

# Aldhelm and Old St Peter's, Rome

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## ABSTRACT

Aldhelm of Malmesbury was one of the most prolific and influential scholars of early Anglo-Saxon England. His contemporary fame rested partly on the fact that he had been a pilgrim to Rome. This article presents new evidence for Aldhelm's literary debt to the epigraphy of early Christian Rome. Two ninth-century manuscripts from Reims contain an anthology of six epigrams which derive largely from verse inscriptions in Old St Peter's. Aldhelm quoted two of these, *de Petro* and *de Andrea*, almost verbatim in his *Carmina Ecclesiastica*. It is likely that Aldhelm knew these verses from first-hand observation rather than via the pages of a manuscript sylloge.

It is well known that Aldhelm went to Rome. This we know from a contemporary (but undated) letter addressed to him by an anonymous, Irish correspondent who wished to borrow a book from his collection.<sup>1</sup> The letter-writer referred to Aldhelm's widespread renown as a scholar of Greek and Latin, and stated that his reputation was made all the more potent because, he said, 'you have been a visitor to Rome' (*quia tu Romae aduena fuisti*). Tales of a pilgrimage to the Apostolic See feature prominently in the later accounts of Aldhelm's life as told by Faricius of Arrezzo (d. 1117) and William of Malmesbury (c. 1125).<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Ep.* VI, ed. R. Ehwald, *Aldhelmi Opera omnia*, MGH 15 (Berlin, 1919), 194; trans. M. Lapidge and M. Herren, *Aldhelm: the Prose Works* (Cambridge, 1979), p. 164. The author of this letter is called *scottus ignoti nominis* in the unique manuscript copy. The letter is preserved there with four others to or from Aldhelm in the mid-ninth-century manuscript that contains the bulk of the correspondence of Boniface and Lull (implying that copies of these early letters had been taken abroad for use by Boniface's community): Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod. 751, 25r–25v (*Ep.* VI, anon. Irishman to Aldhelm); 26r–29r (*Ep.* IV, Aldhelm to King Geraint of Dumnonia); 33v (*Ep.* VIII, Aldhelm to Abbess Sigegyth), 35v–36r (*Ep.* VII, Aethilwald to Aldhelm); 38r–38v (*Ep.* 1, Aldhelm to an unnamed bishop), plus four of Aldhelm's rhythmical poems at 40r–42r (D. Schaller and E. Könsgen, *Initia carminum Latinorum saeculo undecimo antiquiorum* (Göttingen, 1977), nos. 8824, 10788, 15842, 16982). On the manuscript, see *Sancti Bonifacii Epistolae. Codex Vindobonensis 751 der Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek. Faksimile-Ausgabe der Wiener Handschrift der Briefe des Heiligen Bonifatius*, ed. F. Unterkircher, *Codices Selecti phototypice impressi* 24 (Graz, 1971).

<sup>2</sup> M. Winterbottom, 'An Edition of Faricius, *Vita S. Aldhelmi*', *Jnl of Med. Latin* 15 (2005), 93–147, at 104 [c. 7.4]; William of Malmesbury, *Gesta pontificum Anglorum*, I: *Text and Translation*, ed. M. Winterbottom, OMT (Oxford, 2007).

Faricius thought that Aldhelm had composed the first of his *Carmina Ecclesiastica* (*In basilica sanctorum Petri et Pauli*) while abroad<sup>3</sup> and William preserved a redacted copy of the privilege of Pope Sergius I, claimed (in an earlier vernacular version) to have been secured by Aldhelm for two of his monasteries, as well as an anecdote that Aldhelm had brought a large and ornately carved altar top back to England from Rome.<sup>4</sup>

Despite the corrupt transmission of the papal bull for Malmesbury, the pontificate of Sergius (687–701) has traditionally been used to provide an approximate date for Aldhelm’s visit to Rome, thereby providing one of the few fixed points of his career. Michael Lapidge has recently argued that Aldhelm’s journey was occasioned by the pilgrimage of his kinsman, King Ceadwalla of Wessex, in 688, and that Aldhelm himself may have been responsible for the transmission back to Anglo-Saxon England of the texts of Ceadwalla’s epitaph (d. 689) and that of Pope Gregory the Great (d. 604), whence they were subsequently incorporated by Bede into his *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*.<sup>5</sup> Ceadwalla died in Rome on 20 April 689 *in albis* (that is, while still in his baptismal robes) and, as a consequence, was buried at St Peter’s. A formal twenty-four-line epitaph with a prose dating-clause was erected over his tomb.<sup>6</sup> If Lapidge’s hypothesis is correct, we can place Aldhelm at Old St Peter’s in 689 noting down the verses of inscriptions that commemorated an English king and the pope considered to be the ‘apostle of the English’.

Important evidence to connect Aldhelm with the city of Rome is indicated by his knowledge of Latin verses (*tituli*) that were inscribed on buildings and monuments in Rome. He certainly knew many that had been composed by

<sup>3</sup> CE 1 was also cited by William; *Gesta Pontificum*, V.197.4 (ed. Winterbottom, pp. 520–3).

<sup>4</sup> Aldhelm is named only in the late-eleventh-century Old English redaction extant in London, British Library, Cotton Otho C. i. vol. i (s. xi<sup>1</sup>); H. Edwards, ‘Two Documents from Aldhelm’s Malmesbury’, *Bull. of the Inst. of Hist. Research* 69 (1986), 1–19; C. Rauer, ‘Pope Sergius I’s Privilege for Malmesbury’, *Leeds Stud. in Eng.* 37 (2006), 261–81; M. Lapidge, ‘The Career of Aldhelm’, *ASE* 36 (2007), 15–69, at 63. For the anecdote of the altar (which was dropped by the camel that carried it, and was miraculously repaired), see William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Pontificum*, ed. Winterbottom, V.222 (pp. 558–9) and II (pp. 275–6).

