

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE DERIVATION OF THE WORD 'CHURCH.'

The Structural Church of Early Greek and Latin Christianity—'The Lord's House'—Various theories as to the origin of 'church'—Walafrid Strabo—Ulphilas and the Gothic Bible—Difficulties in the current theory, historical, geographical, archaeological, and philological—Latin loan-words in Saxon speech—'Circ' one of these—Used by Alfred of the Circus of Romulus—'Circ-tun,' 'Church-bay,' 'Churchyard'—Activity of Hiberno-Saxon missionaries on the Continent—Evidence from Switzerland—France—Friesland, Holland and Denmark—Scandinavia and Finland—Germany—Russia and the Slavs—Hungary—Poland—Isle of Man and Iceland—Finis.

What then is the derivation of the word 'Church'? Since the ninth century, when Walafrid Strabo—he received his training as a monk in St. Boniface's Scotie monastery of Fulda, and died abbot of Reichenau in 849—hazarded the guess that it comes from the Greek κυριακόν (*scil.* δῶμα) meaning 'the Lord's House,' this theory has held the field against all others. It is repeated by the writer of the *O. E. Homily on the Credo* (circa 1200),² accepted as fact by Richard Hooker,³ asserted by Professor

¹ In the East the circle is the symbol of eternity, and *ergo* of divinity, but it is not clear that either of these meanings belongs to the circle in the West, except in so far as it was adopted in Christian times under Latin or Eastern influence. Obviously, however, the Western value of the symbol as the token of the presence of Death lent itself readily to confusion with either of the Oriental meanings.

² Ich leue þat Chireche is holi Godes hus on eorðe, and is cleped on boc *Kiriaca*, i.e. *dominicalis*, þat is on Englis louredlich hus.—Morris, *Old English Homilies*, 2nd Series (1873), p. 23.

³ *Ecclesiastical Polity*, v, 13: 'Churches were consecrated to none but the Lord only. The general name "church" doth sufficiently shew this, for it doth signify nothing but "the Lord's House."'

Skeat,¹ and defended by the *New English Dictionary*. As the compilers of the last-named work discuss the matter to the length of a column of small print, it would appear that it is clearly not beyond argument.

There is no doubt that the Greek Christians had sporadically—probably not generally—structural churches of some sort as early as the close of the third century,² and that such buildings, though it seems for a limited period only and perhaps never generally, were known by the name of κυριακά. The word occurs in the *Apostolic Constitutions* of 300, and is frequent for some years thereafter. Eusebius, who died in 340, says that Constantine styled by this name several of the churches which he built.³ But there is abundant evidence that in still earlier days of Christianity, in the East as much as in the West, it was not usual to have any special *building* for the purposes of worship, and that the places of meeting, although they might be anywhere, were especially at the graves of the faithful dead. Such a thing as a structural church did not then exist. The meetings were called by a variety of names, such as *synodi*, *concilia*, *conciliabula*, and *conventicula*.⁴ Chrysostom

¹ *Etymol. Dict. of the Eng. Language*. Bingham (*Christian Antiquities*, viii, i, § 2) accepted this derivation without criticism, albeit he expressed his inability to agree with 'a learned man' (Bishop Beveridge) in the corollary 'that the Greeks, and not the Latins, were the first planters of Christianity in Britain.'

² Gregory Thaumaturgus, Bp. of Caesarea (*obit* c. 270), is said by Gregory of Nyssa to have built several churches at Caesarea and in the adjoining parts of Pontus. An Edict of Diocletian in 302 ordered the demolition of the churches and the confiscation of the lands belonging to them. Lactantius (*De Morte Persecutorum*, xii) describes the destruction of a large church at Nicomedia in 303; see Smith's *Dict. Christian Antiqs.* (1893), i, 366. The earliest existing building in the nature of a church is said to be the so-called 'Basilica of Reparatus' (the ancient Castellum Tingitanum) in Algeria, which is doubtfully attributed to the year 252 (Hill, *Architect. Hist. of the Church*, p. 11).

³ *De Laud. Constantini*, xvii. The term occurs in *Edict. Maximini* (303-313), quoted in Eusebius, *Eccles. Hist.* ix, 10; in Canon 15 of the Council of Ancyra (314), Can. 5 of the Council of Neo-Caesarea (314-323), Can. 28 of the Council of Laodicea (οὐ δὲ ἐν τοῖς κυριακοῖς ἢ ἐν ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις τὰς λεγόμενας ἀγάπας ποιεῖν).

The date of the Council of Laodicea is disputed, but it was not earlier than 314. The actual first instance of the use of κυριακόν in the sense of a building wherein Christians worshipped is said to be in Eusebius' *Eccles. Hist.* ix, 5 (*Notes and Queries* xii, 302). The feminine κυριακή (*scil.* οἰκία) was also used in the same sense, but rarely, and at a date (says *N.E.D.*) too late to affect the question. See also Ducange, *Lexicon Med. et Inf. Graec.*

⁴ See Bingham, *Christian Antiqs.* VIII, i. That author, like almost every one else, was prepossessed with the idea that the Christians had structural churches from the earliest times, and therefore entirely failed to see the purport of the evidence he had collected. The view that 'for the first three ages [centuries] the Christians had no such distinct places of worship' he dismisses as 'a singular paradox which has been advanced by some learned men in these last ages,' based (he declares) 'upon certain mistaken passages of Origen, Minucius Felix, Arnobius and Lactantius, who say "the Christians had no temples".' Lactantius, author of the last remark, lived in the early part of the fourth century. Bingham fails to adduce any evidence for the existence of any buildings expressly constructed to serve as churches before the days of Thaumaturgus.

could declare (c. 385) that 'Synodos and ecclesia are the same'¹; and Augustine of Hippo (ob. 430) explicitly says that 'ecclesia is the name of the place where a congregation meets (*quo ecclesia congregatur*), for the ecclesia is the congregation (*nam ecclesia homines sunt*).² In the time of Eusebius and Constantine the term *martyrium* seems to have been as usual as any in the sense of a structural church: it is applied by Eusebius and others to the building erected by Constantine on the site of the Holy Sepulchre (*Martyrium Salvatoris*), and to others at Edessa, Rome, and Chalcedon, upon the sites of the tombs or of the martyrdoms of SS. Thomas the Apostle, Peter, Paul, and Euphemia.³ St. Augustine makes frequent mention of the *Mensa Cypriani* at Carthage, i.e. the altar of St. Cyprian, which stood upon the spot where that saint was martyred (258) and buried;⁴ but there is nothing whatever, beyond the preconception of centuries, to suggest that there was any structural church on the spot. Apparently in Asia, in Africa, and in Italy, precisely as in Ireland, Wales, and England, the early converts knew of no more proper place of meeting, no more usual *ecclesia*, than a burial-place. 'With the Christians,' wrote Onuphrius⁵ in the sixteenth century, 'their burial-places used to serve them for temples and places of prayer, as indeed they do to this day. There their bishops assembled their congregations, administered the sacraments, and preached the word of God. Hence the remarkable fact that when any Emperor resolved to persecute the Christians, he would first and foremost debar them from their burial-places, and so deprive them of the opportunity of assembling together.'⁶

¹ *Hom. in Psal. cxlix.*

² *Quaest. in Levit. lvii.*

³ Bingham, *Christian Antiqs.* VIII, i, § 8. *Martyrium* is the Welsh *Merthyr*, for which see above, ch. xix.

⁴ *Ibid.* VIII, i, § 9. The *mensa* was the stone slab which marked the Saint's grave and served also as an altar.

⁵ *Appendix ad Platinam, De Coemeteriis*, xi; Bingham, *Christian Antiquities*, Bk. VIII, i, § 9. Onuphrius Panvinus, the Italian historian of the Papacy, died in 1568. Hospinianus, who quotes (*Opera*, Geneva, 1681) this passage from Onuphrius, and refers to various passages in the *Acts of*

the Apostles, adds the following: *Ubi Bellarmini impostura notanda est. Probare enim volens (Col. 2188) fideles Apostolorum tempore et paulo post habuisse ecclesias, hoc est templa, a privatis aedibus distinctas, ex I. Cor. cap. 11 and 14 et aliquot locis patrum, vocem Ecclesiae, quae apud eos reperitur, pro templis extructis sumit; quum ibi pro solo fidelium conventu in privatis aedibus collecto usurpetur. Est igitur aequivocationis fallacia.* The equivocation was, however, far older than Bellarmine, for it goes back to Bede; and if Hospinianus himself did not carry it so far as did Bellarmine, he did not altogether escape it.

⁶ As for example did Valerianus in 253.

Pope Damasus I (366–384) wrote a *Life* of the martyr-Pope Fabianus (236–251), in which he asserts that the latter ordered the building of many wooden structures (*fabricas materiales*) in (per) the Christian cemeteries of Rome; and that a century later Pope Liberius (352–366), on his return from exile, made his dwelling in the cemetery of St. Agnes (*habitare in coemeterio Agnetis*).¹ In other words, as late as the third quarter of the fourth century there were in Rome itself a number of wooden *oratoria* precisely like those of early Celtic Christianity, and the Bishop of Rome saw nothing derogatory to his dignity in dwelling in such an oratory amongst the tombs, precisely as did St. Cadoc and the multitude of early Celtic saints. 'Moreover,' adds Hospinianus, 'in the cemeteries at Rome the Christians administered baptism, celebrated the Lord's Supper, sang the vigils, and conducted all the offices of the Church.'

The Latin Christians had early made it a practice to meet on occasion in a room in the secular *domus* of one or other of their number, and when they were presently permitted to worship without molestation in public, they not uncommonly styled any structural church which they built *Domus Dei*, 'The Lord's House,' a name still surviving in the common Italian *duomo* and the Teutonic *dom*. An alternative name of the same purport was *Dominica* or *Dominicalis* (*scil. domus*), which passed into Ireland as *dombnach*.

Saxon and other early theological writers, whether or no they retained any recollection of another origin for their peculiar word *ciric*, *kirk*, etc., must have been well aware, like Walafrid Strabo, that both in Greek and in Latin Christianity the structural church had been called, or was still called, by terms denoting 'The Lord's House'; and it is probable that for that very reason they would wish to read the same meaning into their own word. It may be that Walafrid was innocent of any deliberate juggling with language to this end, but it is almost certain that the writer

¹ All cited by Hospinianus (*op. cit.*). The *coemeterium Agnetis* might possibly mean the *Catacombs* of St. Agnese, but the *coemeteria* in which were built the *fabricae materiales* can hardly have been catacombs. It is said that the Christians began to abandon the secrecy of the catacombs and to make their

burial-places above ground from the date of the Edict of Milan (311), but it would seem that some such burial-places above ground existed at least 60 years earlier. The use of the catacombs became infrequent after 350, and ceased entirely after 410.

of the *Homily on the Credo* was expressly concerned to establish this derivation: when he wrote that 'chireche is holi Godes hus' he meant men to believe that 'Godes hus' was a translation of *chireche*. As *ciric* could not by any effort of ingenuity be referred to *dominica*, it had to be referred to κυριακόν if it was desired to explain it as meaning 'The Lord's House'¹; and while all Christians of the time would welcome such an identification, there was not forthcoming any philologist either able or wishful to refute it. Walafrid's guess of the ninth century had become an article of faith when the *Homily* was written.

It is admitted on all hands that Walafrid Strabo's derivation presents difficulties which the ingenuity of a thousand years has failed to overcome. These are partly philological, partly geographical and historical; and long before philology had been raised to the dignity of an exact science there had been writers to doubt the traditional view. As they did not however for the most part advance any detailed evidence for an alternative derivation, the *New English Dictionary* is able to dismiss them with the somewhat damaging remark that much of the strength of the traditional derivation lies in the fact that 'no other conjecture offered will bear scientific statement, much less examination.'

It has been shown in the preceding chapters that the word *ciric* did not originally signify a building of any kind, but a circular place of burial. By what stretch of language could the Saxons call such a thing by a name which was consciously understood to mean 'God's House', and this at a date, as the evidence shows, many years before any structural building was to be found in most of such *cirics*, and still longer years before the structural building came to be thought of as the more important thing?

