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ROME PILGRIMAGE, ROMAN LITURGY, AND THE RUTHWELL CROSS

ÉAMONN Ó CARRAGÁIN

The Anglo-Saxon high cross at Ruthwell (Dumfriesshire, Scotland) dates from the eighth century. The sculptors show deep familiarity with mediterranean models, and the unparalleled care the designer took to provide inscriptions on all sides of the monument enables us to interpret the Cross with some confidence. On the two narrow sides of the cross, on the broad panels around fine panels of foliage interlace, the designer had an English poem inscribed. This poem makes the Cross itself speak of its encounter with Christ on Calvary: it makes no reference to Christ carrying the Cross, but has the Cross speak of the dilemma it underwent when it saw itself required to carry Christ to his death: »I dared not tilt« (6); »I [dared not] bow« (3).¹ The poem presents the role of the Cross at the Crucifixion as reminiscent of Mary's role at the Annunciation: the Crucifixion here requires the startled but obedient cooperation of the Cross, as the Incarnation had required the cooperation of Mary. The poem, like the epistle for the sixth Sunday of lent (Phil. 2:5-11), emphasizes that incarnation and Crucifixion formed part of a single divine act which culminated in the glorification of »the Lord of Heaven« (15). One analogue for the poem's originality is the ancient tradition, known to Bede, that the first Good Friday fell on 25 March, the spring equinox in the Julian calendar. On this date, from the late seventh century, the Annunciation had begun to be celebrated at Rome; gradually, in the first half of the eighth century, celebration of the feast spread from Rome to Northumbria.²

¹ The layout of the poem is the same on each of the two narrow sides: the text runs from left to right across the upper border of the lower of the two stones from which the monument is constructed, then continues in short letter groups in a unified column of runes which runs down the right side of the border. A separate sentence is then inscribed so as to form a similar column on the left border. The order in which these four columns must be read to make sense of the poem indicates the order in which the Cross as a whole must be read: moving sunwise around the monument. The order of the figural panels, and in general the layout of the Latin inscriptions around them, are consistent with this way of reading the cross. On the relation between poem and iconography on the Cross, see ÉAMONN Ó CARRAGÁIN, *The Ruthwell Crucifixion poem in its iconographic and liturgical contexts*, in: *Peritia* 6-7 (1987-1988) 1-71 and pls I-III. To save space, in the present short paper I quote the Ruthwell poem in modern translation only; the original Old English text, and discussion of words or phrases (here given between braces, thus: { . . . }) restored to the Ruthwell text (by comparison with the manuscript text of the related poem, *The Dream of the Rood*), will be found in the *Peritia* article. The line numbering of quotations from the Ruthwell poem follows the numbering in that article. To inscribe the vertical limbs of crosses in vertical columns made up of short letter-groups, without word-

division but reading left-to-right (so that the onlooker did not have to tilt his head to read the inscription) is common on Byzantine crosses and reliquaries from the sixth to the tenth centuries, and on crosses and reliquaries where (although Roman script is used) Byzantine influence is strong: see, for examples, KURT WEITZMANN and IHOR ŠEVČENKO, *The Moses Cross at Sinai*, in: *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 17 (1963) 385-98, Plates I-XVIII, reprinted in KURT WEITZMANN, *Studies in the arts at Sinai* (Princeton NJ, 1982) study IV; ERICA CRUIKSHANK DODD, *Three early byzantine silver crosses*, in: *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 41 (1987) 165-80 [= *Studies on art and archaeology in honor of Ernst Kitzinger on his seventy-fifth birthday*, edd. WILLIAM TRONZO and IRVING LAVIN (Washington DC)]; VIKTOR H. ELBERN, *Zum Justinuskreuz im Schatz von Sankt Peter in Rom*, in: *Jahrbuch der Berliner Museen* 6 (1964) 24-58; CHRISTA BELTING-IHM, *Das Justinuskreuz in der Schatzkammer der Peterskirche zu Rom*, in: *Jahrbuch des Römisch-Germanischen Zentralmuseums, Mainz* 12 (1965) 142-66; HENRY M. WILLARD, *The staurotheca of Romanus at Monte Cassino*, in: *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 30 (1976) 55-64, Plates 1-6.

² On the gradual acceptance of the feast in Northumbria before ca. AD 750, see MARY CLAYTON, *The cult of the Blessed Virgin in Anglo-Saxon England* (Cambridge 1990) 30-38: the feast was known to Bede (36). On the tradition that the Crucifixion took place on 25

The iconography on the first broad side of the Cross develops the theological ideas of the first half of the poem by showing how they are reflected in the spring and lenten liturgy. The programme now begins (on the base of the cross: see Plate 79a) with a representation of Christ naked on the Cross (the poem, similarly, stressed Christ's nakedness: »God almighty stripped himself«, 1). Directly above this panel there is an Annunciation scene, inscribed »INGRESSVS A[NG] . . . B[E]« (Pl. 79a. 80a). This fragmentary text is presumably to be expanded »INGRESSVS ANG(elus) . . . BE(nedicta)«: it is likely that the inscription quoted Lk 1:28 in whole or in part, or an antiphon based on that verse. Antiphons based on Lk 1:28, or clauses from it, were used on 25 March in the earliest surviving Roman antiphonaries for Mass and Office. The beginning of the iconographic programme, like the first half of the poem, associates the Crucifixion with the Annunciation.³

