

Review by Rita Wood (2019)

## Mary Curtis Webb

### ***Ideas and Images in Twelfth Century Sculpture: the transmission of ideas and their visual images from the first to the twelfth centuries***

(revised edition 2012)

#### **GENERAL REMARKS**

This significant book was given widespread distribution following private publication in 2012 (pp. 1-5): it can be found in its printed version in more than twenty university libraries, and is available as a free download from several web-sites including that of the Buckinghamshire Archaeological Society ([www.bucksas.org.uk](http://www.bucksas.org.uk)) and Lionel Wall's site ([www.greatenglishchurches.co.uk](http://www.greatenglishchurches.co.uk)); it has been cited in the Corpus of Romanesque Sculpture ([www.crsbi.ac.uk](http://www.crsbi.ac.uk)). As far as I know, it has not been reviewed.

Mary Webb died in 1987, not having been able to bring her work to the public herself; that was done, twenty-five years later, by her daughter. In reading and now reviewing this book, I find it refreshing to 'meet' someone else who was convinced of the presence of serious content in Romanesque sculpture, and I salute her search for its roots, in the *Moralia* of Gregory the Great, and in medieval schemata.

When Mary Webb began her research is unknown, but it may be hazarded that she was taking a serious interest by the late 1950s. There are few clues in the book: George Zarnecki is 'Dr Zarnecki' but became Professor in 1963, and in the bibliography there is no publication later than 1975; the opinion of the sculptor Alan Collins on the font from Hampstead Norreys was given to her in 1963. However, she did not start with the Hampstead Norreys font, but with reading the inscription at Dinton: she says 'This book is the outcome of a treasure hunt which began in an attempt to solve the Dinton puzzle', and again, at greater length, 'This study took as its starting point the original literary source and context of the Dinton inscription, and the occasion for the choice of its extraordinary reference to despair...'. Eventually, working on further sites, she identified theological positions that had been abandoned after the twelfth century, and the purpose of her study became 'to demonstrate the unique historical value of the evidence to be found in such ancient sculpture' (pp. 68, 69) so that it might be valued and preserved. I am very grateful to Gillian Greenwood for supplying the following details of her mother's life (which I have shortened), these can only add to the merit of her pioneering achievement:

Mary Curtis Marsh was born in 1903; she went to Guildford High School for Girls, from where she gained a place at the Central School for Art and Design in London. Before going on there, however, she had a holiday in Italy with an aunt; later she would travel with her former headmistress and then life-long friend, Miss Stocks. Mary married Christopher Webb in 1926; he was a stained-glass artist who that same year set up the Orchard House Studio on St Albans. Three children, and the Second World War, absorbed her attention, but soon after 1945 Mary put her gifts to use by devising an art therapy for the mentally ill at the nearby Napsbury Hospital; this had the full backing of the hospital authorities and involved stimulating patients with actual objects borrowed from museums. An interest in medieval things was fed by her Anglican upbringing, her art training, and visits to churches; she was photographing as well as closely observing the sculpture. The visit to Dinton (date unknown) drew all her interests together, the rare inscription fixed her attention and gave her something definite to explore. Knowing that guide books were useless, she turned directly to twelfth-century and earlier texts, the greatest discovery being Gregory the Great's *Moralia* which she said opened up to her a whole world of medieval theology. Reading widely, as can be seen in her bibliography, she used the Warburg Institute library, the London Library, the Bodleian, and the old reading room of the British Museum; she was always reading. She had friends and contacts who could help with translations (she had a little Latin), but was guided by her own initiative. She had responsibilities at home; her husband was older than she was, and it was after he died in 1966 that her research really took shape. She said that when she was exploring the twelfth century she was always 100% happy.

The present-day reader has to appreciate how different was the field into which she entered in the 1950s from what it would become a few decades later, and is now. For example, there are occasional hints in what she writes that she may have assumed that the building and carving was done by monks (pp. 34, 105, 108, 128, 171,172): this is a theory that has long gone out of fashion, except for rare proven instances. In the 1950s, her focus - the textual sources of Romanesque sculpture - was not of much interest in academia, which was engaged in something more elementary, it was struggling to find all the Romanesque sites in Britain. From 1945 to 1959 George Zarnecki was assistant, then principal, librarian of the Conway Library at the Courtauld Institute, and he was filling red box-files with photos taken all over the country and abroad. In the early days, the very notion of what constituted English Romanesque sculpture was different from today, largely because only complete figural sculpture was rated worthy. Consequently, sites were numbered in the low hundreds: nowadays the *Corpus of Romanesque Sculpture in Britain and Ireland* anticipates recording nearly 6,000 sites, some of which have archaeological value or offer historical evidence rather than providing artistic satisfaction.

Any thought of informed interpretation of the sculpture was necessarily far in the future, and meanwhile (as Webb complains on p. 12) guidebooks could suggest or assert almost anything and be unchallenged. She bewails the academic emphasis at that time on 'the

search for stylistic parallels, and the study of their diffusion' (p. 128) – such research would have fed her own interests though it was not her particular motivation. She made contact with specialists in sculpture, art and theology, men who encouraged her but could do little more, for adult education in non-vocational subjects had hardly arrived.

Webb's book is a work of scholarship, it is focussed on three sites though she visited many more in England and abroad; it does not fudge the issue and does not repeat received opinion. Webb went back to fundamentals, that is, she separated the gentle amusement of her contemporaries from the serious intention of the medieval makers; she set out to know what had inspired the sculpture. The results serve to emphasise the long continuity of the art of the twelfth century with earlier centuries; it was, she declares, familiar with cosmologies inherited from ancient Greece and with Christian metaphors from the Fathers. She highlights the significant change in thought that separates that earlier period from the Gothic Middle Ages; she would be one who would start the Romanesque period at the end of the Roman Empire, perhaps with Gregory himself. The book is a huge positive achievement, especially considering the conditions in which she worked.

But there are cautions too. To work alone can be both an advantage and a deprivation. She had a method and followed it, but sometimes to extremes and sometimes trusting in a faulty premise. It was certainly reasonable to expect to find sources for the carvings in the bible and the writings of the Fathers and in even earlier philosophers, but those texts are so lengthy that they contain quotable passages on almost every subject, and with a range of attitude. For example, there are reputable sources for a negative medieval attitude to sex (pp. 69-70), but these could be challenged by God's blessing of Adam and Eve in Genesis 1:28 ('be fruitful and multiply'), an exactly opposite command. This example is simplistic, but it illustrates the fact that one can usually choose a quotation to fit one's need; thus when Webb wrongly identifies a motif as a 'worm', she can find texts which make the presence of a worm almost credible (pp. 18, 20). With companions or supervision, she would probably have been able to avoid these distractions, and her best work would shine more clearly.

It will be obvious to anyone reading this review via my web-site that my interest in the book would be from the direction of the sculpture then to the textual sources, whereas her interest tends to be primarily in texts, despite her beginning in the arts. For the review, I have had to keep reminding myself that her title is *Ideas and Images*, and that this title to some extent must excuse the lengthy accounts of ancient and medieval philosophy. As we have received her work, the mass of 'ideas' sometimes swamps the argument about the 'images'. If the author had been able to complete it herself she might have shaped it and trimmed some sections. However, as Gillian Greenwood's biographical note (p. 1) says 'she kept finding further evidence'; it would have been impossible for the editors to do anything other than include everything in order to miss nothing. Mary Webb herself says (p. 69), 'The findings are presented from the point of view of an historian, and must therefore be concerned with the social and educational background, and the beliefs which prompted the production of the carvings'. It may have been her historian's preference for written authority that caused her to quote from Charles Keyser's introduction but barely refer to the wonderful collection of

more than 150 photographs that follow it. It was presumably in that collection that she saw the plate with the Croxdale tympanum (p. 36), but she seems not to have noticed the series of tympana with two animals and a tree, most of which are grouped near the plate of Dinton.

My criticisms of her work seem to arise from, firstly, the years of solitary study with its emphasis on monastic learning and manuscript art, and secondly, her precocity and the consequent thinness of a convincing narrative to explain the transmission of this widespread imagery in sculpture. It is hard for us to imagine the period in which she worked: now, when the range of features studied has widened, not only within patronage and monastic studies, but in the material culture of buildings, sculpture, glazing and ironwork, etc., all urged on by the growth of a 'heritage industry'; now too we have the internet with ease of communication between scholars, and major manuscripts to see on-line at the click of a mouse. With that expansion, the number of interested researchers has grown, while 'interdisciplinary' and 'medieval studies' have become the watchwords of ambitious university departments. Might a feminist thought intrude here? Her angle on the sculpture is not to follow up powerful patrons or elite schemes, but she takes the quieter more persistent monkish path; here again she was a woman before her time. She died before the launch of the Corpus of Romanesque Sculpture in 1988, with its annual seminar and numerous fieldworkers, all with their own angles and interests. She would have gained from those meetings – the fellowship with others equally keen but with different experience, the discussions and appreciation, and, above all, the rising vision of the multitude of Corpus images from smaller churches which themselves challenge preconceptions of what is attractive about Romanesque sculpture – all those things would have matured her own discourse. Working in isolation would be impossible these days. She would have been heartened to know that her earnest wishes for the recognition and preservation of the sculpture (pp. 1, 171-2) have been advanced by these developments.

## THE REVIEW

My review works through *Images and Ideas* chapter by chapter and page by page, commenting on how Webb's book appears at the present state of Romanesque studies. If there are passages with no comments, I have either excluded them because they do not bear directly on the sculpture, or because I am not competent to discuss the content. For example, it is not possible for me to deal with the pattern of the Solomon's knot helpfully.

With the advent of the internet, many of her sources are on-line, including the translation of the *Moralia*, found at [www.lectionarycentral.com](http://www.lectionarycentral.com) (but, alas, still without its valuable Index which is only in the book version). Full references for most of the manuscripts in the Plates

can be found on pp. 221-3 in Acknowledgements; from there it may be possible to find images on-line at the web-sites of their holding institutions, perhaps even with a recent description of the manuscript and its contents. For sculpture at many of the churches, see [www.crsbi.ac.uk](http://www.crsbi.ac.uk).

Page numbers cited in the review are taken from the printed pages, not the numbers given by the pdf.

