



43. Malmesbury Abbey. South entrance

The 'Frieze' at Malmesbury

THE SOUTH ENTRANCE of the former abbey church at Malmesbury in Wiltshire opens into a spacious Romanesque porch, which was rib-vaulted at a later date (*ill. 43*).¹ Its walls are decorated with three figurative tympana displayed in a way that recalls the reliefs in the south porch of the abbey church at Moissac. The arrangement brings to mind a kind of large half-open carved triptych, the wings of which when fully open would form a grandiose composition with a relatively small centre-piece and oversized flanking panels. One gets the impression that sculptures suitable for a church façade have been transferred to the interior of the porch and adapted to its rectangular space, with the flanking sections dominating and, so to speak, squeezing the central panel. On the tympanum over the doorway the figure of Christ is enclosed in an almond-shaped mandorla supported by two symmetrically disposed angels, whose poses follow the particular curve of the arch (*ill. 44*). The scene forms the centre of a rare iconographical arrangement, with twelve apostles, in groups of six, on the side walls of the porch (*ills. 45, 46*).²

In his pioneering study *Later English Romanesque Sculpture 1140-1210*, George Zarnecki pointed out that the flying angel above each group carries a scroll, which, when the whole was painted, undoubtedly had an inscription. He believed that the whole composition was meant to depict the glory of Christ and His disciples at the Last Judgement.³ But is this in fact a representation of the Last Judgement? Had the inscriptions been preserved, we should possess a clue to the subject matter. Since they have not survived, we can only rely on a thorough iconographical analysis.

Within the mandorla of the middle relief, Christ is seated on a rainbow holding a book in His left hand, with His right hand raised in blessing. Although He sometimes appears this way in Last Judgement scenes, nothing here alludes directly or indirectly to the eschatological theme. The graceful angels accompanying Christ in the mandorla happen to occur in the representation of Christ in Majesty, but this subject *sensu stricto* should also include the symbols of the Evangelists, as on the Portail Royal at Chartres, on two fragments of a monumental relief (possibly a frieze?) at Lincoln, and on the tympanum of the west portal at Rochester (Kent).⁴ Their absence at Malmesbury is no doubt intentional. The expression of the bodies and gestures of the angels indicate rather the act of lifting up the Lord, corresponding to



44. Malmesbury Abbey. South porch, tympanum, Christ in Mandorla

the theme of the Ascension. His rising into the air is emphasized by ornamental framing in the form of a zigzag line with alternating dots, suggesting clouds. Beneath the figures, an inverted arcade frieze of stylized lily-shaped endings, by contrast, enhances the impression that Christ and the angels are rising.⁵ There is no figurative lintel.

The apostles, headed on the east wall by St Paul and on the west by St Peter — who are physically (here) and spiritually the closest to Christ — are shown in two groups of six, each above a wall arcade consisting of four arches (*ills.45, 46*),⁶ and they form a kind of monumental frieze set against the background of tympanum-like lunettes framed by a plain band. Each group is seated in a row on a long bench, the figures close to one another, all of equal height. Surpassing in scale the relatively small figure of Christ and the attending angels, they seem to be looking down on the small inner tympanum⁷ and witnessing the supernatural event, which was once explained on the scroll of the angel hovering horizontally over each group. Both angels are skilfully adapted to the narrow segments beneath the arch of the pseudo-tympana and the rectangular block of the frieze-like seated



45. (above) Malmesbury Abbey. South porch, east side, Six Apostles with St Paul
46. (below) Malmesbury Abbey. South porch, west side, Six Apostles with St Peter

apostles. Their legs extended full length, partly covered by the heads of the apostles, their upward gaze and their arms stretched out in the direction of the doorway, as well as the frieze-like alignment of the seated figures — all this emphasizes the longitudinal disposition of the scene and contributes to the linking and thematic subordination of the apostles (in spite of their larger dimensions) to the Ascension tympanum.

On each wall, beside St Peter and St Paul, the apostles are arranged in pairs, as if in conversation, while one apostle between each pair bends his head as if in meditation.⁸ Zarnecki remarks on the deep emotional content of the figures, which is vividly expressed by the gestures of the apostles, 'their heads ecstatically turned to each other...'⁹ Identifiable by his bold forehead and long beard, St Paul leans back and reacts most vigorously to the sacred occurrence. Only St Peter, who symbolizes the Church, clutching an enormous key with his right hand and resting his left on a great book standing vertically on his right knee, stares straight ahead. Without doubt a close narrative connection exists between the seated apostles remaining on Earth and the image of Christ ascending to Heaven.¹⁰ The apostles, six with a book in hand and one with an unfolded scroll, make a terrestrial complement to His divine glory, and represent the eternal Christian society founded by Him.