The evidence of archaeology points very decidedly to the Latin *circus* as the real original of 'church.' The suggestion is not by any means new: it was made at least so

¹ The obviously intentional effort thus to explain it must have been prompted by the knowledge that the word in reality went back to the Roman word *circus* with its unhallowed associations, or at any rate by the fear that this derivation might be entertained. The persistent efforts of those in authority to substitute some other word,

e.g. *minster*, and the use of the non-Latin word *amphitheatrum* when speaking of the true *circus*, are both to be explained by the same fear. At any rate the statement in the *Homily* is an *ex-cathedra* pronouncement, based either upon ignorance, prejudice, or purposed obscurantism.

long ago as 1599 by Justus Lipsius,¹ and repeated by Edward Lhuyd² in 1707; it has been hinted by many writers within the last half century and to all intents asserted by James Fergusson.³ Some have found the connexion in their belief that druidical temples were circular,⁴ and others have seen it in the occasional use of *circus* by classical writers in the sense of the people therein assembled, the 'congregation.'⁵ Of the mass of archaeological evidence which is still to be gathered on every hand no one has heretofore availed himself. That evidence ignored, and the true significance of *circus* and of *ciric* alike misapprehended, it might well be difficult to trace any connexion between the two terms, and authority might with complacency 'set aside'⁶ the suggestion that any connexion existed. But there having been adduced some reasons (ch. vi) for the belief that *circus* primarily meant a place of sepulchral origin which was used as a moot, and evidence enough to convince all that *ciric* originally meant a place of sepulture which was likewise for long centuries the moot of its community, the question whether the two words are ultimately related is worth reconsideration, the more so as the only alternative derivation of 'church' admittedly holds the field only until a better be forthcoming.

It is generally agreed that the κυριακόν-theory presents difficulties both philological and historical. Archaeologically it has no support whatever. If therefore it can be shown that, as regards the *circus*-theory, the philological difficulties are at any rate no greater, and the historical difficulties

¹ *Epist. Selectarum, Cent. iii (Ad Belgas)*, no. 44. Lipsius, a juriconsult of Louvain, is writing to another juriconsult upon the flux of languages and the traces of Latin words in the Germanic tongues. After giving a number of examples, he continues: *Credo et a circo Kirck nostrum esse, quia veterum templa instar circi rotunda; quod tamen aliis a Graeca κυριακή esse placet.*

² *Archaeologica Britannica* (Oxford, 1707).

³ 'I believe the word *kirk*, common to all Teutonic languages, to be derived from the word *circulus* or *cirque*, Teutonic *kirk*' (*Handbook of Architecture*, 2nd Ed. 1859, p. 508). He suggested the sequence:—circular burial mounds (Etruscan, Chinese, etc.), circular sepulchral buildings (churches), circular churchyards. This is wrong. The correct sequence is:—circular barrows, cir-

cular churchyards, structural churches; and the structural church is circular only by rare occasion and for quite different reasons.

⁴ Mackay (*Dict. of Lowland Scots*) flatly states *kirk* to stand for *kirkyl*, = *circulus*, and to have reference to circular druidical temples and stone-circles. T. A. Wise (*Hist. Paganism in Caledonia*, p. 174) says: 'These groups or circles of stones were called by the new converts the *Clachan*, or church-stones, a name afterwards applied to the Christian place of worship . . . The Romans called such a circle of stones *circus*, which was converted by the Germans into *kirche*, by the Saxons into *church*, and by the Scots into *kirk*.'

⁵ Eden, *Churchman's Dict. of Theology*.

⁶ This derivation, says N. E. D., 'has been set aside as untenable.'

infinitely less, while further there is a mass of archaeological evidence to support it, then it must be allowed that the *circus*-theory is so far better than the other.

The philological difficulties need not detain us long. To provide the missing link between the Greek and the Teutonic forms there is assumed a Gothic form **kirika*. If this assumed Gothic form were really derived from *κυριακόν*, it ought to appear as *kūrika*; and as *κυριακόν* is of neuter gender, the derivative ought normally to be of the same gender, and not feminine, as are all the *kirk*-forms without exception. Authority confesses that these are real difficulties, but declares that 'they can be answered.' It does not go so far as to say that they can be quite satisfactorily answered. Unanswerable, and fatal to any suggestion of a connexion with *κυριακόν*, is the further fact that the Anglo-Saxon form *cyrice* is of later appearance than the forms *cirice* and *circe*.¹ In other words the forms in *cir*- are older than those in *cyr*-.

Some may esteem this dictum, the last word in English linguistics, sufficient to dispose for good and all of the *κυριακόν*-theory. Others may, not altogether unreasonably, entertain doubts of its sufficiency. The wiser course were to enquire how far the other evidence justifies one in rejecting the derivation from *κυριακόν* and preferring another. If the other evidence points all in the same direction as does that of linguistics, then the latter may be accepted as a most powerful reinforcement, but it must not be held to be in itself sufficient.

Those who support the *κυριακόν*-theory are concerned to justify Walafrid Strabo's guess that the Greek word was introduced among the Goths in the fourth century by their apostle bishop Ulfilas, and was thence passed on to the other Teutonic peoples. As the Goths are known to have been living at that time north of the Danube in Dacia (Wallachia), this suggestion seemed better than any other to satisfy the geographical and chronological requirements of the problem. So the worthy abbat's guess has come to be regarded as a statement of fact, and philology has so long concerned itself to explain how this thing *might* be so, that it at last has come to believe that it *actually was* so. It has declared that, granted a Gothic form **kīrika* or **kirika*,

¹ So Prof. Allen Mawer in a personal letter under date 3,7,'22.

the evolution of all other forms of the *kirk*-word from the known Greek *κυριακόν*, is, if not wholly satisfactory, at any rate good enough.

Walafrid Strabo deserves some credit as one of the first of comparative philologists. He noticed the similarity subsisting between certain Teutonic and certain Greek and Latin words, and inferred that the former were therefore borrowed from the latter. Without examining his list in detail, it is worth while to point out that he blundered over so cardinal a word as *basilica* (= *ecclesia*), which he derived from the Greek *βασιλεύς*, *ut regia a rege*.¹ It is quite true that the Latin *basilica* is derived ultimately from the Greek *βασιλεύς*, but it is not true that in adopting the term as the name of a church of peculiar plan the Roman Christians of the fourth century implied any connexion at all with *βασιλεύς*. To put it in another way, *basilica* did not mean, as Walafrid says it meant, to the Christians of his time and earlier, 'the King's House.' It meant simply a church of a particular plan, *i.e.* an aisled apsidal building like the pagan Roman *basilica* or law-court.

Certain 'brothers in Christ' had told him, says Walafrid, that there were Christian congregations 'among the Scythians,' and especially at Tomi (Kustendjeh), who used the Gothic language in their liturgy; 'for the Getae and the Goths are the same, and history tells us that certain learned Goths shortly translated the Holy Scriptures into their own tongue.'² It may be so, but it is not generally accepted that the Getae were Goths,³ or spoke the same language, and we cannot be sure that the language of those liturgical books was Gothic.⁴ Walafrid assumed both these identifications, and thence others have argued that there must have existed a Gothic scriptural literature in the fourth century. It is indeed the accepted belief that Ulfilas gave to the Goths a vernacular Bible, or most of it,

¹ *Sicut domus Dei basilica, i.e. regia a rege, sic etiam Kyriaca, i.e. Dominica, a Domino nuncupatur; quia Domino dominantium et Regi regum in illa servitur. De Rebus Eccles. Pt. I. c. vii* (Migne's *Patrologia*, nos. cxiii, cxiv). In the contemporary inscription (1056) preserved in the little chapel of Holy Trinity at Deerhurst, the building is styled *aula regia, i.e. a basilica*.

² *De Rebus Eccles. l.c.*

³ *Encycl. Britann. s.v. GETAE.*

⁴ If it was really so, one may compare the curious survival of an Illyrian liturgy in the churches of the island of Veglia off the Dalmatian coast, excepting in the city and convent of Cassione, where Latin is used; T. G. Jackson, *Dalmatia, the Quarnero and Istria* (1887). The ancient name of Veglia was Curicta (Ptolemy and Pliny) or Cyractica (Strabo), from a Slavonic word (cf. Croat *krk*, 'leg') meaning something long and narrow.

before he died in 383, and that fragments of his translation remain to us in the famous *Codex Argenteus*, which is thought itself to have been written in Upper Italy at the beginning or middle of the sixth century.¹ But Walafrid says nothing of Ulfilas as the translator.

The Goths displaced the Romans in Dacia in the third century. They defeated Gallienus there in 256, and Aurelian (270–275) ceded to them the province. About the same time they came into direct contact with the Greeks, and raiding the coasts of Asia Minor, penetrated in 264 into Cappadocia, carrying off some of the population—Christians amongst them—to Dacia. In 321 they crossed the Danube and plundered Thracia and Moesia, to be again driven out by Constantine in 336. They were as yet pagans, and the work of converting them did not begin until 342.

Ulfilas—the name is Gothic and signifies ‘Wolf-cub’—was their apostle. Of Cappadocian descent and the son of a slave-girl, he was born between 311 and 318. As there was a Bishop of the Dacians at the Council of Nicaea (325), there must so early have been some Christians, Goths or others, amongst the Dacians. Ulfilas came to Byzantium in 332, was consecrated in 341, and in the next year returned to Dacia as bishop in *partibus Gothorum*. After seven years of mission-work he and his followers were expelled in a pagan reaction (349). He continued his work in Moesia, and died in 383. One writer of the time² asserts that Ulfilas had translated into Gothic the entire Bible excepting the *Book of Kings*; but his pupil Auxentius,³ who wrote a *Life of Ulfilas*, says nothing of any such translation.

The Goths of Dacia had reverted to paganism, expelling all Christians. Into Dacia (*circa* 370) burst the Huns: half of the Goths fled south of the Danube and reappeared as the Ostrogoths of history; the rest fled westward to become the Visigoths. Some of the latter settled in Noricum, whence Alaric led them to the invasion of Italy

¹ So Balg, *First Germanic Bible* (Trübner, London, 1891). The exact date at which the *Codex* was written is of no particular moment here, for the Scriptures containing no mention of any structural church, there could be none in any translation of the Scriptures, Gothic or otherwise. The word used in the *Codex* for ἐκκλησία is *aikklesjo*,

in the Scriptural sense of ‘congregation’ only.

² Philostorgius (*circa* 360–430). Two hundred years later Isidore of Seville (560–636) roundly asserts that Ulfilas had ‘translated into his own tongue both Testaments.’

³ He became bishop of Milan, the precursor of St. Ambrose, and died in 374.

in 410. Noricum was missionised by Severinus in the latter half of that century, but before that date the bulk of the Visigoths had pushed farther west into the Rhone Valley, Southern France, and Spain. Behind this wave of migratory Goths came that of the Huns, and in the wake of these again a further swarm of peoples quite as pagan, if not so utterly savage—Alemanni, Heruli, Rugii—who overran all Noricum, Pannonia, and the *Agri Decumates* to the confines of the Franks and the Saxons and other northern Teutonic peoples. Can any one seriously believe that amidst all these successive cataclysms of a century there could survive any trace of that slight tincture of Christianity which had been brought into Dacia by the seven years’ labours of Ulfilas? It is in the highest degree unlikely.

The silence of Walafrid Strabo as to Ulfilas’ alleged translation of the Bible is very remarkable. Had he known of it he must have mentioned it, for it would have been the very best possible evidence for his case. Equally remarkable is the silence of Auxentius, the bishop’s own pupil. It is at least thinkable that both these writers had a better chance to know the facts than had later generations, and it has recently been seriously argued that the so-called Gothic Bible of Ulfilas is a myth, and that those fragments of the Gothic Bible which have come down to us really belong to a much later date.¹

The argument of those who maintain the derivation of ‘church’ from κυριακόν would seem to be as follows: Some of the Goths were Christians in the fourth century; therefore they must have possessed structural churches, and necessarily a name for these. As they learnt their Christianity from Byzantium, they must have borrowed from Greek their name for the structural church; and as they did not use the *ecclesia*-word in that sense, the word borrowed must have been κυριακόν. If one assumes a Gothic **kirika* as

¹ Leo Wiener, *Commentary on the Germanic Laws and Medieval Documents* (Harvard), p. xxxiii. His conclusion is that not only is the Gothic version of the Bible a work probably of the eighth century, possibly written in Spain, but that ‘the tradition which has grown up in regard to the whole Germanic question is based on a vicious circle, of which the authorship of the [Gothic] Bible [*scil.* Ulfilas] is the initial step. Upon close inspection the whole

structure of Germanic philology, in so far as it rests upon the assumption of a fourth-century Gothic literature, collapses from its own weight.’ It may be remarked that Wiener is not concerned with the specific point here at issue, the derivation of the word ‘church,’ or with anything at all ecclesiastical. So early as the eighteenth century Welstein (*Prolegomena*, i, p. 114) questioned whether Ulfilas was the author of the text of the *Cod. Argenteus*.

the form in question, this provides the missing link between the Greek κυριακόν and all the European *kirk*-forms. Therefore the Goths used the word *kirika*.

