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JOHN THE BAPTIST AND THE *AGNUS DEI*: RUTHWELL (AND BEWCASTLE) REVISITED

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The identity of the figure with a lamb carved on the upper stone of the Anglo-Saxon cross at Ruthwell, Dumfriesshire, was interpreted by Paul Meyvaert (in 1982 and 1992), as an apocalyptic image of the Deity instead of John the Baptist. Close inspection of the panel, however, makes it difficult to accept such an explanation. Instead, an adaptation of the early Christian images of the Baptist is proposed, and it is argued that the details of the panel are best understood in the light of the introduction of the *Agnus Dei* chant into the Mass by Pope Sergius I (687–701), and of biblical commentary which saw the Baptist himself as an apocalyptic figure associated with the Lamb, the paschal sacrifice, commemorated each day in the Mass.

In his 1982 article on the Anglo-Saxon monument at Ruthwell, Dumfriesshire, Paul Meyvaert questioned the orthodox interpretation of the carved figure with a lamb set at the top of the shaft, as John the Baptist with the *Agnus Dei* (fig 1). He resurrected a view that had first been propounded by the Revd Henry Duncan some 150 years earlier,¹ arguing that the figure should be identified as an apocalyptic image of the Deity.² He subsequently elaborated on this argument in a major paper on the assembly and function of the carved fragments which formed his contribution to the 1992 Princeton Colloquium devoted to the Ruthwell cross.³

Meyvaert's approach to the subject was based on two distinct grounds: empirical and iconographic. Empirically, in both his 1982 and 1992 articles, he relied heavily on the evidence of earlier photographs and casts of the Ruthwell and Bewcastle monuments. On this basis he argued in 1982 that the Ruthwell panel depicted a 'male figure *standing* on two globes' (authors' emphasis), holding a book in his right hand and supporting a lamb on his left arm.⁴ By 1992 he saw the figure in question as supporting, on the left knee, a lamb placed so that it was centrally 'aligned with the head of the *seated* figure' (authors' emphasis).⁵ This apparent 'ambiguity' in the figure's position Meyvaert attributed to the Anglo-Saxon sculptor on the basis that 'perhaps we should not expect much realism from such a monument at this period'.⁶ Despite the difficulties he encountered in interpreting this aspect of the panel, however, Meyvaert was adamant (in both 1982 and 1992) that the figures at Ruthwell and Bewcastle held a book, and at Ruthwell, that the remains of the inscription bordering the image could be deciphered as closing with '[a]doramus ... um'. This he explained as an allusion to Revelation 7:10–12: '... et clamabant voce magna dicentes salus *Dea* nostro qui sedet super thronum et agno ... et ceciderunt in conspectu throni in facies suas et adoraverunt Deum dicentes: Amen [author's emphasis]'.⁷ For Meyvaert, the co-presence of the figure, lamb and book, together with this inscription pointed to an apocalyptic iconographic tradition rather than one associated with John the Baptist.



Fig 1. The Ruthwell Cross. Detail: figure with the lamb. Photograph: Dr Ross Trench-Jellicoe

This conclusion, Meyvaert argued, could be supported iconographically by similarities between his reconstruction of the two Anglo-Saxon images and extant apocalyptic schemes of tenth- to twelfth-century date; his accompanying rejection of the conventional interpretation of the panels as depicting John the Baptist was upheld by perceived differences between the Ruthwell and Bewcastle carvings and the early Christian image of John the Baptist featured on the fifth-century episcopal throne of Maximianus at Ravenna.⁸ As a further argument in favour of an apocalyptic interpretation Meyvaert drew attention to the extensive damage suffered by the panel at Ruthwell, and suggested that

this reflected seventeenth-century iconoclastic attitudes to the depiction of the Deity.⁹

The force of the argument thus constructed has been such that those discussing the two monuments over the last nineteen years have felt the need either to accept it, or to incorporate consideration of it into dissenting interpretations.¹⁰ When, however, the monuments themselves are closely examined, it is impossible to accept the visual evidence as presented by Meyvaert: neither in regard to the inscription bordering the Ruthwell panel, nor in regard to the human figures at Ruthwell and Bewcastle.¹¹

THE INSCRIPTION REVISITED

Close inspection of the inscription bordering the Ruthwell figure (figs 2–3) reveals that more letters are visible than Meyvaert was able to decipher. The lettering which presumably once filled the upper and right-hand vertical border is indeed irrecoverable, but on the lower part of the left-hand vertical border there is a legible inscription that reads downwards and continues, without a break, on to the lower horizontal border (below the figured panel), where it reads from left to right. Although it is often difficult or impossible to interpret in morning light or cloudy conditions, in bright afternoon sunlight this inscription can be deciphered without difficulty, and has been read by the present authors, on two separate occasions, as: ‘... DORAMVSV/TNONCVM’. We interpret this to be: ‘[a]doramus ut non cum’. It is clearly a continuous text because the word ‘ut’ is divided between the two borders. The ‘V’ of ‘ut’ is set on its side (like the ‘V’ in ‘adoramus’ just above), so that the point of the letter coincides with the lowermost part of the vertical edge of the shaft (fig 2).

In 1788 the Revd D Carlyle drew the inscription to the panel as ‘DORAMVS ... / TNONCVM’.¹² The following year Gough and Cardonnel supplied a very similar reading: ‘[A]DORAMVS ... / TNONEVM’.¹³ This was rejected by Meyvaert because their interpretations of the other Ruthwell inscriptions were generally inaccurate, and also because the forms of ‘N’ and ‘O’ in this inscription differ from those found elsewhere on the monument.¹⁴ Recent work on the upper stone of the Ruthwell monument, however, has demonstrated quite clearly that it was not carved as part of the same campaign as the lower stone.¹⁵ Thus differences in the letter forms, and indeed, the layout of the inscriptions between the two parts of the monument can no longer be considered grounds (in themselves) for disregarding this reading of the inscription.

THE FIGURES REVISITED

Close examination of the carved figures at Ruthwell and Bewcastle also tends not to support Meyvaert’s description of the panels. There is no sign that either figure was seated, although the fact that the damage caused by the break in the stone at Ruthwell would not be as clear on a cast as on the monument itself, might explain how such an interpretation could be reached.



Fig 2. The Ruthwell Cross. Detail: inscription accompanying the figure with the lamb.

Photograph: Dr Ross Trench-Jellicoe

The lamb, at both Bewcastle and Ruthwell, is haloed. At Ruthwell the near front and rear legs were originally free standing, while the lamb itself, like that at Bewcastle, is set on the draped left hand of the figure (rather than on the knee as described by Meyvaert).¹⁶ In neither panel does the human figure hold a book. At Bewcastle the right hand of the figure points with his index finger across his body towards the lamb supported on his left hand. At Ruthwell, the right hand was similarly disposed (fig 1), although here the carving is damaged: the end of the index finger (from the upper knuckle to the tip) has been broken off. Nevertheless, the outline of the pointing finger can still be discerned, crossing the lines of drapery that fall over the chest in vertical parallel folds from the shoulder; the other three fingers are also visible, curled into the fist of a pointing hand.



