Christian Origins in Britain*

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It is my intention in this address to examine certain series of buildings and objects that represent the material evidence for the beginnings of Christianity in Britain. Although these series have been discussed individually on more than one occasion, there has been little attempt to assess their collective meaning and to demonstrate their significance in the development of the British church. It is my hope that the discussion will throw some light on Christian origins in Britain and, in particular, will contribute to an appreciation of the extent to which there was continuity between the church in Roman Britain of the 4th century and the later church in the Celtic lands of the north and west.

My first series concerns the 'churches' of Roman Britain. I make no excuse for examining these buildings, although they lie outside the field normally studied by this Society. Formally I might call in the authority of the Cambridge Medieval History, which starts logically with the Emperor Constantine and the Peace of the Church (313). Christianity is a historical unity and the scholar who seeks to understand the early medieval church must look back to its origins. This is the more important in that the church is the dynamic element in the early middle ages, the hammer which beat out a finely finished civilization on the anvil of tribal society.

The little building at Silchester, the first undoubted Romano-British 'church' to be explored, had an overall length of 42 ft. It consisted of a central area with a western apse, measuring in all 29 ft. by 10 ft., and with narrow corridors on each side and small, rather wider, chambers flanking the apse; at the E. end a cross-hall, or narthex, measuring 24 ft. by 7 ft., extended the full width of the building. The floor of the main space was mosaic, of coarse tesserae with a panel of finer tesserae on the chord of the apse. Recent excavations by the late Sir Ian Richmond brought to light a coin minted between 348 and 353 adhering to the mortar underbedding of the pavement; the building, therefore, can hardly be earlier than c. 360. At the N. end of the cross-hall was a foundation 22 in. in diameter. On the axial line, 11 ft. east of the building, was a tile foundation about 4 ft. square, surrounded by the remains of a rough pavement of flints.

The building stood in the eastern part of a small insula immediately south-east of the forum. On the west were traces of a wall separating the plot from the rest of the insula; the other sides were bounded by streets. The building was set approximately in the centre of this plot, which measured 130 ft. by 95 ft. The only other structures located were a well, 17 ft. to the west of the apse and

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1 Archaeologia, lxxi (1893), 563–9.
slightly north of the axial line, and a narrow beam-slot with a parallel row of post-holes, traced for a length of 60 ft. to the north of the building. The filling of the well included pieces of good opus signinum flooring, two small pewter cups near the bottom and three coins of Victorinus (268-70) near the top. The beam-slot and post-holes belonged to a wooden building which ran obliquely to the axis of the church. The layout of this building and the filling of the well suggest that both represent an earlier occupation of the site.

Since its discovery in 1892 the 'church' at Silchester has generally been accepted as a Christian place of worship on the evidence of the architectural plan; no corroborative of any other sort has been found.

Before discussing this building it will be convenient to describe the 'church' at Caerwent, with which it has a number of features in common. The 'church' at Caerwent lay on the S. side of the main street, in the insula facing the forum. This insula, which included the public baths, had a complex architectural history going back to the early days of the Roman city. The part facing the main street was occupied from the 2nd century onward by a large building—either an aisled hall or a peristyled courtyard—behind which lay the baths. The baths were still in use in the late 4th century, though the building facing the street—hall or courtyard—had fallen into decay. The 'church' was built over the western part of the ruined building, with its walls bedded at a height of 1 ft. or more above the older pavements. The date can hardly be much earlier than 400. The excavator, the late V. E. Nash Williams, preferred a date long after the ruin of the earlier building, 'perhaps in the sub-Roman period'.

The 'church' measured 21½ ft. by 17 ft. with a flattened apse at the E. end. To the west, 'not bonded in, but evidently contemporary', was an L-shaped wall, interpreted as a 'forebuilding'; it was 14 ft. wide and extended 22 ft. south of the main structure. This part of the site had been much disturbed and the full plan could not be recovered. Restored symmetrically, as proposed by the excavator, the forebuilding would form a cross-hall, or narthex, measuring 62 ft. by 14 ft. The restored N. end would extend about 8 ft. into the Roman street; it was not the earliest encroachment of this nature. There was a bench along the S. end of the cross-hall.

