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21
Recapitulating History: Contexts for the Mysterious Moment of Resurrection on Irish High Crosses

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This paper briefly examines how four Irish figural high crosses set about 'making histories', in other words, discerning varied patterns in human history, as their ecclesiastical communities understood it: past history, as presented in the Old and New Testaments and in the apocrypha; recent history, as recounted in monastic hagiography; and future events, as imagined in Christian eschatology. History, as presented on the Irish high crosses, began with the Jewish narratives of the creation of the world and the fall of man; centred on the redemption of history through the incarnation, life, death and resurrection of Christ; and culminated in the future *Parousia*, or full revelation of Christ in Glory at the Last Judgement.[1] Christ's life, and in particular his death, resurrection and hoped-for return in glory, was considered to be a 'summing up' or 'restoration', a new beginning of human history.[2] It was natural, therefore, that these events should be central to the high crosses. Christian liturgies celebrated history both as a 'mystery' and as a 'sacrament'; the words '*mysterium*' (a loan-word from Greek) and '*sacramentum*' (a Latin calque on Greek *mysterion*) were both used to refer to the shape of human history, in particular in the Easter Vigil ceremonies of the Latin Church.[3] Each day, the hymns of the liturgy of the hours, sung by monastic and other clergy, associated the sun's daily course with the life of Christ and so with the course of human history, understood as renewed, and given a new beginning, by Christ's victory over death on the Cross.[4]

The Irish high crosses, as we shall see, regularly (but not invariably) place Christ's death in significant relationships to representations of the *Parousia*, or the full revelation of the Majesty of Christ at the end of human history.[5] Being made of stone, high crosses are fairly static objects (though, in this age of environmental pollution, it has become necessary for the Office of Public Works to move some of them inside, out of the weather). When the sun shines on the Irish high crosses it produces shadows that move gradually but continually. Those few crosses that still apparently stand on their original sites (such

1 The standard, and indispensable survey of Irish high crosses is Harbison, 1992; one of the many merits of this great work is the fair-minded surveys of work done on the iconography of the crosses to that date.

2 The classical expressions of this idea in the New Testament are in the Pauline Epistles: e.g. Colossians 1.14–20 and especially Ephesians 1.10 (instaurare omnia in Christo); on Christ as the new Adam, see Romans 5.12–21, I Corinthans 15.22–49, Philippians 2.6–11

3 See Ó Carragáin, 2005: 120–26

4 See e.g. Ó Carragáin, 2005: 321–25

5 On representations of the *Parousia* on Irish high crosses, see especially Veclenturf, 1997

as the two complete high crosses at Monasterboice) suggest that they were often, perhaps usually, erected with their broad sides facing east and west. The shadow of such a high cross is thus cross-shaped in the morning; in midday sunshine its shadow narrows, so that it appears like the shadow of a pillar or even an obelisk; the shadow gradually achieves its cross shape again towards evening.[6] Where crosses were erected with their broad sides facing east and west, it was natural to see the vision of history, on which the life of a monastery or ecclesiastical community was based, as being fully revealed in the morning and again at evening. At morning and evening major services of the Church took place: Lauds at daybreak, Vespers near nightfall. Mass was usually celebrated in the morning, except during Lent and in other penitential seasons when it took place after the ninth hour, towards evening.[7] Within a monastery or ecclesiastical settlement, crosses were designed to be lived with.[8] Whether consciously or unconsciously, clerics in community are likely to have associated the shadow of their cross or crosses with the daily *horarium* of their communal life, and to have felt their high crosses, at least in a general and informal way, to be not dissimilar to sundial-pillars, like that at Monasterboice (Fig. 21.1).[9]

A short paper must be selective. This one will examine the contexts which the designers provided for the four clear surviving Irish examples of the scene in which Christ lies in the tomb: at Clonmacnoise and Durrow (both in Co. Offaly), Kells (Co. Meath) and Monasterboice, Co. Louth (Fig. 21.2). The different contexts for these images indicate that these four monastic communities coped in different ways with the task of 'making histories'. This paper is intended to complement an important article in which Anna Maria Luiselli Fadda looked at the iconography of the image, and its context, on the west side of the Cross of the Scriptures at Clonmacnoise.[10] Inspired by that study, I wish to enquire what contexts other commissioners, at Durrow, Kells and Monasterboice, provided for the image. Professor Luiselli Fadda convincingly calls the Clonmacnoise image 'the mysterious moment of resurrection' (Fig. 21.2a).[11] Christ's soul is about to revivify his body; the women already approach the tomb from the right; the soldiers still sleep, but they are about to get a big surprise.