Now the only sense in which 'church' occurs in the Scriptures is that of 'congregation,' and the word used is ἐκκλησία. The Goths adopted that word (*aikklesjo*) in that sense and in no other. In the whole of the surviving Gothic literature there appears to be no trace whatever of any word which could conceivably be derived from κυριακόν, and in the Scriptural portion of that literature there is not, nor could be, any equivalent for 'structural church.'¹ There is therefore no evidence for the existence amongst the Goths of the fourth century of any such thing as a structural church, and as little evidence of the existence of any word referable to κυριακόν.

The Goths, at whatever date, adopted (*aikklesjo*) the Greek word ἐκκλησία in the sense of 'congregation'; but as it is a fact that every other Teutonic and Slavonic people declined to follow their example, what reason is there for believing that they adopted an assumed Gothic loan-word **kirika* for 'structural church'? It will not do to say that the former concept is more difficult than the latter, for it is just to express the more difficult concepts that peoples do borrow loan-words. Moreover 'congregation' was to them the prior concept. Greek Christians had been familiar with ἐκκλησία in the sense of 'congregation' for two centuries before it can be proved that they had any structural churches. Yet the *ecclesia*-word, which the Goths are alleged to have adopted so early as the fourth century, utterly failed to make good amongst any other Teutonic or Slavonic people.

On the other hand every people which was directly missionised from Rome or Gaul, even so far afield as the

¹ Balg, *Comparative Glossary of the Gothic Language* (Trübner, London, 1877-9), has 'a church, churchyard, gards,' in his English-Gothic Glossary; in his Graeco-Gothic Vocabulary, 'κυριακόν, κυριακός, κύριος, gards.' In his Gothic Vocabulary *gards* is given as 'house, enclosure, yard,' and cited from Ulfilas' Bible, *Matth.* viii, 6, ix, 6; *Mark* iii, 25, x, 30; *1 Tim.* iii, 12. *Gards* corresponds to English *garth*, M. E. *zard*, O. E. *zeard*, Gk. *χόρτος*, Lat. *cobors*,

O. Ir. *gort*, 'cornfield, crop.' Gabelentz and Doebe (in Migne's *Patrologia*, no. xviii) have 'ἐκκλησία, aikklesjo, gemainþs'; but *gemainþs* does not appear in their Gothic Vocabulary. Stamm (*Ulfila*, Paderborn, 1858) gives it = *gemeinde*, which is modern German for 'commonalty, communion, church (not structural), parish,' the word still used for the assemblies of the Swiss Cantons (*Lands-gemeinde*).

Bretons, Cornish, Welsh, Scoti and Irish,¹ adopted, and for the most part still uses, the Greek ἐκκλησία in both senses of that word,² and shows of the *kirk*-word no trace whatever.³ So hard and fast is this linguistic difference that it cannot be shown that the Saxons in England, albeit in closest and uninterrupted contact with the Welsh, ever used any form of the ἐκκλησία-word. They obstinately used the *kirk*-word only, and, as the cases of Chirk and Falkirk declare, even ousted the ἐκκλησία-word where they found it already established.

If κυριακόν, as is implied, had sufficient virility to perpetuate itself in every language of Western Europe from the Danube to the Shetlands, it is remarkable that it should have failed completely to hold its own within the Greek-speaking area, its original home. Such however is the fact. The word ἐκκλησία has forced itself upon the Arab, the Persian, and even the Turk,⁴ whereas, a vulgar and rare form κυρικόν excepted, there is not to be found any trace of the word κυριακόν either in the speech of the Greek races, or in any other tongue spoken between the Persian Gulf and the Adriatic. That it should have left no mark in Syriac is only less remarkable because even ἐκκλησία has left no trace there.⁵ Even in Armenian the sole trace is the use of the word *kirake*, denoting not the structural church, but 'Sunday' (ἡμέρα κυριακή).

According to one view the *kirk*-word is 'common west-Germanic'; according to another it is 'a western loan-word.' If it be west-Germanic, loan-word or otherwise, it is not clear why its assumed oldest form should be found so far east as Dacia. Further we are assured that the Slavonic forms of the word were probably derived from the Teutonic. If that be so, how comes it that the forms least

¹ It may be remarked that the adoption of the *ecclesia*-word by the Gallic Church and by all the Western Celts, to the absolute exclusion of anything which can be imagined to represent κυριακόν, is itself a strong argument against the identity of the latter with the *Kirk*-word. It is an equally strong argument against the view that Gallic Christianity originated from the Greek East. Obviously the West learnt its ritual vocabulary from a people who knew nothing of any κυριακόν-word.

² Ital. *chiesa*, Fr. *église*, Span. *yglesia*,

Port. *ygrejo*, Bret. *iliz*, Corn. *eglos*, Welsh *eglwys*, Gael. *eaglais*.

³ There are some good remarks on this curious and rigid geographical distribution in Taylor, *Origins of the Aryans*, p. 247.

⁴ Arabic, *Kenisa*; Persian, *Kilisá*, *Kanisá*, *Kanisbt*; Turkish, *Kilisá*. The Turkish *kirk* means 'forty'; *Kirk-Kilisse* is 'Forty Churches,' and the mosque called *Kirklar* near Derbend (Abercrombie, *Trip through the Caucasus*, p. 223) is 'The Forty.'

⁵ Even in ancient Syriac neither ἐκκλησία nor κυριακόν appears, except in the loaned adjective ἐκκλησιαστικός.

like the supposed parent-form (κυριακόν), such as the Russian *tserkova* and the Bulgarian *criky*, are to be found in the areas immediately contiguous to the Greek-speaking countries and admittedly receiving their Christianity directly thence and at a late date; whereas the forms least unlike κυριακόν are found only in the regions most remote from the Greek-speaking countries? These facts seem to be in direct conflict with the theory. On the other hand it is curious that the Slavonic forms should approximate so remarkably to the Anglo-Saxon *kirk* and *ciric* and to the Latin *circus*; e.g. modern Slavonic *cirkovī*, Russian *cerkov*, *tserkova*, Bulgarian *čerkova*, Servian *crkva*, Slovenian *cerkev*, Czech *cirkev*, Polish *cerkiew* and Lusatian *cyrkej*.

Again, if some κυριακόν-form was so securely fixed in Gothic speech so early as is supposed, i.e. some generations before the severance of Visigoths from Ostrogoths, how is it that this assumed form, though *ex hypothesi* robust enough to supplant all rivals in the tongues of peoples ethnologically and geographically so remote as Saxons, Jutes, and Angles, nevertheless wholly failed to show itself in the lands where the Goths settled in the course of the next century, and where they remained for long generations the dominant race? Why is there no trace of the word in Northern Italy or in Southern France, or in Spain where the Visigoths were for 300 years the ruling race?

The apostle of the Slavs was Cyril of Byzantium, who lived in the seventh century, and the first Slav-speaking people to be missionised were the Old Bulgarians. As they learnt their Christianity in the first instance direct from Byzantium, it would be odd if they had failed to learn the Greek κυριακόν as directly, but adopted it indirectly only and at second hand from their Teutonic neighbours to the north. The Old Slav *crŭky* is found as early as 860, yet its form declares that, if derived at all from κυριακόν, it was already old among the Slavs.¹ If we assume it to have been already as much as 200 years old, an extreme concession, we know that the *kirk*-word was already established as early as 660 beyond the Danube,² in Cassel and farther east, where Scotie and Saxon missionaries were even then active. Which

¹ So Ellis Minns assures me.

² It is generally admitted that Chris-

tianity was established among the Continental Teutons before the Goths commenced to move westwards from Dacia and Moesia.

is the more probable? That the word found in Cassel in 660 was a survival from an Old Gothic original answering to the Greek κυριακόν? or that it was derived from the word *ciric*, *cyrce*, and was introduced by the Saxon missionaries?

No one pretends that in the Greek East even in Eusebius' time the word κυριακόν was the common term for a Christian place of worship. The common term was ἐκκλησία, and κυριακόν completely failed to make good even in Greece. In other Southern countries there have been used other terms, such as *dominica*, *basilica*, and *templum*, but side by side with these is always some form or other of the *ecclesia*-word; and this in most cases has remained the standard and authoritative term, while there is no trace whatever of any word referable to κυριακόν. On the other hand the northern peoples have throughout the centuries with few exceptions wholly ignored alike the *ecclesia*-word and all its Latin equivalents, stubbornly persisting in the use of the *kirk*-word; and whatever exceptions occur are pedantic introductions of a late date, parallel with the Anglo-Saxon *minster* (*monasterium*), which, be it noted, has run over all Europe where the *kirk*-word has gone, but is rarely discoverable in those southern countries where the *ecclesia*-word appears. From Petrograd to the Isle of Man, from the North Cape to the Danube, the same *kirk*-word prevails, not merely in preference to any other word, but to the almost total exclusion thereof. If κυριακόν had been even remotely like any familiar and wide-spread Teutonic word with which it could be confused, this peculiar geographical distribution might be explicable, but philology insists that there is no such word. Neither in Teutonic nor in Slavonic is there discoverable anything which the ingenuity of philologists can bring into connexion with the *kirk*-word. They are therefore driven to admit that it must be borrowed. That is a necessary conclusion. But when they go on to assert that it must be borrowed from κυριακόν, they assume that there is no alternative. It has been shown in the preceding chapters that there is an alternative—that archaeology points unmistakably to the Latin word *circus* as the true original.

'We do not know of the actual circumstances in which this less usual Greek name (i.e. κυριακόν) became so well

known to all the Germanic tribes as to become practically the native name (for a 'church'), and like *Austrôn*, *Easter*, resist all the efforts of Latin Christianity to supplant it; this too at so early a date as to be brought to Britain . . . by heathen Angles and Saxons.'¹ There is no evidence that it was so brought to Britain, and were it not for the unhappy assumption that the Goths of Ulphilas' time had already adopted it, possibly no one would ever have assumed that it was already familiar to the Angles and Saxons before they came to Britain.²

Two other suggestions are advanced to get over the geographical difficulties. One of these points out that there were places in Alsace 'before the days of Boniface' bearing names compounded with the *kirk*-word, e.g. Kiricheim and Chiricunvillare, and infers that such names point to an 'early penetration of Christianity from the Upper Rhone Valley into the valley of the Upper Rhine.'³ As Boniface (Winfrith) was born in 680, this carries back the use of the *kirk*-word in Alsace only to the last years of the seventh century, at which date Hiberno-Saxon missionaries had been active all along the Rhine for a full hundred years. The second suggestion is a counsel of despair. It asserts that there is nothing remarkable in the wide diffusion of the *kirk*-word, for 'from 313 onwards Christian churches with their sacred vessels and ornaments were well-known objects of pillage to the Germanic invaders of the Empire. If the first with which these made acquaintance, wherever situated, were called *κυριακόν*, it would be quite sufficient to account for their familiarity with the word.' This theory assumes that the term *κυριακόν* was of commoner occurrence and wider diffusion than there is any reason to believe was the case, particularly at the date in question. When the argument goes on to say that 'the Angles and Saxons had seen and sacked Roman and British churches in Gaul and Britain for centuries before they had them of

¹ *New English Dict.*

² The earliest known occurrence of the word is in the *Laws* of Ethelbert of Kent (ob. 616).

³ *N. E. D.* s.v. CHURCH, referring to Hildebrand and to Irenaeus *Adv. Haer.* I, x, § 2. Other such place-names are Wulfredeskirika and Sigeharteschiricha, in the

valley of the Werra (Cassel), a tributary of the Weser. Irenaeus, who was bishop of Lyons 177-202, says that Christianity had so early reached the Germans, but he is referring to those of the two cis-Rhenane provinces of Upper and Lower Germania, with capitals respectively at Mainz and at Cologne, not to the barbaric Germans east of the Rhine.

their own,' it is merely begging the question. There is no proving that Angles and Saxons, at that remote date, had seen or sacked any churches at all, because it cannot be proved that there were any churches for them to see and sack.¹ Possibly there were a few, a very few; but there is no proving that Angles or Saxons pillaged them. When we are further told that 'we have every reason to believe that they had known and spoken of them (the churches) as *cirican* during the whole of that period of their paganism', the same criticism applies. It would be much more correct to say that we have nothing to show that they did *not* speak of churches as *cirican*. We have not. Neither have we anything to show that they did.

