

VII—CHRISTIAN EVIDENCES IN THE ROMAN PERIOD

THE NORTHERN COUNTIES PART II (concluded)

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(17)-(21) *Traprain Law Treasure*

The most remarkable collection of precious objects from the Roman era to be discovered in our islands, and one of the most remarkable from any period, is the Traprain Law hoard, unearthed at the hill of that name in Haddingtonshire, East Lothian, in 1919.¹ The date of deposition of this treasure is securely fixed by the associated coins, the latest being two of Honorius, 395-423, and others dating from 407-411, and the bulk of its component pieces were undoubtedly manufactured during the 4th century. Whilst the pieces of the equally celebrated Mildenhall treasure had suffered little damage, those from Traprain are in marked contrast.² They were evidently the hoard of barbarian plunderers, and the component pieces had been broken up or beaten flat to make them more portable. Nevertheless, the common features of both services, the presence of flanged and scalloped bowls, of remarkably similar design, and, in particular, the borders of large, round, hollow beads³ suggest that the services were both made during the 4th century A.D. It seems likely that the bulk of the pieces were made in Gaul or near Rome.

¹ A. O. Curle, *The Treasure of Traprain*. 1923. Flagon—13f., No. 1, figs. 2, 3, Pl. V; Flask—19f., No. 3, fig. 5, Pl. VIII; Spoon—70, No. 105, fig. 52, Pl. XXVI; Pair Spoons—64 Nos. 97, 98, figs. 41, 42; Colum—75f., figs. 59, 60, Pl. XXXVIII.

² J. W. Brailsford, *The Mildenhall Treasure: A Handbook*, B.M., (1955), which see for close analogies with the Traprain Law hoard.

³ See No. 11 (Part I).

Of some 110 rich and valuable items, six are inscribed or decorated in a way which marks them out as Christian. They are:

i (17) A flagon, 8.5" high, "by far the most impressive portable Christian object which may be connected with the Roman era in our island".⁴ A frieze of four biblical scenes, executed in repoussé, occupies the body—Moses striking the Rock, the Fall, the Betrayal, and the Adoration of the Magi. Above the main frieze is a narrow zone containing pastoral scenes "signifying the Heavenly country to which the Christian was journeying".

ii (18) A small flask, with the ✠ monogram, flanked by Alpha and Omega, and an indecipherable inscription in Greek characters picked out on the neck.

iii (19) A silver spoon engraved with a fish, one of a number of similar spoons, which may well have been Christening spoons, gifts for children or adult converts at their baptism.⁵

iv and v (20) A pair of unequivocally Christian spoons engraved with the ✠.

vi (21) A *colum* or wine strainer, an object not infrequently found among the belongings of tribes who imported wine from a distance, perforated with the ✠ in the centre, and the words IESVS CHRISTVS round the circumference. This may have been used for eucharistic or other liturgical purposes, an alternative possible function for the spoons already described. (Nos. 3-5.)

There is no evidence to indicate ownership, or even to indicate whether the six pieces with Christian associations, out of a total of 110, had a common Christian owner. They may have been looted from a church,⁶ where they would have served a liturgical purpose, or they may have been plundered from the villa of a wealthy Roman official, part

⁴ Curle, *op. cit.*, 13f.

⁵ See No. 22, below.

⁶ This would indicate a settled Christian community—not impossible even in the Lowlands of Scotland, in a civilian context, in the late 4th century A.D. Here is a possible connection with the Ninianic Mission.

of the tableware of a Christian household. We can never certainly know.

These objects, of course, can only be tentatively regarded as evidence for Christianity in Roman Britain, still less in the North, for while they may well have been looted from within the Province, they could have been plundered from the continent, perhaps from Gaul.⁷ Nevertheless, it would be useful if we examined, briefly, the possibilities of a Northern provenance.

