

## THE CIRCLE AND THE CROSS.

By A. HADRIAN ALLCROFT.

### CHAPTER XXV.

#### GOD'S ACRE.

*The Christian attitude to death a novelty—The 'Hypogée des Dunes' at Poitiers—Burial within structural churches—Theodore's 'Penitential'—Reforms of archbishop Cuthbert—Form of the new burial-grounds—Saxon names for the burial-ground—Political consequences of Cuthbert's reforms—The parochial system—Townships—Multiple churches within one garth—South Malling, Hollington, Hellingly—Wanlip and Rushock—The churchyard fence—'God's acre'—Alfriston and Hawkshead—The handful of dust—Causes of the disappearance of the Barrow—Mounds beside churches—Taplow—Grave of Harald Hairfair—Churches within earthworks—Christianity follows the Roman roads—Churches on hill-tops—Folklore: the devil and the churchyards—Sites of parish churches—Thorpe, 'Teep,' etc.*

A century ago a writer on Welsh antiquities remarked that 'As the practice of burying in consecrated ground has no foundation in Christianity, but rather the reverse, for our Saviour was buried in a garden, this custom must be referred to the practice of antiquity in the times of heathenism.'<sup>1</sup> Bingham similarly concluded that the sacredness of Christian cemeteries before the days of Gregory of Tours (sixth century) must have arisen from reasons other than their formal consecration by bishops.<sup>2</sup> Professor Baldwin Brown calls the ultimate use of the very church itself as a place of sepulture a 'remarkable' fashion, 'because it was entirely opposed to the customs of most

<sup>1</sup> Peter Roberts, *Cambr. Popular Antiquities* (1815), p. 54.

<sup>2</sup> *Christian Antiquities*, Bk. xxiii, ii, §§ 1-2.

other religions, especially that of the Jews. So abhorrent to the Hebrew mind was the idea of any profanation of a sanctuary by contact with the dead that Ezekiel will not even let the burial-ground of kings abut on the outer wall of his temple courts.<sup>1</sup> In the Latin countries at any rate, the older feeling which had regarded the grave as an altar,<sup>2</sup> the tomb as a temple, was so far as concerns public religion almost extinct before Christianity was introduced; the *parentalia* and *lemuria* survived as a matter of form only, and there was no sentimental connexion whatever between the tomb and the temple in the official religion.<sup>3</sup> The wealthier dead were buried along the roads leading from city or town, the poorer class and slaves mostly in public cemeteries, or in the private burial-places of the great men their masters. The poor had no memorial, and the magnificent tombs of the rich had come to be little but the advertisement of their riches. Great houses usually owned each its own *columbarium*, wherein were laid the ashes of the family and of its servants alike. Only in a few cases did there still survive the practice of inhumation.

As early Christianity forbade cremation and required earth-to-earth burial, the earliest of the faithful in Rome were buried in the catacombs. Elsewhere they would usually be laid in private graves, with no imposing monuments; for the new faith was still suspect, so that it sought no notoriety for its dead, while the practice of

<sup>1</sup> *Arts in Early England*, i. p. 264. Fergusson had made much the same remark. A synagogue in Hull was promptly closed this year (1928) owing to the discovery of old funeral vaults beneath the site.

<sup>2</sup> Ridgeway, *Origin of Tragedy*, c. 1. Cf. the form of the Roman sarcophagus adapted for use as an altar.

<sup>3</sup> Greek and Roman temples had nothing to do with burial: 'He that looks for urns and old sepulchral relics, must not search for them in the ruins of temples, where no religion anciently placed them.' Taking the word 'temple' in the sense presumably intended, this generalisation is probably true. Nevertheless the origin of the temple was still the tomb, and in the case of the *Prytaneum*, and similar institutions, the sepulchral character of the building was neither forgotten nor even disguised. cf. Clemens Alexandrinus (*In Protreptico*): *Superstitio templa condere persuasit. Quae*

*enim prius hominum sepulchra fuerunt, magnificentius condita, Templorum appellatione vocata sunt. Nam apud Larissam civitatem in arce in templo Palladis Acrisii sepulchrum fuit, quod nunc sacrarii loco celebratur. In arce quoque Atheniensi, ut est ab Antiocho in nono Historiarum scriptum, Cereris sepulchrum fuit; in templo vero Palladis, quam Poliada Graeci appellant, iacet Erichthonius. In Eusebii Praef. Evangel., ii, the title of cap. vi is 'The Temples of the Gods, which are nothing but Tombs.' Rev. S. Baring-Gould remarks (*Cliff-Castles and Cave-Dwellings of Europe*, p. 177) that 'It is certainly remarkable that whereas in paganism the identification of the tomb with the temple passed away, and the temple acquired independence of such association, in the Latin church the reverse took place, and the church unassociated with a tomb—a basilica in fact—was converted into a sepulchral monument.'*

inhumation did away with the *raison d'être* of the usual mausoleum or *columbarium*. When presently Christianity had gained toleration monuments might be revived for the *fideles*, but they would be of different plan and on a far humbler scale, the church discouraging display for two reasons: one was the ethical objection to any such parade of fleshly pride; the other the very reasonable fear that undue attention to the grave might lead to the revival of pagan practices. The attitude of the church was in fact wholly inconsistent, for on the one hand it preached that 'Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord,' and taught the efficacy of prayers to and for the dead, while on the other hand it forbade any cult of the grave. Trouble was bound to arise from this inconsistency of doctrine,<sup>1</sup> especially when introduced amongst peoples with whom the old sentiment of ancestor-worship, so far from being dead, was the vital part of their religion; and speaking broadly this was the case everywhere except among such few as had abandoned their real, if mistaken religion, for this or that philosophical creed. It may be true, as Bacon asserted, that no true philosopher was ever other than a religious man, though this is a difficult thesis to establish. It is quite as true, and much more easy to prove, that there is most religion where there is least philosophy, and that there is no predominant religion which does not take great thought for its dead.

'The union of devotion with interment, the development of the grave into the cemetery, and of the cemetery into the church, is essentially Christian; one might perhaps say it *is* Christianity.' So wrote Theodore Mömmsen. But this does not quite grasp the whole of the essential thing. The peculiarity of Christianity is that, unlike any other intellectual creed, not only did it refuse to see any defilement in death, or in the presence of the dead, but it made such presence a primary *desideratum*.<sup>2</sup> It

<sup>1</sup> 'The Christians seem to have imitated the pagans in their care for the dead, as Tertullian remarks how in his time they were sumptuously entombed, perfumed and richly apparelled. Origen also mentions the display made by the Christians in the decoration of their dead. St. Gregory of Nyssa beautifully attired the body of his sister Macrina, who died in a convent. The evils which came from the imitation of pagan

customs were sufficiently important to be deemed worthy of formal condemnation at the Council of Auxerre' (C. H. Kains-Jackson, *Our Ancient Monuments*, p. 81).

<sup>2</sup> cf. the anecdote from Eusebius quoted by Bingham (*Christ. Antiq.* Bk. xxiii, ii, §6). Julian the Apostate objected to the Christian practice of conducting funerals by daylight: 'How can the day be auspicious that sees a funeral?' he asked. The reply was that

adopted an attitude entirely foreign to all so-called civilised peoples, and familiar only to those 'degraded' savage tribes who mummify a corpse and keep it within their dwelling-places; and upon this unpromising foundation it has reared a church which has out-lived all the rest, and will still out-live them. The Jew had left it to the unclean, to the lepers and epileptics, to dwell among the tombs; the church bade its sons make their orisons and their temples there and there only. Most of all was this so in Celtic Christianity. Who has not felt a vague sense of something incongruous on finding in some remote country spot a costly new church, standing as it were naked within a newly consecrated graveyard wherein everything, from the railings to the few tombstones, bespeaks itself likewise brand-new? In literal truth a church without an ancient churchyard is un-English, because it is un-Celtic.

The same feeling, in a somewhat more eclectic shape, dominated the early Christianity of Rome and of the east. The holy places of the faithful were primarily the spots where one or other of the martyrs had suffered, or where some more distinguished one amongst the first of their teachers was buried. And as a rule these spots were outside the walls of the towns. 'Aemylian, the Roman prefect, tells Dionysius, bishop of Alexandria, that they (the Christians) should not have liberty to go into their cemeteries, as they called them (*τὰ καλούμενα κοιμητήρια*), and there hold their assemblies for divine worship.'<sup>1</sup> The fifth council of Carthage (401), concerned to suppress the heresy of the Donatists, ruled that the bishops of the various dioceses should, where possible, destroy 'the altars (*altaria*) that were erected by the roads or in the fields as monuments of martyrs, in which it could not be proved that the bodies or relics of true martyrs reposed'<sup>2</sup>; it being the practice of the Donatists, just as it was of other Christians, to make

the Christians 'knew no pollution arising from the attendance of a dead body or a funeral. The bodies of Christians were the members of Christ, alive or dead.'

<sup>1</sup> Bingham (*Christian Antiqs.* Bk. xxiii, i, §1.) quoting from Eusebius, vii, 11. He comments that the fact 'would incline a man almost to think, were there not otherwise insuperable arguments against it, that it was the ancient custom of the primitive Christians to bury in churches.' It in

reality suggests nothing of the sort, but merely that the graves of the faithful were the first and most holy places of worship. Bingham has noted and faithfully recorded that 'churches' were called *martyria* and *coemeteria* (Council of Laodicea, Can. ix), but he was so much obsessed by the modern idea that 'church' or *ecclesia* must necessarily denote a building, that he failed to see the obvious explanation, (see p. 52).

<sup>2</sup> Bingham, *op. cit.*, Bk. xxiii, i, § 4.

the tombs of their martyrs in the fashion of altars and use them as places of worship. Of anything answering to a churchyard there is no mention. The martyrs were buried, like other people of the time, 'by the roads and in the fields.'

In the great Cimetière des Dunes, a mile or so east of Poitiers and beside the Roman road thence to Bourges, is Chiron<sup>1</sup> Martyrs, 'The Martyrs' Cairn,' amongst the most perfect examples at present known of a *martyrium*, that is, of the earliest form of a Christian church. It is a *hypogée*, its floor sunk 9 feet below the natural surface. In plan rectangular, it is set east-and-west, and approached by a sort of Galilee in the form of a long and narrow stairway. The chamber is divided into two portions each about 8 feet in length, of which the more easterly, 16 feet wide and raised one step, was the sanctuary, the other (13 feet wide) answering to a nave. A small altar stands in the sanctuary, flanked on either side by an enormous stone sarcophagus. Three other sarcophagi take up well nigh the half of the second chamber, and in the floor, particularly about the altar, are sunk others. The roof of the *hypogée* had been so constructed as to allow of a small east window. Decoration had been lavished upon the fabric: several of the steps of the stairway are carved with designs reminiscent of Irish work, the jambs of the doorway are painted with still brilliant colour, and upon the plaster covering the altar was a Greek cross with the cup-and-circle set between the limbs. Painted inscriptions in debased Latin proved the whole to have been erected by one Abbat Mellibaudes (*circa* 600) to the memory of certain martyrs of the district, and a rudely carved slab represents the crucifixion of two of the number, Sosthenes and Hilarius; but there were also found within the building other objects which, but for the circumstances, must have at once been set down as part of a deposit of the Bronze Age, ornaments of bronze, earrings of amber, and beads of glass.<sup>2</sup> The evidence also showed that, primitive as was this 'church,' it was yet a reconstruction of some still earlier monument. Mellibaudes himself

<sup>1</sup> The term is still in local use to denote a pile of stones, and commonly a pile which proves on excavation to be the cairn covering a Gaulish burial.

