to the hill where the idol was, and have touched the *signum crucis* that Samson cut in the stone'.

These seven personal notes, taken together, suggest to me that the writer of the *Vita Samsonis* had lived as a monk in Wales somewhere

¹ This is all that is said of the status of the old monk: Mr Taylor translates 'being himself a cousin of St Samson and a deacon', a phrase which really belongs to Henoc. The grammar of the whole paragraph quoted above is highly confused. *Hoc* seems to stand for *quod*, and *mater tradidisse* for *matrem tradidisse*, unless our author wrote *mater tradens ea* in a sort of nominativus pendens (*tradens se* BJ). But *in cuius domo* . . . *Samson fundauerat* seems to me corrupt: can we not read *funguerat* (a word which occurs i 15) in the sense of 'fonctionnait'?

near Llantwit (where Eltut's monastery was), and probably at Llantwit itself. It is in connexion with these notes that I would understand his statement in i 1 that he had heard the names of Samson's parents recited at Mass: this would not be at Dol, for in that case the remark would have had no interest for his audience, as they would have heard the names themselves, but it was at Llantwit where Samson's relations were locally venerated for their own sakes.¹ Further, it should be noted that the author of our biography, writing for the monks of Dol by command of the 'apostolic bishop' Tigernomalus, does not speak of the written memoir by Henoc as a document accessible in their own monastery library, but as something which he found in the monastery where he had lived (when in Wales):—*litteris quae catholice ac indubitanter a supradicto diacono in eodem monasterio conscriptas repperi* (*Prolog.* § 4). He does not even say that he made a transcript of this work: on the contrary, he reproduces it from memory, together with things that his aged friend had told him about St Samson. If our author had been twenty years in Brittany and Henoc died about 570, and between this comes the greater part of the life of the aged monk, we arrive at somewhere about the year 650. But it is more likely that our author lived much later, and that his aged friend had not really been contemporary with Henoc the cousin of St Samson.

In any case this interpretation gives a reasonable meaning to what is said about Henoc's memoir. He had accompanied his cousin on his journey to Brittany and he knew something about his subsequent journey to the Merovingian King that resulted in the release of the native Princelet and the foundation of Pental, but we may suppose that after that he returned to South Wales before Samson's death. Henoc is the one real source of information, consequently the latter days of Samson, from which we might have expected reminiscences, are a blank in our *Vita*.

This is certainly a very curious circumstance. I venture to think that we can make from it one or two deductions. We have to bear two institutions in mind, which may indeed have once been identical, but certainly came in time to be distinct, viz. the Monastery of Dol and the See of Dol. Mr Taylor's second map, already referred to (Taylor, p. xxviii) is called Brittany in the 6th century, but it really represents the settlement of Noménoé, made in 848. Prof. Loth (*L'Émigration bretonne*, pp. 208–211), in discussing this settlement, gives good reasons for disbelieving the categorical statement of the late and prejudiced Chronicle of Nantes, that Noménoé among other things turned the monastery of Dol into a bishopric for the first time in 848, and shews

¹ Is it possible that Ammonford, in the region now mined for anthracite, was named after Amon, the father of Samson?

that he was in the main consolidating a state of things that had already grown up and had been partially recognized. But that is a very different thing from the impression given by Mr Taylor's map, which in fact shews the various Breton bishoprics neatly marked out with the boundaries that they have had since the days of Noménoé. In the 6th century, i. e. in Samson's time, and for long after, there is nothing that suggests this agreed division of spheres of influence and much that points to its being an anachronism.

In the south of Brittany there were the three Gallo-Roman cities of Rennes, Nantes, and Vannes. These cities had had bishops since the 5th century, and their influence extended, no doubt, into the country round over the *pagani*. Had the 6th and following centuries been a period of peaceful development, no doubt the territory administered by these bishops would ultimately have coincided with the limits of the old civil divisions, and any fresh sees created would have been connected with the civil divisions. But no such peaceful period ensued. The northern and western coasts of what is now called Brittany were invaded by the Bretons, that is by clans from Devon and Cornwall in the north, and by clans from the Severn Valley in the south-west. In most of the districts to which the invaders came the country seems to have been almost deserted, but wherever contact was made with the Gallo-Roman population there was long and devastating war. The three great centres of Roman civilization maintained themselves against the invaders, Rennes and Nantes entirely, Vannes to a certain extent, but their territory was reduced, and so when a settlement is reached in 848 we find that the three bishoprics are correspondingly diminished.