The iconographic programme proceeds from Mary's acceptance of Christ to further images of how Christ was encountered in conversion and repentance. Directly above the Annunciation panel there is an image of conversion, the Blind Man (Pl. 80b). The inscription combines a paraphrase of the *incipit* of John 9:1 (»Et praeteriens vidit Iesus hominem caecum a nativitate«) with a final phrase (»et s[anauit eum]«) which seems to be a summary of the narrative of John 9:1–38, the lection »De Ceco Nato«. Directly above this panel, the Mulier Peccatrix (Lk 7:36–47) is represented: the inscription quotes Lk 7:37–38 (Pl. 80c). The two gospel lections here quoted were important in the Roman lenten liturgy of the seventh and early eighth centuries. During lent two groups of people were given special attention: the catechumens, who in a series of ceremonies were instructed in the faith and exorcized; and the public sinners, who were expelled from the church building on Ash Wednesday, lived lent in penance, and were readmitted solemnly to the church and the eucharist on Holy Thursday morning. The lection »De Ceco Nato« (Jn 9:1–38) had been associated with the catechumenate from at least the early fifth century. In the seventh and

March, see Bede on Luke 1:26: *In Lucae euangelium expositio*; in *Marci euangelium expositio*, ed. D. HURST (CCSL, 120) (Turnhout 1960) 30; VINCENZO LOI, *Il 25 Marzo data pasquale e la cronologia giovannea della passione in età patristica*: *Ephemerides Liturgicae* 83 (1971) 48–69; A. M. M. SCHEER, *Aux origines de la fête de l'Annonciation*: *Questions liturgiques* 3 (1977) 97–169; THOMAS J. TALLEY, *The origins of the liturgical year* (New York 1986) 91–99.

³ The presentation of Christ naked on the Cross was an early Roman tradition given new prominence in the early eighth century by Pope John VII (705–707) in the triumphal arch of Santa Maria Antiqua: see PER JONAS NORDHAGEN, *John VII's adoration of the Cross in S. Maria Antiqua*: *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 30 (1967) 388–390; PER JONAS NORDHAGEN, *The frescoes of John VII (AD 705–707) in S. Maria Antiqua in Rome* (*Institutum Romanum Norvegiae. Acta ad Archaeologiam et Artium Historiam Pertinentia*, III) 43–54. The best edition of the non-runic inscriptions on the cross is ELISABETH OKASHA, *Handlist of Anglo-Saxon non-runic inscriptions* (Cambridge 1971) 110–111. The letters »B[E] . . .«, on the upper left-hand border of the Annunciation panel were not recorded by OKASHA in her edition; but the »B« is clearly visible on the cross, and the traces of the next letter

of the inscription correspond better to the letter »E« than to any other (Pl. 79a). For the uses of Lk 1:28, in whole or in part, on 25 March in the Roman liturgy, see RENÉ HESBERT, *Antiphonale missarum sextuplex* (Brussels, 1935) No. 33, 42–45, Offertory of the Mass: »Ave Maria gracia plena«; RENÉ-JEAN HESBERT and RENÉ PRÉVOST (edd.), *Corpus Antiphonalium Officii* (*Rerum Ecclesiasticarum Documenta, Series Maior, Fontes*) 6 vols (Rome 1963–1979) III, 284, No. 3340, *Annunciatio S. Mariae*: »Ingressus angelus ad Mariam, dixit: Ave, gratia plena, Dominus tecum; benedicta tu in mulieribus, et benedictus fructus ventris tui«. This antiphon is recorded by HESBERT and PRÉVOST for both the »*Cursus Romanus*« (Vol. I, 124–125: *Veronensis*) and the »*Cursus Monasticus*« (III, 215–217: *Fossatensis*). HESBERT and PRÉVOST also record a shorter antiphon which omits the clauses after »*Dominus tecum*« (No. 3339; III, 284). The letters »B[E]« on the Ruthwell cross may possibly indicate that the Ruthwell community used an antiphon analogous to HESBERT and PRÉVOST's No. 3340, rather than to No. 3339 or to the short Mass antiphon. However, it is perhaps more likely that their quotation of Lk 1:28 is an indirect, rather than a direct, reference to the liturgy: that it is a direct quotation of the scriptural verse various clauses of which were sung antiphonally on 25 March.

eight centuries it had been assigned to the Wednesday of the Fourth week of lent. On this week the major ceremonies of the catechumenate were held. Known (from the opening words) as *Apertio Aurium*, they comprised three »handings on« (*traditiones*): of the Gospels, the Our Father and the Creed. In the image of the blind man, the Ruthwell designer chose an image intimately linked with the public ceremonies of the Roman catechumenate.⁴

The lection »*De Muliere Peccatrice*« occurs in all the early Roman lists of gospel lections (the earliest of these *Capitula lectionum* is dated as of the early seventh century) for the Friday of the sixth week after Epiphany. The lection can only have been read on this day in the years when there were six full weeks between Epiphany and Ash Wednesday (i.e. when lent did not fall very early in the year). When the lection was read, its relevance to the public sinners (to be singled out soon afterwards, on Ash Wednesday) must have been obvious. But the lection was also associated in other ways with lent, and in particular with Holy Thursday. A long antiphon, which includes a paraphrase of the same verses from the lection as are inscribed around the Ruthwell panel, is preserved in several Office antiphonaries, both of the *Cursus Romanus* and of the *Cursus Monasticus*, for the ceremony on Holy Thursday evening in which the pope washed the feet of twelve subdeacons, his *cubicularii*:

In diebus illis, mulier quae erat in civitate peccatrix, ut cognovit quod Jesus accubuit in domo Simonis leprosi, attulit alabastrum unguenti; et stans retro secus pedes Domini Jesu, lacrimis coepit rigare pedes ejus, et capillis capitis sui tergebat, et osculabatur pedes ejus, et unguento ungebat.