The panel is placed at the bottom of the shaft not only because it is appropriate to place a tomb on or near the earth, but because the theme of the panel is fundamental to Irish ideas of what monasteries were about. Repeatedly, in Irish saints' lives, the founder-abbot is told by an angel that the place where he or she is to found the monastery is to be

6 See É. Ó Carragáin, 2010: 715–23; and Denton, 2012 for discussion of this phenomenon in relation to the Anglo-Saxon high cross at Bewcastle, Cumbria

7 See Hiley, 1995: 1–45; on evening Mass during Lent and penitential seasons, see Jungmann, 1986: 1. 245–52

8 See Pulliam, below: 00-00

9 On sundials, see Macalister, 1946: 69–70; Bailey and Cramp, 1988: 66; Orton *et al.*, 2007: 131–43

10 Luiselli Fadda, 2007; see also the discussion of all four panels in Stalley, 1990b: 149–55; Harbison, 1992: 1. 302–309

11 Luiselli Fadda, 2007: 149

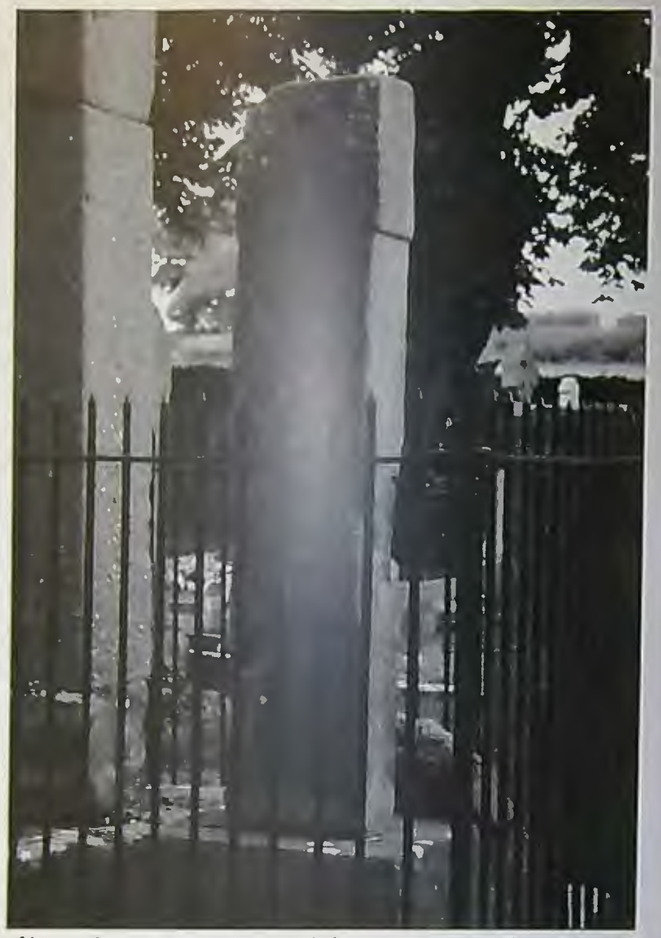


Figure 21.1: Sundial Pillar, Monasterboice (Photo: Author)

his *locus resurrectionis*: the place of his or her resurrection and, by extension, the place of resurrection of the whole community and their dependents.[12] It is natural, therefore, that the moment of Christ's resurrection should be placed as a model or foundational image on the monuments of Irish monastic sites, as the definitive moment when the reign of Christ, and the restoration of history, was made real.

The central image at the crossing, on this west side of the Clonmacnoise Cross of the Scriptures (Fig. 21.3), is an elaborate Crucifixion scene. The 'mysterious moment of resurrection', at the base of this side of the shaft, is linked to the Crucifixion by two panels representing scenes from the Passion. Both are 'figure-of-three' scenes: Christ, at the centre of each panel, is flanked by two other figures.[13] The precise identification of these Passion

12 Lutterbach, 1994; on the importance of the *topos* in Irish monastic topography, see T. Ó Carragáin, 2010: 73. Stalley (1990b: 152–53) points out that, while the four surviving resurrection scenes always appear at the foot of cross-shafts, ascension scenes usually appear at or near the tops of crosses.

13 On the significance of 'figure of three' tableaux, with particular reference to fol. 114r of the Book of Kells where Christ, flanked by two male figures, advances to Mount Olivet and hence to his Passion, see Ó Carragáin, 1994: 415–27



Figure 21.2: Top, left to right, The Resurrection of Christ on the Cross of the Scriptures, Clonmacnoise; the High Cross, Durrow; the Tall Cross, Monasterboice (with Baptism); below, on the Market Cross, Kells (Photos: top and lower left, Tomás Ó Carragáin; top centre: Peter Harbison; top right: Author)

Figure 21.3: right: West Face, Cross of the Scriptures, Clonmacnoise (PhotoTomás Ó Carragáin)

scenes is a matter for dispute, but it is important that both panels place Christ at the centre, and therefore that they visually prepare for the great Crucifixion scene in which Christ on the Cross is flanked by the much smaller figures of Longinus (the spear-bearer) and Stephaton (the sponge-bearer). At Clonmacnoise, therefore, the 'mysterious moment of resurrection' is placed directly in the context of the Passion, presumably to emphasise that the Passion demands to be understood in the context of the defeat of death on Easter Sunday.[14]