The case would be strengthened if it could be shown that these objects reached their find spot overland and not by sea. Traprain Law is remote from the commerce of Gaul and the continent, and (leaving out of account for the moment the possibility of transportation by sea-pirates), the plausibility of a particular locale for the theft reduces proportionately with its distance from the place of deposition. Now whilst it is true that sea-pirates may be supposed to have ranged over long distances with comparative ease, there is no direct evidence that these objects were hidden by sea pirates. Indeed, there is no evidence, apart from this one large deposition, that Traprain Law was a robber's stronghold at this material time, rather than the cantonal capital or possibly even the curia of the elusive VOTADINI. It is true that the nearest point on the coast is only some four miles away, with convenient sea-outlets at the one-time Roman forts at Inveresk and Cramond on the Firth of Forth, fifteen and twenty-four miles away respectively. On the other hand, a main trunk road from the South into Scotland via Corbridge almost certainly passed within twelve miles to the West. Now the Corbridge treasure⁸ and the Traprain Law hoard bear certain resemblances of style. In addition, certain pieces in both collections carry symbols or inscriptions which mark them out as Christian. Signifi-

⁷ The discovery of the Mildenhall Treasure has made the possibility of a British provenance for the Traprain Law hoard much more plausible. *cf.* J. M. C. Toynbee, *J.B.A.A.* 3, xvi (1953), 22.

⁸ *cf.* Nos. 11, 12 (Part I).

cantly, Corbridge, CORSTOPITVM, whilst not itself a cantonal capital was one of the 53-odd "other major settlements so far identified in Roman Britain". Professor Eric Birley has pointed out⁹ that in the period from Severus to the Picts war, Corbridge at least would be growing in size, if not in elegance.¹⁰ There is evidence for a considerable variety and extent of trade with Scotland throughout the Roman period.¹¹ Even after Scotland had been abandoned, forts were held to the North of Hadrian's Wall at Risingham and High Rochester on Dere Street¹² throughout the 3rd century, and now, it seems, into the 4th century, during which, we know, the native town of Traprain Law received consignments of pottery from the South.¹³ Dere Street crosses the Tyne at Corbridge, traverses the Wall at Portgate, and when last certainly plotted at its Northern extent, was found to be aligned directly on Newstead (TRIMONTIVM). Although doubtless it then continued by Channelkirk and Soutra Aisle to the forts of Inveresk and Cramond, a short branch road, of Roman or Roman-British construction, would conveniently link this trade-route with the cantonal capital on Traprain Law. It is not impossible therefore that the theft of these objects took place while they were for some reason in transit within the Northern region, along the highway of Dere Street, and that in any event they reached their find spot, however clandestinely, by the same route.

We cannot therefore rule out the possibility that the objects with Christian associations were owned by an organised Christian community somewhere in the North. Still less can we exclude the possibility that they formed part of the tableware of a wealthy Roman, or philo-Roman, a travelling official who was also a Christian.

⁹ *Loc. cit.*, note 3 (Part I).

¹⁰ Keeney, *A.A.* 4, xi (1934), 158-75.

¹¹ James Curle, *P.S.A.S.* lxxvi (1932), 277-397, esp. 345-50.

¹² *C.W.* 2 xxxi (1931), 139, and *cf.* now *N.C.H.* xv. 1940. 63-159.

¹³ In this case, possibly, by sea through Cramond.

(22) *Sunderland Spoon.*

Another small object, very probably Christian, was found in close proximity to the Wall region, near Sunderland. Unfortunately it cannot now be traced. This was a silver spoon or "cochlear", with a peculiar short hooked handle in place of the more usual long handle (Fig. 1), first noted in 1869.¹⁴ The cavity, when perfect, undoubtedly bore the inscription (BE)NE VIVAS, similar to that noted on the beaker from Corbridge.¹⁵ From the drawing and inscrip-



FIG. 1. SILVER ROMAN SPOON (1:1)
By courtesy of the Royal Archaeological Institute

tion it also bears marked resemblances to the Christian Spoons from the Mildenhall Treasure, engraved PAPITTEDO VIVAS and PASCENTIA VIVAS respectively,¹⁶ and, like them, may well have been a Christening spoon presented as a gift to a child or adult convert at his baptism. The formula VIVAS was as we have already noted¹⁷ pagan before it was Christian, but it is one very commonly used in unequivocally Christian contexts in the 4th century.

(23) *Glass: Inscribed ✠.*

Part of a rectangular base of a glass bottle bearing the Christian ✠ monogram has come to light since Professor Toynbee wrote her account in 1953. It measures 2 $\frac{3}{8}$ " (broken) by 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ " (broken) with part of one corner extant, and was found, unstratified, on the site of the Roman fort at

¹⁴ *A.J.* xxvi (1869), 76.