In addition, Pope Gregory II (715–31), who provided masses for the Thursdays of lent, assigned the lection »*De Muliere Peccatrice*« to the end of his series, the Thursday before Holy Thursday (in the fifth week in lent). DOM C. CALLEWAERT suggested, in the light of the surviving antiphons for Holy Thursday evening, that Pope Gregory may have assigned the lection to this day to prepare congregations for the reconciliation of penitents itself, which took place just a week later on Holy Thursday morning.⁵

⁴ For the uses of »*De ceco nato*« on the fourth week of lent (until the fifth century, on the fourth Sunday; then moved to Wednesday of the fourth week) and its importance in the catechumenate, see THEODOR KLAUSER, *Das römische capitulare evangeliorum. I. Typen*, Second, revised edition (Münster 1972) 22 No. 77: Wednesday of fourth week (earliest series of Gospel lections, dated about AD 645) and all later series; THIERRY MAERTENS, *Histoire et pastorale du rituel du catéchuménat et du baptême* (Paroisse et liturgie, collection de pastorale liturgique, No. 56) (Bruges 1962) 126–129, 146–157; A. DONDEYNE, *La discipline des scrutins dans l'église latine avant Charlemagne*: *Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique* 28 (1932) 5–33 and 751–787; BALTHASAR FISCHER, *Der patristische Hintergrund der drei großen Johanneischen Taufperikopen von der Samaritanerin, der Heilung des Blindgeborenen und der Auferweckung des Lazarus am dritten, vierten und fünften Sonntag der Quadragesima*, 61–79 in GIUSTINO FARNEDI (ed.), *I simboli dell'Iniziazione cristiana: Atti del I congresso internazionale di liturgia*, Pontificio istituto liturgico 25–28 Maggio 1982 (*Studia Anselmiana*, 87 [= *Analecta liturgica*, 7]) (Rome 1983).

⁵ Text of the antiphon »*In diebus illis*« in HESBERT and PRÉVOST, op. cit., III, No. 3224; for manuscripts of the »*Cursus Romanus*« which record the antiphon, see Vol. I, No. 72 (»*in cena domini, Ad Vesperos*«) 170 (*Compendiensis*); Vol. I, No. 147 (»*Ad Mandatum*«) 416–417 (*Compendiensis, Modoetiensis*); for manuscripts of the »*Cursus Monasticus*« see Vol. II, No. 72e (»*Antiphonae ad Mandatum*«) 310 (*Hartkerii*); No. 147 (»*Ad Mandatum*«) 783 (*Fossatensis*). On the papal washing of the feet of twelve subdeacons on Holy Thursday evening, see ANTOINE CHAVASSE, *A Rome, le Jeudi-Saint, au VII^e siècle, d'après un vieil Ordo*: *Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique* 50 (1955) 21–35, at 34–35. On the various uses of the lection, »*De Muliere Peccatrice*«, see KLAUSER, op. cit., 189 under Lk 7:36–47. For its use on Friday of the sixth week after Epiphany, *ibid.*, 17 No. 38 (earliest series of Gospel lections, dated about AD 645) and all later series. For its use on Thursday of the fifth week of lent, *ibid.*, 23, footnote to No. 83 (eighth century MSS of the earliest series); 69 No. 96 (second series, dated about AD 740) and all later series. In the second series and in later series Lk 7:36–47 was also used on the Wednesday after the feast of St. Lawrence (10 Au-

»*De Muliere Peccatrice*« (through lections and antiphons) was therefore associated with lent. In particular, it was significantly related to Holy Thursday, on the morning of which the public penitents were reconciled. It is possible that the lection may have been used for that very ceremony in some Roman basilicas, although our evidence for this is not conclusive. The only extended surviving description of the ceremony of reconciliation of penitents on Holy Thursday morning is in the so-called Pontifical of Poitiers (Paris, Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, Codex 227). The manuscript dates from about 900 AD and comes from the Paris region; however it reflects some much older Roman traditions. It prescribes that »*De Muliere Peccatrice*« be used when more than one public sinner comes to be reconciled. If there was indeed an older Roman tradition of the use of this lection for the reconciliation of public sinners on Holy Thursday morning, then this would explain why an antiphon based on the lection (including verses which correspond to those on the Ruthwell Cross) was sung on Holy Thursday evening. An antiphon such as »*In diebus illis*« would have provided a reminiscence, during the ceremony commemorating Christ's washing of his disciples' feet, of the lection read that morning, in which a repentant Peccatrix washed Christ's feet. If indeed there was such an early Roman use of the lection on Holy Thursday morning, the Roman liturgy may have deliberately prepared for it by the two uses of the lection earlier in the lenten season. As we have seen, the use of the lection just before lent may have been intended to provide for the penitents, just before they were expelled on Ash Wednesday, a promise of the liturgical reconciliation that awaited them on Holy Thursday; Gregory II's decision to insert the lection on the octave before Holy Thursday may have been intended to reinforce this early use of the lection just before lent. In that case, some Roman basilicas in the eighth century may possibly have known three lenten uses of the lection, in a cumulative series of which the climax would have been the ceremony of reconciliation on Holy Thursday morning itself. The Arsenal manuscript is late in date, and northern in provenance. Some elements of the Holy Thursday reconciliation ceremony it describes seem to provide evidence for early Roman usages, but others reflect later Frankish piety. We must therefore use it with caution as evidence for the Roman liturgy of the early eighth century.⁶ Nevertheless, the other uses of »*De Muliere Peccatrice*«