The same is true of the Durrow high cross; indeed the correspondence with Clonmacnoise is so close as to suggest that the sculptors used the same, or very similar, models for some of the Passion scenes.[15] The Durrow cross seems designed to reveal its vision of history gradually, in the course of each day, when particular sides were highlighted by the sun in its daily course. Its presentation of history has little to do with historical chronology; but it may possibly have more to do with the shape of the liturgical day. If the present orientation of the cross corresponds with its medieval orientation, the morning sun shone directly on a great image of the *Parousia* on the east side of the crossing. This made sense in liturgical terms. The Mass, celebrated in the morning except during penitential seasons, was seen as a pledge of Christ's Second Coming, an idea which goes back to St Paul, who wrote the earliest surviving description of the Christian Eucharist and what it signified: 'For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes'.[16] Lauds, and Morning Mass, may possibly provide the context for the sequence of panels on this east side of the Durrow cross (Fig. 21.4a).[17] The central panel of the *Parousia* is flanked by other scenes which prefigure or prophesy Christ's final victory: David as Psalmist with his lyre, and a reference to the head of Goliath (on the left or south side of the *Parousia* scene); David as victor defeating the lion (on the right-hand or northern arm of the cross); and on the shaft, just under the *Parousia*, Abraham sacrifices his son Isaac, a sacrifice referred to in the Roman Canon of the Mass, as preserved in the Stowe Missal (*sacrificium patriarche nostri abrache*).[18] At the foot of the shaft, there is an elaborate variant of the 'figure-of-three' motif. A central figure, his head and shoulders flanked by angels, presents an open book to two male human figures, also flanking him, who contemplate the book. The large central figure may represent Christ himself, presenting the gospels to his followers; but the centrality of the book between human and angelic figures suggest that the scene may possibly refer also, or even primarily, to the first part of each Mass in which Christ was contemplated and his teaching celebrated in the chanting (intonation) of the Epistles and Gospels.[19] Above the crossing

14 For a good survey of the interpretations put forward for the individual panels on this cross, see Harbison, 1992: 1. 48–53

15 For discussions of the Durrow cross, see Stalley, 1990b; 2007

16 quotienscumque enim manducabitis panem hunc et calicem bibetis mortem Domini adnuntiatis donec veniat (I Corinthians 11.26)

17 For identifications of individual panels, see Harbison, 1992: 1. 79–82

18 Warner, 1989: 13; for discussion, see Jungmann, 1986: 1. 218–26

19 See the discussion in Harbison, 1992: 1. 79; on the intonations, see Hiley, 1995: 54–58



Figure 21.4: High Cross, Durrow: left, East Face; right, West Face (Photos: Peter Harbison)

with its *Parousia* scene, Christ appears again in glory, surrounded by a mandorla, as the Agnus Dei, while the theme of the lamb is continued in the figure of the lamb, saved from the lion by David, to the right of the *Parousia*.[20]

The surviving archaeological evidence from Irish churches makes it seem likely that in early medieval Ireland celebrants normally faced east to celebrate Mass.[21] The liturgical tract in the Stowe Missal, when explaining the ritual fraction of the host, provides a reason

20 I Samuel 17.34–37. The figure of the ram, in the panel (just below the *Parousia*) representing Abraham's sacrifice, provides yet another prefiguration or foreshadowing of Christ as 'Lamb of God' on this east side of the Durrow cross; see Harbison, 1992: 1. 79–80

21 See T. Ó Carragáin, 2009: 128–38; 2010: 99

why: because, it says, Christ faced west on the Cross, that is, *contra civitatem* (against the city), and the celebrant at the altar faces Christ on the Cross.[22] Kees Veelenturf has helpfully pointed out that if we take this text as a general prescription we are in danger of falling into circularity of argument (in other words, arguing that, because Christ was considered to have faced west on the Cross, all the crucifixions on Irish high crosses must of necessity have faced west originally).[23] Nevertheless the idea can, if used cautiously, help us to make sense of the possible use of the sun's course to construct, on individual crosses, patterns in which the iconography gradually 'revealed itself' dynamically in the course of the day, a pattern which might have culminated, at sunset, in Crucifixion scenes and scenes closely related to the Crucifixion.

This idea is helpful in the case of the Cross of the Scriptures at Clonmacnoise, as we have just seen. It may be more generally helpful to use (always, however, with caution) the concept of an 'ideal orientation' (just as, in broader architectural discourse, it is common to use such phrases as 'liturgical east' or 'liturgical orientation'). It is conceivable that a commissioner or designer might have been familiar with an ideal orientation which, they may possibly have been aware beforehand, would not be realised on the ground, but to which nevertheless they may have wished to refer. It is even more conceivable that some designers were frustrated: that they might have hoped that their monument should be oriented so as to refer to an honoured tradition (such as that which regarded Christ as having faced west on the Cross), but found that their wishes were ignored, either when their monuments were first erected or later, and that priority was given to other factors, such as the construction of buildings which rendered impossible the orientation which the designer had intended.[24] Just because a particular community may not have held to a certain orientation, or may have abandoned that orientation in certain circumstances, does not mean that that community did not know of and did not to some degree respect the 'ideal' orientation which they either chose not to adopt, or else not to maintain. The hypothesis, that Irish designers wished to refer to the tradition that Christ faced west on the Cross, *contra civitatem*, is most useful for those few Irish sites (such as Monasterboice) where no evidence survives that the major surviving crosses have been moved around. It

