

IDEAS AND IMAGES IN TWELFTH CENTURY SCULPTURE

MARY CURTIS WEBB



Revised Edition 2012

IDEAS AND IMAGES IN TWELFTH CENTURY SCULPTURE

THE TRANSMISSION OF IDEAS AND THEIR VISUAL IMAGES
FROM THE FIRST TO THE TWELFTH CENTURIES



MARY CURTIS WEBB

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NONEMCLATURE, PLATES and NOTES

Throughout the text, references to Plates are shown within brackets as, for example (Plate 4) and references to Notes are shown as, for example (4) without any preceding word.

The references to the plates are included as hyperlinks in the text. In order to view a plate, click the left mouse button on the plate reference. To return to the original position in the text, use the “previous view” button on the toolbar. (If the “previous view” button is not shown on your page navigation toolbar, then depending on your version of Adobe Reader, either right-mouse click on the toolbar, select “more tools”, scroll down until both “previous view” and “next view” are seen in the “page navigation” section and tick their boxes on the left side OR right mouse click on the tool bar, select “Page Navigation” and then “Show all page navigation tools”).

MARY CURTIS WEBB

My MOTHER , **Mary Curtis Webb**, who died in 1987, was the widow of Christopher Webb, an artist in stained glass.

Mary Webb spent many years researching the subject of this book.

She discussed her findings with Professor George Zarnecki CBE.FBA.FSA and also with other eminent scholars, notably Dr C. R. Dodwell, Professor of the History of Art at Manchester University, Professor C. H. Talbot of the Wellcome Medical Museum, London and Professor D. R. Richardson, one-time Principal of Ripon Hall Theological College, Oxford all of whom gave her encouragement and urged her to publish her work. But she kept finding further evidence which enlarged the scope of the scheme or served to illustrate it, thereby repeatedly delaying completion. Thus, sadly, she was overtaken by age and never finally sorted and edited her papers for publication. However, with the help of others, I have tried to do this for her - albeit after a gap of over 20 years.

Once, when asked what the book's title was to be she replied that she had not yet found a short telling form of words but that the ground it covered was "the transmission of ideas and their visual images from the first to the end of the 12th centuries".

Her research led her to many small parish churches in the British Isles, to various places in France, Germany and Italy and especially the pilgrim route to Santiago in northern Spain. She spent many hours in the Reading Room of the British Museum as it then was, and in other libraries, studying ancient texts and drawings in manuscripts. Out of this grew the comprehensive picture which her understanding formed in her mind's eye.

Mary Webb delighted to explore twelfth century churches and to seek out the meaning of the designs and the pictorial carvings which she found there. She established convincing and well-supported identifications for numerous carvings on Norman doorways, capitals and fonts which are either misinterpreted or left unexplained in church guides and other publications. She was able to do this because of her intensive reading from Plato onwards, of the writings of philosophers and theologians from the earliest times to the 13th century. If this book encourages others to enjoy these unique sculptures with greater understanding and draws attention to the urgent need for their preservation for posterity, it will have achieved its purpose - and will be a happy memorial to a dear mother.

Today the lack of proper recognition of these rare sculptures places them all at risk, for with the closure of redundant churches they may easily be dispersed through ignorance and neglect. My mother fervently hoped that those who are now responsible for the fate of these sculptured pictures and geometric designs - which vanished from the repertoire of church sculpture after 1200 - will acquaint themselves with their unique historical importance and take urgent steps to ensure their preservation for posterity. GMG

FOREWORD

This book is a study of the intriguing Anglo-Norman carvings which still survive on fonts and over doorways dating from up to the end of the 12th century when the old Alexandrian Ransom Theory - which for nearly a thousand years had been accepted by the Church as the explanation as to why God became Incarnate- was abandoned and replaced by Anselm's exposition of the doctrine of the Atonement. They are all very rare and precious because they vanished for ever from the repertoire of ecclesiastical sculpture after the year 1200.

The RANSOM THEORY was based on the assumption that a deception had been practised by the Devil upon Adam and Eve into committing the original sin of disobedience to God's command, in consequence of which the human race fell under the absolute power of the Devil. God's love for his creatures determined that their ransom must be paid but the price of their ransom required by the Devil was nothing less than the blood and soul of the Son of God. Since divine justice must allow this claim it must also allow a method of quid pro quo in the form of its payment. Thus by a divine stratagem the Deceiver himself was deceived and brought upon himself his own destruction. God being the fisherman with Jesus as bait, the Devil, unaware that the human flesh offered was divine, was caught like a fish on the 'barb of divinity'.

The Ransom theory explains God's Salvation of the world and it was expounded by Pope Gregory the Great in his lengthy commentary on the Book of Job, the *Moralia in Job* - at least one copy of which was kept in most monastic libraries - and also in another popular work, the apocryphal *Gospel of Nicodemus*. It was illustrated in manuscripts and in carvings, but these carvings, being so unfamiliar to us today, have been widely misinterpreted (for instance it is not generally known that Christ was not uncommonly depicted with wings or even depicted as a vulture).

The Ransom theory was illustrated according to the imagination of the illustrator, for example on the Alton Towers triptych in the Victoria and Albert Museum we see we see Leviathan being hooked on God's fishing line whereas in carvings we see Christ as a warrior in combat with Leviathan. The versions differ but were widely understood. But over the centuries the Ransom theory has now been almost completely forgotten.

THE RANSOM THEORY WAS NOT THE ONLY LINK IN THE LONG CHAIN OF INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENTS TO BE ABANDONED AT THE END OF THE 12TH CENTURY.

The sculptured evidence of a much older cosmological theory is still to be found on Anglo-Norman fonts and over doorways although its meaning has been forgotten. These are geometric designs which have been mistakenly thought to be mere decoration. They are however, cosmological schemata whose ultimate source was Plato's *Timaeus*, their general purport being the Harmony of the Four Elements. This PLATONIC COSMOLOGY had been

accepted by the Church to signify the cosmic harmony within God's Work of Creation. However, at the end of the century, a renewed study of Aristotle's rediscovered works replaced the reading of the *Timaeus* in the Arts Faculty of the School of Paris and this Platonic cosmology was abandoned.

To SUMMARISE,

Mary Webb explains that these surviving sculptures illustrate two things : this being the Alexandrian Ransom theory *and* the Platonic cosmology which had been adopted by the Church. In other words, the carvings illustrate both the Creation *and* the Salvation of the World.

The Creation and Salvation of the world is wonderfully depicted on the sculpted font originating from the church of Hampstead Norreys, Berkshire, now in the church of Stone, Buckinghamshire. This font is therefore a very rare surviving "Summa" of 12th century Church dogma.

It is hoped that this book will raise awareness of the historical importance of these rare surviving carvings as a record of a stage in the intellectual development of our western society. Many are at risk of erosion by the weather, or, in the event of church closure through redundancy, of dispersal and loss - through ignorance or neglect. It was my mother's fervent hope that those who are now responsible for the fate of this ancient heritage - the entire surviving corpus of 12th century English sculpture - will take urgent steps to ensure its preservation for the nation.

GMG

**A comment by Professor Diarmaid NJ MacCulloch Kt, DD, FBA.
Faculty of Theology, Oxford**

***"I have found the book fascinating, scholarly and convincing. This is a remarkable work of scholarship whose conclusions will be of interest alike to theologians, historians and students of medieval architecture. Gillian Greenwood has done them a great service by presenting it to a modern audience and I commend it to as wide a readership as possible."* (2012)**

INTRODUCTION

MARY CURTIS WEBB IDENTIFIES IN PARTICULAR THE LITERARY SOURCES OF THREE 12TH c. SCULPTURES:

1. The FONT from HAMPSTEAD NORREYS, Berks, now in the church of Stone, Bucks .
2. The LINTEL with a LATIN INSCRIPTION and the TYMPANUM of the south doorway of the church of DINTON, Bucks.
3. The TYMPANUM of the church of PITSFORD, Northants.

The FONT. At her first encounter with the font, Mary Webb, unconvinced by the explanations which she found in the church, determined to begin her own search for the meaning of these amazing carvings.

After careful comparisons with drawings in MSS of the same period, Mary Webb came to see that the two very different sets of carvings on either side of the font have to be considered, *not* separately, but as a whole because they in fact depict the two Works of God - the Works of Foundation (Creation) and of Restoration (Salvation) as expounded by the twelfth century Master Hugh of Saint Victor in his *De Sacramentis Christianae Fidei*. The font is a rare surviving "Summa" of twelfth century church dogma.

In contrasting the two sides of the font, the elaborate GEOMETRIC DESIGNS - which had apparently been dismissed as mere decoration - are shown to illustrate the cosmology derived from Plato's *Timaeus* and the theory of Number to be found in Boethius' *Arithmetic*, since all this was accepted at the time as the basis of Christian philosophical speculation. The designs depict the metaphysical account of the Creation derived from the *Timaeus* and developed around the year 100 by the Pythagorean Nicomachus of Gerasa in his *Introduction to Arithmetic* - later to be translated by Boethius into Latin. Comparable designs are cited in meaningful contexts in other surviving church sculptures and in manuscripts as well as in fourth century mosaics from Christian churches in the Levant.

The source of the PICTORIAL CARVINGS on the other side of the font, far from being explicable in terms of Norse mythology as has been previously suggested, is the Ransom Theory as expounded in Gregory the Great's lengthy commentary on the Book of Job, the *Moralia in Job*, and to a lesser extent in the apocryphal *Gospel of Nicodemus*. Mary Webb shows how these carvings depicting Christ's Descent into Hades follow their literary source in minute detail.

THIS FORM OF THE RANSOM THEORY was taught and illustrated in Anglo- Norman carvings and in manuscripts and artefacts up until the close of the twelfth century when it was abandoned. In the second half of the twelfth century Anselm's *Cur Deus Homo* rejected the assumptions of the Ransom theory while the re-discovery of Aristotle's works made the Platonic cosmology and theory of Number obsolete.

The font is shown to be most probably the product of the Reading Abbey workshops, and the doorways of Pitsford, Northants and of Dinton, Bucks are likely to have been designed/carved by the same designer. All the carvings on the font and on these doorways illustrate in close detail quotations from Gregory the Great's account of the Ransom Theory and are intended to expound Gregory's teachings.

Mary Webb quotes the frequency with which the *Moralia* and other writings occur in twelfth century library lists and relates the teaching to the social and theological context of the time.

The LATIN INSCRIPTION on the Dinton lintel which, as with the font, was intriguing to Mary Webb, may be translated as, "If anyone should despair of obtaining the rewards of his deserts let him attend to the precepts and keep them in mind". This is shown to refer to a passage in the last book of the *Moralia* in which the preceding chapters explain exactly the references to rewards, deserts, precepts and despair.

Gillian M Greenwood 2012

NOTE TO THE READER

Each year, like migrant birds, increasing crowds of summer visitors flock to the stately homes of Britain, view the remnants of the Roman occupation of our island and wander round the great cathedrals. Comparatively few discover the significance of what they see and fewer still find their way to those remote and ancient parish churches where some rare pictorial and schematic sculptures have survived intact. Those discerning few who manage to seek out such rural ways are too often baffled by the incomprehensibility of the carvings that they find and are deceived by the apparent naivety of the Anglo-Norman sculptors' style. Thus discouraged, the visitors depart, saddened perhaps by the knowledge that the numinous sense of peace which still pervades these ancient buildings may soon be engulfed in a silence born of redundancy and closure.

The form in which this study is presented is therefore designed to serve two purposes for, while its chapters are arranged round a series of illustrations which it is hoped will interest the general reader, some new and hitherto unpublished findings, made during the course of its preparation, will be of interest also to specialists in medieval studies. For this small group of carvings, on account of their relatively clumsy style and the apparent obscurity of their iconography, have suffered from a neglect which is quite unwarranted, in view of the remarkable sophistication of their content. They in fact display a robust and literal approach to the metaphors of their literary sources and an originality of interpretation which is most unusual. Their didactic purpose was suited to an illiterate and simple-minded audience: in the twelfth century such visual aids were an absolute necessity for most laymen since literacy was still the monopoly of churchmen and the monastic orders. A visual vernacular had become the basis for all forms of education and, as a living language with very ancient roots, it had the capacity for adaptation and growth. For, as Augustine spoke in the fifth century:

"Thus presented, things move and kindle our affections much more than if they were set forth merely as bald statements. Why this should be, it is hard to say, but it is a fact that anything we are taught by allegory pleases us more." (1)

The English translation of Gregory's *Moralia in Job*, from which I quote, was made by an anonymous scholar and published in four volumes by J. H. Parker and J. Rivington. (2) The Latin translation of the Bible used by Gregory was, as he said, the "new" translation (presumably Jerome's) but Gregory tells us in his introduction that he used both the old and the new translations as occasion required. His biblical translations therefore vary at times from the standard texts. Gregory's commentary was so constantly quoted by succeeding generations that his aphorisms and injunctions appear even in the tragic letters that passed between Eloise and Abelard, after they had perforce entered separately into the religious life of the cloister. On this side of the Channel, Gregory was honoured from the time of Bede as the Apostle to the English and his writings provided an inexhaustible literary source for visual aids for the benefit of illiterate parishioners. For, as the Very

Rev. W. R. Inge, Dean of St. Paul's, remarked in his address to the British Academy in 1946:

"A political church is an institution in which the half-educated cater for the half converted. Nevertheless, it is the duty of the priest or minister to provide (for persons with every degree of myopia) spectacles through which they may see the invisible." (3)

CHAPTER 1

THE TWELFTH CENTURY CONTEXT: THE RANSOM THEORY

There still survive, not far from Reading, carvings of the mid-twelfth century which afford parallel illustrations of carefully planned doctrinal expositions, based upon current literary sources which were available in the library of Reading Abbey, and elsewhere, at this time. These sculptured scenes of men and monsters form no part of the usual presentations of the Christological cycle, and indeed they seem to have no exact parallels. The nearest approximations to them are to be found in Abbess Herrad's *Hortus Deliciarum* written in Alsace after 1167, and in the elegant little triptych in champlevé enamel of about 1150, from the Meuse region, known as the Alton Towers Triptych (Plate 1).

The *Hortus Deliciarum* (Plate 3) was a magnificently illustrated book, written after Herrad of Landsberg had been elected Abbess of Sainte Odile (Hohenburg) in Alsace in 1167. Fortunately, some of its full-page drawings were copied before the book, then housed in a library in Strasbourg, was destroyed by fire during the Franco-Prussian War. (Note1) Among these copies is the illustration of the deception of the Devil, Leviathan, who is about to be caught on the hook of Divinity. At the top of the picture, God holds a rod in His right hand for the chastisement of the Devil. It is a rod to which is attached a line composed of the lineage or human descent of the Incarnate Redeemer. The bait at the end of this line is His human body, but it is shown already free from the Cross, robed and crowned as the King of Heaven, while the hook of His incarnation is formed from the Cross itself. Leviathan, the monster of the deep, is shown partly as a fish, partly as a beast with dragon's claws, and partly as a bird with wings folded over his back behind his scaly neck. His jaw is pierced by the hook of Divinity.

The literary source for all this is to be found in Gregory the Great's *Moralia in Job*; every detail of the illustration has a theological significance and a biblical reference which is explained in the commentary on the 40th chapter of the Book of Job.

"In the abyss of the waters - that is, in the boundlessness of the human race - this whale was rushing hither and thither with open mouth, eager for death, and devouring almost all. But a hook for the death of this whale was suspended by a marvellous arrangement in the gloomy depths of the waters ..."

Gregory then states that the line upon which the hook was suspended was the genealogy of Jesus:

"... a kind of line is spun for the Incarnate Lord who is the hook, to be bound to the end of it, whom the whale would catch with open mouth, while it was hanging in the waters of the human race." (Plate 1 and Plate 3)

The Alton Towers Triptych, (Plate 1) now in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, is a small altarpiece of gilded copper and champlevé enamels, the work of an

extremely skilled craftsman. But it is also a most carefully planned doctrinal exposition, in which every detail is significant, for it illustrates the Work of Restoration (or Salvation). It is arranged to show this Work by the three episodes of the Passion, which centre upon the Crucifixion placed in the middle of the central panel, with the Descent of Christ into Hades below, and the empty tomb of the Resurrection above. All the scenes are accompanied by identifying inscriptions whose framing bands form a geometric structure composed of circles, and in the case of the Crucifixion the motif of a square interlaced with a square, with the four Evangelistic Beasts in the corners, and on either side, the Trees of Life and of Knowledge. Above and below are small roundels depicting Divine Love (Caritas) and Justice, and at the sides, the Sun, Moon, Earth and Ocean, as cosmological symbols of the Work of Foundation (or Creation). The side panels contain the Old Testament types of the three events of the Passion, those of the left being the types occurring before the Law of Moses, while those on the right show the types under the Law.

Concentrating now on those upon the lowest horizontal row of pictures, we observe, in the central panel, the Redeemer, bearing his Cross and leading Adam by the hand, with Eve and their descendents following, as they emerge from the prison-house of Death. Satan, as a small figure, lies beneath the feet of the Redeemer, bound hand and foot, while the doors of the prison of Death have fallen before Him. There is no suggestion here of Hell's fire, and the reference is to the text in 1 Peter 3:19. But the Redeemer is shown thrusting the butt end of His Cross down the mouth of the prostrate Devil, that the mouth of Death might be stopped. An inscription on the circular frame reads:

"Fortior hic forte captus spoliat premit hoste."

(Here the Stronger, caught by His strong enemy, despoils and crushes him.)

On the left, God, with a fishing rod and line, hooks a large fish. The surrounding inscription reads:

"Hamus quod pisci fit Leviathan caro Christi"

(as the hook is to the fish, so is the flesh of Christ to Leviathan)

The panel to the right shows Samson carrying the city-gates of Gaza, which he has lifted bodily from the ground, to the top of a hill where he will set them up. (2) The whole sequence describes the Work of Redemption in terms of payment of a ransom.

This strange metaphor has a long history, deriving from Biblical texts and Jewish apocryphal works. To Christian apologists, it had been connected with the idea of the death of Death. This was to be accomplished, as they said, through the self-deception of the Devil and his refusal to acknowledge the fact of Christ's incarnation in the man Jesus. For, being thus deceived, the Devil, in lusting after the flesh, was emboldened to attack Incarnate God, and was therefore hooked on the hidden barb of unrecognised Divinity. Therefore the Devil who, through pride, deceived Adam with false promises, was himself

mocked by a deceptive bait of flesh; and in performing this, Christ was described as mocking and laughing at the Devil. For, as Gregory of Nyssa (c.335-395) had put it,

"He who first deceived men by the bait of sensual pleasure is himself deceived by the presentment of the human form." (3)

THE RANSOM THEORY was one of two very early attempts by churchmen to explain the reason why God became incarnate, and it continued in currency as an alternative to the idea of Atonement until the close of the twelfth century.

The theme had been in common currency since the third century. Indeed, from Jerusalem to Cappadocia, and from Syria to northern Italy, it had been widely used in the writings of Christian apologists. St. Augustine was familiar with the theme, but only used it when addressing an unsophisticated audience. (4) It appears in the liturgical hymns of Ephraim the Deacon, written at Edessa between 300 and 373, and these continued in use in the Syrian churches. A catechetical Easter sermon of Archbishop Cyril of Jerusalem (318-386) was full of it, and Rufinus employed it in his explanation of the Apostles' Creed in use in Aquileia (c.308). But the man through whom it was transmitted most fully to the Latin west was Pope Gregory the Great. It has been estimated that his *Moralia in Job* was the most widely read book, outside the scriptures, throughout the early Middle Ages. (5) Evidence of the early currency in England of the *Moralia in Job* is to be found in the Anglo-Saxon poem, *Christ*, attributed to Cynewulf, from the eighth century Exeter Book, and also in the Anglo-Saxon homilies of Aelfric, who repeats the image of the hook and bait very much as it had been used by Gregory. (6) But its currency in the twelfth century was equally assured by its inclusion in the popular *Gospel of Nicodemus* which had been known in England since the days of Bede.

It has however not previously been noticed that on the twelfth century tympanum of the parish church of Pitsford in Northamptonshire (Plate 26), on the lintel of the south door of the village church at Dinton, Buckinghamshire (Plate 6), and on a font bowl from the church of St. Mary, Hampstead Norreys, Berkshire (Plate 45), there are comparable illustrations of the hooking of the Devil by a bait of mortal flesh. (7) These sculptures clearly depict the same literary source although they differ widely in their pictorial approach. Moreover, the ingenuity with which every space is filled with small associated symbols makes it clear that we have here the products of men who were theologians as well as masons. Symbolic meaning is conveyed in a variety of ways with the utmost economy of means which suggests that these are individually considered illustrations which do not derive from pattern books and are not the hack-work of journeymen carvers. They are, in fact, carefully planned doctrinal expositions based upon extremely accurate knowledge of a written source. When we consider that the *Moralia in Job* was of inordinate length (8), the accurate use of symbols drawn from throughout the work suggests a well-informed and contemplative devotion, rather than the work of a mere copyist.

Besides the theme of the hooking of Leviathan and the deception of the Devil, there was another with which these carvers were especially concerned, and which was also associated with the Descent into Hades. It was the metaphor of the Descent of Christ as a bird (often a vulture, sometimes an eagle) (Plate 49 and Plate 50) which had also been current since the beginning of the third century. An early instance of its use occurs in a fragment of *An Address to the Greeks*; commenting on Leviticus 14 : 49-53, the author of this treatise states:

"By the two birds Christ is denoted, both dead and as a man, and living as God. He is likened to a bird because he is understood and declared to be from above, and the living bird having been dipped in the blood of the dead one, is afterward let go ... But the two contained a representation of one economy of God Incarnate, for he was wounded for our transgressions ..." (9)

It was again through the *Moralia in Job* that the symbolism of the Bird became familiar to the Anglo-Normans. In the eighth century the poem, *Christ*, referred to above, elaborates the theme still further:

"Concerning that, Job made a proverb to his knowledge; praised the Protector of men, the Saviour; and lovingly fashioned a name for the Son of the Sovereign: and called Him a Bird, whom the Jews could not conceive in the strength of His divine spirit. The Bird's flight was inscrutable and hidden from foes on earth, who bore a benighted understanding in their bosoms, a heart of stone. They would not acknowledge the glorious tokens which the noble Son of God wrought before them, many and various throughout the world.

Thus the Dear Bird essayed flight; sometimes undaunted, strong in his powers, He sought on high the abode of angels, the glorious home; sometimes He sank again to the ground, sought the face of the earth, by grace of the Spirit: came to the world. Of that the prophet sang; 'He, exalted and holy, was caught up in the clasps of the angels in His great fullness of power above the glory of the heavens'.

They who made denial of the ascension could not know of the Bird's flight, and did not believe that the Author of life, holy from the earth, was raised up in man's image above the glorious hosts." (10)

Since the idea of a winged Christ has become so unfamiliar today, a number of Anglo-Norman sculptures in which this figure appears have either been entirely overlooked or else mistakenly attributed to St. Michael. Careful observation, however, shows that when St. Michael appears on the tympana of English churches in combat with the dragon, he fights with lance or spear and "the shield of righteousness". (11) It is only the divine protagonist who thrusts His cross into the dragon's mouth, for example on the north doorway of Quenington church, Gloucestershire, where Hell's mouth is shown as the open jaws of Leviathan, the fish-monster. The distinction between the two heavenly warriors had been so emphasised in commentaries throughout the centuries, that no carver of the twelfth century could have been unaware of its importance. (12) (Plate 14, Plate 15, Plate 16)

No serious study of the meaning and sources of the sculptures on the Dinton and Pitsford doorways has yet been forthcoming, although unsupported assertions of a pagan Norse derivation have twice been published (13). In the case of the font bowl from Hampstead Norreys, two more extensive studies have appeared. They too explain the carving in terms of Norse mythology, although they differ in their identification of the pagan figures supposedly involved. Moreover, they are concerned to elucidate only one section of the bowl, while the remainder has unfortunately been ignored. These writers also failed to take account of the time and the place in which this font was made (14). The accepted date of the font is the twelfth century (15) and its place of origin was the parish church of Hampstead Norreys, about ten miles from Reading Abbey. The circumstances of time and place make it historically quite impossible that any form of pagan Norse mythology could have been employed for the decoration of a Christian font.

This concentration of attention upon only one historiated section of the font (Plate 45), to the exclusion of the remaining sequence (Plate 63), may be traced to the assumption that the dichotomy of style must be explained by a later cutting of the bowl, an assumption supposedly supported by a slight distortion of one section of the surface. In order that the facts of the case might be verified, I append an expert and independent examination of the fabric of the font bowl, to assess the nature of its repairs and the probable order of its working. This was very kindly undertaken for me by the sculptor, Alan Collins, ARCA, ARBS to whose expert and experienced judgement I am greatly indebted. His conclusions confirm that the entire sequence of the font carvings (Plate 44) are the result of one original lay-out, and that later repairs are limited to the insertion of some small patches of new stone along the fracture line, and the replacement of fragmented originals, which have not basically altered the original design. The distortion of the bowl is due in his opinion to the uncovering of a fault in the limestone during the initial working of the drum.

Taking into consideration the social and ecclesiastical developments in the area of Hampstead Norreys in the first three quarters of the twelfth century, and evidence gathered from stylistic comparisons and from the twelfth century library list from Reading Abbey, I conclude that the entire sequence of the carvings on the Hampstead Norreys font bowl presents a doctrinal Summa of the two Works of God, the Foundation and the Restoration of the World, as described in the *De Sacramentis* of Hugh of Saint Victor (16). The figures used for their illustration were current at the time, and are taken from literary sources known to have been available. Their present lack of recognition is due to the fact that the terms used to represent both the Work of Creation and the Work of Salvation were each superseded, though for different reasons, early in the thirteenth century.



Plate 1 THE ALTON TOWERS TRIPTYCH

A champléve enamelled triptych from the Meuse area, dated c. 1150-70 now in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

This triptych is arranged to show in the central panel the Crucifixion with the empty Tomb above and the Descent of Christ into Hades below, with Caritas at the top and Justitia below. Sun and Moon veil their faces; Earth and Ocean are personified. The two Trees of the Apocalypse flank the four Evangelistic Beasts while identifying inscriptions fill the geometric forms of the frames. In the left panel of the triptych the prophetic types of Christ's death and resurrection are shown from the period before the Law of Moses and those on the right derive from after its reception.

The scene at the base of the left panel shows God fishing with a baited hook for the capture of Leviathan, identified by its associated inscription. The comparable type on the right panel shows Sampson carrying away the gates of Gaza.

Victoria and Albert Museum



Plate 2 ALTON TOWERS TRIPTYCH DETAIL

A detail from the left-hand panel of the Alton Towers triptych showing the hooking of Leviathan inscribed:

HAMUS QUOD PISCI FIT LEVIATHAN CARO XPI

(The flesh of Christ becomes to Leviathan what the hook is to the fish.)

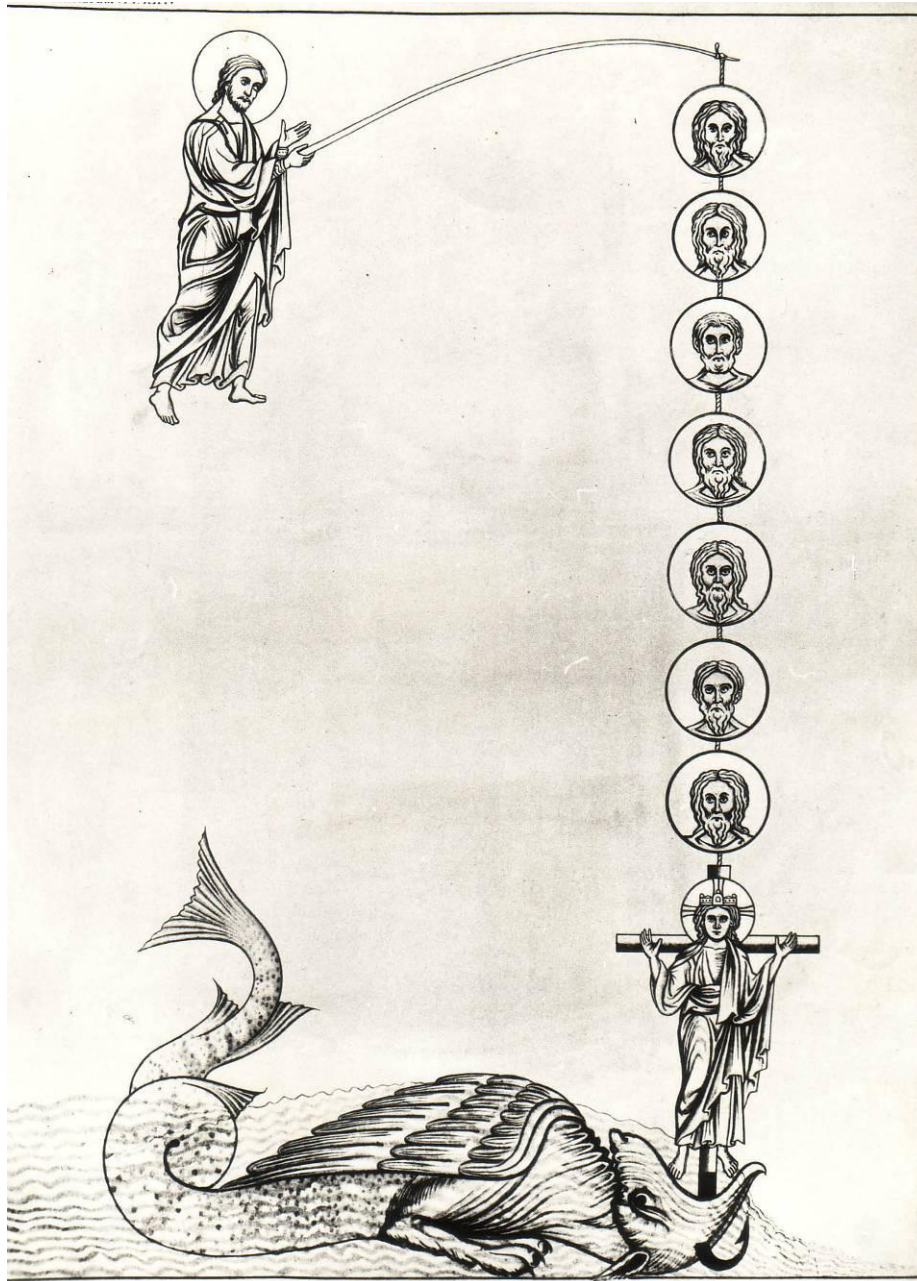


Plate 3 THE DECEPTION OF THE DEVIL

An illustration from the *HORTUS DELICARUM* of ABBESS HERRAD OF LANDSBERG based on Pope Gregory the Great's *Moralia in Job* showing the snaring of Leviathan by the bait of flesh on the hook of Divinity. The line is shown as the lineage of Jesus who stands robed and crowned, freely and unbound upon the Cross.

This drawing of Leviathan is closely paralleled in the sculptured figure on the lintel of the Parish Church of Dinton, Buckinghamshire.

Warburg Institute, University of London



Plate 4 THE QUINITY

'THE QUINITY' - THE ELEVATION OF THE VIRGIN MOTHER OF GOD

A drawing from a book of Church Offices c. 1012-1020, from the New Minster, Winchester. The first two persons of the Christian Trinity sit together on a rainbow, each holding the Book of the Word. Beside them, on the same level, stands the Virgin Mary upon whose crowned head broods the Holy Spirit. As Mother of God and Bride of the Holy Spirit she holds her Son, Jesus Christ. Beneath the feet of the Christ Logos the Devil crawls out of the circle of Heaven into the mouth of Hell while the heretic Arius and the traitor Judas lie chained until the day of Judgement.

The British Library

CHAPTER 2

THE SCULPTURES OF THE SOUTH DOORWAY OF DINTON PARISH CHURCH: THE LINTEL

The sculptures surrounding the south door into the nave of Dinton Parish Church, in Buckinghamshire (Plate 5), provide a rare example of a complete Anglo-Norman portal from the last quarter of the twelfth century. Its Norman arch has two major orders, which are surmounted on their outer rim by a three-banded alternating roll mould taken right down to the ground as a frame. Within this is a triple-sectioned chevron, and on its inner band small berry fruit have replaced the usual decorative balls within the apex of each chevron. These on the sides of the doorway are worn smooth, but in the upper reaches of the arch their original form is evident and continuous. Exactly similar berry fruit are seen on the Tree of Life, upon which the souls of the faithful, as birds, are feeding, in a drawing from a twelfth century Bestiary. (1)

A very unusual feature occurs on the impost blocks which flank the south doorway, for there a series of large and deeply- concave hearts have been cut into the stone, sixteen being originally placed at each side. These differ from the usual heart-shaped leaves, not only by their depth, but also by their lack of veins and stems, which are common elsewhere. Their regimentation precludes any suggestion of natural growth, and must deter us from a too hasty conclusion that they are intended for leaves.

The very robust moulding on the arch which abuts the tympanum is supported by two twisted free-standing columns. The capital on the left has a swagged necking beneath the geometric decoration of its abacus, while the capital on the right shows a bird with out-stretched wings on the necking below a similar abacus. The semi-circle of the arch is enriched by a beaded guilloche (a badly mutilated doorway at Romsey Abbey (Plate 17) shows similar features of the same date, with free- standing columns, and a range of exactly similar berry fruit on the surrounding voussoirs but its tympanum has been destroyed).

The sculptures on the tympanum (Plate 5) represent a tree bearing leaves, and two fruit which are marked with a calyx, suggesting that they are intended to be apples. The roots of the tree are visible and bulbous; its stem is curved and tapers towards the top. Two confronting beasts sit on either side of the trunk. They each hold a fruit from the tree in their toothless mouths, and grasp its roots with their paws. The creatures have large heads, and scales on their necks, and their bodies end in fish tails.

The tympanum and lintel are divided by an inscription cut in bold capital letters in high relief, upon two blocks of stone. Since the original position of the second stone has

been altered to allow for the raising of the sill, it is difficult to read except from a position immediately below the lintel.

The monster approaching from the left side of the lintel is easily identified as Leviathan (Plate 6) not only from his description in Gregory's *Moralia in Job*, but also from its almost exact correspondence, even to the loop of his tail, with the nearly contemporary drawing of Leviathan in Abbess Herrad's *Hortus Deliciarum*. (Plate 3) The carver has shown the scales on the neck of Leviathan, his whale-like body, very large tongue, gaping jaw, exaggerated eye, and wings, to conform with Gregory's interpretation of the relevant Biblical text. On the right side of the lintel there appears the upper half of a small winged man, apparently in imminent danger of the approaching jaws of Leviathan. Nevertheless the gaze of this man is directed outward at the observer, with unconcern, for he is laughing broadly at us (Plate 6). A pair of outstretched wings spring from his neck; in consequence his bared shoulders and arms are placed so far beneath that they scarcely seem to belong to his head. In his clenched right hand he holds a thin undulating line, cut in high relief, which suggests nothing more than a child's representation of a wriggling worm. But in his left hand he holds the stem of his Cross, thrust forward directly to confront the extended tongue and gaping jaws of Leviathan. On top of the upper arm of this Cross the carver has also placed a small round object which, because of its indentation, may be compared with the fruit on the tree on the tympanum above, which show a comparable indentation suggesting the calyx of an apple. This round fruit, placed so near the drooling tongue of Leviathan, surely suggests a juicy bait for his devouring hunger; but a similar round "apple" has also been carved beneath his upstanding tail, so that the beginning and the end of the body of Leviathan is shown to be bounded by an apple, while a small tree is also placed behind his body.

The twelfth century designer of the Dinton sculpture, taking his inspiration from the text of Gregory's *Commentary on the Book of Job*, developed the pictorial possibilities of its allegorical expositions in the literal sense of the text.

At the same time Pope Gregory's description of the life of the carnally-minded man as the flaccid growth of a tree beset by bestial temptations was also pictured on the tympanum, with an accurate repetition of all its symbolic details (Plate 5).

The Carvings on the Lintel

The carvings on the Dinton lintel (Plate 6) depict the main theme of the Ransom Theory, for they illustrate the winged and laughing Christ, confronting the monster, Leviathan, with the butt of His Cross. Every detail of this sculpture relates to the description in Pope Gregory's commentary on the relevant passages in the Book of Job, so that by following the textual source the reader will discover its significance. (2)

"Why is it that our Adversary is first called Behemoth, and afterwards, Leviathan, and is now compared to a bird? Behemoth is interpreted monster, and is shown to be a quadruped; but Leviathan, as he is taken on a hook, is doubtless set before us as a serpent in the waters. But now he is brought before us in comparison with a bird, when it says, 'Wilt Thou play with him as a bird?' He is therefore designated by the very names of his doings; in what he attempts to do he is called a beast, or a dragon, or a bird. For those whom he excites to folly and lust, he is a beast; in those whom he inflames to malicious injury, he is a dragon; but in those whom he exalts with the haughtiness of pride as though they understood high things, he exists as a beast, a dragon and a bird at the same time. For the Lord in truth played with him as a bird, when in the Passion of His only-begotten Son He showed him the bait, but concealed the snare. For the evil one saw what he was taking into his mouth, but he knew not what he was holding in his throat. For although he confessed that Jesus was the Son of God, yet he believed Him to be dying as a mere man, for whose death he stirred up the Jews. So, because Leviathan was ignorant of this, even to the time of His Passion, he was deluded as a bird, and so suffered from the snare of His Godhead, when he seized the bait of His manhood." (3)

We have already noted that the laughing figure of the Christ holds in His left hand the stem of His Cross (Plate 6) which he thrusts towards the extended tongue of the approaching monster, Leviathan. Above the head of the Cross is placed an apple, reminiscent of the bait by which the Devil lured Adam and Eve to their Fall. Thus, the Incarnate Christ and His action are portrayed in terms of the Alexandrian Ransom Theory, expounded by Gregory:

Who can be ignorant that on a hook a bait is placed, a point concealed? For the bait tempts and the point may wound. Our Lord therefore, when coming for the redemption of mankind, made as it were a kind of hook of Himself, for the death of the Devil; for He assumed a body in order that this Behemoth might seek therein the death of the flesh, as if it were His bait. But while he was unjustly aiming at that death in His person, he lost us, whom he was justly holding. He was caught therefore on the hook of His Incarnation, because while he sought in Him the bait of His body, he was pierced by the sharp point of His divinity. For there was within Him His humanity to attract the devourer; but there was His divinity to wound, there was His open infirmity to excite and His hidden virtue to pierce through the jaw of the despoiler. He was therefore taken by a hook because he perished by means of that which he swallowed. For this Behemoth knew indeed the Incarnate Son of God, but he knew not the plan of our redemption. For he knew that the Son of God had been incarnate for our redemption, but he was quite ignorant that this our Redeemer was piercing him by His own death." (4)

Among the many fine drawings in the famous Winchester Psalter, made most probably by the princely and sophisticated Bishop of Winchester, Henry of Blois, between 1129-1161, there is one figure which is distinguished from all the rest by the rarity of its iconography. It is the figure of the laughing Christ in illustrations of two of His appearances to His disciples, after His resurrection. (Plate 7) The artist's apparently simple method of presenting the episodes of the Gospel story is deceptive, for in several instances, including these, he has extended the meaning of his subject by the addition of small but significant details. These serve as pictorial footnotes for the benefit of readers familiar with the patristic commentaries which, in the twelfth century, formed the bulk of the standard works in all monastic and cathedral libraries. Thus the significance of the drawing of the risen and laughing Christ is emphasised by the fact that, although He stands

in the midst of His disciples and is the focus of their devoted attention, He appears to disregard all the claims of His immediate surroundings. Instead, He stares out beyond the context of the page and the boundary of time and place that is established by its ornamental frame, to laugh in the face of the living readers as if to share with us some private joke. Similarly, at Dinton, our attention is challenged by the mirth that is directed towards us by this small figure who so disregards the frightful contingency of His situation - for He is about to be swallowed, like Jonah, by the monstrous Leviathan, the whale of Death (Plate 6).

The Wriggling Worm in the Hand of the Laughing Christ

"Let not anyone think it unbecoming that the Incarnate Lord can be typified by an animal, for it is admitted by all that He is spoken of in Holy Scripture as a worm ..." (5)

Gregory's reference is to Psalm 22:

"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? ... I am a worm and no man; a reproach of men and despised of the people; all they that see me laugh me to scorn". (6).

By including this image of the worm (Plate 6) the sculptor has contrasted the mockery suffered by Jesus at the crucifixion with God's divine mockery of the Devil. The same comparison was made by Ailred, Abbot of Rievaulx (1110-1167), in a sermon which was copied in a number of manuscripts of the late twelfth century and early thirteenth centuries for the worm was taken to be the prophetic of the events and sufferings of Christ.

Where, O Death, has your fighting brought you? Where, O Jews, is now your mockery? O Satan, where is your astuteness? For now you yourself are being laughed at; your cunning has been detected, and your malice overcome. For behold, Death devours the flesh and is caught by the Strong; he pounces on the little red worm (vermiculus) and is caught on the hook. And so he is caught on the three-fold cord, when the Wisdom of God circumvents his astuteness, and His strength overcomes the Devil, and His mildness defeats his wickedness. For it was with these three evils that the cunning Enemy deceived our first parents."

The vermiculus is still a favourite bait for fresh-water fishermen, since by its blood-red colour and energetic wriggling it is the most likely to attract fish; it thrives in compost heaps.

The Outspread Wings of the Laughing Christ (Plate 6)

"The pathway of the Bird he knew not
neither beheld the eye of the Vulture" (Plate 49)

Gregory comments on this passage from Job (28.7 in the Vulgate version):

"Who is denoted in this place by the title of "The Bird" saving He, who in ascending poised skywards the fleshly body which He took to Himself? Who, furthermore, is fitly designated by

the title of "The Vulture" as well? ... Rightly therefore is the Mediator between God and man called a Vulture, who while remaining in the loftiness of His divine nature, marked as from a flight on high, the carcass of our mortal being down below, and let himself drop from the region of the heaven to the lowest places. For on our behalf He vouchsafed to become man (8). While He sought the dead creature, He found death among us, who was deathless Himself. Now the eye of the Vulture was actually aiming at our resurrection, because He Himself, being dead three days, set us free from everlasting death. The faithless people of Judea saw Him in a state of mortality; but how, by His death, He should destroy our death, they had not noticed. Which people refused to regard the ways of His humility, whereby He lifted us on high, and 'knew not the pathway of the Bird'..." (9)

The Scales on the Neck of Leviathan (Plate 6)

Referring to Job 41: 15-17:

"His strong scales are his pride. Shut up together as with a close seal, one is so near to another that no air can come between them. They are joined to one another. They stick together, that they cannot be sundered ... in his neck abideth strength, and terror dances before him."

Gregory comments:

"It is said that the body of the dragon is covered with scales, to keep it from being penetrated quickly with shafts. In like manner the whole body of the Devil - that is, the multitude of the reprobates when reprov'd for its iniquity - endeavours to excuse itself with whatever evasions it can; and opposes, as it were, some scales of defence, that it may not be transfixed with the arrow of the Truth. For whoever when reprov'd seeks to excuse rather than lament his sin, is covered as it were with scales. When assailed by holy preachers, the sword of the Word has no way of reaching his heart. For the spiritual sword is kept by the hardness of the flesh from being plunged into him." (10)

"What is designated by the neck of Leviathan except the stretching- out of his pride, with which he raises himself up against God, when with pretended sanctity he is exalted by pride." (11)

To the parishioners of Dinton, the sunny south porch of their parish church (Plate 5) must often have served as a "preaching station" where they could listen to these extracts read from Pope Gregory's *Moralia in Job* by their parish priest, beneath the sculptured illustrations placed above the door. Indeed, the carver had added so many small but relevant details to support the metaphors of his textual source that two sermons were probably required, one for the lintel and a second for the tympanum. In the next chapter, we shall therefore consider the implication of the carvings on the tympanum, and the way in which they illustrate the "precepts" to which the inscription urges the congregation to attend.



Plate 5 THE SOUTH DOOR OF THE NAVE OF THE PARISH CHURCH OF DINTON,
BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

12th Century



**Plate 6 THE 12th CENTURY SCULPTURED LINTEL AT DINTON PARISH CHURCH
LINTEL (DETAIL): THE WRIGGLING WORM IN THE HAND OF THE WINGED AND LAUGHING
CHRIST**

Psalm 22 “I am a worm and no man. All that see me laugh me to scorn.”

Leviathan (Death) is mocked in his turn by the laughing Christ who thrusts his Cross into the monster's jaws. The wings of His heavenly descent are outspread while He holds in His hands the worm. Note the scales on the neck of Leviathan.



Plate 7 THE LAUGHING CHRIST

Winchester Psalter 1140-1160

The British Library



Plate 8 THE TYMPANUM IN FLAX BOURTON CHURCH, SOMERSET

Showing the winged figure of Christ descending to stop the mouth of Death (Leviathan) with his Cross and flourishing the sword with which he will dismember Leviathan.

Compare this carving with the tympana of Pitsford, Northants, of Dinton, Bucks and of Hoveringham, Notts.



Plate 9 HINTON PARVA, (Stanbridge), Nr Wimborne, DORSET.

A rare 12th c. sculpture in the now redundant and privately owned church of St. Kenelm, which stands in the grounds of Gaunt's House.

The winged and Ascending Christ-Logos with the Book of the Word, the Cross and the Tree of Adam's Fall. The Tree of the Fall and the Tree of the Cross were constantly contrasted in 12th century literature.

"Through the Tree came death, and through the Tree came life, because death was in Adam and life was in Christ." Origen. *Contra Celsum*. VI. 34 See also the writings of Anselm.



Plate 10 12th CENTURY TYMPANUM FROM THE (REBUILT) CHURCH OF HOVERINGHAM, NOTTS

The winged Christ in combat with Leviathan. His divine identity is established by the Hand of God above ("This is My Beloved Son") and by the Lamb of God placed on a pedestal immediately behind Him. The anatomical features of the dragon show all those attributed by Pope Gregory to Leviathan. The surface of the stone has flaked on the lower half of the face of the fighting Christ but, since the distance between the bottom of the nose and the base of the chin is clearly marked and abnormally long, it is probable that this figure-like that of the winged Christ on the lintel- was laughing.

Photo- National Buildings Record



Plate 11. 12TH CENTURY TYMPANUM OF SOUTHWELL MINSTER

The winged Christ in combat with Leviathan. On the left is his prophetic prototype, David, rescuing the lamb from the lion's mouth.

Photo - National Buildings Record



Plate 12. THE WINGED CHRIST

From the St. Albans Psalter, made before 1123, now in the Cathedral Library of Hildesheim.

Warburg Institute



Plate 13. AN EXAMPLE OF THE ACQUISITION OF SPIRITUAL WINGS BY SAINTLY SOULS

Part of a wall painting in the 12th century cave church of Goreme in Cappadocia showing the Dormition of the Virgin Mary and her winged soul, as a child, held in the arms of her divine Son.



Plate 14. ST. MICHAEL FIGHTING LEVIATHAN

Tympanum: KINGSWINFORD Church, Staffs.

The idea of the acquisition of wings by saintly souls was not unfamiliar in the 12th century.