Where I felt it necessary or useful, I have cited my own publications, using the reference numbers in Section 2 of my web-site, in the form 36:135-6; an expanded list of the publications is given at the end of the review. For other sources, I have given short references in brackets within the text of the review, hoping that these will be enough for the reader to locate the information.

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## Chapter 1

### **The Twelfth Century Context: the Ransom Theory**

pdf p. 16

pp. 8-10 The chapter begins with a summary of theologians presenting the ransom theory, which is probably helpful. Although the bibliography includes a work by R. W. Southern, it is not noted in the text, but would perhaps apply here (look up his comments on 'Redemption' in any edition of *The Making of the Middle Ages*). The Ransom theory has not been forgotten by historians but, of course, is not referred to by the modern churches except in passing where they maintain the poetry of the medieval liturgies. For a brief summary of the two theories current in the twelfth century, see my discussion of the beginning of Chapter 9, below.

p.10 Dinton and Hampstead Norreys: the reader will see from my later comments that her identification of the ransom theory at these places occasionally involves mis-readings of the carvings. On the other hand, her explanation of the tympanum at Pitsford (Chapter 4) is detailed and largely credible.

p. 10 In twelfth-century sculpture generally, she maintains that 'symbolic meaning is conveyed in a variety of ways with the utmost economy of means which suggests that these are individually considered illustrations which do not derive from pattern books and are not the hack-work of journeymen carvers. They are, in fact, carefully planned doctrinal expositions based upon extremely accurate knowledge of a written source'. Again, considering the time and atmosphere

within which she worked, this is an exceptionally perceptive reading of the sculpture. The three sites she discusses at length are examples of individual, one-off designs, though these incorporate some motifs that are seen more widely.

p. 11 Christ and St Michael. There is need for someone to research the interplay between these two characters, which is evident in 12<sup>th</sup>-century manuscripts and sculpture. Despite what Webb says, there are some mixed characterisations, and it would repay the trouble of finding out in what circumstances these occur (for example, see my paper, **36**:135-6).

Another example of attributes or functions being shared with Christ, is the Virgin on the tympanum at Fownhope: she has a cross-halo and holds an orb).

Webb's endnote (12) does not cite earlier theological sources for a distinction between the two, and the note perhaps belongs in another place.

p. 12 The opinion of the sculptor, Alan Collins, on the carvings on the font from Hampstead Norreys is referred to several times in the text (pp. 12, 85, 94, 187), but fully set out in her Appendix 1, on pp. 174-5. It is reviewed after Chapter 9.

## Chapter 2

### The Sculptures of the South Doorway of Dinton Parish Church: the Lintel

pdf p. 25

Mary Webb discusses this doorway in Chapters, 2, 3, and 5. The beginning of Chapter 2 is an introductory description of the whole. See also <https://www.crsbi.ac.uk/site/840>

pp. 17-8 No other commentator has suggested that the inscription is a later addition. See below re Chapter 5, pp. 68, and pp. 69-78.

pp. 18, 19 Unlike other observers before and since, Webb recognised the laughing face and dared mention it. That Christ might be shown as winged is possible, as illustrated in Plate 12, but, as noted above re p.11, there are many examples, some in manuscripts, of the fusion of Christ with St Michael in a situation of cosmic battle (Rev. 12:7-9). Christ and St Michael were certainly thought of as distinct entities, but giving St Michael some attributes of Christ would demonstrate the ultimate power behind the archangel. A regular convention suggested by Webb - Christ holding a cross staff, and St Michael a sword or spear – would presumably have had to exist to make the variations possible and give them value. Sometimes the battle with the dragon is not taking place in heaven, but is Christ's battle on the cross as told in the gospels (plates 25, 26); in this case there might be a cross or a chalice adjacent, and the armed figure is always the incarnate Christ. It is the cosmic or spiritual

battle in which the examples of fusion are present. Webb's case that it is Christ on the lintel is reasoned, but not certain.

It is singularly not the case here that it is the butt of the cross which is used to attack the monster but, most unusually, it is the *head* of the cross which is pushed into the monster's mouth (plate 6; contrast plates 3, 8, 14-16). I have suggested that this is the head of an altar-cross, with the right hand of Christ/angel cupped to support the weight of the stepped base, and the left hand ramming the head of the cross forward (27:143-4). See my photo:



The right hand is not holding a worm (pp. 18, 20, etc): the left end of the form in question dips below the hand; there is no head or eye of a worm; snakes/worms would be shown by a sine curve in this period, but the form is more angular. This form at the bottom right of the lintel is a row of zigzag. The single line of zigzag is not common, the elaborated chevron is much more so, but a single line of zigzag is used between two rows of scale pattern to indicate the shining sky of the firmament on the lintel at Moreton Valence, Gloucs, where, in the tympanum above it, St Michael and the dragon fight in heaven (10: 24, fig. 23; <https://www.crsbi.ac.uk/site/4775>). At Croxdale, co. Durham, the tree in the tympanum has a full-width row of zig-zag below it, below that again is a row of saltire stars; the two patterns together could represent the shining firmament with stars. Another example of a short length of zigzag defining the firmament is on a capital in Graville, Seine-Maritime (Wood 2017, 115, fig. 121; on this capital two martyrs in heaven receive back their smiling heads).



At Dinton, the battle is squeezed into the vertical face of the lintel, with just the short length of zigzag to suggest the firmament, but in the soffit the firmament is shown complete by a full row of three-strand beaded plait (guilloche).

Webb further suggests that two pierced domes are apples (pp. 18-19); there is a third one in the spiralled tail. Elsewhere in England, scattered, centrally-pierced domes are very common, and, in the tympanum at Hauxwell, North Yorkshire, they fill every space in a trellis grid (Wood 2012, 113; see also 27:154, Leckhampstead); these pierced domes can all be interpreted as stars. The domes and the zigzag (stars; the firmament) place the scene of the battle in heaven: the interpretations suggested by Webb (apples; wriggling worm) lead her off course, though they are made to fit her general analysis.

It is not clear whether the figure on the lintel is Christ or angel: if only considering the smile and the use of the cross, this figure on the lintel at Dinton could represent a cosmic or eternal version of Christ, but, considering the motifs which signify stars and the firmament, and the more usual use of wings as an attribute of angels, there is also a case for the figure to represent the archangel Michael fighting as described in Revelation. This battle, if taking place in heaven, is thus not the Crucifixion as suggested by Webb on p.20, 'about to be swallowed' etc.

p. 18 The small tree near the tip of Leviathan's tail was not mentioned in my analysis of the lintel, and I accept her comparison with the similarly-placed tree on the tympanum at Pitsford: at both places this tree could allude to the Tree of Knowledge in Eden, which Leviathan would count as a victory and have 'on his side'. As pointed out by Webb (p. 26 and Plate 9), the Tree of the Fall is countered in the lintel by the Tree of the Cross held by the angel/Christ.

p. 20 Granted that all those things were written about worms and Christ, but they are not relevant if there is no worm.

pp. 20-1 The metaphor of Christ as a bird recurs in at least one more passage in *Moralia*. In Book XXXI, ch. 94, Gregory describes the eagle as swooping down, seeking mankind. This usage was identified in sculpture at Dijon (23:227-7; fig. 6).

## Chapter 3

### The Dinton Tympanum and surrounding carvings

pdf p. 42

pp. 34-5 Webb takes a surprisingly pessimistic view of the content of the tympanum and, to enforce her opinion, uses slightly derogatory words for its features: the tree's bole is

described as ‘swollen’; its leaves are ‘sparse’ and the animals ‘clumsy’. This attitude was the consequence of her seeing likenesses between the two animals and the monster on the lintel. However, there is only a general likeness of the two animals to Leviathan (for a start, they have curly manes like a lion, whereas Leviathan has scales). She makes no mention of any of the further seven tympana with this design of ‘tree with two confronting beasts’ in which most of the animals are not monsters but quadrupeds (27: 161; Wood 2017, 149). Although Charles Keyser’s book, *Tympana and Lintels*, is in her bibliography, she has not noticed those other examples of the design which are illustrated there, close to Plate 40, the one of Dinton; the trees on those other tympana are more regular and stylised, less naturalistic. Trees on Plate 50 (the Floreffe Bible fol. 199), at the upper level beside the mandorla containing the ascending Christ – that is, trees in Heaven – are very like the one on the tympanum.

(Image from British Library digitised manuscript Add. MS 17738)



p. 36 Those assumptions, or characterisations which cannot be corroborated, make the texts from *Moralia* irrelevant. They lead her to an unnecessary (and I would suggest erroneous) interpretation of the tympanum at Moccas (Wood 2017, 113).

p. 36 The Tree of Life is seldom shown as a palm tree in English Romanesque sculpture, and until Mary Webb identified it at Pitsford I had not seen one. The Tree of Life varies in England but is usually a quasi-symmetrical tree with small single fruits ('cherries' are popular). The fruit of the tree as 'apples' (pp. 17, 34) is a doubtful identification: the form has no calyx but a depression at the outer end of the ovoid – it makes me think of plums – but a decision is not vital because a species is not named in Genesis.

p. 36 Croxdale tympanum has a formal tree with a small human head as the apex, and Webb spots the significance, though it can hardly still be Assyrian; there would have been plenty of current Christian resonances. It is doubtful that she visited Croxdale which is in Co. Durham, but in Keyser's volume it is Plate 93.

pp. 37, 42 and plate 21 The balls of berry fruit are quite common in arches of chevron, and probably often represent grapes. The heart-shaped ornament on the jambs is unknown to

me at any other site. It may represent hearts as suggested by Webb – in a passage which represents much treasure-hunting, searching and thinking – but I can't see why these might not be leaves, which are a common ornament on churches, and usually they are made as regular as medieval conditions could manage because they would be thought of as heavenly and therefore perfect. Whatever their inspiration, it is the negative relief which is the curious thing.

pp. 45, 46 and plates 24, 25 The item behind Christ on the Ault Hucknall lintel suggests something into which the armed knight might be forced by the dragon, some negative outcome for him of losing the battle and dying. Webb's comparing it to the shackle in the Gerona *Beatus* is an excellent suggestion, and again the fruit of long searches and a good memory.