<sup>5</sup> Bede, *HE* V.7; *Bede’s Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, ed. B. Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors (Oxford, 1969), pp. 470–2. Also, Lapidge, ‘Career of Aldhelm’, pp. 52–64, esp. 60, and R. Sharpe, ‘King Ceadwalla’s Roman Epitaph’, *Latin Learning and English Lore: Studies in Anglo-Saxon Literature for Michael Lapidge*, ed. K. O’Brien O’Keefe and A. Orchard, 2 vols. (Toronto, 2005), pp. 171–93 at 186.

<sup>6</sup> Epitaph for Ceadwalla, ed. G. B. De Rossi, *Inscriptiones Christianae Urbis Romae* [hereafter *ICVR*], 2 vols. (Rome, 1857–88) II, 288; Sharpe, ‘King Ceadwalla’s Roman Epitaph’, pp. 176–7, 185. The location of Ceadwalla’s tomb is not known, although de Rossi speculated that it might have been in the narthex, close to the tomb of Gregory I and the original site of the tomb of Sergius himself (but *not* that of Leo I, which Sergius had translated to the south transept in 688 and supplied with a new inscription: De Rossi, *ICVR* II, pp. 139–40; Silvagni, *ICVR* n.s. II, no. 4148).

Pope Damasus (366–84) for the martyrial shrines that lay in the extramural cemeteries of Rome, since there are verbal echoes of several in his *Enigmata* and in the *Carmen de uirginitate*, and their form and function is reflected by the five *Carmina Ecclesiastica* (CE) which Aldhelm seemingly composed for churches and altars in Wessex.<sup>7</sup> Additionally, particular weight is attached to Aldhelm's use in one of his metrical treatises of a line from a verse inscription that had been cut to commemorate the reconstruction of the Liberian basilica of St Mary (later S. Maria Maggiore) by Pope Sixtus III in the mid-fifth century (432–40).<sup>8</sup>

It is generally assumed that Aldhelm knew verses such as these through manuscript collections (*syllogae*) of Latin *tituli* that circulated in Francia from the later seventh century and, it is thought, also in England at around the same time, although this assumption is made largely on the basis of Aldhelm's use of several texts that are in the early collections and because copies of his works are found alongside early copies of some *syllogae*.<sup>9</sup> Certainly, a substantial number of Roman epigraphic *tituli* were known in England by the time that Bede, Cuthbert of Canterbury and Milred of Worcester, among others, began to compose similar verses for their own English churches.<sup>10</sup> It has also long been recognized that the impulse to collect the texts of epigraphic *tituli* from early Christian Rome was catalysed in part by the growth in the traffic of pilgrims to Rome during the mid-seventh century, Franks and Anglo-Saxons prominent among them.<sup>11</sup> De Rossi thought that the period around the pontificate of Honorius I (625–38) was especially important in the development of Rome as a pilgrim centre, arguing that some of the earliest *syllogae* and itineraries of the city were put together *c.* 640 and that these were made for the religious 'tourists'.<sup>12</sup> The chronological basis of de Rossi's thesis was challenged by Silvagni who argued instead that our extant collections are fragmentary reflections of one *sylloge*

<sup>7</sup> A. Orchard, *The Poetic Art of Aldhelm*, CSASE 8 (Cambridge, 1994), 236–7; Lapidge, 'Career of Aldhelm', pp. 53–9.

<sup>8</sup> 'Virgo Maria, tibi Sixtus nova templa dicavi'; *De pedum regulis*, ed. Ehwald, *Aldhelmi Opera*, p. 153.31, trans. M. Lapidge, J. L. Rosier and N. Wright, *Aldhelm: the Poetic Works* (Cambridge, 1985), p. 215. For discussion of the original context of this verse, and the implication of Aldhelm's knowledge of it, see de Rossi, *ICVR* II, 60, 71; Orchard, *Poetic Art*, pp. 203, 211–12; and Lapidge, 'Career of Aldhelm', pp. 54, 59.

<sup>9</sup> Sharpe, 'King Ceadwalla's Roman Epitaph', pp. 174–5.

<sup>10</sup> M. Lapidge, 'Some Remnants of Bede's Lost *Liber Epigrammatum*', *EHR* 90 (1975), pp. 798–820, repr. in his *Anglo-Latin Literature 600–899* (London, 1996), pp. 357–80; P. Sims-Williams, 'Milred of Worcester's Collection of Latin Epigrams and its Continental Counterparts', *ASE* 10 (1982), 21–38, and his *Religion and Literature in Western England, 600–800*, CSASE 3 (Cambridge, 1990), 328–59.

<sup>11</sup> See, for example, A. Thacker, 'Rome of the Martyrs. Saints, Cults and Relics, Fourth to Seventh Centuries', *Roma Felix: Formation and Reflections of Medieval Rome*, ed. É. Ó Carragain and C. Neuman de Vegvar (Aldershot, 2007), pp. 13–49.

<sup>12</sup> De Rossi, *ICVR* II, xliii–xlvi.