The evidence of language proves conclusively that alike in Gaul and in Britain churches, of whatever fashion they may have been, were in Roman times called by *ecclesia*-names, not by *kirk*-names; and not the most persistent plundering of churches in Gaul and in Britain could possibly have taught the plunderers the word *kirk*. Only in the Greek lands and only for a short period in the fourth century, do we know that churches were actually called *κυριακά*. Is it credible that the looting of never so many *κυριακά* at that end of Europe by whatever Teutonic raiders can have taught the word *κυριακόν* to the Saxons and Angles of the remotest north-west? It is not.

The mental picture which represents Gaul and Britain even in the fifth century as dotted over with handsome churches, remarkable for their architectural magnificence, wholly lacks reality. It is doubtless true of the later Middle Ages; of a period some ten centuries earlier it is certainly not true. It has never been shown that there was in Roman Britain outside the walls of Silchester, Canterbury, and possibly Caerwent, a single church which was in the least likely to attract a Saxon's cupidity; and Northern Gaul—that part of Gaul with which alone the Saxons had any considerable acquaintance—was probably in little better case at the same date.

¹ The whole of Northern France as far south as the Loire was pagan until the conversion of King Clovis (496), and it is unlikely that there remained any Christian

buildings to be sacked nearer than Tours and its vicinity. Clovis is reputed to have built many churches, but the Saxons did little raiding in that part of the world after 500.

Alike in Ireland, Wales, Scotland and England, for long years after the re-introduction of Christianity, there were no structural churches at all save the very few built by the Latin missionaries Augustine and Paulinus. There were *ecclesiae* in the sense of 'places of meeting,' but these were places of burial only, Christian barrows. Supposing that the Angles and Saxons had somehow learnt to apply the name of *cirican* (i.e. κυριακά) to the handsome and costly building which they or their forebears had—so it is assumed—seen and plundered elsewhere, how could they possibly extend the same name to the normal *ecclesia* of Britain, a mere earthen mound or ring-work, or even to its proportionately mean and bare *bedehus*?

We have very little knowledge of the condition of the Goths of Dacia when Ulfilas attempted their conversion, but we have no evidence that they were in any way less barbarous than were the Anglo-Saxons of the seventh century; and untouched as yet by Roman influence, they cannot have been more civilised than were the Romano-British of the third, fourth, and fifth centuries. Yet both the Britons of that date and long afterwards, and the Anglo-Saxons for several further centuries, knew little or nothing of any structural churches. What reason is there to assume that the Goths must have possessed such things in the fourth century, at a date when even the Greek and Latin Christians were but just beginning to build them? Is it conceivable that Ulfilas' short-lived seven years of missionary work can have led to such amazing results? The Goths, as we know, learnt and used the word *aikklesjō* (*ecclesia*) to denote the new concept of a Christian 'congregation,' and perhaps that of a Christian 'place of meeting'; but that they learnt and used the word κυριακόν denoting a 'structural church,' or ever possessed any such buildings, is a baseless and wholly improbable assumption. Bishop Ulfilas himself had no see, and therefore no episcopal church; he was bishop *in partibus* only. How then can one believe that his flock possessed any such accessories to their young faith? The whole picture is as erroneous as is that suggested by Bede when he speaks of the 'churches' of the Romano-Britons and the early Saxons. There was probably not one structural church north of the Danube until two centuries after Ulfilas' time,

but from 600 onwards there were *cirics* in large numbers, i.e. the circular monastic settlements of Scotie and Anglo-Saxon missionaries in Western Germany, Switzerland, and along the Danube, and the circular burial-grounds wherein their converts buried their dead and made their orisons.

In as much as the Irish *kil* and the Welsh *llan* denoted originally no building at all, but merely a precinct, it is not unreasonable to surmise that the Saxon *ciric* also, whatever its derivation, meant originally much the same, meant the 'churchyard' rather than the 'church'; and there has been adduced abundant evidence that it was so. Further it has been shown that wherever Scotie Christianity went the burial-ground was originally of circular plan. *Ciric* therefore meant in the first instance a circular burial-ground, a round barrow. The inference is that the words *ciric* and *circular* are related one to the other. As 'circular' derives from *circulus*, and that from *circus*, it is to the latter that archaeology points as the true source of the word *ciric*.

The oldest known form of the Anglo-Saxon word is *circ* (*kirk*).¹ The expansion of *circ* to *ciric* is regular,² and from *ciric* was developed the fuller form *cirice*. The forms with *y* (*cyrc*, *cyric*, *cyrice*) are later, and from these were evolved the various palatalised forms now standardised in

¹ So I am assured by Prof. W. Craigie. The Celtic *r* was, and is, heavily rolled, as was also the Latin *r* (the *littera canina*); and such rolling would facilitate both the substitution of *circ(us)* for *cruc*, and the development of *circ* to *ciric*.

² The palatalisation took place at a late date. In *Domesday* the normal spelling for all parts of England is *cherche*, though *cerce* is found in Notts., Dorset, Devon, and Isle of Wight. In Yorks. *Kirkebi* occurs once only, *Chirchebi* or *Cherchebi* 35 times (Johnston, *Place-Names*), *ch* being the usual Norman sign for the sound of the English *k*. Chaucer regularly rhymes *chirche* with *wirche*, *worche*, *werche* (work), *yrke* (irk), and *clerke* (clerk), e.g. *Miller's Tale*, v. 243.

'I saugh to-day a cors y-borne to chirche,
That now, on Monday last, I saugh him
wirche.'

Cf. *ibid.* v. 121; *Man of Law's Tale*, v. 566.

The contemporary brass in Wanlip church,

Leic., has *Kirk* (1393). Myrc (*Instructions to Parish Priests*, c. 1450) rhymes *chyrche* with *yrke* (vv. 526-7; one MS. has *Kirk*) and again with *worche* (vv. 1717-8). The personal name now written *Kirkus* and *Churches*, appears as *Kyrkhus* and *Kyrkhuse* in 1539, *Kyrkys* in 1552, *Kirkehouse* in 1617 (Bardsley, *Dict. Eng. and Welsh Surnames*). As Bettws for *bede-house*, so *Kirkus* stands for *Kirk-house*, and it was originally written *atte Kirkus*, as *Kirk* was originally *atte Kirk*. There is still a *Kirkus* beside the church at Ulpha beyond Broughton-in-Furness. In Chaucer's verse *chirche* was a dissyllable; e.g. *Friar's Tale*, v. 7, 'Of chirchereves and of testaments,' a regular decasyllabic line; *Foreword to Monk's Tale*, v. 14, 'wol nat in chirche to my wyf enclyne.' So in the ballad (seventeenth century) of the *Dragon of Wantley*: to that monster 'houses and churches were as geese and turkeys'; i.e. the pronunciation was still *kirkes*, dissyllabic and not palatalised.

church. Intermediate forms are preserved in the place-name Chirk¹ and in *curch* of Northumbrian dialect.²

It is noticeable that those forms which are etymologically the older are found in the north of England, the newer forms in the south. As Scotie Christianity entered England from the north, this is what was to be expected.

Had *y* been the vowel of the original Saxon word, there should have been no palatalisation: *c* should not have passed into *ch*, but should have remained with the sound of *k*.³ Therefore, as both *circ(e)* and *ciric(e)* are certainly older than *cyr(e)* and *cyric(e)*, any derivation from *κυριακόν* is philologically impossible.

There is no form of the *kirk*-word discoverable upon the Continent which cannot be deduced without difficulty from the Anglo-Saxon prototype, the whole forming an unbroken *catena* in which, as was to be expected, the successive links become steadily less and less like the original, until in South-Eastern Europe they are perhaps remotely like *kirk*, but very much more remotely like the Greek *κυριακόν*.

Whatever few visible traces of Christianity the Saxons may have found about them when first they entered England, these can hardly have been such as to arrest their attention. Even a *basilica* like that of Roman Silchester, measuring over-all no more than 42 ft. by 27 ft., would scarcely be a very striking feature amongst the surrounding buildings, public and private, of a populous and thriving city; and there is no reason to believe that any churches in other Roman towns of Britain were more impressive. Nor is there any reason to suppose that they were rich in ornaments and treasures.⁴ Thus the suggestion that the Saxons' imagination was so abruptly taken by the wealth of plunder which he found in such buildings that he forth-

¹ Above, ch. xxiv. Bardsley (*Dict. Surnames*) cites from Hundred Rolls, Lincs., 1273 'the curious intermediate form' of (John de la) Chirke.

² Wright, *Dict. Provincial English*. Hence also the place-name of Curthwaite in Cumberland. Cf. Norse Kurksetter.

³ Thus the Saxon *cyrnel*, *cycene*, *cyrtel*, appear in modern speech as *kernel*, *kitchen*,

kirtle; but *cill*, *cildr*, *cicen*, *cidan*, have become *chill*, *children*, *chicken*, *chide*.

⁴ Every one knows and quotes the anecdote preserved by Sulpicius Severus (ii, 41) as to the poverty of the three British bishops who are alleged to have attended the Council of Ariminum in 359. Their expenses were paid, not by their flocks, but by the Imperial Treasury. The anecdote has the air of fact rather than of imagination.

with paused to enquire what might be the name of them, lacks any likelihood. He probably found more booty in any one of a hundred villas. He must have seen at least as many and as imposing buildings which had been erected as pagan temples, yet he never learnt even the easy word 'temple.'¹ Again the whole mental picture is wrong. The churches in the towns of Roman Britain were very few and probably very small; in the open country they hardly existed; and while the churches of Gaul were probably more numerous and better provided than those of contemporary Britain of the fifth century, there is small reason to think they were already so numerous and so rich as to attract the special attention of Saxon pirates. There is evidence that the Saxons had made small settlements at the mouth of the Loire and at Bayeux in the fifth century (*temp.* Childeric I, 458-481), but the Franks and others were quite able to take care of themselves.² Franks, Burgundians and Visigoths had found Christianity already established in Gaul, and at once adopted the word *ecclesia* (*église*); but they failed to pass it back to a single one of their trans-Rhenish kindred, and the Saxon on his coming here had, so far as we know, never heard of it, or indeed of any churches at all.

If the Saxons did not adopt the Roman names for things to them so novel as Roman villas and Roman temples, it were scarcely to be expected that they would adopt the Roman name for the few and insignificant churches they met with. It is quite as likely that they never noticed such things at all. They would therefore learn nothing of *ecclesiae* and *basilicae*³ and *dominicae*, and for the time being Christianity's every outward symbol, so far as it was symbolised in buildings, would vanish from the land.

For nearly a century and a half the Saxon remained an unqualified pagan, too much occupied with his own affairs

¹ *Tempel* appears only as a later literary loan-word. In Alfred's *Orosius* (vii, 9) it is used of Solomon's Temple. Elsewhere *templum* and *aedes* are both avoided; e.g. iv, 1, *in templo Iovis*, aet his godes dure; iv, 4, *aedes Salutis*, godes hus Iofeses; vii, 26, *templa*, diofolgielthus.

² A Saxon colony had been established at Bayeux, and its warriors fought side by side

with the Roman Aëtius and the Visigothic armies against Attila and the Huns at Châlons (451). F. Haverfield in *Social England*, i, p. 163.

³ Bede uses *basilica*, but his Saxon translator avoids it. So Alfred in translating *Orosius*; e.g. vii, 39, *in basilicas*, on *paem ciricum*. The word *dominica* is as wholly absent from Saxon speech as is *ecclesia*.

to have any appreciable contact with the Continent.¹ To a people in his state of barbarism, without books or any other machinery of education, even a century would bring complete oblivion of the past ; so that, had he ever known the concept '(structural) church,' no memory of it could well survive. On his western borders during all those years, in many areas actually within his borders, he had the Briton, who in some measure still remained a Christian and preserved at any rate the vocabulary of Christianity. The Briton had learnt and preserved the word *ecclesia* (*eglwys*, *eglos*, *eaglais*) ; but so little had the Saxon to do with the Britons' religion, so little was there in that religion to strike his curiosity, that the Saxon never learnt even that.