The choice of the Ascension for the decoration of the south porch at Malmesbury, with its frieze-like seated apostles, cannot have been fortuitous, and may have corresponded to the dedication of the church building of that time. The history and sequence of the churches at Malmesbury are not easy to unravel, especially since the source for this history, William of Malmesbury, is so often ambiguous. But it is generally believed that St Aldhelm built three new churches, among them one in honour of our Saviour, St Peter and St Paul which, until Abbot Aelfric's time, was regarded as the chief church of the monastery. This was probably the church that had remained standing until the time of William of Malmesbury and which the latter praises for its workmanship.¹¹ Abbot Aelfric, who 'caused the Blessed Virgin to be regarded as the patron of the monastery in place of SS Peter and Paul', built a new church for the monastery dedicated to the Virgin.¹² As the Virgin is not included in the iconographical programme of the south porch reliefs, it seems plausible that these Romanesque sculptures were meant for the then still-existing church built by St Aldhelm in honour of St Peter and St Paul.

George Zarnecki draws attention to the unusual composition with seated apostles at Malmesbury. He points to the north tympanum of the Portail Royal at Chartres (*ill.47*) as a precedent for just such an arrangement.¹³ The Ascension portal at Chartres, like the two other portals of the west façade of the cathedral, was executed after Saint-Denis (1145-55), probably about 1145.¹⁴ It is supposed that the Malmesbury reliefs originated 1160-65 as a culmination of the development of Romanesque sculpture in England.¹⁵



47. Chartres Cathedral. West façade, north portal, *Ascension*

In spite of the difference in style between Malmesbury and Chartres, both Ascensions display an evident similarity in the iconographical type. In Malmesbury, as in Chartres, there are three orders of figures: Christ supported by angels, flying angels addressing the apostles, and seated disciples of Christ addressed by these divine messengers. The main distinction in arrangement between Malmesbury and Chartres consists in the abandonment of the lintel (as a matter of fact two superimposed lintels) and the transferring of the angels and the frieze of the apostles from the portal to the lunettes on the side walls of the porch. Instead of occupying a separate level (see *ill. 48* for Chartres lintel), the angels have been placed in narrow segments beneath the upper curve of the pseudo-tympana, exactly over the heads of the apostles, in order not to remove the apostles too far from the ascending Christ. Consequently the number of angels descending towards the apostles has been reduced from four at Chartres to two angels at Malmesbury: one on each wall, rendered in strictly horizontal position. From the point of view of iconography, the dissimilarity of the two works lies primarily in the absence of the dove of the Holy Ghost at Malmesbury. It appears over the head of Christ at Chartres (*ill. 47*), alluding (as rightly argued by Willibald Sauerländer) to the Pentecost which, in keeping with the announcement made at that time by the angels to the apostles, followed soon after the Ascension.¹⁶ Nevertheless, the Malmesbury reliefs and the Chartres portal represent the same scene. Both belong to the variant of the Ascension showing frieze-like



48. Chartres Cathedral. West façade, lintel on north portal

seated apostles without Mary. In both, the future mission of the disciples of Christ is virtually anticipated as described in the Acts of the Apostles. The emphasis laid on the attendance of Saints Peter and Paul at Malmesbury may be due to their special importance in the doctrine of the Ascension as taught by the Church in the liturgy of the feast day.¹⁷

Fritz Saxl had already noted a similarity between the Malmesbury reliefs and the left portal of the west façade at Chartres, but he did not draw any unequivocal conclusion about the iconographical meaning of this resemblance.¹⁸ However, as early as 1934, Sister Helena Gutberlet had hesitantly included the tympanum at Malmesbury (without mentioning the apostles), together with the tympana at Ely and Water Stratford (Buckinghamshire), in the series of so-called abbreviated Ascensions of the Burgundian type, represented by the inner tympanum of the west portal at Charlieu.¹⁹ More recently Yves Christe has discussed the figures of the Malmesbury tympanum as an Ascension scene.²⁰

In *Romanesque Lincoln* Zarnecki seems to accept the Malmesbury composition as an Ascension;²¹ as for the style, he relates one of the seated figures in the Lincoln frieze, among the Elect in Heaven (*ill. 49*), not only to the apostles on the Dorchester font, but also to the apostles in the porch of Malmesbury, regarding the Lincoln frieze 'as one of the sources of the Malmesbury style'. Zarnecki stresses the Lincoln contribution because he believes the sculptors moved from Old Sarum to Lincoln, and then back to the



