

CHAPTER XXI.

SAXON PAGANISM.

Saxon Religion—The 'Hearg'—Bede's account of Godmundham—Roman Buildings as 'Fana'—St. Pancras' Church at Canterbury—Gregory's Letter to Mellitus—St. Gall at Bregenz—Gregory not concerned with Stone circles—Saxon burials—'Byrgels'—Cremation and Orientation—King Radbod of Frisia—Saxon Terms for Barrows, etc.—Alfred on Barrows—Saxon Cemeteries remote from Villages—Their Relation to Roman Roads—The Moot-System—Hundreds and their Names—Guildhall of York—Stone Circles not used as Moots by Saxons—The Saxons' debt to the Celts.

When once it has taken a definite shape, the religion of man is one of the most stubborn things in his life. It rarely changes except under pressure of force or of policy, and even then it changes probably in its outward form only, not in its essentials. It is otherwise with a religion which has not yet attained the rigidity of a system. When the Saxons¹ came to England they brought with them their religion indeed, but it was a scarce-formed thing, likely to be modified with ease. And it appears that it was easily modified, although there was no direct attempt to do this for a hundred and fifty years. Such of the Romanised British population as remained in the land—and they were numerous in all but a few exceptional areas—were

¹ 'Saxons' and 'Anglo-Saxons' are convenient expressions, but it is certain that the invaders represented many other tribes than Saxons, Angles, and Jutes only,

and equally certain that there was little uniformity amongst them, religious or otherwise.

either the confessed serfs or the professed foes of the newcomers; they lacked the means to impose Christianity upon their masters by force, and they refused, at least officially, to attempt to do so by other means.¹ The Saxon, so long as he thought of the Briton as an enemy, and withal a beaten enemy, was not likely to forsake his own victorious gods in favour of the God of the defeated race. Not until he saw his king make this exchange would the thegn feel tempted to follow suit, and the ceorl presently follow the thegn; and no Saxon king is alleged to have taken this momentous step until Ethelbert of Kent was baptised by Augustine on Whit-Sunday of 597. A week later died Columba in Hy. Thirty years elapsed before Edwin of Northumbria was baptised at York (627) and the missionary who there reaped where Columba's disciples had sown² was the Roman Paulinus. There was a brief relapse in the northern kingdom under Edwin's sons, until in 635 Oswald succeeded, and inviting help from Iona, founded in that year the Scotie bishopric of Aidan in Lindisfarne.

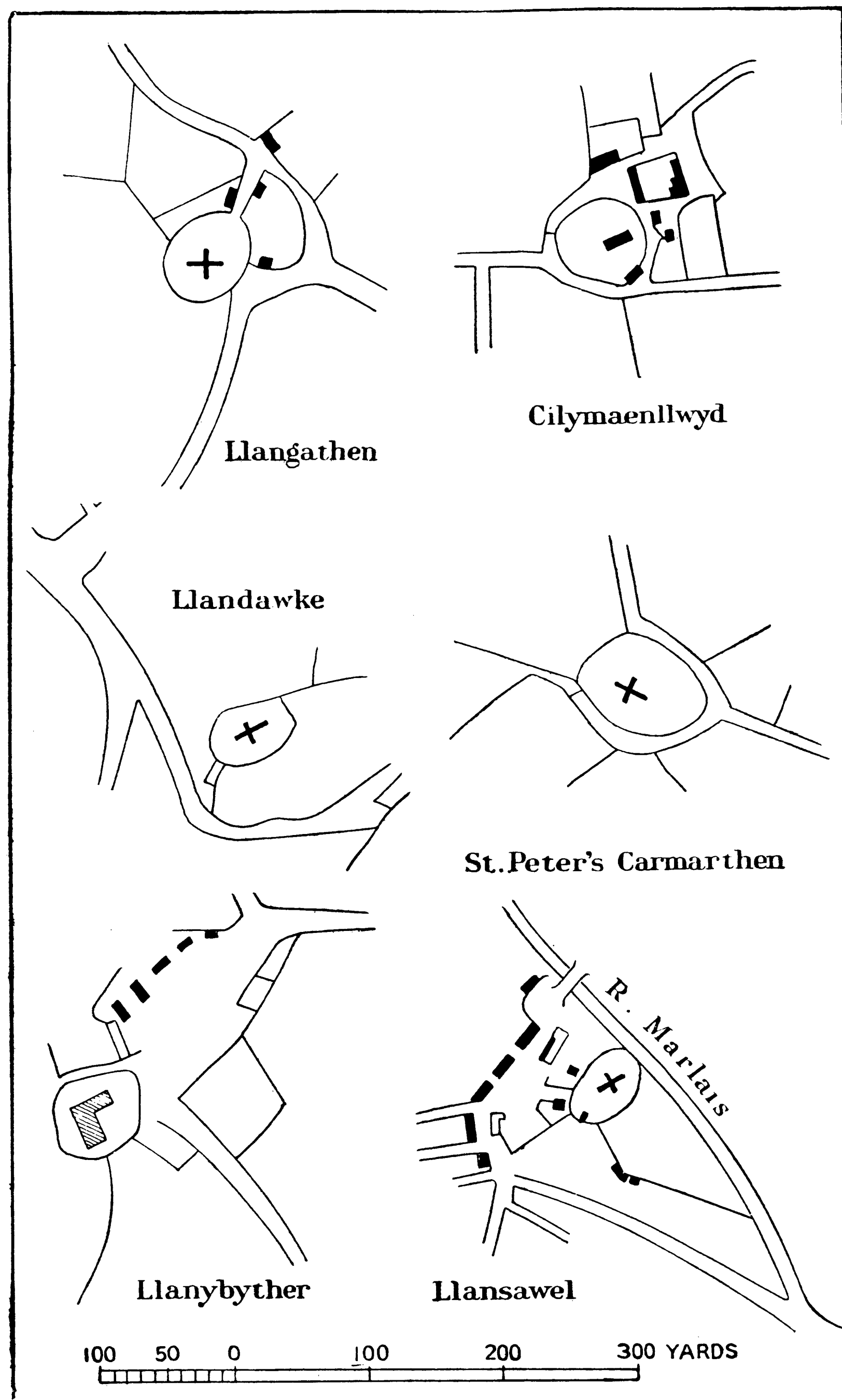
The various tribes whom for convenience we call Anglo-Saxons were stragglers in the great push which (412) divided Gaul amongst Franks, Burgundians, and West Goths. For the Saxons there was no room in Gaul, so of necessity they drifted west into Britain. Not having filtered through Gaul they came as Teutons in the raw, but settled here they fell at once under the influence of the Celt, and the history of their gradual reclamation from barbarism to civilisation is the history of their gradual acceptance of Celtic culture. That story reached its conclusion when they laid aside their old gods and accepted the Christianity which was the Celts' last gift.

J. R. Green has remarked that the bitterness with which the Saxon fought the Dane, and the rapidity with which the two peoples presently coalesced, are alike to be explained by their being both of one blood.³ It was the same with the Saxon and the Celt, save that their differences were greater because older.

¹ Bede *H.E.* II, ii, § 93: cp. *ibid.* II, xx, § 147: *cum usque hodie moris sit Brittonum fidem religionemque Anglorum pro nibilo habere.* So the attitude was still the same more than a century after Augustine's time.

² Above, ch. xvi.

³ *Short History of the English People* (1881), p. 43.



CIRCULAR CHURCHYARDS IN CARMARTHENSHIRE.

(From the *Tiibe* maps).