Fig 3. The inscription showing letter forms and direction of reading. Drawing: Dr Ross Trench-J ellicoe

In this respect the pointing hand at Ruthwell may be compared to that of the *Majestas* at the top of the closely related, late eighth-century, cross-shaft from Rothbury where the broken outlines of the three curled fingers of the pointing right hand are preserved over the lines of the folds of drapery covering the figure's chest (fig 4). On this monument, there were specific iconographic reasons for depicting the pointing hand - reasons that explain why the pointing hand was deliberately adapted from a model that would have depicted Christ with two fingers extended in blessing.¹⁷ The adaptation renders the book held by Christ as more than the mere attribute it is in other portraits of the *Majestas*; at Rothbury it becomes *the* book of Christ, the book that points the way to humankind's redemption. By making the figure of Christ point to his book (as opposed to 'simply' blessing it), those designing the monument literally pointed to the fact that faith in the power and majesty of Christ, guided by belief in the written word of the New Testament, are what can redeem humanity. At Rothbury the detail of the pointing finger is repeated, almost as a leitmotif linking the images on the monument, in the miracle scene (also at the top of the shaft), and the Ascension at the base of the shaft. It would seem that the detail was utilized in a similarly deliberate fashion at Ruthwell and Bewcastle in the panels depicting the figure with the lamb.

The folds of drapery visible behind the pointing hand of the Ruthwell figure are those of a wide *pallium* (clearly differentiated from the undergarment), that is worn over both shoulders in a manner resembling a shawl (fig 5). The width of the *pallium* and the heavy nature of its folds cause a slightly raised effect on the right shoulder which,

viewed from below in certain lighting conditions, could be mistaken for a square object and interpreted as a book. Nevertheless, at Ruthwell two tubular folds of the *pallium* can be distinguished running in continuous lines above and below the pointing right hand, and a third runs continuously between the hand and the lamb on the left. This makes it certain that there never was a book, or any other object, in front of the *pallium* above the pointing right hand.



Fig 4. The Rothbury Cross. Detail: *Majestas*. Photograph: Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle upon Tyne

This observation becomes even clearer when the panel is compared with that set immediately above in the lowermost arm of the cross-head, where both a book and a pointing hand do occur together. In this panel the evangelist Matthew and his symbol, the winged man, are depicted (fig 6). The evangelist holds a book in his veiled left hand and indicates it with his right hand. The winged figure next to him points to it with his right hand in such a way that his index finger extends towards the upper corner of the book. When the details of this panel are compared with those of the panel below it is possible to distinguish the various elements (of book, pointing hand and drapery), and their relative presence and absence from the two scenes. It is clear that while the evangelist Matthew holds a book to which the winged symbol points, the figure holding the lamb in the panel below does not hold a book, but does point to the lamb with the index finger of his right hand.



Fig 5. The Ruthwell Cross. Detail: pointing hand and drapery of figure with the lamb.
Photograph: Dr Ross Trench-Jellicoe



Fig 6. The Ruthwell Cross. Detail of Cross-head: Matthew with Evangelist Symbol / Winged Man.
Photograph: Dr Ross Trench-Jellicoe

ICONOGRAPHIC IMPLICATIONS

The Question of Identity

Observation of the carved panels set at the top of the shafts at Ruthwell and Bewcastle indicates that each contains a nimbed male figure who stands and points with his right hand to a lamb supported on his draped left hand. At Ruthwell the figure is distinguished by being set with his feet on two globes, and by an inscription which contains the words '[a]doramus ut non cum'. While the human figures holding lambs at Ruthwell and Bewcastle are, as all commentators have agreed, closely related to each other, the globes under the feet of that at Ruthwell do make that panel significantly different from its counterpart at Bewcastle. It is best, therefore, to consider the possibility that the panel at Ruthwell may have had a different iconographic emphasis.¹⁸ After all, if those responsible for the production of the Ruthwell image had intended simply to replicate the image at Bewcastle (or vice versa), the globes would, presumably, not have been deemed necessary.

At Bewcastle, the human figure simply holds a lamb to which he points. In the absence of the apparently apocalyptic detail of the book proposed by Meyvaert (as well as

the globes and apposite inscription), it is difficult to escape the conclusion that, as scholars have almost universally recognized, the panel at Bewcastle may, after all, represent John the Baptist pointing at the *Agnus Dei*. Yet, as Meyvaert mentioned, depictions of John the Baptist are not well represented in the surviving corpus of early Christian art.¹⁹ Nevertheless, such images do exist, and documentary references (albeit vague in terms of the details desired by modern iconographers) attest to their wider use in the decoration of the early Christian churches of the Mediterranean world.²⁰

The surviving visual material shows that although the iconography of the Baptist was far from established by the eighth century, there were at least two distinctive types of image in use. One, which is almost universally cited in discussions of the Anglo-Saxon carvings, is that represented by the fifth-century ivory throne at Ravenna. It illustrates the standing figure of the Baptist, wearing a thick hair cloak, holding a medallion depicting the *Agnus Dei* in his left hand and raising his right in blessing.²¹ Another type, not usually cited, depicts the Baptist, sometimes wearing the toga-like garb of late antiquity, standing and pointing to the Lamb of the Apocalypse which is set next to him, as, for example, on the fifth-century font which stood in the Lateran Baptistry,²² and somewhat later, in the late eighth- or ninth-century arch fresco in the fifth-century crypt of San Martino ai Monti, Rome.²³ This iconographic type seems to have been a specific version of more generalized schemes that included the Baptist in heavenly visions of the Lamb of the Apocalypse that were present in Christian art by the sixth century and quite widespread by the ninth century.²⁴

Clearly, none of these iconographic types, in themselves, provides an exact parallel for the Bewcastle (nor indeed, Ruthwell) figure. Nevertheless, they do contain the elements featured in the Anglo-Saxon panels. Together they indicate that John the Baptist did feature in early Christian art of the West, and that he was closely associated with the Lamb, either by holding its image, or by pointing at it. Moreover, when we consider not only these iconographic types themselves but their overall contexts, it becomes clear that John the Baptist is most commonly represented in a role of authority contingent on his association with the lamb. On the Ravenna episcopal throne he is placed centrally at the front, flanked by the four evangelists with their gospels, and surrounded by borders richly decorated with an inhabited (eucharistic) vine-scroll which contains, above his head, the peacocks of eternal life. It is a context usually reserved for images of the *Majestas*, or (perhaps somewhat more analogous with the Baptist) the Virgin Mary supporting the Christ Child.²⁵ In the church decorations he recurs in the decoration of the eastern apses in apocalyptic contexts, as one of only two 'attendants' or 'witnesses' to the Lamb of the Apocalypse. As such the Baptist functions in the same manner as the angels and/or martyrs who are more commonly depicted as attendants on the Lamb in such iconographic schemes.²⁶

