DURHAM CASTLE was founded by William the Conqueror in 1072; in 1075 it passed into the hands of Bishop Walcher, and it remained the episcopal residence until modern times. Since 1837, the castle has been the home of University College, and since 1986, along with the Cathedral, it has been part of the World Heritage Site on the peninsula. Apart perhaps from the plain undercroft of an early hall, the ‘Norman Chapel’ is the oldest building in this area: in plan, a small rectangle three bays north to south by four bays east to west (Fig. 1).1 Initially, it would have been one of several buildings scattered around the inner bailey; it was set against the curtain wall to the north and had the earliest version of the motte to the east.2 Nowadays the chapel is reached from an antechamber, down a square tunnel, and through a modern opening in its west wall.3 Over the centuries it has become so submerged by later buildings that only its north wall, actually the curtain wall, can be seen from outside. Because the

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1 Approx. 32 ft 10 in. by 20 ft 9 in. (10 m by 6.8 m); the height of the vault is nearly 15 ft (about 4.5 m), measurements from Durham University Journal (12 July 1878), p. 5. Slightly different measurements in Victoria County History of Durham, ed. W. Page, iii (1928), 86; plan opp. p. 89. Orientation in the chapel is given here by liturgical, not compass, directions. Columns and capitals in the chapel are numbered from east to west, and as if forming two arcades, N and S (figs 1, 28); this is the convention used by the Corpus of Romanesque Sculpture in Britain and Ireland, www.crsbi.ac.uk.


3 This opening was cut about 1840 when a number of drastic changes were made in the chapel (largely reversed in 1953–54); see B. Colgrave, ‘The Restoration of the Norman Chapel in Durham Castle’, Transactions of the Architectural and Archaeological Society of Durham and Northumberland [TAASDN], x (4) (1953), 381–82.
enclosure of the chapel has had several important consequences, these additions must be briefly described. 4

To the west, the chapel lies at an angle to the wing that contains the hall and gallery of Bishops Flambard and Puiset. 5 The condition of the enclosed space between the chapel’s west wall and those later buildings is unknown, but John Carter in the late eighteenth century already found the capitals of the west responds illegible, probably owing to damp. 6 The north wall, actually the original curtain wall, has two splayed

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5 Challenging the statement, in N. Pevsner, 2nd edn revised E. Williamson, County Durham (1983), p. 218, that the chapel range extended further north-west, Martin Leyland, in Rollason, Harvey and Prestwich, Anglo-Norman Durham, p. 413, says ‘On the Jones plan of 1904 there are a number of dotted foundations shown in this area … These, however, are on various alignments and do not give the impression of being part of an integral plan. Without details it cannot be assumed that these foundations belong to the eleventh century’. Much of the interior west wall is overlain by a layer of later stonework which encroaches on the west responds (Leyland, thesis, Elevation 22). It is very unlikely that the chapel itself extended further west: as so often in small post-Conquest churches, the doorway is in the western bay of the south wall; secular or moral subjects found here are appropriate to the west end (see Sections III and IV).

6 The Senate Room and chamber lie over the chapel. Martin Leyland began to explore the space to the west of the chapel through the floor in this area, as described in his thesis. When the present entrance was cut through this space in 1840, ‘a massive vault and a stone staircase were revealed’, VCH Durham, iii, 86 and n. 73; Leyland thesis, Appendix N, quoting eyewitness.
windows (enlarged in the 1840s), and the whole exterior length is banked up by soil. Here, drainage is definitely inadequate, but, there being no sculpture on this wall, the dampness is not obvious. The east wall has the original splays of two of its three windows but all are blocked by buildings against the later motte; here too sculpture is decaying. The south wall of the chapel would have had two or three windows, but a new building was set against it in the late twelfth century, a room or rooms being added above, and the wall has since been partially rebuilt. The original doorway remains in the western bay but ground-level entry was interfered with, though not necessarily closed off, by the construction of the late-twelfth-century building and its spiral staircase. These accretions prevented major structural interference for centuries, but have adversely affected the drainage and ventilation of the stonework, and they severely reduce light levels. The lost exterior elevation would probably not have been at all remarkable: the doorway is relatively small and its tympanum was probably not carved. Small early Romanesque churches in the region are usually plain outside: display was saved for the interior.

Visitors entering by the modern opening in the west wall are struck by the unexpected perfection of the dimly-lit chamber. The six slender pillars glow, their golden stone curiously marked by swirling bands of natural iron-staining. Like a forest, and similarly having no obvious orientation, the chapel invites entry. On moving round, the variety of carvings on the capitals high up — but not too high for comfort — becomes apparent (Fig. 2). The slightly stilted arches of the vault continue the lightness of the columns, their roundness combining agreeably with the harmonious proportions of the chamber itself. For objective measurements of the sculpture, John Carter’s scaled drawings of 1795 may be quoted: the coursed pillars are nearly 10 ft high (2.88 m); the carved face of a capital is about 1 ft 11 in. wide at the top and 11 in. high (0.59 m × 0.26 m).

II

A question that has diverted much academic interest is whether this chamber is all there was of the original building, or only the lower storey of it; whether this was undercroft, main chapel or inferior chapel. Several two-storey chapels belonging to bishops in the Empire still exist, and there used to be one of late-eleventh-century date in Hereford:9 it is supposed that such buildings derive from Charlemagne’s palace chapel at Aachen and that the form was appropriated by bishops as a sign of status.

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7 The north wall, the curtain wall, contains a blocked salley-port; the terraces appear on early panoramas of the peninsula, as currently exhibited on the Black Stairs, for example. VCH Durham, iii, 89, attributes the terracing to the time of Bishop Cosin, 1660–72.
8 Compare the present walls with the plan of this area in J. Carter, The Ancient Architecture of England, pt I, The Orders of Architecture during the British, Roman, Saxon and Norman ages (1795), pl. xxvi; and with VCH Durham, iii, plan opp. p. 89, repr. in M. W. Thompson, Medieval Bishops’ Houses in England and Wales (Aldershot, 1998), fig. 6. VCH Durham, iii, 88, notes subsidence due to the upper storey.
**Figure 2.** General view of south arcade from the east end, capitals S1, S2 and S3. All illustrations are of the Norman Chapel in Durham Castle unless otherwise indicated.

**Figure 3.** St John’s chapel in the White Tower, London: a capital with tau cross on the main face and ribbed leaves on the angles.
In surviving examples, the bishop’s personal upper chapel often looks down on the lower one by means of an opening in the floor: Durham’s chapel has uniform groin vaults and could never have had such an opening and, as Richard Gem points out, its plan is axially-arranged and not centralised as Aachen-type chapels are. Eric Fernie has suggested that, rather than looking for the two-storey chapel, we should expect bishops’ chapels to declare themselves by their oddities, their individuality. The arguments to be set out in the rest of this section are intended to demonstrate that this chamber was the entire chapel, and that it did not need an upper floor to make it worthy of a prince-bishop.

Although ground-floor access could have been maintained when the new building was added on the south side in the late twelfth century, the reduction in natural lighting the addition brought about suggests that the chapel had by then begun to decline in importance. In modern times it became ‘a receptacle for rubbish’ and a ‘dumping ground’. Yet it had been called ‘glorious’ by Laurence of Durham when he described the buildings in the castle precinct about 1141–43:

Fulget et hic senis suffulta capella columnis,  
Non spatiosa nimis, sed speciosa satis.  

And here stands a glorious chapel, supported by six columns  
Not too spacious, but beautiful enough.

This brief but first-hand description clearly must refer in some way to the chamber being discussed in this paper, whose most memorable feature is still its array of six columns. Unfortunately, the phrase ‘supported by six columns’ has been taken to mean that the columns supported a chapel above the present vault. That is likely to be a misreading, however, for Alcuin had used much the same terms as Laurence when he described the eighth-century York Minster:

Haec nimis alta domus solidis suffulta columnis,  
Suppositae quae stant curvatis arcubis . . .  

This lofty building, supported by strong columns,  
Themselves bolstering curving arches . . .

11 There are the remains of an arch on the east wall of the vice. The bottom of the stairs was re-directed in the 1840s; see Colgrave, TAASDN, x (4), 380; VCH Durham, iii, plan opp. p. 89.
12 Contrast the spectacular entrance to the hall range, as built by Bishop Puiset (1153–95). The ornate archway was the terminus of a staircase from the inner bailey, recalling a structure of c. 1165 or later at Canterbury; see D. Kahn, Canterbury Cathedral and Its Romanesque Sculpture (1991), ills. 161–63; see also fn. 66 below. The west front of Ripon Cathedral is in an early Gothic style and may date from as early as 1175: it marks an even more radical shift in taste.
13 Carter, Ancient Architecture, p. 24; Colgrave, TAASDN, x (4), 380.
15 The translation of Laurence and the expert discussion of his couplet are the work of my neighbour Peter L. Wood, to whom I am, once again, very grateful. He solves the persistent problem of the double chapel.
16 For example, as in K. J. Galbraith, ‘Notes on Sculpture in Durham’, circulated for discussion at BAA conference in 1977, see Society of Antiquaries of London, MS 903/6/1; also Thompson, Bishops’ Houses, p. 427.
The description in both cases is of something supported by columns: in the description of York Minster, it is clear that the space containing the strong columns and curving arches is itself the main body of the church, and whatever spaces are mentioned later (even upper rooms beneath the roof) are secondary. It is therefore not necessary to assume that Laurence meant the bishop’s chapel was on an upper floor supported on the six columns.