All about him in his new surroundings the Saxon saw things entirely new to his intelligence—the Romans' roads and walls, walled towns, and villages. He adopted forthwith the Roman name for each of these—*street* and *wall* and *chester* and *wick*—and in so doing showed that each was to him a novelty. That he did *not* adopt any known Roman word for 'church' suggests either that he found here no churches at all, or that at any rate he found them too few and too insignificant to arouse his interest. Those who argue that he did not adopt a Roman name for this concept because he already possessed a term to express it, must explain how it happened that he had acquired the concept while as yet he possessed no term for 'street,' 'wall,' 'walled town,' or 'village.' Whoever was the barbarian who first saw a structural church and learnt its name, to reach it he must have traversed many a mile of *strata*, passed through many a *vicus*, and breached the *vallum* of at least one *castra*. Yet there is little evidence that the Saxons had noticed or named such more obvious features of civilisation before they arrived in Britain.

If the Saxons, as is generally admitted, borrowed the Roman names for the concepts above mentioned, there is no reason why they should not have borrowed also the Roman name for the *circus*, the peculiar circular moot

¹ Some of the objects found in A.-S. graves, notably in those of Kent and at Highdown in Sussex, suggest that some sort of trade with the Continent existed ; e.g.

the glass drinking-cup from Highdown with its Greek inscription 'Use it and be merry.' Conceivably, however, such objects were the proceeds of mere pirate-raids.

which was a necessary adjunct of every town and every considerable village in Roman Britain. Some name for it he must have had, for it was ubiquitous and, from the fashion of its construction, abiding. The Roman called it *circus*. The Saxon adopted this name and called it *kirk*, *circ*, or *ciric*.¹

The Latin word *circus* passed also into the speech of the Britons, where it appears as the Welsh *cyrch*, Cornish *cerch*, but with a peculiar meaning, viz. 'centre of attraction,' 'goal to which things or forces tend,' 'place of meeting,' 'rendez-vous or resort.' These are obviously secondary meanings naturally arising from the function of the *circus* in the municipal life of Roman Britain. The Celt did not perpetuate it in the sense of a place of religious meeting, because he had already adopted in that sense the word *ecclesia* (*eglwys*), but it will be recalled that the *Triads of Motes and Carmotes* place a meeting for religious purposes upon precisely the same plane as meetings for political purposes. For the place of meeting itself the Briton had had his own term *cruc*, itself philologically the same as *circus* ; and in some of its various forms the *cruc* had been itself to all intents identical with the Latin *circus*.

Cruc refused to become obsolete : it survived for the Saxons to take it over in the form *creke* (ch. xv), and to be to this day a common term in all Celtic-speaking countries.

But the existence of the Welsh *cyrch* and Cornish *cerch* is proof that the Briton had seen the *circus* and learnt its name² ; and it was the Britons who taught the Saxons the name. To the latter it meant those peculiar circular structures, commonly of earth and turf, within which he was told the men of the older time had met for debate and for purposes of ritual. Without doubt during the long years of the Conquest his own envoys had frequently themselves met and debated with the Roman Britons in such places.

When Christianity at last returned to England it was

¹ McClure, *British Place-Names in their Historical Setting* (1910), p. 118, gives a list of further Latin words which entered into English *place-names* ; *circus* is not amongst them, but it ought to be. So W. Barnes, *Early England and the Saxon English* (1869), p. 75 : 'it is more likely that *Kirk*, *Kirche*, was used for a holy enclosure even in

heathen times, and that *Kirk*, *Kirche*, *Cchurch*, means the (hallowed) enclosure.'

² For 'circle' the Britons took both the Greek *κύκλος* and the Low Latin *circellum*, turning them respectively into *cylch* and *cyrchell* ; unless *cylch* be parallel with the Alemannic *Kilchberg*, etc. ; p. 416.

the Christianity of Ireland, Celtic Christianity, whereof the outward and visible sign was the circular *limes* with its surrounding *vallum* and insignificant fosse, a thing in no wise to be compared with the formidable *castra* which the Saxon's fathers had stormed, the ruins whereof were still evident on every hand. Therefore the Saxon could not call the new thing a *chester*; *raison de plus*, the typical *chester* was in no sense circular. Neither *cil*¹ nor *llan* attracted him, for neither word suggested what was to him the most striking feature in the novelty, its painful circularity. And this is precisely what *kirk* did suggest. So he called this also a *kirk*, i.e. a *circus*. *Circus* is the one Latin word which even now exactly describes that particular *mansio* which St. Cuthbert, in accordance with the Scotie rule, built for himself in Farne.²

The Saxon had several words which might be used to denote the circumference or periphery of a circular area or 'circle,'³ e.g. *brinc* ('ring'), *trendel* (cf. to 'trundle' a hoop), *hwyrfel*, and *hweohl* ('wheel'). For the circular area itself he had no term, and to make good the deficiency he adopted the word *circus* (*kirk*, *ciric*). His only alternative was to make shift with compound words such as *bringstede*.⁴ When presently he became educated and required the term in geometry, he found the word *kirk* to be already fixed in its religious sense and was forced to borrow again from Latin.⁵

Ringsted is the name of the burial-place of the royal house of Denmark, and there still remains a solitary monolith, possibly the last remnant of the circle (ch. ix) from which the place was named. Ringstead occurs in England in Norfolk⁶ and in Northamptonshire, in the latter case⁷

¹ O'Curry (*Manners and Customs*, vol. i, cccxxxi) thought he saw the Irish *fert* in the Saxon *fybrt*, a form of heathenism prohibited by the laws of Cnut. *Fybrt* remains un-explained. It appears to mean 'divination,' and is thought to be connected with the Icelandic *frett* 'intelligence.'

² *Supra*, ch. xxi.

³ 'The circumference or periphery itself is called the circle, though improperly, as that name denotes the space contained within the circumference.' So says Hutton's *Mathematical Dict.*, i, 284. Custom however persists in using the term improperly, and 'circle' to the common mind means the

circumference of a circle, Euclid notwithstanding.

⁴ Given as meaning 'a circus' in Bosworth's *Anglo-Saxon Dict.*

⁵ 'Circus girus; *circulus girus*,' in *An viii Century Anglo-Saxon Glossary*. Later was used also the loan-word *circul*.

⁶ West of Burnham and on the line of the old Peddar's Way. Ringland occurs 7 miles N.-W. of Norwich, again at a spot associated with prehistoric remains (*Proc. Prehist. Soc. East Anglia*, ii, pp. 323-4); and 7 miles N.-W. of Manchester is Ringley.

⁷ Between Irthlingboro' and Thrapstone, on the Roman road from Ichester to Caistor.

associated with a variety of anhistoric earthworks.¹ It is the name also of the small cromlech which gives a name to Ringstead Bay in Dorset.²

Ringstone Moor near Halifax perpetuates the memory of a stone circle now vanished. Another such circle still remains at Ringmore in Devon. Ruston (or Russen) in East Worlington, 6 miles east of Chulmleigh in the same county, appears in *Domesday* as Rinestanedona, i.e. Ringstone Down, and points to the disappearance of yet another circle. Ringston Hill, a mound partly natural and partly artificial, near the spot where meet the three Yorkshire (W.R.) wapentakes of Strafforth, Staincross and Osgoldcross,³ probably represents Ringstone.

The personal name Hringr may explain such names as Ringswould in Kent, Ringshall and Ringsfield in Suffolk, but there remains a crowd of others in which Ring, Rings, and The Ringses⁴ have plain reference, like *hweohl*⁵ and *hwyrfel*⁶ and *trundel* (*trendel*)⁷ in other cases, to the circular periphery of earthworks of various kinds, a long series of 'camps' of every size and every degree of strength, situated in all sorts of localities, and having in common nothing except their circular plan. In strongest contrast with the manifold variety of these were others, the small and formalised *circi* of the Romano-British settlements which were to be met with everywhere in England, 'countless,' as King Alfred declared. For these the Saxon was fain to adopt their Romano-British name. And when, some century and a half later, he made acquaintance with the peculiar Christian *limes*, he extended to this the name of the thing which it most resembled. The massive earthen banks and sunken *cavea* of the normal *circus* were things

¹ Amongst them Cotton Camp, $\frac{3}{4}$ mile E. of Addington. There was a Roman settlement in the vicinity, but Cotton Camp 'seems not to be Roman' (Haverfield in *V. C. H. Northamptonshire*, i, 194). Roman or not, it probably had its own moot.

² *Supra*, ch. ix.

³ Gomme, *Primitive Folkmoors*, p. 240. Ringstones is the name also of a circular 'camp' at Worsthorpe, Lancs.

⁴ E.g. Ring Hill near Saffron Walden; the Ring on Cleeve Hill (Glouces.); Chanctonbury Ring in Sussex; Rings Hill

on Worbarrow Bay in Dorset; Maumbury Rings by Dorchester; Ringsbury near Puriton in Wilts. The Ringses on Beanley Moor and at Doddington in Northumberland, and again at Clovelly in Devon.

⁵ This word probably underlies some at least of the many cases where Wilbury is the name of circular earthworks.

⁶ E.g. Worlebury, Som.

⁷ E.g. The Trundle, a camp on St. Roch's Hill near Chichester; another on Giant's Hill near Cerne Abbas, Dorset; and Trendel Ring, a ringwork on the Quantocks near Bicknoller, Som.

which would not quickly be destroyed. There must have been hundreds, possibly thousands, of them in the England of Anglo-Saxon paganism. Whether the Saxon had himself learnt to make any use of them or not, he would not yet have ploughed them out. They would remain about him on every hand to keep their name alive upon his lips.

The new Christian *limes* resembled the old *circus* in other points than plan only; it resembled it also in the uses to which it was put. It was, like the *circus*, peculiarly a place of religion. More characteristic still, it was a centre of meetings where men daily came and went, a place of much talking, a patent sort of moot wherein questions were discussed and long harangues were delivered. The only thing in the Saxon's experience which in the least resembled it was the familiar circular moot attached to hundreds of Romano-British settlements, and to that it had a very close resemblance indeed. Of that he had learnt, if he had not actually seen, the use. He had also learnt its name. The new thing was just such another, and it was the most natural thing in the world to call it by the same name.

There are two other ways in which the Saxon tribes might conceivably have learnt the word and the thing it denoted—from Latin-speaking missionaries, and from an earlier contact with Roman civilisation.

It is not to be believed that Christian missionaries would themselves apply to the Christian *limes*, a name to them redolent of the barbarities of the Roman *arena* and its attendant abominations in the way of brawls, beast-fights, obscene mimes, and prostitution.¹ So far from the missionaries having introduced the word, they plainly disliked it and tried to abolish it, substituting *minster* wherever they could. But the word proved ineradicable, and this suggests

¹ Cf. Alfred's language about the *anfi-theatra*, cited above, ch. ix. Alfred himself refers to Augustine of Hippo as speaking in the same strain, and there is more of the same kind of thing in many of the Early Fathers, e.g. Tertullian's *Apologia*, in which everything in the way of dramatic performances is fiercely denounced along with the *nuda theatra*. Wright (*Vocabularies*, i, 58) cites '*lupanar, vel circus, vel theatrum, myltestre-hus*,' with the comment: 'It is rather curious that the A.-S. scholar should confound a theatre with a brothel; but the

mistake arose probably from his forming his judgment of the character of the Roman stage from the ecclesiastical writers, who decried both the theatrical performances . . . and the drama in general.' But the Circus (Maximus) and its purlieus had quite as bad a reputation in Classical and pre-Christian times, as Ovid and Horace testify. The bias against the stage owes most of its vigour to these old Patristics, whose disciples in 1730 refused to bury in consecrated ground the body of Adrienne Lecouvreur.

indeed that it was already deep-rooted, but not at all that it had been learnt elsewhere than in England.

As for the second alternative, some of the kindred of the Anglo-Saxons had for long years lived in contact with the Roman legionaries along the Rhine, and many of them had seen service as auxiliaries in the garrison-towns.¹ These Teutons may have become perfectly familiar with the amphitheatres which were the inevitable adjuncts of every permanent military station, and they would most certainly have learnt to speak of them as *circi*, even as did true-born Italians. But we have no evidence that either Angles, Jutes, or Saxons,² ever used the *circi* of Roman Britain for any of the purposes to which they were put by the Romans; yet had they learnt so to use them on the Continent, they must surely have continued that use in Britain.