¹⁵ See No. 12 (Part I).

¹⁶ J. W. Brailsford, *op. cit.*, 14. Nos. 27, 28, Pls. 8a, 8b.

¹⁷ Nos. 13, 14 (Part I).

Catterick. On the base a graffito ☩ with a single cross bar has been inscribed "retrograde", that is to say, to be read from above.¹⁸ This discovery considerably reinforces the interpretation we have placed on the only other example of a ☩ monogram on tableware, the Corbridge Bowl.¹⁹

(24) *Bronze Decorated Buckle.*

This account would not be complete without mention of one of three small objects which suggest that Romano-British Christianity lingered on for many years in the territory occupied by the Anglo-Saxon invaders. A bronze buckle of Anglo-Saxon type, now dated to the 5th century, and inscribed with the symbol of the sacred tree, was dis-

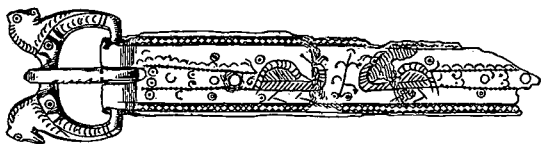


FIG. 2. BRONZE BUCKLE FROM STANWICK (4)
By courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum

covered at the site of the Stanwick fortifications in Yorkshire. It was followed by the publication in 1931²⁰ of a small bronze nail cleaner found near Rivenhall in Essex. The authors had no difficulty in pointing out parallels in early Christian art of the 5th and 6th centuries. Now a third, similar, object has come to light, a silver gilt brooch with a ☩ monogram, which was found in all probability in Sussex. The analogies are clear enough to establish a Christian meaning for our Stanwick buckle. (Fig. 2.)

¹⁸ The only publication to date is a brief note in *J.R.S.* 1 (1960). Now in the British Museum.

¹⁹ No. 11 (Part I).

²⁰ C. F. C. Hawkes and A. B. Tonnochy, *Ant. J.* xi (1931), 121-8. For the Stanwick Buckle see p. 121 and fig. 2; also B.M. *Anglo-Saxon Guide*. 1923. R. A. Smith, 90, fig. 108. For the silver-gilt brooch mentioned below see R. L. S. Bruce-Mitford, quoted in *J.B.A.A.* 3, xviii (1955), 17, Pl. IV. W. H. C. Frend.

(25) *Lamp: ✠ Monogram.*

The search for Roman Christian terra-cotta lamps from Britain has proved, on the whole, to be disappointing. I have identified one, not before published, now in the city of Lancaster museum. It was unearthed in 1912 in the vicarage garden of the Priory Parish Church of St. Mary. It measures 5½" in length and carries the ✠ monogram clearly raised on the base. Unfortunately, the circumstances of the find have not been recorded in detail, and we must include this lamp in our schedule with due reserve. There is archaeological evidence of a fort at Lancaster,²¹ at a crossing of the river Lune, and we know that it was also an important town or road junction, if not a frontier passage, from the presence there of two *beneficiarii consularii*—"consular beneficiaries",²² attesting the kind of environment in which Christianity might take root.

(26) *Burial Bone Plaque.*

It remains to consider, under the general heading of inscribed objects, a fragmentary bone plaque,²³ bearing letters which would appear to have been applied to some object now lost. They read: S(OR)OR AVE/VIVAS/IN/DEO—an aspiration, as we have seen, quite definitely Christian. The plaque was found in Sycamore Terrace, York, outside Bootham Bar, in a stone coffin containing a family skeleton, jewellery and glass vessels. "This is a notable, but by no means unique, instance of grave goods in a Romano-Christian burial".²⁴

(27) *Baptismal Trough?*

The next object to be considered carries no inscription or formula to indicate that it was ever used by Christians. Nevertheless it clearly belongs to a group of nine large lead

²¹ *Trans. Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire*, Vol. 105 (1953).

²² *C.I.L.* vii, 271-2.

²³ From *J.B.A.A.* xvi (1953), Pl. IV, 4.

