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# VISUAL THEOLOGY WITHIN A LITURGICAL CONTEXT: THE VISUAL PROGRAMMES OF THE IRISH HIGH CROSSES

In the first place, I wish to pay tribute to Dr Peter Harbison, the greatest living authority on the Irish High Crosses. His three-volume corpus of Corpus of the Irish high crosses is the one indispensable reference work on the subject, certainly the greatest work ever written on these monuments [1]. It is at present out of print, and I hope it will not be long before it is reprinted, perhaps updated by Dr Harbison himself. For more than a generation, Dr Harbison has generously placed his unrivalled knowledge, and his equally unrivalled collection of photographs, at the disposal of all students of these monuments. Like all the scholars who work in the area, I am deeply in his debt; and would like to dedicate the present lecture as a tribute to his work on the crosses.

A number of important general studies of the Irish high crosses have been published since Harbison's book appeared. They all, appropriately, draw on and acknowledge his work, while dissenting from, or modifying, some of his conclusions. Peter Harbison himself made a further important contribution to our understanding of the political setting of an important group of Irish high crosses in 1993, soon after his book appeared, when he argued that the Ahenny group of crosses, on the borders of the kingdom of Osraighe, could be dated to the reign of the high king Maelsechnaill (AD 846-62), and reflect the king's domination over the Osraighe [2]. Raghnall Ó Floinn

1. P. HARBISON, *The high crosses of Ireland: an iconographical and photographic survey*, 3 vols, Bonn, 1992 (Römisch-germanisches Zentralmuseum, forschungsinstitut für vor- und frühgeschichte, Monographien, Band 17, 1-3).

2. P. HARBISON, *A high cross base from the Rock of Cashel and a historical reconsideration of the 'Ahenny group' of crosses, Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, section C, XCIII (1993), pp. 1-20.

built on and modified Harbison's conclusions in 2001. He agreed with Harbison's dating, and thus with the general political setting of the group; but he argued convincingly that this group of crosses were erected by the contemporary king of the Osraighe itself, Cerball mac Dúnlainge (847-88), to mark the borders of his kingdom [3]. Roger Stalley has made a number of important contributions to our understanding of the iconography, style and artistry of the crosses, starting with his major article on the Irish high crosses and European art in 1990 [4]. This article pointed out just how singular was the range of images on the Irish high crosses. Even on the relatively late crosses, such as Monasterboice and Kells, major Carolingian themes (such as the Virgin Mary) figure seldom, if at all. Stalley argues, against Françoise Henry and Peter Harbison, that the Irish high crosses draw on a wealth of early Christian iconography which is likely to have reached Ireland (from Rome, and from other early Christian sources) in the seventh and eighth centuries, some of the images perhaps as paintings on wood. Particularly valuable is Stalley's recent identification of the activities, and description of the style, of an anonymous artist who worked on the figural crosses at Monasterboice, Kells and Clonmacnois [5]. Stalley's work complements that of Harbison, and to some degree provides a stimulating counterweight to it. Following Stalley's general approach, Dorothy Hoogland Verkerk has provided further evidence of how important, for the Irish high figural high crosses, were early Christian iconography and Irish pilgrimage to Rome [6]. Two succinct and well-illustrated introductions to the

3. R. Ó Floinn, *Patrons and politics: art, artefact and methodology*, in *Pattern and purpose in insular art: proceedings of the fourth international conference on insular art, held at the National Museum and Gallery* (Cardiff, 3-6 September 1998), ed. M. Redknap, N. Edwards, S. Youngs, A. Lane, and J. Knight, Oxford, 2001, pp. 1-14.

4. R. Stalley, *European art and the Irish high crosses, Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, Section C, PRIA, Section C, XC (1990), pp. 135-58.

5. R. Stalley, *Artistic identity and Irish scripture crosses*, in *Making and meaning in insular art*, ed. R. Moss, Dublin, 2007, pp. 153-66. Peter Harbison, in arguing that Carolingian influence was central to the iconography of the Irish high crosses, accepted the thories of F. Henry, *Irish art in the early Christian period (to 800 A.D.)*, London, 1965; Ead, *Irish art during the Viking invasions (800-1020 A.D.)*, London, 1967.

6. D. Hoogland Verkerk, *Pilgrimage 'Ad limina Apostolorum' in Rome: Irish crosses and early Christian sarcophagi*, in *From Ireland coming: Irish art from the early Christian to the late Gothic period and its European context*, ed. C. Hourihane, Princeton, 2001, pp. 9-26.



Irish high crosses have been published: one by Roger Stalley, whose short book has deservedly been reprinted; and another by Hilary Richardson and John Scarry [7]. On the iconographic themes of the Irish crosses, the major contribution since Harbison's three volumes is Kees Veelenturf's fine monograph on eschatological themes [8]. In another study, Veelenturf emphasized the importance of early Christian iconography for the high crosses, as Stalley had done; and argued convincingly that insular images of the meeting of Paul and Anthony, a recurrent motif on the Irish high crosses, are derived from early Christian images from Rome of the harmony between Saints Peter and Paul. This linking of a Roman apostolic motif with the insular monastic motif of Saints Paul and Anthony meeting in the desert further reinforces the evidence provided by Stalley and Verkerk (and by Peter Harbison himself) that Roman, and in particular early Christian iconographic images (presumably acquired by pilgrims) provided much of the visual language of the Irish figural crosses [9].

It is clear that such monuments were interpreted at different levels: by nuns, monks and clerics, by educated laity, and by the illiterate. A number of scholars have addressed the question of audience, building on Ann Hamlin's brief but fact-packed article of 1987 [10]. Her article discussed the Irish high crosses: since then, similar work has been carried out on some of the Anglo-Saxon crosses, in particular by

7. R. Stalley, *Irish high crosses*, Dublin, 2004 (first published in 1996); H. Richardson and J. Scarry, *An introduction to Irish high crosses*, Cork, 1990.

8. K. Veelenturf, *Dia brátha: eschatological theophanies and Irish high crosses*, Amsterdam, 1997 (Amsterdamse historische Reeks, kleine Serie, Deel 33). On this theme, see also K. Veelenturf, *Apocalyptic elements in Irish high cross iconography?*, in *Pattern and purpose* cit. (note 3), pp. 209-20.

9. K. Veelenturf, *Irish high crosses and continental art: shades of iconographical ambiguity*, in Hourihane, ed., *From Ireland coming* cit. (note 6), pp. 83-102. On the motif of the meeting of Saints Paul and Anthony, see also É. Ó Carragáin, *The meeting of St Paul and St Anthony: visual and literary uses of a Eucharistic motif*, in *Keimelia: studies in archaeology and history in honour of Tom Delaney*, ed. G. Macniocaill and P. Wallace, Galway, 1988, pp. 1-58; Id, *Ritual and the Rood: liturgical images and the Old English poems of the 'Dream of the Rood' tradition*, London and Toronto, 2005, pp. 153-60; Id., *Ruthwell and Iona: the meeting of St Paul and St Anthony revisited*, in *The modern traveller to our past: studies in honour of Ann Hamlin*, ed. M. Meek, Gretton, Northants, 2006, pp. 138-44.

10. A. Hamlin, *Crosses in early Ireland: the evidence from written sources*, in *Ireland and Insular art A.D. 500-1200*, ed. M. Ryan, Dublin, 1987, pp. 138-40.

Jane Hawkes and Carol Neuman de Vegvar [11]. In her paper for the present volume, Dr Jennifer O'Reilly has spoken about how the monastic culture common to the two Atlantic islands, Ireland and Britain, is reflected in their illuminated manuscripts. In the present paper, I will take a similar approach, asking what is in common, as well as what divides, the monuments of the two islands.

The insular monumental stone crosses are likely to have had many sources of inspiration. Long before Christianity, large monumental standing stones were an existing feature of the prehistoric British and Irish landscapes, and such features may possibly have made early Christian clerical patrons receptive to erecting stone crosses which would update and rival such ancient monuments [12]. More direct inspiration is likely to have come from the accounts of the Holy Land, in which both the Irish and the Anglo-Saxons were particularly interested. In the early fifth century, the Emperor Theodosius II (AD 408-50) had erected a jewelled cross on top of Mount Calvary, a monument which was represented, or perhaps anticipated, by the Roman mosaic of Santa Pudenziana, which was probably executed before AD 415 [13]. Liturgical prescriptions for the Major Rogation processions each April make it clear that a monumental cross stood outside the walls of Rome, at the foot of Monte Mario [14]. A famous

11. J. HAWKES, *Reading stone,* in *Theorizing Anglo-Saxon stone sculpture,* ed. C.E. KARKOV and F. ORTON, Morgantown, WV, 2003, pp. 5-30; C. NEUMAN DE VEGVAR, *Converting the Anglo-Saxon landscape: crosses and their audiences,* in *Text, image, interpretation: studies in Anglo-Saxon literature and its Insular context in honour of Éamonn Ó Carragáin,* ed. A. MINNIS and J. ROBERTS, Turnhout, 2007, pp. 407-30; see also É. Ó CARRAGÁIN, *At once elitist and popular: the audiences of the Bewcastle and Ruthwell Crosses,* in *Elite and popular religion,* ed. K. COOPER and J. GREGORY, Woodbridge, Suffolk, and New York, 2006 (Studies in Church history, 42), pp. 18-40.

12. See J.E. WOOD, *Sun, moon and standing stones,* Oxford, 1978; S. CASARTELLI NOVELLI, *Segni e codici della figurazione altomedievale,* Spoleto, 1996, p. 138.

13. See S. HEID, *Kreuz, Jerusalem, Kosmos: Aspekte frühchristlicher Staurologie,* Münster, 2001; V. TIBERIA, *Il mosaico di Santa Pudenziana a Roma: il restauro,* Todi, 2003, pp. 79-85; CASARTELLI NOVELLI, *Segni e codici* cit. (note 12), p. 65.

14. NEUMAN DE VEGVAR, *Converting the Anglo-Saxon Landscape* cit. (note 11), pp. 422-6; J. DYER, *Roman processions of the Major Litany (litaniae maiores) from the sixth to the twelfth century,* in *Roma Felix – Formation and reflections of medieval Rome,* ed. C. NEUMAN DE VEGVAR and É. Ó CARRAGÁIN, Aldershot and Burlington, VT, 2007, pp. 113-37; on the origins of insular monumental high crosses, see R. BAILEY, *England's earliest sculptors,* Toronto, 1996, pp. 3-41; J. MITCHELL, *The high cross and monastic strategies in eighth-century Northumbria,* in



wooden cross, revered as a relic, was erected by King Oswald of Bernicia before the battle at Heavenfield at which he defeated King Cadwallon of Gwynedd (AD 633 or 634) [15]. Before succeeding his brother Eanfrith as king of Bernicia, Oswald had been for seventeen years in exile in Dal Riata, Irish or Celtic territory on the western seabord of Scotland, which included the island-monastery of Iona [16]. It seems likely that wooden monumental crosses were erected at Iona soon after the death of the founder, St Columba. Bede states that Oswald's cross was the first cross erected in Northumbrian territory: Oswald may have been inspired, not only by Constantine's famous vision at the Milvian Bridge, but also by his experience of the monastic landscape at Iona [17].

Processional crosses, often highly decorated with gold and jewels, were a feature of early medieval liturgical ceremonies. From Ireland, we have the eighth- or ninth-century Tully Lough Cross, a wooden cross encased in bronze decorative plates, with bosses studded in amber [18]. This processional cross was found in 1986 in a lake in Co. Roscommon, near the important Patrician foundation of Kilmore. It

*New offerings, ancient treasures: studies in medieval art for George Henderson,* ed. P. BINSKI and W. NOEL, Stroud, 2001, pp. 88-114; H. RICHARDSON, *The concept of the high cross,* in *Irland und Europa, Die Kirche im Frühmittelalter – Ireland and Europe: the early Irish Church,* Stuttgart, 1984. On the transition from wood to stone, and the forms of the Irish high crosses, see D. KELLY, *The heart of the matter: models for Irish high crosses,* in *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland,* CXXI (1991), pp. 105-45; EAD., *A sense of proportion: the metrical and design characteristics of some Columban high crosses,* in *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland,* CXXVI (1996), pp. 108-46; N. EDWARDS, *Origins of the free-standing stone cross in Ireland,* in *Studia Celtica: Bulletin of the board of Celtic studies,* XXXII (1985), pp. 393-410; M. WERNER, *On the origin and form of the Irish high cross,* in *Gesta,* XXIX (1990), pp. 98-111; R. STEVICK, *Shapes of early sculptured crosses of Ireland,* in *Gesta,* XXXVIII (1999), pp. 3-21; ID., *High cross design,* in *Pattern and purpose,* cit. (note 3), pp. 221-32.

15. Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum,* III, ii, in *Bede's Ecclesiastical History,* ed. B. COLGRAVE and R. MYNORS, Oxford, 1969, pp. 214-19.

16. Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica,* III, iii: ibid., pp. 218-9.

17. KELLY, *The heart of the matter* cit. (note 14), p. 106. On the relevance of Constantine to the Anglo-Saxons, see J. HAWKES, *The legacy of Constantine in Anglo-Saxon England,* in *Constantine the Great: York's Roman emperor,* ed. E. HARTLEY, J. HAWKES, M. HENNIG and F. MEE, York, 2006, pp. 104-14.

18. For discussion and illustration, see E. KELLY, *The Tully Lough Cross,* in *Archaeology Ireland,* LXIV (2003), pp. 9-10; see also Kelly's account, and illustrations, of the cross at the website http://irishartsreview.com/html/vol20_no3/tully/feature_tully.htm (site consulted 20 August 2009).

is now displayed at the National Museum in Dublin. From a Continental centre under Anglo-Saxon influence, we have the famous Rupertuskreuz [19]. At the Irish monastery of Clonmacnois, the stone high crosses were recently moved from their original sites into the site museum, to protect the stone against deterioration. Under the two crosses which still stood in their original position, Heather King found post-holes. This seems to indicate that at Clonmacnois the stone crosses replaced earlier wooden crosses [20]. At Clonmacnois, also, it is clear that the three crosses were placed in a significant relationship to the monastic churches on the site [21]. It is possible that, at the major site of Armagh, crosses were placed to mark the boundaries between various parts of the city [22].

On the Ahenny high crosses, the bosses and interlace decoration were clearly designed to recall precious metalwork (Figs. 1-3) [23]. The five bosses on the crosses at and near Ahenny also had an important symbolic function: to recall the five wounds of Christ, on his hands, his feet and in his side [24]. Each of the Ahenny crosses has a massive base (Figs. 1, 3) which, as first Helen Roe and then Hilary Richardson have convincingly argued, was designed to recall the hill of Calvary [25]. In addition, these crosses were equipped with capstones which, Hilary Richardson has argued, may have been intended to recall the *anastasis* aedicule, the tomb of Christ, in the *martyrium* complex at Jerusalem [26]. It seems likely, therefore, that Irish high crosses could

19. For discussion and illustration, see *The making of England: Anglo-Saxon art and culture AD 600-900*, ed. J. Backhouse and L. Webster, London, 1991, Cat. No. 133, pp. 170-73.