49. Lincoln Cathedral. West front, detail of frieze, seated figure among *The Elect in Heaven*



50. Chartres Cathedral. West façade, tympanum of central portal, *Christ in Majesty*

South-west to Malmesbury.²² He also identifies the influence of Lincoln on Malmesbury in the motif of the crossed legs of the seated apostles: 'On the Lincoln relief the legs of one partly hidden figure, and it is unclear whether it is seated or standing, are crossed in an X-shape, and the feet turned inwards, another anatomically unlikely position. The almost acrobatic twist of the legs and feet is well known in medieval art and one of the most famous examples is found in the figure of Jeremiah on the trumeau of the portal of Moissac. The motif was much loved by Anglo-Saxon artists and was endlessly used by the painters and draughtsmen of the so-called Winchester School. The "acrobatic" figure at Lincoln undoubtedly derived this feature from pre-Conquest sources and the same applies to one of the Malmesbury apostles, whose feet are twisted in an even more exaggerated manner.'²³

Since the crossing of legs is by nature more normal with a seated than with a standing person, the poses of the Malmesbury apostles are surely not so exaggerated or acrobatic. Furthermore, the three apostles concerned all cross their legs in perfectly normal anatomical positions: the third from the south, in both St Paul's and St Peter's row, puts his right leg across his left,



51. Chartres Cathedral. West façade, lintel from central portal, *The Apostles*

whereas the apostle beside St Peter, who holds a long unfolded scroll with both hands, has crossed his left leg over his right.

Further doubts as to the Lincoln and pre-Conquest influence on the pose of the Malmesbury apostles are prompted by the fact that seated apostles with crossed legs appear on two lintels of the west façade at Chartres, where the motif is considered to originate from South-west France; one is that of the iconographically relevant Ascension portal.

Saxl compared the use of linear folds on the figures of the apostles at Malmesbury with Continental models, using as examples the seated apostles of the central portal at Chartres,²⁵ where four apostles cross their legs: the third and the tenth (counting from the left) put their left leg across their right, the fifth and the eighth their right leg across their left (*ill. 51*).²⁶ However, the range of comparison between the Malmesbury and Chartres apostles need not be restricted to the central portal at Chartres. On the Ascension lintel (*ill. 48*), three apostles out of ten have legs crossed. Counting from the left, the fourth, the seventh and the ninth cross their left leg over their right.

Emile Mâle recognized something of the Christ at Cahors in the Christ of the Ascension at Chartres, and the apostles on the lintel seemed to him to be related to those seen at Carennac (Lot): they are seated, some having crossed legs '*à la manière méridionale*'.²⁷

Even if one of the Malmesbury apostles — the one whose feet twist in an exceptionally exaggerated manner — had derived this particular feature from pre-Conquest sources, the similarity between the frieze-like seated apostles at Malmesbury and the apostles on the Ascension lintel at Chartres cannot be easily dismissed, taking into account the general iconographical, thematic and compositional resemblance of both Ascension scenes. The frieze-like arrangement of the disputing, cross-legged, disciples of Christ at Chartres must have left a strong impression on the Master of the Malmesbury Ascension.

Thus, when the three-level formula of the Ascension with frieze-like seated apostles without Mary at Chartres was adapted at Malmesbury, the apostles with crossed legs on both the central as well as the left portal of the French cathedral might have been used as a model for the English realization of the motif. Notwithstanding the stylistic influence of the Lincoln frieze of the Elect in Heaven discovered and examined by George Zarnecki, the Malmesbury reliefs were made after the prevailing French fashion, since porches with sculptural decorations on the side walls were unknown in England but appear in such French churches as Moissac, Souillac, Conques and Ydes in South-western France.²⁸ Moreover, as to the Lincoln frieze, it is worthwhile reminding ourselves of the unusual iconographical order and sequence of scenes, which develop from the middle of the façade, first to the right, and then from the middle to the left, in a manner similar, though not identical, to the iconographical order and sequence of the thirty odd scenes on the capital frieze of the west façade at Chartres. Here, the series starts on the left of the central door and moves to the left across the left door, ending at the north tower; it then begins again on the right of the central door and continues across the right door, finishing at the south tower.²⁹