These surviving examples of the early Christian iconography of John the Baptist suggest that, although he may not have featured with any great regularity, when he was depicted it was in association with the Lamb, usually in aspects of authority and majesty, and sometimes in apocalyptic contexts. Furthermore, those images which have

survived from the early Christian period indicate that when the Baptist was portrayed, he was selected to feature in the decoration of buildings and artefacts with extremely prestigious associations: the throne of the bishop of the imperial see of Ravenna, and the Lateran Baptistery of Rome (the baptistery of the cathedral church of the bishop of Rome). At the Lateran Baptistery, the iconographic prominence of John the Baptist was reinforced by his cultic prominence. Not only did he feature there at the font and in the apse mosaics of the chapel of San Venantius, one of the chapels built by Pope Hilary (461–8) was also dedicated to John the Baptist; the others were dedicated to St John the Evangelist and to the Holy Cross.²⁷ Both at Ravenna and Rome the figure of John the Baptist was intimately associated with the authority of the bishop, the chief liturgist of the city. A properly equipped baptistery, often with dedications to John the Baptist, was a highly desirable element in a properly functioning complex of episcopal buildings. Thus, at Rome, when an antipope prevented him from functioning at the Lateran, Pope Symmachus (498–514) provided the baptismal area in the north transept of St Peter's with a symbolic copy of the chapels at the baptistery at the Lateran: as at the Lateran, the chapels were dedicated to St John the Baptist, St John the Evangelist, and the Holy Cross.²⁸

Against this background, an interpretation of the carved figure at the top of the Bewcastle shaft as John the Baptist with the *Agnus Dei* seems more convincing than Meyvaert's alternative hypothesis. The commanding presence of the figure, noted by Meyvaert, is in keeping with the known iconography as it survives, as are the close association with the lamb and the pointing attitude adopted by the figure. It is true that no exact parallel for the Anglo-Saxon panel survives: nevertheless, the extant material is suggestive. If the Bewcastle carving was intended to depict the Baptist, it could have been a direct copy of an iconographic type which has not survived, but which was closely related to those which have. Another, more likely explanation is that the image was refashioned from material available in pictorial or written form to fit the confines of the shaft and the needs of those responsible for its production.²⁹ It may be that a full-length figure holding an image of the Lamb and raising his other hand in blessing (as on the episcopal throne in Ravenna) was adapted to provide the pointing hand; or it may be that a full-length figure pointing to the separate figure of the Lamb (as on the Lateran baptismal font) was adapted to place the Lamb 'in' the Baptist's hand. In either case, the image at Bewcastle can be explained as a 'composite' of the two types of Baptist image which we know were available in western Europe by the eighth century.

Certainly, a tendency to appropriate and adapt iconographic images is a common feature in the production of Anglo-Saxon sculpture.³⁰ Indeed, there is evidence of the phenomenon at Bewcastle itself. It has long been accepted that the image of Christ, depicted immediately below that of the figure with the lamb, was adapted from an illustration of Christ in Majesty so as to include the heads and crossed paws of the two creatures set under his feet.³¹ The same practice can be seen at Ruthwell in the comparable image of Christ over the Beasts, and the so-called 'Magdalene' panel (depicting the Woman who was a Sinner), where the female figure was added at the feet of an image of the *Majestas*.³² Thus, access to a pictorial model of the Baptist (of any iconographic type), and/or

a knowledge of the general iconography (through the words of Canon 82 of the Quinisext Council of 692, or of negative Roman reactions to it, if nothing else), can account for the carved image as it survives. Such considerations may also explain the apparent differences between the Bewcastle image and other surviving medieval depictions of the Baptist.

Certainly, these factors (of iconographic knowledge, and appropriation and adaptation of images) go some way towards explaining the distinctive details of the Ruthwell image of the figure with the lamb. As has been noted, it is primarily the globes set under the feet of this figure which differentiate it from that at Bewcastle. It is not impossible that, having access to the same (or a closely related) model-type(s) lying behind the Bewcastle image, those responsible for the design of the Ruthwell panel simply adapted the depiction of the standing figure which holds and points to the lamb, by placing two globes under his feet.

The question of ‘why’ the image should have been fashioned in this way is a separate issue. Depictions of globes in early Christian art, are, as Meyvaert’s studies have demonstrated, inextricably linked with the visionary symbolism of heavenly majesty and apocalypse. As we have seen, in early Christian art John the Baptist featured prominently in such visionary and apocalyptic contexts. Therefore, it is possible that those responsible for the production of the Ruthwell image introduced the symbol of the globes in order to highlight iconographically the traditional association of John the Baptist with apocalyptic visions of Christ, or the Lamb, in majesty. Unable to seat the figure on a large single globe, given the confines of the shaft, two were set under his feet, in much the same manner as two creatures were set under the feet of the *Majestas* figures at both Ruthwell and Bewcastle.³³

The Question of Context

The preceding discussion has confirmed the traditional identification of the disputed Ruthwell scene as representing John the Baptist. It does not follow, however, that the panel depicts the scene by the River Jordan in which John twice, on successive days, greeted Christ as the *Agnus Dei*,³⁴ rather, the iconography has been adapted to present a new image — that of a transformed, heavenly, John the Baptist.

Early eighth-century Northumbria provides a context within which such experimentation with the image of the John the Baptist can be understood. The official biography of Pope Sergius I (686–701) records that the pope introduced a new chant, ‘Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis’, into the Mass. This biography was certainly known to Bede, who quotes it,³⁵ and scholars accept that the following passage from his homily on John r :29–34 (one of his homilies for the Sundays after Epiphany) probably indicates that Bede was familiar with the regular use of the *Agnus Dei* in the Mass at Wearmouth-Jarrow:³⁶

Not only did he wash us from our sins in his blood when he gave his blood for us on the cross, or when each of us was cleansed in his baptism by the mystery of his

most sacred passion, but he also takes away every day the sins of the world [‘peccata mundi’], and washes us of our daily sins [‘a peccatis nostris cotidianis’] in his blood, when the memory of his blessed passion is re-enacted on the altar, when a created thing, bread and wine, is transformed by the ineffable sanctification of the Spirit into the sacrament of his flesh and blood. Thus his body and blood is not poured and slain by the hands of the unfaithful to their own ruin, but he is taken by the mouth of the faithful to their own salvation.³⁷

Bede uses the plural ‘peccata mundi’, as in the *Agnus Dei* chant, rather than the singular ‘peccatum mundi’ of John 1:29, implying an association of the forgiveness of sins by the *Agnus Dei* with the sacrifice of the Mass. Most important of all, he sees the forgiveness of sins by the *Agnus Dei* as an ongoing process, a daily event that takes place whenever the Lamb of God ‘is taken by the mouth of the faithful to their own salvation’. Bede’s statement that this process is an everyday event, which continues at the present time when the Lamb of God is glorified in heaven, is important for understanding the way in which the image of the Baptist with the *Agnus Dei* was transformed on the Ruthwell Cross.