Meanwhile the invaders introduced their own ecclesiastical system, or want of system, into the territories occupied by them. It is possible to speak of the *Irish* system, for it lasted a long time in Ireland, and was regarded there as normal and not as a makeshift. But it is a question whether it was ever in vogue in Wales or in Brittany. In the Irish system there is what Mr Taylor (p. xvi) speaks of as 'a perverse development which tended to destroy the governmental prerogative of the bishop altogether. The abbot became supreme and the bishop in some cases a mere conduit of the grace of Holy Orders. There are, however, no traces of this development in Wales, Brittany, and Cornwall. There was nevertheless a very distinct tendency throughout Celtic Christendom to ignore the important principle of the Catholic Church, that a bishop should have not only succession from the Apostles, but also be in a right relation both to the local Church of which he claimed to be head and to the whole Church'. I quote this passage in full, because, if I have not mistaken Mr Taylor's meaning, it contains an assumption which the historian is not at liberty to make before the age of Charlemagne in

north-western Europe. Mr Taylor speaks of 'the local Church', but *was* there a local Church? Is not the Irish system a system other than 'the parochial system', not an organization which existed alongside of it?

One very important fact seems generally to be left out of consideration in discussions whether the Irish system is to be found in Wales and Brittany, particularly with reference to the case of St Samson, and this is the general disturbance of the whole social fabric. In the 4th and 5th centuries, while Roman legions were keeping the peace in Britain, no doubt Christianity was being organized on Continental lines. We know the names of a bishop of London (Restitutus) and of York (Eborius); in fact, as York was the capital of Roman Britain, it would be surprising if York had been left without a bishop. But of the history of the British Church from the Synod of Arles (314) to the times of Gildas the contemporary of St Samson we hear practically nothing.

Then came the English invasions of the 5th and 6th centuries. We know now that they were no mere raids, but a permanent occupation of the country; but at the time many Britons, who fled to the borders of Wales and the other districts in the West that maintained themselves for long, or altogether, against the heathen English, must have hoped to return to their homes when the barbarian wave had spent itself. The life of Samson falls in the middle of the invasions. The year that Mr Taylor fixes for Samson's ordination to the episcopate is 521,¹ a year after the battle of Mount Badon, when the West-Saxons were driven back and the Britons in the districts round Gloucester and Malmesbury got a respite of nearly fifty years. It was a turbulent period, marked by civil dissensions. Mr Taylor admits (p. xi) that from the Life of Samson there is nothing to shew that there were any secular clergy in Britain. But he goes on to say: 'The inference to be drawn is that regulars and seculars were practically independent of each other', a sentence which suggests that after all the parish priests, however unworthy, were there.

I feel inclined to doubt it. There may have been, here and there, priests who were not monks, either still exercising their charges at Bath or Glevum, or other centres of Roman-British life as yet undisturbed by the heathen English, or else refugees from the conquered districts. But I imagine them to have been relics of a doomed society, and I doubt very much whether any true 'parochial system' had developed itself by this time, outside some of the greater towns. And the 'monks' were not orderly Benedictines, but persons who had abandoned regular human society in despair, and who lived some indeed in the greatest asceticism

¹ I cannot quite follow Mr Taylor's calculations: it is a year when Feb. 22 fell on a Sunday: why not 526?

and sanctity, but others in a more or less irregular manner, having no fixed standard of life except the absence of household cares.¹

All these considerations come from the general history of the period, supported more or less by the vague denunciations of Gildas. The hagiographical material tells us in addition of two, and only two, centres of continuity and ecclesiastical organization, viz. Bishop Dubricius' and the School of Eltutus (or Illtyd). The Life of Dubricius in the Book of Llandaff is an almost worthless compilation of the 12th century; in fact, the most trustworthy details about his career are to be culled from the *Vita Samsonis* itself, but all our information is of the same character. It shews us a man and a bishop 'carrying on' when everything is crumbling around him, ordaining, regulating, appointing, degrading, according to the necessities of the moment; a man apparently with no fixed place of habitation, but glad to find a retreat in which he could stay at least for Lent and Easter. The other personage is Eltutus, a last relic of vanished learning, who lived in a comparatively safe and undisturbed district, and who spent his life there in trying to hand on some of the literary culture he had inherited.