The interpretation of this structure as a Christian 'church' rests entirely on the plan and on its position on top of an important Roman building, which had become ruined at a late date; there was no corroborative evidence. Caerwent was the site of an important medieval 'clas', or monastery of the old Welsh type. The site of this monastery, centred on the present parish church, lay in the same insula of the Roman city, behind but rather to the west of the building described as a 'church'. The story of its foundation by St. Tathan in the 6th century is told in the Life of the Saint. This was composed in the 2nd quarter of the 12th century, but much of the information is based on the traditions of the church. St. Tathan, an Irishman, came to Gwent, where the king, Caradog ap Ynyr, gave him land

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1 Archaeologia, LXXX (1930), 231-7.
2 A. W. Wade-Evans, Vitae Sanctorum Britanniae et Genealogiae (1962), pp. 270-87, especially capp. 6 and 9; for the 'clas' see Archaeologia Cambrensis, cxx (1962), 1-24.
There ‘he founded a church in honour of the holy and undivided Trinity’. Subsequently, following on a miracle, ‘the king granted to St. Tathan the whole of the city and territory (totam civitatem et totum territorium) freely for a perpetual inheritance’. The whole Life is embellished with the trappings of the 12th century, but the story of the transfer from an original foundation outside the walls to the medieval monastery within sounds like a genuine tradition. If this is so there can be no question of continuity between the Romano-British (or sub-Roman) ‘church’ and the medieval ‘clas’. In any case if there had been any suggestion that the ‘clas’ at Caerwent took its origin from a Romano-British martyr or founder, this fact, however distorted, would have been jealously preserved in the traditions of the church and would have left its mark in the Life, just as the traditions of the early martyrs were jealously preserved at neighbouring Caerleon (p. 4).

Both Calleva Atrebatum (Silchester) and Venta Silurum (Caerwent) were civitates, in each case the caput of a British tribe. If Gaulish parallels are valid, each might be expected to become the seat of a bishopric in the course of the 4th century. But neither of these buildings can be described as a cathedral; the absence of a baptistery is decisive. It is true that the late foundation in front of the ‘church’ at Silchester has been tentatively interpreted as a baptistery. It is unlike any other known example and the more cautious explanation of the original excavators is to be preferred. A ‘laver in which the faithful used to wash their hands and faces before entering the church’ is credible; a basin into which the nude candidate descended for the rite of baptism cannot be accepted in this open and exposed position. Moreover there is no trace in either case of the associated dwellings and offices that one would expect with either a cathedral or a titulus. Nor, at Silchester, is there any space where such could readily have been accommodated. Comparisons with the known basilicas and tituli of other provinces are not fruitful (pp. 5, 6f.).

The solution is suggested by the architectural parallels. The most significant is at Cologne, in the cemetery outside the S. gate of the Roman city. Rich pagan burials have been found in this cemetery surrounding the later church of St. Severin. About the year 160 Christian graves begin to appear. Among these were the graves of the local martyrs, Asclinius and Pamphilus. About 320 a small rectangular oratory with an apse was built as a memoria or martyrium above a double grave with separate wooden coffins. Towards the end of the 4th century the oratory was enlarged by the addition of narrow flanking corridors and a cross-hall, or narthex, extending across the whole front of the building. In this narthex was placed the tomb of St. Severin, a 5th-century bishop of Cologne, who was among the last of the Roman leaders of the city. The Christian history of the church stretches without interruption from the oratory of c. 320 down to the present day.

5 ChrB, p. 9 and n. 3. For key to abbreviated references see below, p. 12.
6 E.g. Canon 9 of Hippodotius; text in F. Cabrol, Dictionnaire d’archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie, II (1910), 261.
7 NAD, pp. 329–39; cf. ChrB, p. 34.
The position within the walls at Silchester and Caerwent need not invalidate the suggestion that these buildings, like the oratory at St. Severin, Cologne, were memoriae. There are two similar buildings within the garden of the episcopal palace of Salona and, though their function has not been satisfactorily explained, they cannot have served as the cathedral of the 4th and 5th century, which must have been in a hall on the destroyed upper floor of the palace. The memoria commemorating a martyr could be erected either at his grave, at the place of his martyrdom or at his dwelling.\(^8\) The memoria of a British martyr, whose body had been destroyed or whose grave was unknown, could well have been raised outside the entrance to the forum, within which he had been sentenced. At Salona the memoria to the martyrs was set up in an oratory formed within the amphitheatre,\(^9\) in which they had, presumably, met their fate.