<sup>2</sup> Now in the Museum of the Soc. des Antiquaires de l'Ouest at Poitiers.

was buried in the sarcophagus which lay on the south side of the altar, that on the north side being the collective ossuary of those whom he sought to honour.<sup>1</sup>

A *hypogée* such as this is half-way between the simple dolmen and the complete church. It belongs to a part of France famous for its early Christian antiquities: all around it have been found burials of Gaulish, Gallo-Roman, and Merovingian date; only a quarter of a mile away is the *Pierre Levée*, a dolmen which was itself a place of Christian pilgrimage until the thirteenth century; and not many miles off is the famous dolmen-church of Confolens (ch. xviii).

The sequence of events would appear to be as follows: certain martyrs, led thither from Poitiers by the road still known as the *Route des Martyrs*, were executed and buried where they fell in a grave or graves of the common kind in the general pagan cemetery of their town. Their place of burial became a place of prayer to others of the *fideles*, an *ecclesia* or 'place of meeting.' When the days of persecution were long passed, Mellibaudes built upon the spot the oratory above described, gathered within it the remains of other martyrs to the number of 72, possibly himself retired thither as to a hermitage, and there was assuredly buried. Had fortune so willed it, some other benefactor would have reared over Mellibaudes' work a soaring French church, but mischance prevented it. Something occurred to sever the thread of tradition, and for centuries the world forgot even why Chiron Martyrs and the *Route des Martyrs* were so called.

The church taught, and teaches, the equality of its sons and daughters: they are 'one family in Christ.' This teaching harmonised with the practice of the great Roman houses, which had long treated all who belonged to the *familia* as equal at any rate in the grave. So there would grow up a feeling that Christians should be buried with Christians, and in some spot as it were under the protection of the God whom they had worshipped. But amongst the Latins this was a late development. The earliest Latin churches had no graveyards at all; they were frequently

<sup>1</sup> Camille de la Croix, *Martyrium de Poitiers* (Paris, 1883). Discovered in 1878, the remains were again covered up, to be

again uncovered and protected by a permanent building in 1909.

within towns, and the civil law forbade all burial within a town. Yet one finds as early as the fourth century isolated cases of the burial of illustrious dead actually within the churches, as when Constantine was buried within his great church of the SS. Apostles at Constantinople. Here again the practice of the new faith was inconsistent with its preaching, for it built churches over the actual tombs of its dead saints and martyrs, while it excluded others of the faithful from burial within their walls. Who was to decide, and by what criterion, whether the latest of the dead was more or less of a saint than others? By the sixth century it was a matter of course to bury prominent persons within the building, and St. Augustine built his monastic church of SS. Peter and Paul at Canterbury expressly that it might serve for his own mortuary chapel and that of his royal converts of the Kentish line.<sup>1</sup> Probably the provision of consecrated graveyards about the churches had, where conditions permitted, become usual some time before.<sup>2</sup> At any rate when Latin Christianity first reached England with Augustine, the old 'pagan' sentiment was once more alive in it—the temple and the tomb were again one and the same, and the faithful had begun to demand as of right that they should be buried within the shadow of their church, if not actually within its walls.

With Irish Christianity the development was different: religion with the Celt, whether it were Christian or not, began with the grave and the graveyard, and this was, as it had so long been, a circular barrow. The oratory, from which after long centuries developed the church, was merely the outward sign of Christianity stamped upon the old pagan symbol of mortality, the circle; and it owed its sanctity primarily to its being actually built upon the grave. There being no sanctity where there was no burial, the more numerous the burials the greater the sanctity. Every new interment meant the addition of new *reliquiae*, and there was virtue in quantity. 'What the pagans of Ireland had

<sup>1</sup> All the archbishops of Canterbury were buried there until Cuthbert (*obit* 758) broke the tradition by causing himself to be buried in Christ Church 'because he was solicitous for the honour and dignity' of his cathedral.

<sup>2</sup> The first actual evidence of such consecration is said to be a case mentioned by

Gregory of Tours (540-594); Walcott *Sacred Archaeology*. Chrysostom (*circa* 403) states that the early Christians buried outside the towns and away from their 'churches.' But the case of Chiron Martyrs, above cited, proves that there was no keeping the 'church' long away from the place of burial.

called *ferta* we call *reilic*,<sup>1</sup> says the chronicler of St. Patrick's life, and there was significance in the adoption of the latter term for a cemetery. Relics became the great object of desire, and all manner of un-Christian sin was committed to obtain possession of the bones of saints and kings.

It is not needful here to trace further this line of development. It was not peculiar to Ireland even in its genesis. It grew out of a natural instinct of humanity, but it thrived with a special and persistent vigour wherever the Ibero-Celt had come. It thrived therefore all over the British Isles. It would have thrived to some extent without purposed fostering; it thrived amazingly when Holy Church made it a lever for her own purposes. 'It was a strange perversion which brought the new faith to attach such importance to death as to forget life, and to fix its thoughts so steadfastly upon the terrors of hell as to forget the bliss of heaven.' Yet this was, it has been said, the prevailing Gospel and practice of Christianity until the Renaissance and the Reformation introduced a saner view.

A canon of the council of Nantes (seventh century) forbade burial within a church, except in the *atrium*, the *porticus*, or the *exedrae* of the building. Whatever be the meaning of these various terms, it is at any rate clear that the main portion of the fabric was not to be used as a common burial-place; and this ruling the council enunciated as being *secundum maiorum instituta*, the traditional practice of the Latin church. When therefore Theodore of Tarsus, archbishop of Canterbury 668-690, ruled (capitulary 68) that *in ecclesia sanctificata nulli mortui sepeliantur*, he was merely endeavouring to enforce the Latin as against the Celtic practice. Theodore was, if not an entirely submissive servant of the papacy (for he delayed six years in giving effect to the papal commands in regard to St. Wilfrid), at any rate as Roman as he dared to be. But even the Latin church was inconsistent in its practice, for Theodore himself was buried *in ipsa ecclesia* of SS. Peter and Paul in Canterbury,<sup>1</sup> and the archbishop was himself inconsistent in his rulings. In the *Penitential*,<sup>2</sup> for example, he deals with the question whether it was permissible to celebrate mass in a church in which interments

<sup>1</sup> *H.E.* II, iii, § 96.

<sup>2</sup> *Liber Poenitentialis*, II, i, 4-5.

had been made. He decides that while the burial of heathen and heretics does pollute a consecrated church, that of Christians does not pollute. Where non-Christians have been buried, mass may not be said until their bodies have been removed, the church purified, and its timbers scraped and washed.<sup>1</sup> There is no possibility of doubting that the archbishop was concerned here with buildings—buildings of *timber* only, be it noticed—and not merely with burial-grounds, and there is no difficulty in understanding how the problem had arisen. The half century preceding his appointment to the primacy had witnessed a savage struggle of the old heathenism against the new faith: it was the time of Redwald of East Anglia and of Penda, the whole-hearted pagan who died at Winwaedsfield in 655. Penda's reign must have seen the desecration of many of the few existing churches, and quite possibly some of them had actually been turned into pagan places of burial, if not into pagan places of worship. When therefore Mercia once more and finally came back to Christianity, there would be reason to ask with what provisos it were permissible to reopen such churches for Christian worship.<sup>2</sup> Penda's far-reaching activity would certainly involve here and there a church still in the building, or if built, not yet consecrated; and Theodore's reply covers these also.<sup>3</sup>

Theodore does not seem to have placed any effectual limitation upon the interment of *fideles* within the churches. We are not told what burial was offered to such of the faithful as died at spots remote from any church: as the

<sup>1</sup> So the text as printed by Haddan and Stubbs. Thorpe, p. 303, prints a much more copious and obviously later text. One of the additional paragraphs emphasises the course to be taken with a church which has been profaned *before it had been consecrated*.

<sup>2</sup> Tradition asserts that the original church of Winchester was built by the mythical King Lucius (third century) and destroyed in a subsequent persecution; that a second and less splendid church was built on the same site *circa* 312-317; that this was converted into a pagan temple by Cerdic (*circa* 519); that it was destroyed in the time of Kenwalch, as *having been profaned by the heathen*, and the third church erected and consecrated, again on the same site, by Birinus, 648.

<sup>3</sup> The suggestion that Theodore was

thinking of pagan places of worship, and that *ecclesia* is here applied to such heathen temples, is not warranted. The question what to do with pagan *fana* had been dealt with already by a greater than Theodore (ch. xxi), not a century before. Theodore, it must be remembered, was no stranger to England, as was Gregory. He knew what he was talking about. We find exactly the same question answered in exactly the same way in Gaul of the ninth century; a Capitulary of Charlemagne and his son Louis (*Corpus Iuris Germani Antiqui*, ii, 524) forbids the sanctification of churches which had been desecrated by pagan burials, unless the pagan bodies were disinterred and the timbers (*lignis*) scraped and washed; nor might mass be said in such a building unless (*until?*) *fideles* were buried there. De Baye, *Industrial Arts of A.-S.*, p. 124.

churches of Theodore's time were exclusively the *mynstres* of the monasteries, the number of such must have been considerable. Naturally their kindred would bury them as best they might, in a Christian *locus sanctus* if such were accessible, but otherwise either in the existing pagan barrows, or in new-made barrows of precisely the same semblance.

One natural consequence of Theodore's ruling was that in such few churches as existed the number of burials soon exceeded the accommodation, and the buildings became mere charnel-houses.<sup>1</sup> It was in part to check this obvious evil that at last, in the middle of the eighth century, archbishop Cuthbert<sup>2</sup> obtained papal permission to have burial-places provided within the towns. Making pilgrimage to Rome he had noticed the prevalence of intramural burial. Permission given, he 'made burial-places everywhere in England.'<sup>3</sup>

The old Roman law which forbade all burial within the walls, held rigidly good until the systematic desecration of Christian graves by the 'barbarians'—whether Goths (537) in search of plunder or Lombards (755) in search of 'relics'—led to its being first ignored and finally abrogated. So early as 609 pope Boniface IV. collected and laid beneath the altar of the Pantheon (then consecrated as the church of St. Maria ad Martyres) no less than 28 wagon-loads of the bones of 'saints,' in whose honour it is said that the festival of All Saints was then instituted.

From the earliest times and for obvious reasons the dead had been buried at some distance from the abodes of the living. Scotie monks might take another course and habitually make their abodes on or beside a grave, but they could not at once force such a practice upon the mass of the peoples whom they sought to convert. If they established a Christian place of burial amongst such a

<sup>1</sup> Bede (*H.E.* II, iii, § 96) records that Theodore himself was buried inside the church of SS. Peter and Paul, Canterbury, 'because the *porticus* was now full,' less than 80 years after its consecration (613). This was the north aisle, subsequently the chapel of the Blessed Virgin.

<sup>2</sup> His date is 742-758. He is constantly miscalled 'Saint' Cuthbert, and what he did is often grossly misrepresented.