There is confirmation for this reading within Laurence’s couplet. He uses the word *senis*, not *sex*, for six: this is an oddity for *senis* is the distributive form of the numeral and inappropriate here. Its use is explained by the metre which Laurence uses to build up his description of the chapel, a form of hexameter called ‘leonine’, where the final syllable of the line rhymes with a syllable in the first half of the line. It is unlikely, therefore, that *senis* was meant to imply ‘six columns on each floor’, it is merely a poetic affectation and metrical necessity. In other words, what Laurence knew as the ‘glorious chapel’ is the interior that we still see.

Similar slender columns are seen on the Continent chiefly in crypt chapels, and at the more fortunate sites close to Roman ruins they are monolithic classical *spolia*. Early chapels in England are few: in Richmond Castle, there is a tiny rectangular chapel of the late eleventh century at ground level in a tower in the east wall of the bailey; this has seven seats in niches in the side walls, and a shelf and three small windows at the east end. A crypt of c.1074 survives from the church in the bailey of Oxford Castle. Its four original capitals have large ribbed leaves on the angles, with the remains of what may have been tau crosses on two of them: but the crypt is low and its piers are thick, it deserves to be termed an undercroft. In London, the high and well-lit royal chapel in the White Tower, built some time in the 1070s or 80s, has capitals with tau crosses and leaves on the angles, all far neater than at Oxford but the variety of embellishment is limited compared to Durham (Figs 3, 30, 31). The crypt of St Mary-le-Bow, London, is a rectangle of three bays by four, with north and south aisles; it has relatively slender monolithic columns and plain scallop capitals, one perhaps with formalised trees on the angles. Anselm’s extensive crypt at Canterbury

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18 *Senis* ‘six each’, for example, ‘She gave them six apples each’.
19 In this instance: *senis . . . columnis; nimir . . . satis*.
Cathedral, after 1093, has carved columns, and sculpture which is amazingly skilful — but then Canterbury would attract the cream of the workmen who came across the Channel. Sculpture in St John’s chapel and in the Canterbury crypt is discussed in section V.

Laurence of Durham’s summary of the chapel as ‘Not too spacious, but beautiful enough’ fits the present chamber very well. His choice of a very difficult Latin verse-form in which to describe it was deliberate and meant to parallel the rare quality of his subject, for this interior would have been rated very fine in its time. The chapel was well lit with windows in at least three walls. The tall pillars, though coursed and not monolithic, are in a specially-chosen stone that contemporaries might have compared to golden marble.\(^{23}\) The slenderness of the pillars contrasts with the heavy columns necessary in the White Tower, and demonstrates technical confidence. The moulded imposts and bases show the presence of trained, that is, immigrant, masons. The narrative scene (the hunt) and the cable mouldings are rare for late-eleventh-century England.\(^{24}\) That every capital is carved, and with a wide variety of motifs, is a richness unknown to other survivals of its period in England. While almost all motifs have parallels in Normandy,\(^{25}\) the carvings themselves are more restrained and orderly than is often the case there, and their quality is consistent throughout. The rare paving (Fig. 4) seems to have been made for the chapel, although it was not in place from the beginning because both the surviving paving and its raised eastern platform (removed in 1953) lapped the pillar bases. In 1953, Bertram Colgrave noted ‘traces of an earlier flooring of lime and what looked like reed . . . immediately below the herring-bone flooring’.\(^{26}\) However, the pavement is not much later, it is likely to pre-date the downgrading of the chapel which seems to have taken place in the late twelfth century: a shaped stone found together with Romanesque painted plaster in an nearby excavation implies the same conclusion.\(^{27}\)

\(^{23}\) It is a Carboniferous fluviodeltaic litharenitic sandstone that came from quarries nearby on the other side of the river. The curious concentric, swirling colour bands are due to variation in iron oxide-hydroxides (geothite/limonite) in the sandstone. They were produced a long time after deposition, when the rocks were buried in the subsurface: they did not form after quarrying (ex inf. M.E. Tucker).

\(^{24}\) G. Zarnecki, *English Romanesque Sculpture, 1066–1140* (1951), figs 7, 8; pp. 25, 26. Here he assumed a date shortly after the foundation of the castle, but laterfavoured c. 1080.


\(^{26}\) Colgrave, *TAASDN*, x (4). Damaged stones must have been turned over when ‘very cleverly relaid’ since many show quarrying marks and not a smooth surface (M.E. Tucker). The three eastern bays were originally raised above the rest by two shallow steps. Along the north aisle, the main face of the pilasters and the opposite side of the pillar bases have a border of narrower rectangular slabs, some apparently original; it would have been normal for such a border to have existed wherever a pavement met vertical stonework. See also C. Norton, ‘The Luxury Pavement in England before Westminster’, in *Westminster Abbey: the Cosmati Pavements*, ed. L. Grant and R. Mortimer (Aldershot, 2002), p. 8; figs 14, 15 (Carter’s plan of the chapel; pre-restoration photograph). Further pre-restoration photographs are in the Conway Library, Courtauld Institute, but coverage is incomplete. To complicate things further, Carter’s indication of the patterns, the photographs, and the present patterning all differ.

\(^{27}\) Leyland, thesis, p. 40; Appendix L mentions the finding of a stone ‘of rhomboidal shape, which bore a striking resemblance to those that can still be seen in the Norman Chapel’. There were several layers of paint on the plaster fragments (Excavation DC91A, East Range). Stone flooring must have been fairly common, but it is interesting, considering the Norman influences at Durham, that a pavement of small flat stones of ninth- to tenth-century date was found during the excavation of a building close to the cathedral at Bayeux, and thought to have been a canon’s house: F. Delacampagne, ‘Une Maison Urbaine à Bayeux (ix\textsuperscript{e}–xvii\textsuperscript{e} siècle): de la Maison Canoniales à la Maison de la Fabrique’, in *Les Villes Normandes au Moyen Age* (Caen, 2006), pp. 166, 168.
Figure 4. Paving in the Norman Chapel: the west end looking north-east, showing pillar bases N3 and S3, the herring-bone pattern and the axial line of squared stones

Figure 5. Capital S3, east face: a man’s head; star pattern; cable pattern
between the pilasters on the north wall are like those seen in Romanesque churches on the Continent and once existed on the south wall too. The walls would have been plastered and painted, probably in panels of plain colours. In the 1953–54 restoration, the capitals and imposts were cleaned of what seems to have been Victorian paint, and this work probably removed any fragments of original colour, however, faint suggestions of staining remain — in the eyes, for example, of the stag — and give an idea of how alive the sculpture would once have been. Lamps would have been hung in the centre of each bay. The beautiful columns would have been left without plaster or paint. The chapel has quality everywhere.

The building is always given a late-eleventh-century date. The name of the bishop involved is not recorded, but Kit Galbraith favoured William of St Calais (1081–96). In choosing Bishop William rather than the other possible patrons (Earl Waltheof, Bishops Walcher or Ralph Flambard, or the King), she was almost certainly right. His suitability as patron of the chapel and designer of its sculptural programme is discussed in section VI.

III

There follows a detailed discussion of the subjects carved on the six capitals and the east responds (Fig. 1). The interpretations suggested will enable the liturgical functioning of the chapel to be examined in section IV.

Star and cable patterns and foliage (Figs 5–8)

The star and cable patterns are almost enough in themselves to define the chamber as a chapel. Star patterns or foliage designs are used throughout (except in the hunting scenes on capital N3 or where motifs are too large), and these two patterns refer, respectively, to heaven and to paradise. Star patterns are ‘chip-carved’, completely

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28 According to Carter, *Ancient Architecture*, pl. xxvii. The salley-port in the north wall was exposed in 1953. The aumbry in the north-east bay is large (1.01 m high, 0.47 m deep and 0.76 m wide) and may be original.
29 E. Fernie, ‘St Anselm’s Crypt’, *Medieval Art and Architecture at Canterbury before 1220*, ed. N. Coldstream and P. Draper, BAA Conf. Trans. 1979 (Leeds, 1982), n. 16, says ‘most parallel examples [to the shafts and columns of the Canterbury crypt] suggest that carving is used to give form to painting and flat surfaces are painted in plain colours or enlivened with little more than repeated rosettes’.
32 The patterns are not quite enough on their own: secular buildings sometimes had chevrons and occasionally also motifs seen in churches.
Figure 6. Capital N2, east and north faces: trees with two styles of foliage

Figure 7. Capital S1, south-west angle: naked men on the angles and foliage patterns in the centre of each face
FIGURE 8. Capital N1, east face: various kinds of volute

FIGURE 9. East respond capital, south arcade: men’s heads in the position of volutes (one broken); the tau cross is central on the main face below the star pattern.
filling the space around motifs. The foliage takes various forms, but most of it consists of lozenge-shaped leaves, though the tree on N2, north face, has soft, flowing leaves, while both kinds are mixed on capital S1. In addition to the recognisable foliage, the volutes are not simply bold accents in the architecture, but the angle volutes and the small paired versions, as on capitals N1 and S1, should all be read as leaves. On the classical Corinthian capital, volutes reproduced the unfurling foliage of the acanthus plant, and in Norman work the spiral volute was still understood as foliage. For example, at Cerisy-la-Fôret (Manche), a pair of volutes spring from the mouth of a man, and similarly on a capital of the chancel arch at St Mary's, Whitby, two spiral volutes emerge: in both cases standard angle volutes are made to function like the stems and leaves emitted by a 'green man'. The third significant pattern, cable, was used at only three points in the chapel: immediately at the entrance on the ring below capital S3 (Figs 5, 29), and on both east responds, where it is now best preserved on the right side of the south respond. This pattern conventionally marked a venerated space, for example, the columns supporting a ciborium over an altar were often spiralled.