Two facts made such coalescence the easier. One was that small bodies of Teutonic immigrants had long been drifting westward along the same route, settling in Britain, and necessarily merging into the Celtic mass of the population.¹ The other was that, even when the invasion was at its height in the fifth century, the newcomers were not one homogeneous and co-ordinated mass, but a number of independent bodies whose collective weight was largely lost in their mutual jealousies. Settling here and there amongst the native Celtic population, they offered themselves individually to the influence of Celtism, which rapidly made itself felt. Nowhere apparently is the Saxon element so strong as in Sussex, and the reason is simple: in Sussex the Briton had been exterminated.²

So far as is known the Saxons of England in the fifth century were precisely as were the peoples of Tacitus' Germany in the first century. Had we more details we should doubtless be able to recognise differences in the degree of culture of the various tribes, or even to determine this or that trait as peculiar to Jute, Angle, Saxon and so on.³ But between 410 and 597 this land had no Tacitus. It had not even a Bede. The names of the days of the week, and that of the feast of Easter,⁴ epitomise for most of us most of what we know of even their gods. There is nothing to show that their religion differed from that of the other German and Scandinavian tribes,⁵ and so late as 600, it

¹ The archaeological evidence for this statement is abundant, in the eastern counties especially, as is natural. The original Teutonism of the Jutes had been largely modified in the course of their passage westward. Earlier sporadic settlers under the Roman *régime* would learn the ways, not of the Roman, but of the Romanised Briton; and distributed amongst the other *pagani* such earlier settlers would themselves remain *pagani*, with little if any knowledge of Christianity. There is a good deal about the survival of British blood, custom, and even speech, amongst the Saxons, in Vinogradoff, *Growth of the Manor*.

² Above, ch. xvi.

³ Archaeology can do something of this kind with such concrete matters as a brooch; with abstract matters the typological method fails. It is a fact that the culture of the Jutes was much above that of

the Angles or the Saxons, and Thurlow Leeds has suggested that this may be due to that tribe's having for some time been settled in N. Gaul (*Archaeol. of A.-S. Settlements*, ch. vii). This might be invoked to explain how Augustine came to find traces of Romano-British Christianity surviving in Kent, and why the Kentish Saxons so early adopted the ruins of Roman buildings as *fana* (ch. xxii). But even the South Saxons, who seem to have been as uncivilised as any, had their contacts with the outer world, as the treasures recovered from the cemetery at Highdown Hill sufficiently prove.

⁴ Even of Easter the etymology is disputed. The usual view is that it preserves the name of Eostre, a goddess of the spring-time.

⁵ Traill and Mann, *Social England*, i, 217-222.

has been said, 'it had very slight hold upon the affection or the superstition of the people.'¹ Assuredly there was nothing in it resembling the systematised religion of the Celts, for that was organised to abet a political system to which the Saxons had never approached. England did not again come near to any such thoroughness of organisation until the fifteenth century, and forthwith rose against it at the Reformation.² Few peoples are more essentially religious than the English, yet no people is more impatient of religious *formulae*. Both qualities are inherited from their teachers, the Celts. The Celt taught the Saxon his first Christianity: there would therefore be nothing surprising if he taught the Saxon also something of his earlier faith. And the evidence suggests that this was the case—that what religion the Saxons developed before their conversion was to a considerable degree modified by Celtic paganism.

In effect these 'farmers from Sleswick' on their first arrival here were in possession of no political institutions whatever³ and no religious system. A religion they undoubtedly had, but that is a different thing from a religious system; and in the same way they had a common instinct in dealing with matters such as the making, interpretation, and administration of what little law had as yet taken shape in custom. They began at the very bottom of the ladder of evolution with the family as the unit, and each such family was itself an embryonic state, the head whereof was judge, priest and king.⁴ Exactly how these families grew to be tribes, peoples, kingdoms, we can only surmise, seeking analogies, perhaps, in the fashion in which the first English colonists of America, or the first fore-loopers of Dutch South Africa grew into states. The evolution of either of those was the work of generations—not less than

¹ *Op. cit.* i, p. 226.

² Compare Dean Merivale's remarks upon a similar sequence of events in the case of the Old Saxons of the Continent in *The Continental Teutons*, p. 124.

³ Bede (*H.E.* V, x, § 381) expressly says that even in his own time the Old Saxons still had no kings, and Henry of Huntingdon explicitly asserts that the East Saxons on their arrival here were without a kingship. J. R. Green (*Short Hist. Eng. People*) argued

that monarchy was not developed amongst the Saxons until after the conquest of Britain. So also Palgrave. The real power was with the ealdormen, who answer to the *senatores* of Caesar's Belgae. Like the Belgae the Saxons chose their leaders, and these elected chiefs gradually became hereditary monarchs with very limited powers. The ealdormen claimed to be the sons of Wotan, and answer to Homer's σκηπτοῦχοι βασιλῆες.

⁴ Rhys, *Lectures*, p. 226.

one and a half centuries. That of Saxon England could not be more speedy. Bede lived and wrote when the process was still unfinished. He might have told us much about it, but he has told us nothing at all.

If the head of the family was at once judge and priest, it will follow that each family had its holy place, and that as the family developed into the village, and that again into the tribe, there would be developed also holy places of the village and of the tribe, just as we know that there came to be special moots for village, hundred and county. Possibly this was so, but these holy places would for the most part be literally places only, and nothing more. There would be no buildings, ornaments, or accessories. The most to be looked for would be some sort of *limes* marking the *locus consecratus*, some sort of fence perhaps enclosing a small area about a tree or stone. That the Teutonic tribes in England ever built roofed temples, or fashioned anthropomorphic figures of their deities, it is impossible to prove.¹ Their chief objects of worship, as the laws of Cnut declare,² were the sun and the moon, fire and water, springs, stones, and trees; none of these objects lend themselves to roofs, nor very readily to representation by idols. The continental Saxons of the eighth century had indeed a wooden temple and a wooden figure of their great god Irmin. It stood near Marsberg on the Diemel, and was destroyed by Charlemagne in 772.³ This, however, is readily explained as due to later imitation of examples Gallo-Roman or Roman. But even so late there seems to have been little or no change in the essentials of their religion: 'Their superstitions and their cult, as described in the ancient chronicles, seem to have been generally identical with those reported of the tribes which occupied the same seats in the early days of Germanicus and Varus.'⁴