There are historical records of memoriae in Britain of the more normal kind above the grave of the martyr. Gildas,\(^10\) writing about the middle of the 6th century, states that there were, among others, the places of martyrdom and burial of St. Alban at Verulamium and of St. Julius and St. Aaron at Caerleon. At St. Albans there still existed in the early 8th century a church of 'wonderful work'\(^11\) erected after the Peace of the Church in 313. This was at the burial-place outside the Roman walls; today it presumably lies beneath the medieval abbey church, now the cathedral. Bede's evidence about the church is contemporary and in no way incredible. His further conjecture that St. Alban suffered under Diocletian need not be accepted; two different dates in the 3rd century have been proposed. The precise date is immaterial, but the existence of the martyrium is incontrovertible. It was already a place of Christian devotion as early as 429, when St. Germanus of Auxerre and St. Lupus of Troyes visited the shrine in order to return thanks for victory over the invader.\(^12\) The memoria of St. Julius and St. Aaron was near Caerleon, probably on the opposite bank of the Usk; its exact location is unknown. The church with its possessions (totum territorium) is recorded in a 9th-century document abstracted in the Book of Llandav; early in the 12th century it was given with Goldcliff to the great Norman abbey of Bec.\(^13\)

Both these British examples afford an exact parallel to many sites on the continent, including the tomb of St. Peter on the Vatican Hill outside the walls of Rome. Xanten,\(^14\) in west Germany, not far from the Dutch frontier, is a typical example. The name is a corruption of *ad sanctos* and exactly describes the settlement which has grown up around the church over the martyr's tomb. This lay in the cemetery lining the Roman road, which leads upstream from the S. gate of Colonia Ulpia Traiana. Had there not been a continuous Christian tradition on

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\(^8\) Canon 14 of Council of Carthage (c. 398); text in *Sacrorum Conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio*, ed. P. Labbe, iii (1759), 971.

\(^9\) *Recherches a Salone*, ii (Copenhagen, 1933), 108, 10 and 145-6.

\(^10\) 'Gildas de excidio Britanniae', cap. x, in *MGH:AA*, xiii, i (1894), 31; cf. *Antiquity*, xv (1941), 337-50.

\(^11\) Bede, 1, 29.

\(^12\) 'Vita Sancti Germani episcopi Autissiodoriensis auctore Constantio', cap. xvi, in *MGH:SRM*, vii (1919), 262.

\(^13\) *Antiquity*, xv (1941), 337-44.

\(^14\) *Sechzen hundert Jahre Xantener Dom*, ed. W. Bader (Köln, 1964), pp. 65-72; *ChrB*, p. 32.
Medieval English Pottery

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Medieval English pottery 'may be claimed, quite simply, as the most beautiful pottery ever made in England . . .' It is 'now recognised as worthy of comparison for (its) nobility of form with the early Chinese wares so much admired today as the finest of all pottery.' Thus wrote W. B. Honey in his preface to the first edition of Bernard Rackham's classic pioneering work in 1948. Since then medieval archaeology, for which pottery is the essential working material, has made great strides, and there have been many discoveries that have lead to a progressive synthesis of our knowledge of these wares. The task of revising Medieval English Pottery and giving it the precision of dating and attribution now possible has been undertaken by J. G. Hurst of the Department of the Environment, a leading authority in the field and supervisor of a number of medieval archaeological sites throughout the country. Much important detail has been added in the captions and elsewhere in the new edition - though the essential character of the book remains unchanged. The bibliography has been revised and expanded, and four extra colour plates have been included.

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the site, the memoria at Xanten would have been difficult to identify. It is only the fourth building stage, dating from the 7th to 8th century, that shows a church readily identifiable as such by its plan. The first two phases were simple, rectangular structures of timber above the grave; the third was a rectangular oratory of stone erected about the middle of the 5th century and preserving no detail that is undoubtedly Christian.