gust): *ibid.*, 35 No. 177, and all later series; but the context of the panel suggests that the earlier pre-lenten and lenten uses are more relevant to the Ruthwell Cross. For CALLEWAERT's suggestion, see his commentary on Gregory's mass-series: »Les messes des jeudis du Carême«, in his »*Sacris erudiri: fragmenta liturgica collecta a monachis sancti Petri de Aldenburgo in Steenbrugge ne pereant*« (Steenbrugge, 1940) 605–633, at 629–633 (»La messe du jeudi de la semaine de la Passion«). CALLEWAERT there notes other correspondences between the antiphons and prayers of Gregory's mass for the Thursday of the fifth week in lent and the mass for the reconciliation of penitents on Holy Thursday, e.g. the Introit »*Omnia ergo quae induxisti*« [= Daniel 3:31,42–43] which, he suggests (630) functioned as an epistle. Antiphons based on various verses from the lection »*De Muliere Peccatrice*« are recorded by HESBERT and PRÉVOST for Gregory II's new feast, the Thursday of the fifth week in lent: Vol. I (»*Cursus Romanus*«) No. 67 b, 160–161; Vol. II (»*Cursus Monasticus*«) No. 67 c, 290–291 (these include one occurrence of »in diebus illis« in S. Lupi Beneventiani).

⁶ ALDO MARTINI (ed.), *Il Cosidetto Pontificale di Poitiers* (Rerum Ecclesiasticarum Documenta, Series Major, 14) (Rome 1979) 146–161 (the Holy Thursday reconciliation ceremonies); 150–153 (the »*De Muliere Peccatrice*« lection, used »*si plures ad reconciliandum venerint*«). When only one penitent presented, the Prodigal Son lection is prescribed (MARTINI, 146–148). It is hoped that Monsignor MARTINI will provide a full discussion of the question, in what ways could Arsenal Codex 227 be considered to reflect older Roman ceremonies, in his eagerly-awaited commentary on the manuscript (Vol. II of his edition). In his introduction to Vol. I, MARTINI emphasizes that the collection was not brought together for everyday use but reflects the historical interests of its monastic compiler (62*–66*) who »*dimostra rispetto e attaccamento alla tradizione specie romana*« (MARTINI, 66*). JOSEF A. JUNGSMANN, *Die lateinischen Bußriten in ihrer geschichtlichen Entwicklung* (Innsbruck 1932) accepts the Arsenal MS as reflecting early Roman versions of the reconciliation ceremony (e.g. in its references to ambos) (83–87) as well as later developments; DOM ANDRÉ WILMART, NO-

(lections and antiphons) place the Woman who was a Sinner in significant relationships to Ash Wednesday and Holy Thursday, and so associate that figure (quite independently of Arsénal Codex 227) with lenten public penance.

Lent provided both catechumens and public penitents with a period of time, a »sacramental space«, in which they could grow towards faith and repentance while they (in union with the whole Church) prepared for Easter. Thus it is interesting that these two panels are placed between two images of the invisible growth of Christ in the Virgin Mary's womb: the Annunciation (directly below) and the Visitation (directly above them). The growth of the catechumens in the womb of the Church, and their birth from the baptismal font as from a womb, was an important theme of the Roman lenten and baptismal ceremonies; and the penitents' growth towards grace, their »*paenitentia secunda*«, was conceived as a re-enactment of their initial conversion in catechumenate and baptism. Indeed, the whole body of the Church, preparing for Easter under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, was seen as growing, through the active conversions of its catechumens and penitents, in strength, purity and joy: »*Augemur regenerandis, crescimus reuersis. Lauant aquae, lauant lacrimae. Inde gaudium de adsumptione uocatorum, hinc laetitia de absolutione paenitentium*«.」⁷

