CHAPTER 5

Anglo-Saxon churches and their interpretative relationship with Rome

In turning to consider the public art of architecture in Anglo-Saxon England, it is necessary to contextualize the study of the early ecclesiastical buildings and to examine those churches for which it is possible, relevant and meaningful to draw parallels with the architecture of Roman churches and the imagery of Rome/*Romanitas*, so to assess the importance of 'Rome' in Anglo-Saxon England. This will be achieved by focusing on structures and settings (both locally and regionally) of church buildings in relation to ideas of 'Romanness'. Currently the study of the material remains of Anglo-Saxon churches – archaeologically, architecturally and historically – has concentrated mainly on the analysis of details: this has proven a useful and almost always indispensable approach that nevertheless, regardless of the scholarly perspectives (formalistic, topographical, iconographical), often lacks appreciation of the wider context. Here instead, attention to details will provide only a starting point, something essential but constraining, which will be used like an inverted funnel in the process of considering how the concept of 'Romanness' can serve as a guiding principle through the scholarly precedents. In this more holistic approach *Romanitas* can be taken as a common denominator to make sense of the different shapes, settings, meanings and intentions.

5.1 Critique of scholarly approaches to the study of Anglo-Saxon churches

The study of Anglo-Saxon church architecture is a field of scholarship that only fairly recently has acquired autonomous status, one not confined to archaeological surveys and excavation, and one that strongly benefits from an interdisciplinary approach.[1] To understand the importance of these developments and identify possible new directions in the study, it is useful to outline briefly the main approaches and schools of thoughts in this area.

[1] See for instance R. Morris, *Churches in the Landscape*, London 1989.

Any such review must necessarily begin with the Harold and Joan Taylor's *Anglo-Saxon Architecture*, published in the 1960s.[2] This magisterial work offers – after a brief description of the main 'features' of Anglo-Saxon churches – a detailed, systematic survey of over 400 buildings, arranged alphabetically, complete with plans, measurements and further bibliography. These are followed in the third volume by the architectural details, being identified separately and discussed at greater length, to provide a classification that takes account of regional variations and groupings, in order to explain or suggest the dating of the ecclesiastical structures under consideration. The importance of a work of such scope and accessibility is hard to exaggerate.[3] At the same time, especially when excavations and surveys have been carried out on individual churches subsequent to the Taylors' publication, it is often the case that their conclusions have (not surprisingly) been contradicted or superseded. Thus, the canon of Anglo-Saxon churches is constantly being elaborated and knowledge of the subject expanded. Furthermore, this kind of approach raises one main problem: in its overall attempt to classify and provide a general key to understanding all Anglo-Saxon architecture, the perception of the all-important and sometimes very specific geographical and historical elements underpinning the existence of each structure can be easily underestimated.

One early study that takes this into account is Eric Fletcher's work on the early Kentish churches, published in 1965,[4] which objected to the possibility 'that pre-Conquest architecture can be studied as if it has some organic unity';[5] in response, it offered a regional study based on a limited number of buildings. Fletcher regarded the conclusions originating from this study to be exemplary, not for Anglo-Saxon architecture specifically, but for the light they could shed

[2] H.M. Taylor and J. Taylor, *Anglo-Saxon Architecture*, Cambridge 1965, vols. 1-2; vol. 3 appeared only in 1978, edited by H.M. Taylor only.

[3] It has yet to be attempted for Scotland, for instance, and has only recently been attempted for a discrete region of Ireland (Tomas Ó Carragáin, *Pre-Romanesque Churches in Ireland: Interpreting Archaeological Regionalisms*, unpub. Ph.D. thesis, University of Cork, 2002; and his forthcoming book *Churches in Early Medieval Ireland. Architecture, Ritual and Memory*, 2010).

[4] E. Fletcher, 'Early Kentish Churches' in *Medieval Archaeology* 9 (1965), pp. 16-31.

[5] Id., p. 16.

on their historical and ecclesiastical backgrounds, and on architecture more generally. While this highlights one of the consequences of a national study, the tendency to lose sight of the way in which Anglo-Saxon architecture can be, and perhaps has to be, considered concurrently within the history of early medieval architecture *tout court*,[6] Fletcher's interest in the wider context nevertheless resulted in his denying the early Kentish churches any relevance in the subsequent development of Anglo-Saxon architecture.[7]

Thus, an approach focusing on regional studies, based on the historical background of the various regions of Anglo-Saxon England – for example Kent, Mercia or Northumbria – can be extremely fruitful, although archaeological features relating to the materials used to construct and decorate the buildings also need to be taken in consideration, while bearing in mind that these can be circumstantial features related to factors such as the presence or absence of certain materials. Richard Morris's *Churches in the Landscape*, provides a clear example of just such a study. Here, the topographical context of the buildings is placed at the forefront: their location in relation to the ideas of patronage and patterns of Christianization forming one of the primary considerations. The Roman background of Anglo-Saxon England is taken into account, as well as the differences between a predominantly urban landscape versus a primarily rural one. Here, it is interesting to note that in Anglo-Saxon England, and especially in the early phases of 're-conversion', there seems to have been little need to accommodate pre-existing local cults or martyrdom locations,[8] meaning

[6] Without necessarily having to find models for it on the Continent. See R. Gem in 'Church buildings: cultural location and meaning' in *Church Archaeology: research directions for the future,* J. Blair & C. Pyrah (eds), CBA Research Report 104 (York 1996), p. 5: 'Yet Anglo-Saxon architecture is sometimes discussed as though it were isolated from these currents and could be studied in a self-contained compartment. This must not be allowed to happen.' Gem's discussion then goes on to suggest the contribution of Anglo-Saxon architecture and art in the creation and development of the Carolingian 'style'.

[7] 'Although Kent is thus limited in the contributions it makes of our knowledge of Anglo-Saxon characteristics, it compensates by providing a group of churches which, while not relevant to the subsequent development of Anglo-Saxon buildings in general, are of outstanding interest for the study of Christian architecture in the 7th century and for the historical problems associated with the missions…'. Fletcher, 'Early Kentish Churches', p. 17.

[8] Compare instead with Rome, see supra, ch.1 & 2.

churches could be more freely established, following 'the interests or aspirations of the individuals, families or groups'.[9] Nevertheless, as will be discussed later, despite this 'wider choice of holy sites', locations negotiating churches and pre-existing Roman structures of various types are very frequent and ideologically significant.

Morris also suggests that pre-existing British monasticism (as opposed to Anglo-Saxon) had roots in the behaviour of late-Roman landowners and nobility.[10] Drawing an analogy with Gaul, he postulated a distribution of early monastic centres juxtaposed to late-Roman residences of high status. This was confirmed by several examples in Wales, the Cotswolds, Somerset, Dorset, and interestingly introduces patterns of royal-ecclesiastical patronage to be found in other regions of England. At the same time, however, the apparent need for comparison does hinder the very positive aspects of this perspective: models and similarities, mostly of 'continental' origin, are too often invoked for Anglo-Saxon churches along with historical-political background for their establishment. This has its drawbacks: the date of the continental 'parallels' can prove restraining for the Anglo-Saxon buildings, and more local and regional influences that might have played a part in their design are ignored.[11] Here, the problem of dating needs to be further expanded.

In response to such studies, the importance of providing architectural or artistic elements that can be dated is clearly expressed by Richard Gem: 'without chronology we cannot make comparisons; without comparisons we cannot discern patterns; and without patterns there is no comprehensible history'.[12] He continues with a useful review of the scholarly approaches,

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[9] Morris, *Churches in the Landscape*, p. 102.

[10] Id., pp. 97-102; see also supra, ch.1.

[11] See for instance and J. Blair, , 'Anglo-Saxon minsters: a topographical review' in *Pastoral Care Before the Parish*, J. Blair & R. Sharpe (eds), Leicester 1992, pp. 226-66; C.E. Fernie, *The Architecture of the Anglo-Saxons*, London 1983, pp. 45-6; R. Gem (ed.), *St Augustine's Abbey, Canterbury*, London 1997, p. 92.

[12] R. Gem, 'ABC: How Should we Periodize Anglo-Saxon Architecture?' in *The Anglo-Saxon church: papers on history, architecture and archaeology in honour of Dr H. M. Taylor*, L.A.S. Butler & R.K. Morris (eds), CBA Research Report 60 (London 1986), p. 146.

focusing on the difference between deductive or inductive reasoning, before extrapolating 'cultural paradigms' to establish those patterns deemed essential to gaining an understanding of a given period. What is notable here is the stress he places on the interaction between different cultural areas to define a period, and the need to be consistent in using comparable categories to describe effectively the characteristic of a certain time in history. We cannot move freely from political to historical, from architectural to ecclesiastical, in the hope of finding elements that would fit into our 'pattern': it is necessary to postulate such patterns only when the coincidence of different areas allows it. At the same time it is possible to suggest that cultural areas dynamically influence each other, intensifying their similarities.[13]

This said, the typological or formalistic approach – exemplified by the Taylors' work – often seems to foreground dating issues, even when making full use of regional case-studies, thus overlooking other, equally important, aspects. Nevertheless, the field of church archaeology proved and still proves to be a rich and dynamic area of research, often questioning and redefining itself and recognizing the paramount importance of working in a close relationship with different disciplines.[14]

One of the more notable instances of this in recent scholarship is the role that church architecture has played within the so-called 'minster debate', allowing very different conclusions depending on which scholarly perspective is applied, in a discussion that has primarily involved ecclesiastical (as opposed to architectural) historians.[15] As will become clear, the consequences of the

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[13] 'Culture forms an integrated whole and different branches of one culture will tend to fall into similar patterns of historical development', Gem, 'ABC', p. 152.

[14] *The Archaeological study of churches*, P. Addyman & R. Morris (eds), CBA Research Report 13 (1976); *The Anglo-Saxon church: papers on history, architecture and archaeology in honour of Dr H. M. Taylor*, L.A.S. Butler & R.K. Morris (eds), CBA Research Report 60 (London 1986); W. Rodwell, *The Archaeology of churches*, Stroud 2005 (first ed. 1981).

[15] See E. Cambridge, 'The early church in Co. Durham: a reassessment' in *Journal of the British Archaeological Association* 137 (1984), pp. 65-85; A. Thacker, 'Monks, preaching and pastoral care in early Anglo-Saxon England'; S. Foot, 'Anglo-Saxon minsters: a review of terminology'; C. Cubitt, 'Pastoral care and conciliar canons: the provisions of the 747 Council of *Clofesho*' and Blair, 'Anglo-Saxon minsters'; all in *Pastoral Care Before the Parish*, J. Blair & R. Sharpe (eds),

architectural debate are such that addressing the question from a single disciplinary point of view can be misleading.

The origins of the 'minster debate' rest in a regional case-study on the early churches of Co. Durham, approached through the lens of topography and church archaeology.[16] Subsequently the investigation expanded and the origins of the tenth-century's 'mother churches' have been pushed back to the monastic organization of the earliest ecclesiastical structures of Anglo-Saxon England.[17] Further elements in the debate focus on terminology,[18] and more widely on pastoral care and ecclesiastical organization between monastic and non-monastic communities.[19] As often noted, the word 'minster' chosen to define the problem presents some inherent ambiguities: derived from the Old English *mynster*, in turn originating from the Latin *monasterium*, the term suffers from both the later association of the word 'minster' in modern English with episcopal centres (such as 'York Minster'), and connotations with the contemporary idea of a monastery and its contemplative and regularly organized life.[20]

More generally, however, two main problems can be identified with this discussion. First, is the quest for a model or pattern that would encompass regional and ecclesiastical diversities, which in this case, as much as in the traditional classification seen in the work of the Taylors, tends – even when legitimately admitting the existence of identifiable patterns – to intentionally

Leicester 1992; see also, E. Cambridge & D. Rollason, 'Debate: The pastoral organization of the Anglo-Saxon Church: a review of the 'Minster Hypothesis'and J. Blair, 'Debate: Ecclesiastical organization and pastoral care in Anglo-Saxon England', both in *Early Medieval Europe* 4 (1995), pp.87-104 and 193-212.

[16] Cambridge, 'Early church in Co. Durham', is the essential work in the identification of the role of sculpture and the association between the importance of a site and production of sculpture.

[17] The most significant proponent of this approach is John Blair, although his views have softened considerably, see his most recent work *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*, Oxford 2005; see for example p. 5 of his Introduction.

[18] Foot, 'Anglo-Saxon minsters'.

[19] Thacker, 'Monks', and Cubitt, 'Pastoral care'.

[20] Foot, 'Anglo-Saxon minsters', pp. 214ff. I personally do not want to use the word 'minster', in order to avoid generating confusion. A definition like 'religious community' seems more appropriate, because it includes both monks and clergy.

seek models and patterns. Second, is the attempt to apply a reverse and somehow conservative chronology, interpreting tenth- to twelfth-century information as a positive and evolving outcome of the situation in the preceding centuries; this leads to a teleological approach that can ignore the specificity of each period while also excluding Anglo-Saxon England from the larger network of mutual influences and exchanges with the rest of continental Europe at that time.

A further limitation of the 'minster-debate', when applied to architectural studies, is the desire for uniformity expressed in the contemporary sources, which means, in effect, Bede.[21] It has been repeatedly underlined that Bede's cultural background was extremely privileged, and that his life-long experience in one of the intellectually and materially richest religious communities of his time will have affected his point of view, giving him a strict and theologically advanced view of religious life that might not necessarily correspond to a more general situation in seventh-to eighth-century Anglo-Saxon England. With this in mind, Bede's stress on uniformity and reforms may itself suggest it was advocated because it was not achieved.[22]

Nevertheless, 'a strong sense of corporate identity' of 'monastic' families or *parochiae* cannot be denied,[23] and this is probably one of the most interesting and fruitful aspects that can be applied to the study of church-buildings from the 'minster debate'. Their topographical gathering in 'clusters'[24] and the possible identification of communal elements in the construction or decoration of buildings and production of sculpture – as noted by Cambridge – can successfully complement the historical components of the 'minster-debate' analysis. Moreover, examination of terminology in relation to the nature or function of the religious community can be pushed further to define the

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[21] See Blair's objections in 'Debate', pp. 194-5, 207-9.

[22] Although the Canons of Clofesho of 747 seem to be inspired by Bede's view or at least overlap with his 'school of thought'. See Cubitt, 'Pastoral care'.

[23] Thacker, 'Monks', p. 150.

[24] An example of the terminology introduced by Foot, see in particular her *Monastic life in Anglo-Saxon England, c. 600-900,* Cambridge 2006.

function and aspect of the buildings where these communities lived and worked. To sum up, as made clear in particular by both Cubitt and Foot, it is diversity rather than uniformity that has to be pursued in the scholarship, thus the use of regional studies seems the most reasonable option, bearing in mind the activity and influence of interregional and intercontinental travellers and founders on different areas.[25] In all these approaches, despite church buildings being examined in great detail, the underlying ideas of *Romanitas* in Anglo-Saxon ecclesiastical architecture are rarely considered.

5.2 An iconography of architecture and the idea of *Romanitas*

Another line of research is that which pursues the doctrinal and theological meaning of a church building and the projection or influence of that church – intended as a community – on society, rather than the classification or descriptive analysis of buildings and sites.[26] Here, the main idea addressed is the question of 'symbolic content or significance' of a building.[27] As Gem has made clear, the study of a church includes several aspects that need to be considered in close association with practical function, such as symbolic meaning and aesthetic choices. Once it is acknowledged that style and iconography draw heavily on social and cultural constructs, then these are the aspects that need to be identified and investigated in order to allow a real understanding of a monument consisting of a 'multiplicity' of cross-influencing factors.[28] Of these, the imitation of Rome and more generally the idea of *Romanitas* have often been invoked, which is of particular interest here, bearing in mind that the notion of *renovatio* is not a re-establishment of the past but its re-interpretation.

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[25] For instance the foundations in Northumbria of Benedict Biscop and Wilfrid, or the Columbans/Irish foundations in current Scotland, Gaul and Italy.

[26] See R. Gem, 'Church buildings: cultural location and meaning' in *Church Archaeology: research directions for the future*, J. Blair & C. Pyrah (eds), CBA Research Report 104 (York 1996), pp. 1-6.

[27] R. Krautheimer, 'Introduction to an "Iconography of Mediaeval Architecture"' in *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 5 (1942), p. 1.

[28] Gem, 'Church buildings', p. 3.

Having said this, some preliminary observations are necessary. First of all, when considering imitation in the field of early medieval Anglo-Saxon architecture, any 'comparison' between buildings has to be based on 'medieval' criteria, rather than modern ones; only then it will be possible to identify the models, the inspiration and the subsequent process of filiation. Medieval imitation had a very distinct nature and the relationship between original and copy did not automatically imply or necessitate precision: depictions, images and descriptions could be easily perceived as 'distorted' to the modern eye, but they still served their purpose as references to specific models or ideas.[29] Even just one element could suffice to build the idea of imitation. So elements can be isolated, taken out of their original context, 'reshuffled'[30] and then re-arranged in a new combination that, albeit with some difficulties, can be seen as 'copies'. When this happens a prominent element can become self-sufficient in indicating the model and – in an architectural synecdoche – one part (altar, chancel arch, columns, dedication) becomes equivalent to the entire model (or even a plurality of models).[31] Furthermore, it is important to bear in mind that this apparent vagueness and 'indifference towards pure imitation' did not subtract from the conceptual significance of imitation itself.[32] It is therefore the act of imitation itself that needs to be explained – why it occurred in the first place – in order to clarify the different layers of meaning present in the concept of the *imitatio Romae* and its particular ideological value in Anglo-Saxon England.

A reminder of the origin of this concept in the field of Anglo-Saxon studies can be helpful. As always, Bede provides a useful starting point, and there are at least two instances in his works where the phrase '*iuxta more Romanorum*' is associated with the building of churches.[33] But this selection can be slightly

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[29] Krautheimer, 'Introduction to an "Iconography', p. 7.

[30] Id., p. 13.

[31] Id., p. 15.

[32] Id., p. 6.

[33] Bede, *Historia Abbatum* (Plummer ed.), ch. 5, p. 368: 'Benedictus oceano transmisso Gallias petens, cementarios qui lapideam sibi aecclesiam iuxta Romanorum quem semper amabat

misleading. It has been suggested, again following Bede's account, that when dealing with architectural descriptions, the 'Roman custom' simply meant 'stone buildings' as opposed to the '*more Scottorum*', the Irish custom, that implied timber constructions.[34] However, this does not explain why in both these cases it is explicitly specified that the churches were built of stone (*ecclesiam lapideam*/*ecclesiam de lapide*); this would not have been necessary if the equation 'Roman custom = stone' was obvious.