²⁴ *Ibid.* 17, N.B. 5, and refs. J. M. C. Toynbee.

tanks or vats, from widely scattered sites, some of which bear Christian formulae. It was discovered in March 1943 at Low Ireby Farm in Westmorland and is the smallest of the group.²⁵ When Professor Toynbee wrote in 1953 she was able to say of this example: "It is noteworthy that only the smallest and most portable of the series . . . was found at a distance from the rest, outside the Southern areas of the Roman Province".²⁶ A more recent discovery²⁷ of a similar lead tank fragment, clearly of the same kind, provides a link between the Southern and Ireby specimens. It was ploughed up in 1959 at Risby Manor, Walesby, 3 miles north-east of Market Rasen, in Lincolnshire. The find spot is approximately 140 miles from Ireby, and thus some 70 miles nearer than the most northerly of the remaining examples from the river Ouse near Huntingdon. Moreover this carries no distinguishing Christian formula whereas the fragment of the Walesby vat clearly carries a ✠ monogram tilted to the right, 7½" high, together with part of a long panel in relief containing two sets of human figures, three males standing half right, clad in tunics, and three females on the left.

Although this fragment actually occurs just outside our region, we have considered it in detail before the Westmorland example, since its more recent discovery reinforces the view that all the vats, including the one from Ireby, may have been used for Christian purposes, a view not shared by Professor Ian Richmond when he first published it.²⁸ I shall make use of his description; as follows: "The capacity of the vat is approximately 10.06 gallons. Unlike the others, which held multiples of amphorae, this volume is unrelated to any standard Roman unit. Attached are two handles

²⁵ Now in the Tullie House Museum, Carlisle.

²⁶ Toynbee, *op. cit.*, 16.

²⁷ *J.R.S.* 1 (1960), 239, Pl. XXVI.

²⁸ *C.W.* 2, xlv (1946), 163-171. It is impossible to determine, from the details published in the *J.R.S.* (*supra*), the capacity of the Walesby vat. The fragment recovered measured 22" x 22". The Ireby vat may still remain therefore the smallest and most portable of the group.

roughly pierced by holes which are disturbed at the outer edge as if they had been used from time to time to pull the vessel along the ground. The handles are not strong enough to have been used for lifting or for permanent suspension. The massive vessel is not wholly devoid of ornament, apart from the cable mould at the rim, for the sides were ornamented externally with a series of cuneiform circles, $3\frac{1}{2}$ " in diameter, in cable pattern, and in two groups of five. The normal decoration of the group is saltires, though six bear circles as well as saltires, thus preparing us for the treatment in circles alone at Ireby".

Excluding the recent Walesby find, of the vats from the group which bear Christian symbols, one was found in 1939 near the Roman villa at Icklingham in Suffolk. On either side the central panel bears the ✠, which is on one side flanked by A and W in reverse order. The second came to light in 1942 or 1943 near the Roman buildings at Lickford farm, Wiggonholt, in Sussex. Here the ✠ monogram adorns the central panel on one side. A third, from Icklingham, now lost, may have carved on it an alpha.

Despite these Christian evidences, Professor Richmond nowhere ascribes any Christian religious function to the Ireby example, but suggests possibilities ranging from water troughs to steeping vats for dyeing, fulling or brewing—"the most likely common function". On the contrary, I believe that the elaborate decoration of the group as a whole, makes such completely utilitarian functions unlikely, and since these are large and costly objects, a merely ornamental function seems equally improbable. It has already been suggested that those with Christian symbols were used for liturgical purposes, as fonts or baptisteries,²⁹ and this would explain their presence by a river as a ready source of water. Although we know that the first Christians used running water for baptism by preference,³⁰ from representations on early Christian works of art it is clear that in the 4th century at

²⁹ *Ant. J.* xxiii (1943), 156. cf. also Toynbee, *op. cit.*, 16.

³⁰ *Didache*, vii, 1-3.

least baptism was by affusion and not by total immersion. Professor Toynbee has pointed out³¹ that since the Icklingham and Wiggonholt tanks are 32" and 30½" respectively in diameter, a neophyte could have stood in them with his feet in water while the officiant poured water over his head from a patera. The same could be said of the Ireby example, of 18" overall diameter and 6½" internal depth. Although, in such cramped conditions, the rite would be correspondingly more difficult to perform, on the other hand the comparatively small size of the vat would render it more portable for its purpose, and there is evidence, as we have seen, that it was constructed to be pulled along the ground.