## Chapter 4

### The sculptured tympanum in the parish church at Pitsford, Northamptonshire

pdf p. 55

p. 47 The historical link suggested to Godstow might be valid. I have suggested connections between the doorways at Quenington and Dinton through the activity of the Lacy sisters Cecily and Agnes, and these influences also would come into play (33: 123-4). It was Agnes de Munchesney (*née de Lacy*) who gave Dinton church to Godstow according to A. Clark (ed.), *The English Register of Godstow Nunnery* (London, 1905-11), nos. 50-4.

It is twenty years since my visit to Pitsford, where I remember looking only at the tympanum, and had not then seen the Dinton doorway. I now appreciate the similar appearance and make-up of the Pitsford and Dinton doorways as a whole; another reason for me (or someone) to reconsider the historical situation connecting these various sites, and the others noted as similar in Ron Baxter's report on <https://www.crsbi.ac.uk/site/713>. I could make no sense of the Pitsford tympanum at the time of my visit, except that it must be some version of the fight of Christ with the devil; there were too many unknowns, the damage at the centre being the most obvious problem. I now find Webb's interpretation almost totally satisfactory (the exception is the fishing net, pp. 55-8).

p. 47 As to the likeness of some carved features at Pitsford to others at Dinton, these are often a matter of personal judgement, and probably need personal visits, preferably close together on the same day. Note that Webb compares the feet of the two animals on the Dinton tympanum to those of the large beast on the tympanum at Pitsford (not Dinton, as printed).

p. 48 Items of everyday life. It is interesting she mentions these, for the introduction of a familiar object was something I had noticed at Dinton, Quenington and South Cerney (33:118) where, in all cases, the items introduced were associated with church services (altar cross, chalice, chasuble and cope). The butcher's knife and the quilted tunic would certainly have helped the laity connect with the theology and see the battle as a real one.

p. 48 The summary of the interpretation of the tympanum is largely viable (I dissent from the identification of a net and its floats); this is much the best interpretation that has yet been offered. She outlines her findings before proceeding to quote at length the passages from *Moralia* which she sees as relevant:

'On the right stands the Incarnate Christ who has flown down from heaven 'like a vulture' in search of Death to destroy it and, having laid aside the wings of His divine nature, He stands with both feet on the earth as a mortal man. His face is shown in profile as He confronts His antagonist and His back is turned towards the observer while He swings the weapon in His right hand to deliver a blow at His enemy. With remarkable skill the carver has indicated the curve of His spine below His tightly-fitting garment which emphasises the vigour of His action. His weapon is not, however, a sword but a single-bladed butcher's knife of the traditional form in which the handle is exactly half the length of the blade. The monstrous death which confronts the Christ is depicted as Behemoth, the counterpart of Leviathan from the Book of Job, and the carver in following Gregory's commentary has shown him 'raised up on the birds of his pride', in contrast to the humble stance of Christ who stands upon the ground. The features of this Behemoth closely correspond with those of Leviathan on the Dinton lintel. His foliated tail, 'raised like a cedar', is beaded all along its length. In the background is a leafless palm tree with three small circles carved at its root. Its trunk is attacked by one of the evil birds who is also supporting Behemoth. The sculptor has shown that the left hand of the Christ is thrust into the very jaws of Death, for He is 'binding the tongue of Leviathan with a cord'. The three-fold cord is attached to the under-seam of His garment and its tasselled ends swirl beside Him in the stress of battle. The whole of this sculptured tympanum is enclosed within a framing rope which is threaded through 14 rectangular blocks on each side of which are 9 small bosses arranged in a three-by-three square.'

p. 49 The references are to chapters and verses in the Book of Job.

p. 50 at note (3) Webb quotes a section from *Moralia* Book 33, chapter 30 (*not* chapter 24 as printed in the endnotes); there are a few omissions, and the passage runs on usefully into chapter 31. Webb says three birds support Behemoth, but a careful inspection shows that there are only three creatures in total, of which one creature has two heads. It was this misreading, presumably, which caused her to think that the smaller creatures 'support' the larger, but the idea is not present or implied in any of the passages from the *Moralia*. Gregory describes the three creatures as, firstly, an irrational four-footed animal (or a monster or a beast), secondly a dragon or serpent, and lastly, a bird. These creatures are all manifestations of the one evil thing, Behemoth. Gregory says that if one type of temptation does not succeed, the 'shape' or temptation will be changed until success is achieved. There are three major sins which the devil cultivates in mankind:

'[Behemoth] is, therefore, called by the name of many things, because he is changed into various kind of shapes before the eyes of those who are deluded by him. For when he tempts this one by the lust of the flesh, and yet does not overcome him, he changes his suggestion, and kindles his heart into malice. Because, therefore, he was unable to approach him as a 'monster,' he comes near as a

'dragon.' [If] he is unable to corrupt him with the poison of malice, but yet he places [the man's] good qualities before his eyes, and exalts his heart to pride. [Behemoth] could not, therefore, steal up to this man as a dragon, but yet by bringing before him the phantom of vain glory, he flew before the sight of his thought as a bird.' (*Moralia* 33, chapter 31)

pp. 49-50 On the tympanum, there are only three animals, not one monster and three birds. There is the large lion-like monster facing the armed man; below its hind legs is a creature with a beak, wings, two legs and a tail formed in a figure of eight interlaced with a circle. To the right of the vertical motif is a third creature which has two heads. One head is that of a bird, and it seems to peck the vertical motif; the other head is that of an animal, and it rears up towards the mouth of the monster. The body of this creature is winged, and legs are at the beaked end. All three together are the various 'shapes' taken by Behemoth, or the Devil.

Gregory repeats the allegories of the three creatures in several ways, for example he says of Behemoth: 'in those whom he excites to the folly of lust, he is a 'beast'; in those whom he inflames to do malicious injury, he is a 'dragon'; but in those whom he exalts to the haughtiness of pride as though they understood high things, he is a 'bird.'" (*Moralia* Book 33, chapter 31)

The large monster would represent the unclean and brutish 'beast' which incites man to lust; the bird on the left could symbolise pride because the interlace pattern made by its tail apes a triquetra or a cross-based interlace pattern, that is, the creature simulates the nature of God, the sin of Lucifer for which he was cast down from heaven. The creature with two heads would then presumably picture the malicious dragon which seeks to hurt man and makes man hurt others. These three creatures represent the chief forms of temptation promoted by the Devil to defeat man: all three are threatened by the man with the cleaver.

p. 50 The pair of discarded wings is next discussed, and this passage seems eloquent in its development of the *Moralia* book 18, ch. 54. The only remotely similar pair of wings is part of a cluster of motifs representing St Michael on the tympanum at Long Marton, Cumbria, and that cannot be the interpretation of the armed man here. The identification of the source of the imagery is reliable.

p. 50 The butcher's knife or cleaver in the right hand of the man leads Webb to several useful biblical texts about cutting up the devil. There are two other examples of a man with a cleaver known to me, both with a similar metaphorical use. The first is at Fishlake where a man has a wolf on a leash and threatens it with a cleaver, the man represents the guardian of the flock (possibly Christ) and he is about to kill the destroyer (5:33); the second example is at St Marychurch near Torquay where a mounted figure representing Christ comes to finish off the boar which had been rooting up the vineyard of the Church (14:92-4).

pp. 51-2 The quilted garment worn by Christ is not so usefully linked to texts, and would probably be sufficiently relevant if it suggested Christ's active engagement in the world by his wearing a garment well-known to the villagers for whom the tympanum was designed and made.

pp. 52, 53-4 The large eye of Behemoth and the beaded decoration are not so unusual as to be certainly inspired by the quoted passages, though I would agree that beading can indicate a line of bright spots. Whatever it might represent here, beading is an artist's device which enables the viewer to follow the direction of a stem or tail, especially useful now when colour has been lost.

p. 54 *Moralia* Book 33, Chapter 17 contains the Hook allegory for the mission of Christ, which is so important to Webb. *Moralia* Book 33, Chapters 18 and 19 use another metaphor about God's son, that he, in the likeness of sinful man, bound Leviathan with a cord. Webb identifies, for the first time, that this scene at the centre of the Pitsford tympanum is Christ binding the tongue of Leviathan/Behemoth. This is a daring but no doubt correct identification. It is daring because the vital area – the left hand of the man and the mouth of the beast – has been damaged, but correct because the texts and the remains describe the activity so well once we know what to look for. It is not easy, and perhaps never was possible, to trace the free end of the cord. Webb says (p. 52) 'The carver has taken care to show the trellis pattern of the quilted garment and even the under-arm seam into which the loose end of the three-fold girdle is inserted'. The trails to left and right of the armed man have no logical unity, though they share a three-strand cross-section; there is a two-strand trail ending in a leaf above the head of the beast, has that come out of its mouth? Are the trails, all together, binding the tongue at one end, and erupting into shoots of rejoicing faith elsewhere? Or are we to understand some of them as wayward growths in a context of sin? Without Webb's connection to the texts in *Moralia*, it is not possible to begin to understand the tympanum.

pp. 54-5 A leafless tree is archetypally the Cross. In Chapter 2, p. 17, in her discussion of the arches of the doorway at Dinton, Webb had noted the likeness of an ornament in the chevron order to fruits seen in a bestiary illustration: 'Within this is a triple-sectioned chevron, and on its inner band small berry fruit have replaced the usual decorative balls within the apex of each chevron... Exactly similar berry fruit are seen on the Tree of Life, upon which the souls of the faithful, as birds, are feeding, in a drawing from a twelfth century Bestiary.' The tree in the bestiary is not the Tree of Life, but the Perindeus tree which is an allegory of the Church (T. H. White, *The Book of Beasts*, 1954, 160). In Chapter 4, p. 55, on the tympanum at Pitsford she cites the same illustration. She takes her interpretation further, pointing out that the drawing has three circles at the base of the tree; this is equated to the three circles noted by Charles Keyser at the foot of the leafless tree on the Pitsford tympanum, and then related to Gregory's mention of the Trinity. However, another tree in the same bestiary has similar graphic forms to those she notes (White 1954, p. 61, illustrating Canis, the Dog); whether we think of these forms as meditative additions, or just draughtsman's conventional ornament, they are not necessarily related to the main subject. Whether the forms at Pitsford are three circles, or four (as they appear in CRSBI photographs), might be solved by inspection. In either case the forms probably just represent 'ground', and that is an insignificant place to put a reference to the Trinity. It is possible to read the excerpt from *Moralia* about the leafless tree to apply to the resurrection of mankind as well as Christ.

pp. 55-8 The rope which frames the Pitsford tympanum. The metaphor of a net does not fit with the subject in the tympanum, for this 'net' would gather Christ himself, while he is still performing his errand on earth, and sweep him up along with the various forms of evil. The net, properly understood, is an allegory of the Church. While the texts quoted in support of the idea are sound teaching, they depend on their relevance for the initial identification of the bordering pattern as the margins of a fishing-net, and that is not sustainable. This complex passage shows Webb taking her belief in the existence of meaning to an extreme. Features in this and other chapters, such as the quilted garment, are habitually but sometimes needlessly extended by quotations from Gregory or the Bible; 'gilding the lily' is a drawback of working on one's own.