<sup>3</sup> Weever, *Ancient Funeral Monuments* (1631), p. 214: *Cuthbertus Archiepiscopus Cant. xi ab Augustino, cum Romae videret plures intra civitates sepeliri, rogavit Papam ut sibi liceret cetera facere; quod Papa annuit. Reversus itaque cetera ubique in Anglia constituit.* The statement is repeated by Dugdale, *Monasticon* (1682), p. 25. See further APPENDIX D. The pope at the time would be Zacharias (741-752), according to Gams, *Series Episcoporum*.

people, it would certainly not be within the *tun*, but outside it, and just so near as sentiment would permit.<sup>1</sup> What archbishop Cuthbert did was to consecrate burial-places actually within the *tuns*. Until this was done there must necessarily cling even to Christian burial-places something of the feeling of aversion which had always attached to a grave. The innovation tended to simplify the rites of Christian burial, and by so doing to recommend it to the masses. It would tend also to check those pagan rites and practices which stubbornly clung to pagan burial: what was done at some remote barrow could less easily be done at the *ciric* within the village and under the eyes of the priest. And by giving as it were a new dignity to the *ciric* it would relieve the congestion of the few structural churches existing, while it left no excuse for any of the flock to bury their dead as their forefathers had done, in promiscuous barrows or other unconsecrated graves, and without Christian obsequies. As Cuthbert's reform was made at a date not a century removed from that at which much of England had still been pagan, there was still a very real risk of the pagan way's reasserting itself.<sup>2</sup>

Up to this date then, with such exceptions as were provided for royalty by St. Augustine at Canterbury, and such accommodation as the various monasteries might voluntarily provide, English Christians had been left to bury their dead either in the scattered *loca sancta* of the Scotie missionaries, or where they pleased. In the latter case they would bury them as their forbears had done, in the open, in barrows and in cromlechs, and in the urn-fields of Saxon paganism. And that this did happen is proved by the occasional finding of Christian ornaments among the mass of pagan grave-furniture in Saxon cemeteries.<sup>3</sup> It is

<sup>1</sup> The oldest monastic foundations lay always outside the limits of the towns, as at Abingdon and at Canterbury (St. Augustine's). No one was buried within the walls (in the cathedral church) of Canterbury, until Cuthbert himself set the example.

<sup>2</sup> According to Bingham (*Christ. Antiqs.* xliii, i, § 7.) a similar reform was not made in the East until about 900, when Leo Sapiens 'abrogated all the old laws against burying in cities.'

<sup>3</sup> e.g. at Long Wittenham, where was found a cup ornamented with scenes from

gospel history (*Archæologia*, lv, 467), and the famous 'Desborough' necklace (*Archæol.* xxxviii, p. 350) with its gold cross. Finds of this character are exceptional chiefly because the church very early forbade the burial of ornaments with the dead—a rule which she could scarcely enforce in the case of those buried in the remoter places—so that, the unsatisfactory test of orientation apart, we rarely have means of knowing whether an interment is that of a Christian or of a lower-class pagan. In Rome too the earliest Christian dead were buried in the catacombs amongst the general crowd of pagan dead.

proved also by the frequency of the decrees against the practice of pagan rites associated with such burials; and even after the churches had made the required provision, similar decrees were issued from time to time. It may be quite true that Charlemagne's Capitularies are concerned with the Old Saxons of the continent, but as these were simply the less progressive brethren of their English namesakes, it is certain that the same practices would linger on in England also. The language of one of these Capitularies (789) is interesting: 'We command that the bodies of all such Saxons as die in the faith be brought to *ecclesiae coemeteria*, and not to the *tumuli paganorum*.' The expression *ecclesiae* (not *ecclesiarum*) *coemeteria* means simply 'burial-places of Holy Church,' i.e. Christian barrows; it does not mean, as it is usually rendered, 'graveyards of the churches.' In other words the antithesis is not between *coemeteria* and *tumuli* so much as between Christianity and paganism, and the wording of the Capitulary does not necessarily imply the presence of any structural church in the *coemeterium*. The Capitulary further implies that it was a common practice with the Old Saxons to lay their dead in certain specific barrows which were recognised as general burying-grounds, exactly as are our modern graveyards,<sup>1</sup> and this means that every such barrow was recognised by the commonalty as a *locus consecratus*, and by Holy Church as a focus of heathenism. We are told that the illegitimate children of corrupt nuns were buried in such *tumuli* until the eighth century,<sup>2</sup> and that 'the Wends, although they had their children baptised, yet buried like the Saxons in their ancestral *tumuli*' right down to the opening of the eleventh century.<sup>3</sup>

Very possibly the deficiency of Christian graveyards was not in early times so great a grievance as is commonly imagined. So late as 1843 it was said that the Esthonians 'seem to have an aversion to the consecrated places of

<sup>1</sup> The Saxon burials about Kilham, E.R. ('the Danes' Graves'), are spoken of as being 'massed together as in a modern churchyard.' At least 500 separate interments were counted. *B. M. Guide to Early Iron Age*, pp. 111-112.

<sup>2</sup> Baldwin Brown, *Arts in Early England*, i, 263.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.* p. 261, citing Hauck, *Kirchengeschichte Deutschlands* (Leipzig, 1887), iii, 417. The fact illustrates the obstinacy where-with a people clings to its traditional forms of sepulture. The ruder the people, the more obstinate will they be; and the Saxons, for a century or more after reaching England, were quite as rude as were the Wends.

Christianity. If they can, they much prefer burying their dead in some spot of their own choice, in the depths of the forest or in the wilderness, rather than in the churchyards. Many such lonely graves may be found in the wildest parts of the country, marked only by the solitary mounds erected over them.<sup>1</sup> This was fully five centuries after the first nominal conversion of the Esthonians by the Teutonic Knights.

The text referring to Cuthbert's innovation has nothing to say about structural churches. It is clear, however, from the *Penitential* of Theodore that there had already existed a few buildings which might be so called. But these were not within the *tuns*. Each stood within its own ring-wall or other circular *limes*, which marked also its burial-ground. Cuthbert ordered new burial-grounds to be made. He was not concerned with any structural churches. Sooner or later a little wooden *bede-hus* would come where the Christian dead were laid.

Of what fashion were these new 'cemeteries'? Any one who will take the trouble to examine the *old* churchyards of England will recognise that they were precisely like the general run of the pagan barrows in the open fields: they are circular and they are mounded up. A churchyard such as that of Alfriston (pp. 168, 176) is unmistakably a barrow and nothing else. It must have been built exactly as was built any other barrow. It cannot well have been there, in the very heart of the village, before 750; it may have been made at any time after that date. So the construction of barrows was in active course beyond the middle of the eighth century.

Here and there one finds a churchyard which suggests the more elaborate forms of barrow, the 'bell' or the 'disc,' as in the case of Mareham-on-the-Hill (ch. xxiv) near Horncastle, Lincs., but by far the greater number are typical 'bowls' of the late and somewhat depressed type; and the presumption is that when Christianity came to be the accepted creed, the ordinary churchyard was built in the ordinary form, without any such ring-wall as had marked—and earned a name for—the first monastic *ciric*. That, it will be remembered, was an outcome of the late

<sup>1</sup> J. G. Kohl, *Russia*, p. 388.

and elaborate Brythonic disc-barrow, a refinement to which the Saxon seems never to have attained. As a pagan he had been content at the most with a mere 'bowl'; as a Christian he continued to content himself with the same type. It was only what was to be expected.

Before 750, therefore, it is probable that there was no such thing as a village churchyard, let alone a village church, these expressions being understood in their natural sense of churches and churchyards *in* villages.

It need not be supposed that every then existing community at once acted upon archbishop Cuthbert's new order. With small and growing settlements it would be a matter of time.<sup>1</sup>

Of the older burial-grounds the larger number would pass out of memory. Some, however, would be remembered and might even come to be themselves the churchyards of new villages which presently gathered about them. Thus arose such cases as those of Fimber and Pytchley (ch. xxiv), and in the same way, the monastery drawing others to its vicinity, St. Guthlac's usurped pagan barrow at Crowland grew up to be the *tun* of Crowland, as its greater neighbour at Medeshamstede grew up to be the town of Peterborough, and Maidulf's monastery made the town of Malmesbury. But of the multitude of earlier Scotie foundations, small and remote as they were, the greater number in the upshot faded out of existence, as was the case with Old Melrose and a hundred others, whose very names are lost as completely as their sites.

The original Saxon term for a cemetery was *lictun*.<sup>2</sup> This was early replaced by *ciric* or *legerstow*, and these in turn gave way under the influence of Latin Christianity to a variety of Latinisms—*coemeterium*, *atrium*, *sanctuarium*,

<sup>1</sup> It is hardly needful to quote instances of so obvious a truth. One will suffice. Thus 'until 1357 the churchyard [of Salehurst, Sussex] served as a burying-place for both Salehurst and Etchingham, but in that year pope Innocent VI. issued his "mandate to set apart and bless a cemetery for the church of Etchingham according to the petition of the parishioners of the same, they having hitherto used the cemetery of Salehurst, distant two leagues"'. L. J. Hodson, *Hist. of Salehurst*, (1914), p. 57, quoting *Calendar of Papal Letters*, iii, 583.

<sup>2</sup> Still surviving in southern England in the forms *litten* and *litton*. A field in the parish of Beaworthy, Hants, known as 'The Old Litten,' presumably marks an old graveyard. Foundations, presumably those of a church, were still visible in 1835 (*Archæologia*, xxvi, p. 1). At Angmering, Sussex, 'the inhabitants call the site' of the church of St. Peter, long destroyed, 'Lightning Hill,' i.e. the *bill* of the *lictun* (*Sussex Arch. Coll.* xii, 83), albeit there is no 'hill' visible there now.

and *poliandrium*<sup>1</sup>—more or less mis-spelled. By the fifteenth century *coemeterium* had become *semitorium* and *sanctuarium* had become *seyntwary*, and later still we have *senry-garth*.<sup>2</sup> Finally prevailed *kirk-garth*, the modern *churchyard*.

Archbishop Cuthbert's action may be taken to mark the date at which the number of churchyards was at last beginning to be sufficient to provide reasonably for the requirements of the whole country; for it was idle to insist that people should bring their dead to the churchyards so long as these lay at remote distances. Until this difficulty was got rid of Christians must necessarily have laid their dead where they could. The Scotie missionaries had consecrated numbers of *cirics*, within which there was as yet no church at all. When the time came to build a church, it was natural to place it within such a *ciric* if the site were otherwise convenient. But, strange as it sounds, it is nevertheless perfectly clear that the Roman way had originally been exactly the reverse. It had built churches no doubt, but it had not provided them with churchyards.

Doubtless archbishop Cuthbert's sole motive had been the desire to make more real the Christianity of his people, but unwittingly he had introduced a political reform of the first magnitude, creating a new franchise in which the church was the basic fact. There had been *tuns*—i.e. *civitates*, or self-governing communities—throughout England ever since the Saxons occupied it and before, but these owed nothing to the Church. There now arose the view that *civitas* and Christianity were inseparable, so that in English law a town 'cannot be a town unless it hath or had a church, with celebration of sacraments, burials, etc.'<sup>3</sup> Moreover, though every house, and even the church itself, disappear, it remains a town (township) in law. It follows that every borough and city is a town, and that a township of a parish is a part of the said parish which has, or once had, its own place of worship and of burial. It follows

<sup>1</sup> See Wright-Wülcker, *Vocabularies*. In Aelfric's *Vocabulary* (tenth cent.) we have *halig legerstow* as the equivalent of *coemeterium*. The epithet *halig* suggests that there were at that date still many other *legerstows* that were understood not to be Christian. *Leger* (cf. Yorkshire *lig* = 'lie')

conveys the same idea as does cemetery. viz. 'the place where they sleep.'

<sup>2</sup> Sometimes mis-written *senry garth*, as if from *cemeterium*, as in Wright's *Dict. Provincial English*. In Cornwall the term still survives in the sense of 'Glebe-land.'