Whatever their function, it is clear that the tanks with Christian symbols were originally made for Christian owners, for these symbols must have been made from "dies" pressed into the moulds or matrices of damp sand, in which the sides of such vessels were cast, and not inscribed subsequently. It is possible that even the tanks devoid of Christian symbols fulfilled a Christian religious function, in view of the close similarities of the group as a whole.³² For this reason they are likely to be of the same 4th century date and possibly the products of the same workshop. One of the nine examples, but in this case without any Christian formulae, was found in a sealed layer in a Roman house at Bourton on the Water, and dated to 370-390 A.D.

We can say in conclusion that the discovery at Walesby considerably reinforces the view that all the tanks, whether inscribed with Christian symbols or not, and including our Ireby example, could have been used for Christian religious purposes, and most probably for Baptism.

We have now completed our review of the positive evidences for Christianity in the Roman period which have

³¹ *Loc. cit.*, 16, and especially N.B. 4, for such representations in early Christian art.

³² Their use for pagan ritual ablutions seems unlikely.

come to light as the result of archaeological method. However, there remains an important group of finds which yield indirect, if *negative*, evidence for the presence of Christians in the Wall region in the 4th century A.D.

(28) (29) (30) *Destruction of Mithraea*

Three Mithraea have been discovered in the Wall region, all bearing evidences of deliberate destruction and desecration: at Housesteads, 1822 and again 1898; at Carrawburgh, 1950; and at Rudchester, 1953; forts *per lineam valli*. The evidence suggests in each case that the actual Mithraea themselves or the more "offensive" Mithraic symbols were destroyed through the iconoclastic zeal of Christians when Christianity became, first a recognised and then the official religion of the Empire after the conversion of Constantine. They were especially provoked by the apparent and dangerous similarities between Mithraism and Christianity. Ceremonially, the Mithraic ritual meal closely resembled the holy eucharist, and the Mithraic ritual purification by water, Christian baptism, actual springs and water lavers being frequent in Mithraea. Like Christianity, Mithraism maintained an elevated moral code which contrasted with the immorality of many pagan cults. Proselytising Christians recognised the stumbling block which such parallels created in the minds of observers, and were provoked to militant action. This explains why the earliest centres of pagan worship to be attacked and destroyed by Christian zealots or by the authorities of the Christianised empire were the Mithraea. Behn³³ has pointed out that of all the hundreds of Mithraea on the continent, very few are undamaged—all the others having been more or less completely destroyed. He ascribed the destruction at Dieburg, for example, to the invading Germans³⁴ of the late 3rd century, but that cannot account for the cases along the Wall, where it seems natural

³³ F. Behn, *Das Mithrasheiligtum zu Drieburg*. 1928. 7.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 45.

to suppose that the ruin of the Mithraea was brought about by the Christians.³⁵

In the brief review which follows, we will confine our attention solely to the recorded evidences of deliberate destruction, and treat the Mithraea in the order of their discovery.

(28) *Housesteads—VERCOVICIUM*

The inner shrine of this Mithraeum was discovered by workmen in 1822 and excavated in 1834.³⁶ The excavators discovered some fragments of the sacrificial slab, representing the mythical sacrifice of a bull which usually covered the end wall in temples of Mithras, before the altar. The slab had evidently been ruthlessly torn from its base and deliberately smashed. The subsequent excavators in 1898 did not succeed in finding the inner shrine, nor did they recover any fragment of the sacrificial slab, but a layer of charcoal within the pavement was noted as "probably the remains of the household roof beams". The final report of these excavations³⁷ included a note of the discovery, near the centre of the nave, of three figures carved in coarse free-stone. All were headless and much broken and were lying face downwards, a male figure, and a pair representing the torchbearers Cautes and Cautopates. Fortunately, the head of one of them was found a few feet away. "The main part of the building seems to have been burned. We noted much burning to a somewhat high level and large lumps of charcoal in the central area. The inner shrine may have escaped through being half underground."