At the same time Bede uses similar expressions in very different contexts, with a much wider and flexible meaning: for example the laws of Æthelbert of Kent are described as being issued '*iuxta exempla Romanorum*'.[35] This could refer generally to the tradition of the Church of Rome;[36] or to the Christian customs of other regions or people.[37] In one particular case the expression is used almost to equate the liturgical custom of the Roman Church with that of the newly established Church in Kent.[38]

Another related issue is the assumption that building churches in stone required skilled labour not available in Anglo-Saxon England: in fact, the only mention of this appears to be that in Bede's account of Benedict Biscop's establishment of the monastery at Wearmouth, for which it is recorded that he

morem facerent, postulavit, accepit, adtulit.' HE, V.21, p. 532: 'Sed et architectos sibi mitti petit, qui iuxta morem Romanorum ecclesiam de lapide in gente ipsius facerent, promittens hanc in honorem beati apostolorum principis dedicandam; se quoqe ipsum cum suis omnibus morem sanctae Romanae et apostolicae ecclesiae semper imitaturum'.

[34] HE, III.25, p. 294: 'in insula Lindisfarnensi fecit ecclesiam episcopali sedi congruam, quam tamen more Scottorum non de lapide sed de robore secto totam conposuit atque harundine texit'.

[35] HE, II.5, p. 150: 'inter cetera bona quae genti suae consulendo conferebat, etiam decreta illi iudiciorum iuxta exempla Romanorum cum consilio sapientium constituit'.

[36] For instance, HE, II.2, p. 138: 'iuxta morem sanctae Romanae et apostolicae ecclesiae', referred to the administration of Baptism. HE, II.4, p. 146: 'iuxta morem universalis ecclesiae', referred to the Church of the Britons and the Irish; HE, V.19, p. 522: ' pascha catholicum ceterosque ritus canonicos iuxta Romanae et apostolicae ecclesiae consuetudinem recipere', referred to the Roman Easter and other canonical rites.

[37] HE, III.18, p. 268: 'eisque pedagogos ac magistros iuxta morem Cantuariorum acceperat', referred to Bishop Felix. HE, III.23, p. 288: 'et religiosis moribus iuxta ritus Lindisfarnensium...instituit', referred to the establishment of the monastery at Lastingham by Bishop Cedd. HE, III.26, p. 308: 'iuxta morem provinciae illius (Scottorum) coronam tonsurae ecclesiasticae', referring to Bishop Tuda.

[38] HE, II.20, p. 206: 'etiam magister ecclesiasticae cantionis iuxta morem Romanorum sive Cantuariorum multis coepit existere', referred to James the deacon at York.

obtained builders from Gaul.[39] For no other church is it specified where the workers came from, and stone churches were definitely built by Wilfrid at York, Ripon and Hexham;[40] of Wilfrid it is said that he returned from the court of Egbert of Kent with singers, masons and artisans.[41]

Thus, it seems reasonable to conclude that there was more to the idea of Rome than the simple materiality of stone churches, even according to the ubiquitous Bede. At the same time it is necessary to bear in mind that 'Rome' could easily mean Gaul or even Kent, while in turn whenever mentioning 'continental influence' it is misleading to think automatically of Gaul/Francia and not to include Rome.[42] As a consequence, the concept of '*more Romanorum*' needs to be expanded to a much wider idea of *Romanitas*, and what this could and would entail.

Here, it would be useful to introduce the understanding of *Romanitas* as adaptable and flexible, given the distinctive nature of the Roman past of Anglo-Saxon England, which was such that the visible and documented heritage of Rome in the region was not necessarily uniform; as a consequence its subsequent developments and reinterpretations were somehow open to negotiation. There is no single model of *Romanitas* to look for, but there are many different ways in which inspiration and ideological meanings could be appropriated and expressed, according to what was built or decorated (be it a church building, a free-standing or funerary monument, buildings pertaining to a religious community), where these were situated (Kent, for instance, being

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[39] See supra, fn. 33.

[40] See infra, pp. 225-9.

[41] This can suggest that they were native of Kent, although it cannot be excluded that they came from Gaul or Italy.

[42] See R. Cramp, 'The Anglo-Saxons and Rome' in *Transactions of the Architectural and Archaeological Society of Durham and Northumberland* n.s. 3 (1974), pp. 27-37; R. Gem, 'Towards an Iconography of Anglo-Saxon Architecture' in *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institute* 46 (1983), pp. 1-18; J. Hawkes, '*Iuxta Morem Romanorum*: Stone and Sculpture in Anglo-Saxon England' in *Anglo-Saxon Styles*, C.E. Karkov & G. Hardin Brown (eds), Albany 2003, pp. 69-99. It seems misleading to think of Continental and Mediterranean as two distinct and separate entities and influences. In addition, the paradigm Rome = Gaul has been used to look at (later) Carolingian churches to demonstrate the Roman/Gallic nature of the Anglo-Saxon buildings.

very different from Northumbria) and who was responsible for the projects (in other words, the patrons).

Although imitation of Rome was mainly promoted from an ecclesiastical point of view, and as such it is often invoked as the basis of the ideological or religious controversies of 'Irish versus Romani', it is also essential to remember that the sixth-century Christian mission did not arrive in a cultural vacuum, and the written sources (often produced from a very distant situation, both in time and space, and rarely having first-hand experience), were primarily concerned with proving their point of view which was, generally speaking, a specific ideological one. Reality and ways of accommodating very diverse backgrounds can prove to be much more varied.[43]

But what did 'Rome' really mean? It was clearly not a geographical concept; rather it was understood as a spiritual, theological nation. As noted, the idea of Rome included both the imperial and the apostolic focus of Christianity, from the heart of which the missionary Church could reach the margins of the world. The symbolic authority once emanating from Rome to the periphery of the Empire corresponded neatly to the Christian, catholic (universal) authority that again had Rome at its centre, as a 'cultural capital'.[44] Bede's view of Anglo-Saxon history was clearly 'Rome-centric' and was almost embedded in a well-defined scheme that had Roman history as its common denominator.[45]

Thus, 'Romanness' could be understood as the expression of a symbolic continuity – 'through stone the outpost of the empire was being redefined'[46] – but also through dedications, the choice of sites, or the ideological meaning of transforming a building or an area into 'Rome'; for example, when the religious community at Ripon was handed over to Wilfrid, turning from Columban to

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[43] See supra, ch.4.

[44] N. Howe, 'Rome: Capital of Anglo-Saxon England' in *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 34 (2004), pp. 147-72, esp. pp. 155-7.

[45] Id., p. 149; see also supra, pp. 7-9.

[46] Hawkes, '*Iuxta Morem Romanorum*', p. 87.

Roman,[47] or the way in which the crosses at Ruthwell, Bewcastle and Rothbury are set almost on a line that echoes Hadrian's Wall, possibly conveying the idea of claiming back former Roman territories, or establishing a new Roman boundary versus foreign, non-Christian lands or powers.[48] Regarding such multiple renditions of the idea of *Romanitas*, it could even be suggested that the openness (or vagueness) in proposing and then interpreting models, even when not intentional, could lead to multiple readings by medieval audiences, hence allowing a much wider understanding of the object under examination.

Several reasons can therefore be posited for an apparent lack of meticulous reproduction: it was the concept that mattered, and that could be conveyed through different styles, scale and media. Adopting a more conceptual approach in finding the reasons and ways behind the imitation can help to move away from analysing and appreciating the imitation *per se*.

Finally, in analysing the concept of an Anglo-Saxon *Romanitas*, scholars have correctly identified different sources of inspiration, although it seems this has been pursued once again in the search for specific models, and attempts to extrapolate the more 'native' elements in Anglo-Saxon art, supposedly distinct from the attempt at imitating, for example, the more Mediterranean, naturalistic, figural art.[49] Thus, the fact that it is a fusion of all these strands, which created a unique and vernacular Anglo-Saxon art, can be overlooked. The original achievement of the *Romanitas* expressed visually in early medieval Anglo-Saxon England needs to be emphasized, pursuing further the hypothetical understanding that Anglo-Saxon church architecture might have developed by means of creating original features and patterns, adapting models, finding inspiration in them, but not necessarily copying them in detail. Once the 'inspiration' and symbolic intentions are determined it is relevant to

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[47] Id., p. 73.

[48] Id., pp. 82-3.

[49] See the summary provided in J. Hawkes, 'Anglo-Saxon *Romanitas*: The Transmission and Use of Early Christian Art in Anglo-Saxon England' in *Freedom of Movement in the Middle Ages. Proceedings of the 2003 Harlaxton Symposium*, P. Horden (ed.), Donington 2007, pp. 19-36.

examine processes of autonomous interpretation of architectural structures or elements of decoration, without being compelled to find an external origin for each single feature of a church or monument. Lastly, when considering sources of inspiration, it is worth asking if they were drawn from the latest trends in building (the most recently built churches) or those forming the 'collective imagination' of ecclesiastics coming from or travelling to Rome (those churches with a more long-standing past or tradition), or arguably a combination of both.

5.3 Roman architectural features in Anglo-Saxon churches: a process and a path

With this in mind, it is necessary to clarify the types of evidence that can be taken into account and how they have been interpreted in the scholarship to substantiate the 'Roman' nature of some Anglo-Saxon buildings or architectural elements. Evidence of Roman influence seems very slight if it is based only on documentary sources containing written references or descriptions of churches. While in Bede and Stephen of Ripon's accounts it is possible to find details or summary descriptions of Wearmouth and Jarrow, Hexham and Ripon, York and a few other churches, here such mentions are usually made to provide information concerning the real focus of the narrative, be that a miracle, a change of leadership or authority within a religious community, or a particularly important and symbolically charged ceremony.[50] It is exceedingly rare that a description of church architecture will be given *per se*, and even if this happens it does not necessarily correspond to a surviving church, and nor is the description such that it provides significant architectural detail.[51] Furthermore, it is often the case that, when the churches mentioned or

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[50] For instance, Stephen's account of both the restoration of the church at York, and the establishment of Ripon are imbued with Old Testament references, and can be interpreted as a reflection of Wilfrid's increasing power; see *Vita Wilfridi*, chapts. 16-17, pp. 32-7. Similarly, Bede's account of the events surrounding the battle of Heavenfield and the death of Oswald, includes references to churches, which are instrumental to the introduction of miracles and relics: see HE, III.2, pp. 216-9; HE, III.6, p. 230; HE, III.9-13, pp. 240-55.

[51] See for instance the discussion of Hexham, infra, fn 53.

described in the sources are excavated, the structures thus revealed do not always correspond with the documentary accounts.

For example, in the case of the monastery at Wearmouth, the material evidence seems, at least in part, to confirm Bede's account, while his information on the church at Jarrow has not been completely confirmed by the excavations.[52] Another example is offered by Wilfrid's foundations at Ripon and Hexham, where only the crypts have survived: the temptation to make the scanty remains identified in the excavations coincide with the description of the two churches provided by Stephen can be very strong, although not necessarily fruitful, in particular when considering that the crypts are not even mentioned in his account. In part this seems to reflect a tendency in the scholarship to focus on textual accounts, probably deemed as being the most telling form of evidence. Certainly Stephen's picture of the church at Hexham, with its unusual stairways, crypts, upper storeys and magnificent size of the building is particularly evocative, but reveals surprisingly little of its architectural nature.[53] Moreover, Hexham's 'crypt', the one element of Wilfrid's church that has survived *in toto*, hardly corresponds to what modern architectural historians would refer to as 'crypts'. Yet, the rarity of such accounts combined with the powerful rhetoric of Stephen's prose, have perhaps helped to perpetuate the impression that there are only a few remaining Anglo-Saxon churches: the 'literary' ones which may (or may not) correspond to surviving structures, and those still completely or partially standing.[54]

While it is true that there are very few standing churches consisting entirely of Anglo-Saxon fabric – and it is interesting to note that one of the most

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[52] For Bede's accounts see *Historia Abbatum* (Plummer ed.), pp. 364, 368, 373, 381-2; on the excavations see R. Cramp, *Wearmouth and Jarrow monastic sites*, 2 vols. Swindon 2005-2006.

[53] *Vita Wilfridi*, ch. 22, pp. 44-6: 'domum Domino in honorem sancti Andreae apostoli fabrefactam fundavit: cuius profunditatem in terra cum domibus mire politis lapidibus fundatam et super terram multiplicem domum columnis variis et porticibus multis suffultam mirabileque longitudine et altitudine murorum ornatam et liniarum variis anfractibus viarum, aliquando sursum, aliquando deorsum per cocleas circumductam, non est meae parvitatis hoc sermon explicare, quod sanctus pontifex noster, a spiritu Dei doctus, opera facere excogitavit, neque enim ullam domum aliam citra Alpes montes talem aedificata audivimus.'

[54] See J. Moreland, *Archaeology and Text*, London 2001.

renowned, St John at Escomb,[55] is not mentioned in contemporary or even later medieval sources – a significant number of medieval churches do incorporate early material, as has been demonstrated by the Taylors' work, while the more recent contributions of church archaeology have considerably expanded our knowledge of Anglo-Saxon architecture.[56] Indeed, the archaeological work has primarily helped to increase our understanding of the buildings' plans, their interaction with pre-existing or subsequent buildings, and often has offered important elements to interpret some of the internal features. This necessarily brings to the forefront the concept of design as the most common and widely researched element to investigate the aspect of a church and consequently its 'influence'.

5.3.1 Design

a) Basilica

The design of a church building can be exemplified most clearly to modern scholars by its plan. Therefore, it seems only fitting to start this overview with the most 'Roman' example of a church, the basilica, although any expectations of locating basilicas in Anglo-Saxon England that replicated the dimensions of the large five-aisled apostolic foundations of Rome (Lateran, 100m long; St Peter's, 123m long; St Paul's, 128m long) will, for the most part, remain unfulfilled (**Pl.8**).

Thus, if dimensions are considered to be the intrinsically defining element of a basilican church, the largest surviving Anglo-Saxon church, at least in terms of overall length, is Cirencester, (Gloucestershire) (**Pl.96**),[57] which – being

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[55] See infra, pp. 219, 231.

[56] See Cramp, *Wearmouth and Jarrow monastic sites*; the excavations at Winchester, led and published by M. Biddle; the excavations at York Minster, led and published by D. Phillips.

[57] Currently dated to the first half of the ninth century, although it could date from as early as the late-seventh century. See Fernie, *Architecture of the Anglo-Saxons*, p. 69 and A.K.B. Evans, 'Cirencester's early church' in *Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Association* 107 (1989), pp. 107-22; for the earlier dating see 'Archaeological evidence for the Anglo-Saxon period' in *Studies in the Archaeology and History of Cirencester*, A. McWhirr (ed.), BAR 30 (1976), pp. 19-45.

only 54m long – still cannot be compared with the apostolic foundations of Rome, but is perhaps more realistically comparable with the *titulus* basilica of Santa Sabina (53m long). Other exceptionally large examples of early Anglo-Saxon churches are found at Brixworth, (Northamptonshire; 33m long)[58] and Hexham, (Northumberland; 30m long)[59] (**Pl.96**): their dimensions can be compared with the Roman martyrial basilicas of S. Lorenzo fuori le Mura (32m long) or Sant'Agnese (30m long). Generally, however, it seems that Anglo-Saxon churches, basilican or otherwise, tend to be much smaller than their Roman counterparts.

The church of All Saints at Brixworth offers the most often cited Anglo-Saxon prototype of the other exemplary feature of a basilica, a central nave flanked by continuous side-aisles. Here, though, even Taylor, in his description of the church, noted that:

> …it is not quite clear whether these side buildings
> were aisles, as at present understood, or a series of
> *porticus*, or side-chapels…[60]

This simply highlights the problem of easy distinction between the spaces, and – as will be further discussed below – those involved in defining and understanding church buildings and their components through their form rather than their use. Nevertheless, it can be suggested that, although visually and architecturally distinct, side aisles and *porticus*/side chapels might have ultimately embodied and performed the same function and fulfilled the same

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[58] The dating swings between 675 and the mid-eighth century. The church at Brixworth has usually been dated according to a twelfth-century source that claimed it was founded by Cuthbald, Abbot of Peterborough, in 675. See Taylor, *Anglo-Saxon Architecture*, pp. 108-14; Fernie, *Architecture of the Anglo-Saxons*, pp. 65-9; D. Parsons, 'St Boniface, *Clofesho*, Brixworth' in *Baukunst des Mittelalters in Europa: H.E. Kubach zum 75. Geburtstag*, F.J. Much (ed.), Stuttgart 1978, pp. 371-84; see also the cautious opinion of B. Cherry, 'Ecclesiastical Architecture' in *The Archaeology of Anglo-Saxon England*, D.M. Wilson (ed.), Cambridge 1976, pp. 171-2.

[59] Dated to 672-78; see infra, pp. 206-7 for further discussion.

[60] Taylor, *Anglo-Saxon Architecture*, p.109. Fernie describes Brixworth quite ambiguously: '…nave divided into four bays by arches…these arches led into flanking spaces divided into porticus'; he placed the church in the chapter devoted to 'The Anglo-Saxon Basilica', but then failed to define the 'flanking spaces' as aisles.

needs, thus allowing the building to be understood by its contemporaries as a 'basilica'.

Unlike Brixworth, the Anglo-Saxon foundation at Cirencester survives only fragmentarily in plan, but it is worth noting, not only for its unique length and proportions, but also for the presence of lateral spaces, possibly strengthening this church's basilican character. It is unclear, however, if these very elongated spaces flanking the central nave were actually accessible from it: they seem rather to have been self-contained chambers, not intercommunicating with each other, and therefore not really forming continuous aisles on both sides of a central space. Regardless of this, the plan is here reminiscent of the Roman circus basilica, at least in its very long and narrow proportions, lacking only the ring corridor around the apse (**Pl.9-10**).[61]

Compared with these impressive counterparts, All Saints at Lydd (Kent) (**Pl.97**), despite lacking the characteristic dimensions of a 'basilican style' church, is perhaps the most unambiguous example of Anglo-Saxon basilica, at least in relation to the presence of side-aisles.[62] The central nave – only 9m long x 5m wide – presents a surviving north wall with three arches that once opened into a lateral space. This suggests the existence of a continuous lateral aisle: although the possibility that it was articulated into a combination of closed and non-communicating *porticus*-like chambers cannot be ruled out, the very small dimensions and the presence of a window above the arches make the first option more likely to explain the surviving layout of this church.[63]

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[61] However, it has been suggested that relying on the plan in order to reconstruct a three-dimensional model of a church can prove misleading. See Lehmann, '"Circus Basilicas", "coemeteria subteglata".