Trellis pattern (Figs 11, 12, 19–21, 24)

All the bodies of the animals have the same incised trellis-wise grid. It is difficult to suggest one single reason for this, but perhaps the most likely is that the grid pattern was intended to indicate the symbolic, heavenly, nature of the creatures themselves. Other explanations, that the grid might represent shaggy pelt or scales or provide a key for paint, are inadequate. If used to mark a spiritual entity, then applying the pattern to the horse is a mistake, because this is a natural horse in a narrative scene. At a smaller scale, on capitals S2 and S3 (Figs 2, 10) a trellis-wise grid marks divisions within bunches of fruit, that is, it delineates grapes.

The tau cross (Fig. 9)

At the east end, on the capital of the south respond, between the two human heads there seems to be a tau cross, that is, a cross in the shape of the Greek letter T. This one has an unusually deep horizontal bar and slender upright, but the tau cross is common in the early Norman period — as already mentioned, it occurs in chapels in the White Tower (Figs 3, 30, 31) and Oxford Castle. The tau cross was associated

34 The rigidity of the lozenge-shaped leaves cannot be entirely due to the limitation of tools because rounded surfaces have been carved elsewhere. It is a manner of carving leaves which would persist into the third decade of the twelfth century in some regions of England: it does not seem to occur in Normandy in exactly that form.
35 Baylé, *Origines*, figs 533, 536.
38 But seen in apparently good condition by Carter, *Ancient Architecture*, pl. xxvii, at T and U.
39 Cable or spiral pattern: Wood, *JBAA*, cliv, 9, 11.
41 Baylé, *Origines*, figs 690–95.
FIGURE 10. Capital S3, west face: a bunch of grapes in star pattern

FIGURE 11. Capital N3, south and east faces: Placidas/Eustace goes hunting with his horse and dogs
with the Passover, being understood to be the sign painted in blood on the lintels of houses belonging to the Hebrews (Exodus 12:22, 23); this episode belonged to a number of Old Testament types of the Crucifixion. The tau cross associates this place with the Eucharist.42

The hunting scenes (Figs 11, 12)

George Zarnecki identified three faces of capital N3 as illustrating the legend of St Eustace.43 Eustace had been a Roman general, a virtuous pagan, who before baptism was called Placidas. His military background and love of hunting would have appealed to any medieval lord, and gave the story a long currency.44 John of Salisbury is quoted by Zarnecki as saying that the nobility esteemed hunting and hawking as honourable and virtuous employments, and, though some bishops enjoyed these pastimes,45 the legend is used here to further spiritual ends. The carvings show Eustace leading his horse, perhaps to indicate they are deep in the forest; he has a brace of dogs on the leash; on the west face of the capital the two dogs look as though they are either attacking the exhausted stag by leaping for its throat or they are holding it at bay until the huntsman arrives to kill it.

Some details of Aelfric’s version of the legend are echoed in the carving: on the west face of the capital, the dogs are tiny in comparison with the stag because it was an ‘immense hart . . . of exceeding bigness above all the others, and beautiful’ which had drawn Placidas alone of his companions to follow it. At the end of the chase, Christ spoke to Eustace through the stag, his presence made explicit by the shining cross, ‘brighter than the sun’s beam’ between the stag’s antlers. The sculptor was, of course, unable to supply such a cross, but the eyes of the stag are large and round: they fix on the viewer in the same way that a lion representing Christ in English Romanesque sculpture often gazes directly outwards.46 At this point in Aelfric’s version of the legend, the hart had ‘mounted up on a high rock and there stood’ — an image intended to evoke a parallel with Christ crucified on the hill of Calvary. ‘Then Placidas stood long and beheld the hart, and wondered at its size, and ceased his pursuit.’ The tables are turned, and Placidas resembles Paul on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:3–5). Christ has noted the good works of the pagan, saying: ‘It is not right that my beloved servant . . . should serve . . . unreasoning idols’. In the carving,

42 The Passover episode is illustrated in metalwork in E. Mâle, Religious Art in France: the Twelfth Century (Princeton, 1978), figs 136, 140. Other types or foreshadowings of the death of Christ include Abel offering a lamb, and Melchisedek with bread and wine. In sacramentaries, the opening initial T of the canon of the mass (Te Igitur) may be developed as a Crucifix, see J. Beckwith, Early Medieval Art: Carolingian, Ottonian, Romanesque (1964), figs 54, 56 (mid ninth century).
43 Zarnecki, Sculpture 1066–1140, pp. 25–26. At St Gervais, Falaise, three sides of a capital are carved: a horseman blowing a horn; two large dogs; a stag to scale, very damaged: a superficial treatment compared to Durham. See also A. Rooney, Hunting in Middle English Literature (Cambridge, 1993), pp. 118–20.
45 Thomas Becket preferred hawking.
46 R. Wood, ‘The Romanesque Tomb-slab at Bridlington Priory’, YAJ, lxxv (2003), 73–74, fig. 9; idem, ‘The Romanesque Church at Melbourne’, Derbyshire Archaeological Journal, cxxvi (2006), 134–35, pl. 5. Another example is in Fig. 26 (Stow Longa), animal on right, see fn. 67.
Figure 12. Capital N3, west face: the ‘immense’ stag and the dogs

Figure 13. West respond capital, south arcade (after John Carter, 1795)
Eustace has a halo: according to the legend, he and his family converted and died as martyrs in the reign of Hadrian.

It is unfortunate that the carvings on the west responds are effectively lost. The south respond capital had a narrative scene when sketched in the late eighteenth century by John Carter, and with that drawing for comparison a standing figure can still be made out (Fig. 13).47 The north respond capital was not published by Carter. Apart from the Eustace narrative and perhaps this lost sculpture, the remaining motifs are read in a spiritual sense and illustrate the theme of ‘heaven’.

**The four men among foliage (Figs 2, 7)**

The symmetrical design on capital S1 repeats four times with men on the angles and foliage of some kind on the centre of each face; there is a little more foliage between the men’s arms and heads. The pose appears similar to the classical figure of Atlas,48 but the men are not supporting the impost block since very few thumbs reach the top of the capital. A more useful comparison is with a capital at Graville Priory, Le Havre (Fig. 14). There, men of similar proportions stand upright amidst greenery, their legs apart, hands raised and with strands of foliage passing through their fingers.49 Again, on a tympanum at Linley, Shropshire (Fig. 15) a standing man is surrounded by foliage, and more foliage comes from his mouth. He stands with his hands on his hips or, more likely, he is holding his legs apart (compare Fig. 27, left). He is naked and, just as with the men at Durham, no genitalia are carved — the pose with the legs held apart emphasises this void. If we read the plentiful foliage in all these examples as placing the men in paradise, their sexlessness becomes more comprehensible, for Matthew 22:30 states that there is no marrying in heaven. The men who restrained themselves on earth are seen rewarded with paradise: the general principle of self-denial for the sake of God is also taught by the Eustace legend.

The few leaves between the arms and the heads of the men have their source somewhere below the heads, but the stems are in low relief and difficult to trace to a definite source on the neck or body. Foliage coming from the mouth, as if the breath of new life, is commonly carved:50 but foliage is not frequently seen coming from any other point. However, a small capital dating from c. 1010 in the crypt of Dijon Cathedral shows foliage springing from the forehead, mouth, and also high on the chest, perhaps therefore from the heart, of a man.51 Monastic reforms in Dijon, Normandy and England were linked and are likely to have been the means of transmission of this uncommon detail. The pose of the men in foliage on capital S1, with their arms raised and the palms of their hands showing, is that of orants, and thus they stand in paradise praising God.

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Figure 14. Priory of Sainte-Honorine, Graville, Le Havre (Seine-Maritime), capital of blocked apse in north transept: standing men with foliage

Figure 15. Linley (Shropshire): the tympanum on the north side of the church, from sketch and photographs
The various men's heads (Figs 5, 9, 16, 17)

There are seven isolated heads of men carved in the chapel and none of them is differentiated by any distinguishing feature, for example, there is no tonsure or halo anywhere. The unusually large head on N3 (Fig. 17), with beard, moustache and bushy hair also has no attribute. This head might perhaps be an individual portrait, arising as an extempore improvement on the other faces. Regarding a similar rare invention, the author has suggested that the lopsided smile on a lion carved in the Canterbury crypt was the result of the sculptor looking around at his fellows and working from life instead of carving a mouth like the model he had been given; perhaps something similar happened at Durham.52 Another oddity of the human faces carved in the chapel is that five of them have a detail of a kind never yet observed elsewhere: the mouths are in the form of a regular incised zigzag of three or four repeats (for example, Figs 16, 17, 29). Six other carved faces have normal mouths (for example, Figs 5, 7, 11). The incised zigzag mouth is distinct from the formation of the lion’s mouth on capital S2, north face, where individual conical teeth show in a rectangular opening (Fig. 19). It is suggested that the zigzag mouth originated when the sculptor copied a pen-drawing in which the fluid swoops of a pen simulated the curves of cheek and upper lip: the lower lip would have been indicated by a dab of colour, or even omitted. In several manuscripts preserved in Rouen there are pen-drawn mouths of this kind, especially where the drawing was rapid (Fig. 18).53 The portrait on the north face of N3 has a zigzag mouth and shows the lower lip as a slight projection (Fig. 17).