tice du »Pontifical de Poitiers« (Bibliothèque de l'Arsénal No. 227): Jahrbuch für Liturgiewissenschaft 4 (1924) 48–81, emphasizes that the ceremony contains later elements (81) but asks whether »le texte premier viendrait-il d'une basilique romaine desservie par des moines?« (62). WILMART (72) and MARTINI (54*–62*; text 245) stress the significance of the petition »ut congregationem sancti Petri in tuo apto seruitio conseruare digneris« in the third Holy Saturday litany; MARTINI suggests that the manuscript may have belonged to a monastery near Paris dedicated to St. Peter (60*–61*). Is it possible that a learned member of such a community, a man with historical interests, compiling what WILMART terms »un travail délicat d'érudition« (81), might have been particularly interested in the older traditions of the monastic community which had charge of the liturgy of St. Peter's on the Vatican? The speculation is tantalizing with reference to the Ruthwell »*De Muliere Peccatrice*« panel, as we know that in Northumbria in AD 679–680 the Abbot John, Archicantor of St. Peter's, gave detailed public instruction on the liturgy of St. Peter's: Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum*, IV, 18; *Historia Abbatum*, Ch. 6: see CHARLES PLUMMER (ed.), *Venerabilis Baedae Opera Historica* 2 vols (Oxford 1896) II, 484, index, s.v. »Johannes archchanter«. As one might expect from its prescription of the »*De Muliere Peccatrice*« lection for Holy Thursday morning, the Arsénal manuscript records for its Mandatum ceremony that evening two antiphons based on that part of the lection quoted on the Ruthwell Cross: one is »*In diebus illis mulier quae*« (HESBERT and PRÉVOST No. 3224); the other seems to be a shortened version: »*Mulier quae erat in ciuitate*« (MARTINI, 190).

⁷ Old Gelasian Sacramentary, ceremony of reconciliation on Holy Thursday morning, address of deacon to officiating bishop: LEO CUNIBERT MOHLBERG (ed.), *Liber sacramentorum Romanae Ecclesiae ordinis anni circuli* (Rerum ecclesiasticarum documenta, series

maior, Fontes, IV), third edition (Rome 1981) par. 353, 56. On lent as »un espace sacramentel« to allow growth in repentance, and on the re-enactment of the catechumenate by public sinners, see ADRIEN NOCENT, *Aspects célébratifs de la réconciliation dans la tradition liturgique occidentale: Ephemerides liturgicae* 97 (1983) 347–361; JAMES DALLAN, *The reconciling community: the rite of penance* (New York 1986) 62–73. On the growth of the catechumens in the womb of the church, see MICHEL DUJARIER, *Le catéchuménat et la maternité de l'église: La Maison-Dieu* 71 (1962) 78–93; PAUL A. UNDERWOOD, *The fountain of life in manuscripts of the gospels*, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 5 (1950) 41–138 and Plates 1–76. Space does not permit discussion of the important question, whether the Ruthwell Cross »*De Muliere Peccatrice*« panel might indicate the existence in the eighth century at Ruthwell of an »ordo paenitentium« during lent, or whether instead the designer of the cross refers to lenten ceremonies prescribed in sacramentaries and antiphonaries but not put into practice; on the question of public penance in Britain and Ireland in the period, see KATE DOOLEY, *From penance to confession: the Celtic contribution: Bijdragen, tijdschrift voor filosofie en theologie* 43 (1982) 390–411. The Ruthwell Visitation scene is provided with a (now badly damaged and fragmentary) Latin inscription in runes: it refers not only to »*maria m[ate]r*« [upper border], as one might expect in a Visitation scene, but also to »*dominnae*«, (ladies) [right border], and to »... *Martha*« [left border]. There may have been a reference to »*Elizabetha*« on the destroyed lower border, to balance »*Maria M[ate]r*« on the upper border; to »[*Maria* (i.e. Magdalena) et] *Martha*« on the left border. The Mulier Peccatrix was identified by Gregory and Bede with Mary Magdalen: see VICTOR SAXER, *Le culte de Marie Madeleine en Occident des origines à la fin du moyen âge: Cahiers d'archéologie et d'histoire* 3, 2 vols (Auxerre and Paris 1959) I, 2–6.

The second half of the English vernacular poem is of particular interest in the context of Anglo-Saxon pilgrimage to Rome. It describes the followers of Christ coming together at the Holy Cross in Jerusalem on Good Friday evening, after Christ has died, and describes the Cross as bending to present the body of Christ to the hands of these followers. It finally describes how the followers of Christ gather around the body of the Lord, and contemplate it. In translation it reads:

- 9 Christ was on the Cross.
- 10 But eager ones came thither from afar,
- 11 the noble ones [came] together. I looked upon all that:
- 12 I was terribly afflicted with sorrows; I bowed *{to the hands of the men.}*
- 13 Wounded with arrows,
- 14 they laid him down, limb-spent; they stood by the head of his dead body;
- 15 there they looked on *{the Lord of heaven}* . . .