Even in Cicero's day and in Rome, so Cicero declares, the final syllable of such a word as *circus* was so slurred as to be almost indeterminate. In the debased speech of the Romano-Britons it is certain that the pronunciation would be at least as careless, and under the influence of the kindred native word *cruc*, the Latin *circus* was reduced to something exactly like *circ* (*kirk*).³ This, if adopted by the Saxons, might normally change to *ciric*, as *byrg* to *byrig*. To the assumed derivation of *ciric* from *κυριαχόν* the vowel of the first syllable presents an insuperable difficulty; in the derivation from *circus* that difficulty does not arise. The further difficulty in connexion with the gender of *ciric* is present in both cases: *κυριαχόν* is neuter and *circus* is masculine, whereas *ciric* and all the series of *kirk*-names are consistently feminine. But the Saxons took great liberties with the genders of borrowed words: the Latin neuters *stratum* and *castra* both became feminine in Saxon (*straet*, *ceaster*), while another neuter, *vallum*, became

¹ Keysler, *Northern Antiq.*, p. 80: 'Germans had closely associated with Romans on the frontier for 80 years before the time of Tacitus.' Ridgeway, *Early Age of Greece*, p. 339: 'Germany was permeated by Roman trade centuries before the barbarians swept down on Italy and Rome.'

² F. Haverfield (*Social England*, i, 163) says that in the fourth and fifth centuries 'the Saxons certainly, and the Angles very probably, came in contact with the Roman

Empire, and possibly even with Roman civilisation. Both Saxons and a tribe named suspiciously like Angles figure, though only to a small extent, in the fourth century Roman Army as described in the *Notitia Dignitatum*.'

³ *Cyrch* is the form which actually recurs again and again in the *Trials of Dyfnwal Moelmud*, and *kirk* is as near as the average person, not being a Welshman, can get to its correct pronunciation.

masculine (*weall*). For the difference of gender in *circus* and *ciric* we have an exact parallel in the words *vicus* and *wic*: like *circus*, the Latin *vicus* is masculine, but the Saxon form *wic*, like *ciric*, is feminine.

At the present day the syllable *kirk* is a frequent constituent of Cumberland place-names attaching to stone-circles and other ring-works,¹ and no satisfactory explanation of the fact is forthcoming unless it be that the plan of such things recalled the radical significance of *kirk*, 'a circular area.'

In the neighbourhood of Whitby, we are told, so late as the middle of the last century, the word *kirk* was 'commonly applied, not to the church, but to the churchyard.'²

In examining the account of the monastery at Barking (ch. xxiii), it appeared that Bede's Saxon translator was at variance with his original upon the question whether there was any structural church there in the seventh century; and that he actually used *ciric* in the sense of *liictune*, 'graveyard.' An even more convincing passage to show that this was the primary meaning of *ciric* is that referring to John of Beverley's *mansio* near Hexham (ch. xxiii), where *cirican* renders the Latin *coemeterium*. It is true that neither in the case of Barking nor in that of John of Beverley's *mansio* are we explicitly told that the *liictune* of the one or the *coemeterium* of the other was circular; but we have evidence enough that in both cases a Celtic foundation is in question, and we know that in the early Celtic church, whether Irish or Scottish, Welsh or Cornish, its burial-places were always circular.

We have therefore two passages from a Saxon text of the tenth century, in which the word *cirice* is definitely used of a circular burial-ground without reference to any building thereon.

In Alfred's version of Orosius, dating perhaps some three quarters of a century earlier than the Saxon version of Bede, the word *ciric* occurs four times only: it is applied

once (vii, 26) to the building of Christian churches generally under the Edict of Milan in 311¹; once (vii, 39) to the particular churches of St. Peter and St. Paul in Rome,² and once (vii, 5) to the Temple in Jerusalem.³ In all these passages it denotes a holy place of Christendom. The remaining passage (ii, 4) is different: it refers to what cannot well be anything else than the *Circus* of Romulus, the traditional scene of the Rape of the Sabines.

The passages are printed side by side, together with the English rendering of the Saxon version:—

OROSIUS.	ALFRED'S VERSION.	TRANSLATION.
Itaque Romulus, interfecto primum avo, dehinc Remo fratre, arripuit imperium urbemque constituit: regnum avi, muros fratris, templum soceri sanguine dedicavit.	þuss gebletsade Romulus Romana rice on fruman; mid his broðer blode þone weall, mid para sweora blode pa ciricean, mid his eames blode paet rice.	Thus did Romulus consecrate the Kingdom of Rome at the outset: with the blood of his brother the wall of it, with the blood of their fathers-in-law the <i>ciric</i> , ⁴ and with the blood of his uncle ⁵ the Kingdom.

Orosius is dealing with the legendary story of the founding of Rome, and in almost all the classical accounts of that event a large place is taken by the Rape of the Sabines and the manner in which, to accomplish that *coup*, Romulus constructed the first Roman *circus* and therein celebrated the games which attracted his intended victims.

Orosius does not give these details nor name the *circus*, but his language shows that he knew the whole story, for he mentions 'the Sabine women whom he (Romulus) caused to be treacherously carried off and married.' Alfred adds details which show that he too knew the story in all its particulars: he mentions Romulus' initial request that the Sabines should give to him and his men their daughters to wife, the Sabines' contemptuous refusal, his further invitation to the Sabines to come and assist him in sacrificing to his gods, the war which followed upon the Rape, and the fashion in which the stolen women themselves at length

¹ *Supra*, ch. xxiv.

² *Dialect of Whitby* (1851). This would seem to be the precise meaning of 'church' in Chaucer's lines—

'I saugh to-day a cors y-born to *chirche*,
That now, on Monday last, I saugh him
wirche.' (Miller's Tale, v. 243).

Cf. Scott's 'Proud Maisie':—

'Tell me, thou bonnie bird,
When shall I marry me?'

'When six braw gentlemen
Kirkward shall carry ye.'

(Heart of Midlothian.)

¹ Not in the original Latin of Orosius.

² Orosius, *basilicas sanctorum apostolorum Petri et Pauli*.

³ Orosius, *Hierosolymis sacrarium*.

⁴ Both *weall* and *rice* being in the singular,

it is probable that *ciricean* also is singular, like the *templum* of Orosius' text. Otherwise the word might equally well be plural.

⁵ Amulius, strictly speaking his great-uncle.

intervened to end the war. Knowing all this, he cannot but have known that the traditional scene of the Rape was the Circus of Romulus. To this the word *ciricean* refers. If Alfred wished to mention the *circus*, he had no alternative but to use *ciric*.¹ He knew the story and its locality; and if he wrote *ciricean* rather than any other word it can only have been because he knew *ciric* to be the same as *circus*, and to denote just such a circular area as he rightly understood the Circus to have been.

Elsewhere, when speaking of pagan holy-places, Alfred never uses the word *ciric*. For Greek temples and for the shrine of Egyptian Ammon he uses the old Saxon *heargh*; for pagan temples in Rome and Italy he writes *godes hus* or *diofolgielddhus*. It is to be inferred therefore that in using *ciric* in the passage above quoted he was not concerned to render Orosius' *templum*, but is tacitly correcting that writer's loose original.² Thrice more in the same chapter he corrects Orosius, once in reference to the date of the foundation of Rome,³ again in substituting *mid para sweora blode* for *soceri sanguine*,⁴ and a third time in amending Orosius' 'grandsire' to '(great) uncle.' Where Alfred learnt his Roman history has not yet been determined,⁵ but it is certain that he knew more about some of it than did Orosius. And it is as certain as any matter of the kind can be that he used *ciric* of the Roman *circus*. In other words, even in England so late as the close of the ninth century the word *ciric*, so far from denoting exclusively what we now call a 'church,' might be used without any Christian connotation whatever, even by a writer so scholarly and so devoutly Christian as was King Alfred. The fact disposes at once of the argument that 'the word, because its cognates are found in Old High German and Slavonic in the sense

¹ The word *circus* occurs only once in Orosius (i, 3) in a passage where is drawn a parallel between the fate of Rome and that of the Cities of the Plain. This Alfred's translation unluckily omits.

² What precisely Orosius meant by *templum* it is impossible to guess, unless it was actually the *circus* regarded as the temple of Consus.

³ Orosius put it at 414 years *post Trojam eversam*; Alfred amends to 'about 440 years.' [The traditional date of the fall of Troy was 1184 B.C.]

⁴ Orosius' wording can only refer to some supposed murder of Titus Tatius, upon which Haverkampff passes the dry comment: *hoc alibi me legere non memini*.

⁵ In the *Introduction* to Daines Barrington's edition of Alfred's *Orosius* (1773) is given a list of the authorities cited in that work, viz. Pompeius Trogus, Justinus, Livy, Polybius, Valerius Antias, Valerius (? Maximus), and Claudius; and it is added that there is internal evidence that Alfred had access to Aulus Gellius and to the lost work of Tubero.

of 'church' only, must have already, when first it came to England, have denoted 'church' and nothing else. If it is not given in the Glossaries as an equivalent of *amphitheatrum*, the sufficient reason is that the ecclesiastics of that age were greatly concerned to obliterate all memory of its earlier significance; for the Glossaries, like most other books of their time, were written, it is to be supposed, by ecclesiastics. Ecclesiastics also carried the word to the Continent, and naturally in the only sense in which they reluctantly approved it.

There need therefore be the less hesitation in interpreting the name of the Berkshire Curknel Pit (ch. ix) as a direct derivative from the Romano-British *circ* through the intermediate form of Circan-hill; and the difficulty presented by the non-palatalisation of the initial is met instantly by the occurrence, only some 15 miles to the south-west, of the equally exceptional name of Kirby, sometime a manor in Inkpen. Moreover this derivation throws light upon two curious scraps of local folklore, first, that on Churn Hill Birinus began the evangelisation of Wessex, and second, that the locality was once holy ground.

Some memory of the word's radical meaning must have been present in some of its derivatives; e.g. *ciric-tun* meant indeed a 'churchyard,' but it implied also that such churchyard was circular. In other words it meant the 'round yard,' not the yard within which stood what we call a church. The need for further particularisation arose when there had come to be built structural churches, and when it had become customary to hold under a roof the services which had previously been held *al fresco*. In older times one who 'went to church' went merely to the consecrated circular *limes*, the *ciric*; later he still went to church, but 'church' had now come to mean the structural church. Thus it was needful to devise more particular expressions for the *limes*, such as *church-hage*, *-hay*, *-haw*, *-hail*, *-heil*, *-tun*, *-garth*, *-yard*.¹ The earliest citation of any of these

¹ The forms in *-haw*, *-bage*, *-bay*, are derived from A.-S. *baga* 'hedge'; those in *-hail*, and *-heil*, go back to *baligan*, *beilig*, 'hallow.' The former mean merely the 'circular enclosure,' the latter the 'circular holy ground'; Cf. *beilig legerstow* 'holy place of sleep, coemeterium.' The older

Saxon term was *lictun*, literally 'corpse-enclosure'; cf. Welsh *corfflan*. The supersession of *lictun* by *cirictun*, etc., supports the view that the pagan A.-S. burial-ground was of no particular shape, and that the Saxon took the circularity of the Christian graveyard for a difference.

forms in *N.E.D.* is no earlier than 1154.¹ But in the oldest Norwegian code of laws, the *Gulathingslög*, occurs *kirkiu-garðe*, and these laws date between 934–960.² As Norway learnt her Christianity from North Britain, she must have borrowed both *kirk* and *kirkgarth* ready made, which means that the distinction must have found expression in North Britain before the year 960: and this agrees with the evidence previously adduced.

‘As fast as a church tied to a hedge’ is to this day a familiar saying in Lincolnshire, and on the face of it meaningless. Amended to ‘fast (*i.e.* secure) as a church *tyned* with a hedge’ it becomes reasonable enough, and has direct reference to the fact that the original ‘church,’ *i.e.* the churchyard, was both by custom and by law ‘tyned’ or fenced to safeguard it from desecration. It is therefore further proof that the original meaning of the word ‘church’ was what we call the ‘churchyard.’

It may be asked, why did not the Celtic names for the same thing likewise convey some suggestion of its essential form? Why were there used words (*kil*³ and *llan*) which themselves have no suggestion of circularity? Simply because to the Celt there was nothing distinctive in the circular form of the churchyard. With the Celts of every race every settlement and every *locus consecratus*, place of worship and place of burial alike, had always been circular. In Ireland these circular enclosures had various names according to their use—*fert* and *kil*, *rath*, *dun*, *cashel*, and *lis*—and we find a number of Christian foundations still called by these names; but not one of these terms appears in itself to convey any smallest suggestion of circularity. It was too much a matter of course to call for any emphasis. In Wales again the *llan*, the ‘clearing’ of a homestead, was necessarily circular like every other Celtic settlement, and when the new Christian *limes* arrived, it made no difference in terminology. In Scotland the Irish missionaries simply introduced the word which had become inveterate in their own kindred speech (*kil*), and it mostly

¹ *O.-E. Chronicle*: *nouther circe ne cyrceiaerd*.