All the isolated men’s heads except the over-large portrait are surrounded by star pattern, and we are to understand these men as anonymous believers looking down from heaven. The heads on capital S1 and the adjacent respond (Figs 7, 9) replace spiral volutes: this seems an inevitable development for such projecting knobs, with or without the symbolism of the physical head taking on the spiritual life of the foliage volute.

Such is the nature of medieval symbolism that the motifs yet to be discussed have a choice of contemporary interpretations. Gregory the Great (c. 540–604) is well known for his defence of pictures as the books of the illiterate, and his use of verbal imagery was followed by later writers. Typically, Gregory gives a list of alternative interpretations, moral and spiritual, good and bad, for a creature in the literal text he is expounding; from these he will choose one and proceed to make his point. Bestiaries also supply a range of anecdotes and significations for their animals: they contain few creatures without both good and bad characteristics. The following interpretations of the serpent, lions and horned animal have been chosen to give a reading consistent with the general context of ‘heaven’ that is established by the star and cable patterns and foliage. The mermaid had a bad character in moralising literature, and new sources have been identified that give a reading more appropriate in the context of this chapel.

53 An example from Toulouse, see J. Porcher, French Miniatures from Illuminated Manuscripts (1960), pl. xix. Anglo-Saxon artists drew a mouth more from observation.
FIGURE 16. Capital S3, north face: man with zigzag mouth

FIGURE 17. Capital N3, north face: ‘portrait’ head of a man
FIGURE 18. Enlarged detail of a Norman manuscript, Rouen Bib., MS 420, fol. 11v, photograph in Conway Library, The Courtauld Institute of Art, London

FIGURE 19. Capital S2, north and west faces: two lions in star pattern
The serpent and the lions (Figs 19–22)

The serpent carved on the south face of N2 has the forked tongue of the natural creature (Fig. 20). It is without the winged forelegs and animal head which some later versions of this motif have, however, it does have small pointed ears. There is a pellet or dome inside the loop of the snake’s body, and the association of snakes with domes is quite frequent in English Romanesque sculpture. The dome has the remains of a roughly incised circle at the centre, and such domes can be shown to represent stars. In the context of heaven, the symbolism of the snake is based on the fact that it sheds its old skin and appears as recognisably itself, but ‘new’. Classical Graeco-Roman society took this as an indication of eternal life, and St Paul speculates on the ‘new body’ of the resurrection.

There are four lions carved in the chapel, these are on capitals S2 and N2, and capital N1 (Figs 19, 21, 22). In Romanesque sculpture the primary use made of the lion, the ‘king of beasts’, is to represent the victorious and ascended Christ, king in heaven. Generally some feature will make this clear, such as the bountiful tail of the lion in Figure 26, right. However, there are several lions on the capitals in the chapel, and no one more prominent than another. Believers are Christ’s younger kin (John 20:17; Romans 8:19–23), and they could be represented by these lions with no distinctive features. Like the various men’s heads discussed above, the lions and the snake in star patterns represent anonymous believers in heaven. Yet, these are animal symbols and not direct representations of physical men, and the Trinity itself was sometimes shown by animal symbols. The snake and lions could therefore perhaps picture a particularly spiritual level of human existence. Comparisons are made in Section V to sculpture at Northampton which includes lions and serpents.

The horned animal (Fig. 23)

This carving on the north face of capital N1 could represent an ox, which, according to Gregory the Great in his *Moralia in Job*, signifies a hard-working preacher:

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54 Snakes with domes are carved, for example, at Kirkburn (East Riding), Dinton (Bucks.) and Llanbadarn Fawr (Radnors.), all probably c. 1130. The association of snakes with domes has not been observed in Normandy or France more generally. See below, fn. 57.

55 Dome with central hollow a star, see Wood, *J.B.A.A.*, CLIV, 7.


Figure 20. Capital N2, south face: the serpent in star pattern

Figure 21. Capital N2, west face: another lion
Whom does the designation of ‘the ox’ set forth, save those within the bounds of Holy Church who have taken upon themselves the yoke of Orders and are constrained to the ministry of preaching?\textsuperscript{59}

There are many volutes on this capital (Fig. 8), both large ones on the angle and small paired ones elsewhere: as has been explained, both forms of volute were understood as foliage.\textsuperscript{60} Apart from the head of the ox and the various kinds of foliage, capital N1 has only one other motif, the small head of a lion on the west face (Fig. 22). It is perhaps not coincidence that there is so much foliage on this capital, for later in his exposition of the ox Gregory says of the preacher that he spends himself in the labour of preaching, and longs to be henceforth refreshed by eternal contemplation . . . but it is as if the chained ox lowed at [an] empty manger . . . we see nothing of the verdure of the eternal inheritance, [but] like brute animals we go hungering after the longed-for grass.

With feeling, Gregory describes the labouring ox longing for refreshment — he himself preached unless he was too ill and then his sermons were read for him.\textsuperscript{61} But the sculpture depicts both animals feeding: the lion on the west face of the capital has its tongue touching (tasting?) the small pair of volutes (that is, leaves) below, and it is presumably about to eat them, while the ox has an inverted pair of small volutes in its mouth and thus is shown actually ingesting leaves.\textsuperscript{62} The \textit{Moralia} speaks of longing for rest from labour: the carving shows the preacher at last being refreshed by the foliage of heavenly contemplation. Like the men on the opposite capital S1, the preacher is shown enjoying his reward.

\textit{The mermaid} (Fig. 24)

Romanesque mermaids and mermen are clearly derived from Mediterranean forms, originally classical Greek nereids and tritons, companions of the sea-god Poseidon. In France, in Germany and Italy, where classical influence was strongest, mermaids were carved quite frequently, but the mermaid has not been noted to occur in sculpture in Normandy,\textsuperscript{63} and she is not common in England — the example in this chapel is probably the earliest. Since the motif may have been unknown to the Norman sculptor, it is possible that a pen drawing of a mermaid was shown him, and that this introduced the zigzag mouth into the sculpture.\textsuperscript{64}

\textsuperscript{59} On Job 6.5, \textit{Moralia}, bk vii, 14.xii. See \textit{Morals in the Book of Job}, Library of the Fathers of the Holy Catholic Church anterior to the division of the East and West, vol. 18 (Oxford, 1844), 373. This translation reworked by the author so as to be more easily understood.

\textsuperscript{60} See above, under the heading ‘Star and Cable Patterns and Foliage’.

\textsuperscript{61} G.R. Evans, \textit{The Thought of Gregory the Great} (Cambridge, 1986), pp. 75–76.

\textsuperscript{62} The delicate tasting or nibbling by symbolic animals of one grape of a bunch or the tip of a leaf is a feature of numerous Romanesque carvings, for example, see Wood, \textit{Derbys. AJ}, cxxxv, pl. 6; R. Wood, ‘The Romanesque Font at St Marychurch, Torquay’, \textit{Devon Archaeological Society Proceedings}, LXXII (2004), 85, figs 6, 7. Compare capital at Cerisy-la-Fôret, Baylé, \textit{Origines}, fig. 551. The leaf in that case is a short upright leaf, of the kind that forms a collar at the base of many Norman-Corinthian capitals. There might be a reference in capital N1 to Isaiah 11:7b.

\textsuperscript{63} There are no illustrations of mermaids in Norman sculpture in either Baylé, \textit{Origines}, or J. Leclercq-Marx, \textit{La Sirène dans la pensée et dans l’Art de l’Antiquité et du Moyen Âge: du mythe païen au symbole chrétien} (Brussels, 1997).

\textsuperscript{64} For the various creatures called ‘sirens’, see Leclercq-Marx, \textit{La Sirène}. For the mouth, see above, under the heading ‘The various men’s heads’.
FIGURE 22. Capital N1, west face: a lion’s head with foliage

FIGURE 23. Capital N1, north face: the ox
The pose of the Durham mermaid is similar to that of the ‘syrene’ in the earliest surviving illustrated bestiary, dated to c. 1120 (Fig. 25). In the contemporary bestiary of Philippe de Thaon, the text describes the siren as seductive, recalling the episode in Homer’s Odyssey. She symbolises the riches of this world which ‘effect great wonders, they talk, fly, take by the feet and drown’ their victim. Bestiaries are unanimous in giving a negative character to the siren, yet, in the context of the chapel’s sculpture as it has been interpreted above, warnings of this kind would be entirely out of place: there is no moralising against sin in the Eustace legend, but there as elsewhere in the chapel the sculpture expresses spiritual aspirations and attainment. And not only here does the mermaid-motif demand a positive role, but even more clearly on a tympanum at Stow Longa (Fig. 26), where a mermaid is flanked by a lamb and a lion, which here are symbols of Christ. Elsewhere, mermen ring the font at St Peter’s, Cambridge; in Pavia (Fig. 27), a mermaid is several times paired with a naked man-with-foliage; in the crypt of Modena cathedral, mermen and bird-sirens are arranged symmetrically round capitals; a mermaid at Le Puy Cathedral wears a crown; an ivory crozier in the form of a tau from Jumièges Abbey has a bishop on one side and a mermaid orant on the other, similarly ornamented. In every case, the context suggests that favourable interpretations for the mermaid must have existed. Indeed, some classical texts did mention sirens positively, associating them with the ‘music of the spheres’ and heavenly life-forms; these works had been absorbed by a few early Christian writers for orthodox usage, and could have been known to those designing teaching schemes in sculpture in the eleventh and twelfth centuries.