The most usual Saxon term for a 'holy place' is

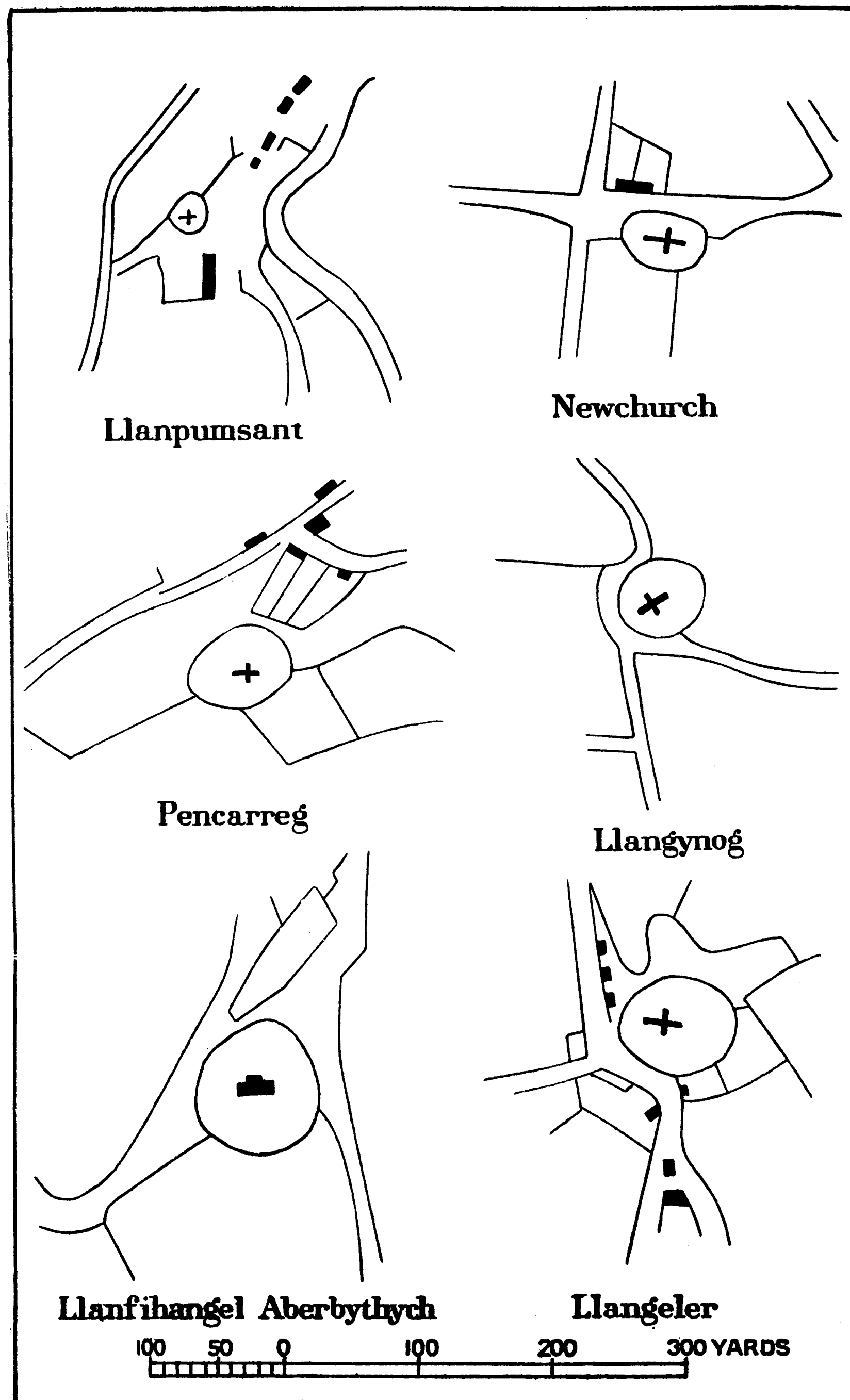
¹ No such thing as a Saxon idol has yet been found in England. The frequent assertion that the early Teutonic tribes made idols is probably largely due to the use of *idola* in old writers (e.g. Bede, *H.E.* V, ix, § 384, and Cnut's *Laws*) for 'false gods.'

² Thorpe, *Ancient Laws*, p. 379. In the *Law of the Northumbrian Priests* (*ibid.* p. 416) occur injunctions against the worship of idols (§ xlviii) and another (§ liv) makes it an

offence 'if there be a *frith-geard* on anyone's land about a stone or a tree or a well, or any such folly.'

³ The idol was the famous Irminsul, 'Pillar of the world.' The figure, carved of wood, held in one hand a rose, in the other a pair of scales, and wore a helmet crested with a cock. It was decorated with ornaments of gilded bronze.

⁴ Merivale, *The Continental Teutons* p. 121.



CIRCULAR CHURCHYARDS IN CARMARTHENSHIRE.

(From the Tithe maps).

bearg, the Icelandic *hörgr*, usually rendered 'temple' or 'shrine.' Both renderings involve a *suggestio falsi*, for the *bearg* seems to have been roofless, and probably the Latin *lucus*¹ is nearer the meaning. In modern English the word assumes the form *barrow*, seen in such place-names as Harrow-on-the-Hill, Harrowden (older, Harrowdun), Peperharrow, and Arrowfield.² The suggestion that the word was occasionally applied to Christian shrines, as in the case of Anglezargh or Anglezark, a village in the parish of Bolton, three miles east of Chorley, Lancs., and in that of Guthlacesarc, the sometime name of the modern parish of Golcar near Huddersfield,³ is scarcely warranted: there is no reason to suppose that the Guthlac here concerned is identical with the saint of Crowland, and both names may be otherwise explained.⁴

There is no evidence that the *bearg* was commonly on a hill rather than on low ground. There are no hills in Sleswig, and a large part of the eastern coastal areas of England is almost equally flat, so that there could be no 'high-places' there if hills were needful. Very possibly the *bearg* was nothing more than, as suggested in the *Law of the Northumbrian Priests*, an enclosure surrounding a stone, a tree, or a well. If this was all, there would be nothing upon such a spot to reward the excavator for his pains. Even the stone which may have been the central feature in some cases, will long ago have been removed,⁵ and excepting a few ashes, and perhaps traces of incinerated bones, we know of nothing which the ritual of Saxon paganism was likely to leave behind.⁶ It would seem

¹ As suggested in Wright-Wülcker's *Glossary*.

² The etymology of *bearg* is quite unknown. A connexion with Latin *carcer*, 'a place enclosed and set apart,' has been suggested. In a *Corpus MS.* (? ix cent.) the word appears to translate the Latin *lupercal*. Alfred in his *Orosius* uses it of the holy places of certain Balkan tribes, but never of Greek or Roman temples; and in his translation of Gregory's *Pastoral*, where the English version (*E.E.T.S.* xlv, p. 152) renders 'idols of the people of Israel were painted on the walls' (*tha beargas* [v.l. *bearga*] *Israbela folces*). See McClure, *British Place Names*, pp. 209-216. The word does not occur in Middle-English lexicons.

³ Taylor, *Names and their Histories* (1896), p. 390.

⁴ By reference to the O.N. *erg*, 'a shieling.'

⁵ The early Church issued repeated orders for the destruction, removal, or burial, of all sacred stones. How stubbornly such objects resisted is illustrated by the case of the famous Venus of Quinipili in Brittany, which is to this day the object of the secret worship of the neighbourhood. See Baring-Gould, *Book of Brittany* (1895), pp. 26-28.

⁶ 'The *börg* was a sacred altar built of stones, often mentioned in the *Eddas* and *Sagas*, but never described . . . Freyja says, "Ottar made me a big *börg* reared of stones . . . He reddened it with fresh ox-blood"':

that metal was taboo in such places,¹ and there is no evidence that the Saxon ever used his *bearg* as a place of burial. There is no reason to think that the Saxons would go to any great trouble in the way of raising earthworks about their holy places. They seem to have had a general antipathy to any such form of labour. Only when compelled by the *force majeure* of the Danes did they take to rearing any considerable fortifications about their *tuns*, and only by rare exception did they trouble themselves to rear conspicuous barrows over their most exalted dead. Alike in their general contempt for funereal pomp and their refusal to think of a god who might be confined under a roof, they were exactly like the Germans of Tacitus' time. In the latter point they were also exactly like the Celts.

Their barrows excepted, the rigidly circular *limes* of Celtic ritual was not essential to the Saxons. Yet the evidence of language declares that to the Saxon's mind the strictly circular plan was nothing novel and remarkable; for even in the case of the largest stone-circles this feature in no wise stirred his wonder. Mostly such circles have no old Saxon names at all. Stonehenge indeed was a thing to marvel at, but what struck the Saxon was not the plan of it or even the size of its monoliths, but the peculiarity of the impost. This was a novelty indeed, so he called the place the 'Stone Gallows.'² As no similar name is elsewhere recorded, it is the more likely that the impost was in fact a new departure and unique in the Britain of its day.

Bede, who was born in 673, must have talked with many a man who could remember the time when paganism was almost universal in England, yet his language when speaking of it is always curiously vague, perhaps purposely so. The Saxons, he says, had *fana*, *delubra*, *templa*, *idola*, *arae* and *arulae*. His Saxon translator is vaguer still: occasionally he speaks of *bearg* (*herge*) and *wigbed* ('altar'), but more commonly writes the colourless word *deofolgyld*, 'devil-worship.' Redwald of East Anglia, a pervert who died in 617, had within the same *fanum* an *altare* for the worship

Du Chaillu, *Viking Age*, p. 356. According to Cleasby and Vigfussen (*Icelandic-English Dict.*), the *börg* was 'an altar, holy circle, or any roofless place of worship.'

¹ This follows from the story of Coifi at Godmundham, cited below.