(perhaps two) made in the mid- to late seventh century by a scholar with Anglo-Saxon connections who had come to Rome.<sup>13</sup> Although the textual basis of Silvagni's analysis has not been widely accepted, his suggestion that an Anglo-Saxon might have been responsible for collecting texts of inscriptions while on pilgrimage to Rome has taken root. Orchard has argued that Aldhelm himself could have been responsible for just such an enterprise, and that this would account for his use of known Roman *tituli* within his own compositions.<sup>14</sup> In this respect, Orchard has been supported by Lapidge, who regards Aldhelm as 'a plausible agent of transmission' of the texts of epigraphic *tituli*, rather than just the user of collections made by other northern pilgrims to the holy city.<sup>15</sup>

AN EPIGRAPHIC ANTHOLOGY FOR OLD ST PETER'S

Two mid-ninth-century manuscripts from Reims, now in Paris, provide some substantial new evidence for Aldhelm's literary debt to the epigraphic heritage of Rome and Old St Peter's in particular. Both books have been heavily glossed, reflecting intensive use and reflection on the texts they contain. The earlier of the two manuscripts (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, lat. 9347) dates in large part probably to the second quarter of the ninth century. It contains early *ex libris* marks showing that it belonged to the monastery of St Remigius at Reims.<sup>16</sup> It is a handsome book of high quality. Measuring *c.* 365 × 250 mm (with a writing space of 295 × 205 mm) it was copied in a two-column format by two or three scribes using a bold minuscule script with good uncial capitals for the headings of many poems. The second book (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, lat. 2773) is slightly later, s. ix<sup>2</sup>, and was – on the basis of its textual filiations as well as its script – also made at Reims, probably during the rule of Archbishop Hincmar (845–82) (see Plate I).<sup>17</sup> The script is like that used by scribes who worked on books made for Reims in the latter half of the ninth century; particularly characteristic is the long shallow head stroke to the letter *s*.<sup>18</sup> It bears comparison with that of a named Reims scribe, Ausoldus, who wrote

<sup>13</sup> Silvagni, *ICVR* n.s. 1 (Rome, 1922), xxv–xxvii.

<sup>14</sup> Orchard, *Poetic Art*, pp. 211–12.

<sup>15</sup> Lapidge, 'Career of Aldhelm', p. 60.

<sup>16</sup> See F. M. Carey, 'The Scriptorium of Reims during the Archbishopric of Hincmar (845–882 AD)', in *Classical and Medieval Studies in honor of E. K. Rand*, ed. L. W. Jones (New York, 1938), pp. 41–60, at 58, who dates this manuscript AD 900–50, without explanation.

<sup>17</sup> B. Bischoff, *Mittelalterliche Studien*, 3 vols. (Stuttgart, 1966–81) III, 247 who dates it s. ix<sup>3/4</sup>; G. Glauche, *Schullektüre im Mittelalter. Entstehung und Wandlungen des Lektürkanons bis 1200* (Munich, 1970), p. 33.

<sup>18</sup> Carey, 'Scriptorium', p. 48, and Pls. I–II, and especially, M. Parkes, *Their Hands before our Eyes: a Closer Look at Scribes. The Lyell Lectures delivered in the University of Oxford, 1999* (Aldershot, 2008), p. 90. On ninth-century Reims manuscripts in Anglo-Saxon England, see M. Lapidge, *The Anglo-Saxon Library* (Oxford, 2006), p. 49, n. 87.

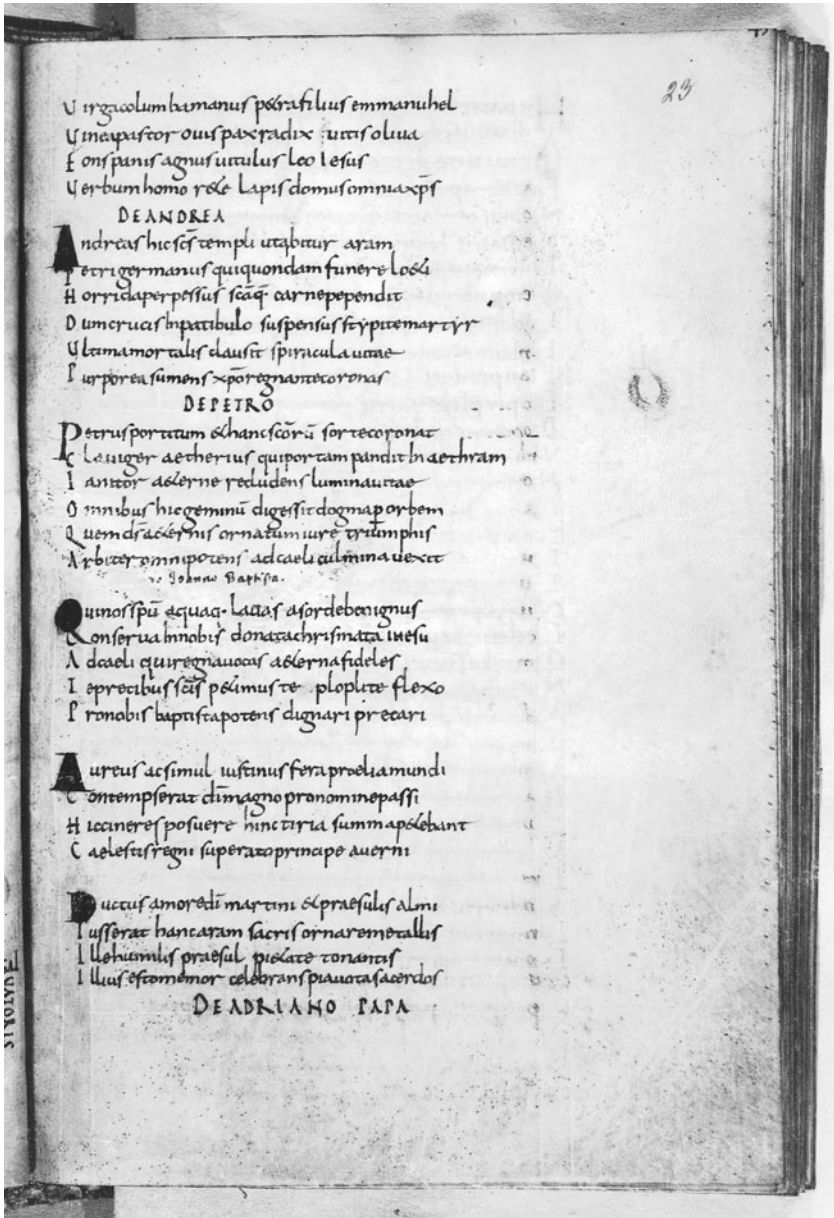


Plate I: Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, latin 2773, 23r showing the first five epigrams in the anthology and the title of the sixth, *De Adriano Papa*, Alcuin's Epitaph for Pope Hadrian I (d. 795).