20. H. King, *Burials and high crosses at Clonmacnoise*, in *Death and burial in medieval Europe*, ed. G. De Boe and F. Veraeghe, Zellik, 1997, 127-31.

21. Ibidem; the matter is discussed further in T. Ó Carragáin, *Early Irish churches: architecture, ritual and memory*, New Haven and London, forthcoming.

22. See the Annals of Ulster *s.a.* 1166.4 in S. Mac Airt and G. Mac Niocaill, ed., *The annals of Ulster (to 1131)*, Dublin, 1983, p. 153.

23. See Harbison, *The high crosses of Ireland* cit. (note 1), I, pp. 11-15; II, figs 7-29; Ó Floinn, *Patrons and politics* cit. (note 3), pp. 11-12; Casartelli Novelli, *Segni e codici* cit. (note 12), pp. 48-50, 154-58.

24. M. Swanton, ed., *The Dream of the Rood*, Exeter, 1987, p. 106.

25. H.M. Roe, *The high crosses of western Ossory* (Kilkenny, 1962), p. 13; Richardson, *The concept of the high cross* cit. (note 14), p. 130; Richardson and Scarry, *An introduction to Irish high crosses* cit. (note 7), pp. 24-26.

26. Richardson, *The concept of the Irish high cross* cit. (note 14), p. 130; Richardson and Scarry, *An introduction to Irish high crosses* cit. (note 7), p. 24.



be designed, in more senses than one, to provide images of the holy places. The Irish saints' lives emphasise that a recurring temptation of Irish monks was to leave the monastery and take off on pilgrimage to Rome or to the Holy Places. Even a major saint such as Kevin of Glendalough suffered from such a temptation: his Latin *Vita* tells us that a devil entered into his clogs or shoes to make him want to leave the monastery on pilgrimage [27]. On occasion, a high cross could act as a defence against such temptation, reminding the monks that, through monastic and liturgical observance, they had Rome, and indeed Mount Calvary, at home. The life of St Berach tells us of a young monk who could not be dissuaded from setting off on pilgrimage to Rome. Finally, Abbot Berach gave in to him, and courteously agreed to accompany the young wanderer on the first few miles of his long pilgrimage, before bidding him farewell. But after a few miles, the travellers were granted a vision of Rome itself, and of the liturgical splendours of the city. To commemorate the vision, Berach had a cross erected: and, we are told, to go in pilgrimage to that cross was the same as to go the same distance on a pilgrimage to Rome. In this case, it is clear that a local cross was intended to function as a substitute for, and a distraction from, Rome or Jerusalem pilgrimage [28].

For the remainder of this lecture, I will concentrate on two related themes. The first is that, while scholarship hitherto has concentrated on identifying the subjects of the individual scenes or panels on the figural high crosses, we are now, as a result of the work done by scholars in the last thirty years, in a better position to assess the overall theological message of individual crosses: to enquire how the individual panels add up to a more or less coherent theological statement, made by the cross as a whole. The second is related to this: I shall argue that some, at least, of the high crosses were designed to reveal their meaning gradually in the course of the day, as the sun in its course shone, first on the east, then on the south and west, sides of the cross. Modern scholars usually carry out much of their study of the crosses using the excellent photographs at present

27. *Vita Sancti Coemgeni*, xxx, in *Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae*, ed. C. Plummer, 2 vols, Oxford, 1910, I, pp. 249-50.

28. The Irish vernacular life of St Berach, ch. xxx, in *Bethada Náem nÉrenn*, ed. C. Plummer, 2 vols, Oxford, 1922, II, pp. 41-42; see É. Ó Carragáin, *The city of Rome and the world of Bede*, Jarrow, 1995 (Jarrow Lecture, 1994), pp. 37-8.

available, in books or on line. When they visit the monastic sites, it is usually for relatively short periods of, say, a few hours (Peter Harbison must have been an exception to this tendency, however: to take his splendid and comprehensive set of photographs must have taken many hours of patient waiting until the sun was in the right position to illuminate particular details of the monuments). But medieval monastic or clerical viewers, who lived on the monastic site, would have experienced their local high cross(es) in a rather different way. Most, if not all, of the high crosses were intended to be erected in the open air [29]. If so, the appearance and meaning of the crosses was not static but dynamic: the appearance of the monuments changed during each day, slowly but regularly, as the sun gradually shone on different sides of the cross [30]. Such regular change offered an opportunity to designers: they could, on occasion, use the sun's course as a guide to the figural programme on their cross. The sun's daily course (and perhaps also its seasonal course through equinoxes and solstices) would have provided the community with a daily guide to where the iconographic programme began, how it developed, and where it culminated. In short, the high crosses were meant to be lived with: the interaction between cross and sun provided the local community with silent but effective lessons, daily and yearly, in how the local cross(es) should be understood. In the present paper I shall discuss five crosses where, I shall argue, the iconographic programmes were consciously designed to exploit this regular daily progression of the sun. I shall begin by examining the two earliest surviving Northumbrian

29. A possible exception is the now fragmentary Anglo-Saxon high cross at Rothbury. On its transom are holes, probably designed for candles: the use of candles on a high cross suggests that the monument was designed to stand within a church: see BAILEY, *England's earliest sculptors* cit. (note 14), p. 9; J. HAWKES, *The Rothbury Cross: an iconographic bricolage*, in *Gesta*, XXXV/1 (1996), pp. 73-90; and EAD., *Symbols of Passion or Power? The iconography of the Rothbury Cross-head*, in *The Insular tradition*, ed. C. KARKOV, M. RYAN and R.T. FARRELL (Albany, NY, 1997), pp. 27-44. The Anglo-Saxon Ruthwell cross, probably designed originally to stand out of doors, seems to have been placed within an ecclesiastical building, probably a church (perhaps on the site of the present Ruthwell Parish Church) before the end of the eighth century, or early in the ninth: for a summary of the evidence, see É. Ó CARRAGÁIN, *Ritual and the Rood* cit. (note 9), pp. 27-32, 211-13.

30. The now fragmentary cross at Rothbury, if designed to be placed inside a church, would be an exception to this theory: see the studies by BAILEY cit. (note 14) and by HAWKES cit. (note 29).



figural high crosses, Ruthwell and Bewcastle, because the designers of these monuments clearly made use of the daily course of the sun, and perhaps indeed of its seasonal course also. I shall then go on to argue that the same daily progression of the sun is important in interpreting three of the Irish high crosses: at Moone, at Kells and at Monasterboice. In each of these five crosses, the sun's daily course provides us (or in the case of the Moone Cross provided until recently, when the high cross was, quite properly, moved indoors to protect it from the weather) with a daily lesson in how the monument should be read.

The earliest Northumbrian crosses to survive are those at Bewcastle (of which only the shaft survives, not the cross-head, which seems to have been detached from the cross in the early seventeenth century) (Figs. 4-10); and the high cross at Ruthwell, torn down by Presbyterian iconoclasts in 1642 and reconstructed from damaged fragments in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries (Figs. 11-19) [31]. Each of these monuments is to be dated to the first half of the eighth century: that is, to the age of Bede or within twenty years or so of his death. We shall first look briefly at the way in which the sun's daily course helps us to interpret these two related monuments.

It is best to begin with the Bewcastle cross-shaft (without prejudice to the question, which cross was erected first, Ruthwell or Bewcastle?) because it stands in its original position and orientation, and because its association with the sun's daily and yearly course is particularly clear. As part of a panel of vine-scroll on the south side, the cross-shaft bears a sundial: clearly, the sun's course was important to the designers (Figs. 6-8). Each morning, at Bewcastle, the rising sun shines on the east side of the cross with its great vine-scroll (Fig. 6);

31. On Bewcastle, see R. BAILEY and R. CRAMP, *Cumberland, Westmorland, and Lancashire North-of-the-Sands*, Oxford, 1988 (Corpus of Anglo-Saxon stone sculpture, II); on Bewcastle and Ruthwell, BAILEY, *England's earliest sculptors* cit. (note 14); both crosses are discussed in Ó CARRAGÁIN, *Ritual and the Rood* cit. (note 9). Recent discussion of these monuments has included theories, vividly expressed but unconvincing, that they were designed, not as crosses, but as obelisks, to which the crossheads were added later: see P. O'NEILL, *'A pillar curiously engraven; with some inscription upon it': What is the Ruthwell Cross?*, Oxford, 2005 (British Archaeological Reports, British Series, 397); and F. ORTON, I. WOOD and C.A. LEES, *Fragments of history: rethinking the Ruthwell and Bewcastle monuments*, Manchester, 2007. On the weakness of the 'obelisk theory', see C. NEUMAN DE VEGVAR, *Converting the Anglo-Saxon landscape* cit. (note 11), pp. 409-10.

the midday sun shines on the south side with its sundial (Fig. 7) and, finally, the setting sun shines on the figural programme of the west side (Figs. 9 and 10). In other words, each day the sun still encourages us to see the progression, on that cross-shaft, from vine-scroll to sundial and finally to the figural programme: it defines the figural programme as the climax of this sequence of three sides.

However, it is useful to begin at the north side, on which the sun shines only in the summer, and then slantingly (Figs. 4 and 5). Medieval authors associated the north side, not unnaturally, with cold, darkness, and therefore with evil and the devil [32]. At the centre of the north side at Bewcastle, there is a remarkably large and carefully-designed panel of chequer patterns (Fig. 5). The chequer-panel is the third, or central, panel of five panels on the north side of the shaft (Fig. 4). The two panels above the chequers, and the two below, together provide an elaborate double frame for the chequer-panel: its centrality to the design of the north side is therefore impossible to miss. The inner part of this double frame, immediately above and below the chequers, consists of paired small panels of 'insular' interlace. The outer part of the double frame, at the top and bottom of the shaft, consists of two matching large panels, filled with 'Mediterranean' foliage. Both on the north and also on the south sides of the Bewcastle shaft, the designer consistently alternated panels in an 'insular' style with panels in a more naturalistic 'Mediterranean' or 'continental' style. It is as if the designer wished to emphasize that the Bewcastle community lived in a border land, between Anglo-Saxon territory to the south (where the English were much concerned to have their church reflect the 'mores Romanorum'), and Pictish, Celtic and Columban territory to the North and West [33]. This regular alternation between 'insular' and 'continental' images, not found on the other sides, also hinted that the north and south sides of the cross-shaft

32. B. MAURMANN, *Die Himmelsrichtungen im Weltbild des Mittelalters*, Munich, 1976 (Münstersche Mittelalterschriften, 33), pp. 135-203; and D. SCULLY, *The third voyage of Cormac in Adomnán's 'Vita Columbae': analogues and context*, in *Text, Image, Interpretation* cit. (note 11), pp. 209-30 (at pp. 222-30).

33. J. HAWKES, *The plant-life of early Christian Anglo-Saxon art*, in *From earth to art: the many aspects of the plant-world in Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. C. BIGGAM, Amsterdam, 2002, pp. 257-80; EAD., *'Iuxta morem Romanorum': stone and sculpture in the style of Rome*, in *Anglo-Saxon styles*, ed. G. HARDIN BROWN and C. KARKOV, Albany, NY, 2003, pp. 69-100.



should be seen as especially related: that they were designed to echo and complement each other.

The carefully-framed panel of chequers on the north side seems to have been designed to hint that the whole Bewcastle Cross should be associated with light and darkness. As the chequer-panel is on the north side, it is only after the Spring equinox and before the Autumn equinox that the sun shines on the chequers. The panel comprises « twenty-five rows of alternate four sunken and four raised chequers » [34]. To appreciate the visual effect, it is useful to begin by concentrating on the top or bottom rows of the panel. The panel presents us with three-and-a-half interlocked 'bright' equal-armed crosses, formed by the raised chequers; and, in contrast, three-and-a-half interlocked 'dark' crosses. By 'interlocked' I mean that the transom of each cross simultaneously forms part of the transom of the crosses to its left or right, while the lower vertical arm of each cross simultaneously forms the upper vertical arm of the cross directly below. Each 'bright' cross has a dark square at its central crossing, while each 'dark' cross has a bright square at its centre. The onlooker's attention naturally shifts from 'light' to 'dark' and back again, in the effort to make visual sense of the chequers. Making visual sense of them necessarily involves seeing whether they fit into larger patterns, and these patterns comprise crosses made up of 'light' and 'dark' patterns. The contrast between 'light' and 'dark', visible at all times of the year, becomes more sharply defined after the Spring equinox and towards the Summer solstice. The '-and-a-half' feature reinforces the effect of shifting, changing patterns: it encourages in the onlookers a feeling of uncertainty and mystery. It hints that they can change their minds, from moment to moment, about where the individual crosses begin and end. In addition, this feature suggests that the 'light' and 'dark' cross-patterns are endless, and might be imagined to continue 'off-screen', beyond the borders of the chequered panel. Early each morning and late each evening from the Spring equinox to the Summer solstice, as the sun's rays gradually shine on more of the sides (as well as on the faces) of the individual raised chequers, the contrast sharpens between the

34. BAILEY and CRAMP, *Cumberland, Westmorland, and Lancashire North-of-the-Sands* cit. (note 31), p. 64.

darkness of the sunken chequers and the brightness of the raised ones. The contrast then gradually diminishes from the Summer solstice onwards. As well as forming the central feature of the design of the north side, the chequers may possibly have been designed to echo visually the now-lost head of the Bewcastle Cross: an early drawing of a detached equal-armed cross-head found in Bewcastle churchyard, which may possibly be that of our monument, was also covered in a pattern of raised and sunken chequers [35]. If so, the theme of light and darkness was not only important on the shaft, but also on the now-missing crosshead.