The 'rope' and 'floats' are without parallel in carving, but might perhaps have been something seen in metalwork and repeated as an ornamental border to frame the allegory; compare the borders round the two 'pictures' on the Jelling Stone (32: fig. 6).

## Chapter 5

### The Source and Context of the Dinton Inscription

pdf p.76

p. 68 Date of the doorway and inscription. Webb begins this chapter with the assertion that the inscription 'was carved in the last quarter of the twelfth century.' She gives no evidence for this date which is something like 30 years later than when the doorway itself would nowadays be thought to have been made, and no-one else has suggested the inscription is a later addition. The unusual make-up of the doorway in the zone of the capitals is echoed at other doorways in this group (27:154-64) and not due to later changes. However, on p. 70 she mentions Fair Rosamund and her burial at Godstow: 'The carving of the Dinton inscription may also have been prompted by the scandal concerning the burial of Fair Rosamund (Clifford), the beloved mistress of King Henry II, at Godstow Nunnery in 1176. The Abbess of Godstow held the advowson of Dinton parish church, and rumours of such events could not have failed to reach the ears of its parishioners at a distance of less than 20 miles.' The argument for the date of the inscription is circular; it leads Webb into a long discussion of the status of women in the medieval period, which may all be true but is not relevant.

pp. 69 -78 The suggestion that the couplet was derived from the last book of the *Moralia* is a good one, since certain key concepts are found there and the summation of the long text would have been familiar to medieval readers. The words from it which identify the source of the first part of the Dinton couplet are these: 'But on the coming of our gracious Redeemer, let no one who is conscious of his infirmity despair of obtaining the inheritance of the heavenly

patrimony.' (*Moralia* Book XXXV ch. 46). This short quotation is a general remark (consequent on the coming of our Redeemer) embedded in a passage about sons and daughters of Job which is not relevant to the doorway. As discussed in the previous paragraph, Webb was almost certainly wrong in giving a late twelfth-century date for the inscription, as she had been also in seeing the tympanum as having inconclusive and negative content (pp. 34-5). These assumptions encouraged her to follow the false trail of the Fair Rosamond, and to read the inscription as a warning against sexual sins. However, when Gregory the Great said a man may have cause to despair, he was thinking of the inevitable short-fall in every man's faithfulness, he was not making a specific reference to lust.

The inscription concludes with something more precise, it says that despair of receiving the heavenly inheritance can be relieved by 'attending to the doctrines here preached, and taking care to keep them in mind' (Charles Keyser's translation; 27:142). Curiously, Webb does not discuss this line, and always leaves out 'here' (*hic*) in her translation of it (pp. 58, 68, 72, 78). 'Here' surely refers to the church itself, whether to the doorway or the interior, as a place for teaching, and as she pictures its use, p. 21.

## Chapter 6

### **The Font from Hampstead Norreys and the circumstances in which it was carved**

pdf p. 92

p. 84 It is indeed 'unfortunate that no exact record of the repair of the font bowl has been left to us except a statement by the architect in charge of the church that it was carried out with difficulty at the hands of an excellent workman and that the whole had been accurately restored' (note 1, p. 206). Webb herself had doubts about the font, and doubts were voiced locally; she therefore asked for another opinion 'to establish, if possible, the nature and extent of its repairs and the probable order of the working of the drum'; and she then relied on the word of an expert who may not have been familiar with Romanesque sculpture, and assumed that everything was as the original. The sculptor's report is discussed below, re Appendix 1.

Modern authorities are divided, but none seems happy: in his report on the font, now in the church at Stone, Berkshire, Ron Baxter remarks on the 'prominent ribs and kneecaps' of the standing figures, and the 'accurate anatomical observation' of the fish. He consequently suggests a date late in the twelfth century (<https://www.crsbi.ac.uk/site/3247>); the VCH suggests a date in the 1140s and says 'it must be concluded that much of the carving has been reworked', and I would agree with that judgment. Looking at the figural passage, the disposition of motifs is unusual in that the figures have such varied amounts of space around them and outlines are slack: authentic Romanesque sculpture is usually more evenly

and densely arranged, and outlines are strong (I thank Jeff Craine for looking at photos of the font and being puzzled by it). The restorers admitted to having a lot of work to do, as Ancona, in charge of the restoration, wrote in 1846: ‘When it first came into our hands [the font] exhibited only the faintest signs of the elaborate sculpture with which it was adorned; nor was it without considerable trouble, in the hands of a very excellent workman, that the whole was accurately restored. The result has, however, I think, amply repaid both the trouble and expense...’ (*The Builder*, 4, no. clxxxi (25th July 1846): 355-56).

The basic larger shapes on the cylinder must echo the original, that is, what we see now lies under or within their ghosts, but there are too many false notes to take seriously the finer details of small heads and animals. Most telling is the fact that the supporting base under the cylindrical bowl, known to have been supplied new in 1846, has precisely the same small faces as are on the bowl of the font itself; there are also small heads on the ‘sandwich’ of new stone inserted in the cylinder at the restoration (mentioned by Collins in his report, p. 174). No restorer could make such perfect copies. In both parts of the font, the little heads have high bold cheekbones, and eyes and eyebrows unlike any twelfth-century manner, even those comparisons suggested by Webb, Plate 89 (note, for example, the different construction of the eyes, and the effort on the font to maintain facial proportion). Since the base is not illustrated by Webb and not shown on the CRSBI site, here are two views of the complete font:



and here are comparisons of the little heads, the first of each pair is on the font bowl and the second is on the base.



Another suspect feature is that every major space within the geometric motifs has its little face or animal head, whereas the font at Bagthorpe (Plate 78 J on p. 164) is the only example illustrated by Webb that has any forms at all in the interstices of such patterns, and at Bagthorpe they are plain discs or domes. The best comparisons I have seen to the interlace panels on the font are at Sturmer in Essex, on the tympanum of the south doorway. Of several motifs similar to the font, one has domes in the interstices while the largest has three-fold fans of leaves (or, as described on <https://www.crsbi.ac.uk/site/1550> ‘largely daisies or parts of them’; see also 10: Figs. 6, 7). Further, on the font the agonised, if not actually demonic, faces – which Webb recognised as such (p. 93) – are at odds with the positive philosophical interpretations of the large panels which she will suggest in Chapter 9. It is a shame that so much of her discussion relied on the accuracy of a dubious restoration.

In the manuscript on Plate 57 (p. 141), the small heads represent the four winds and what might be thought to be their wild beards is actually their breath, the winds, while on Plate 58 (p. 142) the small head at the centre represents Annus, the year; these personifications are common in such topics; they have no function other than to enliven the diagram and help us distinguish it from others; they are the only categories of little heads which are found with any frequency in scientific diagrams. I suggest that, if domes or simple motifs had once filled the patterns on the Hampstead Norreys font, they had become so damaged as to suggest faces, and that the ‘excellent workman’ used this opportunity to introduce some fashionable devils from Autun or Vézelay, or from a manuscript (p. 186, citing Morgan MS 709, fol. 78r).

p. 86 The involvement as patron, of an Augustinian nunnery (the Priory of Goring), and Webb’s eventual link with the work of Hugh of St Victor (also an Augustinian) is viable as a source for whatever imagery the font once displayed. A short passage in Hugh of St Victor’s *De Archa Noe* seems to be the basis for the programme on the font from Everingham, Yorkshire (28:140). The designers of these programmes chose short well-known passages from the bible or from other respected writers – the opening or concluding statements, or memorable imagery within the main text. The question of sculptural links is wide open, not just because of the unknown amount of damage done in the restoration, but because a national survey is not yet complete; there are certain to be other examples of the beaded plait, for example, that might not have a direct link to Cluniac work.

p. 87-90 The monastic library lists that have a bearing on the subjects on the font is discussed by Webb. If there are, today, historians who deal in such things, they don’t often mix with art historians, the exception proves the rule (Ron Baxter, *Bestiaries and their Users in the Middle Ages*, Stroud, 1998).

The two quotations on p. 90 are vivid and useful, and their sources have kindly been identified for me by Frans van Liere. The first is from *De Vanitate mundi*, and the second from *De Archa Noe*.

## Chapter 7

### The sources and meaning of the carvings on the font bowl

pdf 101

p. 93 ‘Professor Bober has shown that these circular figures are adjustable schemata which could be used to demonstrate the harmonious relationships between a number of quaternities, besides the Four Elements (Earth, Fire, Air and Water) in the macrocosm of the universe and the microcosm of mankind. From such evidence, therefore, we may now assume that the two circular figures on the font bowl from Hampstead Norreys were recognisable statements of the harmonious order in the creation of the world and all its elements.’ More recent writers have similarly given credence to the value of such diagrams, among them Professor Kauffmann whose book she gives in the bibliography but does not cite here. How far these associations were ‘recognisable’ to the laity at Hampstead Norreys is another matter. In the continuation of this passage, once again Webb fits her identification to some medieval source, but it is lost labour because the heads are Victorian fictions: ‘The various little animal masks (Plate 39) that are carved in association with these schemata on the font bowl cannot be individually identified, nevertheless it may be suggested that they refer to the repeated assertions by twelfth century writers that the four humours of men were comparable to the ferocity, guile, sloth or greed attributed to a variety of beasts’.

pp. 93-4 I am totally in sympathy with Webb when she decries the modern dismissal of medieval patterns. However, as above re p. 84, I cannot credit the original presence of any of those little faces within the five large geometric motifs, and indeed can hardly believe in them anywhere else on the font either, nor the scatter of small animals. Even if there had once been motifs within the geometric interlace, they would not have been of that alarming nature, which is totally out of place in the presence of cosmic harmony. The ‘screaming soul’, ‘devils’ and ‘hell fire’ have no place there.

p. 93-4 Her solution to the dichotomy of the design (patterned panels; figures and animals), that it was unified and shaped by a quotation from Hugh of St. Victor, is excellent. The text comes from chapter II of the Prologue to what is probably his most famous work, *De Sacramentis Fidei*.