² Stane-henges. This is a more probable rendering than the alternative 'Hung (suspended) Stones.' The worshippers of Odin had an intimate acquaintance with gallows, but a gallows of stone was verily a novelty to them.

of Christ and an *arula* for the worship of 'devils'; the Saxon Version writes *wigbed* for both.¹ According to the lexicons *fanum* means merely a sacred place, a *locus consecratus*, irrespective of any building thereon, and neither *delubrum* nor *templum* necessarily connotes any building. On the conversion of Edwin of Northumbria and his high-priest Coifi, the latter proceeds forthwith to desecrate the *fanum* of the creed he had disowned. This was at Godmundham (Goodmanham) near Market Weighton, E.R.² In it were *arae et fana* (*heargas*) *idolorum*, and Coifi rides off *ad idola destruenda*. The Latin phrase suggests actual 'figures,' but a few lines further on we read *pergebat ad idola*, which looks as if *idola* was merely another term for *fana*; and the Saxon Version throughout has *deofolgyld* only. Coifi desecrated the precinct by hurling into it his spear³: the weapon *sticode faeste on thaem herige*. So says the Saxon Version, but Bede's own Latin has nothing of the sort. If *herige* here means anything more than *fanum*, it must denote something into which the spear could fix itself. Was it an 'idol' or a tree? We know the Saxons worshipped trees; we have no proof that they ever made 'idols' as we understand that term. So it was probably a tree, unless indeed the *herige* was merely the soil of the *locus consecratus*.

The place was surrounded by *saepta* (*heowum*, 'haws,' 'hedges'), which is good Latin for a fence made of any sort of timber, but not commonly of stone or earth. It was destroyed 'together with its fences' by fire; so again the fences were definite objects.⁴ There was seemingly no roofed building,⁵ nor was there anything which could not be destroyed by fire.

This event happened in 627, when Northumbria was both in extent and in power the greatest of the Saxon kingdoms. Yet there is no hint that the chief holy place of

¹ Bede, *H.E.* II, xv, § 134.

² *ibid.* II, xiii, § 131. Greenwell (*Brit. Barrows*, p. 286) remarks that this, from the evidence of barrows, etc., was the centre of a large population and a place of special sanctity in times far antedating the Saxons. How is this continuity of sanctity amid successive conquests to be explained?

³ But conversely the young Cuthbert, still a layman, before entering the 'church' of

Melrose to pray, hands his spear to his servant (Bede, *Vita St. Cuthberti*, c. 6).

⁴ So in Icelandic paganism (ix-xi cents.) the *bof* was surrounded by high wooden fences which could be locked and were accounted as holy as the *bof* itself (Du Chaillu, *Viking Age*, i, 360).

⁵ In *Beowulf* occurs the expression *bearg-trafum*, which is explained as 'idol-tents,' i.e. shrines.

its Bretwalda was anything that could in modern language be called a temple. It was apparently merely a *bearg* of the usual kind. Clearly the Northumbrian Saxons were in point of religion and ritual still savages, a century and a half after their migration. This is the solitary holy place of paganism about which Bede speaks with anything to be called detail, and Coifi is the solitary pagan priest whom he mentions.¹

There is a doubt about the nationality of Coifi, whose name Toland identified with the Gaelic *Coibhi*, said to have been synonymous with 'arch-druid.'² Bede's account leaves the matter in doubt. If Toland be right, the Northumbrian Saxons must have gone some considerable way towards adopting Celtic paganism, as seems to be suggested by other facts. The interest of the matter lies in the further possibility (above, ch. xvi) that Celtic Christianity also had retained a footing at York; in which case the position of Edwin, who had to choose between the two, was very much that of the later Oswy, who had to choose (664) between the rival claims of the Celtic and the Roman churches.³

There is evidence that the Kentish Jutes, the East Angles, and possibly the East Saxons also, had likewise made progress. Living where the Roman influence had been most virile, they had so far departed from their original Teutonic attitude as occasionally to appropriate ruined Roman buildings and turn them into *fana*. That of Redwald was still remembered by some of Bede's contemporaries⁴: he was very possibly dealing with one Roman ruin as Queen Bertha certainly did with another, the famous church of St. Martin. In Thorne's *Chronicle* (fourteenth century) it is said that king Ethelbert had a pagan place of worship ('*fanum sive idolum*') of his own. It was a building, for it had a southern porch; and in that porch stood a *simulacrum* which Augustine broke to

¹ It is to be noticed that the *fanum* was not at York, which lies 18 miles N.W. of Market Weighton. If Edwin's 'capital' was near his *fanum*, he had avoided the Roman city. On the other hand Paulinus at once seizes upon York as the scene of the king's baptism and the site of the first Christian 'church.' The northern Saxons had seemingly shown no tendency to adopt

Roman ideas, and Paulinus deliberately set himself to reverse that attitude. A Roman road ran past Market Weighton, a mile to the west, leading to the shores of the Humber at Brough.

² *Hist. Druids*, p. 279.

³ On the occasion of the Synod of Whitby.

⁴ Bede, *H.E.* II, xv, § 134.

pieces. Then he 'made a Christian meeting-place of the pagan place of meeting' ('*synagogam mutavit in ecclesiam*'), and dedicated it to the Roman boy-martyr St. Pancras. Augustine appropriated Ethelbert's *fanum* as a church, but for what purpose the original building had been intended by its Roman builders we are not told. It was very soon superseded by the larger monastery-church of SS. Peter and Paul, which Augustine built beside it.¹ Himself a monk of St. Augustine's, William Thorne was in the best position to know, if not the facts, at least the tradition of his house.

Bede gives² a transcript of the letter sent (601) by Pope Gregory to the abbat Mellitus directing him how to deal with the *fana idolorum* in England. The *idola* are to be destroyed, but not the *fana*. If these can be utilised as Christian churches, they are to be sprinkled with holy water and then provided with altars and relics. Reasons are given for this course: if the *fana* are well built, they ought to be adapted to the service of the true God; and the heathen may the more easily be converted if they are encouraged still to frequent the familiar scenes of their pagan devotions. Gregory well understood the power of the *religio loci*. Even the pagan festivals are not to be rudely forbidden: they are to be transmuted into Christian festivals. In an earlier letter the same pope had urged³ king Ethelbert to 'hunt down the worship of false gods (*idola*) and overthrow the buildings (*aedificia*) which are their temples (*fana*).'⁴ Milman suggests that he diplomatically laid upon the king's own shoulders the invidious task of destroying such *fana*, while advising his missionaries to adopt a more conciliatory attitude.⁴

Gregory is clearly answering a precise question, viz. What was to be done with the *fana* of the pagan Saxons?

¹ *Monast. Anglic.* I, 23. The event is not dated in the *Chronicle*. According to one view it was in 598, three years before the writing of Gregory's *Epistle to Mellitus*; according to another view, it occurred in the year following that *Epistle* (602).

The building was 'about midway between the church of St. Martin and the walls of the city.' It was also 'the first church dedicated by St. Augustine.' The statement is not inconsistent with Bede's narrative, who says (*H.E.* I, xxvi, § 56) that

St. Martin's had been 'dedicated of old,' and does not make mention of St. Pancras' church at all. For both these churches, see Canon C. F. Routledge, *The Church of St. Martin, Canterbury* (1898).

² *H.E.* I, xxx, § 74. Mellitus was going to assist Augustine, who presently (604) made him bishop of London, and in 619 he became archbishop of Canterbury.

³ Bede, *H.E.* I, xxxii, § 76.

⁴ *Hist. Latin Christianity*, ii, 232.

There were, so far as can be guessed, only three possible varieties of *fana* in the England of that day, namely the Saxon *hearg*, the earlier *locus consecratus* of the Britons, and here and there a Roman ruin which had been adopted as a *fanum* by the more progressive Saxons such as those of Kent. Gregory's words declare that he was thinking of buildings, and it being impossible that any one could regard a *hearg* as a building, or that a pope of Rome at that date could regard a stone circle as something convertible into a church as he understood it, the conclusion is that he had in mind the last-named variety of *fana*, Roman ruins which had been converted into pagan places of worship and might be re-converted into Christian churches. He must assuredly have heard of the case of St. Martin's church. Presumably he had heard also of Ethelbert's *fanum*; and the action of Augustine in forthwith breaking Ethelbert's idol and reconsecrating the building to St. Pancras, looks like a direct outcome of the pope's letter. The stubborn tradition that St. Paul's in London occupies the site of a Roman temple,¹ and the cathedral of Winchester also, may have the like origin.