If the iconographical type of the Ascension reliefs and the motif of the crossed ankles at Malmesbury seem to be linked to the left and central portals

of the west façade at Chartres, the strictly horizontal position of the flying angels above the apostles belongs to the common heritage of Continental art, usually in the context of supporting a roundel or wreath. The motif has its roots in Late Antique sculpture, both pagan and Christian. This is the attitude of the Genii and Victories on the front of Roman sarcophagi. Presenting the clipeated portrait of the dead, or the bust or a monogram of Christ, the angels, positioned symmetrically on either side, generally turn their heads backwards.³⁰

At Malmesbury, both angels turn the lower and the middle part of their bodies to the onlooker, but keep their heads straight in the direction of their flight. The angel hovering over St Peter's row holds a banderole in extended arms, whereas the arms of the angel over St Paul's row are artificially crossed: the left is stretched out with a banderole, the right turned in the opposite direction.

Among the precedents in Romanesque sculpture for the Malmesbury flying angels I would propose the marble altar at Saint-Sernin in Toulouse, signed *Bernardus Gelduinus me fecit*, 1096,³¹ and the marble impost of one of the capitals, c. 1100, in the abbey cloister of Moissac,³² where the angels placed horizontally carry a medallion with the image of Christ (in Toulouse flanked by two more angels on each side); and also the decoration of one of the vousoirs on the portal of Saint-Nicolas at Civray (Vienne), where angels support the crowned Virgin (?) in a pointed mandorla.³³

Some ivories of the second half of the first millennium might have served as an intermediary between antique and Romanesque sculptures, for instance the angels on a diptych in five compartments with Justinian as Defender of the Faith, in Paris (second quarter of the sixth century);³⁴ or another diptych from Echmiadzin in the Matenadaran at Yerevan, with Christ enthroned between the apostles on the left wing and the Virgin with Child seated between angels on the right (sixth century);³⁵ or again on a Syrian plaque from a diptych with the Virgin and Child, in Berlin (sixth-eighth century).³⁶ Later the Carolingian Renaissance contributed to the continuity of the antique tradition, as exemplified by the ivory book-cover of the Lorsch Gospels, c.810, in London.³⁷ What can be seen here as an interesting phenomenon of iconographical transformation is that the Late Antique motif of horizontally flying angels supporting a medallion with the head or bust of Christ was understood as a representation of the Ascension.³⁸

If a conclusion is to be drawn from this iconographical analysis, the Malmesbury reliefs can under no circumstances represent the Last Judgement, but rather the Ascension with seated apostles, but without Mary, in the manner of a frieze. It is true that, compared to Chartres, the side-wall tympana 'became part of a bizarre scheme both artistically and iconographically', yet in

spite of that, 'they are part of an iconographically complex programme within a unified design'.³⁹ As established by Yves Christe, the Ascension is one of the four didactic programmes generally used to decorate the main entrance of a Romanesque church, the others being the Transfiguration, the Last Judgement and Christ in Majesty.⁴⁰ The unusual disposition of the participants in the scene at Malmesbury reveals a high degree of independence in assimilating and transforming the iconographical and stylistic models of French Romanesque sculpture.

The French iconographical sources for the Malmesbury Ascension become even more obvious when one is confronted with the small jewel-like Ascension scene on the entrance arch to the Malmesbury porch, which carries a sculptured programme reflecting 'a more general influence from South-west France'.⁴¹ On its outer arch the disappearing figure of Christ is represented in a way first used by Anglo-Saxon artists and later incorporated into the iconography of English Romanesque art: by showing His feet and skirts.⁴² It was not often in the history of English medieval art that Insular and Continental conventions for the depiction of the same theme were both employed at the same time, as parts of the decoration of one and the same work of architecture.

An additional conclusion may be drawn from a comprehensive comparison of the Malmesbury reliefs with the left portal of the west façade at Chartres. The Chartres sculptures, although unique in their frieze-like disposition of the seated apostles without Mary, have always been interpreted as representing the Ascension of Christ. However, Jan van den Meulen recently challenged the traditional identification and suggested that the Chartres scene represented the Creation of the World.⁴³ Willibald Sauerländer has convincingly refuted this hypothesis in his booklet on the Portail Royal. The Ascension at Malmesbury may be cited to reinforce the traditional identification. The close iconographical relationship between Malmesbury and Chartres implies the same subject matter in both cases; therefore the Malmesbury reliefs, if Jan van den Meulen were right, should visualize the Creation of the World, like those at Chartres. But as far as Malmesbury is concerned, this conclusion is unacceptable on iconographical evidence. The close relationship between Malmesbury and Chartres precludes the Genesis theme, and contributes to a correct recognition of the Ascension, with seated apostles but without Mary in both sets of sculpture. The manner in which these are placed, read as a unit, confirm their frieze-like function.