A modern commentary on this work (Rorem, *Hugh of St Victor* (2009)), says that the subjects taught at the school of St Victor under Hugh were wide-ranging: secular pagan subjects as well as standard Christian ones. Paul Rorem is a little puzzled (pp. 16, 17) that Hugh should have allowed ‘the books of the gentiles’ to be used to describe God’s works of Foundation – that pagans should share that task with the book of Genesis. In much the same way, public opinion at Stone was puzzled by the two sorts of image on the Hampstead Norreys font. But Hugh’s open-mindedness sanctions the use of concepts ultimately derived from Platonic sources being combined with the figural presentation of the works of

Restoration derived from the bible. The troublesome dichotomy itself tends to confirm that the particular passage found by Webb was the inspiration for the font design.

Geometric diagrams were everywhere in the early medieval period: in manuscripts they formed mnemonics for students, and in sculpture they were used as simple means of decoration for provincial craftsmen (Plate 61, p. 144) as well as appearing in more skilful works; similarly, the idea of the Fall being balanced by the Incarnation was a widely recognised idea, but the two ideas together so clearly stated (if that can be said about such a frustrating font!) fits well with the quotation from Hugh of St Victor. The diagrams have equal or even greater impact than the figural sculpture, which is a hard effect to achieve when the human eye is so drawn to human images. It is no wonder that there were those who thought the two kinds do not mix and must be different in date. The pairing of perfect patterns and human figures allows the ‘foundation/creation’ and ‘restoration/redemption’ sequence to be recognised.

pp. 94-5 In my opinion, it would be reasonable to expect that the larger forms carved on the font – the five geometric motifs, the two standing figures and the two flanking beasts, perhaps also the bird – had survived the re-carving because of their bulk or familiarity, although, even so, their details have been worked over and ‘improved’. Speculation on the original content can hardly be taken any further.

pp. 95-6 The Descent into Hell; Baptism These subjects are introduced here by the author, and then dropped; see later in the book, Appendix 2, pp. 178-83. Once again, the condition of the carvings makes it difficult to identify what interactions had been pictured in the figural area.

pp. 95-8 These pages introduce the theories derived from earlier writers (both Christian and pagan) which Webb thinks gave important imagery to twelfth-century sculpture. These theories are, firstly, the Ransom theory, to be made obsolete by Anselm’s work, *Cur Deus Homo*, perhaps by the mid 12<sup>th</sup> century; this is largely discussed in Chapter 8. Secondly, cosmology and number theory, found in Plato’s *Timaeus* and Boethius’ *Arithmetica*, which were dropped in favour of the works of Aristotle by the mid 13<sup>th</sup> century; this is discussed in Chapter 9.

This review should include an authoritative statement of the differences between Plato and Aristotle as they were appreciated in the twelfth century and after, but I am not competent to give it. It is probably indicative that in Raphael’s fresco in the Vatican, *The School of Athens*, c. 1510, grey-beard Plato is pointing heavenwards and younger Aristotle (his pupil) spreads his hand forward over the earth: Plato was conscious of ‘ideal’ forms beyond earthly existence; Aristotle studied natural forms in the manner of an early scientist.

## Chapter 8

### The Descent into Hades and the Baited Hook illustrated at Hampstead Norreys

pdf 111

p. 103 This chapter sets out to link the carvings on the bowl to two further sources, 'namely Pope Gregory the Great's *Moralia in Job* and the apocryphal *Gospel of Nicodemus*'. For the latter, see Appendix 2. In this chapter we are faced, full on, with the problem that, once her questions were resolved by the expert's report, Webb assumed every detail of the carvings on the font to be original.

p. 103 That the larger standing figure represents Christ is almost certain; that his right hand holds a cleaver and his left hand is in the mouth of the monster, also. There is a likeness, thus far, to features of the tympanum at Pitsford. The degree of damage to the font is shown by the fact that Christ would certainly not have been entirely naked as the remains now suggest, but had probably worn a loin-cloth as when shown on the Cross (compare centre of Plate 1). He stands boldly upright, comparable in some ways to the figure stepping out of the tomb chest in 13<sup>th</sup> century imagery of the Resurrection; the context is not a literal Resurrection, however, but a symbolic compilation.

pp. 103-4 The salamander against Christ's right leg, despite the ingenious interpretation, seems irrelevant to the Redeemer. The salamander and the small snake immediately under the feet of Christ are perhaps the remains of the things trampled in Psalm 91:13, and would signify his victory over Death; for an example of this, see Plate 53, p. 122.

p. 104 The dragon as Satan, that is, sin or temptation. The first paragraph seems sound, but the second not so. The snake at the bottom of the cylinder might have been the continuation of the tail of the dragon, leaving the leaf below the smaller figure as a sign of resurrection. Who knows? This area is not only recut but probably includes new fabric.

pp. 105, 108 The Vulture. The bird pecking the dragon is unlikely to represent Christ, who is already shown as the large human figure. It might perhaps represent the Holy Spirit, or perhaps, given the Augustinian connections mentioned earlier by Webb, a Crane, which often represented an Augustinian canon (17:133,144-146). Either 'bird' would be assisting the smaller human in subduing temptation. The smaller figure (p.108) is likely to be Adam. Like Christ, he would not have been shown naked, he would have been holding a leaf in his right hand or worn an apron. Other recarving might have reduced the 'flimsy stick' which is said to be prodding Satan. The neck of the dragon swells in that area as if a collar might have been worn, and the arrangement shown in Plate 52, p. 121, would be ideal because a stiff rod attached to the collar would both control the dragon and keep it at a distance from the man. It is best not to prod Satan into action, but rather to control and quieten

temptation. Adam would thus be shown as able to keep temptation at arm's length, since Christ had defeated Satan.

p. 107 The wolf as Death. Though the pairing of Sin and Death is a biblical one, the one bringing about the other, it is unusual to find it pictured so early (but see Plate 51, the small dragon and the bound demon). The 'bread roll' is an unfortunate identification of what was surely the wolf's tongue before it was improved. The cleaver is held over the wolf, as Christ will put an end to Death at the end of Time.

p. 108 Items below Adam are too tampered with to understand. However, I wonder if a lot of these items at the feet of Christ and Adam were once all foliage, but due to damage it has been reworked as animals. As it is now, the variety of iconography makes this area far too 'busy': the main figures already provide plenty of important teaching.

pp. 108-9 It is not even certain that a fish was first carved to the left of the wolf: if we have Satan and Death pictured, we don't need Leviathan as well. I wonder if the fish was – originally – the tail of the wolf, which is a poor thin thing at present, as is the whole creature (compare White, *Book of Beasts*, 56; or 17: pl. 8). In my opinion, the figural scene on the font has not been shown to reproduce a scene in the Gospel of Nicodemus. The idea that Adam is wearing a helmet (p. 108) is the only detailed link she suggests to the 'Descent' narratives (p. 183), but that helmet (or is it a hat?) itself would seem to be a product of the restoration. A damaged 'basin' haircut would have given much the same impression to the restorer.

pp. 109-111 The 'entanglements of Hell'. Webb likens the regular interlace panel on this font to irregular interlace on the font at Eardisley, which is a curious comparison – more of a contrast really. This passage is too assertive, too intent in its reliance on textual sources. A jumble of trails and leaves can, according to its context, signify the entanglements of sin and temptation, or the super-abundance of greenery in Paradise, but a regular pattern is different again. The example on the font, the regular interlace panel to the left of the standing figures, is defined by Webb as representing the entanglements of sin, yet the standing cross in the museum at Margam (Plate 79) has this pattern boldly on all arms of the cross.

## Chapter 9

### The Work of Foundation in terms of the Microcosm and the Macrocosm

A useful article not listed by Webb is by a student of Professor Bober, Marthiel Mathews, 'Gislebertus Hoc Fecit', *Gesta*, vol I (1964), unpaginated; also recommended is M. Caviness, 'Images of Divine Order and the Third Mode of Seeing', *Gesta* XXII/2 (1983) 99-120.

This chapter contains the most innovative of her ideas, and, coming last as it does, may have been the part that came to interest her most and to which she kept adding. Because it has new material on a neglected subject, it is the most difficult chapter for us to understand, and it has some material which could have been put into the form of endnotes since, interesting as it is, it is not directly associated with the sculpture; sometimes she has not made a connection explicit. Perhaps the complexity of her sources has survived into print because the author herself could not edit her work for publication: it is to that extent at least, unfinished.

p. 123, also pp. 95-8 The representation of the Ransom theory, she says, is 'very rare' in Anglo-Norman sculpture. It seems best to deal with this statement before turning to the main subject of Chapter 9. If we were indeed to need to see a physical hook before identifying the theory, it would be very rare in sculpture. The two theories of human redemption existing in the twelfth century have been oversimplified below in order to characterise possible representations -

The Ransom theory was a centuries-old narrative which might be abbreviated like this: Man sinned, and by being disobedient to God he had voluntarily given himself to serve the Devil; this meant war between God and the Devil; in this war the Incarnation was 'a great act of strategy': Christ, disguised as a man, was offered as bait to the Devil, who saw him as yet more prey for Death and Hell. This trick played by God resulted in the Devil claiming a right which he did not have, so Christ had to be set free.