The chant of the *Agnus Dei* introduced by Sergius (a pope from a Syrian family) reflected the long-standing devotional practice in Syria to refer to the consecrated eucharist as the ‘Lamb’.³⁸ This term associated the eucharist not only with the Baptist’s greetings of Christ in the first chapter of John’s gospel³⁹ but also with the image of the Lamb in John’s Apocalypse: ‘Then I saw between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders a Lamb standing as if it had been slaughtered, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth’.⁴⁰ These Johannine passages, in turn, depended on the Old Testament images of the Paschal Lamb.⁴¹

In the chant the term ‘Lamb’ thus referred, at once, to the historical event of the Passion of Christ, and to the heavenly and eschatological manifestations of Christ’s glory, of which the eucharistic species itself was a pledge. In combining the historical and eschatological dimensions of Christ’s sacrifice in this way, the Syrian term for the eucharist was faithful to one of the earliest Christian theologies of the eucharist, that of Paul in the first Epistle to the Corinthians: ‘For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes’.⁴²

In the Roman rite, the new chant was a striking and even revolutionary innovation. Until its introduction, prayers in the Canon of the Roman Mass were invariably addressed to God the Father, rather than Christ. Now, at the solemn moment when the bread was broken for communion, clergy and people alike prayed directly to Christ, as sacrificed *Agnus Dei*, for mercy. In this way Christ was brought to the forefront of liturgical prayer in a part of the Mass where previously it had been customary to address prayer, not to Christ, but directly to God the Father. Equally striking was the popular nature of the innovation. The chant was to be sung, not by the celebrant, but by those clergy and people who assisted at Mass, while the celebrant and his assistants in silence broke the bread for communion: ‘Statuit ut tempore confractionis dominici corporis *Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis* a clero et populo decantetur’ (editor’s

emphasis).⁴³

As the *Agnus Dei* was primarily a chant for the congregation, the early settings were simple so that they could be sung by all. It is possible that the chant was originally sung as a litany, with the musically-skilled clergy singing the opening invocation, ‘Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi’, and the congregation or community responding with the simple prayer, ‘miserere nobis’.⁴⁴ Such a practice would have complemented other new elements in early eighth-century Anglo-Saxon devotion, as the invocation ‘Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi’ was introduced into Anglo-Saxon England from *c* 700 as part of the Litany of the Saints.⁴⁵ In the eighth century, therefore, the *Agnus Dei* chant was as near as one could get, within a Latin liturgy, to a popular chant in which the whole congregation participated together with the clergy. It was sung as often as necessary, until the celebrant and his assistants had completed the silent act of breaking the eucharistic bread, the ritual act that, in popular devotion and in commentaries on the Mass, was universally associated with the breaking of Christ’s body on the cross.⁴⁶ The new *Agnus Dei* chant dramatically reinforced the association between Lamb and Cross: as the congregation looked at Christ’s body being broken for communion, they asked for mercy from the Lamb whose sacrifice had taken away the sins of the world, and looked forward to the Second Coming of Christ: ‘Look! He is coming with the clouds; every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and on his account all the tribes of the earth will wail. So it is to be. Amen’.⁴⁷

Also relevant is the fact the new chant did not directly use the words of John the Baptist as recorded in the Gospel of John: ‘Ecce agnus Dei, ecce qui tollit peccatum mundi’.⁴⁸ These were a proclamation, not a prayer. Instead, the new chant used the Baptist’s words precisely as they had been reformulated for centuries within the popular *Gloria* chant, sung at the beginning of episcopal Masses.⁴⁹ Here, the phrase ‘Ecce’ was omitted; in the most widely known texts of the *Gloria*, John’s ‘peccatum mundi’ was (possibly under the influence of the plurals in Isaiah 53: 5) changed into ‘peccata mundi’, and the phrase ‘miserere nobis’ had already been added: ‘Qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere nobis’.⁵⁰ The plea ‘miserere nobis’ was in turn inspired by the chant ‘Kyrie eleison ... Christe eleison’ (Lord have mercy ... Christ have mercy) sung in Greek by the congregation at the beginning of the Mass. All these related congregational chants were ultimately inspired by the prayer of the penitent publican: ‘Lord be merciful to me a sinner’.⁵¹

The new *Agnus Dei* chant therefore owed much to existing congregational chants sung at the beginning of Mass. Like them, it was not a simple invocation but a prayer to Christ sacrificed on the cross. At the moment of preparation for communion, the new chant recalled the devotional atmosphere of the first part of the Mass, in which the idea of repentance from sin was combined with a sense of confidence in Christ’s mercy. Communities needed to be motivated to sing the new chant as often and as fervently as necessary. The iconography at Bewcastle is indicative of such motivation, and that at Ruthwell strengthens the theme still further. In both monuments the panels depicting John with the Lamb are placed ‘in excelsis’: towards the top of the west face at Bewcas-

tle, and on the upper stone at Ruthwell, on the side which presumably faced west originally. There, both panels could be contemplated, well above the heads of any officiating clergy, by congregations facing east while assisting at Mass.⁵²

The iconographic details of each panel indicate that they both refer, not to the historical scene where John the Baptist greeted Christ,⁵³ but to the heavenly liturgy of the present time, of which the earthly liturgy in Northumbria was considered to be merely a reflection.⁵⁴ It is significant that on both monuments, John the Baptist is dressed in long gowns and elaborate liturgical *pallia*: indeed, ‘in soft robes’,⁵⁵ not the camel-skin he wore on earth.⁵⁶ This is appropriate ‘now’, as he speaks to mankind from the royal palace of heaven. By the iconographic innovation of having John the Baptist point explicitly towards the Lamb, both panels present John as each day fulfilling, within the heavenly liturgy, his urgent function as ‘angelus Domini’, the forerunner who announces the coming Kingdom of Christ.⁵⁷

This is the one about whom it is written, ‘See, I am sending my messenger (*angelum meum*) ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you’. Truly, I tell you, among those born of women no one has arisen greater than John the Baptist; yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence, and the violent take it by force. For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John came; and if you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah who is to come. Let anyone with ears listen!⁵⁸

Even though no one among mankind was greater than John the Baptist, yet the congregation, already while on earth incorporated into Christ’s body by their participation in the eucharist, are to that extent ‘greater than he’ was on earth. Now glorified in heaven, John, by his urgently pointing finger, encourages the congregation to use his own acclamation as a basis for their plea for mercy. Both panels provide eloquent reminders that Christ, the *Agnus Dei*, in Bede’s words, still ‘takes away every day the sins of the world’ (*uerum etiam cotidie tollit peccata mundi*).⁵⁹