Lullingstone, Kent,15 the site of the third ‘church’ that has to be considered, was a wealthy Roman villa, with a history going back to the 1st century of our era. The building was reconstructed with a substantial dwelling-house towards the end of the 2nd century and the central part was again remodelled soon after 300; a date c. 330 is suggested in the report. The main room at this date was apsidal with mosaics shewing the Rape of Europa and Bellerophon spearing the Chimera. About 350 or a little later two rooms at the N. end of the villa were decorated with Christian paintings. Together with a vestibule formed out of the corridor, they constituted a separate suite cut off from the rest of the house by a blocking wall across the corridor and having a separate entrance. The vestibule was, apparently, undecorated. The paintings in the outer room included a large chi-rho with alpha and omega set in a wreath. The inner room had a similar motive on the S. wall and, on the W. wall, a series of figures standing between columns with their hands outstretched in prayer—typical Christian orantes.16 These orantes were richly dressed in robes with pearled borders; some stand in front of curtains. The outer room, corresponding to the narthex, measured 16 ft. by 10 ft.; the inner room was about 15 ft. wide and probably some 20 ft. long; the E. wall lay beyond the limits of the excavation.

It is difficult to imagine Lullingstone in its rural setting as a normal congregational church—the domus Dei of the texts, which may be compared with the 3rd-century example at Dura,17 the much later example at Merida18 or the early Roman tituli. Professor Toynbee19 has already suggested that the rooms may have formed an oratory for ‘family prayers’, citing the sacrarium on one of the estates owned by Ausonius in Aquitaine.20 But this hardly explains the separation of the rooms from the main part of the house; they were meant to be visited from outside. The provision of an oratory with an antechapel, or narthex, links the suite at Lullingstone with the two buildings already considered and leads to the conclusion that the ‘church’ at Lullingstone was also a memoria or martyrium. Nor is such a conclusion unlikely. A small suburban villa formed the core of the great Christian cemetery at Manastirine,21 outside the walls of Salona. In the same context one may note the 4th-century Christian inscriptions found in the fortified

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16 E.g. the female figure in stage 3 of the Catacomb of Trasone at Rome in O. Marucchi, Le Catacombe romane (Roma, 1933), p. 448.
21 Forschungen in Salona, II (Vienna, 1926), 9–10 and 49–1.
farmhouse at Msuufin, Henschir Taglissi, in the western Djebel of Tripolitania. The house had been rebuilt in the 4th century and, though lack of full excavation makes it impossible to determine the exact function, it seems probable that here again was a memoria, comparable to the memoriae apostolorum found dispersed through the Donatist areas of Numidia and Mauretania.

One other building must be considered in this context—the ruined parish church of Stone, near Faversham, Kent. This stands beside, possibly within, a large Roman cemetery, alongside the road from Canterbury to London. The core of the building, the western part of the late medieval chancel, is the base of a tomb of a type used for inhumations. On technical grounds the structure with courses of tile and sandstone may be assigned to the 4th century. It was substantially built, probably with a vaulted roof, and is the kind of tomb that might have been erected for the 4th-century owner of the villa at Lullingstone. Two sherds of early Saxon pottery indicate the continued frequentation of the site. The discovery of an early 8th-century sceatta 'suggests', to quote the excavators, 'something more than a casual loss . . . . it would be better explained as a religious offering'. In the 11th century Stone was a church under the minster of Teynham, subsequently acquiring parochial status. Here there is strong, though not conclusive, evidence of continuity between Roman Britain and Saxon and medieval England. If this be accepted, there is at Stone an example of the classic sequence—memoria (or martyrium), locus sanctus, and parish church—found on many continental sites. It is the only example from Saxon England known to me, for which an arguable case can be made out.