three quires in a copy of the commentary *In epistolas pauli* by Hraban Maur, which was given to Reims, according to *ex dono* inscriptions, by Archbishop Hincmar.<sup>19</sup>

These two Reims manuscripts now in Paris are large-scale anthologies of the early Christian poetry that constituted the core of the Carolingian ‘school canon’. They have a number of items in common, and these are closely related textually (likely sharing an exemplar if not copied one from another). The ninth-century scriptorium at Reims was particularly active in the production of volumes of poetry that set Carolingian compositions alongside the older works of classical and early Christian poets, and these two manuscripts exemplify the centrality of Reims in the collection and transmission of late antique and Carolingian-era poetry.<sup>20</sup> Works common to both manuscripts are Prosper’s *Epigrammata ex sententiis S. Augustini* followed by a group of short poems that include a coherent set of six epigrams that are associated with Old St Peter’s (discussed below), Arator’s *De actibus apostolorum*, and the verse *Liber medicinalis* of Quintus Serenus. The earlier book also contains the *Carmen paschale* of Caelius Sedulius, and the poetic rendering of the four gospel texts by Juvencus, as well as a rare copy, on 39r, of Alcuin’s epitaph for Archbishop Ælberht of York (d. 780) and poems of Venantius Fortunatus, including three of his *carmina figurata*. Copied into the later book are verses falsely attributed to Pope Damasus, some Sybilline verses and the pseudo-Cato *Disticha*.<sup>21</sup> Here too is a

<sup>19</sup> Cambridge, Pembroke College 308; Ausoldus wrote the ‘portio’ covering fols. 205–28. Particular features in common with the scribe of Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, lat. 2773, 23r include the particular form of ‘g’ with a big, open bowl and short stem, an ampersand with an extended, raised tail and backward flick, a simple, slightly curved common abbreviation mark, and a relative paucity of other abbreviations in comparison with other scribes working in the same manuscript. On this manuscript, the copying of which was shared out between eight named scribes, see Carey, ‘Scriptorium’, p. 49; J. Vezin, ‘La répartition du travail dans les “scriptoria” carolingiens’, *Journal des Savants* (1973), 212–27; Parkes, *Their Hands before our Eyes*, pp. 88–93 and pls. 16–17; P. R. Robinson, *Catalogue of Dated and Datable Manuscripts c. 737–1600 in Cambridge Libraries*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, 1988), no. 277, pl. 4a–b; B. Bischoff, *Katalog der festländischen Handschriften des neunten Jahrhunderts*, 2 vols. (Wiesbaden, 1998), no. 834. See also Carey, ‘Scriptorium’, pl. I for New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, 728, 180v, another comparative hand in a manuscript dating from Hincmar’s rule.

<sup>20</sup> Glauche, *Schullektüre*, pp. 31–6.

<sup>21</sup> On the hand of the Sybilline verses, see Bischoff, *Mittelalterliche Studien* I, 150–71, at p. 152 (where he dates the second of two hands that copied the Sybilline verses in this manuscript on 24r–v as s. xi). Ehwald had suggested a similar date for the whole manuscript (*Aldhelmi Opera*, p. 48, but s. x at p. 19). On the text, see Lapidge, ‘Some Remnants’, pp. 807–8 (reprint, p. 367) and B. Bischoff and M. Lapidge, *Biblical Commentaries from the Canterbury School of Theodore and Hadrian*, CSASE 10 (Cambridge, 1994), 185–6. The verses begin ‘Iudicii signum tellus sudore madescet’, and down the left-hand margin have the Greek letters of an acrostic poem. Lapidge suggests that, because Aldhelm knew a Latin version of the Greek poem from which the acrostic derives, the Latin translation was made in Canterbury at the school of Theodore and Hadrian. However, the Sybilline verses in this manuscript are not those cited by Aldhelm

copy of Aldhelm's *Enigmata*, which had been absorbed into the Carolingian school curriculum to judge by the number of extant later eighth- and ninth-century Carolingian copies of that work.<sup>22</sup>

A set of six short epigrams, five of which can be linked directly to the basilica of St Peter's in the Vatican, is common to both these manuscripts.<sup>23</sup> Internal evidence suggests that the series was collected in the early ninth century. The first two poems in the group are each six lines long, and are entitled *De Andrea* and *De Petro* respectively. Aldhelm quoted both epigrams, a full twelve lines, as the opening and closing lines of the first and third poems in the fourth of his *Carmina Ecclesiastica*, 'On the Altars of the Twelve Apostles'.<sup>24</sup> He changed his source only slightly, altering the setting of the original *titulus*, *De Petro*, from a porticus to an apse (see below). These two poems are not known from any other *sylloge*; they are unique to these two Reims books. Ehwald noted the existence of both manuscripts in the footnotes of his edition to *CE IV*, and referred his readers to de Rossi's edition, but did not mention the fact that the verses found therein were part of a coherent group of *tituli* that focused on the basilica of St Peter, nor did he comment on de Rossi's observation that the lines were known to Aldhelm.<sup>25</sup> Since one of the two Reims manuscripts also contains a copy of Aldhelm's *Enigmata*, it would be natural to assume from Ehwald's brief note that these two books also preserved fragments of Aldhelm's *Carmina Ecclesiastica*.<sup>26</sup> However, the set of six epigrams has a tight focus on the basilica

in *De Metris*; Lapidge and Rosier, *Poetic Works*, pp. 193, 208–9, 265, 267. See Schaller and Könsgen, *Initia*, no. 8495.