[62] Taylor, *Anglo-Saxon Architecture*, pp. 405-8; E.D.C. Jackson & E. Fletcher, 'The pre-Conquest Basilica at Lydd' in *Journal of the British Archaeological Association* 22 (1959), pp. 42-55 and Id., 'Excavations at the Lydd Basilica, 1966' in *Journal of the British Archaeological Association* 31 (1968), pp. 19-37. Discordant dates have been suggested: Jackson & Fletcher pushed it as early as to presume a 'Romano-British' survival, while Taylor leaned towards a date 'not before the middle of the tenth century' (his main argument being the presence of a double-splayed window), but subsequently agreed with Fletcher.

[63] Either there were two *porticus*, but of different dimensions, or three, resulting in all being very small and their roof covering probably interfering with the window. An aisle seems a much more logical possibility. At Lydd it can also be noted the unusual position of the earlier church

The most recently reconstructed plan of the Anglo-Saxon church of St Andrew at Hexham (**Pl.96-116**), is particularly remarkable when investigating the relationship between the central nave and the lateral aisles.[64] It depicts the church, like that at Lydd, as being flanked by two long and continuous aisles (or *porticus*), with that to the north being narrower than that to the south. However, it is not clear what to make of the elevation of this church, or how to reconstruct the access from the nave into the aisles. What seems to be suggested by the excavation is that the foundations of the southern load-bearing wall of the nave correspond to a solid feature, which was not arcaded.[65] This would contradict the interpretation of St Andrew's as a basilica, following the most traditional definition of the term. However, it would not rule out the possibility of an open connection between the central nave and lateral aisles. These could have been articulated through a sleeper wall with arcading – a layout not identifiable in plan – or with thresholds opening up into side chambers. Another possibility might lie in the presence of arcading only at an upper level; the Wilfridian 'basilica' could have featured *matroneum* – or upper galleries – the 'manifold building above ground supported by various columns' described by Eddius.[66] This arrangement certainly has immediate parallels in Rome: the basilica of S. Lorenzo fuori le mura providing an obvious example, while the basilica of Sant'Agnese might have acted as a source of inspiration chronologically closer to Wilfrid's time (**Pl.34-35**).[67] Built by Pope Honorius (625-38), only a generation before Wilfrid's first visit to Rome, it may well have embodied (to the young pilgrim) the latest architectural style, while also being particularly luxurious,

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in the north-west end corner of the later building, while the most common practice is for the earlier foundation to constitute the chancel of the later one.

[64] See E. Cambridge & A. Williams, 'Hexham Abbey: a review of recent work and its implications' in *Archaeologia Æliana* 5th ser. 23 (1995), pp. 51-138, in particular pp. 72-80.

[65] R. Bailey, 'Seventh-Century Work at Ripon and Hexham' in *The Archaeology of Cathedrals*, T. Tatton-Brown & J. Munby (eds), Oxford 1996, pp. 9-18, esp. p. 14.

[66] See supra, fn 53; suggestion already advanced by Fernie, *Architecture of the Anglo-Saxons*, pp. 61-2.

[67] St Andrew was even larger than Sant'Agnese: 47 x 20 m. versus 30 x 12 m. This would put it closer to the dimensions of Santa Sabina.

prestigious and furthermore associated with the cult of one of the most popular Roman martyrs.

Despite such quandaries regarding the nature of St Andrew's, it has been suggested and seems entirely plausible that, architecturally speaking, the basilica was especially promoted by Wilfrid as a result of his lifelong involvement with ecclesiastical politics, his frequent canonical appeals to Rome (a city that he certainly knew in great depth) and his largely non-monastic milieu and emphasis on the cult of relics, which in seventh-century Rome was focused primarily at the major basilicas outside the walls.[68] As noted,[69] the basilican churches in Rome were mainly prestigious, ceremonial and official buildings, chosen to represent the status achieved by the Christian hierarchies; this would indeed suit Wilfrid's ambitions and achievements. On the other hand, when a church such as that at Lydd is considered, which could be earlier than the Wilfridian foundations, it seems clear that this formal model may not have been 'introduced' by Wilfrid.

Overall, it seems evident that a basilican church in Anglo-Saxon England cannot be described solely on the basis of the presence – or absence – of certain characteristics (large dimensions, side aisles). Furthermore a church might not necessarily feature all the characteristics deemed to define a basilica, and so not be described as such. In such instances the need for classification limits our evaluation of Anglo-Saxon architectural achievements. Denoting a church building as a 'basilica' and so implying that Roman imperially-sponsored churches of the fourth and early-fifth centuries acted as formal model, may not be appropriate in an Anglo-Saxon context, especially when fluctuations of meaning allowed a basilica – even in Rome – to be much more than that: as seen above, influences could have been drawn from the circus basilicas, or the renovated martyrial churches of the late-sixth and early-seventh century. It also needs to be taken into account that the analysis of church plans, although useful,

[68] See supra, ch.2.
[69] See supra, ch.1.

can provide equivocal information, as they cannot detail what the church might have looked like in (isometric) elevation.[70]

Bearing this in mind, it can be noted that all the Anglo-Saxon churches discussed so far offer – in different ways and through the use of different 'basilican' characteristics – patterns of basilican 'style', signifying not a specific and exactly determined form, but multiple aspects, such as function, status, appearance, perception of the space through the careful use of one or more 'basilican' elements. This has been suggested before, most notably by Cherry who underlined how incomplete and often contradictory can be the picture of the 'Anglo-Saxon basilica' presented by the available information, especially when trying to establish an evolutionary history of this building-style, and to define it geographically, chronologically or both. Here, her comments can be expanded to propose that in Anglo-Saxon England the basilica, although having an architectural 'form', was likely understood more as having a 'meaning' in its associated functions, and it did not necessarily require close adherence to a strict Roman model.[71]

If this is the case, it seems now manifest that the churches at Bradwell-on-Sea (Essex) and Reculver (Kent) could also be understood as basilicas (**Pl.98**), although being of quite small dimensions and seemingly lacking the main features of a basilican church, namely the side aisles. Nevertheless, the central nave can certainly be considered a basilican space, with its uninterrupted,

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[70] St Andrew at Hexham can be considered as an example of this difficulty. See also Lehmann, '"Circus Basilicas", "coemeteria subteglata"'.

[71] 'One must conclude that the present state of knowledge on basilican buildings is very unsatisfactory… It is possible to come to very different conclusions on the use of the basilican form in the seventh and eighth centuries. An extreme view is to assume that only in the seventh century was it likely that this Roman type of building would be adopted, and that Wilfrid is the key figure…. At least one aisled building was definitely constructed in the tenth century, the New Minster at Winchester. The other extreme is to see the basilican form as one aspect of the influence of Carolingian architecture, an influence which might possibly have reached England already in the later eighth century, starting with Brixworth. Against this there is the Hexham evidence and the probably early date of Jarrow. A possible view is that the basilican form (probably in a version not very close to Roman buildings) was known throughout the Anglo-Saxon period, but only used occasionally. Why the type should have been chosen for some important churches but not for others has yet to be clarified.' Cherry, 'Ecclesiastical Architecture', p. 173; emphasis mine.

longitudinal axis, focusing on the east end with the imposing triple chancel arch and the distinctive apse beyond.[72] Indeed, at Reculver, the apse was externally polygonal and internally circular, a phenomenon found in Rome at the church of S. Giovanni a Porta Latina.[73]

5.3.1b) Porticus

Having considered some of the problems inherent in the architectural definition of the Anglo-Saxon basilica, it is clear that church plans can also provide information about other aspects of ecclesiastical design: discrete cells, spaces or rooms; the single-cell and two-cell layout.[74]

Considered in this way, the church at Reculver (**Pl.98**), while apparently conforming to some of the formal elements characterising a basilica, could also be described as a church with a single nave enclosed or flanked by *porticus*, multiple cells or lateral chambers. One result of this would be the possible categorisation of Reculver's church within the Taylors' basilica-group or their 'two-cell + adjuncts' group. This underlines the differences rather than the (several) similarities between the two groups, and consequently focuses any discussion only on those churches deemed to relate to Reculver, and only on the basis of the perceived similarities of their plans. While it is certainly possible that a church could be thoroughly and accurately described by means of its

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[72] Reculver could be defined a 'mixed' basilica, as the original plan featured north and south *porticus*/adjuncts rather than continuous lateral aisles, but as two more extra spaces on each side were added at a later stage, it came to resemble a central nave flanked all around by subsidiary spaces. Equally distinctive are the details of the chancel arch and apse.

[73] On apses see Taylor, *Anglo-Saxon Architecture*, pp. 1028-9.

[74] This system seems to be customary in most architectural treatments of Anglo-Saxon churches (see the cited works by Taylors, Cherry, Fernie). Taylor attempted a thorough classification of church plans in order to provide an instrument for extremely synthetic descriptions. Unfortunately, the results seem to be more confusing than helpful, and the fragmentation in numerous subsections somehow fails at conveying a larger picture: any church plan can be ultimately broken down into multiple combination of cells, rooms, or spaces, and a description thus organised denies a church building its individuality of meaning, if not of form, while also limiting possible comparisons or associations with buildings that may have had very little in common with regard only to their plan.

association with one group or another, it is equally likely that one or more buildings would bridge these finite descriptors.

Despite such limitations, it is interesting to consider the apparently ubiquitous role of these adjunct spaces in Anglo-Saxon architecture. In part this can be explained by logistical considerations: they could be easily built at different stages, often added after the construction of the main body of the church, and their modular character allowed great versatility enabling them to serve many functions, the main ones being funerary or liturgical. One of their important features is the point of access, a factor that can shed light on their primary use, and has often been invoked in attempts to categorise the building in question as a basilica or multiple-cell church.

The most often cited and telling examples of this are probably the Augustine mission's foundations at Canterbury (Kent), one of the most important sites for considerations of Anglo-Saxon architecture and Christianity, whose history is well documented by Bede and by several campaigns of archaeological excavations.[75] From these it is known that at least five churches were built or renovated by the missionaries in the first few decades of the seventh century: the Cathedral church of the Holy Saviour,[76] the monastic church dedicated to SS Peter and Paul, two more churches dedicated to St Mary and St Pancras, and the earlier church of St Martin which lies beyond the monastic enclosure (**Pl.99**). In the context of a discussion on adjunct spaces, SS Peter and Paul had two *porticus* to the north and south of the hypothetical apsidal chancel, which probably opened into the chancel itself. Two further *porticus* to the north and south of the central nave, from which they could be

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[75] HE I.26, pp. 76-9; I.33, pp. 114-7; II.3, pp. 142-5 and II.6, pp. 154-7. On Canterbury's Anglo-Saxon churches see Taylor, *Anglo-Saxon Architecture*, pp. 134-48; Id. 'The Anglo-Saxon Cathedral Church at Canterbury' in *Archaeological Journal* 126 (1969), pp. 101-30; R. Gem, 'Reconstructions of St Augustine's Abbey, Canterbury, in the Anglo-Saxon Period' in *St Dunstan, His Life, Times and Cult*, N. Ramsay, M. Sparks & T. Tatton-Brown (eds), Woodbridge 1992, pp. 57-73; Gem (ed.), *St Augustine's Abbey*, esp. Id., *The Anglo-Saxon and Norman churches*, pp. 90-122.

[76] The dedication is notable, see infra, pp. 249-53; the Anglo-Saxon church was modified and completely obliterated after a fire in 1067. Surviving data are limited to literary sources. See in particular the above-cited Gem, 'Reconstructions of St Augustine's Abbey'.

accessed, have been clearly documented by the excavations: their existence and function is supported by Bede's account, who specified Augustine himself was buried in the north 'chapel'[77] with all the succeeding archbishops of Canterbury, while the south chapel was reserved for tombs of the royal family.[78] Further adjuncts followed on the north, south and west face of the church, thus completely enveloping the central nave in a series of rectangular spaces, which were not intercommunicating apart from the two opening onto the narthex, the overall building thus coming to resemble the so-called second stage of Reculver (**Pl.98**). Given the different points of access to the various adjunct spaces at SS Peter and Paul, it may be possible to postulate a function other than funerary for at least the two westernmost ones. It certainly seems that St Pancras presents another configuration of adjunct spaces (**Pl.99**): here, the small and nearly square *porticus* are located centrally to the north, south and west of the nave, with a possible second space at the eastern end of the south side of the nave, overlapping the apse.[79]

Further evidence of adjunct spaces, with a slightly different arrangement, can also be found elsewhere in Anglo-Saxon England, for example at Silchester (Hampshire) (**Pl.100**): here the nave had north and south adjuncts and further square *porticus* flanked the apse, that on the south only accessible from the nave itself, while the north adjuncts were interconnected.[80] Also relevant is the church of St John at Escomb (Co. Durham), often considered an almost

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[77] HE, II.3, p. 142-3: 'mox vero ut dedicate est, intro inlatum et in porticu illius aquilonali decenter sepultum est'.

[78] This appears in the eleventh-century account by Goscelin, see Taylor, *Anglo-Saxon Architecture*, esp. pp. 137ff.

[79] Taylor, *Anglo-Saxon Architecture*, pp. 146-8. Fletcher alludes to a second porch on the south side of the nave at St Pancras, while St Martin seems to have a similar arrangement, as well as Lyminge, which also had a north adjunct entered from the apse; see his 'Early Kentish Churches'. Cherry mentions Lyminge's adjunct as referred by Bede (HE V.23), but it has been impossible to confirm such reference, p.163.

[80] Fernie, *Architecture of the Anglo-Saxons*, p. 44. On Silchester see S.S. Frere, 'The Silchester Church: The Excavation by Sir Ian Richmond in 1961' in *Archaeologia* 105 (1975), pp. 277-97 and A. King, 'The Roman church at Silchester reconsidered' in *Oxford Journal of Archaeology* 2 (1983), pp. 225-37. The dating seems particularly controversial spanning from a temple to a fourth-century Roman church to a seventh-century one.

paradigmatic example of a two-cell building (**Pl.100**). Leaving aside such considerations for the moment, it is worth mentioning that this church, surviving almost intact in its fabric and dated to the late-seventh/eighth century, saw the later addition of a northern *porticus*, communicating into the chancel via an inserted door and possibly built partly in wood; another two-storey adjunct was added to the west wall, but it seems this did not communicate with the nave, but was only accessible from the outside.[81] A similar situation can be observed at Ledsham (W. Yorkshire) (**Pl.100**), where three small square *porticus* were added to the north, south and west sides (cf. St Pancras, Canterbury) at a slightly later stage, although probably planned from the beginning. The western adjunct was in all likelihood a two-storey one, while both the fabric and the surviving chancel arch are reminiscent of Escomb.[82]

Although this fragmentation of the internal spaces of Anglo-Saxon churches tends to be discussed in terms of the architectural classifications established in the scholarship and it is not usually included in this context, the fact is that the multiplicity of possible combinations of cell, spaces and adjuncts is not without parallel in Rome, where a number of buildings provide evidence of a similar adaptability in arranging church spaces. Initially found in civic structures (from which the Christian basilica was, after all, derived), the Maxentian Basilica, a non-Christian public building of the fourth century appropriated by the Emperor Constantine,[83] presents one notable example of a building characterised by the modularity of its square lateral spaces (adjuncts?) (**Pl.2**). Closely related is the basilica Sessoriana, also originally a civic building associated with the imperial family, but which later came to be known as Santa Croce in Gerusalemme; this presents a similar subdivision of the internal space, here transversal rather than longitudinal (**Pl.101**).[84] The Church of Santa

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[81] Taylor, *Anglo-Saxon Architecture*, pp. 234-8; Cherry, 'Ecclesiastical Architecture', p. 164; Fernie, *Architecture of the Anglo-Saxons*, pp. 54-7.

[82] Taylor, *Anglo-Saxon Architecture*, pp. 378-84. Particularly interesting is the tall and narrow south door, now opening into the *porticus*.

[83] See supra p. 20.

[84] See supra, ch.1; see also infra, p. 219 in connection with the triumphal arch and Brixworth.

Pudenziana likewise represents another example in which a pre-existing Roman structure was turned into a prestigious and lavish *titulus* at the turn of the fifth century.[85] Here the transformation of a large courtyard, flanked by a two-storey *porticus* and other buildings on all sides, gave origin to a church composed of several combined spaces (**Pl.101**).

In addition to providing such architectural parallels, other Roman churches can also shed some light on the function of *porticus*: it has often been noted that the north and south *porticus* with access from the sanctuary was inspired by the eastern/byzantine usage of the *diaconicon* and *prothesis*, the former opening into the chancel and the latter into the nave, according to different ecclesiastical and liturgical functions.[86] In Anglo-Saxon England this arrangement seems to have been fully replicated only at Bradwell, although a similar use could also be postulated where only one adjunct is accessible from the chancel, or when both open into the nave. While Fletcher denied that this arrangement was known in Rome, it seems that both the churches of Santa Maria Antiqua and the basilica of S. Pancrazio presented a similar architectural arrangement and so could have inspired and informed Anglo-Saxon choices.[87]

A further attempt at explaining the functions of porticus in Anglo-Saxon churches has been given in a seminal study by Éamonn Ó Carragáin.[88] His analysis opens with Wearmouth where excavations identified a covered walkway connecting the church of St Peter to (possibly) the monastic dormitory (**Pl.102**).[89] Here the practicality of a sheltered passage to reach the church for liturgical services in all weathers was probably combined with a more symbolic meaning, a reference to the covered *porticus* leading to the basilicas of St Peter,

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[85] See supra, pp. 50-51.

[86] Fletcher, 'Early Kentish Churches', pp. 30-1; Cherry, 'Ecclesiastical Architecture', p.163; see also Doig, pp. 54, 77, 80, 102.

[87] San Pancrazio had been recently renovated by the same Pope Honorius mentioned before in connection with Sant'Agnese, Hexham and Wilfrid.