It is important to appreciate fully the significance of the pointing finger in each panel: it literally indicates that it is the Lamb, not John, who is the central figure of both panels. In a passage which had clear eucharistic overtones, John proclaimed:

No one can receive anything except what has been given from heaven. You yourselves are my witnesses that I said, ‘I am not the Messiah, but I have been sent ahead of him’. He who has the bride is the bridegroom. The friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom’s voice. For this reason my joy has been fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease.⁶⁰

However unworthy their individual members may have felt themselves to be, the congregation formed part of the Church, the bride of Christ. For them, John the Baptist still performed the office of ‘the friend of the bridegroom’, announcing to the bride the bridegroom’s presence. In the panels at Bewcastle and at Ruthwell, one controlling idea behind the iconography is that Christ must increase, but John must decrease.⁶¹ If in the

panels John is glorified, this is only in order to glorify the Lamb. John functions as a human throne for the Lamb, who in both panels stands in triumph on his left arm. John's pointing finger deflects attention away from himself, encouraging those at Bewcastle and Ruthwell to appeal for mercy to this Lamb who takes away the sins of the world.

At Ruthwell, the eschatological overtones of the *Agnus Dei* image, and the Baptist's role as throne for the Lamb, are even more explicit than at Bewcastle. At Ruthwell, John is provided with two globes which function as footstools beneath his feet. In the context of the monument, these do not indicate that John himself is divine (except in the special sense that all participants in the earthly and heavenly liturgy were seen as members of the body of Christ, and as such to participate in the divine nature): rather, they emphasize his role as throne for the divine Lamb.⁶²

The panels immediately below the *Agnus Dei* panel refer to the idea that Christ was to be 'known between two living things'. This phrase (from the Old Latin text of the Cantic of Habbakuk 3:3) was liturgically important: the Cantic was sung every Friday at Lauds, and the relevant verse was sung as part of the responsory after the first Old Testament reading in the ceremony commemorating the death of Christ on Good Friday. As such, it was the subject of exegesis, particularly by Jerome and Bede. At one level of his interpretation, Jerome says that: '... there are those who interpret the two living things as the two Testaments, Old and New, which can be said to be truly life-giving and full of life, to breathe [the Spirit] ('*quae spirent*'), and in the midst of which the Lord may be known'.⁶³ In this context, the testimony of John the Baptist was an outstanding example of the way in which Christ was to be known between the two testaments. He, a 'prophet, and more than a prophet', summed up the Old Testament. In the Vulgate Bible, the Prophecy of Malachy⁶⁴ was placed as the last prophetic book of the Old Testament to emphasize the link between its prophecies of John, and the fulfilment of these prophecies in the opening chapters of the four gospels.

At Ruthwell, the two globes may thus be intended to suggest, among other things, that Christ is known between two worlds, the Old and New Testaments: the two worlds spanned by the prophecies about John the Baptist, and by the Baptist's own testimony. They suggest that the Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah, who came to mankind as saviour and sacrifice, are still relevant; they will only be fulfilled when Christ comes once more, as Judge: '... and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple. The messenger of the covenant in whom you delight - indeed he is coming, says the Lord of hosts. But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears?'⁶⁵

Apart from elucidating the iconography of the panels depicting the Baptist with the Lamb, the circumstances in which the *Agnus Dei* chant was introduced into the Roman Mass also provide a context within which the fragmentary inscription for the Ruthwell panel may possibly be understood. This inscription, fragmentary now, may have been 'fragmentary' from the beginning. It is difficult to imagine where, on the borders of the panel, the phrase '*Adoramus ut non cum*' might originally have been completed. The words '*ut non cum*' run across the lower border: are we to imagine the phrase being

completed by words that ran upwards along the right-hand border of the panel? On the lower stone, the final words of inscriptions are sometimes inscribed on the lower borders of panels (eg the 'Magdelene' panel). There is no example on the lower stone in which an inscription runs on from the lower border to the right-hand border. However, as the upper stone was probably not part of the same campaign as the lower, and as one of the most striking features of the upper stone is the lack of logical planning in the layout of the inscriptions, it is possible that the inscriptions of this upper stone were never intended to bear minute examination in the same manner as those of the lower stone. Therefore, the phrase 'adoramus ut non cum' may possibly never have been completed on the panel itself.

Setting such speculation aside, the inscription as it stands seems to form part of a warning: 'we adore, so that not with ', as though it meant to suggest that 'we adore [the Lamb], so that we be not associated with ...' some group of people. As such, the extant fragmentary phrase suggests controversy and debate: the *Agnus Dei* chant was certainly introduced in just such an atmosphere. It is likely that Pope Sergius introduced it during the period in which he and the Roman church were rejecting the canons of the Quinisext Council that had been called at Constantinople by Justinian II in 692. This tried to impose a number of Eastern disciplinary customs on the universal church, and so infringed papal prerogatives in various ways. The 82nd Canon of the Council stated that:

On some venerable images is depicted a lamb at whom the Forerunner points with his finger: this has been accepted as a symbol of Grace, showing us in advance, through the Law, the true Lamb, Christ our Lord. While embracing the ancient symbols and shadows inasmuch as they are signs and anticipatory tracing handed down to the Church, we give preference to the Grace and the Truth which we have received as the fulfilment of the Law. Consequently, in order that the perfect should be set down before everybody's eyes even in painting, we decree that [the figure of] the Lamb, Christ our God, who removes the sins of the world, should henceforward be set up in human form on images also, in the place of the ancient lamb, inasmuch as we comprehend thereby the sublimity of the humiliation of God's Word, and are guided to the recollection of His life in the flesh, His Passion and His salutary Death, and the redemption which then accrued to the world.⁶⁶

On the Ruthwell panel the verb 'adoramus', which is in the first person plural of the present tense, would appear to refer to current local liturgical practice: the Lamb who daily takes away the sins of the world is adored by the community ('we'). In doing this, the members of the community disassociate themselves from those who would reject the image of the Lamb, and thus follow the Roman rejection of threats to ancient devotional and artistic traditions.