22 See the Irish vernacular commentary on the Mass in the Stowe Missal (Stokes and Strachan, 1901–1903: 2. 252–55). The idea that Christ on the Cross, in facing west, was facing 'against the city' may possibly allude to Yahweh's complaint against the faithless Israel in Isaiah 65.12, a verse quoted by Paul in Romans 10.21: 'But to Israel he saith: "All the day long have I spread my hands to a people that believeth not and contradicteth me"' (ad Israhel autem dicit tota die expandi manus meas ad populum non credentem et contradicentem); see Ó Carragáin, 2011: 151

23 Veelenturf, 1997: 126

24 On Irish crosses which have been moved from their original settings, see Veelenturf, 1997: 121–50. The Ruthwell cross, Dumfries., Scotland, and the Kells Market Cross, Co. Meath, provide examples of monuments which have certainly been moved from their original settings, but where nevertheless it is useful to speculate about the original or 'ideal' orientation of the monuments; see Ó Carragáin, 2005: 62 (on Ruthwell); 2011: 153–62 (on Kells)

is always necessary to emphasise the necessity for caution, but we can certainly envisage that, in the early middle ages as in the present day, social, political, or economic factors, or sheer ignorance, may have determined the placing or moving of a cross, whatever its commissioner or designer may have intended. In such circumstances, it is worth while discussing the possible distance between ideal conception and actual achievement, even if such discussion has to be speculative.

On the Durrow cross, in the course of the day, we move from the liturgical references of the east ('first') broad side past the narrow south (and north) sides with their images of transition between the Old Testament and the New. On the opposite west ('second') broad side, we come again to the Passion and resurrection sequence, as at Clonmacnoise. The programme on the narrow south side of the Durrow cross is simple and powerful. The loss of Paradise (Adam and Eve) and the first murder (Cain and Abel: the sacrifice of Abel is also mentioned in the Canon of the Mass)[25] are reversed by the establishment of the Kingdom (David in Majesty) and by the fascinating juxtaposition, on the south side of the cross-head, of the image of a church, with X-shaped finials, and a horseman. The scene seems to be a royal *adventus* and, in the light of the church and horseman on the south side of the cross-head on Muiredach's cross, I would tentatively suggest a reference to Chapter 3 of the Book of Malachi, the last prophetic book of the Old Testament: 'the overlord whom you seek will suddenly come to his Temple'.[26] The narrow north side at Durrow seems, like the opposite south side, to focus on the transition between the Old Testament and the New: perhaps Zachariah, Elizabeth and John the Baptist; perhaps John the Baptist and Christ.[27] There are similar, and more developed, transitional schemes at Monasterboice and Kells.[28] At Durrow, we then move from these transitional scenes to the central narrative of the New Tesament, to the Passion and the moment of Resurrection, linked as at Clonmacnoise. As at Clonmacnoise, the Durrow designer has specified that this is the very moment of resurrection by placing a bird directly above the head of Christ as he lies in the tomb (Fig. 21.2b). The bird stretches its beak into Christ's mouth, so as to breathe Christ's soul into his corpse, as in the ancient Egyptian image which represents the re-uniting of *Ba*, the bird-soul, with its body.[29] At Durrow, there is a mysterious small figure above the tomb, between the sleeping soldiers with their plumed helmets. Peter Harbison described it as follows: 'Between them [the soldiers] there is what may be a small human figure. [...] It is difficult to interpret whatever may be between the two soldiers'.[30] Roger Stalley was equally cautious:

25 As in the Stowe Missal: Warner, 1989: 13: munera pueri tui iusti Abel

26 Malachi 3.1: '[...] et statim veniet ad templum suum dominator quem vos quaeritis [...]'. On the horseman and *adventus*-scene on Muiredach's Cross at Monasterboice, see Ó Carragáin, 2011: 171–72

27 Harbison, 1992: 1. 82

28 Ó Carragáin, 2011: 164–65, 167–68, 170

29 Luiselli Fadda, 2007: 158–59, fig. 11

30 Harbison, 1992: 1. 81

> At Durrow the cross [which appears in the Kells and Monasterboice panels, to be discussed below] is replaced by an indecipherable carving, a bust perhaps, or a condensed version of the three Marys. At Clonmacnoise the equivalent area is blank.[31]

These scholars see either 'a small human figure' (Harbison) or 'a bust' (Stalley). Both, with admirable caution, refuse to interpret the scene. I suggest that here we have a small haloed human figure, and propose that the designer may possibly have provided here an image of Christ's soul at the moment it enters the tomb to revivify his corpse (via the breathing bird). Such a figure would specify even more vividly that we have here the mysterious moment of resurrection, and therefore would heighten still more the drama of the scene. If this speculation is correct, the Durrow designer has provided two separate images (the soul-breathing bird, and the small haloed figure above the tomb) of the moment in which Christ comes to new life.