<sup>3</sup> Jacob, *Law Dictionary*.

further that in law the terms *tun* and *ciric* came to be to some extent convertible: the church was the flock, and *vice versa*. Hence we have mention of *ciricsocn* side by side with *tunsocn*,<sup>1</sup> and ultimately find the *ciric* identified with all the communal activities of the *tun*.<sup>2</sup>

Probably this action of archbishop Cuthbert had more to do with the making of our present parochial system than anything that was done by his precursors. Henceforward each *tun* had, or might aspire to have, its own *ciric* within its own gates, and such a *ciric* from its greater convenience would speedily take priority over any older one that lay further afield.<sup>3</sup> If the district represented by the *tun* came to be a parish, then the building which arose within the *ciric* would be the parish church, the *tun-circe* of Anglo-Saxon documents.<sup>4</sup> Of the older and less conveniently situated *cirics* the greater number would sooner or later be forgotten, while others would struggle on for a time as so many subsidiary *cirics*, or might now and again develop to be 'chapels of ease' to the parish *ciric* in the *tun*.<sup>5</sup> Some of these might in time come to be parish churches in their own right, but this development would be largely checked by an understandable jealousy on the part of the 'town-church.' Anything in the way of recognised parish-boundaries could arise only when the growing number of such 'town-churches' had covered the whole face of the land, and one parish found itself contiguous to the next.<sup>6</sup>

From the middle of the eighth century, therefore, the whole country came to be divided into a multitude of *tuns* each possessing its own *ciric*. Some notion of their number may be got from the case of Shropshire, where there yet survived in 1870 as many as 817 townships averaging each about 1,000 acres of land.<sup>7</sup> Some of the ancient *tuns* remain to this day as individual parishes, but the vast

<sup>1</sup> *Diplomatarium*, pp. 369, 418, 306.

<sup>2</sup> See below, chs. xxvi, xxvii.

<sup>3</sup> 'Gregory the Great had taught that it was more profitable to be buried in the churchyard than in the distant cemetery, because in the former case the survivors may frequently behold the sepulchres as they enter the sacred building, and may put forth their petitions.' Johnson, *Byways*, p. 353.

<sup>4</sup> e.g. Will of Thurstan (1045) in *Diplomatarium*, pp. 572, 574.

<sup>5</sup> Kennet, *Parochial Antiquities*, p. 587.

<sup>6</sup> cp. H. R. Mill in *A Fragment of the Geography of South-west Sussex* (*Geog. Journal*, Mar.-April, 1900): 'The parishes appear to have grown naturally until they filled the county; the relation of the boundaries to the natural features shows that it cannot be said that the county had been divided into parishes.'

<sup>7</sup> Kelly's *Post Office Directory*, 1870.

majority have long since lost their individuality and become merged into parishes. This spontaneous grouping of other *tuns* about such centres—the *ealdormynstres* of their districts—is the real origin of the English parishes. Of Shropshire's 817 *tuns* about three-quarters have lost their ecclesiastical independence, but as townships they still retain certain shadowy rights in regard to rating and to customary law, which declare them to be the survivals of true communal entities—*civitates*—which once were independent and self-administering. The name of Ruyton-of-the-Eleven-Towns bespeaks it a parish which once comprised 11 townships; Ellesmere has 24; and Worfield near Bridgnorth has as many as 28. But numbers of *tuns* have wholly disappeared, and if their memory survives at all, it is only as the name of a house or a farm. Frequently there remains only a field-name such as 'The Churchyard,' 'Church Field,' 'The Litton,' 'Old Hallows,' or 'Hallow Fur-long.'

The normal course would be to build chapels-of-ease for remoter parts of the parish in which were gathering clusters of population, but these would not usually be churches with burial-grounds. They would be chapels only, and the difference of nomenclature points to the fact that the word 'church' was felt to imply the presence of a burial-ground.<sup>1</sup> In due course, if the community throve, it would be provided with a burial-ground of its own, as happened at Etchingham (p. 162, n. 1). Sometimes, however, the outlying community built its own 'church' within the parochial graveyard. Instances of this kind are specially frequent in East Anglia, and at Reepham in Norfolk there used to be three churches—there are at present two in actual use—within one churchyard, viz. one for the 'town,' and two others for the lordships of Hackford and Whitwell.<sup>2</sup> The two churches at Swaffham Prior, Cambs., stand both in one garth. Most of the instances of this kind appear to be of late date, and they commonly arose from the division of what had previously been undivided manorial holdings, as at Gillingham in

<sup>1</sup> Yet as early as Edgar's time (958-975) they are all called *cirics*, for his Canon (i, 2) speaks of '*cirics* which have no *legerstow*' (Thorpe, *Leges Vetustae*, p. 111). These

were all on *bocland*, i.e. private chapels, not communal or parochial churches.

<sup>2</sup> Both Hackford and Whitwell are now parishes in their own right.

Norfolk. Other instances of a plurality of churches within one garth are cited by Walcott as to be found in his day (1868) at Altrincham (Ches.), Evesham, Willingale Doe in Essex, North Cockerington (Cockerington St. Mary and Alvingham St. Ethelwald) in Lincs., while there had been others at Fulbourn (Cambs.) and Trimley (Suff.)<sup>1</sup> Of the two churches within the single churchyard of Prestbury in Cheshire, one is a diminutive Norman building which was possibly the first stone-built church of the parish, spared to serve as a mortuary chapel when the larger and later church was built in the fourteenth century.<sup>2</sup>

Of what form would be these new burial-grounds of archbishop Cuthbert? Circular, without question, like all other *cirics* at that date to be found in England. That was the form in which the Scotie missionaries had introduced the Christian graveyard; it was the form which the term *ciric* explicitly denoted; it was the form to which the Christianity of the time had become accustomed; and it is not likely that the church would add to the inherent difficulty of weaning its flock from the older sites by any needless innovations. Further, as the Latin church had hitherto made no special provision of graveyards, it had no inherited tradition as to the proper form of such things, and could therefore the less feel any jealousy upon the point. So great is the number of English churchyards of which the original circularity is still clearly recognisable, that there can be no reasonable doubt that in Cuthbert's time the circular figure was invariable. The Latin church had not even come to recognise in that figure a tradition handed down from Celtic paganism. With the *name* of the thing it did quarrel and tried to abolish it, but tried in vain. The Saxons knew that *ciric* meant something circular, and so long as they remembered the fact they refused to have *cirics* of any other plan.

The South Saxons were the last English 'folk' to accept

<sup>1</sup> *Sacred Archaeology*, p. 126. Of these the second church at Fulbourn has now disappeared, and those of Cockerington and Alvingham do not now stand within the same garth.

<sup>2</sup> Prestbury—Priest's Barrow—claims to be one of the earliest Christian sites in this part of England. Its churchyard, although

immensely enlarged, is still circular on the only original part of the periphery now remaining, and contains some fragments of a very early cross of Celtic design. The place is not mentioned in *D.B.* The Norman church has been much altered and enlarged: a drawing of 1592 shows that it originally had an apse in place of the present square eastern wall. Earwaker, *Hist. Chesb. re.*

Christianity (681). Their conversion was due to Wilfrid who was entirely Latin in his views. He succeeded where the Scotie Dicul had failed.<sup>1</sup> His original church of Selsey has long been under the sea,<sup>2</sup> so that we have no means of knowing what was its appearance, but Sussex provides a number of examples of the circular garth, and amongst them one or two of peculiar interest—more than enough to prove that it never entered Wilfrid's head to quarrel with a *ciric* of that plan.

A monastery was founded in 688, so says Leland, at South Malling on the Ouse, by Ceadwalla of Wessex,<sup>3</sup> who had conquered the South Saxons. Of any monastic buildings only the smallest traces remain, and these are probably those of the mediæval collegiate buildings, but the church (St. Peter) still occupies what is probably the original site within a circular graveyard of about an acre. It is of no moment to urge that Ceadwalla, as his name suggests, may have been a Celt, and may therefore have planned his monastery on Celtic lines, for the church to whom he made the gift would in such matters have its own way. Here then is an indubitable<sup>4</sup> example of a churchyard of the Scotie plan consecrated, in the land of the South Saxons whom the Latin Wilfrid had converted, towards the close of the seventh century and when the Latin Theodore was archbishop.<sup>5</sup> If the Scotie plan asserted itself in this

<sup>1</sup> Above, ch. xvi. Dicul's settlement was at Bosham, a few miles west of Cissa's *ceastre* (Chichester) upon a spot abounding in Roman *vestigia*.

<sup>2</sup> The cathedral of Chichester was founded to replace it in the eleventh cent. in accordance with the order of William I that cathedrals should be removed from insignificant villages to the more important towns.

<sup>3</sup> According to L. F. Salzman (in *V.C.H. Sussex*, ii, 117) the founder was one Aldulf, prince of the South Saxons, circa 765; but a charter of that prince (*Cart. Sax.*, No. 197), believed to refer to South Malling, explicitly speaks of the monastery as having been founded long before (*religiosa antiquitate fundati*).

<sup>4</sup> The churchyard is so situated that it has probably never been interfered with until recently, when the one road of approach was metalled, and the boundary of the yard on that (south) side was straightened to bring it into line with the

road. This has entailed the adding of a very small angle of ground on the south-east, where the scarp of the original circular garth is still noticeable. The church (re-built in 1628 by the grandfather of the diarist John Evelyn) stands eccentrically near the southern edge of the garth. To judge from a report made in 1554 (*Sussex Arch. Coll.* xxxi, 180) the enclosing wall either did not then exist, or was in a condition of ruin. for 'horse and cattell and swyne come davlye in to the church. in the somer for hette, and now (November) ffor lothe (shelter from the wind).'

<sup>5</sup> If it should be objected that there is not sufficient evidence that this *ciric* was made at so early a date, and that it is possibly much later, this, could it be proved, would only strengthen the argument; for the later the date, the stronger would be the Latin influence. The case thus proves conclusively that the Latin rule did not at first concern itself to interfere with the traditional form of the *ciric*.

case, it is safe to assume that it would do so in areas nearer to the 'Celtic Fringe.' It should be added there is not at South Malling, nor ever can have been, the least topographical reason why the circular shape should have been preferred to any other.

Within a few miles of South Malling are at least three other churchyards which yet preserve more or less of their original circular form, viz. Selmeston, Barcombe, and Alfriston, while there is ocular evidence that those of Berwick, Ringmer, Little Horsted, Horsted Keynes and



FIG. I. CHITHURST, SUSSEX.

*Drawn by Robert Gurd, 1923.*

Piddinghoe were originally circular. These are all in mid-Sussex. At the western end of the county East Wittering still retains in part its circular garth, as also does Singleton; mutilated examples are to be seen also at New Shoreham, at Poynings, and at Coombes, where there remains a considerable segment of the original circular fosse and vallum; and the tiny church of Chithurst, four miles west of Midhurst, stands upon an unmistakable barrow<sup>1</sup> rising 6 or 7 feet above the natural level of the ground about. But in the great majority of cases the original plan has been

<sup>1</sup> 'Most picturesquely perched upon an artificial mound,' wrote P. M. Johnston in 1912. *Sussex, Arch. Collections*, lv, p. 99).

completely obliterated by alterations, and these alterations have frequently occurred within the last half century.

A drawing of the thirteenth-century church of St. Mary at Apuldram, near Chichester, published in 1872,<sup>1</sup> shows it standing within a mounded circular garth. The garth of the church (St. Leonard's) at Hollington, commonly called 'the Church in the Wood,'  $2\frac{1}{2}$  miles north-west of Hastings, is to-day a mere rectangular strip, but in 1814 it was 'almost perfectly circular,'<sup>2</sup> and the whole thickly enclosed with trees, without any aperture except an entrance from each of the cardinal points<sup>3</sup> by four low



FIG. 2. ST. MARY'S, APULDRAM, SUSSEX, IN 1872.

gates . . . a church and its cemetery in a grove, and that grove in the middle of a wood.'<sup>4</sup>

Hellingly now presents the most remarkable circular garth in Sussex. It is ringed with trees, it has four paths of entry, and it is revetted with a wall of brick of no great age

<sup>1</sup> Nibbs and Lower, *Churches of Sussex*.