The reasoning which replaced the Ransom theory was that of Anselm of Canterbury. In his *Meditation on Human Redemption*, Anselm addresses God: 'you did not assume human nature to conceal what was known of yourself, but to reveal what was not known... God owes nothing to the devil except punishment, nor does man owe [God] anything except to reverse in some way the defeat which he allowed himself to suffer by sinning... God was not obliged to save mankind in this way [i.e. incarnation and death] but human nature needed to make amends to God like this' (B. Ward, *The Prayers and Meditations of St Anselm*, (1973) 230-232). Anselm's *Cur Deus Homo* ('Why God became Man') is his principal work setting out his idea, presented as a reasoned conversation with his fellow Boso.

The two theories (more fully recounted by R. W. Southern and elsewhere) differ in that the earlier one postulates a form of war between God and the Devil; the second sees the incarnation and self-offering of Christ as the most precious thing that could be imagined, opening the way for 'a fresh appreciation of the human sufferings of the Redeemer' in the following centuries. Hence it is possible to suggest that representations of a fight between God and the Devil (depicted as Leviathan, Behemoth, a dragon, etc) indicate the survival of

the Ransom theory, while the absence of such fights, or the representation of naturalistic scenes of Christ's sufferings, might be a parallel for Anselm's affective thinking (the Rood at the chancel arch is a much earlier feature but already uses that method of engaging devotion). Until all Romanesque sculpture is carefully interpreted it is too early to say that the Ransom theory is 'rare', indeed, it could be distinctive of our period since there are so many battles representing the Crucifixion, the occasion when the 'bait' was taken by the 'fish'. Southern says '[Anselm's] explanation did not win the universal approval which seems to have been accorded to his rejection of the older view'; and, as we see, the Ransom theory continued in sculpture long after Anselm had died (in 1109).

p. 123 But to return to the main subject of Chapter 9, which is the works of Foundation as exemplified by four of the five geometric designs on the Hampstead Norreys font. Briefly, Webb links four of the panels on the font to particular uses in ancient and medieval manuscripts. (She also finds connections for the 'Solomon's knot' device which is fairly common but does not occur on this font; I am not able to deal with that part of her text.) The explanations are somewhat scattered, being in the captions as well as the text, and sometimes without corroborating illustrations; these features confirm that she was still working on this part of her study when she had to give it up through age.

In Chapter 8, pp. 109-111, Webb has already separated out the fifth design, the panel of regular woven interlace, seeing it as representing the entanglement of sin. However, this panel is made of the same beaded strands as the other four and is of similar height; it would have been better if she had questioned why it had been given a place with the four to which she is about to give such importance. She may have been encouraged to exclude it because this type of pattern is not found in the scientific manuscripts of Plato or his 'descendants', but the pattern was certainly in use in hallowed sculptural contexts before and during our period (see Plate 79, also 10:16-18); it was also used in Coptic (Egyptian Christian) art.

The font has perhaps only three patterns in the five panels, for nos. 1 and 3, and nos. 2 and 4 might be variations of the same thing – I am not convinced that no. 4 was intended as of rectangular proportion rather than square because, in the process of placing the panels on the cylinder, perfect squareness would easily get lost. As to the odd fifth panel with the woven pattern, let us consider how the font would have been prepared for carving. We might suppose that the figural motifs would have been set out first and then the geometrical motifs were placed from left to right to fill the remainder of the circumference. The 'woven' panel, likely to be the last motif set out, is the narrowest; its different pattern may have been chosen because a squareish symmetrical motif like the previous four could not be fitted into the remaining, narrow, space, whereas a woven interlace design is helpfully elastic. The setting-out of fonts can be surprisingly irregular, even a basic blank arcade is rarely equally spaced (the back of the Thorpe Salvin font is the exception that comes to mind). Similarly, on the tympanum at Sturmer the forms of loops are not standard; they are rather bodged as if unfamiliar to the sculptor. Contrast all that to the perfection of a monk's illuminated page.

p. 123 As discussed on pp. 93-4, Webb sees these patterns as representing Hugh of St Victor's category of God's works of Foundation, or Creation. The word 'works' is plural in Hugh's text, which would nicely accord with the schemata, which were used for a variety of natural features, of creation in general (macrocosm) and man in detail (microcosm). She states: 'The Work of Foundation is illustrated on the font bowl (Plate 63) by a sequence of four geometric designs, comprising two circular figures, a square superimposed upon a square, and a rhomb superimposed upon an oblong. [These] four figures are carved in very bold relief, and are stylistically linked by the similarity of their beaded structures. Their purpose was to explain the cosmic harmony within God's Work of Foundation in the macrocosm and the microcosm, and to present its numerical basis.'

pp. 124-5 The general suggestion is excellent, but she takes the interpretation of these panels very literally from similarities she finds in schemata of the period, equating them more closely than is justifiable to the medieval diagram. In discussing Plate 54, the *schema* from the *Hortus Deliciarum* fol. 10v, she forces her argument hard, expecting too much correspondence between the manuscript and the false little heads. For example: 'In the corresponding segment of the carved circle on the font there is a foliated head, which, despite repair, was obviously intended to be a form of the vegetative Earth, later called 'the Green Man'. In the contiguous section to the right, Abbess Herrad had inscribed 'Ignis' and this is matched in the font circle by a little screaming figure with outstretched arms and upstanding hair.' Even if these heads had been genuine, there is no assurance for such a close correspondence when schemata or diagrams were used in manuscripts as a framework to manage any number of subjects or quaternities. Her solution to the transposition of Fire and Air (pp. 124-5) may be viable, but it is a distraction here.

In the textbooks, these diagrams were used for arranging natural phenomena, severally or together, such as winds, the four elements, seasons, and humours of man; all subjects that bring to mind God's orderly creation. The panels on the font fitted the programme derived from Hugh of St Victor because they were associated – in the minds of the educated – with concepts that were 'immovable and unchangeable' as Nicomachus' *Arithmetic* textbook put it, or as Socrates had explained, 'the eye of the soul... is aroused by these... the truth of the universe beheld'. While it is not possible to equate every detail of the heavily-restored carving with manuscript models, the general thesis, that such patterns would bring to mind God's orderly creation, is excellent, and at last does honour to the use of such motifs.

pp. 125-6 'there seems no reason to doubt that the circular design carved on the font bowl from Hampstead Norreys between the two rectangular figures (Plate 63A and Plate 44) was a commonly recognisable statement of the Macrocosmic Harmony within God's Work of Foundation.' Again, the word 'commonly' is too forceful and, if it had been left out, we would have a more useful statement. Webb was probably right in suggesting that these four patterns were added to the Hampstead Norreys font in order to bring to mind the works of Foundation in creation at large and in Man in particular, but she was mistaken in implying that everyone who saw them could appreciate the reference to a schoolbook or to Boethius, Nicomachus and Plato.

pp. 127-8 and title to Plate 61 The Macrocosm was identified in panel 3 (without justification since the details are not original), and the further assumption is made that panel 1 illustrated the Microcosm. She transfers this assumption to the memorial stone in Plate 61.

Now, a digression on two topics Webb did not, or could not, deal with:

She did not distinguish between the range of patterns/diagrams/schemata used in ancient texts or medieval schoolbooks, and those designs which are typical of Romanesque sculpture. Once again, her preference was to follow the leads in philosophical texts rather than the sculpture: on p. 132, she says that the schoolmen of the twelfth century continued to build their philosophic speculations on the ancient theories, and that 'the illuminated pages of their books and Bibles, as well as the carvings on their fonts, bear witness to a deep concern with this cosmology and its theoretical implications'. This is quite possibly true for some illuminations, but for the fonts, it is too sweeping a statement. The manuscripts were for the learned, and would welcome the resonances with the re-use of the classical forms, but the fonts were for those who were outside the schoolroom.

So, let us turn to the sculpture and look through her Plates 78 A-S. In this collection, mostly fonts, the pattern of four loops and a circle is especially frequent, occurring 8 times (the four-loops-and-square occur 4 times, and the Solomon's knot 5 times). Elsewhere also, the four-loops-and-circle is the device most often seen in Romanesque sculpture, to the extent that it seems common currency. The popularity of any particular device could have been fostered by the craftsmen, using and reusing forms they knew were acceptable. The variations on circles with radiating structures on some fonts (Plate 78, B, E, F, G and N, for example) seem to be related to the cross with loops (4, 5 or 6 loops) rather than directly taken from a medieval textbook. Further, there exist examples of the motif where the idea of Foundation or Creation is not the most likely interpretation, but where reference to Christ in his resurrected, glorious, nature, was intended (**30:106**).

From at least the late 10<sup>th</sup> century, the design of illuminated manuscript pages is often based on a symmetrical combination of squares, circles, rectangles and rhombs, and in these a wide range of themes may be inserted; the Byrhtferth diagram (B. Lib. Harley MS 3667, fol. 8r) contains the usual classical texts (Byrhtferth was a pupil of Abbo of Fleury at Ramsey), but the framework of the diagram is used elsewhere with very different associated material, for example biblical characters (Plate 1, the Alton Towers triptych; Caviness, 'Images' figs. 1, 20, 36; Ottonian manuscripts, etc). The four loops and circle device seems not to be found in early copies of the scientific texts derived from Plato, and the earliest texts using it and illustrated by Webb are Plate 62, from Bodl. Ms Digby 83, fol 2v, now thought to be mid-12<sup>th</sup> century, and Plate 54, from the *Hortus Deliciarum* (c.1170). On Plates 57 and 58, from c.1120, 6- and 8-loops occur. The caption to Plate 56, a manuscript by William of Conches, should probably be dated 1180-1225. It looks as though the motif is not common in manuscripts until the twelfth century (based on this very limited search, I am afraid!); other twelfth-century patterns are similarly made up of a circle or square

interwoven with a multiple loop (Plates 75, 76). The history of usage and the distribution of the four-loops pattern is summarised by Webb on p. 127, and might be amplified and illustrated with benefit; she seems to be referring to the circle with four loops motif throughout. To sum up, it is notable that the most common units of geometric organisation in the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries, in Romanesque manuscript and sculpture, display a four-fold symmetry, that is, they suggest a Cross.