The panel of chequered crosses, central to the north side of the Bewcastle cross-shaft, forms part of a much wider symbolic pattern which dramatizes the seasonal symbolism of light and darkness. Each morning, at Bewcastle, the rising sun illuminates the East side of the cross with its great vine-scroll (Fig. 6); the midday sun shines directly on the south side, opposite to the side with the panel of chequers (Fig. 7). The south side has, like the north side, five panels of ornament: but the pattern of alternating styles is now reversed, so that the small patterns of 'insular' interlace form the first, third and fifth panels, and the large panels of 'Mediterranean' foliage come second and fourth. The 'insular' panels, in particular, continue the sense of riddling and mystery which we saw in the chequer-panel of the opposite side. On this south side, the first panel, at the foot of the shaft, is particularly elaborate and intriguing (Fig. 8). The onlooker can hardly help noticing that there is a distinct equal-armed cross at the centre of the panel; that the interlace also forms two clear X- or *chi*- patterns, one above the other; and that these X- patterns, juxtaposed as they are, between them produce a large diamond- or lozenge-pattern which spans the width of the panel and provides a frame for the equal-armed cross. We shall see, later in this paper, that Christian commentators of the period considered X- and lozenge-patterns to be significant (compare Fig. 8 with Fig. 20). It was appropriate that such shifting, changing patterns should appear on the side of the shaft on which the sundial measures ever-mutable time. The sundial has been sculpted on the lower half of the upper panel of foliage (the fourth panel from the bottom) (Fig. 7). The sundial presumably had

35. Id., pp. 72-3, 172-3, and figs 117 and 118.



practical uses, particularly in the regulated life of an ecclesiastical settlement; but these cannot be separated from its symbolic function within the design of the cross-shaft [36]. It makes the relation between the cross and the sun's course, in the day and in the seasons, still more clear. Towards evening the sun, beginning to set, shines on the figural programme of the west side (Figs. 9 and 10). In other words, each day the sun encourages us to appreciate the gradual progression, on that cross-shaft, from vine-scroll to sundial and finally to the figural programme, which appears as the climax of an ordered sequence. The idea that the figural programme was seen as the climax of a sequence is reinforced by two further factors: first, ever since the early centuries of Christianity, Christians, where possible, prayed facing East: at Bewcastle, members of a Christian community would naturally have faced the west side of their cross for (private or public) prayer [37]. Secondly, the upper half of the west side at Bewcastle presents two juxtaposed icons of Christ: in human form (recognized by beasts whose forepaws, significantly, take up the posture of prayer), and in symbolic form as the Agnus Dei, the central figure of the heavenly liturgy of St John's Apocalypse (chs 4:1-6:17) (Fig. 10). At Bewcastle, each day the sun invites the audience to realise that the history of humankind, from Paradise (when Adam was created among the animals, and could participate in the Tree of Life) through the mutable events of history, would, for members of the body of Christ, culminate in union with Christ in the eternal liturgy of heaven (Figs. 9 and 10). The Bewcastle cross-shaft stands in as close a relationship to the daily and seasonal course of the sun as, for example, the sequence of monuments erected by Augustus in the Campus Martius at Rome; or the Roman Pantheon, where the sun still marks out the seasons across the vaulted roof and the upper part of the wall [38].

36. For an extensive recent discussion of the Bewcastle sundial, in the context of other sundials, see *Fragments of history* cit. (note 31), pp. 131-43.

37. On orientation for Christian prayer, see É. Ó CARRAGÁIN, *The Ruthwell Cross and the Irish high crosses: some points of comparison and contrast*, in RYAN, *Ireland and Insular art* cit. (note 10), pp. 118-28 (at p. 120); *Ritual and the Rood* cit. (note 9), pp. 285-7.

38. On the *Horologium Augusti*, see F. COARELLI, *Roma sepolta*, Rome, 1984, pp. 72-91; on the sun in the Pantheon, see W.L. MACDONALD, *The Pantheon: design, meaning, and progeny*, Cambridge, MA, 1976, pp. 88-93.

On the west side of the Bewcastle cross-shaft, the third panel (reading upwards from the foot of the cross) consists of a standing human figure of Christ, his right hand raised in blessing and his left arm holding a book (Fig. 10); Christ is acclaimed by a pair of (unspecified) beasts below his feet. The beasts' forepaws are raised in prayer in the ancient *orans*-posture. Their inner forepaws, now damaged by rain, seem originally to have crossed to form an X- or *chi*-pattern: if so, these animals, though unable to speak, by this silent gesture wittily acclaim Christ as *Christos,* the anointed one, the Messiah. In the panel just above at the top of the shaft, Christ is presented in a symbolic form, as the Agnus Dei. The haloed lamb is held by a male, bearded, human figure, standing frontally: « his right hand emerges from a fold of drapery and appears to be pointing across his body towards the lamb » [39]. Each day, the sun in its course encourages onlookers to relate the sundial on the south side to these two figures (Fig. 9). The level of the bottom of the central panel of insular interlace on the south side (the third panel from the bottom) corresponds closely to the level of the bottom of the third panel on the west side (« Christ acclaimed by the beasts »). At the top of the shaft, the level of the top of the uppermost panel of insular interlace on the south side corresponds closely to the top of the fourth panel on the west side ('Christ as the Agnus Dei'). The daily course of the sun from south to west would encourage an audience at Bewcastle to associate panels three to five (reading upwards) of the south side with the spatially-related panels three and four (reading upwards) of the west side. In other words, the sun itself would have daily encouraged a community living at Bewcastle to associate the sundial, ensconsed in its panel of foliage which in turn is flanked by two panels of insular interlace, with the two standing figures and their accompanying animals on the west side: each afternoon the sun, moving from south to west, silently insists on the spatial correspondence between the south and west sides.

If the figure holding the lamb represents John the Baptist, the link was particularly meaningful, because the liturgy linked the

39. Bailey and Cramp, *Cumberland, Westmorland, and Lancashire North-of-the-Sands* cit. (note 31), p. 63. Space does not permit discussion of the human figure at the foot of the west side, below the panel of runic inscriptions. See especially the recent study of this panel, D. Thomson, *The Bewcastle Falconer-Evangelist,* in *Journal of the British Archaeological Association,* CLXI (2008), 1-23.



cousins, Christ and John the Baptist, by means of the solar cycle which spans the four seasons. John the Baptist was conceived six months before Christ (Luke 1:36); while Christ was the light of the world (John 1:4-5; 9:5), his cousin the Baptist was not himself the light, but came to testify to the true light which enlightens everyone (John 1:8-9). The Baptist himself had expressed their relationship in the following words: « He must increase, but I must decrease » (John 3:30). The early medieval liturgy associated these scriptural themes with the cosmic imagery of the sun's yearly course. It celebrated the physical conceptions of Christ and John at the equinoxes of the Julian calendar: Christ on 25 March (the eighth day before the kalends of April), when the sun begins to get the upper hand over the darkness, and John on 24 September (the eighth day before the kalends of October), when the sun begins to be conquered by the autumnal darkness. It celebrated the births of Christ and John at the solstices: Christ's on 25 December (the eighth day before the kalends of January) when, at the darkest time of the year, the sun begins to 'increase' against the winter dark; and John's on 24 June (the eighth day before the kalends of July) when the sun, having reached its apogee, begins to 'decrease'. This Christian solar cycle, which is reflected for example in the martyrology of Bede [40], can be summarized as follows:

1. a[nte] d[iem] VIII Kalendas Ianuarias (25 December) Nativitas Domini [**dies crescens: a growing day**]
2. a[nte] d[iem] VIII Kalendas Apriles (25 March) ADNUNTIATIO DOMINI ET PASSIO EIUSDEM [**dies crescens: a growing day**]
3. a[nte]d[iem] VIII Kalendas Iulias (24 June) Nativitas S. Ioannis Baptistae [**dies decrescens: a lessening day**]
4. a[nte] d[iem] VIII Kalendas Octobres (24 September) Conceptio S. Ioannis Baptistae [**dies decrescens: a lessening day**]

The sun, its daily course from morning to evening, and its seasonal course defined by solstices and equinoxes, forms a major principle of unity within the Bewcastle cross-shaft.

When we turn to the Ruthwell Cross, erected some thirty miles to the west of Bewcastle and possibly by the same workship, we find

40. See H. Quentin, *Les martyrologes historiques du moyen âge: Étude sur la formation du martyrologe romain,* Paris, 1908, pp. 50, 52, 54, 55.

versions of this same figural sequence, Christ acclaimed by the beasts and the Agnus Dei (Figs. 11-19, especially Figs. 18 and 19). It is a reasonable assumption (though it must remain a speculation) that the Ruthwell Cross originally stood out of doors, and that these figural panels originally faced west, as they still do at Bewcastle [41]. Far more writing is inscribed on the Ruthwell Cross than on all the other insular high crosses put together (i.e. all the surviving high crosses in both islands, Britain and Ireland, taken together); and that writing is in two languages (Latin and English) and two scripts (runic and Roman). The Ruthwell Cross has an extremely coherent programme, based on ceremonies found in Gelasian, and at times also in Gregorian, sacramentaries. In other words, the dynamic unity of the cross can best be understood by seeing it within a context of communal rituals which must have been performed in some form by an ecclesiastical community (clerical or monastic or both?) at Ruthwell itself. The first broad side, which may originally have faced East, presents a uniquely coherent celebration of the relations between the rites of Christian initiation and the incarnation of Christ (Figs. 11-15); while the second broad side, which may once have faced west, presents an equally coherent celebration of the ways in which Christ is to be recognized, in human and symbolic forms, in the Eucharist (Figs. 16-19). In short, the Ruthwell Cross provides a profound meditation, unique in the European sculpture of the pre-Carolingian period, on the devotional implications of liturgical practice. Unlike the Bewcastle Cross, the Ruthwell monument has no sundial, and so a later generation at Ruthwell (perhaps before the end of the eighth century) could think it appropriate to move their great cross inside, out of the sun; or perhaps even to build a church building around the monument. As well as eliminating the sundial, the Ruthwell designer avoided patterns of insular interlace such as we find on the north and south sides at Bewcastle: he or she would find other visual means to celebrate what Roman and Celtic traditions held in common. Instead, the designer concentrated on expanding the Mediterranean Tree of

41. On the hypothesis that the orientation of the Bewcastle shaft can enable us to work out the original orientation of the Ruthwell Cross, see *Ritual and the Rood* cit. (note 9), pp. 32-47.



Life motif, making it central, and providing it with its own striking ekphrastic vernacular commentary, in runic letters. Two matching Tree of Life images now cover the sides of the shaft that (we may hypothesize, on the basis of the orientation of the Bewcastle shaft) originally faced north and south: the great Tree of Life images cover, not only the lower stone, but also the upper stone as far as the transom (Figs. 11 and 16). Its designer gave this cross-shaft a distinctive shape: while the Bewcastle shaft is almost square at the bottom (56 x 54 cm), at Ruthwell the two sides (originally north and south?) occupied by the Tree of Life are narrower than the other two sides. The other two sides (originally facing east and west?) were made broad so that extensive figural programs could be sculpted on them: but, as we shall see, those programmes take their meaning from the great paired vine-scrolls or Tree of Life images which, with their runic *tituli*, form the symbolic centre of the cross.

The Ruthwell designer provided the rooted vine-scrolls on the lower stone (i.e., those parts of the vine-scroll that any literate onlooker, familiar with runes, could easily read) with a carefully-edited verse narrative, in English and in runes, of the heroic death of Christ. The highly original narrative begins on the side of the cross that would probably have faced north originally (Fig. 11). Unlike the four Gospels, which tell how the Cross came to Calvary with Christ, borne by Simon of Cyrene (in the synoptic Gospels) or by Christ himself (in John 19:17), the English vernacular poem envisages the Cross already in place before Christ confronts it. Thus the English poem creates a disturbing encounter between Christ, who courageously chooses death, and a startled Cross, which sees itself required, not to defend its Lord unto death as any loyal warrior would do, but to stand fast and become its Lord's killer. The Cross was, in this way, required to become an apparent traitor to its lord, in the presence of enemies who mock them both: the most agonizing dilemma an Anglo-Saxon poet could imagine. This disturbing narrative, in which the cross and Christ are surrounded by enemies who mock them both, would have faced north if, as I have suggested, the Ruthwell Cross was originally oriented as the Bewcastle Cross still is. It was appropriate for the designer to place that part of the vernacular verse narrative in which the powers of darkness are triumphant on the north side, the side associated with darkness and the powers of evil. The opening sentence of the English poem runs across the top of the north side of

the lower stone and then, in a great column of runes, down the right-hand side of the vine-scroll:

God almighty stripped himself
when he willingly chose [*wolde*] to ascend the gallows
brave before all men: I dared not bow ... [42].

In choosing the gallows, God reveals himself: the narrative begins with a theophany. The first verb, **ondgeredæ** 'stripped himself', is remarkable: Germanic warriors normally armed themselves for battle, they did not usually strip. The verb echoed, with ironic effect, a closely related verb *ongyrede*, 'prepared himself'; more importantly it introduced into the poem an important metaphor derived from the Epistle for the Sunday before Easter (Palm Sunday), Philippians 2:5-11. There, at the beginning of Holy Week, the whole life of Christ, from incarnation to crucifixion, was seen in terms of self-stripping, self-emptying (Philippians 2:7: Greek *eauton ekenôsen*, Latin *exinanivit seipsum*, 'he stripped/emptied himself'). These two related metaphors, stripping and emptying, will shape the whole Ruthwell narrative: it begins as almighty God strips himself willingly to ascend the gallows, and ends (in the second *titulus* on the opposite narrow side of the lower stone) as Christ's followers contemplate his dead body, emptied even of its blood.

To read the two great columns of runes in which the first *titulus* is set out we have had to move from the right border of the inhabited vine-scroll to its left border (Fig. 11). If we now continue, following the sun's daily course, we come to the first broad face of the cross: the side which, it is likely, originally faced east. Each morning the rising sun would have shone directly an image of the Annunciation (at the bottom of the shaft, just above the large base) (Figs. 12 and 13) and the Visitation (at the top of the shaft, on the damaged upper stone) (Figs. 12 and 15). From at least the sixth century, the Annunciation and Visitation lections, already paired in Luke's gospel (Luke 1:26-38 and 1:39-56), were read throughout Europe in the weeks before Christmas. The liturgy of the Advent season therefore presented the Incarnation as a three-stage process: Annunciation-

42. For an edition of the original Old English text, and detailed commentary, see *Ritual and the Rood* cit. (note 9), pp. 79-80.