<sup>2</sup> The quotation is from the unpublished narrative of a journey from Brighton to Hastings in 1814. W. Faden's map of Sussex (1795) shows it precisely as here described.

<sup>3</sup> Old Welsh law required that every village church should have four roads eading thereto; a proviso which at once recalls the peculiar arrangement of

St. Cadoc's *llan*, with its four wide paths down the four hill-slopes leading to it (above, ch. xix).

<sup>4</sup> The popular account declares that the devil, who had successfully thwarted all efforts to build the church on a site more convenient to the village (two miles away), himself caused the surrounding woods to spring up and conceal the completed building.

in places as much as 7 feet above the level of the roads which skirt it on three sides. On the fourth (north) side there is no such difference of level, because the churchyard occupies the extremity of a gently-falling tongue of higher ground which drops abruptly on the flanks to the flats below. Old cottages stand along the arc of the circumference on this northern side, and so careful were the builders not to interfere with the 'sanctuary' that one building is conjoined to the next at most awkward angles. The church is dedicated to SS. Peter and Paul. Part of the chancel is of late Norman style, but the rest of the fabric is of later dates.

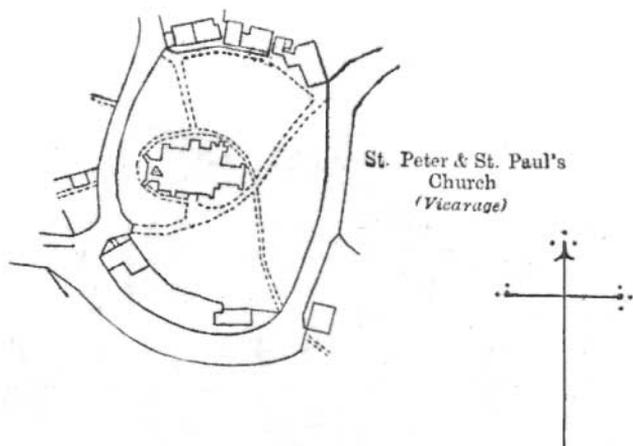


FIG. 3. ST. PETER AND ST. PAUL'S, HELLINGLY, SUSSEX.  
(Scale : 25 ins. to the mile.)

The first church was consecrated by bishop Seffrid of Chichester, who held the see from 1180 to 1204, and documents exist to show that one Nicholas de Brade at the time endowed the church with certain lands, while his brother Rykeward de Hellingly further gave a croft of land and 'six perches of my moor to enlarge the churchyard.' So there was a churchyard there before the church was built.

What happened is quite clear. The first stone church of Hellingly was built and consecrated no earlier than the close of the twelfth century. It was built within a *ciric* of the traditional circular plan, i.e. upon a barrow. The *ciric* was

of some considerable size, but for whatever reason it was felt desirable to enlarge it. This could only be done conveniently on the northern side, in which direction the ground rose continuously to a sandy hillside or 'moor.' The owner of this moor was Rykeward, who gave a strip of it for the purpose. It was six perches only. The strip lay along the northern side of the *ciric*, which in consequence is to this day oval in plan (276 feet  $\times$  222 feet), the longer axis lying north and south. And this happened about 1200.<sup>1</sup>

For the position of affairs at Hellingly before the stone church was built there is no evidence at all beyond the fact that it had a *ciric*, and as that is circular now, it is safe to believe that it was circular then. We may perhaps assume a *bedehus*, a little wooden building, probably serving both for church and for priest's house, but this is surmise. *Domesday* does not even mention the place, let alone any church there.

In the church of St. Nicholas, Wanlip, in Leicestershire, is a brass (dated 1393) to the memory of Thomas Walsch, knight, lord of Anlep (Wanlip), and his wife Katrine, 'which in her tyme made the kirke of Anlep and halud the kirkyerd first.'<sup>2</sup> Yet there had long been a rector of Wanlip, and a 'church' of some sort also, but it was a chapel only (*capella de Anlep*, c. 1225)<sup>3</sup> Wanlip seems therefore to be an example of those 'churches without burial-grounds' mentioned in the *Laws* of Edgar and of Canute: it originated in a manorial chapel, and so remained until it was provided with a graveyard in 1393. The brass faithfully records the alteration in its status and calls it now a 'Kirke.' Leicestershire provides other examples of such a development, as for example at Blaston St. Giles and at Kibworth Harcourt, and there are many in Shropshire. Grasmere

<sup>1</sup> Salzman, *History of Hailsham*, pp. 103, 182. where the documents (from *Charitularv* of Bayham Abbey) are printed. Hellingly claimed to be the mother-church of Hailsham, a claim which was established after much litigation; and this means that the parish of Hailsham was carved out of that of Hellingly. This erstwhile importance of Hellingly may explain why the churchyard was enlarged at so early a date; the reason cannot be found in the great size of the church, for there is every reason to believe that the building consecrated by bishop Seffrid was very much smaller. The revent-

ment wall is apparently eighteenth cent. work, and perhaps encloses a good many feet more than the area of the original *ciric*. It leans outward on the western side in a fashion which promises a speedy collapse.

<sup>2</sup> Cited in Pettigrew's *Collection of Epitaphs (Chronicles of the Tombs)*, 1857, as an instance of the use of English in such a case at an unusually early date. The spelling of *kirke* and *kirkyerd*, at that date and in that locality, are worth notice.

<sup>3</sup> *Rotuli Hugonis W'elles (Cant. & York Soc. i, 253)*.

and Windermere in Westmorland likewise had rectors before they had churchyards, being until that date (1347) free chapels within the parish of Kendal.<sup>1</sup>

Later phraseology was not always so accurate as in the case of Wanlip. In the registers of the church of Rushock (St. Michael and All Angels) near Kidderminster it is recorded, under date 1688, that in that year the bishop of Worcester 'did consecrate the churchyard and make it a buriall.'<sup>2</sup> As the same register contains records of interments prior to 1688, it is clear that the entry refers merely to an enlargement of the older garth.

The church and parish of Kingston-by-Lewes in Sussex were created by the Priory of St. Pancras, at the expense of the wide parish of Iford, in the year 1100, when Hugh the Sheriff gave an acre of land there on which to build a church. So there was not even a *ciric* there before that date. The original boundaries of this piece of ground are still discernible, and it was rectangular. Other examples go to show that from the time of the Conquest onward the customary form of *new* churchyards was rectangular, the customary area an acre.

The conquest brought in an administration, ecclesiastical and political, based upon the Latin tradition, whereof the geometrical expression was not the circle, but the square. Norman monasteries were planned upon the nucleus of the quadrangular cloister-garth,<sup>3</sup> and Norman measurement was by the square acre. Norman churchyards were therefore likewise square, or at any rate rectilinear. The Normans did not as a rule interfere with existing facts, but where they created new burial-grounds they would commonly make them rectangular. Such was the Latin way, and for that reason alone the Norman followed it—a very different reason from the inherited sentiment of centuries which made the Celt and his proselytes still cling to the circular plan.

The churchyard fence (*ecclesiae sepes, cirictune*) was mentioned in a law of King Edgar (ch. xxiii), showing that so early the garth was supposed to be provided with some

<sup>1</sup> I am indebted for these facts to Prof. A. Hamilton Thompson.

<sup>2</sup> i.e. a place of burial. See above, ch. xxi. The last illustration of this use of the word given in *N.E.D.* is from Caxton.

<sup>3</sup> This figure had made its appearance before the Conquest in Latin monasteries founded between ninth and eleventh cent.

sort of fence to demarcate it from profane ground. Some rectangular garths show evident traces of a continuous earthen vallum thrown about them, and have therefore been written down as originally 'Roman camps,' but such vallum is probably in most cases nothing but the *defensum* in general use during the twelfth-fourteenth centuries for enclosing any parcel of ground. As the Norman was a mighty builder he probably walled many of his new-made churchyards with stone; but even walls will perish if neglected, and when the first fever of Norman church-building was spent and the Norman enthusiasm for religion had been cooled by the experiences of the Crusades, there set in a period of laxity, when the church and its belongings fell into a bad way. Those in authority had frequently to call attention to the neglected condition of the churchyards. The churchyard belonged to the parish, and the parish used it for a variety of purposes, to-day mostly dissociated from the church, which were highly detrimental to the proper upkeep of any fences—for fairs and markets, games and revels and sports of all kinds. It was in fact the common recreation-ground of the parish. Therefore we find bishops from the thirteenth century onward issuing repeated orders for the more seemly upkeep of the garth and its fences. John de Pontissara, bishop of Winchester (*ob.* 1304) issued a synodal statute that 'all *coemeteria* be decently enclosed with a ditch, hedge, or wall, by those to whom of custom this duty belongs,' and forbidding them to be used for sports and games.<sup>1</sup> His successors, bishops Woodlock and Adam de Orleton, repeated and supplemented these injunctions. The language implies that the churchyard was presumed to be fenced, that the upkeep of the fence was a customary duty of the parishioners, and that this duty was very frequently neglected. There must have been as great local differences in such a matter then as now there are in all matters relating to the maintenance of the church, statutes and authority notwithstanding. Only fifty years ago the churchyard of Marros, Carm., was open to the surrounding roads, very much as were those which called for their bishops' interference in the fourteenth century.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Synodal Statutes of John de Pontissara*, i, 225; Wilkins, *Concilia*, ii, 295.

<sup>2</sup> See further, Johnson, *Byways*, pp.

354-6. Churchwardens' Presentments of seventeenth-eighteenth cent. contain repeated references to the good or bad repair

Lesser dignitaries followed where the bishops led. William Downe, archdeacon of Leicester in the middle of the fourteenth century, leaves by will 'for the fabric and repair of the nave and of the churchyard wall (*clausuram cimiterii*) at Georgeham (Devon), 10 marks'; 'for the making of a stone wall or a good ditched hedge of quick-thorn round the churchyard (*ad facturam muri lapidei vel fossate spinee bone circa cimiterium*)' at Quainton (Bucks.), 10 marks; and again 'for the repair and enclosure of the churchyards of a number of poor churches in Leicestershire, 10 marks.'<sup>1</sup>

These fences were the 'church-haws' and 'church-hayes' of mediaeval England.<sup>2</sup> Following a well-recognised usage of language, these names were speedily transferred to the garth itself. The transfer had occurred as early as the beginning of the thirteenth century,<sup>3</sup> and speedily ousted borrowed terms such as *seintwary*<sup>4</sup> and other Latinisms, in turn giving way to the northern 'churchyard' in one or other of its many forms (-garth, -yearde, -yerde, -yorde, -yerd, -erd, -arth).<sup>5</sup>

The extent to which this northern form (garth) has forced itself upon the world is remarkable, for it is found not only over the whole of the British Isles, but over the whole of Scandinavia and as far afield as Hungary. Its vitality indeed is little less than that of *kirk* itself. Inasmuch as no one questions the wide diffusion of *garth*, it is matter of wonder that there should be so much question about the similar diffusion of *kirk*. Both alike came out of the north, and specifically out of the Northumbria of the seventh century.

The term 'God's Acre' was in common use amongst

of the churchyard fences, and the security of the garth from 'annoyance of animals': but there was much difference of opinion as to what was 'decent.' Thus the vicar of Salehurst, Sussex, recorded in his Tithe-book in 1650 that one Jeremiah Goffe owed 'a year's rent for my churchyard at Lady-day, 1649. He hath putt horses ever since into it. . . I pray you lett it to somebody at 10 shillings p.ann. and get ye churchwardens to fence it well, y<sup>e</sup> you may keepe out hoggs' (L. J. Hodson, *Hist. of Salehurst*, p. 57).

<sup>1</sup> *Arch. Journal*, Sept. 1915, pp. 247, 267.