V. The 'Frieze' at Malmesbury

For the opportunity to visit Malmesbury I am grateful to Count Jan Badeni. For help in obtaining photographs thanks are due to Mrs Constance Hill and Professor C.M. Kauffmann. Special thanks go to Professor George Zarnecki, who inspired the writing of this paper, read the typescript, and helped to clarify a number of points. Finally Paul Crossley was kind enough to revise and correct the English text.

1. E.S. Prior and A. Gardner, *An Account of Medieval Figure-sculpture in England*, Cambridge, 1912, pp.78-79, fig.74; pp.186-87, fig.164; C.E. Keyser, *A list of Norman Tympana and Lintels with figures of symbolical sculpture still or till recently existing in the churches of Great Britain*, 2nd edn, revised and enlarged, London, 1927, pp.LXIX-LXX, 33-34, pls.123-25; A. Gardner, *A Handbook of English Medieval Sculpture*, Cambridge, 1935, pp.84-86, fig.86; G. Zarnecki, *Later English Romanesque Sculpture 1140-1210*, London, 1953, pp.40-43, 60, notes and pls.92-93; F. Saxl, *English Sculpture of the twelfth century*, ed. H. Swarzenski, Boston, 1954, pp.57-64, pls.LIV-LXXXIII, nn.47-68 on pp.74-76; L. Stone, *Sculpture in Britain. The Middle*

- Ages, Harmondsworth, 1972, pp.83-84, pls.60-61; M.Q. Smith, *The Sculptures of the South Porch of Malmesbury Abbey. A Short Guide*, Minety (Wilts.), 1975.
2. G. Zarnecki, *Romanesque Lincoln. The sculpture of the Cathedral*, Lincoln, 1988, p.82, writes of 'a striking composition'.
 3. Zarnecki, op. cit. (see n.1), p.60, n.92; Prior and Gardner, op. cit. (see n.1), p.78, fig.74.
 4. On the Christ in Majesty see F. van der Meer, 'Maestas Domini. Théophanies de l'Apocalypse dans l'art chrétien', *Studi di antichità cristiana pubblicati per cura del Pontificio Istituto di Archeologia Cristiana*, XIII, Rome/Paris, 1938, pp.315-99; idem, 'Maestas Domini', in *Lexikon der christlichen Ikonographie, herausgegeben von Engelbert Kirschbaum SJ*, III, Rome/Vienna/Freiburg/Munich, 1971, col.136: 'Heute ist Maestas Domini ein kunsthistorischer Fachausdruck geworden: Fast immer versteht man darunter ein im Früh- und Hoch Mittelalter häufig vorkommendes Bildmotiv, nämlich den erhöhten, thronenden Herrn, umgeben von den vier lebenden Wesen aus dem 4. Kap. der Apokalypse. Es wäre wünschenswert, den Namen nur für dieses Motiv und nicht für andere Varianten des Thronmotivs zu verwenden'. See also Y. Christe, *Les Grands Portails Romains: Etudes sur l'iconologie des théophanies romanes. Etudes et documents publiés par les Instituts d'histoire de la Faculté des Lettres de l'Université de Genève*, 7, Geneva, 1969, pp.135-53. The author of the booklet *Malmesbury Abbey, Wiltshire*, Malmesbury, 1985, p.13, stresses the 'graceful line' of the angels. On the other hand, in the opinion of Jurgis Baltrusaitis, *La stylistique ornementale dans la sculpture romane*, Paris, 1931, pp.320 (fig.857), 322, 328, the position of their legs spoils 'l'équilibre du corps qui s'affaisse lourdement'.
 5. Keyser, op. cit. (see n.1), p.33, takes the relatively tall horizontal element under the tympanum for the lintel, and writes of its 'elliptic arched ornament'.
 6. Saxl, op. cit. (see n.1), p.58.
 7. As observed by Laurence Stone, op. cit. (see n.1), p.53.
 8. Smith, op. cit. (see n.1), p.8.
 9. Zarnecki, op. cit. (see n.1), p.60, n.93.
 10. Saxl, op. cit. (see n.1), p.60, had pointed out (after Keyser, p.34), 'that they [the apostles] are turned, in attitudes of adoration, towards the Christ in mandorla appearing on the tympanum over the south door and that St Peter with the Key occupies the northern position of the west side, which gives him his usual place immediately to the right of the Lord. Together with the apostles this tympanum thus belongs to the original programme of the sculptural decoration of the porch'.
 11. A. Watkin, '2. Abbey of Malmesbury', in *A History of Wiltshire*, III, *The Victoria History of the Counties of England*, ed. R.B. Pugh, London, 1956, p.227.
 12. *ibid.*, p.213.
 13. Zarnecki, op. cit. (see n.2), p.82.
 14. W. Sauerländer, *Das Königsportal in Chartres. Heilgeschichte und Lebenswirklichkeit*, Frankfurt am Main, 1984, pp.44-47, fig.24. On the north portal of the west façade at Chartres see also: E. Houvet, *La cathédrale de Chartres: portail occidental*, Chartres, n.d. [1920-21], pls.3, 30-32; E. Mâle, *Notre Dame de Chartres*, Paris, 1949, pp.25-26, fig.30; P. Kidson, *The Sculpture of Chartres*, London, 1958, p.12, figs.11-12; A. Katzenellenbogen, *The Sculptural Programs of Chartres Cathedral: Christ, Mary, Ecclesia*, Baltimore/New York, 1959, pp.24-25, fig.25; *Chartres Cathedral*, ed. R. Branner, New York/London, 1969, p.78, fig.26.
 15. Zarnecki, op. cit. (see n.1), p.43: 'After Malmesbury, much of the late Romanesque sculpture is an anti-climax', and p.60, n.92: 'As the Chichester reliefs were the culmination of the development of Romanesque sculpture in England in the first half of the twelfth century, so the sculpture of Malmesbury holds a similar place in the second half of the century'; Smith, op. cit. (see n.1), p.15: 'The Malmesbury master seems to have founded no "school"; he was one of the last exponents of the Romanesque in this part of Britain'.
 16. Sauerländer, op. cit. (see n.14), pp.46-47. K.J. Galbraith, 'The iconography of the biblical scenes at Malmesbury Abbey', *The Journal of the British Archaeological Association*, 3rd series, XXVIII, 1965, p.53, on the margin of the Ascension scene on the outer doorway of the south porch at Malmesbury, to which we shall allude at the end of this paper, pays special attention to the fact that in Early Christian times both feasts, the Ascension and the Pentecost, were celebrated simultaneously. See also, H. Gutberlet, *Die Himmelfahrt Christi in der bildenden Kunst von den Anfängen bis ins hohe Mittelalter. Versuch zur geistesgeschichtlichen Erfassung einer ikonographischen Frage*, Leipzig/Strasburg/Zurich, 1934, pp.13-28; B. Fischer, 'Himmelfahrt Christi, III. Liturgisch', *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, V, 1960, col.362: 'Bis weit ins 4. Jh. hinein hat man trotz Apostelgeschichte 1, 3