Likewise, Christ also was depicted with wings. Today the idea of a winged Christ has become so unfamiliar that Anglo-Norman sculptures depicting Christ are mistakenly attributed to St. Michael - although in the 12th century the distinction between the two heavenly warriors was widely understood. St. Michael is generally shown fighting with lance or spear and with 'the shield of righteousness'; it is only the divine protagonist who thrusts his Cross into the mouth of the dragon.



Plate 15 THE ARCHANGEL MICHAEL ATTACKS THE DEVIL

From a late Anglo-Saxon psalter in the British Library



Plate 16 THE DESCENT OF CHRIST INTO HADES AND THE OVERCOMING OF DEATH ASSISTED BY THE ARCHANGEL MICHAEL

(Top half of folio) from St. Swithin's Priory, Winchester. 1150-1160

A parallel illustration showing the archangel Michael assisting at the Descent into Hades occurs in a gospel made probably at Bury St. Edmunds 1130-1140. Cambridge, Pembroke College MS 120.

British Library.



**Plate 17 SOUTH DOOR OF ROMSEY ABBEY SHOWING GRAPE CLUSTERS
ON THE VOUSOIRS**

Compare with the west door at Dinton where the heart shapes are clearly seen but the grape clusters are very worn and almost defaced.

CHAPTER 3

THE DINTON TYMPANUM AND SURROUNDING CARVINGS

In the centre of the Dinton tympanum (Plate 5) stands a tree bearing two fruit which appear from the indentation of their calyx to be apples. The roots of this tree are exposed and swollen and have no depth while its upward growth is conspicuously curved. The girth of its trunk is thickest above its roots but rapidly diminishes to a thin and pendulous crest of sparse leaves.

Two identical beasts are stationed on either side of this tree, and each has grasped hold of its roots with its clumsy fore-paws while at the same time they hold its two small fruit in their open jaws. These beasts are composite creatures showing all the anatomical features of Leviathan, as specified in Pope Gregory the Great's *Moralia in Job*. Indeed, in the twelfth century the lion-asp was not an uncommon mixture, symbolising the concept of evil from the 91st psalm:

"Thou shalt tread upon the lion and the asp; the young lion and the serpent thou shalt trample under foot ..."

Nevertheless the stance of these two monsters appears to be less aggressive than that of Leviathan on the lintel below and since they are toothless they seem to be only toying with the fruit of this languid tree. The outcome seems unpredictable but the fruit is evidently endangered.

The tree with two confronting beasts

The carver is referring to a passage from Pope Gregory's *Moralia in Job*:

"... The life of the righteous is likened to a palm in this respect that the palm below is rough to the touch and in a manner enveloped in dry bark but above it is fair with fruit, spread out in a beautiful greenness. For so is the life of the elect, despised below but beautified above. Down beneath it is straightened by many afflictions but on high it is spread out with foliage in an amplitude of rewarding. The palm too has another thing by which it differs from all other trees. For every (other) tree holds in its timbers its largest girth towards the ground but it grows narrower above and in proportion as by degrees it grows upward it is so much diminished on high. But the growth of the palm begins with a small circumference at the bottom and rises larger towards leaves and fruit and that which is slender at the bottom grows up greater above.

Accordingly, all other trees are like earthly minds expanding below and narrow above because surely all the lovers of this world are strong in things of the earth but feeble in things of heaven. Thus for temporal glory they will defend themselves even to death itself but for everlasting hope they maintain so little exertion. For the sake of earthly gains they

submit to any injuries, but for the sake of heavenly reward they refuse to bear the insults even of the most trifling word ... So these, after the manner of the rest of the trees, are wide-spread below and narrow above because they hold strong towards the parts below and go off (diminish) towards that part which is above." (1)

"... By the jaws are hidden their inner plots, but by the teeth their now open commission of sin." (2)

The sculptor has shown that the two beasts which lurk beside the life-tree of the earthly-minded man are the tempters who already hold its fruit in their jaws. Nevertheless, these beasts are at present toothless since the man has not yet succumbed to their temptations but is titillated at the prospect. The question remains, by what means can this sinner be saved?

"Wilt thou bind his tongue with a cord?
Wilt thou put a ring through his nostrils?
or bore through his jaw with a bracelet (manacle)?" (Job 41: 1b - 2)

{Mary Webb here quotes Job 41 verses 1b-2. In Chapter 4 the same verses are quoted in a longer quotation from a different translation. In Chapter 4 it will be seen that verse 1a has "canst thou draw out Leviathan with a fish hook" and that verse 2b also has "hook" instead of "bracelet" (manacle). MW's translation of this line is correct. The original Hebrew, the later Greek and yet later Latin do here, unlike in verse 1a, have "bracelet" (the Latin being "armilla"). At first sight this may seem obscure but makes perfect sense if one recognises that it reflects the practice of inserting a ring into the fish's lip after it has been caught with a hook, in order that it may be retained in the water with line attached. The quotation from Gregory that now follows makes this clear. (Note by Ben Elliott.)}

"The Lord bores through the jaw of Leviathan with a bracelet because by the power of His mercy He so thwarts the malice of the ancient Enemy that he sometimes loses even those whom he has seized, and they, as it were fall from his mouth, who after the commission of a sin return to innocence. For whoever could escape from his jaws after he had been seized if the jaws had not first been bored through?"

"And what man can escape from the mouth of Leviathan so completely as not to commit anything unlawful? Hence we know how much we are indebted to our Redeemer who not only restrained us from falling into the mouth of Leviathan but granted us also to return from his mouth; he bereft not the sinner of hope because He Himself pierced his jaw that he might make a way of escape so that those who at first were incautious and not afraid of being bitten might at least escape the bite through the hole which Christ made. The heavenly remedy therefore comes to our aid because he both gave men precepts that they should not sin and yet furnished them with remedies when in sin so that they should not despair.

There must there be exercised the greatest caution that no-one through pleasure in sin be seized by the mouth of this Leviathan ... For Leviathan may be said to hold in his mouth not those whom he has completely entangled in sin but those whom he is still tempting with the pleasure of sin so that his chewing of anyone may be his tempting of him ..." (3)

In this passage the references to “despair” and “precepts”, words which also occur in the Dinton inscription, provide a clue to its possible source. I believe that the last part of Gregory’s *Commentary on the Book of Job* is the original context of the inscription and explains every detail on the sculptured tympanum and its connection with the scene on the lintel beneath.

A close parallel to the theme of the Dinton sculpture is to be seen on an Anglo-Norman tympanum in the parish church of Moccas, Herefordshire. (Plate 18) This is carved by a less skilful craftsman, but comes from the same literary source; for there a couple of sinners are already half swallowed by two wolf-like beasts that lurk beside the upright Tree of Life. Nevertheless these two men have managed to retain their hold upon the Tree, albeit with only one hand: and for this reason they are shown falling headlong out of the jaws of sin and will escape by their belated repentance.

The Origin and Characteristics of the Tree of Life

The Tree of Life (Plate 18, Plate 19 and Plate 32) in its original form was the Palm Tree of ancient Assyria. From its first appearance on cylinder seals in the fourteenth and thirteenth centuries B.C., it is clear that it was regarded as a manifestation of a god and was strictly formalised. Its chief characteristic was the vertical shaft of its trunk which on at least one seal had been reduced to a decorated pole topped by the emerging godhead. (4) As a standard motif the Tree of Life was accompanied throughout the long history of Assyrian art by attendant worshippers or supporters in the form of Griffins - while a seal from ancient Syria shows a pair of confronting animals, a winged dragon and a bull on either side of the sacred tree. (5) The function of the Assyrian griffin seems to have been to support, protect and perhaps to fertilise the Tree; and Dr. Henri Frankfort has pointed out that there are sufficient instances of the performance of ritual acts in connection with the stylised tree to exclude mere ornament as an explanation of such additions.

The Christian Fathers were equally familiar with the ancient association of divinity with the Sacred Palm, whose outstanding natural characteristics were its vertical, undeviating and exalted growth, crowned by its luxuriant leaves and fruit - as Pope Gregory remarked, “in an amplitude of rewarding.” But for the Christians in the Latin West who - except for the Crusaders - may have never seen a palm tree, the old theme was transmitted through the writings of the Latin Fathers and especially through St. Augustine, while the naturalistic form of its illustration appeared, for example, in the Byzantine mosaics of the twelfth century in the Norman royal palace at Palermo. Here the lofty date palm is shown with two confronting lions at its base, while in England some of the new sculptured tympana in parish churches showed motifs depicting the vertical trunk of the stylised Tree of Life. Indeed such a tree is shown in its most ancient form over the south door of the church at Croxdale, Durham, where the godhead appears to grow out of the top of a leafless, vertical trunk.

Among the many references to the Tree of Life which were current in the twelfth century we need quote only one, for already in the homilies of Aelfric (died 1020) there is mention of "the Tree of Life which is our Saviour." Thus, Hugh of Saint-Victor, a devotee of St. Augustine, also explained that the *lignum vitae* of the Apocalypse had become the *Palma Christi*:

"To him that overcometh, to him will I give to eat of the Tree of Life which is in the Paradise of God". (Revelation 2:7). "This is the Tree of Life which was planted in the midst of Paradise, namely Jesus Christ, set up in the midst of His church for all believers. It is He who rose from the earth and pierced the heavens, who came down to the depths yet did not leave the height ; Himself both above and below, in majesty and compassion. A tree bears two things, fruit and leaves; it feeds us with its fruit and shades us with its leaves. In the same way the power of the Godhead is food for the souls of the enlightened and shade for the weak ..." (6)

(see also (Plate 32) Pitsford. The leafless Tree of Life)

Since copies of Hugh's works were available in English monastic libraries in the latter part of the twelfth century his expression of the well-known theme may also have been available to the Dinton designer. The persistence of its symbolism is shown in the diary kept by Joseph Conrad on his journey down the Congo in 1890 for he wrote, "I saw the Palma Christi, the oil palm, very straight and tall, and thick in some places. A name not known to me before." (7)

A twelfth-century Bestiary now in Cambridge University Library shows the "Peridixion Tree", which as the tree of spiritual life and knowledge was equated with Christ. This is indicated by a tri-lobed leaf placed conspicuously on the trunk, referring to the Cross. The birds who feed upon its fruits and are sheltered by its leaves represent the faithful. They are safe while they remain within its branches, but they are in danger of being devoured by the hungry beasts who lurk beneath.

The Heart Shapes and the small Berry-fruit in the Architectural Frame

The last two items to be considered in this investigation of the Dinton sculptures and their functions as visual aids to parish preaching are the series of small berry-fruit in the chevrons of the voussoirs surrounding the framing arch and the sequence of large heart-shapes on the two impost blocks that support the lintel. (Plate 21).

Similar berry-fruit occur, for example, on a much mutilated 12th century doorway at Romsey Abbey (Plate 17), as already noted, and on the voussoirs of the west door at Bishop's Teignton church, Devon, on which a dove is feeding while on the sculptured font at Bridekirk, Cumberland a small man is shown eating the same berry-fruit from a formalised vine. Contemporary manuscripts illustrate the Peridixion Tree within whose sheltering foliage the bird-souls feed upon its spiritual fruit.

I have, however, failed to find in the *Moralia* any passage that seems to account directly for the associated use of the heart shapes carved so conspicuously - fifteen on either side of the doorway (Plate 5), in a close and rigid conformity that precludes any resemblance to leaves. They cannot be ignored since it has become apparent that every detail of this sculptor's work was intended to have a didactic reference.

It will be recalled that there was a second literary source used directly by the Dinton carver for his representation of the wriggling worm in the hand of the laughing Christ on the lintel over this door (Plate 6). This source was the 22nd psalm which is divided into two parts. In the first eighteen verses we find the passages that were always assumed to be prophetic of the events and sufferings of Christ's crucifixion and included the passage:

"I am a worm and no man,
All they that see me laugh me to scorn ..."

In verse 20 there is a final cry:

"Deliver my soul from the sword;
My darling from the power of the dog.
Save me from the lion's mouth ..."

But in the second half of this psalm, the mood changes to one of triumph:

"But when he cried unto Him, He heard him.
Of Thee cometh my praise in the great congregation.
I will pay my vows before them that fear Him.
The meek shall eat and be satisfied
They shall praise the Lord that seek after Him.
Let your heart live forever.
All the ends of the earth shall remember
And shall turn unto the Lord ..."

Whether or not this passage accounts for the laborious carving of the berry-fruit and the deeply-cut hearts on the architectural framework surrounding the Dinton south door, (Plate 21) it is quite certain that the designer of its sculpture must have been familiar with this famous psalm since he made use of one of its prophetic passages.

The red heart was used as a symbol of the love of God and the blood of Christ in three illustrations in a *Spanish Commentary on the Apocalypse* by Beatus of Liebana (d. 798), preserved at Gerona Cathedral. One page of this magnificent manuscript is filled by a large cross (Plate 23) on the four arms of which are painted hearts, while on the next page, among the four Evangelistic Beasts surrounding Christ in Majesty, the Eagle of St. John, "the disciple whom Jesus loved", also bears a red heart upon its breast (Plate 22).

Finally, in a full-page illustration of the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, the white horse itself is dappled all over with red hearts (Plate 24). (8) Nowhere else in this manuscript do any red hearts appear and their use restricted to these significant contexts emphasises their reference to Divine Love.

The presence of illustrated copies of the *Beatus Commentary on the Apocalypse* in some twelfth century monastic libraries is attested by surviving library lists; there were three in the library of Reading Abbey, founded in 1123. We therefore cannot exclude the possibility that the hearts carved at Dinton were intended to convey a similar reference to the love of God and to the twenty second psalm.

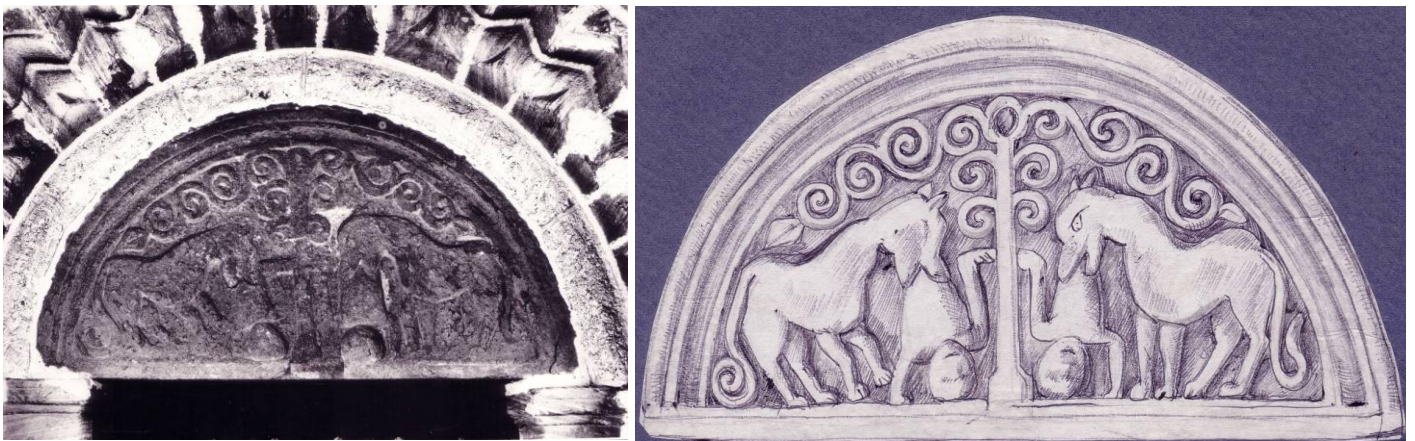


Plate 18 .12th CENTURY TYMPANUM of ST. MICHAEL'S CHURCH, MOCCAS, HEREFORDSHIRE

Two half-swallowed sinners hold on to the Tree of Life.

National Monuments Record



Plate 19 "The life of the righteous is likened to a palm tree".
The Moralia in Job

From a Spanish Beatus Commentary

Paris Bibliothèque National

"... palma; quod ab omnium arborum generibus differt. Omnis namque arbor in suo robore iusta (sic) terram vasta subsistit; set crescendo superius angustatur. Et quantum paulisper sublimior, tantum in altum subtilior redditur. Palma vero minoris amplitudinis iusta terram inchoat; et iusta (sic) ramos ac fructus ampliori robore exurgit. Et que tenuis ab ymis proficit vastior ad summa succrescit. Quibus; itaque alia arbusta nisi terrenis mentibus et terrena luca desiderantibus inveniuntur esse similia. In hac vita vasta, in illa vita angusta. Quia sine dubio omnes huius seculi amores in terrenis rebus fortes sunt, in celestibus debiles. Nam pro temporali gloria usque ad mortem desudari appetunt, et pro spe perpetua penarum quidem in labore subsistunt. Pro terrenis lucris quaslibet iniurias tolerant. Et pro celesti mercede vel tenuissimi verbi ferre contumelias recusant. Terreno iudicio toto etiam die assistere fortes sunt; in oratione vero coram domino vel unius ..."

"... the palm; because it differs from all kinds of trees. For every tree in its trunk is wide near the ground but in growing higher gets narrower. And as it gradually rises, so it becomes thinner above. But the palm begins next the ground of less width, and rises up with a wider trunk next the branches and fruit. And as it grows up thinner from the bottom, so it continues wider at the top. Other trees therefore are found to be similar to those wanting only worldly thoughts and worldly rewards. In this life wide, in that life narrow. Because without doubt all lovers of this world are strong in worldly things and weak in celestial things. Because for temporal glory they strive to be worn out to the point of death; and in return for the perpetual hope of hardships each one subsists in toil. For terrestrial rewards they endure any injuries. And for celestial reward they refuse on the contrary to bear revilings of the slightest word. They are strong to attend a terrestrial court for a whole day; in prayer indeed before God ..."

Plate 20 Translation of Plate 19



**Plate 21 THE BERRY FRUIT on the voussoirs above the south door and
THE CONCAVE HEART SHAPES**

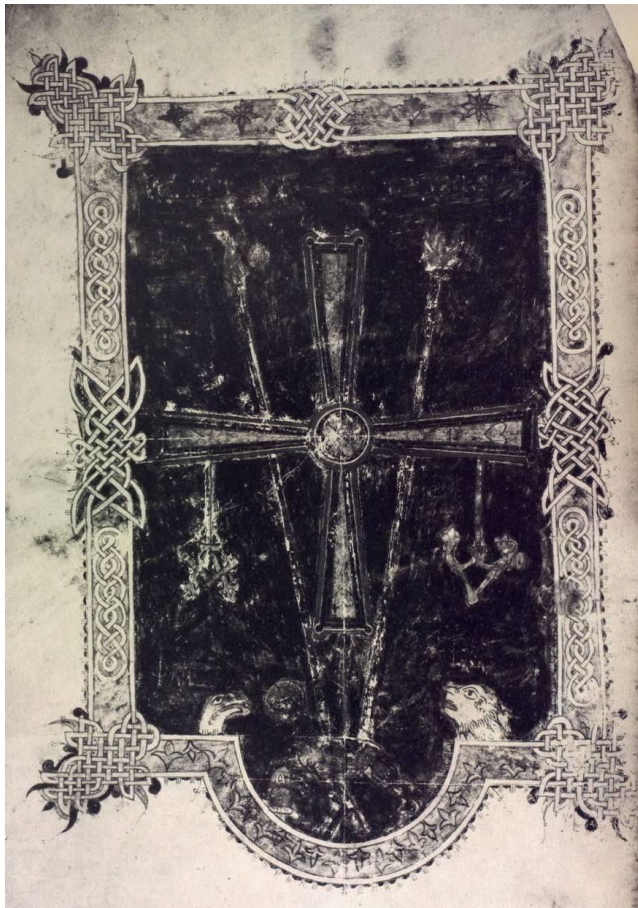
These occur on the impost blocks on both sides of the doorway in the parish church at Dinton, Buckinghamshire.



Plate 22 THE RED HEART PAINTED ON THE EAGLE OF ST. JOHN, "THE DISCIPLE WHOM JESUS LOVED."

A page from a facsimile of The Gerona Beatus Apocalypse

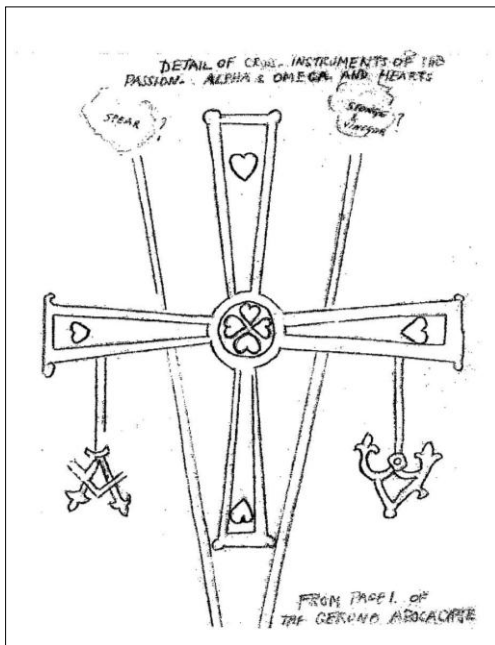
Senate House Library



**Plate 23 THE PAINTED HEARTS
SYMBOLISING THE LOVE OF
CHRIST**

A page from a facsimile of The
Gerona Beatus Apocalypse
published Lausanne 1926

Senate House Library



Sketches to detail the Hearts on the Eagle
and on the Cross



Plate 24 A PAGE FROM A COPY OF THE ILLUSTRATED COMMENTARY ON THE APOCALYPSE

THE FOUR HORSEMAN OF THE APOCALYPSE .The White Horse is dappled with hearts.

Produced originally by the Spanish monk, Beatus of Liebana (died 786). This copy was completed in 973 and is now in the archives of Gerona Cathedral. The Lamb of God is shown within a shackle, bearing His Cross, while His right foot is freely and voluntarily placed within the loop of a shackle that is here firmly fixed to its base. The use of the shackle epitomises the concept of "the Prison House of Death" from which the risen and ascending Christ liberated Adam and all his descendants.

Compare this with the sculptured panel at Ault Hucknall Church where the shackle behind the fighting Christ has been uprooted and is falling sideways.

Facs. Bibliothèque National of Paris



Plate 25

THE SCULPTURED PANEL FROM AULT HUCKNALL PARISH CHURCH, DERBYSHIRE

The sculptor has illustrated the combat between Christ and Leviathan (Death). The anatomy of the monster corresponds in all details with Pope Gregory the Great's account of Leviathan in his *MORALIA IN JOB*, including the large oval eye and the tongue extended to engulf the Cross which stands between him and the Incarnate Christ. The garment worn by the battling Christ is similar to that worn by the Christ who fights Leviathan on the Pitsford tympanum and the faint indications of trellis quilting above the waist suggests a similar reference to the gambeson at Dinton. To the left of the Christ is the large loop of a shackle which has been uprooted and is falling sideways. The shackle is exactly paralleled on two pages of the *SPANISH BEATUS COMMENTARY* now in Gerona cathedral; there it is fixed to a block and the Lamb of God has voluntarily placed his unbound foot in it to show that he can be detained only by his by his own volition.

CHAPTER 4

THE SCULPTURED TYMPANUM IN THE PARISH CHURCH AT PITSFORD, NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

(Plate 26 and Plate 27)

In the nineteenth century the ancient parish church of All Saints, Pitsford was almost entirely rebuilt and only a few fragments of its twelfth century fabric remain beside the Anglo-Norman tympanum now placed over the south door of the nave. Very little is known of the early history of the original church and there is nothing beyond the internal evidence of its sculptured tympanum to connect it with Dinton. Nevertheless there may be an indirect association through the influence of Godstow Abbey.

According to the Victoria County History (1) the overlord of Pitsford in 1086 was Simon the Fleming, ancestor of the Barons of Wahull, in whom the overlordship continued to be invested and whose chief seat was at Pattishall on Watling Street some twelve miles south-west of Pitsford. At the time of the Domesday survey the manor was in the possession of Fulcher, Lord of Pitsford, who held it jointly with Philip of Pitsford; the church went with the manor. A surviving cartulary shows that in 1139 the church of Pattishall was given to Godstow nunnery and about 1170 or a little earlier the advowson of the church at Dinton, Buckinghamshire was likewise given to Godstow. Dinton lies some 20 miles to the east of the site of Godstow nunnery. Thus it is possible - but by no means proven - that some connection might have been made through the Abbess of Godstow which would link the carvings at Pitsford with those of Dinton. All that can be said for certain is that the sculptures surviving in both churches derive from a common literary source and display a very high degree of skill and understanding in their interpretation of it. Moreover, from a comparison of style and methods, it is now possible to show that the sculptures with which we are concerned at Dinton and at Pitsford are the work of one and the same designer and carver. A number of very close correspondences exist between details of both sculptures, while the even distribution of forms and spaces is maintained with the same consistent level of relief. An exact stylistic parallel is also to be seen in the unusual form of the clumsy feet of the two beasts on the Dinton tympanum and the feet of the leonine monster Behemoth on the Dinton tympanum. The details too of the monster's head at Pitsford with its large oval eye, small back-turning ears, blunt snout, scaly neck and thinly incised outline round his gaping jaws, are all repeated in the carving of the head of Leviathan on the Dinton lintel. The style of the outspread wings of the laughing figure on the Dinton lintel and the wings of the approaching Leviathan are also closely paralleled by the pair of discarded wings in the Pitsford carving.

Beyond all these similarities of detail there is evidence in the design of both sculptures of a concern to meet the interests of contemporary laymen by the introduction of objects of daily life. For example there is the wriggling worm on the lintel at Dinton (Plate 6)_while at Pitsford (Plate 26 and Plate 27) the carver has introduced the single-bladed butcher's knife, the quilted gambeson of the Norman foot-soldier and the framing circle of the fisherman's trawl-rope to depict the references in his literary source. And, since it can be shown that their common literary source is Gregory's *Moralia in Job*, it is clear that at Pitsford we have an illustration of the combat between the Incarnate Christ and Behemoth, who was associated with Leviathan as an image of death. For, as Gregory said, Behemoth was also likened to a lion.

The theme of the Pitsford tympanum may be summarised as follows (but its details are explicable only by reference to the text of Gregory's *Moralia in Job*):

On the right stands the Incarnate Christ who has flown down from heaven "like a vulture" in search of Death to destroy it and, having laid aside the wings of His divine nature, He stands with both feet on the earth as a mortal man. His face is shown in profile as He confronts His antagonist and His back is turned towards the observer while He swings the weapon in His right hand to deliver a blow at His enemy. With remarkable skill the carver has indicated the curve of His spine below His tightly-fitting garment which emphasises the vigour of His action. His weapon is not, however, a sword but a single-bladed butcher's knife of the traditional form in which the handle is exactly half the length of the blade. The monstrous death which confronts the Christ is depicted as Behemoth, the counterpart of Leviathan from the Book of Job, and the carver in following Gregory's commentary has shown him "raised up on the birds of his pride", in contrast to the humble stance of Christ who stands upon the ground. The features of this Behemoth closely correspond with those of Leviathan on the Dinton lintel. His foliated tail, "raised like a cedar", is beaded all along its length. In the background is a leafless palm tree with three small circles carved at its root. Its trunk is attacked by one of the evil birds who is also supporting Behemoth. The sculptor has shown that the left hand of the Christ is thrust into the very jaws of Death, for He is "binding the tongue of Leviathan with a cord". The three-fold cord is attached to the under-seam of His garment and its tasselled ends swirl beside Him in the stress of battle. The whole of this sculptured tympanum is enclosed within a framing rope which is threaded through 14 rectangular blocks on each side of which are 9 small bosses arranged in a three - by - three square.

Every detail of this tympanum is derived from Pope Gregory's commentary upon selected passages from the last three chapters of the Book of Job. (2)

Chapter 40

- v.15 Behold Behemoth which I made with thee.
- v.15 He eateth hay like an ox.
- v.17 He moveth his tail like a cedar.
- v.19 He is the chief of the ways of God.

Chapter 41

- v. 1 Canst thou draw out Leviathan with a fish-hook
or press down his tongue with a cord ?
- v. 2 Canst thou put a rope in his nose
or pierce through his jaw with a hook ?
- v. 5 Wilt thou play with him as a bird
or wilt thou bind him for thy maidens ?
- v. 6 Shall the bands of the fishermen make traffic with him,
shall they part him among the merchants ?
- v. 7 Wilt thou fill the nets with his skin,
or the cabin of fishes with his head ?
- v. 8 Lay thy hand on him, remember the battle,
and speak no more.
- v.14 Who can open the doors of his face
Round about his teeth is terror.
- v.15 His strong scales are his pride,
shut up together as with a closed seal.
- v.16 One is so near to another
that no air can come between them.

Chapter 42

- v.10 The Lord turned the captivity of Job
when he prayed for his friends
and the Lord gave Job twice as much
as he had before.
- v.14 And he had also seven sons and three daughters,
and he called the name of the one Dies,
and the name of the second Casia,
and the name of the third Cornu Stibii.
- v.15 In all the land there were found no women as fair
as the daughters of Job. And their father gave them
their inheritance among their brethren.

This preliminary identification of the Pitsford carvings will be followed by their full explanation in the words of Gregory's commentary, the *Moralia in Job*.

The Three Evil Birds which support Behemoth

"Wilt thou play with him as a bird?" (Job 41:5)

"Why is it that our adversary is first called Behemoth, and afterwards Leviathan, but is now compared to a bird in ridicule at his destruction? ... Let us examine why he is called a monster or a beast, why a dragon, and why a bird. For we learn more quickly the meaning of his names if we examine the craft of his cunning He is an irrational and four-footed animal by the folly of his unclean doings, a dragon by his malice in doing hurt and a bird by the levity of his subtle nature ... Sometimes, because through his indomitable pride, he feigns to be an angel of light, he is a bird. For though he harasses mankind through his inexplicable skill in wickedness yet he especially tempts by three sins in order to subdue to himself some by lust and some by pride ... If he is unable to corrupt (a man) with the poison of his malice yet by bringing before him the phantom of vain glory, he flies before the sight of his thought as a bird. This bird is raised up more cruelly against us the less it is impeded by the weakness of its own nature for when it saw our Redeemer was mortal in the flesh it was puffed up with the greater haughtiness of pride but where it raised itself up against its Maker with the wings of pride there it found the snare of its own death ... For the Lord in truth played with him as a bird when in the passion of His only begotten Son He showed him the bait but concealed the snare ..." (3)

The Pitsford sculptor has illustrated the three forms of temptation which, in the shape of evil birds, uphold the body of Behemoth in his self-deception and pride. This interpretation may be compared with the statement of the sculptor's older contemporary, Rupert, Abbot of Deutz (1119-1130), who wrote another commentary on the Book of Job in which he interpreted the same text:

"He (Behemoth) was truly played with as a bird and mocked and his hope did disappoint him, since in dying Christ was devoured in vain. We marvel at the magnitude of the mockery of God who formed the Dragon to jeer at him, for when the Dragon thinks he will devour so great a Son, he himself is enslaved by God's purposes."

The Pair of Discarded Wings

"The pathway of the Bird it knew not, neither beheld the eyes of the Vulture" (Job 28:7, Vulgate version). "Who is denoted in this place by the title of the Bird, saving He who in ascending poised skyward the fleshly body which He took to Himself? Who, furthermore, is fitly designated by the title of the Vulture? For rightly is the Mediator between God and man called a Vulture, who let Himself drop from the regions of Heaven to the lowest place. On our behalf He became Man. He sought Death among us, who is deathless Himself ... Now the eye of the Vulture was aiming at our resurrection because He himself, being dead for three days set us free from everlasting Death.

The faithless Jews saw Him in a state of mortality but they knew not how by His death He would destroy Death. They refused to understand the ways of His humility, and they knew not the pathway of the Bird ... No one of the Angels was sent as the Redeemer of the human race ... There is no angel sent in His stead because it is necessary that the creature should be set free by His Creator." (4)

The Weapon in the Hand of the Christ

The carver of the Pitsford tympanum has shown that the weapon wielded by the Christ-figure is not a sword but a single-bladed knife, the handle of which is exactly half the length of its blade. This is the traditional form of the old hand-forged butcher's knife, which remained in use until the introduction in recent years of stainless steel. It has been included to emphasise the scriptural references to the cutting up of Leviathan as meat for the people of Jerusalem.

"His friends shall cut him in pieces;
the merchants shall divide him." (Job 41: 6 E. V.)

"Thou hast broken the head of Leviathan in pieces, and hast given him to be meat for the people of Ethiopia." (Psalm 74:14)

"This Leviathan is cut to pieces as often as his members are severed from him by the sword of the Divine Word ... For He calls his friends merchants, for in the preaching of the faith a kind of traffic is carried on when the word is given to and received from the hearers. They make as it were a kind of traffic, who make a venture with their preaching, and bring back faith from the people." (5)

In Rabbinical texts the snaring of Leviathan was expected of the Messiah: The Holy One, blessed be He, will in time to come, make a banquet of the flesh of Leviathan. The rest of Leviathan will be distributed and sold in the markets of Jerusalem." (6)

The Quilted Garment worn by the Christ

"Wilt thou bind him for thy maidens?
His friends shall cut him in pieces:
The merchants shall divide him." (Job 41:6 E. V.)

"She made fine linen and sold it,
and delivered a girdle to the Canaanite." (Proverbs 31: 24)

"If heavenly preaching had not been a traffic, Solomon would never have said of the Holy Church, under the type of a virtuous woman, that 'She made fine linen and sold it, and delivered a girdle to the Canaanite.' For what signified the garment of fine linen but the subtle texture of holy preaching in which men rest softly because the mind of the faithful is refreshed by heavenly hope ... The Church therefore made and sold this fine linen garment because she imparted in words that faith which she had woven by belief, and had received from the believers a life of upright conversation. She delivered a girdle to the Canaanite, because by the might of righteousness which he displayed, she constrains the lax doings of the gentile world; and thus what is commanded may be carried out in life, 'Let your loins be girded about'. The Lord therefore is searching out His preachers, finds them as maidens, and by changing them he makes them His friends, while by enriching them, He sends them forth as merchants." (7)

The sculptor has shown his ingenuity by introducing another object familiar through current use. For he has depicted the garment worn by the Christ-figure, as He battles against Behemoth, as the gambeson, the sole protective covering worn by the lowest ranks of Norman foot-soldiers, often made of padded and quilted linen. (8) The carver has taken care to show the trellis pattern of the quilted garment and even the under-arm seam into which the loose end of the three-fold girdle is inserted. It is high-necked and fits tightly above the waist but is open down the centre of the back to fall as padded panels over the thighs above a short kilt.

The gambeson was mentioned by Wace, and also by Guillaume le Breton, who described the troops of Duke William preparing for the fight: "Plusors orent vestu gambais." According to a contemporary account, the gambeson in its simplest form was a linen garment, stuffed with an interlining of wool, tow or even old rags, which would require some form of quilting to keep it in place. Illustrations in contemporary manuscripts frequently show a trellis pattern covering the gambeson, indicating this quilting. The garment was high-necked with long sleeves, close-fitting over the body but sometimes open from the waist downwards for horsemen, so that it should fall as protective panels over the thighs. Such a trellis-quilted gambeson is depicted in an initial letter in the twelfth century manuscript of Gregory's *Moralia in Job* from Rochester Cathedral, where it is worn by a mounted knight who thrusts his spear through the body of a dragon (9). Examples of such padded quilting are to be found in the twelfth century carvings of mounted Norman soldiers in the parish churches of Ruardean, Gloucestershire and Brinsop, Herefordshire. (10)

The large Eye of Behemoth

"In his eyes he will take him, as with a hook." (Job 40 : 19)

"When the Lord has pointed out the manifold expressions of his cunning crafts and the unrestrained strength of Behemoth He immediately sets forth the coming of His only-begotten Son, our Redeemer, and teaches in what way this Behemoth is to be destroyed ... saying, 'In his eyes He will take him with a hook '. For we are said to have in our eyes that which we see before us. But the Ancient Enemy of mankind saw placed before him our Redeemer, whom he confessed to know, and feared in confessing, saying, 'What have we to do with Thee Thou Son of God? Art thou come to destroy us before the time?' He was therefore taken with a hook in his eyes because he first knew whom to fear, and yet afterwards feared not, when he hungered for the death of His flesh, as it were his bait." (11)

The Pitsford sculptor has here shown that, despite the enormity of the wicked eye of Behemoth, he is deceived as to the divine nature of his Antagonist. For the Incarnate Christ has laid aside the wings of his heavenly descent, which are hidden behind His mortal body, and He fights with both feet firmly on the earth as

a mortal Man. Thus, as Gregory said, Behemoth "saw Him in a state of mortality but knew not how by His death He would destroy Death"

The Beaded Decoration on the Tail of Behemoth and on the Tail of one of his Supporting Birds

"He raiseth his tail like a cedar." (Job 40:17)

"A path will shine after him." (Job 41:32 E.V.)

"There are in these words many points for moral instruction ... We examine first the violence of Behemoth in order to detect his crafts. For the name Cedar sometimes means the lofty excellence of heavenly glory, and sometimes the stubborn pride of the wicked. But what is meant by the tail of this Behemoth except the latter end of the ancient Enemy, that ruined man, who is especially called Antichrist? For since he is permitted by the honours of this world and by signs and prodigies of pretended sanctity to be elevated by the swelling of power his tail is rightly compared to a cedar. For as the cedar leaves behind all other trees in its increasing height so Antichrist, possessing in temporal things the glory of the world, will surpass all men in the height of his honour and the power of his miracles ... When therefore this Behemoth expands his tail most fatally at the end of the world, what greater cruelty can spring up in these torments? Whose resolution will not then be shaken from the very bottom of his thoughts, when he who tortures with scourges also glitters with miracles? Let it be rightly said then that he setteth his tail like a cedar because he (Antichrist) will be exalted through his prodigies and harsh in the cruelty of his tortures. For he is then not only exalted in power but is also supported by a display of miracles ... for he persuades one by the height of his greatness, while he deceives others by a display of sanctity. Of this tail of Behemoth it is said by John that, under the form of a dragon, 'his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and cast them to the earth. For stars therefore to fall from heaven is for some, having abandoned the hope of heavenly things, to be eager under his guidance for the pursuit of secular glory.' (12) 'He is the chief of the ways of God'. (Job 40: 19)

"Behemoth is said to have been the chief of the ways of God, because doubtless, when He was performing all the works of creation, He created him first, whom He made more eminent than the other angels ... Hence the prophet, still speaking of the power of his superiority, subjoins: 'every precious stone was thy covering, the sardius, the topaz, the jasper and the chrysolite, the onyx and the beryl, the sapphire, the carbuncle and the emerald.' (Ezekiel 28:13 ff). He mentions nine kinds of stones doubtless because there are nine orders of angels ... and yet this Behemoth is described as being covered with them because he had those as a vesture for his adornment, by comparison with whom he was more brilliant when he transcended their brightness." (13)

The beaded decoration then represents the glitter of jewels, and also the stars swept from the sky by the tail of the great Dragon (Revelation 12:4). (14) The Pitsford carver illustrates the jewels in the tail of Behemoth and on the tail feathers of the "bird of his pride" by a carefully carved row of beading running between the raised outlines of the tail. In this he had a precedent in a composite drawing of Leviathan/Behemoth in Lambert of Saint-Omer's illustrated *Liber Floridus*, which was completed in 1120. In this drawing the wings and the four legs of the beast are shown, while its raised and greatly exaggerated tail bears not only

the identical double outline but also the beading running throughout its length. Such beading was of course a common decorative device in the guilloche which so often appears on Anglo-Norman font bowls and which likewise frames the tympanum of Dinton, Buckinghamshire. But its specific use for jewelled ornament is equally common, occurring on the edges of vestments, on crowns and on the vesica which represents the glory surrounding the triumphant Christ. A familiar example of its specific reference to jewels may also be seen on the vestments of two seated ecclesiastics on a capital from Winchester Cathedral, dated 1140, now in the City Museum.

The Christ binds the Tongue of Behemoth with the Three-fold Cord of His Girdle

(Compare Plate 26, Plate 30 and Plate 31)

"Canst thou draw out Leviathan with a fish-hook, or press down his tongue with a cord? Canst thou put a rope into his nose or pierce his jaw through with a hook?" (Job 41: 1,2)

"A three-fold cord is not easily broken." (Ecclesiastes 4: 12)

"Our Lord bound the tongue of Leviathan with a cord because He appeared in the likeness of sinful flesh and condemned all his erroneous preaching ... He bound his tongue with a cord because, by the likeness of sinful flesh, He swept away all the deceitful arguments from the hearts of His enemies. For, when the Lord appears in the flesh, the tongue of Leviathan is bound because when His truth had become known those doctrines of falsehood were silenced. The Lord bound the tongue of Leviathan with the cord of His Incarnation. A three-fold cord is not easily broken because faith in Truth, which is woven by the mouth of the preachers, from a knowledge of the Trinity, remains firm in the Elect, and is broken only in the hearts of the reprobate." (15)

The carver has shown the left hand of Christ thrust upward to the open jaws of Behemoth, but owing to the flaking of the surface of the stone at this point it is not possible to see whether He is actually "binding the tongue with a cord."

Nevertheless, one end of the girdle attached to the gambeson seems to be entering the jaws and the three-fold nature of the cord is carefully emphasised by the carver.

The Leafless Tree (Plate 32)

"For there is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will be green again; and that the tender branches thereof will sprout forth. Though the root thereof wax old in the earth and the stock thereof die in the ground yet through the scent of water it will bud and bring forth foliage as when it was planted. But man, when he is dead and stripped and consumed, where is he?" (Job 14 : 7-10)

"The root of the righteous may be taken for the very nature itself of a human being, by virtue whereof he subsists, which same root waxes old in the earth, when the natural frame of the flesh comes to nought; but 'at the scent of water it buds', in that through the coming of the Holy Spirit it rises again; 'and brings forth boughs as when it was first planted', in that it returns to that form which it was created to receive, if when it is set in Paradise he had refused to sin. Which perhaps may be taken of the Lord Himself, who is the Head of all the Good; for whereas He said of Himself, 'If they have done these things in the green tree what shall be done in the dry?' He said that He Himself was the green tree, but we that are mere men are called the dry tree. And so, 'there is hope of a tree if it be cut down, that it will sprout again', in that even if He was able to be put to death by His Passion, yet by the glory of His resurrection He came to the greenness of life again; 'His branches shoot', in that the faithful being multiplied by His resurrection grew out far and wide. His root as it were waxed old in the earth, in that the preaching of Him was to the unbelief of the Jews a despicable thing; and 'His stock dried in the dust', in that in the heart of them that persecuted Him, which was uplifted by the wind of their unbelief He was held as an object of scorn and contempt in that He was capable of being put to death in the flesh. But 'at the scent of water' He budded in that through the power of God His flesh after demise returned to life, according to that which was written, 'Whom God has raised from the dead'. For, in that God is a Trinity, the Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, raised up to life the extinct flesh of the only begotten Son. 'And it brought forth foliage as when it was first planted', in that the feebleness of the Apostles, who at the season of His death were afraid and denied, and by denying turned Dry, by the glory of His resurrection was again quickened in faith. In comparison with which Tree, what is every man but dust?" (16)

The Pitsford carver has condensed the meaning of this passage into the image of a leafless tree. The three small circles at its root were first noticed by Charles Keyser, but without explanation. (17) A parallel example occurs in the twelfth century Bestiary (18) where the tree that is Christ is depicted as described by Hugh of Saint-Victor with three conspicuous circles at its root. In the context of the *Moralia*, these three circles clearly relate to Gregory's repetition of a common patristic statement that "God who is Trinity raised up the extinct flesh of the only begotten Son, and it brought forth foliage as when it was first planted".

The Rope which frames the Pitsford Tympanum

This rope represents the circular line of a fisherman's trawl with floats for the support of nets.

"Wilt thou fill the nets with his skin, and
the cabin of fishes with his head?" (Job 41.7)

The sculptor has supplied a visual interpretation of these two lines with an ingenuity which is truly astonishing. For technical reasons it is certain that the carving of this framing rope was done *after* the sculptured scene within it was completed. It is apparent that the carver's intention was to summarise the meaning of all that had gone before by encircling it within the rope's significance. Thus, by following the suggestions in Gregory's interpretation of the biblical text, we shall

arrive at the symbolic implications of the rope. The carver has also emphasised its strength by its thickness and the closeness of its twist, as it runs through 14 rectangular blocks reminiscent of the floats on a fisherman's trawl net. On each of these 14 blocks the sculptor has carved a series of nine small bosses, in relief, arranged as three rows of three. The labour involved in the production of such insignificant details cut in relief, must have been out of all proportion to the decorative results, and can only have been justified if some further symbolic reference was intended. Answers to these questions are, however, not far to seek for the carver has epitomised with remarkable ingenuity the explanation provided by Gregory in his *Moralia*. A fifteenth century illustration of the use of such a trawl-rope with floats supporting the nets is to be seen in a calendar illustration for the month of April in *Les Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry*, where it is being dragged behind two boats on a lake. This traditional method of fishing was widespread and still persists in some parts of the west coast of Scotland and in estuaries of some English rivers.

"The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a net cast into the sea and gathering every kind of fishes." (Matthew 13 : 47)

"But God chose the foolish of this world, that He might put to shame them that are wise; and He chose the weak things of the world; that He might put to shame the things that are strong. (1 Corinthians 1: 27)

"What is designed by nets, or a cabin of fishes, except the churches of the faithful, which make one Catholic Church? Whence it is written in the Gospel, 'The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a net cast into the sea and gathering every kind of fishes'. The Church is in truth called the Kingdom of Heaven, for while the Lord exalts her conduct to things above, she already reigns herself in the Lord, by heavenly conversation. The Church is already rightly compared to a net cast into the sea, gathering of every kind of fishes because when cast into this gentile world it rejected no-one but caught the wicked with the good, the proud with the humble, the angry with the gentle, and the foolish with the wise. But by the skin of this Leviathan we understand the foolish and by his head the wise ones of his body. Or certainly by the skin which is outermost are designated those who serve him as inferiors in the meanest offices but by the head is meant those who are placed over them. And the Lord, observing the proper order, rightly declared that He will fill these 'nets' or 'cabins of fishes' (that is His Church) with his 'skin' first and afterwards with his 'head'. Because He first chose the weak that He might confound the strong afterwards. He chose in truth the foolish things of the world to confound the wise. For He gathered together the unlearned first and philosophers afterwards; and He taught not fishermen by means of orators but with wondrous power He subdued orators by means of fishermen." (19)

The Book of Job continues, "Wilt thou fill the nets with his skin and the cabin of fishes with his head? Wilt thou lay thy hand upon him? Remember the battle and speak no more." (41: 7,8) At this point the sculptor has indeed made us remember the battle but with the completion of the framing rope his task is done; therefore he will

"speak no more", for he has come to the *end* of his sermon in stone. But we are still faced with the question of the number of those floats, 14 in all, upon each of which the carver has placed the three-by-three little bosses; and the Book of Job has provided us with only one clue for their explanation, namely that he has reached the *end* of the story. Turning therefore to the *end* of the Book of Job and to the penultimate paragraph of the last of the 35 volumes of Pope Gregory's commentary, we discover the sculptor's reason for the introduction of the numbers 3 x 3 and 14 and their relevance to the current problems in medieval society which had called forth the need for this sermon.