<sup>2</sup> Subsequently corrupted to 'Church-

way(s)' as at Warren (ch. xx) or even to Churches. the name of a Worcestershire farm. The poet Gray used 'Churchway' in the *Elegy* ('Slow through the churchway path we saw him borne') so late as 1751.

<sup>3</sup> As in *Ancien Rivle* (circa 1225).

<sup>4</sup> i.e. *sanctuarium*.

<sup>5</sup> Bardsley (*Dict. Surnames*) has the forms Kirkegarth 1297, Chircheyerde 1347, Kirkeverde and Cyrkarth (both in Howdenshire, Yorks.) 1379, and again Chircheyerde 1492; forms which seem to suggest that *k*, *c*, and *ch*, had all one value in fourteenth-fifteenth centuries. We have Churcherd in Sussex in 1524.

the Saxons, but that it was ever intended to be even an approximate measure of the churchyard is not clear. Perhaps it was felt that an acre was the smallest area suitable, the donor being free to make it as much larger as he might feel disposed. Even so the measure of the acre varied in different parts of England by as much as 50%. The Welsh *erw*, as has been said, is no equivalent of the English statute acre, and in fact varied in the different Codes as widely as did the Saxon acre. Nevertheless, as the *Laws of Hocwel* stipulated that the measure of a churchyard should be 'a legal *erw*' in radius,<sup>1</sup> it may be that the Saxon expression 'God's Acre' was borrowed from Celtic usage. But even in Wales the areas of the still circular garths show wide divergences, and here too we may suppose that, while the minimum radius was in the ninth century fixed at 'a legal *erw*,' there was no limit in the other direction. The garth of Eglwys Cymmin is almost exactly a statute acre, but this is obviously an accident, for that churchyard represents a secular fort adapted to the purposes of a church. According to the Brehon laws the proper measure of the *dun* of a king was 140 feet each way, i.e. a circle with diameter of 140 feet.<sup>2</sup> This means an area of about  $\frac{1}{3}$  acre, if the Irish foot be equal to the English. Again the standard is perhaps only the minimum permitted, for many Irish *duns* are very much larger.<sup>3</sup>

As the Saxon *accre* was freely used in the sense of the Latin *ager*, 'God's Acre' may have meant nothing more than 'God's Field,' and some Saxon *cirics* of quite late date were much too small to be called 'acres' in any other sense. Thus the *burh* of Lewes, which seems to have come into being by royal order at the beginning of the tenth century only, stood within an earthwork of some two acres in all; yet room was found therein for a church and churchyard (St. John sub castro). The garth here must have been very small. Very small too was that of Alfriston in the same county, one of the rare cases in which enlargement has yet reproduced much of the original circular plan. It shows

<sup>1</sup> Above, ch. xix.

<sup>2</sup> O'Curry, *Manners*, iii, 28.

<sup>3</sup> It is only reasonable to believe that the earliest Christian burial-grounds would be

rather small than large. That at Warren (ch. xx) had a diameter of 25 yards only. A superficial rood is represented by a circle with diameter of 40 yards, a superficial acre by one of 80 yards (approximately).

also how slight may be the relation between a present-day church and its original. The first church of Alfriston can have been no bigger than a typical early church in Wales or Ireland, but the present cruciform structure, not inaptly called the 'Cathedral of the Downs,' is altogether out of proportion to the size of the original garth, which it almost fills.<sup>1</sup> The garth therefore had to be enlarged at last, though this was not done till 1901, when the new 'intake' was so planned as to follow the curving line of the original area.<sup>2</sup> Its level, however, was different, and there remains the old *limes* within the new fence—a bold scarp sweeping round the western side and in one part actually retaining the ancient revetment-wall. A second glance is scarcely needed here to convince one that the original *ciric* was a barrow and nothing else (plate 1, fig. 1).

Part of the earlier *limes* remains in many old churchyards, commonly misinterpreted as 'a portion of the *enceinte* of a camp' Roman or British. Warbleton<sup>3</sup> in Sussex is a case in point. A better example is that of Hanbury in Worcestershire, which has repeatedly been described as a British camp adapted to the purposes of Christianity. There is nothing to justify this view, and very much to support the belief that it was yet another Christian *ciric* which, presently revetted, came to have the appearance of a fortified hill-top.<sup>4</sup> The garth still retains considerable part of the original circular plan.

Yet another case is that of Hawkshead, Lancs. The church—there is no known reference to any building there before the thirteenth century—stands upon an isolated circular knoll, and the garth was circular until modified by recent additions. H. Swainson Cowper has suggested that this was once the *saeth* of a Norse Hawkr who gave his name to the village, and has construed as evidence in support of this view some slight traces of scarping and ditching.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 'The circumference of the church is greater than that of the churchyard which surrounds it' (Pagden, *Hist. of Alfriston*, p. 17).

<sup>2</sup> The masons who built the new wall did their best, however, to spoil this happy accident, constructing it in some five or six rectilinear sections, instead of on a true curve. Nevertheless the general effect of a circular *limes* remains.

<sup>3</sup> Major Luard in *Suss. Arch. Coll.* xviii, 164. He mistook the *vestigia* of a mediæval homestead adjoining the churchyard for the further evidences of Roman occupation of the site.

<sup>4</sup> The scarping seen here and in many similar cases has no resemblance to the raised vallum of a secular camp or of a Scotie monastic *casbel*.

<sup>5</sup> *History of Hawkshead*, p. 30.

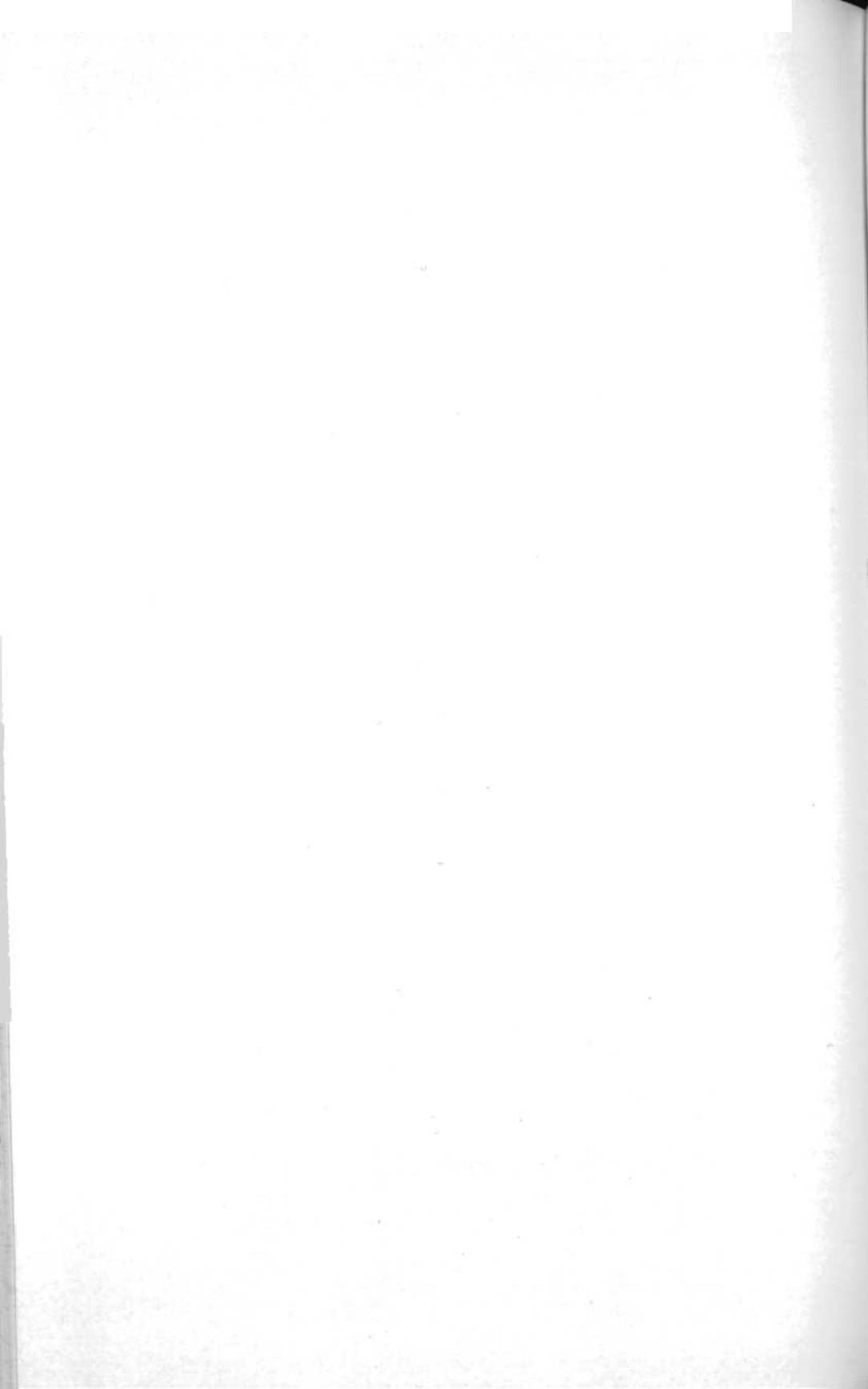


NO. 1. ST. ANDREW'S CHURCH, ALFRISTON, SUSSEX.

Showing the mounded graveyard and fragment of the original retaining wall.



NO. 2. ST. MICHAEL'S, HAWKSHEAD, LANCASHIRE.



There is nothing which cannot readily be explained as part of an original barrow, or of subsequent steps to fence it from desecration (plate 1, fig. 2).

Never a great earth-worker, the pagan Saxon seems to have preferred to use for a place of burial a ready-made mound, natural or otherwise; and failing this, to have laid his dead in grave-fields without individual mounds, or with none of a size to be still discernible, small both in area and in elevation. The evolution of the barrow amongst the Celts had been steadily in a like direction, and its last form—the ring-barrow—though it might be very large in area, had little or no elevation. The unfossed bowl barrows of the earliest type were certainly raised by the combined efforts of many persons each contributing his share of soil, and the same occurred when an existing barrow was heightened to receive a fresh interment, as at Carn Brea (ch. xx) and in the case of the great barrow on Lord's Down, Dewlish,<sup>1</sup> where the mound revealed in section three successive strata of chalk rubble, each containing an interment, covered by as many strata of earth. Doubtless all the mourners assisted in piling up these successive strata,<sup>2</sup> and the literature of the Heroic Age suggests that the custom was at once a duty and a privilege. But the custom died, leaving behind nothing but a symbolical piece of ritual; for this is the origin of the custom which allows, not the priest only, but all the dead man's friends to cast a handful of earth upon his coffin.<sup>3</sup> Even in the world of ancient Greece and Rome it had already been reduced to a like formality, and the casting of a mere handful of dust upon a corpse was accounted the necessary minimum in the way of burial.

That this was actually the early Christian practice is proved by the case of churchways, Warren (ch. xx), where the dead lay 'three or four tiers deep.' Clearly after the

<sup>1</sup> Figured in Warne, *Ancient Dorset*.

<sup>2</sup> So it was amongst the Peruvians of Quito (*Gents. Mag.* for 1752, p. 210), whose grave-hills might be as much as 150 feet in diameter and 60 feet in height.