I cannot believe that the activities of Dubricius and Eltutus were normal or conventional. As I view the matter, they were doing what they could to keep the Christian organization going somehow, and thankful to use any element of zeal or stability that came to their hand. It is not without reason that all the more famous Welsh and Breton Saints are said to have been schoolfellows—not necessarily therefore contemporaries—of Samson, for it seems likely that Llantwit was the only centre of learning left. It was under Dubricius and Eltutus that 'the Britons' came to an end, and what was left of them was organized as 'Wales'.

An extraordinary tradition, which cannot be traced beyond Geoffrey of Monmouth, makes Samson to have been consecrated Bishop of York. This is rejected, of course, by M. Fawtier, and also by M. Duine, and by Mr Taylor (p. xxxix). But I wonder whether, after all, there may not be something in it. Not, of course, that Samson ever went near York, but about the time that tradition puts his consecration Eboracum fell into the hands of the heathen English: is it not possible that Samson was consecrated to the title of York *in partibus infidelium*? It might seem natural to continue the succession to what had been the capital of Roman Britain, in the hope of better days.

However this may be, Samson evidently made no effort to go north. He went in the other direction, across the sea, and found a home at

¹ 'Cum quidquid putauerint uel elegerint hoc dicunt sanctum, et quod noluerint hoc putant non licere': St Benedict is not likely to have put these Sarabaitae in such a prominent position, if they were merely rare examples of eccentricity.

Dol. The fact that the monastery at Pental was somehow founded, though it is on the Lower Seine, in a district never politically occupied by Britons, lends support to the tradition that he did go on a mission to the King of the Franks and that he did win favour with him. What was the real point of the foundation of Pental? As it was founded by Samson, I suppose it was intended for men of British race, at least in the first instance. There must have been many British refugees all along the French coasts, and I imagine its function was to be a religious centre for these. It was not, and never became, a centre of political life.

But Dol was a different matter. Let us take the tradition, for the moment, as it stands. The status of Commorus, the 'external judge', is to us unknown. We do not read that he was an officer or nominee of Hiltbert. All we are told is that he was the usurping ruler of the country and that after his defeat Iudualus reigned over 'Dumnonia'. Of the *de facto* boundaries of this Dumnonian state we have little information. It almost certainly did not include Cornouailles, i. e. the see of Quimper, but how much of the rest of North Brittany ever came under the sway of Iudualus we have no idea, or indeed what was his place of residence.

Be this as it may, we find in the end along the north coast of Brittany the five Dumnonian sees—St Pol de Léon, Tréguier, St Brieuc, St Malo, and Dol. What really determined the limits of these sees is obscure, but it is likely to have been something connected with the conquests of the tribes which occupied the respective territories. Judging by the present limits of the Breton language, limits which according to Prof. Loth have hardly changed since the 12th or 13th century,¹ St Pol de Léon and Tréguier had a population predominantly Breton, while in St Brieuc, St Malo and Dol the population was mainly Gallo-Roman.

As to how these episcopal districts—it is perhaps a sort of anachronism to call them by the formal name dioceses—were administered in the period between Samson and Noménoé we have little information. Prof. Loth, judging mainly from documents connected with St Malo (pp. 204–205), gives reasons for believing that it was a quite different organization from that of the Irish monastery, where the non-episcopal abbot (or rather *coarb*) was at the head, and the bishop a subordinate. But it was not altogether on the pattern of the ordinary Roman model. On the one hand the Bishop was the head over a more or less defined tract of territory: there was no abbot of the mother-house to dispute his position, for he himself was its head. On the other hand we do not hear of any non-monastic clergy, of parish priests who are not monks. We do not know how, if at all, the scattered lay Christian population

¹ Loth *Émigration bretonne* pp. 192–193.

were cared for. At a guess, I would say that they were not cared for, in our parochial sense; that by annual or occasional pilgrimages to Dol or Tréguier, or some other centre, they acquired the desired 'pardon' for their sins, or else they got it by the merits of pious hermits who might settle in the woods of their neighbourhood for a life of fasting and meditation.