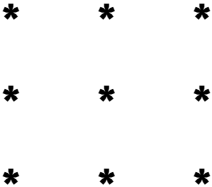
"The Lord was moved at the penitence of Job when he prayed for his friends; and the Lord added all that had been lost to Job two-fold ... And he had 7 sons and 3 daughters. And he called the name of one Dies, and the name of the second Casia, and the name of the third Cornu Stibii. In all the land were no women found as fair as the daughters of Job. And their father gave them inheritance among their brethren. And after this Job lived 140 years, and saw his sons, and his sons' sons, even four generations. And Job died, being old and full of days." (Job 42: 10, 13-17)

"Those things which were lost to Job are now restored two-fold. But as many children were restored as he had lost. (Job 1:18/19) For he had 7 sons and 3 daughters. But he is now described as having 7 sons and 3 daughters, in order that those who had been destroyed may be shown to be alive ... For God added to Job double the number of children, to whom He afterwards restored 10 in the flesh, but he reserved the 10 that had been lost in the hidden abode of souls. If anyone wishes, as an intellectual being, to put aside the chaff of the history and feed on the grain of the mysteries, it is necessary for him to learn our opinion ..." (20)

The stamina even of "intellectual beings" may excusably falter at this point. A précis of Gregory's opinion suggests that God restored to life Job's original seven sons and three daughters, but retained them in the abode of souls. At the same time God gave to Job twice the number of his original children, namely 14 new sons and six new daughters. Nevertheless the last verses of the Book of Job are concerned only with the beauty and virtue of the three original daughters and the equality of their patrimony among their brethren while the seven original sons are not even mentioned again for, since they were retained in the abode of souls, they could not have followed the virile example of their 14 new brethren who became great-grandfathers in the course of time.

Gregory next gives a long and detailed interpretation of virtues and names of the three original daughters, which thus led the carver to include them with their six new sisters. Indeed, their perfection was implicit in their names, as Dies, Casia and Cornu Stibii, which Gregory interpreted as "The Light of Innocent Day", "The Sweet Odour of Sanctity" and "The Song of Them that Rejoice"; and with names like that no man could be expected to ignore them. At this point the sculptor gave a final example of his ingenuity, by representing their perfection in terms of the current Pythagorean mathematics. For Gregory, in the same chapter, had also remarked that, "In secular knowledge the square and the cubic numbers

are called "Perfect" but we transcend all this knowledge by advancing through the loftiness of the Scriptures." The Pitsford sculptor therefore took the hint for he has displayed the 'perfection' of the daughters of Job by the arrangement of nine carefully raised small bosses as a square, on each of the 14 floats supporting the encircling rope of the fishing net:



Gregory goes on to link the original seven sons and three daughters of Job with the payment of a reward of 10 pence, the denarius, which was a sum paid equally to all the labourers in the parable of the vineyard, at the end of the day, irrespective of the length of their service. (Matthew 20: 2-16)

"Because we transcend all this knowledge by advancing through the loftiness of Holy Scripture, we find the reason why the numbers 7 and 10 are perfect ... For as the Truth relates, the labourers in the vineyard are rewarded by a denarius; and in a denary 3 are joined to 7. But man, who consists of body and soul, consists of 7 qualities, 3 spiritually and 4 bodily. For in three spiritual qualities we are commanded to love the Lord our God with all our mind, soul and strength. But man also consists of four bodily qualities, because he is composed of matter (the 4 elements). Man who therefore consists of seven qualities is rewarded by a denarius because, in that attainment of our heavenly country, our seven are joined to the Eternal Three in order that man may enjoy the contemplation of the Holy Trinity. Thus, by the reward of his work he may live as though made 'perfect' by a denarius ... But everyone who is perfect receives a denarius in this life when he unites these same 7 qualities to the virtues of Faith, Hope and Charity." (21)

Thus we are brought back to the wording of the inscription which the carver had placed between the tympanum and the lintel of Dinton parish church: "If anyone should despair of obtaining the REWARDS of his deserts, let him attend to these precepts and keep them in mind."



Plate 26 THE TYMPANUM OF ALL SAINTS CHURCH PITSFORD, NORTHANTS

The tympanum is framed by the circular rope of a fisherman's trawl net with 14 floats.

Photo: National Monuments Record



Plate 27 A DETAIL FROM THE PITSFORD TYMPANUM, NORTHANTS
Derived from POPE GREGORY THE GREAT'S *MORALIA IN JOB*

The figure of the Christ is shown with his back to the observer and his face in profile standing with both feet on the ground, as a mortal man, his wings discarded.

In his right hand he holds the traditional form of a butcher's knife, the handle of which is exactly half the length of the blade. To emphasise the force of the blow to be delivered the carver has shown the curved line of his spine beneath his quilted gambeson and the fabric is stretched backwards from the shoulder by the swing of the weapon in his right hand. The garment is open at the back from the waist downward, and its side panels fall over the short kilt worn beneath.

The girdle is a three-fold cord attached to the under-arm seam of the quilted gambeson and one end appears to have entered the jaws of Behemoth, as the Christ "binds his tongue with a cord". The stone surface has, however flaked at this point and the left hand of the battling Saviour within the mouth of the monster has been obliterated (compare with the capital letter for Psalm 69 in the St. Albans Psalter where Christ is shown holding the cord by which the monster is to be bound).

The two evil "birds of pride" are seen to be supporting the front legs of Behemoth who is thus raised high in the air in contradistinction to the humble stance upon the earth of the fighting Christ.

Note the large evil eye of Behemoth and the scales of pride along his neck and those of the evil birds.



Plate 28 DAVID RESCUES THE LAMB FROM THE LION'S MOUTH

Here David has discarded the protection of his cloak to overcome the lion with his bare hands. This symbolism is repeated in the discarded wings of the incarnate Christ who fights Behemoth on the Pitsford tympanum. David was traditionally seen as a type of Christ.

Psalter from Winchester, 11th century

British Library

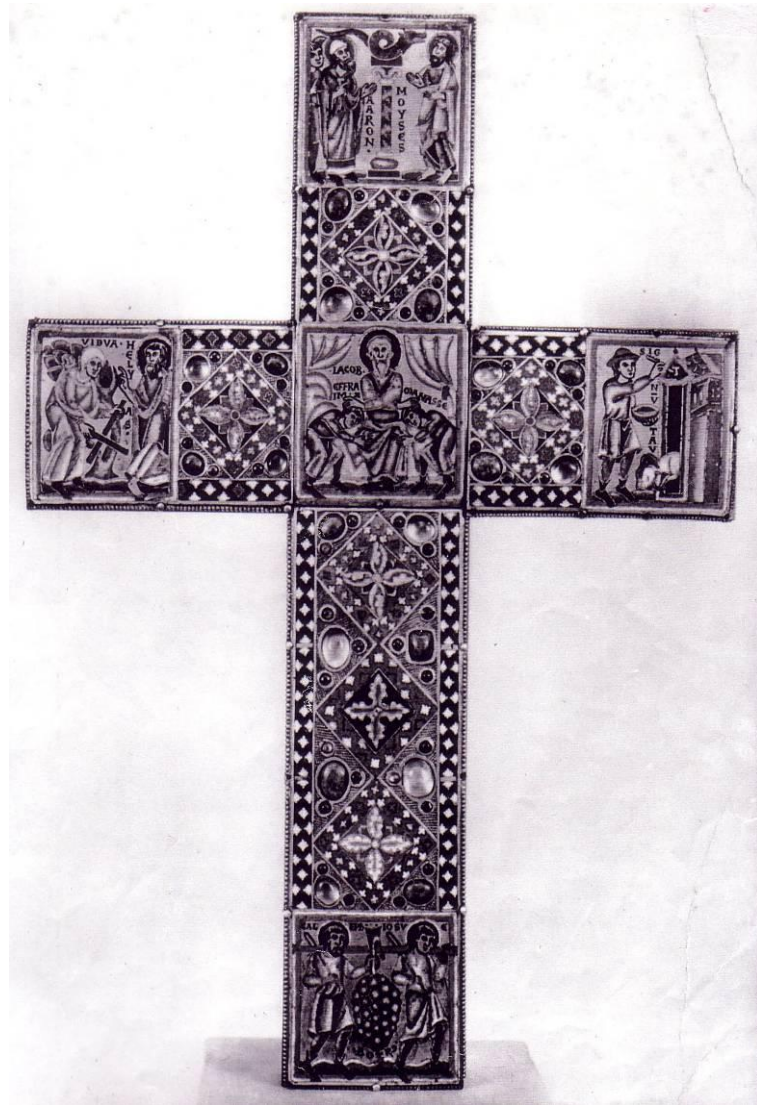


Plate 29 AN ENAMELLED CROSS ATTRIBUTED TO GODFROID DE CLAIRE, MADE IN THE VALLEY OF THE MEUSE IN THE SECOND HALF OF THE 12th CENTURY

A miniature Summa depicting incidents taken from the Old Testament which since the 3rd century AD had been regarded by churches as prophetic types of the Christian Cross. Such interpretations of Jewish scriptures as prophetic forecasts of the Crucifixion was a method of proselytisation developed by Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria and Origen and it persisted unchanged in the Liberal Arts up to the close of the 13th century.

Seen at the head of the Cross are Moses and Aaron with the Brazen Serpent and at the foot are depicted two men with the names Caleph and Josue (Joshua) carrying the fruits of the Promised Land. The left arm depicts the widow and Elijah (Helas = Elias = Elijah) and the right arm the TAU sign (Exodus 12:22). In the centre the seated Jacob is blessing Ephraim and Manasseh.

British Museum



Plate 30 A CAPITAL LETTER FOR PSALM 69

“Save me, O God, for the waters are come into my soul”

The Christ leans down from Heaven to rescue a man from the jaws of Leviathan. His left hand grasps the sinner's wrist and, at the same time, holds the cord by which the monster is to be bound.

The St. Albans Psalter, completed before 1123, now in the Cathedral Library of Hildesheim.

Warburg Institute



Plate 31 THE TYMPANUM OF THE NORTH DOOR OF THE CHURCH OF ST. JOHN AT BECKFORD, WORCESTERSHIRE

The Descent of Christ into Hades.

As on the Dinton lintel, Christ is shown stopping the mouth of Death with his Cross. With his left arm he holds the cord with which the Devil is to be bound as he liberates Adam (compare with Christ's girdle on the Pitsford tympanum). Hell's mouth has been damaged in the stone work. Christ may have had a cruciform halo.



**Plate 32 COMPARISON OF CARVINGS: THE DESCENT OF CHRIST
DINTON AND PITSFORD**

Compare the monster at Pitsford (above) with that at Dinton (below), "tails raised like a cedar."

Behind the monster on the Pitsford tympanum is the leafless Tree of Life.

Dinton shows the languid Life-Tree of the earthly-minded man.

The roots are exposed and swollen. The tempters, who hold the fruit of this tree in their mouths, are toothless (as at Moccas, Plate 18) because the man has not as yet succumbed to the temptation.



Plate 33 TRAWL FISHING with floats

An illustration of the same method of fresh water fishing occurs in Les Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry for the month of April .There the trawl net upheld by floats is dragged between two boats on a distant lake.

This photograph shows the rope supporting the net threaded through floats at close intervals. Compare with the carvings on the tympanum of Pitsford parish church.



The two clumsy pairs of feet of the confronting beasts on the Dinton tympanum (above) which grasp the roots of the central tree. Although this style is unusual it is very like that of the feet of the monster Behemoth on the Pitsford tympanum (below). Note the beading on the tail.



Plate 34 COMPARISON OF CARVING STYLES

CHAPTER 5

THE SOURCE AND CONTEXT OF THE DINTON INSCRIPTION

"If anyone should despair of obtaining the rewards of his deserts, let him attend to the precepts and keep them in mind."

This uncompromising exhortation, in the form of a rhyming Latin couplet, was carved in the last quarter of the twelfth century between the tympanum and lintel over the south door of Dinton parish church, Buckinghamshire and was clearly intended as a warning to the parishioners. The sculpture surrounding this portal is complete and has survived the vicissitudes of 800 years in a remarkably undamaged condition. It is commonly regarded as one of the finest examples of Anglo-Norman carving and design. (Plate 5 and Plate 6)

But what are the precepts to which its inscription refers? What place has despair in a gospel of hope and whose is that curiously laughing face that stares out at us all from the lintel ?. After a lapse of so many centuries, the meaning of this sculpture and the source of its associated inscription has been totally forgotten.

This book is the outcome of a treasure hunt which began in an attempt to solve the Dinton puzzle and, as in all treasure hunts, one good clue at the start opens the way for many more which must necessarily follow before the whole scheme comes to light. This clue lay in the discovery of the literary source and context of the Dinton inscription and its strange reference to despair for the couplet is a paraphrase of a sentence from the last chapter of the last of the thirty-five books that make up Pope Gregory the Great's Commentary on the Book of Job, a huge metaphorical work completed shortly before he sent the Roman mission to Canterbury in 597 for the conversion of the Anglo-Saxons.

The wording of the inscription, as it stands in isolation, seems deliberately ambiguous, for who among sinners deserving hell's fires would despair at their non-attainment? And who among the faithful and believing Christians could despair of the fulfilment of the divine promise of salvation, unless there was some other factor in the divine economy which was allowed to intervene? Clearly the designer of the Dinton tympanum intended to present the congregation with a riddle - for in twelfth century theology there was indeed an impeding factor all too likely to affect the most virile of laymen which would surely justify despair. Meanwhile, that laughing face carved on the lintel seems to stare out in recognition of a private joke.

The first clue in this strange treasure-hunt therefore pointed to the arguments used in the final chapter of Gregory the Great's commentary, the *Moralia in Job*, and so to the surviving inventories of twelfth century monastic libraries whose references stretched back in time to Plato's *Timaeus* written in the fourth century before Christ. The search led on to those silent, lovely places where little Norman churches are still standing enveloped in their trees. For it is there that traces of the ancient visual vernacular can still be found in fragmenting frescos, on sculptured voussoirs, on font bowls and tympana, in the ironwork of old oak doors and sometimes in graffiti scratched upon the walls.

This study took as its starting point the original literary source and context of the Dinton inscription, and the occasion for the choice of its extraordinary reference to despair. The findings are presented from the point of view of an historian, and must therefore be concerned with the social and educational background, and the beliefs which prompted the production of the carvings. Nevertheless it is in no sense intended as a religious apologia. Its purpose is to demonstrate the unique historical value of the evidence to be found in such ancient sculpture. From the literary source it is apparent that despair among the laity had a very real cause in the Church's traditional association of guilt with sexuality, and its condemnation of all physical pleasure, even in the marriage bed, as concupiscence. (1) At the time of the carving of this tympanum, despair was already manifesting itself in veiled rebellion, not only in the songs of a wandering Arch-Poet at Cologne, but also at the Courts of Love promoted by the daughters of Queen Eleanor of Aquitaine, wife of King Henry II of England. Attempts were being made to evade, if not actually to challenge, the Church's ruling in this matter.

Such an occurrence was not fortuitous, for the first half of the twelfth century was the period of greatest monastic expansion in England, and the ascetic ideal remained paramount throughout the Church. It found expression in the earliest known representation of the Coronation of the Virgin Mary, as Queen of Heaven and Mother of God, on a sculptured capital made for the royal Abbey of Reading in about 1130 (2). At the same period, she was venerated as Bride of Christ by Bernard, Abbot of Clairvaux, in the more than eighty sermons which he preached on the *Song of Songs* between 1135 and his death in 1153. But perhaps the most intimate insight into the psychological necessity for such adoration of the Virgin Mother is to be found in the *Prayers and Meditations of Anselm*, former Abbot of Bec, and Archbishop of Canterbury until his death in 1109. For Anselm repeatedly expressed his passionate devotion:

"O Woman, uniquely to be wondered at for your uniqueness ...
Have mercy, Lady, on the soul that pants after you in longing."

For reasons such as this the whole burden of sexual guilt was laid upon the shoulders of lovers, and of the married, who were traditionally regarded as the lowest in the spiritual hierarchy of the Church, since, as a consequence of Adam's fall, even procreation could not be achieved without sinful pleasure, Bede records the direction sent, before 605, by Gregory the Great, for the guidance of the newly- founded church in Canterbury:

"We do not condemn marriage in itself, but since lawful intercourse must be accompanied by bodily pleasure, it is fitting to refrain (afterwards) from entering a holy place, since desire itself is not blameless." (3)

The carving of the Dinton inscription may also have been prompted by the scandal concerning the burial of Fair Rosamund (Clifford), the beloved mistress of King Henry II, at Godstow Nunnery in 1176. The Abbess of Godstow held the advowson of Dinton parish church, and rumours of such events could not have failed to reach the ears of its parishioners at a distance of less than 20 miles.

It is customary for art historians today to concentrate their attention on evidence provided by stylistic studies and comparisons in order to establish how, when and where these ecclesiastical objects were produced. But the question *why?* is not always answerable by such means and to that extent the field remains insufficiently surveyed. This chapter, therefore, seeks to extend this field by considering not only the literary sources most commonly available at that time to the sculptors and designers in the monastic and cathedral workshops but also the sociological factors that were most likely to have been affected by that form of the Alexandrian theological system which was then still current; for it was not until the close of the twelfth century that its associated Ransom Theory was finally superseded and abandoned.

By means of this approach it is now possible to identify the literary source of the Dinton inscription with its strange reference to despair together with the context from which it was chosen and the reason for its choice. But its occasion may also be attributed to events taking place at the time of the production of these carvings in the last quarter of the twelfth century at Godstow Abbey, some twenty miles distant as the crow flies to the west. Godstow Abbey had been founded during the last years of the reign of King Henry I by a certain Dame Ediva, with the assistance of the King. Its dedication in the year 1139 took place in the presence of the Archbishop of Canterbury and the bishops of Lincoln, Salisbury, Exeter and Worcester, with endowments also from King Stephen, his Queen and many of the leading nobles. For the foundation of Godstow was specifically for ladies of high birth, the widows and daughters of the nobility. Thus, about the year 1180, the new abbey received a handsome gift of lands in Frampton and Pauntley, Gloucestershire from Robert Clifford, whose wife and whose daughter, "the Fair Rosamund", were buried at Godstow.

Rosamund Clifford had been the beloved mistress of King Henry II, and according to Giraldus Cambrensis she lived in open adultery with him after he had imprisoned his wife, Eleanor of Aquitaine. Rosamund died at Woodstock in 1176, and Roger de Hoveden reported that for love of her the King conferred many benefactions on the convent. Indeed a pipe roll of Michaelmas 1176 shows that the King sent building materials from Gloucestershire and as patron of the Abbey he enriched it further with advowsons of the churches of Wycombe and Bloxham. Although there is no evidence that Rosamund took the veil at Godstow, it was not unusual for the mistresses of kings to be buried in such precincts. In her case, the tomb was placed before the high altar in the chancel and the nuns of Godstow elevated it into something of a shrine, with silken hangings and with lamps and tapers burning. While the King still lived nothing could be done to show the disapproval of the Church, but two years after his death in 1189 the Bishop of Lincoln made an official visitation to the Abbey of Godstow and ordered the immediate removal of the body of Fair Rosamund from the church. It was probably also he who devised the macabre pun that was subsequently carved upon her tombstone as a perpetual warning to the nuns:

"Hic jacet in tumulo Rosa mundi non Rosa munda
non redolet set olet quae redolere solet."

"Here in the tomb lies Rose of the world, not Rose unsullied,
She is not fragrant but stinks."

So Rosamund's body was exhumed and re-buried in the Chapter House. In 1436 when John Brompton, Abbot of Jervaulx, visited Godstow he wrote a description of the tomb and its inscription; according to Leyland the grave was opened at the Reformation and its stone was broken up. Its inscribed couplet that was so harshly intended to rebuke the nuns, may be compared with a similar warning in the *Ancren Riwle*. (4) This is thought to have been written by Richard Poore who was successively Bishop of Chichester, Salisbury and Durham, for the guidance of three young anchoresses enclosed for life in their cell at Tarrant on the River Stour, Dorset; for although he loved them as a father, yet he warned them that, "Our Lord, by Isaiah, threatened with the stench of hell those who delight in carnal perfumes." It was to Tarrant, his birthplace, that Richard Poore returned to end his days in 1237.

The repercussions of the shocking events at Godstow cannot fail to have reached the parishioners of Dinton, for the advowson of their church was already held by the Abbess of Godstow. It is therefore possible that the choice of the literary source which supplied the Dinton inscription erected at this time over the laymen's entrance into the nave was dictated by the need to counteract the effects of this scandal. Indeed, as its context in Pope Gregory's *Moralia in Job* clearly

shows, its message was addressed primarily to women, with the assurance that although holy virginity was indeed the highest form of the good life, those who had not attained it need not despair. For, by putting aside the desires of the flesh, they might still become fit to meet the heavenly bridegroom.

The Dinton inscription was presented in the form of a rhyming Latin couplet:

+PREMIA PRO MERITIS SI Q(U)IS DESP(ER)ET HABENDA
AUDIAT HIC (or HINC) PRAEC(E)PTA SIBI QUAE
SI(NT) RETINENDA+

(If anyone should despair of obtaining the rewards of his deserts let him attend to these precepts and keep them in mind.)

This exhortation echoes a passage selected from the last of the 35 books that go to make up Gregory's *Moralia in Job*.

NULLUS INFIRMITATIS SUAE CONSCIUS DE SORTIENDA COELESTIS
PATRIMONII HAEREDITATE DESPERET

(Let no-one who is conscious of his weakness despair of obtaining the inheritance of his heavenly patrimony.) (5)

It will be seen that the associated chapters in the *Moralia* can explain exactly the references to the rewards, the deserts, the precepts and the despair in the inscription.

Pope Gregory the Great completed his famous commentary on the Book of Job shortly before he sent the Roman mission to Canterbury in the year 596 and copies of it were produced and widely distributed in England, for it was quoted by Bede (672-735) and by Cynewulf in his Anglo-Saxon poem, *Christ in Northumbria* in the eighth century. Before the twelfth century Gregory's *Moralia in Job* had become the most popular single book in all monastic libraries, and despite its enormous length, it was often held in duplicate. But the context in Gregory's *Moralia* from which the Dinton inscription and two other related passages were taken provided a didactic basis for the entire sculptural scheme on the tympana of the parish churches at Dinton, Buckinghamshire (Plate 5) and at Pitsford, Northamptonshire (Plate 26), in terms of that peculiar doctrinal explanation known as the Ransom Theory, then still current from the old Alexandrian theological system throughout the Latin west.

THE RANSOM THEORY was one of two very early attempts by churchmen to explain the reason why God became incarnate in a man and it continued in currency as an alternative to the idea of Atonement until the close of the twelfth century. But the theory of the Ransom contained references to Behemoth and Leviathan as the twin images of lust and death, and also referred to the mocking

laughter of God at His own deception of the Devil. This theme was reproduced in the figure of the winged and laughing Christ who confronts Leviathan on the lintel below the Dinton inscription (Plate 6). At the same time, Pope Gregory's description of the life of the carnally-minded man as the flaccid growth of a tree beset by bestial temptations was also pictured on the tympanum above (Plate 5) with an accurate repetition of all its symbolic details.

The reference to despair in the inscription is even more remarkable for it carried a strange ambiguity and was clearly intended as a topical allusion to a state of affairs that was currently affecting the lives of laymen and women. This was foreshadowed in the same literary context by Pope Gregory's citation of the former disregard for women in very ancient times, whereby they were altogether excluded from a share in the patrimony allotted to their brethren. Nevertheless, Gregory had followed this up with an assurance that, "in the equal life of blessedness hereafter, each will obtain a different place, according to his deserts." In this context the ambiguity of the Dinton inscription becomes obvious, since if one's deserts were hell's fires, no-one would despair at their non-attainment; while if the promised heavenly rewards had been merited by trust in God and by long and faithful endeavour, only some form of predestination could prevent their just attainment. The answer to this puzzle will however appear when we consider the debased position allotted to married couples within the hierarchical order of merit in the ecclesiastical society of the twelfth century. For in the penultimate verse of the last chapter of the Book of Job it is written:

In all the land there were found no women so fair as the daughters of Job.
And their father gave them their inheritance among their brethren.
Book of Job 42: 15

It was in Gregory's final comment upon this passage that we now discover the context of the sentences which, when transposed as a rhyming couplet, appears to have provided the carver with his inscription beneath the Dinton tympanum. But his selection of this sentence out of thousands of alternatives is in itself significant and points to a contemporary problem which in the twelfth century was indeed disturbing the laymen and women in every congregation. It must therefore be considered within the context from which it was taken:

"Because of the merit of perfection they (the daughters) are said to be beautiful, but as a type of the imperfect they also receive, as if they were weak, an inheritance among their brethren.

For the practice of life in former times permitted no females to obtain inheritance among the males because of the Law selecting the strong and despising the weak which studied to sanction that which was strict rather than that which was merciful.

But at the coming of our gracious Redeemer let no-one who is conscious of his weakness despair of obtaining the inheritance of his heavenly patrimony. For our Father has granted to women also the right of succession among the males; because among the strong and the perfect He also admits the weak and the humble to the lot of the heavenly inheritance ... Whence the Truth itself says in the Gospel, "In my Father's house are many mansions." For there are in truth many mansions with the Father because in that equal life of blessedness each one obtains a different place according to his different deserts. But he feels not the losses of this disparity because that which he received is sufficient for him. Sisters therefore, can come to an inheritance with their brethren because the weak are admitted with the strong in such wise that if anyone through imperfection shall not be the highest, he may not through humility be shut out from his inheritance."

Gregory's Moralia in Job Book 35: 46

The cause of this 'imperfection' was, however, quite arbitrarily assigned to the married state because of the sin of concupiscence associated with it. But the passage immediately preceding this extract gives Gregory's interpretation of the names of the three daughters of Job, as Dies (the Light of Innocent Day), Casia (the Sweet Odour of Sanctity) and Cornu Stibii, (the Song of them that Rejoice). And it is here that we find the specific reference to the 'third condition' of the human race - that is, the married - and their need to transcend "the filthy habits of human intercourse" in order to meet the love of the heavenly Bridegroom.

"For holy souls which had been brought forth by the ancient Fathers to the knowledge of the truth delight their Redeemer in His honour because they claim nothing to their own credit of all that they do well. But, because the human race in its third condition when new-fashioned for the resurrection of the flesh is engaged in that concert of eternal praise the third daughter is called Cornu Stibii, expressing the song of them that rejoice ... It is there truly fulfilled where the song of praise to God will no longer be sung by faith but in contemplation of His Person ... who made the human race by "Dies" by creating it, "Casia" by redeeming it, and "Cornu Stibii" by taking it to Himself ... But before the Bridegroom comes to the marriage chamber she casts off from herself all filthiness of life and preparing herself for the love of the Bridegroom adorns and arrays herself with beautifying virtues. For she studies to approve herself to the inward Judge and, from being exalted in her innermost desires, to transcend the filthy habits of human intercourse. Whence it is also well subjoined that,

'In all the lands were no women found as fair as the daughters of Job.'

From all this it is clear that the cause of the despair among laymen and women in the twelfth century lay in the persistent assumption by churchmen that guilt must be associated with sexual love, and that even between married lovers it could be described in such outrageous terms. Here we meet at last the laymen's reaction to the current fervour for the ascetic ideal, and the Church's evaluation of the married state, which at that time had sunk precariously low. (Plate 35)

For in the twelfth century it had long been the custom to evaluate the three conditions of life within Christian society according to the relative degrees of their asceticism. This distinction was already current when Augustine, as Bishop of Hippo, wrote his *City of God* between 413 and 426, for he explained that it was associated with Christ's parable of the Sower (6) in which the harvest yielded some thirty, some sixty and some an hundred-fold reward in the fruits of the Spirit, according to the relative degrees of asceticism in the lives of those who received the message of the Gospel. Augustine's interpretation of the parable was later illustrated in the stained-glass windows erected in Canterbury Cathedral in about the year 1200, where the three degrees of laymen are depicted with identifying descriptions, as "Virgo", "Continens" and "Conjugatus" with a Latin superscription to explain their connection with the parable of the Sower. This may be translated as "Three seeds when leavened produce three fruits, for the espoused, the virgin and the widowed."

But although Augustine concluded that continence was to be set before marriage and holy virginity before widowed continence he "did not condemn marriage by over-praising the higher good."

Augustine's moderation was not unfortunately shared by his contemporary Jerome, (345-419), who justified his own misogamy by a reference to St. Paul's famous statement that "It is better to marry than to burn" upon which Jerome acidly remarked, in his controversy against Jovinian:

"... The reason why it is better to marry is that it is worse to burn. Let burning lust be absent and Paul will not say it is better to marry. I suspect the goodness of that which is forced into the position of the lesser of two evils ... If the wisdom of the flesh is enmity towards God, and they that are in the flesh cannot please God, I think that they who perform the functions of marriage do love the wisdom of the flesh. But Paul said, 'Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, neither can corruption put on incorruption'. If corruption attaches to all intercourse the rewards of chastity cannot belong to marriage ... "

For in Jerome's account of marriage lust was the only incentive and there was no mention of loving care. It was a state of misery, compounded of crying babies, domestic losses, cosmetics, financial troubles, abortions, dead children and above all loomed the awful sinfulness of pleasure in the marriage bed. But as for the monk Jovinian, he was excommunicated by Pope Siricius in 394 for affirming that widows, married persons and holy virgins who preserved their baptismal vows were of equal merit and might be equally rewarded.

But the authoritative position ascribed to Jerome, as one of the four great Latin Fathers of the Church, ensured not only that his misogynous opinions should continue to be quoted but that a copy of his *Contra Jovinian* should find a place in almost every monastic library of the twelfth century. Nevertheless, in fairness to Jerome, we must remember that he had derived a great deal of his anti-feminist

material from the writings of the neo-Platonist Porphyry and others which he used without acknowledgement in his address to Jovinian.

The simile of the three floors of the Ark was also persistently employed in support of the three conditions of laymen, for holy virgins were placed exclusively on the top deck, chaste widows amidships, and the married on the third and lowest deck. Authority for this was found in Augustine's *City of God* 15 : 26) which was repeated in the Anglo-Saxon homilies of Aelfric, Abbot of Eynsham, written between 990 and 992; while Hugh of Saint Victor (1096-1141) wrote two treatises on the Ark of Noah, describing the passengers upon its decks in much the same terms but adding that

"to the storey that adjoined the bottom was consigned the animals dung, which is a fit figure for the life of carnal persons; since what but rotteness do they produce who serve the longings of the flesh?" (Plate 36)

Nevertheless, the scholar most affected by Jerome's opinion was John of Salisbury, born at Old Sarum in 1110, who after a long life of wide travel and experience, died as Bishop of Chartres in 1180. His *Policraticus* appears to have been written mostly at Canterbury between the years 1159 - 60 and in this work he quoted Jerome's statements with evident approval:

"All lustful pleasure is vile, with the exception of that which is excused by the bond of matrimony. This, thanks to the licence granted to it, covers any shame that may inhere in it ... However honourable and useful marital union may be it is more fecund of worry than of joy. For example it begets children in pain nor does it produce any fruit which bitterness does not precede or follow...

Not that I would at all deprecate conjugal chastity, but I am not at all inclined to think that the fruit of the 100th part or the 60th part should be united with that of the 30th ..."

The blessed Jerome writes that all Euripides' tragedies are made up of abuses of women; and he says that Epicurus - although he had a wife, Leontium - says that the Sage would rarely risk matrimony since much inconvenience is inherent in marriage.

"If therefore the vexations of marriage are so great (although the state is undoubtedly a good one, as it was instituted by the Lord) - that the Sage fears it - who except one bereft of his senses would approve sensual pleasure itself which is illicit, wallows in filthiness and is something that men censure and that God without doubt condemns? For since the two forms of carnal delight, gluttony and carnal love, are characteristic of beasts, one seems to possess the filth of swine and the other the stench of goats ..." (7)

Jerome's opinions were clearly echoed also from the cloister of Saint Victor in Hugh's further statement that "Those who are now begotten in concupiscence take corruption as it were from the very vice of their root" and in his *De Vanitate Mundi* he

listed the miseries of marriage of which, as an Augustinian canon regular, he had no experience whatsoever.

"If those who are getting married would remember this", he wrote, "they would understand that the married state gives more cause for tears than for laughter. But for the moment a little bit of lust is dangled before them, so they that may be caught in the ruthless inevitability of trouble and sorrow ..." (Book 1: 4)

Nevertheless Pope Gregory's comments upon a passage from Ecclesiasticus 42:14, in his *Moralia in Job*, were familiar in the twelfth century through the persistent popularity of his work; for he wrote:

"In Sacred writ 'Woman' is taken for sex, or else for frailty, as when it is written, 'Better the wickedness of a man than the goodness of a woman'. For man is a term for every strong-minded and discreet person; but 'Woman' is understood to be the weak and indiscreet mind. Therefore it can rightly be said, 'Better the wickedness of a man than a woman doing well'." (Book 11, para. 65)

This denigration had however been preceded by Augustine's explanation of the Fall of mankind, from the same passage in Ecclesiasticus, for in his *City of God* he referred to:

"... Woman in whom sin began, for which we are all death's slaves, and which was committed that disobedience unto the Spirit and carnal desires might take place in us ..." (Book 15 : 20)

As a consequence of this teaching it became customary in the twelfth century for married couples to part in middle life, entering separately into religious orders for the rest of their days, and Abelard recorded that his parents had followed this practice. Thus the guilt associated with sex cast a long shadow upon the natural woman through the unique illumination reserved for the figure of the ever-virgin Mother of God; and this denigration reached such a pitch in the twelfth century that, at the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215, Pope Innocent III was forced to intervene, with a rider to its Profession of Faith that should not have been necessary:

"Not only holy virgins and the continent but also married persons deserve by right of faith and good works pleasing to God to come to everlasting blessedness ..." (8)

When the sculptures were erected at Dinton the troubadours of Provence and the Breton jongleurs had already sung of the adulterous loves of courtly knights for fair amorous ladies. At the itinerant court of King Henry II (1154-1189), Marie de France was likewise writing her *Lais on Courtly Themes* and dedicating them to her princely relatives. (9)

But the Church had the last word: "Go forth, O Christian soul", and above the portals of some of the great new cathedrals rising at that time there was placed a tall stone angel with a balance in his hand for the weighing of souls lest any should be found at the last to be wanting. For this reason there was occasion for despair among those married lovers who, according to the tenets of their faith, persisted up to their eyes in sinful pleasure; and the reading of Aelfric's homily for Sexagesima Sunday could have left no doubt at all about it.

"Believing laymen who live in lawful wedlock yield thirty-fold in the fruits of good works if they keep their marriage according to the written institutes - they that co-habit for the procreation of children at permitted times and when they no longer procreate they cease from co-habitation. This is the rule for laymen according to the written institutes." (10)

Thus we are brought back again to the inscription carved above the laymen's entrance into the parish church of Dinton, Buckinghamshire:

"IF ANYONE SHOULD DESPAIR OF OBTAINING THE REWARDS OF HIS DESERTS, LET HIM PAY ATTENTION TO THE PRECEPTS AND KEEP THEM IN MIND ..."

Meanwhile, at Poitiers the new and revolutionary movement of Courtly Love had already come into full flower under the patronage of the rebellious wife of King Henry II, Eleanor of Aquitaine. It was a movement which implicitly challenged the tenets of the church, for the practice of Courtoisie in the Art of Love and the service of the lady stood in direct opposition to the elevation of the Virgin Mother of God.

At this point a remarkable manual entitled *De Amore* was produced by Andreas Capellanus who described himself as "Lover and Chaplain to the Royal Court." It was allegedly written for Walter, "a young recruit to love", who had apparently suffered from his first encounter and did not yet know how to manage his horses. "But I know, clearer than day", wrote Andreas, "that after you have learned the art of love your progress in it will be more cautious." By turns satirical and extremely amusing, this extraordinary little book betrays a strange ambiguity for although he gives the twelve rules of Courtly love, and describes the transports of lovers, Andreas equates Amore with Amus, a hook, by which the unwary are deceived and caught. Indeed, though this lively author clearly intends to present the conditions at Queen Eleanor's Court between 1170 and 1174, he does not hesitate to describe his own impetuous seduction of a nun, admitting that thereby he came perilously near Hell's fire. Thus, as he says, he presents two points of view, a double lesson; for while the courtesy of the Lady inspires her knight to greater deeds of Chivalry, yet the face of the evil Venus accompanies the fulfilment of desire. Thus what appears to be fatherly advice to a young lover is actually an assurance by Andreas that he will come to bad end. For, as Bernard Silvestris of Tours pointed out in his

own *Cosmographia*, the evil Venus represents man's fallen nature so that matter itself and all material pleasures have been corrupted and must await Redemption through the love of God.

Although the *De Amore* of Andreas Capellanus presented what appeared to be an ambiguous approach to the subject of human passion, there is no ambiguity whatsoever in the defiant proclamation of the Arch-Poet who died in 1165. The protest of this nameless lover was addressed to the ecclesiastical hierarchy in a long poem of twenty verses, written at Pavia, in the heyday of his youth. And Helen Waddell, who translated it, tells us that he had enjoyed the patronage of Reginald von Dassel, Archbishop of Cologne. But eventually, having scandalised his patron beyond the limit of forbearance, he found a haven in the infirmary of St. Martin at Cologne, where he died in 1165.

Extracts from **THE CONFESSIONS OF THE ARCHPOET**

Seething over inwardly
With fierce indignation,
In my bitterness of soul,
Hear my declaration.
I am of one element,
Levity my matter,
Like enough a withered leaf
For the winds to scatter.

Never yet could I endure
Soberness and sadness,
Jests I love, and sweeter than
Honey find I gladness.
Whatsoever Venus bids,
Is a joy excelling,
Never in an evil heart
Did she make her dwelling.

Down the broad way do I go,
Young and unregretting,
Wrap me in my vices up,
Virtue all forgetting.
Greedier for all delight
Than heaven to enter in:
If the soul in me is dead,
Better save the skin ...

Pardon, pray you good, my lord,
Master of discretion
But this death I die is sweet
Most delicious poison.
Wounded to the quick am I
By a young girl's beauty:
She's beyond my touching? Well
Can't the mind do duty?

Hard beyond all hardness, this
Mastering of Nature:
Who shall say his heart is clean,
Near so fair a creature?
Young are we, so hard a law,
How should we obey it?
And our bodies, they are young,
Shall they have no say in't?

Look again upon your list.
Is the tavern on it?
Yea, and never have I scorned
Never shall I scorn it,
Till the holy angels come,
And my eyes discern them,
Singing for the dying soul
Requiem aeternam ... (11)

There is also a translation of an anonymous poem of about the same date which recalls a lover's grief and reading it we may remember Fair Rosamund in her grave at Godstow and the royal lover who mourned for her there.

A LATIN LYRIC FROM ABOUT 1200

Herself hath given back my life to me,
Herself hath yielded far
More than had ever hoped my misery.
And when she recklessly
Gave herself wholly unto Love and me
Beauty in heaven afar
Laughed from her joyous star.

Too great desire hath overwhelmed me,
My heart's not great enough
For this huge joy that overmastered me,
What time my love
Made in her arms another man of me,
And all the gathered honey of her lips
Drained in one yielded kiss.

Again, again, I dream the freedom given
Of her soft breast,
And so am come, another god to heaven
Among the rest.
Yea and serene would govern gods and men,
If I might find again
My hand upon her breast. (12)

Translations by Helen Waddell



Plate 35 MEDIEVAL VIEW OF SEX

The couple in bed are being seized by a devil.

British Library -



Plate 36 NOAH'S ARK

From a wall painting in the church of Saint-Savin sur Gartempe (Vienne), France
Late 11th century or early 12th century.

According to AUGUSTINE'S *City of God* , holy virgins were placed upon the top deck, chaste widows amidships and the married on the third and lowest deck. Hugh of Saint-Victor added that "to the storey that adjoined the bottom deck was consigned the animals' dung, which is fit figure for the life of carnal persons; since what but rottenness do they produce who serve the longings of the flesh?"

CHAPTER 6

THE FONT FROM HAMPSTEAD NORREYS AND THE CIRCUMSTANCES IN WHICH IT WAS CARVED

(Plate 44, Plate 45 and Plate 63). In the year 1767 a twelfth century limestone font was discarded from the ancient church of its origin, that of St. Mary the Virgin, at Hampstead Norreys in Berkshire, and dumped in the churchyard. Indeed, so distasteful had its carvings become to the elegant eighteenth century parishioners that a previous attempt had been made to obliterate them by the application of a thick coating of plaster composition, not easily removed. During the next eighty years, the heavy old bowl lay neglected and misused, first as a water trough, and later as a garden ornament, until it was recovered by a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries. Through him it was finally presented to the Vicar of the parish church at Stone, Buckinghamshire, to replace an equally ancient font which had there suffered a totally destructive fate. (1)

The architects in charge of the restoration of the church at Stone were delighted with this acquisition, for there too - as they reported - "the misdirected zeal of the parishioners, added to the barbaric cleansings by an ignorant set of men, most extraordinarily called Churchwardens, had almost completed the destruction of what the iconoclasts had spared." (2)

Thus the battered old font was repaired for use once more and erected upon a new base after the thick coating of plaster had with great difficulty been scraped away to reveal a strange scene of two naked men and two monsters on one section of the bowl.

These carvings at once excited great interest for no one could ascribe to them any sort of Christian reference and they appeared to have no parallel. In consequence of this Mr Colley March soon afterwards sought their explanation in pagan Norse mythology and his example was later followed by Mrs Ettlinger with another pagan myth. (3) It is unfortunate that no exact record of the repair of the font bowl has been left to us except a statement by the architect in charge of the church that it was carried out with difficulty at the hands of an excellent workman and that the whole had been accurately restored. By 1846 the work was completed and a very inaccurate panoramic drawing of the whole sequence of the font carvings was presented to the Vicar by the architects concerned, Messrs. Ancona and Bagster of London. The drawing is now in the Bodleian library, Oxford. Thereafter the subject-matter of the font's carvings remained a tantalising puzzle. It was later remarked that although the upper rim remained true, a lower section of the bowl was distorted, and that because of the strangeness of their style, some of the human masks might have been re-cut. Moreover, there was a very marked

divergence amounting almost to a dichotomy in the design between the new-found historiated sculpture and the geometric decoration surrounding the rest of the bowl. Without more ado, it was generally assumed that only the historiated section was worthy of study, while the remainder of the carving could be disregarded as irrelevant or of a later date. Thus a very important piece of evidence common to both sections was entirely overlooked. Moreover no consideration was given to the known time, place and circumstance of the font's origin. It was therefore on totally insufficient grounds that its explanation in terms of pagan Norse mythology was published, despite the general consensus of opinion which ascribed its date to the middle years of the twelfth century. (4)

As a necessary preliminary to any further study, therefore, an independent examination of the whole fabric of the font bowl was requested by the present writer from the very experienced professional sculptor, Mr Alan Collins ARCA, ARBS in order to establish, if possible, the nature and extent of its repairs and the probable order of the working of the drum. From his findings, Mr Collins concluded that the whole sequence of the carvings which surround the bowl was the product of one initially planned design which cannot have been subsequently altered by restoration or re-cutting (Appendix 1). From such conclusions it was evident that any further study of the font from Hampstead Norreys must begin with the known historical circumstances operating at the time and place of its origin.

The first recorded facts concerning the church at Hampstead Norreys show that a Saxon church and a priest appointed by a prebend already existed there in the reign of Edward the Confessor and that at the time of the Domesday survey the church was still similarly served. But before the death of King Henry I in 1135 the rectory and the advowson were presented as a gift to the new priory at Goring, only five miles distant on the Thames, and the donor was William de Siffrewast. Now Goring priory was a convent for Augustinian canonesses and its founder, Thomas Druval, endowed it with a sufficiency of lands, rents and other sources of income which were supplemented by gifts from various landowners. The original charter, now lost, was granted by Henry I, probably about 1130, but all its endowments were confirmed in a surviving document granted by Henry II. Such a foundation at that time was something of an innovation in England, and the priory at Goring was among the first five communities for Augustinian canonesses to be established in the country. (5) The Rule which they followed was attributed to St. Augustine of Hippo and enjoined beside the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, the duty of study. This suggests that the canonesses were literate; and indeed it has been estimated that a much greater proportion of English women could read Latin between the years 1150-1250 than at any time in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. (6)

But the gift of the advowson of the church at Hampstead Norreys carried with it very definite obligations for the Prioress of Goring and these had already been defined in clause fifteen of the enactments of the Synod held at Lillebonne on the Sèine in the presence of William the Conqueror. A full report of these

enactments has been left for us by the English-born monastic chronicler, Ordericus Vitalis. (7) In cases where churches had been granted to monks or canons, the abbot - in this case the Prioress - must select a qualified priest and present him to the bishop for institution. She must also be responsible for the provision of books, vestments and all things necessary for the proper ordering of the services. Provision must also be made for the priest-in-charge to live in sufficient comfort for the execution of his duties. The Prioress of Goring, as holder of this advowson, was therefore obliged to keep in touch with the needs of the church at Hampstead Norreys which lay within walking distance of her own convent. We also know, from the surviving portions of its Norman architecture, that the rebuilding of this church had already begun and from its stylistic evidence we may safely conclude that the font bowl was made at about the same time, probably between 1140-1150. But if the obligation to supply a font devolved upon the Prioress, how was she to meet it? Presumably she would turn to the nearest mason's yard or workshop where she might hope to obtain the services of a monastic sculptor and perhaps a suitable design to illustrate, in the current terms, the Church's traditional teaching concerning Baptism. But the nearest mason's yard at that time was one of more than local significance, for it belonged to the most important foundation of the century, Reading Abbey, which was then in building, only eight miles distant on the Thames.

If indeed the Prioress did seek the help of the Abbot of Reading for the provision of a new font for the church of Hampstead Norreys she certainly had precedents for doing so. For her contemporary, Christina, anchoress of Markyate, received much friendly help from the Abbot of St. Albans in the provision of new buildings for her small community, and Christina herself recorded the occasions when the abbot and his attendants rode over to visit her. A magnificent illuminated psalter was also provided for her use from the scriptorium at St. Albans. (8) Such suppositions concerning the Prioress of Goring would of course be futile were it not for the fact that in two instances unusual details in the carving show a remarkably close stylistic correspondence with motifs occurring on a capital and a voussoir from the ruins of Reading Abbey.

A significant figure in the shaping of the intellectual climate of Reading Abbey was its founding abbot, Hugh of Boves, and it is probably a reflection of the influence of his own theological training which we shall find in the choice of subjects that were carved upon the font for Hampstead Norreys.

It was in 1123 that Hugh of Boves, formerly prior of the first English Cluniac foundation at Lewes, was appointed by King Henry I as founding Abbot of Reading and five years later he was elevated to the archbishopric of Rouen. He seems to have had an affectionate regard for the King, his patron (9) and to have supported his daughter, Matilda the Empress when, in her later years, she retired to a life of pious works at Rouen; for the connections of King Henry I and his family with the abbey of Cluny were very close. As abbot, he laid the foundation of the Cluny

observances at Reading Abbey and strangely enough the year of his death coincided with that in which at long last its great monastic church was dedicated in 1164.