That both the Bewcastle and Ruthwell communities were aware, however indirectly, that the new chant had been introduced as part of a debate on how Christ was to be represented in art, is suggested by the wider iconographic contexts provided for the *Agnus Dei* panels on both monuments. On the western side of the Bewcastle shaft, a representation of Christ in symbolic form, as the *Agnus Dei*, was juxtaposed with a representation

of Christ in human form, as adored by the beasts. The Quinisext Council had suggested an either/or choice: either the use of the Old Testament symbol of the Lamb, or the use of the human figure of Christ (which was to be substituted for images of the Lamb). In conformity with Roman tradition, the Bewcastle cross implicitly rejects this 'either/or' choice in favour of an inclusive 'both/and'. This 'both/and' idea was expanded on the corresponding side of the Ruthwell cross: here, we have a logically ordered meditation, in five stages, on the major symbolic and realistic ways in which Christ was to be known in art and liturgy:

1. Christ is presented in human form at the bottom of the shaft, in the 'Flight into/from Egypt'.⁶⁷ There, Christ's mother gestures with her right hand to indicate the human form of her son, who is enthroned on her lap. The pointing gesture of Mary's right hand provides a clear visual parallel to the index finger of the right hand of John the Baptist, who on the upper stone indicates Christ in symbolic form.
2. Immediately above the 'Flight' scene, Christ is presented in symbolic form as the heavenly bread broken by Paul and Anthony,⁶⁸ a reference to the way in which the eucharistic bread was broken for communion at Iona.⁶⁹
3. Immediately above this, Christ is presented in human form, recognized by the beasts in the desert,⁷⁰ a highly multivalent image, referring among other things to the chants sung in the Old Roman liturgy at the moment on Good Friday when Christ's death was commemorated. The crossed paws of the Ruthwell animals form a 'chi': the animals thus recognize Christ, wittily presenting in visual terms, Christ's messianic title.⁷¹
4. Immediately above this, on the upper stone, Christ is presented in eucharistic symbolic form, as the *Agnus Dei* (fig 1), in terms of the new Roman chant recently introduced to accompany the breaking of the eucharist for communion.
5. This extended meditation was completed in the cross-head with the four Evangelists and their symbols surrounding (presumably) another image of Christ (fig 6), either as a portrait bust (such as was set at the centre of the Rothbury and Hoddum cross-heads) or as the *Agnus Dei*.

There is also a significant relationship between the *Agnus Dei* panel at Ruthwell and the Visitation scene set opposite it on the upper stone.⁷² This depicts a remarkably physical version of the Visitation, and those scholars who have written that in the panel the two female figures merely 'embrace' each other have neglected to note the manner in which Elizabeth lays her hand on Mary's womb, while Mary reaches out to touch Elizabeth's arm above the elbow, supporting the confirmatory gesture of her cousin. While Elizabeth gazes at Mary, Mary's head is half-turned to the onlookers, in the pose traditionally assumed in the iconography of the Visitation to signify her recitation of 'The Magnificat',⁷³ the canticle sung daily by all monks and clerics at Vespers.⁷⁴ The scene is by no means a mere greeting, a mere embrace: rather, it is a mutual recognition and celebration by the two women of their pregnancies.⁷⁵ As such, it depicts the moment when

John the Baptist, not yet born, began to fulfil his lifelong role: to recognize and proclaim the physical presence of Christ:

When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and exclaimed with a loud cry, 'Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child leapt for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfilment of what was spoken to her by the Lord'.⁷⁶

The angel Gabriel had already greeted Mary, at the Annunciation, as 'blessed among women',⁷⁷ a phrase now taken up by Elizabeth.⁷⁸ On the Ruthwell Visitation panel, the inscription develops the theme that Mary is blessed among women: she is associated with 'ladies', one of whom seems to be 'marpa'. In the Roman liturgy of the early eighth century, the Visitation lection was used as the gospel for the Feast of the Nativity of the Virgin (8 September), while the Lucan story of Martha and Mary⁷⁹ provided the gospel for the particularly important feast of Mary's Dormition, celebrated some three weeks earlier, on 15 August.⁸⁰ The Roman liturgy therefore provides a context within which it made sense to associate Mary, not only with other women in general, but with Martha and Mary of Bethany in particular.

If the Ruthwell Visitation panel indicates that Mary is 'blessed among women', this theme has implications for the *Agnus Dei* panel on the opposite side of the upper stone. Bede commented as follows on Elizabeth's greeting of Mary at the Visitation:

And she exclaimed with a loud cry, and said: 'Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb'. It is to be noted that the prophecy made of Christ is fulfilled, not simply by miraculous events, but by appropriate words. For He is the fruit about whom David, making an oath under the law of the patriarchs, foretells that 'I will place upon my throne one who is the fruit of your womb' [Psalms 131 : 11]. It is likewise to be noted that Mary is blessed in the same words by Elizabeth as by Gabriel: inasmuch as she is worthy to be venerated by angels and men, and fittingly to be placed above all other women.⁸¹

For Bede, the words which Gabriel and Elizabeth alike used as a greeting for Mary look forward to the final glorification of Christ. His commentary provides a literary analogy for the iconographic structure of the upper stone at Ruthwell. The ultimate fulfilment of John the Baptist's prophetic role, a role begun when he leapt in this mother's womb to announce the presence of Christ, is to proclaim, now and throughout eternity, the final glorification of the fruit of Mary's womb. On the opposite side of the upper stone John the Baptist, standing with two globes for his footstools, acts as a throne for the glorified *Agnus Dei* to whom he urgently points, as if still to proclaim that 'For this reason my joy

has been fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease'.⁸²

SUMMARY

Close observation of the panels at the top of the shafts at Bewcastle and Ruthwell makes it clear that further discussion of these carvings should consider them in the context of early Christian images portraying standing male figures who point to the figure of the lamb supported on the left hand. The fragmentary evidence for the iconography of John the Baptist in early Christian contexts does not rule out the possibility that the Anglo-Saxon panels were based on a model (or models) depicting this figure, and that they were intended to portray the Baptist. The apparent differences between the carvings and the surviving material elsewhere, if not representative of a now-lost iconographic type, can alternatively be explained as a deliberate adaptation by Northumbrian sculptors of surviving iconographic images, in order to make them appropriate to their new contexts in Anglo-Saxon stone sculpture, and to the wider context of the recently-introduced liturgical chant, the *Agnus Dei*. At Bewcastle the image was presented as the standing figure of John the Baptist pointing at the Lamb; at Ruthwell this image was adapted (further) to include the two globes. These adaptations of the Baptist figure can be understood in the light of eighth-century liturgical practices and biblical commentary, which associated John the Baptist with the Lamb as a sacrificial, paschal and apocalyptic image; they particularly emphasized John's role as the forerunner, 'angelus Domini' - the messenger who not only announced the advent of the historical figure of Christ, but who also announces his continual role as the 'Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world'. This act of present mercy would, it was believed, continue until it was finally completed in Christ's eschatological manifestation in majesty at the end of time.