To suggest that Gregory, that 'Argus full of eyes,' erred through ignorance of the forms of Saxon paganism and thought that it commonly constructed roofed temples, cannot be right, for he was otherwise a very well-informed man, and the less likely to have laboured under such a mistake four years after Augustine's arrival in Kent.

Nothing is said of any interments in the pagan *fana*. This confirms the view that with the Saxons the *hearg* and the burial-place were different things. On the other hand Gregory insists on the introduction of relics of the saints into all converted *fana*. In other words the Latin Church of 600 was in complete agreement with the Celt in the feeling that interments or their equivalent were essential to any proper *locus consecratus*. The Saxon seems not to have so closely identified religion with death, but having no dogma of his own he was open to new ideas, and presently adopted this feeling in its entirety. In the same way, having no fixed prepossessions about such matters,

¹ The balance of evidence going to show that Londinium never lost its Romano-British population (ch. xvi), and was never

left a desolation, Mellitus would have to deal with a goodly number of Roman buildings, temples and others.

he was clearly by way of adopting a Roman fashion of temple.

There is evidence that other Teutonic tribes displayed a like adaptability. The case of the Irminsul has been mentioned (p. 167). We have an earlier instance from Switzerland: St. Gall, seeking a site for a monastery, finds a desecrated 'church' in the neighbourhood of Bregenz. It had been turned by the natives into a *fanum*, and certain bronze figures which hung upon the walls were the objects of their worship. The saint brays to pieces the figures, purifies the building, and reconsecrates it by introducing certain relics of SS. Mauricius and Desiderius, 'which he carried hung about his neck in a little case.'¹ Similarly, at a date much later than that at which the Old Saxons did so, their neighbours in Denmark and Norway had likewise adopted some sort of structural temple, the *hof*, which they introduced in the ninth century into Iceland.²

It has sometimes been argued that stone circles are fewer in the north of England than in the south because Paulinus deliberately destroyed them, and that he did so because they were *fana* of the Saxons. There is very little reason for supposing that Paulinus' attitude was any different from that of Augustine, and he was probably guided in his conduct by the same advice which Mellitus had received from pope Gregory. He certainly contributed to the destruction of king Edwin's *hearg* at Goodmanham, but the description proves that that was not a stone circle. Nor is it literally true that the circles south of the Humber are so markedly more numerous and finer than those north of that estuary. Derbyshire, for example, has more circles to a given area than any part of England, and those of Cumberland are amongst the finest of the whole series. If there do not happen to exist traces of similar circles in certain large northern areas, e.g. Durham, Northumberland, and parts of Yorkshire, the fact admits of explanation.³ There are few or none in East Anglia, in Mercia, and in Sussex, which are all in the south of the

¹ Walafrid Strabo, *Vita S. Galli*, xi. St. Gall flourished c. 600, and the building must have been a relic of some earlier (Latin) missionary.

² Above, ch. ix.

³ See above, ch. xi.

island. In some of these areas this peculiar form of moot may never have established itself, at any rate on the scale in which it is to be seen in other regions.

If the Church, whether in the person of Paulinus or at some later time, had so to say declared war on the circles because of their alleged connexion with devil-worship, they must long since have perished, not partially only, but entirely, for their construction was not such that they could possibly withstand an ordered campaign for their overthrow. That so many of them survive, and in some cases survive almost intact, is proof that there can have been no organised effort to remove them; and this again is proof that the Church did not particularly associate them with the practices of Saxon paganism.¹ There is abundant evidence that their destruction has been in great part the work of the last two or three centuries, due to nothing more systematic than the activities of farmers, road-menders, or even idle holiday-makers. It may be demonstrable that the stones of Arbor Low have been overthrown with systematic intent, but there is no proving at what date and by whom it was done; and in any case Arbor Low, with its great fosse, is a circle of different purpose from the unfossed moot-circles. If the stone circles were necessarily symbolical of what was un-Christian, it is very remarkable that the best of them, and the best preserved, are to be found in just those parts of England in which Scotie Christianity took first and deepest root. If on the other hand they were not regarded as symbolical of paganism their survival is understandable enough, in contrast with the case of the *hearg*. The disappearance of the latter is, as says Prof. Ekwall, 'by no means remarkable,'² simply because it was the embodiment of Saxon paganism. At any rate there is not known a solitary instance of its survival.

All that is known of Saxon burial-customs bears out what Tacitus says of the German tribes at large: they made little account of death, small fuss of burial. Exception might be made naturally in the case of the great ones of a tribe: Beowulf has his own barrow and is buried with full

¹ There appears to be no capitulary or other Church edict which expressly orders the destruction of stone circles,

² *Introd. to Study of Eng. Place-Names*, p. 38.

honours, but his barrow is of the primitive type, the familiar 'hill' of earth; for the Anglo-Saxon seems never to have developed any distinctive type of monument, or anything more elaborate than the 'bowl' and the 'bell.' Of dolmens, menhirs, cromlechs, and disc-barrows he knew little, if anything. Even his 'bowls' and 'bells' are commonly of insignificant size, and rather than build a new one he would lay his dead within the barrows of any earlier races.¹ Often he laid them in mounds which were never meant to be sepulchral at all, or within the 'camps' of older races, as at Highdown hill in Sussex. Most frequently he laid them in urn-fields or grave-fields, of which no visible *limes* remains. The dead lie as close as may be in such cases, yet very rarely does one interment interfere with another; which lends colour to the belief that there must have been some external sign to mark each grave. If so it was neither elaborate nor abiding, for it has left no recognisable trace.² In some Kentish cemeteries each grave seems to have had its own tiny mound, as in a modern graveyard.

There is a similar absence of all rule in regard to the orientation of the graves³ and to the choice between cremation and inhumation. Thurlow Leeds asserts that, so far as there is any discoverable rule, the Angles burned, the Saxons buried, their dead. This deduction is possibly vitiated by the inclusion of cases both Christian and non-Christian, for, as will be seen, there is rarely any means of distinguishing the one from the other. The Church, so soon as it dared, forbade cremation, but until that time either fashion appears to have been very much a matter of choice.⁴ Similarly the Church discouraged the burial of

¹ 'Wherever the invaders penetrated the barrow areas of England, they made use of the barrows for the interment of their own dead.' This is particularly noticeable in Derbyshire and Yorkshire: 'On the great barrow-area of the Derbyshire moors, secondary interments in Bronze-Age barrows are very common, but the use of them as general grave-yards, as in the remarkable instance at Driffild, seems to be confined to Yorkshire' (Thurlow Leeds (*Archaeology of the A.-S. Settlements*, p. 71). In the *British Museum Guide to the Early Iron Age*, p. 112, it is remarked that these Yorkshire interments lie 'as in a churchyard.'

² St. Boniface (*Ep.* lxxxi) mentions, and condemns, the practice of fixing on stakes near graves the heads of the (animal) victims of the funeral-feasts. This practice would ensure that a grave was not lost sight of so long as such funeral-feasts continued.

³ Thurlow Leeds, *Archaeology of the A.-S. Settlements*, pp. 27-8, 105.