Abbot Hugh had received his monastic education in the great mother house of the Cluniac order, and his later training as a theologian under that "Master of Masters", Anselm of Laon. When, therefore, he was appointed to govern the new Reading community the nature of his theological training at Laon cannot have failed to make itself felt; for among his contemporaries his reputation as a theologian was high. (10)

And since there is good reason to think that the elaborate sequence of carvings on the Hampstead Norreys font was the meaningful product of Reading's monastic workshop, these facts will have considerable significance for our understanding of their subjects. For it was from the school of theological studies at Laon that the first impulse towards a systematisation of theology derived. Up to this time Patristic studies had, for the most part, consisted of unrelated commentaries and random anthologies. But, following the lead given at Laon, systematic summaries of dogma were now being widely developed by the masters of the monastic and cathedral schools, which in the third and fourth decades of the twelfth century resulted in the production of a new literary genre, the *Summae Sententiarum*.

But the earliest and most lucid of all these summaries of Christian doctrine was that produced shortly before the death of King Henry Beauclerc, about the year 1134. It was written by one of the Augustinian canons regular, Master Hugh of Saint Victor (1096-1141) as the outcome of his lectures in the monastic school of Saint-Victor, on the south bank of the Sèine outside Paris. Its title was *De Sacramentis Christianae Fidei*. This remarkable work gave a clear and orderly account of the accepted doctrines of the Christian faith, beginning with a statement and a definition, namely:

"There are two works of God, under which all things may be subsumed; these are the Work of Creation (or Foundation), and the Work of Restoration (or Salvation)."

And since Hugh of Saint-Victor's statement appears to have been taken as the basis for the designs upon the Hampstead Norreys font, this reference should not be forgotten.

In view of the widespread enthusiasm for such systematisation, Hugh of Saint-Victor's *Summa* and other writings, and those of the Englishman, Robert of Melun, were widely influential, paving the way for the most popular of all the works of this class, the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard (d. 1160). It would have been surprising if such literary activities had not been reflected in the visual arts; and indeed the trend towards a comprehensive theological exposition is revealed in the panoramic visions of Creation and Salvation being carved on the great western

portals of the cathedrals and monastic churches in France, at Chartres, Saint-Denis and Vézelay, for example.

At the same time, the great "In Principio" illuminated pages of many magnificent contemporary Bibles reveal the same summarisation of the Works of Creation and Restoration. (11)

It is clear from the contents of the earliest library list from Reading Abbey that the new form of Summa was of great interest to the community who kept three copies of Hugh's *De Sacramentis Christianae Fidei* at Reading and another in the library of their house at Leominster, beside the *Liber Sententiarum* of Robert de Melun, several volumes of Peter Lombard's *Sentences*, and other works of this kind.

It has not, however, before been recognised that the carved sequence on the font at Hampstead Norreys is likewise an epitomised form of summa, which illustrates in the pictorial forms then current, the two essential Works of God, as defined by Hugh of Saint-Victor - the Works of Foundation and Restoration.

Since this will be discussed fully in Chapter 7, it is here only necessary to understand how such a presentation was related to the circumstances of the time and place of the font's manufacture - and to the general trends of twelfth century studies, which began at the theological school of Anselm of Laon.

King Henry's appointment of Hugh of Boves as founding Abbot of Reading was not fortuitous for Hugh had previously ruled the first Cluniac monastery in England which had been established at Lewes in 1077. The family and descendants of William the Conqueror had already proved to be the greatest consistent benefactors of the Order of Cluny in Europe. King Henry Beauclerc, the Conqueror's youngest son, exceeded them all, however, in the magnitude of his gifts and endowments to Cluny, so that it was through his extraordinary benefactions that the vast basilica of the mother house of Cluny, begun by King Alfonso of Castile, was brought to completion. The ninth and greatest of the abbots of Cluny, Peter the Venerable, was elected in 1122, the year before Henry Beauclerc founded Reading Abbey. Under this saintly statesman - abbot, Cluny reached a height of glory that was never repeated. In its basilica the 200 priors of its daughter houses from all parts of Europe assembled with 1,212 of their monks for the General Chapter, which in 1132 simplified the current elaboration of its activities in a reforming movement towards a closer observance of the monastic Rule. Since all the priors of Cluny's daughter houses, from England, Spain, France, Italy and Germany were annually recalled for the General Chapters, the very high standard of cultural, spiritual and intellectual life under Peter the Venerable would have been felt at Reading Abbey also and this may have encouraged the monastic carvers of Reading to place the figures of Enoch and Elijah as exemplars of the Ascension and the Assumption on one of their capitals (Appendix 3). By such intercommunications between people and places we see how it came about that a

font bowl, carved under these auspices, could carry the expression of a Summa of doctrine as it was described in Hugh's *De Sacramentis*.

The content of the monastic library is of obvious importance in any consideration of the environmental influences affecting the choice of subjects available to the carvers of Reading Abbey workshops. The earliest surviving booklist was written in a volume containing 315 of the early charters of Reading Abbey up to the beginning of the thirteenth century and contains the titles of books in use from the foundation of the abbey in 1123 up to that date together with a list of the vestments and relics in use during that period. (12) The survival of this invaluable volume is due to the fact that it had been hidden, presumably by one of the last 35 monks at the time of the dissolution of the monastery and the execution of their abbot. In the nineteenth century it was discovered within the chimney of Lord Fingall's house in Reading, in a secret room which contained seats for three fugitives, with some books, now lost. One can only guess at the horror of these circumstances, and the desperate hope of better times which justified the preservation of this precious book of title deeds from the ancient foundation of Reading Abbey.

From it we learn that at the time when this catalogue was made there were 228 volumes in use at Reading, with a further 130 in the Cell of Leominster. But since it was customary to bind a number of separate works together, giving only the title of the first of them, we have no means of knowing the full extent of this library, which must have greatly exceeded the number of works specified. Moreover, the great Norman abbots of the twelfth century were active in building up their libraries and often had considerable collections of their own books, as for example did Henry of Winchester (d. 1150) who gave to Glastonbury more than 50 of his volumes.

A survey of such early library lists, besides establishing the standard works that were common to all monastic libraries of the twelfth century, (13) gives a fair index of the particular concerns and developments of each individual community. The library list of Christ Church, for instance reveals that 600 volumes were available there in 1170, whose contents suggest a provision for the needs of a flourishing monastic school, since many of the works essential for the Quadrivium studies were available in duplicate. There were, for example seven copies of Boethius' *On Music*, eight on Boethius' *Arithmetic*, 11 of Macrobius, and a total of 15 volumes containing the *Timaeus* of Plato with its commentaries and glosses. (14) These, taken as a whole, show the very great influence of Plato's *Timaeus* upon the cosmological theories of the schools in the twelfth century. And since at this date the monasteries and cathedral libraries were the sole repositories of learning north of the Alps, it is not surprising to find that the catalogues of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries from Cluny should contain nearly 1000 volumes. (15)

But some of the most interesting entries in the Reading library list are those which are inserted at its beginning, before the usual collection of works by

Augustine and the other Latin Fathers. These refer to several treatises written by contemporary masters of the great schools across the Channel and include works by the eminent scholar, Platonist, and Chancellor of the cathedral school of Chartres, Gilbert de la Porrée (1075-1154). At least two of these are expressly stated to have been given by Gilbert himself. Here we have direct evidence - if such were needed - of personal contacts between monks at Reading Abbey and one of the greatest exponents of the humanist and Platonising trends in philosophic thought at that time. Gilbert de la Porrée is known to have studied under Anselm of Laon and Bernard of Chartres before becoming, in 1124, a canon of Chartres and two years later he was made Chancellor of the cathedral school.

The activities of the schools of Paris and Chartres at the time are vividly described by Hugh, Master of the monastic school of Saint-Victor:

"I see a place of learning", he writes, "full of pupils - boys, lads, young men and old ... Some are making arithmetical calculations, others are plucking stringed instruments and making music, others are working out various figures and geometrical forms. Some are using special apparatus and are plotting the course and position of the stars and the rotation of the heavens ; others are dealing with the nature of plants, the humours of men, the qualities and properties of everything ..."
(16)

As Hugh of Saint Victor died in 1141, we are left in no doubt as to the kind of education which was drawing students from all Western Europe to the schools of Paris and Chartres. But there were dangers too which led Hugh to complain:

"... How many people do we know nowadays, who come to church with the rest of the faithful and would like to be called Christians, while their hearts are more often thinking of Jupiter and Hercules, Mars and Achilles, of Hector and Pollux, Socrates, Plato and Aristotle. They love the poet's trifles, and either neglect the truth of the holy scriptures, or, what is worse, laugh at them."

Such was the ferment of the schools at the height of the revival of humanist interests - when the cosmological theory of Plato's *Timaeus* could still be accepted as the basis of Christian philosophical speculation. We shall find the consequences of this Platonist speculation illustrated in unmistakable form in that sequence of the font carvings from Hampstead Norreys which was devoted to the Work of Foundation (Plate 63).



Plate 37 A FINE EXAMPLE OF THE TRANSMISSION OF GREEK COSMOLOGY TO 12th CENTURY ENGLAND

The persistence of Platonic cosmology and Pythagorean arithmetical theories in the studies of the *Quadrivium* is underlined by this drawing from a manuscript written in Christ Church Cathedral Priory, Canterbury c.1150. It shows, bottom right, Nicomachus of Gerasa (1st century AD) with Boethius, his translator, discussing musical harmony with Pythagoras (top right) and Plato (bottom left).

Plato's *Timaeus* was the ultimate source of those cosmological theories which, in the twelfth century, were used to provide a 'scientific basis' for Christian theories of the Creation. Boethius' Latin translation of the Arithmetical Primer (written c.100 by the Pythagorean, Nicomachus of Gerasa) supplied the Middle Ages with the sole text book available on the subject in the schools. This drawing was made during the Platonist revival, contemporaneously with the work of such scholarly Chancellors of the Cathedral School of Chartres as Thierry (d.1155) and Gilbert de la Porrée (d.1154) and before the full recovery of the Aristotelian corpus.

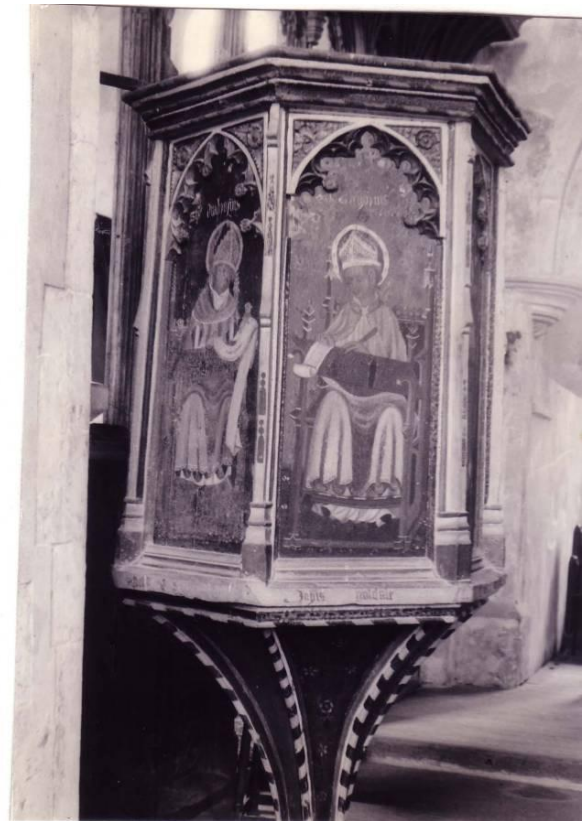


Plate 38 THE CONTINUITY OF PATRISTIC TRADITION

The painted wooden pulpit in the parish church of St. Margaret, Burnham, Norfolk
c.1450

The portraits of the two donors face the altar while the portraits of the four Latin
Fathers face the congregation.

St. Augustine, 354 - 430;

St. Ambrose, Bishop of Milan, 373 - 397;

St. Jerome, 347 - 419;

Pope Gregory the Great, 540 - 604.

CHAPTER 7

THE SOURCES AND MEANING OF THE SCULPTURES ON THE FONT BOWL

(Plate 45 and Plate 63)

The first clue for the identification of the sequence of carvings on the font bowl from Hampstead Norreys and their literary sources lies in the repetition of a small screaming human head with outstretched arms and flaming hair which occurs on both sections of the design. In the historiated section this screaming head is held in the grip of a monstrous dragon (Plate 46) and his upstanding hair can be matched in a number of contemporary representations of devils where it clearly indicates hell fire. Other examples of such screaming heads are to be seen on the twelfth century sculptured capitals in Autun cathedral (Plate 42) and in the illustrations of a late Anglo Saxon Psalter now in the British Library (Plate 43), for the device was not uncommon at that time. The second occurrence of the screaming head on the font bowl is to be found within one of the two circular designs (Plate 63 A) which are interlaced by their own arcs on the opposite side of the bowl. Its position within this circular frame is adjacent to another human head which is foliated in the traditional form of the "Green Man", associated with the vegetative Earth. Two other unidentified heads occupy the corresponding quadrants of the circular frame but the position of these fiery and foliated heads on the font bowl corresponds exactly with the relative positions of "Fire" and "Earth", which are identified by inscriptions in a circular diagram of the Four Elements from the *Hortus Deliciarum*, (Plate 54) a magnificent illuminated manuscript written by the Abbess Herrad of Landsberg, after 1167. Other examples of the same circular figure with identifying inscriptions are to be found in a group of school books compiled from the cosmological works of The Venerable Bede and Isidore of Seville which were copied in English monasteries in the eleventh and twelfth centuries (Plate 62). Professor Bober has shown that these circular figures are adjustable schemata which could be used to demonstrate the harmonious relationships between a number of quaternities, besides the Four Elements (Earth, Fire, Air and Water) in the macrocosm of the universe and the microcosm of mankind. From such evidence, therefore, we may now assume that the two circular figures on the font bowl from Hampstead Norreys were recognisable statements of the harmonious order in the creation of the world and all its elements. The various little animal masks (Plate 39) that are carved in association with these schemata on the font bowl cannot be individually identified, nevertheless it may be suggested that they refer to the repeated assertions by twelfth century writers that the four humours of men were comparable to the ferocity, guile, sloth or greed attributed to a variety of beasts.

There are also rectangular figures which are carved on the font bowl on the same large scale as the two circles. The boldness of relief used for their beaded

outlines is common to all four. This suggests that they were intended by the carver to be seen as a meaningfully associated sequence. The similarity of these two rectangular figures is however deceptive, for one is constructed of a square superimposed upon a square and interlaced with it; the other shows a rhomb interlaced with an oblong, (Plate 63) and its spaces contain animal masks (compare with Plate 40 and Plate 41). It would be easy to dismiss the use of such square and oblong constructions as merely decorative for they occur quite commonly as alternating motifs, for example on friezes in a number of twelfth century Italian churches and are frequently associated in mosaic pavements of the Hellenistic period in areas formerly dominated by the Greco-Roman culture. But our modern assumption that oft-repeated motifs must be meaningless belongs to the impoverishment of an age which habitually indulges in “background music” to the value of which no attention whatever need be paid. Moreover, the square and the oblong were included in Aristotle’s list of opposites and although Aristotle’s works (Note 31. Chapter 9) were not recovered by the Latin west until the latter part of the twelfth century, such assumptions concerning these figures had remained current through the Arithmetic of Boethius. With the recovery of the cosmological references and sources of the square and the circular figures we are surely justified in supposing that they were intended to represent the harmonious creation of the universe and all its elements. We have also Mr Collins’ assurance that, despite the apparent dichotomy in its style, the entire layout of the font bowl was the result of one original design (Appendix 1). From this it must be concluded that both sections of its design were in some way meaningfully connected and that the gist of their meaning would have been apparent whenever its carvings were used as visual aids for teaching by the parish priest. Evidence for the use of such visual aids in “cathedrals and parish churches where public stations take place”, is to be found in a handbook for church decorators written at the very end of the twelfth century, most probably by the English abbot, Adam, of Abbey Dore, Herefordshire. (1) Moreover the literary sources used for two Anglo-Norman tympana designed for such a purpose, have already been identified in this study. Such evidence confirms our conclusion that the strange figures in the historiated section of the font bowl (Plate 45) must be meaningfully associated with the cosmological schemata of the harmony of the elements in the created world. What then was its literary source?

The answer to this question is not far to seek for it occurs in the opening words of the first and most famous twelfth century summary of the Christian faith, namely Hugh of Saint Victor’s *De Sacramentis Christianae Fidei*. This was written about 1134 at a time when such summarisations in all fields of study were becoming a necessary mode of exposition.

“There are”, he wrote, “two Works of God, under which all else may be subsumed. The first is the Work of Foundation, and the second is the Work of Restoration ... The Work of Foundation is that whereby things that were not came into being;

The Work of Restoration is that whereby those things that have been impaired were made better.

The Work of Foundation is the creation of the world and all its elements.

The Work of Restoration is the Incarnation of the Word, and all its sacraments ...”

The writings of Hugh of Saint Victor were widely known; soon after his death in 1141 copies appeared in most monastic and cathedral libraries on both sides of the Channel. The surviving inventory of Reading Abbey shows that the community had acquired copies of the *De Sacramentis* before the close of the twelfth century. From the accumulation of such evidence there can be little doubt that the entire sequence of carvings which surrounds the font bowl from Hampstead Norreys was intended as a visual “summa” of the two *Works of God*, as Hugh of Saint Victor had named them, and that they were portrayed by the carver in terms of the cosmological and theological definitions current at that date. We now have to recall these definitions for, strange though it may seem, both were rejected and abandoned at the end of the twelfth century and have since been almost entirely forgotten.

But the carver of the Hampstead Norreys font bowl was faced with a difficulty over his choice of illustration for the Work of Restoration in terms of Hugh of Saint Victor’s definition of it. For clearly, “the Incarnation of the Word and all its sacraments” was an expression of doctrine rather than a reference to any specific event in the Gospel story. Therefore the standard illustrations in the usual Christological cycle could provide no exact exemplar.

Nevertheless, Baptism was the first of all the sacraments and the font bowl was a necessary means for its accomplishment. It might therefore be supposed that the carver would illustrate the Work of Restoration by an illustration of the Baptism of Christ in the Jordan. But that reference had no part in the Church’s traditional teaching concerning the sacrament of Baptism which from Apostolic times on had been regarded as a kind of death and resurrection - “a death unto sin, and a rebirth into righteousness” - and sermons to that effect had been preached to successive generations of candidates for Baptism. We have, for example, the homily preached to catechumens before their Easter Baptism by Cyril, Bishop of Jerusalem (315-386) in Constantine’s church of the Holy Sepulchre. The same theme was elaborated in the *Great Catechism* by Gregory of Nyssa (c.335-395) and dramatically emphasised in the *Easter Hymns* of Ephraim the Deacon (306-375), written at Edessa for the Syrian churches. Moreover, the *Easter Hymns* of Ephraim were incorporated into the liturgy of the Syrian churches and thus their contents would certainly have been known to those western ecclesiastics who followed Count Baldwin 1 and his crusaders when he established his rule at Edessa, before the establishment of the Latin kingdom of Jerusalem. For this reason, doubtless, copies of Ephraim’s writings were available in a few English monastic libraries in the twelfth century, and one was listed in the early inventory of Reading Abbey. Its

presence there may be accounted for by the fact that Baldwin 1 was the father-in-law of Matilda, the daughter and sole heiress of King Henry I, the founder of Reading Abbey, through her re-marriage to Geoffrey of Anjou.

But, be that as it may, the association of Christ's Descent into Hades with the sacrament of Baptism had become a commonplace long before the twelfth century, so that we find a remark made almost casually by the English-born Chronicler, Ordericus Vitalis, which neatly summed it up:-

"Nicodemus was worthy of being instructed in the efficacy of Baptism", he wrote, "through the regeneration by water and the Spirit; and how Christ was to descend into Hell and ascend into Heaven." (2)

From such an accumulation of evidence it is now possible to identify the figures in the historiated section of the carvings on the Hampstead Norreys font bowl, and their source in the apocryphal *Gospel of Nicodemus*. From this it becomes apparent also that the carver has not used any standard pictorial prototype but has followed his written source with great economy of means and remarkable precision. Moreover, the ingenuity by which so much meaning was compressed into so small an illustration is typical of the didactic methods of the twelfth century.

THE RANSOM THEORY was the first attempt by the growing Christian church to explain the reason why God became incarnate in a man. It was developed from an association of unconnected scriptural texts, and its first organised expression was found in the writings of Origen (185-254), master of the first school for baptismal candidates in the great metropolis of Alexandria in the third century A.D. (3) The evolution of this theory ran concurrently with that of the apocryphal *Gospel of Nicodemus*, the one providing a necessary explanation of the reason for the other. It was not until the twelfth century had run its course that the old Ransom theory was finally superseded by the doctrine of Atonement, after which its rare illustrations ceased. Today the Ransom theory has so long been forgotten that its representations in Anglo-Norman sculptures are passed unrecognised by modern churchmen.

Origen based his metaphoric teaching upon two preconceptions. The first was inherited from the Greek philosophers who taught the primacy of Justice in the Idea of the Good, and therefore in God; for, as Aristotle had said, "Justice is the perfect virtue". (4)

The second idea followed naturally upon this and led Origen to assume that, because of Adam's disobedience, the whole human race had fallen with him into the power of God's enemy the Devil and, as in the terms of current war-fare, lay helplessly imprisoned by his fallen nature. Divine Love prompted the Creator to rescue his creature but Divine Justice required that a ransom must be paid by God to the Devil for Adam's redemption. But since Satan had deceived Adam with false

promises, so now God was entitled to a quid pro quo, and the Devil was to be deceived in his turn by the hidden fact of the incarnation of God in a human being. The evil mind of the Devil was of course unable to recognise the divinity of Jesus and was thus lured by the bait of the human body in which, as he supposed, sensual pleasure must reside. (5) But, in attempting to engulf his humanity, the Devil was hooked, like a fish, on the hidden barb of divinity within it after which God was described as mocking and laughing at the Devil for having thereby accomplished his own destruction (Plate 2 and Plate 3).

Among the many accounts of this strange metaphor, by both Greek and Latin Fathers of the Church in the fourth and fifth centuries, that of Rufinus (c 345 - 410), written probably at Aquileia, is interesting occurring as it does in his commentary on the Apostles' Creed at a time when, as he says, the words, "ad inferos" (he descended into hell) had not yet been added to the Creeds used in Rome and in the oriental churches. (6)

"The object of the mystery of the Incarnation was that the divine virtue of the Son of God, as though it were a hook concealed within the form and fashion of human flesh - (He being, as the Apostle said, found in fashion as a man) - might lure the Prince of this world to a conflict; to whom, offering His flesh as bait, His divinity underneath might catch him and hold him fast with its hook, through the shedding of His immaculate blood. For He alone, who knows no stain, has destroyed the sins of all.

As therefore, if a fish seize a baited hook, it not only does not take the bait off the hook, but is drawn out of the water to be the food for others, so he who had the power of death, seized the body of Jesus in death, not being aware of the divinity within it. But having swallowed it he was caught forthwith, and the bars of Hell being burst asunder, he was drawn as it were from the abyss to become the food for others.

For, as the prophet Ezekiel said, 'I will draw thee out with my hook, and stretch thee out upon the plain ...' (Ezekiel 29:4). And the prophet David said, 'Thou hast broken the heads of the great Dragon and thou hast given him to be meat for the people of Ethiopia.' (Psalm 74:15)

And Job witnessed to the mystery, saying, 'Wilt thou draw forth the Dragon with a hook? Wilt thou put a bit in his nostrils? ...' (Job 40:25) (7)

The most abundant source for these strange metaphors was, however, the Book of Job, and so we find a further elaboration of this Ransom theory in Pope Gregory I's lengthy Commentary on the Book of Job, the *Moralia in Job* which, as we have seen, became the most popular book of all throughout the Middle Ages.

But Augustine, when Bishop of Hippo, had transposed the metaphor of the hook into a mouse-trap, baited with the blood of Jesus, in his sermon addressed to an uneducated audience. (8) On such patristic authorities the theme continued in currency until the time of Anselm of Bec, that great Archbishop of Canterbury of the twelfth century. In his famous book, *Cur Deus Homo*, Anselm challenged and rejected its basic assumption for God, as he pointed out, could never be under any

compulsion to act in any particular way, and the Devil was owed nothing except punishment. Moreover, such types and metaphors, though useful for didactic purposes, must not be made the grounds for rational proofs.

Anselm's introduction of the dialectical method of rational proof for doctrines held by faith had far-reaching consequences, one of which was the ultimate abandonment of the Alexandrian Ransom theory with its metaphor of the baited hook. This was repeated, probably for the last time, therefore, in Peter Lombard's *Sentences* published about 1150 (9) after which time its rare illustrations vanish from the artistic repertoire of the Western Church.

But the metaphor of the baited hook was not the only idea that was superseded in the thirteenth century, for the rediscovery of Aristotle's works at the end of the twelfth century led to the replacement of Plato's *Timaeus* in the Arts Faculty of the School of Paris in favour of the study of Aristotle's works before the middle of the thirteenth century. (10) It is therefore true to say that only up until the end of the twelfth century could a design have occurred which combined an illustration of the Descent into Hades in terms of Origen's metaphors, with schematic figures illustrating the cosmology derived from Plato's *Timaeus* and the theory of Number to be found in Boethius' *Arithmetica* (Boethius 480-524). For this was a theory discussed and rejected by Aristotle.

In the chapters which follow we shall examine the ways in which these forms, so soon to be superseded, were combined in the sculpture of the font from Hampstead Norreys.



Plate 39 FONT BOWL FROM HAMPSTEAD NORREYS

THE OBLONG FIGURE which is carved beside the circle containing masks of the personified four elements.

It seems probable that the oblong enclosing the cross, here shown, is intended to contain the four humours of man and their four associated animal characteristics.

Compare this design with a close parallel in an 11thc. drawing in the Beatus Commentary on the Apocalypse from Burgo de Osma. (Plate 40)

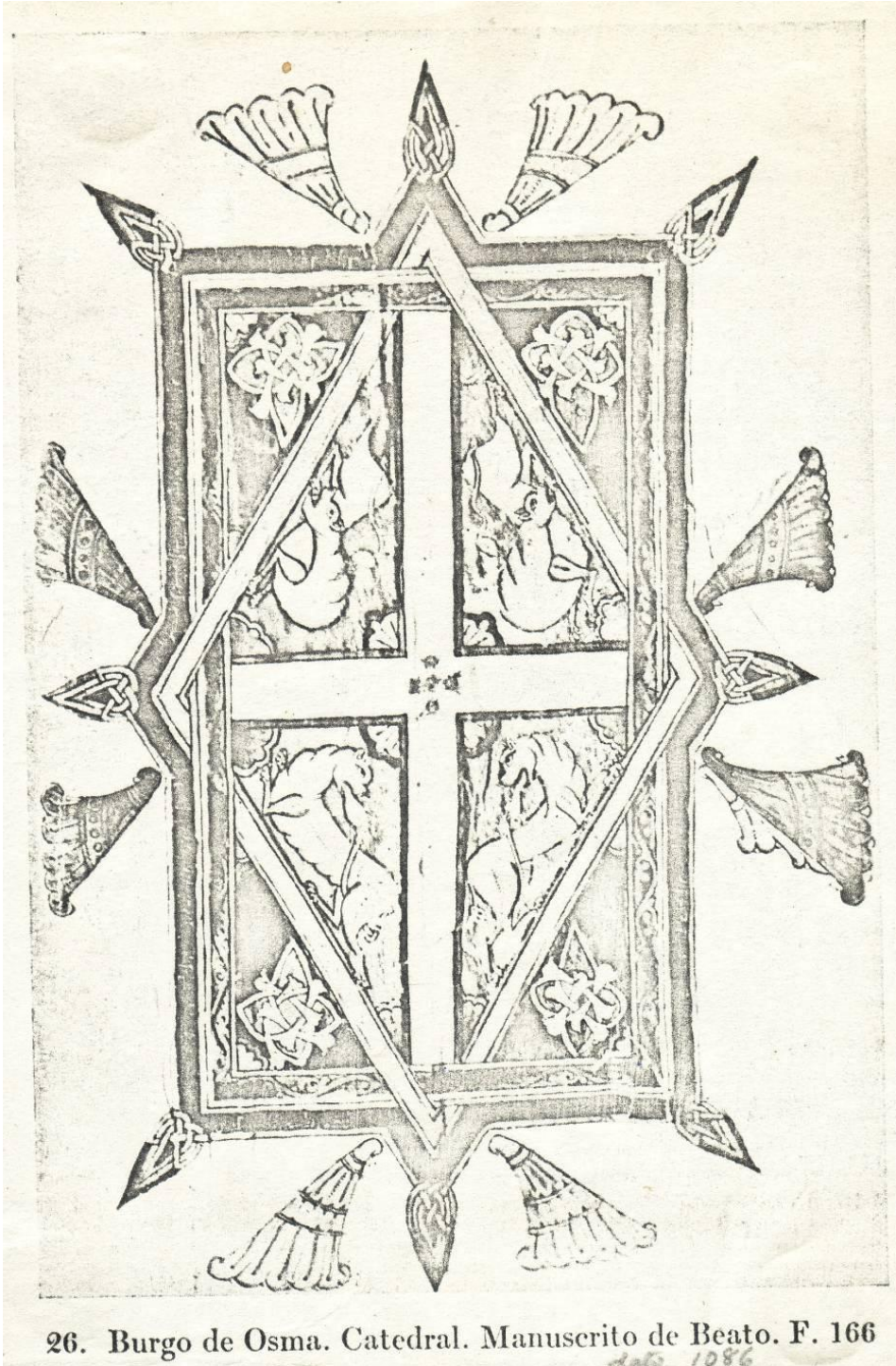


Plate 40 BEATUS OF THE CATHEDRAL OF ST. OSMA,
Figure of a Rhomb on an Oblong

Illustration from an article by Timoteo Rojo in "Art Studies"p.154, pl.26
Baltimore 1931,"Burgo de Osma, cathedral manuscrito de Beato, fol.166

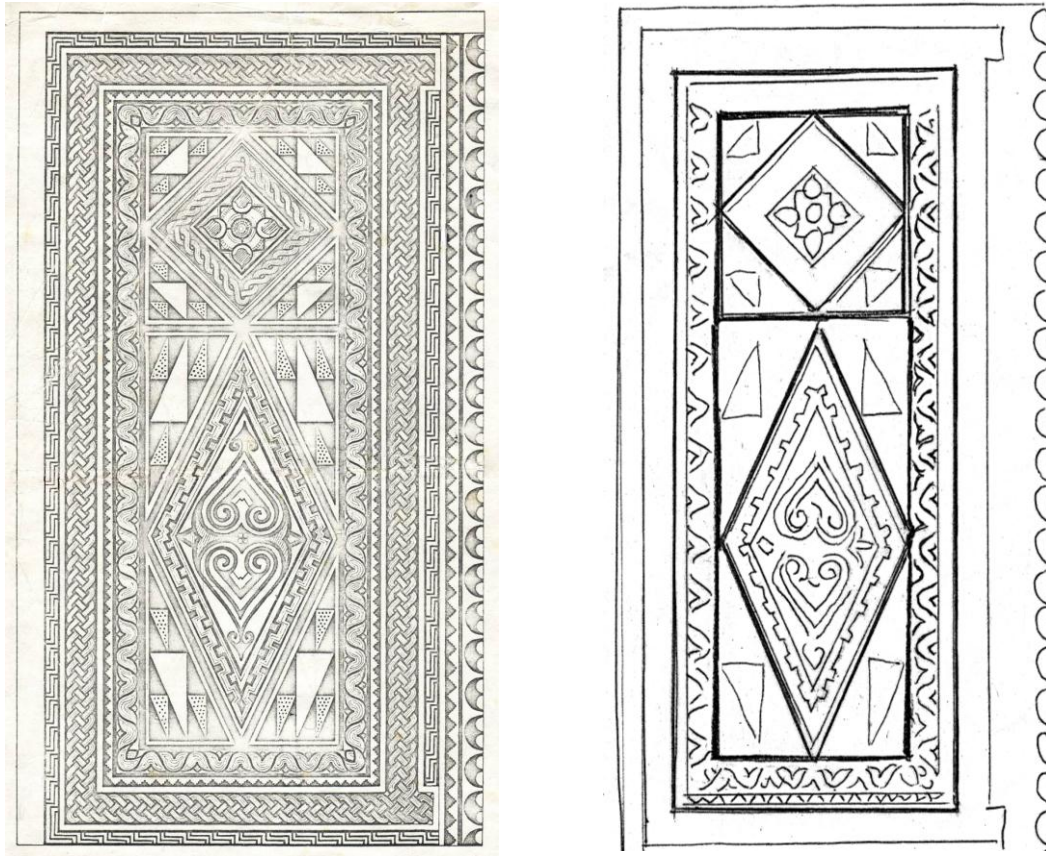


Plate 41. ROMAN MOSAIC from TRIER

Roman mosaic from TRIER showing the Square on a Square and the Rhomb on an Oblong



Plate 42. DEVIL WITH FLAMING HAIR FROM A CAPITAL IN THE CHURCH OF ST. LAZARUS, AUTUN.

First half of the 12th century.



Plate 43 CHRIST IN COMBAT WITH THE DEVIL WITH FLAMING HAIR

Late 12th century Anglo-Saxon Psalter.

British Library

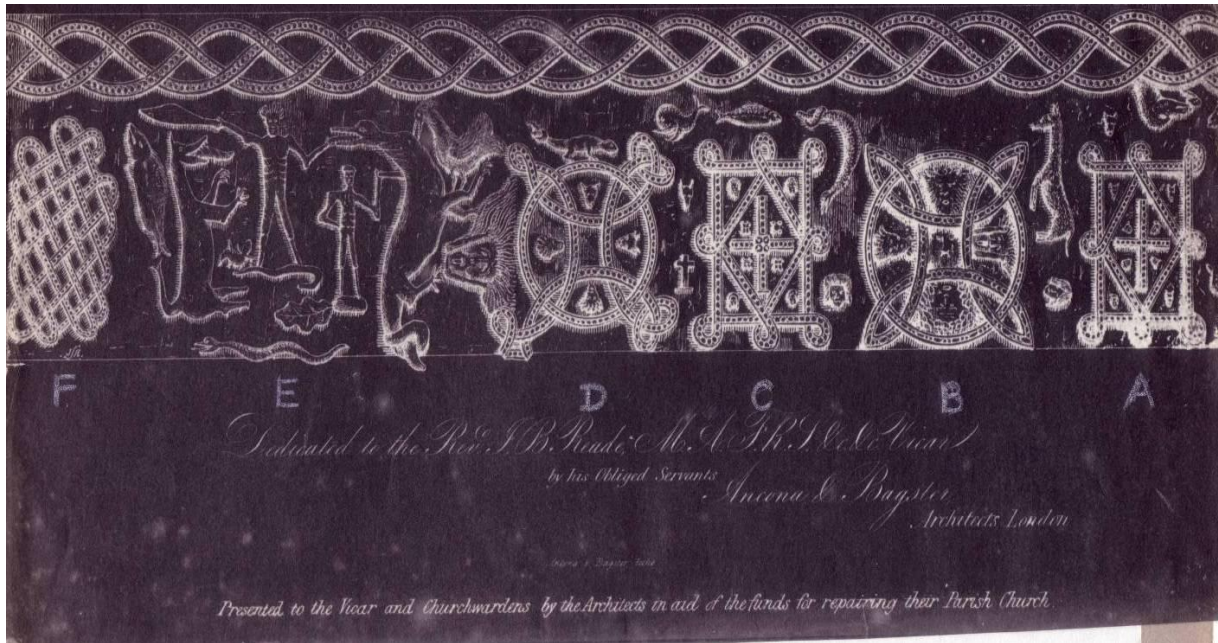


Plate 44 A Panoramic Drawing of the Carvings which surround the Font Bowl formerly in the church of St. Mary the Virgin, Hampstead Norreys, Berks but now in the church of St. John the Baptist, Stone Bucks.

This drawing was made by the architects, Messrs Ancona and Bagster, who were responsible for whatever repairs were carried out upon the bowl in 1848. The details are, however, inaccurate.

Oxford Diocesan papers

CHAPTER 8

THE DESCENT INTO HADES AND THE BAITED HOOK ILLUSTRATED AT HAMPSTEAD NORREYS

(Plate 45)

An account of the epic story of Christ's descent into Hades, and the Ransom theory with its baited hook, has been given in the previous chapter. The next step in our enquiry is to identify its details, as they are epitomized in the scene carved on the Hampstead Norreys font bowl. For the two chief literary sources were widely known and generally available, in the English cathedral and monastic libraries of the twelfth century - namely Pope Gregory the Great's *Moralia in Job* and the apocryphal *Gospel of Nicodemus*.

The central figure in the scene carved on this font bowl is that of a man standing naked between two monsters, Satan the dragon, and Death the wolf-like animal. Here the Redeemer enters Hades at the moment of his death, and comes face to face with the regents of Hell.

Each of these figures will be considered in relation to their associated literary sources; for it becomes evident that the carver intended the scene to be a form of visual aid in supplementing the preacher's homilies, for Baptism was traditionally understood as a kind of descent into death and rebirth, and as such it was carved with the utmost ingenuity, economy of means and exactitude of metaphor.

I. The Redeemer

Jesus stands in the centre of the scene, offering his left hand as a bait of mortal flesh to be seized in the jaws of the dragon. In his right hand he holds a large knife, of the traditional type still used by butchers even today, and he is pointing it at the head of the fish (Leviathan) as a sign of the dismemberment of Leviathan, whose flesh was to be cut up and sold by the merchants in the streets of Jerusalem at the coming of the Messiah. (1)

II. The Salamander

Against the right leg of the Redeemer, the carver has placed a little salamander, as an extremely ingenious reference to the fact that, despite all Satan's boasts, Jesus withstood all the fires of temptation. The theological arguments based upon the presumed existence of the salamander were widely familiar, for they were asserted in Augustine's *City of God*, and repeated in the contemporary Bestiaries. We know also that Reading Abbey Library possessed

copies of both these works. Arguing from the fact that the salamander lives in fire without being consumed, Augustine had concluded that:

"... If the salamander lives in fire, as the most exact naturalists record, and yet remains whole and unconsumed, then these are sufficient proofs that all that feels pain does not perish. Why then should we have to produce any more examples to prove the perpetuity of men's souls and bodies, without death or dissolution, in everlasting fire and torment?" (2)

From this it was generally accepted that fallen man must eternally endure the double death of body and soul, the horrors of which were further explained in Gregory's *Moralia in Job*.

"... These punishments both torture those who are plunged in them beyond their powers, but at the same time preserve them alive ... so that torments may live without end, dying without death, failing without failing, and ending without end." (3)

"But", said Gregory, "there came unto us (in Hell) One who in our stead should die the death of the flesh only and join His single death to our two-fold death and set us free."

The relationship of the single death of Jesus to mankind's "double death" was a subject frequently discussed at great length by theologians up to the twelfth century and it was certainly familiar to the laity through contemporary sermons, so that the salamander signified the endurance of Jesus in his descent into Hades. A relief on the socle of the Porch of the Last Judgement, carved at Notre Dame, Paris, between 1225 - 30, demonstrated the righteous man's endurance amid the fires of temptation; for a salamander is blazoned in flames on the shield of a righteous Judge who resists temptation, in contradistinction to a corrupt lawyer who is shown manipulating the scales of Justice and clutching a money-bag of bribes. (4)

III. The Dragon (Satan)

The Dragon is shown by the carver with its back turned to the figure of Jesus, because in the apocryphal Gospel Satan refuses to recognise the incarnation of God in man. The Dragon therefore only looks back to attack the Christ and is shown swallowing the "mortal bait" - the hand of Jesus. Nevertheless the Dragon's power is now curtailed, as the knot tied in its extremity clearly shows, since by accepting the proffered bait, he is already deceived and mocked by God.

In one claw the Dragon clutches a screaming soul, whose hair is enveloped in flames of Hell, and whose arms are outstretched in agony. This is an apt illustration, for in one version of the apocryphal Gospel of Nicodemus, Satan boasts,

"I have become a furnace to the sons of men!"

The carver would also have been familiar with the descriptions of the damned, to be found in Augustine's *City of God* and in the *Moralia* of Pope Gregory I, for there he must have read that,

"every one that is damned, whilst he is consumed by everlasting fire, is in darkness to the eternal light." (5)

Since, as Augustine also said,

"the words of our Saviour could not be untrue, which he promised to pronounce in the Last Judgement, saying, 'Depart from Me ye cursed into everlasting fire which is prepared for the Devil and his angels'." (6)

IV. The Vulture

But what can be said of the very large bird which, in the Hampstead Norreys carvings, is pecking the head of the Satanic dragon from above? (Plate 46) One thing at least is clear, from the nature of its large and open beak it cannot be intended for a dove. Let us therefore turn back to Gregory's *Moralia* - for our sculptors were evidently familiar with its text:

"Rightly is the Mediator between God and man called a Vulture ", he writes, "Who, while remaining in the loftiness of His divine nature, marked as from a kind of flight on high the carcass of our mortal being here down below, and let Himself drop from the region of Heaven to the lowest place. On our behalf He vouchsafed to become man. While He sought the dead creature, He found death among us, Who was deathless in Himself.

"Now, the eye of the Vulture was actually aiming at our resurrection, because He Himself, being dead three days, set us free from everlasting death. The faithless people of Judea saw Him in a state of mortality, but how by His death He should destroy our death, they noted not. Which people refused to regard the ways of His humility, whereby He lifted us up on high; and they knew not the pathway of the Bird." (7) (Plate 49)

A paraphrase of this passage is to be found also in an Anglo-Saxon poem ascribed to Cynewulf of the eighth century, in which the Descent of Christ for the Salvation of Mankind is described as "the flight of the Dear Bird from heaven to earth." (8)

But the simile of the Christ as the resurrecting Phoenix is older even than the fourth century, for it is to be found in the *Hortatory Address to the Greeks* which is ascribed to Justin Martyr who was executed in Rome about 165 A.D. "By the two birds Christ is denoted - both dead as a man and living as God." (9)

And finally, we have the evidence from an Easter hymn of Ephraim the Syrian:

"The Medicine of Life flew down from Heaven
and was mingled with the body, the mortal fruit.
But Death could not feed on Him, after its fashion,
and Life in turn, swallowed up Death ..." (10)

Such descriptions of the "Dear Bird" in search of Death were evidently familiar when Gregory of Nyssa explained them with his usual distinction in his *Great Catechism*, addressed, be it noted, to baptismal candidates:

"Perhaps one who understands this mystery would be justified in saying that, instead of Christ's death occurring in consequence of His birth, the birth on the contrary was accepted by Him for the sake of the death; for He who lives for ever did not sink down to the conditions of bodily birth from any need to live, but to call us back from death to life. Since then, there was need for the lifting up from death of the whole of our nature, He stretched forth His hand as it were to prostrate man and stooping down to our dead corpse, He came so far within the grasp of Death as to touch a state of deadness; and then in His own body to bestow on our nature the principle of resurrection, raising - as He did by His power - the whole man ... as though the whole of mankind were a single living being ..." (11)

It is therefore of some significance that a Bestiary was listed in this Reading Library catalogue, for in the text of the twelfth century bestiaries the Vulture, like the Eagle, is endowed with far-reaching vision, that is foresight, and the Vulture is given attributes by which it is associated with the virgin birth and the incarnation of Christ:

"Vultures, like eagles, notice cadavers, even when they are beyond the seas. They can see from their height, while flying, many things hidden from us. They are said not to copulate or mingle in a conjugal manner; for the females conceive without assistance from the males, and generate without conjunction. What would people say who are accustomed to laugh at the Mysteries, when they hear that a Virgin vulture has brought forth? For they actually suppose that the Mother of God cannot do what vultures do!" (12)

A parallel example of the bird carved on the Hampstead Norreys font bowl compared with the drawing of the Vulture in the Cambridge Bestiary shows a remarkable similarity in the partially opened beak, the short feathers of the neck, with one upturned feather at the back of the head.

Another example occurs on the font at Eardisley, near Leominster (Plate 47) which was dated by Dr Zarnecki to 1160. There a bird of prey with an aquiline beak accompanies the Christ as he

"takes Adam by the right hand and leaps up out of Hell." (13)

The speed by which the Saviour moves is such that Adam is shown being literally dragged off his feet from the shackles and entanglements of Hades and from the gaping mouth of the "lion seeking whom he may devour" which pursues him from the other side of the bowl. And, since the fonts of Eardisley and of Hampstead Norreys appear to have been the work of men in some way connected with the Reading Abbey workshops (14), they seem to have been following the same literary source.

Moreover, a surviving Charter granted in the Court of the Abbot of Reading held at Leominster probably between the years 1158 and 1160 refers to the transfer of land in the parish of Eardisley (15) - a fact which seems to confirm the connection.

There is, however, an even more remarkable illustration of the prevision of Christ- Logos, in the form of an eagle in the hands of God, which is of almost exactly the same date as the Eardisley font. This occurs in a beautifully illuminated page at the opening of the Fourth Gospel, in the great Bible written in the abbey of Floreffe, in the diocese of Liège about 1160. (16) (Plate 50).

V. **Death as the Wolf**

The monster which the carver of the font bowl has placed on the right hand of Jesus is Death, shown as a wolf. Such a figure was already familiar in Anglo-Saxon poetry:

"The accursed wolf, the dark shadow of Death
Has scattered Thy flocks, O Lord" (17)

Once more, the carver has displayed with extraordinary economy, the fact that Satan refused to recognise the mighty power of Christ in raising Lazarus from the grave. The carver has therefore shown Death facing towards the figure of Jesus, whereas Satan is shown literally turning his back upon the Redeemer.

VI. **The Bread snatched from the mouth of Death**

Perhaps the most remarkable example of conformity to the text appears in the curious object, looking like a bread roll, which the carver has placed in the mouth of Death - for in the descent epic, Death laments that Lazarus has been snatched from his mouth, and at the command of Jesus had flown up into life again out of his belly. In one of the Easter hymns of Ephraim the Syrian also, Death protests:

"One man has closed my mouth -
Mine, who closed the mouth of so many ...
To others he multiplied bread;

But my bread, from my mouth he snatches it." (18)

VII. Adam

The small man who stands naked, except for a helmet, beneath the sheltering arm with which the Redeemer offers to the Devil is of course Adam on whose behalf the debt must be paid (Plate 45). The position of Adam, between God Incarnate and the Devil, seems to have been deliberately planned by the carver as a valid expression of the human predicament.

As we have already seen, Jesus was described in the *Gospel of Nicodemus* as "both soldier and commander, a marvellous warrior in the shape of a servant", while Hugh of Saint-Victor referred to the army of Christ (19), whose soldiers included all who have gone before. Adam, as the first 'redeemed' of that great army, is therefore given the "helmet of Salvation" by the carver. The flimsy stick with which Adam seems to be prodding the Devil and the improbability of its angle suggest that this is an addition by the restorer of 1846, since the very low level of its relief is inconsistent with all the rest of the carving.