Visitation-Nativity. But at Ruthwell the Annunciation and Visitation are not juxtaposed; instead, they are separated by two intervening panels. Before returning to Annunciation and Visitation, it is best to enquire into the function of these intervening panels (Fig. 14). Between the Annunciation and Visitation panels the designer juxtaposed two images of encounter with Christ. First, just above the Annunciation panel, Christ heals the man blind from birth (John 9:1-38), an image of conversion; then, above it and just below the Visitation panel, the woman who was a sinner kneels at the feet of Christ (Luke 7:36-50), an image of repentance. The long captions for these panels quote from the appropriate Gospel pericopes, each of which has Lenten associations. During Lent, catechumens (whether adult or infant) were prepared for their baptism, which ideally took place during the Easter Vigil. Public sinners were, at the beginning of Lent, solemnly excluded from church ceremonies, and were required to do penance: they would be symbolically reconciled to the community on Holy Thursday. Both catechumens and penitents were seen as growing towards a new birth in the womb of the Church. The Church was seen as pregnant, and as bringing both catechumens and sinners to a new Easter birth. This provides the rationale for the Ruthwell design, in which the panels of the Blind Man and of the Repentant Woman (Fig. 14) were placed between images of the Annunciation (below them: Fig. 13) and the Visitation (above them: Fig. 15). The designer clearly saw spiritual growth, in conversion and repentance, as closely related to the growth of Christ towards birth in the Virgin's womb. The designer was evidently familiar, directly or indirectly, with the theology of Pope Leo the Great, who had written that Christ « placed in the font of Baptism that very origin which he had assumed in the Virgin's womb. He gave to the water what he had given to his Mother. For, the same power of the most high and overshadowing of the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:35) that caused Mary to bear the Saviour makes the water bring the believer to new birth » [« Originem quam sumpsit in utero Virginis, posuit in fonte baptismalis, dedit aquae quod dedit matri: uirtus enim Altissimi et obumbratio Spiritus Sancti, quae fecit ut Maria pareret Saluatorem, eadem facit ut regeneret unda credentem ».] [43]

43. LEO I, Sermon XXV, par. 5, in *Sancti Leonis Magni Romani pontificis tractatus septem*

The designer emphasized the theme of pregnancy and birth by placing a vivid panel representing an archer, in the act of drawing his bow, just above the Visitation panel and under the transom of the cross (Fig. 15). The original transom has never been recovered, and was replaced by a modern transom at the beginning of the nineteenth century. In patristic commentary, Christ was seen, in the words of Isaiah 49:1-2, as « the chosen arrow [...] hidden in [God's] quiver » – hidden, that is, in a human body and human nature, and still further hidden, between the Annunciation and his Nativity, in the womb of the Virgin Mary. This passage of Isaiah had particular resonance for people in Britain and Ireland, because it called out to people who, like them, were at the ends of the earth:

audite insulae et adtendite populi de longe
Dominus ab utero vocavit me
De ventre matris meae recordatus est nominis mei
Et posuit os meum quasi gladium acutum
In umbra manus suae protexit me
Et posuit me sicut sagittam electam
In faretra sua abscondit me [...] [44]

Listen, ye islands, and give ear, ye people from afar
The Lord has called me from the womb
From my mother's belly he has remembered my name
And he has made my mouth like a sharp sword.
In the shadow of his hand he has protected me,
and has placed me as a chosen arrow:
he has hidden me in his quiver [...] [45]

With remarkable daring, this very passage, universally applied to Christ in the Christian patristic tradition, was applied to John the Baptist on the feast of his Nativity (VIII kalendas iulias: 24 June). The Introit for Mass on that day was based on Isaiah 49:1-2, while the first scriptural reading, Isaiah 49:1-7, made all literate clerics

*et nonaginta,* ed. A. CHAVASSE, 2 vols, CCSL 138-138A, I, p. 123; translated by J. FREELAND and A. CONWAY, *Saint Leo the Great: Sermons,* Washington, DC, 1996 (Fathers of the Church, 93), p. 103.

44. Isaiah 49:1-2: Vulgate quotations are taken from *Biblia Sacra iuxta Vulgatam versionem,* ed. R. WEBER and R. GRYSON, Fourth edition, Stuttgart, 1994.

45. Trans., from the Vulgate, by the present author.



aware of the source of the Introit [46]. This unique application of Isaiah 49:1-7 to John the Baptist was a remarkable birthday-gift to John, the cousin and forerunner of Christ. The Ruthwell archer panel reminded its audience that the Visitation, represented just below, would lead to two births which would change the history of the world: that of John (24 June) and that of Christ (VIII kalendas ianuarias: 25 December). Although there is no sundial on the Ruthwell Cross the sun's yearly course, marking the seasons by solstices and equinoxes, is central to its meaning. The spring equinox, 25 March (VIII kalendas apriles), was not only the feast of the Annunciation: it was also seen to be the anniversary of the first Good Friday, and so of the ordeal of Cross, required to kill its Lord [47].

Thus at Ruthwell, when the cross was first erected, the morning sun would have shone on a uniquely coherent set of images representing spiritual birth, and relating that process to the very beginnings of Christian revelation: the growth of Christ to birth in the Virgin's womb, from Annunciation to Visitation and Nativity (Fig. 12). It is likely that, on this side of the missing transom, there were images of baptism: for the spiritual growth of the Lenten catechumenate culminated in the baptismal ceremonies of the Easter vigil [48].

The midday sun would have shone on the south side of the cross, with its second great vine-scroll (Fig. 16). Like the runic *titulus* on the other side of the stone, the ekphrastic *titulus* for this vine-scroll also begins with a short *incipit* (on the top margin of the lower stone) which leads to two great columns of runes. As on the opposite side, the right-hand column is to be read first, and then the left-hand column: the layout of the runes encourages the reader to follow the direction of the sun's course around the cross. There are significant contrasts between this second half of the runic vernacular poem and the first half on the opposite (north?) side. On the north side, the Cross and Christ were together mocked by their enemies; now (on

46. For the Introit *De ventre matris meae* see R.-J. HESBERT, *Antiphonale Missarum sextuplex,* Brussels, 1935, No. 119, pp. 134-5. See É. Ó CARRAGÁIN, *Chosen arrows, first hidden, then revealed: the Visitation-Archer sequence as a key to the unity of the Ruthwell Cross,* in *Early Medieval studies in memory of Patrick Wormald,* ed. S. BAXTER, C. KARKOV, J.L. NELSON and D. PELTERET, Farnham, Surrey and Burlington, VT, 2009, pp. 185-204.

47. See *Ritual and the Rood* cit. (note 9), pp. 83-94.

48. Ibid., pp. 146-7.

the original south side?) the 'noble' followers of Christ come 'eagerly' from afar and gather at the Cross: Christ, raised on the Cross, begins to draw all things to himself (cf. John 12:32) [49]. The Anglo-Saxon poet has created, and the Ruthwell designer has carefully edited, a highly original narrative image of the beginnings of the Church itself, seen as a people gathered around the body of Christ on the Cross. On the north side the poem had dramatized the terrible dilemma of the Cross: that it could not move or bow, but had to stand fast and bear its Lord to his death; in contrast, on the south side, the Cross now bows down to present Christ's dead body, emptied even of its blood, to the hands of his gathered followers. This narrative is unique: nowhere else, in Christian art or literature, does the Cross hand on the body of Christ to his followers in this way. There are, therefore, remarkable contrasts between the narratives of the first half of the poem (on the north side) and the second half (on the south side). The designer chose, with remarkable editorial sensitivity, to place the grim narrative of conflict and enmity on the dark north side, and to place the handing on of Christ's body to his loyal followers, a scene in which no one could have missed the Eucharistic undertones, on the auspicious south side of the cross. Christianity itself had, after all, come from the south to Britain and Ireland, these Atlantic islands at the ends of the earth [50].

The poem's narrative on the south side of the cross posed an urgent challenge to any members of an ecclesiastical community at Ruthwell who read the runes, or heard them sung: how were they to look upon the body of Christ, which the cross itself had handed on to his followers? How could they now participate in that vivid Good Friday scene? How were they, here and now at Ruthwell, to recognize and react to that body? Each day the sun in its course silently suggested a majestic answer to such a challenge. Towards evening it shone directly on the second broad side (Fig. 16), on

49. On the word *fusæ* 'eagerly' as an adverb, see A. Bammesberger, *Old English runic inscriptions: textual criticism and historical grammar,* in *'Beowulf' and beyond,* ed. H. Sauer and R. Bauer, Bern and Berlin, 2007, pp. 69-87 (at pp. 75-76).

50. See J. O'Reilly, *Islands and idols at the ends of the earth: exegesis and conversion in Bede's 'Historia Ecclesiastica',* in *Bède le Vénérable entre tradition et posterité,* ed. S. Lebecq, M. Perrin and O. Szerwiniack, Lille, 2005, pp. 119-45 (Collection: 'Histoire de l'Europe du Nord-Ouest', 34); and D. Scully, *The third voyage of Cormac,* cit. (note 32).



which the Ruthwell designer provided a uniquely-rich sequence of Eucharistic images, in a carefully-ordered sequence. The principles behind the sequence are of particular interest to us, as, in due course, we will find analogous principles behind the sequences of images on the Cross of St Patrick and Columba at Kells, and also behind the rather different sequence on Muiredach's Cross, Monasterboice. In due order, reading from the bottom of the shaft, Christ is represented on his mother's lap, crossing the desert on the return from Egypt (Matthew 2:15): the scene is a fulfilment of the heavenly manna which had once fed the Israelites in the desert (Fig. 17) [51]. Just above, Christ is recognized in the breaking of bread (two ecclesiastical figures stand facing each other to break the Eucharistic loaf between their bodies, while the Latin *titulus* tells us, in the past tense, that « Saints Paul and Anthony broke bread in the desert ») (Figs. 17 and 18). The third panel is a variant of the panel at Bewcastle in which Christ is acclaimed by, and between, two living creatures. At Ruthwell, the animals still clearly cross their paws to form the Greek letter *Chi*, an X-pattern which is visually echoed by his name and messianic title 'IhS XPS', inscribed in Roman capitals at the top of the panel (Fig. 18). The fourth panel is also a variant of a Bewcastle panel. At Ruthwell, this fourth image of the Eucharistic sequence is on the upper stone, directly opposite the Visitation scene on the first side: John the Baptist, clad in fine garments, stands pointing across his body at the Agnus Dei, whom he cradles in his left arm (Fig. 19).

Modern onlookers have found the logic behind this sequence difficult to understand. It begins with a scene from the New Testament (the Return from Egypt), and proceeds with a scene which may be based on, or at least refer (by means of its *titulus*) to an episode in Jerome's Life of St Paul the First Hermit (who died in the middle of the fourth century). But the next panel returns to the New Testament, St Mark's account of the temptations of Christ in the desert, where

51. While to see the panel as a Return from Egypt, and so as referring to the Gospel of St Matthew, better suits the iconographic sequence of this second broad side of the cross, it is necessary to point out that the image could also be interpreted as a Flight into Egypt: see Veelenturf, *Irish high crosses and continental art* cit. (note 9), pp. 94-6. For fig. 17 I have chosen a photograph of the painted cast of the Ruthwell Cross in the Manchester museum, to remind the reader that high crosses, both in Britain and in Ireland, were probably painted originally: see Bailey, *England's earliest sculptors* cit. (note 14), pp. 5-11.

« he [Christ] was with the wild beasts, and angels ministered to him » (Mark 1:13). The Agnus Dei scene on the upper stone seems to be an original creation, based on the heavenly liturgy of chapters 4-6 of St John's Apocalypse. In the Ruthwell sequence, the sculptors move confidently between scripture and hagiography. For the designer, the thematic progression was primary: in order to develop the (Eucharistic) theme of the recognition of Christ, he or she felt confident to move from scripture to hagiography and back again to different parts of scripture. Apart from an emphasis on Eucharistic themes, two further elements seem to be important to the thematic unity of this side of the shaft. First, there is a regular alternation between human and symbolic representations of Christ: he is represented as a human figure in the 'Return from Egypt' and 'Christ acclaimed by the beasts' panels (the first and third from the bottom of the shaft); but he is represented symbolically in the Breaking of Bread and Agnus Dei panels (the second and fourth). Secondly, there is a gradual progression towards eschatological themes. In the third panel, at the top of the lower stone, Christ acclaimed by the beasts is already called 'the judge of fairness' ('iudex aequitatis')(Fig. 18). On the upper stone, eschatological themes predominate: as Agnus Dei, Christ is placed in the context of the heavenly liturgy of the Apocalypse (Fig. 19). We may assume that Christ was again represented on the missing transom, surrounded by the four evangelists with their animals. Of these, St Matthew and his angel survive below the transom (Fig. 19), while St John with his eagle (mistakenly reversed in the modern reconstruction) was represented on this side of the upper arm of the cross-head. We can only speculate as to how Christ was represented on this side of the missing transom (the present transom is a nineteenth-century substitute): as a human bust-portrait, or once more under the symbol of the Agnus Dei? The regular alternation between 'naturalistic' and 'symbolic' representations of Christ on this side of the shaft suggests that at the centre of the missing transom Christ was represented in human form, for example as a bust portrait, at the centre of the transom. Both possibilities are reflected in surviving fragmentary eighth-century cross-heads from Hoddom, some ten miles from Ruthwell [52].

52. *Ritual and the Rood* cit. (note 9), figs 14-15 on pp. 32-35.



Before leaving the Ruthwell Cross, I wish briefly to examine one of the Eucharistic panels (the second from the bottom of the shaft) on this second broad side, the side that may originally have faced west. The inscription to the panel states, in the past tense, that the first Egyptian monks, Saint Paul of Thebes and Saint Anthony the Abbot, once broke bread in the desert (Fig. 18). But the panel should not be taken as simply a representation of Saints Paul and Anthony. As we have seen, Kees Veelenturf has shown that the image is modelled on Roman images of the 'harmony of the apostles', i.e. of Saints Peter and Paul. To match the Roman image of the *Concordia Apostolorum* insular designers worked out an Insular image of *Concordia Monachorum*: harmony, that is, between the eremitic life (represented by St Paul of Thebes, the first hermit) and the communal monastic life (represented by St Anthony, the first Abbot) [53]. The panel therefore should not be seen as simply an illustration of St Jerome's *Vita* of St Paul the first hermit. The panel presents the two figures, breaking a loaf of bread between their bodies, in distinctly liturgical terms. These monks or clerics are clad in flowing robes. They stand in a formal tableau: they are not, as in Jerome's Life of St Paul, seated to their desert meal. The particular interest of this panel is that, while the motif of Saints Paul and Anthony breaking bread is a very common Eucharistic motif on Pictish and Irish monuments, this is the only definite representation of the two saints to survive from Anglo-Saxon territory [54].

This panel seems to indicate that the Ruthwell sculptors were in touch with Columban traditions. Perhaps a single generation before the Ruthwell Cross was erected Adomnán, Abbot of Iona, in his Life of Saint Columba, told the story of Bishop Crónán of Munster. This episode makes it seem likely that at Iona, when a priest visited the monastery, he was in courtesy invited to celebrate the community mass. At the breaking of bread for communion, the Abbot and the visiting priest together broke the loaf between them at the altar [55]. When they stood at the altar to break the loaf between them, they

53. VEELENTURF, *Irish high crosses and continental art* cit. (note 9), pp. 90-93.

54. É. Ó CARRAGÁIN, *The meeting of St Paul and St Anthony,* and *Ruthwell and Iona* cit. (note 9).

55. Adomnán, *Vita Columbae,* I, ch. 44: *Adomnán's life of Columba,* ed. A.O. ANDERSON and M.O. ANDERSON, Oxford, 1991, pp. 80-81.

enacted a visual tableau which was clearly designed to recall visually the way in which Saints Paul and Anthony had long ago broken bread in the desert. The Ruthwell 'Paul and Anthony' panel seems primarily to refer to the liturgical tableau referred to by Adomnán, a monastic tableau of friendship and welcome; the *titulus* seems designed to remind the community at Ruthwell that this tableau, which Adomnán presented as having already been invented in Iona during the lifetime of Columba (and therefore as possibly invented and certainly approved by the founder Columba himself), was based on the meeting between Saints Paul and Anthony, and on the way in which they together 'broke bread in the desert'. It may be that the Ruthwell community themselves imitated the Iona tableau of priestly welcome. Whether or not this was so, the Ruthwell panel provides evidence of intellectual contact between Iona and this small Northumbrian monastery. It also implies that this Northumbrian community respected and valued the spiritual traditions which Irish Columban monasticism could teach them.