<sup>3</sup> W. Johnson (*Byways*, pp. 315-317) points out that this common participation in the rite, which had been transferred to the priest alone before the Reformation, was by the Prayer Book of 1552 restored to the mourners generally. This is an odd

illustration of the suggestion elsewhere made that the Reformation was in some ways a return of the Anglican Church to its older Celtic traditions. Dr. Greenwell had hinted at this origin of the phrase 'earth to earth' (*British Barrows*, p. 5, n.). The old parish-clerk (Geo. Cain) of St. John's Margate, one of the last of his race, made much of his indefeasible right as the representative of the community to scatter the statutory 'handful of dust' (Information of Rev. W. K. Fleming).

lowest and oldest interments had been made, sufficient fresh soil was laid over them to accommodate a second tier ; and this process was repeated for a third and even for a fourth tier. The graves thus superposed one upon another lay away from the primary central grave, which was itself three feet below the surface ; so the fresh soil had been put chiefly upon the flanks of the barrow, and this would help to spread the whole and give to it a less pronounced relief than it originally had. A recent instance of the same practice has been cited (ch. xxii) from Hillswick in Shetland.

Thus the barrows reared over the graves of Christian dead in early Saxon times would in most cases be very slight,<sup>1</sup> certainly of no great height, and probably in most cases of no great area. If such a barrow came to be a *ciric*, i.e. a Christian burial-ground, there would be scanty room for further interments, the whole mound would soon be filled, and any further burials would require to be made not in it, but around it ; and probably in the course of a few centuries it would no longer be possible to recognise the exact position of the original burial which had hallowed the spot. When the time came to build a structural church within the *ciric*, the builders would have wide freedom of choice for its position. If they elected to place it upon the approximate centre, the chances were that, in getting their foundations, they would completely demolish what little was left of the original tumulus ; and in seeking a sufficiently firm and sufficiently large foundation they would bring the floor of the building much below the level of the ground at some points. This is the rational explanation of the fact that, in the case of old churches, one usually descends several steps to reach the floor-level. But the church is not by any means always set on the actual centre of the *ciric*. Sometimes it is the chancel, less frequently the western end, which is sunk more deeply. It is a fact that few ancient churches appear to stand upon ground which is uniformly level. Most modern churches do, and this is one of the features which, whether we understand the reason or not, jar upon our intuition and suggest a some-

<sup>1</sup> Speaking generally, the churchyard in England is less mounded than that of Wales, just as the Celtic barrows of Wales are as a rule bigger and bolder than those of England. But with the churchyards, as with the

barrows, there are notable exceptions. So again in Wales and in England there are circular churchyards which lie in the bottoms of hollows and show little or no signs of any mound.

thing which should not be so. On the other hand, the fact that the chancel is usually at a higher level than the nave finds its ultimate reason in the fact that the former stood as a rule upon the central grave, and therefore upon the highest part of the barrow, the floor-level naturally falling as the builders moved further away from that point. The various reasons offered for adherence to the same tradition even in modern church-building—to give added dignity to the chancel, or to make the altar more visible—are adventitious, if actual. Architects have long recognised that the fact had some connexion with the provision of a crypt. They have not recognised that the crypt itself was but a development of the grave, and that the chancel was commonly higher than the nave even where no crypt existed and at a date when the construction of a crypt was impossible.<sup>1</sup>

If the mound was high in proportion to its area, the builders naturally put their church not on it, but beside it. To level a mound was too obvious a desecration, and too laborious withal. So the building would be set close by the mound. After some years it would be rebuilt and enlarged, and fashion demanded perhaps a new chancel, perhaps a western tower, for which room had to be made. Sooner or later some architect would quarrel with the mound which blocked his way and would encroach upon it, not necessarily removing the whole of it (as was done at Ludlow, ch. xxiv), but paring away a portion of it. There are numbers of churches which stand thus side by side with mounds more or less complete.

Whether the original mound in any particular case was actually built for a tumulus is a question only to be answered by excavation. Probably it was so in most cases, but in others it was clearly reared for some other purpose or was natural. But being a mound and having the appearance of a barrow, it was fairly certain to be used as a barrow sooner or later. Moot-mounds and eskers have been perverted into

<sup>1</sup> See for example Baldwin, *The Old Churches of Our Land* (1894), p. 32. There is, however, no particular reason to refer the origin of the crypt to the early catacombs. Both are more probably the independent outcome of one and the same touch of human nature. There is a very striking example of the point here noticed in the

little church of Rottingdean, Sussex, where the floor-level of the sanctuary is some 6 feet above that of the western door-sill. Until lately it was even higher, having been raised another two feet to allow of the burial of a Vicar who died in 1732, but the earlier level has now been restored.

tumuli, and tumuli have been converted into *mottes*, into the moots of later peoples, into mill-balls and into *belles-vues*. So long as they are there, some one will somehow contrive to find a use or misuse for them.

The old church of Taplow stood 30 yards east of a mound, which when excavated in 1883 proved to be the grave of some warrior, whose equipment—golden buckles and jewelled studs, drinking-horn and arms—fixed the date of his interment *circa* 600, that is, at a time prior to the return of Christianity to the Thames Valley, and long years prior to the building of parish churches of stone. Yet this indisputably pagan mound, a great *howe* with diameter of 80 ft., height of 15 ft., and flat summit 26 ft. across, lay within the *ceinture* of the Christian churchyard. When the last of the ruins of the old church were removed in 1853 it was found that the western tower had been erected over an ancient fosse, and the excavation of the barrow showed that the locality had been occupied by settlements of British and Romano-British dates. Finally there were found secondary interments in the base of the mound.<sup>1</sup>

The sequence of events is clear. Here had stood a British settlement, which in due course became Romano-British; and like others of its kind it was defended by earthworks, a fosse and a vallum. The Saxons stormed and pillaged it, and one of their chieftains falling in the fight, they buried him on the scene of their victory.<sup>2</sup> The site lay desolate, the vallum crumbled, and the fosse was slowly filled in. Christianity presently returned, and some dead Christian was buried, *more Saxonico*, in the convenient mound of the old hero: if St. Guthlac could choose a pagan barrow as the site of his hermitage (ch. xxiv), lesser men might well choose such places for their graves. But these new burials, being Christian, hallowed the spot to Christianity. It grew to be the *ciric* of Taplow, and in due course Taplow built for itself a church. This was set many yards away from the great *howe*: they were not likely to demolish it, and the intervening space was perhaps already full of graves. As for the old fosse, it was perhaps altogether

<sup>1</sup> *V.C.H. Bucks.* i, 199; Thurlow Leeds, *Archæology of A.-S. Settlements*, p. 66.

<sup>2</sup> Precisely the same thing happened to another Romano-British settlement at Lowbury, Berks.

obliterated by then, certainly too inconspicuous to be considered. The church grew as churches do, and when presently the villagers aspired to a tower,<sup>1</sup> they extended their church by so much to the west, and in so doing put its foundations actually upon the site of the old fosse.

The very precise description of the burial-place of Harald Hairfair in Norway is to the point. 'King Harald died . . . and was buried at the howes by Kormt Sound. In Howe Sound a church standeth to-day, and just to the north-west of the churchyard is the howe of King Harald Hairfair; but west of the *church* lies the tombstone of King Harald, which lay over his grave in the mound as aforesaid, and the said stone is  $13\frac{1}{2}$  feet long and near 2 ells broad. In the midst of the howe was the grave of King Harald, and one stone was set at his head and another at his feet, and on the top thereof was laid the flat stone, while a wall of stones was built below it on either side. But these stones which were in the howe stand now in the churchyard as aforesaid.'<sup>2</sup>

Here then was a Christian churchyard and church set as close as might be beside a pagan howe, so close that the great stones which marked the pagan king's grave could be rolled down into the churchyard.

That English churches are frequently situated within earthworks is a commonplace. These earthworks are sometimes wet moats, more often enclosures with the usual fosse and vallum, circular or rectangular, and of all sizes from large 'camps' of many acres to small enclosures only roomy enough to embrace church and churchyard. To examine each case upon its own merits is out of the question here, but some general principles are readily found which may bear upon the individual case.

<sup>1</sup> Western towers are frequently later additions to earlier fabrics: they are found blocking up elaborate west windows and doorways, for example, of late Norman and Early English style. In Wales, where any sort of tower is a foreign feature, they may even block up the east light, as at Llanbister (where circumstances did not allow of building the tower at the west end). The common guide-book expression 'the tower is the oldest part of the church' is ambiguous: it is often the oldest piece of masonry now surviving, because it was of solid design and was built at a date when

the builders at last thoroughly understood their work; but at the same time the tower, unless it be transeptal, is commonly the latest member of the whole fabric. There are, however, cases in which the present-day tower has been raised upon the walls of a lower stage which was originally the nave of a Saxon church. See Hamilton Thompson, *Ground Plan of English Parish Church*, pp. 30 sqq.

<sup>2</sup> *Story of Harald Hairfair (Saga Library)*, c. 45. The description strongly suggests that Harald's monument was a dolmen crowning his barrow.

The Celtic way was to place the Christian settlement within a ringwork of earth and stone. This fashion was introduced in England along with the circular graveyard. The area enclosed was, however, very small, and the site was commonly upon the lower levels. Such a work would quickly perish if abandoned, and in the century of the Danish invasions most were abandoned. If by chance the site revived after the Danish settlement, some part of the defences might also survive. The greater number would be desecrated, ploughed over, and wholly destroyed.

In some few cases the settlement may have been made, as in Ireland and Wales, within the secular ringwork of some forgotten Celtic magnate, but the 400 years of the Roman occupation having broken the continuity of the Celtic tradition, there would be few examples of the kind surviving over the greater part of southern and middle England. They would be found chiefly in the north and along the Celtic fringes of Wales, Strathclyde, or Cornwall, and it is just there that most of the possible examples are discoverable. Of documentary evidence on this head, such as is forthcoming for Ireland and for Wales, there is little or none.

The Roman rarely built circular forts, the Saxon few of any kind. The Norman built circular baillies, and he had a fondness for including places of worship within their lines. Some of those churches which are found within *incomplete* circular enclosures of no great size are probably amongst those adopted by the Norman. If the enclosure be really extensive, it is more likely to be a prehistoric camp, as at St. Catherine's Hill, Winchester, at Cholesbury in Bucks., at Chirbury Camp near Great Bedwyn in Wilts., and at the Trundle near Chichester.

Of churches within proven Roman earthworks there is a long list. Some of these are sites which have survived to be of importance to-day, and the church came thither as it came to any other *tun*. Others, now wholly abandoned, we know to have once contained Christian settlements, as for instance Burgh Castle near Yarmouth where settled St. Fursey 'in the wilderness,' Tasburgh and Caistor St. Edmund's in Norfolk, the great multiplex fortress of Ardoch in Perthshire, Caerhün in Carnarvonshire, Ebchester recalling the name of St. Ebba, and that

unplaced fortress wherein Tunna had made his home.<sup>1</sup> Roman enclosures are not commonly of very small area. The many small rectangular enclosures surrounding churches are mostly late: they represent either the remains of great houses with their accustomed chapels, or if feebler in character, the *defensa* which each parish was required from the fourteenth century to provide for its church.

The motives which drew churches to pre-existing earth-works would vary from age to age. St. Fursey chose the vast ruin of Burgh Castle because it was a desolate spot and because its gaunt walls would shut him off the more completely from the world. But he had no use for all that great area: he would build the usual diminutive *mansio* within the enclosure, for in England no man and no monastery before the tenth century had any need for a spacious precinct.