VIII. The large leaf and the serpent beneath Adam

The serpent carved under the feet of Adam is surely the Tempter by whom he fell. The carving of a large leaf, upon which Adam takes his stand, though it has obviously been partially restored, is without doubt part of the original didactic scheme. For since the earliest years the Tree of the Fall had been compared with the Tree of the Cross. As Origen had put it,

"Through the Tree came Death, and through the Tree comes Life, because Death was in Adam and Life in Christ." (20)

But since the font carvers in this case were obviously familiar with Gregory's *Moralia*, they would also have known his very apt question:

"What is man but a leaf who fell from Paradise from the Tree? What but a leaf is He who is caught in the winds of temptation, and lifted up upon the gusts of his passions?" (21)

IX. The Fish, Leviathan, and the Triple Bait

The large fish which appears below the point of the butcher's knife wielded by the standing figure of the Redeemer is an illustration of Leviathan rising up towards a triple bait, here shown as three tiny rosettes (Plate 46). The source of this symbolic detail is again Pope Gregory's *Moralia in Job* for Gregory had

emphasised the ancient doctrine of the Church by stating that the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ was the work of the whole Trinity in common and that Leviathan must be snared by the triple power of the Godhead and his jaws pierced with a three-fold cord. The carver of the Pitsford tympanum had in fact illustrated the piercing of the jaws of the evil monster with a three-fold cord (Plate 27) but the carver of this section of the Hampstead Norreys font bowl has shown instead the triune nature of the bait by which Leviathan, the Devil, must be hooked and mocked.

The mythology which had grown up round the figure of Leviathan, the monster of the deeps and its terrestrial counterpart, Behemoth, had been elaborated in Jewish traditions; but its Biblical source was the Book of Job, to which scattered references taken from Ezekiel and the Book of Enoch had been added. In rabbinical literature Leviathan was the power of Evil which would be slain at the coming of Messiah:

"The Holy One, blessed be he, will in time to come make a banquet from the flesh of Leviathan ... and the rest of Leviathan will be distributed and sold in the markets of Jerusalem." (22)

In the Book of Job we find the original statement:

"Shall the bands of the fishermen make traffic with him? Shall they part him amongst their merchants?" (Job 41:6)

The dismemberment of Leviathan in the days of the Messiah was explained by Pope Gregory in his commentary, as the action of the preacher, the apostles, who by the sword of God's word were to liberate all those souls formerly engulfed by this Evil One. Thus the preachers of the Gospel were the "merchants" in the streets of Jerusalem, preparing the faithful for the Messianic banquet.

X. The Entanglements of Hell

We now come to the large block of interlacing bands which is carved so intricately in high relief upon the font bowl, beside the fish which is identified as Leviathan. (Plate 46). Can this interlacing be related in meaning? Is it in fact another explanatory symbol associated with the Descent into Hades - or is it merely a space-filler? If so, why was such a technically difficult motif chosen here when any other more simple form would have served? It is true that such interlacing bands were not uncommon in Anglo-Norman work and that they abounded in Northumbrian and Celtic designs and on Roman mosaic pavements. Nevertheless the answer to these questions can be solved not only by reference to the literary sources which the carver was evidently following, but also by a parallel example of

the same subject, on another twelfth century Anglo-Norman font made for the little church of Eardisley, near Leominster by a school of carvers who are believed to have had contacts also with the Reading Abbey is the figure of Christ holding his Cross before him, and dragging Adam "by the right hand" as he "leaps up out of Hell." (24) It is, in fact an abbreviated illustration of the Descent into Hades and the Resurrection, in which the symbol of the Eagle (or alternatively the Vulture) is shown accompanying the Christ. (Plate 47). But the speed with which the Christ figure on the Eardisley font is shown to be emerging from Hell is shown by the fact that Adam is literally being dragged off his feet, and the reason for this is made plain by the carver, for Adam's legs are shackled by the entanglements. This clearly refers to Gregory's statement that:

"Some aim at things that are eternal with a dissolute mind, and of their own free will they fetter themselves by the irregularities of their efforts, so that they never advance towards God with a free step; and while they entangle themselves with the loose practices of their behaviour, they as it were set their feet to be held in the meshes of a net (maculis), and with their random steps they do not perfectly forsake the world, but fetter themselves in their walking so that they cannot progress ..."
(25)

Here then is the explanation of the interlacing bands on the font bowl from Hampstead Norreys. A parallel example of the use of the same metaphor is to be seen on a wooden font of the same date from Medelpad, Sweden, (Plate 48) where a laughing figure, wearing an apparently cruciform halo, is seen emerging from very similar entanglements (26). But the use of such motifs on font bowls is not fortuitous, since a great deal had been written in catechisms addressed to the candidates for baptism by the early Fathers of the Church, on the subject of the labyrinthine way and the fetters of the prison-house of Death.

In the catechism composed for the newly baptised by Gregory of Nyssa (c.335-395), we find a further explanation of it:

"They must follow by way of imitation Him who leads us to our salvation, carrying out the actions which he has shown them. For it is not possible to attain the same end unless they follow the same route. For those who are incapable of treading the wanderings of labyrinths - if they fall in with some experienced person and follow in his steps - succeed in traversing the various misleading ways and windings of the building, whereas they would never have got through had they not followed in the steps of their guide ...

So I ask you to consider that the labyrinth of this life can never be threaded by human nature, unless a man takes to that same path by which He who entered into the Life succeeded in passing outside its confining limits."

"I use the word Labyrinth figuratively, to denote the prison of Death, from which there is no outlet, and in which the miserable race of Man was confined."

"What did we see in the case of the Captain of our Salvation- a state of death that lasted three days, and then a return to life."

"What then is the device by which we may imitate that which was done by Him?"

"Now Earth and Water have an affinity, being the only elements that have weight and bear downwards and abide in one another. Since then, the death of the Author of our life led to burial in the ground - in virtue of the nature which He shares with us - our imitation of His death is represented by the neighbouring element."

"He, after being laid in the earth, returned on the third day; so everyone united to Him has water, instead of earth, poured upon him, and then passing through that element three times (triple immersion) reproduces the grace of the Resurrection which was gained in three days." (27)

It now becomes clear that the entanglements from which Christ is delivering Adam on the font at Eardisley, and the elaborate block of interlace in the Descent scene carved on the font from Hampstead Norreys, carry the full implications of an amalgam of myths far older than the Christian faith. (28) And this was acknowledged and explained by Lambert, a monk of St. Omer, who illustrated with very ingenious pictures his own account of the labyrinth of sin in his *Liber Floridus* (29)

See Appendix 4. *Liber Floridus: The Labyrinth of Sin*



Plate 45 HISTORIATED SIDE OF THE 12th CENTURY FONT BOWL FROM HAMPSTEAD NORREYS.

This font is now in the parish church of Stone, Bucks.

This scene can be identified from its literary source in an early version of the *APOCRYPHAL GOSPEL OF NICODEMUS*. It follows in every detail its metaphor and text but has no comparable pictorial prototype.

Christ is shown as he descends into Hades, naked and alone, to stand between the two regents of Hell, Death as a wolf and Satan as a dragon. Christ offers his left hand as a bait to the jaws of the dragon while he points his knife at Leviathan rising for the triple bait, "whose flesh shall be sold as meat in the streets of Jerusalem at the coming of the Messiah." He wields the traditional form of a butcher's knife.

A salamander, symbolising the power of Christ to withstand all the fires of temptation, nestles against the leg of the Redeemer who tramples the serpent

underfoot. The "Dear Bird from Heaven" (Anglo-Saxon poem ascribed to Cynewulf) is pecking the monster and the knot in the monster's tail can be clearly seen.

Adam, wearing the Helmet of Salvation, stands upon a leaf between God Incarnate and the Devil.

The large bread roll, which is being regurgitated from the jaws of Death, is a reference to a 4th century hymn of Ephraim, the Deacon of Edessa, which was incorporated into the liturgy of the Syrian churches. This illustrated Death's complaint at the raising of Lazarus by Jesus. "To others he multiplied bread but my bread from my mouth he steals it."

A volume of Ephraim's writings was listed in the Reading Abbey library list in the 12th century, for Reading had indirect connection with Edessa.

From stylistic and other evidence, there is reason to suggest that this font was made in a Reading Abbey workshop.

National Monuments Record



Plate 46 DETAILS (above) A screaming soul enveloped in flames, still in the clutches of the dragon above) ; (below) The great fish, Leviathan, rises for the triple bait; The “Dear Bird” pecks the dragon; The serpent is trampled underfoot .



**Plate 47 THE SCENE OF THE DESCENT ON THE 12th CENTURY FONT
AT EARDISLEY, HEREFORDSHIRE**

Christ is “leaping up out of Hell” holding Adam by the right hand as described in the apocryphal Gospel of Nicodemus. Adam is emerging from the “Labyrinth of the prison of Death.”

The eagle, or “Dear Bird”, accompanies Christ (*MORALIA IN JOB* and GREGORY OF NYSSA).



Plate 48 . 12th CENTURY FONT FROM ALNO CHURCH, MEDELPAD NORTHERN SWEDEN

This laughing figure emerging from a labyrinthine entanglement of sin suggests a reference to the epic story of the Descent into Hades, as it was carved on the font at Eardisley, Herefordshire in the same century (see Gregory I and Gregory of Nyssa who interpret the entanglements).

Swedish National Heritage Board, Stockholm

nos in uos immua crudelitate picimus. Adpla em si picit. n
 qh suum picit. s; quasi degenerem n recognoscit. nos qd
 pa: quos uos recognoscimus abdicamus.



Vultus ano
 latus tar
 do nominat
 putat. Magni
 tudine epe
 exponit papi
 vel uolat non
 h. Vulture
 ante sic

et adle e ult
 maria cadauera serui
 unt. Atq; epe uolantet multaq; montu obturitate celant.
 exalto illi aspiciunt. Negant em uultes indulge concubitu.
 conjugali usu nuptial copule forte misceri. atq; na sine ullo
 masculu ocyte femine. et sine conuinctone genare. natoq;
 exhit in multam etatis longeuitate pcedere. ut usq; ad centu
 annos uite eoru seruet pducant. n facile eos angusti eui finis
 excipiat. Qd auunt q; solent ma uidere mistia cu audiunt
 qd uirgo generauit ympossibilem in nupte eui pudore
 nulla uiri q;uetudo temerasset existimant partum. Im

Plate 49 VULTURES

“Rightly is the Mediator between God and Man called a Vulture.” *Moralia in Job*
 12th c. Bestiary

Cambridge University Library

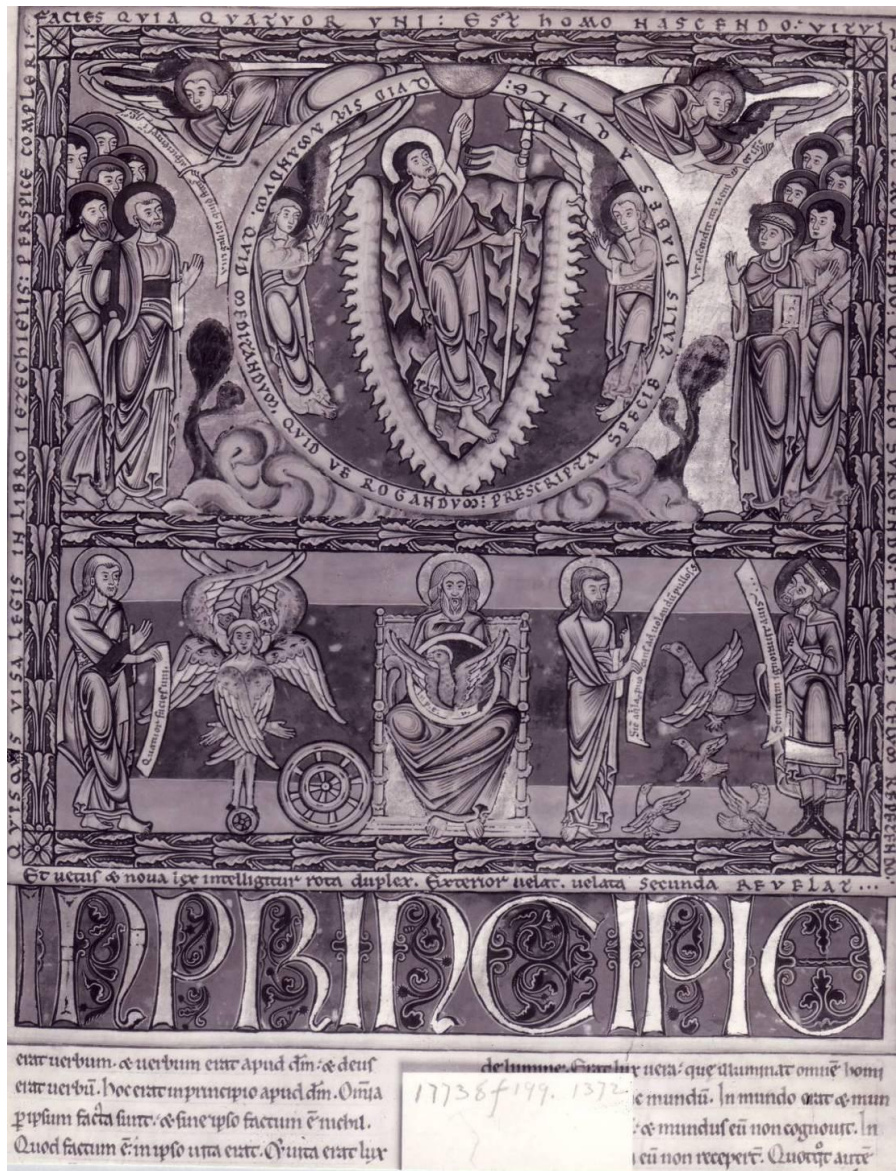


Plate 50 THE FLOEFFE BIBLE c. 1154 A VISUAL AID TO MEDITATION

The IN PRINCIPIO page based on St. John's Gospel.

In the centre of the lower row is Christ as a bird in the hands of God.

The page is designed as a doctrinal statement supported by prophetic texts and visual images taken from the Jewish scriptures.

British Library

The IN PRINCIPIO page of the Floreffe Bible c. 1154

- 1 Viri Galilaei, quid statis aspicientes i(n) c(aelum). (Acts 1: 4)
Men of Galilee, why stand you gazing up into heaven?
- 2 Ut ascendit ita veniet IHC. (an abbreviation of the second half of Acts 1.2)
As he ascends Jesus will come again.
- 3 Quid sit amandum, quid meditandum, quidve rogandum. Prescripta specie talis habes aquilae.
What is to be loved; what is to be meditated; or what prayed for.
Thou hast these prescribed in the form of an eagle.
- 4 Quator facies uni.
The four faces become one. (a reference to Ezekiel 1: 10).
- 5 In P. E. V. = In Principio erat Verbum. (John 1: 1)
In the beginning was the Word.
(The position of the Eagle here, as the Logos, is equated with John 1: 18 "In the bosom of the Father".)
- 6 Sic aq(ui)la p(ro)vocans ad volandum pullos s(uos). (Deuteronomy 32.2)
Thus the eagle summoning its young to fly.
- 7 Semitam ignoravit avis. (Book of Job; Proverbs 30:19)
He did not know the way of the bird.
- 8 Quisquis visa legis in libro lezechielis: perspice compleri.
Facies quia quatuor uni: est homo nascendo: vitulus qui fit moriendo
qui leo surgendo: fit avis c(a)elum repetendo. (Ezekiel 1: 10).
Whoever thou art that readest the visions in the Book of Ezekiel.
See how they are fulfilled, why there are four faces for one (person):
He is a man by birth (or by being born) who becomes a calf by dying (or by his death as a sacrificial animal) and becomes a lion by rising; he becomes a bird by seeking heaven again.
- 9 Et vetus et nova lex intelligitur rota duplex. Exterior velat.
Velata secunda revelat.
Both the Old and the New Law will be discerned as a double wheel.
The outer one conceals, and the inner (second) one reveals what has been concealed.
- 10 In Principio erat Verbum: Verbum erat apud Deum ...
In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God. (John 1: 1)



Plate 51 THE DEVIL SHACKLED. A RARE ILLUSTRATION OF CHRIST'S DESCENT INTO HADES.

From a late Anglo-Saxon Psalter

British Library

Behind the stooping figure of the Christ in Plate 53 is the open gate of the prison house of Death and beneath his feet lies Satan, bound hand and foot, and a wizened dragon which, nevertheless, conforms to Pope Gregory's specifications for

Leviathan. Adam and Eve, with their descendents, are emerging from the mouth of Hades and are received into the hands of the victorious Christ.

The originality and graciousness displayed in this drawing suggests a passage from the *Great Catechism* of Gregory of Nyssa, although in the original Greek it is unlikely to have been known in England at that time:

“Since there was need for the lifting up from death of the whole of our nature, He stretched forth His hand as it were, to prostrate man, and stooping down to our dead bodies, He came so far within the grasp of death as to touch the state of deadness, and in His own body to bestow on our nature the principle of resurrection, as He did by His power.”

Gregory of Nyssa (335-395), *Great Catechism* chap. 32

After the clause, "He descended into Hell", was first added to the Apostles' Creed at Aquileia, Rufinus' Commentary upon it, written in 344, provided an explanation that remained current in manuscripts in the 12th century.

“His divine nature through the flesh descended into death, that through the infirmity of the flesh He might effect Salvation ... it is as if a king were to proceed to a prison, and go in and break open the doors and undo the shackles and break in pieces the chains and bars and bolts, and bring forth those that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, into light and life.”

The shackles which restrain Satan in this drawing appear in another context on a Spanish sculptured capital in the cloister of the collegiate church of Santillana del Mar, Northern Spain (Plate 52) . The sequence of carvings on this capital illustrates the combat between a mounted knight and the monster Leviathan, whose scaly body is here held in a shackle by an angel.



Plate 52 CARVING IN THE CLOISTERS OF THE CHURCH OF SANTILLANA DEL MAR, NORTHERN SPAIN

The Devil shackled



Plate 53 CHRIST LOGOS TRAMPLES ON THE LION AND THE ASP (DEATH AND SATAN)

Anglo Saxon Psalter

British Library

CHAPTER 9

THE WORK OF FOUNDATION IN TERMS OF THE MICROCOSM AND THE MACROCOSM

The abrupt transition in style between the two main areas of the carvings on this bowl has already been explained, not as evidence of later additions or re-cutting but as a carefully planned method of illustrating the two contrasted Works of God, namely those of the Creation, or Foundation of the World, and those of its Restoration. The theme of the two Works was already familiar in the twelfth century, not only through the writings of Augustine, but also in the works of contemporaries, for example in those of Hugh of Saint-Victor (1) and Gilbert de la Porrée (2); for they were all part of the long tradition in the doctrinal exegeses of the Latin Church.

In previous chapters we have already shown that the Work of Restoration was illustrated on the font bowl from Hampstead Norreys and occasionally elsewhere, in the theological terms still current in the twelfth century. These included the theory of a ransom paid by God to the Devil on behalf of Adam, in which the Incarnation was described by the barbaric metaphor of a hook, baited with mortal flesh for the deception of the Devil. Its representation in Anglo-Norman sculpture is *very rare* and has not previously been recognised. But by the thirteenth century it had vanished from the repertoire of the ecclesiastical arts and was finally superseded in doctrinal expositions.

It can now be shown that The Work of Foundation is illustrated on the font bowl (Plate 63) by a sequence of four geometric designs, comprising two circular figures, a square superimposed upon a square, and a rhomb superimposed upon an oblong. There, four figures are carved in very bold relief, and are stylistically linked by the similarity of their beaded structures. Their purpose was to explain the cosmic harmony within God's Work of Foundation in the macrocosm and the microcosm, and to present its numerical basis. The two chief literary sources then current were the Latin translation by Boethius of the neo-Pythagorean *Introduction to Arithmetic* of Nicomachus of Gerasa, written at the end of the first century AD, and Plato's *Timaeus*. Both of these books were standard works known in the monastic and cathedral schools of the twelfth century, and they were supplemented by a limited number of commentaries - of which the chief were Chalcidius' *Commentary on the Timaeus* and a brief account of Platonic theory contained in Macrobius' *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio*, written towards the end of the fourth century.

Twelfth-century copies of Nicomachus contain elaborate diagrams relating his theory of number to the Pythagorean theory of harmony. A fine example in a manuscript now in Cambridge University Library uses red, green, purple and black inks to show how the ratios between sameness and difference are manifest in musical harmony.

In this chapter we shall give an account of the cosmology to which these carvings refer, and their Platonic and neo-Pythagorean derivation, with the evidence for their identification as illustrations of the harmony of the four elements of the macrocosm. This will be supported also by reference to contemporary and parallel examples with inscriptions.

The circular design carved between the two rectangles on the Hampstead Norreys font bowl must now be compared with a similar design of late twelfth century date, from Abbess Herrad's *Hortus Deliciarum* (Plate 54) for there we find an exact correspondence between the font circle and its interlacing arcs. In the lowest segment of the circle in the manuscript there are numbers (3 x 3) associated with the word "terra". In the corresponding segment of the carved circle on the font there is a foliated head, which, despite repair, was obviously intended to be a form of the vegetative Earth, later called "the Green Man". In the contiguous section to the right, Abbess Herrad had inscribed "Ignis" and this is matched in the font circle by a little screaming figure with outstretched arms and upstanding hair. (Plate 63A). An exactly similar screaming figure with flaming hair is carved on the other side of the font bowl where it is held in the clutches of the satanic Dragon, the Devil, in the scene of Christ's descent into Hades (Plate 46). Now the upstanding hair, so conspicuous in both these little figures, is a common motive in the twelfth century illustrations of the Devil and the damned, representing the fire of Hell. Examples occur on the capitals of the nave and narthex at Vézelay, dated between 1096 and 1120, and at Autun, dated about 1140 (Plate 42). Another example is to be seen in the late *Anglo-Saxon Psalter*, now in the British Library (Tib. C V1, f.10v) where the Tempter's hair leaps up as flames. (Plate 43). In view of the other correspondences it is evident that this screaming figure represents Fire in the position corresponding to Ignis in the manuscript. There is nothing by which we can identify the two other heads in the carved circle, but, the establishment of Earth and Fire within it, imply that they are Air above Earth, and Water opposite Fire. It can, however, be objected that the correct position for the element Fire, as described by Plato in his *Timaeus* should be above that of Earth, since Fire was the lightest and Earth the heaviest of the two primary elements, while Air and Water held intermediate positions between them. Why then did the Abbess transpose the position of Fire with Air and why was the same transposition made by the carver, and by nearly all the scribes who copied the same cosmological

schemata of the four elements, in manuscripts of Isidore's *De Natura Rerum* (Plate 55)

The original cause of this adjustment, I think, lies in the influence of Augustine's famous *City of God*, a book which was read more widely than any other of his works. In this book Augustine described the arguments of the Platonists, his contemporaries, who denied the possibility of the resurrection and ascension of the body into heaven, on the grounds that the predetermined order of the Elements made it impossible. Augustine gives his reply, proving (to his own satisfaction) that such an ascension is possible, since the bodies of birds fly through Air, while Fire issues from the Earth in volcanoes, and he ends his proof by asking;

"Why then, may we not believe that the nature of the corruptible body may be made incorruptible and fit for heaven, when we see the element of Fire made corruptible and fit for us?"

There is, however, no doubt that in the twelfth century the correct Platonic position of the four elements, as described in the *Timaeus*, was familiar to schoolmen and it had even been illustrated in the "In Principio" page of the *St. Hubert Bible*, about 1070 (4). A general conformity to Augustine's argument seems the most likely cause of the transposition of Fire and Air, in these circular schemata of the Harmony of the Elements, for they were first used in manuscripts of *De Natura Rerum* of Isidore of Seville (Plate 55), in which, as Isidore himself stated, he had "cleared up certain obscurities about the Elements by studying the works of the Fathers of the Church, as well as those of the Philosopher." (5)

But such circular diagrams were indeed visual instruments devised, as Dr. Bober has pointed out, in a long pedagogic tradition, which could be used and understood independently of the texts with which they were associated (6) so that whole chapters could be written round them. And, although they are first found in the early MSS of Isidore's *De Natura Rerum*, there is evidence to show that they were much older. In the eleventh and twelfth centuries they were current in England also in a type of school-book (Plate 62) compiled of excerpts from the scientific works of Isidore (570-636), Bede (672-735) and Abbo Fleury, Abbot of Benoît-sur-Loire (945-1004). The first centre of diffusion of this class of compilation was probably the newly founded monastery of Ramsey, twelve miles south east of Peterborough, where for a few years Abbo had worked to organise its monastic school, before being recalled to Fleury, and some fine rota diagrams of the Macrocosmic-Microcosmic harmonies are to be found in such illustrated school books subsequently copied in England. (7)

From this evidence there seems no reason to doubt that the circular design carved on the font bowl from Hampstead Norreys between the two rectangular

figures (Plate 63A and Plate 44) was a commonly recognisable statement of the Macrocosmic Harmony within God's Work of Foundation. Similar designs occur on a number of twelfth century English fonts, as at Braybrooke and Aston le Walls, Northants (where their flattened framework suggests that they were intended for inscriptions. Other examples occur at Preston, Suffolk, East Dean, Sussex; Bisley, Gloucestershire Mears Ashby and Thornby; Northants; at Mylor, Cornwall and elsewhere (all Plate 78). In association with the superimposed squares, the same design occurs not only upon the font bowl from Hampstead Norreys but also on the fonts of Sculthorpe and Toftrees, Norfolk (Plate 78) and on the voussoirs of the (rebuilt) western arch of St. Peter's, Northampton. Other instances of its use occur on the tessellated floor of the Lady Chapel of Old Sarum Cathedral, built 1107-1139, where it covered the whole pavement in front of the altar (8). But its earliest English examples are to be found on the Anglian crosses of Northumbria of the late tenth century, in areas where the scholarship of Bede and Alcuin of York (735-804) cannot have wholly been forgotten, despite the devastations of the Norse invaders. Examples of the same schematic figures, unfortunately described by W.G.Collingwood (9) as "Scandinavian ring knots", are carved on such standing crosses at Melling in Lonsdale, Lancaster, Ureswick, Aspatria; Bromfield; Kirklevington and at Maenychwyfan, all dated by Collingwood to the tenth century.

The same design is carved on the seats of the bishops and kings in the set of whalebone chessmen of twelfth century date found in the Isle of Lewis (Plate 78q) (10) and on a slab in the Orkneys at Holm. Nevertheless, such designs cannot be described as of Scandinavian origin, since examples are found in Christian contexts much earlier elsewhere. An interesting survival of a very close parallel to the same design on the seats of the chessmen exists in the fifteenth century manuscript from Ethiopia, where Christ and the Bridegroom, in the Marriage of Cana (11), are depicted sitting on almost identically decorated stools. The survival of such diagrammatic designs in Ethiopia points to the conservative character of the Coptic Church and is confirmed by its recurrence on a carved wooden arch from the ruins of the very ancient church of Yeha near Addis Ababa (12).

The persistent association of the circular design with cosmic harmony is also implied by its use, as a suitable adornment for the seats of temporal and celestial power; and this is confirmed by its occurrence on the four arms of a cross on a wooden door, dating probably from the early twelfth century, from the Priory of La Voulte-Chilhac, Haute-Loire, erected sometime after the death of Abbot Odile of Cluny. Here the four designs are carved above an inscription, partially destroyed, which reads:

HIC VBI REX REGNUM HOC CONDIDIT ODILO TEMPLUM AGMINIBUS SUPERIS QUEM
MISCVIT AEBITER ORBIS ...

(Here O King of Kings, where Odilo, whom the ruler of the World has joined to the company of Heaven, founded this church)

Odilo died in 1049, as ruler of the great monastery of Cluny (13) and the wording certainly suggests that a connection between the harmony of Earth and Heaven was intended to be reflected in the use of these four diagrammatic designs (14).

The same design is carved upon a Christian memorial stele dated seventh - eighth century, from the North African coast, above a standing figure whose arms are raised in prayer (Plate 61). Over his head is a large equal-armed cross, flanked by two identical circular figures which, from their size and position may be assumed to represent schemata of the harmony of the Microcosm and the Macrocosm (15).

Earlier examples of the same design in a Christian context occur, though very rarely, on mosaic floors of churches, dated by inscriptions to the late fourth century. But as yet there is insufficient evidence to establish their earliest use and derivation. One early example may be seen on the floor of the Baptistry in front of the font in Kaousie church, at Antioch in the Orontes (16), and others are to be found in a mosaic near the altar of the ruined church of Zahrani, Libya, dated about 389 (17) and in a mosaic floor of the church of Ss Cosmas and Damian of Gerasa of about the same date (18) (Plate 69).

All that can at present be said about the earliest appearance of these circular motifs is that they are occasionally found on mosaic floors - before their occurrence on Isidore of Seville's cosmological treatise and that they first occur coincidentally with the neo-Platonist developments of Hellenistic philosophy in the first five centuries of the Christian era, and that they reappear in the twelfth century in the ecclesiastical arts on both sides of the English Channel during the neo-Platonic renaissance at the school of Chartres. They cease to be used in the decoration of English fonts after the twelfth century.

I have so far found only one instance of the design used in the twelfth century as an initial letter for the name of God (19) but such a use is entirely appropriate when it is recalled that the *Animis Mundi* of Plato's *Timaeus* was itself the Harmony of the Universe, identified by some of the schoolmen of Chartres with the Third Person of the Christian Trinity.

From the foregoing evidence there is no doubt that the circular design carved upon the Hampstead Norreys font bowl was intended as an illustration of the Harmony of the Macrocosm. One may therefore assume that the corresponding circle in the same sculptured sequence illustrated the Harmony of the Microcosm

(Plate 63B). Unfortunately a large lateral crack surrounding the bowl crosses this part of the design, necessitating a patch of new stone, on which is an intrusion of three human heads of more recent date (Plate 83 and Plate 84). There is, therefore no means of identifying the original quaternity which this circular schema must also once have contained. It does, however, provide valuable stylistic evidence of the provenance of the font bowl, which is discussed in Appendix 3. Nevertheless, the very distinctive structure of such cosmological schemata made them as easily recognisable even to illiterate laymen of the twelfth century, as is the Union Jack today to thousands who have no knowledge of its components. Indeed it is essential to realise that the symbolism of the twelfth century was a visual vernacular, and a living language, sufficiently ubiquitous to allow for individual ingenuity in its expression. Like all living languages, it admitted and even encouraged the equation of symbols, which run together, like clustering bubbles blown by the breath of a common faith and a shared devotion. Such symbolism, in its adaptability, soars beyond the reach of our myopic modern vision, when we limit out pedestrian researches to stylistic parallels, and the study of their diffusion, forgetful of that spirit we no longer understand.

THE NEO-PLATONIC AND PYTHAGOREAN THEORY OF NUMBER AS THE BASIS OF CREATION

In order to understand the significance of the circular and rectangular designs carved upon the Hampstead Norreys font bowl (Plate 63), a brief account of the theory of Number as the basis of existence must here be considered. Its original development was Pythagorean but its most elaborate expression was found in Plato's *Timaeus*. By the beginning of the Christian era it had become inextricably mixed with neo-Platonic philosophy in the Hellenistic culture of the Greco-Roman world, and the early Christian Fathers, who had inherited this cosmology, made use of it to demonstrate the Work of God's Foundation of the Universe. Through these written works supplemented by the comparatively few classical authors whose cosmological commentaries survived, the twelfth century received its scientific inheritance in a strange mixture of mathematics and theology.

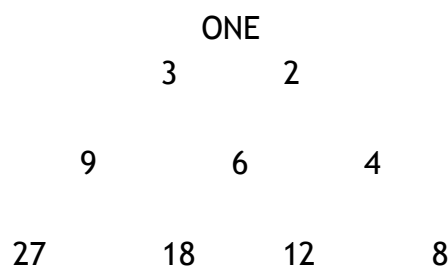
We have, in fact a syllabus of the arithmetical studies of the *Quadrivium*, written by Alain of Lille (1121-1203) in his poem, the *Anti-Claudian*. His source-book was Boethius' translation of the Greek neo-Pythagorean *Introduction to Arithmetic*; among his older twelfth century contemporaries were the men who carved the Hampstead Norreys font bowl and had probably followed the same studies in their own monastic and cathedral schools.

"Figures, though mute, vaunt the entire art of numbering," wrote Alain of Lille "What is virtue in mathematics, what is law, what is relationship, what order, bond, affinity, reason, compact and harmony; in what manner Number builds things in concord, combines separate things, rules the world, orders the globe, moving the stars and tying together the elements, and marrying souls to bodies, earth to heaven, the celestial to the transitory; in what manner it was the principle, end, exemplar, and form and seal to the birth of the World, and the creation of things, according to the pattern of which the Idea of Deity stamped forms on things and shaped the World; How the principle of Number, the fount, mother, origin, is a MONAD, and the unique Monad of Number, producing of itself multitude; Why the far-seeing doctrine may portray soul, heaven, reason, happiness, under an UNEVEN number; why an EVEN number signifies body, feeling, and lamentable death, and may even speak of a worse fate ..." (20)

It is apparent from this strange summary of arithmetical studies that students might start with discussions concerning multiplication, addition and ratios - but end with a consideration of the prospects of Hell - or the music of the spheres.

In the many copies of Boethius' *De Institutione Arithmetica* in use in the schools throughout the Middle Ages, there occurs a Lambda diagram (Plate 64, Plate 65 and Plate 66) dating probably from the 4th century B.C. (21) and demonstrating the Pythagorean theories of the flow of Number from its source. Since we shall be concerned with this theory in identifying the figures carved upon the font bowl from Hampstead Norreys, a brief account of it must here be given.

The Lambda Diagram



In the Lambda diagram we have a statement of the flow of number in two opposing streams, of the Odd and the Even. The source of both streams is the One, the Monad, in which all number was said to be potentially existent. Behind this statement lies the very ancient Greek theory, deriving from Pythagoras (c 585-479 BC) and developed by Plato (428-348/7 BC), concerning the numerical basis of Creation and the reconciliation of all its opposing polarities by mean terms. These means, while incorporating the nature of both extremes, combined them with a third term in harmonious relationships. Thus, by the nature of its basic construction in number, the world's body and soul were said to be the living expression of the

harmony ordained by the Creator. From the Sameness of the One, therefore, Number flowed out into difference and multiplicity without limit, through the Dyadic principle, whose first manifestation was the number 2 in the series of the even numbers. The establishment of a limit, and therefore of order and form upon this otherwise boundless and divergent flow was achieved by measure and dimension. For the One, being pure potentiality, was likened to a mathematical point beyond all dimension. The first dimension, a line bounded by two points, expressed the emergence of the Dyadic Principle from the Unity of the One. The number 3, being the first in the series of odd numbers, gave the first plane figure, a triangle composed of three points. And since 3 was composed of 1+2 it combined the Monadic and Dyadic principles with a mean term, thus exhibiting an internal unity of threefold origin, and was regarded as the first actual number.

But the geometric nature of Number became apparent in its capacity to generate other numbers by self-multiplication; and upon this Trinity of 1, 2, 3, the whole universe could be said to be constructed.

For the first squares were the products of 2 squared and 3 squared, in the even and the odd streams of number, while $2 \times 2 \times 2$, and $3 \times 3 \times 3$ produced the first cubic (solid) numbers with three dimensions.

The achievement of dimension thus became the immaterial basis for the elements of matter and these elements were, as Plato explained, necessarily four in number, being Fire, Earth, Air and Water in the form of four geometric solids, each one constructed of triangular atoms. The 'fullness' or 'perfection' of number was thus achieved by its cubic state through self-multiplication and the cube, as Macrobius pointed out, could be imagined as two equal squares, one superimposed upon the other by the addition of altitude - a fact of considerable importance for our study of font carvings.

THE MONAD

The Monad was identified with the One, and therefore with God (22), and since all numbers were potentially within the One, number itself was seen to be the Form of all forms, dwelling like thought in the Divine Mind. But the Monad was also changeless in its internal unity and equality, and stood in opposition to the Dyad, as spirit is opposed to matter. For the cubic state of One was unique among all numbers, in its self-multiplication, which produced nothing greater than itself, as $1 \times 1 \times 1 = 1$. The Monad was therefore called the Same, and because of its unchanging equality it was the exemplar of perfection. From the One all the odd numbers also derived their Monadic characteristics, which were seen in the fact that when the odd numbers, starting from 1, are added together, the result is always a square number. For example:

$$1 + 3 = 4; \quad 1 + 3 + 5 = 9; \quad 1 + 3 + 5 + 7 = 16 \quad \text{and so on.}$$

Thus in the cubic state of all numbers the Monadic qualities of sameness and equality are always to be found in their dimensions.

THE DYAD

In contradistinction to the Monad, the Dyad was seen to be the origin of all inequality, boundlessness, plurality and difference. As the origin of matter it could produce only unlimited formlessness and chaos, and from it flowed all the even numbers, starting with 2. Since the Dyad was also the first separation from the unity of the One, it came to be regarded by the Pythagoreans and later by the Christians as the sign for sin (23). But as a confirmation of the inequality of the indeterminate Dyad, it was also discovered that the addition of all even numbers, starting with 2, produced only unequal (oblong) numbers, for example:

$$\begin{array}{r}
 2 + 4 = 6 \\
 * * * \\
 * * *
 \end{array}
 \qquad
 \begin{array}{r}
 2 + 4 + 6 + 8 = 20 \\
 * * * * * * * * * * \\
 * * * * * * * * * *
 \end{array}$$

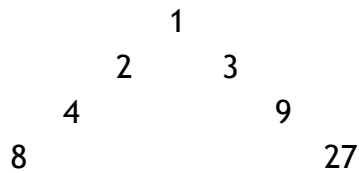
Nevertheless, since all opposites and extremes must be brought into harmony with one another, the bonds which should unite them must partake of the nature of both. And the most perfect bond, according to Plato, "is that which makes itself and the terms it connects into a unity in the fullest sense". This bond was found in continued geometric proportion in the sesquialter. ('sesquialter' = one and a half times).

But, as Plato said, only one bond or mean term was required to unite plane figures and that which best unites (2 squared and 3 squared is 6); since 4: 6 = 6: 9. But two bonds are necessary in the case of cubic (solid) numbers such as (2 cubed and 3 cubed). These are found in the same ratio:

$$(8: 12) = (12: 18) = (18: 27)$$

This is clearly demonstrated in the Lambda diagram.

Through proportion therefore, the opposing streams of the odd and the even numbers were brought into a harmonious relationship, in the series 1, 3, 9, 27 and 2, 4, 8, of which the Monad and the Dyad were the respective principles. But the mixture arising out of these seven numbers also brought about the generation of the World Soul, as Plato had described it, in which Sameness and Difference were combined with existence.



Upon such ancient theories therefore, the schoolmen of the twelfth century continued to build their philosophic speculations and the illuminated pages of their books and Bibles, as well as the carvings on their fonts, bear witness to a deep concern with this cosmology and its theoretical implications (24).

Leaving aside the deceptive simplicity of Plato's "likely story" of the creation of the universe - we should remember in reading it that he considered Geometry to be "a knowledge of the eternally existent" (25) and that although an elementary study of geometry was of incidental utility in practical affairs, its advanced study was a necessary means towards "a comprehension of the essential Form of Goodness". For the sake of brevity, Plato in the *Timaeus* left some of the more abstruse geometrical arguments to be recognised only by those mathematicians "favoured by the Gods", while he contented himself with the deceptively simple statement that exactly four elements were necessary for the construction of the world's body; Fire, being the lightest, most mobile, was first necessary to give visibility, and Earth, being the heaviest, was necessary to give tangible stability; and since the world was to be solid and spherical rather than a plane surface, two mean terms were required for the harmonisation of its polarities. Air and Water thus fulfilled the function of the mean terms between Fire and Earth; and their qualities (hot, cold, wet, dry) also served as common interchangeable bonds to link the four elements together. Moreover, since Plato had assigned to the four elements the forms of the four geometric solids, each was capable of measurement and dimension. To the first element, Fire, Plato allotted the first geometric solid, the pyramid, as being the lightest, and this was associated, as in the Lambda diagram, with a 2 cubed (eight). To Earth, below Fire, he gave the Cube as being the most stable, associated with 3 cubed (twenty-seven); while the intermediate elements, Air and Water, received the geometric forms of the octahedron and the icosahedron, and the numbers 12 and 18 respectively, as the two requisite means for the reconciliation of the polarities.

This arrangement was beautifully illustrated in the illuminated "In Principio" page at the beginning of the Book of Genesis, in the Bible of St. Hubert, from the Meuse area about 1070 (26). In the centre of the page is the figure of Christ-Logos, designated by the Alpha and the Omega, and Lux. Around the figure of the Creator are grouped the personified Four Elements, with their associated numerals, in the correct Platonic order. (27)

| | |
|--------------|--------------|
| Ignis | |
| Bis Bina Bis | |
| V111 | |
| Aer | Aqua |
| Bis Bina Ter | Ter Tria Bis |
| X11 | XV111 |
| Terra | |
| Ter Tria Ter | |
| XXV11 | |

THE ETHICAL VALUE OF THE SQUARE AND THE OBLONG

It is now necessary to consider the ethical values which the Pythagoreans had attached to the square and oblong figures. Nicomachus of Gerasa had emphasised the basic principle of Number in the harmony of the cosmos:

"All that has by Nature and with systematic method been arranged in the universe seems both in part and as a whole to have been determined and ordered in accordance with Number, by the forethought and the Mind of Him who created all things. For the pattern was fixed like a preliminary sketch, by the domination of Number pre-existent in the Mind of the World-creating God; Number conceptual only and immaterial in every way, but at the same time true and the eternal essence; so that with reference to it, as to some artistic plan, should be created all those things, Time and Motion, the Heavens, the Stars and all sorts of Revolutions ..." (28)

But it was seen that the generation of number was also three-form in its methods, producing two classes of numbers characterised by their equality and inequality respectively; while a third way, by combining something of both extremes, provided a Mean between them. Thus, apart from the unique self-generation of 1, which produced no change, nor any number greater than itself, we have to consider these three modes in the generation of numbers.

- (a) Numbers may be generated by self-multiplication. These produce numbers greater than themselves but of the same equality in all their dimensions.

Examples:

| | | | |
|-------|------------------|-----------|------------------------------|
| * * | | * * * * * | |
| * * | $2 \times 2 = 4$ | * * * * * | |
| * * * | | * * * * * | |
| * * * | | * * * * * | |
| * * * | $3 \times 3 = 9$ | * * * * * | |
| | | * * * * * | |
| | | * * * * * | |
| | | * * * * * | |
| | | * * * * * | $9 \times 9 = 81$ and so on. |

The result of self multiplication is always a square.

- b) Numbers which are multiplied by others greater than themselves by more than 1, produce numbers of unlimited inequality in their dimensions.

These are the oblong numbers, as for example:

| | |
|-----------------|--------------|
| * * | |
| * * | |
| * * | |
| * * | 4×2 |
| | |
| * * * * * | |
| * * * * * | |
| * * * * * | 3×6 |
| | |
| * * * * * * * * | |
| * * * * * * * * | |
| * * * * * * * * | |
| * * * * * * * * | 4×8 |

c) Numbers whose sides differ only by 1. Though a kind of oblong, they are distinguished as heteromecic, for example:

1. 2; 2. 3; 3. 4; 4. 5; which are 2, 6, 12, 20, and so on

* * *
* * * 2. 3

* * * *
* * * *
* * * * 3. 4

* * * * *
* * * * *
* * * * *
* * * * * 4. 5

"But whereas the two kinds of numbers, the cube and the scalene, are extremes, the one extended equally in every dimension, and the other unequally, the heteromecic numbers are means between them." (29)

The Pythagoreans had also discovered the ratios of length in the monochord which produced the perfect consonances of the musical scale, namely 1.2 which gives the octave, 2.3 which gives the 5th and 3.4 which gives the 4th, but the octave ratio was accepted as the most perfect and comprehensive expression of musical harmony. Its geometric expression was a heteromecic rectangle whose sides differ by 1. Indeed the harmonic proportion was contained in the numbers 3, 4, 6, which form the basis of the octave (3:6), the 5th (4:6), and the 4th (3.4). The ratios of the 4th and 5th can thus be seen to be contained within the octave. But Nicomachus also explained that the first three proportions acknowledged by Pythagoras, Plato and Aristotle were the Arithmetic, the Geometric and the Harmonic: and that the Harmonic stood as a mean between the other two.

"The Harmonic proportion was so called", he wrote, "because the Arithmetic proportion was distinguished by quantity, showing an equality in this respect with the intervals from one term to another; and the Geometric by quality, giving similar qualitative relations between one term and another. But the Harmonic form, with reference to relativity, appears now in one form and now in another, neither in its terms exclusively, nor in its differences exclusively - but partly in the terms, and partly in the differences ..." (30)

From this it is clear that the mean between the square and the oblong could be equated with the mean between the opposing Monadic and Dyadic principles.

The ethical values initially ascribed by the Pythagoreans to the square and the oblong can be seen from the decadic list of opposites quoted by Aristotle. In this list the expression of the Monadic and Dyadic elements in creation are apparent:

| | |
|----------|---------------|
| Limit | The Unlimited |
| Odd | Even |
| Unity | Plurality |
| Right | Left |
| Male | Female |
| Rest | Motion |
| Straight | Crooked |
| Light | Darkness |
| Good | Evil |
| Square | Oblong |

(31)

From this list it will be seen that the Monadic characteristics in the square are also expressions of the idea of the Good, whilst the Dyadic inequalities within the oblong are seen as equivalent to Evil but since all opposites must be harmonised by mean terms, the Mean between the square and the oblong must be found not only in that number whose sides differ by 1 but also in a Mean between good and evil.

Augustine of Hippo, whose vocabulary abounded in neo-Pythagorean terms, made very effective use of this in his description of God Incarnate as a Mean between the human and divine. Thus, the Pythagorean concepts of a Mediator or Balance were ascribed to Christ. For as Pope Gregory 1 (540-604) was later to remark, "What else is meant by the title of the Balance, but this Mediator between God and man, who came to weigh the merit of our life and brought down with him justice and loving kindness together?" (32)

Within this context also Augustine explained the death of Jesus as "single", of the body only, in contrast to the "double" death of the body and soul of sinful man. This he described as the octave ratio of 1: 2, and the mediation of Christ as harmony. Such an association of ideas would have been understood by Augustine's contemporaries, who were already familiar with the Platonic and Pythagorean theory of the transmigration of souls.

This "double" death was explained by Macrobius as the state that befell a pre-existent soul when it entered into the "perishable region and abode of

mortality (the body) and became imprisoned therein as in a tomb". But "when it frees itself from this taint of evil and from bodily passions, it returns to the splendour of everlasting life". The "double" death occurred to souls so engrossed in the body that they did not escape with the body's death. (33) It is most probable though that the belief in the descent into Hades originated in Old Testament texts such as Psalm 139 v.8 or Jonah, chapter 2, reinforced by the pre-Christian Platonic concept of the soul's descent into matter.