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NOTES

- 1 Duncan 1833, 318–19.
- 2 Meyvaert 1982.
- 3 Meyvaert 1992. For a summary of previous interpretations, including those which interpreted the figure as John the Baptist with the *Agnus Dei*, see Meyvaert 1982, 9–10.
- 4 Meyvaert 1982, 17.
- 5 Meyvaert 1992, 115–16.
- 6 Ibid, 115–16.
- 7 Meyvaert 1982, 16.
- 8 Lowden 1997, figs 67–8.
- 9 Meyvaert 1982, 15–21; 1992, 114–19. Meyvaert’s suggestion that iconoclastic activity in the seventeenth century substantiates the figure’s identity as the Deity cannot be supported. Such an argument risks projecting backwards the perceptions of a seventeenth-century audience, presumed to be familiar with tenth- to fourteenth-century apocalyptic images of the Deity, onto Anglo-Saxons of the eighth century. A simpler explanation for the extensive damage, due to the ‘great weight of the uppermost part of the cross falling from such a height’, has been proposed by Farrell with Karkov (1992, 40), while Orton (1998) has recently questioned whether the upper stone was still set in the seventeenth century, as it is now, on the top of the shaft.
- 10 Eg Henderson 1985; cf Karkov 1997, n 2; Ó Carragáin 1999, 192.
- 11 The Bewcastle panel was examined from the vantage point of a ladder by Jane Hawkes (then of Newcastle University, England), Jim Higgins (Galway, Ireland), and Catherine Karkov (Oxford University, Miami, Ohio), on July 26th, 1996. Their findings were observed (with some trepidation and not a little amusement) by approximately fifty Anglo-Saxonists, delegates of the ‘Golden Age of Northumbria’ Conference held at Newcastle University, 22–26 July 1996. The panel at Ruthwell was examined with more decorum and privacy by the authors in bright sunlight on 18 July 1997, also from the vantage point of a ladder, and the results recorded photographically. Hawkes and Ó Carragáin, with Fred Orton, again examined the monument on 16 July 1998, and confirmed their previous observations.
- 12 National Library of Scotland, Riddle ms Vol IV, p 138; Craig 1992, I, 98, 101; Cassidy and Howlett 1992, fig 4. In his discussion of this transcription Howlett suggests that the inscription should be reconstructed as ‘[A]DORAMUS/[E]T NON CVM’ (Cassidy and Howlett 1992, 115).
- 13 Gough 1789, II, 2, pls LIV-LV.

- 14 Meyvaert 1982, 6–12.
- 15 Orton 1998; 1999.
- 16 Meyvaert 1992, II5.
- 17 Hawkes 1989; 1996.
- 18 Orton 1998; 1999; Hawkes 1999.
- 19 Meyvaert 1982, 15.
- 20 Canon 82 of the Quinisext Council (the Council in Trullo) in 692 implies such widespread use, of which it disapproves: ‘On some venerable images is depicted a lamb at whom the Forerunner points with his finger’ (Mango 1986, 139–40; see further discussion below).
- 21 Lowden 1997, figs 67–8.
- 22 Cabrol and Leclercq 1910, II, pt 1, fig 1325. The fifth-century font at the Lateran Baptistery is described in the sixth-century biography of Pope Hilary, AD 461–8 (Davis 1989, 38–41), in Panvinio’s sixteenth-century description of the Lateran Baptistry (Davis-Weyer 1986, 35–71), and in the eleventh-century description of the imitation of the Lateran at Monte Cassino (Davis-Weyer 1986, 138); it has been reconstructed from these descriptions in Cabrol and Leclercq.
- 23 Davis-Weyer and Emerick 1984, 25–8, fig 27. See also the ninth-century arch fresco in the crypt of Sta Maria in Vescovio, Torri in Sabina (Waetzoldt 1957, pi 5).
- 24 Eg the church of the Transfiguration at Mt Sinai depicts the Baptist (represented as a bust-portrait) accompanying the Lamb of the Apocalypse in the sixth-century mosaics decorating the arch over the apse (Forsyth and Weitzmann 1973, pls CXXIV–CXXV). Another example is found in the chapel of San Venantius, added to the Lateran Baptistry by Pope John IV (640–42). Here, in the apse mosaics executed under Pope Theodore (642–9), John the Baptist stands as a full-length figure balanced against John the Evangelist (who holds a book) on the other side of the apse; they accompany the central *Majestas* figure which is represented on a higher level, in a *clipeus*. As at Ruthwell, the Baptist is dressed in a long undergarment, over which is a broad ‘ancient’ shawl-like *pallium* (clearly distinguished from the narrow ‘modern’ (seventh-century) liturgical *pallia* worn by other papal and clerical figures in the apse). In his left hand he holds a slender staff-cross, towards which he gestures with his right hand (Pietrangeli 1990, 47, illus on 56–7).
- 25 Eg the sixth-century ivory panel in Berlin (Lowden 1997, fig 43); the sixth-century icon from Mt Sinai (Galavaris 1990, fig 4).
- 26 Eg the sixth-century presbytery mosaics in San Vitale, Ravenna (Lowden 1997, fig 77); the sixth-century apse mosaics of Santi Cosma e Damiano, Rome (Schiller

- 1971b, fig 594).
- 27 Davis 1989, 39.
- 28 Ibid, 45.
- 29 Dependence on written descriptions of images cannot be ruled out. There is evidence that such a practice was adopted at Hexham in the seventh century (Bailey 1990), and at Sandbach, Cheshire, in the ninth (Hawkes 1995a; forthcoming).
- 30 Eg Schapiro 1944; Hawkes 1989; 1993; 1995a; 1995b; 1996; 1999.
- 31 Bailey and Cramp 1988, illus 94.
- 32 Cassidy 1992, pls 23, 16; Schapiro 1944, note 3; Saxl and Wittkower 1948, 15; see also Ó Carragáin 1986, 383–90; 1999, 192–5. The apparently unique omission of the raven from the Paul and Anthony panel at Ruthwell may denote a similar process of adaptation of the well-established iconographic type of the two hermit saints (see Ó Carragáin 1988, esp 39–41).
- 33 Henderson (1985, 9) suggested the ‘globes’ could have been inspired by the tendency to depict John the Baptist standing on rocks, often stylized in their form, in images of the Baptism of Christ. Such depictions, however, were part of a well-established narrative iconographic tradition that was distinct from the more iconic tradition reserved for presenting the Baptist in association with the *Majestas*. The apocalyptic connotations of this (latter) tradition, and its association with the globe, probably best explain the presence of the globes, and their function as ‘footstools’ of the figure (see further below). The ‘apocalyptic flavour’ of the Ruthwell figure would also be enhanced by the association of the panel with the depiction of the evangelists and their symbols (presumably originally set round a central portrait of Christ), in the cross-head above (fig 6; Cramp 1978).
- 34 John 1:29–34, 35–6; Henderson 1985, ro.
- 35 ‘*Chronica maiora*’, *CCSL* 1977, 529–30.
- 36 Willis 1968, 221; Atkinson 1977, 5; cf Ó Carragáin 1978; 1994; 1996, 393–4.
- 37 ‘Homily 1:15’, Martin and Hurst 1991, I, 149. ‘Non solum autem lauit nos a peccatis nostris in sanguine suo quando sanguinem suum dedit in cruce pro nobis uel quando unusquisque nostrum mysterio sacraesanae passionis illius baptismi aqua ablutus est uerum etiam cotidie tollit peccata mundi lauatque nos a peccatis nostris cotidianis in sanguine suo cum eiusdem beatae passionis ad altare memoria replicatur cum panis et uini creatura in sacramentum carnis infidelium manibus ad perniciem ipsorum funditur et occiditur sed fidelium ore suam sumitur in salutem’ (*CCSL* 1955, 105–6).
- 38 Jungmann 1986, II, 334.