die Himmelfahrt Christi nicht am 40. Tage nach Ostern gefeiert, sondern—aus dem Bewusstsein ihres Zusammenhangs mit der Geistessendung—an Pfingsten mitbegangen'; A.A. Schmid, 'Himmelfahrt Christi', *Lexikon der christlichen Ikonographie*, II, Rome/Freiburg/Basle/Vienna, 1970, col.268: 'Bis ins 4. Jh. wurde die Himmelfahrt Christi zusammen mit Pfingsten begangen'.

17. The lesson of the Mass *In Vigilia Ascensionis* provides readings from the letter of St Paul to the Ephesians (4: 7-13) with the passage: 'Qui descendit, ipse est et qui ascendit super omnes caelos, ut implet omnia. Et ipse dedit quosdam quidem apostolos, quosdam autem prophetas, alios vero evangelistas, alios autem pastores et doctores, ad consummationem sanctorum in opus ministerii in aedificationem corporis Christi...' The Mass *In Ascensionem Domini* includes *Statio ad S. Petrum*, introit (Acts 1: 11): 'Viri Galilaei, quid admiramini aspicientes in caelum? alleluja: quemadmodum vidistis eum ascendentem in caelum, ita veniet alleluja, alleluja, alleluja', and lesson (Acts 1: 1-11), and Mark (16: 14-20), with the passage: 'Euntes in mundum universum, praedicate Evangelium omni creaturae'. Finally, the Sunday *Infra Octavam Ascensionis* Mass comprises the lesson readings from the first letter of St Peter (4: 7-11).