"Therefore," said Augustine, "the Singleness, Sameness and Oneness of Christ cancels the doubleness and unlikeness of sinful man ... for this answerableness or concord or consonance, or whatever more appropriate word there is, whereby 1 is to 2, is of great compacting or co-adaptation of the creature. For what I mean is precisely that co-adaptation which the Greeks called Harmony." (34)

And here we should notice that the terms, "Sameness", "Oneness", etc used by Augustine, are all Platonic or Pythagorean expressions of the Monadic principle, contrasted with the sinful connotations of the Dyad.

Augustine could therefore claim to be doubly justified in his description of Christ as Mediator, and as the Harmony discoverable in the octave ratio, since on Plato's authority it was generally held that, "The soul is derived from musical concords, the first of which, the octave, contains the two others, the 4th and the 5th." (35)

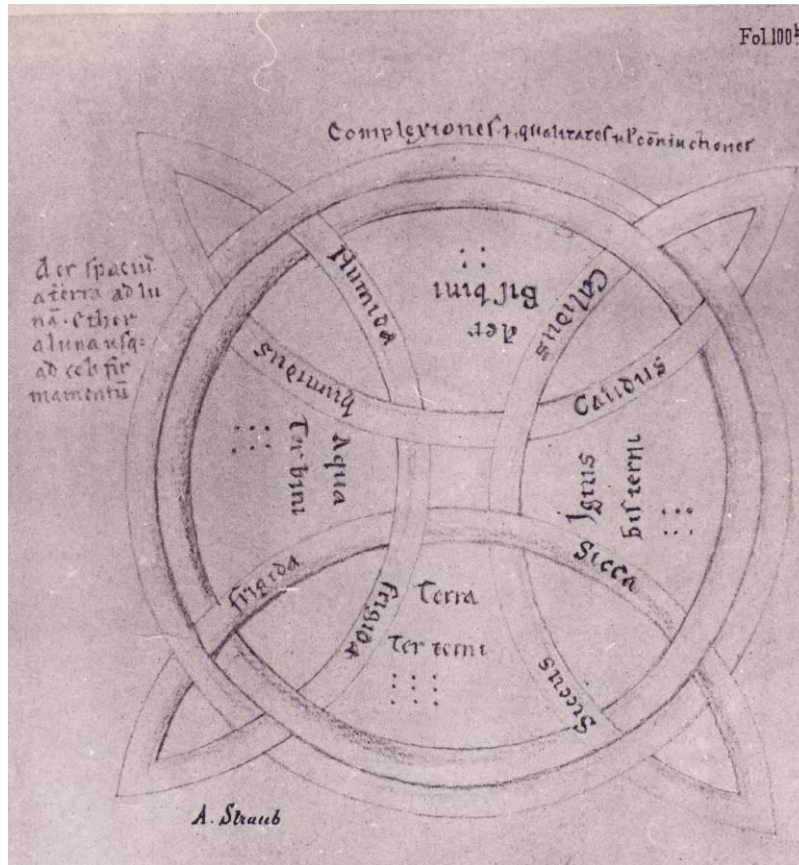


Plate 54 THE HARMONY OF THE CREATED UNIVERSE

A cosmological diagram from ABBESS HERRAD'S *HORTUS DELICARUM*, written c. 1167 - 1195, showing the cyclical interaction of the qualities of the Four Elements as described in Plato's *TIMAEUS*.

"... God when putting together the universe, made it of Fire and Earth. But it is not possible to combine two things properly without a third to act as a bond to hold them together. The best bond is one that effects the closest unity between itself and the terms it is combining; and this is best done by continued geometric proportion ... So God placed Air and Water between Fire and Earth, and made them so far as possible proportional to one another, so that Air is to Water as Water is to Earth, and in this way He bound the world into a visible and tangible whole. So by this means and from these four constituents the body of the universe was created to be at unity, owing to proportion; in consequence it acquired concord"

Plato. *TIMAEUS* 31b 31c

". A suitable shape for a living being that was to contain all living beings would be a figure that contains all possible figures within itself. Therefore He turned it into a rounded spherical shape, with extremes equidistant in all directions from the centre. It was designed to supply its own nourishment from its own decay, and to comprise and cause all processes ..."

Plato. *TIMAEUS* 33.34

Warburg Institute photo

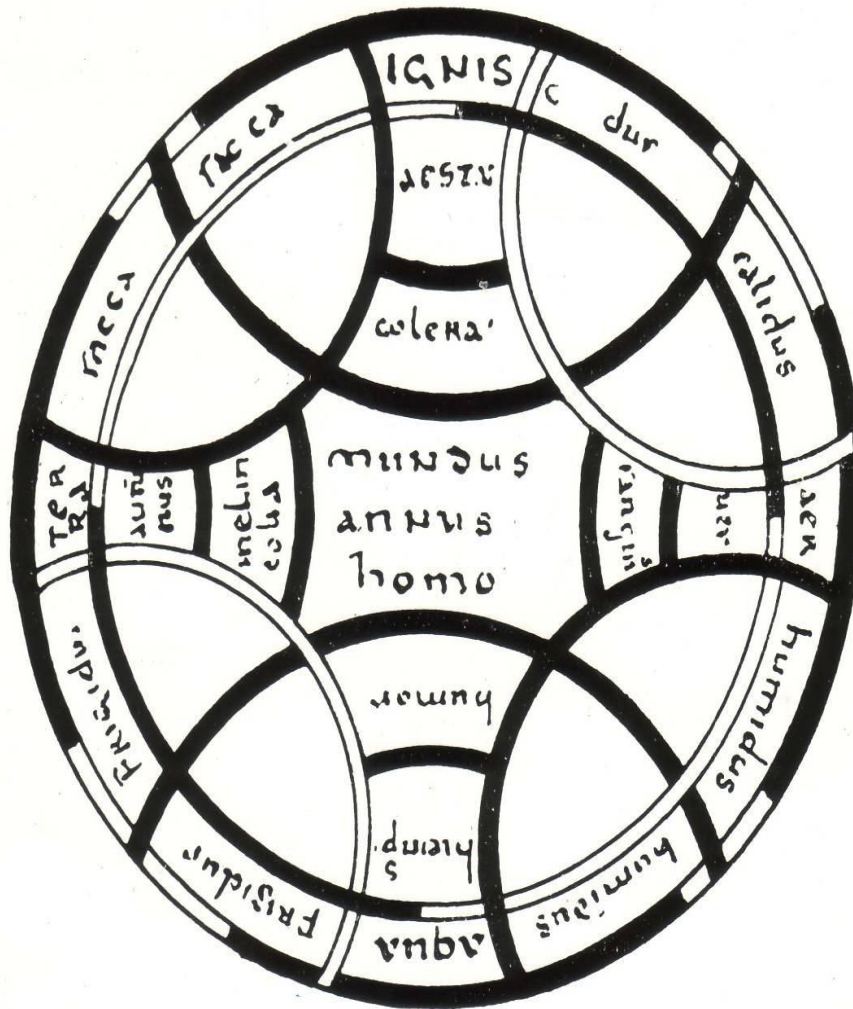


Plate 55 ISIDORE OF SEVILLE: *DE NATURA RERUM*
8TH CENTURY

The diagram shows the Universe, the Year and Man with the Four Elements, the Seasons and the Humours. Each is linked by a pair of properties - dry, wet, hot and cold.

Warburg photo. Isidore of Seville, *Traité de la Nature* Bordeaux 1966 XI. 3 (fig) 216 bis.



Plate 56 WILLIAM OF CONCHES: PHILOSOPHIA MUNDI written c. 1180 - 1125

William of Conches was an extreme Platonist and his commentary [56] on the *Timaeus* was read in the Faculty of Arts in the School of Paris up till 1255.

Paris Bibliothèque National



Plate 57 LAMBERT OF ST. OMER: *LIBER FLORIDUS* c. 1120

Diagram of the year, night and day, the lunar month, winds and seasons

Ghent Bibliothèque de l'Université. MS 92 f. 28



Plate 58 LAMBERT OF ST. OMER: *LIBER FLORIDUS* c. 1120

Ghent Bibliothèque de l'Université. MS 92 f.23



Plate 59 FRAMEWORK OF A COSMOLOGICAL DIAGRAM ENGRAVED ON A PILLAR BEHIND THE HIGH ALTAR OF COUTANCE CATHEDRAL, NORMANDY

The cathedral was built originally by William the Conqueror and rebuilt in 1200 - 1225.

The signet used by the Warburg Institute is taken from a wood-cut in the edition of the *De natura rerum* of Isidore of Seville (560-636) printed at Augsburg in 1472. In that work it accompanies a quotation from the *Hexameron* of St. Ambrose (III. xlv) describing the interrelation of the four elements of which the world is made, with their two pairs of opposing qualities, hot and cold, moist and dry. Earth is linked to water by the common quality of cold, water to air by the quality of moisture, air to fire by heat and fire to earth by dryness. Following a doctrine that can be traced back to the Hippocratic physiology, the diagram adds the four seasons of the year and the four humours of man to complete the image of cosmic harmonies that both inspired and retarded the further search for natural laws.



Plate 60 CONCENTRIC CIRCLES INTERLACED WITH ARCS

Warburg Institute Signet



Plate 61 A Christian memorial stone, probably from Carthage - 7th or 8th century showing the Cross flanked by the two circles of the Harmony of the Macrocosm and the Microcosm

"God never ceases to listen to the inward converse of the heart ... for this reason we also raise the head and lift the hands towards heaven, and stand on tip-toe as we join in the closing outburst of prayer, following the eager flight of the Spirit into the intelligible world; while we endeavour to detach the body from the earth by lifting it upward along with the uttered words; we spurn the fetters of the flesh and constrain the soul, winged with desire of better things, to ascend into the Holy place ... "

CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA (c. 150 - 215 AD), *STROMATEIS*, Book 7 111- 40

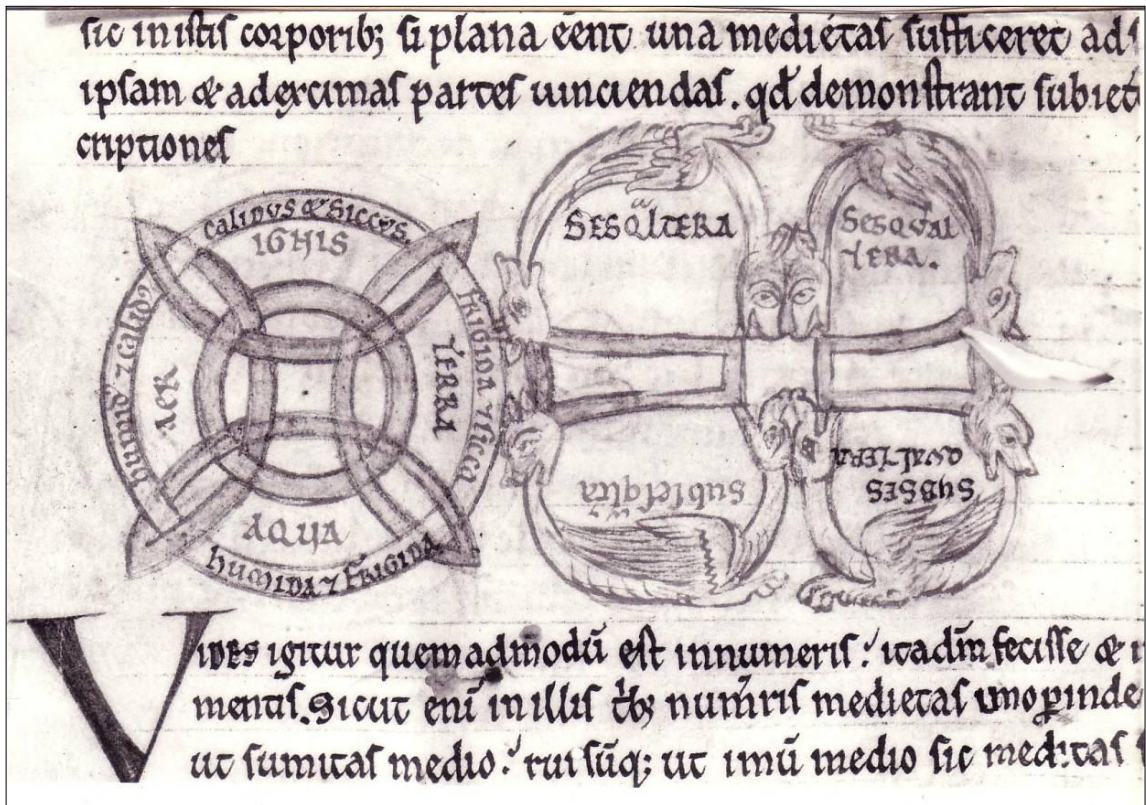


Plate 62 An illustration from an English manuscript of the third quarter of the 12th century containing a compilation of extracts from PLINY, ISIDORE OF SEVILLE and ABBO OF FLEURY

Compare this double circle of the qualities of the four elements in the macrocosm and the microcosm with a parallel example on the mosaic floor of an early Christian church at Dea (Die) in the French department of the Drome.

THE GEOMETRIC DESIGNS ON THE FONT BOWL
from HAMPSTEAD NORREYS

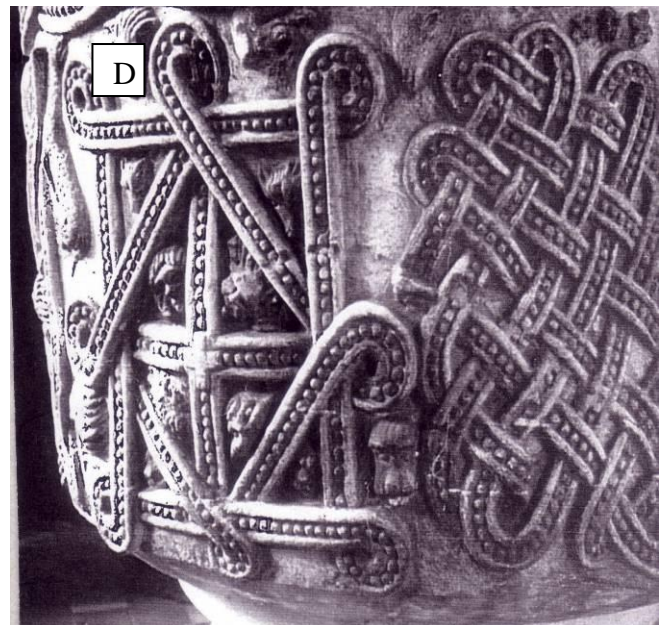
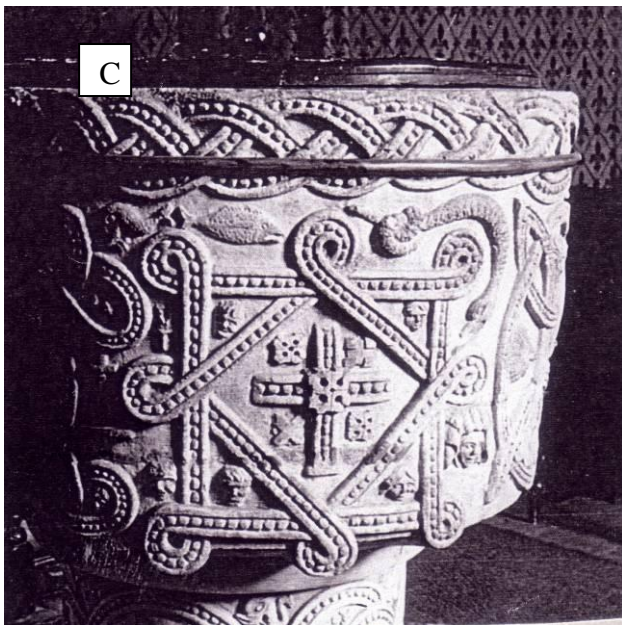
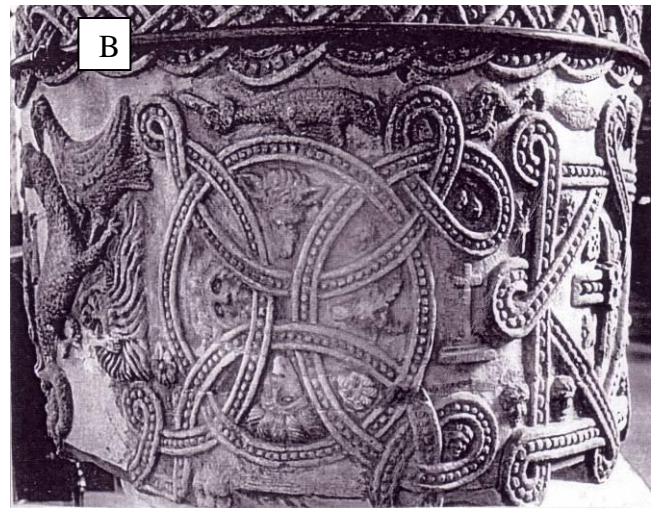
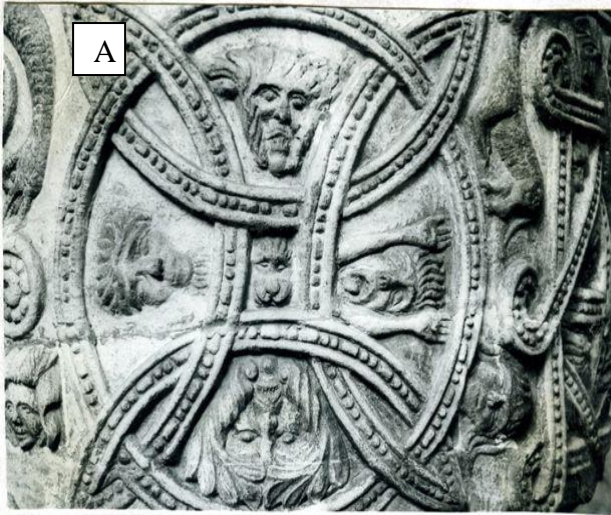


Plate 63

- A. CIRCLE interlaced with its arcs: the Macrocosm with the four elements.
- B. CIRCLE with its arcs double-looped: probably the Microcosm.
- C. SQUARE ON A SQUARE: the perfection of number: a cube represented as two superimposed squares.
- D. RHOMB ON AN OBLONG: probably harmonic proportion, reconciling good and evil.



Plate 64 LAMBDA DIAGRAM

With two numerical series on a page headed “*DE MUNDI ANIMA*” with the rubric “*PLATO’S SPHERE OF THE WORLD SOUL*”.

The capital Greek letter Lambda is written as an equilateral triangle or as an inverted V. LAMBERT OF ST. OMER: *Liber Floridus* c.1120

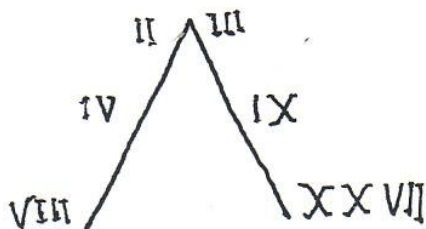
Ghent University Library MS 92 f.230



**Plate 65 "Thou hast created all things in measure and weight"
(Wisdom of Solomon 11: 20)**

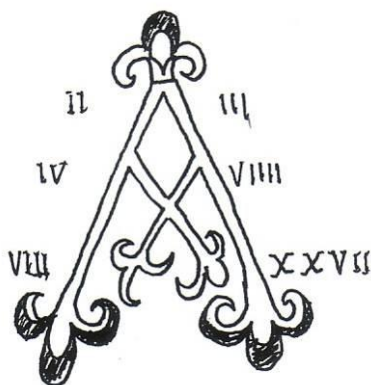
The two pipes blown by the Creator form a LAMBDA DIAGRAM and the dots seem to indicate a numerical series. An illustration from a mid 11th century Anglo-Norman Psalter.

British Library



The usual version of the lambda diagram in 12th century Mss, eg William of Conches' gloss on PLATO'S *TIMAEUS* and BOETHIUS' *ARITHMETICA*

British Library: Add 11942. fol. 43



In one manuscript of the *Timaeus*, the numerals of the lambda surround the letter A for the beginning of number with reference to Revelation 22: 13, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end."

British Library: Add. 11942. fol.13



Version of the lambdoid figure from a 12th century Ms of MACROBIUS' *SOMNIUM SCIPIONIS*

British Library: Add 11942

Plate 66 Sketches of Lambdoid figures copied from a page in a MS in the British Library

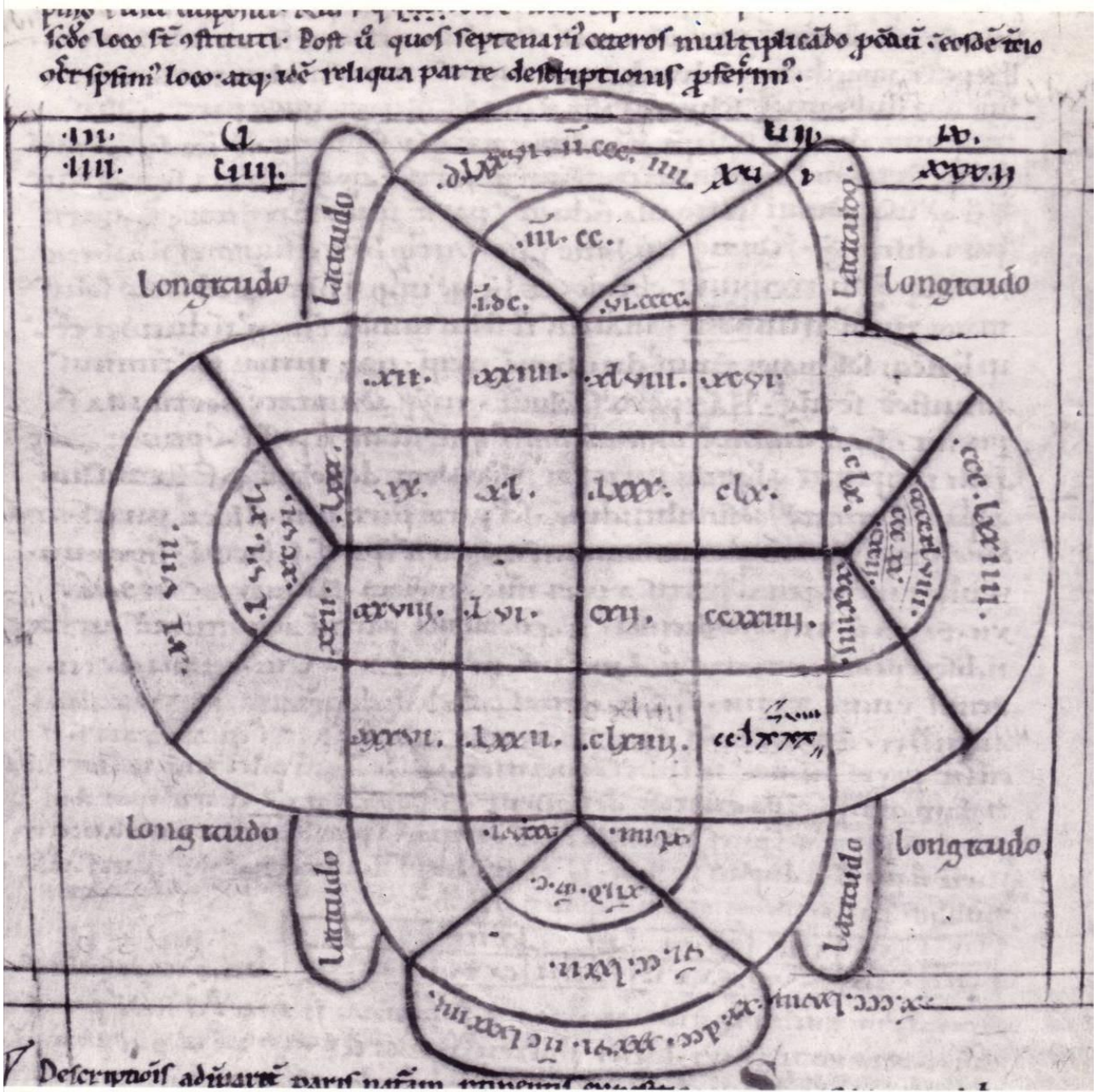


Plate 67 PAGE FROM A 12th CENTURY COPY OF BOETHIUS' *DE ARITHMETICA*

(Boethius' version of Nicomachus of Gerasa's *Introduction to Arithmetic*)

From a copy written at Christchurch Priory, Canterbury, c.1130

The Pythagorean Square showing the crossed loops of Plato's World Soul. The numerals demonstrate the harmonic nature of the universe.

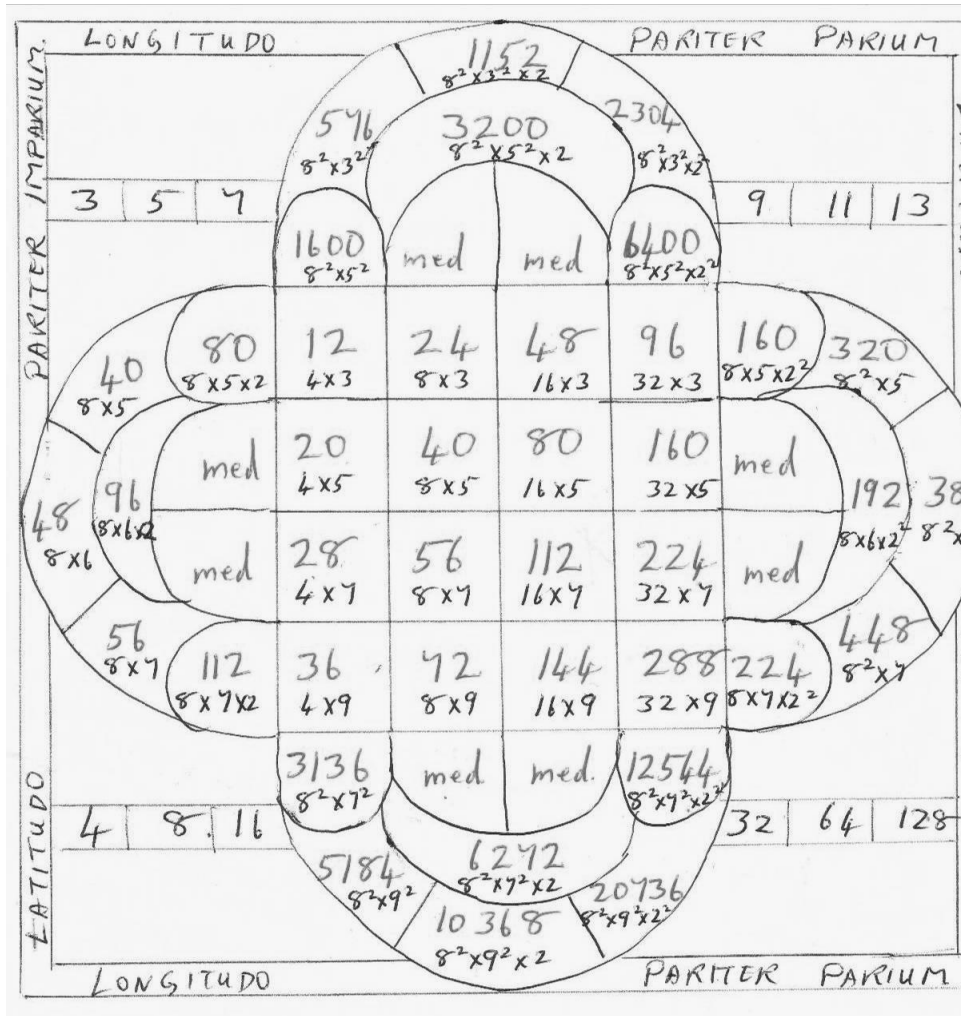


Plate 68 . Sketch of a drawing of a fuller version of the Pythagorean Square substituting Arabic numerals and adding the factors which demonstrate the mean terms

From a copy of BOETHIUS' *DE ARITHMETICA* written at Christchurch Priory, Canterbury, c. 1130

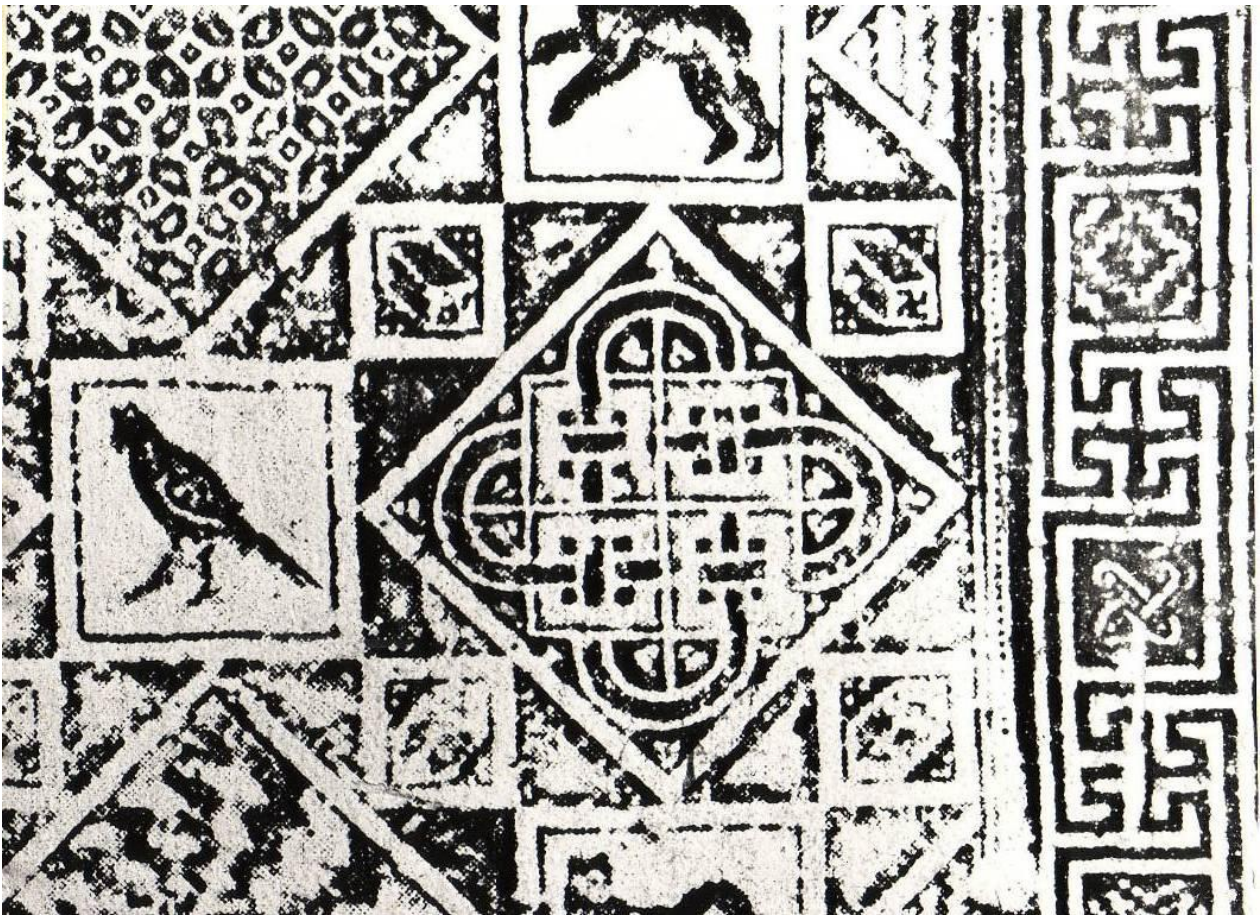


Plate 69. Part of the mosaic floor in the ruined church of Saints Cosmas and Damian at Gerasa, dated by an associated inscription AD 533.

In the centre is the Pythagorean Square with its grid of 4 x 4 square interstices for the accommodation of numbers superimposed by a cross and in the border on the right hand side there is an example of the crossed loops of Plato's World Soul. The crossed loops, sometimes called the "Solomon's Knot" represent the World Soul at the junction of opposites. Plato defined the World Soul as Same and Different and existence as constituent parts divided up and bound together by Proportion. (Timaeus 37)

Photo. See Acknowledgements

A photograph showing this same mosaic floor in the ruined church of Saints Cosmas and Damian at Jerash (Gerasa) can be seen on <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jerash>.

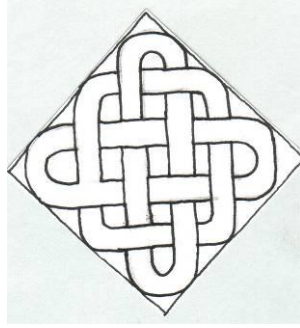


Plate 70 AN APPROXIMATION TO THE PYTHAGOREAN SQUARE

A common motif on Roman mosaics showing the two intersecting loops but lacking the central cross. It therefore fails to provide the grid of 4 x 4 required for the accommodation of the necessary sequence of odd and even. Examples on mosaic floors are common at Antioch, Aquileia, Gerasa and elsewhere.

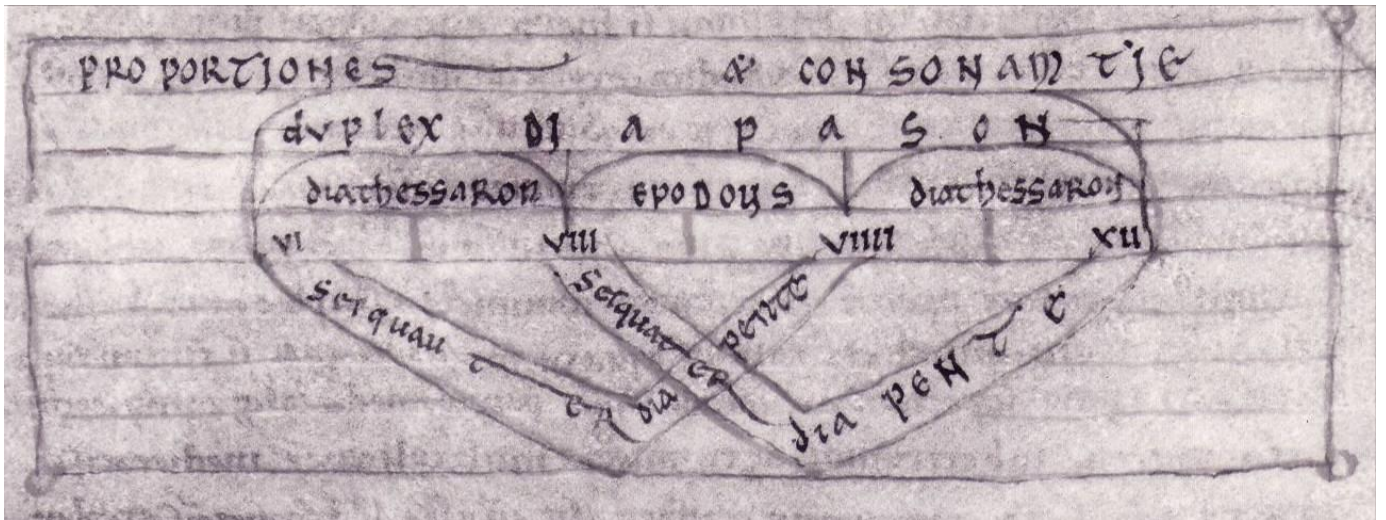


Plate 71
Another illustration of Proportions and Consonances in Musical Harmony .
BOETHIUS . DE ARITHMETICA

British Library



Plate 72. A 12th CENTURY ILLUSTRATION OF "THE MOST PERFECT PROPORTION"

A schematic figure illustrating the last chapter of NICOMACHUS OF GERASA'S *DE ARITHMETICA*

"It remains for me to discuss briefly the most perfect proportion, that which is three-dimensional and embraces them all, and which is most useful for all progress in music and in the theory of the nature of the universe". Book 2 Ch. 29.

After showing how the numbers 6, 8, 9 and 12 contain the various kinds of mathematical proportion, Nicomachus demonstrates the fact that the ratios between each pair of numbers are also the ratios of the musical intervals: the fourth, the fifth, the tone, and the octave, which, according to Plato and to the neo-Platonists, expressed the mathematical and musical harmony innate in the World Soul.

The Diatessaron is the ratio of 4:3

The Diapente is the ratio of 3:2

The Diapason is the ratio of 2:1

The Di-diapason is the ratio of 4:1 - "the most perfect of them all".

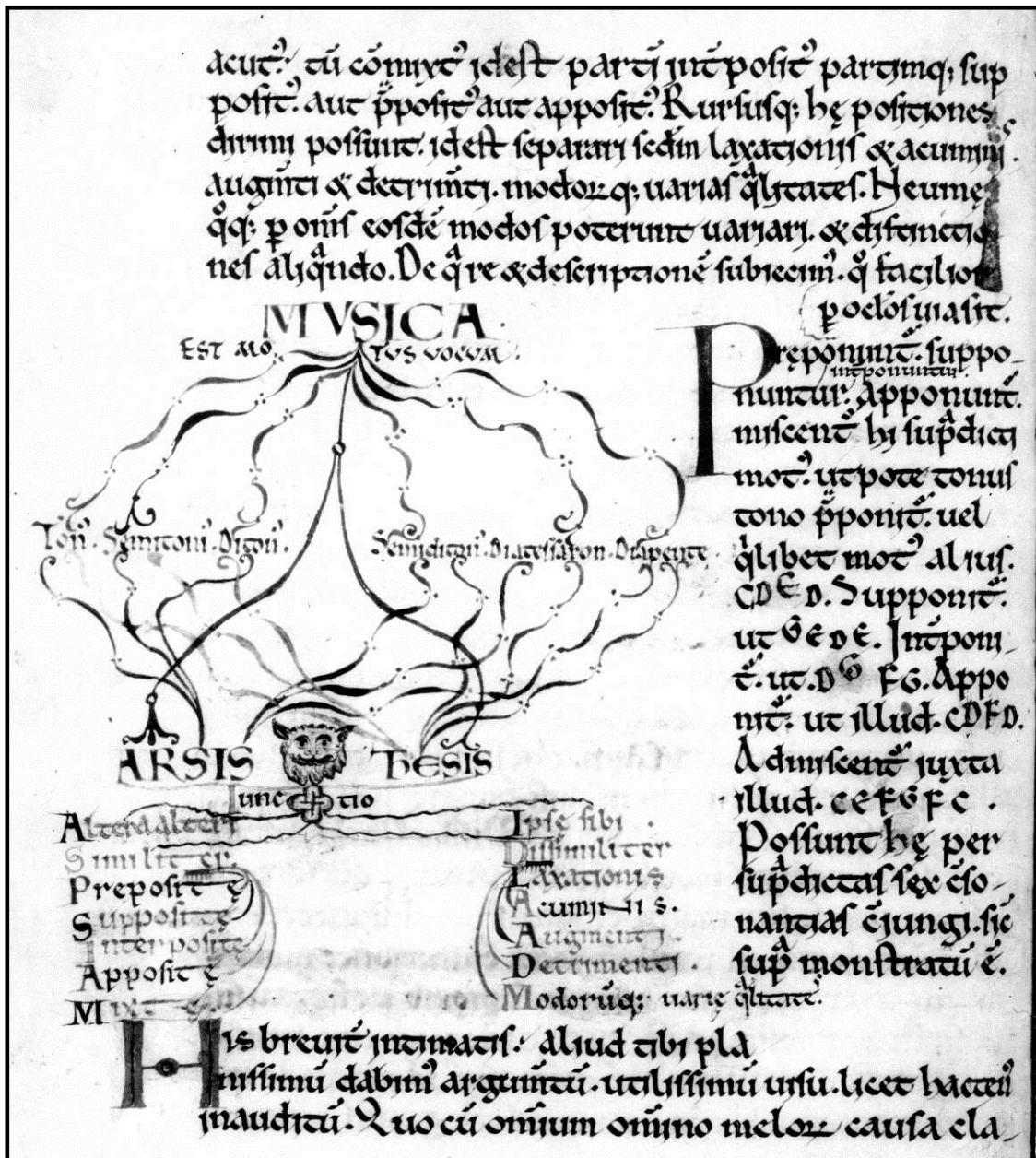
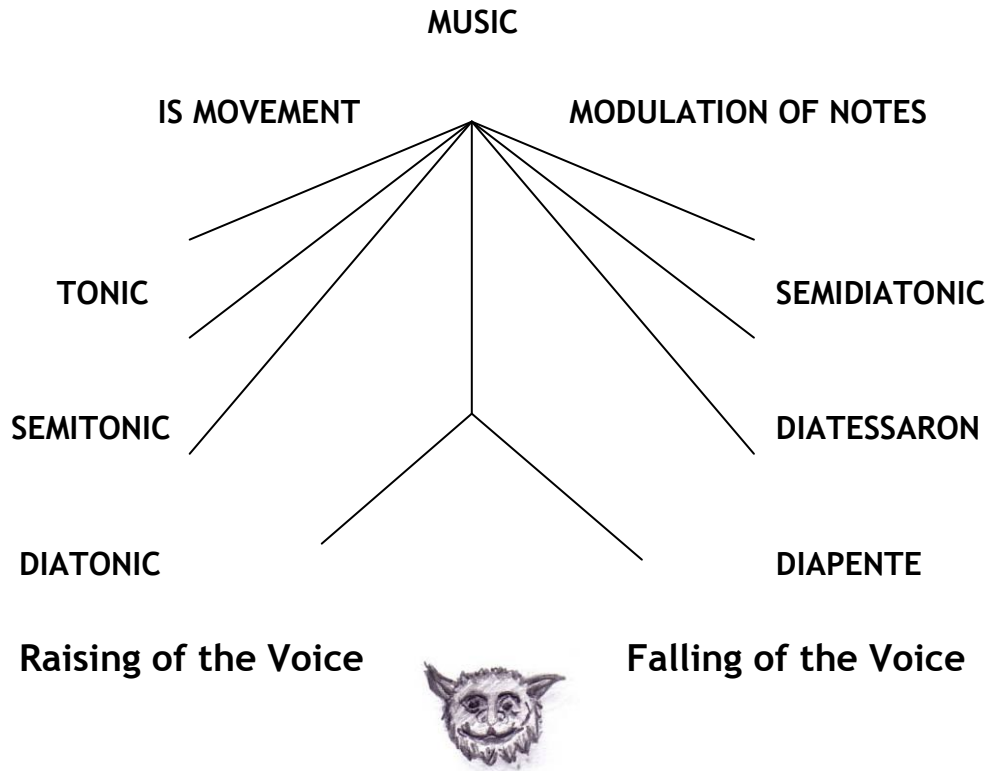


Plate 73 THE WORLD SOUL DISPLAYED AS THE SOURCE OF HARMONY expressed in the intervals of the musical scale

A key to a diagrammatic illustration from Boethius' *De Musica* c.1130 -1160. The original meaning of the harmony expressed in the proportions found in the musical scale is here epitomised by the use of the so-called "Solomon's Knot" to represent the World Soul at the junction of opposites.

Trinity College Cambridge

THE WORLD SOUL DISPLAYED AS THE SOURCE OF HARMONY



Putting together the UNION or combination of opposites

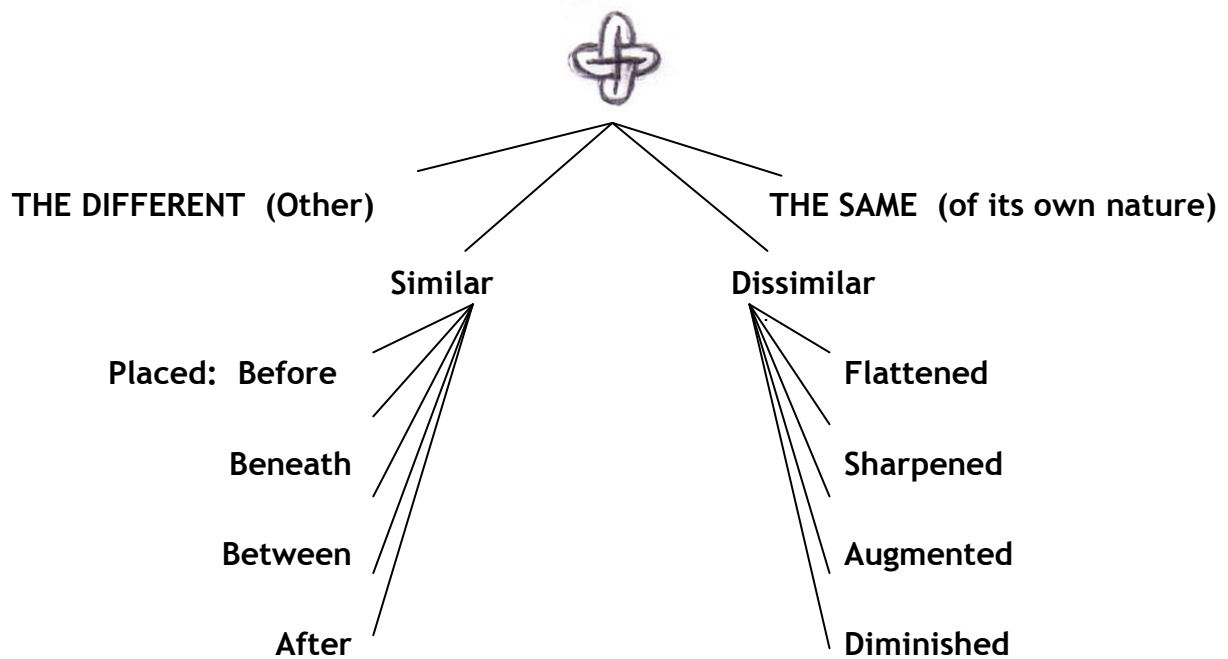


Plate 74 A key to the previous plate with translations of the musical intervals

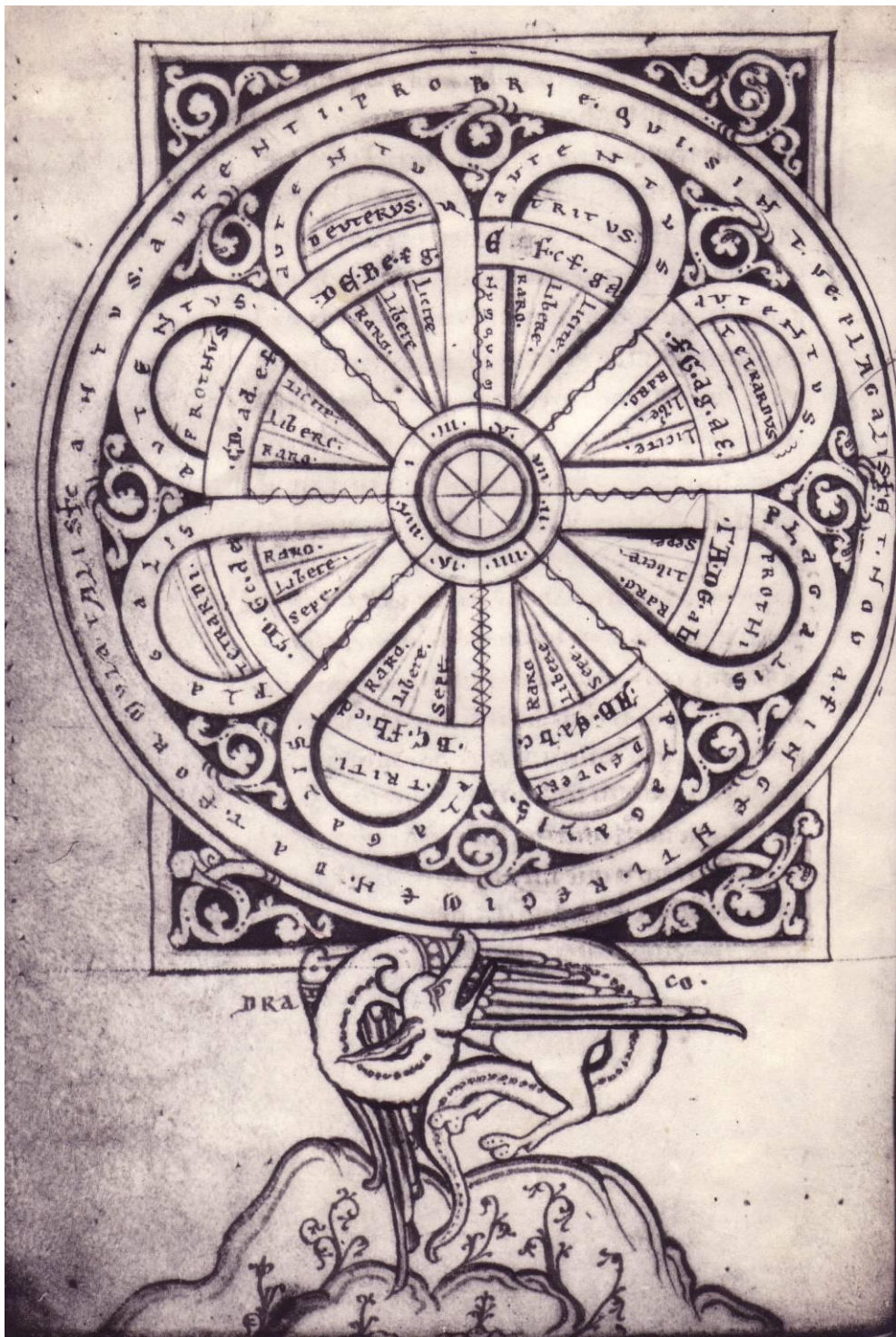


Plate 75 12th CENTURY MANUSCRIPT FROM CANTERBURY

A MUSICAL DIAGRAM is arranged in the perfect circle of a rose window from which Leviathan is excluded. The difference between the specific references in the text and the comprehensive overtones of this schematic figure presupposes a long tradition of monastic education based upon the cosmology of Plato's *TIMAEUS*.