² The code was drawn up by Haakon the Good (Magnusson's *Index to the Heimskringla Saga*).

³ The attempt has been made to refer *kil* to a Celtic root implying circularity (R. Ferguson, *Dialect of Cumberland*), but there is no evidence that such a root existed.

superseded the Brythonic *llan* because the population of Western Scotland was not Brythonic. But when the new thing came to the knowledge of the Anglo-Saxons, the case was wholly different. *Llan* and *kil* and *fert* and *rath* were all alike meaningless to the Anglo-Saxons, and could not be brought into relation, however forced, with any words in the Teutonic vocabulary. Struck at once by the peculiar form of the Christian *limes* and its close resemblance to those monuments of the past to which they had long ago learnt to give the name of *circ*—the Roman *circus* and the Celtic *cruc*—the Saxons forthwith applied the old name to the new thing.

The terminology of certain traditional Scottish games proves that the word *kirk* long retained the implication of circularity. In the game called ‘Sow in the Kirk,’ for example, ‘a large hole is made in the ground, surrounded by smaller ones according to the number of the players, every one of whom has a shinty, or hooked stick. The middle hole is called The Kirk. The leader in the game is called the Sow-Driver. His object is to drive a small piece of wood or bone—“the Sow”—into the large hole or “Kirk,” the others trying to prevent it.’¹

‘Shinty,’ a rude form of hockey, is played in much the same way, the players seeking to put the ball, or its equivalent, into a round central hole; and a local name for the game in Fifeshire is ‘Carrick,’² *i.e.* probably Kirk, a name which, as in the preceding game, denoted also the central hole.

Yet a third form of the game is called ‘Kirk the Gussie.’ The ‘gussie’ is a large ball, which one party of players endeavours to drive with clubs into a hole, while the other party do their best to prevent it. ‘When the ball is lodged in the hole, it is said to be *Kirkit*.’³

That the Saxon presently totally forgot the real origin and meaning of *ciric* requires no proof. Everyone has forgotten it. When, his intellectual horizon broadening, the Saxon required a word to express *e.g.* the zodiacal circle,

¹ Alice Gomme, *Traditional Games*, ii, 209.

² *Ibid.* i, 58.

³ *Ibid.* i, 305. In the same book (i, 85) is mentioned the game of Curcuddie, ‘a

grotesque kind of dance, in which the players, seated on their hams, form a circle of independent figures.’ *Curcuddie* is presumably identical with the Welsh *cwrchydau*, ‘stooping, squatting.’

he was fain again to borrow from Latin,¹ but in this case the borrowed word remained on the face of it a loan-word.

Evidence has been given that when Christianity first reached the Saxons it came in the concrete presentment, not of any building that we should call such, but of the circular monastic *cashel* and the circular burial-ground. It was for this the Saxon had to find a name, and he naturally selected a name which to him suggested its essential external feature. *Ciric* denoted the *locus consecratus* only, the circular precinct. It implied originally no building at all. As the *gorsedd* and the *circus* were places wherein people assembled *sub Iove* and 'in the eye of light,' so also was the *ciric*. Only the *auspicia* and the purpose were changed.

For the natural transfer which in due season gave the name of *ciric* to the building that at long last came to be its most important feature, there are parallels in plenty. But we know that only at a very late date did there arise any such important building within the burial-ground, and for many generations a multitude of such burial-grounds possessed no other special symbol of their Christian character than a cross, or not even that.²

Had the Roman Augustine, with his Roman idea of the greater importance of the structural church, been the first missionary to reach Saxon England, the English name for 'church' would assuredly have been an *ecclesia*-word in some form or other. He was not the first missionary, and when he arrived he found the word *ciric* already so familiar to the greater part of the Saxons that they refused to change it. They had learnt to recognise the thing first in Northumbria, and in Northumbria we still find the oldest form of the name, viz. *kirk*. That was the form which was passed on by other missionaries to the Continent, and all the variety of *kirk*-names to be found in Europe are derived direct from this Saxon original.

Their missionary zeal hurried the Irish overseas to the Continent while the conversion of England itself was still

¹ *Circul* (= *circulus*). The earliest citation in *N.E.D.* is *circa* 1000. In Alfred's *Orosius*, v, 14 (Latin Version, vi, 20), a solar halo (*circulus*) is rendered by *bring*.

² A Saxon Vocabulary of twelfth century (Wright, *Vocabularies*, i, 80) interprets *ecclesia* by *cyrce*, *oððe geleafful gaderung*,

'church, or any lawful (i.e. non-pagan) assembly.' So late then the word had not acquired the fixed sense of a 'structural church.' Unhappily the silence which fell upon the Saxon tongue for 1½ centuries after the Norman Conquest prevents our seeing more precise evidence of the supersession of *mynstre* by *ciric*.

only begun. They crossed from Northern Britain to the Rhine, and travelled up that ancient highway of the nations, already well known to less peaceful Irish.¹ As interpreters they took with them numbers of their Saxon converts, for the speech of all the peoples of either bank of the Rhine was then still Teutonic. Anglo-Saxon speech made a decided mark upon the yet unformed German language, more particularly in matters connected with religion, and the very term *deutsch* is coined upon a Saxon model (*peodisc*).²

To these Saxon converts the only word for 'church' was *ciric*, and so *ciric* passed direct into Europe. There is to this day a village of Engelskirchen just outside Cologne.

St. Columbanus was one of the earliest and the most active pioneers. He traversed much of Northern France, settled for a time in a monastery at Luxeuil in Burgundy, and thence passed into Switzerland. Ultimately he moved on into Italy³ and there died in 615, leaving his disciple St. Gall to convert the Alemanni and to give his name to a Swiss Canton. Another Irishman, St. Kilian, was the apostle of Franconia, dying in 689.⁴ Bede mentions⁵ the monastery founded (c. 695) by Suidberct on the island of Kaiserwerth in the Rhine below Cologne, 6 miles from Düsseldorf. There were Irish monasteries on the Rhine near Strasbourg⁶ and at Constance, further east at Erfurt, Kelheim, Meiningen and Feldkirch, at Nuremberg, and as far afield as Ratisbon and Vienna.⁷ Nor was this the

¹ Stokes, *Ireland and the Celtic Church*, pp. 143, 144. The valley of the Danube was equally a highway eastward to the Black Sea, S. Russia and Anatolia, and along it had moved successive waves of Celtic migration (Ridgeway, *Early Age of Greece*, p. 389, etc.). Bertrand (*La Gaule avant les Gaulois*) has a chapter (vii) on *La Voie du Danube*.

² See especially Wilhelm Braune, *Beiträge zur Geschichte Deut. Sprache und Literatur* (1918), vol. xxiii.

³ The writer knows of no circular churchyard in Italy, but it is probable that there were such things. Raffaello Santi's picture (dated 1507) of the *Sacra Famiglia dell' Agnello* (in the Prado, Madrid), shews in the background a church standing within a circular garth surrounded by a high stone-built revetment.

⁴ Anderson, *Scotland in Early Christian Times*, i, p. 163.

⁵ *H.E.* V, xi.

⁶ Honaugria, founded by Bp. Tuban on an island in the Rhine.

⁷ See articles by Bp. Reeves in *Ulster Journal Arch.*, vii, 227, translating Dr. Wattenbach on 'Scotic Monastic Settlements in Germany'; R. Rolt Brash, *Ulster Journ. Arch.*, viii (1860), 286-7; L. A. Willoughby in *Discovery*, February, 1920, p. 46. In Winfrith's time, says the latter, English priests came over (to Germany), not in dozens, but literally in hundreds, 'and of the benefices instituted in Thuringia, Hesse, and E. Franconia, most were held by Englishmen.' A considerable list of these early foundations is to be found in Warren, *Liturgy and Ritual of the Celtic Church* pp. 15-16. Celtic also were 'other countless and nameless *Hospitalia Scotorum*, alluded to in the *Capitularies* of Charles the Bald, A.D. 846'; see Pertz, *Mon. Germ. Hist. Legum*, i, 390. These were presumably much like the *hospitia* of the Scoti and the Welsh in Britain.

extreme limit of their reach. Borlase figures side by side with a plan of Inismurray another of a site at St. Leonard's in Hungary. 'In each case a great stone enclosure is an imperfect circle, divided into two parts by an irregular stone wall or rampart, the presence of which is a distinguishing feature not easily accounted for.'¹ Within the Hungarian example stands the typical small oblong church with western door, itself raised upon a circular mound.

Much of this Scotie activity was probably due to the triumph of Latin Christianity in England at the Synod of Whitby (664). Debarred from entire freedom of action in England many of the Irish turned elsewhere, and 'wandering had become to them a second nature.' In the time of Charlemagne the connection between Ireland and the Continent was perhaps at its closest (778-814), though possibly to most people the name of Duns Scotus is the only familiar link.² Saxons like St. Boniface (Winfrith), the founder of Fulda, were but following in the footsteps of their Scotie foreloopers.

Wherever went these Irish and Saxon missionaries, they would take with them the essential features of Scotie Christianity, amongst which the most obvious was the circular *limes*, the *kil* or *ciric*. *Kil* survives to this day in the familiar Zell of Germanic place-names³; but the Continental Teutons naturally preferred the word used by their Saxon kindred. The word *ciric*, like the Saxon *mynstre*, spread over the whole of Teutonic Europe as far as the Alps. It came at last, there as here, to be synonymous with the Faith itself, 'Holy Church.' On the lips of the Alemanni it took the form of *kilc*, *kilch*, which still recurs in the place-names of Switzerland.⁴

¹ *Dolmens of Ireland*, p. 1130. His plan is from Much, *Antiquities of Hungary*. A possible explanation of the dividing wall has been advanced above, ch. xviii. Churches within circular ringworks are not unknown in Germany, e.g. at Michaelsberg in Bavaria (Addy, *Church and Manor*, p. 107).

² Stokes, *Ireland and the Celtic Church*, p. 218.

³ McClure has shown that *Zell* was represented by the Latin *cella*; thus Zell in Freising was Nova Cella in 766, Zell in Kempten was Cella S. Martini in 1275, and

Appenzell was Cella Abbatis. But *cella* in these names was a Latinization of the original Scotie *kil*; cf. above, ch. xviii. Appenzell is an *enclave* of the peculiarly Scotie canton of St. Gall.

⁴ E.g. Kilchberg on the W. shore of the Lake of Zurich. But a few miles further east, near Bregenz, is Kirchberg in the Toggenburg, with Feldkirch and St. Gallenkirch, both in the Bregenzerwald. Notker Balbulus, the monk of St. Gall (tenth century), wrote *chilikba*. The dialect pronunciation of Kirkbühl is indifferently Kilchbühl and Chilpel.

In the little village of Glis,¹ outside Brigue in the Rhone valley, was a patent indication of the passage of the Scotie missionaries. The original structural church was² represented by a tiny rectangular building standing within a circular garth, mounded up and revetted precisely as are so many of those in Wales. To this original church had been added a newer structure, the older one remaining as a chapel of especial sanctity attached to the N.E. corner of its usurping successor; and to make room for the latter much of the circular periphery of the original garth was destroyed, the *limes* extended, and the new portion fenced with rectilinear walls. But round the east end the earlier revetment remained unspoiled to prove what was the course of events. The church, which is mentioned as early as 620, was anciently a place of pilgrimage. Other examples are to be seen at Château d'Oex in the Rhone valley, and at Lauenen in the Bernese Oberland.

Of the Scotie missionaries to the Continent many travelled across the Channel to the mouth of the Canche (Étaples) and so across Picardy by way of the fourth-century Abbey of St. Riquier near Abbeville and along the *Chaussée Brunehault* to Amiens. In this part of France therefore one would expect to find examples of the circular Scotie grave-yard, and they are not rare. There is a fine one at Maisoncelle near Montreuil. Round about Abbeville are several: the church of Bailleul stands within a garth still largely circular, raised and revetted; there is another at Eaucourt; a third at Bellefontaine stands isolated and ringed by its hedge amidst cultivated fields. Between Sorel and Wanel, south-east of Liercourt, is a fourth similarly situated, but having neither trace nor tradition of any structural church. The churches of Heugleville-sur-Scie and of L'Étoile both stand upon circular mounds. All these are ancient Christian sites.³ The churchyards of Gheluveldt and of unhappy Passchendaele were both circular.

In the earlier half of the seventh century the Frisii apparently occupied most of the Lowlands as far south as

¹ The name is derived from *ecclesia*.