No convincing literary or iconographic parallels have yet been found for the idea of the Cross bending to present Christ's body to His followers. We have here the earliest description in the English language, and perhaps in any Germanic language, of the following ideas: a symbolic pilgrimage on Good Friday to the Holy Cross in Jerusalem; a communal reception of the body of Christ from the Holy Cross on that evening; and a communal contemplation of the *corpus domini* by Christ's followers gathered at the Holy Cross. The most likely explanation for these startlingly original ideas is that the poet and the community at Ruthwell enacted, on Good Fridays in the eighth century, liturgical ceremonies based on those of the City of Rome. The Roman Good Friday liturgy, as described in *Ordo XXIII* (mid-eighth century) involved a symbolic pilgrimage to Jerusalem. On Good Friday at the eighth hour the Pope and clergy proceeded barefoot carrying a reliquary of the Cross from the basilica of the Lateran to the basilica of Santa Croce in Gerusalemme (where it was believed that St. Helena had placed the relics of the Cross she brought from Jerusalem). The Lateran Cross-reliquary was placed on the altar at Santa Croce, opened, and venerated by all the people in due order while the Good Friday lections, culminating in St. John's Passion, were being chanted (*Ordo XXIII*, pars 9–20). To congregate at Santa Croce, the equivalent in Rome of Golgotha, was symbolically to come together at »Hierusalem« itself. The Papal ceremony at Sancta Croce was conservative: the pope and senior clergy did not receive communion, but returned to the Lateran directly after the solemn prayers which closed the ceremony of the veneration of the Cross (pars 20–21). But the custom of receiving communion on Good Friday evening, first introduced from the East into the various *tituli* of the city in the late seventh century, was clearly widespread at Rome in the eighth century. *Ordo XXIII* says that, after the ceremony of veneration was finished at Santa Croce and the pope had departed, those who wished to communicate did so, from the bread consecrated on Holy Thursday and preserved in »*capsis*« (cylindrical boxes). People, if they preferred, could communicate at the services of readings held that evening in the other churches of the city:

It would be natural for the Ruthwell rune-masters to refer not only to »Martha« but also to her sister, represented in the panel immediately below the Visitation scene. Bede's interest in the liturgical cult of Mary Magdalen is particularly interesting: he knew of the

Gallican feast of the two saints, Martha and Mary of Bethany, on 19 January: SAXER, op. cit., I, 36; he is also the earliest Western authority to record the feast of St. Mary Magdalen on 22 July (Bede is here reflecting the tradition of Constantinople): *ibid.*, I, 40–45.

Attamen apostolicus ibi non communicat nec diaconi. Qui vero communicare voluerit, communicat de capsis de sacrificio quod V feria servatum est. Et qui noluerit ibi communicare, vadit per alias aecclesias Romae seu per titulos et communicat. (par. 22)⁸

Ordo XXIV, which was compiled for a city outside Rome, in France or Italy, shows us one way in which this new practice of receiving communion on Good Friday evening could be integrated with the veneration of the Cross. In this veneration ceremony the clergy and people came forward and kissed a wooden cross supported between two acolytes before the high altar (*«interposito spatio inter ipsam et altare»*: par. 29). While the people saluted the Cross, two senior priests (*«presbyteri vero duo priores»*), immediately after having themselves venerated the Cross (*«mox ut salutaverint»*), proceeded to the sacristy, or wherever the consecrated bread which remained after Holy Thursday was kept, and placed the *corpus domini* on a paten (par. 32). They then proceeded back to the altar: two subdeacons went before them, one carrying the large paten with the *corpus domini* and the second a chalice of unconsecrated wine. The priests then received the paten and chalice from the subdeacons and placed them on the bare altar (par. 33). Thus while the veneration was going on, the congregation could see the *corpus domini* being solemnly laid on the altar just behind the wooden cross which they were venerating. The consecrated bread lying on the altar provided a sacramental image of Christ's body emptied by its wounds of blood (the absence of the blood was emphasized by the presence on the altar, next to the *corpus domini*, of a chalice which contained, not the *sanguis domini*, but unconsecrated wine). At the end of the veneration of the wooden cross, the cross was put away in its own place (*«Qua salutata et reposita in loco suo»*, par. 36). At this moment in the ceremony the congregation no longer gazed on the Cross but on the *corpus domini*, lying before them on the altar. The congregation would, in the words of the Ruthwell poem, have »looked on the [Lord of Heaven]« (15), in a sacramental image of his wounded and exhausted body, emptied even of its blood. In Ordo XXIV, this moment of pause and contemplation was immediately completed by eucharistic action. The presiding bishop sang the introduction *«praeceptis salutaribus moniti»* and the Our Father. Then he consecrated the wine by placing a piece of the bread in the chalice (to symbolize the completion of Christ's sacrifice in His resurrection). The congregation communicated in silence, and the ceremony was completed with a simple blessing (par. 39). In three Gelasian sacramentaries we find references to a ceremony which differed in certain respects both from Ordo XXIII and from Ordo XXIV, but which reflects a similar concern to relate the adoration of the cross intimately to communion. The sacramentaries specify that all should proceed to the church where the ceremony was to be held (*«Ora nona procedunt omnes ad aecclesiam»*), where at the beginning of the ceremony a cross is placed on the altar. These details seem inspired by the procession with the Cross-

⁸ The differences between the various ceremonies described in Ordo XXIII, Ordo XXIV and the Gelasian sacramentaries (see next note) are as instructive as the similarities: it is clear that the early eighth century was a period of liturgical experiment, in which it was felt increasingly important to combine the veneration of the Cross on Good Friday with reception of the eucharist, but in which there was as yet no firm consensus on how this should be done. See MICHEL ANDRIEU, *Les ordines romani du haut moyen âge* (Spicilegium Sacrum Lovaniense, 11, 23, 24, 28, 29) (Louvain 1931-1961) III, 269-273 (Ordo XXIII); 287-297 (Ordo XXIV). On

the use on Good Friday of unconsecrated wine which is then consecrated by contact with the *corpus domini* (a practice described in Ordo XXIV but not in Ordo XXIII nor in the Gelasians), see MICHEL ANDRIEU, *Immixtio et consecratio. La consécration par contact dans les documents liturgiques du moyen âge* (Université de Strasbourg, bibliothèque de l'institut de droit canonique, II) (Paris 1924) 20-41. On the phrase *«de capsis»*, see NATHAN MITCHELL, *Cult and controversy: the worship of the Eucharist outside Mass* (New York 1982) 95.