⁴ Thurlow Leeds, *op. cit.* pp. 26 *sqq.* To assist at a cremation was made a capital offence in France of the eighth century (Charlemagne, *Capitulary* viii).

any grave-furniture with the dead, but it is hardly to be thought that it would in the early days of Christianity take up too rigid an attitude in this, or indeed in any matter relating to burial. All that we really know of these days goes to show that the Church compromised in very liberal fashion; and it is more than likely that the archaeological dogma which writes down as pagan any Saxon interment inconsistent with present-day rules in regard to orientation, or revealing any trace of funeral furniture, is guilty of an intolerance unknown to England until at least the middle of the eighth century.¹ The case of king Radbod of the Frisians has in it probably a good deal that is applicable to Teutonic paganism at large. The first missionary to the Frisians was the Saxon Willibrord, after whom followed Wulfram of Sens. The latter had persuaded the king to consent to baptism, when Radbod suddenly asked, 'Where were his forbears? Shall I find them also in this Heaven you promise me, or are they in that Hell you speak of?' 'In Hell with all the unbaptised,' replied Wulfram. 'Then I will follow them thither,' said the king, and declined to accept a faith which would separate him from his kindred. Wulfram's intolerance postponed the conversion of Friesland for many years. Without doubt many a Saxon would have sympathised wholly with Radbod, and without doubt the Christian missionaries in England, more particularly those of the Scotie Church, exercised a more tactful discretion than did the overzealous Wulfram.

When Hakon the Good was buried at Seaham in North Hordaland 'his friends brought his body and raised there a great howe, and laid the king therein all armed with the best of his array, but no wealth therein besides. Such words they spoke over his grave as heathen men had custom, wishing him farewell to Valhalla.'² King Hakon was on the border line betwixt old and new: he was by way of being a Christian himself, but could not prevail upon his people to be so. His burial was in keeping, neither altogether pagan, nor wholly Christian, showing the older practices blending with the new.

¹ cp. the cases above cited (ch. iii) of radial burials, and the finding of urns and other grave-furniture in unquestionably Christian graves at Warren (ch. xx) and at the Knowe of Saverough (ch. xxii).

² *Story of Hakon the Good* (Saga Library), c. 33.

Saxon speech bears out the evidence of archaeology. The language has none of that variety of names for graves and grave-monuments which is so prominent in Irish, and to a less degree in other Celtic tongues. It has indeed no standard word at all. *Beorb* and *blaw* and *howe* and *hyll* are used indifferently, and all mean the same thing, the 'hill' of earth which we now call a barrow.¹ More generic than any of these were *byrgenne*, 'grave,' and *byrgels*, 'cemetery.'²

In early Saxon Charters such phrases as *on ðaem haeðenan byriels*, 'to the heathen cemetery,' occur frequently; e.g. in a charter of Aethelwulf of Wessex, 854. 'Heathen Burials Corner' is still a well-known spot in the parish of Steyning, Sussex, possibly the only one to retain its early name. A spot in the adjacent parish of Upper Beeding, 1½ miles east, is known as 'Christian Burials.' The ground adjoining some conspicuous barrows on Longmynd, near Ratlinghope, Salop, is called 'The Old Burials.'³ The word sometimes developed into Burrell or Burrells; cf. the Scottish Burreldales, where are remains of a (? sepulchral) circle. In Gibson's *Camden* (1753), p. 990, Burrells in Bath is explained as a corruption of Borough Walls, and the same explanation is offered for Burrells near Appleby; but Sedgefield⁴ prefers to derive this from the personal name Burrill or Borrell. In *D.B. Sussex* is Burgelstaltone (now Burgh Hill), i.e. *byrgels-steall-tun*, 'the *tun* by the burial-place,'⁵ which suggests that the Saxons had no aversion from such places. The local name Britmeresburieles, 'Beorhtmaer's burial-place,' is cited in Buckinghamshire, c. 1250.⁶

It is quite in keeping with the facts of archaeology that *graef*, 'grave,' has outlived all the other terms. Alfred, in his version of Orosius' *History*, provides a curious illustration of the unfamiliarity of anything like the imposing individual barrow of Celtic times in the England of his own day. Orosius had repeated from Livy the story how

¹ Dr. Grundy, however, thinks that the terms *blaw* and *beorb* at any rate meant 'two different types of barrow' (*Arch. Journ.* lxxvii, p. 123).

from *bergan*, 'to shelter'; whence also the verb 'to bury.'

³ *Shropshire Shreds and Patches*, vii, 78.

⁴ *Place-names of Cumb. and Westm.*

⁵ Taylor, *Names and Their Histories*, p. 390.

⁶ *Place-Names of Bucks*, p. 260.

² See ch. xxv. The word is a derivative of the same root as that of *burgh*, 'borough,'

one of Hannibal's sailors, bidden climb aloft and report what he could see of the adjacent shore, said that he had sighted a ruined tomb (*sepulchrum dirutum*). Alfred faithfully translates the text, and adds the gloss 'such as it was the custom to rear of stones in memory of great men.'¹

The Jutish cemeteries of Kent abound in examples of grave-furniture which prove that here the new-comers stepped straight into the heritage left by the Romans.² Here and there too are interments which perplex those archaeologists who accept the dogmatic assertion that Christianity allowed no grave-furniture such as is held to mark a pagan burial. Near Strood, for example, was found in 1852 a Saxon burial accompanied by 'the ordinary weapons of iron' and other typically 'pagan' relics, and with these a cylindrical object of bronze bearing, embossed upon it six times over, an indubitably Christian subject, viz. three figures, 'one seated and nimbed, the others standing with hands crossed on the breast; above the head of one is a cross, of the other a bird carrying a wreath.'³ This burial was close to the site of a Roman cemetery.

Like most other pre-Christian peoples of these islands the pagan Saxons made their burial-places remote from the dwellings of the living. There are few recorded cases of the finding of demonstrably early Saxon interments close beside old Saxon habitation-sites, whereas there are many examples of cemeteries lying a mile or so away from the village which may be supposed to represent the original *tun*. There is no doubt that the Saxons' advance over the country was largely guided or determined by the lines of the Roman roads. They did not as a rule place their *tuns*

¹ Alfred's *Orosius* (E.E.T.S.), pp. 201-202: (*ane to-brocene byrgene*) *swelce biera theaw waes thaet mon ricum monnum bufan eorþan of stanum worhte*. The point of Alfred's remark is probably in the word *ricum*. The early Christianity of England most certainly built barrows for its dead until within a few years of Alfred's time, but it made no distinction between the greater and the less among the *fideles*. But Latin Christianity speedily established the doctrine that burial in an *individual* barrow was a mark of paganism. Thus the Norse hero Lumber: 'He was born in Wangorn, and there lies in a cairn, for he was

a *beatben*' (*Arch. Scot.* iii, p. 151). So too Hengist: Aurelius 'commanded him to be buried, and a heap of earth to be raised over his body according to the custom of the pagans' (Geoff. Monmouth, *Hist.* viii, 7). When Duke William gave similar orders about the body of Harold, that it should be buried 'on the seashore under a heap of stones,' he probably did so to mark his opinion of the dead king as one who had no more than a pagan's regard for a Christian oath.