<sup>22</sup> Ehwald, *Aldhelmi Opera*, pp. 44–54; Glauche *Schullektüre*, pp. 32–3; Bischoff, *Mittelalterliche Studien* III, 222–3 and n. 54; Lapidge and Rosier, *Poetic Works*, p. 68.

<sup>23</sup> Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, lat. 9347, 48v–49r and Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, lat. 2773, 23r–24r; De Rossi, *ICVR* II, 257–8 (no. XXIII). De Rossi thought that the St Peter's anthology contained only six poems. It is possible, however, that the epigram that precedes the six he identified should also be included in the set, making a total of seven epigrams. The Paris manuscripts entitle this epigram, which begins 'Spes ratio via vita salus sapientia mens mons', 'uersus siluii de cognomentis Saluatoris' ('verses by Silvius on the names of the Saviour'). The Cambridge *sylloge* contains the same verses, without this heading and with an additional line attributing the verses in the manner of so many in that collection to Pope Symmachus I, 'Simmachus ista tibi pie Iesu nomina lusit'. The same *sylloge* entitles the epigram, 'Item in oratorio Salvatoris de nominibus eiusdem', thus attributing it to an oratory dedicated to the Saviour. It might, therefore, reasonably be grouped with the three epigrams that follow to Symmachus's remodelling of the oratories of Old St Peter's, as Silvagni, following Levison, thought: W. Levison, 'Aus Englischen Bibliotheken II', *Neues Archiv* 35 (1910), 331–431, at 358–9; Silvagni, *ICVR* n.s. II, 13 (no. 4114).

<sup>24</sup> *Aldhelmi Opera*, ed. Ehwald, pp. 19–20, 22–3.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 19, 22; De Rossi, *ICVR* II, lii–liiii.

<sup>26</sup> Schaller and Könsgen assumed that Aldhelm was the author of both these poems, despite noting that de Rossi had edited them and thus tacitly acknowledging that they also had an earlier, Roman, epigraphic context: *Initia*, nos. 758 and 11958.

of Old St Peter and its monuments (especially on the oratories in the southern side of the building) and this observation, as well as Aldhelm's editorial alteration of a single word, strongly suggests that the two Reims manuscripts preserve the text of the original *tituli* that had served as Aldhelm's source, and not vice versa.

Internal evidence suggests that the set of six *tituli* was brought together in this form in the early ninth century (805 × 815). The last three poems are Carolingian. The sixth (and longest) of the set is the forty-line epitaph for Pope Hadrian I, composed by Alcuin in Charlemagne's name shortly after Hadrian's death in 795. It is notable that the Reims manuscripts do not attribute Hadrian's epitaph to Alcuin; his authorship is not important in the context of this anthology, which instead has a topographical focus on the basilica of St Peter.<sup>27</sup> Hadrian had been buried in an oratory deep within the basilica, against the western wall of the southern transept, not far from the *confessio* of St Peter. Early references make it clear that Alcuin's verses were inscribed on a marble slab that was erected close to the pope's tomb. The fifth poem in the series is a four-line epigram that refers to a gift of precious metal for an altar dedicated to St Martin, the soldier-saint of Tours. The poem has been rendered anonymous, with the replacement of the donor's name by the pronoun *ille* in the third line (*ille humilis praesul*); de Rossi argued that it refers to a gift from Fredegis, Alcuin's successor at Tours, to an altar for St Martin at Old St Peter's.<sup>28</sup> Fredegis's donation is mentioned in the *Liber pontificalis*, in reference to an altar for St Martin which was in the narthex that joined the rotunda of Sant'Andrea to that of S. Petronilla, located immediately south of the southern exedra that abutted the transept of the basilica. The exact date of Fredegis's donation is not known, although it should certainly be considered a gift made during his abbacy at Tours (804–33). The *Liber pontificalis* narrows the date range, saying that Pope Leo III (796–816) had 'coated St Martin's altar with fine silver gilt out of what Abbot Fredegis had formerly sent'.<sup>29</sup> The epigram recording the donation may thus be dated 804 × 816.

The fourth epigram in the set is the only one that cannot be linked explicitly to Old St Peter's, but it too has Frankish connections. This six-line poem refers to two fifth-century martyrs, Aureus and Justinus, whose cults were

<sup>27</sup> De Rossi, *ICVR* II, 258.7; Schaller and Könsgen, *Initia*, no. 6573. These manuscripts are the earliest extant copies of Alcuin's Epitaph for Hadrian; for a full analysis of the text and context of the epitaph, this anthology and related *sylogae*, see J. Story, *Charlemagne and Rome: Alcuin and the Epitaph of Pope Hadrian I* (Oxford, forthcoming). For a new edition, translation and commentary, see D. Howlett, 'Two Latin Epitaphs', *Archivum Latinitatis Medii Aevi* 67 (2009), 235–47.

<sup>28</sup> De Rossi, *ICVR* II, 258.6; Schaller and Könsgen, *Initia*, no. 3938.