It is the churches, in the narrower sense, the liturgical halls for the celebration of the Eucharist, the domus Dei, which were the spiritual and administrative centres of the Christian communities, that are lacking. Perhaps it would be more correct to say have not been recognized as such. This was implicit in my contribution to the Nottingham symposium on Christianity in Britain. I will briefly recall what I said on that occasion in respect of the continental material. The Christian church of the early period was essentially a house—the residence of the bishop or of a community of clergy, perhaps the dwelling of a wealthy sympathizer—in which a room or rooms were used or set aside for liturgical purposes: the celebration of the Eucharist, the Ministry of the Word and Baptism are the vital offices. It also formed the centre to which the Christian community looked for the regulation of its affairs. As a house the plan is seldom recognizable; the identification of the church depends on non-architectural evidence—continuous Christian tradition, paintings and mosaics are the most important. It is not until after the Peace of the Church (313) that distinctively Christian buildings, recognizable as such on architectural evidence, begin to arise. In transalpine Europe they do not seem to have penetrated beyond the greater cities before the end of the 4th century. Trier is the most important centre in this area and even at this

23 Archaeologia, xcv (1953), 37-43.
24 J. Rom. Studies, xxx (1940), 32-49.
26 ChrB, pp. 19-36.
imperial capital the purely architectural evidence only becomes conclusive about 400. The masonry synthronon, which is common in churches under the influence of Aquileia, does not seem to have been adopted in the north-west.

There can be no doubt that churches, either houses in which rooms were used or set aside for liturgical purposes or halls of assembly for service, existed in Roman Britain. British bishops were present at the Council of Arles as early as 314. And, though the list as it stands is corrupt, a cogent argument based on Gaulish practice has been put forward to the effect that the ecclesiastics listed represented the metropolitan sees of the four Diocletianic provinces—London, York, Lincoln (or Colchester) and Cirencester, the last represented by a priest and a deacon in the absence of the bishop. Bishops imply cathedrals and churches. But, in the absence of continuous tradition, or of a fortunate accident preserving paintings or mosaics, it is difficult to identify them. The early churches were essentially domic­tic in character and there are no architectural criteria, on which it is possible to rely. It would be tedious to discuss the matter in detail; one example will suffice. The excavators of House xxii n at Caerwent conclude their account thus:

'The plan of the group formed by Rooms 1, 2, 6, 7, 10 and 11 resembles somewhat that of an early church, but it would be very rash to assert that it was such a building.' Ignoramus et ignorabimus.

This is not the place to re-examine the mosaics with Christian elements like the head of Christ at Hinton St. Mary or the chi-rho at Frampton. These motives are clearly Christian in inspiration, but they occur alongside normal classical themes. Eclecticism of this kind is implicit in the outlook of the generation of Ausonius and lasted far longer. The Christ at Hinton St. Mary tells us little or nothing of the outlook of the villa owner. At most it shews that Christianity and Christian emblems had become respectable among the potentes of the last age of Roman Britain.

The cemeteries tell us equally little. Several tombstones—a very short list hardly reaching double figures—have been claimed as Christian on the basis of phrases or formulae. The same examples appear in many contexts and special pleading has been used in more than one case to justify even a colourable pretext for calling an inscription Christian. The D(is) M(anibus) of the stone from Horraby Hill, Carlisle, was put on in the mason’s yard and was in any case not repugnant to Christian thought. Anima innocentissima claimed as Christian on the stone of Simplicia Florentina at York also occurs on undoubted pagan stones. Again it is no more than a further example of the eclecticism of the 4th century. Non uno itinere potest perveniri ad tam grande secretum, where not all would have shared the lofty and idealistic conservativism of Symmachus. The point that I would make is that, apart from the dubious phraseology, all these inscriptions fall into the

17 NAD, pp. 366–79; cf. in particular figs. 3 and 5.
18 Labbe, op. cit. in note 8, II, 476–7.
20 Archaeologia, lxii (1911), 411–12.
22 RCHM: Dorset, i (1952), 150; Toynbee, no. 199.
24 ChrB, pp. 52–3; RCHM: York, i (1962), 130; RIB, no. 690.
normal Romano-British series. They have the same formal layout, the same masoned frames and the same architectural and sculptural setting. They belong to the common form of provincial classical art and culture and, like the mosaics, left no living tradition to pass beyond the disasters of the 5th century.