In a recently-published article, planned as a companion to this chapter, I have examined the possible iconographic strategies of the Tall Cross at Monasterboice (Fig. 21.5) and of the Market Cross at Kells (Fig. 21.6a), the crosses which include the two remaining examples of the 'mysterious moment of resurrection' theme.[32] There is no need to repeat that material here: I shall therefore concentrate on the immediate contexts provided for the moment of Resurrection on these crosses. On the Tall Cross at Monasterboice (Fig. 21.2c), as on the Cross of the Scriptures at Clonmacnoise and on the high cross at Durrow (Figs 21.3, 21.4b), the panel representing the 'mysterious moment of resurrection' is placed at the foot of the 'second' or west broad side. One might expect New Testament scenes to cluster on the 'second', west-facing, broad sides of high crosses, as Christ's incarnation and death were believed to inaugurate the sixth age of the world. As the ninth-century Vespers hymn 'Conditor alme siderum' put it,

Vergente mundi vesperae	When the evening of the world was approaching,
sicut sponsus de thalamo,	like a bridegroom from his bridal chamber
egressus honestissima	you came forth from the most pure
Virginis matris clausula.	little enclosure of the Virgin mother.[33]

There, as at Clonmacnoise and Durrow, a series of 'figure-of-three' panels connect the foot of the shaft to the central Crucifixion panel. There are four of these 'figure-of-three' panels, providing twelve figures in all, whereas at Clonmacnoise and Durrow there were only two such panels, containing six figures in all. On the Tall Cross at Monasterboice the four 'figure-of-three' panels are much worn, and consequently the identification of the individual panels is much discussed.[34] However worn, these panels still perform their

31 Stalley, 1990b: 150

32 Ó Carragáin, 2011: 153–62 (Kells, Market Cross), 165–70 (Monasterboice, North Cross or Tall Cross)

33 The hymn was sung at Vespers in Advent; for bibliographical references, see Ó Carragáin, 2005: 323

34 See the useful survey of earlier interpretations in Harbison, 1992: 1. 150



Figure 21.5: West Face, Tall Cross, Monasterboice (Photo: Author)





Figure 21.6: Market Cross, Kells: top, East Face; below, Christ as Giant (Photos: Tomás Ó Carragáin)

primary visual function, to prepare the onlookers for the large 'figure-of-three' at the crossing, where Christ is crucified between the smaller figures of Longinus and Stephaton. The great height of this cross permitted the designer to provide, not only a much more extended series of 'figure-of-three' panels, but a powerful two-panel prologue or *exordium*, at the foot of the shaft, to the programme of this 'second' broad side. The second panel from the bottom represents Christ's baptism in the Jordan. The sculptor has envisaged the Baptism in contemporary liturgical terms; as Harbison points out, John 'seems to have a satchel by his side, and holds out a book or scroll from which he presumably reads'.[35] The water of the River Jordan is emphasised: it stretches in a horizontal band across the full breadth of the lower third of the panel, and visually echoes the horizontal band of the slab over Christ's tomb in the panel below. On the left, John the Baptist towers over the smaller figure of Christ who stands at the centre, up to his waist in water. Christ's lower position leaves space for a prominent bird, the dove of the Holy Spirit, to hover over his head, with wings outstretched.

Just below, at the foot of the shaft as usual, we get our third example of 'the mysterious moment of resurrection' (Fig. 21.2c). Here, unlike the panels at Clonmacnoise and Durrow, a cross sustained by angels hovers over the tomb; Helen Roe made the brilliant suggestion that the presence of the long-stemmed cross in this scene (and, as we shall see, in the analogous scene on the Market Cross at Kells), was based on the 'cross that spoke' at the moment of resurrection in the apocryphal Gospel of Peter.[36] It is possible to read the two panels downwards, in chronological order from Christ's Baptism to his Resurrection. But the two-panel sequence can also be read upwards: Christ's resurrection was the primary act of *instauratio*, the transformation of human history, and thus the model for all subsequent Christian baptisms. Christ's baptism by John not only foreshadowed his own death and resurrection, but also formed another model for Christian baptism. Of these two models for Christian baptism, Christ's death and resurrection could be seen as the fundamental one.[37] A clerical or monastic audience would have understood the long-stemmed cross, towering over the grave in the 'moment of Resurrection' scene, to provide a visual and thematic link between that scene and the waters of Jordan in the panel just above. In some Western rites of Baptism, the baptismal font was 'fructified', so that it could bring the catechumens to new birth, by making a cross-pattern with the chrism on the waters of the font.[38] The two-panel *exordium* at the

35 Harbison, 1992: 1. 150, 340

36 Roe, 1966: 48; 1993: 28. Roe's hypothesis is discussed, in the light of more recent scholarship, in Ó Carragáin, 2011: 155–57. For the Gospel of Peter, Roe referred to James, 1924: 92–93; see now Elliott, 1993: 156–57 and, for the Greek text, Santos Otero, 1999: 383–84 This passage of the Gospel of Peter is discussed by Crossan, 1988: 360–93