There is no question that from the earliest times Latin Christianity sought to establish itself upon those sites which had been occupied by the cities of Roman Britain. The activities of Augustine and his followers at Canterbury, Rochester, and London, are paralleled by those of Paulinus at York, Lincoln, and Campodonum. In all these cases there was assuredly a direct tradition. But the Scotie missionaries show the same preference: Aidan founds a monastery at Old Melrose near Trimontium; Chad puts his see at Lichfield beside Letocetum; Sidnacester, the original see of Lindsey, whether or not it was at Stow, was certainly a Roman site; so was Birinus' see at Dorchester (Oxon.); and the first two great monastic foundations of the Hwiccas were planted at Bath and Gloucester, the chief Roman cities of the district. Of the oldest known sites of Christianity in England a very large number can be proved to have been Roman also. The inference is that the Roman road-system was still in being in those days, and that the missionaries followed the roads. Seeing that hundreds of miles of those roads are in use to-day, and that before the days of turnpikes there were in use many

<sup>1</sup> See Baldwin Brown, *Arts*, i, 270 sqq. He cites the cases of Dover, Reculver and Othona, and his conclusion is that 'in our present state of knowledge there seems no reason to attach historical or religious sig-

nificance' to such instances, for 'it does not appear to indicate a continuity of tradition.' Of non-Roman fortified sites he says nothing.

hundreds of miles more, there is nothing odd in such a view. The oddity is rather that so little attention has been paid to the part played by the Roman road-builder in furthering the march of Christianity. He did not know it, but it is none the less a fact, that it was he who literally 'made straight the way of the Lord.'<sup>1</sup>

Probably in many cases the attracting force was a pre-existing barrow. There are barrows within the walls of many prehistoric camps, and paganism and Christianity alike seem to have been drawn towards such sites when once they were abandoned by the living. So there came to be a *ciric* there, and sometimes the *ciric* came to possess a church. Through far later generations the piety which saw in every circular enclosure a burial-place or the potentiality thereof, concerned itself to build churches and chapels in such places. It happened so on the Trundle by Chichester—for example, and again at Knowlton (ch. xxiv), where a still later generation, with less understanding, presently added the superfluous rectangular *limes* about the lonely church.

The earliest Christianity of England was Scotie, and the Scotie Christians made their settlements in the lower ground, avoiding the hill-tops; and so long as they had reason to fear hostility they would continue to do so. Moreover at no period subsequent to the introduction of Christianity did any considerable part of the population make their homes upon the higher ground: the Saxon conquest 'made a silence in the hills' which has continued ever since. Even in Wales there are few *llans* which can be said to stand upon the hills. The missionaries showed their wisdom by making their settlements and their 'churches' in spots easily accessible to the population. Also the missionaries required a constant and plentiful supply of water.<sup>2</sup> For all these reasons they affected the lower ground. The oldest church of Glastonbury stood at the

<sup>1</sup> See on this matter Montagu Sharpe, *Parish Churches on Romano-British Sites* (1909). In his view many of those churches which stand on the lines of Roman roads, and especially at cross-roads, occupy the sites of Romano-British *sacella* and *compita*. Very possibly this may be so in some cases, but before there came to be any church there the spot must have been a place of

burial, and neither *sacellum* nor *compitum* was felt to be such. Moreover, the church went there, not because the spots were *sacella* and *compita*, but because the *tun* was there; and the *tun* had come thither because the road was there.

<sup>2</sup> This question largely determined also the sites of the later and greater monasteries.

foot of the great Tor, not upon its summit. Hill-top churches in this country are mostly late-comers.<sup>1</sup>

In the new departure inaugurated by archbishop Cuthbert may be found a sufficient explanation of that commonest of English legends, that the devil or his kindred refused to permit the building of a church upon a particular site. It probably echoes the struggle between the newer churchyards consecrated in accordance with Cuthbert's orders, and the older and remoter burial-places to which the mass of the people would cling with the obstinacy of long tradition. The older *cirics*, presumably in some cases actually pagan, and inevitably the scene of traditional rites—*diofolgild*—of a more or less pagan kind, would necessarily be regarded by the more orthodox as so many temples of the devil; and when the question was asked in later days, why the structural church had been reared elsewhere than on the older burial-ground, the ready answer was that that site was the devil's property, and that he had refused to permit the church's being built there. Thus at Waldron in Sussex tradition declares that the devil prevented the erection of the church at a spot some two miles away from the village and the present church of the parish, and to this day the rejected site is known as 'Church Field,' i.e. the field of the *ciric* or burial-ground, near Horeham Road.<sup>2</sup> The legend occurs again at Alfriston,<sup>3</sup> where, as has been stated, the older burial-ground, presumably both Christian and pagan, has recently been discovered at Hallow Furlong.<sup>4</sup> At Checkendon, Oxon., the rejected site is still pointed out and known by the curious name of the 'Devil's churchyard,' a small clearing in otherwise wooded ground at the extreme edge of the parish in the direction of Ipsden;<sup>5</sup> and of Ipsden itself is told the same legend, the forbidden site being pointed out on Berin's Hill,<sup>7</sup> where

<sup>1</sup> At Laindon and at Wickham Bishops in Essex the old church is at the foot of the hill, the new one at the top. The reader will bear in mind that 'hill' is a very elastic term covering anything from 10 to 999 feet. The only English cathedrals (Durham and Lincoln) which stand upon hills, were secure within their defences.

<sup>2</sup> *Sussex Arch. Coll.* xiii (1861), pp. 83, 226.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.* p. 226.

<sup>4</sup> Above, ch. xxi. Tradition, however, points out as the intended site a field now called Saffron's Close, some 200 yards, only

from the church, but upon considerably higher ground.

<sup>5</sup> Information of the rector, Rev. I. T. Munn, who describes it as 'irregular in shape, more or less circular.' In the parish of Minchinhampton, Gloucecs. is another 'Devil's churchyard' says Dr. Thurnam, 'in which name there is probably a tradition of the locality having been associated with pagan sepulchral rites' (*Archaeologia*, xlii, p. 243).

<sup>6</sup> Traditionally, and perhaps because of the legend, explained as St. Birinus' Hill,

there have been found human remains. At Christchurch, Hants., it is said that the intention was to build the church on St. Catharine's Hill, two miles to the north, where are abundant evidences of an early settlement. In the case of St. Marie du Castel, Guernsey (ch. xviii), the legend distinctly points to a dolmen as the forbidden site. Other localities to which relate similar legends are Godshill in Isle of Wight, Membury in Devon,<sup>1</sup> Brighton,<sup>2</sup> Duffield in Derbyshire, St. Brelade in Jersey, Kilbarr in Barra (Hebrides),<sup>3</sup> Churchstoke in Montgomeryshire, the cathedral of St. David's, and Llanbedr and Corwen in Merionethshire. In Cornwall the story is very common. In that land of few or no villages there was bound to be considerable jealousy in regard to the site of the 'church town.'

Like most such scraps of folk-lore the tale has been varied to suit the facts and feelings of various centuries. It has been advanced as reason why a church stands upon some rather distressing hill, as is the case at Brent Tor (Devon), at Limpley Stoke (Wilts.), and at Bow Brickhill (Bucks.): the devil refused to allow the church to be built on lower ground, removing it to the hill-top as to a locality within his more immediate sovereignty. The story may contain a reference to the patent fact that early Christianity contented itself with lowlier sites and left hill-tops alone; left them, that is, to the old gods and to Satan. There may be a further reference to the Old Dragon and to pagan high-places in the frequent dedication of hill-top churches to St. Michael the slayer of dragons; but it is a fact that, while very many churches of St. Michael are in no sense upon hill-tops, a very large number of English hill-top churches—and they are not many—are not dedicated to St. Michael.

Of the churches and chapels which have actually crowned English hills a great number are ruined and abandoned, which is sufficient proof that they were no natural outcome of the country's communal life, but rather eccentricities. They are mostly of late date, and frequently have no burial-ground, which is another reason

and said to have been the scene of that bishop's first preaching in this part of Wessex.

<sup>1</sup> *Trans. Devon Assoc.* xxxix (1907), 142.

<sup>2</sup> T. S(tackhouse) in *Brayley's Graphic and Historical Illustrator* (1834), p. 278.

<sup>3</sup> Martin, *Description of Western Isles*, p. 93.

for their disappearance—they 'had no root.' Very many of them belong to a period (fourteenth-fifteenth centuries) when piety advertised itself by the multiplication of such buildings; and hill-tops lent themselves to such advertisement.

However flat and low-lying be the site of the village, it will generally be found that the church, if at all old, occupies a site in some degree higher than the surrounding levels, a small foot-hill overlooking the flats, or a slight knoll rising at least a few feet and so beyond the reach of floods. The pagan barrow-builders followed the same rule, and so did the Celt and Saxon in their choice of urn-fields and cemeteries. Saxon cemeteries, albeit seldom far away from water, are commonly upon sites obviously chosen for their dryness.<sup>1</sup> The Christian church stands usually just where one might have looked to find a pagan burial, i.e. a barrow, and the explanation of the fact is simply that the Christian *ciric* actually *was* a barrow.

It is usual to maintain that a circular churchyard, if situated upon a knoll, was made circular to conform with the contours of the ground. This is to argue the wrong way round. In reality a rounded knoll was preferred because it conformed to the circular plan of the barrow to be built. And in not a few cases the slight knolls which carry the churches of fenland and riverside villages were purposely constructed for that end. They are again barrows.

In large areas of eastern England there was no other means of providing for a *ciric* than by constructing such an artificial mound—a flat circular platform which might safeguard the bones of the dead from flood, just as other such isles of refuge—'coterrells'—were built for the cattle in the marshes of the Medway. By sinking piles and brushwood in the boggy soil, by heaping up the surface, and by keeping open a fair-sized fosse around the area, something might be constructed that would serve the purpose, and

<sup>1</sup> Thurlow Leeds, *Archæology of the A.-S. Settlements*, p. 16. Even if a case can be adduced of a pre-Christian cemetery situated in a water-logged spot, this will probably be found to be no exception to the rule, but explicable by later changes. Modern efforts to drain or embank one area occasionally result in the flooding of another. There are several mediæval domestic sites upon

Pevensy Level which at the present time are entirely unsuitable for habitation, the construction of the sea-wall and the embanking of the rivers of the marsh land having prevented the rapid escape of superfluous water. The construction of locks upon the course of rivers previously open, will lead locally to similar results.

practical experience would teach the fen-men where they might find a firm bottom of clay or gravel amongst the flat stretches of shaking peat-moss.

Not the churches only, but the separate houses and homesteads of the Dutch Polders are built upon just such artificial foundations, though commonly there has been more labour spent upon the church, so that this stands a foot or two higher than the houses of the village, and is so much the safer a refuge in times of flood. When the waters are out the actual structural churches are thrown open as places of refuge, and the population with all their flocks find shelter there.<sup>1</sup> In the fens of Friesland every house and every church stands upon its own mound, known in the local dialect as a *torp* (or *teep*).<sup>2</sup> This may be one of the words which reappear in England commonly as *thorp* or *thorpe*, the suffix in some hundreds of place-names which are to be found scattered thickly over the fen-levels of Lincolnshire, Yorkshire, and Nottinghamshire, less frequently in Norfolk and Suffolk, more rarely in other lowland counties, and very seldom in the hilly counties. With few exceptions they lie at or near the saturation level,<sup>3</sup> and for the most part on the banks of rivers. The word might thus denote much the same thing as did *beorb*, and herein may be the explanation of its being given 'in very early glosses . . . as an alternative to *thingstow*, "place of assembly."'<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This occurred as lately as 1915-16. When the flood-bank of the Trent Valley, between Girton and Marton Cliff, broke at Spalford in 1795, the consequent floods inundated 20,000 acres of lowland west of Lincoln to a depth of 10 feet, and the villagers of Saxilby were forced to take refuge in their church (*Lincs. Notes and Queries*, i, 213).

<sup>2</sup> These have yielded a large number of Saxon burials (Thurlow Leeds, *Archaeology of Anglo-Saxon Settlements*, p. 94).

<sup>3</sup> There is a Thorp-on-the-Hill six miles south-west of Lincoln, where the 'Hill' is merely a slight rise at the edge of the adjoining flats.

<sup>4</sup> *Chief Elements in Eng. Place-Names*, p. 59.