<sup>29</sup> *Lib. Pont.* 98.110; ed. L. Duchesne, *Le Liber Pontificalis*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1886–92) II, 33; trans. R. Davis, *The Lives of the Eighth-Century Popes* (Liverpool, 1992), pp. 229–30, n. 199.



celebrated at Mainz in the early ninth century and who were later translated to Heiligenstadt, near Kassel.<sup>30</sup> Archbishop Riculf (787–813) is said to have translated the bones of the martyrs to the monastery of St Alban in Mainz in 805 as part of the celebrations to mark the consecration of the new abbey church. It seems likely that the epigram is linked to this event. An alternative context might be the occasion of the translation of some of the saints' relics to Fulda c. 819, again for the consecration of a new church; it was there that the cults were incorporated into the martyrology compiled by Hraban Maur, c. 845. The inclusion of an epigram for Aureus and Justinus within a collection of epigraphic verses set in Rome was a means of imparting a sense of *romanitas* to the remains of these northern martyrs at a time when corporeal relics from Rome were highly desired but impossible to obtain. In the late eighth and early ninth century the papacy enforced an embargo on the export of such relics from Rome; it was not until 829 when Einhard illicitly removed the bodies of SS. Marcellinus and Peter from Rome that the trade in corporeal relics to monasteries in the north resumed in earnest.<sup>31</sup>

The first three epigrams in the series, including the two used by Aldhelm, are from an earlier era. All three were thought by de Rossi to have been composed by or for Pope Symmachus I (498–514) in the context of his radical new programme of construction of oratories at St Peter's in the early sixth century. Symmachus aimed to recreate at St Peter's the liturgical setting of the Lateran basilica, which was at that time under the control of Lawrence, his rival for the papal throne.<sup>32</sup> In doing so Symmachus began to introduce the relics and associated cults of a great many other saints into the domain that had previously been the preserve of Peter alone. In particular he focused on two zones, the area around the baptistery in the northern exedra, and the new 'basilica' dedicated to St Andrew in the easternmost of the two late imperial rotundas that lay to the south of the church.

The third epigram in the series relates to the area of the baptistery where Symmachus had dedicated three oratories: to the Holy Cross; John the Baptist; and John the Evangelist.<sup>33</sup> It is a conflation of two epigrams; a distich for the

<sup>30</sup> De Rossi, *ICVR* II, 258.5; Schaller and Könsgen, *Initia*, no. 1479. A. Wand, *Heiligenstadt und seine Stadtpatrone. Die Geschichte der Aureus und Justinusverehrung* (Heiligenstadt, 2001).

<sup>31</sup> J. M. H. Smith, 'Old Saints, New Cults: Roman Relics in Carolingian Francia', *Early Medieval Rome and the Christian West: Essays in honour of Donald Bullough*, ed. J. M. H. Smith (Leiden, 2000), pp. 317–39, esp. 322–3, 336.

<sup>32</sup> *Lib. Pont.* 53.6–7; ed. Duchesne, *Liber Pontificalis* I, 261–2; trans. R. Davis, *The Book of Pontiffs (Liber Pontificalis). The Ancient Biographies of the First Ninety Roman Bishops to AD 715* (Liverpool, 2000), pp. 46–7; See also J. D. Alchermes, 'Petrine Politics: Pope Symmachus and the Rotunda of St Andrew at Old St Peter's', *The Catholic Hist. Rev.* 81 (1995), 1–40.

<sup>33</sup> S. de Blaauw, *Cultus et decor: liturgia e architettura nella Roma tardoantica e medievale. Basilica Salvatoris, Sanctae Mariae, Sancti Petri*, 2 vols. (Vatican City, 1994) II, 508–9.

baptistery itself followed by the first three lines of a six-line poem to John the Baptist.<sup>34</sup> Aldhelm did not use this epigram (perhaps because John was not an apostle and thus did not feature in his programme of twelve apostolic altars).

De Rossi argued that the first epigram, *De Andrea*, was a *titulus* associated with an altar created as part of Symmachus's dedication of the easternmost of the two late antique imperial rotundas set on the southern flank of the Vatican hill to the apostle Andrew, brother of Peter. Within the rotunda he created a constellation of oratories dedicated to martyrs who represented the centres of Lawrence's power, including the city of Constantinople, which hitherto had been the focus of the cult of Andrew. In this way Symmachus was able not only to set up St Peter's as a rival cathedral to the Lateran, but also to appropriate the cachet of 'foreign' cults for his own political ends.

The rotunda of Sant'Andrea stood hard up against the obelisk from the circus of Nero that was believed to have been the site of St Peter's martyrdom. The *titulus* celebrates Andrew's martyrdom as well as his blood relationship with Peter – a point reinforced by the situation of the rotunda between the obelisk and the basilica that contained Peter's relics.

***De Andrea***

Andreas hic sanctus templi tutabitur aram  
 Petri germanus qui quondam funera loeti  
 Horrida perpeusus sancta quoque carne  
 pendit  
 Dum crucis in patulo suspensus stipite  
 martyr  
 Ultima mortalis clausit spiracula vitae  
 Purpureas sumens Xpo regnante coronas<sup>35</sup>

**Aldhelm: CE IV.3 In Sancti Andreae**

Hic simul Andreas templum tutabitur ara  
 Petri germanus qui quondam funera lactus  
 Horrida perpeusus sancta cum carne pendit  
 . . .  
 Dum crucis in patulo suspensus stipite martyr  
 Ultima mortalis clausit spiracula vitae  
 Purpureas sumens Christo regnante coronas<sup>36</sup>

These verses were used by Aldhelm in CE IV.3.1–3, 13–16, and he interpolated between them a further ten lines of his own composition concerning Andrew's recruitment as an apostle, his readiness to abandon his former life, and his fame as an evangelist of Christ's commands.

<sup>34</sup> De Rossi, *ICVR* II, 258.3–4; Silvagni, *ICVR* n.s. II, no. 4136–7, p. 20; Schaller and Könsgen, *Initia*, nos. 13321 and 153. The final three lines are found in another Carolingian manuscript: Leiden, Universiteitsbibliotheek, Voss. lat. Q. 69 18v (after verses to the Holy Cross); Silvagni, *ICVR* n.s. II, 20 (no. 4138); Schaller and Könsgen, *Initia*, no. 7135.

<sup>35</sup> De Rossi, *ICVR* II, 257.1; Silvagni, *ICVR* n.s. II, 17–18 (no. 4126); Duchesne, *Liber Pontificalis* I, 265–6; Schaller and Könsgen, *Initia*, no. 758.