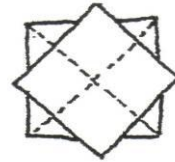
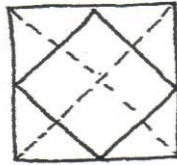
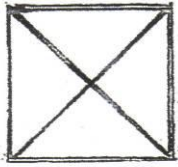
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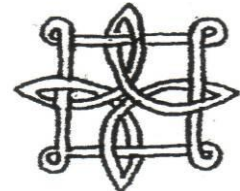
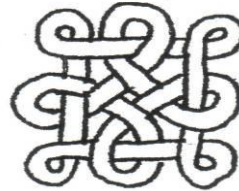
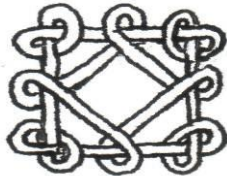
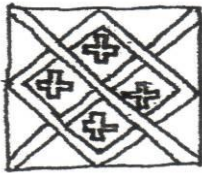
Plate 76 EXAMPLES OF THE USE OF THE CUBE DESIGN AS A NATURAL SYMBOL FROM THE QUEEN MELISENDE'S PSALTER

See D. Knowles: Evolution of Natural Things pages 104 - 106.

British Library



**THE TIMAEAN CONSTRUCTION OF THE ELEMENTAL SOLID: THE CUBE AND
EXAMPLES OF DESIGNS ON ANGLO-NORMAN FONTS, ETC. SOMETIMES USED IN
CONJUNCTION WITH SCHEMA OF 4 ELEMENTS.**

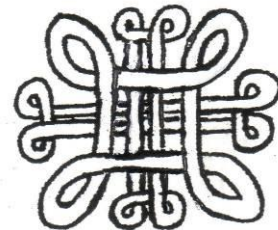
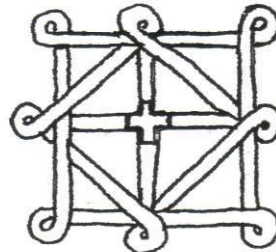
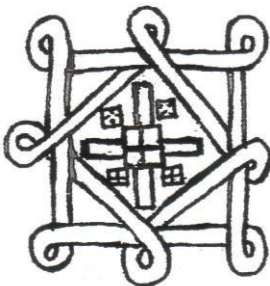


St. Peter's,
Northampton

Sculthorpe
font

Rouen Museum
capital

Northants
west porch



Rome
stone slab

Stone, Bucks
font

Stone, Bucks
font

Stottesdon
font

**Plate 77 SKETCHES OF INTERLACED SQUARES AND OTHER GEOMETRIC FIGURES
CARVED ON FONTS AND ELSEWHERE**

MACROBIUS' COMMENTARY ON THE TIMAEUS

“.. Hence it is apparent that the number 8 both is, and is considered to be, a solid body, - if one is represented by a point, two by the drawing of a line (which is limited by two points), and four by points arranged at right angles to one another, with lines extending between the points to form a square. When these four points are duplicated and made 8, forming two equal squares, and one is superimposed upon the other, giving the figure altitude, - the result is a cubic figure which is a solid body”

Plate 78 (A- S) MORE VARIATIONS OF INTERLACED SQUARES AND OF CIRCLES INTERLACED WITH THEIR ARCS AND SOME EXAMPLES OF THE SO-CALLED "SOLOMON'S KNOT"



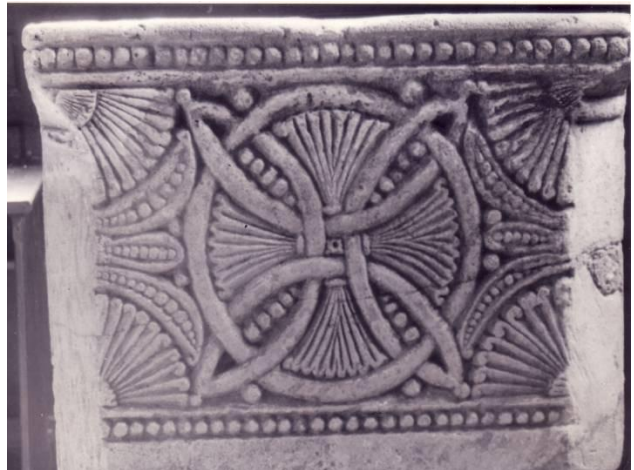
A - Interlaced square on a capital now in the Museum of Antiquities, Rouen



B - Font at Sculthorpe, Norfolk. Second half of 12th century.



C - Shernborne, Norfolk



D - Braybrooke, Northants. 12th century



E - Mears Ashby, Northants



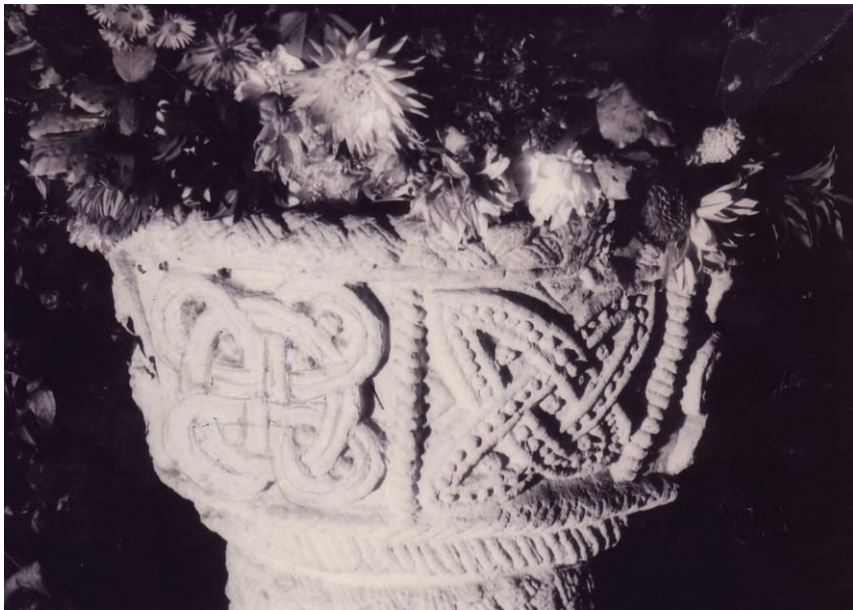
F - Thornby, Northants



G - Toftrees, Norfolk. Second half of 12th century



- H - The 12th century sculpted tympanum over a Norman doorway now built into a cottage at Sherborne, Gloucestershire shows two versions of the cosmological schemata, copied from a contemporary manuscript. Its figures should be compared with those included in an arithmetical treatise by Boethius, copied at Peterborough Abbey c. 1122 and now in the British Library. Cotton Lib. C 1 fol.7



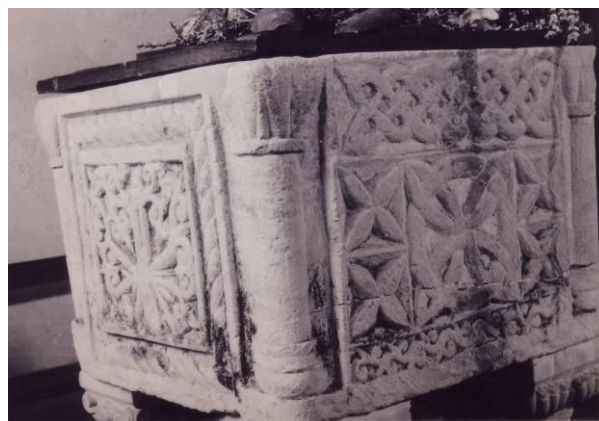
- I - 12th century font bowl in the parish church of Bisley, Gloucestershire, showing the circles of macrocosmic and microcosmic harmony in the physical universe, and the two intersecting loops of Plato's World Soul.



J - Representation of the schema of the Four Elements on the 12th century font bowl in Bagthorpe Parish Church, Norfolk. .



K - 12th century tympanum of the church of St. Benedict, Haltham-on-Bain, Lincs.



L - 12th century font bowl at Preston, Suffolk



M - Aston le Walls,
Northants. 12th
Century



N - Stottesdon,
Shropshire





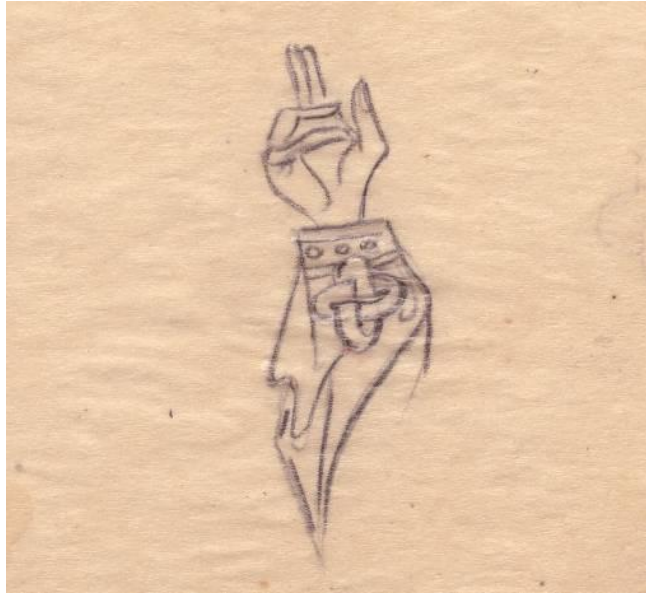
O - Sculthorpe, Norfolk Second half of 12th century

P - East Dean, Sussex. 12th century



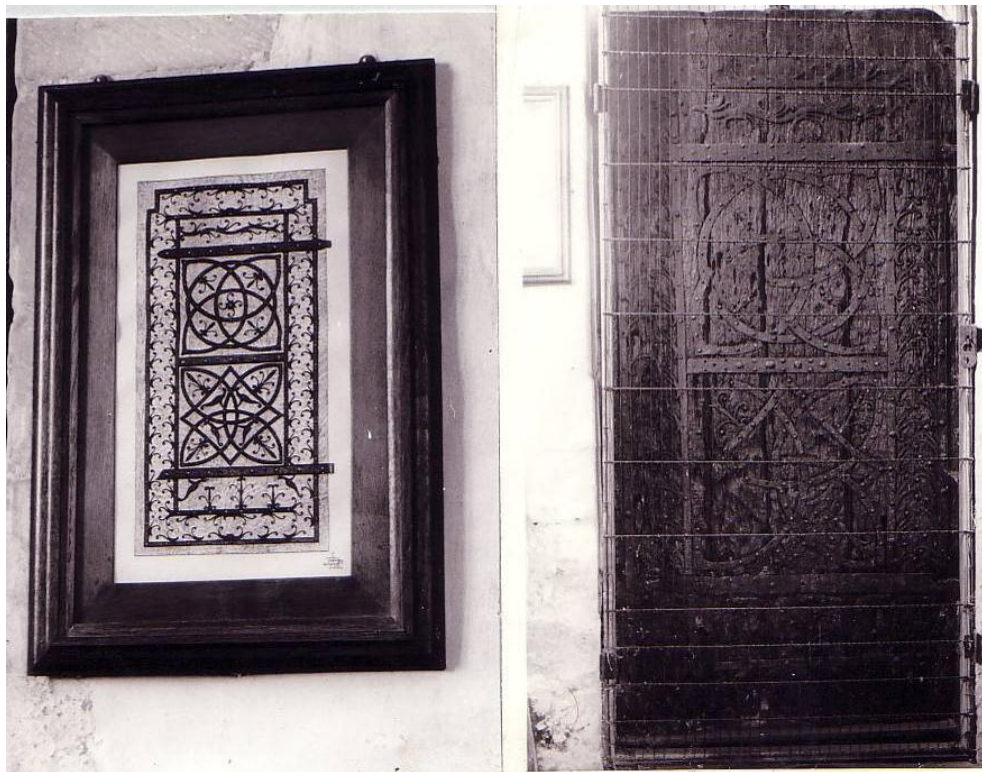
Q - The circle of Cosmic Harmony on the seats of bishops and kings (the Church and the State) in a set of walrus ivory chessmen from the Isle of Lewis.

British Museum



- R- Sketch of a detail from an illustrated late 12th century Spanish copy of a Beatus Commentary on the Apocalypse
The right hand of Christ Logos raised in blessing as He sits enthroned with the Book of Life and cruciform halo. The crossed loops of Plato's World Soul appear on his sleeve.

Paris Bibliothèque National



- S - Remains of the north door in the Saxon or early Norman church of Little Horstead, Herts and a scaled down diagram in the church.



Plate 79 THE CROSS OF ENION

Late 9th or early 10th century. Margam Stones Museum, Glamorgan.

The so-called “Solomon's Knot” placed at the centre of the cruciform design is the symbol of Cosmic Harmony in the World Soul. In Platonic terms it represented the crossing of the celestial equator with the ecliptic. In Christian terms, Justin Martyr (100-165) remarked that “God had laid a Cross upon the world in the shape of the Greek letter CHI (or X).”

In the monastic schools of the 12th century a further explanation of the cosmic significance of this figure was commonly available also in a later translation of *INTRODUCTION TO ARITHMETIC* by NICOMACHUS OF GERASA (1st century AD) translated into Latin by BOETHIUS. This book remained in use, with its accompanying diagrams, and was continuously copied in monastic schools down to the 15th century, so that the profound significance of this “Solomon's Knot” would have been generally understood in ecclesiastical circles at the time of its construction.



Plate 80 Mosaic with the symbol of Cosmic Harmony in the World Soul

Roman Palace, Fishbourne, early 3rd century

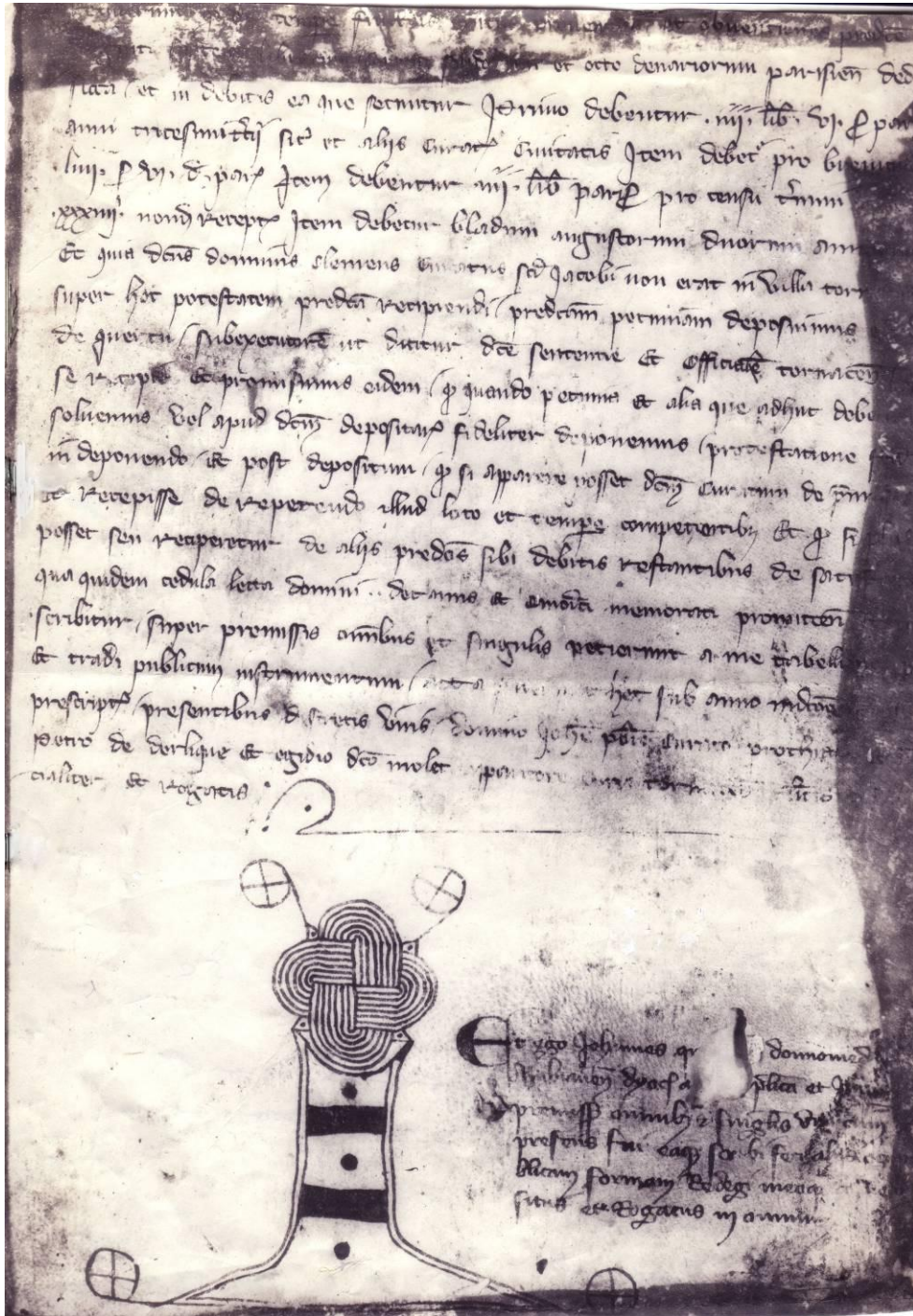


Plate 81

A page of a 15th century legal document which shows that the **CROSSED LOOPS OF PLATO'S WORLD SOUL** were used as a notorial sign at least into the late 15th century. In this document, however, the seven strands into which Plato divided the circle of the "Different" to represent the seven known planets have mistakenly been applied to both circles - page such an aberration was not uncommon.

CONCLUSION

We have now reached the end of this study of the carvings on the Hampstead Norreys font bowl. By relating these sculptures and their contemporary parallels to the life and thought of the time in which they were made, and to the events and personalities of their original environment, we have uncovered a number of unexpected facts about it, chief among which is the reason for the dichotomy of its style. For it now appears that these carvings are a *rare* example of a unified doctrinal exposition, a Summa of the two Works of God, based upon contemporary sources, those of Foundation or Creation, and those of Restoration.

Their form of presentation employed two theories, both of which were shortly to be superseded, so that at no other time than the middle of the twelfth century could such a Summa in such terms have been attempted. By the mid thirteenth century the Origenist Ransom theory with its metaphor of the baited hook, had been rejected by theologians, while the returning corpus of Aristotelian writings led to the study of the *Timaeus* being superseded in the Faculty of the Arts in the schools of Paris by 1250.

The neo-Platonist Renaissance at Chartres promoted the use of cosmological schemata and symbolic figures and their association with theological speculation; and it can be shown that all this was reflected in the carvings on the font bowl from Hampstead Norreys.

Several previously unidentified English twelfth century sculptures have now been identified as parallel examples to the subjects carved upon the font bowl. Through the pursuit of their meaning, these carvings provide us with a glimpse of their comprehensive and "scientific" view of Creation and of the Creator whom Augustine called the Architect, and Gilbert de la Porrée termed the Worker, as He created all things in Measure, Number and Weight.

It is true that these carvings lack the skill of an expert craftsman, nevertheless they show a vigorous ingenuity in adapting the symbolic vernacular to an individual expression of a common faith. This too is typical of the period of monastic growth and enthusiasm, in what has been described as the Golden Age of English monasticism - that of the twelfth century.

Enough has been said to show the extent of the evidence of the Ransom theory, and of the much older cosmological theory of the Harmony of the Four Elements, to be seen in the sculptures which survive in English parish churches. Today, their lack of proper recognition places them all at risk for, with the closure

of redundant churches, they may easily be dispersed through ignorance and neglect. If such dispersal were in the future to include the rare group of sculptures on the font bowls and tympana with which we are concerned, the interrelated evidence which they contain would be dissipated and with it a unique record of a stage in the intellectual development of our western society. It is greatly to be hoped that those who are now responsible for the fate of this ancient heritage will acquaint themselves with its unique historical importance and will take urgent steps to ensure the preservation for the nation of the whole surviving corpus of twelfth century English carving - if necessary in a new ecclesiastical museum.

It is evident that the font carvings which are the basis of this study, were carefully planned by English carvers, better informed in matters of their belief than in artistic skill. But since it is also evident that they were men of education, we may suppose that they were monastic craftsmen, for the limit of their vision was obviously not bounded by pattern books, nor by any necessity to grub after exemplars to justify their work. In the choice of their cosmological schemata to illustrate the Work of Foundation, they showed themselves to be educated men, in touch with the neo-Platonic developments of their own generation. So they unfolded their intellectual vision of Harmony in Number at the heart of Creation, which sang as music in the very World Soul, through all the elements and stages of life. It was, of course, a Platonism that had long been Christianised, so that Master Hugh of Saint-Victor (1096-1141) may claim the last word:



Plate 82 THE CREATOR OF THE UNIVERSE

"As the heart's thought is manifest in the utterances of the voice, so the Wisdom of God is manifest in His Work. For this Work, this lovely Work, this Work that only the Omnipotent can do, at one and the same time in its beauty proclaims, as with a voice, the Might of the Creator, and speaks His Wisdom."

Hugh of Saint Victor.

From the Bible Moralisée - 13th century

Austrian National Library

APPENDIX 1

A REPORT BY MR ALAN COLLINS A.R.C.A., A.R.B.S. ON THE FABRIC OF THE FONT BOWL FROM HAMPSTEAD NORREYS, NOW IN THE CHURCH OF ST. JOHN, STONE, BUCKS.

CONCERNING THE NATURE OF ITS REPAIRS AND THE PROBABLE ORDER OF THE ORIGINAL WORK UPON THE BOWL

In one area of the font bowl now in the church of St. John, at Stone, a lowering of the surface level of the drum has occurred towards its base; but this cutting back does not extend to cover the whole of any one unit of the design. On the contrary, it embraces only the lower right-hand portion of the pictorial section, extending further towards the right to include the lower part of the left side of the adjacent circular design. In view of the fact that the level of relief in the upper half remains consistent with that of the surrounding upper rim of the bowl, it is certain that this section was carved in the initial working of the font. Because of this consistent level of relief which is maintained throughout the upper half of all the figures, any re-cutting here would almost certainly have had to follow the original design, though a small adjustment has been made to a loop in the circular design which abuts this flattened area.

It is probable therefore that in the flattened area a fault in the limestone became apparent during the carving of this section of the block, and that the venting resulted in a loss of some of the intended volume of the bowl. In such a case it may well have been decided to continue with the work, and complete the font by pushing back the level of the background still further, over the area of the shale, in order to re-carve that part of the original design at a lower level. It is evident that the original surface and working of the bowl, displaying a consistent height of relief, extends all round the drum in its upper half. Subsequent repairs have not diminished the consistent height and do not warrant the assumption that there was a complete re-cutting of the stone.

The background levels of the square and circular designs show considerable freedom in their depths, especially where several overlapping forms have to be accommodated; and this has produced a general inconsistency which seems to be characteristic of the original work.

The font shows a lateral fracture which extends all round the lower part of the bowl. This has been repaired in some parts by insertions, where a narrow sandwich of stone of a lighter colour has been built into the fracture. In these cases the repairs seem to have followed the carving of the original forms fairly accurately.

The surface of the stone has been washed with some form of shellac, and traces of it can be seen where it has trickled down below the surface of the bowl. No trace of any original colour has survived, and it is likely that the stone was darkened by a fairly modern wash. But it will be noticed that in some areas the limestone surface has been exposed by some very inexpert scraping round the sculptured figures.

I conclude that the sculptures of this bowl are the product of one initially planned sequence, which, despite subsequent patches and repair, cannot have been subsequently altered by restoration.

(signed) ALAN COLLINS
April 1963

In a letter dated 21st April, 1963, addressed to the Author, Mr Collins adds:

"As to the various little animal heads, I am sure that they were carved with the whole of the original design and they are of sufficient depth to make this certain".



Plate 83 HAMPSTEAD NORREYS

These photographs show the line of the lowering of the surface of the font bowl which begins to be apparent on the extreme left beyond the dragon's tail and reaches its maximum depth at the base of the bowl on the left side of the circular design. New stone has been inserted as a patch along the fracture line from the left at this level. A small projection from the bottom rim planned to take the left loop of the circle's interlacing arc was changed to a lion mask by the original carver presumably because of adjustments necessitated by his uncovering of the fault within the limestone block in this area.



Plate 84 HAMPSTEAD NORREYS

A more recent head inserted as a patch in the fracture line

APPENDIX 2

SYNOPSIS OF THE LATIN TEXTS OF THE APOCRYPHAL GOSPEL OF NICODEMUS IN WHICH IS DESCRIBED THE DESCENT OF CHRIST INTO HADES FOR THE RESTORATION OF ADAM

(The English translations used here are those taken from the Apocryphal New Testament, by M. R. James and from the translations made by A. J. B. Higgins in his New Testament Apocrypha, from the Latin texts. The synopsis of these translated texts will be *italics* to distinguish them from the notes and parallel sources which must accompany it. By following the indented text, the continuity of the drama will readily become apparent.)

THE SCENE is a very dramatic presentation of Sheol, the prison of the dead, in which Adam and Eve and all their descendents wait in darkness and in hope, together with the Prophets of the Old Testament who foretold the coming of their Saviour.

The co-Regents of Sheol are Death and Satan, and Hell is their abode. But the quarrel which develops between them in this epic underlines their difference. This difference is made more explicit in parallel accounts to be found in the Syrian Easter Hymns, where Death is shown to be a natural force, without guile, while Satan is entirely evil and malicious. The purpose of the dialogue between them is to express the very old doctrine derived originally from Origen, concerning the ransom of Adam through a deception practised by God upon Satan, who was deceived as to the divine nature of Jesus, whereas Death was able to recognise it. By this refusal of Satan to recognise the Godhead incarnate in the man Jesus, the Arch-Deceiver of Adam is himself deceived by God, who is actually described as mocking and laughing at the Devil. It can now be shown that the pictorial scene carved on the Hampstead Norreys font bowl depicts the whole of this dramatic episode and that the details of its carving epitomise the dramatic events and their doctrinal significance with remarkable precision, economy and originality.

The story of the Descent of Christ into Hades forms part of the apocryphal Acts of Pilate, but is of much earlier date. It is presented as an eye-witness account of the event in Sheol that occurred between the time when Jesus was raised upon the cross, until his resurrection from the tomb on Easter morning. The account purports to have been given by two men who rose from the dead at the same time and who returned to Jerusalem to bear witness concerning the resurrection of Jesus to the unbelieving Jews, before they, too, ascended into Heaven. (1)

In Chapter 8, a detailed explanation has been given of the font carvings in which, with an exact economy of means, the carver has graphically presented an illustration of Christ's descent into Hades.

THE DESCENT INTO HADES

"At midnight, in the darkness of Hades, there came a sudden light like the sun - a purple and royal light - and shone upon all the Dead, and they saw one another. At this the patriarchs rejoiced, saying 'This light is the Author of everlasting light, which did promise to send His co-eternal Light.' And Elijah proclaimed, 'This is the Light of the Father, even the Son of God, according to my prophesies on earth.'

Simeon, too, gives thanks for the birth of Jesus who descended to earth 'to be the Light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of Thy people Israel.'

The next episode is the arrival in Sheol of John the Baptist after his execution. All the dead flock to ask his name. He says he has been sent as a fore-runner of the Most High, and testified to the divinity of Jesus whom he has baptised in the Jordan.

Next follows the story of Seth, for when Adam heard that Jesus was baptised in the Jordan, he called upon Seth his son to declare to them all the promise made to him by the Archangel Michael at the gates of Paradise, when Adam lay dying, and was begging to be anointed with the oil from the Tree of Mercy.

'Vex not thyself, Seth with tears and entreaty for the oil of mercy', Michael had said to him, 'for thou wilt not be able to receive it save in the last days. Then shall the beloved Son of God come upon earth to raise up the body of Adam and the bodies of the dead, and He shall be baptised in Jordan. Then shall He anoint with the oil of mercy all that believe in Him... and shall bring our Father Adam into Paradise unto the Tree of Mercy.'

The same theme of anointing with the oil from the Tree of Mercy for baptismal candidates is found in the apocryphal Acts of Thomas, from the third century:

"The apostle took the oil in a cup of silver, and spake over it, 'Fruit more comely than all other fruits, altogether merciful, fervent with the force of the Word; symbol and joy of the sick; that did announce unto them their salvation; that showed a light to them that sit in darkness; whose leaf is bitter, but in thy most sweet fruit Thou art fair ... let Thy victorious might come and be established in the Tree that was its kin, even Thy might at the time when they that crucified Thee could not endure Thy Word ... and let

this rest upon the oil.' And having said this, the Apostle poured it upon their heads, saying, 'In the name of Jesus Christ, let it be for a remission of sins and for the salvation of their souls.' And having anointed them, he led them down into the water in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit." (2)

Following the story of Seth in the Latin text A of the Descent epic comes a dialogue between Satan and Death:

"And while all the saints were rejoicing, Satan, the chief of Death, said to Hades, 'Prepare thyself to receive Jesus who boasted that He was the Son of God, whereas He is a man, afraid to die', for He said, 'My soul is exceedingly sorrowful unto Death.' Satan, now delighted at the prospect of the death of Jesus which he has devised, recounts how formerly he had been robbed of Lazarus and others who had been raised from the dead by Jesus, and how Hell had thereby been impoverished. But Death recognises in these events a sign of the divinity of Jesus, and replies to Satan, 'If He be so mighty in His manhood, I tell thee He is almighty in His Godhead ... He said He feared death only to ensnare thee, and woe to thee for everlasting ages'. Nevertheless the Devil boasts, 'I tempted Him ... I sharpened the spear ... I prepared the cross and nails ... His death is near, and I will bring Him here, subject to thee and me.' To this Death replies, 'It seems to me that no-one will be able to withstand Him; and whereas you say you heard how He feared death, He said this only to mock and laugh at you (3) being determined to seize you with a mighty hand ... I adjure you not to bring Him here, for if you do, none of the dead will be left to me.'"

In the Nisibene hymns of Ephraim the Syrian, we get an extended version of the quarrel between Death and Satan, in which Satan boasts of his ability as a Tempter, and says,

"Thou Death from God has gotten thy might. I alone am helped by none when I lead men astray; thou art a fool, O Death not to know how great am I; I who suffice to capture free will, the sovereign power". (4)

Death replies, "Thou, O Evil One, like a thief thou goest round. I, like a lion, break in pieces and fear not ... My face is shown to all the world, for I am guileless and not like thee who, without guile cannot abide.... Thy partner I am in share, but not in sin. Mine are the slain, but thine the slayers, whom thou makest to sin ... And if I, Death, have taken your departed, the strangled, the slain and the slaughtered, who was it who slew them?"

In the 61st Nisibene hymn, Death turns to mankind and addresses the human race with his reproaches:

"While I was but desiring to wait patiently till Adam should die, and before I had power, YOU gave me power over your bodies. It was Cain with his sword, who first overthrew the gate of Sheol, for it was closed; but before the appointed time, Cain opened it. He by treading, made the way into Sheol, without my help, for in the way ye have trodden out for me, lo, now I walk. Ye are Satan to each other, and the Evil One is abhorred! Ye are pestilence to each other and Death is blamed! Your own wills to you are Satan but yet of Death and Satan all men complain! Groan over yourselves, ye that are thus hateful, who say they hate me, O murderers! With torture, scourgings, with fire and stonings you put to death the sons of men and you are proud. I am more modest than you and more merciful, also more reverent I lay him to sleep for but a while." (5). For with reverence I bear away your departed. On the bed I deal gently with him that is sick, and quietly I lay him to sleep but for a while" (5)

Returning now to the account of the Descent story in the apocryphal Gospel of Nicodemus, Death, in reply to Satan's boasting, says,

"It seems to me that no man will be able to withstand Him. Thou sayest thou hast heard Him fearing death. But this He said to mock thee and in sport, willing to seize thee with a mighty hand. And woe to thee for everlasting!" Satan replies, "Thou Death that devourest all, art insatiable! I fear Him not!"

The Latin version says that, while Death and Satan are still disputing, suddenly comes:

"a Voice as of thunder, and a spiritual cry: Remove, O Princes your gates, and be ye lift up ye everlasting doors, and the Prince of Glory shall come in!" for Jesus is approaching death. When he hears this, Death suddenly rounds upon Satan and says, "Depart from me and get out of my abode ...", and mockingly, "If thou be a man of war, GO! Fight against the King of Glory! - but what hast THOU to do with HIM?"

Thus Death casts Satan out of his kingdom.

There are a number of further details to be found in the Nisibene hymns of Ephraim the Syrian which greatly enhance the dramatic power of the story. In one of these we learn how Death, fearing the approach of the dying Jesus, exclaims:

"I will hasten and close the gates of Hell.
Before this Dead, whose death has spoiled me.
Whosoever hears will wonder at my humiliation;
that by a dead Man that is without
I am taken captive.

All the dead seek to go forth,
but this One presses to enter in.
A Medicine of Life has entered Hell
and restored life to its dead.
Who then has brought in and hidden from me
that Living Fire
in the cold dark recesses of Hell?"

This is part of hymn 36, verse 14. In the next hymn, we have that cry from the Cross which echoes through Hell, revivifying the dead. In this hymn, Death comments:

"There was a tumult of bones in Sheol,
bone seeking its fellow and joint its mate.
There was none that questioned nor was questioned
whether these bones lived.
Unquestioned, the voice of Jesus,
the Master of all creatures
quickenened them.
I used to take men captive.
The Son of Captivity
whom I took captive,
now has captured me!" (6)

"At that cry, Satan feared, and sought a way to flee and could not, for Hell and his ministers held him bound and fenced him in on every side ..." Satan, unable to escape, cries out, 'Shut the gates of brass and put up the bars of iron and withstand stoutly, lest we that hold in captivity be taken captive!' But the multitude of saints rebuked Satan, shouting their prophecies, and demanding the opening of the gates. Then a second cry is heard, a voice of thunder, approaching Hell, again demanding the lifting of the gates. 'And when Hell heard that they so cried out twice, he said, as if he knew it not, WHO is the King of Glory?'"

"Then David answered Hell and said, 'The words of this cry do I know, for by His Holy Spirit I prophesied the same. And now I say unto thee that which I said before, it is the Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle, He is the King of Glory. And now, O thou most foul and stinking Hell, open the gates, that the King of Glory may come in!'"

"And as David was speaking, the King of Glory appeared suddenly, in the form of a man, and lighted the eternal darkness, and broke the bonds that could not be loosed, that the succour of His everlasting Might visited us that sat in the deep darkness of our transgressions and in the shadow of death of our sins. When Death and Satan and all his wicked ministers were thus confronted with the Christ, alive in Hell, they were put to confusion and cried, 'Who art Thou, so great and so small, both humble and exalted, both

soldier and commander, a marvellous warrior in the shape of a bondsman, and the King of Glory, dead and living, whom the bore slain upon it?"

It is necessary to underline the significance of this remarkable passage, as it would have appeared to the carvers of the twelfth century. For at that time two books were widely influential and available in the library of Reading Abbey, and in most monastic libraries of any importance throughout the Anglo-Norman kingdom: the *De Sacramentis* of Hugh of Saint Victor (1134) and the writings attributed to Dionysius the Areopagite, written about the fifth century AD upon which Hugh wrote a commentary. In the *Divine Names* of the latter author, the relevance of the line, "So great and so small", is underlined.

"This Greatness is infinite, without quality and without number. The excess of Greatness reaches to this pitch through the absolute, transcendent out-pouring of Incomprehensible Grandeur. And Smallness, in Rarity, is ascribed to God's nature because He is outside all solidity and distance, and penetrates all things without let or hindrance. Indeed, Smallness is the elementary cause of all things; for you will never find any part of the world but participates in that quality of Smallness. This is the sense in which we must apply that quality to God. It is that which penetrates unhindered into all things, energising in them, and reaching to the dividing of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow; being a discerner of all desires and thoughts of the heart or rather of all things - for there is no creature hid before God."
(7)

Again, with reference to the passage in the Latin text of the Descent: "both soldier and commander, a marvellous warrior in the shape of a bondsman ...", the carvers of the font bowl would also have known an equivalent metaphor in Hugh of Saint Victor's *De Sacramentis*, in which the Incarnation of Christ and its fulfilment is described:

" ... For the Incarnate Word is our King, Who came into this world to war with the Devil; and all the saints who were before His coming are soldiers, as it were, going on before their king; and those who have come after, and will come, even to the end of Time, are the soldiers following their King ... all are serving one King and following one banner: all are pursuing the one enemy, and are being crowned by the same victory."

APPENDIX 3

THE CARVINGS ON TWO SURVIVING STONES FROM READING ABBEY

A careful comparison of details on the carvings on the Hampstead Norreys font bowl with two surviving sculptured stones from Reading Abbey will show some close stylistic correspondences. The Reading stones here to be considered are first, the capital with the two figures here identified as those of Enoch and Elijah (Plate 88, Plate 89) which is in the Reading Museum, and secondly a large voussoir (Plate 92) which had at one time been built into a modern ornamental arch in the private grounds of Shiplake Court, Henley. The carving on this stone (which happily is now kept in the care of Reading Museum) has suffered considerably from weathering; nevertheless its basic design is still clear. For the purposes of this chapter, these stones will be described as Reading capital Y and Reading voussoir Z.

On capital Y (Plate 89) the following unusual features are to be seen on two identical human heads:

- a) very prominent and wide cheek bones
- b) very narrow and diminishing jaws
- c) short thick noses
- d) clearly marked and shaven chins
- e) small beards growing down from under the chin
- f) Two unusual details: namely the incised lines marking the growth of the hair which seems to radiate upwards from the forehead; and a thin raised line running between the hair and the forehead which rises to a point above the centre of the forehead and drops down at the sides
- g) very protuberant eyeballs, of unnatural proportions

It can now be shown that every detail described above, with the exception of the protuberant eyeballs can be matched exactly in one head contained in the circular design on the Hampstead Norreys font bowl (marked B in the panoramic drawing by Messrs Ancona and Bagster 1848 - (Plate 44) and Plate 63A). It is possible that the restorer of 1846 cut back the original eyeballs in this head, which otherwise corresponds in such small details with the two heads on the Reading capital Y. Further parallels with naturalistic eyes are also to be found on a Swedish twelfth century font from Vange, Gotland (Plate 90, Plate 91). On this Swedish font we find the same features, the short thick noses, wide cheeks and very diminished jaws, with clearly defined chins, albeit lacking the beards. This font also provides another parallel in two nude figures of Adam and Eve, which corresponds in style with the standing nude figures on the Hampstead Norreys font

bowl (Plate 87). This correspondence had been noted by Miss M. Rydbeck of the Statens Historiska Museum, Stockholm.

Parallels in the designs upon English and Swedish twelfth century fonts are well known and can be accounted for by the fact that the Swedish Church was largely founded from England. In 1152 the Papal Legate who visited Norway to install an archbishop at Nidaros, was the Englishman Nicholas Breakspear who afterwards became Pope Hadrian IV. In 1164, an archbishop of Sweden was installed at Uppsala but the sculptor of the font from Vange is known for he signed his name, Hegwald.

Another variant of the same type of head, of known Reading workmanship, occurs on the capital of the tower arch in the church of St. Mary at Cholsey (Plate 88) This church was added to the property of Reading Abbey at its foundation in 1123, and rebuilt in the middle years of the twelfth century, obviously by men associated with the monastic workshops, thus giving further proof that the monastic craftsmen were available also for work upon other churches in the vicinity. Cholsey lies some twelve miles N.W. of Reading but only about eight from Hampstead Norreys.

The beaded plait on the abacus of Reading capital Y (Plate 88) should be noticed for the boldness and regularity of its execution and the closeness of the weaving of its three bands, whose raised edges provide wide salvages on either side of its centre line of beading. Exactly the same type of beaded band with raised edges is to be seen on a capital from the Cluniac house of St. Pancras, Lewes, whose Prior, Hugh of Boves, became the first Abbot of Reading. The accomplished carving of this beaded plait is paralleled in a section of the guilloche which surrounds the rim of the Hampstead Norreys font bowl above the designs. At this point the carving on the bowl shows almost identical proportional correspondence with the plait on Reading capital Y, and is clearly also the work of an experienced carver. But as it is continued round the font bowl the depth of the relief is maintained but its regularity deteriorates into a rather slovenly loose weave which would obviously be quicker and less laborious to cut. Here, I suggest, we have evidence that the work on the plait was started by a master mason of Reading Abbey as an exemplar for the pupil who was to complete it. A similar deterioration of exemplary work may also be seen on the little twelfth century font in the village of Hinton Parva, Dorset, (Plate 93) where a master has clearly marked the lay-out of his design upon its bowl and has started to carve elaborate interlacing. But the work was evidently handed over to a pupil, whose attempts to complete it ended in such chaos that it was abandoned and the work remains unfinished to this day. The beaded plait on the Hampstead Norreys font bowl was, however, carried to its completion, and is worthy of note on account of the proportions which, in one section of it, exactly correspond with the proportions on Reading capital Y.

The design which covers the Reading voussoir Z (Plate 92) is remarkably decorative but its components are also remarkably simple. They consist of a cross

whose equal arms are superimposed upon a beaded circle. An exactly similar circle occurs on the Hampstead Norreys font also. But on the voussoir its four interlacing arcs are looped into a loose knot around the circle itself instead of passing beyond it. A parallel version of the same looped knot is to be seen on the circular design B on the font bowl (see Plate 63) but there its interlacing arcs are knotted *beyond* the circle and not *upon it*.

Since these designs are both based on the circular diagram of Macrocosmic Harmony already familiar in the twelfth century, their elaborations on the Reading voussoir Z and on the Hampstead Norreys font are natural derivatives, being decorative and at the same time meaningful. For the meaning implied in the super-imposition of the cosmological symbol of the Harmony of the Four Elements upon an equal-armed cross can be traced to Plato's statement in the *Timaeus*, that the Creator laid the Animus Mundi upon the universe "in the form of the Greek letter CHI" (X). (1) From the time of Justin Martyr, Christian writers had seized upon Plato's statement as evidence that the equal-armed Cross of Christ stretches to the four quarters of the globe. (2)

Many instances of the decorative adaptations of this essentially meaningful symbol occur in Anglo-Norman work. In just the same way the Cross itself often becomes the subject of decorative treatment without losing its ultimate significance. But I have so far been unable to trace any other example of the knotting of the arcs which are to be seen both on the Reading Abbey voussoir Z and the Hampstead Norreys font bowl. This fact, in itself, and the beaded circle used in both cases afford further evidence of the derivation of the font bowl from Reading Abbey workshops.

One other small head of an elf-like nature should be noticed on the Hampstead Norreys font beneath the central cross of the square design (Plate 63C). This little detail is a fairly common motif in manuscript decoration of the eleventh - twelfth centuries and can be matched, for instance, at the top of an initial in an Anglo-Saxon M.S. (Morgan 709). The authenticity of this detail is underlined by the fact that the manuscript itself had belonged to Judith, wife of Tolsig, who was killed at the Battle of Stamford Bridge, who was also a sister-in-law of Harold, the last Saxon King of England, and that after her remarriage in 1071 to Count Henry II of Guelph she presented this book with other precious manuscripts to the Benedictine monastery at Weingarten, where fortunately they have survived. By the evidence of such contemporary sources, this small detail on the Hampstead Norreys font attests the genuine work of its original carver.

The beading of guilloche which surrounds the abacus of Reading capital Y and the rim of the Hampstead Norreys font should be noticed because the raised edges (or salvages) of the bands provide a conspicuous border on either side of its central string of beads. On the circular design of the font bowl (Plate 63A) these beads are varied in size to suggest jewels, but on all the rest they conform to those on the Reading capital Y.

Now, Professor Boas has remarked in this connection that, "this beaded guilloche is a feature not found in the Norman or Canterbury Repertoire. (3) It is, however, frequently to be seen in Cluniac carving. The derivation of the beaded bands, with their raised salvages which make up the type of guilloche to be seen on the Reading capital Y (Plate 88) and the font bowl from Hampstead Norreys, can be seen also on the impost block from Lewes Priory, which was consecrated in 1131 as the first Cluniac foundation in England. Indeed this type of guilloche occurs most frequently in Cluniac work, as for example on the impost block of a capital from St. Marie la Durade, c. 1115, now in the Musée des Augustins, Toulouse, and on a capital at Brout, Puy-de-Dome, of mid 12th century date, in a church dependent on Souvigny, while another example can be seen on the capital of St. Lazare at Autun. From these and other examples it seems clear that the beaded bands of the Reading capitals belong to the Cluniac repertoire and, since they also appear on the Hampstead Norreys font bowl, they provide further evidence that this too is the work of Reading carvers operating in the third and fourth decades of the twelfth century under the influence of the Cluniac founding community.