These Romano-British tombstones lead directly to the next most important early Christian series in Britain—the Celtic Christian inscriptions in Latin. These inscriptions have been discussed more than once: it is generally agreed that they date from the 5th, 6th, 7th and possibly the 8th centuries and that the lettering shows a gradual development with forms derived from book hands replacing the purely epigraphic letters of classical monumental origin. The inscriptions are generally cut on upright pillar-stones, the earlier often roughly squared with dressed faces. Examples like the Cunaeide stone at Hayle in Cornwall, the Rastaecce stone at Llanerfyl in Montgomeryshire or the Latinus stone at Whithorn in Galloway date from the 5th century. The inscription is cut in horizontal lines in poor Roman capitals. The monuments have little in common with the architectural layout and the formal monumental character of the normal Romano-British tombstone. If a comparison with Romano-British inscriptions is to be made it must be with the milestones, which the early Christian series resembles both in form and in the roughness of the lettering. The lettering, in particular, may be compared with examples of milestones found in the military zone in the north and in Wales. These were the models which the craftsmen, who probably derived their skills from the Roman army, were capable of imitating for their new masters—the ecclesiastics and chieftains of the successor states, which had become responsible for the administration and defence of large areas that had formerly been part of the frontier.

The distribution of these Latin inscriptions is exclusively western and northern. There are in round figures about fifty in the south-western peninsula, including five not altogether typical at Wareham, Dorset. Wales has nearly one hundred and fifty and southern Scotland and the Borders about a dozen. It is only rarely that they are found on Romano-British sites and such discoveries are probably fortuitous. A single example must suffice. The Roman Wall was abandoned at the end of the 4th century; the Brigomaglos stone found near Chesterholm dates from c. 500. Wareham is perhaps more significant. There was an extensive Romano-British occupation on the site, which included at least one building of distinction. But the earliest of the Christian inscriptions belongs to c. 600 or the 7th century and two are on reused architectural members of Roman buildings; they afford no basis for suggesting a direct derivation from civilized

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35 RCAM(W): Anglesey (1937), xciv-cxvii; ECMW, pp. 3-16; Jackson, pp. 149-93.
36 V.C.H., Cornwall, 1 (1906), 420 (under St. Erth); CIIC, no. 479.
37 ECMW, no. 294; CIIC, no. 421.
39 E.g. RIB, nos. 2254 (with Christian inscription on back), 2256 (both Wales) 2233 (Cornwall), 2279 and 2285 (northern).
40 RIB, p. 541; ChrB, p. 52; CIIC, no. 498.
Romano-British models and could be more cogently used as evidence for the take-over of east Dorset by the rulers of the western borderlands.

It has seemed necessary to discuss at some length the relationship between the Romano-British monumental stones and the early Christian series of inscriptions. The problem of the contribution of 4th-century Christianity in Britain to the formation of the later Celtic churches has long been a matter of debate. When I first discussed the origin and dating of these inscriptions in 1937, I felt that the only relevant comparisons were with the continental material of the same date; the Romano-British church had contributed nothing of significance. On reflection I see no reason to change my opinion. The limited technical contribution that I have outlined above is all that I would concede and even this is perhaps going too far. The general spread of classical technology into the borderlands may well have accompanied rather than preceded the spread of Christianity. But the dynamic of Christianity as illustrated by this, the oldest insular series, is inspired by contemporary continental sources and not by the dying church of the potentes of 4th-century Britain.

The earliest of the inscriptions date, as has already been stated, from the 5th century. Technically they may derive in part from the late Roman milestones. But their content—generally no more than a name, often accompanied by a patronymic and a very simple formula, such as hic iacet—represents a reduction of the memorial to the barest essentials, which can only be paralleled on the contemporary Christian memorials of the continent. Gradually the horizontal lines give way to a vertical set-out with the lines reading downwards—a purely insular development. How far this change is due to convenience—the greater ease of arranging the lines vertically when they are cut on a long pillar-stone needs no elaboration—and how far it is due to the influence of the Irish oghams must remain a matter for discussion. Ogham is a cipher based on the Latin alphabet. The letters are indicated by strokes, long or short, set either at right angles or obliquely to a stem line, which in the British series is normally formed by the arris of the stone. British ogham inscriptions are normally bilingual, with the name in the British form in Latin letters and in the Irish form in ogham. They are concentrated in the western peninsulas of Wales and Cornwall and spread out from these centres. The Latin versions show that their range in Britain covers the same period as the Latin series.