Jacqueline Leclercq-Marx, after a wide-ranging examination of sirens in literature and art, summarises the twelfth century as a period when sirens were described as compassionate real creatures, for example, warning sailors of gales, but she repeats that their symbolic meaning was to warn against seduction in its various forms. Objections to the generally negative symbolism for the mermaid have been raised by French authors studying Romanesque carvings in central France. They cite a

65 C.M. Kauffmann, *Romanesque Manuscripts 1066–1190* (1975), p. 76. Sirens and centaurs had been paired since the earliest versions of the *Physiologus*: see Leclercq-Marx, *La Sirène*, pp. 45–47; for the translations of the Hebrew texts in Isaiah which name the two creatures as in fig. 25, see ibid., pp. 43–44.

66 The siren in early Romanesque art is predominantly a mermaid, although bird-sirens also occur especially later in the twelfth century. The Pudsey doorway in the Norman gallery has some perched in its capitals; compare Leclercq-Marx, *La Sirène*, ill. 169 (c. 1150; Louvre).

67 The animal on the left has a shaggy fleece and undocked tail; it is associated with an altar and represents Christ as the sacrificed Lamb. The animal on the right with the vigorous tail is ‘leo fortis’ and represents the victorious and ascended Christ. A lion conventionally raises a fore-paw to the front, but here this would have interfered with the mermaid’s tail. For photographs, see www.crsbi.ac.uk.

68 D. Gaborit-Chopin, *Trésors des Abbayes Normandes* (Rouen, 1979), item 269, pp. 241–43; L. Musset, *Normandie Romane*, 2: *Haute Normandie*, pls. 44, 45; English *Romanesque Art 1066–1200*, ed. G. Zarnbeck, J. Holt and T. Holland (1984), item 181, showing bishop side only. The small extent of the mermaid below the waist is broken away so that whether tail or tails cannot be determined; the arms and shoulders are scaly above her breasts; the hands do not clasp the border but lie open in front of it.


70 Ibid., pp. 141, 227–28.

Figure 24. Capital S2, south face: the mermaid

Figure 25. Illustration from a bestiary: syrene and onocentaur, Bodleian Library, University of Oxford: MS. Laud Misc. 247, fol. 147, photograph in Conway Library, The Courtauld Institute of Art, London
metaphor of Clement of Alexandria which likens the attraction of the voice of the mermaid to the appeal of the scriptures: they suggest that the singing of the Romanesque mermaid represents the transmission of the gospel. However, since the authors make unsupported assumptions about the meanings of the motifs associated with the mermaids in this interpretation (such as foliage, men-with-snakes and men-with-foliage), their suggestion is not convincing. Nevertheless, they are right to ponder the frequent association of the motifs of mermaid and man-with-foliage. The Durham mermaid has her hands raised in an attitude of praise like the men on capital S1 (Fig. 7) and, with her fishy tail, she is as sexless as they are.

Considered by medieval people as a marvel of creation, the mermaid is half-woman half-fish, thus she resembles the centaur, which is half-man half-horse; these creatures commonly appear together, as in Figure 25. After the Edict of Milan, much Roman imagery was appropriated for Christian use, but there were limits to borrowing figures from pagan mythology, especially in the early centuries when the worship of the old gods might have been revived: clerical approval would have been essential before artists incorporated the siren or centaur with anything other than a negative meaning. However, at least by the early eleventh century, the form of the centaur had been taken into art to picture the dual nature of the incarnate Christ, the God-Man. It may be that in Moralía in Job, the late-sixth-century text quoted above regarding the ox, we have an influential theologian writing in a way that would sanction the use of the mermaid, and classical sirens generally, as positive motifs in Christian art. In his preface to Moralía, Gregory the Great describes how, in the resurrection life, Holy Church (sancta Ecclesìa) will receive a double reward because she rises not to the joy of souls alone, but to a blessed state of bodies as well. That is, the saints will finally experience the perfect bliss of eternal souls united with incorruptible bodies. Gregory, quoting Revelation 6:11, continues:

And there was given to them to each [soul] a white robe; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little time, until [the number of] their fellow-servants . . . should be fulfilled. That is, the souls of the deceased have robes given them while they await the general resurrection. Towards the end of Moralía, Gregory returns to this subject:

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72 Ibid., pp. 56–58. The open-mouthed, singing, mermaid at Stow Longa is a rarity, but see also Leclercq-Marx, La Sirène, fig. 100 (Agen Cathedral).
73 For example, they assume that snakes speak evil thoughts to men, but see R. Wood, ‘The Romanesque Tympanum at Fownhope, Herefordshire, and the Functioning of the Herefordshire School of Romanesque Sculpture’, Transactions of the Woolhope Naturalists Field Club, lxxi (2005), 69–71. Similarly, they interpret foliage and symmetry to fit their thesis. Leclercq-Marx also notes the association of carvings of the siren with naked men, and concludes the siren is a negative moral figure.
74 The classical triumph is a metaphor used by St Paul, a Roman citizen (2. Cor. 2:14; Col. 2:15). Many elements of a triumph appear in iconography, see A. Grabar, Christian Iconography: a Study of its Origins (Princeton, 1968).
75 Although Hercules overcame Cerberus at the mouth of Hades, this demi-god is very rarely used as a type of Christ harrowing Hell: see R. Wood, ‘The Occupatio of St Odo of Cluny and the Porch Sculpture at Malmesbury Abbey’, Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Magazine, cxi (2000), 203–05. Leclercq-Marx, La Sirène, p. 60, notes a profound opposition between pagan and Christian culture.
76 See Wood, Antiq. J., lxxix, 226–27, fig. 4.
the saints receive a single garment before the resurrection, because they enjoy the happiness of their souls alone; but in the end of the world they are about to have, each of them, two [garments],

\[\text{78 'in fine autem mundi binas habituri sunt'. Corpus Christianorum Series Latina, vol. CXLIIIB, 1789.}\]

because, together with blessedness of mind, they will also possess the glory of the flesh.\[\text{79}\]

It is suggested that the mermaid was recognised as having two ‘garments’, and therefore that the motif was capable of representing an individual composed of soul and body or, collectively, Holy Church, in heaven after the general resurrection.\[\text{80}\]

The likelihood that this derivation and interpretation of the mermaid motif is valid is strengthened by the observation that the *Moralia in Job* also includes a long passage which verges on describing the incarnate Christ in the form of a centaur, for example:

our Redeemer is, in one and the same person, both the horseman and the rider of the horseman

He joined together in Himself, not that only which was ruled [Man/lower part/horse], but that also which ruled [God/upper part/man].

Gregory describes this combined creature as outwitting the scornful Jews.\[\text{81}\] In the early twelfth century, in the *Livre des Créatures* of Philippe de Thaon, Christ is explicitly represented by a centaur, with the horse part delivering vengeance on the Jews. It is therefore suggested that, at some time after the writing of *Moralia*, both the centaur and the siren were appropriated as positive teaching aids on the strength of Gregory the Great’s descriptions.

The examples of Romanesque mermaids listed above occur in various contexts, which affect the precise meaning in each case.\[\text{82}\] In the tympanum at Stow Longa, (Fig. 26) the mermaid personifies Holy Church, she is in heaven singing praises to the Lamb and the Lion; the personification would also apply in the case of the crozier from Jumièges. Where there are multiple mermaids or mermen, as in the crypt in Modena and on the font in Cambridge, the motif would evoke anonymous individuals in the afterlife. The frequent association of the mermaid with the man-and-foliage motif, as in Pavia (Fig. 27) and as observed in the Velay region, suggests that there the mermaid represents a female believer in paradise alongside her male counterpart. The mermaid in Durham is of that kind, though, because capitals

\[\text{78 ‘in fine autem mundi binas habituri sunt’. Corpus Christianorum Series Latina, vol. CXLIIIB, 1789.}\]

\[\text{79 Moralía, bk xxxv, ch. 25, Library of the Fathers, xxxi, 678, re. Job 42:11.}\]

\[\text{80 In Hildegardis: Scivias, c. 1140–50, one illustration of Mother Church differs in significant details from the others in the same work: see Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis, xliii (Turnhout, 1978), pl. opp. p. 174, the Fifth vision of the Second part. The crowned female figure is clothed above the waist, has raised hands and a scaly lower body. Hildegard of Bingen explains that this figure, representing the triumphant Mother Church, is made up of apostles and religious above the waist, and laity below. By the mid twelfth century in sculpture, a variety of twofold combinations between lions, snakes and birds is used with the intention of representing believers living the marvellous new life in heaven, see Wood, *YAJ*, lxxviii, 120–23. In the seventeenth century, George Herbert used the horse and rider as an allegory of the ‘bodie and minde’ of a Christian, in the opening section of his poem *Christmas*.}\]

\[\text{81 Gregory the Great, *Moralia in Job*, bk xxxi, ch. 42 (expounding Job 39:13–18); Library of the Fathers, xxxi, 455–56.}\]

\[\text{82 Romanesque carvings illustrated by Leclercq-Marx, *La Sirène*, could represent either Ecclesia (e.g., ills. 69, 70, 72; figs 115–7b) or the blessed (e.g., ills. 130, 140, 144, 167, 169).}\]
S1 and S2 are separate and not immediately adjoining, she might have been used as a figure of Holy Church had occasion ever arisen. But why the bishop’s chapel in Durham included a female image at all when foliage could have filled this face of the capital (as on the corresponding face of N2) is a matter for consideration in the next section.
The chapel is small and precious enough to have been used by the prince-bishop and his household clergy alone. The sacred and secular not being distinct, the chapel might also have seen secondary use as a place for solemn business such as the witnessing of charters. Further, the sculpture as interpreted above seems to address the religious beliefs of particular individuals – laymen and women as well as clergy. This section examines the possible implications of these sculptural references for our understanding of the liturgical functioning of the chapel (Fig. 28).