In style and form, the Ruthwell and Bewcastle crosses were designed to recall Rome. Above each massive base, each cross forms a tall, slender column, visually reminiscent of such Roman monuments as the obelisk which stood to the south of St Peter's basilica [56]. With their relief sculpture, they may also have been intended as Christian versions of the Roman triumphal columns [57]. When compared to any of the Irish high crosses, their sculpture is very realistic, with a genuine characterization of individual characters, such as the repentant Mary Magdalen who bows to bathe the right foot of Christ with her tears, while in the act of drying his left foot with her hair (Fig. 14).

Iona is likely to have been the most important point of transition between Northumbria and some, at least, of the Irish crosses. At

56. At a symposium at Leeds in July 1998 I suggested that the Vatican obelisk might have helped inspire the Northumbrian obelisk-crosses; I did so on the basis that 'if the slender tapering shapes of the Ruthwell and Bewcastle monuments were indeed inspired by that of an obelisk, this obelisk is the obvious candidate' in view of the importance of St Peter's to the Anglo-Saxons, and of the association of that basilica with the symbolism of the sun's course: see É. Ó CARRAGÁIN, *Between Annunciation and Visitation: spiritual birth and the cycles of the sun on the Ruthwell Cross,* in *Theorizing Anglo-Saxon stone sculpture,* ed. C. KARKOV and F. ORTON, Morgantown, WV, 2003, pp. 131-87 (at p. 184).

57. R. CRAMP, *Early Northumbrian sculpture,* Jarrow, 1965 (Jarrow Lecture, 1965), p. 5; see also MITCHELL, *The high cross and monastic strategies* cit. (note 14).



Iona, we can still see experiments in how to add the wheel to an earlier design based on wooden originals [58]. But we should beware of simply arguing that Iona gave to Ireland the idea of the high cross. In the early eighth century, contacts between the two Atlantic islands were many and various. Nor need we assume that all the influence went one way. It is possible that some of the earliest experiments in transferring high crosses from wood to stone took place in Ireland, even earlier than the Northumbrians erected their great monuments. The earliest so far discovered, Toureen Peakaun, has been dated as early as AD 700; Kilnaruane, Co. Cork, may be up to a century later [59].

But the Irish High Crosses with figural programmes seem all to be at least a century later than the Northumbrian high crosses. The recent work on their political background enables us to see the Irish high crosses as forming discrete groups of monuments, each group the product of a separate campaign, and each cross within the group making a particular theological statement [60]. Such statements may well have had political as well as theological points to make: for example about the kingship of Christ (and thus kingship in general), and (in the sufferings of Christ) the difficulties of the Irish Church in the context of Scandinavian depredations.

Unlike the Northumbrian designers, their Irish confrères attempted to represent vast panoramas of salvation history. The Cross at Moone, Co. Kildare, is a case in point (Figs. 20-24). The figures are extremely stylized, so as to form, in effect, a form of hieroglyphics: knowing that the cross would be sculpted in granite, a difficult stone to sculpt, the designer probably looked to stylized metalwork forms. Such extreme stylization encouraged onlookers to be aware of the place of each individual panel within the overall programme of the cross. Using the analogy of hieroglyphics, we could look on individual panels as words: the sentence, and its syntax, is provided by the whole

58. See KELLY, *The heart of the matter* cit. (note 14), and the other studies by D. KELLY and M. WERNER cited in the same note.

59. On Toureen Peakaun, see G. CHARLES EDWARDS, *The east cross inscription from Toureen Peacaun: some concrete evidence,* in *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland,* CXXXII (2002), pp. 114-26; HARBISON, *The high crosses of Ireland,* cit. (note 1), I, p. 174; II, figs 598-99; on Kilnaruane, ibid., I, pp. 131-32; II, figs 441-42.

60. See especially Ó FLOINN, *Patrons and politics* cit. (note 3); also STALLEY, *Artistic identity and Irish scripture crosses* cit. (note 5).

shape of the cross. In assessing how sequences of panels add up to major statements on each cross, I have found the semiological work by Professor Casartelli Novelli particularly helpful [61].

Above its massive base, the shaft of the Moone Cross is slender, like the obelisk-crosses of Northumbria (Figs. 20-21). On the shaft, animals, birds and peaceful looking monsters appear. On the east side of the crosshead, Christ in glory displays his wounds (as on the last day) [62]. On the other side of the crosshead, two human figures flank an abstract representation of a cross and, below, there is a (four-sided) lozenge: symbolic references to eternal life and to the order of the world [63]. The wealth of animal images on the shaft provides an analogue for the many animal- and bird-images at Bewcastle and Ruthwell. Christ was understood to be the second Adam (with a reference to the Pauline dictum that, if in man [Adam] all died, even so in man [Christ] shall all be made alive) [64]. Adam had been created, among the animals, on the sixth day of Creation, a Friday; when Christ died on Good Friday, the sacraments flowed from the wound on his side. Patristic writers insisted that, through these sacraments Paradise was restored, with its harmony between humankind and the rest of creation.

The designer at Moone provided a coherent sequence of figural panels for the massive base below the slender shaft (Figs 22-24). At Moone each day the sun's course encouraged the community to recall, in due order, the main events of Salvation history, the ages of the world [65]. At dawn, the rising sun shone on the east side, with its panels of the Fall of Man, the sacrifice of Isaac by Abraham (in the third age of the world) and Daniel in the lions' den (in the fifth age of the world, the age of the prophets) (Fig. 22, right side of base). At

61. CASARTELLI NOVELLI, *Segni e codici* cit. (note 12), pp. 45-50, and in particular pp. 142-56 on the functions of stylization in the Irish high crosses.

62. VEELENTURF, *Apocalyptic elements* cit. (note 8), p. 211, col. 2.

63. On the significance of the diamond or lozenge figure, see J. O'REILLY, *Patristic and Insular traditions of the evangelists: exegesis and iconography*, in *Le isole britanniche e Roma in età romanobarbarica*, ed. A.M. LUISELLI FADDA and É. Ó CARRAGÁIN, Rome, 1998, pp. 49-94 (at pp. 77-94).

64. I Corinthians 15:21-23; also Romans 5:12-21.

65. The 'clear and logical arrangement' of the iconography on the base of the Moone cross, and that it should be read sunwise, starting at the east side, was already noted by F. HENRY, *Irish high crosses*, Dublin, 1964, p. 39.



midday, the sun shone directly on the south side of the base, with its panels of the three children in the fiery furnace: another image of the fifth age of the world (Fig. 21, left side of base). The sixth age, that of Christ, begins on the same south side of the base, with images of the desert of Sinai: desert themes were clearly relevant to a monastic site, as we will see when we come to examine the opposite north side. First we get the flight into Egypt; then, the feeding of the five thousand in the desert. This Eucharistic desert banquet is expressed by abstract symbols: two fish, five loaves and, on either side of the loaves, two mysterious living creatures (*animalia*). The presence of the flanking animals hints that, in the loaves between their bodies, Christ is to be recognized (Fig. 22, left side of base) [66].

Each evening, the setting sun shone on a representation of the Crucifixion: as an early eighth-century Irish liturgical tract reminds us, Christ faced west on the Cross (Fig. 23, right side of base) [67]. The death of Christ, the second Adam, balances the fall of Adam and Eve on the corresponding panel on the opposite side of the base. Below the crucifixion, a stylized representation of the twelve apostles recalls the end of St Matthew's gospel: « go ye therefore, and preach to all nations, even to the ends of the earth » [68].

The sun only shone on north side of the base in the summer months, and then slantingly. As we have seen, in the middle ages the north was associated with cold, dark and the devil. Fittingly, therefore, on the north side at Moone we find monsters, the temptations of St Anthony the Abbot and, above these scenes, their reversal: Saints Paul and Anthony, the first monks, break bread in the desert (Fig. 23, left side of base, and Fig. 24). Here, the saints are represented as seated to their meal: the sculptor is more faithful to the situation as described in St Jerome's Life of St Paul.

Two things are of particular interest about the figural programme on the base of the Moone Cross. First, the designer was interested in

66. Ó CARRAGÁIN, *The meeting of St Paul and St Anthony*, cit (note 9), p. 21.

67. *Thesaurus palaeohibernicus: a collection of Old-Irish glosses scholia prose and verse*, ed. W. STOKES and J. STRACHAN, 2 vols, reprint, Dublin, 1975, II, p. 254, par. 15; see Ó CARRAGÁIN, *The Ruthwell Cross and the Irish high crosses* cit. (note 37), p. 120; but see the cautionary comments of VEELENTURF, *Dia brátha*, cit. (note 8), pp. 126-7.

68. On the relevance of the 'ends of the earth' theme to Ireland and England, see O'REILLY, *Islands and idols* cit. (note 50), and SCULLY, *The third voyage of Connac* cit. (note 32).

historical progression in a way that other designers, both in Britain and in Ireland, were not. Saints Paul and Anthony, those desert monks, bring the sequence of Salvation history into what we might call the monastic present: a period in which the dominant form of Christian spirituality, in ninth-century Ireland as in fourth-century Egypt, was that of desert monasticism. Secondly, images of and references to the Eucharist predominate on the Cross at Moone as they did at Bewcastle and Ruthwell.

I will end this paper by examining two crosses which also exemplify the Irish preoccupation with the shape of Salvation history, and with Eucharistic liturgical images: one of the three surviving crosses at Kells, and one of the two crosses at Monasterboice.

At Kells, the Cross known as that of Saints Patrick and Columba (or 'The Cross of the Tower'), takes its more usual name from the only inscription now legible on the monument (on the base of the east face), 'PATRICII ET COLUMBAE CRUX' (Figs. 25-30) [69]. As at Moone, the iconographic programme begins on the east side of the cross with the beginning of human history: the fall of Adam and Eve and the killing by Cain of Abel (on the bottom row of figural panels) (Fig. 25). Immediately above, the Three Children in the Fiery Furnace recall, as at Moone, the liturgical canticle of the Three Children from the Book of Daniel. The canticle is again recalled in the panel of Daniel between two lions just below the intersection of the cross (Fig. 26). Such images of Daniel between two lions were seen as *figurae* of Christ on the Cross, crucified between two thieves [70]. At the centre of the crossing (and so at the symbolic centre of the cross) there is a square mat of interlace filled with a roundel bearing seven bosses in relief (Fig. 26). The Eucharistic significance of these seven bosses is made clear by the figural images which surround this central panel. Just below the panel, as we have seen, Daniel between the lions looks forward to Christ crucified between the thieves. Above

69. See R. STALLEY, *The tower cross at Kells*, in *The Insular tradition*, ed. KARKOV, FARRELL and RYAN cit. (note 29), pp. 115-41; VEELENTURF, *Apocalyptic elements* cit. (note 8), pp. 209-10; ID., *Dia brátha* cit. (note 8), pp. 64-66, 108-112.

70. S. ALEXANDER, *Daniel themes on the Irish high crosses*, in *The Insular tradition*, ed. KARKOV, RYAN and FARRELL cit. (note 29), pp. 99-114; C. HOURIHANE, *'De camino ignis': the iconography of the three children in the fiery furnace in ninth-century Ireland*, in HOURIHANE, ed., *From Ireland coming*, cit. (note 6), pp. 61-82.



it, on the cross-head, Christ and David the harper are seated facing each other. In front of Christ are five circular loaves, and at the top of the cross two rows of heads represent the multitude in the desert. The reference is clearly to the feeding of the five thousand in the desert, with five loaves and two fishes, the only one of Christ's miracles to be described in all four gospels.

Below the figures of Christ and David, there are two large fishes, crossed to form the Greek letter *chi* (Fig. 26). This is clearly a reference to the messianic title 'Christ': the Kells designer has been just as imaginative in his visual reference to the letter *chi* as the earlier designers of the Ruthwell and Bewcastle « Christ acclaimed by the beasts » panels. At Kells, the crossed fishes act as a transitional device, leading the eye from the scene where Christ faces David to the central mat with seven bosses, and from the seven bosses back to Christ and David. The fishes, in short, can be visually related to the seven bosses of the crossing as easily as to the five loaves between Christ and David. The presence of the fishes just above the central bosses provides the visual key to the meaning of the seven bosses. In the gospels of Mark (8:8-10) and Matthew (15:32-9) there is a second miraculous feast, with seven loaves and 'a few fishes'. For Mark and Matthew this second feast was not merely a repetition of the first, but a symbolically significant development of it. Whereas the first (with the five loaves) took place in Galilee, to the west of the Sea of Galilee, the second (with seven loaves) took place in the Decapolis, to the east of the Sea of Galilee. Whereas the first (with five loaves) fulfilled the manna which fed the people of Israel at the Exodus, the second (with seven loaves) foreshadowed the way in which the same spiritual food would be offered to the gentile nations.

Medieval commentators usually saw the five loaves as symbolizing the Pentateuch, and the two fishes as symbolizing the Psalms and the Prophets. As the late-seventh century Irish *Expositio Quattuor Evangeliorum* puts it, commenting on Matthew, '*quinque panes*, id est quinque libri Moysi' [71]. In other words, such commentators saw Christ as transforming what the Old Testament had to offer. On the other hand, in the second feast medieval commentators saw Christ acting as the informing principle of the New Testament. Thus, the

71. *P.L.*, XXX, col. 571.

seven loaves were seen to symbolize the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, given to the Church at Pentecost. Cummean, who wrote a commentary on St Mark (in the mid-seventh century in the south of Ireland), summed up the patristic tradition as follows: « septem panes, dona sunt septem Spiritus sancti » [72]: for him, the seven loaves are the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit. Kees Veelenturf has pointed out, convincingly, that when groups of seven bosses recur on other Irish monuments (such as the North Cross at Duleek, and the Island Cross at Tynan) they usually refer to eschatological expectations, to the end of the world [73]. But, as Veelenturf has also clearly shown, Christians always saw the Eucharist as a pledge that Christ would return in power and majesty [74]. The mat with seven bosses on this 'first' east broad side of the Cross of St Patrick and St Columba, precisely because it is firmly placed in a Eucharistic context, has an eschatological element in it: it already looks forward to the eschatological scenes which cover the 'second' western side of the cross (Figs. 26, 28 and 29).

Crossed in the form of the Greek letter "*chi*", the two fishes provide a visual 'title' for the representation of Christ with David just above, in the same way that the crossed paws of the acclaiming animals at Bewcastle and Ruthwell provide these panels with visual 'titles' referring to Jesus as *Christos*, 'the anointed one', 'the Messiah'. The Kells designer was aware that Christ and David were both the 'anointed ones' (Messiah, *Christos*), the holy ones of Israel; and that David's psalms found their fulfillment in Christ, as Daniel between the lions was fulfilled in the Crucifixion between two thieves. On the head of the cross David, the prophetic harper-king, is allowed to (fore)see the fulfilment of his psalms in the feeding by the Messiah of the multitude with five loaves. But the central place on the cross is given to a symbolic reference to the seven loaves, the gifts of the Holy Spirit with which the Church is sustained in its pilgrimage. This central symbol (the seven bosses) is placed between two references to the Mass. To the left, Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac was represented:

72. *P.L.*, XXX, col. 634.