The Roman capitals of the earliest Christian inscriptions are in time replaced by letter forms drawn from other sources. There is no sudden change, but individual letters are substituted, the new forms intruding into the older alphabet. Historically the most important change is the introduction of letters drawn from the semi-uncial book hand, which had already developed on the continent as early as the beginning of the 5th century. A good example of this period is the manuscript of the Pauline epistles, of which the greater part now surviving forms St. Gallen no. 1395. Of this manuscript E. A. Lowe concludes: ‘written in Italy,
possibly during the lifetime of St. Jerome, to judge from the palaeography.’ Other manuscripts in this hand date from the later 5th, 6th and 7th centuries. In Britain the memorial to St. Sadwrn (Sadwrn Farchog) on the stone at Llansadwrn in Anglesey is an early example shewing the influence of this script; it may be dated c. 520-40, as he was a contemporary of St. Illtyd, who died about 540.

The latest inscriptions in this Christian series use only semi-uncial or similar or derived forms and may most conveniently be described as inscriptions in insular majuscule. This is a book hand derived from semi-uncial and incorporating some uncial forms. It is used in both Britain and Ireland and in Irish foundations on the continent, such as Bobbio and Echternach. The Cathach of St. Columba, now in the library of the Royal Irish Academy, is the earliest surviving manuscript in this hand. Traditionally this is the volume which gave rise to the battle of Cul Dremhne (561) and the exile of St. Columba. The story has been regarded with scepticism, but—to quote Lowe once more: ‘the early date for the Irish majuscule MS. is palaeographically possible.’ Among the British inscriptions which illustrate this stage is the memorial to King Cadfan of Gwynedd at Llangadwaladr in Anglesey; he died c. 625.

This whole series—the earliest archaeological post-Roman series in Britain—is insular, influenced continuously by contemporary continental practice. The only contribution from Roman Britain—and the extent of this is doubtful—lies in the technological field and is derived from the military frontier, rather than the old civil province south and east of the great legionary fortresses of York, Chester and Caerleon. The series bears out the traditional account of the conversion of Celtic Britain by missionaries trained on the continent and lends no support to the contrary thesis that the insular Celtic churches were the offspring of Roman Britain.

The evidence discussed above is borne out by the ceramic series. This is not the place to discuss native British wares, which are small in quantity and poor in quality. In this field there may again have been a certain technological contribution from Roman Britain. But the whole evidence is hard to discern and difficult to interpret. It is the imported pottery that is of interest in the present context.

The latest series of imported pottery that can be identified in Roman Britain is Argonne ware, once better known as Marne ware. Its import dates from the late 4th and 5th centuries. Argonne ware is found on many normal Romano-British sites, e.g. London, Cirencester, Wroxeter and York, to take names at random from the published distribution-list. Beyond the line of the three great legionary bases—York, Chester and Caerleon—only a few strays are recorded, including a fragment from Moel Ffennili, a hill-fort on the Clwydian hills, between Denbighshire and Flintshire, and another from the Keil cave in Kintyre, Argyll.

The first of these is of more than passing interest. The hill-fort bears the name of the tyrant Benlli, who opposed St. Garmon and was destroyed by fire from

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44 RCAM(W): Anglesey (1937), cix; CJIC, no. 323; ECMW, no. 32.
45 CLA, ii (1935), no. 266.
46 RCAM(W): Anglesey (1937), civ-cv; CJIC, no. 970; ECMW, no. 13.
47 G. Chenet, La Céramique gallo-romaine d’Argonne du iv' siècle et la terre sigillée décorée à la molette (Mâcon, 1941), pp. 147-8.
heaven. His dynasty was replaced by Cadell, the ancestor of the later kings of Powys, who had befriended the saint. St. Garmon or Harmon, a local saint enshrined in the toponymy of Powys, was later confused with St. Germanus of Auxerre who visited Britain in 429 to combat Pelagianism. The legend, as transmitted by Nennius, is a wild mixture of miracle and folklore, which probably embellishes the record of a real conflict in the troubled sub-Roman age; the chance discovery of the sherd at least shews the probability that the traditional site was occupied by a man of some standing at the time indicated. This is a digression; my real object is to shew that Argonne ware represents a Romano-British distribution-pattern—albeit a restricted one—appropriate to the last age of Roman Britain and, incidentally, to provide slight archaeological support for the derivation of Powys from the pagenses of Wroxeter.