<sup>36</sup> CE IV.3, ed. Ehwald, *Aldhelmi Opera*, pp. 22–3; Schaller and Könsgen, *Initia*, no. 6712. Translation: 'Here the church shall be protected by the altar of St Andrew / The brother of Peter, who once joyfully suffered / A terrible death, hanged by his holy flesh / When he was hanged as a martyr from the broad tree of the cross / He breathed the last breath of this mortal life / Taking on a purple crown in Christ's kingdom'; trans. Lapidge and Rosier, *Poetic Works*, p. 52. See Alchermes, 'Petrine Politics', p. 23, for an alternative translation (of the epigram *De Andrea*).

De Rossi thought that the second inscription in the set, *De Petro*, had probably also been made for a location in the vicinity of Sant'Andrea and could have referred to the entranceway of Sant'Andrea itself, although this is not certain since Symmachus also improved the atrium of the main basilica and the *titulus* could have been placed there or on a long colonnade that defined the approach to St Peter's from the Tiber and which was later known as the *porticus S. Petri*.<sup>37</sup> It may be significant for understanding the collection of these texts in the early ninth century that Pope Leo III (796–816) is known to have repaired the steps leading up to Sant'Andrea.<sup>38</sup> Nevertheless, this *titulus* was evidently intended for a *porticus* or entrance, since it plays on the iconography of St Peter as the keeper of the keys and the *ianitor* of Heaven.

***De Petro***

Petrus porticum et hanc sanctorum sorte  
coronat  
Claviger aetherius qui portam pandit in  
aethram  
Ianitor aeternae recludens lumina vitae  
Omnibus hic geminum digessit dogma  
per orbem  
Quem Deus aeternis ornatum iure  
triumphis  
Arbiter omnipotens ad caeli culmina  
vexit<sup>39</sup>

**Aldhelm: CE IV.1 In Sancti Petri**

*Hanc Petrus absidam sanctorum sorte coronat*  
*Claviger aethereus qui portam pandit in aethra*  
*Ianitor aeternae recludens limina vitae*  
*Omnibus hic geminum digessit dogma per orbem*  
...  
*Quem Deus aeternis ornatum iure triumphis*  
*Arbiter omnipotens ad caeli culmina vexit*<sup>40</sup>

These verses were quoted by Aldhelm in *CE* IV.1.1–4 and 34–36. In the first line of his *carmen*, however, he changed the location of the verses from the *porticus* of the original to an apse, despite the fact that *porticus* fits better with the sense of the poem with its many allusions to gateways, keys, and doorkeepers.

<sup>37</sup> De Blaauw, *Cultus et decor*, pp. 456, 528. The *porticus* from the river was repaired by Pope Hadrian in the early 780s; it burned down in the fire of 817 which also destroyed the English quarter, 'quae in eorum lingua burgus dicitur', and was repaired by Paschal I (*Lib. Pont.* 97.72 and 100.7; Duchesne, *Liber Pontificalis* I, 507 and II, pp. 53–4; trans. Davis, *Lives of the Eighth-Century Popes*, p. 159 and *idem*, *The Lives of the Ninth-Century Popes (Liber Pontificalis)* (Liverpool, 1995), pp. 8–9).

<sup>38</sup> Duchesne, *Liber Pontificalis* I, 267, n. 29; see also *Lib. Pont.* 98.90; *ibid.* II, 28; trans. Davis, *Lives of the Eighth-Century Popes*, p. 222.

<sup>39</sup> De Rossi, *ICVR* II, 257.2; Silvagni, *ICVR* n.s. II, 18 (no. 4127); Schaller and Könsgen, *Initia*, no. 11958.

<sup>40</sup> *CE* IV.1, ed. Ehwald, *Aldhelmi Opera*, pp. 19–20; Schaller and Könsgen, *Initia*, no. 6094. Translation: 'Peter crowns this apse (portico) with the blessedness of saints / The celestial key-bearer, who opens the gateway of heaven / The doorman who throws open the doors of eternal life / He made clear his two-fold doctrine to all (peoples) throughout the world / God, the omnipotent Judge, took Peter, duly adorned / With his heavenly triumphs, to the summits of heaven'; trans. Lapidge and Rosier, *Poetic Works*, p. 50.

This editorial change is a clear indication that Aldhelm was using a pre-existing epigram as a source for his own *carmen*. It might also imply that he did, in fact, have a real rather than an imaginary location in mind for his own verses, envisaging them set out around the base of an apse. It is conventionally thought that Aldhelm composed this *carmen* not for inscription in a real Anglo-Saxon church but as a set of epigraphic verses for an idealized basilica in which he imagined twelve altars dedicated one to each of the apostles.<sup>41</sup> And yet he had used just this theme in the third of his *Carmina*, to describe what was, apparently, a real church dedicated to St Mary. There, in *CE* III.40–1, he referred to the lofty new church built by Bugga where ‘holy altars gleam in twelve-fold dedication’; here, however, Bugga ‘dedicates the apse to the Virgin’.<sup>42</sup> This poem was certainly composed after April 689, because in lines 17–32 Aldhelm refers to the death of Ceadwalla in Rome, and (as Lapidge has noted) ‘the wording of the epitaph is reflected in the diction of [the poem]’.<sup>43</sup> According to a later eighth-century itinerary of the basilica, Old St Peter’s also had an oratory ‘to the twelve apostles’ located somewhere in the south transept.<sup>44</sup>

The second line of the *De Petro* epigram, ‘Claviger aetherius qui portam pandit in aethram’, became a particular favourite with Aldhelm. He reused it often: in *CE* I.6; in the *Epistola ad Acircium*; in the prose *De uirginitate* c. LV; in the *Epistola ad Geruntium*.<sup>45</sup> It has been argued previously that Aldhelm created this line by conflating two hexameters from Arator’s *De actibus apostolorum* (I.899 and I.1076), a work composed in 544 and contained in both of the Reims manuscripts discussed above.<sup>46</sup> Furthermore, it seems that a six-line section of Arator’s work (I.1070–6), including the line ‘Claudit iter bellis qui portam pandit in astris’ was extracted and inscribed on a wall at S. Pietro in Vincoli in Rome.<sup>47</sup> However, if de Rossi is right in ascribing the complete line and its companion verses *De Petro* to the period of Symmachus’s remodelling of the oratories of Old St Peter’s c. 500 it seems that Aldhelm derived it complete, direct from the *titulus*, and that it was Arator who had quoted it piecemeal.