37 See Romans 6.3–4 and, for discussion, Harbison, 1992: 1. 340; Ó Carragáin, 2005: 140–41, 234

38 See Whitaker, 1987: 160–61 (blessing of the font in the *Missale Gothicum*), 186–87 (consecration of the font in the Old Gelasian Sacramentary); for discussion, see Spinks, 2006: 111–12

foot of the west side of the Tall Cross provided the monastic community at Monasterboice with a coherent meditation on the relevance of both Crucifixion and Resurrection to contemporary communal life. A close association between baptism and the moment of Resurrection was not merely relevant to parish life in which (infant) baptism was administered; it was equally relevant to the life of a monastic community: throughout eastern and western Europe, the early medieval ceremonies of initiation to monastic life were closely modelled on those of catechumenate and baptism.[39]

Our fourth and last panel of 'the mysterious moment of resurrection', on the Market Cross at Kells, is given the most startling and original position of all. The panel is placed, as usual, at the bottom of a shaft, and so reminds onlookers that the monastery was a *locus resurrectionis*, not only for its founder-abbot, but for all its community in later centuries. But unlike the analogous scenes at Clonmacnoise, Durrow and Monasterboice the 'moment of resurrection' is here placed at the foot, not of the Crucifixion side, but of the opposite side; presumably the 'first' side, and also, presumably, facing 'east' (Figs 21.2d, 21.6a).[4] As on the Tall Cross at Monasterboice the 'moment of resurrection' forms part of a two-panel *exordium*, but here the two panels provide a prelude, not just to the Crucifixion, but to the whole programme, including the Old Testament scenes on that same 'first' and 'east'-facing broad side. That this is the moment of Resurrection is once more made clear by the slender long-stemmed cross, sustained by angels, which stretches down between the sloping spears of the soldiers almost (but not quite) to the slab over the tomb. The first Epistle of Peter had stated that Christ 'was put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit, in which also he went and made a proclamation to the spirits in prison'.[41] But in the apocryphal Gospel of Peter it is the Cross which tells us, in response to a questioning voice from heaven, that it has preached to those who sleep in death. In the apocryphal narrative, the Cross, though not identical with Christ, is very closely associated with him. The author uses the 'figure-of-three' or *sustentatio* tableau to suggest Christ's unique divinity: he is, literally, greater than the angels:

> they saw three men come out from the sepulchre, two of them supporting the other and a cross following them, and the heads of the two reaching to heaven, but that of him who was being led reached beyond the heavens. And they heard a voice out of the heavens crying, 'Have you preached to those who sleep?', and from the cross there was heard the answer 'yes'.[42]

39 See Ó Carragáin, 2005: 294–96

40 The Kells Market Cross has certainly been moved around a lot, in modern times and in very recent times; therefore (as in Ó Carragáin, 2011: 153–62) I simply refer to the 'ideal' orientation, in which the Crucifixion would have faced 'west', but place all such references within quotation marks, to emphasise that they are hypothetical.

41 I Peter 3.18–19: mortificatus carne vivificatus autem spiritu in quo et his qui in carcere erant spiritibus veniens praedicavit

42 Gospel of Peter, sections 38-42 (Elliott, 1993: 156–57)

The narrative in the Gospel of Peter enables the Kells (and Monasterboice) designers to refer precisely to the 'moment of Resurrection', and thus to give their panels heightened dramatic tension. At this moment, Cross and angels are already present. They have not yet entered the sepulchre, but are just about to do so. When all four figures (Christ, the flanking angels, and the closely-following Cross) emerge from the tomb, the angels will be sustaining, not the cross, but Christ himself. This Cross will soon assert, in answer to the question from heaven, that it has preached to those who sleep: it therefore will not only accompany the newly-risen Christ, but will identify itself as doing what the First Epistle of Peter asserted that Christ did.[43] The Clonmacnoise and Durrow designers specified the 'moment of resurrection' by placing soul-breathing birds stretching their beaks into Christ's mouth; in the image of the tall slender Cross approaching the tomb, sustained by angels, the designers of the Kells and Monasterboice panels have found another way of dramatizing that precise moment in which history was restored.[44]

The identification of the Cross here with Christ's victory is made even more emphatic by the panel just above, the second panel of the *exordium* to the programme of the Kells cross (Fig. 21.6b). At the centre of the panel is an armed male figure. His giant body spans the panel from top to bottom. He is armed for battle, with spear and shield. In order to emphasise that this warrior is advancing directly towards us, his right leg has been placed ahead of his left. In his advance, the warrior was originally flanked by twelve smaller figures, also armed with shields. They all face towards the advancing central figure, and gaze wide-eyed upon it. The resolute advance of the giant warrior, and the alertness of his twelve attendant warriors, contrasts sharply with the slouched guards seated on the tomb in the panel just below. We are in the presence of an heroic and royal *adventus*, the triumphal entry of a king into his city and inheritance. Helen Roe refers, convincingly, to Psalm 23.7–8: 'Lift up your gates, O ye princes, and be ye lifted up, O eternal gates, and the King of Glory shall enter in. Who is the King of Glory? The Lord who is strong and mighty: the Lord mighty in battle.'[45]

The twelve attendant warriors suggest that this *adventus*-scene was designed to also recall Psalm 18 (Hebrew 19). The Vulgate text of this psalm calls Christ a giant, and explicitly associates his life with the daily course of the sun:

43 The close association between Christ and the Cross is a common motif in early Christian iconography: Christ is enthroned at the foot of the glorified cross (apse of Santa Pudenziana, Rome), or a bust-portrait of Christ is placed above the glorified cross (see two Roman monuments: the apse of the Lateran *Basilica Salvatoris*, and the apse in Santo Stefano Rotondo commissioned by Pope Theodore [642–47]); or a bust-portrait of Christ is placed at the crossing of the cross (apse of Sant'Apollinare in Classe, Ravenna); see Ó Carragáin, 2005: 232–36, 345

44 Luiselli Fadda, 2007: 258–59; on the soul as bird, see also the references in Stalley, 1990b: 152. On the liturgical significance of the *sustentatio*-tableau ('figure-of-three', in which the flanking figures sustain the central figure, as in the so-called 'Arrest of Christ' tableau on fol. 114r of the Book of Kells), see Ó Carragáin, 1994: 417–27

45 'adtollite portas principes vestras et elevamini portae aeternales et introibit rex gloriae; quis est iste rex gloriae Dominus fortis et potens Dominus potens in proelio'

> He has placed his tent in the sun,
> and, like a bridegroom coming out of his bridal chamber,
> he has rejoiced like a giant to run his way.
> His coming forth is from the height of heaven,
> and his return is also to [heaven's] height,
> nor is there anyone who can hide himself from his heat.[46]

It was particularly appropriate to place a panel designed to recall this psalm, which so clearly associates Christ the Giant with the sun in its daily course, on the east side of the Market Cross at Kells. The image of Christ the Giant would have a rich history in Christian exegesis, poetry and visual art.[47] Any monastic audience is likely to have been familiar with the Advent hymn 'Intende qui regis Israel' (also widely known, from the opening words of its second stanza, as 'Veni Redemptor gentium') in which St Ambrose saw the giant of Psalm 18.6 to refer to Christ's unique hypostasis of divine and human natures:

Procedens de thalamo suo	Going out from his bridal chamber
pudoris aula regia	the royal hall of modesty
gemine gigas substantiae	a giant of twin substance,
alacris ut currat viam.[48]	so that he may run his swift course.

This image of a victorious warrior is best understood within the theologies of Christ's defeat of Satan important in the first millennium of Christianity.[49]

The twelve smaller figures who flanked the giant central figure (ten survive on the damaged shaft) seem also designed to remind the onlookers of Psalm 18. An important theme of that psalm is that 'the heavens tell of the glory of God', and that day and night proclaim it. God's glory spans time (history) and space, and spreads over all the earth:

> Their sound has gone forth through every country,
> and their words have reached to the ends of the earth. [50]

In Christian exegesis, the opening verses of the psalm, and in particular the verse just quoted, was taken to refer to the spread of the gospel to the ends of the earth, through the preaching of the twelve apostles in particular.[51] The Kells panel, combining an advancing

46 Vulgate Psalm 18.6–7 (Gallican Psalter): In sole posuit tabernaculum suum | et ipse tamquam sponsus procedens de thalamo suo | exultavit ut gigans ad currendam viam suam: | A summo caeli egressio eius | et occursus eius usque ad summum eius | nec est qui se abscondat a calore eius (trans. Author)

47 For further discussion see Ó Carragáin, 2005: 321–25

48 Stanza five; text and translation Ó Carragáin, 2005: 323, where further bibliographical references may be found

49 Aulén, 1931; Southern, 1967: 201–47; Heim, 1992

50 Psalm 18.5 (Gallican Psalter): In omnem terram exivit sonus eorum / et in fines orbis terrae verba eorum (trans. Author)

51 See, in particular, the psalter *tituli* (Arocena and Goñi, 2005: 1. 57): for example, No. 367, 'De Apostolorum predicatione'; No. 368, 'Propheta de Apostolis et de Christo et de Ecclesia dicit'; see also Ó Carragáin, 2005: 321–25

giant with twelve flanking warriors who watch him intently, seems designed to encourage a monastic audience to recall, not only the descent of Christ into Hell (in the imagery of Psalm 23.7–10: 'Dominus fortis et potens, Dominus potens in proelio', as suggested by Helen Roe), but also Christ as a Giant, hastening on his mission of salvation, a salvation that, after the resurrection has defeated death and the devil, the apostles preach even to the ends of the earth: in other words, even to the Isles of the North, Britain and Ireland. We are now in a position to sum up the highly original strategy which unifies the broad sides of the Kells Market Cross.[52] The programme begins, on the 'east' side of the shaft, with morning (the morning of Easter Sunday): the moment when Christ becomes 'the first-born from the dead.'[53] At this moment, history is definitively restored, and a new age begins. The panel immediately above, portraying '*Dominus fortis et potens, Dominus potens in proelio*' clarifies the nature of Christ's victory, and so of the panel just below. If the panel below concentrated on one precise moment, in contrast this panel relates that event to past and future history. The Harrowing of Hell was already accomplished, between Good Friday and Easter Sunday, before the resurrection took place. Christ's vanquishing of Satan fulfils and surpasses the past victories of Jewish history, such as Joshua's entry into the Holy Land, or David's defeat of Goliath.[54] But the twelve wide-eyed attendant warriors, designed to recall Psalm 18 and the apostles, look to future history, when they and their successors (such as Patrick, Columba and Columbanus) will carry the good news to the ends of the earth and into the Irish and European monastic present.