The next important ceramic series in Britain are those generally known as 'A' and 'B' wares, from the letters allotted in my provisional publication of the early medieval pottery found at Tintagel, a Celtic monastery on the N. Cornish coast. Both fabrics are of east Mediterranean origin. A strong case has been made for identifying 'A' ware (or some varieties) with 'late Roman C', which has been dated in its country of origin c. 425-c. 600. The insular distribution of these two types is confined to western Britain and to Ireland. Among the more notable British sites are Tintagel itself, a Celtic monastery, South Cadbury in Somerset, a pre-Roman hill-fort massively refortified at this date and long associated with the name of Arthur, Dinas Powys, near Cardiff, a defended secular residence of some importance, and Cadbury Castle, Congresbury, in north Somerset, traditionally the site of a British bishopric. 'A' ware is a fine table-ware, occasionally impressed with Christian emblems on the base of the wide, shallow dishes. 'B' ware is coarser—amphorae and similar vessels. Both have a comparable origin and dating and a similar distribution-pattern in Britain.

The British distribution of these two series corresponds closely to that of the early Christian inscriptions in Latin; the Irish distribution is comparable with that of the related inscriptions in ogham (p. 9). This pattern has no connexion with or derivation from Roman Britain as the term is generally understood. It illustrates the wider connexions of insular Celtic Christianity through the Atlantic seaways, which had regained their importance when the barbarian invasions swept across Gaul and cut the normal cross-channel routes to the Mediterranean lands. They draw attention to the fact that these connexions were seaborne.

The theme of this address has been Christian origins in Britain. It has been an attempt to analyse the relevant archaeological material and to shew what light it throws on the much discussed question of the inspiration behind the insular Celtic churches. This material is not the only factor in a full assessment of the

question, but it is, in my view, a very important element in that assessment. It shews that in this field, at least, Roman Britain made no significant contribution to the rise of the insular churches in the 5th century.

It will perhaps be objected that the address contains no discussion of the architecture of the British and Irish churches. *De non existentibus et de non apparentibus idem est ratio.* Perhaps a future age will reveal the secrets of the buildings in which the British and Irish congregations of the first Christian centuries worshipped. St. Wilfrid, when endowing the church of Ripon in 670, spoke of the holy places (*loca sancta*) which the British clergy had deserted and which had been taken over by the Northumbrians. None that are certainly of early date have yet come to light. The earliest that we know are simple, rectangular oratories and few if any of these are likely to be earlier than the 7th century. A discussion of the genesis of insular Celtic ecclesiastical architecture would go far beyond any legitimate interpretation of the title of this address.

**ABBREVIATIONS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Source</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ChrB</td>
<td><em>Christianity in Britain</em>, 300-700, ed. M. W. Barley and R. P. C. Hanson (Leicester, 1968).</td>
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<tr>
<td>CLA</td>
<td>E. A. Lowe, <em>Codices Latini Antiquiores</em>.</td>
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<tr>
<td>MGH:AA</td>
<td><em>Monumenta Germaniae Historica: Auctores Antiquissimi</em>.</td>
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<tr>
<td>MGH:SRM</td>
<td><em>Monumenta Germaniae Historica: Scriptores Rerum Merovingicarum</em>.</td>
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<tr>
<td>RGAM(W)</td>
<td>Royal Commission on Historical Monuments in Wales and Monmouthshire.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RCHM</td>
<td>Royal Commission on Historical Monuments in England.</td>
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56 *Vita Wilfridi episcopi auctore Eddio Stephano*, cap. xvii (Rolls Series, lxxi, 1879), p. 25.