[88] É. Ó Carragáin, 'The Term *Porticus* and *Imitatio Romae* in early Anglo-Saxon England' in *Text and Gloss. Studies in Insular Learning and Literature Presented to Joseph Donovan Pheifer*, H.C. O'Briain, A.M. D'Arcy & J. Scattergood (eds), Dublin 1999, pp. 13-34.

[89] See for example R. Cramp, 'Monastic sites' in *The Archaeology of Anglo-Saxon England*, D.M. Wilson (ed.), Cambridge 1976, pp. 229-34.

St Paul and S. Lorenzo fuori le mura in Rome; in this context a *porticus* was an external architectural element leading to a church. In the case of St Peter's, however, the allusion is more complex and layered, as entrance to the medieval basilica was architecturally announced by a 'quadriporticus', an atrium enclosed on all sides by a continuous covered and arcaded *porticus* (**Pl.102-114**).[90] The westernmost side of the *porticus*, the closest to the actual entrance to the basilica, was a liturgically-charged space, being – from the time of Leo the Great – the resting place of almost all the sixth- and seventh-century popes, including Gregory the Great.[91] Thus, at St Peter's, an external, corridor-like *porticus* led – as in procession – to a transitional, funerary *porticus*, to finally enter a third and final *porticus*, represented by the side aisles of the basilica themselves, where also popes and aristocratic Christians – including Anglo-Saxons – were buried.[92] A further association made by Ó Carragáin is the fact that even the corridors in the catacombs could be termed *porticus*; here it should be noted that another resting place of the first popes was the crypt ('of the popes') in the Catacombs of San Callisto in Rome, a highly revered underground funerary chapel (*porticus*), accessed via corridors (also, *porticus*). With this arrangement transferred above-ground, the act of maintaining the same (albeit confusing) terminology serves to powerfully enhance the symbolic significance of the structures.[93]

Thus, it seems that a *porticus* in Anglo-Saxon England can be understood better in terms of function than form, while the style itself can often be embodied by the function: a corridor or walkway, but also a funerary side-chamber or an entrance-porch could all be '*porticus*', maintaining a certain degree of flexibility in terms of their position and appearance. Indeed,

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[90] Ó Carragáin, 'The Term *Porticus*', p. 19.

[91] The dedication to Gregory of one of the funerary *porticus*/chapel at Canterbury could be reminiscent of this.

[92] The word *porticus* could also be used to describe aisles, as by Paulinus of Nola, see Ó Carragáin, 'The Term *Porticus*', p. 23.

[93] A walkway/corridor can probably be postulated also for Hexham, to the north side of the church; see Cambridge & Williams, 'Hexham Abbey', p. 79. Potentially, a similar interpretation could be given to the Palatine ramp at Santa Maria Antiqua; see supra, ch.4.

classifying architectural elements on the basis of their form, location or name can be both confusing and not necessarily appropriate: while trying to make distinctions it is easy to forget that a multiplicity and conflation of meanings, functions, uses and perceptions were largely admitted in Anglo-Saxon England and somehow probably even preferred to a single reading. The ubiquitous nature of *porticus* in Anglo-Saxon churches cannot be interpreted as an 'incompetent' attempt to build aisles, but rather needs to be understood as an attempt to *re*-interpret and implicate some of the most prestigious churches of early Christian Rome, widely experienced and understood by Anglo-Saxon pilgrims and ecclesiastics alike.

5.3.1c) Centrally-planned churches

Turning from the laterally-planned Anglo-Saxon churches, with their adjunct spaces, to address centrally planned churches, primarily articulated as round buildings, it must be said that there is very little physical evidence for this type of church in the region. That which is perhaps most commonly cited is the church dedicated to Alma Sophia, built in York during the archiepiscopate of Aelberht (767-80). Alcuin's literary account of the church in his poem on the *Bishops, Kings and Saints of the Church of York* hints at a large, centrally planned church, probably with galleries:

> This lofty building, supported by strong columns,
> Themselves bolstering curving arches, gleams
> Inside with fine inlaid ceilings and windows.
> It shines in its beauty, surrounded by many a chapel
> With many galleries in its various quarters,
> And thirty altars decorated with different finery.[94]

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[94] 'Haec nimis alta domus solidis suffulta columnis, suppositae quae stant curvatis arcubus, intus emicat egregiis laquearibus atque fenestris. Pulchraque porticibus fulget circumdata multis, plurima diversis retinens solaria tectis, quae triginta tenet variis ornatibus aras.' Alcuin, *The bishops, kings and saints of York*, P. Godman (ed.), Oxford 1982, pp. 119-21. See also in C. Norton, 'The Anglo-Saxon Cathedral at York and the topography of the Anglian city' in *Journal of the British Archaeological Association* 151 (1998), pp. 1-42.

In his discussion of the present Minster Yard as the site of the original Anglo-Saxon cathedral, Christopher Norton has suggested that the Chapter House may perpetuate the site and plan of the earlier centrally-planned building.[95] One possible continental parallel for the Alma Sophia is a church with the same dedication built in Benevento in the mid-eighth century.[96] However, the unusual aspect of Aelberht's church may well refer to and conflate into a single church the two late-antique *mausolea* extending from the south transept of St Peter's, which were later converted into chapels dedicated to St Andrew and St Petronilla.[97] Such an association, with the site of the Roman basilica of St Peter, would have had particularly strong associations in the context of the Anglo-Saxon cathedral of York, also dedicated to Peter.

Alternatively, another possible precursor of this highly unusual church might lie with the Wilfridian foundation of the now lost church of St Mary at Hexham. Described in the twelfth century, it seems likely that this church was centrally planned and polygonal, if not circular, with galleries or adjuncts at the four corners, almost creating a cruciform plan inscribed within the round.[98] The connection of a *rotunda* type building with a dedication to the Virgin is widely attested: two especially prestigious examples were widely known: the church of the Assumption in Jerusalem, and the Pantheon (Santa Maria ad Martyres) in Rome. Although Gem has suggested several continental sources of inspiration for Wilfrid's St Mary, he did not include Roman examples as potential

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[95] He also suggested that a connection between the church's dedication and the famous library of York, and furthermore Alcuin's involvement in the conception and creation of the church could have played a part in the project for Charlemagne Palatine Chapel at Aachen. Id., p. 23. For a contrary opinion, R. Morris, 'Alcuin, York and the *alma sophia*' in *The Anglo-Saxon church: papers on history, architecture and archaeology in honour of Dr H. M. Taylor*, L.A.S. Butler & R.K. Morris (eds), CBA Research Report 60 (London 1986), pp. 80-9.

[96] See J. Mitchell, 'The church of Santa Sophia at Benevento', Paper delivered at the seminar *The rhetoric of sacred space: Solomon's Temple and the Church of the Holy Wisdom*, York, May 2009.

[97] For some interesting observations between the interplay of Imperial mausolea and the Basilica of St Peter see M. McEvoy, 'The Mausoleum of Honorius: Late Roman Imperial Christianity and the city of Rome in the fifth century', paper delivered at the Conference *Old St Peter's Rome*, British School at Rome, March 2010.

[98] R. Gem, 'Towards an Iconography of Anglo-Saxon Architecture' in *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institute* 46 (1983), pp. 1-18, esp. pp. 11-2.

influences, despite the presence of a number of other centrally planned buildings in early medieval Rome that could have easily performed this role: Santo Stefano Rotondo (consecrated under Pope Simplicius, 468-83), and the mausoleum of Santa Costanza (**Pl.103**). This latter building, linked to the catacombs and basilica complex of Sant'Agnese,[99] would provide even stronger evidence for the idea that the Roman basilica could have served as a model for Wilfrid's church of St Andrew at Hexham, an association in this case emphasized by the juxtaposition of basilica with centrally-planned building.[100]

5.3.2 Internal elements of design

Further to the analysis of church plans, precious evidence of Roman influence at play in Anglo-Saxon England is also offered by some of the internal features in the few standing Anglo-Saxon churches, which can be enhanced by careful examination of elements in the plans or excavations.

5.3.2 a) Arches

Regardless of whether a church building was articulated, as a basilica or with a multiple-cell arrangement, a common – although not indispensable – feature of both designs was a marked separation between the central nave and the chancel (sanctuary), which often ended in an apse. The most common way of accessing this was through a triumphal arch, isolating the sanctuary while at the same time enhancing and leading the longitudinal focus towards the most sacred area of the church.[101] In the early Anglo-Saxon churches the triumphal arch seems to have been a well-developed feature, appearing frequently and with different characteristics.[102]

At the church of St Pancras, Canterbury, there is evidence of a sleeper wall between the nave and chancel supporting three arches, two smaller ones

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[99] See supra, pp. 25-27.
[100] See also supra, pp. 180-2, where discussing the Oratory of the Forty Martyrs.
[101] See supra, pp. 28-31.
[102] For a summary on chancel arches see Taylor, *Anglo-Saxon Architecture*, pp. 785ff.

flanking the large central one, resting on four round columns (**Pl.99**); the remains of the southernmost one are still visible and it has been suggested they might be reused Roman columns (**Pl.104**). A similar solution has been traditionally accepted for SS Peter and Paul, Canterbury; this rests not on archaeological or written evidence but on the basis of marked parallels with the churches at Reculver and Bradwell (**Pl.98**). The mid-seventh-century church of St Mary, Reculver (**Pl.105**) was demolished in 1805,[103] but two centuries later the extant remains defiantly survive and, complemented by some important nineteenth-century drawings, reveal that an imposing triple arcade opened into the sanctuary. Here, two central tall and round columns and two lateral walls created twin narrow openings flanking the wider central one (**Pl.106**).[104] It is perhaps not irrelevant to note that the nearby Roman shore fort of Richborough (Kent) has been identified as the site of an impressively monumental Roman triumphal arch (**Pl.107**).[105] Set right in the centre of the settlement, on a raised platform – the staggering foundations of which are still visible – it stood 25m tall with an opening on each of the four sides: covered in marble and probably decorated with statues,[106] it would have been a prominent and widely visible feature not only in the surrounding landscape but also to those approaching from the sea, as was the church at Reculver.[107] At Bradwell-on-Sea, the mid-seventh-century church of St Peter also presented a triple triumphal arch (**Pl.98-108**): the tall external jambs of it survive and allow a probable reconstruction with three narrow openings of equal width.[108] Other examples can be found at Lydd (**Pl.97**), where a triumphal arch with a single opening has been suggested,

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[103] Taylor, *Anglo-Saxon Architecture*, pp. 503-9.

[104] The two columns survived the slaughter and are housed in the crypt of Canterbury Cathedral.

[105] See S. Harris, *Richborough and Reculver*, English Heritage guide Books, London 2001.

[106] Statues were a prominent feature in triumphal arches, for instance on the Arch of Janus and that of Constantine in Rome.

[107] Unfortunately, it is not possible to assess how much – if any - of the triumphal arch was left and visible in the sixth century, or earlier.

[108] Taylor, *Anglo-Saxon Architecture*, pp. 91-3, dated to the mid to late-seventh century. See also Fletcher, 'Early Kentish Churches' and T. Bell, *The Religious Reuse of Roman Structures in Early Medieval England*, BAR British Series 390, Oxford 2005, p. 196.

while the church of St Mary at Lyminge (Kent)[109] (**Pl.109**) offers evidence for a triple arcade with very narrow lateral arches.[110]

A peculiar triumphal arch setting – possibly explained by the later dating – can also be reconstructed for the church of Brixworth, where a first wall separated the nave from the presbytery and a second, further east, delimited the opening onto the apse (**Pl.96-110**). The first transversal wall has usually been interpreted as having a tall central arch flanked by two openings on each side on two levels, thus resulting in a total of five arched openings.[111] This arrangement seems to have been replicated in the second triumphal arch, leading to the apse which also presented a tall, narrow central arch flanked by two further openings on each side, one set as doorways taking into the crypt and the other at window level. A possible source of inspiration in Rome for this multiplicity of triumphal arches can be found in the transversal triple arched walls inserted into the main room of the basilica Sessoriana when it was turned into the church later known as Santa Croce in Gerusalemme (**Pl.101**).[112] Further Anglo-Saxon examples can also be found in the North, where Escomb (**Pl.100**) features a wonderfully preserved single triumphal arch with particularly tall and narrow proportions (**Pl.111**), and the church of All Saints at Ledsham (West Yorkshire), although much altered, still retains its original chancel arch (very similar to that at Escomb)[113] and preserves also an unusually tall and narrow arched doorway in the south wall.[114]

Fletcher suggested that the triple chancel opening was probably chosen over the single one because it was 'no doubt an easier form of construction than a wide chancel arch, which may have been beyond the capacity of the builders

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[109] Taylor, *Anglo-Saxon Architecture*, pp. 408-9, dated possibly to the first half of the seventh century. See Fletcher, 'Early Kentish Churches' and Bell, *Religious Reuse*, pp. 112-3, 227.

[110] A similar possibility has also been suggested for the church of Rochester, on the basis of Canon Livett's excavation. Taylor's comment is that 'the original excavation report gave no indication of a triple chancel arch', *Anglo-Saxon Architecture*, p. 992.

[111] Taylor, *Anglo-Saxon Architecture* , p. 793; Fernie, *Architecture of the Anglo-Saxons*, pp. 65-6.

[112] See supra, p. 22.

[113] Although the proportions are quite different: Escomb 1.6m x 4.5m; Ledsham 2.4m x 4.5m.

[114] 0.6m x 4.26 m; an explanation for such strange proportions could be found in liturgical needs, such as tall processional crosses; see Taylor, *Anglo-Saxon Architecture*, p. 382.

of these Kentish churches'.[115] While it is true that single-opening triumphal arches in Anglo-Saxon churches have quite tall and narrow proportions (for example at Escomb), they do nevertheless exist, and bear witness to competent engineering in their production and elegance in the results. Furthermore, a triple opening would require a larger amount of building materials and equally skilled work to accurately calculate the span of the openings, in order to provide the arch with the necessary stability, as well as a harmonic effect.

Despite such logistical considerations, the symbolic value of a triple arch cannot be underestimated; it refers back, once again, not only to early Christian architecture, but also (ultimately via those early Christian articulations) to the triumphal arches of imperial architecture. [116] Usually erected by the Senate to celebrate an Emperor's military victory or conquest, triumphal arches were still prominent landmarks in early medieval Rome and one of the most powerfully emblematic area of Rome, the Forum, had no less than three of these monuments. The Arch of Septimius Severus was dedicated in AD 203; it lies on the north side of the Forum, at the foot of the Capitoline hill, and consists of a larger central arched opening, flanked by two smaller and narrower ones (**Pl.5**). Following the via Sacra, which crossed the Forum to the opposite (south) end, is the Arch of Titus (**Pl.112**), erected soon after the Emperor's death (AD 81) to celebrate his capture of Jerusalem (AD 70); this monument had only one central opening and is aligned with the Arch of Septimius Severus (**Pl.112**). Continuing south, just at the edge of the Forum and next to the Colosseum is the Arch of Constantine, oriented on a different axis from the previous two, but still visually connected (**Pl.4-113**). Like the Arch of Septimius Severus, it has three openings: a main central one flanked by two minor ones; it was erected in 316 to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the Emperor's rule. As noted, this was a site of strong Christian focus, with the churches of Santa Maria Antiqua, SS Cosma

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[115] Fletcher, 'Early Kentish Churches', p. 25.
[116] See supra, pp. 21-22.

e Damiano and S. Adriano, just to mention those in the immediate vicinity.[117] It is also worth mentioning that as Constantine was considered, by posterity if not also by his contemporaries, as the founder of the Christian Empire, his triumphal arch was perceived by subsequent generations as a Christian monument, or at least as one whose patron was Christian.[118]

Within a Christian context it has been suggested that Roman triumphal arches likely performed a role in liturgical processions, but even without this practical use, other structures in Rome, being similar in form, although different in function, to triumphal arches would have also figured largely in the Rome experienced by visitors and pilgrims. The Aurelian Walls, for instance had a number of gates, most of which were articulated as a single arched opening within the main fabric of the walls; those on the itineraries leading to the suburban basilicas were obviously particularly important and were thus likely to have been architecturally influential.[119] Another significant parallel can probably be found in the three-opening arched entrance to the 'quadriporticus', the atrium of St Peter; this can also be interpreted as the triumphal way into the sacred precinct of the main apostolic church (**Pl.114-102**).

Regardless of these considerations, the primary influence of Roman triumphal arches on the design of Anglo-Saxon ecclesiastical architecture would have been that mediated by early Christian triumphal apsidal arches that were so prominently articulated in Roman churches. Here, it seems that the standard structure was a single arched opening with a wide span, usually resting only on two narrow sections of transversal wall,[120] although sometimes they were

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[117] The church of S. Clemente is located just beyond Constantine arch, and the foundations on the Celian hill can also be mentioned. See supra, pp. 42-5.

[118] See É. Ó Carragáin, ''Ut poesis pictura': the transformation of the Roman landscape in Botticelli's 'Punishment of Korah'' in *New Offerings, Ancient Treasures: Studies in Medieval Art for George Henderson*, P. Binski & N. William (eds), Stroud 2001, pp. 492-518.

[119] For instance the Porta Nomentana and Tiburtina led to Sant'Agnese and S. Lorenzo fuori le mura; the Porta Asinaria stands right next to the Lateran; the Porta Pinciana led to the via Aurelia (and to the catacombs and basilica of S. Pancrazio); the Porta Latina and Porta Appia still lead towards the via Appia and its main catacombs (S. Callisto, S. Sebastiano); the Porta Ostiense was crossed on the way to the basilica of San Paolo fuori le mura

[120] Like at S. Lorenzo or Sant'Agnese

combined with one column on each side.[121] Even today, the most striking feature of these Roman triumphal arches is the opportunity they offered for surface decoration (mosaic or frescoes). Depending on the proportions, this could present a large, almost rectangular band above the arch itself (in the attic storey),[122] or just the two spandrels of the arch with the much narrower band running over the head of the arch itself (as at Santa Maria Maggiore). Normally the two flanking – and structurally supporting – walls offered little room for decoration that was thus centred on the upper section of the arch, almost creating a frame for the apse: this was ultimately the real focus of the structure, with the arch being somehow a way of introducing the apse and its decoration, while the respective decoration could often constitute a whole, interactive programme.[123]

This interpretation seems valid for almost all the early medieval Roman churches, even those where the decoration of both the triumphal arch and the apse has been lost (as at Santa Sabina). Given that most surviving and reconstructable Anglo-Saxon triumphal arches were chancel arches, rather than functioning as thresholds framing the apse, this might not seem an entirely applicable source of inspiration. Nevertheless, Taylor recognized the strong symbolic function of the chancel arch, pointing out that as the imposing round arch was probably the one defining feature of the space, and framed the action of 'entering' the sanctuary, it adequately performed the same function as the triumphal apse arches, thus providing a further example of the synthetic reading of imitation seen elsewhere in the ecclesiastical architecture of Anglo-Saxon England.[124] The triumphal-chancel arch in Anglo-Saxon churches may

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[121] Like at the Lateran or S. Paolo fuori le mura.