73. VEELENTURF, *Apocalyptic elements* cit. (note 8), pp. 213-6, and note 4.

74. The classic text is I Corinthians 11:26: 'For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes'. See VEELENTURF, *Dia brátha* cit. (note 8), p. 69.



« sacrificium patriarche nostri Abrache » is found in the Roman canon of the Mass (and thus in the Irish Stowe Missal) as a prefiguration of the eucharistic sacrifice [75]. To the right, and thus, interestingly, towards the north, Saints Paul and Anthony break bread in the desert (Fig. 27): in this cross, as at Ruthwell and Moone, the figures of Paul and Anthony serve to relate the scriptural themes of feeding in the desert to the present 'monastic era' of desert spirituality. The saints, equipped with crosiers, sit to their meal in chairs. Behind each saint's crozier, a book-satchel hangs from the nearest arm of each saint: the Mass always began with chewing (meditating on) the word of God in scriptural readings, before proceeding to the chewing of the Eucharistic bread (Fig. 27).

The design of this Kells cross has a simple principle of unity. We may assume that, as at Bewcastle with its sundial, and as in the massive base at Moone where Christ faces west on the cross, the cross of St Patrick and St Columba was originally oriented as it is at present: here, as at Moone, the crucifixion is on the west face and so Christ faces west on the cross. Thus the morning sun shone on the Eucharistic imagery we have just examined and, in the course of each day, the sun's course encouraged the audience at Kells to relate these Eucharistic foreshadowings to the eschatological realities of which the Eucharist is a pledge. On the east side, as we have seen, the iconographic sequence brought the onlooker from the fall of man and the first murder, through the survival of the three children in the fiery furnace to a culminating image: Daniel in the lions' den, a clear foreshadowing of Christ's crucifixion (Figs. 25 and 26). But on the opposite west side of the cross, these Old Testament images find their fulfilment: just below the crossing on the west side, and so just opposite the 'Daniel' image on the east side, the designer placed his elaborate image of the Crucifixion (Figs. 28 and 29). Thus, on this Kells cross, the 'morning' eastern Old Testament images find, each evening, their fulfilment: the evening sun shines on Christ crucified, between Longinus and Stephaton (Fig. 29). If on the east face, in the morning of history, Christ was primarily represented in typological and figural images, on the west face these shadows give way to reality.

75. *The Stowe Missal*, ed. G. F. WARNER, 2 vols, London, 1906-1915 (Henry Bradshaw Society, XXXI and XXXII), reprinted 1989, II, p. 13.

Christ now appears, both as victim (in the Crucifixion) and above, at the crossing, as eschatological Judge (Fig. 30). At the foot of this west side, a panel of interlace, with human heads, echoes the '*chi*' or X-shaped symbol we have seen in the fishes on the East side (and on the Northumbrian crosses) (Fig. 28, just above the base). In the crucifixion scene, Christ's legs are bound, and his garment stretches to his knees (Fig. 29). To his right (our left), Stephaton offers him vinegar in a vessel on the end of a pole, while on his left side Longinus pierces his left armpit with a lance. Above Longinus and Stephaton come two smaller figures, which Peter Harbison suggests may represent the Sun and Moon [76]. Above Christ's head, an eagle with outstretched wings provides an image of the resurrection of Christ (« renovabitur ut aquilae iuventus tua », as Psalm 102 has it) (Fig. 29) [77].

The eagle image leads the eye of the onlooker to the culminating scene on the monument: the great eschatological tableau at the head of the west face of the cross (Fig. 30). Here Christ stands at the centre, wearing a long garment with a cloak over it. Over his left shoulder he holds a cross-staff, and over his right a blossoming sceptre. Above Christ's head, where the upper arm begins, a human figure (probably an angel) holds aloft the apocalyptic Lamb in a circle or mandorla, probably a reference to the Lamb of St John's Apocalypse (an image which we have already seen on the Bewcastle and Ruthwell Crosses). In these eschatological images, the Eucharistic images of the east side find their fulfilment. Instead of the mat with seven bosses, we get the majestic image of Christ as Judge; instead of the Eucharistic prefigurations of Abraham and Isaac, David with his harp, and Paul and Anthony breaking bread in the desert, we get proliferations of bosses: abstract images, perhaps with eschatological and cosmological significance? (Figs 26, 28 and 30) [78]. On the reasonable assumption that the present orientation of this cross is the original one, the sun's daily course provides a reliable guide to the imagery of the monument and to the way in which it was designed to unfold, dynamically, in the course of each day.

76. HARBISON, *The high crosses of Ireland* cit. (note 1), I, p. 110.

77. An eagle image, 'the eagle on the branch' provides a visual transition between the first and second sides of the Ruthwell Cross: see Ó CARRAGÁIN, *Ritual and the Rood,* cit. (note 9), pp. 143-6.

78. See VEELENTURF, *Apocalyptic elements* cit. (note 8).



The most massive, complex and subtle of the Irish high crosses is Muiredach's Cross at Monasterboice (Figs. 30-41). Like the Kells cross we have just examined, it is to be dated as early as the middle of the ninth century, or as late as the first quarter of the tenth [79]. The designer kept the individual figures, vivid and three-dimensional though they are, small so that the onlooker would always see individual figures, and individual scenes, as part of the larger pattern of the Cross itself. Thus, as on the high cross at Moone, the figures on Muiredach's Cross, realistic though they are, function like hieroglyphics: individual panels provide visual 'words' which build up towards the massive syntax of the whole monument.

Each morning, the sun illuminates the east face, which spans human history from the fall of man to the end of time (Fig. 31). This meditation on history begins, as on the Kells cross, at the bottom of the shaft. In the first two panels, the fall of man (Adam and Eve) and the first murder (Cain kills Abel) are juxtaposed to images of the establishment of the Kingdom of Israel: David slaying Goliath, flanked by images of Saul and Jonathan (Fig. 32 and Fig. 33, bottom panel). These first two panels form a visual pair, a sort of diptych. Each of the two panels has four figures. Each panel contains a scene of violence: negative violence, in Cain and Abel; and laudable violence when David slays Goliath. In this pair of panels, the loss of Paradise, a negative event, is 'answered', and partially reversed, by the establishment of the Kingdom in Israel.

The second two panels also form a visual and thematic pair: again, a sort of diptych (Figs. 33 and 34). To provide this visual diptych, the designer has reversed the course of history. In historical terms we go backwards, from Saul and David and the establishment of the kingdom (Fig. 33, bottom panel), back to Moses and the Exodus from Egypt. By this reversal of the course of history the designer was able to juxtapose Moses, striking the rock to provide water for the Israelites in the desert, to Mary at the Epiphany, showing the Christ child to the wise men (four of them: they are guided by an angel) (Figs. 33 and 34). The key to the juxtaposition of the two panels is St Paul's statement, of the rock which accompanied the Israelites on

79. HARBISON, *The high crosses of Ireland* cit. (note 1), I, pp. 140-46; II, figs 472-87; VEELENTURF, *Dia brátha,* cit. (note 8), pp. 62-4, 102-107.

their desert journey, that "that rock was Christ" [80]. In the two panels, we move from Moses, leader of Israel, to Mary, type of the Church; from God's care for the people of Israel to the Church's revelation to the Gentiles.

Over the head of the Christ Child the star, which also guided the wise men to Bethlehem, can be seen (Fig. 34). This detail enables us to appreciate the designer's genius. The star, round like a shield-boss, fits in with the multitude of such images on the great ring of the Cross (Figs. 34 and 31). The designer has transformed the cross-ring into an image of the cosmos itself. The ring centres on the Parousia: Christ comes in majesty to judge the world at the end of time. Below Christ's feet, St Michael the Archangel weighs the souls; above his head is another tiny scene, perhaps of angels reading from a book of life, or a book listing sins [81]. David, who once slew Goliath, and whose Psalter foretold not only the wise kings from the East but also the details of Christ's Passion and victory over death, now plays his harp at the head of those who are saved, at Christ's right side (Fig. 35). At Christ's left side, the damned turn from him to flee, pursued by a devil, into outer darkness (Fig. 36). David and his triumphant followers advance towards Christ from the south; the damned flee into outer darkness, fittingly placed on the northern arm of the cross.

This great designer has also transformed the upper arm of the cross into a skeumorph of an Irish church building: by placing the skeumorph as the capstone, the designer was able to allude to the idea that the Christian Church itself was 'built upon a rock' (cf. Matthew 16:18). In the little "church", on this side, there is a scene of ecclesiastical triumph (Fig. 31); on the north side, Paul and Anthony break bread in the desert (Fig. 38); on the south side, Christ enters Jerusalem on Palm Sunday (Fig. 39). We will look at the west side in due course (Fig. 38). The image of the church encourages the onlooker to relate the vision of history on the cross to the ceremonies enacted, the sacraments administered, and the sermons pronounced in the churches of Monasterboice itself. In other words, the culminating image of the church on the crosshead encourages onlookers to relate the cross's historical and cosmic concerns to the here and now of life in a monastic community.

80. I Corinthians 10:4.

81. See VEELENTURF, *Dia brátha,* cit. (note 8), pp. 63-4, 113-114.



On the west side of Muiredach's Cross, illuminated by the evening sun, the designer has concentrated on what for him was the central moment of history, the Crucifixion: like the author of the Stowe Missal commentary on the Mass, and of the designers at Moone and Kells, this designer knew that Christ faced west on the Cross (Fig. 37). To interpret the Crucifixion, the designer has flanked it, above and below, by small panels which echo it visually, and which explore its implications. The central visual source for these small patterns is an ancient motif, in which the central figure (in this case, Christ) is sustained by two flanking figures: we might refer to the motif, therefore, as the *sustentatio* (support, sustainment) motif. Such tableaux of three figures, in which the central figure is sustained by two flanking figures, is found not only in art but in regal ceremonial – in ancient Rome, in ancient Israel (the book of Esther) and, indeed as far afield as twentieth-century Tibet: the processional tableau was enacted by the present Dalai Lama at a teenager, in the Potala palace before the Chinese invasion [82]. From the imperial ceremonies of ancient Rome, it was taken into the Christian liturgy, for such important actions as the introit procession of the Papal Stational Mass. Such liturgical tableaux were naturally echoed by Christian art, as in the mosaic of Christ flanked by Peter and Paul on the apse of Old St Peter's basilica, and the many imitations of that famous mosaic [83]. The tableau is echoed in the Book of Kells, in the so-called "Arrest" page, fol. 114 recto. On this page, the Gospel text tells us what is going on: "Et ymno dicto exierunt in montem Oliveti" – "And, having sung a hymn, they went out into the mount of Olivet". The artist has, among other things, represented the solemn procession from the Last Supper, at which Christ has instituted the Eucharist, to Gathsemane, where His Passion will commence. In effect, the artist

82. E. JERG, *Die 'Sustentatio' in der römischen Liturgie vor dem Hintergrund des kaiserlichen Hofzeremoniells,* in *Zeitschrift für katholischen Theologie,* LXXX (1958), 316-24. Jerg refers to Tibet: see further H. HARRER, *Seven years in Tibet,* London, 1955, pp. 169, 230, 264, and the illustration between pp. 176-77. See also É. Ó CARRAGÁIN, *'Traditio Evangeliorum' and 'sustentatio': the relevance of liturgical ceremonies to the Book of Kells,* in *The Book of Kells: proceedings of a conference at Trinity College Dublin, 6-9 September 1992,* ed. F. O'MAHONY, Aldershot, 1994, pp. 398-436 (at p. 417).

83. See H. KESSLER, *Old St. Peter's and church decoration in medieval Italy,* Spoleto, 2002, fig. 1.2.

of the Book of Kells fol. 114r represented the solemn Introit of Christ into his Passion [84].

The Monasterboice cross unmistakeably refers, like fol. 114r of the book of Kells, to the *sustentatio* image. The Monasterboice sculptors have provided a whole series of images of Christ between two creatures, in order to set forth the stages of his Passion, and the relations between his Passion and his consequent glorification. Each of the panels, below and above the Crucifixion scene, shows Christ flanked by two men (Fig. 37). Each therefore is visually related to the Crucifixion scenes, in which Christ is flanked by Longinus and Stephaton. The small flanking panels lead the eye of the onlooker away from, and back towards, the central image of each West side, the Crucifixion. They encourage the onlooker to see a variety of visual, and thus thematic, links between the Crucifixion and these scenes of suffering and recognition.

Three small panels occur below the crossing. In the lowest of these, the references to regal *sustentatio* are ironic (Fig. 37). The panel combines elements of an 'Arrest' scene with the representation of the Mocking of Christ as King. The small panel directly above represents Christ, after the Resurrection, being recognized as king and priest by, and between, two figures (Saints Peter and Paul?). This panel therefore reverses the theme of the Arrest-Mocking below. The third small panel, just below the transom, represents the *traditio clavium*, the handing on of the keys. It complements the scene directly below: Christ the King now hands on the keys (his power to bind and loose) to St. Peter, and the New Testament to St. Paul. As the eye travels upwards along the shaft of Muiredach's cross it encounters one scene of suffering in which Christ is paradoxically revealed as '*Rex Iudaeorum*', and two scenes in which Christ is progressively revealed as the risen king and the source of the Church's authority. We saw that, on the opposite (east) side of the shaft, the designer reversed the narrative course of history in order to create two visually-related diptychs. Here on the west face of the shaft, the designer once more subordinates historical progression to visual and thematic concerns. Below the great Crucifixion image, at the bottom of the

84. Ó CARRAGÁIN, *'Traditio Evangeliorum'* cit., p. 421.



shaft the Arrest-Mocking, which historically began the Passion, is followed by two scenes (the recognition of Christ, and the handing on of the keys and book to Peter and to Paul) which, as they evidently include at least one image of Christ between St Paul as well as St Peter, represent no episode recorded in the gospels or elsewhere in scripture. They are symbolic rather than historical scenes. They represent the bases for the power and authority of the Church rather than any historical events. The designer is interested above all in reiterating the *sustentatio*-motif. That motif made clear the centrality of Christ to the status and mission of the Church. But it also visually echoed liturgical tableaux with which the designer, and the monastic audience at Monasterboice would have been familiar: scenes at Mass, for example, in which the chief celebrant would have been flanked and 'sustained' by deacon and sub-deacon. As all three panels on the shaft refer to kingly power, the audience is visually prepared to interpret the great Crucifixion-scene, at the crossing, not just as a scene of suffering but also as a theophany, a revelation of Christ's nature as God and Man, and of his triumph over death and his roles as king and priest of the New Testament.