After this memorable two-panel exordium, the theme of past and future history is developed. We proceed directly, just under the crossing, to the first Adam (Christ will be the second) and the first murder (Cain's murder of Abel). These reversals of human history are themselves reversed in turn, by the scene at the centre of the crossing: Daniel in the lions' den. Daniel's outstretched arms already foreshadow the Crucifixion, the corresponding scene on the 'second' or 'west' side of the monument, while the four ravening lions provide a twofold hint that Christ will be revealed on the Cross as both divine and human, by being 'known between two living creatures' (*in medio duorum animalium*).[55] Just below Daniel's feet, the small panel of David with his harp encourages onlookers to see Daniel as foreshadowing the Crucifixion: the psalter was read (and sung liturgically) as the greatest of the prophetic books.[56] To the left of Daniel and his lions, on the 'south' arm of this 'east' side of the cross, Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac, itself (as we

52 On the narrow sides, see Ó Carragáin, 2011: 158–59 (the 'south' side), 162 (the 'north' side)
53 Cf. Colossians 1.18 'primogenitus ex mortuis'
54 Thus Harbison (1992: 1. 105) was not mistaken to see in the panel a reference to David acclaimed as victor, though Roe (1966: 28–30) more convincingly interpreted the panel as 'Christ the king of glory'; see discussion in Ó Carragáin, 2011: 158, who suggests that a verse from one of the relevant psalms, such as *Dominus potens in proelio*, would usefully emphasise the centrality of scriptural reminiscence to the panel
55 For a recent analysis of this *topos*, with a survey of previous scholarship, see Bailey, 2011
56 Arocena and Goñi, 2005; Rondeau, 1982–1985

have seen above) referred to in the Canon of the Mass, further encouraged onlookers to see Daniel's ordeal as looking forward to Christ's sacrifice. But this 'east' side of the crossing encourages us to look, not only backwards to Old Testament history, but forward towards the monastic present. Daniel, praying, arms outstretched, among the animals, foreshadows St Anthony, tempted among demons in the desert. This scene comes, appropriately, on the right-hand, 'north', arm of the cross.[57]

On the 'second' broad side, facing 'west', Old Testament foreshadowings give way to the reality of Christ's life and death, 'in mundi vespere'. If the scriptural programme of the cross began with the morning of Easter, it ends with the evening of Good Friday. Below the great central crucifixion-scene, and above the seventeenth-century inscription which has deprived us of the panel at the foot of the shaft, a series of three panels represent scenes from the life of Christ. As the shaft narrows towards the crossing, the third of these (the distribution of the loaves at the feeding in the desert) echoes, visually and thematically, the crucifixion-scene just above. Each day, the Kells Market Cross epitomised the way in which Christ, in his resurrection (morning) and death (evening), restored human history. Unusually, the cross lacks any reference to Christ's return in glory at the *Parousia*. Helen M. Roe suggested that 'this monument may originally have been erected as a *tearmann* [boundary] cross, serving to indicate one of the immediate limits of the *civitas* and possibly also of its power of sanctuary'.[58] It is probable that, in a rich monastic complex such as Kells, the high crosses (of which there were at least five[59]) were designed so that the iconographic programme of one cross complemented that of the others. At the centre of the monastic enclosure, near the present parish church, the 'Cross of Saints Patrick and Columba' (also known as 'The Cross of the Tower' or the South Cross) supplies what the Market Cross lacks: creates, on its west side, intimate visual and thematic links between the Crucifixion and the *Parousia*.[60]

This brief examination of the different contexts given to a single panel, 'the mysterious moment of resurrection', show us four designers thinking in a variety of ways about this single theme. They do not receive the images and ideas of the tradition passively; instead, using elements from a variety of visual, patristic and liturgical traditions, they create original, and at times remarkable meditations on history as they understood it. On these crosses, using the resources of scripture, hagiography and liturgical practice, and showing remarkable iconographic creativity, history is made and remade.

57 Indeed, all the panels of this 'north' arm (on the east, north and west sides) represent the first Egyptian monks, Saints Paul and Anthony, as does the north side of the base of the high cross at Moone; see Ó Carragáin, 2011: 152–53 (Moone), 162 (Kells, 'north' arm); on the 'Saints Paul and Anthony' cycle on the Kells Market Cross, see Harbison, 1992: 1. 302–309, 339, and 104–108 for his analysis of individual scenes
58 Roe, 1966: 26
59 Roe, 1966: 6–9; Harbison, 1992: 1. 100–112 and 2. figs 326–63
60 On this cross, see Roe, 1966: 10–25; Harbison, 1992: 1. 108–11; É. Ó Carragáin, 1988: 16–20; 2010: 736–40