² Destroyed, since this was written, by an avalanche.

³ Information of Mr. J. P. Maitland and of M. l'Abbé Le Sueur, *curé* of Eaucourt and Bailleul. The writer has found the circular

garth at St. Leger Vauban, some 2 miles N. of Quarré les Tombes in the Avallonnais (Yonne). His knowledge of France does not permit him to say that it is unknown further south, but he has failed to find it in Auvergne and Provence, and in Touraine.

Flanders. Attempts to convert them were made by Eligius and Amandus, the latter a monastic of the Scotie type, with dubious success; and when King Dagobert of Austrasia (*obit* 638) at the invitation of Amandus 'built a church' at Trajectum (Utrecht), a violent reaction was the instant result. It was to the Frisians especially that the converted Saxons of England devoted their earliest missionary efforts, and the true apostles of Frisia were all Englishmen, namely Wilfrid and Willibrord and Winfrith (Boniface). It has been remarked that the affinity between the two peoples must have been very close, as the missionaries seem to have found no linguistic difficulty in dealing with the Frisians.¹

The Friesic word for 'church' is *kirkko*, beyond a doubt learnt direct from the lips of these Saxon missionaries, and in turn passed on to the Dutch in the form *kerk*. It is to be found in place-names scattered freely over the map from Dunquerque (Pas de Calais) on the south to Grypskerk in Groningen and Lunenkerk on the north-west coast of Friesland. So also the circular churchyard. At Spijk, north-east of Groningen, 'church and churchyard are on a mound completely circular. It is surrounded by a wide *sloot* (fosse), and about this again runs a road, along which are set in a circle the houses of the village.'² Holland has other examples of the kind.

The Danish *kirke*, in pronunciation identical with the Scottish *kirk*, was probably learnt from Frisia before it was met with in the course of the first Danish raids upon Northumbria (778).³ Circular churches are not rare in Denmark, the finest being that of Thorsager, a name which itself suggests that the church—it stands upon an isolated hill—was once a *fanum* of paganism. In the Island of Bornholm alone there are four circular churches, at Osterlarskirke, Olskirke, Nylarskirke, and Nykirke. The last, its name notwithstanding, is said to be the oldest: it contains an inscribed stone bearing the date 1287. The oldest churches of Norway, the so-called 'Stave-Churches,' were built entirely of timber and were always more or less circular in plan. They numbered at least 300, of which remain now

¹ *Encycl. Britann.*

² The presence of water in the fosse is no part of the design, but an inevitable outcome of the topographical conditions.

³ Denmark's first Christianity was learnt from Ansgarius, who came from the Scotie monastery of New Corbey in Westphalia in 827; but the country did not become in reality Christian until the days of Canute.

only twenty-four, and some of these have been removed to other than their original sites. The oldest surviving is said to be that at Urnes, *c.* 1100. At Merok, at the head of the Geiranger Fjord, is a sub-circular church standing within a circular garth. Dietrichson suggested that the circular plan was derived from that of the pagan *hof*. The Norwegian name (*kirke*) is in spelling identical with the Danish, but entirely different in pronunciation: the initial *k* is sibilant, the aspirate being so much accentuated as to disguise the guttural sound entirely and approximate to the English word *shirker*. The word appearing in the *Gulathingslög*, that is, before 960, it was in use long before Olaf I (Tryggves-son) brought his missionaries from England to Norway (995–1000). Some of the Norwegian churches still retain obvious traces of their descent from the pagan *hof*. That of Loën, Nordfjord, has an octagonal nave,¹ and stands within a garth of pronouncedly sub-circular plan; and at Olden, 5 miles away, is a second example of which one half of the original outline remains.

In Sweden the spelling is *kirkja* (earlier, *kyrko*), and the pronunciation almost exactly that of *church*, the initial consonant being palatalised in utterance, though not in writing.² In the districts between Denmark and Friesland the vowel-sound is broadened to *kark*.³

In Finland the word appears as *kirkko*, and the structure commonly follows the Celtic type of a small oblong building, with unbroken roof-line and no architectural feature to distinguish nave from chancel, no tower, a western door, and sometimes also a south porch.⁴ 'In the olden times

¹ The fabric is new, but is said to reproduce the form of the older building.

² This illustrates the difficulty of determining the exact pronunciation of the English spellings at any given time, and of fixing the date at which the English word was palatalised. The vowel-sound in the Swedish word varies from *eu* of the educated classes, to *i*, *u*, and even *o*, in the various dialects.

³ Kirkoswald in Cumb. appears as Karcoswald in *Pipe Rolls* of 1166–7 (Johnston, *Place-Names*). Frädersdorff, *Practical Introduction to Danish and Norwegian*: 'The English word *church* is identically the same, etymologically speaking, as the Northern word *Kirk*, originally meaning a place enclosed or set apart (*cp.* Latin *carcer*); but *Kark* to this

day is the word for H.-G. *Kirche* used as far as the boundaries of Jutland . . . *Church* (*i.e.* *Kark*) means "a place with a boundary to it" . . . and the visible church in the present sense of that term (*i.e.* the structure called a church) was a subsequent thing only.' The writer of the foregoing came very near the truth, although his equation of *kark* with *carcer* is unnecessary. The etymology of *carcer* is dubious. It appears in the Old Irish *carcair*, 'prison cells,' the primitive dwellings of the Irish anchorites. See Skene, *Celtic Scotland*, ii, 245.

⁴ See O. A. Forsström, *Suomen Keskiajan Historia* (1898), vol. ii, c. 18, and *Finland in the XIX Century* (Helsingfors, 1894) where are several illustrations of the type. The belfry, if there is one, is almost always separate from the church.

the dead were for the most part buried under the floor of the church,'¹ but nowadays almost every village has its own modern cemetery.

'The typical *cashels* of Ireland are represented also in Scandinavia, and there too they have come to be used as cemeteries.'² In Sweden they are known as *ring-murs*, and the name bespeaks them foreign importations.

The faith was carried into Thuringia in the seventh century by way of the valleys of the Lahn and the Main to Warzburg, where St. Kilian founded a monastery. From this centre it spread northwards into Cassel by the valley of the Werra and eastwards along the Danube. The O.H.G. forms *chirihha*, *kirihha*, *kiricha*, *chiricha*, all finally took shape as *kirche*. *Kirchhof*, 'churchyard,' in formation exactly parallel with *cirictun*, preserves the old pagan name of the *hof* (ch. vii), which was necessarily circular. The tumuli of northern Germany, circular or oval in plan, are sometimes styled Wenden-kirchhöffer, 'churchyards of the Wends.'³

By the ninth century Latin Christianity had so far prevailed over Scotie that the structural church had already begun to overshadow the precinct in point of importance. Hence the Russians and other Slavonic peoples took the word *kirche* in the sense of a Christian *building*, transforming it according to the genius of their speech into the Russian *tserkova*,⁴ Bulgarian *criky* or *crüky*. *Tserkova* means literally the 'round house,' and the typical Russian church is built upon a circular plan. The Slavonic for a 'churchyard' is *ograda*, compounded of Slavonic *o* 'round' and *grada* (cf. Gothic *gards*, Russian *grad*, O.E. *garth*), 'yard.' How came the Slavs to call the Christian burial-ground by a name which so strongly emphasises the essential feature of the Celtic practice? As the word declares, it is a northern concept, borrowed from beyond the Danube; and it must have been borrowed at a date when Christian churchyards

¹ *Finland in the xix Century*, p. 74.

² Borlase, *Dolmens of Ireland*, p. 1132. He reproduces two illustrations after Hildebrand (*Forhistorika Folken in Europa*) and Sjoborg (*Samlingar för Nordens Fornalskare*).

³ Keyser, *Northern Antiquities*, p. 9; Borlase, *Dolmens of Ireland*, p. 545. The same name is given to some of the 'wide

elevations of earth of irregular form in which stand urns in great numbers'—a kind of compromise between barrow and urn-field—in Mecklenburg, etc.; Borlase, p. 500, citing Schröter and Lisch, *Friderica Franciscum* (Leipzig, 1824).

⁴ *Ts* is the regular Russian equivalent of *k*; cp. *Tsar* and *Caesar*. The final *va* is a substantival formative.

north of the Danube were habitually constructed in the circular form. As the only Christian graveyards so constructed were those of Celtic Christianity, it follows that the Slavonic *ograda* is derived directly from Celtic models. Similarly the Hungarians learnt to construct and name their burial-grounds from the same teachers, and called them *sírkert*.¹ Their structural church, however, they call *tempel*. The structural church was non-Celtic, and therefore bears a non-Celtic (Latin) name. A similar conflict of Latinism and Celtism betrays itself in Poland, where the Greek Church (structural) is called by a *kirk*-name (*cerkiew*), but the Latin church bears another name.² The Latin church is basilican, the Greek church fundamentally circular. Philology admits that both the Russian *tserkova* and the Polish *cerkiew* go back to the German *kirche*. If so, they go back ultimately to *circus*, and there are Russians who believe, on whatever grounds, that their own word has this origin. As said before, the Russian etymological equivalent of *circus* is *kroog*, and *kroog* strictly denotes not the periphery (*ambitus*), but the area (*circus*).

These and similar forms fill the map from the Arctic Circle to the Danube. Generally speaking that river marks the southern limit of the *Kirk*-word; south of it, the Old Slavonic excepted, all the tongues of the Balkan peoples employ for 'church' Latin or Greek words derived from *ἐκκλησία*, *basilica*, or *templum*. The old Greek *κυριακόν* has, excepting rarely in Low Greek, wholly disappeared.

In the Isle of Man, from the time of its first conversion onwards for some centuries, every Christian place of meeting was a *keeil* (*kil*), every parish a *keeyl*; but under the influence of the Norse settlement *kirk* was substituted for *keeyl* in almost every case. The change was merely the substitution of one tongue for another, for *kirk*, the circular precinct, merely translated *keeyl* (*kil*), the circular graveyard.

'Christian men, Irishmen,' had planted Christianity in Iceland before the pagan Norwegians settled there (c. 875). So say the *Landnamabok* and the *Islendingabok*, adding

¹ *Sír* 'grave,' and *kert* 'garden.' The latter is the same Teutonic *garth* again.

² *Kosciol*, said to be derived from Latin *castellum* through O. H. G. *cbastel*. It

was first used in the sense of 'church' in Bohemia (*Kostel*), and thence passed to Poland (Mikl *sich* *Lexicon Polaco-Slovenicum—Graeco-Latinum*, 1862).

that they were called by the Norwegians *Papae*, had left their name in those of the islands of Papeya and Papyli, and that the evidence for their Irish provenance was the bells, books, and pastoral staves which they had left behind them.¹ It is noteworthy that nothing is said of any churches. There would be neither bells nor books unless there were settlements, and these must have been of the form which was alone usual with the Scoti, *viz.* circular. To these circular settlements the Norwegians gave the name (*kirk*) which they had learnt from the Frisians.² It was in the tenth century that the missionary Orlygr essayed the conversion of the Norwegian colonists of Iceland, as previously related (ch. xxii).

Members of the Anglican Church may be gratified to believe, with the writer, that the Saxon speech has given its name to the Christian Church in regions as remote as the Neva and the Volga. Others of the Roman Church will perhaps be glad to think that after all the *kirk*-word in all its many forms is still in part of Latin descent. With any unhappy jealousies of creed for creed the writer is not concerned, satisfied if he has shown to be possible a steady evolution through some 3000 years or more of that *locus consecratus*—yesterday the moot of paganism, to-day 'God's Acre'—wherein he too must at the last foregather with all the Church Visible, well content like Sir Thomas Browne if he may but 'bring up the rear of Heaven.'

¹ Anderson (*Scotland in Early Ch. Times*, i, p. 162). The Irish traveller-monk Dicul (ninth century) says more definitely that these Scotie foreloppers had stayed six months in Iceland (Wilson, *Prehistoric Ann. Scotland*, p. 485). Four of the northern islets still retain the name of Papa.

² Skeat pronounced the Ic. *kirkja* to be borrowed from A.-S. McClure argues (*Brit. Pl.-names*, p. 226, note) that *kirkja*

must have come from the Goths, and finds support for this belief in the name of *Papae* = 'priests.' But the name of *papa* was commonly used in the Latin church for a 'bishop' as early as the fourth century, and may as easily have passed into the west with St. Patrick as did *ecclesia*. Only in the course of the fifth century did the term *papa*, 'Pope,' come to be restricted to the Bishop of Rome, and that only in the Western Church.