The designer of Muiredach's cross used all his ingenuity to present the crucified Christ as flanked by a variety of figures (Fig. 37). The largest of these, Longinus and Stephaton, are much smaller in scale than the figure of Christ, and are thus clearly subordinated to him as, in the *sustentatio*-tableaux on this side of the shaft, the flanking figures are always subordinate to the central figure, Christ. Two round knobs or heads on either side of Christ's knees are likely to represent the sun and moon (*sol et luna*). Two angels, hovering above Christ's shoulders, support his head. At the beginnings of the crossing to left and right, outside the figures of Longinus and Stephaton, are two small figures which have been identified by Harbison as the earth (Gaia) and the ocean or water (Tellus). Harbison's suggestion is attractive, as it would add earth and water to the cosmic symbols of *Sol et Luna*. Whatever about the interpretation of individual details, the intention of the sculptors is clear: to multiply references to flanking figures (angelic, allegorical, human and animal) so as to encourage the onlooker to view the Crucifixion scene as an epiphany of Christ as man, and a theophany of Christ as God.

We have seen that the upper arm of the cross is a skeumorph of a church building. On this west side, within the little 'church' the central

figure, Christ, has his arms raised towards heaven, and is sustained by two flanking angels, their wings clearly visible: this scene is thus the fourth and final example of the *sustentatio*-motif on this side of the shaft (Fig. 38). Christ's hands are clearly displayed, palms facing outwards. The marks of nails are still visible on each hand: thus the panel must represent a moment, after the resurrection, in which Christ is made known between two angels. As the panel occurs at the top of this side of the cross, and as Christ's raised hands reach towards the sky, Roger Stalley was surely correct in identifying the panel as representing the Ascension [85]. This scene carries one stage further the tableaux of Christ's kingship in the three small panels on the shaft below the Crucifixion. The angels turn to the onlookers as though to invite them to recognise, in Christ's wounded but glorified body, God « revealed between two cherubim » (Exodus 25:22). The emphasis on the wounds in Christ's hands may be intended to remind the onlookers of the second Parousia, in which Christ is to display his wounds to those who pierced him (Apocalypse 1:7-8). Apart from the various subsidiary associations, the central originality of the panel has been to fuse two narrative moments into a single triumphal image of Christ. One moment, the Ascension, took place in the past (but was each year made present in the liturgy); the other, Christ's display of his wounds on the Last Day, is to take place 'any moment', at an unknown day or hour: it is an urgent eschatological image, encouraging the onlooker to swift repentance. The sculptors have created an image which expresses the full force of the prophecy, which Luke in the Acts of the Apostles placed in the mouths of the two men in white. These appear after Christ has disappeared, and say to the apostles « Why are you Galileans standing here looking into the sky? This Jesus who has been taken up from you into heaven will come back in the same way as you have seen him go to heaven » (Acts 1:11). At Monasterboice the 'men in white' appear as winged angels holding books: they appear, not after Christ has disappeared, but honouring him and making him known in a *sustentatio* tableau. Their two matching books imply that in this *sustentatio* the Old Testament as well as the New has been fulfilled. The Monasterboice artist has created a truly multivalent image. The ability to create

85. STALLEY, *European art and the Irish high crosses* cit. (note 4), pp. 138-41.



images rich in association, as in this panel and in the 'Arrest' page of the Book of Kells, was one of the great glories of early medieval monastic culture.

We have seen how consistently and confidently, on east and west broad sides, the designer of Muiredach's cross subordinated narrative or historical sequence to thematic and visual patterns. The same principle is found in the figural panels on the narrow sides, to south and north. On the south side, the midday sun shines each day on two images of kingship (Figs. 39, 40). At the end of the south arm, Pilate washes his hands, in the presence of an attendant and of three armed warriors. In Pilate, the designer has provided an image of the shirking of power, the avoidance of responsibility (Fig. 40) [86]. Directly above, on the south side of the skeumorph church, Christ rides in kingly triumph, towards the west, into the royal city of Jerusalem while above, on the gable end of the church-image, the skeumorphic finials over the gable-ends echo the X- or *Chi*-shaped pattern of the messianic title, *Christos* (Fig. 39). Thus, like the historical scenes on the east side of the shaft, or the *sustentatio*-series on the west side, the two figural panels on the narrow south side balance each other thematically.

The same is true of the narrow north side, directly opposite (Figs. 38, left side; and Fig. 41). Peter Harbison has convincingly identified the scene at the end of the north arm as the beating and mocking of Christ (Fig. 41) [87]. This Passion-scene of torture and mock-recognition of Christ's kingship is once more answered, and reversed, by the image above, on the north side of the skeumorph church. Here (once more towards the North, as at Moone and Kells) Saints Paul and Anthony, the first monks, break bread in the desert (Fig. 38, left side of plate). The raven, bringing the loaf from heaven, plunges down between their shoulders. The loaf rests in the V-shape formed by the crossed staffs held by the two saints. The two staffs are crossed not as a sign of conflict, but of faith: they form a clear X- or *chi*-pattern, the visual reference we have seen in the crossed paws at Bewcastle and Ruthwell, and in the crossed fishes at Kells. Above, the gable end and finials of the skeumorph church again echo the pattern. On both

86. See C. HOURIHANE, *Pontius Pilate, anti-semitism, and the Passion in Mediedieval art*, Princeton, 2009, pp. 112-113.

87. HARBISON, *The high crosses of Ireland* cit. (note 1), I, p. 146; II, fig. 485; III, fig. 866.

of the narrow sides of Muiredach's cross a similar pattern is to be seen: from Passion to recognition, from mockery to faith. In each case, the designer confidently reverses or ignores narrative progression, confident that the monastic audience can read each sequence visually and thematically.

To conclude: in spite of all the differences in style and structure, there are remarkable similarities, in subject and procedure, between the high crosses with figural programmes on both sides of the Irish Sea. In order to understand the crosses we have examined, we need to realise that these monuments were meant to be lived with. The static images of a printed book, however detailed and vivid, can only take us so far. In order to understand these crosses we need to imagine them, as far as possible, in their original monastic setting. All five crosses are dynamic objects, which, in the case of Bewcastle, the Cross of St Patrick and St Columba at Kells, and Muiredach's Cross at Monasterboice, still gradually change in appearance and visual emphasis each day, with the changing of the light. Particularly in the cases of Ruthwell and Moone, which have been moved indoors, we need to enquire as carefully as possible where the monuments may originally have stood (this is easy in the case of Moone, which was moved recently in order to spare it from the weather, and where we have many excellent photographs of the monument in its original setting; it is highly controversial in the case of the Ruthwell Cross, which may have been moved indoors already by the early ninth century). All five monuments were designed to interact with the sun's daily course, and attention to the question of orientation, and to how the light would have played on the monuments, helps us to appreciate the programmes of the five crosses. Further research is needed to see to what extent this is true of other crosses, to what extent their various 'local theologies' are coherent, and the various aesthetics behind their programmes. Hitherto, the most fruitful research on the Irish high crosses has been concerned with identifying the meaning, and sources, of individual images: Peter Harbison's great work is by far the best synthesis of this approach. Not the least of its virtues is the way in which Harbison carefully records the opinions of previous scholars, before advancing, and justifying, his own carefully-considered conclusions. Now that Harbison's work is available, and in the light of the scholarship that has appeared since his, we can perhaps begin to see further, like dwarfs on the shoulders



of giants: to begin to assess the logic and 'local theology' of each individual cross, and how particular scenes or motifs, which recur from cross to cross, can be placed in different contexts and reused to make different statements. Both of these early medieval cultures, Northumbrian and Irish, were acutely aware of the visual impact of tableaux (such as the *sustentatio* motif), and the subtle variants that can be worked in such recurring tableaux (as on the west side of Muiredach's cross). A recurring theme in all these crosses, Northumbrian and Irish, is the Eucharist; they all encourage meditation on the various ways, symbolic and human, in which their communities can recognize, and participate in, Christ's victorious death, resurrection, and future return in glory. Behind the traditions of both Atlantic islands, those of Northumbria and those of Ireland, is a European tradition of monastic devotion, shaped and informed by liturgical observance.

CREDITS FOR PHOTOGRAPHS ARCHAEOLOGY DEPARTMENT, UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, CORK: Figs 1-3, 20-24, 28, 31-37. THE MANCHESTER MUSEUM: Fig. 17. MR JOHN SHEEHAN, ARCHAEOLOGY DEPARTMENT, UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, CORK: Figs 25-27, 29-30, 38-41. DR ROSS TRENCH-JELLICOE: Figs. 4-16, 18-19.



Fig. 1 - Ahenny, North Cross, East side.



Fig. 2 - Ahenny, North Cross, East side, detail.



Fig. 3 - Ahenny, South Cross, West side.



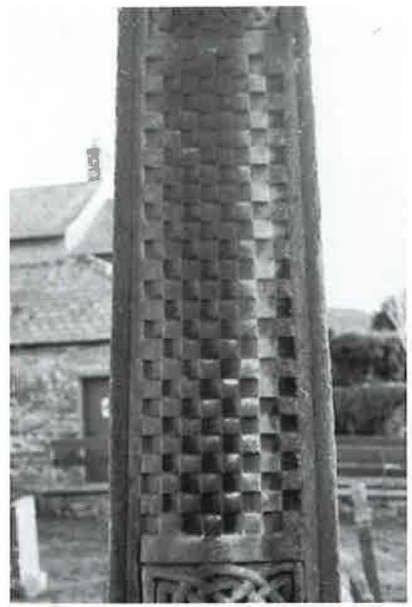
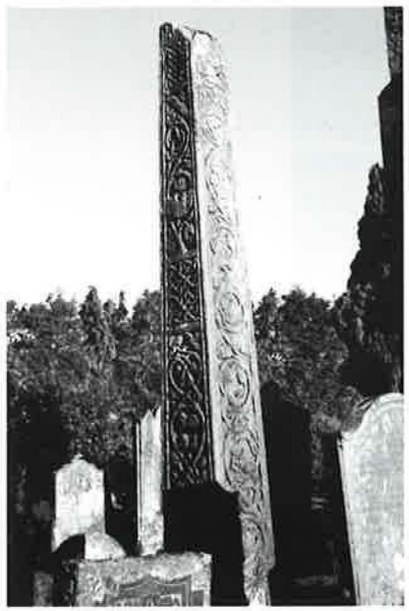


Fig. 4 - Bewcastle, North and West sides. Fig. 5. Bewcastle, North side, panel of cross-patterned chequers.



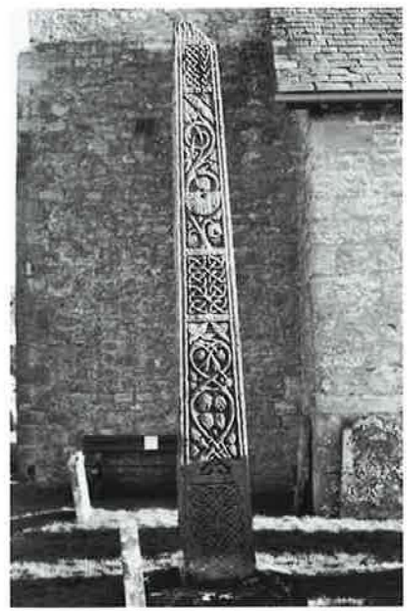


Fig. 6 - Bewcastle, morning: East and South sides. Fig. 7. Bewcastle, midday: South side.





Fig. 8 - Bewcastle, South side, interlace panel with Cross-, *Chi*- and Lozenge-patterns.



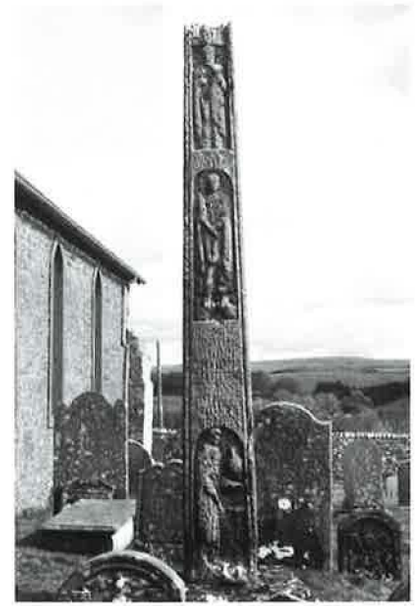


Fig. 9 - Bewcastle, afternoon: South and West sides. Fig. 10. Bewcastle, towards evening: West side.





Fig. 11 - Ruthwell, first vinescroll (originally North side?) and first broad side.
Fig. 13. Ruthwell, first broad side, Annunciation.



Fig. 12 - Ruthwell, first broad side (originally East side?), incarnation-conversion programme. Reading from bottom: 1) Annunciation, 2) De Caeco Nato, 3) De Muliere Peccatrice, 4) (upper stone) Visitation, and 5) (lower arm of cross-head) Archer with a book-satchel 'quiver'.







Fig. 14 - Ruthwell, first broad side, The Man born blind (De Caeco Nato) and the Woman who was a Sinner (De Muliere Peccatrice). Fig. 15. Ruthwell, first broad side, upper stone, Visitation and Archer with a book-satchel 'quiver'.



Fig. 16 - Ruthwell, second vine-scroll (originally South side?) and second broad side.





Fig. 17 - Ruthwell, second broad side, 'Return from Egypt' and 'Paul and Anthony' panels (photographed from the painted cast in the Manchester museum). Fig. 18. Ruthwell, second broad side, 'Paul and Anthony' and 'Christ acclaimed by two animals' panels.



Fig. 19 - Ruthwell, second broad side (upper stone), Agnus Dei panel; (lower arm of cross-head) St Matthew with his angel.





Fig. 20 - Moone, towards evening: west side of cross.



Fig. 21 - Moone, morning: east side of cross.

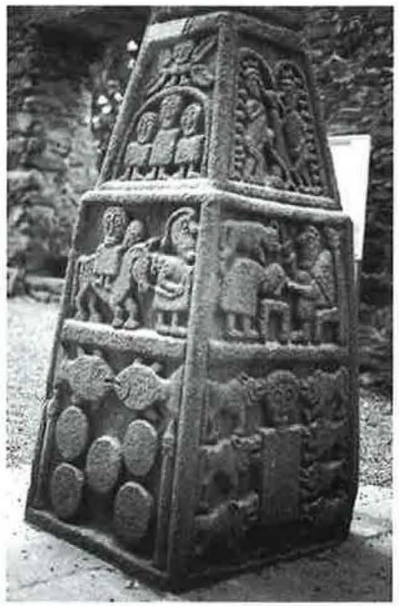




Fig. 22 - Moone, midday, east and south sides of base. Fig. 23. Moone, towards evening, west and north sides of base.

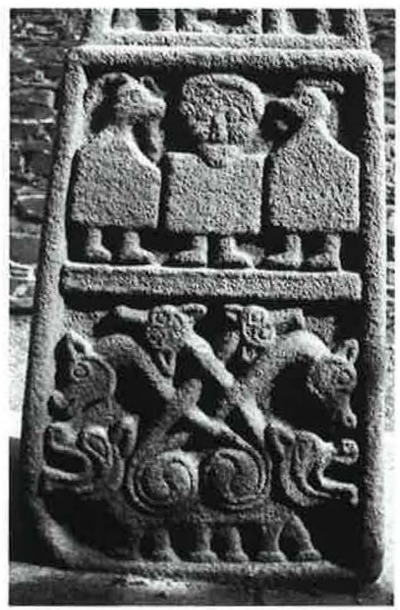


Fig. 24 - Moone, towards evening in Summer, north side of base: in the desert, Monsters besiege St Anthony.