³⁵ cf. R. G. Collingwood. *The Archaeology of Roman Britain*. 1930. 144-5. At least four of the Rhineland Mithraea are now known to have been similarly destroyed, as also the Mithraeum at Caernarvon-Segontium: cf. *Archaeologia Cambrensis*, cix (1960).

³⁶ Report published by Hodgson, *A.A.* 1, i (1822). cf. also C. M. Daniels, *Mithras Saecularis*, etc., *A.A.* 4, xl (1962).

³⁷ R. C. Bosanquet *A.A.* 2, xxv (1904), 255. The Roman Camp at Housesteads: 3. The Temple of Mithras.

(29) *Carrawburgh—BROCOLITIA*³⁸

Here again the destroyers concentrated solely upon the imagery which made Mithras himself manifest. They did not blot out the written word of votive offerings, nor, strangely, the image of Mithras as sun-god on one of three large altars in the sanctuary, although when found the stone itself was broken in two portions. In addition the excavators found four small altars, mostly re-used, set against the benches. Another, dedicated to the Matres, the three Celtic mother-goddesses, had its inscribed face hidden against the bench. At the south ends of the benches, near the door, lay fragments of two statues—the dadophori. The western statue, Cautopates, had been violently broken off at the shins and removed, leaving only its crossed ankles and feet. The eastern statue, Cautes, had been beheaded and remained standing. The roof of the building having been at the same time torn off and completely destroyed, it became considerably weathered before it fell flat on the silted floor. The sanctuary sides were flanked by two pedestals, intended for lengthy objects, probably the lion guardians of the sacred fire. These had also been destroyed. The shallow niche at the back was provided with a strong stone shelf some five feet high, intended to carry the stone reredos depicting Mithras killing the wild bull. Of this panel, only a bull's broken horn remained: all else had been systematically removed, in an evident attempt to annihilate the imagery of the god and his worship. By the middle of the 4th century the building had not only been destroyed, but was already vanishing under a growing tip of rubbish and refuse: silent testimony to neglect.

(30) *Rudchester—VINDOVALLA*

The Mithraeum here had been broken into and disturbed

³⁸ First published in detail by I. A. Richmond and J. P. Gillam in *A.A.* 4, xxix (1951), 6-92. *cf.* also the excellent publication of the Museum of Roman Antiquities of this Society, *Mithras and His Temples on the Wall*, 1962, by C. M. Daniels. Many of the despoiled Mithraic objects mentioned in this account are on display at this museum.

by workers seeking stone in 1844. It was carefully excavated for the first time in 1954.³⁹ This revealed two periods of occupation, with a re-building between them. It is believed that in Mithraeum II the interior of the apse held a large conventional relief showing Mithras killing the bull. Broken pieces of a large grooved slab suitable for the base stone of such a reredos were found in the disturbed ground south of the apse. No trace of the reredos itself was found, and its removal would explain the movement of the base from the dais to a position in the nave where it was found and thrown back in 1844. Two large flat stones found in the north-west corner have been held to be the oblong base for, as it might be, a carved stone lion. If so, the disappearance of this object cannot be attributed to the stone-robbing of 1844.

Four small altars similar to those found at Carrawburgh were discovered lying face downwards at intervals before the face of the west bench, as if they had originally stood upright on its edge and had been deliberately pitched forward from it. The heads of the two Dadophori were found in the eastern part of the valley where the Mithraeum is situated: one of these retained its Phrygian cap, while that of the other had been broken off. It is possible that one or other of these heads came from a statue broken up in 1844; if so, the head had already been broken off before then, for the stone-robbing did not extend so far east as the find spot of either head. There came a time, early in the 4th century, when the building ceased to be used. Distinctive marks, scored by ploughshares, run from front to back of the top of the tallest unbroken altar. This shows that it, and presumably the other large unbroken altars also, still stood upright and undisturbed in its final position when ploughing began, long after the building was in ruins. On the other hand, the main bull-killing relief, together with whatever stood on the base in the north-west corner, has vanished without trace, and the torchbearers are represented only by two

³⁹ J. P. Gillam and I. MacIvor, *A.A.* 4, xxxii (1954). 176f.

heads, not forming a pair, and possibly by the statue found and destroyed in 1844. In common with the other Mithraea therefore this temple was desecrated, but destruction of its furnishings did not extend beyond those objects most intimately related to the cult.