On the other hand, a full range of rotae or other frameworks from the schoolbooks – such as pentagrams or diagrams based only on circles – is extremely rare in twelfth-century sculpture. (Contrast the large variety of diagrams sketched in a Greek language manuscript in *Florilège de textes scientifiques*, <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark>; or see Bodl. Ms Digby 83, diagrams within fols. 2v-39r, also on-line). Those geometric diagrams, even though they could have been associated with cosmic significance (or might have been simpler to draw), were not transferred *en bloc* onto sculpture. Was this because their structure did not suggest a cross? Is this perhaps another example of a pagan or classical subject Christianised, as some written texts were according to Krautheimer (*Art Bulletin*, ‘Carolingian Revival’, 1942), and as I have suggested for the Romanesque usage of centaurs and mermaids (2017, 9)? Raymond Klibansky (also cited by Webb p.207 n. (10)) says that from the time of Justin Martyr, Christian writers had endeavoured to admit the pagan Plato to the *doctrina christiana*, believing he had known and used the Scriptures, while Ambrose, like the Alexandrians, presented him as instructed by Jeremiah and following the precepts of the ‘Jew’ Pythagoras (1939, 23). The ‘conversion’ of the scientific diagrams is likely to have happened quite early since the texts were widely taught. Webb’s Plate 61, a memorial stone, shows the circle-and-four-loops motif prominently, so it was significant already for Christians somewhere in North Africa in the 7th or 8th century; Coptic patterns are similar; floor mosaics are another field of study, as she mentions.

It seems possible, therefore, that by our period the most popular motif (a circle and four loops) was seen as both a cosmic diagram and a pattern celebrating the Cross ; it expressed the cosmic eternal nature of Christ (words fail here, the diagram does it all). The twelfth-century manuscripts (Plates 54, 56, 62) arrange the ‘earth, air, fire and water’ of the classical diagrams within the new approved form. The use of the several large pattern units on the Hampstead Norreys font is distinctive since they are not varied for the sake of a workman’s regular pattern-making (as for example the motifs arranged in an orderly chain on the font at Stottesdon (Plate 78N, also 78E, F, I and P), and fonts elsewhere, but they are a more untidy or random series which could reasonably be allied to the scientific connotation suggested by Webb. The font now at Stone belongs to a small group of fonts nationally which were individually designed and used a mixture of motifs to display a teaching programme: the majority of fonts repeat an orderly arrangement of a limited number of motifs.

How early did the cross-and-four-loops achieve its popularity? Further research is needed to ascertain the similarities and differences in the forms and their periods of use, but it was discerning of Mary Webb to link the ancient scientific use of geometric diagrams to the use

of similar forms in Romanesque sculpture. Despite Bober opening up the subject, there is still a long way to go in the serious study of these patterns in manuscripts and in sculpture. While some peripheral criticisms can be made of Webb's work in this area, hers is a serious and stimulating contribution to a neglected subject.

A gap in her analysis is that Webb could not realistically connect 'Plato' with the medieval audience: she almost always ends with expecting the active participation of a monk, though she certainly understood that the items of Romanesque sculpture she discusses were made for the laity, because she says in her introduction: '[The sculptures] display a robust and literal approach to the metaphors of their literary sources and an originality of interpretation which is most unusual. Their didactic purpose was suited to an illiterate and simple-minded audience: in the twelfth century such visual aids were an absolute necessity for most laymen since literacy was still the monopoly of churchmen and the monastic orders...' (p.6). She can imagine the priest teaching one or two sermons from the doorway at Dinton (p. 21). However, not all the learning set out in Chapter 9 would have been transferable to a village audience: the priest, teaching from these panels, might have recited various four-fold cosmic or natural features to the laity, speaking about the orderly works of the Creation as a scientific fact, but also no doubt enlarging in the biblical sense in preparation for the figural scene. Illiterates are not simple-minded, but the philosophy can hardly have been taught to villagers in its primal sophistication; there were innumerable stages in the transfer of the ancient ideas in manuscripts into the design of the sculpture, and on to the laity.

But, to return to the book:

p. 132-3 As Harry Bober wrote in his study of the Genesis initial in the St Hubert Bible (Brussels Bib. Roy. ms 11.1639 fol. 6v) 'even if the *Timaeus* ... proves to be the ultimate source for so much of the doctrine in the Genesis initial, the path between Plato and the ... initial is most indirect' ('Creation before time' in *De Artibus Opuscula, Essays for Erwin Panofsky* (1960), 17; this article is cited by Webb). Modern research has broadened our knowledge of the pathways and, if anything, the ways are harder and longer – but the views are better.

pp. 128-135 Arithmetic fascinated the Greek philosophers, and number theory, as we might call it, engages present-day mathematicians too. It is a logic which is independent of the natural world, so no wonder that in medieval times it was seen as close to theology, the knowledge of God. The four subjects of the medieval quadrivium, (Arithmetic, Geometry, Music and Astronomy) begin with number. Number theory engaged the interest and wonder of some monks and students, but it seems peripheral to the subject of Romanesque sculpture, and Webb does not demonstrate that it is necessary or frequent (once her fishing net at Pitsford is discounted, see above re pp. 55-8). Numbers 1, 3, 4, 6 and 8 seem specially favoured in the sculpture of the period, but numbers beyond 12 would seem unlikely to have been useful for engaging the interest of the *illiterati*. One and three have biblical resonance, while four and six can be linked, as above to the schoolbooks; all, as number, have the highest philosophical pedigree. But naturally, once a carving is started, small numbers of 'things' are created, and to expect to find significance in every occurrence of 3

or 4 motifs would be unwise. Webb falls into this trap regarding the large fish and the three ‘rosettes’ carved to the left of the larger standing figure on the font (pp. 108-9), and perhaps regarding the three (or four?) ‘small circles’ below the tree on the tympanum at Pitsford (p. 55).

pp. 129-130 The philosophical background to the Lambda figure. This is a diagram she discovered to have been of interest in the early medieval period but which is not directly related to sculpture. She identified the Lambda diagram in the Tiberius Psalter (Plate 65; B. Lib. Cotton Tiberius C. VI f. 7v), where it is formed by the two horns or trumpets; excellent digital reproductions are on-line. This drawing of the Creator with three attributes was discussed by Adelheid Heimann in ‘Three Illustrations from the Bury St Edmund’s Psalter and their prototypes’ *JWCI* 29 (1966) pp. 51-53. Following Isaiah 40:12 and Wisdom 11:20, Heimann could easily account for the scales and dividers (as *pondere* and *mensura*), but not the horns; she was ‘forced to conclude [the two horns denote] *numero*’, while, reading vertically, ‘they also symbolize the Second Person of the Trinity’. Webb therefore has solved that puzzle, though the dots on the bands circling the horns do not form a series such as would be found in the Lambda diagram (being 2, 3, 3, and 2, 4, 4). Heimann found examples in other manuscripts of two horns in the mouths of personifications of the winds; a head with two horns in its mouth is found on some fonts, referring to the blowing of the last trump, but their use as a Lambda diagram must be rare. God’s creative breathing of ‘number’ is a fine touch.

p. 130 The solid or 3-D figure. She writes, ‘The ‘fullness’ or ‘perfection’ of number was thus achieved by its cubic state through self-multiplication, and the cube, as Macrobius pointed out, could be imagined as two equal squares, one superimposed upon the other by the addition of altitude - a fact of considerable importance for our study of font carvings.’ Webb probably meant by this that the square-on-square or rhomb-on-rectangle panels (nos. 2 and 4) were thought of as solid geometry, as three-dimensional figures such as a cube or a brick, but this is not made explicit until the caption to Fig. 72. She may be right, but, again, this is a topic that needs the corroboration of a specialist. Her best evidence is Plate 72 and its caption (p. 154). Medieval drawings of solid objects are not readily recognised by modern people, and the medieval idea of a ‘copy’ of a solid (for example, copies of the Tomb of Christ) was very different from ours.

p. 159 Plate 77 contains her drawings of interlaced-square figures taken from 12<sup>th</sup> century sculpture. In the caption, all are said to represent solid 3D figures, when read with the quotation below them from Macrobius, after Plato’s *Timaeus*. The text quoted in the caption suggests to me – a modern person – one square above and parallel with another, not turned 45 degrees as in the drawings: however, turning is necessary if both squares are to be shown on a flat 2D plane, and that would have been the obvious gambit for a medieval artist. She has no actual proof, unless the text from Nicomachus and Plate 72 are tied together as closely as she says. I have not been able to identify the manuscript. Although Acknowledgements (p. 221) gives the source as Egerton MS 2888 fol. 19 v, the manuscript is not reproduced on-line and the description of it is short. Assuming she is right,

the common devices sketched in Plate 77 would bring to mind not only solid forms, but a further range of associations, musical etc., almost ‘magic’ mathematics.

To sum up, the font from Hampstead Norreys has a range of patterns in keeping with the choice to illustrate the Foundation/Redemption story, as identified by Webb. When occurring singly elsewhere, similar large geometric patterns might encapsulate the same idea of God’s orderly creation. Illustrations of fonts at the end of Chapter 9 (Plates 78 A-S) suggest similar teaching would have been possible in many places, but it would have depended on the presence of a sufficiently learned priest.

## Conclusion

pdf 179-180

pp. 171 The opening paragraph sums up Webb’s achievement in melding the apparently disparate imagery round the Hampstead Norreys font. Despite the damaged sculptural record, her basic analysis can be sustained.

p. 172 The Conclusion ends with a quotation from Hugh of Saint Victor: this was displaced into the caption to Figure 82 on p.173. It reads:

‘As the heart’s thought is manifest in the utterances of the voice, so the Wisdom of God is manifest in His Work. For this Work, this lovely Work, this Work that only the Omnipotent can do, at one and the same time in its beauty proclaims, as with a voice, the Might of the Creator, and speaks His Wisdom.’