A greater problem is presented by a little three-stepped cross, which is carved in low relief above the fracture line in the background between two of the large geometric frames of the Hampstead Norreys font bowl (Plate 86). Its appearance is entirely modern, and its comparatively low relief suggests that is a recent interpolation. Two objections to this easy assumption are as follows: first, there is no apparent reason why a restorer should have taken the trouble to introduce a cross at this point, on a section of the original stone which did not require repair and secondly, this small stepped cross has a close parallel, of twelfth century date, which is to be seen on an un-restored and grossly lopsided font in the little village church of Burrough-on-the-Hill in Leicestershire (Plate 86). This cross is also small and stands on two steps under the carved arcade which encircles the rim of the bowl. It has never been finished and remains as the carver left it, roughly blocked into shape. This Burrough font bowl is also of interest, since it shows an even greater distortion than that of the Hampstead Norreys font, due most probably to the same cause which, as Mr Collins explains, was the occurrence of a fault in the limestone block during the initial carving of the drum. Another example of a three-stepped cross upon a twelfth century font bowl is to be found on a very interesting carved font at Braybrooke, Northamptonshire in a particularly meaningful context (Plate 86). It is composed of a pattée-type -head, enhanced by four rays, on a tapering shaft above three rising steps. This cross fills the right half of a square frame, the left half being occupied by a downward-plunging mermaid about to devour a small fish; while on the further side of the same font is a remarkable example of the circular schema for the illustration of the Macrocosmic Harmony. Since by long tradition the mermaid was equated with the Siren, whose seductive allure dragged men to the depths, her downward plunge is here contrasted with the ascending steps of a radiant cross; and the small fish which is

her victim has reference to the ancient concept of the Fish, Christ, in the Baptismal waters, and the "little fishes" who follow Him.

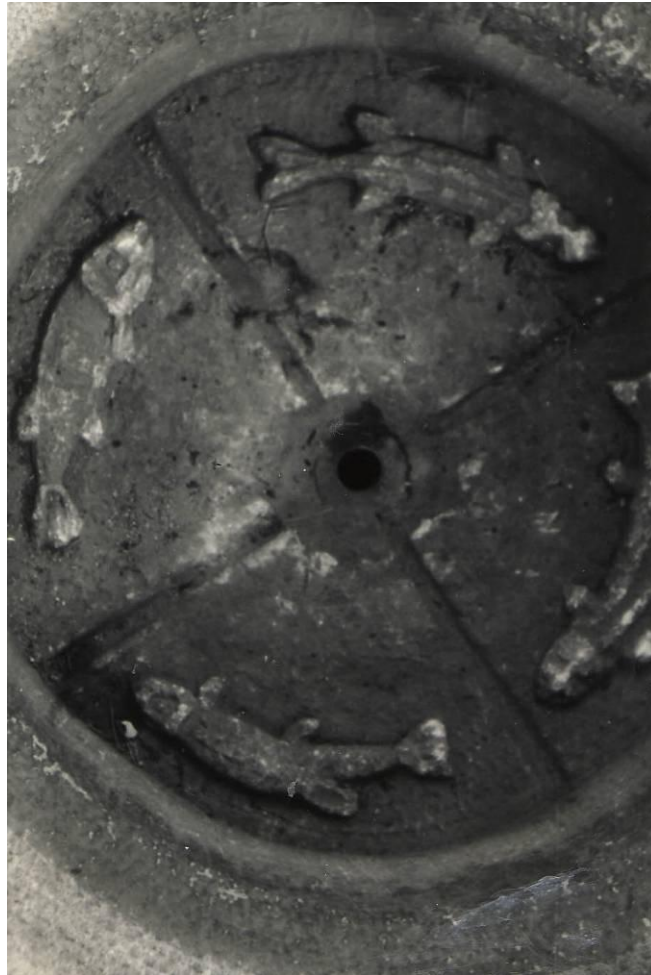
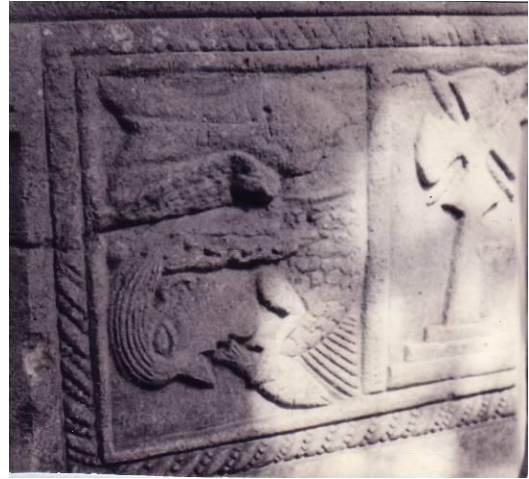


Plate 85. THE INTERIOR OF A 12th CENTURY FONT BOWL IN THE PARISH CHURCH OF RAMSBURY, WILTSHIRE SHOWING THE FOUR FISH IN THE SEGMENTS OF THE BOWL.

Two similar fish are carved in a font bowl of the same date in the parish church of Bisley, Gloucestershire. An earlier example of four fish carved in a cruciform font bowl occurs in Tunis where the font is sunk into the floor and the fish are placed round the Chi-Rho monogram of Christ with the letters Alpha and Omega.



3-stepped cross on font from
HAMPSTEAD NORREYS



3-stepped cross and mermaid
on font at Braybrooke,
Northants



The font at Burrough-on-the-Hill, Leics.

Here there is a gross distortion of the bowl and an unfinished stepped cross under one of the surrounding arcades. There is no evidence of restoration.

**Plate 86 EXAMPLES OF A STEPPED
CROSS ON 12th CENTURY FONT
BOWLS**



Plate 87 COMPARISON OF CARVING STYLE READING ABBEY AND the font from HAMPSTEAD NORREYS

Compare the face work and the backward turning movement of the animal on the capital from Reading Abbey and the snout of its open mouth (above), with that of the dragon on the font from Hampstead Norreys (below).

1.



2.



3.



Example 1
("Capital Y") from Reading Abbey

Example 2
from Cholsey Church
(a Reading dependency)

Example 3
the font bowl
from Hampstead Norreys

The features of the two heads 2 and 3 correspond with those of the two heads on the Enoch and Elijah capital from Reading Abbey (Plate 89).

Plate 88. COMPARISON OF CARVING STYLE.

EVIDENCE OF READING ABBEY WORKMANSHIP AT HAMPSTEAD NORREYS AND AT CHOLSEY



Sketch to show
the raven in the
hand of Elijah



Plate 89 THE ENOCH AND ELIJAH CAPITAL FROM READING ABBEY (CAPITAL Y)

Two seated figures, each within a 'vesica' and with a winged halo. Above, Enoch holds a book and gives his blessing. Below, Elijah holds his pastoral staff and the raven that fed him. The beak can be seen just below the first ridge on Elijah's shoulder.

Reading Abbey Museum

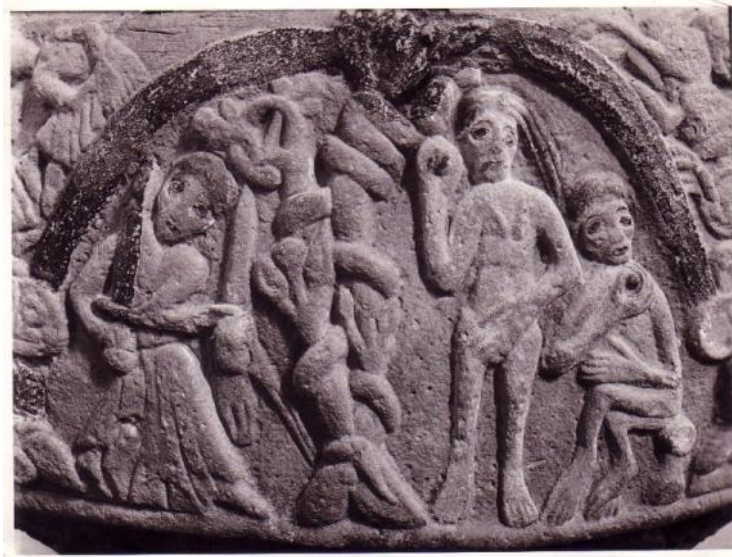


Plate 90 MORE COMPARISONS OF CARVING STYLE

A detail from a Swedish font of the 12th century from Vange, Gotland. Compare the standing figure with those carved on the font from Hampstead Norreys.



Plate 91 Another detail from the above.

Compare the style of the head on the right, with its wide cheek bones, thick nose and diminishing jaw, with the heads of Enoch and Elijah on the capital from Reading Abbey and with one head in the circular design on the font bowl from Hampstead Norreys.

Statens Historika Museum, Stockholm.

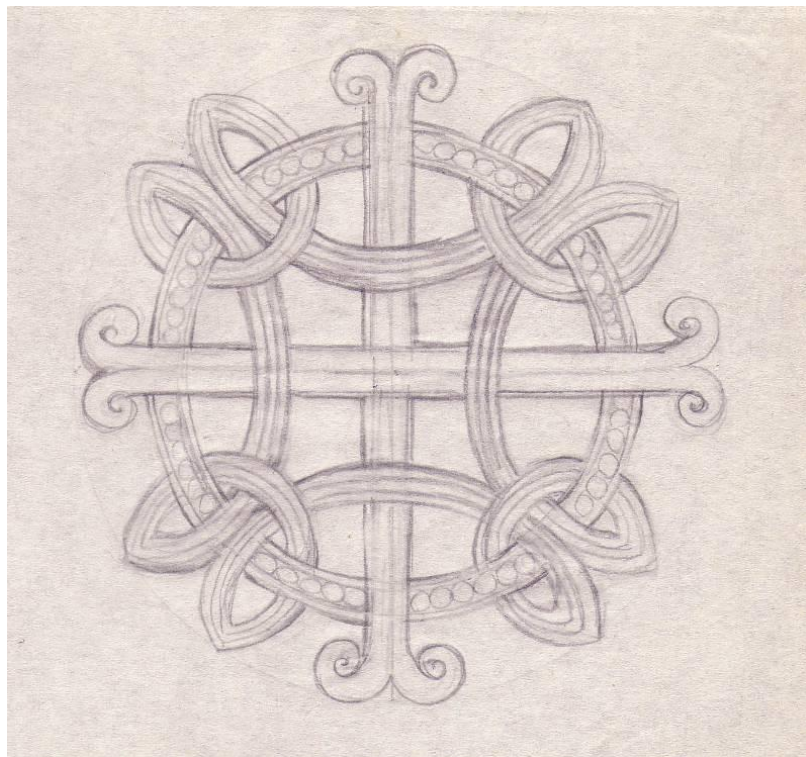


Plate 92 "VOUSSOIR Z"

A VOUSSOIR FROM READING ABBEY c. 1140

The components of this design are a cross superimposed upon a beaded circle whose four arcs are here each doubly looped around the circle itself, instead of outside it, as in the similar design to be seen on the font bowl from Hampstead Norreys.

Reading Abbey Museum



Plate 93 A SMALL, UNFINISHED FONT AT HINTON PARVA, DORSET.

Notice the careful planning and execution of the original work which rapidly deteriorates into confusion when a pupil takes over the carving.

APPENDIX 4

THE LABYRINTH IN 12th CENTURY ILLUSTRATIONS

The labyrinth had become familiar in the common speech of the fourth century as an expression of the intricacies of thought and argument among the Fathers of the Church so that in 381AD Gregory of Nazianzan could write of St. Basil that to his proficiency in philosophy, rhetoric, dialectic and grammar he added such a grasp of astronomy, geometry and numerical proportion, "that it was more difficult to elude his verbal toils than to escape from the Labyrinth ... and that to those who had experience of him, Minos was a mere trifle". (1) In such a sense, the labyrinth appears embroidered on the famous cloak of the Emperor Henry II, at Bamberg in the eleventh century (2), as a sign of his obtuse and impenetrable councils. And in the twelfth century we also have an example of the Labyrinth used metaphorically for the involved dialectic of heretical doctrine in a treatise by Gautier of Saint-Victor. It occurs in the title of his virulent attack upon four great teachers of Paris; Abelard, Gilbert de la Porrée, Peter of Poitiers and Peter Lombard; and the title of this treatise was "*Contra Quatuor Labyrinthos*". (3)

But an example of the use of the Labyrinth of Crete in association with Christian implications is to be found in one illustrated manuscript, the *Liber Floridus* of Lambert of Saint Omer c.1120 now preserved in Ghent (4) (Plate 97). This remarkable book was written only a couple of years before Henry Beauclerc granted his foundation charter to the new Abbey of Reading. On fol. 20 of the *Liber Floridus*, Lambert gives an illustration of the Labyrinth of Crete with the Minotaur at its centre and an inscription below which reads:

"Pasiphae Queen of the Cretans lay with the Bull, while she was disguised inside the wooden cow made by the ingenious Dedalus. She became pregnant by him and gave birth to the Minotaur, half man, half bull. On his birth, Dedalus, by order of King Minos, made a pit (fovea), that is the Labyrinth, and a house above it. The Minotaur was placed inside.

Minos, the King of Crete, having conquered the Athenians, extracted from them a triennial tribute of twice-seven bodies of young people, to be sent to the Minotaur for food (pastum)."

When this drawing (Plate 97) and its inscription is seen in conjunction with Lambert's other illustrations of the Ox, Behemoth and the sea-monster, Leviathan, upon whose backs are seated comparable figures of the Anti-Christ, (Plate 94 and Plate 95) it becomes clear that a Christian parallel is intended for the Cretan myth and that Behemoth is equated with the Minotaur. The source which Lambert was following was Pope Gregory the Great's commentary on the Book of Job. But Lambert has taken care to show by the details of his drawing that the winding path

of the labyrinth leads literally into the belly of the Minotaur, that is into the very embodiment of Evil, which stands at its centre. In his right hand this monstrous beast holds a sword, but with his *left* hand he gives the Devil's valediction in mockery of the Christian sign of blessing (Plate 97 . See also Plate 95).

On Fol. 62 of the same manuscript we find confirmation of this equation of the Minotaur with the Devil. For the title above Lambert's drawing of Behemoth reads:

"The Devil, mounted on Behemoth, singular beast of the Orient."

But Behemoth is here drawn as a fantastic Bull and its description given below the drawing closely follows that to be found in Pope Gregory's commentary, the *Moralia in Job*:

"Behemoth is a four-footed animal", writes Lambert, "armed with immense teeth. His tongue protrudes and his horns are like ram's horns. The sinews of his scales are like iron greaves (laminae). His testicles are intertwined and he has cloven feet. His bones are like the hedgehogs' spines. His dragon's tail is terrible and tall as a cedar tree. With his tail he binds, and with his teeth he wounds. For his sake a thousand mountains produce grass on which he feeds, eating hay like an ox, and swallowing rivers. He sleeps in the shadows in secret places among reeds.

He came into existence at the beginning of the world, and will perish with it. He signifies the Devil who fell from the height to the depths, and was made a brute beast for his transgressions. He also signifies Anti-Christ who will come at the end of time, and who will help the Devil to the utmost of his powers to bring perdition on the human race, and finally upon himself."

A comparison with the 32nd book, chapter 18 of Gregory's *Moralia in Job* shows how closely Lambert reproduced its text in this passage: nevertheless, he has made one very significant alteration, by the over-emphasis of the amount of grass consumed by Behemoth, which makes the beast devour not merely "pastum" (that is fodder or pasture) but the "hay of a thousand mountains". The reason for this exaggeration becomes apparent when we turn to Lambert's description of the Minotaur in the Labyrinth. For there the food of the Minotaur is the flesh of youths, "the bodies of twice- seven young people sent as a triennial tribute from Athens" which are also described in the "pastum".

The pit of the Labyrinth which contains the Minotaur is described by the word "fovea" which means both pitfall and womb. The same term "fovea" was used in the sense of the womb by Tertullian (5) and recalls the statement in the Book of Proverbs concerning the things that are never satisfied, "the grave, and the barren womb, the earth that is not filled with water, and fire; they say not, 'it is enough.'" (6)

Thus it becomes clear that Lambert identified the pit of the Labyrinth in which the Minotaur was contained, with the hungry womb, and the bestiality in

which this half-man was conceived. Such insatiable greed could not be satisfied even with the "pasture of a thousand mountains" nor with the triennial offering of a thousand lives.

But the insatiable maw of Death was likewise understood as a devouring womb and this idea is echoed by St. Paul in his description of Christ as "the first-born from the dead. (7) Thus Gregory's *Moralia in Job* had surely justified Lambert's "thousand mountains" when we read in his commentary the following comparison of texts from the Book of Job with the texts from the prophet Isaiah:

"When Isaiah observed the life of sinners devoured by an ancient and insatiable enemy, he said, 'The lion shall eat straw like an ox.' (Isaiah 11:7)

But what signifies the words, Hay and Straw, except the life of the carnal, of which it is said by the Prophet, 'All flesh is Hay?' (Isaiah 40:6). Then he who is here called 'Behemoth' is there called 'The Lion' and they who are here called 'Hay' are there called 'Straw' ... What is it then for which this Behemoth is compared to an ox that eats clean food - except that which is said of the Ancient Enemy by another Prophet - 'His food is choice'?

For he rejoices not in seizing those whom he holds of their own accord, lying in the lowest depths within himself, and already involved in wicked and filthy actions. But he seeks to eat Hay as an ox, because he seeks to wound with the fangs of his suggestion the pure life of spiritual persons ..." (8)

From this it is evident that Lambert, in his *Liber Floridus*, had not only identified the Cretan Minotaur with Behemoth, as a type of the double death of body and soul, but that he had also seen in Pasipae (the wife of King Minos) the figure of Woman, who was held to be the cause of this insatiable Death. This theme was confirmed by Lambert's illustration of the monster Leviathan, with Anti-Christ seated on his back (Plate 95); for he was fully aware of the passage in Gregory's *Moralia* which left no doubt about the lascivious hunger of this monster for the bait of human flesh, a hunger that could only be defrauded by the virgin body of a virgin-born Redeemer.

In this connection we may notice an unfinished drawing of a twelfth century labyrinth which is associated with an inscribed schema, the inscriptions upon which state that there are four good things which result from despising oneself, the World and its vanities (nullum) and in (sesperni) laying aside (sepono) sex, (se=sex, as in the Latin semestris). This schema and its associated Labyrinth occur in a twelfth century copy of Isidore of Seville's *Etymology* (Plate 96) and underlines the monastic trend of thought and its horror of the World and the Flesh which were now equated with the Devil.

The origins of the labyrinth, and its echo in the turf mazes that still survive, as well as the labyrinth inlaid in stone in the cathedral pavements of Chartres, Sens, St. Quentin, Amiens and Rheims are too complex to be considered further

here. (9) But we should remember that there was a labyrinth inlaid upon the floor of the Abbey of St. Bertin at St. Omer which was destroyed during the French Revolution, the design of which is of interest since its layout suggests the nature of an entanglement, rather than of a circuitous pathway. (10)

Nevertheless, even in Shakespeare's day, the turf mazes had fallen into disuse so that, as he says, "The nine Men's Morris is filled up with mud, and the quaint mazes in the wanton green, for lack of tread, are indistinguishable." (11)

But, in England, though the Maypoles and the dancing feet have gone, turf labyrinths of unknown antiquity do still survive, as for example that at Somerton, Oxfordshire, only twelve miles from the village church of Handborough, which King Henry Beauclerc had given to Reading Abbey at its foundation in 1121. Another example survives at Wing in Rutland, while near Breamore south of Salisbury, an ancient Miz-Maze is still to be found in an area filled with innumerable relics of our ancestors' long-forgotten past. There can be no doubt that in the twelfth century the men of England who brought their children to the fonts for Baptism, and who gazed at the didactic carvings in their new Anglo-Norman churches, understood well enough the meaning of the Labyrinth and its implications. It is, in my opinion, most probable that the turf mazes in England are also of twelfth century date.



Plate 94 THE DEVIL SEATED ON BEHEMOTH

An illustration from *LIBER FLORIDUS* of LAMBERT OF ST. OMER c. 1120

Ghent Bibliothèque de l'Université MS 92 f.67



Plate 95 ANTICHRIST SEATED ON LEVIATHAN

"This Leviathan, whom the holy scriptures call Anti-Christ ..."
 (Gregory the Great, *MORALIA* BK 3, 34). Note the beading on the Leviathan's tail.

An illustration from Liber Floridus of LAMBERT ST. OMER completed 1120.

Ghent Bibliothèque de l'Université Library. MS 92 f.68

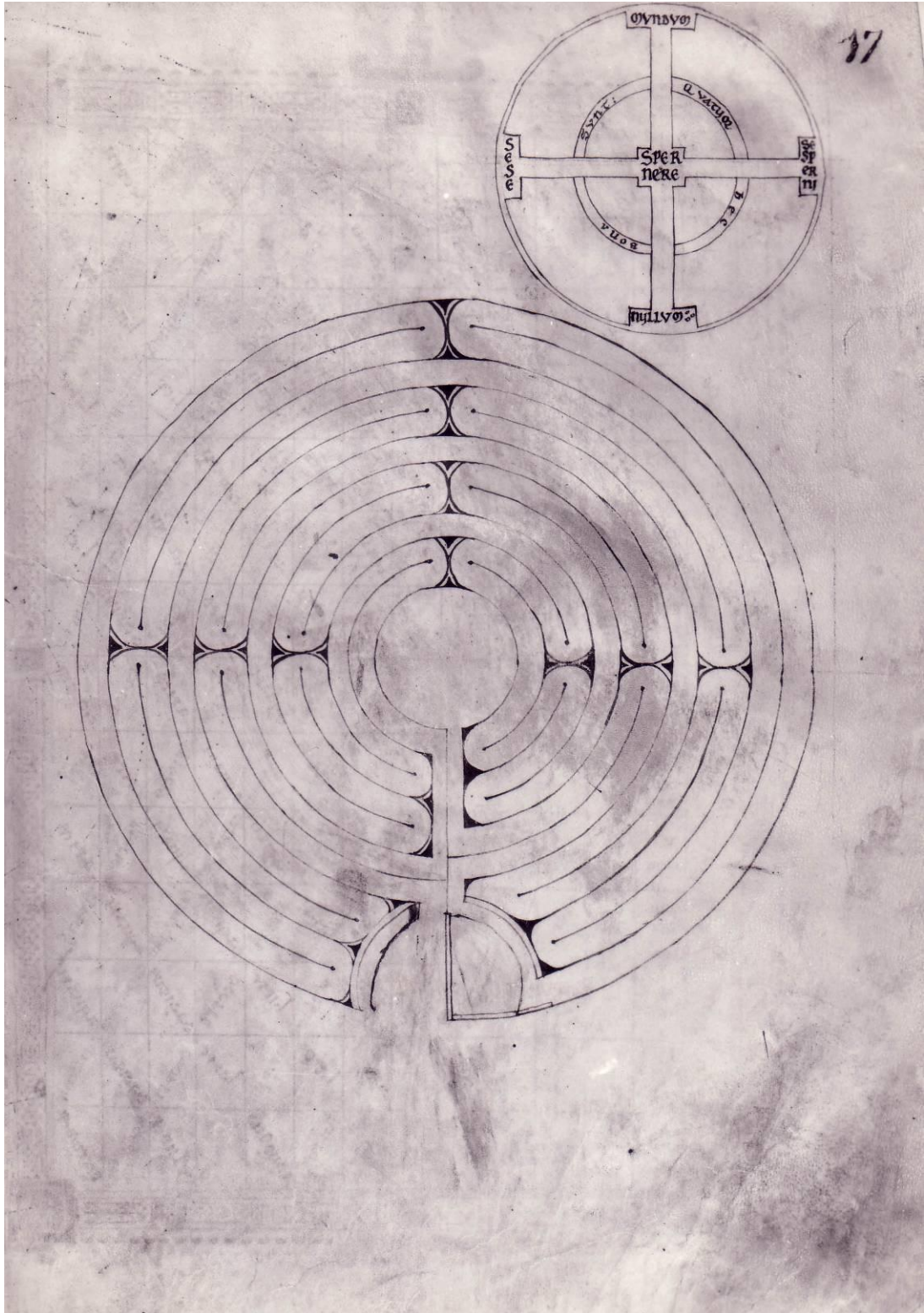


Plate 96 From THE ETYMOLOGY OF ISIDORE OF SEVILLE 570 - 636

Bibliothèque National Paris



Plate 97 *LIBER FLORIDUS* - THE LABYRINTH OF SIN

LAMBERT OF ST. OMER identified the Cretan Minotaur with Behemoth, c. 1120.

Ghent Bibliothèque De l'Université Ms 92 fol. 22.

NOTES

Note to the Reader

- (1) Epistles 55. 11: 21.
- (2) Library of the Fathers (Oxford 1884-50).
- (3) Proc. Soc. British Academy. Vol. XX11.

Chapter 1

- (1) cp. F. Saxl: "An Illustrated Mediaeval Encyclopaedia" in Warburg Institute Journal, Vol. 1 (1957).
- (2) Judges 16: 1-3.
- (3) Great Catechism (written in Cappadocia c. 383), Chapter 26.
- (4) Sermon 130.
- (5) See James S. Beddie: "Libraries of the twelfth century, their catalogues and contents" in "Anniversary Essays for S .H. Haskins" (1929).
- (6) "The Anglo-Saxon Homilies of Aelfric". English translation by Benjamin Thorpe (1844).
- (7) The font bowl from Hampstead Norreys has been in the church of St. John the Baptist at Stone, near Aylesbury, since 1846.
- (8) In the library of Leominster, it was contained in no less than 22 volumes.
- (9) English translation in Ante-Nicene Library, Vol. X11. The Hortatory Address is ascribed to Justin Martyr (c. 114-165), but in any case is not later than the third century.
- (10) English translation by R. K. Gordon in "Anglo-Saxon Poetry" (1950), p. 160.
- (11) e.g., at Moreton Valence, Gloucestershire, illustrated in G. Zarnecki: "English Romanesque Sculpture 1066-1140" (London 1951), Plate 31.
- (12) cp Hebrews 2: 14-18.
- (13) E.S. Prior & A.M. Gardner: "An Account of Mediaeval Figure Sculpture in England" (Cambridge U. P. 1912) and Victoria County History: Northamptonshire.
- (14) H. Colley March: "Proc. Dorset Natural History & Antiquarian Field Club", XXXV (1912-13), pp. 14-15, and Ellen Ettlinger: "Records of Buckinghamshire" XV11 (1964) pp. 257-264. The font appears in "Records of Buckinghamshire" because the font is now in Stone Parish church - see note 7 above.
- (15) Victoria County History: Berkshire, Vol. 4 (1924), pp. 78-79 gives a more exact date, c. 1140.
- (16) Translated by Roy J. Deferrari: "On the Sacraments and the Christian Faith" (Cambridge, Mass., 1951).

Chapter 2

- (1) Cambridge University Library MS I. i. 4. 26, f. 45v.
- (2) The passages to which Gregory refers are Job 40: 15-24 and 41: 1-3.
- (3) Moralia in Job 33: 31.

- (4) *ibid* 33: 14.
- (5) *ibid* 33: 64.
- (6) Earlier Tertullian in his "Answer to the Jews" (written in 198) made a similar allusion: "His mien was unhonoured, deficient in comparison with the sons of men, knowing how to bear infirmity, to wit having been sent by the Father "for a stone of offence" and made "a little lower than the angels". He pronounces himself "a worm and no man" and "rejected of the people".
- (7) e.g. Lambeth Palace Library MS 497 (possibly 12th century from Reading Abbey) and Durham, Bishop's Cocin's Library MS V. 1. ii, and Oxford, Jesus College MS E 6. see Scriptorium, Vol. 1: Sermones Inediti B. Ailredi, ed. C.H.Talbot, Rome 1952. I am indebted to Dr. Talbot for this reference.
- (8) In the twelfth century Latin prose Bestiary now in Cambridge University Library, the Vulture is said to conceive its young without assistance from the male, and to generate without copulation; this is alleged as proof of the Virgin Birth of Christ.
- (9) *Moralia* in Job 18: 54. cp also Book 31: "In holy Scripture, the word "Eagle" is sometimes used for the subtle understanding of the saints, or else for the incarnate Lord, flying swiftly over things below, and seeking again the things on high. By the word "Eagle" is expressed the flying of the Lord's ascension".
- (10) *Moralia* in Job 33: 51.
- (11) *ibid* 34: 2.

Chapter 3

- (1) *Moralia* in Job 19: 49.
- (2) *ibid* 9: 47.
- (3) *ibid* 33: 22, 26.
- (4) Seal No. 956 in the collection of Ancient and Near Eastern seals in the Pierpoint Morgan Library, New York.
- (5) H. Ward: "Cylinder Seals of Western Asia" (Washington 1910) figure 665; Henri Francfort; "The Art and Architecture of the Ancient Orient" (1959) p 68.
- (6) *De Sacramentis*; cp "De Arca Noe *Moralia*", trans. C.S.M.V. (Wantage) p.89.
- (7) Jocelyn Maines: "Joseph Conrad, a Critical Biography" (1960).
- (8) *Gerundus Codex*, fol. 1, 2 and 126.

Chapter 4

- (1) Victoria County History, Oxfordshire, Vol. 2, p.71.
- (2) The English translation of the biblical version used by Gregory is Parker and Revington.
- (3) *Moralia* in Job 33: 24.
- (4) *ibid* 18: 54.
- (5) *ibid* 33: 33.
- (6) BT. Baba Bathra 75a.

- (7) Moralia in Job 33: 25.
- (8) John Hewitt: "Ancient Armour and Weapons of Europe" (London 1955).
- (9) Brit. Library MS Royal 6. CV1 fol. 6 (1108-14).
- (10) Charles Keyser: "Norman Tympana and Lintels" (1927).
- (11) Moralia in Job 33: 14.
- (12) *ibid* 32: 22.
- (13) *ibid* 32: 47.
- (14) This reference is used by John of Salisbury (1110-1180) in "Metelogicon" 4: 24 to describe the corrupting influence of an evil will in contemporary events at the Papal Court.
- (15) Moralia in Job 33: 18.
- (16) *ibid* 12: 4-9.
- (17) C. Keyser: "Proc. Soc. Antiquaries", 2nd series, Vol. 28, p.234.
- (18) See Chapter 2, note 1, above.
- (19) Moralia in Job 34.
- (20) *ibid* 35.
- (21) *ibid* 35: 42 ff. In the Roman coinage still in use at the time of Pope Gregory 1 denarius = 10 asses.

Chapter 5

- (1) (Hugh of Saint-Victor, writing in about 1135, quotes Augustine: "Those who are now begotten in concupiscence take corruption as it were from the very vice of their root, and are born in guilt". (De Sacramentis 1: 7).
- (2) G. Zarnecki, *op. cit.* plate 61.
- (3) Bede: "History of the English Church and People". 1: 27.
- (4) Trans. James Morton, Camden Society (London 1853).
- (5) Moralia in Job 35: 19.
- (6) Matthew 13: 23.
- (7) Policraticus 3: 11.
- (8) Cambridge Mediaeval History, Vol. 6, Chapter 19, p. 634.
- (9) J .C. Fox: English Historical Review XXV, p. 303, and XXV1, p. 317.
- (10) The Anglo-Saxon Homilies of Aelfric. English translation by Benjamin Thorpe (1842)
- (11) Mediaeval Latin Lyrics. (1929), ep Schneidler: Die Gedichte des Archipoets. (1913).
- (12) *ibid.*

Chapter 6

- (1) Report of J. S. Ancona in "The Builder" (July 25, 1846).
- (2) Records of Buckinghamshire: 1V p. 354 and 1X p. 193.
- (3) H. Colley March F.S.A. in Proc. Dorset Natural History and Antiquarian Field Club: XXX1V (1912) and XXXV (1913).
- (4) Royal Commission of Historical Monuments: Buckinghamshire, Vol 1, p. 292.

- (5) T. R. Gambier Parry: *Goring Charters*. (Oxford Record Society 1931-32).
- (6) David Knowles: "Christian Monasticism" (London), 1969.
- (7) Ordericus Vitalis: "Chronicle", Book V, chapter 5. (In Boehn's translation: vol. 11, p. 130).
- (8) C.H.Talbot: "The Life of Christina of Markyate", translated from British Library Cotton MS. Tib. E.I. vol. 2.
- (9) William of Malmesbury. *op. cit.* p. 500 f.
- (10) Pignot: "Histoire de l'Ordre de Cluny", vol. 111, p.35.
- (11) e.g. the St. Hubert Bible: Brussels, Bib. Roy. MS 11. 1639 (c. 1070, Mosan work) and the Holkham Bible: British Library Harley MS 4381.
- (12) The Fingall Cartulary, Brit. Library Egerton MS 3031, transcribed in *English Historical Review*, vol.3 (1888) p.118. cp J. B. Hurry: "Reading Abbey" (1901).
- (13) The four great Latin Fathers: Augustine of Hippo, Jerome, Ambrose, Pope Gregory 1.
- (14) J. E. Sandys: "A History of Classical Scholarship (1921) p.625.
- (15) *op. cit.* Book 1V.

Chapter 7

- (1) M. K. James: "Pictor in Carmine".
- (2) Ordericus Vitalis: "Ecclesiastical Acts" Book 1 ch. 5. : 13.
- (3) For a full discussion, see N. Oxenham: "The Catholic Doctrine of the Atonement" (1881) and Hastings Rushdall: "The Idea of the Atonement in Christian Theology" (Bampton Lecture, MacMillan, 1920).
- (4) "Nicomachian Ethics" V.I. xv. (trans. Loeb Classical Library). See also Augustine of Hippo on divine justice in his "De Trinitate" book X111, ch. 22 (Dodd translation).
- (5) Gregory of Nyssa emphasised this point ("Great Catechism" XXV1).
- (6) Copies of this work were available in cathedral and monastic libraries in England in the 12th century; one, made at Old Sarum, still survives in the Salisbury Cathedral library.
- (7) Rufinus, trans. in *Library of the Nicene and post-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 111, p.550. (1892).
- (8) Augustine: Sermon 130; see also his "Enchiridion".
- (9) Peter Lombard: "Sentences", Book 111. 19.
- (10) R. Klibansky: "The Continuity of the Platonic Tradition" (1939) p.28.

Chapter 8

- (1) The Book of Job in Pope Gregory the Great's Commentary on Job, chap. 41, v. 6.
- (2) Augustine: " *City of God*" Book XX1, ch. 1V (Everyman edition vol. 2, p.339.)
- (3) (3) Pope Gregory the Great: "Moralia in Job", Book 1X; cp Isaiah 66: 24 and

Mark 9: 44-48.

- (4) Martin Hurlimann and Jean Boney: "French Cathedrals" (1960) plate 10.
- (5) Gregory the Great: "Moralia in Job" Book 1X: 97.
- (6) Augustine of Hippo: "", Book XX1, ch. Xxii.i
- (7) "Moralia in Job" Book XV111: 54.
- (8) "Exeter Book", British Library MS Cotton, Tib.
- (9) Justine Martyr: trans. "Ante-Nicene Christian Library" vol. 11, pp. 357. (1867).
- (10) Ephraim the Syrian "Nisibene Hymns", trans. in Waer and Schaff: "Library of Nicene Fathers", new series, vol. X111.
- (11) Gregory of Nyssa: "Great Catechism".
- (12) T. H. White: "The Book of Beasts" (1954); translation from a Latin prose Bestiary, Cambridge University Library MS 11. 4.26.
- (13) The Apocryphal Gospel of Nicodemus.
- (14) G. Zarnecki: "Later English Romanesque Sculpture" pp. 12-14.
- (15) British Library Charter: Add. Charters 19: 594. "Grant of seisen by Roger Abbot of Reading to Roger de Leituna of land at Eardisley which his grandfather held, claimed by him in the Abbot's Court against Robert de Barogberia. ".
- (16) British Library Add. Ms. 17738, f.199.
- (17) The Exeter Book.
- (18) op. cit. Hymn XXX1X. Ephraim died in 373. All Syrian churches which still retain Syriac as their liturgical language keep Ephraim's hymns, which are still sung.
- (19) "De Sacramentis".
- (20) Origen: "Contra Celsum" V1: 34.
- (21) op. cit. Book X1: 60 - commentary on the text of Job 13: 25.
- (22) B.T. Baba Bathra. 75a. E.T. i. 229.
- (23) G. Zarnecki, loc. cit.
- (24) Apocryphal Gospel of Nicodemus.
- (25) Gregory the Great, op. cit. Book V11: 39.
- (26) 12th century wooden font from Medelpad, Sweden, now in Stockholm Museum.
- (27) Gregory of Nyssa.
- (28) cp 1 Peter 3: 19 and 2 Peter 2: 4 for the chains of prisons.
- (29) Lambert of Saint-Omer: "Liber Floridus" f. 1.

Chapter 9

- (1) Hugh of Saint-Victor (d. 1141): "De Sacramentis".
- (2) Gilbert de la Porrée: see E. Gilson: "The History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages".

- (3) Augustine of Hippo: "*City of God*", Book XX11, ch. 11.
- (4) Saint-Hubert Bible, Brussels Bib. Roy. MS 11. 1639. See H. Bober: "Creation Before Time".
- (5) Ernest Brehaut: "An Encyclopaedist of the Dark Ages" (Columbia U.P., 1912) p.24: Studies in History and Economics and Public Law, vol. XLV111 No. 1.
- (6) Harry Bober: "An Illustrated Medieval Schoolbook" in Journal of the Walters Art Gallery, vol. X1X-XX (1956-57), Baltimore, U.S.A.
- (7) Examples quoted by H. Bober: Baltimore MS W73 (c. 1190-1200, English); Bib. Nat. Paris MS Lat. 5543 f. 135v and 136v (English); St. John's College, Oxford MS 17 f. 39v (c. 1110). See also: Modena Bible, Estense MS a 1. 23 Lat. 9883 f. 89r.
- (8) See architect's plan of the cathedral of Old Sarum (made at the time of the excavation), now in Salisbury Museum.
- (9) W.G. Collingwood: "Northumbrian Crosses of the pre-Norman period" (1927).
- (10) Chessmen, now in the British Museum. The type of mitre worn by the bishops in this set of chessmen suggests a 12th century date.
- (11) Bib. Nat. Paris MS; see Jean Dresses: "The Ancient Cities of Ethiopia", trans. by Elsa Coult, p. 97.
- (12) Photo by J. Doresse.
- (13) Joan Evans: "Cluniac Art in the Romanesque Period", p.17.
- (14) A similar implication is to be found in the use of the same schemata designs in the Berthold Missal - probably made about 1217 at the monastery of Weingarten.
- (15) British Museum - Memorial Stone No. 1814.
- (16) Levi, Doro : "Antioch Roman Mosaic Pavements", Vol.2 (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1947). 2 vols. (Vol. 1 : text, vol. 2 : plates).
- (17) Maurice H. Chéhab: "Mosaïques du Liban", Bulletin du Musée de Beyrouth X1V (1957).
- (18) M. G. Picard and M.H.Stern : "La Mosaïque Gréco-Romaine".
- (19) C. Oursel: "La Miniature du X11e Siècle à l'Abbaye de Citeaux, Bib. de Dijon MS 141 f. 67.
- (20) Alain of Lille (1128-1202): "Anti-Claudian" Book 111, ch. 4, trans. Wm. Hafner Cornog, University of Pennsylvania Dissertation. (Philadelphia 1935).
- (21) The Lambda diagram was stated by Plutarch (in "De Anima Procreatione" XX1X : 1027) to have been used by Crantor, the first commentator on Plato's "Timaeus" in the 4th century B.C.
- (22) Macrobius: "Commentary on the Dream of Scipio" Book 1. v. xi trans. W.H. Stahl (1952).
- (23) Indeed, Justin Martyr was among the first to make use of the assumption in Christian apologetics. Durandus, Bishop of Mende in the 13th century, stated that the passing-bell should be tolled twice for a dying woman, since through Woman (Eve) came the first separation from God. The custom continued in England, without the explanation, until the beginning of the First World War in some parish churches, as for example at St. Nicholas

- Guildford, when nursemaids explained the tolling bell: "Once for a man, but twice for a woman".
- (24) e.g. the Saint-Hubert Bible and the Anglo-Saxon Psalter.
- (25) Plato: "Republic" V11 : 526.
- (26) Brussels, Bib. Roy. MS 11 1939; see H. Bober.
- (27) When this arrangement of the elements and their associated numbers is compared with that given by Abbess Herrad, it will be seen that she has made a mistake: she has allotted only 2 squared and 3 squared to the two elements which she considered the primary, that is to Air and Earth, thus leaving only one mean term to be shared by the two intermediate elements (described by her as Fire and Water). Thus she makes nonsense of Plato's theory that two mean terms are required to unite a solid body. Nevertheless her general reference can be clearly understood, and the distinctive framework of the circular schema with its interlacing arcs is unmistakable as a diagram of macrocosmic harmony.
- (28) Nicomachus of Gerasa: "Introduction to Arithmetic". This Greek schoolbook was written probably at the end of the first century A.D. at Alexandria, contemporaneously with the writing of the last books of the New Testament. It represents the traditional teaching of Arithmetic as developed by the neo-Pythagorean schools, Boethius' translation of it continued in use in the Latin West from the 5th to the 15th centuries.
- (29) *ibid* Book 11 ch. 16 : 3.
- (30) *ibid* Book 11 ch. 5 (trans. M. L. D'Ooge, p. 276).
- (31) Aristotle: "Metaphysics" 1: 6-7. "Metaphysics" 6: 9-10 explains this further: "These thinkers make it clear that Goodness is predictable in numbers, and that the odd, the straight and the equal-by-equal (square), and the powers of certain numbers belong to the series of the Beautiful. For the Seasons are connected with a certain kind of number, and the other examples which they adduce from mathematical theories all have the same force".
- (32) Gregory the Great: "Moralia in Job". Book V11.
- (33) Macrobius: *cp. cit.* Book 1 ch. 12.
- (34) Augustine: "On the Trinity" Book 4 ch. 2. A copy of this was in the Reading monastic library, probably before the 12th century. See Etienne Gilson: "The Christian Philosophy of Augustine" (1961) p.199: "In Augustine, Idea, Forma, Species, Ratio, are practically synonymous terms. The correct Latin translation of the Greek word for "Idea" is "forma" (a species). It is often translated by "ratio", but "ratio" corresponds exactly to "logos", not to "idea". If we want to be correct, we should translate the term by "form". However, "ratio" may signify ideas as principles of knowledge, and of the intelligibility of things. We can say that it means fundamentally the same thing".
- (35) Macrobius, *op. cit.* Book 1 6 : 42.

Appendix 2

- (1) The New Testament texts from which the Descent epic developed show that such a belief was current in apostolic times. They are to be found in:
- (2) Ephesians 4: 8-9

- (3) Romans 14: 9
- (4) 1 Peter 3: 18-19 and 4: 6
- (5) 1 Corinthians 15: 55
- (6) Revelation 1: 18
- (7) See M.R. James: "Apocryphal New Testament" p. 433.
- (8) The mockery of Jesus at his trial is offset by God's mockery of Satan. Origen had underlined the divine mockery of Satan by quoting from Romans 8: 32 "The Father spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all : that those who took him and delivered Him up into the hands of men might be laughed at by Him who dwells in the heavens, and might be derided by the Lord". (Commentary on Matthew 13: 9; Ante-Nicean Christian Library Add. Vol. 2897).
- (9) The following sentences spoken by Death, occur interspersed with Satan's.
- (10) Translated from Ephraim the Syrian: Library of Post-Nicene Fathers vol. X111, 2nd series, Wace and Schaff.
- (11) The works of Ephraim were known in 12th century monastic libraries, including that of Reading Abbey.
- (12) Chapter 1X: 3, trans. C. E. Holt: "On the Divine Names and the Mystical Theology". (1951) p.163.

Appendix 3

- (1) Plato: "Timaeus".
- (2) Justin Martyr.
- (3) Boas: "English Art 1100-1216" p. 74.

Appendix 4

- (1) Panegyric on St. Basil 23.
- (2) Leclerc: "Dictionnaire d'Archéologie Chrétienne" p. 982.
- (3) "Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du Moyen Age" vol. X1X (Paris 1952).
- (4) Lambert de Saint-Omer: "Liber Floridus", Ghent University Library MS 92 f.20.
- (5) Anim. 19.
- (6) Proverbs 30: 15.
- (7) Colossians 1: 18.
- (8) Gregory the Great: "Moralia in Job" Book XXX111. 26 Paris Bib. Nat. MS Acq. 2169 f. 17.
- (9) The maze on the pavement of the nave of Ely cathedral is a comparatively recent addition by the 19th century restorers.
- (10) W. H. Matthews: "Mazes and Labyrinths" (London 1922) p.63.
- (11) "A Midsummer Night's Dream" Act 11, sc. 1. line 98 - Titania's speech.

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AFTERWORD

A note about the Ransom Theory

Two alternative theological explanations of the Incarnation were current from early times until the 12th century: the Ransom Theory developed in Alexandria, involving the tricking of the Devil, and the doctrine of the Atonement. The former, which implied that God was guilty of falsehood was then abandoned - though orthodox teaching still speaks metaphorically of Christ's death as a ransom paid to liberate sinners from the rule of death, an idea developed from the epistles of Paul.

The two doctrines were not mutually exclusive; they were (and are) regarded by theologians at attempts to make truths which are ultimately beyond human comprehension, intelligible to the laity. The Ransom Theory was particularly capable of graphic illustration in the form of Jesus being dangled as a bait on a fisherman's hook, swooping down from heaven like a bird and soaring up again, or thrusting his into the mouth of Leviathan.

The so-called "Solomon's Knot"

The illustrations of the crossed Loops Design appended to Chapter 9 are not directly paralleled in the carvings which form the main subject of this book. They are included, as are the examples of the Lambda diagram, to demonstrate how geometrical forms were used as shorthand references to mathematical/metaphysical concepts.

The crossed loops (sometimes named for no apparent reason, a "Solomon's Knot") symbolise the World Soul, referring to the essential Harmony of the Universe as expounded in Plato's *Timaeus* Nicomachus and Boethius develop this in terms of numerical relationships, but to Plato it was an ineffable concept, expressed in the myth of Creation by the Demiurge.

Since 1987 scholars have continued to explore these subjects; unfortunately it has not been possible for me to make a survey of their findings. However, I should like to draw attention to an article by Rita Wood: "The 'Occupatio' of St. Odo of Cluny and the porch sculptures of Malmesbury Abbey" in the *Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Journal*, Vol. 112 (2009), pp202-210. Rita Wood identifies a specific link between the 12th century sculptures at Malmesbury Abbey and a 10th century poem by Odo, Abbot of Cluny which she describes as "Odo's epic on the history of salvation". She states that the humanity that deceived Satan into taking the hook of Divinity is an allegory of the Incarnation invented by Gregory of Nyssa in the 5th century, and still current in the 12th century. During her discussion which mentions the Burgundian influence on the architecture and sculptures of Malmesbury, she observes that "the Beatus illustrations bridge the gap in time between Odo and the 12th century sculptures".

GMG

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book, written by my late mother, Mary Curtis Webb, might have been lost and I am much indebted to my friends for their help to me in saving it. I am most grateful also to the Directors of the many libraries and museums for their permission to reproduce their images and for their kind assistance in other ways.

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