18. Saxl, op. cit. (see n.1), p.75, n.60: 'A comparison between the row of Apostles in Chartres—see also the lintel of the central porch [Houvet, op. cit. n.14, pls.39-43]—and Malmesbury indicates how original the English treatment of such an apparently common theme is'.

19. Gutberlet, op. cit. (see n.16), pp.234-35.

20. Christe, op. cit. (see n.4), pp.66, 88 n.51, 89, identifies the Ascension theme also at Ely and Rochester.

21. Zarnecki, op. cit. (see n.2), p.64.

22. idem, op. cit. (see n.1), p.40; Smith, op. cit. (see n.1), p.14. Stone, op. cit. (see n.1), p.84, also pays tribute to the 'obvious affinities' of the Malmesbury apostles with the Lincoln frieze.

23. Zarnecki, op. cit. (see n.2), p.65. On the type in general of the cross-legged figure in English and French Romanesque art, see also Saxl, op. cit. (see n.1), p.73, n.26.

24. Smith, op. cit. (see n.1), p.9.

25. Saxl, op. cit. (see n.1), pp.58-59, fig.42. See also Smith, loc. cit. The lintel of the central portal of the west façade at Chartres is reproduced by Sauerländer (see n.14), pp.30-31, fig.15, and among others, Houvet, op. cit. (see n.14), pls.39-

43; Mâle, op. cit. (see n.14), fig.23; Kidson, op. cit. (see n.14), fig.29; W. Sauerländer, *La sculpture gothique en France 1140-1270*, Paris, 1972, pl.7; X. Barral i Altet, 'Architecture, sculpture et mosaïque', in *Le monde roman 1060-1280: Les royaumes d'Occident*, [Paris], 1983, p.157, fig.128.

26. No doubt under the influence of the apostles on the lintel of the central portal of the west façade at Chartres, Smith (loc. cit.) writes by mistake of Malmesbury that not three but 'four of the Apostles have crossed their ankles, a pose that enlivens the composition and may be indicative of influence from south-west France'.

27. E. Mâle (see n. 14).

28. Zarnecki, op. cit. (see n.1), p.41; also Stone, op. cit. (see n.1), p.83: 'The arrangement of sculpture along the side of a porch, as at Malmesbury, is unique in England but found in south French churches, at Moissac, Souillac, and elsewhere'. However, Zarnecki (loc. cit.) observes: 'It is difficult to say whether the idea of the Malmesbury porch was derived from these churches because in the iconography, composition and style, it had little in common with them. It is the sculpture of the Saintonge region of western France that influenced Malmesbury'. This statement, as well as the sentence on p.40 ('The most decorative scheme in which the Western French influence is present is that of Malmesbury in Wiltshire') relate to the delicate reliefs on the outer doorway.

29. A. Heimann, 'The Capital Frieze and Pilasters of the Portail Royal, Chartres', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 31, 1969, p.75, pls.33 a, b and 34 a, b. The iconographical order and the sequence of scenes at Lincoln established by Zarnecki has lately been called into question by Chiara Frugoni, 'Modena — Lincoln: un viaggio mancato', *Atti di Convegno Wiligelmo e Lanfranco nell'Europa romanica, Modena, 24-27 ottobre 1985*, Modena, 1989, pp.55-66.

30. A. Grabar, *Sculptures byzantines du moyen âge, II (XIIe-XIVe siècle)*, Paris, 1976, no.145, pp.139-40: 'Le motif des anges volant portant le médaillon avec le monogramme du Christ (ou du symbole du même genre), est un motif triomphal antique que déjà les païens, puis les chrétiens, avaient adaptés aux monuments funéraires. Les chrétiens de Byzance s'en servaient aussi, au IVe siècle, et le Musée d'Istanbul conserve un des plus beaux exemples de ce genre, un petit sarcophage d'enfant, décoré de cette composition, sur ses deux côtés longs (notre vol. I, pls.CXVa, b)'. See also Schmid, op. cit. (see n.16), cols.268-69.