As a rule, the sculpture on the east face of any capital would have been the least important since those present generally faced east, seeing most easily the west face and, diagonally, the north or south face of any capital. On entering from the south doorway, the view embraces the cable ring and the man in stars on S3, and Placidas/Eustace on N3 (Fig. 29). This combination might have suggested, for example, ‘This is a holy place’, ‘heaven is close’ and ‘God seeks you’. Most, perhaps all, of those who entered would continue directly forwards, northwards, into the avenue of columns and to the central line of squared paving stones, the axis of the chapel. Here, guided by the flow of the chevron pattern, individuals would turn eastward to reverence the altar, conscious of the stag on the west face of N3 looking down at them (Fig. 12). The stag represents the crucified Christ, suffering and patient: the west face of S3 has a bunch of grapes as a symbol of his shed blood and of the Eucharist (Fig. 10). Diagonally opposite the narrative of the earthly Eustace on capital N3 is capital S1 which shows men in paradise, those who have renounced or controlled the desires of the flesh as Eustace had done; again attention is drawn eastwards and ‘Godwards’.

Since most people stood during services, several dozen could in theory have been present, however, ritual movement and etiquette have to be allowed for and considerably reduce that number. After honouring the altar, any laymen present would have moved aside, leaving room for the entry of the clergy procession. Laymen eventually stood around capital N3 with the story of Eustace, and around capital S3 which has the heads of men in stars, that is, in heaven. Looking eastwards, they would see the capitals of the east responds which also showed men’s heads with stars; the tau cross might have been seen beyond the altar.

The positive interpretation found for the mermaid indicates that women as well as men used the chapel, though they must have been in a minority. It is suggested that any women present stood or sat together in the third bay of the south aisle overlooked by the mermaid, that is, in the bay next to the doorway. In the early medieval period the congregation was customarily segregated by gender, and in some cases in Rome women stood to the left as seen from the sanctuary. Whether Roman custom was

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83 The sexes are segregated in art, for example, in an illustration of St Fulbert of Chartres preaching; in drawings of the congregation in the Exultet Rolls of Norman south Italy; on a mosaic in Venice over the north doorway of the west façade of St Mark’s.

FIGURE 28. Suggested liturgical use of the Norman Chapel

FIGURE 29. View from the original entrance in western bay of south wall, capitals N3 and S3
being followed, or whether this was the most convenient place for women to be, cannot be determined.

The position of the altar is marked, first, by the four corners of a ‘ciborium’ formed by the east respond capitals with their cable patterns together with capitals N1 and S1 and their paradise symbolism; secondly, by the emptiness of the central east bay in Carter’s plan of the floor, which suggests that a complex pavement had been salvaged. The altar would have been approximately cube-shaped, and freestanding; the celebrant at mass would almost certainly have stood to its west, facing east. In a church without an apse, the bishop would sit in the north-east bay; other clergy would have used the wall seat in the south-east bay as the customary sedilia. The gospel was read from the north side, and preaching would have followed it, probably from the same position, as suggested by the carving of the ox. The officiating clergy are therefore accommodated in the three eastern bays, the area formerly raised slightly above the rest, but for ease of movement round the altar they also needed the second three bays from the east.

One more area seems to be marked out for attendant clergy, that between pillars N2 and S2 together with the central third bay from the east. Here the motifs of snake and lions, on these capitals and on N1, probably refer to the clergy and their more spiritual life. Laity would consequently be restricted to the five peripheral bays of the western half of the chapel. The extension of the clergy area westwards from a compact eastern ‘chancel’ recalls the arrangements in a basilican church, though there is no suggestion of actual fixed barriers in the chapel. For the choir offices, clergy would probably have gathered in the two central bays of the chapel in two rows facing each other.

One reason that the chamber has not always been recognised as a chapel is that, in plan, it is an undivided rectangle. It is instructive to compare the placing of sculptural motifs in the Norman Chapel with that in three other interiors with little architectural differentiation, two associated with important castles, and one a monastic cathedral. Because of their size or status, or both, all three are likely to have been served by a number of clergy. Their architecture allows an unrestricted view into the sanctuary, but their sculpture suggests limited physical access for the laity. With no chancel arch,

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85 For example, Gregory, Dialogues 4.58.
86 This is not to suggest that anything as exotic as a Cosmati pavement was laid in this bay but, by highlighting the altar in some way, marking the central axis leading to it and patterning the whole floor, the paving in the chapel imitated a Roman pavement. Compare P. Pajares-Ayuela, Cosmatesque Ornament: Flat Polychrome Geometric Patterns in Architecture (2001), figs 4–55, 6–3.
87 Eisenhofer, The Liturgy, p. 132.
89 The sermon or homily was often a reading from one of the Fathers, or on the gospel.
Figure 30. St John’s chapel in the White Tower, London: capital at south side of the western recess

Figure 31. St John’s chapel in the White Tower, London: capital at north side of the western recess, photograph in Conway Library, The Courtauld Institute of Art, London
the first impression is of an avenue of pillars, so that, in varying degrees, all four interiors resemble a Roman basilica.

St John’s chapel in the Tower of London probably predates the chapel in Durham castle. It comprises a four-bay nave with an apse, both opening by arcades into a continuous aisle.91 There is nothing interrupting the sweep of wall, pillars and capitals to mark the chord of the apse.92 The delicate formal designs on the capitals are irregularly distributed, with the tau cross common throughout (Figs 3, 30, 31); here it is the massive plain curve of the apse wall that signals the east end and the altar. A shallow round-headed recess at the west end is flanked by the responds of the arcades: here details are special. The impost have star patterns and beading, not mouldings as elsewhere in the chapel; the capitals have the tau cross but the leaves on the angles are additionally refined (Figs 30, 31, compare Fig. 3). The extra degree of ornamentation suggests that the recess made an appropriate backcloth for the king: yet liturgical action took up most of the floor space.

The crypt of Canterbury Cathedral was begun shortly after the appointment of Anselm as Archbishop in 1093 and was perhaps completed by the time of his death in 1109.93 It ends in an apse, but this is not obvious. On the central axis, the crypt has eleven pairs of refined columns which have been examined by Eric Fernie to clarify the original arrangement of their patterns.94 His analysis concludes that an eastern series of three pairs of columns marked the sanctuary, and they had shafts richly decorated with spirals.95 The series of beautiful pillars making an avenue to the altar, and the spiral patterns highlighting it, are reminiscent of the Durham Castle chapel. The sculpture in Anselm’s crypt is relevant too. Of the capitals of the western series, the second, fourth and sixth pair from the west have sculpture.96 The capitals of the second pair of pillars from the west have a curious collection of images, some related to Canterbury illuminations.97 These carvings might have entertained novices, children or laity during a long service, thus reinforcing some moral teaching already received, which is a function comparable to that of the Eustace carvings at Durham. As to the fourth pair of capitals, that on the north has, twice, an elaborate lion and a griffin each holding a drooping snake; the south capital is all foliage.98 These carvings could announce Christ’s victory over death and, consequent on that, the opportunity of paradise for mankind. The sixth pair of capitals, the last sculpture before the sanctuary, have symmetrical designs; here the picture is of the peaceful and regular

92 Ibid., p. 58.
93 The eastern arm of the cathedral, apparently complete except for the tops of the towers, was consecrated in 1130: Fernie, in Coldstream and Draper, *Medieval Art and Architecture in Canterbury*, p. 27.
94 Fernie, in ibid., pp. 31–33. Note the pillars are numbered and discussed from west to east.
95 Fernie, in ibid., p. 32.
96 The three pairs of capitals in the eastern series are all likely to have had ‘richly carved ornament’ just as they can all be reasoned to have had spiral pillars, Fernie, in ibid., pp. 31, 32.
98 Capital 4N: Kahn, *Canterbury Cathedral*, figs 81, 82; Zarnecki, *Sculpture 1066–1140*, fig. 50; Capital 4S: Kahn, *Canterbury Cathedral*, fig. 49.
life in paradise. The anticipation of paradise and the symmetry in the sixth pair of capitals recall features at the east end of the chapel at Durham.