² See the evidence gathered in *V.C.H. Kent*, i, pp. 343 *sqq.*

³ *ibid.* p. 377.

actually upon the course of the trunk roads, but on either side thereof at a distance of half a mile or so from the road, making use of the road itself as a convenient boundary line¹ for the territory of the *tun*. To maintain that they did not also use the roads as a means of communication is to argue the Saxons a people of fools. But while the *tun* lies off the road, the cemetery is found again and again close beside it, as if purposely placed at the very edge of the *tun's* land. Sussex provides a good illustration: a Roman road is traceable from Chichester eastward by Ford and Angmering through Portslade and Brighton to Lewes and on to Glyndebourne Cross; thence through the village of Glynde, up the Downs behind West Firle, and along the high ground south-eastward to the Long Bridge at Alfriston and so to Eastbourne.² Saxon cemeteries have been found beside this road at Brighton (Port Hall), at Lewes (Saxonbury), at Glyndebourne Cross, at Glynde,³ and at Winton Street in Alfriston; while that at Highdown Hill lies but a quarter of a mile from the line of it. The villages to which these cemeteries may be supposed to correspond lie at distances varying from half a mile to a mile away from them, namely East Angmering, Bright-helmston, Kingston-by-Lewes, Glynde, Beddingham, and Alfriston. Each of them, Kingston⁴ excepted, has or had⁵ an ancient church and churchyard set, as usual, in the very centre of the *tun*. The provision of such grave-yards actually within the *tuns* did not commence until about 750,⁶ until which time the villagers must have continued to lay their dead in the older cemeteries. Thus Christian and

¹ e.g. the Erming Street from Lincoln to the Humber. 'In thirty miles it does not pass through a single village, except a portion of Broughton and Appleby, nor even a group of houses, except at Spital, twelve miles from Lincoln. In curious contrast with this desolate highway is the quick succession of villages on each side' (Murray's *Handbook of Lincs.* p. 234). So along the Great North Road beyond York and along the Fosse Way in Notts. In many parts of the country it must have been impossible for the Saxons to get away from the ubiquitous network of minor roads, so that too much must not be made of the constant association of old churches with Roman roads and Roman relics. It is nevertheless a fact that very many of the oldest

of our churches lie on or beside Roman trunk roads, and the inference is that the Scotie missionaries used these roads in their progress through the country.

² *Arch. Journ.* 1916, pp. 201-232.

³ Actually in the parish of Beddingham, at the spot once known as Mill Hill, now destroyed by a chalk-quarry.

⁴ Kingston was a royal manor in Alfred's time, but was part of the parish of Iford until about 1100. As a charter of that date provides for the gift of an acre of land on which to build a church, there was presumably neither church nor churchyard there before.

⁵ East Angmering once had its own church.

⁶ Below, ch. xxv.

pagan, possibly for a century or more, would be buried in one cemetery, and herein lies the explanation of the difficulty which archaeologists have found in deciding whether the relics from any particular Saxon cemetery represent pagan or Christian interments.

Anglo-Saxon burial-places in this or other countries seem commonly not to have had any *limes* of a sort to survive to the present time. As in the cemeteries of the Yorkshire Wolds and in that of Alfriston, Sussex, the graves seem usually to have been made in regular rows. But in the barrow-districts the Saxon tribes very quickly learnt to make use of existing barrows, and so to associate the circular figure with sacred ground. When Scotie Christianity supervened with its rigidly circular precinct, it found the most pagan of the Saxons so far prepared for the new faith.

The Saxon cemetery at Alfriston occupied ground known for centuries as Hallow Furlong. The name shows that the spot was remembered as a *Christian* burial-ground, and the several interments were all laid in the east-to-west position. Yet on the other hand many of the graves yielded furniture of various kinds, and some of them brooches and other details of exceptional beauty.¹ The reasonable conclusion is that in this cemetery at Winton Street were laid all the dead of Aelfric's *tun* (Alfriston) irrespective of their creed, until the Church provided its own 'hallowed acre' in the heart of the village. That 'hallowed acre' is an indisputable round barrow, but it was reared by Holy Church to receive the faithful dead.² The burial of some few Christians—Sussex was converted only in 681—within the pagan grave-field was sufficient to hallow the whole. That was the kindly view of the Celt and the Saxon. It was not the view of the dogmatic Roman: Archbishop Theodore explicitly declared in his *Penitential* that the interment of a single heretic or infidel within the *limes* brought pollution upon the whole. Theodore was neither a Celt nor a Saxon; he was of

¹ *Sussex Arch. Collections*, lvi (1914), p. 16.

² See below, ch. xxv. So, very curiously, whereas the Saxons of Alfriston had till

then known nothing of barrows, but used merely a grave-field, Christianity immediately provided them with a communal barrow of its own.

Tarsus and as rigidly Roman as he dared to be. Another saint, Guthlac to wit, Saxon by birth and Celtic by training, actually selected for the site of his own cell what he knew to be a pagan barrow.¹ Saxon barrows are relatively few, Saxon burials within other barrows are common enough. Common also is the name of the Saxon god Woden, usually more or less corrupted, applied to conspicuous barrows. But it is very rare to find any other Saxon god-name so applied, and one infers that such names—Wodensborough, Wanbarrow, etc.—originated in post-pagan times and signify merely that the barrows in question dated from pre-Christian days and were associated with paganism.

But if the Saxon was somewhat indifferent to the generality of his dead, taking little pains to furnish them with any special or abiding monument, he was very jealous of the pedigrees of his great people. The royal houses of Wessex traced their descent from founders to whom go back also the old royal houses of the Danes, to Scyld (Skioldr) and Freawine and Wig; and the kings of Mercia and of Northumbria had pedigrees equally long. Such jealousy points to a very real and very retentive form of ancestor-worship, for which there is further evidence in such writings as *Beowulf*, and in the edicts issued from century to century by the Church against the rites connected with funeral-feasts. Nothing is more certain than that the Saxons at large habitually 'ate the offerings of the dead' and that their feasts were attended by various other practices to which Christianity took grave exception. Bede² assures us that many of the less offensive practices of paganism continued in use far into the seventh century, and were especially liable to reassert themselves in times of stress: 'in time of plague some would abandon the Christian sacraments for the mistaken remedies of paganism, as if they could control the scourge of God by incantations and phylacteries and other such secrets of the black art.' Councils of the Church in Gaul³ throughout the seventh

¹ For Guthlac and his foundation at Crowland, see ch. xxiv.

² *H.E.* IV, xxvii, 344.

³ In Brittany the survival of *paganie* is rather the rule than the exception. 'The

Bretons still spend whole nights at the graves of their kinsmen and pour over them libations of milk,' says Baring-Gould (*Book of Brittany*, p. 25), citing Cambry, *Voyage dans la Finistère* (1836), p. 128.

and eighth centuries, and indeed long after, denounce a multitude of similar and frequently much grosser *paganía*; such as the worship of trees and stones and wells, sacrifices to false gods, sacrifices and feasts at the graves of the dead, and in particular the eating of horseflesh at such feasts. This latter was apparently an essential in the sacramental ritual of Woden.¹

As the Saxon polity developed there was developed an elaborate system of moots. Commencing with the *tun* at the bottom of the scale, we have burgh-moots, hundred-moots, shire-moots, moots representing an entire kingdom, and finally the national moot of the collective nation. As was to be expected, those which came earlier in the evolution, and represent stricter territorial areas, show a fixity which is not found in the later moots of kingdom and nation. Doubtless the Saxon would have developed something of this kind had he been left entirely to his own devices. Living as he did side by side with the British Celt, with whom a similar system of local moots was inveterated, it is at least likely that the Celt's example was not lost upon the Saxon²; and when it is found that the Saxon's most frequent place of meeting, for whatever purpose, was a grave-mound, or something exactly like a grave-mound, it looks as if he too shared with Achæans and Hellenes, with Latins and Celts, their peculiar belief in the necessity of 'taking the majority into their councils.'

The hundred-names which contain the words *beorh*, *howe*, *blaw* and *hill*, all in the sense of places of sepulture, are a formidable list. If there be added further those embodying *-church* and *-stow*, the list becomes yet more considerable. There are also very many hundred-names referring to other objects—to roads, fords, streams, wells, camps, stones, meres (boundary-dykes), and yet more frequently to trees. Now as a moot was necessarily held at one definite spot, it is obvious that roads, streams and

¹ Therefore Hakon the Good refuses to eat horseflesh at a 'blood-offering'; *Story of Hakon the Good* (Saga Library), c. 18. Du Chaillu, *Viking Age*, has a chapter (xxxiii) on the survival of *paganía* in Christian Scandinavia.

² Thos. Barnes (*Notes on Ancient Britain and the Britons*, p. 66) was but one of many who have believed the Saxon hundreds to go back to Celtic originals. Peake (*The English Village*, p. 89) would put the origin of the hundred-moot far back in the pre-historic time.

dykes could not in themselves serve the purpose. In these cases the *rendezvous* must have been less the road, dyke, or stream, than some well-known object lying on or near the line of it; and in all likelihood it was a burial-mound. The same remark applies to trees: at a date when 'oak and ash and thorn' were vastly more common objects than now they are, it is no less difficult to understand how any such object, unless it were otherwise distinguished, could serve as the trysting-spot of an entire hundred, than to understand how a road or a dyke could do so. It is a fact that a very large proportion of hundred-moots were confessedly places of burial; it is not at all improbable that originally all were so.