The 9th century brought in a wholly new state of things. Brittany submitted to Charlemagne in 799. A quarter of a century later Noménoé, appointed duke or count of the province by Louis le Débonnaire, found means to unite the Breton and the Gallo-Roman elements of 'Brittany' in a common opposition to the foreigner. In the following reign (of Charles the Bald) Noménoé revolted and made all Brittany into one independent realm. He died in 851, but his work was permanent and Brittany never became part of France till it passed by inheritance to the French crown in the 15th century.

One thing only was lacking to the complete triumph of Noménoé. The Archbishop of Tours, the successor of St Martin, claimed archiepiscopal jurisdiction over all the land to the west, from sea to sea, and Tours was within the dominions of the French King. Noménoé, on the other hand, desired his Brittany to be a province of its own, independent of Tours and subject only to Rome. It was a weak point in his case that Rennes and Nantes, and also Vannes, the chief towns within his dominions, had been in the past subject to Tours. Possibly Tours had never exercised any *de facto* control over St Pol de Léon and Tréguier, but it might be replied that they were outlying districts, separated by forests and by barbarous tribes from their rightful ecclesiastical suzerain. It could not be claimed that by word or deed any properly constituted ecclesiastical authority in Gaul had ever formally recognized them.

But Dol was different. It was claimed, and it was not contested, that Samson, the founder of Dol, had been recognized by Hiltbert, that he had founded Pental within the dominions and therefore by the permission of the Frankish monarch. This was claimed, and that the claim had some historical foundation may be inferred not only from the fact of Pental, but also from the subscriptions to the Council of Paris, where after the signature of well-known bishops of Gaul we read

Samson subscripsi et consensi in nomine Christi.

No see is named: perhaps, as we have seen, Samson regarded himself as bishop of the now non-existent see of Eboracum. But it was enough for Noménoé. Samson of Dol was not subject to Tours. All that was necessary was to get Dol recognized as an Archbishopric and then Rennes and Nantes could do homage to Dol. It was not an

absurd scheme: much the same had been done when, for instance, Coire was transferred from Milan to the new archbishopric of Mainz. And again, had Mercia maintained its political independence there is some likelihood that there might have been an archbishop of Lichfield.

As it was, the scheme failed, and the claim of Dol was finally disallowed by Innocent III in 1199, but only after several of its 'archbishops' had actually received the pallium. Of this claim the *Vita Samsonis*, the subject of this paper, is the earliest surviving monument. The theory that underlies it, from the beginning to the end, is that Samson had been duly consecrated *summus sacerdos*, to the highest ecclesiastical rank, by proper ecclesiastical authority, by Peter of Rome, by James of Jerusalem, by John of Ephesus, by the Holy Spirit in bodily form,—and that the successor of Samson is therefore bishop of an apostolic see. In our *Vita* Samson is not called 'archbishop', as he is in the later recension edited by Dom Plaine,¹ nor is there any endeavour to shew him as the ecclesiastical superior of any other places than Dol and Pental. The claim made, in fact, is a claim of independence rather than of dominion. The work, therefore, is older than Noménoë's constitution of 848!

But how much earlier our *Vita Samsonis* is than the first half of the 9th century it is difficult to say. It is evident from the work itself that there was no living reminiscence of the career of Samson at Dol, that the only account of him by a contemporary was preserved in Wales overseas, and that all we have is what the writer remembered having heard read and talked about when, some time ago, he was a young monk in Wales. His chief informant was a very aged man, whom he does not name, but of whom he says that Henoc, Samson's cousin, was his uncle. Frankly, I think our author is here inaccurate. I think he must have missed a generation and that his aged friend was not really Henoc's nephew. What our author did not get from Henoc's memoir seems to me to be worth very little to the historian.

But I feel compelled to believe in the existence of Henoc's memoir, because after all there do seem to be some real historical reminiscences in our *Vita*. First of all, there are the passages, quoted above, in which the writer speaks in the first person; the statements are quite credible in themselves and prove that the memory of Samson was then honoured in Wales: it was no unknown hermit that had wandered to Dol, but a personage already of consideration. I am even ready to believe that he was born of distinguished parents who had given up hope of offspring, and so regarded their first-born as a child of miracle, to be dedicated to God, because his parents named him Samson, no doubt in conscious reminiscence of the story in Judges. The name

¹ *Analecta Bollandiana* vi 79-150.

became more common afterwards, because of St Samson himself, but I think he was the first Christian to be so named. Such a personage, who had confirmed the promise of his infancy by a well-spent early manhood, might be sent abroad on a roving commission to do what he could for Briton refugees in the Frankish dominions. He was exactly contemporary with Jacob Burd'ana, the founder of the Jacobite Church, whose long episcopate was a roving commission of this sort for his countrymen in Syria. Jacob was consecrated a Bishop to a see then vacant: Samson was also consecrated a Bishop, possibly to the then vacant see of York, or rather Eboracum.