relic to Santa Croce in Gerusalemme in Ordo XXIII (pars. 9–12). Then follow the readings and the solemn intercessions, after which deacons proceed to the sacristy, bring out bread and wine (both consecrated the day before: »*procedunt cum corpore et sanguinis domini quod ante die remansit*«) and place them on the altar. The priest then adores the Cross on the altar, kisses the altar, and recites the Our Father with its introduction (»*Praeceptis salutaribus moniti . . .*«) and embolism (»*Libera nos domine quesumus . . .*«). These were the prayers normally said before the reception of communion at the end of mass; it is significant that in the three Gelasians both the adoration of the Cross and communion together follow this eucharistic introduction: »*Haec omnia expleta adorant omnes sanctam crucem et communicant*«. The solemn placing of the *corpus et sanguis domini* together with the Cross on the altar, the adoration of the Cross by the priest in a setting that must have also have been seen by the congregations as a veneration of the eucharistic species which at that point lay with the cross on the altar, and the use of the »Our Father« as an introduction both to the veneration of the Cross and to communion, show that the compilers of the Gelasians were just as determined as the compilers of Ordo XXIV to associate the veneration of the Cross with the veneration of Christ's body in the eucharist, and with the reception of communion at the ninth hour on Good Friday.⁹

This concern to associate the coming together of Christ's followers at the Cross, their contemplation of His body, and the eucharist, is also central to the second half of the Ruthwell Cross (where the second half of the poem demands to be interpreted in relation to the second half of the programme of figural panels). Having described how the Cross bowed to hand the body of Christ to his followers, the English poem ends with a moment of pause, as the followers of Christ gaze on His dead body. The layout of the poem, as of the other inscriptions on the cross, encourages the onlooker to proceed around the cross sunwise, with his right hand towards the monument. The onlooker who, responding to this layout, continues around the cross from the end of the poem, comes to the broad side which may originally have faced west (Pl. 79b). On this broad side there is a series of eucharistic images, the central theme of which is the recognition of Christ. Christ is recognised by Paul and Anthony in the breaking of bread in the desert, and recognized in the desert by the two animals who cross their paws to form a »Chi« (the initial letter of His messianic title »Christ«). He is adored as the Agnus Dei (the surviving »ADORAMVS« of the inscription must refer to the communal liturgy of the Ruthwell community, who probably sang the »*Agnus Dei*« chant recently introduced into the Roman liturgy at the breaking of bread for communion, not on Good Friday itself but throughout the year). The present writer has argued elsewhere that the panel in which the two animals recognise Christ refers to two liturgical texts: verse 3 of the Old Latin text of the Canticle of Habbakuk (»*in medio duorum animalium innotesceris*«), and Ps. 90:13 (»*super aspidem et basiliscum ambulabis, et conculcabis leonem et draconem*«).¹⁰ The Canticle of Habbakuk and Psalm 90 were sung as res-

⁹ The three Gelasians are the Old Gelasian, the Sacramentary of Gellone and the Sacramentary of Angoulême: see respectively LEO CUNIBERT MOHLBERG, op. cit., par. 395 (64) and par. 418 (67); A. DUMAS and J. DESHUSSES (edd.), *Liber sacramentorum Gellonensis*, 2 vols [CCSL CLIX (textus: ed. DUMAS) and CLIX, A (introduction, tabulae et indices: ed. DESHUSSES)] (Turnhout 1981) Vol. CLIX, par. 641 (86) and par. 666 (90); and PATRICK SAINT-ROCH (ed.), *Liber sacramentorum*

Engolismensis (CCSL CLIX, C) (Turnhout, 1987) par. 647 (91) and par. 679 (94).

¹⁰ See É. Ó CARRAGÁIN, Christ over the beasts and the Agnus Dei: two multivalent panels on the Ruthwell and Bewcastle crosses, 377–403 in PAUL SZARMACH (ed.), *Sources of Anglo-Saxon culture: Studies in medieval culture* 20, (Kalamazoo, MI 1986). On the possible liturgical significance of the Agnus Dei panel, see Ó CARRAGÁIN, Liturgical innovations associated with

ponsorships after the two Old Testament readings which (with St. John's Passion) accompanied the veneration of the Cross at Santa Croce on Good Friday (Ordo XXIII, pars 17–19). Poem and iconography both refer to the ceremonies at Santa Croce; taken together, poem and iconography firmly place the synaxis at the Holy Cross on Good Friday in a eucharistic setting, in which Christ's followers at Ruthwell not merely receive the »*corpus domini*« from the Cross, but recognise him in the »*fractio panis*« as Christ, and adore him as the Agnus Dei. The iconography on the second broad side of the cross completes the second half of the English poem, by showing that the breaking of Christ's body by the nails and spear on the Cross is made present, not only on Good Friday but throughout the year, when at Mass Christ's body is recognised in the breaking of bread. But the English poem deals explicitly with Good Friday itself; and it seems reasonable to suggest that there was a liturgical basis for this close association on the Cross of the Good Friday narrative and the Eucharist. It seems probable that on Good Fridays the Ruthwell community not merely gathered to venerate the Holy Cross (as in Ordo XXIII), but that they integrated this veneration with communion, in a ceremony analogous to those described in Ordo XXIV and the three Gelasian sacramentaries.