## Appendix 1

### A report by Mr Alan Collins A.R.C.A., A.R.B.S

pdf. 182-3

pp. 174-5

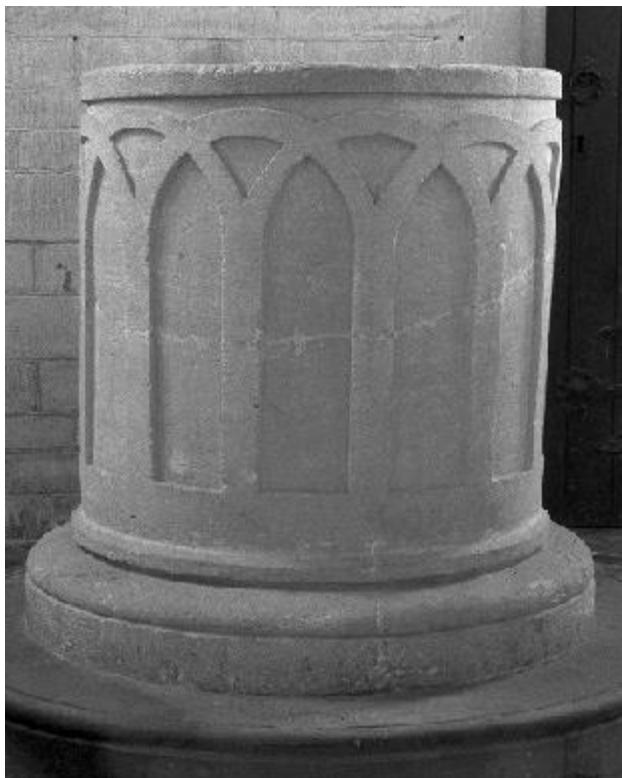
On p. 12, Webb says that the dichotomy of forms in the sculpture round the Hampstead Norreys font had led to the idea being current that there had been two periods of carving. Having divined the unifying programme of Foundation and Redemption, she needed some support to overcome that notion, and consequently asked for a sculptor’s opinion: ‘I append an expert and independent examination of the fabric of the font bowl, to assess the nature of its repairs and the probable order of its working. This was very kindly undertaken for me by the sculptor, Alan Collins, ARCA, ARBS to whose expert and experienced judgement I am greatly indebted. His conclusions confirm that the entire sequence of the font carvings (Plate 44) are the result of one original lay-out, and that later repairs are limited to the insertion of some small patches of new stone along the fracture line, and the replacement of fragmented originals, which have not

basically altered the original design. The distortion of the bowl is due in his opinion to the uncovering of a fault in the limestone during the initial working of the drum.'

In his report, Collins does not digress from the two questions he had been asked in order to make any Romanesque stylistic comparisons – to be fair, he was not asked for his opinion on the genuineness of the carvings as a whole. One wonders if he had much familiarity with work of the period. Alan Collins (1928-2016) was ‘an English religious artist’ working in a modernist style. In the early 1960s he produced a number of stone sculptures for Guildford cathedral, for which he won a medal and, c. 1965, he made a work in fibreglass for the northern headquarters of the Seventh-Day Adventists, in St Albans; from about 1968-1989 he lived in the United States as a teacher and sculptor.

Faults in the font show up on Plates 83, 84, on pp. 176, 177. Not often remarked, at the bottom of the cylinder, the geometric panels project over a deep modern-cut chamfer while, on the figural side, motifs at the bottom have been restored with new stone. In most cylindrical fonts there are losses along this lower edge, largely due, it may be supposed, from the inserting of a wooden or metal lever at various times in order to move the tub to a new position; the font is unlikely to have originally stood on a narrower cylinder as it now does, but on a wider plinth or directly on the floor. We know the font has been moved around a great deal: the loss in this zone after neatening up by Ancona’s workman could be some 10 centimetres or more, allowing for the usual blank border at the lower edge against the plinth or floor. Collins describes a second major area of restoration: ‘a lateral fracture which extends all round the lower part of the bowl. This has been repaired in some parts by insertions, where a narrow sandwich of stone of a lighter colour has been built into the fracture.’

With damage and faults like these present, we should be surprised by the perfect survival of pure plain surfaces and the minute detail. It is the minor knocks and wear that instinctively help us distinguish old from new work, and there are few of those, though perhaps the unimproved nakedness of the two standing figures is evidence for deliberate damage in the past. The restorer had no clue as to what had been there before (for suggestions, see above re pp. 105, 108), nor dare he give the figures genitalia for fear of offending propriety.



A possible comparison for the type of stone used was found at Brightwalton (Berks), a village less than seven miles from Hampstead Norreys, see [www.crsbi.ac.uk/site/979](http://www.crsbi.ac.uk/site/979); photograph and report by Ron Baxter. The arcaded font is described as a 'large, almost cylindrical tub' with an 'irregular crack right round the middle of the bowl'; the blank arcade is very plain and might perhaps have been recut. The dimensions of the two fonts are quite similar:

External diameter at rim	HN 0.80m	Br 0.78m
Internal diameter at rim	HN 0.65m	Br 0.62m
Height	HN 0.53m	Br 0.72m

The difference in the height (0.19m or 7½ inches) could be partly due to the differing nature of each block of stone, but some of it must be due to the Victorian recutting, when the bottom of the Hampstead Norreys font was neatened up. The Brightwalton font is described by Ron Baxter as 'almost' cylindrical: it is quite common in some areas for cylindrical font blanks not to have been turned on a lathe but to have been roughly formed by eye, perhaps checked by rolling the cylinder on the ground (pers. comm. Dr Martyn Pedley). That rough preliminary shaping could also have been applied to the Hampstead Norreys font, adding to the difficulty of estimating the depth of the restoration. Compare also the 'distorted' font from Burrough-on-the-Hill, (Plate 86): despite its competent carving and a likely date late in the century, the basic form is only approximate.

Collins was asked to assess the nature of the nineteenth-century repairs, and the probable original order of working: he concluded that the entire sequence was the result of one original lay-out, and that repairs were limited to insertions not altering the basic design. He focussed on her questions but did not consider any further problems or indications. He was

not asked to give a judgment on the reliability of the restoration, or to differentiate old from new work, and he did not attempt a verdict on the style (or styles).

At the end of his report, he does digress a little: ‘The surface of the stone has been washed with some form of shellac, and traces of it can be seen where it has trickled down below the surface of the bowl. No trace of any original colour has survived, and it is likely that the stone was darkened by a fairly modern wash. But it will be noticed that in some areas the limestone surface has been exposed by some very inexpert scraping round the sculptured figures.’ Are the shellac and the scraping both part of the restoration, or is the scraping later, some amateur trying to remove the shellac? The background to the figures is amazingly smooth, with not sign of tooling.

There may have been suspicions voiced at the time that the whole thing has been recut, since Collins says ‘It is evident that the original surface and working of the bowl, displaying a consistent height of relief, extends all round the drum in its upper half. Subsequent repairs have not diminished the consistent height and do not warrant the assumption that there was a complete re-cutting of the stone.’

He admits, however, ‘The background levels of the square and circular designs show considerable freedom in their depths, especially where several overlapping forms have to be accommodated; and this has produced a general inconsistency which seems to be characteristic of the original work.’ He blames the inconsistency on the medieval workman.

There had been other doubts too, as Webb says on p. 84: ‘It was later remarked that although the upper rim remained true, a lower section of the bowl was distorted, and that because of the strangeness of their style, some of the human masks might have been re-cut’. On page 93, she mentions ‘various little animal masks (Plate 39)... that cannot be individually identified’. It was perhaps her doubts about them that prompted Collins to write to her (p. 175) saying: ‘As to the various little animal heads, I am sure that they were carved with the whole of the original design and they are of sufficient depth to make this certain’. Webb herself (p. 128) describes: ‘a large lateral crack surrounding the bowl ... necessitating a patch of new stone, on which is an intrusion of three human heads of more recent date (Plate 83 and Plate 84).’ Here she knew she was looking at modern work, and it is just like the ‘original’, and yet she still believed him – or perhaps she assumed too much from what he told her. The plan, Hugh’s plan, of geometric panels and figural area, was ‘original’, but could that be true of each detail? Neither of them considered the columnar base, with the same heads again, supplied by the firm of Ancona and Bagster in 1848.

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Regarding the final material, listed below, I have little further comment to offer

## **Appendix 2**

### **Synopsis of the Latin texts of the Apocryphal Gospel of Nicodemus in which is described the Descent of Christ into Hades for the Restoration of Adam**

pdf 186-191

p. 178-183

## **Appendix 3**

### **The Carvings on two surviving stones from Reading Abbey**

pdf pp. 192-203

pp. 184-195

p. 186 The 'elf-like' head carved on the font (Plate 63C) could equally have been carved by the restorer from sight of such a manuscript; the similarity is not proof of a twelfth-century origin for the carving.

## **Appendix 4**

### **The Labyrinth in 12th century Illustrations**

pdf 204-211

pp. 196-203

**Notes** p.204

I have not checked the endnotes.

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List of my publications noted in the review

- Wood 2017 *Paradise: the World of Romanesque Sculpture* (York, 2017)  
<http://www.ypdbooks.com/the-arts/1693-paradise-the-world-of-romanesculpture-YPD01885.html>  
ISBN 978-0-9955882-0-2
- 5** 'The Romanesque Doorway at Fishlake', *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal* 72 (2000), 17-39.
- 10** 'Geometric Patterns in English Romanesque sculpture', *Journal of the British Archaeological Association* 154 (2001) 1-39.
- 14** 'The Romanesque font at St Marychurch, Torquay', *Devon Archaeological Society Proceedings*, 62 (2004), 79-98.
- 17** 'The Romanesque church at Melbourne', *Derbyshire Archaeological Journal*, 126 (2006), 127-168.
- 23** 'The two major capitals in the crypt of Saint-Bénigne at Dijon', *Antiquaries' Journal*, 89 (2009), 215-239.
- 27** 'The Romanesque doorways at Dinton and Leckhampstead', *Records of Buckinghamshire*, 51 (2011), 139-168.
- 28** 'The Augustinians and the Romanesque Font from Everingham, East Riding', *YAJ*, 83 (2011), 112-47.
- 30** 'The church of St Edith, Bishop Wilton, East Riding: a sympathetic nineteenth century restoration allows an interpretation of the Romanesque sculpture', *YAJ*, 84 (2012), 77-119.
- 32** 'The pictures on the greater Jelling stone', *Danish Journal of Archaeology*, 3, issue 1, (2014), 19-32.
- 33** 'Romanesque Sculpture at Quenington and South Cerney', *Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society*, 132 (2014), 97-124. With an historical note by Bruce Coplestone-Crow
- 36** 'The Two Tympana at Long Marton Church' *Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society*, 18 (2018), 123-140.