The date of this vindictively selective destruction is known within well defined limits. While pottery of types that emerged before the end of the 3rd century and remained current for some time were fairly abundant, no pottery of types exclusive to the 4th century was found sealed by the fallen masonry of the east end of the temple. This suggests that while the temple continued in use into the 4th century, it was for a short time only. It is probable therefore that the final abandonment and desecration of the Mithraeum at Rudchester was strictly contemporary with the final abandonment and desecration at Housesteads and Carrawburgh. "The parallels between the three are close, while there seem to be no close parallels to this precise kind of treatment in the Empire. In all three the main relief was destroyed and largely or completely removed, while the altars were left in position without desecration."⁴⁰ Such uniform treatment implies a single wave of feeling along the line of the Wall, or a single general order."⁴¹ We have already commented on the nature of the hostility between Christianity and Mithraism. While the two cults were cognate and had much in common, Christians regarded Mithraism as a travesty of their religion.⁴² The date accords with the newfound militant power of Christianity consequent

⁴⁰ It is difficult to explain why the altars alone remained unharmed, unless the iconoclasts regarded them as comparatively innocuous by comparison with the more obtrusive Mithraic images.

⁴¹ J. P. Gillam etc., *op. cit.*, 178. The earliest official act of desecration for which we have any written evidence is as late as 377 A.D. when St. Jerome tells us that a Christian Prefect of Rome first destroyed a metropolitan Mithraeum.

⁴² The Mithraeum discovered in Walbrook, London, in 1954 has furnished further evidence for the opposition of Christians to the Mithras cult. Published in *J.B.A.A.* xviii (1955), 11. *cf.* also *Recent Archaeological Excavations in Great Britain*. 1956. Ed. R. L. S. Bruce-Mitford. Ch. VI, Excavations in the City of London, by W. F. Grimes. 136-end. Also Ch. IV, The Cult of Mithras and its Temple at Carrawburgh, by I. A. Richmond, 65-86.

upon the Peace of the Church. We may fairly conclude therefore that the destruction and desecration which we have described in all three cases were the work of Christians, who singled out Mithras and his temples for particular attack: an eloquent if negative testimony to their presence in the Wall region at least in the early decades of the 4th century A.D.

DOUBTFUL EVIDENCE

(31) "*Christian Lamp*"

I now add, as a kind of appendix to this review, one piece of doubtful evidence which cannot fairly be assigned to either of my two main categories. The only evidence we possess for the existence of a Roman lamp bearing the Christian monogram, alleged to be at Newcastle, is a cryptic reference in *I.B.C.*, 81, No. 228.⁴³ The lamp cannot now be traced, so that the extant Lancaster lamp already referred to remains unique in the Northern Counties.⁴⁴

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Abbreviations:

I.B.C.—*Inscriptiones Britanniae Christianae*. Prof. Hübner.

B.M.—British Museum.

In addition to works cited in the text and footnotes the following may be consulted:

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(1) *Decept(vs)*.

Roman Inscriptions and Sculptures belonging to the Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle upon Tyne. 1926. R. G. Collingwood. 49, No. 164. (Previous Catalogue No. 95)

A.A. 2, i (1857), 257, No. 121.

C.I.L. 1021.

Lap. Sept. 623.

⁴³ For a note on the generally unsatisfactory nature of Prof. Hübner's material, see F. Haverfield's paper *Early Northumbrian Christianity*, in *A.A.* 3, xv (1914), 22-43, N.B. 9. *cf.* also Toynbee, *op. cit.*, 23.

⁴⁴ No. 25 above.

- (2) *Fla(viv)s Antigonas Papias*.
E.E. ix, 607, No. 1222.
Catalogue of the Roman Inscribed and Sculptured Stones in the Carlisle Museum, Tullie House. 1922. No. 85, Pl. opp. p. 31, *P.S.A.N.*, v, 231.
- (3) *Titvs N*.
C.W. 2, xxxii, 133-4.
- (4) *Brigomaglos*.
A.A. 2, xiii, 367-371.
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