St Peter’s, Northampton, was built by the lord of the nearby castle c. 1120–40. The interior is of eight bays, formerly nine: five (formerly six) allocated to the nave and three to the chancel; there are eight pairs of capitals with carving. The effect is very rich throughout, and at first glance there is little to choose between the areas that would have been occupied by the laity and the clergy, though the present division by steps is confirmed by minor architectural details. The continuity of the interior is especially noticeable in engravings showing the church without furniture or steps: these strongly recall a basilican church. The four pairs of capitals in the nave have various foliate patterns, sometimes with the addition of small masks from which foliage emerges, and there is one carving of a naked man rising out of an inverted mask. The fifth pair of capitals from the west have the first animal symbols (birds and lions in foliage), and mark the beginning of the clergy area. The lions and wyverns on the sixth pair of capitals and imposts from the west are either symmetrical or their attitudes are ecstatic and full of energy, consequently these probably frame the approach to the altar which perhaps was in the central bay of the three. Further eastwards again, as well as foliage patterns, the east responds have lions and a snake. Thus there is a distinction between west and east in the form of those in heaven: the nave depicts the resurrection of the physical body, the priestly part of the interior is marked by a spiritual life symbolised by birds, lions, serpents, and combinations of them.

A traditional apsed basilica in Rome had a clergy or choir area that ran westward from the altar down the centre of the nave, this area was separated off by low marble screens, cancelli. Beyond the altar at the eastern end of the clergy enclosure, against the curve of the apse wall, was raised seating for the bishop and clergy. Much of the old basilican arrangement seems to have been reproduced in the twelfth-century Canterbury Cathedral, in the ‘glorious choir’ above the crypt already described. The choir was built c. 1096–1110, and Gervase of Canterbury described its furnishing before the disastrous fire of 1174:

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99 Capital 6N: Kahn, *Canterbury Cathedral*, fig. 60; Capital 6S: ibid., fig. 57, pl. x.
100 P. Woodfield, *Church of St Peter, Marefair, Northampton* (2007). For a discussion of the historical development of chancels in general and St Peter’s in particular, see P.S. Barnwell, ‘The Laity, the Clergy and the Divine Presence: the Use of Space in Smaller Churches of the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries’, *JBAA*, CLVII (2004), 41–60. See www.crsbi.ac.uk for photographs of the Northampton sculpture. For access, see website www.visitchurches.org.uk. St Peter’s has lost a little of its original west and east ends, but that does not affect the discussion. Note that, because sculpture is being discussed and not architecture, for simplicity the term ‘bay’ is used here as meaning one interval in an arcade.
102 Somewhere in the eastern area was perhaps the grave of which the slab survives: this is contemporary with the sculpture on the capitals and presumably commemorated the founder or his son. See *English Romanesque Art 1066–1200*, ed. Zarnacki, Holt and Holland, item 142, pp. 62, 180; Wood, *YAJ*, lxxv, 74. There may have been a shrine of St Ragener, probably in the lost east bay, if so it would have been accessible to the laity by the aisles.
103 A. Doig, *Liturgy and Architecture from the Early Church to the Middle Ages* (Aldershot, 2008), pp. 89–94, discusses the upper church of San Clemente in Rome (a rebuild of c. 1100 using old material) as the setting for a papal stational mass of perhaps the seventh century.
At the base of the pillars [that is, the nine pairs of pillars in the choir] there was a wall built of marble slabs, which, surrounding the choir and presbytery, divided the body of the church from its sides, which are called aisles. This wall enclosed the choir of the monks, the presbytery, the great Altar dedicated in the name of Jesus Christ, the altar of St Dunstan and the altar of St Alphege ... Above the wall, in the circuit behind and opposite the altar, was the patriarchal seat, formed out of a single stone, in which ... the archbishops were wont to sit during the solemnities of the mass, until the consecration of the Sacrament; they then descended to the Altar of Christ by eight steps ...\footnote{F. Woodman, *The Architectural History of Canterbury Cathedral* (1981), pp. 46–47, the translation taken from R. Willis, *Architectural History of some English Cathedrals*, pt 1 (1845), 43–44, with reconstruction plan of the cathedral in 1174 on p. 38. Professor Willis comments that ‘the wall was evidently low, from its construction of marble slabs, and the [archbishop’s] chair, elevated upon eight steps, would rise above it’. See also C. Davidson Cragoe, ‘Reading and Rereading Gervase of Canterbury’, *JBAA*, CLIV (2001), 46.}

The sculpture in the Norman Chapel of Durham Castle makes effective use of standard patterns and motifs, using them individually for teaching purposes and, together, to organise a small space with great precision. In addition, numerous features of Roman origin have been mentioned — most obviously, the beautiful columns, the martyr Eustace, and the interest in the writings of Pope Gregory — and, if the chapel itself functioned according to the basilican plan, that is yet another. To the modern reader, these references to Rome might seem just coincidence, but the demonstration of *romanitas*, whether of imperial or Christian kind, was very highly valued.\footnote{It is hard for a modern beholder to see anything comparable' between medieval copies and their models, but see R. Krautheimer, ‘Introduction to an “Iconography of Mediaeval Architecture”’, *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, v (1942), 1–33.} The chapel shone ‘glorious’ not just through its obvious craftsmanship, nor even on account of its painstaking design, but by reflecting the very best exemplars.\footnote{See, for example, the essays in Part II of *Roma Felix — Formation and Reflections of Medieval Rome*, ed. E. O’Carragain and C. Neuman de Vegvar (Aldershot, 2007); J. Hawkes, ‘The Legacy of Constantine in Anglo-Saxon England’, in *Constantine the Great: York’s Roman Emperor*, ed. G. Hartley, J. Hawkes and M. Henig with F. Mee (York, 2006), pp. 104–12.}

Non spatiosa nimis, sed speciosa satis. The final section of this paper will present the evidence for linking the design of the chapel to Bishop William of St Calais.

VI

William was the first Bishop of Durham actually with a Norman background,\footnote{Modern accounts include: H.S. Offler, ‘William of St Calais, First Norman Bishop of Durham’, *TAASDN*, x (3) (1950), 258–79; W.M. Aird, ‘An Absent Friend: the Career of Bishop William of St Calais’, in Rollason, Harvey and Prestwich, *Anglo-Norman Durham*, pp. 283–97.} his murdered predecessor Walcher having been from Lotharingia. William of St Calais was chosen by the Conqueror as Bishop in November 1080, consecrated in January 1081, exiled by William Rufus from 1088–91, began building the cathedral at his own expense in 1093 and died in January 1096. In fifteen years, despite the initial unrest and his own exile, much was accomplished, including the peaceful establishment of a contented priory, the formation of a Norman cathedral worthy of the region’s saint and, outside the diocese, much work for the Crown. Locally he acted wisely, for
example, carrying opinion with him when reordering the community of St Cuthbert;\textsuperscript{108} nationally he is thought to have had some role in organising Domesday Book.\textsuperscript{109}

His Norman background makes him the obvious choice to be the builder of the chapel. Born perhaps in the 1030s, he is first recorded as a secular clerk in Bayeux, but he shortly became a monk, and later abbot, of St Calais in Maine; from about 1078 he was abbot of St Vincent in Le Mans. Maine had been under Norman occupation since 1063, and while at Le Mans William was useful to the Conqueror in resolving some ‘very difficult affairs’: the appointment to Durham followed.\textsuperscript{110} In England he became the King’s close adviser and ‘a thoroughly curial figure’.\textsuperscript{111} The qualities that made many clerics of this period useful to rulers — in William’s case useful not only to the Conqueror but to his sons Rufus and Robert — were skills of memory, logic and public speaking that had been acquired in the course of a religious vocation. William of St Calais is sometimes represented devoid of this background, particularly when he is reduced to a ‘slippery’ politician on the biased opinion of Eadmer.\textsuperscript{112} Dom David Knowles acknowledges no fault in the monk, but he does see both sides of the man: ‘an excellent representative of the observant and lettered foreign monasticism, he was also a man of outstanding ability’.\textsuperscript{113} William should be seen in the round: to this end, for example, the continuous care with which he built up the monastic library and scriptorium at Durham Priory might be noticed.\textsuperscript{114}

For eye-witness accounts of him there are only those of the monks Symeon and Eadmer, both biased in their own ways. Symeon had longer and closer contact with his subject and must be preferred. His William is vigorous, assiduous, zealous; he has a tenacious memory, subtlety of mind, gives prudent advice; he is well equipped with eloquence and it is a pleasure to hear him speaking.\textsuperscript{115} But Symeon also relates that, after Boso’s prophetic dream was told to the Bishop, William then ‘trembled in great fear, and began thenceforth to take greater care of the health of his soul, being more generous in almsgiving, praying at greater length and more intently, and not setting

\textsuperscript{108} Compare the moderate view taken by the new community in the early years, M. Foster, ‘Custodians of St Cuthbert: The Durham Monks’ Views of their Predecessors, 1083–c.1200’, in Rollason, Harvey and Prestwich, Anglo-Norman Durham, pp. 54–61.


\textsuperscript{110} Rollason, Symeon of Durham, bk iv, ch. 1, pp. 222–25; Offler, TAASDN, x(3), 262.