Fig. 25 - Kells, Cross of St Patrick and St Columba, morning: East side.





Fig. 26 - Kells, Cross of St Patrick and St Columba, East side, crossing and transom. Fig. 27. Kells, Cross of St Patrick and St Columba, East side, right (North) arm, Saints Paul and Anthony with book-satchels.



Fig. 28 - Kells, Cross of St Patrick and St Columba, towards evening, West side.





Fig. 29 - Kells, Cross of St Patrck and St Columba, towards evening, West side, Crucifixion and Eagle (Resurrection). Fig. 30. Kells, Cross of St Patrick and St Columba, towards evening, West side, Second Coming and glorified Agnus Dei.





Fig. 31 - Monasterboice, Muiredach's Cross, morning: East side.



Fig. 32 - Monasterboice, Muiredach's Cross, East side, first panel from bottom of shaft: (1) Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel.

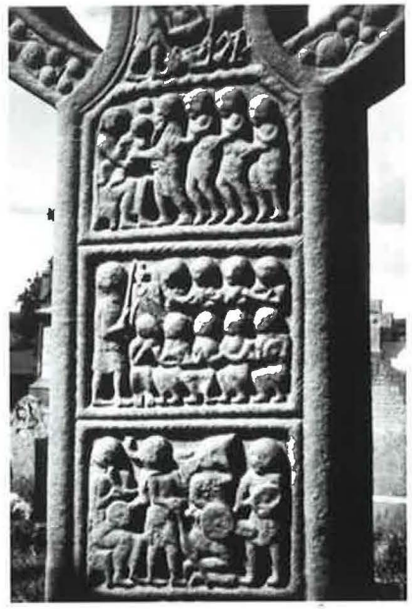


Fig. 33 - Monasterboice, Muiredach's Cross, East side: second, third and fourth panels from bottom of shaft: (2) David and Goliath flanked by Saul and Jonathan; (3) Moses striking the rock; (4) Epiphany.



Fig. 34 - Monasterboice, Muiredach's Cross, East side, (4) Epiphany, with star over Christ-child's head.







Fig. 35 - Monasterboice, Muiredach's Cross, East side, Last Judgement, left (South) arm: David and the saved gather at Christ's right side. Fig. 36. Monasterboice, Muiredach's Cross, East side, Last Judgement, right (North) arm: pursued by a devil, the damned flee into outer darkness.



Fig. 37 - Monasterboice, Muiredach's Cross, afternoon, West side.



Fig. 38 - Monasterboice, Muiredach's Cross, towards evening: skeumorphic church: Saints Paul and Anthony on left (North) side; Ascension on right (West) side.



Fig. 39 - Monasterboice, Muiredach's Cross, midday: Pilate washes his hands (end of south arm); Christ enters Jerusalem (south side of skeumorphic church).





Fig. 40 - Monasterboice, Muiredach's Cross, midday, south side: Pilate washes his hands and (above) Christ enters Jerusalem.



Fig. 41 - Monasterboice, Muiredach's Cross, north side: Mocking and beating of Christ (end of north arm) and (above) Saints Paul and Anthony.

## Discussione sulla lezione Ó Carragáin

RICHTER: *thank you very much for your illuminating paper. I want to take the opportunity to refer you the earliest written reference to a free-standing cross on a monastic site with Irish ancestry known to me. It occurs in ch. 6 of Book II of Jonas of Susa's Life of Columbanus and other abbots. There he, an eye-witness, describes how Attala, Columbanus's successor as abbot of Bobbio, had himself carried out of his cell to the cross which was standing in front of the cell, i. e. on the monastic precincts. This was in ca. 625. It is highly plausible that the rection of this free-standing cross goes back to Columbanus and Irish practice brought with him and passed on to his community. Most likely the cross in Bobbio was made of wood. The assumed Columban legacy would then bring us back to Ireland in the later sixth century at the latest. It may be suggested in parenthesis that such crosses had been part of the monastic sites of Columbanus's monasteries in Burgundy.*

Ó CARRAGÁIN: *Thank you for that information. The idea that the layout and 'symbolic landscapes' of Irish monasteries on the Continent should be influenced by the equivalents at Iona is a plausible hypothesis, which merits further investigation.*

VAN ETTEN: *1) the Kells Cross (the Marked Cross) can be seen as apocalyptical, due to the Viking attack on Iona. What is the reader's view on this?*

*2) The Cross of Muiredach at Monasterboice could have had the same sculptor/mason as the Cross of the Scriptures at Clonmacnois? Is this a possibility?*

Ó CARRAGÁIN: *(a) Scenes of strife and heroism are central to the Market Cross at Kells. But such scenes are central to the Old Testament as well, in particular to the historical books. Early medieval theology also saw Christ's*

*death and resurrection in heroic terms, as a victory over the Devil: think of the great Easter Sequence, "Victimae Paschali Laudes", with its line "Dux Vitae mortuus regnat vivus". Early medieval theology also stressed eschatological themes, particularly in Eucharistic contexts. The Eucharist was seen, on good scriptural authority (the earliest description of the Eucharistic meal, in I Corinthians chapter 11), to "show forth the death of the Lord until he comes".*

*I have no problem with the idea that the Viking invasions should have heightened the sense that, as things were falling apart, the end of the world was near. Eschatology is prominent in later Northumbrian sculpture, as on the Irish crosses such as the Market Cross at Kells. I would not exclude references to the Vikings on the great Irish scriptural crosses: Harbison, in his indispensable book (Volume, I, pp. 143-44) records that references to Norsemen have been suggested in the modern scholarly discussion of the arrest or mocking of Christ on Muiredach's Cross, Monasterboice.*

*(b) Roger Stalley's suggestion of a single master-sculptor who worked at Monasterboice, Kells and Clonmacnois (see note 5 of my lecture) is convincing, important. It will no doubt stimulate much scholarly debate in the coming years.*

Casartelli Novelli: *gentile professore Éamonn Ó Carragáin, sono felice di rincontrarla in questa Settimana che il CISAM ha dedicato specificamente a* L'Irlanda e gli Irlandesi nell'Alto Medioevo, *dopo il nostro primo incontro alla Seconda Settimana di Studi Tardoantichi e Romanobarbarici, svoltasi a Monte S. Angelo il 4-8 ottobre 1999, sul tema* Mondo romano e isole britanniche nei secoli IV-VIII, *in cui ricordo la sua* lectio *ermeneutica della funzione propriamente 'liturgica' del linguaggio dell'Immagine nei due 'poli' dell'arte altomedievale, romana e nord-insulare, dal titolo* Imitazione e indipendenza: dalla liturgia romana alle liturgie insulari. *E ricordo altresì il gentile dono di alcuni suoi saggi, di non facile reperibilità in Italia, sul rapporto fra iconografia e liturgia, specifico delle croci nortumbre. Nella stessa occasione, il mio contributo di storico dell'arte medievale, che guarda al linguaggio figurativo europeo nell'esperienza del ritorno all'astratto e all'ambiguazione della scrittura in Immagine riemersi nelle Avanguardie Artistiche del Novecento, muoveva all'analisi della traduzione 'cristologica' del segno cruciforme, non in quanto 'rappresentativo' della crocepatibolo, bensì in quanto 'simbolo' del centro e dell'armonia cosmica, nel codice 'astratto' del sacro mitico-cosmogonico attestato in Irlanda negli innumeri* men-hir *e* passage-tombs *eretti nel suo territorio nel tardo Neolitico; per*



*tornare a dominare, attraverso "un de plus grand tours de force de l'art abstrait", i nuovi* signacula *eretti al sacro cristiano nelle pietre 'crociate' dei primi selvaggi romitaggi atlantici e nelle pietre 'crucigene' – le superbe* high crosses *di tipo celtico alte fino a 7 metri – delle grandi "città monastiche" irlandesi, "un lieu peuplées d'étudiants" e "tout hérissé de croix"* [1]. *Il massimo 'santuario' e 'focolaio' monastico occidentale, la cui abbazia madre è nell'isoletta di Iona, sulla costa nord-occidentale della Scozia, sorto nel modello del Deserto monastico «* ex Aegypo tranducto *» dal diuturno lavoro di quella particolarissima "association autonome" e "corp vivant" di "frères en solitude", fiorita in quel "lambeau d'Europe qui a sauté du néolitique au Moyen Age sans passer par l'Antiquité"* [2] *– e irraggiatasi nel continente con la «* peregrinatio pro Christo *» guidata da san Colombano, fino a Bobbio. Cui questa Settimana spoletina ha voluto dedicare un interesse multidisciplinare specifico, rispetto ai territori nord-insulari "britannico" e "anglo-sassone".*

*Il mio interesse verso i monumenti/testi artistici del sacro cristiano fioriti nell'antica* Hibernia e Caledonia *ha avuto inizio, molti anni orsono, dagli intrecci-entrelacs connotativi del notevole gruppo di marmi della Cattedrale carolingia di Torino, e* in toto *della scultura 'liturgica' della "rinascenza carolingia"; per svilupparsi in analisi linguistico-semiotica nel nuovo quadro planetario, nuove tematizzazioni e nuovi paradigmi d'analisi, che la macrostoria del segnico e l'ermeneutica del sacro hanno aperto nel secondo Novecento nel complesso, denso e pluristratificato, panorama culturale della Tarda Antichità: in cui, superati i concetti di 'primitivismo', 'decadenza', 'razza' e 'barbarie', la forte singolarità dell'arte "irlandese" ha superato la tradizionale lettura storico-artistica, di un'arte massimamente 'attardata' in un linguaggio dell'Immagine di tipo 'anticlassico', 'arcaizzante', 'astratto' e 'primitivo', in ultimo 'decorativo'.*

*Con il superamento della visione eurocentrica, quindi del primato dell'arte cristiana di discendenza classica e imperiale, in specie romana e costantinopolitano-bizantina, il linguaggio dell'Immagine per eccellenza 'anticlassico', 'arcaizzante' e 'astratto', connotativo dei monumenti/testi artistici creati nella pietra, nell'oreficeria e «* in codicibus *» – eminentemente nel "Libro della Parola" – da quella "contre-société" di "paysans européens qui attendent l'aurore en sandales" nelle terre estreme dell'*orbis christianus *an-*

1. Cfr. F. Henry, *L'Art Irlandais*, I, "Zodiaque", dec. 1963, pp. 26, 156.
2. R. Debray, *Le Feu sacré fonction du religieux*, Paris, 2003, pp. 44-45, 52.

tiquus [3], *ha conquistato ormai nella storia dell'arte altomedievale, fra tutti gli apporti che i cosidetti "barbari", pagani e senza-scrittura, hanno apportato nei secoli V-VIII alla* condenda Europa, *lo statuto e la funzione di una creazione 'apicale', eminente e polare rispetto all'altra eminente manifestazione 'apicale' occidentale, costituita, senza meno, dall'arte «* in parietibus *» delle grandi basiliche romane dei secoli V-IX, somma dell'invenzione/creazione* docta e dives *dei vescovi della Chiesa Apostolica di Roma* mater ecclesia catholica. *Per tradizione, contesto socio-culturale, committenti e fruitori, codice e artefatti, due forme affatto 'polari' del linguaggio altomedievale dell'Immagine, dal cui incontro nella "svolta epocale" della rinascenza carolingia è discesa la nascita del linguaggio figurativo europeo, fino alla nuova apertura estetico-poietica che le Avanguardie Artistiche del Novecento hanno compiuto verso l'arte dei popoli "non-europei".*

*Ho ascoltato quindi con il massimo interesse la sua interessantissima e. mi permetto di dire, raffinatissima* lectio *ermeneutica della* visual theology *specifica delle* high crosses *"irlandesi", la quale parla un linguaggio dell'Immagine fortemente 'autonomo' rispetto ai monumenti/testi artistici occorrenti nei diversi territori e ambiti costituenti* L'Europa delle invasioni barbariche *in quanto, nutrita della tradizione celtica e mediterranea «* ex Aegypo tranducta *», è l'unica arte dei nuovi "paysans européens" a fondare contestualmente le sue radici primarie, come Lei ha evidenziato, nella simbolica e nella 'memoria' del sacro del Tardo Neolitico. Donde la specificità della forma iconografica e del valore propriamente 'liturgico' dell'arte "irlandese", che, passando in rassegna da 'storico' dell'arte l'analisi delle croci irlandesi e nortumbre nei relativi* Corpus, *non mi sembra essere stata pienamente valorizzata; complice, direi, il permanere di un orientamento, sostanzialmente ideologico, a 'ritardare' culturalmente (e anche cronologicamente) le prime rispetto alle seconde, in ragione della minore 'alterità' di queste ultime rispetto alle tematiche e al codice figurativo di marca ellenistico-romana; anche a costo di incorrere in letture iconografiche, a mio giudizio, affatto arbitrarie.*

*Un esempio fra tutti, la densa ierofania della faccia convenzionale Est della mirabile stele/croce/albero di Carndonagh – la cui faccia convenzionale Ovest è interamente lavorata a nastri intrecciati – letta quale rappresentazione del Crocefisso e delle Tre Marie al sepolcro! A mio avviso un vero 'esproprio' culturale.*

*Per cui, sul valore peculiare della creazione artistica "irlandese" e quindi*

3. R. Debray, ibid.



*del suo apporto 'apicale' alla rinascenza carolingia e al linguaggio figurativo europeo, pari al valore e all'apporto 'apicale' dell'arte «* in parietibus *» della Chiesa di Roma, lo storico dell'arte chiede il conforto della sua competenza; e, comunque, la ringrazia anticipatamente della sua attenzione.*

Ó Carragáin: *Professor Casartelli Novelli, I consider that your studies of the relationships between abstract and figurative design on the Irish high crosses to be of great importance. These studies (some of which have been helpfully collected in a CISAM volume, referred to in note 12 of my lecture) contain many insights which, I hope, will be vital in future discussion of these monuments. Particularly valuable is your stress on the cosmological symbolism of the monuments.*

*One of the important achievements of Harbison's great synthesis (1992) was to draw together, and describe with admirable fairness and objectivity, the many theories of earlier scholars about how individual scenes or panels on the figural crosses should be identified; he himself made a large number of intelligent and helpful suggestions about such questions. Having performed such a useful work, Peter Harbison has given future scholars a stimulus and opportunity to move beyond such concerns towards the ways in which the ornament and panels of individual crosses, taken together, may (or, on occasion, may not) add up to convincing theological statements. A related question is whether we can discern particular 'local theologies' at individual sites, such as Ahenny, Castledermot, Kells, Monasterboice and Clonmacnois. An important part of such approaches should be the question of how the interaction between the sculpture of the crosses and the daily (and seasonal) movement of the sun could help viewers to see the 'local theology' of their crosses as progressively or dynamically enacted in the course of the day and, indeed, of the year. For approaching such a question an awareness of the imagery of the liturgical year is, as you have helpfully suggested, fundamental.*