[122] Again, compare with S. Lorenzo or, although reconstructed, S. Paolo fuori le mura.

[123] See for example how the decoration is arranged on the triumphal arch at San Lorenzo fuori le mura, or at Santa Maria Antiqua.

[124] Also, the triumphal (apsidal) arch was the necessary structural threshold to the vault/apse that symbolized Heaven. The choice of building an arched opening (instead of a more practical or easy square, doorway-like one) into the sanctuary in Anglo-Saxon churches, even when they did not feature the vault/apse ending element is a strongly symbolic, and eminently conscious, decision.

not be the large, magnificent gateway to a lavish, highly visible, mosaic-clad apse as it is in the Roman basilicas, but – notwithstanding the more compact proportions – they could still convey a notion of entrance and passage, of threshold to the sanctity of the space. By clearly demarcating a different area of the church, and almost hiding the sanctuary by virtue of their small dimensions, they probably enhanced the spiritual, liturgical separation of the two spaces and the mystery of the ritual enacted there.

5.3.2 b) Liturgical furniture

Nevertheless, in some cases this may not have been the case. The positioning of the altar, or altars, is clearly an important element of the liturgy, but original altars rarely survive and their remains are very difficult to identify. One example that seems to contradict the powerful liturgical significance of the apse-sanctuary area in the Anglo-Saxon church appears at Reculver (**Pl.98**), where the base of an altar has been identified, set on a floor of *opus signinum* in front of the triumphal arch in the nave and not, as might be expected, on the far side of the arch in the apsed sanctuary; this might suggest that it was the east end of the nave that acted as a sanctuary.[125] A similar setting may be observed at Silchester (**Pl.100**),[126] where a square panel in the floor, *c.*1.6m from the west end – which in this case is the apsed end of the sanctuary – preserves a fine mosaic that has been interpreted as the place for an altar. Given that neither the mosaic panel, nor the floor around it, present signs of wear, other than at its eastern edge, this strongly suggests the celebrant was positioned to the east of the hypothetical altar, within the nave. Although objections have been raised to the interpretation of the mosaic as the site of the altar,[127] the evidence seems to

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[125] Fernie, *Architecture of the Anglo-Saxons*, pp. 41-2; Taylor, *Anglo-Saxon Architecture*, p. 508.
[126] See supra, fn. 80.
[127] See King, 'The Roman church at Silchester'.

suggest an arrangement similar to that at Reculver, despite the much smaller dimensions of Silchester.[128]

At Canterbury it has also been suggested that the main altar stood in the east end of the nave of SS Peter and Paul, before the triumphal-chancel arch (**Pl.115**).[129] Here, it has been noted by Fletcher, followed by Fernie, that if the altars stood before the apse, the triple arcade, at Reculver as much as at Canterbury, would have performed the role of a screen, a 'backdrop, a kind of theatrical setting'[130] not unlike the Lateran *fastigium* (**Pl.20**).[131] At Canterbury, in addition to the central altar, it is known from Bede that another altar, dedicated to Pope Gregory, was placed in the bishops' funerary *porticus* (**Pl.115**), to the north of the nave, where Mass was celebrated in their memory each Saturday.[132] Another altar probably existed also in the south *porticus*, where the members of the royal family were buried. This proves the coexistence, within the same church, of more than one altar, possibly corresponding to different functions.[133]

A further element that could have powerful implications for our understanding of Anglo-Saxon liturgical practices that can be inferred from architectural arrangements, has been suggested following the excavations at Hexham, where remains explained as an *ambo* (H in Hodges plan) (**Pl.116**), have

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[128] Although the smaller dimensions are indeed what make this interpretation, as the space around the altar would be greatly limited and make liturgical actions difficult – if not impossible – to perform.

[129] Fletcher also proposed in an earlier hypothesis that the altar was 'on the chord of the apse or slightly within the arch of the apse', 'Early Kentish Churches', p. 26.

[130] Fernie, *Architecture of the Anglo-Saxons*, p. 41.

[131] See supra, pp. 31-35.

[132] HE, II.3, p. 144: 'habet haec in medio pene sui altare in honore beati papae Gregorii dedicatum, in quo per omne sabbatum a presbytero loci illius agendae eorum sollemniter celebrantur'.

[133] An altar seems to have been identified at Winchester, while at Wells there was probably an altar in the burial chapel insisting on the Roman mausoleum. Also needs mentioning the 30 altars of the church of Alma Sophia at York, albeit known only from literary sources. At Hexham the position of the altar in the church has been postulated as right above the crypt: this hypothesis seems strengthened by a post-hole on the centre-line of the crypt and thus presumably on the centre of Wilfrid's nave. Here, it could have held a cross-shaft placed right behind the altar, in turn over the relics in the crypt. See R.N. Bailey & D. O' Sullivan, 'Excavations over St Wilfrid's crypt at Hexham, 1978' in *Archaeologia Æliana* 5th ser. 7 (1979), p. 155. On the number of altars, see the correlation to Santa Maria Antiqua in Gulowsen, 'Some Iconographic Aspects', p. 196, fn. 37.

been uncovered.[134] Here, however, this feature could equally represent a raised walkway – the so-called '*solea*', a common feature in Byzantine-style churches – that led from the nave into the chancel, and marked the direction followed by the Gospel procession during the liturgy of the Mass.[135] Although the *solea* was indeed architecturally and functionally linked to the *ambo*, not all churches had both. As a *solea*, the feature at Hexham would provide yet more evidence of architectural inspiration from Rome, and more specifically with Santa Maria Antiqua, one of the most prestigious churches of seventh and eighth-century Rome,[136] where a *solea* can be postulated, or with Santo Stefano Rotondo, where different flooring patterns also support the existence of a *solea* leading to the main altar (**Pl.117**).[137]

5.3.2 c) Crypts

Another significant and powerfully symbolic architectural element of Anglo-Saxon churches is the crypt, those that formed part of the Wilfridian foundations at Hexham and Ripon being perhaps the best known in the scholarly literature.[138] Indeed the crypt at Ripon is the only surviving element of his church there – despite its omission from the *Vita* – while the crypt at Hexham, seemingly corroborated by a mention in the sources, forms a significant part of the extant evidence of Wilfrid's foundation.[139] As both are thus datable with some certainty, they constitute the most undisturbed pieces of

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[134] R.N. Bailey, 'The Anglo-Saxon Church at Hexham' in *Archaeologia Æliana* 5th ser. 4 (1976), pp. 56-7.

[135] A. Doig, *Liturgy and Architecture: from the Early Church to the Middle Ages*, Aldershot 2008, pp. 61, 63, 68, 72-8, 91-4.

[136] See supra, ch.4.

[137] The liturgical furnishing also provides an appropriate explanation and function for some of the sculptural fragments that abound at both sites. See supra, p. 44 and infra, ch.6.

[138] See supra, pp. 201-3; of course these are not the only surviving Anglo-Saxon crypts, later examples appear at the churches of Repton, Brixworth and Cirencester, but the crypts at Wilfrid's foundations are chronologically the most relevant for the present enquiry and the only ones that can be attributed to a specific time. Bailey, 'Seventh-Century Work', p. 10.

[139] The word used is, quite interestingly, *domus*: '*cum domibus mire politis lapidibus fundatam*'; *Vita Wilfridi*, ch. 22, p. 46. In classical Latin the word *domus* had a wide range of meanings, indicating 'any sort of building or abode', and could be used for example a labyrinth, a sacred grotto, the abode of the Gods, a tomb, only to mention a few examples.

Anglo-Saxon architecture that have survived to the present day.[140] This makes their potential 'Romanness' unequivocally important.

The most significant of all early Christian crypts was that built under the patronage of Gregory the Great at St Peter's to facilitate pilgrims' access to and veneration of the tomb of the Apostle (**Pl.118**). Here the innovative solution adopted was that of an underground ring corridor (accessible from the nave before the altar) that, following the shape of the apse, enclosed the chamber containing the reliquary tomb which was linked to the ring corridor by an axial passage: the faithful would enter from one side, stop before the relics and then proceed, returning to the basilica above. Similar solutions in Rome were adopted at the early seventh-century basilica of S. Pancrazio and, later in the mid-eighth century, at S. Crisogono (**Pl.118**).[141]

Wilfrid's crypts are of course notably different from the Roman ring-crypt, which acted as a powerful prototype throughout Western Europe.[142] At Ripon and Hexham (**Pl.119**) – considered together given their structural and conceptual similarity in plan, proportions and use of materials – the main rectangular and vaulted chamber, presumably containing the relics, was reached via a north and a south corridor, running parallel to the room and then turning at sharp angles towards it. At Ripon the north access develops into a larger ante-chamber that then opens into the relic-chapel, while at Hexham the north passage leads into an ante-chamber constituting a quite separate space that is furthermore accessible via a third western passage. These passages and chambers were once covered with plaster, fragments of which survive at Ripon, and the original lamp-niches – which provided the only source of underground light – are still set into the walls (**Pl.120**). The articulation of the passages

[140] Dates: Ripon (669-78) Hexham (671-73). 'To the visitor these crypts offer a rare experience. Other English churches may contain seventh-century fabric, but only at these two sites it is still possible to stand completely enclosed within walls and roofs built during the first century of English Christianity.' Bailey, 'Seventh-Century Work', p. 9.
[141] See supra, pp. 47-8.
[142] The cathedral church of Canterbury had a ring-crypt, but it is not clear to what phase of construction it belonged.

leading to the relics could reflect liturgical and devotional arrangements: if interpreted following the model of the ring-crypt, one would assume that the crypts had a one way access from the north and once the pilgrims had processed through the main chamber, they would exit via the south passage. At Hexham the presence of a third western access could be explained as a 'refined' setting, so that the pilgrims would not go through the relic-chamber, an act reserved to the clergy who could then have 'private' use of the south corridor.[143] Nevertheless, it has been observed that, at least at Hexham, the south passage probably led outside the church, and that this could also be implied for the north passage, thus complicating such a straightforward reading in the function and use of the different passages.[144] Furthermore, it seems that, superimposing Hodges' plan with the crypt's plan (**Pl.116-119**),[145] the western, central passage would communicate exactly with the spot where the *solea* has been identified: it is unlikely that this was the corridor used by the 'general public', as it was accessed from – or gave access to – a very prominent liturgical location in the basilica.

Regardless of these considerations, and although it is impossible to establish the exact nature of the 'relics' venerated at Ripon and Hexham – one may assume that they came from Rome, or the Continent, given Wilfrid's special connection with those regions – suggestions can be made. In the east wall of the main chamber at Ripon there is an arched, shallow niche, placed quite high in the wall: the ledge and depression in its base are probably not original,[146] but it could safely be interpreted as that which contained the relic(s),

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[143] Possibly leading to an area 'reserved for the clergy', Taylor, *Anglo-Saxon Architecture,* p. 301; see also supra, pp. 181-2 the potential use of the left aisle at Santa Maria Antiqua for the processional of the Great Entrance.

[144] R.N. Bailey *Saint Wilfrid's Crypts at Ripon and Hexham. A visitor's guide*, Newcastle upon Tyne, 1993, p. 11.

[145] Bailey, 'Anglo-Saxon Church', pp. 56-7.

[146] R. Hall, 'Observations in Ripon Cathedral crypt 1989' in *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal* 65 (1993), pp. 39-53.

possibly in a small box, or maybe even – given the size and shape of the niche – a sacred icon from Rome (**Pl.121**). [147]

Despite such speculations, the fact that the crypts at Ripon and Hexham were architecturally dissimilar from the ring-crypt type established in Rome, has led to the formulation of two, equally powerful hypotheses concerning their form and source of inspiration (**Pl.122**). The first lies in the possibility that the crypts had as their model in the tomb of Christ in the church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, while the second looks to the Roman catacombs.[148] Here, underground, winding, dark and narrow corridors lead to larger, better illuminated, rectangular spaces, where the sepulchre, or *memoria*, of martyrs or Popes rested. Often it was necessary to pass through these chambers to continue the underground itineraries and it is worth emphasising once more that at least the first of Wilfrid's experiences of Rome focused exactly on the suburban cemeteries, which in the sixth and seventh centuries presented a close architectural association between catacomb and basilica. At both S. Lorenzo fuori le mura and Sant'Agnese there was direct access into the basilica from the underground corridors, while other examples can probably be found at S. Pancrazio and the basilica of SS Nereo e Achilleo at the catacomb of Domitilla.[149] This interpretation does not necessarily deny the strong metaphorical references to the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem, which are made even more evident by the numerous allusions in the *Vita Wilfridi* to the construction of the Temple and by the portrayal of Wilfrid himself as an Old Testament figure.[150] It has been noticed how the dimensions of the central chamber correspond exactly to those

[147] It is told in the *Vita Wilfridi*, ch. 34, pp. 70-1, how the bishop owned a relic-box, which must have been a fairly small object if, when stolen by Queen Iurminburg, she could wear it as a necklace; on the power of icons, see supra, ch.4; fn 28.

[148] See Bailey, 'Seventh-Century Work', pp. 16-7, suggestions recently re-proposed in *St Wilfrid – a European Anglo-Saxon*, the public lecture opening the *St Wilfrid 1300th Anniversary Conference*, York September 2009.

[149] See supra, p. 64.

[150] See the papers by C. Stancliffe, 'Stephen's *Life of St. Wilfrid* and Bede's Prose *Life of St Cuthbert*'; M. Laynesmith, 'The Britons, the Irish and the Jews: Biblical Typology in Stephen's *Life of Wilfrid* and Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*'; S. Duncan, '*Prophets shining in dark places*: Biblical Themes and Theological Motifs in the *Vita Sancti Wilfridi*'; papers delivered at the MANCASS Conference *Wilfrid, Saint and Bishop: 709-2009*, Manchester April 2009.

of the Tomb of Christ: a complex relationship can be advocated between the tomb (empty but having once contained the body of Christ), the body of Christ (that can be also interpreted as the Church), and the church itself, intended as both building and community of believers. In the church, placed directly above the tomb, the sacrifice of Christ was re-enacted during the liturgy of the Eucharist, and symbolically connected with the empty sepulchre witnessing Christ's resurrection and victory. It is important to note here that these complex interpretations are not mutually exclusive and are furthermore connected with the audience of these monuments. Surely the knowledge of certain elements (such as the symbolic measurements of the central chamber) was deemed important by the patrons, even if they were not immediately visible or known of beyond their immediate circle.[151]

5.3.2 d) *Spolia*

One last observation concerning the internal architectural features of Anglo-Saxon churches can be based on the materials used in the construction of the crypts of Ripon and Hexham: Roman material is reused extensively throughout both structures, including plain dressed stone and, especially at Hexham, tombstones, inscriptions and decorated masonry (**Pl.123**). Bailey argued that the entirety of the crypt was covered by a uniform layer of plaster, thus making the underlying moulding and lettering invisible, while more recently Paul Bidwell suggested that the placing of Roman material in the passages was deliberate and that they could have indeed been veneered with a thin layer of plaster, or even emphasized with the use of gesso or paint.[152] Whether this was indeed the case, it is worth noting that the catacombs, one of the possible sources of inspiration for the Anglo-Saxon crypts, were highly 'written' sites, where most

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[151] An example of this can be seen in the Cuthberth coffin. The iconographical and symbolic connections between crypts and Jerusalem are being currently explored by M. Boulton, *'(Re)building Jerusalem; a conceptual analysis of space in ecclesiastical Anglo-Saxon England'* (PhD) York forthcoming 2011.

[152] Bailey, *Saint Wilfrid's Crypts,* p. 8; see also, P. Bidwell, 'A new survey of the Hexham crypt and the source of its stonework', *St Wilfrid 1300th Anniversary Conference*, York September 2009.

sepulchres were covered by funerary and often decorated inscriptions. In addition, it is also useful to remember the prominent position given to the large, renowned Damasian epigraphs at the most important pilgrimage sites in Rome (**Pl.31**).[153] There is no proof that the Anglo-Saxon crypts were decorated in such a way to make the reused inscriptions visible or hidden from sight, but it is important to underline that the reused material could have been significant even when it was not obvious, or known only to patrons and builders. Certainly the visible reuse of Roman materials in any part of a church building would have created an immediate connection with Rome, as this practice can be witnessed in almost all the churches there.

The scholarly literature on *spolia* is extensive and the debate on their function and meaning informs the word itself chosen to denote this practice: namely, the 'spoils of war' removed from a conquered city to the victorious one.[154] Regardless of the present perception and definition of *spolia*, which is only an interpretation of an action not theoretically explained by its contemporaries, one point seems clear: contrary to the common explanation of *spolia* reflecting the logistics of economy, their use cannot be dismissed solely as a practical necessity in the light of an absence of or difficult access to building materials.[155] It is true that with many of the early Anglo-Saxon churches considered here, like SS Peter and Paul, St Pancras and St Martin's in

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[153] See supra, pp. 61-2.

[154] On *spolia* see: Kinney, '*Spolia. Damnatio* and *renovatio memoriae*'; B. Brenk, Spolia from Constantine to Charlemagne: Aesthetics versus Ideology' in *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 41 (1987), pp. 103-9; B.L. Wohl, 'Constantine's use of *spolia*' in *Late Antiquity: art in context*, J. Fleischer et al. (eds), *Acta Hyperborea* 8 (2001), pp. 85-115; R. Coates-Stephens, 'Epigraphy as *spolia* - the reuse of inscriptions in early medieval buildings' in *Papers of the British School at Rome* 70 (2002), pp. 274-96; H. Saradi, 'The use of ancient spolia in Byzantine monuments: the archaeological and literary evidence' in *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 3 (1997), pp. 395-423; Bosman, *The Power of Tradition*; see also supra, pp. 34-5. The use of *spolia* has been long associated with the intention of appropriating the symbolic associations of the 'spoliated' object, city or people. The metaphor of cannibalism proposed by Brenk is particularly loaded with meaning, while Coates-Stephens discussing the reuse of 'blocks, bricks, tiles' points out 'how all *spolia* can have ideological connotations…regarding the precise source of the re-used materials, rather than such material's intrinsic worth or form', which seems very fitting within an Anglo-Saxon context.