It is probably significant that in his *Epistola ad Geruntium*, the *Epistola ad Acircium*, and in the prose *De uirginitate* Aldhelm ascribes the line to an anonymous poet (*ut poeta*); he used exactly the same expression to introduce the line

<sup>41</sup> Lapidge and Rosier, *Poetic Works*, p. 239, n. 38.

<sup>42</sup> *CE* III, ed. Ehwald, *Aldhelm Opera*, pp. 14–18; trans. Lapidge and Rosier, *Poetic Works*, pp. 40–1 and 47–9, at p. 48.

<sup>43</sup> Lapidge, ‘Career of Aldhelm’, p. 60, n. 206.

<sup>44</sup> De Blaauw, *Cultus et decor*, p. 571, n. 336.

<sup>45</sup> *Aldhelmi Opera*, ed. Ehwald, pp. 11, 68, 314, 485; trans. Lapidge and Rosier, *Poetic Works*, p. 46; Lapidge and Herren, *Prose Works*, pp. 39, 124, 159.

<sup>46</sup> Lapidge and Rosier, *Poetic Works*, p. 233, n. 3; Orchard, *Poetic Art*, pp. 166–9.

<sup>47</sup> De Rossi, *ICVR* II, 110.64; Sims-Williams, ‘Milred of Worcester’, p. 36; Orchard, *Poetic Art*, p. 166 and n. 176.

from a mid-fifth-century dedicatory inscription at S. Maria Maggiore in his *De pedum regulis*. The same expression is used to introduce another line twice quoted by Aldhelm that also reads just like a verse from an inscribed *titulus* in an architectural setting; *Petrus apostolicae qui culmina praesidet arcis* ('Peter, who presides over the heights of the apostolic citadel').<sup>48</sup> The double meaning of *culmina* ('heights / keystones') affords the line a literal architectural context as well as a metaphorical allusion to Rome. Although this line does not occur outside Aldhelm's writing, we can be certain that we have but a fragment of the total number of *tituli* (and *syllogae*) that were once visible in Rome, so this need be no bar to identifying it as a quotation from a lost inscription.

The multiple appearance of the line 'Claviger aetherius . . .' in several of Aldhelm's works has implications for the dating of those works, and for our understanding of how and when Aldhelm learned the verses of these two Roman *tituli*. If, following Lapidge, we believe that the *CE* were 'inspired by Aldhelm's experience of engraved *tituli* in Roman churches' and that Aldhelm's key journey was made in the late 680s, we are obliged to date the *CE*, the *Epistola ad Geruntium*, the prose *De uirginitate* and the *Epistola ad Acircium* (including the *Enigmata* and the *De pedum regulis* that reference the *tituli* of popes Damasus and Sergius III) to the period after his visit to Rome. But of these, the *Epistola ad Acircium* (and its attendant texts) and the prose *De uirginitate* are usually thought to have been composed before Aldhelm became an abbot (682 × 686–706), and thus some time before his projected pilgrimage to Rome with Ceadwalla in 688–9.<sup>49</sup> There are two possible ways to reconcile the incongruities of the dating evidence, such as it is: firstly, that Aldhelm interpolated the line 'Claviger aetherius . . .' into pre-existing texts (it is always used by him as an interjection); or secondly, that Aldhelm, like many of his clerical contemporaries, went to Rome more than once.

Alternatively, we would need to suppose that Aldhelm knew these *tituli* from Old St Peter's through a *sylloge* now lost. As noted above, the Symmachan verses beginning *Petrus porticum* and *Andreas hic sanctus* are unique to the two Reims manuscripts. There they form part of a coherent anthology of *tituli* that has a topographical focus on St Peter's basilica (especially the oratories of its southern side) and it seems that the anthology as it exists in these manuscripts was collected in the early ninth century. Without this anthology, we would have no reason to suppose that Aldhelm's fourth *Carmen Ecclesiasticum* was anything other than his own work. As it stands, this new evidence suggests that he could write a fair pastiche of early sixth-century Roman epigraphic verse

<sup>48</sup> *De Metris*, ed. Ehwald, *Aldhelmi Opera*, p. 93 and *Carmen de uirginitate*, l.530, ed. Ehwald, *Aldhelmi Opera*, p. 375; trans. Lapidge and Rosier, *Poetic Works*, pp. 114, 208.

<sup>49</sup> Lapidge, 'Career of Aldhelm', pp. 66–9.

as a homage to Rome, and to its principal apostle.<sup>50</sup> His reuse of two genuine Roman epigrams for *CE* IV.1 and IV.3 also raises the question of whether similar epigraphic sources inspired the remaining verses in that *carmen*. The absence of these *tituli* in any other extant early *syllogae* probably implies that they were transmitted twice, once to Aldhelm, and again for the early-ninth-century anthology. We cannot know for sure if Aldhelm himself was responsible for the collection of these particular *tituli* (among others), but they certainly contribute to the mounting evidence that Aldhelm knew at first hand the city of Rome and the basilica of Old St Peter's and its inscriptions.

<sup>50</sup> The order of the saints in *CE* IV follows that of the Roman *ordo*: Lapidge and Rosier, *Poetic Works*, p. 42.