\textsuperscript{111} M. Philpott, ‘The De iniusta uexacione Willelmi episcopi primi and Canon Law in Anglo-Norman Durham’, in Rollason, Harvey and Prestwich, Anglo-Norman Durham, p. 133. Aird, in ibid., p. 291, notes how the bishop of Durham would be near the head of the list of witnesses in many royal charters.

\textsuperscript{112} Offler, TAASDN, x (3), 270; VCH Durham, ii, 137. R.W. Southern, in his foreword to Eadmer’s History of Recent Events in England, trans. G. Bosanquet (1964), says Eadmer was not very far-sighted or balanced in his judgement. The dispute about Archbishop Anselm at Rockingham, in which Bishop William was spokesman for the King, is given on pp. 54–69.


\textsuperscript{114} A. Lawrence-Mathers, Manuscripts in Northumbria in the 11th and 12th Centuries (Woodbridge, 2003), pp. 27–63. Philpott, in Rollason, Harvey and Prestwich, Anglo-Norman Durham, pp. 125–137, fn. 111, is also relevant.

\textsuperscript{115} Rollason, Symeon of Durham, bk iv, ch. 1, pp. 222–25.
aside on account of any business the periods reserved for daily prayer in private'.

The thought of Bishop William on his deathbed closeted with Archbishop Anselm 'for a long time' brings before us the acute dilemma of men of religion trapped in a feudal system.

With his background, it is not surprising that the books he gave the cathedral priory show 'a preference for Norman texts, styles and editions'. As a young man William would have seen many great churches being built in Normandy, and as a secular clerk he must have understood the content of the sculpture and perhaps taught from it. With this experience, he would find it something of a relaxation, probably very soon after being chosen as Bishop in 1080, to design his own chapel using familiar symbols. He could have brought his own stonemasons with him to Durham since capitals in the chapel are voluted in the Norman manner — it is cushion and scallop types, from other sources, which appear from 1093 onward in the cathedral. The early days of his episcopate would logically have been the time to build the chapel: his castle was secure but conditions outside were uncertain and the cathedral was still in the hands of the irregular native community of St Cuthbert. Perhaps the Bishop used the vision of his chapel to try to persuade the old community to reform under his leadership: however, the Benedictine rule was eventually introduced to the cathedral in 1083 with monks brought from Wearmouth and Jarrow. If Laurence of Durham’s couplet is any guide, the Bishop’s chapel must have encouraged those early monks as to the quality of the new cathedral they could expect.

William’s exile in Normandy would have given him opportunity to work on the cathedral project, for which Malcolm Thurlby has shown he looked to Old St Peter’s in Rome for a model. The admiration of Rome was universal and of long-standing, but in Durham it would recall the journeys of Benedict Biscop and Ceolfrid to furnish Wearmouth–Jarrow; these journeys were described in Bede’s History, of which the Bishop had his own copy. St Calais himself visited Rome at least once, in winter 1082–83, and would have seen the basilicas with their striking classical pillars. Both the castle chapel and the cathedral impress by their pillars — but this, of course, may have been a more universal emphasis than we can now tell, when paint has been lost.

The layout of the chapel, with its tidy arrangement of personnel as if in pigeonholes, suggests the administrator, but what of the cleric? The books Bishop William gave the monks over the years were ‘a rather conventional collection’ but, equally,
books ‘fundamental for his new foundation’. The list also reflects the fact that, beyond the usual compliments paid by monastic biographers, William of St Calais was known for his public speaking: his ability is mentioned admiringly by Symeon as quoted above, and, bitterly, by Eadmer who describes him as ‘a man quick-witted and of ready tongue rather than endowed with true wisdom’. His own interests are reflected in the donations: sermons of Ambrose, Gregory, Rabanus and others are included; some of the books were used for reading aloud in the refectory. In the list are the *Moralia in Job* and five other titles by Gregory the Great, the Pope who not only felt himself constrained to preach, but who was insistent that preaching was the duty of every priest, and especially of a bishop. St Gregory would have been an example to William also in that they had both been called from monastic life to be administrators. The carving of the ox in paradise embodies William’s personal hopes of rest after labour. This public comparison of the bishop to an animal driven by peasants reinforces the feeling that the chapel was not richly furnished for the sake of self-aggrandisement, but because its beauty was intended to win over opposition to the new order and be a foretaste of the cathedral.

The bishop would have sat ready to read and preach in the north-east bay, facing the altar and with the ox to his right hand. In Carter’s plan, there is a change in the direction of the herringbone pattern in this one bay, in deference presumably to the bishop’s sightline on the altar. The floor itself is impossible to date securely to the time of St Calais, nevertheless, this pavement emulated those of churches in Rome by having the altar area distinctively paved and the axial line marked, and in addition the overall chevron pattern would have completed the enclosure of worshippers in a symbolic heaven. In the cathedral, too, there are significant remains of early paving, and this can reasonably be linked to Bishop William, at least in the planning though he may not have lived to see it. The choir, crossing piers, eastern sides of both transepts and one bay of the nave immediately west of the crossing were completed in his lifetime; the transepts were completed by the monks before 1099, and the

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124 See Turner, *J. Theol. Studies*, xix, 125–31; A. C. Browne, ‘Bishop William of St Carilef’s Book Donations to Durham Cathedral Priory’, *Scriptorium*, xlIi (1988), 140–55. It is speculation, but the large aumbry in the north-east bay (fn. 28) is plenty large enough to have held both volumes of the Carilef Bible (vol. ii, DCL A. II. 4, approx. 0.32 m × 0.5 m).

125 Evans, *Gregory the Great*, pp. 75–86. Texts of Gregory the Great in the list are: *Moralia, Pastoral Care, Registrum* (letters), *40 Homilies, Homilies on Ezekiel* and *Dialogues* (probably a seventh-century reworking of Gregorian texts); also in the booklist is a work supposedly by Prosper of Aquitaine, *De contemplativa et activa vita*.

126 For pavements in Roman churches, see fn. 86. The axial line at Durham could perhaps have guided the crucifer and the clerical procession: monks walked with their eyes cast down, as enjoined in ch. 7 of the Benedictine Rule; see J.O. Prestwich, ‘The Career of Ranulf Flambard’, in Rollason, Harvey and Prestwich, *Anglo-Norman Durham*, p. 301. For zigzagging patterns as the shining day-lit firmament, see Wood, *JBAA*, CLIV, 24. A capital at Graville priory, though recut, shows two headless men standing and holding their smiling heads, beneath them is a zigzag line. This can be interpreted as two martyrs receiving back their heads: standing on the firmament, they are in heaven. See Baylé, *Origines*, fig. 611, bottom left (pre-restoration drawing).
apse vault, if not the whole choir vault, may have been completed by 1104, when a
consecration took place and the body of St Cuthbert was translated into the apse.\textsuperscript{127} John Crook believes that the pavement of which vestiges remain in the feretory would
have been in existence by 1104: it would have prepared the apse to accommodate the
elaborate shrine, which comprised the reliquary-coffin raised high on columns and a
plinth. The Romanesque apse is brought back to life by runs of slabs intermittently
following what would have been the curve of its wall; within this border the pavement
had simple rows of large rectangular slabs running east–west. The technique is a
common one and the scale is very different, but these features recall the chapel in the
castle, and might suggest the involvement of the same workmen with both
pavements.\textsuperscript{128} That the chapel’s pavement was not laid from the beginning could have
been due to the apprehension of subsidence there, for the castle is not on such solid
ground as the cathedral. Colgrave records of the chapel that ‘a two-course rubble wall
. . . had been built beneath the original floor to stabilize the bases before erecting the
superstructure’.\textsuperscript{129} Early doubts about the condition of the subsoil in this area might
also explain the placing of the chapel against the curtain wall; while the building
added onto its south wall in the late twelfth century may have functioned partly as a
buttress.

Bishop William died at the King’s Christmas court at Windsor, and the body was
brought back to Durham, where Symeon says it was greeted with lamentations by
‘the monks, the clergy [and] all the people’ and carried into the church of St Michael,
where ‘its obsequies were performed the first night by the clergy and people’. In the
morning the monks took the body from there and burial took place the following day
in the chapter house. David Rollason suggests that the otherwise unrecorded church
of St Michael might have been the chapel in the castle,\textsuperscript{130} and this would indeed seem
to be the appropriate place to have taken the body on arrival at Durham.

\textsuperscript{128} ‘The most obvious feature of the layout of the floor is the way in which it seems to preserve an [original] apsidal
structure’, J. Crook, ‘The Architectural Setting of the Cult of St Cuthbert in Durham Cathedral (1093–1200)’ in Rollason, Harvey and Prestwich, \textit{Anglo-Norman Durham}, pp. 243, 244, 248–49, 242; fig. 17. See also fn. 26. It is unfortunate that a specimen of neither pavement is available for analysis, as this might have added to the
circumstantial evidence for a connection. Another similarity is that both pavements were raised, apparently as an
afterthought.
\textsuperscript{129} Colgrave, \textit{TAASDN}, \textbf{x} (4), 381.
\textsuperscript{130} Rollason, \textit{Syneon of Durham}, bk iv, ch. 10, pp. 255, n. 55. St Michael’s is not likely to have been a mortuary
chapel in the monastic enclosure because of the presence of laity the first night.