[155] Taylor, *Anglo-Saxon Architecture*, p. 12; Morris, *Churches in the Landscape*, p. 28.

Canterbury, or St Mary, Lyminge, or that at Reculver, the fabric consists almost completely of re-used Roman bricks and tiles. However, the way in which these have been arranged, whether as constituting entire walls (as at St Martin), or decorative or bonding courses (as at Reculver or Brixworth),[156] presupposes a degree of awareness and understanding, not to mention engineering skills, that does not support the view of their reuse merely as easily accessible building material (**Pl.124-125**).[157] This is also true of the church at Escomb (**Pl.126-127**), aptly described by Fernie as having 'walling overall… almost indistinguishable from Roman walls, like those in the amphitheatre at Chester', for here all the stonework was recovered from Roman buildings, and – although it has been suggested that the impressive chancel arch might have belonged in its entirety to a Roman building, and was 'simply' re-erected, an act which would still require remarkable engineering skills – it was used to achieve a building constructed with outstanding architectural uniformity, but nevertheless one of which it has been said: 'No Roman building ever looked quite like Escomb'.[158] With this in mind it is perhaps interesting to add that the analysis of the provenance of the re-used building materials at Brixworth indicates that the first phases of construction can probably be connected with Roman buildings at nearby Leicester rather than the Barnack stone that might be expected from a daughter house of Peterborough:[159] this has not only led to speculations about

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[156] At Brixworth Roman bricks are re-used regularly throughout to create the round arches above doors and window openings; see Taylor, *Anglo-Saxon Architecture*, p. 108ff.

[157] There could also be an element of imitation of Roman structures still *in situ*, like the Roman multangular tower in York, that present clear arrangement of decorative bonding courses in bricks.

[158] Fernie, *Architecture of the Anglo-Saxons*, p. 55. One could also rightly affirm that no Anglo-Saxon church ever looked more Roman, at least if considering the fabric. On the skills required to dismantle and re-use effectively Roman materials, see the paper by Bidwell cited supra, fn. 159.

[159] Historically, Brixworth foundation had associations with Peterborough (based on later written sources) in turn Peterborough having within its privileges ownership of and access to the quarry at Barnack. See Parsons, 'St Boniface', esp. pp. 378-80.

the economies of reuse, but could also shed some light on the motives informing the foundation's patronage.[160]

It is notable that the use of *spolia* in Rome seems to have been more strongly associated with precious decorative architectural materials, such as columns or capitals, than with exterior stonework. Noteworthy examples of this have been seen at Santa Sabina, where a uniform set of columns and capitals, probably 'recovered' from a warehouse, were used (**Pl.21**).[161] At S. Lorenzo fuori le mura the arrangement of the *spolia* is particularly interesting: here the capitals in the nave are all Corinthian, but the two closest to the original triumphal arch (and therefore to the apse-sanctuary) have distinctive '*arma victor*' capitals carved with a composition of winged victories, weapons and trophies (**Pl.128**).[162] This remarkable decoration probably represents a deliberate allusion to the victory over death and the resurrection of Christ re-enacted in the sanctuary at the moment of the Eucharist and framed by the triumphal arch. In the same powerfully symbolic way the two columns at the *matroneum* level, above the narthex, directly opposite the sanctuary, are of black marble and standing on plinths carved with crosses, and the letters A (alpha) and Ω (omega) (**Pl.128**). At an even earlier date, the Constantinian basilica at the Lateran was furnished with a homogeneous set of re-used columns mixed with capitals, also re-used, of different styles and orders.[163] Likewise, at St Peter's, assorted columns, capitals and lintels were re-used, and even the famous twisted and carved columns surrounding the Apostle's 'trophy' were *spolia* from the second-third century. These latter pieces were particularly well known, being associated throughout the middle ages not only with

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[160] It can also be interesting to consider here the concept of 'secondary re-use' when element from the first phases of an Anglo-Saxon church are re-incorporated in the later constructions, for example the scarce fragments of architectural sculpture from Wilfrid's church at Ripon, built in the external face of the north transept, and many others.

[161] See supra, p. 34.

[162] See R. Coates-Stephens, 'Attitudes to *spolia* in some Late Antique texts' in *Theory and Practice in Late Antique Archaeology*, L. Lavan & W. Bowden (eds), Leiden 2003, p. 349.

[163] On the significance on both the *varietas* of colours and styles and the homogeneous arrangement see Kinney, Brenk and Bosman, cited at fn. 161.

Constantine, who donated them, but with the Temple of Solomon from which they were understood (erroneously) to have been taken. A further, more monumental, example of reuse in Rome lies in the establishment of a church within a pre-existing building, in such a way that part of it would represent the structural *spolia* embedded within the fabric of the Christian monument, as for instance at Santa Maria in Cosmedin or S. Angelo in Pescheria (**Pl.63-64**).[164]

Such use of *spolia* in Rome was very common and was, in part, no doubt connected to the large availability of expensive recyclable materials originating from pre-existing building (and also material being used for the first time after being stored for some considerable time in warehouses). Nevertheless an important part of this practice was also the metaphorical meaning these materials acquired which, in being appropriated and given a new and often prominent position within Christian monuments, would have signified the changing status of Christianity itself, replacing that which had gone before, but at the same time establishing a profound sense of continuity with the Roman Empire. Although in Anglo-Saxon England such reuse largely involved building materials, this potential symbolic interpretation cannot be underestimated.

5.3.3 Negotiating locations

With these points in mind, two further aspects of the influence of Rome on Anglo-Saxon architecture and its materials need to be discussed, both of which address the wider issues involved in the articulation of the sites where the churches were erected, rather than further analysis of the buildings themselves.

First, the possibly meaningful relationship between, for example, the churches of St Peter and Alma Sophia at York, or St Andrew and St Mary at Hexham has already been discussed, but this phenomenon naturally raises consideration of those churches, monastic and non-monastic, that demonstrate a close spatial and ideological connection, association or even inter-dependence

[164] See supra, p. 126.

between themselves, to the point that they have been defined as 'families' or 'clusters', both in terms of the individual sites, and more widely in terms of their extended geographies.[165] In some cases such affinities have been supported through the examination of comparable material evidence, in particular the production of sculpture has been used in an important study by Cambridge not only to identify the existence of monastic sites, but to combine them in significant units, 'clusters', often formed only by two-three foundations (Escomb and St Andrew Auckland; Wearmouth, Seaham and Dalton).[166]

In other cases a higher number of churches formed a larger group, focused around a main foundation: it is possible to infer from the written sources that the large mid-seventh century abbey at Whitby (N. Yorkshire) included among its dependencies the monastery at Hackness (N. Yorkshire), probably a nunnery, and its male counterpart at the unidentified site of *Osingadun*.[167] Furthermore, it is known that Hild, before establishing Whitby, was granted land 'north of the river Wear', where it is reasonable to think she founded her first monastic community. She was also chosen to substitute the abbess Heiu of Hartlepool (Co. Durham) upon her retirement, and this foundation's 'mother church' was at nearby Hart (Co. Durham).[168] Hence Hild, through Whitby and her thriving monastic 'family', controlled at least six sites scattered across a 60-mile stretch of coastline. A similar account can probably also be given for the abbey of *Medeshamstede* (Peterborough), and for what has been defined as Wilfrid's 'monastic empire'.[169] Although Whitby and its dependencies also produced a significant wealth of sculpture, contextualised in a study by

[165] See Taylor, *Anglo-Saxon Architecture*, p.1020; W. Rodwell, 'Churches in the Landscape: Aspects of Topography and Planning' in *Studies in Late Anglo-Saxon Settlement*, M.L. Faull (ed.), Oxford 1984, pp. 1-23; Foot, *Monastic life*, esp. chapter 6 and pp. 96-119, esp. pp. 111-3; Blair, 'Anglo-Saxon minsters'.

[166] Cambridge, 'Early Church in Co. Durham'.

[167] HE, IV.23, pp. 405-21; see also Blair, *Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*, pp. 212-4; Cambridge, 'Early Church in Co. Durham', pp. 74, 84.

[168] See Taylor, *Anglo-Saxon Architecture* , pp. 287-9, while Cambridge argues the opposite; see also Cramp, 'Monastic sites', pp. 220ff.

[169] Foot, *Monastic life*, p. 252

Rosemary Cramp,[170] here the concept of 'family' seems to revolve more around the very charismatic figures of the founders or patrons, ecclesiastic as well as lay. In some respects this process is very reminiscent of that found in fourth- and fifth-century Rome, where some of the most powerful and politically charged networks of churches were attached to particularly prestigious founders.[171] Furthermore, 'families' of churches in early medieval Rome were 'strung together', even at considerable distance across the city, by liturgical ceremonies: this is a practice that has often been invoked as a powerful source of inspiration for many of the architectural models, uses and dedications of Anglo-Saxon churches.

Another connection between church buildings is also confined to urban or single monastic contexts, as opposed to the ecclesiastical networks spread over larger areas. As at York and Hexham, this phenomenon can be observed at Jarrow (Tyne & Wear), for instance, [172] where the medieval church of St Paul was on the same axis with a smaller free-standing rectangular chapel standing to the east, which constitutes the chancel of the present church. Here, as well as in the 'twin church' of St Peter, Wearmouth (Tyne & Wear), the subsidiary structures identified by the excavations are in parallel alignment to the main (basilican) churches. A similar arrangement of 'axially-planned church groups' is visible at Lindisfarne, Glastonbury, Winchester, Wells, Gloucester, London, Canterbury, just to mention some examples of this widespread occurrence (**Pl.129**). Further recurring features seem to be the dedication of one of the churches in these 'strings' to St Mary, as well as the fact that these patterns of alignment seem to stem from the adaptation of pre-existing structures.[173]

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[170] R. Cramp, 'A reconsideration of the Monastic Site of Whitby' in *The Age of Migrating Ideas: early medieval art in Northern Britain and Ireland*, R.M. Spearman & J. Higgitt (eds), Edinburgh 1993, pp. 64-73. See also CASSS, vol. 6, discussion of the sculpture at Whitby, p. 231ff.

[171] See supra, pp. 45-56.

[172] The Anglo-Saxon foundations have been identified through excavations. The medieval church was subsequently obliterated by the church built in 1783 and then renovated in 1866. See Cramp, *Wearmouth and Jarrow*, vol. 1, p. 154.

[173] See infra, p. 253.

Here, it is the ways in which these churches interacted with each other on a given site which are important, and especially the reasons potentially lying behind the establishment of the structures. Previous works have underlined that the multiplication of churches can be explained in terms of liturgical and processional needs, but this explanation can be further expanded by consideration of the almost obligatory presence of a church dedicated to Mary as a reference to Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome. This fifth-century basilica on the Esquiline, together with the Lateran and Santa Croce in Gerusalemme, was the focus of the stational liturgy for the main celebrations during both Christmas and Holy Week.[174] In addition, during the seventh century, a process culminating with the papacies of Sergius (686-701) and John VII (705-7) saw the introduction of four other major feasts connected with the cult of the Virgin,[175] thus further promoting worship revolving around the main basilica dedicated to her. With the synthetic effort that seems to characterize so much of the evidence explored so far, the foundation of any Anglo-Saxon church dedicated to St Mary may be seen as the creation of one of the necessary tools to appropriately celebrate the main feasts of the Christian year.

The second aspect that needs to be considered in more depth concerns the understanding of *spolia*: just as building material could be re-used but still retain its symbolic significance associated with the ideology and power of its (Roman) past, so too could locations. This concept is particularly important in an Anglo-Saxon context because it represents an element of 'Romanness' that could be completely autonomous from the design or materiality of the church, and was one that, moreover, can still be recognised in all its meaningfulness, even without the remains of any earlier structures. The sites or pre-existing Roman structures chosen for several of the early Anglo-Saxon churches, and the implications of the geographical appropriation of land have been considered in recent works by Tyler Bell, but tend to be often limited to certain periods or

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[174] Ó Carragáin, *Ritual and the Rood,* pp. 237ff.; Baldovin, *The Urban Character of Christian Worship*; see supra, p. 37.

[175] Purification, Annunciation, Dormition and Nativity. See supra, ch.4.

areas, so that a full picture – or indeed, a sense of continuity and stability in this practice – seems to be lacking.[176] Here, therefore, it will be necessary to discuss how and to what extent, both chronologically and geographically, earlier Romano-British structures may have impacted on the subsequent Christian ones, in a pattern of pervasive and flexible interaction.

5.3.3 a) 'Shore forts'

Among the most visible of the earlier Roman remains in Anglo-Saxon England were the 'Saxon Shore Forts', a series of Roman walled settlements created during the course of the third century.[177] Although the original role of the forts is not clearly defined,[178] Christian activity dating to the post-Roman period has been identified in almost all of them. The architectural design of the churches at Reculver and Bradwell has already been discussed, but they need to be reconsidered here in terms of their location. Reculver was one of the earliest Roman forts: the Anglo-Saxon church was placed almost at the centre (of the fort), on the site of the *principia* (headquarters),[179] resting at the right-angle intersection of the two roads that divided the fort in four square quadrants (**Pl.130**). This position represents one of the two alternatives open to those reclaiming the earlier forts for Anglo-Saxon buildings or settlements. The other, more common, saw the church almost sheltering in one of the corners of the fort, close to the walls. This position may well have been used for a second 'chapel' at Reculver itself,[180] and can be observed for the main churches at Burgh (Castle, Norfolk) and Richborough (**Pl.130**),[181] this last site having already been mentioned in connection with the potential architectural influence of its

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[176] Bell, *The Religious Reuse*; S.E. Rigold, '*Litus Romanum* – the Shore forts as mission stations' in *The Saxon Shore*, D.E. Johnston (ed.), CBA Research Report 18 (1977), pp. 70-5.

[177] See I. Richmond, 'The military area from Severus to Carausius', in *Roman Archaeology and Art. Essays and Studies by Sir Ian Richmond*, P. Salway (ed.), London 1969, esp. p. 40 and fn. 3.

[178] It is not clear if they were primarily defensive, against external attacks (ie. from the sea), or possibly settlements placed at strategic trade/communication position.

[179] Compare with the setting in York, infra, pp. 242-3.

[180] Rigold, '*Litus Romanum*', p. 73

[181] A third possible option is to have the church on one of the fort's gate, like at Bradwell.

Roman triumphal arch, the dimensions of which emphasized the importance of this thriving port and town (**Pl.107**).[182]

Like at Richborough, the locations of the churches at both Minster-in-Sheppey (Kent) and Lydd, although not set within earlier Roman forts, still dominated the coastline, being originally surrounded by water. Elsewhere, Anglo-Saxon churches were connected with different earlier Roman coastal settings and fortified structures, such as coastal watchtowers – as at Seaham (Co. Durham) and Whitby – or the marginal defensive boundaries of Offa's Dyke and Hadrian's Wall.[183]

Among these, the position of the Anglo-Saxon abbey on the East cliff of Whitby is evocative: the existence of a 'lost' Roman signal station here has been suggested on the basis of several factors, convincingly brought together in a study by Tyler Bell.[184] His main argument rests on two very different pieces of evidence: first the practical need of a station at Whitby to guarantee the necessary intervisibility between the previous and following positions (Goldsborough to the north and Ravenscar to the south);[185] and second, as often

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[182] The 'late-Saxon chapel' seems instead to rest on the foundations of a fourth-century Roman building: this and the burial patterns of the nearby cemetery have led scholars to suggest the presence of an earlier wooden church. The presence of a possible baptismal font has also suggested a quite early Christian activity. See Rigold, '*Litus Romanum*', pp. 71-2; Bell, *The Religious Reuse*, p. 233 and the already cited English Heritage guide to Richborough and Reculver. Other sites are Walton, Dover, Burgh, Portchester, Lympne; see Rigold's study for a complete overview. From a slightly different perspective the church at Minster-in-Thanet can as well be relevant in this context: according to the sources it is associated with the first arrival of the Roman mission to the Anglo-Saxon shores. Although the structures on this site do not seem to pertain to such an early stage, the location represents the setting of the first encounter between 'official' Christianity and 'native' one, and it could be particularly significant when considering the kind of landscape associated with the Christian re-conversion offered to both audiences, the Christian missionaries and the soon-to-be kingly patrons.

[183] M. Biddle's comments on this are particularly illuminating: the 'relationship between fort and church and town and village are not invariable, but it is frequent enough to demand explanation'. He then continues with associating this practice with a remarkable degree of continuity specific to area of well-established Romano-British Christianity. M. Biddle 'A widening horizon' in *The Archaeological study of churches*, P. Addyman & R. Morris (eds), CBA Research Report 13 (1976), p. 67.

[184] T. Bell, 'A Roman signal station at Whitby' in *Archaeological Journal* 155 (1998), pp. 303-22.

[185] In order to support this Bell provides topographical and archeological evidence, interesting geological calculations for the coastal erosion and a useful parallel with the site at Scarborough.

happens, Bede provides 'the most suggestive pieces of evidence'.[186] The toponym Whitby is never mentioned in the *Historia Ecclesiastica*, *Streonaeshalch* being the name used for the foundation associated with Hild and the well-known council of 664; this word is explained in Latin by Bede himself as *Sinus Fari*, a lighthouse, beacon or watchtower.[187] Although the coincidence with a metaphorical interpretation of signalling the light of Christianity from this ideologically charged site cannot be underestimated, it is highly possible that the name genuinely originated from the presence of a Roman structure: even if no longer in use or recognizable in Anglo-Saxon times, its origins were nevertheless still correctly understood and valued.