The Ruthwell community would have learnt their Good Friday liturgy, directly or indirectly, from clerics who had been to Rome and studied the Roman liturgy. In their poem's vernacular description of people coming to Holy Cross on Good Friday evening to receive the body of Christ we may have evidence that they had grasped that the Roman city liturgy expressed itself in a plurality of shrines or stational churches unified by stational processions on symbolically appropriate days. On Good Friday, the appropriate station was Holy Cross in Jerusalem, and one must ask whether on certain days, including Good Friday, they might have celebrated mass at an altar before the Ruthwell cross. The Ruthwell community might originally have got their information, directly or indirectly, from John the Archicantor of St. Peter's, who represented Pope Agatho at the synod of Hatfield in AD 679. Bede describes in some detail how John taught the liturgy of St. Peter's to monastic communities from all parts of the kingdom of Northumbria. But the Ruthwell community could have got their information from any of a number of prominent Northumbrian clerics who had been to Rome to study the liturgy of the city: Benedict Biscop, Ceolfrid, Hwaetberht, Wilfrid, Acca or others. The international interests of the senior Northumbrian clergy of this generation are exemplified by Pehthelm, bishop of Whithorn 731–35 (a possible patron of the Ruthwell Cross). Pehthelm was a friend and correspondent both of Bede and of Boniface. Like Boniface Pehthelm was from Wessex; his name as recorded by Bede (»protector of Picts«) may possibly have been, like Wynfrith-Boniface, a symbolic and programmatic name assumed on consecration to Whithorn. We do not have to assume that Pehthelm necessarily was the patron of the Ruthwell Cross: any educated Anglo-Saxon cleric during or soon after the reign of Pope Gregory II (715–31) is likely to have been anxious, as Boniface was, to make sure that liturgical ceremonies embodied the central catechetical concerns of the Roman lenten liturgy (catechumenate, public penance, processions to Holy Cross), as well as relatively recent developments like the combination on Good Friday evening of the veneration of the cross with communion.¹¹

Pope Sergius and the iconography of the Ruthwell and Bewcastle crosses, 131–147 in ROBERT T. FARRELL (ed.), *Bede and Anglo-Saxon England* (British Archaeological Reports, British series, 46) (Oxford 1978).

¹¹ On the Roman stational liturgy, see now JOHN F. BALDOVIN, *The urban character of christian worship. The origins, development, and meaning of stational liturgy* (Orientalia christiana analecta, 228) (Rome

The achievement of the Ruthwell designer was considerable. At a time when, because of infant baptism, the ceremonies of initiation were becoming fossilized in Rome itself, and when the older sense of their unity (and of their connection with lent and Easter) was being lost, he achieved an original synthesis of the older Roman traditions of initiation, public penance, and the eucharist. He placed these sacraments firmly in their original lenten setting, and in a convincing theological order: the images (in the first half of the Ruthwell poem and iconography) of encounter with Christ, initiation, and repentance, are brought to completion (in the second half of the poem and iconography) by the eucharistic and eschatological images of »*Iesus Christus iudex aequitatis*«. The designer thus produced a powerfully unified epitome of central catechetical features of the Old Roman liturgy for lent and Holy Week. The Ruthwell Cross is not only remarkably original in the way it integrates sculpture and song (for liturgical antiphons, lections and vernacular poetry were designed to be sung and chanted aloud, not read silently); it is also an extremely coherent liturgical document. The monument provides a perfectly integrated example of what the young English Church could learn from pilgrimages to Rome, and how the Northumbrians could make their own highly original syntheses of that great heritage.

1987); on imitation of Rome in northern Europe in the later eighth century, see ANGELUS ALBERT HÄUSSLING, *Mönchskonvent und Eucharistiefeier: eine Studie über die Messe in der Abendländischen Klosterliturgie des frühen Mittelalters und zur Geschichte der Meßhäufigkeit* (Liturgiewissenschaftliche Quellen und Forschungen 58) (Münster Westfalen 1973). On Pecthelm, see CHARLES PLUMMER, *op. cit.*, II, 509, s.v. »Pecthelm«. The best surveys of Anglo-Saxon contacts with Rome in the seventh and eighth centuries are WILFRID J.

MOORE, *The Saxon pilgrims to Rome and the Schola Saxonum* (University of Fribourg diss.) (Fribourg en Suisse, 1937); WILHELM LEVISON, *England and the continent in the eighth century* (Oxford 1946); and GIULIA MAZZUOLI-PORRU, *I rapporti fra Italia e Inghilterra nei secoli VII e VIII: Romano-barbarica* 5 (1980) 117–169.

Sources of Figures: 79a. 80a–c: Durham University, Department of Archaeology. 79b. British Museum.