That none of the Saxon hundreds can be shown to have kept a Celtic name is not surprising. Even if the Saxon in a large degree owed to the Celt the development of his hundred-system,¹ he would not be likely to take over the individual Celtic hundreds as they stood. The Saxon hundreds were naturally relative to the Saxon population. If it happened that the new Saxon hundred retained the same trysting-place as its Celtic precursor, it was not to be expected that the Saxon would adopt and retain its name also. The old site would receive a Saxon name, very probably also a Saxon burial to give it a Saxon consecration; for a 'founder' who was not of the blood was impossible alike in logic and in fact.

That this view is plausible the term 'moot-hill' is itself evidence, 'hill' here having the sense in which it is still used by the older Southdown shepherds, who apply it to any grave-mound however slight in elevation.² So essential was the mound to the Saxon moot that the simpler earlier term *mot* or *gemot* was quite supplanted by 'moothill,' which was itself at a later date sometimes reinforced by other terms of the same import, resulting in

¹ Presumably, like the other Germanic peoples, he already had it in an embryonic form. See above, ch. xii.

² cp. *mot-beorh* in a bilingual charter of Edgar (958-975), where the Latin version has *congressionis collem* (*Cod. Diplom.*, no. 364; *Monast. Anglic.* ii, 364). In Dovedale is a Moot-low (Jewitt, *Grave-mounds*, p. 128), and Mutlow occurs in Ches., Cambs., and

elsewhere. In Kemble's *Saxons in England*, i, pp. 55, 56, are cited *mearc-mot* and *mearc-beorh*; whence it would seem that *mot* and *beorh* might be interchangeable. The fact may throw light on the hitherto unexplained origin of the word *motte* (Norman-French) meaning a '(castle-)mound.' *Mot-beorh* is in sense identical with the *cryc-beorh* dealt with in chap. xv.

pleonasms such as Mutilow¹ and Muthillstow. For centuries after his conversion to Christianity the Saxon still held his communal moots at the grave-mounds of the community's dead, i.e. in the churchyard or the church of his *tun*.² But that, as is commonly supposed, he had ever habitually concerned himself to build mounds expressly for the purposes of moots, is improbable. He disliked spade-work, and preferred when possible to make shift with the barrows of the men before him. The burial-places which he thus used as moots while he was still a pagan, like those which he used for the same purposes when he became a Christian, were invariably circular, and there are other hints that he long retained something of the Celtic feeling that moots should be of this peculiar plan. The original arrangement of the guildhall of York (plate i, fig. 1)—it was altered only some forty years ago—was very suggestive. A severely rectangular building, erected about 1446, it included a perfectly circular 'ring' of a diameter of some 24 feet. The 'ring,' the floor of which was raised two steps above the general floor of the hall, was enclosed by wooden panelling, of which the one half was carried up to the full height of the mayoral throne in its centre—the throne backed against the end-wall of the hall—while the other, about half as high, was provided with two small doors whereby the city fathers reached their seats. The plan is curiously reminiscent of that of some stone circles, and not less curious is the fact that the guildhall stands just outside the presumed site of the south-western gate of Roman Eboracum, and close beside the Roman road now represented by the street called Stonegate, that is to say, exactly where one might have looked to find the moot of the ancient city. The building occupied the site of an earlier 'Common Hall,' and was so constructed as to leave beneath it a thoroughfare which is believed to represent the old Roman road and is still known as Common Hall Lane.³

¹ Mutlow in Cambs., a large barrow, was anciently Mutilow, i.e. Moot-hill-low, and similar redundancies are common. At Normanton, Yorks. is Haw Hill, presumably for How Hill. In some instances the syllable *low* has been rationalised to *law*: thus the mound in Blyth, Notts. now known

as Blyth Law Hill, once the site of the manorial gallows, was earlier called Emmers-low (*V.C.H. Notts.* i, 315).

² Below, chaps. xxvii-xxviii.

³ At a subsequent date (until 1811) a building upon the Ouse bridge was used as town hall.

It looks indeed as if, when at last a roofed moot was desired, this was so built as to enclose the site of the community's earlier place of assembly in the open air.

The Celtic name for all moots of whatever type was *cruc*, for which the Romanised Britons substituted the Latin equivalent *circus*. The Saxons, learning both words, quickly dropped the one,¹ but passed on the other as the name of the scene of a specific kind of moot, that 'assembly of the faithful for religious worship' which the old Welsh called *cyrch* and we ourselves call a 'church.' The scenes of his older native gatherings he continued obstinately to call *moots* and *moot-hills*, just as the Dane, with equal obstinacy, continued to call them *tings*.

Reasons have been given for believing that a large number of the stone circles were moots of the Celts. If the Saxon, as here suggested, was led to develop his system of moots by Celtic example, the question arises, Why then did he not adopt the stone-circle? There are but three possible answers to the question.

Firstly it might be retorted that the question is fallacious—that he did so use the circles. There is ample evidence that in the non-Saxon parts of Scotland, as in Brittany, the traditional use of the circles did not cease until the fourteenth century or even later²; but there is no hint of it in the thoroughly Saxon areas. One of the best pieces of evidence against it is the fact that not one single known Hundred-name refers to any such stone circle.

Secondly it has been argued by some writers that the stone circles were not in existence when the Saxon first arrived here. This view is hardly worth arguing to-day. It is probable that some of the best examples in Britain were actually erected after the fifth century in Cornwall and in Cumberland, but the type must have been known and used in these islands for some centuries earlier.

The third, and the only convincing answer is, that when the Saxons arrived upon the scene the stone circles

¹ Dropped it in the sense of 'moot,' though he retained it, as did the Celt himself, in the sense of 'grave' (ch. xv).

² Above, ch. xi.

had throughout the more progressive parts of Britain ceased to be in active or general use—that the Roman *circus* had supplanted the stone circle wherever the Roman influence was strongest, i.e. exactly in those parts of Britain by which the Saxon invaders made their entry. In these eastern and south-eastern and southern coastal lands the lack of suitable stone must have made that type of moot always rare and difficult to provide.

In the remoter West, in Cornwall and Wales, as in Strathclyde and in Scotland, they might, and almost certainly did, continue in use, and there, if not sooner, the Saxon must have learnt their purpose. Elsewhere the Romano-British communities had for the most part discarded the circle-moot for the new *circus*, a more modest thing and more accordant with their humbled condition. This, and the earlier and still humbler mound-moot, the Saxon saw in active use on all his borders. The mound-moot he adopted, if only because it was the easier to provide. Of the *circus* he learnt the use and the name; he did not imitate it, but he kept its name in mind for future service.

The Saxon tribes, when first they reached Britain, would seem to have been in much the same state of savagery as were any other Teutonic people when they passed into Gaul, the Belgae not excepted. Celtism quickly modified the Belgae, so that when they again moved on into Britain they came as a highly developed people with a fixed polity, a fixed religion, and fixed ideas on burial. The Saxons had had no chance to learn these things; the Frank had forestalled them in Gaul, so that they came here direct and untutored. But once here they fell, like their forerunners, under the influence of Celtism. They learned and used the Celtic system of moots, they imitated Celtic burial practices; and when presently they learnt Celtic Christianity, this was but the natural corollary to what had gone before. Like his kinsmen in Gaul before him, like the Normans in Ireland after him, the Saxon too fell under the same spell of Celtism,¹ and became *ipsis Hibernis Hibernior*.

¹ For some remarks upon the enervating influence of Scotie Christianity upon the Saxon, see Sir H. Howorth's *Golden Age of the English Church*.