Whether this was indeed the case, close proximity to water certainly reinforced an apparent sense of seclusion often attributed to these sites, despite the fact that the foundations at Whithorn, Iona, Lindisfarne, Ebb's Nook, and also Wearmouth/Jarrow, in seemingly isolated positions, were actually established at the centre of trade routes (Iona) or directly facing royal sites (Lindisfarne/Bamburgh), and so encapsulated two distinct but communicating spheres of influence.[188]

While in Anglo-Saxon England rulers granted the forts to Christian use,[189] in Rome (although, being a city, inherently different in terms of geographical and spatial organization and setting) a similar situation may be found, for example when considering the concession by the reigning emperor to the Pope of the Pantheon and the Curia Senatus to convert them into churches, or the buildings and properties granted by Constantine as the site for the Lateran

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[186] Bell, 'A Roman signal station', p. 394. His position has been contrasted by P.S. Barnwell, L.A.S. Butler & C.J. Dunn, 'The Confusion of Conversion: Streanæshalch, Strensall and Whitby and the Northumbrian Church' in *The Cross Goes North. Processes of Conversion in Northern Europe, AD 300-1300*, M. Carver (ed.), Woodbridge 2005, pp. 311-26, in which Strensall is proposed as a more probable identification of 'Streonaeshalch'.

[187] *HE*, III.25, p. 298: 'in monasterio, quod dicitur Strenaeshalc, quod interpretatur Sinus Fari…synodus fieri'.

[188] Although the practical use of water as a primary means of access and transport cannot be underestimated.

[189] The main source being Bede; see Rigold, '*Litus Romanum*', for individual references to the relevant passages for each church.

basilica.[190] In Anglo-Saxon England the reuse of forts certainly included practical motivations, the most obvious being the availability of a space that would constitute a pre-made enclosure, a feature that so often delimits not only the monastic property, but the sacred precinct as well. While in his work Rigold underlines the inward defensive nature of the early Christian communities settling within former Roman forts, a more outward-looking stance, almost consciously advertising the new active role of Christianity on the island, and even more so along its coasts, cannot be discounted. Similarly, John Blair rules out the possibility that 'churches were built in Roman forts because they shared them with seats of secular power',[191] he nevertheless fails to mention that this could well be the very factor that made those sites so ideologically powerful. The Roman shore forts could be regarded as representing 'heritage sites' of earlier imperial Roman control, authority and settlement, which made them in turn ideal *loci* for the Church to re-appropriate and rearticulate, in a manner analogous to the processes involved in the reuse of material *spolia*.

5.3.3 b) The forum/principia

The ways in which Christian structures encroached on Roman forts also find parallels within more urban settings, where churches were often established at sites corresponding to the *forum,* the heart of a Roman city, or the *principia*, its military equivalent in those settlements that gathered around a legion or garrison.[192] Examples of this practice can be found, among the others, at Lincoln, London, Exeter, St Albans (*Verulamium*) and York.

Lincoln (Lincolnshire) is one of the most notable of these sites: here the foundations of the church now known as St Paul-in-the-Bail lie exactly at the

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[190] See supra, ch.1.

[191] Blair, 'Anglo-Saxon minsters', p. 239.

[192] Morris, *Churches in the Landscape*, p. 37; W. Rodwell, 'The role of the church in the development of Roman and early Anglo-Saxon London' in *In Search of Cult. Archaeological investigations in honour of Philip Ratz*, M. Carver (ed.), Woodbridge 1993, pp. 92-3.

centre of the *forum* and present three subsequent phases (**Pl.131**).[193] The first building is a rectangular structure of the late-Roman period over which, with a slight shift to the east, was built an apsed church dating probably to the seventh century. A very prominent position was given to a grave, placed on the central axis of the nave, just before the point where the nave meets the apse-chancel, possibly corresponding to the position of the altar; this same grave was the focus of a later, smaller structure, maybe a *cella memoria*. Although no remains were recovered from the tomb, perhaps due to an earlier translation, this site certainly preserves an interesting continuity of cult which focused on the centre of the former Roman heart of the city.

A similar pattern can be observed in London, where the church of St Peter, Cornhill was situated within the civic basilica on the north side of the *forum*, respecting very closely the alignment of the Roman structures (**Pl.131**).[194] At St Albans/*Verulamium* (Hertfordshire), the church of St Michael likewise crosses the foundations of the Roman basilica at the north end of the *forum* (**Pl.131**). Elsewhere, at Exeter (Devon) an extensive cemetery, datable from fifth to seventh century, developed in the north-east corner of the *forum*: the earliest burials are aligned with the Roman structures, while the later ones follow a liturgically correct orientation, echoed by that of the later (tenth-century) church dedicated to St Mary, which could suggest the presence of an earlier, similarly oriented church on the same site (**Pl.131**).[195] It has been suggested that these churches encroached upon the Roman civic structures when these were still standing, if not even partially functioning, and they were therefore made an integral part of the new Christian buildings.[196] Such settings would thus

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[193] See B. Gilmour, 'The Anglo-Saxon church at St Paul-in-the-bail, Lincoln' in *Medieval Archaeology* 23 (1979), pp. 214-8; Bell, *Religious Reuse*, pp. 85ff. and p. 223.

[194] Bell, *Religious Reuse*, p. 87; Rodwell, 'Churches in the Landscape', p. 5; Id., 'Role of the church', p. 93; on the churches of London see infra, pp. 244-5.

[195] Bell, *Religious Reuse*, pp. 87, 213; Rodwell, 'Churches in the Landscape', p. 5.

[196] Rodwell, 'Churches in the Landscape'; C.M. Heighway, 'Anglo-Saxon Gloucester to A.D. 1000' in *Studies in Late Anglo-Saxon Settlement*, M.L. Faull (ed.), Oxford 1984, pp. 38-9.

reveal a conscious choice that, as with the Shore forts, 'proclaimed a reclamation of space and the placement of a new, spiritual authority'.[197]

The same can be said of York, where it has been proposed that the church of St Michael le Belfrey occupied a position to the left of the entrance to the courtyard of the Roman *principia*, possibly making use of the stone walls as foundations.[198] Christopher Norton has proposed that the site of the present church was originally that of a bell-house, a role perpetuated by the almost unique dedication. This structure:

> flanking the entrance to the precinct of the cathedral church of St Peter at York might have been a conscious echo of the church of St Peter at Rome, where a tower built by Pope Stephen II (752-7) […] is believed by some scholars to have been located next to the gatehouse to the atrium of St Peter's.[199]

This would certainly represent a powerful set of associations, strengthened by the other evocative connections between the city of Rome and the Anglo-Saxon cathedral of York,[200] and it is not irrelevant to note in this context that representatives of the dioceses of York, London and Lincoln are recorded as having participated in the Constantinian Council of Arles in 314.[201] Memory of such association would certainly confirm the extreme antiquity of the Christian presence in these centres, indirectly supporting the existence of early Christian structures, and also underlining their relevance in the later, Anglo-Saxon campaigns of ecclesiastical establishment.[202]

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[197] Bell, *Religious Reuse*, p. 87.
[198] Norton, 'The Anglo-Saxon Cathedral at York', p. 8.
[199] Ibidem.
[200] See supra, pp. 215-7.
[201] P. Salway, *Roman Britain*, Oxford 1981, p. 340; C. Thomas, *Christianity in Roman Britain to AD 500*, London 1981, p. 197.
[202] Finally, it is interesting to note that once again, Blair provides in his study numerous continental counterparts for this phenomenon, but at the same time he never mentions Rome as a possible comparison, while it is known from several examples that the Forum in Rome was visibly 'Christianized' as early as the sixth century. See supra chapter 1 the examples of SS Cosma e Damiano, Santa Maria Antiqua, S. Adriano, etc.

5.3.3 c) The re-use of Roman buildings and sites (secular/cultic)

The structural and ideological interaction between Anglo-Saxon churches and the pre-existing Roman landscape articulated in the practice of establishing churches within large Roman settlements or incorporating their materials into Christian structures can also be recognised in the frequent appropriation and reuse of earlier buildings.

At Wells (Somerset), a late or sub-Roman mausoleum was the focus of an eighth-century Anglo-Saxon cemetery (**Pl.129**).[203] At some point during the complex and seemingly continuous history of the site, the 'primary' Roman remains were probably translated (to an unknown location) or removed, the mausoleum levelled and replaced by a small burial chapel built over it. This 'single-cell structure' constituted the first nucleus of a church dedicated to St Mary, which was subsequently enlarged and provided with a nave. Here, it is interesting to note that the concentration of tombs around a main sepulchre indicate an early respect or even veneration for it. Although it is impossible to ascertain if the occupants of the mausoleum at Wells were themselves Christian, the Christian character of the subsequent Anglo-Saxon activity suggests they were at least identified as such, even if this indicated no more than a need to control the site from a socio-religious point of view.[204]

A similar practice of functional reuse is also apparent at Gloucester (Gloucestershire), where a local, private cult developing around a Roman villa became the focus of a fifth/sixth-century cemetery which included a subsequent burial chapel-mausoleum built over the domestic structures; this in turn

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[203] Morris, *Churches in the Landscape*, p. 33

[204] Bell, *Religious Reuse*, pp. 80ff. A similar focus on burials not unequivocally identified as Christians has been observed by J. Crook at Marseilles, see his 'The Enshrinement of Local Saints in Francia and England' in *Local Saints and Local Churches in the Early Medieval West*, A. Thacker & R. Sharpe (eds), Oxford 2002, p. 195. The early setting also influenced the subsequent topography of the site, where the alignment of the pre-existing structures was respected by the eighth century church of St Andrew.

evolved into the site of the church of St Mary de Lode,[205] a situation similar to that identified at the church of SS Giovanni e Paolo in Rome.[206]

Elsewhere, at Folkestone, Lyminge or Stone-by-Faversham (all in Kent), early Anglo-Saxon foundations are either mentioned in the sources or postulated to explain the presence of later (tenth century) churches; they all coincide with the presence of earlier Roman structures, which usually took the form of a villa with an attached *mausoleum* or bath-house (**Pl.132a**).[207] The small, independent (self-contained, isolated and autonomous) square or circular structures often became the focus for pre-Christian burials and were subsequently converted to Christian (Romano British?) or Anglo-Saxon use, just as illustrated by St Mary, Wells. The same can be said for Much Wenlock (Shropshire), where a square, niched structure has been excavated in perfect alignment under the crossing of the present, ruined abbey. This building has been interpreted as a Roman (or rather, Romano-British) 'church'; the place-name itself has been suggestively interpreted as referring to a 'white-washed' structure: this would in turn indicate the later conversion (or re-conversion) of a pre-existing building into a church, symbolized by the plastering or repainting of the structure thus remembered in the name.[208]

Evidence for the transition of 'pagan' buildings into Christian ones is also apparent in London, where the remains of an apse – possibly 'the sole remaining portion of a sub-Roman cemetery basilica' – was discovered during the post-war excavations at the church of St Bride (**Pl.132b**), and defined as sub-Roman on the basis of its shape: externally polygonal (canted) and internally

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[205] Bell, *Religious Reuse*, p. 216; Heighway, 'Anglo-Saxon Gloucester', p. 38.

[206] See supra, pp. 42-3.

[207] See Taylor, *Anglo-Saxon Architecture*, pp. 408-9, 575-7; Bell, *Religious Reuse*, pp. 78-83, 112-3, 118-9, 125-6, 169, 227, 240-1; see also S.E. Rigold, 'Roman Folkestone reconsidered' in *Archaeologia Cantiana* 87 (1972), pp. 31-41; H.M. Taylor & D.D. Yonge, 'The Ruined Church at Stone-by-Faversham: a re-assessment' in *Archaeological Journal* 138 (1981), pp. 118-45.

[208] Bell, *Religious Reuse*, p. 118; for a contrasting opinion see M. Biddle & B. Kjøbye-Biddle, 'The So-Called Roman Building at Much Wenlock' in *Journal of the British Archaeological Association* 141 (1988), pp. 179-81.

semi-circular.[209] In the architectural development of St Bride an Anglo-Saxon phase has been suggested, characterized by a 'conventional two-celled' structure evolving from the sub-Roman building.[210] Another early structure that bears witness to such religious continuity in London is the early-fourth-century conversion of a Mithraic temple into a Christian building at Walbrook: this was an extremely common phenomenon in Rome with evidence for pre-existing *mithrea* connected to the sites of the later churches of San Clemente and Santo Stefano Rotondo.[211]

Another example of the interplay between Roman and Christian structures is provided by the church of St Nicholas in Leicester, where the Roman bath complex was reused (**Pl.132c**).[212] In its late-Saxon phase the building stands almost at the centre of the *palestra* (courtyard) within the baths and is clearly, eastwardly aligned with a second church (SS Augustine and Columba) inserted into the earlier civic basilica on the north side of the Forum, just across from the baths. The most interesting aspect of this site is the suggested integration, west of the church, of the so-called Jewry Wall (**Pl.132d**), a monumental stretch of Roman masonry that formed the colossal, arched entrance to the baths and seemed to have continued to play that role for the church: indeed, it probably owes its survival to the church, having being used as a structural *spolia*. Such extensive reuse of earlier structures *in situ* finds close parallels in Rome at the church of Sant'Angelo in Pescheria (**Pl.64**), where the remains of the covered, monumental market of Portico d'Ottavia were incorporated to form the west entrance to the Christian building.[213]

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[209] Rodwell, 'Role of the church', pp. 94-5.

[210] Rodwell, Ibid.

[211] Although at Walbrook there's no direct evidence of a Romano-British or Anglo-Saxon church, the site has been deemed 'ideal for conversion to a church'. In London there is also the site at Southwark, where 'ritual cleansing' has been suggested, which in turn presuppose a 'pagan-to-Christian conversion and Roman-to-Anglo-Saxon sequence'; Rodwell, 'Role of the church', p. 92.

[212] Taylor, *Anglo-Saxon Architecture*, pp. 384-6; Rodwell, 'Churches in the Landscape', pp. 6-7; Bell, *Religious Reuse*, pp. 86, 222.

[213] See supra, p. 126. A remarkable but isolated case of re-use, or more likely imitative architecture, can be seen at Yeavering (Northumberland), in all likelihood a royal site –

A final observation on this subject concerns the manner in which Anglo-Saxon England single-cell churches ('aula unica') seem to coincide most often with the reuse of pre-existing Roman buildings.[214] It is difficult to assess the popularity of this plan in sixth/seventh-century Rome, although the church of SS Cosma e Damiano, which was installed in a public building in the Forum in 527, does offer a notable example of just such a single-cell structure, in which the available space was made Christian with little or no alteration to the pre-existing civic building. Nevertheless, there seems to be evidence of several Romano-British churches reusing Roman structures, and of cemeteries focusing around them, which often evolved in later, Anglo-Saxon buildings; this signals a continuity of veneration or cult and cannot exclude a phase in the sixth-century when, before an Anglo-Saxon church was built, the pre-existing structures offered a place of worship and burial grounds common to British and Anglo-Saxons alike.[215] These buildings represent the presence of a practising Christianity of sub-Roman times that seems to be instrumental to the establishment of Christianity on the same sites in the following Anglo-Saxon times. It is also possible that where these sub-Roman (post-Roman) sites displayed the focus of some form of Christian cult, they consequently required, at a later stage, a certain degree of control, both liturgical and architectural, that

mentioned in Bede (HE, II.14, p. 188) - where the excavations have shown a peculiar wedge-shaped raised wooden structure, strongly reminding a section of a Roman theatre, datable to the early-seventh century. It is uncertain for what purpose the 'cuneus' was built, and if it was used for civil or religious ceremonies, but it seems unmistakable that the inspiration was provided by Roman amphitheatres. Here, an architectural design that was, together with the Forum and the Baths, the epitome of Roman urban life, was transplanted within an Anglo-Saxon royal setting bringing with it, regardless of the change in/of function, enhanced status and authority. Yeavering is a one-off example, but there are other interesting sites that seem to indicate, in the evolution of their religious role, a continuity of meaning if not of intent. See B. Hope-Taylor, *Yeavering: an Anglo-British centre of early Northumbria*, London 1977, and the website http://www.pastperfect.org.uk/sites/yeavering/index.html (accessed April 2010).

[214] This has been deemed a good enough reason to include the mention of these churches not, as customary, within the earlier discussion of plan and design, but in this section while taking into account the interaction of pre-existing Roman structures and Anglo-Saxon churches.

[215] For instance at Exeter, Folkestone, Ripon (Alcey Hill), Stone-by-Faversham, Wells, all discussed in this chapter.

might often have resulted in the establishment and construction of 'new' and 'proper' churches.[216]

5.3.3 d) Reclaiming sites of earlier Christianity

While the Anglo-Saxon re-use of Roman sites and structures for Christian purpose included that of buildings that were later considered worthy of veneration regardless of their original function as *mausolea*, bath-houses or *basilica fora*, other structures were also reclaimed, which had formerly recognisable associations with religious activities, both Christian and pagan.

One such instance is found at Ripon where, to the north-east of the site of Wilfrid's cathedral, a 10m high mound (known as Ailcey Hill) has revealed an extensive cemetery,[217] which, in the seventh/eighth centuries served an all male community; the burials, found with the remains of iron brackets and chest lockets (potentially the remains of coffins), point to the exclusive use by a monastic community, after having served a normal cross-section of the population of a sixth-century community. Although the possible use of the cemetery by the Wilfridian monastic community does not prove the pre-existing Christian nature of the cemetery, it does suggest an important element of continuity and respect towards an already sacred site. It could at the same time represent a phase in which the Church exerted exclusive control on the site, raising questions of patronage and social power of early Anglo-Saxon Christianity.

A different but equally significant picture is offered by the Roman villa at Lullingstone (Kent), in use from the early second to at least the second half of the fourth century, when an upper room of the villa was turned into an oratory-chapel and decorated with Christian frescoes.[218] This practice, although

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[216] See supra, pp. 45-56; the discussion on schism and schismatic churches in Rome.

[217] R.A. Hall & M. Whyman, 'Settlement and Monasticism at Ripon, North Yorkshire, from the 7th to the 11th Centuries A.D.' in *Medieval Archaeology* 40 (1996), pp. 62-150; R. Hall, 'Ripon before and after Wilfrid', paper delivered at the *St Wilfrid 1300th Anniversary Conference*, York September 2009.