Samson crossed over into Brittany, and later on succeeded in a political mission at the Frankish court of Childebert I. His orders were recognized, and at Paris he took part in a Synod or Council, signing his name among the bishops present, but as he claimed no territorial jurisdiction he mentioned no see in his signature. The fact that he signed at all shews that he was regarded as a bishop, but to the Franks generally then and for a century after he was known as the founder of a monastery at Pental on the Lower Seine, as well as one at a place called Dol, somewhere in the barbarous land north of Rennes where Merovingian writs did not run.

A generation later a Welsh saint called Maclovius settled at Aleth, now called after him St Malo, and extended his influence over the lapsed and the heathen to the west and south of Dol, so that Dol was almost cut off from direct contact with the territory still under the influence of the Bishop of Rennes. But Maclovius and his successors laid no claim to interfere with Dol itself, which continued to prosper in quiet, being governed and presided over, as Pental was not, by a chief in episcopal orders, the successor of Samson's status and immunities. Tigernomalus knew himself to be the bishop of an 'apostolic see'. No doubt it was recruited chiefly from its own district, no doubt therefore the Gallo-Roman element in its monks tended to increase and the Welsh to diminish. But no doubt also it felt the new Breton patriotism, of which Noménoé is the incarnation, as well as jealousy for its special privileges. The monks were now mostly of a different race from their founder, and the memory of his deeds had not been transmitted to them. So at some unknown period, I should guess at the end of the 8th century, the Bishop Tigernomalus ordered an old monk, who had passed his youth in Wales, to put down in writing the tales he had doubtless told from time to time to his brethren. The result is our *Vita Samsonis*. The author is uncritical and garrulous; he has a delight in wonderful tales of serpents killed by prayer and the sign of the cross, and such-like stories. But the framework of his narrative is an account of Samson made by a contemporary, who however had gone back to his native

Wales before his hero died. This framework keeps the *Vita* on historical lines, notwithstanding the embroidery of fancy and of marvel that enwraps it.

I must conclude with a short note on the Latinity of the *Vita*. This is so curious as to be worth a study in itself, though I fear the style is too individual and peculiar to lead to any safe indication of date. The Prologue and Part ii are evidently the writer's own composition from beginning to end, and they shew clearly his very feeble grasp upon real Latin. The Latin of the *Vita Samsonis* is not like that of the *Hisperica Famina*, or the metrical Life of Wilfrid, or Aldhelm's poetry, but it resembles the style of these works in being bad Latin, Latin which is neither classical nor vulgar, but that of a foreigner who does not know the difference between what is common and what is rare.

For instance, *reciproca lux* is not the Latin for 'next day', yet it is so used (without emphasis) in i 5 and *reciprocus* is used in the same unnatural way in ii 3 and ii 12. The author must have got this from some school-book. *Librarius* for 'wizard' or 'magician' (i 3f) is curious; something like it is found in the Latin life of St Guthlac. *Pilax* (or *pelax*) for 'cat' (i 16) occurs in the *Hibernensis* (liii 8), a collection of Canons that Henry Bradshaw shewed to be not Irish but Breton, in the form that we have it. *Theomacha* I have noticed already: the wild woman was '*bribetham suis uestimentis*', which M. Duine takes to mean *en bribes*, i. e. in tatters.

A writer who can use *Omnitonans* for 'God' in the middle of a plain narrative (i 51) must have had very little feeling for natural Latin, so that some things which look like scribal errors in the text may only be incorrect use of words. In i 32 *axim festinanter tenens* certainly does not mean 'swiftly bearing north', as Mr Taylor translates it: Samson is following the track of a serpent which is 'like a beam drawn through scorched grass', and Dom Plaine's text (p. 99) has *ille uero uelociter tendens per uestigium exustum*. In ii 1 *mogillatim ac politi operis* is nonsense: I should think the author meant *modulati*, but very likely the misspelling (except the final *m*) is his own.

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