31. F. Gerke, 'Der Tischaltar des Bernard Gilduin in Saint-Sernin in Toulouse. Über das Verhältnis

- der südfranzösischen Frühromanik zur altchristlichen Kunst,' Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur [in Mainz]. Abhandlungen der geistes- und sozialwiss. Klasse, Jahrgang 1958, no.8, pp.472, 475, figs.38-40; Christe, op. cit. (see n.4), p.89.
32. Gerke, op. cit. (see n.31), pp.475, 480, figs.43, 46 (Matthew), 47 (John); Christe, op. cit. (see n.4), p.89; Barral i Altet, op. cit. (see n.25), p.71, fig.53.
33. B. Rupprecht, *Romanische Skulptur in Frankreich*, Munich, 1975, p.92, pl.91.
34. Cat. Exh.: *Age of Spirituality, Late Antique and Early Christian Art, Third to Seventh Century*, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 1977-78, ed. Kurt Weitzmann, New York, 1979, pp.33-5, no. and fig.28. See also Gerke, op. cit. (see n.31), p.487; Schmid, op. cit. (see n.16), col.269.
35. A. Grabar, *Christian Iconography. A Study of its Origins*, London, 1980, p.80, pls.204-205.
36. *Age of Spirituality*, op. cit. (see n.34), p.510, no. and fig.458: 'The motif of angels bearing a wreath (with cross or monogram) was common as early as the Theodosian period (cf. sarcophagus from Sargüzel in Istanbul (Kollwitz, 1941, pp.132 ff., pl.4 and column of Arcadius, no. 68)'.
37. *The Medieval Treasury. The Art of the Middle Ages in the Victoria and Albert Museum*, ed. P. Williamson, London, 1986, pp.64-65. See also Gerke, op. cit. (see n.31), pp.447, 487, figs.48, 49. An important group of Continental and English examples of this motif is put together by C.R. Dodwell, *Anglo-Saxon Art: A New Perspective*, Manchester, 1982, pp.122-8, figs.29a-e.
38. Van der Meer, op. cit. (see n.4), 1938, p.374; Schmid, op. cit. (see n.16), cols.268-269; Dodwell, op. cit. (see n.37), p.127: 'This [a bust of Christ in a roundel], raised by angels...became an abbreviated representation of the Ascension and the Ascension relief itself associated, and even confused, at times with the Apocalyptic Majesty in art...'
39. G. Zarnecki, 'English 12th-century sculpture and its Resistance to St Denis', *Tribute to an Antiquary: Essays Presented to Marc Fitch*, Portsmouth, 1976, reprinted in idem, *Studies in Romanesque Sculpture*, London, 1979, pp.88-89; idem, 'The Transition from Romanesque to Gothic in English Sculpture', *Acts of the Twentieth International Congress of the History of Art*, New York, 1963, I, pp.153-54.
40. Christe (see n.4).
41. Smith, op. cit. (see n.1), p.10.
42. M. Schapiro, 'The Image of the Disappearing Christ. The Ascension in English Art around the Year 1000', *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, 85, pp.135-52; Galbraith, op. cit. (see n.1), p.52, pl.XX, 7.
43. J. van der Meulen and J. Hohmeyer, *Chartres. Biographie der Kathedrale*, Cologne, 1984, pp.128-243; J. van der Meulen and N.W. Price, *The West Portals of Chartres Cathedral, I, The Iconology of the Creation*, Washington DC, 1981.

V. Lech Kalinowski:
LA 'FRISE' À MALMESBURY

Le portail sud de l'ancienne église abbatiale de Malmesbury est décoré de trois tympanons figuratifs qui représentent, au-dessus de la porte, le Christ dans une mandorla en amande soutenue par deux anges et, sur les murs latéraux, les douze Apôtres, en deux groupes de six, formant un sorte de frise monumentale. Dans les travaux actuels d'histoire de l'art, ces reliefs sont interprétés comme représentant le Christ en Majesté entouré des Apôtres au jour du Jugement Dernier.

Néanmoins, l'absence de symboles de l'Évangile à côté de la figure du Christ, de même que les expressions et les attitudes des Apôtres, suggèrent qu'il s'agit de la scène de l'Ascension du Christ plutôt que d'un thème eschatologique.

En tant que composition iconographique, les reliefs de Malmesbury (1160-65) en dépit de l'évidente différence de style, sont proches de la scène de l'Ascension du tympan nord de la façade ouest de la cathédrale de Chartres (1145-55). De même, la position croisée des jambes de certains Apôtres est due, moins à l'influence de l'époque de la pré-conquête, qu'à la mode française exemplifiée à Chartres. La position strictement horizontale des anges volants au-dessus des Apôtres appartient au vieil héritage de l'art continental.

La disposition inhabituelle des participants de la scène à Malmesbury, révèle un haut degré d'indépendance dans l'assimilation et la transformation des modèles iconographiques et stylistiques de l'art roman français. Les Apôtres assis de l'Ascension, sans Marie, à Chartres et à Malmesbury, remplissent une fonction similaire à celle d'une frise.