[218] Taylor, *Anglo-Saxon Architecture*, pp. 401-2; Bell, *Religious Reuse*, pp. 80-3, 125-6, 227.

preserved in a 'remote' and rural part of the Roman Empire, can nevertheless be paralleled by the *domus ecclesiae* of Rome, which have long been considered as at the origin of several of the titular churches, and thus constituting the backbone of Christian organization in the city.[219] A similar situation has also been postulated for York, where the church of St Helen on the Walls seems to have been built over a Roman 'town house', in which a mosaic panel with a medallion depicting a female head has been identified as corresponding to the probable position of an altar.[220] Such an element suggests this may well have been a *domus ecclesia*, while the later tradition associating Helena with York, and specifically with the area of this building, has been interpreted as evidence that the 'church' was dedicated to her from a very early period.[221] Finally, Anglo-Saxon material was uncovered (following World War II bombing raids) at the church of All Hallows in London, the earliest of which was dated to the seventh century.[222] This, combined with the previous dedication to St Mary and the traditional name of 'Barking Church' has suggested a connection with the nunnery at Barking, founded at the end of the seventh century by the bishop of London for his sister.[223] The London church lies over a Roman house of the late-second century.[224] Although tenuous, such practices could echo the pattern of continuity in late antique Rome, where patrons, often female, established communities that had their origins in their own private properties.[225]

A similar pattern was suggested for the foundation of the Cathedral church of Christ the Saviour in Canterbury, which was reputedly built 'by Roman Christians': however, excavations have determined that no underlying Roman structure can be a plausible candidate for a pre-existing Roman church

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[219] See supra, pp. 38-9.

[220] Rodwell, 'Churches in the landscape', pp. 11-2.

[221] See J.R. Magilton, *The Church of St-Helen-on-the-Walls, Aldwark*, London 1980.

[222] Taylor, *Anglo-Saxon Architecture*, p. 399.

[223] HE, IV.6, pp. 354-7: 'sorori autem in Orientalium Saxonum provincial in loco qui nuncupatur Inberecingum'.

[224] A tessellated floor has been excavated. See Bell, *Religious Reuse*, p. 225

[225] See supra, p. 38.

renovated by St Augustine.[226] This means that either Bede was misinformed, or the re-used structure was not a church: what seems to matter here is its 'Romanness', a further example of how the assimilation and authority of the 'new' Christians could be enhanced *a posteriori* affirming the encroachment on a pre-existing site of Roman Christianity.[227]

It seems clear that most of these sites, just as it is the case for Canterbury, present multiple, overlapping aspects of what 'Romanness' meant when linked to the re-establishment of Christianity, which strongly contribute to an idea of continuity.

5.3.4 Place-names and dedications

The '*Romanitas*' of a church could also be claimed or evoked by its dedication. Study of this subject and – as a natural consequence – of place-names can often signal the cult of specific saints and has therefore been used to date or locate the existence or spread of such cults. In this context it can be helpful in identifying dedications specifically associated with Roman saints, and the patterns of their diffusion chronologically and geographically.

A short but seminal account of this subject was published by Levison as early as 1946.[228] His schematic summary of the early dedications of English churches pointed unmistakably to a very limited range of dedications, almost all identified as 'Roman' or 'Apostolic': the largest group of churches was easily defined by just three main dedications, to SS Peter, Paul and Mary (including the double dedication to Peter and Paul), while the remaining churches were represented by a limited but select group of dedications: namely, St Andrew

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[226] Bell, *Religious Reuse*, pp. 124-5.

[227] More indisputable examples of this mechanism of reclaiming sites of earlier Christianity can be seen at St Albans, the Roman *Verulamium*, or St Osyth/Chichester. The latter is possibly connected with the cult of the British saint Sixtus, and will be analysed in the following section, in connection with the relevant discussion on dedications.

[228] Levison, *England and the Continent*, pp. 259-65. See also J. Blair, 'A Saint for Every Minster? Local Cults in Anglo-Saxon England' and 'A Handlist of Anglo-Saxon Saints' in *Local Saints and Local Churches in the Early Medieval West*, A. Thacker & R. Sharpe (eds), Oxford 2002, pp. 455-94, and 495-565. The definitive guide to place-names is M. Gelling & A. Cole, *The Landscape of place-names*, Stamford 2000.

(the brother of St Peter) and St Martin, with the addition of some almost unique dedications, such as the Four Crowned Martyrs and St Alban. The study of dedications since Levison has also pointed at influences other than that of Roman saints. Richard Morris has underlined the significant occurrence and concentration of some characteristic 'Merovingian' saints' dedications in Anglo-Saxon England, although he could only provide tenth-century examples;[229] in addition, a possible explanation for a 'revival' of the dedication to St Paul could be found in the connection between the saint and bishop Theodore, both being natives of Tarsus.

A slightly different focus was given by Richard Sharpe in his lengthy account of the cult of local saints in Britain: here he devoted considerable attention to the central role of post-Roman Britain in shaping a Christianity that was completely in line with contemporary events and trends on the Continent and not necessarily in opposition to 'Celtic' Christianity, demonstrating that all the strands of Christianity and saints' cults were fully represented and participating in the same network of influences and movement of people and ideas.[230] He also analyzed the originally British cults of St Alban, SS Aaron and Julius, and of St Sixtus and demonstrated how veneration for them survived – or failed to do so – in the face of the Gregorian mission's attempt to control them;[231] this was often achieved through the veneration of the emerging figures of the founders of churches who were promoted to supersede the memory of more local martyr-cults.[232] Nevertheless, as has become clear, 'in remembering

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[229] Morris, 'Churches in the Landscape', p. 26.

[230] R. Sharpe, 'Martyrs and Local saints in Late antique Britain' in *Local Saints and Local Churches in the Early Medieval West*, A. Thacker & R. Sharpe (eds), Oxford 2002, pp. 75-154. In his article Sharpe provides a helpful and necessary correction to scholarship when he argues that 'Post Roman (and Sub Roman I would add) Britain is an imprecise expression, too open-ended; and as long as Romano-British is treated as applying only before 409 or 429, we lack an adjective like Gallo-Roman for the Britons who still thought of themselves as Romans…', p. 105.

[231] Sharpe, 'Martyrs and Local saints', p. 124.

[232] Id., p. 149. It seems to have been a useful tool where the revamping of a site was associated to a new saint (often a bishop/founder or abbot).

its early founders a community forged its identity',[233] and in such activities the same communities could forge stronger links with a Roman past, which was thus renewed, revived and legitimated. *Vice-versa*, this same past would elevate the status of a foundation and/or its founder, and their importance could be strengthened by perpetuating the sacrality of a place through its dedication or by re-appropriating a Roman building or site.

The importance of place-names can be seen, for instance, when considering the focus of the pre-Augustine cult of St Sixtus. Nicholas Brooks has hypothesised that the coastal town of St Osyth (Essex), originally Cice or 'Chich' could have been derived from the name Xystus.[234] This explanation may also apply to Chicester (Sussex), which lies in an area of possible British influence: here, the feast of the widely venerated thirteenth-century saint and bishop, Richard of Chichester, happens to occur on April 3, the same feast day as that of Pope Sixtus I (115-25). It may well be that when Augustine explicitly asked Gregory for the relics of this saint and martyr of the early Roman church, it was to replace the local cult of a native British saint with one (more 'controlled') of the same name.[235]

Other dedications can give an idea of the very early date at which churches and associated cults began to spread across Anglo-Saxon England. In addition to a possible association with Sixtus at Cirencester, and the veneration of St Helena at York,[236] the two extramural chapels – also at Cirencester – dedicated to St Cecilia and St Laurence may well indicate the presence of a marked Roman influence at a very early date.[237] The single dedication to St

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[233] C. Cubitt, 'Universal and Local Saints in Anglo-Saxon England' in *Local Saints and Local Churches in the Early Medieval West*, A. Thacker & R. Sharpe (eds), Oxford 2002, p. 437.

[234] N. Brooks, 'Canterbury, Rome and the Construction of English Identity' in *Early Medieval Rome and the Christian West. Essays in Honour of Donald A. Bullough*, J.M.H. Smith (ed.), Leiden 2000, p. 238.

[235] Sharpe, 'Martyrs and Local saints', pp. 123-5. This episode is preserved in a continental copy of the *Libellum responsionum*, and not in the copy incorporated by Bede in HE, I.27, pp. 78-103, which represents the main tradition. It could also have been because Augustine believed those could not possibly be true remains of the martyred Pope, and so he asked for authentic relics.

[236] See supra, p. 248.

[237] Rodwell, 'Churches in the Landscape', p. 12.

Paul, as opposed to the combined dedication to SS Peter and Paul, is also suggestive of an early date and indicative of a conscious correspondence to the Christian landscape of Rome, with two separate basilicas outside the walls, dedicated individually to SS Peter and Paul. The ancient church of St Paul-in-the-Bail at Lincoln is certainly relevant in this context, as are the two separate foundations in London, dedicated to St Peter, Cornhill, and St Paul on Ludgate Hill. The 'notable rarity' of an individual dedication to St Paul was pointed out by Rodwell, who explicitly linked it to the Roman precedent: it is also worth noting that in London a striking sequence of seemingly early dedications – to St Gregory, St Augustine, St Mary, St Pancras, St Benedict and St Martin – join those to St Peter and St Paul.[238]

These dedications are of course very similar (if not almost identical) to those at Canterbury, where the dedications to Holy Saviour (the Lateran), SS Peter and Paul, St Martin, St Pancras and St Mary, have been explained by Sharpe as 'connected with a policy of founding extra-mural churches in imitation of the topography of Rome itself'.[239] Here, it is worth noting that the churches of Rome thus evoked by the missionaries had evolved just like those in Roman Britain, that is in connection with extra-mural burials. The conscious imitation of the topography of Rome in Canterbury could thus well coincide with an existing context in which the Roman setting was already independently and genuinely replicated, because it rested on the same premises: the presence of churches over burials or *martyria* that turned into cult sites outside the walls.

A more metaphorical, though not mutually exclusive, interpretation of dedications was further suggested by Krautheimer,[240] who outlined how the name of a church building could follow the same process of isolation as occurred with other defining architectural features, so that the name itself could be sufficient to evoke references and parallels, even when there were no other elements to call such associations to mind. A telling example of this

[238] Rodwell, 'The role of the church', p. 96.
[239] Sharpe, 'Martyrs and Local saints', p. 130.
[240] Krautheimer, 'Iconography of Mediaeval Architecture', pp.15-7.

phenomenon in Rome is the Basilica Sessoriana, or Santa Croce in Gerusalemme, where the attribution 'Jerusalem' quickly became self-sufficient and the church itself started to synthetically represent Jerusalem, bringing with this mental association its sacred monuments and symbolic references.[241]

With such mimetic processes in mind it is possible to see how some church dedications in Anglo-Saxon England could imply an early foundation of that church, or a cult that had existed long before the arrival of the Gregorian re-conversion mission. Dedications and place-names can also provide interesting elements to identified native British cults, or patterns of devotion otherwise swept away by the normalizing wave of the seventh-century.[242]

5.4 The Roman Mission: continuity or new beginning?

The aspects discussed so far prompt a twofold consideration: while on the one hand they create a more than appropriate setting for the foundations established in the aftermath of the Gregorian mission, on the other hand it seems clear that the architectural landscape initially encountered by the Roman missionaries was not a clean slate, and thus it is probably more appropriate to talk about a re-establishment of Christianity in Anglo-Saxon England at the turn of the seventh century.

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[241] Ó Carragáin, *Ritual and the Rood*, pp. 148-50.

[242] A comment is needed on the dedications to the Virgin in Anglo-Saxon England: while illustrating the frequent pairing of a church dedicated to the Virgin with a second, usually later, with an Apostolic or broader dedication, Blair rightly pointed out that the dedication to St Mary is quite unusual for early foundations, and that this phenomenon may correspond with the re-dedication (and renovation/enlargement?) of a pre-existing church. 'It may be relevant that the groups in which St Mary's was the earlier church are in areas where Anglo-Saxon penetration was relatively late. There is a pattern here which needs further study.' Blair, 'Anglo-Saxon minsters', p. 253. It could be further suggested an attempt, during the seventh and eighth centuries, at normalizing churches that fostered the cult of 'British' saints, possibly even in their original setting. This practice could be successfully eradicated and controlled with the use of a 'politically correct' dedication, like the one to the Virgin Mary, which in addition was up-to-date concerning the contemporary debate on liturgical and theological implication. See supra, chapter 4, and Sharpe, 'Martyrs and Local saints', p. 151; see also T.C. Edwards, 'Wilfrid and the Celts', paper delivered at the *St Wilfrid 1300th Anniversary Conference*, York September 2009.

Of course, the first generation of missionaries was not wholly successful,[243] but they nevertheless established the necessary foundations for a second generation of Anglo-Saxons, both ecclesiastics and nobles, exemplified by figures such as Benedict Biscop or Wilfrid, who went on to actively seek and express 'Romanness'.[244] Their achievement in the artistic field is renowned and the figure of Wilfrid especially has undergone a re-appraisal, while recent studies have also underlined the central contribution of Theodore to this second 'phase' of the Roman mission, creating a real doctrinal and organizational watershed in the post-Whitby Anglo-Saxon England.[245] However, this has in turn created a few myths, in particular the antagonism between 'Irish' and 'Roman' factions, convincingly reduced in recent studies.[246] As a consequence, a substantial re-evaluation of monasticism has also been attempted, reviewing especially its impact and uniformity, and causing a related reassessment of the concept of patronage in Anglo-Saxon England. Both aspects find a telling parallel with the situation in contemporary Rome: here, the conflict between ecclesiastic and lay patronage and their consequences have been widely discussed in the previous chapters, creating a picture in which this seems to be a constant characteristic of the social and artistic life of the city, from the fourth century and well into the ninth and beyond.

Thus, it would seem that in Anglo-Saxon England the later and distinctly Germanic concept of '*Eigenkirche*' could be introduced to understand some patterns of patronage, which can be better understood as owing a lot to the Late Antique system of religious evergetism amply discussed in Part I of this thesis.

This can lead to further observations, the principal being the need to restore a proper Late Antique period to the British Isles: as noted by Guy

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[243] HE, II.5, pp. 150-5; II.20, pp. 202-7.

[244] Cramp, 'The Anglo-Saxons and Rome', p. 34; see also supra, pp. 195-201.

[245] See supra, pp. 177-8.

[246] K. Hughes, 'Evidence for contacts between the churches of the Irish and English from the Synod of Whitby to the Viking Age' in *England before the Conquest. Studies in primary sources presented to Dorothy Whitelock*, P. Clemoes & K. Hughes, Cambridge 1971, pp. 49-67; C. Stancliffe, *Bede, Wilfrid, and the Irish*, Jarrow Lecture 2003.

Halsall, 'placing Anglo-Saxon England back in the mainstream of post-Imperial history permits a very different appreciation of the changes that took place in the seventh century',[247] this being applicable to the realm of cultural as much as social, economic and theological thought. As a consequence, Anglo-Saxon England would gain a more prominent position in a wider continental network from a much earlier stage, and not just after the 'conversion'. On the other hand, 'Continental influence' should not be used as an overall explanation or easy answer to architectural situations or solutions in Anglo-Saxon England, and above all the influence should always be considered mutual, and not exclusively Roman or Frankish. From a very practical perspective it should be noted that Anglo-Saxon travellers to Rome would cross Francia and their experience of architecture and buildings there would make the links with Rome even clearer. This in turn would give the Anglo-Saxon 'architects' and patrons the mental and material freedom to adapt their Roman aspirations and ideological contents to a combination of available form and materials more appropriate to their context. In addition, when considering the practical aspects of building 'Roman' churches in Anglo-Saxon England, the constant resorting to craftsmen trained 'abroad' is of limited help. Instead, it should be considered the possibility and time needed to train a native generation of workmen, and aspects related to the great skills needed even just for the dismantling and re-use of Roman material *in situ*.[248] Furthermore, it should be reinforced a certain degree of familiarity with pre-existing stone buildings in Anglo-Saxon England, as well as the hypothesis that within the retinue of ecclesiastics and noblemen travelling to and staying in Rome for prolonged periods of time, some may have accessed local and direct training while there.

[247] G. Halsall, 'Examining the Christianization of the region of Metz from archaeological sources (5th-7th centuries): problems, possibilities and implications for Anglo-Saxon England' in Id. *Cemeteries and society in Merovingian Gaul: selected studies in history and archaeology, 1992-2009*, Leiden 2010, p. 282.
[248] See supra, fn. 158.

It is necessary at this point to distinguish and integrate a first, instrumental use of *Romanitas* in the architecture of Anglo-Saxon England, one originating from the Roman provenance of the missionaries, and from their need to create a link with the past and thus affirm their authority, with a second phase of *Romanitas*, a more proactive one, autonomously embraced by Anglo-Saxon leaders and consciously sought and drawn from Rome, mainly to promote their affiliation, unity and uniformity to the Christian Church, and to firmly establish the role now played by the Anglo-Saxon Church in the larger picture of the Universal Church. As noted by Halsall,[249] there can be no conflict or mutual exclusiveness between forging links with the Roman past and being projected into the future thanks to those same associations: such legitimation, obtained through architecture and all its related aspects, ultimately granted Anglo-Saxon England a place of responsibility in the future landscape of power of early Medieval Europe.

These two aspects of *Romanitas* are both present and prominent in most of the architectural foundations examined here, and they have to be further combined with the observation that any mission requires a certain degree of creativity; this too is displayed in many of the buildings taken into account. Such creativity had to merge with what was left of a pre-existing *Romanitas*, the role of which requires more prominence in the assessment of this period. Only a fair emphasis on the Roman, British and Late Antique past of Anglo-Saxon England can help to create a better sense of continuity concerning traditions, examples, intentions and practices in the field of architecture. In this context, the importance of archaeological investigation remains paramount: the outcome of many such projects has proved essential in outlining the present chapter. It is to be hoped that these kinds of projects can continue – helped by the progress in computer technology and despite the complications intrinsic to large-scale excavations – and that their results can be made widely and quickly available,

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[249] Halsall, 'Examining the Christianization of the region of Metz', pp. 275-6.

not overshadowed by the impossible task of comparing the data thus obtained with the comparatively disheartening lack of documentary evidence.

Finally, it needs to be remembered that the position of Anglo-Saxon architecture must be situated within a wider context: although the inspiration provided by continental models is undeniable, and regardless of the fruitful relation established with a pre-existing past, the autonomous contribution of Anglo-Saxon architecture at this particular time and space cannot be underestimated, a contribution made even more relevant and visible when placed against the background of a tradition of *Romanitas*. Thus, Anglo-Saxon England itself proved in turn to be a source of inspiration.