- 39 John 1:29, 36.
- 40 Revelation 5:6.
- 41 Especially the descriptions of the slaughter of the Paschal Lamb in Exodus 12 and Deuteronomy 16. These descriptions (more commonly Exodus 12) were used at Rome as the second Old Testament reading at the ancient service of readings to commemorate Christ's death, at the ninth hour on Good Friday (Klockener 1991, 221–3).
- 42 I Corinthians 11:26.
- 43 Duchesne 1886–92, I, 376. 'He laid it down that at the time of the breaking of the Lord's body the clergy and people should sing 'Lamb of God who takest away the sins of the world, have mercy on us' (Davis 1989, 86–7).
- 44 Jungmann 1986, II, 337. The earliest musical settings of the chant are discussed by Atkinson (1977). He points out, however, that, with one exception, all the surviving *Ordines Romani* consistently assign the singing of the *Agnus Dei* to the 'schola cantorum'. The exception is the monastery at Luxeuil (c 775) where the chant was performed by the 'fratres', probably the monks (Atkinson 1977, 7). He suggests that the chant may have been performed 'a clero et a populo' (as described by the *Liber Pontificalis*) in smaller churches, perhaps those without a trained choir (see also Schildbach 1967; Atkinson 1981).
- 45 Ó Carragáin 1978, 134; Lapidge 1991, 19, 97, 100 etc. Musically elaborate settings for the chant only develop from the twelfth century when it was finally taken over by the trained singers of the choir, and the celebrant himself began to recite the *Agnus Dei*.
- 46 In the early fifth century Paulinus of Nola had given lapidary expression to the association between the Lamb and the Cross in his verse titulus for the apse of his new basilica at Nola: 'sanctam fatentur crux et agnus victimam' (the cross and the lamb reveal the holy victim; Arnulf 1997, 56).
- 47 Revelation 1:7, quoting Zechariah 12:10. This prophecy was included in the Greek inscription for the apocalyptic Crucifixion image in Sta Maria Antigua, Rome, 705–7 (Nordhagen 1968, 48, 50–4, pi LIII).
- 48 John 1:29.
- 49 Gamber 1983; Jungmann 1986, I, 346–59.
- 50 Gamber 1983, 240, 242–3, 246; Jungmann
- 51 1986, I, 339, 353–4; II, 338.
- 52 5 1. Luke 18:9–14. Ó Carragáin 1986, 390.
- 53 John 1 :28.

- 54 See De Lubac 1949, 9–137; Congar 1968, 61–248; Angenendt 1994.
- 55 Matthew 11:8.
- 56 Matthew 3:4.
- 57 Cf Henderson 1985, 9–10.
- 58 Matthew 11:10–15.
- 59 ‘Homily 1:15’, Martin and Hurst 1991, 149; *CCSL* 1955, 105–6.
- 60 John 3:27–30.
- 61 John 3:30.
- 62 See Dürig 1952. The notional association of the globes with a ‘footstool’ (‘scabellum’) was well established in biblical and exegetical literature, being cited in Matthew 5:33–7, 22:44; Mark 12:36; Acts 2:34–5, 7:48–9; I Corinthians 15:25; Hebrews 1:13, 10:13; Psalms 98/9:5, 109/10:1, 3 (the first psalm to be sung at vespers each Sunday, and understood to refer to Heaven and the heavenly liturgy); and Isaiah 66: r: ‘Haec dicit Dominus: caelum sedes mea, terra autem scabellum pedum meorum’.
- 63 Ó Carragáin 1986, 385–6; cf 1988, 11. ‘Sunt qui duo animalia, duo intellegant testamenta, nouum et uetus, quae uere animantia sint, quae uitalia, quae spirent et in quorum medio Dominus cognoscatur’ (‘*Comment in Abacuc*’, *CCSL* 1970, 621). There seems to be a literal illustration of Christ, known between the Old and New Testaments, in the portrait bust at the top of the canon tables on fol 4r of the Book of Kells. Here, the bearded and nimbed male figure (Christ?), in a gesture reminiscent of the *orans* pose (a pose not dissimilar from that of the portrait bust of Christ in the previous opening, fol 2v) holds aloft two books, one on either side of his body. On fol 2v Christ, bearded and nimbed, was illustrated between two animals (the three crosses over his head clearly refer to the three crosses of Calvary where Christ was made known between the two thieves). On the same opening, in the bust on fol 3r, a reference to the eucharistic wine is combined with two animals (Ó Carragáin 1994, 426–30, pls 2, 3; for fol 4r, see pi 5). On fol 4r, in the third and final portrait-bust of the sequence, Christ, by holding aloft the two books, indicates the other way in which he was to be known in the Mass: through the solemn intonation of the sacred scriptures. Thus, the unified sequence of portraits on fols 2r–4r of Kells seems to imply a direct reference to Jerome’s commentary on the Old Latin text of Habbakuk 3:3.
- 64 Malachy 3:1: ‘See, I am sending my messenger (‘angelum meum’) to prepare the way before me’; Malachy 4:5: ‘Lo, I will send you the prophet Elijah before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes’.
- 65 Malachy 3:1–2.

66 Mango 1986, 139–40.

67 Cassidy 1992, pi 25.

68 Cassidy 1992, pi 24.

69 Ó Carragáin 1988.

70 Cassidy 1992, pi 23.

71 Ó Carragáin 1986; 1999.

72 Cassidy 1992, pi 14.

73 Luke 1:46–55.

74 Schiller 1971a, 55–6.

75 It should be noted that this version of the scene represents yet another instance of the tendency to adapt iconographic images for specific purposes. In most versions of the Visitation which depict the two women embracing (rather than conversing), Mary is shown with her arms round Elizabeth's shoulders, while her cousin, if not similarly disposed, has one hand on Mary's womb, confirming the fact of her miraculous and saving pregnancy (Schiller 1971a, 55, eg, figs 75, 130: eighth-century ivory 'Genoels Elderen Diptych'; tenth-century ivory from Milan or Reichenau; cf Hawkes 1993).

76 Luke 1:41–3.

77 Luke 1:28.

78 Luke 1:43.

79 Luke 10:38–42.

80 See Ó Carragáin 1992; Clayton 1990, 30–40.

81 Translated from Bede, '*In Lucae evangelium expositio*', *CCSL* 1960, 36.

82 John 3:29–30.